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## IRGC unveils new missile city, displays cruise and ballistic missiles

TEHRAN – In a ceremony on Monday, the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps Navy unveiled a new missile city hosting a broad range of cruise and ballistic missiles with various ranges.

The military facility was inaugurated by IRGC Commander Major General Hossein Salami, IRGC Navy Commander Rear Admiral Alireza Tangsiri and a number of other armed forces officials.

The new missiles and missile gear

have advanced operational capabilities, such as accurate firing from underground launchers and civil defense sites.

The new equipment in the missile city can launch mines in various ranges, allow for 360 degree and mobile firing operations, according to Tashm.

One of the items unveiled in the event was a missile system that can shift the focus on targets after launch.

*Continued on page 2*

## Trade between Iran, SCO members exceeds \$23b in 11 months

TEHRAN - The value of trade between Iran and the members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) hit \$23.165 billion in the first 11 months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2020 – February 18, 2021), the spokesman of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) announced.

Ruhollah Latifi put the weight of commodities traded between the two sides at

over 41.747 million tons, IRNA reported.

Iran has cross-border trade with 11 key member states and observer states of the Shanghai Agreement, including China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Mongolia, Pakistan, India, Afghanistan and Belarus, among them the largest volume of trade is with China which is \$15.518 billion, the IRICA spokesman stated.

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# Iran starts mass-production of homegrown coronavirus vaccine

## Choosing Bahrain as Group C host a political decision: expert

**BY FARROKH HESABI**

Choosing Bahrain as host of the 2022 FIFA World Cup qualifiers in Group C is a political rather than a sporting decision made by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC), Iranian football legal expert, Houshang Nasirzadeh says.

The former head of the Legal Committee of the Iran Football Federation believes that politic has a big influence in choosing which country to host important tournaments.

The Iranians were informed by the AFC last week that the Persian Gulf state will host the remaining matches in Group C of the second round of the competition, which also features Iraq, Cambodia, and Hong Kong.

“Not giving the privilege of hosting the games to Iran, is a matter beyond the principles of sports. It falls within the frameworks of international political behavior against the country. The main reason is that Bahrain and some other Persian Gulf countries are the main financial supporters of the AFC and they are a big part in the process of the decision-making by the confederation,” Nasirzadeh said.

“The sports authorities of the Persian Gulf countries are mainly of politicians and they make political decisions as well. Bahrain had secured the rights to host the final eight matches in Group C and it is an act of utter injustice. In making such a decision, the AFC’s directors or the members of the Executive Committee implement their political beliefs,” he added.

Iran along with other seeded teams had played three away games and one home game against the lowest-seeded team in their group. Much to the horror of the Iranian fans, AFC handed over the hosting rights to their rivals, Bahrain, under the pretext of sanctions and the fact that AFC and their commercial partners would not be able to operate in Iran.

“It should be noted that Sheikh Salman, president of the AFC, is a member of the House of Khalifa, the royal family of Bahrain, a country that is not in line with the Islamic Republic of Iran in terms of political issues, although he may have friendships with some people in the Iranian football, including former officials of the federation. It is difficult to prove that giving the hosting to Bahrain is purely a political decision and we should bring the issue to the FIFA’s Ethical Committee to prevent such incidents in the future,” he concluded.

## Zionists have hijacked Biden admin’s foreign policy posts: ex-Senate candidate

**BY REZA MOSHFEGH**

TEHRAN - Mark Dankof, a former U.S. Senate candidate, says radical Zionist zealots like Anthony Blinken, Linda Thomas Greenfield, Victoria Nuland, and now Richard Nephew have “absolutely hijacked” the Biden administration’s key foreign policy posts.

Unlike his promise during election campaigns to reverse Donald Trump’s foreign policy faults, Biden seems to follow the same course, adopting a confrontational approach.

The Biden administration has shown that it is not determined to make a radical policy change toward West Asia, especially when it comes to Saudi Arabia’s deconstructive role and the Israeli occupation of Palestine and its crimes against Palestinians.

“It is important for the American political scene to understand that support for Israel in the United States involves the most contradic-

tory coalition possibly ever amassed in history,” Mark Dankof tells the Tehran Times.

Following is the text of the interview:

**How do you assess Biden’s performance until today? Don’t you think that he is following Trump’s policy in some respects?**

As I have stressed repeatedly throughout the last year, Joe Biden and Donald Trump are two sides of a counterfeit Zionist coin when it comes to the foreign and national security policies of the United States, which are nothing less and nothing more than the foreign policy of the Zionist State of Israel and its domestic machine operative in America with absolute impunity. It is apparent when one examines some of the major Israeli lobbying organizations that the Zionist monolith has an absolute stranglehold on the American government, the American mainstream news media, the electoral process,

*Continued on page 5*

## Hezbollah delegation arrives in Moscow for 3-day visit

A delegation of lawmakers from Lebanon’s Hezbollah resistance movement has arrived in Russia’s capital, Moscow, for talks.

Led by Mohammad Raad, the head of the Loyalty to the Resistance Bloc – the political wing of Hezbollah - the delegation arrived in Moscow on Sunday on the invitation of the Russian Foreign Ministry.

The three-day visit will include meetings at the foreign ministry and the Federation Council, the upper house of the parliament, and the State Duma, the lower house, Lebanon’s al-Manar TV station reported.

Raad told Sputnik that the three-day visit aims to exchange views on the latest developments in Lebanon and the region.

He noted that the relationship between Hezbollah and Moscow is built on “common interests and a single or very close view regarding the situation in the region and the

need for its stability”.

Both Russia and Hezbollah back the Syrian government in its fight against foreign-backed Takfiri militants, who have been wreaking havoc in the country since March 2011.

The Syrian government says the Israeli regime and its Western and regional allies are aiding the Takfiri terrorist groups.

Syrian government forces have taken back many areas once controlled by the terrorist groups. The government and allied forces are currently fighting the last bastions of militants in the northwestern province of Idlib and areas in the neighboring Aleppo province.

Before his visit, Raad had said that the formation of a new government in Lebanon may also be discussed during the trip, “but in the context of our assessment of the situation in Lebanon and the necessity of its stability and the efforts to accelerate the formation of the government”.

## Iran frees 612 Afghan convicts in ‘humanitarian move’

TEHRAN – Iran has released 612 Afghan convicts in a humanitarian move over the past couple of days, Mahmoud Abbasi, deputy minister of justice for human rights, has said.

On Monday, 306 Afghan convicts were transferred to their country, while another 306 were handed over to Afghan authorities last Wednesday, IRNA quoted Abbasi as saying.

Eighteen Iranian convicts in Afghan prisons will be transferred to the country by the next few days, he stated.

He went on to note that over the last three years, more than 2,000 Afghan criminals have been extradited to their home country, and almost as many are ready to be handed over to their country.

With the presence of U.S. forces in Afghanistan during the last two decades, the production and trafficking of narcotics in this country has increased thousands of times, making it the largest producer of narcotics in the world, with the nation and government of

Iran and Afghanistan being the first victims, Abbasi lamented.

Eskandar Momeni, the director of headquarters for the fight against narcotics, said on March 8 that despite the difficult conditions caused by the global pandemic, Iran managed to discover 1,200 tons of narcotics in 2020, an increase of 41 percent compared to 2019, showing Iran’s adherence to international obligations.

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## Majestic Si-o-Se Pol undergoes urgent restoration

TEHRAN –Parts of Si-o-Se Pol, the 17th-century arch bridge widely known as a masterpiece of Persian architecture, has undergone some rehabilitation works in Isfahan.

Replacing worn-out bricks, repairing the bridge’s arcs as well as its pillars, which have been damaged over the years, are parts of the project being carried out by a team of experienced restorers and cultural heritage experts, the provincial tourism chief on Monday.

Ahead of the Iranian New Year’s Holidays, some historic sites scattered across the province including the historical bridge of Si-o-Se Pol, are being renovated and restored to welcome visitors, Fereydoun Allahyari added.

Si-o-Se Pol, also known as Allahverdi Khan, is one of the Safavid-era bridges constructed over the Zayanderud River. The 298m-long monument has been served as both a bridge and dam. It is a popular meeting place when the locals and travelers gather to watch the sunset and catch the moment alongside the arches.

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.

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## COVIRAN BAREKAT starts new clinical trial phases

The second and third clinical trial phases of COVIRAN BAREKAT, the first Iranian coronavirus vaccine, started on Monday.

The vaccine will be injected into 300 volunteers in the second phase and to 20,000 volunteers in the third phase.

COVIRAN BAREKAT was unveiled and injected into three volunteers during a ceremony on December 29, 2020.

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



## Diplomacy at Biden's White House: Still a long way off

By Azin Sahabi

**TEHRAN** — Since presidential campaign, President Joe Biden has explicitly and implicitly been vocal on how he would turn the page from Donald Trump's tenure in terms of U.S. foreign policy. In his first major foreign policy speech, he reiterated that "America is back" to reclaim its role which Donald Trump distorted heavily. Hence, as Biden told the annual Munich Security Conference, the Americans "are not looking backward. We are looking forward, together."

He claimed that Washington is "prepared to reengage in negotiations with the P5-plus-1 on Iran's nuclear program."

In parallel, given Washington's increasingly critical competition with China in multiple spheres, the Oval Office has underscored the remarkable strategic importance of traditional U.S. relationships with Europe and Asia.

A month and a half into his tenure, many analysts have focused on comparing the Biden White House with his predecessor's. The observers speculate: Is his administration really open to act differently overseas or the Oval Office will hang on Trump's mantra to keep the U.S. foreign policy caught in the hard, cold clutches of the previous administration?

A senior journalist and analyst, Ryan Cooper, has also said it is necessary that Biden "chart a new course in foreign policy." Writing on TheWeek.com, Cooper says, "For that to happen he will sooner or later have to stand up to the imperial war machine, and the corrupt hired guns of foreign countries that want to treat the U.S. military as their own personal plaything. If he won't do that, his record on foreign policy will look basically similar to Donald Trump's."

Concerning this, the American weekly news magazine, Newsweek, has elaborated on the issue. In a piece of opinion on March 12, Daniel R. DePetris, a fellow with the Defense Priorities think tank, writes: "Biden's Foreign Policy is More Similar to Trump's Than You Think."

He points out that almost immediately, Biden rejoined the Paris climate agreement, re-engaged with the UN Human Rights Council, and expressed his intention to rejoin the 2015 Iran nuclear agreement, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which Trump ditched in 2018.

The author mentions that by and large, except cutting off military support for the Saudi-led war on Yemen and extension of the New START agreement with Russia, Biden's foreign policy seems comparatively static.

Actually, while the Oval Office seems eager to turn the leaf from Trump's era, especially in terms of nuclear diplomacy with Tehran, "progressives are getting increasingly impatient with the slow pace of the Biden administration's diplomacy," the analyst adds.

The author, a defense analyst and Washington Examiner columnist, stresses that thus far, similarities between Biden and Trump's policies towards Russia, Iran, and Saudi Arabia outweigh the differences.

He points to ripping up the JCPOA as well as boosting leverage on Tehran, Trump also embarked on a cascading set of actions. Let alone unilateral withdrawal from the 2015 deal, he sanctioned Iran's high-ranking officials, banks, businesses, foundations, and individuals, as well as military entities with the IRIGC at the top. Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif was personally sanctioned and banned from entering the United States to attend UN meetings.

DePetris argues that due to the Iranians' ever resistance to foreign diktats, getting Tehran to roll back its nuclear program is not as simple as setting extravagant, unrealistic conditions and depriving it of oil revenues. Thus, being fully aware of the fact, Biden's foreign policy orbit was harshly critical of Trump's maximum pressure on Iran.

The Biden Administration has lifted restrictions imposed by the Trump Administration that had confined the movement of Iranian diplomats and their families that had confined the movement of Iranian diplomats and their families to Iran's United Nations mission, their homes, or John F. Kennedy Airport.

The Oval Office has rescinded "snapback" sanctions which Trump invoked last year but ultimately failed to reinstate UN sanctions on Iran.

Nevertheless, "with the symbolic U.S. B-52 flyovers in the Persian Gulf are proceeding, such moves do not necessarily matter if diplomacy itself is still a long way off."

As Newsweek puts it, with no sanctions relief looming and the \$5 billion loan that Iran has requested at the IMF are still frozen, "the very same maximum pressure strategy Biden rightly denounced remains in effect."

Ashok Swain, a professor of peace and conflict research at the Department of Peace and Conflict Research from Uppsala University, has also criticized Biden for not reentering the nuclear deal, saying as he immediately went back to the Paris climate agreement, "he should do that with the Iranian nuclear deal."

(See full text at [tehrantimes.com](http://tehrantimes.com))

# Iran declares it was not behind attacks on U.S. bases in Iraq

POLITICAL  
d e s k

**TEHRAN** — Iran's UN envoy Majid Takht-Ravanchi has told the United Nations that claims of Iran's role in attacks on United States interests in Iraq are "completely baseless and lacking legal credibility", according to Aljazeera.

In a letter to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, he "decisively" rejected claims that Iran-backed forces were behind recent attacks against the U.S.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has not had any involvement, directly or indirectly, in any armed attacks by any entities or individuals against the United States in Iraq," he wrote, according to parts of the letter's text published by state-run IRNA news on Monday.

Last month, several rockets hit a military base inside the airport in Erbil, northern Iraq, which killed one foreign civilian contractor and wounded at least nine others, including an American soldier, Aljazeera reported.



Aljazeera reminded several other rocket attacks were launched against U.S. interests

in Iraq in the following weeks and wrote, "Most recently, several rockets landed in the

Ain al-Asad base in early March."

In reaction to the recent attacks, U.S. President Joe Biden ordered an air attack on facilities in eastern Syria near the border with Iraq, which the U.S. claimed are used by Iran-backed militias.

The air attack, which Biden said was "proportionate" and aimed at creating "deterrence", killed 22 people, according to war monitor Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

In his letter, Iran's envoy to the UN condemned the air attack, calling it "illegal".

The U.S. attacks amount to a "violation of the sovereignty of the region's countries and a clear symbol of the gross violation of international rights and the UN Charter," Takht-Ravanchi remarked.

He also asserted the U.S. moves only destabilize the region further and serve to advance the interests of "terrorist groups".

Takht-Ravanchi requested the letter be formally recognized as a UN Security Council document.

## Construction Party wants Mohsen Hashemi as presidential candidate: member

POLITICAL  
d e s k

**TEHRAN** — Ali Mohammad Namazi, a member of the Servants of Construction Party, says "as far as I know" the final presidential candidate of the party is Mohsen Hashemi.

Mohsen Hashemi, the current chairman of the Tehran City Council, is the son of the late President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.

In interview with the Tasnim news agency published on Monday, Namazi also expressed his unwillingness for a possible candidacy

of Hassan Khomeini, the grandson of Imam Khomeini.

"I offer that Hassan Khomeini not to run in the presidential election."

Pointing to the importance of the June presidential election, Namazi said, "Reformists are determined to take part in the presidential election. They are seeking to nominate somebody for presidency who can represent all reformists."

Meanwhile, Esmail Gerami Moghadam, the spokesperson of the National Trust

Party, welcomes a candidacy of Hassan Khomeini, saying, "Many religious scholars have confirmed Hassan Khomeini's political and religious knowledge."

He also said, "The constitution has asserted that the president needs to be elected from among politicians not military staff."

His remarks come as so far former defense minister Hossein Dehqan has announced his intention to contest the election and Saeed Mohammad, former head of the Khatam al-Anbiya Construction Headquarters, has

also hinted his willingness to run for the post.

Regarding the likely candidates, he stressed, "There is no exact information whether Mr. Raisi will run in the presidential election."

Ebrahim Raisi is the head of the Judiciary. He ran for president in 2017 elections.

Gerami Moghadam, a former parliamentarian, added, "Reformists are determined to unite for the presidential election. However, there are serious challenges on the path of reformists."

## Contradiction seen in Biden admin's actions and words toward nuclear deal

POLITICAL  
d e s k

**TEHRAN** — The United States is willing to sit down with Iran "tomorrow" and jointly agree to full compliance with the nuclear accord they and five other world powers signed in 2015, a Biden administration official told the Washington Post.

"We've made clear that we're not talking about renegotiating the deal," the official said of the agreement that curbed Iran's nuclear program in exchange for lifting U.S. and other sanctions, according to the Post.

The newspaper reminded Iran has made equally clear it shares the goal of going back to the terms of the original agreement, before President Donald Trump pulled out of it and said, "Trump reinstituted the sanctions and added what Biden officials estimate were at least 1,500 new ones. In response, Iran reactivated key elements of the program."

Pointing to nearly two months into Biden's presidency, it wrote, "With Iran's own contentious presidential election approaching in June, the two sides have been unable even to talk to each other about what both say they want."

Biden has vowed to quickly restore the Iran nuclear deal, but that may be easier said than done, according to the Post.

There was a near miss more than three weeks ago, when the administration said it would attend a meeting called by the European Union with Iran and the other original signatories still party to the agreement — Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China. Iran said no, indicating it wanted to know more about what was on the table.

The Washington Post acknowledged the United States and Iran have issued sometimes contradictory, often intransigent statements, and stressed, "Mutual suspicion and agendas are far broader than the simple reactivation of an agreement that many of its opponents say was flawed to begin with."

Regarding Iran's demands, the post emphasized, "Iran wants all Trump sanctions lifted and an immediate influx of cash from the release of blocked international loans and frozen funds, along with foreign investment and removal of bans on oil sales. It seeks assurances that

the next U.S. administration won't jettison the deal again."

It admitted even when the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the official name for the 2015 nuclear deal, was in force, Iran complained that U.S. threats limited foreign investment and wrote, "Sanctions during the first two years of Trump's 'maximum pressure' campaign led to the contraction of Iran's economy by almost 12 percent, and oil exports — a key source of foreign currency — dropped by 80 percent."

Criticizing Trump restrictions on Iran's banking system, the Post underscored, "It impeded its ability to import medicine and medical supplies as the government confronted one of the worst coronavirus outbreaks in the world."

It emphasized the Biden administration wants a reactivated JCPOA, to serve as a "platform" to renegotiate its sunset provisions — the future dates when certain provisions are set to expire, and wrote, "It wants to move quickly to discussions about its other problems with Iran, including Tehran's ballistic missile program and its use of proxy forces in Iraq, Syria and beyond."

"We are talking about both sides returning into compliance... and only then engaging in follow-on negotiations on strengthening and lengthening the deal and addressing other concerns, knowing that Iran will bring its concerns to the table, too," the senior official told the Post.

The administration has not made clear whether an Iranian

commitment to follow-on talks is a prerequisite to reentering the deal, the Post said.

But even an agreement to take simultaneous, sequential steps to comply with its original terms requires a meeting, the American newspaper quoted the official as saying.

"We can't guess what steps they will take and when, and what steps we will take and when, without talking directly or — if they refuse — indirectly," he added.

Among the issues to discuss are which Trump sanctions — some of them unrelated to nuclear issues and thus not included in the original agreement — are eligible to be lifted, the Post said.

The Post underlined Iran wants all sanctions gone and that it has no interest in talking about anything else and said, "It maintains a right to develop ballistic missiles it insists are not intended for nuclear weapons, but for defense in a region where it is surrounded by adversaries. It shows no willingness to withdraw support for proxy forces in Iraq or elsewhere."

If the United States is willing to reenter with no conditions, then no meeting is required, Abbas Araqchi, Iran's deputy foreign minister and nuclear negotiator, said in a Russian television interview Thursday. "Did the Americans hold talks with anyone when they withdrew from the agreement? Did they hold a meeting?" he said.

(See full text at [tehrantimes.com](http://tehrantimes.com))



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

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## IRGC unveils new missile city, displays cruise and ballistic missiles

**1 →** The military gear has been manufactured by the Defense Ministry, local knowledge-based companies, and the IRGC Navy research organizations.

Speaking at the event, Major General Salami said, "What we are noticing today is just a small section of the great and extensive power of the IRGC Navy."

He added Iran is now seeing highly extensive progresses in missile power in view of "naval battles."



# High voter turnout expected in Iran presidential election

**POLITICAL d e s k** **TEHRAN** —Iran is slowly moving toward an early election fever, with several unofficial candidates privately organizing their campaign staff to prepare for one of Iran's most consequential elections that could determine Iran's trajectory for years to come.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is going to hold its 13th presidential election on June 18. On the surface, this election will be held in a pre-planned way, meaning that it would be a regular one in the history of the Islamic Republic, which has so far held 12 presidential elections successfully. But, in some ways, the election would be more consequential this time, simply because it will be held in much more different circumstances. First, the 13th presidential will most likely be held during the coronavirus pandemic, something that will require the Iranian government to put into place new measures to protect voters from Covid-19.

Secondly, the upcoming election will be held against a backdrop of economic challenges created by the United States pressure campaign against Iran. The U.S. imposed sweeping economic sanctions on Iran following former U.S. President Donald Trump's withdrawal from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal - officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)- in May 2018.



Trump piled up sanctions on Iran in a bid to force Iran into making more concessions to the U.S. within the framework of a new nuclear deal. Trump, however, failed to get his deal, bequeathing his successor a litany of unresolved issues with Iran.

The Biden administration has said it wants to open a new chapter with Iran and change tack, though it is yet to make any move to break with the Trump legacy on Iran. Over the past weeks, there have been some European-brokered diplomatic efforts between Washington and Tehran in relation to the

JCPOA but these efforts seem to have hit a dead end, making the next presidential election even more important as it will produce the next Iranian administration that will lead the efforts to lift sanctions.

This fact has not been lost on ordinary Iranians, who, despite economic challenges, attach importance to the 2021 election's results, according to a new opinion poll conducted by the Iranian Students Polling Agency (ISPA) in the period between January 20 and February 18.

According to the poll, a remarkable portion

of Iranian society still positively looks to the political changes that will be produced by election in the next spring. The poll showed that a large number of Iranian people hope that with the change of government, openness will be achieved in their individual and societal lives.

More than 1,500 people above the age of 18 have participated in the ISPA poll. They were asked the following question: "In your view, how much does the participation of people in the election can be effective in resolving the current problems of the country?"

More than 55% of the respondents said they believe that participation of the people in the June election will have a positive impact on resolving the current problems while less than 39% said that participation will be to no use. A breakdown of the second figure into two groups shows that 13% of respondents believe that the election will be "somehow ineffective" in changing the conditions of their lives. And 26% of respondents said the election will not be effective at all.

The ISPA poll shows in no uncertain terms that the majority of Iranian people pin hopes on the election's results and look forward to participating in the June election. According to the poll, those hoping the election will contribute to making their lives better have already made decision to vote.

## Iran accuses Israel of attacking Iranian ship in the Mediterranean

**POLITICAL d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Saeed Khatibzadeh, spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry, said on Monday that Tehran has evidence suggesting that Israel may have been behind an attack on an Iranian container ship in the Mediterranean Sea.

Speaking at a weekly press conference on Monday, the spokesman said that identifying those behind the attack was up to the General Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces but the finger of blame for the attack can be pointed at Israel, given the location of the attack, which points the finger at Israel.

"The (Israeli) regime's ferocious and aggressive nature also corroborates this," the spokesman said, noting that Israel has always sought to stoke unrest in the region.

"That regime (Israel) finds its survival in war, crisis and chaos. Iran would consider all options when it finds out who has been involved in this operation, and will resort to them to protect its legitimate rights," Khatibzadeh continued.

He pointed out that Iran does not hesitate to safeguard its national interests, nor does it compromise with anybody on

this issue. "The Israeli officials are aware how Iran defends itself," Khatibzadeh noted, according to Tasnim.

The spokesman also said that Iran will use all options to defend its rights against those behind the attack.

Tensions have been on the rise between Iran and Israel over the past years. The Wall Street Journal has recently reported that Israel has targeted at least 12 vessels linked to Iran since 2019. According to the American newspaper, these ships were mostly carrying Iranian oil.

Iran has not reacted to this allegation.

On Friday, Iran announced that an Iranian merchant ship was targeted with an "explosive object" in the Mediterranean.

Ali Ghiasian, a spokesman for the Shipping Company of the Islamic Republic of Iran, said in an exclusive interview with Nournews that "part of the ship's hull was damaged after an explosive device hit the Iranian container ship Shahrekord on Wednesday, March 11, in international waters in the Mediterranean Sea."

"This vessel, which belongs to the Container Transportation of Iran's shipping company, was on its way from

to Europe," the Iranian official continued.

Citing a member of the Iranian team investigating the attack, Nour News reported on Saturday that the Israeli involvement in this "terrorist act is very strong." The expert pointed to the impact of high-explosive objects on a number of containers on the deck of the ship, noting that the explosive projectiles could have been fired from a flying vehicle at the ship.

"Considering the geographical location and the way the ship was targeted, one of the strong probabilities is that this terrorist operation was carried out by the Zionist regime," he said.

Israeli media outlets also said that Israel may be involved in the attack. The Israeli authorities did not claim responsibility for the attack. But they also refused to deny involvement in the attack, something that prompted observers to speculate over who was behind the attack, which happened amid heightened tensions between Iran and the West over the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

## Iran summons KRG representatives over controversial stamp

**POLITICAL d e s k** **TEHRAN** — The Iranian Foreign Ministry has summoned the representative of Iraq's Kurdish Regional Government over a controversial stamp design in Iraqi Kurdistan breaching Iran's territorial integrity.

Nazem Dabbagh, the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) representative to Tehran, told the Iraqi Kurdish Rudaw news agency that Iranian officials have summoned him over the stamp and informed him that it is "a violation of Iran's sovereignty."

The stamp in question raised eyebrows in the region, causing tensions between the 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 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 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.

Dabbagh denied that Iran had hinted at any threats, saying, "We made clear to the Iranians that the aforementioned stamp is one of several examples presented by artists."

According to the Kurdish official, Iran knows that the stamp is not officially pre-



sented by the KRG. Dabbagh pointed out that the Iranian official in charge of the Iraq file in the Iranian Foreign Ministry spoke with him respectfully "and asked me for an explanation of what happened, and he told me that he does not wish to delve much into what happened, but this does not serve the interest of the current policy of the Kurdish Regional Government, as it affects Iran's lands, so we want you to provide an explanation."

Dabbagh said he responded to the Iranian official by saying that the stamp "is not the work of the Kurdish Regional Government, but a group of artists who proposed these models to the Ministry of Transport and Communications, and the Kurdish Regional Government has shown its commitment to the Iraqi constitution and human rights considerations."

According to Dabbagh, the Iranian Foreign Ministry accepted his clarification and confirmed the delivery of a message to Iraq.

Last week, 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."

## 'Maximum pressure' on Iran was total failure: Russian diplomat

**POLITICAL d e s k** **TEHRAN** — The United States economic pressures against Iran was a total failure and that needs no further evidence to be recognized, Russia's Permanent Representative to the International Organizations in Vienna Mikhail Ulyanov has said.

In a tweet on Monday, the Russian diplomat highlighted the need for "some people" to learn lessons from the mistakes of the past.

"Some people can't draw lessons from the mistakes of the past. Do we need further evidence to recognize total failure of maximum pressure policy? Did 'Pompeo's 12 points' materialize? The arguments of opponents of the #JCPOA can't be taken seriously," Ulyanov wrote on his Twitter page.

The Russian ambassador was commenting on an opinion piece published by the Saudi-own Arab News newspaper. The article claims that Iran has backed down from some of its demands regarding the nuclear deal - formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) - due to the U.S. sanctions and that the sanctions need to be preserved as a U.S. leverage over Iran.

Ulyanov seized on the opportunity to once again underline the failure of the U.S. pressure campaign against Iran. Last week, he described the U.S. sanctions on Iran as meaningless while welcoming American signals of readiness for talks with Iran.

"The US is sending signals of readiness for dialogue to restore the JCPOA. It is welcomed," Ulyanov said in a Russian-language tweet on Monday, using an acronym for the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the official name of the nuclear accord, according to Press TV.

"It's time to put an end to the meaningless policy of maximum pressure on Iran and ensure the normal functioning of the nuclear deal, the most important



component of the nuclear non-proliferation regime," he added.

Ulyanov's comments came days after the U.S. mission to the Vienna-based international organizations said in a tweet that Washington "is ready to reengage in meaningful diplomacy to achieve a mutual return to compliance with" the Iran deal "in close coordination with our allies and partners."

Earlier last week, Ulyanov welcomed America's readiness to reengage in diplomacy to revive the nuclear deal.

"The United States, in close coordination with our allies and partners, is ready to reengage in meaningful diplomacy to achieve a mutual return to compliance with the JCPOA, a key achievement of multilateral diplomacy," the U.S. mission to the UN in Vienna said in a tweet on March 4.

In response, Ulyanov said Russia is ready to engage with the U.S. as well.

"Welcome, dear #US colleagues! #Russia is ready to engage with you and all other #JCPOA participants in order to restore full compliance with the nuclear deal as soon as possible," the Russian diplomat tweeted.

"And this voluntary restrictions are temporary. According to JCPOA, they are aimed at restoration of confidence in exclusively peaceful nature of the Iranian nuclear program. But in real life-you are right- this aim can be misinterpreted," he added.

## Pakistan envoy holds talks with Iran FM over Afghan peace process

**POLITICAL d e s k** **TEHRAN** — A senior Pakistani official met on Sunday evening with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif to discuss the latest developments in Afghanistan.

The Pakistani prime minister's special envoy, who was visiting Iran at the head of a political-security delegation for consultations on the Afghanistan affairs, held a meeting with Zarif at the end of his trip, the Iranian Foreign Ministry said

in a press release on Monday.

During the meeting, the Pakistani prime minister's special envoy expressed his pleasure with his earlier consultations, and elaborated on Islamabad's views about the developments in Afghanistan, the statement continued.

According to the ministry, the chief Iranian diplomat, in turn, underlined the need for regional cooperation to help establish peace in Afghanistan and to preserve the

Afghan people's achievements.

Over the past months, Iran has been in close contact with Afghan officials to promote peace and cooperation.

In mid-February, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Seyyed Abbas Araqchi had a video conference call with his Afghan counterpart on the latest developments in relations between Tehran and Kabul. The two sides conferred on the issues of mutual interest in bilateral relations as well as regional collaboration.

## SPORTS

### Two coaches added to Iran football coaching staff

**S P O R T S d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Marijo Tot and Juan Carlos Gómez Perlado have been added to coaching staff of Iran national football team.



The coaches have joined Iran at the request of National Team head coach Dragan Skocic.

Croatian coach Tot, 48, will work as Skocic's assistant in Iran while Spaniard Juan Carlos Gómez Perlado, 62, will work as fitness coach.

Tot has most recently worked as assistant coach of Saudi Arabian team Al Ittihad.

Iran prepare for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and AFC Asian Cup China 2023 in Group C.

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

The 'Persian Leopards' will meet table-toppers Iraq, Bahrain, Hong Kong and Cambodia.

Iran sit third in the group.

## Gholi Fallah tries to show how strong she is

**S P O R T S d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Elaheh Gholi Fallah has always been an inspiring, defiant figure but the PyeongChang 2018 Paralympic Winter Games changed everything.

"It is when I understood we can try and we can live regardless of discrimination, regardless of difference of culture, regardless of different category. We can be together and try together," said Fallah, who competed in Para cross-country skiing.

"It was one of the best experiences of my life," she told Paralympic.org.

Fallah was the first and so far the only Iranian woman to qualify for the Paralympic Winter Games. Vision impaired from the age of five, due to fluid in the brain and a tumour, she has long refused to let her disability define her. Six months after losing her sight, she started riding a bicycle and was soon going out on her own, despite her parents' understandable fury. Track and field followed at school but then came Para Nordic skiing and the opportunity to change her life and the lives of others.

"I would like to be a pioneer in skiing for vision impaired people. When I started skiing that was one of my goals; for example that we make a team of athletes," Fallah said. "I don't like to try just for my life, I like to try for all disabled people who I can help."

Having taken up Para Nordic skiing in 2017, the Paralympic Games came fast. Fallah finished 11th in the B1 women's 1.5km sprint classic but she picked up things far more important than just a finishing position.

"I found some friends from different nationalities. I learned new things, new techniques in skiing, new things in sport, in different cultures," she said. "One of the German coaches and athletes taught me a new technique to ski. I really appreciated it because it really helped me."

And it is these experiences, these benefits that she wants to share, that she intends to share.

An untimely recent injury, which required surgery and a recovery period of more than a month, means Fallah has not yet qualified for Beijing 2022. But she intends to do all she can to cement her spot in the coming months and, given what she has achieved so far, you would be a brave person to bet against her.

"I try to show, not just speak," she said. "Not in a formal way but with my friends, with my actions."

## Persepolis complete signing of Farshad Faraji

**S P O R T S d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Persepolis football team completed the signing of Padideh defender Farshad Faraji on Monday.

The 27-year-old defender has penned a 2.5-year deal with Persepolis.

Faraji is Persepolis' third signing in the winter, as the Reds have already signed Mehdi Torabi and Shahrar Moganlou.

Persepolis have signed him as Shoja Khalilzadeh's replacement. Khalilzadeh joined Al Rayyan in late October.

Faraji started his playing in Rah Ahan in 2014 and has also played in Sanat Naft and Saipa.

Yayha Golmohammadi's side are looking forward to win Iran Professional League title for the fifth time in a row.

## Bonyadifar to officiate Iran, Syria match

**S P O R T S d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Moud Bonyadifar was chosen to officiate the friendly match between Iran and Syria.

The match has been scheduled to be played on March 30 in Tehran's Azadi Stadium.

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

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.

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

Bonyadifar is an Iranian football referee who has been officiating in the Persian Professional League for nine seasons and has been on the international list since 2013.



## TEDPIX rises 9,000 points on Monday

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — TEDPIX, the main index of d e s k Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), rose 9,066 points to 1,254 million on Monday.

Over 7.886 billion securities worth 64.578 trillion rials (about \$1.537 billion) were traded at the TSE on Monday.

The first market's index gained 4,918 points, and the second market's index rose 24,268 points.

After several weeks of decline, growth finally returned to the TSE, Iran's major stock exchange, as TEDPIX 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).

## Loading, unloading at ports noticeably successful despite sanctions

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — The head of Iran's Ports and d e s k Maritime Organization (PMO) said that despite the sanctions imposed on Iran's shipping activities, loading and unloading of goods have been noticeably successful at the Iranian ports.

Making the remarks addressing the journalists and reporters on the sidelines of the annual gathering of the PMO directors, Mohammad Rastad said, "Many fruitful measures were taken in most of the ports, while some good development projects were also implemented this year".

The latest data released in terms of the amount of loading and unloading at the ports of country indicates that 122 million tons of commodities have been loaded and unloaded at the ports during the first ten months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2020 – January 19, 2021).

As announced last month by the head of PMO, the capacity of Iranian ports is expected to increase to 280 million tons by the end of the current government's incumbency (early August).

Rastad put the current loading and unloading capacity of the country's ports at 250 million tons.

"We have signed 300 contracts with the private sector for conducting development projects including the construction of structures, equipment, and even infrastructure in ports," he said.

According to the official, the private sector has currently invested over 160 trillion rials (about \$3.8 billion) in the country's ports.

Mentioning the restrictions created by the U.S. sanctions in the country's ports and maritime activities, the official said: "In all areas which were affected by the U.S. sanctions we tried to rely on domestic capacities and managed to keep the ports active and the country's imports and exports afloat."

The capacity, infrastructure, and equipment of the ports have made it possible for them to be able to load and unload goods in accordance with international standards, he stressed.

"For all kinds of goods and all types of vessels, including light to heavy goods and also super-sized commodities and vessels, there are berths and special terminals in the country that can provide the necessary services," Rastad added.

The official put the total length of the Iranian port wharves



at 39 kilometers, saying that this has made it possible for different types of ships and vessels to be able to dock and load or unload their cargoes.

"Today, we have no problems regarding the loading and unloading of basic goods, bulk goods, and containers in the country's ports, and the commodity owners are not obliged to pay demurrage charges (damages for delayed unloading and loading) to ships because of port operations, and this shows how standard the Iranian ports are," the PMO head added.

The official has also said that the country's trade gateways were not closed even a moment despite the sanctions and pandemic, adding that loading and unloading of goods, especially the essential goods, are continuously conducted at the ports.

As announced by the PMO head, loading and unloading of commodities are being conducted continuously at the ports of Iran while the health requirements are completely met.

Rastad has reiterated that all port operations are done observing healthcare protocols and the principles set by the Coronavirus Containment Headquarters.

In a statement in mid-October last year, PMO declared that loading and unloading of commodities are underway continuously at the country's ports.

While the enemy is trying to halt Iran's exports and imports through imposing sanctions, operation at Iranian ports are underway without interruption as the result of the all-out efforts of the organization's personnel, the statement reads.

Meanwhile, as the PMO head has announced, 11 new development projects with 59 trillion rials (over \$1.4 billion) of investment are currently underway at the Iranian ports.

Not only the sanctions could not stop development activities at the ports of Iran, some new development projects have been also defined, Rastad has underscored.

The third phase of the development plan of Shahid Rajaei Port is one of the major projects which is going to go operational by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20).

While Iran is combating the U.S. unilateral sanctions on its economy, the country's ports as the major gates of exports and imports play some significant role in this battle, and the ongoing operation at the ports indicates that they are playing their part perfectly.

As reported, loading and unloading of commodities at the ports of Iran have risen six percent during the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19, 2020).

# 5 new petchem projects to go operational by late-June

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** – Five new ma- d e s k jor petrochemical projects are scheduled to go operational across the country during the first quarter of the next Iranian calendar year (March 21-June 21), the project manager of the National Petrochemical Company (NPC) announced.

According to Amir Vakilzadeh, the mentioned projects will be inaugurated as part of the second leap of the country's petrochemical industry.

The official noted that the said projects were planned to be inaugurated in the current year, however, their execution faced some problems due to the restrictions created by the coronavirus pandemic.

Some 17 petrochemical projects worth about \$12 billion were planned to be inaugurated across the country in the current year to realize the second leap of the industry, of which 12 have been put into operation, Vakilzadeh said.

The new projects are aimed at increasing Iran's annual petrochemical production by 35 percent in the present year, according to NPC Managing Director Behzad Mohammadi.

The petrochemical industry plays a crucial role in Iran's non-oil economy, as the petrochemical export is the second-largest source of revenue for the country after crude oil. Petrochemical exports already constitute nearly 33 percent of the country's non-oil



exports.

Iran has been highly developing this sector over the recent years as the development of the giant South Pars gas field (Iran shares with Qatar in the Persian Gulf) has been supplying more feedstock to the petrochemical units.

Also, the U.S. sanctioning Iran's oil exports has encouraged more development of

the petrochemical industry to boost exports from this sector.

Now, pursuing the second and third leap in this sector, the country aims to boost its annual petrochemical production capacity to 100 million tons in the next Iranian calendar year (March 2021-March 2022) from the current 66 million tons.

## Trade between Iran, SCO members exceeds \$23b in 11 months

**1 →** He put Iran's export to the SCO members at 33.339 million tons valued at \$11.173 billion during the mentioned 11-month period, and said the highest amount of export has been to China, which was \$6.724 billion, and the lowest was to Mongolia, which was \$412,809.

Iran's imports from the mentioned countries stood at

8.408 million tons worth \$11.991 billion in the said time span, Latifi said, adding the highest amount of imports was from China (\$8.793 billion), and the lowest was from Mongolia (\$2.448 million).

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), or Shang-hai Pact, is a Eurasian political, economic, and security al-

liance, the creation of which was announced on June 15, 2001 in Shanghai, China by the leaders of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan; the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Charter, formally establishing the organization, was signed in June 2002 and entered into force on September 19, 2003.

## Commodities valued at \$384m traded at IME in a week

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN**- During the d e s k past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday), commodities worth \$384 million have been traded at Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME).

As reported by the IME's Public Relations and International Affairs Department, in the past week the exchange saw trade of 551,375 tons of commodities on its mineral and industrial trading floor valued at nearly \$176 million, which included 231,398 tons of steel, 1,380 tons of copper, 2,310 tons of aluminum, 250 tons of molybdenum concentrate, 27 tons of precious metals concentrate, 160 tons of zinc, 315 tons of iron ore concentrate, 400 tons of coke and 1 kg of old bars.

Next trading floor was the IME's oil and

petrochemical which saw trade of 351,418 tons of commodities worth nearly \$192 million.

On this floor, customers of the IME purchased 89,270 tons of vacuum bottom, 117,021 tons of bitumen, 64,674 tons of polymeric products, 32,074 tons of chemicals, 45,000 tons of lube cut, 2,612 tons of insulation and 1,800 tons of sulfur.

Based on this report, the IME's agricultural trading floor was a platform to sell 46,270 kg of saffron valued at more than \$17 million.

Last but not least, the exchange saw trade of 4,034 tons of non-exchange-listed commodities on its side market.

As previously reported, over 2,893 tons of commodities worth nearly \$1.5 billion have been traded at IME during the tenth Iranian calendar month of Dey (December

21, 2020-January 19, 2021).

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

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

On its oil and petrochemical trading floor, the IME traded more than 1,707,000 tons of commodities worth nearly \$749 million, which included 602,855 tons of various types of bitumen, 257,511 tons of polymeric prod-

ucts, 124,965 tons of chemicals, 6,300 tons of slop wax and 503,760 tons of vacuum bottom. Moreover, the exchange sold on this floor 11,825 tons of base oil, 69,725 tons of sulfur, 200 tons of argon and 129,000 tons of lube cut.

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

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

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

## Monthly red meat production rises 43% yr/yr

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Statistical Center of Iran d e s k (SCI) announced that production of red meat in Iran stood at 42,000 tons in the eleventh month of the current Iranian calendar year (January 20 – February 18), showing 43 percent growth compared to the same month in the past year.

The SCI's report said that beef and veal had the lion's share in the country's red meat output during the eleventh month with 24,100 tons, followed by lamb and mutton with 14,500 tons, goat meat with 2,500 tons, and red meat from other livestock with 918 tons.

The head of Iran's Livestock Provision Council has called on the government to purchase the red meat at guaranteed prices to support the producers.

Mansour Pourian has also recommended the exports of livestock to support the producers while bringing foreign revenue for the country.

Saying that the purchase of red meat at guaranteed prices started in the country in the middle of the fourth Iranian calendar month of Tir (early July, 2020), Pourian announced that 4,000 tons of red meat have been purchased in this way by the State Livestock Affairs Logistics Company since then.



The purchase of red meat at guaranteed prices is already done in 15 provinces, including Khorasan Razavi, North Khorasan, Gilan, Alborz, Yazd, Isfahan, Fars, Sistan-Baluchestan, Khuzestan, East Azarbaijan, and Semnan, he said, adding that it will be then conducted in the other provinces as well.

Iran's deputy agriculture minister, Morteza Rezaei, has

## Exports from Gilan province hit \$600m

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — The value of d e s k exports from Gilan province, in the north of Iran, hit \$600 million in the first 11 months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2020 – February 18, 2021), IRNA reported.

The annual export from the province is planned to be \$720 million in the next calendar year.

The geographical location of this province in northern Iran, proximity to the Caspian Sea littoral countries, existence of various ports, as well as special economic and free trade zones and being located in the north-south railway corridor has provided special and privileged conditions for trade and foreign economy of Gilan, so, the provincial officials are expected to make any effort for the promotion of the province.

Iran has traded 134 million tons of non-

oil commodities worth \$65.5 billion in the first 11 months of the present Iranian year, according to the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA).

During the mentioned period, 103 million tons of commodities worth \$31.2 billion were exported to foreign destinations, while about 30.8 million tons of non-oil goods valued at \$34.3 billion were imported, Mehdi Mir-Ashrafi said.

Iran's top five non-oil export destinations during this period were China with \$8.1 billion worth of exports, Iraq with \$6.8 billion, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) with over \$4.1 billion, Turkey with \$2.2 billion, and Afghanistan with \$2.1 billion.

According to the official, the mentioned five countries accounted for 72 percent and 75 percent of Iran's total non-oil exports in the said period, in terms of weight and

value, respectively.

Meanwhile, the country's top five sources of imports during these 11 months were China with \$8.8 billion, the UAE with \$8.4 billion, Turkey with \$3.8 billion, India with \$2 billion, and Germany with \$1.7 billion worth of imports.

The mentioned countries exported a total of 15.2 million tons of commodities to the Islamic republic to account for 50 percent and 72 percent of the country's total imports during the said period in terms of volume and value, respectively.

The imports of non-oil goods in this time span decreased by six percent and 15 percent in terms of weight and value, respectively, compared to the same period last year.

Of the total imported commodities in the mentioned 11 months, some 21.4 million tons worth \$11 billion were basic goods.



Like all other countries around the world, Iran's trade with its foreign partners has been affected by the coronavirus pandemic, however, the situation is getting back to normal and the country's trade is reaching its pre-pandemic levels.



# Zionists have hijacked Biden admin's foreign policy posts: ex-Senate candidate

the think-tanks, and the policy-making level, specifically of the State Department, the American military, and the American intelligence community. Daniel McAdams of the Ron Paul Institute says as much in his recent article, "Biden Bombs Syria: A New World Record." The evidence is there for any reasonable person to see: AIPAC, the ADL, the Southern Poverty Law Center, the American Jewish Congress, the Republican Jewish Coalition, Democratic Majority for Israel, JINSA (Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs), and something like 30 PACs (Political Action Committees) that pour money into elections at all levels. In the case of the latter, some have names that identify what they are doing; others have carefully disguised names that conceal their true nature and purpose from all but the insiders. President Kennedy and his brother Bobby sought to have the American Zionist Congress (forerunner of AIPAC) forced to register under the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA). The events in Dallas in November of 1963 and Los Angeles in 1968 ensured that would never happen. Your own Tehran Times is absolute to be credited for publishing the information of Laurent Guyenot on this latter subject entitled, "Israel is Behind the Serial Assassinations of the Kennedy Brothers." The message delivered to the Kennedy brothers has not been lost on any American officials since. The results for Israel are all too obvious.

**Do you think that hawkish people in Biden's administration may take control of the decision-making process? Why has the far-right narrative been supported in America?**

Radical Zionist zealots like Anthony Blinken, Linda Thomas Greenfield, Victoria Nuland, and now Richard Nephew, have absolutely hijacked the Biden Administration's key foreign policy posts. This was

to be anticipated. Now it has happened.

It is important for Tehran Times readers specifically, and observers of the American political scene generally, to understand that support for Israel in the United States involves the most contradictory coalition possibly ever amassed in history. I referred to this in a graduate paper on Christian Zionism for Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia years ago that is available on-line. It is entitled "Historical Critique of Dispensationalism, Zionism, and Daniel's Prophecy of 70 Weeks." There, I noted that:

The paradoxes of this alliance [American establishment left and right; Protestant Evangelicals with LGBTQ activists and the abortion lobby] are legion. The cooperative relationship between Protestant Evangelicals of Dispensational ideology and Israel has muted the former's criticism of the obvious political and financial links of the American Jewish lobby with many of the far political left's most recognizable names, movements, and organizations, including the disturbing amount of Jewish money generated for the nexus of the homosexual right, Planned Parenthood, the American Civil Liberties Union, and Norman Lear's People for the American Way, the last of which underscores the acknowledged but downplayed role of American Jews in the financial underpinning of the Hollywood establishment and culture. Simultaneously, the American Israel Political Action Committee (AIPAC) and its disbursement of money for Presidential, Senatorial, and House campaigns reveal a similar curiosity—the contribution of cash to politicians across the ideological spectrum from port to starboard, ranging from Bella Abzug to Jesse Helms—politicians who share in some cases only one position in common—the desirability of maintaining a Jewish state in Palestine.

At the same time, the Americans who



oppose the Zionist state and its policies range from people like Medea Benjamin and Dr. Jennifer Loewenstein on the left to Mark Dankof, Michael Collins Piper, Dr. Adrian Krieg, Pat Buchanan, and Philip Giraldi on the starboard leaning side of many issues. Dr. Loewenstein was on my radio show some 15 years ago on the Republic Broadcasting Network. I consider her a friend. Our conversation on Zionism and its implications for the American Empire covered much common ground. So does her recent interview for the Fars News Agency of Iran. Your editors and readers must see the political tensions among Americans who oppose Israel and its policies. Medea Benjamin and the Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) organization engaged in an unfortunate attack on Ms. Alison Weir of If Americans Knew some years ago for merely appearing on my radio show as a guest. It may well be that people like Alison Weir and Jennifer Loewenstein would agree with Mark Dankof on little else other than the Zionist issue. But the latter two have no trouble speaking their minds when in responsible anti-Zionist forums on the American nationalist right. That is not universally the case, as I pointed out at the time in an op-ed entitled, "Mark Dankof

Responds to the Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) Broadside of Alison Weir: Poetry for Palestine."

Understanding this phenomenon in American politics is the key to deciphering the United States' political enigma posed by the Zionist state.

**What is your analysis of Biden's administration's decision not to extend the ban imposed on some Saudi officials to Mohammed bin Salman?**

It is absolutely laughable that Biden and his Administration can pose as human rights advocates while toeing the Saudi line as well as the Israeli line in perpetuity. The reason is simple: Since 1971, when Nixon and Kissinger were successful in the fateful move to remove the American dollar from the Gold Standard while replacing it with the agreement of the United States with Saudi and OPEC that all international oil transactions would be conducted with the American dollar, the stage was set for an absolute American alliance with murderers like Netanyahu and bin Salman. The American dollar's teetering status as the Reserve Currency of the World depends on these evil arrangements. This is why elections in the United States are a complete joke: LBJ, Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan, Bush

I, Clinton, Bush II, Obama, Trump, and Biden don't matter. They are all in total complicity with the American Empire's arrangements that guarantee false flag operations, assassinations, coup d'états, and illegal military invasions for Israel, Central Banks, the American Petro-Dollar and the Bretton Woods Banking System, and the Military-Industrial Complex.

Tehran Times editors and readers need to understand the risks posed to the best American anti-Zionist activists on both ends of the American political spectrum. We have been targeted, marginalized, demonized, and even threatened. The alliance between Mainstream American Media and the Social Media Conglomerates like Twitter, Facebook, Google, Instagram, and YouTube has intensified the pressure, along with legislation designed to make criminals in the United States out of people merely exercising their Bill of Rights freedoms Constitutionally. Biden, Clinton, and Obama are as much a part of this evil system as is Donald Trump. As a lifelong Republican, I wish I could tell all of you what I have been subjected to since my interview with your Tasnim News Agency last year in the aftermath of the Soleimani Assassination. That conversation changed the course of my life. It is entitled, "General Soleimani's Assassination an Extra-Judicial War Crime."

Make no mistake about it: The American Empire's War Machine and its Domestic Police State are equally owned by Biden and Trump specifically, and the American political elite generally in both major American political parties. If war with Iran becomes official American policy, dissidents will be imprisoned and falsely charged with treason. In a broadcast on Rense Radio this last Monday, March 8th, I made it clear in my guest appearance

that American nationalists must absolutely refuse any participation in the next escalation of the Zio-War, and should be prepared to face the consequences accordingly. This conflict has absolutely nothing to do with the legitimate national defense of the United States and would kill countless Americans, not to mention innocents in Iran and the probability of a wider expansion of the war into a great power conflict and World War III itself.

**Do you think Iran and the U.S. can reach an understanding on common interests in West Asia? What are the roots of this misunderstanding?**

I have absolutely no hope that this is possible. The United States and Iran should be able to come to amicable agreement on the issues involved and enjoy a mutually profitable and blessed friendship. Zionism and the demonic forces already mentioned as operative in this tragedy make this impossible.

**What is the dominant impression about Iran in U.S. media? Is there any factual image of Iran in the U.S.?**

Any factual images and articles on Iran are possible only for Americans who consult non-Zionist media outlets abroad and travel to Iran to see for themselves the difference between the real Iran and the trash being fed to the people of the United States by their own Zionist Occupied Government (ZOG), and the latter's media alliances with CNN, Fox News, the Washington Post, the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, the Jewish Forward, ad infinitum.

As a young person, I spent three summers and two Christmas seasons in Iran long ago. I saw and experienced a great deal but only scratched the surface of its treasures. It is my hope to return before my own life, or history itself, finally concludes.

**"Joe Biden and Donald Trump are two sides of a counterfeit Zionist coin when it comes to the foreign and national security policies of the United States."**

**"Your own Tehran Times is absolute to be credited for publishing the information of Laurent Guyenot on this latter subject entitled, "Israel is Behind the Serial Assassinations of the Kennedy Brothers."**



## INVITATION TO ONE STEP INTERNATIONAL TENDER

### Second Announcement

55/99/30857

16/03/2021

Agricultural Support Services Company



Ministry of Jihad-e-Agriculture

### AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT SERVICES COMPANY

Agricultural Support Services Company, hereinafter will be referred as ASSC, a subsidiary of the Ministry of Agricultural Jihad of I.R. of Iran, is considering the purchase of 4×40000±5% MTS of Granular Triple Super Phosphate (GTSP) through one step international tender.

All of the qualified and interested companies are invited to receive tender documents from **Monday** dated 15/3/2021 until **Sunday** dated 28/3/2021 (5 working days) from our purchasing committee (located at the 9<sup>th</sup> floor, no. 1, fourth alley, Gandhi st., Tehran, Iran).

The bidders are requested to submit their letters of introduction, along with remittance bill of I.Rials 1,200,000 to ASSC's account no. 4001039704005791 with SHEBA no. IR250100004001039704005791 at the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran through payment order of SATNA or PAYA with the 30 character identification code of 35803978226350065000000000000006.

The bidders are required to submit their sealed and stamped envelopes containing offers latest on **Saturday** dated 1/5/2021 (during official working hours) to our security office, located on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor. Meanwhile the meeting for the opening of the envelopes will be on **Sunday** dated 2/5/2021 at 2:00 PM with the presence of bidders' representatives in our purchasing committee (9<sup>th</sup> floor, no. 1, fourth alley, Gandhi St., Tehran, Iran).

- The bid bond value should be at € **246371** or in equal value of that in any other foreign currencies, except US dollars, based on Telegraphic Transfer rate in Sana rate website, [www.sanarate.ir](http://www.sanarate.ir). It should be noted that this site lists the Currency Transactions, executed in Integrate Currency Transactions System [Nima website] on 9/3/2021 for each lot of 40000 MTS ± 5% in bank guarantee.

– The bidders are permitted to submit the bid bond in Iranian Rial. Therefore, the value of bid bond for each lot of 40000 MTS ± 5% will be IR **68257000000** which must be only submitted by the bidders.

For more information, you may refer to our website [www.assc.ir](http://www.assc.ir), and <http://iets.mporg.ir> or contact us by phone no. 00982188776325.

PR & Intel Affairs Dept. of Agricultural Support Services Company (ASSC)



## INVITATION TO ONE STEP INTERNATIONAL TENDER

### Second Announcement

55/99/30857

16/03/2021

Agricultural Support Services Company



Ministry of Jihad-e-Agriculture

### AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT SERVICES COMPANY

Agricultural Support Services Company, hereinafter will be referred as ASSC, a subsidiary of the Ministry of Agricultural Jihad of I.R. of Iran, is considering the purchase of 2×40000±5% MTS of Granular Potassium Sulphate (GSOP) through one step international tender.

All of the qualified and interested companies are invited to receive tender documents from **Monday** dated 15/3/2021 until **Sunday** dated 28/3/2021 (5 working days) from our purchasing committee (located at the 9<sup>th</sup> floor, no. 1, fourth alley, Gandhi st., Tehran, Iran).

The bidders are requested to submit their letters of introduction, along with remittance bill of I.Rials 1,200,000 to ASSC's account no. 4001039704005791 with SHEBA no. IR250100004001039704005791 at the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran through payment order of SATNA or PAYA with the 30 character identification code of 35803978226350065000000000000006.

The bidders are required to submit their sealed and stamped envelopes containing offers latest on **Sunday** dated 2/5/2021 (during official working hours) to our security office, located on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor. Meanwhile the meeting for the opening of the envelopes will be on **Monday** dated 3/5/2021 at 2:00 PM with the presence of bidders' representatives in our purchasing committee (9<sup>th</sup> floor, no. 1, fourth alley, Gandhi St., Tehran, Iran).

- The bid bond value should be at € **253180** or in equal value of that in any other foreign currencies, except US dollars, based on Telegraphic Transfer rate in Sana rate website, [www.sanarate.ir](http://www.sanarate.ir). It should be noted that this site lists the Currency Transactions, executed in Integrate Currency Transactions System [Nima website] on 09/03/2021 for each lot of 40000 MTS ± 5% in bank guarantee.

2 – The bidders are permitted to submit the bid bond in Iranian Rial. Therefore, the value of bid bond for each lot of 40000 MTS ± 5% will be IR **70144000000**, which must be only submitted by the bidders.

For more information, you may refer to our website [www.assc.ir](http://www.assc.ir), and <http://iets.mporg.ir> or contact us by phone no. 00982188776325.

PR & Intel Affairs Dept. of Agricultural Support Services Company (ASSC)



## Iran suspends Iraq flights due to virus strain

**TOURISM** **TEHRAN** – The Iranian Civil Aviation Organization of Iran on Monday announced all flights to the country from Iraq have been suspended for a week to curb the spread of a Covid-19 strain.

The decision was made as a pre-emptive measure to protect the Iranian citizens against the variant which was first detected in Britain late last year.

The Civil Aviation Organization in a statement announced that all flights of Iranian and Iraqi airlines from Iraq were suspended for one week effective as of Mar. 14 due to the UK COVID-19 variant, Mehr reported.



Due to the outbreak of a new type of UK coronavirus and to observe necessary precautions and protect the health of citizens, effective measures have been taken in this regard, the statement added. Also, all domestic airlines are obliged to inform passengers of the case timely, the organization announced.

Late in February, the CAO suspended all flights to and from 32 countries due to the latest decision of the National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control. The restrictions limited travels between the Islamic Republic and England, Angola, Bolivia, Botswana, Burundi, Cape Verde, Chile, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, Eswatini, French Guinea, Lesotho, Guyana, Malawi, Mauritania, Mauritania, Rwanda, Sicily, Suriname, Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, and Zambia.

For more than a year, the worldwide outbreak of COVID-19 has brought the world to a standstill, and tourism has been the worst affected of all major economic sectors. World tourist arrivals fell by 72% over the first ten months of 2020, according to data compiled by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in December.

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

## Prehistorical pottery recovered in western Iran

**HERITAGE** **TEHRAN** – Iranian police have confiscated a prehistorical piece of earthenware, which had just been unearthed by unauthorized excavators in a village in western Iran.

"The seizure took place in Saqqez county of Kurdistan province after the police received reports from cultural heritage aficionados about the illegal excavation," CHTN quoted a provincial police commander as saying on Sunday.

"The excavator(s) had escaped before the police forces reached the crime scene; however, the pursuit of looters is on the agenda till they are handed over to the judiciary for prosecution," the police official said.



The pottery is estimated to date back to the first millennium BC, the official added.

The name Kordestan refers to the region's principal inhabitants. After the Turkish invasion of Iran in the 11th century CE (Seljuq period), the name Kurdistan was applied to the region comprising the northwestern Zagros Mountains. It was during the reign of Abbas I the Great of Iran's Safavid dynasty (1501–1736) that the Kurds rose to prominence, having been enlisted by Abbas I to help stem the attacks of the marauding Uzbeks from the east in the early 17th century.

## Persian handicrafts: crystal craving

**HERITAGE** **TEHRAN** – Craving crystals is one of the most original and common cold methods of decorating crystal works tracing back to the Achaemenid era (c. 550 – 330 BC). Sassanid artists were also very skillful in carving crystals.

Crystal works in the Islamic era were highly influenced by the works from ancient Iran. The carving is the oldest complementary and decorative process that is done on crystals from many years ago, according to Visit Iran, the official travel guide to the country.

What today we refer to as carving glass and crystal in Iran began in 1935 when a crystal factory was established and went through many ups and downs during the time. In this artistic process, different designs are carved onto crystal pieces using specific stones that are harder than the production and elevates it to another level. Today the carving is done using small electric machines with round stone discs that rotate.

The speed of the rotation of the disks depends directly on the kind of carves. It uses a machine called milling to apply the carves. The designs created by the milling machine are not deep due to the construction of the machine. The province of Alborz is one of the most important centers of producing crystal carvings in modern Iran, and some of these products are kinds of jars, glasses, bottles, luster chandeliers, bowls, plates, and fruit dishes.

# Archaeologists prepare to make final attempt to unearth temple

**TOURISM** **TEHRAN** – Iranian archaeologists are getting prepared to make their final attempt to excavate the ruins of an enigmatic widely believed to exist in the town of Nahavand, Hamedan province.

"The excavation project was scheduled to take place in [the Iranian month of] Esfand (Feb. 19-March20). However, we have not yet received a permit from the Iranian Center for Archaeological Research....," Nahavand's tourism chief, Mohsen Khanjan, told ISNA on Saturday.

"The formal proposal for the final excavation season has been sent to the center, and we will start the project as soon as we receive the permit," the official explained.

Regarding the achievements of the last five archaeological seasons, the official noted: "In addition to a Greek inscription, other significant objects such as bronze statues of Greek gods, a stone altar, column head, column shaft, column base and pottery pieces had been discovered in Dokhaharan neighborhood [of Nahavand]."

"Regarding those findings, we concluded that the history of the city of Nahavand goes far back in prehistoric times, on the contrary to what previously believed it only dates back to the Seleucid period," he said in January.

"The outcome of previous excavations determined that a Seleucid city was established on remains of a prehistoric settlement... and the sixth season aims to discover the main structure



of Laodicea Temple."

In the fifth season of excavation, 12 trenches were dug tightly based on speculations and discoveries made during the four previous seasons... the season, however, yielded some new clues on the ancient sanctuary, Khanjan explained.

The archaeological project also aims at solving the problems of the residents of the districts near the site, who haven't been allowed to construct buildings for over 50 years. In 1943, archaeologists discovered an 85x36

centimeter ancient inscription of 30 lines written in Greek calling on the people of Nahavand to obey the laws of the government. The inscription indicated the existence of the Laodicea Temple, which had been built by the Seleucid king who ruled Asia Minor, Antiochus III the Great (223-187 BC), for his wife Queen Laodicea.

Two of the inscriptions as well as four bronze statuettes, unearthed at the site, are on display in the National Museum of Iran in downtown Tehran.

## Majestic Si-o-Se Pol undergoes urgent restoration

➔ **1** 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.



## Coronavirus causes \$64m damage to Markazi province tourism

**HERITAGE** **TEHRAN** – The tourism industry of Markazi province has taken some 2.7 trillion rials (\$64.2 million at the official exchange rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) hit from the coronavirus outbreak over the past year, the provincial tourism chief said on Monday.

Even though there has been major damage, only 460 billion rials (\$10.9) has been paid to the corona-affected businesses so far across the province, Mostafa Marzban announced.

However, the province's accommodation centers and historical sites are prepared to receive tourists and travelers during the New Year holidays, which begins on March 21, the official added.

He also noted that the province's histor-



ical sites and museums could also be visited on virtual tours, which are being offered for those who will stay home during the holidays due to the coronavirus outbreak.

Markazi province is considered the industrial capital of the country. It is rich in natural, historical, cultural, and religious

attractions.

Hand-woven carpets and kilims, made in its cities including Farahan, Sarugh, Lilivan, Senejan, and Vafs are known internationally.

**Tourism industry in critical situation**

Tourism minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan in October warned that Iran's cultural heritage and tourism would be in a critical situation if the crises caused by the outbreak of the coronavirus continue.

Last August, the tourism minister said that the tourism sector of the Islamic Republic had 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).

## Webinar discusses ecotourism in northeast Iran

**TOURISM** **TEHRAN** – On Sunday, an online seminar was held in Esfaryen to discuss ecotourism and travel prospects of the historic city situated in North Khorasan province.

Some thirty ecotourism enthusiasts, nature lovers, tour operators, and cultural heritage experts attended the event, Esfaryen's tourism chief has announced.

Ecotourism and nature, examples of ecotourism, promoting city attractions, and rural development using tourism capacity were discussed during the event, Abdollah Sohrabipur said on Monday.

As a four-season country with pristine and beautiful nature in different parts of the country, Iran has a lot to offer nature lovers and eco-tourists.

Eco-lodge units in rural areas and the heart of nature, away from the hustle and bustle of the city, smoke, and pollution, could free people from the chaos and turmoil of modern life.

In recent years, several historical mansions and rural houses across the country have been repurposed into eco-lodge units to attract more domestic and foreign tourists.

The houses represent the indigenous culture, local customs, traditions, and stories, while the guests are



served delicious food with local ingredients.

The growing tendency of tourists to experience indigenous and local cultures has made them want to get closer to natural and indigenous living conditions, experiencing the old-fashioned way of life, considering that staying in these eco-lodge units is much cheaper than

eaten raw and by the handful. Persian cuisine is, above all, about balance — of tastes and flavors, textures and temperatures.

Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari has various unique traditions and rituals relative to the '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.



# Mass-production of homegrown coronavirus vaccine started

**1 →** COVIRAN BAREKAT was unveiled and injected into three volunteers during a ceremony on December 29, 2020.

The second Iranian coronavirus vaccine, Razi Cov Pars, started the clinical trial by injecting it into two volunteers during a ceremony on February 27.

Iran started mass vaccination with Russian-made Sputnik V vaccine, with the priority given to medical staff, the elderly, and people with underlying diseases. The vaccine is going to be co-produced by the two countries.

Meanwhile, the first batch of COVAX vaccines will be delivered between March 18 and March 28, ISNA quoted Alireza Raeisi, the National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control spokesman, said.

On January 27, Health Minister Saeed Namaki said that there are four different ways to supply the coronavirus vaccine, includ-



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

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

## New cases and mortalities

In a press briefing on Monday, Health Ministry's spokesperson Sima-Sadat Lari confirmed 7,980 new cases of COVID-19 infection, raising the total number of infections to 1,754,933. She added that 1,499,301 patients have so far recovered, but 3,784 remain in critical conditions of the disease.

During the past 24 hours, 100 patients have lost their lives, bringing the total number of deaths to 60,330, she added.

So far, 11,781,317 COVID-19 diagnostic tests have been performed in the country.

## Police seize \$12.4m of hoarded goods

**SOCIETY TEHRAN** — Police forces have seized **d e s k** hoarded goods worth 523 billion rials (nearly \$12.4 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) across the country since February 19.

Basic goods such as rice, flour, wheat and barley, tomato paste, oil, sugar, car spare parts, home appliances, and tires were confiscated, police chief Mohammad Reza Moghimi said on Monday.

In this line, 177 criminals were arrested, he added. Smuggled goods and currency worth 126 trillion rials (nearly \$3 billion) have been discovered across the country over the past eleven months, Moghimi said on March 12.

## 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.

## Iran frees 612 Afghan convicts in 'humanitarian move'

### 1 → Iran's anti-narcotics measures

Iran seized some 1,000 tons of narcotics in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended March 20, 2020), putting the country in first place in the world, Momeni said in July 2020.

After the Islamic Revolution (in 1979), 3,800 were martyred, 12,000 were wounded and disabled in the fight against drug traf-

ficking, Momeni announced.

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

The organization also officially announced that the world's first place in the discovery of

opium, heroin, and morphine belongs to Iran.

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

UNODC World Drug Report 2020 estimates that in 2018, 91 percent of world

opium, 48 percent of the world morphine, and 26 percent of the world heroin were seized by Iran.

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



Agricultural Support Services Company

## INVITATION TO ONE STEP INTERNATIONAL TENDER

### Second Announcement

55/99/30857

16/03/2021



Ministry of Jihad-e-Agriculture

## AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT SERVICES COMPANY

Agricultural Support Services Company, hereinafter will be referred as ASSC, a subsidiary of the Ministry of Agricultural Jihad of I.R. of Iran, is considering the purchase of 40000±5% MTS of GKCL(MOP) through one step international tender.

All of the qualified and interested companies are invited to receive tender documents from Monday dated 15/3/2021 until Sunday dated 28/3/2021 (5 working days) from our purchasing committee (located at the 9<sup>th</sup> floor, no. 1, fourth alley, Gandhi st., Tehran, Iran).

The bidders are requested to submit their letters of introduction, along with remittance bill of I.Rials 1,200,000 to ASSC's account no. 4001039704005791 with SHEBA no. IR250100004001039704005791 at the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran through payment order of SATNA or PAYA with the 30 character identification code of 3580397822635006500000000000006.

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-The bid bond value should be at € **196118** or in equal value of that in any other foreign currencies, except US dollars, based on Telegraphic Transfer rate in Sana rate website, [www.sanarate.ir](http://www.sanarate.ir). It should be noted that this site lists the Currency Transactions, executed in Integrate Currency Transactions System [Nima website] on 9/3/2021 for 40000 MTS ± 5% in bank guarantee.

– The bidders are permitted to submit the bid bond in Iranian Rial. Therefore, the value of bid bond for 40000 MTS ± 5% will be **IR 54335000000** which must be only submitted by the bidders.

For more information, you may refer to our website [www.assc.ir](http://www.assc.ir), and <http://iets.mporg.ir> or contact us by phone no. 00982188776325.

PR & Intel Affairs Dept. of Agricultural Support Services Company (ASSC)



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## AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT SERVICES COMPANY

Agricultural Support Services Company, hereinafter will be referred as ASSC, a subsidiary of the Ministry of Agricultural Jihad of I.R. of Iran, is considering the purchase of 2×40000±5% MTS of Granular Di ammonium Phosphate (GDAP) through one step international tender.

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-The bid bond value should be at € **294940** or in equal value of that in any other foreign currencies, except US dollars, based on Telegraphic Transfer rate in Sana rate website, [www.sanarate.ir](http://www.sanarate.ir). It should be noted that this site lists the Currency Transactions, executed in Integrate Currency Transactions System [Nima website] on 9/3/2021 for each lot of 40000 MTS ± 5% in bank guarantee.

– The bidders are permitted to submit the bid bond in Iranian Rial. Therefore, the value of bid bond for each lot of 40000 MTS ± 5% will be **IR 81714000000** which must be only submitted by the bidders.

For more information, you may refer to our website [www.assc.ir](http://www.assc.ir), and <http://iets.mporg.ir> or contact us by phone no. 00982188776325.

PR & Intel Affairs Dept. of Agricultural Support Services Company (ASSC)

## Green spending makes up less than a fifth of Covid recovery funds, says UN

Less than a fifth of the money spent by major economies on long-term Covid recovery measures can be considered "green", a new report has found.

An analysis by the University of Oxford and the UN Environment Programme finds that only a small number of countries have significantly increased spending on measures to tackle greenhouse gas emissions, air pollution and nature loss since the start of the pandemic.

The world's 50 largest countries announced \$14.6 trillion (£10.5 trillion) in spending in 2020 – of which just \$368bn (2.5 per cent) went towards green initiatives, the report said.

Around \$1.9 trillion of the total was spent on long-term Covid recovery measures. Of this money, \$341bn (18 per cent) went towards green recovery measures, according to the analysis.

The findings come despite repeated warnings from experts that a green recovery from Covid will be needed to tackle the world's worsening climate and environmental crises, and to ensure long-term economic prosperity.

"Governments today haven't been spending as green as they should," Brian O'Callaghan, report author and lead researcher of the Economic Recovery Project at the University of Oxford, told The Independent.

"Almost the entirety of green spending is being driven by a few major countries, including South Korea, Spain, Germany, the UK, China and France.

Of the \$341bn spent on green recovery measures in 2020, \$86bn was invested in green transport measures such as electric cars, walking and cycling; \$66bn went towards renewable energy projects; and \$56.3bn was spent on measures to restore ecosystems or replant forests, according to the findings.

However, a sizable portion of recovery spending went towards "dirty policies that are likely to increase greenhouse gas emissions", the report said.

This includes spending on bailouts for airlines in the UK, the US, South Africa and South Korea, the report said. The UK government has spent hundreds of millions of pounds on airline bailouts since the start of the pandemic.

There was a missed opportunity to attach "green strings" to such bailouts to encourage airlines to slash their emissions in exchange for financial help, the report said.

Last year also saw countries commit further to "dirty energy investments", the report added. For example, China and India announced significant investments in expanding coal mining domestically, while the US, Canada, Mexico and Australia invested in oil and gas generation.

While the UK was one of few countries to include green measures in its economic recovery plans, it is still doing "relatively poorly" when compared to the global average, said Mr O'Callaghan.

"There have certainly been missed opportunities in the UK," he said. "I think that we would have expected more green spending given the rhetoric of the current government."



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**GUIDE TO  
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING**

When Allah chooses to favor someone, He makes him the source of satisfying other people's needs.  
*Prophet Muhammad (S)*

## Iran's "Eaten" wins Children's Prize Geneva Black Movie festival

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — Iranian director Mohsen Rezapur's short animated film "Eaten" has garnered the Children's Prize at the Black Movie International Independent Film Festival in Geneva, Switzerland.



A scene from the Iranian animated movie "Eaten" by Mohsen Rezapur.

This prize, awarded by a jury of 7-9-year-olds, goes to one of the Tour du Monde films. Screening and judging are preceded by a short training session designed to help the young jury members better understand and evaluate the works they see.

The story of "Eaten" is set on a mysterious, unknown planet, where a rabbit-like creature is eaten by a wolf. It meets another rabbit-like creature in the wolf's stomach and they begin a new life with each other, but that's not the end of the story.

The film has been screened in numerous international festivals. It won an honorable mention at the 26th Golden Beggar International Film Festival in Slovakia in 2020.

Rezapur received the special jury award for "Eaten" at the 11th Tehran International Animation Festival in Tehran in 2019.

"Entre Perro y Lobo" by Irene Gutiérrez from Cuba won the Critics' Prize at the Black Movie festival, while the Young Adults' Prize went to "Acasa, My Home" by Radu Ciorniciuc from Romania.

The Black Movie for Kids Payot Prize was presented to "Meow or Never" by Neeraja Raj from India, and "El Otro" by Francisco Bermejo received the Volunteers' Prize.

"Alebrjes" by Luis Salas from Colombia won a special mention.

## Georg Simmel's "The Philosophy of Money" comes to Iranian bookstores

**CULTURE** **TEHRAN** — A Persian translation of Georg Simmel's "The Philosophy of Money" has recently been published by Markaz Publications.

The book has been translated into Persian by Javad Ganji. Its greatness lies in ceaseless and varied use of the money form to unearth and conceptually reveal incommensurability of all kinds, in social reality fully as much as in thought itself.

In "The Philosophy of Money", Simmel puts money on the couch. He provides readers with a classic analysis of the social, psychological and philosophical aspects of the money economy, full of brilliant insights into the forms that social relationships take.

He analyzes the relationships of money to exchange, human personality, the position of women and individual freedom. Simmel also offers readers prophetic insights into the consequences of the modern money economy and the division of labor, in particular the processes of alienation and reification in work and urban life.

An immense and profound piece of work, the book demands to be read today and for years to come as a stunning account of the meaning, use and culture of money.

Simmel was born in Berlin, the youngest of seven children. He studied philosophy and history at the University of Berlin and was one of the first generation of great German sociologists that included Max Weber.

Simmel sought to isolate the general or recurring forms of social interaction from the more specific kinds of activity, such as political, economic and aesthetic. He gave special attention to the problem of authority and obedience.

In "The Philosophy of Money" he applied his general principles to a particular subject, economics, stressing the role of a money economy in specializing social activity and depersonalizing individual and social relationships.

In the last decade of his life, he devoted himself to metaphysics and aesthetics.

# Art Bureau unveils Islamic Revolution Artist of the Year longlist

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — The Art Bureau of the Islamic Ideology Dissemination Organization announced its longlist of nominees for the title of Islamic Revolution Artist of the Year.

Poet Afshin Ala is on the list that features 14 artists and cultural figures.

In a press release published on Monday, the Art Bureau said that Ala has been selected for "his timely literary response to events in society and creating the poetry book 'Sarbaznameh' ('Book of Soldiers') in mourning for General Qassem Soleimani."

Tehran-based French writer and illustrator Claire Joubert is also among the nominees. She has received the nomination for the books created based on stories from the Holy Quran, including "The Woven Shoes" and "Small Drops".

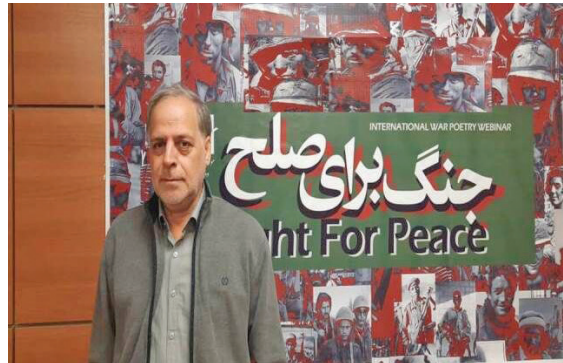
Director and screenwriter Jalil Saman has been nominated for his trilogy "Gift of Darkness", "Butterfly" and "Breath" on the Islamic Revolution and the popular TV series "The Antique".

Author and storyteller Mohammadreza Sarshar has received a nomination for



This combination photo shows pictures of artists and literati nominated the Islamic Revolution Artist of the Year title.

## Sacred Defense Museum hosts webinar on war poetry for peace



Director of the webinar of war poetry for peace Abdoljabbar Kakai poses for a photo.

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — A number of poets gathered at the Sacred Defense Museum on Saturday to attend a webinar on war poetry for peace.

Speaking at the ceremony, director of the webinar Abdoljabbar Kakai called the event a light to demonstrate a sense of patriotism in people around the world that is manifested in poetry.

"This means we can find wars in history that happened to establish peace and were inevitable. In our history

we see that Cyrus the Great overthrew the dictatorship by invading Babylon and liberated the Jews of that land. Or, for example, the conquests of the Greeks to defend their cities, or even our eight-year war of Sacred Defense," he added.

"Sometimes man was forced to give in to some wars, however, these wars are typically destructive, miserable and bad if viewed without considering ideologies, religions, religious schools of thought and schools of thought," he added.

"Killing and being killed is not a good thing at all, but from the point of view of religions and schools of thought, and from the point of view of nations, sometimes these wars are considered sacred and an honorable defense," he remarked.

"In ideological wars, killing and being killed are interpreted as martyrdom, and even the desire for martyrdom is created. In any case, although human beings are truly pacifists, there are these issues in human culture, but sometimes war is inevitable, as there are both forces of anger and kindness in human

nature," he explained.

"This webinar looks at war and peace together, meaning that a different approach to war is not necessarily praiseworthy nor necessarily idealistic; it looks at war and peace together," Kakai said.

He added that poets from Germany, Argentina, Iran, Egypt and India participated in the webinar and presented works written for their nation and in defense of their national identity.

Kakai considered the webinar important in its difference from other events in the field of war and defense, and added: "This webinar is different because so far our revolutionary and war-affiliated institutions often hold Sacred Defense programs, focusing on the 8-year war."

"We tried to show that patriotism is natural and exists everywhere in the world and we are not alone; it makes young Iranians feel that we have had such an event in history. The war with the Russians, the war with the Ottomans, the war with the invaders of Iraq have all been part of our history," he concluded.

## Iranian movies line up for Atlanta festival

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — Six movies by Iranian filmmakers will be competing in the 45th edition of the Atlanta Film Festival, one of only two dozen Academy Award qualifying festivals in the U.S.

"African Violet" by Mona Zandi, "Crab" by Shiva Sadeq Asadi, "The Doll" by Elaheh Esamaeili, "Eyes and Arms" by Panahbarkhoda Rezai, "Spotted Yellow" Baran Sarmad and "Witness" by Ali Asgari.

"African Violet" will be screened in the Narrative Feature category of the festival, which will be held from April 22 to May 2.

The film is about Shokuh, a middle-aged woman who finds out that her ex-husband, Fereidun, has been placed in a nursing home by their children. She, and her second husband Reza, decide to take care of Fereidun themselves, but in their own home. This new situation leads



"African Violet" by Mona Zandi. (Photo by Habib Majidi)

to unexpected changes in the lives of all three characters.

"Crab" has been selected to compete in the animated short section. It is about a shy, withdrawn boy who has his heart set on being in the school theater group, but the only role offered to him is that of a crab.

"The Doll" will be competing in the documentary short category. The film is about Alireza, a man who consents to the marriage of his 14-year-old daughter Asal after consulting with his relatives. As individuals with differing perspectives, Alireza, his family and Asal herself contemplate the decision.

"Eyes and Arms" will be screened in the documentary feature category. In this film, Maryam says to her husband Mohammad, "God has created us for each other." Living in almost total isolation in rural Iran, the impoverished middle-aged couple is not only deeply in love, they literally complete each other. After losing both her forearms and one foot in a train accident, Maryam went against her parents' will and eloped with her blind suitor. Since then, they've happily cared for each other, with her acting as his eyes

and him her arms. She wants a child and he does not. Can they keep walking the path of life together?

"Spotted Yellow" has been picked for the narrative short category. It is about Roya, a young girl with a yellow spot on her face. When a giraffe appears in her life, everything begins to change.

"Witness" is another Iranian entry to the narrative short competition. A mother helps an elderly woman in a shopping mall in Tehran. A tragedy occurs, brutally confronting her with the impact of her actions.

There are 170 total works currently scheduled to play at ATLFF 2021's virtual, drive-in and in-person screenings, the organizers of the festival have said.

The films have been selected from among 9,400 submissions to the festival, which is organized by the Atlanta Film Society.

## Iran's museum of photos makes debut with Haft-Seen spreads photography

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — Iran's museum of photos opened Monday at the Azadi Art and Cultural Complex with an exhibition of photos on Haft-Seen spreads, an arrangement of seven symbolic items, all of which start with the letter 'S' in the Persian alphabet, as a gesture to salute the new year.

The photo exhibit features 62 photos by veteran photographers including Hassan Ghaffari and Alfred Yaqubzadeh.

The museum is home to old cameras and equipment dating back to 170 years ago in addition to old photos from the collection of veteran photographer Mohammad-



An image of Haft-Seen Spread.

Ali Jadidoleslam.

The Haft-Seen spread includes sabzeh (green sprouted seeds), samanu (a sweet pudding made from wheat seedlings), senjed (dried oleaster), seer (garlic), seeb (apple), sumac (a spice) and serkeh (vinegar), each of them symbolizes something such as love, health, beauty and wisdom.

Several veteran photographers were honored at the opening ceremony while Narges Raadman, the photographer of health defenders who is also attending the exhibit with one of her Haft-Seen spreads, was honored.

## Witold Szablowski's "How to Feed a Dictator" published in Persian

**CULTURE** **TEHRAN** — Polish journalist and writer Witold Szablowski's book "How to Feed a Dictator" has recently been published in Persian.

Zeinab Kazemkha is the translator of the book published by Parseh in Tehran.

What was Pol Pot eating while two million Cambodians were dying of hunger? Did Idi Amin really eat human flesh? And why was Fidel Castro obsessed with one particular cow?

Traveling across four continents, from the ruins of Iraq to the savannahs of Kenya, Szablowski tracked down the personal chefs of five dictators known for

the oppression and massacre of their own citizens — Iraq's Saddam Hussein, Uganda's Idi Amin, Albania's Enver Hoxha, Cuba's Fidel Castro, and Cambodia's Pol Pot — and listened to their stories over sweet-and-sour soup, goat-meat pilaf, bottles of rum, and games of gin rummy. Dishy, deliciously readable and dead serious,

"How to Feed a Dictator" provides a knife's-edge view of life under tyranny.

"Amazing stories... Intimate portraits of how [these five ruthless leaders] were at home and at the table," Lulu Garcia-Navarro wrote about the book on NPR's Weekend Edition Sunday.

Szablowski graduated from the



Front cover of the Persian translation of Polish writer Witold Szablowski's book "How to Feed a Dictator".

Department of Journalism and Political Science at the Warsaw University. He has also studied political science in Istanbul.

While working as an intern at CNN Türk, he visited all of Turkey.

He began his journalistic career with TVN24, one of the leading news channels of Poland. In 2006 he began working for "Gazeta Wyborcza" and its weekly supplement "Duzi Format", becoming the youngest reporter in its team. He worked there until 2016.

Since 2018 he has been associated with "Dzien dobry TVN", a Polish morning show broadcast. Since April 2019 on Newtone Radio he runs his radio show about traveling.