



**Iran rules out any gradual lifting of sanctions** *Page 2*



**Persepolis held by Shahr Khodro: IPL** *Page 3*



**Noruz visits to Iranian museums falls by one-fifth due to virus** *Page 6*



**IIDCYA makes animations on national luminaries** *Page 8*

# Failure of decades of wickedness

See page 3



**Gando, the most watched thriller in Iran during Noruz, sheds light on Britain's recent machinations in the country**

## Iran's petchem production capacity rises 13.5m tons

**BY EBRAHIM FALLAHI**  
The capacity of Iranian petrochemical production increased by 13.5 million tons in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20) following the inauguration of 12 new petrochemical projects across the country.

With the inauguration of the mentioned projects which were defined under the framework of the petrochemical industry's second leap, the country's total petrochemical production capacity has now reached 83.5 million tons.

According to the National Petrochemical Company (NPC), the second leap of the petrochemical industry is going to be realized in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 21) to boost the country's annual petrochemical revenues up to \$25 billion.

The third leap of the industry, which is aimed to increase the revenues from the mentioned sector to \$37 billion, is also planned to take place in the Iranian calendar year 1404 (begins in March 2025).

According to the Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, the country's petrochemical production capacity has nearly doubled over the past eight years.

"The petrochemical production capacity is expected to reach 100 million tons in the current year and this shows that a lot of work has been done. The revenues from the petrochemical industry have helped us during the years of economic war and sanctions," Rouhani said earlier.

The president noted that 17 petrochemical projects worth about \$12 billion were planned to be inaugurated across the country to realize the second leap of the industry, of which 12 were put into operation in the previous year and the rest will go operation this year.

Takht Jamshid Petrochemical Complex in Khuzestan Province, Miandoab Petrochemical Complex in West Azarbaijan Province, Kaveh Petrochemical Complex in Bushehr Province, Lorestan Petrochemical Complex in Lorestan Province, and Middle East Kimiaye Pars Complex in Bushehr Province were among the projects inaugurated during the previous year.

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

*Continued on page 4*

## Iran offers condolences on death of top WCC official Ghada Hijjawi

TEHRAN – Iranian tourism minister Ali-Asgar Mounesan offered condolences on Friday on the death of the World Crafts Council-Asia Pacific Region (WCC-APR) President Ghada Hijjawi, who died of COVID-19, praising her deep acquaintance with Persian handicrafts.

"Hijjawi was well aware of the unique potential of Iranian handicrafts," Mounesan said. Her seriousness in developing, promoting, and supporting human artifacts was admirable, the minister added. The late Hijjawi always had an effective relationship with the member states of the World Crafts Council, and in the meantime, with her deep knowledge of the unique capacities of Iranian handicrafts, she had a constructive interaction with (Iran's) Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, Mounesan said.

"During her tenure, she took firm steps towards achieving the goals of the World Crafts Council, with a special focus on the original arts and crafts of the peoples of the planet."

Our country is ranked first in the number of global registrations of cities and villages of handicrafts, he added.

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

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

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

*Continued on page 6*

## Protests for prisoners: Rallies hit 18 districts across Bahrain

Protesters have taken to the streets in Bahrain to show solidarity with political prisoners and call for their immediate release as the ruling Al Khalifah regime presses ahead with its cruel clampdown on human rights advocates and opposition figures in the tiny Persian Gulf kingdom.

On Friday evening, protesters staged rallies in more than 18 regions under the motto "Friday of Prisoners' Rage" to denounce Bahraini authorities' mistreatment of jailed activists, and their miserable conditions at detention centers especially in light of the coronavirus pandemic.

The demonstrators carried Bahrain's national flags and chanted anti-regime slogans in the villages of al-Malkiya, al-Maqsha, Southern Sehla, Diraz, Bu Quwah and al-Dair as they called for the immediate release of the inmates, Press TV reported.

The participants held Bahrain's monarch King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifah fully responsible for

the wellbeing of prisoners of conscience being kept behind bars in crowded jails.

The Protesters said the coronavirus outbreak has exacerbated the situation of the prisoners – some of whom have lost their lives to the highly contagious respiratory disease.

Bahrainis also held similar demonstrations in the villages of Abu Saiba, Shakhurah, al-Markh, Nuwaidrat, Shahrakan and Tubli as well as Salmabad and Sanad towns, where they held up the pictures of their imprisoned loved ones as well as those of prominent opposition figures, including Zakia al-Barbouri, who was charged to five years in prison on February 6, 2019, and had her citizenship revoked in a politically-motivated case.

On Thursday, Bahrain's most prominent Shia cleric Sheikh Isa Qassim warned that political dissidents in Bahraini prisons are facing deaths and demanded their immediate release.

## Huge whiffs of desperation in Washington now...

**BY MARTIN LOVE**

How grand that China and Iran have finally formalized, after several years of waiting, a 25 year (and likely more) "strategic agreement" that's going to encompass not just trade and economies, but also cultural, educational, medical and other spheres, too. It's all a part of what the U.S. despises most and is doing whatever it can to disrupt and halt – China's peaceful Belt and Road initiative binding, if not absolutely cementing, expanded trade and mutually ben-

eficial relations across Asian countries at least between China up towards Europe. And to boot, Russia and China are closer in spirit than they have ever been before, and both countries are working hard to pull away from what reliance they have had on the U.S. dollar.

Meanwhile, especially of late, one can quite easily catch whiffs of desperation in Washington while the U.S. sinks slowly into a morass of its own making over the past three decades. The desperation is obvious. For example, there's the

matter of the Nordstream 2 gas pipeline which is about 90 percent complete between Russia and Germany and the U.S. is desperate to stop it altogether and sell much more expensive LNG to Germany and Europe. Even a fool would wonder why Europe would ever buy the expensive gas if given a sound and reliable alternative supply, but again the U.S. is desperate to cast itself as Europe's protector, its Big Daddy, as it has been generally or claimed to be since the end of World War 2.

*Continued on page 2*

## EU failed to address COVID crisis: Canadian historian

**BY MOHAMMAD MAZHARI**

Pointing to populism as a key problem threatening the future of the European Union, a Canadian historian says that the EU has failed to address the COVID crisis.

"In Italy and Spain, the numbers were alarming," David R. Marples tells the Tehran Times.

While the majority of countries in Europe are falling short on tracking coronavirus variants, such as those first detected in the UK, South Africa and Brazil, meaning more contagious strains are spreading undetected, Europe now remains the epicenter of the coronavirus.

The COVID crisis revealed Europe's weaknesses when it comes to health and social equality.

Marples says the EU suffers threats like populism and internal struggles as well.

"I think the key problems are populism and reaching a consensus on issues like the Nord Stream pipeline, which has divided Germany and some of the others," Marples notes.

Following is the text of the interview:

**Do you think that the U.S. and Europe have been successful in containing the Coronavirus? What are the COVID-19 implications for America and the EU?**

In general, no. COVID-19 has had very adverse effects in the United States, which was in denial in the early part of the Trump presidency and belatedly addressed it. The EU is too large to cover in a single statement but in Italy and Spain, the numbers were alarming. COVID-19 has caused short-term economic dilemmas and demonstrated the need for international cooperation when dealing with a pandemic.

*Continued on page 5*



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## Street sweepers getting COVID-19 vaccine

On Saturday, the first group from a total of 500 street sweepers received the coronavirus vaccine in the city of Arak, central Markazi province.

According to the national vaccination document, vaccination against coronavirus started with priority given to health workers, vulnerable and high-risk groups, and then ordinary people will receive the vaccine.

On January 27, Health Minister Saeed Namaki said that Iran will soon be one of the world's important manufacturers of the COVID-19 vaccine.



## All-in-one dialogue: A smarter way to be tough on Iran

By Azin Sahabi

**TEHRAN** — Nearly all prominent American think tanks with a determinant role in U.S. security and foreign policymaking have focused on President Joe Biden's pledge to revitalize the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

American nuclear policy and non-proliferation experts mention that this stated attitude towards the JCPOA by Washington might have led to some sort of convergence between the U.S. and Iran.

They believe that at the time being, notwithstanding the long-time acrimonious relationship between Tehran and Washington, both capitals concur on the necessity to restore core elements of the 2015 nuclear deal.

In this context, Arms Control Association with Daryl G. Kimball as Executive Director and Kelsey Davenport, Director for Nonproliferation Policy, have elaborated on the issue.

The think tank publishes a monthly flagship magazine titled "Arms Control Today" which contains authoritative information and analysis on arms control as well as negotiations, agreements, and related national security news.

In volume 5 of the journal released in April 2012, Naysan Rafati, an expert on the Iran nuclear deal and regional policies, has written an article titled "The Arduous Path to Restoring the Iran Nuclear Deal" in which he underlines that while both Tehran and Washington have stated their commitment to restoring the JCPOA, the current dynamics indicate that actions speak louder than words.

With deep bilateral mistrust as the primary impediment towards a revival of the JCPOA, Rafati says, "The shared strategic imperative of full mutual compliance remains out of reach so long as a tactical deadlock continues on how to achieve it."

In a piece of opinion on September 13, 2020, on CNN website, Biden as a vocal critique of Donald Trump's maximum pressure strategy against Iran, described Trump's Iran policy as "a dangerous failure". The headline of his article was "There's a smarter way to be tough on Iran."



Both Tehran and Washington are strongly reluctant to take the first initial move to step out of the current political stalemate. Against the backdrop, Rafati proffers some recommendations as potential solutions to break the diplomatic impasse.

He believes that to conduct a "surgery" on the JCPOA, "triage" must be considered as the substantive and foundational step and writes: "One potential solution would be to identify initial steps that each can take in parallel, thereby sidestepping the question of unilateral concessions in favor of mutual, reciprocal action."

Rafati defends keeping existing U.S. sanctions and accuses Iran of sponsoring terrorism and breaching the JCPOA. He writes: "For example, the United States could work with South Korea on the partial release of frozen Iranian assets, which might, in turn, be earmarked for purchases of COVID vaccines and other medical goods."

The analyst adds: "In return, Tehran could end one of its more worrisome nuclear breaches, such as the recently initiated production of uranium metal or uranium enrichment to 20 percent U-235."

The think tank argues shaping such an initial understanding may facilitate the way for both Tehran and Washington to "unwind their nuclear breaches and sanctions, respectively."

The Trump administration imposed more than 1,500 designations against Iranian individuals and entities.

In turn, Tehran has declared that a U.S. compliance with the JCPOA means the entire rollback of all the sanctions.

Given that Secretary of State Antony Blinken has said that an Iranian full return to the JCPOA would trigger "some sanctions relief", Rafati claims that Iran's precondition is "maximalist demand unlikely to be realized."

For the White House, as the analyst admits, the JCPOA is "necessary but insufficient diplomatic initiative." As Blinken and other U.S. officials have reiterated, the U.S. seeks a "longer and stronger" nuclear deal, to be constructed on top of a fully reinstated JCPOA.

The expert argues that the 2015 JCPOA talks indicate that considering wider regional issues such as Saudi Arabia and Israel's concerns is essential for brokering an effective, sustainable deal. In this context, the expert recommends: "An effort at the de-escalation in the (Persian) Gulf may be the most feasible starting point."

A few months before the U.S. presidential elections in November 2020, the Democratic nominee proposed his playbook for dealing with Iran's nuclear program based on three main pillars.

To draw the outlines of his agenda, Biden wrote: "First, I will make an unshakable commitment to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon."

"Second, I will offer Tehran a credible path back to diplomacy. If Iran returns to strict compliance with the nuclear deal, the United States would rejoin the agreement as a starting point for follow-on negotiations."

"Third, we will continue to push back against Iran's destabilizing activities, which threaten our friends and partners in the region."

Reiterating U.S.'s commitment to providing Israel with security assistance, Biden mentions the record-setting U.S.-Israel agreement signed when he was vice president and wrote: "America will also work closely with Israel to ensure it can defend itself against Iran and its proxies."

On U.S. sanctions on Iran, Biden openly stated: "We will continue to use targeted sanctions against Iran's human rights abuses, its support for (what he called) terrorism and ballistic missile program."

Reviewing Biden's opinion on CNN before arriving at the White House indicates that his roadmap for pressuring Tehran was already set out. Biden's White House has taken some symbolic steps to show goodwill such as easing the Trump-era restrictions on the movement of New York-based Iranian diplomats and rescinding a Trump administration assertion that all UN sanctions had been reimposed on Iran in September. However, all sanctions are still in place and the configuration of Iran's team at the Oval Office may tell another story. With Richard Nephew, the architect of Washington's economic siege as the right-hand man of Robert Malley, opening the window of rapprochement seems a bridge too far.

In other words, as Biden put in September 2020, a tougher agenda to confront the Islamic Republic smartly is on the table at the current democratic Oval Office.

# Biden's Iran envoy: U.S. has to lift sanctions inconsistent with nuclear deal

POLITICAL  
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**TEHRAN** — Washington has to lift those sanctions that are inconsistent with the 2015 nuclear deal if Iran is prepared to reverse its retaliatory measures in reducing its commitments to the deal, Robert Malley, President Biden's special envoy for Iran, has said.

Malley's remarks came after the Joint Commission of the JCPOA, which is led by the European Union foreign policy chief, held a virtual meeting on Friday in which the participants agreed to meet on Tuesday in Vienna with the participation of the U.S. but there will be no direct talks between Iran and the U.S.

"It's been many years since the United States has had that kind of engagement with Iran. It's going to be indirect. But we have seen the product of several years in which the Trump administration had tried to impose maximum pressure on Iran, withdrawing from the deal, trying to get Iran to surrender," Malley said in an interview with PBS' Judy Woodruff.

Malley added, "Our goal is to see whether we could agree on a roadmap back to com-



pliance for both sides."

State Department spokesperson Ned Price called the resumption of negotiations, scheduled for Tuesday in Vienna, "a healthy

step forward." But Price added, "These remain early days, and we don't anticipate an immediate breakthrough as there will be difficult discussions ahead."

## Iran using new advanced centrifuges at Natanz

POLITICAL  
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**TEHRAN** — The Atomic Energy Organization of Iran has started feeding uranium into cluster of 174 IR-2m centrifuges at the Natanz nuclear facility, the IAEA confirmed in a report on Thursday.

"On 31 March 2021, the Agency verified at FEP [Fuel Enrichment Plant] that: Iran had begun feeding natural UF6 into a fourth cascade of 174 IR-2m centrifuges," the report, dated Wednesday, said.

UF6 stands for uranium hexafluoride - the chemical compound used in the process of uranium enrichment.

Iran has been gradually reducing its commitments to the 2015 nuclear deal according to which economic and financial sanctions against Iran were going to be terminated in exchange for a curb on Tehran's nuclear activities.

Now, the administration of U.S. President Joe Biden looks to

rejoin the accord but the two sides are at odds who must restore compliance first.

Iran has said it has not quit the nuclear deal to return to it. It says it has only taken remedial measures in accordance to paragraph 36 of the JCPOA which has provided "a mechanism to resolve disputes and allows one side, under certain circumstances, to stop complying with the deal if the other side is out of compliance."

## Joint Iran-Iraq committee to pursue Gen. Soleimani assassination

→ 1

Both commanders were highly popular because of their key role in dealing a severe blow to the Daesh terrorist group in the region, particularly in Iraq and Syria. Elsewhere in his remarks, Baqeri Kani referred to the February 8-11 visit by Iran's Judiciary Chief Ebrahim Raisi to Iraq.

Among the issues raised during the trip was Iran-Iraq cooperation regarding the assassination case, he said.

"In this regard, a joint committee has been formed. On behalf of Iraq, the deputy

attorney general and on behalf of Iran, the deputy Tehran prosecutor are represented in this committee," the official noted.

"The process of investigating the assassination of Martyr Soleimani is supposed to be followed as seriously and swiftly as possible within the framework of the joint committee between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Iraq."

On the first anniversary of the cowardly assassination operation, a Baghdad court issued an arrest warrant for Trump as part

of its investigation into the targeted killings.

Iran also issued a warrant for the arrest of Trump and asked Interpol to relay it as a "red notice" to other police forces around the world.

The assassination of General Soleimani was an open violation of Iraq's sovereignty.

Only ISIS celebrated the assassination of the legendary commander.

On the first anniversary of the general's martyrdom, Iran's Foreign Ministry described the U.S. and ISIS as "brothers in arms."

Nader Entessar, a professor emeritus of political science from the University of South Alabama, has praised General Soleimani's shrewdness in devising asymmetrical "warfare strategies" against terrorists, calling his abilities "unmatched".

"His military acumen, ability to devise asymmetrical anti-terrorism warfare strategies, and bringing together unruly groups to work together were unmatched," Entessar told the Tehran Times as Iran marked the first anniversary of his martyrdom.

## Huge whiffs of desperation in Washington now...

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and as well demonize both Russia and China as dangers to Europe and even Africa, and they are anything but that in fact. The slow transition underway to a New World Order frightens the bejesus out of Washington and its efforts to shore up its relevance by insisting that the "order" it wants to maintain or further impose makes sense in a world that aches for multilateralism and peaceful relations after 30 years or more of bellicose disruptions largely spawned by the U.S. and its alleged NATO allies.

What are those garbage assertions from Washington about a "rules based" international order, as if it's a principled goal? One must ask, "what rules"? The U.S. in fact abides by no "rules" but its own arrogance where anything especially military goes and nothing at all is fixed and reliable and honest. The idea of a "rules based" order sounds good on the surface but it's really just a sham which anyone with an IQ of 90 and maybe even less ought to perceive. What could be witnessed this decade is a U.S. that like the huge cargo ship Ever Given stuck in the Suez Canal temporarily, the U.S. could be similarly stuck and going nowhere permanently.

President Biden, in any case, had just put forth a rather lame notion that maybe the U.S. along with other countries create its own initiative to rival China's Belt and Road to prevent China from becoming more powerful than it already is with an economy that by some metrics already equals or surpasses the U.S. He claims that the U.S. must mount rival infrastructure projects with allies like the U.K. to assist countries like China has been doing. Is this idea going to take off? Not likely. One reason why not is because America's infrastructure is as shoddy as any Third World country and Biden must first attend to trying to upgrade the U.S., which does not, to cite just one aspect of it, have a single decent high-speed passenger rail line! Soon to be unveiled in Washington is an infrastructure plan costing several more trillions of dollars on top of the recent \$2 trillion Covid relief outlays.


This is almost a joke because the U.S. is virtually broke with the Federal Reserve Bank literally conjuring up "money" out of thin air. It is, in fact, a race between

getting anything done before the U.S. dollar and the U.S. itself virtually collapses into a burning dumpster of wildly inflated fiat "money" and broken dreams.

One must ask, how in the world can the U.S. accomplish much of anything positive unless the government raises taxes dramatically and cuts the Pentagon's budget by at least two thirds and closes most of its 800 plus military bases scattered across the globe? The truth is, it can't. A majority of the members of the U.S. Congress for one thing abhor tax raises because voting for them threatens their job tenure in Congress, and slashing the U.S. military footprint has long been off limits for purblind legislators who mistakenly believe that military might is the sine qua non of U.S. influence and power. It's not, as China has demonstrated by not starting wars, and remember the U.S. has literally not won a war it has started or supported in decades,

not even the war to topple little Syria and the Assad government there at Israel's behest. Not to mention Vietnam, Iraq, Libya, Yemen, etcetera, unless "winning" constitutes mayhem, death, destruction and chaos.


This latter concept of a "win" is something that Washington could never admit to because if it did the U.S. would destroy utterly what's left of its respect and influence overseas. Already the U.S., to cite just one bad move, is backing away from its agreement with the Taliban in Afghanistan to pull out troops in May. Australian writer Caitlin Johnstone put it most succinctly when she wrote recently: "U.S. intelligence agencies have warned the Biden Administration that if the U.S. withdraws its military presence from Afghanistan under current circumstances, the nation would be at severe risk of falling under the control of the people who actually live there."



### Did you know that 400 Sunni religious schools under the auspices of the Secretariat of the Planning Council of Sunni religious schools of the country are teaching and training students of religious sciences?

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

SYMPTOMS



## Zarif to start tour of Central Asia

POLITICAL  
d e s k

**TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif will take a tour of the Central Asian states of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, the Foreign Ministry announced on Saturday.

The trip will start from April 5 and will last until April 8.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said promoting "civilizational, historical and cultural" affinities with Central Asian states have been among Iran's priorities.

The spokesman also said the focus of Zarif's talks with the officials of these countries will be on bilateral and regional cooperation.

A few days ago, Zarif visited Tajikistan, another Central Asian state, for a conference on Afghanistan. Some other countries participated in the meeting titled "Heart of Asia". It was hosted by Dushanbe.

While in Dushanbe, Zarif held talks with the Tajik president and foreign minister.



## SPORTS

## Two Iranian wrestlers banned for four years

**SPORTS** **TEHRAN** — Iran's National Anti-Doping Organization (NADO) has imposed a four-year ban on two wrestlers.

Masoud Kamarvand and Arman Tahmasebi have been banned from all sport for a period of four years after they tested positive for prohibited substances.

Freestyler Kamarvand has been banned for using anabolic steroid stanozolol. His suspension has started from Jan. 24.

Tahmasebi has been banned for using steroid anabolic boldenone from Jan. 31 until Jan. 30, 2025.

## Iran to send eight powerlifters to Tbilisi 2021 World Cup

**SPORTS** **TEHRAN** — Iran will send eight athletes to the 2021 Para Powerlifting World Cup.

The competition will be held in Tbilisi, Georgia from May 20 to 23.

Iran has earned six spots for the Paralympic Games. The 2021 Para Powerlifting World Cup will be one of the final qualification events for athletes aspiring to compete at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games.

The 16th Summer Paralympic Games are scheduled to be held in Tokyo, Japan between 24 August and 5 September 2021.

## Mojtaba Khorshidi named Machine Sazi coach

**SPORTS** **TEHRAN** — Mojtaba Khorshidi has been named as new head coach of Iranian football team Machine Sazi on Saturday.

The former Rah Ahan coach replaced interim coach Saeid Akhbari.

Struggling team Machine Sazi are on the verge of disbanding due to the financial problems.

The team are scheduled to meet Gol Gohar Sirjan on Monday. Machine Sazi sit bottom of the table in Iran Professional League with nine points from 18 matches.

## Issa Alekasir serves his six-month ban

**SPORTS** **TEHRAN** — Persepolis football team striker Issa Alekasir is eligible to play for the team after six-month.

Alekasir was handed a six-month ban by the Asian Football Confederation for a "discriminatory gesture" on October 3 after making a slant-eyed gesture to television cameras after scoring against Uzbekistan's Pakhtakor in the quarterfinals of the 2020 AFC Champions League.

He was fielded in the match against Shahr Khodro in Iran Professional League on Saturday, where Persepolis were held to a 1-1 draw.

Alekasir will be a key member for Persepolis in Iran Professional League and 2021 AFC Champions League.

## Junior World Weightlifting Championships relocated to Uzbekistan

**SPORTS** **TEHRAN** — The 2021 IWF Junior World Weightlifting Championships have been relocated to Uzbekistan.

The gold qualifier event for the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games, was originally set to be held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

The competition will now be hosted in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, from May 23-31, 2021.

Iran will send the female team to the event for the first time ever.

## Iran to partake at Asia Oceania Judo Championship

**SPORTS** **TEHRAN** — Iran sent a five-member team to Kyrgyzstan on Saturday to participate in the Asia Oceania Judo Championship.

The competition will be held in Bishkek, capital of Kyrgyzstan from April 4 to 10.

The Bishkek competition offers valuable points to qualify for the Tokyo Olympic Games starting on July 23.

Mohammad Mohammadi Barimanloo (-73kg), Amin Kamyabi (-81kg), Ghasem Baghchehi (-90kg), Ali Parhizkar (-100kg) and Saeid Karaji (+100kg) will participate in the seven-day competition.

## Persepolis held by Shahr Khodro: IPL

**SPORTS** **TEHRAN** — Persepolis football team came from behind to draw 1-1 with Shahr Khodro in Iran Professional League (IPL) Matchday 19 on Saturday.

Amin Ghaseiniyeh gave the hosts a lead just before the interval and Persepolis midfielder Milad Sarlak equalized the match in the 69th minute.

Persepolis created several chances but the team's players failed to capitalize on their chances.

In Tehran, Esteghlal and Paykan shared the spoils in a goalless draw. Tractor played out a goalless draw against Mes Rafsanjan in Tabriz.

Nassaji defeated Naft Masjed Soleyman 2-0 thanks to goals from Hossein Zamehram and Reza Dehghani.

Zob Ahan edged past Sanat Naft 1-0 in Isfahan courtesy of a goal from Farshad Mohammadi Mehr.

On Monday, Gol Gohar will host struggling Machine Sazi and Sepahan meet Saipa in Tehran.

Persepolis sit top of the table with 38 points, one points ahead of Sepahan who have a game in hands.

## Failure of decades of wickedness

Gando, the most watched thriller in Iran during Noruz, sheds light on Britain's recent machinations in the country

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — An eye-catching sequel to a true-life TV series featuring Iranian intelligence battle against foreign espionage has sparked broader debate among ordinary Iranians as well as public figures about British hostile activities against Iran.

Produced by Mojtaba Amini, the series, Gando 2, is a true-life story of the sacrifices made by an Iranian intelligence agency in combating British efforts to establish a spy network in Iran, one that is tasked with collecting highly confidential information about Iran's nuclear negotiations and its economy in the midst of a Western economic pressure campaign against the country.

Gando 2 portrays the British embassy in Tehran as being actively implicated in the espionage. It uses a visa-issuing process to recruit spies from among top Iranian officials, provides accommodation and diplomatic cover for MI6 agents, and exploits its diplomatic status to oversee and direct moles in Iran.

Up until now, the British embassy has remained silent on the series, refusing comment on it. But this silence did not dissuade Iranians from all walks of life from highlighting British malign activities in Iran over the course of history. Some even pointed to the most recent machinations by the British embassy in Tehran involving the British ambassador to Iran, Rob Macaire.

In January 2020, the British ambassador, who tries his best to get closer to ordinary Iranians by doing many things such as reciting popular Persian poems, was briefly arrested by Iranian security forces in front of Amir Kabir University of Tehran, where a mob of protesters gathered to protest the crash of a Ukrainian airliner a few days earlier. Macaire was accused of instigating unrest in a situation fraught with anger.

The ambassador denied the accusation, saying he didn't participate in any protest.

"Can confirm I wasn't taking part in any demonstrations! Went to an event advertised as a vigil for victims of PS752 tragedy. Normal to want to pay respects-some of victims were British. I left after 5 mins, when some started chanting," he tweeted on January 12, 2020.

The arrest of the ambassador quickly came to an end and Macaire continued



to do his job in Tehran after a short visit to his home country.

The Gando 2 series reminded Iranians of much older British subversive activities in Iran, most notably the 1953 coup that overthrew the democratically-elected Prime Minister of Iran Mohammad Mossadegh.

The prime minister went down in history as the man who stood against the British and American rapacity and prevented them from plundering Iranian resources- not for so long.

British and American firms had for decades controlled oil wealth in Iran and other countries in the region. But when the Arabian-American Oil Company in Saudi Arabia reached a fifty-fifty agreement on oil revenues with the Saudis in late 1950, the British sensed the danger. They refused to strike a similar deal with Iran, prompting Mossadegh to fundamentally change Iran's approach by pursuing a nationalization of Iran's oil wealth. In early 1951, the prime minister, with great fanfare, announced the nationalization of Iran's oil industry, a move that sent the British scrambling to topple him by staging a coup together with the Americans. They jointly orchestrated a coup against Mossadegh that brought his government down. the coup succeed-

ed in overthrowing Iran's prime minister but it poisoned the country's relations with the West for decades to come. Some pundits in the West believe that the coup played a significant role in fueling a surge of Iranian anti-Western nationalism and poisoning Iran's relations with the West into the 21st century.

Mohamad Reza Shah, whose reign was saved thanks to the foreign-backed coup, rewarded Britain and the U.S. with billions of dollars in arm sales deals.

When the Iranian people, led by Imam Khomeini, rose up against the Shah, Britain and the U.S. wasted no time in siding with their puppet against the Iranian people. They pursued regime change policy in Iran right from the start and when they failed, they supported Saddam Hussein in his eight-year war against Iran while even refusing to deliver arms ordered by Iran under the Shah. In fact, Britain still owes as much as £400m to the Iranian government arising from the non-delivery of Chieftain tanks ordered by the Shah before the victory of the Islamic Revolution in 1979.

In the decades after the Iran-Iraq war, the British joined other Western countries such as the U.S., France and Germany in putting pressure on Iran under

## Iran rules out any gradual lifting of sanctions

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Iran is not considering any step-by-step process for lifting the sanctions the U.S. imposed on Iran over the course of the Trump administration, says Saeed Khatibzadeh, spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry.

"As has been clearly stated many times, no step-by-step plan is being considered," Khatibzadeh told Press TV on Saturday.

Khatibzadeh reiterated the position of Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, underlining the need for the U.S. to lift all sanctions.

"The definitive policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran is the lifting of all U.S. sanctions, whether those which Trump reimposed after withdrawing from the JCPOA or those which he initiated, as well as sanctions imposed under any other heading," the spokesman said.

The Leader laid out Iran's policy on the nuclear deal—officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)—in a recent speech delivered on the occasion of the Persian New Year.

He outlined a process in which the U.S. should lift all sanctions first in order for Iran to fully resume implementing the JCPOA.

"This policy is that the Americans should lift all sanctions. After that, we will verify. If the sanctions have been lifted, we will return to our Barjam [JCPOA] commitments. We will return without any problem. This is a definite policy. We do not consider American promises to be valid. If they say that they will lift them on paper, this is of no use. What is necessary is action! They should lift the sanctions in practice. Subsequently, we will verify their statements to make sure that the sanctions have been lifted. Then, we will resume our commitments," the Leader said on March 21. Ayatollah Khamenei reiterated that "this policy will not be violated in any way."

The spokesman's remarks came in response to claims made by U.S. State Department deputy spokeswoman Jalina Porter about a planned meeting by representatives of Iran and other countries in Vienna Tuesday to discuss the troubled 2015 nuclear deal.

Porter said Friday that the discussion would focus on "the nuclear steps that Iran would need to take in order to return to compliance with the terms of the JCPOA."

In the talks, American officials would be down the hall while British, German, French, Chinese and Russian officials meet with Iran.

And that would be joined with discussion of "the sanctions relief steps that the United States would need to take in order to return to compliance, as well," Porter said, an acknowledgment that the United States is currently in violation of the accord.

The Tuesday meeting seems was arranged during the Friday meeting of the JCPOA Joint Commission, which was held virtually.

The meeting, chaired by one of the European Union's top diplomats Enrique Mora, was attended by representatives of China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom



and Iran at the level of deputy foreign ministers and political directors.

Under the terms of the JCPOA, the Joint Commission is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the agreement.

During the meeting, participants discussed the prospect of a U.S. return to the JCPOA, according to a statement issued by the Iranian Foreign Ministry after the meeting.

"In line with the joint ministerial statement of 21 December, participants recognized the prospect of a full return of the U.S. to the JCPOA, and underlined their readiness to positively address this in a joint effort," the statement said.

Deputy Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi represented Iran in the meeting. He elaborated on Iran's principled policies, and said the removal of U.S. sanctions is the first step to revive the JCPOA.

"Iran will stop its remedial nuclear measures immediately after it verifies the lifting of sanctions," he said.

The Iranian diplomat pointed out that there is no need for any negotiation for the United States' return to the JCPOA, as it is totally clear how the U.S. can return.

"The United States can get back to the deal and put an end to law-breaking in the same way as it left the JCPOA and imposed unlawful sanctions against Iran," Araghchi stated.

During the meeting, the JCPOA parties also highlighted the disastrous impacts of the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA on Iran's ability to reap the benefits of the deal, and stressed that time should not be wasted at this juncture.

In the meeting, the JCPOA member states emphasized their commitment to preserving the deal, and agreed to resume the Joint Commission session in Vienna next week, in order to continue consultations and clearly identify sanctions lifting and nuclear implementation measures, including through convening meetings of the relevant expert groups.

The chair of the meeting also issued a similar statement saying that the JCPOA coordinator will also intensify separate contacts in Vienna with all JCPOA participants and the United States.

This part of the European statement sparked a wave of speculations over a possible meeting between Iran and the U.S. in Vienna. Western news media reported that

Iran and the U.S. will meet in Vienna, a claim that was quickly rejected by Iran.

Araghchi denied reports about the U.S.'s participation in the upcoming meeting of the JCPOA Joint Commission in Vienna.

"The Vienna meeting which will be attended by the Iranian delegation is a meeting of the JCPOA Joint Commission aimed at discussing the U.S. possible return to the nuclear deal, and will be attended only by the current parties to the JCPOA," Araqchi said in a statement on Friday.

"The U.S. will not be present at any meeting attended by Iran, including the meeting of the JCPOA Joint Commission, and that is definite," he added.

He said it is up to other JCPOA parties if they would like to hold bilateral or multilateral consultations with the U.S. regarding the measures it must take, either in Vienna or in any other place.

"That is something which has happened before," Araghchi said.

"The Iranian delegation, however, will not hold negotiations with the American delegation at any level," he emphasized.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif also ruled out any prospect for a meeting between Iran and the U.S.

"At virtual JCPOA JC meeting, Iran & EU/E3+2 agreed to resume in-person talks in Vienna next Tues. Aim: Rapidly finalize sanction-lifting & nuclear measures for choreographed removal of all sanctions, followed by Iran ceasing remedial measures. No Iran-US meeting. Unnecessary," the chief Iranian diplomat tweeted on Friday.

Iran has so far ruled out at least two things: Negotiations over a possible U.S. return to the JCPOA and the resumption of Iran's compliance with the deal without the lifting of the U.S. sanctions.

Iran has said there is no need for new negotiations over the U.S. return to the nuclear deal. Moreover, Iran has made it clear that any step by Iran to resume full compliance with the JCPOA would require the U.S. to lift all sanctions first.

Following the Friday meeting of the JCPOA Joint Commission, an informed source told Press TV that the only way the United States could see Iran stop its counter-measures under the 2015 nuclear deal is for Washington to lift all the sanctions it imposed on the Islamic Republic in the aftermath of its withdrawal from the agreement some three years ago.

The source referred to the negotiations earlier on Friday within the framework of the joint commission of the parties to the deal and said Iran, during the session, emphasized the necessity of a "consistent removal" of all the U.S. sanctions and its verification before Tehran's return to full compliance.

The source added that Iran will accept nothing from the JCPOA Joint Commission but the removal of all the sanctions by the United States. According to the source, in Friday's meeting, the consensus in Iran on the issue was emphasized.



## Housing price increases 93% in Tehran city in a month yr/yr

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Housing price in Tehran city has risen 93.7 percent in the last month of the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20), as compared to the same month of its previous year, according to the latest report released by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI).

The CBI's report put the average price for one square meter of a residential unit at 302.74 million rials (about \$7,208) in the capital city in the last month of the past year.

Two weeks ago, Transport and Urban Development Minister Mohammad Eslami announced that 510,000 residential units will be provided for the applicants under the framework of the National Housing Action Plan during the coming months.



Deputy Transport and Urban Development Minister for Housing and Construction Affairs Mahmoud Mahmoudzadeh has recently 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.

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.

Last month, the Governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Abdolnaser Hemmati and the transport minister held a meeting to discuss ways of financing the mentioned plan in the current Iranian calendar year (started 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.

## TEDPIX loses 11,000 points on Saturday

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), fell 11,648 points to 1.282 million on Saturday, which is the first day of the Iranian calendar week.

Over 1.801 billion securities worth 32.956 trillion rials (about \$784.6 million) were traded at the TSE on Saturday.

The first market's index dropped 9,412 points, and the second market's index fell 20,486 points.

TEDPIX had risen eight percent in the last week of the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20).

The index increased 101,000 points to 1.307 million in that week.

After several weeks of decline, growth finally returned to the TSE, Iran's major stock exchange, as TEDPIX rose 2.4 percent during the last week of February.

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



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

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.

# IMIDRO identifies 1,700 new promising mineral zones across Iran

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Noting that the necessary licenses for exploration must be issued for IMIDRO by the Industry, Mining and Trade Departments of the provinces in which the mines are located, Asqarzadeh said: "So far, IMIDRO has applied for exploration licenses for 492 regions with an area of 32,120 square kilometers."

"Some 63 exploration licenses for various minerals such as lead and zinc, gold, copper, iron, coal, brine, etc. have been issued for IMIDRO and its subsidiaries, and exploration operations are being pursued in licensed areas," he said.

"Also, licensing processes are underway for 30 zones and discovery certificates have been issued for four regions," he added.

Back in May 2020, the Iranian Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry had signed a trilateral memorandum of understanding (MOU) with IMIDRO and the Geological Survey and Mineral Explorations of Iran (GSI) for expansion of the country's mining sector.



Development of cooperation in the fields of exploration, extraction, and processing of minerals, utilization of capacities, experiences, and abilities

of each sector, and attracting more investment from the country's private sector and cooperatives in this industry were some of the main goals of the signed agreement.

IMIDRO is a major state-owned holding company active in the mining sector in Iran. The company has 55 operational subsidiaries active in steel, aluminum, copper, cement, and mineral exploitation fields.

The company is currently collaborating with major mining companies across the country including Khuzestan Steel Company, Mobarakeh Steel Company, Golgozar Mining, and Industrial Company, Chadormalu Mining and Industrial Company, and also Iran Minerals Production and Supply Company.

Due to the significant role of the mining sector in the country's non-oil exports, the Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry has been pursuing operational targets in the mining sector's three major areas of exploration, extraction, and processing over the past few years.

## Iran's petchem production capacity rises 13.5m tons

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iran has been highly developing this sector over the past few years as the development of the giant South Pars gas field (Iran shares with Qatar in the Persian Gulf) has been supplying more feedstock to the petrochemical units.

Also, the U.S. sanctioning Iran's oil exports has encouraged more development of the petrochemical industry to boost exports from this sector.

While the leap in the petrochemical output is a big measure to boost Iran's non-oil exports, it also plays a

very significant role in promoting domestic production.

Balanced development of the petrochemical industry has also been of particular interest among the NPC strategies in recent years since the development of downstream industries will prevent the sale of raw materials and result in the production of products with higher added value.

Most of the projects in this industry are currently using domestic equipment, licenses, and technological knowledge of the Iranian experts.



## 'Industry Ministry promoting production and development'

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister Alireza Razm-Hosseini has said his ministry's incentive programs and packages have contributed a lot in promoting domestic production and development of the country.

Speaking in a meeting of the Resilient Economy Headquarters, which was also attended by First Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri, Razm-Hosseini mentioned the Industry Ministry's incentive packages for materializing the current year's motto, saying: "The Industry Ministry has prepared very good incentives especially for those projects which can go operational in short term."

As IRNA reported, the minister also expressed his ministry's readiness for co-operating with other government bodies to promote domestic production in the current Iranian calendar year (began on March 21).

The Leader has named the present year



as the year of "Production: Support and the Elimination of Obstacles."

According to Razm-Hosseini, the ministry's program for the current year is going to focus on three major aspects including the ministry, other related government bodies, and the government itself.

Explaining the program, the official noted that the first aspect, which is related to the Industry Ministry, covers four major areas including the provinces and private organizations, removing internal

bottlenecks, reforming procedures, and deleting and amending some problematic directives and regulations.

The minister further emphasized the promotion of domestic production and development of industrial units while preserving the environment, noting that the ministry is prepared to establish new industrial parks in accordance with environment-related standards.

Back in March, Razm-Hosseini had said that the industrial growth is going to be accelerated in the country in the current year.

The minister announced his ministry's target of boosting production and achieving industrial growth this year through removing the barriers in the way of domestic production and by eliminating unnecessary rules and regulations.

The official said that an industrial growth of 7.5 percent was achieved in the past year, which will be increased this year.

During the previous Iranian calendar

year, the Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry implemented several programs for developing the country's industrial and economic sectors.

The ministry's programs, which came under seven major axes, mainly focused on developing and supporting domestic production as well as expanding exports to the neighboring countries.

Supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), supporting the country's exporters and creating specialized working groups in order to promote exports to the neighboring countries, reviving the country's idle production units and small and medium-sized mines, supporting domestic auto part manufacturers, holding exhibitions for encouraging domestic production, signing cooperation agreements with knowledge-based companies and universities were among the major steps taken by the industry ministry in order to promote domestic production and boost exports in the previous year.

## Trade between Iran, UAE stands at \$14b in a year

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — The value of trade between Iran and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) stood at \$14.279 billion in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20), an official with Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) announced.

Farzad Piltan, the director-general of TPO's Office of Arabian and African Countries, also put the weight of annual trade between the two countries at 20.34 million tons, and said that the figure shows a 28-percent growth year on year.

Last July, TPO had held a meeting of its Commodity-Country Desk on trade with the UAE.

Participated by TPO Head Hamid Zadboum, the meeting was aimed at discussing the ways for increasing exports of agricultural products to the UAE.

Increasing non-oil exports to the neighboring countries is one of the major plans that the Iranian government is now pursuing.

First Vice-President Es'haq Jahangiri has called for developing non-oil exports as the only way for realizing the motto of boosting production.

"The Foreign Affairs Ministry should provide the necessary bases for the development of [non-oil] exports by expanding and strengthening economic diplomacy," he said in a meeting on reviewing ways of boosting economic relations with the neighboring countries and



supporting non-oil exporters.

Emphasizing that 15 neighboring countries and countries such as China and India and Eurasian members should be targeted as the most important export destinations of the country, Jahangiri called on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other relevant agencies to strengthen economic diplomacy and focus on these export destination countries to provide the necessary infrastructure for the development of exports to these nations.

As announced by the head of Islamic Republic of Iran

Customs Administration (IRICA), the value of Iran's non-oil trade stood at \$73 billion in the past year.

Mehdi Mir-Ashrafi also put the weight of non-oil trade at 146.4 million tons, and said that the figure shows a 25-million-ton annual decline, which is the result of sanctions and coronavirus pandemic.

Iran's non-oil export was 112 million tons valued at \$34.5 billion, and that of import was 34.4 million tons worth \$38.5 billion in the past year, the official added.

Among the country's non-oil export destinations, China was the first, with importing \$8.9 billion worth of products, Iraq was the second with importing \$7.3 billion, the United Arab Emirates the third with importing \$4.6 billion, Turkey the fourth with importing \$2.5 billion, and Afghanistan the fifth with importing \$2.2 billion, Mir-Ashrafi announced, and named gasoline, natural gas, polyethylene, propane, and pistachio as Iran's major exported products during the past year.

He further named Iran's top sources of non-oil imports in the said time, as China with exporting \$9.7 billion worth of products to the Islamic Republic, the UAE with \$9.6 billion, Turkey with \$4.3 billion, India with \$2.1 billion, and Germany with \$1.8 billion, respectively, and mentioned corn, cellphone, rice, oil meal and oil seeds, wheat, and raw oil as the major imported items.



## Copper concentrate production rises 6% in 11 months

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Production of copper concentrate in Iran rose six percent during the 11 months from March 20, 2020 until February 18, 2021 (which was the first 11 months of the past Iranian calendar year), as compared to the same period of time in its preceding year.

As reported, over 46 million tons of copper concentrate was produced in the said time span.

Used as raw materials in copper smelting, copper concentrates have a copper content of about 30 percent by weight. The remainder consists mostly of sulfur and

iron. Copper concentrates are made mostly from sulfide ores.

The periodical reports and statistics indicate that Iran's metals sector is progressing both in terms of production and export despite the limitations imposed by the U.S. sanctions.

The country's copper industry is moving forward noticeably, as some outstanding projects are implemented.

As announced by the head of National Iranian Copper Industries Company (NICIC), Iran's copper production capacity is going to reach 550,000 tons by the Iranian calendar year 1403 (begins on March 20, 2024).

"Considering €2.5 billion of new investment made in Sarcheshmeh Copper complex, and the implementation of 29 new projects in this industry, we hope that the country's copper production capacity will reach 550,000 tons by the year 1403", Sa'd-Mohammadi has said.

He pointed to the high quality of the Iranian copper, saying: "Iranian copper has a very good quality and with 99.999 percent purity, has its own customers around the world and we hope with this quality of products we can improve our global position in the copper industry."



# China is the best partner that Iran could ever have: geopolitical analyst

Mohammad Ali Saki

**TEHRAN** — Pointing to the U.S. disinformation campaign against China, an American geopolitical analyst says Beijing is the best partner that Iran could ever have.

“The controversies over China’s foreign investments are the result of the U.S.’ disinformation-driven Hybrid War,” Andrew Korybko tells the Tehran Times.

“China is arguably the best partner that Iran could ever have,” Korybko adds.

A 25-year plan for comprehensive partnership between Iran and China was finalized and signed on March 27.

The plan was finalized in a meeting in Tehran between Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Ali Larjani, advisor to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution and Iran’s Special Representative for strategic ties with the People’s Republic of China.

Korybko says, “The reportedly promised Chinese investments will enable the Islamic Republic to modernize its economy and emerge as a regional production powerhouse with time.”

Following is the text of the interview:

**What is the importance of the 25-year strategic partnership signed between China and Iran? How can it impact the region, including Iran’s neighbors?**

The recently concluded agreement advances the W-CPEC+ vision of expanding the Belt & Road Initiative’s (BRI) flagship project of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) westward through Iran and thenceforth to Azerbaijan and Turkey, after which it can connect with Russia and the EU respectively. It represents major progress on the grand strategic goal of more closely connecting the Eurasian supercontinent, and therefore simultaneously serves all relevant stakeholders’ interests. This is especially so for Russia as well considering that its Greater Eurasian Partnership has the same goal. As for Iran, the reportedly promised Chinese investments will enable the Islamic Republic



to modernize its economy and emerge as a regional production powerhouse with time. This will in turn improve its people’s living standards and gradually reduce the protest potential of its population, which is sometimes provoked from abroad as evidenced by past events over the years.

**Don’t you predict that the Sino-Iran partnership may prompt the U.S. to take an immediate step to return to the JCPOA?**

To the contrary, the Chinese-Iranian Strategic Partnership makes it less likely that Washington and Tehran will reach an agreement on the JCPOA. Both parties understand the game-changing geostrategic consequences of this deal, which disincentivizes Iran to comply with any of the unilateral concessions that the U.S. has demanded. America is unlikely to moderate its view in light of this agreement since the tensions that its prior withdrawal from the pact provoked work out to its regional interests by justifying its increased military presence in the

(Persian) Gulf. They also create an excellent pretext for the U.S. to sell more arms to the (Persian) Gulf Kingdoms, too.

**How do you assess China’s ties with Asian countries economically? Is China a reliable partner for a country such as Iran?**

China is arguably the best partner that Iran could ever have. The controversies over China’s foreign investments are the result of the U.S.’ disinformation-driven Hybrid War. Some scandals objectively occurred in the past, but they were due to opposition forces exploiting the terms of various agreements for populist purposes in order to improve their electoral potential. It should be remembered that China, unlike the U.S., doesn’t ever impose any terms onto its partners, nor do any of its deals have secret strings attached. Every country’s legitimate government voluntarily enters into various agreements with China on their own prerogative because they believe that the terms advance their national interests. This is of course also true for Iran as well.

**Why is the U.S. worried about the Iran-China partnership?**

The ongoing New Cold War is due to the U.S.’ efforts to thwart China’s rise as the world’s next superpower. It will therefore always oppose everything that’s in China’s interests, especially if this concerns its other strategic rivals like Iran too. The recently concluded agreement brings BRI to West Asia through W-CPEC+, thereby creating a direct connection between that part of the world and East Asia via Pakistan with time. This will enable all relevant countries to trade with one another via overland routes instead of relying on the maritime ones that they presently do. The end result is that the influence of the U.S. Navy will decline because it will no longer be able to blackmail the international economy like it current does. Of course, this will take a lot of time to unfold and maritime trade routes will always remain in use, but it’s nevertheless important to note the trend of diversifying trade via overland ones, which is what this partnership aims to do with West and East Asia via South Asia through W-CPEC+.

**How do you see China’s ties with Iran’s rivals, including Saudi Arabia, in West Asia?**

China doesn’t take sides in regional disputes and always pursues pragmatic, balanced relations with all parties. In West Asia, this has seen it increasing its economic relations with “Israel”, Saudi Arabia, and the other (Persian) Gulf Kingdoms in parallel with doing the same with Iran. In fact, China recently built a drone factory in Saudi Arabia a few years back as well, which shows how close their relations are. The grand strategic vision that China is trying to advance is the creation of a regional economic network that might in theory reduce the conflict potential between rival powers like Saudi Arabia and Iran due to the shared interests that they’d have in doing their utmost to not disrupt trade. Again, this will take some time to enter into practice, but it’s still important to have a view of what China’s long-term goals are in this respect.

## EU failed to address COVID crisis: Canadian historian

**➔ 1 What are the main challenges that threaten the EU’s future?**

I think the key problems are populism and reaching a consensus on issues like the Nord Stream pipeline, which has divided Germany and some of the others. Hungary is embracing a policy of open illiberalism. In Poland, the Law and Justice Party has reached an impasse over the question of abortion. There is also the question of new members and the limits of European expansion. Should the EU stop where it is? Should Turkey finally be accepted? Should Ukraine, Belarus, and other neighboring countries be considered longer term members? And, if so, what about Russia? Is the EU a rival of Russia or could the two work together? I would say that in 2021 this outcome seems unlikely, but it is not inconceivable given that geographically, the industrialized part of Russia lies in Europe.

**Do you predict a serious confrontation between Russia and Western powers during Biden’s presidency?**

They are off to a bad start. Perhaps Biden wanted to make it clear that he did not share Trump’s complacency

and indifference to some Russian actions, such as pulling troops out of Syria and ignoring issues in Ukraine. Biden has also agreed to stronger sanctions against Belarus, an important Russian ally. I think Biden is a more orthodox type of leader, direct, and committed to restoring ties with traditional allies in NATO and the EU. I don’t see this as heralding a serious confrontation, but it could lead to some tension with Russia.

**Do you think that Russia may turn into an alternative hegemon to challenge the U.S. in the near future?**

Well the only alternative hegemon militarily is China, and there are some disadvantages to heavy reliance on China under Xi Jinping, who has become the most powerful Chinese leader since Mao. The leaders of the world’s largest countries, India and China, have also taken some disturbing steps against their Muslim populations in recent years. Russia may move closer to China but I don’t think it will be a long-term strategy.

**How do you assess EU’s performance when it comes to independence in terms of setting policies? Take the example of the Iran nuclear**

**deal as the EU failed to confront the Trump administration’s unilateral sanctions on Tehran.**

Strictly speaking, the agreement on the Iran nuclear deal came through the UN Security Council with the addition of Germany, the so-called 5+1. Thus, the questions should have come from the UK, France, China, Russia, and Germany. And they should have come. The Security Council, on the other hand, is rarely in full agreement. The EU countries are very different. The closest to the U.S. during the Trump presidency were Poland and the Baltic States (it would have been the UK before Brexit). Germany and Italy are both open to close relations with Russia, and others, such as Slovakia, are also more open. France seems to be moving in that direction. I felt that the Trump era only strengthened these non-EU ties. I do think the EU makes sense economically. In terms of democracy promotion, which it advocates, especially for potential new members, its record is mixed. And in terms of addressing U.S. hegemony, it has followed an independent path in many aspects, but in foreign policy, the U.S. is the main player. This is a legacy of the Cold War and post-war Europe in general. On the ending of the Iran nuclear deal, Trump never consulted with his traditional allies and in general, he preferred to meet on a bilateral basis with leaders like Putin and Kim Jong un.

## China and Iran: A natural anti-imperialist alliance

By Kim Petersen

On 15 July 2015 — the day after the United States agreed to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA; also called the Iran nuclear deal) along with China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, plus Germany — then U.S. president Barack Obama said in an interview that Iran was “a great civilization.” Without listing any of the great attributes of Iran, Obama then proceeded to criticize Iran, saying, “but, it also has an authoritarian theocracy in charge that is anti-American, anti-Israeli, anti-Semitic, sponsors terrorism, and there are a whole host of real profound differences...”

That is American exceptionalism. The U.S. is a country whose sense of diplomacy deems it appropriate to openly criticize other nations. And because of this self-bestowed exceptionalism, it need not substantiate any criticisms it makes, and, of course, no such accusations could be leveled against the U.S.

However, soon after Donald Trump won the electoral college vote to become the U.S. president, the days of the U.S. abiding by the JCPOA were numbered. The U.S. State Department said that the JCPOA “is not a treaty or an executive agreement, and is not a signed document.”

Apparently, U.S. and international definitions on what constitutes a treaty differ. Since the JCPOA had not received the consent of the U.S. Senate, as per domestic U.S. law, it was not considered a treaty. Another instance of U.S. exceptionalism — how the

U.S. legally separates itself from the international sphere.

On 8 May 2018, the U.S. pulled out from the Iran nuclear deal.

Even though the U.S. had withdrawn, Iran made it known that it would continue to comply with its commitments to the JCPOA if Europe also complied with its commitments. One important condition was that Europe must maintain business relations with Iranian banks and purchase Iranian oil despite U.S. sanctions. Europe, however, failed to uphold its commitments.

China stood steadfast with the JCPOA. Wang Yi, China’s foreign minister, called upon the U.S. to quickly and unconditionally return to the Iran nuclear deal. Wang also called on the U.S. to remove sanctions on Iran and third-parties.

Wang also urged Iran to restore full compliance with the JCPOA. China, though, has made it clear that the U.S. “holds the key to breaking the deadlock” by returning to the JCPOA and lifting sanctions on Iran.

When the Trump administration slapped sanctions on Iran, a devastating result was expected.

The effects of sanctions are lethal. Americans professors John Mueller and Karl Mueller wrote in their Foreign Affairs article:

“Economic sanctions ... may have contributed to more deaths during the post-Cold War era than all weapons of mass destruction throughout history.”

The lethality has been borne out. A large-scale human suffering was part of the plan

to topple the government in Iran, which secretary of state Mike Pompeo admitted to. Not even the serious outbreak of COVID-19 would stir mercy in the hearts of American politicians. Included in the sanctions were medicines and food.

When targeted by a hegemonic military superpower, the importance of powerful friends cannot be underestimated. China seems like a natural ally for Iran.

Like Iran, China has historically been targeted by brutish American imperialism. China, like Iran finds itself ringed by American militarism. China also has U.S. sanctions levied against it. Western governments and their mass media bombard readers and viewers with disinformation to demonize China. U.S. warships ply the South China Sea as they ply the waters of the Persian Gulf. Both China and Iran deal with domestic terrorism (undoubtedly abetted by Western foes).

Thus, the Mujahedin-e-Khalq (MEK), designated as a terrorist group by the U.S. in 1997, would be dropped from the U.S. terrorist list in 2012. Later, the “cult-like” MEK would be embraced by right-wing Americans such as Rudy Giuliani, John Bolton, and Mike Pompeo, in hopes of furthering U.S. aims of “regime change.” In a similar move, the separatist East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) in Xinjiang, China was removed from the U.S. terrorist list.

U.S. machinations have only served to hasten closer relations between China and Iran.



On March 27, Iran and China signed the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, a \$400 billion 25-year agreement that includes oil and mining, promoting industrial activity in Iran, and collaborating in transportation and agriculture.

It’s a win-win. Iran gets a market for its commodities and investment. China gets access to needed resources and a partner for its Belt and Road Initiative, a multi-trillion-dollar infrastructure scheme to encompass Eurasia and abroad.

Iran also has economic and technology agreements with another U.S.-sanctioned country that is a close ally of China, Russia. In February 2021, there was the important symbolism of the Iran-China-Russia collaboration on naval maneuvers in the Indian Ocean.

Iran might not have nukes, but it has powerful friends.

## Vehicle attack raises new questions about U.S. Capitol security

New questions are being raised about security measures around the United States Congress after a vehicular assault on a security checkpoint killed one Capitol Police officer, injured another and ended with the driver of the car shot dead.

A couple of minutes after 1pm local time (17:00 GMT) on Friday a man drove a car into a main driveway of the U.S. Capitol plaza, striking two police officers before crashing into a barricade. The man emerged from his car brandishing a knife and lunged at the officers before being shot, police officials said.

According to al Jazeera, Officer William “Billy” Evans succumbed to his injuries, according to acting Capitol Police Chief Yogananda Pittman. The second officer remained hospitalised.

“We are devastated to share the sad news that one of our officers involved in this afternoon’s incident passed away,” the Capitol Police said in a statement. Evans, a Capitol Police officer since 2003, died at a hospital from injuries sustained in the attack.

Most of the 535 members of Congress were away on recess when the attack happened. National Guard soldiers and police with riot shields responded to the incident which caused a two-hour lockdown for thousands of congressional staff working at the Capitol complex.

“I personally believe that the Capitol Police need reinforcements right away and we should do everything in our powers to add the personnel that they require,” said Representative Raja Krishnamoorthi in an interview with the MSNBC news outlet.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said in a statement there would be “a swift and comprehensive investigation into this heinous attack” and praised the “heroism” of the police officers.

Sensitivities are high following the January 6 attack on the Capitol by a mob of supporters of former President Donald Trump. Protesters seeking to disrupt Congress’s certification of President Joe Biden’s 2020 election overran police checkpoints and invaded the Capitol building.

## Armed resistance against U.S. forces in Iraq to persist until full withdrawal, Asa’ib leader warns

The leader of Iraqi anti-terror movement Asa’ib Ahl al-Haq has said the armed resistance against American forces occupying Iraq will continue until they are fully removed from the Arab country.

“As resistance groups, we have taken up and will continue to take up arms to destroy any U.S. or U.S. military presence on Iraqi soil,” Qais Khazali said.

“There is no room for American military bases, neither in al-Assad nor in al-Harir,” he said. “This is the decision and promise of the men of resistance.”

Iraqi lawmakers, last year, approved a bill requiring the Baghdad government to end the presence of all foreign military forces in the Arab country.

The Iraqi MPs’ decision came two days after the high-profile assassination of top Iranian and Iraqi anti-terror commanders — General Qassem Soleimani, commander of the Quds Force of Iran’s Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, deputy head of Iraq’s PMU — near Baghdad airport in a drone strike authorized by former U.S. President Donald Trump.

Anti-American sentiments rose sharply following the assassination of the two top commanders, who played a major role in the defeat of the Daesh terrorist group in Iraq. It is estimated that there are currently 2,500 American troops in Iraq.

## Russia warns NATO against deploying troops to Ukraine

Russia has warned NATO against deploying troops to Ukraine, saying such a move would escalate tensions near its borders, amid renewed fears over the region’s long-simmering conflict.

Moscow’s comments came after NATO voiced concern on Thursday over what it said was a large Russian military build-up near eastern Ukraine, with leading member the United States pledging to stand by Ukraine in the event of any Russian “aggression”.

Renewed front-line clashes have gripped the region in recent weeks. Russia earlier said an escalation in the conflict in Ukraine’s Donbass region could “destroy” Ukraine.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Friday that the situation at the contact line in eastern Ukraine between Ukrainian government forces and Russian-backed separatist forces was concerning, and that multiple “provocations” were taking place there.

Peskov also said Russia would be forced to respond if NATO troops were deployed to Ukraine as he insisted Russia was not threatening Ukraine.

“There is no doubt such a scenario would lead to a further increase in tensions close to Russia’s borders. Of course, this would call for additional measures from the Russian side to ensure its security,” he said, without specifying which measures would be adopted.

“Russia is not threatening anyone, it has never threatened anyone.”

## Resistance News

## OCHA: Israel displaced 34 Palestinians in two weeks

**INTERNATIONAL** **TEHRAN** — The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said that the Israeli authorities demolished or seized 26 Palestinian structures, mostly homes, during two weeks in the occupied territories of the West Bank and Jerusalem.

In its biweekly report on Israeli violations on Friday, OCHA explained that the demolition measures were carried out during the period 16 - 29 March 2021 at the pretext that the owners had no Israeli-issued building permits.

The demolitions displaced 34 people, including 15 children, and affected about 40 people, according to its report.

“22 structures were targeted on 17 March in four communities in Area C, including eight tents seized in Khirbet Tana (Nablus), displacing 18 people; and 11 uninhabited houses demolished in An-Nuweima Al Fauqa Bedouin community (Jericho), affecting 21 people.

Israel also displaced 12 Palestinians in east Jerusalem after four homes were demolished, including three by their owners, following threats by the Israeli municipality.

During the reporting period, Israeli forces carried out 128 search-and-arrest operations and arrested 115 Palestinians, including five children, across the West Bank.

The Ramallah governorate recorded the highest number of these operations (27), followed by Tulkarem (21) and al-Khalil (18). In one operation in Beit Kahil (al-Khalil), 21 Palestinians were arrested.



## Iran offers condolences on death of top WCC official Ghada Hijjawi

➔ 1 Ceramics, pottery vessels, handwoven cloths as well as personal ornamentations with precious and semi-precious gemstones are traditionally exported to Iraq, Afghanistan, Germany, the U.S., the UK, and other countries.



Over the past couple of years, dozens of high-quality Iranian handicrafts have been honored with the UNESCO Seal of Excellence.

## Lufthansa to resume Frankfurt-Tehran flights this month

**TOURISM** **TEHRAN** — German airline Lufthansa announced on Friday that it will resume flights from Frankfurt to Tehran from April 16.

Lufthansa had suspended flights in January 2020 after the Islamic Republic accidentally downed a Ukrainian jetliner amid an exchange of hostilities with U.S. forces in the Iraqi soil.

The airline said it has since assessed security measures by Iran with national and international authorities. "The conditions for safe flight operations in Iranian airspace are currently in place," it said in an emailed statement, Reuters reported.



In January 2020, however, the EU Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) approved that European airlines can return to parts of Iranian and Iraqi airspace. EASA announced, following an EU aviation security risk group meeting, that it was lifting temporary recommendations against overflying the two countries altogether. Lufthansa was among airlines that canceled flights over the affected airspace.

On January 3, 2020, a U.S. drone strike assassinated top Iranian general Qassem Soleimani and in an act of retaliation, Iran fired missiles at U.S. targets in Iraq on January 8. The Ukrainian airliner was accidentally shot down by Iran's air defense as it was on high alert in the tense aftermath.

## Police seize Parthian-era jugs from smuggler

**HERITAGE** **TEHRAN** — Iranian police have recently confiscated two earthenware jugs from a smuggler in the city of Abhar, west-central Zanjan province, a senior police official in charge of protecting cultural heritage has said.

The relics, which are estimated to date back to the Parthian era (247 BC – 224 CE), have been discovered from an antique dealer in the historical village of Sharif-Abad, Hassan-Ali Fazli said, CHTN reported on Saturday.

The accused was surrendered to the judicial system for further investigation, the official added.

Abhar is a historical town surrounding a castle of the same name. Archaeological evidence suggests its origin dates from some six millennia ago.



Zanjan is one of the cities founded by Sassanid King Ardashir I (180-242 CE). The province makes a base for wider explorations with the architectural wonder of Soltaniyeh, the subterranean delights of the Katala-Khor caves, colorful mountains, and the UNESCO-registered Takht-e Soleiman ruins are nearby.

Establishing a primary residence at Ctesiphon, on the Tigris River in southern Mesopotamia, Parthian kings ruled for nearly half a millennium and influenced politics from Asia Minor to northern India, until they were overthrown by Sasanian armies from southwest Iran in the early third century CE.

Parthian wealth obtained through lucrative trade networks resulted in substantial patronage of the arts, in particular, relief sculpture, statuary (large and small scale), architectural sculpture, metalwork, jewelry, and ceramics; coins with images of Parthian rulers form another important category of objects.

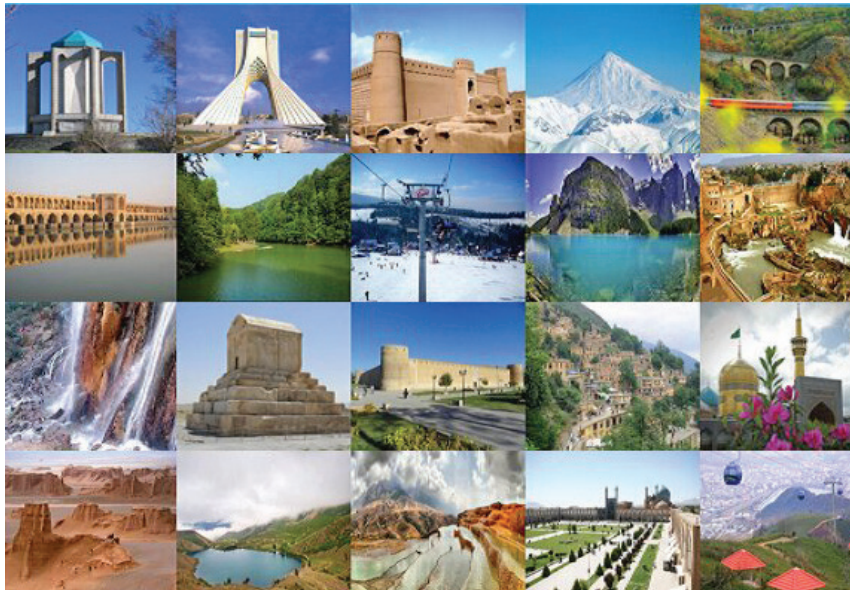
# Symposium to explore Iran tourism over past 100 years

**TOURISM** **TEHRAN** — Iran will be hosting a specialized symposium to explore its tourism ups and downs over the past 100 years. The symposium is scheduled to be held in the second half of the current Iranian calendar year.

The event is jointly organized by the coordination council of cultural heritage, handicrafts, and tourism NGOs; Science and Technology Park; the Iranian National Committee for ICOM; and the e-Tourism Society of Iran, Mehr reported.

Furthermore, it enjoys support from the University of Tehran, University of Isfahan, Cultural Heritage and Tourism Research Institute, Transport and Urban Development Ministry, Prof. Jafari Tourism Foundation, Tourism Commission of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Tehran Municipality Tourism Headquarters and other specialized tourism and trade unions, the report said.

Thinkers, professors, specialists, and lecturers have been invited to the event, which aims to explore policies, laws, programs, structures, drawbacks, and developments that occurred in the past century intending to propose a roadmap for the future of Iran tourism.



Various specialized working groups in the arenas of land, rail, air and sea transport, hotels and accommodation centers, catering and food services, pilgrimage, nature tourism, sports and health tourism, visa services, consular and customs

affairs, would join the symposium as well.

Over the past couple of years, except the recent coronavirus era, Iran tourism was advancing step by step, drawing millions of travelers from across the globe.

In the Islamic Republic, like any oth-

er country, the wound inflicted by the virus on the tourism industry is also so deep, to some extent and it hasn't stopped bleeding yet!

Tourism [industry of the country] was growing before the corona [outbreak], its revenues reached \$11.7 billion in 2019, which accounted for 2.8% of GDP, near the average share of tourism in the world GDP, which was 3.2 percent, according to Ali-Asghar Mounesari, the minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and, Handicrafts.

The numbers of foreign travelers to Iran have drastically plunged since the virus made its debut as the country registered only 74 international visits during last spring, which is traditionally a high season.

Iran expects to reap a bonanza from its numerous tourist spots such as bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, mausoleums, churches, towers, and mansions, of which 24 being inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list. Under the 2025 Tourism Vision Plan, it aims to increase the number of tourist arrivals from 4.8 million in 2014 to 20 million in 2025. So, the country will undeniably try its best to achieve a relatively ambitious goal but when that happens the travel industry is likely to look more altered.

## Noruz visits to Iranian museums falls by one-fifth due to virus

**TOURISM** **TEHRAN** — Visits to Iranian museums fell by one-fifth during the recent Iranian New Year (Noruz) holidays (March 19-April 2) in comparison to the same period two years ago, when the new coronavirus was not yet an issue.

"Visits to cultural heritage museums fell by one-fifth during the Noruz holidays of the current year (1400) in comparison to the same period in the year 1398," Mohamadrez Kargar, the director of museums and historical properties at the tourism ministry, announced on Saturday.

"1,246,102 people visited cultural heritage museums [and sites] during this Noruz," the official said without mentioning the number of visitors during the same period in 1398.

Cultural heritage museums were closed during the Noruz holiday last year (1399) due to strict social distancing measures, the official said.

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

said in March.

Back in 2018, he publicized that some three million historical objects were being kept at museums affiliated with the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism Ministry.

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

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

From a wider point of view, Iranian history can be divided into Pre-Islamic and Islamic eras. The Medes unified Iran



as a nation and empire in 625 BC. The Islamic conquest of Persia (633–656) that put an end to the mighty Sassanid Empire (224–651) was a turning point in the history of the nation.

## New round of restoration to start on Jameh Mosque of Saveh

**TOURISM** **TEHRAN** — A new round of restoration work is to commence on the 12th-century Jameh Mosque of Saveh, which is sometimes referred to as "a museum of Islamic architecture".

The project aims at strengthening walls and rooftops as well as replacing worn-out bricks and materials, Saveh's tourism chief said on Saturday.

A budget of 2.2 billion rials (about \$52,000 at the official exchange rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) has been allocated to the restoration projects so far, however,



the budget required for the new restoration project is about 50 billion rials (\$1.1 million), Reza Ayyaz announced.

Moreover, a restoration work has also been completed on the centuries-old Great Wall of Saveh, with a budget of 150 million rials (about \$ 3,500), the official added.

He also noted that the Qajar-era (1789–1925) wall, which was supposed to protect the city against invaders at the time, was inscribed on the national heritage list in 2018.

Sources say that the Jameh Mosque of Saveh has continuously been a busy place of worship, yet the monument has undergone restoration projects since the time it was completed in the 12th century onwards.

## Sassanid-era fortress visited by thousands of travelers in Noruz

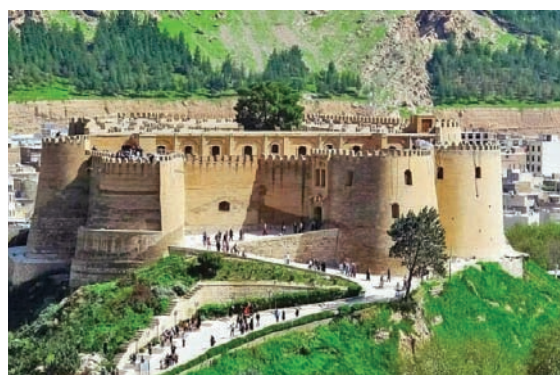
**TOURISM** **TEHRAN** — The centuries-old Falak-ol-Aflak Fortress in Khorramabad, the capital of Lorestan province, attracted about 13,000 holidaymakers during the two-week New Year (Noruz) holidays (March 19-April 2).

The fortress ranked 16 among the historical sites and tourist attractions across the country in number of visitors during the mentioned period, the provincial tourism chief has said.

Strict health protocols were followed by the travelers during their visits to help contain the outbreak of the coronavirus, Seyyed Amin Qasemi announced on Saturday.

Earlier last week the official publicized that Iranians made 6,339 overnight stays in the western province during the first ten days of the Persian New Year holidays.

He also mentioned that the data has been collected from various residential centers including hotels, eco-



lodge units, guest houses, and tourist complexes that host tourists and travelers under strict health protocols.

Also known as Falak-ol-Aflak Castle, the unmissable eight-towered monument dominates the city as one of the most visited travel destinations in the region for both domestic and foreign sightseers.

The fortress dates from the Sassanid era (224–651). It seems particularly imposing and dramatic when floodlit at night, offering picturesque views of its encircling crenelated battlements.

The Sassanid era is of very high importance in Iranian history, under which Persian art and architecture experienced a general renaissance.

Soaked in history and culture, Lorestan is one of the lesser-known travel destinations in Iran, which mainly acts as a gateway to the sweltering plains below in adjoining Khuzestan province. Lorestan is also a region of raw beauty that an avid nature lover could spend weeks exploring.

## Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari registers over 7,600 overnight stays in Noruz

**TOURISM** **TEHRAN** — Iranian holidaymakers made more than 7,600 overnight stays in Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari province during the two-week Persian New Year (Noruz) holidays, starting March 20, the provincial tourism chief has said.

The data have been collected from various residential centers including hotels, eco-lodge units, apartment hotels, guest houses, and tourist complexes, Mehrdad Javadi added on Saturday.

Over 13,000 tourists also visited the historical sites and tourist attractions scattered across the southwestern province during the mentioned time, the official added.

Earlier last week the deputy tourism minister Vali Teymouri announced that

Iranians made some 1.3 million overnight stays in the official accommodation centers across the country during the first week of the Noruz holidays.

The average occupancy rate of the residential centers has reached around 30 percent during the mentioned period, Teymouri mentioned.

Appreciating tourists and travelers who followed health protocols during their trips, the official also thanked those who delayed or postponed their travels to help the tourism industry deal with the coronavirus outbreak.

Last year the country went into lockdown during the Noruz holidays due to the coronavirus pandemic. Iranians made over 74 million overnight stays during the

two-week Persian New Year holidays in 1398 (March 21-April 2, 2019).

Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari lies in the southwestern part of the country. Its capital is Shahrekord. The province has various unique traditions and rituals relative to the 'tribal' lifestyles. Special forms of music, dance, and clothing are noteworthy. It has considerable potential to become a vibrant tourist attraction because of its changing natural landscape.

The province is also a hub for making wool felt products, majority of which exported abroad. It is home to some 500 crafters, in over 250 workshops, making handmade felt products.

Currently, about 40 tons of felt are yearly being made in Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari



through traditional and modern manners, which could be increased to 50 tons, according to official data. Experts believe that Shahr-e Kord has the potential to be a world city for felt products.



# Iran to launch 4th ‘house of innovation’ in Russia soon

→ **1** By supporting innovative ideas, holding technological and innovative events, the centers will be a platform for the development and promotion of Iranian knowledge-based companies, startups, and creative industries.

The centers are mainly formed with the investment and support of the private sector to provide the necessary infrastructure for their exports through the innovation houses.

“We are trying to open up opportunities for exporting knowledge-based products to other countries, especially African countries, which we may have paid less attention to, or Southeast Asian countries, which will increase both the companies’ income and confront sanctions,”



Mehdi Ghalehnoei, an official with the vice presidency for science and technology, has said.

Currently, some 5,000 knowledge-based companies are active in the country, manufacturing diverse products to meet the needs of the domestic market while saving large amounts of foreign currency.

Vice President for Science and Technology Sourena Sattari told the Tehran Times in October 2020 that U.S. sanctions caused exports of knowledge-based companies to decline three years ago, however, it has returned to growth and was projected to reach the pre-sanctions level of more than \$1 billion by the end of the previous [Iranian calendar] year (March 20).

## ‘Brick-by-brick plan’ donates \$2 million for school building



**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** – A national plan titled “brick-by-brick” aiming to encourage people to donate money for building schools in deprived areas of the country has so far collected 80 billion rials (about \$2 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials).

The plan started early last [Iranian] year (March 2020-March 2021) and was highly welcome by benevolent people, Mehrolah Rakhshanimehr, director of the Organization for Development, Renovation, and Equipping Schools, said, IRNA reported.

To date, around one million individuals have contributed to the plan, he added.

Rakhshanimehr had previously said that some 30 percent of the country’s schools have been constructed by benefactors, adding there are 450 school-building charities in the country.

There are some 107,000 schools nationwide with 530,000 classes, 160,000 of which are dilapidated, not meeting safety standards.

Some 4.5 percent of the national development budget proposed in the bill for the current [Iranian calendar] year (started on March 21) has been earmarked for school building; a three-fold rise compared to the last year’s figure.

The next year’s proposed development budget is about 1,040 billion rials (some \$25 billion).

Some 37 billion rials (around \$880 million) was spent in the past Iranian calendar year on building schools, he said, adding the figure will rise to 51 billion rials in the current year.

Education Minister Mohsen Haji Mirzaei has said that 85 billion rials (nearly \$2 million) has been spent on average per day for renovating schools nationwide over the past three years.

## Coronavirus vaccination begins for autistic adults

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** – The first phase of vaccination against coronavirus for autistic people over the age of 18 started in Iran on Saturday.

Concurrent with the World Autism Awareness Day, some 150 doses of vaccine will be injected into autistic adolescents aged 18 or older without underlying diseases.

These patients receive two doses of the vaccine free of charge, IRNA reported.

World Autism Awareness Day is an internationally recognized day on April 2 every year, to raise awareness about people with autistic spectrum disorders including autism and Asperger syndrome throughout the world.

Autism spectrum disorders (ASD) are a group of complex brain development disorders.



This umbrella term covers conditions such as autism and Asperger syndrome. These disorders are characterized by difficulties in social interaction and communication and a restricted and repetitive repertoire of interests and activities.

World Health Organization estimates that

1 in 160 children has an autism spectrum disorder worldwide.

In January 2019, Mehdi Shadnoosh, head of the transplantation and treatment of diseases department at the Ministry of Health, announced that some 8,000 people have been diagnosed with autism disorder in the country, while the number is estimated to be over 20,000.

### Mass vaccination

Iran started mass vaccination against COVID-19 with the Russian-made Sputnik V vaccine, with the priority given to medical staff, the elderly, and people with underlying diseases. The vaccine is going to be co-produced by the two countries.

Meanwhile, the first batch of COVAX vaccines will be delivered between March

18 and March 28.

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, which started mass-production on March 29.

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

Fakhra vaccine, the third homegrown vaccine, was unveiled and started the clinical trial on March 16.

On January 27, Health Minister Saeed Namaki said Iran will soon be one of the world’s important manufacturers of the COVID-19 vaccine.

## Iran to probably face drought this year: expert

**ENVIRONMENT** **TEHRAN** – Iran will probably experience drought over the current [Iranian calendar] year (began on March 21), as only four provinces out of 31 provinces of the country received normal rainfall last year, director of flood control at Forests, Rangelands, and Watershed Management Organization said.

Given that Iran is an arid and semi-arid region, the rainfall rate is low, in other words, the fluctuations of rainfall vary significantly from year to year, Abolghasem Hosseinpour told ILNA on Saturday.

Over the last two years, Iran was doused with rain which was unprecedented during the past 50 years, but last year, unfortunately, the country faced drought, which shows a 40 percent decrease in rainfall, he explained.

He went on to note that for example, Sistan-Baluchistan and Hormozgan had a decline of 80 to 85 percent compared to the average rainfall, and among all, only four provinces received normal rainfall, which may cause

drought this year, so that we need to strengthen watershed and aquifer infrastructure.

Watershed management is a solution to strengthen the ecosystem in the face of subsequent droughts by penetrating rainfall into the ground, he said.

Referring to the importance of watershed management, Hosseinpour noted that watershed management in the wet season will reduce flood damage, drought, and water shortage problems, in addition to stabilizing the ecosystem of the region.

“We are in dire need of infrastructure development, and the implementation of activities at the level of one million hectares per year, given the climate change conditions and the problems of drought and floods in the country, should be three or four times higher,” he concluded.

### Wet spell

Rainfall extremes over the past three years slowly questioned the conception that Iran is experiencing a long-term drought and some of the experts announced that a wet spell

will embrace the country.

So, some experts claimed that Iran has entered a period of a wet spell after experiencing dry spells over the past few decades, some others highly rejected the claim implying that the country faced a lack of rain by 50mm over the past 5 decades.

Climate disruption or global climate disruption, is the new term scientists are using to explain the extreme fluctuations that can and will occur to our weather systems as anthropogenic-caused carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases increase in our atmosphere, the oceans get warmer, and weather events go wild.

The report regrets that climate disruption will be continuing as climate change is on the rise and it calls on taking proper and effective measures to alleviate the adverse effects of climate change on the country.

In fact, experiencing two or three consecutive years of rainy days cannot ensure that drought no longer hits the country, but then it may enter a multi-year drought.

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → E

## Iran pioneer in cancer innovation, research among Islamic countries

Iran has the most research and innovation in the field of cancer both in the region and among Islamic countries, deputy health minister Reza Malekzadeh has stated.

Referring to the great progress in cancer research, he said that “We have been able to play a role in this area globally.” He added that one of the hopes for early detection of cancer is the use of urine and blood tests for people who are susceptible to cancer.

“We have conducted researches in the field of blood and urine biomarkers, which will help control cancers in the country,” he said.

Pointing out that there are about 250,000 cancer patients in the country, Malekzadeh noted that 50,000 people die each year from the disease and 125,000 new patients develop cancer, so that the number of people with the disease increases each year.

## ایران بیشترین نوآوری و تحقیقات سرطان را بین کشورهای اسلامی دارد

معاون تحقیقات و فناوری وزیر بهداشت، درمان و آموزش پزشکی گفت: ایران هم در منطقه و هم بین کشورهای اسلامی بیشترین میزان تحقیقات و نوآوری ها در حوزه سرطان را داشته است.

دکتر رضا ملک زاده روز شنبه در گفت و گو با خبرنگار علمی ایرنا با اشاره به اینکه ما در زمینه تحقیقات سرطان پیشرفت های خیلی خوبی داشتیم، گفت: ما در سطح جهانی هم توانستیم در این حوزه نقش آفرین باشیم. وی افزود: یکی از امیدهای خیلی روشن برای تشخیص زودرس سرطان، استفاده از آزمایش ادرار و خون برای افرادی است که استعداد سرطان را دارند.

معاون وزیر بهداشت گفت: در ایران تحقیقات خیلی خوبی در زمینه بیومارکرهای ادراری و خونی در دست اجرا داریم و امیدواریم با این کار، امکان کنترل سرطان ها در کشور میسر شود.

ملک زاده با اشاره به اینکه در حال حاضر تعداد ۲۵۰ هزار مبتلا به سرطان در کشور داریم، گفت: هر سال حدود ۵۰ هزار نفر بر اثر این بیماری می‌میرند و ۱۲۵ هزار بیمار جدید اضافه می شوند. در نتیجه هرساله تعداد مبتلایان این بیماری بیشتر می شود.

## Iran set to close borders with Turkey to curb COVID-19

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** – The Iranian health minister has issued an order, restricting travels to and from Turkey for a week in a bid to help contain the new coronavirus variant.

In a letter to the interior minister, Health Minister Saeed Namaki stressed the need for closing air and land borders with the neighboring country for a week, IRNA reported on Saturday.

“Iranian citizens who are in Turkey and intend to turn back to the country, as well as Turkish citizens who are in Iran, can leave the country observing the relevant protocols and doing PCR test to make sure no infection spreads,” he highlighted in the letter.

For Iranians entering the country from land and air borders, quarantine is also required for suspicious or positive cases, he stated. To prevent the new strain of COVID-19, the ministries of health and transport implemented a plan with the goal of rapidly identifying and testing incoming passengers and keeping them in quarantine facilities, if necessary.

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

Some 5,000 members of the Iranian Red Crescent Society cooperate for carrying out the plan; while around 8,000 individuals enter the country via borders on a daily basis, Karim Hemmati, head of IRCSC said on March 26.

On February 22, the spokesman of Iran’s Customs Administration Rouhollah Latifi said Iran has closed five crossing points with Iraq to prevent the spread of the UK variant of coronavirus, ISNA reported.

Border points of Kileh, Piranshahr, Chazzebah, and Shalamcheh were closed to travelers, and on Tuesday Mehran border in the nearby province of Ilam will shut down, he added.

Iraqi nationals visiting Iran have worsened the coronavirus pandemic in the southwestern Khuzestan province, IRNA quoted the province’s governor-general, Qassem Soleimani-Dashtaki, as saying.

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

### New cases and mortalities

In a press briefing on Saturday, Health Ministry’s spokesperson Sima-Sadat Lari confirmed 11,420 new cases of COVID-19 infection, raising the total number of infections to 1,920,394. She added that 1,642,418 patients have so far recovered, but 4,024 remain in critical conditions of the disease.

During the past 24 hours, 123 patients have lost their lives, bringing the total number of deaths to 62,999, she added.

So far, 13,038,709 COVID-19 diagnostic tests have been performed in the country.

## Russia develops first Covid vaccine for animals

The world’s first Covid vaccine for animals has been registered by scientists in Russia, after tests showed it was effective in several species including pets and livestock.

The breakthrough will allow mass production of the vaccine to begin as early as this month, raising hopes that potential future mutations of the virus that could be even more harmful to humans may be prevented from spreading.

Tests showed that Carnivac-Cov, which entered clinical trials last October, generated antibodies against Covid-19 in dogs, cats, foxes, mink and other animals.

The jab already has orders from fur farms in Russia and other businesses in Greece, Poland and Austria, and companies in the US, Canada and Singapore are said to have shown an interest in the drug.

“The results of the trials allow us to conclude that the vaccine is safe and highly immunogenic as all the vaccinated animals developed antibodies to coronavirus,” Konstantin Savenkov, deputy head of regulator Rosselkhoz nadzor – the Russian Federal Centre for Animal Health – said in the statement.

“The use of the vaccine, according to Russian researchers, can prevent the development of viral mutations, which most often occur during interspecies transmission of the agent.

“So far, it is the world’s first and only product for preventing Covid-19 in animals.”

The watchdog said the animals had continued to show an immune response for at least six months and that it would continue to study the vaccine’s effect on the animals. The jab would be able to protect vulnerable species and prevent viral mutations, the regulator said.

## LET’S LEARN PERSIAN

(Part 151)

(Source: saadifoundation.ir)

■ **Genetive**

■ **إضافه**

The structure consists of an unstressed /e/ placed between a noun

or other words, and the modifying elements which follow:

لباس بیمار : لباسی که مال بیمار است

درد شدید : دردی که شدید است

مرکز تجارت: مرکزی که مخصوص تجارت است

مریم پارسا : دختری که نامش مریم و نام خانوادگیش پارساست

إضافه بعد از واژه: پای من، گلولی تو، مزه ی ترش، گوشي او

ساختار اضافه ممکن است شامل کلمات زیادی شود:

درهای رستوران بزرگ دانشگاه

اسم کوچک پسر استاد زبان فارسي دانشگاه ما

● تمرین ۳. کلمات را به گروه اضافه تبدیل کنید:

۱. نظر. دکتر

۲. بیمار. گلو

۳. فرش ها. تهران. شهر

۴. دانشگاه. بیمارستان. دکتر

۵. آسمان. شهر. شمال. تهران



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GUIDE TO  
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING



Lying would negatively influence your livelihood.

Prophet Muhammad (S)

## Art Dubai 2021 showcases artworks by Iranian artists

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Works by Iranian artists were showcased at Art Dubai 2021, which came to an end on Saturday.

The artworks have been selected by the Tehran galleries Dastan's Basement, +2, Khak and Saradipour Art International, which also has opened a branch in Los Angeles.



A painting by Moslem Khezri that was showcased at the 14th Art Dubai

Dastan's Basement participated in the event with artworks by Mamali Shafahi, Yusha Bashir, Iman Raad, Farrokh Mahdavi and Taba & Shooki, while +2 took part in the fair with two paintings by Andisheh Avini.

Khak took artworks by Nargess Hashemi, Mandana Moqaddam, Golnaz Fathi, Kurosh Shishegaran, Mojtaba Ramzi and Masud AkhavanJam, and the Saradipour Art International put on view 40 paintings by Moslem Khezri.

The 14th edition of the fair, recognized as West Asia's leading art fair for showcasing local, regional and international artists, took place in an adapted format at Dubai International Financial Centre from March 29 to April 3 with 50 galleries from 31 countries showcasing a diverse selection of artworks, artists and practices that reflects the multicultural identity of the city.

Due to the pandemic, the fair opened with the first three days restricted to VIPs and invitation-only guests. The fair's artistic director, Pablo del Val, said that he is pleased with the performance of the 2021 edition.

"Doing a very straightforward fair, where the relationship between the visitor and the work of art is raw, is amazing... It's been a different exercise for collectors. There are fewer distractions around," he added.

## Iranian bookstores host "The Man Who Loved Books Too Much"

**C U L T U R E d e s k** **TEHRAN** — American writer Allison Hoover Bartlett's national bestseller "The Man Who Loved Books Too Much: The True Story of a Thief, a Detective, and a World of Literary Obsession" has recently been published in Persian.

Saless is the publisher of the book translated into Persian by Mojtaba Veisi.

Set within the world of rare-book collecting: the true story of an infamous book thief, his victims, and the man determined to catch him.

Rare-book theft is even more widespread than fine-art theft. Most thieves, of course, steal for profit. John Charles Gilkey steals purely for the love of books. In an attempt to understand him better, journalist Allison Hoover Bartlett plunged herself into the world of book lust and discovered just how dangerous it can be.

John Gilkey is an obsessed, unrepentant book thief who has stolen hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of rare books from book fairs, stores and libraries around the country.

Ken Sanders is the self-appointed "bibliodick" (book dealer with a penchant for detective work) driven to catch him.

Bartlett befriended both outlandish characters and found herself caught in the middle of efforts to recover hidden treasure. A cat-and-mouse chase that not only reveals exactly how Gilkey pulled off his dirtiest crimes, where he stashed the loot and how Sanders ultimately caught him, but also explores the romance of books, the lure to collect them and the temptation to steal them.

Bartlett looks at the history of book passion, collection, and theft through the ages, to examine the craving that makes some people willing to stop at nothing to possess the books they love. Bartlett has written on a variety of topics, including travel, art, science and education, for the New York Times, the Washington Post, San Francisco Magazine and other publications.

Her original article on book thief John Gilkey was included in the Best American Crime Reporting 2007, and the book was selected for Barnes and Noble's "Discover Great New Writers" program. Bartlett was named a San Francisco Library Laureate in 2010 and is a founding member of North 24th Writers.

She and her husband have two children and live in San Francisco.

# IIDCYA makes animations on national luminaries

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** — The Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA) has produced a collection of animated movies to raise children's knowledge of national luminaries.

One of the figures is Persian poet Hafez, who is buried in his hometown of Shiraz, and is most famous for his divan. Among the many partial English translations of this work are those done by Gertrude Bell and H. Wilberforce Clarke.

The extraordinary popularity of Hafez poetry in all Persian-speaking lands stems from his simple and often colloquial, though musical, language, free from artificial virtuosity, and his unaffected use of homely images and proverbial expressions.

Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Zakariya Razi (Rhazes), the great physician of the Islamic world during the ninth century CE, is another Iranian personality portrayed



A scene from an episode of the IIDCYA series that is about Professor Mahmud Hesabi.

in the collection.

An episode of the series revolves around the life story of Iranian scientist Avicenna.

Born in 980, Avicenna was the most famous and influential of the philosopher-scientists of the medieval Islamic world.

He was particularly noted for his contributions in the fields of Aristotelian philosophy and medicine. He composed the Kitab al-Shifa (Book of the Cure), a vast philosophical and scientific encyclopedia, and Al-Qanun fi al-Tibb (The Canon of Medicine), which is among the most famous books in the history of medicine.

Lieutenant-General Qasem Soleimani, war hero Mostafa Chamran, Professor Mahmud Hesabi, Qajar chief minister Mirza Taqi Khan Farahani — Amir Kabir, and poet Parvin Etesami are among the luminaries.

The collection is being dubbed into English, Arabic and Spanish.

## Online art business brisk amid pandemic: gallery owner



An art aficionado visits a photo exhibition by Hesam Darvishpur at Golestan Gallery on June 7, 2019. ((Honaronline/Saeid Rabiei

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Lili Golestan, the owner of a major art gallery in Tehran, has said that her gallery quickly adapted to survive over the one-year-plus pandemic despite her preconception about virtual art showcases.

"Online exhibitions caused an increase in the number

of Golestan Gallery's customers," she told the Persian service of Honaronline on Friday.

Following the detection of the first cases of the COVID-19 infection in the country in February 2020, Golestan canceled all its exhibits for about four months.

"We had our annual schedule and we did not know what to do. I asked the artists who were scheduled to showcase their artworks at our gallery if they were ready to display their artworks in virtual exhibitions. I was not very familiar with the virtual world, so I engaged in this type of business with some skepticism. I anticipated that it would not be successful, but despite my preconceptions, the online exhibitions really went well and were quite successful."

She said that her exhibitions had visitors from across the world.

"We even had customers from among Iranian expatriates living in Ireland, England, Germany, Japan, the U.S., France and Denmark, and it was amazing for me that those people who could not visit our exhibitions before were able to purchase artworks from our showcases," Golestan noted.

Nearly 95 percent of the customers were first-time artwork buyers of Golestan Gallery, which sent the purchased artworks to buyers free of charge.

## Woody Allen's comedy play "Riverside Drive" on stage at Tehran theater

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** — American filmmaker and writer Woody Allen's comedy play "Riverside Drive" is on stage at Sanubar Hall of Tehran's Shahrzad Theater Complex.

Morteza Barzegarzadegan is the director of the play translated into Persian by Mohammadreza Avzar.

Mohammadreza Hashemi, Babak Qaderi and Sanaz Roshani are members of the cast.

In "Riverside Drive," the better play on the twin bill, the wild, infantile, murderous impulses of the unconscious are the subject of forlorn meditation.

Waiting on a park bench by the Hudson River, a self-absorbed screenwriter, Jim Swain, fidgets in that special Woody Allen



A poster for Woody Allen's play "Riverside Drive" by Iranian director Morteza Barzegarzadegan

ozone of fretful desire.

He is expecting his mistress, with whom

he is planning to break up. A bearded homeless man, the aptly named Fred Savage intrudes on Swain's solitude, unsettling him first by identifying him as a writer, then by claiming uncredited authorship of Swain's latest movie, the idea for which, he maintains, Swain stole from a conversation of Savage's, overheard in Central Park.

The play is an episode of "Three One-Act Plays: Riverside Drive, Old Saybrook and Central Park West".

Three delightful one-act plays set in and around New York, in which sophisticated characters confound one another in ways only Woody Allen could imagine.

Allen's first dramatic writing published

in years, "Riverside Drive," "Old Saybrook" and "Central Park West" are humorous, insightful and unusually readable plays about infidelity.

The characters, archetypal New Yorkers all, start out talking innocently enough, but soon the most unexpected things arise — and the reader enjoys every minute of it (though not all the characters do).

These plays, successfully produced on the New York stage and in regional theaters on the East Coast, dramatize Allen's continuing preoccupation with people who rationalize their actions, hide what they're doing, and inevitably slip into sexual deception — all of it revealed in Allen's quintessentially pell-mell dialogue.

## Islamic arts: zenith of Islamic literature

### Part 2

Also notable are his Elahinameh ("The Book of God"), an allegory of a king and his six sons, and his profound Mosibatnameh ("Book of Affliction"), which closes with its hero's being immersed in the ocean of his soul after wandering through the 40 stages of his search for God. The epic exteriorizes the mystic's experiences in the 40 days of seclusion.

### Importance of Jalal ad-Din Rumi

The most famous of the Persian mystical masnavis is by Jalal ad-Din Rumi (died 1273) and is known simply as the Masnavi. It comprises some 26,000 verses and is a complete — though quite disorganized — encyclopaedia of all the mystical thought, theories, and images known in the 13th century.

It is regarded by most of the Persian-reading orders of Sufis as second in importance only to the Quran. Its translation into many Islamic languages and the countless commentaries written on it up to the present day indicate its importance in the formation of Islamic poetry and religious thought.

Jalal ad-Din, who hailed from Balkh (in present-day Afghanistan) and settled in Konya (in present-day Turkey), the capital of the Rum, or Anatolian Seljuqs (and hence was surnamed "Rumi"), was also the author of love lyrics whose beauty surpasses even that of the tales in the Masnavi.

Mystical love poetry had been written since the days of Sanai, and theories of love had been explained in the most subtle prose and sensitive verses by the Sufis of the early 12th century.

Yet Rumi's experience of mystical love for the wandering mystic, Shams ad-Din of Tabriz, was so ardent and enraptured him to such an extent that he identified himself completely with Shams, going so far as to use the beloved's name as his own pen name.

His dithyrambic lyrics, numbering more than 30,000 verses altogether, are not at all abstract or romantic. On the contrary, their vocabulary and imagery are taken directly from everyday life, so that they are vivid, fresh, and convincing.

Often their rhythm invites the reader to partake in the mystical dance practiced by Rumi's followers, the Mawlawiyyah (the name is derived from the honorific "Maw-lana" — meaning "Our Lord" — often bestowed on Rumi).

His verses sometimes approach the form of popular folk

poetry. Indeed, Rumi is reputed to have written mostly under inspiration, and, despite his remarkable poetical technique, the sincerity of his love and longing is never overshadowed, nor is his personality veiled. In these respects, he is unique in Persian literature.

### Zenith of Islamic literature

During the 13th century the Islamic lands were exposed, on the political plane, to the onslaught of the Mongols and the abolition of the Abbasid caliphate, while vast areas were laid to waste. Yet this was in fact the period in which Islamic literatures reached their zenith.

Apart from Rumi's superb poetry, written in the comparative safety of Konya, there was also the work of the Egyptian Ibn al-Farid (died 1235), who composed some magnificent, delicately written mystical poems in qasidah style, and that of Ibn al-Arabi, who composed love lyrics and numerous theosophical works that were to become standard.

In Iran, one of the greatest literati, Saidi, (died 1291), returned about 1256 to his birthplace, Shiraz, after years of journeying, and his Bustan (The Orchard) and Gulistan (The Rose Garden) have been popular ever since.

The Bustan is a didactic poem telling wise and uplifting moral tales, written in polished, easy-flowing style and a simple meter.

The Gulistan, completed one year later, in 1258, has been judged "the finest flower that could blossom in a Sultan's garden" (Johann Gottfried von Herder). Its eight chapters deal with different aspects of human life and behavior. At first sight its prose and poetical fragments appear to be simple and unassuming, but not a word could be changed without destroying the perfect harmony of the sound, imagery, and content.

Sadi's Gulistan is thus essential in discovering the nature of the finest Persian literary style. Since the mid-17th century its moralizing stories have been translated into many Western languages.

Sadi was likewise the author of some spirited ghazals; he may have been the first writer in Iran to compose the sort of love poetry that is now thought of as characteristic of the ghazal.

A few of his qasidahs are also of note, although he is at his best in shorter forms. His elegant aphoristic poems, words of wisdom, and sensible advice all display what has been called the philosophy of common sense — how to act

in any given situation so as to make the best of it both for oneself and others, basing one's conduct on the virtues of gentleness, elegance, modesty, and polite behavior.

The influence of mysticism, on the one hand, and of the elaborate Persian poetical tradition, on the other, is apparent during the later decades of the 13th century, both in Anatolia and in Muslim India.

The Persian mystic Iraqi (died 1289), a master of delightful love lyrics, lived for almost 25 years in Multan (in present-day Pakistan), where his lively ghazals are still sung. His short treatises, in a mixture of poetry and prose (and written under Ibn al-Arabi's influence), have been imitated often.

While in Multan he may have met the young Amir Khosrow of Delhi (died 1325), who was one of the most versatile authors to write in Persian, not only in India but in the entire realm of Persian culture.

Amir Khosrow, son of a Turkish officer but whose mother was Indian, is often styled, because of the sweetness of his speech, "the parrot of India." (In Persian, it should be noted, parrots are always "sugar-talking"; they are, moreover, connected with paradise and are thought of as wise birds — thus models of the sweet - voiced sage.)

He wrote panegyrics of seven successive kings of Delhi and was also a pioneer of Indian Muslim music.

Imitating Nezami's Khamseh, Khosrow introduced a novelistic strain into the masnavi by recounting certain events of his own time in poetical form, some parts of which are lyrics.

His style of lyrical poetry has been described as "powdered", and his ghazals contain many of the elements that in the 16th and 17th centuries were to become characteristic of the "Indian" style.

Khosrow's poetry surprises the reader in its use of unexpected forms and unusual images, complicated constructions and verbal plays, all handled fluently and presented in technically perfect language.

His books on the art of letter writing prove his mastery of high-flown Persian prose. Khosrow's younger contemporary, Hassan of Delhi (died 1328), is less well known and had a more simple style. He nevertheless surpassed Khosrow in warmth and charm, qualities that earned him the title of "the Saidi of Hindustan."

(Source: Britannica)

Concluded