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Things to do in Washington when the JCPOA is dead

©File photo

Tehran rules out discrimination against ethnic groups

TEHRAN – Iran's top human rights official on Sunday ruled out alleged discrimination against ethnic groups, saying the Islamic Republic observes the rights of all citizens regardless of their ethnicity.

Ali Baqeri Kani, secretary of the High Council for Human Rights, made the remarks in response to a statement by UN High Commissioner on Human Rights

in which she had criticized Iran's code-of-conduct toward minorities.

Ethnic groups in Iran are not minority, rather they are citizens of "the whole Iran", Baqeri Kani asserted, according to IRNA.

Writing on his Twitter account, he said, "Ms. Commissioner, Iranian ethnic groups are not 'minority', they are 'the whole Iran'." *Continued on page 2*

Production by major automakers exceeds 817,000 in 11 months

TEHRAN - Three major Iranian carmakers, namely Iran Khodro Company (IKCO), SAIPA Group, and Pars Khodro, manufactured 817,069 vehicles during the first eleven months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2020-February 18, 2021), the data released by Codal website showed.

According to the data, during the mentioned period, IKCO manufactured 432,006 vehicles, of which 43,912 were

produced in the eleventh Iranian calendar month of Bahman (January 20 – February 18, 2021).

SAIPA manufactured 291,220 vehicles in the mentioned period, of which 29,452 were manufactured in the eleventh month.

Pars Khodro also manufactured 93,843 vehicles, of which 12,828 were manufactured in the eleventh month. *Continued on page 4*

Second Iranian COVID-19 vaccine enters clinical trial

TEHRAN – Iran started the human trial of its second coronavirus vaccine, Razi Cov Pars, by injecting into two volunteers during a ceremony on Sunday.

The vaccine is both injectable and intranasal based on recombinant COVID-19 proteins, Mohammad Hassan Fallah, deputy head of Razi Vaccine and Serum Research Institute, said.

Through the first phase of the human

trial, 133 people will receive the vaccine, 13 of whom are injected in the first group and the rest in four groups consisting of thirty members, he noted.

After 23 days, phase one of vaccination should be completed. "The second dose of the vaccine will be injected to the volunteers 21 days later and the third dose will be inhaled 51 days later," he explained. *Continued on page 7*

Car scrapping industry dormant; scrap imported

BY MAHNAZ ABDI

It's a couple of years that Iran has launched a car scrapping scheme, mainly aimed at reducing air pollution, especially in the capital Tehran.

Although a considerable number of worn-out vehicles were junked in line with the mentioned scheme, the scheme has not been carried out as scheduled, and there are many worn-out cars waiting to be scrapped.

The chairman of the Association of Car Scrapping Centers has recently said that there are currently three million worn-out vehicles in the country, and the number will reach eight million by the Iranian calendar year 1404 (March 2025 – March 2026).

"If this condition continues in this way, we need a thousand years to scrap such high number of cars", Mahmoud Mashhadi-Sharif lamented.

Making the remarks in a press conference, he said 150 out of 220 centers for scrapping and recycling the light and heavy vehicles in the country are now closed, and the rest are active with a less than 10 percent of capacity.

"While it was planned to scrap 30 percent of the worn-out vehicles since [the Iranian calendar year] 1388 (March 2009 – March 2010), but in the past year, just 8,000 out of the 360,000 worn-out cars were scrapped.

As stated by Amir Ahmadi, the secretary of the aforesaid association, "Although we have the capacity to scrap 360,000 vehicles a year, due to the government's negligence, we will face a tsunami of worn-out vehicles in a few years".

Lagging behind the scrapping scheme is one of the main reasons for the air pollution, especially in Tehran, while also there are other challenges in this regard.

One challenge is that while there are many worn-out vehicles in the country, at present, scrap and scrap iron are imported to meet the needs of steel mills.

Although car scrapping and recycling centers are one of the main suppliers of scrap iron to steel mills, due to the recession that has occurred in the last few years, the government has authorized the import of scrap iron and the needs of steel mills are currently met through importing scrap and scrap iron, he stated.

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Vast majority of terror victims are Muslims: scholar

BY MOHAMMAD MAZHARI

TEHRAN - Noting that most of the people who are victims of terrorism are Muslims, a British professor of communication says that Islamophobic rhetoric makes reconciliation and peace harder to attain.

"The vast majority of victims of these acts of terror have themselves been also Muslims," Nicholas Cull says.

"Responding to terror with exaggerated Islamophobic rhetoric rather than solid police action plays into the hands of the extremists in the Middle East (West Asia) and makes reconciliation and peace harder to attain," the scholar in the USC Annenberg School for Communication tells the Tehran Times.

This in the text of the interview:

After Trump came to power in 2016, it seems that the threat of far-right ideas

returned to European countries. How do you analyze this phenomenon?

My feeling is that you have this the wrong way round. Trump came to power because of the same impulse to return to extremes that pushed Europe to the right. I see this as a function of both the economic downturn of 2008 and the destabilization caused by the emergence of widespread social media, a mechanism that amplified the confirmation of existing ideas, privileged extremes and promoted conspiracies. In a time of instability, people seek certainties either in a vision of the future or in the idealization of the past. The rhetoric of the far-right focused on an ideal past that they could also present as disrupted by an outside influence. In many cases, the rhetoric stressed a victim narrative and the extent to which a people had suffered.

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Yemenis target Saudi soil with 15 UAVs and ballistic missile

Yemeni forces targeted the Saudi soil with 15 UAVs and a ballistic missile on Saturday night, the spokesman for the Yemeni Armed Forces Brigadier General Yahya Saree says.

In a press conference on Sunday, Saree provided details about the Yemeni Armed Forces' attack on Saudi soil.

"The operation titled the "Fifth Response Balance" was carried out jointly with drones and ballistic missiles," he said. "Sensitive positions and places in Riyadh, the capital of the enemy, were targeted with a ballistic missile of the type 'Zulfiqar' and nine "Samad-3" UAVs. Six Qasf K2 UAVs also targeted military positions in the Abha [capital city of Asseer Province near the Red Sea in southwest Saudi Arabia] and Khamis Mushait areas [a city in southwest Saudi Arabia, located east of Abha]."

According to him, the operation lasted from Saturday evening until this morning.

"As long as the attacks and siege on our country [Yemen] continue, our operations will continue and

will be more extensive," he added.

Saree called on the people of Saudi Arabia to stay away from all military positions and places and airports.

Saudi Arabia announced Saturday it intercepted a missile attack over its capital and bomb-laden drones targeting a southern province.

The Saudi-led military coalition fighting in Yemen's yearslong war announced a ballistic missile was launched toward Riyadh and three booby-trapped drones toward the province of Jizan, with a fourth toward another southwestern city and other drones being monitored. The U.S. embassy in Riyadh issued a warning to Americans, calling on them to "stay alert in case of additional future attacks."

The Saudi-led coalition has faced widespread international criticism for airstrikes in Yemen that have killed hundreds of civilians and hit non-military targets, including schools, hospitals, and wedding parties.

Tourism, transport ministers ink MOU to boost maritime tourism

TEHRAN- Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan on Sunday signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Transport and Urban Development Minister Mohammad Eslami to deepen cooperation and expand bilateral ties.

The MOU aims at developing maritime tourism and make the best use of its potential in the southern and northern coasts of the country, according to a press release issued by the tourism ministry.

Promoting the culture of using the sea as a tool to increase social vitality, development of coastal activities in the form of environmentally-friendly plans and programs, and creating the necessary grounds for cooperation and exchange of knowledge and information were also among the topics of the agreement.

The traditional skills of building and sailing Iranian Lenj boats in the Persian Gulf was another issue discussed by the two ministers to find a way to safeguard the endangered UNESCO-registered

tradition for future generations.

Speaking on the sidelines of the signing ceremony, Mounesan said that the tourism ministry tries its best to leave single product tourism behind and diversify tourism products.

A focus on the country's natural capacities along with the historical and cultural capacities could attract more domestic and foreign tourists as well as create more job opportunities in some deprived areas, he explained.

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Rapid COVID-19 testing in Ahvaz underway

TEHRAN – A COVID-19 rapid testing program is being implemented across the city of Ahvaz, southwestern Khuzestan province, as a new wave of the virus has pushed the city into high-risk red zone.

Teams of emergency medical services are settled in crowded parts of the city to rapidly identify those individuals who are suspicious of being infected with the disease.

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Jalaluddin Rakhmat was victim of slander by takfiris: Indonesian professor

BY M.A. SAKI

TEHRAN – Jalaluddin Rakhmat, a top Shia figure in Indonesia, lived under harassment and slander by takfiris, especially in recent years, an Indonesian academic says.

"As is the case in many parts of the world, the Shia's emergence was met with negative reactions from takfiri groups linked to Saudi Arabia," Professor Otong Sulaeman tells the Tehran Times.

"Dr. Jalaluddin Rakhmat and the Shia community in Indonesia often become victims of persecution and slander by the takfiris," Sulaeman laments.

"This phenomenon has been increasing in recent years along with the Syrian conflict," notes Sulaeman, a member of Sadra Islamic Philosophy College in Jakarta.

Following is the text of the interview:

How do you evaluate Dr. Jalaluddin Rakhmat's position, personality and contributions in developing Islamic thought in Indonesia?

In the 1980s, youth in the Muslim world experienced a period of Islamic awakening. Indonesian youths at that time were very passionate about studying Islamic teachings and philosophy. Books written by intellectuals from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Syria, including Iranian writers such as (Ali) Shariati and Morteza Motahari, were widely translated and read. On campuses, students regularly hold regular discussions to discuss Islamic teachings and principles.

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CSIS: Issue linkage to secure Iran's commitment

By Azin Sahabi

The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), the number one think tank in the United States across all fields in 2019, conducts policy studies and strategic analyses of political, economic, and security issues throughout the world. It publishes numerous reports about the Islamic Republic of Iran as a permanent key area of focus for the U.S.

While the Biden administration explores ways to re-engage Iran over its nuclear program, CSIS has addressed the issue from different aspects.



In this regard, in an event held on February 24, CSIS elaborated on the "Freeze for Freeze" initiative as one of the approaches which some experts believe will suit the best for the U.S. to adopt in the future talks. According to CSIS, in the "Freeze for Freeze", "Iran would freeze aspects of its nuclear activities in exchange for increased access to money."

In such an environment, Eric Brewer, Hannah Kavain, and Henry Rome elaborated if "Is 'freeze for freeze' a viable pathway to re-engage with Iran?"

U.S. sanctions to continue in the immediate future

To discuss the issue from a technical perspective, Brewer, the deputy director of the Project on Nuclear Issues at CSIS, mentioned the Iranian parliamentary law called "Strategic Action to Lift Sanctions and Protect the Interest of Iranian Nation". On February 23, the Iranian government started to suspend the Additional Protocol to the NPT in response to the abrogation of the international nuclear agreement (JCPOA) by the Trump administration in May 2018 and imposition of the harshest ever sanctions in history.

Brewer claims that since the passage of the parliamentary law in December, "Iran is playing hardball a little bit more."

He reminds that the U.S. under the Trump administration appeared as the aggressor actor vis a vis the Iranians in terms of the JCPOA, but now it seems that the situation is on the verge of change. He argues that "Iran is going to be in those shoes and it's going to lose its status as the aggrieved party."

Henry Rome believes that unless there is progress on the diplomatic front, the U.S. sanctions are going to be kept in place in the immediate future. He points out that Iranians do not intend to appear that they need to conclude a deal more than the United States.

Tehran views this integral to maintain its leverage at the negotiation table, Rome opines.

To elaborate on plausible steps that Biden can take to reverse the mistrust that's built up under Trump, Brewer points out the snapback mechanism and restrictions on Iranian diplomats as some issues that Biden can use to make a positive gesture. Also, waiving sanctions on certain types of nuclear cooperation projects that were permitted under the JCPOA can contribute to "normalizing the tensions" among two capitals, the expert adds.

However, CSIS emphasizes that it sounds strange to get back to the negotiations and try the "freeze for freeze" deal as the first option, so the first option is to test the water to see if the two parties will make it to return to the deal or not.

Focus on how to bring Iran to the table

To get back to the status quo ante, Rome stresses, the U.S. should think about any move "in the narrow context of 'what do we need to do to bring Iran to the table' and nothing more."

Therefore, he underlines that the fundamental goal for the Oval Office is to get back to negotiations whereby the parties can deliberate about smaller steps to build confidence.

Kaviani, a journalist with RadioFarda, who has closely followed the nuclear negotiations, believes that "it was not that much of a crisis in the past two, three weeks as it was portrayed."

She argues that Tehran does want the JCPOA to be revived and is ready for talks to negotiate the way back to the deal.

In this context, Rome argues regardless of the political attitude of the future president of Iran, Tehran has made a strategic decision to get back to the JCPOA. Therefore, he stresses, the U.S. should not get into a "trap" to consider the June elections as a deadline just to rush a deal with the current team in Tehran.

Walk and chew gum at the same time

In contrast to some experts who strongly recommend Biden not to address regional issues or missile program in future talks, Brewer believes the U.S. can walk and chew gum at the same time. He recommends the Biden administration to consider "continuing with some of the efforts by the Trump administration to enhance interdictions against some of Iran's conventional proliferation. Politically speaking, it shows that the United States is not ignoring these other very objectionable Iranian activities."

He also stresses: "The United States can counter Iran as if they're no negotiations and pursue negotiations as if there's no outside conflict with Iran. I think we can do both at the same time and I think they positively reinforce each other."

At the table with no compliance to the JCPOA

Kaviani mentions that the freeze for the U.S. should be "freeze over a non-participation in a nuclear deal" and argues: "If Iran is insisting on that, means that the United States will at least announce a willingness, or its intention in a formal way, to go back into the deal."

CSIS predicts that in July, all parties to the JCPOA, including the U.S. will sit at the table while have not returned to compliance with the 2015 deal. Also, either to get Iran back to the talks or maybe at the beginning of talks, the U.S. will probably issue some kind of small measure of sanctions relief.

Though CSIS portrays the talks as "messy", it believes an overall positive trajectory will be looming and emphasizes that besides negotiating the sanctions, the U.S. should try "to secure some Iranian commitment to follow on negotiations and regional/missile negotiations as well."

Ambassador says Iran ready to assist Iraq in security affairs

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — In an interview with Iraq's Kurdish TV channel Rudav on Sunday, Iraj Masjedi, Iran's ambassador to Iraq, says that Tehran is ready to assist Iraq in security affairs if needed, according to the IRNA news agency.

Iran favors restoration of full security in Iraq, never supports those who intend to weaken Iraq's security, and in pursuit of such policies Tehran is even ready help Iraq, Masjedi stressed.

He emphasized that the existence of foreign forces in Iraq is not only of no value but leads to further insecurity and tension both in Iraq and the region as well.

Iran resolutely believes that the security forces of the Iraqi central government and the autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan Region can ensure security without foreign forces, Iran's ambassador to Baghdad added.

The diplomat added, "Iran's relations with all different Iraqi governments after the collapse of Saddam's despotic regime have been friendly and constructive."

Iran's current relations with various Iraqi groups are satisfactory and even better than before, especially after Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kazemi's recent visit to Tehran and his consultations and agreements with Iranian officials.

The Iranian diplomat also said the 1975 Algiers Agreement on common borders is registered at the UN and is still the basis and currently there is no plan to redraw any new map on shared borders.

"The thing to be done at the time being is



the rearrangement and full implementation of the 1975 Algiers Agreement in full collaboration between the two countries," he said, adding that only some small parts have remained undecided in that agreement that are of trivial importance.

"At any rate, there is no agreement on setting up new border posts, or defining new borders," he underlined.

'Iran opposes violation of security of diplomatic centers'

Masjedi also stressed that Iran opposes the violation of the security of diplomatic centers

in Iraq.

"I tell you quite clearly that the Islamic Republic of Iran is opposed to any kind of breaching of the security of diplomatic centers in any country, including Iraq, and has always condemned such attacks," the ambassador said when asked about Iran's position toward missile attacks on the U.S. embassy in Baghdad.

Ambassador Masjedi further reiterated that the security of diplomatic centers needs to be preserved fully and there is no difference between the U.S., and any other country's embassies.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran's diplomatic

centers in Iraq have faced more severe attacks than the American centers, citing examples of the Iranian consular offices in the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala, both of which were also subjects for arson," he told Rudav.

Pointing to the presence of foreign forces in Iraq, he said, "Iran believes every Iraqi citizen has the right to enjoy full security and if the Iraqi government wishes, Iran is ready to assist Iraq in restoration of security in this country, including the autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan province."

"Iran's stand about the presence of foreign forces in the region is quite clear and that is: there is no need for the presence of foreign forces of NATO, or any other country in the Iraqi Kurdistan, in entire Iraq, or in the region," he added.

Masjedi emphasized that the security of the region, either in Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, or any other regional country need to be ensured by the regional countries' their own forces.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran's relations with the Autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan province, including the Iraqi Kurdish leaders, is brisk and satisfactory for both sides, and there are absolutely no differences of opinion to be resolved," Iran's envoy to Iraq remarked.

"Yet, fine relations, too, are relative and the Islamic Republic of Iran's relations with the Iraqi Kurdistan, for instance, can be further improved if the entire existing opportunities for strengthening and improvement of ties are maximally used," he stressed.

Tehran rules out discrimination against ethnic groups

1 → Baqeri Kani suggested if she had been able to visit Iran, she would have seen the realities.

"If politics didn't prevent you to take a trip to Iran and you were allowed to closely see Iran's realities, you would notice how Lurs, Kurds, Turks, Turkmens, Arabs, Baluchs, Fars people, etc.

shout at the aliens: 'We are Iranians,'," Iran's human rights chief pointed out.

UN High Commissioner on Human Rights Michelle Bachelet has claimed that a coordinated campaign is underway in Iran targeting minorities in Sistan-Balouchestan and Khuzestan provinces.

Iran is famous in West Asia for its ethnic and religious diversity. It is home to a large Jewish community. However, it is a fact that in certain border areas people are not economically in a good situation in comparison to citizens in other parts of the country.

General Nasirzadeh says Iran capable of building jet engine

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Brigadier-General Aziz Nasirzadeh, the commander of the Air Force, says Iran is able to build jet engines.

Some universities in Iran ask the Air Force to build a piece of jet engine "while today some of our university workshops can build different generations of jet engines," he explained.

He added, "One of our demands is that

education officials increase the hours of workshop training. Our universities provide basic training, and we will use capable officers who will increase our military and national strength in accordance with our training programs as in the past."

He also said, "The country's Air Force has operational dominance over the region."

"The Islamic Republic's Air Force's power

has been proven in the region so that no air force, whether fighter or otherwise, has the right to cross the country's airspace without Iran's permission and coordination," Nasirzadeh remarked, according to the IRNA news agency.

By reinforcing the Air Force, political will and pressure can be imposed on enemies internationally, he stressed.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the Air Force chief said, "Regional states make a major strategic mistake by not relying on themselves and resorting to foreign pilots and equipment provided by foreign military advisers."

He added, "Not only they will not become self-sufficient, but in the long-run foreign forces will not have the incentive to fight and defend their country."

Hossein Amir-Abdollahian condemns U.S. attacks on Syrian soil

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, the Iranian Parliament speaker's special aide for international affairs, has condemned the recent U.S. airstrikes on anti-terror Iraqi popular forces in eastern Syria, according to Fars news agency.

"The new American administration has just changed mask and continues the path of the former one in supporting the ISIS terrorist group," he stressed.

Amir-Abdollahian noted that the U.S. President Joe Biden's

claims of fight against terrorism during his presidential campaign were all lies as he has ordered the Pentagon to strike anti-ISIS forces.

"While @JoeBiden boasted abt war agnst terrorism & #ISIS during the campaign, his authorization to strike local anti-ISIS forces shows how @WhiteHouse is hypocrite vis-a-vis terrorism & keeps its friendship w/DAESH. Mask of White House occupants has just changed & nothing more! pic.twitter.com/5tPB2C2gEz," he tweeted.

The Pentagon issued a statement late Thursday confirming earlier reports that the U.S. had conducted airstrikes inside Syrian territory. The statement said the strikes, carried out at President Biden's order, targeted multiple facilities used by Shia groups, including Kata'ib Hezbollah and Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada.

The U.S. Defense Department called the strikes a "proportionate military response" in the wake of rocket attacks on U.S. forces in Iraq by unknown assailants.

Nuclear chief: Iran will respond if IAEA board adopts negative resolution

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iran will respond appropriately in case the Board of Governors at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) issues a resolution against Iran for suspending the voluntary implementation of the Additional Protocol, the head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) warned on Sunday.

That Additional Protocol allows the IAEA to carry out short-notice inspections.

"If the Board of Governors adopts a resolution against Iran, we will show an appropriate reaction," Ali Akbar Salehi said, according to Press TV.

Salehi made the remarks on the sidelines of a meeting of the Parliament National Security and Foreign Policy Committee. The statement by Salehi came just a day before the IAEA board is to convene for a session on Iran.

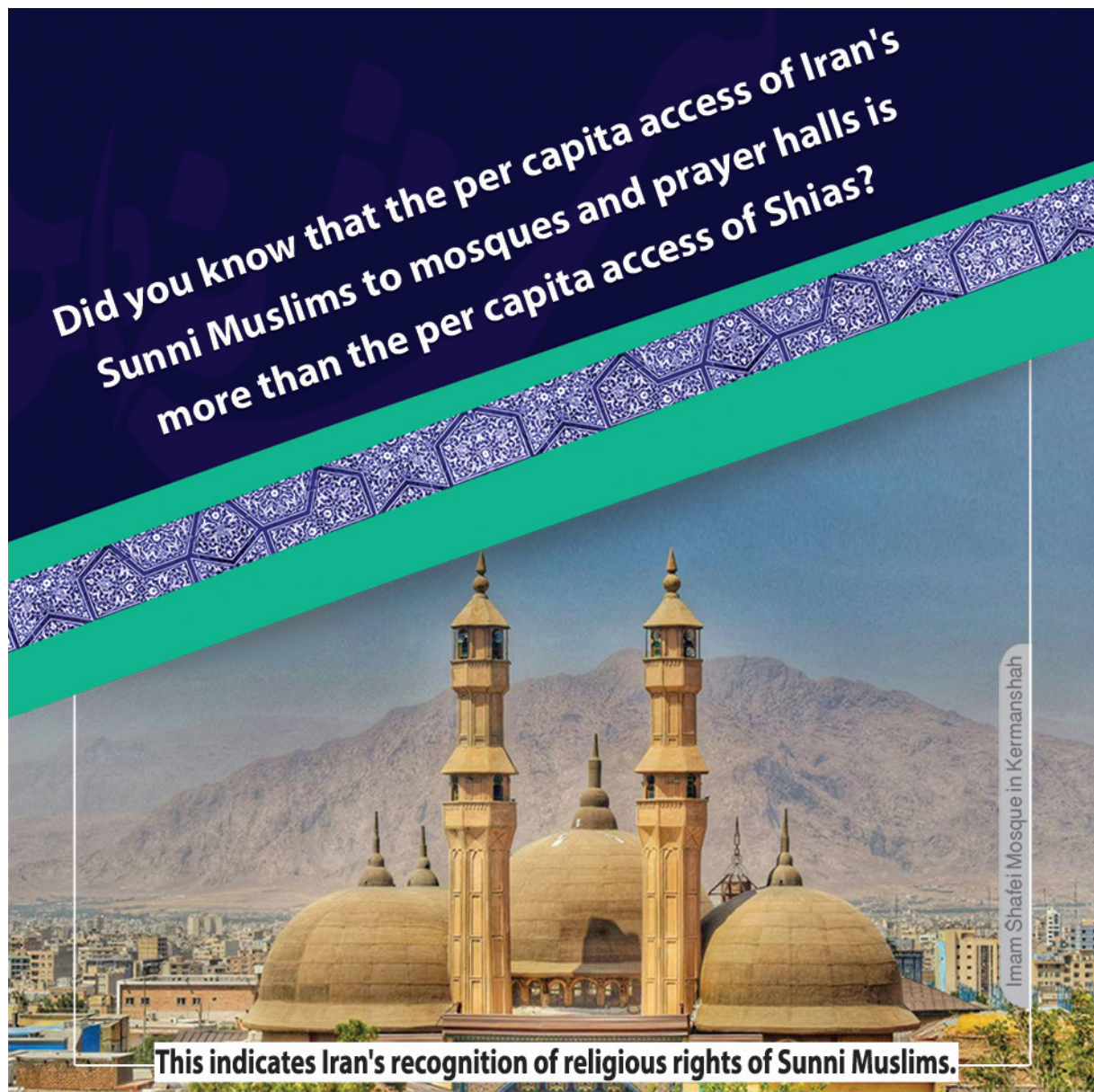
Salehi, a nuclear physicist and Iran's former ambassador to the IAEA, added that Tehran has sent a letter to the Vienna-based nuclear watchdog informing the international body of the issue.

Iran has stopped its voluntary implementation of the Additional Protocol under the Strategic Action Plan to Counter Sanctions, a law passed in December by the Parliament.

According to the move, any footage recorded by cameras at Iran's nuclear sites will no longer be shared with the IAEA, but will be retained by Iran for three months, after which they will be permanently deleted if the U.S. sanctions are not lifted.

The IAEA board is slated to convene its regular March meeting on Monday to discuss a range of issues, including its verification and monitoring activities in Iran and the NPT Safeguards Agreement with the country, according to the UN nuclear watchdog's website.

IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi visited Tehran ahead of the suspension of the Additional Protocol to discuss issues surrounding the move. During his visit, Iran and the IAEA agreed to continue cooperation while the Iranian administration goes ahead with the implementation of the December law.



Things to do in Washington when the JCPOA is dead

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** – The United States is reportedly planning to get the UN nuclear watchdog's Board of Governors to adopt a resolution criticizing Iran for reducing nuclear commitments with a 2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and major world powers.

But doing so could spell the end of the nuclear deal and dampen hopes for rekindling diplomacy with Iran under President Joe Biden, particularly now that Iran is being punished for continuing cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

The IAEA Board of Governors has received a draft resolution from the United States censuring Iran for reducing nuclear commitments in response to the unilateral withdrawal of the U.S. from the 2015 nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

While the IAEA continues to carry out inspections in Iran, U.S. diplomats circulated a document on Thursday which lists Washington's grievances and orders Iran to fully cooperate with inspectors, according to a Bloomberg report.

The proposed resolution would "underscore strong concern at the IAEA's findings" and "express the board's deepening concern with respect to Iran's cooperation," Bloomberg said, adding that this resolution would suggest that Iran could be providing incomplete information on its nuclear activities, something that has potentially serious consequences, including another referral to the United Nations Security Council.

The U.S.-led resolution comes less than a week after Iran and the IAEA arrived at an understanding on how to continue cooperation in light of the implementation of an Iranian Parliament's nuclear law that obligates the government to stop implementing the Additional Protocol to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

The nuclear law, officially called "Strategic Action to Lift Sanctions and Protect the Nation's Rights," stipulates that if the remaining parties to the JCPOA – Ger-



many, 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.

The IAEA chief Rafael Grossi traveled to Iran a few days before the nuclear law goes into effect in a bid to find a middle ground on nuclear inspections. In a gesture of goodwill, Iran struck a deal with the IAEA on how to continue cooperation with the UN nuclear watchdog.

Instead of rewarding Iran, the West responded by further ramping up diplomatic pressure on Iran. Of course, the U.S.-led resolution is not adopted yet. But there is no sign that the U.S. is going to withdraw its resolution.

If Washington goes forward with its resolution, then it will throw a monkey wrench into its own efforts to revive the JCPOA because Iran has made it clear that it considers such a move as a continuation of the Trump administration's "maximum pressure" against Iran.

"These hackneyed behaviors are a continuation of Trump's maximum pressure strategy and unveil the contentious intention of the new U.S. administration against Iran," an Iranian official told Nour News, a website close to Iran's top security body after Western news organizations reported on the U.S. resolution.

Iran also sent a letter to the IAEA warning it of the consequences of adopting a resolution against Iran.

In the letter, Iran threatened to end the deal with the IAEA, if the Agency's board of governors endorses the U.S.-led resolution, according to a Reuters report. "Iran perceives this move as destructive and considers it as an end to the Joint Understanding of 21 February 2021 between the Agency and the Islamic Republic of Iran," Iran purportedly said in its letter to the IAEA, according to Reuters.

Ali Akbar Salehi, head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), confirmed on Sunday that Iran had sent a letter to the IAEA.

He warned against adopting a resolution against Iran, saying that Tehran would give a proper response to such a move.

"If the International Atomic Energy

Agency's board of governors issues a resolution against our country due to its cessation of [the implementation of] the Additional Protocol, Iran will give a proper response. A letter in this regard has been sent," Salehi told the Islamic Consultative Assembly News Agency (ICANA).

The nuclear chief also said that Iran's move to halt the implementation of the Additional Protocol was in line with the Parliament's nuclear law.

The Iranian government implemented this law in a way that strikes a balance between domestic growing calls for reducing cooperation with the IAEA and the Agency's need for continued cooperation with Iran.

However, the Biden administration seems to be determined to undercut Iran's efforts to save the JCPOA. By putting forward a resolution against Iran, Washington only implied that it responds to Iran's goodwill gesture with more pressures and bullying. This has raised alarm bells for some analysts and diplomats.

"IAEA BoG session will start tomorrow. It can predetermine further developments around the Iranian nuclear program, as well as prospects of full restoration of JCPOA. All Governors need to keep this in mind and exercise responsible approach," Mikhail Ulyanov, Russia's permanent representative to international organizations in Vienna, said in a tweet on Sunday.

The Biden administration risks destroying the opportunity for a renewed diplomacy between Tehran and Washington by pushing for a resolution that will only complicate the situation around the JCPOA. If the Agency's board adopts a resolution against Iran only a few days after Iran reached an understanding with the IAEA, then why Iran should continue to cooperate with IAEA. Iran has long tolerated the U.S. non-compliance with the JCPOA, hoping that a new U.S. administration would rejoin the deal. But now Iran has no reason to tolerate the non-compliance of an administration that campaigned on rejoining the JCPOA but reneged on its promise as soon as it took the helm in the White House.

Iran not interested in escalation with U.S.: ambassador

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** – Iran has no interest in escalating tensions with the United States, Iran's ambassador to the United Nations Majid Takht-Ravanchi has said.

The Iranian ambassador pointed out that the Islamic Republic of Iran has shown in practice that it has no interest in making provocative moves and escalating tensions even during the time when the Trump administration started to stoke tensions and make provocative moves.

The Iranian envoy made the remarks in response to Al Jazeera's question about a possible escalation of tensions as a result of Tehran's moves to scale down its commitments under the 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, officially known as the JCPOA, according to Press TV.

Iran has recently struck a deal with the International Atomic Energy Agency on how to continue cooperation in light of the Iranian Parliament's nuclear law that came into effect on February 23.

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.

The IAEA chief Rafael Grossi paid a visit to Iran two days before Iran starts implementing the nuclear law to make arrangements for the implementation of the law, according to Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif.

"Mr. Grossi came to Iran to make arrangements for the implementation of the law. We have reached an agreement in this regard, and the principle of this agreement is that the tapes recorded from our nuclear programs, which were never presented live to the Agency, but were provided on a daily and weekly basis, will be kept from now on and will not be presented to the Agency," the chief Iranian diplomat said, noting that Iran will continue to implement the IAEA safeguards.

The IAEA and the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) issued a joint statement outlining the content of the deal moments after Grossi concluded his visit to Iran.

"The Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) recalled and reaffirmed the spirit of cooperation and enhanced mutual trust that led to the Joint Statement in Tehran on



26 August 2020, and the importance of continuing that cooperation and trust," the statement said. "The AEOI informed the IAEA that in order to comply with the act passed by the Parliament of the Islamic Republic of Iran called 'Strategic Action to Cease Actions and Protect the interest of Iranian Nation' (The 'Law') Iran will stop the implementation of the voluntary measures as envisaged in the JCPOA, as of 23 February 2021."

The statement added, "In view of the above and in order for the Agency to continue its verification and monitoring activities, the AEOI and the IAEA agreed: 1. That Iran continues to implement fully and without limitation its Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement with the IAEA as before. 2. To a temporary bilateral technical understanding, compatible with the Law, whereby the IAEA will continue with its necessary verification and monitoring activities for up to 3 months (as per technical annex). 3. To keep the technical understanding under regular review to ensure it continues to achieve its purposes."

"Deal with IAEA shows Iran still honoring obligations"

Takht-Ravanchi said this deal is yet another sign that Iran continues to honor its international obligations.

He said the moves made by Iran in reaction to the failure of other JCPOA parties in living up to their commitments cannot result in an escalation of tensions.

"When the Trump administration decided to leave the JCPOA, the remaining parties to the JCPOA asked us not to adopt a stance similar to that of Trump. They said they will compensate for the damages caused by the Trump administration's withdrawal from the deal. We waited for a year, but we didn't get anything from their promises, and it was just an empty promise," he was quoted as saying by Press TV.

Therefore, the envoy added, Iran had no other choice if it wanted to create a balance in the nuclear deal, and thus started to take certain measures in that regard.

"Recently, when our Parliament witnessed that the other parties to the JCPOA are not serious about making up for our damages, and that the E3 is not willing to fulfill its commitments, it decided to ... pass a law that obliges the administration to take measures like increasing uranium enrichment."

Control (LoK).

"The joint statement is an important step towards further peace and stability in the South Asia region," spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry Saeed Khatibzadeh said

in a statement on Sunday.

He also expressed hope that the two countries will move towards peace, stability, and welfare of the region by taking further strides. The armed forces of India and Paki-

stan announced in a joint statement on Thursday that they had begun to strictly adhere to a ceasefire along the Line of Control in the disputed region of Jammu and Kashmir.

SPORTS

Azizi Khadem elected head of Iran football federation

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** – Shahabeddin Azizi Khadem was elected as president of Iran football federation on Sunday for a four-year term.

In the Football Federation of the Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) elections which were held at the Iran International Conference Center in Tehran, Azizi Khadem was elected as new president of football federation with 49 votes out of 87 votes.

The four candidates were vying to win the election and Azizi Khadem and Kiumars Hashemi won 35 and 24 votes respectively in the first round.

Mostafa Ajorloo and Ali Karimi also earned 18 and nine votes in the first round.

Azizi Khadem won the election in the second round with 49 votes, while Hashemi claimed 38 votes.

Azizi Khadem, 43, has already worked in Iran football federation as a member of board of directors.

The Iran football federation was running by Heydar Baharvand as acting president after Mehdi Taj resigned as president in December 2019.



We need help to improve our football: Azizi Khadem

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** – Newly-elected president of Iran football federation Shahabeddin Azizi Khadem says that they need help to improve football.

Azizi Khadem was elected as president for a four-year term with 49 votes out of 87 votes at the Iran International Conference Center in Tehran on Sunday.

He defeated Kiumars Hashemi in the second round to win the elections.

"First of all, I want to thank everyone who voted for me. The today's elections showed the manifestation of democracy. We will move forward with consensus and take step with the aim of improving football at the provinces," Azizi Khadem said after the elections.

"The Iranian clubs and all football society should help each other to improve our football. We will move forward with a new way. We are going to make a plan for football, because our football has suffered disorganization over the past years," he added.

"We will move forward step by step to reach our goals, that's why I'm here. We're obliged to use the experts in the federation. The new federation will also support the grassroots and women's football," Azizi Khadem concluded.

Iran to take part at Sofia Taekwondo Open

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** – Iran will send six taekwondo practitioners to Bulgaria on Thursday to participate at the eighth edition of the Sofia Taekwondo Open.

The Sofia Open is scheduled to take place on March 6 and 7 in the Bulgarian capital.

This event currently has 117 athletes from 12 countries registered to take part.

Iran taekwondo national team will also hold a 10-day training camp in Sofia after the Open.

Iran squad:
-54kg: Hossein Lotfi
-68kg: Soroush Ahmadi
-74kg: Mirhashem Hosseini
-80kg: Amirmohammad Bakhshi
-87kg: Mehran Barkhordari
+87kg: Sajad Mardani

The team will be headed by Fariborz Askari in the tournament.

Baharvand appointed FFIRI acting vice president

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** – New president of Football Federation of the Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) Shahabeddin Azizi Khadem appointed Heydar Baharvand as the federation's acting vice president.

Baharvand was also appointed as acting president of Iran Football League Organization.

He served as FFIRI acting president since December 2019 after Mehdi Taj stepped down as president of federation.

Azizi Khadem was elected as president of Iran football federation for a four-year term on Sunday.

Iranian Greco-Roman wrestlers shine at Ukrainian Memorial

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** – Seven Iranian Greco-Roman wrestlers claimed medals at the Outstanding Ukrainian Wrestlers & Coaches Memorial.

Alireza Nejati won a gold medal after defeating Kyrgyzstan's Zholaman Sharshenbekov 5-1 in the final match of the 60kg.

Mohammadali Geraei beat his countryman Amin Kavaniinejhad 4-2 in the 77kg final.

Sajad Abbaspour seized a silver in the 55kg, losing to Georgian Nugzar Tsurtsumia in the 55kg final match.

Mohammadreza Mokhtari (72kg) and Mehdi Bali (97kg) also won two bronze medals.

Amin Mirzazadeh also took a bronze at the 120kg category. Freestyler Mohammadsadegh Firouzpour also won a gold medal after defeating Turkey's Soner Demirtaş 2-1 in the final match of the freestyle 74kg.

Outstanding Ukrainian Wrestlers & Coaches Memorial featured about 600 participants from 33 different nations.

Car scrapping industry dormant; scrap imported

1 → “We in the country have the capacity to scrap 360,000 worn-out cars annually and turn them into scrap and scrap iron, but considering that the government and the authorities do not care about this area, last year we were able to scrap only 8,000 cars and thus scrap iron production also declined; however, there is no need to import scrap metal if the scrapping centers are active with their full capacity”, according to Ahmadi.



In addition to polluting the air and consuming too much fuel, the traffic of worn-out vehicles in cities endangers the lives of their owners due to lack of safety.

And all these factors put emphasis on the need to take required measures for complete implementation of the scrappage scheme.

Commodities worth nearly \$445m traded at IME in a week

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — During the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday), 789,176 tons of commodities with a total trading value of nearly \$445 million were traded at Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME), showing a growth of nine percent in volume of trades as compared to the week before.

According to a report by the IME's International Affairs and Public Relations Department, the exchange sold on its mineral and industrial trading floor 312,107 tons of various products worth more than \$221 million.

Commodities traded on this floor included 299,717 tons of steel, 7,500 tons of copper, 3,985 tons of aluminum, 200 tons of molybdenum concentrate, 30 tons of precious metals concentrate, 25 tons of lead, 450 tons of zinc and 20 kg of gold bars.

Furthermore, the oil and petrochemical trading floor of the IME, on its both domestic and export pits, saw trade of 475,291 tons of various commodities valued at more than \$224 million.

On this floor, the exchange's customers purchased 184,480 tons of vacuum bottom, 121,955 tons of bitumen, 77,966 tons of polymeric products, 40,036 tons of chemicals, 48,000 tons of lube cut, 1,901 tons of base oil, 30 tons of argon, 500 tons of insulation and 1,800 tons of sulfur.

In addition to that, the IME traded 1,777 tons of other commodities on its side market.

As reported last week by the IME's International Affairs and Public Relations Department, the value of trades at the exchange rose 16 percent during the eleventh Iranian calendar month of Bahman (January 20 – February 18).

During the past month 2.96 million tons of commodities worth \$1.62 billion were traded at the exchange, while the weight of traded goods shows a two-percent growth as well.

The IME's mineral and industrial trading floor witnessed trade of 1.349 million tons of commodities worth more than \$875 million.



This floor was a platform to sell 236,000 tons of steel, 26,040 tons of copper, 54 tons of precious metals concentrate, 510 tons of molybdenum concentrate, 24,500 tons of aluminum, 500 tons of coke, 18,100 tons of zinc, 50,000 tons of iron ore concentrate, 100 tons of cast iron, 50 tons of lead and 65 kg of gold bars.

In addition to that, the IME traded on both domestic and export pit of its oil and petrochemical trading floor 1,589,000 tons of commodities worth more than \$740 million.

Commodities sold here were 494,337 tons of bitumen, 331,664 tons of petrochemicals, 152,840 tons of chemicals, 13,382 tons of base oil, 423,050 tons of vacuum bottom, 18,790 tons of sulfur, 200 tons of argon, 250 tons of insulation and 159,500 tons of lube cut.

Last but not least, the exchange saw trade of 21,645 tons of commodities on its side market.

As previously reported, over 2,893 tons of commodities worth nearly \$1.5 billion have been traded at IME during the tenth Iranian calendar month of Dey (December 21, 2020-January 19, 2021).

The exchange hosted trading of 1,176,000 tons of commodities with a trading value of more than \$740 million on its mineral and industrial trading floor.

On this floor the IME sold 1,093,000 tons of steel, 5,160 tons of copper, 30 tons of precious metals concentrate, 480 tons of molybdenum concentrate, 15,955 tons of aluminum, 800 tons of coke, 20,500 tons of zinc dust, 40,000 tons of iron ore concentrate, 300 tons of cast iron and 54 kg of gold bars.

On its oil and petrochemical trading floor, the IME traded more than 1,707,000 tons of commodities worth nearly \$749 million, which included 602,855 tons of various types of bitumen, 257,511 tons of polymeric products, 124,965 tons of chemicals, 6,300 tons of slop wax and 503,760 tons of vacuum bottom. Moreover, the exchange sold on this floor 11,825 tons of base oil, 69,725 tons of sulfur, 200 tons of argon and 129,000 tons of lube cut.

The next trading floor of the IME was agricultural with 10,500 kg of saffron sold on it.

Last but not least, the IME's side market saw trade of 9,510 tons of various types of commodities within the same month.

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).

Production by major automakers exceeds 817,000 in 11 months

1 → Iranian carmakers had exported about 1,300 vehicles to nine countries, including Hong Kong, Taiwan, Syria, UAE, Spain, China, Iraq, and Turkey during the previous Iranian calendar year.

Based on the data released by the Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry, 468,699 vehicles were manufactured in Iran during the first half of the current year (March 20-September 21, 2020), which has been 23.4 percent higher than the figure for the same period of time in

the past year.

During this period, 425,925 passenger cars were manufactured in the country, registering a growth of 21.9 percent compared to the first six months of the previous year. The production of trucks also reached 39,519 units in the said time span, which has increased by 40.4 percent compared to the last year's same period.

Considering the mentioned data, while the growth in output has been realized in the first half, car manufacturing is also



planned to rise in the second half.

Mohsen Salehinia, the new head of the Industrial Development and Renovation Organization of Iran (IDRO), has mentioned planning for increasing car manufacturing in the second half, and said, “We are investigating and finalizing the issues in

this due”.

Deputy Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Saeed Zarandi had said earlier this year that 1.2 million vehicles were planned to be manufactured in the present year, which seems a realistic figure given the surge in production policies of this year.

Over 27b cubic meters of water stored in Iranian dams

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Some 27.33 billion cubic meters of water is stored behind the dams across Iran, indicating that 54 percent of the capacity of the country's dams is full, according to the Iranian Energy Ministry data.

Based on the Energy Ministry data, the total capacity of the country's dam reservoirs currently stands at 50.5 billion cubic meters.

As reported by IRNA, since the beginning of the current water year (late September 2020) up to late February, the total volume of water inflow to the reservoirs of the country's dams stood at 13.75 billion cubic meters, nine percent less than the figure for the last year's same period.

According to the Energy Ministry data, compared to the figures for the previous water year, the volume of water outflow from the country's dams has also decreased by 17 percent to stand at 13.61 billion cubic meters.

Back in December 2020, the director of planning affairs at Iran Water and Power Resources Development Company

(IWPCO) had announced that all dams across the country were fully prepared for handling potential floods in the winter and spring.

Due to the heavy rainfalls across Iran in mid-December 2020, the empty volume of the country's dam reservoirs had been reduced to 2.6 billion cubic meters, Mohammad Mousavi Kani said on December 19.

Earlier in May 2020, the Energy Ministry's portal (Paven) had announced that 190 dams, with a total reservoir capacity of 48.488 billion cubic meters, were understudy or being constructed across Iran.

As reported, 90 of the mentioned dams with a total reservoir capacity of 29.724 billion cubic meters were under study and another 100 dams with a total reservoir capacity of 18.7672 billion cubic meters were under construction.

Out of a total of 183 currently operational dams across Iran, 52 are related to the Caspian Sea catchment area, 12 are based in Urumieh basin, 68 dams are located in the



Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman watersheds, 34 dams are in the Central Plateau, 11 dams are in Sarakhs catchment basin, and another six dams are located across the eastern boundary basin (Hamoun).

Energy Ministry launches new systems to improve services

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian inaugurated several new systems for improving services in the water and electricity sectors through video conference on Sunday.

Launched in the 43rd week of the Energy Ministry's A-B-Iran program, the mentioned systems were put into operation in various areas including resource consumption improvement, asset utilization, human resource management, financial resources management, and reforming work processes in order to create transparency, and to facilitate and accelerate affairs while eliminating possible bottlenecks.

A smart system for improving the Energy



Ministry's support and emergency centers called Homa, as well as a new customer services system called Chavoush were also among the launched systems.

A mechanized network monitoring system called Sanam was also put into operation; this system is aimed at monitoring the electricity networks of various provinces in order to reduce electricity losses and improve the efficiency of the country's power network.

As reported, electricity losses in the country's power network have been reduced from 14.5 percent in the Iranian calendar year 1392 (ended in March 2014) to 9.5 percent in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20) and as a result, the fuel consumption by the country's power plants has also decreased by 16 billion liters.

The mentioned developments have saved the country about 500 trillion rials (about \$11.9 billion) during the said period.

A-B-Iran program (the acronyms A and B stand for water and electricity in Persian) was initiated in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19, 2020), during which the minister made several trips to various provinces for inaugurating over 220 major projects with a total investment of 335.6 trillion rials (about \$7.99 billion).

Since the beginning of the second phase of the scheme in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 20, 2020), every week several energy projects have gone operational across the country.

According to Ardakanian, in the second phase of the program 250 projects were going to be inaugurated by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20).

Exports from mining sector stand at over \$5.6b in 10 months

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — The value of Iran's exports from the mining sector stood at \$5.612 billion in the first 10 months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2020-January 19, 2021), according to the data released by the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA).

Based on the mentioned data, the Iranian mining sector exported 34.09 million tons of products during the said 10 months, IRNA reported.

As reported, some 3.9 million tons of the mentioned products valued at \$762.296 million were exported during the 10th Iranian calendar month of Dey (December 21, 2020-January 19, 2021).

Steel ingots and products, copper cathode, and aluminum ingots accounted for the biggest share of the exported products during the period under review.

During the mentioned time span, 6.173 million tons of non-metallic minerals worth over \$214.091 million were exported to foreign destinations.

According to official data, on average the mineral sector has accounted for about 20 percent of the country's total non-oil exports in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20).

Based on the IRICA data, overall, 122.79 million



tons of non-oil commodities worth \$58.702 billion were exported from the country in the first 10 months of the current Iranian calendar year.

As previously announced by the former Acting Minister of Industry, Mining, and Trade Hossein Modarres Khiafani, reaching the minerals export of \$10.5 billion is planned for the current Iranian calendar year.

In the current Iranian calendar year which has

been named the year of “Surge in Production” by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution of Iran Seyed Ali Khamenei, the government is determined to support domestic production and promote the country's non-oil exports.

The “Persistent Production-Effective Employment-Sustainable Exports” program has been defined by the Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry in line with the government's new strategies for developing the country's infrastructure in order to realize the “Surge in Production” motto.

Back in April 2020, Iran's Deputy Industry Mining and Trade Minister Darioush Esmaili had said that the Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry has provisioned operational targets in the mining sector's three major areas of exploration, extraction, and processing, for the current year.

“In the mining industry sector, we have targeted a 25-percent increase in the production of mineral products, and in the exploration sector, we will add about 20 percent to the previous reserves”, the official said.

The mining sector accounted for 25 percent of the country's non-oil revenues in the past Iranian calendar year, he said.

Iranian aviation incomes drop \$76m in 2020

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Head of Iran Airports and Air Navigation Company (IAC) announced on Sunday a \$76-million decline in the country's aviation industry revenues during 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic restrictions.

According to Siavash Amirmokri, the air passenger numbers in Iran decreased by 52 percent in 2020, the IAC Office of Public Relations reported.

The country's air traffic also declined by 67 percent during the mentioned time span.

Speaking in a gathering of aviation industry managers at the place of IAC, Amirmokri noted that despite the problems created by the coronavirus pandemic IAC managed to inaugurate 28 major development projects

in 14 different airports across the country over the past year.

The mentioned projects include the construction of 21 new aircraft parking stands and renovation and improvement of over 1.3 million square meters of airport spaces.

Implementation of the said projects has added 50,000 square meters to the Iranian airports' terminal space, according to Amirmokri.

The IAC head also announced the completion of several other development projects at various airports, including Mehrabad, Mashhad, Gonabad, Ardabil, Birjand, Saqez, and Ilam in the upcoming Iranian calendar year 1400 (begins on March 21).

Based on the international aviation data, global air traffic declined by 60 percent

in 2020 compared to 2019, according to Amirmokri.

“The number of air passengers in 2019 was about 4.5 billion, which declined by 1.8 billion in 2020; airport revenues also decreased by 65 percent (\$112 billion),” he said.

Airlines also saw a 66-percent drop in passenger traffic, and the world's air navigation revenue fell by \$13 billion, he added.

Back in June 2020, Transport and Urban Development Minister Mohammad Eslami had said that plans were in place for adding new terminals and runways to the existing airports across Iran to further increase the capacity of the airports by another 10 million passengers per year.

“These airport projects include the pas-



senger terminal, runway, control tower, radar system, and navigation system,” he said, adding that finishing those projects would greatly boost aviation safety in Iran.

Iranian airports currently have the capacity to handle more than 60 million passengers a year.

Jalaluddin Rakhmat was victim of slander by takfiris: Indonesian professor

‘The nature of Islam in Indonesia is a peaceful Islam’

1 → The young Jalaluddin Rakhmat was one of four or five prominent Muslim thinkers in Indonesia at that time. He wrote many articles published in national media. He also delivered scientific speeches, which many students attended. In my opinion, Dr. Jalaluddin Rakhmat had two outstanding qualifications. First, he was professional in presenting excellent speeches and writing skills so that readers or listeners enjoy his writings and lectures. People know Dr. Jalaluddin as a very talented orator and writer. His speeches and writings were able to touch the heart and excite the mind. The second qualification was his ability to introduce a new approach to understanding Islam. He called it an “alternative approach”. A collection of his speech on this new approach has been published in a book entitled “Islam Alternatif” (Alternative Approach). The book was very well known and widely read by Indonesian youth and is still circulating today.

In that book, Dr. Jalal wrote about Islam as the source of compassion, Islam and liberation of the oppressed, Islam and community development, and Islam and science. In the last chapter, he explained about Shia teaching school and the Islamic Revolution of Iran. In this chapter, he encouraged people to be open-minded and accept the differences between many mazaheb (school of thoughts). According to Dr. Jalal, having an opinion and passing it on to others is allowed in Islam. What is forbidden is turning differences of opinion into sectarianism and disunity. The speeches and writing of Dr. Jalal have made significant contributions to the spread of moderate and intellectual Islam in Indonesia.

What were his achievements as a researcher and academic?

Dr. Jalaluddin Rakhmat was a man who had spent his entire life devoted to the development of science. He had taught at Padjadjaran University in the faculty of communication. He wrote tens of books and almost all of them were best sellers. Most of these books are related to Islamic thought, from the interpretation of the Quran, mysticism, the study of hadith, to the explanation of prayers. Some of the others are related to education, communication science, and psychology. His book, entitled “Communication Psychology”, has become a compulsory book taught in psychology and communication faculties in universities in Indonesia. Apart from



being an Islamic thinker, Dr. Jalal is also known as an expert in communication science.

How do you describe his relations with the Islamic Revolution in Iran? What was the impact of the Iranian Revolution on Indonesian Muslims?

As I said earlier, in the 1980s, youths in the Muslim world, including Indonesia, experienced an Islamic awakening era. Many Islamic thinkers viewed this phenomenon as the impact of the Iranian Islamic Revolution. At that time, the translation of the books of Imam Khomeini, Rafsanjani, Ali Shariati, Motahari, and Tabatabai were among the bestselling books in Indonesia. The university students discussed these books; along with the books of Muhammad Abduh, Jamaluddin Al-Afghani, Rasyid Ridha, etc.

Muslim scholars in Indonesia provided their views about the revolution in the form of writing and speeches. However, in my opinion, the best explanation regarding the Iranian Islamic Revolution

is that of Dr. Jalaludin Rakhmat. As I mentioned earlier, in his legendary book “Alternative Islam”, he describes the Shia and Wilayatul Faqih system, which became the basic ideology for the Iranian Islamic Revolution and the formation of the Islamic Republic of Iran. When the Iranian Islamic Revolution began to receive attacks from takfiri groups, in the form of slander and baseless accusations, Dr. Jalaluddin always provided his defense.

Please tell us about his approach towards other religions and dialogue between the religions?

Dr. Jalaluddin was one of the intellectuals who consistently called for the importance of dialogue between religions and various sects. He did this not because he was part of a minority group but because he believed that dialogue was one of Islam’s most important teachings. He believed that when the tradition of dialogue to resolve differences fades away, the pillars of our nation will collapse.

Dr. Jalaluddin himself repeatedly gave speeches in seminars that were attended

Dr. Jalaluddin himself repeatedly gave speeches in seminars that were attended by various religious figures and schools of thought. That is why the commemoration of Dr. Jalal’s death was also attended by minority figures in Indonesia who gave testimony about Dr. Jalal’s efforts to fight for the protection of minorities.

by various religious figures and schools of thought. That is why the commemoration of Dr. Jalal’s death was also attended by minority figures in Indonesia who gave testimony about Dr. Jalal’s efforts to fight for the protection of minorities.

Could you tell us about the co-existence of different religions and sects in Indonesia? Is there any takfiri or extremist ideologies there?

The nature of Islam in Indonesia is a peaceful Islam. History shows that Islam entered Indonesia without the slightest bit of war or conquest. This situation continues today. The two largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia, namely Nahdhatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, are moderate organizations. Indeed, as is the case in many parts of the world, the emergence Shia was met with negative reactions from takfiri groups linked to Saudi Arabia.

Dr. Jalaluddin Rakhmat and the Shia community in Indonesia often become victims of persecution and slander by the takfiris. This phenomenon has been increasing in recent years along with the Syrian conflict. However, in general, takfiri groups are the minority in Indonesia. The majority of Indonesian Muslims reject their ideology, which is considered contrary to our state’s principles.

How do you assess Indonesian Islamic scholars’ contribution to Islamic world?

I should mention that Indonesia is the biggest Muslim country in the world. Our population is more than 270 million people, and 80% of us are Muslim. So, there are more than 200 million Muslims in Indonesia. I think, with this huge number, it is inevitable that the development of Islam in Indonesia has an impact on the Muslim world. In Indonesia, many Muslims have essential roles in social, political, and economic fields. Although Indonesia is not an Islamic state, the Indonesian state’s basic principles, called “Pancasila”, are the essence of Islamic teachings, namely monotheism, humanity, unity of the people, democracy, and justice.

Islamic scholarship is quite well developed in Indonesia. We have universities that specifically teach Islamic sciences in various fields, from philosophy, law, education to economics. However, the studies conducted by Islamic scholars in Indonesia still need to be improved so that their thoughts can contribute more widely to the Islamic world.

Baku welcomes Iran’s participation in Karabakh reconstruction: Azeri MP

By Zahra Mirzafarjouyan

TEHRAN—“Describing Iran as a good neighbor, Tural Ganjaliyev said, “We would like to see Iranian government and companies’ participation in the reconstruction of Karabakh.”

Nowadays after the liberation of the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, a new chapter is going to be opened in the relation of all regional countries, particularly between Tehran and Baku.

Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan share, to a large extent, the same history, religion, and culture.

Besides historical and cultural commonalities of the two countries, Iran recognized Azerbaijan’s independence in 1991, and diplomatic relations between the two countries were established in 1992. Both countries are full members of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and the organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

Commonalities and joint interests of the two countries have functioned as the driving engine of the two countries’



ties. Relations between the two neighboring countries have gradually but significantly improved since 2013.

During a visit to the Republic of Azerbaijan organized by GJC, a correspondent of Mehr News agency reached out to Tural Ganjaliyev, a member of Azerbaijan’s parliament and head of the Azerbaijani community in Azerbaijan. He discussed Tehran-Baku relation in the post-Karabakh war.

He noted that Azerbaijan is very keen on cooperation with all counties regarding the reconstruction process of the Karabakh region after the liberation of the region.

Referring to the liberation of some parts of Iran and Azerbaijan border areas which were under long-term occupation, Azeri Parliamentarian said that besides Karabakh Azeri side wants full-scale cooperation with Iran in reconstructing border areas in order to achieve more positive results.

He stressed, “Iran has always been our good neighbor and partner and we enjoy good cultural and historical commonalities, so we would like to see Iranian government and companies’ participation in the reconstruction of Karabakh.

Vast majority of terror victims are Muslims: scholar

1 → Trump promised to make America great again and rescue the U.S. from China and migrants; Brexit promised to allow the U.K. to <take back control> and rescue British people from Brussels. The same pattern is repeated with different visions by leaders promising to make Turkey, Hungary, Poland, the Philippines, China and a dozen other places’ great again.>

What are the main reasons for opposition to immigrants or religious minorities by right-wing parties?

Migration to Europe has increased in recent years, and the overlap of an anti-reaction to this migration with political difficulties in the Middle East (West Asia) gave the far-right an ideal scapegoat in Muslims. It is true that there have been acts of terror perpetrated by extremist people professing the Muslim faith. The tragedy is that the vast majority of victims of these acts of terror have themselves been also Muslims. Responding to terror with exaggerated Islamophobic rhetoric rather than solid police action plays into the hands of the extremists in the Middle East (West

Asia) and makes reconciliation and peace harder to attain.

What does push people to turn to racist groups or parties in Europe?

I am a great believer in the power of economics to drive extremes and the observation of the Roman poet Ovid that <in prosperity no altars smoke.> I suspect that as and when prosperity returns, the extremes will recede. Of course, that is the moment to work for the real reconciliation that can be a hedge against a return to extremes.

How can the world confront anti-Islamism?

I think that there is a need to talk about all extremes in religion and politics. We need to acknowledge the way in which demonization of enemies is used to build



political capital by leaders who have a vested interest in perpetuating conflict. The most hopeful thing is when people can connect with others like themselves

“Migration to Europe has increased in recent years, and the overlap of an anti-reaction to this migration with political difficulties in the Middle East (West Asia) gave the far-right an ideal scapegoat in Muslims.”

but in other countries and communities. This is the value of cultural and educational exchanges. I see great value in events like the Arabesque season at the Kennedy Center in Washington DC or the Iranian art show at the British museum, which shows the region’s beauty and heritage and disrupts the demonization.

How do you see the future of Muslims in Britain? What is the current status of Muslims in the country?

I know that the headlines are always negative at the moment, but there are also positive indicators of change. When I was a boy, it was impossible to imagine some of the things we have today, like Muslim members of parliament, Muslim ambassadors, Muslim lawyers, Muslim entertainers and sportsmen and women. What would Uncle Napoleon say? This is not a British trick but a sign of real change and of hope for the future. A better, more inclusive society and a more tolerant wider-world will require effort and patience. The first step must be to listen and not to assume we know how the other side feels.

Several killed in bloodiest day of Myanmar anti-coup protests

Security forces in Myanmar moved quickly to stamp out protests against military rule on Sunday, firing live bullets at demonstrators in the main city of Yangon and other cities, killing at least six people and wounding several in the bloodiest day of weeks of demonstrations.

According to al Jazeera, police were out in force early and opened fire in different parts of Yangon after stun grenades, tear gas and shots in the air failed to break up crowds. Soldiers also reinforced police.

The Myanmar Now media group posted a video of a wounded man lying on the street near the Hledan Centre intersection in Yangon, and said he had been “shot in his chest area by what appeared to be live ammunition”.

A man who witnessed the shooting told the Frontier Magazine that the police had fired live rounds at protesters sheltering at a bus station and that “one person died and others are wounded”.

Iraqi warplanes, Hashd al-Sha’abi fighters take on Daesh remnants in Diyala

Iraqi warplanes and fighters from the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), also known as Hashd al-Sha’abi, have embarked on sweeping operations to clear the western border province of Diyala of remnants of the Takfiri terrorist group of Daesh.

As part of the operations, the terrorists’ important positions and headquarters have been heavily bombed over the past three days, especially in the province’s Sheikh Baba village and the mountainous Hamrin area, Abdulkhaliq al-Azzawi, a member of Iraq’s parliamentary Committee on Defense and Security, was quoted as saying by al-Maloumah news agency on Sunday.

According to al Jazeera, the operations, he added, have destroyed Daesh’s underground facilities in the areas, many of which contained explosive materials and ammunition.

“Daesh has lost some of its elements during the recent aerial attacks,” he also reported, but said the inaccessible terrain was preventing people on the ground from keeping track of the exact death toll.

Sadiq al-Husseini, the spokesman for the PMU’s division in Diyala, said the airstrikes had killed a Daesh operations officer, who used to function as one of the group’s notable ringleaders and had led attacks against security forces over the past months.

Armenia crisis grows as president blocks bid to fire army chief

Armenian President Armen Sarkisian said he had refused to sign a prime ministerial order to dismiss the army’s chief of staff, deepening an entrenched national political crisis.

The move came as several thousand opposition protesters took to the streets of Armenia’s capital Yerevan for the third day running to call for the resignation of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, AFP reported.

They want him to go over his handling of last year’s war with Azerbaijan, which many see as a national humiliation.

The fresh protests, which have continued on and off since the fighting ended in November, erupted Thursday when Pashinyan defied a call by the military to resign and accused the army of an attempted coup.

He also ordered the chief of the general staff Onik Gasparian to be fired -- but on Saturday, Armenian President Sarkisian, whose role is largely ceremonial, said in a statement that he would not back the move.

Gorbachev urges talks to ‘avoid nuclear war’ as U.S. bombers fly over Russian navy

Mikhail Gorbachev, who was the last leader of the former Soviet Union, has called on U.S. President Joe Biden and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin to resolve their differences through negotiation and work towards further restrictions on nuclear weapons as part of efforts to “avoid nuclear war.”

Gorbachev said in an interview with the Russian Interfax news agency on Saturday that the two leaders, who spoke by phone after Biden’s inauguration last month, should meet and discuss to push for further arms curbs.

“I believe that it is imperative that the presidents meet. Experience shows that it is necessary to meet and negotiate,” the 89-year-old former Soviet leader said.

“It is clear that the main thing is to avoid nuclear war. Since such a problem must be avoided, it is impossible to solve it alone, it is necessary to meet. If the desire to achieve disarmament and to strengthen security prevails, so much can be accomplished,” he added.

Tensions escalated between the two sides under former U.S. president Donald Trump, fuelled by allegations of sweeping cyber-attacks and a litany of other disagreements over security-related matters and nuclear arms control.

Resistance News

More than 150 settlers defile Al-Aqsa courtyards

INTERNATIONAL **TEHRAN**— Dozens of Jewish settlers stormed d e s k on Sunday morning the holy Al-Aqsa Mosque under Israeli police protection.

Media and local sources said that 153 Jewish extremists broke into the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

The so-called Temple Groups had called for mass desecration of the holy Islamic site as part of celebrations of the so-called Purim Jewish festival, which started on Sunday.

Al-Aqsa Mosque is witnessing daily, except on Fridays and Saturdays, incursions and violations by settlers and the occupation police in two shifts in the morning and evening.

The frequency of these incursions increases during the period of Jewish festivals, during which restricted measures are imposed on the entry of Palestinians to the Mosque.

Tourism, transport ministers ink MOU to boost maritime tourism

➔ He also expressed hope that constructing seaside hotels on the northern and southern coasts and bringing the international cruise ships would also boost maritime tourism in the country. For his part, Eslami said that having a well-organized program for the development of beaches and the use of marine recreation is a priority for the transport ministry.



Over the past couple of years, the Islamic Republic has made various efforts to exploit maritime tourism potential by developing hospitality infrastructures, diversifying sea routes, and drawing private sector investors along its vast southern coasts. Prosperous maritime tourism could help the county to meet its ambitious target of attracting 20 million annual tourists by 2025. It also keeps an eye on tourism developments in the Caspian Sea in the north.

Hop-on hop-off busses reach Kish Island

TOURISM **TEHRAN** — With only weeks to the Iranian New Year, several double-decker hop-on, hop-off busses have recently been transferred to Kish Island in the Persian Gulf.

Recently added to the Kish transport fleet, the vehicles are set to offer tens of hop-on, hop-off access to touristic places of the Island, Mehr reported.

Over the past couple of decades, the coral Kish Island has become a beach resort where visitors can swim, shop, and sample a laid-back and relatively liberated local lifestyle. It is home to free-trade-zone status, with ever-growing hotels, shopping centers, apartment blocks, and retail complexes.



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

The pristine and beautiful nature, the meeting of land and sea, the clear sky, the pleasant air, and the pleasurable reverberation of the waves create such a sense of calm that one cannot even distinguish between imagination and reality.

Yazd's centuries-old cemetery restoration works begin

HERITAGE **TEHRAN** — The centuries-old cemetery of Juy-e Horhor in the central province of Yazd has undergone some rehabilitation work, a provincial tourism official has said.

The restoration project aims at preserving the historical site, which has recently been inscribed on the National Heritage list, Mohammadreza Falahati announced on Sunday.

The project involves strengthening walls and rooftops using cob material as well as repairing the lower parts of walls of the tombs in the cemetery, the official added.

Although the cemetery dates back to centuries ago, the structures and some mausoleums inside it belong to the Qajar-era (1789–1925), he explained.



Juy-e Horhor belongs to both Muslims and Jews with two different entrance gates on the north and south sides. There are several graves of scientists, mystics, literati, and clergymen from different historical eras in the cemetery.

Although there are currently no burials in the Muslim section of the cemetery, the Jewish section, with its 22,000 square meters of area, still retains its use, and religious services are also performed there apart from burying the dead.

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

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

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

Istakhr, once capital of the Sasanian Empire, undergoes restoration

TOURISM **TEHRAN** — A fresh archaeological season has commenced on the southern Iranian city of Istakhr, which was briefly served as the first capital of the mighty Sasanian Empire from 224 to 226 CE.

Istakhr (also spelled Estakhr) is located in the vicinity of the UNESCO-registered Persepolis, the ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid Empire (c. 550–330 BC).

Similar archaeological projects, concerning the documentation and restoration of the ancient city, have been carried out over the past couple of years due to the significance of Istakhr, IRNA quoted Hamid Fadaei, director of the World Heritage, as saying on Sunday.

Improving the old access routes as well as establishing new routes to the historical works of the area and setting up a restoration workshop are parts of the project, the official added.

The project is being supported by a team of archaeologists, cultural heritage experts, and restoration specialists, and a center for them is being created, he added.

From one point of view, its history stretches back to 224 CE, when a Persian nobleman named Ardashir, son of Papak, son of Sasan, dethroned the lawful ruler in Persia, Artabanus IV, king of the Parthian Empire.

As one of his residences, according to livius.org, the new ruler chose Istakhr:



situated near Persepolis, the capital of the Achaemenids, it allowed the new Sasanian dynasty to identify itself with a glorious past. The builders of Istakhr often reused architectural elements from the monuments of Persepolis. The Achaemenid royal tombs of Naqsh-e Rostam are not far from Istakhr too. The city, which had strong walls, repulsed

the first Arab attack in c.644, but was captured and sacked in c.650. Although the site was not abandoned, most people moved to Shiraz (which was founded in 684). Once, as an Islamic town, it was enclosed by fortification walls with rounded towers.

Among the kinds of pottery excavated from the Islamic stratum, molded ware is found

very frequently. These light-green vessels were not only of very high quality but also manifested a unique method of pottery making. The upper and lower halves, with their sculptured decorations, were always molded separately; the two halves, often showing the same pattern, were then joined together.

Also from the Islamic period, but less frequent, are pitchers with floral designs in red, yellow, and black. Unfortunately, excavations of the site produced only a few of the famous and very rare lusterware vessels with their metallic sheen over a golden-yellowish body. There is considerable controversy about this pottery and whether it was produced in Iran or imported from Mesopotamia.

Among other finds were clay figurines of animals. There were also stone and bronze objects, such as lamps, small vessels, and several utensils used in daily life. Also found were objects of iridescent glass and personal ornaments ranging from clay to gold.

Today, Istakhr is nothing but a plain full of sherds, scattered architectural remains, and a few ruins. The walled-in area measured 1,400 x 650 meters and was surrounded by a ditch that was connected to the river Pulvar.

Under the Sasanians, Iranian art experienced a general renaissance. Architecture often took grandiose proportions, such as the palaces at Ctesiphon, Firouzabad, and Saravan.

Iran to introduce new art destinations

HERITAGE **TEHRAN** — World cities and villages of handicrafts, as well as those nationally registered, are planned to be promoted to new art destinations, according to Iran's Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts.

"The cited cities and villages are planned to be introduced as 'art destinations' to domestic and international travelers," IRNA quoted Pouya Mahmoudian, the deputy for handicrafts of the ministry, as saying on Saturday.

Referring to the national register of 52 cities and villages of handicrafts, and the inscription of 11 cities and three villages of handicrafts by the World Crafts Council, Mahmoudian said: "Those handicrafts should be introduced to more tourists.... We try to introduce these areas as destinations and targets for domestic and foreign tourists."

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

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

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

Iran suspends flights to and from 32 countries over coronavirus

TOURISM **TEHRAN** — Iran has decided to suspend all flights to and from 32 countries including South Africa, Argentina, Brazil, Mozambique, Peru, and Zimbabwe over the discovery of a new variant of the coronavirus.

On Sunday, Mohammad Hassan Zibakhsh, the spokesman of Iran's Civil Aviation Organization (CAO), announced that all flights to and from 32 countries have been suspended due to the latest decision of the National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control, IRIB reported.

The new restrictions also limit travels between the Islamic Republic and England, Angola, Bolivia, Botswana, Burundi, Cape Verde, Chile, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, Eswatini, French



Guinea, Lesotho, Guyana, Malawi, Mauritania, Mauritania, Rwanda, Sicily, Suriname, Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, and Zambia.

Regarding the admission status of travelers from countries with special conditions, the official said: "For direct or indirect flights to

Iran, passengers, who have stayed in one of the cited countries for more than four hours within a maximum of two weeks before the date of travel, will not be able to enter the Islamic Republic of Iran until further notice."

Earlier this month, Iran announced it would reduce the validity of negative COVID-19 PCR test results from 96 hours to 72 hours for inbound and outbound passengers.

The new regulation replaced a role that required to bar passengers from boarding if they do not have a negative COVID test within 96 hours of departure.

All passengers are subject to the medical screening on arrival, and if they are suspected of having the disease, non-Iranian nationalities will be quarantined at a place specified by the Health Ministry at their own expense

and Iranian citizens will need to self-isolate for 14 days.

The worldwide outbreak of COVID-19 has brought the world to a standstill, and tourism has been the worst affected of all major economic sectors.

World tourist arrivals fell by 72% over the first ten months of 2020, according to data compiled by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in December.

Restrictions on travel, low consumer confidence, and a global struggle to contain the coronavirus pandemic are amongst factors contributing to the worst year on record in the history of tourism. Iran has also suffered the same fate as its foreign arrivals plunged 72% during the first eight months of 2020 when compared to 2019.

Ardebil could be Iran's next tourism hub, minister says

TOURISM **TEHRAN** — Iran's Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan has said that Ardebil province has immense potential to become the next tourism hub of the country.

The development of infrastructures, which is currently taking place in Ardebil, could facilitate this region's transformation into a new tourism hub, IRNA quoted Mounesan as saying on Friday.

The implementation of tourism-related projects worth 40 trillion rials (\$952 million at the official exchange rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) shows the decisive decision of the province's tourism officials for the development in this field, he explained.

The completion of the mentioned projects will add capacity to the tourism sector of the country, the minister noted.

He also expressed hope that the province would become a duly deserving host of the 2023 Economic Cooperation Or-



ganization (ECO) tourism capital program.

Last April tourism authorities of the province announced that they have developed extensive plans to draw more tourists

during the winter season to the province and make it the winter tourism hub of the country.

In December 2019, provincial tourism chief Nader Fallahi announced that the objective to launch tourism projects is to provide tourists from all over the world and domestic tourists as well with the opportunity to use these facilities and select Ardebil as their prime destination.

Sprawling on a high, windswept plateau, Ardebil is well-known for having lush natural beauties, hospitable people, and its silk and carpet trade tradition. It is also home to the UNESCO-registered Sheikh Safi al-Din Khanegah and Shrine Ensemble.

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

'Kordestan holds potential to be nature tourism hub'

TOURISM **TEHRAN** — The western province of Kordestan could be developed into a dynamic hub for nature tourism due to its beautiful and pristine landscape, the deputy tourism minister has said.

However, the province is needed to be promoted more properly in the fields of nature tourism and cultural tourism, Vali Teymouri announced on Friday.

Baneh, Marivan, and the provincial capital Sanandaj are among the most popular tourist and travel destinations, which require further elaborate introduction, the official added.

Kordestan can play a significant role in attracting foreign tourists considering its

common border with neighboring Iraq, the official explained.

Nature-based tourism is any type of tourism that relies on experiences directly related to natural attractions and includes ecotourism, adventure tourism, extractive tourism, wildlife tourism, and nature retreats.

Eco and nature-based tourists seek and expect a high level of service and product directly related to natural attractions, and they are willing to pay for it. They deliver more economic benefits than other tourists because they spend more and stay longer.

Iranian officials and policymakers in the

realm of travel expect such a branch of tourism development will end and possibly reverse the trend of migration from villages to cities by creating sustainable jobs and prosperity for local communities.

Agritourism and nature-tourism enterprises might include outdoor recreation (fishing, hunting, wildlife study, horseback riding), educational experiences (cannery tours, cooking classes, or tea or coffee tasting), entertainment (harvest festivals or barn dances), hospitality services (farm stays, guided tours, or outfitter services), and on-farm direct sales (u-pick operations or roadside stands).

It is a subset of a larger industry called rural tourism that includes resorts, off-site farmers' markets, non-profit agricultural tours, and other leisure and hospitality businesses that attract visitors to the countryside.

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 Islamic Republic announced in 2018 that 2,000 eco-lodges would be constructed across the country until 2021. Having a very diverse natural setting, Iran offers varied excursions to nature lovers. Sightseers may live with a nomad or rural family or enjoy an independent stay.

'Feast of charity' to be held virtually amid pandemic

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — 'Feast of charity', a campaign held prior to the Iranian New Year celebration each year helping families having a hard time addressing their essential needs, will be held virtually this year nationwide due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The nationwide event opens annually a few days before the Iranian New Year, starting usually on March 21, and lasts for three days soliciting contributions to help those underprivileged who can barely afford a living.

The event also aims at encouraging humanitarian efforts and altruistic behaviors among the public.

Unlike all the previous years that many people referred to schools and mosques to provide deprived families with cash handouts, commodities, or clothes, this year, coronavirus changed the event to an online contribution preventing gatherings.

This year, the charity celebration will be held on March 3, with the cooperation of a virtual education system called SHAD; and on March 4 by setting up a fundraising base in the main squares of each city and on March 5 in Friday prayers.

Also, the SMS system, different applications, and websites are other ways to participate in the celebration.



Last [Iranian calendar] year (March 2019-March 2020), some 75,000 centers collecting donations have been established in the country thanks to the Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation.

Such charity events would certainly encourage altruistic behaviors and generosity in society. Particularly encouraging the youngsters to practice giving even though this brings no advantage to them would result in bringing up a caring generation.

Social distancing replaces big gatherings

Noruz, Yalda Night - which takes place on

the longest night of the year, Sadeh Festival and Chaharshanbeh Souri - in praise of the spring, are examples of such ceremonies that were affected by the pandemic.

This year, people lost the opportunity to celebrate the big occasions as always in gatherings, from Noruz to different festivals or religious ceremonies which all held avoiding gatherings.

The outbreak reached its peak concurrent with the Iranian New Year celebration (March 21, 2020), making Noruz different from years and even centuries ago.

However, in Sizdah Bedar, people were also asked to stay at home and resist picnicking outdoor to break the chain of coronavirus transmission, and they were successful in curbing the disease.

Sizdah Bedar, also known as Nature Day, is an Iranian festival held annually on the thirteenth day of Farvardin, the first month of the Iranian calendar (falling on April 1 this year), during which Iranians reconcile with nature by spending time in resorts, gardens, and natural areas. It marks the end of the Noruz holidays in Iran.

In the light of the global pandemic, Christmas was also celebrated virtually, unlike usual gatherings, among Iranian Christians.

Charity foundation opens up 180,000 jobs for the deprived

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Barekat Charity Foundation, affiliated to Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam, has generated 180,000 jobs for the people residing in deprived areas since the beginning of this year (March 20, 2020), the foundation's head has said.

The foundation supports launching 60,000 job plans which resulted in 180,000 direct and indirect jobs across the country, IRNA quoted Amir Hossein Madani as saying on Sunday.

Some 276 cities and 7,575 villages in 31 provinces of the country are covered by the employment plans of the Barakat Foundation, he stated.

The total number of job creation projects that the foundation has so far implemented across the country reached 100,000, which has created 300,000 jobs, he also said.



The implementation of job creation projects in deprived rural areas, in addition to economic and social empowerment

and improving living standards and livelihoods, has also led to reverse migration in these areas, he further noted.

Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam was founded in 1989. In the Iranian calendar year, 1386 (March 2017-March 2018) Barekat Charity Foundation - the social arm of the organization - with the aim of promoting social justice was established.

Socio-economic empowerment of communities by encouraging entrepreneurship prioritizing breadwinner women, developing infrastructures such as water supply and power grids, building roads, constructing schools and increasing educational spaces, promoting health for all, granting non-repayable loans and insurance especially in less developed areas and regions most affected by 1980s war and natural disasters are of the priorities of the charity foundation.

Second Iranian COVID-19 vaccine enters clinical trial

1 → He went on to say that the vaccine was produced according to the instructions of the World Health Organization, adding, Razi Institute started making vaccines in March 2020 and used the recombinant protein-based method, which is one of the safest vaccines.

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.

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; which will soon start the second phase of the clinical trial.

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 8,010 new cases of COVID-19 infection, raising the total number of infections to 1,631,169. She added that 1,393,125 patients have so far recovered, but 3,732 remain in critical conditions of the disease.

During the past 24 hours, 93 patients have lost their lives, bringing the total number of deaths to 60,073, she added.

So far, 10,853,008 COVID-19 diagnostic tests have been performed in the country.

Lari noted that currently, 11 cities are at high-risk "red" zones, 32 cities in medium-risk "orange" zones, 251 cities in low-risk "yellow" zones.

Rapid COVID-19 testing in Ahvaz underway

1 → With the spread of the UK mutated variant of the virus in the province, some officials suggested that all the cities should be completely locked down, but unfortunately some businesses have remained opened, putting the city in a dangerous situation.

Khuzestan is in a dangerous situation with 11 high-risk "red" cities and 8 medium-risk "orange" cities.

Iraqi nationals visiting Iran have worsened the

coronavirus pandemic in the southwestern Khuzestan province, IRNA quoted the province's governor-general, Qassem Soleimani-Dashtaki, as saying on February 22.

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

So that Iran has closed five crossing points with Iraq to prevent the spread of the UK variant of coronavirus.

On February 13, President Hassan Rouhani emphasized the necessity for people to follow health protocols, as a new wave of coronavirus may hit the country within the next two months.

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

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

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Educational projects worth \$330m to be inaugurated

A total of 1,015 educational projects worth 14 trillion rials (nearly \$330 million) will be inaugurated across the country, Mehrolah Rakhshanimehr, director of the organization for renovation, development, and equipment of schools, has announced.

The projects will be inaugurated by the next 10 days, on the occasion of the 41st anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, he stated, ISNA reported on Sunday.

According to Rakhshanimehr, the projects include 4,168 classrooms, 11 swimming pools, and 32 gyms.

About 14,000 classrooms have been built so far this year (started March 21, 2019), compared with some 10,000 last year, he concluded.

افتتاح ۱۴۰۰ میلیارد تومان پروژه آموزشی

رئیس سازمان نوسازی، توسعه و تجهیز مدارس کشور گفت ۱۰۱۵ پروژه آموزشی با اعتباری به میزان ۱۴۰۰ میلیارد تومان در سراسر کشور به بهره‌برداری می‌رسد.

به گزارش ایسنا، مه‌اله رخشانی مهر افزود این پروژه‌ها طی ۱۰ روز آینده و به مناسبت چهل‌ویکمین سالگرد پیروزی انقلاب اسلامی افتتاح خواهند شد.

به گفته او، این پروژه‌ها شامل ۴۱۶۸ کلاس درس، ۱۱ استخر، و ۳۲ سالن ورزشی هستند.

رخشانی مهر ادامه داد تاکنون در سال ۹۸ حدود ۱۴ هزار کلاس درس افتتاح شده است در حالیکه در سال ۹۷ حدود ۱۰ هزار کلاس افتتاح شده بود.

Magnitude 4.4 quake rattles northwestern Iran

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — A 4.4-magnitude earthquake struck near the city of Sarab, northwestern East Azarbaijan province, on Sunday morning.



The tremor was recorded at 8:47 a.m. local time, at a shallow depth of 7 kilometers below the surface.

No injuries or fatalities have been reported so far.

There are 13 villages with a total population of more than 8,000 within 10 kilometers radius of the epicenter.

World still 'very far' from meeting climate goals, UN warns

Countries must submit tougher climate plans this year if the world is to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement, the UN has warned.

Under the Paris Agreement, countries pledged to keep global warming to "well below" 2C above pre-industrial levels, with the aspiration of limiting temperatures to 1.5C.

As part of the deal, all countries were due to submit revised climate plans, which are known as "nationally determined contributions" (NDCs), by the end of 2020.

However, a progress report from the UN finds that only 75 "parties" - which includes individual countries and the European Union - met the 31 December deadline. These countries represent just 30 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions.

And the UN's analysis of these plans finds that, when considered together, they would see emissions fall by just one per cent by 2030, when compared to levels in 2010. This is far below the level of reduction needed by 2030 to put the world on track to limiting global warming to 1.5C by the end of the century, the UN said.

A landmark report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the global authority on climate science, found that emissions would need to decline by around 45 per cent by 2030, when compared to 2010 levels, to give the world the greatest chance at limiting global warming to 1.5C.

UN chief Antonio Guterres said the interim report should signal "a red alert for our planet".

"2021 is a make or break year to confront the global climate emergency," he said in a statement. "The science is clear, to limit global temperature rise to 1.5C, we must cut global emission by 45 per cent by 2030 from 2010 levels.

"Today's [report] shows governments are nowhere close to the level of ambition needed to limit climate change to 1.5C and meet the goals of the Paris Agreement."

The report highlights that the world's biggest emitters, in particular, must significantly raise their ambition this year if the world is to meet its climate goals, he added.

Just two of the world's 18 largest emitters came forward with more ambitious climate plans by the end of 2020, the report says. This includes the UK and the EU. Some major emitters submitted new climate plans that were no more or even less ambitious than their previous pledges, researchers previously told The Independent.

An upcoming round of UN climate talks known as Cop26, which are to be held in Glasgow in November, will provide a key opportunity for raising climate ambition.

Alok Sharma, the UK minister who has been appointed Cop26 president, said the UN's findings should "serve as an urgent call to action".

"I am asking all countries, particularly major emitters, to submit ambitious 2030 emission reduction targets," he said.

Patricia Espinosa, executive secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), said that the progress report should be viewed as a "snapshot" rather than "a full picture".

This is because many countries said that they faced difficulties meeting the 2020 deadline due to challenges posed by the Covid pandemic, she said. She added that a second NDC progress report will be released before Cop26.

"This report shows that current levels of climate ambition are very far from putting us on a pathway that will meet our Paris Agreement goals," she said.

LET'S LEARN PERSIAN

(Part 136)

(Source: saadifoundation.ir)

بله، آره، چرا **Yes**

بله is the most common word both in formal and informal conversation. آره is used only in informal and friendly conversations. چرا is the positive answer to negative questions when a positive answer is expected:

فرمایشی دارید؟ چیزی می‌خواهید؟ - بله، نوار موسیقی می‌خواهم ... چیز دیگری لازم ندارید؟ - چرا، یک کارت تلفن هم لازم دارم ...

نه، خیر، نخیر **No**

نخیر and خیر are the more formal counterparts.

رنگ - از کلمه 'رنگ' بعد از اسم رنگ‌ها هم استفاده می‌کنیم:

سیاه = سیاه‌رنگ black, black coloured

قرمز = قرمز‌رنگ red, red colored

قهوه‌ای = قهوه‌ای‌رنگ brown, brown colored

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GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Best way to defend Islam, is to practice Islam.

Prophet Muhammad (S)

“Driving Lessons” wins awards at CineVoyage filmfest

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iranian director Marzieh Riahi's *“Driving Lessons”* has won awards in three categories, including best direction and best screenplay, at the CineVoyage Film Festival in Mumbai, India.

The film, which was competing in the Professional category, also brought Hossein Neshati the award for best editor, the organizers have announced.



“Driving Lessons” by Iranian filmmaker Marzieh Riahi.

The film also written by Riahi tells the story of Bahareh, a young woman who, according to Iranian law, must have a man from among her relatives accompany her on driving lessons so she and her male instructor won't be alone.

“Driving Lessons” has been screened in dozens of international festivals across the world.

The film won the Barran Award for best fiction film at the Karama Yemen Human Rights Film Festival in January.

It was also named best short narrative at the 21st Through Women's Eyes International Film Festival (TWE) in Sarasota, Florida, the U.S. in March 2020.

“Minotaur” directed by Jonathan English from Spain was also selected as best film in the Professional category of the CineVoyage Film Festival.

The film also received the awards for best sound engineer and best director of cinematography.

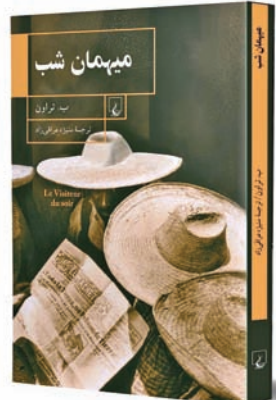
In the Amateur category, “Cycle” from Poland received the award for best film editing.

“Bioscope” from Bangladesh won the awards for best film, best direction, best cinematography, best screenplay and best sound design.

“The Night Visitor” comes into Iranian bookstores

CULTURE **TEHRAN** — A Persian translation of “The Night Visitor: And Other Stories” by B. Traven has recently been published by Qoqnus Publications in Tehran.

The book has been translated into Persian by Manijeh Araqizad.



Front cover of the Persian translation of B. Traven's “The Night Visitor”.

Indian woodcutter who makes a compact with the devil to save his family from starvation.

Among seven shorter stories, some are based on incidents from contemporary Mexican life, others on ancient Indian folk legends. All have spontaneity, humor and warmth.

The mysterious B. Traven was born in Chicago, spent his youth in Germany as an itinerant actor and revolutionary journalist, became a seaman on tramp steamers, settled in Mexico in the early 1920s, and began recording his experience in novels and stories.

In the United States his best-known novel is “The Treasure of the Sierra Madre”.

Mobarak festival opens with message calling puppets representations of ancient myths, future dreams

A R T **TEHRAN** — The 18th Mobarak Puppet Theater Festival opened on Sunday with a message from Deputy Culture Minister for Artistic Affairs Seyyed Mojtaba Hosseini calling puppets the representations of the myths of the past and a visualization of the dreams of the future.

“Man is the child of hope, the soul-seeker looking for immortality. Puppets and dolls are the children of this worship,” he said.

“The puppet shows are representations of the myths of the past and visualization of the future. They are made in order to remember beauties and discover the virtues for a better world built on simplicity and honesty,” he added.

The 18th edition of the festival has begun with emphasis on personal creativity, and, due to the coronavirus restrictions, many artist and cultural events have gone online, he said.

He also paid tribute to puppet show director Golzar Mohammadi, who was the secretary of the 18th edition of the festival and died in March 2020 after months of suffering from cancer at the age of 42.

A lineup of 57 puppet shows will be performed during the 18th Mobarak Puppet



Deputy Culture Minister for Artistic Affairs Seyyed Mojtaba Hosseini (3rd R) and several cultural officials unveil the poster of the 18th Mobarak Puppet Theater Festival.

Theater Festival which opened Sunday.

The photo section of the festival also opened on Sunday at the Iranian Artists Forum under the supervision of Amir Abedi.

“29 puppet shows from Tehran and 28 from other cities will be performed online from February 28 to March 7 available at tiwall, namayeshnet and Hashure, the Iranian

platforms providing video on demand (VOD) service for films,” secretary of the festival Mehdi Hajian had said earlier.

Hajian said that the veteran artists of Puppet Theater, Iraj Mohammadi and Mohammad-Hassan Abuyi Mehrizi, will be honored with lifetime achievement awards this year.

Three books on puppet shows will also be published to promote the art of puppet theater, he said, adding that several virtual workshops and meetings have also been held that were warmly received by puppet theater artists in the country.

A lineup of seven traditional puppet shows have also been selected to be performed during the festival.

The puppet shows have been chosen from 14 submissions by a selecting board composed of Pupak Azimpur, Shahrzad Mobarhan and Davud Fat'hali Beigi.

The lineup includes “The Last Autumn Celebration” by Ali Jabbari, “Salim Khan Court” by Zahra Amini, “Salim Khan Court” by Safar-Ali Mohammadzadeh, “Salaman and Mobarak” by Mahmud Dehqan Harati, “Stay in the Jar” by Amir-Hossein Ensafi, “Favorite of the Stage” by Hossein Rabiei and “Korsibazi” by Mohammadreza Azadfar.



A scene from “The Snow Calls” by Marjan Khosravi.

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iranian filmmaker Marjan Khosravi's “The Snow Calls” has been selected as best feature at the Big Sky Documentary Film Festival in Missoula in the northwestern U.S. state of Montana.

The film centers on Mina who, after bearing three daughters, has just one more chance; her next child has to be a boy or her husband will marry another woman.

That's the tradition. The very pregnant Mina and her family live in southwestern Iran, where the rules of the Bakhtiari tribe apply. This time, the expectant mother decides not to have an ultrasound scan, for fear of the

“The Snow Calls” crowned best at Big Sky Documentary Film Festival

result and the gossip that would ensue. She is already under enough pressure from her in-laws, although she does still have people on her side, too.

“This film depicts community and family with an intimacy rarely seen on the big screen, and it uses cinema to amplify voices that absolutely need to be heard,” the jury wrote in a statement published on the closing day of the festival on Sunday.

The award for best artistic vision in this section went to “Il Mio Corpo”, a co-production between Switzerland and Italy directed by Michele Pennetta.

“We recognize this film's bold aesthetic approach which, through both close-ups and nimble movement, evokes the drama and emotion of social realist storytelling. It demonstrates an intimacy with its subjects that can only be achieved through sustained and deliberate collaboration,” the jury said.

“Red Heaven” by Lauren DeFilippo and Katherine Gorringe from the USA won the Big Sky Award in a special category for the films that artistically honor the character, history,

tradition and imagination of the American West.

The artistic vision award in this section was given to “Victoria” by Sofie Benoot, Liesbeth De Ceuleraer and Isabelle Tollenaere from Belgium.

“Meltdown in Dixie” by Emily Harrold from the USA was named best short documentary.

In the Mini-Doc Competition, the winner was “Eagles”, a co-production between Canada and the USA co-directed by Kristy Guevara-Flanagan and Maite Zubiaurre.

The artistic vision award in the Mini-Doc Competition went to “The Roots Weaver” by Fernando Saldivia from Chile.

“A Horse Has More Blood Than a Human” by Abolfazl Taluni, “Khoniyar's Children” by Arman Qolipour Dashtaki and “Holy Bread” by Rahim Zabih were other Iranian films screened at the Big Sky Documentary Film Festival, however, they failed to garner any award.

The event is organized every year by the Big Sky Film Institute to support the people who create documentary films, vibrant events, and expand knowledge and conversation around issues that matter.

Rendition of “Journey in Blue” tribute to Hans Christian Andersen: Persian translator

A R T **TEHRAN** — Shaqayeq Qandehari has said that her Persian translation of Stig Dalager's “Journey in Blue: A Novel about Hans Christian Andersen” is a tribute to the Danish writer Hans Christian Andersen, “a hard-working man who had a wonderful life.”

“I am sure all of us have read the stories of this writer during childhood,” she told the Persian service of Honaronline on Sunday.

She said that the story of “Journey in Blue” begins at the time Andersen is on his deathbed, taking morphine.

“One good thing about the book is that the different points about life, fate, mood and spirits of the writer are narrated, the points which we may not have known beforehand, and help the story go on better,” she noted.



A statue in Central Park, New York commemorating Hans Christian Andersen and “The Ugly Duckling”.

“I worked on it for a year,” Qandehari said and added, “Critics believe the book's author, who is Danish himself, has been able to describe the life of Andersen differently.”

In Italy, Germany and France, Andersen gained recognition and was greatly praised, while in his homeland Denmark, he encountered harsh criticism, breaking his heart,” she explained.

Andersen is a master of the literary fairytale whose stories achieved wide renown. He is also the author of plays, novels, poems, travel books and several autobiographies.

While many of those works are almost unknown outside Denmark, his fairytales are among the most frequently translated works in all of literary history.

“Journey in Blue” narrates Andersen on his deathbed. Doses of morphine cause his brain to oscillate between dreamy states and fleeting moments of clarity. The complex and elastic mind that drives his personality

and his work wrestles with his own perceived fate as a stranger in the world, his longing for love, and his religiosity.

To believe in his own talent to the extent that Andersen has done and to have lived so one-dimensionally has left him socially deficient and isolated. There is also torment, although internationally renowned, he was rejected in his own country until late in his life when a leading Danish literary critic discovered his fairytales and confirmed their importance to his fellow countrymen.

As Andersen's death approaches, his memories grow more vivid and material, yet at the same time fairytale-like. In this remarkable novel, Dalager takes the reader on a journey through the mind, body, spirit and works of one of the truly great names in world literature.

Iranian troupe restages “True West” at Tehran theater

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iranian director Omid Saeidpur is restaging American playwright Sam Shepard's play “True West” at Molavi Theater in Tehran.

A cast composed of Shadi Amiri, Mohammad Charkhtab and Saeidpur is performing the play translated into Persian by Amir Amjad.

The troupe performed “True West” earlier at the Tehran Independent Theater in September and October 2020 when veteran actor Parviz Parastui collaborated with them as the producer of the production.

Saeidpur had earlier staged the play at Mirak Academy in the northwestern Iranian city of Tabriz in July 2019.

The American classic is a character study that examines the relationship between Austin, a screenwriter, and his older brother, Lee.

It is set in the kitchen of their mother's home 40 miles east of Los Angeles. Austin is house-sitting while their mother is in Alaska, and there he is confronted by his



Left to right, Mohammadreza Charkhtab, Omid Saeidpur and Shadi Amiri perform Sam Shepard's “True West” at Molavi Theater in Tehran on February 15, 2021. (Payamekhabar.ir/A.A. Ezhari)

brother, who proceeds to bully his way into staying at the house and using Austin's car.

Siri Hustvedt's “Blazing World” published in Persian

CULTURE **TEHRAN** — American novelist Siri Hustvedt's “The Blazing World” has recently been published in Persian in Tehran.

Sales is the publisher of the book translated into Persian by Khojasteh Keyhan. “The Blazing World” is a brilliant, provocative novel about an artist who, after years of being ignored by the art world, conducts an experiment: she conceals her female identity behind three male fronts.

Presented as a collection of texts, edited and introduced by a scholar years after the artist's death, the book unfolds through extracts from Burden's notebooks and conflicting accounts from others about her life and work.

Even after she steps forward to reveal

herself as the force behind three solo shows, there are those who doubt she is responsible for the last exhibition, initially credited to the acclaimed artist Rune.

No one doubts the two artists were involved with each other. According to Burden's journals, she and Rune found themselves locked in a charged and dangerous psychological game that ended with the man's bizarre death.

From one of the most ambitious and internationally celebrated writers of her generation, Hustvedt's “The Blazing World” is a polyphonic tour de force. It is also an intricately conceived, diabolical puzzle that addresses the shaping influences of prejudice, money, fame and desire on what we see in one another.

Emotionally intense, intellectually rigorous, ironic and playful, this is a book

you won't be able to put down.

Hustvedt was born in Northfield, Minnesota. Her father Lloyd Hustvedt was a professor of Scandinavian literature, and her mother Ester Vegan emigrated from Norway at the age of thirty.

She holds a B.A. in history from St. Olaf College and a Ph.D. in English from Columbia University; her thesis on Charles Dickens was entitled “Figures of Dust: A Reading of Our Mutual Friend”.

Hustvedt has mainly made her name as a novelist, but she has also produced a book of poetry, and has had short stories and essays on various subjects.

Like her husband Paul Auster, Hustvedt employs the use of repetitive themes or symbols throughout her work.



Front cover of the Persian translation of Siri Hustvedt's “The Blazing World”.