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Iran’s UN envoy says JCPOA will be meaningless with sanctions in place

TEHRAN - Majid Takht-Ravanchi, Iran’s ambassador to the United Nations, says any U.S. plan to rejoin the 2015 nuclear deal will be worthless if it is not combined with a verifiable lifting of the sanctions on Iran, according to Tasnim news agency.

In an interview with khamenei.ir, he noted that Washington’s expression of readiness to rejoin the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) will be worth nothing if the sanctions against Iran are not terminated in practice.

“We cannot agree on a signature on a letter alone. If the signature does not come with a process for verifying the (U.S.) measures, that would be meaningless,” Iran’s top diplomat to the UN remarked.

He emphasized that a termination of oil sanctions on Iran must entail assurances that Tehran will not face any problem to sell oil and that the customers will easily transfer money via the international banking system.

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ICCIMA to hold Iran-Oman trade opportunities webinar on Tuesday

TEHRAN - The international department of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) will hold a webinar on investigating the opportunities and potentials for trade between Iran and Oman on Tuesday.

The online event will be attended by the members of Iran-Oman Joint Chamber of Commerce, some representatives of provincial chambers of commerce, as well as the chairmen

of different unions and associations.

The meeting will review opportunities, challenges and obstacles related to private sector cooperation with Oman and reports will be released on the latest developments in the region, bilateral cooperation and the prospects for the development of relations and cooperation in addition to the existing opportunities between the two countries.

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Iran’s Book of the Year Awards announces winners

TEHRAN – Winners in different categories of the 38th Iran’s Book of the Year Awards were honored as they received their awards from President Hassan Rouhani during a special ceremony at his office on Saturday.

In the Art category, the Persian translation of Angelos Koutsourakis’ “The Cinema of Theo Angelopoulos” by Vahid Ruzbehani won the award for best book on dramatic art issues.

“Myth of Rasta” by Farshad Fereshteh-Hekmat was selected as best play section.

Lucy Soutter’s “Why Art Photography?” translated into Persian by Mohsen Baimramnejad and Ben Long’s “Complete Digital Photography” translated into Persian by Dariush Esmaeili shared the award for best book on photography.

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South Khorasan hosting unique species of urial

BY FARANAK BAKHTIARI

Darmian protected area in eastern province of South Khorasan is a habitat for thousands of the largest and the most beautiful species of urial in Iran, which is even famous worldwide.

The urial (Ovis orientalis vignei), also known as the arkars or shapo, is a subspecies group of the wild sheep Ovis orientalis. Noticeable features are the reddish-brown long fur that fades during winter; males are characterized by a black ruff stretching from the neck to the chest and large horns.

The urial is found in western central Asia from northeastern Iran and western Kazakhstan to Pakistan’s Balochistan and Chitral, and in Ladakh, India. To the east, it is replaced by the bigger argali and to the southwest by the Asiatic mouflon. Its habitat consists of grassy slopes below the timberline.

Darmian Protected Area, stretching to 84,039 hectares in the center of Darmian border city, shares a variety of environmental attractions and is renowned in the world for its unique species.

The urial in this protected area is slightly different from the urial in other parts of the country, which has made it attractive to tourists, environmentalists and even hunters, Hassan Akbari, director of the provincial department of environment (DOE) said.

Urials of the Darmian region are different due to sharing a border with Afghanistan and gene transfer, so that their conservation value also increases, he added, noting, the male urial in this region is more beautiful, stronger, bigger, and smarter than other species of urial due to its larger horns and its special shape and long hair on its chest.

The hybrid urial is rare in the world, which is reproduced by Afghan urials and native urials, he highlighted, IRNA reported on Saturday.

“We plan to do genetic studies to determine exactly whether Darmian urial is different from other urial of the country, although the differences are now visible,” he stated.

Mohammad-Ali Khosravi, Darmian’s DOE chief, announced that the population of urial has increased in the region, according to the winter census this year (beginning on December 21, 2020), over a thousand urials have been identified in the protected area, which shows an increase of 30 percent compared to last year.

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Ex-U.S. assistant secretary of state invites ‘a return to private negotiation’ to revive JCPOA

BY M.A. SAKI

TEHRAN - Thomas Countryman, a top arms control official in the Obama administration, suggests “a return to private negotiation” between Iran and the United States for a revitalization of the 2015 nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Iran and the new Biden administration are caught in a standoff on who should take the first step to restore the JCPOA.

Officials in Tehran say it is the United States that quit the JCPOA in May 2018 and reimposed sanctions, and naturally it should be the first side to return to the agreement and lift sanctions.

In response to the Trump administration’s withdrawal from the JCPOA, Iran waited for a whole year that the remaining parties to the nuclear agreement, especially the European trio (E3), to protect the Islamic Republic from U.S. sanctions. However, seeing no tangible action

Iran started to gradually reduce its commitments to the JCPOA in accordance with paragraph 36 of the JCPOA.

But, in December the Parliament (Majlis) adopted a legislation forcing the Rouhani government to speed up nuclear activities in order to force the U.S. and other parties to the JCPOA to lift sanctions on Iran. The parliamentary legislation, called “Strategic Action to Lift Sanctions and Protect the Nation’s Rights”, also obliges the government to suspend the Additional Protocol to the NPT if sanctions are not lifted by February 21.

However, Iran has extended the deadline to February 23. Rafael Grossi, director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, visited Tehran on Saturday to hold talks with Iranian officials about suspension of the Additional Protocol.

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Satellite images reveal Israel quietly expanding secretive Dimona nuclear site

Newly-released satellite images have revealed that the Israeli regime — the sole possessor of nuclear arms in the Middle East — is conducting “significant” constructive activities at the highly-secretive Dimona nuclear facility in the Negev Desert.

Citing commercial satellite imagery of the facility, the International Panel on Fissile Material (IPFM), a group of independent nuclear experts from 17 countries, reported Thursday that “significant new construction” had been underway at the Dimona complex.

The construction site sits “in the immediate vicinity of the buildings that house the nuclear reactor and the reprocessing plant,” the report said.

The IPFM’s website said the construction had “expanded and appears to be actively underway with multiple construction vehicles present,” adding, however, that the purpose

was not known.

It was unclear when the construction work began, but Pavel Podvig, a researcher with the program on science and global security at Princeton University, told The Guardian that the project had apparently been launched in late 2018 and 2019.

“But that’s all we can say at this point,” he added.

According to Press TV, Israel has tightly withheld information about its nuclear weapons program, but the regime is estimated to be keeping at least 90 nuclear warheads in its arsenal, according to the non-profit organization Federation of American Scientists (FAS).

The warheads, FAS said, had been produced from plutonium obtained at the Dimona facility’s heavy water reactor.

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‘Unique’ relics unearthed in northern Iran: archaeologist

TEHRAN – A “unique” haul of ancient relics and vestiges of urban structures have been unearthed in Astarabad (or Esterabad) in northern Iran, senior Iranian archaeologist Habib Rezai has said.

“As a result of the excavations carried out in this [archaeological] season, historical artifacts and evidence from the Qajar, Safavid, Timurid, Ilkhanid, and Seljuk eras were discovered. These include architectural remains, pieces of pottery and glassware, as well as metal objects and vessels,” Rezai told CHTN in an interview on Thursday.

A collection of Seljuk-era metal objects (made of copper and bronze), which date back to nearly one thousand years ago, is the most important cultural finding at this excavation, the archaeologist said.

“The metal objects include candlesticks, fire-crackers, burners, chandeliers, large and small vessels and utensils, some of which bearing decorations and inscriptions.”

“The discovery of such metal collections from the Seljuk era is unprecedented and unique in

Iran,” Rezai, who led the archaeological excavation at the site, said.

Astarabad is the older Islamic name for the modern town of Gorgan in Golestan province. It lies at the southeastern corner of the Caspian Sea, and is essentially a lowland and piedmont area, rather drier in climate and habitat than the semi-tropical regions of Mazandaran and Gilan further west; it forms a transition area, both from the climatic and the vegetational aspects.

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Archery competition held in Tehran

TEHRAN - The 11th edition of Iran’s Archery Premiere League was held in Tehran, capital of Iran on Friday.

The event was held in memory of health martyrs at the Azadi Complex.

The compound competition brought the men and women archers across the country together in the three-day event.

Mehdi Alinejad, the Iranian Deputy Minister of Sport and Youth, also attended the competition.

GSA: Saudi-U.S. ties will face major challenges in the next four years

BY MOHAMMAD MAZHARI

TEHRAN - Chief executive officer of Gulf State Analytics (GSA) says that U.S.-Saudi relations will witness major challenges in the upcoming four years over the Saudi-led war on Yemen, the Libya crisis, and Riyadh’s human rights record.

“The Saudis must contend with the fact that the new U.S. administration will have some major disagreements with Riyadh on a host of issues from Yemen to Libya to human rights,” Giorgio Caferio tells the Tehran Times.

“The upcoming four years could come with major challenges to Washington-Riyadh relations,” the DC-based consultant predicts.

Reportedly, the Biden administration is about to release a long-sought U.S. intelligence report concluding that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman ordered the murder of Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi in 2018.

Plans for the release come as U.S.-Saudi relations have tumbled to a new low in recent weeks. According to the Washington Post, the Biden administration has pledged to “recalibrate” ties with the Saudi kingdom.

In a dramatic move, the new U.S. administration has canceled arms sales to the kingdom, which has been pounding Yemen ruthlessly since March 2015.

Biden has also been a critic of Saudi Arabia’s human rights abuses and harassment of dissidents.

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Think tanks: Who should take the first step to revive the JCPOA?

By Azin Sahabi

While President Joe Biden and his close circle reiterate Washington's interest to rejoin the JCPOA, many Western experts have been underling the lack of a particular agenda to address the issue. However, reviewing policy notes published over the last two weeks by American think tanks may imply that the broader agenda will be gradually disclosed.

To commence the nuclear diplomatic process between Iran and U.S., both parties are too reluctant to take the first step. In this context, top think tanks have been implicitly and explicitly recommending that to ensure that a revival of the JCPOA would not squander the American leverage over Iran, it is Tehran who should make the first move.

At the time being, while approving Biden's insistence on the necessity of Iran's return to full compliance, experts argue that merely waiting for Tehran to take the first step before any move, Biden would make a mistake.

In fact, at the time being, it appears that think tanks overtly



HARVARD Kennedy School

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for Science and International Affairs

urge Biden to "make the first move to revive the Iran nuclear deal."

Moreover, perhaps, Iran's parliamentary law to limit the UN inspectors' access to its nuclear activities has also contributed to this seemingly changed trend.

The institutes which advocate this approach stress if the U.S. takes the first step in the future diplomatic process, it will boost Washington's leverage over Tehran. Therefore, the Oval Office should take the initiative to gain the upper hand in terms of negotiation with Iran to pave the way for follow-on negotiations on Iran's nuclear program and regional activities.

In other words, the U.S. can turn its leverage meaningful and productive in case of using the JCPOA as a potential ace up its sleeve.

"Play cards wisely" at the table

In an analysis published on Feb 15, Mahsa Rouhi from the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs elaborates on how Biden's administration can turn the current pressure against Iran effective.

Rouhi, an expert on Iran's nuclear program, says although the "maximum pressure" campaign impaired Iran's economy, "they have not succeeded in changing Tehran's behavior regarding its nuclear program. Indeed, Iran has not offered additional concessions."

She believes that Trump's embargoes on Iran were meaningless since they were not used proportionally "to produce desired policy outcomes."

Moreover, the Belfer Centre emphasizes that "by reviving the nuclear accord, the U.S. government will not squander any sanctions leverage, but if it plays its cards wisely, it could enhance its position for follow-on negotiations on Iran's nuclear program and regional activities."

ICG: "Cap, freeze and roll back Iran's nuclear program"

Mentioning Iran's parliamentary law to limit the UN inspectors' access to its nuclear activities, Ali Vaez from the International Crisis Group (ICG) emphasizes that "if Biden is willing to be bold and invest the necessary political capital in resuscitating the deal," a way out of the current stand-off may be visualized.

The expert underlines: "This would need to take the form of a three-phase process that can be summed up in the non-proliferation shorthand of 'cap, freeze, and roll back,' and would require closely synchronized steps between the two sides."

Presenting the scheme of the first step, ICG proposes a number of recommendations "to cap the current stand-off and prevent it from escalating":

- "From the U.S. side, this would mean revoking Trump's 2018 withdrawal from the nuclear deal."

- "While authorizing the secretaries of treasury and state to start the process of returning the U.S. to full compliance with its own commitments under the deal, but without necessarily detailing how the U.S. will lift sanctions."

Against the backdrop, Vaez anticipates that Tehran would be "inclined to issue a political directive halting implementation of its legislation on UN inspectors' access and thus continuing to abide by the Additional Protocol to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty."

Given the COVID-19 pandemic, ICG describes a complementary move from the American side to "begin to restore a measure of trust between the two sides through a humanitarian gesture."

The expert points out that Tehran's request for an emergency loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to manage the health crisis is still unanswered since ten months ago.

To explain the "humanitarian gesture" which the U.S. can make, Vaez suggests that notwithstanding Iran's status in the U.S. as a "state sponsor of terrorism," which requires U.S. representatives on the IMF's Executive Board to vote against granting the loan to Iran, there still exists some channels that the loan could pass through with support from other board members. In this regard, he stresses that such a move will be possible "if the U.S. gives a quiet signal that it does not object". He adds: "In order to prevent possible diversion, the IMF could disburse the funds through authorized humanitarian channels and the World Health Organization for the purchase of vaccines."

ICG clarifies that the above measures will not result in any immediate sanctions relief from the U.S. However, they can demonstrate the Biden administration's political will to preserve the U.S. national security interests as well as its commitment to humanitarian values, which "helping the Iranian people fight the pandemic" can signify.

Describing the next phase, Vaez writes: "The subsequent reciprocal set of steps would be for Iran to freeze the most problematic aspects of its nuclear program."

In his view, the "most problematic aspects" of Iran nuclear program are:

- "Enrichment of uranium to 20 percent, which is perilously close to weapons-grade."

- "Work on uranium metals that could be used in reactor fuel and nuclear weapons."

- "Research and development of more advanced centrifuges."

ICG explains that in response, "the U.S. could grant waivers to some of Iran's oil customers so that Tehran can restore some of its oil exports and repatriate its revenues."

The analyst believes that if Iran and the U.S. can fulfill these moves, "both would then have enough time and space to negotiate a timetable for a series of staggered additional synchronized steps that would bring them back into full compliance with their obligations. It would be best if this could happen before Iran's elections in June, but if not, it should be done by August, when a new Iranian president enters the office."

Jake Sullivan says diplomacy is only path to revive JCPOA

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — In interview with CNN on

Friday, Jake Sullivan, the U.S. national security advisor, said, "The first and most important thing for us to communicate is that we believe diplomacy has to be part of the answer of solving the Iranian nuclear issue."

Sullivan emphasized the U.S. wants to negotiate with Iran over its nuclear program and noted, "That means being prepared to sit down at the table with the permanent five members of the Security Council, plus Germany and Iran, to talk about how we get Iran back into compliance with the terms of the Joint Comprehensive Plan Of Action."

Announcing that the Biden administration will accept the EU invitation to meet with the Iranian diplomats, he said, "So President Biden directed us to agree to the invitation by the European Union to join a meeting at a date to be determined where we can begin those discussions. We're at an early stage here."

"It's going to take work, it's going to take hard-headed, clear-eyed diplomacy, and ultimately it's going to take a decision by Iran that they are prepared to take the steps required to assure the world and to prove to the world that their program is for exclusively peaceful purposes," he added.

The U.S. national security advisor reiterated Biden's words towards the revival of the JCPOA and underscored, "Steps by



Iran to do that, clearly, and steps by the United States to meet its obligations."

Meanwhile, he acknowledged, "The U.S. which is in contravention and came out of that deal, and Iran is calling for sanctions to be lifted."

"Well, what we have said repeatedly is that United States is prepared to come back into compliance with its terms if Iran is ready to come back into compliance with its terms of the deal," Sullivan said in answer to the question about the

mechanism for synchronicity to salvage the JCPOA.

In response to the Trump administration's unilateral and illegal revocation of the nuclear agreement in May 2018, Iran began to reduce its commitments to the agreement after waiting for a full year. Iran did this after seeing no action by the remaining JCPO parties, especially the European trio (E3), to protect Iran from the sanctions effects. In December 2020, the Iranian Parliament also approved a

Iran's UN envoy says JCPOA will be meaningless with sanctions in place

1 → In remarks earlier this month, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei set the road map, stressing, "Iran will resume honoring the JCPOA in full only after the U.S. has removed all sanctions on Tehran in a practical and verifiable manner."

The JCPOA was signed between Iran and six world states — the U.S., Germany, France, Britain, Russia and China - in July 2015. It was confirmed by UN Security

Council Resolution 2231.

However, former U.S. president Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from the JCPOA in May 2018 and reinstated the sanctions that had been lifted under the deal.

In May 2019, Iran began to scale back its JCPOA commitments after the remaining European parties failed to fulfill their obligations and compensate for Washington's sanctions.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei: Role of youth in national development is obvious

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — In a message to the 55th meeting

of the Union of Islamic Students Associations in Europe on Saturday, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei stressed the growing role of the youth in scientific progress in Iran after victory of the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Ayatollah Khamenei said the role of the Iranian youth in the country's progress and ensuring a successful future is becoming clearer day by day.

"The Iranian youth's resolve, motivation and hopefulness after the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic provided impetus for scientific and practical

breakthroughs, like in many other fields," Ayatollah Khamenei noted, according to Tasnim.

"It is one of the Islamic Revolution's greatest glories that it has been able to pin the medal of 'role playing in fundamental issues' to the chest of the country's vigorous young people," the Leader said

in the message, read by Hojatolislam Ahmad Vaezi at an online meeting of the association.

Ayatollah Khamenei also urged the Iranian youth to obtain more scientific, religious and ethical qualifications and get ready to play a greater role in the country.



Biden intends to talk with Iran before officially rejoining JCPOA: Bloomberg

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iran says the U.S. must

first return to the 2015 nuclear deal and lift sanctions if it wants talks with the Islamic Republic, appearing to snub an effort by the Biden administration to begin direct discussions before officially rejoining the nuclear agreement, according to Bloomberg network.

The Iranian Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei called it Iran's "final policy" on the matter in an Instagram post, reiterating a statement he made last week. Earlier Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said the "key sequence" for engagements between the two nations was commitment, action and then a meeting.

According to American network, Iran's reactions indicate "the challenges in ending an impasse that has threatened to enter the Persian Gulf region into a new conflict in the years since former President Donald Trump exited the international agreement and imposed sanctions."

Iran is set to restrict international inspections of its nuclear sites, a significant hardening of its stance in the face of punishing U.S. sanctions that threatens to make compromise by either side more difficult.

The Biden administration announced it would be willing to meet with Iran to discuss a "diplomatic way forward" in efforts to return to the nuclear deal, a first step toward easing tensions.

State Department spokesman Ned Price declared, "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."

The U.S. also lifted travel restrictions on Iranian envoys and reversed a Trump administration claim that it had imposed - or "snapped back" - United Nations sanctions on Iran, according to a letter sent to the UN Security Council and seen by Bloomberg.

The offer is a politically risky effort by President Joe Biden to move beyond the standoff after a series of U.S. sanctions hurt Iran's economy and infuriated other world leaders, who argued that the accord and the inspections regime it created had controlled and monitored Tehran's nuclear program.

According to Bloomberg, Biden, in remarks to a security conference in Germany on Friday, noted the threat of nuclear proliferation meant it was important to engage with Iran. "We must also address Iran's destabilizing activities across the Middle East (West Asia) and we're going to work in close cooperation with our European and other partners as we proceed," he remarked.

The U.S. moves were a "positive step" but not enough to persuade Iran to reverse changes to its nuclear program or keep the wider inspections regime, said Diako Hosseini, an analyst at the Tehran-based Center for Strategic Studies, a government-run research institute that advises the president.

"It's a weak beginning to a real diplomatic effort," Hosseini said, while adding it could still create the room needed for progress.

European parties to the nuclear deal hailed the U.S. measures. Germany urged Iran "not to implement and

is bowing to the pressure by Iran.

"Whether or not the Iranian Majlis would admit that its legislation is intended to pressure the U.S., it is - de facto - an ultimatum. And it should not be surprising that the Biden Administration does not want to allow a perception that it folded in the face of an Iranian ultimatum," notes Countryman, the current chair of the Arms Control Association board of directors who served as assistant secretary of state for international security and nonproliferation during the Obama administration.

The former top diplomat criticizes the United States and Iran for issuing ultimatums, making threats and setting deadlines for each other, believing such an approach

puts pressure on each side.

"Ultimatums, threats, deadlines, and negotiating through public statements are all ways that the U.S. and Iran have usually dealt with each other. Usually, such tactics bring as much pressure upon oneself as they do upon the other side," Countryman remarks.

He says both President Joe Biden and his Iranian counterpart Hassan Rouhani seek reactivation of the nuclear deal and to achieve such a goal both the United States and Iran need to conduct private negotiations.

"To get back to full implementation of the JCPOA - a goal shared by both Presidents - will require an end to the obsession with 'who will move first?' and a return to private negotiation," Countryman suggests.



tion by the Iranian Parliament is considered an ultimatum and the Biden administration does not want to "allow a perception" that it

Going nowhere

Grossi's track record impedes improvement of ties

POLITICAL
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TEHRAN — The UN nuclear watchdog chief Rafael Grossi was expected to arrive in Tehran on Saturday night ahead of Iran's important deadline for the White House to lift all sanctions on the Islamic Republic.

The visit comes against a backdrop of heightened tensions between Iran and the West over who should make the first move to revive the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

While the U.S. says it will not lift sanctions before Iran fully implements the JCPOA, Iran has insisted that the U.S. must lift all of sanctions if it really wants to revive the deal.

Iran has also made it clear that it will not take the first action to revive the JCPOA and it expects the U.S. to do so. Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, has recently said that Iran will act only after it sees actions from the U.S. on lifting the sanctions.

"We have heard many nice words and promises, but in practice, they have not been honored and on the contrary, they have acted against those promises. It is no use talking. It is no use giving promises. This time, only actions matter! If we see actions on the part of the other side, we will take action too. This time, the Islamic Republic will not be satisfied with hearing such and such words and promises. Things will not be like the past," the Leader said in a speech on Wednesday.

With the U.S. stubbornly insisting on keeping the sanctions in place, Iran set a deadline of February 23 for Joe Biden to lift sanctions reimposed by former U.S. President Donald Trump, or it will halt snap international inspections under the JCPOA.

Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency Rafael Grossi is visiting Iran for the second time in six months to discuss technical issues related to Iran's plan to stop the implementation of the Additional Protocol to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

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

"IAEA DG travels to Tehran on Saturday for technical discussions with the Atomic Energy Organization on how to continue cooperation in the light of new arrangements and development. As already announced, article 6 of the new law will be implemented as of February 23," Gharibabadi said in a tweet.



The nuclear law, officially called "Strategic Action to Lift Sanctions and Protect the Nation's Rights," stipulates that the Iranian government should take certain nuclear measures such as raising the level of uranium enrichment to 20% and suspending the voluntary implementation of the Additional Protocol in few months if the Western parties failed to honor their obligations under the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, formally called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

The sixth article of the law clearly stipulates that if the remaining parties to the JCPOA — Germany, France, China, Russia and the UK — failed to facilitate Iran's oil exports and the return of Iranian oil revenues in two months, the Iranian government would be obligated to stop inspections beyond the IAEA safeguards, including the voluntary implementation of the Additional Protocol, which allows unannounced and intensive inspections of nuclear sites.

Grossi requested a visit to Iran immediately after the country announced that it will implement this law. Iran accepted the request although Grossi has been criticized by Iranian officials for his weak leadership during his tenure as the head of the IAEA.

In Tehran, Grossi will meet with Ali Akbar Salehi, the head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), and other Iranian officials.

During the visit, the UN nuclear chief will discuss technical issues and arrangements that will be undertaken by Iran to halt inspections beyond the IAEA safeguards.

The IAEA has said that Grossi will seek to find a solution for the UN nuclear watchdog to continue verification activities in Iran.

"Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi

will visit Tehran on Saturday for discussions with senior Iranian officials in order to find a mutually agreeable solution for the IAEA to continue essential verification activities in the country," the IAEA said in a statement.

But Grossi is unlikely to find such a solution given his track record of clumsily handling the IAEA relations with Iran. In fact, Iran is not satisfied with what Grossi has been doing over the past months.

Iran has recently criticized the Agency for failing to protect the confidentiality of information.

Gharibabadi has recently sent the IAEA a lengthy letter of complaint expressing concern about the leakage of the information that Iran provided to international inspectors in good-will.

"Disclosure of confidential information, especially regarding Iran's nuclear activities and facilities, which has been provided to the Agency's inspectors in good-will and as a transparency and confidence-building measure, is of serious concern," the Iranian ambassador wrote.

Garibabadi added, "The boundaries between the principles of confidentiality and transparency have been blurred, thus misunderstood. Transparency requires States to provide the Agency with required information and cooperation regarding their nuclear activities. Nevertheless, relying on this principle, the Agency cannot and should not shoulder off its responsibility regarding the protection of the confidentiality principle, because transparency does not mean divulging confidential information. Else, it would lead to damages on the concerned State Party, either commercial or security, which may invoke the Agency's legal

responsibility."

This letter was not the first time that Iran criticized the IAEA for leaking confidential information.

In early December, Gharibabadi criticized the leaking of a report on Iran's nuclear development by the IAEA, saying the IAEA shall ensure confidentiality of safeguards information.

"@iaeaorg confidential report, based on Iran's confidential letter, appeared in Media immediately even before the BoG Members could track it down. Agency is not merely responsible to update the development, but shall ensure confidentiality of safeguards information," Gharibabadi said in a tweet at that time.

But Grossi did nothing to stop the leakage of Iran-related information. He continued to let the IAEA be exploited by some Western countries.

Reuters, which has a long history of leaking Iran-related IAEA information, leaked another confidential information about Iran just hours before Grossi start his trip to Iran.

Citing unidentified diplomats, Reuters claimed that the UN nuclear watchdog found uranium particles at two Iranian sites it inspected after months of stonewalling. The British news agency went further to say that the IAEA is preparing to rebuke Tehran for failing to explain.

Seven diplomats told Reuters the agency will use that opportunity to rebuke Iran for failing to explain to its satisfaction how the uranium particles wound up at two undeclared sites. The rebuke could come either in the quarterly report or in an additional report released the same day, Reuters continued.

The head of the AEOI hit back at both the IAEA and Reuters, saying that the Reuters report was published to achieve a certain political goal.

"There is no doubt that publishing such reports is aimed at achieving political goals," Salehi told Fars News on Saturday. The Iranian nuclear chief said the IAEA mechanisms should be reconsidered to prevent the leakage of confidential information.

"For the Agency to arrive at this mechanism, it should professionally prevent the leakage of such information while preserving impartiality," Salehi noted.

Salehi's remarks were another indication that the IAEA under Grossi failed to build confidence with Iran. But Grossi can restore the broken trust by distancing himself and the Agency from the political games being played by the West against Iran. This is no easy task and he will likely face pressure from the U.S. and Europe. But this is a task worth doing.

S P O R T S

Iran ICT Minister Azari Jahromi angers Esteghlal fans over trash talk

S P O R T S
d e s k

TEHRAN — Mohammad-Javad Azari Jahromi, Iran's Communications and Information Technology (ICT) Minister, has angered Esteghlal fans after posting a story about their team on his Instagram account.

Esteghlal archrivals Persepolis defeated Gol Gohar 5-0 on Friday and finished the first at the halfway of Iran Professional League (IPL).

Shortly after the match, Azari Jahromi posted a story on his Instagram account that angered the fans of the Iranian football team.

"Gol Gohar needed one more goal to reach Esteghlal's record. But Esteghlal's record is not achievable," he shared the post.

Azari Jahromi, a fan of Persepolis football club, referred to a match dating back to 1973, where Persepolis drafted Esteghlal 6-0 in the domestic league.

On Saturday, during a radio interview, Esteghlal's head of board of directors Esmail Khalilzadeh, said Azari Jahromi must apologize the team's fans for trash talk because his comment has been disrespectful to the club.

Azari Jahromi also reacted to Khalilzadeh's interview and said he will not apologize since he has not disrespected anyone.

"I'm also a citizen and I'm free to express my opinion. I respectfully said my opinion without disrespecting anyone. It was just a little trash talk. Are you upset with me?" Azari Jahromi said.

Iran taekwondo practitioner Hadipour suffers ACL tear

S P O R T S
d e s k

TEHRAN — Iranian taekwondo practitioner Armin Hadipour has suffered a third anterior crucial ligament (ACL) tear.

MRI scans have confirmed Hadipour's injury.

Iran taekwondo coach Fariborz Askari said that the player has sustained the injury but will not undergo a surgery.

"Hadipour will miss the Olympics if he undergoes the surgery. He will be sidelined for six months after the surgery. After consulting with the doctors, we've decided to keep him fit for the Olympics without the surgery," Askari said.

"Mohammad Bagheri Motamed won a silver medal at London 2012 under the same circumstances. Hadipour will undergo the surgery after the Tokyo Olympic Games," he added.

Hadipour participated in the 2019 World Taekwondo Grand Prix in Moscow and managed to get an Olympics quota by reaching the semifinals.

Iran's Zob Ahan part ways with Milic Curcic

S P O R T S
d e s k

TEHRAN — Iranian football club Zob Ahan parted company with Serbian coach Milic Curcic on Saturday.

The 40-year-old coach was named as Zob Ahan coach in February 2020 and assisted head coach Rahman Rezaei in Iran Professional League (IPL).

Curcic was appointed as Zob Ahan interim coach after the Iranian top-flight club sacked Rezaei following the poor results.

Last week, the Isfahan based football club reached an agreement with Mojtaba Hosseini.

On Saturday, Zob Ahan announced that they have parted ways with the Serbian coach.

Yazdi on verge of being named Naft Masjed Soleyman coach

S P O R T S
d e s k

TEHRAN — Dariush Yazdi is on the verge of being named as Naft Masjed Solyman coach.

He is a candidate to replace Mojtaba Hosseini in the Iranian football club.

Hosseini left the team last week to join Zob Ahan.

Yazdi started his coaching career in Shahin Ahvaz in 2010 and has also worked at Esteghlal Ahvaz, Esteghlal Khuzestan, Naft va Gaz Gachsaran and Naft Masjed Soleyman.

Hamid Derakhshan, Behrouz Makvandi and Faraz Kamalyand have been also shortlisted to take charge of Naft Masjed Soleyman.

Naft Mashed Soleyman sit 10th in Iran football league, 12 points behind leaders Persepolis.

Rezaeian, Karimi's goals shortlisted for Best Free-kicks of 2020

S P O R T S
d e s k

TEHRAN — Goals of Al Duhail winger Ramin Rezaeian and Esteghlal midfielder Ali Karimi from the set-piece have been nominated for the Best Free-kicks of AFC Champions League 2020.

As the kick-off date for the historic 2021 edition approaches, the-AFC.com looks back at the 2020 tournament which turned out to be a thrilling affair despite the challenging circumstances.

Ramin Rezaeian

Al Duhail SC vs Sharjah, Matchday Three

New signing Ramin Rezaeian struck the pick of goals to send Al-Duhail 2-0 up early in the second half after Almoez Ali had scored the opener for the Qataris in the 40th minute.

The Iranian international had joined Al-Duhail just three weeks prior after enjoying a magnificent individual 2019-20 season, scoring 13 times for his former side Al-Shahania in the Qatar Stars League.

Ali Karimi

Pakhtakor vs Esteghlal, Round of 16

With 32 minutes gone, Esteghlal's Mehdi Ghaedi looked to make his way into the penalty box but was brought down just outside the area by Khojabbak Aljonov.

Ali Karimi stepped up to take the resulting free-kick, curling the ball beautifully into the back of the net past rooted Pakhtakor goalkeeper Eldorbek Suyunov.

Trump's pressure campaign against Iran has failed, Blinken says

POLITICAL
d e s k

TEHRAN — U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has admittedly said that the Trump administration's so-called "maximum pressure" against Iran has failed to produce results.

"We have a policy in recent years of so-called 'maximum pressure' on Iran that has not produced results. In fact, the problem has gotten worse," the top U.S. diplomat told the BBC.

Former U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew the U.S. from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal — formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) — on May 8, 2018, based on allegations that the deal was flawed. Trump then launched what he called a "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran in a bid to squeeze Iran "until the pips squeak," according to the former U.S. national security advisor, John Bolton.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution of Iran Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei has described the imposition of unprecedented sanctions on Iran as another miscalculation aimed at bringing Iran to its knees.

"One of those 'first-rate fools' said that they would celebrate New Year 2019 in Tehran. That person has been sent to history's trash can, and his boss has also been kicked out of the White House with disgrace, but the Islamic Republic is still standing strong on its feet, with God's grace," the Leader said in an apparent reference to Bolton and his former boss Trump.

Trump's pressure campaign failed to achieve its stated goals, something that prompted Joe Biden to publicly oppose Trump's Iran policies and vow to change them.

Biden voiced strong criticism of Trump's withdrawal from the JCPOA during his 2020 campaign when he also promised to rejoin the accord signed when he was vice president. However, he has failed to take corrective measures since he assumed office on January 20.

President Biden said on Friday that the U.S. must work with other major powers to rein in what he called Iran's "destabilizing" nuclear activities.

Blinken told the BBC the U.S. and its European partners were "once again on the same page" on Iran.

"President Biden has been clear for some time: if Iran returns to its obligations under the nuclear agreement, the United States will do the same thing," he said.

And he said the U.S. would then work with other countries to confront Iran on other issues, including its influence in the region and its ballistic missile program.

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."

On Friday, Biden expressed the White House's readiness to "re-engage" with the group of countries that are party to the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran.

Giving a speech via video-link to the Munich Security Conference on Friday, Biden pointed out that the U.S. was "prepared to re-engage in negotiations" within the "P5+1" countries, which initially negotiated the nuclear deal with Iran — namely France, Britain, Germany, the U.S., Russia and China.

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.

Iran has long said that for the JCPOA to be revived the U.S. should lift sanctions first. Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has introduced a new initiative to get the deal revived. He said the U.S. should make a commitment to lift sanctions and act on this commitment and then seek a meeting with Iran.

"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," the chief Iranian diplomat said in a tweet last week.

The Iranian foreign minister's position on the necessity of lifting the sanctions was in line with Ayatollah Khamenei's recent stance in this regard.

The Leader underlined the need for the U.S. to lift all of its sanctions before Iran implementing the JCPOA in full.

Addressing the people of East Azerbaijan province on Wednesday, 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."

Nearly 194,000 tons of alumina powder produced in 10 months

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** —Iran has produced 193,962 tons of alumina powder during the first ten months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2020 – January 19, 2021).

The monthly alumina power output stood at 16,723 tons in the tenth month of this year (December 21, 2020 – January 19, 2021), which was 16 percent less than the output in the same month of the past year.

Aluminum oxide, which is commonly called alumina, is an inert, odorless, white amorphous material often used in industrial ceramics.

TEDPIX loses 5,500 points on Saturday

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — TEDPIX, the main index of the Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), dropped 5,597 points to 1.232 million on Saturday (the first day of Iranian calendar week).

The first market's index fell 1,098 points, and the second market's index dropped 21,790 points on Saturday.

TEDPIX rose two percent in the past Iranian calendar 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.

Transportation infrastructure insufficient for agricultural products export

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — The vice chairman of the Transportation Committee of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA), said that there is still no large transportation company that can support the export of agricultural products according to the full annual plan.

Ali Hosseini also mentioned the country's need for refrigerated products containers.



He announced the export of various agricultural products in the form of sales at the borders and the transfer of goods with the help of the trucks of the target countries and reminded, “What is important in providing the number of refrigerated products containers is to streamline the export of perishable agricultural products.”

According to him, despite the existence of transportation companies in the country, the appropriate infrastructure has not been formed and the concept of logistics is still not implemented properly in these companies. Therefore, the export of various agricultural products is not done in an organized and structured manner.

“Perhaps it can be explained that we do not have a large transportation company that can support the export of agricultural products according to the full annual plan, and most companies enter on a seasonal basis”, he stated.

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.

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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Iran exported over \$5.8 billion worth of agricultural and food-stuff products in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19, 2020), the Head of Agriculture Ministry's Planning and Economic Affairs Department Shahrokh Shajari has announced.

Iran to launch direct shipping line to S. Africa, Latin America

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** – Iran is going to launch a direct shipping line to South Africa and Latin American countries in near future, an official with the Iranian Chamber of Cooperatives (ICC) informed.

According to Babak Afghahi, ICC's head of the non-oil trade and export development committee, the mentioned shipping line will connect southern Iranian ports to the ports of South Africa and then to Latin American countries, specifically Brazil.

The said shipping line is going to be launched with the support of the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL) and is aimed to develop Iran's non-oil trade with the countries in the mentioned regions.

“With the support of the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines, considering the capacity of Iran's cargo export to the mentioned destinations, the chambers of commerce across the country, the Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) of Iran and other



export bodies have been informed about the new development.” Afghahi said.

As reported by IRNA, the Islamic Republic's trade with South Africa reached \$43 million in the first six months of the previous Iranian calendar year (March 21-September 22, 2019), while the figure stood at \$27 million in the same period of its preceding year.

Following a new strategy for boosting non-oil trade and distancing the country's economy from oil, Iran has been launching several direct shipping lines to its major trade destinations over the past few years

Earlier this month, the Head of Iran-Syria Joint Chamber of Commerce Keyvan Kashefi announced the establishment of a direct shipping line between Iran's southern port of Bandar Abbas and Syria's Mediterranean port of Latakia.

The country has also launched five direct shipping lines to Oman and is planning to establish direct routes to Qatar, India, Turkmenistan, and Russia as well.

ICCIMA to hold Iran-Oman trade opportunities webinar on Tuesday

1 → Problems and proposed solutions to facilitate the entry of Iranian companies into the Omani market will also be discussed by representatives of provincial chambers, as well as the chairmen and representatives of related committees and unions.

During a meeting between the Governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) and Oman's Foreign Affairs Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad, in Muscat in late January, the two sides emphasized the necessity of expanding bilateral economic and banking relations.

Addressing the meeting, the Omani minister pointed to the importance of Iran's role and position in the region, and considered the expansion of trade and economic relations between the two countries important.

It should be noted that before this and in the meeting of the CBI governor with the commerce and industry minister of Oman in Tehran last year, strategies for continuous development and facilitation of banking and trade relations between Iran and Oman were discussed.

Despite the U.S. re-imposition of sanctions against

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

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

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

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

Ali bin Masoud al Sunaidy also said, “We will make

the most efforts to provide incentives for joint investment and also promote bilateral trade cooperation between the two countries.”

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

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

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

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

Gas network stable in quake-hit Sisakht

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** – Head of the Kohgiluyeh-Boyer Ahmad Province's Gas Company said on Saturday that the gas network in Sisakht and surrounding areas are stable after a 5.6-magnitude earthquake struck the southwestern town late on Wednesday.

“The gas supply network and facilities in most areas of the city have withstood the earthquake and there is no problem in the gas supply to this area,” Shana quoted Rahman Khadem as saying.

According to the official, the gas supply



to the city was disconnected immediately after the earthquake for taking precautionary

measures but it has been reconnected and natural gas is supplied through the network to the people in the region.

“After determining the potential leakages and securing and ensuring the safety of the gas supply network, the gas flow was resumed,” he said.

The mentioned quake which was felt in several cities and villages in Kohgiluyeh-Boyer Ahmad Province 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.

Mining, energy projects worth over \$190m inaugurated in central Iran

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** – Iranian Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister Alireza Razm Hosseini on Saturday inaugurated a mineral production unit worth eight trillion rials (over \$190 million) as well as a solar power plant during a visit to Yazd province, central Iran.

Upon arrival to the mentioned province in Saturday morning, Hosseini inaugurated a 10-megawatt solar power plant at Chadormalu Mining and Industrial Complex, Shata reported.

This power plant, which will supply the electricity required by the Chadormalu complex, is equipped with 202 inverters and 402 tracker systems, as well as domestically-made voltage transformers.

Razm Hosseini also inaugurated Yekta Granule Meybod Complex in Meybod County. This production unit has the annual capacity to produce 10,000 tons of ceramic tile glaze, 10,000 tons of alumina ceramic pellets, and 160,000 tons of feldspar powder.

As reported, over eight trillion rials (about \$190 million) has been invested in this complex which is going to create



direct jobs for 190 people.

Speaking in the opening ceremony of this production unit, Hosseini also mentioned a project for transferring seawater from the Persian Gulf to Isfahan province through a pipeline that is going to pass through Yazd province.

According to the official, the transfer of seawater to Yazd

province is going to have a huge impact on the province's industries.

This pipeline project is going to be implemented by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20), he noted.

Stating that Yazd is the second largest mineral center in the country, the official said: “There are 52 discovered mineral elements in this province, and the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade will do its best to support the development of the mining industry in this province.”

During his two-day visit to Yazd province, Razm Hosseini is going to inaugurate a total of four major industrial and mining projects worth 19.08 trillion rials (about \$454.2 million).

In total, the mentioned projects are going to create direct job opportunities for over 900 people.

Development project of a yarn production unit in Ashkzar city, the minerals production unit in Meybod, a lead and zinc mine in Bafgh, and finally the development project of a zinc concentrate production unit in Mehriz city are the major projects scheduled to be inaugurated during the minister's visit.

Jask oil terminal's 2nd offshore line's pipe laying completed

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

According to Vahid Maleki, the construction of the mentioned pipeline was started immediately after the completion of the first pipeline in late January and the project was completed on Friday on schedule, Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC) reported.

Maleki put the total physical progress of the Jask Oil Terminal early-phase at 82 percent, saying: “With the completion of these two offshore pipelines, in the coming days, it will be possible to install the project's first single point mooring (SPM) system which is currently loaded in the Khorramshahr industrial yard.”

The construction of the first SPM system of the Jask crude oil export terminal was completed last week and the SPM has been loaded and ready to be shipped toward its designated point in the Gulf of Oman waters.

According to the official, the capacity of this SPM system is 7,000 cubic meters per hour (equivalent to one million barrels per day).

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

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

According to the deputy director of the project in Petroleum Engineering and Development Company (PEDEC) the progress of the first phase of the strategic Goreh-Jask oil pipeline project has also surpassed 70 percent.

Ali Jafarzadeh said that such progress promises that the project will be completed by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20).

Despite the tough condition created by

the sanctions and also coronavirus outbreak, this strategic project will be completed at the scheduled time, he underscored.

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

Back in December 2020, the managing director of PEDEC had announced that the implementation of Goreh-Jask project by domestic contractors has saved the country over €500 million.

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

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

So far, more than 780 kilometers (km) of



pipes have been delivered to the site and more than 400 km of piping has been carried out, the official said at the time.

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

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

Prospect of the U.S.-Iran relations beyond manufactured scare

By Professor Fan Hongda

U.S. State Department Spokesperson Ned Price said in a statement on February 18: “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.”

This is another easing gesture made by the Biden administration towards Iran. In fact, the Biden administration is changing Trump’s Iran policy. It is indeed time for the United States to rethink Iran.

U.S. lacks objective understanding of Iran

Recently I read an article “Can Washington Rethink Iran” by Mr. Jason Rezaian, a former correspondent of the Washington Post in Tehran. This article pointed out that the United States has quite limited objective knowledge of Iran, and Washington’s Iran policy formulated on this basis is also difficult to be effective. Therefore, the United States needs to understand the real Iran.

Mr. Jason Rezaian’s article reminded me of an experience in Iran. When traveling in Iran a few years ago, I met an American who was also traveling there. I asked him how he felt about Iran in front of him. The American gentleman said angrily that Washington politicians and the American media were liars, because what they said about Iran was very different from the real Iran.

I agree with Mr. Jason Rezaian that the United States needs to rethink Iran. I also think the American tourist in Iran told the truth. Indeed, the United States should rethink Iran as soon as possible.

For 40 years, not only did the United



States and Iran have no formal diplomatic relations, but their confrontation has also been very serious, which made it possible for not many American scholars to go to Iran to do in-depth fieldwork. Moreover, the combined effect of poor U.S.-Iranian relations and third-party influence has pushed Washington to get used to understanding Iran from a negative perspective. This is an important reason why the United States has implemented a strong suppression policy against Iran for many years.

The lack of objective cognition and the existence of subjective negative cognition make Iran’s image in the United States very bad. When I planned to buy books in a large bookstore in New York City many years ago, the clerk quietly and naturally told me that all books on Iran were in the “terrorism” shelf. This episode shows to a large extent that the American public also has a strong sense of disgust towards Iran.

U.S. policy towards Iran is not conducive to its national interests

Under the dominance of the view of Iran mentioned above, U.S. intelligence agencies often choose to believe information that can confirm the “U.S. view of Iran”. This has been clearly reflected in the U.S. attitude towards Iran’s nuclear development. Dr. Gareth Porter, American independent investigative journalist and historian in U.S. national security policy, elaborated on the U.S. nuclear policy towards Iran in his 2014 book “Manufactured Crisis: The Untold Story of the Iran Nuclear Scare”. The title of this book clearly shows the author’s basic point of view.

In this way, whether intentionally or unintentionally, the negative perception of Iran in the United States is widespread. Obviously, Washington’s policy towards Iran on this basis cannot receive a good response from Tehran. Not to mention, Iran’s enemies and U.S. allies in West Asia have been persuading Washington to implement a policy of hatred and suppression of Iran.

Judging from my years of fieldwork experience in Iran, Washington’s Iran policy does

have serious problems. Although Washington has always claimed that the Iranian people are worthy of respect, the evil is the current Iranian government. But there is no doubt that the Iranian people are the biggest victims of the long-term U.S. sanctions.

Both sides need to rethink bilateral relations

Objectively speaking, whether it is Washington’s hatred of Iran or Tehran’s hatred of the United States, they have increasingly deviated from their respective national interests. The time has come for the United States and Iran to look at their bilateral relations from the perspective of national interests.

Iran is a country with splendid culture and strong resurgence capabilities. Isn’t a friendly Iran more beneficial to the United States? Iran deserves the United States to rethink itself. Also, I believe the United States is capable of handling relations with other countries in West Asia while developing relations with Iran.

On the other hand, after years of severe international sanctions, even for fundamental national interests, does Tehran really lack the will to improve relations with Washington?

In short, when it comes to U.S.-Iran relations, the United States and Iran will not go against their own national interests forever. There are enough smart people in Washington and Tehran. Both countries should together rethink the future development of bilateral relations.

Fan Hongda is a professor of the Middle East Studies Institute of Shanghai International Studies University, China

(The views expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect those of the Tehran Times)

GSA: Saudi-U.S. ties will face major challenges in the next four years

➔ “A repercussion will likely be that the Biden administration will maintain its firm position that the U.S. leadership must recognize King Salman, and not the king’s son, as the Saudi leader whom the U.S. government must work with,” Cafiero notes.

The following is the text of the interview:

How do you evaluate Biden’s administration policy towards Yemen? Is the U.S. going to reverse previous decisions or just making a gesture to save face?

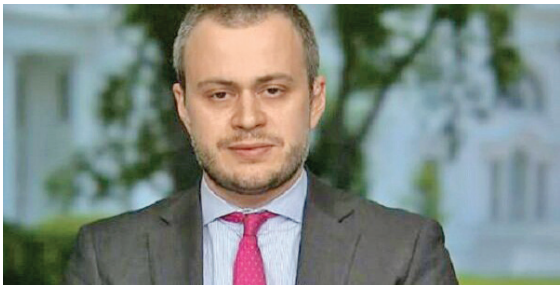
Biden’s speech on Yemen was filled with many qualifiers. He stated that the U.S. would cease to support “offensive” Saudi military operations in Yemen. Yet how the administration distinguishes between “offensive” and “defensive” operations remains to be seen, and such language offers Biden room to maneuver.

Nonetheless, the Saudi war in Yemen has lost support from most lawmakers in the U.S. Also, Biden campaigned on ending U.S. support to Riyadh’s military operations in Yemen, where the world’s worst humanitarian disasters have been unfolding for years, which means that it would be politically popular in America for the new leadership in Washington to make good on Biden’s campaign promise.

How do you see U.S.-Saudi relations in the new Biden administration?

The Biden administration, like all U.S. administrations dating back to Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s, will continue to view the Saudi kingdom as an important partner which the U.S. must work in the Middle East (West Asia).

However, the upcoming four years could come with major challenges to Washington-Riyadh relations. Done are the days of the Trump era in which Crown Prince Mo-



ammed bin Salman had a friend in the White House who bent over backward to give him the benefit of the doubt. The Saudis must contend with the fact that the new U.S. administration will have some major disagreements with Riyadh on a host of issues from Yemen to Libya to human rights. It will be important to see the extent to which Saudi conduct changes as a result of pressure from the Biden administration. Already, the al-Ula summit, which led to a Saudi-Qatari rapprochement, was a sign that Riyadh might believe it must change some of its positions and actions in the interest of preserving a close relationship with Washington.

Do you think that Biden will endorse Abraham Accords? Can you see any shift in U.S. attitude towards Palestine?

Officials in the Biden administration, such as Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, are strong supporters of the Abraham Accords. The new leadership in Washington would like to build on these accords and see more Arab/Muslim countries establish full-fledged diplomatic relations with Israel. Nonetheless, I doubt that the Biden administration

will be as transactional as the Trump administration in pressuring poorer Arab nations such as Sudan to sign the Abraham Accords.

Some American sources say that the U.S. will release new information about bin Salman’s role in the Khashoggi killing. What would be the repercussions of such a step?

The release of a summary of intelligence findings concerning the Saudi Crown Prince’s purported role in the murder of Jamal Khashoggi will make it increasingly difficult to defend Mohammed bin Salman on this file. A repercussion will likely be that the Biden administration will maintain its firm position that the U.S. leadership must recognize King Salman, and not the King’s son, as the Saudi leader whom the U.S. government must work with. Of course, if/when Mohammed bin Salman becomes King, the U.S. leadership will have no choice but to deal with him, notwithstanding the Khashoggi affair.

What is the legacy of Trump for West Asia?

The legacy of Trump in the Middle East (West Asia) is one of disregarding international law, avoiding diplomacy, and further militarizing the region with major arms sales. As a consequence of Trump’s presidency, the U.S. has far less credibility on the international stage, and many of the last U.S. administration’s strategic blunders opened up many opportunities for Washington’s geopolitical rivals, chiefly Moscow and Beijing, to gain greater clout in the Middle East (West Asia) and other regions too. Nonetheless, Trump’s presidency will be missed by officials in certain Arab states of the Persian Gulf and Israel who strongly supported his “maximum pressure” agenda against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Neoliberal institutionalism under a broken hegemony

By Mehrdad Torabi

It is not that if mankind in its international relations has failed to achieve the rational good, it must either have been too stupid to understand that good or too wicked to pursue it, rather relative gains from cooperation, in a world dominated by imperialist agendas, will always be disproportional enough to refute the prisoner’s dilemma.

The golden years were 1990 to 2004, but then in 2005, the order started going south. Iraq turned into a disaster, Afghanistan, which first looked like a success to serve the interests of the U.S., as well, the international economy almost went off the cliff in 2008, the Euro crisis happened shortly after, and so on. In recent years, many people believed there was a bug in the system; they thought the problem was Donald Trump, and now that they have gotten rid of him and have put someone else—like Joe Biden—everything will go back to normal.

In particular, Donald Trump was elected, and populism was centered around socio-economic issues, in general, conversely, as a reaction to, and by running against the liberal international order. “I don’t see that is a realistic political position within the U.S.,” Michael Every, the Head of Financial Markets Research for Asia-Pacific, emphasized in ABARES 2017 conference, “to go back to completely free trade.” With China on the rise, trade deficits can reduce employment and income. “If you are importing consumer goods, every dollar you spend is a dollar you could be spending at home,” he said.

Pursuing protectionist policies, the U.S. imposed tariffs on imports, withdrew from

international setups like TPP, and so on, but make no mistake; Trump was not the problem, but a manifestation of the problem. The problem is idealism; liberal democracy has proved not to be the end of history, for as soon as the attempt is made to practice ideals in the political battleground, selfish vested interests of the main actors are exposed from behind the veils of those abstract principles; a reason for this liberal democratic recession, therefore, seems to be the system itself that is self-destructive.

A realist argument is that, firstly, liberal democracy doesn’t attract so many people today. In fact, as Zselyke Csaky points out, “a growing number of leaders in Central and Eastern Europe have dropped even the pretense of playing by the rules of democracy.” We observe today “a stunning democratic breakdown in the 29 countries covered by Nations in Transit. There are fewer democracies in the region today than at any point since the annual report was launched in 1995.”

Secondly, having the force to impose ideologies upon others has become like crusader states, fighting endless wars. The United States of America has been at war for two out of every three years since the Cold War ended. Setting aside hypocrisy, which I assume at least for a scientific analysis we must do, it becomes facile to realize that America today is a highly militarized state addicted to war. No wonder to create a liberal international order and reform the world in their own image, liberal democratic crusaders have formed an alliance of balancers against their offenses.

Thirdly, the sole crusading pole has ended up poisoning relations with other major powers in the world. I can tell that in the face

of color revolutions, as well as NATO/EU expansion, pushing towards Russian borders, Russians are not feeling very happy. Chinese are not pleased either to see the U.S. interfering with their politics; in this regard, their concerns over protests in Hong Kong fueled by Americans are not merely illogical.

Fourthly, the order clashes with nationalism undermining the sovereignty and national identity. Like the European Union, powerful institutions with a lot of authority to make decisions raise many questions about input and output legitimacy. Decisions about Britain’s future, on the other hand, should be made in London and not in Brussels. Regarding national identity, free movement of persons and taking in refugees in the age of exclusionary nationalism are among matters that have exhausted liberal internationalism to a great extent.

Five is the problem of hyper globalization. We have moved from a globalized system to a hyper globalized system, and now it is much easier to move capital around the world, but as a result, many have lost jobs in the Western world. The liberal international order was undermined inside countries like the United States and Britain because of the economic consequences of hyper globalization, and that those problems have led to significant political difficulties leading us to the final but very critical issue that liberal internationalism has yet to face: The rise of China.

“Obviously, we must engage China,” Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman John Kerry said in a major speech on China policy at the Center for American Progress in Washington, stressing the U.S. must “fully integrate China into the global community.”

Integrating China into the liberal world order undermines unipolarity. World’s structure in favor of Uncle Sam towards expansion being transformed to multipolarity implies both the end and the beginning of a new cycle. A liberal international order may only spread in a unipolar order, for the uni-pole then does not have to worry about the balance of power; once the structure is changed into multipolarity, however, the balance of power politics will ensue. With China looking for high value-added industrial products, the U.S. appears to be moving back to the pre-World War II pattern of thinking about trade. In such an order, the West and the Rest will try to establish their own protected orders. Just recently, Asia-Pacific nations signed an inclusive trade deal with China, and Joe Biden confirmed that “the United States must align itself with other allies so that they write the rules governing global trade—and not China.” Alliance structures will be formed sooner or later while economic relationships will be all tied up with security competition; such order will be reminiscent, in some ways, of the Cold War. Of course, as was true in the Cold War, there will be an international realist order as well: that of proliferation control regime through which the Chinese, the Russians, and the Americans will work together at the international level. However, U.S.-led and China-led orders will matter the most, as was the case during the Cold War. That “unipolar moment” upon which the U.S. had devised its main strategy in the post-Cold War era is over. Utopians have failed to dominate the world, for everything will happen as it always has.

(Source: Press TV)

Satellite images reveal Israel quietly expanding secretive Dimona nuclear site

➔ Dimona, which is widely believed to be key to Israel’s nuclear arms manufacturing program, was built with covert assistance from the French government and activated sometime between 1962–1964, according to reports.

Israel has acknowledged the existence of the Dimona nuclear reactor, but neither confirms nor denies the purpose of the facility, which is assumed to be the manufacturing of nukes.

Meanwhile, environmentalists have warned that Dimona — one of the world’s oldest nuclear facilities — could pose enormous environmental and security threats to those living in the area and to the entire Middle East, calling on the regime to shut down the complex.

Turning a deaf ear to international calls for nuclear transparency, the regime has so far refused, with the US’s invariable support, to join the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) that is aimed at preventing the spread of nuclear weapons.

Iraqi officials, scholars protest NATO plan to increase troops in Iraq eightfold

Iraqi officials and religious scholars have lambasted NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg’s latest remarks that the U.S.-led military alliance plans to significantly increase its forces in the Arab country, describing the measure as unacceptable and unjustified.

Amer al-Faez, a member of the Iraqi Parliament’s Foreign Relations Committee, said on Friday that “the increase in the number of NATO forces in Iraq is unjustified,” stressing that the country “does not need any foreign forces.”

“Iraqi security forces are capable of deterring any aggression against the country, and they have proven this during the war against Daesh,” Faez added.

“Therefore, I do not see any need for the presence of any foreign troops, either from NATO or other forces.”

Faez said the Iraqi parliament will inquire the government about its request for an increase in the number of NATO forces, and the reasons why it has circumvented the legislature in this regard, Press TV reported.

Stoltenberg told reporters at the conclusion of a two-day virtual NATO defense ministers meeting on February 18 that the Western military alliance will expand its mission in Iraq.

Battle for Ma’rib: Yemeni army, allies make big advances on eastern front

Yemeni army troops and allied fighters from Popular Committees have made new advances against Saudi-led coalition militants in Yemen’s central province of Ma’rib, flushing them out of several districts and edging closer to the final victory.

Lebanon-based Arabic-language al-Mayadeen television news network reported that the Yemeni soldiers and their allies have wrested control over Raqwan district, and are working to take over al-Alam al-Abayad and al-Nadhoud regions, which lie northeast of Ma’rib city.

Local sources said Yemeni army forces and fighters from Popular Committees have been able to purge a number of positions from Saudi-led forces and militants loyal to former Yemeni president Abd Rabbuh Mansur, and have also laid a siege to militants affiliated to al-Qaeda terror group on the outskirts of al-Nadhoud district.

The sources added that Yemeni forces are currently advancing towards the al-Wadiyah border crossing with Saudi Arabia.

Russia approves its third COVID-19 vaccine, CoviVac

Russia on Saturday approved a third coronavirus vaccine for domestic use, Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin said on state TV, though large-scale clinical trials of the shot, labelled CoviVac and produced by the Chumakov Centre, have yet to begin.

Russia has already approved two COVID-19 vaccines, including the Sputnik V shot, developed by Moscow’s Gamaleya Institute, following a similar approach of granting approval before seeing any late-stage trial results.

According to Reuters, the preemptive approvals had raised concerns among some scientists in the West, but inoculations with those first two shots began on a mass scale in Russia only after trials were concluded and showed success.

Sputnik V was approved in August and late-stage trials began in September. Mass vaccination was launched in December, after preliminary trial results showed the vaccine to be 91.4% effective.

Since then, more than two million Russians have been vaccinated with at least the first dose of Sputnik V, Health Minister Mikhail Murashko said on Feb. 10.

Resistance News

Dozens of Palestinians injured by Israeli forces in West Bank

INTERNATIONAL DESK **TEHRAN** — Israeli forces have fired rubber bullets and teargas to disperse weekly anti-settlement protests in several areas across the occupied West Bank, leaving dozens of people injured.

Israeli forces violently attacked hundreds of Palestinians participating in a peaceful rally in the village of Beit Dajan, east of Nablus City, on Friday, according to the Palestinian Quds News Network.

A Palestinian was also injured during a weekly protest in the village of Kafr Qaddum, near the city of Qalqilia, in the occupied West Bank.

“Despite bad rainy weather, clashes broke out today between #Palestinian protesters and Israeli occupation forces in the village of Kafr Qaddum in the occupied West Bank, today,” the news network said in a tweet.

The West Bank has long been a scene of weekly peaceful protests against the Israel regime’s settlement expansion policy.

According to a recent report by the anti-settlement monitoring group Peace Now, Israel has advanced plans for the construction of 780 new illegal settler units in the occupied West Bank.

According to a recent report by the anti-settlement monitoring group Peace Now, Israel advanced plans for the construction of 780 new illegal settler units in the occupied West Bank.

Historic bazaar of Ardebil to be equipped with modern heating system

TOURISM **TEHRAN** – The Seljuk-era (1037–1194) bazaar of Ardebil in northwest Iran will be equipped with a safe and smart heating system after being fully restored to its former splendor.

Due to the high risks of gas heating, which has long been used in the old vaulted marketplace, it will be equipped with modern and safe gears such as solar and ceiling radiation systems, the provincial tourism chief has said.



“The project will be carried out in close collaboration with the shop owners,” Nader Fallahi announced on Saturday.

Such projects aim at protecting people and shop owners’ lives as well as their properties, the official added.

The historical bazaar of Ardebil was once an important trade center during the Safavid era (1501-1736). At that time, Ardebil had a special prestige and enjoyed a remarkable political, social, and cultural status.

Inscribed on the National Heritage list in 1985, the bazaar was extensively restored during Qajar-era (1789–1925).

In the Iranian culture, bazaars have been traditional public spaces in the Iranian cities with great contributions to commercial activities in the urban life meanwhile their extended activates can be traced to social, cultural, political, and religious roles.

People watching and even mingling with them in the bazaars is one of the best ways to take the pulse of the country. Bazaars have traditionally been major economic and social centers in any Iranian city.

Most mazes and passages offer certain commodities such as carpets, metalwork, toys, clothing, jewelry, and kitchen appliances, traditional spices, herbal remedies, and natural perfumes.

One can also bump into colorful grocery stores, book-binders, blacksmiths, tinsmiths, coppersmiths, tobacconists, tailors, flag sellers, broadcloth sellers, carpenters, shoemakers, and knife-makers.

Several divided carpet sections across the bazaar enable visitors to watch or buy hand-woven Persian carpets and rugs with different knot densities and other features.

From another point of view, bazaars are also synonyms of foods, with their unmissable colorful stalls of vegetables, herbs, and spices. Yet, most of these ingredients might be mysterious to a foreign eye.

Sprawling on a high, windswept plateau, whose altitude averages 3,000 meters above sea level, Ardebil is well-known for having lush natural beauties, hospitable people, and its silk and carpet trade tradition.

The province is very cold in winter and mild in summer, attracting thousands every year. The capital city of Ardabil is usually recorded as one of the coldest cities in the country in winter.

Iran’s largest beach park to be built in Kish

TOURISM **TEHRAN** – The country’s largest beach park is planned to be established in the Persian Gulf island of Kish, southern Iran.

Hundreds of hectares of coastal lands on Kish Island have been ratified to be turned into a beach park, which would be the largest of its kind in the country, the CEO of Kish Civil, Water, and Urban Services Abolfazl Tayyebi said on Saturday.



One of [public] benefits from the implementation of this project is that some 388,000 square meters of valuable beaches will not be ceded to the private sector, the official added.

In many cities and countries of the world, nowadays, most of the beaches are owned by individuals and the private sector, and due to construction near the sea, they are out of reach of people and tourists, the official explained.

With such a project and establishing facilities for the public on the island’s coastline, no one could encroach on this precious treasure that belongs to all Iranians, he noted.

Amongst the Persian Gulf islands, Kish is the more luxurious and developed. Except for its unique nature such as waters and shallow beaches, the tourist attractions of this charming island are due to its rich historical background as well as kind and hospitable people.

About one million foreign and domestic tourists travel to the island every year and it is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Iran as it has magnificent attractions such as Kariz Underground City, Harireh Ancient City, Greek Ship, and Grand Recreational Pier to name a few.

‘Unique’ relics unearthed in northern Iran: archaeologist

➔ 1 “Architectural evidence and a collection of available sources and [historical] travelogues show that [the modern] Gorgan lies on the historical city of Astarabad, and certainly in the lower layers of this historical city, valuable cultural artifacts can be retrieved,” the archaeologist explained.

Talking about future excavations at the site, the expert noted: “To complete the archaeological knowledge of this treasured site, the excavations should be continuing at this site to reach the virgin soil.”

“Future excavations and additional studies can give answers to many of our questions about the spatial function of the site of the discovery of this unique metal treasure... and also the study lower cultural layers and deposits related to the Seljuk period will help to do so.”

Asterabad is situated along a small tributary of the Qareh River, 37 km from the Caspian Sea. The ancient city, in existence since Achaemenian times, long suffered from inroads of the Turkmen tribes who occupied the plain north of the Qareh River and were subjected to incessant Qajar-Turkmen tribal conflicts in the 19th century.

It was renamed Gorgan in the 1930s after being devastated by an earthquake.



Articles of trade include cereals, soap, and carpets. In modern times the plain around Gorgan has become a flourishing granary.

Furthermore, Gorgan is home to an immense defensive wall of the same name (“The Great Wall of Gorgan”) which is stretched some 200 km in length, built to prevent

the invasion of the northern tribes. It is said to be the longest architectural work of ancient Iran, which was built in 90 years.

Also known as Red Wall, which in some ancient texts is referred to as the Red Snake, this wall is the longest brick ancient barrier between Central Europe

Online marketplace for handicrafts launched in East Azarbaijan

TOURISM **TEHRAN** – An online crafts marketplace, aimed to boost sales of local handmade products and souvenirs, was launched in northwestern East Azarbaijan province on Wednesday.

The necessary platform and infrastructure for comprehensive e-commerce have been developed in the province to drive up handicraft sales to all over the world, the deputy governor-general, Javad Rahmati, said addressing the inauguration ceremony.

Although the outbreak of the coronavirus has affected the handicrafts sector of the province, such markets could introduce the crafters’ handmade products to their customers directly, the official added.

It also could promote the products properly, which could contribute artisans to reach bigger and better markets that lead to economic prosperity, he explained.

Ahmad Hamzezadeh, the provincial tourism chief, was another speaker at the ceremony, who said over 5,000 handmade products have been put on sale in this market.

Currently, over 85 handicrafts fields are being practiced by 14,000 artisans and crafters across the province, he added.

Capital of East Azarbaijan province, Tabriz, which is well-soaked in history and culture for millennia, embraces several historical and religious sites, including Jameh Mosque of Tabriz and Arg of Tabriz, and UNESCO-registered Tabriz Historic Bazaar Complex to name a few.

The ancient city was declared a world craft city of

carpet weaving by the World Craft in 2016. It also bore the title of 2018 Islamic Tourism Capital.

Tabriz became the capital of the Mongol Il-Khan Mahmud Gazan (1295–1304) and his successor. Timur (Tamerlane), a Turkic conqueror, took it in 1392. Some decades later the Kara Koyunlu Turkmen made it their capital, it was when the famous Blue Mosque was built in Tabriz.

The city retained its administrative status under the Safavid dynasty until 1548, when Shah Tahmasp I relocated his capital westward to Qazvin. During the next two centuries, Tabriz changed hands several times between Persia and Ottoman Empire. During World War I, the city was temporarily occupied by Turkish and then Soviet troops.

With 14 entries, Iran ranks first globally for the number of cities and villages registered by the World Crafts Council, as China with seven entries, Chile with four, and India with three ones come next.

In January 2020, the cities of Shiraz, Malayer, and Zanjan and the village of Qassemabad were designated by the WCC- Asia Pacific Region, putting Iran’s number of world crafts cities and villages from ten to 14.

Shiraz was named a “world city of [diverse] handicrafts”. Malayer was made a global hub for woodcarving and carved-wood furniture. Zanjan gained the title of a “world city of filigree”. And Qassemabad village, which is nationally known for its traditional costumes, was also promoted to a world hub of handicrafts. Chador Shab, a kind of homemade outer-garment for women,



was, however, the main subject for the WCC assessment for the village.

Iran exported \$523 million worth of handicrafts during the calendar year 1398 (ended March 19, 2020). Of the figure, some \$273 million worth of handicrafts were exported officially through customs, and about \$250 million was earned via suitcase trade (allowed for customs-free and tax-free transfer) through various provinces, according to data provided by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts.

Ceramics, pottery vessels, handwoven cloths as well as personal ornamentations with precious and semi-precious gemstones are traditionally exported to Iraq, Afghanistan, Germany, the U.S., the UK, and other countries.

Explore Tepe Hesar with finds from Chalcolithic Age to Sasanian era

HERITAGE **TEHRAN** – Tepe Hesar, which bears cultural periods from the Chalcolithic Age to the Sasanian period, is one of the most famous archaeological sites in Iran.

Situated on the southern outskirts of Damghan, northcentral Iran, Tepe Hesar is reportedly one of the world’s five archaeological hills of the Iron Age, and the archaeological hill is considered as of the oldest prehistorical sites in the Iranian plateau as well.

Identified in 1880, Tepe Hesar was excavated in 1925 and 1931-1932 when the construction of the Trans-Iranian Railway cuts through the main mound. It was one of the first Chalcolithic and Bronze Age excavations in this area, and the stratigraphy has been very important to date similar sites. In 1976, research was briefly resumed and radiocarbon measures were taken.

The oldest layer, Hesar I, belongs to the Copper Age (Chalcolithic; after 3800



BC); it is about as old as Susa and resembles Sialk III, by which it appears to have been influenced, according to livius.org, a website on ancient history written and maintained since 1996 by the Dutch historian Jona Lendering, according to Livius.org; a website on ancient history written and maintained since 1996 by the Dutch historian Jona Lendering.

Hesar II, which starts in about 3600 BC, is

marked by the appearance of burnished grey pottery and the first objects made of bronze. Among the finds are long-shaped bottles.

The next phase, Hesar III, began in about 2800 BC and saw nice metal work and grey pottery similar to Turan Tepe, which is on the other side of the Alborz mountain range. Some three centuries later, when Hesar III ended, a part of the town was violently destroyed. The ruin that is now known as the “Burnt Building”, situated in the western part of the hill, is the most recognizable remainder of this catastrophe. Archaeologists have found stone arrowheads and charred battle victims.

After this period, the site was abandoned and there was a hiatus for about five or six centuries. After about 1350 BC, people returned and settled on smaller mounds in the neighborhood of the ancient mound. If the main hill was occupied, those recent layers have eroded.

The smaller mounds from the Iron

Age and later have not been investigated, although surface finds prove that Tepe Hesar remained inhabited, as one could have expected, because this part of the Silk Road, from Rhagae to Susia, continued to be in use. In the west, the Median kingdom came into being in the second quarter of the first millennium; its armies came along the road and subdued the Parthians. Later, both Media and Parthia were part of the Achaemenid and Seleucid Empires, until the Parthians turned the tables and united Iran. Directly west of Tepe Hesar, Hecatompylos flourished.

Damghan lies at an elevation of 1,200 meters, just southeast of the Alburz Mountains on a large, barren gravel plain. It is on the road and railway between Tehran and Mashhad. Damghan was an important town and capital of the medieval province of Qumis but was destroyed by Afghans in 1723. The town trades in pistachios and almonds.

Iranian archaeologists begin demarcation project on Bronze Age site

HERITAGE **TEHRAN** – A team of archaeologists and cultural heritage experts has recently commenced a thorough demarcation project on a Bronze Age site in southeastern Sistan-Balouchestan province.

The demarcation project is underway at Bagh-e Nil in Delgan county intending to protect the historical site from illegal constructions within its boundaries as well as preserve its originality, the deputy provincial tourism chief said on Saturday.

A budget of 400 million rials (\$9,500 at the official exchange rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) has been allocated to the project, Mansureh Molla-Elahi added, CHTN reported.

Dating back to the Middle Bronze Age (2200–1550 BC), Bagh-e Nil is located near a village with the same name. The ancient site was inscribed on the National Heritage list in 2019.

According to Encyclopedia Iranica, during the Bronze



Age, the populations of the Iranian plateau bounded on the east by the Hindu Kush and the Himalayas and on

the west by the lowlands of Khuzestan and Mesopotamia. There is also evidence that at the end of the 4th millennium BC settlements through-out Iran were linked in a common cultural network, the “Proto-Elamite horizon.”

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

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

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

\$2.8b of drug traffickers' assets confiscated

SOCIETY TEHRAN – Iranian police have seized illegally acquired assets of drug traffickers worth 120 trillion rials (nearly \$2.8 billion at the official rate of 42,000 rials) over the past 10 months, IRNA reported on Saturday.

Trafficking in drugs and other related crimes generates huge illicit funds which are used to support other criminal activity, corruption, illicit arms trading, the smuggling of goods and currency, and other economic offenses. The traditional enforcement techniques aimed only at carriers and confiscation of the seized contraband no longer provide a sufficient deterrent.

The \$2.8b forfeiture of the property and assets of smugglers is about three times more than the amount confiscated in the [Iranian calendar year] 1397 (March 2018-March 2019), Eskandar Momeni, the secretary-general of Iran's drug control headquarters, said in a press conference.

"One of the most important measures in the fight against narcotics was the establishment of a committee to confiscate all property illegally acquired or accumulated in the [Iranian calendar year] 1398 (March 2019-March 2020), because we believe that they will continue smuggling in prison unless their property is seized," he stated.



Pointing to the control of illegal import and distribution of narcotics as other new services of the headquarters, he said that this led to a reduction in the volume of transit through Iran and a change of route to other countries.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Momeni announced that two care centers have been

set up for addicts with specific diseases, hepatitis and HIV, and two care centers for addicted women. The establishment of two other centers is on the agenda.

Iran's anti-narcotics measures
Iran seized some 1,000 tons of narcotics in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended March 20, 2020), putting the country in

first place in the world, Momeni said in July 2020.

After the Islamic Revolution (in 1979), 3,800 were martyred, 12,000 were wounded and disabled in the fight against drug trafficking, Momeni announced.

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

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

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

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

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

Iraqi travelers worsen pandemic in Khuzestan: governor general

province's governor general as saying on Saturday.

More than 300 Iraqi nationals cross Chazzebeh and Shalamcheh borders on a daily basis, Qassem Soleimani-Dashtaki said, adding that the issue has contributed to a rise in the number of coronavirus cases.

"For the time being, any entrance and exit via the two borders is forbidden for a week. Travelers are accommodated at a temporary center and are tested for the virus. We have taken strict measures for other individuals and communities which is forecast to be effective in the short term."

Eleven cities of the province are in the "high alert" situation. On February 13, President Hassan Rouhani emphasized the necessity for people to follow health protocols, as a new wave of coronavirus may hit the country within the next two months.

He called on the people to observe the hygiene principles, insisting that anyone who enters the country should undergo the COVID-19 test. "We should all join hands to prevent the fourth wave of the outbreak," he asserted.

New cases and mortalities
In a press briefing on Saturday, Health Ministry's spokesperson Sima-Sadat Lari confirmed 922 new cases of COVID-19 infection, raising the total number of infections to 1,566,081. She added that 1,337,877 patients have so far recovered, but 3,677 remain in critical conditions of the disease.

During the past 24 hours, 68 patients have lost their lives, bringing the total number of deaths to 59,409, she added.

So far, 10,387,561 COVID-19 diagnostic tests have been performed in the country. Lari noted that currently, 10 cities are at high-risk "red" zones, 217 cities in low-risk "yellow" zones.



SOCIETY TEHRAN – Iraqi nationals visiting Iran have worsened the coronavirus pandemic in the southwestern Khuzestan province, IRNA quoted the

South Khorasan hosting unique species of urial

1→ Appropriate rainfall over the past two years and the protection measures are among the reasons for the population growth of this valuable species, he concluded.

Urialed added to UN global wildlife agreement

The Thirteenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of

Wild Animals (CMS COP13) has approved Iran's proposal to include urials in the United Nation's list of endangered animals.

The CMS COP13 was held February 15 – 22, 2020 in Gandhinagar, India, with resolutions and decisions adopted to help conserve migratory species globally.

The meeting approved a proposal submitted by Iran, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan to include urials in the United Nation's



list of top ten endangered animals for conservation. So that, they were listed as migratory species that would benefit from enhanced international cooperation and conservation actions.

The conservation status of the urial is threatened as their habitat is perfectly suitable for human development; however, the urial population has been recovering in recent years.

Experts identify 'super-plant' that absorbs roadside air pollution

Bushy, hairy-leaved cotoneaster is a "super plant" that can help soak up pollution on busy roads, horticultural experts have said.

Scientists at the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) looked at the effectiveness of hedges for soaking up air pollution, comparing different types of shrubs including cotoneaster, hawthorn and western red cedar, the Guardian reported.

The study forms part of work by the charity to ease environmental problems such as air pollution, flooding and heatwaves, boosting the benefits of gardens and green spaces.

On roads with heavy traffic, the denser, hairy-leaved Cotoneaster franchetii was at least 20% more effective at soaking up

pollution compared with other shrubs, the researchers said, though it did not make a difference on quieter streets.

The lead researcher, Dr Tijana Blanus, said: "On major city roads with heavy traffic, we've found that the species with more complex, denser canopies and rough and hairy leaves such as cotoneaster were the most effective."

"We know that in just seven days a 1-metre length of well-managed dense hedge will mop up the same amount of pollution that a car emits over a 500-mile drive."

She said cotoneaster would be ideal to plant along busy roads in pollution hot spots, while in other areas where encouraging nature was

key, a mix of species would be recommended.

While a survey of 2,056 people for the RHS found that a third (33%) were affected by air pollution, just 6% are taking active steps in their gardens to alleviate it.

Of those surveyed by YouGov, 86% said they cared about environmental issues, while 78% worried about climate change, and the RHS is hoping to harness that interest to encourage people to think about helping the environment in their garden.

Prof Alistair Griffiths, RHS director of science and collections, said: "We are continually identifying new 'super plants' with unique qualities which when combined with other vegetation provide enhanced

benefits while providing much needed habitats for wildlife.

"We've found, for example, that ivy wall cover excels at cooling buildings, and hawthorn and privet help ease intense summer rainfalls and reduce localised flooding. If planted in gardens and green spaces where these environmental issues are most prevalent, we could make a big difference in the fight against climate change."

RHS scientists are now moving into the Hilltop centre, at the charity's gardens at Wisley in Surrey, which has facilities that will allow them to increase research into these areas, as well as exhibition spaces and "living laboratory" gardens.

ENGLISH IN USE

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A ← → ج

Afghanistan thanks Iran for free services to refugees during COVID-19

Afghanistan has appreciated Iran for offering health and treatment services to Afghan refugees infected with coronavirus free of charge.

The Afghan Foreign Ministry in a statement on Saturday announced its gratitude and appreciation to Iran for its humanitarian efforts to address the issue of Afghan refugees in the country.

All measures, especially the recent decree by the Iranian president to provide free medical treatment to Afghan refugees in Iranian public hospitals, have assured the Afghan government, IRNA reported on Sunday.

According to the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, providing transportation services to transit trucks and providing the necessary health assistance to vulnerable Afghan nationals are among the measures that are highly appreciated.

افغانستان از همکاری ایران برای مداوای مهاجران مبتلا به کرونا قدردانی کرد

وزارت امور خارجه افغانستان از کمک و همکاری جمهوری اسلامی ایران به مهاجران افغانی مبتلا به ویروس کرونا و مداوای رایگان آنها قدردانی کرد.

وزارت امور خارجه افغانستان روز شنبه در اطلاعیه‌ای اعلام کرد: مراتب امتنان و سپاسگزاری خود را از جمهوری اسلامی ایران در رابطه به اقدامات بشردوستانه آن کشور درباره رسیدگی به مهاجرین افغان در آن کشور ابراز می‌دارد.

در این اطلاعیه آمده است: تمام اقدامات به ویژه صدور حکم اخیر رئیس جمهوری ایران برای درمان رایگان مهاجران افغان در بیمارستان های دولتی ایران موجب خاطر جمعی رهبری دولت افغانستان شد.

براساس اطلاعیه وزارت خارجه افغانستان، ایجاد تسهیلات در رفت و آمد کامیون های ترانزیتی و فراهم آوری مساعدت های لازم بهداشتی برای مهاجران در مناطق آسیب پذیر آن کشور اقداماتی هستند که از جانب دولت افغانستان به چشم قدردانی نگریسته می‌شوند.

Air pollution significantly raises risk of infertility, study finds

Exposure to air pollution significantly increases the risk of infertility, according to the first study to examine the danger to the general population.

The analysis of 18,000 couples in China found that those living with moderately higher levels of small-particle pollution had a 20% greater risk of infertility, defined as not becoming pregnant within a year of trying, the Guardian reported.



The study design did not enable the scientists to determine how air pollution might damage fertility, but pollution particles are known to cause inflammation in the body, which could damage egg and sperm production, the scientists said.

Another recent study of 600 women attending a US infertility clinic found that increased exposure to air pollution was associated with a lower number of maturing eggs in the ovaries.

Infertility affects many millions of couples around the world but relatively little research has been done on the impact of air pollution. However, dirty air is already known to increase the risk of other aspects of reproduction, including premature birth and low birth weight. Common levels of nitrogen dioxide are as bad as smoking in raising the risk of miscarriage and pollution particles have been found on the foetal side of placentas.

Qin Li, at the Centre for Reproductive Medicine at Peking University Third hospital in China, who led the infertility research, said prospective parents should be concerned about air pollution. "Numerous studies have noted that air pollution is associated with lots of adverse pregnancy events," he told the Guardian.

"Approximately 30% of infertile couples have unexplained infertility," Li and colleagues wrote, noting that age, weight and smoking were well-known factors. "[Our study] indicates that small-particle pollution could be an unignorable risk factor for infertility."

Previous studies have produced mixed results but were based on groups of people that excluded infertile couples or were conducted in infertility clinics, Li said: "Our study samples were recruited from the general population, so our findings may be more generalisable."

"The size of the effects they observe seem pretty high, which would be concerning if borne out in future studies as well, particularly in low pollution environments," said Tom Clemens, at the University of Edinburgh, UK. The pollution levels in China are relatively high, he said, but harmful effects have been reported on reproduction at much lower levels. "So clearly poor air quality impacts the reproductive system in general," he said.

Prof Mireille Toledano at Imperial College London, UK, said new research on this important topic was very welcome as there were not many previous studies. She said lower levels of air pollution might affect infertility, but that more research was needed.

The research, published in the journal Environment International, was based on data from interviews and questionnaires from 18,571 couples who were part of the large China Fertility Survey of Married Women. In China, women are required to register with the authorities before attempting to become pregnant, enabling the researchers to request information from all women who were aiming to conceive.

The researchers found that women exposed to small particle pollution that was 10 micrograms per cubic metre higher over a year had a 20% greater risk of infertility. The average pollution level for the Chinese couples was 57µg/m3. In London, UK, the average is about 13µg/m3.

The results also showed that the proportion of women not becoming pregnant after 12 months of trying rose from 15% to 26% when comparing the quarter exposed to the lowest pollution with the quarter suffering the highest. The researchers took account of other factors including age, weight, income, smoking, alcohol drinking, and exercise levels.

Previous studies of dirty air and fertility have used data on sperm quality, perhaps because this is easier to obtain, with a 2017 review concluding air pollution has a "negative impact".

LET'S LEARN PERSIAN

(Part 132)

(Source: saadifoundation.ir)

yes	آره : به	
cheap	آرزان	
bazaar; market	بازار	
up	بالا	
better	بِهْتَر	پیراهن
best	بِهْتَرین	
more; more often	بیشتر وقت، فید	
most	بیشترین	
down	پایین	داتن
to put on, to wear	پوشیدن – پوش	
commerce, trade	تِجَارَت	
altogether	روی هم	
black≠wait	سیاه ≠ سفید	شلوار

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GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

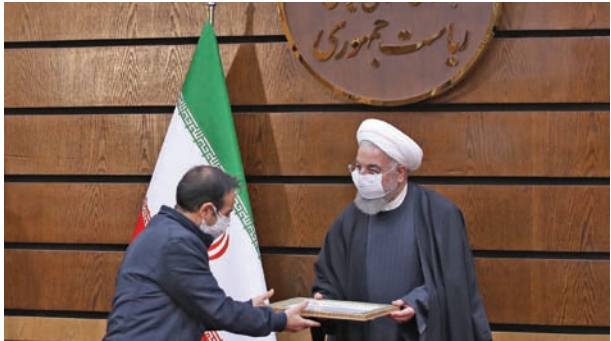
There is reward for kindness to every living thing.

Prophet Muhammad (S)

Iran's Book of the Year Awards announces winners

→1 In the Visual Arts section, "Kubacheh Pottery" by Firuz Mahjur and Erwin Panofsky's "Perspective as Symbolic Form" translated into Persian by Mohammad Sepahi won the award.

In the Literature category, "Mid-Day Incantations" by Mansur Alimoradi was selected as best novel, and the award for best Literary Criticism went to "History of the Body in Literature" by Seyyed Mehdi Zargani and colleagues.



A winner accepts his award from President Hassan Rouhani during the 38th Iran's Book of the Year Awards on February 20, 2021. (President.ir)

The award for best Translation was shared by Maria Nikolajeva's "Aesthetic Approaches to Children's Literature: An Introduction" translated into Persian by Mehdi Hejvani and Fatemeh Zamani, and "An Introduction to Contemporary American Poetry" by Kamran Ahmadgoli and Bahdor Baqeri.

"Epic of Musayyebnameh" written by Mohammad-Baqai Vars Bukhari and Abu Taher Tarsusi, and translated and corrected by Milad Jafarpur won the award for best old text.

In the Physical Education section, the award was given to the Persian translation of Claude Bouchard's "Claude Bouchard's "Molecular and Cellular Regulation of Adaptation to Exercise" translated into Persian by Abbas-Ali Gaini, Javad Tolueiazar and Mohammad Hemmatinafar.

Speaking at the ceremony, Rouhani said that if there were no books, one's connection with the past would be cut.

"We have inherited our cultural heritage from our ancestors but nothing can replace them like books, and our spiritual treasures are preserved in books," the President said.

"Books bear precious treasure from the past. We can find more about the scientist and scholars from what they have written or from what others have written about them, and if there were no books, there would be a great loss," he remarked.

15 Iranian organizations to present productions at European Film Market

» TEHRAN — Fifteen Iranian organizations and companies will be presenting their latest productions at the European Film Market, one of the top three meeting places of the international film and media industries.

Among the organizations are the Experimental and Documentary Film Center, Fajr International Film Festival, Farabi Cinema Foundation, Art and Experience Cinema, Eli Image, Honar Aval and iFilm Pro.



European Film Market (File photo).

Due to the pandemic, the European Film Market will be held online from March 1 to 5. Its close links with the Berlinale as a public film festival and its position at the heart of Berlin's vivid creative economy are defining characteristics of the festival's film market.

Nearly 800 films are already registered for market screenings, of which two-thirds are market premieres, the organizers have announced. Over 470 companies from almost 60 countries have registered, including almost 200 companies that are participating in the EFM for the first time. The number of accreditations is also closing in on last year's high level of participation.

"These positive numbers confirm that this year's virtual edition of the EFM is also in high demand, and they reinforce the decision to go forward with the unusual format in an unusual year. In the first quarter of the year, the EFM is the focal point of the international film business," comments EFM Director Dennis Ruh.

International Art Festival of Resistance honors winners

» TEHRAN — Winners of the Sixth International Art Festival of Resistance were honored during a ceremony on Friday at the Iranian Artists Forum in Tehran.

A top selection of artworks in the forms of poster, sculpture, typography, illustration, cartoon and caricature by artists from over 50 countries went on view at the forum while observing health protocols and social distancing.

The ceremony was attended by Revayat Cultural Foundation director Mohammad-Yashar Naderi, the director of the festival, Masud Nejabati, and a number of artists.

"The resistance art is a trust we have received from the masters and veterans of the art of the Islamic Revolution and we have tried to preserve it. As long as there are war, battles and blasphemy in the world we will preserve the art of resistance," Nejabati said.

Painters Abbas Saki and Mohammad-Ali Rajabi Davani, graphic designer Mohammad-Ali Keshavarz, photographer Abbas Mirhashemi and cartoonist Mohammad-Hossein Salavatian received



A winner receives his award at the Sixth International Art Festival of Resistance at the Iranian Artists Forum on February 19, 2021. (Mehr/Pantea Nikzad)

lifetime achievement awards.

Tahmures Ashenagar was named best painter, and the award for best sculptor was given to Nasrin Shapuri.

Karim Motaqqi received the award for best photographer, and Mohammad-Mehdi Dorani received the award for best artist in the Health Defenders section.

In the graphic design section, Mehdi Mostafavi, Ehsan Sanaeirad, Sediqeh Ahmadi, Maryam Musavi and Haleh Vajdani were all honored.

The award for best cartoonist went to Saeid Sadeqi, and Mehdi Parastar received the award for best illustrator.

In the typography section, Mahbubeh Javadipur was named best artist, and in the flags and epigraph section Majid Keshavarzi, Mohammad-Saber Sheikh Rezaei and Mojtaba Hassanzadeh were honored.

A selection of paintings were showcased at the Palestine Museum of Contemporary Art in Tehran.

The Revayat Cultural Foundation is the organizer of the event, which was held from February 8 to 19.

"Holodomor" reveals how Stalin starved millions in Ukrainian famine



A scene from Seganeh Troupe's latest production "Holodomor". (Photo by Reza Javidi)

» TEHRAN — An Iranian play named "Holodomor" premiered at Tehran's Neauphle-le-Chateau Theater on Friday, recapitulating the Holodomor, a famine planned by Joseph Stalin in Soviet Ukraine from 1932 to 1933 that killed millions of Ukrainians.

Ali Safari is the writer of the play, which is being performed by the Seganeh Troupe with director Raha Hajjizinal.

This play is the final part of a trilogy, which has been produced by Safari and Hajjizinal about World War II. "Women's Auschwitz" and "Berlin 10:10" were other parts of the set, which were performed in 2019 and 2020.

The word Holodomor literally translated from Ukrainian means "killing by starvation". The term Holodomor emphasizes the famine's man-made and intentional aspects such as rejection of outside aid, confiscation of all household foodstuffs and restriction of population movement.

As part of the wider Soviet famine of 1932–33, which affected the major grain-producing areas of the country, millions of inhabitants of Ukraine, the majority of whom were ethnic Ukrainians, died of starvation in a peacetime catastrophe unprecedented in the history of Ukraine.

Since 2006, the Holodomor has been recognized by Ukraine and 15 other countries as a genocide of the Ukrainian people carried out by the Soviet government.

Some scholars believe that the famine was planned by Joseph Stalin to eliminate a Ukrainian independence movement.

A cast composed of Sarina Azad-Milani, Farshad Ayyubi, Mohammad Pasandideh, Tima Taqizadeh, Farzaneh Seiri, Ahu Shafiei, Milad Salehvand, Mehdi Abbasi, Nika Qasemi, Atefeh Musavi and Alireza Valipur perform the paly, which will remain on stage until March 12.

The troupe has earlier performed "Women's Auschwitz" about women in the Auschwitz concentration camp operated by Nazi Germany in occupied Poland during World War II and the Holocaust.

The second part of the trilogy was "Berlin 10:10", which centers on the event occurred one minute before the outbreak of WWII.

Book City to review Cyrus Ghani's "Shakespeare, Persia, and the East"

» TEHRAN — A Persian translation of Cyrus Ghani's book "Shakespeare, Persia, and the East" will be reviewed in an online session by the Book City Institute in Tehran.

The book translated into Persian by Masud Farahmandfar has recently been published by the Morvarid publishing house in Tehran.

Farahmandfar and the literati Omid Tabibzadeh and Mostafa Hosseini are scheduled to deliver speeches during the session, which will be screened live on www.instagram.com/ketabofarhang at 11 am.

Ghani was an Iranian-born academic, lawyer, Iranian studies scholar and film critic. Born in the northwestern Iranian town of Sabzevar, he lived in the United States and in England.

No writer's work has been studied more closely or more often than the plays of William Shakespeare, that master of language and peerless explorer of the human heart.



A poster for the Book City Institute's online review session for a Persian translation of Cyrus Ghani's book "Shakespeare, Persia, and the East".

Books about him number in the thousands, yet "Shakespeare, Persia, and the East" brings a truly fresh perspective to his genius.

In the three dozen plays he composed

between 1590 and 1612, Shakespeare ranged far and wide in his imagination, setting some of his tales in places as varied as Denmark, Venice and Athens while drawing on a rich array of imagery and lore from lands further east.

This remarkable book by a lifelong student of Shakespeare Cyrus Ghani reveals how rich a source of inspiration those exotic Eastern realms were for the playwright.

Elizabethan England was especially fascinated by Persia, whose deep-rooted culture was then flourishing under the Safavid dynasty. An Englishman first visited there in 1562, two years before Shakespeare's birth. More contacts between England and Persia followed, prompted by hopes of a lucrative trading relationship and a possible military alliance against the Ottoman Turks.

A pair of English adventurers, Anthony and Robert Sherley, spent years attempting to

establish these ties, not always scrupulously, and their story was well known to England's greatest dramatist.

To illuminate the creative uses Shakespeare made of the East, this book first looks at the life of the playwright himself, then at the dynasties that did so much to shape England and Persia in that tumultuous age.

Other sections in the book profile key figures in the efforts to forge a connection between the two lands, with particular focus on the colorful Sherleys and their fatally ambitious sponsor, the Earl of Essex, a great admirer of Shakespeare.

The final section of the book briefly describes the plays and cites their many allusions to the East, testimony that this literary giant was very much a man of his time.

"Shakespeare, Persia, and the East" was originally released by Mage Publishers in August 2008.

IRGC commander praises play "Borunesi"

» TEHRAN — Saeid Mohammad, commander of the Khatam-al-Anbiya Construction Headquarters, an Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) construction unit, praised "Borunesi" after watching the play at the Sayeh Hall of Tehran's City Theater Complex on Friday.

Morteza Shahkaram is the director of the play, which is about the life story of IRGC senior commander Abdolhossein Borunesi.

Borunesi was martyred during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war. His military life as a soldier during the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah and his activities during the Islamic Revolution and post-revolution life are portrayed in the play.

Mohammad called the play very good and professional, with talented actors and a brilliant performance.

"The play beautifully portrays and connects people's struggle during the Pahlavi regime and their active presence during the war, highlighting the national hero Borunesi. I really enjoyed the play," he said.

"I believe this play showcases the sincerity which is rooted in our culture and beliefs. This play shows that we must live according to our beliefs. I believe this play can help make culture for the society," he said.

He said that the topic of the war is quite varied and



Thespians act in a scene from "Borunesi" by Morteza Shahkaram at Tehran's City Theater Complex. (Tehran Picture Agency/Milad Beheshti)

added, "Those who have good experience can produce new and attractive plays with the central theme of the war."

"The war represents the issue of defending our land, consequently all Iranians are interested in this topic," he stated.

Ahmet Altan's "Dying is Easier than Loving" appears in Persian

» TEHRAN — A Persian translation of Turkish author Ahmet Altan's "Dying is Easier than Loving" has recently been published by Now Publications in Tehran.

The book has been translated into Persian by Alireza Seifeddini.

In this story, a car stopped in front of the casino, Nizam rushed out of the car, ran into the casino, there was no piano sound, it was very quiet, dormant to the next room, the door of the piano was closed, he scanned the hall with his eyes, Anya was by the window, smoking.

He saw a trace of astonishment for the first time. Nizam went and stopped in front

of the woman and asked, What's your name? You have learned my name."

Altan ranks among Turkey's most-read novelists as well as its most influential political columnists. It is a role into which he was born. His father, Çetin Altan was an important novelist and popular journalist as well as a politician.

Ahmet's younger brother Mehmet, a professor of economics, is also a household name in Turkey for his political commentaries. Ahmet graduated from the School of Economics of Istanbul University. In the decades that followed, he worked his way around newspapers from the night shift to the head of the foreign desk to managing

editor, to nationwide prominence.

It is as an op-ed writer that he commanded national attention. No taboo has proved too sacred to deflect his direct style and crystal-clear prose.

In 2009, Altan was awarded the Prize for the Freedom and Future of the Media by the Media Foundation of the Sparkasse Leipzig.

In 2011, he received the International Hrant Dink Award. The Turkish Publishers Association awarded its 2013 Freedom of Thought and Expression Prize to Ahmet, and the Istanbul Human Rights Association Freedom of Thought and Expression Prize was given to him in 2017, albeit in absentia while in prison.



Front cover of the Persian translation of Ahmet Altan's "Dying is Easier than Loving".