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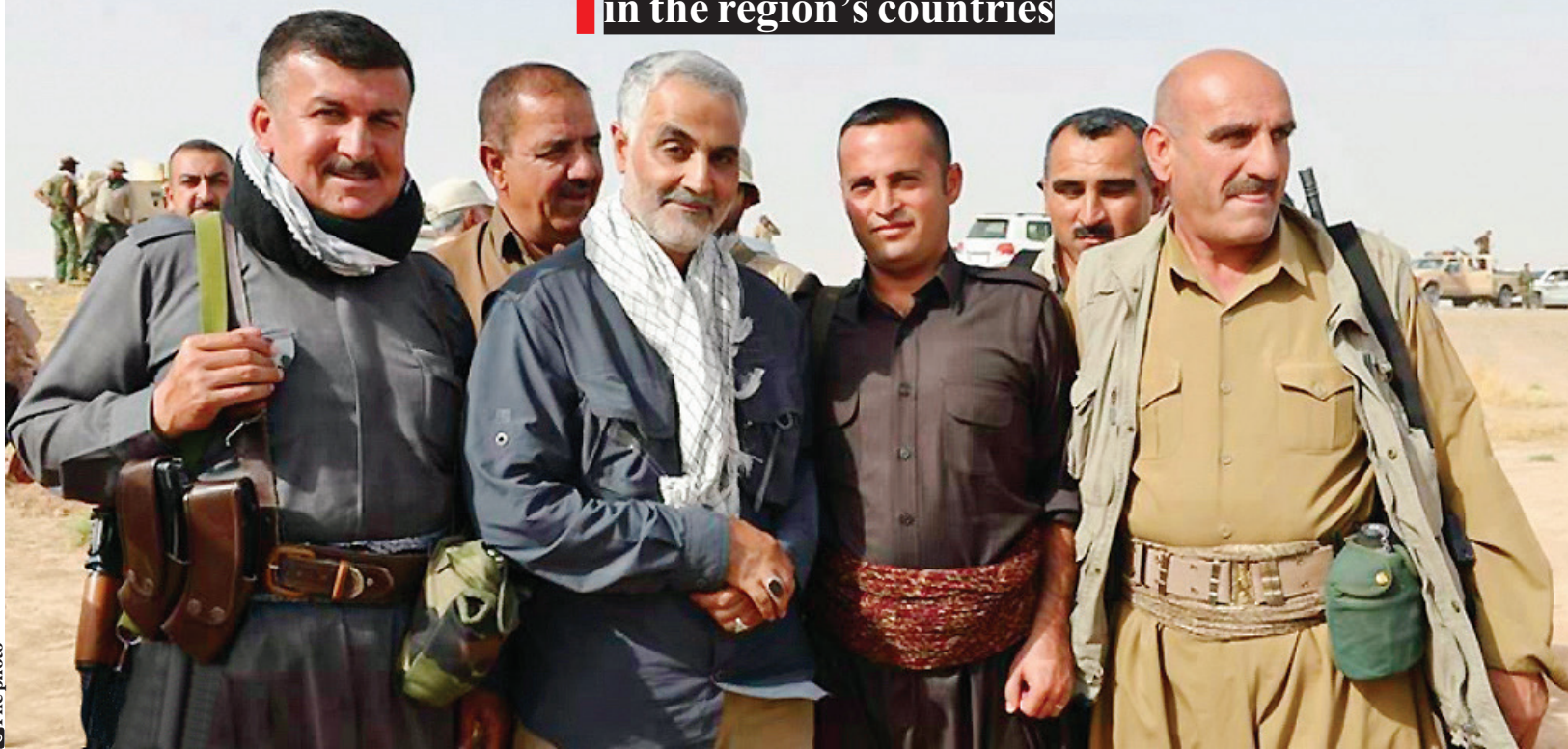


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# Iran: KRG's friend of difficult days

**KRG official underlines the need to avoid any interference in the region's countries**

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© File photo

## Iran joins group of countries at UN in forming coalition against sanctions

TEHRAN – Iran joined a group of more than a dozen countries in forming a coalition to defend the UN Charter by opposing the use of force and sanctions.

Reuters reported on Friday that China, Russia, North Korea, Iran and others are seeking support for a coalition to defend the United Nations Charter by pushing back against the use or threat of force and unilateral sanctions.

A concept note for the "Group of Friends

in Defense of the Charter of the United Nations," seen by Reuters, states that multilateralism "is currently under an unprecedented attack, which, in turn, threatens global peace and security."

Other founding members of the group are Algeria, Angola, Belarus, Bolivia, Cambodia, Cuba, Eritrea, Laos, Nicaragua, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Syria and Venezuela.

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## Iran's export to Russia rises 105% in 2020

TEHRAN- The value of Iran's exports to Russia has increased 105 percent in 2020, Iranian Ambassador to Moscow Kazem Jalali announced.

The ambassador put the worth of Iran's export to Russian at \$390 million in 2019, and at \$800 million in 2020, and reiterated that the Russian market has a good capacity for the Iranian products.

He stressed the existence of various fields for economic relations between Iran and Russia and said, "Russia's economy is a large economy and this country has about \$260 billion in imports, so we, as Russia's neighbor, can provide some of the goods it needs and have our share of the market of this country."

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## American decision-makers lack ability to understand Iranian civilization: professor

BY MOHAMMAD MAZHARI

TEHRAN — Professor Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, chair of the Centre for Iranian Studies at the London Middle East Institute, says that the conversation between Persepolis and Washington DC can lead to repeated misunderstandings due to Americans' failure to understand Iran's civilization.

"While it is true that the U.S. and Iran

share interests in the region and beyond, the conversation between Persepolis and Washington DC can only lead to repeated misunderstandings," Professor Adib-Moghaddam tells the Tehran Times.

However, Professor Arshin Adib-Moghaddam says, contrary to the U.S., China and Russia have a better understanding of Iran.

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## Why should S.Korea release Iranian frozen funds?

BY EBRAHIM FALLAHI

Once one of Iran's major oil buyers, South Korea has been holding back the release of several billions of dollars of Iranian oil money under the pressure from White House.

The country was one of the first Asian countries that stopped importing Iranian crude oil when a U.S. sanctions wavier ended back in 2019, and since then the country has not paid over seven billion dollars worth of Iranian oil it previously shipped in.

The South Korean's reluctance for standing up against the U.S.'s unilateralism comes in a situation where many other Iranian oil buyers including China are defying Washington's unjust sanctions and paying for their oil imports through various payment mechanisms.

The situation has raised several questions the answers to which could be of great interest for both sides; why is it in South Korea's best interest to put on a stronger face against the U.S. regarding the release of Iranian frozen assets? Is South Korea choosing the right approach in dealing with the situation? And finally, what ways can the country use for returning the Iranian funds?

One thing that South Korea and other Iranian trade partners should keep in mind is that no sanctions can last forever and sooner or later Iran will reclaim its rightful share in the energy market and it would be best for them to be on friendly terms with the Islamic Republic when that time comes in order to be able to benefit from the country's abundant energy resources in the future.

It should not also be forgotten that Iranian crude oil and gas condensate have several advantages for Asian buyers; for instance, many of their refineries are specifically regulated for processing Iranian crude. The distance and shipping costs are other vital issues that should be taken into consideration for comparing Iranian crude to other western sources. Furthermore, Iran has always been providing its crude customers with significantly high discounts and incentives which would be hard to get anywhere else in the market.

So, considering the abovementioned points, it seems that South Korea has a lot to consider in case of taking the U.S.'s side in the conflict between Tehran and Washington.

*Continued on page 4*

## Tehran, Tashkent discuss cultural heritage ties

TEHRAN – The Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Uzbekistan have held talks to widen ties in the arena of cultural heritage.

Iran deputy tourism minister Mohammad-Hassan Talebian met on Wednesday with Uzbekistan's deputy minister of foreign affairs, Farhat Sadiqov, to explore possibilities for deeper cooperation on museum affairs as well as preserving and restoring historical monuments.

Based on the development of cultural relations between the two countries and the capacity to cooperate in specialized fields of cultural heritage, Talebian said that both sides could exchange views and experiences on preparing joint dossiers on tangible and intangible cultural heritage for global registration as well.

Setting up tours during Noruz (Iranian new year holidays, which is also celebrated in some other countries in the region) as well as tourist tours for visiting the Silk Road and restored

historical structures could also promote tourism in both countries, he added.

For his part, Sadiqov asked for ease of visa issuance between the two countries in the field of tourist exchange in the shortest possible time.

Referring to the establishment of an Islamic research center in Bukhara and a center for Islamic civilization in Tashkent, and conducting a research project on Quranic and Islamic manuscripts by Uzbek scholars and students, he called for the assistance of Iranian masters in these projects.

There are 740 museums across Iran, some half of which are associated with private collectors or various institutions. Some three million historical objects are currently being kept in Iranian museums which are affiliated with the tourism ministry. Iran is home to one of the world's oldest continuous major civilizations, embracing settlements dating back to 4000 BC.

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## Number of migrant children in U.S. border facilities soars amid growing crisis

The number of refugee children being held in U.S. border facilities is more than four times the number in late February, highlighting a growing humanitarian and political crisis for President Joe Biden's administration.

More than 3,600 migrant children, up from around 800 on Feb. 22, were held in the "facilities" as of Thursday morning, U.S. officials said.

Some reports, however, said the number of detained asylum-seeking children is much higher.

An estimated 8,800 migrant children who came to the United States alone are in federal care facilities, a U.S. Health and Human Services (HHS) spokesperson told Sputnik on Friday.

Biden vowed to undo many of the immigration policies of former president Donald Trump when he assumed offices on Jan. 20,

Detentions, however, on the U.S. border have surged since January as the number of asylum-seeking unaccompanied minors has

spiked, with more children transferring to increasingly crowded notorious federal shelters.

Last week, U.S. health officials lifted coronavirus-related capacity restrictions on shelters for unaccompanied minors and this has posed a serious COVID-19 health risk to children and staff.

The Biden administration has been sharply criticized by both fellow Democrats and Republicans for its handling of the refugee crisis at the border.

Republicans have ripped the president for rolling back Trump's hardline policies, saying his administration has encouraged illegal immigration.

Democrats criticized Biden for using notorious Trump-era detention facilities in Texas to house migrant children. Democrats had used the detention facilities to accuse Trump of putting "kids in cages."

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## Centrist Biden is unlikely to take bold actions toward West Asia: Hunter

BY M.A. SAKI

TEHRAN - Shireen Tahmaash Hunter, a professor of political science at Georgetown University, says Joe Biden is reluctant to take bold decisions, especially when it comes to West Asia.

"Biden is a centrist and is not likely to take very bold actions, especially in regard to the Middle East (West Asia)," Hunter tells the Tehran Times.

However, she says, Biden's "approach towards China and Russia, too, is quite hardline."

While Biden pledged in his election campaigns

to reverse Trump's policies and make fundamental changes in U.S. foreign policy, some political observers are doubtful that he can make any significant reforms.

Moreover, many are doubtful of a real difference between Democrats and Republicans in regard to American foreign policy.

"Except for the far left, in foreign policy, especially regarding the Middle East (West Asia), there is not much difference between the conservatives and the more liberal U.S. politicians,"

Hunter notes, adding, "The conservative-liberal divide is more significant in the domestic area."

The case of the Khashoggi killing and the role of Mohammed bin Salman in it was a good test. While Biden promised to penalize the Saudi crown prince, his administration exempted him.

Biden's move has raised serious questions about his proclamation in upholding human rights.

Following is the text of the interview with Shireen Hunter:

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## More refugees in Iran under insurance coverage

BY FARANAK BAKHTIARI

TEHRAN – The number of refugees covered by social insurance services has increased by 20 percent in Iran, as 120,000 foreign nationals will be under the insurance coverage.

In order to support the refugees living in the country, the seventh phase of the health insurance plan will cover 120,000 vulnerable refugees through a memorandum of understanding signed between the Health Insurance Organization and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

This measure aims to provide medical services in the form of a comprehensive basic package (out-patient, inpatient, and temporary hospitalization) for one year to the foreign nationals.

A total of 1.4 trillion rials (nearly \$35 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) have been allocated in this regard, which increased by 20 percent compared to the previous phase.

Other refugees can also use the benefits of the mentioned services like Iranians by paying the approved insurance premium.

**Two million foreign nationals residing in Iran**  
Deputy Interior Minister Javad Naserian said last week that about one million documented foreign nationals are residing in Iran, and perhaps another one million are illegally living in the country.

At the end of 2018, Iran hosted close to one million refugees, making it the sixth-largest refugee host country in the world. The country was also the eighth largest refugee-hosting country in the world in 2019, hosting 951,142 Afghan refugees and 28,268 Iraqi refugees, according to the UNHCR.

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## Leader: Iran's presence in the region is political

TEHRAN - Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei on Thursday slammed the enemies, especially the U.S., for distorting the facts and presenting developments in a way that is opposite to the truth.

Addressing the Iranian nation on the occasion of Eid al-Mab'ath, which marks the appointment of Muhammad ibn Abdullah as the prophet of Islam in the seventh century, the Leader noted the U.S. is the possessor of the world's largest nuclear arsenal but claims to be against such weapons.

*Continued on page 2*



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## Lifting sanctions: A bridge too far

By Azin Sahabi

**TEHRAN** — Given the determinant role of the U.S. Congress in grand strategic policy-making, any nuclear agreement with Iran is not obligatory unless it is approved by the American legislative body.

This makes it vulnerable to collapse by the next administration, as Trump ripped up the 2015 JCPOA, leaving intense diplomatic marathons all in vain.

During the 2020 presidential campaign and since taking office, President Joe Biden has been reiterating that if Iran returns to “strict compliance” with the original 2015 deal, then the U.S. will do the same. In this context, it seems that many commentaries and analyses published by the top U.S. think tanks take a “revival” of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) for granted.

While admitting several obstacles both Tehran and Washington face in the path forward, the think tanks speculate that finally the parties will sit vis-à-vis at the negotiating table. In other words, it sounds that these informal policy makers’ calculations are primarily based on “definite” nuclear talks, not “likely” ones.

Concerning this, Gary Samore, a senior official in the National Security Council for nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) under Bill Clinton and Barack Obama, speculates on “The Revival of the Iran Nuclear Deal and the Day After.”

While accusing Iran of pursuing nuclear weapons in an interview with Brandeis University on March 4, Samore explains that currently three points about Iran’s nuclear program are worth mentioning.



### Reduced yet it has potential to surpass 2015 level by yearend

Clarifying the first feature, Samore, who is commonly referred to as the “WMD czar”, compares Iran’s current enrichment capacity with the situation before the JCPOA went into effect.

He believes that currently the capacity is reduced and argues: “In 2015, Iran had roughly 18,000 operating centrifuges and around 7,000 kilograms of low-enriched uranium. Today, Iran has roughly 6,000 operating centrifuges and about 4,000 kilograms of low-enriched uranium.”

He stresses that in surpassing the limits of the JCPOA, Tehran has played safe but “if Iran keeps doing what it is now doing, it will eventually surpass its 2015 numbers before the end of this year.”

#### “Break-out time maybe a couple of months”

To clarify the second feature, Samore addresses what other parties of the JCPOA call “the break-out time”. Notwithstanding lack of any robust, conclusive evidence indicative of a deviation in Iran’s nuclear program, Samore tries to manipulate the fact. While admitting that Iran’s nuclear activities are still closely monitored by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards, he claims that “break-out time maybe a couple of months.”

#### Reversible and nonreversible steps

To explain the third point, the pro-Israel figure talks about reversible nuclear steps and the nonreversible ones. Concerning this, Samore says: “Iran can easily reverse the steps it has taken and restore compliance with the nuclear limits of the original deal within a matter of weeks, which could be verified by the IAEA inspectors.”

Meanwhile, he admits, “The one activity that cannot be reversed is the experience Iran has gained by moving from research and development on advanced centrifuges (which is permitted under the JCPOA) to installing and operating entire cascades of advanced centrifuges.”

Samore mentions that based on the “compliance for compliance” approach, there exist several impediments for Tehran and Washington to overcome. In his point of view, these obstacles include domestic political dynamics in both capitals, mistrust, and bargaining tactics, which make both sides reluctant to take the first step.

#### Finally, Iran at eventual informal talks

The strategist reminds that in mid-February, the U.S. proposed to meet informally with the remaining parties to the JCPOA, including Iran “to break the impasse.” But “Iran rejected this offer saying that the time was not right for such a meeting.”

Against this backdrop, the fellow speculates: “Eventually Iran will agree to hold informal talks with the JCPOA parties and the U.S., but this episode illustrates the fragility of even getting negotiations started.”

Samore acknowledges that reversing Iran’s nuclear steps is “relatively straightforward and easy to verify” but “reversing sanctions by the U.S. is more complicated.”

#### Lifting sanctions: Too far a bridge

To portray the likely goal of lifting Iran sanctions a bridge too far, Samore sheds light on several additional embargoes imposed under Trump’s tenure to link the sanctions to counter-terrorism, human rights, and missile proliferation.

He argues should the Biden administration try to restore the status quo ante, it requires lifting some non-nuclear sanctions besides those embedded in the JCPOA.

To explain the barriers Biden faces at home, Samore mentions that in reviving the JCPOA this is Congress that enjoys the upper hand. Given the 2015 Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act (INARA), Congress has the right to review any new nuclear agreement with Iran.

The expert foretells, although Biden does have the authority to lift these sanctions by executive action, Congress will strongly oppose offering such a relief just with a stroke of a pen.

Therefore, Samore highlights, “It is unlikely that Congress can muster the necessary two-thirds majority in both chambers to override a presidential veto if Congress disapproves of a U.S.-Iran agreement to revive the JCPOA.”

#### An orchestrated Persian Gulf security dialogue

Due to the current regional chaos coupled with deep mistrust among Iran, Israel, and some regional Arab states, Samore predicts that a “grand bargain” to resolve all the disputes in a whole pack is not feasible. Therefore, he says: “I expect the Biden administration will try to tackle each problem one at a time, beginning with Yemen. At some point, the Biden administration will probably try to orchestrate a Persian Gulf security dialogue among Iraq, Iran, and the GCC, which may reduce tensions, but it is unlikely to resolve underlying conflicts.”



# Zarif to Blinken: Repeating failed ‘maximum pressure’ policy won’t yield new results

**POLITICAL d e s k** **TEHRAN** — In response to U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken who has said Washington will oppose the release of Iran’s frozen assets in South Korea until Tehran returns to full compliance to the 2015 nuclear deal from which the U.S. has officially withdrawn, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has advised the new Biden administration that the “same failed policy of maximum pressure” campaign exercised by the Trump administration will not produce new results.

“Repeating the same policy won’t yield new results,” Zarif tweeted on Thursday.

Zarif said such remarks are incompatible with the statements by the Biden administration that claims it favors diplomacy.

“U.S. claims it favors diplomacy; not Trump’s failed policy of ‘maximum pressure,’” Zarif added in his tweet.

Asked about Iran’s frozen funds in South Korea at the House Foreign Affairs Committee on Wednesday, Blinken said, “If Iran comes back into compliance with its obligations under the nuclear agreement, we would do the same thing.”

However, Zarif said, despite Biden’s claims, his secretary of state still insists on pursuing the same futile policy with regard to Iran.

“Secretary Blinken boasts about blocking Korea from transferring our own money to the Swiss Channel—only used for food and medicine,” Zarif regretted.

The U.S. is the only party that has left the nuclear deal – JCPOA – and naturally it should be the first party to return to its commitments.

In retaliation to U.S. exit from the nuclear



deal in May 2018, only one year later Iran started to gradually reduce its commitments to the JCPOA in accordance to the paragraph 36 of the JCPOA.

Iran has been insisting that as soon as the U.S. returns to its commitments in a verifiable and practical manner it will reverse its decisions and resume full compliance to the JCPOA.

In a phone call with his Finnish counterpart Pekka Haavisto on Wednesday, Zarif reiterated Tehran’s position saying, “If the U.S. lifts its illegal sanctions [against Iran] and implements its obligations as per the JCPOA, Iran will also reverse all its remedial steps.

Tehran has been pressing Seoul to unblock about \$7 billion of its assets frozen in two South Korean banks. Seoul said last month that Iran’s money will be released only after consultations with the U.S. government.

### No talks needed on U.S. return to JCPOA

In remarks on Thursday, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Abbas Araqchi also said a possible return of the U.S. to the nuclear agreement does not require any negotiations since Washington held no consultations with anyone before its pullout from the multilateral deal.

“In our opinion, the U.S. return to the nuclear agreement does not require any meeting. Did the Americans hold talks with anyone when they withdrew from the agreement? Did they hold a meeting?... We believe that there is no need for negotiations or any meeting,” Araqchi told Sputnik.

Araqchi—who served as a senior negotiator during the talks in the run-up to the deal—said there is a “simple” solution to the current dispute over the agreement, and that is for the

American side to return to the JCPOA and lift all the sanctions it has re-imposed on Tehran.

“After that Iran will once again abide by its obligations after verifying the U.S. credibility in this regard,” the senior diplomat added.

However, Araqchi said a meeting of the remaining signatories to nuclear deal – Iran, Russia, China, Britain, Germany and France - is possible at any time.

“Over the previous years, the Joint Commission on the nuclear agreement have held a regular session every three months, and we also used to conduct unofficial emergency meetings. There is no issue to hold a meeting with the current members, or consult with them and exchange opinions,” the diplomat explained.

He emphasized that the U.S. can take part in these sessions only if it lifts sanctions on Iran.

Faod Izadi, a Tehran University professor, said two months have passed since Biden’s presidency but he is continuing the same old policy of the Trump administration.

Izadi told ISNA that the American should realize that time is not in their favor.

#### Intimidation against Iran won’t work

Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, the special aide to parliament speaker for international affairs, also said in a tweet on Friday that there will undoubtedly be no negotiations with the U.S. under pressure or intimidation.

“Biden should learn lesson from history. One should talk to the great and powerful Iranian nation with power of logic and not logic of blackmail,” Amir-Abdollahian remarked.

The former Foreign Ministry pitman for Arab affairs also said the sanctions on Iran are taking their “last breath”.

## We will break the bones of criminal U.S.: Quds force chief

**POLITICAL d e s k** **TEHRAN** — “We have made it clear that we will break the bones of the criminal U.S.,” Brigadier General Esmail Qaani, commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps Quds Force, says.

He predicted that the sound of U.S. bone being “fractured will be heard at proper time.”

According to the Tasnim news agency, Qaani also highlighted the Zionist regime’s growing vulnerability, warning Israel that even the wall it is building around itself will be demolished.

“Although Israel has all world’s tools at its disposal, it is building a wall around itself -one meter in width and six meters

in height- in order to remain safe. But they (Zionists) must be sure that we will destroy that wall too,” the commander stressed.

Addressing a conference in northeastern city of Mashhad on Friday, General Qaani also said the world’s arrogant powers, including the U.S. and Israel, have become weaker more than ever.

## Tehran-Moscow ties stronger than ever: Foreign Ministry

**POLITICAL d e s k** **TEHRAN** — The Iranian Foreign Ministry released a statement on the 20th anniversary of conclusion of a cooperation treaty with Russia, saying Tehran-Moscow relationship “has become stronger more than ever.”

Expressing Tehran’s willingness to enhance relations with Moscow in various fields based on mutual respect, it emphasizes the treaty is based on “mutual relations and the principles of cooperation between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Russian Federation”.

The statement said, “The anniversary of signing the treaty has coincided with the exchange of messages between the Iranian and Russian leaders.”

It added, “The Islamic Republic of Iran regards the Russian Federation as a powerful neighboring country and its friend on the basis of ‘mutual cooperation and respect’, and is willing to further enhance its relations with that country in all fields.”

Part of the statement said, “In light of resolve of the leaders and high-ranking officials, the cooperation between the two countries for the fulfillment of common interests has gone beyond the level of bilateral relations, has entered the area of contributing to the regional and international security, and has become stronger more than ever.”

Finally, the Foreign Ministry emphasized that Iran and Russia work in full harmo-

ny against “the inhumane and unilateral sanctions and the Western interference in the affairs of other countries”, cooperate to prevent the third parties from playing a role in Tehran-Moscow ties, and agree on the need to respect international law.

Iran and Russia signed the treaty on basis for mutual relations and principles of cooperation in Moscow on March 12, 2001.

According to the treaty, the two countries have agreed to “build relations with each other on the basis of sovereign equality, cooperation, mutual trust, respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence, and non-interference in each other’s internal affairs.”

Iran and Russia have also undertaken

“not to use force or the threat of force and not to use their territory for the carrying out of acts of aggression and subversive and separatist activities against the other Party.”

#### Cooperation treaty is automatically extended for another 5 years

Iran’s ambassador to Moscow, Kazem Jalali, told IRNA on Friday that the cooperation agreement will automatically be expanded for another five years if each party does not inform the other side of anything one year before the expiry of the agreement.

“This cooperation agreement is automatically extended for another five years and simultaneously, based on the new capacities of the two countries, it is being updated,” Ambassador Jalali explained.

## Ayatollah Khamenei: Iran’s presence in the region is political

### U.S. claims of support for human rights is hypocritical, Leader says

**1 →** “America is the only government that has used nuclear bombs, but raises its voice to say that ‘we are against the development of nuclear arms.’ They claim to be against weapons of mass destruction, while they possess the worst and the most dangerous such weapons.”

“The U.S. created Daesh (ISIS) and they themselves admitted it... Then, they create a military base under the pretext of the existence of the Daesh.... They provide Daesh with modern media facilities and money and allow them to destroy and sell Syrian oil, then they say we are fighting Daesh,” Ayatollah Khamenei stressed.

#### ‘Commotion against Iran’

The Leader said the enemies have created a commotion about Iran’s help to Iraq and Syria in their fight against terrorists, including Daesh.

“They refer to Iran’s presence in the region with hatred and resentment. While we do not have a military presence.”

The Leader indirectly noted that Iran rushed to the help of the legitimate governments in Iraq and Syria at their own request and giving military advice to them “but they (Americans) themselves attack a country without permission and establish a military base” there.

In some instances, the Leader noted, where there is no Iranian military advisor Iran’s presence is “purely political”.

As another case in point, Ayatollah Khamenei referred to the U.S.-backed Saudi regime’s military aggression against Yemen, saying “It has been six years that America’s Arab

partner has been bombarding the oppressed Yemeni people in homes, hospitals and schools. It has imposed an economic siege on (the people), blocking their access to food and medicine. This has been going on for six years with America’s green light,” the Leader remarked.

Ayatollah Khamenei expressed hope the “talented” Yemeni people have succeeded in developing the required defense equipment to retaliate against the Saudi attacks, but as soon as they began to respond, the United States, and even the United Nations, raised an outcry against Yemen’s campaign of self-defense.

#### ‘Washington supports Saudi Arabia that dismembered dissident’

The Leader also said U.S. claim of support for human rights is a hypocrisy, saying Washington has been supporting the Saudi regime which dismembers its opponent with a saw, an open reference to the brutal killing of Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul in October 2018.

“America defends the Saudis who dismembered a dissident with saw. Despite this move, America claims that we are defender of human rights,” the Leader remarked.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the Leader said the Islamic Revolution in Iran followed the Prophet’s path that started with Bi’tha — an Arabic word that means the Prophet’s selection by Allah for the guidance of people.

“It (Revolution) was against oppression, tyranny and arrogance...in support of the oppressed people of any faith or

religion. It stood for the deprived and the downtrodden (people) from any nation, religion or faith. Under all circumstances, this Revolution invited the entire humanity to (follow) the straight path of Islam,” the Leader stressed.

Following the Revolution, which brought about the Islamic establishment in Iran, the world’s villains and criminals joined forces and lined up to confront the revolution, similar to what happened to Islam’s Prophet Muhammad when he began his divine mission, the Leader noted.

“That was, of course, not contrary to our expectations. It was crystal-clear from the start that...the likes of America and the then Soviet Union would confront (Iran),” he emphasized. Ayatollah Khamenei named “insight” in addition to “patience and perseverance” as the two important factors required to face the enemies’ plots, saying, “If these two elements are there, the enemies will not be able...to do any harm (to the country) and will not achieve any success.”

Ayatollah Khamenei further renewed the warning against the soft war being waged by the enemies against Iran, who have targeted the nation’s patience and perseverance and resorted to the distortion of realities about the Islamic Republic in pursuit of their hostile goals.

In the face of the war, Iran’s youth have a task to fulfill, the Leader said, hailing them as the “officers of the soft war.”

Ayatollah Khamenei advised the youth should use cyber space as an opportunity to promote perseverance and insight among the people and prevent them from losing hope.

## Israeli president to visit 3 European states to discuss Iran

**POLITICAL d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Presidents of Germany, France, and Austria will meet Israeli counterpart Reuven Rivlin to discuss Tehran’s nuclear program, according to ISNA news agency.

He will travel to Germany, France, and Austria next week to speak to their presidents Iran’s nuclear program and the International Criminal Court’s decision to open a probe into alleged war crimes by Israel.

Rivlin was invited by the presidents, his office said in a statement Thursday. He will

be accompanied by IDF Chief of Staff Aviv Kohavi.

They will discuss the “intensification” of Iran’s nuclear project, the International Criminal Court’s decision, and Lebanese Hezbollah’s growing power, the statement noted.

Rivlin has previously met with all three of the presidents in Jerusalem.

The three-day trip comes as International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is working to rescue a 2015 deal between 5+1 nations and Iran that has unraveled ever since for-

mer U.S. president Donald Trump pulled out of it in 2018. Germany and France are both signatories to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which gave Iran relief from sanctions in return for limits to its nuclear activities.

After its withdrawal from the accord, the U.S. reinstated harsh economic sanctions on Iran, which reacted by scaling back from its own commitments to the deal, in particular by increasing uranium enrichment.

On Thursday, the last day of his trip, Rivlin

will head to Paris to meet France’s President Emmanuel Macron.

U.S. President Joe Biden and his administration have repeatedly said they will return to the JCPOA if Tehran first returns to compliance. Iran has insisted the U.S. lifts sanctions before it returns to the deal’s terms, putting the two sides at a stalemate.

On Thursday, Israeli and U.S. officials were to hold the first session of a bilateral strategic group aimed at collaborating in the effort to contain Iran.



# Iran: KRG's friend of difficult days

KRG official underlines the need to avoid any interference in the region's countries

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — In a provocative move, a controversial stamp was published in Iraq's Kurdistan Region marking the visit of Pope Francis to Iraq.

The stamp in question raised many eyebrows in the region, causing tensions between the Iraqi Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) and a number of regional countries.

It has two problems: First, there was no Arabic translation of what was written on the stamp, something that drew criticism from some Iraqi groups as Arabic is the official language of Iraq. Second, the stamp featured a map imagining large swathes of Iranian territories — as well as Turkish ones - as part of the Greater Kurdistan, a clear violation of Iran's territorial integrity.

The stamp was published to commemorate the recent four-day papal visit to Iraq that included a foray into Erbil, the capital of the Iraqi Kurdistan, on the third day.

Upon his arrival in Erbil, the pope was welcomed by the president and the prime minister of the autonomous region of the Iraqi Kurdistan, as well as civil and religious authorities, according to Vatican News. He then met with the President of the autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan, Nechirvan Barzani, and the Prime Minister, Masrour Barzani at the Presidential VIP Lounge of the airport.

The visit was widely overshadowed by the stamp controversy. Iran and Turkey strongly objected to the stamp design.

Saeed Khatibzadeh, spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry, said that the stamp runs counter to international regulations.

"It's obvious that what was publicly published goes against international principles and regulations," Khatibzadeh was quoted by state news IRNA as saying on Wednesday. "We have expressed our objection to the government of Iraq and demanded the immediate recall and correction of this unfriendly act."

Turkey also criticized the KRG over the stamp, calling it a "grave mistake" that the Kurdish authorities should "immediately rectify."

"Certain presumptuous authorities in the KRG dared to abuse the [pope's visit] to express



their unrealistic aspirations against the territorial integrity of Iraq's neighboring countries. KRG authorities are in the best position to remember the disappointing outcomes of such deceitful aims," The Turkish Foreign Ministry said in a statement, according to Al-Monitor.

Following the Iranian and Turkish objections, the KRG sought to distance itself from the controversy by saying that the stamp design was proposed by a number of artists and it was not allowed to be printed.

KRG spokesman Jotyar Adel told reporters that artists submitted samples of proposed designs to be printed for Pope Francis' visit to Iraq earlier this month, according to Anadolu Agency. He said none of the models have been approved and noted that "the design that will be approved for printing will be in accordance with the Constitution and the law."

However, Adel's explanation did little to soothe concerns in the region, with some experts saying that those behind the stamp may have aimed to undermine the KRG relations with Iran and Turkey.

Iran has long supported the KRG during difficult times and that disseminating controversial stamps may weaken the autonomous region's ties with Iran, which has stood by this region during the fight against the Daesh terrorist group.

The KRG officials have hailed the Ira-

nian support, particularly during the fight against Daesh.

In a January interview with the Tehran Times, Nazem Dabbagh, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) representative to Tehran, said that top Iranian general Qassem Soleimani played an important role in supporting the KRG against Daesh.

"Martyr Qassem Soleimani did not only help in the framework of consultation, but also in the battlefield. He helped the Iraqi Kurdistan in its combat against terrorism. We are thankful and appreciative for Iran's advisory presence and its arms aid to eliminate the Daesh threat from Erbil," Dabbagh said.

In a new interview with the Tehran Times, Dabbagh said the stamp was not published by the KRG, reiterating the position of Adel regarding the stamp.

He said those behind the stamp aim to undermine the KRG's relations with some regional countries and secure their interest at the expense of the well-being of the Kurdish people.

"Those who take advantage of this stamp seek to perpetually make the region insecure, overstate problems, and create tensions between the Kurds and Iran, Turkey and even Iraq in order to exploit the situation. The Kurdistan Regional Government political leadership should understand that," Dabbagh

told the Tehran Times, calling on the KRG to prevent suspicious groups from creating problems and concerns in neighboring countries.

The KRG representative in Tehran underlined the need to avoid any interference in the internal affairs of the region's countries, saying that the territorial integrity and prosperity of these countries are important to the KRG.

According to Dabbagh, Iran and Turkey expressed objection to the Iraqi government over the stamp and these objections are reminiscent of what happened when the KRG held a referendum on seceding from Iraq.

Dabbagh said the Kurdish officials should be more careful not to repeat what happened after the referendum. In Dabbagh's view, the Kurdish authorities should seek to achieve their rights in accordance with Iraq's constitution and avoid creating trouble with other countries.

In addition to Iran and Turkey, the stamp controversy also elicited a strong response inside Iraq. The stamp's map did include at least two Iraqi provinces — Kirkuk and Nineveh - that are not part of the Iraqi Kurdish autonomous region.

Hatam al-Taei, a spokesman for the Arab Council of Kirkuk, said on Friday that the stamp was of "separatist" nature because it included the governorates of Kirkuk and Nineveh. Al-Taei said Kirkuk should not be considered as part of Kurdistan.

He pointed out that the Kurdistan region is part of the Iraqi state, and that "the process of issuing stamps must be through the Ministry of Transport in the federal government." The spokesman expressed objection to what he described as "attempts to plunge Kirkuk and Nineveh governorates into regional and international conflicts."

Also, Niyazi Memar Oglu, a former Iraqi lawmaker and a leader in the Turkmen Front, accused the KRG of "promoting such a map for years," indicating in an interview with a local Iraqi television network that "the publication of the postal stamp was not spontaneous, but rather planned." He called on the Iraqi parliament to launch an "investigation and not to be silent about this sensitive issue."

## Iran joins group of countries at UN in forming coalition against sanctions

**1→** The concept note said, "The world is seeing a growing resort to unilateralism, marked by isolationist and arbitrary actions, including the imposition of unilateral coercive measures or the withdrawal from landmark agreements and multilateral institutions, as well as by attempts to undermine critical efforts to tackle common and global challenges."

**'Long-term consequences of sanctions are as brutal as terrorism'**

Iran has long criticized the use of sanctions by the U.S. On Thursday, Iran's Ambassador to the United Nations Majid Takht-Ravanchi has denounced sanctions as inhumane, immoral and illegal, saying their far-reaching, devastating and long-term consequences are as brutal and vicious as terrorism, war crimes and crimes against humanity, according to Press TV.

"In order to combat food insecurity in the world, it is necessary to lift siege and sanctions and foster international cooperation," Takht-Ravanchi said via videoconference to a meeting of the UN Security Council on Thursday that discussed how conflict and food security are interlinked.

"The current number of people at risk of hunger and food insecurity in the world is alarming, which has made it essential and urgent to deal with this challenge," he added.

Takht-Ravanchi then highlighted the right to food is the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger and malnutrition under any circumstances, whether in peace or war.

The senior Iranian diplomat stressed that full realization of such a right requires a comprehensive approach and effective measures, both at national and international levels, which would particularly address all root causes of food insecurity and ensure secure international cooperation.

The Iranian diplomat stressed the need for closer cooperation among the General Assembly, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), as well as the relevant institutions and agencies of the world body to that goal.

"To combat the acute food insecurity caused by conflicts, the Security Council needs to oblige all parties to adhere to these principles, and at the same time the Council itself must

not, under any circumstances, boycott humanitarian trade, especially food and medicine," he pointed out.

"Nothing is more urgent than the immediate lifting of the inhumane siege against the Yemeni people, and removal of the illegal blockade of Gaza," Takht-Ravanchi continued.

He described sanctions as the main reason behind food insecurity, noting that the U.S. anti-Iran bans have prevented Tehran from gaining access to food, medicine as well as medical equipment, and undermined the Islamic Republic's ability to effectively deal with the coronavirus pandemic.

"Countries should not use economic and political coercive tools to put pressure on other governments; and immediate removal of sanctions should be taken into consideration as a key step in tackling food insecurity," Takht-Ravanchi said.

**'Just a lie'**

So far, several Iranian officials have denounced the U.S. sanctions, saying the U.S. restrictions on Iran have impacted the lives of ordinary Iranians.

Last September, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said Washington's efforts to stop Tehran from exporting oil have limited the government's ability to respond to the global health crisis and provide relief to the Iranian people. Iran also has "quite a bit of money stashed in countries abroad," he said, adding that the U.S. has prevented Tehran from gaining access to these funds, even to buy medicine.

The top Iranian diplomat noted that, due to U.S. sanctions, Iran could not use its "own money" to ensure access to coronavirus vaccines under development.

Iran cannot even purchase doses of influenza vaccine, Zarif lamented.

"Whatever the Americans are saying about their sanctions not affecting humanitarian items, it's just a lie... It's basically medical terrorism," he said.

Zarif reiterated this position in a tweet on Thursday, underlining that the U.S. prevents Iran from using its own money to purchase food and medicines.

"U.S. claims it favors diplomacy; not Trump's failed policy

of 'maximum pressure.' Yet @SecBlinken boasts about blocking Korea from transferring our OWN money to the Swiss Channel—only used for food & meds. Repeating the same policy won't yield new results. Only way: #CommitActMeet," the chief Iranian diplomat wrote.

Last October, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani also highlighted the U.S. "cruel" efforts to prevent Iran from buying medicines after Washington imposed new sanctions on Iran's banking sector at the time. He said these sanctions were an effort of a "terrorist, cruel and inhumane" nature aimed at putting major obstacles to fund transfers for the purchase of medicine and food amid the coronavirus pandemic.

"Everyone is witnessing that Washington's move is full violation of international law; and in these times of the coronavirus pandemic, the White House's attitude is completely against humanity; and the so-called advocates of human rights should condemn it globally," Rouhani said in a phone call with Governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Abdolnaser Hemmati.

Also in October, Iran's High Council for Human Rights said despite U.S. claims that humanitarian affairs are not covered by sanctions, blocking financial transactions between Iran and the world has practically obstructed importation of humanitarian articles and drugs used to treat people with serious diseases, according to Press TV.

"As attested to by the American officials' remarks, measures taken by the lawbreaking regime of America have clearly taken aim at the health and lives of [the Iranian] people and are considered <crime against humanity>," the council said in a statement at the time.

The head of the Iranian Judiciary's High Council for Human Rights also said on October 5 that the body is planning to prosecute 46 American natural and legal persons involved in the imposition of unjust sanctions on the Islamic Republic, which among other things, have prevented the country from importing medications necessary to treat patients with serious diseases.

## Iran voices support for China's new law on Hong Kong

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Iran has expressed support for a new Chinese law regarding Hong Kong electoral system, saying that it respects any decision made by China regarding the country's national sovereignty.

In a statement on Thursday, Saeed Khatibzadeh, spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry, said Hong Kong is part of China and that anything related to it is considered China's internal affair.

"We respect the decision made by China on its sovereignty," said Khatibzadeh when

asked by reporters on Thursday about the adoption of the new Hong Kong election law at the National People's Congress (NPC) of the People's Republic of China.

"Over these years, China has shown that it well conforms to the principle of 'one country — two systems' in Hong Kong," the spokesman pointed out.

"Law-making by the People's Congress of China about the election system is within the powers vested in this institution and is in line with the 'one country — two systems' principle," said Khatibzadeh.

"So, any foreign interference in China's domestic affairs which, among other things, may undermine Hong Kong's stability, is naturally rejected," he noted.

Chinese parliamentary body has all but unanimously approved the new law that creates new conditions for those who seek to govern Hong Kong. The law was criticized by the West as a move to undermine democracy in Hong Kong.

"This is the latest step by Beijing to hollow out the space for democratic debate in Hong Kong, contrary to the promises made

by China itself," the UK's foreign minister, Dominic Raab, said. "This can only further undermine confidence and trust in China living up to its international responsibilities and legal obligations as a leading member of the international community."

China said the new law was passed by all deputies, including those from Hong Kong.

"The meeting made the decision to approve the electoral system in Hong Kong, and won the approval from all deputies, including those from Hong Kong," said the chair of the NPC standing committee, Li Zhanshu.

## Envoy: Political resolve needed to make disarmament conference successful

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Iran's permanent representative to the United Nations Headquarters in Geneva, Esmaeil Baghaei Hamaneh, has stressed the need for a "strong political resolve" to help the Conference on Disarmament (CD) achieve its purposes and fulfill its duties.

Speaking at online meeting of the conference on Thursday, Baghaei Hamaneh noted Iran believes that it is extremely important to strengthen the role and status of the conference as the only multilateral forum established to negotiate arms

control and disarmament agreements.

"We need strong political determination to help the Conference on Disarmament to fulfill its negotiating duties and resume its main activity for creating the legal binding tools," he remarked.

The Iranian envoy also deplored "lack of political resolve" by certain delegations which seek to turn the conference into a consultative body.

The Conference on Disarmament was recognized by the 10th Special Session on Disarmament of the UN General

Assembly in 1978 as a single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community.

The conference primarily focuses its attention on cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament, prevention of nuclear war, including all related matters, and prevention of an arms race in outer space.

The conference is comprised of 65 member states, including the five NPT nuclear-weapon states and 60 other states of key military significance.

## S P O R T S

### Bahrain chosen to host World Cup qualifiers in Group C

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Bahrain was chosen as centralized venue for the Asian Qualifiers for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and AFC Asian Cup China 2023 in Group C by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC).

The matches are scheduled to take place from May 31 to June 15, 2021.

Iran was originally scheduled to host three matches out of four remaining matches before coronavirus shut down the competitions.

Iran had to host table-toppers Iraq, Bahrain and Hong Kong in Tehran and were supposed to travel to Pnom Penh to meet Cambodia.

Now, the 'Persian Leopards' have a difficult task ahead since they will have to play their home matches in an away venue.

### Persepolis qualify for Iran's Hazfi Cup Round of 16

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Persepolis football team defeated second division Mes Novin 3-0 in Round of 32 of Iran's Hazfi Cup on Friday.

Kamal Kamyabinia opened the scoring for visiting Persepolis in the 38th minute and Omid Alishah netted a brace in the 58th and 64th minutes.

On Thursday, Esteghlal, Hazfi Cup's most decorated football team, defeated Paykan 2-1 in the same stage in Tehran.

**Results:**

- \* Malavan Anzali 2 – 1 Vista Turbine Tehran
- \* Esteghlal Mollasani 0 – 0 Shahin Bandar Ameri (3-4 pens)
- \* Shahrdiri Bardaskan 0 – 3 Khooshe Talaei Saveh
- \* Pars Jonoubi Jam 3 – 0 Pas Hamedan
- \* Etehad Kamyaran 0 – 0 Qashqai Shiraz (9-10 pens)
- \* Aluminum Arak 0 – 0 Havadar Tehran (5-4 pens)
- \* Tractor 3 – 0 Shahrdiri Mahshahr (Shahrdiri withdrew from the match)

### No Iranian team chosen to host ACL Groups Stage

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — No Iranian team have been confirmed as hosts for the AFC Champions League 2021 Group Stage by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) on Thursday.

The West Region matches, which are scheduled to take place between April 14-30, will see Saudi Arabia host Groups A and D in Riyadh as well as Group C in Jeddah, with the matches in Group B to be staged in the United Arab Emirates city of Sharjah, while India, whose representative FC Goa are poised to mark the nation's debut in Asia's premier club competition, will host Group E.

Persepolis, champions of Iran league and runners-ups of the AFC Champions League (ACL) in 2020 and 2018, were drawn with Al Rayyan of Qatar, India's FC Goa, and the winner of the playoff match between Al Wahda (UAE) and Al Zawraa (Iraq) in Group E.

Tractor, Hazfi Cup winners, will have UAE's Sharjah, Pakhtakor of Uzbekistan, and either Al Wehda (Saudi Arabia) or Air Force Club (Iraq) in Group B.

Group C comprises Iran's Esteghlal, Qatar's Al Duhail, Saudi Arabia's Al Ahli, and Al Shorta of Iraq.

### Dragan Skocic satisfied with Iran's friendly matches

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Iran national football team head coach Dragan Skocic is satisfied with the friendly matches against Uzbekistan and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Iran will also meet Syria in a friendly match in Tehran on March 30.

The match will be held as part of preparation for the 2022 World Cup qualifiers at the Azadi Stadium.

"COVID-19 has spread widely around the world over the past year. The virus caused a lot of problems for the National Team. The pandemic caused destruction and our training camps were postponed," Skocic said in an interview with Iran's state-run TV.

"It caused we find new solutions to prevent further damages to our programs. It was an opportunity to analyze our players. We traveled to Belgium, Croatia and Russia to closely monitor our players," he added.

"We intended to play Mali in Turkey but the match was canceled due to coronavirus. But I am satisfied with two friendly matches against Uzbekistan and Bosnia since we tested different tactics and our players performed well in the new systems," the Croat added.

Dragan Skocic's team will hold a training camp in late March in Tehran.

"We will play Syria in a friendly match and I hope I can implement my ideas in the training camp. I am optimistic about qualifying for the 2022 World Cup with the players and the solutions we have," Skocic concluded.

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

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

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

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

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

### IPL: Alireza Mansourian takes charge of Aluminum

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Alireza Mansourian has been named as new head coach of Aluminum football club.

The 49-year-old coach will take charge of the Arak based football team until the end of the season.

Mansourian was named Tractor coach at the beginning of Iran Professional League season but was sacked after five weeks.

Mansourian, who has already coached Pas Hamedan and Esteghlal, replaced Rasoul Khatibi in the team.

Aluminum are ninth in IPL.



## Over 83,000 public transport vehicles turned dual-fuel since late-Mar. 2020

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — The director of the National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company (NIORDC) said his company has turned 83,802 public transport vehicles into dual-fuel cars since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2020).

NIORDC and state-owned Iran Khodro Company (IKCO) signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) in December 2019, to add 1.46 million new dual-fuel vehicles to the country's public transportation fleet.

According to Mohammad-Hossein Baqeri, the total number of cars registered in NIORDC's previous conversion program was 264,423 cars, of which only 116,066 were eligible to use the program's facilities.



The official noted that following the mentioned program, the government has also started a new scheme for turning the automobiles registered in online transportation apps (like Snap and Tapsi in Iran) and also in taxi agencies into dual-fuel cars over the past weeks.

"The registration for the owners of such vehicles is underway and based on this program the government is going to pay for 75 to 80 percent of the conversion costs through bank loans offered to the owners," Baqeri explained.

He further noted that some necessary measures have also been taken for smartening of the country's CNG stations.

Earlier this week, NIORDC Managing Director Alireza Sadegabadi had said that developing the country's CNG industry could potentially save Iran \$14b.

According to Sadegabadi, increasing the country's gasoline production capacity by 20 million liters requires at least \$15 billion of investment, while boosting the country's CNG output by the equivalent of the same amount would only need \$1 billion, that means it could save the country \$14 billion.

The development of the CNG industry in Iran began many years ago concurrently with the development of the national gas network and currently, there are more than 40 million cubic meters of daily CNG distribution capacity in Iran, according to Sadegabadi.

A large part of this capacity however is not being used, and this has led the government to try to benefit from this capacity by increasing the number of dual-fuel vehicles.

According to the NIORDC head, each cubic meter of CNG consumption would save the consumer 30 cents in comparison to one liter of gasoline.

Iranian Oil Ministry also considers CNG as the national fuel; therefore, the ministry has it on the agenda to increase the share of this fuel in the country's energy basket.

Iran's CNG consumption currently stands at about 25 million cubic meters and there are currently 2,495 CNG stations across Iran that supply 22 percent of the country's fuel basket.

## Iranian oil exports to China expected to hit record high in March

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Iranian crude oil exports to China are surging and expected to hit record highs in March despite the U.S. sanctions on the country's oil industry.

Chinese imports of Iranian crude oil are expected to hit 856,000 barrels a day in March, the most in almost two years and up 129 percent from last month, Bloomberg reported quoting traders and analysts.



As reported, Iranian shipments to the province of Shandong, which accounts for a quarter of China's refining capacity, have surged so much this month they're causing congestion at ports and filling up storage tanks.

The surge in China's crude imports from Iran comes as many of other Iranian oil buyers are still waiting for the U.S. President Joe Biden to remove sanctions on the Islamic Republic.

"The surge is related to lower costs but also, politically, to a

sense that this might be an interim period between the outgoing administration and the Biden administration figuring out its position on Iran," said Michal Meidan, director of the China Energy Program at the Oxford Institute for Energy Studies.

Iranian oil production and exports have been both increasing over the past few months despite the U.S. sanctions and the Iranian Oil Ministry has announced its readiness for boosting the country's crude oil output to the pre-sanction levels in case of the U.S. rejoining the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Back in January, the data from SVB International and two other firms indicated that Iranian oil exports were climbing in January after a boost in the fourth quarter despite U.S. sanctions.

Iran's Deputy Oil Minister Amir Hossein Zamaninia had said earlier that the country started boosting its oil production and would be able to reach pre-sanction levels within two months.

Iranian oil won't create any surplus in the oil market and the market will be able to accommodate the country's maximum oil output of around 3.9 million to four million barrels a day, Bloomberg quoted Zamaninia as saying on the sidelines of the Iran Oil Show in Tehran in late January.

# Iran's export to Russia rises 105% in 2020

**1 →** "Our relations with Russia are mostly in political, security and defense fields, and on the other hand, due to the mutual economic potential that exists, economic relations between the two countries should undoubtedly be developed and expanded", the ambassador further stressed.

As previously announced by the chairman of Iran-Russia Joint Chamber of Commerce, Iran's exports to Russia have increased 20 percent during the first quarter of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-June 20, 2020).

Hadi Tizhoosh Taban has said that the growth in the exports indicates that the coronavirus pandemic has not affected trade between the two neighbors.

During a video-conference between Iran's ambassador to Moscow and Russian officials at Federal Customs Service including Vladimir Vladimirovich Ivin, the deputy head of the customs, in last July, the two sides investigated ways of boosting bilateral customs cooperation.

Addressing the conference, Jalali said that Iran is ready to create customs "Green Corridor" with Russia in the pandemic occasion when many international activities have been brought to lockdown.

To have multilateral cooperation with the Eurasian Economic Union (EUEA) in the framework of Russian President Vladimir Putin's initiative to create the customs "Green Corridor" in coronavirus and post-coronavirus periods is among the



main agenda of development of economic relations, the ambassador said.

During the talks, the two sides exchanged views about fostering customs cooperation and solving some problems for the Iranian lorry drivers.

Meanwhile, in last September, Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Russian Export Center (REC) for the expansion of trade relations between

the two countries.

By signing this MOU, the two sides pledged to focus more on bilateral cooperation to develop trade and economic exchanges between the two countries and stated that they will work to increase the traders' understanding of each other's production and consumption capacities in order to promote mutual trade, the TCCIMA portal reported.

As reported, the two sides also stressed the use of barter trade as an effective way of increasing the level of trade between the

## Why should S. Korea release Iranian frozen funds?

**1 →** To answer the question regarding the ways in which South Korea can release Iranian funds the experiences with other countries like India, Iraq, and China can be of great help.

Iran is currently exporting energy carriers to several countries and they are paying for their shipments in one way or the other.

Barter trade and using the oil money for exporting humanitarian goods to Iran is the best and most obvious way that the South Korean government can use for returning Iranian funds without breaking any sanctions-related regulations.

The Asian country however is taking a very conservative approach in this regard and is clearly waiting for a green light from the White House while the Joe Biden administration and Iran continue to disagree on which side should come back into full compliance under the 2015 nuclear deal first.

Earlier this week, the governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) criticized South Korea for being under the influence of the United States regarding the release of Iran's frozen assets in the Asian country.

Abdolnasser Hemmati made the remarks following

the U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken's claims about Washington not letting the release of Iran's assets in South Korea unless Tehran returns to the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"From the outset, it was clear that the [South] Korean government was not able to decide independently to settle problems pertaining to Iran's forex assets," Hemmati said.

If South Korea doesn't change its yielding policies towards the U.S. in this regard and does not act and decide independently; the country should consider the negative impacts of such an approach on the two countries' future economic and political interactions.

Another thing that should be taken into consideration by both the U.S. and South Korea is that the Iranian economy has so far survived the harshest forms of sanction and the Islamic Republic can manage its affairs even without the return of the frozen assets outside the country.

In this regard, Hemmati has underlined that the CBI is preparing its plan for the upcoming Iranian calendar year



(begins on March 21) regardless of its frozen assets in other countries.

"The CBI has regulated its program to meet the country's forex needs irrespective of its frozen resources in South Korea and other countries," he said.

## Production of 25 major products in industry, mining sectors rises in 11 months

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — The manufacturing of 25 major products in industry and mining sectors has increased in the first 11 months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2020 – February 18, 2021), as announced by the deputy industry, mining, and trade minister.

Saeed Zarandi, the deputy minister for planning, said that the manufacturing of home appliances had a 38 percent growth, aluminum ingots a 54 percent rise, passenger



cars an 18 percent, steel a seven percent, and cement a 12 percent growth in the mentioned 11-month period.

The industry, mining, and trade ministry has already outlined its main programs for supporting the domestic production in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 20), which is named the year of "Surge in Production".

The ministry's seven main axes of the surge in production are going to be pursued under

40 major programs.

Developing technology and promoting knowledge-based industries, development of domestic production in line with the Leader's stresses on surge in production, managing imports and development of non-oil exports, improving the business environment, development of financing and investment and finally development of logistics were reported to be the seven major axes of the Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry's works in the current year.

## Gas transferring capacity to climb 110mcm per day

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Iran's daily gas transmission capacity will increase 110 million cubic meters (mcm) through operating the sixth and ninth national gas transferring pipelines, as announced by the managing director of Iranian Gas Engineering and Development Company (IGEDC).

Bahram Salavati said that the implementation of these huge gas transferring projects, while strengthening the stability of gas flow, will increase the country's gas transferring capacity by 110 million cubic meters per day, with the aim of permanent, stable and reliable gas transmission to the southwest, west and northwest of the country and strengthen gas exports.

Iranian Gas Transmission Company (IGTC)'s managing director has said that in the cold season and at maximum consumption the gas storages help the stability of the gas transmission network, adding, "In the first eight months of this year we saw a 17-percent increase in gas injection to Sarajeh underground gas storage (UGS) and a 26-percent



increase in gas injection to Shourijeh UGS."

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

## TEDPIX up 2.4% in a week

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — After several weeks of decline, growth finally returned to Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), Iran's major stock exchange, as TEDPIX, the main index of the exchange, rose 2.4 percent during the past Iranian calendar week.

The index closed at 1.206 million points on Wednesday (the last working day of the week).

During the past week, the indices of Social Security Investment Company, Mo-barakeh Steel Company, National Iranian Copper Industry Company, Bou Ali Sina

Petrochemical Company (BSPC), and Amin Investment Bank were the most widely followed indices.

Iranian Capital Market Analyst Soheil Kolahchi believes the stock market is not going to go through many ups and downs over the next six months and the market is expected to follow a stable trend.

"In the coming months, the market will not fall heavily, but we also can't expect the index to enter an uptrend soon," Kolahchi told IRNA last week.

Pointing to the recent decline in the

Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE) main index, the expert said: "The stock market is in a good condition both technically and fundamentally, but despite the positive measures that the Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO) has put on the agenda to improve the market, it is still following a downward trend; and this has increased the shareholders' skepticism and anxiety."

He noted that the Iranian stock market is usually negative during the last Iranian calendar month of Esfand (February 19-March 20) and that is a normal trend

for the country's capital market in the last days of the year.

"Because most of the companies active in the market are looking for selling their shares and somehow turn their assets into liquidity by the yearend," Kolahchi explained.

"We look forward to a positive trend of trading in the next year, he said, adding that the market is now in a very good condition for growth and we can hope for positive days in the stock market and improve the situation in the coming months", he added.



# American decision-makers lack ability to understand Iranian civilization: professor

Arshin Adib-Moghaddam says “China and even Russia have a better understanding of Iran”

**1 →** “China and even Russia have a better understanding of Iran also because of their civilizational capital and the historical depth of the institutions that govern their international conduct,” Adib-Moghaddam notes.

The professor says while Iran and the U.S. share interests in West Asia and other regions, the long-term quarrel between the two countries raises questions about the roots of this conflict.

Following is the text of the interview:

**How do you describe Iran and its position in West Asia in terms of history?**

As I have described in my book «What is Iran?»: The most fundamental aspect about Iran's position is the country's embeddedness in the regional and global culture. Iran is a transnational phenomenon that can't be reduced to its geopolitical locality. Iran is in every fiber of the region and it has always been a major focal point of global history. From the ancient Greek Historians such as Xenophon to the doyens of the European Enlightenment such as Hegel: Persia is one of the major nodal points of the world. Global history can't be thought and comprehended without an understanding of Iran.

Adib-Moghaddam is of the opinion that most U.S. decision makers lack the ability of comprehensive understanding when it comes to Iranian civilization.

“This ability is entirely absent from the toolbox of other U.S. decision-makers,” he notes.

**Why did Iran and the U.S. fail to reach an understanding despite the fact that some say the two countries have common interests in the region? Is it due to different conceptions of the world order or because of different interests?**

Iran and the United States are fundamentally different countries exactly because of the reasons mentioned above. Persia is ancient, the USA is recent in terms of its presence in global history. China and even Russia have a better understanding of Iran also because of their civilizational capital and the historical depth of the institutions that govern their international conduct. History makes a real difference. China in particular better comprehends the longue durée that continuously tempers with the subliminal consciousness of Iranian decision-makers.



**“They (Americans) don’t understand Iran as a civilizational entity that has existed beyond the current set-up.”**

This is the psychological context, which guides HOW the interests can be implemented and aligned. While it is true that the U.S. and Iran share interests in the region and beyond, the conversation between Persepolis and Washington DC can only lead to repeated misunderstandings. Obama understood this dynamic which is why he referred to Iranian culture through Khayyam and the Persian New Year to build bridges. This ability is entirely absent from the toolbox of other U.S. decision-makers. They don't understand Iran as a civilizational entity that has existed beyond the current set-up.

Difference does not have to translate into conflict and antagonism. It simply requires understanding to be bridged. Iran and the

United States could work together if there emerges an empathetic drive towards accepting each other's interests but also sensitivities and limitations. This would make for a trusting relationship that is not merely geared to short term interests and pragmatism»

**Given the huge media propaganda against Iran on the other front, how can we help the Western side (people and government) to understand Iran?**

By reading history, understanding culture and comprehending the complexity of a country such as Iran and indeed the world beyond the United States. By training institutions to work with a mind that resembles Methusalem, a sage with the wisdom acquired through knowledge.

**“There is no ‘West’, anymore and the future of the world order will be by far more diffuse, opaque and decentered than the ‘unipolar moment’ when the U.S. remained as the sole superpower after the demise of the Soviet Union in 1989.”**

## Centrist Biden is unlikely to take bold actions toward West Asia: Hunter

“Attacks in Iraq could be false flag operations” by Israel to incite a confrontation between Iran and the U.S., Georgetown University professor says

**1 →** It was America that pulled out of the nuclear pact unilaterally in 2018, so why is the Biden administration not taking concrete steps to rejoin the JCPOA and lifting the sanctions?

Biden wants to use the existing sanctions to force Iran to agree to talks on other issues of concern to the U.S., such as Iran's missile program and its regional policies, which Washington sees as challenging the U.S. interests and those of its allies, especially Israel.

**Don't you think that Biden's policies towards Iran are confusing because he is trying to keep Trump's sanctions in place while talking about diplomacy? It may send a negative signal to Tehran.**

Biden, too, wants to force Iran to make some basic concessions, such as reducing its missile program and changing its regional strategy. Biden wants to achieve these goals through diplomacy. But opting for diplomacy does not mean abandoning Washington's basic interests. A diplomacy is a tool, as is the use of military force. Therefore, there is nothing confusing about Biden's policy on Iran. Trump, too, wanted to talk to Iran, provided Tehran agreed to his conditions.

**Biden's administration has imposed a ban on some Saudi officials for the Khashoggi killing. But it was not extended to bin Salman. Do you think Biden is serious when he talks about human rights, especially when it comes to Saudi Arabia?**

Human rights issues never determine states' foreign policies. They are mostly propaganda tools. They are used more in the case of hostile states and not the friendly ones. Despite tensions, Saudi Arabia is still a U.S. ally and the U.S. does not want to undermine its relations with Riyadh. Any action in this regard would be more



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symbolic than real.

**Israel's military chief has warned of a new plan to strike Iran's nuclear facilities. At the same time, some Iraqi groups have claimed that Israel is behind some provocative attacks on U.S. military bases in the Iraqi territory. How can Israel hinder the process of reviving the JCPOA?**

A: Israel has strong support in the U.S., including in Congress. U.S. presidents, in general, are receptive to Israeli views. Netanyahu claimed that he convinced Trump to exit the JCPOA. Israel has been advising the U.S. not to return to the JCPOA without significant concessions from Tehran. Furthermore, some hardliners in Israel still hope to trigger a military confrontation between Iran and the U.S. Attacks in Iraq could be false flag operations to incite such a confrontation. Even if there were no extensive military conflict, instability in Iraq would harm the prospects for the U.S. return to the JCPOA, especially if Iran was blamed for inciting turmoil.

**Biden's administration is filled with people who served under the Obama presidency. Don't you think that it makes the administration too conservative and cautious about making brave decisions?**

Except for the far left, in foreign policy, especially regarding the Middle East (West Asia), there is not much difference between the conservatives and the more liberal U.S. politicians. The conservative-liberal divide is more significant in the domestic area. Moreover, Biden is a centrist and is not likely to take very bold actions, especially in regard to the Middle East (West Asia). His approach towards China and Russia, too, is quite hardline.



The Department of Homeland Security said it is expecting unprecedented number of unaccompanied minors to cross the border this year after.

## European Parliament passes resolution blasting Bahrain for flagrant rights abuses

The European Parliament has overwhelmingly adopted a resolution, urging Bahrain to stop its blatant and deadly violations of the country's human rights campaigners and prisoners of conscience.

The legislative body passed the resolution on Thursday, with 633 votes in favor, 11 against, and 45 abstentions.

It noted how the overall human rights situation “continues to worsen” in Bahrain since the kingdom came face to face with a popular uprising against its suppressive policies.

The MEPs lent special significance to the situation of death row inmates in the country and found serious fault with the mistrials that had led to their convictions.

They noted how Manama had lifted a de facto moratorium on the death penalty and kept railroading people into facing the punishment.

“MEPs demand that all human rights defenders and prisoners of conscience in the country be immediately and unconditionally released,” it noted.

“The Bahraini government must stop harassing human rights defenders and immediately lift the travel ban on them.”

The uprising erupted in the Persian Gulf island in 2011 in protest at its drawn-out discriminatory policies against its Shia Muslim population. The ruling Al Khalifah regime came down hard on the peaceful rallies, killing scores of people and jailing hundreds of others.

In its rush to muffle all dissenting voices, the island has also outlawed its main opposition Al Wefaq group, and stripped many of the country's oppositionists of their citizenship.

## Russia gradually ditching U.S. dollar in trade with allies

A senior Russia lawmaker says his country is gradually reducing the role of the U.S. dollar in financial transactions with allies and commercial partners, a long-pursued measure aimed at using currencies other than the greenback to offset the impacts of American sanctions.

Vyacheslav Volodin, the speaker of the Russian parliament's lower chamber, the State Duma, made the announcement on Thursday and said Russia was gradually reducing the share of the U.S. dollar in the Russian economy and foreign exchange reserves.

The State Duma speaker underlined that, in late February, Russia changed the currency structure of the National Wealth Fund, including the Japanese yen and the Chinese yuan.

Volodin also said that the share of U.S. dollar and euro decreased from 45% to 35% at that time, while the share of the pound sterling remained at ten percent.

Head of Russia's upper house of parliament — Federation Council — earlier said that the U.S. dollar would remain in circulation in Russia but the economy's dependence on the American currency must be reduced.

Valentina Matvienko also said Russian gold and foreign exchange reserves are already much less dependent on the dollar, and that Moscow's investments in government obligations of the U.S. have decreased 30 times over the past ten years.

## UAE weapons maker to partner with Israel Aerospace for anti-drone missile system

Israel's major aerospace and aviation manufacturer has announced plans to jointly develop an advanced anti-drone missile system with the United Arab Emirates' state-owned weapons maker EDGE.

Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) said in a statement Thursday that the companies will work together to build the system in order “to detect, identify, classify, and intercept a broad range of threats.”

IAI said the Counter-Unmanned Aircraft System (C-UAS) will include soft kill solutions such as electronic jamming and cyber takeovers, and hard kill capabilities such as guns, missiles, electromagnetics and lasers, as well as advanced command and control.

IAI further asserted that the project would have “wider ranging benefits for the region (West Asia) and beyond.”

Boaz Levy, president and CEO of IAI, welcomed the project as “a stepping-stone for further business and strategic alliances between” Tel Aviv and Abu Dhabi.

Faisal al-Bannai, CEO and Managing Director of EDGE, said the project is set to strengthen the UAE's advanced technology portfolio and partnerships in the region, adding that the deal is “in line” with the recently brokered normalization accords.

“We believe that this collaboration will help both companies through the transfer of knowledge and sharing of capabilities,” Bannai said.

The announcement was made following a call between Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

“Through this fund, the UAE will invest in and alongside Israel across sectors including energy, manufacturing, water, space, healthcare and agricultural technology. The investment fund will support development initiatives to promote regional economic cooperation” between Abu Dhabi and Tel Aviv, the UAE said in a statement published on the state-run Emirates News Agency (WAM).

Netanyahu also confirmed that the UAE plans to invest \$10 billion in the Israeli economy.

The Israeli prime minister also said that he and bin Zayed agreed that his first trip to the UAE would take place soon.

Netanyahu was forced to postpone his planned visit to the Persian Gulf state on Thursday, because Jordan delayed granting overflight rights. An earlier visit in February was canceled due to concerns from the coronavirus pandemic.

The Israeli prime minister signed agreements with Emirati Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan and Bahrain's Foreign Minister Abdullah Al Zayani during an official ceremony hosted by ex-US president Donald Trump at the White House on September 15 last year. UAE sets up \$10bn fund to invest in Israel

Moreover, the United Arab Emirates on Thursday announced it had established a \$10 billion fund to invest in multiple sectors in Israel.

## Number of migrant children in U.S. border facilities soars amid growing crisis

**1 →** A dozen Republicans led by House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy will travel to the U.S.-Mexico border in Texas on Monday to address what they say is a dire crisis.

McCarthy requested a meeting with Biden last week to discuss the border refugee crisis, but said he has not heard back from the president.

Mexico has blasted Biden for stoking illegal immigration by rolling back Trump's immigration policies, saying the U.S. president has created business for organized crime.

“They see him as the migrant president, and so many feel they're going to reach the United States,” Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said of Biden after a virtual meeting with his U.S. counterpart on March 1.

Mexican officials said Biden's new immigration policy turned people into a “commodity” for human trafficking gangs.

Biden has also been accused by his predecessor of inspiring a “spiral tsunami” at the border.

“A mass incursion into the country by people who should not be here is happening on an hourly basis, getting worse by the minute. Many have criminal records, and many others have and are spreading COVID,” Trump said last week.

“Interior enforcement has been shut down — criminals that were once promptly removed by our Administration are now being released back onto the street to commit heinous and violent crimes,” the former U.S. president added.

Trump said the Biden administration has “given the smugglers and traffickers effective control of our border,” noting that the U.S. border crisis would get worse.

Some senior U.S. officials have called the border crisis a challenge or “vexing problem” as the Biden administration remains loath to characterize the border situation as a crisis.



## Tehran, Tashkent discuss cultural heritage ties

➔ **1** The name of Iran, formerly known as Persia, mostly conjures up the first Persian Empire, ruled by the Achaemenids (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.

## Registration plate for Sacred Defense elements unveiled in Tehran

**HERITAGE d e s k** **TEHRAN** – A registration plate for 25 elements involving Iran-Iraq 1980-1988 war, which is called Sacred Defense in the Islamic Republic, was unveiled in a Tehran ceremony on Wednesday.

Deputy tourism minister Mohammad-Hassan Talebian and several high-ranking military commanders attended the unveiling ceremony held at the Sacred Defense Museum, CHTN reported.

The elements including field hospitals, martyrdom places, schools, a military camp, and a police station were officially registered on the National Intangible Cultural Heritage list months ago concurrent with the Sacred Defense Week annually held on the anniversary of the beginning of the war in late September.



Currently, 14 museums related to the Sacred Defense are active across the country, of which Tehran's Sacred Defense Museum is the most popular. Covering a landscaped site of 21 hectares in north-central Tehran, the Sacred Defense Museum is a gigantic war memorial with its collections concentrated heavily on the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war.

The Sacred Defense Museum is equipped with a state-of-the-art visual system including projections and video walls, while audio recordings relevant to each period contribute to its charm. The complex has vast garden areas, water features, and children's play areas. Outside, a patchwork of domestically-manufactured armaments such as rockets, tanks, and artillery pieces are on show.

## Post & philatelic museum inaugurated in Yazd

**HERITAGE d e s k** **TEHRAN** – A museum dedicated to the post and philatelic opened its doors to the public in the ancient city of Yazd on Wednesday.

A selection of 50 historical envelopes, 4,000 stamps, 100 letters, 50 postal cards, and 100 historical documents dating back to the Qajar-era (1789-1925) have been put on show at the museum, according to Ali-Asghar Samadiani, the deputy tourism chief of Yazd province.

Research projects are set to be implemented by the participation of scholars and experts on the history of communications and post in the province, he explained.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by the CEO of the National Post Company, Ramezan-Ali Sobhanifar who also doubles as the deputy minister of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), and several cultural officials and cultural heritage experts.



It was only in 1851 when the government of Iran started to produce its own stamps, thus the creation of a unique mailing and communication arrangement. It was through the reign of Nasser al-Din Shah Qajar (1848-1896) that the national postal system began developing.

The monarch was inspired by the reported successes of a postal system in many regions, so he decided to send a group to France to study the system and launch it in Iran.

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

With its winding lanes, forest of badgirs (wind catchers), mud-brick houses, atmospheric alleyways, and centuries of history, Yazd is a delightful place to stay, referring to as a 'don't miss' destination by almost all travel associates in the region. Yazd Jameh Mosque, Dowlatabad Garden, the Yazd Atash Behram, also known as Atash-kadeh-e Yazd, Towers of Silence, and adjacent desert landscape are among its tourist sites.

# Iran, Slovakia seek to expand tourism ties

**TOURISM d e s k** **TEHRAN** – Iran and Slovakia on Thursday held an online meeting, in which high-level tourism officials, tour operators, and hoteliers discussed ways to boost tourism ties between the two countries in the post-coronavirus era.

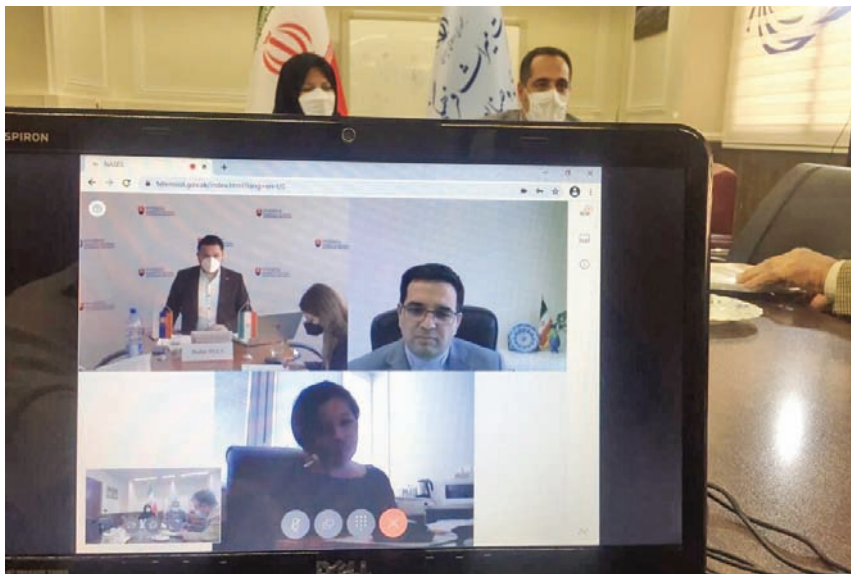
A key priority for Iran's tourism sector is to restore tourism ties with previous markets and expand into new international markets such as Slovakia when the coronavirus crisis comes to an end, Mohammad Qasemi, the director for marketing and advertising at the tourism ministry said, IRNA reported.

Regarding the unique characteristics and features of Iranian tourism as a different destination for the visitors from Slovakia, he emphasized the need for enhanced private sector relationships between the two countries to lead to the development of an efficient bilateral tourism exchange.

Emphasizing the two countries' capacity for caving, hydrotherapy, skiing, and national and natural parks, he also suggested that successful experiences be shared through training workshops and courses between the two sides.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the Iranian official reminded the tremendous impact of the novel coronavirus pandemic on global tourism, adding that the Iranian government has provided support for travel businesses affected by the disease.

The Slovak delegation also hailed the expansion of ties in the arenas of tourism



and cultural heritage. Moreover, the Slovak Association of Tour Operators & Travel Agents (SACKA) expressed readiness to start bilateral tourism as soon as the virus is contained. The two centuries also agreed to draft a memorandum of understanding to lay the ground for further cooperation including fam tours for media personnel and tour operators.

Last November, the World Tourism Organization announced that international

tourist arrivals to Iran plunged 72% during the first eight months of 2020 when compared to 2019, highlighting the severe impact of COVID-19 as the main factor. Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan in October warned that Iran's cultural heritage and tourism will be in a critical situation if the crises caused by the outbreak of the coronavirus continue.

Last August, Mounesan said that Iran's

tourism has suffered a loss of 12 trillion rials (some \$2.85 billion) since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic. He also noted that the coronavirus pandemic should not bring traveling to a complete standstill. "Corona is a fact, but can the virus stop tourism? Certainly not. For us, the coronavirus is a new experience in dealing with crises that teaches tourism experts around the world how to deal with such a disaster, and thankfully governments are turning this into an opportunity for better planning."

Optimistic forecasts, however, expect Iran to 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 destination in 2019. The latest available data show eight million tourists visited the Islamic Republic during the first ten months of the past Iranian calendar year (started March 21, 2019). Iran welcomed some 7.8 million foreign nationals a year earlier, achieving a 52.5 percent increase year on year.

The ancient land embraces hundreds of historical sites such as bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, mausoleums, churches, towers, and mansions, of which 24 being inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list. Under the 2025 Tourism Vision Plan, the country aims to increase the number of tourist arrivals from 4.8 million in 2014 to 20 million in 2025.

## Tehran promotes tourism at ITB Berlin

**TOURISM d e s k** **TEHRAN** — ITB Berlin (Internationale Tourismus-Börse Berlin), which bills itself as the world's leading travel trade show, has presented a taste of Iran. Due to the pandemic, ITB Berlin was held virtually from March 9-12, featuring some 3,300 exhibitors from 120 countries.

The Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Ministry as well as several private-run businesses promoted the country, hammering home the message of diversity and richness in recreational, cultural, natural, and medical arenas of tourism.

"The presence of the Islamic Republic of Iran, particularly its the private sector, in this fair shows the dynamism of the country's tourism industry after a year of closure...., and we declare in this exhibition that we are ready to bring tourism back on track again after the epidemic is curbed," said Vali Teymouri, the deputy tourism chief.

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

"Some 450,000 foreign travelers arrived in Iran for mainly medical or trade purposes during the first nine months of the year... tightened measures to tackle the new coronavirus has reduced international travel to the country by 94 percent," according to the official.

The global tourism industry has been plagued by the outbreak of the coronavirus for more than a year, which is a record in the history of this industry, the official noted. In an interview with the Tehran Times, the official noted: "We need to revise marketing strategies, and to redefine tourism products by paying great attention to nature tours, rural tourism, and ecotourism, agricultural tourism as a tool to empower local communities and travel businesses."

Tourism minister, Ali-Asghar Mounesan, announced in February that the tourism industry of the country had suffered a loss of some 220 trillion rials (about \$5.2 billion at the official exchange rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic. "Iran's tourism has suffered some 220 trillion rials due to corona pandemic so far.... and we hope that with the production of domestic vaccines, tourism will flourish in 1400 [the new Iranian calendar year which begins



on March 21],” Mounesan said.

"Over 1.5 million jobs have been lost in the tourism sector of Iran due to the COVID-19 disease.... Many of the tourism-insiders are now unemployed or they are staying at home," Mounesan said. Iranian tourism officials are optimistic about the fate of national tourism as soon as the virus wanes.

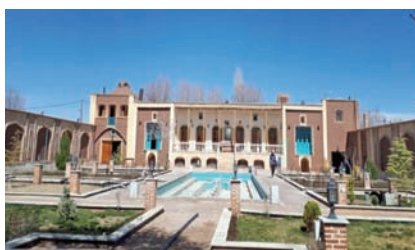
## New properties in Isfahan added to national heritage list

**TOURISM d e s k** **TEHRAN** — A total of 12 aging structures and historical monuments, which are scattered across Isfahan province, have recently been inscribed on the national heritage list.

The Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts announced the inscriptions on Thursday in a letter to the governor-general of the province, CHTN reported.

Niknam Mansion, Darb-e Kushk Mosque, Sar-Robatan Public Bathhouse, Haj Hassan Castle, and Isfahan's Electricity Factory are among the properties added to the prestigious list.

The list also includes Heidar Seifi Mansion, Master Hassan Kasai's house, and Chaharsuq



Pudeh Bazaar.

Soaked in a rich history and culture, Isfahan was once a crossroads of international trade and diplomacy in Iran. Now, it is one of Iran's top tourist destinations for good reasons. The ancient city is filled with many

architectural wonders such as unmatched Islamic buildings, bazaars, museums, Persian gardens, and tree-lined boulevards. It's a city for walking, getting lost in its mazing bazaars, dozing in beautiful gardens, and meeting people.

The city has long been nicknamed as Nesf-e-Jahan which is translated into "half the world", meaning seeing it is relevant to see the whole world. In its heyday, it was also one of the largest cities in the region with a population of nearly one million.

Isfahan is renowned not only for the abundance of great historical bridges but also for its 'life-giving river', the Zayandeh-Rood, which has long bestowed the city an original

beauty and fertility. The cool blue tiles of Isfahan's Islamic buildings, and the city's majestic bridges, contrast perfectly with the encircling hot, dry Iranian countryside.

The huge Imam Square, best known as Naghsh-e Jahan Sq. (literary meaning "Image of the World"), is one of the largest in the world (500m by 160m), and a majestic example of town planning. Built in the early 17th century, the UNESCO-registered square is punctuated with the most interesting sights in Isfahan. Modern Isfahan is now home to some heavy industry, including steel factories and a nuclear facility on its outskirts, however, its inner core wants to be preserved as a priceless gem.

## Museums dedicated to endogenous crafts inaugurated in Shahr-e Kord

**TOURISM d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Two museums dedicated to indigenous handicrafts were officially inaugurated in the city of Shahr-e Kord, the capital of Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari province, on Wednesday.

One of the museums features various handicrafts including metalworks, and the other is merely devoted to handwoven textiles and floorings, according to Mehrdad Javadi, the provincial tourism chief.

Both museums are located within the historical and cultural complex of Chaleshtar, which now the number of its museums adds up to five, he said.

The southwestern province is home to many cultural and natural attractions. Vienna's ambassador to Tehran Stefan Scholz said last August that natural sights in Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari hold the potential to turn the province into a tourism hub for foreign travelers. "The pristine and unique nature of this province has a special potential to attract foreign tourists," he said during his two-day visit to Kuhrang and Saman counties of the province. Many experts say the province is one of the lesser-known travel



destinations in Iran.

Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari has various traditions and rituals related to tribal lifestyles. Special forms of music, dance, and clothing are noteworthy. It has considerable potential to become a vibrant tourist attraction because of its changing natural landscape. The province is also a hub for making wool felt products,

majorly of which exported abroad. It is home to some 500 crafters, in over 250 workshops, making handmade felt products.

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

Traditional arts are learned from person to person, passed from one generation to the next, and influenced by culture, family, ethnicity, and era. 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. 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.

## Persian handicrafts: Ihrami Bafi of Khuzestan

**HERITAGE d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Ihrami is a kind of traditional fabric of Iran that is locally produced in the province of Khuzestan. This fabric is made using cotton or wool yarn.

Textile machineries are used to make Ihrami fabrics which usually have simple geometric patterns. In the past, a kind of Ihram fabric was produced without any pattern and it was used as the clothing of Ihram during the Islamic pilgrimage of Hajj, according to Visit Iran, the official travel guide to the country.

But today Ihrami fabrics are weaved in different sizes and the forms of prayer rugs, doormats, bed covers, bags, and similar products. In the province of Yazd, a fabric named "Harami" and in Ilam, another kind named "Ihram" are weaved that, in terms of material, design, pattern, size, and color are different from Ihrami of Khuzestan.

The motifs, colors, and design of Ihrami fabrics are created from the memory of the weaver. There is no premade design involved and they are usually created based on a general form.

Due to the technique of making of Ihrami, no cursive pattern can be applied to it, but they are geometric and symmetrical. The most common motifs of Khuzestan Ihrami are diamonds, pines, double diamonds, simple strips, "Tikhorusi" strips, "Ajorkari" (brick), butterfly, "Kheshti" (Adobe), "Arusaki" (doll), and "Busehye Do Mahi" (two fishes kissing). The motifs of Ihrami are somehow representative of motifs of potteries from the Susa civilization from hundreds of years ago.

Bright and shiny colors such as red, yellow,

blue, green, and white are common in Ihrami. Today most of these products are seventy in one hundred and ten centimeters or one hundred and fifty in one hundred centimeters. The traditional textile machine is installed and fixed in the workshop, with the warp yarns arranged horizontally. Like many other textile machines, most parts are made from wood.

Susa was once the capital of the Elamite Empire and later an administrative capital of the Achaemenian king Darius I and his successors from 522 BC.



# Rural development projects create 262,000 jobs in 3 years

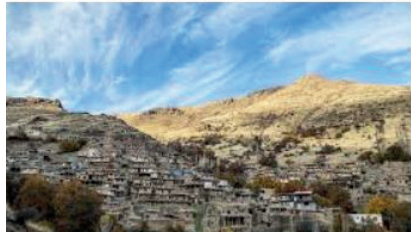
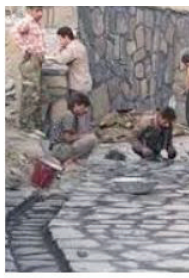
**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — Development projects implemented over the past three years have created more than 262,000 job opportunities in rural areas, Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare Minister Mohammad Shariatmadari has said.

Since February 2018, some 130 trillion rials (about \$3 billion at the official exchange rate of 42,000 rials) have been invested in 142,000 job creation plans in villages across the country, he explained.

The administration is making efforts to pay more attention to economic development in villages in order to pave the way for increasing rural population and help reverse the current trend of migration from villages to cities, he added.

Many efforts have been made over the past couple of years by the government to support villagers and slow down the trend of migration from rural areas to cities.

Rural tourism, agritourism, religious



tourism, and ecotourism are alternatives or complementary economic activities

that could further stimulate rural development while decreasing rural community

dependency on one main economic sector (agriculture, forestry, energy, or mining).

In November 2020, Mohammad Omid, the vice president for rural development, said a total of 220 trillion rials (nearly \$5.6 billion) has been approved for the development of villages in the current year (March 2020-March 2021).

Currently, 26 percent of the country's population lives in villages, he said, adding that around 39,000 villages have more than 20 households and 23,000 villages have less than 20 households.

Thus, more than 97 percent of the country's rural population lives in villages with over 20,000 households, he noted.

The unemployment rate in rural areas has reached 7.4 percent, which has decreased by over one percent compared to last year, he concluded.

In Iran, October 6 is celebrated each year as the National Day of Villagers and Nomads.

## IRCS to tighten COVID-19 control across borders

them in quarantine facilities, if necessary, IRIB quoted IRCS head Karim Hemmati as saying on Tuesday.

Thirty border checkpoints have been selected, including 18 land borders, nine air borders, and three sea borders, he said, adding that all incoming passengers will be tested and referred to the quarantine facilities in case of necessity.

He went on to say that some 5,000 members of the IRCS will cooperate for carrying out the plan, noting that around 8,000 individuals enter the country via borders on a daily basis.

In February, Khuzestan province's governor general said Iraqi nationals visiting Iran have worsened the coronavirus pandemic in the southwestern province.

More than 300 Iraqi nationals cross Chazzabeh and Shalamchah borders per day, Qassem Soleimani-Dashtaki

said, adding that the issue has contributed to a rise in the number of coronavirus cases.

Meanwhile, restrictions aimed at slowing a surge in coronavirus cases have been set for four provinces, which have recently been designated as high-risk "red zones".

"Travel to and from Khuzestan province is completely restricted and it is not possible to travel to or leave Khuzestan," the deputy traffic police chief, Seyyed Teymour Hosseini, said.

"Moreover, it is not possible to travel to the three northern provinces of Gilan, Mazandaran, and Golestan due to the corona situation [there] and the decisions are taken to prevent the spread of the virus."

He added that travels to and from the cities of Mashhad, Shiraz, Isfahan, Bushehr, Bandar Abbas, Kish, and Qeshm have been limited until further notice.



**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — The Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) will launch a program this week aiming to take strict measures for curbing coronavirus across border areas of the country.

With the cooperation of ministries of health and transport, this plan will be implemented with the goal of rapidly identifying and testing incoming passengers and keeping

## National document drafted for water management, environment protection

**ENVIRONMENT** **TEHRAN** — A national document for preserving water resources, managing drought and soil erosion, and protecting the environment has been drafted by the vice president's office for science and technology.

Optimization of water consumption, protection of the environment, management of sand and dust storms (SDSs), and reduction of pollutants in water, air, and soil are the four main themes of the document, IRNA reported.

According to estimates, 16.4 tons of soil erodes in Iran per hectare, which is more than three times the global average. A total of 2 billion tons of soil erosion occurs in Iran annually, and the volume has been on the rise in recent years due to heavy floods.

Each ton of soil is valued at \$28 in terms of metal ores, so the loss of two billion tons of soil annually means the annual loss of \$56 billion, which is more than revenues from



the sale of oil and agricultural products, gardens, livestock, poultry, and fisheries.

The soil conservation law was ratified by Guardian Council in June 2019, which has been passed by the Majlis (Iranian Parliament) in February 2020.

Meanwhile, according to the Standardized Precipitation Evapotranspiration Index (SPEI), 11 percent of the Iranians are affected by mild drought, 21.5 percent of whom also are under pressure of moderate drought; while severe drought is exerting pressure on 32.5 percent of the people.

The country has been repeatedly exposed to sand and dust storms due to its presence in the arid and semi-arid part of the world, so that in 2006-2007, the dust storms originating in Iraq and Syria affected Iran, haunting a wide area of the country so that it reached the central areas and southern slopes of Alborz and also included Tehran.

Over the past three years, the government has spent about \$370 million from the National Development Fund on fighting sand and dust storms,

## Iranian police seize \$3b of smuggled goods, currency

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — Smuggled goods and currency worth 126 trillion rials (nearly \$3 billion at the official rate of 42,000 rials) have been discovered across the country over the past eleven months, Mohammad Reza Moghimi, the police chief, has announced.

During the aforementioned period, all kinds of smuggled goods, including home appliances, cosmetics, electronic devices, spare parts, food, fuel, livestock were discovered in the country with the specialized measures and round-the-clock efforts of the anti-trafficking police, he stated.

The value of discovered goods and currencies has increased by 84 percent compared to the

same period last year, he added.

The discovered goods were handed over to the organization for the collection of smuggled fuel of the National Petrochemical Company, and 103,000 smugglers were arrested and handed over to the judicial authorities, he explained, ISNA reported on Tuesday.

■ **Smugglers fined \$570m in 8 months**  
From the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2020) until November 16, 2020, smugglers of fuel and livestock were fined 24 trillion rials (about \$570 million), representing 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 were 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.

Every year, \$20-25 billion are smuggled in and out of the country, which, if stopped, will create hundreds of thousands of jobs, Hassan Norouzi, a member of the parliament, has said.

In the Iranian calendar year 1396 (March

2017-March 2018), \$12 billion was smuggled into Iran and \$900 million out of the country, according to the Headquarters for Combating the Smuggling of Commodities and Foreign Exchange.

Iran, which has a 900-kilometer border with Afghanistan, has been used as the main conduit for smuggling Afghan drugs to narcotics kingpins in Europe.

Despite high economic and human costs, Iran has been actively fighting drug-trafficking over the past decades.

In June 2020, the first phase of the national anti-smuggling plan was implemented with the priority given to customs, tobacco, and transit goods.

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → €

## Iran breaks U.S. monopoly on aviation navigation charts

Iranian researchers have succeeded to produce aviation navigation charts, known as Inflight AIP (Aeronautical Information Publication), which was monopolized by the United States, IRNA news agency reported on Sunday.

Prepared by Iran's Army, the Inflight AIP was unveiled in Tehran with Air Force Commander Brigadier General Aziz Nasirzadeh and Vice President for Science and Technology Sourena Sattari in attendance.

Digital aeronautical charts, including instrument flight rules (IFR) and visual flight rules (VFR), is a high-quality knowledge-based product which was solely produced by Jeppesen Company and was not available for Iranian airlines due to U.S. sanctions.

## ایران انحصار آمریکا در نقشه‌های هوانوردی را شکست

ایران با تولید نقشه‌های هوانوردی (INFLIGHT AIP) که پیش از این در انحصار آمریکا بوده به موفقیت چشمگیری در زمینه صنعت هوانوردی دست یافت. به گزارش ایرنا، روز یکشنبه با حضور امیر سرتیپ خلبان عزیز نصیرزاده فرمانده نیروی هوایی ارتش و سوزنا ستاری معاون علمی و فناوری ریاست جمهوری از نقشه‌های هوانوردی (INFLIGHT AIP) تولید داخل رونمایی شد.

چارت‌های هوایی دیجیتالی شامل نقشه‌های پروازی IFR و VFR یک محصول دانش بنیان با فناوری بسیار بالا است که پیش از این انحصار آن در اختیار آمریکا و شرکت جپسن (Jeppesen) قرار داشت که به دلیل اعمال تحریم‌های ظالمانه شرکت‌های هواپیمایی ایرانی از دسترسی به این نقشه‌ها محروم شده بودند.

## More refugees in Iran under insurance coverage

➔ One of the largest and most protracted urban refugee populations in the world is living in Iran; about 97 percent of refugees live in urban and semi-urban areas, while three percent are residing in 20 refugee resorts run by the UNHCR's main government counterpart.



Undocumented Afghans have access to free primary health services and similarly free COVID-19 related testing, treatment, and hospitalization, just like nationals.

In Iran, UNHCR is seeking \$16.2 million for its COVID-19 emergency, while requires an additional \$98.7 million to support Iran in maintaining and sustaining its commendable inclusive refugee policies, under the umbrella of the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees.

### ■ Education, health for foreign nationals

Many of the refugees living in Iran are the second and third generation, according to the UNHCR.

There are 40,000 Afghan students in the country, according to the official report, 17,000 of them are graduated, while the unofficial report is estimated at 26,000.

Some 47,000 people were trained and 10 percent of legal refugees were covered by social insurance with the help of the UNHCR, and other foreign nationals can pay for health insurance like Iranians.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, undocumented Afghans have access to free primary health services and similarly free COVID-19 related testing, treatment, and hospitalization, just like nationals.

## What to do about indoor air pollution

People are restless. Honestly, who can blame them? It's been a year since COVID-19 forced many of us to isolate at home. It's for a good cause, though; our collective effort has helped limit the spread of the virus. But this achievement hasn't come without sacrifice. Spending all this time at home has certainly taken a toll on our mental health, and due to the presence of indoor air pollution, it has likely also had a substantial effect on our physical health as well.

Most days, the air in our homes seems unassuming—unless you've recently burned dinner, it lives up to the phrase "out of sight, out of mind." But according to the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), this air can actually be just as polluted as the air we breathe outside. Sometimes this can happen because outdoor pollutants manage to sneak their way into our homes, but researchers Christopher Long and Peter Valberg point out that more often than not the pollution is actually generated indoors. For example, high concentrations of gases and particles are released into the air every time we cook and clean—two activities we've been doing a lot more often as a result of the pandemic.

Additionally, cleaning products can emit a wide variety of volatile gases. While more research is needed to determine if any of these compounds can cause any ill effects on their own, we know they can readily undergo chemical reactions and produce even more indoor particles, or even form toxic gases like formaldehyde, a known carcinogen.

This all sounds dire, especially as many of us are still sheltering at home as we wait for vaccines to become more widely available. In the meantime, however, Long and Valberg explain that regulatory agencies, like the EPA, have provided three basic strategies that can be used to reduce indoor concentrations of air pollutants.

First: source control. While most of us can't avoid cooking, the EPA has a list of cleaning products that are considered safer for us and the environment. Next, improve ventilation by opening a window or turning on the kitchen exhaust fan in order to help prevent the buildup of pollutants in your home. Lastly, consider investing in a portable air purifier or installing filters in central air-conditioning systems. While it's unrealistic to strive for a truly pollution-free environment, following these three steps can certainly limit the amount of pollution we allow to linger in our homes.

## LET'S LEARN PERSIAN

(Part 144)

(Source: saadifoundation.ir)

### ■ Possessive Pronoun

### ضمیر ملکی

ضمیرهای ملکی هم دارای دو شکلی جدا و پیوسته‌اند:

my head	/saram/	سر من = سَرَم
your head	/sarat/	سر تو = سَرَت
his head	/saraš/	سر او = سَرَش
our head	/sareman/	سر ما = سَرِمان
your head	/saretān/	سر شما = سَرَتان
their head	/sarešan/	سر آنها = سَرشان

بین دو واژه، همخوان میانجی "ی" گذاشته می‌شود: پایتم، گلویم

### ● تمرین ۵. ضمیرها را به شکل پیوسته بنویسید:

خط من	فَظَم	راه تو	راهِت
۱. دست من		صورت او	
۲. دوست ما		دل من	
۳. دهان او		بیمار آنها	
۴. دندان ایشان		سر شما	



INTERNATIONAL DAILY  
www.tehrantimes.com

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» Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 88805807

» Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051603

» Printed at: Jame Jam Bartar Borna - 44197737

Tehrantimes79

Tehrantimes79

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No. 18, Bimeh Alley, Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran  
P.O. Box: 14155-4843  
Zip Code: 1599814713

GUIDE TO  
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

The greatest Jihad is to battle your own soul. To fight the evil within yourself.

Prophet Muhammad (S)

WHAT'S IN ART GALLERIES

**Calligraphic painting**

■ Ayrik Gallery is playing host to an exhibition of calligraphic paintings by Shima Hashempur. The exhibition will run until March 17 at the gallery located at Ayrik Center on East Ferdows Blvd.

■ Calligraphic paintings by Ahmad Mirza are on display in an exhibition at Ravi Gallery. The gallery can be found at 9 Dastan Alley, Ezzatollah Entezami St., off Movahhed-Danesh St. in the Aqdasieh neighborhood.

**Artistic jewelry**

■ Aria Gallery is showcasing a collection of artistic jewelry by a group of artists. The exhibit will be running until April 20 at the gallery located at No. 10 Zarrin Alley, near Beheshti St., Vali-e Asr Ave. The works on view at the exhibition will be judged by a jury composed of Garland magazine writer Kevin Murray, Nasser Giv and Ruhollah Shamsizadeh.

**Ceramics**

■ A group of ceramists, including Hossein Musavi-Sadr, Sogol Movahhedpur, Mahtab Fattahi, Fahimeh Heidari, Reyhaneh Jahani and Ghazaleh Sheibani, are currently displaying their latest artworks in an exhibition at Vista Gallery. Behnam Kamarani and Barges Farahani are the curators of the exhibition, which will run until April 9 at the gallery located at No. 11, 12th Alley, Mir Emad St.

**Multimedia**

■ Artworks by Morteza Momayyez, Farshid Maleki, Garnik Derhakupian, Mansur Qandriz, Saeid Shahlapur, Ruin Pakbaz, Mohammadreza Jadat and Parvaneh Etemadi are on display in an exhibition at Talar Gallery. The exhibit will run until March 17 at the gallery that can be found at 105 Daneshgah St. off Enqelab Ave.

■ A group of artists, including Navid Mirzai, Hooman Mehrdana, Ahmad Mohammadpur, Reza Alizadeh, Elham Fatemi, and Kambiz Hazratpur, are displaying their latest artworks in various media in an exhibition at CAMA – Contemporary and Modern Art Gallery. The exhibit entitled “Mine” runs until March 17 at the gallery located at No. 44, 10th Golestan, Pasdaran St.

■ Artworks in various media by Saeideh Arian, Anita Keivan, Farhang Atefi, Hassan Noruznia, Behdad Najafi, and Abolhassan Riazai are on view in an exhibition at Rasul-e Mehr Gallery. The exhibition will be running until March 15 at the gallery that can be found in East Arghavan St. off North Motahhari St., Darya Blvd. in the Saadatabad neighborhood.

**Painting**

■ An exhibition of paintings by a large group of artists, including Ahmad Vakili, Elyas Sattari, Homayun Salimi, Shadi Davari, Saeid Dowlati, and Hosseinali Zabehi, are on view at Shokuh Gallery. The exhibit named “My Nature” will continue until March 15 at the gallery located at 19 Amir Nuri Alley, North Salimi St. near Andarzgu Blvd.

■ Entezami Gallery is hosting an exhibition of paintings by Elaheh Nasrollahi. The exhibit runs until March 16 at the gallery located at 608 Shariati Ave. near Motahhari St.

# Hamidreza Moqaddasi tops at Iran’s International Quran Competition

**CULTURE** **TEHRAN** — Iranian d e s k reciter Seyyed Hamidreza Moqaddasi has taken first place at Iran’s International Quran Competition. He won the top prize in the Tahqiq Recitation category, the organizers announced on Thursday and added Kabir Qalandarzadeh from Afghanistan and Muhammad Ali Qasim from Lebanon won the second and third prizes in this section. The competition is organized every year before the holy month of Ramadan in Tehran, however, the COVID-19 pandemic forced the organizers to hold the 37th edition online. Winners were announced during a ceremony at the Andisheh Hall of the Art Bureau with a limited number of guests, among which was Majlis speaker Mohammad-Baqer Qalibaf. First prize in the Tartil Recitation section also went to Iranian reciter Ehsan Mohammadi, while Ali Jawad Tarihi from the Netherlands and Mustafa Shaikh from Syria stood in second and third places. In the memorization section, Reza Golshahi won first prize, while Mehdi Qorbani from Afghanistan was presented with a prize as runner-up, and Adeen Shahzad Rehman



A tawashih group performs during the closing ceremony of the 37th International Quran Competition at the Andisheh Hall in Tehran on March 11, 2021. (Shabestan)

from the United States stood in third place. In the females’ memorization section, Atieh Tebyanian from Iran was selected as best memorizer. Amamneh Musavi from

Afghanistan and Amani Hassan Seyid Ali from Iraq won second and third awards. The organizers also honored a number of Iranian Quran calligraphers in two categories. Paria Hamzei won the top prize in the Young Quran Calligraphers section, and Qazal Chabok and Ali Amiqli shared second prize in this category, which announced no winner for third prize. In the Adult Quran Calligraphers section, Majid Saeid-Kafi and Elham shared the runner-up prize, and Seyyed Mehdi Adnani won third award. No winner was announced for first prize. Speaking during the closing ceremony of the competition, the director of the State Endowment and Charity Affairs Organization, which is the main organizer of the competition, said that several major international Quran competitions were postponed or canceled due to the pandemic. “Organizing Quran competitions during the pandemic can convey this message to the world that Islam and Quran are alive, and the Islamic society continues its way to happiness under the teachings of the Holy Quran,” he added.

## Encyclopedia on Imam Khomeini released



First Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri (2nd L) unveils the Encyclopedia of Imam Khomeini at Jamaran Hosseinieh in Tehran on March 10, 2021.

**CULTURE** **TEHRAN** — The Institute for the d e s k Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini’s Works released an encyclopedia on Imam

Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Republic, on Wednesday. The Encyclopedia of Imam Khomeini, which has been published in ten volumes, was introduced in a special ceremony at Jamaran Hosseinieh, a place for seasonal Islamic rituals adjacent to a building that housed him during the 1980s. His grandchild, Hassan Khomeini, First Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri and a number of cultural figures attended the ceremony. There are over 860 main entries in the encyclopedia, which has been compiled and written by 260 experts and scholars in 6800 pages carrying over 3,370,000 words. The team of experts and scholars has worked under the supervision of Ayatollah Seyyed Zia Mortazavi. Hojjatoleslami Ali Kamsari, the director of the Institute for the Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini’s Works, expressed his thanks to the team and said, “Several hundred scholars and writers have made endeavors for about ten years to accomplish this great encyclopedia.” “Since culture and ideology have made the infrastructure of the Islamic Revolution, writing this has considerable

scientific importance,” he added. Several top scholars, who have made great contributions to the encyclopedia, were honored by Jahangiri during the ceremony. The encyclopedia also carries an album of 264 photos in the end, and one-third of the articles of the collection have been documented with relevant photographs. Earlier in February, the Sacred Defense Research and Archives Center also released a book entitled “Book of Defense” that surveys the leadership role of Imam Khomeini during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war, which is known as the Sacred Defense in Iran. The Institute for the Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini’s Works had approved the book. Speaking during the unveiling ceremony of the book, the director of the Socio-Cultural Studies Department of the center, Mohsen Qazi, said that the book contains Imam Khomeini’s discourses on the war derived from Sahifeye Nur, a series containing Imam Khomeini’s speeches on various topics.

## Iranian children win awards at Bulgarian drawing contest

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — Iranian d e s k children have won the main awards at the 17th World Children’s Picture Contest in Sofia, Bulgaria, Iran’s Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA) announced on Wednesday. The children, who all are members of the IIDCYA, participated in the contest in 2019, which centered on the two topics “Free” and “Let’s play outside – your favorite games when you are in nature”. Thirteen-year-old boy Arshia Farahani won the Little Zograf Prize of the competition, which is organized every year by the Malyk Zograf Foundation.



A drawing by the 7-year-old Iranian girl Mobina Sharafi won a silver prize at the 17th World Children’s Picture Contest in Sofia, Bulgaria.

Amir-Ali Naqavi, Yasna Sadeghi and Mohammad-Mahyar Mahsian were among 12 children from across the world, who won a gold prize. Among the silver prize winners were Mobina Sharafi and Sina Sarhangi, while Sadra Milani, Armita Changizi, Sahand Saadat, Arshia Farahani and Arshia Deilami won a bronze award. Meanwhile, Diana Noshad, Hannaneh Tabei and Lachin Kalami won honorable mentions, and Zeinab Zafari, Yasna Sadeqi, Bahar Nasirian, Fatemeh-Zahra Qolizadeh, Nilia Aqasi and Zahra Havasi received a certificate of the competition. University professors Ivana Eneva and

Anna Bojadjeva, and graphic designer Denitsa Marinova were the members of the jury at the contest. An exhibition displaying the winning works was organized at the Art Gallery of the National Palace of Culture in Sofia in September 2019. The organizers said that they had thousands of entries from Sri Lanka, Hong Kong, China, India, Thailand, Egypt, South Korea, Oman, Slovenia, Russia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Australia, the USA and the United Kingdom, and added, “We would like to point out the very strong presence of Iran that sent over 1600 drawings.”

## “Mysticism in World Religion” published in Persian

**CULTURE** **TEHRAN** — Sidney Spencer’s d e s k “Mysticism in World Religion” has recently been published in Persian. Hermes is the publisher of the book translated into Persian by Mohammadreza Adli. The framework for this study is world religion. It describes and explains mystical thought in virtually all its contexts, primitive, Hindu, Chinese, Hellenistic, Hebrew, Christian and Muslim. It is illustrated with numerous quotations from the sayings and writings of famous mystics. The final chapter surveys the main tendencies of mystical religions and

their relevance to humanity’s recurring and fundamental problems. In a preface to the book, Spencer wrote, “It is my conviction that mysticism is of the utmost importance to religion and so to the future of mankind. “At a time when religion is met, as never before on a similar scale, with the challenge of materialist philosophy, and when the growth of scientific knowledge of the forces of nature and the power which this brings with it are a constant temptation to men to neglect the things of the spirit, it is all the more necessary that the inner life should be quickened and renewed.

“But if the life of religion is to be renewed, there must be a renewal of vision and of understanding; and nothing can be of as much value from this standpoint as the study of the experience and teaching of the mystics.” “Mysticism in primitive religions”, “Hindu mysticism”, “The Upanishads”, “Buddhist mysticism”, “The Hinayana & the Mahayana”, “Mysticism in the Hinayana”, “Hebrew & Jewish mysticism”, “Mysticism in the Old Testament”, “Christian mysticism”, “Islamic mysticism” and “The growth of Sufism” are some of the topics discussed in the book.

## Free verse in Persian poetry

The term sher-e azad, Persian for the French vers libre and English free verse, entered Persia in the 1940s and immediately began to be used in a variety of senses and applied to diverse subspecies of the emerging canon of new poetry, especially to highlight those features in which this body of poetry was felt to differ from classical Persian poetry and the contemporary practice modeled after it. However, because the new poetry is not uniform in its departures from the classical canon, the term has never been defined with satisfactory accuracy or applied with precision. Since the metrics of the aruz and the strict regularity of rhyme were the most perceptible features of the classical canon, the term new poetry has come to mean all kinds of poetry, written by all self-proclaimed modernist poets that did not display the metrics and regularity of rhyme visible and audible in classical Persian poetry. In Western poetic traditions, free verse often refers to poems, in which the perception of rhythm and rhyme do not depend on the regular use of strictly measurable patterns. Rather, it arises from the cadence of recurrent words, phrases, images, and the like.

Although the history of such verse can be traced to Greek and Roman literatures, it refers primarily to the poetry written roughly in the past century or so. Its principal practitioners are the French symbolists and various strains of Anglo-American modernists, particularly Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot. Since the French symbolist tradition constitutes an important source of inspiration for Nima Yushij and other Persian modernists, new poetry most specifically refers to Nima’s modernist output and that of his followers, thus making two other phrases, namely sher-e Nimai (Nimaic verse) and sher-e azad-e Nimai (Nimaic free verse). Mohammadreza Shafiei Kadkai suggests that a long poem in fourteen stanzas by Mohammad-Ali Hazin Lahiji can be considered the first experimentation with free verse in Persian poetry. However, in any but the merely accidental sense, the term must be linked to the emergence of new poetry in Persia in the early part of the 20th century. Culminating in the work of Nima Yushij, this tradition rests for its visible and auditory qualities on an important redefinition of the

role of meter and rhyme in poetry, one that renders the regular use of the fixed patterns of aruz and the unchanging regularity of rhyming words obsolete. As a result, a variety of irregular uses of these constant features begin to connote freedom from the classical tradition’s most perceptible systemic constraints. During the past half century or so, the term sher-e azad has been used in three interrelated senses in Persian literary criticism. First and most accurately it describes the type of modernist poem which still employs the devices of rhyme and meter, only more sparsely and with greater attention to the internal relations these serve. This usage can be illustrated best by the modernist poems of Mehdi Akhavan Saless, Hushang Ebtehaj and Nader Naderpur. Secondly, it refers to the poems that strive to privilege the internal music of poetic phrases, at times substituting internal rhyme or alliterative harmony for regular use of rhyme and meter. This usage is most prominent in the early works of Ahmad Shamlu and, to a lesser degree, Forugh Farokhzad poems in her last two collections.

Finally, the phrase has been and continues to be used, rather irresponsibly, to refer to poems that are indistinguishable from prose in any external features, relying solely on the use of space, the presence or prevalence of poetic images to communicate the quality of genuine poetry. More discriminating observers, however, continue to employ “poème en prose” and English “prose-poem”. As such, the idea of free verse, like that of two other adjacent poetic concepts translated into Persian from French and English, namely sher-e sepid (blank verse) and sher-e mansur (prose poem), is still evolving in Persian literary scholarship. As Shafiei Kadkai and others have noted, the exact nature and function of rhythm and rhyme is far from settled in the 20th-century Persian poetry. This is particularly true in the light of ever greater understanding of the importance of Nima Yushij’s critical observations, not only as the culminating force in contemporary Persian poetry but also as the guide for poets who followed in his footsteps before each one could find his/her own distinct approach to creating poetic quality. (Source: Encyclopedia Iranica)