



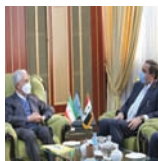
Trump died while JCPOA still alive

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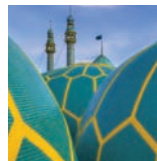
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No time left to waste

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Biden needs to quickly revive JCPOA

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America Today: Imperial pipe dreams die hard

BY AMIR MOHAMMAD ESMAEILI

TEHRAN - David Yaghoubian, a professor of history at California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB), tells the Tehran Times that the current chaotic situation in the U.S. revealed that American hegemony is declining and today the U.S., Israel, and Saudi Arabia have become weaker domestically and increasingly isolated on the international stage.

"Currently the U.S. global hegemon is experiencing what historians refer to as Late Stage Empire Collapse," Yaghoubian notes.

"This phase of decline is characterized by buffoonish, erratic, pseudo-populist political leadership, a growing perception of 'threats' both domestically and abroad, increasing curtailment of citizens' rights, massive military spending, a cult of militarism and accompanying jingoism and anti-intellectualism. In some cases, the provision of 'bread and circus' (sufficient distraction via food and entertainment as in the late Roman empire) can keep the increasingly impoverished citizens of the imperial metropole content enough to avert an internal uprising, but ultimately the self-inflicted damage to governing institutions and economic pressures lead to a total collapse of the system," argues Yaghoubian, the author of "Ethnicity, Identity, and the Development of Nationalism in Iran".

On the failure of American aggressive policies against the Iranian people, the historian says, "The fact that Iran has steadfastly conformed to international law while standing up to the world's wealthiest and powerful bullies alone by relying on the Iranian people, the resistance economy, domestic industrial and technological innovation, and strategic patience amounts to a much-needed slap in the face of imperial arrogance, and has elevated the global reputation of the Islamic Republic even further."

The following is the full text of the interview:

Scholars believe that the U.S. is declining. For instance, recently Richard Hass wrote that the "post-American era" has begun. What do you think?

A: The United States is indeed declining. Currently the U.S. global hegemon is experiencing what historians refer to as Late Stage Empire Collapse.

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Leader's message to the youth is independence at all levels: Lebanese sociologist

BY MOHAMMAD MAZHARI

TEHRAN – Head of the Center for Political Studies at the University of Lebanon says that Iran has enhanced a model of independence encouraging the countries to follow common interests and common security.

In a letter dated January 21, 2015, and another on November 29, 2015, Ayatollah Khamenei elaborated on the truth of Islam and malicious attempts by certain Western leaders to use terrorist acts as a pretext to distort the image of Islam.

The letters written by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution asked Western youths not to judge Islam based on the Charlie Hebdo attacks and other terrorist acts.

Ayatollah Khamenei's message in his letters to Western youth is "that we, in cooperation with the others, can apply such a model in all countries of the region and encourage the countries to follow common interests and common

security," Dr. Talal Atrissi tells the Tehran Times. The following is the text of interview:

Imam Khamenei penned two letters to young people in Europe and North America, censuring the power structures' attempts to marginalize Islamic thought. How do you see the impact of this message on the Western youth?

A: Regarding the letters that Imam Khamenei penned to young people in Europe and North America, the goal of these letters was to bypass Western media that do not present facts to their audience and society as well as young people in Europe and the United States.

Ayatollah Khamenei addressed the youths directly with the aim of finding out the facts through a message from the heart of the Islamic world because the Western media is misleading and does not convey the truth to the youth.

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Western COVID-19 vaccines: An iron fist in a velvet glove?

Since its emergence in Asia late last year, the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is the defining global health crisis of the 21st century and the most demanding challenge since World War Two. According to official statistics, we have reached the tragic milestone of one million deaths all over the world. Therefore, developing an effective vaccine to immunize people against this unprecedented public health emergency is now a major medical concern.

According to the World Health Organization, currently more than 230 pharmaceutical companies around the globe are working to develop the corona vaccine and more than 30 million vaccine doses have already been administered in 47 mostly high-income countries.

Meanwhile four drug giants have grabbed the headlines: Pfizer, Bionotech, Moderna

and Oxford as well as fierce controversy surrounding the safety of their products, possible adverse effects and efficacy let alone some lawsuits against them due to their products.

Herein, maybe Pfizer Inc., an American multinational pharmaceutical corporation as one of the world's largest pharmaceutical companies has hit the headlines at the most.

Undoubtedly, using vaccines can be considered as one of the safest and most secure methods to confront pandemics but against this background some critical questions may leap to mind:

Why COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy and skepticism are ever increasing, even in the U.S? For what causes are the so-called developed countries such as France, once a vaccine pioneer, so hesitant to get the shots?

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Iran's 'Venice', a lesser-known, must-see tourist destination

BY SAMANEH ABOUTALEBI

There is hardly anyone who has never heard of Italy's Venice, the stunning city on the water, with rivers instead of alleys, but on the other hand, it is hard to find anyone who has heard of the Iranian village of Sarakhyeh, known as Iran's Venice.

Situated in the middle of Shadegan wetland in the southwestern province of Khuzestan, Sarakhyeh is a top destination for the wetland's tourists, who also want to

witness slices of southern Iranian customs and traditions.

To pass through the village, villagers and tourists need to use a kind of wooden boat, known as Balam. Tourists also could rent boats to wander around the wetland and enjoy its natural beauties.

Sheltering different species of native and migratory birds, the village and its surrounding areas is a haven for birdwatchers. Furthermore, it is home to buffalo herds, which are captivating

for nature lovers.

The best season to visit the village is in winter when the weather is cool and mild. Tourists could also try swimming in the wetland while visiting the village if the tour guides ensure the safety of the area.

The villagers have prepared some pergolas with basic facilities for accommodation for the tourists; however, the travelers could stay in the nearby cities overnights.

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Army tests new electro-optic system

TEHRAN - Iran's Army Ground Force on Wednesday tested new indigenous electro-optic system in real combat conditions against mock enemy targets.

The Army started a two-day drill, codenamed "Authority 99", along the Makran coasts on the northern rims of the Sea of Oman, on Tuesday.

It used the mobile electro-optic system, called Jalal, to precisely monitor different areas and the zones of the maneuver.

The Ground Force also employed an indigenous mobile geographic information system (GIS) to facilitate the control and command of operations and the preparation and production of various geographical data and operational maps, Fars reported.

The system provides the commanders with their essential requirements for controlling and commanding operations in remote and operational zones as well as training areas.

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FFIRI's amended statutes paves the way to a new era: expert

BY FARROKH HESABI

TEHRAN - Houshang Nasirzadeh, the former head of the Legal Committee of the Iran Football Federation, says that in the amended statutes of football federation, the former players will have the right to participate in the presidential elections and it will be a good thing for football.

The Football Federation of the Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) sets to elect a new president on Feb. 28 as the date has been identified for the long-awaited presidential election of the federation.

The candidates of the FFIRI's presidential elections have registered to compete for the most coveted seat in the country's football.

The main candidates for the presidency of the football federation are the FFIRI Acting President Heydar Baharvand, the former member of the FFIRI board of directors, Shahaboddin Azizi-Khadem, Kiomars Hashemi, the former Deputy Minister of Sports, Mosataf Ajorlou, former General Manager of Pas football club, and most importantly, legendary Iranian footballer Ali Karimi.

Based on the football federation's announcement, the validity of the candidates will be announced 21 days before the day of holding the FFIRI's General Assembly. Accordingly, on Feb. 7, 2021, the electoral commission will officially announce the name of the candidates.

Houshang Nasirzadeh, the former head of the Legal Committee of the Iran Football Federation, said that the validation process has different stages which include checking the identity documents and work records of the candidates.

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Western COVID-19 vaccines: An iron fist in a velvet glove?

1 → As stated by the *Wall Street Journal*, France now meets some of the world's highest skepticism rates with only around 422,000 people receiving the vaccine in more than three weeks since European regulators authorized the drug, far behind most other developed nations.

Also, approximately, 4 out of 10 Americans say they would "definitely" or "probably" not get a vaccine, according to a *Pew Research Center* survey of 12,648 U.S. adults from Nov. 18 to 29, 2020.

Currently, the so-called resistance exists among health workers in the U.S., France, Norway and East European countries. As *Associated Press* reported on January 18, in countries like the Czech Republic, Serbia, Bosnia, Romania and Bulgaria, vaccine skeptics have included former presidents and even some doctors. For instance, Serbian tennis champion Novak Djokovic was among those who said he did not want to be forced to get the shot.

Additionally, the Islamic Republic of Iran as a nation facing the most unprecedented sanctions in the history of international relations by Western countries (ironically those vaccine-producing states) is facing harsh criticism for prohibiting import of American and British vaccines.

In a televised speech on January 8, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei banned the import of vaccines from American and British companies, emphasizing they are not reliable.

After these remarks, Iranian officials were accused of being pre-occupied with conspiracy theories and "depriving Iranian People from Highly Effective vaccines..."

Regardless of permanent anti-Iran propaganda, the fundamental question is: Why are American and British vaccines considered unreliable? For what reason, in the COVID-19 pandemic, which has so far claimed the lives of nearly 57,000 in Iran, the Leader of Islamic Revolution is underlining Western sanctions on Tehran? Is it really a conspiracy theory? Does politics overshadow health and lives of millions of Iranians? The answer lies in a brief overview of anti-Iran embargoes as well as inspection of some official records of lawsuits against the above-mentioned multinational drug giants.

Washington claims that food, medicine and other humanitarian supplies are exempt from sanctions that the U.S. imposed against Tehran after President Donald Trump walked away from the JCPOA in 2018. However, the U.S. measures targeting oil sales to shipping and financial transactions have deterred major foreign banks from doing business, including humanitarian deals, with Iran. Therefore, hundreds of Iranian patients suffering from rare disease such as Multiple Sclerosis (MS), some cancers and Epidermolysis Bullosa (EB), have had difficulty accessing medicine after the illegal sanctions were imposed. In fact, smart sanctions introduced during the Barack Obama administration targeted Iranian civilians, including patients in desperate need of vital medications.

In addition, amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. declared that the Trump administration would not offer sanctions relief to Iran. However, in paradoxical remarks, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said: "The whole world should know that humanitarian assistance to Iran is wide open, it's not sanctioned!"

Pfizer has faced thousands of lawsuits for medical injuries caused by some of its most widely-used medications as well as setting a record for the largest fine paid for a health care fraud by the U.S. Department of Justice.

It paid \$2.3 billion in fines, penalties, and settlement for illegal marketing claims. Some of the Pfizer lawsuits have been dismissed, some others settled, and several remain in court systems.

The Manhattan-based corporation also plays a determining role in United States politics.

In report aired by CNBC television on Dec 23 2020, Pfizer, BioNTech and Moderna have total immunity against lawsuits related to injuries resulting from the vaccine until 2024! It would be interesting to learn that COVID-19 vaccine was researched and developed in just eight months, breaking the speed record of four years.

One of the latest worrisome news about the adverse side effects of Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is reported from Norway. The country has reported mortalities among elderly recipients of the shots. A few others have developed severe but not fatal reaction called anaphylaxis.

Furthermore, in 2018, Pfizer came under scrutiny for raising the prices of 100 of the company's drugs. In July, Donald Trump blamed the company in a tweet stating that Pfizer "merely taking advantage of the poor & others unable to defend themselves."

Pfizer is also one of the single largest lobbying interests in United States politics. For example, in the first 9 months of 2009 Pfizer spent over \$16.3 million on lobbying congressional lawmakers, making it the sixth largest lobbying interest in the U.S.

According to U.S. State Department cables released by WikiLeaks, Pfizer "lobbied against New Zealand getting a free trade agreement with the United States because it objected to New Zealand's restrictive drug buying rules and tried to get rid of New Zealand's former health minister, Helen Clark, in 1990.

Stealing drug secrets

In fact, the U.S. medication producer reminds us of controversies, ranging from stealing drug secrets to the millions of dollars it spends on lobbying to tax cuts. According to a study in JAMA Internal Medicine, Pfizer spent \$219 million in lobbying and \$23 million in campaign contributions between 1999 and 2018.

Definitely, the above facts maybe just the tip of the iceberg. There exist several formal documents revealing hideous unethical clinical testing trials by U.S, German and British drug corporations in developing countries which have led to long lasting adverse effects on large populations.

For instance, in 2008, the Center for Research on Multinational Corporations released a document revealing numerous registered examples of unethical clinical testing in the 1990s and throughout the 2000s in the developing world, including Ugandan women taking the anti-transmission drug Nevirapine between 1997 and 2003. It resulted in thousands of serious adverse effects. By letting these symptoms go unreported, it led to the death of several African women.

Another shocking trial took place in India in 2003 in which eight subjects, even unaware of testing of the anti-clotting drug Streptokinase, died.

Besides, many European and American people have been victimized by a lengthy list of medications which found their way into marketplace without taking appropriate testing phases.

Among them Thalidomide scandal is one of the worst in the history of drug tragedies that led to "biggest man-made medical disaster ever" in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Pregnant women in 46 countries such as Spain, the UK, Australia, Canada and New Zealand as well as the U.S. used German pharmaceutical company Chemie Grunenthal drug thalidomide to treat morning sickness resulting in more than 10,000 children born with a range of severe deformities as well as thousands of miscarriages. But the FDA refused approval to the drug stressing that further studies were needed. Therefore, the similar impacts were much less limited in the U.S.

The above painful story of medial tragedies are still continuing, proving that now MONEY TALKS, not the call of conscience. Global health crises, such as the current pandemic, can be a sharp two-edged sword for nations falling in love by Western souvenirs wrapping their iron hand in a velvet glove.

EU's Borrell hopeful to see revival of JCPOA

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — European Union foreign policy chief Joseph Borrell has sharply criticized the Trump administration for the U.S withdrawal from the JCPOA and insists it is necessary the new U.S. President Joe Biden to rejoin the deal as soon as possible.

Borrell said Washington would save time by rejoining the Iran nuclear deal that Trump quit in 2018, rather than seeking to negotiate a new arms control accord.

Pointing out what first steps the Biden administration needs to take, Borrell said: "Stop threatening sanctions against everybody who is part of the economic relationship with Iran."

EU states, which welcomed the agreement in 2015, say Trump's broad economic sanctions on Iran have provoked Tehran into violating the deal's restrictions.

However two of President Joe Biden's top national security nominees said on Tuesday that new U.S. administration does not intend to rejoin the nuclear deal quickly.

Biden has said that if Tehran resumed strict compliance with the 2015 agreement under which Iran restrained its nuclear program in return for termination of economic sanctions Washington would too.

"We are a long way from there," Antony



Blinken, Biden's choice for secretary of state, told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, saying the Biden administration will have to see whether Iran actually resumes complying with the pact.

"We would then have to evaluate whether

they were actually making good if they say they are coming back into compliance with their obligations, and then we would take it from there," he noted, saying Biden's ultimate goal will be a deal that also restricts Iran's missile program and support for regional

Iran's missile program not subject to negotiation, Zarif says

1 → Americans need to abdicate this idea that they have always had and say, 'What I have is mine and what you have can be negotiated.' If this idea has influenced other countries, it will not influence the Islamic Republic of Iran," the foreign minister noted.

Zarif added, "We agreed from the beginning (of nuclear negotiations) that regional and missile issues will not be negotiated in the JCPOA."

Under the terms agreed in the 2015 nuclear deal, the UN arms embargo on Iran expired on 18 October 2020.

Iran has been insisting that its missile program is exclusively deterrent and will not negotiate on it.

"We agreed restrictions on arms (purchase) continue for five years and limits on the missiles continue eight years," Zarif reminded.

"This (missile) issue was raised but we refused to negotiate over it and we paid a price for not talking (about it)."

President Joe Biden's secretary of state nominee said on Tuesday that the incoming administration would seek a "longer and stronger" nuclear agreement with Iran as he laid out a foreign-policy vision for the next four years.

However, Antony Blinken also said Washington is a "long way" from reaching a new accord with Tehran.

"We would have to see, once the president is in office,

what steps Iran actually takes" and evaluate whether "they're coming back into compliance with their obligations," Blinken told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee during his confirmation hearing on January 19.

Blinken said the 2015 agreement would be "a platform" for a "longer and stronger agreement" that would include other issues such as Iran's missile program.

A professor from the George Washington University has suggested that Iran should not compromise on its defensive missile program in case the Biden administration is willing to rejoin the nuclear deal.

"Iran's missiles should be non-negotiable," Hossein Askari told the Tehran Times in an exclusive interview.

Professor Askari cites certain reasons why Iran should not forego its rights to defensive missile program.

"Iran is surrounded by adversaries, including the United States, who are much better armed with missiles, sophisticated planes and warheads and even nuclear warheads. And these countries have a history of attacking others, something that Iran has not done for centuries," Askari noted.

Takht Ravanchi has had no negotiations with Biden team

Zarif also refuted a claim by the French newspaper that Majid Takht Ravanchi, Iran's representative to the UN, had



consulted with Joe Biden's team about the JCPOA in New York.

"He (Takht Ravanchi) just returned to New York on Monday, and will usually be quarantined for a week after his return," Zarif added.

Zarif described the report by Figaro as "very incalculable". The French newspaper had reported that about three weeks ago, Biden's pick for the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield and her Iranian counterpart began behind-the-scenes negotiations.

Expert enumerates nine hurdles to revitalizing JCPOA

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — A West Asia security and nuclear policy specialist at Princeton University, enumerates nine hurdles to revitalize the nuclear deal – JCPOA - that Iran signed with the 5+1 nations - the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany - in July 2015.

For example Seyed Hossein Mousaviani points to the "snapback" mechanism in the JCPOA which only favors the 5+1 nations.

"The 'snapback' mechanism built into the agreement allows any country to force the UN Security Council to reimpose multilateral sanctions against Iran if Iran fails to fulfill its commitments. But this is one-sided: There is no such remedy for Iran if other parties fail to do their part," Mousaviani writes.

The article was published on Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists on January 19, one day before Joe Biden was officially sworn in as U.S. President.

Following is the text of the article headlined "Nine hurdles to reviving the Iran nuclear deal":

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on January 8 that Tehran was in no rush for the United States to rejoin the 2015 nuclear deal formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), but, he also said, sanctions on Iran must be lifted immediately.

"If the sanctions are lifted, the return of the Americans makes sense," he insisted. President-elect Joe Biden has announced his plan to return to the deal soon after he is sworn into office. "If Iran returns to strict compliance with the nuclear deal," he wrote in an op-ed for CNN, "the United States would rejoin." His Iranian counterpart, President Hassan Rouhani, has also expressed willingness to return to the deal, stating that, "Iran could come into compliance with the agreement within an hour of the United States doing so."

Five years ago, after years of intensive negotiations, six world powers managed to sign the world's most comprehensive nuclear agreement with Iran. While the agreement was a political one, it was also ratified by the UN Security Council in Resolution 2231. And,

according to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the organization tasked with verifying the agreement's technical aspects, Iran was fully complying with the deal for about three years, until President Trump withdrew from it in May 2018. In response to the U.S. violations of the nuclear agreement, Iran too reduced some of its commitments. Most recently, on January 4, Iran announced that it had increased its uranium enrichment levels to 20 percent.

Although reviving the agreement is certainly still possible, it won't be easy. The two sides will need to overcome nine hurdles to make it happen.

First, the sequencing of a mutual return could be an immediate problem. Iran expects the United States to lift sanctions first, because it was the Trump administration that withdrew first. While Tehran's demand is legitimate, Washington may ask that Iran come into full compliance before lifting sanctions. Indeed, a straightforward reading of the quotation from Joe Biden's op-ed suggests just that. In this scenario, after Joe Biden's executive order rejoining the deal, Iran and the world powers can meet and agree on a realistic plan with a specified timeline of proportionate reciprocal actions.

Second is the issue of what compliance constitutes. During the Obama administration there was one major barrier to the full realization of the terms of the agreement: Many U.S. primary sanctions, targeting U.S. citizens and permanent residents, organizations, and individuals that engage in trade and business with their Iranian counterparts, remained intact. These sanctions limited the economic benefits of the deal for Iran. The 29th paragraph of the deal clearly states that all signatories will refrain from any policy specifically intended to directly and adversely affect the normalization of trade and economic relations with Iran. This cannot be achieved without abolishing the primary sanctions.

Third, the Trump administration imposed numerous sanctions against Iran under the guise of terrorism and human rights, aimed at preventing the Biden administration from re-

turning to the deal. For a clean implementation of the agreement, Biden will need to remove all of these sanctions as well.

Fourth, Trump's withdrawal from the agreement and violation of the UN Security Council Resolution 2231 as well as other international commitments has damaged U.S. credibility abroad. There is now a widespread belief among policy makers in Iran that the United States will simply not live up to its end of the bargain, no matter what that bargain is. This naturally raises the important question: What guarantees are there that the United States will remain committed to the deal in the post-Biden era?

Fifth, because of Trump's maximum pressure policy, the Iranian economy has suffered hundreds of billions of dollars of losses while Iran was in full compliance with the terms and conditions of the deal. Some Iranian leaders, including Iran's foreign minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, have demanded compensation for the economic damage the country suffered after the United States withdrew. The challenge will be to find a mechanism to compensate for the economic damages that the Trump administration inflicted on the Iranian economy.

Sixth, the "snapback" mechanism built into the agreement allows any country to force the UN Security Council to reimpose multilateral sanctions against Iran if Iran fails to fulfill its commitments. But this is one-sided: There is no such remedy for Iran if other parties fail to do their part. This became abundantly clear when the Trump administration first withdrew from the deal and then tried to unilaterally re-impose multilateral sanctions on Iran through the snapback mechanism. It was as if the injurer was demanding punishment for the injured. Although the UN Security Council rejected the U.S. demand, the stunt revealed the structural flaw of the snapback.

Seventh, in the first week of December 2020, the Iranian parliament passed a bill mandating Iran's Atomic Energy Organization to resume enriching uranium to 20 percent purity. The legislation also requires the Iranian government to cease voluntary

Army tests new electro-optic system

reconnaissance operations to monitor the foreign vessels in international waters.

It is worth mentioning Brigade 223 of the Ground Force carried out airborne and invasion operations

influence.

He added, "If Iran comes back into compliance we would, too, but we would use that as a platform with our allies and partners who would once again be on the same side with us, to seek a longer and stronger agreement."

Trump abandoned the nuclear deal in May 2018 and introduced the harshest sanctions on Iran in line with his "maximum pressure" campaign against the Islamic Republic. Exactly, after waiting for a whole year, Iran said its strategic patience is over and started to gradually remove limits, increasing its stockpile of low enriched uranium, enriching uranium to higher levels of purity and installing centrifuges. Iran did this after the remaining parties to the deal, especially Europeans failed to protect Iran's from Trump's sanctions.

Avril Haines, Biden's nominee for director of national intelligence, speaking earlier at her own confirmation hearing at the Senate, also suggested a decision to return to the agreement was not imminent.

She emphasized, "(Biden) has indicated that if Iran were to come back into compliance that he would direct that we do so as well. And I think, frankly, that we are a long ways from that."

along the coastal lines and returned to their bases by the Airborne Unit's helicopters rapidly.

No time left to waste

Biden needs to quickly revive JCPOA

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The clock is ticking on the Biden administration's promise to rejoin the 2015 nuclear deal because Iran has waited for so long to see a wise leadership taking the helm in Washington. Therefore, any procrastination on part of the United States under President Joe Biden will most likely spell the end of the nuclear deal, which has now been on life support of more than two years.

"The ball is in the U.S. court now," Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said at a cabinet session on Wednesday, in the latest sign that the U.S. should take the first step to revive the nuclear deal because it was the U.S., not Iran, that withdrew from the deal — officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) — in May 2018.

Former President Donald Trump pulled the U.S. out of the Iran nuclear deal in 2018, calling it the worst deal in history, and vowing to replace it with a "better" deal with Iran; one that would put permanent restrictions on Iran's nuclear program, curb Iran's missile program and reign in its influence in the West Asia region. To this end, Trump imposed a multitude of sanctions on Iran with the purpose of forcing it into accepting his demands through strangling its economy. Trump failed to make any breakthroughs with Iran and came close to an all-out war with the Islamic Republic on several occasions.

On the other hand, Iran exercised maximum restraint in the face of what came to be known as "maximum pressure campaign," a U.S. policy that aims to choke off Iran's economy in order to push it into reopening the JCPOA. Tolerating all kinds of pressure from the Trump administration, Iran decided to remain a JCPOA participant state while chipping away at its commitments under the pact. On the first anniversary of the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA, Iran took the



step to gradually reduce its nuclear commitments. Iran suspended the implementation of some JCPOA obligations in five steps, all of which were taken in line with the terms of the nuclear deal.

Meanwhile, the European signatories to the JCPOA — France, Germany and the UK (collectively known as E3) — sought to convince Iran into remaining in the deal by vowing to provide Iran some relief of the U.S. sanctions. The E3 floated the idea of establishing a barter trade mechanism to bypass U.S. sanctions on Iran. The idea culminated in the E3 establishing a barter mechanism called INSTEX, which failed to facilitate to even humanitarian trade with Iran. Of course, the Europeans blamed the failure of the mechanism on Iran. But this did not change the fact that Europe miserably failed to preserve the JCPOA by securing Iran's economic interests.

However, despite the U.S. unprecedented pressures, Iran continued to honor the core commitments of the deal, giving the

International Atomic Energy Agency's international inspectors regular access to its nuclear facilities even during the process of reducing nuclear commitments. In fact, Iran has never moved to restrict, let alone cut, the UN nuclear watchdog's inspections of its nuclear plants.

Unlike what the U.S. and its European allies claim, Iran has strictly complied with its nuclear commitments even when it began to walk away from some of its JCPOA commitments. At the end of the day, all Iran's nuclear measures were done under the watchful eyes of IAEA inspectors.

In a nutshell, Iran made a strategic decision to abide by its nuclear obligations over the course of the Trump administration in the hope of reviving the JCPOA under a wise and different administration in Washington, though the E3 failed to compensate Iran for the loss caused by the Trump administration.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif reminded the E3 of this fact in mid-January when he strongly respond-

ed to remarks by his French counterpart Jean-Yves Le Drian who called for "tough discussions" with Iran over its missile program and regional influence.

The French foreign minister pointed out that the return of Iran and the U.S. to the nuclear deal would not be enough because there is a need to talk about other issues.

"Tough discussions will be needed over ballistic proliferation and Iran's destabilization of its neighbors in the region," the French foreign minister told the Journal du Dimanche newspaper, according to a Reuters report.

Zarif told Le Drian the E3 failed to honor their JCPOA commitments and if the deal is still alive, it's only because of Iran.

"E3 leaders—who rely on signature of OFAC functionalities to carry out their obligations under JCPOA—have done ZILCH to maintain JCPOA. Remember @EmmanuelMacron's stillborn initiative or UK non-payment of court-ordered debt? JCPOA is alive because of Iran and not E3, @JY_LeDrian," Zarif tweeted on January 17.

But Iran may soon give up on its hope to revive the JCPOA if the Biden administration raises time-wasting, non-nuclear issues and fails to seize on the momentum created by the new U.S. president's desire to revive deals such as the Paris climate accord that were jettisoned by Trump. Iran tolerated at least two years of unprecedented pressure to preserve the JCPOA. And this seemed to be affordable for Iran given the huge challenges Trump faced before the 2020 U.S. presidential election. But now if President Biden reneges on his campaign promise to rejoin the JCPOA one way or another, Iran may find no reason to cling to a deal it did not benefit from. Therefore, the Biden administration does not enjoy the luxury of having some more time to repair what Trump destroyed.

Iraqi, British officials discuss Iran-U.S. rift

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Qasim al-Araji, Iraq's national security advisor, has discussed with the British ambassador to Iraq, Stephen Hickey, the necessity to put an end to disagreements between Iran and the United States.

During his meeting with Hickey, al-Araji pointed to the need to make joint efforts to end Iran-U.S. disagreements and create a more stable situation to resolve crises in a way that serves the interests of the region's states and nations, the Iraqi al-Sabah newspaper reported on Wednesday.

During the meeting, the need for the new U.S. administration to deal with the crisis between Tehran and Washington was also underlined, according to a



statement issued by al-Araji.

The statement also said that the Iraqi national security advisor discussed with the British ambassador ways to enhance security and intelligence cooperation in the field of combating terrorism, as well as intensifying international efforts, to spare the region more crises, and to achieve the desired stability in the region and the world at large.

"Al-Araji explained the importance of joint action to end Iranian-American differences, and create a more stable environment, to dismantle and solve crises, for the good of the countries and peoples of the region and the world," the statement noted.

Zarif holds phone talks with Turkish counterpart ahead of Caucasus tour

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif spoke by phone with his Turkish counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu on Tuesday night.

"During the phone call, the two sides discussed the latest developments in bilateral relations in various areas of mutual cooperation," Iran's Foreign Ministry said in a short statement on Tuesday.

In remarks on Wednesday, Zarif described his phone call as "good."

"We are talking to Turkey. Last night I had a good telephone conversation with Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu," Zarif told the Iranian Akhbarin Khabar news website.

The conversation comes before an imminent visit by Zarif to a number of Caucasus countries and Russia.

The tour includes Baku, Moscow, Yerevan and Tbilisi. Zarif did not say whether his telephone conversation with his Turkish counterpart had something to do with his imminent tour but he said he will travel to countries that can contribute to resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh crisis.

"I intend to travel to countries that can work together to help the Nagorno-Karabakh crisis and the situation of peace and stability in the region," Zarif said.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson

Maria Zakharova said on Friday that the Iranian foreign minister will pay a visit to Moscow on January 26 to hold talks with his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov.

She added that the two foreign ministers are expected to continue exchanging views on international issues including the situation around the Nagorno-Karabakh region and also the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) as well as the situation in Syria, Afghanistan, and the Persian Gulf region.

Zarif said that the dates of his trips to the Republic of Azerbaijan, Russia, Armenia, and Georgia have already been set and he is waiting for the result of his Covid-19 test.

Iran and Russia enjoy close coordination in various fields, which is evident from the number of Zarif's visit to Russia since he took office. So far, he has paid 31 visits to Russia five of which took place in 2020.

The Russian foreign minister has said that the high number of Zarif's visits to Russia is indicative of a very good relationship between Tehran and Moscow. The upcoming visit will take place ahead of major JCPOA developments as the new U.S. administration has publicly expressed interest in rejoining the nuclear pact, though it is yet to provide any plan to reenter the pact.

Iran welcomes Qatari call for regional dialogue

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iran has welcomed the Qatari foreign minister's call for a dialogue between Iran and the Persian Gulf's Arab states.

"Iran welcomes my brother FM @MBA_AIThani's call for inclusive dialogue in our region. As we have consistently emphasized, the solution to our challenges lies in collaboration to jointly form a 'strong region': peaceful, stable, prosperous & free from global or regional hegemony," Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said in a tweet on Tuesday night.

The tweet came after Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani called for dialogue between Iran and its Arab neighbors to resolve outstanding differences. The chief Qatari diplomat once again expressed hope that a summit between leaders of the six-member Persian Gulf Cooperation Council and Iran would happen.

"We are hopeful that this [summit] would happen and we still believe that this should happen. And I think this is also a desire that being shared among the other GCC countries. I just mentioned to you that there is a difference between the countries on the way how to approach such a dialogue. Also from the Iranian side. They have expressed their willingness several times to engage with the GCC countries,"

he said in an interview with Bloomberg TV.

Bin Abdulrahman underlined that the time should come when the Persian Gulf's Arab states will sit at the table with Iran and reach a common understanding. "We have to live with each other. We cannot change geography. Iran cannot move the GCC away from its neighborhood and the GCC cannot move Iran from the neighborhood," he continued.

The Qatari foreign minister voiced readiness to facilitate dialogue between Iran and the GCC or support anyone facilitating such a dialogue.

He also expressed hope that the much-anticipated talks between Iran and the U.S. on the 2015 nuclear deal — officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) — would help soothe the tensions between Iran and its Arab neighbors.

Bin Abdulrahman expressed hope that what will happen between Iran and the U.S. on the JCPOA would contribute to resolving the differences between Iran and the GCC. "Of course, things are interconnected at the end of the day," he noted, adding that Qatar will support negotiations between the stakeholders.

"We will be welcoming this idea. We maintain a good relationship with the U.S. and we maintain a good relationship with Iran," bin Abdulrahman stated.

SPORTS

FFIRI's amended statutes paves the way to a new era: expert

1→ "In the previous version of the FFIRI's statutes, the candidacy validations were examined by a three-member committee including the secretary general of the football federation, a representative of the Ministry of Sports, and a legal expert," said Nasirzadeh in an exclusive interview with Tehran Times.

"But after the amendment of the statutes, now a committee elected by the Assembly of the Football Federation is responsible for reviewing the qualifications of the presidential candidates," he added.

It was in 2020 October that FIFA approved that the football federation's new statutes. Then the statutes were approved by the General Assembly of the FFIRI, and after that, the elections' date was set by the assembly.

Nasirzadeh believes that the presence of football figures like Ali Karimi in the elections will be good for Iranian football.

"Based on the FFIRI's amended statutes, the former football players can register for the different positions of the federation. I believe that it will pave the way to a new era. However, nothing is clear about who will win the election, and also it is not guaranteed if a former football star will be a good president for the FFIRI. There was a constant criticism of why football figures are not running in the football federation elections but now the opportunity has been provided for them to register and compete for the presidency of the football federation," Nasirzadeh concluded.

Iran's NPC Athletes Council elected

SPORTS **TEHRAN** — Nine Para athletes were elected as the members of Iran's National Paralympic Committee (NPC) Athletes' Council on Wednesday for a four-year term.

The Council will serve as a consulting body between the NPC and its athletes and should be the voice of all current, future and retired Para athletes. The Council's mission is to ensure that the Para athletes can play the role at the decision-making processes both on and off the field of play.



The Council will act in line with International Paralympic Committee (IPC)'s policy to ending unlawful discrimination for every single person. IPC pursues greater equality in areas such as race, gender and sexuality.

In order to be eligible to be a member of the Athletes' Council, an individual had to be an active Paralympic athlete, or have competed in the Paralympic Games within the previous eight years.

1. Zahra Nemati (Para Archery)
2. Javad Hardani (Para Athletics)
3. Sajad Mohamaddian (Para Athletic)
4. Davoud Alipourian (Sitting Volleyball)
5. Sadegh Bigdeli (Sitting Volleyball)
6. Ahmadrza Shah-Hossein (Five-a-side Football)
7. Samira Eram (Para Shooting)
8. Gholamreza Rahimi (Para Archery)
9. Sadegh Kalhor (Para Ski)

Mes Rafsanjan beat Paykan: IPL

SPORTS **TEHRAN** — Mes Rafsanjan football team defeated Paykan 3-2 in Matchday 12 of Iran Professional League (IPL) on Wednesday.

In the match held in Tehran, Mohammad Sattari scored for the hosts just eight minutes into the match. Faraz Emamali leveled the score with five minutes left to the halftime.

Mes striker Sajad Ashouri made it 2-1 four minutes into the second half but Mohammadamin Darvishi equalized the match in the 55th minute.

Emamali, who had scored a winner against Machine Sazi last week, found the back of the net in the 79th minute to seal another three points for his team.

Mes forward Mohammad Ghazi was sent off in the final minutes of the match after receiving his second yellow card.

In Isfahan, Zob Ahan registered their eighth draw from 12 matches. Rahman Rezaei's team played out a goalless draw against Naft Masjed Soleyman.

Shahr Khodro also defeated Nassaji 1-0 in Mashhad thanks to the Amin Ghaseminezhad's first half goal.

Esteghlal sit top of the table with 22 points from 11 matches.

Daei says Ronaldo deserves to break his goalscoring record

SPORTS **TEHRAN** — Iran legend Ali Daei says that Cristiano Ronaldo deserves to break his goalscoring record for the most strikes in the international football.

Daei scored 109 times in 149 appearances for Iran, while Ronaldo now sits on 102 goals in 170 matches for Portugal. Ronaldo has a chance to improve his record in matches against Azerbaijan or Luxembourg.

"Nobody deserves to break my record more than Ronaldo," Daei said in an interview with Kicker.

"He is without a doubt the best footballer of all time. I am convinced that there is a reward for the people who work hard and are determined, so he deserves it," he added.

Trump died while JCPOA still alive: Rouhani

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday that the outgoing U.S. president, Donald Trump, who withdrew the U.S. from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal in 2018, died while the deal is still alive.

Speaking at a cabinet session, Rouhani pointed to the Trump administration's efforts to kill the nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"Trump died while the JCPOA remained alive. He did everything in his power to destroy the JCPOA. Hardliners of Saudi Arabia and Israel also did the same thing. [But] today the JCPOA is still alive and even more vibrant than yesterday. He's gone with his bad track record while Iran remained in place with its resistant track record," Rouhani asserted.

Rouhani addressed the current situation in the U.S. and what Trump has done over the course of his presidency.

"Today, the dark chapter of Trump will be closed forever. This guy, whose ominous administration is reaching the end, has left a legacy of polarizing American society over the past four years. On the inauguration day, Washington D.C. has

turned into a garrison town. All these troops came to the city to maintain its security. And this is the outcome of Trump's naïve and authoritarian works, which polarized American society," Rouhani stated, adding that Trump's legacy is the U.S. isolation in the international arena.

"Stupid terrorist"

According to Rouhani, the U.S. was left alone in its anti-JCPOA campaign and when it decided to restore a UN arms embargo against Iran, it incurred a defeat. The Iranian president described Trump as a "stupid terrorist" because he ordered the strike that assassinated the top Iranian general, Qassem Soleimani, who was assassinated in an American drone strike near Baghdad's international airport on January 3, 2020.

Underlining the end of Trump's political life, Rouhani also called on the incoming Biden administration to return to commitments and clear the stains of the past four years.

"The last four years were replete with cruelty and law-breaking. [But] Today, we expect the incoming U.S. administration to return to the rule of law and commit themselves, and if they can, in the next four years, to remove all the black spots

of the previous four years," Rouhani pointed out.

"The ball is in the U.S. court now"

The Iranian president said the new U.S. administration should return to international regulations and resolutions including UN Security Council Resolution 2231, which endorsed the JCPOA in 2015.

"If they (the Biden administration) sincerely return to law, it's naturally we will return to our commitments. It became clear for the world and our nation that the policy of maximum pressure and economic terrorism against Iran has failed 100%," Rouhani stated.

The Iranian president also said the ball is in the U.S. court and that the U.S. needs to return to the JCPOA.

"The ball is in the U.S. court now. If Washington returns to Iran's 2015 nuclear deal, we will also fully respect our commitments under the deal," he remarked.

The remarks came after Antony Blinken, Biden's choice for secretary of state, called for patience before making any decision on the JCPOA. He said on Tuesday Washington would not take a quick decision on whether to rejoin the JCPOA.

Iran’s foreign debts nearly zero

1 → External debt is the portion of a country's debt that is borrowed from foreign lenders including commercial banks, governments or international financial institutions. These loans, including interest, must usually be paid in the currency in which the loan was made.



Foreign debt as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is the ratio between the debt a country owes to non-resident creditors and its nominal GDP.

Iran’s external debt has been falling in recent years following a downward trend.

2,200 industrial, mining units active in free, special zones

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The secretary of Iranian Free Zones High Council announced that 2,200 industrial and mining units are now active in the country’s free trade zones and special economic zones.

Morteza Bank has also said that despite the limitations and barriers due to the foreign currency, tax and customs issues, as well as the sanctions, and coronavirus pandemic, some valuable achievements are witnessed in terms of investment making in the free trade zones and special economic zones of the country.

The data released by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs show that 89.843 trillion rials (about \$2.139 billion) of domestic investment has been made in Iran’s special economic zones during the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19, 2020), which has been 173 percent more than the figure of its preceding year.



The establishment of free trade zones in Iran dates back to Iranian calendar year 1368 (March 1989- March 1990) following the fall in the country’s oil income in the preceding year which prompted the government to promote non-oil exports.

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

CFZO, IFO ink cooperation MOU to promote fishery industry

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran Fisheries Organization (IFO) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Chabahar Free Zone Organization (CFZO) to cooperate for promoting fishery activities in Chabahar port.

The MOU was signed by CFZO Head Abdolrahim Kordi and the Head of IFO Nabiollah Khoun-Mirzaei, IRNA reported.

As reported, the MOU covers cooperation in a variety of areas including the development of fishing activities, aquaculture development, education, theoretical and applied fisheries research and the construction, equipping, management, and maintenance of fishing infrastructure, as well as marketing, sales, and export of fishery products.

Speaking in the signing ceremony, Kordi mentioned the country’s great capacities for the development of fishery activities, saying: “According to official reports on fisheries capacities in the country, it is clear that these conditions and capacities are a great opportunity in which we can make an important contribution.”



“Currently, more than half of the households living on the Makran shores are working at sea and mainly in the field of fisheries, so any event in the field of fisheries will surely have a significant impact on the livelihood of the people living in this region,” he said.

Implementing a fisheries and aquaculture export terminal, establishing an exchange market for fishery products, and market regulation through supporting the business in this industry are other important issues under consideration by the two sides, Kordi noted.

He further stated that by signing this memorandum and strengthening cooperation between the two organizations, they can have a positive effect on the local economy and consequently the country’s economy.

Khoun-Mirzaei for his part expressed satisfaction with the outcome of the negotiations and the signing of the mentioned memorandum and said: “We hope that the existing capacities will be implemented well in accordance with the content of the signed MOU.”

“I am very optimistic that the Chabahar Free Zone Organization can remove many of the obstacles and problems in the way of fisheries affairs in the region and accelerate the implementation process, and the existence of legal authority and strong will in the Chabahar Free Zone Organization and the Fisheries Organization can increase this capacity,” he said.

Iran urges S. Korea to compensate for 2-year delay in oil payments

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The Governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Abdolnaser Hemmati has said that South Korean banks must compensate for the damages caused by the two years of delay in freeing Iran’s oil money.

“We believe that Korean banks should compensate the Islamic Republic of Iran for the damage suffered during these two years; Of course, the amount of this compensation is a technical issue and must be determined by banking and financial experts,” Hemmati told Bloomberg on Tuesday.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has been prevented from using its funds with Korean banks due to the Korean banks’ full compliance with the maximum pressure policy of the United States against Iran, he said.

This policy is against international law and not justified by legal principles, Hemmati stressed.

He noted that the Korean side has the



political will to resolve the issue and enable Iran to make use of its assets, but the problem is that they want to comply with

the U.S. policies and regulations as well.

The official further mentioned some of the issues that are in the way of Iran us-

ing its oil money in South Korea, saying: “Iranian banks and financial institutions, including the Central Bank of Iran, are listed by the U.S. Treasury as sanctioned entities. Unfortunately, the Korean government has succumbed to the pressure and, unlike some other countries, refuses to cooperate with Iran.”

“Our other partners could find some ways so that we can use resources to import humanitarian goods, but the Korean government did not propose any reliable channel in this regard. The funds are held with Korean banks which have business with the U.S. banks and they take it as an excuse that the funds are Korean won and cannot be converted into euro directly,” he explained.

He finally noted that South Korean authorities have promised to do whatever they could in order to release Iran’s frozen assets. s was not the first time they are making such promises,” the governor added.

Iran, Russia hold webinar on expansion of industrial co-op

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran and Russia’s industrial officials held an industrial-trade webinar on Tuesday for exploring the expansion of cooperation in this sector, especially in the auto industry and shipbuilding, IRNA reported.

The online event was attended by senior officials from the two countries including Iran’s Deputy Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister Hamid Zadboum, and his Russian counterpart Oleg Ryzantsev, as well as Iran’s envoy to Moscow Kazem Jalali.

Speaking in the webinar, Zadboum expressed satisfaction with the increase in the volume of trade between the two countries in the previous year, saying: “We are pleased with the increase in trade between Iran and Russia last year, and we hope that bilateral trade will increase further due to the large capacities of the two countries.”

Referring to some problems that Iranian traders including dairy producers are facing for exports to Russia, Zadboum

said: “Iranian dairy products are of very good quality; the Institute of Standards and Industrial Research of Iran is very strict about the quality of goods. We have a duty to check the restrictions on the export of dairy products as well as Iranian tomatoes to Russia.”

He expressed hope that with the cooperation of the two sides such restrictions on exports would be removed in the future.

Russia’s Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade Oleg Ryzantsev for his part said that the Russian side hopes for constructive talks with Iran.

“I consider today’s conference as a prelude to holding a meeting of an Iran-Russia industry working group within the framework of the two countries’ Joint Economic Committee.”

Elsewhere in the webinar, Kazem Jalali offered the establishment of joint commercial and industrial holdings with the aim of optimal use of the green customs corridor



between the two sides, saying: “The joint cooperation of the two countries’ holdings can play an important role in the development of trade relations between Iran and Russia.”

TEDPIX gains 33,000 points on Wednesday

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — TEDPIX, the main index of the Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), rose 33,230 points on Wednesday.

Over 5.967 billion securities worth 68.614 trillion rials (about \$1.633 billion) were traded at the TSE on Wednesday.

The first market’s index rose 28,633 points and the second market’s index increased 52,135 points.

TEDPIX had dropped 6.5 percent in the past Iranian calendar week.

The index stood at 1.229 million points on January 15 (the last working day of the week).

During the past week, the indices of Mobarakeh Steel Company, Iran Khodro Group, Social Security Investment Company, Saipa Company, and National Iranian Copper Industry Company were the most widely followed indices.



Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Farhad Dejpasand has recently said that the stock market is now on the right track and has reached a stage that can be trusted in terms of performance.

“Except for the peripheral variables that affect this market, we do not have a specific market disturbance”, the minister stated.

Inflation rate up 1.7%: SCI

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The Statistical Center of Iran (SCI) announced that the inflation rate in the twelve-month period ended on January 19, which marks the end of the tenth Iranian calendar month of Dey, stood at 32.2 percent, rising 1.7 percent from the figure for the twelve-month period ended on the last day of the ninth month.

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

The statement published on the website of the CBI read, “Given the adopted policies and taken measures and also taking the country’s macro-economic factors into account, the CBI believes



that based on the realistic scenarios, the inflation rate in the current year will continue its downward trend.”

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

Trade between Iran, China declines 15% in 9 months on year

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The value of trade between Iran and China has fallen 15 percent during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-December 20, 2020), from the same period of time in the past year.

According to the data released by the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TC-CIMA)’s Office of Economic Investigations, Iran-China trade stood at \$13.4 billion in the nine-month period of this year.

Iran’s export to China was \$6.4 billion, falling 15 percent year on year, while its import from that country stood at \$7 billion, dropping 14.7 percent.

According to the previous data released by the General Administration of Customs of the People’s Republic of China, Iran’s trade with its top trading partner China stood at \$11.19 billion in the first nine months of 2020, registering a



38.5 percent decline compared to the same period in 2019. Iran-China trade in the January-September period

of 2019 exceeded \$18.17 billion.

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

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

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

Approximately 80 percent of China’s total imports from Iran are oil and the rest are mineral and chemical products.

138 idle industrial units revived in West Azarbaijan Province

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The head of Industry, Mining and Trade Department of West Azarbaijan Province, in northwest Iran, said that 138 idle industrial units have been revived in the province in the current Iranian calendar year (began on March 20, 2020).

Gholamreza Babaei said 12.398 trillion rials (about \$295.19 million) of investment has been made for the mentioned units to return to the production cycle, creating jobs for 2,319 persons.

He said the amount of investment made in this due shows a 92-percent rise year on year. The acting head of Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO) has announced that 1,170 idle industrial units have been revived in the country during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-December 20, 2020).

Asghar Mosaheb said that reviving the

mentioned units has created jobs for 19,446 persons.

The official said there are over 46,000 small and medium-sized industrial units in Iran’s industrial parks and zones, of them about 9,200 units are inactive.

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

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

According to Mosaheb, preventing the inactive status of the industrial units is a major plan of ISIPO, while lack of liquidity, problems in terms of supplying raw materials and machinery, and absence of market are the main reasons making the units inactive.

ISIPO’s Previous Head Mohsen Salehnia

had said that providing liquidity is the main issue for many of the country’s production units, so based on the arrangements made, these units can receive part of their needed liquidity through bank facilities.

“Currently, the share of the country’s production and industrial units in receiving bank facilities is about 31 percent and it is necessary to allocate a larger share of banking facilities to the country’s production and industry,” he had stated.

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

To this end, the current Iranian calendar year has been named the year of “Surge in Production”, and all governmental bodies, as well as the private sector, are moving in line with the materialization of this motto.



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

The ministry’s seven main axes of the surge in production are going to be pursued under 40 major programs.

Leader's message to the youth is independence at all levels: Lebanese sociologist

1 → The idea of writing these two letters was to shed light on the reality of the Islamic world, extremist movements, and the role of Western youth in understanding what is going on and in order to open a horizon for fair and just relations with the Islamic world. In fact, this move was unprecedented all around the Islamic world.

Why did Ayatollah Khamenei address the youth rather than Western politicians?

Because the political officials in the West are not ready for an equal dialogue; a dialogue that recognizes the other side as a true partner.

Officials in Western countries, in general, do not recognize the other and non-Western, and they consider other peoples and other countries, especially those in the Islamic world, as inferior, less civilized, and lower culturally and even in human values.

Therefore, they deal with our countries as places to obtain more wealth or dictate our governments their orders.

Therefore, they do not need or are not convinced of the idea of equal dialogue in which the common interests between the two parties are discussed.

For this reason, the idea of going to the youth is to go beyond political officials and Western media, and their published writings and literature that insult the Islamic world and portray it as a backward world.

That is why Ayatollah Khamenei bets on young people because they can understand this message; they can think about it and compare what was mentioned in these two letters and what the media present in terms of distortion or in an attempt to distort the facts.

Addressing the youth is an attempt, to be frank, and to speak directly because the necessary grounds for the frankness with Western governments are provided. These governments are not ready for such a dialogue.

How do you assess the dominance of the Western media over the thought of the youth in the West and even in the Arab world?

Unfortunately, the Western media completely controls the public opinion, and there are many studies that suggest the absence of free choice in the West.

Though there is an emphasis on free political choice and election in the West, indeed, these processes are directed by the media that highlight a certain personality



organizing various interviews with him to present him as popular and desirable.

The media cover only what they want. It is possible to present half a minute about what is going on in Palestine, whilst presenting 10 minutes about Israeli achievements and technical development.

Mainstream media prefer to present the activities, policies and relations established by a European country while they hide what is happening in the Islamic Republic of Iran and its reality.

The media is not sincere in reflecting the truth about what is happening in the world, and therefore it is not possible to bet on this media, and unfortunately in the Arab world, many media persons and the information sources are influenced by Western reports.

I mean, most newspapers, magazines and news websites report news from foreign agencies and consider them true and correct.

It may or may not be wrong. Although the news may turn out true, the volume that is given to the news is not natural.

Of course, there are Arab media who are not influenced by these sources of information, but they are in minority, especially since the West controls the space and broadcasting and can prevent any satellite channel from operation.

How do you see the reflection of the efforts made by the resistance axis in the world, especially in countries that

suffer from dictatorship?

The repercussions of the resistance's accomplishments on countries in the region and on the Western media vary between those who want to ignore these achievements and those who want to talk about them briefly and quickly.

Regarding the resistance, Western media is reluctant to express its achievements, but rather in a manner that raises accusations and suspicions.

I mean, when the resistance made an achievement in Lebanon and Palestine, it is considered that this matter has external causes and the resistance's moves threaten stability in the region and obstructs the peace process and negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis.

They accuse the resistance of undermining the stability in Lebanon when Hezbollah confronts Israel or challenges the Zionist occupation.

Consequently, these media do not convey any truths and are concerned about the power and influence of the resistance. On the other hand, these achievements are real achievements. No one can claim that they have not been realized or deny that Israel withdrew from southern Lebanon under the blows of the resistance movement.

The 2006 war forced Israel to admit its failure, and the enemy did not achieve what it wanted, while Hezbollah scored a

great victory.

No one can deny that the Palestinian resistance has achieved great achievements by its steadfastness, and Israel has failed in successive wars on Gaza.

The media cannot ignore this, even if it is mentioned quickly or raises suspicions about it. This is why the achievements of the resistance in the region have left great and positive effects on the people since there are media who convey them and there are people who search for satellite channels that reflect news about the resistance.

Therefore, the blackout of the resistance's achievements was taken into consideration by the people of the region. Meanwhile, the Western media and the hostile countries, do not report, do not care, and do not want the resistance to make major steps.

What is the message of the Islamic Revolution to the region and the world?

The Islamic Revolution in Iran has provided a model to the world, trying to preserve it and fight for it, and it is the model of independent development, independent economic and armament capabilities.

The Islamic Republic wants to have independent educational curricula that are not affiliated to the West or imitating the West. This is the experience that Iran is carrying to the peoples of the region and even to the peoples of the world.

For the peoples of the region, Iran sends the message of dialogue and calls for understanding and focusing on common interests.

This is a message addressed to young people as well, and whoever creates the future, and therefore for this future and strengthening relations between neighboring countries, young people must realize the content of this message.

The Leader of the revolution always talks about the youth and sends the message to the youth because he believes that they are the source of hope and they are the future.

This is the message of the Islamic Republic, which is to preserve its existence and use its experience, and to tell the peoples of the region that this is the Islamic experience that must remain and continue.

It says that we, in cooperation with the others, can apply such a model in all countries of the region and encourage the countries to follow common interests and common security.

America Today: Imperial pipe dreams die hard

1 → This phase of decline is characterized by buffoonish, erratic, pseudo-populist political leadership, a growing perception of "threats" both domestically and abroad, increasing curtailment of citizens' rights, massive military spending, a cult of militarism and accompanying jingoism and anti-intellectualism. In some cases, the provision of "bread and circus" (sufficient distraction via food and entertainment as in the late Roman empire) can keep the increasingly impoverished citizens of the imperial metropole content enough to avert an internal uprising, but ultimately the self-inflicted damage to governing institutions and economic pressures lead to a total collapse of the system.

Certainly, the disaster that was the Trump administration itself and the catastrophically irresponsible ways in which U.S. political elites attempted to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic have hastened this decline, but the malignancy was already rooted. Deep-seated imperial arrogance and hubris combined with and enabled by unsustainable militarism and unfettered plutocracy was destined to bring a rapid and inglorious end to the so-called American Era.

Do you think recent crises have diminished the U.S. soft power domestically and internationally?

Without a doubt U.S. soft power has radically diminished over the past four years. Especially in the rancid wake of the Trump regime, the idea that the United States serves as a model of democracy, sound economic policy, political stability, rule of law, human rights, justice, and/or moral and ethical values for others to follow is absurd. While U.S. political elites will likely continue to bloat about American greatness and "exceptionalism" for decades, they will be doing so only for an increasingly jaded and skeptical domestic audience absent a long-term, concerted effort to bring U.S. domestic policies back in line with the Constitution, and U.S. foreign policy in line with international law. Considering the current trajectory of U.S. economy, politics, and empire I hold out no hope that such a reckoning and reform will occur before it is too late to save U.S. global hegemony. And for that, the citizens of the world should rejoice.

How do you assess Trump's foreign policy toward West Asia, specifically Iran? Has his maximum pressure campaign been successful?



For four years the Trump administration pursued foreign policy goals in West Asia designed to benefit the hegemonic interests of apartheid Israel and the despotic Kingdom of Saudi Arabia rather than serving the cause of regional peace and stability, or any tangible American interests outside of massive arms sales. Targeting the Iranian population with hybrid warfare and medical terrorism in an effort to effect "regime change" to serve the nefarious causes of Zionist expansionism, Saudi despotism, and American imperialism was by all accounts an abysmal failure, and completely counterproductive. As a result of their continued belligerent, criminal behavior in the attempt to isolate and weaken Iran, the United States, Israel, and Saudi Arabia have themselves become weaker internally and increasingly isolated on the international stage.

It is significant that Donald Trump, Benjamin Netanyahu, and Mohammad bin Salman are all individually facing criminal investigation either domestically and/or internationally for their assorted nefarious deeds. The fact that Iran has steadfastly conformed to international law while standing up to the world's wealthiest and powerful bullies alone by relying on the Iranian people, the resistance economy, domestic industrial and technological innovation, and strategic patience amounts to a much-needed slap in the face of imperial arrogance, and has elevated the global reputation of the Islamic Republic even further.

What a Biden presidency means for American West Asian policy? How about Iran?

A: I do not hold out any hope that the Biden administration will deviate from Trump's "Israel-First" foreign

policy in West Asia outside of a likely attempt to return halfheartedly to the JCPOA. While I believe President Biden will be under personal pressure from former President Barack Obama and former Secretary of State John Kerry to return to the agreement—albeit in the same state of shameful non-compliance Obama left office in 2017 with—the Israel and Saudi lobbies are currently working overtime to try to interject qualifications and caveats that will seek to ultimately destroy the deal.

Additionally, I expect the Biden administration to re-initialize CIA support for ISIS and al-Qaeda takfiri terrorists in Syria (and likely Iraq) as the Obama administration had for over five years through Operation Timber Sycamore (2012-2017): an effort to "pay back" the Zionists and the Saudis for having the audacity to make an agreement with Iran, using the Syrian nation as currency. Of course, Biden-Harris will fail at this criminal enterprise like Obama-Biden did, but it will be attempted, nevertheless. Hubris and amnesia are intellectually crippling and dangerous afflictions of the American political establishment.

Will he continue Trump's maximum pressure campaign? Or his focus will be on China in the "pivoting to Asia" approach?

President Biden will not pursue "maximum pressure" any further. And yet due to the domestic maximum pressure Biden faces from powerful, assorted elements of the military-industrial complex and the Zionist lobby, he will not work quickly to undo the legal, terminological, and narrative web the Trump regime has purposefully left behind to make U.S. compliance with UN resolutions and international law difficult.

While overtly and lamely "pivoting to Asia" to pursue what will likely be the last, pathetic attempt by the decompensating U.S. empire to project global power and threaten foreign countries who do not capitulate to self-serving and hypocritical U.S. demands, the Biden administration will leave as much chaos and instability behind in West Asia as is possible, hoping to "double back" to the region after "securing" Asia, and finally accomplishing "full spectrum dominance" over the earth and outer space. Imperial pipe dreams die hard.

Joe Biden to lead divided America after bitter campaign

Joe Biden takes the reins as the 46th President of the United States. After a bitter campaign and a high-security inauguration, his message of "healing" and "unity" will be severely tested.

Upon inauguration on Wednesday, Biden will officially begin his stewardship of the United States. It's been a long road to the top for Biden, the ultimate career politician. Five decades in Washington, three previous shots at the presidency and eight years as Vice President behind him, Biden officially defeated Donald Trump in November to finally land his dream job at the ripe old age of 78, RT reported.

Biden ran a muted campaign, preferring to release videos from his Delaware basement than to hold bombastic rallies like his rival. His eventual victory over Trump was also subdued, as a trickle of late-arriving ballots clinched him a squeaker win in key swing states, rather than the landslide repudiation of "Trumpism" some Democrats had hoped for.

Trump refused to concede defeat and claimed Biden's victory was fraudulent. Citing changes to election law, closed-doors counting, and computer "glitches," Trump challenged Biden's victory in court, but had his cases rejected. Anger among Trump's supporters came to a head when Congress certified the election result earlier this month, and culminated in a number of Trump supporters forcing their way into the US Capitol, temporarily halting the certification – and earning the MAGA crowd a new mainstream media nickname of "domestic terrorists."

U.S. fighting alongside Daesh, al-Qaeda against Yemen: Houthi official

A senior Yemeni official has slammed the U.S. for designating the country's Houthi Ansarullah movement as a "terrorist" organization, saying Washington is fighting alongside Takfiri terror outfits such as Daesh and al-Qaeda against Yemen.

"This American description [of Ansarullah] comes from the same people, who is fighting on the same front with Daesh and al-Qaeda against us," Mohammed Ali al-Houthi, a member of Yemen's Supreme Political Council, told Russia Today on Monday.

Washington announced the decision to label the Houthi movement as a foreign "terrorist" organization on the weekend.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said three leaders of what it called the "Iran-backed" Yemeni group would also be branded as "especially designated global terrorists."

The designation went into effect as of today, just a day before the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump leaves office.

According to Press TV, al-Houthi said the U.S. was supporting the two terror groups so it can use them as "its two arms" to fight Yemen's defense forces.

Washington, he added uses similar labels against the Palestinian resistance movements that are defending their nation against the Israelis. The Israeli regime, however, is conversely spared such "terrorist" designations, al-Houthi said.

U.S. to keep embassy in Jerusalem: Biden's top diplomat

The incoming administration of President-elect Joe Biden will keep the U.S. embassy in Israel in Jerusalem, his nominee for secretary of state affirmed at his Senate confirmation hearing.

"Do you agree that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel and do you commit that the United States will keep our embassy in Jerusalem?" asked Republican Senator Ted Cruz of Texas.

"Yes and Yes," said Antony Blinken in testimony on Tuesday.

According to al Jazeera, outgoing President Donald Trump announced the U.S. recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital in December 2017. The U.S. moved its embassy to Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem in May of the following year.

Biden intel chief nominee vows to release Khashoggi murder report

President-elect Joe Biden's nominee to be the next Director of National Intelligence has said she intends to release an unclassified report to the United States Congress on the assassination of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

During a Senate confirmation hearing on Tuesday, Senator Ron Wyden told Avril Haines that she had an opportunity to "immediately turn the page on the excessive secrecy and lawlessness of the outgoing administration".

He then asked if she would submit the report if she is confirmed.

Resistance News

UN: Israeli settlements in occupied Palestine flagrant violation of intl. law

INTERNATIONAL **TEHRAN**— UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has condemned the Israeli regime's recent plan to construct hundreds of new settler units in the occupied West Bank, saying such structures are considered illegal under international law.

"The establishment by Israel of settlements in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem al-Quds, has no legal validity and constitutes a flagrant violation under international law," Guterres said in a statement on Monday.

He added, "Settlement expansion... further erodes the possibility of ending the occupation and establishing a contiguous and viable sovereign Palestinian State, based on the pre-1967 lines."

The UN chief also said the Tel Aviv regime's latest decision to build approximately 800 units in the settlements of Beit El, Tal Menashe, Rehelim, Shavei Shomron, Barkan, Karnei Shomron and Givat Ze'ev, is "a major obstacle to the achievement of the (so-called) two-state solution, and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace" in the Middle East.

Italy urges Israel to reconsider new land grab scheme

Separately, the Italian Foreign Ministry renewed Rome's deep concern about Israel's decision to start building some 800 new housing units in the West Bank, Press TV reported.

The ministry, in a statement released on Monday, called on the Israeli authorities to reconsider their decision.

Egypt, Qatar agree to resume diplomatic relations after three years

Egypt and Qatar have agreed to resume diplomatic relations against the backdrop of more than three years of dispute between Doha and the Saudi-led quartet of Arab states.

"Arab Republic of Egypt and the State of Qatar exchanged, today, January 20, 2021, two official memoranda, in virtue of which the two countries agreed to resume diplomatic relations," the Egyptian Foreign Ministry said in a statement on Wednesday.

In 2017, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain

severed diplomatic ties and transport links with Qatar.

The quartet accused Qatar of supporting terrorism, presented it with a list of demands and gave it an ultimatum to comply with them or face consequences.

The list of demands included closing Al Jazeera television and cutting links to the Muslim Brotherhood.

The Muslim Brotherhood was outlawed in Egypt in late 2013 following the ouster of the country's first democratically-elected president, Mohamed Morsi, through a military coup.

Doha denied terrorism charges and refused to meet the conditions laid out by the boycotting bloc, stressing that it would not abandon its independent foreign policy.

On January 5, a reconciliation agreement was reached between Qatar and the quartet—Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt.

All the four countries have now announced the reopening of their airspace to Qatar.

Direct flights between Qatar and Egypt resumed on Monday.

(Source: Press TV)



Iran’s ‘Venice’, a lesser-known, must-see tourist destination

➔ **1** The Arabic-speaking inhabitants try to promote their village as a tourist destination so they can earn their living through tourism; however, there is still a long way ahead to get to that point.

The tourism infrastructure in the region, however, needs to be developed and basic facilities are necessary to be provided to attract more domestic and even foreign tourists.



Shadegan wetland covers 530,000 hectares, 400,000 hectares of which has been designated as a Ramsar site (defined by the Ramsar Convention for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands, recognizing the fundamental ecological functions of wetlands and their economic, cultural, scientific, and recreational value).

Khuzestan is home to three UNESCO World Heritage sites of Susa, Tchogha Zanbil, and Shushtar Historical Hydraulic System yet it is a region of raw beauty where its visitors could spend weeks exploring. The province is also a cradle for handicrafts and arts whose crafters inherited from their preceding generations.

Lying at the head of the Persian Gulf and bordering Iraq on the west, Khuzestan was settled about 6000 BC by a people with affinities to the Sumerians, who came from the Zagros Mountains region. Urban centers appeared there nearly contemporaneously with the first cities in Mesopotamia in the 4th millennium. Khuzestan, according to Encyclopedia Britannica, came to constitute the heart of the Elamite kingdom, with Susa as its capital.

Mofakham complex selected tourism icon of North Khorasan province

TOURISM **TEHRAN** – The extensively restored Mofakham complex has been selected as the tourism icon of North Khorasan province, the provincial tourism chief said on Wednesday.

The reconstruction and revival of the historical-cultural complex has made this place as a symbol of tourism and economy [prosperity] of the northeastern province, Habib Yazdanpanah said. Furthermore, several tourism-related projects are currently underway on the premises of the complex, the official said.



“One of the goals of this [development] projects is to create a dynamic and vibrant social and economic center in the city and to build a suitable place for the supply and presentation of souvenirs and handicrafts.”

Located in Bojnurd, the Qajar-era complex was damaged by an earthquake in May 2017. Some tour experts say the revival of the complex is a turning point for other abandoned buildings in the province to regain their former glory.

Most foreign tourists pass straight through North Khorasan in transit between Mashhad and Gorgan, but if one has time to explore, it’s worth diverting south from the capital, Bojnurd, towards Esfaryen, famed for its wrestling tournaments, the remarkable citadel of Belqays and the partly preserved stepped village of Roein some 20km north.

Haul of ancient coins confiscated from smugglers

HERITAGE **TEHRAN** – Iranian authorities have confiscated a haul of ancient coins from smugglers during a police operation in the western province of Kermanshah.

After days of intelligence operations, 144 historical coins, which date back to the Elamite, Parthian, Sassanid, and Qajar periods, were seized from two illegal antique dealers, Amir Rahmatollahi, a senior police official in charge of protecting cultural heritage said on Tuesday.



Coins and coinage, standardized units of metal used as a medium of exchange, were first introduced into Persia by the Achaemenid Darius I (521-486 BC), according to Encyclopedia Iranica.

Before modern times the Persian economy consisted of a conglomeration of regional economies, each with a mint and a currency system geared to local commerce, rather than an integrated national economy. For this reason, it is more sensible to study changes in the output (weight, fineness) of a single mint over time, rather than trying to arrive at an estimation of a non-existent national norm.

Take a trip to the unknown, to rugged shores of Makran

TOURISM **TEHRAN** — Makran deserts’ coasts are all about its rugged rock formations, dramatic dunes, and relentless waves crashing upon jagged boulders, which are perfect in winter.

The coasts of Makran or Makuran – as it is pronounced by the local people – is a region comprising about 1,500 km of shoreline along the Sea of Oman and the Indian Ocean, which is stretched from Iran’s Hormozgan, and Sistan-Baluchestan provinces to Pakistan’s Balochistan province.

It offers visitors a dramatic setting to discover one of the most breathtaking, and arguably more scenic, sandy stretches in southern Iran.

Iranian tourism officials and experts believe that the natural and historical attractions of the Makran coastal strip hold considerable potential to be registered on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

Makran coasts embrace some unique attractions such as Darak village, Martian Mountains, pristine beaches of Chabahar, and sacred fig trees to name a few.

Darak village and Martian Mountains, commonly known as Miniature Mountains, which are located on the Makran coast, are also among the top tourist destinations in the region that eye to gain a UNESCO tag as well.

Located between the two important port cities of Chabahar and Bandar Abbas, Darak is one of the few places in the world where the sea and the desert meet. Darak or Darag in the local language means



settling along the sea.

The beach and the amazing village, along with the Oman Sea, are tourist destinations where dunes, palm trees, and blue sea in a frame together create fantastic scenery.

Hiking, swimming, and photography are among the best activities tourists could enjoy while traveling to Darak Beach. It

is known for its extraordinary beaches and has a pristine shoreline.

Mars or Martian Mountains, also known as “Koohaye Merikhi” in Persian, are a type of badlands stretched out parallel to the Gulf of Oman. Their current shape results from millions of years of erosion by wind and water. The height of the mountains varies between five to over 100 meters.

Locals named them Martian Mountains since it seemed as if aliens – in this case, people from Mars – built them; with almost no vegetation, their curvy scenery stands in strong contrast with the landscape around.

Throughout history and before Omani Arabs gained a more dominant position, this shoreline had been recorded in history as the Sea of Makran.

The Makran coast starts from Alkouh region north of Iran’s Mina port and is considered an Iranian coast until it reaches the border between Iran and Pakistan in Gwatar Bay in Iran’s Sistan-Baluchestan province.

The narrow coastal plain rises rapidly into several mountain ranges. The climate is dry with little rainfall. Makran is very sparsely inhabited, with much of the population concentrated in a string of small ports including Chabahar, Gwatar, Jiwani, Jask, Sirik, Gwadar (not to be confused with Gwatar), Pasni, Ormara, and many smaller fishing villages.

Makran, the ancient Gedrosia of the Persian and Macedonian empires and the scene of Alexander the Great’s retreat from India (325 BC), has been strategically significant in the history of Iran and India, according to Britannica.

The etymology of the name is uncertain, chiefly regarded either as a corruption of Mahi Khuran (Fish Eaters), identified with the Ichthyophagoi (now represented by the Meds) mentioned in the Indica of the 2nd century CE.

Iran should sharpen focus on nature tourism, minister says

TOURISM **TEHRAN** – Iran’s Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan said on Tuesday that developing nature tourism in the country needs to be considered more seriously.

As nature tourism is one of the key potentials of the country’s tourism industry, establishing tourist camps and complexes seems necessary and the ministry’s focus should be on nature-related projects, the minister said.

He also expressed his satisfaction with measures taken to boost rural tourism in collaboration with different related organizations. Referring to the eco-lodge units as a prerequisite for developing nature tourism, he explained that setting up more eco-lodges is on the ministry’s agenda.

Iranian officials and policymakers in the realm of travel expect such a branch of tourism development will end and possibly reverse the trend of migration from villages to cities by creating sustainable jobs and prosperity for local communities.

Nature-based tourism is any type of tourism that relies on experiences directly related to natural attractions

and includes ecotourism, adventure tourism, extractive tourism, wildlife tourism, and nature retreats. Eco and nature-based tourists seek and expect a high level of service and product directly related to natural attractions, and they are willing to pay for it. They deliver more economic benefits than other tourists because they spend more and stay longer.

Agritourism and nature-tourism enterprises might include outdoor recreation (fishing, hunting, wildlife study, horseback riding), educational experiences (cannery tours, cooking classes, or tea or coffee tasting), entertainment (harvest festivals or barn dances), hospitality services (farm stays, guided tours, or outfitter services), and on-farm direct sales (u-pick operations or roadside stands). It is a subset of a larger industry called rural tourism that includes resorts, off-site farmers’ markets, non-profit agricultural tours, and other leisure and hospitality businesses that attract visitors to the countryside.

Experts say each eco-lodge unit generates jobs for seven to eight people on the average so that the scheme could create 160,000 jobs. The Islamic Republic an-



nounced in 2018 that 2,000 eco-lodges would be constructed across the country until 2021. Having a very diverse natural setting, Iran offers varied excursions to nature lovers. Sightseers may live with a nomad or rural family or enjoy an independent stay.

Lorestan sets sights on travel boom in post-coronavirus era

TOURISM **TEHRAN** — The tourism sector of Lorestan province is ready to jumpstart after the coronavirus crisis, the provincial tourism chief has announced.

Before the coronavirus outbreak put everything on a halt, the number of tourists who visited natural and historical attractions in the western province rose nearly 40 percent, ISNA quoted Amin Qasemi as saying on Wednesday.

The official noted that Lorestan is teeming with tens of historical and natural destinations, which the sector is heavily relying on.

“These tourist destinations could attract



more tourists and holidaymakers to the region in the post-coronavirus era,” he said.

More than 220 natural attractions have been identified across the province, some

of which are in impassable areas, the official added.

Last April, Qasemi announced that more than 1.5 million visits were paid to tourist attractions and museums in Lorestan province during the past Iranian calendar year 1398 (ended March 20, 2020).

Falak-ol-Aflak fortress in Khorramabad, the capital of Lorestan province, was the top destination with over 220,000 visits. Foreign tourists also made over 1,000 visits to the province, which is one of the lesser-known travel destinations in Iran, and mainly acts as a gateway to the neighboring Khuzestan province which hosts UNESCO sites of Susa, Tchogha Zanbil, and Shushtar

Historical Hydraulic System.

Lorestan is also a region of raw beauty that an avid nature lover could spend weeks exploring. The region was inhabited by Iranian Indo-European peoples, including the Medes, c. 1000 BC. Cimmerians and Scythians intermittently ruled the region from about 700 to 625 BC.

The Luristan Bronzes noted for their eclectic array of Assyrian, Babylonian, and Iranian artistic motifs, date from this turbulent period. Lorestan was incorporated into the growing Achaemenid Empire in about 540 BC and successively was part of the Seleucid, Parthian, and Sasanid dynasties.

Some \$524,000 paid to support handicrafts businesses in Ardebil

HERITAGE **TEHRAN** — The Iranian government has paid over 22 billion rials (about \$524,000 at the official exchange rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) in loans to the handicrafts businesses affected by the coronavirus pandemic in the northwestern Ardebil province.

This amount of money was paid to 205 handicraft workshops and crafters during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (Mar. 20 – Dec. 20, 2020), the deputy provincial tourism chief said on Wednesday.

To support the province’s artisans and crafters, a permanent handicrafts exhibition is established, which helps them to promote their arts and businesses more properly, Nasser Mahmudi announced.

Despite the outbreak of the coronavirus, which has led many businesses to temporary closures, the activities and educational workshops related to the handicrafts sector have been developed in the province, the official added.

With 14 entries, Iran ranks first globally for the number of cities and villages registered by the World Crafts Council, as China with seven entries, Chile with four, and India with three ones come next. In late January, the cities of Shiraz, Malayer, and Zanjan and the village of Qassemabad were designated by the WCC- Asia Pacific Region, putting Iran’s number of world crafts cities and villages from ten to 14.

Iran exported \$523 million worth of handicrafts during the past calendar year 1398 (ended March 19). Of the figure, some \$273 million worth of handicrafts were exported officially through customs, and about \$250 million was earned via suitcase trade (allowed for customs-free and



tax-free transfer) through various provinces, according to data provided by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts.

Ceramics, pottery vessels, handwoven cloths as well as personal ornamentations with precious and semi-precious gemstones are traditionally exported to Iraq, Afghanistan, Germany, the U.S., the UK, and other countries.

Last May, the deputy tourism minister Pouya Mahmoudian noted that due to the outbreak of coronavirus, suitcase exports of handicrafts were completely stopped since the month of Esfand (the last month of the year), and official exports of handicrafts experienced a steep decline.

“Some 295 fields of handicrafts are currently practiced across Iran with more than two million people engaging,

majority of whom are women... Handicrafts also play an important role in the economy in our rural villages,” she said.

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

Depending on the type and activity of the businesses, they could benefit from at least 160 million rials (\$3,800 at the official rate of 42,000 rials) to nine billion rials (\$214,000) of bank loans with a 12-percent interest rate, he said.

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

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

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

Technology transfer from Iran a priority for Syria

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** – Ambassador of Syria to Tehran Shafiq Dayoub has said that technology transfer from Iran and its indigenization is a priority for Syria.

The achievements of Iran is a motivation and a successful model that developing countries can follow, he added.

In a meeting in Tehran on Wednesday with Iranian Science Minister Mansour Gholami, the Syrian official emphasized that the realization of scientific advances in the field of economy and, more importantly, the transfer of these valuable experiences must be considered by developing countries.

Setting up research laboratories, holding joint scientific conferences and seminars, boosting scientific skills training cooperation, exchanging students and professors as well as experiences, offering joint guidance of master's and doctoral dissertations, and publishing scientific articles in journals of the two countries were among the fields of cooperation discussed at the meeting, ILNA reported.

The Iranian minister, for his part, referred to the importance of scientific cooperation between Iran and Syria, saying that "We are interested in good cooperation between the two friendly countries of Iran and Syria in various scientific and research fields."

Many Syrians have studied and graduated in Iran, and a large number of them are currently studying in Iranian universities, he noted.



sities, he noted.

He went on to say that in the fields of nanotechnology and biotechnology, Iran is among the top 10 countries in the world, expressing readiness to enhance cooperation between professors and students of the two countries.

Referring to the successful science and technology parks in Iran, he noted that educated and specialized young people, along with university professors, develop their technological ideas with the support of parks and become startups that meet the needs of society and even export the product to other countries.

All countries need to develop such centers

to withstand the hostile behavior of the colonial powers, which generally oppress many nations these days, he stated.

The fact that our country has been able to resist the oppressive sanctions over the past three years is very much due to the valuable services and scientific achievements made by the youth and local experts, he highlighted.

In this meeting, the development process of scientific and technological cooperation between Tehran and Damascus and the challenges in this regard were addressed.

Technology development in Iran
Despite sanctions putting pressure on the country, a unique opportunity was provided for business development and the activity of

knowledge-based companies in the country.

Currently, some 5,000 knowledge-based companies are active in the country, manufacturing diverse products to meet the needs of the domestic market while saving large amounts of foreign currency.

The fields of aircraft maintenance, steel, pharmaceuticals, and medical equipment, oil and gas are among the sectors that researchers in technology companies have engaged in, leading to import reduction.

In recent years, the vice presidency for science and technology has been supporting knowledge-based companies active in the production of sanctioned items.

Sourena Sattari, the vice president for science and technology, told the Tehran Times on October 2020 that "U.S. sanctions caused exports of knowledge-based companies to decline three years ago, however, it has returned to growth and is projected to reach the pre-sanctions level of more than \$1 billion by the end of the current [Iranian calendar] year (March 20, 2021).

Fortunately, last year, companies achieved a record sale of 1.2 quadrillion rials (nearly \$28.5 billion at the official rate of 42,000 rials), which is expected to increase by 40 percent this year."

To date, 42 knowledge-based companies with a total value of 2.8 quadrillion rials (nearly \$66.6 billion) have been listed on the stock exchange and they will soon turn into the biggest businesses in the county, Sattari said.

Italy supports sustainable agriculture development in Iran



SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Italy has been implementing a project on strengthening rural communities through sustainable agriculture in Iran over the past three years.

The project, called SPRING (Strengthening CSO's Participation for a Responsible and Inclusive Agriculture Growth through Development of Rural Cooperatives), is drawing to a close after three years of activity in Iran.

With the objective of taking stock of the initiative's accomplishments and discussing future strategies, a Final Capitalization Conference was held on Tuesday virtually, with the participation of the main stakeholders of the project and representatives of the cooperative movement in both countries.

The initiative was aimed at strengthening the capacity of cooperatives and cooperative associations to promote inclusive and sustainable growth, by supporting the rural producers in the County of Bam and the broader Kerman province.

It has been led by the Iranian Society for the Protection and Assistance of the Socially Disadvantaged Individuals (SPASDI), in cooperation with the Italian NGO Haliéus (Lega Pesca for International Cooperation Projects) and Legacoop, the oldest Italian cooperative organization, and has been co-financed by the European Union in the framework of its Civil Society Organizations and Local Authorities Thematic Program.

The SPRING project is part of broader cooperation in place between Italy and Iran in the field of support to civil societies

and, in particular, to the most disadvantaged social groups.

The conference was opened by the Ambassador of Italy, Giuseppe Perrone's introductory remarks.

After acknowledging the important results achieved by the promoters of the initiative, the Italian Envoy described SPRING project as "an important example of mobilization and empowerment of the most disadvantaged segments of our society through a participatory approach aimed at strengthening the organizational and managerial skills of local farmers, by providing them with a prospect of sustainable development and improvement of their living conditions."

Perrone then underlined the fundamental role historically played by the cooperative movement, both in Italy and in Iran, in promoting a more widespread and inclusive economic development.

All participants in the meeting shared their appreciation for the outcome of the project, illustrated the best practices implemented and the difference they made in the life of local communities and laid premises for the continuation of the joint work done with SPRING.

Air pollution will lead to mass migration, say experts

Air pollution does not respect national boundaries and environmental degradation will lead to mass migration in the future, said a leading barrister in the wake of a landmark migration ruling, as experts warned that government action must be taken as a matter of urgency.

Sailesh Mehta, a barrister specializing in environmental cases, said: "The link between migration and environmental degradation is clear. As global warming makes parts of our planet uninhabitable, mass migration will become the norm. Air and water pollution do not respect national boundaries. We can stop a humanitarian and political crisis from becoming an existential one. But our leaders must act now."

He added: "We have a right to breathe clean air. Governments and courts are beginning to recognise this fundamental human right. The problem is not just that of Bangladesh and the developing world. Air pollution contributes to around 200,000 deaths a year in the UK. One in four deaths worldwide can be linked to pollution."

The comments follow a decision by a French court this week, which is believed to be the first time environment was cited



by a court in an extradition hearing. The case involved a Bangladeshi man with asthma who avoided deportation from France after his lawyer argued that he risked a severe deterioration in his condition, and possibly premature death, due to the dangerous levels of pollution in his homeland.

The appeals court in Bordeaux overturned an expulsion order against the 40-year-old man because he would face "a worsening of his respiratory pathology due to air pollution" in his country of origin.

Yale and Columbia universities' environmental performance index ranks Bangladesh 179th in the world for air quality in 2020, while the concentration of fine particles in

the air is six times the World Health Organization's recommended maximum.

Dr David R Boyd, UN special rapporteur on human rights and environment, agreed with Mehta's analysis, telling the Guardian: "Air pollution causes 7 million premature deaths annually, so it is understandable if people feel compelled to migrate in search of clean air to safeguard their health. Air pollution is a global public health disaster that does not get the attention it deserves because most of the people who die are poor or otherwise vulnerable."

He explained: "My work is really focused on increasing recognition and implementation of everyone's right to live in a healthy environment, which surely includes clean air. I'm involved in a couple of really important lawsuits on this issue in South Africa and Indonesia. The good news is that we have solutions that simultaneously address air pollution and climate change primarily by rapidly phasing out fossil fuel use."

Alex Randall, coordinator at the Climate & Migration Coalition, said safe and legal routes to allow people to migrate needed to be established.

"Cases such as this, where air quality or

other pollution become a reason for preventing deportation, are certainly important steps forward. They may potentially lay the foundations for other future cases in which the impacts of climate change provide grounds for allowing people to stay. In fact, several other cases mostly relating to people from climate vulnerable Pacific island nations have started to do this.

"However, these cases do not usually set legal precedents and people moving across borders due to climate change impacts remain in a legal grey area."

According to the Environmental Justice Foundation, one person every 1.3 seconds is forced to leave their homes and communities due to the climate crisis but millions lack legal protection. It has called on all countries to rapidly and fully implement the Paris climate agreement.

A ruling by the United Nations human rights committee a year ago found it is unlawful for governments to return people to countries where their lives might be threatened by the climate crisis.

Tens of millions of people are expected to be displaced by global heating in the next decade.

Schools reopen with "optional" attendance amid pandemic

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** – Schools with less than 50 students and vocational schools in low-risk cities resumed activity on Wednesday, with optional attendance of students, ISNA reported.



Each year, Iranian students start the school year on September 23, after three-month summer vacation, while this year, in the light of the coronavirus pandemic, all educational centers in Iran have been closed since late February 2020, and education was followed in three forms of in-person, virtual, and television-based.

In order for students to keep in touch with their studies, the Ministry of Education launched a homegrown mobile application on April 9, called SHAD, providing students with distance learning programs. He added that more than 60 percent of students and 94 percent of teachers attended 64 percent of classes through the SHAD app, whose acronym in Persian translates as the Students Education Network.

Moreover, the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) also began to broadcast televised educational programs on a daily basis after school closures.

The National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control announced that schools with less than 50 pupils and vocational schools are allowed to start operating for practical and workshop courses in accordance with the health protocols, while the students' presence is voluntary and on their choice.

National conference on teaching Persian underway

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** – The 3rd National Conference on Teaching Persian Language to Non-Persian Speakers is being held virtually on January 20-21.

Focusing on "Teaching Literature, History and Culture to Non-Persian Speakers", the biennial conference is hosted by Shahid Beheshti University.



The role of Iranian literature, history, and culture in the development of Persian language teaching, the history of Persian teaching inside Iran and abroad, the role of other Persian-speaking countries in the spread of Persian language in the past and present, the study of activities by Persian language institutions in Iran, and contribution of non-Iranian Iranologists to the Persian language development are among the topics of the conference.

The first edition of the conference was held in 2017 with the focus on the analysis of Persian language teaching resources for non-Persian speakers and the second conference was held in 2019 with the focus on standardization of educational materials.

LET'S LEARN PERSIAN

(Part 112)

(Source: saadifoundation.ir)

گروه /h/ (جمع: گروه‌ها) ؛ چند نفر با هم	
to enjoy	لذت بردن (از)
man	مرد
always	همیشه
هاروکا، ژاپن	



خانم هاروکا در تهران تحصیل می‌کند و دانشجوی مَرکَزِ

آموزشِ زبان فارسی است. مَراکِزِ بین‌المللیِ زیادی در

تهران و شهرهای دیگر وجود دارد و دانشجویان خارجی

دانشگاه‌های ایران اول در این مراکز فارسی می‌آموزند.

کلاس‌های درسِ هاروکا بسیار دوستانه است و هاروکا

دوستانِ خوبی از کشورهای مَختَلَف دارد. دانشجویان هم

با تاریخ و فَرهنگِ ایران آشنا می‌شوند و هم از آشنایی با

فَرهنگ و زبان‌های دیگر لذت می‌برند.

در تعطیلاتِ هر سال هم، گروه‌هایی از دانشجویان

دانشگاه‌های خارج برای خواندنِ زبان یا ادبیات

فارسی به ایران می‌آیند. همچنین استادانِ خارجی زبان

و ادبیاتِ فارسی و خارجیانی که در ایران زندگی می‌کنند

می‌توانند از کلاس‌های این مراکز استفاده کنند.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → E

Air pollution has no effect on coronavirus prevalence: expert

Air pollution has no special effect on the incidence of the disease, and our studies showed that there is no connection between these two issues, Ali Maher, deputy chief of Tehran special working group for coronavirus control said.

Pointing to the coronavirus outbreak in winter, he noted that the prevalence of coronavirus in winter depends on the people, if they observe health protocols, the infection will reduce.

Because there has been no evidence that temperature affects the prevalence, therefore the only way to control the virus is the observance of health protocols by the people, he highlighted, ILNA reported.

آلودگی هوا تأثیری بر روی میزان ابتلا به ویروس کرونا ندارد

علی ماهر معاون ستاد مقابله با ویروس کروناى استان تهران در گفت‌وگو با ایلنا گفت: آلودگی هوا هیچ تأثیر خاصی بر روی این بیماری ندارد و بررسی‌های ما هم حاکی از عدم ارتباط بین این دو موضوع است.

وی با اشاره به وضعیت شیوع کرونا در زمستان ادامه داد: وضعیت میزان ابتلا به ویروس کرونا در زمستان بستگی به رفتارهای مردم دارد و اگر رفتارهایی که برای پیشگیری از شیوع ویروس در نظر گرفته شده را به درستی انجام دهیم، میزان شیوع کاهش پیدا خواهد کرد، چون شواهدی بر اینکه دما در میزان همه‌گیری تأثیرگذار باشد را پیدا نکردیم و بنابراین تنها رعایت مردم مسئله اصلی برای کنترل این ویروس است.

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GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Lying would negatively influence your livelihood.

Prophet Muhammad (S)

Tehran Book Fair organizing 17 intl. webinars

→1 The Friday webinars will open with a session on the Persian language in Africa and the Arab countries. The publication of Iranian books in the Balkan region will also be discussed during another session.

On Saturday, the fellowship potential of Istanbul with the printing industry in Iran and the Persian language in Arab countries will be discussed in two separate webinars. The Translation and Publication Grant Program of Iran and similar programs in Turkey and Serbia will be reviewed in a session.

The Persian language in the Caucasus and Central Asian countries will be scrutinized in a webinar on Sunday. A webinar will also pay tribute to Afghan writer Mohammad-Azam Rahnavaard-Zaryab, who died of COVID-19 in 2020. The expansion of relations between Iranian and Afghan publishers will be studied in another session.

A virtual meeting of the representatives of the literary agencies in Iran, Turkey and Germany will be held on the last day of the book fair on Monday. Chinese and Iranian publishers will also discuss plans to expand relations in a session.

The 33rd edition of Iran’s most important cultural event was scheduled to be held in April 2020, and Turkey was slated to be the guest of honor, however, the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance canceled the fair due to a massive rise in the death toll from coronavirus in the country.

Finally, the ministry and the Iran Book and Literature House, the main organizers of the book fair, decided to run the event online.

“Bandar Band” named best at Kolkata Intl. Film Festival

A R T TEHRAN — “Bandar Band” by Manijeh d e s k Hekmat from Iran has been named best film at the 26th Kolkata International Film Festival.

The film was screened in the official competition of the festival, which took place in the Indian city from January 8 to 15.

“Bandar Band” is about some Iranian women singers who are going to enter an unofficial competition in a coffee shop in Tehran.

Pregnant Mahla along with the other members of Bandar Band, her husband and one of their closest friends, start their journey to Tehran from a southern province just when they have lost all they had in a flood.



A scene from “Bandar Band” by Manijeh Hekmat.

They still keep their hopes alive, although every road they take leads to a dead-end in a flood-stricken land. They intend to go to Tehran, but they wonder if it is just another turn around a vicious circle.

Also in the international competition section, “Blindfold” by Taras Dron from Ukraine received the special jury mention, and Artykpai Suiundukov from Kirghizia was named best director for “Shambala”.

In the national competition section, “The False Eye” by Rahul Rijji Nair was named the best film, and Biswajeet Bora received the best director award for “God on the Balcony”.

“The Salt in Our Waters”, a co-production between Bangladesh and France by Rezwan Shahriar Sumit, received the NETPAC Award.

“Highways of Life” by Amar Maibam was named the best Indian documentary, and the award for best Indian short went to “Dusk” by Ujjal Paul.

Iranian photographers honored at Tajik Photo Art

A R T TEHRAN — Iranian d e s k photographers have been honored at the 3rd Tajik Photo Art.

The contest was organized with the patronage of the Federation Internationale de l’Art Photographique (FIAP) and the Photographic Society of America (PSA) in the categories of open monochrome, open color, people, portrait, landscape and travel.

In the open color section, the FIAP Gold Medal went to Mehdi Kazemi Bumeh for his photo “Gear”, while the PSA Gold Medal was awarded to Hadi Dehqanpur for “Jamkaran” and Amin Mahdavi’s “Death behind the Door” won the FPC Trophy.

Abbas Mohammadi’s “The Glory of Decency” received an honorable mention.

In the people category, Babak Mehrafshar was honored with the FIAP Gold Medal for his “Colorful Women” and the FPC Trophy was awarded to Mohammad Esteki for his photo “Cry under Water”.

Hadi Dehqanpur for “Corona Bride” and Omid Shekari for “Rooster” won honorable mentions.

Almost all top prizes in the portrait section were scooped up by Iranian photographers.



“Jamkaran” by Hadi Dehqanpur won the PSA Gold Medal in the open color section of the 3rd Tajik Photo Art.

Mehdi Kazemi Bumeh’s “Tired Old Man” and Babak Mehrafshar’s “Kurdish Girl II” won the FIAP Ribbons.

“Bold” by Amin Mahdavi won the FIAP Gold Medal and “Face” by Saeid Arabzadeh received the FPC Trophy. Mohammad Esteki’s “Beautiful Eyes” received an honorable mention.

The FIAP Ribbon of the landscape category was awarded to Amir Qayyumi for “Badab Surat Mazandaran”. Maziar Amini Alashti’s “Starry Night” also won an honorable mention.

In the travel section, the FIAP Gold Medal went to Amir Qayyumi “Giving Birth” and Ramin Amani’s “Anchor” won an honorable mention.

In the open monochrome section, Iranian photographers failed to win any top prize, however, Babak Mehrafshar for “Magnificence of Desert VII” and Mehdi Zabolabbasi for “Missal 2” received honorable mentions.

Winning photos and a selection of the submissions will be put on view in an exhibition at the Roudaki Photo Club in Dushanbe on March 15. The photos will also be published on www.tajikphotoart.salon.photo.

Iranian Film Festival Australia honors “Castle of Dreams” with four awards

9th iranian film festival australia

Winners pose after being honored during the awards ceremony of the 9th Iranian Film Festival Australia at the Embassy of Australia in Tehran on January 19, 2021. (Photo by Azadeh Amir Khan)

A R T TEHRAN — Reza Mirkarimi’s drama d e s k “Castle of Dreams” won awards in four categories, including best film and best screenplay, at the 9th edition of the Iranian Film Festival Australia (IFFA).

The awards ceremony of the 9th edition of the festival, which was due to be held on October 20, 2020 in the garden

of the Australian Embassy in Tehran, was postponed due to the coronavirus restrictions, and the ceremony was held on January 19, 2021.

Speaking at the ceremony, Australian Ambassador Lyndall Sachs called the festival an event that has helped to better familiarize the Australian audience with Iranian culture while featuring Iranian stories in movie theaters in the various cities of Melbourne, Brisbane, Sydney and Canberra.

She also expressed thanks to the jury who collaborated with the festival and picked the best.

Producer Gholamreza Musavi, editor Hayedeh Safiyari, actor Parsa Piruzfar, writer and journalist Mansur Zabetian, and actress Parinaz Izadyar were the members of the jury.

A lineup of 11 films including “Castle of Dreams”, “Repression” by Reza Guran, “Life Hanging” co-directed by Hossein Amiri Dumari and Pedram Puramiri, “Old Men Never Die” by Reza Jamali, “The Oath” by Mohsen Tanabandeh and “Tehran: City Of Love” by Ali Jaber-Ansari competed in the festival.

“Castle of Dreams” also brought Jila Shahi and Hamed Behdad the awards for best actress and best actor.

The film is about two young children whose mother has just died, and their father, Jalal, after long years of absence, returns to sort things out, but he does not want

to take the children with him.

Mohsen Tanabandeh was selected as best director for his drama “The Oath”, which was picked as best audience film.

“The Oath” shows that, in Iran’s legal system, 50 oaths in court can reverse a judgment. Razieh, whose sister was killed by her husband, takes 50 people to the courthouse by chartered bus.

The award for best debut film was given to “Life Hanging” co-directed by Hossein Amiri Dumari and Pedram Puramiri.

“Life Hanging” shows how Asma’s previous suitor Yasser ruins her wedding ceremony. Her brother Jamal accidentally kills Yasser’s brother. Yasser’s odd suggestion in order to forgive Jamal, endangers Asma’s marriage.

The jury special award was handed to Reza Jamali for “Old Men Never Die”.

“Old Men Never Die” is about 100-year-old Aslan, the head of a death squad in his youth, who lives with his other single old fellows in a remote village. Since he came to the village 45 years ago, nobody has ever died there! Now, most of the population consists of old and disabled men. All being done with life, they believe the only way to bring death back to the village is to commit suicide!

DocPoint to screen movies from Iran

A R T TEHRAN — DocPoint – d e s k Helsinki Documentary Film Festival has picked the Iranian documentaries “Fish Eye”, “Maya” and “Radiograph of a Family” to screen at its 20th edition, which will go online from January 29 to February 7, the organizers have announced.

“Fish Eye” by Amin Behruzzadeh follows Parsian Shila, Iran’s biggest industrial fishing boat that plans to catch 2000 tons of tuna fish. The film depicts the cruelty and harsh conditions of the job, and just how nature is affected by this activity.

Out in the deep waters, life unfolds frozen in time, atavistic, like an account watched through the wet eyes of a fish. With this ocean crossing, the director invites the viewers to plunge into the everyday life of large-scale fishing, which is presented in the film like a pitiless industrial work assembly line, but



“Fish Eye” by Amin Behruzzadeh.

not exempt of poetry.

“Radiograph of a Family”, a co-production from Norway, Iran and Switzerland by Firuzeh Khosrovani, is about her mother when she married her father Hossein. On one hand, Tayi was excited about her new life, on the other, she had doubts about being distanced from her

family and religion. At that time, Hossein was studying radiology in Switzerland and he had a much more worldly attitude than Tayi had ever seen in Iran.

This dichotomy remains in their marriage and affects Khosrovani when she grows up. With this film, she carefully reconstructs not only her family’s story but also at the same time makes an x-ray scan of the history of Iranian society.

“Maya”, a co-production between Iran and the UK by Jamshid Mojaddadi, shows how daily life at Iran’s second-biggest zoo is interrupted when Mohsen, the head keeper, takes Maya, his 4-year-old Bengal tiger, to perform in a fiction film in the north of the country by the Caspian Sea, which was once home to the now extinct Caspian tiger.

In between filming, Mohsen lets Maya off the leash and allows her to roam in this sparsely populated landscape, she is the

first ‘free’ tiger in Iran in over 60 years. But instead of the perfect experience of the wild that Mohsen hopes it to be, the trip kick starts a series of events that mark the end of Mohsen and Maya’s relationship and in the process reveals a much darker and more complex side to Mohsen and the Zoo in which Maya and the other animals are kept.

Last year, DocPoint held a retrospective of Iranian documentarian Mehrdad Oskui.

Oskui’s award-winning documentaries “My Mother’s Home, Lagoon”, “Nose, Iranian Style”, “Sunless Shadows” and “The Other Side of Burkha” were reviewed during the festival.

Oskui, who has won several awards for his films at Iranian and international festivals, also held a master class about his working methods and filmmaking philosophy during the festival.

Orwell’s “Notes on Nationalism” readable in Persian

A R T TEHRAN — English author and journalist d e s k George Orwell’s “Notes on Nationalism” has recently been published in Persian.

Ebrahim Mahjubi has rendered the book into Persian from a German translation published in January 2020. Shahre Honar is the publisher of the Persian translation, which carries a preface by Ramin Nasehi, a Germany-based Iranian sociologist.

“Notes on Nationalism” is an essay completed in May 1945 by Orwell and published in the first issue of the British magazine Polemic in October 1945.

Orwell discusses nationalism and argues that it causes people to disregard commonsense and to become more ignorant towards facts. Orwell shows his concern for the social state of Europe and the rest of the world because of the increasing influence of nationalistic sentiment in a large number of countries.



A combination photo shows the front covers of the English and Persian versions of George Orwell’s “Notes on Nationalism”.

The essay was soon translated into French and Dutch, Italian and Finnish, in which the word nationalism was represented by chauvinism.

The article was abridged in the translated versions by omitting details of particular relevance to British readers. A short introduction, based on material supplied by Orwell, preceded the translated abridgements.

Orwell’s work is marked by keen intelligence and wit, a profound awareness of social injustice, an intense opposition to totalitarianism, a passion for clarity in language, and a belief in democratic socialism.

He is best known for the dystopian novel “Nineteen Eighty-Four”, published in 1949, and the satirical novella “Animal Farm” that came out in 1945. They have together sold more copies than any two books by any other twentieth-century author.

“Solitude” by Michael Harris comes into Iranian bookstores

C U L T U R E TEHRAN — A Persian d e s k translation of Michael Harris’s book “Solitude: In Pursuit of a Singular Life in a Crowded World” has recently been published by Khazeh Publications.

The book has been translated into Persian by Saman Shahraki.

Today, society embraces sharing like never before. Fueled by dependence on mobile devices and social media, people have created an ecosystem of obsessive connection. Many now lead lives of strangely crowded isolation, they are

always linked, but only shallowly so.

The capacity to be alone, properly alone, is one of life’s subtlest skills. Real solitude is a powerful resource one can call upon, a crucial ingredient for a rich interior life. It inspires reflection, allows creativity to flourish, and improves everyone’s relationships with themselves and, unexpectedly, with others. Idle hands can, in fact, produce the extraordinary. In living bigger and faster, everyone has forgotten the joys of silence, and undervalued how profoundly it can revolutionize our lives.

The book is about discovering stillness inside the city, inside the crowd, inside the busy lives. With wit and energy, award-winning author Harris weaves captivating true stories with reporting from the world’s foremost brain researchers, psychologists and tech entrepreneurs to guide one toward a state of measured connectivity that balances quiet and companionship.

Solitude is a beautiful and convincing statement on the transformative power of being alone.

Harris is also the author of “The End

of Absence”, which won the Governor General’s Literary Award in Canada and became a national bestseller.

He writes about media, civil liberties and the arts for dozens of publications, including The Washington Post, Wired, Salon, The Huffington Post and The Globe & Mail.

His work has been a finalist for the RBC Taylor Prize, the BC National Award for Canadian Non-Fiction, the Chautauqua Prize, the CBC Bookie Awards and several National Magazine Awards. He lives in Vancouver.