

# Man of the year

TEHRAN – As Iranians from all walks of life prepare to celebrate the end of the year, the Tehran Times takes the unprecedented step of introducing Man of the Year, hoping that such a move would continue in the future.

Tehran Times's 1399 Man of the Year is martyr General Qassem Soleimani, the former commander of the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), who was assassinated by an American drone strike near Baghdad's International Airport in the early days of 2020.

The 1399 choice is unusual in two ways: First, the selection of General Soleimani marks the first time that the Tehran Times names an Iranian figure as a Man of the Year. Secondly, General Soleimani was martyred last year and therefore he was not alive in 1399.

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## How Iranians celebrate new year in COVID times

BY AFSHIN MAJLESI

It is for the second consecutive year that the novel coronavirus keeps families apart on eve of the Iranian New Year.

This Noruz (pronounced NO-rooz), or "new day" in Persian, starting on Saturday, ushers in the Iranian year 1400. The ancient celebration of the vernal equinox marking the first day of spring in the Northern Hemisphere; the moment when the length of day and night are almost equal.

Noruz is always a time of joy. One of the reasons it is so joyful is because people get together, not only family but also neighbors. The street celebrations bring together people who often do not even know each other.

This is supposed to be one of the busiest times of the year when people get together and visit their families. And many of the Noruz traditions take place on the streets.

However, last night, for example, was a time when people traditionally jumped over bonfires in hope of good health in the year to come. This year, as traditions are transformed by the coronavirus, many people limited their gatherings last night. They set up candles in their homes or their backyards and they jumped over the candles. It was just with their families, instead of having large parties.

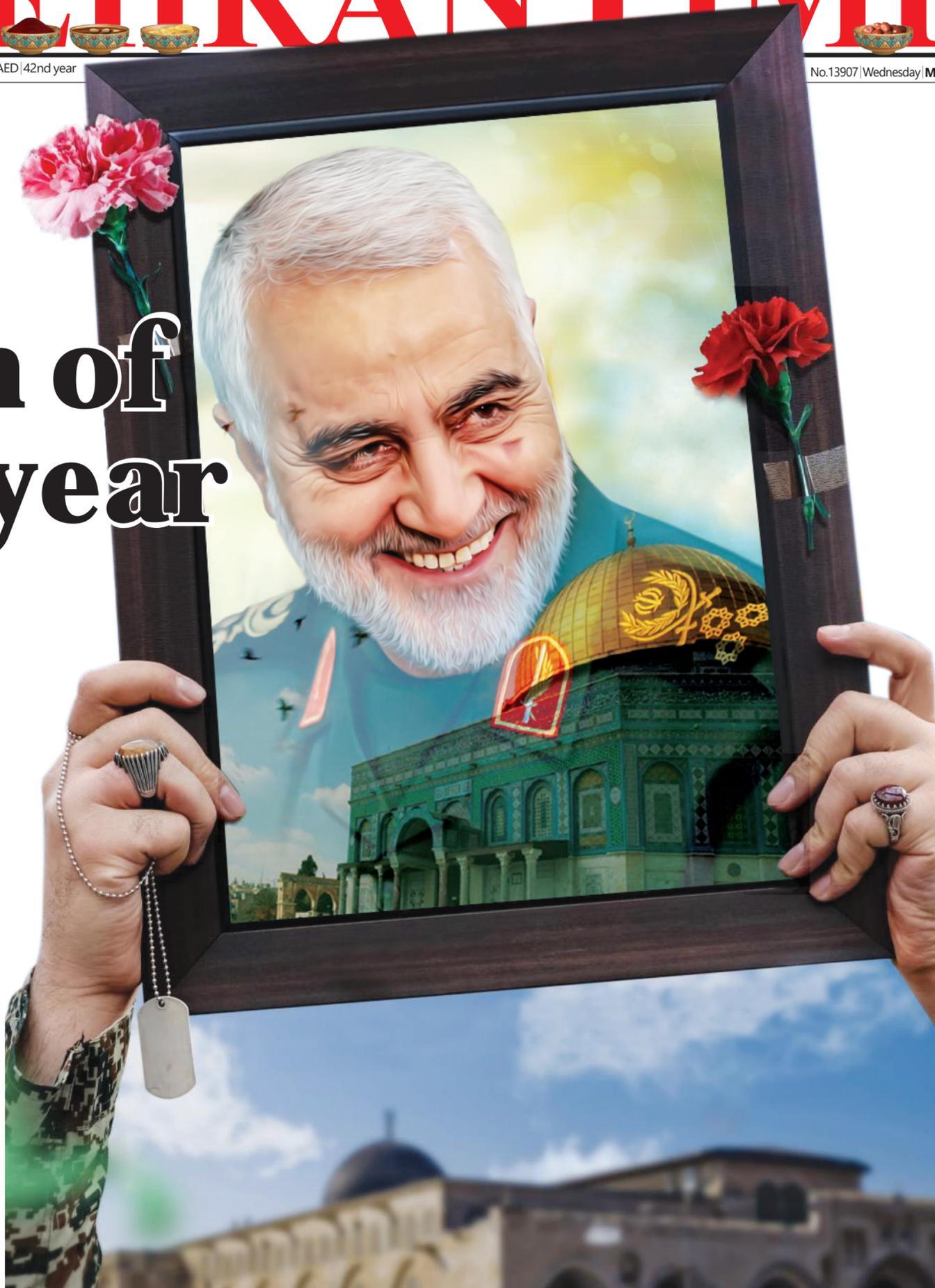
Furthermore, in normal years, millions of Iranians travel to tourist places or some relatives' homes around the country during the nearly two weeks period of the holiday when most businesses and workplaces are closed, as are schools.

Earlier this month, President Hassan Rouhani declared new travel bans for cities situated in the "red" and "orange" zones to combat the new COVID-19 variant. Rouhani called on people to avoid traveling during the Iranian New Year holidays to help contain the spread of coronavirus. He said it would be forbidden to make trips to cities marked as "red" and "orange" in terms of the prevalence of COVID-19.

"We request people to avoid traveling during Noruz holidays for the sake of their own health... It will be forbidden to travel to red and orange towns and cities," he said. "No one should make any plans to travel to these cities," he stressed.

Late in February, the tourism minister, Ali-Asghar Mounesan, said despite all the obstacles and issues and the outbreak of the coronavirus, the country's tourism sector is still alive and dynamic.

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## Hezbollah delegation discusses West Asian affairs with Russia FM in Moscow

Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and a visiting Lebanese lawmaker from the Hezbollah resistance movement and his accompanying delegation have held "open and friendly" talks.

Lavrov met with Mohammad Raad, the president of the Loyalty to the Resistance Bloc, Hezbollah's political wing at Lebanon's Parliament, in Moscow on Monday, the Russian Foreign Ministry said without giving details.

The visit by the four-member Hezbollah delegation to Russia comes at a time when Lebanon is mired in its worst economic crisis in decades as well as a political

stalemate over the formation of a new government.

Speaking after the 40-minute meeting, Raad said the discussions were "open and friendly."

He added that "Russia's support for friendly countries in the region, especially Lebanon" was also reviewed at the meeting.

Raad further stressed the importance of speeding up the formation of a new government in Lebanon "in a way that represents the people's will," noting that such a step is key to restoring stability and solving crises in the country.

He had earlier told Russia's Sputnik news agency

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."

Lavrov also met with Lebanon's Prime Minister-designate Saad Hariri on the sidelines of his visit to the United Arab Emirates last week.

Hezbollah was established following the 1982 Israeli invasion and occupation of southern Lebanon. Since then, the popular resistance movement has grown into a powerful military force.

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## Majlis approves amended national budget bill

TEHRAN- During an open session of Majlis (Iranian parliament) on Tuesday, the MPs approved the amended national budget bill for the coming Iranian calendar year (begins on March 20).

The amended bill for the next fiscal year amounted to about 28.823 quadrillion rials (about \$686.261 billion at the official rate of 42,000 rials).

The proposed bill for the next year, first submitted to Majlis in early December 2020, was 24.357 quadrillion

rials (about \$579.928 billion), with a 20-percent rise from the current year's approved budget.

The bill estimated the government's budget at 9.298 quadrillion rials (about \$221.38 billion), while the amended figure is 13.733 quadrillion rials (about \$326.976 billion).

Last week, the parliament's budget review committee wrapped up its final session for reviewing the details of the national budget bill for the next year, as announced by the spokesman of the committee.

According to Rahim Zare', the bill then was submitted to the Guardian Council for final approval.

The parliament had rejected the general outlines of the budget bill in early February, urging the government to reform the bill and submit it to the parliament again; after making the necessary amendments, the government resubmitted the bill to the parliament, and Majlis approved the amendments of the national budget bill in mid-February.

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## Plan on population growth, family support approved

BY FARANAK BAKHTIARI

TEHRAN – The Majlis (Iranian Parliament) approved on Tuesday to implement a population growth and family support plan for 7 years to change the declining trend of childbearing.

The plan stipulates health insurance for infertile couples, providing services and facilities to working women, providing health and nutrition support packages to mothers and children, educational opportunities for

student mothers, providing livelihood support to families, and ongoing medical services to pregnant women.

Considering that the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei emphasizes that the seventh Five-Year National Development Plan (2021-2026) should focus on population growth, and on the other hand, the Expediency Council seeks a one-year extension of the Sixth Five-Year National Development Plan, it was decided to implement the plan for 7 years.

According to the law, all higher education institutions in the country are obliged to raise awareness about the positive aspects of childbearing, take the necessary measures such as producing content and learning packages, as well as holding festivals, workshops, temporary and permanent exhibitions.

The Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Sports, the Ministry of Culture,

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## Iran unveils, tests new COVID-19 vaccine

TEHRAN – Fakhra vaccine, named after martyred nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, was unveiled and started the clinical trial on Tuesday, IRNA reported.

The first dose of the vaccine was injected into the son of martyr Fakhrizadeh.

From the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, relying on specialized, committed, and experienced forces, with the efforts of martyr Fakhrizadeh, the fight against the disease began.

The production of various diagnostic kits of COVID-19 and mobile specialized laboratories was the starting point of this fight.

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## Zarif reminds the West who pursues 'malign' behavior in the region

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has criticized the West's hypocrisy over who really pursues "malign" behavior in the West Asia region.

The chief Iranian diplomat said the West provided chemical weapons to former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein during the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s, which Saddam used against Kurdish people in northern Iraq on March 16, 1988.

"March 16 is the 33rd anniversary of the chemical carnage in #Halabja. Some care not to remember—those in the west who provided Saddam with the deadly chemicals. Over 5,000 innocent civilians were gassed to death. Still want to talk about 'malign regional behavior'? Shameless," the Iranian foreign minister said in a tweet on Tuesday.

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## American academic says U.S. can't be an 'ethical model'

BY REZA MOSHFEGH

TEHRAN - An American academic says that U.S. governance is not at all an "ethical model" for the world, but and it is an international fact that other countries following the footsteps of the U.S.

"It cannot be an 'ethical model.' But the rest of the world operates in the same way," Phillips Stevens Jr. tells the Tehran Times.

Many observers inside and outside America believe that Trump's presidency ruined what is called "American dream" and raised serious questions about U.S. global leadership.

Now the world is more aware about what is going on inside America, especially systematic discrimination against black and the radical divisions inside the society.

This is the text of the interview:

**What are the main challenges facing President Biden?**

President Biden is committed to supporting the principles of the U.S. Constitution. He is especially committed to ensuring equality of opportunity to all citizens. I would say that achieving that goal is the greatest challenge. To achieve that means solving many other social and economic problems which he inherited, all of which have been worsened by the pandemic. These are unprecedented times for the world, as well as for the U.S. All world leaders will acknowledge the same problems. Global climate change is at the head of the list. That is the most serious.

**What are the main roots of division in the U.S.? Is this division political or societal?**

The roots of today's division extend back through the entire history of the U.S., beginning in the 17th century.

**Do you think that racism and far-right narratives have been eliminated in the U.S.?**

Absolutely not, just as they are not eliminated anywhere in the world. We are human. People everywhere are intolerant of cultural and ethnic differences. People have to be TAUGHT to live peacefully with other types of people.

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**Dear readers,**  
The next issue of the Tehran Times will be published on Saturday, April 3.

## Boston Globe advises Biden to make a deal with Iran soon

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN — Under Donald Trump, the United States broke the landmark nuclear deal with Iran but President Biden shouldn't be afraid of moving first to restart talks, according to the Boston Globe.

Pointing to several years of fruitless and unnecessary standoff, the American newspaper wrote, "The United States and Iran are now engaged in a diplomatic dance over reactivating the nuclear nonproliferation agreement that as recently as three years ago had sharply limited Iran's nuclear program — and imposed a multifaceted verification regimen."

It claimed the deal prevented an Iranian nuclear weapon and remained a critical priority with broad international support, and asked an irrelevant question, "Should Iran develop nukes that would trigger a dangerous Middle East (West Asia) nuclear arms race that would introduce even greater instability to the volatile region?"

Iran has officially stated that production, stockpiling and use of weapons of mass destruction, including atomic arms, as haram (religiously banned). This is a decree issued by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

**"U.S. seeking for face-saving reasons"**  
The Boston Globe assumed the Biden administration wants to resuscitate that deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which the United States and its negotiating partners struck with Iran in 2015, but which Donald Trump exited.

"Iran says that since it was the United States that left the deal, this country must take the first step to patch things up; Tehran wants Biden to lift economic sanctions before Iran returns to compliance or even joins discussions about restoring the deal. The United States is hoping to find a way to avoid moving first, for face-saving reasons," the Boston Globe wrote.

Meanwhile, the American newspaper acknowledged principles in Iran are insisting that Biden should not demand broad new concessions from Iran unrelated to the nuclear program, including a change of Iran's behavior in the region and controls on its missile program, as a condition for lifting the economic sanctions the Trump administration reinstated after quitting the accord in 2018.

"Yoking other issues to an arms control deal would be historically unparalleled, according to Thomas Countryman, a former State Department nonproliferation expert who now chairs the board of the Arms Control Association, a nonpartisan group devoted to that cause," the newspaper reported.

"There is no precedent for an arms control agreement that simultaneously solves all of the disputes between the parties to the agreement," Countryman said during a recent Zoom meeting with the Globe editorial board.

**"U.S. not in a position to make big demands"**  
It admitted some of the demands floated by critics of the Iran deal are not reasonable.

"Consider, first, the matter of missiles. Iran, notes nuclear nonproliferation expert Jeffrey Lewis, director of the East Asia Nonproliferation Program at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey, is hardly the only country in the Middle East (West Asia) that has worrisome missile capability. Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey — and probably the United Arab Emirates — do as well."

"The idea that the Iranians would give up their missiles but no one else would have to is pretty unrealistic," Lewis remarked. That is particularly true since Iran's air force is mostly composed of older aircraft left over from the Shah's reign, which ended more than four decades ago. That means Iran's aerial military capability relies largely on its missile program, making it even more illogical to expect Iran to agree to unilateral limits there.

A change in Iran's nonnuclear regional behavior is also an illusory goal, as well as something that can't be measured and quantified in the way nuclear activity can, the American newspaper argued.

The Boston Globe acknowledged it is unlikely that the United States could get agreement from the other parties to the deal — the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council plus Germany — on such limitations and wrote, "An illustration: Former secretary of state Mike Pompeo had insisted that Iran remove all its forces from civil-war-torn Syria, where they support strongman Bashar Assad. Problem: Russia, another party to the nuclear deal, also backs Assad. How probable is it that Russian President Vladimir Putin would sign off on that demand?"

With regard to the view of other signatories, the newspaper argued, "The United States isn't in a position to make big demands. We, after all, are the party that left the nuclear agreement. Until we did, Iran had been honoring the agreement, which in broad terms was a quid pro quo: a verifiable limitation on Iran's nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief. Under the pact, Iran had sharply reduced its stockpile of enriched uranium and given the International Atomic Energy Agency widespread access to its various nuclear facilities."

Nevertheless, it claimed, "None of that is to say that broader concerns about Iran should be ignored, but rather that they will have to be addressed other ways, outside nuclear negotiations."

**"Hugely unrealistic"**

Still, it admitted demands from U.S. hawks are hugely unrealistic and thus highly unlikely to succeed. Rather, the paper added, they would only ensure there will be no new deal and would thereby further raise nuclear-standoff stakes.

"Those people are demanding those things, plus a pony, because they don't want any deal at all," said Lewis.

The newspaper advises the most plausible way forward would be for both sides, using the good offices of the other parties, to move in unison back into compliance.

"But Iran's insistence that the United States, as the country that left the agreement, move first is a boulder in that particular path. The Biden administration has tried to ease the way forward with low-key diplomatic moves; it has reversed a Trump declaration that the United Nations "snap-back" sanctions must be reinstated on Iran since it has now moved out of compliance, agreed to multiparty talks about restoring the deal, and relaxed travel restrictions on Iran's UN diplomats," the article said.

**"Wary of being perceived as weak on Iran"**

Biden's administration is obviously wary of being perceived as weak on Iran, particularly in the aftermath of a missile attack launched by an Iranian-backed militia group on a U.S. airbase in Iraq, an attack that resulted in the death of a U.S. foreign national and injuries to six others, the Boston Globe reported.

In a letter to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, Iran's ambassador to the UN Majid Takht-Ravanchi has said, "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."

"Fault for nuclear deal's unraveling lies with U.S., not Iran" (See full text at [tehrantimes.com](http://tehrantimes.com))

# Top general says Iran capable of annihilating Zionist regime

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN — Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Hossein Baqeri says capacities have been developed for a destruction and elimination of the Zionist regime, Tasnim reported.

In a congratulatory message to commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps on Pasdar Day, General Baqeri praised the IRGC for courageous confrontation with arrogant and hegemonic forces, saying, "No power is capable of defeating the dear Pasdars."

Pasdar is the Persian word for an IRGC member. Pasdar Day falls on the birth anniversary of Imam Hussein (AS), the grandson of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Pointing the regional and extra-regional adversaries' fear of the growing power of the Islamic Republic in West Asia and the Mediterranean coasts, the top general noted, "Before entering the second step of the (Islamic) Revolution, the capacities for the annihilation of the Zionist regime and, by God's grace, the elimination of the fake, child-murdering and odious regime from the political geography of the region have



been prepared." The remarks by the Iranian military chief followed after Israel's armed forces chief of staff Aviv Kochavi made open military threats against Iran and even said the plan for attack on Iran has been prepared and exercised.

"I have instructed the IDF to prepare sev-

eral operational plans in addition to existing ones, which we will develop throughout the coming year. The power to initiate them lies with the political echelon. However, the offensive options need to be prepared, ready, and on the table," Kochavi said in remarks delivered at the Israeli Institute for National Security Studies 14th Annual International

Conference. Kochavi's military threats were so unguarded that Mossad chief Yossi Cohen called his remarks "irresponsible".

**'Offense and resistance capability'**  
Major General Baqeri also noted that IRGC forces have developed such great power that they are capable of offense and resistance at the same time.

IRGC forces can strike the centers of threat and the enemies' camp in due time, with a desirable scope, on any scale, and with any degree of severity, he remarked.

In February, Iran's ambassador to the United Nations dismissed the Israeli rhetoric of military action against Tehran, saying the Islamic Republic is ready for a crushing response to any threat.

In February, Iranian Foreign Minister warned Israel against any attack on Iran, saying that such a move would amount to "committing suicide."

"If Israel attacks Iran, this will amount to committing suicide," Zarif said in an interview with the Lebanese television network Al Manar.

## Zarif says Iran has always favored inclusive arrangements in region and beyond

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Tuesday that Iran has always been ready for inclusive and workable arrangements in the region and beyond, Iran Press reported.

Zarif made the remark at a the "Tehran Dialogue Forum 2021" attended virtually by foreign ministers of Afghanistan and Turkey.

Regarding the transformation in international politics after Covid-19 pandemic, Zarif noted, "The main question which I would like to address is if international politics is going through drastic changes or not, and if the pandemic would change the world order or not."

While seeking to explain the pandemic according to scientific theories, he said, "There are different schools of thought but to encapsulate them, I can say that there are three major lines of argument including those: Who believe this pandemic will be soon taken under control and everything will get back to normal, meaning no strategic changes; those who argue that not only the social life has changed forever but other aspects of human relations have changed and the new era has already started; and those who believe that transition in international politics had already begun before pandemic but was accelerated by it and the pandemic has worked as a catalyst."

Warning about the dangers the nations facing, he stressed, "We, in West Asia, were used to always argue that the time is sensitive but now I can state that if there is one consensus among experts about the current state of affairs in world politics it is that time is sensitive, context is complex and uncertainty widespread."

The foreign minister expressed hope that a new multi-polar global order will be created. "It should be argued here that the vertical approach to international relations does not best serve to explain what is happening. We need to adopt a horizontal approach as well, meaning that we are experiencing a new world order in which there are equally diversified centers of powers."

A world that there is just no single superpower dominating and dictating, he added.

With regard to rivalry among great powers in the 21st century, he underlined, "We are seeing the emergence of China, a revival of Russia, and the intangible rise of non-Western powers and the awakening of Asian and African players, which have been either remained unseen or, more accurately, intentionally have been neglected by the West."

**'Frozen mindset of old great powers'**

The Iranian foreign minister reminded that there is a reality which has been so obvious that even Western academia and think tanks, and

even Western security clubs such as the MSC, have noticed to the extent that jargons such as "Westlessness" or "post-Western world" have been coined.

"One of the main problems the world is facing right now is exactly the frozen mindset of old great powers, more specifically the U.S., which uses all it holds to prevent this definite transition: from naked use of force and hard power to protectionism, the weaponization of dollar, sanctions, and economic war against competitors. It even uses multilateralism to actually exhaust diplomacy to avoid multilateralism," he underscored.

Criticizing U.S. foreign policy towards Iran and the region, he noted, "Different U.S. administrations have used different strategies, including the current one, but all have had similar aims and agendas. This is the main problem. Look at how it behaves in our region and vis-à-vis Iran."

**'Genuine normative global player'**

The chief Iranian diplomat emphasized Iran is obviously and undeniably a genuine regional player but is also a genuine normative global player, saying Iran for "many years has tried to raise new concepts such as 'resistance to domination and U.S. interventionism', 'principled international order based on equality of players and justice', and also an alternative approach

to the world politics that 'power politics' is not the only game at play. It is why, intellectually speaking, many argue that such an approach could be seen as one of the main engines for post-colonial understanding."

He went on to say, "The U.S. is, obviously, struggling to avoid or delay such a transition but in fact has accelerated the 'awakening wave' among not only the 'Eastern axis', but even also among the liberal West: as we are hearing on a daily basis about 'strategic autonomy' in Europe."

Offering his solution to overcome these obstacles, he said, "I can say in one sentence that fundamental changes need to be adopted on both cognitive as well as practical levels, but it starts with acceptance: the U.S. has to accept the reality of the world in transition; the realities of our region, and the reality of Iran."

Concerning the geopolitical importance of Iran in West Asia, he underlined, "But unfortunately, it (the U.S.) has actively tried to 'exclude' Iran from any regional arrangement; to demonize the great nation of Iran, and more importantly to 'make Iran as an exception' in international politics: Which have all of course failed."

Finally, he concluded Iran has been always ready for inclusive and workable arrangements in the region and beyond.

## CFR says cybersecurity co-op agreement between Russia, Iran likely to create hurdles for U.S.

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN — The new cooperation agreement between Russia and Iran on cybersecurity and information technology is likely to create new hurdles for the United States and its allies in West Asia, the Council on Foreign Relations said in a commentary on Monday.

Following is an excerpt of the article:

This January, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and his Iranian counterpart Javad Zarif signed a cooperation agreement on cybersecurity and information and communications technology (ICT). The agreement includes cybersecurity cooperation, technology transfer, combined training, and coordination at multilateral forums, like the United Nations.

The cooperation with Moscow outlined in the agreement could upgrade Tehran's cyber capabilities. The agreement is largely defensive, motivated by the countries' shared animus toward the United States and U.S. influence in the Middle East (West Asia) as well as a desire to reduce dependence on Western technology. There are limits, however, to how closely the two sides can be expected to work together.

Cyber cooperation between Moscow and Tehran is likely to be focused on intelligence sharing and improving cyber defenses, rather than sharing offensive capabilities. Nonetheless, the agreement could pose four challenges to U.S. cyber operations. First, Russia could help Iran obtain stronger cyber defense systems. Harvard's Belfer Center's National Cyber Power Index 2020 lists Iran as the lowest-scoring nation for cyber defense capabilities, with Russia ranked in the middle of the countries surveyed. If Tehran addresses these defensive deficiencies with the help of Russian technology and training, it could make U.S. initiatives like defend forward more challenging and costly.

Secondly, Iran-Russia cyber cooperation could provide a golden opportunity for Russian cyber teams to deploy in Iran to monitor Iranian networks in order to collect insights and identify U.S. malware, similar to U.S. Cyber Command's "Hunt Forward" operations. Acquiring and analyzing Cyber Command or National Security Agency hacking tools and techniques could help improve Russian and Iranian defenses, thwart future U.S. cyber operations, and force U.S. hackers to develop new exploits sooner than they hoped.

Russian hackers could acquire and reverse engineer U.S. or Israeli malware that has been used against Iran by accessing Iranian defense systems. This occurred with the Stuxnet worm, which targeted Iran's nuclear facilities in 2010 and was attributed to the United States and Israel. Since then, numerous cyber actors have developed over 22 million pieces of malware that used Stuxnet's blueprint to target organizations around the world. Stuxnet eventually infected thousands of networks globally, so hackers had access to lots of samples, but

an attack that did not become as widely known could still be repurposed if Russia is able to access Iranian networks.

Technologies and techniques that Iran acquires from Russia could be provided to Iran's allies around West Asia, including Hezbollah as some of these allies have already shown

considerable hacking capabilities.

These allies with advanced Russian cyber capabilities could allow them to sabotage government agencies, businesses, and U.S. operations in West Asia.

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



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

Did you know that so far 1300 scientific and accredited degrees grading up to level 4 (doctorate) have been issued to Sunni seminary students and scholars by the Secretariat of the Planning Council of Sunni religious schools



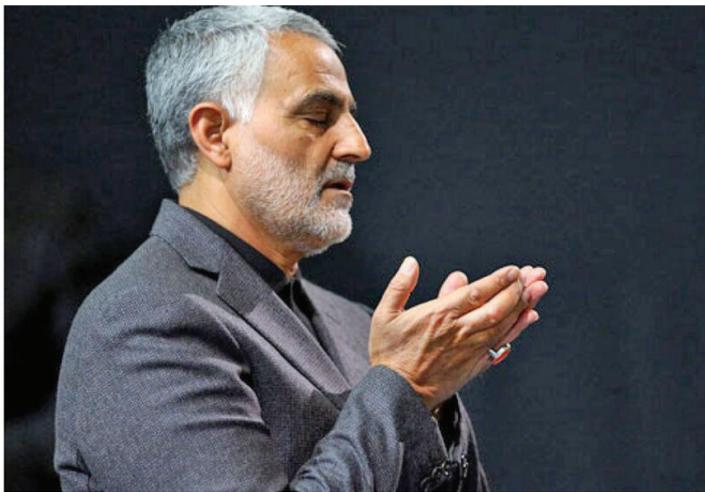
# Man of the Year

However, his long-lasting effects on Iran and the broader West Asia region have convinced us to name him as Man of the Year, because his martyrdom overshadowed developments throughout 1399.

General Soleimani was assassinated along with his longtime comrade Abu Mahdi al-Mohandes, the former deputy head of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF). Top Iranian general was visiting Iraq at the invitation of Iraq's leader to deliver an Iranian reply to a Saudi message through Iraq. He left Tehran for Baghdad on January 3, 2020, and arrived at midnight at Baghdad airport, where al-Mohandes was waiting to receive him. After a short exchange of greetings, the two men left the airport but as they moved out of the airport in their motorcade, they were targeted with a number of missiles launched by an American drone.

The strike was ordered by then-U.S. President Donald Trump, a dangerous move that brought Iran and the U.S. close to an all-out war. Iran did not let the U.S. go unpunished for its reckless terrorist attack. Five days after the U.S. strike, Iran launched a military operation codenamed "Operation Martyr Soleimani", which saw Iran showering the U.S. Ein al-Asad airbase in Iraq's western governorate of al-Anbar with tens of ground-to-ground missiles. Initially, the U.S. sought to downplay the strike on its airbase. But the Pentagon admitted later that more than 100 U.S. service members have been diagnosed with traumatic brain injury (TBI) stemming from Iran's missile attack on the airbase.

Following the retaliatory response, Iran announced a new strategy to continue what General Soleimani had assiduously started: expulsion of the U.S. forces from the region. A few days after the assassination of General Soleimani, several Iranian officials announced that real revenge for the late general would



be the expulsion of all American troops from the region. For instance, Iranian First Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri said in remarks at that time that "the real revenge for the United States' criminal and illegal actions, at the top of which is the assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, will be their expulsion from the region."

Chief of the IRGC Quds Force Brigadier General Esmaeil Ghaani said in January that the Americans must be expelled from the region. Ghaani said the unreal grandeur of the global arrogance must be revealed, adding that the followers of Iran's anti-terror commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani will expel the Americans from the region.

Those who committed the crime must realize that it is not the case to assassinate the counterterrorism hero and then continue to be alive, Ghaani said, underlining that the path of Martyr Soleimani will undoubtedly be continued and strengthened.

Losing one of its most distinguished

commanders, Iraq also joined the efforts to expel American forces. Two days after the American drone strike, the Iraqi parliament held an extraordinary session to vote for a bill obligating the Iraqi government to order a complete withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq.

"There is no need for the presence of American forces after defeating Daesh," said Ammar al-Shibli, a lawmaker sitting on the parliamentary legal committee. "We have our own armed forces which are capable of protecting the country."

The martyrdom of General Soleimani and al-Mohandes generated new momentum in the region among resistance groups in the region to achieve the goal of getting rid of America's military presence. This elan was partly generated due to the two men's sacrifices during the fight against Daesh (ISIS). The two commanders enjoyed enormous popularity not just in Iran and Iraq but in entire West Asia and beyond for the major role they played in the successful battles that ultimately put an end to the territorial

rule of Daesh, the world's most notorious terror group.

High-level officials from many countries in the region have appreciated General Soleimani's contribution to the fight against terrorism. Imad Khamis, who served as Syria's prime minister at the time of General Soleimani's assassination, called him a "symbol of the fight for liberation and regional security."

Hadi al-Amiri, the head of Fatah Alliance in the Iraqi parliament, has praised the role Iran played in support of Iraq during the country's fight against the Daesh terrorist group.

Speaking at a ceremony held in the holy city of Najaf to mark the first anniversary of the assassination of General Soleimani and his Iraqi trench mate Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, al-Amiri said Iran was the only country that supported Iraq in the difficult times of anti-Daesh fight.

"During the difficult situation in Iraq, it was only the Islamic Republic of Iran that stood by us and supported our nation in the fight against the terrorist Daesh group," the Iraqi politician said. "We thank Martyr Qassem Soleimani for his role in supporting the Iraqi nation in difficulties and hardships."

Iraqi Kurdish officials who received tangible support from General Soleimani during the fight against Daesh, also were keen to appreciate his role in helping them defeat Daesh.

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

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

## Iran says U.S. forces must leave Syria immediately



**POLITICAL** TEHRAN — Majid Takht-Ravanchi, Iran's permanent ambassador to the United Nations, has said the United States must withdraw all of its "occupying" forces from Syria immediately. Majid Takht-Ravanchi made the remarks in a Monday address to the United Nations Security Council, during which he emphasized that the sole solution to the crisis in Syria would be a peaceful one conforming to international law, according to Press TV.

The Iranian ambassador underlined that all foreign forces that are present in Syria without the Damascus government's approval, particularly the American troops that are occupying parts of Syria, must leave the country as soon as possible.

"The Syrian people do not accept continued occupation of their soil or violation of their country's sovereignty and the international community should not concede to it either, because it contravenes the most basic principles of international law," he noted.

Takht-Ravanchi also strongly condemned frequent attacks by U.S. forces and Israel in Iraq and Syria, noting that such illegal measures only worsen the situation in an already tense region.

"The Syrian crisis has no military solution and the sole way to end it would be a peaceful one in total conformity to principles of international law and articles of the Charter of the United Nations," he pointed out.

Takht-Ravanchi also called on the international community to put an end to Israel's military adventurism in the region.

Iran has long criticized U.S. military presence in Syria. In late February, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh condemned American attacks on areas east of Syria, saying the illegal bases run by American forces in the country are used to train terrorists for later use against the Syrian government.

"Illegal American bases on the Syrian soil are training terrorists and using them as a means [against the Damascus government]," Khatibzadeh said.

Speaking at a Security Council meeting on Syria in November, Takht-Ravanchi said the U.S. is plundering the Syrian nation's wealth and oil resources while supporting terrorist groups in the Arab country, calling for an immediate and unconditional withdrawal of American troops from the war-ravaged country.

He added that the full, immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the U.S. forces from Syria is essential. Also in February, Iran's mission to the United Nations in New York condemned the brutal attacks of foreign-backed terrorists and illegal occupation as well as inhumane sanctions.

Eshagh Al Habib, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations, told the UN Security Council on February 25 that "For ten years, the Syrian people have utterly suffered from the brutal attacks of foreign-backed terrorists and illegal occupation, and in recent years, from inhumane sanctions."

He noted, "The international community has a responsibility to help the Syrian people and government to overcome this crisis and to ensure Syria's unity, sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence. In this context, we call for the immediate withdrawal of all foreign forces that are present in Syria without the permission of its government. These and other aspects of the Syrian crisis have been extensively discussed in the Astana format meeting,

held recently in Sochi, Russia, following which a joint statement was issued by Iran, Russia and Turkey. The three countries condemned the increasing terrorist activities in Syria and agreed to continue cooperation to ultimately eliminate Daesh, Al-Nusra Front and all other Security Council designated terrorist groups and their affiliates."

Al Habib pointed out that these countries also expressed serious concern over the increased presence and terrorist activity of "Hayat Tahrir al-Sham" and other affiliated terrorist groups and the threat they pose to civilians inside and outside the de-escalation Idlib area.

The Iranian diplomat also took a jab at U.S. sanctions on Syria, saying these sanctions will only prolong the crisis and inflict more pain on the Syrian people.

"The application of unilateral sanctions against the Syrian people only further exacerbate the situation and prolong both the crisis and the sufferings of the people. Such sanctions are unlawful, inhumane and unjustifiable, and must therefore come to an immediate end," he stressed.

"Mounting political and economic pressures on Syria or making multiple preconditions for the peaceful settlement of the crisis has proven to be counterproductive. Reconstruction of the country and the return of refugees and displaced persons must go hand in hand with the political process. They are interlinked, mutually inclusive and mutually reinforcing," Al Habib continued.

"Finally, Iran reiterates its commitment to political resolution of this crisis and will continue supporting the people and government of Syria to restore the unity and territorial integrity of their country," he concluded.

Iran and Syria enjoy close relations. In Late February, Khatibzadeh traveled to Syria and held talks with Syrian officials and attended meetings of think tanks, media outlets and elites in the Arab country. The meetings were held in Damascus in line with Iran-Syria cooperation in public diplomacy, media and cultural arenas.

## Zarif reminds the West who pursues 'malign' behavior in the region

The tweet comes against a background of heightened tensions between Iran and the West over the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The United States withdrew from the JCPOA in May 2018 under Donald Trump. But now with Joe Biden in charge, the U.S. says that reviving the nuclear deal is not enough and that other issues such as Iran's influence in the region and its defensive missile program must be included in any future talks, something that Iran firmly rejects. The West claims that Iran's influence in the region is "malign" but Iranian officials say it's the U.S., not Iran, that pursues malign behavior in the region. Zarif has more than once denounced the Western support for Saddam as a grave mistake. In March 2019, Zarif said the Iranian

nation and Kurdish brothers in Iraq will never forget the Halabja and Sardasht chemical attacks.

"First they denied it happened—then they blamed Iran. When it was clear it was their own ally, using their own chemical weapons, they were silent. The West may like to forget about horrors of Halabja & Sardasht—31 years ago today—but neither we, nor our Kurdish brethren, ever will," Zarif tweeted at the time.

On March 16, 1988, Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein ordered his air force to attack Halabja in northern Iraq with chemical bombs, using nerve agents such as VX and mustard gas to kill thousands of innocent civilians. The attack killed between 3,200 and 5,000 people and injured 7,000 to 10,000 more, most of them civilians.

The Halabja attack was part of the

Al-Anfal Campaign in northern Iraq. The attack has been recognized as a distinct event of genocide conducted against the Kurdish people by the Saddam regime. The Iraqi High Criminal Court recognized the Halabja massacre as an act of genocide on March 1, 2010.

In March 2020, Iran's Consul General in Sulaymaniyah, Mehdi Shoushtari, said that the Iraqi Baath regime's chemical attack on the Kurdish city of Halabja in northern Iraq was a "big anti-human tragedy."

"Undoubtedly, this criminal incident against the innocent people of Halabja by a criminal regime through using chemical weapons manufactured by certain Western countries, which make claims about defending human rights, was one of the biggest anti-human tragedies," he said in a message to Halabja Governor



Azad Tofigh.

Shoushtari also said, "The Islamic Republic of Iran fulfilled its Islamic and humanitarian duty in this respect and supported the people of Halabja. These supports continued in different periods of time during history such as fighting terrorism and extremism.

## SPORTS

### FFIRI releases statement on choosing Bahrain as Group C host

**SPORTS** TEHRAN — The Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) has released a statement on choosing Bahrain as host of the 2022 World Cup qualifiers in Group C.

Bahrain was chosen as centralized venue for the competition in Group C by AFC on Friday,



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

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

Now, the Iranian federation has showed dissatisfaction over the AFC's decision.

"On Jan. 5, the AFC announced that the renaming matches would be held on a home and away basis but unfortunately in a webinar session held on Feb. 16 the AFC announced that the competition would likely be held at a centralized venue. Iran had already sent a letter to the AFC and announced that the competition, under no circumstances, should not be held at a centralized venue," the statement said.

"On March 3 the FFIRI submitted its request to host the matches and AFC said that Iran faces difficulties in terms of commercial, broadcasting and logistics due to the U.S. sanctions. Iran, relying on logical reasons, once again, sent a letter to the AFC and defended its right to host any international competition.

"Iran was completely ready to host the remaining matches but in a surprising move, the AFC granted the hosting rights to Bahrain. The commercial and broadcasting rights had to be devoted to the participating countries but the AFC selected Bahrain as host. The AFC ignored Iran's inalienable right for hosting the remaining matches.

"The AFC uses sanctions as an excuse to ignore our inalienable rights to host the competitions. The football federation reserves the right to take all necessary measures to defend its right according to the international laws," the statement read.

### Mehdi Pashazadeh no longer Machine Sazi coach

**SPORTS** TEHRAN — Mehdi Pashazadeh stepped down as head coach of Iranian top-flight football team Machine Sazi.

The former Admira Wacker defender had been appointed as head coach of the struggling team in late February but parted company with Tabriz based football team Monday night.

Saeid Akhbari, who had previously coached the team in the current season, was named as interim coach.

Machine Sazi will host Esteghlal on Wednesday in Tabriz in Matchday 18 of Iran Professional League.

### Ahmad Nourollahi on verge of leaving Persepolis

**SPORTS** TEHRAN — Persepolis football team midfielder Ahmad Nourollahi is going to leave the team at the end of the season.

The 28-year-old player's contract expires at the end of the season.

Nourollahi joined Persepolis in 2014 from Foolad Yazd and has played a key role in Persepolis' success during the past years.

He helped the Reds qualify for the AFC Champions League final two times.

Nourollahi also won four Iran Professional league titles with the Iranian giants.

### Majid Hosseini linked with AEK Athens

**SPORTS** TEHRAN — Iran international defender Majid Hosseini has been linked with a move to Greek Super League football team AEK Athens.

The 24-year-old Trabzonspor defender had been previously been linked with a move to Charleroi, Sampdoria, Olympiakos.

Hosseini's current deal expires at the end of the Turkish Super Liga season.

Turkish website Gazete Dagma has reported that the defender is going to stay at Trabzonspor.

If Hosseini signs for AEK, he will join his countryman Karim Ansarifard in the Greek team.

### Foolad Sirjan crowned Iran Volleyball Super League champions

**SPORTS** TEHRAN — Foolad Sirjan defeated Shahrdari Urmia 3-1 (25-23, 30-28, 21-25, 25-21) to win the 23rd edition of Iran Volleyball Super League.

The Sirjan based volleyball club won two matches out of three matches to win the title for the first time ever.

The Iranian Super League (ISL) is a professional volleyball league in Iran at the top of the Iranian volleyball league system. It was founded in 1975 as the Pasargard Cup, but after the Iranian Revolution it was renamed to the first Division.

In 1997 the league system was revamped and the Iranian Super League was established. Paykan Tehran have won the most titles in the new Super League with 12 titles.

## Iran-EAEU trade reaches \$1.9b in 11 months

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — The value of non-oil trade between Iran and the members of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) reached \$1.9 billion in the first 11 months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2020 – February 18, 2021), data released by Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) showed.

Based on the mentioned data, the value of trade shows a 9.4-percent fall, as compared with the same period of time in the past year.

Iran exported 2.4 million tons of commodities worth \$933 million to the EAEU members in the period under review, registering a 17-percent fall in terms of weight and a four-percent decline in terms of value.

Iran's imports from the block hit 2.9 million tons valued at \$1 billion, with a one-percent rise in weight, and a 14-percent drop in value.



Trade with Eurasia accounted for three percent of the country's total non-oil trade in the mentioned period.

Iran and Eurasian Economic Union reached a free trade agreement in October 2018 based on which about 862 commodity items were subjected to preferential tariffs.

The interim agreement enabling the formation of a free trade area between Iran and the EAEU was signed on May 17, 2018, and officially came into force on October 27, 2019.

Iran is a very important market in the region and the development of ties with this country is of high significance for the EAEU members (Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan).

The free trade agreement between Iran and this union has laid the ground for the expansion of trade ties between the two sides.

The agreement with the bloc has increased Iran's exports to the EAEU member states significantly, which is a turning point for the Islamic Republic's plans for boosting non-oil exports during the U.S. sanctions.

In late January, TCCIMA hosted an Iran-Eurasia economic diplomacy meeting, attended by senior officials including the TCCIMA Head Masoud Khansari, the Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) Head Hamid Zadboum, and the Head of Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) Mehdi Mir-Ashrafi.

## Exports from East Azarbaijan stand at \$3.8b in 11 months

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — A provincial official put the value of exports from East Azarbaijan province, in the northwest of Iran, at \$3.8 billion in the first 11 months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2020 – February 18, 2021).

Habib Aminzadeh, the head of the province's Industry, Mining and Trade Department, said, "Despite the closure of borders due to the coronavirus restrictions, and also the strict sanctions, through good management we could achieve this amount of export".

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.

# Majlis approves amended national budget bill

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — After approving the general outlines, the budget review committee has been holding several sessions for reviewing the details of the bill.

The first session of the budget review committee was held on February 20 in which the parliament determined the share of the National Development Fund

(NDF) from the country's oil and gas export revenues in the newly amended budget bill.

Majlis continued to review the details of the national budget bill for the year 1400, in an open session on February 28. This session was mainly focused on the expense aspects of the national budget bill.



## Incentive program reduces electricity consumption in Iran

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — Implementation of a program by the Iranian Energy Ministry for rewarding efficient electricity subscribers with a 100 percent discount on their bills, has reduced the number of high-consuming subscribers across the country by 6.1 percent.

According to Iran's Power Generation and Distribution Company (TAVANIR), this program called "Power of Hope" was aimed to change the attitudes of household consumers towards the proper use of energy resources and consequently protect the environment.

The Energy Ministry started the implementation of the mentioned program in mid-August 2020.

In late August 2020, Iranian Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian had announced that the Power of Hope program was expected to reduce the country's electricity consumption by 10 percent.

"This program will be implemented to both reward low-consuming subscribers and to encourage others to consume less and it is expected to reduce power consumption by 10 percent," Ardakanian said in a press conference on the occasion of the Government Week (August 23-29, 2020).

The minister noted that according to a cabinet decision, all the subscribers that cooperated well with the



Energy Ministry's consumption management programs this summer are to be awarded.

"To do so, home subscribers were divided into three categories, which include low-consumers, normal-consumers, and high-consumers," he said.

He noted that two programs have been prepared for high-consuming subscribers so that by implementing these plans, these subscribers would also join the low-consumer group.

The official described the first program as a training course to teach consumption management methods with the help of knowledge-based companies and start-ups, and said: "Start-up companies will be formed in this field and will help us optimize the consumption of high-consuming subscribers by providing simple solutions."

The second plan is to install solar panels on the roofs of high-consuming subscribers' houses so that such subscribers would meet their electricity needs by installing these PV stations, Ardakanian explained.

Managing electricity consumption by various sectors including households, agriculture, and industry, and reducing the consumption of fossil fuels used by power plants has become one of the major priorities for the government in recent years.

Earlier, the Energy Ministry Spokesman for the electricity sector Mostafa Rajabi Mashhadi had told Tehran Times that the ministry's specialists and experts defined different packages for different sectors to manage the country's electricity consumption.

Rajabi Mashhadi said that since the households account for the majority of the electricity consumption, the main part of the Energy Ministry's program was focused on encouraging the households in metropolitan areas like Tehran to reduce their consumption in peak hours.

## Top Iranian enterprises to invest over \$6b in development projects

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — Iran's top companies are going to invest \$6.1 billion in the country's industrial, mining and trade development projects, Director General of Planning and Financing Office of the Ministry of Industry, Mining, and Trade Alireza Hadi announced.

According to Hadi, the mentioned investment is going to be realized as part of a new program dubbed "Resilient Economy with Top Enterprises" in which the Industry Ministry defines new projects for the country's top companies to invest in.

As the first stage of the said program, the Industry Ministry has signed memorandums of understanding (MOU) worth \$6.1 billion with five major enterprises including Sepahan Oil Company, Almahdi Aluminum Company, Shirin Asal Food Industrial Group, and Chadormalu Mining and Industrial Company, the official announced.

Aimed at encouraging major companies



to participate in the country's development for achieving the goals of the resilient economy, these MOUs cover 62 projects in the fields of mining and mineral industries, food industry, machinery, and refining industries, Hadi stated.

Earlier this week, Deputy Industry Minister Saeed Zarandi said that the Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry has implemented the "Resilient Economy with Top Enterprises" scheme for promoting investment in the country's industrial sectors.

According to Zarandi, as a preparation for the mentioned program, the Industry Ministry has been identifying pioneering industries and promoting the establishment of public joint-stock companies over the past two years for guiding public capitals towards such industries.

"We believe that the country's economic development, in line with the policies of the resilient economy, requires increasing productive investments based on competitive advantages and completing the value chain in various industries," Zarandi said.

Considering the technical, financial, and effective executive records of large and successful companies in the field of production and export, their role in the realization of this goal is of special importance, he added.

According to the official, every year, the country's top companies are ranked according to their performance in the fields of production and export, job creation, and value-added, and 100 main companies of the current year have already been identified.

"This ranking is done among the country's industrial, trade, and mining companies, and finally the top 100 companies are identified and selected to implement important projects; 39 of these companies are active in the petrochemical and chemical sectors, 21 companies are in the non-metallic sector, 20 companies in the mining sector and 20 companies are active in the manufacturing of machinery," Zarandi explained.

The official noted that for each one of the mentioned companies, a certain project has been defined and an MOU will be signed with them to determine their obligations regarding the fulfillment of their investments.

## National Housing Action Plan costs unchanged

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — Iran's Deputy Transport and Urban Development Minister for Housing and Construction Affairs Mahmoud Mahmoudzadeh has said that the construction costs for the National Housing Action Plan are set based on the current year's construction material price list and haven't changed.

Mahmoudzadeh made the remarks in response to some rumors about the rise in the prices of such housing units as a result of the increase in construction costs, IRNA reported.

The National Housing Action Plan aims to construct 400,000 small and medium-size apartments (70-100 square meters in size) across the country and particularly in Tehran, where housing prices have risen most sharply.

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

Earlier this month, the Governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Abdolnaser Hemmati and the Transport and Urban Development Minister Mohammad Eslami held a meeting to discuss ways of financing the mentioned plan in the upcoming Iranian calendar year (starts on March 21).



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

The CBI governor emphasized his bank's strong support for the implementation of the government's housing-related plans and asked the bank directors to

participate in such programs.

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

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

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

The Transport and Urban Development Ministry is going to provide the land for the National Housing Action Plan and will also supervise the construction by enlisting private sector construction firms who will bid for contracts that entitle them to receive state loans and subsidized building materials.

In addition to creating new jobs, providing housing to low-income families could also help alleviate economic hardship, especially if the government's assistance can help inflation-hit renters become homeowners.

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

## TEDPIX gains 36,000 points on Tuesday

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), rose 36,309 points to 1.29 million on Tuesday.

Over 8.831 billion securities worth 80.633 trillion rials (about \$1.919 billion) were traded at the TSE on Tuesday.

The first market's index gained 30,434 points, and the second market's index rose 60,093 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.

Iranian Capital Market Analyst Soheil

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

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

Pointing to the recent decline in the Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE) main index, the expert said: "The stock market is in a good condition both technically and fundamentally, but despite the positive measures that the Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO) has put on the agenda to improve

the market, it is still following a downward trend; and this has increased the shareholders' skepticism and anxiety."

He noted that the Iranian stock market is usually negative during the last Iranian calendar month of Esfand (February 19-March 20) and that is a normal trend for the country's capital market in the last days of the year.

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

"We look forward to a positive trend of trading in the next year, he said, adding that the market is now in a very good condition for



growth and we can hope for positive days in the stock market and improve the situation in the coming months", he added.

# Penn professor says human rights are marginal issues in U.S. policy making

Mohammad Ali Saki

TEHRAN — Ian Lustick, a professor of political science at the University of Pennsylvania, says that human rights have a very “marginal” role in U.S. policy making “if at all”.

Unlike former U.S. president Donald Trump who never cared about values such as democracy and human rights, Joe Biden pledged in his presidential campaigns to uphold ethical values rather than impulsive narrow-minded policies.

Professor Lustick says the U.S. exercises double-standards in regard to human rights violations, especially when geopolitics are involved.

“When geopolitics are also involved, for example in regard to human rights violations by China, the U.S. might well take a stronger stand,” Lustick tells the Tehran Times.

A concrete example of this is the United States’ approach toward the Khashoggi killing.

Jamal Khashoggi, a columnist for the Washington Post who wrote critically of the Saudi crown prince and his policies, was murdered by a team of Saudi agents in the kingdom’s consulate in Istanbul in October 2018. His dismembered body has never been recovered.

U.S. intelligence agencies revealed in a newly declassified intelligence report that Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman approved the murder of Khashoggi but Wash-



**“It is a typical reflection of realpolitik even if Biden’s policy is more in line with upholding norms of decency than was Trump’s.”**

ington stopped short of targeting the future Saudi king with financial or other sanctions.

“It is a typical reflection of realpolitik even if Biden’s policy is more in line with upholding norms of decency than was

Trump’s,” Lustick notes.

Biden had also pledged to reverse Trump’s policies regarding Washington’s unconditional support for the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen. However, the Yemeni Ansarullah movement

says the U.S. proposal for silencing the guns in Yemen favors the Saudi coalition.

Asked if he thinks that U.S. steps are enough to end the war in Yemen, the American academic says, “Yes, but perhaps not immediately. The Saudis will have to adjust to a new reality.”

However, the Yemeni side is skeptical of Washington’s desire to compel the Saudi kingdom to end six years of war on Yemen which the United Nations says has caused the worst humanitarian disaster in modern history.

When it comes to Iran and the landmark nuclear agreement, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Biden’s administration has adopted a very conservative approach.

Some pundits say that Biden is using Trump’s sanctions leverage along with diplomacy with Iran.

“Trump’s policy weakened Iran’s economy, but it did not achieve stability in the region or deflect Iran from its commitment to develop a nuclear weapons capacity,” Professor Lustick believes.

Many are doubtful of the United States’ intention to democratize tyrannical regimes in West Asia.

“The U.S. has not ‘exported’ democracy to any country in the Middle East that I know of,” the professor from the University of Pennsylvania says.

## American academic says U.S. can’t be an “ethical model”

It is not natural. It is natural to be suspicious of others; it is in our evolutionary biology. “Far-right narratives” emerge in times of stress and social anxiety; people resist change, and people blame others, and the people who are blamed are the “others.”

**Do you think that the political system in America, especially the bipartisan system, is ready for fundamental reforms in order to find drastic solutions for social problems?**

No, it is certainly not ready; neither is the world ready

**“The roots of today’s division extend back through the entire history of the U.S., beginning in the 17th century.”**

– global warming and the coronavirus must be resolved first. Then, perhaps, the world can work on its serious social problems.

**The American political system is based on liberal capitalism. Do you think this model can be used as an ethical model for other countries?**

No, it is not and it cannot be an “ethical model.” But the rest of the world operates in the same way, what you are describing is an international fact!

## Meghan’s ambitions cannot be realized in the UK: ex-British MP

By Mohammad Mazhari

TEHRAN — Noting that Meghan Markle, Prince Harry’s wife, is not fully appreciated for the consequences of royal protocol, a former British Conservative MP says that Meghan’s ambitions cannot be fulfilled in the UK.

“I do not think Meghan fully appreciated the consequences of royal protocol and when she realized what it is really like it was never going to work in the UK,” Matthew Gordon-Banks tells the Tehran Times.

In 2020, Meghan Markle and Prince Harry announced in an Instagram post that they were taking a “step back” from the royal family.

The couple wrote they would split their time between the United Kingdom and North America and that they planned to be financially independent.

Meghan and Harry are among the most controversial royal couples in the UK. “She has ambitions, which can only be fulfilled in the United States,” Gordon-Banks notes.

Following is the text of the interview: **What is your comment on Prince Harry and Meghan Markle’s problems with the royal family?**

I think it is very sad what has happened, but I do not think Meghan fully

appreciated the consequences of Royal protocol and when she realized what it is really like it was never going to work in the UK. She has ambitions, which can only be fulfilled in the United States. Whether Harry will feel fulfilled in a few years’ time remains to be seen. It is going to be a very different life for him no matter how much money Meghan or the pair of them make.

**To what extent does the royal family and the queen have influence in Britain’s political sphere?**

I consider that in the UK, HM The Queen has very considerable influence but no power. She is only in control of her private property. Apart from her Royal Patronages including charities, as a Constitutional Monarch she acts on advice from the government. This includes her visits to overseas countries and receiving other heads of state in London.

**Meghan revealed ‘concerns’ within the royal family about her baby’s skin colour. Isn’t it a case of racism?**

**“We cannot have one set of countries telling others what they should and should not do, whilst not following their own advice.”**



I think this is much over-blown. The British royal family are not racist – look at their work in the Commonwealth countries – I think Meghan has been over-sensitive to an alleged innocent remark; if indeed one was ever made.

**What are the main sources of authority in the UK? Parliament or government or royal family?**

In theory the British Parliament is sovereign, but in practice, for as long as I can remember and more, the executive branch, that is the government, is all powerful. Often the UK Parliament acts as a rubber stamp for the executive,

but from time to time, both the House of Commons and the House of Lords, the Upper Chamber, can amend legislation or even force the government to act or similarly withdraw proposals it does not like. This is in the minority of cases, in my view.

**According to Telegraph, Britain is set to increase the number of nuclear warheads it can stockpile. What is your comment?**

There are those that say there may be a temporary increase in nuclear weapons in the UK whilst routine maintenance takes place and some equipment is temporarily taken out of service. However, recent remarks by an anonymous government source, quite clearly authorized to speak, did not make any such scenario clear and presented it as if it was increasing its nuclear arsenal. It came across very badly and in a fragile and dangerous world we need to be reducing nuclear proliferation not increasing it. I am hoping dialogue in this area within UN and international organizations between countries will see some success. Also, we cannot have one set of countries telling others what they should and should not do, whilst not following their own advice. It requires greater dialogue and a willingness to sign new treaties and importantly, stick to them.

## Yemen: U.S. must stop Saudi war, siege to set stage for political process

The spokesman for Yemen’s Houthi Ansarullah movement says the U.S. administration is not sincere in its calls for the restoration of peace to the country, stressing that Washington must make the Saudi-led invaders end their aggression and siege against Yemen to set the stage for a real political process.

It is unacceptable for [the United States of] America to chant the slogan of human rights and express concern over the worsening humanitarian conditions in Yemen as a result of the [Saudi-led] aggression and siege, and then make that (humanitarian issues) subject to military and political bargaining,” Mohammed Abdul-Salam wrote in a post published on his Twitter page on Monday.

He was responding to U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken’s comments on supporting what he described as a Yemen free from foreign influence.

During a phone conversation with the UN’s Yemen envoy Martin Griffiths, Blinken claimed that “the United States supports a unified, stable Yemen free from foreign influence, and that there is no military solution to the conflict,” according to the U.S. Department of State.

Washington plans to “reinvigorate diplomatic efforts” to end the war in Yemen, he said.

Abdul-Salam said a political process can achieve success only when it is free from coercion, adding, “We know the U.S. is well aware of what can [truly] contribute to the restoration of peace in Yemen,” but its misleading and unwise statements show Washington does not want such a thing to happen.

The Ansarullah spokesman said “our position is defensive. The U.S. must first oblige aggressors to stop their aggression and lift the blockade against Yemen” in order to set the stage for a real political process.

Ansarullah sends peace plan to U.S. envoy

Moreover, Mohammed Ali al-Houthi, a member of Yemen’s Supreme Political Council, tweeted on Monday that the Ansarullah movement had presented its own vision plan for the cessation of hostilities in the war-torn country to U.S. Special Envoy for Yemen Tim Lenderking.

“We are actually confronting an all-out aggression against our country, besides occupation and siege by a coalition which is waging a war, invading our country and besieging our nation,” Houthi added.

The senior Yemeni official noted that Ansarullah has submitted a plan for a nationwide ceasefire in Yemen, through Griffiths, to Lenderking.

The U.S. special envoy for Yemen on Friday said during a webinar with the Atlantic Council think tank that Houthis are a “significant player” in Yemen and that needs to be acknowledged.

“I don’t think you can operate by denying that reality,” he said, adding that the U.S. “never said the Houthis have no role in Yemen.”

Lenderking, who recently returned from a three-week trip to the region, said Washington is looking for the Ansarullah’s response to its peace plan, but claimed that Ansarullah does not appear interested in a ceasefire at this moment, and is supposedly prior-



itizing a military campaign to take the strategic central province of Ma’rib.

“I will return immediately when the Houthis are prepared to talk,” Lenderking said.

UAE brings in foreign experts to Yemen’s Socotra island to explore for oil, gas

Separately, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has reportedly brought in a group of foreign experts to the strategic island of Socotra to assess the natural resources there.

An informed source, speaking on condition of anonymity, told the Yemeni Press Agency that the experts come from Pakistan, India and Egypt, and they are exploring for oil and gas reserves on the island, besides rich fishing grounds surrounding the island.

## Hezbollah delegation discusses West Asian affairs with Russia FM in Moscow

During the 2000 and 2006 Israeli wars on Lebanon, battleground contribution by Hezbollah proved an indispensable asset, forcing the Israeli military into a retreat and shattering the myth of the occupying entity’s invincibility.

Unlike the Western countries, Russia does not consider Hezbollah a terrorist organization.

“Some say Hezbollah is a terrorist organization. We maintain contacts and relations with them because we do not consider them a terrorist organization,” Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov was quoted by Interfax as saying on Sunday. “They have never committed any terrorist acts on Russian territory. Hezbollah was elected by people to the Lebanese parliament. They are cabinet members and ministers who are from Hezbollah in Lebanon. It’s a legitimate socio-political force,” he added.

The Russian ambassador also referred to the tunnels under Lebanon’s border with the occupied territories, which Israel claims to have been dug by the Hezbollah resistance movement, saying there was “no proof Hezbollah created the tunnels.”

**Protests continue in Lebanon as crisis lingers on**  
Prime Minister-designate Hariri has so far failed to form a cabinet to lift the country out of crisis.

Analysts say the main problem is the interference of Saudi Arabia, the United States and France in the country’s internal affairs and the adherence of some Lebanese groups to the Zionist-Takfiri axis.

On Monday, the local currency hit a new record low, with the dollar selling for 13,200 pounds, triggering fresh protests in Beirut and Tripoli.

The Lebanese protesters gathered at Beirut’s Martyrs Square on Monday night and torched tires.

The demonstrators in Tripoli set fire to trash bins and stormed into the electricity office while chanting slogans against corruption.

## On first trip to Asia, Blinken accuses China of ‘coercion’

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has accused China of using “coercion and aggression” in the region, in an indication that the new U.S. administration would not be pursuing a different path toward Beijing.

Blinken arrived in Tokyo with U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin in the first overseas visit by top cabinet members of U.S. President Joe Biden’s administration.

“We will push back if necessary when China uses coercion and aggression to get its way,” Blinken said on Tuesday.

In a joint statement issued with their Japanese counterparts, Blinken and Austin said that Beijing’s “behavior, where inconsistent with the existing international order, presents political, economic, military and technological challenges to the Alliance and to the international community.”

Tokyo and Washington are “committed to opposing coercion and destabilizing behavior towards others in the region, which undermines the rules-based international system,” said the joint statement.

The meeting was held in the “2+2” format, with Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi and Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi as hosts.

The diplomats also criticized China for what they called Beijing’s “unlawful” maritime claims in the South China Sea.

The U.S. and Japanese diplomats expressed “serious concerns” about what they described as “disruptive developments” such as the law China passed in January that for the first time, allows its coast guard to open fire on foreign vessels deemed to pose threats.

The resource-rich South China Sea has been a source of tensions between Beijing and Washington, which not only sides with Beijing’s rivals in the maritime dispute but also regularly dispatches warships and warplanes to the waters as part of what it describes as “freedom of navigation” patrols.

## WHO warns against cessation of vaccination, as countries halt use of AstraZeneca

The World Health Organization appealed to countries on Monday not to pause vaccination campaigns, after several nations suspended the use of AstraZeneca’s shot to probe possible side effects.

WHO chief scientist Soumya Swaminathan said on a virtual media briefing on Monday that there have been no documented deaths linked to the inoculation campaign.

“We do not want people to panic,” she said, adding there has been no association, so far, found between so-called thromboembolic events reported in some countries and COVID-19 shots.

AstraZeneca’s shot was among the first and cheapest to be developed and launched at volume since the coronavirus was first identified in central China at the end of 2019 and is set to be the mainstay of vaccination programs in much of the developing world.

Concerns over the vaccine rollout came after the European Medicines Agency (EMA) said that as of March 10, a total of 30 cases of blood clotting had been reported among close to 5 million people vaccinated with the AstraZeneca shot in the European Economic Area, which links 30 European countries.

Germany, France and Italy said on Monday they would suspend AstraZeneca shots.

Still, the decision by the European Union’s three biggest countries to put inoculations with the AstraZeneca shot on hold threw the already struggling vaccination campaign in the 27-nation EU into disarray.

Denmark and Norway stopped giving the shot last week after reporting isolated cases of bleeding, blood clots and a low platelet count.

Iceland and Bulgaria followed suit and Ireland and the Netherlands announced suspensions on Sunday.

Spain will stop using the vaccine for at least 15 days, Cadena Ser radio reported, citing unnamed sources.

Cyprus also suspended AstraZeneca shots for COVID-19 on Monday pending a review by the EMA, its health ministry said. Cyprus’ inoculation program with vaccines from Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna will continue, the health ministry said.

There have been no publicly reported cases of any side effects from the AstraZeneca vaccine in Cyprus.

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said an advisory committee meeting on AstraZeneca would be held on Tuesday. (Source: Agencies)

## Historical castle restored to former glory

**TOURISM** TEHRAN — Parts of the walls of the Kalat d e s k Ahran Castle, also known as Zaer Khezr Khan Castle, in Tangestan county, southwestern Bushehr province were restored, the deputy provincial tourism chief has announced.

A budget of four billion rials (\$95,000 at the official exchange rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) was allocated to the project, which is aimed at repairing the historical structure damaged by an earthquake last year, CHTN quoted Nasrollah Ebrahimi as saying on Tuesday.

Local and indigenous materials such as stone, brick, and thatch were used to preserve the originality of the historical monument, the official added.



The fortification, which was built during the Qajar era (1789–1925), was owned by one of the resistance fighters, Zaer Khezr Khan Ahrami, to the British military presence in Bushehr during its occupation in World War I.

The castle was added to the National Heritage list in 1998. From very early history to modern times, defensive walls have often been necessary for cities to survive in an ever-changing world of invasion and conquest.

Fortifications in antiquity were designed primarily to defeat attempts at the escalade, and to the defense of territories in warfare, and were also used to solidify rule in a region during peacetime.

Uruk in ancient Sumer (Mesopotamia) is one of the world's oldest known walled cities. The Ancient Egyptians also built fortresses on the frontiers of the Nile Valley to protect against invaders from neighboring territories.

Many of the fortifications of the ancient world were built with mud brick, often leaving them no more than mounds of dirt for today's archaeologists.

With over 6,000 years of history and significant monuments from the Elamite, Achaemenid, Parthian, and Sassanid eras, Bushehr Province is one of Iran's most important historical centers.

Besides its cultural heritage, beautiful beaches and lush palm groves make it an attractive destination for world travelers.

The historical and architectural monuments of Bushehr include Islamic buildings like mosques and praying centers, mansions, old towers, castles, as well as gardens.

When it comes to cultural attractions, there are many historical mounds in Bushehr including Tall-e Khandaq with Sassanid architectural style, Tall-e Marv located near an Achaemenid Palace, and the Qajar-era Malek al-Tojar Mansion. Qajar era Kazeruni Mansion, which has been inscribed on the World Heritage List, is another attraction that world travelers love to see among various ancient sites.

## Persian handicrafts: Gereh Chini

**HERITAGE** TEHRAN — “Gereh Chini”, literally meaning d e s k arranging the knots, is one of the traditional decorative and applicable handicrafts of Iran. It is the art of laying finely cut pieces of wood on a surface based on a specific design.

Geometric knots that are beautifully and rhythmically repeated are considered an essential part of Gereh. The beginning of Gereh Chini has not been dated exactly, but the Seljuk era (1037–1194) is known to be the first time this craft was used and Isfahan is its birthplace. Safavid era (1501–1736) is known to be the time Gereh flourished,



according to Visit Iran, the official travel guide to the country.

For Gereh Chini, pieces of wood are used in their raw color and no paint is added. According to masters of this art, the plane tree is the best wood to make Gereh. However, wood from other trees such as walnut, beech, almond, silverberry, zelkova, pear, and jujube are also used to make structures such as doors of shrines, pulpits, doors, and windows, frames, tableaux, dividers, covers for tables and many other decorative objects.

In the art of Gereh Chini, the Gereh or knot is, in fact, intersections of pieces of woods that have been attached by locking in each other and create delicate designs. The finer the wood pieces, the more valuable the product.

Using tongue and groove joints make Gereh Chini pieces endure in different climate of Iran. That is the reason we can find Gereh Chini artworks in many historical buildings.

Some of the best remaining examples are Chehel Sotoon (literally Forty Columns), Hasht Behesht (literally Eight Heavens), and historic houses like Alam's House and Sheikh ol-Islam in Isfahan. There are also House of Tabatabaei in Kashan, Abbasian, Boroujerdi, Golestan Palace, and other such buildings in Yazd and Tehran. Today, there are Gereh Chini workshops in Tehran where this craft is still practiced.

# How Iranians celebrate new year in COVID times

→ 1 Noruz ceremonies and trips, if practiced under health protocols, could be beneficial for the revival of the tourism industry and handicrafts, which have been severely affected by the coronavirus pandemic in many provinces, the minister explained.

According to official data, over 60,300 people have died from the virus across the country since the start of the pandemic a year ago. More than 1,750,000 cases have been reported.

So that is clear that the disease has overshadowed preparations this year in a country severely hit by the outbreak. A lot of people have tried to replace physical connection with virtual connection. They read poetry to each other over voice messages. They send their friends and family poems or even recipes. There are various ways that people are trying to communicate with each other using technology.

As the spring beckons and the lilies and daffodils begin to bloom, impatient Iranians start adorning their homes with colorful decorations. It is another reminder that Noruz is just around the corner.

Noruz celebrations last 13 days, beginning with the first day of spring and culminating with a picnic, but preparations begin well in advance. It is the longest, oldest, and most cherished festival in the Persian calendar. It marks nature's resurrection from the long winter. Homes are cleaned, tables are symbolically rearranged. It's part of a string of customs to herald the spring and celebrate rebirth.

Noruz begins with 'Saal Tahvil', which can be translated as year delivery. It falls at the exact moment of the spring equinox. Everybody in the family, dressed up in their new clothes, gathers around the Haft Sin spread looking forward to 'Saal Tahvil'. As the countdown ushers in the New Year, the members of the family cheer up, hug and kiss each other, and exchange Noruz greetings, 'Eid-e Shoma mobarak!' or 'Sal-e No Mobarak' (Happy New Year). Now everyone, especially the children, move on to make the rounds of the elders of the family first, then the rest of their family and finally their friends and the rest of the neighborhood.

Adults, too, have a set schedule of visits and receiving visitors. This custom demonstrates the respect that Iranians pay to the elderly. Visits are short, typically taking about 30 minutes.

During Noruz, everyone gathers around



a Haft Seen, a table spread with seven items, including sprouts, which symbolize rebirth, and apples, which represent health and beauty.

Sofreh Haft Seen, the traditional Noruz (Iranian new year) tablescape, or cloth, decorated with seven symbolic items starting with the Persian letter S (pronounced as “seen”). The light briefly spotlights each item and reflects off the sugar-dusted toot — mulberry-shaped Iranian marzipan — providing a display of kaleidoscopic patterns and lights.

The seven items on the Sofreh Haft Seen include sabzeh (wheat, lentil or mung bean sprouts), samanu (a sweet pudding made with germinated wheat), seeb (apple), senjed (the dried fruit of the wild olive, oleaster), somagh (sumak), serkeh

(vinegar) and seer (garlic).

Various pastries are placed on the table as a symbol of sweetening the year to come. Common ingredients include flower waters and warm spices like cardamom, almonds and pistachios (used both whole and ground to a powder), chickpea flour, rice flour, and, of course, plenty of sugar. (Blanched ground almonds are also the main ingredient in toot, which means mulberry in Persian.) Sweets that carry with them all the love, care, and hopes for a sweeter new year.

Many Iranian have started khooneh takooni (also known as khaneh takani), which translates to “shaking out the house,” referring to the tradition of cleaning and cleansing the home in preparation for the new year. Once all the windows are washed, rugs are beaten and cabinets are cleared

**A lot of people have tried to replace physical connection with virtual connection. They read poetry to each other over voice messages. They send their friends and family poems or even recipes. There are various ways that people are trying to communicate with each other using technology.**

and reorganized, the ritual of baking Noruz pastries begins.

Noruz's characteristic herald, the old tambourine man, Hajji Firuz, with his black-painted face and a red regalia, goes out in the cities and villages spreading delight among the public.

He is a messenger of health, power, happiness, and abundance for the New Year. He has a trumpet and tambourine and a traditional song: 'Hajji Firuz-e, Saali Ye Ruz-e', which means 'It is Hajji Firuz, coming only once a year'. Along with his troupe of musicians, he strolls on the streets and alleyways entertaining people.

One other preparation to welcome Noruz is called 'Kharid-e Noruzi'. It involves buying new clothes, sweets, flowers — particularly hyacinths and tulips — and the articles of 'Haft Seen.'

A book, preferably a religious one, an upright mirror, burning candles, colored eggs, an orange floating in water, a goldfish swimming in a bowl, Iranian sweetmeats, confectioneries, fruits, traditional Iranian pastries such as baghlava, 'aajee' (dried nuts, berries and raisins) which is another important component of the whole Noruz festival, and the national colors of Iran.

Noruz has its own particular dishes, too. 'Sabzi-Polo Mahi', rice with green herbs and fish, is served on the night just preceding Noruz, or on the day of Noruz.

'Eidi', new-year gift, is another characteristic feature of Noruz. Within the family, the head of the household must grant the Eidi to the members of the family. It is to be mentioned that the young visitors do not bring any gifts with them, and may only receive a gift. The rounds of visitations might last as long as twelve days, up to the day of 'Sizdah Bedar'.

Family members may play music, pour fragrant drops of rose water into one another's palms, or have a bite of sweets to usher in the holiday with all of their senses. Then comes the feast — lunch or dinner, depending on what time the equinox falls — followed by 11 days of herb-laden meals and teatime sweets. On the final day, it's traditional to retreat outdoors for a day of picnicking.

Among all Persian ancient ceremonies, Noruz with its different aspects in every region of the country is a peerless festival. It repeats and renews, generates and revives, and influences the Iranian creative soul.

## Tourism ministry to monitor Noruz travels

**TOURISM** TEHRAN — People who would go on d e s k a trip during the Noruz holidays, which begins on Saturday, will be strictly supervised by the committee of travel services coordination, the deputy tourism minister has said.

The committee, which includes members from the tourism and health ministries as well as the police personnel, will monitor the implementation of the health protocols by the tourists and travelers during the holiday, IRNA quoted Vali Teymouri as saying on Tuesday.

As people have been prevented from traveling for more than a year due to the outbreak of the coronavirus, it has been decided to ease the travel restrictions to improve society's vitality, the official added.

However, following strict health protocols on the way and in the destinations is necessary and will be monitored, he noted.

Earlier this week, the Transport and Urban Development Minister Mohammad Eslami announced that no ban on Noruz travels has been imposed for people who would



use public transport.

Earlier this month, President Hassan Rouhani declared new travel bans for cities situated in the “red” and “orange” zones to combat the new COVID-19 variant. Rouhani called on people to avoid traveling during the Iranian New Year

holidays to help contain the spread of coronavirus. He said it would be forbidden to make trips to cities marked as “red” and “orange” in terms of the prevalence of COVID-19.

“We request people to avoid traveling during Noruz holidays for the sake of their own health... It will be forbidden to travel to red and orange towns and cities,” he said. “No one should make any plans to travel to these cities,” he stressed.

Late in February, the tourism minister, Ali-Asghar Mounesan, said despite all the obstacles and issues and the outbreak of the coronavirus, the country's tourism sector is still alive and dynamic.

Noruz ceremonies and trips, if practiced under health protocols, could be beneficial for the revival of the tourism industry and handicrafts, which have been severely affected by the coronavirus pandemic in many provinces, the minister explained.

Iranians traditionally make hundreds of thousands of domestic trips during the New Year holidays, when most businesses and workplaces are closed, as are schools.

## Qajar-era public bathhouse undergoes restoration

**TOURISM** TEHRAN — Hammam-e Asgari, a Qajar-era (1789–1925) public bathhouse in the city of Bojnurd, northeastern province of North Khorasan, has undergone some rehabilitation works, the deputy provincial tourism chief has said.

With an area of 305 square meters, the aging structure is located inside Sabzeh Meidan historical complex near a caravanserai, Ali Mostofian announced on Tuesday.

Besides the bathhouse and caravanserai, Sabzeh Meidan complex consists of a bazaar, some small markets, and coffee shops, the official added.

Every year, a proper budget is allocated to the restoration and preservation of the complex, which was once the main trade center of the city, he explained.

The complex has been inscribed on the National Heritage list.

Bathhouses or 'hammams' in Iran were not only places for bathing and cleaning up. They had a social concept for people who gathered at these places weekly.

It was a place where people talked with each other



about their daily life and shared humor and news. There are still bathhouses in Iranian cities but they do not have their social function anymore since most people have bathrooms in their homes due to the modern lifestyle.

## Gang of illegal excavators arrested

**TOURISM** TEHRAN — Iranian police have recently busted a gang of illegal diggers and antique dealers in the northern province of Gilan.

Eight illegal diggers, who were trying to find relics in a historical site in the small village of Chalak were detained in this regard, said Mohammad Alipur, a senior police official in

charge of protecting cultural heritage, CHTN reported on Tuesday.

Some digging tools were seized from the culprits, who were surrendered to the judicial system for further investigation, the official added.

Gilan is well-known for its rich Iron Age cemeteries such as Marlik that have been

excavated over the past century. It was once within the sphere of influence of the successive Achaemenian, Seleucid, Parthian, and Sassanid empires that ruled Iran until the 7th century CE. The subsequent Arab conquest of Iran led to the rise of many local dynasties, and Gilan acquired an independent status that continued until 1567.



# Iran unveils, tests new COVID-19 vaccine

Fakhra vaccine is named after martyred nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh

**1 →** The process of research and development of Fakhra vaccine began in March 2020, by isolating the virus from among 35,000 samples of Iranian patients and performing various tests to identify the virus, so that the vaccine reached the experimental production stage in June 2020.

COVIRAN BAREKAT, the first coronavirus vaccine made by researchers at the Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam which was unveiled on December 29, 2020, started to be mass-produced on Monday.

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

On February 26, Iran started mass vaccination with the Russian-made Sput-



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

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

## Lake Urmia restoration should be documented as a successful plan: VP

**ENVIRONMENT** TEHRAN – The implementation process of Lake Urmia restoration program should be documented accurately and presented as a successful example of large-scale projects, First Vice-President Is'haq Jahangiri has said.

"In addition to the restoration of Lake Urmia, other projects have been done successfully in recent years with the help of universities," he highlighted.

Jahangiri made the remarks in the fourteenth meeting of the national working group for the Lake Urmia restoration, which was held on Monday, IRNA reported.

Some of the wetlands, such as Anzali, Miankaleh, and Gorgan Bay, also face problems and issues that need restoration programs, he further noted.

Lake Urmia, located in the northwest of Iran, was once the most extensive permanent hypersaline lake in the world. Unsustainable water management in response to increasing demand together with climatic extremes has given rise to the lake's depletion during the last two decades. The lake's restoration program was established in 2013 and aims to restore the lake within a 10-year program.

**Lake's surface area doubled in 6 years**  
At the beginning of the Lake Urmia Restoration Program in 2013, the Lake's level was about 1270.32 meters, 1783 square kilometers in surface area, and 1.14 billion cubic meters in volume, which indicates a 50 percent increase in the lake's surface area in comparison to the current water level.

Lake Urmia's surface area has reached 2,785 square kilometers, indicating a more than 100 percent rise compared to the lowest volume recorded in the Iranian calendar year 1393 (March 2014-March 2015).

The current level of the lake stands at 1271.24 meters, which increased by more than 1.2 meters compared to the lowest recorded amount, according to Farhad Sarkhosh, head of the Lake Urmia Restoration Program's office in West Azarbaijan province.

The volume of water also raised by 3.26 billion cubic meters, which has increased more than 5 times compared to the Iranian calendar year 1394 (March 2015-March 2016) and before the Lake Urmia Restoration Program started, he highlighted.

Last year (March 2019- March 2020), over 1.4 billion cubic meters of water released into the lake.

## Plan on population growth, family support approved



**1 →** and other relevant institutions are obliged to allocate 30 percent of their budgets to those NGOs that work to reduce the age of marriage, facilitate youth marriage, encourage childbearing and strengthen families.

Employees with three to five children will be promoted. Maternity leave will be extended to 9 months by paying all salaries and related extras.

The government is obliged to establish a life insurance and investment fund for unemployed housewives with 3 or more children living in rural and nomadic areas by paying 70 percent of the life and investment insurance premiums.

The Ministry of Health is obliged to provide quality natural childbirth in state-run hospitals in a way that is completely free for people covered by insurance and people without insurance coverage.

Municipal public transportation services and cultural, sports, and recreational tariffs will be halved.

Tuition for children in private schools and educational centers will include a 20 percent discount.

All production, distribution, and service units are obliged to include phrases with the content of childbearing

support on products and goods.

### Population growth policies

Some 14 policies to support childbearing and the family were announced by the Leader in [the Iranian calendar year] 1389 (March 2014-March 2015) when he stressed that social, cultural, and economic development should be done in accordance with these general policies to support families.

The policies address the need to increase the population and the various dimensions of it, including childbearing, facilitating marriage and strengthening the family, reproductive health, promoting the Iranian-Islamic lifestyle, empowering young people, honoring the elderly, and the environment, which can lead to an increase in the quantity and quality of the population if it is timely and continuous implemented.

Kimia Mohammadzadeh, a member of the working group for women's and family at the independent association of the University of Tehran, told Mehr news agency that thus, instead of considering family support and youth marriage, policymakers adopt policies that lead to delays in marriage and family formation.

Childbearing, which should be a public issue, became an inefficient policy due to lack of follow-up, she said.

### Demographic issues

The fertility rate in Iran has been declining over the past eight years, the lowest of which was related to the past [Iranian calendar] year (March 2019-March 2020) with a birth rate of 1.2, according to the data recently published by the Statistics Center.

The total fertility rate in simple terms refers to the total number of children born or likely to be born to a woman in her lifetime if she were subject to the prevailing rate of age-specific fertility in the population.

According to the data released by the National Organization for Civil Registration, the number of births registered during the [Iranian calendar] year 1390 (March

2011-March 2012) was equal to 1,382,118, which increased to 1,528,053 births in the [Iranian calendar] year 1395 (March 2016-March 2017).

However, the number of births in the whole country faced a downtrend over the past three years, as registered births decreased to 1,196,135 over the past [Iranian calendar] year; a difference of roughly over 120,000 to 16,000 per year.

Nicholas Eberstadt, the Henry Wendt Chair in Political Economy at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) wrote in an article in July 2020 that the fertility rate in Iran has dropped by 70 percent over the past 30 years, which has been the highest decline in human history.

Melinda Gates, an American philanthropist and co-founder of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, also wrote on her Twitter account that "The fastest decrease in the rate of childbearing per woman in the history of the world has happened in Iran!"

Seyed Hamed Barakati, deputy health minister for family and school population, said in May that Iran's population growth rate has decreased to less than one percent for the first time over the past four decades.

At the beginning of the Islamic Revolution (in 1979), the country's population grew by 2.5 percent annually, however, suddenly, population growth reached about 1.5 percent in the 1980s, he highlighted.

### Iran: the world's oldest

Mohammad Esmail Akbari, a senior advisor to the minister of health, has said that the world has grown about 5 years older over the past 70 years, but the population of Iran has unfortunately grown 10 years older in the past 60 years.

"Currently, the elderly constitute less than 10 percent of the population and we are considered a young country, but we are getting older every year so that in the next 20 years, we will be one of the oldest countries in the world and the oldest by the next 30 years," he explained.

## Climate crisis: recent European droughts 'worst in 2,000 years'

The series of severe droughts and heatwaves in Europe since 2014 is the most extreme for more than 2,000 years, research suggests.

The study analysed tree rings dating as far back as the Roman empire to create the longest such record to date. The scientists said global heating was the most probable cause of the recent rise in extreme heat.

The heatwaves have had devastating consequences, the researchers said, causing thousands of early deaths, destroying crops and igniting forest fires. Low river levels halted some shipping traffic and affected the cooling of nuclear power stations. Climate scientists predict more extreme and more frequent heatwaves and droughts in future.

The study also found a gradual drying of the summer climate in central Europe over the last two millennia, before the recent surge. The scientists ruled out volcanic activity and solar cycles as causes of this long-term trend and think subtle changes in Earth's orbit are the cause.

"We're all aware of the cluster of exceptionally hot and dry summers we've had over the past few years," said Prof Ulf Büntgen,

of Cambridge University, who led the study. "Our results show what we have experienced is extraordinary. The series is unprecedented for the last 2,000 years." The available data ends in 2018, but 2019 and 2020 also had very hot European summers.

The scientists said changes in the position of the jet stream and the circulation of air over the continent caused the droughts, and that climate change was probably the underlying driver. "Climate change [means] extreme conditions will become more frequent, which could be devastating for agriculture, ecosystems and societies as a whole," said Büntgen.

Prof Mislav Trnka, of the CzechGlobe research centre in Brno, who was part of the study team, said the sharp increase in droughts was particularly alarming for agriculture and forestry. "Unprecedented forest dieback across much of central Europe corroborates our results," he said.

Dr Friederike Otto, of Oxford University, said a lack of historic data often hindered the clear identification of the drivers of observed events, making the new work important and useful. "It corroborates from a long-term per-

spective that the huge increase in heat extremes observed over Europe in the summer, which has clearly been attributed to human-induced climate change, does indeed change the nature of summer in Europe," she said.

The study, which was published in the journal Nature Geoscience, analysed 27,000 growth rings from 147 oak trees. Living oaks were used for the last century, then timber from old buildings such as churches. For the middle ages, the researchers used oak that had been preserved in river deposits or gravel beds, and for the Roman period they used remains such as wood used to construct wells.

Previous climate reconstructions from tree rings used width and wood density to determine temperature. The Büntgen-led study used measurements of carbon and oxygen isotopes to show how much water was available to the trees, giving a record of droughts. This showed that the high frequency of recent European droughts was unprecedented, even compared with severe historical droughts such as the Renaissance drought in the early 16th century.



The wood samples come from the Czech Republic and Bavaria in Germany, and represent climate conditions across central Europe. High temperatures were the main cause of recent droughts, and these have been seen across Europe.

The climate crisis is also linked to extreme wet weather in winter. The rainfall in the UK on 3 October 2020 was the highest in records dating back to 1891, and a study published last Wednesday said this had been made three times more likely by global heating. The research by the UK Met Office also found that such downpours will be 10 times more likely by 2100 without major cuts to carbon emissions.

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## Iran to carry out cloud seeding project within two weeks

A cloud seeding project will be carried out within the next two weeks in some northern, central and southern provinces of the country, Farid Golkar, head of Iran's National Cloud Seeding Research Center, has announced.

Golkar explained that the operation will be carried out on the Zagros and Alborz Mountains in the north, Isfahan and Yazd provinces in the center, and Fars and Kerman provinces in the south.

The first cloud seeding project was launched in the Iranian calendar year 1395 (March 2016-March 2017), he stated, adding that, each operation can lead to a 10-15 percent increase in precipitation.

He went on to highlight that this year, a total budget of 70 billion rials (about \$1.6 million) has been earmarked in this regard.

## آغاز عملیات باروری ابرها تا دو هفته دیگر

عملیات بارورسازی ابرها تا دو هفته دیگر در بخش‌هایی از شمال، مرکز، و جنوب کشور انجام می‌شود.

فرید گلکار، رئیس مرکز ملی تحقیقات و مطالعات باروری ابرها، در گفت‌وگو با ایسنا، توضیح داد این عملیات روی کوهستان‌های زاگرس و البرز در شمال کشور، استان‌های اصفهان و یزد در مرکز، و استان‌های فارس و کرمان در جنوب انجام می‌شود.

او با بیان این‌که نخستین پروژه بارورسازی ابرها در سال ۱۳۹۵ انجام شد، اظهار کرد تاثیر یکبار عملیات در میزان افزایش بارش‌ها ۱۰ تا ۱۵ درصد است.

گلکار اضافه کرد: امسال هفت میلیارد تومان بودجه برای این موضوع در نظر گرفته شده است.

## LET'S LEARN PERSIAN

(Part 148)

(Source: saadifoundation.ir)

|   |
|---|
| در شهر تهران و اطراف آن، چند زیارتگاه وجود دارد.  |
| زیارتگاه امامزاده صالح در میدان تجریش، شمال تهران، بسیار معروف است.   |
| زیارتگاه جای زیارت، نذر، دعا و نماز است. بعضی از مردم برای رسیدن به آرزوی خود پول نذر می‌کنند.  |
| عده‌ای، به جای پول، آجیل و خرما و غذا به آنجا می‌برند.  |
| بعضی دیگر هم در خانه برای مردم غذا می‌پزند.   |
| مردم اغلب در روزهای چهارشنبه و تعطیلات به امامزاده صالح می‌روند. آنها گاهی با خود ناهار یا شام می‌برند و حتی از صبح تا شب در آنجا می‌مانند. |
| بازار سنتی و دیدنی تجریش هم در میدان تجریش واقع است. برای خیلی از مردم، رفتن به امامزاده صالح هم زیارت است و هم گردش و خرید.                |

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GUIDE TO  
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Heaven lies beneath the feet of mothers.  
Prophet Muhammad (S)

## “Weekend” named best Asian film at Hong Kong festival

**A R T** TEHRAN – Iranian director Ario Motevaghé's short fiction film “Weekend” has been selected as best film in the Asian New Force Category of the 26th ifva Awards, which is organized by the Hong Kong Arts Centre.

The film is about the Moniri and Kheradmand families that are in a park for a picnic. After finishing their meal, it is revealed that they are there for something else.



A poster for Iranian director Ario Motevaghé's short drama “Weekend”.

The jury members of the Asian New Force Category, Kuo Ming-jung, Felix Tsang, Cecilia Wong, Tammy Cheung and Brillante Mendoza, announced the winners on March 13.

“Drifting” by Chinese director Bo Hanxiang won the silver award in this section.

The film tells the story of Yan, an illegal second child born during the One-Child policy. To avoid government punishment, Yan's parents hid their oldest daughter in the countryside and raised Yan as a girl. Now a young adult, Yan struggles with his gender identity and being treated as an outcast in a conservative society. His sole escape is driving his father's old taxi through abandoned parking lots.

“God's Daughter Dances” by Korean filmmaker Sung-bin Byun received the special mention of the section.

The movie is about Shin-mi, a transgender female dancer who bravely faces forward with grace and style as she takes the physical examination at the Military Manpower Administration.

Iranian movies “The Visit” Azadeh Musavi, “Mina's World” by Shahu Zandi and Hamidreza Seyyed-Daryabakhsh and “Coffin Maker” by Amir Karimi were also among the finalists in this category.

In the Asian New Force Category of the 25th ifva Awards the Iranian drama “The City of Honey” by Iranian director Moein Ruholamini won the gold award.

The ifva Awards was formerly the Hong Kong Independent Short Film and Video Awards. Ifva stands for Incubator for Film and Visual media in Asia.

## “Sun Children” coming to Iranian theaters to brighten up Noruz

**A R T** TEHRAN – Iranian director Majid Majidi's acclaimed movie “Sun Children” will be screened during Noruz as the Iranian New Year holiday has been blemished by the fears of COVID-19.

The Screening Council of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance also announced on Monday that Iranian theaters have begun screening four other new movies since the past week in the ministry's annual program to enrich people's spare time during Noruz.

Director Shahram Shah-Hosseini's comedy, “Treat Humanly Once a Week”, is another movie on the Noruz lineup, which also features “Laleh” by Asadollah Niknejad, “Khun Shod” by Masud Kimiai and “Ace” by Majid Mafi.

Meanwhile, the government and Health Ministry in particular are asking people to avoid traveling due to the pandemic.

The child labor drama “Sun Children” was among the 15 movies selected for the foreign-language film category longlist at the 93rd Academy Awards. However, it failed to compete for the honor as the finalists were announced by the academy on Monday.

The film is about the 12-year-old Ali and his three friends. Together, they work hard to survive and support their families, doing small jobs in a garage and committing petty crimes to make fast money. Everything changes, however, when Ali is entrusted to find a hidden treasure underground but must first enroll at the Sun School, a charitable institution that tries to educate street kids and child laborers.

The movie had its Iranian premiere during the 38th Fajr Film Festival in Tehran in February 2020, garnering the Crystal Simorghs for best film, script and set design.

Numerous international events, including the 77th Venice Film Festival, have also screened the movie. The festival honored the film's star Ruhollah Zamani with the Marcello Mastroianni Award.

The 33rd International Film Festival for Children and Youth in Isfahan also awarded Majidi as best director and Zamani as best actor.

Strand Releasing, a leading U.S. distributor of foreign language, American independent and documentary films in theaters, on DVD/Blu-Ray and via video-on-demand, has purchased U.S. rights to “Sun Children”.

# Iran Book and Literature House unveils Iranology translations

**A R T** TEHRAN – A collection of Iranology books translated into various languages was unveiled during a special meeting at the Iran Book and Literature House in Tehran on Monday.

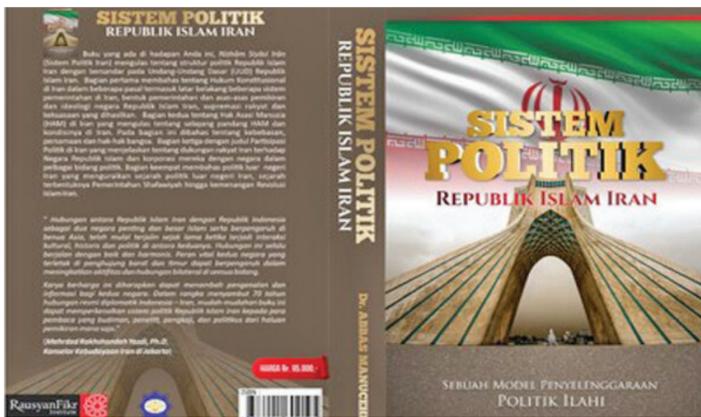
The collection is composed of 12 books published by the Iranian cultural centers working under the supervision of the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization (ICRO).

“Political System in the Islamic Republic of Iran” is one of the books, which has been published in Indonesian at the Iranian Culture Center in Jakarta. The original version has been authored by Iranian scholar Abbas Manuchehri.

A Bulgarian translation of “Iran Art History” originally written by Habibollah Ayatollahi is also among the books. The book was introduced at Sofia University earlier in December 2019.

The collection also has “Iran: Culture and Civilization” compiled and translated by the Iranian Cultural Center in Sofia. The book was introduced at the center in January 2019.

A Thai translation of “Iranology” is another book in the collection. The book was originally



Cover of the Bulgarian translation of Abbas Manuchehri's “Political System in the Islamic Republic of Iran”.

published by the Organization for Researching and Composing University Textbooks in the Humanities – SAMT in Tehran.

A Chinese translation of “Iranian Civilization” and a Kyrgyz rendition of “Iran” were also among the books.

A number of Iranian cultural attachés and ICRO officials attended the unveiling ceremony of the collection.

“One of ICRO's missions is to give a positive image of the Islamic Republic and convey the concepts of the pure Islam of the Prophet Muhammad (S) and Shia through translation and publication of books,” ICRO official Atefeh Nuri said at the meeting.

She noted that “the global arrogance” is institutionalizing Iranophobia by giving a dark image of the country in the world and added, “The ICRO and other relevant organizations should try to correct this image and introduce a real image of Islam and Iran.”

She said that the translations of Persian books by Iranian translators have caused damage to the authenticity of the books, however, the ICRO has designed a plan to employ natives to deal with the problem.

“These translators can better convey the concepts and in addition, local publishers show more interest in publishing such translations and distributing the books in local libraries and universities,” she stated.

## Iran's “Talker” wins Grand-Prix at Kyoto Intl. Student Film Festival



A poster for the Iranian movie “Talker” directed by Mehrshad Ranjbar.

**A R T** TEHRAN – Iranian movie “Talker” has won the Grand-Prix at the 23rd Kyoto International Student Film Festival in Japan.

Directed by Mehrshad Ranjbar, the film tells the story of an elderly woman who has cared for her infirm husband for many years until one day this routine ends.

The movie was also named the best student film at the 18th Tirana International Film Festival in Albania in September 2020.

Filmmakers Ohku Akiko, Hayato Kawai and Tatsuo Kobayashi were the jury members of the Kyoto festival, which came to an end on March 5.

“We Bloom” by Korean director Kim Yul-hee and Turkish filmmaker David Dincer's “The Coral Guardian” won the Semi Grand-Prix.

In “We Bloom”, every day after school, Sang-hyeon goes to Jeoung-woo's place. Jeoung-woo is always “listening” to movies at home because he is blind. Before moving away, Sang-hyeon starts recording a film.

The Akiko Ohku Award of the festival went to “Boozy Wozy Wonderland” by Japanese director Shiika Okada.

“Pick-up” by Korean director Roh Do-hyeon received the Hayato Kawai Award while the Tatsuo Kobayashi Award was given to “Young, Fragile” by director Joscha Bongard.

The festival screened 15 works carefully selected by the executive committee from a total of 372 entries and special screenings.

Due to the pandemic, the Kyoto International Student Film Festival was organized online for the first time.

## Persian influences in English and American literature

Although academic Persian studies may be said to have begun in England in the early 17th century with the establishment of chairs in Arabic at the two leading universities at Cambridge and Oxford, it was not until the late 18th century that the Persian poets began to be read in English translations. This was due to the linguistic and literary skills of Sir William Jones and to the fact that Persian was the official language at the Indian courts. Thus, when Pitt's India Act of 1784 brought the East India Company under direct control of the British crown, a veritable crash program in Persian studies was launched both at home and in India that would soon make the names of the Persian poets almost as familiar to English readers as those of classical Greece and Rome. The importance of India to Persian studies is attested by the fact that Sir William Jones himself, when called to India to head the new judicial system, threatened, as he wrote to Edward Gibbon, to drown his Persian books deeper than plummet ever sounded, for lack of patronage, when he was called to India to head the new judicial system.

Jones's Persian Grammar, his various graceful translations of Hafez and his fellows, his learned discourses on the poetry of Persia and India all served to bring about what he had dreamed of as a young orientalist: that the cultivation of this newly discovered literature would provide English poets with “a new set of images and similitudes and [that] a number of excellent compositions would be brought to light, which future scholars might explain, and future poets might imitate”. This was patently a program for the Romantic Age in English literature, even though Jones was a neo-classicist who chose to call Ferdowsi “the Persian Homer” and Hafez “the Persian Anacreon.” It was some time before readers saw the Persian poets in their own dress and English poets imitated them.

Most of the poets and poetasters of the Romantic era, as distinguished from Jones and his orientalist associates, had little if any competency in the Persian language, though the temptation was strong to enter the field. William Wordsworth's clergyman uncle wished that the young poet would take up the study of oriental languages. Samuel Coleridge once hoped for a cadetship in the East India service. Percy Shelley, it seems, actually began the study of Arabic, though his little poem entitled “From the Arabic” is more like an imitation of Jones's translations than an original:

My faint spirit was sitting in the light / Of thy looks, my love;

It panted for thee like the hind at noon / For the brooks, my love.

The internal rhyme followed by a refrain captures the music of the ghazal. R. M. Hewitt points out another ghazal device in a poem of Shelley's that is not otherwise oriental: Less oft is peace in Shelley's mind / Then calm in waters seen.

Whether accidental or intentional, this verse has the taste for the “high-seasoned garb of barbarians,” but apparently he could not resist joining the party with his nine poems from the Arabic and Persian. Robert Southey had an equally low opinion of the Arabic and Persian imitations and translations, but he based his *Thalaba* and *The Curse of Kehama* on fairly wide readings in orientalia.

Although Lord Byron nastily called these works of Southey his “unsaleables,” the fact is that they caught popular fancy. One American reviewer asserted that Southey's treatment of Persian mythology was superior to Ferdowsi's.

Byron and Thomas Moore were only slightly more authentic in their orientaling. Byron ridiculed one Robert Stott for having the effrontery to use “Hafez” as a *nom de plume*, but his rebuke shows him as capable of giving offense as seeing it: “What would be the sentiments of the Persian



The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam translated by Edward Fitzgerald.

Anacreon, Hafiz, could he rise from his splendid sepulchre at Sheeraz (where he reposes with Ferdousi and Sadi, the Oriental Homer and Catullus) and behold his name assumed by one Stott of Dromore, the most impudent and execrable of literary poachers for the Daily Impulse?”

Comparing Sadi with Catullus and burying Ferdowsi next to Hafez and Sadi were Byron's very own blunders. Yet Byron appears to have fooled Jeffrey of the Edinburgh Review into believing that “The Giaour”, one of his so-called Turkish tales, was a genuine translation since it contained words like “kiosk”, “muezzin”, “Palampore”, and “ataghan”. It is possible to judge how calculated all this Eastern coloration of Western Romantic literature was from Byron's note to Thomas Moore explaining: “The little I have done in this way is merely a voice in the wilderness for you; and if it has had any success that also will prove that the public are orientaling, and pave the path for you.”

Moore did, indeed, cash in, for he learned one day that his famed Bendemeer's song from “Lallah Rookh” had been translated into Persian and was being sung in that language on the streets of Isfahan.

Yet when all was said and done, the Romantic poets provided a very superficial adaptation of the materials of Persian poetry. Victorian authors had the advantage of a more serious concern for the content of Persian poetry and, thanks to the German orientalists, a more accurate view of the forms in which that poetry was written. Goethe's enthusiasm for the German translations of Persian poetry by Josef von Hammer inspired not only a major author such as Ralph Waldo Emerson in the United States, but also secondary authors in England such as Clarence Mangan, R. C. Trench, and Monckton Milnes, to produce imitations twice removed, as it were, from the Persian originals. The Germans also took more seriously the Sufi mysticism pervading Persian poetry. Edward B. Cowell, the chief advocate of the poetry, would not go all the way with a Sufistic interpretation, but he saw something more in Hafez than a “Persian Anacreon.” Cowell played a major role in bringing a genuine Persian strain into the main stream of Victorian literature through his acquaintance with Edward FitzGerald and Alfred Tennyson.

First it is fitting to turn to the national poet of Persia, Ferdowsi, and to the special appeal that he held for another major Victorian figure, Matthew Arnold. Sir William Jones had once proposed that a proper Greek tragedy might be made of the best known episode from the Persian epic, the *Shahnameh*; namely, the story of the death of the youth Sohrab at the hands of his warrior father Rostam. Arnold had no knowledge of the Persian original, but he had read a synopsis (not entirely accurate) of the episode in Sir John Malcolm's *History of Persia*. Later Arnold came upon a detailed review by the critic St. Beuve of Jules Mohl's ongoing French translation of the Persian epic. Arnold's lengthy poem “Sohrab

and Rustum”, composed in blank verse, had a Homeric tone that he thought would impart classical health and vigor to the dominantly querulous poetry of the age, including his own melancholic verses. As it turned out, Ferdowsi's native fatalism was in perfect harmony with Arnold's melancholy.

Tennyson's early poetry in *Poems by Two Brothers* showed him to be in what might be called the “Sir William Jones phase of orientaling,” but Tennyson's next volumes, according to his friends Hallam and Milnes who reviewed them, revealed a more serious interest in “yonder shining orient.” His response to Persian poetry, at any rate, led him to undertake the study of the language, perhaps as early as the late 1840s, certainly by the mid-fifties when, according to his son, Tennyson strained his eyes by peering too long at small Persian script. His mentors were, it would seem, Cowell and FitzGerald. There has been some argument about the extent of Tennyson's involvement in Persian poetry.

Unquestionably, the most far-reaching influence from Persian poetry upon the life and literature of England and America came from Edward FitzGerald's *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*. It not only replaced Thomas Gray's “Elegy” as the most popular poem in the English language, but also laid the basis for a philosophical and sociological cult that was determined to liberate the bourgeois European mind from its neo-classical or Calvinist or Victorian restraints. This, in turn, produced an anti-cult that at its most extreme regarded the *Rubaiyat* as a sort of ethical plague that threatened the destruction of all moral values. The story of the *Rubaiyat* is a history unto itself, that can only be touched upon here. A particularly interesting study is D'Ambrosio's account of T. S. Eliot's youthful “possession” by FitzGerald's translation when he came upon it at age fourteen and his equally strong rejection of it in his maturity.

The popularity of this translation was so tyrannous among both general readers and serious critics that it affected the reputations of all other Persian poets in Europe, with the possible exception of Ferdowsi. Hafez, the favorite of the Romantics, came to be regarded as a latter-day Khayyam. Some of his ghazals were translated into quatrains, as were also some of the didactic verses of Sadi. Academic scholars sought to maintain some semblance of balance by stressing the importance of the mystical poets Farid ad-Din Attar, Jalal ad-Din Rumi, and Abd al-Rahman Jami. Reynold A. Nicholson asked: “What should they know of Persia who only Omar know?” He and his successor at Cambridge, Arthur J. Arberry, devoted a good portion of their scholarship to editing and translating the works of Rumi. Yet it cannot be said that any of the Persian mystics found a FitzGerald who could give the Persian poet the literary standing he deserved, although Dick Davis' Conference of the Birds translated with Akhram Darbandi is a very successful rendering of Attar's *Manteq al-tayr*.

A Scottish clergyman and Hegelian philosopher did, indeed, hope that his adaptations of some of Rumi's ghazals from Rueckert's German versions would demonstrate the moral superiority of Rumi over Khayyam. But the subtitle of William Hastie's little book of poems reveals that the villain in the piece played a larger role than the hero.

It is perhaps fitting that this survey should end with a familiar complaint about what English taste has done to Persian poets in their English language dress: “It is characteristic that Omar Khayyam, rather than Ferdowsi, or Rumi or Hafiz, should be the best known Persian poet in the West; it is characteristic that Khayyam's own reputation should be based on a translation which is Victorian and in fact very much an English poem of the Victorian temper; and finally, it is characteristic that Robert Graves, the only major English poet who has so far addressed himself to Persian poetry, should return to the well-known *Rubaiyat* and not to much greater Persian poets, like Hafiz and Rumi, whose work lies buried under uninspired and unreadable translations.” (Not entirely true; not entirely wrong!)

(Source: *Encyclopedia Iranica*)