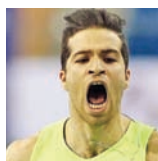




Zarif raps Western hypocrisy over Israeli nuclear bomb factory *Page 3*



Iranian sprinter Taftian wins gold at French championships *Page 3*



Iran plans to build 100-seat passenger plane *Page 4*



Doc depicts Iranian environmentalist's attempts to save Caspian seal from extinction *Page 8*

Iran, Russia working on strategic deal

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Foreign Ministry spokesman tells Tehran Times: Iran and Russia have placed long-term cooperation on agenda



Office photo

Mother tongue is the soul of life

BY MEHDI GARSHASBI

International Mother Language Day is celebrated each year on February 21. It is a source of inspiration to build multicultural and inclusive societies where people of all races, faiths, languages, and cultures get respect and can live with dignity.

The United Nations General Assembly has called upon member states "to promote the preservation and protection of all languages used by peoples of the world".

The day recognizes that languages and multilingualism can advance inclusion, and the Sustainable Development Goal's focus on leaving no one behind. UNESCO believes education, based on the first language or mother tongue, must begin from the early years as early childhood care and education is the foundation of learning.

This year's observance is a call on policymakers, educators and teachers, parents, and families to scale up their commitment to multilingual education, and inclusion in education to advance education recovery in the context of COVID-19.

Languages, with their complex implications for identity, communication, social integration, education, and development, are of strategic importance for people and the planet. Yet, due to globalization processes, they are increasingly under threat of disappearing altogether. When languages fade, so does the world's rich tapestry of cultural diversity. Opportunities, traditions, memory, unique modes of thinking and expression — valuable resources for ensuring a better future — are also lost.

It is said that 43 percent of the estimated 6,000 languages spoken in the world are endangered.

Multilingual and multicultural societies exist through their languages which transmit and preserve traditional knowledge and cultures in a sustainable way.

Today there is growing awareness that languages play a vital role in development, in ensuring cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, but also in strengthening co-operation and attaining quality education for all, in building inclusive knowledge societies and preserving cultural heritage, and in mobilizing political will for applying the benefits of science and technology to sustainable development.

Learning more languages is useful as it offers more windows to the world besides enabling cross-cultural understanding, peace, and harmony. However, it can't be achieved without a strong foundation in one's own first language. Mother tongue is the soul of life.

Efforts underway to revive horse-riding game in Fereidan

TEHRAN — A working group has been formed to revive Chogan in Fereidan country, which was once one of Iran's popular venues for the ancient horse-riding game.

"The revival of Chogan, an original Iranian tradition and culture, is on agenda in Fereidan.... as it would promote sports, health and vitality into the people of the region," Fereidan's governor, Seyyed Taqi Moenodini, announced on Sunday.

"Chogan is an indigenous and original sport that due to its magnetism, has the potential to attract people of the region, particularly the youth," the official said.

Chogan is a sporting team game with horses and a version of the modern polo game. From time immemorial it was considered an aristocratic game and held in a separate field, on specially trained horses. Nowadays, Chogan is played in Iran, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Azerbaijan.

The horse-riding game, traditionally played in

royal courts and urban fields and accompanied by music and storytelling, won the UNESCO world heritage status in December 2017.

In Chogan, two-rider teams compete and the aim is to pass a ball through the opposing team's goal post using a wooden stick. The bearers of the game include Choganbazan (the athletes), storytellers (Naqqals, Morsheds, etc.), and musicians, according to UNESCO.

Chogan is a cultural, artistic, and athletic element with a strong connection to the identity and history of its bearers and practitioners. It has a strong presence in the literature, storytelling, proverbs, handicrafts, and ornaments that are valuable parts of the symbolism of its practitioners. As an element that promotes the health of the body and soul, Chogan also establishes a connection between nature, humankind, and horses.

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Enemy forced to leave the region following the drills: military chief

TEHRAN — Major General Mohammad Hossein Baqeri, the Iranian Armed Forces Chiefs of Staff, says several massive drills launched by the military in recent weeks finally compelled the enemy to leave the region.

In a meeting with a senior Iranian cleric in Qom on Sunday, the top general highlighted the Iranian Armed Forces' success

in overcoming the enemy's mounting pressures over the past two years after the U.S. withdrew from the JCPOA and the subsequent increase in sanctions.

"The enemy ultimately left the region with humiliation and its dreams did not come true," Baqeri stressed.

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Majlis sets NDF share of oil incomes in budget bill at 38%

TEHRAN — Iranian parliament on Sunday stipulated that the share of National Development Fund (NDF) from the country's oil and gas export revenues in the newly amended budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year 1400 (starts on March 20) must be 38 percent if crude oil exports surpass one million barrels per day (bpd).

As reported by IRNA, according to a decision approved by MPs on Sunday, in case of exporting one million barrels per

day (bpd) of oil and gas condensate (or less), the NDF share would be reduced to 20 percent, however, the 18-percent gap will be considered government's debt to NDF and should be settled in the future.

Also, the share of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) from the oil and gas condensate export revenues is set at 14.5 percent, while a 14.5-percent share is also allocated to the state-owned companies affiliated to the Oil Ministry.

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Iranian-made coronavirus vaccine 90% immunogenic: study

TEHRAN — Tests performed on volunteers who received the Iranian-made COVID-19 vaccine showed that the immunogenicity of "COVIRAN BAREKAT" is about 90 percent.

COVIRAN BAREKAT, the first coronavirus vaccine made by Iranian researchers of the Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam, was unveiled and injected into three volunteers during a ceremony on December 29, 2020.

Immunogenicity tests have been per-

formed on about 35 volunteers so far, and the results show that the vaccine has higher immunogenicity than we expected, Mohammad Reza Salehi, clinical conductor of the Iranian coronavirus vaccine announced.

"Test results show that about 90 percent of people who received the second dose of the vaccine showed evidence of immunity after two weeks," he added.

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Protesters oppose move to disband French anti-migrant group

Dozens of people have rallied in Paris to support the anti-migrant group Generation Identity, which is fighting for survival following a government order to dissolve it.

Around 200 protesters took part in the demonstration, which was largely peaceful.

Participants bore the flags of the movement, as well as signs reading "Stop dissolution".

A counter-demonstration against the controversial group also took place in southern Paris. Generation Identity has influence throughout France and beyond.

It contends its members are whistle-blowers on a mission to preserve French and European civilisation, seen as undermined by newcomers, notably Muslims. Critics contend it is a militia espousing a racist cause.

The Lyon-based group was the backbone of a 2017 "Defend Europe" mission on the Mediterranean Sea that used a chartered anti-migrant ship

crewed by European citizens.

Generation Identity has scraped through several legal battles, but at the moment it is up against French interior minister Gerald Darmanin, who wants to disband the group.

Earlier this month, Mr. Darmanin announced the start of proceedings to dissolve Generation Identity.

The ministry cited France's security code forbidding "combat or private militia groups", and groups that "provoke discrimination, hate or (racial) violence", according to French daily newspaper Liberation, which saw a copy of the government's seven-page justification.

The group was given 10 days to respond, and the deadline is Monday.

Its leader Clement Gandelin said Generation Identity has the evidence it needs to refute the allegations.

He said the group will fight to the end in court to retain the right to operate and, if dissolved, "the militants will still be there".

First volume of unabridged Azerbaijani dictionary published in Ardebil

TEHRAN — The first volume of an unabridged Azerbaijani dictionary bearing words beginning with the letter "A" was unveiled on Saturday during a ceremony in Ardebil, one of the Iranian cities with Azerbaijani-speaking people.

A number of Ardebil provincial officials attended the ceremony organized at the Shiekh Safieddin Ardebili Complex. In addition, several scholars from the Azerbaijan Republic and Turkey also attended the meeting virtually.

"To compile the first volume a team of Azer-

baijani lexicographers traveled to several parts of the country and had meetings with scholars who later joined the team for further collaboration," the leader of the team, Ahad Boyuteh, said at the ceremony.

He added that the team has been situated at the Religious Scholar Museum of Ardebil, and the project has been carried out both in the library research section, and outdoor research works.

"A number of elderly people from the villages and from among the regional nomads were interviewed

for further information on words, and in the library research sections, the published books were studied," he explained.

He added that he expects the scholars would help find the probable mistakes in order to present books with fewer mistakes.

The dean of the University of Mohaqeq Ardebili, Aziz Habibi, hoped that the culture of religion would be preserved and cultural relations with Iranian expatriates would be developed.

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Iran's remarkable biodiversity museum

TEHRAN — The richest and most important biodiversity museum of Iran has been set up in the Department of Environment (DOE), which exhibits extinct native species such as Persian lion and Caspian tiger, as well as rare species of Asiatic cheetah, mugger crocodile, bustard, grouse, and Asian black bear.

In the museum of the natural history of Iran, out of about 90,000 identified specimens in the world, there are more than 5,000 species of animals, plants, ancient and museums, while entry is not open to the public.

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Idea of nuclear-weapon-free zones is unlikely: Russian expert

BY MOHAMMAD MAZHARI

THRAN — A Russian expert believes the idea of nuclear-weapon-free zones in West Asia is not practical due to the level of trust between nations and separate political groups.

Iran has repeatedly said that the international community must compel the United States and Israel to fulfill their commitments in establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zones (NWFZ) in West Asia.

However, the main obstacle to the NWFZ is the Israeli arsenal of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and its refusal to join the chemical weapons convention (CWC) and the biological weapons convention (BWC). This indicates the failure of the United States in honoring its obligations for nuclear-weapon-free zones. (The last American doctrine "Nuclear Posture Review" allows Washington to use nuclear weapons even against non-nuclear states).

In this regard, Stanislav Mitrakhovich from the National Energy Security Fund and the Financial University tells the Tehran Times that the idea of nuclear-weapon-free zones is not practical, at least in the near future.

"The level of trust between nations and separate political groups in the Middle East (West Asia) is rather low, that makes the idea of nuclear-weapon-free zones unlikely, at least in the nearest future," according to Mitrakhovich.

Nevertheless, Israel's nuclear arsenal has always been a source of concern amid the weakening of the non-proliferation regime and the disintegration of the arms control regime.

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VOA Persian: Biden's secret weapon in Iran nuclear talks

By Azin Sahabi

The internet revolution has affected all aspects of life, including politics, international relations and diplomacy as a tool of foreign policy.

In fact, media can function as a powerful instrument for advancing foreign policy and international negotiations. In other words, officials use "media diplomacy" to communicate with international actors. Actually, journalists can temporarily play the role of diplomats and serve as non-state brokers in international negotiations mostly focused on conflict resolution.

In parrel, influencing public opinion at home as well as overseas is quite crucial and if state officials ignore public diplomacy, they may make a critical mistake.

Given the Joe Biden administration's stated policy to revive the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, some think tanks have emphasized that the Oval Office should use its media policy effectively and proportionately in resetting Iran policy.



Against the backdrop, on February 17 Ilan Berman, senior vice president of the American Foreign Policy Council (AFPC), writes that if the U.S. really wants to conclude a meaningful deal with Iran and reset its Iran policy, it should focus on its foreign media outlets as "secret weapons".

Berman has consulted for the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) as well as the U.S. Departments of State and Defense. He regularly proposes several testimonies before the U.S. Congress to draw roadmaps to deter Iran. This fellow has been called one of America's "leading experts on the Middle East (West Asia) and Iran" by CNN.

In the article posted on the AFPC website, Berman, a pro-Israel analyst, harshly blames Michael Pack, the CEO of the U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM), describing him as "the very first personnel casualty of the Joe Biden administration." AFPC also believes that Pack-appointed leaders at Voice of America (VOA), Radio Free Europe and Radio Free Asia have been quite incompetent, too.

It is worth mentioning that raising overt heavy criticism against this congressionally funded broadcaster is not something new. Brian Hook, the former U.S. special representative for Iran, on 28 May, 2020 harshly criticized Voice of America Persian News Network (VOA-PNN). He emphasized that VOA Persian which received more than \$17 million in 2019, has failed to fulfill its mission in "countering Iranian disinformation and propaganda."

In addition, in 2017 and 2019, AFPC conducted assessments of VOA's Persian programming which confirms the results are quite in accordance with Berman's analysis.

In Berman's words, VOA is "one of the most out-of-date, inefficient and scandal-ridden broadcast services administered by USAGM, plagued by everything from poor management to lackluster content."

Mentioning "maximum pressure campaign" of the Trump era against Iran, Berman believes that although the Biden administration has not clarified several aspects of its foreign policy, its approach toward Iran so far shows a major departure from that of the Trump administration.

Therefore, as the Biden administration attempts to reshape U.S. foreign policy towards Iran, fixing such deep-rooted deficiencies is more crucial than ever.

In this context, Berman argues that USAGM and its Persian services are one of the fundamental pillars of the U.S. foreign policy to conduct public diplomacy to confront Iran.

AFPC acknowledges that American officials' claims that VOA is significantly influential among Iranian people, there exists little empirical data to support this. Berman says that many interviews with longtime observers of Persian-language broadcaster carried out in recent months, imply that "the U.S. outreach is increasingly marginal and irrelevant to most Iranians."

Berman emphasizes that VOA Persian suffers from several fundamental flaws and "the service needs to be fixed, top to bottom". In this regard, he details on the root causes of its dysfunction and proposes a number of recommendations to reinforce "the service's inherent credibility as the authoritative 'voice' of the United States."

The expert stresses that Biden should use VOA Persian wisely in his administration's mission of re-engaging Iran and notes that whether or not Biden makes it, the goal "will be a key test of how serious he is about restarting a real dialogue not just with the Iranian regime, but with the Iranian people as well."

Undoubtedly, American media serve as an effective tool in their asymmetric warfare against Iran. And at the time being, dealing with Washington is placed at the top of Iran's foreign policy agenda. Given the multilateral U.S.-led Western "smart war" against the Islamic Republic, it is vital for Tehran to set a detailed, proportionate and effective roadmap in terms of media operation to preserve and promote its national interests in the future talks with the United States. In fact, the Oval Office is already pretty ready to use its soft power to influence the global public opinion to equip American negotiators with ideational weapons to win the diplomatic race at the table.

Actually, in the current complicated diplomatic battlefield which the Islamic Republic is involved, using media smartly via various platforms, provides Tehran with cultural warriors to back the Iranian diplomats at the negotiation table. As the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has clarified, "what is going on is a war of wills", therefore enjoying triumph in foreign policy is plausible provided that Iran acts wisely in the game of media policy.

Iran says assesses EU invitation to meet with U.S.

POLITICAL
d e s k

TEHRAN — Abbas Araqchi, the Iranian deputy foreign minister, said late on Saturday that Iran is studying a European Union proposal for an informal meeting between current members of Tehran's 2015 nuclear deal and the United States, but has yet to respond to it.

Araqchi said EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell has expressed his readiness to invite the current parties to the JCPOA, namely the P4+1 and Iran, to attend an unofficial meeting to develop the future roadmap of the deal.

Speaking at a televised program, Araqchi said, "We are studying Josep Borrell's proposal to hold an informal meeting of the 4+1 (nuclear deal members) with the United States and Iran, and we are consulting with our partners, including Russia and China, and we will respond to this proposal in the future."

"However, we believe a U.S. return to the nuclear accord does not require a meeting and the only way for it is to lift the sanctions," Araqchi added.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif also told Press TV on Sunday that the Islamic Republic will be open to negotiations on reviving the historic nuclear accord once all signatories begin fulfilling their obligations.

Zarif also said U.S. President Joe Biden has spurned predecessor Donald Trump's Iran policy in words, but has so far pursued the same course of action in practice.

Iran and the United States disagree over who should take the first step to revive the



2015 nuclear deal. Iran asserts the United States must first lift former President Donald Trump's sanctions while Washington says Tehran must first return to compliance with the accord.

Iran insists that as the party that has abandoned its international obligations, the U.S. should take the first step by lifting the unlawful bans in a verifiable manner.

Doubling down on Iran's firm position in that regard, Zarif reiterated that Washington

would not be able to return to the JCPOA unless it removed the sanctions.

The White House said on Friday the United States plans to take no additional actions in response to pressure from Iran before potential talks with Tehran and major powers about returning to the deal, Reuters reported.

White House spokeswoman Jen Psaki said the EU had floated the idea of a conversation among Iran and the six major powers that signed the nuclear accord. "The Europeans

"About 20 to 30% of the IAEA's oversight capacity will be reduced as a result of the implementation of the parliament's decision."

Iranian army produces domestic radar system

POLITICAL
d e s k

TEHRAN — Two home-grown defense products, namely the Bahman radar system and the Nejat mobile operating room, were unveiled on Saturday.

Brigadier General Alireza Sabahi Fard, Commander of the Army's Khatam ol-Anbiya Air Defense Base, and Vice-President for Science and Technology Sorena Sattari participated in the unveiling ceremony of the two indigenous defense products.

General Sabahi Fard said the Bahman radar system has been manufactured by Iranian specialists.

"One of the projects unveiled today is the Bahman radar system and its rival has not been seen anywhere in the world," Fars quoted Sabahi Fard as saying.

"One of the features of the Bahman radar system is that it is passive, which can detect and identify all conventional aircraft and drones with a very small cross-section," he added.

He announced, "The next project is the (Nejat) mobile

operating room, which is self-tensile in all battlefields and critical situations, including floods and earthquakes, and carries out its mission automatically."

In June 2019, Iran unveiled a new home-made state-of-the-art missile defense system named "Khordad 15" which is equipped with passive phased array radar system for detecting fighter jets, stealth targets and cruise missiles.

The missile defense system was unveiled in a ceremony participated by Defense Minister Amir Hatami and General Sabahi Fard in Tehran.

Elaborating on the features and capabilities of the defense shield, General Hatami said that it can trace targets, including fighter jets and enemy drones, 150km away and intercept them at a range of 120km.

In August 2019, Iran unveiled a locally upgraded radar system with a range of 400 km (250 miles) that could help defend against cruise and ballistic missiles and drones.

The national television showed the Falaq, a mobile radar and a vehicle housing a control room.



"This system has high capabilities and can detect all types of cruise and ballistic missiles and drones," Sabahi Fard said at the time

The Falaq is a phased-array radar system which can be incorporated into Iran's larger integrated air defense, which includes an S-300 surface-to-air missile system that Russia delivered in 2016, state-run Press TV said.

"The (Falaq) system was developed in order to counter sanctions restricting access to spare parts of a previously foreign-developed system," Press TV said on its website.

Enemy forced to leave the region following the drills: military chief

➔ The military chief said the Armed Forces conducted 10 military exercises on orders of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei after the previous U.S. president Donald Trump mounted pressure

on Iran during the last two months of his tenure and took a series of extreme measures in the region.

The commander said the unplanned military exercises by Iran, which included various missiles, drones, as well as maritime and air

defense systems, ended the "enemy's mischief in the region".

"The enemy was forced to leave the region, while Iran's security was preserved very well," he remarked.

The Iranian Army and the IRGC held several massive exercises over the recent weeks, putting on show part of Iran's deterrence power.

Iran has made technological breakthrough in defense industry.

Republicans criticize Biden's decision to lift Iran sanctions

POLITICAL
d e s k

TEHRAN — Republicans are criticizing President Biden's decision to give up on a Trump-era push to reinstate United Nations sanctions on Iran, as the administration takes a warmer tone toward Tehran, according to Fox News.

Republican Joe Wilson, the U.S. Representative for South Carolina's 2nd congressional district, noted, "This is outrageous and dangerous. Biden just legalized Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping selling arms to Iran. Why?"

"I agree Joe," responded Republican Greg Steube, U.S. Representative for Florida's 17th congressional district, who is on the House Judiciary and Foreign Affairs Committees. "Why is Biden lifting UN sanctions banning Putin from selling arms to Iran? Seems to warrant an investigation," he added.

The reaction comes to a move by the Biden administration to change the Trump administration's approach on the "snapback" of UN sanctions on Tehran.

The Trump administration triggered the "snapback" mechanism in August, which would restore all UN sanctions that expired under the 2015 Iran nuclear deal. That move came after a failed effort by the U.S. to extend an arms embargo on

Iran that was set to expire in October as part of the 2015 deal and banned the Iranian government from buying and selling arms from its allies.

However, that effort to snap back the sanctions was rejected by the UN Security Council members, which stressed the U.S. had no authority to use the mechanism since it was not part of the accord from which the U.S. had withdrawn.

Former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo rejected the UN arguments, claiming it was part of the accompanying UN resolution.

However, the Biden administration has sought to adopt a different approach to Iran and has sought to rejoin the Iran deal. As part of that, the State Department said a letter had been sent to the Council reversing the U.S. position on the snapback.

Based on UN Security Council Resolution 2231, which confirmed the 2015 nuclear deal – JCPOA – arms embargo against Iran expired on October 18, 2020.

Another Republican, Marco Rubio, the U.S. senator from Florida, described Biden's position toward Iran "nothing short of reckless."

Mohsen Rahami says plans to run for president

POLITICAL
d e s k

TEHRAN — Mohsen Rahami, a reformist law expert, has announced he plans to contest the June presidential elections.

Rahami broke the story in an interview with the official IRNA news agency on Sunday.

The former parliamentarian said since some time ago "we have formulated committees for crafting plans in several fields" with the help of a number of figures and groups.

The cleric law professor said the views and experiences of figures have been used in working out the "comprehensive plan" to "to improve the situation in the country".

These plans have different applications both for people and political parties and if he wins the election they can be used, said Rahami, the director of the International Peace Foundation.

In addition, Rahami added, these plans can be presented to anybody who emerges



winner in the elections in he wishes.

These plans as "basic studies", which have been prepared by the International Peace Foundation for the progress of the country, "can be used in the country in the future".

Rahami served as representative in the first and second parliament after the victory of the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Prior to the announcement by Rahami, former defense minister Hossein Dehqan

had announced his decision to run for the presidential post which will be held on June 18.

Dehqan was defense minister in Hassan Rouhani's first administration. He now acts as military advisor to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution.

===== "We should wait to see who is confirmed to run"

Gholam-Hossein Karbaschi, the secretary general of the Servants of the Construction Party, also told IRNA on Sunday that his party favors the candidacy of Mohsen Hashemi but first they should wait to see who is confirmed by the Guardian Council to run for the position.

The competence of candidates for president, parliament, the Assembly of Experts and city council should be first confirmed by the oversight Guardian Council.

"It is logical to wait and see who are confirmed because" his party intends to reach an agreement with other reformist parties

through a consensus, remarked Karbaschi, the former mayor of Tehran.

"We don't intend to impose our candidates on the reform front."

"If after confirmation of competence... and groups agree on Mohsen Hashemi then a decision will be taken about him with other reformists."

Of course, he added, it depends whether Mohsen Hashemi would announce his decision and register to run in the election.

"If Mohsen Hashemi is confirmed... he will be supported."

Karbaschi described Mohsen Hashemi, the current chairman of the Tehran City Council, a "capable and active" person with a pragmatic record.

In remarks on Sunday, Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli also said presidential elections should be held in a "sound and healthy" way with a high voter turnout.

Iran, Russia working on strategic deal

Foreign Ministry spokesman tells Tehran Times: Iran and Russia have placed long-term cooperation on agenda

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iran and Russian authorities have begun working on drafting a new long-term cooperation document that would replace a decades-long treaty between the two countries, the Tehran Times can reveal. Tehran and Moscow already have a treaty that is set to expire nearly a year from now. The treaty in question was signed in Moscow between Iran and Russia on March 12, 2001. The treaty, officially known as the Treaty of the Foundation of Mutual Relations and the Principles of Cooperation between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Russian Federation Act, was initially signed for a period of 10 years. But it was extended twice.

According to the terms of the treaty, if neither party notifies the other party in black and white of its intention to terminate the treaty at least one year before its expiration, it will be automatically extended for a further period of five years. Accordingly, the treaty has so far been extended twice.

With the treaty nearing its expiration date, Iran and Russia have begun discussing ways to update it and draft new documents to boost Tehran-Moscow relations, according to Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh.

The spokesman said that the treaty is valid until March 2022.

"Given the developments in relations between the two countries in recent years, officials of the two countries emphasize the need to update existing documents and draft new documents to develop co-



operation," the Spokesman told the Tehran Times. "To this end, the drafting of a comprehensive document on long-term cooperation has been placed on the agenda of the two countries."

Khatibzadeh said that such a document requires measures and brainstorming inside Iran and Russia in the first place.

"This [document] initially requires measures within the two countries to prepare a draft document with the brainstorming and conclusion of the views of the relevant ministries and organizations. And then the two countries should negotiate to finalize it after exchanging views,"

Khatibzadeh said.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif underlined the need to upgrade the Treaty and raise the Iran-Russia cooperation to a strategic level.

On July 21, Zarif paid a visit to Moscow to hold talks over a range of issues including the need to extend the Treaty. The Iranian foreign minister said at the time that this Treaty was no longer compatible with the current status of relations between Russia and Iran and that it needs to be extended and upgraded.

"This Treaty belongs to another period of international relations and our relations

with Russia. We have agreed with Putin to review the treaty," Zarif said at the end of his July visit to Moscow, adding that he held talks with the Russian officials for more than 4 hours, including an hour-long phone conversation with Russian President Vladimir Putin, which Zarif himself described as "very fruitful."

The chief Iranian diplomat added, "Of course, when the expiration date arrives, the treaty will be extended provided that no party opposes the extension. However, we think it's better to upgrade the treaty and draft a long-term comprehensive strategic agreement, which should be signed eventually and then submitted to the Parliament."

Zarif once again reiterated the need to upgrade the treaty in early August when Leonid Slutsky, chairman of the International Affairs Committee of Russia's State Duma, paid a visit to Tehran.

During a meeting with Slutsky, Zarif described Tehran-Moscow ties as strategic and said that Iran and Russia should update the long-term cooperation treaty to a strategic level.

Following Zarif's visit to Moscow in July, Kazem Jalali, Iran's ambassador to Russia, stated that Iran and Russia are determined to reach a deal for long-term comprehensive cooperation.

"The two countries' top officials have announced their agreement to extend and update the deal. Given the prospect of cooperation, they are determined to sign a long-term deal for comprehensive cooperation," the ambassador said in a tweet.

Biden pursuing Trump's failed policy, Zarif says

"All the sanctions must be removed; the United States must gain reentry to JCPOA. It's not automatic; it's not a revolving door," Zarif underlines.

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said the new U.S. administration of Joe Biden is pursuing the same old failed policy of the Trump administration.

In a Sunday interview with Press TV's Marzieh Hashemi, the chief Iranian diplomat said U.S. President Joe Biden has spurned predecessor Donald Trump's Iran policy in words, but has so far pursued the same course of action in practice.

"Nothing has changed. Biden claims that Trump's policy of maximum pressure was maximum failure... But for all practical purposes, they are pursuing the same policy," he pointed out.

Zarif said the Islamic Republic will be open to negotiations on reviving the historic 2015 nuclear accord — formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) — once all signatories begin fulfilling their obligations.

Underlining the need for the U.S. to take the first step by removing the unlawful bans in a verifiable manner, the foreign minister reiterated that Washington would not be able to return to the JCPOA unless it removed the sanctions.

"All the sanctions must be removed; the United States

must gain reentry to JCPOA. It's not automatic; it's not a revolving door," Zarif underlined.

He added that pressure does not work with Iran.

"The U.S. is addicted to sanctions, bullying, and pressure. But it doesn't work for a country with millennia of history. We have had a global empire that lasted longer than the United States' history," Zarif said, adding, "Therefore, with Iran pressure does not work, and 'maximum pressure,' in their own words, has led to 'maximum failure.'"

The Americans, he said, have to "open their eyes, make a sober assessment of the past, not only with Trump, and realize that with this country only respect works."

Zarif said that the United States has not gained any leverage against Iran through its unlawful sanctions, adding that on the contrary, the restrictive measures have only helped Iran diversify its economy away from oil.

"Trump left the [nuclear] agreement hoping that Iran's government would crumble. Now, he's gone, and we're still here," he said. "I think that's a good lesson. Seven consecutive U.S. presidents are gone. Every one of them wanted to get us out. All of them are out. We're still here."

The top diplomat reminded that Paragraph 36 of the JCPOA enables Iran to take "remedial action" against

failure by other sides to implement their obligations.

The Islamic Republic, he added, was not violating the agreement, it was simply implementing the remedial steps that it is entitled to in line with the pact.

He referred to a parliamentary law that obligates the Iranian government to take the latest step in its retaliation, namely the planned suspension of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)'s short-notice visits of the country's nuclear program. The law, he said, was not a "warning to the world," but a "domestic" interaction between the government and the legislative body that holds the government responsible.

Zarif dismissed any assertion on the part of the U.S. or its European allies in the JCPOA that "we signed a number of instructions" as per the international agreement.

"It's not just signing, it's the impact," Zarif said, noting how the U.S. allies failed to implement even a single one of their obligations following Washington's unilateral withdrawal from the agreement.

"European companies listen to Washington more than they listen to them (European governments). I believe they do have the ability to change the behavior of their companies," he added, regretting the submissive nature of Europe's behavior towards Washington.

IAEA chief holds talks in Tehran

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency Rafael Grossi held talks with Iranian officials to discuss the latest issues related to the cooperation between Iran and the UN body.

Grossi, who had requested to visit Iran ahead of the cessation of the implementation of the Additional Protocol to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), arrived in Iran on Saturday night. He met with Ali Akbar Salehi, head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), on Sunday.

The AEOI said in a statement on Sunday that the UN nuclear watchdog chief held negotiations with Iranian officials on coordinating the simultaneous implementation of the Iranian nuclear law adopted in December and the Agency's safeguards activities.

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.

Iran will implement the nuclear law which obligates the government to halt implementing the Additional Protocol on February 23, Kazem Gharibabadi, Iran's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to international organizations in Vienna, said on February 15.

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

Grossi requested a visit to Iran immediately after the country announced that it will implement the law.

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.

Grossi expressed hope that he will find an agreeable solution that will ensure the continuation of cooperation between Iran and the IAEA.

"Tomorrow I travel to Tehran to meet with senior Iranian officials to find a mutually agreeable solution, compatible with Iranian law, so that the IAEA can continue essential verification activities in Iran," Grossi said in a tweet on Friday evening. "Looking forward to success — this is in everybody's interest," he continued.

Iran has repeatedly said that it wants the U.S. to lift sanctions. Tehran has made it clear that if Washington wants Iran to fully implement the JCPOA, then it must lift all the sanctions the Trump administration slapped on Iran.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Friday that the U.S. should

near the desert town of Dimona, the newspaper continued. Pundits believe that the construction work has begun in early 2019.

"It appears that the construction started quite early in 2019, or late 2018, so it's been under way for about two years, but that's all we can say at this point," Pavel Podvig, a researcher with the program on science and global security at Princeton University, said.

The Israeli embassy in Washington refused to comment on the new images. Israel has a policy of deliberate ambiguity on its nuclear arsenal, neither confirming nor denying its existence. But pundits believe that the Israeli regime does possess weapons of mass destruction. Israel also refuses to cooperate with the international community on its nuclear program.

S P O R T S

Iranian sprinter Taftian wins gold at French championships

S P O R T S d e s k **TEHRAN** — Hassan Taftian claimed a gold medal at the French championships held in Miramas Saturday night.

The Iranian sprinter finished in the first place in the 60 meters event with a time of 6.62 seconds.

French sprinters Mouhamadou Fall (6.64) and Amaury Golitin (6.64) won silver and bronze medals, respectively.

Taftian, fastest Iranian man, won a quota place for the Tokyo Olympics in the men's 100-meter by hitting the national record of 10.03 at the IAAF Diamond League meeting in Paris in August 2019.



Serbian water polo coach Ciric returns to Iran

S P O R T S d e s k **TEHRAN** —Iran national water polo team Aleksandar Ciric returned to Iran on Sunday.

The three-time Olympic medal winner, who had been named as Iran coach in 2015, had left Iran months ago due to coronavirus fears.

The Serbian coach has returned to Iran to prepare the team for the 2022 Asian Games.

The Games will be held between September 10 and 25 in Hangzhou, China.

Ciric has played for two Olympic bronze medal squads, one for FR Yugoslavia at the 2000 Summer Olympics in Sydney, the other for Serbia at the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing and one silver medal squad for Serbia and Montenegro at the 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens.

Rasoul Khatibi named Tractor coach

S P O R T S d e s k **TEHRAN** — Rasoul Khatibi was named as new head coach of Tractor football team on Saturday.

The 42-year-old coach left Aluminum Arak by mutual consent to take charge of his former club.

Khatibi started his footballing career in 1996 and also headed the team in 2014-15.

He replaced Masoud Shojaei, who was appointed as Tractor interim coach after Alireza Mansourian's dismissal, in the Tabriz based football club.

No contract's details have been revealed.

Tractor are one of four teams representing Iran in the 2021 AFC Champions League.

Dariush Yazdi appointed as Naft Masjed Soleyman coach

S P O R T S d e s k **TEHRAN** — Dariush Yazdi was appointed as Naft Masjed Solyman football team new head coach on Sunday.

The former Esteghlal Ahvaz coach will lead the Iranian top-flight football team for the rest of the season.

Yazdi replaced Mojtaba Hosseini at Naft Masjed Soleyman. Hosseini canceled his contract with Naft Masjed Soleyman after the Iranian club failed to meet their financial commitment.

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 Kamalvand were also shortlisted to take charge of Naft Masjed Soleyman but Yazdi was named as new head coach.

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

Iran to hold training camp in late March

S P O R T S d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iran national football team will hold training camp in late March in Tehran.

The camp will be held as part of preparation for the 2022 World Cup qualifiers.

The Iranian football federation is also going to arrange a friendly match during the camp.

According to AFC's decision, the Qualifiers have been postponed to June.

Iran are scheduled to play Hong Kong and Cambodia on June 3 and 7.

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

Due to the coronavirus concerns, the remaining matches will be held at the centralized venue and Iran submitted its request to host the four remaining qualifiers.

Dragan Skocic's team sit third in Group C behind Iraq and Bahrain.

Pas Gorgan win promotion to Iran Volleyball Super League

S P O R T S d e s k **TEHRAN** — Pas Gorgan volleyball team won promotion to Iran Volleyball Super League.

Pas advanced to the Iran Volleyball Super League after advancing to the First Division Volleyball League on Sunday.

Pas defeated Iranshid Chalous 3-2 and qualified for the final match.

The Iranian Super League (ISL) is a professional volleyball league in Iran at the top of the Iranian volleyball league system.

It was founded in 1975 as the Pasargard Cup, but after the Iranian Revolution it was renamed to the first Division. In 1997 the league system was revamped and the Iranian Super League was established. Paykan Tehran have won the most titles in the new Super League with 12 titles.

Zarif raps Western hypocrisy over Israeli nuclear bomb factory

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has criticized several Western leaders and the UN nuclear watchdog over their silence on Israeli nuclear activities.

Zarif mentioned U.S. President Joe Biden, French President Emanuel Macron, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and the International Atomic Energy Agency.

"Israel is expanding Dimona, the region's only nuclear bomb factory. @POTUS @iaeaorg @BorisJohnson @EmmanuelMacron Angela Merkel. Gravely concerned? Concerned? A little? Care to comment? I thought so," the Iranian chief diplomat said in a tweet Saturday.

The tweet came after Western news organizations reported

that Israel is expanding its Dimona nuclear plant, where Israel has made material for nuclear bombs.

"Israel is carrying out a major expansion of its Dimona nuclear facility in the Negev desert, where it has historically made the fissile material for its nuclear arsenal," The Guardian reported, citing Satellite images that show significant expansion of the desert site over the past few years.

According to the British newspaper, construction work is evident in new satellite images published on Thursday by the International Panel on Fissile Material (IPFM), an independent expert group.

The area being worked on is a few hundred meters across to the south and west of the domed reactor and reprocessing point at the Shimon Peres Negev Nuclear Research Center,

Commodities worth nearly \$443m traded at IME in a week

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — During the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday), 718,966 tons of commodities with a total value of nearly \$443 million were traded at Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME).

According to a report by the IME's International Affairs and Public Relations Department, the exchange traded on its mineral and industrial trading floor 396,872 tons of commodities worth nearly \$272 million.

On this floor, the IME sold 377,074 tons of steel, 9,200 tons of copper, 7,280 tons of aluminum, 150 tons of molybdenum concentrate, 18 tons of precious metals concentrate, 60 tons of lead, 3,000 tons of zinc and 24 kg of gold bars.



Next trading floor was the oil and petrochemical with 415,410 tons of commodities sold on its both domestic and export pits valued at nearly \$170 million.

Commodities purchased on this floor included 64,300 tons of vacuum bottom, 91,597 tons of bitumen, 85,334 tons of polymeric products, 39,033 tons of chemicals, 26,500 tons of lube cut, 3,795 tons of base oil, 30 tons of argon, 350 tons of insulation and 6,500 tons of sulfur.

Moreover, the IME saw trade of 5,884 tons of various types of commodities on its side market.

IME is one of the four major stock markets of Iran, the other three markets are Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market known also as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), and Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX).

In last April, IME Managing Director Hamed Soltani-Nejad unveiled the market's new outlook plan, which depicts IME's development roadmap until the Iranian calendar year of 1404 (March 20205-March 2026). Materializing the slogan of this Iranian year, which is "Surge in Production" is seriously considered in the mentioned plan and it is, in fact, the strategic approach of the outlook plan.

31 production units put into operation in Maku FTZ since last March

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — As announced by an official with Maku Free Trade Zone Organization, 31 production units have been put into operation in the industrial and mining sectors of the Maku FTZ, in Iran's northwestern province of West Azarbaijan, since the beginning of current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2020).

Arash Yousefzadeh, the production facilitation director of the organization, also said that in this way one unit has been inaugurated each week on average since the year start.

As announced by another official with the mentioned organization, 120 industrial units are active in Maku Free Trade Zone.

Ebrahim Jalili, the deputy head of Maku Free Trade Zone Organization for investment and economic affairs, said that enjoying this number of units, the zone has become one of the most active regions in terms of production and industry in the northwest of the country.



Maku is one of the seven major free zones of Iran. It has 140 kilometers of border with Azerbaijan Republic and 130 kilometers of border with Turkey.

As Maku is among the most newly-established and also the largest free zones of the country, there is a high need for the creation of infrastructures in this zone.

The establishment of free trade zones in Iran dates back to the Iranian calendar year 1368 (March 1989- March 1990) following the fall in the country's oil income in the preceding year which prompted the government to promote non-oil exports.

The first two free trade zones of Iran were established in the south of the country. The first one was Kish Free Trade Zone established in 1368 on Kish Island in the Persian Gulf and the second one was Qeshm Free Trade Zone established the year after on Qeshm Island in the Strait of Hormuz.

Some five other free trade zones have been also established in the country since then, including Chabahar in southeastern Sistan-Baluchestan Province, Arvand in southwestern Khuzestan Province, Anzali in northern Gilan Province, Aras in East-Azarbaijan Province and Maku in West-Azarbaijan Province, both in the northwest of the country.

Considering the important role that the free zones play in promoting the country's export and employment, Iran is seriously pursuing the development of its existing zones and the establishment of new zones as well.

More development measures in this field have been taking since the U.S. re-imposition of sanctions on the Iranian economy in November 2018, as Iran is reducing its dependence on the oil income while elevating its domestic production and non-oil exports.

Although the sanctions have disrupted Iran's economic activities, they could not impede the development of Iranian free zones; in fact, the development of these zones has been even accelerated.

Many strides made for increasing activities in the free zones have played a significant part in boosting the country's non-oil exports and brought prosperity in the other economic sectors.

Majlis sets NDF share of oil incomes in budget bill at 38%

1 → Last week, the parliament approved the amendments of the national budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year. The amendments were approved during an open session of the parliament with 211 votes in favor, 28 votes against, and six abstentions.

The parliament had earlier rejected the outlines of the budget bill, which was submitted to Majlis by the Vice President for Parliamentary Affairs Hossein-Ali Amiri on December 2, 2020.

In the reformed budget bill, the government had reduced the NDF share of the oil revenues and increased the ceiling of the incomes from publishing treasury bonds by 530 trillion rials (about \$12.6 billion), according to Mojgan Khanlou, spokeswoman of the Parliament Budget Committee.

Also, the government proposed to reduce its expenses by 400 trillion rials (about \$9.5 billion) to prevent the need for increasing tax incomes, Khanlou said.

"The most important factor in the amendment was the discussion of the subsidized foreign currency and the amount of oil revenues;



The oil revenues in the amended bill were not changed, and the subsidized foreign currency

would still be allocated for essential goods like medicine and crops" she noted.

Iran plans to build 100-seat passenger plane

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Head of Iran's Civil Aviation Organization (CAO) Touraj Dehqani Zanganeh has said the country is planning to establish the production line for a 100-seat commercial passenger plane, Iran's Civil Aviation Network News reported.

The mentioned production line will be established by CAO in collaboration with the Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics, according to Dehqani.

"We have planned to build 70- and 100-seat aircrafts inside the country, and [in this regard] we signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Ministry of Defense to be able to use the country's existing military capabilities for the construction of commercial aircrafts," the official explained.

According to Dehqani Zanganeh, the mentioned MOU has been in fact a trilateral document signed among the Transport and Urban Development Ministry, the CAO, and the Defense Ministry for cooperation in the manufacturing of commercial aircrafts.

Another MOU will also be signed between the CAO and the country's Advanced Aviation and Transportation Tech-

nology Development Headquarters in order to allow the two sides' to use each other's capabilities and capacities for realizing the construction of the airplanes, the official said.

Stating that the project for the production of the mentioned 100-seat aircraft is at the primary studies stage, the official said: "I recently visited the production center of these aircraft; significant progress has been achieved."

"There are a lot of knowledge-based companies established in the country that have great potentials; Mapna, and another company are currently building gas turbines, and we are helping them to build aircraft engines," he further said.

Dehqani Zanganeh further noted that CAO is also pursuing a project for manufacturing flight simulators inside the country which would be constructed and installed in southern Kish Island.

Having the oldest airline in West Asia and second oldest in Asia, Iran started developing its aviation industry nearly 80 years ago and this industry is still improving in the country, however, despite its long history civil aviation industry in Iran has not been developed at a desirable pace.

After the re-imposition of the U.S. sanctions, most of



the western companies like Boeing and Airbus which had signed deals with the Islamic Republic for providing the country with new planes left their contracts and so like many other areas, the Iranian aviation industry is taking serious measures to cut reliance on foreign sources to meet its needs.

Khesht oilfield to reach early production by late Sep.

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Managing director of Iranian Central Oil Fields Company (ICOFC) has said that early production from Khesht oilfield in central Fars Province will be realized in the first half of the next Iranian calendar year (March 21-September 22), Shana reported.

According to Ramin Hatami, the field's development project will be completed by the end of the next year (March 2022) when its daily production will reach 20,000 barrels.

"The early phase of the field will be operational in the first half of next year with the



launch of three wells, and the produced oil will be sent to Nargesi Center via a 10-inch pipeline," Hatami said.

When fully developed, the field will have five operational wells, the official said.

Khesht oil field is being developed by South Zagros Oil and Gas Production Company, which is a subsidiary of National Iranian Central Oil Company.

Earlier this year, the Head of the Iranian Parliament's Energy Committee Fereydoun Abbasi visited Khesht oilfield's development project to monitor the project's development.

Speaking on the sidelines of this visit, Abbasi put the project's physical progress at 90 percent and said that the development of this field will have a positive impact on the

improvement of the adjacent urban areas.

According to the official, after the completion of the mentioned oilfield's development, a small-scale petro-refinery is planned to be constructed in the region for using the produced oil as feedstock.

Established in 1999, ICOFC is one of the five major subsidiaries of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC).

The company is responsible for the production of gas and oil from 76 reservoirs in central Iran including 45 gas fields and 31 oilfields; among which, 14 gas fields and 13 oilfields are currently in operation.

'Stock market to reach stability in near future'

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iranian stock market is moving in the right direction and will reach stability in the near future, market analyst Amir-Ali Amir-Baqeri told IRNA on Saturday.

"Market authorities are currently using asymmetric fluctuations to improve the market situation, but we must move in a direction where there is no volatility in the market," Amir-Baqeri said.

Criticizing the government's interference in the capital market, Baqeri said the more the market moves away from ordained pricing, and government-set rules and regulations, toward a free market in which the pricing is set through supply and demand, the more realistic and competitive the economy will become in the mid and long term.

The expert noted that political factors including the U.S. sanctions and their impact on the domestic markets which led to the increase of inflation in the country led people to bring their assets into the stock market, and that caused a significant surge in the mentioned market.

However, several external factors, including the disputes between the oil and economy ministries over the offering of the second ETF (dubbed First Refinery, or Dara Second), increase in interest rates, and the ambiguities in the next year's national budget bill resulted in a recession in the stock market.

According to Amir-Baqeri, the changing political atmosphere in the United States and the world, and also Iran's economic resilience against the U.S. sanctions also impacted



the market.

Consequently, Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE)'s main index (TEDPIX) which had surpassed two million points in early August 2020, suddenly started a downward trend in late August and has since slumped about 38 percent.

To support the market, the government has started passing new regulations and guidelines and has injected millions of dollars of resources into the market; however, these measures have been proven counterproductive, according to the expert.

The market is correcting itself and will reach stability in near future if the government stops interfering in it, Amir-Baqeri stressed.

Back in January, Finance and Economic Affairs Minister

Farhad Dejpasand had said that the stock market is on the right track and has reached a stage that can be trusted in terms of performance.

"Except for the peripheral variables that affect this market, we do not have a specific disturbance in the market", the minister stated, adding: "sometimes the policies that are made in different sectors affect the market, which is natural."

The vice-chairman of TSE's board of directors had also said in December 2020 that the stock market is expected to spend the last months of the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20) calmly.

Mentioning investigation of the periodical (six-month and nine-month) reports of the companies' performance, Javad Eshqi-Nejad said that given the foreign currency exchange rate situation and the appropriate sales volume, in this period, almost the expectations of listed companies have been met and positive results have been provided for the capital market.

Regarding the continuation of the stock market trend in the next three months, he said: "In this regard, the main issue is political relations and international behavior; we seem to be achieving good results in the international arena."

While predicting that the stock market will be calm in the last months of this year, he said: "But for the next year, according to the budget, we may face new events whose analysis can have special effects on various industries; in a way that these effects may be associated with some industries for the next 2-3 years."

TEDPIX slides 10,000 points on Sunday

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.

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

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



Why there is no news of extending 20-year agreement between Iran and Russia

By Mohammad Hadi Shamkhani

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif confirmed in August that Iran is willing to extend the 20-year agreement with Russia.

The 20-year agreement ends in March in 2021.

"The agreement's extension is on our agenda and can be considered if the Russian friends are ready to have another long-term contract; but agreement's extension is definitely on our agenda," Zarif told reporters when asked whether Iran renews the agreement.

The top Iranian diplomat did not comment on the message he was delivering on behalf of President Hassan Rouhani to Russian President Vladimir Putin, saying, "If it were to be broadcast on television, it would be said in Tehran."

This development, in the absence of details of Rouhani's message to Putin, raised questions, including whether Iran is reviewing its relationship with Russia.

After a 25-year agreement between Iran and China, which has been accompanied by a lot of media coverage and debate, and according to the declared desire of Iran to extend the comprehensive cooperation agreement with Russia, it seems that Iran has adopted a new strategy to develop its relations and cooperation following existing challenges with Europe.

But there are a few things to keep in mind about a possible non-extension of the agreement between Iran and Russia.

1. The reason behind Putin's reluctance to not receive Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf and what was Qalibaf's message?

Will Putin's reluctance to receive Qalibaf indicate Russia's disinclination in the field of strategic relations or the extension of the cooperation document?

No one has an answer to this question yet. But the problem is that the Russians' unwillingness to deal with Iran is not unreasonable, especially if the speaker of the Iranian parliament carries a message to Putin instead of the head of the country's diplomatic apparatus. Putin's hesitation to meet with Qalibaf is questionable, and it is not unlikely that the reason is hidden in the nature or quality of Iran-Russia bilateral relations.

2. Have the United States or Russia set a precondition for Iran regarding the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action or subsequent talks?

The agreement was also opposed at the time (at the time of signing) and provoked a reaction from the Americans. "Some may like this agreement and some may not. Our countries will work for our interests," said General Leonid Ivashov, a senior Russian Defense Ministry official at the time.

The agreement at the time was also a signal to the U.S. administration of George W. Bush that Iran and Russia intend to further limit U.S. influence in the region.

"We are particularly concerned about the sale of advanced conventional weapons or sensitive technologies, such as nuclear technology," said Richard Butcher, a State Department spokesman at the time.

Naturally, extending this treaty or changing it into a comprehensive long-term strategic agreement will again provoke a negative reaction from the United States. Because such a reaction was made in response to the planned 25-year document of cooperation between Iran and China. Basically, the United States seeks political and economic isolation of Iran. Therefore, Iran's cooperation with any country is viewed as a violation of Washington's Iran policy. The White House has sought to weaken Iran's economy over the past few years by pursuing a policy of "maximum pressure." For this reason, any loophole to get out of this situation will undermine U.S. policy of pressure.

In order to secure its interests and to state that its options are not limited, Iran has sought bilateral agreements with important countries in order to improve its economic situation in the future in addition to circumventing sanctions. China, as the world's economic power, has been a serious option for Iran for long-term cooperation, and according to Iran's foreign minister Tehran and Beijing are close to the long-term agreement. Russia, as another world power, is on the agenda of the next long-term agreement, and naturally will not be the last country in this regard.

Since these measures by Iran will thwart U.S. efforts to undermine Tehran, any future agreement between Iran and Russia or any other country will come under attack by media outlets.

In such cases, the countries behind the Iranian sanctions will become more Catholic than Pope and pretend to defend Iran's national interests! Because such agreements, in addition to paving the way for Iran, are not good news for an international order pursued by the U.S. They will reduce American political and economic influence exponentially.

The issue of the JCPOA and the Iran-U.S. talks have always been raised in the form of Iran-5+1 dialogue, but this time apparently Trump's U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA, has pushed the Iranian and American sides towards the need for bilateral and not multilateral talks.

The issue of the JCPOA and Iran-U.S. talks, although has always been raised in the form of Iran-5+1 talks, this time, because of Donald Trump's withdrawal from the JCPOA, has



pushed the Iranian and American sides towards the need for bilateral and not multilateral talks.

Now that Democrats have won the elections in the U.S., the relations between Washington and Moscow are expected to worsen as the White House will probably add human rights pressures to U.S. sanctions on the Kremlin; so the assumption that the U.S. will exert pressure on Iran not to renew its strategic agreement with the Russians is not far from mind.

Given the growing need for Iran-U.S. talks to break the JCPOA deadlock, will Washington this time try to declare preconditions such as limiting Iran-Russia strategic relations as a hidden and undeclared precondition for negotiation or lifting sanctions?

The Iran-Russia-China strategic agreement, especially the projected 25-year strategic agreement with China, has always been considered as an exit route for Iran to evade U.S. sanctions. And given that Iran has used agreements with Russia and China as a leverage to persuade the United States to return to the JCPOA commitments, a delay in extending the agreement between Iran and Russia have led some analysts to speculate whether the United States has a hidden precondition for lifting sanctions.

In other words, according to the American logic, Iran is not supposed to benefit from the fruit of the JCPOA and the lifting of sanctions, as well as strategic relations with Russia and China.

3. Has this left the 20-year Iran-Russia agreement frozen? The essence of Iran-Russia relations is regulated by a thermometer of tension with the United States, not the interests of both sides.

This is especially important when we know that Iran and Russia usually define their relationship in terms of confronting the United States, not just mutual interests. Some analysts, like Professor Hassan Beheshtipour, believe that "Iran-Russia relations have always been dependent on Russia's relations with the United States."

4. The mood of the 20-year agreement between Iran and Russia has never been favorable.

When Mr. Putin visited Tehran during the first Ahmadinejad government, various promises were made under the agreement. The promises envisaged a 40 billion dollars tradeoff. But now we see the transactions stands at two billion dollars maximally. This in itself can be an incentive for the contract not to be extended and the unwillingness of both parties to renew the agreement.

"Naturally, U.S. sanctions are very effective because Russian companies are either under pressure from U.S. sanctions themselves or are subject to sanctions if they want to cooperate with Iran," said Beheshtipour. "That is why it was argued that exchanges between Iran and Russia should be done in rubles and rials. In the meantime, banks should create the ruble-based credit for Iranian businessmen and rial-based credit for Russian businessmen so that dollar is excluded from the exchanges between the two countries, but such a thing has not been achieved at all."

The Iranian expert also noted, "It was recently announced that some Russian banks could conduct economic exchanges in rubles and rials. Well, if that happens, one of the obstacles to the development of Iran-Russia cooperation will be removed. The next issue is insurance. Insurance is one of the important issues that if Iranian goods are exported to Russia or Eurasia, they must be insured and the insurance companies that are agreed upon by the two countries should be able to start their activities in this field, which unfortunately are still at the beginning of the road."

Beheshtipour stressed, "The next issue is that Iran has made some progress in the Eurasian tariff system. Russia means Russia and Kazakhstan and Belarus and Armenia. Russia has set certain standards for its own imported goods that Iran must observe in order for its goods to be exported."

"Although this obstacle has become less important than the past, Russia has still set a series of specific standards for imported goods, which make it difficult for Iran to implement those standards, and this obstacle still stands in the way of cooperation between the two countries," the analyst highlighted.

The Iranian professor stated, "Over the past few years, Mr. Putin has personally sought to resolve the problems between Iran and Russia, but at the banking, insurance, and oil

investment fields, there have been little cooperation due to the fear of sanctions and disruptions by the Americans. I do not know what Mr. Zarif means by the 20-year cooperation, but before that the agreement was for a period of ten years with a value 40 billion dollars. I do not know how they want to increase these exchanges and cooperation, because I think the increase in exchanges between the two countries is a gradual process."

5. What does the content of the 20-year Iran-Russia agreement say about extension?

The agreement, titled "Treaty on the Basis for Mutual Relations and the Principles of Cooperation between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Russian Federation", was signed in March 12, 2001 in Moscow at the presence of the presidents of the two countries.

The term of this agreement, which has been approved by the parliaments of the two countries, is originally 10 years, but after the end of the term, it has been extended twice for 5 years each.

Article 21 of the treaty states: "This treaty shall be concluded for a period of ten years, and unless either party notifies the other party in writing of its intention to terminate the treaty at least one year before its expiry, it shall automatically be extended for the next five years. This treaty was drafted in Moscow on March 12, 2001 in two versions in Persian and Russian, each of which has the same text."

"This treaty contains an introduction and twenty-one articles. Article 6 of the treaty mentions and specifies cooperation between the two countries in the field of energy, including nuclear energy, and the parties will assist in the development of their long-term and mutually beneficial relations in order to pursue joint projects in the fields of transport, energy, including the peaceful use of nuclear energy, the construction of nuclear power plants, industry, science, technology, agriculture and public health."

Other sections also mention cooperation between the two countries in various fields of economy, energy, transportation, politics and security.

The treaty marked a diplomatic breakthrough in the meeting of the two countries' presidents, which was almost the first meeting at that level in 40 years.

According to Article 21 of the treaty, if Iran or Russia did not intend to publically terminate the treaty one year before its expiration, it will be automatically extended.

Considering all the aforementioned issues and speculations, it is obvious that the extension or non-extension of the Iran-Russia agreement is affected by various variables at bilateral and international levels: from the U.S. plan to limit Iran's relations with Russia as a precondition for lifting sanctions, to the Russians' perception of the inefficiency or poor performance of the agreement and that the costs outweigh the benefits.

U.S. base in northern Iraq targeted with several rockets

Several rockets have hit a U.S. military base in Iraq's northern province of Salahuddin.

Three suspected Katyusha rockets slammed the Iraqi airbase of Balad, which is currently home to U.S. forces, in the southern parts of Salahuddin and north of the capital Baghdad on Saturday evening, the al-Mayadeen television news network reported.

One Iraqi contractor sustained injuries in the blasts. Reuters cited unnamed Iraqi security officials as saying.

However, Iraq's Arabic-language al-Sumaria television network raised the number of "Katyusha rockets" to four, adding that the blasts inflicted almost "no material damage."

It was the second salvo of rockets to hit a base hosting U.S. forces or contractors in Iraq in less than a week.

Anti-U.S. sentiment has been running high in Iraq following Washington's assassination of top Iranian anti-terror commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani and senior Hashd al-Sha'abi commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis outside the Baghdad airport in January 2020.

Two days after the cowardly act of terror, Iraqi lawmakers unanimously passed a bill mandating the withdrawal of all foreign troops.

Resistance News

Haneyya lists four principles to confront normalization

INTERNATIONAL DESK **TEHRAN** — Ismail Haneyya, Hamas's leader, listed four principles championed by his Movement to confront normalization with Israel.

Haneyya was addressing the General Arab Conference, which was held on Saturday evening under the slogan of "United against Normalization" via the Zoom platform with the participation of Islamic, national and Palestinian factions.

In his speech, which was published on the Movement's official website, Haneyya explained that the four principles are: resistance, approving a political program outside the framework of the Oslo Agreement, restoration of Palestinian national unity and strengthening partnership with the nation's components."

Regarding normalization with Israel, he said that it revealed the extent of the "Zionist infiltration" in the Arab region. "But at the same time, it revealed the absolute rejection of the Arab masses of normalization and any relationship with Israel", he added.

Haneyya stressed that Hamas will persist with its resistance project until ending the occupation and liberating the Palestinian land and will reject any settlement that infringes on the rights of the Palestinian people.

First Announcement



Khouzestan Steel Company

Announcement of the contractors' qualification for Khouzestan steel company new wagon unloading system (tippler No. 3) by EPC contract

Khouzestan Steel Company (KSC), intends to increase the capacity of its wagon unloading system by implementing an EPC contract for a new wagon tippler No. 3

Wagon tippler No. 3 must be able to unload all types of wagons with weight of 90 tons of load and a total weight of 120 tons.

Companies interested in taking part the tender, having the following qualifications, can declare their readiness:

1. Sufficient Technological Knowledge and experience in similar projects.
2. The ability of financing and implementing the project by EPCF approach is preferred.
3. The equipment must be supplied from European Companies in Europe or other country under their license with European Union Countries Standards.

The interested companies shall send the following documents to KSC by the date: 10th March 2021.

1. Company Profile and Catalogues
2. Company references of similar projects. (Name, Location, Scope, Capacity and Contract Price)
3. The list of projects with frame of financing (if any).

After receiving the documents and evaluating the companies' competency, KSC will send the tender documents to the selected contractors.

Address: IRAN, Ahwaz, Khouzestan province, Khouzestan Steel Company, Post Box: 1378, Post Code: 61778-1311, Mr. Seyyed Hasan Hosseini contracts department manager.

Contact: Mr. Jamshid Sayyadi project manager - Tel: 0098 61 32908222 - Email: j.sayyadi@ksc.ir

Public Relations of Khouzestan Steel Company

Idea of nuclear-weapon-free zones is unlikely: Russian expert

1 → Meanwhile, the U.S. administration put the maximum pressure on Iran to hinder its peaceful nuclear program.

Trump pursued the policy of crippling sanctions on Iran under the pretext that Iran is seeking to get access to nuclear weapons.

The UN nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, has repeatedly verified the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program.

However, the new American administration under Biden's presidency is moving too slowly to rejoin the nuclear pact despite the fact that he had pledged to revive the pact during his election campaigns.

This policy may have multiple causes and motives.

"Biden said he won't lift sanctions

soon. But after a while such possibility exists, especially if the new administration tries to make Saudis feel they owe Americans," the Russian expert argues.

Saudi Arabia has maintained its hostile position regarding Iran. The Saudi Kingdom is notably concerned about the growing influence of Iran in West Asia. The kingdom is also envious of Iran's technological progress, including in the nuclear technology.

Asked about the role of Moscow in the struggle between Iran and the U.S., Mitrakhovich believes that Moscow will definitely try to play the role of a mediator.

"This role will support the Russian anti-sanction narrative. But Moscow will also remember Iran's position as a competitor in oil and gas market."

But the Biden administration may

prefer not to focus on Iran and forgive other challenges in Asia. Russia and China are superpowers which are dangerous rivals for American hegemony in terms of military and economic power.

"Biden's administration will be full of people who are afraid to oppose China as a strategic competitor so they will choose Russia as a demonized adversary — both on the level of real politics and value discourses," Mitrakhovich emphasizes. "But as for strategic issues like nuclear weapons or space enforced dialogue will continue."

Overall, Biden's presidency will be a continuation of Obama's policy both internally (affirmative actions, 'positive discrimination', etc.) and externally ('talk of peace' with some regional wars like a war on Libya).

Restoration work begins on Seymareh archaeological site

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN**— A restoration work has commenced on Seymareh archaeological site, which is also an open-air museum over the ruins of the ancient city in Ilam province, the provincial tourism chief has announced.

A budget of 800 million rials (\$19,000 at the official exchange rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) has been allocated to the project, which aims at organizing and restoring the tourist routes of the site using indigenous and traditional materials, Abdolmalek Shanbehzadeh said on Sunday.



The ancient town of Seymareh is now a part of the city of Darreh Shahr. The first archeologist to visit Seymareh was Sir Henry Rawlinson. He began an expedition to the site in 1836. He was looking for the remaining of Seymareh and considered it to have belonged to the Sassanid dynasty. Jaques de Morgan also visited this historical land in 1891 and introduced it as the same ancient city of Madaktu. Then it was Aurel Stein who attempted to explore it in 1936, according to Visit Iran, the official travel guide of Iran.

Believed to be flourished on remnants of the Elamite capital, Madaktu, Seymareh dates back to the Sassanid-era (224 CE–651). Archeological findings show that the city included about 5,000 houses with some modern aspects like a water distribution system through clay pipes and underground sewers. The city was destroyed and deserted after a huge earthquake around 950 BC.

Darreh Shahr was once the summer capital of Elamites, a pre-Iranian civilization dated from 2700 to 539 BC. The city also enjoyed centuries of prosperity during the Sassanid era.

Darreh Shahr and its surrounding regions boast vestiges of Sassanid constructions such as arches, ceilings, alleys, and passages that follow a specific order of urban development criteria of the time.

Sassanid coins cleaned, restored in lab southeast Iran

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — A total of 23 historical coins have been cleaned and restored at a museum laboratory in the southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchestan, the deputy provincial tourism chief has said.

Dating back to the Sassanid era (224 CE–651) the coins belong to a larger haul previously recovered from smugglers or being unearthed in historical sites across the province, the deputy tourism chief, Mansoureh Molla'elah, said on Sunday, CHTN reported.

In about 220 CE the Sasanian dynasty of Iran introduced the concept of thin flan coins, issues that were struck in relief on both sides. In order not to produce intolerable stresses in the dies, since the thinner the material the more force necessary to make it flow into the recesses of the die's design, the depth of relief on such coins was of necessity much shallower than with earlier currency. Such techniques spread by way of Byzantium to northern Europe, where the emperor Charlemagne struck thin flan deniers (small silver coins), or pennies, which became characteristic of both his own and neighboring kingdoms.

In many ways, Iran under the Sassanian rule witnessed tremendous achievements of Persian civilization. Experts say that the art and architecture of the nation experienced



a general renaissance during Sassanid rule. In that era, crafts such as metalwork and gem-engraving grew highly sophisticated, as scholarship was encouraged by the state; many works from both the East and West were translated into Pahlavi, the official language of the Sassanians.

The Muslim conquest of Persia, also known as the Arab conquest of Iran, led to the fall of the Sasanian Empire of Iran (Persia) in ca. 651 and the eventual decline of the Zoroastrian religion. The rise of Muslims coincided with an unprecedented political, social, economic, and military weakness in Persia.

The conquering Muslims at first mimicked the coinage of their predecessors. In the western provinces, they issued gold and copper pieces imitated from contemporary Byzantine coins, modifying the cross on the reverse of the latter somewhat to suit Muslim sensibilities. In the eastern provinces, the Arab governors issued silver dirhams that were copies of late Sasanian coins (mostly of those of Khosrow II; with the addition of short Arabic inscriptions on the margin and often the name of the Arab governor in Pahlavi; even the crude representation of the fire altar was retained.

Tourism minister honors exemplary crafters, artisans

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian tourism minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan and his deputy for handicrafts, Pouya Mahmoudian, honored some exemplary crafters and artisans on Saturday.

Behruz Zarindashti in ceramic and Sara Hedayat in costume designing received Silver Cypress, during the closing ceremony of the 5th Fajr national handicrafts festival, one of Iran's major crafts shows held in the National Museum of Iran.

Furthermore, Zeinab Masudi in illumination, Abbas Jalalikia in woodwork, Saru Moqerchian in metalwork, and Vajiheh Sadat Jalali in woodcarving received honorable mentions, according to organizers.

Two the recently-deceased veteran crafters; Ahmad Shishegar, who was a master of tilework, and Amir Saeim, a master of toreutics, were honored posthumously during the ceremony, which was attended by tens of artists, crafters, and cultural officials as well.

Over 150 crafters practicing different fields of handicrafts participated in this edition of the festival, of which several were honored during the ceremony.

This edition of the festival, which brings together works from all over the country and is a venue for showcasing tens of ancient and modern Iranian hand-



icrafts, was held entirely online due to the coronavirus outbreak.

The event showcased woodwork, illuminated manuscript, miniature, textile printing, enamel, leatherwork, calligraphy, metalwork, mirrorwork, and marquetry, among others. It also featured potteries, ceramics, personal ornamentation, rugs,

and kilim carpets.

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

In January 2020, the cities of Shiraz, Malayer, and Zanjan and the village of

Qasemabad were designated by the WCC- Asia Pacific Region, putting Iran's number of world crafts cities and villages from ten to 14.

Shiraz was named a "world city of [diverse] handicrafts". Malayer was made a global hub for woodcarving and carved-wood furniture. Zanjan gained the title of a "world city of filigree". And Qasemabad village, which is nationally known for its traditional costumes, was also promoted to a world hub of handicrafts. 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.

Architecturally-rich Tepe Ashraf to be turned into open-air museum

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — Tepe Ashraf, an architecturally-rich mound that has so far yielded ancient human remains and relics, will be turned into an open-air museum in the touristic city of Isfahan, central Iran.

"Isfahan province's department for cultural heritage, tourism and handicrafts on Saturday signed a memorandum of understanding with Isfahan Municipality to reorganize Tepe Ashraf," the provincial tourism chief, Freydown Allahyari, said on Saturday, CHTN reported.

The MoU touches upon future excavations, landscape architecture, debris removal, and the establishment of an open-air museum at the ancient site, the official said.

Recent archaeological excavations have brought to light some human remains and skeletons, estimated to date from the Parthian era. The ancient hill originally measured some 13 ha in area, however, only seven hectares of it has been remained being owned by the provincial administrations (some six ha has been tuned into modern urban spaces).

Iranian researchers, led by Jafari-Zand, found a new range of discoveries that offer novel clues about the history of Isfahan. Furthermore, they found an ancient burial containing the remains of a horse -- estimated to be four years old was found near a place where a giant jar-tomb was unearthed weeks earlier.

"Tepe Ashraf is the second place after the Tepe Sialk (in Isfahan province) that has yielded the discovery of such jar tombs that offers valuable clues to uncover the obscure history of pre-Islamic Isfahan," according to Jafari-Zand.

Excavations at Tepe Ashraf initially began in 2010 when Jafari-Zand announced his team found evidence at the site suggesting that the Sassanid site had also been used during the Buyid dynasty (945–1055). "We stumbled upon a reconstructed part in the ruins of the castle, which suggests that the structure had been used during the Buyid dynasty."

The Parthian Empire (247 BC – 224 CE), also known as the Arsacid Empire, was a major Iranian political and cultural power in ancient Iran. The Parthians largely



adopted the art, architecture, religious beliefs, and royal insignia of their culturally heterogeneous empire, which encompassed Persian, Hellenistic, and regional cultures. At its height, the Parthian Empire stretched from the northern reaches of the Euphrates, in what is now central-eastern Turkey, to eastern Iran.

Efforts underway to revive horse-riding game in Fereidan



➔ **1** Traditionally, transmission has occurred informally within the family or in workshops, and Chogan techniques continue to be actively safeguarded by families and local practitioners. However, over the last decades, Chogan associations have also

been established, which hold training courses, support local masters, and assist in transmitting all aspects of Chogan while safeguarding local diversity.

From its Iranian origins in Persia, it spread to Constantinople, and eastward

through Bactria and Afghanistan to Tibet, China, and Japan, and from Tibet to India, where it flourished throughout the Mughal (Mogul) dynasty. The word "polo" comes from the Tibetan word for the willow root from which polo balls were made, which is "Pulu".

Eco-lodge units inaugurated in northern Iran

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — A total of 21 eco-lodge units have recently been inaugurated in the northern province of Gilan, a local official announced on Sunday.

A budget of 600 billion rials (\$14.2 million at the official exchange rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) has been allocated to the construction of the eco-lodges, which are expected to develop tourism in the region, Reza Hassanpour said.

Establishing these eco-lodge units is estimated to generate 100 job opportunities directly for the locals, the official added.

He also noted that 10 more eco-lodges are scheduled to come on stream by the end of the current Iranian year (March 20).

In 2019, Gilan was selected as the first province to start the country's comprehensive tourism plan, which is being developed under the auspices of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). The comprehensive plan is aimed to serve as a roadmap to guide tourists from all



over the globe to achieve a sustainable and competitive tourism market.

Bounded by the Caspian Sea and the Republic of Azerbaijan on the north, Gilan, in the far past, was within the sphere of influence of the successive Achaemenid, Seleucid, Parthian, and Sassanid empires that ruled Iran until the 7th century CE.

The tourism ministry has set a target to help build 2,000 eco-lodges by 2021, believing such guest houses could cater to sustainable development and job creation in the countryside and rural areas. Experts say each eco-lodge unit generates jobs for seven to eight people on average so that the scheme could create 160,000 jobs.

The culturally-diverse country never disappoints visitors when it comes to eco-tourism, sightseeing, and even tribal tourism as it is home to many regional people including ones with Turk and Arab elements in addition to the Kurds, Baloch, Bakhtyari, Lurs, and other smaller minorities such as Armenians, Assyrians, Jews, and others.

Man donates relics to hometown heritage office in northwest Iran

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — An Iranian man, who is a native of Salmas in northwest Iran, has recently donated some relics to his hometown's office for cultural heritage, tourism, and handicrafts.

The objects include clay utensils, agricultural tools, bread baking tools, wooden boxes, chariot wheels and hand scales, which belong to the contemporary era, Afrasyab Geravand who presides over the cultural heritage office, announced on Sunday.

Some effective measures have been taken to encourage people in the region, which is located in West Azarbaijan

province, to submit their historical and cultural objects to the cultural heritage department, the official added.

The donated objects will be kept under the name of their owners and will go on display occasionally, he explained.

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

The region has been the seat of several ancient civilizations. It formed part of Urartu and later of Media. In the



4th century BC, it was conquered by Alexander the Great and was named

Atropatene after one of Alexander's generals, Atropates, who established a small kingdom there. The area returned to the Persian (Iranian) rule under the Sasanians in the 3rd century CE.

The Arabs controlled Azerbaijan from the 7th century until Turkish nomads overran it in the 11th century. Thenceforth the inhabitants of the region were Turkish speakers. The region was overrun by the Mongols in the 13th century, and, under the ruler Hulegu, Azerbaijan became the center of a Mongol empire extending from Syria on the west to the Oxus River (now Amu Darya) on the east.

Iranian-made coronavirus vaccine 90% immunogenic: study

1 → Determining this issue requires a more detailed statistical study, but preliminary results show that the vaccine is about 90 percent immunogenic, he highlighted, noting, phase one of the clinical trials is nearly over so that now all 56 volunteers have received the first dose of the vaccine and 30 have received the second dose of the vaccine.

He went on to say that the second phase of the clinical trial will begin by the end of the current [Iranian calendar] month (March 20).

Noting that the second phase will last by the end of May, he stated that "most likely, the second and third phases will be merged, and in the middle of this phase, an initial report will be submitted to the Food and Drug Administration."

"If the report is approved, we will enter the third stage of the human trial," IRNA quoted Salehi as saying on Sunday.

Mass vaccination

Iran started mass vaccination with Russian-made Sputnik V vaccine, with the priority given to medical staff, the elderly, and people with underlying diseases; and is also going to



be co-produced by the two countries.

Importing vaccine from COVAX, a global initiative to ensure rapid and equitable access

to COVID-19 vaccines, is also on the agenda.

On January 27, Health Minister Saeed Namaki said that there are four different ways

to supply the coronavirus vaccine, including direct purchase from a foreign country, procurement from the World Health Organization's COVAX facility, a joint production with a Cuban company as well as domestic production of the vaccine.

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

New cases and mortalities

In a press briefing on Sunday, Health Ministry's spokesperson Sima-Sadat Lari confirmed 7,901 new cases of COVID-19 infection, raising the total number of infections to 574,012. She added that 1,344,791 patients have so far recovered, but 3,689 remain in critical conditions of the disease.

During the past 24 hours, 74 patients have lost their lives, bringing the total number of deaths to 59,483, she added.

So far, 10,444,695 COVID-19 diagnostic tests have been performed in the country.

Lari noted that currently, 11 cities are at high-risk "red" zones, 217 cities in low-risk "yellow" zones.



SOCIETY TEHRAN – The 3rd international social work congress and the 35th national social work conference will be held virtually in Tehran on March 8. National social work conference is held annually on the

Tehran to host online intl. congress on social work

occasion of the national social work day, observed on March 20, which is concurrent with the international social work day, Mehr quoted Seyed Hasan Mousavi-Chalak, the head of the Iran Association of Social Workers, as saying on Sunday.

Every year, World Social Work Day is celebrated on the third Tuesday of March, and events are organized throughout the month of March, which is the key day in the year that social workers worldwide stand together to celebrate the achievements of the profession and take the theme message into their communities, workplaces and to their governments to raise awareness of the social work contributions and need for further action.

This year, it is celebrated on March 16, focusing on social work, monitoring and solidarity.

The conference is organized in partnership with the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), the International Association, social work universities, and the IFSW federation in the Asia-Pacific region, Mousavi-Chalak noted.

"Social workers can play an effective role in social mon-

itoring due to the variety of topics, information, and target groups, and we believe that social monitoring will be an opportunity for better social planning and policy-making to improve the quality of services and timely actions. At the same time, it can help to pay more attention to social solidarity, which is a serious need of the international community and our country," he explained.

World Social Work Day

World Social Work Day is celebrated on March 16. It is the key day in the year that social workers worldwide stand together to advance our common message globally. This year, the 2021 World Social Work Day highlights Ubuntu: I am Because We Are. This is the first theme of 2020 to 2030 Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development.

Ubuntu: 'I am because we are' is a concept and philosophy that resonates with the social work perspective of the interconnectedness of all peoples and their environments. It speaks to the need for global solidarity and also highlights indigenous knowledge and wisdom.

Iran's remarkable biodiversity museum

1 → The museum includes several sections, including a genetic bank that includes samples of genes from Iranian and foreign species for study, a herbarium collection, an animal taxidermy collection, and a geological museum.

Providing research opportunities in the fields of animal, plant, and geological species, the museum allows researchers and scientists to study special and rare species of Iran and other species.

This collection, which is the first-panel exhibition (collection of horns and skulls) in Iran, has been working for a long time, since 2006 until the efforts of Iranian researchers, which has been completed in August 2020.

This panel includes a variety of deer, chinkara, antelopes, mouflon, wild goat, and a large number of specimens of foreign animals, especially from Russia, Siberia, and Africa.

In the taxidermy collection, the samples are generally collected after an animal's death, part of this collection has been donated.

There are the world's eight top specimens in the museum that are unique

and there is no second specimen of them, including urials, hartebeest, dik-dik (the world's smallest antelopes), and Persian fallow deer.

The world's biodiversity section includes different species of mammal and reptile from the deserts of Africa to the North Pole. The Persian Gulf collection also includes a combination of aquatic and terrestrial specimens with a mock-up of the coastal landscape of the region, the Persian Gulf submarine tunnel also includes fish species, the starfish of the Persian Gulf. In the Caspian Sea collection, there is the rare Caspian seal and a variety of Caspian fish.

Other valuable items include the world's most diverse and remarkable butterflies, insect display cases, Asian elephant skeletons, Iranian stone and minerals, mollusk showcases including large shells, especially from Southeast Asia, samples of old fossilized plants of the country, and a showcase of invertebrates including corals, cephalopods, echinoderms, bivalves, and ammonites (a type of mollusk) found in Iran.

Five ecoregions, rich biodiversity

Each region is defined by its characteristics that play a significant role in a land's biodiversity and richness, based on which, Iran shares five ecological zones with specific flora from the lowest to the highest parts.

The great difference between the two latitudes of the north and south of the country and the existence of different plains, altitudes, and climates have given a very diverse view to the vast land so that a variety of vegetation and plant species are grown across it. Here, five ecological regions of Iran are briefly introduced below.

The Hyrcanian ecological zone covers the green belt, the southern margin of the Caspian Sea, and the northern profile of the Alborz mountain range. The forested areas of the region stretch to 2.4 million hectares covering Astara in Gilan province to Glidaghi in Golestan province.

The area of forests in the Iran-Turani ecological region, which covers most of the central plateau of Iran, is 4,666,941 hectares. Based on topographic and altitude conditions, this region is divided

into two mountainous regions with a cold climate and a desert with a hot and dry climate.

The forests of this region, which are among the semi-humid forests of the country, are located in the province of East Azarbaijan and northwest of Ardebil province, which covers 174,838 hectares. Arasbaran forests have been protected by UNESCO since 1976 as one of the biosphere reserves due to their rare and unique plant species and rich biodiversity.

Some sources date the Zagros oak forests to 5,500 years. The creation and expansion of these forests are due to rainfall raised by the Mediterranean system and the Black Sea, which extends from the Sardasht area of West Azarbaijan to Firoozabad city of Fars province covering an area of 5,440,494 hectares.

The forests of the Persian Gulf-Omani ecological region include part of the southwest and all southern coasts, covering 2,039,963 hectares. Due to ecological differences, the main vegetation is divided into two territories of the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ج

All-Iranian COVID-19 diagnostic kits to be released within month

Iran will commercialize domestically-made COVID-19 diagnostic kits by the Iranian calendar month of Farvardin (March 21-April 22), secretary of biotechnology development of Vice Presidency for Science and Technology announced.

Following a call by the headquarters for the production of COVID-19 diagnostic kits, a contract was signed with five knowledge-based companies and manufacturing process began, ISNA quoted Mostafa Qane'ei as saying on Monday.

Diagnosis is the most important part of coronavirus treatment, he highlighted.

Patients suspected to coronavirus are currently being identified by diagnostic kits that have entered Iran in the form of assistance and purchases by the World Health Organization, China and UNICEF, he said.

So, the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology decided to manufacture the kits domestically, he noted.

Existing imported kits are sufficient for the next two months but after this period we will be faced with shortages of kits, however, the domestic ones will enter the market, he concluded.

کیت‌های ایرانی تشخیص کووید ۱۹ ماه آینده روانه بازار می‌شوند

دبیر ستاد توسعه زیست‌فناوری معاونت علمی و فناوری ریاست جمهوری گفت:

کیت‌های تشخیصی کووید ۱۹، فروردین ماه وارد بازار می‌شوند.

مصطفی قانع، دبیر ستاد توسعه زیست‌فناوری معاونت علمی و فناوری ریاست جمهوری، اظهار داشت: به دنبال فراخوان این ستاد برای ساخت کیت‌های آزمایشگاهی تشخیص کووید ۱۹، با پنج شرکت دانش‌بنیان برای ساخت این کیت‌ها قرارداد منعقد شده است.

تشخیص، مهم‌ترین راه ورود به درمان بیماری کرونا است.

در حال حاضر بیماران مبتلا به کرونا به وسیله کیت‌های تشخیصی که در قالب مساعدت و خرید از طریق سازمان بهداشت جهانی، کشور چین و یونسف وارد ایران شده‌اند شناسایی می‌شوند؛ اما ستاد توسعه زیست‌فناوری معاونت علمی و فناوری ریاست جمهوری با انتشار فراخوانی از دانش‌بنیان‌های توانمند دعوت کرد تا به حوزه ساخت این کیت‌ها ورود کنند.

به گزارش از مرکز ارتباطات و اطلاع رسانی معاونت علمی و فناوری ریاست جمهوری، وی افزود: کیت‌های وارد شده تا دو ماه آینده کافی هستند اما بعد از این مدت با کمبود کیت‌های تشخیص کرونا مواجه خواهیم شد. به همین دلیل با کمک توانمندی‌های داخلی این نیاز را مرتفع می‌کنیم.

World must 'transform relationship with nature', says UN

The world must transform its relationship with nature to tackle its worsening environmental crises, a new UN report urges.

The report, published by the UN environment programme, warned that millions of people now die each year as a result of the climate crisis, biodiversity loss and pollution.

The three crises are inextricably linked and so must be fought together, the report said, with the economic recovery from the Covid pandemic providing an "unmissable opportunity" to face up to the challenge.



Writing in the report's forward, UN chief Antonio Guterres said: "Humanity is waging war on nature. This is senseless and suicidal. The consequences of our recklessness are already apparent in human suffering, towering economic losses and the accelerating erosion of life on Earth.

"Ending our war does not mean surrendering hard-won development gains. Nor does it cancel the rightful aspiration of poorer nations and people to enjoy better living standards.

"On the contrary, making peace with nature, securing its health and building on the critical and undervalued benefits that it provides are key to a prosperous and sustainable future for all."

The new report synthesises previous assessments from the world's leading authorities on the climate crisis and biodiversity loss.

This includes a landmark report published in 2019 which concluded that one million animal and plant species now face extinction as a result of human pressures such as habitat loss, the wildlife trade and global heating.

Another report included notes that, if more urgent action isn't taken, current policies from world leaders would put us on a path to a 3C temperature rise by the end of the century.

This is much higher than the world's goal of limiting global warming to "well below" 2C above pre-industrial levels, which was set by countries under the 2015 Paris Agreement.

This year will be crucial to raising ambition to tackle both the climate and biodiversity crises, says the UN.

In May, China will host a biodiversity summit for world leaders. This will be followed by a key round of climate talks, known as Cop26, which are to be held in Glasgow in November.

The report also said that the climate crisis, biodiversity loss and pollution "interact and have common causes, and thus can only be effectively addressed together".

For example, global heating is fuelling biodiversity loss by creating living conditions that are intolerable for wildlife.

In addition, the burning of fossil fuels is a major driver of deadly air pollution. A recent study found that in 2018, one in five deaths worldwide were linked to air pollution from fossil fuels.

Professor Rachel Warren, a researcher of global change at the University of East Anglia, said: "There are three novel aspects to the report. The first is that it brings together the environmental problems of climate change, biodiversity loss, land degradation and pollution.

"Secondly, it goes further than earlier reports by providing a solution to the problem, and being very clear about how various societal actors – governments, businesses, financial organisations, and individuals for example – can all be a part of that solution, with specific actions for each.

"Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, it advocates a fundamental change in man's relationship with his environment – we need to put nature at the heart of all of our decision making, and work with nature to solve these problems."

The report recommended that governments take action by getting rid of subsidies for fossil fuels and unsustainable agriculture and instead use this money for "low-carbon and nature-friendly solutions".

It also recommended including "natural capital in measures of economic performance" – echoing the words of the recent Dasgupta Review, a report commissioned by the UK treasury which called for the world's economic system to find value in protecting nature.

The UN report also said that individuals can make a difference by "reconsidering their relationship with nature" and by changing their habits, such as by cutting out food waste and by adopting healthier diets with less meat and dairy and more fruit and vegetables.

LET'S LEARN PERSIAN

(Part 133)

(Source: saadifoundation.ir)

در هر شهر ایران، بازاری سَنّتی وجود دارد که مُهم‌ترین مَرکَزِ تجارت در آن شهر به شمار می‌رود.
بازارِ بزرگِ تهران از جاهای تاریخی و دیدنی شهر تهران است. این بازار شاملِ بازارهای کوچک‌تری می‌شود که طولِ آنها روی هم به چند کیلومتر می‌رسد.
بازارهای فرش، طلا و آجیل از همه مُهم‌تر و جالب‌ترند. در بازارِ فرش، بهترین، زیباترین و گران‌ترین فرش‌ها را می‌توانیم ببینیم.
قیمت‌ها در بازارِ تهران پایین‌تر از جاهای دیگر است و هر روز هزاران نفر، هم برای خرید و هم برای تماشای این بازار می‌روند. چند کاروان‌سرای قدیمی هنوز در بازارِ تهران وجود دارد که اکنون از مَراکِزِ بزرگِ خرید و فروش به شمار می‌روند.

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GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

What actions are most excellent? To glad-
den the heart of human beings, to feed the
hungry, to help the afflicted, to lighten the
sorrow of the sorrowful, and to remove the
sufferings of the injured.

Prophet Muhammad (S)

First volume of unabridged Azerbaijani dictionary published in Ardebil

→1 Researcher Mehdi Mirza Rasolzadeh also expressed thanks to the scholars who contributed to the dictionary, and said that a good point about the dictionary is that it also carries the words Azerbaijani nomads use in their daily conversations.



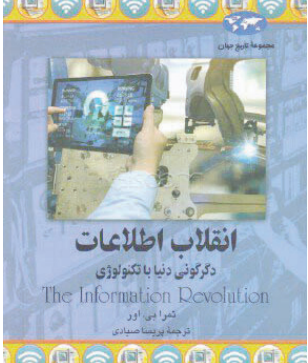
Scholars unveil the first volume of an unabridged Azerbaijani dictionary at the Shiekh Safieddin Ardebili Complex in Ardebil on February 20, 2021.

In his online speech, the director of Azerbaijan Republic's Institute of Linguistics, Mohsun Nagisoylu, called language an everlasting treasure, and said that preparing the dictionary is a great task that will forever remain in history.

The project has been commissioned by the Public Culture Council, affiliated with the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance.

“The Information Revolution” by Tamra B. Orr appears in Persian

CULTURE TEHRAN — A Persian translation of Tamra B. Orr's book “The Information Revolution: Transforming the World through Technology” has recently been published by Qoqnu Publications in Tehran.



Front cover of the Persian translation of Tamra B. Orr's book “The Information Revolution”.

The book has been translated into Persian by Parisa Sayyadi. Young people growing up today don't know a life without social media, smartphones and other Internet-driven technology. However, it wasn't that long ago when computers were still the size of an entire room. As it became easier and cheaper to share information quickly through computer technology, an information revolution began taking place.

As readers explore this revolution through accessible main text, informative sidebars and annotated quotes, they discover the people and inventions that created the digital world they know today.

Historical and contemporary images give readers a deeper sense of how the ideas of the past have shaped their present in this book.

Tamra Orr is a full-time author living in the Pacific Northwest. She is the author of more than 400 educational books for readers of all ages.

Her book on school violence was voted New York Public Library's best nonfiction book for teens. She has a degree in English from Ball State University. Tamra has been fascinated with history all of her life and enjoys the chance to learn more about it when researching for a book. She lives in Oregon with her husband and four children.

Tamra B. Orr is the author of books such as “America's Best Colleges for B Students”.

Doc depicts Iranian environmentalist's attempts to save Caspian seal from extinction

A R T TEHRAN — Iran's d e s k Experimental and Documentary Film Center (EDFC) is producing a documentary depicting Iranian veterinarian and environmental activist Amir Shirazi's attempts to save the Caspian seal from extinction.

The Caspian seal, also known as Pusa Caspica, is one of the smallest members of the earless seal family and unique in that it is found exclusively in the brackish Caspian Sea. They are found not only along the shorelines, but also on the many rocky islands and floating blocks of ice that dot the Caspian Sea.

In a press release published by the EDFC, Mohammadreza Keivanfar, the director of the documentary entitled “Amir”, said, “Amir Shirazi is the sole supporter of the Caspian seal in Iran who is making attempt to save the endangered species.”



A scene from the documentary “Amir” shows Iranian veterinarian Amir Shirazi and a Caspian seal.

“In 2019, he launched a large campaign to draw up a petition against legal hunting of this mammal in Russia, and finally, hunting the Caspian seal was prohibited in the country as a result,” he added.

Shirazi is also the CEO of the Iran Caspian Seal conservation Center.

Keivanfar noted that hunting the Caspian seal still continues in other countries bordering the Caspian Sea and some maritime activities in the region have been the causes of death for a large number of these mammals.

“Only twenty percent of the shooting remains, and it consists of the scenes depicting an operation to rescue Caspian seals being captured in hunter's nets,” he said.

“We have to wait for the specific moment and that is not under our control,” he added.

Hafez Studies Center launches story writing festival



Mausoleum of Hafez, Shiraz.

A R T TEHRAN — The Hafez Studies Center in Shiraz has organized a festival of story writing with the central theme of the great Persian poet Hafez.

“The festival aims to make the younger generation more familiar with the poetry and thoughts of Hafez and the ancient, original culture of the country,” the director of center Kavus Hassanli said in a press release published on Sunday.

“The center has organized varied programs. People derive a portion of their pride from their proud ancestors. Our history is a precious book whose golden pages cause the jealousy of other nations to arise,” he said.

“Today we have to make the best use of our precious cultural assets. Our great poet Hafez is a valuable treasure who has been praised by many contemporary world scholars,” he added.

“Fiction can be one of the ways to connect the young generation of today with the thoughts and poetry of Hafez,

and we are planning to invite national writers to attend the festival with the central theme of Hafez,” he said.

Interested applicants are asked to submit their works to the Hafez Studies Center before August.

The stories written in Persian must be in connection with poetry, thoughts, life and time of Hafez.

Hafez, who is buried in his hometown Shiraz, is most famous for his Divan and among the many partial English translations of this work are those by Gertrude Bell and H. Wilberforce Clarke.

The extraordinary popularity of Hafez poetry in all Persian-speaking lands stems from his simple and often colloquial, though musical, language, free from artificial virtuosity, and his unaffected use of homely images and proverbial expressions.

Stories from Shahnameh simplified for children

CULTURE TEHRAN — Stories d e s k from the Shahnameh, the epic magnum opus of Persian poet Ferdowsi, have been simplified for children in a collection by litterateur Zeinab Yazdani.

The collection composed of nine books has been published by Tirgan, a major Iranian children's book publisher in Tehran.

The collection includes “Kaveh the Just”, “Zal and Simorgh”, “Zal and Rudabeh”, “The Seven Adventures of Rustam”, “Rustam and Sohrab”, “The Seven Adventures of Esfandiar”, “Rustam and Rustam”, “Rustam and Siavosh” and “Bijan and Manijeh”.

“The general characteristics of the original text should be maintained and writers should avoid any manipulation of the text when they plan to rewrite a story from the classic Persia literature,” Yazdani wrote in a preface to the collection.

“Simplifying the classic texts means to rewrite the works in modern prose to make them clear for all without a change in the original meaning,” she stated.

Yazdani has previously simplified



A combination photo shows Zeinab Yazdani's collection of simplified stories from the Shahnameh.

several stories from classic Persian literature, including Masnavi-ye Manavi, Molana Jalal ad-Din Rumi. Among the books are “Parrot, the Conversable” and “Demon and Solomon”.

Masterpieces from classic Persian literature have been simplified by a number of literati over the past few decades.

Mehdi Azar Yazdi's series “Good Stories for Good Children” stands top of the list. This collection comprised of eight books won a UNESCO prize in 1966, and was selected as Iran's best book of the year in 1967.

In 2018, the Tehran-based publishing house Padyab released four collections of simplified stories from classic Persian literature for children in the project “The Leaves of the Green Trees”, which was coordinated by litterateur Mahmud Karimpur.

Stories from the Kelileh and Demneh abridged by Hassan Goharpur with illustrations by Maryam Zabih were published in one of the collections.

The collection is composed of the stories “Imaginations of the Simple-Minded Man”, “The Fate of the Covetous” and “The Simple-Minded Camel”.

The Kalileh and Demneh is mainly a translation of an Indian book, Penchatentra written in Sanskrit and published some 1500 years ago. The original translation was done from Sanskrit into Pahlavi (Middle Persian) by Barzuyeh. Ibn Moghaffaa translated it from Pahlavi to Arabic. Finally, Nasrollah

Monshi translated it into Persian from Arabic. The book contains stories about animals.

Mohsen Rahabari Torbati simplified stories from the Marzbani-nameh. The book was written by Espahbod Marzbani in the Hyrcanian language in the late 10th century. It was later translated into Persian by Sa'deddin Varavini during the 13th century.

“Jackal, the Donkey Rider”, “The Predatory Cat” and “The Rooster and Fox” were selected for another collection, which has been illustrated by Zabihi.

A collection also contains the stories “The Elephant in the Dark”, “Escape from Death” and “Mr. Morad and the Sweet-Talker” from the Masnavi-ye Manavi. The stories have been streamlined by Abdoljali Karimpur. Saeideh Nosratifard is the illustrator of the collection.

Another collection carries stories from the Gulistan (The Rose Garden), Sadi's masterpiece, which have been simplified by Pegah Sadeqi.

“The Salt of Food”, “Greed” and “The Classroom” have been selected for the collection illustrated by Nosratifard.

Iranian veterans share happy memories in doc series “Lovely War”

A R T TEHRAN — “Lovely War”, a documentary series centering on happy memoirs of the Iranian soldiers who fought during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war, which is known as Sacred Defense in Iran, has recently been streamed online on Filmo and Namava, the Iranian platforms providing video on demand.

Directed by Hossein Homayunfar, the series has been produced by the Revayat Cultural Foundation.

“In the past years many soldiers have narrated their memories, which have been sad and unhappy, while it was not all the same at the warfronts,” the program host Asghar Naqizadeh said in a press release published



A scene from the series “Lovely War” with host Asghar Naqizadeh (L).

on Sunday.

“Many of the war memories have not been narrated at all. They are the real lives of the soldiers and those who lived at the war fronts or behind the fronts. It is not a comedy, but good and happy memories,” he said.

“Those who are almost my age remember those days and will surely remember the memories when they hear them. And if the young generation watches the program, they will discover the atmosphere of those years,” he said.

He added that he expects the series to be welcomed.

“This series will answer the questions such as how that generation has lived and married,” he added.

“Sniper”, “Yadoo”, “Mansur”, “Expediency” honored at Qoqnu Screen Awards

CULTURE TEHRAN — The 10th d e s k edition of the Qoqnu Screen Awards selected “The Sniper”, “Yadoo”, “Mansur” and “Expediency” as the top movies of the year on Saturday.

The films were honored during an online ceremony, which was streamed live on Ofoq, IRIB's channel for documentary cinema.

Organized by the Art Bureau of the Islamic Ideology Dissemination Organization, the Qoqnu Screen Awards honors revolutionary films and cineastes.

All the movies had their Iranian premieres during the 39th Fajr Film Festival, which took place in Tehran from January 31 to February 10.

Directed by Ali Ghaffari, the real-life drama “The Sniper” portrays Abdorrasul Zarrin, who was one of the most lethal

snipers in the Iranian forces during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war.

It won the Golden Simorgh for best film from the national point of view at the Fajr festival.

“Yadoo” directed by Hossein Jafari tells the story of a teenage boy named Yadoo living with his family and people under siege in the southwestern Iranian city of Abadan in the early days of the Iran-Iraq war. The family is finally forced to migrate.

The drama was the top winner of the Fajr festival by garnering awards in several categories, including best film and best director.

“Mansur” is a biopic about the late commander-in-chief of the Iran Air Force, Mansur Sattari.

Directed by Siavash Sarmadi, the film was earlier entitled “Owj 110” and

has been produced at the Owj Arts and Media Organization, a major institution that produces revolutionary works in art and cinema.

Sattari was one of the main Iranian commanders during the Iran-Iraq war. He was killed in a plane crash near Isfahan in 1995.

At the time, Sattari and his colleagues were working on the project “Owj 110”, which Iran initiated to make its first jet strike fighter, Azarakhsh.

The film failed to win any prizes at the Fajr festival.

“Expediency” challenges justice in Iran's judiciary system in the early days after the victory of the Islamic Revolution.

Directed by Hossein Darabi, it is about a radical revolutionary who kills a leftist son of a wealthy family during a street brawl. The revolutionary, who is also the



A combination photo shows scene from “The Sniper”, “Mansur”, “Expediency” and “Yadoo”.

son of a senior judiciary official, will likely face a death sentence, something which may bring disgrace on the revolutionary government. The judiciary official now faces with the dilemma of choosing between justice and political expediency.

This film also did not garner any awards at the Fajr festival.