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Iran urges U.S. to lift all sanctions

TEHRAN – Iran has called on the United States and Europe to put an end to U.S. sanctions and return to compliance with the 2015 nuclear deal.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Friday that the U.S. should lift all sanctions if it wants Iran to reverse its nuclear measures.

“U.S. acknowledged Pompeo’s claims regarding Resolution 2231 had no legal validity. We agree. In compliance with

2231: U.S. unconditionally & effectively lift all sanctions imposed, re-imposed or re-labeled by Trump. We will then immediately reverse all remedial measures. Simple: #CommitActMeet,” Zarif said in a tweet on Friday.

The tweet came after the Biden administration a rescinded former President Donald Trump’s restoration of all U.N. sanctions on Iran.

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Persian Gulf Arab states seek to usurp Iranian illumination: artist

TEHRAN – Iranian illuminator Zeinab Shahi, whose works have been showcased in several international events across the world, has said that the Persian Gulf Arab states are seeking to usurp Iranian illumination art.

Speaking to the Persian service of ILNA on Thursday, Shahi said, “Most of the buyers of Iranian illumination artworks are from the Arab countries,

however, Turkey is also active in this field, attracting illuminations created by Iranian artists.”

“But, they want Iranian artworks without the signatures of their creators. One of their conditions to buy the illuminations from Iranian artists is that they want their signatures removed from the bottom of their artworks,”

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Iran's largest agro products export terminal inaugurated

TEHRAN – President Hassan Rouhani, on Thursday, inaugurated the first phase of Iran’s biggest agricultural products export terminal constructed with an investment of 7.2 trillion rials (about \$171 million) in the northern Mazandaran province through video conference, IRNA reported.

Put into operation in the 51st series of inauguration ceremonies in the current Iranian calendar year (started

on March 20, 2020), the terminal is covering 31,000 hectares of land in the city of Jouybar.

Marketing, exporting products, creation and introduction of Iranian brands in global markets, reforming the distribution system and regulation of the market of agricultural products are reported to be among the primary goals of the mentioned export terminal.

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Iran most deserved country to host World Cup qualifiers: official

BY FARROKH HESABI

Iran is the most deserved country to host the 2022 World Cup qualifiers in the second leg of Group C matches, based on the Iranian football federation’s spokesman.

The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) changed the fixtures of Group C due to the pandemic coronavirus outbreak and decided to hold the games in a centralized format.

According to the previous schedule, Iran had to host Hong Kong in Tehran and travel to Phnom Penh to meet Cambodia in March. But now, the matches will be played every three days in June and in a single host country.

Amirmahdi Alavi, spokesman of the Football Federation of the Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI), explained the federation’s actions in this regard in an exclusive interview with Tehran Times.

“The FFIRI expressed its concerns about losing our hosting right in the competitions in a letter to the AFC and asked the confederation to consider the situation and make the best decision. The AFC confirmed that the most important issue is the safety and health of all teams and their staff. This is what we also emphasize, however, we never want to be deprived of our hosting privileges in this important stage of the games,” Alavi said.

“Hong Kong and Cambodia were not able to host their matches due to the COVID-19 restrictions and protocols. Based on the previous schedule, Hong Kong had to travel to Iran on March 24 before hosting Iraq five days after. But it was impossible for them because based on the corona-related regulations in this country, both teams needed two weeks of quarantine to be allowed to enter Hong Kong country.

“Accordingly, Iran, Iraq, and Bahrain have announced their readiness to host the games. However, based on the situation of the other two countries, we believe that Iran is the most deserved country to host the matches. June is very hot in Bahrain and Iraq national team have played their previous matches in Jordan due to some problems in hosting the games. So, with considering all the factors, Iran will have the best conditions to host the games with the highest standards regarding the health and safety of the teams,” Alavi stated.

“Iran has verbally expressed its request to the AFC’s official and we will also submit our official written request in due time,” the FFIRI spokesman concluded.

Iran plans to open innovation, technology centers in Russia, Syria

TEHRAN – Iran plans to set up two houses of innovation and technology in Syria and Russia in the near future with the aim of finding new markets for domestic knowledge-based products in the region.

Exporting technological products of Iranian knowledge-based companies is one of the important and key programs of the vice presidency for science and technology, and in this regard, the first house of innovation and technology was inaugurated in the Kenyan capital of Nairobi on January 27.

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

A house of innovation and technology has already been set up as a technology exchange office in China, Mehdi Ghalehnoei, an official with the vice presidency for science and technology, said, IRNA reported.

The centers are mainly formed with the investment and support of the private sector to provide the necessary infrastructure for their exports through the innovation houses, he noted.

To enter the market of some countries, the European Product Quality Standard (CE) is required; these bases help knowledge-based companies in obtaining standards and documents, for the export of medical equipment, raw pharmaceuticals, herbal medicines, he explained.

Technology exchange with Russia, as a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and Syria, is on the agenda, he added.

“We are trying to open up opportunities for exporting knowledge-based products to other countries, especially African countries, which we may have paid less attention to, or Southeast Asian countries, which will increase both the companies’ income and confront sanctions,” he highlighted.

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Massive famine threatens new peace efforts in Yemen: UN

Top UN officials have warned that a massive famine in Yemen could wipe out fresh peace efforts in the impoverished country, which has been suffering from a brutal war imposed by Saudi Arabia for the past six years.

UN Special Envoy for Yemen Martin Griffiths on Thursday called on the Yemeni army to halt its ongoing offensive to take control of Ma’rib from militiamen loyal to former pro-Saudi president, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi.

He warned that the offensive would threaten “all of the prospects of the peace process.”

Earlier this month, Yemen’s army soldiers and their allied fighters from Popular Committees resumed an offensive to take control of oil-rich Ma’rib, Hadi’s last urban stronghold in northern Yemen, which is some 120 km east of the capital Sana’a.

New American President Joe Biden claims that ending the conflict in Yemen is a priority for

his administration, appointing a special envoy on Yemen and reportedly ending U.S. support for offensive operations by Saudi Arabia.

“International support for ending the conflict is indispensable, and this offers us a new opportunity to reopen space for a negotiated solution,” Griffiths told the 15-member UN Security Council.

“There’s an important opportunity right now to help Yemen move towards lasting peace ... but that opportunity will disappear, it will be wasted, if Yemen tips into a massive famine,” the UN’s head of humanitarian affairs and emergency relief Mark Lowcock told the Security Council.

He said that around \$4 billion is needed in the current year to fund humanitarian operations as Yemen is speeding towards the worst famine the world has seen in decades.

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Venezuelan minister to visit Tehran to discuss tourism cooperation

TEHRAN – Venezuelan Tourism and Foreign Trade Minister Felix Ramon Plasencia Gonzalez will visit Iran in the next few days to discuss tourism cooperation, Caracas’ Ambassador to Tehran Carlos Antonio Alcalá Cordones has said.

“Felix Plasencia is going to visit Iran next week to sign a Memorandum of Understanding on expansion of tourism cooperation with the Islamic Republic,” IRNA quoted the envoy as saying on Wednesday.

The Venezuelan ambassador made the re-

marks on Wednesday night in a meeting with Iran’s Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan, noting that Plasencia’s visit is aimed at paving the way for more collaboration in the tourism industry.

The ambassador also noted that he has been in Iran for two years and it is obvious that a short visit by the Venezuelan minister will not give him enough time to get acquainted with the history and tourist attractions of the country, the report said.

Cordones underlined that joint venture in

the tourism industry will bolster ties between Iran and Venezuela and help the two countries’ economies.

He further noted that Plasencia intends to offer a pavilion to Iran at the International Tourism Fair of Venezuela.

For his part, Mounesan said that during a webinar with former Venezuelan tourism minister, both sides decided to expand tourism ties and hold an introductory tour.

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Ongoing relief for quake-hit Sisakht

TEHRAN – Rescue and relief operations are underway in Sisakht and surrounding areas as a magnitude 5.6 earthquake struck the southwestern town late on Wednesday.

The quake, felt in several cities and villages in the region, struck at a depth of 10 km at 10:05 p.m. local time.

According to officials, some 2,000 houses in Sisakht and 38 neighboring villages have been damaged by the incident and around 60 people have been injured. No fatalities have been

reported so far.

Iran has entered a decade of earthquakes since the [Iranian calendar] year 1396 (March 2017-March 2018), as the Iranian plateau is shrinking by 30 millimeters per year, Mehdi Zare, professor of engineering seismology at the International Institute of Earthquake Engineering and Seismology (IIEES), has said.

An earthquake of magnitude 6 or more is likely to occur in Iran next year, he stated.

Zare went on to say that every year about 250

earthquakes of 4 to 4.9 magnitude, 25 earthquakes of 5 to 5.9 magnitude, two magnitudes 6 to 6.9 earthquakes happen in the country, adding, every 10 years two earthquakes of 7 to 7.9 magnitude occur.

About 2 percent of the earthquakes of the world occur in Iran but more than 6 percent of the victims of the world earthquakes during the 20th century are reported from Iranian earthquakes. This shows the high level of vulnerability in Iran, according to Zare.

Invitation for Bids No. 99.EXP.01 & No. 99.EXP.02

Iranian Aluminum Company (IRALCO) intends to invite eligible bidders to purchase **13000 MT** of aluminum sow and ingot, **3600 MT** of aluminum billet 7-6063 inches on tender basis in **February 2021**.

Interested companies are allowed to send their competitive offers until **2:00 PM**

Tehran Time on 1st March, 2021 based on our required instructions.

For more information and access to tender documents please refer to Iralco

website: <http://iralco.ir>

Public Relations Department of Iranian Aluminum Company



Moscow interested in strong partnership with Iran: Russian analyst

BY MOHAMMAD MAZHARI

TEHRAN – Leonid Savin, a Russian political analyst, is of the opinion that Moscow is keen to establish a strong partnership with Iran.

“Despite Western position Russia is interested in strong partnership with Iran and development of common projects,” Savin tells the Tehran Times.

“The last visit of the Iranian delegation to Moscow indicated that we are strengthening our cooperation,” he argues.

“Iran is looking to join Eurasian Economic Union that seems a very important move forward. Our interaction in Syria also was a good bridge for trust-building,” according to Savin.

The following is the text of the interview:

How do you assess the new American administration's policy towards Iran? Washington asks Iran to take the first step to revitalize the JCPOA while it was the U.S. under the Trump presidency that withdrew from the deal in 2018. What is your comment?

In my opinion, there is no big change between old and new administrations. Both (Democrats and Republicans) are interested to pressure Iran. They have a consensus on the necessity to dismantle the “regime of Ayatollahs” (a special term used for high authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran). Only approaches are different. Let’s remember how American Democrats promoted and supported the “green revolution” in Iran in the whole framework of color revolutions organized in many regions.

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Unified transatlantic focus on JCPOA: Hitting two birds with one stone

By Azin Sahabi

TEHRAN — France, Germany, and the United Kingdom (E3), the European parties in the 2015 nuclear talks, are setting their agenda for future negotiations with Iran to revive the JCPOA.

In this respect, the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), a pan-European think tank, has commented on the issue to present the E3 with a playbook in terms of the Iran nuclear talks.

In a joint commentary published on 10 February 2021, Julien Barnes-Dacey and Ellie Geranmayeh, West Asia experts at ECFR, propose recommendations for the EU to “support the Iran nuclear deal.”

Issue linkage: A recipe for failure

ECFR argues that if the EU wants to salvage the JCPOA timely, and also open a window to negotiate with Iran on regional security, it “needs to quickly and clearly reject the argument that the two issues should be bundled together.”

Some Persian Gulf Arab monarchies as well as Israel, who largely share the idea that the Biden’s administration should maintain Trump’s maximum pressure campaign to force Tehran to offer more concessions, have increasingly insisted on engagement in future talks.



The think tank describes Washington’s regional allies’ common approach to the JCPOA as quite disruptive in the path forward and warns: “If Europeans want to contain the risks from Iran’s expanding nuclear activities quickly, it is critical that they avoid obstructing the process by pressuring Biden to tie the nuclear talks to negotiations on regional security.”

Proposing some recommendations to Biden and the E3, ECFR shed light on the followings:

- Tehran has clarified that it will not engage in further negotiations until Washington fulfils its JCPOA commitments, so both parties urgently need to re-establish a degree of trust by restoring the JCPOA.

- Concluding an agreement among Iran and the U.S.’s regional allies is hardly plausible in near future. In fact, Tel Aviv and Riyadh are not willing to negotiate with Tehran just only on the nuclear issue, leaving aside the regional concerns that Riyadh views more important to be addressed.

- Given Israel’s deliberate ambiguity on its nuclear weapons, Iran is neither willing to sit across the table with Israel nor to make further nuclear concessions.

Focus on JCPOA: Hitting two birds with one stone

In this respect, ECFR stresses that Washington and E3 should instantly focus to “contain the Iranian nuclear program before it is too late and lay the groundwork for subsequent wider negotiations on regional security.”

So, the experts clarify that the Western party should return to the initial JCPOA without any new partners’ formal presence at the table. Meanwhile, they suggest, consulting with regional allies on the JCPOA track is quite necessary.

The Berlin-based think tank strongly recommends that Europeans “should declare clear support for a focused approach on preserving this critical agreement. By doing so, they would also widen the space for negotiations with Iran on regional security.”

Geranmayeh also stresses: “The U.S. can keep Iran walking the path of diplomacy not by sustaining Trump’s sanctions, but by reentering the deal and restoring its ability to snap sanctions back into place in the future if Iran violates its obligations or blocks follow-up talks.”

In other words, she points out, “Today’s incentives are tomorrow’s leverage and sanctions relief not only will present Biden’s administration a chance to restore confidence but also create an opportunity cost for Iran in the future.”

Dealing with Israel on Iran: A recipe for E3

In a commentary on 15 February 2021, Hugh Lovatt, a policy fellow at the ECFR, underlines that given Israel’s harsh stance on the JCPOA and its renewed saber-rattling to launch a preventive strike against Iran, the Oval Office and the E3 need to clarify for Tel Aviv that reviving the original JCPOA is still the best means of addressing “its immediate security concerns.”

He notifies that it seems that Benjamin Netanyahu’s government alongside his new Persian Gulf Arab partners are again gearing up to arrange a campaign to undermine the talks which Biden is inclined to reenter.

Lovatt describes Israel’s hardline stance against the JCPOA “a challenge that the U.S. and E3 will have to manage carefully.” In this regard, he reminds that to complexify the future efforts to revive the JCPOA, Israelis conducted a series of sabotage operations against Tehran in the final months of Trump’s tenure.

The analyst warns that by blocking the diplomatic process, this strategy is a high-risk one and there is little to indicate that the Israelis will play a constructive role in support of the nuclear talks.

Therefore, ECFR puts forward a number of advices to Biden’s administration to restrain disruptive intentions of the Israeli government:

- The U.S. should privately relay its preparedness to deny Israel from offensive weapons that could enhance its operational capacity to attack Iran. Meanwhile, the Oval Office can go on bolstering Israel’s defensive capabilities

- The U.S. and E3 should be ready to call out potential future Israelis’ covert attempts inside Iran to impair the diplomatic process.

- Netanyahu, with the help of Mossad Director Yossi Cohen, has ignored dissenting views in the security establishment to just focus on Iranian profile. In fact, his policy to put politics ahead of security, is a major issue that the U.S. and E3 should tap into.

Lovatt emphasizes that such an approach can prove proportionate to fulfill two major objectives: “revival of the 2015 JCPOA as a point of departure to concluding a broader agreement that would address other Israeli concerns.”

Finally, ECFR stresses that dealing with Israel is a task that the U.S. and E3 must grin and bear it because “reaching an agreement on Iran’s nuclear program that prevents a regional arms race must remain the immediate focus. It is also a more attainable goal than changing Iran’s regional behavior or halting its missile development.”

Don’t shy away from obeying law, Rouhani advises Biden administration

POLITICAL DESK **TEHRAN** — Hassan Rouhani, the Iranian president, urges the Biden administration to make up for Donald Trump’s mistakes, respect international regulations, and not shy away from surrendering to law, according to Tasnim news agency.

In comments after inaugurating a number of industrial projects at a videoconference on Thursday, Rouhani said the new U.S. administration has realized that Washington has made mistakes in dealing with Iran.

“Surrendering to law is not a fault. Do not shy away. What is bad is surrendering to force,” the president advised the U.S. government.

Rouhani also rejected the notion that Iran has taken a series of nuclear steps to pressurize the U.S., adding, “Tehran calls on Washington to respect law and honor commitments, including United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231.”

He also stressed that his cabinet would never have thought that a “stupid” person



like Trump might take the helm at the U.S. and wage an unprecedented economic war

against the Iranian nation.

The Iranian president highlighted the

economic progress in Iran despite crippling sanctions, saying, “Despite all U.S. pressures and economic war and the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, Iran maintained economic progress in various industrial sectors, such as steel production.”

Rouhani also praised his government’s success in joining the Eurasian Economic Union and unveiled plans for Iran’s permanent membership in the union, which he said would serve the purposes of Iran’s resistance economy and facilitate exports with suitable tariffs.

President Joe Biden, who had pledged to rejoin the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, has so far refused to lift economic sanctions and imposed by his predecessor.

In remarks on Wednesday, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei said Iran has had enough of empty promises about the nuclear deal, demanding practical action on fulfilling the JCPOA by the other parties.

There’s huge disagreement among Biden aides over JCPOA revival: Politico

POLITICAL DESK **TEHRAN** — President Joe Biden says that the U.S. will rejoin the Iran nuclear deal if Tehran resumes complying with the terms of the agreement, but inside the Biden administration, debates have raged among top aides over whether this is the best path or whether to take other routes that may sidestep the original deal, according to Politico.

Meanwhile, supporters of the 2015 deal are worried that Biden doesn’t rush to return to it. They fear key Democrats and Iranian politicians are waiting an upcoming election to shape their policies. They also worry about ongoing Iranian efforts, including restrictions on the access of IAEA inspectors, to pressure Biden to act faster and lift sanctions as part of a return to the original deal, Politico said on Thursday.

The State Department has announced that the United States would accept an expected European Union invitation to attend a gathering of parties to the original deal.

Politico claimed a full restoration of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) may be a far messier, and it needs a longer-lasting set of negotiations than what many observers had expected – if it happens at all.

The JCPOA is the official name for the 2015 nuclear agreement.

“There is a window of opportunity that simply will not last,” warned Daryl Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association. “The slow pace of deliberations on the part of the United States will jeopardize Biden’s stated goal, which is to restore the agreement and to build on the JCPOA.”

But there are “a lot of different views” within the Biden administration, one of the people familiar with the discussions said, adding, “I think there’s an instinct to return to the deal, but that’s not a preordained outcome.”

A Capitol Hill Democratic aide expressed concern about U.S. government’s policy towards Iran and told Politico, “I don’t get the sense they have a timeline, like they don’t have dates and times” for rejoining the accord, added, “How fast to move – and how big?”

According to Politico, Biden’s administration has faced a crucial question: Whether to aim for a return to the original

nuclear deal first or seek a broader deal from the start. A broader deal could possibly include non-nuclear aspects, such as limits on Iran’s missile program, and its regional influence.

The media company suggested, “One option on the table is to have some sort of interim agreement that can build confidence on both sides. The interim agreement would not necessarily look like the original deal. It could involve giving Iran some limited sanctions relief – such as allowing oil sales – in exchange for Tehran halting some of its nuclear activities such as enriching uranium to 20 percent purity.”

Some Biden’s administration officials insisted that the debate has finished. They claim the U.S. is prepared to return to the original nuclear deal if Iran complies with it. But exactly what steps must be taken to achieve that goal and at what pace are still a matter of debate and discussion, Politico wrote.

Politico explained the opinions of the U.S. officials concerning Iran issue and wrote, “Brett McGurk, a senior Middle East official on the National Security Council staff, is among the more hawkish voices on Iran – and that national security adviser Jake Sullivan at times takes a harder line than many of his colleagues. He recently declared that containing Iran’s nuclear program is a “critical early priority” of the U.S. administration. Rob Malley, Biden’s special envoy for the Iran talks, is known to be more of an advocate for a return to the original nuclear deal. Others likely to be on his side include Jeff Prescott, a top official in the U.S. Mission to the United Nations. However it is not clear where Secretary of State Antony Blinken stands.”

Regarding the U.S. efforts to revive the JCPOA, Politico highlighted the role of the U.S. envoy and said, “Malley has spent his short time as far as envoy reaching out to the other parties to the 2015 agreement, including Russia and China, but not to Iran itself. He also has been in touch with representatives of Israel as well as Arab countries.”

Pointing to the critics of the JCPOA, Politico said, “Struck during the presidency of Barack Obama, its supporters hailed it for dramatically curtailing Iran’s nuclear program, but its



opponents cast it as too weak and too generous in terms of the sanctions relief it offered Iran in return.”

Interestingly, Politico acknowledges Iran has complied with the agreement and writes, “Iran has technically remained a party to the agreement, which is still functional to a limited degree. But since the U.S. walked away from it, Tehran has taken several steps that have put it out of compliance. The moves aimed to push America back to the negotiating table while also pressuring European leaders to find ways to ease the substantial economic sanctions.”

Some advocates of a speedy return to the 2015 agreement argue that time is of the essence, in part because Iranian presidential elections are set for June.

Anti-American politicians likely to win than the ones who negotiated the deal, Politico stressed.

Those who are against any quick U.S. return to the accord claim that no matter who wins the Iranian election, the economic sanctions and the coronavirus pandemic will compel Iran to return to the negotiating table. For instance, Gabriel Noronha, a former State Department official, argues “Iran is in desperate financial and political straits right now. We have no reason to relent on the pressure, especially to get back to a deal which is already well on the way to expiring.”

American network says Biden administration is ready to talk with Iran

POLITICAL DESK **TEHRAN** — The Biden administration says that it was ready to hold talks with other world powers and Iran to discuss Tehran’s nuclear program, marking a first step in a possible diplomatic deal in which Washington could rejoin the JCPOA, according to NBC News.

State Department spokesperson Ned Price noted the Biden’s administration is prepared “to discuss a diplomatic way forward on Iran’s nuclear program,” in reaction to an invitation from the European Union’s high representative for foreign affairs and security policy to attend a meeting of the countries that signed the 2015 nuclear agreement — Britain, France, Germany, Russia, China and Iran.

Meanwhile, the EU’s deputy secretary general for political affairs, Enrique Mora,

said that the accord was at “a critical moment” and that he was ready to invite all the participants in the deal to “an informal meeting to discuss the way forward.”

A senior State Department official told reporters that the announcement represented not a breakthrough but merely a first step on a potentially long, arduous diplomatic effort, adding “I think we recognize that this is just a very first initial step to say that we are prepared to attend the meeting that would be convened by the EU.”

“We recognize that that’s not in and of itself a breakthrough. Even the first meeting itself may not be a breakthrough,” the official said. “But it is a step. Until we sit down and talk, nothing’s going to happen.”

The senior State Department official sug-

gested that it was up to the Iranians whether they would accept the EU invitation.

“We’ll find out, I assume in the coming days, whether they are prepared to join a meeting that the EU would convene. Of course, our hope is that they would, but we’ll just have to wait and see,” the official remarked.

The three European foreign ministers “welcomed the United States’ stated intention to return to diplomacy with Iran as well as the resumption of a confident and in-depth dialogue between the E3 and the United States,” according to NBC News.

Mohammad Javad Zarif, the Iranian foreign minister, stressed the Europeans must abide by their own commitments and “demand an end to Trump’s legacy of Economic Terrorism,” saying that Iran’s actions were

responses to U.S. and European “violations” of the accord.

Early Friday, Zarif tweeted that Iran would “reverse all remedial measures” if the U.S. lifts sanctions on his nation.

Also on Friday, Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei reiterated his previous statement concerning the JCPOA on the Instagram and noted, “Iran has fulfilled all its obligations under the deal, and not the United States and the three European countries ... If they want Iran to return to its commitments, and the United States must in practice ... lift all sanctions. Then, after verifying whether all sanctions have been lifted correctly, we will return to full compliance ... It is the irreversible and final decision and all Iranian officials have consensus over it.”

IRGC official says Iran’s conventional arms non-negotiable

POLITICAL DESK **TEHRAN** — General Mohammad-Ismaeil Kowsari, the advisor to the IRGC commander, told Yemen’s Al-Masira website on Thursday that conventional defense weapons are “our right” and cannot be negotiated in any way, and it is an issue on which there is consensus, according to Iran press.

“Iran has never sought war and has defense agents to deter any aggression and will respond to any aggression against its territory with power,” Kowsari warned.

In recent weeks, the Iranian Army and the IRGC have conducted various military exercises across the country. These drills involve homegrown missiles, drones, helicopters, submarines, military ships, and UAVs. Different missiles have been tested during the drills, including Zolfaghar Basir with a range of 700 km, Dezful with a range of 1,000 km, and Qiyam with a range of 800 km.

Iran has been insisting that its weapons are only deterrent. When Iraq’s Saddam Hussein invaded Iran in the 1980s, no country sold missiles to Iran to defend itself.

Saddam’s army fired missiles on Iranian cities. The weapons were provided to the Saddam regime mostly by the Soviet Union and Western countries, particularly France. German and Dutch companies also provided materials to the Iraqi regime for building chemical weapons. The United States also supported Saddam in the war against Iran. It gave satellite images of the Iranian forces stationed in the border region.

The memories of the 1980-88 war is still haunting the



Iranian nation. Once in a while remains of Iranian soldiers killed in the war are unearthed.

Though the United Nations faulted Iraq for invading Iran it failed to force Iraq to pay reparations to Iran.

General Kowsari also said Iran would fulfill its nuclear obligations only if the other parties fulfill their obligations in practice not in words.

Former U.S. President Donald Trump quit the 2015 nuclear agreement – JCPOA – and thereby violated United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231 which have confirmed the multilateral agreement. By leaving the legally binding agreement, the former U.S. administration not only returned sanctions lifted under the agreement it also added new ones.

Even European sides avoided to honor their commitments

under a pressure from the Trump administration.

Now hopes for a revitalization of the agreement have been raised as new U.S. President Joe Biden has vowed to return to diplomacy with Iran. However, the question is who takes the first step.

Iranian officials have repeatedly stressed that Tehran has never left the agreement and it was the U.S. that quit the agreement and imposed sanctions on Iran and naturally it is the U.S. side that must take the first step to restore the nuclear deal.

In his latest remarks on the current state of play between Iran and the United States, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei underlined the need for Washington to take tangible measures before Tehran makes any move on the 2015 nuclear deal.

Addressing the people of East Azerbaijan province on Wednesday morning, the Leader pointed out that the Islamic Republic has heard many words and promises from the other side about the nuclear deal, but this time only actions matter, and if the Islamic Republic sees actions from Europe and the U.S., it will act too.

“About the JCPOA, promises were made by the other side. I am saying one thing: We’ve heard many promises which were broken and contradicted in practice. Mere words don’t help. This time only action! Action! If the Islamic Republic sees action from the other side, it will act too,” Ayatollah Khamenei said, adding, “We set the condition and the condition will not be retreated from.”

Tehran says U.S. still not JCPOA member as Washington floats return to diplomacy

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TEHRAN – The United States is yet to become a member of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, Iran has said, as the Biden administration intensifies diplomatic effort to reach a common position with Europe on Iran.

U.S. State Department spokesman Ned Price said on Thursday that Washington was willing to take part in a meeting of the P5+1 and Iran to discuss the situation around the Iran nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

“The United States would accept an invitation from the European Union High Representative to attend a meeting of the P5+1 and Iran to discuss a diplomatic way forward on Iran’s nuclear program,” Price said, referring to the UN Security Council’s five permanent members and Germany.

The remarks elicited a response from spokesman for Iran’s Foreign Ministry Saeed Khatibzadeh because they implied that as if



the P5+1 still exists.

Khatibzadeh took to Twitter to remind

the Americans that the P5+1 format had been reduced to P4+1 after the Trump adminis-

tration unilaterally withdrew the U.S. from the nuclear deal in May 2018.

“Reminder: Because of US withdrawal from JCPOA, there is NO P5+1. It is now ONLY Iran and P4+1. Remember, Trump left the room and tried to blow it up. Gestures are fine. But to revive P5+1, U.S. must Act: LIFT sanctions. We WILL respond. Here is the key sequence: #CommitActMeet,” Kahtibzadeh said in a tweet on Friday.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif also echoed the same position, underlining that the U.S. should lift all the sanctions it imposed on Iran over the course of the Trump administration.

“U.S. acknowledged Pompeo’s claims regarding Resolution 2231 had no legal validity. We agree. In compliance with 2231: U.S. unconditionally & effectively lift all sanctions imposed, re-imposed or re-labeled by Trump. We will then immediately reverse all remedial measures. Simple: #CommitActMeet,” Zarif tweeted on Thursday.

Iran urges U.S. to lift all sanctions

Zarif says, “We’ll follow action with action”

POLITICAL
d e s k

TEHRAN – Iran has called on the United States and Europe to put an end to U.S. sanctions and return to compliance with the 2015 nuclear deal.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Friday that the U.S. should lift all sanctions if it wants Iran to reverse its nuclear measures.

“U.S. acknowledged Pompeo’s claims regarding Resolution 2231 had no legal validity. We agree. In compliance with 2231: U.S. unconditionally & effectively lift all sanctions imposed, re-imposed or re-labeled by Trump. We will then immediately reverse all remedial measures. Simple: #CommitActMeet,” Zarif said in a tweet on Friday.

The tweet came after the Biden administration a rescinded former President Donald Trump’s restoration of all U.N. sanctions on Iran.

Acting U.S. Ambassador Richard Mills sent a letter to the UN Security Council on behalf of President Joe Biden informing the 15-member body of the U.S. decision to rescind the Trump administration’s assertion that all UN sanctions had been reimposed on Iran in September.

On September 19, former U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo took a measure that sent diplomatic shock waves across the world. In a statement on that day, Pompeo announced the return of “all previously terminated UN sanctions” on Iran, a highly controversial measure that was met with global backlash from U.S. friends or foes alike.

“Today, the United States welcomes the return of virtually all previously terminated UN sanctions on the Islamic Republic of Iran.... Sanctions are being re-imposed on Iran pursuant to the snapback process under UN Security Council resolution (UNSCR) 2231,” the statement said.

All parties to the Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), opposed the U.S. measure, saying the White House had no legal right to reinstate the UN sanctions on Iran.

“Our remedial measures are a response to US/E3 violations”

The Iranian foreign minister also responded to a European-American joint statement on Iran. He accused Westerners of pursuing sophistry and putting the onus on Iran.

“Instead of sophistry & putting onus on Iran, E3/EU must abide by own commitments & demand an end to Trump’s legacy of #EconomicTerrorism against Iran. Our remedial measures are a response to US/E3 violations. Remove the cause if you fear the effect. We’ll follow ACTION with action,” the chief Iranian diplomat said in a tweet on Thursday.

The top diplomats of France, Germany, the UK and the U.S. issued a joint statement regarding Iran on Thursday following a virtual meeting hosted by France.

“The E3 welcomed the United States’ stated intention to return to diplomacy with Iran as well as the resumption of a confident and in-depth dialogue between the E3 and the United States. The Ministers affirmed strong interest in continuing their consultations and coordination, including with China and Russia, on this key security issue, recognizing the role of the High Representative of the European Union as Coordinator of the Joint Commission,” the statement said, adding, “The E3 and the United States affirmed their shared objective of Iran’s return to full compliance with its commitments under the JCPOA. Secretary Blinken reiterated that, as President Biden has said, if Iran comes back into strict compliance with its commitments under the JCPOA, the United States will do the same and is prepared to engage in discussions with Iran toward that end.”

The foreign ministers also called on Iran not to take any additional steps, in particular with respect to the suspension of the Additional Protocol and to any limitations on IAEA verification activities in Iran.

Iran has recently announced that it is going to stop implementing that the Additional Protocol to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), a remarkable move in a series of nuclear measures mainly intended to make the West realize that Iran will not implement the JCPOA one-sidedly.

After years of calling on the JCPOA parties to implement their obligations, Iran gradually began reducing JCPOA commitments on the first anniversary of the U.S. withdrawal from the deal. In its latest move, Iran raised the uranium enrichment level to 20%. It also intends to stop implementing the Additional Protocol to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) on February 23.

Instead of ensuring Iran’s legitimate interests in the JCPOA, the Europeans joined the Biden administration in calling for new nuclear and non-nuclear negotiations with Iran, a move that dampened hopes of a quick revival of the JCPOA and prompted Iran to double down on its nuclear activities.

The Europeans, together with the Americans, once again said that they want to use the JCPOA as a starting point for new negotiations aimed at addressing other issues of concern.

“The E3 welcomed the prospect of a U.S. and Iranian return to compliance with the JCPOA. The E3 and the United States affirmed their determination to then strengthen the JCPOA and, together with regional parties and the wider international community, address broader security concerns related to Iran’s missile programs and regional activities. We are committed to working together toward these goals,”

Can Russia and China restore balance to JCPOA?

POLITICAL
d e s k

TEHRAN – As the U.S. doubles down on its diplomatic effort to reach a common consensus with Europe on the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, pundits raise speculation on how the European Union, particularly EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell, can save the day by setting the stage for Iran and the U.S. to ultimately implement the nuclear deal in full.

But these pundits rarely point to the fact that the European signatories to the nuclear deal –formally called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) – have lost the neutrality needed to act as a go-between since Joe Biden won the U.S. presidential election in November. The Europeans are now harboring even more hawkish views than Washington itself.

During the Trump administration, the European parties to the JCPOA – France, Germany and the UK (E3)– had been calling on Iran to fully implement the nuclear deal in the hope that Trump would lose the presidential election and then they will revive the JCPOA in collaboration with a more favorite Democratic administration.

Trump lost the election and was replaced by someone who had played a direct role in negotiating the JCPOA in the first place. But the Europeans were quick to renege on their promise to salvage the nuclear deal. They called for a new negotiation with Iran after Biden assumed office, one that would expand the JCPOA and add other thorny issues such as Iran’s defensive missile program and its regional activities to it.

The top diplomats of the E3 and the U.S.

reiterated this position during a Thursday joint meeting.

“The E3 welcomed the prospect of a U.S. and Iranian return to compliance with the JCPOA. The E3 and the United States affirmed their determination to then strengthen the JCPOA and, together with regional parties and the wider international community, address broader security concerns related to Iran’s missile programs and regional activities. We are committed to working together toward these goals,” the chief diplomats said in a joint statement after the meeting.

The Europeans are now planning an informal meeting of all JCPOA participants and the U.S., according to a Reuters report. Citing a European official, Reuters said that the date of this meeting is yet to be set. The official also pointed to a U.S. willingness to accept an invitation from the EU to participate in a meeting of the P5+1.

Earlier on Thursday, U.S. State Department spokesman Ned Price said Washington was willing to attend a meeting of the P5+1, although the U.S. is not a member of this group of major world powers.

“The United States would accept an invitation from the European Union High Representative to attend a meeting of the P5+1 and Iran to discuss a diplomatic way forward on Iran’s nuclear program,” Price noted, referring to the UN Security Council’s five permanent members and Germany.

Price’s remarks signified a U.S. desire to walk into the P4+1 with the help of the E3 even before lifting its sanctions on Iran.

Iran’s Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed

Khatibzadeh reminded the West that the U.S. is still not a JCPOA member and the only way to get the JCPOA membership is to lift sanctions.

“Reminder: Because of US withdrawal from JCPOA, there is NO P5+1. It is now ONLY Iran and P4+1. Remember, Trump left the room and tried to blow it up. Gestures are fine. But to revive P5+1, U.S. must Act: LIFT sanctions. We WILL respond. Here is the key sequence: #CommitActMeet,” Khatibzadeh said in a tweet on Friday.

But while the E3 tries to sneak the U.S. in the JCPOA without lifting the sanctions, two JCPOA parties, namely China and Russia, can ensure that the U.S. would rejoin the nuclear deal after correcting the mistakes Trump made against Iran.

China took a step in this regard by saying Thursday that U.S. should unconditionally return to the JCPOA and lift all sanctions.

Speaking at a news conference on Thursday, China’s Foreign Ministry Hua Chunying said, “Currently the Iranian nuclear issue is at a critical stage with both opportunities and challenges. China holds that the return of the United States to the JCPOA is the only correct approach to resolve the impasse on this issue. All parties should act with greater urgency, work together to implement consensus reached at the foreign ministers’ meeting last December, and push for the unconditional return of the United States to the JCPOA as soon as possible and the lifting of all sanctions on Iran. On its part, Iran should resume full compliance with the JCPOA. In the meantime, we call on all sides



the Thursday statement noted.

But the Western reiteration that they want to misuse the JCPOA is unlikely to sit well with Iran. Because Tehran has said time and again that it will not renegotiate the nuclear deal, let alone expand it.

Iran will implement a nuclear law obligating the government to halt implementing the Additional Protocol on February 23, Kazem Gharibabadi, Iran’s Ambassador and Permanent Representative to international organizations in Vienna, said on Monday.

“Act of Parliament will be executed on time (23 Feb) and the IAEA has been informed today to ensure the smooth transition to a new course in due time. After all, goodwill brings about goodwill!” Ambassador Gharibabadi said in a tweet on Monday.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said in a recent telephone conversation with his Swiss counterpart Guy Parmelin that it’s up to the U.S. to make the first move toward reviving the JCPOA.

“The ball is in the U.S. court now. When it lifts illegal sanctions in practice, everything will return to the right path,” the Iranian president pointed out.

Rouhani reiterated the same position in another telephone conversation with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, saying that Europe should prove in practice that it wants to preserve the JCPOA.

President Rouhani stated that if Europe is really seeking to preserve the JCPOA and realize its goals it must prove it in practice. “The only way to protect the JCPOA is cancellation of inhuman U.S. sanctions,” he continued.

Noting that moves to include new issues in the JCPOA is something “impossible”, Rouhani told Merkel, “The JCPOA is a document approved by the (UN) Security Council and is the product of long years of efforts by Iran and six great countries in the world, and it has a definite framework that is unchangeable.”

to remain calm and exercise restraint, avoid taking actions that will escalate the situation and reserve space for diplomatic efforts.”

Russia, for its part, reminded the West why the JCPOA ended up a failed deal. Dmitry Peskov, spokesman for the Kremlin, has welcomed a U.S. decision to rescind the Trump administration’s restoration of all UN sanctions on Iran in September.

Peskov also said that the main reason for the non-implementation of the JCPOA is the sanctions pressure that the U.S. put on Iran.

Also, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov told TASS on Friday that Iran cannot be suspected of carrying out a covert nuclear weapons program as the E3 and the U.S. ramped up pressure on Iran, accusing it of pursuing nuclear activities that have no civil justifications.

“We have always said and are saying now that a state, which has an agreement on comprehensive guarantees with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and which has been committed to this deal - and Iran has such an agreement, and a state, which has been fully observing the JCPOA for a long time, cannot be suspected of carrying out a covert program on weaponization in the nuclear field,” Ryabkov noted.

With the E3 working to pave the way for a U.S. return to the JCPOA without lifting the sanctions, Russia and China have a unique opportunity to ensure that the dispute around the JCPOA is resolved reasonably. They need to make it clear to the West that a dispute settled unfairly is bound to break out in the not-so-distant future.

S P O R T S

Persepolis down Gol Gohar at Iran Professional League

S P O R T S
d e s k

TEHRAN – Persepolis football team eased past Gol Gohar 5-0 to finish first at the halfway of Iran Professional League (IPL) on Friday.

The Reds earned their fifth consecutive win in Sirjan.

Ahmad Nouroollahi opened the scoring for the visiting team in the 30th minute. Omid Alishah made it 2-0 on the hour mark after he entered the box and found the net with a strike that sent the ball through the gap between Mehrdad Bashagaedi’s legs.



Mehdi Shiri registered the third goal with a header in the 68th minute. Bashagardi failed to clear Siamak Nemati’s strike and Shiri headed the ball into the net from the rebound ball.

Gol Gohar defender Ahmadrza Zendehrouh scored an own goal in the 72nd minute. In the 84th minute, Gol Gower were reduced to 10-man after Behnam Barzay received his second yellow card.

With two minutes remaining, Namati rubbed the salt into Gol Gohar’s wounds. Bashagardi once again failed to save the ball and Nemati scored the fifth goal from the rebound ball.

Persepolis came first with 30 points from 15 matches. Sepahan are second with 28 points and Esteghlal sit third with 26 points.

FIFA ranking: Iran still second best Asian team

S P O R T S
d e s k

TEHRAN – Iran national football team remain second best Asian team in the latest FIFA World Ranking released on Thursday.

With minimal national team football played since the last ranking in December, there were no changes to the positions of Asia’s top ranked teams with Japan 27th, followed by Iran at 29th, while Korea Republic are ranked 38th.

Australia are at 41st, with reigning Asian AFC Asian Cup champions Qatar completing the top five at 58th.

Belgium, France, Brazil, England and Portugal continue to occupy the top spots, with the leading trio of Belgium, France and Brazil only separated by 37 points.

In the first FIFA World Ranking of 2021, a total of 43 full internationals (including one played in December 2020) were taken into account.

Alireza Jahanbakhsh available for Crystal Palace match

S P O R T S
d e s k

TEHRAN – Iranian winger Alireza Jahanbakhsh is available for the match against Crystal palace, Brighton coach Graham Potter said.

Potter is hoping Alireza Jahanbakhsh can return to the squad after missing the last nine games due to a hamstring injury.

Jahanbakhsh has not featured since the FA Cup third round against Newport last month due to injury.

The match will be held at the Amex Stadium Monday night. “Ali just needed a bit more time coming back from his injury, but he will be available for the squad on Monday night,” Potter said.

Brighton are currently 16th after last week’s goalless home draw against Aston Villa and will bid to extend their six-game unbeaten league run against derby rivals Crystal Palace.

Asia’s World Cup qualifiers officially postponed

S P O R T S
d e s k

TEHRAN– The 2022 FIFA World Cup qualifiers officially postponed to late May and June amid COVID-19 fears. The AFC said four matches will be held as scheduled on March 25 and 30 at their respective venues, with the remaining rescheduled games to be played in a centralized format from May 31 to June 15.

“The AFC continues to place the health and safety of players, teams... as the highest priority and will work together with its Member Associations to closely monitor the situation in the region,” AFC said in a statement.

Games involving 40 nations across eight groups in the current round of qualifying had been due to resume in March after matches originally scheduled to be played last year were suspended due to the pandemic. The winners of each of the eight groups will qualify for the next phase of Asia’s competition to determine the continent’s participants at the World Cup alongside the four best runners-up.

Asia has four guaranteed places at the finals in addition to Qatar – the reigning Asian champions – securing their berth in the tournament as hosts. A further place is available through an intercontinental playoff. According to the decision, the ‘Persian Leopards’ will play Hong Kong and Cambodia on June 3 and 7.

The matches against Bahrain and Iraq will be held on June 11 and 15.

Iran, who sit third in Group C, have four must-win matches.

Abdi’s goal chosen the Best Header of 2020 ACL

S P O R T S
d e s k

TEHRAN - Persepolis striker Mehdi Abdi’s goal against Al Nassr of Saudi Arabia was chosen the Best Header of 2020 AFC Champions League.

Trailing by a goal, Persepolis needed a hero and Abdi was the player of the moment as he rose high to head home Bashar Resan’s cross as the Iranian champions went on to win the penalty shoot-out, the-afc.com wrote. He won the poll with 81 percent of votes.

Esteghlal striker Cheick Diabate also came second in the poll with 11 percent.

Saad Natiq (Al Shorta), Li Shenglong (Shanghai SIPG FC) and Dragan Ceran (Pakhtakor) were also in the in the poll.

E-commerce trade quadruples in H1

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** – The value of Iran’s e-commerce transactions during the first six months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-September 21, 2020) increased by four times compared to the same period in the previous year, according to the head of E-Commerce Development Centre of Iran.

The number of new licenses issued for online businesses also tripled in the mentioned six months compared to the same period in the previous year, Ali Rahbari told IRIB.

The process of issuing licenses has become systematic and smart and the duration of issuing such licenses has been reduced from five working days to less than one working day, according to the official.



The number of e-signature certificates, which is one of the major determining factors for the development of the e-commerce industry, has also doubled in the first six months of this year compared to the same period last year, Rahbari said.

This success has been achieved with the support of the government, the National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control, and the media, the official stressed.

According to Rahbari, this statistic shows that many have changed their shopping methods and chosen online shopping, and also traditional and offline businesses have tried to have online sales, while online businesses have tried to strengthen the capacity of their various departments.

Nearly a year ago, E-Commerce Development Center of Iran officially launched a system for recording customers’ complaints against e-commerce businesses in the country in order to strengthen the monitoring of the online trade in the country.

Elaborating on the goals of the mentioned system, Rahbari said the system was aimed to provide the customers with a profile of the electronic businesses for evaluating them.

The official pointed to the evaluating of the e-commerce businesses and establishing a trust for the customers as the first step toward the development of the e-commerce market in the country, saying that the center started working on the mentioned system since the end of the Iranian calendar year of 1396 (ended on March 2018).

TSE’s main index rises 2% in a week

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

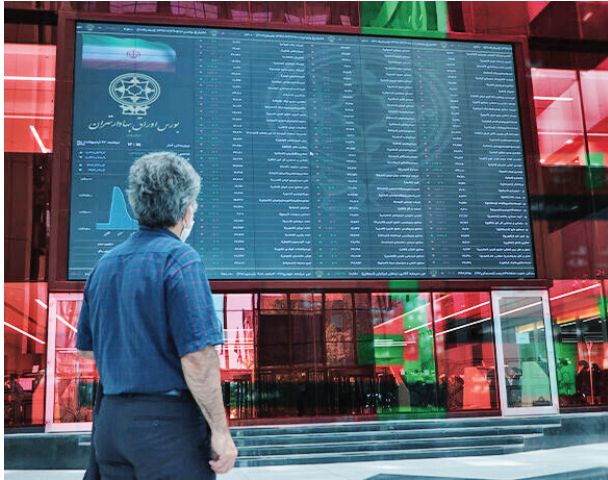
The index closed at 1.238 million points on Wednesday (the last working day of the week).

During the past week, the indices of Iran Khodro Group, Saipa Company, Social Security Investment Company, Tehran Oil Refining 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.

Farhang Hosseini, a capital market expert, has recently 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.

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

Nearly 1m tons of copper concentrate produced in 10 months

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — During the first ten months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2020 – January 19, 2021), 998,000 tons of copper concentrate has been produced in Iran.

Meanwhile, production of copper concentrate stood at 92,803 tons in the tenth month of the present year, which was nine percent less than the figure of the same month in the past year.

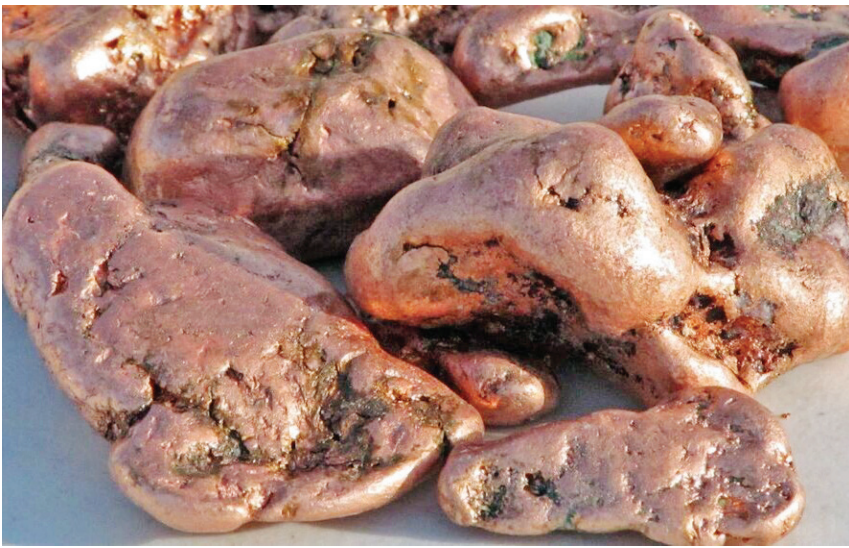
Used as raw materials in copper smelting, copper concentrates have a copper content of about 30 percent by weight. The remainder

consists mostly of sulfur and iron. Copper concentrates are made mostly from sulfide ores.

In its outlook plan for the mining sector in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20), Iran plans to produce 1.427 million tons of copper concentrate.

The country had planned to produce 1.198 million tons of copper concentrate in the past year, while the output reached 1.18 million tons.

Iran has seen its copper exports doubled in the past Iranian calendar year, despite a series of bitter sanctions imposed by the United States aimed at hampering the Islamic



Republic’s trade of lucrative metals.

A senior official at Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO), Iran’s larg-

est metals and mining holding, has said that the value of exports for main copper products reached more than \$1 billion over the past year.

Iran’s largest agro products export terminal inaugurated

1 → Speaking in the opening ceremony, the terminal’s Head Khalil Gholizadeh said the first phase of this export terminal with a capacity of more than 364,000 tons has different sections for sorting and packing fruits, producing carton boxes, and freezing protein materials and has created direct jobs for 300 people.

According to the official, the export terminal includes 57 cold storage halls and has the capacity for freezing 80 tons of agricultural products and producing 6,000 tons of carton boxes every day, as well as the annual packaging of 274,000 tons of various agricultural products and the storing of 90,000 tons of vegetable and protein products at above and below zero temperatures.

Gholizadeh considered the regulation of the market of agricultural products, especially horticulture products, as one of the most important advantages of this terminal and called for the support of public and private banks in providing working capital for the country’s agricultural units.

He pointed to providing the complete supply chain, including the packaging industry, as one of the main requirements of the country’s export terminals for agricultural products and said: “supporting the production chain needed for this export terminal and setting up export terminals for similar agricultural products in other provinces are the requirements for our export sector today.”

As announced by an official with the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), the value of the country’s agricultural products export has risen 8.4 percent



during the first ten months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2020 – January 19, 2021), compared to the same period of time in the past year.

Mehrdad Jamal Orounaqi, the IRICA deputy head for technical and customs affairs, put the value of exported products at \$4.9 billion in the ten-month period of the present year.

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

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

IFO, Japan, UNIDO ink MOU to promote Iranian fishery industry

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** – Iran, Japan, and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) have signed a trilateral agreement to cooperate on the third phase of a project for developing advanced fishery in the port city of Chabahar in southeastern Iran, ILNA reported.

The mentioned MOU, valued at \$3 million, was signed at Japan’s embassy in Tehran on Thursday, in a ceremony attended by the Japanese ambassador to Tehran, the IFO and the UNIDO representative.

In the first and second phases of this project which was supported by the Jap-



anese government, some \$500,000 was invested by UNIDO and Japan in order to improve the methods of fishing, offshore and onshore storage of fishery products,

as well as introducing optimal processing methods to fishermen and processors in the mentioned region.

Based on this memorandum, the third phase of the mentioned program would be focused on the production of high value-added products as well as the processing and export of tuna value chain products in Chabahar port.

When completed, this project will place Iran among the producers and exporters of tuna fish in international markets.

Eliminating deprivation and generating income and creating productive employment, especially for women in the region are also

among the goals of this project.

Back in March 2020, Japan had signed a cooperation agreement with UNIDO for the implementation of the third phase of the said project in Iran.

Valued at €180,000, the said agreement was signed as a part of five cooperation documents between UNIDO and Japan at UNIDO headquarters in Vienna, in presence of permanent representatives of Iran, Japan, Iraq, Pakistan, South Africa, and Uganda.

As Iran’s only oceanic port, Chabahar consists of two separate ports named Shahid Kalantari and Shahid Beheshti, each of which has five berths.

Iran’s export to Iraq falls 14%

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN**— The value of Iran’s export to Iraq has fallen 14 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, Mojtaba Mousavian, the deputy head of Iran’s Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), announced in a TV program on Thursday.

As announced by Hamid Hosseini, the secretary-general of Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce, Iran has exported \$6.3 billion of products to its neighbor Iraq in the ten-month period of this year, while the figure was \$7.5 billion in the same time span of the previous year.

In mid-January, Iranian Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian, who is the head of the Iran-Iraq Joint Economic Committee, said that the two countries’ annual trade is going to be increased to \$20 billion.

Ardakanian made the remarks in the opening ceremony of the two countries’ fourth Joint Economic Committee meeting in Tehran, which he co-chaired with the Iraqi Trade Minister Alla Ahmed Al-Jubouri.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran is ready to support the export of Iranian engineering and technical services to Iraq by establishing a joint investment fund,” he said, adding that new agreements are going to be signed between the two countries in the fields of water and energy.



He also underlined the development of transportation lines between the two countries as an important factor in the development of trade relations between the two countries and added: “We are ready to implement the previous agreements in the fields of electricity, gas, and water, and to formulate new agreements in this field in order to develop cooperation between the two countries.”

The official further called for signing agreements for cooperation in other fields including double taxation, investment, preferential tariffs, and customs.

Ardakanian also mentioned the positive political relations

between the two countries as a base for boosting economic relations.

He expressed hope that with the efforts of the two countries’ governments and businessmen, the development of trade and economic relations between the two sides will become smoother and the talks in the Joint Economic Committee meeting will lead to the signing of documents to develop bilateral cooperation.

Further in the meeting, Al-Jubouri emphasized the significance of modern technologies in the development of economic relations between the countries, and said: “In today’s world, the digital economy is very important and the existing obstacles and problems in the way of the development of economic relations between the two countries can be overcome accordingly.”

According to Al-Jubouri, the presence of a high-ranking Iraqi delegation at the two countries’ Joint Economic Committee meeting was an indication of Iraq’s determination for boosting cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Iran in order to identify and eliminate existing obstacles in the way of the two sides’ trade development and to take the necessary measures.

“Given the important relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Iraq, both countries can help each other by sharing their experiences and technical knowledge to have good cooperation on important economic issues,” he stressed.

Gas reproduction from Sarajeh storage up 17%

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — The capacity of gas reproduction from Sarajeh storage facility has risen 17 percent since the beginning of current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2020), compared to the same period of time in the past year, according to an official with the Iranian Central Oil Fields Company (ICOFC).

Ahmad Rajabi, the production director of the company, announced that 1,014 million cubic meters (mcm) of gas has been reproduced from the storage since the year start.

As the first natural gas storage facility in Iran and West Asia, Sarajeh storage facility was officially inaugurated in January 2014 near Qom, 124 kilometers south of Tehran.



Iran has two major natural gas storage facilities in Sarajeh and Shourijeh, in which

every year the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) stores the gas received from gas refineries all over the country to be used in the colder months of the year.

Following the development of the South Pars gas field and the increase in the country’s gas production capacity, construction and development of the country’s natural gas storage facilities has become a top priority.

Reproduction from Sarajeh and Shourijeh storages increased by 33 percent in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19, 2020) compared to the preceding year, according to Ahmad Rajabi, director of technical affairs at the National Iranian South Oil Company (NISOC).

The mentioned storages supply gas to six northern and northeastern provinces that are far from the southern gas-rich regions, eliminating the need for importing gas from Turkmenistan.

As one of the world’s top gas producers, Iran is planning to expand its underground natural gas storage capacity to ensure that enough natural gas is available during peak demand periods to avoid electricity supply shortfalls in the future.

According to the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC)’s plans, the capacity of the two storage facilities, Sarajeh and Shourijeh, is planned to increase to over seven billion cubic meters in future.

Moscow interested in strong partnership with Iran: Russian analyst

➡ The case of Trump is interesting because he made many issues more complicated (also for China, Russia, European partners, Latin American countries). I agree with the Supreme Leader of Iran that the U.S. must lift all sanctions and bans first because they imposed them first. Under new conditions, it will be not easy because any new steps by Iran to develop its nuclear program is described in the U.S. and Israel as serious violations. It gives American decision-makers and political lobby groups a large base for interpretations that step by step modified into a pretext for hostile actions against Iran.

What is the role of Russia in reviving the JCPOA? Could Moscow play the role of an influential mediator?

Of course, Moscow is interested in a balanced approach and special conditions for Iran in a context that both (Iran and Russia) are suffering from Western sanctions. On the other hand, Russia has some limits because we face confrontation with both the EU and the U.S. at the moment. This experience also presents Russia as a reliable negotiator for Iran. Despite the Western position, Russia is interested in a strong partnership with Iran and the development of common projects. The last visit of the Iranian delegation to Moscow indicated that



we are strengthening our cooperation. Iran is looking to join the Eurasian Economic Union that seems very important to move forward. Our interaction in Syria also was a good bridge for trust-building.

Do you think that the initiative of nuclear-weapon-free zones (NWFZ) in West Asia is realistic due to Israel's refusal of any cooperation?

No. I'm sure that Tel-Aviv will continue its own irresponsible policy in the region. Also, after the Abraham Accords the perception

of regional security, unity between Arab and Muslim countries was broken. Israel still following Begin's doctrine of chronic inferiority. Due to repressions against Palestinians and land grabbing, Israelis feels vulnerable from possible conventional massive strike, so they want to have robust elements for strategic deterrence.

Given the New Start that is signed by the U.S. and Russia, how do you evaluate the new U.S. administration's policies when it comes to Russia?

They have no choice. Actually, both sides need this new agreement. But it was signed under Russian conditions so we see it like our victory. Recently I discussed this process with colleagues from governmental institutions who focused on this problem. The Russian position is that the analysis and preparation of new agreements will take one or two years. It is a realistic scenario.

Do you expect a fundamental shift in U.S. policies during the Biden presidency?

It is not possible. Joe Biden is not an isolationist or game-changer. He will try to restore American leadership and ties with partners abroad, especially for NATO countries. But democratic agenda, in general, is the same as 10 years ago - it is about interventions, from promoting human rights (that is a good umbrella for interference in domestic affairs of any country, but always under double standards, just to mention how the U.S. reacted to the uprising in Bahrain 10 years ago) to direct attacks if possible. Libya, Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq are the most concrete examples. But the world has changed too and we have emerging China more actively confronting the U.S. hegemony. Russia is also more powerful than before. The most important is understanding the true nature of Western policy.

We need to scratch our back on our own

By Abir Bassam

In an article I published on the Tehran Times a few months ago under the title "Waiting for the American Godot", I wrote that electing Joe Biden will not bring any changes to the American policy in the region.

The name of the American president is insignificant. If we need to see changes, we have to make them! And the return of peace, prosperity, and security in the region are pointless, if not demarked with the free will. Simply, it is better to apply the Arabic proverb: nothing scratches your body like your nail, instead of the English proverb: scratch my back and I will scratch yours, since the Americans will not scratch any body's back.

2021 is not going to be an easy year for West Asia and the Arab World. Major changes have occurred through the last years. However, if we want to see the Americans departing the region, major steps need to be taken.

Biden's presidential term is not going to be rosy and peaceful. He came to finish what he has been started during Barack Obama's presidential period. Although he is facing domestic challenges, the final goals for this phase of history are set. The Americans since the end of the First World War have not approved Sykes-Picot division of the region.

The Americans since the end of the First World War did not approve Sykes-Picot division of the region. Therefore, when Bernard Lewis presented his vision in the fifties, it seemed to be more logical to control the Middle East, which was approved by Obama's administration. The implementations of Bernard Lewis's recommendations are still stirring the course of actions in the area. In addition, Biden stressed in his first speech, as a president, on the need to retrieve the American role in leading the international diplomacy. He called for America's friends and allies, mainly Turkey and Europe, to stick together in doing so. Add to that, it is a critical period of history and we need to be aware that Biden still has no plans to leave Syria and Iraq. Therefore, it is up to the resistance forces to raise the Americans' awareness about the necessity for their departure.

In assuring the continuous existence of the American troops in Syria and Iraq, we witnessed in the last months of 2020 the return of ISIS, i.e., the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. Its militias were released from SDF's dungeons, i.e., Syrian Democratic Forces. ISIS leaders were moved to the American bases in Iraq and Syria for further futuristic assignments. Accordingly, ISIS started attacking the civilians in Der al-Zor in Syria and in Mousel in Iraq. In a second stage they started attacking the Arab Syrian Army troops and Hashed al-Shaabi. ISIS was released and the old cracked disc is back to playing once more: America in the region, solely, to fight ISIS!

There is an obvious relation among ISIS, SDF and the Americans. The three sides have been living in harmony for at least two years. This has proved to be true once ISIS started its terrorist attacks on civilians and armed forces in

Mesopotamia. In addition, when the leaders of the tribes in the Syrian Desert called for their sons to quit SDF because it is no longer acting within its intended aim, SDF went to AS-Suwayda in south Syria to recruit more young men.

In doing so SDF was playing on sectarianism because the majority of the inhabitants in the AS-Suwayda government are Druze. Druze is an Islamic minority cult; they are Arabs and have been living in the Levant and northern Palestine for more than 12 centuries. Playing on sectarian differences to form a new unity is a Western originated move that aims to divide and re-dividing the region. It is an original step that does not fall far from Bernard Lewis's recommendations, which Obama's administration has implemented in the region since 2011. Biden is back to keep the Americans troops in Mesopotamia under the pretense of fighting ISIS.

In his first couple of appearances, Biden urged "parties involved" in the war in Yemen to put an end to it. He ceased weapons shipment to Saudi Arabia. On the other hand, he requests Ansarullah to stop military operations in Bab al-Mandab. This was a big surprise. It was a clear message that the U.S. is not serious about ending the war in Yemen, despite the removal of the name Ansarullah from the list of terrorism any ways; Ansarullah has made their choice and took firmness.

The concept of the free will was applied when Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Leader of the Islamic Revolution, met with senior Iranian Air Force officers on February 7. A banner was hanged behind Ayatollah Khamenei; the slogan printed was one of the commandments of Imam Ali (PBUH), in which he recommended taking precautions against enemies. The printed proverb said much about the Iranian future policy in facing the coming challenges, in particular with United States. The proverb said: it seems that the enemy is flattering to fool you, hence be firm. The decision for firmness in the Islamic Republic was manifested in the continuous nuclear researches and in building its missile force, in spite of the American objections.

"Be firm" means be prepared! Whether it was building your military force, or getting your national priorities in order. It is the fool, who would march ill-equipped to any confrontation whether it was a political or military. The coming confrontation phase with the Americans in the region will require full readiness.

In Iran, it is clear that preparations are in full swing. In Palestine, there is no other solution but to resist, for it is a finger biting game, the loser is the first screamer. The Palestinians have no other choice but to fight, and fight to the end. The question, for Palestinians now, is to be or not to be.

The resistance in Lebanon is fully ready to go. It is now up to Syria, not the Syrian political decision or the Syrian army. Syria took its political decision as long as we remember. Damascus was the first to support the Islamic Revolution in Iran; it also backed the resistance movement in Palestine and Lebanon. And after 2003, Damascus was with Iraq in its



fight against the Americans. However, no matter how much the situation is complicated in northern Syria or in the East of Euphrates, now it is up to the people to say their word. The decision must be taken to initiate a national resistance against the Turkish and the American occupations.

It should be a Syrian resistance, by the Syrians, and for the Syrians. There is no other way; otherwise, it will not work out. The only mean to get the Americans out of Mesopotamia is to initiate a secret resistance. If the Americans have not suffered in Syria and Iraq - what they suffered in Iraq 2003-2008 and in Lebanon in 1982, they would have never left. Now the Syrians need to take firmness once again, just as they did since 1920 till 2011, then all the way till 2018. Taking the consideration, the tougher task is yet to come.

Accordingly, we have to take notice of two vital issues. First, the French are waiting patiently. They believe that it is about time to take over matters in northern and east northern Syria. They have interests that they want to protect and they have investments that they need to make. In addition, they have an unfinished business with Turkey, which requires finalization.

The second issue, Biden is trying to sort the American affairs around the world, among them the American presence in Mesopotamia. He needs to get his priorities in order so that he can accomplish two important files, the first is the nuclear agreement with Iran; and the second is to solve the disputes with China and Russia. The war drums are beating, yet no one wants to go there, except for Israel.

Although it might be strange to say, the American plans can only be blockade in Syria. The missing piece to end the American game in Mesopotamia is in the declaration of "Effective Announcement No. One" the Syrian Resistance against the occupied forces was born. Naturally, the forces present against the will of the Syrian leadership. Once a Syrian resistance is set to go, the American plans will be turned upside down. Then, history will, for sure, write that the end of America as we know was eradicated by the Syrian blood, and the blood of those who formed the Resistance Front against the American imperialism and Israel.

Morocco suppressing activists in Western Sahara after deal with Israel

Activists and ordinary people in Western Sahara are said to have been subjected to a harsh crackdown and human rights abuses by the government in Rabat, weeks after the United States recognized Morocco's sovereignty over the disputed territory — where pro-independence sentiments run high — as a gift following its normalization with Israel.

The Middle East Eye news portal cited the activists as saying on Friday that Washington's decision on December 10, 2020, to recognize Morocco's territorial claim to Western Sahara had emboldened Rabat to harass ordinary people and those critical of the move.

Mahmoud Lemaadel, one of the activists, reported an "unprecedented" number of assaults on activists and campaigners in Western Sahara over the past weeks.

Following the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, and Sudan, Morocco became the fourth Arab country late last year to reach a normalization agreement with Israel, which was brokered by the administration of ex-U.S. president Donald Trump during its final days

in office.

As part of the contentious deal, Trump agreed to recognize Morocco's authority in Western Sahara, which has been at the center of a decades-old territorial row between Morocco and the Polisario Front.

The Algeria-backed movement has been fighting for the Sahrawi people's aspirations for independence from Moroccan rule and for a referendum on their self-determination, something that has been pledged to the region in UN resolutions.

Resource-rich Western Sahara, a former Spanish colony, was claimed by Morocco in 1957, but its indigenous population is firmly opposed to Moroccan control and has been calling for independence from the North African country.

Elaborating on Rabat's campaign of suppression, Lemaadel said since last December, Sahrawi citizens have been stopped in the streets and grilled about their views of Morocco's rule over the territory.

In turn, Mohamed Elbaikam, another ac-

tivist, revealed other repression tactics used by the Moroccan government.

"Salaries of human rights activists have been cut off or frozen, their family members are often threatened and there have been several examples of phones hacked and exposed," he said.

People in W Sahara under military siege' Elbaikam further rejected Trump's claim that his decision was meant to provide the locals with an opportunity to live a better life and said the recognition had instead paved the way for a "stronger, more intense and continuous" repression campaign against the Sahrawi people.

Meanwhile, Nazha el-Khalidi, an activist and journalist, warned that Trump's move could negatively impact the already conflict-stricken region.

"We Sahrawi people do not want to be the scapegoat for any relationship that binds one state to another... the bridge between Morocco and Israel has been built over the blood of Sahrawi people," she said.

Meanwhile, Lemaadel said Morocco had also stepped up its arrest campaign against activists in recent weeks, saying those detained had faced "vague" or "made-up" charges so that they could be kept in jail.

Disturbing videos of several brutal arrests at the hands of Moroccan forces were widely shared on social media platforms.

Moroccan government have long been responding to pro-independence activism in Western Sahara with an iron fist.

Last December, the Human Rights Watch (HRW) slammed Rabat for having kept a "strong lid on any manifestations of opposition to Moroccan rule in Western Sahara for a long time.

The leading New York-based rights group said Moroccan authorities "have prevented gatherings supporting Sahrawi self-determination, beat activists in their custody and on the streets, imprisoned and sentenced them in trials marred with due process violations including torture, impeded their freedom of movement, and followed them openly."

(Source: Press TV)

Daesh confirm fighting alongside Saudi mercenaries in Yemen

The Daesh terrorist group has openly confirmed that its members are fighting alongside Saudi-backed mercenaries against Yemen's army and forces from popular committees in the province of Ma'rib.

Over the past few weeks, Ma'rib has been the scene of major operations by Yemeni forces pushing hard to recapture it from forces loyal to the former Saudi-backed government.

Daesh issued a short statement on Wednesday, saying it has carried out operations against Yemen's Ansarullah forces in Ma'rib province, killing and wounding a number of the movement's forces.

According to Press TV, the new development came after Ansarullah forces and their allies in the Yemeni army launched a major offensive to retake Ma'rib, which is considered as the last stronghold of Saudi-backed forces in northern Yemen.

Their advances have raised concerns in the Saudi-led coalition and their allies, including the US. On Tuesday, US State Department spokesman Ned Price called on Ansarullah to halt its offensive and end retaliatory strikes on Saudi Arabia.

The movement says the call proves US support for terrorist elements in Ma'rib.

Massive famine threatens new peace efforts in Yemen: UN

➡ Lowcock further said that about 16 million people in Yemen are going hungry and five million of those people are "just one step away from famine."

Saudi Arabia and a number of its regional allies launched a devastating war on Yemen in March 2015 to bring Hadi, a staunch ally of Riyadh, back to power and crush the popular Ansarullah movement.

Yemen's popular forces, however, have gone from strength to strength against the Saudi invaders, leaving the Saudi-led coalition forces bogged down in Yemen.

At least 80 percent of the 28-million-strong population in Yemen is reliant on aid to survive in what the UN has called the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

UN agencies have already warned that around 400,000 Yemeni children aged under five are in danger of losing life this year due to acute malnutrition.

The war has destroyed or closed half of Yemen's hospitals and clinics, leaving the people helpless particularly at a time when they are in desperate need of medical supplies to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

Biden administration 'to declassify report' into Khashoggi murder

The Biden administration will declassify an intelligence report into the murder by the Saudi government of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, according to Avril Haines, who has been nominated to serve as director of national intelligence.

The decision means that the US is likely to officially assign blame for Khashoggi's brutal murder to the kingdom's de facto ruler, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

Khashoggi, a Washington Post journalist and US resident who wrote critical columns about the Saudi crown prince, was murdered by Saudi agents inside the Saudi consulate in Turkey in October 2018.

While media reports have said that the US intelligence community determined with a medium to high degree of confidence that Prince Mohammed ordered the killing, that assessment has never officially been stated. The crown prince has denied he ordered the murder.

Since then, Khashoggi's fiancée Hatice Cengiz and other human rights activists have called on Biden to release the classified report into the murder, saying that doing so was the first step towards seeking accountability.

Biden's message to G7, Munich events: Allies should work together on China challenge

U.S. President Joe Biden seek on Friday to rally global democracies and European allies to work together to address a range of concerns about China, but is not looking for a "new Cold War," a senior administration official said.

The Democratic president, sworn in less than a month ago, will use a "virtual visit" to Europe to try to re-establish the United States as a multilateral team player after four years of divisive "America First" policies pursued by Donald Trump, Rutgers reported.

Biden will arrive bearing gifts - a \$4 billion pledge of support for global coronavirus vaccination efforts, the re-entry of the United States into the Paris climate accord and the prospect of a nearly \$2 trillion spending measure that could bolster both the U.S. and global economies.

Biden will meet at 9 a.m. (1400 GMT) with G7 leaders from Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Canada and Japan by videoconference, but plans to join them for an in-person summit hosted by the UK this summer.

Resistance News

Hamas: Captured soldiers to be released only in exchange deal

INTERNATIONAL DESK TEHRAN — Hamas Movement on Thursday evening affirmed that Israel will not get back its captured soldiers in Gaza except through an exchange deal through indirect negotiations.

Hazem Qassem, Hamas's spokesman, said in a statement published on his Twitter page that recent experiences confirm the ability of the Palestinian resistance to impose its will.

Benny Gantz, the Israeli Defense Minister, said that he is working with the security apparatuses and the political echelons to return the captured soldiers from the military wing of Hamas.

The Qassam Brigades, Hamas's armed wing, holds four Israelis, two of them were captured during the Israeli war on Gaza in the summer of 2014 and their fate or health status is unknown. The other two entered Gaza in unclear circumstances during the past years.

Quake opens up deep cracks in historical bridge

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** – Two deep cracks have appeared in the centuries-old Pataveh Bridge as the result of an earthquake with a magnitude of 5.6 late on February 17. The epicenter was near the southeast of the town of Sisakht. “Preliminary assessments show that two deep cracks have been made in the structure of Pataveh Bridge due to the earthquake,” Mohamad-Hassan Talebian, the deputy minister of tourism and cultural heritage, announced on Thursday.



Pataveh Bridge is a masonry arched monument dating back to the Safavid era (1501–1736).

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.

Oshnavieh; a paradise for archaeologists, cultural heritage enthusiasts

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** – Resting on a layer cake of civilizations that have come and gone for millennia, Oshnavieh county, in northwest Iran, is teemed with ancient hills, tomb chambers, archaeological sites, and bas-relief carvings. According to many, it's a paradise for archaeologists.

Located in West Azarbaijan province, Oshnavieh boasts 106 sites registered on Iran's National Cultural Heritage List. It is also home to five bas-relief carvings, originally belonging to the Kingdom of Urartu (860 BC – 590 BC), the main reason why Oshnavieh is called an archaeologist's paradise.

However, over the past couple of years, the region has reportedly witnessed series of unauthorized, unprecedented drillings and excavations committed by unauthorized diggers and antique dealers.

The Urartu kingdom rose to power in the mid-9th century BC, but it went into gradual decline and was eventually conquered by the Iranian Medes in the early 6th century BC. The Urartians were succeeded in the area in the 6th century BC by the Armenians.

Urartu, an ancient country of southwest Asia centered in the mountainous region southeast of the Black Sea and southwest of the Caspian Sea. Today the region is divided among Armenia, eastern Turkey, and northwestern Iran. As mentioned in Assyrian sources from the early 13th century BC, Urartu enjoyed considerable political power in the Middle East in the 9th and 8th centuries BC.

According to Encyclopedia Iranica, the territory of the ancient kingdom of Urartu extended over the modern frontiers of Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and the Republic of Armenia. Its center was the Armenian highland between Lake Van, Lake Urmia, and Lake Sevan.



Urartian archeological finds in modern Iran including castles, settlements, water channels and other water constructions, rock chambers, rock graves, stelae, rock inscriptions, and building inscriptions.

Most impressive are the Urartian architectural remains with their different building forms and ground plans, mainly as castles and larger fortresses. They range in size from small, mostly rectangular castles or road stations to the extended fortification systems of large settlements.

Urartian pottery is mainly earthenware and, to a lesser extent, red polished ceramic, so-called palace-ware, since it is found only in the larger, central Urartian sites. Urartian pottery is mostly monochrome ware made by the potter's wheel.

Cuneiform inscriptions have been found on clay tablets, cylinder seals, and bullae; there are inscriptions on building stones, as at Bastam and rock inscriptions, others on stelae and clay vessels.

The Urartian rock chambers influenced the Achaemenid rock graves in layout and stonecutter techniques. The monumental scale of the Urartian rock cuttings and surface preparation for cuneiform inscriptions prepared the way for the Achaemenid monumental inscriptions, in particular, that of Darius at Bisotun.

West Azarbaijan embraces a variety of lush natural sceneries, cultural heritage sites, and museums including the UNESCO sites of Takht-e Soleyman and Qareh Klise (St. Thaddeus Monastery), Teppe Hasanlu, and the ruined Bastam Citadel.

The region has been the seat of several ancient civilizations. It formed part of Urartu and later of Media. In the 4th century BC, it was conquered by Alexander the Great and was named Atropatene after one of Alexander's generals, Atropates, who established a small kingdom there. The area returned to the Persian (Iranian) rule under the Sasanians in the 3rd century CE. The Arabs controlled Azerbaijan from the 7th century until Turkish nomads overran it in the 11th century. Thenceforth the inhabitants of the region were Turkish speakers. The region was overrun by the Mongols in the 13th century, and, under the ruler Hulegu, Azarbaijan became the center of a Mongol empire extending from Syria on the west to the Oxus River (now Amu Darya) on the east.

Foreign arrivals to Iran plunge 94 percent in face of virus

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** – The number of foreign visitors to Iran plunged 94% in the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (started March 20, 2020), from a year earlier, government data showed on Wednesday, as the coronavirus pandemic takes a heavy toll of the tourism industry.

“Some 450,000 foreign travelers arrived in Iran for mainly medical or trade purposes during the first nine months of the year... tightened measures to tackle the new coronavirus has reduced international travel to the country by 94 percent,” Vali Teymouri, the deputy tourism minister, announced on Wednesday.

The global tourism industry has been plagued by the outbreak of the coronavirus for more than a year, which is a record in the history of this industry, the official noted.

In an interview with the Tehran Times, the official noted: “We need to revise marketing strategies, and to redefine tourism products by paying great attention to nature tours, rural tourism, and ecotourism, agricultural tourism as a tool to empower local communities and travel businesses.”

The coronavirus epidemic has ruined more than 1.5 million jobs in Iran's travel sector, tourism minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan said in December.

“Over 1.5 million jobs have been lost in the tourism sector of Iran due to the



COVID-19 disease.... Many of the tourism-insiders are now unemployed or they are staying at home,” Mounesan said.

The county's travel sector has suffered a loss of 140 trillion rials (some \$3.3 billion

at the official rate of 42,000 rials) since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic till the end of Shahrivar (Sep. 21), the official added.

Mounesan publicized last November

“Over 1.5 million jobs have been lost in the tourism sector of Iran due to the COVID-19 disease.... Many of the tourism-insiders are now unemployed or they are staying at home.”

Venezuelan minister to Visit Tehran to discuss tourism cooperation

→ 1 The Iranian minister added that the two countries are going to sign an MoU to expand cooperation in the tourism industry and that tourism practitioners from Venezuela and Iran will hold talks for future cooperation.

The Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts has determined a five-day trip for the Venezuelan delegation, but it seems that they are going to stay less time in Iran, he noted.

The relationship between Venezuela and Iran became more serious following an official visit by the then Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez to Tehran in 2001. Now, the two nations are determined to expand cooperation in tourism, the news agency explained.

According to previous agreements, Venezuelan and Iranian nationals can have visa-free travels to each others' countries to stay for two weeks.

The visit by the Venezuelan minister is expected to pave the ground for expansion of cooperation in cultural, economic, and political fields as well.

Last November, Mounesan said that visa-free access

and direct flights are the two important advantages for Iran and Venezuela to develop tourism cooperation.

“We are ready to expand our relations with Venezuela in the arena of tourism by organizing familiarization tours in both countries with the participation of the private sector,” Mounesan said in a meeting with the Venezuelan ambassador.

Back in October, Mounesan exchanged views with Plasencia, in a video conference to deepen tourism relations, especially through simplifying visa rules, launching fam tours, and setting up exhibits. They also agreed to sign a memorandum of understanding in a bid to broaden bilateral ties.

Iran expects to reap a bonanza from its numerous tourist spots such as bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, mausoleums, churches, towers, and mansions, of which 24 being inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

Under the 2025 Tourism Vision Plan, it aims to increase the number of tourist arrivals from 4.8 million



in 2014 to 20 million in 2025. So it will undeniably try its best to achieve a relatively ambitious goal but when that happens the travel industry is likely to look more altered.

No harm to Fars historical sites by quake

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** – No [noticeable] damage has been reported to cultural heritage sites across Fars province as the result of the medium-sized quake hit southwest Iran late on February 17, the provincial tourism chief has said.

The earthquake with a magnitude of 5.6 shook southwest Iran near the town of Sisakht of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad province with at least 44 people injured, Iranian media reported.

The quake, which caused substantial seismic waves, was felt in the surrounding provinces including Fars. State news agency IRNA said the temblor struck at



a depth of 10 kilometers at around 10 p.m. local time.

“The four counties of Eqlid, Abadeh,

Sepidan, and Mamasani are adjacent to the provinces of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, and Isfahan, where the earthquake was felt.”

Iran sits on top of major tectonic plates and experiences frequent seismic activity. A 7.3-magnitude quake in the western province of Kermanshah killed 620 people in November 2017.

In 2003, a 6.6-magnitude quake destroyed the ancient mud-brick city of Bam in the southeast Kerman province, killing at least 31,000 people.

Iran's deadliest was a 7.4-magnitude quake in 1990 that killed 40,000 people, injured 300,000 others, and left half a

million homeless across the northern town of Rudbar.

The ancient region of Fars, also spelled Pars, or Persis, was the heart of the Achaemenian Empire (ca. 550–330 BC), which was founded by Cyrus the Great and had its capital at Pasargadae. Darius I the Great moved the capital to nearby Persepolis in the late 6th or early 5th century BC.

Its capital city, Shiraz, is home to some of the country's most magnificent buildings and sights. Increasingly, it draws more and more foreign and domestic sightseers flocking into this provincial capital which was the literary capital of Persia during the Zand dynasty from 1751 to 1794.

Persian New Year: tourism ministry proposes models for domestic travels

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** – With a month to go till the start of the Iranian New Year, which has long been associated with millions of domestic travels, the Iranian tourism minister wants to find a way to partially revive the already-slumped travels in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The tourism ministry has held several meetings with the National Headquarters for the Coronavirus Control during with we discussed the issues in detail. Based on our strategies, we proposed two travel models that can be implemented following health protocols in the country,” ISNA quoted Vali Teymouri, the deputy tourism minister, as saying on Thursday.

The first [working] model for travels in the Iranian New Year, proposes travels by the means of package tours.

“Throughout package tours, travelers benefit from services provided by the tour and they will definitely stay in authorized accommodation centers [and destinations] which are under the supervision of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts,” the official explained.

For the second model, people do not go on tours, but when traveling to their destination city, they must stay in authorized accommodation centers, which are under the supervision of the ministry, to comply with all health protocols and maintain public health, Teymouri explained.

Any other form of accommodation would be prohibited to curb the virus, he said.

“To help prevent the spread of the coronavirus



in Noruz 1400, the establishment of tourist camps, camping, tourists staying in places such as schools, shrines, husseiniyats, etc. is prohibited, and this issue has been announced to the provincial governors.”

The arteria of Noruz travels is expected to be announced in detail during the upcoming exhibition for tourism and handicrafts, which will be held in near future, he said.

Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan publicized in November that mass, unplanned travels are not approved. “The outbreak of the coronavirus has caused damage to the tourism industry in Iran and [other parts of] the world in such a way that according to statistics, 50

million people are directly and indirectly exposed to unemployment due to the virus spread in the global scene.... yet, mass or unplanned and irresponsible travels are not approved to take place during the coronavirus era.”

Smart and responsible traveling should replace “do not travel” recommendations, the minister stressed, adding: “In our country, Corona has caused problems in the tourism industry and the worrying point is the continuation of this trend.”

“We are well aware of what the National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control proclaims [the health protocols], hence as a proposal, we have formulated some smart, responsible travel packages by the implementation of which we could have secure travels,” the minister said.

He has repeatedly announced that his ministry is in full coordination with the Ministry of Health for strictly implementing health protocols in travel destinations, hospitably centers, and museums, amongst others, underlining that “people's health is our priority.”

Tourism [industry of Iran] was growing before the corona [outbreak], its revenues reached \$11.7 billion in 2019, which accounted for 2.8% of GDP, near the average share of tourism in the world GDP, which was 3.2 percent, the minister explained.

Iranians traditionally make hundreds of thousands of domestic trips during the New Year holidays, when most businesses and workplaces are closed, as are schools.

Iran, a role model in West Asia for NCDs control: WHO official

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Iran's measures to control non-communicable diseases (NCDs) is a role model for the Middle East (West Asia), World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Director for Eastern Mediterranean, Ahmad al-Manzari, has said.

During a visit to Tehran, al-Manzari stated that implementation of plans on non-communicable disease prevention and control in 31 provinces and 67 universities of medical sciences has accelerated Iran's path to achieving sustainable development goals.

He called the recent pandemic an opportunity for health systems around the world to prepare themselves for possible future epidemics by making structural changes, IRNA reported on Friday.

Al-Manzari stressed the need to transfer Iran's knowledge and experience to other countries in the region, especially experiences related to the COVID-19 pandemic and non-communicable diseases by setting up regional and global networks.

Unfortunately, with the over-emphasis of the health system on the recent pandemic and the disruptions in the provision of prevention measures, it is predicted that in the coming years, non-communicable diseases bring up new challenges to the world, he lamented.

300,000 Iranians die of NCDs annually

In February 2019, the health ministry



announced that some 300,000 Iranians die of NCDs annually in Iran, which means that one-fourth of the country's population (standing at 80 million) are overweight or obese which also results in developing NCDs.

Diabetes, a non-communicable disease, is a serious threat to people's health and is the fifth leading cause of death in the country. Diabetes prevalence is 10 percent in Iran and is high among people aging 50 or more.

Cardiovascular diseases (mainly heart disease and stroke), which were the leading cause of death in 2012, diabetes, musculoskeletal disorders (especially osteoarthritis — a highly disabling degenerative disease of the joints), and some cancers (including endometrial, breast, ovarian, prostate, liver, gallbladder, kidney, and colon) are common health consequences of overweight and obesity, WHO warns.

Having too much sugar in the blood for long periods of time can contribute to serious health problems if it's not treated. Hyperglycemia can damage the vessels that supply blood to vital organs, which can increase the risk of heart disease and stroke, kidney disease, vision problems, and nerve problems.

Moreover, 30 percent of men and 36 percent of women aged 25 to 64 years also have high cholesterol due to overweight and obesity, consuming fast food, and insufficient physical activity.

NCDs, a global health threat

NCDs kill 41 million people each year, equivalent to 71% of all deaths globally. Each year, 15 million people die from an NCD between the ages of 30 and 69 years; over 85% of these "premature" deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries.

Cardiovascular diseases account for most NCD deaths, or 17.9 million people annually, followed by cancers (9.0 million), respiratory diseases (3.9million), and diabetes (1.6 million). These 4 groups of diseases account for over 80% of all premature NCD deaths.

Tobacco use, physical inactivity, the harmful use of alcohol, and unhealthy diets all increase the risk of dying from an NCD. Detection, screening, and treatment of NCDs, as well as palliative care, are key components of the response to NCDs.

Tehran, Kabul to establish science, technology park

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Sourena Sattari, the Iranian vice president for science and technology, and Abdul Zahir Shakib, the head of the Academy of Sciences of Afghanistan, discussed enhanced cooperation between the two neighboring countries through establishing a joint science and technology park, ISNA reported.

During a meeting held in Tehran on Wednesday, the two officials discussed signing a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to develop a joint innovation ecosystem and enhance cooperation and technological interaction.

The most important goal of the MOU is to develop scientific and technological cooperation, transfer experience and infrastructure, and provide development assistance in the field of science and technology, Sattari said.

Pointing to the creation of a joint innovation ecosystem between Iran and Afghanistan, Sattari said that "the successful models that were implemented in Iran's innovation ecosystem, based on a joint cooperation, can be generalized and developed in Afghanistan."

Emphasizing the establishment of a joint science and technology park, he stated that there are 50 science and

technology parks in the country that provides a platform to promote innovative and technological ideas.

Moreover, our successful model has paved the way for the prosperity of over 5,700 knowledge-based companies and thousands of innovative companies, he stated, highlighting that the cooperation between research institutes, knowledge-based and creative companies are other topics of technological cooperation between the two countries.

Referring to the increasing influence of the Persian language as an opportunity for technological development, he said that the Persian language is the ninth language of the Internet, which is significant considering the global population.

Moreover, Persian-language startups are among the best in the web platform, and this language can be a common ground for cooperation between the two countries for the prosperity of knowledge-based and creative companies, he noted.

Shakib, for his part, expressed readiness to use Iran's scientific experience, noting that cooperation with the Iranian vice presidency for science and technology is valuable and we will continue to develop the interaction between the scientific centers.



Considering the common historical and cultural background between Iran and Afghanistan as a basis for scientific and technological cooperation, he said that "the two countries have deep and rich interaction in various fields and by using common language tools, we can establish scientific and technological relations between the two countries."

Iran plans to open innovation, technology centers in Russia, Syria

1 → He went on to say that last year, knowledge-based companies gained about \$800 million in revenue from export, and next year (March 21), it seems to reach up to \$2 billion.

Africa, neighboring countries, Southeast Asia and Eurasia are our export target priorities, and we hope to create Iranian innovation and technology in all these areas, he added.

Technology development in Iran

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

Currently, some 5,000 knowledge-based



companies are active in the country, manufacturing diverse products to meet the needs of the domestic market while saving large amounts

of foreign currency.

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

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

Vice President for Science and Technology Sourena Sattari told the Tehran Times in October 2020 that "U.S. sanctions caused exports of knowledge-based companies to decline three

years ago, however, it has returned to growth and is projected to reach the pre-sanctions level of more than \$1 billion by the end of the current [Iranian calendar] year (March 20, 2021).

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

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

Dolphins have similar personality traits to humans, study finds

Dolphins have developed a number of similar personality traits to humans, despite having evolved in vastly different environments, researchers have found.

A study, published in the Journal of Comparative Psychology, looked at 134 male and female bottlenose dolphins from eight facilities across the world, with each

dolphin's personality being assessed by staff at the facilities. The results of the study found a convergence of certain personality traits, especially curiosity and sociability.

The study has aided researchers in understanding how certain human personality traits developed independently of immediate environments. These similarities were

found despite dolphins having evolved in a completely different environment from primates, with the last common ancestor living about 95m years ago.

Dr Blake Morton, a psychology lecturer at the University of Hull and the lead author of the study, said this research was the first time the personality of dolphins had been

studied in this way, the Guardian reported.

Morton said: "Dolphins were a great animal for this kind of study because, like primates, dolphins are intelligent and social. We reasoned that if factors such as intelligence and gregariousness contribute to personality, then dolphins should have similar personality traits to primates."

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ج

Shiraz University, Chinese Academy of Sciences sign MOU

Shiraz University and Chinese Research Center for Eco-Environmental Sciences (RCEES) have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to expand cooperation in scientific and research projects, IRNA news agency reported on Tuesday.

Joint research activities through the Silk Road Research Program, joint publication of articles and books, study opportunities for faculty and doctoral students, use of laboratory facilities, experience exchange workshops especially in the field of natural disasters, droughts, floods, medicinal plants, biodiversity, land degradation and international joint research projects were among the mutually agreed programs.

The MOU provides the opportunity of extensive scientific and research cooperation in a wide range of areas of interest to both natural and agricultural resources.

دانشگاه شیراز و موسسه تحقیقات منابع طبیعی چین تفاهم‌نامه امضا کردند

دانشکده کشاورزی به نمایندگی از دانشگاه شیراز با موسسه تحقیقات منابع طبیعی آکادمی علوم چین سند تفاهم نامه همکاری‌های علمی- پژوهشی مشترک امضا کرد.

به گزارش ایرنا، زمینه بهره برداری عملیاتی از ظرفیت های تفاهم نامه حاضر به ویژه در زمینه فعالیت های پژوهشی مشترک از طریق برنامه پژوهشی راه ابریشم، نشر مشترک مقالات و کتب، فرصت‌های مطالعاتی اعضای هیات علمی و دانشجویان دکتری، استفاده از امکانات آزمایشگاهی، برگزاری کارگاه‌های تبادل تجربه به ویژه در حوزه حوادث غیرمترقبه طبیعی، خشکسالی، سیل، گیاهان دارویی، تنوع زیستی، تخریب سرزمین و طرح‌های پژوهشی مشترک بین‌المللی در قالب برنامه‌های مشترک مورد توافق طرفین مورد بحث و بررسی قرار گرفت. این تفاهم‌نامه مقدمه همکاری‌های گسترده علمی و پژوهشی را در دامنه وسیعی از حوزه‌های مورد علاقه طرفین در زمینه منابع طبیعی و کشاورزی فراهم می‌کند.

LET'S LEARN PERSIAN

(Part 133)

(Source: saundfition.ir)

European Words

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تمرین ۱. "هن" یا "غ" بگذارید و غلط‌ها را تصحیح کنید:

۱. () شب یلدا بلندترین شب هر هفته است.
۲. () جشن شب یلدا یک جشن سنتی ایرانی است.
۳. () ایرانیان نادانی را دشمن خود می‌دانند.
۴. () آقای امامی گل، سگه و شیرینی خریده است.
۵. () تمام مهمان‌ها دوستان آقای امامی هستند.
۶. () پدربزرگ در مهمانی امشب نیست.

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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

Sculpture

■ An exhibition underway at Aria Gallery displaying sculptor Azar Sheikh Bahaeddin's latest collection named "Masks".

The exhibit will be running until March 2 at the gallery located at No. 10 Zarrin Alley, near Beheshti St., Vali-e Asr Ave.

■ Khak Gallery is playing host to an exhibition of sculptures by Masud Akhavanjam.

The exhibition entitled "Idiosyncrasy" will run until March 17 at the gallery located at 1 Jila St. off Basiri St. Qolhak crossing.

Painting

■ Shalman Gallery is displaying Tufan Arfa's latest painting collection "Before the Rain" in an exhibition running until February 24.

The gallery can be found at 27 Kavusi Alley, West Rudbar St., off Mirdamad Blvd.

■ Paintings by a large group of artists, including Fatemeh Ahankar, Roya Mazruei, Ali Saeidi, Mina Qahramani, Zeinab Azizian, and Monireh Samiel, are on view an exhibition at Shokuh Gallery.

The exhibit will continue until March 11 at the gallery located at 19 Amir Nuri Alley, North Salimi St. near Andarzgu Blvd.

Photo/video

■ Shaahin Esfandiari is showcasing his latest photo and videos in an exhibition at Silk Road Gallery.

The exhibit named "Ride" will run until March 10 at the gallery located at 103 Lavasani St. in the Kamranieh neighborhood.

Video/installation

■ Videos and sets of installation art by Anita Hashemi-Moqaddam are on display in an exhibition at Vaali Gallery.

The exhibit named "Epidemis" will continue until March 10 at the gallery located at 72 Khoddami St., Vanak Sq.

Drawing

■ An exhibition of drawings by Sormeh Arab is currently underway at Vista Gallery.

The exhibit will run until March 1 at the gallery located at No. 11, 12th Alley, Mir Emad St.

Tile

■ A collection of tiles on the theme of Haft Seen by Manijeh Nuri is on view in an exhibition at Ehsan Gallery.

The exhibit entitled "Phoenix" will run until February 24 at the gallery located at No. 22, East 14th St. in the Ajudanieh neighborhood.

Multimedia

■ Shokufeh Khorramrudi and Taba Fajrak are displaying their latest artworks in various media in an exhibition at Dastan Basement Gallery.

The exhibit will be running until March 12 at the gallery located at 6 Bidar St., off Fereshteh St.

■ A group of artists, including Kian Vatan, Kaveh Namegh, Farhad Mafuz, Masid Keshmiri, Ramin Hafizi, and Savalan Jamaati, is displaying their artworks in various media in an exhibition at Atbin Gallery.

The exhibit named "Ghalagh" will run until March 12 at the gallery that can be found at 42 Khakzad Alley, Vali-e Asr Ave. near the Parkway Intersection.

Iran returns COVID-19 restrictions on cultural events with fear of new wave

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iranian Health Ministry has announced the return of all coronavirus restrictions on the concerts and cultural meetings in the fear of a new wave of the disease.

"The decision has been made along with the Ministry of the Interior and all the concerts can only stream online," Deputy Health Minister Mohsen Farhadi said in a press release published on Friday.

"Any concerts, seminars and religious ceremonies need to be approved by the National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control," he added.

He also said that there will be no exception for the concerts on Kish Island.

Pointing to the Fajr Music Festival that is currently underway, Farhadi expressed thanks to the organizers of the festival who decided to hold the event online.

"Holding the festival online these days



Bardia Kiaras conducts the Tehran Symphony Orchestra in an undated photo.

of coronavirus is relay praiseworthy," he said.

"Holding the festival was to meet the cultural needs of people. Due to the long pandemic, which has caused restrictions, people needed the festival, and this took place with the good cooperation between the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance and the Health Ministry," he added.

"People can stay at home and watch the performances. I think it was a very good decision that the organizers made, giving the opportunity to people in every corner of the country and those living abroad to sit and watch the programs," he added.

The 36th edition of the festival kicked off last Tuesday with streaming performances on fajrmusicfestival.com, nay.ir, and tiwall.com after canceling the in-person edition in Tehran due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and will be running until February 21.

Persian Gulf Arab states seek to usurp Iranian illumination: artist

➔ added Shahi whose work was on view at the 13th Fajr Festival of Visual Arts, which wrapped up on Thursday.

She called such an attitude an act of plagiarism and said, "This amounts to the blackmailing of Iranian artists, who have made and are making great contributions to promote the art of illumination and have helped preserve the art."

Shahi, whose works have been showcased earlier at the Sharjah Islamic Arts Festival and the Masters of Your Future-Traditional Arts Design Competition in Turkey, said that ninety percent of the artworks hung at the first edition of the Sharjah Islamic Arts Festival were done by Iranian artists.

She also said that, the festival, in its next editions, put

artworks on view with fake signatures representing an Arab name.

"However, the art of illumination originates in Iran and they want to register it in the world for the Arabs," she lamented.

Shahi said that illumination should not be deemed an exclusively Islamic art and said that many of her works have been purchased by non-Muslim visitors at exhibitions across the globe.

In January 2020, the 22nd Sharjah Islamic Arts Festival hang a collection of works by Shahi and her fellow Iranian illuminator Mohsen Aqamiri in an exhibition titled "The Role of Imagination in Islamic Arts".



Iranian illuminator Zeinab Shahi poses with one of her works at the 22nd Sharjah Islamic Arts Festival, January 2020. (Islamic Art Magazine)

Pandemic postpones Tehran International Sculpture Symposium

A R T **TEHRAN** — The 10th edition of the Tehran

International Sculpture Symposium, which was due to open on Friday with sculptors competing in national, international and student sections, has been postponed due to the pandemic.

"Considering the current condition of the country and the coronavirus restrictions, the symposium has been postponed to a later time in May," the secretariat of the festival announced in a press release published on

Thursday.

"Ten sculptures have been selected out of 165 submissions, while 8 sculptures will be competing in the student section, and three by sculptors from Italy, Greece and Turkey will be competing in the international section," executive director of the symposium Majid Haqiqi had announced earlier.

He added that the international section was warmly received by the sculptors, and 224 submissions by 124 sculptors from 38 countries were received by the secretariat.

However, due to the coronavirus restrictions the organizers decided to select only a few sculptors.

Several sculptors have also been selected as reserves in each section.

The 10th edition will be running in the Taraz Cultural Center.

The previous edition of the symposium opened with five Iranian and 10 foreign sculptors in the Abbasabad district in November 2019.

Laura Marcos from Argentina, Olga Nechay

from Belarus, Arijel Strukelj from Slovenia, Georgi Minchev from Bulgaria, Jiang Chu from China and Sangam Vankhade from India were among the participating sculptors at the symposium.

Also included were Ulises Jiménez Obregon from Costa Rica, Victor Arturo Guadalupe Tineo from Peru, Yeh Chuan Hsien from Taiwan and Alex Labejof from France.

The Iranian sculptors were Hedayat Sahrai, Hossein Molai Fumani, Mohammad-Mehdi Ashuri, Reza Qarebaghi and Mehdi Seifi.

Anton Chekhov's "Cherry Orchard", "Bear" on stage at Tehran theaters

A R T **TEHRAN** — Russian dramatist Anton

Chekhov's plays "The Cherry Orchard" and

"The Bear" are on stage at the Mehregan Theater in Tehran.

Director Amir-Hossein Rezaei's troupe is performing

Chekhov's 1903 play "The Cherry Orchard" at Hall 1 of the theater.

Starring Farzad Dashti, Media Doshvarpasand, Hadi Fallah, Rojan Rezvanian and Reza Amanlu, the play is being performed based on a Persian translation by Maryam Jazini.

The play revolves around an aristocratic Russian landowner who returns to her family estate, which includes a large and well-known cherry orchard, just before it is auctioned to pay the mortgage.

Unresponsive to offers to save the estate, she allows its sale to the son of a former serf; the family leaves to the sound of the cherry orchard being cut down.

The story presents themes of cultural futility — both the futile attempts of the aristocracy to maintain its status and of the bourgeoisie to find meaning in its newfound materialism.

It dramatizes the socio-economic forces in Russia at the



Posters for the plays "The Cherry Orchard" and "The Bear".

turn of the 20th century, including the rise of the middle class after the abolition of serfdom in the mid-19th century

and the decline of the power of the aristocracy.

Hall 2 of the theater is also hosting theatergoers for "The Bear: A Joke in One Act", another of Chekhov's plays, also known as "The Boor".

It is a one-act comedic play, which was originally dedicated to Nikolai Nikolaevich Solovtsov, Chekhov's boyhood friend and director/actor who first played the character Smirnov in the play.

The play takes place in the drawing room of Elena Ivanovna Popova's estate exactly seven months after her husband's death. Since her husband died, Popova has locked herself in the house in mourning. Her footman, Luka, begins the play by begging Popova to stop mourning and step outside the estate. She ignores him, saying that she made a promise to her husband to remain forever faithful to his memory. Their conversation is interrupted when Grigory Stepanovitch Smirnov arrives and wishes to see Elena Popova.

Azizollah Saranjami is the director of the play starring Mehdi Khalilzadeh, Sahar Mohseni and Mitra Qalepur.

Book on modern Persian children's poetry published in Turkey

A R T **TEHRAN** — A book on

modern Persian children's poetry has recently been published in Istanbul, Turkey.

Melek Gedic, a research assistant at the Department of Persian Language and Literature of Ardahan University, is the author of "Contemporary Iranian Children's Poetry" (Cagdas Iran Cocuk Siiri) released by Demavend Publications in Istanbul.

"It is remarkable that although children's poetry has an important place in children's literature in Iran, there has not been any study on this subject in our country," the author said after the release of the book.

"It is hoped that this study will improve

the recognition of Iranian children's poetry in our country, and understanding of the development process of contemporary Iranian poetry in post-revolution Iran," she remarked.

Demavend has previously published "Omar Khayyam: His Life, Thought, Works and Rubaiyat" (Omer Hayyam: Hayati, Dusuncesi, Eserleri ve Rubailer).

The book has been written by Professor of Persian literature Ali Güzelyüz of Istanbul University.

The book contains over 250 poems by Khayyam translated into Turkish by Guzeyluz.

Khayyam is chiefly known to Eng-

lish-speaking readers through a translation of a collection of his quatrains in the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam by the English writer Edward Fitzgerald.

The publisher has also released the Saffarnameh ("Book of Travel"), the most-celebrated prose work of the Persian poet and mystic Abu Muin Naser-e Khusraw al-Marvazi al-Qubadiyani, known as Naser-e Khusraw who lived during the eleventh century.

It is a diary describing his seven-year journey through Syria and Palestine.

Books by numerous Iranian literati, including Sohrab Sepehri and Forugh Farrokhzad are also among other books published by the publisher.



Front cover of the book "Cagdas Iran Cocuk Siiri" authored by Turkishscholar Melek Gedic.

Hilary Mantel's "Mirror and the Light" comes into Iranian bookstores

A R T **TEHRAN** — A Persian

translation of Hilary Mantel's "The Mirror and the Light" has recently been published by Tandis Publications in Tehran.

The book has been translated into Persian by Ali-Akbar Qazizadeh.

With "The Mirror & the Light", Mantel brings to a triumphant close the trilogy she began with her peerless, Booker Prize-winning novels, "Wolf Hall" and "Bring Up the Bodies". She traces the final years of Thomas Cromwell, the boy from nowhere who climbs to the heights of power, offering a defining portrait of predator and prey, of a ferocious contest between present and past, between royal will and a common

man's vision of a modern nation making itself through conflict, passion and courage.

The story begins in May 1536: Anne Boleyn is dead, decapitated in the space of a heartbeat by a hired French executioner. As her remains are bundled into oblivion, Cromwell breakfasts with the victors. The blacksmith's son from Putney emerges from the spring's bloodbath to continue his climb to power and wealth, while his formidable master, Henry VIII, settles to short-lived happiness with his third queen, Jane Seymour.

Cromwell, a man with only his wits to rely on, has no great family to back him, no private army. Despite rebellion at home, traitors plot-

ting abroad and the threat of invasion testing Henry's regime to the breaking point, Cromwell's robust imagination sees a new country in the mirror of the future. All of England lies at his feet, ripe for innovation and religious reform. But as fortune's wheel turns, Cromwell's enemies are gathering in the shadows. The inevitable question remains: how long can anyone survive under Henry's cruel and capricious gaze?

Eagerly awaited and eight years in the making, "The Mirror & the Light" completes Cromwell's journey from self-made man to one of the most feared, influential figures of his time. Portrayed by Mantel with pathos

and terrific energy, Cromwell is as complex as he is unforgettable: a politician and a fixer, a husband and a father, a man who both defied and defined his age.

Mantel is the two-time winner of the Man Booker Prize for her bestselling novels, "Wolf Hall", and its sequel, "Bring up the Bodies". Both novels have been translated into more than 30 languages and sold over 5 million copies worldwide.

Mantel is the author of over a dozen books, including "A Place of Greater Safety", "Beyond Black" and the memoir "Giving up the Ghost". In 2014 she was appointed Commander of the Order of the British Empire.