



Trump's fate will be no better than Saddam Hussein's Page 2



Persepolis did a great job: Ali Daei Page 3



Hossein Parsai to stage "The Soldier" about Commander Soleimani Page 8

Congratulations on the birth anniversary of Jesus Christ to all monotheists in the world



# Russia and China may need to clarify their security initiatives



# Iran terms as 'unacceptable' any proposal to revise, renegotiate or extend JCPOA

TEHRAN – Majid Takht-Ravanchi, Iran's ambassador to the United Nations, has rejected as "unacceptable" any proposal to revise, renegotiate or extend the 2015 nuclear pact as contrary to UN Security Council resolution 2231.

The ambassador made the remarks during a meeting of the UN Security Council on "Non-Proliferation: implementation of Security Council resolution 2231 (2015)."

Security Council resolution 2231 (2015)."
"Almost four months after the failed

United States' move to destroy the JCPOA, the Security Council is again considering the implementation of resolution 2231 and the JCPOA," Takht-Ravanchi said.

"The JCPOA is an agreement coming out of hard-won negotiations involving difficult gives and takes, and any proposal for its revision, renegotiation or extension will be against resolution 2231 and absolutely not acceptable to Iran," he pointed out.

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# Iran's non-oil trade stands at \$52b in 9 months

TEHRAN – The value of Iran's non-oil trade in the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-December 20) stood at \$52 billion, according to the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA).

The total volume of the country's nonoil trade was 110 million tons in the mentioned nine months, of which over 85.2 million tons were exported commodities and about 25 million tons were imported goods, Mehdi Mir-Ashrafi told IRIB. The official put the total value of t

The official put the total value of the imports into the country during the said time span at \$26.8 billion, while the value of exports was reported to be \$25.1 billion.

According to Mir-Ashrafi, 17.5 million tons of the imported commodities into the country in the period under review were basic goods, accounting for the lion's share of the imports in terms of weight.

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# Iranian children win awards at FAO World Food Day Poster Contest TEHRAN – Two Iranian children have the world are women and mothers who

TEHRAN – Two Iranian children have won awards at the World Food Day Poster Contest that has been organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations.

Atrin Afshari-Tavana took first prize in the 5-8 age group, the organizers have announced. About her painting, she wrote, "Farmers are the best champions in the world."

Atrin's sister, Anahita, took third in the 9-12 age group. "My food heroes around

cultivate food with all their might and give it to people all over the world," she said about her work.

The art contest was organized for children between ages 5 to 19 to celebrated World Food Day. The organizers called on all children around the world to use their imagination and create a poster of their favorite food hero at work.

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#### Iran captain Ghanbari sad about Iran's position in FIFA ranking

BY FARROKH HESABI

ahra Ghanbari has expressed her sadness after Iran women's national football team were taken out of the latest FIFA rankings list completely due to not playing an international game within the last 18 months.

The Iranian team were 70th in the previous rankings released by FIFA but now they are out of the list of the international teams.

It was a devastating blow to the Iranian women football and many of the experts as well as coaches and players have expressed their sadness and concerns about this issue.

Zahra Ghanbari, captain of the Iranian national team and one of the best players of the women's football history, expressed her sadness about the national team's position at the FIFA ranking.

"It is very unfortunate that such a thing has happened for us, something that we think should be reconsidered by FIFA. We got considerable results over the past years and it is a real blow to the Iranian football", Ghanbari said in an exclusive interview with Tehran Times.

"The sad reality is that the national team were left alone and no one paid attention to them for the last two years. We had no friendly matches and no training camps for a long time, so we should expect something like this to happen", Zahra added.

Ghanbari, 28, is the current player of Vochan Kordestan team and the all-time top goal scorer of the Iran Women's Football Professional League.

She criticized the Iranian football federation's officials for neglecting the women's national team.

"We got good results in the past few years and moved up in FIFA's rankings. However, in all those years we also had a few friendly matches, and our few training camps were formed only near the start of a tournament," she said.

"We should have a plan. We need to change the way we think about holding a training camp when we have a competition ahead. There should be long term planning for the national team. The football federation arranged some training camps and friendly matches for the men's national team during the time of the coronavirus pandemic despite the fact that they had no official match ahead," Ghanbari added.

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# 280 genetic counseling centers operating in Iran

TEHRAN – Some 280 centers are currently offering genetic counseling services across the country, Fatemeh Rezvan Madani, head of the prevention development center of the Welfare Organization, has stated.

The services of genetic counseling centers are free of charge for those under the Welfare Organization's coverage and cost less for other people, she explained.

Last year (March 2019-March 2020), 384,000 households were screened at these centers, and the services resulted in the prevention of 1,444 births with disabilities; in addition, the necessary coordination was made with the Ministry of Health for abortion cases, she also noted.

Individuals can refer to genetic counseling centers before pregnancy or marriage; and then to genetic testing if needed, she added

### Over 1.3m persons with disabilities live in Iran

Pirouz Hanachi the mayor of Tehran, said in December 2019 that over 1.3 million people suffering from disabilities live in the country and the figure rises by 50,000 every year.

Majlis [the Iranian parliament] approved both general outlines and details of a bill on the rights of persons with disabilities in January 2018. Development of disability-friendly cities, free transportation, health insurance, free education, job creation, housing loans, and fewer working hours are some of the articles of the law.

Since the approval of the law, education for students with disabilities have been provided in Azad universities, subsidies for patients with spinal cord injury as well as disability care centers have been increased, in addition to residential units to families having members with disabilities.

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# Trump pardons Blackwater contractors convicted of massacre in Iraq

Donald Trump has caused further outrage in the dying days of his presidency by granting pardons to four former government contractors who were convicted in a 2007 massacre in Baghdad.

The Blackwater guards were all serving lengthy prison sentences for their part in the massacre, in which more than a dozen Iraqi civilians were killed. The incident caused international uproar over the use of private security guards in a war zone.

Fourteen Iraqi civilians were killed and 17 others wounded.

Supporters of the former contractors had lobbied for the pardons, arguing that the men had been excessively punished in an investigation and prosecution they said was tainted.

The Blackwater firm was founded by Erik Prince, an ally of Trump and the brother of Education Secretary Betsy DeVos. It has since been renamed.

The Blackwater case has taken a complicated path since the killings at Baghdad's Nisoor Square in September 2007, when the men, former veterans working as contractors for the State Department, opened fire at the crowded traffic circle.

Prosecutors asserted the heavily armed Blackwater convoy launched an unprovoked attack using sniper fire, machine guns and grenade launchers. Defense lawyers argued their clients returned fire after being ambushed by Iraqi insurgents.

They were convicted in 2014 after a months-long trial in Washington's federal court, and each man defiantly asserted his innocence at a sentencing hearing the following year.

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### Project to support ecotourism, local communities in Gwadar Bay

TEHRAN – A new initiative seeks to expand ecotourism and consequently to empower local communities across Gwadar Bay, which is home to wetlands and pristine natural landscapes.

"A community-based ecotourism project is ready to be implemented across Gwadar Bay to empower local communities in a way they enjoy the economic benefits generated from tourism activities," Ali Arvahi, the director of the Conservation of Iranian Wetlands Project, said on Tuesday.

"The community-oriented nature tourism from

one hand, and making the best use of wetland tourism potentials, from the other, are expected to lead to more clever exploitation [of the wetlands], and to expand participatory conservation [of them]," the official noted.

Gwadar Bay, Persian Khalij-e Gavater, is an inlet of the Arabian Sea indenting the sandy Makran coast at the Iran—Pakistan border. It is about 32 km long and 16 km wide.

Valuable wetlands

Wetlands play a major role in protecting the

land against floods and the impacts of storms. They provide food and diverse habitats which support genetic, species, and ecosystem biodiversity. Wetlands play a key role in the life cycles

of many species and annual migration patterns. Unfortunately, wetlands are being degraded and lost due to pollution, overexploitation, climate change, and human population growth. In recognition of these challenges, the Ramsar Convention, an international treaty, was adopted in 1971.

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#### pushed Arabs to seek partnership with other powers

**GSA: Trump's** 

unpredictability

#### BY MOHAMMAD MAZHARI

TEHRAN - Chief executive officer of Gulf State Analytics (GSA) says that the "unpredictability" of U.S. policies under Trump's presidency pushed Arab countries in the Persian Gulf region to seek partnership with other powers including China and Russia.

"All Arab countries in the Persian Gulf have had to contend with the unpredictability and incoherence of Trump's foreign policy," Giorgio Cafiero tells the Tehran Times.

This "created greater doubt about the wisdom of remaining so dependent on the U.S. for security relations and prompted them to explore deeper partnerships with other powers such as China, France, Turkey, and Russia," the DC-based consultant notes.

Washington's policy in West Asia has historically been based on two main goals: securing oil for the U.S. industry and supporting Israel. Although U.S. authorities claim to follow an even-handed approach in dealing with West Asian issues, their practice is traditionally biased in favor Israel.

At the same time, the United States has adopted punitive measures towards 'uncooperative' states, including Iran, in the region.

including Iran, in the region.
Since the victory of the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979, the country has been under U.S. sanctions. Washington's pressure campaign reached its height during Trump's "maximum pressure" strategy against Iran.

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### Resistance festival honors "Where Are You Ebrahim" with Soleimani Award

TEHRAN – The 17th Resistance Theater Festival in Tehran awarded winners during a ceremony at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on Tuesday as "Where Are You Ebrahim" by Leili Aaj won the Soleimani Award, a special prize of the event.

The award was established by the organizers in memory of Commander Qassem Soleimani, the chief of IRGC Quds Force, who was assassinated during a U.S. airstrike in Baghdad on January 3.

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# Iran terms as 'unacceptable' any proposal to revise, renegotiate or extend JCPOA

1 → He explained that after its withdrawal from the JCPOA on May 8, 2018, the U.S. re-imposed all its nuclear-related sanctions, and since then, by pursing a hostile policy towards the JCPOA and Iran, has conducted persistent widespread public and private harassment of Iran's business partners.

By so doing, Takht-Ravanchi continued, the U.S. has committed multiple cases of "significant non-performance" under the JCPOA and as such is in continuous systematic material breach of its legal obligations under resolution 2231, the UN Charter and international law.

"Likewise, by brazenly threatening other States to either violate resolution 2231 or face punishment, the U.S. has not only failed to honor its own commitments under that resolution, but has also substantively obstructed the implementation of commitments by other Member States."



"The U.S. has also defied the unanimously issued order of the International Court of Justice on 3 October 2018, which includes an obligation to remove impediments to humanitarian trade with Iran," he added.

The Iranian envoy pointed out that instead of taking any remedial measures authorized in the JCPOA, Iran, upon the E3's request, exercised restraint and strategic patience for one year.

He said Iran's maximum restraint was responded to with the so-called "maximum pressure" of the U.S. and its ever-increasing unlawful sanctions as well as the utter failure of the E3/EU to implement their commitments.

"This left us with no choice but to take certain remedial steps in full conformity with the JCPOA's paragraphs 26 and 36, according to which, in case of 'a re-introduction or re-imposition of the sanctions', Iran has the right 'to cease performing its commitments ... in whole or in part'," Takht-Ravanchi remarked.

"Therefore, Iran's steps are in full accordance with our rights and commitments under the JCPOA, and more importantly, are completely reversible," he said. "However, the damages and sufferings inflicted upon Iran are almost absolutely irreversible."

Takht-Ravanchi quoted U.S. officials as saying that the objective of the sanctions is the "starvation" of the Iranian people through weaponizing food and medicine, which is prohibited even in wartime.

Sanctions prevent the import of humanitarian goods, including vital medicines and medical equipment needed for patients particularly those with rare or complicated diseases, he said, adding that at a time when Iran is experiencing one of the worst outbreaks of COVID-19, sanctions are drastically hindering the country's national response to the pandemic.

#### U.S. lies that humanitarian goods are exempt from

"The U.S.'s claim that humanitarian goods are exempt from sanctions is an absolute lie. As an example, even today, we cannot easily import medicine for relieving the breathing problems of those injured by chemical weapons which were provided by some Western countries to Saddam.

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measure, the

are illegal,

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inhumane and

Western countries to Saddam and used by him during his aggression against Iran."

"The U.S. also claims that sanctions are 'not directed at the people of Iran'. This is also a sheer hypocrisy as sanctions target the most vulnerable people the most, harm the poor more than the rich, the ill people more than the healthy ones, and infants and children more than adults," Takht-Ravanchi stated.

He maintained that sanctions do not merely create economic hardships, but in many cases, they claim the innocent lives of people from all walks of life.

By any measure, the U.S. sanctions are illegal, illegitimate, immoral, inhumane and oppressive, and have no designation other than economic terrorism and crime against humanity, the ambassades deslared.

ambassador declared. Pointing to the assassination of Iran's top anti-terror general Qassem Soleimani almost a year

ago, Takht-Ravanchi said the assassination was a living example of the United States' bankrupt policy. This terrorist act, conducted at the direct order of the U.S. president, is a gross violation of international law, he pointed out.

"There are also serious indications that the assassination of Martyr Fakhrizadeh, a prominent Iranian scientist, on 27 November 2020, was conducted by the Israeli regime--the closest regional ally of the United States with a long dark record of such terrorist acts against the Iranian nuclear scientists in the past," he added.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the Iranian ambassador repeated Iran's stance on returning to the JCPOA commitments, saying as soon as all JCPOA participants start implementing their commitments unconditionally, effectively and in full, Iran will also resume implementing all its JCPOA commitments.

"This has always been our principled position throughout the recent years and now it has become a binding legal obligation for the government following the recent adoption of a new law by our Parliament," he said.

Takht-Ravanchi also called on regional countries to engage in good faith and work toward the establishment of a better, safer

and more prosperous region.

"Our Hormuz Peace Endeavor (HOPE) is a recipe for bringing regional countries closer to each other with the aim of resolving their differences and establishing friendlier relations among them. We hope that our honest and sincere call for opening a new page in regional cooperation will be heeded by our neighbors in the

Persian Gulf soon," he said.

"Finally, our observations on Secretary-General's report are contained in my letter already sent to the Council covering our views on issues that I did not address in my remarks today," he concluded.

# Rouhani: Trump's fate will be no better than Saddam Hussein's

POLITICAL d e s k Hassan Rouhani predicts the fate of Donald Trump, who is on his way out from the White House, will be no better than that of former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein.

"We've had two lunatics in [our] history, one was Saddam who imposed a military war on us and the other lunatic is Trump who imposed the economic war on us," Rouhani said at a cabinet session on Wednesday.

He said Iran emerged victorious in the military war and waited for the Iraqi lunatic to be hanged. "Trump's destiny will be no better than Saddam's," he emphasized.

"We saw how the Iranian people broke them with their resistance against those who wanted to break us," the president added.

Trump reimposed sanctions on Iran after he pulled out of the JCPOA, commonly known as the Ian nuclear deal, which was signed under his predecessor Barack Obama.

With Joe Biden's victory, however, hopes have been raised over the survival of the nuclear deal. Biden has promised to return the United States into the JCPOA if Iran returns to full compliance with the deal.

Rouhani said his administration's efforts are aimed at reducing the effects of the economic war on the one hand and end



the cruel sanctions on the other.

"We hope to break the sanctions every day," he said. "If we break the embargo, we will defeat the Zionists as well as the reactionaries and the extremists of the U.S."

During last Wednesday's cabinet session, Rouhani said his administration is "not excited" about Biden's victory, but it's

happy about Trump's defeat.

"Some say you are excited about Biden's coming [into power]. No, we're no excited, but we're very happy about Trump's leaving," he said, describing Trump as a person who even blocked the provision of vaccines to patients because he did not adhere to any moral and humane principles.

The remarks came two days after the U.S. Electoral College voted to confirm the final electoral result of 306 to 232 in favor of Biden.

Speaking from Wilmington, Delaware, Biden declared that "the rule of law, our constitution and the will of the people prevailed. Our democracy – pushed, tested, threatened – proved to be resilient, true and strong."

Rouhani said, "The next U.S. administration can decide for itself. The path is open. If it wants to choose the right path, it's ready. If it wants to choose the wrong path, it's also ready."

Earlier this month, Biden reiterated in a New York Times interview that the U.S. would rejoin the JCPOA (the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action), if Iran returns to strict compliance.

Under the JCPOA, which Iran signed with six world powers in 2015, Iran agreed to scale down its nuclear program in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions.

Biden said a return to the agreement, which would include lifting the sanctions imposed by the Trump administration, would serve as a "starting point to follow-on negotiations".

### Putin, Macron underline need to salvage JCPOA

POLITICAL de s k Vladimir Putin and his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron have stressed the need to preserve the Iran nuclear deal, less than a month after the inauguration of U.S. President-elect Joe Biden, who has promised to join the deal.

The two leaders made the remarks during a phone conversation on Tuesday.

"Regarding the situation around Iran's nuclear program, both sides stated the demand for collective efforts directed at preservation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)," the Kremlin press service said on Tuesday, TASS reported.

The future of the JCPOA came into question after the U.S. unilaterally withdrew from the nuclear deal on May 8, 2018 and introduced oil export sanctions on Iran.

Putin and Macron also discussed the situation around Nagorno-Karabakh in detail and confirmed

their mutual readiness to continue the coordination on various aspects of the peaceful settlement.

"The Russian President underscored that the situation in the region stabilizes itself, and the November 9 agreements, achieved by the presidents of Russia, Azerbaijan and the Prime Minister of Armenia - are generally being complied with. The sides noted a successful work of the Russian peacekeepers, who ensure the ceasefire and the safety of civilians under the request of Baku and Yerevan. The sides confirmed mutual readiness for further coordination on various aspects of the settlement in Nagorno-Karabakh, within the OSCE Minsk Group in particular," the press service said.

Humanitarian problems, connected to repatriation of refugees, restoration of infrastructure, preservation of religious and cultural memorials were named as the most pressing issues.

"The current situation in Syria and Libya was discussed. Regarding Libya, the importance of observance



of a ceasefire regime and promotion of the effective political process with the participation of representatives of all key Libyan forces was noted," the statement added.

# Russia expects U.S. to fully rejoin Iran deal, says envoy

POLITICAL
d e s k it expects the United
States to fully rejoin the 2015 Iran nuclear agreement, formally referred to as
the JCPOA, without preconditions.

"No one has asked the United States to act as a world policeman, and the attempts to do that look anachronistic today, as does the reckless and arrogant policy of resorting to unilateral pressure," Russian Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations Dmitry Polyansky said, addressing the UN General Assembly on Tuesday.

"The most logical thing for the U.S. to do would be to fully rejoin the previous



agreements within the JCPOA, without preconditions, of course," he said.

The U.S., under President Donald Trump, withdrew from the multilateral

agreement on May 8, 2018 and imposed harsh economic sanctions on Iran. It also pressured other countries to follow suit, threatening them with secondary sanctions if they cooperate with Iran.

Iran remained fully compliant with its obligations for a year after the U.S. withdrawal, but as other parties failed to meet their end of the bargain, it decided to gradually reduce its nuclear commitments according to the JCPOA. However, Tehran has voiced readiness to return to complying with the deal as soon as others do.

"We expect that the new U.S. administration will realize that and take the

right steps in the near future. The entire world will benefit from it," Polyansky pointed out. "Over the past six months, we have

seen how fragile the balance of interests that the nuclear deal is based on is," Polyansky said. Meanwhile, U.S. President-elect Joe

Meanwhile, U.S. President-elect Joe Biden has voiced support for the JCPOA, saying his administration will rejoin the deal. Biden served as vice president in the Barack Obama administration, under which the nuclear deal was reached.

Biden has said he hopes to return the U.S. to the deal, but he has also hinted he would like to expand it.

### Chinese envoy asks for efforts to bring nuclear deal back on track

(Xinhua) — A Chinese envoy on Tuesday called for efforts to bring the Iran nuclear deal back on the right track and asked the United States to rejoin the agreement as early as possible.

The Iran nuclear deal is an important achievement of multilateral diplomacy endorsed by Security Council Resolution 2231, is legally binding, and should be effectively implemented, said Geng Shuang, China's deputy permanent representative to the United Nations.

To preserve the July 2015 agreement is to uphold multilateralism, maintain peace and stability in the Middle East (West Asia), safeguard the international nuclear non-proliferation regime, and the international order underpinned by international law, he told the Security Council.

The U.S. unilateral withdrawal from the deal in May 2018, its continued maximum pressure on Iran, and its undermining the efforts of parties to uphold the agreement are the root causes of the current predicament of the Iranian nuclear issue, he said.

This year, the United States openly pushed in the Security Council for the extension of the arms embargo against Iran, demanded to invoke a snapback mechanism and unilaterally announced the reinstatement of international sanctions against Iran, he said, adding in disregard of the views of the international community, the United States staged several farces.

Faced with the unreasonable demand of the United States, the overwhelming majority of Security Council members adhered to an objective and fair stand, refused to endorse the U.S. position as Washington's actions were illegal and politically motivated, he said.

"The rotating presidents of the Security Council also concluded that they were in no position to take any action on the U.S. request for a snapback. This represents a resounding rejection of bullying by fairness and justice, unilateralism by multilateralism. It reflects vividly the support of the international community for justice and



multilateralism," he stated.

The envoy added, "At present, the situation on the Iranian nuclear issue is pregnant with important changes and faced with new opportunities and challenges. All parties should maintain calmness and restraint, resolutely implement the agreement, resolve differences through dialogue and consultation, and restore the balance of rights and obligations under the agreement."

"On Monday, foreign ministers' video teleconference on the Iranian nuclear issue was successfully convened. The parties reaffirmed their commitment to safeguarding the agreement and Security Council Resolution 2231, ensuring their complete and effective implementation, recognizing the prospect of the United States rejoining the deal and agreeing to make joint efforts to positively address the U.S. return as soon as possible," he said.

The Chinese diplomat went on to say that "the foreign ministers' meeting has sent a positive and strong message to the world. All parties should seize the opportunity to speed up engagement and consultations, strengthen diplomatic efforts, and move the deal back to the right track as soon as possible. The most urgent

task at the moment is for the United States to mend its ways, rejoin the agreement unconditionally at an early date and return to full compliance".

"China understands that certain countries have concerns about issues such as regional security. Yet linking them directly to the agreement and demanding the reopening of negotiations on it will create new obstacles and add new complications to the issue," said Geng.

"Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi, on the Oct. 20 Security Council debate on the Persian Gulf region, proposed the launch of a multilateral dialogue platform for the region. China is willing to link its initiative with similar ones from Russia and others, learn from each other and form synergies."

"Security Council members and regional countries can use this as a basis, earnestly engage in dialogue and discussion, gradually accumulate momentum so as to strive for a consensus that addresses the legitimate concerns of all parties -- in response to the expectations of the international community," he pointed out.

"China hopes that the secretary-general and the UN Secretariat will continue to promote and facilitate the diplomatic efforts from all parties and continue to play an important role in helping resolve the Iranian puellog issue."

He added, "China has always been committed to maintaining the authority of the Security Council resolutions and the effectiveness of the Iran nuclear deal. China will continue to stand on the right side of history, firmly uphold multilateralism, and work with all parties concerned to make unremitting efforts to promote the political and diplomatic settlement of the Iranian nuclear issue and safeguard peace and stability in the Persian Gulf region."

The July 2015 deal was between Iran and the six world powers of Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and the United States. Washington withdrew from the agreement in May 2018, hampering its implementation.

# UN calls for efforts to preserve JCPOA

POLITICAL TEHRAN — A senior de s k United Nations official has called on signatories to a 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers to make efforts to preserve the agreement.

"The Iranian nuclear issue is an important non-proliferation subject, with consequences for regional and global peace and security. In achieving the JCPOA, the concerned countries had shown that their dialogue and diplomacy, supported by a united Security Council, could forge a path to resolving this issue. We hope that these countries and the council can do so again," said UN Undersecretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo.

The JCPOA - the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action - is the official name for the Iran nuclear deal.

DiCarlo made the remarks on Tuesday during a Security Council briefing on non-proliferation during which the implementation of UN Resolution 2231 (2015) was discussed in detail.

She said the full implementation of the JCPOA and Resolution 2231 can contribute to regional stability. She expressed regret over the escalation of tensions over the past years, saying the escalation of tensions "deepen the differences related to the Plan, and render efforts to address other regional conflicts more difficult."



"We call on all concerned to avoid any actions that may result in further escalation of tensions," DiCarlo said, noting that "The Secretary-General has consistently underscored the importance of the JCPOA and has encouraged all States to support it"

The undersecretary-general pointed out that the U.S. reimposition of its national sanctions on Iran was inconsistent with the goals outlined in the JCPOA.

"The reimposition by the United States

of all its national sanctions that had been lifted or waived pursuant to the Plan are contrary to the goals set out in the Plan and in resolution 2231 (2015). Further, steps taken by the United States not to extend waivers for the trade in oil with Iran and certain non-proliferation projects may have impeded the ability of Iran and other Member States to implement certain provisions," DiCarlo noted.

She also pointed to the differences between Iran and the Europeans over Tehran's decision to reduce its commitments under the JCPOA, underlining that all parties to the deal should work to resolve differences within the dispute resolution mechanism stipulated in the JCPOA.

"The Secretary-General calls on all participants to work constructively to address their differences within the dispute resolution mechanism outlined in the Plan. He also underscores the importance of all initiatives in support of trade and economic relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran, especially during the current economic and health challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic," DiCarlo stated.

The Security Council briefing came a day after 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 to discuss the latest developments surrounding 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.

### Qatar calls for dialogue between Iran and Persian Gulf Arab states

The Octavi foreign minister, who is an anofficial wigit to

The Qatari foreign minister, who is on an official visit to Russia, said he discussed with the Russian officials a variety of regional issues including the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

"We discussed various regional issues, developments in the [Persian] Gulf crisis and the Iranian nuclear agreement," Al Thani said, according to Aljazeera, adding that Qatar views the security of the Persian Gulf as a priority and that "escalation is not in the interest of anyone."

The chief Qatari diplomat called for regional dialogue to defuse tensions and ensure stability.



"We call for dialogue between the [Persian] Gulf countries and Iran, and we welcome any initiatives that make the region more stable," Al Thani pointed out.

The Qatari foreign minister made the remarks on Wednesday after a meeting with his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov. The Russian foreign minister said he discussed regional issues with his Qatari counterpart.

"We discussed the situation in the [Persian] Gulf and stressed the importance of forming the concept of collective security for the benefit of the parties in the region," Aljazeera quoted Lavrov as saying.

Al Thani met with several Russian officials, including Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian government Yury Borisov, during his visit to Moscow.

### Iran will not renegotiate JCPOA: spokesman

POLITICAL
d e s k
TEHRAN – Iran will not renegotiate a deal that had already been negotiated painstakingly, says Alireza Miryousefi, spokesman for Iran's

mission to the United Nations.
In a statement to Politico, the Iranian diplomat said that Iran "will not renegotiate an accord already agreed to after careful and detailed back-and-forth."

The statement came amid renewed European efforts to bring Iran and the United States back to the negotiating table to revive a deal that U.S. President Donald Trump quit more than two years ago. However, the European signatories to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) – France, Germany and the UK (E3) – saw an opportunity to revive the nuclear deal after Joe Biden won the U.S. election in November. During his election campaign, Biden had said that he would rejoin the deal if Iran returns to strict compliance with it.

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

also addressing other issues of concern."

After the election, Biden said he still stands by the views expressed in the op-ed, but he said that it would be "very difficult" and "hard" for him to rejoin the deal because other issues such as Iran's missile program also need to be raised in the future talks with Iran. The Europeans also echoed the same view, saying that the U.S. return to the JCPOA will no longer be enough.

"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," German Foreign Minister Heiko Mass said in a recent interview with the German magazine, Der Spiegel.

But Iran has made it clear that it will not renegotiate the nuclear deal. Iranian President Hassan Rouhani has recently said that the JCPOA is not renegotiable. The president also ruled out negotiations on Iran's defensive missile program and its influence in the region, saying that the Americans had tried to add the missile issue to the JCPOA but Iran rejected the issue.

"The Americans were trying for months to add the missile issue (to the nuclear talks) and this was rejected. Trump was uninformed and did not know about the matter, but Mr. Biden is well aware of the details of the deal," the Iranian president noted, adding, "I have not heard Biden say that we have to reach another agreement in order to return to the nuclear deal, that is what Trump says."

But Iran expressed readiness to negotiate regional issues with neighbors and countries in the region, according to Miryousefi.

Ruling out renegotiations over the JCPOA, the spokesman said, "To contrast, Iran has also always publicly said that we are ready to negotiate regional issues, but only with neighbors and countries in the region."

"Iran does not believe that there is any need for foreign powers' presence at that dialogue, foreign powers who are literally thousands of miles away from the region. The sale of deadly weapons to countries in the region by these trans-regional powers has always been one of the most important causes of insecurity and problems in the region," he continued.

There have been growing calls in some countries in the region for participating in the expected talks between Iran and major world powers. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab

Emirates, Bahrain and Israel all have called on the incoming administration of the U.S. to include them in the talks.

On Monday, as 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 to discuss the latest developments surrounding the Iran nuclear deal, the ambassador of the UAE, Bahrain and Israel took part in a "private, off-the-record" discussion with members of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). The envoys have used the moment to discuss their views on what to do about Iran and the nuclear deal, according to Politico.

The ambassadors' meeting was held even though Iran has announced that it will not negotiate with major world powers over regional issues.

In a tweet on December 8, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said, "Dear neighbors, why ask US/E3 for inclusion in talks with Iran when: a) There won't be ANY talks about OUR region with them as they're the problem themselves. b) We can speak directly about our region without outside meddling. Hormuz Peace Endeavor (HOPE) is still on the table."

# Russia and China may need to clarify their security initiatives

POLITICAL description of the description of the description of the past months, Russia and China presented initiatives to maintain stability and deescalate tensions in the Persian Gulf but they have not provided details about their initiatives, a move that deprived observers and politicians in the region from thoroughly examining the Russian and Chinese initiatives.

This week, the foreign ministers of Russia and China once again presented their own initiatives to reduce tensions in the Persian Gulf region. Although their initiatives had already been presented in the past months, they remain obscure. Pundits find it difficult to study them due to a lack of details about the initiatives.

During a meeting with his Qatari counterpart on Wednesday, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov underlined the need to form the Russian "concept of collective security," an initiative that was first presented to the United Nations on July 23, 2019.

"We discussed the situation in the [Persian] Gulf and stressed the importance of forming the concept of collective security for the benefit of the parties in the region," Aljazeera quoted Lavrov as saying on Wednesday.

Qatari Foreign Minister Mohammad bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani welcomed the initiative and called for dialogue in the region.

"We call for dialogue between the [Persian] Gulf countries and Iran, and we welcome any initiatives that make the region more stable," Al-Thani remarked.

Russia presented its initiative to the UN last year as tensions soared in the region following the unilateral withdrawal of U.S. President Donald Trump from the Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). At that time, the Russian initiative was distributed

as an official document approved by the United Nations. Russia's state news agency TASS published some of the initiative's contents shortly after it was distributed in the UN. According to TASS, Russia's concept of collective security

according to TASS, Russia's concept of collective security calls for creating a security system that would enhance consultations between countries in the region and outside of it.

"Practical work on launching the process of creating a security system in the Persian Gulf may be started by holding bilateral and multilateral consultations between interested parties, including countries both within the region and outside of it, UN Security Council, LAS [League of Arab States], OIC [Organization of Islamic Cooperation], GCC [Persian Gulf Cooperation Council]," the document said.

In a letter to the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly, Russia said that it is "ready for cooperation with all interested parties to implement this and other constructive proposals."

But since July, the Russian initiative was all but put on the shelf. No serious diplomatic efforts have been made to implement it nor were its details made public.

China, which has recently presented its own initiative, welcomed the Russian one, underlining the need to maintain peace and stability in the region.

"We welcome the Puscion initiative" roid Chinase Foreign

"We welcome the Russian initiative," said Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying in late July, adding, "Peace and stability in the Persian Gulf region are of utmost importance to ensure safety and development of the region and the world as a whole."

China itself has presented a similar, but vaguer, initiative to help defuse tensions in the region. During a ministerial meeting of the JCPOA parties on Monday, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi made a 4-point proposal to revive the nuclear deal. The fourth point is to establish a multilateral

dialogue platform in the Persian Gulf region that aims to build consensus among regional countries on security issues.

In a Twitter thread on Tuesday, Chunying said the Chinese foreign minister 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 dialogue 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 initiative was first presented during a visit by Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif to China in October. The Chinese foreign ministry said at the time that China proposed to "build a regional multilateral dialogue platform with equal participation of all stakeholders." The platform, China said, would enhance mutual understanding through dialogue and explore political and diplomatic solutions to security issues in the region.

There are no details available on the Chinese initiative. But it seems that it is similar to the Russian one because both seek to reduce tensions through promoting dialogue among the Persian Gulf region's countries. However, it's still not clear yet how they would promote dialogue in a region where tensions run high. Therefore, Russia and China may need to elaborate on their initiatives so that pundits can study them in a more accurate way.

### SPORTS

# Captain Ghanbari sad about Iran's position in FIFA ranking

"During this period, I and other players of the women's national team objected to the condition of our team with the interviews we had and the posts and stories that we published. We have a good and active women's football league in our country but when it comes to the national team, there is very little activity and planning for the team," the captain concluded.

#### Persepolis did a great job: Ali Daei

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Legendary forward Ali Daei says d e s k that Persepolis football team did a great job by reaching the final match of the 2020 AFC Champions League.

Persepolis qualified for the ACL final match twice in three years, however the Reds failed to end their title drought in the prestigious event.



Persepolis lost to Japan's Kashima Antlers 2-0 on aggregate in 2018 and were beaten by South Korean Ulsan Hyundai 2-1 in 2020.

"Persepolis did a great job and no other Iranian team could do that," Daei said in an interview with Persepolis' website.

"To play in the final match within three years is not an easy job and no other team, even in Asia, could accomplish that. In my opinion, they have done a great job in the competition. Persepolis advanced to the final match with an Iranian coaching staff," he added.

"Iran football owes this success to Persepolis because they defended our football's credibility in Asia. They managed to be in the final with all the problems they had and nothing should ignore their success," ex-Iran striker went on to say.

"Many other teams with better conditions cannot reach the

"Many other teams with better conditions cannot reach the final and it proves that what they have done. If they want to keep going, the coaches and players should not concentrate on useless things.

"They must focus on their goals to make them happen. I am sure they can win their fifth successive title in Iran league and repeat their success in Asia," the world's all-time leading goalscorer in the history of men's international football concluded.

# Shahr Khodro held by Aluminum: IPL

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Shahr Khodro football team were held to a 2-2 draw by Aluminum in Iran Professional League (IPL) on Wednesday.

Shahr Khodro fought back from a goal down to earn a 2-2 draw with visiting team Aluminum in Mashhad's Emam Reza Stadium. Saeid Bagherpasand was on target for Aluminum in the 11th minute with a header but Akbar Sadeghi canceled out his goal eight minutes later.

Aluminum striker Mehdi Hosseini made it 2-1 in the 26th minute.

Shahr Khodro went down to 10-man before the break after Sadegh Sadeghi was shown his second yellow card but Hossein Mehraban leveled the score in the 57th minute.

Earlier on the day, Tehran based football teams Paykan and Saipa shared the spoils in a 1-1 draw.

Amir Roostaei scored for Paykan in the 22nd minute and Reza Jafari equalized the match in the 73rd minute. Paykan midfielder Majid Eidi was sent off in the 62nd minute

after receiving his second yellow card. 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.

#### Abdi wins 2020 AFC Champions League Goal of Week

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Persepolis striker Mehdi Abdi's goal was chosen as the AFC Champions League 2020 Goal of the Week.

He scored Persepolis' only goal against Ulsan Hyundai in the final match of the  $2020\,\mathrm{ACL}.$ 

The Iranian striker drove forward and fired home from just inside the box in the 45th minute.

Brazilian Negrao also scored twice from the penalty spot and helped his team win ACL title for the second time. Abdi registered an impressive 96 percent.

#### Iran's Ali Asgari signs for Slovakian water polo team Olympia

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Olympia water polo team have d e S k completed the signing of Iranian international player Ali Asgari.

Belgian team Antwerp had shown interest in signing the Amolborn player but he decided to join Olympia.

Asgari was a member of Spanish team C.N. Molins, Serbian Valis and Portuguese team Vitoria.S.C over the past years.

"I am very happy to be here because this is a new challenge for me. I am so glad to join Olympia," Asgari shared on his Instagram account.

#### **TEDPIX up 2,800 points on** Wednesday

TEHRAN—TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), rose 2,874 points to 1.447 million on Wednesday.

 $Over\,11.451\,billion\,securities\,worth\,131.967\,trillion\,rials\,(about$ \$3.142 billion) were traded at the TSE on Wednesday.

The first market's index gained 2,653 points, and the second market's index increased 3,862 points.

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

#### **Steel products export falls 30%**

**ECONOMY TEHRAN**—Iran has exported 1.679 million e s k tons of steel products during the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-November 20), which was 30 percent lower than the figure for the same period of time in the past year, which was  $2.405\,\mathrm{million}$  tons.

It is while the production of these products rose 9.4 percent to 17.195 million tons during the eight-month period of this year, from 15.714 million tons in the same time span of the past year.



The data provided by Trade Map website has shown that Iran was ranked 19th among the world's top steel ingot exporters while taking 53rd place for the exports of steel products in 2019.

According to the mentioned website, in 2019, Iran ranked 159th among the world's top 196 countries in terms of importing crude steel (ingots).

The country ranked 53rd among 195 countries in the exports of steel products and it was ranked 85th out of 226 countries in global imports of steel products.

Based on the mentioned data, Iranian imports of crude steel and steel products in 2019 stood at \$42 million and \$302 mil-

The country exported \$312 million and \$252 million worth of crude steel and steel products in the mentioned year, respectively.

Last year, the total production of crude steel (ingots) in Iran stood at 26.8 million tons and the total volume of steel products output reached 20.6 million tons, according to the mentioned

#### **Commodities worth \$233m** exported to Armenia in 8 months

**ECONOMY TEHRAN**— Iran has exported products worth \$233 million to Armenia during the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-November 20), an official with Iran's Trade Promotion Organization

Behrouz Hasan Olfat, the director-general of TPO's office of trade with Europe and America, said that the eight-month export shows a 27-percent fall year on year, adding, "But we hope to make up for this in the last quarter of the year.

The official put Iran's worth of the import from Armenia at \$11 million during the first eight months of the present year.



He also referred to the trade data released by Armenia and said Iran-Armenia trade during January-October 2020 stood at nearly \$330 million, of which \$254 million has been the share of

Iran's export and \$74 million was the share of Armenia's export. The ten-month trade between the two neighbors shows a 0.6-percent rise year on year, he added.

Iran's preferential trade agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) has had a significant impact on the country's trade relations with Armenia, according to the head of Iran-Armenia Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

"The two sides are applying tariff discounts offered based on the agreement and there has been no problem in this regard", Hervik Yarijanian said in January.

According to the official, the volume of trade between the two countries has witnessed an outstanding rise since the agreement became effective last October.

Iran mainly imports red meat from Armenia, while Armenia imports polymer raw materials, machinery, industrial gases, manufactured artifacts, leather, and leather goods from Iran, he said.

He further noted that Iran has a much greater export capability compared to Armenia, adding that traders have not yet gotten used to the idea of the preferential trade agreement and hopefully with the expansion of this deal, more Iranian traders

will be attracted to the Armenian market. Iran and Armenia have been emphasizing the need for preserving and expanding trade relations between the two countries since the preferential trade deal between Iran and EAEU was

implemented. While the U.S. renewed sanctions on Iran are aimed at isolating the Islamic Republic both politically and economically, Iran's relations, especially in the economic sectors, with its neighbors

are seemed not to be affected by the sanctions. The northwestern neighbor Armenia is one of the countries preserving and expanding its economic relations with Iran re-

gardless of the sanction condition.

# Iran's non-oil trade stands at \$52b in 9 months

Iran's top five non-oil export destinations during this period were China with \$6.4 billion worth of exports, Iraq with \$5.9 billion, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) with over \$3.3 billion, Turkey with \$1.8 billion, and Afghanistan with

Meanwhile, the country's top five sources of imports during this period were China with \$7 billion, the UAE with \$6.3 billion, Turkey with \$3 billion, India with \$1.6 billion, and Germany with \$1.6 billion worth of imports.

Some 5.2 million tons of commodities were also transited to other countries through Iran, 10.9 percent less than the figure for the same period in the previous year, Mir-Ashrafi said.

world, Iran's trade with its foreign part-



Like all other countries around the ners has been affected by the coronavirus back to normal and the country's trade is

pandemic, however, the situation is getting reaching its pre-pandemic levels.

# Iran, Azerbaijan discuss oil market developments

**ECONOMY TEHRAN** – Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh met Azerbaijan's Energy Minister Parviz Shahbazov in Tehran on Tuesday night to discuss the recent developments in the region and the global oil market, Shana reported.

Speaking in the meeting, Zanganeh underlined Azerbaijan's positive role as one of the members of the alliance between Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and non-OPEC members and stated: "Iran has close relations with Azerbaijan and the oil cooperation between the two countries is under the framework of the OPEC+.

Shahbazov for his part mentioned the close political and economic relations between the two countries and expressed gratitude for Iran's significant role in OPEC+ constructive decisions, saying: "As part of this coalition, we were able to resolve the crisis of the oil market in April."

"The OPEC Plus mechanism is a good tool for amend-



Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh (R) and Azerbaijan's Energy Minister Parviz Shahbazov hold talks in Tehran on Tuesday.

be more effective, this coalition must be developed. It is true that we are taking action, but the crisis remains, Shahbazov stressed.

Referring to the country's need for natural gas as fuel for its power plants, the Azeri energy minister said: "I hope we can use Iranian gas, and I also appreciate the Iranian exports of gas to Nakhchivan."

Azerbaijan-Iran relations have deep historical roots and despite their ups and downs, the two countries' relations have entered a new, dynamic, and promising stage of development in recent years.

During the period from 2003 to 2018, Azerbaijan-Iran relations in the course of their development went through several stages, in each of which bilateral relations have experienced ups and downs. However, since 2013, a new page has been opened in interstate relations.

### Thermal power projects worth over \$3.5b to come on stream by Mar. 2021

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Head of Iran's Thermal Power Plant Holding (TPPH) said seven major thermal power industry projects worth 150 trillion rials (about \$3.57 billion) will come on stream across the country by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March

According to Mohsen Tarztalab, under the framework of the Energy Ministry's A-B-Iran program, a total of 21 major thermal industry projects valued at 400 trillion rials (about \$9.5 billion) were planned to go operational in the current year of which 14 have been inaugurated.

Tarztalab noted that the mentioned 14 projects with a total investment of over 250 trillion rials (about \$5.95 billion) were put into operation before the current year's summer peak period to add 1,300 megawatts (MW) to the country's power generation capacity.

The official put the total volume of investment made in the country's thermal power industry under the framework of the A-B-Iran program at €2.5 billion.

A-B-Iran program (the acronyms A and B stand for water and electricity in Persian) was initiated in the previous Iranian calendar

vear (ended on March 19). 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

According to the official, the country's thermal power plants have generated over 233,000 gigawatt-hour of electricity since the beginning of the current Iranian year (March 20) up to December 5.

Over 38,000 MW capacity of thermal power plants have gone through general overhaul programs since the end of the summer peak period in early September so far, he added. Currently, a total of 478 thermal power plants are operating throughout Iran which

includes both gas power plants and combined Iran's total power generation capacity

stands at about 85,000 MW, more than 90 percent of which is supplied by thermal power plants.

Over two-thirds of Iran's thermal power plants are owned and operated by the country's private sector and private owners are currently generating nearly 67 percent of

# IIEC plans to hold 120 exhibitions next year

**ECONOMY TEHRAN** — Managing director of Iran e s k International Exhibitions Company (IIEC) said his company is planning to hold 120 major national and international exhibitions during the next Iranian calendar year (begins on March 21, 2021).

Speaking in a ceremony for signing a cooperation memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Iran Chamber of Cooperatives (ICC) on Tuesday, Hassan Zamani said: "We have prepared comprehensive plans for holding about  $100\,$ national exhibitions as well as 20 international ones."

Underlining the capacities of the country's exhibition industry, Zamani noted that his company plans to promote and stabilize the position of the mentioned industry in the country's economy.

In order to support Iran's industry and economy, IIEC has provided proper intrastructures for the private sector to benefit in order to develop the country's market and



promote technology exchange, the official said.

Further in the signing ceremony, the ICC Head Bahman Abdollahi, who also attended the event, said marketing is one of the major factors in promoting the country's economic activities and the IIEC is at the forefront of

"Marketing is the last link in any production and economic activity's chain and all companies in the world contribute to the development of their business by having a significant presence in international exhibitions and by presenting and showcasing their products and services, Abdollahi stressed.

Since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic in the world and across Iran, almost all of the country's national and international events and exhibitions have been postooned or canceled and this industry has been wrestling with serious challenges under the shadow of the pandemic.

# Tehran, Karachi hold joint webinar on trade expansion

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (TCCI-MA), and Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) held an Iran-Pakistan business forum via webinar on Tuesday.

During the online event, the two sides conferred on the expansion of economic ties and expressed readiness for the implementation of a free trade agreement between the two countries, TCCIMA portal

In this regard, Pakistan's Ambassador to Tehran Rahim Hayat Qureshi stressed his country's efforts to finalize the free trade agreement, and the TCCIMA Head Masoud Khansari called the agreement an important step towards the \$3-billion goal in trade relations between the two



TCCIMA Head Masoud Khansari (center) attends an online Iran-Pakistan business forum on Tuesday.

The webinar was also an opportunity for the two countries' business owners active in various areas including energy, tourism, transportation, food, agriculture, pharmaceutical, health, clothing, textile,

and leather to share ideas and explore collaborative capacities.

Speaking in the event, Khansari pointed to the barter trade as a good solution for the current problems in the way of expanding

the trade relations between the two sides and noted that the two sides are working on the matter. He announced the formation of a joint working group between the private sectors

of the two countries to identify obstacles and challenges in the way of trade between the two countries and to eliminate them. "By establishing dialogue and sharing

solutions by the private sectors of the two countries, achieving the \$3 billion trade will be possible," Khansari stressed.

Strengthening the transport infrastructure between the two countries, using the two countries' national currencies for trade,

forming joint ventures for establishing industrial parks in border areas, and finally establishing joint banks were among the solutions offered by the head of TCCIMA for boosting trade between the two sides.

Referring to the opening of the new border between Iran and Pakistan last week, the Pakistani ambassador for his part noted that the governments of the two countries are working to establish more common borders and border markets in the future.

Pakistan has a relatively large consumer market with a population of over 200 million. According to the World Trade Organization, imports constitute over 66 percent of Pakistan's trade.

Expansion of trade with Pakistan, and boosting exports to this neighboring country is one of Iran's priorities.

### Over 278m Sq. m of tiles, ceramics produced in 8-month period

**ECONOMY TEHRAN** — Iran has produced 278.22 million square meters (Sq. m) of tiles and ceramics during the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-November 20), which was 4.5 percent lower than the output in the same period of time in the past year.

Tiles and ceramics output stood at 291.33 million square meters in the first eight months of the past year. Iran exported 161 million square meters of tiles

and ceramics in the previous Iranian calendar year

(ended on March 19).

The annual output is anticipated to be at least 150 million square meters in the present year.

Based on the data released by the Iranian Ceramic Producers Syndicate, over half of the produced tiles and ceramics were used inside the country last year, and the same thing is predicted to occur this year.

Iran's tiles and ceramics output is planned to be 700 million square meters in the Iranian calendar year 1404 (starts in March 2025).

Based on the investigations made by the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade, tile and ceramics industry is one of the strategic industries of Iran.



# Money in politics has eroded morality, decency and humanity in U.S.: professor

"Today, selfishness and hypocrisy reign supreme"

**TEHRAN** — A professor of international business at the George Washington University says "money in politics has eroded morality, decency and humanity" in the United States.

In an exclusive interview with the Tehran Times, Hossein Askari says, "Lying and cheating are tolerated as long as they emanate from one's own party, it is tribalism to the max."

The professor agrees with the view that slavery in the U.S. has been transformed into something more palatable to those in power. Noting that this is "servitude," Askari says the U.S. is now "adrift".

Following is the text of the interview: In just a few words, how would you characterize the prevailing situation of the United States?

A: Moral decay, poverty amidst grotesque wealth, unjust, divided and politically dysfunctional, with dwindling allies around the world.

Where are America's fault lines? What are its problems?

A: I came to the United States as a student in 1963. I had no intention of staying after my graduation, but I liked what I saw and stayed. I found it a caring country. A country where I could say what I wanted. A country where most people had a reasonable chance

#### "Capitalism, whatever it preaches, has become akin to a religion in the **United States.**"

of succeeding. I say most because racism was, and still is, alive although minorities have made gains. A tolerable inequality of wealth and income at the time. Politicians with respect for political differences and norms of behavior willing to compromise in support of the national interest. After WWII, along with building an empire under the radar around the world, the United States was still generally giving something back to the rest of the world and standing up for human, if not for political, rights.

But what I admired then has been slowly eroded. I cannot begin to reconcile the United States of today with what I saw in 1963. Today, selfishness and hypocrisy reign supreme. For how can moral men or women be complacent when a few have untold wealth while millions stand for hours outside food banks for their next meal? And others have to decide between buying food or medicine for their family? In those days, the tax structure was highly progressive, with the highest marginal tax rate at 91% compared to today's 37% coupled with blatant tax dodges such as what is called carried interest for billionaires. Today, a few have a number of opulent residencies while millions are homeless and sleep in the street. In earlier times, the United States could boast that its citizens had more upward mobility than any other country on earth but today that is far from the case with a number of European countries having a higher degree of upward mobility. Hope for a better future



whereas today it is whatever they can get away with. Lying and cheating are tolerated as long as they emanate from one's own party, it is tribalism to the max, with the general public losing at every turn. There is corruption and even legal corruption where Congress recently passed a tax package that gave a whopping 1.2 trillion dollars to the top 1% richest Americans

I could go on and on because the fault lines are many. Money in politics has eroded morality, decency and humanity. And this is supported by an unchecked media that promulgate lies of their political masters. There is no moral compass. America is adrift. Would changes in the U.S. tax

code turn this around? A: No. That is necessary but not sufficient. You are correct in assuming that the U.S. tax code, when it comes to both income and inheritance, needs serious adjustment and possibly an added wealth tax. Tax loopholes must be closed. Income tax must be made much more progressive. The higher marginal tax rates of the past did not, I repeat did not, deter incentives and hard work. In fact there were economic growth rates that were higher than what we see today. Inheritance taxes were needed to inhibit the amassing of unbelievable wealth and the power that goes with it being passed down through generations. Unchecked passing of large fortunes is akin to cancer at the foundation of a democratic system and the rule of law. The country needs a serious examination of its income and inheritance tax structure now before more harm is done to future generations.

But even all this is insufficient for a rebirth of the America that I knew

Is this all a direct result of the capitalist economic system?

A: Let me say that capitalism, whatever it preaches, has become akin to a religion in

the United States. Let's step back in time. The father of the modern economic system and what some call capitalism is Adam Smith. Smith was a man of faith. He believed that a free market system would lead to the most prosperous economy. Today, most economists would agree with this prescription. It is also the system recommended in Islam. But Smith demanded much more than just an unfettered market system. And Islam

demands even more than Smith

While Smith recommended a free market system, he realized that that the market needed supervision and enforcement to avoid monopolies, market failures and other impediments to its performance. Smith also believed that for sustained prosperity it was essential that everyone be given a reasonable opportunity to develop their talents. Well that's what is absent in America. Americans do not have similar opportunities for access to education, healthcare and nutrition. The system is rigged in favor of rich white citizens. The wealthy get better opportunities while black Americans and other minorities suffer. But this dual system, favoring one group over the other, is also reflected when it comes to treatment by the police and the judicial courts. It is rapidly becoming a powder keg.

■ This all sounds like slavery has been transformed into something more palatable to those in power, what do

A: Yes you could put it that way, for how else can you classify a society where humans must have a good job before they can get access to healthcare? Isn't this a human right? To say nothing of having access to food, shelter and education. Yes, in my opinion, the America of today forces individuals to take whatever job they can get in order to secure healthcare for themselves and their family. This is servitude pure and simple.

"America has been at war during most of its history. It cannot continue in this way. America should reduce the use of military force and economic sanctions to solicit cooperation from other countries and focus more on social

#### How long would it take to put the United States back on a more enlightened path and what would it take?

A: The answer to this question would take many books. So let me be very brief and say what I think is the most crucial element in the U.S. and in other countries. The country will get on the right path. That is when Americans change. When individuals attach importance to having a country where there is trust and cooperation. When individuals don't only consider their own selfish welfare but also the welfare of others. Let this sink in. Such a change in people will take decades.

Has the Trump era made positive change all the more difficult?

A: The short answer is yes. The country was already feeling the pain from some of these forces. Trump found a troubled country, exposed the country's problems for all to see and went on to make matters worse by throwing fuel on the fire. In the process, Trump divided the country. Americans are now pitted against Americans. Americans will have a very difficult time coming together and trusting each other to solve the growing problems the country faces.

Does Biden's more diversified  $cabinet\ address\ many\ of\ the\ problems$ we have discussed?

#### "Today, a few have a number of opulent residencies while millions are homeless and sleep in the street."

A: Biden is focused on presenting a cabinet that shows diversified faces but will this do much to address the underlying problems? Not necessarily. Different races and different sexual orientations may better represent what America is but does it lead to needed change? No. It is deep understanding of the issues and the determination to push through policies that address them.

■ Is the United States following the path of other fallen empires, with its best days over and now the inevitable

A: I think so. It may take many decades but I am afraid so. It takes decades to build trust in a country. Trust and cooperation are essential to national success. America has dissipated trust. It will be hard to get it back

For a more solid foundation for recovry, the country must face its two original sins. The treachery against native Americans and the introduction of slavery and its horrors. Americans from a young age must be exposed to more honest textbooks and discussion of these two sins that underlie social unrest.

Also, internationally, the U.S. is not admired as it was in the past. America has been at war during most of its history. It cannot continue in this way. America should reduce the use of military force and economic sanctions to solicit cooperation social justice than waging costly wars.

#### was widely held but not today. Politicians from other countries and focus more on appeared to follow some norms of conduct

GSA: Trump's unpredictability pushed Arabs to seek partnership with other powers

Some Arab states tried to exploit Trump's hostility towards Iran to consolidate their ties with Washington and buy more weapons to change the balance of power in West Asia.

According to Cafiero, "USD 23 billion arms sale that includes F-35 fighter jets, highly advanced drones, and munitions, could have profound implications for the (Persian) Gulf region and wider Middle East's balance

The following is the text of the interview with Cafiero: How do you see the U.S. move in agreeing to sell the Emirates F-35 jets? Would it serve the peace in the region?

A: For a host of reasons, this U.S.-UAE weapons deal that the Trump administration strongly supports is highly controversial in Washington. A growing number of lawmakers as well as various members of Biden's inner circle have criticized the Arab-led coalition's conduct in Yemen as well as the UAE's actions in Libya. It is clear that the UAE has spent years becoming more assertive and bold in its foreign policy throughout the wider Arab region. Abu Dhabi has become increasingly difficult for Washington to influence, which is relevant to discussions about this USD 23 billion arms sale that includes F-35 fighter jets, highly advanced drones, and munitions. There is a recognition that the Emiratis possessing such weapons



could have profound implications for the (Persian) Gulf region and wider Middle East (West Asia)'s balance of power, making the UAE an increasingly powerful country.

Why do the U.S and some European states prefer to turn a blind eye on the Saudi-Emirati massacre in Yemen and are continuing selling them arms?

A: The Trump administration was keen to defend Saudi actions in Yemen, often resulting in disagreements between U.S. lawmakers of both political parties and

the White House. What remains to be seen is the extent to which U.S.-Saudi relations and Washington's overall approach to Yemen change after President-elect Joe Biden takes the helm. As a presidential hopeful, Biden vowed to cut off U.S. support to the Riyadh-led coalition fighting the Iranian-backed Houthi movement. Yet it will be important to see whether Biden actually cuts off such support, or if this was merely campaign rhetoric.

How do you see Trump's policy in the region? Do you think that Arab nations are content with U.S. approaches?

A: Some Arab states in the Persian Gulf such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE supported Trump's "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran. Yet others such as Qatar and Oman did not welcome the U.S.'s growing aggression against Iran in the Trump period and both Doha and Muscat hope to reap benefits from the Biden administration's approach to Iran which will likely be more diplomatic and less hawkish than Trump's. Moreover, all Arab countries in the Persian Gulf have had to contend with the unpredictability and incoherence of Trump's foreign policy, which created greater doubt about the wisdom of remaining so dependent on the U.S. for security relations and prompted them to explore deeper partnerships with other powers such as China, France, Turkey, and Russia.

# Trump pardons Blackwater contractors convicted of massacre in Iraq

1 → The American Civil Liberties Union decried the pardons. Hina Shamsi, the director of the organization's national security project, said in a statement that the shootings caused "devastation in Iraq, shame and horror in the United States, and a worldwide scandal. President Trump insults the memory of the Iraqi victims and further degrades his office with this action.'

Democratic congresswoman Ilhan Omar said on Twitter: "Nicholas Slatten, Paul Alvin Slough, Evan Shawn Liberty, and Dustin Laurent Heard are war criminals.

"Pardoning monstrous criminals will leave a dark mark on the history of presidential pardons.'

The pardons reflect Trump's apparent willingness to give the benefit of the doubt to American servicemembers and contractors when it comes to acts of violence in warzones against civilians.

Last November, he pardoned a former US Army commando who was set to stand trial next year in the killing of a suspected Afghan bombmaker and a former Army lieutenant convicted of murder for ordering his men to fire upon three Afghans.

#### **Israel hopes for rapprochement** with fifth Muslim country before Trump exit

 $Is rael is working towards formalizing \ relations \ with a \ fifth \ Muslim \ country, \ possibly \ in \ Asia, \ during \ U.S. \ President \ Donald \ Trump's$ term, an Israeli cabinet minister said on Wednesday.

The White House has brokered rapprochements between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco this year. Rabat hosted an Israeli-U.S. delegation on Tuesday to flesh out the upgrade in relations, Reuters reported.

Asked if a fifth country could sign up before Trump steps down on Jan 20, Regional Cooperation Minister Ofir Akunis told Israel's Ynet TV: "We are working in that direction."

#### Russia says expects 'nothing good' from Biden

With less than a month before Joe Biden moves into the White House, Moscow on Wednesday accused the incoming U.S. administration of "Russophobia" after the president-elect promised to punish Russia for a major cyber attack.

Biden is expected to take a tougher stance against Russia than Donald Trump, whose ascent to the U.S. presidency in 2016 was plagued by accusations of Russian interference to boost his campaign, AFP reported.

Russian President Vladimir Putin was one of the last leaders to congratulate Biden on his election victory, sending his congratulatory message six weeks after the November 3 vote and saying he was ready for "collaboration."

Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov, speaking to reporters on Wednesday, said the Kremlin was expecting "nothing positive" in ties with Washington.

Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov struck a similar note, speaking about Moscow's expectations from the future U.S. administration. "We are definitely not expecting anything good," Ryabkov said in an interview with Interfax news agency.

And it would be strange to expect good things from people, many of whom made their careers on Russophobia and throwing mud at my country," he added.

#### Iraq to sign \$2.625 bln Faw port contract with S. Korea's Daewoo

Iraq's government has agreed to sign a \$2.625 billion contract with South Korea's Daewoo Engineering & Construction (047040. KS) to build the first phase of a giant commodities port in the south of the country, a port manager said on Wednesday.

The long-planned and repeatedly delayed Grand Faw port is one of several projects that Iraq hopes will create a shorter transportation corridor between the Middle East and Europe, bypassing the Suez Canal, Daily Star reported.

Under the contract, expected to be signed on Sunday, Daewoo E&C will handle construction works that include building five berths to unload ships and a yard for containers, Farhan al-Fartousi, Iraq's director general at the General Company for Ports, told Reuters in Basra.

#### Three French police shot dead responding to domestic violence dispute

Three police officers were killed and a fourth wounded in central France on Wednesday by a gunman they confronted in response to a domestic violence call, officials said.

The suspect, a 48-year-old man known to authorities for child custody disputes, was «discovered dead» several hours after fleeing the home in an isolated hamlet near Saint-Just, a village south of the city of Clermont-Ferrand, Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said in a tweet.

According to AFP, he gave no further details on how the man died. «Our security forces put their lives at risk to protect us. These are our heroes,» President Emmanuel Macron said in a tweet

#### **Resistance News**

#### **Tunisia: Stance on** Palestine unchanged, no normalization with Israel

**INTERNATIONAL TEHRAN**— The Tunisian Ministry of Foreign e s k Affairs has made it clear that the North African country will not follow in Morocco's footsteps to normalize diplomatic ties with Israel, and that its position on the Palestinians' legitimate rights will not be affected by any international changes.

The ministry, in a statement published on its official Facebook page on Tuesday, dismissed media reports that Tunisia intended to establish ties with the Tel Aviv regime as unfounded and contrary to its principled and official position vis-à-vis the Palestinian issue.

"Tunisia reiterates the firm stance of the President of the Republic, Kais Saied, who has emphasized on several occasions that the rights of the Palestinian people are inalienable, foremost among which is their right to self-determination and establishment of an independent state with (Jerusalem) al-Quds as its capital," the statement read.

According to Press TV, Tunisians feel solidarity with the Palestinian people and strongly support their rights, which have been recognized by numerous United Nations resolutions and various international bodies, especially the UN Security Council and the General Assembly, it added.

Tunisia reaffirms its full conviction that a just, lasting and comprehensive peace cannot be established in the region without implementing international decisions regarding the rights of the Palestinian people to recover their stolen land and to establish their independent state," the ministry noted.

'As Tunisia respects the sovereign positions of other countries, it affirms that its stance is principled, and changes in the international scene will never affect it," the statement said.

The foreign ministry concluded that Tunisia will not participate in any initiative that infringes upon the rights of brotherly Palestinian people, and it is not interested in establishing diplomatic relations with the occupying regime of Israel.

#### Project to support ecotourism, local communities in Gwadar Bay

In Iran, 141 wetlands with ecological value with an area of over 3 million hectares have been identified, of which 25 wetlands are designated as wetlands of international importance (registered in the Ramsar Convention) covering more than 1.4 million hectares and four sites are biosphere reserves.



Of Iran's 25 Ramsar sites about one-third are under pressure or in critical condition.

Chief of the Department of Environment, Issa Kalantari, has said to restore wetlands in the country a budget of 600 trillion rials (nearly \$14 billion) is required.

# Tehran airport to tighten anti-COVID measures

TOURISM

d e s k

Airport is to tighten measures against the COVID-19 epidemic by expanding and upgrading existing facilities and infrastructure



The Iranian government has paid two trillion rials (some \$47 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) in loans to support Imam Khomeini International Airport, the CEO of the Tehran airport said on Wednesday.

Segment of the bailout will be allocated to have the runways renovated, Mohammad Mehdi Karbalaei said.

The official also added that all flights of the airport are in full accordance with the required health protocols to curb the

IKIA is the main international airport of Iran, located 30 kilometers southwest of the city of Tehran. It is one of the two major commercial airports serving Tehran and the busiest international air passenger gateway to Iran and it is also the only

#### Bushehr reinforcing tourism structures in long-lasting recession

profit-making airport in Iran.

TOURISM
de s | TEHRAN - The cultural heritage and tourism department of Bushehr, like many other Iranian provinces, has commenced reinforcing travel-related structures during a prolonged recession resulted from the coro-

navirus pandemic.
A vast restoration and landscaping project is commenced on historical and cultural sites which are scattered across the historical core of Bushehr, Ali Darvishi, a provincial official, said on Tuesday.

The project covers some three kilometers of routes and thoroughfares along with some 20,000 square kilometers of historical structures located within the ancient core of the city, the official noted



The tourism sector of the southwestern province is ready to jumpstart after the coronavirus crisis ends, provincial tourism chief Mohammad-Hossein Arastuzadeh announced in April, stressing that Bushehr needs innovative plans and programs to attract more tourists and holidaymakers.

With over 6,000 years of history and significant monuments from the Elamite, Achaemenid, Parthian, and Sassanid eras, Bushehr province is one of Iran's most important historical centers. Besides its cultural heritage, beautiful beaches and lush palm groves make it an attractive destination for world travelers.

The historical and architectural monuments of Bushehr include Islamic buildings like mosques and praying centers, mansions, old towers, castles, as well as gardens.

When it comes to cultural attractions, there are many historical mounds in Bushehr including Tall-e Khandaq with Sassanid architectural style, Tall-e Marv located near an Achaemenid Palace, and Qajar era Malek al-Tojar Mansion. Qajar era Kazeruni Mansion, which has been inscribed on the World Heritage List, is another attraction that world travelers love to see among various ancient sites.

# Qom province suffers \$190 million loss under COVID jolt

TOURISM TEHRAN – Qom tourism dessible some industry, like many other Iranian provinces, has sunk further into recession, losing eight trillion rials (over \$190 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials), as the result of a colossal financial impact from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The tourism industry of Qom has taken eight trillion rials hit from the coronavirus outbreak over the previous months," provincial tourism chief said on Wednesday.

Due to the long time closure and lockdown, tourism business units and facilities have faced several issues and problems, the most important of which is the lack of liquidity, Hamid Yazdani stated.

The tourism sector is unable to pay for taxes and the insurance of its staff, while the units have problems for paying for energy carriers and maintenance costs as well, the official added.

He also emphasized that the tourism businesses that are struggling with the impact of the coronavirus pandemic need more support and a government-provided supportive package, which includes low-interest loans, could contribute to the tourism-jobs and businesses.

The country's second-holiest city after Mashhad, Qom is home to both the magnificent shrine of Hazrat-e Masumeh (SA) and the major religious madrasas (schools).

Apart from sightseers and pilgrims who visit Qom to pay homage at the holy shrine, the city is also a top destination for Shiite scholars and students who come from across the world to learn Islamic studies at its madrasas and browse through eminent religious bookshops.

Economic response to virus-hit sector In late October, deputy tourism chief Vali



Teymouri said that a new support package to pay loans to tourism-related businesses affected by the coronavirus pandemic was approved by Iran's National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control.

He also announced that depending on the type and activity of the businesses, they could benefit from at least 160 million rials (some \$3,800) to nine billion rials (some \$214,000) of bank loans with a 12-percent interest rate.

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,

 $tour is m \ complexes, and \ recreational \ centers, \\ the \ official \ explained.$ 

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.

In October, Cultural Heritage, Tourism,

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

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 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).

### Indigenous Iranian lamb stew one step closer to national status

HERITAGE TEHRAN — Yakhni Polo, which is an degree of k Iranian lamb stew, is now a step closer to win national heritage status. The fatty dish is very popular in Dargaz, northeastern Khorasan Razavi province.

An all-inclusive dossier, including documentation and essential records, has been developed for the dish, which is also favored in the Indian subcontinent, parts of southern Asia, and the Balkans.

A native flatbread and the skill of making a sweet pudding are other elements the cultural heritage office of Dargaz seeks to add to the national list of intangible cultural heritage, a local official Mohammad Madadi said on Wednesday.

"Traditional foods of Yakhni Polo (a combination of lamb and rice, which is also popular in India and Pakistan) and a kind of local bread as well as the skill of making samanu (sweet pudding made entirely from germinated wheat) are one step closer to possibly be added to the National Heritage list," he said.

As Dargaz is a city with a history of seven thousand years

and a rich culture and valuable traditions, several items could be identified and registered as intangible cultural heritage, the official added.

He also noted that so far several dossiers have been prepared for various properties and items in the city to be registered on the national heritage list.

Stews are a big part of Iranian cuisine. Ghormeh Sabzi along with Fesenjan and Gheimeh are an essential part of the culinary tradition of the nation and also the most common stews cooked by all Iranians both at homes and restaurants.

Iranian cuisine, usually dominated by fragrant herbs, varies from region to region. It principally accentuates freshness, deliciousness, and colorfulness.

Experts say that food is not merely an organic product with biochemical compositions. However, for members of each community, food is defined as a cultural element.

No Persian meal is complete without an abundance of herbs. Every table is usually set with sabzi khordan, a



basket of fresh herbs, radishes, and scallions, which are eaten raw and by the handful. Persian cuisine is, above all, about balance — of tastes and flavors, textures and temperatures.

### Tourism projects worth \$255m underway in northwestern Iran

TOURISM TEHRAN — A total of 31 tourism-related projects worth 10.7 trillion rials (about \$255 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) are being implemented across the northwestern West Azarbaijan province, the provincial tourism chief has said.

Hotels, hotel apartments, travel agencies, eco-lodge guest houses, traditional restaurants as well as recreational and tourist facilities are amongst the projects, which is aimed to create job opportunities for 1430 people, CHTN quoted Jalil Jabbari as saying on Wednesday.

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



August announced that Iran's travel sector had suffered a loss of 12 trillion rials (some \$2.85 billion) since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic; however,

he mentioned that all the tourism businesses across the country would have the capacity to fully resume their activities both in domestic and foreign markets.

"Many tourism projects have been completed, or are being implemented, showing that a very good capacity has been created in the field of tourism in the country and [this trend] should not be stopped," he explained.

Mounesan went on to say that 2,451 tourism-related projects worth 1,370 trillion rials (around \$32 billion) are being implemented across the country that signals a prosperous future for Iran's tourism sector.

West Azarbaijan embraces a variety of lush natural sceneries, cultural heritage sites, and museums including the UNES-CO sites of Takht-e Soleyman and Qareh Klise (St. Thaddeus Monastery), Teppe Hasanlu, and the ruined Bastam Citadel.

The region has been the seat of several ancient civilizations. It formed part of Urartu and later of Media. In the 4th century BC, it was conquered by Alexander the Great and was named Atropatene after one of Alexander's generals, Atropates, who established a small kingdom there. The area returned to the Persian (Iranian) rule under the Sasanians in the 3rd century CF

### Book on Mahan's cultural heritage unveiled

TOURISM TEHRAN — A book containing rare described by a manuscripts and other cultural heritage of Mahan, a historical town in southeast Iran, was unveiled during a ceremony at Shahid Bahonar University of Kerman on Tuesday.

The ceremony was attended by provincial officials, university professors, scholars, calligraphers, and cultural heritage experts, provincial tourism chief announced.

The book represents Quranic manuscripts, handwritten folios attributed to Shah Nimatullah Wali, who was a Persian Sufi Master and poet from the 14th and 15th centuries, amongst other works of art, the official explained. Historical manuscripts are of special importance when



it comes to the cultural heritage structure, the official said. Picturesque Mahan, 35km southeast of Kerman, is a low-key town that's widely famed for its shrine and UNESCO-listed Persian garden.

With a superb little heritage hotel and a fine (and unpretentious) teahouse at the shrine-area, it's worth considering Mahan as an alternative place to stay in the Kerman region.

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

# Ancient Iranian utensils, artworks gain former glory

TOURISM TEHRAN — A selection of 21 historical objects have been documented, restored, and preserved in laboratories across Iran's South Khorasan province, a cultural heritage official provinced on Wednesday.

itage official announced on Wednesday.s 12 ceramic and clay utensils, six metal works, two manuscripts, and a glass piece constitute the relics, each date back to

different historical eras, the official added. Cultural heritage experts and restorers completed the job during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (Mar. 20-Dec. 20), he said.

Made of clay, metal, paper, and glass, have been discovered from different historical sites scattered across the eastern province, Hamzeh Hamzeh announced.

Located in eastern Iran, South Khorasan is home to many historical and natural attractions such as Birjand Castle, Dragon Cave, Furg Citadel, and Polond

It is also known for its famous rugs as well as its saffron and barberry which are produced in almost all parts of the



# Civil registration in Iran turns 102

By Faranak Bakhtiari

**TEHRAN** — The National Organization for Civil Registration in Iran began its activities on December 25, 1918, issuing the first Iranian identity card for a girl named "Fatemeh Irani" in Tehran.

Prior to 1918, vital events such as births and deaths were recorded based on religious beliefs and traditions in the country, by writing the name and date of birth on the back cover of holy books, including the Holy Quran. So, there was no trace of the deceased except for the name and date of their death, which was written on the tombstone.

With the spread of human culture and knowledge, the increasing development of cities and villages, and population growth, the need for an organization to record vital events became inevitable and gradually the idea of forming an organization in charge of registering births and deaths as well as issuing birth certificates for the citizens became apparent.

Registration of births and deaths, and issuance of certificates, replacement of birth certificates, registration of marriages and divorces, issuance of birth certificates for foreign nationals, and establishment of a demographic database and population statistics, are among the main activities of the organization.

852,084 infants born within 9

Over the first nine months of the current [Iranian calendar] year (March 21 - December 20), 852,084 babies were born and their births were registered, including, 440,276 boys and 412,808 girls, Seifollah Aboutorabi, the National Organization for Civil Registration spokesman, said on Wednesday.

Some 397,501 deaths were also recorded over the aforementioned period, of which



224,752 were men and 171,648 were women. The average age of men who died during this period was 63 years and the average age of women was 67 years, he noted.

He went on to state that 307,349 marriages and 99,679 divorces have been registered in the country during the first seven months of the current [Iranian calendar] year (March 21-October 21).

Most popular Iranian baby names «Fatemeh» and «Amir-Ali» were respectively the most popular names for baby girls and boys born in Iran during the first nine months of this year, Aboutorabi said.

Over the aforementioned period, Iranian parents chose Amir-Ali, Mohammad, Ali, Amir-Hossein, Hossein, Abolfazl, Arad, Aria, Samyar, and Amir-Abbas more than other

Over the first nine months of the current [Iranian calendar] year (March 21 - December 20), 852,084 babies were born and their births were registered, including, 440,276 boys and 412,808 girls. Some 397,501 deaths were also recorded over the aforementioned period, of which 224,752 were men and 171,648 were women.

names for their baby boys, he added.

Meanwhile, Fatemeh, Zahra, Rasta, Helma, Zeinab, Ava, Mersana, Yasna, Reyhaneh and Nazanin-Zahra were the top ten names for baby girls, he stated.

Over 12,000 twins born in Iran During the first nine months of this year, about 12,799 twin births registered across the country, he announced.

Some 380 triplet births and 12 higher-order multiple births happened in the country last year, Aboutorabi said.

115 birth certificates issued to babies born to Iranian mothers, foreign fathers

According to Aboutorabi, 115 birth certificates have been issued so far after the implementation of the law determining the citizenship of children born to Iranian women married to foreign nationals.

Birth certificates have been issued to 84 children born to Iranian mothers and foreign fathers since November 18.

According to the Government of Iran, nearly 75,000 children at risk of becoming statelessness are eligible for Iranian citizenship under a new nationality law, which was amended in 2019 to allow children under 18 years to apply for identity documents.

According to official figures, 28,000 children below the age of 18 years have filed applications to receive birth certificates and a nationality.

According to article one of the law, children of Iranian women and non-Iranian men who were born before or after the law can be an Iranian citizen in case the Iranian mother requested if they have no security problem before the age of 18.

These children, after reaching the age of 18, can apply for Iranian citizenship if not requested by the mother, then will be granted Iranian citizenship in case of no security problem.

### No cases of UK mutated coronavirus found in Iran: minister

TEHRAN — So far, no cases of the new coronavirus recently emerged in the United Kingdom have been observed in Iran, Health Minister Saeed Namaki has said, emphasizing that all foreign travelers from the UK are being monitored.

As soon as the United Kingdom announced a new COV-ID-19 strain one to two months after its emergence, Iran immediately banned flights to and from the UK.

Currently, all passengers entering Iran from England undergo diagnostic tests for the new COVID-19. European travelers are also tested for coronavirus, and they must stay in quarantine for two weeks.

All travelers who have entered the country from the UK in the last two or three weeks, one by one, are being monitored, he said.

"No cases of the new virus have so far been found in the country, but we are still investigating and will announce if any case is identified," he highlighted.

Referring to the coronavirus vaccine, he expressed readiness to import the vaccine without any barriers and it will soon be provided.

With the efforts of the Basij, people, and volunteers, as well as a national plan named after martyr Qassem Soleimani so far the transmission chain of the disease has decreased by 50 percent, and high-risk red zones turned to yellow and orange.

Martyr Soleimani plan is being 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.

Some 22,530 monitoring teams have been formed within the framework 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.



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.

As soon as the United Kingdom announced a new COVID-19 strain one to two months after its emergence, Iran immediately banned flights to and from the UK. All passengers entering Iran from England undergo diagnostic tests for the new About 782,000 visits and monitoring of various places and centers have been done to warn those who do not observe the health protocols, Sadeq-Tabrizi stated.

COVID-19 toll, new cases on a declining trend
Due to the high prevalence of the disease, strict COVID-19
restrictions took effect on October 26.

The National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control started strict restrictions in 43 cities that had the highest rate of infection in the country. Ten days later, decisions were made to set new limitations on highly-affected areas for another 10 days, through which 46 cities undergone restrictions.

The plan divided cities into three levels of alert, namely red, orange, and yellow.

Another plan also went into effect on November 21, according to which all occupations, except for emergency services and basic food suppliers, get closed for two weeks in high-risk cities.

Alireza Reisi, a spokesman for the National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control, said on December 19 that the disease prevalence is declining in 30 of the whole 31 provinces and the death toll had dropped to 50 percent in comparison to the previous month. Also, the hospitalization rate has been reduced by 40 percent.

In a press briefing on Wednesday, Health Ministry spokesperson Sima-Sadat Lari confirmed 6,261 new cases of COVID-19 infection, raising the total number of infections to 1,177,004. She added that 914,194 patients have so far recovered, but 5,419 still remain in critical conditions of the disease.

During the past 24 hours, 153 patients have lost their lives, bringing the total number of deaths to 54,156, she added. So far, 7,201,567 COVID-19 diagnostic tests have been

performed in the country.

Lari noted that currently, 205 cities are in low-risk "orange" zones, and 243 cities are in yellow.

#### **ENGLISH IN USE**

COVID-19.

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

# Health ministry pursuing to provide medicine for SMA patients

The Ministry of Health is trying to provide medicines for patients with spinal muscular atrophy (SMA) and other rare diseases, IRIB news agency reported on Friday. Some medicines, especially those needed for SMA patients and certain rare diseases which are only made by American pharmaceutical companies, are not imported to the country, Health Minister Saeed Namaki said. "I wrote two letters to World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom, over the past few days, and also to some NGOs hoping that we would be

able to resolve the issue," Namaki noted. He added that medicine provision for all patients have been hindered, but it can be said that this year's medicine shortage is one-third of last year's.

# پیگیری وزارت بهداشت برای تهیه داروی بیماران SMA

وزیـر بهداشـت، درمـان و آمـوزش پزشـکی گفـت در تـلاش هسـتیم داروی بیمـاران مبتـلا بـه SMA و بیماریهـای صعـب العـلاج دیگـر را تأمیـن کنیـم.

به گزارش خبرگزاری صدا و سیما، سعید نمکی روز پنج شنبه گفت: بعضی داروها همانند بیماران SMA و بیماران خاص که شرکت دارویی صد در صد امریکایی است، اجازه فروش به ما نمی دهد. من در این روزها دو نامه برای آقای تدروس دبیر کل سازمان جهانی بهداشت نوشتم و همچنین با برخی سازمانهای مردم نهاد بین المللی مکاتبه کردم که امیدوارم بتوانیم راهگشایی کنیم و این مورد را حل کنیم.

وی افزود شرایط تهیه دارو برای همه بیماران به شدت سخت شده است، اما به جرأت می توان گفت کمبودهای دارویی امسال یک سوم پارسال است.

# Benefactors release 5,068 prisoners of unintentional crimes

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Iranian philanthropists have described by helped free 5,068 inmates of unintentional crimes since the beginning of the current [Iranian calendar] year (started March 20) till November 20, Asadollah Joolaei, head of Blood Money Organization, has said.

Some 173 female and 4,895 male prisoners were released across the country with a debt of 22 trillion rials (nearly \$530 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials), he noted.



According to him, there are currently 12,874 inmates of unintentional crimes in the country's prisons.

As an annual tradition, benefactors came together in a ceremony to raise funds for releasing prisoners of unintentional crimes concurrent with the holy month of Ramadan, which started on April 27 this year.

In May, heads of the three branches of the government and the private sector donated 6.5 billion rials (nearly \$150,000) to release prisoners who had committed involuntary crimes.

President Hassan Rouhani, Parliament Speaker Åli Larijani, and Judiciary Chief Ayatollah Seyed Ebrahim Raeisi made a total of 3.9 billion rials (around \$92,000) in contributions to free prisoners of unintentional crimes.

Moreover, the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture, and the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture, representing the private sector, and also Imam Khomeini Relief Committee, participated in the event by donating 2.6 billion rials (about \$62,000).

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has donated 4.5 billion rials (about \$110,000) this year, and more than 25 billion rials (about \$600,000) over the past ten years, helping release over 700 prisoners of unintentional crimes in the country.

Last year (March 2019-March 2020), some 8,599 inmates of unintentional crimes were released from prison with the help of charities.

# 280 genetic counseling centers operating in Iran

Disability prevalence worldwide

About 15 percent of the world's population lives with some form of disability, of whom 2-4 percent experience significant difficulties in functioning.



The global disability prevalence is higher than previous WHO estimates, which date from the 1970s and suggested a figure of around 10 percent. This global estimate for disability is on the rise due to population aging and the rapid spread of chronic diseases, as well as improvements in the methodologies used to measure disability.

#### LET'S LEARN PERSIAN

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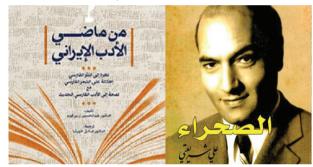
Lying would negatively influence your livelihood.

Prophet Muhammad (S)

#### **Translations from Persian** literature honored at Sheikh Hamad awards

CULTURE TEHRAN — Several translations from Persian e s k literature have been honored at the Sixth Sheikh Hamad Awards for Translation and International Understanding (SHATIU) in Doha, Qatar.

In the category of translation from Persian into Arabic, "The Desert" ("Al-Sahra") by Hasan al-Sarraf received first prize. The book features articles by Iranian scholar Ali Shariati, the organizers announced on Tuesday.



 $A\,combination\,photo\,shows\,the\,Arabic\,translations\,of\,"From$ the History of Iranian Literature" by Sadiq Khursha and "The Desert" by Hasan al-Sarraf.

"The Zaydiya in Iran" ("Al-Zaydiyah fi Iran") translated by Mustafa Ahmad al-Bakkur. The original book has been authored by Muhammad Kazim Rahmati.

The Zaydiyya are a branch of Shia Islam, often termed "moderate" or even "the practical group of the Shia," that diverged from other Shia factions in the course of the dispute over the succession to the imamate that followed the death of the fourth imam, Hazrat Ali Zayn al-Abidin (AS) in 713. Third prize went to "A History of Persian Literature" ("Tarikh

al-Adab al-Farisi") translated by Basil Ahmad Adnawi.

Authored by Ahmad Tamimari, the book gives a comprehensive image of the tender subtleties and rich scope of Persian literature. It zooms in on the intellectual and philosophical: peripatetic, illuminative, mystical, theological and combinative philosophy, and the five literary period schools. It also briefly introduces various Persian poetic styles including Khorasani, the middle, Vuqu, Indian, restorational and contemporary styles.

"From the History of Iranian Literature" ("Min Madi al-Adab al-Irani") translated by Sadiq Khursha won third prize. The book has been written by Abdohussein Zarrinkoub.

The category of translation from Arabic into Persian had no winner for first prize, while second prize was awarded to "The Druze of Belgrade" ("Duruz Bilgrad") translated by Sadeq Darabi.

Authored by Lebanese novelist Rabi Jaber, "The Druze of Belgrade" draws from the history of the writer's birthplace. He tells the story of Druze fighters exiled from Lebanon after the bloody Mount Lebanon civil war of 1860 between Christians and Druze. The novel opens when a Christian man, Hanna Jacobs, is captured along with the exiled Druze in a case of mistaken identity. The novel won the Arabic Booker prize in 2012.

Third prize went to "Frankenstein in Baghdad" ("Frankshtayn fi Baghdad"), a novel written by Iraqi writer Ahmed Saadawi. Amal Nabhani is the translator of the book into Persian.

From the rubble-strewn streets of U.S.-occupied Baghdad, Hadi, a scavenger and an oddball fixture at a local café, collects human body parts and stitches them together to create a corpse.

His goal, he claims, is for the government to recognize the parts as people and to give them proper burial. But when the corpse goes missing, a wave of eerie murders sweeps the city, and reports stream in of a horrendous-looking criminal who, though shot, cannot be killed.

Hadi soon realizes he's created a monster, one that needs human flesh to survive first from the guilty, and then from anyone in its path.

It won the IPAF award for 2014. The novel was translated

into English by Jonathan Wright.

Qatar established the Sheikh Hamad Awards for Translation and International Understanding (SHATIU) in 2015 "to honor translators and acknowledge their role in strengthening the bonds of friendship and cooperation among peoples and nations of the world," the organizers have said.

"The award also aspires to inculcate a culture of knowledge and dialogue, promote Arab and Islamic culture, develop international understanding and encourage mature crosscultural interaction between Arabic and other world languages through the medium of translation.'

The total value of the award is \$2,000,000, divided into three categories: translation prizes (\$800,000), achievement prizes

(\$1,000,000), and prizes for international understanding (\$200,000). Earlier in 2017, Iran's Center for the Great Islamic Encyclopedia in Tehran was honored with a \$100,000- prize at the Sheikh Hamad Award for Translation and International Understanding.

# Iranian children win awards at FAO **World Food Day Poster Contest**

→1 "The world is full of food heroes from farmers to drivers, shop assistants, food bank or government representatives etc., who, despite various challenges such as the current COVID-19 pandemic, work hard to make sure that food makes its way from farms to our table," the organizers said in their statement for the contest.

"Let's celebrate their great efforts this World Food Day. Young minds can be inspired by our World Food Day Activity Book that talks about the important role food heroes play in the food system and how everyone can come together and take action to support our food heroes so they can provide the healthy diets we need, while protecting the planet,' added the statement.

The winner of second prize in the 5-8 age group is Joone Huzaifa Jamali from Tanzania. "Each and every farmer around the world is working hard so that we don't face starvation... despite various challenges, such as the current COVID-19 pandemic; working hard to ensure that 'food makes its way to our table'," she



This combination photo shows paintings by Iranian sisters Atrin and Anahita Afshari-Tavana, who won prizes at the FAO World Food Day Poster Contest.

Third prize went to Tao Yanxi from China. Deepshikha De from India won first prize

in the 9-12 age group.
"There are many books on superheroes who save the world. I have shown the Food Heroes in the pages of the book I painted. In the middle, I have shown balanced nutrition that is possible only because of the Food Heroes," she wrote.

Manya Anoop from the United Arab Emirates won second prize in this category.

"There is an increase in demand for supplies, and we are all sending a thank you to our farmers when we come home with fresh vegetables... during this pandemic situation," she wrote.

The winners of the 13-15 age group are Pavel Milanovski from North Macedonia, Nafisa Nuren from Bangladesh, and Xinyu Du from China.

In the 16-19 age group, Soyeon Kim from South Korea received first prize. Amgalangoo Tsend Ayush from Mongolia and Arina Afla Safa Putri from Indonesia won second and third prizes respectively.



Leili Aaj accepts the Soleimani Award for her play "Where Are You Ebrahim" at the 17th Resistance Theater Festival at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on December 22, 2020. (Fars/ Mehdi Marizad)

→1 "Where Are You Ebrahim" is about Ebrahim Hadi, a volunteer who made heroic endeavors to evacuate the remains of numerous Iranian soldiers from the battlefields during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war.

In the main competition section, the award for best

### Resistance festival honors "Where Are You Ebrahim" with Soleimani Award

actress was given to Mahnaz Rudsaz and the one for best actor went to Ali Farahnak, both for their roles in "Liliet' by Mohammadreza Shahmardi.

Shahmardi also received the award for best playwright for "Liliet", and the award for best director went to Alireza Marufi for "The Bodies".

In the street section, the award for best actress was given to Simin Behfar for the play "Gravel Path", and Iman Nazifi received the award for best actor for "6599" by Masud Barahini who also received the best director award.

Next, the ceremony continued with honoring veteran theatrical figures.

Actor and street theater expert Morteza Vakilian was honored with a lifetime achievement award, and the play "Epidemic" by Saeid Badini was honored for the best team work. The children's special award was given to Hurad Habibi for narration of the play "Years before That Event".

In addition, the three plays, "6599", "Epidemic" and

"Survivor", were also introduced to the Fajr Theater Festival. The ceremony continued with tributes paid to active theatrical figures, actor Kurosh Zarei, who is also the director of the Art Bureau's Center for Dramatic Arts, and dramatist

Nasrollah Qaderi. In the student section, the award for best actress was given to Vida Musavi for "Behesht, Hakimallah", while Musavi was also honored as the best director in this section.

The award for best actor was given to Mohammad-Hadi Atai for the play "Silent Scream". Due to a spike in the number of coronavirus cases, the

17th Resistance Theater Festival went online. The street theater performances were held in open spaces

with the audiences observing health protocols. The Association of the Revolution and Sacred Defense Theater organizes the festival every year in collaboration

with several other institutions. Ten children's plays have also been selected to be staged during the festival in a special program.

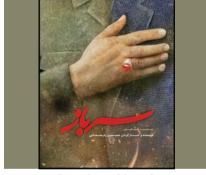
### Hossein Parsai to stage "The Soldier" about Commander Qassem Soleimani

**TEHRAN** — Director Hossein Parsai plans to stage "The Soldier" about Commander Qas-

sem Soleimani at Vahdat Hall on January 1. The play will be performed to observe the first martyrdom anniversary of the chief of IRGC Quds Force, which was assassinated during a U.S. airstrike in Baghdad on January 3.

This play is so attractive and important that it does not require any box office draw. We actually owe to the main character of the play," Parsai, who is also the writer of the play, has said.

The style of my narrative is quite different in this play since the main character of this



A poster for "The Soldier" by Hossein

play is known as a national hero," he said. He noted that he has tried to keep his account of events in the play as factual

The play will go on stage with audiences limited due to the pandemic.

Ali Barati is cooperating as the choreographer, and Mohammad Movahednia is the graphic designer of the project.

Parsai directed the dramatic parts of the symphonic poem "Alamdar" at Vahdat Hall in September to raise funds for the poor across the country.

Iranian musical prodigy Puria Khadem is the composer of "Alamdar" ("The Standard-Bearer"), which is about Hazrat Abbas (AS), the brother of Imam Hussein (AS) and the standard-bearer of the Imam's group in the Ashura battle in 680, during which the Imam and his companions were martyred.

Veteran actor Parviz Parastui is the producer of the performance, which was conducted by Bardia Kiaras, the conductor of the Tehran Symphony Orchestra.

Parsai staged a musical based on Victor Hugo's French historical novel "Les Misérables" in 2018.

Parsai staged a musical version of "Oliver Twist" in 2017 with an all-star cast at Tehran's Vahdat Hall. The musical was an adaptation based on "Oliver!", a 1968 British musical drama film directed by Carol Reed.

# **UNICEF** honors Iranian photographers

💶 TEHRAN — Erfan Kuchari and Hamed Malekpur, two photographers from Iran, have been honored at the UNICEF Photo of the Year Award.

Each year since 2000, UNICEF Germany has awarded the UNICEF Photo of the Year Award to photos and photo series that best depict the personality and living conditions of children worldwide in an outstanding manner.

The two photographers working for Tasnim, an Iranian news agency, have received honorable mentions.

Kuchari won the honor for his photo "Corona – a Piece of Freedom on the Rooftop", and Malekpur was honored for "One Heart, Two Lives".

Kuchari shows how the children escape onto the flat



"Corona – a Piece of Freedom on the Rooftop" by Erfan Kuchari.

roofs of their houses during the pandemic in Iran, and how they use these spaces to play, skate, fly kites, do gymnastics, build tents or plant gardens.

Malekpour shows how the heart of Sajjad Darvishali, a nine-year-old boy who was declared brain dead, was successfully transplanted into a ten-year-old boy in Tehran.

Greek Photographer Angelos Tzortzinis's "The Flames of Misery", depicting two children fleeing from the burning refugee camp Moria on the Greek island of Lesbos, won the UNICEF Photo of the Year Award.

Indian photographer Supratim Bhattacharjee's "The Curse of Coal" was selected as runner-up, and third Prize went to "Brazil: the Favela Ballet" by Evgeny Makarov from Russia.

### "A Bad Night for Bullies" comes to Iranian bookstores

**CULTURE TEHRAN** — A Persian e s k translation of Gary Ghislain's book "A Bad Night for Bullies' ("The Goolz Next Door") has recently been published by Saad Publications in Tehran. The book has been translated into Persian

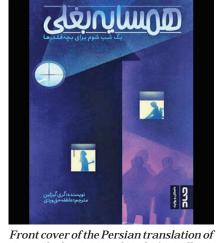
by Atefeh Haqverdi. For fans of Goosebumps and other young horror titles, this is the first book of "The

Goolz Next Door" series. When horror novelist Frank Goolz and his daughters, Ilona and Suzie, move next door, twelve-year-old Harold is only hoping to make exciting new friends. But he soon learns that Frank's books are actually based on real-life paranormal adventures. Suddenly a gift from Ilona seems much more dangerous than he ever imagined. Could it be fulfilling

Twelve-year-old Harold Bell lives a pretty normal life in his little seaside town. He fills his days with reading books, cruising down the boardwalk, and, unfortunately, trying to stay off the radar of Alex Hewitt and his pack of goons who can't resist bullying a boy in a wheelchair.

But everything changes when famous horror novelist Frank Goolz moves next door with his daughters - beautiful, fierce Ilona and her troublemaking little sister, Suzie. Harold soon learns that life with the Goolz is never quiet and it's definitely not normal. Frank's novels are, in fact, based on his family's real-life paranormal adventures,' the book explains.

At their home, lights flash inexplicably, objects move on their own, and grotesque specters appear in the attic. When Ilona gives Harold "the stone of the dead," he knows there's no going back. The stone can make things happen, but its powers can't be controlled. Bullies start vanishing, and



Gary Ghislain's "A Bad Night for Bullies".

it seems to be the work of a terrifying ghost who has attached herself to Harold. Could Harold unknowingly be causing the stone to fulfill his own darkest wishes? Ghislain was born in France to a Franco-

Spanish family. He grew up between Paris and the French Riviera. After receiving a Masters Degree in literature and linguistics at the University of Paris 8, he decided to travel the world.

English quickly became his everyday language, the one in which he writes and publishes his novels. He specializes in children's literature. He is the author of the critically acclaimed, multi-awards winning middle-grade series "The Goolz Next Door" and the sci-fi comedy "How I Stole Johnny Depp's Alien Girlfriend".

He currently lives in Antibes on the French Riviera where he continues to develop "The Goolz Next Door" universe.