



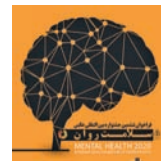
Iran has started developing quantum technology *Page 2*



Saipa crowned champions of Iran volleyball super league *Page 3*



Philanthropists donate \$2b to health sector *Page 7*



Mental health photography contest centers on COVID-19 *Page 8*



Saudi aggressive foreign policy backfired

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Trump embraced authoritarian allies: Georgetown University researcher

BY MOHAMMAD MAZHARI
An American academic says Donald Trump's administration embraced authoritarian regimes like Saudi Arabia and Egypt and made efforts to undermine democracy and human rights around the world.

"For the last four years, the Trump administration had no interest in democracy promotion abroad and embraced authoritarian allies including Saudi Arabia and Egypt while also repeatedly undermining rule of law and democracy in the United States," Dr. Mara Redlich Revkin tells the Tehran Times.

Political observers believe that the U.S. wars and presence in West and Central Asia has not had tangible results for the region's stability.

Hayatollah Alami, an Afghan parliamentarian, told the Tehran times on Tuesday that "after twenty years of U.S. presence in Afghanistan, we are back to square one."

However, Revkin, a national security law fellow at Georgetown University, claims that "nearly two decades of U.S. intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan have had some success in degrading the capabilities of al-Qaeda and later the ISIS in Iraq."

The following is the text of the interview:
How do you assess the impact of Trump's policies in increasing extremism in West Asia?

Former President Trump's Islamophobic policies and rhetoric (such as the "Muslim Ban" that banned citizens of seven predominantly Muslim countries from visiting the United States) have fueled many different forms of extremism not only in the Middle East (West Asia) but also in the United States, where violent attacks by white supremacist and nationalist groups against Muslims, immigrants, and other minorities increased during The Trump administration.

ISIS has long exploited Islamophobia in Europe and the United States to claim that the West is engaged in a war against Islam. Before the 2016 election, ISIS supporters on Telegram were hoping that Trump would defeat Hillary Clinton because he would be, in one person's words, "the perfect enemy" to inspire new recruits, as I wrote in Foreign Affairs at the time: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2016-11-14/isis-perfect-enemy>.

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Sa'dabad historical complex reopens as virus curbs eased

TEHRAN – The Sa'dabad Cultural-Historical Complex on Tuesday reopened its doors to the public as some restrictions over the coronavirus pandemic have been relaxed in Tehran.

According to the National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control, Tehran province is in the low-risk "yellow" zone and museums and historical sites across the province could reopen and resume their activities.

Iran closed cultural heritage museums and historical sites across the country in a preventive measure amid fears of coronavirus outbreak last February, but as the coronavirus lockdown was eased, they were reopened in early May.

Due to a sharp rise in the number of coronavirus infections and deaths, museums and all art and cultural centers, universities, schools, seminaries, English schools, libraries, movie theaters, mosques, beauty salons, and several

other entities went on lockdown during July.

The closure continued during November over the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. In June, Mohammadreza Kargar, the tourism ministry's director for museums and historical properties announced that Iranian museums and historical sites have taken 600 billion rials (about \$14.2 million) hit from the coronavirus outbreak.

If the country was in normal condition, the museums would host over 25 million visitors, but now they have faced a huge loss as there is almost no visitor to the museums, he noted.

In October, Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan warned that Iran's cultural heritage and tourism would be in a critical situation if the crises caused by the outbreak of the coronavirus would be continuing.

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China to conduct South China Sea military exercises

China said on Tuesday it will conduct military exercises in the South China Sea this week, just days after complaining that a U.S. aircraft carrier group had sailed through the disputed waters.

A notice issued by the country's Maritime Safety Administration prohibited entry into a portion of waters in the Gulf of Tonkin to the west of the Leizhou Peninsula in southwestern China from January 27 to January 30, but did not include details on when the drills would take place or on their scale, al Jazeera reported.

The USS Theodore Roosevelt led a group of ships into the South China Sea on Saturday to promote "freedom of the seas," the U.S. military said, days after Joe Biden began his term as president.

China claims sovereignty over the entire sea based on its historic "nine-dash line" and has been increasingly assertive in recent years, building military bases on rocky outcrops and

deploying its coastguard and maritime militia. The waters are also claimed by the littoral states – Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Brunei – as well as Taiwan – and have become another flashpoint in the testy bilateral relationship between Beijing and Washington as the U.S. military has stepped up activities in the sea.

China on Monday complained that U.S. action to "flex its muscles" was not conducive to peace and stability in the region.

Meanwhile, Chinese President Xi Jinping has warned global leaders against starting a "new Cold War" and urged unity in the face of the coronavirus pandemic.

"To build small cliques or start a new Cold War, to reject, threaten or intimidate others ... will only push the world into division," said Xi at an all-virtual Davos forum on Monday.

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Western vaccine producers: Failed commitments

It seems that the promising prospects of the COVID-19 vaccines by Western drug giants Pfizer, BioNTech and Oxford are gradually declining.

Given some European countries along with a number complaints by certain U.S. states on the shortage of vaccine, it is likely that these corporations are going to face major difficulties at least in terms of fulfilling their commitments.

EU and Pfizer: Tensions over reduced vaccine deliveries

A decision by Pfizer and BioNTech to reduce

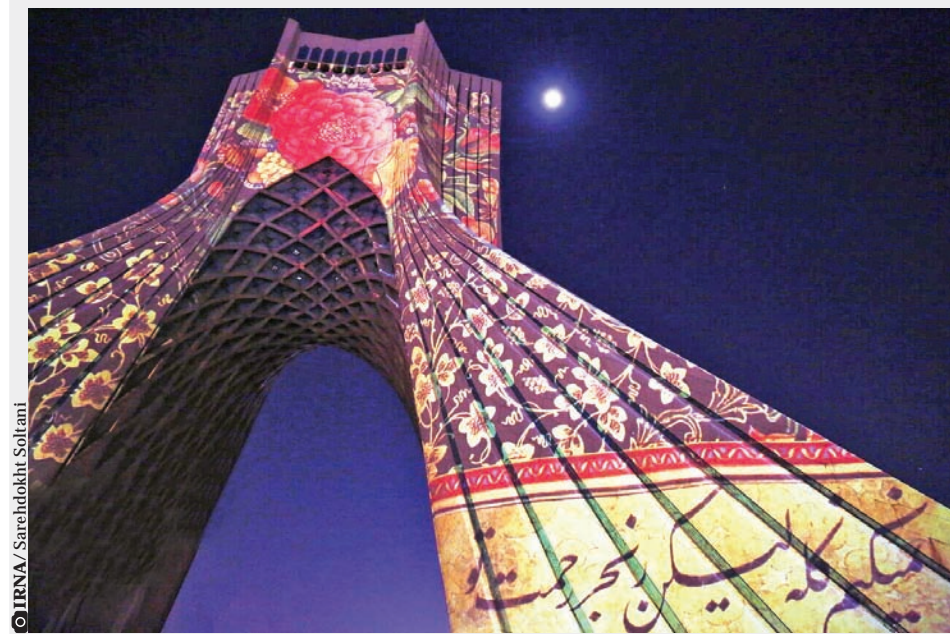
the number of vaccines vials they send to the EU has forced health officials to slow vaccination plans. Among them, at least one EU member state is threatening legal action.

BioNTech-Pfizer announced last week a temporary slowdown in deliveries to the EU. In response, the State Attorney General's Office of the Italian government, on 25th of January, sent a letter of formal notice calling on Pfizer to respect its contractual commitments over its COVID-19 vaccine deliveries.

If Pfizer does not meet its contractual obligations, the drug group could be accused of breaching the contract it has signed with the European Union on behalf of member states, an Italian source familiar with the matter said.

Also, on Saturday Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte said the delays in vaccine supplies amounted to a serious breach of contractual obligations, adding that Italy would use all available legal tools.

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Iranian artists set up video mapping to observe Silk Road calligraphy exhibit

TEHRAN – Iranian artists projected examples of Persian calligraphy on Tehran's Azadi Tower on Monday night to celebrate the First Raqs-e Qalam International Exhibition of the Silk Road Calligraphy now underway in the capital.

An exhibition of calligraphy works selected from the exhibition opened at the Iranian Academy of Arts in Tehran last Friday.

Calligraphy works by 203 artists from 30 countries have been showcased in a virtual exhibition, which officially opened on January 20 in the northeastern Iranian city of Mashhad.

The Iranian National Commission for UNESCO is the main organizer of the exhibition.

Iranian capital market: a huge capacity in need of correction

BY EBRAHIM FALLAHI

TEHRAN – Two years after the re-imposition of the U.S. sanction on Iran and at a time when the Trump Administration had started its maximum pressure policies to, as they claimed, paralyze the country's economy, the Iranian government started implementing a strategy to cut reliance on oil and promote domestic production using internal capacities.

The capital market was one of the major areas in which this new strategy manifested. As part of the mentioned strategy, the government defined a holistic program to encourage the country's production sector to enter the capital market and use its huge capacities for funding development projects and boost production.

The government also started offering the shares of a large group of its foundations, investment organizations, banks, and pension funds at the Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), the country's largest stock market, to direct people's wandering capitals into a unified arena to be used for maintaining economic growth by compensating the revenues it normally earned through oil sales or foreign trade.

Following the government's new movement, TSE attracted a whole new generation of investors. Ordinary Iranians flocked to the capital market to shield their assets from potential economic fluctuations and also to make some profit in the meantime. This caused the market's main index (Tehran Dividend and Price Index or TEDPIX) to start rising significantly.

In early August 2020, when all the major stocks around the world were experiencing serious declines, TEDPIX surpassed two million points.

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Zarif: Iran will suspend Additional Protocol if embargo continues

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif threatened on Tuesday that if the economic embargo against Iran is not lifted by February 21, Iran will suspend the implementation of the Additional Protocol to the NPT.

“Since the U.S. administration has been changed, we have heard some words but they have not taken any action,” Zarif remarked.

“If appropriate measures are not taken to restore our economic relations by February 21, we will act in accordance with parliamentary law,” he emphasized.

The Iranian parliament approved a law, named the “Strategic Action Plan to Counter Sanctions”, which requires the government to scale back more obligations under the JCPOA.

Politician sees management instability as main hurdle for economic and technological progress

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — A member of the Expediency Council chiefly blames an instability in management system for economic and technological inefficiencies in Iran, saying in countries in which there is stability in management system the manager knows that he will not be dismissed because of differences with his superior and this encourages him to take “brave” decisions.

“Unfortunately, in certain cases we have returned to the past because of management instability,” Mohammad Reza Aref told ISNA in an interview published on Sunday.

Aref, who acted as vice president from 2001-2005, says a manager who starts a work and advances it to a certain degree it will be reversed by the next manager and this does not happen necessarily with a change in government.

“We start from one point and reach another point but the next manager, who is not necessarily a manager of another government and is appointed by the same government, does not continue that path,” Aref regrets.

Aref, currently chairman of the Hope Foundation of Iranians, says in such a situation manager just wants to set a record for himself and does not have a “long-term view”.

He adds, “The building is crumbling but we paint it in order protect its facade.”

“Now in the fifth decade of the (Islamic) revolution which is the decade of maturity of a political system we should focus on science and past experiences so that we can overcome problems,” notes Aref, who was the chief of the parliamentary Hope faction in the previous parliament.

The new director, he says, instead of continuing his predecessor’s work and resolve problems in the process of doing the job, he just wants to say what “I have done and not what we have done.”

He suggest there is no solution other than seeking the experience of others.

“How much do parliament representatives hold consultation talks with former representatives or how many ministers ask the views of former ministers?” Aref asks.

It is natural when managers do not use the experiences of Iranian managers there will be no effort to seek the experiences of foreigners, the former vice president remarks.

“We have not developed a culture to make use of others’ experiences while it is a necessity to make use of the experiences of other countries in tandem with the situation of our country.”

The former official goes on to say wherever successive managers have made efforts to continuously push ahead with a project the country have made progresses. The former vice president cites non-technology as an example.

For example, he says, in 2003, when he was vice president, a center for developing nanotechnology was established and set a policy that Iran should be among the first 15 countries in this field within 10 years and now Iran has a “single-digit” ranking in the world.

“In my view the most important reason for this success in this sector was management stability and the attention of the next governments to the targeted goal,” stated Aref, who holds PhD in electrical and communication engineering from Stanford University.

He suggests this achievement in nanotechnology can serve as an example of management stability.

Prioritizing nanotechnology has led to Iran’s steady placement among the five pioneers of the nanotechnology in recent years. There are 227 companies in Iran registered in the WoS databases, manufacturing 419 products, mainly in the fields of construction, textile, medicine, home appliances, automotive, and food.

Instead structural reforms “we have been replacing individuals,” Aref says.

Such an approach in management system has even made the public to expect “slogans”, he opines.

The former official also sees lack of enough attention to the talented persons among the reasons for managerial problems. Aref, who ran for president in the 2013 but withdrew at the last hours, cites hollow slogans as one of other reasons for inefficiencies, saying candidates make promises which cannot be materialized.

“Usually in elections promises are given which definitely cannot be realized,” he notes.

Presidential or parliamentary candidates give slogans which is actually show they do not have information about “resources and incomes” and there is a great gap between “their promises with the performance”.

He adds, “If plans are crafted based on realities then there will be efficiency.”

Mostapha Hashemi Taba, a candidate in the 2017 presidential candidate, also says governments, especially presidential candidates envision “utopia” for the people while it is not actually possible.

If a government wants to prove that it is competent it should provide logical and achievable and not idealistic answers to demands of the public, Hashemi Taba tells ISNA in an interview published on Monday.

For example capable government should give logical answers how social welfare, environment, economic system, international relations with the outside world, adds Hashemi Taba, a former chief the Physical Education Organization.

Expecting extraordinary things from officials is just a “mirage”, he comments.

Zarif: Iran seeking to form six-party union in the Caucasus region

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Upon his arrival in Moscow on

Tuesday, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said Iran is seeking to form a six-party bloc in the Caucasus region that would include Iran, Russia, Turkey, the Republic of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia.

“We are looking to form a six-party cooperation union in the region and it is the most important goal of this regional trip,” Zarif said.

Zarif went to the Republic of Azerbaijan before Russia and is scheduled to travel to Georgia, Armenia and Turkey as part of his regional tour.

Talking to reporters at Moscow airport, Zarif said that his travel is intended to upgrade cooperation among the six countries and make coordination on other regional issues as well.

Multilateral cooperation in the region has a great importance for Iran, he remarked.

In Moscow, Zarif is to consult with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov on various issues including the Karabakh situation, the JCPOA, Syria, Afghanistan and the situation in the Persian Gulf region.

The senior diplomat stressed that Iran-Russia relationship entails continuous mutual contacts.

In a statement, the Russian Foreign Ministry pointed to Zarif’s visit to Moscow and said Russia is determined to develop fruitful relations with Iran.



Foreign Minister Zarif and his Russian counterpart Lavrov sign a cybersecurity cooperation pact in Moscow.

Russia brokered a peace deal between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, ending a deadly 44-day war with Armenia over the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh from late September through to November 2020.

The Iranian foreign minister praised Russia for ending the war between the two former Soviet republics.

“After the Nagorno-Karabakh crisis and the war in our neighborhood, this war was stopped

by the efforts of the Russian Federation and Vladimir Putin,” Zarif pointed out.

Zarif added, “In today’s meeting, we will discuss the international situation, the implementation of the JCPOA by all parties and Russia, and of course other issues such as Syria, Afghanistan and Yemen are also on the agenda.”

“Since Trump left the office, a special situation has been created, and therefore we are seeking to coordinate with Russian officials

on international issues,” Zarif remarked.

‘Strategic ties’

Speaking to reporters during a joint press conference in Moscow, Zarif said Iran and Russia have “strategic relations” and need to hold regular and constant negotiations in various conditions.

The Iranian foreign minister asserted even the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic has not prevented contacts between Tehran and Moscow.

Lavrov also said, “We talked with Foreign Minister Zarif about plans to build new units at the Bushehr nuclear power plant.”

Lavrov expressed his hope that “the U.S. will return to the JCPOA and that this will be a condition for Iran to implement the JCPOA.”

Russian foreign minister emphasized, “Moscow will continue its efforts to ensure that Iran and the United States fully comply with their obligations to the JCPOA in the near future.”

“Russia-Iran relations are independent of U.S. desires to impose illegal sanctions,” he said.

He sharply criticized the Trump administration because it encouraged other countries to break their commitments under the JCPOA.

At the end, cybersecurity cooperation pact was signed by Foreign Minister Zarif and his Russian counterpart Lavrov.

Three top American scholars optimistic about revival of JCPOA

By Hamid Bayati

TEHRAN — In interviews with the Tehran Times and Mehr news agency three senior American scholars are optimistic about restoring the 2015 nuclear deal – JCPOA – in view of the fact that Joe Biden’s candidates for foreign policy and national security team, including Jake Sullivan, Tony Blinken, William Burns, and Wendy Sherman, helped craft the nuclear agreement.

The JCPOA was signed in July 2015 and went into force in January 2016. However, during his presidential campaigns in 2016 Donald Trump made the most vitriolic attacks on the multilateral agreement. When Trump started his work as president he started to undermine the JCPOA until he officially withdrew the pact in May 2018 and introduced the harshest ever sanctions on Iran based on his “maximum pressure” campaign against the Islamic Republic.

“Generally Biden has chosen highly professional people with relevant experience. That is certainly true of his national security and foreign policy team. He has made clear what he wants with Iran: return to the status quo ante (the situation before the Trump Administration) by both Washington and Tehran,” Daniel Serwer, a professor of School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University points out.

“I am hopeful it will be realized,” Professor Serwer notes when asked about the makeup of Biden’s national security and foreign policy team.

Barbara Slavin, director of Future of Iran Initiative at

the Atlantic Council, also says she is “optimistic that we can get back into the JCPOA and build on it.”

Slavin is of the opinion that one of President Biden’s “top priorities” is to get back to diplomacy with Iran.

She says the road for such an approach is not bumpy in view of the fact that the persons that Biden has selected for his security and foreign policy team are pro-JCPOA.

“Biden has a lot of work to do on domestic and foreign policy issues but clearly one of his top priorities is to return to diplomacy with Iran. Fortunately, he has chosen a number of individuals with past successful experience in this area including Jake Sullivan, who helped start the back channel with Iran in 2012, Bill Burns, who has been dealing with Iran issues since the George W. Bush administration, Tony Blinken, who was deputy secretary of state under John Kerry, and Wendy Sherman, who led JCPOA negotiations and will now be deputy secretary of state. Given their experience and commitment, I am optimistic that we can get back into the JCPOA and build on it,” Slavin states.

Mark Fitzpatrick, an associate fellow and former executive director of the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), says although “it is only a coincidence that so many senior members of the Biden foreign policy team have experience dealing with Iran”, the new U.S. president “wants to restore” the nuclear deal.

“Biden chose Anthony Blinken, Jake Sullivan, Wendy Sherman and others because he knew them well from their previous positions and because he values their judgment



Barbara Slavin (L), Mark Fitzpatrick (C), Daniel Serwer (R)

and habits of discretion, diligence and teamwork,” says Fitzpatrick who served as acting deputy assistant secretary for non-proliferation at the State Department.

The former diplomat says these persons worked on the Iran nuclear issue during the Obama administration as Iran’s progress in nuclear technology “was one of the most challenging of the foreign policy issues Obama faced and he was intent on resolving it.”

Fitzpatrick adds, “Today, Biden faces many other challenges, mostly domestic in nature, and in the foreign policy arena Iran is not the most pressing problem. But Biden does want to restore the JCPOA. The coincidence that architects of the deal are on his team will make it easier to get started on this challenge.”

“Window of opportunity is very limited” for U.S. and Europeans, Iran says

Rabiei says no talks between Iran and the U.S. at the moment

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — At his virtual press briefing, Ali

Rabiei, Iran’s government spokesman, said “we are not holding any talks with the new U.S. administration at the moment.”

Rabiei also said now that Donald Trump is gone, tension in the global community has been reduced considerably.

When Trump was defeated in the economic war that he waged against Iran, Tehran’s trade partners changed their approach, so Iran’s economic relations are entering post-sanctions phase, Rabiei told reporters.

The government spokesman said Iran is waiting “the U.S. fulfill its obligations and

lift the illegal sanctions as an integral part of its obligations.”

He added, “Currently, there is no plan to negotiate with the U.S.”

The spokesman also emphasized that the United States “will not have time forever and the window of opportunity is very limited not only for the U.S. but also for the European members of the JCPOA in fulfilling their obligations.”

Regarding the IAEA inspectors’ access to the Iranian nuclear sites, Rabiei said, “According to the parliamentary law, the first steps of restricting the IAEA inspectors to nuclear sites, with regards to the

Additional Protocol, will begin in the first week of March.”

Iran could strongly resist the sanctions although they have created problems and difficulties for the people, the spokesman noted.

Noting that warmongers were not able impose a new war on Iran, he said, “The government has developed infrastructures, followed resistance economy and strengthened its knowledge-based companies to move forward to development and growth”.

Trump, who withdrew unilaterally from the 2015 nuclear deal and imposed the highest level of sanctions against Iran, left the

White House on January 20. The new U.S. President, Joe Biden, has pledged to rejoin the JCPOA.

Officials in Tehran have censured the U.S. strict sanctions on Iran, calling sanctions economic terrorism.

Despite calls by international bodies, including the United Nations, the Trump administration refused to relax illegal sanctions against Iran as the country was fighting the Covid-19 pandemic.

In a tweet in March 2020, Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif said, “The world can no longer be silent as U.S. Economic Terrorism is supplanted by its Medical Terrorism.”

Iranian ambassador: U.S. acts as sponsor of terrorism in Yemen

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Hassan Irlou, Iranian Ambassador to Yemen, has said that the United States is the sponsor and mother of terrorism in the world.

“The war in Yemen should be stopped. Everyone knows that the U.S. is the sponsor and mother of terrorism in the world, it supports the siege on Yemenis and adds to their humanitarian problems,” Irlou wrote on his twitter page on Monday night.

He pointed to the recent protest demonstrations in Yemen to protest at the U.S. designation of Ansarullah as

terrorist organization, saying that it showed opposition to the U.S. and the Zionist regime’s colonial policies.

Last week, more than 300 anti-war and humanitarian organizations across the world signed a statement calling for an end to the Saudi war against impoverished Yemen.

The statement called for an international day of action on January 25, just days after U.S. President Joe Biden’s inauguration and the day before Saudi Arabia’s “Davos in the Desert” Future Investment Initiative.

Saudi Arabia launched war on Yemen in March 2015 in a bid to reinstall Yemen’s former pro-Riyadh government.

Iran has started developing quantum technology, Salehi says

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Ali Akbar Salehi, the head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), said on Monday night that “Iran has started to develop quantum technology, because the 21st century is the century of this technology.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony of the open space quantum communication achievement, Salehi announced, “The quantum technology is very significant and that advanced industrial countries kicked off development in this technology from the onset of 21st century”.

“The Atomic Energy Organization began

work on the quantum technology in 2016 and it is responsible for monitoring scientific developments throughout the world and prioritizing high tech technologies”, said Salehi, according to the IRNA.

The technology intertwines photons and separates a pair of photons and then dispatches the photons to a chosen destination, Salehi, a nuclear physicist, stated, adding the photon, which remains in the first place, would be affected by the other photon that has been sent to the destination.

Iran’s nuclear chief also said that in 2019 the

AEOI decided to carry out the experiment in farther distances, so the test was implemented at a distance of 2 meters, trying to increase the rate of photon generation, which ended up in the production of several million pairs of intertwined photons.

Salehi added that the distance increased to 300 meters in June 2020.

He also announced, “The Atomic Energy Organization plans to increase the distance to seven kilometers between the location of the organization and Milad Tower in Tehran in next summer”.

He expressed hope that the AEOI will be able to utilize the quantum technology in order to transfer codified data in different fields, including in telecommunications, defense, banking communications, medical and computer sciences, artificial intelligence, atomic clock, radars, and biology.

“Iran is the first country in West Asia that has conducted the test and a few countries succeeded in investing in quantum technology, including Austria, the U.S., China, Russia, India, Britain, the European Union and Canada,” he explained.

Saudi aggressive foreign policy backfired

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — With the Saudi capital city of Riyadh coming under attack in broad daylight, the Saudi government seems to be unable to protect its capital against increasing attacks.

A “loud” explosion was heard in Saudi Arabia’s capital Riyadh on Tuesday in what appeared to be a missile or drone attack on the oil-rich country for the second time in a week. As of this writing, Saudi authorities have not commented on the incident, but Saudi-owned Al Arabia TV said several witnesses reported hearing two loud bangs and seeing a small plume of smoke above the capital just before 1 P.M. local time (10 A.M. GMT).

Social media users in Saudi Arabia also shared videos purportedly showing Saudi Arabia’s air defense systems were activated to intercept an unidentified air target – most probably a combat drone - over Riyadh.

Unlike the earlier attack this week, this time there were no claims of responsibility whatsoever. According to social media reports, the Tuesday attack targeted the Riyadh airport. Flight tracking websites also showed that there were no planes flying over Riyadh’s airport during the time of the attack.

This is the second attack on Riyadh in four days. Earlier this week, Saudi Arabia’s air defense systems were activated to intercept an air target. On Saturday, Saudi Arabia had announced that it had intercepted and destroyed an “enemy air target” launched towards Riyadh.

A new Iraqi group called “al-Wiyat al-Wa’ad al-Haq” (Brigades of Righteous Promise) claimed responsibility for the attack.

“After the (Persian) Gulf’s Arabs persisted



in their crimes against the peoples of the region and continued to support ISIS criminal gangs and takfiri groups that have the blood of innocent people on their hands, here are the people of the Arabian Peninsula who fulfill their promise by sending drones of fear to the kingdom of the House of Saud and crushing their strongholds in Al Yamama Palace and other targets in Riyadh,” the group said in a statement, adding that it is beginning to take the battle deep into the Saudi “Sheikhdom” in revenge for “the blood of the martyrs.”

The group also warned that it would strike Dubai if the crown princes of Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi continued to commit crimes.

The Tuesday attack was the latest sign that Saudi Arabia’s aggressive policies in the region, especially against its immediate neighbors, are beginning to backfire. Saudi Arabia started a disastrous war against Yemen in 2015 that resulted in creating the worst humanitarian crisis in the world. It still refuses to stop the war even though it continues to exacerbate the suffering of the Yemeni people.

Riyadh along with its regional allies also imposed a blockade on Qatar in a futile effort to drive a wedge between Qatar and some regional countries such as Iran and Turkey. All this while Iran has called - and continues to call – on Saudi Arabia to resolve differences

through dialogue. But Saudi Arabia rejected all Iran’s calls while accusing Iran of interfering in the internal affairs of Arab states.

All Saudi claims aside, Riyadh itself has been accused of interfering in some Arab states such as Iraq. Iraqis have pointed the finger at Saudi Arabia after two suicide bomb attacks killed dozens of Iraqi citizens in Baghdad last week.

Saudi Arabia does not face any difficulty revising its aggressive foreign policy. In fact, there are growing calls in the region demanding that Saudi Arabia reconsider its policies. Iran said that Saudi Arabia has begun realizing that its aggressive foreign policy has ended in failure and that it seems to be revising some aspects of its foreign policy accordingly. Iran said it would welcome Saudi Arabia’s decision to change its approach.

“It looks like the Saudi officials have begun reforming some of their policies concerning the interaction with some of the Persian Gulf’s littoral countries, having understood that war and bloodshed do not help them out anymore, and also having despaired of their former allies,” Iran’s Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said in remarks to ISNA that the news agency published on Sunday, according to Press TV.

The spokesman pointed out that if Riyadh seriously puts policy reforms on its agenda and concludes that the solution to problems lies in “regional cooperation,” Iran will be the first country to welcome these reforms.

The spokesman pointed out that if Riyadh seriously puts policy reforms on its agenda and concludes that the solution to problems lies in “regional cooperation,” Iran will be the first country to welcome these reforms.

Iran waits for Biden to make the first diplomatic move: ambassador

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iran’s Ambassador to the United Nations Majid Takht-Ravanchi has said Iran has no plans to hold talks with the Biden administration and is waiting for the new U.S. president to take the first step to lift sanctions and return the U.S. to the 2015 nuclear deal.

In an interview with NBC News, the Iranian diplomat said that Iran has not spoken to the new U.S. administration yet and is not planning to initiate any talks with the U.S.

“No, there has not been any conversation between Iran and the U.S. after Biden came into office,” Takht-Ravanchi said.

He pointed out that Iran is not in a rush to get the U.S. return to the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

“It’s up to the U.S. to decide what course of action to take. We’re not in a hurry,” the Iranian ambassador noted, adding that Iran is willing to see the new U.S. president make good on his campaign promise to return the U.S. to the JCPOA and if he did, Tehran would be ready to once again abide by the terms of the accord.

The new U.S. president, Joe Biden, had expressed willingness to rejoin the agreement during his election campaign. “I will offer Tehran a credible path back to diplomacy. If Iran returns to strict compliance with the nuclear deal, the United States would rejoin the agreement as a starting point for follow-on negotiations. With our allies, we will work to strengthen and extend the nuclear deal’s provisions, while also addressing other issues of concern,” Biden wrote in a September op-ed for CNN.

After he won the U.S. presidential election in November, Biden said he still stood by the views articulated in the op-ed but said that rejoining the nuclear deal would be “hard.”

Takht-Ravanchi said now it’s up to the U.S. to make the first move.

“The ball is in the U.S. court,” he said. “It is totally up to the new administration. So as soon as they implement their obligations, Iran has said on numerous occasions that Iran will return to the full implementation of its undertakings.”

He added that it would be “absurd” for Iran to take conciliatory steps now when it was the U.S. that violated the 2015 agreement by withdrawing.

“Words are not enough. We need to see action on the part of the United States,” said Takht-Ravanchi who was involved in the intensive talks that produced the JCPOA in July 2015.

Ever since Biden won the U.S. presidential election, Iranian officials have said repeatedly that Tehran won’t make the first move to revive the JCPOA and that the U.S. needs to make the first move.

“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,” Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said last week.

“If they (the Biden administration) sincerely return to law, 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%,” the president continued.

The remarks come 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.

“We are a long way from there,” Blinken told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on January 19.

Iran said it will not do anything on the JCPOA as long as the U.S. does not uphold its obligations under UN Security Council Resolution 2231. “Our position is the same as we

previously said: the U.S. and other remaining parties to the JCPOA must lift the sanctions and effectively implement the deal,” Saeed Khatibzadeh, spokesman for Iran’s Foreign Ministry, said in a press briefing on Monday.

Nothing will be done by Iran as long as the U.S. doesn’t comply with Resolution 2231, Khatibzadeh remarked. “If the new U.S. administration is willing [to rejoin the JCPOA], it must show that it is distancing itself from the previous administration and return to the right path of implementing its commitments,” he insisted.

The spokesman echoed the position of another Iranian spokesman. Ali Rabiei, the spokesman for Iran’s government said in mid-November that Iran expects the Biden administration to return to the JCPOA.

“We expect the new White House officials to unconditionally return to all their previous obligations and commitments,” Rabiei said in an interview with the IRIB news agency in mid-November. “In the first step, sanctions and barriers to the transfer of Iranian money must be lifted and the U.S. administration must be held accountable for the damage it has done to the Iranian people during this period.”

‘Iran open to prisoner exchange’

In addition to the JCPOA, Takht-Ravanchi addressed the prospect of Iran and the U.S. exchanging prisoners. He said Iran would be open to an exchange of Iranian nationals detained in the United States in return for American citizens imprisoned in Iran.

“We are ready to engage on a comprehensive exchange of all prisoners or detainees on both sides, in the United States, in Iran, and those that are waiting to be extradited to the United States. And this is a very simple and straightforward proposition,” the Iranian ambassador said.

Salvation of JCPOA one of the most acute topics, Russian FM says

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Tuesday that salvaging the 2015 Iran nuclear is one of the most urgent issues he discussed with his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif.

During his meeting with Zarif, Lavrov said Moscow and Tehran are both interested in complete restoration of the Iran nuclear deal, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), according to a Sputnik News report.

“The salvation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on the Iranian nuclear issue is one of the most acute topics on the agenda. Both we and Iran are deeply interested in the full return of signatory states to fulfilling their obligations under the accord,” the Russian foreign minister said.

Underlining that Moscow has heard U.S. statements about returning to the JCPOA, Lavrov noted that Russia will welcome a U.S. return to the nuclear deal.

“We have heard many statements

from Joe Biden’s team, which concern his foreign policy plans. These statements particularly mentioned plans to return to compliance with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. If it happens, we will certainly welcome it,” the chief Russian diplomat was quoted by TASS as saying on Tuesday.

Zarif, who visited Russia on the second leg of his regional tour that includes several countries, expressed gratitude to Moscow for its “constructive and unwavering position” on the issue of the JCPOA.

The chief Russian diplomat underlined that due to both Moscow and Tehran’s role in the region the two states are also interested in expanding dialogue on a number of other issues, such as security in the Persian Gulf, the resolution of the domestic conflict in Afghanistan, and the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh.

The Iranian foreign minister embarked on a tour of Caucasus countries and Russia as well as Turkey late on Sunday.

Five Iranians dead in avalanche on Turkish border

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Five Iranian nationals stuck in an avalanche on the border with Turkey have unfortunately lost their lives, the Iranian Foreign Ministry said in a statement on Monday, adding that efforts are underway to bring their bodies back home.

In a statement on Monday, Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said the bodies of the victims have been recovered and will be transferred to Iran after the necessary arrangements are made.

“Based on the details received from relevant organizations, following an avalanche when five Iranian koolbars went missing on the Iran-Turkey border, the [Iranian] Foreign Ministry made phone contacts and met our country’s consul general in Erzurum, and the Contingency Headquarters in the [Iranian] West Azerbaijan Province followed up on the issue,” he said.

“Iran sent two memos to Turkish officials, one from Iran’s embassy in Ankara and the other from the general consular department to the Turkish embassy in Tehran, requesting permission for a search team from the Iranian Red Crescent Society to be sent to the site of the incident and [requesting] Turkish forces cooperate with them to find the bodies of the missing Iranians,” the spokesman added.

Khatibzadeh noted that these efforts will continue until their bodies are transferred to Iran.

“Border officials have always urged Iranian nationals to avoid illegally crossing the border, so that, given the conditions in the area, they will not run into problems similar to the one these five fellow countrymen faced,” he continued.

Khatibzadeh also expressed his gratitude to border authorities and the Turkish Red Crescent Society for cooperating to establish the fate of those five Iranians.

Taliban political delegation visits Iran for Afghan peace talks

1→ The visit came amid renewed efforts by Iran to increase contacts with all major Afghan players. On Monday, Mohammad-Ebrahim Taherian, the Iranian foreign minister’s special envoy for Afghanistan, held a series of talks with several foreign officials including Afghan Foreign Minister Mohammad Hanif Atmar.

Taherian and Atmar conferred on the latest developments in Afghanistan, relations between Tehran and Kabul, and the Afghan peace process, according to Iran’s Foreign Ministry.

The Iranian envoy also held talks with his German and Russian counterparts. The Iranian Foreign Ministry said that Taherian held separate talks with his Russian and German counterparts on Monday.

“During the talks, Taherian underlined the necessity of reducing violence and the need for collaboration among the friends of Afghanistan in establishing sustainable peace through diplomatic solutions. He also described intra-Afghan negotiations as the most appropriate way to end the crisis

in Afghanistan and relieve the Afghan people’s pains, and expressed Tehran’s preparedness for any assistance in this regard,” the ministry said in a statement.

Taherian also spoke with the UN secretary-general’s special representative for Afghanistan Deborah Lyons. During the talks, the two sides conferred on the latest status of intra-Afghan negotiations, the peace process in Afghanistan, and the establishment of sustainable peace through diplomatic solutions, according to Iran’s Foreign Ministry.

SPORTS

Saipa crowned champions of Iran volleyball super league

SPORTS **TEHRAN** — Saipa claimed the title of the 20th edition of Iran Women’s Volleyball Super League on Tuesday.

Saipa defeated Shahr-dari Qazvin in straight sets (25-7, 25-12, 25-17) in Iran Volleyball Federation’s hall in Tehran to win the title for the second successive year.

Mahsa Saberi tallied a game-high 16 points for Saipa and Aylar Saeidi registered six points for Shahr-dari Qazvin.

The 20th edition of Iran Women’s Volleyball Super League started with eight participating teams. The competition was originally scheduled to be played with 14 teams but eight teams took part under observing severe health protocols in a centralized venue.

The teams are drawn in two pools of four teams. Saipa, Shahr-dari Qazvin, Exxon Tehran and Sarvghamatan Babol are in Pool A and Zob Ahan, Khojasteh Eslamshahr, Paykan Tehran and Setaregan Fars are in Pool B.

Zob Ahan are the most decorated team in Iran Women’s Volleyball Super League, winning the title six times.

ACL’s Group Stages to be played in centralized venues

SPORTS **TEHRAN** — The biggest-ever Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Champions League will be played in centralized group stages in the 2021 season.

The AFC Champions League will be held in the West and East Regions while the AFC Cup will be staged across the five AFC Zones.

With the continued support of the Member Associations and participating clubs, the AFC has agreed that the AFC Champions League Group Stage West Region matches will be scheduled between April 14-30 while the East Region are planned for April 21-May 7, 2021.

The AFC Champions League 2021 knockout matches in the Round of 16 are scheduled for Sept. 13-15 and the Quarter-finals on Sept. 27-29. Both rounds will be played as single matches. The AFC Champions League Semi-finals will be over two legs on Oct. 19-20 and 26-27.

The AFC Champions League, which will feature 40 teams for the first time in history, will reach its grand finale with the two-leg Final on Nov. 21 and 27, while the AFC Cup Final will take place on Nov. 26.

Dato’ Windsor John, the AFC General Secretary, said: “The AFC is most grateful for the support of the AFC Competitions Committee, the Member Associations and the participating clubs in producing this schedule for the biggest and most inclusive AFC Champions League and AFC Cup in history.

“Once again, the AFC will put the safety and welfare of all its stakeholders as its overriding priority, but we demonstrated with the successful AFC Champions League in 2020 that the unity, solidarity and strong leadership of the AFC can deliver its club competitions in the most challenging of times.”

Bidding invitations and other hosting details will be circulated to Participating Member Associations after the AFC Champions League 2021 Group Stage draws which will take place on Jan. 27, 2021.

Persepolis, Tractor, Esteghlal and Foolad will represent Iran in the 2021 AFC Champions League.

Mehdi Heydari elected president of Lifesaving & Diving Federation

SPORTS **TEHRAN** — Mehdi Heydari was elected as head of Iran Lifesaving & Diving Federation on Tuesday for a four-year term till 2025.

In the elections held at the Iran’s Academy Olympic, Heydari secured 27 of 42 votes cast.

Farhang Shadnia finished in second place with 12 votes and Mohammad Babaei earned three votes.

Heydari replaced Ilkhan Nouri as head of the federation. Iran Lifesaving & Diving Federation was founded in 1974.

Asian Athletics Championships called off due to Coronavirus

SPORTS **TEHRAN** — The 24th Asian Athletics Championships in Hangzhou, China have been called off due to coronavirus concerns.

The competitions have been scheduled to be held in May. The Asian Athletics Championships had been already postponed one time.

The Asian Athletics Association has yet to announce the new date for the competitions.

2021 VNL to be held in Covid-secure bubble

SPORTS **TEHRAN** — The Volleyball Nations League (VNL) 2021 will be held with a secure bubble concept to ensure the health of all athletes and stakeholders involved and preserve the original format of the flagship annual event.

The bubble concept will protect the health of all participants by accommodating all 16 teams per gender in one country in a safe environment with frequent COVID-19 testing, significantly minimizing the risk of virus transmission. The matches in a round robin format and the finals will be hosted in one venue, preserving the original format of the VNL with the same number of matches per gender.

Developed in close consultation with the event’s main stakeholders, the concept was approved by the VNL Council during its latest videoconference meeting earlier today.

Following the approval of the VNL Council, the FIVB will advance negotiations with interested organizers and aim to announce the host country or countries and the match schedule in February 2021.

In light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent travel restrictions, the FIVB is committed to minimizing international travel and creating a safe environment to protect the health and wellbeing of all participants.

Iran will participate in the third edition under guidance of Vladimir Alekno.

Tehran, Muscat stress expansion of economic, banking ties

1 → Hemmati arrived in Muscat on Tuesday for a two-day visit aimed at strengthening trade and banking relations between the two countries, given the new international condition.

Despite the U.S. re-imposition of sanctions against Iran, Oman is getting closer to the Islamic Republic both politically and economically. There is also the same approach adopted by Iran, as Iranian companies now prefer to conduct trade with Oman rather than the United Arab Emirates (UAE), given that the UAE is highly complying with the sanctions.

Iran is somehow replacing some of its previous strategic trade partners such as UAE with Oman, considering the Sultanate as an economic-trade hub.



Over the past two years, there have been many meetings and negotiations between trade and economic officials from the state-run and private sectors of the two sides with the aim of strengthening and expanding bilateral trade ties.

During the 18th meeting of the Iran-Oman Joint Economic Committee in Tehran, Omani minister of commerce and industry had said that his country was trying to boost its trade and economic ties with Iran, stressing that this goal could be achieved through more cooperation between the two sides' private sectors.

Ali bin Masoud al Sunaidy also said, "We will make the most efforts to provide incentives for joint investment and also promote bilateral trade cooperation between the two countries."

Stressing that a very proper condition is available for invigorating the bilateral trade, the Omani official said the two sides can also take the advantage of bartering to expand their trade ties.

Addressing the same meeting, Iran's Former Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani said while there are potential and capabilities for boosting the trade turnover between Iran and Oman to \$5 billion, the figure is currently \$1 billion.

The International North South Transit Corridor (INSTC) can help the two countries elevate their bilateral trade to this level, the minister noted.

Meanwhile, Iran-Oman Joint Chamber of Commerce and Iran Mine House (IMH) signed a memorandum of understanding on cooperation for the expansion of the Iranian private sector's presence in Oman in early August, 2020.

Housing price rises 1.8% in Tehran city in a month

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Housing price in Tehran city has risen 1.8 percent in the tenth Iranian calendar month (December 21, 2020-January 19, 2021), from its previous month, according to the latest report released by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI).

The CBI's report put the average price for one square meter of a residential unit at 273.9 million rials (about \$6,521) in the capital city in the tenth month of this year, up 98.3 percent from the figure for the same month in the past year.

Meanwhile, the number of real estate deals has increased 37.6 percent in Tehran in the tenth month of this year, compared to the ninth month, while it decreased 67.1 percent compared to the same month of the past year.

Last month, the deputy managing director of Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) for economic studies said that the exchange plans to presell housing units through standard salaf bonds in near future.



"We will soon see the issuance of standard housing salaf bonds in the capital market to help financing in the housing sector and construction of new housing units in the country," Javad Fallah said.

A standard parallel salaf is an Islamic contract similar to futures, with the difference being that the contract's total price is paid in advance.

According to the official, IME is following two major approaches for implementing the mentioned plan, one is offering bonds related to the already existing housing units like assets owned by the government and state banks and the other is preselling the units that are going to be constructed in the future.

Outlining the procedure, the official said the total value of a housing unit or a construction project will be securitized and converted into marketable bonds which will be offered through salaf contracts.

The official further explained that each salaf bond would be backed by one square meter of a housing unit, which means each bond would be offered at the price of one square meter of a particular housing unit at the time of offer.

Fallah underlined the implementation of this method as a way to develop reliable investment in the housing sector and added: «In this way, micro-capitals will lead to the increase of construction and supply of housing units and will consequently curb the rampant rise in housing prices."

Back in last July, the High Council of Securities and Exchange announced the approval of a decision for establishing a specialized exchange for real estate trade in the country.

It will be the fifth exchange operating in the country after the Tehran Stock Exchange, the junior equity market Iran Fara Bourse, Iran Energy Exchange, and the IME.

Iranian capital market: a huge capacity in need of correction

1 → This situation created some skepticism among investors regarding the creation of a bubble in the market, and some economists and market analysts also warned about the government's over-interfering in this market.

The government, however, continued offering more and more of its entities on the market and further encouraged people to invest in the market.

Turning the fears of the investors into reality, TEDPIX started a downward trend in mid-August and has since slumped about 38 percent, closing near 1.235 million points on Tuesday.

What President Rouhani called one of the most "astonishing rises" in the history of the stock market, became one of the most dramatic swings on record.

Now, the big question would be "what is on the horizon for the Iranian stock market?" To answer this question and to have a clearer picture of the whole situation the Tehran Times has interviewed some experts and analysts to share their opinions.

The reason for the historic decline

According to Farhang Hosseini, a capital market expert, although several external factors, including the disputes between the oil and economy ministries over the offering of the second ETF (dubbed First Refinery, or Dara Second), increase in interest rates, the ambiguities in the next year's national budget bill, and etc. have contributed to the decline of the TSE's main index over the past few months. The main reason for



this decline is the unconventional valuation (to be more precise the over-valuation) of entities in this market for encouraging liquidity inflow.

"The market is correcting itself and most of the companies, enterprises, and funds are getting closer and closer to their real values," Hosseini explained, adding: "The market has quickly returned to a logical valuation level and more than half of the market is within the reasonable value range."

Behzad Samadi, market analyst and board member of a major broker in Iran, believes that the recent declines in the main index of the TSE has nothing to do with the funda-

mental and technical issues of the market.

He believes the main reason for this situation is the interference of the government and over-encouraging of the masses for entering the market without having the slightest knowledge even about the fundamentals of this market.

"Like its decline, the drastic growth of the market did not have any technical and standard basis," he said.

According to Samadi, the bubble created in the TSE's main index was partly the result of the excitement instilled by the government, and partly due to the huge gap between some entities' real value and the prices for which

they were offering their shares.

The solutions

Asked about the future of the market and the solution to stabilize the current turbulent situation, Hosseini stated that instead of interfering in the market, the government must provide the necessary economic basis in the country in order for the stock market to follow a logical trend.

"Market trends are influenced by macro-economic factors, for instance, the value of the national currency and the pricing of major products which is itself affected by factors such as the prices of energy carriers like electricity and gas."

"If the mentioned factors are stabilized, the market can fluctuate at current levels or even resume its upward trend, however, if we see an increase in production costs, a decrease in the selling prices of major products or fluctuations in the exchange rates, a decrease in the index is inevitable."

Samadi also believes that the stock market in Iran has become a victim of politicization and disputes between the government and various parties.

A legal entity supervision body should become responsible for preventing such issues that are hurting this market which has great potentials for generating wealth and prosperity for the country.

Considering the significant growth of the population in the stock market, which is currently estimated at 40 million, the government should reconsider its policies regarding this market, he said.

Electricity, water projects worth over \$163m put into operation

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Some 23 water and electricity projects worth 6.86 trillion rials (about \$163.33 million) were put into operation in four provinces through video conference.

Inaugurated in the 38th week of the Energy Ministry's A-B-Iran Program by the Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian, the mentioned projects were put into operation in Zanjan, Qom, Isfahan, and Semnan provinces.

Of the mentioned projects, 20 were electricity projects and the other three were in the water sector.

The projects included desalination facilities, repair, and reconstruction of water transmission lines, a wastewater

project, a water supply project, several electricity supply projects, three small-scale power plants, as well as several projects for improving the quality of the electricity network and reducing losses.

A-B-Iran program (the acronyms A and B stand for water and electricity in Persian) was initiated in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19, 2020), during which the minister made several trips to various provinces for inaugurating over 220 major projects with a total investment of 335.6 trillion rials (about \$7.99 billion).

Since the beginning of the second phase of the scheme in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 20,

2020), every week several energy projects have gone operational across the country.

According to Ardakanian, in the second phase of the program 250 projects were going to be inaugurated by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20) of which so far 227 have gone operational.

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

Last week, Ardakanian inaugurated six electricity projects worth 2.4 trillion rials (about \$57.14 million) in Kerman and Yazd provinces in the 37th week of the mentioned program.

Iran's non-oil trade exceeds \$58b in 10 months

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iran has traded 122.8 million tons of non-oil commodities worth \$58.7 billion in the first 10 months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2020-January 19, 2021), according to the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA).

Of the total volume of the country's non-oil trade in the mentioned period, 94.541 million tons worth \$28.063 billion was the share of exports and about 28.249 million tons valued at \$30.639 were the imported goods, Mehdi Mir-Ashrafi said.

According to the official, the exports of non-oil goods in this period decreased by 17.7 percent and 20 percent in terms of weight and value, respectively, compared

to the same period last year.

The figures, however, grew significantly compared to the previous calendar month (December 21, 2020-January 19, 2021), the official added, noting that the upward trend is expected to continue in the coming months.

In comparison to the previous year's same time span, the imports of the mentioned commodities also declined by two percent and 15.5 percent in terms of weight and value, respectively, according to the IRICA head.

Iran's top five non-oil export destinations during this period were China with \$7.2 billion worth of exports, Iraq with \$6.3 billion, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) with over \$3.7 billion, Turkey with \$2 bil-

lion, and Afghanistan with \$1.9 billion.

The mentioned countries imported a total of 69.5 million tons of goods worth \$21.3 billion from Iran in the said 10 months, accounting for 73.5 percent and 76 percent of the total exports in terms of weight and value, respectively.

Meanwhile, the country's top five sources of imports during this period were China with \$7.9 billion, the UAE with \$7.4 billion, Turkey with \$3.4 billion, India with \$1.8 billion, and Germany with \$1.4 billion worth of imports.

Some 5.8 million tons of commodities were also transited to other countries through Iran, 9.5 percent less than the figure for the same period in the previous year, Mir-Ashrafi stated.



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

IPEC 2021 underway in Tehran

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — The 6th Iranian Petroleum and Energy Club Congress and Exhibition (IPEC 2021) kicked off in Tehran on Tuesday, at Industrial Management Institute Conference Center, Shana reported.

IPEC which is the biggest event of its kind in West Asia examines the key topics that affect the rapidly advancing oil, gas, and energy industries in Iran and around the world.

Speaking in the opening ceremony of the event, the Chairman of the Board of Iran's Petrochemical Industries Development Management Company Habibollah Bitaraf outlined the main axes of this year's congress.

The future of gas production and consumption, horizons of future trade, value creation, and gas consumption, strengthening E&P companies to achieve eight million barrels of oil production capacity, new financing methods considering the capital market, the impact of current world conditions on the future of Iran's oil and energy



industries, oil and energy regulatory, non-governmental investment challenges in Iran's electricity and renewable energy industry, upstream production for petrochemical industry, methanol surplus, price effects, and value chain

completion, the role of government and private sector and the export markets for oil, petro-refineries vs. petrochemical complexes, and the role of international cooperation in the post-Covid-19 era, are the main axes of this year's event, according to the official.

Bitaraf, who is also a member of the congress' policy council, noted that the three-day congress will be held in full compliance with health and safety protocols.

The coronavirus pandemic in Iran, like countries all around the world, has created special and new conditions for all industries; the situation has influenced the way many events are held. So this year's IPEC is being held half-physical and half-virtual.

The previous IPEC congress was held with the presence of more than 4,000 experts from local and international organizations and companies dealing with key issues in the oil, gas, and energy industries.

Monthly loading, unloading of goods fall %18 at Iranian ports

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — The loading and unloading of commodities have been dropped 18.8 percent at the ports of Iran during the ninth Iranian calendar month Azar (November 21-December 20, 2020), as compared with the same month in the past year.

The latest data released by Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) indicate that 9.13 million tons of goods have been loaded and unloaded at the ports of country in the mentioned month of this year, while the figure was 11.24 million tons in the same month of the previous year.

PMO Head Mohammad Rastad has recently said that the country's trade gateways

were not closed even a moment despite the sanctions and pandemic, adding that loading and unloading of goods, especially the essential goods, are continuously conducted at the ports.

As announced by the PMO head, loading and unloading of commodities are being conducted continuously at the ports of Iran while the health requirements are completely met.

Rastad has reiterated that all port operations are done observing healthcare protocols and the principles set by the Coronavirus Containment Headquarters.

In a statement in mid-October last year, PMO declared that loading and unloading

of commodities are underway continuously at the country's ports.

While the enemy is trying to halt Iran's exports and imports through imposing sanctions, operation at Iranian ports are underway without interruption as the result of the all-out efforts of the organization's personnel, the statement reads.

Meanwhile, as the PMO head has announced, 11 new development projects with 59 trillion rials (over \$1.4 billion) of investment are currently underway at the Iranian ports.

Not only the sanctions could not stop development activities at the ports of Iran, some new development projects have been

also defined, Rastad has underscored.

The third phase of the development plan of Shahid Rajaee Port is one of the major projects which is going to go operational by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20).

While Iran is combating the U.S. unilateral sanctions on its economy, the country's ports as the major gates of exports and imports play some significant role in this battle, and the ongoing operation at the ports indicates that they are playing their part perfectly.

As reported, loading and unloading of commodities at the ports of Iran have risen six percent during the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19, 2020).

Western vaccine producers: Failed commitments

1 → Deliveries of the Pfizer vaccine to EU states have slowed down over the previous two weeks and will last until at least mid-February. Also, AstraZeneca, a British-Swedish multinational pharmaceutical company based in Cambridge as another vaccine producer has also faced similar accusations. While, its vaccine still needs to be approved in the EU, the company is under pressure from EU leaders after the company warned last week it would fall far short of supply targets.

Ursula von der Leyen, the European Commission president, said on Monday the company must live up to its contractual obligations, in a heated call with AstraZeneca's chief executive, Pascal Soriot.

"Of course, production issues can appear with the complex vaccine, but we expect the company to find solutions and to exploit all possible flexibilities to deliver swiftly," her spokesman Eric Mamer made clear.

The pharmaceutical company's new distribution plans were said to be "unacceptable" after it "surprisingly" informed the European Commission on Friday that there would be significant shortfalls on the original schedule.

The Republic of Ireland has also declared it may have to slow its vaccine rollout as a result of the shortage. Micheal Martin, the Irish prime minister, told Irish broadcaster RTE that the delays would "put us in a problem".

A senior EU official told Reuters on Friday that deliveries of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine to the EU would be cut by 60 percent to 31 million doses in the first quarter. According to that report, AstraZeneca said that the cut was caused by "production problems" at a vaccine factory in Belgium run by its partner Novasep.

Another EU official told Politico that AstraZeneca is facing two issues: First, there was an issue with one of their batches that had to be thrown out. Second, the company is still sourcing raw material to ramp up manufacturing.

In addition, Melanie Leonhard, Hamburg's health minister, said the change meant they were now receiving about 20 percent less vaccine than previously delivered and "the situation for the regions is now even worse."

Poland is also facing similar challenges. Pol-



ish prime minister's top aide Michal Dworczyk stated that Moderna has cancelled its coronavirus vaccines supply to Poland scheduled for Tuesday, adding the delivery could be supplied during the weekend at the earliest.

EU under criticism falling behind UK and U.S.

The European bloc has signed six vaccine contracts for more than 2 billion doses, but only the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna jabs have been approved for use so far.

However, the EU with 450 million citizens and the world's biggest trading bloc coupled with its economic and political clout has faced some criticism since its rollout of COVID-19 vaccines has been considered too sluggish regarding vaccine shots for its healthcare workers and most vulnerable people. Additionally, the bloc per capita rates lagging behind the United States, the UK and Israel.

Britain's vaccine supply in jeopardy

Some European officials believe that the shortage problem that they have will only be at the cost of the EU. Peter Liese, the German physician and politician, told reporters on Monday, "Other markets such as the UK will continue to be served by AstraZeneca as planned."

In fact, Britain's vaccine supply is in jeopardy after the EU threatened to block exports of the Belgian-made Pfizer jabs amid a row with

the UK-based AstraZeneca. Also, Britain has suffered a sharp rise in the number of infections and deaths in the new year, fueled partly by a new more highly contagious variant of the virus first identified in southeast England.

According to the latest reports by *Evening Standard*, a London based newspaper, some major vaccine centers in London are being forced to close their doors for days at a time because of a shortage of jabs, sending vaccinators and volunteers home and redirect vulnerable elderly residents' miles across the borough.

U.S. shortage of vaccine supplies: A major disappointment

During a briefing on Monday afternoon, Jen Psaki, the White House press secretary, told reporters that health officials in Florida have not distributed more than half of their current vaccine supply.

Also, San Francisco said this week that the supply its city health department received Tuesday could be gone by the end of Thursday. In addition, as *NBC* reported, New Jersey's most populous county, Bergen, is now running on empty when it comes to vaccines. Also, over the past few days, authorities in California, Ohio, West Virginia, Florida and Hawaii warned that their supplies were running out. New York City began canceling or postponing shots or stopped making new

appointments because of the shortages, too. Florida's top health official said the state would deal with the scarcity by restricting vaccines to state residents.

The vaccine rollout so far has been "a major disappointment," said Dr. Eric Topol, head of the Scripps Research Translational Institute.

The *Washington Post* also reported on January 22 that from Miami to Manhattan, the shortages are intensifying so hospital leaders and public officials are facing one of the most puzzling aspects of the early vaccine rollout, leading to widespread confusion about how much vaccine is available from one week to the next, and how much supply states actually need to inoculate residents in priority groups. Both areas of confusion are barriers to the national immunization campaign that President Biden pledged to mount in his first days in office.

In fact, smaller-than-expected deliveries from the federal government have limited states' ability to contain the outbreak that has so far killed over 400,000 Americans. Regarding this, Tennessee's top health official, Lisa Piercey, laid out "supply" as "the only limitation" to getting more shots into people's arms.

WHO expert: COVID-19 vaccines and worldwide struggle

Against this backdrop, Mike Ryan, the executive director of the World Health Organization's Health Emergencies Programme, said at a press conference on Monday that all countries are having issues with the supply and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines.

According to the latest statistics released by WHO Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Dashboard, the global number of COVID-19 cases has reached 98,794,942, with the cumulative death toll rising to 2,124,193, according to the WHO data.

Due to latest shortages in vaccines supplies besides the doubts over the efficiency of the vaccines as well as possible side effects, medical experts believe still the safest way against this pandemic are adherence to transmission and protective measures, such as physical distancing, wearing a mask, keeping rooms well ventilated, avoiding crowds, cleaning your hands, and coughing into a bent elbow or tissue.

Trump embraced authoritarian allies: Georgetown University researcher

1 → One of President Biden's first acts in the office this week was to repeal Trump's Muslim Ban, which I hope will be seen by the international community as a strong signal of the new administration's commitment to promoting tolerance and engagement with the Muslim.

How do you see the repercussions of the U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan?

Nearly two decades of U.S. intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan have had some success in degrading the capabilities of al-Qaeda and later the ISIS in Iraq and to a lesser extent the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Although the Taliban agreed to stop attacks on international forces as part of a February 2020 deal with former President Trump's administration, they have continued to fight the Afghan government following the withdrawal of most U.S. forces from the country.

But despite some significant victories—particularly the assassination of Osama bin Laden and other high-level al-Qaeda and ISIS leaders—these groups have planned for and are very resilient to leadership decapitation. Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State know how to operate underground, reinvent themselves, and are always ready to replace leaders as they are killed.

Furthermore, these groups elevate assassinated leaders as martyrs, bringing them more attention and potentially inspiring new recruits. Research by Professors Santiago Segarra (Rice), Ali Jadbabaie (MIT), and Richard Nielsen

(MIT) suggests that when jihadist ideologies are killed, their ideas do not die. On the contrary, their ideas actually become more popular with increased traffic to jihadist websites driven by what the authors describe as a "martyrdom bump."

My view is that there is no sustainable military solution to the problem of violent extremism, which flourishes in environments where states fail to provide effective governance, security, and justice for their citizens. Citizens who cannot rely on the state to meet their basic needs and protect their basic rights then become vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups who promise change through violence.

The only way to sustainably reduce the risk of violent extremism in the long-term is to address the underlying grievances that terrorist groups exploit to build support, including weak rule of law, bad governance, state repression, and corruption. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, by exacerbating these root causes of extremism and generating new grievances—most tragically the deaths of hundreds of thousands of civilians in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan—have counter-productively increased the likelihood of future instability in these countries.

Can Washington export democracy to West Asia?

I don't think it's possible for the United States or any country to successfully "export" democracy in the absence of authentic, local demands for democratization and human rights. But the U.S. can and should support these



local demands for democracy and human rights through diplomacy and foreign assistance, as former President Obama's administration did during the Arab Spring. "Supporting" local demands for democracy in these ways is very different from "exporting" or imposing democracy on a foreign country through regime change, which rarely succeeds and often results in greater instability and future conflict or state failure.

For the last four years, the Trump administration had no interest in democracy promotion abroad and embraced authoritarian allies including Saudi Arabia and Egypt while also repeatedly undermining rule of law and democracy in the United States.

These policies were very harmful to the legitimacy of the United States in the eyes of the international community. One of President Biden's greatest challenges will be to rebuild relationships with allies and reassure them that the United States will again support democracy at home and abroad as it has done historically. But the United States' rapid descent toward authoritarianism and armed conflict in 2020, although ultimately averted with the peaceful transfer of power this week, will not be easily forgotten.

U.S. attempts to destabilize region through supporting terrorism: Iraqi MP

An Iraqi legislator has warned against the United States' attempts to disrupt peace and security in West Asia through supporting terrorism, saying Washington is even ready to set entire Iraq on fire so it can keep its military forces in the Arab country.

Karim Alaiwi, a legislator from the Fatah (Conquest) alliance and a member of the Security and Defense Committee in the Iraqi legislature, told Arabic-language Baghdad Today warned against the policies of new U.S. President Joe Biden towards Iraq, reminding the government that Daesh terrorists started their activities during the reign of Democrats.

He added, "The United States has support-

ed and financially sponsored most of terrorist operations in Iraq, and has protected leaders of the Daesh terrorist group in many parts of the country."

The Iraqi lawmaker highlighted that there are areas in Iraq where Daesh is still active, saying Washington is preventing military flights over those regions.

Washington, he said, is ready to "burn" entire Iraq so it will have a pretext to prolong its military presence in the Arab country.

Daesh has claimed responsibility for a rare twin bombing attack that tore through a busy area of central Baghdad on January 21, killing at least 32 people and wounding 110 others.

Yahya Rasool, the spokesman for the Iraqi Ministry of Defense, said one of the two bombers lured a crowd of people towards him in a market in the central Tayaran Square by feigning illness, only to detonate his explosives.

The second bomber struck as people helped victims of the first attack, Rasool added.

Iraq declared victory over Daesh in December 2017 after a three-year counter-terrorism military campaign.

The terror outfit's remnants, though, keep staging sporadic attacks across Iraq, attempting to regroup and unleash a new era of violence.

Daesh has intensified its terrorist attacks in Iraq since January 2020, when the United

States assassinated top Iranian anti-terror commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the deputy head of the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), along with their companions in a drone strike authorized by former U.S. president Donald Trump near Baghdad International Airport.

Following the assassinations, the Iraqi parliament approved a bill demanding the withdrawal of all foreign military forces led by the United States from the country.

The U.S. began the drawdown under the administration of ex-president Donald Trump, but it has said a number of troops will remain in the Arab country.

Chaos as Indian farmers enter Delhi's Red Fort, clash with police

Tens of thousands of Indian farmers have stormed the Mughal-era Red Fort complex in the national capital to demand the repeal of new farm laws, with the protest turning violent and resulting in at least one death.

A "tractor rally" called by the protesting farmers in New Delhi on Tuesday saw them clashing with police who fired tear gas and launched a baton-charge as the protesters broke barricades to march to the heart of the city amid Republic Day celebrations.

For two months now, the farmers had been camping on the outskirts of New Delhi, asking Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government to withdraw the contentious laws passed in September last year.

Defying elaborate security arrangements in place for the Republic Day military parade, the protesters entered the Red Fort, where the predominantly Sikh farmers also installed a religious flag.

U.S. authorizes transactions with Yemen's Houthis for 30 days

The U.S. Treasury Department has issued a license authorizing transactions until February 26 involving Yemen's Houthi Ansarullah movement, which was earlier designated by the Trump administration as a foreign terrorist organization.

The new Treasury Department license issued on Monday allows all transactions involving the Houthi group or any entity in which it owns 50 percent or more - though not its blacklisted leaders - until Feb. 26, 2021.

The Treasury Department appeared to be trying to allay the fears of companies and banks involved in commercial trade to Yemen, which relies mainly on imports.

The Treasury specifically stated in a Frequently Asked Question, "Foreign financial institutions do not risk exposure to ... sanctions ... if they knowingly conduct or facilitate a transaction" for the Houthis.

Brian O'Toole, a former Treasury official under the Obama Administration, says the license "essentially wipes out the entire effect of the designation while giving the Biden administration a chance to make the decision on its own rather than getting stuck with Mike Pompeo's decision."

Donald Trump's administration announced the designation of popular Ansarullah movement as a terrorist group on January 11, nine days before new U.S. President Joe Biden took office last Wednesday.

Trump was a staunch ally of Saudi Arabia, offering logistical help and military sales for the kingdom's six-year war on Yemen to dislodge the Ansarullah-led and Sana'a-based National Salvation Government, which is controlling much of the war-torn country.

The Biden administration's move to approve transactions with the Houthis came after 22 aid organizations working in war-torn Yemen called for Washington to revoke its labeling of the Houthis as a terror group as the move put "millions of lives at risk".

Tunisian protesters gather at parliament

Hundreds of protesters marched on Tunisia's heavily barricaded parliament on Tuesday as it debated a controversial government reshuffle in the biggest rally since demonstrations against inequality and police abuses began this month. Riot police blocked the march, stopping it from reaching the parliament building, but without any immediate clashes like those that have taken place nightly for more than a week and which have led to the death of a protester, Reuters reported.

"The government that only uses police to protect itself from the people - it has no more legitimacy," said one protester, Salem Ben Saleh, who is unemployed.

Zakzaky case adjourned again

The hearing of the case against Sheikh Zakzaky and Mallimah Zeenah has been adjourned again, this time until 8 and 9 March.

IHRC is deeply concerned for the health of both Sheikh, whose health continues to deteriorate, and Mallimah, who tested positive for Covid-19. IHRC Chair Massoud Shadjareh said:

"It is clear that there is something other than the processes of law at work here. The couple need to be released immediately and these trumped up charges thrown out of court."

Meanwhile, a peaceful rally organized by supporters of Nigerian cleric Sheikh Ibrahim Zakzaky in Abuja was attacked by security forces.

The protest rally was held on Monday against Sheikh Zakzaky's arrest and trial. Those attending the protests called for the immediate and unconditional release of Zakzaky, who is the leader of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN), and his wife.

China to conduct South China Sea military exercises

1 → The words appeared to be aimed at U.S. President Joe Biden's plans to revitalize global alliances to counter China's growing influence. Biden, busy handling several urgent domestic crises, did not participate at Davos and tasked U.S. climate envoy John Kerry with representing Washington.

In a swipe at moves targeting China launched by the previous U.S. administration under Donald Trump, Xi said confrontation "will always end up harming every nation's interests and sacrificing people's welfare".

Xi, making his first appearance at the forum since his vigorous defence of free trade and globalisation in an address in Davos in 2017, advocated multilateralism as the way out of current challenges in a roughly 25-minute speech.

Resistance News

IOF kidnaps five West Bankers, another from Gaza

INTERNATIONAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — The Israeli occupation forces (IOF) on Monday kidnapped five West Bank citizens, including two women, and another citizen at a border crossing in the Gaza Strip.

According to local sources, police officers kidnapped 49-year-old Sherin al-Araj, a resident of al-Walaja village in Bethlehem, from outside the Israeli magistrate court in Jerusalem.

Araj went to the court in Jerusalem in response to a summons after the Israeli occupation authority banned her entry to the West Bank five times upon her return from travel abroad.

In al-Khalil, the IOF kidnapped in the evening an elderly man and a girl from Khashm al-Darj village in Yatta area. The man was identified as Mohamed Haddadin. The Khashm al-Darj residents suffer from harsh living conditions as a result of their exposure to constant attacks on their property, crops and cattle by Israeli soldiers and settlers.

In Qalqilya, the IOF kidnapped two teenagers after ransacking their homes in Sanniriya town. They were identified as Anis Mazouz, 20, and Mahmoud Ali, 18.

Meanwhile, another citizen was kidnapped at the Beit Hanoun (Erez) border crossing in the northern Gaza Strip.

Italian embassy hosts review session of book on Tehran architecture

HERITAGE **TEHRAN** – Iranian architect and author Amir-Reza Farahbod on Monday gave a presentation on his new book “My Tehran” during a ceremony held at the Italian ambassador’s residence in the Iranian capital.

Ambassador Giuseppe Perrone, and Tehran City Council Chairman Mohsen Hashemi Rafsanjani were amongst attendees to the event, the embassy announced.

In his opening remarks, the envoy described the occasion as a unique opportunity to highlight the extraordinary significance of Tehran’s architectural and cultural heritage that covers centuries of Iranian history.



Furthermore, the ambassador mentioned Italy’s many contributions to Iran’s architectural and cultural heritage, as shown by the feature of the Italian residence as one of the key highlights of the book.

Hashemi Rafsanjani praised the efforts by Dr. Farahbod and stressed the importance of the ties between Italy and Iran which he characterized as historical and extremely deep.

“My Tehran” is a unique compelling introduction of 340 cultural and historical buildings of Tehran registered in Iran’s national heritage list and the UNESCO World Heritage list (Golestan Palace).

For the first time, all Tehran monuments are organically described in Fahrenbod’s volume and classified according to their location.

“My Tehran” vividly connects the history of the buildings to their dwellers, architects, builders, and historical events throughout centuries starting from the Safavid era up to the present time.

The author is an architect and researcher in the field of cultural heritage. Author of “Peace Street” published in 2018 by Tehran’s Urban Planning and Development Center and longtime Tehran Municipality’s advisor, Dr. Farahbod has developed the book over eight years of work with the contribution of Tehran municipality, and the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and handicrafts, as well as many Iranian prominent experts, photographers and students at the University of Tehran.

Intl. festival to create vivid, deep image of Iranian handmade products

TOURISM **TEHRAN** –A vast international handicrafts festival is scheduled to be held in Isfahan in May to promote magnificent Iranian handicrafts through a vivid and deep outlook.

Such a festival would lay the ground for a better introduction of Iranian products to the world, which is important in the commercialization of handicrafts, deputy tourism minister Pouya Mahmoudian announced on Monday.

The festival also aims at providing an opportunity for Iranian and international artisans to exchange views and transfer their experiences on different issues related to handicrafts, she added.

She also noted that the festival could be a ground for showing Iranian and Islamic artistic capacities to the world.

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 January 2020, the cities of Shiraz, Malayer, and Zanjan and the village of Qasemabad were designated by the WCC-Asia Pacific Region, putting Iran’s number of world crafts cities and villages from ten to 14. Shiraz was named a “world city of [diverse] handicrafts”. Malayer was made a global hub for woodcarving and carved-wood furniture. Zanjan gained the title of a “world city of filigree”. And Qasemabad village, which is nationally known for its traditional costumes, was also promoted to a world hub of handicrafts. Chador Shab, a kind of homemade outer-garment for women, was, however, the main subject for the WCC assessment for the village.

Back in May, Mahmoudian said that some 295 fields of handicrafts are currently practiced across Iran with more than two million people engaging, majority of whom are women. She also noted that handicrafts play an important role in the economy in rural areas.

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.

Dossiers on Iranian railway, cultural landscape submitted to UNESCO

HERITAGE **TEHRAN** – Revised dossiers on the trans-Iranian railway, and the cultural landscape of Uramanat have been submitted to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization to be assessed as World Heritage sites.

“The [revised] dossiers of Uramanat region, and the north-south railway of Iran along with the related facilities, were sent to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for [possible] global registration,” Farhad Azizi, the director of the World Heritage Affairs Office at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, said on Monday.

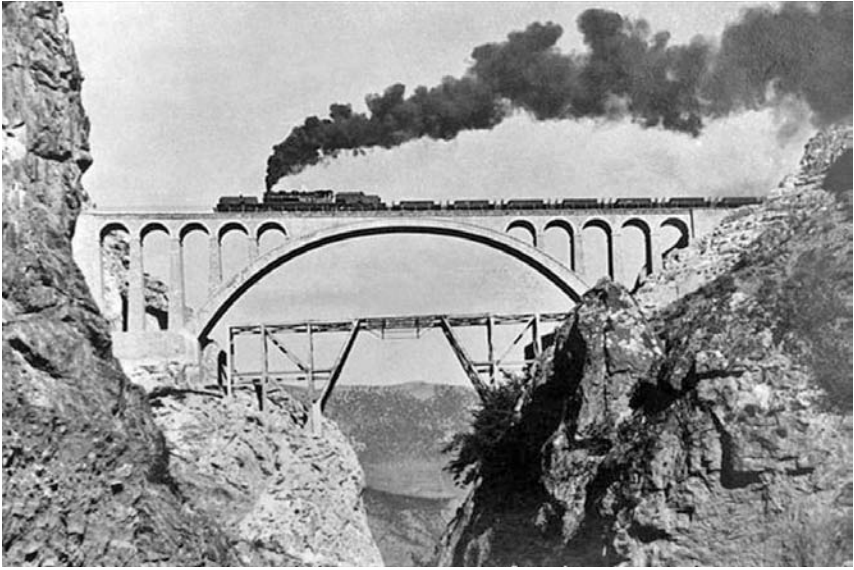
The north-south railway with a length of 1400 km is considered as [one of] most enormous dossiers to be weighed by UNESCO, the official said.

Uramanat region, which is shared between the provinces of Kordestan and Kermanshah, holds 700 villages, 106,000 hectares of land, and 303,000 hectares of surrounding properties as a significant human settlement, Azizi explained.

The cultural landscape of Uramanat

Stretched on a steep slope in Uraman Takht rural district of Sarvabad county, the villages are home to dense and step-like rows of houses in a way that the roof of each house forms the yard of the upper one, a feature that adds to its charm and attractiveness.

Uraman is considered a cradle of Kurdish art and culture from the days of yore. Pirshalyar, which is named after a legendary local figure, is amongst time-honored



celebrations and rituals that are practiced annually across the region.

Local officials believe that inscription of the property on the prestigious list of the UN body could jumpstart tourism in the region and also look at it as a tool for better conservation of its natural landscapes and unique cultural scenes for the next generations, saying its unique rural texture, architecture, lifestyle, and agriculture is a prominent example of the integration of man into nature.

The trans-Iranian railway

The introduction of modern industries and true effects of modernism on Iran began

with Fatali Shah and Naserolddeen Shah’s travels to Europe but was seriously expanded only during the rule of Reza Shah. The period of transfer from an agricultural to an industrial society in Iran happened because of: Amir Kabir’s activities including the establishment of a poly-technique school called Darolfonun in Tehran, introduction of electricity and modern industries in a European style, appearance of modern methods and instruments, growth of technology, mass production of goods by big industries in new spaces, arrival of new modes of communication such as post and lastly a huge change in

Sa’dabad historical complex reopens as virus curbs eased

➔ 1 With the outbreak of the coronavirus, museums were at the forefront of closures and for several months now, they have not had any revenue from the sale of tickets, Mounesan explained.

Meanwhile, the ministry is facing a shortage of funds in the field of cultural heritage, which causes problems for maintaining and preserving 34,000 National Heritage properties as well as 24 UNESCO-tagged sites, the official explained.

It was estimated that museums would earn about 300 billion rials (about \$7.1 million) in the first quarter of the year, but over the coronavirus pandemic they did not even come close to this figure, he added.

In July, Mounesan said that revenues from museums were almost eight billion rials (about \$190,000) during the first three months of the current Iranian calendar year

(started March 20, 2020), a sharp decline compared to around 300 billion rials (over \$7 million) in the same period last year. Earlier this week, the minister said that Iran’s tourism has suffered a loss of over 140 trillion rials (about \$3.33 billion) since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic.

Sprawled on about 110 hectares of a mountainside parkland in northern Tehran, the Sadabad Cultural-Historical Complex is used to be a royal summer residence during the Qajar and Pahlavi eras.

The complex was initially established and inhabited by some Qajar monarchs in the 19th century. It has undergone further expansions from the 1920s until the 1979 Islamic Revolution. The site embraces a variety of buildings, some of which turned to be house museums showcasing a wide range of royal families’ memorabilia including lavish-



ly-made furniture, dishware, automobiles, carpets, and miniature paintings.

Iran, Germany to arrange exhibit on salt mummies

HERITAGE **TEHRAN** – Iran and Germany are set to arrange a joint exhibition on ancient salt mummies and their belongings, which have been gradually discovered in Iran’s Chehrabad Salt Mine decades ago.

A joint exhibition named “death in salt” will be held in Iran and Germany, Shahrzad Aminshirazi an official with the Research Institute of Cultural Heritage and Tourism, said on Sunday, without providing further details.

Last year, a team of experts from the two countries started a project for purifying, cleansing, and restoring garments and personal belongings of the mummies which were first found in the salt mine in 1993.

What was a catastrophe for the ancient miners has become a sensation for science. Sporting a long white beard, iron knives, and a single gold earring, the first salt mummy was discovered in 1993. He is estimated to be trapped in the mine in ca. 300 CE. In 2004 another mummy was discovered only



50 feet away, followed by another in 2005 and a “teenage” boy mummy later that year.

In 1993, miners in the Douzlakh Salt Mine, near Hamzehli and Chehrabad villages in Zanjan province, accidentally came across a mummified head. The head was very well preserved, to the extent that his pierced ear was still holding the gold earring. The hair, beard, and the mustaches were reddish, and his impressive leather boot still contained parts of his leg and foot, according to Ancient History Encyclopedia.

The first mummy, dubbed the “Saltman”, is on display in the National Museum of Iran in Tehran. He still looks very impressive. The third, fourth, and fifth “saltmen” were also carbon dated. The third body was dated and placed in 2337 BP, the fourth body in 2301 BP, and the fifth mummy was dated to 2286 BP, placing them all in the Achaemenid period.

The isotopic analysis of the human remains revealed where these miners were from. Some of them were from the Tehran-Qazvin plain, which is relatively local to the mine’s locality, while others were from north-eastern Iran and the coastal areas around the Caspian Sea, and a few from as far away as Central Asia.

Furthermore, the archaeozoological finds, such as animal bones found within the context of the saltmen, showed that the miners might have eaten sheep, goats, and probably pigs and cattle, as well. The archaeobotanical finds recorded showed different cultivated plants were eaten, in-

dicating an agricultural establishment in the vicinity of the mine.

The wealth of fabric and other organic material (leather) worn by the saltmen have allowed a thorough analysis to be undertaken, detailing the resources used to make the fabrics, the processing, the dyes used to color the fibers of the garments, and not least they offer an excellent overview of the changes in cloth types, patterns of weaving, and the changes of the fibers through time.

Saltman No. 5 had tapeworm eggs from the Taenia sp. genus in his system. These were identified during the study of his remains. The find indicates the consumption of raw or undercooked meat, and this is the first case of this parasite in ancient Iran and the earliest evidence of ancient intestinal parasites in the area. The best preserved and probably the most harrowing of the saltmen is Saltman No. 4. A sixteen-year-old miner, caught in the moment of death, crushed by a cave-in.

Knifemaking, almost-forgotten ancient handicraft in Zanjan

HERITAGE **TEHRAN** – Knifemaking is one of the oldest handicrafts practiced for centuries in several Iranian cities, of which the northwestern city of Zanajn is the most famous.

There is a little about the history of this field of handicrafts, but according to the historical documents as well as travelogues, it can be concluded that from the 17th century Zanjan was a city where knives, swords, and daggers were produced immensely and a lot of knife making workshops were installed.

Due to their design, cut, diversity, and durability, Zanjan knives have been the most successful among the hand-made products of the other cities.

The most important material for handmade knives is Iron. The handle is made from materials such as elk horns, seashells, wood, fiber, or ivory. The knife makers usually carve their names into the blade. Gems, jewelry, filigree, pieces of seashells, and ivory are some of the ornate they add to their creations.

The most important tools used by the cutlers are hammers, sledgehammers, scissors, and kilns. To make a knife, first, the master heats the iron in the kiln. After it reaches the proper degree, it is forged into knife, sword, and dagger blades by the impact of the hammer. Then he skillfully creates the handle using materials like horns or ivory and attaches it to the blade. Finally, the blade is ground and chrome plated.

The knife makers of Zanjan usually carve their names into the blade. Gems, jewelry, filigree, pieces of seashells,



and ivory are some of the ornaments they add to their products. From small decorative knives that are used as key chains to large swords, a wide range of products are made in the workshops.

The handle provides a chance for the artistry of their makers who try to add to their beauty and uniqueness as much as possible. Characteristics such as spring-assisted-like opening, high sharpness of the blade, and very good grip are some of the traits of Zanjan knives.

Based on appearance and number of pieces, these knives can be divided into two groups of simple and complex. The simple knives themselves are subdivided into 1. Knives with handle from goat or cow horn that have a single blade

that is attached to the handle by two nails, and have no spring. 2. Switchblades that have many kinds 3. Knives for cutting fruit, which have a single blade, a handle, and a spring, and is produced in many sizes. There are also small pocket knives and “Qalamtarash”, a special kind of knife that is used to cut calligraphy pens.

However, nowadays the art of making handmade knives, which was once flourished in Zanjan, is being fallen into oblivion.

Last December, the cultural heritage and tourism official of the west-central province announced that to revive and promote this field of handicrafts, they seek to export handmade daggers and swords to the neighboring countries.

They believe that Zanjan, which was designated as a “world city of filigree” last January, has excellent capacities in the production and export of handmade handicraft.

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.

Protected areas expand by 635,000 ha

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** — Some 635,000 hectares of natural lands added to the country's protected areas due to the biological values, Mehr news agency reported on Monday.

In a meeting held on Monday, the Supreme Council of Environment chaired by President Hassan Rouhani approved to designate some parts of natural lands as protected areas under the management of the Department of Environment (DOE).

The meeting was attended by Issa Kalantari, head of the DOE, ministers, and other members of the council.

Currently, about 18.5 million hectares of the country's lands are under the management of the DOE, according to Kioumars Kalantari deputy chief of the DOE for natural resources and biodiversity.

To preserve the existing biodiversity over the wide geographic expanse of Iran, four types of areas have been designated for preservation and protection, including, national parks, wildlife refuges, protected



areas, and natural national monuments. In 1997, the DOE held supervision over

7,563,983 hectares of such areas. By the year 2003, the supervised areas reached

11,791,788.225 hectares.

A national park is a designated part of Iran's environment - including forests, rangelands, woodlands, prairies, water, or mountains - that is an outstanding representation of Iranian nature. As such, it is brought under protection to permanently preserve its natural ecology and to create a suitable environment for the flourishing of wildlife and the growth of flora under natural conditions.

The national parks currently cover 1,649,771 hectares of the country's area.

Protected areas also are significantly important natural resources due to their impact on wildlife breeding, preservation of plant life, or its natural state. The total area of regions protected is 6,600,601 hectares.

A Wildlife refuge has natural habitats and special climate qualifications, which are brought under protection to revive wild animals and are stretching to 3,524,181 hectares.

Philanthropists donate \$2b to health sector

SOCIETY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian benefactors contributed a total of 80 trillion rials (nearly \$2 billion at the official rate of 42,000 rials) to the health sector over the past 11 years, the head of the Association of Health Donors has said.

There are 56 health charities in 300 cities of the country, which play an important role in the provision and equipping of medical infrastructure, Hossein-Ali Shahriari said, IRNA reported on Tuesday.

Benefactors active in the health sector are involved in developing and constructing state hospitals and charitable centers and clinics, improving emergency rooms, supplying medical equipment and medica-

tion, he explained.

Mohammad Hadi Ayazi, deputy health minister for social affairs in July 2018 said that some 70,000 philanthropists are active members of over 600 non-governmental organizations in the health sector.

There are several healthcare facilities providing charity care in the country, including some 875 health care centers, 400 clinics, and 40 hospitals, he stated.

The Association of Health Donors was established in 2010 as a non-governmental organization to identify and organize donors active in the country's health sector and planning to properly use the assistance and public participation to health priorities.

Over 2 tons of narcotics discovered in Sistan-Baluchestan

SOCIETY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Anti-narcotics police seized 2.1 tons of drugs in an armed conflict with smugglers in Sistan-Baluchestan province sharing borders with Pakistan, Ahmad Taheri, the provincial police chief said.

The police destroyed a big drug trafficking gang and arrested six traffickers in Iranshahr city, he stated, IRNA reported on Tuesday.

During the armed operation, a Nissan pickup truck and 4 Peugeots were confiscated from the smugglers; in addition to illegal weapons, he further announced.

On January 5, Ijaz Ahmed Shah, Pakistan's Minister for Narcotics Control, has pledged to further strengthen cooperation with Iran to combat drug trafficking.

Emphasizing the need to strengthen Iran-Pakistan border cooperation, he welcomed Iran's initiatives and proposals to effectively combat drug trafficking.

Iranian anti-narcotics police Majid Karimi and his Pakistani counterpart, Mohammad Arif Malik announced the agreement to establish an information exchange committee between the Iran-Pakistan anti-narcotics forces.

Iran's anti-narcotics measures
Iran seized some 1,000 tons of narcotics in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended March 20, 2020), putting the country in first place in the world, Eskandar Momeni, the secretary-general of Iran's drug control headquarters, said in July 2020.

After the Islamic Revolution (in 1979), 3,800 were martyred, 12,000 were wound-



ed and disabled in the fight against drug trafficking, Momeni announced.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has praised Iran's efforts to fight against narcotics trafficking on the occasion of International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking.

The organization also officially announced that the world's first place in the discovery of opium, heroin, and morphine belongs to Iran.

According to UNODC, Iran remains one of the major transit routes for drug trafficking from Afghanistan to European countries and has had a leading role at the global level in the drug-control campaigns.

UNODC World Drug Report 2020 estimates that in 2018, 91 percent of world opium, 48 percent of the world morphine, and 26 percent of the world heroin were seized by Iran.

Iran's drug control efforts led to the seizure of 266 tons of different types of drugs during the period of April-June 2020, a 20 percent increase compared to the same period in 2019.

Electronics come to protect Dena biosphere reserve

ENVIRONMENT d e s k **TEHRAN** — Dena biosphere reserve, located in the Central Zagros Mountains of Iran, will be equipped with technological advances for more protection, the director of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad department of environment has said.

Violators are instantly identified and tracked using sensors and cameras, IRNA quoted Seyed-Asadollah Hashemi as saying on Tuesday.

The protected area of Dena is rich in biodiversity with valuable animal species, which has been protected through the efforts of rangers and the good cooperation of the judiciary, he further highlighted.

He went on to say that another issue that must be addressed in the region is waste management areas, which needs awareness-raising of the locals, adding that the environment belongs to everyone and each of us should feel responsible for it.

Emphasizing the importance of public training in the field of environmental protection and development, he called for continuous monitoring of hazardous waste produced by industries and business units.

Earlier on January 12, Kioumars Kalantari, head of the natural environment and biodiversity of the Department of Environment announced that Two biosphere reserves, namely Golestan and Dena, will receive special funds in the national budget bill for the next



calendar year (starting on March 20) for the special protection.

Dena Biosphere Reserve, with a general slope of more than 60 percent, contains a globally significant ecosystem, species, and genetic biodiversity. It is also home to a vast range of plant species and several endangered and endemic mammal species. Oak species dominate the highlands, while pistachio and almond are common at lower elevations. Also, hackberry, walnut, and pear trees are scattered throughout this eco-region.

A variety of animal life, such as brown bears, eagles, wolves, various wild cats including caracals, lynxes, and leopards, wild goat have long made their homes in the region. On the other hand, many large rivers, including the Karun, Dez, and Karkheh originate from the area, flowing into the Persian Gulf and the Oman Sea. Scenic waterfalls, pools, and lakes add beauty to the mountainous landscape.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ◀ ▶ ج

Iranian researchers produce nano-mask with 99.9% lethality to coronavirus

Researchers at the Institute of Materials and Energy affiliated with the Ministry of Science, produced nano face masks that can kill coronavirus by 99.9 percent.

According to ISNA, Abuzar Masoudi, a faculty member of the Materials and Energy Research Institute, said that since the fibers of the fabric are hydrophilic. Therefore, the behavior of the virus is different, so different masks have been offered, including the FFP1 mask, which prevents up to 95 percent of the virus and up to 80 percent of the bacteria. While the N95 mask resists the virus up to 95 percent, and up to 100 percent of the bacteria.

This is while sponge and cloth masks prevent up to 50 percent of bacteria from entering the body, and are not able to fight the virus.

According to Masoudi, this project is planned to enter the industrial production phase.

محققان ایرانی ماسک نانو با قدرت کشندگی ۹۹.۹ درصد و ویروس کرونا تولید کردند

محققان پژوهشگاه مواد و انرژی زیر نظر وزارت علوم، تحقیقات و فناوری ایران با استفاده از لایه نشانی نانو ذرات به پارچه به یافی دست یافتند که قادر به تخریب ۹۹.۹ درصدی ویروس کرونا هستند.

به گزارش ایسنا، ابوذر مسعودی عضو هیات علمی پژوهشگاه مواد و انرژی گفت از آنجایی که الیاف پارچه آب دوست هستند؛ از این رو رفتار ویروس متفاوت است و بر این اساس ماسک‌های مختلفی عرضه شده است که از آن جمله می‌توان به ماسک FFP۱ اشاره کرد که تا ۹۵ درصد از ورود ویروس و تا ۸۰ درصد از ورود باکتری جلوگیری می‌کند. این میزان برای ماسک N۹۵ تا ۹۵ درصد ویروس و تا ۱۰۰ درصد باکتری می‌شود.

این در حالی است که ماسک‌های اسفنجی و پارچه‌ای تا ۵۰ درصد از ورود باکتری به بدن جلوگیری می‌کنند، ولی قادر به مقابله با ویروس نیستند. به گفته آنها این طرح برای ورود به فاز تولید صنعتی برنامه ریزی شده است.

Quarter of all known bees 'not seen since 1990'

Over the last 30 years, up to a quarter of all known bee species have fallen off international global records, despite a major increase in the number of such records available.

Around 20,000 species of bee are known to science, but analysis of a detailed international data set suggests around 5,000 of these species have not been seen since 1990.

The loss of the bees may not mean they are entirely extinct, researchers said, but represents a sharp collapse in thousands of populations, meaning these species have become so rare that no one is observing them in nature.

"With citizen science and the ability to share data, records are going up exponentially, but the number of species reported in these records is going down," said lead author of the research Eduardo Zattara, a biologist at the Institute for Research on Biodiversity and the Environment at the National University of Comahue in Argentina.

"It's not a bee cataclysm yet, but what we can say is that wild bees are not exactly thriving."

Declining bee populations have been widely reported in various countries around the world, but the researchers said previous studies have tended to focus on a specific area or a specific type of bee. But this study aimed to identify more general, global trends in bee diversity.

"Figuring out which species are living where and how each population is doing using complex aggregated datasets can be very messy," said Dr Zattara.

"We wanted to ask a simpler question: what species have been recorded, anywhere in the world, in a given period?"

To obtain the answer, the researchers pored over the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF), an international network of databases, which contains over three centuries' worth of records from museums, universities, and private citizens, which together hold data on the 20,000 known bee species from around the world.

In addition to finding a quarter of total bee species are no longer being recorded, the researchers observed the decline is not evenly distributed among bee families.

Records of halictid bees - the second most common family - have declined by 17 per cent since the 1990s. Meanwhile, records for melittidae bees - a much rarer family - have gone down by as much as 41 per cent.

"It's important to remember that 'bee' doesn't just mean honeybees, even though honeybees are the most cultivated species," said Dr Zattara.

"Our society's footprint impacts wild bees as well, which provide ecosystem services we depend on."

The research team cautioned that though their study provides a close look at the global status of bee diversity, it is too general an analysis to make any certain claims about the current status of individual species.

"It's not really about how certain the numbers are here. It's more about the trend," said Dr Zattara.

"It's about confirming what's been shown to happen locally is going on globally. And also, about the fact that much better certainty will be achieved as more data are shared with public databases."

But the researchers warn this type of certainty about global declines might not come until it is too late to reverse the trend.

They said urgent action needs to be taken to help protect the remaining populations of these vital pollinating insects.

"Something is happening to the bees, and something needs to be done," said Dr Zattara.

"We cannot wait until we have absolute certainty because we rarely get there in natural sciences.

"The next step is prodding policymakers into action while we still have time. The bees cannot wait."

The study is published as the UK government has approved the use of neonicotinoid insecticides, which were banned in the EU after they were linked to the decline of bees and birds.

Recent research has reinforced the link, after scientists found the substance - the most common insecticide worldwide, had a "big effect on the amount of sleep taken by both flies and bees."

Around a third of wild bees are in decline in the UK, due to habitat loss, climate change and the use of toxic pesticides, according to a 2019 study.

LET'S LEARN PERSIAN

(Part 117)

(Source: saadifoundation.ir)

میدان آزادی یا بزرگ‌ترین میدان تهران در فاصله‌ی دو کیلومتری فرودگاه مهرآباد واقع است. مساحت میدان، که مانند پارکی سبز و زیباست، به حدود ۵۰۰۰ متر مربع می‌رسد. در وسط میدان، برج آزادی قرار دارد که نشان‌دهنده‌ی معماری باستانی و اسلامی ایران است. برج آزادی دارای سه طبقه و به رنگ سفید است. در این طبقات، قسمت‌های مختلفی مانند موزه، کتابخانه، سالن‌های موسیقی، نقاشی و فیلم وجود دارد. ارتفاع برج به چهل و پنج متر می‌رسد. مردم تهران دوست دارند هم برای گردش و تماشای میدان آزادی بروند و هم در داخل برج آزادی با تاریخ و فرهنگ کشور خود آشنا شوند. برج آزادی نشان شهر تهران و کشور ایران به شمار می‌رود.

INTERNATIONAL DAILY
www.tehrantimes.com

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

Tehrantimes79 Tehrantimes79 Tehrantimes79

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



GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

When a husband and wife look at each other with love, Allah looks at both of them with mercy.

Prophet Muhammad (S)

Abbas Saffari, poet of “Our Story”, dies of COVID-19

CULTURE **TEHRAN** — Iranian poet and translator Abbas d e s k Saffari, the composer of the modern parody “Our Story” about Adam and Eve, died of COVID-19 on Tuesday at a hospital in Long Beach, California. He was 69.

“He was earlier suffering from a lung disease and was later infected with coronavirus, which caused serious damage to his lungs,” his sister Shayesteh told the Persian service of ISNA.

Born in 1951 in the central Iranian city of Yazd, Abbas Saffari had lived in the U.S. since 1979. While still in high school in Iran, he wrote lyrics for several popular singers, including Farhad Mehrad’s classic song “Captured by Night”.

He was the author of “Confluence of Hands and Apples”, “Twilight of Presence” and “Old Camera and Other Poems”.

He translated numerous books into Persian, including “Moon and the Solitude of Lovers” by Izumi Shikibu and Lady Komachi] and “Egyptian Love Poems” by Ezra Pound and Noel Stock.

He was a co-founder and poetry editor of the Iranian literary magazines “Sang” and “Cactus” in exile. He studied sculpture at California State University, Long Beach. He is survived by his wife and two daughters.

His first collection of poems won the Baran Book Prize in Sweden in 1993. He also became the first poet in the diaspora to win the Karnameh Poetry Prize in Iran.

In 2010, his long poem “Our Story” narrating the Adam and Eve story was added to the 9th edition of “Literature: The Human Experience”, a favorite anthology for American students, as one of the subsections in the book’s chapter, “Looking Farther: Forbidden Love”.

In 2011, Saffari showcased a collection of his woodcuts featuring American life during the Great Depression of the 1930s and some artworks on Yazd’s Wind Towers during an exhibition in Tehran. Some 25 woodcuts featured glimpses of the lives of American people in New York and Chicago streets during the Great Depression under the title of “The Hat that the Wind Blew Away”.

“It was not my intention to depict the poverty of the people in my woodcuts but they reflect the disruptions in society at that time,” he had said at that time.

The woodcuts depict Yazd’s wind towers, which were put on view under the title of “Greeting Breeze”.

“I was born in Yazd and I feel nostalgia for the city whenever I look at the woodcuts but this was not my reason for depicting the wind towers. I selected this subject for their graphic design,” he had explained.

Caroline Criado Perez’s “Invisible Women” visible for Persian readers

CULTURE **TEHRAN** — A Persian translation of “Invisible Women: Data Bias in a World Designed for Men” by Caroline Criado Perez has been published by Borj Publications in Tehran.

The book has been translated into Persian by Narges Hassanli. Data is fundamental to the modern world. From economic development, to healthcare, to education and public policy, we rely on numbers to allocate resources and make crucial decisions. But because so much data fails to take into account gender, because it treats men as the default and women as atypical, bias and discrimination are baked into the systems. And women pay tremendous costs for this bias, in time, money, and often with their lives.

Celebrated feminist advocate Criado Perez investigates the shocking root cause of gender inequality, and researches in “Invisible Women”, diving into women’s lives at home, the workplace, the public square, the doctor’s office and more. Built on hundreds of studies in the U.S., the UK and around the world, and written with energy, wit and sparkling intelligence, this is a groundbreaking, unforgettable exposé that will change the way you look at the world.

Criado Perez, who is also a broadcaster and a feminist activist, was named Liberty Human Rights Campaigner of the Year and OBE by the Queen. She has a degree in English language and literature from the University of Oxford, and she studied behavioral and feminist economics at the London School of Economics. She lives in London.

Yazd selected as 2021 Capital of Sahifeh Sajjadih

→1 MP Mohammad-Saleh Jokar, who represents Yazd at the Iranian parliament, also attended the meeting and said, “Today, we are proud that we are at the people’s service, reintroducing a book, which has been ignored over the years.”

“The Sahifeh Sajjadih contains profound and valuable concepts, which can help settle many problems we face in modern life,” he noted.

Yazd Governor-General Mohammad-Ali Talebi said, “Yazd has a profound cultural background and has been called the ‘house of prayers’ for years, however, the growth due to modern urbanization has caused damage and we must rebuild it.”

An English translation of the Sahifeh Sajjadih by W.C. Chittick was published in London in 1988 under the title of “The Psalms of Islam”.

“This comprehensive book of prayer has been a mainstay of the practical dimension of religion, its living spirituality, for countless souls down through the ages,” Muhammadi



Amir Chakhmaq Mosque, Yazd.

Trust of Great Britain & Northern Ireland, the publisher of the book, wrote about it.

“It not only engages the deepest dimensions of the yearning of the seeker for God, it also contains penetrating insights into the psychology of the soul, acute observations of the nature of life in this world, and meditation upon the divine qualities and attributes.

“In addition, the book contains moral and ethical teachings -the ideal behavior of the Muslim in daily life, in relation to parents, children, friends and enemies - that are all the more compelling in being presented in the context of a dynamic relationship between the soul and its Creator.

“There is presented here, in fact, a veritable treatise on ‘human rights’ but linked to human and spiritual duties. Professor Chittick’s rendition of this classical text into fluent and elegant English stands as an indisputable masterpiece of translation.”

The book has also been translated into several other languages, including Spanish and Croatian.

Iran’s “White Clad” wins grand prize at Tehran short film festival

expected trip. The three of them get along so well that “Bogah”, the foreigner, starts to question his initial intentions.

Winners of the 37th edition of the festival were honored during a closing ceremony held at the Iran Mall, a new major trade center in Tehran.

Filmmaker Behnam Behzadi from Iran, documentarian Lia Beltrami from Italy and Busan International Program Manager Kyeong-yeon Kim were the members of the jury in the international competition section.

“Kak Iraj” by Jamshid Farajvand also won the award for best documentary in the international section. The documentary shows a year in the life of a gardener who is also an environmentalist.

“Candela” by Marc Riba and Anna Solanas from Spain was named the best animation. It is about Mrs. Candela who spends the last days of her life in a dying suburb of a big city.

In the national section, “Unseens” by Shahab Abroshan won the best film award in the COVID-19 section.

“Unseens” is a short fiction about a young man, who has just finished visiting his family in his hometown, and gets back to his place. He is made aware of his family situation

during the COVID-19 pandemic by his father’s messages but he doesn’t bother to answer any of them.

“White Winged Horse” by producer Hamidreza Zobeir was named the best film in the national section, while Mahyar Mandegar received the best director award for “White Winged Horse”.

Mona Abdollah Shahi, received the best director award for the animation “Red Fire”.

The ceremony continued with honoring veteran filmmaker and photographer Amir Latifian with a lifetime achievement award.

A lineup of 63 short films from 19 countries competed in the international section of the festival.

The films came from France, India, the U.S., Spain, Germany, Ghana, China, Czech, Poland, Italy, Turkey, Australia, Bulgaria, Denmark, Russia, South Africa, Belgium, Kazakhstan and Iran.

All nine movie theaters at the Iran Mall were dedicated to the festival, which ran for five days with a limited number of visitors.

The short films also streamed online for filmgoers during the event.

Mental health photography contest centers on COVID-19

A R T **TEHRAN** — COVID-19 d e s k has become the central theme of the 6th Mental Health International Exhibition of Photography as the disease has turned into the world’s major issue over the past year.

Nearly 30,000 photos from about 4,000 photographers have been submitted to the exhibition, the organizers announced on Tuesday.

“58 percent of the photographers are from other countries, and this fact shows that the exhibition has been recognized by photographers the world over and has attracted a significant audience,” Mohammadreza Saini, the president of the exhibition, said in a press release.

“The exhibition intends to help raise public



A poster for the 6th Mental Health International Exhibition of Photography.

awareness of mental health, thereby improving health indicators,” he added.

Cash prizes totally worth 9,000 euros will be awarded during this year’s exhibition, which also received photos in the categories of open and mental health.

The event is organized by the Zanjan University of Medical Sciences and Health Services in collaboration with the Focus Photo Club, Iran’s branch of the International Federation of Photographic Art (FIAP).

FIAP president Riccardo Busi, and his assistant, Freddy Van Gilbergen, were among the jury members of the 5th Mental Health International Exhibition of Photography, which took place at the Zanjan Match Factory Museum from April 3 to 10.

In the mental health section, Iranian

photographer Zohreh Lak received the FIAP Gold Medal for her single photo, “Veil”, while Pushpendu Paul from India won the FIAP Silver Medal for his photo, “In My Dreams”.

Iranian photographers Amir Purmand and Javad Rezaei and Korean photographer Shin Woo Ryu received the FIAP Ribbons in this section.

In the open section, Nese Ari from Turkey won the FIAP Gold Medal for “Happiness”, while Peter Gennard from England and Mehran Cheraghchi from Iran received the Exhibition Trophies for their photos, “The Boyfriend” and “Urmia Lake” respectively.

FIAP Ribbons were awarded to Nadiezda Anzhelina from Ukraine, Livinus Bleyen from Belgium and Kumral Kepkep from Turkey in this section.

Houston Iranian Film Festival announces official lineup

A R T **TEHRAN** — The Museum of Fine Arts, d e s k Houston (MFAH) has announced the lineup for the 28th Houston Iranian Film Festival, which opened virtually on January 22.

The festival is underway in the three cities of Boston, Houston and Washington, DC.

The lineup showcases exciting new movies by talented directors from Iran’s film industry. They include “Bandar Band” by Manijeh Hekmat, “African Violet” by Mona Zandi-Haqiqi, “Careless Crime” by Shahram Mokri, “Dance with Me” by Soroush Sehat and “The Slaughterhouse” by Abbas Amini.

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

“African Violet” is about the middle-aged Shokuh who finds out that her elderly ex-husband Fereidun has been placed in a nursing home by their children. With her second husband Reza, she decides to remove Fereidun and take care of him in their own home.



Babak Karimi acts in a scene from “Careless Crime”.

“Careless Crime” goes back to forty years ago, during the uprising to overthrow the Shah’s regime in Iran, when protestors set fire to movie theaters as a way of showing opposition to Western culture. Many cinemas were burned down. In one

Fajr Film Festival unveils official lineup

A R T **TEHRAN** — A total of 16 d e s k films will be contending for a Crystal Simorgh as the organizers of the 39th Fajr Film Festival announced the official lineup on Tuesday.

“Ablaq” by Narges Abyar, “Biamechiz” by Mohsen Qarai, “The Sniper” by Ali Ghaffari, “Ti Ti” by Aida Panahandeh and “180° Rule” by Farnush Samadi are among the films.

“180° Rule” tells the story of Sara, a school teacher whom her students love and who is married to Hamed. As her family gets ready to attend a wedding in northern Iran, an unforeseen obligation falls on Hamed and derails their plans. When Sara’s husband suddenly forbids her to attend the event without him, she makes a decision that sets her on the painful path of atonement.

The real-life drama “The Sniper” portrays Abdorrasul Zarrin who was one of the most

lethal snipers in the Iranian forces during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war.

“Romanticism of Emad and Tuba” by Kaveh Sabbaghzadeh, “Once Upon a Time, Abadan” by Hamidreza Azarang, “Bright” by Ruhollah Hejazi, “Zalava” by Arsalan Amiri, “Setareh Bazi” by Hatf Alimardani and “Shishlik” by Mohammad-Hossein Mahdavian are also included.

The lineup also includes “Gijghaj” by Adel Tabrizi, “Mama” by Arash Anisi, “Expediency” by Hossein Darabi, “Mansur” by Siavash Sarmadi and “Yadu” by Mehdi Jafari.

The Fajr Film Festival, which is Iran’s major film event, will be organized on its regular date from January 31 to February 10, 2021.

Among the members of the jury of the official competition are Nima Javidi, director of the acclaimed drama “The Warden”, and Sareh Bayat, star of the Asghar Farhadi’s



“The Sniper” by Ali Ghaffari.

Oscar-winning drama “A Separation”.

On the jury also is Bahram Tavakkoli, director of the acclaimed war drama “The Lost Strait”, which was highly acclaimed at the Fajr festival in 2018, earning awards in six categories including best film and best director. He is also the director of “Gholamreza Takhti”, a biopic about legendary Iranian wrestler Gholamreza Takhti.

Mostafa Kiai, director of the comedy film

“Motreb”, which has become Iran’s box office hit of the year by grossing 380 billion rials (about \$9 million) in 2020, has also been selected for the jury.

The jury is also composed of cinematography director Morteza Pursamadi, producer Jamal Sadatian and cultural manager Mohammad Ehsani.

In addition, the jury members of the short films and documentaries are Saeid Puresmaeili, Amir Tudehrust, Mohammd-Ali Farsi, Mohammad Kart and Sam Kalantari.

This year, in addition, seven productions from the Owj Arts and Media Organization, a major institution that produces revolutionary works in art and cinema, will be screened at the festival.

They include the spy movie “The Government Expediency” by Hossein Darabi, “Karo” by Ahmad Moradpur and “Mansur” by Siavash Sarmadi.