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Iran's agricultural export up 8% in 10 months on year

TEHRAN- The value of Iran's agricultural products export has risen 8.4 percent during the first ten months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2020 – January 19, 2021), compared to the same period of time in the past year, according to an official with the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA).

Mehrdad Jamal Orounaqi, the IRICA deputy head for technical and customs affairs, put the value of exported products

at \$4.9 billion in the ten-month period of the present year.

The official said the weight of agricultural products exported in the mentioned period has risen 25.9 percent to stand at 7.085 million tons.

He said that Iran had exported 5.6 million tons of agricultural products worth \$4.5 billion during the first ten months of the previous year.

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Iran has capacity to export homegrown COVID-19 vaccine

TEHRAN – There is a diversity of coronavirus vaccine being produced in Iran, so that the country has the capacity to export part of the products, Mohammad Reza Shanehsaz, head of the Food and Drug Administration, said on Wednesday.

The country's potentiality in the pharmaceutical sector is so great that every medicine which was introduced to be effective on the coronavirus was produced

inside the country within less than three months, he added, IRNA reported.

"Test kits and ventilators were also produced and the last measure was the production of vaccines," he noted.

Currently, 11 knowledge-based companies are working on the five vaccine production methods which are being practiced around the world, he explained.

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Iraqi FM heads to Iran amid regional de-escalation drive

TEHRAN – The chief Iraqi diplomat visited Tehran on Wednesday to discuss a range of issues in what appeared to be the latest in a series of regional diplomatic efforts to cool tensions in the Persian Gulf region.

Upon his arrival in Tehran, Fuad Hussein met with his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif and Iran's top security official Ali Shamkhani. The foreign ministries of Iran and Iraq were tight-lipped about the details of the discussion.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry issued a statement saying that during the Wednesday meeting Zarif and Hussein discussed a range of issues including the latest development in bilateral relations and regional and international issues. It stopped short of providing any details about these issues.

On the other hand, the Iraqi Foreign Ministry also avoided providing details.

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Foolad GM Azari clarifies recent controversies

BY FARROKH HESABI

Saeid Azari, General Manager of Iranian football club Foolad, says that the club had done nothing out of standard measurements in the game against Peykan, however, he apologized for the inconvenience caused before the match.

Last Friday, before the Iran Professional League (IPL) match in southern city Ahwaz, Foolad extended the width of their field to allegedly prevent somersault throw of one of the Paykan player.

Foolad club had been also accused of turning the touchline slippery to prevent Nader Mohammadi to throw the long ball. Although the Match Commissioner didn't let the match start until the stadium workers redrew the lines. After the match, Azari apologized for the incident.

"We did nothing against the football laws or international football standards," Saeid Azari said in an exclusive interview with Tehran Times.

"According to IFAB Laws of the Game, the length of the field of play for international matches are minimum 64 meters and maximum 75 meters. We extended the width of Foolad Arena to 72 meters, so it is still less than the maximum standard width. So it was, and it is, our legal right to extend our field but it should not have happened in our domestic match, but in our AFC Champions' League playoff match against UAE's Al-Ain, we will use this legal right. Of course, it will be with the permission of the Asian Football Confederation," Azari added.

"However, regarding what happened in the touchline that made it slippery I apologized and I believe that it was due to lack of coordination in our club," Foolad General Manager stated.

Azari also talked about the Iranian football federation's presidential elections which set to be held on Feb. 28.

"I personally decided to step aside from the football federation election but I follow the news of the election. As I was informed, the federation has invalidated the candidacy of some of the nominees for different positions, however, I don't know why the federation has not announced the name of disqualified people. I was really shocked that the legend Mehdi Mahdavi was also disqualified and only his name was announced among the removed ones!

"Despite all this, based on the information I have received and the conversations I have had with reliable sources, I am optimistic that the football federation's General Assembly will make a wise choice on Feb. 28. I hope that really good things happen for Iranian football," Azari concluded.

Iran eyes UNESCO status for Siraf, other ancient ports: tourism minister

TEHRAN – Iran seeks to register ancient Siraf port and several other southern seaports on the UNESCO World Heritage list in near future, Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan has said.

"We are developing a dossier [to be submitted to UNESCO] for the global registration of Siraf and several other important ports, [which are dotted across Bushehr province] in the southern coastal strip of the country," Mounesan said on Tuesday.

"The noble people of Bushehr should be waiting for the registration news," Mounesan noted.

He made the remarks during his visit to Bushehr, which is one of the most significant historical regions along the Persian Gulf, embracing significant monuments from the Elamite, Achaemenid, Parthian, and Sassanid eras.

The historical port of Siraf was the most important Iranian port from the Sassanid period to the 4th century AH. It bears plentiful evidence

of Persian mastership and genius in seafaring, international relations, and interaction with other near and far cultures and civilizations.

Between 1966 and 1973, the British Institute of Persian Studies conducted seven seasons of excavation and survey at Siraf, which was a major city on the Iranian shore of the Persian Gulf that played a leading role in the network of maritime trade that supplied Western Asia with the products of India, the Far East, and Eastern Africa between 800 CE and 1050.

Siraf had a population of about 300,000 during the early Islamic era and this fact shows that it was a large city. However, today, just about 7,000 people live in Siraf in a small area.

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

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Saudi forces attack protest against bin Salman's economic policies

Reports coming out of Saudi Arabia say Riyadh's forces have attacked a group of protesters who were out on the streets of the city of Buraidah in Qassim Region to denounce the regime's economic policies.

Clashes erupted on Monday night as Saudi troops attempted to disperse the demonstrators, who were angry at Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's economic policies that they say have worsened unemployment and poverty across the kingdom.

"The city of Buraidah in the al-Qassim region witnessed demonstrations where hundreds of young people gathered, and [the demonstrations] led to clashes with Saudi security forces," media personality Hosein Mortada tweeted on Monday night.

Footage of the protests circulated online, showing hundreds of young people voicing

their anger over taxes, coronavirus-related quarantines, growing poverty and unemployment in Saudi Arabia.

The protesters chanted slogans denouncing any amount of tax charged during the spread of the coronavirus.

The local police confirmed that a number of protesters were arrested and their cases were handed to the region's attorney general.

Sources reported that the Qassim Region police and the National Guard were on alert, fearing an escalation of unrest in the area.

Badr Al-Suhaibani, the spokesman of Qassim Region police, said, "A number of citizens were arrested for refraining from responding to security forces while they were performing their duties."

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American analyst says no difference between Trump and Biden when it comes to Iran, Israel

BY REZA MOSHFEGH

TEHRAN – A former U.S. Senate candidate casts doubt on a presumption that the new American administration under Joe Biden's presidency would have better performance in regard to Iran and Israel.

"Any presumption that the Biden-Harris team will be an improvement on the Trump-Pence team on issues of Israel, Iran, war, and peace, is precisely that--an illusion," Mark Dankof tells the Tehran Times.

While some political analysts in America expect Biden to adopt a rather wise foreign policy in comparison to Trump, critics rule out a fundamental shift in Washington's foreign policy approach.

Dankof says Philip Giraldi, an American commentator and security consultant, predicts in an essay for the Unz Review, that "Tony Blinken replaces Mike Pompeo and Israel's friends will enjoy four more years in power."

The American analyst recommends Iran "to refuse to negotiate any 'return' to the JCPOA

treaty where Biden and Blinken will attach all sorts of new, untenable conditions."

The following is the text of the interview: **Do you agree with former American president Donald Trump who branded the JCPOA as a catastrophe and claimed it undermined peace in West Asia?**

I absolutely disagree with Trump and with anyone else who suggests that the JCPOA/P5+1 treaty with Iran was a "catastrophe."

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Including missiles in nuclear deal will stymie chances of fruitful negotiation: professor

BY MOHAMMAD MAZHARI

TEHRAN - Nader Entesar, professor emeritus of political science from the University of South Alabama, is of the opinion that any efforts to include Iran's defensive missile capabilities in the nuclear deal will hinder any "chances of a fruitful negotiation".

"Attempts to include Iran's missile program in any future nuclear deal and in the absence of a comprehensive regional security structure and the current threat system to Iran's national security will stymie chances of a fruitful negotiation," Entesar tells the Tehran Times.

Last week, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the Biden administration will return to its commitments to the 2015 nuclear deal only after Tehran first returns to full compliance.

Also, so far Germany and France, two members of European trio (E3), who are party to the nuclear deal, have proposed including Iran's missile program to the nuclear deal.

But Entesar argues that "the E3 is simply throwing darts in the dark or simply hoping that Iran will ultimately succumb to their threats."

The other member of the E3 is Britain.

"Some Europeans have an inflated opinion of themselves when it comes to their foreign policy weight," Entesar adds.

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Iranian women Paralympians' busts unveiled

TEHRAN – Busts of four Iranian women Paralympic medal winners were unveiled on Wednesday at the Sports Federation for the Disabled headquarters in Tehran.

On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of establishment of Iran's National Paralympic Committee (NPC), the busts of Nayereh Akef, Azam Khodayari, Zahra Nemati, and Sareh Javanmardi were unveiled.

Also, the memory of Para archer Razieh Shirmohammadi, who passed away in June 2019 due to heart attack at the age of 41, was cherished.

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Islamic codes not in contrast with women's progress

By Azin Sahabi

TEHRAN — During a video conference on Wednesday with a group of eulogists on the birth anniversary of Hazrat Fatima Zahra (SA), Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei elaborated on the unique and incomparable character of Hazrat Fatima Zahra (SA) and underlined her outstanding role as the precious daughter of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Imam Ali's wife and fellow as well as mother of unprecedented figures such as the grand progeny of Prophet Muhammad (SA).



Leader says Iranian women's achievements in social, cultural, scientific, political, and economic fields have been unprecedentedly outstanding.

The Leader pointed to the Islamic viewpoints on women and family, underlining that family constitutes the most robust foundation for spiritual and intellectual upbringing of human-beings.

In this regard, he described Hazrat Fatima Zahra (SA), Imam Ali (SA) and their offspring as the most glorious epitome of an Islamic family that adherence to their superiority in sympathy, empathy and all noble human features as role models can lead an Islamic society to glory.

The Leader shed light on the superior, multidimensional characteristics of Hazrat Zahra (SA) as a woman in Islamic society whose absolute superiority in motherhood and marriage as well as piety and effective social presence obviously indicate that in Islamic outlook, there exists no difference between men and women in terms of intellectual and spiritual divine features.

Against this backdrop, Ayatollah Khamenei underlined the fundamental differences between Western outlook towards women and that of Islam and the Islamic Republic in this regard. The former's materialistic and commercial outlook is quite in contrast to the latter's divine principles which results in respect and reverence towards women, Ayatollah Khamenei noted.

Given Western huge propaganda to portray Islam and hijab not only as concepts quite in contrast with women's progress but also as heavy stumbling blocks, the Leader's remarks strongly falsify all the fictitious claims by highlighting facts on the ground.

As the Leader mentioned, under the Islamic Republic, Iranian women's achievements in social, cultural, artistic, scientific, political, and economic fields have been unprecedentedly outstanding. In other words, motherhood and adherence to Islamic codes are not in contrast with women's progress. Hazrat Fatima Zahra (SA)'s personal and social life clearly indicates this fact. The Leader of Islamic Revolution declared: "We are proud of the view of Islam and we protest the Western view on women and lifestyle."

Iran hails UN court's rebuff of U.S. objections in sanctions case

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif hails an interim ruling by the United Nations' top court rebuffing Washington's claim that the tribunal lacks jurisdiction to judge a lawsuit that Tehran has launched against illegal U.S. sanctions.

"Another legal victory for Iran," Zarif tweeted Wednesday, adding that the International Court of Justice (ICJ) "dismissed all the U.S. preliminary objections in the case brought by Iran over unlawful U.S. sanctions."



The court issued the ruling earlier in the day, unanimously refuting several of the jurisdiction-related objections that had been brought up by the U.S. Concerning the rest of the objections, Washington managed to secure only one favorable vote against 15 negative ones.

Tehran lodged a complaint against the U.S. with the ICJ three years ago when former president Donald Trump withdrew the U.S. from the landmark 2015 nuclear deal and restored the sanctions, saying Washington breached the Treaty of Amity and Economic Relations signed by the two countries in 1955.

Iran brought the lawsuit before the ICJ in 2018, strongly protesting the strictly illegal nature of the U.S.'s earlier withdrawal from a 2015 nuclear deal between the Islamic Republic and world powers.

Former U.S. president Donald Trump had taken Washington out of the deal despite its multi-lateral nature and the fact that the accord has been endorsed as a UN Security Council resolution.

In October that year, the Islamic Republic landed its first victory against the U.S. in the case after the ICJ ruled that Washington had to suspend its sanctions on vital commodities and plane parts until the court reached its final decision.

Zarif considered Wednesday's decision by the court to be "another legal victory for Iran following 3 Oct. '18 Order" by the ICJ.

Springing into action against Iran's legal campaign, the U.S. argued that the ICJ was unfit to rule in the matter since Washington had taken itself out of the court's compulsory jurisdiction in 1986.

The ICJ, however, considers itself rightful to act against any given state's preferences given the nature of the matter at hand.

(Source: Press TV)

Rouhani: No change to JCPOA content and no new member

The longer the U.S. delays its decision to observe UN Resolution 2231 the "more mistakes" it will be making, President Rouhani warns

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Hassan Rouhani, Iran's president, says there will be no changes to the content of the JCPOA and that no other country will be added to it.

Rouhani was in fact responding to Saudi Arabia which has said if the new Biden administration plans to rejoin the JCPOA its country should also be included. French President Emmanuel Macron has also called for inclusion of Saudi Arabia in the agreement.

The JCPOA was struck between Iran and 5+1 nations (the five permanent members of the UN Security Council - Britain, France, the U.S., Russia and China - plus Germany in May 2015. The deal committed Iran to restrict its nuclear program in return for termination of economic and financial sanctions.

However, the U.S. under Donald Trump quit the deal in May 2018 and slapped sweeping sanctions against Iran.

"If the group is 4+1, it remains the same, if the group is 5+1, it remains the same," Rouhani noted during a meeting with his cabinet members.

He emphasized "the undue words should not be said. We did a job resulted from hard work. It took more than ten years to gain the achievements. In the beginning of the eleventh government, we made efforts during



the first two years" to reach the multilateral agreement.

Iran has been insisting that it will not renegotiate the terms of the nuclear deal.

"The deal is not a thing that is easily gained. Nobody can tear the deal. If they want (the deal), they can fulfill their commitments. If they don't, they can do their own business. We also do our own business," Rouhani pointed out.

Pointing to the current approach taken by Biden's administration, he noted, "We feel the world public opinion, politicians around the world and even American politicians think that the JCPOA is beneficial for the security, peace and engagement with other countries."

He highlighted the violation of the nuclear deal by the U.S. and said, "Americans have to know they are the violator of United

Nations Security Council Resolution 2231. So they should not talk about the JCPOA. It is not about Iran; there is a consensus among the United Nations Security Council members about the resolution. If you (the U.S.) delay, you make more mistakes. You violated the Resolution 2231, you have to make a commitment to the resolution and international law."

UN Security Council Resolution 2231 confirmed the JCPOA immediately after it was concluded.

Rouhani repeated that Iran is ready to meet all its commitment under the JCPOA, Iran will reverse its nuclear decisions.

"If the U.S. returns to the Resolution 2231, it is very obvious we will fulfill our commitments."

In May 2019, exactly one year after Trump pulled the U.S. out of the deal and slapped harsh and sweeping sanctions on Iran under his "maximum pressure" campaign started to gradually reduce its commitment to the JCPOA as a remedial measure.

President Joe Biden has promised to move quickly to rejoin the nuclear deal with Iran so long as Iran comes back into compliance. But Iran demands immediate lifting of the punishing sanctions imposed by the Trump administration to reverse its nuclear steps.

General Hatami says Iran intends to upgrade its fighters

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Brigadier General Amir Hatami, Iran's defense minister, says Iran is seeking to upgrade its fighter jets.

Speaking on the sidelines of the world's first 'hybrid' air show, Aero India 2021, he noted, "Due to the efforts of aviation industry experts, Iran has gained domestically built products such as Kosar light fighter and Yassin training fighter, all kinds of helicopters and UAVs, and we are looking to upgrade the technology in the sector," according to the Mehr news agency.

During his visit to India, General Hatami also praised the aviation industry of India and said, "Aero India illustrates that India has embarked on a serious and technological move in the field of the aviation industry and is using its capabilities and those of its private sector to make significant progress."

Criticizing the harsh economic sanctions on Iran, he emphasized, "The aviation industry of Islamic Republic of Iran

has a bright future because of the efforts and perseverance of the committed Iranian experts and we hope to move towards advanced technologies as quickly as possible."

The world's first 'hybrid' air show – Aero India – is being held in Bengaluru from 3 to 5 February. Top aviation firms have participated in the event, while India is showcasing its indigenous defense capability.

In addition to aviation giants such as Boeing, Lockheed Martin, Dassault and Airbus, top defense firms including Thales, BAE Systems and missile manufacturer MBDA have taken part in the air show.

In recent years, India has tried to find African and the Indian Ocean Region customers for the export of fighter jets, helicopters, and missiles. Among them, Iran is willing to purchase high tech arms and military equipment from non-Western countries, including India, regardless of the U.S. and EU sanctions on Iran.



Iran is against foreign intervention in Iraq: Rouhani

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Hassan Rouhani, Iran's president, says his country is opposed to foreign intervention in domestic affairs of Iraq.

In a meeting with Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein on Wednesdays afternoon, Rouhani reaffirmed Iran's commitment to Iraq's stability, security, independence and sovereignty and noted, "The cooperation between both countries during the ISIS assault to save the region from terrorists is an indication of good mutual relations between Iran and Iraq."

Elsewhere in his talks with the Iraqi official, Rouhani said, "The assassination of General

Soleimani and Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis is a shameful indication of foreign intervention in the form of state-terrorist operation.

The assassination targeted "the hero who conquered the ISIS."

General Soleimani was a legendary commander in the fight against terrorists, including ISIS, known as Daesh in its Arabic acronym.

General Soleimani and al-Muhandis were assassinated in a U.S. drone strike near Baghdad's international airport on January 3, 2020.

Rouhani also said, "Iran supports Iraq to engage in regional interactions and believes

Iraq is a key actor in political and security arrangements of the region."

Rouhani also expressed his hope to see "the new U.S. administration understands its presence in the region is detrimental to security, and Iran hopes the U.S. reconsider its policies in the region."

For his part, Foreign Minister Hussein praised his meetings with Iranian officials, saying such meetings "deepen the mutual relations between the two countries" and create an environment to "increase cooperation" between the two neighbors.

He added, "The common cooperation committee is seeking to implement the

agreements signed between Iran's and Iraq's presidents."

Hussein also praised Iran for helping Iraq in its war against ISIS, saying, "The Iraqi nation appreciates Iran's cooperation with Iraq to fight terrorists, especially ISIS, and Iraq will never forget it."

The foreign minister also said, "Iraq is adamantly seeking to expel foreign forces from the country."

The top Iraqi diplomat and his delegation also met with Ali Shamkhani, the secretary of Iran's Supreme Council of National Security, and Mohammad Javad Zarif, Iran's foreign minister.

Baghdad trying to stay away from Iran-U.S. competition: analyst

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Reza Mirabian, an international relations expert, says Baghdad intends to stay away from the competition between Iran and the United States.

In an interview with ILNA news agency on Wednesday, Mirabian said, "Iran and Iraq need to negotiate continuously."

Fuad Hossein, Iraq's foreign minister, visited Tehran on Wednesday for talks with top Iranian officials including President Hassan Rouhani. The visit took place amid media reports that Iraq is seeking to mediate between Iran and the U.S.

Since the assassination of General Qassem Soleimani by

American Special Forces in January 3, 2020 near Baghdad's international airport, the tensions between Tehran and Washington have been escalating.

Pointing to the good relations between Iran and Iraq in recent years, Mirabian noted, "Iraqis have not yet officially declared what is the intention of the Iraqi foreign minister's travel to Iran."

Highlighting the significance of relations between Tehran and Baghdad, he added, "These travels are done to increase coordination between the two countries."

"Tehran and Baghdad negotiate continuously over various issues through their embassies to ensure the interests of both

countries. Therefore, these travels don't indicate there is a tension between the two nations," he remarked.

Asked about the impact of a change in the U.S. administration on relations between Iraq and Iran, the analyst said, "Since Biden took power, Iraq hopes to play as a mediator between Iran and the U.S. to ease tensions between both countries."

He noted, "Last day, one of the American media outlets reported, according to the French intelligence service, that the U.S. is considering to withdraw majority of its forces from Baghdad and transfer them to Irbil. It shows Iraq is trying to ease the past tensions and provide an opportunity to stabilize the relation between Iran and the U.S. in Iraq."

Aircraft carrier Nimitz leaves Persian Gulf for home

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — The aircraft carrier Nimitz is finally going home.

The Pentagon last month ordered the warship to remain in West Asia fearing Iran's vengeance on the anniversary of the assassination of Lt. Gen. Qassem Soleimani, the anti-terror commander, by the United States in January 2020 in Baghdad.

According to The New York Times, the ship was ordered to return home as a signal to de-escalate rising tensions with Tehran.

In remarks on January 2, Major General Yahya Rahim Safavi, a senior military advisor to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, said Iran was able to easily sink a U.S. aircraft carrier in a few hours.

At the time, General Rahim Safavi said the U.S. military forces in the region were currently on the defensive and they know how vulnerable they are.

Speaking in an interview with national TV, General Safavi said, "My assessment is that they (U.S.) are getting passive due to their weakness. They are concerned

that we would carry out operations on the martyrdom anniversary of martyrs Soleimani and Abu Mahdi [al-Muhandis] as well as the martyrdom of Mohsen Fakhrizadeh. My assessment is that they are on the defensive. Of course, we must not underestimate the enemy. Our forces are strong and fully prepared to defend our interests. The Americans know that their forces in the region are very vulnerable. Iran is able to turn U.S. aircraft carriers into submarines in a few hours."

With those immediate tensions seeming to ease a bit, and President Biden looking to renew discussions with Iran on the 2015 nuclear accord that Donald Trump withdrew from, three Defense Department officials said on Monday that the Nimitz and its 5,000-member crew were ordered on Sunday to return to the ship's home port of Bremerton, Wash., after a longer-than-usual 10-month deployment, The Times said.

The Pentagon asserted last month — without presenting any evidence — that it had detected new intelligence that Iran was

targeting Trump in the weeks before the inauguration. So the Nimitz and its wing of strike aircraft were ordered to stay near the Persian Gulf, just in case, the newspaper added.

Biden aides assessed soon after taking office that it was time to send the Nimitz home.

Indeed, Robert Malley, a veteran West Asia expert and former Obama administration official, was selected last week to be Biden's special envoy for Iran. He will be responsible for trying to persuade Tehran to rein in its nuclear program — and stop enriching uranium beyond limits imposed by a 2015 nuclear accord with world powers — and agree to new negotiations before the United States lifts its punishing economic sanctions against Iran.

Iran and the new U.S. administration are now caught in a quarrel over who should first return to the nuclear deal - JCPOA. Iran has said that it has never left the nuclear deal so that it can be expected

to rejoin it. However, some analyst say a middle ground can be found for the impasse.

Iran has reduced its nuclear commitments in accordance with paragraph 36 of the JCPOA which allows one side to take remedial measures in response to the violation of the agreement by another side.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has suggested that European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell as coordinator of the JCPOA Joint Commission "can choreograph the moves in consultation with Iran and the U.S."

"US left the JCPOA & violated it. Iran took remedial measures. US should return to compliance. Iran will then immediately reverse remedial measures," Zarif tweeted on Tuesday after his interview with the CNN on Monday afternoon.

Zarif added, "Joint Commission Coordinator—can choreograph the moves in consultation with Iran & US."

Iran's nuclear steps beyond the JCPOA have been monitored by the United Nations' International Atomic Energy Agency.

SPORTS

Iranian women Paralympians' busts unveiled

1→ Mahmoud Khosravi vafa, head of Iran's National Paralympic Committee (NPC), President of Iran's National Olympic Committee (NOC) Reza Salehi Amiri and head of Iran Sports Federation for the Disabled Mohammad Shervin Asbaghian attended the ceremony.

Akef is the first Iranian woman to win a medal in Paralympic. She claimed a bronze medal at the 2000 Summer Paralympics in Sydney, Australia in shooting.

Khodayari represented Iran in the 2004 Summer Paralympics in Athens, Greece and won a bronze medal in the women's F56/58 discus throw event.

Nemati has won two gold medals at the 2012 and 2016 Paralympic Games in archery. She became the first Iranian woman to win a gold at either the Olympic or Paralympic Games.

Javanmardi also won two gold medals in Rio Paralympic Games. She seized two gold medals at the 10 m air pistol SH1 and Mixed 50 m pistol SH1. Javanmardi is the first ever female gold medalist from Iran to win in the shooting category of the Paralympics Games.

Former Iran defender Ali Ansarian dies of coronavirus

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Former Iran and Persepolis football team defender Ali Ansarian died of COVID-19 on Wednesday.

Ansarian passed away at the age of 43 at the Farhikhtegan Hospital in Tehran, capital of Iran.



He started his footballing career in Fajr Sepasi in 1996 and joined Persepolis two years later.

Ansarian also represented Iran national football team from 1998 to 2007.

Last week, Mehrdad Minavand, who represented Iran in the 1998 FIFA World Cup, died of COVID-19 in Tehran.

Minavand was also a member of Persepolis football club.

Tehran Times extends deepest sympathy to Ansarian's family, loved ones, and friends over his demise.

Spokeswoman for Iran's Ministry of Health and Medical Education Sima Sadat Lari said on Wednesday that another 79 people have lost their lives due to the deadly virus during the past 24 hours in Iran.

According to her report, the number of the total death toll reached 58,189.

Lari said that 6,870 new cases infected with the COVID-19 were found over the past 24 hours, some 701 of whom have been hospitalized.

She added that 1,438,286 Iranians have totally been confirmed infected, some 1,229,391 of whom have either recovered or been discharged from hospitals.

Since its outbreak, the COVID-19 pandemic has infected about 104 million people across the world, from whom over 2,200,000 people have lost their lives.

Arsalan Kazemi invited to Iran basketball team

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran power forward Arsalan Kazemi was invited to the National Basketball Team after two years.

Iran coach Mehran Shahintab announced his 16-man squad for the training camp of the third and final window of the FIBA Asia Cup 2021 Qualifiers.

The upcoming window is scheduled for February 18 to 22 in Doha, Qatar.

Iran leads Group E comprising Qatar, Syria, and Saudi Arabia.

Iran squad: Mohammad Torabi, Mohammad Jamshidi, Mohammad Hassanzadeh, Sajad Mashayekhi, Meysam Mirzaei, Saeid Davarpanah, Sina Vahedi, Rasoul Mozaffari, Saleh Foroutan, Emad Salmani, Keyvan Ryaee, Mohammad Yousefvand, Mike Rostampour, Navid Rezaeifar, Arsalan Kazemi, Samad Nikkhah Bahrami

Iran basketball coach Shahintab happy with Iran draw in Olympics

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran national basketball team head coach Mehran Shahintab is satisfied after his team were drawn against the world's powerhouses France and the U.S. in the Olympic Games.

The Tokyo 2020 Olympic Basketball Tournaments draw for both the Men and the Women finalists was held behind closed doors Tuesday at FIBA headquarters, the Patrick Baumann House of Basketball.

The eight national teams plus four slots reserved for the national teams clinching a spot in the Men's Tournament through the FIBA Olympic Qualifying Tournaments were split into the three preliminary groups of four teams each.

The four remaining tickets will be punched in through the four Olympic Qualifying groups planned to be held from June 29 to July 4.

"I am happy to be drawn with the U.S. and France. They are among the world's basketball powers and playing them will be an exciting challenge," Shahintab said.

Canada, China, Czech Republic, Greece, Turkey and Uruguay will play for another place in Group A in the Olympic Qualifying Tournament in Victoria, Canada.

"I think Turkey, Canada and Greece have more chance to book their place in the Olympics. We will prepare well for facing the powerful teams in the Olympics," he added.

Iraqi FM heads to Iran amid regional de-escalation drive

1→ According to the Iranian Foreign Ministry's statement, Zarif and Hussein discussed bilateral issues as well as Iraq's efforts regarding the assassination of the top Iranian general, Qassem Soleimani, and his Iraqi comrade Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis.

Zarif described the U.S. move to assassinate General Soleimani and al-Muhandis as a "terrorist act," saying that "putting an end to the presence of the U.S. forces in the region is the best reaction to this terrorist act."

Shamkhani echoed the same remarks, describing the U.S. military presence in Iraq as a source of instability.

"The main cause of instability and the escalation of crises in the region is the sinister presence of foreign forces, especially American forces," Shamkhani said.

But apart from bilateral issues, the Iraqi foreign minister's visit to Iran could well be an attempt by Iraq to de-escalate tensions between Iran and some Arab countries in the region such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

The visit took place two days after Nayef al-Hajraf, the secretary-general of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council, traveled to Iraq to meet with Iraqi leaders including Hussein, Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi and President Barham Salih.

Following the meeting between al-Hajraf and Hussein, the Iraqi Foreign Ministry said in a tweet that the two officials held talks on "how to cooperate and coordinate in building



good relations with regional countries," without referring to certain countries.

It remains to be seen whether the chief Iraqi diplomat tried to convey a message from Persian Gulf's Arab states to Iran. Iraq has made efforts to mediate between Iran and Saudi Arabia over the past years. But these efforts failed to bring Tehran and Riyadh to the negotiating table.

With Joe Biden taking office in the U.S., however, regional mediators have apparently seen a new opportunity to bring Saudi Arabia and Iran closer together.

Kuwait is a case in point. It has recently expressed renewed interest in resuming its mediation efforts after it, together with the

U.S., succeeded in brokering a reconciliation deal between Qatar and the so-called Arab quartet, which includes Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt and the UAE, putting an end to a three-and-half-year crisis in the Persian Gulf region.

Now that the crisis has come to an end, Kuwait seems to be more confident to embark on a much important dispute between Tehran and Riyadh.

"Kuwait is ready to pursue its mediation between Saudi Arabia and Iran when the appropriate conditions are created," diplomatic sources familiar with the matter at Kuwait's Foreign Ministry told Anadolu Agency on Tuesday.

This readiness was expressed nearly a week

after Deputy Foreign Minister of Iran Seyed Abbas Araghchi visited Kuwait to tell the Arab country that Iran will not negotiate with the West over regional issues.

"I met today with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Kuwait and it was a very useful meeting during which I confirmed that the Islamic Republic of Iran will not negotiate with the member states of the nuclear agreement on any issue other than the method of implementation. Regarding the security of the Persian Gulf region, we are ready for dialogue exclusively with the countries of the region without any foreign intervention," Araghchi said in a tweet following a meeting with the top Kuwaiti diplomat.

Arabic Post, a news website close to Qatar, cited an Iranian diplomatic source as saying that Araghchi's visit was aimed at "discussing ways of Kuwaiti mediation in order to conclude Iran-Saudi Arabia dialogue."

The news website also said that a Kuwaiti delegation is expected to visit Iran in the coming days to advance the Kuwaiti mediation efforts. Citing Kuwaiti diplomatic sources, Arabic Post claimed that the Kuwaiti delegation will discuss issues related to the dialogue between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

"We are discussing in the coming days a visit to Tehran, to inform the Iranian leadership of the Saudi demands, and to try to find workable solutions to persuade the two parties to come to the negotiating table," a Kuwaiti diplomatic source told Arabic Post.

Iran rejects U.S. call to assess Iran compliance with JCPOA

P O L I T I C A L **TEHRAN** — The United States is not in a position to assess whether Iran has complied with a 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and major world powers, an Iranian official at the United Nations said on Tuesday.

The official, Alireza Miryousefi, said that the U.S. has nothing to do with assessing Iran's compliance with the nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"Iran is still a participant member of JCPOA, but the U.S. is not. It's not up to the United States to assess whether Iran -- which we've said can very quickly reverse its remedial measures -- has made good on its obligations," Miryousefi, who is the spokesman for Iran's mission to the UN, told NBC News.

Miryousefi also said that other issues apart from Iran's nuclear program were not part of the negotiations leading up to the 2015 nuclear deal, and as a result, "our defensive missile program is not up for negotiation."

Responding to U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken's remarks on Americans imprisoned in Iran, Miryousefi said



Iran has offered to discuss an exchange of Americans held in Iran and Iranians detained in the United States.

Miryousefi's remarks came in response to Blinken's recent interview with NBC News in which he called for a deal with Iran that would encompass other non-nuclear issues.

The top U.S. diplomat pointed out that the new Biden administration is willing to return to compliance with the 2015 nuclear deal if Iran does and then work with U.S. allies

and partners on a "longer and stronger" agreement encompassing other issues.

Blinken also said the U.S. is going to work to ensure that Americans imprisoned in Iran come home one way or another.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has recently proposed the idea of Tehran and Washington synchronizing their actions aimed at reviving the JCPOA under a process choreographed by EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell.

"JCPOA has a mechanism built into the deal that is the Joint Commission. And the Joint Commission has a coordinator. The coordinator has two hats -- it used to be Federica Mogherini now it is Josep Borrell. He has two hats; One hat is he is the high representative of the European Union for foreign defense policy. The other hat is the coordinator of the Joint Commission. He can put his hat as the coordinator of the Joint Commission and sort of choreograph the actions that are needed to be taken by the United States and the actions that are needed to be taken by Iran," Zarif said in a Tuesday interview with CNN.

U.S. should take the first step to revive JCPOA, Russia says

P O L I T I C A L **TEHRAN** — Mikhail Ulyanov, Russia's permanent representative to international organizations in Vienna, has demanded the United States to make the first move to revive a 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and major world powers.

The Russian diplomat was commenting on a Newsweek report claiming that the U.S. rejected Iran's offer to coordinate both countries' return to their nuclear deal commitments. He also voiced support for Iran's proposal for Tehran and Washington to synchronize their steps toward reviving the nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"I hope this is a wrong assessment. Otherwise, we observe something as bonfire of vanities and fruitless ambitions: the other side has to make the first step. The way to nowhere. This is high time for U.S. and Iran to take coordinated steps to restore full implementation of JCPOA," Ulyanov said in a tweet.

In an attempt to break the impasse over who would make the first move to revive the JCPOA, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has proposed a simultaneous approach to revive the nuclear deal.

In a Monday interview with CNN, the chief Iranian diplomat said that EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell can "choreograph"

the process of reviving the deal.

According to Zarif, there can be a mechanism through which Borrell would synchronize or coordinate what can be done to revive the JCPOA.

"JCPOA has a mechanism built into the deal that is the Joint Commission. And the Joint Commission has a coordinator. The coordinator has two hats -- it used to be Federica Mogherini now it is Josep Borrell. He has two hats; One hat is he is the high representative of the European Union for foreign defense policy. The other hat is the coordinator of the Joint Commission. He can put his hat as the coordinator of the Joint Commission and sort of choreograph the actions that are needed to be taken by the United States and the actions that are needed to be taken by Iran," Zarif stated.

He reiterated this position in a tweet on Tuesday night. I told @cnni's @Camanpour: U.S. left the JCPOA and violated it. Iran took remedial measures. U.S. should return to compliance. Iran will then immediately reverse remedial measures. @JosepBorrellF -- Joint Commission Coordinator -- can choreograph the moves in consultation with Iran & U.S., the Iranian foreign minister tweeted.

But Newsweek reported that the Biden administration has dodged the Iranian offer,



arguing that the Islamic Republic must first reinstate the restrictions suspended in response to the U.S. having abandoned the agreement entirely nearly three years ago.

"If Iran comes back into full compliance with its obligations under the JCPOA, the United States would do the same," U.S. State Department spokesperson Ned Price told reporters at his first press conference Tuesday, "and then we would then use that as a platform to build a longer and a stronger agreement that also addresses other areas of concern."

"We are a long way from that," the spokesperson continued.

The American official pointed out that the U.S. diplomat had not yet opened the issue with their Iranian counterparts.

Iraqi foreign minister meets high-ranking Iranian officials

P O L I T I C A L **TEHRAN** — Iraqi Foreign Ministry Fuad Hussein arrived in Tehran on Wednesday to hold high-level talks with Iranian officials about bilateral, regional and international issues.

The chief Iraqi diplomat met with his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif, Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Ali Shamkhani and President Hassan Rouhani.

The foreign ministers of Iran and Iraq discussed the latest developments in bilateral relations as well as regional and international issues, the Iranian Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

During the meeting, Zarif expressed his appreciation to the Iraqi government for judicially following up on the assassination of the two martyr leaders, Major General Qassem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis, expressing hope that anyone who ordered and carried out this criminal act would be punished through legal follow-up, according to the statement.

"Ending the presence of the American forces in the region would be the best response to this terrorist act," Zarif said.

The Iranian foreign minister also expressed his satisfaction with the convening of the Joint Committee for Economic Cooperation between Iran and Iraq, expressing his hope that the agreements reached during the Iranian president's visit to Iraq in various bilateral fields will be implemented as soon as possible.

Foreign Minister Hussein, for his part, described the visits of the delegations of the two countries as a sign of the two sides' commitment to bilateral relations. Reviewing the issues of relations between the two countries in various fields, he explained the views of the Iraqi side in this regard.

The Iraqi foreign minister also met with Shamkhani, who expressed appreciation to Iraq for issuing an arrest warrant against former U.S. President Donald Trump who ordered the assassination of General Soleimani and al-Muhandis.

During the meeting, Shamkhani underlined the need to fully implement joint agreements between Iran and Iraq.

The top Iranian security official also pointed to the need to establish peace and security in Iraq.

"Supporting and strengthening the authority of the Iraqi

government and its sovereignty in establishing law and order is necessary to overcome the political, economic and security obstacles in this country," he pointed out.

Shamkhani described the U.S. military presence in Iraq as a source of instability, saying that "the main cause of instability and the escalation of crises in the region is the sinister presence of foreign forces, especially American forces."

Shamkhani also touched on the legal efforts made by Iraq to get rid of the yoke of American colonialism, underlining that the implementation of the Iraqi parliament's resolution to expel foreign forces from the country as soon as possible is a good start for their withdrawal from the entire region.

The secretary of the Supreme National Security Council of Iran praised the efforts of the Iraqi Judiciary to issue an arrest warrant for Trump and Mike Pompeo for their responsibility for the crime of assassinating the leaders of the resistance in Iraq.

"We must not let the blood of the martyrs Abu Mahdi Muhandis and Qassem Soleimani go up in smoke, and the perpetrators of this terrorist crime must be severely punished," Shamkhani continued.

TEDPIX loses 32,000 points on Wednesday

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), lost 32,417 points on Wednesday.

Over 8.748 billion securities worth 85.842 trillion rials (about \$2.043 billion) were traded at the TSE on Wednesday.

The first market's index dropped 27,165 points, and the second market's index lost 53,536 points.



After several weeks of drop, TEDPIX could finally register growth in the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday).

The index rose two percent to stand at 1.207 million points in the past week.

Home appliance manufacturing to post a record high in this calendar year

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The manufacturing of home appliances will hit a record high in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20), according to an official with the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade.

Keyvan Gardan, the director for the electrical and metals industries and home appliances office of the ministry, said that according to the plans and the efforts made, despite the continuation of sanctions and the coronavirus pandemic, this year the record of home appliance production will be broken after the victory of the Islamic Revolution (1979).

Making the remarks in a Wednesday meeting of industry owners with the directors of the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade in the field of formulating the strategy of Iran's home appliance industry on the horizon of 1404 (March 2025-March 2026), the official added, "Production was projected to grow by 30 percent this year, reaching a record of 12 million sets of home appliances, but the target was realized by the end of the tenth month (January 19)".

Despite all the sanctions and problems, this industry has been able to continue to grow decisively in the past two and a half years, he said, adding, "Of course, with the ban imposed on the import of home appliances, the people also cooperated and supported this industry, which led to its growth."

He pointed to the \$37-billion home appliance market of the neighboring countries and the region and the \$5-billion domestic market capacity and said, "We are trying to allocate more of this market to our country by providing conditions."

Two months ago, the secretary of the Association of Industries of Household Appliances of Iran said that domestic production of equipment and parts used in the home appliance industry has saved Iran \$220 million.

Currently, Iranian producers have indigenized the knowledge for manufacturing 70-75 percent of the country's home appliance needs, Abbas Hashemi said in a press conference in late December.

According to Hashemi, the Association of Industries of Household Appliances of Iran has established a parts manufacturing department, the purpose of which is to promote the position of component makers in the association to deepen domestic manufacturing of the required parts and equipment in this industry while providing a platform for home appliance manufacturers and component makers to stay connected.

The official noted that the country has managed to export up to \$250 million of home appliances in the previous years and currently, the production and assembly lines for Iranian home appliances have been set up in some of the countries in the region and Iran is exporting its products to the target markets by sending Completely Knocked Down (CKD) kits to the mentioned production lines.



Iran has various comparative advantages in this industry in terms of supplying raw materials such as steel sheets, petrochemicals, copper and brass sections, the abundance and low costs of energy and workforce in addition to the strategic position of the country, compared to other countries in the region, he said.

"So, the development of exports to countries in the region and to the neighboring countries is possible even despite the strong regional competitors," Hashemi added.

In recent years, the Iranian government has been following a new strategy for supporting domestic production to neutralize the impacts of the U.S. sanctions while reducing the reliance of the economy on oil revenues.

The home appliances sector has not been an exemption and like many other areas, the production of home appliances has witnessed a significant rise in the past two years so that in the previous calendar year 1398 (ended on March 19, 2020) this industry's production capacity increased by 10 percent compared to the preceding year.

As stated by the spokesman of the Association of Industries of Household Appliances of Iran, with foreign companies leaving the country's home appliance market the production of domestic companies has increased and the unemployment rate in this sector has significantly declined.

While it was expected that the home appliance industry, like some other industries, would suffer from the effects of the coronavirus pandemic and the U.S. sanctions, the inauguration of several new projects in this industry showed that the industry is expanding strongly and moving forward, Hamidreza Qaznavi said in late December, 2020.

Iran's agricultural export up 8% in 10 months on year

ECONOMY Details of agricultural exports in the period under review show that 2.4 million tons with a value of more than \$2.1 billion are allocated to the 10 major agricultural products, which in terms of value pistachio is at the top of them.

Of this figure, the share of pistachios with fresh or dried skin is 147,000 tons worth more than \$920 million, and the export of fresh or dried pistachio kernels is about 15,000 tons worth more than \$170 million.

According to Orounqi, eight countries were the export destinations of the 10 major exported products which shows that there is a wider distribution than before in the export of these items between countries.

Iran exported over \$5.8 billion worth of agricultural and foodstuff products in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended



on March 19, 2020), the Head of Agriculture Ministry's Planning and Economic Affairs Department Shahrokh Shajari has announced.

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

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

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

Over 200 companies to participate in Iran Plast expo

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — More than 200 domestic companies as well as 250 foreign company representatives and businessmen are going to participate in the 14th International Exhibition of Plastic, Rubber, Machinery, and Equipment (IRAN PLAST) of Iran which is going to be held at Tehran Permanent International Fairground during February 7-10, Shana reported.

According to the Exhibition Organizer Ayoub Banavi, in this year's exhibition, four commodity groups including raw materials, machinery and equipment, and final products, semi-finished products as well as services are presented.

"The distinguishing feature of this year's exhibition is the strong presence of knowledge-based companies as well as the holding of an online exhibition which will kick off concurrently with the physical exhibition on February 7 and will continue for two weeks," the official explained.

Stating that invitations and information regarding the virtual exhibition have been sent to more than 22,000 foreign visitors all around the world, he said: "Although in the past editions of the exhibition there was a virtual exhibition section on the IranPlast website, this year the platform is upgraded and fully complies with the standards of a modern online exhibition."

Making calls, sending messages, voice and video conversations, as well as the possibility of holding online sessions with several people are among the features of this online platform, according to Banavi.

Holding meetings and conferences to introduce products and services and to present the latest technologies and achievements of domestic companies is said to be the main goal of this online exhibition.

IRAN PLAST is a platform to make connections between the petrochemical industry and enterprises, while flourishing downstream industries, according to the Na-



tional Petrochemical Company (NPC) Managing Director Behzad Mohammadi.

Due to the special conditions caused by the pandemic, in almost all exhibitions held this year only managers, businessmen, scholars, and experts have been allowed to participate and visit.

Iran discusses ways for using its frozen assets with Iraq

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The Governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Abdolnaser Hemmati met with the Chairman of Trade Bank of Iraq (TBI) Salem Chalabi on Wednesday to discuss ways for using the country's assets in the mentioned country.

Iranian and Iraqi banking officials have repeatedly consulted in recent months on releasing Iranian assets in the Arab country.

Back in October 2020, Hemmati made a visit to Iraq during which the two sides reached an agreement to unblock Iranian assets in Iraq.

According to Hemmati, the assets, which are mainly electricity and gas export money, will be used to buy basic goods.

During the mentioned visit, Hemmati held talks with his Iraqi counterpart Mustafa Galeb, making headway in resolving the banking issues with neighboring Iraq.

Galeb said the Iraqi authorities are determined to resolve banking issues between the two countries.

The governor of Iraq's central bank proposed that the two countries set up a joint committee to explore ways to re-



The Governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Abdolnaser Hemmati (R) and the Chairman of Trade Bank of Iraq (TBI) Salem Chalabi

solve financial differences between the two countries.

"We do our utmost to continue the cooperation between the two countries. The existing problems related to Iran's financial and monetary demands will be settled," he said.

Hemmati also met with Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi, after which the prime minister expressed satisfaction at the agreement and insisted that he would follow the issue on a weekly basis.

Oil Ministry, APEC discuss problems of oil, gas, petchem contractors

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh, in a meeting with the board members of the Association of Petroleum Industry Engineering and Construction Companies (APEC) discussed the challenges that the private companies and contractors active in the fields of oil, gas, and petrochemicals are currently facing.

As reported by Shana, during the meeting, held on Tuesday, the APEC board members presented a report on the problems that oil and gas companies are facing due to the coronavirus outbreak, as well as a summary of the results of their joint meetings with the Budget Planning Organization (BPO) in this regard.

For his part, Zanganeh delivered a speech in the meeting and stated that the Oil Ministry supports the empowerment and development of the private sector as one of its major policies, adding: "Oil Ministry welcomes the presence of private sector companies that are willing to define and im-



Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh (1st R)

plement major projects in the industry."

He further suggested that the association implements a

Liquidity rises over 26% in 9 months

date in the previous year.

The foreign assets of Iranian banks and institutes increased by 71.7 percent in the mentioned nine months compared to the figure for the same period in the previous Iranian calendar year, to reach 9.26 quadrillion rials (about \$220.5 billion).

The CBI's previous report published in November 2020 had put the country's liquidity at 28.958 quadrillion rials (about \$689.49 billion) in the first six months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-September 21, 2020), 17.1 percent more than the figure for the end of the past year.

The liquidity growth has been inevitable in the country considering the outbreak of the



coronavirus and the injection of liquidity by the government for supporting households and businesses.

In mid-September 2020, board members

of the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (TCCIMA) had criticized the unbridled liquidity growth in the country, claiming it to be causing disruption in many economic and industrial sectors.

During the 16th meeting of the TCCIMA board of representatives, the TCCIMA Head Masoud Khansari noted that currently, liquidity is the most important factor that is disrupting the country's economic system.

According to Khansari, if the current trend continues, the liquidity growth will reach 32 percent and 8 quadrillion rials (about \$190.4 billion) will be added to the country's liquidity by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20).

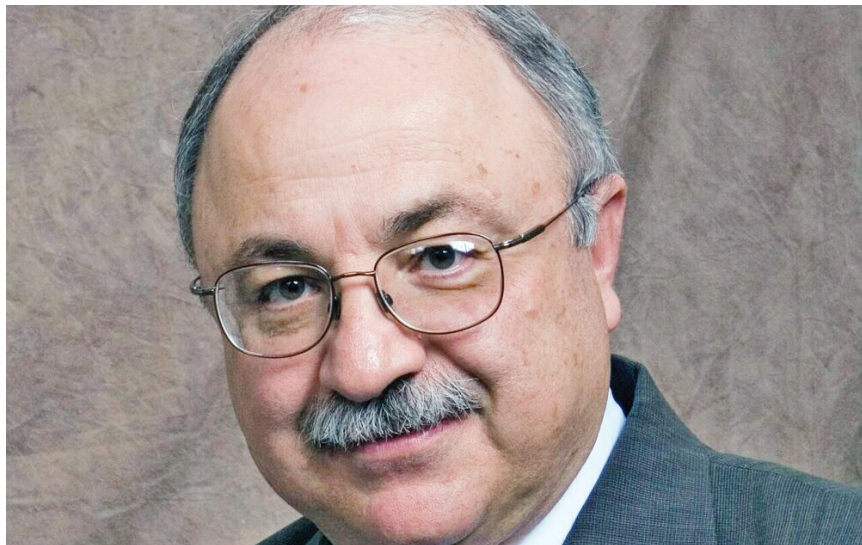
Including missiles in nuclear deal will stymie chances of fruitful negotiation: professor

1 → The following is the text of the interview:

When it comes to reviving the 2015 nuclear deal, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken asks Iran to take the first step to revitalize the nuclear deal (JCPOA) and emphasizes that “any U.S. return may take a while”. Is such a demand reasonable while it was the U.S. that pulled out of the deal in 2018 and imposed sweeping sanctions on Iran?

On the face of it, Iran's demand that the United States must return to the JCPOA and implement its obligation under the nuclear agreement is a reasonable one. But political realities in Washington may make it very difficult for the Biden administration to return to the agreement in its original form. From the very beginning, the JCPOA at best had lukewarm support among U.S. policymakers. Even the majority of the Democrats in Congress were against the deal. This may very well be the case today too.

President Obama's political sleight of hand convinced enough Democrats, albeit grudgingly, not to completely scuttle the deal. Senator Chuck Schumer and Senator Robert Menendez, the current Senate Majority Leader and the current Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, respectively, were among the prominent Democrats who objected to the JCPOA. I assume they still are not in favor of the deal. In addition, with few exceptions, the “think tank” cottage industry in the United States has been working hard campaigning against President Biden's unconditional return to the agreement President Obama had



signed. In short, Iran's demand that the party that ditched the nuclear deal unilaterally must demonstrate its good faith and commitments first is logical and reasonable. But given the current constellation of political forces in the United States, it is politically near impossible for President Biden to return to the JCPOA without extracting more concessions from Iran. Even then, the opposition to the JCPOA in its current form will not dissipate. That is why Secretary Tony Blinken recently emphasized the fact that any U.S. return to the nuclear deal “may take a while.”

Some observers say that Biden's advisory team is a “fake carrot” to deceive

Iran. Do you believe that Biden is going to make a serious change in America's attitude towards Iran?

Biden did not structure his foreign policy team as either a “fake carrot” or a “real carrot” to Iran. Members of the Biden team were selected on the basis of their ability to implement American foreign policy goals.

Furthermore, for the past four decades, American foreign policy towards Iran has developed certain principal pillars that will not change under President Biden. Therefore, realism behooves us not to have an unrealistic expectation about “serious changes” in America's attitude or policies towards the Islamic

Republic.

Some European parties to the JCPOA want to include Iran's missile program in the nuclear deal, while Iran has repeatedly said that it will never negotiate over its defensive capabilities. What is your comment?

Attempts to include Iran's missile program in any future nuclear deal and in the absence of a comprehensive regional security structure and the current threat system to Iran's national security will stymie chances of a fruitful negotiation. The E3 is simply throwing darts in the dark or simply hoping that Iran will ultimately succumb to their threats. Perhaps some Europeans have an inflated opinion of themselves when it comes to their foreign policy weight.

What changes do you expect from the new U.S. administration towards West Asia?

I expect little substantive change in this regard. Of course, some tactical changes and approaches to U.S.-Saudi relations can be expected. I think there will be a lot more continuity than discontinuity with the past in Biden's Middle East (West Asia) policy. Specifically, strong U.S.-Israeli ties will remain intact during Biden's presidency.

Do you think Biden would return to Obama's policies?

No. Conditions in the region and in the United States have changed since Barak Obama left office. One cannot turn the clock back to what existed during Obama's presidency. If anything, Biden's foreign policy in the region may be closer to Bill Clinton's than to Obama's policies.

American analyst says no difference between Trump and Biden when it comes to Iran, Israel

1 → My record on this is a public one, including my past interview with Tasnim News Agency on the subject. David Stockman has written several articles on the subject that underscore the treaty's verifiability, and the compliance of Iran with the treaty terms.

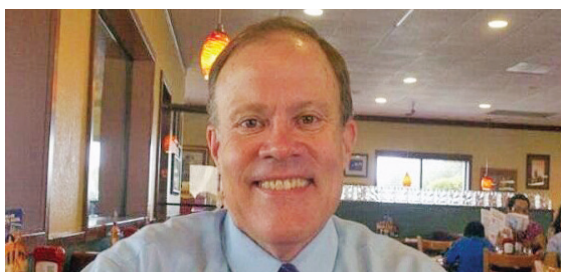
The treaty should have been the basis of a complete re-establishment of a peaceful political, economic, and political relationship between Iran and the United States. Trump's unilateral withdrawal of the United States from the pact is nothing more than an absolute illustration of the ownership of Trump's foreign policy by Israel and its lobby in the United States as Stockman, Scott Ritter, Pat Buchanan, and Philip Giraldi have made clear repeatedly. The tragic thing is that the Democrats and Biden will prove no better when it comes to being the tools of Zionism and Greater Israel.

It is Giraldi who warns us in the Unz Review in an essay entitled, “A Domestic Terrorism Law? War on Dissent Will Proceed Full Speed Ahead,” that dissidents like me in the United States are going to be targeted in more aggressive fashion than has ever been witnessed in the United States before. My consistent criticism of American aggression for Israel in the Middle East (West Asia), the role of Israel in the 9-11 event itself, Trump's

idiotic withdrawal from JCPOA, and the public role of the 45th President of the United States in the criminal extra-judicial assassination of General Qassem Soleimani, have earned me a place in the target folders of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith (ADL), the Southern Poverty Law Center, the American-Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), the Republican Jewish Coalition, and the Democratic Majority for Israel.

The launching of a false flag incident which would be penned on Iran as a prelude to a shooting war, would be accompanied by the arrest and incarceration of those here who would continue to speak out publicly against what is clearly being plotted. David Baxter's article for the Institute for Historical Review (IHR) entitled, “The Great Sedition Trial of 1944: A Personal Memoir,” serves as a primer for what the globalist, Zionist War Party has in mind in the future for those opposed to their New World Order. Real American nationalists who oppose foreign wars, Iran, Putin's Russia, Assad's Syria, Hezbollah, and China are all in the crosshairs of this cabal. This is why I will continue working with Iranian, Russian, and American Alt-Media for as long as I can possibly hold out.

Nuclear-armed countries do not accept to say whether international law applies to their nuclear conduct.



What is the practical solution to make these countries accountable?

I cannot tell you that I honestly have in mind a practical proposal to make nuclear-armed nations uniformly observe international law as the basis of their actions. In the case of the United States government, it is the only one in history to use these weapons against civilian populations. And yet it presumes to tell Iran it has no right to utilize its rights as a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), even as Israel is armed to the nuclear teeth, is not a signatory to the NPT, and was itself involved in the assassination of President John F. Kennedy as chronicled by both Laurent Guyenot and Michael Collins Piper. As far as the bilateral relationship between the United States and Iran is concerned, Operation Ajax in 1953, the shootdown of Iran Flight 655, the utilization of the MEK-MKO terrorist organization against Iran and its government, the Soleimani and Fakhri-zadeh murders, and the imposition of wartime economic sanctions on Iran after the latter kept its end of the bargain with the JCPOA deal, all underscore that the American word of honor is sadly one of dishonor. This is not simply true with Iran, but with others including Russia, where the post-Cold War assurances to Gorbachev about American intentions and actions after the fall of the Berlin Wall have been routinely discarded.

Do you think possessing nuclear bomb is a successful deterrent strategy to prevent war?

Let me answer this way: Does anyone truly believe that the Israeli regime would be threatening to attack Iran if the latter had a nuclear weapon?

Only a few countries have nuclear weapons while they prevent others from possessing such arms. Is it acceptable?

No, it isn't acceptable. The problem is identical to your previous question about making nuclear-armed nations uniformly observe international law as the basis of their actions. I don't know how those who possess the weapons can be made to voluntarily surrender them since there is so much distrust between those nations themselves, not to mention the problem of their relationships with non-nuclear powers. I think a good place to begin would be the creation of a coalition of agreement among the non-American nuclear nations that Israel's weaponized nuclear program must be brought into absolute international scrutiny and inspection. But it will never happen. Therein lies the problem.

Regimes like Saudi Arabia and Israel are trying hard to hinder a revival of the JCPOA. Do you think that they can achieve their goals in the new American administration?

I believe they can and will. The articles continue to proliferate about the Biden foreign policy and national security policy selections with absolute ties to Wall Street, Israel, Central Banking, and the armaments industry. See samples from People's Dispatch, the Texas Jewish Post, Reason, In These Times, Caitlyn Johnstone for Scoop, and especially Philip Giraldi's essay for the Unz Review, entitled “Tony Blinken Replaces Mike Pompeo: Israel's Friends Will Enjoy Four More Years in Power.” Any presumption that the Biden-Harris team will be an improvement on the Trump-Pence team on issues of Israel, Iran, War, and Peace, is precisely that--an illusion.

My recommendation to Iran is to refuse to negotiate any “return” to the JCPOA treaty where Biden and Blinken will attach all sorts of new, untenable conditions, and for Tehran to ensure that both President Putin's Russia and the Chinese are ready to counter the Zionist Occupied Government (ZOG) of the United States when it comes to any Israeli aggression against Iran, especially where the use of the American military as a Janissary Force for Greater Israel and the New World Order is concerned.

U.S. think tanks: Scenarios for the GCC and advice to Israel

By Azin Sahabi

TEHRAN — In the wake of Joe Biden's arrival at the White House and his stated policy to rejoin the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran, American think tanks have remarkably speculated on the issue. In this context, a plenty of publications addressing issues directly and indirectly related to Washington-Tehran relations in the broader West Asia theatre, are also available.

Among the centers, latest publications by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (CEIP) and the [Persian] Gulf State Analytics (GSA) deserve consideration.



“Iranian-Qatari Relations After Al-Ula”

In an article titled “Iranian-Qatari Relations After Al-Ula”, published on February 1, Brett Sudetic, a fellow at Gulf State Analytics, puts Tehran-Doha relations in perspective in the aftermath of recent al-Ula declaration signed on January 5 at a summit aimed at resolving a three-year embargo against Qatar.

The analyst comments on “Tehran's View of Saudi-Qatari Reconciliation” and sets scenarios in this regard. He recalls a mostly cordial relationship between Iran and Qatar since the aftermath of Iraq's imposed war against Iran due to common regional vital interests. He argues the al-Ula summit's outcome may have some positive regional implications for Tehran. In Sudetic's view, Iran considers the move “is akin to a capitulation from Saudi Arabia.”

Sudetic claimed that Iran is concerned about the geopolitical consequences of the recent rapprochement.

Given the fact that Riyadh and Doha still have unresolved fundamental disputes, the author argues Iran will likely count on continued cooperation with Doha. Also, due to Doha's support for the JCPOA in 2015 and its negative vote to the 2006 UN Security Council anti-Iran nuclear sanctions, Tehran may find the state helpful in the path of de-escalation with Washington and some regional actors in 2021. However, Saudis' principal strategy would be building confidence between Riyadh and Doha to convince the Qataris to somewhat distance themselves from Iran.

“Netanyahu's new campaign against the Iran deal is a risky gambit”

Aaron David Miller, a Senior Fellow at the Carnegie Endowment, advises the Israeli government to focus on old-fashioned but effective quiet diplomacy with Washington unless it prefers to engage with the Biden administration rather than act unilaterally towards Iran and the JCPOA. In parallel with Netanyahu's rhetoric on returning to the JCPOA, Israeli army chief of staff Lieutenant General Aviv Kochavi has also used harsh rhetoric against the 2015 nuclear deal. His remarks came against a backdrop of the Israeli army's request for \$1.223 billion new funding for operational military plans for a possible attack on Iran.

Citing a report by a senior Israeli official who is well-informed of Netanyahu's thinking, the author argues that the Israeli prime minister does not want to fight against Biden. In fact, Netanyahu's warm personal relations with Biden over four decades could be helpful to overcome misunderstandings. On the other hand, the Biden administration has regularly declared its intention to consult with Israel before making any decisions on Iran.

Also, given the configuration of the current the U.S. Congress in which Democrats enjoying a majority, Netanyahu will find it more demanding to exert pressure.

Miller argues that recent pike in Israelis' rhetoric and threats regarding a revival of the JCPOA is partially rooted in the Israeli domestic politics. In fact, with the late March general elections ahead, Netanyahu is struggling with several challenges among which COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent economic slowdown are quite threatening. Moreover, Netanyahu who is facing indictments for corruption, breach of trust, and fraud should appear in court within weeks. Against this backdrop, he can divert the Israeli public's attention away from domestic issues to focus on Iran and security as a smart election politics. The American analyst believes that increasing Israeli rhetoric and its excessive threats to attack Iran cannot be considered much more than a means of exerting pressure on the Oval Office. Meanwhile, Miller does not rule out the possibility of any military acts from Israel and neither Tehran nor Washington can not be certain about it.

Saudi forces attack protest against bin Salman's economic policies

1 → Street protests are rare in Saudi Arabia, where the conservative regime harshly suppresses any dissent in the kingdom. Public gatherings hardly ever make news in Saudi media and it is almost impossible for journalists to cover them.

Saudi Arabia has seen a rise in poverty and unemployment rate over the past years, despite an ambitious economic plan presented by bin Salman, called the Saudi Vision 2030, which was supposed to diversify the economy.

The kingdom's economic woes have worsened by the coronavirus pandemic — which has taken a heavy toll on many businesses worldwide — as well as Riyadh's huge military spending on a deadly war against neighboring Yemen.

Israeli drone explodes over southern Lebanon

An Israeli drone has been downed over southern Lebanon, local broadcasters reported, citing a security source. At the same time, the Israel Defense Forces stated that the aircraft was targeted by Lebanon, but managed to escape the fire and proceed with its mission.

“Recently, anti-aircraft fire from Lebanese territory was detected, trying to hit a drone during operations over Lebanon. The aircraft was not damaged and continued its mission”, a tweet says.

The news about the UAV blast comes just two days after Hezbollah claimed it had destroyed an unmanned aerial vehicle belonging to the Israeli armed forces near the settlement of Blida.

INVITATION TO RENEWAL OF ONE STEP INTERNATIONAL TENDER

Second Announcement

55/99/26457

04/02/2020

Agricultural Support Services Company

Ministry of Jihad-e-Agriculture

AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT SERVICES COMPANY

Agricultural Support Services Company, hereinafter will be referred as ASSC, affiliated to Ministry of Agriculture-Jahad of I.R of Iran, is considering the purchase of the below item of technical, through renewal of one step international tender.

ITEM	Name	PACKING	Quantity KG
1	Fipronil Tech (18.8-21.2) pct. (premix 20%)	200 kg drum	5500

All of the qualified and interested companies are invited to receive tender documents **from Wednesday dated 3/2/2021 until Tuesday dated 9/2/2021** (5 working days) from our purchasing committee (located at the 9th floor, no. 1, fourth alley, Gandhi st., Tehran, Iran). The bidders are requested to submit their letters of introduction, along with remittance bill of I.Rials 1,200,000 to ASSC's account no. 4001039704005791 with SHEBA no. IR250100004001039704005791 at the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran through payment order of SATNA or PAYA with the 30 character identification code of 35803978226350065000000000000006.

The bidders are requested to submit their sealed and stamped envelopes containing offers latest on **Saturday dated 13/3/2021** (during official working hours) to our security office located on the 8th floor. Meanwhile the meeting for the opening of the envelops will be held on **Sunday dated 14/3/2021** at 14:00 PM with the presence of bidder's representatives at our purchasing committee hall (9th floor, no. 1, Fourth Alley, Gandhi st., Tehran, Iran). We would like to emphasize that the bid bond amount should be in bank guarantee as follows:

1- € 20515 for Fipronil Tech(18.8-21.2) pct. (premix 20%) equivalent to Iranian Rials 5920000000.

- The bid bond value will be in Euro or in equal value of any other foreign currencies, except US dollars, based on Telegraphic Transfer rate in Sana rate website, www.sanarate.ir. It should be noted that this site lists the currency transactions, executed in Integrated Currency Transactions System [Nima website] **on 31/1/2021.**

For more information, you may refer to our website www.assc.ir, and <http://iets.mporg.ir> or contact us by phone no. 00982188776325.

PR & Intel Affairs Dept. of Agricultural Support Services Company (ASSC)

Iran eyes UNESCO status for Siraf, other ancient ports: tourism minister

➔ **1** Bushehr province is also home to various archaeological mounds including Tall-e Khandaq with Sassanid architectural style, Tall-e Marv located near an Achaemenid Palace, and Qajar era Malek al-Tojar Mansion.



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

Traveling to the Persian Gulf region would be an experience that you probably haven't even considered. While you've been planning your Iranian sojourn around the jewels of the country's rich history (Isfahan, Shiraz, Yazd), to the southeast the Persian Gulf is equally deserving.

Explore the magnetic islands of Kish, Qeshm, and Hormuz, which are absurdly easy to combine and are altogether different. While Kish is unashamedly glam and glitzy, Qeshm and Hormoz are refreshingly void of large-scale development and offer a chance to glimpse a more traditional way of life – not to mention an array

Along the coast, soak up the vibes of lively Bandar Abbas and make a beeline for the delightful town of Kong, whose historical center is peppered with charming old houses and monuments.

Motorcycle rally to mark Islamic Revolution anniversary

TOURISM TEHRAN – Tens of Iranian cyclists are scheduled to stage a rally across Tehran to commemorate the 42nd anniversary of the Islamic Revolution.



Organized by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, the itinerary of the rally, which is scheduled for February 8, will be sketched from the ministry headquarters to Behesht-e Zahra martyrs' cemetery in southern Tehran.

The majority of international cyclists, who have traversed Iran, say their experience equals an endless charm embracing diverse cultures and landscapes.

New museums to promote Persian history, cultural heritage

HERITAGE TEHRAN – Three private museums are scheduled to be established in southwestern Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad province in a bid to promote the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the region, the provincial tourism chief has announced.

A petroleum museum in the city of Gachsaran, an archaeological museum in Yasuj, and an anthropology museum in Dehdasht are planned to be set up in near future, Majid Safai said on Tuesday.

Last month, the official announced that a budget of 43 billion rials (about \$1 million at the official exchange rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) has been allocated to the first phase of establishing the petroleum museum.



Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad province is known for its nomads and nomadic life. Sightseers may live with a nomadic or rural family for a while or enjoy an independent stay and assist them with day-to-day life. It also opens up an opportunity to feel rustic routines, their agriculture, traditions, arts, and culture.

and a currency system geared to local commerce, rather than an integrated national economy. For this reason, it is more sensible to study changes in the output (weight, fineness) of a single mint over time, rather than trying to arrive at an estimation of a nonexistent national norm.

56,000 ancient relics undergo restoration since 2013: deputy minister

TOURISM TEHRAN — A total of 56,000 historical objects have been restored in Iranian museums and laboratories since August 2013, when President Hassan Rouhani began his first administration, deputy tourism minister has announced.

Furthermore, some 3,300 restoration projects have commenced on the historical sites, monuments, museums as well as aging structures during the same period, of which 90 percent have been carried out by the private sector, Mohammad-Hassan Talebian said on Wednesday.

While the country enjoyed 455 museums in 2013, 277 more museums have come on stream during the past seven years, which is a leg for the cultural development, scientific progress, and the protection of cultural identity, the official added.

He also noted that more than 2,000 projects in the field of cultural heritage are underway across the country, 600 of which will be inaugurated by the end of the current Iranian year (March 20).

Investment in the field of cultural heritage,



handicrafts, and tourism is not comparable with other sectors as it can be done with a

small budget, and now there are more than 200,000 investment opportunities in these

Rey's first hotel inaugurated

TOURISM TEHRAN —The first-ever hotel in the city of Rey, southeast of Tehran, was inaugurated on Tuesday on the occasion of Ten-Day Dawn (Jan. 31- Feb. 10, marking the victory anniversary of the Islamic Revolution), ISNA reported.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by Mohammad Mohammadi Reyshahri, the custodian of the Holy Shrine of Shah Abdol Azim, and Anushiravan Mohseni Bandpey, the governor-general of Tehran province, and several local officials and tourism insiders.

A budget of 800 billion rials (about \$19 million at the official exchange rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) has been allocated to the project which adds 42 rooms and 108 beds to the hospitality sector of the city, the provincial tourism chief Parham Janfeshan announced on the sidelines of the ceremony.

The construction and inauguration of this hotel will lead to the development of religious tourism infrastructure in the city, which will bring more welfare to the pilgrims of the Holy Shrine of Shah Abdol Azim, Janfeshan said.

Construction work of the hotel took four years in a

piece of land covering more than eight hectares, he added.

The history of settlement in Rey dates from the 3rd millennium BC. It is featured in the Avesta (the original document of Zoroastrianism, an Iranian religion) as a sacred place, and it is also mentioned in the book of T-obit, of the biblical Apocrypha, and by classical authors.

According to Encyclopedia Britannica, Rey was one of the capital cities of the Parthian empire (3rd century BC–3rd century CE). It was captured by the Muslim Arabs in 641 CE. During the reign of the Muslim caliph al-Mahdi in the 8th century, the city grew in importance until it was rivaled in western Asia only by Damascus and Baghdad.

Islamic writers described it as a city of extraordinary beauty, built largely of fired brick and brilliantly ornamented with blue faience (glazed earthenware). It continued to be an important city and was briefly a capital under the rule of the Seljuqs, but in the 12th century, it was weakened by the fierce quarrels of rival religious sects. In 1220 the city was almost entirely destroyed by the Mongols, and its inhabitants were massacred. Most of the survivors of the massacre moved to nearby Tehran, and the deserted



remnants of Rey soon fell into complete ruin.

Rey, however, retains enough history to give it a different sensibility, its key sight is the elaborately decorated Shah Abdol Azim Shrine. Beside the shrine complex is a lively bazaar, while further afield are a couple of minor historical attractions.

Intl. Iranology festival to be held in Tehran

TOURISM TEHRAN – Tehran will be playing host to the 3rd edition of the International Festival of Iran Nama on Iranian (Persian) studies and Iranology on May 17.

Organized by the First International Fair on Tour Academy in the Word (FIFTAW) in collaboration with Kharazmi University, the festival will be held in four sections of Conference of Iranian Studies Theses, Conference of Iranian Studies Articles and Journals, Iran Photo Frame, and the Campaign of the Sustainable Citizen.

The festival aims at introducing and supporting the research of students on various topics related to Iran as the dissertations are one of the most important research sources, each of which has created and addressed a new topic, so paying attention to this section can be an important step in the comprehensive introduction of Iran, according to organizers.

Submissions to the Festival are divided into various categories such as theses and articles on Iranian studies, archeology, mythology,



symbolism, ancient languages, Persian language and literature, history, popular culture, cultural heritage, customs, ethnicities, local clothing, handicrafts, architecture and urban planning, philosophy and mysticism, natural heritage and tourism.

Due to the outbreak of the coronavirus, the 3rd edition of the International Festival of Iran Nama on Iranian studies and Iranology is scheduled to be in a non-public manner, the organizers said.

Ancient Iran, also known as Persia, historic region of southwestern Asia that is only roughly coterminous with modern Iran. The term Persia was used for centuries, chiefly in the West, to designate those regions where the Persian language and culture predominated, but it more correctly refers to a region of southern Iran formerly known as Persis, alternatively as Pars or Parsa, modern Fars.

Parsa was the name of an Indo-European nomadic people who migrated into the region about 1000 BC. The first mention of Parsa

occurs in the annals of Shalmanesar II, an Assyrian king, in 844 BC.

During the rule of the Persian Achaemenian dynasty (559–330 BC), the ancient Greeks first encountered the inhabitants of Persis on the Iranian plateau, when the Achaemenids—natives of Persis—were expanding their political sphere. The Achaemenids were the dominant dynasty during Greek history until the time of Alexander the Great, and the use of the name Persia was gradually extended by the Greeks and other peoples to apply to the whole Iranian plateau.

This tendency was reinforced with the rise of the S's'nian dynasty, also native to Persis, whose culture dominated the Iranian plateau until the 7th century CE. The people of this area have traditionally referred to the region as Iran, "Land of the Aryans," and in 1935 the government of Iran requested that the name Iran be used in lieu of Persia. The two terms, however, are often used interchangeably when referring to periods preceding the 20th century.

Winter festivals, a rich source of charm for freezing Sarein

TOURISM TEHRAN – Winter festivals have long been a lucrative source of charm for drawing visitors to Sarein, the tourism chief of the northwestern Iranian city has said.

"Furthermore, such festivals are [highly] expected to lead to tourism boom after the coronavirus crisis comes to an end eventually," Yahya Najjar Qabel said on Monday.

He made the remarks on the sidelines of a festival dedicated to skiing and snow, saying "The event is aimed at developing winter tourism in the region as well as promoting Sarein's ski resorts."

The festival named "Awake Winter" was held in Alvares ski resort, which is well-known for its tough winters, "cool" summers, beautiful landscapes, the quality of its dairy products (butter, dough, ash, honey...), and its numerous hot springs.

Holding festivals in this ski resort could attract winter sports enthusiasts to the region as well, the official added.

Located in Ardebil provincial, the freezing city of Sarein is considered one of the top tourism hubs in northwest Iran in the wintertime. Last April tourism authorities of the



province announced that they have developed extensive plans to draw more tourists during the winter season to the province and make it the winter tourism hub of the country.

The prosperity of winter tourism and the removal of the

province from being a seasonal tourism destination is one of the most important programs for the balanced development of the tourism industry in Ardebil, provincial tourism chief Nader Fallahi said.

Sprawling on a high, windswept plateau, whose altitude averages 3,000 meters above sea level, Ardebil is well-known for having lush natural beauties, hospitable people, and its silk and carpet trade tradition, it is also home to the UNESCO-registered Sheikh Safi al-Din Khanegah and Shrine Ensemble. The province is very cold in winter and mild in summer, attracting thousands every year. The capital city of Ardebil is usually recorded as one of the coldest cities in the country in winter.

Iran has long been an international destination for avid powder chasers during winter, while - in total contrast - its arid and semi-arid climate reaches sweltering levels in summer. Maybe not the first that comes to mind, snow-capped mountains above Tehran are home to some of the world's best ski resorts where powder hounds can enjoy famous Iranian hospitality.

Iranian police seize 740 well-crafted fake coins

TOURISM TEHRAN – Iranian authorities have seized 740 fake coins from a gang of antique dealers and smugglers in the ancient town of Namin, northwest Iran.

"The contemporary-minted coins were copied from Islamic coins, and according to cultural heritage experts they have no historical values," investigators said on Tuesday, IRNA reported.

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

The essential advantage of using metals for currency, apart from durability, is that they can be shaped by melting and casting. Casting, therefore, has always been an integral part of the coin manufacturing process. Indeed,

in some instances, it has been the only part.

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



90% of Chabahar coral reefs are dying: official

ENVIRONMENT **TEHRAN** — Up to 90 percent of coral reefs in Chabahar waters along the Sea of Oman have been bleached and are dying, an official with the Department of Environment has said.

A rise in temperature of the water has had a negative effect on the ecosystem so that 90 percent of coral reefs in this region have been bleached and are dying, IRNA quoted Davood Mirshekar, deputy chief of the Department of Environment for marine ecosystems, as saying on Wednesday.

Monitoring coral reefs in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman is one of the prioritized plans of the Department of Environment, he noted.

He referred to irregular scuba diving and tourism as the main factors which have harmed the coral reefs.

Iran shares five ecological zones with specific flora from the lowest to the highest parts, one of which is the Persian Gulf-Oman Sea ecological zone.

The forests of the Persian Gulf-Oman Sea ecological region include part of the



southwest and all southern coasts, covering 2,039,963 hectares. Due to ecological differences, the main vegetation is divided

into two territories of the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman.

In the Persian Gulf area, which extends

from Qasr-e Shirin to the border of Bushehr and Hormozgan provinces, the plant species of Christ's thorn jujube, Prosopis farcta, and desert poplar grow. While in the Oman Sea area, which includes a part of Hormozgan province to Sistan-Baluchestan (border of Iran and Pakistan), Mesquites and acacia species are the main vegetation covers.

Gum arabic tree, used in boat production, are scattered in this area. Mangrove forests, which consist of two species of grey mangroves and loop-root mangroves, are also spread in this area. The mangrove forest habitat is located between the tides of the seas.

Experts believe that urban and industrial effluents from desalination plants increase the salinity of the Persian Gulf, in addition to climate change, which has destroyed coral reefs as seawater gets warmer, while the habitat and breeding ground of three-quarters of marine species is among the coral reefs.

In the last 30 years, the Persian Gulf has lost its ability to rebuild due to unsustainable exploitation.

How wetlands are linked to our climate

Although wetlands cover less than 4% of the Earth's surface, 40% of all animal species live or reproduce in them. One-third of all organic matter on our planet is stored in places like the gigantic Pantanal wetland in western Brazil, the Sudd floodplain in southern Sudan or the Wasjogan Marsh in western Siberia.

Wetlands filter, store and supply the planet with water and food — more than a billion people worldwide depend on them for sustenance, EcoWatch reported.



They also play a key role in regulating the planet's climate, according to James Dalton of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), an umbrella organization of numerous international governmental and non-governmental organizations.

Globally, peatlands and peat soils store twice as much carbon as the total biomass of all the world's forests combined.

From storing CO2 to releasing it

Dams, groundwater usage, increasing water pollution, and industrial and agricultural production have reduced wetlands worldwide by 35% since 1970. Latin America tops the table with an estimated 60% of areas destroyed — not including losses in the Orinoco River region of Colombia and Venezuela and the Amazon. In Asian countries about a third of all wetlands have been destroyed and in Africa more than 40% have been lost.

The biggest contributor to rising water stress worldwide is agriculture. According to World Bank figures, 70% of the annual drinking water demand flows into agriculture. Much of the water is used to raise livestock and grow livestock feed, such as soybeans.

The draining of areas for peat extraction is doubly damaging to the climate. Not only is CO2 storage capacity destroyed but, "When you drain these lands, you also release the gases that are stored in these areas," Dalton warned. That includes methane, a gas that is particularly harmful to the climate.

As temperatures rise and wetlands dry out, they can go from vast greenhouse gas stores to greenhouse gas sources. When they are still wet, they store carbon. But if they dry, decomposition of the biological material begins. This process releases carbon. This is also true of permafrost soils in Antarctica and Canada. As temperatures rise, the melting accelerates. Their disappearance would release about as much CO2 as if the United States continued burning fossil fuel at the current annual rate until 2100. Record temperatures in Siberia last year also caused huge fires on peat soils. Burning peat releases 10 to 100 times more CO2 than burning trees.

Can lost wetlands be restored?

The process of restoring destroyed wetlands is long and costly.

After almost 10 years, some 600 hectares (148 acres) of salt marshes and parts of a natural lagoon in the east of the UK were restored in 2018. More than 500 years ago, people drained the area for agriculture, largely destroying the natural wetland. Aside from providing a natural habitat for countless plants and animals, the wetland eases the pressure on the water conservation dams. The value to coastal protection alone is estimated at a billion pounds.



Every action has a reaction. We have one planet; one chance.

LET'S LEARN PERSIAN

(Part 123)

(Source: saadifoundation.ir)

جُمعه‌ی گُذشتِه آسمانِ تهران صاف بود. هَوا نِه گرم بود و

نِه سَرْد. آن‌اهیتا، آدرین و هاروکا برای گَردِش به پارکِ

مِلّت در شَمالِ تهران رفتند. بسیاری از مَرَدَم، زن و مَرَد،

کوچک و بزرگ، مَخصوصاً در روزهای تعطیل، برای

گَردِش و بازی به این پارک می‌روند.

دخترها اَوّل در خیابان‌های پارک کمی گَردِش کردند.

باغچه‌ها پُر از گُل‌های سَرخ، زَرَد، سَیِّد، آبی و بَنفش بود.

خیابان‌ها هم دِرختانِ سَبز و قَشَنگی داشت. آن‌ها بعد به

دِیدن دریاچه و زَمینِ بازی رفتند و از تماشای بازی

بچّه‌ها لَذّت بُردند. وقتی که خَسْتِه شدند زیر دِرختی

نِشستند؛ حَرف زَدَند، خَندیدند و شیرینی خوردند.

آن‌اهیتا گُفت: 'چه پارکی! چه هوای خوبی!'

هاروکا گُفت: 'چَندَر بزرگ است! چه گُل‌هایی دارد.'

Iran has capacity to export homegrown COVID-19 vaccine



1 → Shانهساز went on to say that the first batch of the Russian-made vaccine, Sputnik V, will be imported in the coming days. Iran is the sixteenth country that has ordered to buy the vaccine, he added.

In January 2019, Shانهساز said that the Iranian pharmaceutical industry and scientists are capable of producing any kind of medicine over a two-year period.

Health Minister Saeed Namaki said in December 2019 that some 97 percent of the whole medicine consumed in the country is produced domestically and only 3 percent is imported.

COVIRAN BAREKAT, the first coronavirus vaccine made by Iranian researchers of the Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam, was unveiled and

injected into three volunteers during a ceremony on December 29, 2020.

President Hassan Rouhani has said the government is trying its best to start mass vaccination against the coronavirus by the next two months with the priority given to medical staff and high-risk individuals.

Kianoush Jahanpour, spokesman for Iran's Food and Drug Administration, has said that Iran and Cuba have formed a 'strategic alliance' through working jointly on a project for producing a potential coronavirus vaccine.

He touched on an agreement signed by the Pasteur Institute of Iran and the Finlay Institute of Cuba which allows the two countries to move faster toward realizing the goal of 'immunization against coronavirus'.

Jobless rate drops by 1.2% in autumn yr/yr

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — The unemployment rate in Iran stood at 9.4 percent in autumn, a 1.2 percent decrease compared to 10.6 percent the same season last year, deputy interior minister Babak Dinparast said on Wednesday, IRIB reported.

Six provinces, namely West Azarbaijan, Khuzestan, Qazvin, Kordestan, Hormozgan, and Hamedan experienced a rise in the unemployment rate, but the other 25 provinces saw a drop in the unemployment rate, he explained.

Last year's total employed population was at 24.27 million, nearly 430,000 more than the year before, according to the Statistical Center of Iran.

Also, out of a total of 61.6 million people aged 15 and above last year, about 44.1 percent are in the active population group and 55.9 percent are the economically inactive population who are neither in employment nor unemployed.

In addition, 89.3 percent of the active population was employed while 10.7 percent of whom were unemployed.



According to statistics, the service sector has the largest share of employment with

52.7 percent, then comes to the industrial and agriculture with a share of 31.7 and 15.6 percent, respectively.

The unemployment rate for young people aging 15-24 indicates that 25.7 percent of the active population was unemployed in the winter, which shows a 2.4 percent decline compared to the same period last year.

A study of the unemployment rate of the population aging 18-35 also shows that in the winter, 17.8 percent of the active population was unemployed, which has decreased by 1.6 percent compared to that of a year ago.

Air pollution may have a detrimental effect on people's cognitive skills

A greater exposure to air pollution at the very start of life was associated with a detrimental effect on people's cognitive skills up to 60 years later, a research has found.

Researchers at the University of Edinburgh tested the general intelligence of more than 500 people aged approximately 70 years using a test they had all completed at the age of 11 years.

The participants then repeated the same test at the ages of 76 and 79 years.

A record of where each person had lived throughout their life was used to estimate the level of air pollution they had experienced in their early years.

The team used statistical models to analyze the relationship between a person's exposure to air pollution and their thinking skills in later life.

They also considered lifestyle factors, such as socio-economic status and smoking.

Findings showed exposure to air pollution in childhood

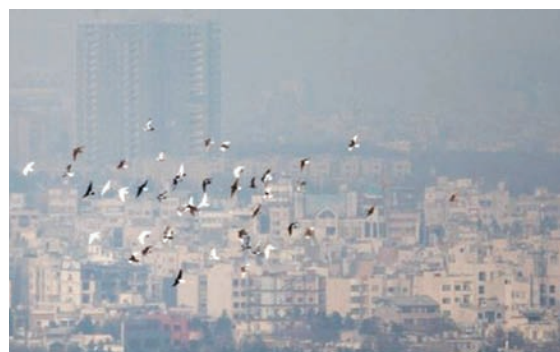
had a small but detectable association with worse cognitive change between the ages of 11 and 70 years.

This study shows it is possible to estimate historical air pollution and explore how this relates to cognitive ability throughout life, researchers say.

Researchers say until now it has not been possible to explore the impact of early exposure to air pollution on thinking skills in later life because of a lack of data on air pollution levels before the 1990s when routine monitoring began.

For this study researchers used a model called the EMEP4UK atmospheric chemistry transport model to determine pollution levels -- known as historical fine particulate matter (PM2.5) concentrations -- for the years 1935, 1950, 1970, 1980, and 1990. They combined these historical findings with contemporary modeled data from 2001 to estimate life course exposure

The participants were part of the Lothian Birth Cohort 1936 study, a group of individuals who were born in 1936



and took part in the Scottish Mental Survey of 1947.

Since 1999, researchers have been working with the Lothian Birth Cohorts to chart how a person's thinking power changes over their lifetime.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → چ

Health ministry pursuing to provide medicine for SMA patients

The Ministry of Health is trying to provide medicines for patients with spinal muscular atrophy (SMA) and other rare diseases, IRIB news agency reported on Friday.

Some medicines, especially those needed for SMA patients and certain rare diseases which are only made by American pharmaceutical companies, are not imported to the country, Health Minister Saeed Namaki said.

"I wrote two letters to World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom, over the past few days, and also to some NGOs hoping that we would be able to resolve the issue," Namaki noted.

He added that medicine provision for all patients have been hindered, but it can be said that this year's medicine shortage is one-third of last year's.

پیگیری وزارت بهداشت برای تهیه داروی بیماران SMA

وزیر بهداشت، درمان و آموزش پزشکی گفت در تلاش هستیم داروی بیماران مبتلا به SMA و بیماری‌های صعب‌العلاج دیگر را تأمین کنیم.

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

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

INTERNATIONAL DAILY
www.tehrantimes.com

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» Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051603

» Printed at: Jame Jam Barta Borna - 44197737

Tehrantimes79

Tehrantimes79

Tehrantimes79

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



GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING



Be childlike with children.
Prophet Muhammad (S)

ICRO, Alija Izetbegovic Foundation sign MOU

CULTURE d e s k **TEHRAN** – A memorandum of understanding (MOU) has been signed between Iran’s Islamic Culture and Relations Organization (ICRO) and the Alija Izetbegovic Foundation in the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo.

Based on the MOU, which was inked by Iran’s cultural attaché in Bosnia, Amirhossein Nuri, and Alija Izetbegovic Museum director Nada Berberovic-Dizdarevic during a meeting, both sides agreed to expand cultural and academic cooperation, the ICRO announced in a press release published on Wednesday.

The secretary-general of the foundation, Muhamed Mulahmetovic, and Iran’s ambassador to Bosnia, Reza Qelichkhan, were also in attendance at the meeting.

The Alija Izetbegovic Foundation is a non-profit organization that works in cooperation with other organizations to implement social initiatives and cultural programs in accordance with the views and intellectual legacy of Alija Izetbegovic, the first president of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina.



Iranian Ambassador Reza Qelichkhan (2nd L) presents a carpet tableau bearing an image of the former president of Bosnia, Alija Izetbegovic, and Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei to the Alija Izetbegovic Foundation in Sarajevo.

The director of the museum said that they are planning to establish a Persian department as the first bilateral project with Iran’s cultural office.

Mulahmetovic also said that the foundation is actually the personal house of the late president Alija Izetbegovic where his memorabilia, awards and other personal items are being preserved.

The late president’s son Bakir Izetbegovic, also present, said that the museum was the home and office of his father during the last years of his life.

Qelichkhan called the late president a national hero for his country and an inspiring figure in the world of Islam, adding that preserving the spiritual works of the president is necessary both for his country and Iran.

The foundation was established with the aim of contributing to the progress of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the well-being of its peoples and citizens on the principles of freedom, equality, plurality and respect for diversity, connecting and promoting the intellectual potential of the society, developing awareness of the importance of peace, nonviolence and social solidarity.

Iranian publisher to review Mario Vargas Llosa’s “Harsh Times”

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** – Setara, the Iranian publisher of the Persian version of Peruvian writer Mario Vargas Llosa’s “Harsh Times”, plans to organize a review session of the novel.

The review session will be held on Thursday at 4 pm, the publisher has announced.

Translator Saeid Matin, editor Sayeh Eqtasadinia and literary critic Farzaneh Fathi will attend the session.

“Harsh Times” is the true story of Guatemala’s political turmoil of the 1950s as only a master of fiction can tell it.

Guatemala, 1954: The military coup perpetrated by Carlos Castillo Armas and supported by the CIA topples the government of Jacobo Arbenz. Behind this violent act is a lie passed off as truth, which forever changes the development of Latin America: the accusation by the Eisenhower administration that Arbenz encouraged the spread of Soviet Communism in the Americas. Harsh Times is a story of international conspiracies and conflicting interests in the time of the Cold War, the echoes of which are still felt today.

In this thrilling novel, Vargas Llosa fuses reality with two fictions: that of the narrator, who freely re-creates characters and situations, and the one designed by those who would control the politics and the economy of a continent by manipulating its history.

“Harsh Times” is a gripping, revealing novel that directly confronts recent history. No one is better suited to tell this riveting story than Vargas Llosa, and there is no form better for it than his deeply textured fiction. Not since The Feast of the Goat, his classic novel of the downfall of Trujillo’s regime in the Dominican Republic, has Vargas Llosa combined politics, characters and suspense so unforgettably.

Insufficient funds key obstacle to war filmmaking: “The Sniper” director

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Ali Ghaffari, director of the war drama “The Sniper”, has said that lack of adequate funding is the main obstacle in the way of the directors trying to make films on the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war.

“The Sniper” is the latest film by Ghaffari who has portrayed Abdorrasul Zarrin, one of the most lethal snipers in the Iranian forces who killed over 2000 Iraqi invaders during the war.

The movie is competing in the official section of the 39th Fajr Film Festival, which is currently underway across Iran.

Speaking in a press conference on Tuesday after a screening of the movie, Ghaffari said that there is a reluctance on the part of directors to make films on the war and that the logistics of making such films requires extremely large sums. Consequently, the financial problems facing film producers and companies over the past few years discourage them to show interest in war stories.

He said that the accessories necessary for making a war film are not available in the market, and filmmakers need the governmental organizations to intervene to provide them.

He also lamented that he has been facing problems to prepare the military logistics for the project.



Kambiz Dirbaz acts in a scene from “The Sniper”.

Produce Ebrahim Asghar, who also attended the press conference, said that “The Sniper” has been produced with a budget of 100 billion rials (over \$400,000 based on Iran’s free-market exchange rate: \$1 = 240,000 rials).

He said that such a sum is not very high for such a project, and said, “I expect the governmental organizations to support projects on similar themes because I feel that they have a duty to do such projects.”

Iranian movies line up for Waco Family and Faith Film Festival



“Douch” by Amir Mashhadiabbas.

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — A lineup of Iranian movies will be competing in the Waco Family and Faith International Film Festival, which open today at the Hippodrome Theatre in Waco, Texas, the organizers have announced.

“Douch” and “Knockout”, both produced by the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults, will be competing in the official section of the festival.

Directed by Amir Mashhadiabbas, “Douch” is about

Gholamreza, a boy who does not have a bicycle to compete with his opponent. With his father facing many financial problems, Gholamreza is trying to find a way to pay his father’s debts. His efforts to gain the prize for making an illiterate person literate bring about certain events. He comes to know the only illiterate is an old woman in the village, and this fact causes a change in his goal and motivation to win the bicycle competition.

“Knockout” by Gholam Reza Ramezani tells the story of Bijan who is surprised how Mohammad and Amir become friends in only one day. Bijan, who is a bullying boy at school, is supposed to compete with Amir as a representative from his Taekwondo club. Mohammad becomes aware that Amir had a very serious disease, and if he is defeated by Bijan he will pass away. So he goes to Bijan and asks him to lose against Amir.

“Lottery” by Mohammad-Hossein Mahdavian tells the story of Amir-Ali and Nushin, who plan to get married against their families’ will. They both also dream of winning

the U.S. green card lottery.

The Iranian shorts “The Earth Is Small for Fish” by Ramtin Serajpur and “The Snail” by Sina Mohammadian will also be competing in the festival, which will run until February 6.

“The Earth Is Small for Fish” is about Mina and Daniel who get to know each other during an accident, which leads them to fall in love with each other.

“The Snail” revolves around two strangers who run into each other in a metro station, an obese man who is looking for a job and a girl who is deaf and has a strange story in her life. This simple encounter in the subway changes the lives of both of them.

Iranian director Fatemeh Hassani’s animated movie “White Graves” will also be screened at the event.

It tells the story of unmarked white gravestones, which draw a little boy’s attention. The little boy tries to find out the mystery behind those gravestones with the help of his father.

Tehran billboards to depict pediatric patients’ paintings

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Copies of a selection of top works from the 6th International Festival of Pediatric Patients’ Painting (IFPPP) will be showcased on billboards across Tehran.

Over 250 artworks by children from different countries will be displayed at Haft-e Tir Square for two months until Noruz, the director of the Tehran Municipality’s Beautification Organization, Barzin Zarghami, said in a press release published on Wednesday.

The 6th edition of the festival was held in Tehran with 250 paintings from the



The 6th International Festival of Pediatric Patients’ Painting (IFPPP) in Tehran.

U.S., Belarus, Spain, Azerbaijan, Turkey and dozens of other countries.

“Since the country has been dealing

with the COVID-19 pandemic, this exhibit can help people become more familiar with the children’s health, while we can also get ideas how to improve the health of children and society by these paintings,” he added.

The festival has been organized by the Health and Art (HEART) Group, a major member of the Universal Scientific Education and Research Network (USERN), which is active in organizing festivals and events focusing on the mental health of pediatric patients.

Nima Rezai, the director of the 5th edition of the festival, had earlier said

that they have plans to turn images from a collection of top entries into dolls and toys.

“The decision has been made after an agreement was signed between the organizers of the festival with Naghashim, a startup that turns children’s paintings into toys and dolls,” Rezai had said in August 2019.

Director of Naghashim Hamid Farzi also said, “The startup will give dolls and toys made based on images from the paintings to the children, and plans to display their paintings on our website to bring back smiles to their beautiful faces and inject hope into their hearts.”

13th Fajr Festival of Visual Arts to open Saturday

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** – The 13th Fajr Festival of Visual Arts will open in the Saba Art and Cultural Institute on Saturday with more female artists participating this year.

“Over 700 artworks by 511 artists will go on display. Coronavirus restrictions and the pandemic gave the artists more opportunities to create artworks,” the Visual Arts Office director, Hadi Mozaffari said in a press release published on Wednesday.

He added that some of the artworks on the theme of COVID-19 will be showcased in a special section.

He also said that a selection of artworks by top female artists from all the previous editions of the Fajr Festival of Visual Arts has been shown in the virtual exhibit “Shadow of Tooba” to celebrate the birthday of Hazrat Fatima (SA), the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad (S).

A total of 103 artworks by 92 female artists who have been the recipients of Golden Tooba awards from the festival have been displayed in the exhibit, which opened Tuesday.

The selection is available on the website and Instagram page of Iran’s Institute for Development of Contemporary Visual Arts.

The director of the festival Ali-Ashraf Sandoqabadi also

said that nine veteran Iranian artists will be honored with lifetime achievement awards this year.

The honorees are master of sculpture and ceramics Jafar Najibi, cartoonist Ahmad Abdollahinia, illustrator Saeid Razzaqi, painter Garnic Derhakuplan, miniaturist Khashayr Qazizadeh, graphic designer Ahmad Aqaqolizadeh, art researcher Yaqub Ajand, photographer Mohammad-Hossein Heidari and calligrapher Mohammad Salahshur.

A collection of 93 calligraphy works has been selected to compete in the festival this year.

“The works have been selected out of 511 works submitted by 239 calligraphers,” a member of the jury, Mojtaba Malekzadeh, said in a press release published last week.

He noted that most of the works are in the nastaliq style of calligraphy.

He also noted that what will make the final judgment difficult is that all styles of calligraphy must be judged together this year while in previous editions each style was judged in its own category.

“We understand current conditions in the country, and I think in the calligraphy section it would be better if we have more than one honoree,” he remarked.

Member of the cartoon section of the festival Masud Ziai

also announced that 49 cartoons will be competing in the cartoon section of the festival this year.

The collection has been selected out of 266 submissions by 100 artists.

In a press release published in late December, the organizers had called on Iranian artists who have been honored at international events to participate in the festival.

“Interested artists who have received international awards at the biennials and festivals in 2019 and 2020 will be attending the new section named ‘World Stars of Iranian Art’,” director of the festival Ali-Ashraf Sandoqabadi had said.

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

He also said that an exhibition of lithographs by curator Ahmad Vakili will also be held on the margins of the festival.

“The winners of the Visual Arts Festival for Youth over the past three years, as well as the winners from the two previous editions of the Fajr Festival of Visual Arts, the fifth Iranian International Calligraphy Biennial and the 11th National Biennial of Contemporary Iranian Ceramic Art, are also attending this year, and their works will also be judged for the final awards,” he concluded.

Sarah Crossan’s “Toffee” at Iranian bookstores

CULTURE d e s k **TEHRAN** — Irish writer Sarah Crossan’s novel “Toffee” has recently been published in Persian.

Ofoq is the publisher of the book translated into Persian by Keyvan Abidi Ashtiani.

“I am not who I say I am. Marla isn’t who she thinks she is. I am a girl trying to forget. Marla is a woman trying to remember,” reads the synopsis of the book.

Allison has run away from home and with nowhere to live finds herself hiding out in

the shed of what she thinks is an abandoned house. But the house isn’t empty. An elderly woman named Marla, with dementia, lives there, and she mistakes Allison for an old friend from her past called Toffee.

Allison is used to hiding who she really is, and trying to be what other people want her to be. And so, Toffee is who she becomes. After all, it means she has a place to stay. There are worse places she could be. But as their bond grows, and Allison discovers how much Marla needs a real friend, she begins to ask

herself - where is home? What is a family? And most importantly, who am I, really?

Toffee is divided into short pieces, a page or two in length; each of these is as satisfying as a smoothed piece of seaglass, strung together to create a spectrum of pain and consolation. The sparse words reveal the artistry in every phrase. The book is saturated by the sense of secrecy.

Though “Toffee” is a pain-filled story, it is also hopeful and profoundly moving, laced with old hurts and small kindnesses; it’s a book that changes its reader for the better.

Crossan graduated with a degree in philosophy and literature before training as an English and drama teacher at Cambridge University, and worked to promote creative writing in schools before leaving teaching to write full time.

She completed her masters in creative writing at the University of Warwick in 2003 and in 2010 received an Edward Albee Fellowship for writing.

“The Weight of Water” published by Bloomsbury in January 2012, is her first novel.