

**Iran biggest victim of landmines: defense minister** Page 2

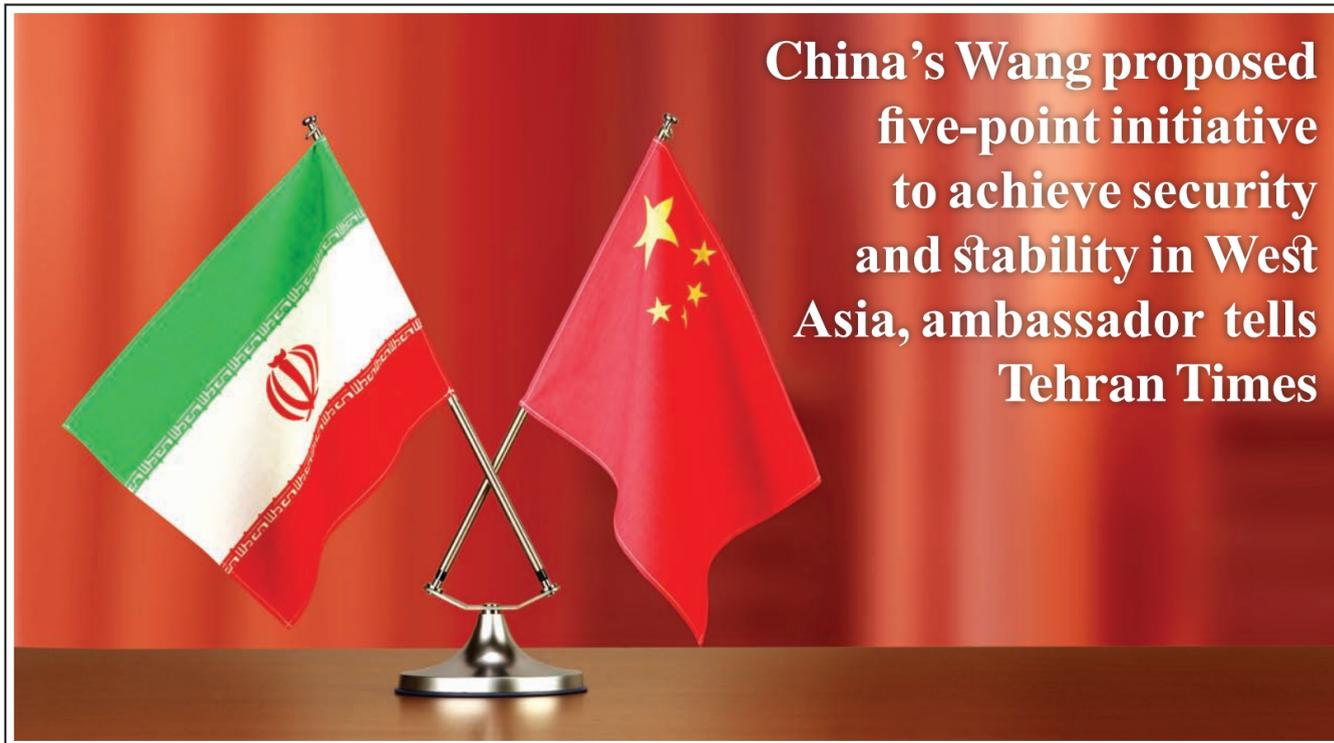
**Sepahan edge Saipa to move top of Iran league** Page 3

**Over 6,000 jobs created for women heads of households** Page 7

**Iranian cartoonist Nosrati wins top prize at Russian contest on environment** Page 8

# Iran and China make history with strategic deal

See page 3



**China's Wang proposed five-point initiative to achieve security and stability in West Asia, ambassador tells Tehran Times**

**Strategic cooperation of emerging powers: Beyond regional instability, towards a new global order**

**BY AMIR MOHAMMAD ESMAELI**  
**H**omme Malade de l'Europe was eventually divided by the Allied Powers at the end of World War I. The Ottoman Empire, which had been declining for a long time, was finally disintegrated by the Western spirit of expansionism. As a result, the nation-states were born whose nations had little to do with their own destiny.

Indeed, the seemingly civilized European nations inevitably took over the uncivilized but historically glorious, West Asian nations to lead them towards development and prosperity. The word "Al-Aistiemar" for colonization was widely used by the region's optimistic people, as they naively thought that the Western interventionists decided to bring about prosperity and developments into the region. Iran and the Ottomans, who were experiencing a long period of decline under authoritarian regimes, did not have the power and will to resist this civilized invasion.

The West Asian contemporary history has intertwined with treaties with a fundamental characteristic, namely, Western decisions for the region without considering the considerations and demands of West Asian nations and governments. The Sykes-Picot Agreement, the Treaty of Sevres and the Balfour Declaration are three tangible examples of these treaties. Meanwhile, McMahon-Hussein Correspondence is also another fact in the West Asian history, which clearly indicates Western interventionist efforts to inject a nationalist ideology with Western spirit into the region, which can hardly be found in the region's thousands of years of history and civilization. These injected nationalist movements, which ultimately ended with the ouster of Sharif Hussein's ambitions, created new territories in the region regardless of the Arabs' considerations. These civilized interventions' legacy was to sow the seeds of successive regional conflicts for West Asian nations. Therefore, West Asia was somehow engineered to be involved in instability and conflicts for the following decades.

Continued on page 5

## Smuggled Iranian relics returned home from Austria

TEHRAN - A total of 28 Iranian relics, which had been smuggled abroad decades ago, were finally returned home on Sunday. Last year, the objects were recovered and surrendered to a representative of the Islamic Republic in Vienna.

"28 historical and archeological Iranian objects, which had been illegally taken out of the country, were transferred from Vienna to Tehran by a diplomatic shipment today, and returned home by one of Iranian diplomats," Mehr reported on Sunday. "The transfer was made under the joint supervision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts," the report added.

Last July, the antiquities were handed over to Iran's representative in Austria following a series of legal investigations and as the result of judicial assistance between the two countries and in cooperation with Interpol departments in the two countries. The extradition session was attended

by the head of the Vienna police criminal investigation department.

Among the seized objects, there are examples of bronze objects known as Lorestan's pins, similar examples of which are being kept at the museums of Reza Abbasi and the National Museum of Iran.

In May 2019, Iran's Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts called for the return of relics, which were discovered from a safety-deposit box of a bank in Austria months earlier.

"In Azar 1398 (the Iranian month falling on November 22 to December 21, 2019) through a telephone call from the head of Iran's Interpol, the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts was informed of the discovery and seizure of some ancient objects of Iranian origin from a safety-deposit box of a bank in Austria," according to Mohammad-Hassan Talebian, the deputy minister for cultural heritage affairs.

Continued on page 6

## U.S. can afford to take some early steps to restore nuclear deal: Fitzpatrick

**BY MOHAMMAD MAZHARI**

TEHRAN - Mark Fitzpatrick, an associate fellow at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, says that the U.S. can afford to take the first steps to revive the 2015 nuclear deal.

"I do think the United States can afford to take some early steps such as releasing some of the Iranian funds frozen in South Korea," Fitzpatrick tells the Tehran Times.

Pointing to the position of Washington and Tehran as key players of nuclear negotiations,

Fitzpatrick says that the United States can take some early steps to break the impasse on reviving the nuclear pact.

Iran, China, Russia, France, Germany and Britain - all parties to the 2015 deal - discussed on Friday the possible return of the United States to the agreement and how to ensure its full and effective implementation by all sides including the U.S.

In Friday's talks the participants agreed to meet in person in Vienna on Tuesday, April 6, after "frank and serious talks," according to Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi, a senior negotiator in the talks.

Here is the full text of the interview with Fitzpatrick over his expectation of this round of talks:

**What is your prediction in regard to the results of ongoing negotiations over reviving the JCPOA? Are you optimistic about the outcome of the talks?**

It should not have taken two months for talks to begin on restoring the JCPOA.

Continued on page 5

## 'Boycott UAE' campaign over Israeli normalization goes global

A pro-Palestinian boycott campaign targeting the United Arab Emirates for normalization of relations with Israel is starting to gather momentum around the world.

The campaign was originally launched last December, advising a boycott of Emirati products in protest at the normalization that took place four months ago. Back then, the initiative announced the hashtag #Boycott\_Emirati\_Products as its rallying point.

On Sunday, campaign organizers announced their intention to expand the drive across the world's entire "Arab and Islamic nations." They cited their success so far, which has motivated them to go global, Press TV reported.

"This campaign has had strong reverberations and impacts in several areas," the organizers said, naming Monday as the day, when the drive would reach farther fronts.

"To discipline the Emirati regime, tomorrow,

God willing, we will launch a large campaign to boycott the UAE...Be with us!" they tweeted.

The UAE and Bahrain signed normalization deals with Israel in a ceremony hosted by former president Donald Trump at the White House last September. The event was joined by Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Palestinians have condemned the accords as a stab in their back and a direct affront to their cause to liberate their lands from Israeli occupation.

The White House event was followed by an unprecedented secret trip by Netanyahu to Saudi Arabia, where he met with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

The United Arab Emirates has reduced official contacts with Israel in protest at Benjamin Netanyahu's attempts to involve the UAE in his re-election campaign, Israeli and western officials said, in what is the first diplomatic crisis since the two countries normalized relations last year.

## Deals worth €165m inked for recovering Iranian fields' flare gas

TEHRAN - Iran's southern Persian Gulf Bid Boland Gas Refining Company has signed three deals worth €165 million with domestic companies for collecting and recovering flare gases of Rag-Sefid offshore oilfield, Shana reported.

The deals were signed in a ceremony attended by Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh and the Managing Director of Persian Gulf Bid Boland Gas Refining Company Mahmoud Amin-Nejad on Monday.

The mentioned deals cover construction of 24 centrifugal compressors as well

as Rag-Sefid's flare gas recovery station.

As reported, the deals for construction, installation, and commissioning of 24 centrifugal compressors worth €75 million were signed with Oil Turbo Compressor Construction Company (OTC) and Mapna Turbine Engineering and Construction Company (TUGA), while the contract for the construction of the Rag-Sefid flare gas recovery station worth €90 million was signed with Energy Industries Engineering and Design (EIED).

Continued on page 4

## Iran among world's richest in biodiversity, genetics

**By Faranak Bakhtiari**

TEHRAN - There are 11 types of ecosystems in the world, 9 of which are identified in Iran. On the other hand, out of 42 types of wetlands, 41 types exist in the country. Therefore, Iran is one of the 20 countries rich in biodiversity and genetics.

Biological and genetic diversity in our country has caused many plants and animals to be native to Iran, currently,

there are 2,100 endemic plant species in Iran. Eskandar Zand, the national authority for the Convention on Biological Diversity said.

**Five ecoregions, rich biodiversity**

Each region is defined by its characteristics that play a significant role in a land's biodiversity and richness, based on which,

Continued on page 7

TEHRAN - Chang Hua, the ambassador of China to Iran, tells the Tehran Times that Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi proposed a "five-point initiative on achieving security and stability in West Asia" during his recent visit to the region, which also included Iran.

regional and international peace.

"We believe the China-Iran comprehensive cooperation plan will not only benefit the two peoples of China and Iran but also contribute to regional and world peace," Ambassador Chang notes tells the Tehran Times.

Some political and economic analysts have said the "25-year strategic roadmap" can help reduce tension between Iran and some of its neighbors on the Persian Gulf's southern shores.

Continued on page 2



## IIDCYA mobile theater trucks roll out for rural Iran

TEHRAN - The Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA) launched four mobile theater trucks in a special ceremony in Tehran on Monday to entertain people in remote Iranian villages.

IIDCYA director Fazel Nazari attending the ceremony said that troupes and artists will travel with the trucks to remote regions across the country to present performances and cultural programs.

The mobile theaters will also screen a number of IIDCYA productions for children and young adults in comprehensive programs every year.

## Iran athletics should be grateful to Ehsan Hadadi: Hashem Siami

TEHRAN - Head of Athletic Federation of Islamic Republic of Iran (AAFIRI) Hashem Siami said the country's athletics should be grateful for what Ehsan Hadadi has done over the past years.

Discus thrower Hadadi became the first Iranian to earn an Olympic track and field medal when he took silver in the discus at the 2012 London Games.

He currently trains in the US under his coach Mac Wilkins in Chula Vista, San Diego.

"Hadadi has won a total of 15 medals so far in Olympics, Asian championships, Asian Game and world championships and we will help him as much as we can to have a good performance in his last Olympics. I would like to pay my respects to him on behalf of country's athletics society. Hadadi has made Iran proud for several times. We also support Hassan Taftian to get his best result in the 100 meters event in Tokyo," Siami said in a press conference.

"We've secured two Olympics berths so far and I think four more athletes have a chance to book their place in the Olympics. Iran sent 10 athletes to the previous Games but we would rather take part in the high-level events," he added.

"Our women athletes have a bright future ahead. Farzaneh Fasihi, Mahsa Mirzatabibi, Sarina Saedi, Toktam Dastarbandan, Zahra Arab Rostami and Reyhaneh Mobini can win medals in the Asian competitions," Siami stated.

## Raisi is principlists' favorite presidential candidate, unity council spokesman says

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN – Manouchehr Mottaki, the spokesman for the unity council of principlists, declared talks with potential presidential candidates on Monday.

However, Mottaki said, Judiciary Chief Ebrahim Raisi is the council's "first priority".

So far, Raisi, the Judiciary chief, has not announced whether he will run for the post of president or not.

Mottaki, a former foreign minister and parliamentarian, said the unity council has started talks with potential candidates to get familiar with their plans and their cabinet makeup.



Raisi ran against President Rouhani in the 2017 elections. The presidential elections in Iran will be held on June 18. Almost all analysts and even ordinary citizens predict that the main competition in the June elections will be between rival principlist candidates.

So far, potential principlist candidates are Raisi; Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf; former Supreme National Security Council secretary Saeed Jalili; Expediency Council secretary Mohsen Rezaei; former parliament speaker Ali Larjani; and Rostam Qassemi and Mohammad Saeed, both chiefs of the Khatam al-Anbiya Construction Headquarters, the construction body of the IRGC.

So far, former defense minister Hossein Dehqan who currently acts as military advisor to the Leader, and former diplomat Ramin Mehmanparast have openly announced their presidential candidacy.

Dehqan, who was minister in President Hassan Rouhani's first administration, has said he will be contesting the elections independently and said has no affiliation to any political faction.

Mehmanparast has also said a presidential candidate should have cohesive plans for running the country.

Atrianfar, a key member of the pro-reform Construction Party, has announced they may back a Larjani candidacy if their favored candidates are not endorsed by the oversight Guardian Council.

However, Mohammad Javad Haqshenas, a member of the National Confidence Party, has said the reformist faction won't back Larjani in he runs for the presidential post.

Haqshenas also said the political climate in the country in the current year is different from 2013 in which reformists backed moderate candidate Hassan Rouhani.

"The political climate of the country in 1400 (the current Iranian year) is different from (1392) and the choice between bad and worse will no longer produce results," he told the Mehr news agency in an interview published on Saturday.

He said even if the leader of reformists back a particular candidate, the reformist groups will not back that candidate.

Former president Mohammad Khatami is considered the leader of the reformist faction. In the two previous presidential elections he backed Rouhani.

Haqshenas, who is currently a member of the Tehran City Council, also defended elections based on party lines, saying, "If a candidate from a party comes to (election) scene and is elected, naturally his party will be held responsible for the performance of president."

The member of the central council of the National Confidence Party said in 2013 "we were caught in a situation in which we had no alternative other than supporting Hassan Rouhani because reformists were still being haunted by results of the 2005 presidential election in which Mahmoud Ahmadinejad won the votes.

In that atmosphere in which reformists wanted to protect their status in the elections they preferred to announce tendency toward a candidate who was closer to "reform thinking" and thereby an "unwritten coalition" was formed between reformists, moderates and moderate principlists and these three factions backed Rouhani and they won the elections, Haqshenas stated.

## Iran biggest victim of landmines: defense minister

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN – Iran became the biggest victim of landmines after eight years of war imposed by the former Saddam regime of Iraq in the 1980s, Defense Minister Brigadier General Amir Hatami said on Monday, denouncing the supporters of Saddam for refusing to help Iran in demining activities after the war.

General Hatami made the remarks as he released a message on the occasion of the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action.

He said while the Islamic Republic has always been the flagbearer of peace, stability and calm in the region and the world, it became the biggest victim of mines after eight years of war imposed by the former Iraqi dictator as around 42,000 square kilometers of the Iranian territories were contaminated by 20 million various types of landmines and explosives manufactured by the self-proclaimed advocates of human rights.

The defense minister also pointed to the large number of Iranian people victimized by the landmines during and after the war and the huge social, economic and environmental damages inflicted on Iran.

"Unfortunately, the very same countries that assisted the Iraqi government in all fields, including (by providing) various mines during years of war against Iran, have refused to help our country in the post-war years in addressing this problem with different excuses and withheld technological assistance to the peace-loving Iranian people," the general added.

(Source: Tasnim)

# China's Wang proposed five-point initiative to achieve security and stability in West Asia, ambassador tells Tehran Times

Chinese ambassador says strategic partnership with Iran will contribute to regional and global peace

➔ Chang says it is necessary to change the "traditional mindset" and see West Asian countries "as partners for cooperation, development and peace" rather than bitter rivals.

"The characteristics, models and paths of the Middle East must be respected. It is important to change the traditional mindset and see Middle East countries as partners for cooperation, development and peace, instead of perceiving the region through the lens of geo-competition. It is important to support Middle East countries in exploring their own paths of development, and support regional countries and their peoples in playing a major role in pursuing political settlement of such regional hotspot issues like Syria, Yemen and Libya," the ambassador asserts.

He also says it is important to "promote dialogue and exchanges among civilizations to achieve peaceful coexistence of all ethnicities" in West Asia, adding "China will continue to play its constructive role to this end."

**"China-Iran relations not influenced by international developments"**

The 25-year comprehensive cooperation document has received global attention.

The ambassador says, "History proves that China-Iran relations have withstood the test of the changing international situation."

He also points to remarks by the Chinese foreign minister while visiting Tehran, saying, "State Councilor and Foreign Minister of China Wang Yi emphasized many times during his recent visit to Iran that no matter how the world situation changes, China's willingness to develop China-Iran relations will not change."

According to China's top diplomat to Tehran, Foreign Minister Wang also said, "The China-Iran friendship will certainly continue to follow the direction defined by leaders of the two countries, stand on a new historical starting point and open a new exciting chapter."

Some media outlets noted that the document includes cooperation in areas of railway and road transportation, manufacturing of refinery, petrochemicals, car production, development of oil and gas projects, protection of environment and promotion of knowledge-based companies.

The ambassador believes that the cooperation plan shows the will of the two countries to promote ties.

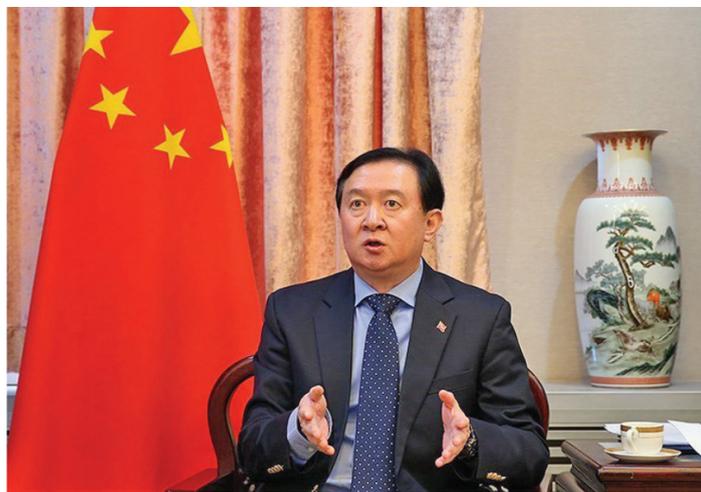
"Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif's visit to China in October last year and State Councilor and Foreign Minister of China Wang Yi's recent successful visit to Iran demonstrate that both sides attach great importance to the comprehensive strategic partnership of the two countries and have the political will to promote it further."

While in Tehran, Wang held talks with President Hassan Rouhani and Supreme Leader's Advisor Ali Larjani.

According to the ambassador, Wang also held "friendly and in-depth talks" with Zarif. "The two sides had extensive exchanges on bilateral cooperation in various fields as well as international and regional issues, resulting in positive achievements."

The ambassador says the foundation for the strategic cooperation was laid during President Xi Jinping's visit to Iran in January 2016.

"When Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Iran in January 2016, China and Iran pointed out in the joint statement on the



establishment of a comprehensive strategic partnership that the two parties agreed to conduct necessary communication and consultations on reaching a 25-year comprehensive cooperation agreement considering the willingness of the two countries to actively develop bilateral relations as well as the economic complementarity and the current cooperation of the two countries in energy, infrastructure, industry, technology and so on," Chang explains.

He goes on to say that "the plan focuses on tapping the potentials in economic and cultural cooperation and charting course for long-term cooperation."

**"Cooperation plan does not include any quantitative, specific contracts"**

The ambassador also reiterates that the document is just a roadmap and "it doesn't include any quantitative, specific contracts or goals but provides a general framework for China-Iran cooperation going forward."

Iranian Ambassador to Beijing Mohammad Keshavarz-Zadeh has said the comprehensive strategic partnership is not against any third country. However, a few hours after the inking of the document, U.S. President Biden said he has been "concerned about that for a year."

The Chinese diplomat says his country is "determined to preserve legitimate cooperation" with Tehran and says that sanctions and bullying tactics against Iran will get nowhere.

"In recent years, the U.S. withdrew from the JCPOA and reimposed sanctions on Iran, which brought difficulties and obstacles to China-Iran practical cooperation. China is always determined to preserve legitimate cooperation with Iran in trade, energy, and other areas with concrete actions and actively calls on the international community to protect Iran's legitimate economic interests. We believe that unilateral sanctions and bullying approach are unpopular and bound to fail," the ambassador remarks.

**"Win-Win cooperation"**

The diplomat believes that China and Iran "should take a long-term perspective, overcome difficulties, uphold the concept of win-win cooperation, strengthen the alignment of development strategies, continue to deepen mutually-beneficial cooperation in various fields, and achieve common prosperity."

On whether the plan falls within the mas-

sive infrastructure project of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) or it is complementary to it, the ambassador notes, "The Belt and Road Initiative is an open and inclusive initiative for cooperation, which follows the principle of extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits, and focus on policy coordination, connectivity of infrastructure, unimpeded trade, financial integration and closer people-to-people ties."

He views Iran as an important transit route in the BRI project.

"Iran has been an important transport hub and distribution center on the Silk Road since ancient times and remains a key partner of cooperation in BRI construction today. The two governments signed a memorandum of understanding on jointly promoting the Belt and Road Initiative in 2016. China has been Iran's largest trading partner for many consecutive years. The cooperation between China and Iran within the framework of BRI shows candid consultation and mutual benefit, enhances the communication and understanding between the two peoples and promotes the mutual trust and support between the two countries," Ambassador Chang states.

**Five-point initiative on achieving security and stability in West Asia**

The ambassador also says Foreign Minister Wang proposed a five-point initiative on achieving security and stability in West Asia during his recent tour to six regional countries, including Iran.

Following is the text of the five-point initiative the ambassador enumerates:

First, advocating mutual respect. The Middle East is home to unique civilizations which have cultivated unique social and political systems. The characteristics, models and paths of the Middle East must be respected. It is important to change the traditional mindset and see Middle East countries as partners for cooperation, development and peace, instead of perceiving the region through the lens of geo-competition. It is important to support Middle East countries in exploring their own paths of development and support regional countries and their peoples in playing a major role in pursuing political settlement of such regional hotspot issues like Syria, Yemen and Libya. It is important to promote dialogue and exchanges among civilizations to achieve peaceful coexistence of all ethnicities in the

Middle East. China will continue to play its constructive role to this end.

Second, upholding equity and justice. Nothing represents equity and justice in the Middle East more than a sound solution to the question of Palestine and earnest implementation of the two-state solution. We support active mediation by the international community toward this objective and holding an authoritative international meeting on this matter when conditions are ripe. In its presidency of the UN Security Council this May, China will encourage the Security Council to fully deliberate on the question of Palestine to reaffirm the two-state solution. China will continue to invite peace advocates from Palestine and Israel to China for dialogue and also welcome Palestinian and Israeli representatives to China for direct negotiations.

Third, achieving non-proliferation. Based on the merits in the evolution of the Iranian nuclear issue, relevant parties need to move in the same direction with concrete actions and discuss and formulate the roadmap and timeframe for the United States and Iran to resume compliance with the JCPOA. The pressing task is for the United States to take substantive measures to lift its unilateral sanctions on Iran and long-arm jurisdiction on third parties and for Iran to resume reciprocal compliance with its nuclear commitments in an effort to achieve early harvest. At the same time, the international community should support efforts by regional countries in establishing a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

Fourth, jointly fostering collective security. In promoting security and stability in the Middle East, all parties' legitimate concerns should be accommodated. It is important to encourage equal dialogue and consultation, mutual understanding and accommodation and improved relations among Persian Gulf countries. It is imperative to resolutely combat terrorism and advance deradicalization. China proposes holding in China a multilateral dialogue conference for regional security in the Persian Gulf region to explore the establishment of a Middle East trust mechanism, starting with such subjects as ensuring the safety of oil facilities and shipping lanes, and building step by step a framework for collective, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security in the Middle East.

Fifth, accelerating development cooperation. Enduring peace and security in the Middle East require development, cooperation and integration. It is necessary to come together to defeat the coronavirus and achieve economic and social recovery as soon as possible. It is important to help post-conflict countries rebuild, support greater diversity in the economic growth of oil-producing countries, and assist other Middle East countries in achieving development and revitalization in light of different countries' resource endowments in the region. China will continue to hold the China-Arab Reform and Development Forum and the Middle East Security Forum to increase the sharing of governance experience with Middle East countries.

China is prepared to stay in close touch with all sides on the five-point initiative and work closely to promote peace, security and development in the Middle East.

## India doubling down on Chabahar port project as strategic counter to China's BRI gains momentum: Asia Times

By the end of May, India will begin full-scale operations in its first foreign port venture at Iran's Chabahar, a facility that opens on the Gulf of Oman that will aim to facilitate more South Asia, Central Asia and West Asia trade, Asia Times wrote on Sunday, April 4.

India's \$500 million investment represents a clear and potent commercial challenge to China's massive port investment in neighboring Pakistan's Gwadar, a key component of Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

India has nearly completed development of two terminals at Chabahar's Shahid Beheshti complex that opens onto the Gulf of Oman.

The 10-year lease agreement, a deal first clinched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Tehran in 2016, has until now been hobbled by U.S. sanctions imposed under the Donald Trump administration.

Indian suppliers and engineers, some with interests in the U.S., were reluctant to deliver essential machinery and services to Iran on fears they could somehow be sanctioned, despite clear exemptions on Chabahar in Trump's sanction order. That led to certain speculation that China may take over the project from India.

But New Delhi has doubled down and accelerated the project with the shift from Trump to Joe Biden, banking like others on a new breakthrough on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the official name for the 2015 nuclear agreement, and a broader U.S.-Iran warming trend.

"I will inaugurate the fully operationalized Chabahar port in April or May," Mansukh Mandaviya, India's ports and shipping minister, said in a recent virtual discussion on Iran's Chabahar port.

India has supplied two large cargo-moving cranes and will deliver two more in the coming weeks before the facility's expected ceremonial opening next month.

New Delhi is already promoting the port's potential humanitarian role, noting it was used to send emergency shipments of wheat to Afghanistan during the Covid-19 crisis and pesticide to Iran to deal with a recent locust infestation.



Chabahar has seen limited operations since 2019, a result of U.S. restrictions imposed on Iran's energy exports. The port handled a mere 123 vessels with 1.8 million tons of bulk and general cargo from February 2019 to January 2021, well below its operating capacity, according to reports.

That's set to change. New Delhi ultimately aims to link Chabahar to its International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), a project initially proposed by India, Russia and Iran in 2000 and later joined by 10 other Central Asian nations.

Some see the INSTC as a less-moored rival to China's BRI, which has invested heavily in Pakistan's road, power and trade infrastructure, including huge multi-billion-dollar investments at Gwadar port.

INSTC envisions a 7,200 kilometer-long, multimode network comprised of shipping, rail and road links connecting India's Mumbai with Europe via Moscow and Central Asia. Initial estimates suggest INSTC could cut current carriage costs by about 30% and travel times by half.

Iran has already started working on a 600-kilometer-long railway line connecting Chabahar port to Zahedan, the provincial capital of Sistan-Baluchestan province close to the Afghan border.

Chabahar oceanic port consists of Shahid Kalantari and

Shahid Beheshti terminals, each of which has five berth facilities. The port is located in Iran's Sistan-Baluchestan Province and is about 120 kilometers southwest of Pakistan's Baluchistan province, where the China-funded Gwadar port is situated.

In May 2016, India, Iran and Afghanistan signed a trilateral agreement for the strategically-located Chabahar to give New Delhi access to Kabul and Central Asia.

The original plan committed at least \$21 billion to the so-called Chabahar-Hajigak corridor, which then included \$85 million for Chabahar port development, a \$150 million credit line to Iran, an \$8 billion India-Iran MOU for Indian industrial investment in a Chabahar special economic zone, and \$11 billion for the Hajigak iron and steel mining project awarded to seven Indian companies in central Afghanistan.

Hajigak is the best known and largest iron oxide deposit in Afghanistan. It is located near the Hajigak Pass, with its area divided between Maidan Wardak and Bamyan provinces.

Unlike Chabahar, which is designed more to serve the economic and trade interests of the wider region, Gwadar is more tilted toward Beijing's ambitions, analysts and traders say.

Riaz Haq, founder and president of PakAlumni Worldwide, a global social network for Pakistanis, wrote in a recent blog that "China is looking to build and use Gwadar in Pakistan as Hong Kong West to serve as a superhighway for China's trade expansion in [the] Middle East (West Asia), Africa and Europe."

Gwadar port's planned capacity will accommodate a massive 300 to 400 million tons of cargo annually, comparable to the combined annual capacity of all Indian ports. It also dwarfs the 10-12 million tons of cargo handling capacity now planned for Chabahar.

In another comparison, the largest U.S. port at Long Beach, California, handles 80 million tons of cargo, about a quarter of what Gwadar could handle upon completion of a project that is designed largely to receive and move China's trade.

APRIL 6, 2021

# Iran and China make history with strategic deal

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN – By signing a strategic, long-term cooperation plan with China in the midst of a renewed nuclear diplomacy with the West, Iran is setting the stage for charting a new foreign policy course that would strengthen the country's positions in the international arena.

While the world was holding its breath to see how Iran and the U.S. would break the nuclear deadlock, Tehran surprised the world by signing a comprehensive cooperation plan with Beijing and striking a dour note on the United States' stated plan to "lengthen and strengthen" the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and Chinese State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi signed the plan on March 27, raising Tehran-Beijing relations in various fields to a new, strategic level.

The plan, officially known as the "Comprehensive Cooperation between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the People's Republic of China," was extensively hailed by almost all Iranian officials as a "strategic" decision, though they somehow differed on the underlying reasons behind cementing ties with China.

Early negotiations over the plan date back to 2016 when Chinese President Xi Jinping paid a successful visit to Iran during which China and Iran announced the establishment of a comprehensive strategic partnership, according to Chinese Ambassador to Iran Chang Hua. Since then, Chang told the



Tehran Times, exchanges and cooperation in various fields of the two countries have become increasingly close.

Iranian officials across the political spectrum have broached two sets of views on the plan. Some of them put it in the broader context of Iran's troubled relations with the West.

"The signing of Iran and China Strategic Partnership Roadmap is part of the Active Resistance policy. The world isn't just the West and the West isn't just the lawbreaking America, UK, France and Germany," Ali Shamkhani, Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, tweeted on March 29.

Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf echoed the same view, saying that the Iran-China strategic plan was an "important warning" to the U.S.

"We clarify that we welcome this move.

If the signing of the document is based on this belief that the world is not just the West and that the future century (21st century) is Asia's century it would be considered a strategic step," the speaker said.

Other Iranian officials said the plan per se was a "strategic choice."

"Iran attaches great importance to its relations with China, and strengthening cooperation with China is a strategic choice made by Iran," the Iranian foreign minister was quoted by the Chinese Foreign Ministry as saying during a meeting with his Chinese counterpart.

Ambassador Chang noted that Tehran and Beijing are determined to move forward with the plan. "Wang Yi's recent successful visit to Iran demonstrate that both sides attach great importance to the comprehensive strategic partnership of the two countries and have

the political will to promote it further," the Chinese ambassador told the Tehran Times.

He further noted that Wang emphasized many times during his recent visit to Iran that no matter how the world situation changes, China's willingness to develop China-Iran relations will not change.

This can explain why China moved to sign the plan with Iran at present. Some political circles close to the government of Hassan Rouhani have raised the claim that full implementation of the Iran-China plan may hinge on improving ties with the West, largely by reviving the JCPOA and lifting U.S. sanctions. But China made it clear that its strategic cooperation with Iran will not be subject to international developments.

Instead of focusing on international developments, including those related to the JCPOA, China seems to be attaching more importance to regional developments, something that is evident from the five-point initiative that was proposed by Foreign Minister Wang during his recent visit to Iran. According to the ambassador, the Chinese initiative promotes mutual respect among regional countries, upholds equity and justice by supporting a sound solution to the Palestinian question, roots for non-proliferation efforts, fosters collective security, and accelerates development cooperation.

"China is prepared to stay in close touch with all sides on the five-point initiative and work closely to promote peace, security and development in the Middle East [West Asia]," Ambassador Chang concluded.

## Iran underlines significance of stability in Jordan, warns of Israeli sedition

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN – In its first reaction to the recent developments on Jordan, Iran on Sunday underlined the need to maintain stability in the Arab country, warning that any instability would benefit Israel.

"Any internal instability and tension in the West Asia region will benefit the Zionist regime [Israel]," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said in a statement. He emphasized the significance of peace and stability in Jordan.

"This regime's fingerprint can always be found in any sedition in Islamic countries," Khatibzadeh noted.

He highlighted Iran's amicable relations with Jordan, saying, "The Islamic Republic of Iran is opposed to any internal instability and foreign interference, and believes all internal affairs of countries must be pursued within the framework of law."

High-profile figures in Jordan, including a member of the royal family and a longtime confidant of King Abdullah II, were arrested on Saturday in what appeared to be a nascent palace intrigue nipped in the bud.

Deputy Prime Minister of Jordan Ayman Safadi said on Sunday that Prince Hamzah and his inner clique's scheme to undermine the security and safety of Jordan was foiled, according to the Jordan Times.

Safadi said between 14 to 16 people were arrested for attempting to jeopardize the safety and stability of Jordan. The suspects included former minister Bassem Awadallah and Sharif Hassan bin Zaid.

In a press briefing on Sunday, Safadi said that Jordanian security agencies, through long-term and comprehensive joint investigations by the Jordan Armed Forces-Arab

Army, the General Intelligence Department, and the Public Security Directorate, have been following activities and movements by Prince Hamzah, Sharif Hassan bin Zaid, Awadallah and others.

The investigations have detected interferences and communications, including some with foreign entities, on the "ideal timing" for taking steps towards destabilizing Jordan's security, Safadi continued.

These investigations lead security agencies to recommend King Abdullah that these activities and those responsible for them be referred to the State Security Court, to undertake legal proceedings in light of preliminary investigations showing that these activities and movements have reached a point that directly impacts Jordan's security and stability.

"However, His Majesty asked that there be a conversation with Prince Hamzeh to resolve the issue within the family and to get him to reconsider these activities, which target and tamper with the security of Jordan and Jordanians, and are at odds with the traditions and values of the Hashemite family. These efforts are still underway, but Jordan's security and stability are above all else, and the necessary legal measures will be taken to safeguard them," Safadi noted.

The deputy prime minister added, "I would like to note here that initial investigations proved there was communication between Prince Hamzeh's inner circle and external parties, including the so-called 'external opposition', through which allegations and messages were passed to foreign sources, aiming to employ these allegations against national security and to spread disinformation."

Jordan state news agency, Petra, reported on Saturday night that Sharif Hassan bin Zaid, a member of the royal family, and Bassem Awadallah, a longtime confidant of King Abdullah II, were arrested for "security reasons" after a close security investigation.

Citing a security source, the news agency said an investigation into the issue was underway. It also said that other people were arrested along with the two high-profile figures but it stopped short of naming them.

Another high-profile figure - Hamzah bin Hussein - was claimed to be arrested. Unverified news reports claimed that bin Hussein, a half brother of King Abdullah, was arrested. But Jordanian Army Chief of Staff Major General Yousef Huneiti said "claims that have been published about his highness Prince Hamzah having been arrested are not true."

According to Huneiti, Prince Hamzah had been asked to "stop movements and activities that are employed to target the security of Jordan and its stability."

"Investigations are ongoing and the outcome will be announced with all due transparency," he noted, adding, "All measures have been taken according to the law, and no one is above the law. Jordan's security is above all considerations."

In a video passed by his lawyer to the BBC, Prince Hamzah denied reports of him being part of a foreign-backed conspiracy but described the ruling system as corrupt.

"[Jordan's] well-being has been put second by a ruling system that has decided that its personal interests, financial interests, that its corruption is more important than the lives and dignity and future of the ten million people who live here," he asserted.

## Top Iranian, British diplomats discuss JCPOA developments

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif held a telephone conversation with his British counterpart Dominic Raab two days before an important meeting on the 2015 Iran nuclear deal in Vienna.

The conversation took place upon Raab's request.

"In this phone call, the two sides conferred on the latest developments related to the JCPOA, especially the upcoming meeting of the Joint Commission in Vienna," the Iranian Foreign Ministry said in a statement. Zarif once again underlined the necessity of the full and final removal of the U.S.'s "unlawful and unfair" sanctions in a way that Iran can verify.

"This is how we will return to our commitments," Zarif said.

He also called on the European parties to the JCPOA to respect their commitments under the deal and play a constructive role in the Tuesday talks in Vienna.

The UK foreign secretary, in turn, said his country will try to help negotiations bear fruit.

The two sides also exchanged views on certain political and consular issues.

Zarif's conversation with Raab came on the heels of another phone call with French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian in which he called on France to show a constructive stance in the Vienna meeting.

"In a telephone call with French FM @ JY\_LeDrian today, I urged France to show a constructive stance on the JCPOA in next week's meeting in Vienna. I called on France to honor its commitments under the accord, and to cease abiding by illegal sanctions imposed by the U.S.," Zarif said in a tweet following the call.

The French foreign minister also said a similar thing. "I encouraged Iran to be constructive in the discussions that are set to take place," Le Drian said. "They are meant to help identify in the coming weeks the steps that will be needed in order to return to full compliance with the nuclear deal."

The parties to the Iran deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), are expected to hold an

important meeting in Vienna on Tuesday. The meeting was arranged during the Friday meeting of the JCPOA Joint Commission, which was held virtually.

Following the Friday meeting, there has been a wave of speculation about possible direct talks between Iran and the U.S. in the next meeting in Vienna as many Western news media outlets broke the news that U.S. officials will be in Vienna at the time of the Tuesday meeting.

The U.S. confirmed that it will participate in the Vienna meeting and said it was open to holding direct talks with Iran.

"These remain early days, and we don't anticipate an immediate breakthrough as there will be difficult discussions ahead. But we believe this is a healthy step forward," U.S. State Department spokesman Ned Price said on Friday of the meeting in Vienna.

"We do not anticipate presently that there will be direct talks between the United States and Iran through this process, though the United States remains open to them," he added.

But Iran said it will not have any talks with the U.S. in Vienna.

"We will have no direct or indirect talks with the Americans in Vienna. We will negotiate with the Joint Commission and the P4+1 and will announce our demand and condition for returning to compliance with the JCPOA. We demand that the United States first fulfill all of its obligations and lift all the sanctions it has imposed, and then we will verify and return," Deputy Foreign Minister of Iran Seyed Abbas Araghchi said in remarks to state TV.

Iran has been taking remedial measures in response to the abrogation of the nuclear deal by former U.S. administration and imposition of unprecedented sanctions. Iran started to reduce its commitments to the JCPOA after waiting for a full year.

Iran took these steps 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."

## Iranian, Uzbek foreign ministers discuss bilateral ties

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif met his Uzbek counterpart Abdulaziz Kamilov in Tashkent on the first leg of his Central Asian tour, which will later take him to Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan, according to the Iranian Foreign Ministry.

Zarif and Kamilov reviewed the two countries' relations in various fields, especially economic ties, trade exchanges, and collaborations in the fields of transportation, transit, and energy as well as the need for tapping into the existing capacities and its economic feasibility, the Iranian Foreign Ministry said in a statement on Monday.

The chief Iranian diplomat also discussed political issues between Iran and Uzbekistan, the existing grounds for cultural and tourism collaborations, and avenues for



promoting mutual cooperation in the aforementioned areas, the statement continued.

Kamilov, in turn, stressed Iran's regional position and

international influence, and highlighted the significance of Tehran-Tashkent collaborations in various fields including cooperation at international bodies, parliamentary cooperation between the two countries' parliamentary friendship groups, collaborations in the fields of transport and transit, and using the port capacities of Iran along the coasts of Persian Gulf and Sea of Oman.

The existing capacities for cooperation in economic, transport, and logistical fields are beyond the current level of ties between the two countries, Kamilov said, highlighting the necessity of expanding mutual cooperation.

The two sides also exchanged views on the US' unilateral and cruel sanctions against Iran, Tehran-Tashkent cooperation in the Afghan peace process, and their collaboration at legal-international bodies.

## SPORTS

### Sepahan edge Saipa to move top of Iran league

**SPORTS** TEHRAN – Sepahan football team defeated Saipa 1-0 on Monday to move up top of Iran Professional League (IPL).

Ezatollah Pourghaz scored an early goal from a corner in Tehran's Dastgerdi Stadium.

In Sirjan, Gol Gohar came from a goal down to beat struggling Machine Sazi 3-1.

Sepahan moved up to top with 40 points, two points ahead of Persepolis.

The Yellows look forward to win IPL title after six years.

Sepahan have won IPL title five times so far. Persepolis are the most decorated football team with six titles.



### Khorshidi appointed Iran football team director

**SPORTS** TEHRAN – Mojtaba Khorshidi has been named as new director of Iran national football team.

Khorshidi was named as head coach of Machine Sazi football team on Saturday but was sacked after several hours.

On Monday, Khorshidi was appointed as Iran director. That seems a little weird since Khorshidi has not enough experience for the position.

Iran national football team prepare for the four must-win match in the 2022 World Cup qualification.

The 'Persian Leopards' will meet Cambodia, Hong Kong, Bahrain and Iraq in a centralized venue in Bahrain.

### Shakhtar Donetsk eye Iranian forward Allahyar Sayyadmanesh

**SPORTS** TEHRAN – Turkish media reports suggest that Ukrainian football giants Shakhtar Donetsk have set their sights on signing Iranian striker Allahyar Sayyadmanesh.

Fenerbahçe's player has been loaned to Zorya for an 18-month contract in October.

The player's contract with Fenerbahçe is until June 30, 2024. Fotomac.com.tr has reported that Shakhtar Donetsk has offered a 8 millions Euros to sign the talented player.

Sayyadmanesh penned a five-year deal with Fenerbahçe however didn't live up to the expectations.

The forward was a member of Iran football team who qualified for the 2017 FIFA U17 World Cup quarter-final in India.

He made his Iran national football team debut on June 6, 2019 against Syria and scored a goal.

### Esteghlal ready to extend Milic's contract

**SPORTS** TEHRAN – Esteghlal football team are ready to extend Hrvoje Milic's contract.

The 31-year-old player joined the Iranian team in August 2019 on a two-year contract from Seri B team Crotone.

The reports suggest that the negotiations are going well and the club are ready to extend Milic's deal.

Milic's current deal expires at the end of current season and the Blues want to keep their iconic winger for the upcoming seasons.

Esteghlal are the favorites to win the Iran Professional League (IPL) title after eight years.

### Peyman Akbari named Paykan volleyball coach

**SPORTS** TEHRAN – Peyman Akbari was appointed as new head coach of crisis-hit Paykan volleyball team.

The 44-year-old last recently coached Shahrdari Urmia in the Iran Super League and helped team become runners-up in the league. Akbari has returned to his former club, aiming to bring glory days back to Paykan.

Paykan are the most successful volleyball club in Iran with 12 league titles.

The team are also the most decorated club in Asian volleyball, as they have won the Asian Club Championships a record seven times.

In 2010, Paykan finished third in the World Club Championships.

### Esteghlal v Al-Sadd among 5 memorable play-offs in ACL west

**SPORTS** TEHRAN – The match between Esteghlal football team of Iran and Qatar's Al-Sadd has been chosen as one of the most memorable play-off matches in the AFC Champions League from the West over the years.

Al-Sadd have plenty of history in the playoff rounds. Sandwiched in between the aforementioned classic against Al-Wahda and a tense affair against Esteghlal in 2017, they were defeated by the UAE's Al-Jazira, also on penalties, when Xavi Hernandez was among those to fail from the spot as the FIFA World Cup winner missed out on a first appearance in the group stage.

Just under 75,000 turned out at Azadi Stadium the following year as the Spaniard got his first taste of the Iranian passion for football. However, after the action on the pitch did not reach the heights the bumper attendance had hoped for, there would again be penalty drama as, for the third time in three years, Al-Sadd's fate would be decided from the spot, the-afc.com reported.

This time Xavi was successful from 12 yards but Ibrahim Majid and Mohammed Kasola were not, allowing Khosro Heydari to confidently dispatch his penalty and send the blue half of Tehran in raptures as it returned to the competition proper.

## Over \$714m allocated for agricultural mechanization this year

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — The head of Iran's Agricultural Mechanization Development Center said some 30 trillion rials (over \$714.2 million) has been allocated for mechanization of the country's agricultural sectors in the current Iranian calendar year 1400 (started on March 21).

According to Kambiz Abbasi, the mentioned funding will be used to supply about 30,000 tractors, 800 combine harvesters, and about 50,000 different agricultural machines and equipment used in various sectors like horticulture, livestock, poultry, and aquaculture.

As IRNA reported, the mentioned funds will be injected into the ninth credit line that has been opened so far for the development of the country's agricultural mechanization.

The official further noted that the Agricultural Mechanization Development Center plans to increase the country's agricultural mechanization coefficient to 2.3 horsepower per hectare in the current year.



Iran's agricultural mechanization coefficient has currently reached 1.65 horsepower per hectare.

"Our ultimate goal is to inject enough machines into the sector to improve the status and degree of mechanization in the process of agricultural production," Abbasi said.

According to the official, the Agriculture Ministry has been allocating a separate credit line for the mechanization of the agriculture sector every year, so that since the Iranian calendar year of 1392 so far, nine credit lines have been opened for this sector.

Statistics show that there is an annual demand for 25 trillion rials (about \$595 million) of facilities for the development and modernization of agricultural machinery.

Since over 95 percent of the technology and knowledge in this area is domestic, despite the U.S. sanctions most of the goals in the mechanization of various agriculture sectors will be achieved without any problems, according to Abbasi.

In the past forty years, since the Islamic Revolution, Iran has witnessed a remarkable improvement in various sectors and the agriculture industry has been one of the areas in which the country has undergone huge development.

Implementing billions of dollars worth of development, research, and educational projects across the country is an indication of the significant improvements in this sector.

## Energy Ministry grants 100% discount to low-consuming subscribers

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — As announced by the managing director of Iran's Power Generation and Distribution Company (TAVANIR), seven million subscribers have received 100-percent discount on their electricity bills in the framework of the "Power of Hope" program.

Mohammad-Hassan Motevalizadeh said, "Since the start of this program in last August, the subscribers have had some good cooperation with us, and we hope that the hot season coming this cooperation will increase."

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

According to TAVANIR, this program called "Power of Hope", was aimed to change the attitudes of household consumers towards the proper use of energy resources and consequently protect the environment.

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

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

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

The minister noted that according to a cabinet decision, all the subscribers that cooperated well with the Energy Ministry's consumption management programs this summer are to be awarded.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# Deals worth €165m inked for recovering Iranian fields' flare gas

→ 1 Speaking at the signing ceremony, Zanganeh stressed that gas flaring in Iranian fields is going to be minimized by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 2022).

"Collecting flare gas has always been my concern, and we have prepared a serious plan in this regard. With the announcement of the Leader, we became more determined to implement this important program," Zanganeh said.

In order to achieve a desirable level of environmental protection and sustainable development, National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) and the Oil Ministry have been implementing various programs, one of which is promoting the establishment of flare gas recovery units in the country's oil-rich regions.

These projects have been defined with the aim of preventing the waste of natural gas, protecting the environment, creating



added value, and providing sustainable feed to the country's petrochemical plants

in the mentioned areas.

To this end, back in September 2018,

National Iranian South Oil Company (NISOC) had inked two deals worth \$1.3 billion with Persian Gulf Bid Boland Gas Refining Company and Maroon Petrochemical Company.

Also, in June 2020, Iranian Central Oil Fields Company (ICOFC) signed a €125-million Engineering Procurement, Construction and Financing (EPCF) deal with an Iranian company for implementing a project that would prevent 82 million square feet of gas flaring every day.

Back in August 2019, Hamid Chitchian, a former minister who currently advises the government on energy issues, said the country had major projects planned to prevent flare gas waste.

According to Chitchian, at the time about 16 billion cubic meters (over 52 billion cubic feet) of flare gas was burning in the country that could be used for various economic purposes, including power generation.

## Development projects worth over \$5m inaugurated in southeastern Iran

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — The head of Iran's Planning and Budget Organization (PBO) Mohammad-Baqer Nobakht inaugurated five development projects worth 226.364 billion rials (about \$5.38 million) in person and through video conference on Monday in southeastern Sistan-Baluchestan Province.

The projects include a governorate building in Nimrouz city with a total investment of 39.834 billion rials (about \$948,428), a women's cultural, educational, and sports complex in Hamoun city with an investment of 18.093 billion rials (about \$430,785), and an access road and a bridge in Fazlabad with an investment of 94.144 billion rials (about \$2.24 million).

Nobakht arrived in the southeastern Sistan-Baluchestan Province on Monday morning for a one-day visit.

Since the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20), which was named the year of "surge in production" by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Seyed Ali Khamenei, the government urged various bodies and ministries to take the necessary measures for the realization of the year's motto.

In this regard, every week several major projects went operational all over the country in different sectors.

This trend is going to continue in the current year which is called the year of "Production: Support and the Elimination of Obstacles", and numerous development, infrastructure, and energy projects are expected to be inaugurated every month.



PBO Head Mohammad-Baqer Nobakht cuts the ribbon at the inauguration ceremony of a project in southeastern Sistan-Baluchestan Province on Monday.

## Experts suggest long-term investment in Iranian stock market

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — Market analysts and experts suggest investors to focus more on long-term investment in the Iranian stock market and to invest through intermediary tools like exchange-traded funds (ETFs) to prevent possible losses in the current Iranian calendar year (began on March 21).

They also advise shareholders to avoid impulsive decisions for quitting the market rattled by the surprising fluctuations in the stock market in the previous year.

In this regard, Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors at Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE) Javad Eshqi-Nejad said the "exit strategy" is the worse course of action that a shareholder can take.



"For some hasty shareholders, exiting the market is their first choice after any fluctuation, while we have repeatedly stated that this is the worst type of strategy in this market," Eshqi-Nejad told IRNA.

"Only those shareholders who invest in

this market with a long-term vision should expect profit," he stressed.

According to the official, people who are looking to invest in this market with small capitals and do not have much experience in this regard should invest through intermediary tools such as ETFs.

"Investing directly in the market is only for people who have enough experience in this market and are familiar with the risks," he emphasized.

Market analyst Alireza Tajbar believes that investors should consider the trend of stock exchange transactions in the past year as a criterion for their investment in the current year and to avoid entering the market directly.

People should invest in this market through intermediaries such as financial institutions in order to obtain a reasonable return on the market and prevent possible losses, he said.

According to Tajbar, in addition to stock market analysis, shareholders must be careful and consider the value of companies' profitability and spend more time for market analysis when investing.

Stock market expert Mohammad Eqbalnia also suggests investors to have always a long-term vision for investing in the stock market, and if they do not have enough knowledge or time to spend in the market, it is better to enter the market through indirect methods such as mutual funds.

## Monthly non-oil trade stands at nearly \$7.5b

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — The value of Iran's non-oil trade stood at \$7.458 billion in the last month of the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20), as announced by the spokesman of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA).

Ruhollah Latifi put the monthly non-oil export at \$3.328 billion and that of imports at \$4.13 billion.

As announced by the head of 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.

## Value of annual trades at IME rises 108%

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — The value of trades at Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20) rose 108 percent compared to the preceding year.

During the past year, about 3.5 quadrillion rials (about \$83.5 billion) worth of commodities were traded at the mentioned market, IRNA reported.

As reported, over 33.39 million tons of goods valued at 3.12 quadrillion rials (about \$74.43 billion) were traded at the exchange's physical market, registering 27 percent and 127 percent of growth in

terms of weight and value, respectively.

In the mentioned year, several new records were achieved in terms of the volume and value of transactions in the mentioned market's various floors including the industrial, petroleum, and petrochemical floors.

The IME's mineral and industrial trading floor witnessed the trade of 13.738 million tons of commodities worth more than 1.66 quadrillion rials (about \$39.5 billion) in the said year.

This floor was a platform to sell 12.437 million tons of steel, 207,205 tons of copper,

238,920 tons of aluminum, 13,795 tons of zinc, 1,300 tons of cast iron, 515 tons of lead, and 675 kg of gold bars.

On its oil and petrochemical trading floor, the IME traded more than 5.141 million tons of commodities worth over 833 trillion rials (over \$19.8 billion), to register 11 percent and 96 percent of growth in terms of value and weight, respectively.

Saffron and dates were the top traded commodities on the agricultural floor with 84 tons of saffron and 610 tons of dates being sold on this floor.

IME is one of the four major stock



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

## TEDPIX drops 6,000 points on Monday

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), fell 6,733 points to 1.262 million on Monday.

Over 4.14 billion securities worth 41,366 trillion rials (about \$984.9 million) were traded at the TSE on Monday.

The first market's index dropped 7,351 points, and the second market's index fell 4,896 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.

# U.S. can afford to take some early steps to restore nuclear deal: Fitzpatrick

➔ But now that all parties are at the table - albeit not exactly at the same table. I expect they will be able to work out a "compliance for compliance" agreement within the next few months. All parties share the same goal of resuming the deal that was negotiated with such intense efforts in 2015. It would be tragic if that goal cannot be reached due to political impediments in both capitals.

**What are the main domestic challenges that hinder Biden's return to the JCPOA? Do you think Biden can contain hawkish attempts intended to completely kill the deal?**

President Joe Biden faces severe political challenges in that he cannot count on a majority of Senators to support a clean "compliance for compliance" restoration of the JCPOA. Some key senators in his own party have said that a restored JCPOA should have additional conditions, such as an agreement to address missiles and other issues and extend the nuclear limits' timelines. In particular, Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chair Bob Menendez opposed the JCPOA back in 2015. Biden needs Menendez's help on many other matters, not least of all getting officials such as Deputy Secretary of State designee Wendy Sherman through the Senate confirmation process. So, Biden cannot afford to anger Menendez by ignoring his views. This is one reason Biden has been cautious about lifting sanctions waivers. Ultimately, I expect Menendez will not want to be responsible for killing a deal to revive the JCPOA, but it may take additional time and some compromises that



Iran will not like.

**Is there any Russian initiative to revive the JCPOA? How do you see Russia and China's role in this regard as they have deep disagreements with the Biden administration?**

Russia and China were helpful partners in negotiations that produced the 2015 accord, and their active support will be needed for efforts to revive the deal. But frankly, they are not the most important players. The key negotiations will involve mainly the U.S. and Iran. China's role may be more important than that of Russia because China can offer more in the way

of incentives, including investment and purchase of Iranian oil. The recent co-operation deal signed between Iran and China, lacking in detail though it was, shows Iranians that the potential for global trade once U.S. sanctions are lifted.

**Two progressive Democratic members of Congress (Sen. Chris Murphy and Rep. Ro Khanna) argued that the United States needs to make the first move in returning to the 2015 nuclear deal. Iran also says it is the U.S. that left the agreement and it should be the first party to return to its commitments. What is your**

**comment?**

When two parties in a standoff insist that the other must move first, the obvious answer is to take simultaneous steps. This is a way to work around political impediments to a deal. Working out the arrangements for simultaneity will require detailed negotiations. This is why it is so important that "proximity talks" are finally beginning. That said, I do think the United States can afford to take some early steps, such as releasing some of the Iranian funds frozen in South Korea. Such a step could be politically justified in Washington on the grounds that the funds will be used for humanitarian goods, especially in light of the Covid wave that is again hitting Iran.

**Do you think the 25-year partnership pact between Iran and China can affect the attempts to revive the JCPOA? Why is the Biden administration worried about China's influence in West Asia?**

China and the United States are increasingly at odds on many issues, and most Americans regard China's foreign policy moves with great suspicion in terms of motives and potential consequences in undercutting U.S. national interests. The China-Iran partnership pact is not necessarily detrimental to the United States. In fact, it could even be helpful in acting as an incentive to restoring the JCPOA. Nebulous though the partnership pact may be, it could show Iranian citizens the economic potential if U.S. sanctions were removed and Iran could freely engage in international trade.

## Strategic cooperation of emerging powers: Beyond regional instability, towards a new global order

➔ West Asian contemporary history acknowledges that Western interventionists were smart enough; their interests have certainly been pursued so much easier in the chaotic regional environment.

But this was not the end of Western interventionist ambitions in West Asia. During the Cold War, this region also played a significant role in the two superpowers' equations, specifically for the United States. On the one hand, the regional rich oil reserves and, on the other, the Soviet efforts to influence the region were a couple of reasons for the U.S. to intervene in the regional affairs much seriously. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, various debates took place to articulate the post-Cold War international order. Emerging a hegemonic order became the strongest voice by such works like *"The End of History and the Last Man"* and *"Clash of Civilizations."*

The United States, like its European predecessors, has been pursuing its interests through regional instability in West Asia, but in a different territorial environment rather than what was agreed in the Sykes-Picot Agreement. Consequently, the United States has taken steps to implement this strategy through different policies, including the New World Order and the Greater Middle East. Both the 2001 United States invasion of Afghanistan and the 2003 invasion of Iraq were the first manifestations of this strategy. But, the ignorance of Western policymakers on socio-political dynamics in the region had profound effects on implementing their strategy. As a result, new regional movements and mobilizations began, and shortly spread throughout West Asia and North Africa in 2010s. Since the early stages of Arab uprising in Tunisia, Western leaders took different approaches to these movements and sought to manage them appropriately; thereby preventing U.S. long-term interests from being jeopardized in the region. In the following years, the United States pursued multiple and sometimes contradictory policies in response to developments in various Arab countries in order to create what it intended to shape under the skin of the New Middle East project.

To sum up, West Asian contemporary history illustrates that Western powers have pursued their interests in the destabilized region. The Sykes-Picot Agreement, the Treaty of Sevres, Balfour Declaration, Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the overthrow of Iran's national democratic government (the 1953 British-American coup) and absolute support for the Pahlavi tyranny, numerous coups in the region in the Cold War, injecting and inciting nationalist currents with imperialist

purposes, supporting Saddam Hussein during eight-year war against Iran, the 2001 U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, the 2003 invasion of Iraq, creating power vacuums in the region and consequently the emergence of extremist terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda and ISIS, supporting sectarian and separatist movements, interference in internal affairs, assassination of government officials, abusing their mainstream media to inflame riots and tensions in opposite countries, imposing economic sanctions, the 2011 military intervention in Libya and its consequent divisions, supporting the Saudi coalition in the fruitless war against Yemen in the last six years, the disastrous humanitarian crisis in Yemen and heavy arms sales to non-democratic Persian Gulf states are some clear evidences that can be used to argue that Western powers have been playing a major destructive role in regional instability.

West Asian socio-political developments in the 2010s led to an emerging new regional order, in which some previous orders' characteristics either have disappeared or are disappearing while new orders' characteristics are showing off themselves. On the other side, global dynamics also indicate a smooth change in the international order, in which Asian players, specifically China and Russia, will play a significant role. However, a prominent group of IR scholars argue that the post-American era has begun and the global order is moving towards a multipolar international order. Therefore, global and regional dynamics address the emergence of a new regional order in West Asia and a multipolar order in the global arena, whose structures have been manifesting themselves.

On March 27, China and Iran signed a 25-year strategic cooperation partnership. The partnership, which has been in the works for five years, was signed between Mr. Wang and his Iranian counterpart Javad Zarif. In the past seven decades, the five principles of peaceful coexistence have guided China's policy with different countries. These long-standing principles include mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence. The signing of this strategic deal between the Islamic Republic of Iran, as a regional power, and China, as an emerging global power, will be significant and effective for both sides in the transition era to new regional and global orders. As emerging Eastern powers, expanding Sino-Iranian cooperation can bring about many short- and long-term benefits for both countries, which have an anti-colonial



and anti-imperialist approach.

In conclusion, over the past century, Western powers' foreign policy has always been based on interfering in the internal affairs of West Asian countries. In addition, their purposes have been shaped based on unilateral rather than multilateral benefits. But based on China's approach to international relations, China's foreign policy in West Asia requires that China defines its interests in regional stability rather than instability in the region. Therefore, unlike Western powers, China pursues its national interests along with interests of West Asian nations.

In short, the Western powers have defined their interests in the instability of West Asia, and this practice has been adopted since their early presence, while China has defined its interests in the stability of the region. The Belt and Road Initiative, for instance, can only be pursued in a stable region and under the five principles of peaceful coexistence. Undoubtedly, stability would be a prerequisite to regional development in West Asia, and Western powers have been aware of this fact for a long time. Therefore, Western powers naturally interpret Iran's partnership with China as a serious challenge to their regional and international interests. Here, a key question requires answering: How can the two emerging Eastern powers, which seek stability in West Asia, overcome (mostly Western originated) destabilizing factors in the region? Obviously, the United States and its regional and Western allies might not easily allow the cooperation to pursue regional stability and new arrangements beyond their interests.

*Amir Mohammad Esmaili is an Iranian researcher, author and Ph.D. Candidate in International Relations and Public Affairs at Shanghai International Studies University. He graduated from Imam Sadiq University, majoring in Political Science and Islamic Studies.*

## Eighteen dead as violence escalates in Sudan's West Darfur: Medics

Tribal clashes in Sudan's restive Darfur have left at least 18 people dead and 54 others injured just months after a long-running peacekeeping mission ended operation in the region.

The Sudanese Doctors Committee said in a statement on Monday that the latest violence started between members of the Massalit tribe and Arab nomads in El Geneina, the capital of West Darfur State, over the weekend and escalated throughout the city on Sunday and Monday morning.

According to residents and an internal UN security bulletin seen by Reuters, heavy weaponry and rocket-propelled grenades were used in the attacks. Pictures and videos from residents also showed plumes of smoke rising from the city's neighborhoods.

The renewed clashes come following a major flare-up of violence earlier this



year in El Geneina. In January, at least 129 people were killed in the troubled region.

Sudanese authorities imposed a statewide curfew in West Darfur, while the Khartoum government dispatched a "high-profile" delegation to help contain the situation.

The attack came just weeks after UN

peace-keepers began withdrawing from the region.

On December 31, the hybrid United Nations African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) formally ended its operations in the region. It plans a phased withdrawal of its approximately 8,000 armed and civilian personnel inside six months.

The Sudanese government said it "will take over responsibility for the protection of civilians" in Darfur as UNAMID's mandate ended.

People in Darfur protested the departure of the UN peacekeepers at the time, citing fears of renewed violence.

Brokering lasting peace in Darfur and other parts of Sudan is one of the main challenges facing military and civilian authorities sharing power following the overthrow of former president Omar al-Bashir last April.

Conflict broke out in Darfur in 2003 after mostly non-Arab rebels rose up against Khartoum. Up to 300,000 people have been killed and 2.5 million displaced, including more than 180,000 displaced in West Darfur, according to UN estimates.

Back then, the Arab-dominated government in Khartoum responded by recruiting and arming a notorious Arab-dominated militia known as the Janjaweed. The main conflict has subsided over the years but ethnic and tribal clashes still flare periodically.

Sudan is undergoing a rocky political transitional after the ouster of Bashir in April 2019 triggered by mass protests against his rule. Bashir, who is currently in custody in Khartoum, is wanted by the International Criminal Court for alleged genocide and war crimes in Darfur perpetrated over a decade ago.

## Afghan president proposes three-phase peace roadmap

Afghanistan's President Ashraf Ghani will put forward a three-phase peace roadmap for Afghanistan during a proposed meeting in Turkey, seeking an agreement with the Taliban and a ceasefire before elections, a document seen by Reuters news agency shows.

The United States is pushing for a conference to be hosted by Turkey, with the involvement of the United Nations, this month to finalize a peace deal between the government and the Taliban as a May 1 deadline looms for the withdrawal of all foreign troops.

Ghani's plan will be presented as a counter to proposals put forward by Washington - and rejected by the Afghan government - that envisage immediately drawing up a new legal system for an interim administration to include Taliban representatives.

The document shows that Ghani's reaching an End state proposal will include, in the first phase, a consensus on a political settlement and an internationally monitored ceasefire.

The second phase will be holding a presidential election and the establishment of a "government of peace" and implementation arrangements for moving towards the new political system.

The third phase will involve building a "constitutional framework, reintegration of refugees and development" for Afghanistan moving forward.

A senior government official said Ghani has already shared his road map with foreign capitals.

A date for the Turkey meeting is yet to be decided, but multiple sources told Reuters it could take place in the next two weeks.

The Afghan government and a number of politicians said they would have to agree on an agenda with the Taliban before the meeting.

In a statement last month, the Taliban threatened to resume hostilities against foreign troops in Afghanistan if they did not meet the May 1 deadline set out in an agreement between the armed group and the Trump administration last year.

## Turkey arrests 10 retired admirals over government criticism

Turkish authorities on Monday detained 10 former admirals after a group of more than 100 retired senior navy officers issued a statement that government officials tied to Turkey's history of military coups.

State-run Anadolu news agency said the retired admirals were detained as part of an investigation into their open letter, which was launched by the chief prosecutor in the capital, Ankara.

Prosecutors also ordered four other suspects to report to Ankara police within three days, opting not to detain them because of their age, the report said.

The former senior military leaders are accused of "using force and violence to get rid of the constitutional order", NTV broadcaster reported.

## At least 76 killed in Indonesia, E Timor floods, landslides

At least 76 people have died and dozens more were missing after Cyclone Seroja hit Indonesia and East Timor, triggering flash floods and landslides that uprooted trees, blocked roads and turned small communities into wastelands of mud.

Indonesia's BNPB disaster agency, in a statement on Monday, said at least 55 people were dead and 40 were missing in the country's East Nusa Tenggara province.

More than 400 people were evacuated and thousands more affected, it said.

Several bridges also collapsed and at least one ship sank in high waves triggered by the Cyclone, it added.

In East Timor, which shares the Timor island with Indonesia, 21 people were killed by landslides, flash floods and a falling tree, mostly in the capital Dili. More than 1,500 people were evacuated. Main Director of Civil Protection, Ismael da Costa Babo, told reporters.

## Bahraini people hold rallies to demand release of prisoners amid pandemic

Bahraini people have held rallies across the country for the fourth consecutive day to call for the release of prisoners amid the coronavirus pandemic.

In the rallies held on Sunday, the protesters urged the Al Khalifa regime to immediately release Bahraini prisoners considering the coronavirus outbreak in the country's jails.

According to Al-Mayadeen TV, the protesters condemned the Al Khalifa regime's media censorship regarding the number of prisoners infected with the novel coronavirus.

The demonstrators chanted slogans against the Al Khalifa regime, and said it is responsible for the lives of prisoners.

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.

In a statement carried by Arabic-language Bahrain Mirror news website, the senior cleric called on the ruling Al Khalifa regime to choose between the deaths of the dissident inmates and their release.

## Resistance News

### Several Palestinians kidnaped overnight in W. Bank and J'lem

**INTERNATIONAL** TEHRAN — The Israeli occupation forces (IOF) at dawn Monday kidnaped several Palestinian citizens during campaigns in the West Bank and Jerusalem.

According to local sources, the IOF kidnaped four young men from their homes during raids in Kobar town, west of Ramallah.

The IOF also raided other homes in Kobar, including the house of ex-detainee Enad al-Barghouthi, who was released last month following five and a half years in jail. He is the nephew of prisoner Nael al-Barghouthi.

Another young man identified as Shadi Safi was taken prisoner during IOF raids in al-Jalazon refugee camp in northern Ramallah.

In al-Khalil, a young man called Saad al-Farroukh was kidnaped from his home during an IOF campaign in Sa'ir town.

The IOF also stormed neighborhoods of al-Khalil city and set up makeshift checkpoints at the entrances to Hallul and Sa'ir town.

In Jerusalem, Israeli police forces kidnaped a young man called Faisal Obeid and his father Louay as well as another young man after raiding their homes in Obeid neighborhood.

Four Jerusalemite citizens were also taken prisoners during an arrest campaign in Qalandia refugee camp.

## Smuggled Iranian relics returned home from Austria

➔ Talebian explained that "According to experts' assessments and available photos, the [seized] relics certainly belong to the geographical and historical realm of Iran [and they date back to the] first millennium BC, as well as the Achaemenid and Sassanid era."

"Based on national laws and international pacts such as the 1970 UNESCO Convention, to which Austria is a signatory, it is required that the items seized to be returned to the Islamic Republic of Iran as soon as possible."



"The images [that we have been received from the confiscated objects] show a metal rhyton in the Achaemenid style, which its counterparts are found in the National Museum of Iran and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York; and a bronze headpiece of the Sassanid King (Shapur II), the original of which is made of silver being kept at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York...." he explained.

The Achaemenid [Persian] Empire was the largest and most durable empire of its time. The empire stretched from Ethiopia, through Egypt, to Greece, to Anatolia (modern Turkey), Central Asia, and India. The Parthian Empire, also known as the Arsacid Empire, was a major Iranian political and cultural power in ancient Iran. The Parthians largely adopted the art, architecture, religious beliefs, and royal insignia of their culturally heterogeneous empire, which encompassed Persian, Hellenistic, and regional cultures. The Sassanid era (224 CE–651) is of very high importance in Iranian history, under which Persian art and architecture experienced a general renaissance.

## Over 6,700 visited National Museum of Iran during Noruz

TOURISM TEHRAN – A total of 6,714 Iranians and nine foreign nationals paid visits to the National Museum of Iran during the two-week New Year (Noruz) holidays, which ended on April 2, the museum director has said.

Although the museum has ranked one of the top ten most visited sites in the country, the number of its visitors has fallen drastically due to the outbreak of the coronavirus, ISNA quoted Jebrael Nokandeh as saying on Monday.



Last year, coronavirus pandemic forced authorities to shut doors of all museums and historical sites across the country in Noruz holidays, however, the National Museum launched online visits and virtual tours during the mentioned time, through which some 10,000 people explored the prestigious site, the official added.

This year, the museum opened its doors to the public during the holidays, while the visitors and the museum's staff followed strict health protocols, he explained.

He also noted that different sections of the museum are still accessible through online tours for those who prefer to stay home in a bid to contain the outbreak of the coronavirus.

Earlier this week Mohammadreza Kargar, the director of museums and historical properties at the tourism ministry announced that visits to Iranian museums fell by one-fifth during the recent Noruz holidays in comparison to the same period two years ago, when the new coronavirus was not yet an issue.

1,246,102 people visited cultural heritage museums [and sites] during this Noruz, while cultural heritage museums were closed during the Noruz holiday last year (1399) due to strict social distancing measures, the official said.

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.

The National Museum of Iran embraces priceless relics that represent various eras of the country's rich history. Its structure was completed in 1928 based on the design by French architect André Godard who was also an archaeologist and historian of French and Middle Eastern Art.

# Noruz travels slump by 96 percent due to virus

HERITAGE TEHRAN – The desk number of domestic travels fell by 96 percent during the two-week New Year (Noruz) holidays (March 20-April 2) compared to two years earlier, Iran's deputy tourism minister has announced.

According to the latest data Iranians made some 2.5 million overnight stays across the country during the Noruz holidays, while the number added up to over 74 million in the same period in 1398 (March 21-April 2, 2019), which shows a drastic fall, Vali Teymouri explained on Monday.

It seems many people have postponed, rescheduled, or even delayed their travel plans to help limit the spread of the coronavirus around the country, the official added.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the official noted that the average occupancy rate of the residential centers reached around 37 percent during the mentioned period.

Some 23 million visits to the historical and natural sites were registered countrywide as well, he noted.

### Coronavirus causes damages to Iran's tourism

Back in January Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan announced that Iran's tourism industry has suffered a loss of over 140 trillion rials (about \$3.33 billion at the official exchange



rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic.

Although the worldwide outbreak of COVID-19 has brought the whole world to a standstill, the tourism industry has been the worst affected of all economic sectors, he explained.

However, efforts are being made by the government to help the tourism sector flourish again with continuous support and injecting supportive packages, he added.

The government has allocated a total of 500 trillion rials (about \$12 billion) to the corona-affected sectors, of which 200 trillion rials (\$4.7 billion) will be given to the health ministry and the rest will be spent on other sectors, he noted.

He also said that the national budget bill for the 1400 Persian calendar year has proposed 70 trillion rials (about \$1.7 billion) to support tourism businesses affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

### New Year travels amid coronavirus outbreak

Before the national holiday, President Hassan Rouhani declared new travel bans for cities situated in the "red" and "orange" zones to combat the new COVID-19 variant.

Rouhani called on people to avoid traveling during the Iranian New Year holidays to help contain the spread of coronavirus. He said it would be forbidden to make trips to cities marked as "red" and "orange" in terms of the prevalence of COVID-19.

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

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

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

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

## Reciting humorous poetry made national heritage in Iran

TOURISM TEHRAN – Reciting humorous desk poetry, which is traditionally accompanied by indigenous music, has been registered on Iran's National Intangible Cultural Heritage list, CHTN reported.

Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan announced the inscription on Sunday in letters submitted to the governors-general of 31 provinces across the country.

Humor has been quite visible and has played important

role in various contexts during the long history of Persian literature. It has also been widely varied in style and form. There has been both verbal and fictional satire, some of the soft and subtle, others coarse and even obscene, but all of them more or less amusing.

According to Encyclopedia Iranica, in modern Persian literature certain forms of classical humor in poetry and prose survived, but they were applied in new ways and in new genres, which were introduced mainly under Western influences.



## Sea trips in Iran grow over Noruz holidays

TOURISM TEHRAN – Maritime trips desk ramped up over the recent Iranian New Year (Noruz) holidays as some 1.4 million maritime excursions were made over the two-week period.

"A total of 1.4 million sea travels and excursions were carried out during Noruz holidays amid strict health conditions due to prevent the coronavirus spread," Mehr quoted a top official with the Ports and Maritime Organization as saying on Sunday.



The data excludes port cities and regions named as high-risk zones related to the coronavirus pandemic; for instance, sea travels and excursions were restricted or even prohibited in Khuzestan and Bushehr provinces, the official added.

Tourism Ministry on Monday publicized that the number of domestic travels fell by 96 percent during the Noruz compared to the same period two years earlier. "According to the latest data Iranians made some 2.5 million overnight stays across the country during the Noruz holidays, while the number added up to over 74 million in the same period in 1398 (March 21-April 2, 2019), which shows a drastic fall."

The Islamic Republic has launched projects to take advantage of southern coasts to make the best use of its maritime tourism potential using developing hospitality infrastructures, diversifying sea routes, and drawing private sector investors. According to official data, some 45 offshore terminals are operating in northern and southern coasts of the country.

Experts say that the boom in maritime tourism can pave the way for Iran to meet its ambitious target of attracting 20 million annual tourists by 2025 as it also keeps an eye on tourism developments in the Caspian Sea in the north.

With widening facilities in the free zones of Chabahar, Kish, and Qeshm - each home to tens of tourist destinations - they would be able to draw sightseers all year round, not just during the wintertime.

IN THE NAME OF GOD  
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING

## INTERNATIONAL TENDER No: 99/103-80/03

**Tender Holder:**  
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING (IRIB)

**Subject of Tender:**  
Broadcasting the TV networks of English iFilm, Press TV and Hispan TV on Galaxy 19 for three years in accordance with the technical specification and other terms and conditions mentioned in the tender documents.

**Deadline and how to receive the tender documents:**  
From **Tuesday 06 April 2021 (1400/01/17)** until **Saturday 10 April 2021 (1400/01/21)** by **02:00 p.m.** with presentation of introductory letter by company or its representative and the receipt of paying the documents fee.

**Place of receiving the tender document:**  
Interested participants may refer to purchasing (KALA) Dept., 4<sup>th</sup> Floor of IRIB Administration Complex, Hotel Esteghlal St. Vali – Assr Ave, Tehran, Iran

**The fee of the tender documents and how to deposit it:**  
Submission of payment receipt for the amount of 1,000,000 Rials to account 4101029171204273 with BIC No. IR 310100004101029171204273 IRAN Central Bank in the name of IRIB.

**Type and amount of guarantee for participation to tender:**  
The amount of deposit for participant in tender is USD 62640 fixed or its equivalent in Rials 1566000000 which should be in the form of Bank Guarantee.

**Time and place of delivering Bidding Envelopes:**  
The sealed (A,B&C) packages/envelopes and the qualification evaluation packages/envelopes separately packed, should be submitted no later than **12:00 p.m. on Tuesday 11 of May 2021 (1400/02/21)** and at the address mentioned in 4<sup>th</sup> clause.

**Time and place of opening Qualification Evaluation envelopes:**  
The date of opening the Qualification Evaluation envelopes on **Wednesday 12 of May 2021 (1400/02/22)** at **10:00 a.m.** in the office of International Purchasing Dept.

**Time and place of opening Envelopes:**  
The envelopes A of those eligible participants who meet the qualification criterion and approval of Technical and Commercial committee will be opened on **Sunday 16 May 2021 at 03:00 p.m (1400/02/26)** in the office of Financial Vice President. In case of complete content in the envelopes A the envelopes of B and C of eligible participants will be opened at the same time and place.  
The participant must be qualified by the competent authorities.  
Fore more information please see :  
[www.iriboffice.ir/tenders](http://www.iriboffice.ir/tenders) and <http://iets.mporg.ir/> Tel: 00982122167053

Purchasing (Kala) Dept., IRIB

# Over 6,000 jobs created for women heads of households

**SOCIETY TEHRAN** — Some 6,200 sustainable jobs have been generated for female heads of households in 24 provinces across the country over the past two years, IRNA reported on Monday.

The National Economic Empowerment Plan for Women Heads of Households was established in the Iranian calendar year 1398 (March 2019-March 2020), with the aim of using the capacity of home-based businesses to create sustainable and productive employment.

Through the plan, some 11,700 applicants undergone talent assessment; and 15,300 women also received business management counseling. While 14,400 women also received the necessary training to start a business.

Moreover, job opportunities were created, revived, and stabilized for 5,300 women breadwinners.

Among the products of women heads of households, 72 brands were created. And, 1,800 virtual stores were set up.

In Iran, there are 3 million women-headed



households (WHH), out of a total of 22 million families, and most of the WHH can be found in less developed areas of the country, according to the UNDP office in Iran.

"At least 2700 women-focused NGOs are active in Iran and we have plans for the empowerment of civil society activities, we have successfully implemented schemes like enhancing social resiliency, also the economic empowerment of thousands of women heads of the household through micro-credit Funds and Cooperatives," Masoumeh Eftekar, the vice president for women's and family affairs, said in October 2020.

## Budget for women breadwinners up 50%

The budget for women and family affairs in the national budget bill for the current calendar year (starting on March 20), is equivalent to 37 trillion rials (nearly \$880 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials).

Female-headed households' share of the national budget accounts for 23 percent of the total credits for women and the family.

Supporting women heads of households in the form of insurance, services, and social support is another important issue, which accounts for 25 percent of the budget, which has grown by about 50 percent.

## First batch of COVAX vaccine arrives in Tehran



**SOCIETY TEHRAN** — The first shipment of COVAX vaccine was delivered to Iran on Sunday, Food and Drug Administration spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour said.

The shipment, including over 700,000 doses of Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine manufactured by South Korean firm SK Bioscience, was loaded and sent to Tehran from Am-

sterdam, Jahanpour wrote on his Twitter account.

Iran started mass vaccination against COVID-19 with Russian-made Sputnik V vaccine on February 9, with the priority given to medical staff, the elderly, and people with underlying diseases; which is also going to be co-produced by the two countries.

According to Alireza Raeisi, spokesman for the National Headquarters for Coronavirus control, some 790,000 doses of vaccine have so far been imported to the country.

Some vaccines are also on the way and will arrive in Iran this week. However, controversy has arisen between some countries due to vaccine shortages, and they refuse to sell, he lamented.

"We purchased 16.8 million doses of vaccine from the COVAX mechanism, and they were supposed to deliver 4.2 million doses since March 21, however, some 780,000 doses delivered," he stated.

"Currently, about 250,000 people in the country have been vaccinated and about 56,000 others have received the second dose of the vaccine," he concluded.

**Homegrown vaccines**  
COVIRAN BAREKAT, the first coronavirus vaccine made

by researchers at the Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam which was unveiled on December 29, 2020, started to be mass-produced on 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.

## New cases and mortalities

In a press briefing on Monday, Health Ministry's spokesperson Sima-Sadat Lari confirmed 13,890 new cases of COVID-19 infection, raising the total number of infections to 1,945,964. She added that 1,658,978 patients have so far recovered, but 4,095 remain in critical conditions of the disease.

During the past 24 hours, 172 patients have lost their lives, bringing the total number of deaths to 63,332, she added.

So far, 13,183,709 COVID-19 diagnostic tests have been performed in the country.

## Special flight to bring back Iranians living in Britain

**SOCIETY TEHRAN** — The Iranian flag carrier Iran Air will operate a special flight to London on April 11 to bring home back Iranians as the highly contagious variant of coronavirus is spreading in the European country.

The flight will leave Tehran's Imam Khomeini International airport at 9:20

a.m. local time and will arrive in London at 12:10 p.m., IRNA reported.

The return flight will depart Heathrow Airport at 14:10 p.m. local time the same day and will land at Imam Khomeini Airport at 23:40 p.m., the report added.

All passengers aged 8 and above are mandated to present negative PCR tests.

Those who are tested positive at Imam Khomeini Airport will be quarantined for 14 days at their own expense.

On February 28, Iran's Civil Aviation Organization (CAO) announced that all flights to and from 32 countries, including Britain, have been suspended due to the latest decision of the National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control.



## Endangered North Atlantic right whales produce most calves since 2015

North Atlantic right whales gave birth over the winter in greater numbers than scientists have seen since 2015, an encouraging sign for researchers who became alarmed three years ago when the critically endangered species produced no known offspring at all.

Survey teams spotted 17 newborn calves swimming with their mothers between Florida and North Carolina from December through March. One calf died after being hit by a boat, a reminder of a death rate experts fear is outpacing births.

The calf-count equals the combined total for the previous three years. In a dismal 2018, scientists saw no births for the first time in three decades. Still, researchers say greater numbers are needed. The population of the endangered marine giants is estimated to have fallen to about 360.

"What we are seeing is what we hope will be the beginning of an upward climb in calving that's going to continue for the next few years," said Clay George, who oversees

right whale surveys for the Georgia state government. "They need to be producing about two dozen calves per year for the population to stabilize and continue to grow."

Right whales migrate each winter to waters off the south-eastern US. Spotters fly over the coastline during calving season, scanning the water for mothers with newborns.

Flights over Georgia and Florida ended on Wednesday, the last day of March, typically the season's end. Spotters will monitor waters off the Carolinas through 15 April, hoping to pick up overlooked newborns as the whales head north.

This season's calf count matches 17 births recorded in 2015. The record is 39, confirmed in 2009. Scientists suspect a calving slump may have been caused by a shortage of zooplankton in the Gulf of Maine and the Bay of Fundy. They say the increase in births could be a result of whales being healthier after shifting to waters with more abundant food sources.

"It's a somewhat hopeful sign that they are starting to adjust to this new regime where females are in good enough condition to give birth," said Philip Hamilton, a researcher at the New England Aquarium in Boston.

Regardless, conservationists worry that right whales are dying, largely from manmade causes, at a faster rate than they can reproduce. Since 2017, scientists have confirmed 34 right whale deaths in US and Canadian waters, with the leading causes being entanglement in fishing gear and collisions with boats and ships.

Considering whales were documented in the same period with serious injuries, researchers fear the real death toll could be at least 49. Thirty nine births have been recorded since 2017.

"If we reduced or eliminated the human-caused death rate, their birth rate would be fine," Hamilton said. "The onus should not be on them to reproduce at a rate that can sustain the rate at which we kill them. The onus should be in us to stop killing."

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ج

## 50bcm of groundwater withdrawn annually in Iran

An annual amount of 50 billion cubic meters of groundwater resources are withdrawn to supply agricultural, industrial as well as drinking water in Iran, a researcher in the field of water resources has stated.

The amount is 10 times greater than the water covering Lake Urmia, amounting to 5 billion cubic meters, ISNA news agency quoted Mohammad Reza Goldansaz as saying on Sunday.

About 60 percent of drinking water and the water used in industrial sector and 50 percent of the water consumed in agriculture sector is pumped from aquifers, he noted.

Referring to the country being highly dependent on underground water, Goldansaz said that if the resource runs out, we will face serious problems.

## سالی ۵۰ میلیارد متر مکعب از آب‌های زیرزمینی برداشت می‌شود

یک پژوهشگر حوزه منابع آب با اشاره به اینکه سالانه ۵۰ میلیارد متر مکعب از منابع آب زیرزمینی برای مصارف خانگی، صنعت و مصارف کشاورزی برداشت می‌شود.

محمدرضا گلدانساز در گفت و گو با ایسنا اظهار داشت: سالانه حدود ۵۰ میلیارد متر مکعب از منابع آب زیرزمینی برداشت می‌شود که این مقدار به اندازه حجم ۱۰ دریاچه ارومیه است.

وی با بیان اینکه وابستگی ما به آب زیرزمینی بسیار زیاد است و اگر روزی این منبع تمام شود با مشکلات زیادی روبرو می‌شویم، اظهار کرد: در کشور ما به دلیل وجود شرایط اقلیمی خشک و نیمه خشک، وابستگی به منابع آب زیرزمینی قابل توجه است و حدود ۶۰ درصد مصارف خانگی و صنعت و حدود ۵۰ درصد مصارف کشاورزی توسط آب زیرزمینی تأمین می‌شود.

## 5,700 rural housing units built in Sistan-Baluchestan

**SOCIETY TEHRAN** — Some 5,700 residential units were inaugurated and provided on Monday to deprived families residing in rural areas of the southeastern Sistan-Baluchestan province.

These units have been built under a joint memorandum of understanding between the Management and Planning Organization and the Housing Foundation to build 115,000 residential units for low-income families across the country, Vice President Mohammad-Baqer Nobakht explained.

In order to implement this goal, the Housing Foundation of Sistan-Baluchestan has so far completed 8,800 housing units from this credit and handed them over to those in need, he added.

"It was planned to build 17,000 housing units for the underprivileged in eight years, and so far, 11,300 units have been completed and provided."

## Downward trend of migration from rural areas to cities

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

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

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

Rural tourism, agritourism, religious tourism, and ecotourism are alternatives or complementary economic activities that could further stimulate rural development while decreasing rural community dependency on one main economic sector (agriculture, forestry, energy, or mining).

Mohammad Omid, the vice president for rural development, said in November 2020 that for the first time in the country, the migration of people from rural areas to cities has reached zero.

A total of 220 trillion rials (nearly \$5.6 billion) has been approved for the development of villages in the current year (March 2020-March 2021), Omid said.

Some 140 trillion rials (about \$3.3 billion) have so far been spent, he noted, adding, the unemployment rate in rural areas has reached 7.4 percent, which has decreased by over one percent compared to last year. In October 2020, Omid stated that the rural development projects worth 130 trillion rials (nearly \$3 billion) inaugurated on the occasion of the National Day of Villagers and Nomads.

He went on to state that 6,750 construction projects will come on stream in various fields such as roads, communications, etc. In addition, a total of 26,512 projects will be launched throughout the country.

## Iran among world's richest in biodiversity, genetics

→ 1 Iran shares five ecological zones with specific flora from the lowest to the highest parts, namely, Caspian, Iran-Turani, Arasbaran, Zagros, and Persian Gulf-Omani ecological zones.

The great difference between the two latitudes of the north and south of the country and the existence of different plains, altitudes, and climates have given a very diverse view to the vast land so that a variety of vegetation and plant species are grown across it.

The Hyrcanian ecological zone covers the green belt, the southern margin of the Caspian Sea, and the northern profile of the Alborz mountain range. The forested areas of the region stretch to 2.4 million hectares covering Astara in Gilan province to Glidaghi in Golestan province.

The area of forests in the Iran-Turani ecological region, which covers most of the central plateau of Iran, is 4,666,941 hectares. Based on topographic and altitude conditions, this region is divided into two mountainous regions with a cold climate and a desert with a hot and dry climate.

Arasbaran forests, which are among the semi-humid forests of the country, are located in the province of East Azarbaijan and northwest of Ardebil province, which covers 174,838 hectares.

Some sources date the Zagros oak forests to 5,500 years. The creation and expansion of these forests are due to rainfall raised by the Mediterranean system and the Black Sea, which extends from the Sardasht area of West Azarbaijan to Firoozabad city of Fars province covering an area of 5,440,494 hectares.

The forests of the Persian Gulf-Omani ecological region include part of the southwest and all southern coasts, covering 2,039,963 hectares. Due to ecological differences, the main vegetation is divided into two territories of the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman.

## Biodiversity in danger

Unfortunately, the protection of forests, pastures, and agricultural lands in our country has not been appropriate in recent years. Improper exploitation, land-use change, and land degradation are the main causes of deforestation and consequently biodiversity, Zand regretted.

According to the statistics, there are about 2 million hectares of forest lands and 15.7 million hectares of forests in Iran.

Comparing this statistic with the data of 2005 shows that during the past 16 years, the level of forests in Iran has not changed much, but the quality of forests has been damaged; So that about 1.6 million hectares of semi-dense forests of Iran (with a density of 25 to 50 percent) has been reduced and in contrast to 1.9 million hectares have been added to forest lands (with a density of 1 to 5 percent), he explained.

## LET'S LEARN PERSIAN

(Part 153)

(Source: saadifoundation.ir)

جدول						
۷	۶	۵	۴	۳	۲	۱
۱	۲	۳	۴	۵	۶	۷
۱	۲	۳	۴	۵	۶	۷
۱	۲	۳	۴	۵	۶	۷
۱	۲	۳	۴	۵	۶	۷
۱	۲	۳	۴	۵	۶	۷
۱	۲	۳	۴	۵	۶	۷

عمودی  
۱. مخالف تند ۲. بعد از ده ۳. رفتن به روزه [توستن] ... ۴. مخالف اول ۴. دو، سه ۵. این نه ... ۶. دانشگاه زمین‌های بازی دارد = دانشگاه سی زمین‌های بازی است ۶. اکنون ۷. در انگلیسی ۷. دو حرف اول تمام ۷. رفتن به روزه ماندن ...

INTERNATIONAL DAILY  
www.tehrantimes.com

Managing Director: Mohammad Shojaeian  
Editor-in-Chief: Ali A. Jenabzadeh

Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 88808214 — 88808895  
info@tehrantimes.com  
Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000  
Advertisements Dept.: Telefax: (+98 21) 43051430  
Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 88805807  
Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051603  
Printed at: Jame Jam Bartar Borna - 44197737

Tehrantimes79 Tehrantimes79 Tehrantimes79

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



GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

How wonderful is the situation of a believer. There is good for him in everything and this applies only to a believer. If prosperity comes to him, he expresses gratitude to God and that is good for him; and if adversity befalls him, he endures it patiently and that is better for him.

Prophet Muhammad (S)

Iranian pre-Islamic elements in Islamic art

Part 2

While the horseshoe shape of the arches of the transepts and the lower arcade arches of the Omayyad mosque in Damascus derive from Syrian Christian architecture, the horseshoe arches of Amman and Okhayzer originate from Sassanid prototypes, such as those at Taqe Gerra, probably dating back to the Middle Sassanid period, and al-Maariz, a 6th-century residential house at Ctesiphon.

The two staircase minarets of both mosques at Samarra, as well as the minaret of the mosque of Ibn Tulun in Cairo, derive their forms from the ancient ziggurats. The ziggurats are in the origin of an important Islamic architectural pattern, namely the stepped elements employed as crenellations.

Probably an ancient symbol of the sacred mountain, its iconography originated in the Iranian plateau in the 4th millennium BC.E. This architectural feature was employed for the first time as crenellation of religious buildings (temples, altars, ziggurats) in Assyria in the 2nd-1st millennium BC.E., retaining its original symbolic value, but possibly with the addition of the apotropaic one as well.

From Assyria it spread over the Near East, both as an architectural element and as a symbolic-decorative motif derived from it, and in the Achaemenid Persia as well (crenellations are employed in the Apadana, at Persepolis; cf. Genito for stepped fire altars). In its original meaning of sacred mountain, it represents the axis mundi and the sovereign as the guarantor of the world order (the rock-cut relief of Bisotun, shows Darius wearing a crenellated crown).

During the following Parthian and Sassanid periods stepped elements were employed in similar ways. Stepped elements lost a great deal of their significance in the Islamic period, although they were employed as crenellations in many buildings, beginning with the Umayyad era. The apotropaic meaning of crenellations was probably preserved only in Yemen.

In continuity with the Iranian pre-Islamic past, stepped elements have also been employed, with their symbolic significance, in several products of the early Islamic period, including coins, architectural decoration, various art objects, etc.

The apotropaic function of quadrupeds (felines and horned animals) and birds (birds of prey) placed near the spouts of ewers or other wares is no longer evident in Islamic art crafts, yet these zoomorphic sculptures survive as decorative motifs in metalwork from the Umayyad period (e.g., the so-called "Marwan ewer", bronze, ca. 750, held at the Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo; or the 12th-13th century brass ewers from Khorasan, inlaid with copper and silver).

The anthropomorphic or, more frequently, zoomorphic ware shape (askoi) is another pre-Islamic artistic feature that was widely employed in Persia and continued to be used in the Islamic period.

Furthermore, the Islamic metalwork produced bronze zoomorphic sculptures that were used as ewers, with a small reservoir that retained its ancient function.

The quintessential example of continuity of techniques, both in manufacture and decoration, are the metal vessels that were produced with similar stylistic features even after the Sassanid Empire had ceased to exist as a political entity, and retained the same shapes and the same iconographic themes, including investitures, audiences, hunts, battle scenes, and animal motifs.

In Islamic painting and sculpture we can observe the preservation either of typical Sassanid motifs (Arnold) or of Iranian-Central Asiatic somatic-stylistic features, recognizable, for example, in an Omayyad painting from Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi, in a stucco sculpture from Kherbat al-Mafjar, and, further, in the famous Samarra paintings.

A major vehicle of transmission of Iranian pre-Islamic elements in the Islamic art was iconography, such as the so-called "flying gallop", frequently combined, in the Sassanid period, to a fluttering ribbon, as we can see in a floor painting from Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi.

Brief mention should also be made to other iconographic themes and their diffusion, such as the semmurv, the male or female figure lifted by an eagle, and popular legendary episodes such as the hunt of the Sassanid king Bahram Gur with his slave.

Survival of Iranian pre-Islamic elements in Islamic art can be traced up to the Safavid, Qajar and Pahlavi periods, in architecture, iconography, stone relief, and a variety of decorative arts.

(Source: Iranica) Concluded

Iranian cartoonist Alireza Nosrati wins top prize at Russian contest on environment

TEHRAN — Iranian cartoonist Alireza Nosrati has won first prize at the 1.5 ° C Environmental Cartoon Competition in Russia.

He received the prize in the main section of the competition for his cartoon named "Plague" depicting a disease of microscopic cars that block the arteries of a tree leaf, the organizers announced last Thursday.

Global warming and depletion of resources, waste recycling and rational consumption, salvation and preservation of nature and its inhabitants were the themes of the contest, which was organized by the Russian Ecological Movement (RED).

Second prize went to Polish cartoonist Grzegorz Szumowski and third prize was given to the Faldin family (Svetlana Faldina, Anastasia Faldina, Alexandra Faldina and Alexander Faldin) from Russia for a series of posters.

On the margins of the competition, Iranian cartoonist Mohammad Raei was honored with the Sustainable Consumption and Resources of the Planet Award.

The Global Warming and Ecocide Award was presented to Weichi Liang from China, and the award for the section "Garbage and Industrial Waste" went to Engin Selcuk from Turkey.

Russian cartoonist Viktor Skopintsev won the award for the section "Biological and Natural Diversity".

The Russian online newspaper Ecosfera, as an information partner of the competition, gave its audience favorite prize to Avdotya Borovskaya in the children's category and to Iranian cartoonist Heybat Ahmadi in the adult category.

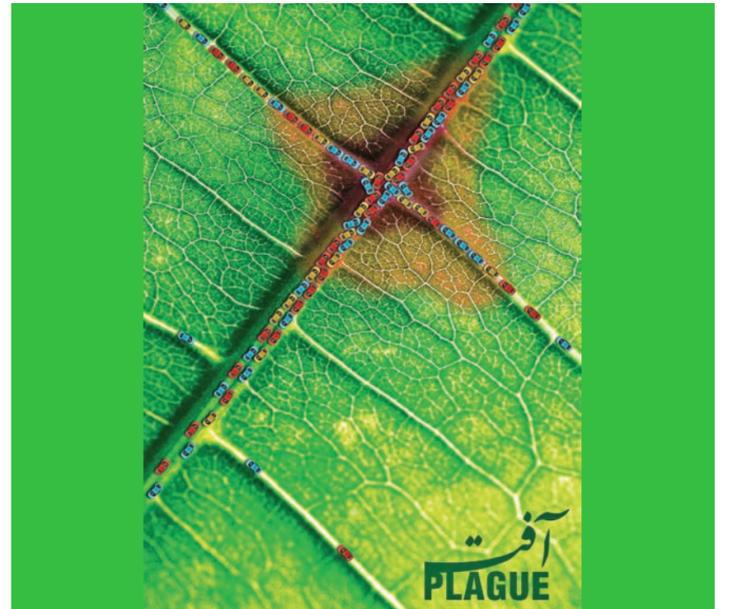
The jury also awarded Iranian cartoonists Alireza Pakdel, Esmail Babai and Pedram Mohammadi with honorable mentions.

Veteran Russian cartoonist Mikhail Zlatkovsky presided over the jury, which was composed of professional artists and RED experts.

He has worked as the chief illustrator for the magazine "Nature and Man" and won over 340 international and national awards in cartoon and illustration. He was awarded the Order of the Legion of Honor in February.

"The topic of ecology and climate change has remained one of the most popular among cartoonists over the past 40 years," Zlatkovsky said in a statement published by the organizers.

"It is great that this competition took place, because in modern Russia caricature is in an absolute enclosure, it is not in print or on the Internet," he added.



"Plague" by Iranian cartoonist Alireza Nosrati won first prize at the 1.5 ° C Environmental Cartoon Competition in Russia.

Maestro Rahbari, Saeidi vocalist brothers team up for "Persian Nightingales"



Maestro Ali Rahbari conducts the Tehran Symphony Orchestra in an undated photo. (Mehr/Hossein Esmaili)

TEHRAN — World-renowned Iranian composer Ali Rahbari and vocalist brothers Ali and Mohammad Saeidi are scheduled to work on an orchestral project named "Persian Nightingales".

Speaking to the Persian service of MNA on Sunday, 72-year-old Rahbari said that the idea of composing the piece had come to his mind when he was working on his violin concerto, "Nohe Khan", at 20 in Vienna.

"I was always thinking of composing an orchestral piece for an Iranian vocalist for presentation to the international arena," he added.

He noted that he wanted to use two vocalists of Iranian traditional music for the project, and in his over 50-year search for the couple he has reached out to the twin brothers, who live in the central Iranian city of Isfahan.

"These two brothers are really excellent and this is a great opportunity since they are both on the same level of vocal quality and work together cordially," Rahbari said.

"I have regularly been in close contact with the brothers, and everything in regard to the technical aspects of the project is going well," he added.

Rahbari, who has worked with the Tehran Symphony Orchestra and more than 120 European orchestras, is the composer of many collections, including "My Mother Per-

sia", the second volume of which was released in 2019 by Naxos Records, a Hong Kong-based German record label specializing in classical music.

Vocalist Mohammad Motamedi collaborated with Rahbari on this album, which was recorded by the Antalya State Symphony live in a concert.

"My Mother Persia" is a cycle of eight symphonic poems by Rahbari. His music utilizes the lavish sound world of the symphony orchestra but contains many of the essential elements, scales, rhythms and colors of Iranian music," Naxos Records said in an introduction to the album.

The first volume of "My Mother Persia" was released on July 12, 2019 and was warmly received in different countries.

The first album features melodies and improvisations in Iranian traditional styles, including a violin concerto entitled "Nohe Khan" by soloist Paula Rahbari, as well as "Mother's Tears" and "Children's Prayer".

On March 22, the Saeidi brothers gave a live online concert organized by the Freiburg-Isfahan Friendship Society.

Gbeck Future Film Festival picks five movies from Iran

TEHRAN — Five movies from Iranian filmmakers will be screened at the 7th Gbeck Future Film Festival as "This Side, Other Side" from Iran won the award for best short animation beforehand at the Canadian event.

Directed by Lida Fazli, the movie is a production from Iran's Documentary and Experimental Film Center.

The film shows that we are always so afraid of the other side, even though we are all the same. When a war rips their world apart, a little girl and little boy from two sides come together to heal it with their magical crayon. But we all know that's just fantasy. Real wars are not so easy to stop; the damage is not



A poster for "This Side, Other Side" by Lida Fazli.

so easy to fix. "Warehouse" by Hossein Torkjush and

"Elephantbird", a co-production between Iran and Afghanistan by Amir-Masud Soheili, will be screened in the short film category.

"The Butterfly" by Masud Haqqi has been selected to be screened in a section that shows the complexity of human nature and diversity of life.

"Ava's Silence" by Seyyed Gholamreza Nematpur will be screened in a section dedicated to films about love, family and dreams.

It tells the story of a young girl called Ava who has to work in her father's auto shop as a mechanic because of her father's illness. Ava is looking forward to her brother returning from military service in a border area so she

can get married to Abbas. The Gbeck Future Film Festival, which will take place in Charlottetown from May 7 to 9, focuses on new media and young filmmakers.

The films were submitted from more than fifty countries. The shortlist for the seventh GbeckFF was released in February 2021, with the winners announced in April. The quantity, quality and coverage of the submitted films have improved significantly.

The organizing committee has selected some excellent movies for screening. The films were submitted from China, Iran, India, Russia, Kazakhstan, France, Spain, Macedonia and other countries.

Iranian troupe to perform adaptation of Lorca's "Yerma" in Tehran

TEHRAN — An Iranian troupe plans to perform a loose adaptation of Federico Garcia Lorca's "Yerma" at Tehran's Molavi Hall on Wednesday.

Nasim Adabi and Neda Shahrokhi will co-direct the play named "Night/Exterior/Yerma", which is about Yerma, a woman who fights for her dream, not giving up due to prejudice.

The Yerma story and real stories from the lives of the cast members are interwoven in the play.

The original play tells the story of a childless woman living in rural Spain. Her desperate desire for motherhood becomes an obsession that eventually drives her to commit a horrific crime.

A cast of actors selected from the students at the Fanoose Honar Theater School in Tehran will perform the play. Sajjad Baqeri, Atefeh Ghazanfari, Alireza Abdolalizadeh,



A poster for "Night/Exterior/Yerma".

Sugand Hosseini and Danial Mohammadi are among the students.

Iranian troupes have previously performed adaptations of "Yerma" at Iranian theaters and international events.

Milad Nikabadi directed "Bitter like Blood in the Veins of Yerma" at the White Tower International Theater Festival in Belarus in September 2012.

The Creative Theatre Company from Tehran staged "Mamma Yerma" at the 15th Teatrny Kufar International Student and Youth Theater Festival in Minsk, Belarus in September 2018.

The play directed by Farzin Nobarani received the award for best professional play and its star, Shabnam Eskandari, was named best actress at the festival.

"Mamma Yerma" deals with the themes of isolation, passion and frustration but also the underlying themes of nature, marriage, jealousy and friendship.

Hannah Arendt's "The Origins of Totalitarianism" appears in Persian

TEHRAN — German political philosopher Hannah Arendt's "The Origins of Totalitarianism" has recently been published in Persian.

Salass is the publisher of the book rendered into Persian by Mehdi Tadayyoni. "The Origins of Totalitarianism" begins with the rise of anti-Semitism in central and western Europe in the 1800s and continues with an examination of European colonial imperialism from 1884 to the outbreak of World War I.

Arendt explores the institutions and operations of totalitarian movements, focusing on the two genuine forms of totalitarian government in our time — Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia — which

she adroitly recognizes were two sides of the same coin, rather than opposing philosophies of Right and Left.

From this vantage point, she discusses the evolution of classes into masses, the role of propaganda in dealing with the non-totalitarian world, the use of terror, and the nature of isolation and loneliness as preconditions for total domination.

"How could such a book speak so powerfully to our present moment?" Jeffrey C. Isaac, a professor of political science at Indiana University, wrote in the Washington Post.

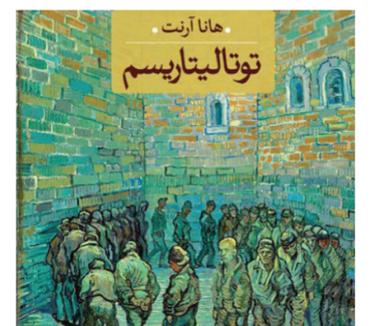
"The short answer is that we, too, live in dark times, even if they are different and perhaps less dark, and 'Origins' raises a set of fundamental questions about how

tyranny can arise and the dangerous forms of inhumanity to which it can lead," he added.

Arendt's 1963 book "Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil" was published by the Borj Publishing House in Tehran in 2020.

Arendt was one of the most influential political philosophers of the twentieth century. Born into a German-Jewish family, she was forced to leave Germany in 1933 and lived in Paris for the next eight years, working for a number of Jewish refugee organizations.

In 1941, she immigrated to the United States and soon became part of a lively intellectual circle in New York. She held a number of academic positions at various American universities until her death in 1975.



Front cover of the Persian version of Hannah Arendt's "The Origins of Totalitarianism".