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Army drone power thrived during sanctions: General Mousavi

TEHRAN - Army Commander Major General Seyyed Abdolrahim Mousavi said on Wednesday that the power of Iran's drones prospered in the era of sanctions.

"The drone power of the army thrived at the height of sanctions," the army chief said, adding this happened at the time of "maximum pressure" introduced against Iran by the Trump administration.

He added, "The Makran port ship and HESA Kowsar (an Iranian fighter jet) are produced in the periods of sanctions."

Pointing to the military exercises conducted by the Army in recent months, General Mousavi also said, "Iran's army is ready to conduct military drills in less than 24 hours. It prepared its plans and conducted four drills in less 10 days."

Intl. railway exhibition underway in Tehran

TEHRAN - The eighth edition of Iran's International Exhibition of Rail Transportation and Related Industries and Equipment (Rail Expo 2021) kicked off on Wednesday at Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds.

The opening ceremony of the four-day event was attended by the Transport and Urban Development Minister Mohammad Eslami and the Head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (known as RAI) Saeid Rasouli, IRNA reported.

Presenting the latest achievements and technological developments of the railway transportation and related industries, promotion of domestic production, export development, introducing the capabilities of Iranian companies, indigenization of railway industry equipment and machinery, and familiarization of railway manufacturers with the latest developments in this industry are reported to be some of the main goals of this exhibition.

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Leader's book on political life of Imam Sajjad (AS) published

TEHRAN - Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei's book on the cultural and political life of Imam Sajjad (AS), the fourth Imam of the Shia, has been published.

Released by Islamic Revolution Publications, "Epic of Imam Sajjad (AS)" was introduced in a meeting at the Razavi Islamic Sciences University in the northeastern

Iranian city of Mashhad on Wednesday. Hojjatoleslam Mohammad-Javad Haj-Aliakbari, a provisional Friday prayers leader of Tehran, and a number of religious and cultural figures attended the meeting.

The Leader has used his own writing method in "A 250-Year-Old Person" to author "Epic of Imam Sajjad (AS)", Haj-Aliakbari said.

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Biden backing away from level of support for Saudis: academic

BY MOHAMMAD MAZHARI
An American academic describes the Biden administration's decision to decrease U.S. support for Saudi Arabia in the war in Yemen as an important step.

"They are backing away from the level of support they've shown for Saudi Arabia over the last years. The Biden administration's decision to withdraw their support from Saudi Arabia's operations in Yemen is an important one," Michael Wuthrich tells the Tehran Times.

In a new move on Friday, U.S. intelligence released a report in which it said the Saudi de facto ruler approved an operation to capture or kill murdered journalist Jamal Khashoggi in 2018.

Khashoggi, a U.S. resident who wrote opinion columns for the Washington Post critical of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's policies, was killed and dismembered by a team of operatives linked to the prince in the kingdom's consulate in Istanbul.

The murder of Khashoggi laid bare only part of gross human rights abuses in the Saudi kingdom.

"I think many in the U.S. are concerned about and have voiced concerns about the issues of human rights within and outside of Saudi Arabia, and the Biden administration appears to be concerned about these," the assistant professor of political science at the University of Kansas points out.

The interview with Wuthrich was conducted before the U.S. released the report about the crown prince's culpability in the murder of Khashoggi.

Following is the text of the interview:
How do you assess U.S. steps when it comes to reviving the JCPOA as we have so far not seen any productive steps in this regard?

As I suggested several months ago, President Biden is trying to get back to the table to restore the agreement with Iran. Although the Biden administration seems to genuinely desire to restore the agreement that was broken by the Trump administration, there is no indication as of yet that the U.S. will pre-emptively lift sanctions without the Islamic Republic halting their current level of production.

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Importing Iranian medicine 'a priority': Syrian health minister

TEHRAN - Syrian Minister of Health Hassan Al-Fabash has said that the import of Iranian medicine is one of the priorities of his country's medical system.

"We highly emphasize [the need to import] these drugs, as Iranian biotechnology medicines play an important role in the treatment of incurable diseases," he noted.

He made the remarks on Tuesday in a meeting with Sourena Sattari, the vice president for science and technology, who headed a delegation of 40 knowledge-based companies to Damascus, IRNA reported.

Al-Fabash also said that "If it becomes possible for some Syrian doctors to travel to Iran for short courses, it will be a good opportunity. Because our country is under siege and the facilities that are imported from foreign countries are very limited."

It is planned to open up the third Iranian

house of innovation and technology in the Syrian capital of Damascus with the aim of finding new markets for domestic technological and knowledge-based products during this trip.

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

A house of innovation and technology has already been set up as a technology exchange office in China.

The signing of a memorandum of cooperation for the development of scientific, technological, and political relations between the two countries are among the other purposes of the trip.

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Ilhan Omar unveils bill to sanction MBS for Khashoggi murder

Democratic members of the U.S. House of Representative have introduced two bills to penalize Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) for his personal role in the violent murder of one of his most prominent critics, Jamal Khashoggi.

The motions were put forward after the administration of U.S. President Joe Biden declassified last week an intelligence report that accused bin Salman of having approved the 2018 killing of the Washington Post journalist.

Congresswoman Ilhan Omar announced on Tuesday a bill that would freeze the Saudi crown prince's assets and impose a visa ban on him.

"This is a test of our humanity," she said in a statement. "If the United States of America truly supports freedom of expression, democracy and human rights, there is no reason not

to sanction Mohammed bin Salman — a man our own intelligence found to have approved the murder of U.S. resident and Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi."

On Monday, Congressman Tom Malinowski introduced a different bill, backed by Democratic House members James McGovern and Andy Kim.

The legislation would mandate a visa ban against the heir to the Saudi throne, based on existing rules that bar human rights abusers from entering the United States. It also allows the president to issue a national security waiver to lift the visa ban.

"I applaud the Biden administration for naming MBS as Khashoggi's killer, but it undercuts our message to Saudi Arabia if we accuse him of the crime and then do nothing to hold him accountable," Malinowski said.

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Mazandaran overnight stays cut by 58 percent due to virus

TEHRAN - Overnight stays in Mazandaran province, one of the most touristic Iranian provinces owing to vibrant lush green landscape and an attractive stretch of coastline, has plunged 58 percent over the past 12 months.

"The official number of tourists entering and having overnight stays in the province has decreased by 58% over the past year due to the coronavirus pandemic," the deputy provincial tourism chief, Mehran Hassani, said on Tuesday.

"A total of 4,650,000 people made overnight stays [at hotels and other authorized accommodation centers across the province] over the past year.... However, the number of overnight stays in Mazandaran reached about 12 million people during the same period a year earlier," the official explained.

Mazandaran is traditionally a major destination for domestic vacationers during the Persian New year (Noruz) holidays, which will officially begin on March 21.

With less than a month to go till Noruz which has long been associated with millions of domestic travels, the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Minister wants to find a way to partially revive the already-slumped travels in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Tourism Ali-Asghar Mounesan last week said despite all the obstacles and issues and the outbreak of the coronavirus, the country's tourism sector "is still alive and dynamic".

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Paintings by Iranian-Armenian artists on view at Tehran gallery

TEHRAN - Javid Gallery in Tehran is currently playing host to an exhibition of paintings by a group of Iranian-Armenian artists.

Works by Marco Grigorian, Misha Shahbazian, Sirak Melkunan, Liliet Teryan and Hakup Vartanian have been selected for the exhibition entitled "Roots".

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Taliban just seeking prisoner release, foreign troop exit: ex-U.S. security adviser

BY M.A. SAKI

TEHRAN - A former adviser to the U.S. Special Operations Command says the Taliban only negotiates only on the release of its prisoners by the Afghan government and the exit of foreign forces, including Americans, from the central Asian country.

"The position of the Taliban has been consistent from the beginning of the period in which the topic of negotiations surfaced. The Taliban has never been willing to negotiate except on two points. First, how can it secure the release of Taliban prisoners held by Afghan government forces? Second, the terms of a U.S. exit from Afghanistan," James P. Farwell tells the Tehran Times.

Farwell says the Taliban "has never shown serious interest in negotiating about any other topics."

The former adviser to the U.S. Special Operations Command also notes that the Taliban's "position is actually more tenuous than it appears to believe."

He adds, "There are many, many stakeholders in Afghanistan and most of them are anti-Taliban. Without a realistic accord that takes broad stakeholder interests into account, the Taliban's strategy seems likely to backfire in its face, miring it in a long-term civil war."

He also tries to portray the Taliban as the enemy of Iran, while Iran has been holding talks with the Taliban representatives in Tehran and has been encouraging intra-Afghan dialogue to settle the decades-long conflict in the country.

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Zarif, UN chief call for peace talks on Yemen to end Saudi aggression

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres on Tuesday called for the start of peace talks in Yemen in order to put an end to the protracted Saudi-led war and siege on the country.

In a phone conversation, Zarif and Guterres discussed the latest steps taken by the United Nations to end the war and restore peace in Yemen as well as efforts to start dialogue among all political parties in the country.

The UN chief called for the continuation of the prominent efforts of Iran in helping to establish peace in the war-ravaged Yemen, according to Press TV.



Patients are treated at a hospital in Hajja in Yemen after an airstrike hit a wedding party. Photograph: Reuters

Zarif expressed Tehran's support for UN efforts to restore peace in Yemen, stressing the need for an end to the Saudi war of aggression, lifting the blockade and providing humanitarian assistance to the Yemeni people.

The chief Iranian diplomat also expressed hope for the establishment of peace and stability in Yemen through holding intra-Yemeni talks and forming an inclusive government.

In April 2015, Iran presented a plan to the UN in a bid to end the conflict in Yemen. The proposal calls for international action to put an end to the Saudi-led airstrikes against Yemen.

The four-point Yemen peace plan Iran brought before the United Nations called for the cessation of hostilities and an immediate end to all foreign military attacks, direct delivery of medical and humanitarian aid, the resumption of political talks and the creation of a broad Yemeni unity government.

"It is imperative for the international community to get more effectively involved in ending the senseless aerial attacks and establishing a ceasefire," Zarif wrote in a letter to the UN chief Ban Ki-moon.

"The only way to restore peace and stability is to allow all Yemeni parties to establish, without any foreign interference, their own inclusive national unity government," the letter said.

Saudi Arabia and a number of its regional allies launched the war on Yemen in March 2015 with the goal of bringing the government of former Mansour al-Hadi government back to power and crushing the popular Ansarullah movement.

According to a new report by the United Nations, 80 percent of Yemen's 30 million people need some form of aid or protection. About 13.5 million Yemenis currently face acute food insecurity, UN data shows.

According to the latest figures released by the UN in December last year, over 230,000 people have been killed since the onset of the Saudi-led war.

The war has also taken a heavy toll on the country's infrastructure, destroying hospitals, schools, and factories.

Some incidents of the Saudi air war on Yemen constitute examples of war crimes.

The U.S. and certain other Western countries are an accomplice in the war crimes against the Yemeni civilians.

In August 2018, munitions experts told CNN that the bomb used by the Saudi-led coalition in the devastating attack on a school bus in Yemen was sold as part of a U.S. State Department-sanctioned arms deal with Saudi Arabia.

Working with local Yemeni journalists and munitions experts, CNN established that the weapon that left dozens of children dead on August 9, 2018 was a 500-pound (227 kilogram) laser-guided MK 82 bomb made by Lockheed Martin, one of the top U.S. defense contractors.

The bomb was very similar to the one that wreaked devastation in an attack on a funeral hall in Yemen in October 2016 in which 155 people were killed and hundreds more wounded.

In March of that year, a strike on a Yemeni market — this time reportedly by a U.S.-supplied precision-guided MK 84 bomb — killed 97 people.

Also in April 2018, an airstrike by the Saudi-led coalition hit a wedding party in northern Yemen, killing at least 20 people. Local officials told the Associated Press that most of the dead were women and children who were gathered in one of the tents set up for the wedding party in the district of Bani Qayis. He said the bride was among the dead.

'Cutting aid is a death sentence'

In a related development on Tuesday, aid groups warned of worsening humanitarian situation in Yemen after a UN appeal for more funds for the war-torn country fell short of reaching its goal.

The UN secretary general said a "disappointing" \$1.7 billion had been pledged by countries on Monday for humanitarian aid in Yemen - less than half the \$3.85 billion the world body was seeking for 2021 to avert a large-scale famine.

"For most people, life in Yemen is now unbearable. Childhood in Yemen is a special kind of hell. Yemeni children are starving," Guterres said, according to Reuters.

He described the outcome the pledging conference in Geneva as "disappointing" and warned in a statement: "Cutting aid is a death sentence."

Some 16 million Yemenis - more than half the population of the Arabian Peninsula country - are going hungry, the United Nations says. Of those, 5 million are on the brink of famine, UN aid chief Mark Lowcock has said.

"This does not solve the problem," Lowcock said after the pledging conference. "It's going to be impossible with such limited resources to prevent a large-scale famine."

More than six years of war in Yemen have sent the impoverished country spiraling into what the United Nations describes as the world's largest humanitarian crisis.

Some 80% of Yemenis need help, with 400,000 children under the age of 5 severely malnourished, according to UN data. For much of its food, the country relies on imports that have been badly disrupted over the years by all warring parties.

The people's suffering has been worsened by an economic and currency collapse, and by the COVID-19 pandemic.

UN officials are trying to revive peace talks, and new U.S. President Joe Biden has said Yemen is a priority, declaring a halt to American support for the Saudi-led military campaign and demanding the war "has to end."

U.S. that has been trading arms at cost of Yemenis' blood will remain shameful in history: Iran

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iran on Wednesday rejected the unfounded allegations by the U.S. secretary of state against Tehran with regard to Yemen, saying the United States which has been selling arms to the countries that have been pounding Yemen for six years at the cost of the "blood" of the Yemeni people will remain "disreputable in history".

The Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said invaders and their accomplices which have realized that their "anti-human military strategy" against the resistant people of Yemen have ended in failure are trying to deflect attention from their crimes but this will remain in the "historical memory" of the Yemeni people and the world at large.

Dismissing the accusations by Antony Blinken, Khatibzadeh said the Americans, who must be held "accountable" for their



crimes in Yemen, "cannot make groundless accusations

against others as a plaintiff." In remarks on Tuesday, Blinken accused

Ireland set to reopen embassy in Iran by 2023

Ireland is to reestablish a diplomatic presence in Iran, the Department of Foreign Affairs has said.

The Irish embassy in Tehran was closed in 2012 as part of cost-cutting measures.

The department said that a diplomatic mission will be set up this year, with a commitment to reopen the embassy in 2023.

It is expected that a chargé d'affaires, or senior Irish diplomat, will move the Iranian capital later this year. An ambassador would then follow in 2023.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Simon Coveney said: "As part of our Global Ireland strategy, Ireland made a commitment to double our global impact by 2025. In that context, the Government has decided to re-establish an Irish diplomatic presence in Iran.

"As an elected member of the Security Council, it is particularly important that we have the ability to engage in more depth on the range of Middle East issues on the Security Council's agenda.

"As Facilitator of Resolution 2231 (concerning the im-

plementation of the Iran nuclear agreement, the JCPOA) for the next two years on the Council, we have a particular responsibility to play a constructive and impactful role on the nuclear non-proliferation agenda.

"Ireland is fully committed to the success of that agreement, and the prevention of the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

"The re-establishment of an Irish presence in Tehran is a concrete sign of our commitment to deepen dialogue with all relevant partners, including Iran, on this issue."

(Source: www.rte.ie)

The road to Biden's foreign policy runs through Senator Menendez: Politico

POLITICAL **TEHRAN**— Bob Menendez, the powerful chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, will not let Biden repeat Obama's mistakes, according to Politico.

Since Joe Biden has taken office, his administration has bombed Syria, imposed sanctions on Saudi Arabia and Myanmar, and taken steps to rejoin the Iran nuclear deal. But if Biden thinks he can make foreign policy decisions without consulting Robert Menendez, he's got another thing coming. Menendez has been in this role before, and he criticized the way the Obama administration conducted international affairs. In Menendez's view, Obama treated foreign policy as if it were the sole discretion of the White House. Consequently, he often made things more difficult for Obama, especially in areas that needed congressional approval.

The 67-year-old third-term senator and former longtime House member told Politico that he was often frustrated by Obama, who would simply notify Congress of his decisions rather than consult with lawmakers in advance. Finally, Menendez came down on opposite sides of the White House on several issues, including the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the common name for the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

"Beyond the realities of a 50-50 Senate, when we talk about foreign policy, whenever we can get a bipartisan basis for something

— maybe not absolute, 100 members — we are stronger in the world," Menendez (D-N.J.) said in an interview. "And I believe President Biden believes that."

Politico acknowledged the White House is off to a rough start and said, "Menendez quickly registered his dissatisfaction last week when the Biden team did not give him a heads up about the president's retaliatory strikes against Iranian installations in Syria; and he and other Democrats are already calling for more severe punishments against Saudi Arabia after a U.S. intelligence report officially pinned the blame for journalist Jamal Khashoggi's murder on the kingdom's crown prince and de facto leader, Mohammed bin Salman."

In a statement, Menendez stressed, "I am hopeful it is only a first step and that the administration plans to take concrete measures holding Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman personally responsible for his role in this heinous crime."

Politico reminded it is critical for Biden's foreign policy to keep Menendez in the loop and wrote, "It's not surprising, then, that there is an ongoing White House campaign to curry favor with Menendez, who hasn't been afraid to break with his party and has a history of making matters difficult for presidents who try to strong-arm Congress."

"That makes all the difference in the world," Menendez said. "It doesn't mean that we're

going to agree 100 percent of the time. But it does mean that we will understand each other, where we're coming from — and more likely than not, we will agree."

The American publication admitted the hawkish Menendez and the Biden administration disagree on a handful of key areas including the Iran nuclear deal, U.S. relations with Cuba, the use of U.S. military force overseas and what to do in regard to Nicolas Maduro, the Venezuelan president.

Generally, Menendez opposes negotiations or deals that seem to give any concessions to them. He likely won't take it easy on the Biden team, many of whose members served under Obama, as they try to revive agreements like the Iran deal, or reestablish ties with Cuba — relationships that were damaged under former President Donald Trump. He'll also insist on greater congressional say if and when the United States uses military force in abroad.

The Biden team is "right to want to have a good relationship with him. They're going to agree with him on a lot of things," said Ben Rhodes, who served as a key force behind diplomatic openings with Cuba and Iran during the Obama years.

"But at a certain point, there's a Senate view and an administration view, and unless you want [Menendez] to be in charge of your Cuba policy, your Venezuela policy or your Iran policy, you're likely going to reach

a point where you have to have a difficult conversation," Rhodes remarked.

During the new administration, Menendez told Politico that Biden's team is already discarding the Obama model — which he asserted did not always value Congress' role in determining U.S. foreign policy — and instead working closely with the Senate to coordinate and seek input.

Nevertheless, Politico emphasized senators have reasons to be optimistic because Biden is a former chair of the Foreign Relations Committee, and Secretary of State Antony Blinken is the former staff director for the panel.

"You haven't had an administration as populated with people who understand the role of the Senate, and also how helpful the Senate can be," said Sen. Tim Kaine (D-Va.), a senior member of the Foreign Relations Committee who is close with Menendez. "I think they have a huge opportunity with Bob as the chair, given who the players are in the administration, to really have a very good working relationship."

However, Kaine has been among the outspoken critics of Biden's airstrikes in Syria last week, insisting that the president should have had an authorization from Congress. Kaine is seeking for years to scrap the 2001 and 2002 war authorizations that presidents from both parties have used to justify U.S. military activity in the West Asia.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Guterres, Qatar FM hold talks on JCOA

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — In a phone conversation on Tuesday, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres spoke with Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani discussing the 2015 nuclear deal — JCPOA - between Iran and 5+1 nations as well as Doha's efforts to revive the agreement.

The phone talks followed after Qatari Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassem Al Thani visited Tehran on February 15 at the head of a high-ranking delegation.

Relations between Iran and Qatar has been growing in recent years. Qatar has already announced it is ready to mediate between Iran and the U.S. to revitalize the JCPOA. "The State of Qatar is working on de-escalation through a political and diplomatic process to return to the nuclear agreement," the Qatari chief diplomat said, according to Reuters.

The remarks by Qatar's foreign minister came after with U.S. Special Representative for Iran Robert Malley and U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan.

In May 2018 the landmark nuclear deal was unilaterally ditched by former U.S. president Donald Trump in line with his policy of "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran. Iran has denounced the illegal sanctions as an act of "economic terrorism."

The U.S. exit from the pact was met with worldwide criticism. A year after the U.S. pullout from the agreement backed by UN Security Council Resolution 2231, Iran said its "strategic patience" is over and started to gradually reduce its nuclear commitments in accordance to paragraph 36 of the JCPOA. However, Tehran has been repeatedly saying that it will return to full compliance as soon as its interests are met under the JCPOA.

This indicates Iran's recognition of religious rights of Sunni Muslims.

Did you know that all educational, supervisory and supportive rules and regulations related to Sunni schools are authorized by the Planning Council of Religious Sciences Schools with the presence and votes of prominent Sunni scholars?

SYMPTOMS

SPORTS

Majidi appointed Esteghlal head coach following Fekri sacking

By Farrokh Hesabi

TEHRAN— Esteghlal have confirmed the appointment of Farhad Majidi as the club's new head coach. it is the third time that Majidi has taken charge of the Blues.

The Tehran-based club's directors moved swiftly to bring in the new head coach following the decision to sack Mahmoud Fekri on Tuesday.



Majidi, along with Gol Gohar's head coach Amir Ghalenoei, Foolad's manager Javad Nekounam and Saket Elhami, former Traktor coach, were the four final candidates to replace Fekri.

The 44-year-old will be charged with the task of improving the situation for a side sat in third in the Iran Professional League (IPL) table, with the AFC Champions League competitions also ahead of the team for the remainder of the season.

Majidi takes the charge of Esteghlal barely less than six months after leaving the club at the end of the last season.

It was after the 2020 Hazfi Cup final that Farhad Majidi resigned from his position as Esteghlal's head coach because of his disputes with the club directors, and his then assistant, Majid Namjoo Motlagh replaced him as interim coach. Just before the beginning of the current IPL season, Fekri was appointed as the Blues' head coach with a two-year contract.

Fekri's downfall was the consequence of a string of poor results which saw the blues two defeats and just one win in their last five IPL games. His final game was Monday's draw against Mes Rafsanjan.

Majidi guided Esteghlal to the Hazfi Cup final, where they were beaten by Traktor, while the club were second in IPL at the end of last season.

The former Esteghlal forward arrives in the Tehran giants club for the third time as head coach with a reputation for being popular among the club's fans.

According to media reports, Majidi has signed a two-and-a-half-year contract with Esteghlal. He has appointed Pirouz Ghorbani, former Esteghlal defender, as his assistant coach, Saleh Mostafavi as the team's analyst, and Behzad Gholampour as keepers' coach.

Also, with Majidi's arrival, Farzad Majidi, Farhad's brother, replaced Parviz Mazloumi as the sporting director of the club.

Majidi would face a tough task to rekindle the Blues' push for winning titles and to end their eight-year title drought in IPL.

Esteghlal fans and those responsible for running the club do not want to find themselves back in the same situation at the end of the current season.

Iran's Khademalsharieh named as FIDE Athletes Commission

SPORTS TEHRAN — Sarasadat Khademalsharieh from Iran has been named as FIDE Athletes Commission.

The International Chess Federation announced the composition of the newly created Athletes Commission.

By the deadline of Dec. 21, FIDE had received nine candidates for the 10 elected positions. Therefore, as decided by the FIDE Council, voting was not required and these nine candidates made it directly into the Commission.

Along with these athletes who presented their candidacy, four other members were appointed by the FIDE Council: IM Alina Kashlinskaya, IM Ekaterina Atalik, IM Jomo Pitterson, and IM Odion Aikhoje.

The FIDE Council reserves itself the right to appoint two more members, in order to reach a total composition of 15 representatives of the players as stipulated in the regulations.

The term of election and appointment of all members will be four years, but exceptionally the first term is limited to two years, until the 2022 FIDE Congress.



Iran remain unchanged at FIBA World Ranking

SPORTS TEHRAN — Iran national basketball team remained in the 23rd place at the FIBA World Ranking Men.

The team are the second-best team in Asia.

The U.S. maintain top spot and Spain, Australia, Argentina and Serbia rounding out the top five.

There was movement just outside the top five, however, with Greece leapfrogging France into sixth place after both teams split their February games in the FIBA EuroBasket 2022 Qualifiers.

Further down the rankings saw big jumps for teams that played in the FIBA Asia Cup 2021 Qualifiers. Kazakhstan claimed two decisive victories over Sri Lanka and one over Palestine to move up five spots to No. 74 while Bahrain moved up six spots to No. 101 after falling to No. 58 Lebanon but then winning by three points over Iraq.

Iran have been drawn with the U.S., France and OQT Victoria winner (Canada, China, Czech Republic, Greece, Turkey, Uruguay) in Pool A of the Men's Olympic Tournament.

Due to the suspension of FIBA competitions, an adjustment was made to the algorithm for the rankings in December by extending the expiration date of past results by eight months in order to ensure that results from two Olympic Games are at all times included in the calculations which weigh data from the past eight years.

Israel sets trap for new Arab allies

Arab allies cast doubt on Israeli initiative

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Israel has proposed to form a special security arrangement with some of the Persian Gulf's Arab states, but the Israeli initiative was coldly received by Arabs, sparking speculation over whether Israel is trying to create troubles between Iran and its Arab neighbors.

In what appeared to be a crass move, Israel's Defense Minister Benny Gantz claimed that Israel intends to establish a "special security arrangement" with some of the Persian Gulf Arab states, who share common concerns about Iran.

During a visit to an Israel-Gaza border crossing, Gantz played down reports in Israeli media that Israel was considering a defense agreement with Persian Gulf Arab countries, but said security ties would be pursued.

"I don't think it's going to be a defense pact but we are going to develop defense relations with every country that we have relations with," Gantz told Reuters.

"We have this process of setting up (a) special security arrangement, and within this arrangement, we can continue and develop our relations," he said. Gantz declined to go into details on what such an arrangement would entail.

Gantz didn't give details about this arrangement. But his comments came after Israel's state-run television channel i24N-EWS reported last week that Tel Aviv is "currently in talks with the kingdoms of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates in establishing a four-nation defense alliance," though Israel has no official relations with Saudi Arabia.

The Israeli channel said the alleged defense alliance was likely a response to the alleged Iranian threat, especially its nuclear program and influence in the region.

The Israeli initiative did not generate enthusiasm among Israel's new Arab allies. Instead, they took it with a pinch of salt, casting doubt on Israel's intention behind the initiative.

Media outlets close to the United Arab Emirates, which appointed ambassador earlier this week, responded to the Israeli initiative by saying, in essence, that Arabs states do need an Israeli military presence in the Persian Gulf region, a move that could further escalate tensions in the region by inviting a strong Iranian response.

"The countries of the region do not need



an additional military presence if the goal is merely to project deterrence," the Al-Arab newspaper said in an article on Wednesday. The article was also published by the Arab Weekly, an English version of the newspaper that mainly translates and republishes Al-Arab's articles.

Israel and the UAE normalized their diplomatic relations last September in a U.S.-brokered deal that sent diplomatic shockwaves across the world. Abu Dhabi and Tel Aviv have committed to the exchange of embassies and ambassadors, and to begin cooperation in a broad range of fields including education, healthcare, trade, and security, according to a statement issued by the White House at the time.

Former U.S. President Donald Trump announced on August 13 that he brokered a "historic deal" between the UAE and Israel to normalize their relations, the first such deal between Israel and an Arab country since 1994. The last time an Arab country signed a deal with Israel to normalize relations was on October 26, 1994, when Jordan signed a peace treaty with Israel.

Following in the footsteps of the UAE, Bahrain and Sudan also normalized relations with Israel, sparking a wave of speculation over the formation of a potential Israeli-Arab alliance against Iran, which was portrayed by Israel as a common threat

to Israelis and Arabs alike.

Iran rejected these speculations, underlining that it does not pose a threat to its Arab neighbors. Iran also warned these neighbors against any military or security cooperation with Israel aiming to hurt Iran.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani warned the UAE against giving Israel a foothold on Iran's doorstep.

"The rulers of the United Arab Emirates should know that they have gone in the wrong direction if they think that they can buy security for themselves by getting closer to the enemies of Islam and Iran," the president said a few days after the U.S. announced the UAE-Israel deal, warning that "unfortunately, the United Arab Emirates has made a big mistake and we hope it would change its wrong tack. We warn them against giving Israel a foothold in the region, then they will be treated differently."

In addition, Iran also warned that it will hold the UAE responsible for any Israeli sabotage against Iran. Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Hossein Bagheri announced at the time that the UAE bears the responsibility for any harm to the national interest of Iran.

Knowing this Iranian sensitivity, the Israelis sought to deepen their military and security ties with its new Arab allies in an attempt

to entangle them in a dangerous escalation of tension with Iran. Since normalizing relations with Arab states, the Israeli officials have toughened their rhetoric against Iran, believing that such threats would resonate well with their new Persian Gulf Arab allies.

But these threats are no longer sitting well with these allies. Because the Emiratis are now wondering if Israel is simply seeking to entangle them in futile brinkmanship with Iran and then leave them alone meeting their fate on the battlefield.

"Ambiguity surrounds the Israeli initiative, amid questions related to its significance. Analysts wonder if the talk will lead to actual security arrangements allowing Israel to use Gulf bases as a launchpad to direct strikes at Iranian sites, or if instead it will constitute only a loose front for an Israeli deterrence policy based on limited strikes as it is the case now in Syria," the Al-Arab article said.

In other words, the Emiratis fear that Israeli officials are only using tough language against Iran for domestic political reasons.

Citing defense experts, the newspaper said that the Persian Gulf countries do not need ineffective "security arrangements" that only carry propaganda value over normalization with the Persian Gulf countries.

"They point out that the countries of the region do not need an additional military presence if the aim is to issue warnings or deterrence threats to Iran, as these countries have their own air force capabilities that could play the same role, in addition to the presence of American forces stationed in different bases in the [Persian] Gulf, which have been in watch-and-wait mode without striking at Iran."

According to the newspaper, "Israel may be aiming less for an actual confrontation with Tehran than using the Iranian threat as a scarecrow to obtain regional recognition and break the psychological barriers that still hinder full normalization."

The newspaper also wondered if Israel is only favoring limited responses to Iran over an all-out confrontation. Israel has issued threats against Iran but it has never been in a position to follow through on them. It is using belligerent rhetoric to lure Arabs into its orbit or hoodwink them into a costly confrontation with Iran. Therefore, the Persian Gulf Arab states need to be aware of the trap Israel is setting for them.

Iran, France presidents hold telephone conversation on nuclear deal

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Iranian President Hassan Rouhani spoke by phone with his French counterpart Emanuel Macron late on Tuesday to discuss a range of issues including the situation around the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

Rouhani warned that any unconstructive move by the International Atomic Energy Agency Board of Governors would further complicate the situation and endanger the nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Rouhani emphasized that missing the opportunities to maintain and revive the JCPOA could make the situation more difficult, according to a statement issued by the Iranian presidency, adding, "The stepwise reduction of commitments on the part of Iran was due to the withdrawal of the United States from the deal and the inability of the three European countries to fulfill their obligations, which can be returned immediately after the fulfillment of the obligations of the other parties."

'We have not withdrawn from the JCPOA in any way'

The Iranian president described the cancellation of the voluntary implementation of the Additional Protocol by Iran as within the framework of the law approved by the parliament and added, "Our cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency continues and we have not withdrawn from the JCPOA in any way."

The president warned that "any unconstructive action or position in the Board of Governors could lead to new challenges and complicate the current situation."

Rouhani described France as an important actor, underlining, "Tehran-Paris relations can be developed based on a sustainable vision and with long-term goals for joint bilateral, regional and global cooperation."

The Iranian president also touched on the coronavirus pandemic and how the U.S. sanctions on Iran impacted Iran's effort to fight the pandemic.

Underlining that effective confrontation with coronavirus requires the cooperation of all countries in the world, Rouhani noted, "The United States' cruel, illegal sanctions have made it more difficult for Iran to deal with this disease and made it difficult for the Islamic Republic to access its financial resources, even for the supply of medicine and medical equipment, and the European Union, especially France, is expected not to remain silent regarding this inhumane act."

'Europe is ready to be more active in the coming weeks to revive the JCPOA'

President Macron, for his part, called the preservation of the JCPOA a necessity for the international community and stressed the need for the continuation of the talks in order for all parties to return to the full implementation of their commitments.

Underscoring the need for the two sides to take the initial steps, the French president said, "Europe is ready to be more active in the coming weeks to revive the JCPOA."

'Deep concern'

Following the conversation, the Elysee palace issued a separate statement detailing the exchange of views between Rouhani and Macron.

According to the French statement, Macron recalled the



support given by the Europeans to Iran in the face of the pandemic and proposed to strengthen cooperation to meet Iran's vaccination needs, through the COVAX mechanism.

Macron also expressed "deep concern" over Iran's nuclear activities which he described as a violation of the nuclear deal, stressing the need for Iran to "return" to compliance with the JCPOA and full cooperation with the UN nuclear watchdog.

"Having reminded (Rouhani) of the efforts made by France with its partners in the last years to reach a negotiated solution, the (French) head of state stressed it was important that Iran made clear and immediate gestures so that dialogue can resume with all parties to the Vienna deal," the statement continued.

The Elysee palace also said that Macron discussed regional issues with Rouhani.

The telephone conversation come against a backdrop of heightened tensions between Iran and the West over a U.S.-led plan to adopt a resolution against Iran at the IAEA's board.

Bloomberg reported on Thursday which lists Washington's grievances and orders Iran to fully cooperate with inspectors. 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 three European signatories to the JCPOA – France, Germany and the UK (E3) – are expected to support the resolution despite Iranian and Russian warnings.

French Foreign Minister Jean Yves Le Drian said on Tuesday that France and its Western allies plan to lodge a protest with the United Nations' nuclear watchdog to criticize Iran's decision to curb cooperation with the agency, according to a Reuters report.

"The nuclear tensions will lead us in the coming days to put forward a protest in the framework of the IAEA Board of Governors to regret this decision," the chief French diplomat told a parliamentary hearing.

Reuters also reported that the E3 on Monday circulated a draft resolution backed by the United States for the Vienna meeting voicing "serious concern" at Iran's reduced cooperation and urging Iran to reverse its steps.

"The situation is complicated," Le Drian noted. "The problem is to know who goes first and nobody wants to be

trapped. The fact that the Iranians suspended the Additional Protocol is not good news," he said, referring to Iran's move last month to curb IAEA inspections.

Iran has made it clear that it will not let the adoption of the resolution go unanswered. Several Iranian officials have warned the UN nuclear watchdog as well as the West against adopting a resolution against Iran.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has warned that any hostile move by the IAEA board against the Islamic Republic would further complicate the situation around the 2015 nuclear deal.

He described the European push to adopt the resolution as a wrong move that will only complicate things.

"The Europeans have started a wrong move in support of the U.S. at the (IAEA) Board of Governors," Zarif told reporters, adding that the Western countries' measure could further complicate the situation, according to Pars News.

According to Zarif, Iran has already informed the IAEA board of the potential consequences of the Westerners' move.

"We have provided the necessary explanations about the current situation to all members of the Board of Governors," Zarif said, warning, "We hope that reason will prevail, otherwise we have our own solutions."

Earlier on Sunday, the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) director Ali Akbar Salehi also had warned the IAEA board against adopting a resolution against Iran, saying that such a move would prompt Iran to reciprocate.

"In case the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency adopts an anti-Iran resolution due to the suspension of the Additional Protocol, we will give a proper response," Salehi said.

Salehi pointed to the recent deal between Iran and the IAEA on how to continue cooperation in light of Iran's decision to implement a parliamentary nuclear law obligating the Iranian government to cease the voluntary implementation of 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 – Germany, France, China, Russia and the UK - failed to facilitate Iran's oil exports and the return of Iranian oil revenues in two months, the Iranian government would be obligated to stop inspections beyond the IAEA safeguards, including the voluntary implementation of the Additional Protocol, which allows unannounced and intensive inspections of nuclear sites.

Iran reached an understanding with IAEA chief Rafael Grossi a few days before the implementation of the nuclear law. Under the deal, the IAEA is allowed to carry out necessary inspections and verifications for a period of three months. After that, the continuation of the inspections would be contingent on the West lifting sanctions and returning to commitments under the JCPOA.

However, the Biden administration and its allies do not seem to be in the mood of lifting the sanctions anytime soon. They keep calling on Iran to fully implement the deal while they refuse to ease sanctions. The Biden administration has even hired a sanctions expert called Richard Nephew in the latest sign that the U.S. may not lift sanctions soon.

Secretary of Iranian Free Zones High Council Morteza Bank resigns

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Secretary of Iranian Free Zones High Council Morteza Bank has resigned from his position, handing over his resignation letter to President Hassan Rouhani, IRIB reported.

In his resignation letter, Bank has stated old age and retirement as the reason for his resignation.



Bank has previously served as President Rouhani's deputy chief of staff. He was also the administrative and financial deputy of the Foreign Affairs Ministry and governor of Kerman Province.

Housing price rises 78% in Tehran city in a month on year

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Housing price in Tehran city has risen 78.9 percent in the eleventh Iranian calendar month (January 20 – February 18), as compared to the same month of the past year, according to the latest report released by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI).

The CBI's report put the average price for one square meter of a residential unit at 232.8 million rials (about \$5,542) in the capital city in the eleventh month of this year.

Fardin Yazdani, the planner of the Transport and Urban Development Ministry's Comprehensive Housing Initiative, believes that the housing prices in the Iranian market are not going to experience any sudden rise in the coming months and the market will stay stable.

"Given the housing market situation and the trends in other parallel markets, there will be no significant change in the volume of housing transactions by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20)," the portal of Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Trade (TCCIMA) quoted Yazdani as saying last month.

The housing market expert further explained that price jumps occur when the rate of price increases in a market exceed the cost increase as well as the inflation rate, so apparently no price jump is expected in the housing market by the yearend.



Excessive price increases have left the market with a kind of imbalance between purchasing power and the owner expectations considering the existing prices; therefore, the market has entered a relative recession and this slump in trading is expected to continue, Yazdani said.

He further referred to the liquidity growth and its impact on the housing market and said: "The liquidity growth will ultimately have its negative impacts on the asset market in the long run; as all the statistical data of the last two decades show, one of the most important and influential factors on the housing market has been the liquidity growth, which unfortunately continues to increase."

According to Parvaneh Aslani, director-general of Housing Economy Office of the Transport and Urban Development Ministry, home prices have registered a 200 percent growth over the past five years.

TEDPIX loses 8,000 points on Wednesday

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), dropped 8,301 points to 1.177 million on Wednesday.

Over 3.95 billion securities worth 44.819 trillion rials (about \$1.067 billion) were traded in the TSE on Wednesday.

The first market's index fell 7,534 points, and the second market's index dropped 11,752 points.

TEDPIX had dropped 2.7 percent during the past Iranian calendar week.

The index stood at 1.205 million points on Wednesday (the last working day of the week).

During the past week, the indices of Social Security Investment Company, Tamin Cement Company, Amin Investment Bank, Mobarakeh Steel Company, National Iranian Copper Industry Company, Tehran Oil Refining Company, and Bandar Abbas Oil Refining Company were the most widely followed indices.

Last week, market analyst Amir-Ali Amir-Baqeri told IRNA that Iranian stock market is moving in the right direction and will reach stability in the near future.

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

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

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

Intl. railway exhibition underway in Tehran

1 → According to the organizers, holding this exhibition can provide a good opportunity to promote domestic production in this industry in the year which has been called the year of "Surge in Production" by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution of Iran Seyed Ali Khamenei.

On the sidelines of the exhibition's opening ceremony, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) was also signed between RAI and Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME).

Based on the mentioned MOU, rail transport companies can offer their services for the transportation of com-

modities on the IME and producers and businessmen active in the commodity exchange will have access the best price for rail transportation as they are trading their goods.

The 8th International Exhibition of Rail Transportation, Related Industries and Equipment of Iran was due to be held during May 28-31, 2020, however the event was postponed due to the critical situation of the coronavirus pandemic in the country at the mentioned date.

Due to the special conditions caused by the pandemic, only managers, businessmen, scholars, and experts have been



Transport and Urban Development Minister Mohammad Eslami (1st R) and RAI Head Saeid Rasouli (2nd L) in the opening ceremony of Rail Expo 2020 in Tehran on Wednesday

allowed to visit most of the exhibitions held over the past few months.

Ordinary people, however, have been able to visit the exhibitions virtually.

Oil Ministry to conduct 42 research projects in collaboration with universities

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iranian Oil Ministry plans to conduct 42 major projects in collaboration with the country's research institutions and universities, the deputy oil minister for engineering, research and technology affairs announced.

The mentioned projects are going to be conducted in a variety of areas including upstream, downstream and oil-related industries, according to Saeed Mohammadi.

Speaking to the press on the sidelines of a visit to a science and technology park in Khorasan Razavi Province, Mohammadi said: "The purpose of these projects and research cooperation is for the universities and research institutes to work alongside the oil industry on a long-term basis."

According to the official, in addition to the mentioned collaborations, the necessary licenses have been issued for the establishment of the Oil and Gas Industry Innovation and Technology Park, which will provide a great platform for the cooperation between the country's technological and commercial sectors.



"The purpose of this technology park is to communicate with the country's knowledge-based companies, especially science parks, and also to support startups," he said.

He further noted that for the development of new

technologies related to the oil industry, an Oil Research and Innovation Fund has also been licensed and established which will act as one of the main pillars for supporting new ideas and products in the oil industry.

Since the re-imposition of the U.S. sanctions, Iran has been encouraging domestic companies, universities, and research institutes' presence in its oil and gas projects in all sectors including research, exploration, and development sectors.

Back in September 2020, National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) signed 13 major research-based deals valued at over €178.6 million (€35 million plus 7.16 trillion rials) with the country's universities and research institutes.

The mentioned deals, mostly focused on improving the recovery factor of the country's oil and gas fields, were signed with the universities of Tehran, Sharif, Amirkabir, Sahand, Shiraz, Oil Industry, Ferdowsi, Science and Technology, Shahid Chamran, Isfahan, and Islamic Azad University, in addition to the Persian Gulf and Petroleum Industry Research Institute.

Iran-Georgia trade webinar slated for mid-March

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran-Georgia Joint Chamber of Commerce is going to hold an online seminar on the two countries' trade opportunities on March 14.

The webinar is going to be held in collaboration with Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) and the Iranian Business Women Association (IBWA), the portal of Iran Chamber



of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) announced.

Officials, businessmen and trade representatives from the two countries will be attending this online event to discuss ways of broadening economic cooperation and removing barriers in the way of mutual trade.

Back in August 2020, Iranian Ambassador to Georgia Javad Qavam Shahidi met with the Georgian Minister of Economy and

Sustainable Development Natia Turnava, to discuss ways for the expansion of the two countries economic relations.

During the meeting, the Iranian ambassador stressed the need for reviving the rising trend of economic cooperation between the two countries before the coronavirus pandemic and even deepen the bilateral cooperation while observing the health protocols.

Tire output hoped to hit a record high this calendar year

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Given the process of tire production in the country in the current Iranian calendar year (began on March 20, 2020), it is hoped that a new record will be achieved in this regard in this year, according to the spokesman of the Iranian Tire Syndicate.

Mostafa Tanha told IRNA that if a record high will be posted, it will be a big success achieved despite the limitations imposed by the sanctions and also the coronavirus pandemic.

As already reported the production of tires in Iran has risen 20 percent during the first ten months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2020-January 19, 2021), compared to the same period of time in the past year.

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

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

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

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

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

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



stand at 15,081 tons.

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

The bicycle and motorcycle tire output stood at 16,182 tons, indicating 32 percent growth.

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

Kamran Kargar, the acting head of planning, supplying, and market regulating office of the ministry, said the consumption of tires is noticeable in Iran due to the country's big transportation fleet.

CBI, Urban Development Ministry discuss financing housing plan

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The Governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Abdolnaser Hemmati and the Transport and Urban Development Minister Mohammad Eslami discussed ways of financing the National Housing Action Plan in a meeting on Tuesday.

In this meeting, which was also attended by the managing directors of some of the country's banks as well as the representatives of the Transport Ministry, Hemmati called on banks to provide housing facilities for improving this market.

According to the CBI's Office of Public Relations, the CBI governor emphasized his bank's strong support for the implementation of the government's housing-related plans and asked the bank directors to participate in such plans.

"It is essential that banks participate in housing-related programs as much as they can," he stressed.

Underlining the capacities of the country's banking system for financing such programs, Hemmati stated: "The power and capacities of private and public banks can be used to finance the National Housing Action Plan."

It was also decided in this meeting to discuss new strategies for the country's banks' cooperation in the National Housing Action Plan as well as other housing-related programs, such as the formation of land and housing funds by banks and to review the results in a joint meeting between the two government bodies.

The National Housing Action Plan aims to construct 400,000 small and medium-size apartments (70-100 square meters in

size) across the country and particularly in Tehran, where housing prices have risen most sharply.

Nearly half of the total number of the said homes will be constructed in Tehran's suburban "new towns" such as Parand and Pardis, respectively located in the west and east of the city.

While the ministry will provide the land for the new developments, it will only supervise construction, enlisting private sector construction firms who will bid for contracts that entitle them to receive state loans and subsidized building materials.

As reported, the government's investment in construction will help create new jobs across the country and is expected to boost wages among laborers.

Providing housing to low-income families could also help alleviate economic



hardship, especially if government's assistance can help inflation-hit renters become homeowners.

The first phase of the plan, which was started in August 2019, was completed in May 2020.

Biden backing away from level of support for Saudis: academic

1 → I know that the Iranian public has been led to think by the official public discussion that lifting of sanctions without any steps taken by Iran would be a good expectation, such a pattern would be historically unusual and outside the normal pattern of negotiations, whether or not we think that is good or bad.

The United States has generally not engaged in this behavior (of preemptive sanction lifting), and President Bidenâ€although he would likely want to see a return to stable relations and an agreement with Iranâ€has a long history of engaging in foreign policy in a conventional way. He is not likely going to do diplomacy in ways that differ strongly from what has been considered good diplomacy in the past. This has widely been observed about his political style. The Islamic Republic leadership and its governors may be frustrated by United States behavior over the past administration, but there will also be a lot of domestic pressure against President Biden if he appears to be engaging too softly with an Iranian government.”

What is your comment on the role of Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) in killing Khashoggi? Is the U.S. serious about punishing Saudi Arabia?

The U.S. is already showing, as we discussed in the interview in December, that they are backing away from the level of support they’ve shown for Saudi Arabia over the last years. The Biden administration’s decision to withdraw their support from Saudi Arabia’s operations in Yemen is an important one.

I think many in the U.S. are concerned about and have voiced concerns about the issues of human rights within and outside of Saudi Arabia, and the Biden administration appears to be concerned about these. The killing of Khashoggi was deeply troubling to many, but the human consequences of the Yemeni conflict reflect an even more horrific tragedy on a massive scale. That is also a context in which the Islamic Republic of Iran could play an exemplary role and



be a positive leader in bringing an end to hostilities and a resolution to the conflict among parties involved.

What will be Biden’s attitude towards China? Is China an enemy or an economic rival?

It’s not fully clear what the Biden administration’s attitude toward China will be. Although few would refer to China as an enemy, many view China as a deeply concerning economic rival. Biden is likely to take a similar position toward China as was described in NATO’s 2030 report. It refers to China as not just an economic rival but a “systemic rival,” one who is actively competing to rival the U.S. and Europe on numerous domains.

What are the main challenges that Biden is facing?

Biden is facing a number of challenges as he begins his term as president. The biggest and most commonly expressed challenge is addressing the coronavirus and improving the speed and availability of vaccinations in the country. This is a big challenge in a large geographic country

that is a federal state. Each state has its own plan and preferences for vaccinations, but the effectiveness of this process (or its lack of effectiveness) can still be blamed on the president. He seems to be working hard to make sure that the availability and the distribution of the vaccine are speeding up, but there are also obstacles from state to state.

The other challenge that Biden faces is the severe political polarization that was reaching a climax at the end of the Trump presidency.

He seems to have a strong desire to lower the political temperature and to emphasize political policies that appeal to everyday concerns, but he receives opposition to this approach from the opposition (Republicans) and from the radical members of his own party, who want him to address more ideological concerns to address their grievances that developed during the previous administration. Many Democrats are angry over the last four years, and there are some who would like to push the policy further to the left to make up for the last four years.

Are Republicans facing a real crisis after Trump?

Trump brought a new kind of conservatism to the political right in the United States. In the case of Trump, his rise came out of a general frustration among much lower educated and lower-income whites that the culture and the economy were moving away from them, and their interests were being replaced by the interests of many other groups in the country.

This generated a populist movement on the right that brought together many different kinds of people, but mostly white Americans. The Republicans have an important challenge going forward.

Over the last four years, in order to stay together as a party, the traditional Republicans largely supported Trump in public and created the impression that he was the new face of the party. Many Republicans ended up supporting Trump initially, not because they liked him, but because he was the Republican candidate, but over time, Republican-aligned media worked to convince people that Trump was a good candidate to keep from losing their supporters, but in the end, they created a lot of support for him and then lost support for themselves and the party’s traditional position. Now, it is fairly clear that many Republicans want to move on from Trump, but they are afraid of angering their supporters who have come to see him as the party flag bearer. It is not clear how the Republicans will move forward. If Biden moves too much to the left on social and cultural issues, he might re-energize the Trump faction of the party. It’s not clear that the Republicans could win again with Trump, but in a two-party system, the losing party can easily recover from the mistakes made by the governing party. You ask a very good question, and it really depends on what Republican leaders decide to do and how the Biden administration and Democrats perform while they have power at the Presidency and in Congress the next two years.

Taliban just seeking prisoner release, foreign troop exit: ex-U.S. security adviser

1 → “From Tehran’s viewpoint, it should bear in mind that the Taliban is Sunni and no friend of Iran. A Taliban-run Afghanistan would likely damage, not help Iran,” he claimed. “A Taliban-run Afghanistan would likely damage, not help Iran,” he adds.

Contrary to claims by the former military advisor, Iran has been hosting millions of Afghan refugees since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and they have assimilated into the Iranian society and there is no talk of who is Sunni or Shia.

In February 2020, the United States reached an agreement with the Taliban and signed a declaration with the government of Afghanistan to encourage an intra-Afghan peace process.

However, analysts firmly believe that the dialogue with the Taliban, which started during the Trump administration, was primarily aimed at finding a face-saving exit by the U.S. from Afghanistan.

Analysts and politicians are asking why the United States, which considered the Taliban as a terrorist group and rejected talks with them, is now begging them to stop attacks on foreign forces.

Many observers believe that the agreement faces serious challenges that would undercut efforts to end the United States’ longest war.

Though the Vietnam War will continue to haunt Americans and the U.S. lost more than 58,000 troops in the country, its war against the Taliban is the longest of all U.S. wars overseas.

Analysts say U.S. negotiations with the Taliban show Washington’s hypocrisy.



When asked if the Taliban are terrorists, why is the U.S. negotiating them, and if they are not, why did America wage war against them, he just said, “This is a civil war.”

The American expert says that “there is no reason” that Iran and the U.S. “should have an adversarial relationship as to Yemen.”

On what fuels the engine of the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan and Pakistan, he says, “That is too broad a question to answer in a short interview. It draws upon a combination of Pashtun anti-foreigner sentiment, and its finances have been fueled by drug smuggling.”

The former military advisor also refused to elaborate on the Biden administration’s decision to change policy toward Saudi Arabia, just saying, “The Biden policy towards Saudi Arabia is evolving. We’ll see how it unfolds.”

Also, on the release of an intelligence report by the U.S. that directly implicates Saudi de facto leader Mohammed bin Salman for killing Jamal Khashoggi and the repercussion of the report on the future relationship between Washington and Riyadh, he said, “The report speaks for itself.”

Some say the release of the intelligence report on the Khashoggi killing may put the fate of MBS in disarray.

“It’s not clear in the opaque dynamics of Saudi politics who will succeed the current king,” Farwell says.

Sustainable peace in Afghanistan, Yemen, and West Asia in general needs comprehensive cooperation between the U.S. and regional actors, including Iran, but on the ground, they have mostly adversary relations.

The former advisor to the U.S. Special Operations Command also sees room for a common understanding between Iran and the United States on the crisis in Yemen, saying, “There is no reason that the two should have an adversarial relationship as to Yemen. That serves no one, least of all the people of Yemen.”

Before Biden came to power, the U.S. was providing logistical and intelligence reports for the Saudi-led war in Yemen.

The war has also taken a heavy toll on the country’s infrastructure, destroying hospitals, schools, and factories. The UN says over 24 million Yemenis are in dire need of humanitarian aid, including 10 million suffering from extreme levels of hunger.

In the early days of the Saudi-led war on Yemen, Iran presented a four-point plan to then UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon proposing cession of war and formation of an inclusive government, among other things.

See you in court, Mr. Crown Prince

By Michael Eisner

With Biden refusing to act, courts are the best chance to achieve justice for Jamal Khashoggi and hold Mohammed bin Salman to account for his many human rights abuses.

On Friday, February 26, the Biden Administration released an unclassified version of the report prepared by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI), revealing the worst-kept secret in U.S. intelligence: Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) ordered the operation that killed Jamal Khashoggi.

Despite the findings in the ODNI report, the Biden Administration chose to impose no sanction on him. Fortunately, another mechanism exists to achieve personal accountability against the crown prince: the courts.

Efforts to bring justice for Khashoggi’s murder extend across the branches of government. As Congress pressured the administration to release the ODNI report, they will try to force Biden to hold MBS accountable.

Representative Tom Malinowski introduced legislation on March 1 to impose a visa ban on MBS. A day later, Representative Ilhan Omar introduced legislation to impose sanctions on MBS for his role in the murder. It remains to be seen if Congress can mus-

ter the bipartisan support to pass either of these bills as a direct and early challenge to President Biden.

Regardless, given its refusal to sanction MBS after the release of the report, the Biden administration will likely adopt the same posture as the Trump administration towards Congressional efforts to hold MBS accountable and veto legislation that imposes any penalty on MBS for the murder.

The good news is that the U.S. judiciary remains independent of both political branches and is not subject to a presidential veto; it might well provide the means to achieve justice for MBS’s crimes.

Three cases have been brought against the crown prince in U.S. federal courts, one for the murder of Khashoggi; the second for the attempted murder of the exiled former senior intelligence official Saad Aljabri; the third for the hacking, harassment and defamation of Al Jazeera anchor Ghada Oueiss.

Recent developments bode well for the plaintiffs in all three cases.

The Biden administration has indicated that it considers MBS as Saudi defense minister to be on the same level as the U.S. secretary of defense, a designation that will almost certainly deny him head of state immunity from these lawsuits.

The ODNI report also confirms the core underlying factual claim made by plaintiffs in the Khashoggi case: MBS was responsible for Khashoggi’s murder. If the court in the Khashoggi case defers, as it should, to the ODNI report’s finding of MBS’s culpability, it will hold MBS liable for the murder and might well impose substantial damages, making MBS “pay the price” that President Biden promised but did not deliver.

Though it seems MBS has escaped Magnitsky sanctions, for now, he will have a much harder time evading the judgment of a federal court. U.S. courts are not the only venue in which MBS may face judicial sanction. This week, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) filed a 500-page criminal complaint against MBS in a German court, alleging that the crown prince committed crimes against humanity in his crusade against journalists, including the murder of Khashoggi.

RSF relies on Germany’s universal jurisdiction laws that allow a German court to try MBS for crimes committed elsewhere.

The laws of universal jurisdiction, prevalent in many European countries and in the U.S. in the form of the Alien Tort Statute, are based on the notion that perpetrators of certain egregious offenses, such as genocide, torture, or extrajudicial killings, are

“hostes humani generis”, meaning “enemies of all mankind.”

Mohammed bin Salman’s extrajudicial killing of Jamal Khashoggi falls squarely within this category. As a result, it seems likely that courts on both sides of the Atlantic will force MBS to account for his role in killing Khashoggi. As these court cases gain media attention, more plaintiffs and prosecutors might well be encouraged to launch new cases against MBS for similar crimes.

These cases are exactly why MBS has not dared to set foot in the U.S. or Europe since he murdered Khashoggi. By imposing a significant penalty on MBS for his campaign of harassment, detention, and murder, the courts might accomplish what governments have been unable or refused to do, providing a good reason for MBS to moderate his behavior.

The Biden administration’s inaction certainly did not create incentives for MBS to temper his abuses. Whether or not they can influence MBS’s behavior, courts right now provide the best chance of achieving a small measure of justice for Jamal Khashoggi and other victims of MBS’s human rights abuses.

The views expressed in this article are the authors’ own and do not necessarily reflect Tehran Time’s editorial stance.

(Source: Aljazeera)

Ilhan Omar unveils bill to sanction MBS for Khashoggi murder

1 → Former U.S. president Donald Trump shielded Riyadh from the fallout of the crime, prioritizing lucrative deals with the regime over human rights concerns.

“The law is clear that the Secretary of State must apply a visa ban on persons he knows are linked to gross human rights abuses — exactly what the Khashoggi report lays out,” he added. “Our bill makes this doubly clear, and reminds the world that in America, no one, whether a president or a prince, is above the law.”

Additionally, McGovern stressed that there must be consequences for the gruesome murder of Khashoggi.

“Such a heinous crime must not be met with impunity. This legislation is an important first step in ensuring that those responsible are named and held accountable,” he said. “I believe more can and should be done, including ending U.S. arms sales and security aid to the Saudi government.”

The U.S. Office of the Director of National Intelligence confirmed in its four-page report the long-suspected view that bin Salman was behind Khashoggi’s murder.

“We assess that Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman approved an operation in Istanbul, Turkey to capture or kill Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi,” said the report, which was based on the prince’s “control of decision-making in the kingdom, the direct involvement of a key adviser and members of [the prince’s] protective detail in the operation, and [his] support for using violent measures to silence dissidents abroad, including Khashoggi.”

Yemeni forces launch new drone attack against Saudi Arabia’s Abha International Airport

The spokesman for Yemeni Armed Forces says a new drone attack has been launched on Saudi Arabia’s Abha International Airport in retaliation for the Riyadh regime’s ongoing military aggression and blockade against the war-torn Arab country.

Brigadier General Yahya Saree said in a statement posted on his Twitter page on Tuesday evening that the Yemeni army and allied fighters from Popular Committees used a domestically-manufactured Qasef-2K (Striker-2K) combat drone in the operation.

According to Press TV, the unmanned aerial vehicle struck military aircraft hangars at the airport with great precision, according to Saree.

He said the airstrike comes within Yemen’s legitimate right to respond to the Saudi-led coalition’s air raids as well as its continued all-out siege against Yemeni people.

The development came a few days after Yemeni army troops and Popular Committees fighters targeted the Saudi soil with 15 unmanned aerial vehicles and a ballistic missile as part of “the 5th Operation of Balanced Deterrence.”

Saree said in a press conference on Sunday that sensitive positions and places in the Saudi capital Riyadh had been struck with a Zolfaghar ballistic missile and nine Samad-3 (Invincible-3) combat drones.

U.S. Ain al-Assad base in Iraq targeted in rocket attack

On Wednesday morning a barrage of rockets struck the Ain al-Assad air base hosting American forces in the western Iraqi province of Anbar.

The Security Media Cell, affiliated with the Iraqi prime minister’s office, announced in a statement that 10 Grad rockets had struck the base, located about 160 kilometers (100 miles) west of the capital Baghdad.

The statement added that security forces had found the launchpad for the projectiles and that further details about the incident would be provided later.

The attack took place at 7:20 am (0420 GMT), coalition spokesman Colonel Wayne Marotto confirmed.

Iraqi and Western security sources said a contractor with the Western-led military coalition died of a heart attack during the rocket attack. His nationality has not been unveiled.

Sabereen News, a Telegram news channel associated with Iraqi Popular Mobilization Units, reported that C-RAM systems as well as Patriot Advanced Capability-2 (PAC-2) missile systems deployed at the base were not able to intercept the rockets.

According to the report, a number of U.S. military aircraft as well as Spanish choppers could be seen flying over the hit district, where the air base is located, in the aftermath of the rocket attack.

No group has claimed responsibility for the attack yet, which is the latest in a series of assaults that have targeted U.S. positions in Iraq over the past few months.

Witnesses said a thick column of smoke could be seen billowing from flames in the base.

Resistance News

ICC launches investigation into alleged war crimes in Palestinian Territories

INTERNATIONAL DESK TEHRAN— The International Criminal Court has opened a formal probe into alleged crimes committed in Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories, Fatou Bensouda, the ICC’s chief prosecutor, said in a statement Wednesday.

“Today, I confirm the initiation by the office of the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court of an investigation respecting the situation in Palestine,” Bensouda said.

The prosecutor specified that the probe would “cover crimes within the jurisdiction of the Court that are alleged to have been committed in the Situation since 13 June 2014, the date to which reference is made in the Referral of the Situation to my Office.”

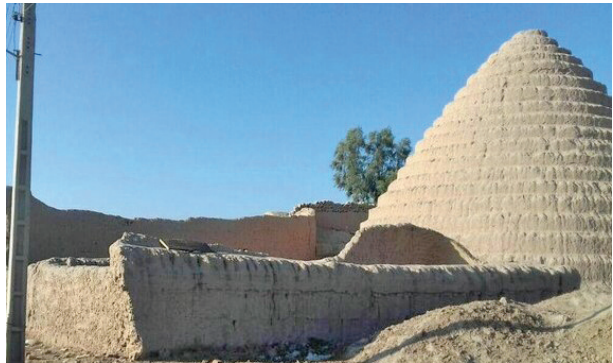
The decision to undertake the investigation was made after carrying out what the prosecutor called a “painstaking preliminary examination” that took place over nearly five years in coordination with representatives from both Israel and the Palestinian territories.

Last month, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu accused the International Criminal Court of “pure anti-Semitism” after The Hague-based tribunal approved a probe into alleged war crimes in Israeli-controlled Palestinian territories.

Qajar-era ice storage turns into heritage museum

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — A Qajar-era (1789–1925) traditional Yakhchal (mudbrick ice storage) in the north-central city of Garmsar, Semnan province has been turned into a museum.

Yakhchal-e Qatul was used to supply ice slabs to the neighboring towns and villages for decades, the provincial tourism chief has said.



As the museums play a big part in introducing and promoting each region's culture as well as attracting more tourists, and to preserve the historical structure more properly, it has been repurposed into a museum, Mehdi Jamal announced on Tuesday.

A budget of 1.4 billion rials (about \$33,000 at the official exchange rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) has been allocated to the project, which was carried out in collaboration with the private sector, the official added.

The Yakhchal of Qatul has been inscribed on the National Heritage list.

When there was no electricity, no refrigerators, and no appliances, people kept a huge amount of water next to the high walls of Yakhchal, which cast a shadow that kept the water cool.

The water turned into ice during the wintertime. Then people cut the ice into many portable parts and put them in the ice house and covered the surface of the ice with special local grass.

The structure is built high to minimize the contact of warm air with the ice surface as the warm air floats upwards. The feature of the ice storage was essential to its functioning.

There were also wells behind the ice storages with a connective canal at the bottom of the ice storage to the wells with a slight slope.

When people piled up the ice, a little amount of water remained under the heap of ice. If the water was not removed it would make the rest of the ice melt. By channeling the water into the well, not only did they prevent the ice stored in the ice house from melting, but also they had cold and tasty water during summer months when the weather went up to 40 degrees Celsius.

Iran's 1000th museum to open to public within year

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iran's 1000th cultural heritage museum will be inaugurated in the next Iranian calendar year, which begins on March 21, the director of museums and historical properties at the tourism ministry announced on Wednesday.



Currently, 740 museums are active across Iran, of which 285 have been established since August 2013, when President Hassan Rouhani began his first administration, Mohammadreza Kargar added.

The official, however, did not mention the exact number of cultural heritage museums scheduled to come on stream during the next Persian year.

Kargar in 2018 publicized that some three million historical objects were being kept at museums affiliated with the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and

Tourism Ministry.

Iran is home to one of the world's oldest continuous major civilizations, embracing settlements dating back to 4000 BC. It also hosts some of the world's oldest cultural monuments including bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, gardens, rich natural, rural landscapes as well as 24 UNESCO World Heritage sites.

The name of Iran, formerly known as Persia, mostly conjures up the first Persian Empire, ruled by the Achaemenids (ca. 550–330 BC) and sites such as Pasargadae and Persepolis. However, there are tens of prehistorical sites as the Burnt City in Sistan-Baluchestan, Tepe Sialk in Kashan, Susa and Chogha Zanbil in the Khuzestan province, and Ecbatana in Hamedan which predate the Achaemenid period.

From a wider point of view, Iranian history can be divided into Pre-Islamic and Islamic eras. The Medes unified Iran as a nation and empire in 625 BC. The Islamic conquest of Persia (633–656) that put an end to the mighty Sassanid Empire (224–651) was a turning point in the history of the nation.

Walnut Kuku added to Iran national heritage list

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — Walnut Kuku, a kind of herbal frittata enriched by walnuts mostly served in Iran's Tuyserkan county, has won a national cultural heritage status.



Kuku is a traditional Persian dish, full of fresh herbs and vegetables mixed with eggs and a balanced spice mix that is a little different for each variety—it is a bit like a lighter and more herb-packed frittata.

Being famous as the walnut capital of Iran, Tuyserkan is a county in Hamedan province. Walnut farming has a very old history in Tuyserkan where there are walnut trees as old as 700 years.

There are some 5,500 hectares of walnut orchards in Tuyserkan with an annual yield of some 70,000 tons. The abundance of walnut wood in the region has laid the ground for a well-developed woodcarving industry that has gained a nationwide reputation.

Tourism minister cuts ribbon on accommodation centers in Kashan

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan inaugurated a hotel and two traditional guesthouses during his visit to the central city of Kashan on Tuesday.

A budget of five trillion rials (\$119 million at the official exchange rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) has been allocated for the establishment of the hotel, which is estimated to generate 120 job opportunities, CHTN reported.

The total budget for traditional guesthouses also amounts to 170 billion rials (\$4 million), the report added. The guesthouses are expected to create 40 new jobs as well.

There is an additional 160 beds to the hospitality sector in the city with the inauguration of the accommodation centers.

Kashan is a historical city near Isfahan



in the central part of Iran. Its history dates back to over ten thousand years ago, and it is home to some of the most beautiful buildings featuring Islamic architecture.

Many travelers opt to pass Kashan on their journeys between Tehran, Isfahan, Shiraz and Yazd, because this delightful oasis city on the edge of the Dasht-e Kavir, is one of Iran's most alluring destinations.

Kashan not only boasts a cluster of architectural wonders, an atmospheric covered bazaar, and a UNESCO-recognized garden, but it also offers some of central Iran's best traditional hotels.

The annual Golab-giri (rosewater distillation) ceremony of Kashan attracts huge crowds to the city every year. Some of the most ancient traces of civilization have been discovered near Kashan, at the Sialk archeological site.

Mazandaran overnight stays cut by 58 percent due to virus

→ 1 He publicized in November that mass, unplanned travels are not approved. "The outbreak of the coronavirus has caused damage to the tourism industry in Iran and [other parts of] the world in such a way that according to statistics, 50 million people are directly and indirectly exposed to unemployment due to the virus spread in the global scene.... yet, mass or unplanned and irresponsible travels are not approved to take place during the coronavirus era."

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

"We are well aware of what the National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control proclaims [the health protocols], hence as a proposal, we have formulated some smart, responsible travel packages by the implementation of

which we could have secure travels," the minister said.

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

On other hand, international tourist arrivals to Iran plunged 72% during the first eight months of the year when compared to 2019, according to data compiled by the World Tourism Organization. Restrictions on travel introduced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic continue to hit global tourism hard, with the latest data from the UNWTO showing a 70% fall in international arrivals for the first eight months of 2020.

Optimistic forecasts, expect the country would achieve a tourism boom after coronavirus contained, believing its impact would be temporary and short-lived for a country that ranked the third fastest-growing tourism destina-



tion in 2019.

On the contrary, some experts believe that the Iranian tourist cities and some others in the world will not return to the way they were before the outbreak of the coronavirus until 2027.

Forgotten wood figurines to reappear in Urmia

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — The local skill of making hand-carved wood figurines, which is currently obsolete in the city of Urmia, northwestern West Azarbaijan province, is planned to be revived in near future.

As one of the indigenous and original arts practiced for generations in the region, the forgotten craft is scheduled to be brought back to life in near future, the deputy provincial tourism chief has said.

Although the city is famous for its wooden crafts, this field has been fallen into oblivion over the years, Afsaneh Ranjbar announced on Wednesday.

However, holding workshops and training courses as well as handicrafts exhibitions and markets to promote woodcarving products are on the agenda of the province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Depart-



ment, she added.

The provincial capital of Urmia, also spelled Orumiyeh, lies just west of Lake Urmia on a large fertile plain that yields grains, fruits, tobacco, and other crops. The population is mainly Azeri Turkish, with Kurdish, Assyrian Christian, and Armenian minorities. The

remains of ancient settlements are scattered over the plain, as are traces of the ancient kingdom of Urartu.

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 hand-

icrafts. Chador Shab, a kind of homemade outer-garment for women, was, however, the main subject for the WCC assessment for the village.

Iran exported \$523 million worth of handicrafts during the past 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 ornaments with precious and semi-precious gemstones are traditionally exported to Iraq, Afghanistan, Germany, the U.S., the UK, and other countries.

Tehran's subway stations to turn into museums, tourist destinations

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — A total of 20 subway stations across Tehran are scheduled to turn into museums and tourist destinations, a member of the City Council has announced.

More than 300 million passengers travel on Tehran Subway each year, enabling it to be used to improve the city's and even the nation's culture, IRNA quoted Mohammad-Javad Haqshenas as saying on Wednesday.

A budget of 200 billion rials (\$4.7 million at the official exchange rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) has been allocated to the project, he added.

Tehran subway system consists of seven operational



lines, stretching to over 200 kilometers. The lines link south to north, east to west, and are gradually covering more neighborhoods.

The first time Tehran is mentioned in historical accounts is in an 11th-century chronicle in which it is described as a small village north of Rey.

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

Persian handicrafts: traditional skill of making rings

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — For millennia, metalworking is practiced in the Iranian plateau. And traditional ring making is amongst those.

There are different opinions regarding the history of wearing rings but what is certain is that the habit of wearing belongs to ancient times.

It seems that Egyptians were the first nation to make rings, but according to Iranian legends and the book "Norouz Nameh", the first human who created a ring and wore it was Jamshid, the fourth Shah of the Pishdadian



dynasty of Persia, according to Visit Iran, the official travel guide to the country.

Undoubtedly, change of religion has gradually affected the designs and styles of jewelry making. One example is that before the Islamic era, the rings were decorated with symbolic signs, but during the Islamic era wearing rings gain religious usage, too, because it is an Islamic tradition and there are many hadith that encouraged it. That is why from the Islamic era the designs of the rings changed into religious motifs.

Today various kinds of rings are created with diverse designs. Some of the most important designs are "Shabakeh" or latticed, Fili, Safavid,

Shirazi, or Zanjani. Each of them is ornated with many motifs and many different names.

For example, some kinds of latticed rings are "Do Gol" (two flowers), "Seh Gol" (three flowers), and "Lalehi" (tulip). Fili rings can be found in different lattice and incrustation (a step in making jewelry that is consisted of both gems and metal is inserting the gemstone).

Safavid rings are created in both simple and lattice designs. A traditional jewelry-making workshop can only make a few numbers of rings per day and that is why most of the rings are unique and limited.

Akbarieh Mosque in Iran's Gilan

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — One of the most famous mosques in Gilan Province, Akbarieh Mosque was built during the reign of Fath-Ali Shah Qajar (1772–1834).

The mosque consists of two parts a Shabistan (inner sanctum) and a Wudu Khaneh (lavabo).

The lavabo has been built in two stories and each level has 8 columns. The first floor has three wooden doors that open into the Shabistan.

The Shabistan is a 25x16-meter space that has tile decorations bearing Quranic inscriptions in the Naskh calligraphy hand. The Mihrab (prayer niche) is 7 centimeters lower than the Shabistan floor and has green tilework and Quranic inscriptions. Large windows on the eastern side of the Shabistan provide lighting for the space.

An 18-meter brick minaret is located on the northeastern part of the mosque.

This octagonal minaret has a small dome that has tilework with geometric patterns in light blue, yellow, dark brown and white.

The entrance of the mosque has red brickwork and thick wooden doors. The mosque was built to be a religious school and a place where daily prayers were performed. Akbarieh Mosque was registered as a National Heritage Site in 1976.



Dam building in Afghanistan threatens Hamoun Wetlands in Iran

ENVIRONMENT **TEHRAN** — Construction of Kamal Khan Dam in Afghanistan has caused Hamoun Wetlands to dry up and generate sand and dust hot-spots, Masoud Tajrishi, deputy head of the Department of Environment (DOE) for the human environment, has said.

The dried-up wetlands became a source of sand and dust storm, and the DOE has called on the government, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Energy to pay serious attention to the environmental issues of wetlands in the talks with the neighboring country, as it affects Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and the Persian Gulf littoral countries, so the dust problem is entirely a regional issue, he explained.

To find a solution to SDSs and climate change, we called on the Afghan authorities to form a special task force and address the issue, he further stated.

Hamoun Wetlands have always been filled with fresh water for the past two centuries, so if sediments are not flooded and do not fill up the wetlands, the area's ecosystem will



certainly be affected, and it is expected that the wetland's salinity increases.

Referring to the Hamoun drought following

the construction of the Kamal Khan Dam in Afghanistan, he added that the locals are affected by the saline water and the animal

species will perish, and the region's ecosystem will be destroyed gradually.

The Hamouns are transboundary wetlands on the Iran-Afghan border made up of three lakes: Hamoun-e Helmand, which is entirely in Iran, Hamoun-e Sabari on the border, and Hamoun-e Puzak, almost entirely inside Afghanistan. The three lakes are linked and fed by water from the Helmand River which starts in the Hindu Kush Mountains in Afghanistan.

In the last two decades, once fertile wetlands have drastically dried up. The Taliban government closed the sluices to the Kajaki Dam on the Helmand until 2002, which aggravated the impact of the worst drought the region has experienced in many decades, brought about partially by climate change and warming temperatures.

According to the Atlantic Council (an American think tank in the field of international affairs) disputes over transboundary water between Iran and Afghanistan date back to the 1870s when Afghanistan was under British control.



Importing Iranian medicine 'a priority': Syrian health minister

I → Other memorandums will be signed with the aim of cooperation in the field of building and equipping nanotechnology, biotechnology, and hospital equipment laboratories.

In January, Ambassador of Syria to Tehran Shafiq Dayoub and Iranian Science Minister Mansour Gholami in a meeting in Tehran discussed ways to boost cooperation in the field of technology.

Setting up research laboratories, holding joint scientific conferences and seminars, boosting scientific skills training

cooperation, exchanging students and professors as well as experiences, offering joint guidance of master's and doctoral dissertations, and publishing scientific articles in journals of the two countries were among the fields of cooperation discussed at the meeting.

The Syrian official emphasized that the realization of scientific advances in the field of economy and, more importantly, the transfer of these valuable experiences must be considered by developing countries.

The sharks that glow in the dark

Scientists have been left puzzled by a glow-in-the-dark shark after conducting the first experimental study of the deep-sea dweller.

The researchers, from Belgium and New Zealand, found that the kitefin shark possessed bioluminescent sites along its belly, sides, back and dorsal fins which were controlled by hormones.

Samples were collected from the Chatham Rise area of seabed east of New Zealand.

The 180cm kitefin has been spotted swimming at depths between 50m and 1.8km but usually inhabits a zone below 300m, experts said. It is the largest known bioluminescent vertebrate.

However, Dalatias licha does not have any predators so the usefulness of its cam-



ouflaged glowing belly – with which, it is thought, it can “counter-illuminate” itself against weak sunlight filtering from above – was not clear.

In constructing their hypotheses, researchers cited previous studies which said

that although *D. licha* has one of the slowest “cruising speeds” known among sharks, it is believed to have a very high short-range burst speed. Evidence has shown it can eat fast-swimming fish as well as slower creatures that dwell near the sea bed.

Therefore, the scientists believe, either “luminescence might be used to illuminate the ocean floor while searching and hunting for prey, or to stealthily approach toward [fast] prey, using counter-illumination camouflage, before striking fast when close enough.”

They added: “In both cases, the principle of counter-illumination would have been distorted to serve as a predation tool instead of an avoidance mechanism, a hy-

pothesis already proposed for the cookie cutter shark.”

Further studies of live specimens are required, the scientists wrote.

The study also looked at two other species, a pair of lantern sharks. These displayed a use of glowing skin that was more in line with previous knowledge of similar creatures, including for communication.

Researchers wrote: “The dorsal photophores, flank markings, and brighter pectoral fin and claspers are likely to be used for intraspecific communications, while the ventrally emitted light is likely to be used for counterillumination.”

The study was published in the journal *Frontiers in Marine Science*.

Global carbon emissions bounce back to pre-pandemic levels

Worldwide carbon dioxide emissions have rebounded to pre-pandemic levels, according to new data from the International Energy Agency (IEA), following a historic drop in emissions during 2020 as countries around the world implemented harsh lockdown restrictions in a bid to control the Covid-19 pandemic.

Though there have been hefty drops in greenhouse gas emissions spurred on by Covid-19 lockdowns around the world a report by the World Meteorological Organization posits virtually no impact on the impending climate crisis. The IEA, in its report, said it hopes 2019 will be the peak year for emissions, something a rebound threatens. A majority of people from around the world, most of them young, believe there is a “clear and convincing” mandate for urgent and aggressive action from politicians to

address the climate crisis, according to a UN survey. Policies such as forest conservation, solar wind and renewable power, climate-friendly farming techniques, and investing more in green businesses and jobs all polled favorably.

Major economies led the rebound, the IEA said, with global carbon dioxide emissions in December 2020 being 2% higher than the same month in 2019, the equivalent to 60 million tonnes.

The changes in emissions differed around the world: China was the only large economy to increase emissions in 2020, rising 0.8% overall, and the U.S. and EU saw emissions fall by about 10% at its lowest, with data showing the U.S. returning to pre-pandemic levels in December.

Emissions from energy dropped by an unprecedented-

ed amount amid pandemic restrictions, the IEA said, the same as “removing all of the European Union's emissions from the global total.”

The rebound should serve as a “stark warning” to policymakers that more must be done to implement clean energy policies, IEA executive director Fatih Birol said, adding that the “numbers show we are returning to carbon-intensive business-as-usual.”

“If current expectations for a global economic rebound this year are confirmed, and in the absence of major policy changes in the world's largest economies, global emissions are likely to increase in 2021,” Birol said.

Former President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the U.S. from the Paris climate accords, a huge blow to the movement of nearly 200 countries.

ENGLISH IN USE

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A ← → E

Smugglers of fuel, livestock fined \$570m

Smugglers of fuel and livestock have been fined 24 trillion rials (about \$570 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) since the beginning of the current [Iranian calendar] year (March 21).

The figure represents a 47 percent increase compared to the same period last [Iranian calendar] year.

Out of a total of about 42,000 smuggling cases, about 28,000 are related to export smuggling, of which 20,000 are related to the smuggling of fuel and petroleum products, mostly to Pakistan and Afghanistan, and to a lesser extent to Turkey and Iraq. A number of these cases are related to livestock trafficking. Most of the cattle are smuggled to Iraq, and then to the Persian Gulf countries.

جریمه ۲۴ هزار میلیارد ریالی قاچاقچیان سوخت و دام

متخلفان قاچاق کالا از ابتدای سال جاری ۲۴ هزار میلیارد ریال جریمه شده‌اند که بیانگر ۴۷ درصد افزایش نسبت به سال گذشته است.

به از مجموع حدود ۴۲ هزار پرونده ی قاچاق، حدود ۲۸ هزار پرونده مربوط به قاچاق خروجی است که ۲۰ هزار فقره آن به قاچاق سوخت و فرآورده‌های نفتی مربوط می‌شود که بیشتر به پاکستان و افغانستان و کمی هم ترکیه و عراق انجام می‌شود.

تعدادی از این پرونده‌ها هم مربوط به قاچاق دام است. بیشتر قاچاق دام به عراق انجام می‌شود و البته این دام‌ها از عراق به کشورهای خلیج فارس هم می‌رود.

Made in prison: inmates holding handicrafts exhibition

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — An exhibition of handicrafts produced by prisoners across the country kicked off in Tehran on Wednesday, IRNA reported.

The exhibition, called “Hami” (literally meaning patron), will run for a month in Gholhak neighborhood, northern Tehran.

The products include copper paintings, glassware, hand-made leather bags, enamel tableware, wood and leather carved tables, turquoise carvings, carpets, and mosaics.



Sustained employment of prisoners during incarceration and support for the employment of prisoners' families after release is on the agenda, Mohammad Mehdi Haj-Mohammadi, head of the Prisons and Security and Corrective Measures Organization said.

Prisoner employment has reached 30 percent over the first six months of this year (March 2020-September 2020), and is projected to reach 50 percent by the end of this year (March 20), he stated.

About 70 percent of prisoners in Iran are directly and indirectly involved in drug-related crimes, Eskandar Momeni, the director of headquarters for the fight against narcotics, said in November 2020.

Some 40 percent of the inmates in prisons are convicted of drug smuggling directly and 30 percent indirectly, he stated.

According to Momeni, many social harms such as divorce, violent behaviors, robbery, etc. are rooted in drug use.

He added that over four million people in the country are regular and recreational drug users.

ATU to host first meeting of ECO university chancellors

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — The first meeting of the university chancellors of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) region will be held in Tehran's Allameh Tabatabai University (ATU) on Thursday.

In this meeting, the presidents of 17 universities from 10 ECO countries will discuss ways to expand scientific cooperation, with ECO Secretary General Hadi Soleimanpour, in attendance.



Representatives from Allameh Tabatabai University and Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, universities of Pakistan, Turkey, Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan will deliver speeches during the one-day meeting.

Established as Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD) in 1964 by Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey, ECO is an intergovernmental regional organization encompassing countries from Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia, Middle East, and South Asia with more than 460 million inhabitants and over 8 million square kilometers connecting Russia to the Persian Gulf and China to Europe. The overall objective of the Organization is the sustainable economic development of its Member States and the Region as a whole.

LET'S LEARN PERSIAN

(Part 138)

(Source: saadifoundation.ir)

● تمرین ۱. "من" یا "تو" بگذارد و غلط‌ها را تصحیح کنید:

۱. () بازار مهم‌ترین محل گردش است.
۲. () بازار تهران یک جای دیدنی در شهر تهران است.
۳. () طول بازار تهران یک کیلومتر است.
۴. () بازارهای فرش و طلا مهم‌ترین بازارها هستند.
۵. () قیمت‌های بازار با جاهای دیگر فرق ندارد.
۶. () کاروان‌سراها امروز هتل‌های بازارند.

۵. بالاتر است □ پایین‌تر است □

۶. خوابگاهند □ آرامگاهند □ مراکز تجارتند □

● تمرین ۱. جواب سؤال‌های زیر را کامل بنویسید:

۱. بازار سنتی مرکز چه کاری است؟
۲. بازار تهران چگونه جایی است؟
۳. شامل چه بازارهایی می‌شود؟
۴. بازار فرش چه فرش‌هایی دارد؟
۵. قیمت‌های بازار چطور است؟
۶. کاروان‌سراها چه مراکزی هستند؟

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Loving humanity is second only to having faith in Allah as one of the best deeds in Islam.

Prophet Muhammad (S)

Leader's book on political life of Imam Sajjad (AS) published

→1 "A 250-Year-Old Person" contains a collection of speeches and writings of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, about the household of Prophet Muhammad (S).

"Instead of focusing on a specific part of the Imam's morals, he has put his spotlight on the whole period of the Imamate, and this general approach aids in understanding the apparent differences in philosophy among the Imams," Haj-Aliakbari noted.



Friday prayers leader *Hojjatoleslam Mohammad-Javad Haj-Aliakbari* (3rd L) and a number of clerics and Islamic scholars hold copies of "*Epic of Imam Sajjad (AS)*" during a meeting organized at the *Razavi Islamic Sciences University in Mashhad* on March 3, 2021 to unveil the book by Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

"By maintaining social life, Our Imams assert their leadership, although the results may not be apparent over the short term. They will, however, be understood over the long term," he added.

The book begins with an introduction, which is a speech the Leader made during the Imam Reza (AS) Conference in 1986. The book is composed of four chapters, which cover a series of speeches the leader delivered about the cultural and political life of Imam Sajjad (AS) at the Keramat Mosque in Mashhad in 1973.

An extensive interview conducted by the *Pasdare Eslam Magazine* with Ayatollah Khamenei about the life of Imam Sajjad (AS) in 1982 has also been reviewed in "*Epic of Imam Sajjad (AS)*". The interview had been published in six editions of the monthly.

Paintings by Iranian-Armenian artists on view at Tehran gallery

→1 The collection has been accumulated by art experts Sanaz Aryanfar and Kianush Motaqedi for the exhibition.

"It has been five years since I have been conducting research works on Iranian-Armenian artists, studying the influence of their art on the history of Iranian visual arts and have organized several solo and group exhibits," Aryanfar said in a press release published on Wednesday.

"This collection features paintings by 27 artists from the first and second generations of influential artists in contemporary Iran. Some are not alive and some are not living in Iran, though," she said.

A highlight of the showcase is a painting by Leoni Tashchian, a 94-year-old pioneer painter who has trained many artists.

"The paintings have been collected from the families of the artists, private collectors and the Ardak Manoukian Museum in Tehran," she said.

"All the artists have had their own style of works in creating still lives and landscapes, which are the main themes of the exhibit," she noted.

She added that she is still working on research about the careers of the artists.

"Today, all people can easily get access to all the knowledge they like, but there was a time when people had no means of communication, and traveling to other countries was not much common. The Armenians, however, had many trips to Iran where their relatives lived, bringing the new events happening in the West into the country," she explained.

"The best example is Marco Grigorian. He was an Iranian-Armenian and American artist, a gallery owner, and a pioneer of Iranian modern art," she remarked.

In 1955, Marco participated in the Venice Biennale for the first time. He then returned to Tehran and was appointed as the Head of the Graphic Department of the then Culture Ministry. In 1958, Marco participated as the Iranian delegate and an international jury member at the Venice Biennale. In the same year, under the auspices of the Culture Ministry, Marco organized the First Tehran Biennial, attempting to coin a modern tradition with an ethnic flavor. The establishment of the biennial, in which creative artists were recognized for their genuine and yet individualistic styles inscribed Marco's name in the unfolding of modern Iranian art.

The exhibition will be running until March 10 at the gallery located at No.17, Yazdan Alley, Zartosht St. off Vali-e Asr Ave.

Ettehadieh Edifice to host exhibit featuring 40 years of Tehran art history

A R T **TEHRAN** — Ettehadieh Edifice, a Qajar-era monument in downtown Tehran, will be hosting an exhibition that will review the history of visual arts in and around Tehran over the past 40 years.

The exhibition named "40 Years Tehran" will open today to showcase over 200 artworks in the fields of film, photo, cartoon and poster.

The showcase is a part of the 17th Image of the Year Celebration, which was postponed due to the pandemic in February 2020. However, a lineup of top films selected for the exhibit was screened later in the summer and the winners were honored.

Top posters will be selected by a jury composed of Reza Abedini, Masud Sepehr, Farzad Adibi, Fatemeh Karkeh-Abadi and Nushin Nazaman.

Winners in the cartoon category will be selected by Kambiz Derambakhsh, Javad Alizadeh, Masud Shojaei-Tabatabai and



Ettehadieh Edifice in downtown Tehran will host the exhibit "40 Years Tehran".



A photo from Iranian photographer Farzam Saleh's series "Rooftops", which has been nominated for the Sony World Photography Awards 2021.

A R T **TEHRAN** — Two collections by Iranian photographers have been shortlisted for the Sony World Photography Awards 2021.

"A City Under Dust Clouds" by Mohammad-Hossein Madadi depicting air pollution in the southwestern Iranian city of Ahvaz has received the nomination in the environment category.

In an introduction to his collection, which has been sent to the Sony awards organizers, Madadi said, "Ahvaz has been consistently ranked as one of the world's worst cities for air pollution according to the World Health Organization, topping the list on numerous occasions in the past decade. "Industrial sources, chief among them the refineries

Iranian collections shortlisted for Sony World Photography Awards 2021

and other components of the vast petrochemical industry in Khuzestan Province, as well as massive dust storms, are the main contributors to air pollution.

"The poor air quality has a significant impact on the lives of the residents of Ahvaz. Each year, thousands seek medical treatment for respiratory conditions. The air pollution has also increased immigration out of the city, limited investments and tourism, damaged infrastructure, and added to the already high electricity and water consumption of the city."

"Rooftops" by Farzam Saleh has been nominated in the sports category. The collection shows Iranians doing workouts on the rooftops during the COVID-19 quarantine.

"In March 2020, in reaction to the COVID-19 outbreak, the Iranian government announced the immediate closure of all athletic venues, sports clubs and training centers across Iran," Saleh said about his series.

"Following the implementation of this mandate, athletes in Iran took to training on the rooftops of their homes in order to maintain a degree of their physical and mental fitness and prowess," he added.

Due to UK government guidance, the World Photography Organization, supported by Sony, has decided to cancel

the London exhibition of the Sony World Photography Awards 2021, which was scheduled to go on display at Somerset House from April 16 to May 3.

The awards ceremony, which was to take place in London, has also been cancelled as overall winners of this year's competitions will be announced, as planned, on April 15 via digital and video platforms.

The following is a list of other finalists: "Drag Queen Cowboys" by Jane Hilton from the United Kingdom, "Meisterhäuser Bauhaus-Dessau" by Frank Machalowski from Germany "Sasha Bauer" by Sasha Bauer from Russia, "Beirut Port Explosion" by Lorenzo Tugnoli from Italy, "Volcano" by Fyodor Savintsev from Russia, "Citizens of Tomorrow" by Loli Laboureau from Argentina, "Mexican Feast" by Paloma Rincon from Spain and "Sea Drops" by Angel Fitor from Spain.

The Photographer of the Year receives \$25,000 and a range of Sony digital imaging equipment.

Ten category winners receive a range of Sony digital imaging equipment, and their works are published in the Sony World Photography Awards book.

Second and third place winners will be published in the Sony World Photography Awards book.

Iranian animation studio warns about migration of professionals

A R T **TEHRAN** — The director of Hoorakhsh, a major animation studio in Tehran, has warned about the migration of skilled and even semi-professional people working in Iran's animation industry.

Speaking to the Persian service of ILNA on Wednesday, Ashkan Rahgozar said the financial motivations are the key factors in these immigrations.

In addition, they prefer to work in environments giving them more freedom to actualize their ideas, he added.

"Iran has not done well on efficiently training human resources in this field, and the professionals' migration issue has really become serious. We are seeing them going to foreign companies for higher salaries. I see no bright prospect for improvement in human resources here, because even semi-professionals are easily attracted by



Director Ashkan Rahgozar in an undated photo.

overseas companies," said Rahgozar who is the director of the acclaimed animated movie "The Last Fiction".

"Aside from the financial motivations, the animators migrate from Iran over their artistic and cultural concerns," he noted and added, "When governmental organizations impose their own stories upon our animators,

and, naturally, no favorable output from them is produced. After a while, the artists begin seeking an environment that allows them to produce the things they want to create."

He said that by working on biased governmental productions, the animators naturally lose the chance to take part in international events such as the Annecy International Animated Film Festival, so they prefer to migrate rather than to work on such projects.

Earlier in March 2019, Rahagoza also expressed concern over the Iranian animators' migration issue, and emphasized that the matter impacts the development of animation in the country.

"Our studio organizes animation courses to discover promising young persons, however, when they achieve high academic standards and they can play a positive role

in animation production, they migrate to work in other countries," he said.

"We haven't found any solution to the problem of migration, because it is really extensive," he lamented.

Rahagozar's "The Last Fiction" was screened in a non-competitive section of the Annecy festival in 2018 and it won the Crystal Simorgh for best animated film at the 37th Fajr Film Festival in Tehran.

The story of the movie is based on the classic Iranian tale from Persian poet Ferdowsi's masterpiece the Shahnameh (The Book of Kings).

It follows Zahak's treacherous rise to the throne in Jamshid in Persia. The young and naive hero Afaridoun will have to save the kingdom and its people from darkness. But he must first conquer his own demons in this portrayal of Persian mythology that reveals human nature.

Qorban Mohammadpur to make Iranian-Indian joint series "Salam Mumbai"

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iranian director Qorban Mohammadpur plans to make "Salam Mumbai", an Iranian-Indian joint series to be produced at the home video network.

He said that he is currently working on the screenplay, and that the project will be the first series to be available on both Iranian and Indian platforms.

He added that they are waiting to receive the production license from the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, however, he gave no details about the film's plot.

He also noted that he is planning to begin the project after the Noruz Holiday, and that it will be produced in 20 episodes, seven of which will be made in Mumbai and 13 in Tehran.

He explained that he has negotiated with several Iranian and Indian actors and will soon begin shooting as soon they receive the production license.

"Javad Noruzbeigi is the producer of the series, which is quite a different project compared to the film "Salam



Iranian director Qorban Mohammadpur in an undated photo. (Mehr/Ashraf Tabatabai)

Mumbai", he remarked.

Bollywood actors Gulshan Grover and Dia Mirza co-

starred with Iranian actor Mohammadreza Golzar in "Salam Mumbai", which was almost totally shot in India.

"Salam Mumbai" was about Ali, an exchange student from Iran who is studying medicine as a cardiology resident in Mumbai. By chance, he saves the life of one of his classmates Karishma, who has attempted suicide. Little by little, he tries to talk to Karishma and give her hope and happiness, which eventually leads to the two of them falling in love.

Mohammadpur also directed "The Devil's Daughter" with a cast of Iranian and Bollywood actors in India.

The story of the film is about Satan's daughter who intends to repent. She is first asked to find an innocent man to bow down to until her repentance is accepted. Satan's daughter then descends to search for a man.

Last year in March, another of Mohammadpur's love stories, "Falling in Love in Hanoi", a project between Iran and Vietnam, came to a halt as members of the Iranian crew failed to get visas to Vietnam due to the COVID-19 outbreak in the world.

Jeanne Mackin's "The Last Collection" comes to Iranian bookstores

CULTURE **TEHRAN** — A Persian translation of Jeanne Mackin's book "The Last Collection: A Novel of Elsa Schiaparelli and Coco Chanel" has recently been published by Chatrang publications in Tehran.

The book has been translated into Persian by Sayeh Sadeqi.

An American woman becomes entangled in the intense rivalry between iconic fashion designers Coco Chanel and Elsa Schiaparelli in this captivating novel from the acclaimed author of "The Beautiful American".

Paris, 1938, Coco and Elsa are fighting

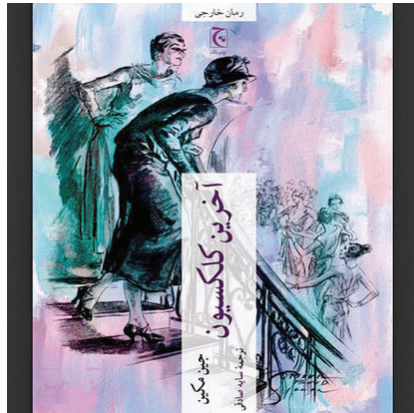
for recognition as the most successful and influential fashion designer in France, and their rivalry is already legendary. They oppose each other at every turn, in both their politics and their designs, Chanel's are classic, elegant and practical, Schiaparelli's bold, experimental and surreal.

When Lily Sutter, a recently widowed young American teacher, visits her brother, Charlie, in Paris, he insists on buying her a couture dress, a Chanel. Lily, however, prefers a Schiaparelli. Charlie's beautiful and socially prominent girlfriend soon begins wearing Schiaparelli's designs as well, and much of

Paris follows in her footsteps.

Schiaparelli offers budding artist Lily a job at her store, and Lily finds herself increasingly involved with Schiaparelli and Chanel's personal war. Their fierce competition reaches new and dangerous heights as the Nazis and the looming threat of World War II bear down on Paris.

Mackin is the author of several historical novels, including "The Beautiful American". She taught creative writing at Goddard College and has given numerous workshops. She lives with her husband in upstate New York.



Front cover of the Persian translation of Jeanne Mackin's "The Last Collection".