



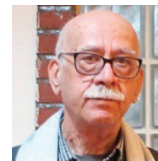
Iran rejects French call for Iran to firstly comply with JCPOA before U.S. return *Page 2*



Iranian teams discover AFC Champions League 2021 fate *Page 3*



Literacy rate reaches up to 96.6% *Page 7*



Translator Torktataari wins Abolhassan Najafi Award *Page 8*

Malign objective

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Israel-Arab axis moves on to next goal against Iran

Trump isolated America and divided the nation: professor

BY MOHAMMAD MAZHARI
The U.S. House of Representatives on Monday presented to the Senate a single article of impeachment accusing former President Donald Trump of inciting insurrection in a speech to his supporters before the deadly attack on the Capitol, setting in motion his second impeachment trial.

In a solemn procession, the nine House impeachment managers silently walked the article through the same ornate halls of Congress overrun by Trump supporters on January 6 and delivered it to the Senate.

In a related context, sources told CNN on Monday that Trump is still working on forming a full legal team for the trial in the Senate, although he began drafting a defense strategy with Butch Bowers, a South Carolina attorney who agreed to represent him at the historical trial.

Two sources familiar with the matter added that former South Carolina Attorney General Charlie Condon had been approached to join the legal team.

But in a brief statement to CNN on Monday evening, he said: "I will not represent former President Trump. Thank you."

A spokesman for the former president declined to comment on any additional information about his legal team.

People familiar with the matter said that with only two weeks left of the core of the trial, Trump was still struggling to find other lawyers to join his team.

However, there are two questions that must be answered: Will the Democrats call witnesses and how long will the trial take?

David Schultz, a professor from Hamline University, tells the Tehran Times that "Democrats are being driven by a political base that hates Trump and they want to punish him."

When asked about the advantages of the second impeachment of Trump for the Democrats, Schultz argues, "They want him to stand out as the worst president in history who was the only one twice impeached and perhaps maybe convicted."

Although some other observers believe that this move may lead to undermining the reputation of Democrats if the move fails, Schultz says, "They are angry at his refusal to work in good faith with Congress and with his words and deeds that led to the insurrection of the Capitol on January 6."

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Swiss ambassador visits National Museum of Iran, discusses ways to expand ties

TEHRAN – On Tuesday, Swiss Ambassador to Tehran Markus Leitner paid a visit to the National Museum of Iran, discussing ways to broaden cultural ties in a meeting with authorities of the museum.

National Museum of Iran Director Jebrael Nokandeh briefly introduced the envoy to the history of the museum and its activities at the domestic and international levels.

"We are interested to expand our relations with the museums of Switzerland, and we have a long history of relations such as temporary exhibitions, of which the most notable was Seven Thousand Years of Iranian Art," Nokandeh said.

He further express thanks to Switzerland for its cooperation in returning the glazed bricks of Qalaichi, an Iron-Age period archaeological site near Bukan, northwest Iran.

"Qalaichi glazed bricks date to 900 to 700 BC and belong to Manna culture and they are

an important part of Iran's history."

The National Museum is set to hold an exhibition entitled "Glazed Bricks of Qalaichi" in near future, he added.

Re-appreciating the efforts made by the Swiss ambassador in returning this important collection, he called for the continuation of these humanitarian cultural efforts.

Leitner, for his part, congratulated the re-opening of the museums following the closure due to the coronavirus pandemic and announced the return of the Qalaichi bricks as a source of pride and satisfaction for his country.

"This event is very important and satisfactory for me and my country... because we believe that the preservation of historical and cultural objects and monuments are extremely important and there is no place for smuggling of cultural heritage objects in Switzerland," the envoy said.

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Biden's foreign policy nothing but Trump's mantra

The Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD) is an anti-Iran, far right leaning think tank openly advocating hawkish foreign policy in West Asia, especially towards Iran.

Mark Dubowitz, the CEO of the center, has played a key role in the Iran sanctions these years. He openly reiterates that the primary objective of the think tank is regime change in Iran. All FDD's comments and recommendations are outwardly against Iran's national interests, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, all military officials. FDD is funded by Zionist lobbies regardless of its proactive role as an anti-Iran lobby in the Congress.

According to their stated policy, FDD has been a determinant non-state actor in the formulation of the Iran embargos.

Richard Goldberg, Saeed Ghasseminejad, Behnam Ben Taleblu, Matthew Zweig and Mark Dubowitz have recently commented

on the U.S. policy towards Iran, China and Arab-Israeli conflict under the Biden administration.

Also, John Hannah, David Adesnik and Jonathan Schanzer have expressed their points of view in this regard.

The following are some of the recent articles by FDD fellows, all echoing neoconservatism.

Blinken: More continuity than change

The new secretary of state enjoying a bipartisan support at his confirmation hearing expressed views openly in agreement with Trump's foreign policy. When asked whether he thought it was a bad idea for the Trump administration to cajole America's NATO allies to spend more on defense, Blinken replied: "I do not." Also, he admired assassination of Lieutenant General, Qassem Soleimani in January 2020.

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The Recurring nightmare of a transfer ban for Persepolis

BY FARROKH HESABI

It might be near the middle of the way of the Iran Professional League (IPL) 2020-2021 season with teams really working hard to stand as high as possible at the league table but some managers are already thinking about the mid-season's transfer window. However, one team might not be able to do any transfers.

Persepolis is again on the verge of a transfer ban due to their failure to pay their former staff including a coach and a player.

The Reds will have to pay Inigo Valencia, the former assistant coach of the team, 78000 dollars plus the interest until February 13 and, most importantly, 500,000 euros to their former Croatian striker Mario Budimir until January 31. On Wednesday, the club announced that they have paid Inigo Valencia's money.

Every club in the league needs strengthening in some way or another. The titleholders Persepolis seems in need of signing new players more than other teams. They have lost some key players and

have struggled to get results in recent weeks.

It would be pretty devastating for any club, especially one that have won four straight titles in the last four seasons of IPL if they were to pick up a transfer ban.

That's exactly what could happen to Persepolis amid reports that they have failed to fulfill the decrees of the FIFA Disciplinary Committee in regard to paying their dues to the former employees.

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Fajr theater festival to honor four stage elites with lifetime achievement awards

TEHRAN – Four Iranian theater elites will be honored with lifetime achievement awards at the 39th Fajr International Theater Festival this year, the director of the festival has said.

"Veteran photographer of theater Akhtar Tajik, theater critic Homayun Aliabadi, veteran actor Bahram Ebrahimi as well as a prominent actor of North Khorasan Province Jamshid Davarpanah are the four veterans who will be honored," the festival director Hossein Mosafer Astaneh, said in a press conference at the Rudaki Hall on Wednesday.

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Iran's conventional arms are completely legal: American scholar

BY MOHAMMAD ALI SAKI

TEHRAN – Describing that depriving Iran from its defensive capabilities is a "fantasy", an American academic says "Iran's conventional weapons are completely legal."

"The objection to them is the fantasy that Iran could at some future date use conventional weapons to deliver a nuclear warhead to Israel," William O. Beeman tells the Tehran Times.

Professor emeritus of the State University of Minnesota emphasizes that "Iranian leaders will never agree to limit conventional defense in order to return to the JCPOA."

The following is the text of the interview:
What is the significance of the JCPOA in these circumstances while some Arab regimes and Israel argue that the region does not need revitalizing such a deal?

There is a bit of a charade going on here. What Israel objects to is not the restoration of the JCPOA. Even Israel knows that the JCPOA was never necessary, since Iran was already prohibited from developing nuclear weapons through the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) dating back to 1970. It was the false claims that Iran was violating the NPT in 2003 and the sanctions imposed on Iran that created the need for the JCPOA. Iran has no nuclear weapons program and is not going to develop one as long as Iran remains a signatory to the NPT.

No, what Israel and the Arab states are worried about is the normalization of relations between the United States and Iran.

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U.S. negotiation strategy in view of Washington Institute for Near East Policy

By Azin Sahabi

TEHRAN – In the coming weeks, TRANSITION 2021 memos by Washington Institute for Near East Policy will address the broad issues facing the Biden administration in the West Asia region.

These range from the region’s strategic position in the context of Great Power competition, Iran’s nuclear program, and how to most effectively elevate human rights and democracy in West Asia.

Arab-Israel normalization diplomacy, Red Sea security as well as challenges and opportunities in northwest Africa will be addressed. In advance of the event, the think tank’s comments on the Islamic Republic of Iran is worth deliberating. **“Less for less” to get “more for more”**

Dennis Ross, a former special assistant to President Barack Obama, provides an approach to reengaging Iran in nuclear diplomacy to preserve what he calls U.S. negotiating leverage and strengthen American alliances in Europe and across West Asia. He proposes an alternative “less for less” approach toward Iran for the U.S. to get “more for more”.

The coming Iran nuclear talks openings and obstacles
January 5, 2021
He argues:

“ If regime change is not a realistic or advisable goal, the objective must be one of changing the Islamic Republic’s behavior. While this would be difficult, history shows that the regime will make tactical adjustments with strategic consequences when it considers the price of its policies to be too high.”

Presidential transition event: Thinking about the next phase of Iran nuclear diplomacy

January 6, 2021
Ross says:

-“ Biden will surely face a number of conflicting issues in the follow-up negotiation with Iran. So, the team should take into account the value of multiple policy instruments that can preserve the pressure but also provide Iran with a way out. First, it must deal with all the challenges that Iran poses, but also try not to hold the nuclear issue hostage to these other concerns.”

-“Second, Europeans and other actors outside the Middle East [West Asia] favor a quick return to the JCPOA, but Republicans remain almost uniformly opposed to it, and a sustainable policy will require bipartisan support.”

-“Third, while there is value in reassuring Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, who are suspicious that returning to the JCPOA will diminish U.S. leverage over Iran, giving the regime little reason to negotiate any substantive follow-on agreements or deal with regional issues.”

-“Indeed, the United States wants to preserve its leverage—and show Iran the consequences of not changing its behavior—even as it incentivizes the regime to accept going beyond the JCPOA (e.g., by extending the agreement’s term and addressing ballistic missiles).

-“ Accordingly, an alternative “less for less” approach might make more sense, and could be easier to negotiate. Such an approach could also buy time for follow-on negotiations aimed at extending sunset provisions, dealing with ballistic missiles, and addressing Iran’s actions in the region.”

-“This would not mean a return to full compliance with the JCPOA, but it could extend Iran’s breakout time to nuclear weapons capability. In particular, it could reduce the nuclear threat by forcing Iran to stop enriching uranium to 20 percent, scale back its stockpile of low-enriched uranium from 2,600 kilograms to 1,000 and dismantle two cascades of advanced centrifuges.”

- “In return, the United States could allow Iran to access some of its frozen overseas accounts, which would provide relief without lifting the U.S. sanctions regime.

Ross adds:
-“ Biden administration should continue:
Pressing Tehran on human rights
Supporting Iraq’s prime minister and military by expanding the political space in which they can operate
Supporting regional partners with enhanced, integrated defenses against ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and drones
Promoting Arab-Israel normalization
Biden doesn’t need to rush back into the Iran nuclear deal to defuse tensions

Jan 19, 2021
Ross claims:

-“Iran has clearly decided to build pressure on the incoming Biden administration, conveying, in effect, that whatever its priorities, it had better deal with the Islamic Republic soon.”

-“Iran needs sanctions relief and wants the United States to fulfill its obligation under the JCPOA to lift all nuclear-related sanctions.

-“Joe Biden position is compliance for compliance, meaning that we cannot lift sanctions before the Iranians are back in. In addition, the Iranians are demanding compensation for what the sanctions have cost them and insisting that the United States, not Iran, must act first. While Biden might be open to providing humanitarian and medical supplies, his compliance for compliance signals that sanctions relief is not possible so long as Iran is violating the JCPOA.”

-“One way to break the impasse and make a virtue of necessity would be for the administration to shift the focus from rejoining the nuclear deal following Iran’s return to full compliance to a “less for less” deal: The United States provides limited sanctions relief; Iran scales back where it is not in compliance.”

He also mentions “ several benefits to such a “less for less” deal”:

“It would scale back the Iran nuclear program in a way that would extend its breakout time and make it less threatening; it would maintain our overall sanctions regime, it would buy time to try to achieve the longer-term agreements that the president seeks, it would make it far easier to gain some Republican buy-in given their almost uniform opposition to the JCPOA, even as it would reduce the Iranian nuclear threat Trump is leaving. Finally, it would be more likely to reassure the Israelis, Emiratis and Saudis who fear an early return to the deal, and the lifting of all nuclear-related sanctions will give the Iranians little reason to change their threatening regional behavior.”

He concludes:

-“Negotiations are never easy with the Iranians. If, however, the Biden administration wants to produce follow-on negotiations that will require more from the Iranians while also giving them more in terms of economic benefits and not just sanctions relief, it might make sense not to rejoin the nuclear deal. In other words, if we are to get to “more for more,” we need to start with less for less.”

Rouhani: World with one voice wants U.S. return to JCPOA

“If you return to your obligations, the next hour we will return to all our obligations”

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** – President Hassan Rouhani, speaking in a cabinet meeting on Wednesday, said the world is demanding with a “single voice” that the United States must rejoin the 2015 nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

“The world wants the United States to return to its obligations with a single voice, and we have also repeatedly stated that whenever you return to your obligations, we will fulfill all our obligations in an hour,” Rouhani insisted.

“This single voice of the world is very important. Of course, the Europeans have misplaced objections because we have demands from Europe, and they should not ask for demands from us. We waited patiently and beautifully for a year, listening. They kept promising another two weeks and another month, but they did not act or could not act,” he emphasized.

Under the JCPOA, Iran agreed to put limits on its nuclear activities in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions. However, Trump quit the deal and introduced the harshest ever sanctions in history against Iran in violation of UN Security Council Resolution 2231 that endorsed the JCPOA.

After waiting for a full year, on May 8, 2019 Iran said its “strategic patience” is over and started to remove caps on its nuclear work at bi-monthly intervals. At the time Iran announced if the Europeans honor their commitments Iran will immediately reverse its decisions. However, the Europeans just paid lip service to the JCPOA, taking no concrete action to shield Iran from sanctions.

Though Trump officially quit the JCPOA on May 8, 2018, he had started to imposing sanctions in his first days in office in early 2017.

“After a year, we put aside two or three



commitments and said that if you return to your commitments in two months, we will return to the first point,” Rouhani explained.

Nevertheless, the president stressed if the U.S. rejoins the nuclear deal, Iran will meet all its commitments immediately.

Hopes have risen for a U.S. return to the nuclear deal as Joe Biden has been elected as the U.S. president. Biden was vice president in the Barack Obama administration when the nuclear deal was signed.

“We have always said that if you return to your obligations, the next hour we will return to all our obligations. So our logic is a long and correct logic, they cannot criticize us. While making the wrong objection, everyone agrees that the U.S. must return to its commitments.”

Iran has been insisting that since the U.S. first withdrew the JCPOA and violated the agreement it must be the first to return the agreement.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohamad Javad Zarif on Tuesday responded to a French call

that Iran should reverse its nuclear measures before the U.S. returns to the nuclear deal.

Zarif’s response came after an unidentified French presidential official told news media outlets on Tuesday that Iran must end what the official called its “provocations” and return to the terms of the nuclear deal if it expects the United States to rejoin the accord, but even then a broader negotiation would be needed.

“If they are serious about negotiations and if they want to obtain a re-engagement of all the stakeholders in the JCPOA, they firstly need to refrain from further provocations and secondly respect what they no longer respect, that’s to say their obligations,” the presidency official told reporters on condition of anonymity.

Zarif said Iran will not take the first move to revive the nuclear deal.

“Why on earth should Iran—a country that stood firm & defeated 4 years of a brutal US economic terrorism imposed in violation of

JCPOA & UNSC Resolution—show goodwill gesture first? It was the US that broke the deal—for no reason. It must remedy its wrong; then Iran will respond,” the Iranian foreign minister said in a tweet on Tuesday.

Iran’s Ambassador to the United Nations Majid Takht-Ravanchi has said now it’s up to the U.S. to make the first move.

“The ball is in the U.S. court,” Takht-Ravanchi told NBC News. “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.

The top diplomat, who was involved in the talked that produced the JCPOA, also 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.

On Monday, 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, told a press briefing.

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.

Seizing power by war in Afghanistan is unacceptable, Iran says

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Ali Shamkhani, secretary of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council, said on Wednesday that Iran will not “recognize” any group to seize power by war in Afghanistan.

Shamkhani made the remarks during a meeting with Abdul Ghani Baradar, the head of the Taliban political delegation, who visited Iran on Tuesday.

On Tuesday, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh also said, “Iran wants a stable, secure, and peaceful Afghanistan so that Afghan people of all tribes can live in the light of security.”

In the Wednesday meeting, Shamkhani also pointed to the precedent of the U.S. sinister acts and warmongering in the region and said, “The U.S. is not seeking for peace and security in Afghanistan.”

He added, “The U.S. strategy is to continue conflict and bloodshed among different groups in Afghanistan.”

Shamkhani says, “Taliban must cooperate with the Afghan government in fighting terrorism and any insecurity and the ISIS movements in the country”.

“The U.S. is showing off initiating peace talks with the aim of creating a dead-end in peace process in Afghanistan,” the top security official pointed out.

The U.S. wants to accuse Afghan groups of creating insecurity and instability in Afghanistan, Shamkhani remarked.

He asked all Afghan parties to determine Afghanistan’s fate by participating in the peace process.

“Taliban must cooperate with the Afghan government in fighting terrorism and any insecurity and the ISIS movements in the country”.

For his part, Ghani Baradar presented a report on the peace process in Afghanistan and said, “Trump made no commitment to peace agreement to be implemented in Afghanistan.”

He underlined that Afghanistan does not trust the U.S. and will fight terrorism and the U.S. mercenaries.

Biden seeking to review U.S. relations with Riyadh: analyst

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Reza Mirabian, an expert on Saudi Arabia, says the Biden administration is seeking to review relations between the United States and Saudi Arabia.

Commenting on the challenges between the U.S. team and Saudi Arabia during the Biden administration, Mirabian dismisses a possible coup against the Saudi crown prince with the support of the CIA.

“The new U.S. president has been in the White House for a week and a coup plot against Mohammad Bin Salman (MBS), the Saudi Crown Prince, seems unlikely, but the Saudi tone shows they feel danger,” the analyst said, according to the Iranian Labor News Agency (ILNA).

“The possibility of a coup d’état in Riyadh has attracted the attention of many analysts, elites and security and political ex-

perts. According to available data, the CIA is seeking to oust the Saudi crown prince, after the transfer of power in Washington,” he says, adding, “These speculations were prompted due to the disagreement between Democrats and Republicans in supporting Muhammad bin Salman, but these data seem to be exaggerated.”

He says he believes the news that has been published regarding CIA’s efforts to consider

alternatives to the Saudi crown prince “can only be media speculation.”

“Democrats, as well as the political and security structure of the United States, are well aware that a person like Muhammad bin Nayef can be a right guy to serve the interests of the United States. I think, if the U.S. intends to eliminate Mohammad Bin Salman, it will gradually marginalize the Saudi Crown Prince,” Mirabian remarked.

Germany evading accountability for arming Saddam with chemical weapons: Iranian diplomat

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Esmaeil Baghaei Hamaneh, the permanent representative of Iran to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, has criticized Germany for not being accountable for its role in equipping Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein’s regime with chemical weapons.

He made the remarks at a United Nations’ plenary session on disarmament held in Geneva on Tuesday, according to ISNA.

Baghaei recalled that Germany provided the raw materials used for building chemical weapons to the former Iraqi regime, saying that the German government has a responsibility to seriously consider the issue.

The Iranian diplomat emphasized “all natural persons and legal entities that had a role, in whatever manner, in arming the former Iraqi dictator with chemical weapons are accomplices to Saddam Hussein’s war crimes, and this fact will not slip into oblivion with the passage of time.”

Although Baghaei sharply criticized the German ambassador to the UN, who had said that the issue goes back four decades and that the raising of the issue is unjustifiable, he welcomed comments by the German envoy who claimed his country is prosecuting German firms involved in selling materials for chemical arms to the former Iraqi regime.

“The issue of Saddam Hussein’s regime using chemical arms and German companies’ complicity with him will not fade away in Iranian people’s memory,” Ambassador Baghaei remarked.

“It is felt wholeheartedly by the oppressed victims of these weapons, who are still suffering from the complications of the wounds caused by these arms,” the envoy lamented.

He said Iran expects the German government to publicly announce the outcome of its probes, including investigations into German officials’ involvement or failure to prevent the illegal transfer of materials used in chemical arms to Iraq.

Biden wants to return to the Iran deal. He can start here.

There is a window now to restore America’s credibility and bring more stability to the Middle East (West Asia).

By Majid Takht-Ravanchi

As dawn broke on July 14, 2015, and after intensive and lengthy diplomatic talks, the final details of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action — better known as the “Iran nuclear deal” — were finalized. All parties to the accord were hopeful. Javad Zarif, my country’s foreign minister, tweeted: “#IranDeal is not a ceiling, but a solid foundation. We must now begin to build on it.”

This deal was considered by many across

the world as an agreement that could change the dynamics in the Middle East (West Asia). For its part, Iran fulfilled all of its obligations for almost three and a half years from when the deal went into effect in January 2016. The United States, however, has been less reliable. Even during the last months of the Obama administration, the United States was not as faithful a partner as we hoped.

But then came Donald Trump. Mr. Trump campaigned on promises to “dismantle” the agreement. His 2016 electoral victory did indeed change the dynamics in the

Middle East (West Asia) — for the worse. Benjamin Netanyahu and other leaders in the region renewed their hopes of harassing and marginalizing Iran. Then, in May 2018, Mr. Trump’s government withdrew the United States from the accord. (Iran, at the request of the remaining participants in the deal, however, continued to comply with the restrictions on its nuclear program for one full year.)

As if the withdrawal wasn’t enough, the Trump administration repeatedly pushed the region to the brink of a catastrophic war.

The assassination of Qassim Soleimani, a top Iranian military commander, in January 2020 was the most important of these provocations, to which was added the brazen assassination of our eminent scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh in November.

Yet despite these provocations and the fantasies of some Trump administration officials of regime change in Iran, the Middle East (West Asia) has not exploded into a major conflagration. For our part, we have been prudent and patient.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Malign objective

POLITICAL TEHRAN – While the new U.S. administration is still a “long way” from fully rejoining the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, Israel and its Arab allies raise alarm bells about any efforts by the U.S. or its European allies to revive the nuclear deal, a move that will not only complicate the situation around the nuclear deal but will also escalate tensions in the region.

Israel and its Arab allies in the Persian Gulf region lived their dreams vis-à-vis Iran during the Trump administration. National security officials of the Trump administration never turned down the demands of the Israel-Arab axis against Iran. As Iran’s ambassador to the UN Majid Takht-Ravanchi put it, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other leaders in the region renewed their hopes of squeezing Iran.

But this axis felt the whole world came crashing down after Joe Biden, who had vowed to rejoin the Iran nuclear deal, won the U.S. presidential election in November. They demanded many things, from being included in the next round of talks with Iran to expanding the deal as if the reopening of the deal – officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) – was set in stone.

These demands came after Biden announced following his election win that he still believed that the JCPOA should be revived though he described the process of reviving the deal as “hard” and “very difficult.”



These Biden’s remarks sent the Israel-Arab axis scrambling to dismantle any prospect for rapprochement between Iran and the U.S. under President Biden. Firstly, they called on Biden to include them in any future talks over Iran’s nuclear program.

A few weeks after Biden was elected president, Saudi Arabia’s Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud said in an interview with CNBC that Donald Trump’s “maximum pressure” campaign against Iran has set the groundwork for a new agreement with Iran



and that Saudi Arabia should be a part of any potential negotiations between the incoming U.S. administration and Iran on a new nuclear deal, which according to bin Farhan, would not only limit Iran’s nuclear activities but also seek to address what he called its “regional malign activity” as well as Iran’s missile program.

The Saudi foreign minister called such a deal “JCPOA++.”

Iran rejected the Saudi offer to seek “JCPOA++.” The Biden administration has

not commented on the Saudi offer.

The Saudis called for “improving” the JCPOA. But now it seems that the Saudi demand did not satisfy the Israelis who went so far as to veto any effort to even improve the nuclear deal. While Iran roundly rejected any effort to reopen the JCOPA, Israelis announced that they would oppose the deal in its entirety.

Aviv Kochavi, the chief of staff of Israeli armed forces, issued on Tuesday stark threats against Iran and its allies in the region. He also said that Israel is not welcoming the expected efforts by the U.S. and its European allies to revive the JCPOA.

“I would like to clarify my position regarding the JCPOA: Even if an improved agreement is reached, it will be a bad agreement at the operational and strategic level. Therefore, such an agreement must not be enabled,” Kochavi said in remarks delivered at the Israeli Institute for National Security Studies 14th Annual International Conference.

The remarks signify a change in the Israeli and Arab positions toward Iran. Back in 2015, the Israelis and their Arab allies were wary of President Obama giving Iran what they called a carte blanche to expand its influence in the region. But now, with Biden trying to revive the deal, they no longer seem to harbor the same concerns. Instead, they are likely concerned that Biden would dismantle a pressure campaign primarily designed to bring about regime change in Iran.

Zarif holds talks in Armenia

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif held talks on Wednesday with high-ranking Armenian officials including his counterpart Ara Aivazian and Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on the third leg of the top Iranian diplomat’s regional tour.

In his meeting with Aivazian, Zarif discussed issues of mutual interest regarding reciprocal ties and regional developments, highlighting the cordial and good neighborly relations between Tehran and Yerevan.

The chief diplomat noted that both Iran and Armenia enjoy age-old civilizations and a long history, according to a statement issued by Iran’s Foreign Ministry.

“Zarif described Armenia as an important neighbor for Iran and added Tehran-Yerevan relations are a symbol of interaction and dialogue between the followers of two faiths. Iran’s foreign minister underscored the significance of territorial integrity, independence and national sovereignty of all countries in the region, including Armenia. He said it is necessary to observe the rights of all ethnic groups in the region,” the statement said.

The Iranian foreign minister underlined that Armenia’s territorial integrity is Iran’s red line, describing as a brave move the decisions by the Armenian government and Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan to move toward the future.

“Zarif voiced regret over the human losses inflicted during the recent conflict in the region and said Iran stands ready to offer whatever assistance and make any efforts in that regard. He expressed hope the humanitarian issues caused by the conflict will be resolved as soon as possible,” the statement continued.

The chief Iranian diplomat also denounced the pres-

ence of terrorists and foreign fighters in the region, adding the presence of such troops is a cause for concern for both countries.

He said Tehran is ready to work with Yerevan and other neighbors in that regard and to help boost economic development in the region by tapping into the opportunity created and by taking the common interests of regional countries into account, according to the statement.

Aivazian, in turn, emphasized the significance of close political, economic and trade ties with Iran.

Foreign Minister Aivazian described Iran as Armenia’s fourth economic partner. He also touched upon the importance of regional stability and security, and highlighted Iran’s key role in the region.

The Armenian Foreign Ministry also put out a statement on the opening remarks of Aivazian during his meeting with Zarif.

“The Armenian-Iranian agenda is, indeed, quite comprehensive, based on the centuries-old friendship uniting our two peoples. This friendship is the best example of intercultural dialogue, an example of different religions and civilizations living side by side, based on mutual trust and respect. That is the key for achieving peace and stability in the region,” the Armenian statement quoted Aivazian as saying.

The Armenian foreign minister also valued the high level of political dialogue with Iran, close trade and economic ties, and cooperation in spheres of mutual interest, describing his meeting with Zarif as “a good opportunity to exchange views on the prospects of multifaceted cooperation and to outline further steps.”



“Iran is the fourth trade partner of Armenia, thus, naturally, the promotion of trade and economic cooperation has a special place in our agenda,” the Armenian foreign minister said.

He pointed out that the main subject of his talks with Zarif has been regional security and stability.

Aivazian described Iran as an important country in the region. “We respect Iran’s approach of building relations with its immediate neighbors,” he continued.

During the Armenia-Azerbaijan war, which broke out in late September, Iran presented a peace initiative that called on both sides of the war to resolve their differences through dialogue. Iran also expressed readiness to facilitate such dialogue.

Tehran shrugs off Israeli military threats, says it is unable to attack Iran

1→ “Our armed forces are trained in defending Iran, and the various drills we have held are a sign that we do not intend to go to war, but we are serious about defending the country,” Vaezi said.

He also said that some Israeli officials think that everything they say will be accepted by Washington. According to Vaezi, during the Trump administration, the former president’s son-in-law, Jared Kushner, was the functionary of the Zionists in Washington and served the interests of Israel but now things have changed after Joe Biden won the U.S. election.

“I think the new U.S. administration is independent like other countries and that this Zionist regime’s rhetoric is psychological warfare,” the president chief of staff continued.

Vaezi pointed out that the U.S. will possibly return to the Iran nuclear deal – officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) – but Israel and Saudi Arabia are working to make sure that that won’t happen.

“Saudi Arabia and the Zionist regime are lobbying in Washington but we should not take that seriously,” Vaezi noted.

The remarks by Iranian officials came after Kochavi claimed that he had ordered several plans to launch offensive operations against Iran while voicing Israel’s opposition to any efforts to revive the JCPOA or even to improve it.

“I have instructed the IDF to prepare several operational plans in addition to existing ones, which we will develop throughout the coming year. The power to initiate them lies with the political echelon. However, the offensive options need to be prepared, ready and on the table,” Kochavi said in remarks delivered at the Israeli Institute for National

Security Studies 14th Annual International Conference.

“I would like to clarify my position regarding the JCPOA: Even if an improved agreement is reached, it will be a bad agreement at the operational and strategic level. Therefore, such an agreement must not be enabled,” he continued.

The Israeli threats against Iran come in the midst of renewed efforts by Europe and the new U.S. administration to revive the JCPOA from which the Trump administration quit on May 8, 2018.

Iran rejects French call for Iran to firstly comply with JCPOA before U.S. return

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Mohamad Javad Zarif has responded to a French call that Iran should reverse its nuclear measures before the U.S. returns to the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and major world powers.

Zarif’s response came after an unidentified French presidential official told news media outlets on Tuesday that Iran must end what the official called its “provocations” and return to the terms of the nuclear deal if it expects the United States to rejoin the accord, but even then a broader negotiation would be needed.

“If they are serious about negotiations and if they want to obtain a re-engagement of all the stakeholders in the JCPOA, they firstly need to refrain from further provocations and secondly respect what they no longer respect, that’s to say their obligations,” the presidency official told reporters on condition of anonymity.

Zarif was quick to respond to the French remarks. He said Iran will not take the first move to revive the nuclear deal.

“Why on earth should Iran—a country that stood firm & defeated 4 years of a brutal US economic terrorism imposed in violation of JCPOA & UNSC Resolution—show goodwill gesture first? It was the US that broke the deal—for no reason. It must remedy its wrong; then Iran will respond,” the Iranian foreign minister said in a tweet on Tuesday.

Former U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew from the JCPOA in May 2018 and reimposed – and some cases



reabeled - the sanctions that were lifted under the deal. The new U.S. president, Joe Biden, has vowed to revive the deal. During his election campaign, Biden had said that he will rejoin the nuclear deal and then use it as a starting point for follow-on negotiations with Iran over other issues.

Biden reaffirmed his previous position on the JCPOA after he won the U.S. presidential election in November but he said reviving the accord would be “hard” and “very difficult.”

Biden and his national security team have underlined the need to work with the U.S. European allies on global issues such as the Iran nuclear deal. President Biden has recently

spoken by phone with French and German leaders to discuss the situation around the JCPOA among other issues.

The presidency official did not give a sequencing on how the lifting of sanctions during a return to compliance would work, but said that the French and U.S. administrations were clear on what needed to be done and how.

“We will have to ... see how the return of the United States to the JCPOA is paid for with verifiable gestures on the part of the Iranians,” said the official.

He added that the issues with Iran went beyond the nuclear deal and that a broader negotiation on its regional activities would need to take place, according to Reuters.

Iran has said time and again that the ball is in the U.S. court, underlining the need for Washington to take the first diplomatic move.

“The ball is in the U.S. court,” Iran’s Ambassador to the United Nations Majid Takht-Ravanchi told NBC News in a recent interview. “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.”

However, the Biden administration seems to be tending to wait for some time before taking any decision regarding the JCPOA. Antony Blinken, the new U.S. secretary of state, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on January 19 that the U.S. is “a long way from” the point of rejoining the JCPOA.

SPORTS

Iranian teams discover AFC Champions League 2021 fate

S P O R T S TEHRAN- The four Iranian teams representing the country in the 2021 Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Champions League discovered their opponents following the conclusion of the group stage draw in a virtual drawing ceremony in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on Wednesday.

Persepolis, the Champions of Iran league and runners-ups of the AFC Champions League (ACL) in 2020 and 2018, were drawn with Al Rayyan of Qatar, India’s FC Goa, and the winner of the playoff match between Al Wahda (UAE) and Al Zawraa (Iraq) in Group E.

Tractor, the Hazfi Cup winners, will have UAE’s Sharjah, Pakhtakor of Uzbekistan, and either Al Wehda (Saudi Arabia) or Air Force Club (Iraq) in Group B.

Group C comprises Iran’s Esteghlal, Qatar’s Al Duhail, Saudi Arabia’s Al Ahli, and Al Shorta of Iraq. Esteghlal will have a tough task ahead as many experts have called Group C the group of death in West Asia.

Foolad Khuzestan, who will playoff with UAE’s Al Ain also face a tough test should they advance to the group stage. They will come face to face with Qatar’s champions Al Sadd, Saudi Arabia’s Al Nassr, and Al Wehdad of Jordan

With one additional group each in the East and West Zones, 40 teams will participate in the group phase of the competition - an increase from 32 last year - with the winners of each group plus the three best runners-up from the west and east regions advancing to the last 16.

2021 AFC Champions League Group Stage Draw

Group A: Al Hilal SFC (KSA), Shabab Al Ahli (UAE), FC Istiklol (TJK), QAT-UZB P/O winner

Group B: Sharjah (UAE), Tractor FC (IRN), Pakhtakor (UZB), KSA-IRQ P/O winner

Group C: Al Duhail SC (QAT), Al Ahli Saudi (KSA), Esteghlal (IRN), Al Shorta (IRQ)

Group D: Al Sadd SC (QAT), Al Nassr (KSA), Al Wehdad (JOR), IRN-UAE P/O winner

Group E: Persepolis FC (IRN), Al Rayyan (QAT), FC Goa (IND), UAE-IRQ P/O winner

Group F: Ulsan Hyundai FC (KOR), BG Pathum United (THA), Viettel FC (VIE), AUS-PHI-CHN P/O winner

Group G: Jiangsu FC (CHN), Nagoya Grampus (JPN), Johor Darul Ta’zim (MAS), KOR-THA P/O winner.

Group H: Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors (KOR), Gamba Osaka (JPN), Tampines Rovers (SIN), Sydney FC (AUS)

Group I: Kawasaki Frontale (JPN), Guangzhou FC CHN), United City FC (PHI), KOR-THA P/O winner

Group J: Shandong Luneng FC (CHN), Port FC (THA), Kitchee SC (HKG), JPN-AUS-MYA P/O Winner

Iran beach soccer training camp halted

S P O R T S TEHRAN - Iran beach soccer’s training camp has been halted due to coronavirus concerns.

The Iranian football federation chose to suspend practices after several players have been confirmed as being infected with the novel virus.

The training has been postponed for the coronavirus concerns.

The daily death toll from the COVID-19 pandemic in Iran was down to 79 on Tuesday, marking a two-digit rate for the fourth week in a row. The overall coronavirus death toll in Iran stands at 57,560, Sima Sadat Lari said.

The Health Ministry’s spokeswoman also noted that the total number of people tested positive for COVID-19 in the country has surpassed 1,385,700 after the detection of 6,420 new cases since Monday.

More than 1,177,300 patients have recovered from the coronavirus infection so far or have been discharged from hospitals across Iran, Lari said.

Among those undergoing treatment at present, 4,038 are being kept in the Intensive Care Units of medical centers because of critical health conditions, she said. The number of people infected with COVID-19 across the world has surpassed 100 million and the death toll has exceeded 2.15 million.

Alireza Jahanbakhsh needs more rest

S P O R T S TEHRAN – Iranian winger Alireza Jahanbakhsh could be two weeks away from a return to action, Albion coach Graham Potter said.

He missed Wednesday’s game with Fulham due to an ongoing hamstring problem, The Argus reported. The issue is different to the one which affected him early in the season.

“Alireza had a feeling in his hamstring against Newport County. He is probably a week-and-a-half away, maybe two weeks,” Potter said.

“But he is making good progress. I’m disappointed for him and for us,” he added.

Jahanbakhsh has struggled for game time this season under Graham Potter and the 27-year-old was quoted recently as saying he is at a point in his career he has to “play a lot more and have better conditions.”

The Iranian international signed from AZ Alkmaar in 2018 for a then club-record fee of £17m but has since endured a frustrating time in the Premier League on the south coast.

The Recurring nightmare of a transfer ban for Persepolis

1→ According to Ebrahim Shakouri, the executive director of Persepolis, it will be impossible for the club to provide 500000 euros before January 31 if the club is not helped by some external sources.

The Tehran-based club, currently sitting in the ninth at the league table, with two games in hand, will be facing a tough period due to their financial difficulties. Fans are unhappy with the recent poor run of results which started with the team’s failure to win the AFC Champions League for the first time ever last month.

While head coach Yahya Golmohammadi constantly talks about the need to strengthen the team by signing new players, a transfer ban will severely impact the club’s plans.

Persepolis had been handed the transfer ban by FIFA’s Dispute Resolution Chamber (DRC) in September 2020 over non-payment of dues to former coach Branko Ivankovic but the ban was lifted by FIFA on Oct. 30 after the club settled with the Croatian.

The club is about to face the recurring nightmare of transfer ban that afflicted the fans many times in recent years. Can Persepolis wake up from such a nightmare?

Dehqan Dehnavi appointed as new head of SEO

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Mohammad-Ali Dehqan Dehnavi was appointed as the new head of Iran's Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO), IRNA reported. Dehqan Dehnavi, who was previously the deputy finance and economic affairs minister, replaced Hassan Qalibaf-Asl.

Having a Ph.D. in economics, the new SEO's head has been also a board member of Bank Maskan.

Iran's largest commercial port to be constructed in Jask

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Head of Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) announced the plans for the construction of the country's largest commercial port in Jask Island, southern Hormozgan Province.



Mohammad Rastad has made the announcement during a visit to the mentioned port city.

"The development of Jask is very important and strategic at the national level, and we have reached a conclusion in the recognition phase to build the country's largest commercial port in this city," Rastad said.

According to the official, PMO has determined the final location of the mentioned port in collaboration with the Oil Ministry and the primary research studies on the project have been already started.

Noting that transportation and maritime trade in the east of the Strait of Hormuz is being considered for the first time by the Iranian government, the official said: "Through this port, we intend to be able to receive large-scale oceanic vessels in the east of the Strait of Hormuz, in addition to Chabahar port."

The port of Jask is a small port on the western part of Iran's coast along the Gulf of Oman. However, over the last few years, it has seen a steady growth of its export freight flows to Oman, mostly agricultural products, including refrigerated, and construction materials.

Major developments for the port of Jask have been announced by Iranian authorities since early 2019, i.e. the construction of a new oil terminal, the construction of a refinery, and of a petrochemical plant.

These developments are part of a total investment of €260 million centered on the construction of a new oil pipeline from Goreh, Bushehr to Jask in order to pump and export oil.

Goreh-Jask oil transfer project is going to provide Iran with an alternative route for the country's crude oil exports that are currently carried out through the Strait of Hormuz.

Tehran hosts webinar on Iran-China trade outlook in 2021

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran-China Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industries hosted a webinar to review the trade relations between the two countries in 2020 and to discuss the outlook of the two sides' economic relations in 2021, the portal of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) reported.



The online meeting was attended by senior officials including the Chairman of the Iran-China Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industries Majid-Reza Hariri and the Iranian Ambassador to China Mohammad Keshavarz-Zadeh.

Speaking in this meeting, Hariri mentioned the 50th anniversary of Iran-China's trade relations and the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the Iran-China Joint Chamber as two major events coming in 2021.

Further in this webinar, dubbed "Iran-China trade relations in 2020 and the prospects of economic relations between the two countries in 2021", Hariri criticized the media sabotage against Iran-China relations, stressing that a negative media atmosphere could ruin the economic relations between the two countries.

The official also criticized some non-expert comments on Iran-China relations and stressed the need to form positive opinions about China both among the people and officials.

Elsewhere in this event, Keshavarz-Zadeh noted that Iran-China relations have entered a new phase since 2016, but unfortunately, due to some issues, the expectations created following the Chinese president's visit to Iran in that year did not materialize.

"Until in February 2019, when Iranian former Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani visited China, another turning point was created in Iran-China relations; to the extent that an Iran-China Joint Economic Committee meeting was held after this visit."

The Iranian ambassador to China further stated: "Despite the conditions created by the coronavirus pandemic, Iran-China trade relations continue in various fields and we have pursued the 25-year Iran-China plan to an acceptable level."

The opening of the Iran-China banking exchange channel through Kunlun Bank to supply humanitarian aids for battling coronavirus to Iran was also among the important issues that Keshavarz-Zadeh talked about.

Domestic manufacturing of industrial parts, equipment saves Iran \$2.2b

1 → "Due to the coronavirus pandemic we were forced to hold some of the mentioned desks through online platforms," the official said.

According to Niaraki, the fourth domestic production promotion desk for the auto industry and auto parts was held early this Iranian calendar year (started on March 20, 2020) in which 40 manufacturers participated and deals worth \$60 million were signed.

The second desk on the petrochemical industry with \$60 million worth of deals, the first desk on the refining industry with \$80 million worth of contracts, and the fifth auto industry desk with \$60 million worth of agreements were also held in the mentioned nine months, Niaraki said.

He noted that a total of \$240 million worth of deals were signed between domestic manufacturers and industrial complexes in the mentioned domestic production promotion desks during the said time span.



The program for holding domestic production promotion desks has been defined by the government to supply products, equipment, and machinery needed in various industrial

fields using the capacities of the domestic producers and to increase self-sufficiency in the mentioned areas.

Back in August 2020, the Industry Ministry announced that relying on domestic production had saved Iran €1.045 billion since the implementation of the program in 2019 up to the mentioned month in which 11 desks had been held on the matter.

Of the mentioned amount, €143 million was the share of oil, gas, and petrochemical industries and €118 million was the share of telecommunications, electricity, and electronics.

Back in 2019, the Iranian Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister at the time, Reza Rahmani, had said that relying on domestic production was going to save \$10 billion for the country in two years.

In October 2019, Leader of Islamic Revolution Seyed Ali Khamenei had urged government officials to ban the import of goods that are also produced domestically.

TCCIMA holds Iran-Eurasia economic diplomacy meeting

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) hosted an Iran-Eurasia economic diplomacy meeting on Wednesday, TCCIMA portal reported.

Attended by senior officials including the TCCIMA Head Masoud Khansari, the Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) Head Hamid Zadboum, and the Head of Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) Reza Mir-Ashrafi, the event was held in collaboration with Persian Gulf Studies Center (PGSC) and the Iran-Russia, Iran-Kazakhstan, and Iran-Armenia Joint Chambers of Commerce.

Iranian Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian also made some remarks on the country's trade relations with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) members through a video message.

In the meeting, the attendees reviewed the requirements and aspects of developing trade relations between the two sides, and by listing the existing challenges, offered solutions to remove obstacles and problems and facilitate trade.

At the beginning of the meeting, Khansari noted that the development of economic agreements in the region will help increase stability and security in the economies of member countries.

He stressed the need for using a common currency and replacing the U.S. dollar in trade exchanges between the members of the EAEU.

Ardakanian, in his message, praised the TCCIMA for holding this specialized conference and stressed the significance of using the capacities of the preferential trade agreement with the EAEU in the development of Iran's non-oil exports.

Further in the meeting, Zadboum announced the beginning of official negotiations for establishing a free trade agreement with EAEU in less than a month and said: "Technical preparations for these negotiations have been provided."

The official went on to point out that the preferential trade agreement with Eurasia currently covers 830 commodity items, adding that: "In negotiations between Iran and the Eurasian Union on free trade, it is likely that with the exception of about 10 tariff lines, the tariff on major trade items will be reduced to zero."

Although the zeroing of tariffs on some items may be gradual, this process should not take more than 10 years, he explained.

Iran and Eurasian Economic Union reached a preferential trade agreement in October 2018 based on which about 830 commodity items were subjected to preferential tariffs.

The interim agreement enabling the formation of a free trade area between Iran and the EAEU was signed on May 17, 2018, and officially came into force on October 27, 2019.



Iran is a very important market in the region and the development of ties with this country is of high significance for the EAEU members (Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan).

The free trade agreement between Iran and this union has laid the ground for the expansion of trade ties between the two sides.

The agreement with the bloc has increased Iran's exports to the EAEU member states significantly, which is a turning point for the Islamic Republic's plans for boosting non-oil exports during the U.S. sanctions.

Jask oil terminal's 1st offshore line's pipe laying completed

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The construction of the first 36-inch offshore oil pipeline of the Jask crude oil export terminal has been completed, the operator of Jask oil terminal project in southern Iran announced.

Vahid Maleki put the total length of the offshore pipeline of the Jask oil terminal at 45 kilometers, including six parts of 36-inch pipelines, and anticipated that the pipeline will be completed on both land and sea by the end of the current Iranian calendar month (February 18), Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC) reported.

Last week, Maleki had announced the beginning of the offshore pipeline extension operation for the early-phase of this project.

As the country's second major oil terminal, Jask terminal is under construction by Pars Oil and Gas Company on 60 hectares of land and with nearly €260 million of investment.

In line with the development of the mentioned oil terminal, a pipeline project,



dubbed Goreh-Jask oil transfer project, is also underway which is going to provide Iran with an alternative route for the country's crude oil exports that are currently carried out through the Strait of Hormuz.

The deputy director of the project in Petroleum Engineering and Development Company (PEDEC) has stated that the progress of the first phase of Iran's strategic Goreh-Jask oil pipeline project has surpassed 70 percent.

Making the remarks on the sidelines of visiting the 25th edition of Iran International Oil, Gas, Refining, and Petrochemical Exhibition (Iran Oil Show) on Sunday, Ali Jafarzadeh said that such progress promises that the project will be completed by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20).

Despite the tough condition created by the sanctions and also coronavirus outbreak, this strategic project will be completed at the scheduled time, he underscored.

He announced the supply of more than 96 percent of the parts and equipment of this project from domestic sources and said: "This is an all-Iranian project and a high percentage of items required for this national project is supplied by the domestic companies."

As announced last month by the managing director of PEDEC, the implementation of Goreh-Jask project by domestic contractors has saved the country over €500 million.

Touraj Dehqani said that the implementation of the project so far has created direct jobs for 8,000 people, while providing indirect job opportunities for over 15,000 people as well.

Dehqani stated that the first phase of this project with a capacity to transfer over 300,000 barrels of crude oil per day will be ready for operation by the end of the current Iranian calendar year.

So far, more than 780 kilometers (km) of pipes have been delivered to the site and more than 400 km of piping has been carried out, the official said at the time.

According to the plan, the entire pipeline, which is about 1,000 kilometers, will be installed, tested, and operational by the year-end, he added.

Goreh-Jask project, which is aimed at expanding the oil transport capacity in the south of the country to one million barrels a day, was inaugurated in late June 2020 by President Hassan Rouhani.

12 idle industrial units revived in Lorestan Province

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — According to a provincial official, 12 idle industrial units have been revived in Lorestan Province, in west of Iran, in the current Iranian calendar year (began on March 20, 2020).

Bakhtiar Razani, the acting head of Industry, Mining and Trade Department of the province, also announced that the mentioned units returning to the production cycle have created jobs for 102 persons.

The acting head of Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO) has announced that 1,170 idle industrial units have been revived in the country during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-December 20, 2020).

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

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

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

Bringing the mentioned 1,170 units back to the production cycle, the plan for reviving such units in the present



year has been completed by 78 percent.

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

ISIPO's Previous Head Mohsen Salehinia had said

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

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

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

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

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

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

TEDPIX loses 7,000 points on Wednesday

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), dropped 7,279 points to 1.207 million on Wednesday.

The first market's index lost 4,320 points, and the second market's index fell 18,236 points.

Farhang Hosseini, a capital market expert, told Tehran Times on Tuesday that 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."

Trump isolated America and divided the nation: professor

➡ 'Among the worst presidents in U.S. history'

It is widely believed that Trump's presidency was a catastrophe for the U.S. and the world at large.

According to the Washington Post, Trump made 30,573 false or misleading claims as president. The newspaper said nearly half of his false or misleading claims came in his final year.

"Trump will probably rank among the worst presidents in U.S. history. He will be noted for isolating America from its allies and dividing a nation already divided. His policies did little to help his supporters and it is possible Trump helped accelerate the decline of the U.S. internationally," Professor Schultz notes.

Nevertheless, this time Republicans are divided over Donald Trump's second impeachment trial.

In the first impeachment trial in January 2020, Republicans supported Trump and Democrats failed to remove him from the office. In fact, the Republican-led Senate killed the impeachment move.

Donald Trump's hopes of avoiding conviction by the U.S. Senate received a boost on Tuesday when 45 Republicans tried to dismiss his impeachment trial before it even began.

The procedural vote was not enough



to prevent the trial going ahead, since 55 senators voted that it should, but it did suggest that Democrats face an uphill battle to get the 67 senators they will need for a conviction on a two-thirds majority vote.

Such moves convince everybody that politics is prioritized over law in the United States.

As the American professor says "In this case yes. This impeachment and Senate

"It is possible Trump helped accelerate the decline of the U.S. internationally."

Iran's conventional arms are completely legal: American scholar

➡ Iran is the most powerful nation in the region. As long as Iran remains estranged from the United States, and economically weakened through sanctions, these other States believe that their own power and influence is aided. They do not want any improvement in U.S.-Iranian relations, and they don't want Iran to be strengthened economically, and that is why they oppose the JCPOA.

Some advisers close to Biden like Robert Malley believe that discussing Iran's missiles won't help reach an understanding over the nuclear dispute. Do you think the U.S. will return to JCPOA without pre-condition?

Robert Malley is a very seasoned foreign relations expert, who has had long dealings with Iran. He is Egyptian/Syrian in family origin, and knows the region very well. Malley is right. Imposing pre-conditions on the United States return to the JCPOA is going to muddle, and perhaps totally frustrate the process.

Iran's conventional weapons are completely legal. The objection to them is the fantasy that Iran could at some future date use conventional weapons to deliver a nuclear warhead to Israel. This is the most far-fetched scenario possible, but Netanyahu and Republican hawks in the United States have convinced low-information citizens of their countries that Iran is a month, two months, six months, from producing a bomb and attacking Israel. They have been saying this since 1990, so one would think that by now people would understand that this is a totally ridiculous accusation.

So, this is going to be a non-starter in dealing with Iran. Iranian leaders will never agree to limit conventional defense in order to return to the JCPOA.

But what Iran may be willing to do as a kind of pre-condition is to scale back its enrichment of uranium. Of course, I believe that Iran increased enrichment not for any functional purpose, but rather to have precisely this bargaining chip when it came time to discuss returning to the JCPOA.

This will be a bargaining situation, however. And this is a situation where both the United States and Iran cannot afford to lose face in these negotiations. This is not personal for Biden. If he gives up too much or

"The objection to them is the fantasy that Iran could at some future date use conventional weapons to deliver a nuclear warhead to Israel," Professor Beeman notes.



gives in too easily, he will be attacked by Republicans immediately, and a good part of the American public who voted for Trump will believe these Republican attacks. Iran also has an election coming up this spring, and the success in dealing with the United States will be important in this election as well.

What do we learn from Trump's presidency and his "maximum pressure" policy? Why did Trump fail to dictate his administration's 12 terms on Iran?

Trump was committed to regime change in Iran, or at least to forcing Iran to come to the United States with concessions on support for external actors, reduction of its conventional weapons programs and whatever else Trump could imagine. He wanted Iran to come begging to him, and he thought that the maximum pressure strategy would work.

He was returning to the George W. Bush administration policies toward Iran. The Bush administration believed mistakenly that if enough economic pressure could be exerted on Iran, the Iranian people would rise up and overthrow their own government. A ridiculous idea, but it was very seriously promulgated by Bush, and also by Trump. People like John Bolton actively encouraged this.

I should mention that royalists and other Iranians living in the United States who are opposed to the current Iranian government were actively supporting Trump in this last election because they had been told by Trump's officials that if he were re-elected he would launch a military attack on Iran and overthrow the government.

Trump's policy was designed to be a strong departure from the Obama administration. If Obama was trying to improve relations with Iran, in the hopes of making progress in areas of mutual interest, then Trump definitely wanted to go in the opposite direction and show extreme hostility toward Iran to pressure

trial is really about politics, but in the end, all impeachments are political."

Regarding Trump's efforts to launch a campaign against ruling institutions and challenge American democracy and values, Schultz emphasizes that Trump tried this and failed. "We had an election, he lost, and Biden is president. Trump tried to change the election results and failed. On one level political democracy survived in the U.S."

President Biden, besides these political tensions, must be prepared to face serious challenges. It is not easy to reverse Trump's policies with an undo bottom.

"The Democrats are not a united party in what they wish to do and the Republicans will put up a fight," the American academic notes. "Democrats have a very thin majority and Biden himself is not by instinct one who is going to make a radical change."

The U.S. political system is set up in a way that makes any change difficult without a lot of political consensus or agreement.

"These factors will limit what Democrats can do to reverse Trump politics. However, a lot of what Trump did was by executive order which will be easy to reverse. Fixing U.S. global standing will take time," Schultz concludes.

Iran into doing what his administration wanted.

But it didn't work. Trump knew nothing about Iran. In fact, Iran has a very robust internal economy. Iran is self-sufficient in just about everything except for specialized pharmaceuticals and specialized technical equipment. In fact, the poverty level in Iran is less than that in the United States. Iran's economy actually expanded during two years of the Trump administration. Iran survived these Maximum Pressure sanctions. It created some very difficult economic situations for some people, but for the most part, life continued rather normally. So the

Is there any obvious mechanism to return to the JCPOA? Some observers suggest "compliance-compliance". What is your comment?

No. Too much time has passed, and although President Biden is committed to returning to the JCPOA he cannot do it without negotiations. For one thing, the sanctions against Iran are so incredibly complicated, they will take a long time to be untangled. See the Wikipedia page below. You will see that there are layers and layers of sanctions that need to be dealt with.

But more importantly, as I mentioned above, there is a political reality involved. If Biden just declared that the JCPOA sanctions were lifted without any concessions from Iran, he would be pilloried by Republicans, and the Democratic party would lose power in the next elections in 2022. So, there must be negotiations. Both sides will have to make some concessions, and the other signatories to the JCOPA must also be involved. With goodwill, this will be possible, but it will be an involved process.

What are the main challenges of Biden in the future? Is America concerned about Trump's return?

For President Biden the massive effort in unifying the nation. The United States is very badly divided. He also has to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic which is worse in the United States than practically anywhere else. He has had a few good days thus far, and people are feeling optimistic, but it will be a difficult four years for him. And in this context, the U.S. Iranian relationship has a much lower priority than many other things. It is important, but if negotiations over the JCPOA and sanctions.

"Iran has no nuclear weapons program and is not going to develop one as long as Iran remains a signatory to the NPT."



the troop level decision, saying, "It stands to reason that the incoming administration will want to better understand the status of operations in both places and the resources being applied to those missions."

He also cast serious doubt on any speculations that Washington had finally begun to listen to those protesting its motto of trying to "defend America" by deploying troops thousands of miles away from America's own borders.

"Nothing has changed about our desire

to defend the American people from the threat of terrorism, while also making sure we are appropriately resourcing our strategy," Kirby added.

Ka'abi warned likewise that Joe Biden's succession after Trump did not mean that Washington had either stopped wishing the Arab country and its resources ill or shuttered its regional projects, including providing support for the Israeli regime.

"The U.S. is hopeful of and has set its eyes on sustaining its presence in Iraq," he said.

The lawmaker, meanwhile, expressed regret that "Iraq's troubles and Daesh elements' movements [there] are the result of the U.S. presence."

The Takfiri terror group of Daesh started its attacks in Iraq in 2014, creating an excuse for the U.S. and scores of its allies to significantly ramp up the Western-led military presence in the country.

(Source: Press TV)

Biden's foreign policy nothing but Trump's mantra

➡ Moreover, he affirmed, "Our commitment to Israel's security is sacrosanct." He further appreciates benefits of Trump's peace deals between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco.

His point of views on China is also in accordance with those of Trump. Blinken called China the "most significant challenge of any nation state to the United States." This is in fact the replica of the two of the most important documents issued by the Trump administration: the "National Security Strategy" and "National Defense Strategy".

FDD: "Double on double the maximum pressure campaign"

Saeed Ghasseminejad claims to be "a senior Iran and financial economics advisor at FDD specializing in Iran's economy and financial markets, sanctions", lately commented on Iran and the U.S. relations under Biden. This anti-Iran figure, in an article titled "What Zarif's words should tell President Biden about the JCPOA", points to Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif's interview on the anniversary of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani's martyrdom.

Ghasseminejad whose affiliated think tank stresses curbing rolling back Iran's nuclear program as well as ballistic missiles, writes:

"He (Zarif) denied there was going to be any JCPOA 2 and 3, meaning the regime will not negotiate any follow-on agreements to the 2015 nuclear deal that limit Iran's missile program and regional policies."

Given Biden's declared inclination to renegotiate with Tehran over JCPOA, the fellow describes Zarif's position "a serious problem for Biden."



The hardline fellow of FDD, redundantly accuses Tehran of terrorism and pursuing military nuclear program, recommends Washington not to rejoin the JCPOA and "double down on the maximum pressure campaign". In this regard he argues:

"The new administration should double down on the pressure campaign until Tehran has no choice but to make real concessions on nuclear, missile, terrorism, and regional issues. If Washington reenters the JCPOA, it will lose all of its leverage, and Tehran will have no reason to curb its missiles and regional policies."

FDD Iran sanctions team: "Biden, Congress should defend terrorism sanctions imposed on Iran"

In a joint 14-page research memo by FDD's sanctions team, Goldberg, Ghasseminejad, Behnam Ben Taleblu, Matthew Zweig and Dubowitz, this anti-Muslim fringe organization, stresses the vital role of the American Congress in implementing sanctions on Iran. As Biden states tendency to rejoin the JCPOA, FDD writes: "Understanding the historical role Congress played in enacting and overseeing the implementation of terrorism sanctions on Iran and its proxies is increasingly important today."

FDD wants a bipartisan support to make sure that regardless of where members may stand on the JCPOA no terrorism-sanctions relief will be provided to Iran.

Members of FDD describe their recommendation completely in line with Anthony Blinken's position on Iran. Moreover, Biden himself confirmed during the 2020 campaign the definite continuation of non-nuclear sanctions. He described them "a strong hedge against Iranian misbehavior in other areas."

FDD: No changes to Trump's central insight

John Hannah, a senior counselor at FDD and a co-editor of a just-published collection of twenty-five essays assessing Trump's record on a range of critical national security issues, concludes that adopting some version of ABT, or "Anything but Trump," would be a serious mistake for the new administration. While confessing Trump's foreign policy deficiencies, Hannah emphasizes that three of the former administration's achievements, in particular, deserve highlighting at least partly.

And argues: "Because they represent sharp breaks from the policies of the Obama administration, in which Biden and most of his top advisors played such central roles."

China, Arab-Israeli conflict and the Islamic Republic of Iran are at the top of Biden's foreign policy agenda. FDD counselor, while reviewing Trump's pitfalls at foreign policy leading to considerable damage to the U.S. reputation worldwide, stresses that Oval Office under Biden should follow some Trump's footprints in this regard.

China: Winning strategic competition

He describes Trump's central insight on China as: "Winning the strategic competition with China, without blowing up or impoverishing the world in the process." He describes the above as the defining challenge of U.S. foreign policy in the twenty-first century and emphasizes that Biden's team should follow the same tough strategy towards Beijing. Hannah reminds Anthony Blinken's remarks at his confirmation hearing on China. The new secretary of states admired Trump's approach to China and said: "President Trump was right in taking a tougher approach to China". FDD's expert describes his comments "a good start."

Arab-Israeli conflict: Restructure the geostrategic map of West Asia

The Oval Office under Trump brokered peace deals between Israel and several Arab states. In fact, while relations had been warming between Israel and many of Persian Gulf Arab monarchies for years, it was the Trump administration which seized the opportunity that arose in 2020 to negotiate a series of normalization agreements, known as the Abraham Accords.

Given Blinken's appreciation of this breakthrough by Biden's team, Hannah believes there can exist upcoming similar deals including with Saudi Arabia. In this regard, he writes: "Achieving them will require sustained U.S. focus and support to restructure the geostrategic map of the Middle East (West Asia) in ways enormously beneficial to U.S. interests."

Iraqi MPs outraged by U.S. decision to review troop drawdown

Iraqi parliamentarians serve fiery responses to a decision coming out of Washington to review the previous U.S. administration's plan to draw down the number of American forces in the Arab country.

Iraq's Arabic-language Baghdad Today news agency reported the reactions that were issued by MPs Hassan Shaker al-Ka'abi, head of the Badr parliamentary bloc, and Mukhtar al-Mousavi, representative of the Fateh Alliance, to which Badr is affiliated, on Wednesday.

The U.S.'s new Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said during his confirmation hearing last week that he was to reexamine the plan announced by the administration of former president Donald Trump for reducing the number of troops in Iraq and Afghanistan each to 2,500.

Aside from throwing hopes of the drawdown into question, Austin's remarks also flew in the face of a decision by the Iraqi parliament last January for all the

U.S.-led troops to leave the Iraqi soil. The legislature passed the law following the U.S.'s assassination of top Iranian and Iraqi anti-terror commanders, Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, in a drone strike in Baghdad.

The Iraqi lawmakers insisted that the parliamentary ratification had to be implemented at the end of the day.

Ka'abi said the legislative body had made its final decision in this regard, and referred to the Iraqis' millions-strong rallies in the aftermath of the assassinations to protest Washington's gall to resort to such barbaric atrocity in violation of the Arab country's sovereignty and the international law.

Mousavi said the parliamentary law was definitive and the Biden administration had to understand this.

Austin's spokesman John Kirby, however, defended Washington's revisiting of

Tehran to host intl. tourism and handicrafts expo next month

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — Tehran will be playing host to an international tourism and handicrafts exhibition next month.

The event is scheduled to be held on both virtual and physical basis at Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds from February 23 to 26, the deputy tourism minister Vali Teymouri announced on Wednesday, CHTN reported.

The event will be held according to health protocols announced by the National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control, and following the necessary coordination with the relevant agencies in this field, Teymouri said.



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

The latest available data show eight million tourists visited the Islamic Republic during the first ten months of the past Iranian calendar year (started March 21, 2019). Iran welcomed some 7.8 million foreign nationals a year earlier, achieving a 52.5 percent increase year on year.

Iran expects to reap a bonanza from its numerous tourist spots such as bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, mausoleums, churches, towers, and mansions, of which 24 being inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list. Rooted in ancient Persian civilization, the nation that has survived numerous alien invasions and natural disasters over its rich history while maintaining its appeal to local and foreign tourists.

Qadamgah of UNESCO-tagged Persepolis to be documented

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — A documentation and clean-up project will soon be commenced on Qadamgah, a post-Achaemenid rock-cut monument which is located near the UNESCO-registered Persepolis.

Qadamgah or Chasht-Khor is unique in terms of the volume of masonry and mountain cutting, Hamid Fadaei, director of the World Heritage site announced on Wednesday.

“By looking at the style of carving and also the signs of masonry tools and also comparing this place with the Achaemenid [rock-carved] tombs that were built in the heart of the mountain, the construction of the porch of Qadamgah is a reminder of the Achaemenid period,” the official explained.

Situated some 40 km south of Persepolis, Qadamgah consists of three platforms with rear walls and staircases and features cavities on the back wall and a now-dry spring and pond at the bottom.

Its function, however, has been a matter of debate, with the latest research pointing to a religious function related to the holy element Water.

The monument was first discovered by Capt. H. L. Wells (from the Royal Engineers) in 1881 who published a drawing of the plan and section of it, but did not describe it. The structure and its purpose was later discussed by Forsat-od-Dowleh (1854–1920), Louis Vanden Berghe (1954), Giorgio Gullini (1964), Mohammad Taqi Mostafavi (1964), Calmeyer (1975), Rémy Boucharlat (1979), Kleiss (1993), and Jean-Claude Bessac (2007).



The structure has been built by cutting two deep terraces vertically from the top of the rocky limestone slope, forming three superimposed platforms with vertical rear walls. The monument lacks any built structures. Underneath the lower terrace, there has been a now-dry spring feeding a pool that overlooked the monument. The terraces are 13.50 meters wide.

The lower terrace is 3 meters above the ground. The upper terrace, which is 4.25 meters higher, is linked to the lower one by two rock-cut staircases on the sides. Three rows of five shallow cavities have been cut in rectangular form into the back wall above the upper terrace. Several shallow, hemispherical holes are also cut along the edge of the upper terrace.

Persepolis, also known as Takht-e Jamshid, whose magnificent ruins rest at the foot of Kuh-e Rahmat (Mountain of Mercy), was the ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid Empire. It is situated 60 kilometers northeast of the city of Shiraz in Fars Province.

The city was burnt by Alexander the Great in 330 BC apparently as a revenge to the Persians because it seems the Persian King Xerxes had burnt the Greek City of Athens around 150 years earlier.

The city's immense terrace was begun about 518 BC by Darius the Great, the Achaemenid Empire's king. On this terrace, successive kings erected a series of architecturally stunning palatial buildings, among them the massive Apadana palace and the Throne Hall (“Hundred-Column Hall”).

This 13-ha ensemble of majestic approaches, monumental stairways, throne rooms (Apadana), reception rooms, and dependencies is classified among the world's greatest archaeological sites.

Persepolis was the seat of the government of the Achaemenid Empire, though it was designed primarily to be a showplace and spectacular center for the receptions and festivals of the kings and their empire.

Impact of handicrafts now visible on Iranian economy, tourism minister says

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian tourism minister has hailed the impact of handicrafts businesses on the economy of the country, saying its results are now evident on people's jobs and their livelihoods.

“Unlike large projects and businesses, whose economic outcomes mostly appear in the long run, the impact of small businesses is now visible [in the field of handicrafts]” Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan said on Monday.

Paying attention to the small businesses will lead to justice and the fair distribution of wealth, the official added.

However, comparing small businesses with large investments is short-sighted as the small businesses receive the least support, while balancing these two fields seems important as well, he explained.

While large businesses are mostly financed by the government, small businesses help improve people's economy therefore the latter needs special attention, the minister said.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Mounesan said that the small businesses in the field of handicrafts could be created with a small amount of investment, which could be a solution for one of the most important issues in the country, which is unemployment.

To support artisans and crafters as much as possible, commercializing of handicrafts



has been started which is expected to have a good effect on the hand-made products' marketing and sales, he added.

Earlier this week, the minister said that the sale of handicrafts is partly related to the prosperity of tourism and the presence of foreign tourists in the country.

He also said that the national budget bill for the next calendar year (starting on March 20) has proposed 70 trillion rials (about \$1.7 billion) to support tourism businesses

affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

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. Chadour Shab, a kind of homemade outer-garment for women, was, however, the main subject for the WCC assessment for the village.

Back in May, deputy tourism minister Pouya Mahmoudian said that some 295 fields of handicrafts are currently practiced across Iran with more than two million people engaging, the 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.

Swiss ambassador visits National Museum of Iran, discusses ways to expand ties

➔ **1** The ambassador expressed his satisfaction with the holding of the exhibition of the Qalaichi bricks and said: “It is a good opportunity for people to visit this great cultural achievement and the Swiss Embassy in Tehran will support the holding of this important event.”

Leitner also welcomed the proposal to expand the cooperation between Iranian and Switzerland museums and strongly emphasized: “We value the role of museums in ensuring world peace and the Swiss embassy will make special efforts to provide the necessary conditions for developing relations and cooperation between museums of the two countries.”

He said that he is willing to continue his activities to return the looted Iranian historical and cultural works to the country: “We are fully prepared, and we do our best to identify and return similar cases to the Qalaichi collection.”

Last December, a total of 49 works of ancient art that had

been looted and smuggled out of Iran some four decades ago were returned home with the aid of Swiss officials.

Situated about nine air km north-west of Bukan in West Azarbaijan province, Qalaichi (or Ghalay-chi) is an ancient settlement so far yielded a large number of glazed objects. Some of which are monochrome and the others show complex compositions. The glazed objects from the regular excavations were curated in the Urmia Museum and the National Museum of Iran.

The artifacts are connected to the Mannai civilization, which was once flourished in northwestern Iran in the 1st millennium BC. Mannai, also spelled Manna, was an ancient country surrounded by three major powers of the time namely Assyria, Urartu, and Media.

The Mannaean are first recorded in the annals of the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III (reigned 858–824 BC) and are last mentioned in Urartu by Rusa II (reigned 685–645 BC) and in Assyria by Esarhaddon (reigned



680–669 BC). With the intrusion of the Scythians and the rise of the Medes in the 7th century, the Mannaean lost their identity and were subsumed under the term Medes.

Replica of Qajar-era portraiture on clay plate recreated

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — An Iranian artist has recently recreated a replica of a Qajar-era (1789–1925) portraiture on clay plate following extensive research.

“The replica of the Qajar plate was made by [the Iranian artist] Rana Bahramifar on an earthen plate, which is 30 cm in diameter, with the method of underglaze and watercolor,” ILNA quoted Seyyed Abdolmajid Sharifzadeh, who presides over the traditional arts group of the institute, as saying on Tuesday.

“Such [Qajar-era] pictorial plates were originally made in Tehran with turning the focus on historical and royal motifs, battlefield themes, and everyday scenes,” Sharifzadeh explained.

The original plate is being kept at the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur, he added.

“[The art of] mono-painting reached its



peak in the Qajar epoch and human characteristics changed under various factors. The art of painting and painting influenced by European art, tended towards naturalization and distancing itself from abstract forms and created an atmosphere with a perspective of various plant and human motifs,” he explained.

Sharifzadeh said that one of the features of the [art] designs of this period was the emphasis on European features such as shading and iconography and specified. “An in that era the use of various new colors such as red, orange and pink became common. Furthermore, these designs showed a kind of identity interaction with society.”

After the turmoil and strife of the eighteenth century in Persia (Iran), the rise to power of the Qajar dynasty signaled a new peace and unity for the country. The Qajar shahs relied heavily on the visual arts to confirm and solidify their new position. One aspect of their public image tied them to the long history of Persia and its ancient dynasties, but another component of their identity was as modernizers and reformers.

This involved both changes to the government and the acceptance of new technologies such as the railroad and the telegraph.

In the arts, this meant support of the new techniques of lithography and photography, as well as innovative applications of existing forms in Iran such as portraiture and oil painting.

While oil painting had already been introduced to Persia and was used by both the Zand and Afsharid dynasties for state portraits, the early Qajars took this medium to new heights. The paintings formed an integral part of palace architecture, and one must imagine viewing them after traveling through a carefully mediated series of courtyards, gardens, and gateways. The Qajars also used these images to promote their international image. Official portraits were sent to England, Russia, France, and other countries with whom the Qajars hoped to foster diplomatic ties, and were copied in other media such as lacquer and enamel.

Ancient qanat in Tehran to be restored, revived

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — The centuries-old Qanat of Behjat-Abad, which is stretched from the towering Alborz Mountains southward to central Tehran, is planned to be restored and revived in the near future, an official with the Tehran Municipality announced on Wednesday.

There are several qanats in this region of the city, which were the main source of water in old times, but now they are suffering a lot of damages as they have been unused for years, Mehdi Hushiar said on Wednesday.

Nowadays as we are facing the shortage of water, reviving these qanats could be a good solution and they will be used for watering the city's green spaces after being fully restored, the official added.

The concept of “Persian Qanat” was registered on the



UNESCO World Heritage list in 2016. According to the UN cultural body, Persian qanats provide exceptional testimony to cultural traditions and civilizations in desert areas with an arid climate.

For thousands of years, qanat systems have supplied water to agricultural and permanent settlements in arid regions of Iran, tapping alluvial aquifers at the heads of valleys and conducting the water along underground tunnels by gravity, often over many kilometers.

The qanat system relies on snow-fed streams, which flow down the foothills of surrounding mountains channeling through sloping aqueducts, often over far distances to discharge into the city's underground reservoirs or ab-anbars. Such constructions are still in practice, many of which were made from the 13th century onwards.

Ancient rituals, elements added to Iran's intangible cultural heritage list

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — Ancient rituals dedicated to water thanksgiving, and Eid al-Adha (Eid Qurban), along with four other cultural elements, all practiced in the western province of Kermanshah, have been registered in the National Intangible Cultural Heritage list.

The Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts on Wednesday announced the inscriptions in a letter it submitted to the governor-general of the province, CHTN reported.

The local game of Qamchan, which is

played with several stones and is widely known as Yek-Qol Do-Qol, the skill of making two kinds of flatbread, and skill of cooking a local food, constituted four elements added to the prestigious list.

Kermanshah embraces a variety of awe-inspiring historical sites, of which Bisotun and Taq-e Bostan are both on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

Inscribed into the base of a towering cliff, Taq-e Bostan comprises extraordinary Sassanian bas-reliefs of ancient victorious kings divide opinions. Late afternoon is

the best time to visit, as the cliff turns a brilliant orange in the setting sun, which then dies poetically on the far side of the duck pond.

Bisotun is a patchwork of immense yet impressive life-size carvings depicting the king Darius I and several other figures. UNESCO has it that Bisotun bears outstanding testimony to the important interchange of human values on the development of monumental art and writing, reflecting ancient traditions in monumental bas-reliefs.



Literacy rate reaches up to 96.6%

SOCIETY TEHRAN — The rate of literacy among Iranians between 10-49 years has reached 96.6 percent, Shapour Mohammadzadeh, head of the Literacy Movement Organization, has stated.

Before the [1979] Islamic revolution, according to a census conducted in 1976, over 51 percent of the people were illiterate, he said, ISNA reported on Wednesday.

Over the past four decades, in the Iranian calendar year 1395 (March 2016-March 2017), the average literacy rate in the age group of 10 to 49 has reached 94.7 percent, he further noted.

The literacy rate in some provinces such as Tehran, Isfahan, Yazd, Semnan, and Mazandaran has reached up to 98 percent, he said, adding, in provinces meeting the national average, 50 percent of the activities are dedicated to educating the illiterate and the rest to mastering literacy.

But in some other provinces such as Sistan-Baluchestan, the rate is 81 percent, which is lower than the national average, so that 70 to 80 percent of activities are dedicated to education and 20 to 30 percent to mastering literacy.

In deprived areas, we will cover up to 70



percent of the education cost, and all our efforts are to solve the problem of illiteracy across the country, he highlighted.

Steps toward illiteracy eradication
Some 50 percent of the activities of the

Literacy Movement Organization is focused on literacy empowerment so that there is no return to illiteracy.

The literacy rate difference between men and women has declined from 26 percent

before the 1979 Islamic Revolution to 2.8 percent, Mohammadzadeh stated in August 2020.

The difference in literacy rate between urban and rural areas has decreased from 34.9 percent in 1976 to about 12 percent in 2019, which demonstrates a significant rise in the literacy rate of rural areas.

According to the censuses conducted between 1976 and 2016, the literacy rate of urban areas has increased from 65.5 percent to 99.8 percent. At the same time, the literacy rate in rural areas has increased from 30.5 percent to 78.5 percent.

The allocation of about 80 percent of literacy activities to girls and women, especially in rural areas, has led to a faster increase in the female literacy index.

According to a census conducted in the Iranian calendar year 1395 (March 2016-March 2017), there are 2.6 million illiterates in the age group of 10 to 49 in the country, of whom 360,000 are foreign nationals.

The Organization plans to educate more than 30,000 illiterate foreign nationals residing in the country, Mohammadzadeh said in December 2020.

Iran, Armenia seeking enhanced technological co-op

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Iranian Vice-President for Science and Technology, Sourena Sattari, met with Armenian Economy Minister Vahan Kerobyan in Tehran on Wednesday to discuss ways to expand technological cooperation.

Praising Iran's scientific and technological achievements, Kerobyan expressed readiness to use Iranian expertise in technology and stated that Armenia also serves Iran in this area.

"We strongly agree with the implementation of a project in the field of creating a joint technology park between Iran and Armenia as soon as possible and the formation of a team to develop bilateral cooperation," he highlighted.

He went on to say that Armenia had the largest number of scientists before the collapse of the Soviet Union, but after the collapse, most of them were scattered across the world, even now, our scientists are either very old or very young, ISNA reported on Wednesday.

"So, we seek a program to bring elites and educated people back from all over the world, which brings the country economic prosperity," he stated, adding, the program implemented in Iran can be used in Armenia.

Sattari, for his part, referred to the plan on the return of Iranian elites from the top 100 universities in the world, saying that through the national model, first the facilities are provided for their return, by creating technology parks, innovation centers, and factories.

Pointing out that the initial idea was taken from a Chinese model, he stated that the plan was able to bring back 2,000 Iranian students from the top 100 universities in the world over a three-year period, amounting to 600 people a year.

Given that this model is closer to the culture of Armenia, it is certainly more applicable compared to European and American models, he noted, expressing readiness to provide them with the Iranian model.

Iran owns largest startups in the region

Iran has 4 million students with high knowledge capacity so that we rely on them to move toward a knowledge-based economy, Sattari said.

Expressing that the formation of technology and innovation ecosystem is the most important and basic need for the realization of the knowledge-based economy, he said that apart from educated people, universities, innovation centers, innovation factories, technology parks, etc. are the main components of this ecosystem.

There are currently 6,000 knowledge-based companies operating in Iran, and last year they generated a revenue of about \$12 billion, he highlighted.

He emphasized that Iran has the largest startups in the region in the field of information and communication technology, biotechnology, nanotechnology, stem cells, etc., and about 50 technology parks have been formed throughout Iran.



Noting that 98 percent of the medicine needed in the country is produced domestically, he said that our expert manpower is able to meet domestic needs, so we can help Armenia in the development of new technologies.

Many Armenian scientists and academics study in Iranian universities, he also said.

Noting that Iran is ready to share all its experiences with Armenia, Sattari emphasized the need to expand cooperation in the field of joint technology parks and student exchange.

Humpback whales may be struggling to breed as climate crisis depletes food

Humpback whales could be struggling to breed due to rapid environmental change in the ocean caused by the climate crisis, a study suggests.

Scientists have confirmed a significant decline in the number of calves born to female humpbacks over the past 15 years in the Gulf of St Lawrence, Canada, an important summer feeding ground for migrating whales. They said the climate crisis has led to rapid sea temperature and sea level rise in this area of the north Atlantic, with knock-on effects for the ecosystem that include decreasing numbers of herring, a vital food source for humpback whales.

Researchers from the University of St Andrews sea mammal research unit took samples from the blubber of female humpbacks, to test whether they were



pregnant and, by identifying markers on individuals, they determined whether the whales returned with calves, the Guardian reported.

They related the probability of finding cow-calf pairs to favourable environmental conditions the previous year, measured

by herring stock. They found that 39% of the pregnancies were unsuccessful and the annual calving rate dropped significantly from 2004 to 2018.

In a paper published in Global Change Biology, Joanna Kershaw, a researcher of marine mammals from St Andrews and lead author of the study, said: "Together, these data suggest that the declines in reproductive success could be, at least in part, the result of females being unable to accumulate the energy reserves necessary to maintain pregnancy and/or meet the energetic demands of lactation in years of poorer prey availability rather than solely an inability to become pregnant."

It was previously thought that baleen whales, a group to which humpbacks belong, could potentially show some resistance to climate change, by changing

migratory patterns or by switching prey species if the abundance or location of prey species changed. Indeed, officials in Florida have recently reported an "encouraging" number of sightings of critically endangered North Atlantic right whale.

However, the decline in calving rates by the population in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence over a period of major environmental change may suggest a "limited resilience" to such ecosystem change, Kershaw said.

The research follows a study by the University of Queensland, Australia, which predicted declines in baleen whales in the Southern Ocean as a result of reduced prey such as krill and copepods, and increased competition between whale species due to reduced food stocks caused by climate change.

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Men with obese wives at higher risk of cardiovascular disease: study

The results of a 16-year study at Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences in Tehran showed that men whose wives were obese or overweight had a higher risk of cardiovascular disease. Farzad Hadaegh, the lead researcher of the study, said that couples share socioeconomic status, dietary patterns, and other environmental and lifestyle factors, but are genetically unrelated. The results of this study emphasize the role of environmental factors, especially lifestyle behaviors of family members in the incidence of cardiovascular disease, and this may help to identify early at-risk individuals in the community and family to implement prevention programs, he explained.

خطر ابتلا به بیماری‌های قلبی عروقی در مردانی که همسران آنها چاق هستند بیشتر است

نتیجه یک پژوهش ۱۶ ساله در دانشگاه علوم پزشکی شهید بهشتی تهران نشان داد خطر ابتلا به بیماری‌های قلبی عروقی در مردانی که همسران آنها چاق یا دارای اضافه وزن بودند، نسبت به مردانی که همسران شان وزن طبیعی داشت، بیشتر است و جالب اینکه این ارتباط مستقل از عوامل خطر مردان است.

دکتر فرزاد حدائق، مدیر مرکز تحقیقات متابولیک دانشگاه علوم پزشکی شهید بهشتی، در این مورد توضیح داد: زوجین در موقعیت‌های اقتصادی-اجتماعی، الگوهای غذایی و سایر عوامل محیطی و سبک زندگی مشترک اند، اما از نظر ژنتیکی بی ارتباط هستند. این استاد دانشگاه خاطر نشان کرد: نتایج این مطالعه به نقش عوامل محیطی به ویژه رفتارهای مربوط به سبک زندگی اعضای خانواده در بروز بیماری‌های قلبی عروقی تاکید می‌کند و این موضوع ممکن است به شناسایی زودهنگام افراد در معرض خطر در جامعه و خانواده برای اجرای برنامه‌های پیشگیری کمک موثری کند.

First innovation, technology center opened in Africa

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Iran House of Innovation and Technology (IHIT) was officially inaugurated in the Kenyan capital of Nairobi on Wednesday, as the first center in Africa.

Vice-President for Science and Technology, Sourena Sattari, officially opened the center which serves as a base for the creation of innovative ideas, the commercialization of these ideas, and the export of Iranian knowledge-based products and services to the East African market.

The IHIT, by supporting innovative ideas, holding technological and innovative events will be a platform for the development and promotion of Iranian knowledge-based companies, startups, and creative industries.

In the first step, this Innovation House will host the Techstars Start-up Weekend event as a start for innovative and technological activities in East Africa, with creative and innovative teams.

The Techstars event, as the first activity of the Iran House of Innovation of Technology, will be held from February 29 to 30 to pave the way for interaction and innovative cooperation among the two countries.

At the event, innovative idea owners, programmers, knowledge-based companies, startups, creative industries, marketers, and graphic designers come together to come up with innovative ideas to convert ideas to services.

Sattari has headed a 40-member business delegation to Kenya, IRNA reported on Wednesday.

Technology development in Iran

Despite sanctions putting pressure on the country, a unique opportunity was provided for business development and the activity of knowledge-based companies in the country.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Former head of Iranian Privatization Organization handed 15 years in jail

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Mir Ali Ashraf Abdollah Pouri-Hosseini, the former head of the Iranian Privatization Organization, has been sentenced to 15 years in jail for economic corruption.

Pouri-Hosseini served the post since September 2013, but he was arrested on August 13, 2019 on the charge of 'illegal ceding' of shares, Mehr reported.

He has disrupted the national production system through transferring shares of large state-run organizations without observing legal procedures and without paying attention to related policies, a source familiar with the situation told the YJC on Wednesday.

Over 29.98 trillion rials (about \$713.8 million) worth of the shares of state-run companies has been transferred to the private sector during the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19, 2020).

The law on privatizing state-owned companies was declared in 2006 in a bid to downsize the government and promote the private sector's role in the national economy.

The privatization plan aimed at boosting productivity, investment, and job creation, as well as promoting trade.

LET'S LEARN PERSIAN

(Part 118)

(Source: saadifoundation.ir)

Present Subjunctive

حال التزامی

ی + یتاک حال + شناسیه‌های حال، بعد از فعل‌های شاید، باید، توانستن، خواستن، لازم بودن، ممکن بودن، و مانند آن:

| | |
|---------------|-----------|
| I may go | شاید |
| You must go | باید |
| He can go | می‌تواند |
| We want to go | می‌خواهیم |
| You should go | لازم است |
| They may go | ممکن است |

کردن و شدن is often omitted in compounds with ی:

خوب است با همه آشنا شوم. دوست دارم کار کنم.

● تمرین ۱. جمله‌ها را با حال التزامی کامل کنید:

- من تو را به او معرفی می‌کنم. من می‌فروهم
- تو اینجا می‌خواهی. تو باید
- ما با ماشین گردش می‌کنیم. ما می‌توانیم
- شما با هم آشنا می‌شوید. شما می‌توانید

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■ Managing Director: Mohammad Shojaeian
■ Editor-in-Chief: Ali A.Jenabzadeh

» Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 88808214 — 88808895
info@tehrantimes.com
» Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000
» Advertisements Dept.: Telefax: (+98 21) 43051430
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Zip Code: 1599814713



GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

There are five activities that I won't leave off till I'm alive so that they would become part of my tradition. [One of them] is greeting children.

Prophet Muhammad (S)

“The Master of Petersburg” translator Mohammadreza Torktataari wins Abolhassan Najafi Award

CULTURE **TEHRAN** — Mohammadreza Torktataari won the Abolhassan Najafi Award for his translation of “The Master of Petersburg”, a 1994 novel by South African writer J. M. Coetzee, the organizers announced on Tuesday.

The Abolhassan Najafi Award is an Iranian private literary prize that is given to a Persian translator of a novel or short story collection every year.

The award was established in the name of Abolhassan Najafi (1930-2016), the linguist and translator of French literature, by his family and the Book City Institute in 2016.



Translators Ali-Asghar Haddad (L) and Mohammadreza Torktataari pose after accepting the Abolhassan Najafi Award at the Book City Institute in Tehran on January 26, 2021. (BCI)

“The Master of Petersburg” is a work of fiction but features the Russian writer Fyodor Dostoyevsky as its protagonist. It is a deep, complex work that draws on the life of Dostoyevsky, the life of the author and the history of Russia to produce profoundly disturbing results. It won the 1995 Irish Times International Fiction Prize.

The award ceremony was organized online at the Book City Institute, and the jury composed of Abtin Golkar, Zia Movahhed, Mahasti Bahreini, Abdollah Kowsari, Hossein Masumi Hamedani, Musa Asvar and Abolfazl Horri gave their special prize to prominent translator Ali-Asghar Haddad.

He received a nomination for his translation of Austrian writer Josef Winkler's 1998 novel “When the Time Comes”.

The story of the book is set in the years before the Second World War, when a man throws a statue of the crucified Christ over a waterfall. Later, in Hitler's trenches, he loses his arms to an enemy grenade.

The blasphemous, screaming in agony, presided over by Satan, who pours a cup of gall into his open mouth, is portrayed amid the flames of hell in a painting by the parish priest that is mounted on a crucifix where the two streets in the cross-shaped village meet.

DEFC to cooperate with National Museum of Iran on archaeological films

CULTURE **TEHRAN** — Plans to collaborate on archaeological documentary films were discussed in a meeting between the directors of the National Museum of Iran and the Documentary and Experimental Film Center (DEFC) on Tuesday.

In his meeting with DEFC director Mohammad Hamidi-Moqaddam, the director of the museum, Jibrail Nokandeh, expressed his thanks to the filmmakers of the centers over their special attention to archeological issues and the protection of the country's ancient sites.

However, he pointed to the few documentaries made about Iran's archaeological issues and urged the filmmakers to help raise public awareness of the cultural heritage by their productions.

He said that the National Museum of Iran, as the most specialized museum for archeological findings in the country, is ready to collaborate with the center in any documentary project on cultural heritage.

Hamidi-Moqaddam also stressed the need for seeking assistance from specialized organizations in the production of scientific documentaries, and said that such an attitude can produce favorable results.

They also agreed to sign a memorandum of understanding to expand the collaboration between the National Museum of Iran and the Documentary and Experimental Film Center.

Hamidi-Moqaddam and a number of his colleagues also paid a visit to the artifacts on view at the museum.

Tehran museum to reopen with works by artists who protested Vietnam War

→1 The museum will receive a limited number of visitors on the opening day.

The museum also plans to showcase a private collection of Iranian artist Manijeh Miremadi and her husband Jamshid Nasserri under the title of “Souvenir”.

“The collection is a real gift that shows the artistic life of this couple who collected rare and precious items,” Aqai added.

Miremadi was one of the pioneers who established the Iran Art Publications after the victory of the Islamic Revolution, while Tavoos, the first bilingual electronic periodical of Iran was established by Miremadi.

“Mr. Nasserri also agreed that the collection can be loaned for exhibits in the country's other museums of contemporary art,” Aqai stated.

“The museum will be open to the public next week on Tuesday, however, there will be more restrictions on the number



Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (TMCA).

of visitors and they need to reserve tickets in advance,” he noted.

There are plans to establish virtual visits to the museum soon, he said.

Deputy Culture Minister for Artistic Affairs Seyyed Mojtaba Hosseini, also attending the conference, said that he seriously pursued the restoration project and that the project took a long time, since there were serious basic repairs required.

Visual Arts Office director Hadi Mozaffari, also attending the conference, said that a databank will be available to the public before the reopening of the museum.

Established in 1977, the TMCA is home to works by many august artists of the West, including Claude Monet, Francis Bacon, Pablo Picasso and Andy Warhol, and notable in the world for its historical narration of art with the largest collection of Western art that exists in the East.

Fajr theater festival to honor four stage elites with lifetime achievement awards

→1 “Among all the arts, the art of theater is the only one that has played major role in helping people feel at peace,” he said.

“Due to the current situation of coronavirus restrictions and the pandemic in the world, the big loss was for the theatrical figures, and they could not produce or perform their theatrical productions,” he added.

“However, they have tried to produce some new plays to insert happiness and hope for the public. I believe they have tried as hard as the health staff and those who fought hard during the eight years of the Iran-Iraq war,” he noted.

He also noted that due to the limited number of visitors and the halls, some of the plays could not find their ways into the festival this year.

28 plays have been selected for the national competition section of the 39th edition of the festival.

The selection includes “Smoking Room” by director Saeid Zarei, “Pinocchio” by Mohammadreza Mahmudi, “Bodies” by Alireza Marufi, “Rashomon” by Ehsan Abdolmaleki, “Bloody Tuesdays” by Mohammad-Mehdi Khatami and “Naskh” by Amirhossein Ghaffari.

Also included are several provincial award-winning plays. The collection includes “Pandemic” by director Reza Purtorabzadeh, “Bob Bara” by Nima Imanzadeh, “Awakening

in Time of Blood” by Ehsan Janami, “Growing” by Shoaib Maktabdari, “Reboot” by Amirhossein Ajir Arshad, “Uninvited” by Alireza Mahmudi and “I Am Staring at the Sea so No One Takes It Away” by Hassan Sobhani.

The plays in the guest section are “Ajax” by Fateh Baadparva, “Among a Great Number of Fish” by Amir Delfani and “A Cassette” by Mohammad Akbari.

In addition, 12 plays have been picked this year for the Soldier of the Revolution, a section dedicated to street theater.

The plays have been selected by a team of stage artists: Tohid Masumi, Saeid Kheirollahi and Mohammad Larti. “Those Years” by director Bahareh Saeidinia, “His is Champion Akbar” by Mostafa Dehasht and Bahar Bordbar, “Cocoon of the Revolution” by Puya Emami, “Life with the Taste of Gunpowder” by Mojtaba Khalili and “In the Name of” by Akbar Qahremani are among the plays.

Also included are “The Ring” by Nesa Soleimani, “General” by Saeid Badini, “Soldier of the Commander” by Amin Purmand, “Commander of the Shrine” by Amir Amini, “Messenger” by Hessameddin Iranmanesh, “No One Is a Man like You” by Behnam Kaveh and “When Hell Freezes Over” by Mehrdad Kavus Hosseini.

The festival will be running from January 30 to February



A poster for the 39th Fajr International Theater Festival. 9 this year.

According to Mosafer Astaneh, the international competition of the 2021 edition of the event will not be held due to a spike in coronavirus cases around the globe.

Iranian-Italian webinar pays tribute to Iranologist Anna Vanzan

CULTURE **TEHRAN** — Italian Iranologist Anna Vanzan, who died of cancer last December, was remembered during a webinar co-organized by Italy and Iran in Rome on Tuesday.

The webinar was organized at the center of the Italian Encyclopedia of Sciences, Letters and Arts, best known as Treccani.

“Undoubtedly, Ms. Vanzan will remain in our memories by around 200 articles and books of hers, and nearly 100 papers for international meetings,” Iranian cultural attaché Mohammad-Taqi Amini said at the webinar.

He pointed to the Career Award for Translation she received from the Italian culture ministry in 2017 and the International Prize Feudo di Maيدا for her book “Muslim Women in Italy's Collective Imagination” in 2006, and said, “Luckily,



Italian Iranologist Anna Vanzan in an undated photo.

her cultural activities were acknowledged over her life.”

“The Iranian Cultural Center in Rome plans to show appreciation for those scholars who help improve mutual understanding across the world by organizing international meetings and conferences,” he added.

Simone Cristoforetti of the International Association for Mediterranean and Oriental Studies (ISMEO) also attended the webinar.

He praised Vanzan for the great endeavors she made to introduce books from Persian literature to Italian readers.

Italian writer Antonello Sacchetti, the author of “Misteri Persiani” and several other Italian literati, including Maria Vittoria Paladinoa and Tiziano Bucci, also attended the meeting.

Born in Venice in 1955, Vanzan held a degree in Oriental languages and cultures from the University of Ca' Foscari of Venice and a Ph.D. in Near Eastern studies from New York University.

Although she was interested in West Asia in general, her research was focused especially on Iran, Central Asia and the subcontinent – Pakistan, Afghanistan and

Muslim India.

She worked in gender studies with a particular interest for contemporary fictional literature produced by Iranian women.

She was the author of many publications in Italian and English, including “La Storia Velata: le Donne dell'Islam Nell'Immaginario Italiano”, “Figlie di Shahrzad”.

Her book “Le Donne di Allah, Viaggio Nei Femminismi Islamici” offers a collection of conversations and discussions with Muslim women who are engaged in finding their way to feminism.

She was a co-founder of the Italian journal Afriche&Orienti. She regularly lectured in various Italian institutions on issues of multiculturalism.

Vanzan was teaching culture and mediation at Ca' Foscari University in Venice before her death.

Iran, Thailand culture ministers discuss expansion of relations

CULTURE **TEHRAN** — Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Seyyed Abbas Salehi, and the Minister of Culture of Thailand, Itthiphol Kunplome, have discussed the expansion of bilateral cultural relations.

The two ministers made the remarks in a virtual meeting, where Iran's minister Salehi proposed that Thailand celebrate Noruz, the Persian New Year, as a symbolic celebration to begin new relations between the two nations.

“The historical background of the two countries and their beautiful natural environment and scenery are attractive to people of both countries, and it seems that in both countries spring is a sign to show how nature in the two countries is attractive,” Salehi said.

“Noruz, the ancient celebration of the Iranian New Year has been registered on UNESCO's List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Noruz begins with the arrival of spring and Iranians celebrate for several days. There are many ceremonies in Noruz that can be of interest to other nations. This celebration can be a good beginning for new relations between the two countries,” he said.



This combination photo shows Thai Culture Minister Itthiphol Kunplome (L) and his Iranian counterpart Seyyed Abbas Salehi.

He added that a new memorandum of understandings (MOU), which can be written based on the previous MOU, can be signed in Iran with the Culture Minister of Thailand later.

“The coronavirus restrictions have changed cultural and social life in the world. It has caused damage to different arenas including culture, art, tourism and economy. However, we have also gained new experience in the art and cultural fields,” he added.

The minister also talked about the virtual edition of the Tehran Book Fair, which is currently underway.

Minister of Culture of Thailand Itthiphol Kunplome also talked about the cultural commonalities between the two countries and welcomed the idea of celebrating Noruz in his country.

He also said that the virtual book fair shows the great interest of the Iranian nation in books, and asked Iran to help his country in organizing a virtual book fair.

He also asked Iran to transfer their knowledge and experience on how to preserve historical monuments.

Iranian bookstores offer “American Dirt” by Jeanine Cummins

A R T **TEHRAN** — A Persian translation of Jeanine Cummins's novel “American Dirt” has recently been published by Vara Publications in Tehran.

The book has been translated into Persian by Somayyeh Sadeqi.

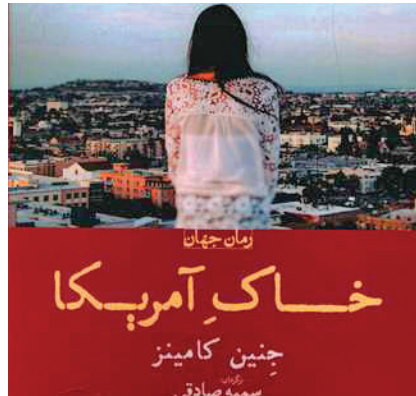
The book centers on Lydia Quixano Pérez who lives in the Mexican city of Acapulco where she runs a bookstore. She has a son, Luca, the love of her life, and a wonderful husband who is a journalist. And while there are cracks beginning to show in Acapulco because of the drug cartels, her life is, by and large, fairly comfortable.

Even though she knows they'll never sell, Lydia stocks some of her all-time favorite books in her store. And then one day a man enters the shop to browse and comes up to the register with a few books he would like to buy, two of them her favorites. Javier is erudite. He is charming. And, unbeknownst to Lydia, he is the jefe of the newest drug cartel that has gruesomely taken over the city. When Lydia's husband's tell-all profile of Javier is published, none of their lives will ever be the same.

Forced to flee, Lydia and eight-year-old Luca soon find themselves miles and worlds away from their comfortable middle-

class existence. Instantly transformed into migrants, Lydia and Luca ride la bestia—trains that make their way north toward the United States, which is the only place Javier's reach doesn't extend. As they join the countless people trying to reach el Norte, Lydia soon sees that everyone is running from something. But what exactly are they running to?

Cummins is the author of three other books, including the bestselling memoir “A Rip in Heaven”, and the novels “The Outside Boy” and “The Crooked Branch”. She lives in New York with her husband and two children.



Front cover of the Persian translation of Jeanine Cummins's “American Dirt”.