



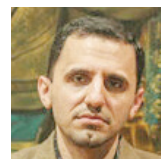
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Biden administration may resume some construction on Trump's border wall *Page 5*



Hassan Ruholamin named Islamic Revolution Artist of 2020 *Page 8*

Israel throws a wrench into Iran nuclear talks



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Salehi says Iran has produced 57 kilograms of 20% enriched uranium

TEHRAN - The capacity of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) for uranium enrichment has reached 16,500 SWUs, AEOI chief Ali Akbar Salehi announced on Wednesday.

SWU stands for separative work unit. Salehi, a nuclear physicist, also said Iran's reserves of nuclear fuel enriched to 20 percent has reached 57 kilograms.

"Today the capacity of Iran's enrichment has reached 16,500 SWUs and we have 57 kilograms of 20-percent uranium," Salehi

told reporters after a cabinet meeting. **"Nuclear industry will not stop with JCPOA"**

The AEOI head went on to say that he was sure that the nuclear industry would not be stopped or slowed down by the JCPOA, the common name for the 2015 nuclear deal.

"Compare for yourself what we had in 1392 in different fields and what we have now."

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Iran's annual gas reproduction rises 15%

TEHRAN- Gas reproduction has risen 15 percent in the country during the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20), as compared to its preceding year, according to the production director of Iranian Central Oilfields Company (ICOFC).

Ahmad Rajabi announced that about three billion cubic meters (bcm) of gas has been reproduced from the country's gas storage facilities (Sarajeh and Shourijeh) in the past year. He also said that 2.87 bcm of gas had been stored during

the first eight months of the past year, showing a 24-percent rise year on year.

The country's gas reproduction projects have registered some high records in the past decade, the official further highlighted.

In early January, the managing director of Iranian Gas Engineering and Development Company announced that the country's gas storage capacity will reach 6.5 billion cubic meters by the Iranian calendar year 1402 (starts in March 2023).

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"Definitive Talk" documentary to be broadcast

TEHRAN-Produced by Khamenei.ir which is the official website of Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the "Definitive Talk" documentary is a first of its kind featuring uncompromising interviews with several notable political figures, namely Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, Foreign Minister

Mohammad Javad Zarif, and the Leader's advisor Ali Akbar Velayati.

The documentary also features other top figures involved in the Iran nuclear deal negotiations including Ali Larijani, Saeed Jalili, Ali Akbar Salehi, and Kamal Kharrazi.

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Six destinations to visit in Hamedan when travel opens up

BY AFSHIN MAJLESI

It is more than a year since many countries around the world have imposed sweeping travel bans and advisories to stem the spread of novel coronavirus within their borders and beyond.

Experts say that whenever the disease is contained, the tourism industry begins to flourish once again. The Islamic Republic of Iran, which is home to countless travel destinations, is among those highly suffered from the pandemic when it comes to tourism. The average of international travels to and from the country fell by 84 percent during the first nine months of the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20, 2021) from a year earlier.

Before the COVID-era, the ancient city of Hamedan was one of the hot travel destinations of the country. Scenic natural landscapes, traditional restaurants, public gardens, colorful outdoor markets, and more importantly, its hospitable people make for an unexpected slice of the central-west city, which never falls short of offering cultural heritage sites to its visitors.

Known in classical times as Ecbatana, Hamedan was once one of the world's greatest cities of ancient times. Pitifully little remains from antiquity, but significant parts of the city center are given over to excavations, and there's a scattering of historical curiosities.

Sprawling on a high plain, Hamedan is graciously cool in August but snow prone and freezing from December to March. In summer the air is often hazy, but on a rare, clear spring day there are impressive glimpses of snow-capped Alvand Kuh (3580m), sitting aloof above the ragged neocolonial cupolas of Imam Khomeini Sq.

In 2018, Hamedan played host to the 40th United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Affiliate Members Plenary Session, attended by tens of international representatives, scholars, and academia.

Here is a selection of travel attractions in Hamedan:

Tepe Hegmataneh

The archaeological site of Tepe Hegmataneh, which corresponds with the ancient city of Ecbatana, has a circumference of 1.4 kilometers with an area of about 40 hectares. Ecbatana was, in fact, a city on the site of which stands the modern city of Hamedan.

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World Health Day: Together we can reach fairer, healthier world

TEHRAN – The World Health Day was commemorated jointly by the World Health Organization (WHO) in Iran and the Ministry of Health and Medical Education on Wednesday in Tehran, according to the WHO report.

This year, with the theme of 'Building a Fairer, Healthier World', the day is drawing attention to the numerous barriers that stand between people and calls for urgent action to eliminate health inequities and mobilize action to attain better health for all.

Iran strides towards health equity

Over the past decade, Iran has made noteworthy strides towards health equity in the country and put efforts towards achieving Universal Health Coverage by enhancement of financial risk protection with more access to quality of care.

Therefore, more than 90 percent of the country's population, including in rural areas, now benefits from health insurance that covers 70 percent of outpatient and 90 percent of inpatient services

offered at public diagnostic and medical centers. Services delivered at Primary Healthcare Centers and pre-hospital care are free of charge.

WHO is working with the Government of Iran to ensure health equity for all and is supporting the country's national measures while helping the healthcare system to access and use all available domestic and international resources and make sure no one is left behind.

One of such efforts was launching of the Iran COVID-19 Emergency Response Project (ICERP) on June 16, 2020. The project is a close collaboration between WHO and Health Ministry and financed by the World Bank at \$50 million. To help tighten the gap in availability of diagnostic and medical equipment by procuring and delivering a total of 316 medical devices and 135 laboratory machines and their consumables to 45 laboratories across 31 provinces.

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Russia, Lebanon's Hezbollah mull opening representative office in Moscow

The Russian government and Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance movement are reportedly considering the possibility of opening a representative office for the Lebanese popular organization in the capital, Moscow, following high-level meetings between the two sides last month.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov received on March 15 a delegation of senior Hezbollah figures led by Mohammad Raad, the head of the Loyalty to the Resistance Bloc — the political wing of Hezbollah — and media reports indicated that the two sides had held "open and friendly" talks.

The meeting, held at Russia's request, was described by analysts as different from Moscow's previous ones with Hezbollah and it showed Russia's inclination to see the Lebanese resistance movement as an "independent" power.

The visit by the four-member Hezbollah delegation to Russia took place at a time when Lebanon

is mired in its worst economic crisis in decades as well as a political stalemate over the formation of a new government, Press TV reported.

"The two sides stressed the need to strengthen means of communication between them and to adopt direct channels of communication between the party and Moscow, while studying the possibility of establishing a representative office for the party in the Russian capital," Lebanon's al-Akhbar newspaper said in a report on Tuesday.

The Lebanese paper also said the two sides had discussed the situation in Yemen, Iraq, Syria, and Palestine.

Pointing to the Syrian crisis, the al-Akhbar newspaper said the Russians stressed that the presence of Hezbollah in the war-inflicted Arab country was "necessary," and added that Moscow counted on future cooperation with the resistance movement.

Saudi Arabia behind coup attempt in Jordan: Palestinian analyst

BY M.A. SAKI

TEHRAN – A Palestinian author believes that Saudi Arabia and the UAE had a key role in the coup attempt in Jordan.

"In the official statement of the Jordanian government, there is a reference to the intervention of foreign intelligence without specifying them," Shaker Zalloum tells the Tehran Times.

"I think it is most likely to be a coup attempt behind which Saudi Arabia and the UAE play a key role," he comments.

Jordanian authorities on Saturday arrested as many as 20 people and sought to restrain the movement of a former crown prince amid what officials called a threat to the "security and stability" of the country.

Prince Hamzah bin Hussein, the eldest son of the late King Hussein and his American-born fourth wife, Queen Noor, was told to remain at his Amman palace amid an investigation into an alleged plot to unseat his older half-brother, King Abdullah II, according to a senior Middle Eastern intelligence official briefed on the events.

The Saudi connections of two detained male associates of Prince Hamzah have sparked questions about Riyadh's relationship with Amman.

Here is the text of the interview with Shaker Zalloum about Saudi's role in Joran developments:

How do you read the recent developments in Jordan? Was there really a coup attempt?

A: There is no smoke without fire, so I think it is most likely to be a coup attempt behind which Saudi Arabia and the UAE play a key role.

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The strategic partnership with China will improve Iran's regional status: Texas University professor

BY MOHAMMAD MAZHARI

TEHRAN - An American professor from the University of Texas says the strategic partnership between Iran and China has raised concerns in Washington as it improves Iran's regional position.

"The strategic partnership has already improved Iran's regional position, which immediately raised concerns in Washington," Jon R. Taylor tells the Tehran Times.

Taylor, a professor of political science and geography at the University of Texas, notes that "Iran has a fairly unique place in China's Middle East (West Asian) strategy because it's more than just trade — it's also military and political."

U.S. President Joe Biden expressed concern about the comprehensive strategic partnership between China and Iran.

Asked about the Agreement, Biden said, "I've been worried about that for years."

China and Iran signed a deal aimed at charting the course of their economic, political and trade relations over the next 25 years.

The Chinese government plans to invest in Iran and buy oil from the Islamic Republic, a move not welcomed by Washington.

The "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership" agreement, signed in Tehran on March 27 by Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi, has been in the works since 2016, when President Xi Jinping became the first Chinese leader to visit the Iranian capital in over a decade.

Continued on page 5



Funeral held for environmental defenders

TEHRAN – A funeral ceremony was held in the city of Zanjan on Wednesday for two environmental defenders who were martyred on Monday.

Mikaeel Hashemi, 42, and Mehdi Mojallal, 34, were martyred by illegal hunters while protecting the environment.

Salehi says Iran has 57 kilograms of 20% enriched uranium

‘Iran’s capacity for uranium enrichment has reached 16,500 SWUs’

➔ For example, he said, Robert Malley, the U.S. special envoy for Iran, recently said, “Go and see how far Iran’s nuclear industry has come with Trump’s actions.”

Salehi a nuclear physicist said, “We have 15 new types of centrifuges that are enriching uranium, such as IR6, IR4, IR2M.”

“In 1392 (2013), we only enriched with IR1, which is a huge leap. Before the JCPOA our maximum enrichment was 13,000 SWUs, but now we have 16,500 SWUs without mobilizing all our resources. So has this industry slowed down and stopped?” he asked.

Salehi added, “We have about 5 tons of enriched uranium and about 57 kilograms of 20% uranium, while we are supposed to have 120 kilograms in a year, but now we have reached 57 kilograms.”

In late last year the Iranian parliament approved a legislation obliging the government to increase the level of enrichment to 20 and produce 120 kg of nuclear fuel to the purity of 20 percent in response to the imposition of sanctions on Iran. The parliament stated the approval is intended to protect the rights of the Iranian nation.



The top nuclear official also said Iran’s capacity for producing yellowcake has reached from 5 tons to 35 tons before the JCPOA was signed.

“Our production of yellowcake before the JCPOA was 4 to 5 tons, but now it has reached an average of 35 tons.”

He added, “We are building two power plants with the cooperation of the Russians.”

Iran celebrates Farvardin 20, which mostly falls on April 9, as National Nuclear Technology Day.

“We are on the eve of the anniversary of the 20th of Farvardin and the honors of the Atomic Energy Organization... We could not hold the 20th of Farvardin last year because of the coronavirus, but this year we will hold it on Saturday.”

Salehi said, “In this ceremony, which will be attended by the president, an exhibition with 133 achievements will be held and we will have about 7 unveilings, the most important of which are some new radiopharmaceuticals. We do not realize the importance of these radiopharmaceuticals until we get sick.”

He added, “About one million people suffer from incurable diseases and the Atomic Energy Organization provides the drugs needed by these patients and the number of these new drugs is increasing every year.”

The nuclear chief also said it was recently announced that a prostate cancer drug is being studied and developed in collaboration with several universities.

He said the National Ion Therapy Center in Alborz province will be opened in September.

This center is a hospital that treats incurable diseases, Salehi explained.

Salehi went on to say there is another project called the “production project of radiopharmaceuticals based on GMP or ‘TETRA project’ which has 60 million euros of equipment” and the AEOI did not receive any fund from the government to for the project.

The project was funded by loans provided by banks, he said, adding preparations are being made to inaugurate the project in September.

In response to a question about the nuclear talks held in Vienna on Tuesday for a possible revitalization of the JCPOA, Salehi said, “The technical experts of the Atomic Energy Organization are in the talks.”

He said as Iranian officials have said the first round of nuclear talks in Vienna was constructive.

Salehi was involved in the nuclear talks for technical matters as Iran and the 5+1 nations were getting close to finalizing the text of the JCPOA in July 2015. He was also Iran’s ambassador to the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency.

“Clear and principled position”

Salehi, who is also considered vice president, also said Iran’s position on a revival of the JCPOA is “clear and principled”.

If the United States returns to JCPOA and lifts sanctions, Iran will also reverse its remedial measures, Salehi said.

He said Iran is not asking excessive demands from the United States, noting, “America has left (the nuclear deal) and wants to return and it has obligations that must do them first.”

He reiterated the position by other Iranian officials, saying, “We do not have a step-by-step discussion in this regard and I have not heard anything in this regard at all.”

Iran has been insisting that if sanctions are lifted it will immediately undo its nuclear steps that are outside the JCPOA constraints.

Salehi stated that the way for a mutual understanding of JCPOA is clear. “New sanctions have been added under Trump. In these negotiations, the list of sanctions should be reviewed, and on the other hand, they want to review our actions.”

“We can stop some actions momentarily; for example, we can stop the production of 20% uranium immediately, but it will take time to remove new centrifuges.”

Salehi, who was also foreign minister during the Ahmadinejad administration, said that the United States has suffered many political defeats over the last one or two years because of the JCPOA.

“If it were not for the JCPOA, these American defeats would certainly not have occurred. Maintaining the JCPOA has put us in the right position. It is a political achievement that the Americans have backed down from the position that Iran must act first.”

Salehi said: “We have seen good signs so far and Iran has also announced that it will abide by its obligations as long as they fulfill their obligations.”

“We have installed 1,000 IR2M centrifuges in the last one or two months,” he said.

“These 16,500 SWUs has been installed mainly in the last few months according to the law of the parliament. These achievements are part of the steps to reduce commitments, and if the JCPOA is to be implemented, we will stop them.”

Chinese diplomat urges U.S. to lift all illegal sanctions against Iran

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — A Chinese

envoy on Tuesday urged the United States to lift all illegal sanctions against Iran and its “long-arm jurisdiction” against third-party entities and individuals, including those from China, CGTN reported.

The Chinese envoy made the remarks during the talks on the Iran nuclear deal in Vienna.

Senior diplomats from China, France, Germany, Russia, Britain and Iran met behind closed doors in the Grand Hotel Wien. On top of the agenda were lifting sanctions on Iran and nuclear implementation measures.

The meeting of the Joint Commission of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), known as the Iran nuclear deal, has drawn public attention as representatives from the United States were in Vienna to save the deal.

The U.S. should lift all illegal sanctions against Tehran, and the Iranian side should resume full compliance with the 2015 nuclear deal on that basis, said Wang Qun, the Chinese envoy to the United Nations and other international organizations in Vienna, after the meeting.

Wang said that the U.S. withdrawal from the deal and its maximum pressure against Iran is the root cause of the current situation. Therefore, Wang said, the early return of the U.S. to the accord is the key to resolving the problem.

“The justified request of the injured party, rather than the offending party, should be confirmed and satisfied first. This is a basic right-or-wrong question. The U.S. should lift all sanctions against Tehran and on this basis, Iran can resume full compliance to the nuclear deal,” Wang said in a statement.

He stressed that China firmly opposes any illegal unilateral sanctions imposed by the U.S. and will safeguard its legitimate rights and interests.

Wang added that China supports the Joint Commission’s efforts in setting up two expert-level groups, one on sanctions-lifting and nuclear issues, and the other on “close contact” with the U.S. He said China hopes the two groups can make progress as soon as possible.

China continues to unswervingly uphold the JCPOA, and hopes that all parties can enhance their sense of urgency, seize the current opportunities, and push the JCPOA back on track through fair and reasonable negotiations, Wang noted.

He pledged that China will work with all parties to continue advancing the political settlement of the Iran nuclear issue, and strive to restore the full implementation of the 2015 accord as early as possible.

A ‘constructive meeting’

The JCPOA talks were chaired by Enrique Mora, deputy secretary-general and political director of the European External



Wang Qun, Chinese envoy to the United Nations and other international organizations in Vienna, speaks at the meeting of the Joint Commission of the JCPOA in the Grand Hotel Wien, Vienna, April 6, 2021.

Action Service (EEAS), on behalf of High Representative of the European Union (EU) for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell. Media reports said the U.S. delegation led by Special Envoy for Iran Robert Malley was based in a nearby hotel.

Mora said on Twitter following the meeting that they had a “constructive Joint Commission meeting.”

“There’s unity and ambition for a joint diplomatic process with two expert groups on nuclear implementation and sanctions lifting. As Coordinator I will intensify separate contacts here in Vienna with all relevant parties, including the U.S.,” he added.

According to the official Islamic Republic News Agency, Iran’s chief nuclear negotiator Abbas Araqchi told the commission meeting that lifting U.S. sanctions is the first and most necessary step to revive the 2015 nuclear deal.

U.S. and Iranian negotiators were not supposed to meet face-to-face but a shuttle diplomacy approach was adopted with the intensified help of the coordinators.

Prior to Tuesday’s meeting, Araqchi said he would “not hold any direct or indirect talks” with U.S. representatives but would only negotiate with the Joint Commission of JCPOA.

If the P4+1 countries, including China, Britain, France and Russia, plus Germany, succeed in convincing Washington to lift all the sanctions “by any means they know,” Iran will comply, said Araqchi, who is also Iran’s deputy foreign minister for political affairs.

The U.S. on Tuesday also called the talks in Vienna “a constructive step” but rejected what it called Tehran’s “maximalist

demands”.

“These discussions in Vienna, even though we are not meeting directly with the Iranians, as we have said, it is a welcome step, it is a constructive step, it is a potentially useful step,” State Department spokesperson Ned Price told reporters in a press briefing.

“We don’t anticipate any immediate breakthrough,” he said. “We know there will be difficult discussions ahead but again this is a healthy step forward.”

Price noted that two working groups in the meeting were focused on respective steps for Tehran and Washington to revive the JCPOA.

“What is on the table in Vienna today and over the next handful of days are those initial indirect discussions about that first step, what Iran would need to do to resume compliance with the JCPOA and what the United States would need to do to resume its compliance with the JCPOA,” he said.

He expected the United States could have a better understanding of a roadmap for how both sides get to mutual compliance with the nuclear deal following the discussions in Vienna.

Washington withdrew from the deal in 2018 and tightened sanctions on Iran under former President Donald Trump. In response to the U.S. moves, Iran suspended the implementation of parts of its obligations under the deal.

Iran’s moves were based on paragraph 36 of the JCPOA that 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.”

Tehran says studying attack on vessel in Red Sea

POLITICAL d e s k

TEHRAN — The commercial Iran-Saviz ship was targeted with landmines in the

Red Sea on Tuesday morning.

Iran said on Wednesday that technical investigations are underway into how the incident happened.

It is said that the incident occurred due to explosion of landmines in the hull of the ship.

The ship has been stationed in the Red Sea for the past few years to support Iranian commandos sent on commercial vessel escort missions.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said the Saviz ship was struck by a blast at around 6 a.m. local time (0300 GMT) on Tuesday, April 5, near the coast of Djibouti, and sustained minor damage, according to Press TV.

Khatibzadeh added, “Fortunately, no casualties were reported as a result of the accident, and technical investigations are underway into how the accident happened and its origin, and Iran will take all necessary measures through international authorities in this regard.”

Khatibzadeh said the Saviz is a non-military vessel, whose specifications and mission have been formally registered with the International Maritime Organization (IMO).

“According to a previous official announcement and coordination with the International Maritime Organization as the reference body, the Saviz civilian ship was stationed in the Red Sea region and the Gulf of Aden to provide maritime security along the shipping lanes and to fight

pirates. This ship practically acted as a logistics station (technical support and logistics) of Iran in the Red Sea, and therefore the specifications and mission of this ship had previously been officially announced to the organization,” Khatibzadeh stressed.

Israel is considered the chief culprit for the incident. According to New York Times, “...an American official said the Israelis had notified the United States that its forces had struck the vessel at about 7:30 a.m. local time.”

The unnamed U.S. official said Israel called the strike a retaliation, and that the ship had been hit below the water line.

The damage to the Iranian vessel came on the first day of constructive negotiations between Iran and P4+1 group. Considering that Israel had previously expressed deep concerns over the restoration of the JCPOA, the strike would not be much of a shock. The Israeli officials have not taken an official stance yet, but sabotage of the Iran nuclear deal is something they do in the most disgusting way possible.

In a similar incident last month, an Iranian cargo ship sustained damages after it was targeted by a terrorist attack en route to Europe in the Mediterranean Sea.

Tehran said back then that such acts of terror are a clear example of naval piracy and run counter to international law on the safety of commercial vessels.

On February 25, an explosion struck Israeli-owned and the Bahamas-flagged ship, the MV Helios Ray, in the Sea



of Oman near the strategic mouth of the Persian Gulf.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu hastily accused Iran of attacking the ship. Iran categorically rejected the charge.

Iranian Ambassador to the United Nations Majid Takht Ravanchi, in a letter addressed to UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres on March 5, warned of consequences of any possible miscalculated measure by Israel over the explosion.

“The incident has all the characteristic of a complicated false flag operation carried out by actors in order to pursue their malign policies and to advance their illegitimate objectives,” Takht Ravanchi wrote.

Chief of IRGC Quds Force wraps up two days of talks in Iraq: Al-Alam

Brigadier General Esmaeil Qa’ani, the commander of the Quds Force of Iran’s Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), has ended a two-day trip to neighboring Iraq, the Arabic-language Al-Alam news network reports.

Citing informed sources as saying, the Iranian news channel’s correspondent said Tuesday that the IRGC Quds Force’s chief had met with a number of Iraqi officials and senior figures besides leaders of political parties and movements in the Arab country.

The meeting, the report said, focused on the developments concerning bilateral relations between the two neighboring coun-



tries as well as regional issues of common interest.

Qa’ani was appointed as chief of the IRGC’s Quds Force following the assassi-

nation of his predecessor, Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, by the U.S. military during an official visit to Baghdad.

General Soleimani was martyred — along with Deputy Commander of Iraq’s Popular Mobilization Units Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis and a number of their comrades — when his vehicle was hit by a drone strike ordered by ex-U.S. president Donald Trump.

The IRGC’s Quds Force under General Soleimani played a key role in the Iraqi armed forces’ successful campaign that liberated the Arab country’s soil from Daesh, the world’s most notorious terror group, in late 2017.

Qa’ani has vowed to continue the path of

Iran took these remedial measures one year after Trump quit the deal.

“Failure of maximum pressure”

Trump abrogated the nuclear deal unilaterally and imposed sanctions on Iran under his “maximum pressure” campaign against Tehran under the illusion of crafting a new deal.

Iran adopted a maximum resistance against the maximum pressure. All unbiased politicians and analysts say the maximum pressure ended in failure.

In an interview with National Public Radio (NPR) on April 6, the U.S. special envoy for Iran said, “We’ve had a real life experiment with this. The last three years the Trump administration tested the proposition that putting Iran under maximum pressure and telling it either it needs to come back and forget about the existing nuclear deal and agree to more stringent requirements, or else the pressure would continue.”

Malley, who helped craft the JCPOA during the Obama presidency, added, “Well, we’ve seen what happened. Iran expanded its nuclear program, is getting closer to, sort of, troubling levels of enriched uranium, troubling levels of advanced centrifuges, troubling restrictions on the verification and monitoring, the unprecedented verification that the nuclear deal provided. So, no, we’ve seen the result of the maximum pressure campaign. It has failed.”

Russia vows to make every effort for JCPOA revival

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov also said his country will make every effort to find mutually acceptable solutions for the restoration of the JCPOA.

Speaking to Russia’s Sputnik news agency, Ryabkov emphasized that he agrees with the U.S. that the process of reviving the nuclear deal will not be easy.

“First of all, because there is no trust between Tehran and Washington ... But even without this, since the process of moving away from the initially set parameters of the JCPOA has gone far enough, the return requires a lot of political will,” he said.

Iran believes that the JCPOA can be easily restored if Tehran and Washington agree on what measures they need to take, and then the sides can implement them promptly, he added. “I admit that this is so, but in order to reach this milestone, great efforts are required.”

France welcomes Vienna negotiations

A spokesperson for the French Foreign Ministry also welcomed the resumption Iran nuclear talks in Vienna, saying, “The ongoing negotiations should allow [the participants] to soon reach an agreement on the actions necessary to bring Iran and the United States back to full compliance with the nuclear agreement.”

(Source: Press TV)

Iran calls on U.S. to lift sanctions all at once

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** – Top Iranian nuclear negotiator has called on the U.S. to lift its sanctions on Iran all at once, warning that Tehran could halt nuclear negotiations if they turn into a waste of time.

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi, who led Iran's negotiating team in Vienna talks on Tuesday, once again reiterated call on the U.S. to remove its sanction in one step, saying that Iran will not accept a step-by-step process for reviving the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"The United States must lift its anti-Iran sanctions altogether and in one step if it truly seeks to rejoin the 2015 nuclear agreement," Araghchi was quoted by Press TV as saying on the sidelines of the Vienna nuclear talks, which took place on Tuesday.

reaffirmed that the gathering did not feature any American representatives, and that it just involved Iran's discussions with the remaining JCPOA participants or the P4+1 — Russia, China, France, Britain and Germany.

The remaining signatories "would then later talk with Americans. And that's their business. We're not engaged in that business. We only negotiate with the P4+1."

He also reflected on comments coming out of Washington alleging that Tehran's assertion that the U.S. has to lift the sanctions first showed the Islamic Republic's lack of seriousness in the JCPOA's revival.

Such remarks, Araghchi said, are indicative of "a lack of seriousness on their [own] side since they have left the JCPOA, and they have imposed sanctions."

"That is quite logical and a very reasonable demand by the Islamic Republic of Iran," Araghchi said. "They (Americans) have left the JCPOA, and they have imposed sanctions. So obviously if they want to come back, they will have to lift all those sanctions, all together, in one step."

The Iranian negotiator noted that Iran had never sought to avoid compliance with the nuclear accord, saying if Tehran was after such a goal, it would have left the deal far earlier after Washington quit it.

Araghchi commented on a tweet by the



Russian envoy to the Vienna-based organizations, Mikhail Ulyanov, who has called the talks "successful."

He said the parties to the talks "are on the right track," and Iran was likewise "hopeful," otherwise it would not join the negotiations.

However, the negotiator stated that the talks could only be described as a success if "the other side can meet our demands."

In separate remarks to the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) News Agency, Araghchi described the Tuesday meeting of the JCPOA Joint Commission as "constructive."

"I can say that it was a constructive meeting as a whole. We agreed to form two working groups; one in the field of sanctions and the other in the field of nuclear and these two working groups consisting of all members of the Joint Commission, namely Iranian experts plus experts from the P4 + 1 countries without the presence of the United States," the deputy foreign minister said.

He added, "It was also agreed in the Joint Commission that the return of the two parties is not a step-by-step process and we do not need step-by-step policies. The steps that the Americans must take are quite clear, as

well as what Iran must do to return to its commitments. So both sets of actions can be done in one step. Of course, we will do our set of actions after the Americans have done their part and after it was verified."

"Iran may halt nuclear talks if it concludes they are a waste of time"

In an interview with Nour News, Araghchi also warned that Iran may halt the nuclear talks if it concludes that these talks are a waste of time.

"If we see that the negotiating parties are looking to waste time or pursue other goals, we will stop the negotiations at this level," he cautioned.

Araghchi once again underlined that there will be no step-by-step process to lift sanctions.

Echoing Araghchi, Saeed Khatibzadeh, spokesman for the Iranian Foreign Ministry, also said in an interview with Press TV that the United States has to return to compliance with the 2015 nuclear deal by lifting its anti-Iran sanctions all at once, asserting that the Islamic Republic accepts no "step-for-step" approach in this regard.

He said the talks held so far have been focused on how the parties attending the

Commission "could make sure that the U.S. will get back to full compliance and effectively remove all imposed, re-imposed or re-labeled sanctions after it ceased its participation in the JCPOA."

The spokesman said the Commission's first gathering had agreed to continue the talks at "two parallel expert meetings."

Khatibzadeh repeated the Islamic Republic's assertion that the country would be ready to stop its retaliatory nuclear steps should the U.S. get back to compliance with the deal in a manner that could be verified by Tehran.

He also dismissed rumors that the U.S. had agreed to unfreeze some Iranian funds in exchange for Tehran stopping uranium enrichment at 20-percent-level purity and end its application of advanced centrifuges.

The spokesman said Iran's position was "crystal clear," and again denied Tehran's approval of any "step-for-step" plan.

"We have just one step and that is the removal of all the sanctions imposed," Khatibzadeh said.

"Iran won't accept division of sanctions"

Iran also rejected any division of the U.S. sanctions into those that had been lifted under the 2015 nuclear deal and the ones unrelated to the nuclear issues, a senior Iranian official told Press TV on Wednesday.

The senior official said, "Iran will not accept a division of the Trump-era sanctions into JCPOA-related [ones] and [those] unrelated to the JCPOA."

"For Iran, all the American sanctions — including the Obama-era sanctions, the sanctions restored by Trump and the additional sanctions in the Trump-era labeled as non-nuclear — must be terminated," the official added.

"Iran does not accept and recognize negotiations on a division of the sanctions," the official emphasized. "Iran's condition for returning to its JCPOA commitments is the lasting removal of all the sanctions."

The official said America and Europe must guarantee that the sanctions will not be restored on Iran again after removal.

The official further emphasized that "a short period of time" will not be enough to verify the termination of the sanctions.

FM Zarif holds talks with Kazakh leaders

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** – Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif met with Kazakh leaders including President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev and Foreign Minister Mukhtar Tileuberdi.

Zarif and Tokayev discussed issues of mutual interest, the Iranian Foreign Ministry said in a statement on Wednesday.

"During the meeting, our country's foreign minister considered Kazakhstan as a friend and neighbor in the Caspian Sea and assessed the proximity of the two countries' positions on regional and international issues as important. Dr. Zarif considered it necessary to try to find ways of lasting cooperation to maintain and expand relations between the two countries," the statement said.

"Underlining the common history and importance of developing cooperation with our country, the President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev called the Islamic Republic of Iran a key partner in the region and stressed the need for comprehensive expansion of relations in the economic and political sectors," it continued.

Zarif and Tileuberdi also "discussed the current state and prospects for the development of bilateral cooperation, as well as topical issues on the regional and international agenda. The ministers discussed ways to increase trade and economic cooperation," according to a statement issued by Kazakhstan's Foreign Ministry.

"They focused on the need to coordinate joint work on the development of the Caspian region. The parties also positively assessed the cooperation within the UN, CICA, OIC, ECO and other international organizations, and agreed to continue working in this direction. As a result of the negotiations, the



parties signed a Cooperation Program between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan and Islamic Republic of Iran," the statement added.

While in Kazakhstan, Zarif also delivered a speech at the 19th D-8 Council of Ministers Meeting, which was held virtually.

Zarif started his speech by thanking Bangladesh for "excellent arrangements for this meeting" and then railed against U.S. sanctions on Iran.

"The international community is still facing the unprecedented challenge of the Covid-19 pandemic. For Iran, the challenge has been compounded by a barbaric economic terrorism against the great Iranian nation, a grave crime against humanity," the Iranian foreign minister said.

He added, "Much as the international community eagerly wants to consign Coronavirus to the dustbin of

history, the pandemic has taught us some valuable lessons. We learned that how a health crisis can easily lead to an economic crisis, a humanitarian crisis, an education crisis, a food security crisis, an inequality crisis (to name a few), leaving a disproportionate toll on developing and least developed countries. Concurrently, we also learned how a global crisis can unleash the blessings of solidarity among nations. Let me seize this opportunity to value support the Islamic Republic of Iran received from our brotherly D-8 countries during the time of pandemic and amid unlawful and cruel sanctions. Another lesson we have learned is that the enhanced cooperation among countries and regions is the optimal choice should the international community wish to set the stage for shared challenges that loom ahead. Multilateral machineries, including the D-8, provide us with a pool of choices to make."

The chief Iranian diplomat stated, "I am not going to elaborate on the shared challenges ahead of us. Rather, I would like to focus on decisive choices we can collectively make within the D-8 existing and potential frameworks for cooperation. This is also very important and pertinent as we are about to finalize the D-8 Decennial Roadmap."

He urged D-8 countries to boost intra-D8 trade and play the role of enabler. He also underlined the need to enhance connectivity among these countries.

"Notwithstanding the geographical remoteness of some D-8 countries, D-8 can be an inter-connected body of countries. This can be and should be realized in terms of, among others, multi-modal transport and port cooperation; cultural affinity and tourism; and business-to-business connectivity," he noted.

Israel throws a wrench into Iran nuclear talks

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** – An Iranian vessel was attacked in the Red Sea as Iran and the West resumed nuclear talks in Vienna to revive a 2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and major world powers.

Saudi and American media outlets claimed that Israel was behind the attack. The Saudi-owned Al Arabiya reported on Tuesday night that an "Israeli commando" attached "a magnetic explosive device" to an Iranian vessel in the Red Sea.

The Tasnim news agency confirmed the attack and identified the vessel as "Iran Saviz." It said that "the incident happened after the explosion of limpet mines attached to the hull of the ship."

A day later, Iran officially commented on the issue. The Iranian Foreign Ministry issued a statement on Wednesday confirming the attack.

"The Iranian merchant ship Saviz sustained minor damage in the Red Sea off the coast of Djibouti at around 6:am local time on April 6, 2021, due to an explosion, the cause of which is being investigated," Saeed Khatibzadeh, the Ministry's spokesman said.

He said the vessel has been deployed to the region in coordination with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and it has been involved in ensuring maritime security.

"As already officially announced and based on the arrangements made with the International Maritime Organization as the relevant authority, the non-military Saviz ship had been stationed in the Red Sea region and the Gulf of Aden in order to ensure maritime security along shipping lanes and to counter pirates," explained the spokesman.

"The ship practically served as Iran's logistical station (for technical support and logistics) in the Red Sea; so, the specifications and mission of this vessel had already been officially announced to the International Maritime Organization," he added.

Iran didn't point the finger at anyone. But The New York Times suggested that Israel was behind the attack. "The Israelis had notified the United States that their forces had struck the vessel at about 7:30 a.m. local time," the American newspaper quoted a U.S. official as saying. Although the official said that the Israelis had called

the attack a retaliation for alleged earlier Iranian strikes on Israeli vessels, but the timing of the attack strongly indicated a link between the resumption of nuclear talks in Vienna and Israeli efforts to derail those talks. The Times implicitly pointed to this link, saying the attack came as progress was reported on the first day of the Vienna talks, which are aimed to revive the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) - the very deal that Israel has been working hard to kill since 2015.

Therefore, Israel may have intended to send a message to the Biden administration that it will do whatever it can to prevent a revival of the JCPOA. Israel's modus operandi in the latest attack also suggests a change in Israel's approach. Israel has reportedly been involved in a shadowy naval war with Iran in recent years.

Several Western news media reported that Israel has been attacking Iranian vessels carrying oil and other commodities since at least 2019 in a bid to halt Iran's economic ties with other countries. These attacks mostly

went unnoticed and Israel refused to publicize them until most recently.

The Israelis would often attack Iranian commercial ships deep into the night using helicopters equipped with machine guns from a distance of many kilometers, a source familiar with the matter told the Tehran Times.

The Israeli attacks were more of a harassment nature than an operation meant to inflict real damage, according to the source.

The attack on the Saviz, however, indicates a new modus operandi. First, it was reportedly done with a limpet mine attached to the hull of the Iranian vessel by an Israeli commando. Second, it was carried out early in the morning, a clear indication that the attacker wanted it to be publicized. Leaking the news of the attack to Al Arabiya and The New York Times left little doubt about the intention of the attacker.

Israel seems to be busy working to prevent the U.S. from returning to its commitments under the JCPOA. So if the U.S. is willing to revive the nuclear deal then it needs to pay more attention to Israeli machinations.

SPORTS

Iran football federation files complaint against AFC

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** – The Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) has appealed to Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) against Asian Football Confederation (AFC) in relation to choosing Bahrain as centralized venue for the 2022 World Cup qualifiers.

In late March, AFC sent a letter to Iran federation and said Shaikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa has not intervened to select his homeland as centralized venue for the qualifiers. FFIRI president Shahabeddin Azizi Khadem was also invited to Manama in a meeting to serve as an opportunity to further strengthen the partnership between the FFIRI and the AFC.

"Whilst we appreciate the interest by the FFIRI to host the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 – Preliminary Competition and AFC Asian Cup China 2023 Qualifiers – Preliminary Joint Qualification Round 2, we would like to inform that the decision was made by the AFC General Secretariat after due consideration and deliberation, factoring various areas, including but not limited to the standard of the proposed Stadiums/facilities, risk assessment on logistical, commercial and financial arrangements for the Participating Member Associations as well as the national medical/Covid-19 pandemic status; and the AFC President does not intervene in the decisions made by AFC General Secretariat," the letter said.

In a statement released Tuesday night, FFIRI announced that it has filed a complaint to CAS against AFC's decision to award the hosting rights to Bahrain.

"The AFC has chosen Bahrain as the centralized venue and has said the venue cannot be change at all. We've asked CAS to take the issue into consideration as soon as possible," the announcement reads.

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

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

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

Ex-Iran woman basketballer Naghipour dies

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** – Former Iran's women's basketball player Pari Naghipour passed away.

She died at the age of 65.

Naghipour was a member of Iran basketball team in the 1974 Asian Games in Tehran.

The Ahvaz-born basketballer joined Tehran based basketball club Azmayesh and then was invited to National Team.

Tehran Times extends deepest sympathy to Naghipour's family, loved ones, and friends over his demise.

Alireza Akbarpour appointed Machine Sazi coach

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** – Former Esteghlal football team striker Alireza Akbarpour has been named as Machine Sazi head coach Tuesday night.

The 48-year-old coach started his playing career in the Tabriz-based football team in 1992 and left them to join Esteghlal after four years.

Akbarpour has previously coached Machine Sazi in 2012/13 season.

The Tabriz-born has penned an 18-month contract with Machine Sazi.

Machine Sazi sit at the bottom of the Iran Professional League table with nine points from 19 matches.

Iranian wrestlers to take part at Bulgarian memorial

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** - Iranian freestyle and Greco-Roman wrestlers will participate at the 'Dan Kolov - Nikola Petrov' tournament.

The tournament has brought bring 20 countries together in the city of Plovdiv from April 8 to 11.

Iran will have four representatives in freestyle and four wrestlers in Greco-Roman.

The freestyle team consists of Jamal Ebadi (74kg), Hamid Zarrin Peykar (79kg), Mojtaba Goleji (97kg), and Amin Taheri (125kg). Pooya Naserpour (60kg), Armin Moheb Sabet (63kg), Ali Arsalan (72kg), and Mehdi Fallah (87kg) will represent Iran in the Greco-Roman section.

Foolad players test negative for COVID-19

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** – Iran's Foolad football team players tested negative for COVID-19.

Foolad traveled to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia Tuesday Wednesday to meet Al Ain of the UAE.

The team's members underwent the COVID test on arrival to the airport.

Foolad will meet Al Ain at the Prince Faisal Bin Fahd Stadium in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia on April 10 at the play-off round of AFC Champions League.

Sri Lankan referee Hettikamkanange Dilan Perera will officiate the match.

The 2021 AFC Champions League qualifying play-offs will be played from 7 to 14 April 2021. A total of 18 teams will compete in the qualifying play-offs to decide the remaining eight of the 40 places in the group stage of the 2021 AFC Champions League.

Iran move down two places in FIFA rankings

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** – Iran national football team moved down two spots in the latest FIFA ranking released on Wednesday.

Iran still are the second-best Asian team in the ranking behind Japan. The top six places remain unchanged, with Brazil, England, Portugal and Spain trailing Les Bleus, but Italy have climbed to seventh spot after moving ahead of Argentina and Uruguay, whose respective South American World Cup qualifiers were postponed.

The next FIFA World Ranking will be published on 27 May 2021.

Govt. considers \$190m incentive package to support exports

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) has announced the allocation of eight trillion rials (about \$190.5 million) for supporting export activities in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 21).

The mentioned funding has been allocated to TPO in order to pay export incentive facilities during the current year, TPO portal quoted Hamid Zadboum as saying.

"The Trade Development Organization of Iran has considered the necessary planning for the payment of the mentioned incentives to promote exports and to support the country's exporters in the current year," Zadboum explained.

As reported, after the payment of the mentioned fund to TPO, the organization will begin providing the facilities to various export-related sectors.

Mentioning the current year's motto which is "Production: Support and the Elimination of Obstacles", the official underlined planning for the development and expansion of non-oil exports as well as the promotion of export culture as the TPO's main priority in the current year.



Mentioning some of the TPO's programs for supporting exports in the previous year, Zadboum stated: "More than 500 exporters used export incentives directly and a large number of exporters benefited from such incentive packages indirectly."

According to the official, TPO managed to offer facilities to more than 30 export-related sectors including refrigeration, mechanized warehousing, sorting and packaging, export terminals, and exhibition centers across the country in collaboration with the TPO's provinces' export promotion working group as well as the provincial industry, mining and trade departments.

Last year, the government had allocated six trillion rials (about \$143 million) for supporting export activities in the country.

National Development Fund (NDF), the Planning and Budget Organization (PBO), the Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry, the Economy Ministry, and the Agriculture Ministry were tasked with drafting the previous year's export support package which was mostly spent on improving export infrastructure.

To expand non-oil exports during the sanctions and the coronavirus pandemic, Iranian economic and trade organizations have been defining some new strategies and have been pursuing them vigorously.

The major strategy is to focus on the neighboring countries and the trade partners in the region, and it is, in fact, one of the top priorities of the government for defying the U.S. sanctions.

TEDPIX slides 10,000 points on Wednesday

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), dropped 10,888 points to 1.249 million on Wednesday.

Over 1.872 billion securities worth 21.81 trillion rials (about \$519.28 million) were traded at the TSE on Wednesday.

The first market's index dropped 8,305 points, and the second market's index fell 20,848 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.

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 Javad Eshqi-Nejad said the "exit strategy" is the worst 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 Eqbal-Nia 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.

Iran's annual gas reproduction rises 15%

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Baram Salavati put the country's current gas storage capacity at 3.25 bcm, and expressed hope that through implementation of different projects the figure will reach 6.5 bcm by the calendar year 1402.

As the first natural gas storage facility in Iran and West Asia, Sarajeh storage facility was officially inaugurated in January 2014 near Qom, 124 kilometers south of Tehran.

Iran has two major natural gas storage facilities in Sarajeh and Shourijeh, in which every year the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) stores the gas received from gas refineries all over the country to be used in the colder months of the year.

Following the development of the South Pars gas field and the increase in the country's gas production capacity, construction and development of the country's natural gas storage facilities



has become a top priority.

Reproduction from Sarajeh and Shourijeh storages increased by 33 percent in the Iranian calendar year 1398 (ended in March 2020) compared to its preceding year, according to Rajabi.

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

As one of the world's top gas producers, Iran is planning to expand its underground natural gas storage capacity to ensure that enough natural gas is available during peak demand periods to avoid electricity supply shortfalls in the future.

According to the National Iranian Gas Company's plans, the capacity of the two storage facilities, Sarajeh and Shourijeh, is planned to increase to over seven billion cubic meters in the future.

NIDC conducts over 10,000m of horizontal, directional drilling in a year

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — National Iranian Drilling Company (NIDC) has managed to carry out 10,182 meters of horizontal and directional drilling in 43 oil and gas wells across the country during the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20), Shana reported.

According to the Head of NIDC's Special Operations Department Ali Daqaeyqi, some 654 meters of core extraction drilling was also conducted in the mentioned period which was a huge achievement for assessing the condition of the country's oil and gas reserves.

Referring to the indigenization of the necessary equipment and machinery for directional and horizontal drilling operations in the country, Daqaeyqi said: "With the acquisition of the necessary technical and engineering knowledge, a number of basic parts and equipment for horizontal and directional drilling and core extraction are currently under construction inside the country."

"This has been achieved as a result of synergy between the company's specialists, scientific and research centers, and knowledge-based companies," he said.

Referring to NIDC's capabilities and capacities in various sectors including technical equipment, as well as specialized and experienced workforce, the official said: "NIDC's Special Operations Department is fully prepared to respond in a timely manner to the requests of the applicant companies, and several such requests for cooperation have been received from domestic oil companies since the beginning of this year

which are on the agenda."

Back in February, NIDC Managing Director Abdollah Mousavi had announced that his company dug and completed the digging operation of 117 oil and gas wells during the first nine months of the previous Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2020 – January 19, 2021).

Mousavi said the drilled wells consisted of 27 development wells, one appraisal well, 85 workover wells, and four exploratory wells.

After the re-imposition of U.S. sanctions against Iran, indigenizing the know-how for the manufacturing of the parts and equipment applied in different industrial sectors is one of the major strategies that the Islamic Republic has been strongly following up to reach self-reliance and nullify the sanctions.

Oil, gas, and petrochemical industries have had outstanding performances in this due, with indigenizing the knowledge for manufacturing many parts and equipment that were previously imported.

Among different sectors of the mentioned industries, drilling could be mentioned as a prominent example in this regard.

NIDC managed to indigenize the knowledge for manufacturing 6,000 drilling equipment in collaboration with domestic manufacturers and engineers in the Iranian calendar year 1398 (ended on March 19).

Before this success, the technology for manufacturing the mentioned equipment was in the possession of a handful of



foreign companies.

The equipment indigenized by NIDC includes drilling mud pumps, blowout preventers, traction motors, draw-works, drilling fluid recycling systems, mission centrifugal pumps, top drives, and drilling rig slow circulation rate pressure systems.

The company has also managed to indigenize the know-how for manufacturing 242 parts that are highly used in the drilling industry during the first half of the previous Iranian calendar year (March 20-September 21, 2020).

In order to indigenize the technology to manufacture these parts, NIDC inked six research deals with domestic universities and knowledge-based companies.

IMF sees Iran's GDP growth at 2.5% in 2021

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The International Monetary Fund (IMF), in its latest World Economic Outlook titled "Managing Divergent Recoveries", predicted a 2.5-percent real gross domestic product (GDP) growth for Iran in 2021, up one percent from 1.5 percent in 2020.

The data presented in the IMF report indicates that Iran's GDP growth has outpaced that of West and Central Asia which is reported to be – 2.9 percent in 2020.

The fund has also raised its forecasts of global growth to six percent in 2021,



seeing it moderating to 4.4 percent in 2022. According to the report, the projections

for 2021 and 2022 are stronger than in the October 2020 report. The upward revision reflects additional fiscal support in a few large economies, the anticipated vaccine-powered recovery in the second half of 2021, and continued adaptation of economic activity to subdued mobility.

The international body sees Iran's inflation (consumer price changes) at 36.5 percent in 2020, increasing 1.9 percent from its previous 34.6 percent in 2019. The report sees the country's inflation fall to 27.5 percent in 2022.

As reported, the country's current account balance which was – 0.7 percent of the country's GDP in 2020 is expected to climb to 1.2 percent in 2021.

In its previous report published in October 2020, IMF had anticipated real GDP growth of 3.2 percent for Iran in 2021.

The international body's report is highly uncertain about the path of the pandemic, the effectiveness of policy support to provide a bridge to vaccine-powered normalization, and the evolution of financial conditions.

Water, electricity tariffs to rise 16% for high-consuming subscribers

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iranian Energy Ministry plans to increase the water and electricity tariffs of high-consuming subscribers by 16 percent, Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian announced.

Speaking on the sidelines of the inauguration ceremony of some energy projects on Tuesday, Ardakanian said the tariff increase for ordinary subscribers will be seven percent like the previous years.

Although the high-consuming subscribers will have to pay more money for their water and electricity, low-consuming households are awarded a 100-percent discount on their bills, following the implementation of a program called "Power of Hope".

Earlier this month, the managing director of Iran's Power Generation and Distribution Company (TAVANIR) announced that seven million subscribers have received a 100-percent discount on their electricity bills in the framework of the Energy Ministry's "Power of Hope" program.

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

Implementation of the mentioned program has reduced the number of high-consuming subscribers across the coun-



try by 6.1 percent.

According to TAVANIR, the "Power of Hope" scheme 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, Ardakanian had announced that various programs were prepared for high-consuming subscribers to encourage them to reduce their consumption

and join the low-consumer group.

The official described the first such 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 was 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.

Increasing the water and electricity tariffs for such consumers is also the ministry's new approach to encourage subscribers to manage their consumption.

According to Ardakanian, currently, the country's power production condition is desirable and all the necessary power units are active and running smoothly, however, the rainfall situation has not been desirable and people should manage their consumption to avoid possible outages.

The official further mentioned the annual overhaul of the country's power plants and noted that the units that are going through overhaul will be ready for the hot season's peak consumption period and the new units under construction will also be inaugurated based on the schedule.

Commodities worth over \$270m exported from Zanjan in a year

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — As announced by a provincial official, commodities valued at over \$270 million were exported from Zanjan province, in the northwest of Iran, during the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20).

Mir-Hashem Seyed-Ahmadi, the director-general of the province's customs department, put the weight of exported products at over 159 million tons and said the annual export shows 21 percent and 26 percent growth, in terms of value and weight, respectively.

The official further announced that 452 million tons of products valued at \$411.2 million have been imported to the province in the previous year, indicating 19 percent growth in terms of worth, and 30 percent rise in terms of weight, on an annual basis.

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

Mehdi Mir-Ashrafi also put the weight of non-oil trade at 146.4 million tons, and said that the figure shows a 25-million-ton annual

decline, which is the result of sanctions and coronavirus pandemic.

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

Among the country's non-oil export destinations, China was the first, with importing \$8.9 billion worth of products, Iraq was the second with importing \$7.3 billion, the United Arab Emirates the third with importing \$4.6 billion, Turkey the fourth with importing \$2.5 billion, and Afghanistan the fifth with import-

ing \$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.

The strategic partnership with China will improve Iran's regional status: Texas University professor

➔ **1** Following is the text of the interview with Jon R. Taylor:

What is the importance of the 25-year strategic partnership signed between China and Iran?

Contrary to observations by some, the strategic partnership deal is far more than symbolic. The deal enhances bilateral economic and political relations between the two nations by increasing cooperation in areas ranging from petrochemicals to mining to nuclear power to high technology to transportation to agriculture. The partnership also encourages greater military collaboration and investment opportunities and will promote maritime projects in order to foster Iran's role in China's Belt and Road Initiative. The deal is practically important to both sides because it will provide China with a stable flow of Iranian oil in exchange for substantial Chinese investments in Iran's critical infrastructure needs such as ports, high-speed rail systems, and the petrochemical industry.

What has been the impact of American policies, especially its "maximum pressure" campaign on Iran to prompt Tehran to seek closer ties with China?

The U.S. has contributed significantly to the reason for this pact's existence. Frankly, given his foreign policy approaches to both China and Iran, former U.S. President Donald Trump bears much of the responsibility for this strategic partnership deal. So far, President Joe Biden has not done all that much to

"While American presidential administrations may have changed, the emphasis appears to remain the same: China. And Iran. And Russia."



discourage the adversarial approach pursued by his predecessor. Given this, neither China nor Iran should expect the U.S. to rejoin the JCPOA or lift sanctions anytime soon. So, I think that it's fair to say that American policies and sanctions have tremendously influenced this strategic partnership.

How do you assess China's ties with Western powers economically? Is China a reliable partner for a country such as Iran?

China's economic ties are becoming more problematic. What I mean by that is that concerns over unfair trade practices, unlevel competition, intellectual property issues, cybersecurity, political differences, and humanitarian concerns have negatively impacted Western views toward China. Western powers still do business with China but are increasingly skeptical of their economic relationships. As for China being a reliable partner for Iran, I would say yes – for now. That's not meant to sound pessimistic, only

to note that Iran needs to be realistic going into this partnership by being fully aware that historically China's interests in the Middle East (West Asia) have mostly been based on access to oil. While oil plays a major role in China's interests, this is changing thanks to the Belt and Road, infrastructure investment strategies, and geopolitical considerations.

Why is Biden worried about the Iran-China partnership? Why is his administration focused on containing China?

Because it's all about two of America's highest profile adversaries. The strategic partnership has already improved Iran's regional position, which immediately raised concerns in Washington. This was underscored when India recently signaled its interest to increase economic and trade relations with Iran. The U.S. believes that China will gain influence in the Middle East (West Asia) and help Iran evade U.S. sanctions. It also believes that the partnership

could deepen China's influence in the Middle East (West Asia) and undermine U.S. efforts to keep Iran isolated. It's also about Iran since the U.S. views Iran as an adversary threatening its strategic interests and its primary partners Israel and Saudi Arabia. While American presidential administrations may have changed, the emphasis appears to remain the same: China. And Iran. And Russia.

How do you see China's ties with Iran's rivals in West Asia, for instance Saudi Arabia? Won't China face a contradiction in the future?

Iran has a fairly unique place in China's Middle East (West Asian) strategy because it's more than just trade – it's also military and political. The strategic partnership will provide Iran with the ability to free itself from the economic and strategic pressures by the U.S. and its allies and enhance Iran's political influence around the Middle East (West Asia). But note that China is looking for ways to balance its ties with Iran and its rivals in the Middle East (West Asia). I'm not sure if Iran will face any contradictions from China in the near future given the tenuous relationship that both China and Iran have with the U.S. That said, what would help reduce this possibility would be for continued Chinese and European Union pressure on the U.S. to immediately and unconditionally return to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and to strike a deal to lift all sanctions on Iran.

"It's fair to say that American policies and sanctions have tremendously influenced this strategic partnership (between Iran and China)."

Saudi Arabia behind coup attempt in Jordan: Palestinian analyst

➔ **1** Bassem Awadallah is one of Mohammed bin Salman's advisers. In the official statement of the Jordanian government, there is a reference to the intervention of foreign intelligence without specifying them, however the Jordanian government indicated the date of the coup operation.

It is early to judge; the details are coming and what is being reported in popular circles through social media is in this course.

What are the relationships of those arrested with Saudi Arabia?

In answer to the question, I should point out that Sharif Hassan bin Zaid is a Jordanian citizen who holds Saudi citizenship in addition to his Jordanian nationality, and he resides in Saudi Arabia while few people know him in Jordan. As for Bassem Awadallah, his history is black in practice, as he is one of the leaders of corruption in Jordan and the region.

Can the recent events be linked to Israel and its allies among the Persian Gulf states in order to change the balance of power in the region?

Changing the balance of power will not be done by replacing a government with another, as it is affected by the strength of the axis of resistance, whether positively or negatively.

There is no difference between crimes committed by the Israeli intelligence service and what Saudi, Emirati and Bahraini intelligence services plan.

How do you see the position of Saudi Arabia and Bahrain towards the Palestinian cause?

The attitudes of the regimes follow subordination policy to the American-Zionist camp have become obvious even to the simple Arab citizen in Jordan and in most Arab countries. What happened in terms of normalization of ties with Israel and Israelization of Persian Gulf regimes revealed the malicious nature of these regimes, and their intentions became evident.

These independent regimes were established according to specific job tasks to serve the colonial West and the Zionist ambitions in Palestine, when Britain declared its Hebrew Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932 Churchill wired to Chaim Weizmann congratulating him on the accomplishment of half of the promised state of "Israel". As for the delusive independence for the rest of the Persian Gulf states, it came in the same context.

With regard to Bahrain and the Zionist Al Khalifa, no less than the headline Zionists inside "Israel".

Indeed, their cooperation with the Zionists is old, and what has appeared to the public in terms of recent normalization of ties does not go beyond the precedent illegitimate relationships.

The Saudi connections of two detained male associates of Prince Hamzah have sparked questions about Riyadh's relationship with Amman.



These regimes claim advocating Arabs and Islam, while they are neither a Muslim nor Arab.

What are the implications of the possible revival of the nuclear agreement for West Asia and the Islamic world at large?

A revival of the nuclear agreement, according to the conditions set by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, reflect positively on Iran and the rest of the parties of the resistance axis in the region; this axis is like an integrated body. Strength of Iran means reinforcement of the resistance axis and vice versa.

The same applies to Syria and the anti-arrogance and anti-Zionist resistance factions in Palestine and Iraq.

Iran's victory is a victory for all the countries and peoples of the Islamic world.

Biden-style diplomacy

TEHRAN – New U.S. President Joe Biden spoke to U.S. State Department staff last week about returning to diplomacy and said he intended to be friend with the world.

He expressed readiness to rebuild the international community's confidence to the United States and called on diplomats to reflect on the White House's new policies around the world.

But Biden did not have a good start in gaining global trust, and by attacking the Iraqi-Syrian border area in support of ISIL terrorists, he showed that he did not know the meaning of diplomacy.

The art of diplomacy is to take the necessary measures to end hostilities and strengthen interaction in foreign relations. Biden not only displeased the Iraqi government by attacking Iraqi soldiers, but also exposed U.S. military forces to retaliation by Iraqi forces.

Certainly, from now on, the illegitimate presence of the United States in Syria will also face a serious problem, and the axis of resistance will narrow the field for American forces.

Biden's policy in Afghanistan also showed no signs of diplomacy. According to the Doha agreement, the United States was to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan by June 2021, but the new U.S. president announced his non-compliance with the peace agreement by announcing the maintenance of these forces in Afghanistan.



Biden's move, which also runs counter to the Afghan government's view, will bring Taliban militants back to the battlefield. It is clear that the withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Afghanistan will lead to peace and security in the country, and Biden's approach to maintaining these forces cannot be reconciled with diplomacy.

Biden's diplomacy with Saudi Arabia was also a deceptive show. He first called for an end to the Yemeni war and an end to the support and sale of military weapons to the Saudi Araba. Biden said he intends to end this war, which is a strategic disaster.

He then telephoned Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to emphasize the continued friendship between Washington and Riyadh, and the next day released a confidential report on Bin Salman's assassination of Jamal Qasohgechi. This

dual policy implies that from now on, the Biden government will invent a new way to milk Saudi Arabia, using the levers of the Yemeni war and the assassination of Qashokchi against the Saudi rulers.

In the meantime, Bin Salman will be open to continue crimes against the defenseless people of Yemen. Of course, if Biden thinks that Saudi Arabia is the winner of the Yemeni war, he will make a miscalculation. Because the evidence shows that this war will establish a new order in the region with the victory of the Yemeni people and the withdrawal of the Saudi coalition.

Biden's diplomacy with Russia began with open interference in the country's internal affairs and protests against the arrest of Russian critic Alexei Navalny, and continued with support for Ukraine against Russia. Biden's stance was met with a serious and aggressive response from Russia, thwarting diplomatic efforts to resolve the dispute between Moscow and Washington.

Biden also clashed with China, calling the ruling government undemocratic. He called for a coalition of his country's European allies to counter China's economic model, and backed Taiwan.

Biden convulsive action, dispatching warships to the South China Sea to contain China in naval confrontations. "Undoubtedly, China has posed the biggest

challenge to the United States compared to other countries," said Anthony Blinkin, the head of U.S. diplomacy.

Even European leaders working to strengthen economic ties with Russia and China are virtually unhappy with the Biden administration's efforts to increase pressure on Moscow and Beijing.

Continued U.S. non-compliance with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the lifting of anti-Iran sanctions, White House human rights pressure on Turkey, the unofficial cancellation of the Keystone XL pipeline with Canada that displeased Ottawa, and Biden's disagreements with the Brazilian president on the Amazon region and numerous other examples show that the U.S. government is still interested in pursuing unilateral policies.

Overall, it seems that the continuation of the hostile policies of the new U.S. administration in West Asia and Biden's support for the Zionist regime and Takfiri terrorist groups and the escalation of tensions with China and Russia, as well as Washington's monopoly on the American continent, will not lead America to the diplomacy.

Biden-style diplomacy is a continuation of the White House's interventionist policies in world affairs. An approach that will not only isolate the United States, but may force Biden, like Trump, to leave the White House.

UK starts Moderna jabs as AstraZeneca probed

Britain on Wednesday began rolling out its third coronavirus vaccine, from U.S. company Moderna, as questions mounted over jabs from the country's main supplier, AstraZeneca.

The Moderna vaccine, which is already being delivered in Europe and the United States, joined ones from AstraZeneca-Oxford University and Pfizer-BioNTech in Britain's armoury against Covid-19, AFP reported.

The first jab of the two-stage Moderna inoculation was given at a hospital in Wales to 24-year-old Elle Taylor.

"I'm an unpaid career for my grandmother so it is very important to me that I get it, so I can care for her properly and safely," she told reporters.

Taylor said she would have been happy to take the AstraZeneca jab despite adverse publicity, centered in Europe, surrounding blood clots.

"I had heard but it doesn't concern me too much. And I guess if it happens, it happens, and I am in the right care if I need it, and I feel happy that I've tried the new one," she said.

The arrival of the Moderna inoculation represents a timely diversification of Britain's rollout, and was hailed by Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

"We have ordered 17 million doses that will be going into arms across the UK in the coming weeks. Please get your jab as soon as you are contacted," he tweeted.

Supply problems for AstraZeneca had threatened to complicate Britain's inoculation drive this month, and concerns are building over a potential link between the jab and rare blood clots among a small number of recipients.

Biden administration may resume some construction on Trump's border wall

Joe Biden promised he wouldn't build "one more foot" of Donald Trump's border wall, but according to a new report, his administration is gearing up to do just that.

Biden's position on the border wall during his campaign last year was clear: he wouldn't build "one more foot" of Trump's wall, a signature policy of the former president. After his inauguration in January, Biden followed through, immediately halting construction on the wall and firing off a slew of executive orders to overturn Trump's hardline immigration policies.

These decisions directly preceded a surge in illegal border crossings, one that the Biden administration was ill-prepared to handle. Numbers of children held in makeshift "jail-like" facilities soared to record levels, and illegal crossings this year are on track to hit a two-decade high, not including countless migrants who evade border agents.

Against this background, Biden could be about to renege on his campaign-trail promise. In a meeting with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials last week, Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said that his department may restart construction, in order to fill in some "gaps in the wall."

That's according to a readout of the meeting seen by the Washington Times, a conservative-leaning news site. According to the report, Mayorkas told the ICE officials that while no new wall will be built, the Biden administration can still work on "gaps," "gates," and areas "where the wall has been completed but the technology has not been implemented."

U.S. Border Patrol officials reportedly presented Mayorkas with the plan.

These "gaps" are apparently hotspots for crossing attempts, according to recent reports.

Conservatives mocked Biden when they heard the news, jeering him for his apparent 180 on the wall.

According to RT< last month, a group of Republican lawmakers wrote to the Government Accountability Office asking the agency to investigate Biden's freeze on wall construction. As \$1.4 billion in funding for the wall was approved by Congress in December, the Republicans argued that it was not Biden's place to stop it being spent. However, Biden's executive order said that this money could be redirected to other border security projects, which Mayorkas' plan may fall under.

Stymied by court battles and funding blocks by Congress, Trump fell short of walling off the U. S.' 2,000-mile border with Mexico. However, by pulling some funds from the military and persuading Congress to part with just over \$1.3 billion per year for the last four years, his administration managed to construct 400 miles of steel wall. Some of this, however, replaced older fencing and barriers.

Joe Biden was not always such a tireless opponent of sealing the U.S. border, and tightening up border security was something both parties mostly agreed on before Trump took office.

Resistance News

IOF kidnaps senior Hamas official, other citizens in W. Bank

INTERNATIONAL DESK **TEHRAN** — The Israeli occupation forces (IOF) last night and at dawn Wednesday kidnaped several Palestinian citizens, including a senior Hamas official and his son, during campaigns in different West Bank areas.

According to local sources, the IOF kidnaped Hamas official Sheikh Jihad Nawahdeh and his son Osaid after ransacking their home in al-Yamun town, west of Jenin.

The IOF also kidnaped and physically assaulted a young man called Jamal Yaseen, from Anin village in Jenin, upon his return from his work in Israel (the 1948 occupied lands). Later at dawn, the IOF broke into and ransacked his home in the village.

Another young man identified as Fuaad Abul-Rab was taken prisoner during an IOF raid on his home in Jalbun town, east of Jenin.

In al-Khalil, four citizens, including teenagers, were kidnaped by the IOF from different areas of Beit Ummar town. The IOF also raided other homes in the town.

In Ramallah, the IOF kidnaped seven citizens from their homes in Ras Karkar village.

The IOF also kidnaped director of the Down Syndrome Friends association Haider Makho from his home in Deir Jarir village, northeast of Ramallah.

Bronze Age earthenware donated to Iranian museum

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — An Iranian woman has donated a Bronze Age pottery to the Astan Quds Razavi Museum, a vast cultural heritage exhibition located in the holy shrine complex of Imam Reza (AS) in Mashhad.

“Now, this five-thousand-year-old object, which is a beige-colored earthen urn, is regarded as the oldest object existing at the museum,” an official with the museum said on Wednesday, ILNA reported.



“Measures related to the identification, illustration and documentation of this historical work, which is related to the Bronze Age and the third millennium BC, have been done and this work will go on show in near future,” the official explained.

Three historical objects discovered in Siraf port

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — Three historical objects have recently been identified in the ancient port of Siraf in southwest Iran.

The discovery includes two pieces of plaster and a stone object that has been cleaned and transferred to the cultural office of the port city, a local tourism official said on Wednesday.



“The objects were found during a survey conducted across the historical texture of the ancient port,” the official noted.

Preliminary studies show that the stone object was originally a limestone handle, which according to the available evidence was used to make bread.

Last year, the national heritage site announced it would develop a data bank on fragments of historical ceramics and pottery discovered through various seasons of excavation.

Between 1966 and 1973, the British Institute of Persian Studies conducted seven seasons of excavation and survey at Siraf, which was a major city on the Iranian shore of the Persian Gulf that played a leading role in the network of maritime trade that supplied Western Asia with the products of India, the Far East, and Eastern Africa between 800 CE and 1050.

Siraf had a population of about 300,000 during the early Islamic era and this fact shows that it was a large city. However, today, just about 7,000 people live in Siraf in a small area.

Landscaping project conducted at mausoleum of Sufi scholar

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — A landscaping project has been completed on the premises of the mausoleum of Sufi Shaykh Zayn al-Din Abu Bakr Taybadi (d.1389 CE), who was an Iranian mystic and Sufi.

In addition to various restoration and masonry works, the site was also made more accessible for the physically challenged people, a local tourism official said on Wednesday.



Located in Taybad, northeast Iran, the mausoleum is a freestanding structure incorporating a square dome chamber, a shallow entrance iwan (portico), and a pair of two-story chambers.

The dome chamber is concealed behind the soaring entrance iwan, which rises to a height greater than twice that of the flanking two-story chambers. The entrance iwan is barrel-vaulted, without muqarnas. The entire façade is decorated with marble and faience revetment. An inscription band that frames the portal is assembled of carved terracotta segments against a blue tile background and may have provided a model for similar epigraphy in the Blue Mosque of Tabriz (1465) since examples of fifteenth-century terracotta inscription are very rare.

Taybad is situated near the border with Afghanistan, and there is an official crossing point to Islam Qala in Afghanistan.

Six destinations to visit in Hamedan when travel opens up

→ 1 The view of distant mountains from the archaeological hill is pleasantly rewarding, especially in the late afternoon, however what lies below is an ancient Median and Achaemenid city. Small sections have been excavated over the last century, most extensively in the 1990s. There's a smart museum nearby, as well as two Armenian churches, now part of Hamadan University.

Ecbatana was first excavated in 1913 by the French Assyriologist Charles Fosse. Excavations have been limited due to the modern town covering most of the ancient sites. In 2006, excavations in a limited area of Hagmataneh Hill failed to discover anything older than the Parthian period (247 BC – 224 CE), but this does not rule out older archaeological layers existing elsewhere within the vast site.

Ganjnameh

For history buffs and culture lovers, Ganjnameh is a can't-miss destination while in Hamedan. Meaning “Treasure Epistle”, Ganjnameh features sets of cuneiform inscriptions written in three languages of ancient Persian, Elamite, and Babylonian.

Dating back to the age of Achaemenid Kings Darius I (521-485 BC) and Xerxes I (485-65 BC), the inscriptions were first studied in detail by the French painter and archaeologist Eugene Flandin, who was accompanied by Pascal Coste.

The right inscription, belonging to Xerxes I, reads: “The Great God [is] Ahuramazda, greatest of all the gods, who created the earth and the sky and the people; who made Xerxes king, and outstanding king as an outstanding ruler among innumerable rulers; I [am] the great king Xerxes, king of kings, king of lands with numerous inhabitants, king of this vast kingdom with far-away territories, son of the Achaemenid monarch Darius.”

An adjacent 9-meter-high waterfall becomes a popular ice-climbing spot in wintertime. In contrast, the Alvand summit can be reached as a day trip in summer. The relaxed ambiance of the site, which



File photo depicts people visiting the Achaemenid site of Ganjnameh in Hamedan before the coronavirus crisis.

is located just a short drive from the city, also opens up an opportunity for hiking on the side of Mount Alvand.

Gonbad-e Alavian

The 12th-century Gonbad-e Alavian (“Alavian Dome”) is a prime example of Persian-Islamic architecture of the time. Its brick tower remains famous for the whirling floral stucco added in the Ilkhanid Mongol era; this ornamentation is described by British travel writer Robert Byron in his travelogue “The Road to Oxiana”.

In its small cellar, there are tombs of two elders of the Alavian family. The interior area is formed of six rooms with arches. Cube-shaped graves covered with turquoise bricks are in the center.

A rectangular plaque with stucco honeycomb patterns and flower motifs is hanged above the entrance of the structure. The outer frame of this plaque bears stucco reliefs of Quranic inscriptions in the Kufic calligraphy hand.

Masjed-e Jameh

Masjed-e Jameh (The Friday Mosque of Hamedan) is one of the oldest in Hamedan. The mosque is rectangular, and formerly had four porches of which three have remained. This structure comprises of two areas for nocturnal prayers, a brick dome, and a large and pleasant courtyard with a huge pool in the center.

The disused south iwan (entrance) leads into a hall over which there's an impressively large brick dome. The north iwan is lavished with patterned blue tile work that continues on four of the mosque's six minarets. Some areas are restricted to men only.

The monument is located near Imam Khomeini Sq. and to the west of Ekbatan Avenue. A vaulted passage of a historical bazaar leads into the courtyard of the large Qajar-era mosque.

Bu-Ali Sina Mausoleum

The iconic 1952 Bu-Ali Sina (Avicenna) Mausoleum dominates his namesake

square and resembles a concrete crayon pointing to the heavens. It was loosely modeled on Qabus' 1000-year-old tower in Gonbad-e Kavus, which is a UNESCO World Heritage. There is a single-room museum of Avicenna memorabilia, his tombstone, a small library, and a display of medicinal herbs.

Avicenna (born 980, near Bukhara, Iran [now in Uzbekistan]—died 1037, Hamadan, Iran), was a Muslim physician, the most famous and influential of the philosopher-scientists of the medieval Islamic world. He was particularly noted for his contributions in the fields of Aristotelian philosophy and medicine. He composed the Kitab al-Shifa (Book of the Cure), a vast philosophical and scientific encyclopedia, and Al-Qanun fi al-Tibb (The Canon of Medicine), which is among the most famous books in the history of medicine.

Ali Sadr Cave

Ali Sadr Cave is a gigantic water-filled cavern widely believed to date from the Jurassic era. The entrance to the lengthy cave is situated some 70km north of Hamadan.

The cave embraces a huge matrix of sunless channels, ponds, grottoes, and water passages which are stretched along with imposing rock formations and stalactite-covered tops in a span of several kilometers.

Sightseeing there is connected with traversing in well-lit labyrinths of waterways via paddle boats, walking on subterranean islets, as well as observing rock carvings of hunting scenes, artifacts, paintings, and vessels that are associated with prehistorical troglodytes.

Some tour operators and tourism marketers say that a standard tour proceeds visitors some 2,000 meters inside the cave, over 1,400 of which is covered by boats that make it one of the longest underground boat trips in the world.

The cave can be reached after someone hour of riding from Hamadan through the countryside. There are usually shuttles and taxis as well.

Parallel loan exhibits on ancient mining start in Iran, Germany

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — On Wednesday, two separate loan exhibitions featuring ancient mining and relevant documents were kicked off in Iran and Germany.

The opening ceremonies were conducted online simultaneously at the National Museum of Iran, and Deutsches Bergbau-Museum Bochum (The German Mining Museum in Bochum).

The exhibition hosted by the German Mining Museum in Bochum is titled “Death in Salt, an Archaeological Narrative of the Land of Persia” and the other is named “Human Search for Resources.”

Jebrael Nokandeh, the director of the National Museum, said: “The National Museum of Iran and the German Mining Museum in Bochum have cooperation in line with the MOU signed in 2017.” The two museums have sought to hold exhibitions of each other's historical and cultural artifacts related to the subject of ancient mining.

He continued: “Due to the continuing limitations caused by the pandemic, the exhibitions will be accessible virtually simultaneously through the websites of both museums for visitors around the world.”

Regarding the exhibition of the Iranian collection, the official said: The virtual exhibition “Death in Salt, an Archaeological Narrative of the Land of Persia” deals with archaeological research and findings of the Chehrabad salt mine in Zanjan, which is available on the German Mine Museum website in Bochum.

Regarding the exhibition “Human Search for Resources”, he said: The exhibition can be viewed online on the website of the National Museum of Iran. In this exhibition, more than 200 objects related to mining history from twenty countries of the world have been displayed. This collection covers a very long history starting with Paleolithic objects up to the contemporary period.

He reminded: These virtual exhibitions will be opened simultaneously in Iran and Germany with the presence of cultural officials of the two countries on April 7, 2021, at 18:30, and this ceremony will be covered live on the official Instagram page of the National Museum of Iran.

Explaining the goals of this virtual international cultural event, Nokandeh said: “Holding two-sided exhibitions



became one of the important activities of the National Museum of Iran in recent years, and due to the pandemic and its limitations, the cooperation of museums has continued in a virtual format.” On the other hand, holding such events reflects the role of museums, that is, their healing presence in crises, which is to create a sense of calmness and security in the face of the shadow of bitter social experiences.

Iran's tourism minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan announced in December that some 200 works, which were on loan from German's Deutsches Bergbau-Museum Bochum, had been transferred to Tehran to go on show at the National Museum. “The exhibit will be featuring the history of mining in the world from the Stone Age to recent centuries, whose works are from 20 different countries on five continents,” the minister said.

Last year, a team of experts from the two countries started a project for purifying, cleansing, and restoring garments and personal belongings of the mummies which were first found in the salt mine in 1993. What was a catastrophe for the ancient miners has become a sensation for science. Sporting a long white beard, iron knives, and a single gold earring, the first salt mummy was discovered in 1993. He is estimated to be trapped in the mine in ca. 300 CE. In 2004 another mummy was discovered only 50 feet away, followed by another in 2005 and a “teenage” boy mummy later that year.

In 1993, miners in the Douzlakh Salt Mine, near

Over 1m visits to Kordestan sites recorded in Noruz

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — A total of 1,010,000 visits to the historical sites and tourist attractions of the western province of Kordestan was registered during the two-week New Year (Noruz) holidays (March 20-April 2), the provincial tourism chief announced on Monday.

Travelers also made some 20,906 overnight stays in the official accommodation centers across the province during the mentioned time, Yaqub Guylian said.

Some handicrafts exhibitions were also held during the period to promote the hand-made products of the local artisans, the official added.

He also mentioned that online visits and virtual tours of some of the province's popular tourist attractions have been launched as well.

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.

Health insurance for 120,000 refugees in Iran: UNHCR

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Some 120,000 refugees residing in Iran are now covered by health insurance, According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

With the help of UNHCR, 20,000 refugees gained access to Iran's national health insurance scheme, taking the numbers assisted with health insurance to 120,000.

Health insurance aims to provide the most vulnerable among the nearly 800,000 Afghan refugees hosted in the country.

UNHCR covered the costs of insurance premiums for some 100,000 vulnerable refugees enrolled in Iran's Universal Public Health Insurance (UPHI) last year. However, with the COVID-19 pandemic and the prevailing economic downturn, UNHCR agreed to increase the number of refugees covered by the scheme.

Despite the challenges, Iran has continued to generously give refugees access to education and health services. Iran is one of only a handful of countries in the world that offer refugees the option to enroll in national health insurance for essential secondary and tertiary public health services in the same way as Iranian nationals.

The national insurance scheme allows for free COVID-19 treatment and hospitalization. It also subsidizes the cost of surgeries, dialysis, radiology, laboratory tests, outpatient care, and more.

However, many refugees are not able



Afghan refugee Abdulrahim Rostami, 66, holds his health insurance booklet in Tehran, Iran.

Iran is one of only a handful of countries in the world that offer refugees the option to enroll in national health insurance for essential secondary and tertiary public health services in the same way as Iranian nationals.

to afford the premium costs. The impact of the pandemic on livelihoods has been particularly severe for refugees, who usually rely on precarious and unstable jobs. Many can no longer cover their most basic needs, let alone the costs of health insurance, which is estimated to represent some 40 percent of an average refugee family's monthly expenditure.

Two million foreign nationals residing in Iran

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

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

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

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

Nationwide lockdown necessary to contain COVID-19: health ministry



SOCIETY TEHRAN — The Iranian Ministry of Health has announced that a nationwide lockdown is necessary for two weeks in order to curb the recent wave of coronavirus which has surged infections and mortalities following the Noruz (New Year holidays).

Currently, 257 counties, including all provincial capital cities, are in the high-risk red zones, according to the Ministry.

"It is necessary that the National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control to shut down all government organizations, restrict intercity traveling by personal and public vehicles, and impose heavy penalties for violators, otherwise the number of deaths would rise to 600 per day."

The number of coronavirus cases has been rising in Iran after millions traveled across the country during the two-week Noruz holidays, which officially began on March 20.

Before Noruz, health officials voiced concerns about the fourth COVID wave due to the traditional travels, mostly to visit family and loved ones.

Authorities had urged people to limit travel and in-person visits, saying that travels during the Noruz festival could lead to another wave of infections across the country.

The UK variant was first observed in the country a few months ago, but now the virus has spread widely

across the country to an extent that no provinces have been spared from it, Massoud Mardani, a member of the National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control, said.

The rate and severity of transmission are much higher than the Chinese virus, being 70 percent more infective, he added, IRNA reported on Wednesday.

Unlike the Wuhan virus, new strain infects young people under the age of 20 and children more, and especially the elderly, and people with weakened immune systems are at greater risk, he noted.

New cases and mortalities

In a press briefing on Wednesday, Health Ministry's spokesperson Sima-Sadat Lari confirmed 20,954 new cases of COVID-19 infection, raising the total number of infections to 1,984,348. She added that 1,675,891 patients have so far recovered, but 4,177 remain in critical conditions of the disease.

During the past 24 hours, 193 patients have lost their lives, bringing the total number of deaths to 63,699, she added.

So far, 13,331,229 COVID-19 diagnostic tests have been performed in the country.

World Health Day: Together we can reach fairer, healthier world

→ 1 Policies and actions needed to tackle causes of inequity

"Health is a fundamental human right. Every person deserves to live a healthy life regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity, disability, economic situation, or employment. Progress in tackling health disparities has been slow worldwide, including in the Eastern Mediterranean Region in which many countries are experiencing emergencies and conflict and we have the largest number of displaced people in the world," said Ahmed Al-Mandhari, WHO, Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean in his message for World Health Day 2021.

The global inequities are not new. Even as the world has seen improvements in average levels of health and life expectancy, these gains have not been

shared equally across different sections of societies within and across nations. This is not fair but is preventable. That is why WHO is calling on world leaders to ensure that everyone has living and working conditions that are conducive to good health.

"All over the world, inequality, stigma and discrimination are, and have always been, drivers of diseases of all kinds," said WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus on Zero Discrimination Day on March 1. "We must remember that for millions of people, COVID-19 is just one threat they face on a daily basis."

Working to tackle the root causes of inequity, last week, the WHO Regional Office launched the report of the Commission on Social Determinants of Health in the Eastern Mediterranean Region.

"This report provides detailed analysis of inequities among and within countries of the Region and recommends fairer policies and actions to achieve health equity. I call on all our partners and stakeholders to take these recommendations forward," noted Al-Mandhari.

Our world is an unequal one, and some people are able to live healthier lives and have better access to health services than others entirely due to the conditions in which they are born, grow, live, work and age. In addition to pre-existing gaps, the COVID-19 has introduced further inequalities, leaving the harshest impacts on those communities already vulnerable, who are more exposed to the disease, less likely to have access to quality healthcare services and more likely to experience adverse consequences



as a result of measures implemented to contain the pandemic.

The regional "Vision 2023: Health for all by all: a call for action and solidarity", is aligned with this year's theme and achieving health for all by all is essential to meet the challenges of today and to build the resilience of tomorrow.

Four injured as magnitude 5.3 quake hits western Iran

SOCIETY TEHRAN — An earthquake measuring 5.3 on the Richter scale shook western Kordestan province on Tuesday, leaving four injured.



The quake occurred in the cities of Marivan and Baneh at 19:42 p.m. at a depth of 10 kilometers, according to the University of Tehran Seismological Center.

Some 30 residential units in border villages of Marivan and Baneh have been damaged.

However, no fatalities or major injuries have been reported so far in the aftermath of the quake.

The Iranian plateau is located in a very seismically active region of the world and is known not only for its major catastrophic earthquakes but also for the disasters relating to natural hazards, especially earthquakes.

About 2 percent of the earthquakes of the world occur in Iran but more than 6 percent of the victims of the world earthquakes during the 20th century are reported from Iranian earthquakes. This shows the high level of vulnerability in Iran, according to Mehdi Zare, a professor of engineering seismology.

Most recently, a magnitude 5.1 earthquake occurred in northeastern Golestan province in September 2020, which left 34 injured.

Climate change: Polar bears forced to eat seabird eggs as Arctic hunting ground shrinks

Climate change is forcing polar bears to adapt their diet, as a new study shows they are increasingly foraging for seabird eggs.

Whilst polar bears traditionally eat ringed and bearded seals and even beluga whales, walrus, narwhals, and bowhead whales, rapidly deteriorating sea ice is meaning that they are less able to hunt for their regular sustenance.

As a result, polar bears have started scavenging in areas populated by humans, as well as coming ashore at the same time seabirds are nesting and snacking on their eggs.

A new published in the journal Royal Society Open Science tracked how the bears approached the nesting site over a period of 11 days, as the number of eggs depleted.

To measure the efficiency of these major predators in this new, warmer-age-foraging, researchers in Canada used drones to monitor them feeding on common eider duck nests on Mitivik Island, in Nunavut.

"We found that later-arriving bears increasingly visited more empty nests and did not travel in an energy-minimizing way, but became less picky in the clutches they consumed," said lead author Patrick Jagielski, of the Great Lakes Institute for Environmental Research at the University of Windsor.

However, bears did not consistently realise the sudden fleeing of an eider hen meant abandoned eggs were nearby.

"This study demonstrates that, while species are able to incorporate 'less preferred' resources into their diet when their primary prey becomes more difficult to obtain, they may not be able to do so efficiently," the authors said.

Whilst experts say that this does not give a generalisable indication as to the new ways that polar bears hunt, it does demonstrate the struggled placed upon animals' diets as a result of global warming.

Adding to concern for the longevity of the species, a study published in Nature Climate Change in July 2020 estimated the species would be starved to extinction by 2100.

Researchers looked both at predictions for climate heating and data on the increasing portion of the year that the bears' must survive on their fat reserves.

Earlier this month, a paper published in the journal Global Change Biology found that polar bears maintained highly specialized diets of soft blubber and flesh for hundreds of years - even during previous periods of Arctic warming.

LET'S LEARN PERSIAN

(Part 153)

(Source: saadifoundation.ir)

to stand	ایستادن - ایست	
station	ایستگاه / جای پیاده شدن و سوار شدن	
to rain	باریدن - بار	
rest, remainder	باقیه	
towards	به طرف / ta'raf	
walking	پیاده‌روی	
summer	تابستان: گرم‌ترین فصل سال	
which (of a certain number)	چندم	
second (2nd)	دوم	
convenient	راحت	
to walk	راه رفتن	
to cause to reach	رساندن - رسان	
light	سبک	تله کابین

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → چ

Kish to host World Health Summit Regional Meeting 2019

The 7th World Health Summit Regional Meeting will be held on April 29-30 in the Persian Gulf island of Kish, IRNA reported on Monday.

Ali Jafarian, international president of World Health Summit 2019, said that it is the first regional meeting in West Asia and North Africa to host 700 participants, including 150 foreign guests.

Pointing out that playing host to the event is an important opportunity for the country, he added that over 100 health experts from different countries have expressed readiness to attend the meeting.

نشست منطقه‌ای مجمع جهانی سلامت در کیش برگزار می‌شود

به گزارش روز دوشنبه ایرنا هفتمین نشست منطقه‌ای مجمع جهانی سلامت در روزهای ۹ و ۱۰ اردیبهشت ۹۸ در جزیره کیش برگزار می‌شود. علی جعفریان نماینده دانشگاه علوم پزشکی تهران در مجمع جهانی سلامت گفت: این نخستین نشست منطقه‌ای در غرب آسیا و شمال آفریقا است که قرار است ۷۰۰ شرکت کننده از جمله ۱۵۰ مهمان خارجی در آن حضور یابند.

جعفریان، میزبانی از این نشست منطقه‌ای را برای جمهوری اسلامی ایران فرصتی مهم دانست و گفت: حدود ۱۰۰ نفر از افراد سرشناس حوزه سلامت کشورهای مختلف جهان به عنوان سخنران برای شرکت در این نشست اعلام آمادگی کرده‌اند.

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GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Be not like the hypocrite who, when he talks,
tells lies; when he gives a promise, he breaks
it; and when he is trusted, he proves dishonest.
Prophet Muhammad (S)

“Definitive Talk” documentary to be broadcast

→1 The “Definitive Talk” documentary is being broadcast with its first screening on April 8 and it aims to shed light on Ayatollah Khamenei’s announcement of the Islamic Republic’s “final and definitive talk”.



In a televised speech on January 8, 2021, on the occasion of the anniversary of uprising of the people of Qom before the Islamic Revolution against the Pahlavi regime, as well as the anniversary of the martyrdom of Commander Qassem Soleimani, Ayatollah Khamenei discussed the speculations and debates in the political atmosphere of the country regarding the stance of the Islamic Republic towards JCPOA (the official acronym for the nuclear deal) and the commitments of the United States. According to Khamenei.ir, the “Definitive Talk” documentary will feature interviews regarding the Iran nuclear deal and the imposed sanctions on the Islamic Republic by the United States.

Amid the current political debates surrounding the Iranian society, especially regarding the economic situation, and in the run-up to the upcoming Iranian presidential elections, this documentary, as well the previous issues published by Khamenei.ir has been fulfilling the role of providing a level of political transparency through clarifying different aspects of Iran’s recent economic and political challenges.

Prior to this, the website had published a documentary featuring Ayatollah Khamenei’s visits and friendly interactions with prominent Iranian artists and filmmakers which was greatly welcomed by the general public and made global news headlines at the time.

Attar Neyshaburi Biennial Conference to be held on Friday

CULTURE **TEHRAN** - Attar Neyshaburi Biennial Conference entitled “Shadow in the Sun” will be held virtually on Friday by the National Commission for UNESCO-Iran.

Sheikh Farid al-Din Attar Neyshaburi is a famous Iranian sage, mystic and poet (sixth and seventh centuries AH) whose works such as “Elahinameh”, “Mantiq al-Tair”, “Tazkereh al-Awliya” and ... enjoy an important position in the field of culture and literature of Iran and the world.



In line with its inherent mission, the National Commission for UNESCO-Iran succeeded in registering the name of this famous thinker in the list of UNESCO 202-2021 commemoration list.

The conference will start with messages from Hojjatollah Ayyoubi, secretary-general of the National Commission for UNESCO-Iran, Gholamabbas Abbas Arbab Khalis, ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Turkmenistan, and Naji Bakerji, president of the Maulana’s mausoleum from Turkey.

Abdolmehdi Mostakin, director of the culture department of the National Commission for UNESCO-Iran, Shokoofeh Akbarzadeh, a writer and researcher from Afghanistan, Reza Ashrafzadeh, a specialist on Attar works, and Akhtar Hussain, director of the Institute of Persian Studies in India will deliver speeches.

Hassan Ruholamin named Islamic Revolution Artist of 2020

A R T **TEHRAN** — Hassan Ruholamin, an Iranian painter who is mostly known for illustrating stories from the history of Islam, was announced as the Islamic Revolution Artist of the Year during the opening ceremony of the Islamic Revolution Art Week on Wednesday.

He won the title for his painting in memory of Quds Force commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani who was martyred in a U.S. air raid in Baghdad on January 3, 2020.

The Islamic Revolution Artist of the Year for 2020 was due to be announced during the 6th Islamic Revolution Art Week last April, but the Art Bureau postponed the event due to the coronavirus outbreak.

Filmmaker Javad Afshar for his documentary “Gando” about the spy case of Iranian-American journalist Jason Rezaian and singer Gholamreza Sanatgar for his songs “Qassem Is Still Alive” and “O Iran” were other nominees for the title.

The shortlist also included graphic designer Mohammad-Saber Sheikhezai and writer Mohsen Kazemi for writing the memoirs of Kazem Darabi, an Iranian suspect in the 1992 Mykonos Restaurant assassinations case in Berlin, in the book



Iranian painter Hassan Ruholamin in an undated photo

“Teahouse Painting”.

Ruholamin’s paintings usually call to mind the ambiance of the Renaissance paintings. In his works, he regards stories from the history of Islam and contemporary events.

In 2017, he also created a painting of Mohsen Hojaji, an Iranian soldier who was martyred by ISIS terrorists in Syria.

In November 2016, the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art unveiled Ruholamin’s painting “The Sky Fell Down”, a large painting featuring the last moments of the life of Imam Hussein (AS).

An exhibition of his paintings was organized at Iran’s cultural office in Paris in March 2018.

Iran’s Ahmad Khatiri wins FIP Gold Medal at Bangladeshi photo contest

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iranian photographer Ahmad Khatiri has won the FIP Gold Medal at the 5th Mahfuz Ullah Memorial International Photo Contest in Bangladesh.

He received the honor, which is presented by the Federation of Indian Photography (FIP), for his black and white photo “Prayer in War Zones” in the mono color category.

This photo shows two visitors praying in the former war zones in Iran’s Shalamchah region.

Khatiri’s fellow Iranian photographer Kiarang Alai also won a FIP Ribbon for his “The Mother” in this category.

The competition was organized by the Mahfuz Ullah Memorial Foundation with contributions from the Federation Internationale de l’Art Photographique (FIAP), Global Photographic Union (GPU), Bangladeshi Photographic Society (BPS) and FIP was also held in the three other categories of color, nature and travel.

Alai was also awarded a GPU Ribbon in the color section of the contest for his photo named “Grandpa”. In addition, a FIAP Honorable Mention Ribbon in this category was



presented to Amir-Hossein Yusefi Keysari from Iran for his “Musical”.

Jef Lemmens from Belgium won the FIAP Blue Badge for Best Author, the top prize of the contest. In addition, the MM Salon Gold Medal for Best Local Author went to Bangladeshi photographer Sultan Ahmed Niloy.

An exhibition of the winning photos and awards giving ceremony will be held at Bisho Sahitto Kendra in Dhaka and April 20, 2021.

Khatiri has competed in dozens of international photography contests around the globe and won prizes in some of them.

His black and white photo named “Girl Flies in Prayer”,

which depicts a little girl opening her arms like wings among a group of Muslims during a congregational prayer, was awarded an honorable mention at a contest organized by the Gruppo Operativo Fotografico Ascoli Piceno – GO-FAP (Ascoli Piceno Photographic Operational Group) in Italy in 2020.

In 2009, he won the UAFB gold medal at the 7th edition of the Romania Bucovina Mileniul III International Salon of Photographic Art.

In 2017, he received the FIAP Gold Medal for his single photo “Prayer and Mourning for the Martyrdom of Their Fathers in War Zones” at the Through the Viewfinder, an international photo contest that was held in Kragujevac, Serbia.

The Fifth International Photo Salon Plovdiv in Bulgaria awarded him a PSA honorable mention for his photo “Balance” in 2018.

The 2nd Danube Digital Circuit in Belarus also gave him a FIAP Honorable Mention for a photo named “Flying Harmony” in 2018.

Tehran shuts down movie theaters less than a week after reopening

A R T **TEHRAN** — All movie theaters across Tehran were shut down once again less than a week after reopening, following the increase in the number of people infected with the coronavirus.

Last week, the National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control allowed movie theaters and art and cultural centers to reopen and continue their activities.

However, according to the announcement on Monday, the situation in Tehran is extremely severe and the Iranian capital is now situated in the “red” zone.

Therefore, all art and cultural centers and movie theaters are forced to go on lockdown in a preventive measure amid fears of coronavirus outbreak as the transmission of the

disease in Tehran is seriously worrisome.

The Ministry of Health has classified districts based on the rate of coronavirus infections with red color indicating high risk, orange meaning medium, while yellow implied low risk and blue being the least.

The country has closed and reopened all art and cultural centers, museums, historical sites, universities, schools, seminaries, English schools, libraries, movie theaters, museums, mosques, beauty salons, and several other entities several times since last February due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Last August, Culture and Islamic Guidance Minister Abbas Salehi said that the coronavirus outbreak in Iran has caused an estimated loss of over 10,000 billion rials (about \$45.5

million, based on the free-market rate) in the art and culture sectors by April 19, the end of the first month of the Iranian calendar year.

“For example, the Tehran International Book Fair had an estimated sale of 1200 to 1300 billion rials (about \$5.5 to \$6 million) last year. In the film industry, the sale was about 3 trillion rials (over \$13.6 million),” he said.

Salehi said, “We have also experienced a big loss in visual arts, music, and theater, that is, about 120 theater halls have been closed just in Tehran. The same has been true in other cities.”

He added that insurance for the members of the Art Credit Fund, which was 350 billion rials (about \$1.6 million), has been

paid, and, based on an enactment approved by the National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control, those interested applicants can register for a facility.

The culture minister further noted that a sum of 120 billion rials (about \$5.5 million) would be paid to members of the Art Credit Fund as livelihood assistance, while 2000 billion rials (over \$9 million) would also be paid as loans to the artists and owners of cultural venues.

The Association of Iranian Theater Owners asked President Hassan Rouhani to lift the coronavirus restriction on cinemas, calling for the reopening of the theaters across the country based on the health protocols during the pandemic last May.

“Chernobyl 01:23:40” appears in Iranian bookstores

CULTURE **TEHRAN** — A Persian translation of “Chernobyl 01:23:40: The Incredible True Story of the World’s Worst Nuclear Disaster” by English writer Andrew Leatherbarrow has recently been published in Persian in Tehran.

Shahriar Khavajian is the translator of the book published by Qoqnus Publications.


Published in 2015, “Chernobyl 01:23:40” is about the worst nuclear accident in history. At 01:23:40 on April 26, 1986, Alexander Akimov pressed the emergency shutdown button at Chernobyl’s fourth nuclear reactor. It was an act that forced the permanent evacuation of a city, killed thousands, and crippled the Soviet Union.

The event spawned decades of conflicting, exaggerated, and inaccurate stories. However, this book, the result of five years of research, presents an accessible but comprehensive account of what really happened.


From the desperate fight to prevent a burning reactor core from irradiating eastern Europe, to the self-sacrifice of the heroic men who entered fields of radiation so strong that machines wouldn’t work, to the surprising truth about the legendary ‘Chernobyl divers’, all the way through to the USSR’s final show-trial.

The historical narrative is interwoven with a story of the author’s own spontaneous journey to Ukraine’s still-abandoned city of Pripjat and the wider Chernobyl Zone. Complete with over 45 pages of photographs of modern-day Pripjat and technical diagrams of the power station, “Chernobyl 01:23:40” is a new account of the world’s worst nuclear disaster.

SYMPTOMS



Did you know that more than 400 universities have been established in Sunni areas after the victory of the Islamic Revolution?



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