



Russia eyes close cooperation with EU on JCPOA, Lavrov says *Page 3*



Esteghlal earn a late win over struggling Nassaji: IPL *Page 3*



South Pars development nearly completed *Page 4*



Fajr Theater Festival's lineup features over ten plays on Commander Soleimani *Page 8*

Macron's gambit

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Iran to U.S.: Objecting to ICJ ruling 'not a good fresh start'

TEHRAN – Iran has criticized the U.S. for objecting the ruling by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in which it has ruled it can hear a case brought by Iran against the U.S. in a bid to end sanctions that the Trump administration reimposed in 2018 after pulling out of the 2015 nuclear deal.

A majority of a panel of 16 judges on Wednesday found that the ICJ, also known as the world court, has jurisdiction in the dispute.

However, the U.S. State Department

on Wednesday expressed displeasure over the ruling. The reaction by the State Department drew a response from Iran's Ambassador to the United Nations Majid Takht-Ravanhi, saying this is "not a good fresh start."

Hopes have risen for a revival of the JCPOA – the official name for the nuclear deal - now that the Trump administration is gone and the new Biden administration has said it will cherish multilateralism and diplomacy.

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IRIB official calls "Salman Farsi" international, interreligious series

TEHRAN – Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) deputy managing director has called the Iranian TV series "Salman Farsi" an international and interreligious project.

"This project needs IRIB's full support and we strongly back the international and interreligious series," Hamid Shahabadi said on Thursday in a visit to the series'

crew on location in the Iran Television and Cinema Town near Tehran.

The series, which is about the life story of Salman Farsi, the Iranian companion of the Prophet of Islam (S), is being made by Davud Mirbageri, who is best known for the series he had directed about the history of Islam.

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BY EBRAHIM FALLAHI

TEHRAN – Over the past few years and especially after the re-imposition of the U.S. sanctions on the Iranian economy, the country has started to follow new strategies in order to distance the economy from the reliance on foreign sources and also to empower the domestic productive sectors.

In this regard, since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2020), which is named

the year of "surge in production" by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Seyed Ali Khamenei, the government has urged various bodies and ministries to take the necessary measures for the realization of the year's motto.

Consequently, new programs have been defined based on which every week several major projects have gone operational by various ministries in a variety of sectors.

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Nuclear war with China, Russia is 'real possibility': U.S. commander

A top U.S. military commander has warned about the possibility of a nuclear war with Russia or China.

The head of U.S. Strategic Command (STRATCOM), Admiral Charles Richard, accused Moscow and Beijing of having "aggressively challenge international norms" and becoming a threat to his country and the region.

He wrote in the U.S. Naval Institute's monthly magazine, Proceedings that Washington needs to seek new ways to face what he called imminent threats from both military powers.

"There is a real possibility that a regional crisis with Russia or China could escalate quickly to a conflict involving nuclear weapons," he wrote.

Richard accused both Moscow and Beijing of conducting cyber-attacks and posing "threats in space," as well as heavily investing in advanced nuclear weapons.

He warned that the United States' "proba-

bility of nuclear use is low, but not 'impossible,' particularly in a crisis."

Richard pointed out that the Pentagon "must re-frame how it prioritizes the procurement of future capabilities" as Russia and China — whom he called "our nuclear-armed adversaries" — continue to "build capability and exert themselves globally."

"Our record in this regard is not stellar," he said. "We must ensure that all of our capabilities map to an overarching strategy."

The commander also accused Russia and China of destabilizing behaviors, which "if left unchecked, increase the risk of great power crisis or conflict."

Richard specifically warned about Russia's nuclear capabilities, including the development of "bombers, intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM) and submarines."

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Numerous development projects inaugurated across Iran to mark Ten-Day Fajr celebrations



Global Innovation Index puts Iran 4th in West Asia

BY MEHDI GARSHASBI

Iran has ranked 60th in the world and 4th in West Asia in the 2021 Global Innovation Index which analyzes dozens of criteria using seven equally weighted metrics, including research and development spending, manufacturing capability, and concentration of high-tech public companies.

The 2021 rankings reflect a world where the fight against Covid-19 has brought innovation to the fore — from government efforts to contain the pandemic, to the digital infrastructure that's allowed economies to work through it, and the race to develop vaccines that can end it.

Iran ranked fourth next to the United Arab Emirates (43), Qatar (52), and Saudi Arabia (53) in the ranking, Bloomberg reported.

The International Labor Organization, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the World Intellectual Property Organization, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization were the sources of information.

South Korea regained the crown from Germany, which dropped to fourth place. Singapore and Switzerland each moved up one spot to rank second and third.

Iran ranked 43rd among the 100 most vibrant clusters of science and technology (S&T) worldwide for the third consecutive year, according to the Global Innovation Index 2020 report.

The total ranking of Iran was 67 in the GII 2020 report, which was 61 in 2019.

Technology development in Iran

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

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

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

Tourism projects worth \$15.3m to be inaugurated in Yazd

TEHRAN – A total of 43 tourism-related projects, worth 645 billion rials (\$15.3 million at the official exchange rate of 42,000 rials per dollar), are scheduled to come on stream across the central Iranian province of Yazd on the occasion of Fajr celebrations (Jan. 31- Feb. 10, marking the victory anniversary of the Islamic Revolution).

Nineteen eco-lodge units, two traditional accommodation centers, seven traditional restaurants, two tourist complexes as well as seven projects in the field of cultural heritage, and six projects in the field of handicrafts will be inaugurated, a provincial tourism official said on Thursday.

The mentioned projects will come on stream in different cities across the province including Bafq, Taft, Ardakan, Meybod, and Mehriz, Mohammad Mirshamsi added.

The projects are expected to generate 247 job opportunities for the locals after being in-

augurated, the official added.

In July 2017, the historical structure of the city of Yazd was named a UNESCO World Heritage. Wedged between the northern Dasht-e Kavir and the southern Dasht-e Lut on a flat plain, the oasis city enjoys a very harmonious public-religious architecture that dates from different eras.

With its winding lanes, forest of badgirs (wind catchers), mud-brick houses, atmospheric alleyways, and centuries of history, Yazd is a delightful place to stay, referring to as a 'don't miss' destination by almost all travel associates in the region.

The UNESCO-registered capital city of Yazd is located close to the Spice and Silk Roads. It is a living testimony to the intelligent use of limited available resources in the desert for survival. Water is brought to the city by the qanat system. Each district of the city is built on a qanat and has a communal center.

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Tehran 'strongly' condemns Belgian court's ruling against Iranian diplomat

TEHRAN – Iran has categorically denounced a Belgian court's ruling against Iranian diplomat Assadollah Assadi.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh issued a statement on Thursday saying that Iran strongly condemns the 20-year jail term issued by a court in the Belgian city of Antwerp against the Iranian diplomat.

"As we have repeatedly announced earlier, all the procedures that have so far been taken against the diplomat, including his arrest, the case brought

against him or the conviction, were all unlawful and amounted to blatant violation of international law, especially the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, and the Islamic Republic of Iran will never recognize it," Khatibzadeh asserted.

"Unfortunately, Belgium and some [other] European countries have taken such illegal and unjustifiable actions [against Assadi] under the influence of the atmosphere that has been created by the hostile Mojahedin Kalk Organization terrorist group on Europe's soil," he continued.

Therefore, he added, they must be held accountable for their flagrant violation of the Iranian diplomat's rights, including the inhumane conditions of the time he faced under arrest in Germany and Belgium.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran reserves the right to resort to all possible legal and diplomatic means to realize the rights of Mr. Assadollah Assadi and to hold accountable the governments that have violated their international obligations," Khatibzadeh concluded.

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Cemetery of martyrs of divine religions flowered

Concurrent with the arrival of the 42 anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, the cemetery of Chaldeans in which the martyrs of divine religions are laid to rest were flowered. The flowering was done with observation of health protocols in view of the coronavirus pandemic on Thursday, February 4. The soldiers buried in the cemetery were mostly martyred during Saddam Hussein's war against Iran in the 1980s. It also includes those killed during the struggle against the despotic Pahlavi regime.

Biden faces difficult job to rebuild divided America: professor

BY MOHAMMAD MAZHARI

TEHRAN - An American professor is of the opinion that President Joe Biden has a long road to repair the deep-rooted division in America, especially when it comes to structural issues like racism, poverty, and Red-Blue division.

"Biden can undo many of Trump's executive orders - which he is trying to do - but he will have to push legislation through a deeply divided Congress, which will be very difficult," Professor Ronnie Lipschutz tells the Tehran Times.

Many observers say that Biden's victory in the November presidential election would not heal the wounds of division in America.

Donald Trump and his supporters' efforts to cast doubt on the integrity of the election have further exposed the depth of divisions.

"The fact that 74 million voted for Trump and most of the Republicans are terrified of getting on his wrong side, and there will be (already is) a lot of resistance and attacks on Biden's 'socialist' agenda," argues Lipschutz, who is also a president and co-director of Sustainable Systems Research Foundation.

The following is the text of the interview:
Do you believe Biden can make a meaningful change in America and contain the deep divide in the society?

I am skeptical, notwithstanding his good intentions. Biden can undo many of Trump's executive orders—which he is trying to do—but he will have to push legislation through a deeply divided Congress, which will be very difficult.

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EU's Borrell: We need to move from 'maximum pressure' to 'maximum diplomacy' toward Iran

“All JCPOA participants are ready to engage,” EU chief diplomat says

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Josep Borrell, the European Union foreign policy chief, said on Thursday that it is high time the former Donald Trump administration's “maximum pressure” campaign against Iran is abandoned in favor of diplomatic engagement and interaction.

Borrell reminded how the Trump administration undermined the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers through his “maxim pressure” campaign against Tehran.

“We need to move from ‘maximum pressure’ to ‘maximum diplomacy’ through the JCPOA Joint Commission,” Borrell told Interfax news agency before making a trip to Moscow.

By the Joint Commission, the EU official, meant a mechanism that is joined by the signatories' representatives and monitors the deal's implementation.

Under the nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Iran was obligated to put limits on its nuclear activities in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions. The JCPOA was turned into international law as it was endorsed by UN Security Council Resolution 2231.

The JCPOA was signed between Iran, the 5+1 nations and the European Union in July 2015.

5+1 refers to the five permanent members of the UN Security Council — the U.S., Russia, China, Britain, France- and Germany.

Under his signature “maximum pressure” policy against Iran, Donald Trump withdrew Washington from the landmark deal and restored sweeping economic sanctions on Iran. His administration not only returned sanctions lifted under the JCPOA it also added new harsh ones.

His administration introduced a total ban on Iran's oil embargo, the main source revenue for Tehran. Despite pleas by the United Nations, the Trump administration even refused to relax sanctions against Iran as the Islamic Republic was fighting the coronavirus pandemic.

The Trump administration also threatened third countries with “secondary sanctions” if they violated the American bans. Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said in March 2020 that Trump's “economic terrorism” is supplanted by “medical terrorism” against Iran.

“U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA and ‘maximum pressure’ policy, including secondary sanctions, had a negative impact,” the chief European diplomatic and security official regretted. “The JCPOA could not reach its full potential - including in the economic field,” Borrell added.

John Tirman, an executive director and principal research scientist at the Center for International Studies, says that Iran could resist America's “maximum pressure” successfully while Europe failed to help Tehran.

“Iran has done well to resist Trump and Pompeo's ill-conceived maximum pressure,” John Tirman tells the Tehran Times.

The CIS researcher also said Trump followed “braggadocio in foreign affairs.”

Borrell said Trump's course of action has to be set aside in order “to try and build a new positive momentum and to ensure once again full implementation of the agreement, including by Iran.”

According to Press TV, Borrell, meanwhile, reminded how Trump successor Joe Biden has voiced a willingness to return the U.S. to the JCPOA, saying, “The new U.S. administration has clearly indicated a new approach and all JCPOA participants are ready to engage.”

Iran says the United States' potential return to the JCPOA could only be meaningful if Washington lifted all of the illegal sanctions it has imposed on Iran.

Even the supposed expression of interest in rejoining the JCPOA has not been followed by a favorable gesture on the part of Washington.

With respect to the issue of who makes the first move to revive the JCPOA, Foreign Minister Zarif noted that EU foreign policy chief can “choreograph” the process of reviving the deal.

Zarif made the suggestion in an interview with the CNN on Monday.

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.

Exactly one year after Trump quit the deal and started to implement his “maximum pressure” campaign against Iran, the Islamic Republic announced that its “strategic patience” is over and started gradually remove limits on its nuclear program at bi-monthly intervals. At the time Iran announced that if the remaining parties to the JCPOA, especially the European trio – Germany, France and Britain –, protect Iran from the sanctions Iran will reverse its decisions.

Asked just how swiftly Iran could scale back its uranium enrichment program to comply with the nuclear deal if the U.S. lifts sanctions, Zarif said, “8,000 pounds of enriched uranium can go back to the previous amount in less than a day.”

Zarif, a former Iranian ambassador to the UN, said that Iran has acted in accordance with dispute mechanisms written into the JCPOA, since the U.S. withdrawal. “Iran used the mechanisms in the nuclear agreement in order to limit its cooperation. If you read paragraph 36, we acted in strict accordance with the nuclear agreement,” he said.

Rob Malley, the new U.S. Iran envoy, spoke with British, French and German officials on January 28 as the United States explores how to revive the 2015 nuclear deal, two sources familiar with the matter said on January 29.

“It was to take stock of the dossier and to assess what our state of mind is,” a European diplomatic source said of Malley's conversation with the British, French and German Foreign Ministry political directors, according to Reuters.

A second source confirmed that the discussion took place but offered no details.

The talks with the British, French and German officials are likely only the first step in consultations that will ultimately bring in China and Russia, and eventually Iran itself.

Hatami hopes to boost military ties between Iran and India

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Brigadier General Amir Hatami, Iran's defense minister, says Iran and India enjoy great capacities to promote defense and military ties given the many affinities that the two states share, including their position on various international issues.

In a meeting on Wednesday with Indian Chief of Defense Staff General Bipin Rawat in the city of Bangalore, Hatami said, “Tehran and New Delhi have cultural and historical commonalities, common approaches toward many regional and international issues and geographical capacities, particularly in the Indian Ocean.”

Highlighting the capacities of both states to expand ties, the Iranian defense chief noted, “These capacities can play a significant role in expanding the two countries' relations, particularly in the defense and military sectors.”

The Iranian minister participated in the opening ceremony of Aero India 2021, which started at an air force base in Bangalore on Wednesday.

For his part, General Rawat hailed the current visit by the high-ranking Iranian defense delegation to India and its participation in the inauguration of the 13th Aero India air show, saying this shows that the two countries have the will to strengthen



cooperation.

As one of the largest states in the IOR, Iran has over the past years expanded its presence in the northern part of the Indian Ocean, which covers approximately one-fifth

of the total ocean area of the world stretching between the southern tips of Africa and Australia.

The Islamic Republic's naval forces usually hold military drills in the strategic

waters with the aim of both increasing their defense readiness against potential threats and ensuring the security of international trade in the region.

Since the termination of the UN arms embargo on Iran in 2020, the Islamic Republic intends to buy advanced weapons from Asian states notably India and China.

Addressing the Bangalore Air Show on Friday, Iranian Air Force Commander Amir Aziz Nasirzadeh also said his Air Force has started a speedy campaign toward building drones (unmanned aerial vehicles) through using nanotechnology and artificial intelligence.

Noting that the Air Force is the most concrete example of national power in the air and space, the commander said the quick endeavor by Iran to gain access to drones with such a technology is the right of Iran.

Speaking the air show through a video-conference from Tehran, the Air Force chief also said, “On behalf of the Air Force of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the great and ancient nation of Iran who is gifted with a shining civilization I wish God to bestow health to the entire Indian armed forces.”

He concluded his remarks by wishing a world free from threat, dominance and full[as1] of justice and peace.

IRGC general: Russia has admitted Iran has changed global equations

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Brigadier General Hossein Nejat, a commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), says the last year's retaliatory missile strike on the U.S. military base of Ain al-Assad in western Iraq was so impressive that Russia admitted that Iran has changed the world equations, according to Tasnim news agency.

In a military gathering on Friday, General Nejat said the U.S. hid the reality of what had happened in Ain al-Assad air base after it was targeted with a barrage of IRGC missiles in January 2020 in retaliation for the assassination of top Iranian commander Lt. General Qassem Soleimani.

On January 3 last year, former U.S. president Donald

Trump ordered drone strikes that assassinated Lieutenant General Soleimani. Five days later, Iran retaliated by firing dozens of missiles at the air base in al-Anbar Governorate.

According to the Pentagon, over 100 American soldiers suffered traumatic brain injuries as a result of the missile strike against the airbase.

Iran to U.S.: Objecting to ICJ ruling ‘not a good fresh start’

I → “New US admin purports to support multilateralism, yet is “disappointed” by @CIJ_ICJ rejection of its objection to case on US sanctions (on basis it is outside Court's jurisdiction),” Takht Ravanchi wrote on his Twitter account.

By quitting the 2015 nuclear deal, the Trump administration violated international law as the agreement is endorsed by UN Security Council Resolution 2231.

“US also violating UNSCR 2231 with illegal sanctions on Iran. Not a good fresh start,” Takht-Ravanchi remarked.

Lawyers for the U.S. argued at hearings last year that the case should be thrown out by the ICJ for lack of jurisdiction and admissibility but the court's president, Abdulgawi Ahmed Yusuf, said that judges rejected U.S. arguments that Iran could not base claims at the ICJ on a 1955 bilateral friendship pact, known as the 1955 Treaty of Amity.

Judges found the treaty, signed decades before Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution and the sharp deterioration of ties with the U.S., could be used as a basis for the court's jurisdiction.

“The court unanimously rejects the preliminary objections to its jurisdiction raised by the United States of America according to which the subject matter of the dispute does not relate to the interpretation or ap-

plication of the Treaty of Amity,” Yusuf said, according to al Jazeera.

‘Legal victory’

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif referred to Wednesday's decision as another legal victory for Iran.

“Iran has always fully respected international law. High time for the US to live up to its international obligations,” Zarif tweeted.

Iran has already filed a suit in the ICJ against the U.S. reimposition of unilateral sanctions as Washington withdrew unilaterally on May 8, 2018 from the nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Earlier on Wednesday, the Iranian embassy in The Hague tweeted, “Today, the ICJ strongly rejected the U.S. preliminary objections and reaffirmed its jurisdiction to hear the case brought by Iran against the U.S. on violations of the 1955 Treaty.”

“Previously in this case, the ICJ rendered an Order obligating the U.S. to remove any impediment arising from the measures announced on 8 May 2018 to the free exportation to the territory of Iran of medicines and medical devices; foodstuffs and agricultural commodities,” Iran's diplomatic mission added.

Moreover, Saeed Khatibzadeh, spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

said that the world's top court had issued a decision in the case of violations of the 1955 Treaty of Amity, saying that the court rejected preliminary U.S. objections and considered itself competent to investigate the lawsuit against the U.S. government and thus the case would enter into substantive proceedings.

The ICJ issued its verdict in the case of violations of the 1955 Treaty of Amity on Feb. 3, 2021, Khatibzadeh said.

He stated that based on the evidence and legal defenses presented to the court by the legal team of the Islamic Republic of Iran with the participation of the Center for International Legal Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and other lawyers and advisors, the court rejected preliminary U.S. objections and considered itself competent to investigate the lawsuit filed against the U.S. government and thus the case would enter into substantive proceedings.

The second legal success was achieved in the proceedings of this case, which relates to the reimposition and escalation of inhumane U.S. sanctions against Iranians since May 8, 2018, with the issuance of this decision, he noted.

He further noted that the court issued an interim order in favor of Iran requiring the United States to remove any obstacles

arising from sanctions imposed on Iran in the field of medicine and medical items, food and agricultural products, parts and services related to civil aviation safety previously on October 3, 2018, but the U.S. has so far refused to comply with the court's order in line with the policy of “maximum pressure” and economic terrorism against the Iranian government and nation.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has informed the court of the issue of pursuing the implementation of the interim order and its violations by the United States, now, with a court decision issued, there is an opportunity for the court to review the U.S. failure to enforce the interim order during the substantive proceedings, he reiterated.

“Although the verdict issued today relates to a competent phase, it shows the legitimacy of the Islamic Republic of Iran's demands at this stage of the proceedings, and with this success, the case will enter the final proceedings of the case,” he noted.

Khatibzadeh stressed, “The use of international legal mechanisms is part of the approach of the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the application of the rights of the noble nation of Iran in the international arena, which has always been on the agenda of the ministry.”

Rouhani praises legal victory of Iranian diplomats over U.S.

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Hassan Rouhani, Iran's president, on Thursday welcomed the International Court of Justice's ruling on a lawsuit pertaining to the U.S. violation of the 1955 Treaty of Amity as a “beautiful and brilliant victory” for the Iranian nation over a superpower, according to Tasnim.

Speaking during inauguration of several industrial projects via a videoconference, Rouhani said, “The great Iranian nation has won a beautiful and absolutely brilliant victory against a superpower after the International Court of Justice dismissed the U.S. objection that the court lacks jurisdiction to hear the lawsuit Tehran has brought against Washington for breach of the 1955 Treaty of Amity and Economic Relations.”

“Although the U.S. had mobilized thousands of experts to win this political war, the Iranian nation won the case



with reliance on its jurists and diplomats,” he added. He also emphasized “it shows Iran's capability to win great victories in all arenas.”

Macron seeks to add Israel and Saudi Arabia to negotiation with Iran

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — French President Emmanuel Macron has praised the U.S. decision to engage with Iran and said Saudi Arabia and Israel must ultimately be involved in the negotiation with Iran, according to Reuters.

Speaking with the Washington-based Atlantic Council think tank in a video conference from Paris, Macron noted, “We do need to finalize, indeed, a new negotiation with Iran.”

“I will do whatever I can to support any initiative from the U.S. side to reengage a ... dialogue and I will be here ... I was here, and available two years ago and one and a half (years) ago, to try to be an honest broker and a committed broker in this dialogue,”

he added.

Iran has already objected to the inclusion of Saudi Arabia to the JCPOA let alone Israel which Iran does not recognize and that it opposes a nuclear weapons free zone in West Asia.

In remarks on Wednesday, President Hassan Rouhani said there will be no changes to the content of the JCPOA and that no other country will be added to it.

Rouhani 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 (JCPOA). In the beginning of the eleventh government, we made efforts during the first two years” to reach the multilateral agreement.

In 2018, former U.S. President Donald Trump quit the JCPOA, which was designed to restrict Iran's peaceful program in return for the lifting of U.S. and other sanctions. His successor, President Joe Biden, has said that if Iran returns to “strict” compliance with the deal, the U.S. will too.

The Trump administration restored the U.S. sanctions that Obama removed in 2015. Trump and his secretary of state Mike Pompeo perused a “maximum pressure” campaign against Iran with the aim of strangulating the Iranian economy.

In 2019, French president sought to bring Washington and Tehran back to the negotiating table and to provide opportunity for wider future talks.



Macron claimed it was time for a new negotiation because Iran was closer to a nuclear weapon. He also said the international community has to deal with Iran's missile program.

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — French President Emmanuel Macron has once again called for broader negotiations with Iran and involvement of Iran's archrivals in the negotiations, a stance that could derail the very much anticipated talks between Iran and the West even before they go ahead.

In a repetition of his last week's remarks that elicited a strong response from Iran, the French president called for a "new negotiation" with Iran to address thorny issues such as Iran's defensive missile program and its regional activities. He said Saudi Arabia and Israel should be involved in such negotiations while expressing readiness to play the role of "honest broker" in facilitating these negotiations.

"I do welcome a willingness to re-engage a dialogue with Iran. And this is a common challenge for peace and security in [the] Middle East [West Asia]. I will do whatever I can to support any initiative from the U.S. side to re-engage demanding dialogue. I will be here, where I was available one and half year ago to try to be an honest broker, a committed broker in this dialogue. But I do believe that we do need to finalize indeed a new negotiation with Iran," Macron said in a conversation with the Atlantic Council on Thursday.

He pointed out that U.S. President Joe Biden would have a "critical role" in the negotiation with Iran for two reasons: first, because Iran is allegedly closer to developing a nuclear weapon than it was before the signing of the 2015 nuclear deal.

"Second, because we have to address the ballistic missile issue and we have to address the stability of the region. This is a comprehensive agenda. This needs to be negotiated now because this is the right timing," Macron claimed.

He added, "We have to find a way to involve



Macron's gambit

in this discussion Saudi Arabia and Israel because they are some of the key partners of the region directly interested in the outcome."

The comments, which were unsolicited, come amid heated debates in foreign policy circles in the U.S. and Europe about how to deal with the Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

During his election campaign, Joe Biden had vowed to rejoin the JCPOA on the condition that Iran resumes strict compliance with the deal. He reaffirmed this position after winning the U.S. presidential election in November. However, the new

U.S. president has refused to articulate his strategy in this regard.

Meanwhile, France along with Germany and the UK have sought to strike a tough tone on Iran in a bid to revive the JCPOA and "improve" it in the process, something Iran strongly opposes.

In addition, France has moved to include Saudi Arabia and Israel in the coming negotiations between Iran and the West, a move that will not only endanger the renewed diplomatic efforts to revive the JCPOA but will highly likely kill the deal in its entirety.

While Biden officials vaguely said that the U.S. will consult with its regional allies

before rejoining the JCPOA, France went so far as to include these allies in the upcoming nuclear negotiations even though Iran has voiced opposition to such an idea.

Following last week's comments of Macron on the need to involve Saudi Arabia in the expected nuclear talks between Iran and the West, a senior Iranian lawmaker strongly rejected the comments.

"Saudi Arabia has nothing to do with the nuclear agreement," Abolfazl Amouei, the spokesman for the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, told the Qatari-owned Al Arabi Al Jadid newspaper, declaring Iran's opposition to the inclusion of Riyadh in any possible talks with the parties to the JCPOA.

Macron is expected to pay a visit to Saudi Arabia soon, where he will mostly likely discuss the issue of reviving the JCPOA. If he does so, he will be throwing a wrench in the works of the Biden administration's efforts to resuscitate the JCPOA even before they start simply because Iran has said time and again that it will not accept any expansion of the nuclear talks' format.

Whether Macron would proceed with his idea remains an open question. It may turn out to be an opening gambit aimed to extract more nuclear concessions from Iran or simply set the stage for a broader negotiation with Iran, but either way, he will complicate things and make them more difficult than ever.

Also, it remains to be seen whether France would succeed in convincing other JCPOA parties and the U.S. into pursuing its agenda. On Friday, the foreign ministers of France, Germany, the UK and the U.S. held a meeting to discuss issues related to the JCPOA.

Regardless of what the foreign ministers discussed in the Friday meeting, any effort to expand the deal or add new members to it will be counterproductive.

Russia eyes close cooperation with EU on JCPOA, Lavrov says

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The chief Russian diplomat has said his country would continue to work with the European Union on the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran and hopes that the United States would decide to return to the deal in the near future.

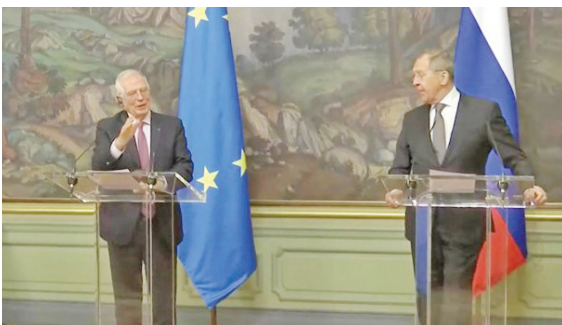
Speaking at a joint news conference with European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell in Moscow, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Friday that the Kremlin is ready to work with the EU on implementing the Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"We have entered a difficult period concerning the Iran deal, and everything depends on the actions of the United States. We hope that the United States will soon be able to explain its actions concerning Iran," Lavrov said, according to Fars News.

He pointed out that Russia and the EU will continue to work with the Europeans on the JCPOA.

"We [Russia and the European Union] continue to work together to ensure the implementation of the JCPOA. We hope that this U.S. administration will be able to decide whether to return to this important international document. This agreement is a means to strengthen the non-proliferation regime and reduce regional tensions," Lavrov continued.

According to UrduPoint, Lavrov said, "We are approaching



a critical moment. We are counting on the U.S. administration, as the country that negotiated and concluded the JCPOA, to decide the extent to which it can return to the most important international document, which has been recognized as an achievement of multilateral diplomacy and has served as an example of the efforts that need to be made both to defuse tensions and to strengthen the nuclear nonproliferation regime."

On the other hand, Borrell also expressed Europe's readiness to work with Russia on international issues such as the JCPOA.

"On the international arena, I think that the minister

has made reference to that, there are places and issues on which we can also work together: the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is a good example," the chief EU diplomat said.

Borrell called for maximum diplomacy with Iran before making a trip to Moscow.

"We need to move from 'maximum pressure' to 'maximum diplomacy' through the JCPOA Joint Commission," Borrell told Interfax news agency.

He reminded how former U.S. President Donald Trump undermined the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers through his "maximum pressure" campaign against Tehran.

Earlier on Tuesday, Russian state media reported that Maria Zakharova also expressed Moscow's readiness to work with the United States on salvaging the Iran nuclear deal.

"We look forward to working closely with the members of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) to achieve this goal (preserving the JCPOA) and to engage constructively with the new U.S. administration in this regard," Zakharova was quoted by Sputnik News as saying.

On Wednesday, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov and Deputy Secretary General for Political Affairs of the European External Action Service Enrique Mora discussed the JCPOA in a meeting in Moscow.

Tehran 'strongly' condemns Belgian court's ruling against Iranian diplomat

1→ The Belgian court claimed that Assadi and three others sought to kill top leaders of the MKO during a rally near Paris in 2019.

Iran has called the bomb plot allegations a "false flag" stunt perpetrated by

the MKO.

A spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry told ISNA that Assadi was the victim of a "Western trap," and that his diplomatic immunity had been violated.

At the time that Assadi was arrested,

Bahram Ghassemi, then a spokesman for the Iranian Foreign Ministry and now Iran's ambassador to France, said he deeply regretted the decision, saying it was part of a "staged conspiracy" to sever relations between Europe and Iran.



Araghchi warns of 'forces of darkness' trying to prevent JCPOA revival

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Seyed Abbas Araghchi has warned that "forces of darkness" comprised of regional and extra-regional forces are hell-bent on preventing the revival of a 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and major world powers.

"All parties must beware of those who have been hostile to this nuclear deal right from the start and have repeatedly acknowledged it. These forces include the Zionist regime [Israel], some Arab states, some groups inside America, and some groups in Europe who acted against the JCPOA right from the start and rejoiced at Trump's decision to withdraw the United States from the JCPOA. They are the sworn enemies of the Islamic Republic and thus can be called the forces of darkness," Araghchi said in remarks delivered at a gathering of Iranian entrepreneurs on Thursday.

He said these forces are working hard to destroy the Iranian nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"All these forces of darkness are determined to prevent the revival of the JCPOA. They are well aware that the Islamic Republic of Iran, which is moving so strongly into the future without the JCPOA, will become an undisputed power in the region and the world if it can strengthen its economy by relying on its own capabilities and by lifting sanctions. Everyone must be vigilant of the forces that are everywhere seeking to defeat this movement, and pursue their policies in the right and wise direction," the deputy foreign minister continued.

He said the revival of the nuclear deal is a "good thing" for Iran but "we are not begging for it."

He pointed out that the United States and its allies think that the JCPOA is useful in terms of maintaining security and strengthening non-proliferation efforts in the world.

The deputy foreign minister said they must return to their commitments under the deal and then "we will do the same thing."



"If this happens, no one will roll out the red carpet for them," Araghchi said, adding that the Islamic Republic has adopted measures to protect its dignity and prestige.

However he predicted that the revival of the JCPOA may happen in the coming weeks.

"If they are ready to change course, we will welcome it, and this is something that may happen in the coming weeks. It is also possible that the forces of darkness will try to prevent this from happening. The path of independence, dignity and honor is very important to us and there will be no change in this path," Araghchi pointed out.

The senior Iranian diplomat also welcomed the EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell's idea of pursuing "maximum diplomacy" instead of what came to be known as "maximum pressure."

"Mr. Borrell, the EU's senior foreign policy coordinator, is the coordinator of the implementation of the JCPOA. In an interview yesterday, he spoke of replacing maximum diplomacy with maximum pressure. Maximum diplomacy is definitely something we will welcome. Of course, it should be noted that this diplomacy will be successful when it leads to the complete restoration of a JCPOA from which noth-

ing has been reduced and to it nothing has been added," Araghchi said.

He added, "They must return to the JCPOA and fulfill their obligations, and the Islamic Republic of Iran is ready to do so. There is no way to achieve this goal other than maximum diplomacy."

Earlier on Monday, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif proposed that the EU foreign policy chief "choreograph" the process of reviving the JCPOA.

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 said in an interview with CNN's Christiane Amanpour late on Monday.

Borrell has responded positively to this offer by calling for maximum diplomacy between Iran and the United States to restore the deal.

He said on Thursday that the former Donald Trump administration's "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran should have long been abandoned in favor of diplomatic engagement and interaction.

Borrell reminded how former U.S. President Donald Trump undermined the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers through his "maximum pressure" campaign against Tehran.

"We need to move from 'maximum pressure' to 'maximum diplomacy' through the JCPOA Joint Commission," Borrell told Interfax news agency before making a trip to Moscow.

SPORTS

Esteghlal earn a late win over struggling Nassaji: IPL

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Esteghlal football team earned a late win over struggling Nassaji here at the Azadi Stadium in Matchday 14 of Iran Professional League (IPL) on Friday.

Farshid Bagheri scored the winner in the 86th minute with a fierce shot from edge of the area.

The Blues remain top of the table with 26 points, one point above Sepahan.

Earlier in the day, Sepahan defeated Zob Ahan 3-1 in Isfahan derby at the Fooladshahr Stadium. Sepahan striker Mohammad Mohebi gave the visiting the lead just two minutes into the match. Danial Esmaeilifar doubled Sepahan's advantage in the 78th minute on a counter attack. Hossein Shanani pulled a goal back two minutes later. Substitute Yasin Salami made it 3-1 in the injury time.

Sanat Naft and Foolad shared the spoils in a 1-1 draw in Abadan derby. Reza Khaleghifar headed home from Hassan Beitsaeid's cross in the 65th minute and Foolad Malian defender Moussa Coulibaly leveled the score eight minutes later.

Aluminum earned a late draw against Saipa in Arak. Mehrdad Heydari gave the visiting team the lead in the injury time with a header and Meysam Majidi equalized the match from a set-piece in the dying moments of the match.

Gol Gohar were held to a goalless draw by Naft Masjed Soleyman in Sirjan.

And rock-bottom Machine Sazi battled back from two goals down to draw 2-2 with Paykan in Tehran. Saman Fallah and Farzad Hatemi scored for Paykan but Mohammadamin Asadi and Peyman Babaei scored two goals within one minute. Paykan defender Fallah was sent off in the 75th minute after receiving his second yellow card.

Former Persepolis defender Ali Ansarian laid to rest

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Ex-Iran and Persepolis defender Ali Ansarian, who died of coronavirus, was laid to rest on Thursday.

He was buried at the Behesht-e Zahra Cemetery on the outskirts of the Iranian capital, Tehran.

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

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 and Ansarian's teammate.

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

Iranian Para athletes to partake at Dubai 2021 GP

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iranian Para athletics team will participate at the Dubai 2021 World Para Athletics Grand Prix.

The Grand Prix, which is also a qualifying competition for the Olympic Games, runs from Feb. 6 to 14.

Iran will send 16 Para athletes to the event.

Iranian Chef de Mission Hadi Rezaei has already said the nine Para athletes will be sent to Tokyo.

The Tokyo Paralympic Games are expected to take place from August 24 to September 5.

Infantino offers condolences on the passing of Ansarian

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — FIFA President Gianni Infantino has expressed his deep condolences to Iran Football Federation over the passing of former Iran and Persepolis defender Ali Ansarian.

Ansarian passed away at the age of 43 at the Farhikhtegan Hospital in Tehran, capital of Iran on Wednesday after losing battle with COVID-19.

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.

"Words seem inadequate to express the sadness I feel. Ansarian's legacy and his achievement, especially his personality, his work ethics and his human qualities will not be forgotten, and he will be truly missed."

"On behalf of the international football community, I wish to extend our deepest sympathy to the Iran Football Federation, and to his family, friends and loved ones," FIFA President Infantino said in his condolence message to Iran.

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 and Ansarian's teammate.



Sepahan remain top of Iran Volleyball Super League

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran Volleyball Super League leaders Sepahan stretched their winning streak to 12 matches on Friday.

Sepahan eased past Shahr-dari Qazvin in straight sets (28-26, 25-16, 25-18) in Tehran's Khaneh Volleyball.

The Isfahan-based volleyball team lead the table with 62 points, followed by Shahr-dari Urmia with 53 points.

Furthermore, Saipa defeated Rahyab Melal 3-1 (25-16, 25-18, 22-25, 25-15).

Shahr-dari Gonbad emerged victorious over Hoorsun 3-1 (25-21, 25-19, 25-27, 25-14) in Iran Volleyball Federation's Hall. Shahdab Yazd edged past Labanyat Haraz 3-2 (23-25, 25-16, 23-25, 25-14, 20-18) and moved to fourth place.

Renewable power generation capacity exceeds 850 MW

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — The capacity of Iran’s renewable power plants reached 859.17 megawatts (MW) in the tenth Iranian calendar month of Dey (December 21, 2020-January 19, 2021), IRNA reported on Thursday.

As reported, Iranian renewable power plants managed to produce 5.738 billion kilowatt-hours (Kwh) of electricity in the mentioned month, 50 percent (426.17 MW) of which was produced by solar power plants.



Wind power plants also accounted for 35 percent (303.18 MW) of the total output, followed by hydropower plants which had a 12-percent share (105.65 MW) of the total production.

Back in December 2020, Mohammad Satakin, who heads Iran’s Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization (SATBA), said the capacity of the country’s renewable power plants is going to reach 1,000 MW (one gigawatt) by the end of the current government’s incumbency (August 2021).

Also, Director General of SATBA Potential Assessment and Resource Evaluation Office Mitra Gholami has said that over the past three years, SATBA has successfully identified regions for the construction of 121,500 MW capacity of renewable power plants across the country by conducting potential assessment studies.

Overall, in the next five years, Iran is aiming for a 5,000 MW increase in renewable capacity to meet growing domestic demand and expand its presence in the regional electricity market.

According to SATBA, the number of small-scale solar power plants across the country which are used by households or small industries is also increasing noticeably as Iranian households and small industries are embracing the new technology with open arms and investors also seem eager for more contribution in this area.

Iran is also planning on expanding its presence in the region’s renewable energy market.

Iranian Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian said in December 2020 that the country has great potentials in the field of renewable energies and can have a significant role in developing the region’s market for such energies.

“Relying on the high potential of renewable energy sources, including solar, wind, biomass, geothermal, etc., the Energy Ministry has planned good measures in order to implement new policies for creating positive changes in the development of the country’s renewable energy sector,” the minister said.

TEDPIX drops 2.8% in a week

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), fell 2.8 percent in the past Iranian calendar week.

The index closed at 1.173 million points on Wednesday (the last working day of the week).

During the past week, the indices of Iran Khodro Group, Saipa Company, Social Security Investment Company, and Isfahan Oil Refinery were the most widely followed indices.

After several weeks of drop, TEDPIX could finally register growth in the Iranian calendar week ended on January 29.

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

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

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

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



Turning the fears of the investors into reality, TEDPIX started a downward trend in mid-August and has since slumped about 38 percent.

What President Hassan Rouhani called one of the most “astounding rises” in the history of the stock market, became one of the most dramatic swings on record.

Now, the big question would be “what is on the horizon for the Iranian stock market?”

Farhang Hosseini, a capital market expert, has told the Tehran Times that although several external factors, including the disputes between the oil and economy ministries over the offering of the second ETF (dubbed First Refinery, or Dara Second), increase in interest rates, the ambiguities in the next year’s national budget bill, and etc. have contributed to the decline of the TSE’s main index over the past few months, the main reason for this decline is the unconventional valuation (to be more precise the over-valuation) of entities in this market for encouraging liquidity inflow.

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

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

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

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

Tire output climbs 20% in 10 months on year

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Production

of tire in Iran has risen 20 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.

Some 225,269 tons of tires have been produced during the ten-month period of this year.

In terms of number, a 20-percent growth has been also achieved through the production of 20.913 million tires.

As reported, 132,741 passenger car tires were produced in the mentioned time span, showing a 24-percent growth.

Some 20,695 tons of van tires were produced, indicating a nine-percent growth.

Also, 47,859 tons of truck and bus tires were produced, showing a 15-percent rise.

Production of the tires of light agricultural vehicles experienced a growth of 49 percent to stand at 3,609 tons, and that of the heavy ones rose 13 percent to stand at 15,081 tons.

Meanwhile, 5,284 tons of road building and industrial vehicle tires were produced, with a 13-percent growth compared to the first ten months of the past year.

The bicycle and motorcycle tire output



stood at 16,182 tons, indicating 32 percent growth.

In early August 2020, an official with Iran’s Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry said that increasing the amount of investment making for the production of the tire in the country is a necessity.

Kamran Kargar, the acting head of planning, supplying, and market regulating office of the ministry, said the consumption of tires

is noticeable in Iran due to the country’s big transportation fleet.

“Now the ground is properly prepared for the production of light and heavy vehicle tires in the country, and investment making will play a significant role both for the establishment of new production units and for launching development projects”, the official noted.

Having an annual production capacity

of 426,000 tons of tire, Iran accounts for 41 percent of tire output in the West Asian region, according to the deputy director of the non-metal industries office of the Iranian Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry.

Mohsen Safdari has said that 11 tire production units are active in the country creating jobs for 14,500 people.

He said 426,000 tons is the nominal capacity, while the real output is less than this figure as some units are working with 60-70 percent of their capacity.

“Iranian tire industry is dependent on foreign raw materials by 40 percent, so we are self-reliant by 60 percent in this field”, the official announced.

In a bid to nullify the U.S. sanctions, Iran is determined to strengthen its domestic production to achieve self-reliance.

Selecting the motto of “Pickup in Production” for the previous Iranian calendar year (March 2019-March 2020), and the slogan of “Surge in Production” for the current year indicates the Islamic Republic’s determination to achieve this goal.

To this end, the Iranian ministries besides the private sector have been outlining their programs for the surge in production.

Numerous development projects inaugurated across Iran to mark Ten-Day Fajr celebrations

I → In addition to the mentioned programs, every year during the Fajr Ten-Day celebrations (this year from January 31 until February 10) usually numerous projects are inaugurated in various sectors to mark the anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution.

Like the previous years, this year too billions worth of projects has been inaugurated all over the country over the past few days:

Yazd

Earlier on Wednesday, Deputy Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister Saeed Zarandi inaugurated four major Industrial projects worth 6.72 trillion rials (over \$160 million) in Yazd province.

The mentioned projects which included a sanitary products production unit, an iron ore concentrate production unit, a production unit of polymer products, as well as a tile production unit, are going to create direct job opportunities for 310 people.

Bushehr

Also during the Fajr Ten-Day celebrations, 13 fishery projects with a total investment of 3.7 trillion rials (about \$88 million) are going to go operational in Southern Bushehr provinces, some of which were inaugurated on Friday.

A complex of 20 shrimp farms, the second phase of two fish farming projects with a capacity of 1000 tons per year, a Spirulina algae farm, a leech breeding project, and the first phase of Shif fishing port are among the mentioned projects.

East Azarbaijan

Several development projects with a total investment of 2.166 trillion rials (about \$51.5 million) were also inaugurated in East Azarbaijan province on Friday.

Urban and rural information technology development projects worth 1.748 trillion rials (about \$41.6 million) were among the mentioned projects.

West Azarbaijan

Some 11 industrial and mining units were also put into operation in West Azarbaijan province on the occasion of the Fajr Ten-Day celebrations.

Over 11 trillion rials (about \$261.9 million) was invested in the mentioned projects which have created jobs for 175 people.

A flour production factory, an aluminum composite production unit, and a marble mine were among the inaugurated projects.

Hamedan

Seven production and service units with an investment of 1.18 trillion rials (about \$28 million) were put into operation in Hamedan province on Friday to mark the 42nd anniversary of the Islamic Revolution.

Knowledge-based units for the production of oil suction and medical equipment, a greenhouse, a livestock farm, and a unit for making wooden handicrafts were among these projects that employ 69 people.

Zanjan

On the fifth day of the Fajr Ten-Day celebrations (started

on January 31), President Hassan Rouhani inaugurated five major production and industrial units with a total investment of 749.76 billion rials (about \$17.85 billion) in Zanjan province through videoconference.

These projects include a steel production complex, a steel rolling complex, a fabric production unit, an industrial and mining complex, and a plastic production company.

The inaugurated projects are going to create direct job opportunities for over 1,768 people.

Khuzestan

Some 102 electricity supply projects with a total investment of 749.76 billion rials (about \$17.85 million) were also put into operation in Khuzestan province on the occasion of the 42nd anniversary of the Islamic Revolution.

Kermanshah

Several power supply projects worth 420 billion rials (about \$10 million) were also put into operation in Kermanshah province to celebrate the Fajr Ten-Day.

Khorasan Razavi

To mark the 42nd anniversary of the Islamic Revolution victory, the Agriculture Jihad Organization of Khorasan Razavi also put 169 projects into operation across the mentioned province.

The mentioned projects, which have been implemented in various sectors including animal husbandry, horticulture, agriculture, and aquaculture, have cost 2.792 trillion rials (about \$66.47 million) and will create jobs for 798 people across the province.

‘India will resume Iran’s oil imports if sanctions eased’

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — The chair-

man of state-run Hindustan Petroleum Corp said that the Indian refiners will resume imports of Iranian oil if the United States eases sanctions against Tehran, Reuters reported.

“Iranian crude had been in the (import) basket of Indian refineries ... we will be happy to take that crude as and when the situation warrants and the crude is available,” M.K.

Surana told a news conference on Thursday.

Surana said Iran was previously offering favorable terms for payment and freight discounts among others which made its oil “preferential” compared to other grades.

After stopping purchases from Iran, Indian refiners have diversified their crude imports.

India, which was Iran’s top oil client after China, had stopped oil imports from the OPEC nation in mid-2019 under pressure from the

sanctions imposed by former U.S. President Donald Trump.

Meanwhile, Indian Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan has recently said that his country hopes to boost its oil imports from Iran under the U.S. new administration.

Making the remarks in an interview on Bloomberg TV in late January, the minister reiterated the comments that he had made in December. “Some geopolitical changes are

there,” he said. “Let us wait for how things unfold.”

The South Asian economy is heavily reliant on energy imports and its refiners struggled to cope as the White House’s aggressive foreign policy over the last few years restricted access to Iranian oil.

India halted imports from Iran, previously its third-largest oil supplier, in mid-2019 after the expiration of U.S. exemptions from sanctions.

South Pars development nearly completed

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** – The managing director of Pars

Oil and Gas Company (POGC), which is in charge of developing Iran’s giant South Pars gas field, has said that the development of the mentioned field is nearly completed and all phases of the field will be fully operational in near future.

“This [Iranian calendar] year (ends on March 20), the development of the large gas field will be nearly completed and we will not have any work left except for phase 11 in the offshore sector and the refinery of phase 14 in the onshore sector; which will be operational early next year,” Mohammad Meshkinfam told IRIB on Thursday.

South Pars, which Iran shares with Qatar in the Persian Gulf waters, is currently divided into 24 standard offshore phases, the output of which is processed by 14 gas refineries on land.

According to Meshkinfam, the first train of the South Pars phase 14 Refinery is going to go operational early next Iranian calendar year (begins on March 21), after which every three months another train will be inaugurated, and by the end of the next Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2022) this refinery will be fully operational.

Underlining the reliance of domestic capacities and capabilities for the development of the mentioned field, Meshkinfam noted: “In the beginning, only 33 percent of the required equipment in this field was produced in Iran, but today 75 percent of the necessary equipment has been indigenized.”

Initially, the first two projects of the field, namely phase two and three and phase four and five, were carried out with the participation of France’s Total and Italy’s Eni, but after that, the remaining phases were developed by Iranian companies, he explained.

Mazandaran’s caviar, sturgeon meat export rises 15%

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — The export

of caviar and sturgeon meat from Iran’s northern Mazandaran province has increased 15 percent in the current Iranian calendar year (began on March 20, 2020), as compared to the same period of time in the past year, according to a provincial official.

Hassan Es’haqi, the director-general of the province’s fisheries department, announced that 1,029 kilograms of the mentioned products worth \$532,000 has been exported from Mazandaran since the year start.

The official named Britain, Qatar, Azerbaijan, Russia, and United Arab Emirates (UAE) as the main export destinations of the province’s caviar.

In early October 2020, the deputy head of Iran Fisheries Organization (IFO) had said that Iran is anticipated to experience a surge in the annual production of sturgeon meat in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20).

Hossein Abdolhay put the country’s sturgeon meat output at 2,500 tons in the past year.

Iranian Agriculture Minister Kazem Khavazi has stated that his ministry supports the cage culture plans.

The minister also said that the Iranian Fisheries Science Research Institute helps those active in the implementation of these plans.

Referring to the request of the units active in the cage culture for the development of



this sector, Khavazi said, “This sector was unknown in the country at the time of its establishment; related issues and the probable problems were unclear, but now we do not have any limitation for the development of

this sector and entrance of new investors in this area.”

Fishery production has increased noticeably in Iran in recent years.

IFO Head Nabiollah Khoun-Mirzaei has put the country’s annual fishery output at 1.28 million tons in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19, 2020), and said the figure is anticipated to reach 1.37 million tons in this year, and surpass 1.5 million tons in the next year.

Khoun-Mirzaei has announced that the country’s fishery export stood at 146,000 tons worth \$538.9 million in the past Iranian year, while the import was 29,000 tons valued at \$98.9 million, so Iran’s fishery trade balance was \$440 million in the previous year.

Tripoli riots: The third step to topple Lebanon

By Abir Bassam

A few days ago, one of my friend's comments attracted my attention. He said: "America loves Lebanon, as much as Juha loves his stepmother". Juha is an authentic Arab character, who is known for his exceptional anecdotes that grew as parables in people's perceptions. He was an exceptional figure in the Arabic culture.

Going back to the love of the stepmother, when Juha was told that his stepmom loved him, he said she must be going nuts because his stepmom always treated him with cruelty and hate. Actually, this madness applies to everyone who believes in the American love for Lebanon. America loves only one party, which serves its interest. Since the American's main interest in the region is "Israel", it is difficult to accept the love of Lebanon.

The comment was not in vain. It was related to the excessive American diplomatic visits to Lebanon in the last two years. In fact, these visits coincided with the tremendous achievements of the Arab Syrian Army and its allies in liberating most of its occupied territories by terrorists, by the end of 2018.

The Syrian achievements sent a clear message that it is going to be impossible to defeat Syria and altering its political decision as to the supporter of the resistance movements against the Zionist and the American existence in the region; in addition, it is impossible to dismantle the strategic alliance between Syria and Iran.

It was a crystal-clear message so that it pushed the American administration into retreating to a backup plan to secure "the Zionist regime" and their interests in the region. The plan B was mainly set to end Hezbollah's role in Lebanon as well as any Iranian existence near the northern Palestinian borders.

Plan B was based on stirring the Lebanese population against Hezbollah and pushing towards a new civil war in Lebanon. It seems that the American mentality cannot elevate its comprehension beyond its colonial perception, and the colonial occupation of Palestine and the Arab lands. America has enormously invested in the creation of Israel so that it is impossible to retreat from its project now.

Accordingly, the American decision was to end Hezbollah in Lebanon and by the Lebanese people. Therefore, a huge campaign is now led against Hezbollah by accusing it of being the main reason behind starving the Lebanese people and disempowering the political decision in



“The Syrian achievements sent a clear message that it is going to be impossible to defeat Syria and altering its political decision as to the supporter of the resistance movements against the Zionist and the American existence in the region.”

the country into its own interest.

The initial plan was to turn Hezbollah Party's social base against it by imposing an economic blockade. Mainly, the Party's supporters were targeted, but it failed. The partisans were aware that it was an American blockade and it targeted the whole Lebanese population; ironically, the least affected people were Hezbollah members and immediate supporters.

The economic blockade did not serve its intended purposes. Therefore, there was an additional need to stimulate the streets and reestablish the "Arab Spring" experience in Lebanon, which would eventually lead to toppling the regimes or to massive chaos. The first step was after the visits of American diplomats to Lebanon in September 2019 and one month later the riots started in Beirut on the 17th of October, and it spread all over Lebanon.

It is unrealistic to say that the first demonstrators, who were in the streets of Beirut, were not people who were living in difficult economic conditions and were demanding transparency and reforms of the political system. However, the demonstrations were manipulated and were steered and redirected against Hezbollah and its allies in Lebanon by the pro-American friends and allies. And eventually, demands were redirected to be against the current parliament and called for new elections. The

situation escalated to become a call for the resignation of President Aoun.

The second main attempt to topple al-Ahed, [an expression used to describe the presidential era of President Michel Aoun] was through the tragedy that shocked Lebanon, which resulted from the tragic explosion in Beirut's Harbor. Lebanon once again witnessed riots in the streets, demonstrations, and attacks on the Parliament and the Council of Ministers. The result was the resignation of the Hassan Diab's government, which calmed the streets for a short period of time. The riots after the explosion of the harbor raised the numbers of the daily infected population of Coronavirus from several hundred to reach almost 2000 people.

Tripoli's riots do not fall far from the goals set behind the two attempts to topple "al-Ahed" to siege Hezbollah and his allies. The American's manipulation in the Lebanese streets is very clear in Tripoli's riots. However, there were far more dangerous manipulations in the recent events. Outside powers and protesters were present. Many unfamiliar persons were arrested by the police. The prisoners were Syrians who were active as part of the terrorist groups of al-Nusra in Lebanon.

In addition, news leaks spread on the relation between Qatari officials' interference and releasing the unfamiliar per-

sons. The news was directly connected to the role the Turkish intelligence has been playing actively in Lebanon since the harbor explosion. It also referred to the Turkish-Saudi competition to assert control over the Sunni community in Lebanon. The competition was manifested in the struggle of the al-Hariri brothers in Lebanon. Bahaa openly declared his position on Hezbollah's weapons, while Saad is still conservative towards the matter because he knows the unrealistic demands behind excluding Hezbollah from the Lebanese scene.

No one can deny the difficult situation and the high level of poverty in Tripoli. It is the highest in Lebanon. However, the riots of Tripoli are analogous to the ones started in Daraa in Syria in 2011. The same groups of terrorists and radicals who manipulated the riots in Daraa were dormant in Tripoli. In particular, the ones who threw bombs at the army soldiers and burned Tripoli's municipality destroyed documents and archives.

They were demanding concessions from President Aoun and Hezbollah, although both parties did not nominate al-Hariri as the coming prime minister after the resignation of Mr. Diab.

On Thursday, another act towards toppling the Lebanese state was performed, which is the assassination of a political opponent, Luqman Salim. He was found shot dead in South Lebanon. Certain media choirs have already named him as a martyr and started pointing the accusations against Hezbollah. Salim was living all his life in the al-Dahia, i.e., the Southern Suburb, the largest gathering of the Shiite community. However, naming him as a martyr is a matter of inquiry.

The big question is, why now? Why would Salim be shot now and in the South of Lebanon? The second question that may follow, how many assassinations are going to take place to start a series of riots in the South, Or in al-Dahia? It is most likely never! However, this does not deny the fact that the tendency to eliminate Hezbollah's existence as an armed resistance has become an international effort.

Many regional powers are involved in the process. It is clear that plan B is needed as a process against the national resistance and to create a vertical crack in the Shiites community in Lebanon. The main goal is clear, which is to push Lebanon towards normalization with the "Israel", or at least towards another civil war that may lead to the ultimate division of Lebanon as we know it today.

U.S. warship sails near Chinese-controlled South China Sea islands

A U.S. warship sailed near the Chinese-controlled Paracel Islands in the disputed South China Sea on Friday in a freedom of navigation operation, the U.S. Navy said, the first such mission under President Joe Biden's new administration.

The busy waterway is one of a number of flashpoints in the U.S.-China relationship, which include a trade war, U.S. sanctions, Hong Kong and Taiwan.

China has been infuriated by repeated U.S. sailings near the islands Beijing occupies and controls in the South China Sea. China says it has irrefutable sovereignty and has accused Washington of deliberately stoking tensions.

The U.S. Navy's 7th Fleet said the USS John S. McCain "asserted navigational rights and freedoms in the vicinity of the Paracel Islands, consistent with international law".

The freedom of navigation operation upheld the rights, freedoms and lawful uses of the sea recognized in international law by challenging the "unlawful restrictions on innocent passage imposed by China, Taiwan, and Vietnam", it said.

Nuclear war with China, Russia is 'real possibility': U.S. commander

➔ "More than a decade ago, Russia began aggressively modernizing its nuclear forces, including its non-treaty-accountable medium- and short-range systems," he wrote.

He said that Russia's "modernization is about 70 percent complete and on track to be fully realized in a few years."

"In addition, Russia is building new and novel systems, such as hyper-sonic glide vehicles, nuclear-armed and nuclear-powered torpedoes and cruise missiles, and other capabilities," the commander added.

Turkey scolded as 'irresponsible NATO ally' after interior minister blames U.S. for 2016 coup attempt

Turkey's interior minister has accused the United States of orchestrating a coup attempt that rocked the country in 2016, prompting a denial from Washington, which blasted the claim as unbecfitting of a NATO partner.

Interior Minister Suleyman Soyulu alleged the U.S. government played an unspecified role in the July 15, 2016 coup d'etat attempt, Turkish daily Hurriyet reported, suggesting on a local television program that American officials "managed" the ill-fated takeover.

"Was it only FETO behind the July 15 coup? Did it just do it alone? No," Soyulu said on Thursday, referring to the movement led by U.S.-based Turkish preacher Fethullah Gulen, labeled the "Fethullah Terrorist Organization" (FETO) by authorities in Ankara.

The U.S. State Department hit back at the charge later on Thursday, issuing a curt statement emphatically denying any connection to the revolt.

"The United States had no involvement in the 2016 attempted coup in Turkey and promptly condemned it. Recent assertions to the contrary made by senior Turkish officials are wholly false," read the statement, attributed to spokesman Ned Price.

Resistance News

Israeli troops kill unarmed Palestinian in West Bank settlement

INTERNATIONAL DESK TEHRAN— The Israeli military said Friday that an unarmed Palestinian man was shot and killed in a West Bank settlement after he tried to break into a home and fought with a guard.

Radi Abu Fkheideh, the head of the local council in the nearby Palestinian village of Ras Karkar, identified the deceased as Khaleed Nofal, 34, the married father of a four-year-old boy. He said the army stormed Nofal's home in the village early Friday and arrested his father. He had no information about the circumstances of Nofal's death.

Hamas: Israel's demolitions in Himsa al-Fuqa "ethnic cleansing"

INTERNATIONAL DESK TEHRAN — The Hamas Movement has denounced the Israeli occupation army's demolition of homes and displacement of families in Himsa al-Fuqa hamlet in the northern Jordan Valley, describing the measure as part of the ethnic cleansing policy pursued by Israel against the Palestinian

"The crime of demolishing homes in Himsa al-Fuqa is part of the systematic organized terrorism that is practiced by the Zionist entity on a daily basis against our people everywhere," Hamas spokesman Hazem Qasem said in a press release on Thursday.

Spokesman Qasem said that the escalating displacement of citizens and the ongoing annexation of Palestinian lands in the West Bank reflect Israel's disregard for the international law.

Biden faces difficult job to rebuild divided America: professor

➔ Add the fact that 74 million voted for Trump and most of the Republicans are terrified of getting on his wrong side, and there will be (already is) a lot of resistance and attacks on Biden's "socialist" agenda (if only). The deeper structural issues--racism, poverty, Red-Blue division--will continue to defy the best efforts to address and change them. I am hopeful but I think we might end up with Obama-plus and not much more.

Do you think U.S. foreign policy will change during Biden's presidency when it comes to Arab regimes like Saudi Arabia and the Emirates?

It was difficult to see much logic in Jared Kushner's Middle East (West Asian) policy, but he seemed to be pursuing a Sunni-Israeli alliance against Iran as a way of minimizing American involvement. I am adamantly opposed to pandering to Israel -which has nuclear weapons - and encouraging the Saudis and associates to threaten Iran on that basis. My hope would be that Biden pursues better relations with Iran, returns to the status quo ante Trump (which wasn't all that great), and breaks up the incipient coalition. I have not really gotten a sense of what Biden's advisors want.

What is Biden's strategy to curb China?

Does he have one? The U.S. has lost the most from the various trade barriers set up by Trump (although not that many people are sensitive to that) and they will only drive China to become more self-sufficient and less dependent on exports.



“The invasion of the Capitol may have been, indeed, only the first skirmish in what could turn out to be civil conflict and even war.”

What I fear most is that he will be persuaded by the anti-China strategists into rattling sabers in Asia. Whatever one thinks of the CCP and the PRC, that is not a good idea. To me, it is reminiscent of German-British relations prior to World War One, and we know what happened there. And would the U.S. ever go to war over Taiwan (certainly not Hong Kong)?

Do you predict a revival of the JCPOA? How can the parties to the deal guarantee their commitments?

I think Biden wants to return to the JCPOA, although I'm not sure he wants to return to the original agreement.

Obviously, commitments are premised heavily on good faith rather than ever more complicated inspection and reporting protocols. The situation has progressed since Trump withdrew; too - indeed, one might almost say (if one believed in such conspiracies) that U.S. withdrawal was meant to revive Iran's nuclear program so that Israel would be provoked into attacking it. And it is Israel that should worry everyone, especially if Netanyahu looks to be in trouble before the coming election.

What are the implications of the impeachment of Trump for America?

I'm all for impeachment, conviction and removal of his right to run for public office ever again. But that will almost certainly anger his followers and turn him into a martyr. I suspect he will be tried by the Senate but not convicted and that we will have to deal with him for the coming 4-8 years.

That will make many Congressional Republicans extremely anxious about (not) getting re-elected. And the crazies will be out in force. The invasion of the Capitol may have been, indeed, only the first skirmish in what could turn out to be civil conflict and even war.

Yemenis not to be fooled by U.S. words on ending support for Saudi war: Houthi

Reacting to the news of the U.S. president's decision to stop supporting the Saudi war on Yemen, Yemen's Supreme Political Council said that Yemenis will not be fooled by mere U.S. statements.

"We consider any move that does not end the siege and aggression against Yemen as just a formality and do not pay any attention to it," Mohammed Ali al-Houthi, a council member said via Twitter Friday morning.

"We are not those who are deceived by statements no matter how they are expressed," al-Houthi noted.

The remarks came hours after U.S.

President Joe Biden announced an end to Washington's support for Saudi-led aggression on Yemen, in a reversal of the Donald Trump administration's foreign policy.

"This war has to end," Biden said in his first foreign policy speech as president. "To underscore our commitment, we are ending all American support for offensive operations in the war in Yemen, including relevant arm sales."

Riyadh, together with its allies chief among them being the United Arab Emirates (UAE), launched a war on Yemen in March 2015 with the aim of reinstalling

Yemen's former pro-Riyadh government and crushing the popular Houthi Ansarullah movement.

The war, which has also been accompanied by an all-out siege of Yemen, has killed more than 110,000 people and turned the impoverished Arab country into the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

"We have spoken with both senior officials in the UAE and senior officials in Saudi Arabia," Biden's national security adviser Jake Sullivan said earlier on Thursday.

"We are pursuing a policy of no surprises when it comes to these types of actions, so they understand that this is

happening, and they understand our reasoning and rationale."

'More than 1,000 Yemenis killed by Saudi cluster bombs'

Earlier this week, the director general of the Yemen Executive Mine Action Centre (YEMAC) said that the Saudi-led coalition has dropped 3,179 cluster bombs on Yemen since the beginning of its military campaign.

Ali Sofra said the civilian casualties of the bombardments who are mostly women and children have exceeded 1,000, and most of them were in agricultural and grazing areas.

UN Security Council demands Myanmar coup leaders free Suu Kyi as U.S. weighs sanctions

The United Nations Security Council called for the release of Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi and others detained by the military as diplomatic and financial pressure grew on the generals who seized power this week to restore democracy.

U.S. President Joe Biden said the military should

step down as the administration considered slapping sanctions on the generals responsible for Monday's coup in the Southeast Asian country.

Streets in the commercial capital Yangon echoed again overnight with the clanging of tin pots as people denounced the military takeover, while teachers

became the latest to join a widening campaign of civil disobedience.

"We only support the elected government and we will always stand with them," university lecturer Nwe Thazin said. "We absolutely don't accept the government which took power by force."

Tourism projects worth \$15.3m to be inaugurated in Yazd

➔ 1 Buildings are built of earth. The use of earth in buildings includes walls and roofs by the construction of vaults and domes.

Houses are built with courtyards below ground level, serving underground areas. Wind-catchers, courtyards, and thick earthen walls create a pleasant microclimate.



Partially covered alleyways together with streets, public squares and courtyards contribute to a pleasant urban quality. The city escaped the modernization trends that destroyed many traditional earthen cities.

Yazd Jameh Mosque, Dowlatabad Garden, the Yazd Atash Behram, also known as Atashkadeh-e Yazd, Towers of Silence, and adjacent desert landscape are among its tourist sites.

Museum of anthropology, cultural heritage to open in northwest Iran

HERITAGE TEHRAN – A local history museum dedicated to the anthropology and cultural heritage of the ancient town of Kowsar and its surroundings will soon open its doors to the public in the northwest Iranian town.

“The firsts phase of Kowsar’s cultural heritage museum is scheduled to be inaugurated in near future,” Jahangir Shahbazi, the tourism chief of the ancient town, said on Wednesday.

Anthropology and handicrafts sections of the museum will be coming on stream in the next phase, he added.



Kowsar is one of the earliest human settlements in Iran, the official said.

“Based on available evidence and works [which have been unearthed so far], Kowsar is one of the most historical regions of the country. There is evidence of life and civilization in this region that goes back to the Iron Age, and even beyond.”

Moreover, a new round of archaeological work is scheduled to commence in the town, which is hoped to add more to the historical values of the region.

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 Ardabil is usually recorded as one of the coldest cities in the country in winter.

Eleven Iranian earthenware made national heritage

HERITAGE TEHRAN – Eleven moveable properties, all historical earthenware belonging to Iran’s Mazandaran province, have recently been inscribed on the national heritage list.



The Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts officially announced the inscription on Thursday in a letter to the governor-general of the northern province.

Clay utensils including jugs, pitchers, and cups, which are being kept in Sari’s City History Museum are the new items added to the prestigious list.

An early civilization flourished at the beginning of the first millennium BC in Mazandaran (Tabarestan).

Its insecure eastern and

southeastern borders were crossed by Mongol invaders in the 13th and 14th centuries. Cossacks attacked the region in 1668 but were repulsed. It was ceded to the Russian Empire by a treaty in 1723, but the Russians were never secure in their occupation. The area was restored to Iran under the Qajar dynasty.

The northern section of the region consists of lowland alongside the Caspian and upland along the northern slopes of the Alborz Mountains. Marshy backlands dominate the coastal plain, and extensive gravel fans fringe the mountains. The climate is permanently subtropical and humid, with very hot summers.

Sistan-Baluchestan loses \$34.2 million in tourism earnings as a result of COVID-19

TOURISM TEHRAN – Iran’s southeastern Sistan-Baluchestan province has lost 1,440 billion rials (\$34.2 million at the official exchange rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) in earnings from tourism as many potential visitors stay away due to the impact of the coronavirus, according to Alireza Jalalzai, the provincial tourism chief.

“Sistan-Baluchestan is a four-season travel destination and even though the province holds vast tourism capacities, it has taken some 1,440 billion rials hit from the coronavirus outbreak from mid-Esfand 1398 (early March 2020) to the end of the month Dey (January 19),” the official said on Wednesday.

The official noted that Sistan-Baluchestan has set sights on [a significant] tourism development, and its travel infrastructure has been drastically extended over the past couple of years.

“From the year 1396 (2017) onwards, the number of travel infrastructure in Sistan-Baluchestan has raised from 40 to 200 ones.... Nowadays tourism of this province has come to fame and distinction,” he explained.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the official pointed to various tourism campaigns being launched over the past couple of



years, adding the campaign ‘Let’s see Sistan, let’s hear Baluchestan’ has taken a noticeable impact on the tourism thrive of the province mainly by the means of on-line programs.

“Despite all the bottlenecks, the province’s tourism has not been forced to shut....”

“For instance, the occupancy rate of hotels in [the city of Chabahar] is [currently] more than 90 percent..... and currently, some 100 to 110 ecolodge unites are active across the province,” the official said.

Last year, Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan said that the development of the

travel industry across Sistan-Baluchestan province is among the top priorities for the ministry.

“I am interested in Sistan-Baluchestan, and the development of this province is a priority for this ministry and the government,” the minister stated.

“The majority of my travels during my tenure has been to Sistan-Baluchestan, which I consider it as a safe province with significant values in terms of culture, history, handicrafts, and tourism.”

The collective province -- Sistan in the north and Baluchestan in the south -- accounts for one of the driest regions of Iran with a slight increase in rainfall from east to west, and an obvious rise in humidity in the coastal regions. In ancient times, the region was a crossword of the Indus Valley and the Babylonian civilizations.

The province possesses special significance because of being located in a strategic and transit location, especially Chabahar which is the only ocean port in Iran and the best and easiest access route of the middle Asian countries to free waters.

The vast province is home to several distinctive archaeological sites and natural attractions, including two UNESCO World Heritage sites, namely Shahr-e-Soukhteh (Burnt City) and Lut desert.

New tourist complex inaugurated in Tehran

TOURISM TEHRAN – Shams ol-Emareh tourist complex was inaugurated in Baqershahr, south of Tehran province, on Wednesday on the occasion of Ten-Day Dawn (Jan. 31- Feb. 10, marking the victory anniversary of the Islamic Revolution).

A budget of 370 billion rials (about \$ 9 million at the official exchange rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) has been allocated to the project, Parham Janfeshan, the provincial tourism chief, addressing the opening ceremony.

Constructed in an area of 11 hectares, the project is expected to create 30 job opportunities, the official added.

Referring to tourism as being “advantageous” for the whole province, the official noted the tourism sector and relevant infrastructure are being developed and strengthened in all districts [and counties] of Tehran province even in low-income and deprived areas.

Earlier this week, the official announced that a total of 206 tourism-related projects are scheduled to be inaugurated across the Iranian capital during the ten-day Fajr (dawn) ceremonies and celebrations.

Ten accommodation centers including hotels, apartment hotels, eco-lodge units as well as tourist complexes, restaurants, and handicrafts workshops will come on stream, he explained.

He also noted that a budget of seven trillion rials (about \$167 million) has been allocated to the projects, which are expected to generate a total of 930 job opportunities.

The mentioned projects will also add 816 beds to the hospitality sector of the Iranian capital, the official added.

Hugging the lower slopes of the magnificent, snowcapped Alborz Mountains, Tehran is much more than a chaotic jumble of concrete and crazy traffic blanketed by a miasma of air pollution. This is the nation’s dynamic beating heart and the place to get a handle on modern Iran and what its future will likely be.

The metropolis has many to offer its visitors including Golestan Palace, Grand Bazaar, Treasury of National Jewels, National Museum of Iran, Glass & Ceramic Museum, Masoudieh Palace, Sarkis Cathedral, Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, Carpet Museum of Iran, to name a few.



The first time Tehran is mentioned in historical accounts is in an 11th-century chronicle in which it is described as a small village north of Ray. It became the capital city of the Seljuk Empire in the 11th century but later declined with factional strife between different neighborhoods and the Mongol invasion of 1220.

Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad seeks to rocket sports tourism

TOURISM TEHRAN – The governor-general of the southwestern Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad province has said that sports tourism in this region needs to be developed.

Having a considerable wealth of human talents in [the traditional, rural and nomadic] sports, vast natural capacities, and a large number of villages, where have long been heavens for the local games, the province can easily be promoted in the arena of sports tourism, Hossein Kalantari announced on Thursday.



Paying attention to the development of indigenous and local sports could make the province a hub for indigenous and

local competitions and festivals after the coronavirus crisis comes to an end, the official added.

Sports tourism is one of the fastest-growing sectors in tourism. More and more tourists are interested in sports activities during their trips whether sports are the main objective of travel or not.

Sport events of various kinds and sizes attract tourists as participants or spectators and destinations try to add local flavors to them to distinguish themselves and provide authentic local experiences.

Travel insiders say that mega sport

events such as Olympics and World Cups can be a catalyst for tourism development if successfully leveraged in terms of destination branding, infrastructure development, and other economic and social benefits.

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.

Ancient festival of Pir-e Shaliar canceled due to virus

HERITAGE TEHRAN – Pir-e Shaliar, an ancient annual ceremony celebrating abundance and good fortune, has been called off due to concerns over the coronavirus outbreak.

The public ritual was supposed to be held, like previous years, on the 15th day of the month Bahman (February 3) in Uraman Takht rural district of Kordestan province, western Iran.

The annulment was announced by the governor of Sarvabad county upon the directive of a local committee for coronavirus control.

Pir-e Shaliar, a legendary folk figure for Magian Kurds, is warmly remembered for his allegedly magical healing qualities and mojo that locals believe could populate the land with livestock and crops in times of trouble. The figure is associated with the pre-Islamic, Zoroastrian times.

The festival usually starts before dawn with children distributing walnuts as gifts, knocking on the villagers’ doors, and getting sweets from them in return.



Sheep and goats are slaughtered as the day breaks. Then several hours are spent cooking a special soup called ‘Veloshin’; meanwhile, people celebrate the event with blessings and prayers. The soup will be ultimately distributed amongst

all villagers.

People come out from their terraced houses, which roof of one is the courtyard of another, to witness the ritual. Daf, a local drum, is played and the dervishes of the region gather to chant and dance while swaying their long hair through the air.

Before night, men meet in the house of Pir-e Shaliar and continue their ritual of chanting prayers and playing the dafs to pay their ultimate tribute to the legendary figure of the region.

The legend says that Pir-e Shaliar magically cured ‘Shah-Bahar Khatoun’ the beloved daughter of the king of Bukhara so that he was rewarded with getting married to the girl.

Uraman region is considered a cradle of Kurdish art and culture from the days of yore. Stretched on a steep slope of Sarvabad county, the village is home to dense and step-like rows of houses in a way that the roof of each house forms the yard of the upper one, a feature that adds to its charm and attractiveness.

A peek into pottery skills in Kalpurgan

TOURISM TEHRAN – According to the specialists, the pottery of Iran’s Sistan-Baluchestan province traces back to many thousand years ago. The three villages of Kalpurgan, Kuhmitag, and Hulanchnag are the most important centers of pottery in the southeastern province.

“Amongst them, Kalpurgan is more famous and original than the others and is known with the names of this region. This village is located three hundred and ninety kilometers far from Zahedan and close to the borderline between Iran and Pakistan,” according to Visit Iran.

The potteries of this region are very similar to the discoveries of archeological excavations that trace back to the 3rd mil-

lennium B.C.

The unique characteristic of potteries in this region is that the technique of their production has not changed since thousands of years ago and the artist potters who are mostly tasteful women of this region, make the potteries with no use of machinery and only by their hands.

The motifs of these potteries also have roots in thousand of years ago and are generally geometric and abstract. Kalpurgan potteries lack glaze and are made using a kind of soil that men gather from a region called “Mash Takuk” located two kilometers away from the village.

This soil turns red after firing which is another trait of the potteries of Kalpurgan.

After the clay utensils are created, they are exposed to sunlight to dry completely. Then they are painted with reddish-brown colors that turn black after firing.

This color is a kind of mineral pigment that is produced from a stone called Tituk. This stone is excavated from “Tapeh Achar” in one of the counties of Zabol. To make the pigments, the stone has grinded on a bigger rock and the powder is mixed with a bit of water to make a slurry. Then they are decorated with ancient motifs of potteries by use of thin branches of the palm tree as brushes.

Finally, the potteries are fired inside traditional kilns made as pits in the ground. The potteries are bowls, jars, chalices, jugs, and



glasses. In 2017 the village of Kalpurgan was registered as the living museum of pottery, and the World Council of Handicrafts chose this village to be the first global village of the pottery.

Iran imports Sputnik V vaccine, AstraZeneca on agenda

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — The first consignment of Sputnik V, the Russian-made vaccine for the coronavirus, was imported on Thursday.

“We have signed an agreement with the Russian side to receive two million doses of the vaccine,” ISNA quoted Mohammad Reza Shانهساز, head of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), as saying. This is for ten thousand people, he said, adding that the next batches will be imported within the next one or two months.

“Of course, we will not import just the Russian-made vaccine. There are other reliable sources, as well that have successfully passed clinical phases and we will receive them by the end of the [Iranian calendar] year (March 20).”

Importing vaccine from COVAX, a global initiative to ensure rapid and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines, is also on the agenda, he noted.

The Iranian Ambassador to the UK Hamid Baedinejad wrote on his Instagram page that 4.2 million doses of the Anglo-Swedish AstraZeneca vaccine will be imported in the near future within the framework of the agreement with COVAX.



FDA spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour has said that those other vaccines made in India, China, and Russia are also under evaluation.

On January 27, Health Minister Saeed Namaki said that there are four different ways to supply the coronavirus vaccine, including direct purchase from a foreign

country, procurement from the World Health Organization's COVAX facility, a joint production with a Cuban company as well as domestic production of the vaccine.

He emphasized that Iran will soon be one of the world's important manufacturers of the COVID-19 vaccine.

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.

Shanehsaz said on Wednesday that 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. “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.

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.

Meanwhile, Iran and Cuba have formed a 'strategic alliance' through working jointly on a project for producing a potential coronavirus vaccine.

Smart monitoring in Golestan National Park at final stage



ENVIRONMENT **TEHRAN** — A project for smart monitoring of Golestan National Park, which started in 2019, is near completion and is scheduled to come on stream by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20).

Golestan, the oldest national park in Iran, is struggling with environmental issues such as wildfire, so the Department of Environment (DOE) with the help of the Ministry of Communications, is trying to promote electronic protection through technological advances.

Bordering the Caspian Sea, the national park is a unique refuge for wildlife that has been facing problems in recent years due to man-made damages.

Stretched to 87,402 hectares, it is home to one-seventh of Iran's plant species, one-third of all birds, and half of the country's mammals, hosting 1,350 plant species and 302 wildlife species. It has been listed as one of the top fifty ecosystems on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1930.

Some 135 billion rials (about \$3.3 million) has been spent on the project so far, IRNA reported.

Using the Internet of Things, data are sent via smart cameras and detectors sensitive to some, dryness, and temperature installed at regions that are difficult to pass and are checked by a monitoring room in the national park.

Golestan National Park is facing the danger of wildfires every year. However, there is a lack of forces to patrol the protected areas, for example, only 40 rangers protect the entire area of the park, which does not correspond to the size of this habitat.

Wildlife species living in the area include Persian Leopard, Brown bear, jackal, Persian ibex, wolves, wild cat, Caspian Red deer, wild boar, gazelle, mountain

goat, fox, and coyote. And plant species growing in the region consist of several endemic ones such as Alma saffron, Persian Ironwood.

In the past, the Asiatic cheetah also lived in the area of Mirzabaylu plain, but the last cheetah was seen in the area at least 40 years ago. Of course, in October 2014, a cheetah was observed in this plain, but no one could photograph it.

Weather in Golestan National Park varies from very humid to semi-arid with precipitation of less than 200 to 1000 mm. Temperatures in Golestan National Park vary from -25 degrees to +35 degrees depending on the different months of the year. The highest absolute temperature reported in the park was 42 C in the southeast of the park.

So far, 150 species of birds have been identified in Golestan National Park. Golden Eagle, eastern imperial eagle, saker falcon, falcon, and bearded vulture are among the endangered birds of the park. Other birds of Golestan National Park include common pheasants, shrikes, griffon vulture, rosy starling, typical warblers, wheatears, finches, and common blackbirds.

The park holds a share of 3 species of amphibians and 24 species of reptiles.

Companies from 21 countries to attend TIM 2021

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Forty foreign investment companies from 21 countries will attend the 3rd Technology Investment Meeting (TIM 2021) of the D-8 Organization for Economic Co-operation which will be held on February 16-17 in Tehran.

Pardis Technology Park will host the event both virtually and in-person, aiming to address the investment potentials in Islamic developing countries in order to open up an opportunity for foreign and domestic investors.

D-8 includes major Muslim developing countries namely, Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Turkey.

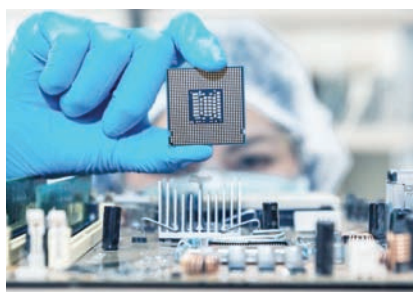
Due to the prevalence of coronavirus and the observance of social distancing, some side programs of this event are held virtually,

Milad Sadrankhanloo, deputy secretary of the event, stated.

This edition focuses on the participation of international investors, and in the startup sector, 24 Iranian startups will be introduced at the event, he said, adding, the main indicator in the selection of startups was their activities in the international era and the capacity to participate in international markets.

Some 30 percent of these startups are active in the field of health, others in fintech (financial technology), ICT, oil and gas, and artificial intelligence, he further noted.

Good opportunities, such as abundant manpower alongside cheap knowledge-based and technological products, have attracted foreign investors, despite unilateral sanctions, to consider the Iranian knowledge-based ecosystem.



Technological achievements of Iran

There are 6,000 knowledge-based companies active in the country, manufacturing diverse products to meet the needs of the domestic market while saving large amounts of foreign currency.

The fields of aircraft maintenance, steel, pharmaceuticals, and medical equipment, oil,

and gas are among the sectors that researchers in technology companies have engaged in, leading to import reduction.

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

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

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

Iran has been repeatedly exposed to SDSs due to its presence in the arid and semi-arid parts of the world; consumption, changing the pattern of cultivation, and climate change have increased the negative effects of this phenomenon.

The SDSs hotspots in other countries stretch to 330 million hectares, with an average of 150 million tons of dust generation per year, which is raised from Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan, he highlighted.

A practical plan is also being developed to counter external hotspots, and we are looking to prepare a sub-plan with each of the countries and regions, which will be prepared by May, he added.

Since the past decade, southern and western provinces of the country are frequently hit by severe sand and dust storms, as well as drought, which is caused by both internal and external hotspots. Major external SDSs sources are Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq.

It was around the year 2005 that the first signs of sporadic SDS appeared in southwestern Iran. Just seven years later, sand and dust storms became so persisting and terrible that PM concentration reported 22 times above the safe levels.

In fact, Iran has been repeatedly exposed to SDSs due to its presence in the arid and semi-arid parts of the world; consumption, changing the pattern of cultivation, and climate change have increased the negative effects of this phenomenon.

A sandstorm or dust storm is a meteorological phenomenon usually caused by strong and turbulent winds blowing over loose soil or sand and sweeping up large quantities of sand or dust particles from the ground, clouding the air and reducing visibility drastically.

LET'S LEARN PERSIAN

(Part 124)

(Source: saadifoundation.ir)

ساختر

Exclamatory Phrase

عبارت صوتی

عبارت های صوتی با 'چه' + اسم + ی/ی ساخته می شوند:

What a garden!	چه باغی!
What a large garden!	چه باغ بزرگی!
What flowers!	چه گل های!
What beautiful flowers!	چه گل های زیبای!

● تمرین ۱. عبارت های صوتی درست کنید:

- چه زمین سبز
- آسمان صاف چه
- باغچه چه قشنگ
- گرم هوا چه
- استخر چه زیبا
- ملت بزرگ چه

Rural development projects worth \$3b to be inaugurated

Rural development projects worth 130 trillion rials (nearly \$3 billion at the official rate of 42,000 rials) will be inaugurated on the occasion of the National Day of Villagers and Nomads, which is marked on October 5.

Currently, 26 percent of the country's population lives in villages, Mohammad Omid, the vice president for rural development, said, adding that around 39,000 villages have more than 20 households and 23,000 villages have less than 20 households.

Thus, more than 97 percent of the country's rural population lives in villages with over 20,000 households, he added.

He went on to state that 6,750 construction projects will come on stream on this day in various fields such as roads, communications, etc. In addition, a total of 26,512 projects will be launched throughout the country. Moreover, some 71,000 newly-built residential units will be inaugurated, he noted.

پروژه توسعه روستایی به ارزش ۱۳ هزار میلیارد تومان بهره برداری می شود

معاون توسعه روستایی و مناطق محروم ریاست جمهوری از بهره برداری از پروژه های روستایی به ارزش ۱۳ هزار میلیارد تومان همزمان با روز ملی روستا خبر داد.

به گزارش ایسنا، محمد امید امروز شنبه در تشریح برنامه های روز روستا، گفت: در حال حاضر ۲۶ درصد جمعیت کشور در روستاها ساکن هستند که از این میان ۳۹ هزار روستا بالای ۲۰ خانوار و ۲۳ هزار روستا زیر ۲۰ خانوار هستند. به این ترتیب بیش از ۹۷ درصد جمعیت روستایی کشور در روستاهای بالای ۲۰ هزار خانوار ساکن هستند.

وی افزود: ۶۷۵۰ پروژه عمرانی در این روز با اعتبار ۳۷۰۰ میلیارد تومان در حوزه های مختلفی همچون راه روستایی، ارتباطات و ... به بهره برداری می رسد. در کنار این پروژه های اشتغال زا نیز مجموعاً ۲۶ هزار و ۵۱۲ پروژه در سطح کشور به بهره برداری خواهد رسید.

وی ادامه داد: در حوزه واحدهای روستایی نیز ۷۱ هزار واحد مسکونی برای روستاییان توسط نهادها و از محل تسهیلات بانکی به بهره برداری می رسد.

ENGLISH IN USE

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GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

The one who gets married has completed half of his/her religion.

Prophet Muhammad (S)

WHAT'S IN ART GALLERIES

Painting/drawing



■ Sohrab Gallery is hanging a collection of paintings and drawings by Yahya Ruydel in an exhibition entitled "Ground 2". The exhibit will run until February 13 at the gallery located at 142 Somayyeh St.



■ Paintings by a group of artists, including Samaneh Rumiani, Fatemeh Panah, Fatemeh Abbasi, Shima Moradi, Masumeh Akbari, and Sanaz Sangi, are currently on view in an exhibition at Ayrik Gallery.

The exhibition entitled "Flying Windows" will run until February 10 at the gallery located at Ayrik Center on East Ferdows Blvd.



■ An exhibition of paintings by Saeid Eskandari is currently underway at Vista Gallery. The exhibit entitled "The Forgotten Village" will run until February 15 at the gallery located at No. 11, 12th Alley, Mir Emad St.



■ Paintings by Sheida Mahmudi are currently on view in an exhibition at Negah Gallery. The exhibit named "Untitled" will run until February 17 at the gallery located at 64 Ghaffari St., Jam St., Motahhari Ave.



■ An exhibition of paintings by Payam Firuzi is currently underway at Farmanfarma Gallery. The exhibit entitled "Descent" will continue until February 19 at the gallery located at 2nd Araabi St., North Kheradmand St. off Karim Khan Ave.

Drawing

■ Inja Gallery is playing host to an exhibition of drawings by Sogol Kashani entitled "Body Is All". The exhibit will run until February 19 at the gallery located at 4 Pedram Alley, Neauphle-le-Chateau St.

Multimedia

■ Artworks by a group of artists in various media, including Manuchehr Niazi, Mohammad Ehsai, Ali Golestaneh, Ali-Akbar Sanati, Reza Bangiz, and Ebrahim Faraji, are on view in an exhibition at Artibition Gallery.

The exhibit runs until February 14 at the gallery located at Qandi Alley, Sasanipur St., Goltabi St., off Shariati Ave.

■ A group of artists, including Abolfazl Amin, Qasem Ahmadi, Nazanin Tayyebbeh, Tajesar Jafari, Davud Kuchaki, and Sakim Karami, are showcasing their artworks in various media in an exhibition at Mohsen Gallery.

The exhibit runs until February 15 at the gallery located at 42 East Mina Blvd., Naji St., off Zafar St.

■ Artworks from various media by Ramana Moshiri, Arian Javadian, Narges Jebeli, Maryam Hami, Golchehreh Rohani, Fatemeh Abbasian and several other artists are on view in an exhibition at Ehsan Gallery. The exhibit entitled "Incident" will run until February 10 at the gallery located at No. 22, East 14th St. in the Ajudanieh neighborhood.

Print/sculpture

■ Prints and sculptures by Tahereh Fallahzadeh and Mostafa Nader are on display in an exhibition at Delgosha Gallery.

The exhibit entitled "Parents without the Past" will run until March 2 at the gallery located at 30 Mohajer Alley, Iranshahr St., Karim Khan Ave.

IRIB official calls "Salman Farsi" international, interreligious series

»1 "We should give this good news to the Iranian people, who will be waiting for an amazing work from Mr. Davud Mirbaqeri, which portrays major events from the history of our country and the advent of Islam in Iran," he noted.

Mirbaqeri expressed his thanks for IRIB's regard for his TV series and briefed Shahabadi about the sets made for the great project.

He also expressed his hope that IRIB would provide the necessary support in due time so that his crew would be able to build the sets as planned.

"We are currently shooting the mid-season of the series, in which Salman Farsi leaves Iran when he is a young adult, converting to Christianity and spends years praying at churches and monasteries in the Byzantine Empire," he added.

Mirbaqeri started shooting "Salman Farsi" in the deserts of Kerman Province in late December 2019 as he said that it was expected to be completed in five years.



A scene from "Salman Farsi" by Davud Mirbaqeri.

The story of the series will be narrated over three seasons starting with ancient Iran, followed by the Byzantine Empire and finally early Islam.

Scenes of the project have been filmed at locations on Qeshm Island in southern Iran.

Mirbaqeri's crew was scheduled to shoot some scenes in Turkey and Armenia, however, the plan was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic and they filmed the scenes on sets built in the Iran.

Salman Farsi was one of several individuals of Persian origin residing in Arabia, probably as a consequence of Sassanid's involvement in Yemen. He was among the freedmen (mawali) of the Prophet Muhammad (S) and became the model of Persian converts and the symbol of the role that Persia and Persians would play in the future of Islam.

According to certain traditional narrations, Salman Farsi was the first who translated parts of the Holy Quran into Persian during the 7th century.

Fajr Theater Festival's lineup features over ten plays on Commander Soleimani

was a father, a brother and a friend with others, and the play had an interesting narration about his character," he said.

He also added that the festival is a venue where interesting topics such as history and revolutionary identity are portrayed.

"The play is so attractive and important that it does not require any box office draw. We actually are indebted to the main character of the play," Parsai, who is also the writer of the play, had already said.

"The style of my narrative is quite different in this play since the main character of this play is known as a national hero," he added.

According to the organizers, 28 plays have been selected for the national competition section of the festival.

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

Also included are several award-winning provincial plays. The collection includes "Pandemic" by director Reza Purtorabzadeh, "Bob Bara" by Nima Imanzadeh, "Awakening in Time of Blood" by Ehsan Janami, "Growing" by Shoaib Maktabdari, "Reboot" by Amirhossein Ajir Arshad, "Uninvited"

by Alireza Mahmudi and "I Am Staring at the Sea so No One Takes It Away" by Hassan Sobhani.

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

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

The plays have been selected by a team of stage artists: Tohid Masumi, Saeid Kheirollahi and Mohammad Larti.

"Those Years" by director Bahareh Saeidinia, "His is Champion Akbar" by Mostafa Dehasht and Bahar Bordbar, "Cocoon of the Revolution" by Puya Emami, "Life with the Taste of Gunpowder" by Mojtaba Khalili and "In the Name of" by Akbar Qahremani are among the plays.

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

The festival will be running until February 9 this year.

French writer Claire Joubert's latest book on Hazrat Fatima (SA) published

CULTURE TEHRAN — The latest d e s k book by the Tehran-based French writer and illustrator Claire Joubert has recently been published by Rud-e Abi Publications in Qom.

In the book named "Like You, My Lady, Fatima", Sama, a little girl who lives near the house of the Prophet Muhammad (S), tells the story of the birth of Hazrat Fatima (SA) to other children.

Joubert has also illustrated the book, and Fahimeh Shaneh is the editor and Hamideh Soleimani is the graphic designer of the book.



Cover of the book "Like You, My Lady, Fatima" by Claire Joubert.

Joubert was honored at the 11th edition of the Ammar Popular Film Festival early January.

She received the Nane Esmat Gloves, a special award of the festival.

Joubert has written several books in Persian, including "In Search of God", "God's Cookies", "Goodbye, Old Raccoon", "The Little Mouse's Prayer", "The Stories of the Little Green Lizard" and "The Most Trustworthy Friend".

Joubert was born in Paris in May 1961. She was brought up in a Christian family. She converted to Islam at the age of nineteen and immigrated to Iran

when she got married.

She illustrates her stories herself. With a cursory look at her works, one can easily perceive her preoccupation with issues such as faith and religion, identity, children's relations with their surroundings, etc. Most of the writer's works are for primary-age children.

She is also interested in doing research on children's literature and philosophy for children. She writes both in Persian and French and has published some French books in Lebanon and France, but her preference is to write in Persian.

Iranian cineastes express sympathy over death of Ali Ansarian

A R T TEHRAN — Iranian cineastes have expressed their sympathy over the death of actor and former footballer Ali Ansarian who died of COVID-19 on Wednesday.

One of the messages of condolences came on Thursday by the organizers of the 39th Fajr Film Festival, currently underway in Tehran and several other cities across the country, which is screening his film "Romanticism of Emad and Tubā" directed by Kaveh Sabbaghzadeh.

"As a nationally popular figure, Ali Ansarian was the Iranian people's beloved. He was passing through some traumatic days of his life, and we had hoped that he would return and shine at the festival with his first appearance at the event," they wrote.

"Of course, he remains as a star and shines, and now has joined the Light," they added.

In a press conference organized during the festival on Thursday for "Once Upon a Time in Abadan", Hamid Azarang's directorial debut, producer Ali Owji asked journalists and critics to observe a minute of silence in remembrance of Ansarian.

Popular actress Fatemeh Motamed-Aria, a star of the film, also pointed to the death of Mehrdad Minavand, another former footballer who passed away of COVID-19 last week, and said, "We lost two role models in life and championship."

"I think that if I were to die, people would feel less



Actor and former footballer Ali Ansarian pose with his mother in an undated photo.

grief than that over Ansarian's death," she added.

Speaking at a press conference for director Ruhollah Hejazi's drama "Bright" at the festival, actor Reza Attaran said that he has good memories of times with Ansarian and Minavand, and asked the government to buy COVID-19 vaccine soon to prevent more casualties.

Persian translator of Turkish literature Iraj Nobakht dies at 88

CULTURE TEHRAN — Persian d e s k translator of Turkish literature Iraj Nobakht has died. He was 88 years old.

Nobakht was born in Tabriz in 1932 and passed away on February 2 in the United States of America where he was buried. He was in the U.S. to visit his daughter who lives in the country.

Nobakht had a Ph.D. in the history of art from the University of Istanbul and was a lecturer at Tonekabon University

in Mazandaran Province.

He had collaborated with several magazines, including Ferdowsi, Khushah and Ketab-e Jomeh.

Most of his books and translations were published by Donya-ye No (New World) Publications.

He was the translator of Turkish historian and author Ismail Hakki Uzunçarsili's "Grand Ottoman History".

Nazim Hikmet Ran's "Blood Doesn't Tell", "Portraits of People from My

Land" and "The Song of the Sun Drinkers" were also rendered into Persian by Nobakht.

Persian translations of Orhan Pamuk's "I Am a Tree" and "Silent House" by Nobakht were also published in Iran.

He also translated Yasar Kemal's "They Burn the Thistles".

He was also the author of several books, including "Molana, Family and Friends" and "How Happy We Can Be Here".



Translator Iraj Nobakht in an undated photo.