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Russian FM discusses regional issues in Tehran

We will avenge sabotage in Natanz in the aggressor's land, says government

TEHRAN - Government spokesman said on Tuesday that Iran will retaliate against the sabotage attack on the Natanz nuclear facility in the right time at the aggressor's land.

Speaking at his weekly press briefing, Ali Rabiei condemned the terrorist act at the Natanz nuclear site and stressed that "action against the Natanz nuclear site shows the defeat of the enemies of Iran's industrial and political progresses."

Noting that Iran reserves the right to take action against the perpetrators of the attack, he said, "Iran, while condemning this move, urges the international community to respond to this nuclear terrorism. To thwart this goal, the Iranian government will continue to seriously pursue the development of nuclear technology and work to lift sanctions."

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Foreign investment in industrial, trade sectors up nearly 190% in a year

TEHRAN - The Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade has approved 158 foreign investment projects valued at about \$2.469 billion in the past Iranian calendar year 1399 (ended on March 20), up 189 percent compared to its preceding year.

According to the latest data released by the ministry, the number of approved projects has also increased 92 percent in the previous year.

The Industry Ministry had approved

82 foreign investment projects with a total investment of \$854 million in calendar year 1398.

Of the total number of investment projects in the past year, 90.5 percent (143 projects) was the share of industry sector, 4.4 percent (seven projects) was the share of mining sector, while trade-related projects accounted for 5.1 percent (eight projects) of the total figure.

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TEHRAN - During his visit to Iran, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov discussed regional issues with high-level Iranian officials amid heightened tensions between Iran and Israel over a sabotage operation that targeted a key Iranian nuclear facility.

The top Russian diplomat met on Tuesday with his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani. His stay in Tehran was part of a regional tour that included Egypt, where Lavrov underlined

the need for Syria to return to "the Arab family," i.e. the Arab League.

Speaking at a Monday joint press conference with his Egyptian counterpart Sameh Shoukry, Lavrov said, "I can reaffirm our strong conviction that Syria must return to the Arab family and fully reinstate its Arab League membership. This kind of issue cannot be resolved overnight given the differences and emotions that have accumulated over many years."

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Lion-dragon alliance: a serious threat to U.S. influence in region

BY EBRAHIM FALLAHI
The signing of a 25-year cooperation document between Iran and China has become the subject of debates by many political and economic experts and scholars and even ordinary people all over Iran.

The agreement, dubbed the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, covers co-operation in a variety of areas including politics, economic, security, defense, culture, agriculture, science, oil and energy, infrastructure, ICT, and health.

The main issue that has caused controversies over this agreement is whether it is aimed at colonizing the Iranian economy by the Chinese or it is truly an opportunity for equal prosperity for both sides.

To answer this question, several points must be taken into consideration, like how this agreement is going to affect the Iranian economy in the future? what is in it for the two sides? What are the agreement's consequences for Iran's political and economic rivals? What does this partnership entail regarding the Iran-U.S. relations?

Iran and China

China is Iran's leading trade partner and was one of the top customers of Iranian oil before the U.S. reimposed unilateral sanctions in 2018 when President Donald Trump abandoned a multilateral nuclear agreement with Tehran.

Even after the re-imposition of the U.S. sanctions, China has taken serious measures for challenging Washington's hostile policies towards Iran and has tried to maintain its economic relations with the Islamic Republic as much as possible. The Asian country has often spoken out against U.S. sanctions on Iran and contested them.

Signing the partnership agreement with Iran is yet another a big step taken by the Asian powerhouse in undermining Washington's policies in the region.

"Our relations with Iran will not be affected by the current situation, but will be permanent and strategic," Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi had said ahead of the signing ceremony.

"Relations between the two countries have now reached the level of strategic partnership and China seeks to comprehensively improve relations with Iran," Wang said.

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From mazy bazaars to nomadic lands: visit Iran in a slow, no-tech fashion

TEHRAN - Hiking along the southern coasts of the Caspian Sea, discovering secret side streets in a tiny Iranian village, walking through labyrinthine bazaars, or roaming down a rain forest path to rural cottages are some of the most memorable experiences can happen only on foot.

Walking is the ultimate in slow travel. It is one of the cleanest pleasures of traveling, offering exercise, fresh air, and an intimate perspective of the surroundings. Walking tours, including self-guided walks, have long been attracted international and domestic travelers interested in exploring their destination in a slow, no-tech fashion: on foot.

Packed with over 5,000 years of history, Iran is a destination that any avid traveler must experience at least once in their lifetime. From the ancient Persian Empire to the Zoroastrian temples, the countless mosques, and even the modern cities like Tehran, there is so much to see that one visit will not be enough.

Many tourism insiders believe that traversing the country equals an endless charm, as it embraces so many diverse cultures and landscapes, saying something like this: "Forget the VIP cars and become adept at slow travel by discovering Iran through walking tours. There are many stunning mosques and pristine deserts!" or "The country has so much to offer if you thoroughly visit every nook and cranny."

Traditionally, one of the most popular ways to visit a city is to experience it on foot. Whatever their size, most historical cities, towns, and villages in Iran are best appreciated by walking, as their century-old city centers were first conceived to wander around.

Take Isfahan, for instance: a masterpiece of Safavid-era architecture popularly known as "half of the world". Numerous craftspeople are boasting skills in the amazing bazaars, producing beautiful handicrafts with copper, woods, ceramics, and wool.

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Wright shooting: Minneapolis erupts in another night of protests

Protesters have clashed with police for the second night in the suburb of the U.S. city of Minneapolis following the killing of a Black man during a traffic stop, with police calling the fatal shooting an "accident".

Officials have said that the shooting death on Sunday of 20-year-old Daunte Wright was "an accidental discharge", adding that the officer had apparently intended to fire a Taser, not a handgun.

The shooting sparked unrest in an area already on edge because of the trial of the first of four police officers charged over the killing of another Black man, George Floyd, last year.

Hundreds of protesters faced off against police in Brooklyn Center after nightfall on Monday, and hours after a dusk-to-dawn curfew was announced by the governor. When the protesters refused to disperse, police began firing tear gas canisters and flash-bang grenades, sending clouds wafting over the crowd and chasing

some protesters away.

According to al Jazeera, a long line of police in riot gear, rhythmically pushing their clubs in front of them, began slowly forcing back the remaining crowds.

"Move back!" the police chanted. "Hands up! Don't shoot!" the crowd chanted back. By late Monday, only a few dozen protesters remained.

Law enforcement agencies had stepped up their presence across the Minneapolis area after Sunday night violence.

The number of Minnesota National Guard troops was expected to more than double to more than 1,000 by Monday night.

'Difference between plastic and metal'
Brooklyn Center Police Chief Tim Gannon earlier on Monday released body camera footage that showed the officer shouting at Wright as police tried to arrest him.

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Iranian children's cinema, simple but not easy to portrait

BY SAMANEH ABOUTALEBI

It is deceptively simple to make a film about children, but it is one of the most popular subjects for directors. Cuteness and affection have always been an integral part of the world of children. This awe-inspiring quality catches the audience's attention and could be a key factor in the success of a film.

Centering on children's vulnerability could raise the level of empathy and sympathy of people who tend to be more alarmed when a child is involved in a particular situation.

Some Iranian filmmakers have exploited this quality to the fullest, leading to their worldwide success.

However, most of these Iranian films by popular filmmakers, target children and are made about them and with them, but they are not necessarily made for them.

Many awards, accolades, and global acceptance have been won by these films during national and international events and they have been well received worldwide.

The following is a list of the top Iranian films

about children, a film lover needs to watch, whether a child or an adult.

"Bashu, the Little Stranger" (Bahram Beizai, 1989)

"Bashu" as an anti-war masterpiece has a simple story. It depicts the story of Bashu, a southern Iranian boy who, after losing his family during the Iran-Iraq war, runs away in search of refuge and is taken in by Naii, a woman living with her two young children in a village in the northern part of the country.

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Iran-China partnership is a combined battle against Washington: columnist

BY MOHAMMAD ALI SAKI

TEHRAN - A Pakistani columnist says that Iran-China partnership pact represents a combined battle against Washington.

"The Iran-China comprehensive strategic partnership means a lot for Beijing and Tehran that seems a combined battle against Washington," Zafar Iqbal Yousafzai tells the Tehran Times.

Yousafzai, the author of "The Troubled Triangle: the U.S.-Pakistan Relations under the Taliban's Shadow", also says that "except China, other countries of the region can't go against the U.S. sanctions, thus it makes China a better partner for Iran to export its oil and gas to its markets."

On March 27, Iran and China signed a comprehensive long-term cooperation document with the aim of cementing their economic and political alliance as both countries. The partnership, which is envisioned to significantly expand the two countries' economic cooperation, is seen to be a great blow to Washington's efforts to suppress the Iranian economy and therefore it has raised concerns in the United States.

Apart from economic cooperation, many predict the partnership would include security and military collaboration between Iran and China.

"The agreement also calls for security cooperation and an intelligence partnership," according to Yousafzai.

Following is the text of the interview:

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

The Iran-China comprehensive strategic partnership means a lot for Beijing and Tehran that seems a combined battle against Washington.

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Tulip festival underway in Arak

The third festival of tulips kicked off in the city of Arak, central Iran, on Monday. More than 120,000 tulips in 43 varieties along with violet flowers and ornamental shrubs have been prepared on a land measuring 8,000 square meters.

However, people are not allowed to participate in the festival due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Araghchi heads for Vienna for nuclear deal talks

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi travelled to Vienna on Tuesday to continue talks with the P4 + 1 group for a possible revival of the 2015 nuclear deal.

Iran and the P4 + 1 group held nuclear deal talks in Vienna on April 6 and 9. The next round of talks will be resumed on Wednesday, April 14.

The P4+1 and Iran are negotiating to examine a possible U.S. return to the JCPOA under the Biden administration.

As top Iran's negotiator, Araghchi has repeatedly stated that there is no "step by step" agreement to restore the JCPOA. He has said Iran will return to full compliance with the JCPOA only after the U.S. has lifted all the sanctions verifiably.

The talks are being done within the framework of the JCPO Joint Commission which is led by the European Union.

Iran and P4+1 nuclear deal talks delayed

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi informed the press the talks between Iran and P4+1 group for a possible revival of the 2015 nuclear deal are postponed to Thursday as one the EU delegate members is diagnosed with COVID-19.

Araghchi stressed that health protocols must be followed and it is the number one priority of the delegates.

Iranian ambassador congratulates Iraqis on Ramadan arrival

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — In a message on Tuesday Iraj Masjedi, the Iranian ambassador in Baghdad, congratulated the Iraqi government and people on the arrival of the holy month of Ramadan.

Masjedi wished health and happiness to the two brotherly nations of Iran and Iraq, and wished progress and comfort to the two friendly and neighboring countries.

In a part of his message, he wished the two countries to expand constructive relations in all economic, political and cultural fields.

The holy month of Ramadan starts on Wednesday.

Senior Iranian, Russian diplomats consult on Syria and Yemen

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Ali Asghar Khaji, a senior advisor to Iranian foreign minister on special political affairs, met on Tuesday with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister and Putin's Special Representative for the Middle East and Africa, Mikhail Bogdanov, discussing issues in West Asia, especially developments in Syria and Yemen.

Bogdanov was visiting Tehran along with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov.

During the meeting, the two diplomats pointed to the recent consultations with the Syrian government and UN Special envoy for Syria Geir Pedersen, stressing the importance of national dialogue in Syria within the framework Constitutional Committee.

The Syrian Constitutional Committee is a UN-facilitated constituent assembly process that seeks to reconcile the Syrian government and the opposition in the context of the Syrian peace process. It seeks to amend the current or adopting a new constitution for Syria.

Syria is also set to hold presidential elections on April 16-17.

Khaji and Bogdanov said the elections in Syria is a matter of law, which is based on the current Syrian constitution. They said the Syrian constitution must be respected in the elections.

In the meeting the sides also discussed the latest developments in Yemen, the need for national dialogue with the cooperation of the United Nations and support by other international actors.

Senior MP reveals more details about sabotage at Natanz

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The head of the Parliament's Energy Committee said on Monday that the sabotage act at the Natanz nuclear facility's electricity and cable distribution system was related to emergency power batteries.

Regarding the Sunday electricity malfunction due to a sabotage at the Natanz nuclear site, Fereydoon Abbasi said, "We have an electricity substation at the Natanz site, from where electricity goes to the basement, which is about 40, 50 meters underground. That place was built in a sturdy fashion, and was located underground and so that air and missile attacks could not destroy this place."

He went on to explain different types of sabotage by the enemy, from cyber-attacks to sabotage being done by the enemy agents, or by sending in defective equipment in five to ten years. He then explained that when there is a sturdy, underground construction, that could not be destroyed by air or missile attacks, the enemy resorts to evil methods like the sort occurred at the Natanz nuclear site.

The act of sabotage at the Natanz nuclear plant occurred on Sunday, prompting a wave of international and domestic reactions.

Qatar's foreign minister strongly has condemned the incident, calling it "a dangerous and destructive action" that could intensify tension in the region and leave negative impacts on the region's stability.

The European Union stated on Monday that the incident "might be a destructive action" amid nuclear talks with Iran, calling any efforts to stop the negotiations "unacceptable."

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas, whose country is a member of the Vienna talks to revive the 2015 nuclear deal, also said on Monday that "what we are currently hearing from Tehran, especially from Natanz, is not a positive thing for the negotiations."

In remarks on Monday, Mojtaba Zolnour, a senior Iranian MP, said Israel had a role in the sabotage "but we also don't see the U.S. as innocent."

Iran starts enriching uranium to 60% purity

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Abbas Araghchi, Iran's deputy foreign minister, announced in Vienna on Tuesday that Iran has sent a letter to the IAEA informing the body that the Islamic Republic intends to start enriching uranium to up to 60% purity.

Araghchi broke the story as he visited Vienna on Tuesday for nuclear deal talks with P4 + 1 group, which is set to start on Thursday.

Addition of centrifuges at Natanz nuclear site.

Abbas Araghchi emphasized that another 1,000 centrifuges with 50% more capacity will be added to the existing machines in Natanz, in addition to replacing the damaged machines.

In a speech to the Assembly of Experts last year, Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution stressed, "The Islamic Republic will not back down from its rational position on the nuclear issue, and according to the interests and needs of the country, it will go as far as 60% enrichment as needed."

IAEA was informed of Iran's decision to enrich 60% uranium, says AEOI spokesman

Behrouz Kamalvandi spoke with state News Agency (IRNA) on Tuesday afternoon, revealing details about Iran's



Kamalvandi

decision to enrich uranium up to 60%, stating that the process will start on Tuesday night.

"By the order of the President, the Atomic Energy Organization (of Iran) it was instructed to launch a 60% uranium production line in the amount required within the framework of Article 1 of the law on Strategic Action for Lifting Sanctions, approved by the parliament," Kamalvandi said.

He stated that in this regard, the DIQ (Design Information Questionnaire) was immediately submitted to the International Atomic Energy Agency, and the executive preparations for this work will begin in the enrichment facility on Tuesday night. He said that additional information will be released soon.



Araghchi

"From tonight, the executive preparations for 60% enrichment will begin in Natanz. 60% uranium is used to make a variety of radiopharmaceuticals," spokesman for Atomic Energy Organization of Iran said.

"Tonight, the new IR1 centrifuges will replace the broken ones, and the new IR1s will have a capacity of 50% more than the previous ones," Kamalvandi noted.

It should be noted that 60% enriched uranium is used in the production of molybdenum to be used in the manufacture of radiopharmaceuticals.

Based on the timing, Iran's declaration of 60 percent enrichment seemed to be an attempt to send a message to the global powers with whom it is negotiating about its nuclear program that, after the



Salehi

sabotage act at Natanz on Sunday, it can maintain pressure on them.

Iran definitely moving towards 60% enrichment, says Salehi

"Replaced centrifuges are among the most advanced centrifuges, and we are definitely moving towards 60% enrichment," said Ali Akbar Salehi, the head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran.

"The emergency power supply of Natanz facility is currently connected and the main power supply will be connected in the coming days," he stated.

He also stated that damaged centrifuges replaced with the most advanced centrifuges.

"Each and every centrifuge is being inspected and damaged centrifuges will be replaced," Salehi said.

Zarif says EU losing relevance

The way to deal with Iran is not nuclear terrorism, Zarif says

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Tuesday strongly condemned EU's passiveness towards the sabotage act in the Natanz nuclear facility, stating that the European Union must be ashamed of itself and promised that Iran's nuclear industry will come back stronger.

"When Mr. Trump came to power, Iran used only IR1 centrifuge, today it operates a chain of IR6 centrifuges," Zarif said during a joint press conference with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in Tehran.

Zarif reminded the current U.S. government that the "maximum pressure" policy against Iran does not work.

"And Americans should not forget that when Donald Trump took office, Iran had 300kgs of enriched uranium, while now we have more than 4000kgs of enriched uranium," Zarif stated.

Noting that Iran will come back stronger after sabotage at the Natanz electricity grid, Zarif said, "Before the recent terrorist attack, 5,000 IR1 centrifuges were enriching (uranium) in Natanz. After the recent terrorist attack, we will definitely go back to more advanced centrifuges."

The high-ranking diplomat emphasized after 42 years of testing the Iranian people, the Americans should have understood that the way to deal with Iran is not making threats.

"The way to deal with Iran is not nuclear terrorism," the minister remarked.

In remarks at the Parliament National security and Foreign Policy Committee on Monday Zarif called the sabotage at Natanz nuclear terrorism.

The Iranian foreign minister also thanked Russia for its position against the sabotage in the facility, and put an emphasis on the need for continued cooperation between Tehran and Moscow.

He also urged the United States to return to its obligations under the JCPOA without delay and to lift all sanctions on Iran.

Iran has been insisting that the U.S. must lift all sanctions in one step and that their lifting should be verified.

Official in Iran has been insisting that if all sanctions are

lifted and verified Iran will overturn its remedial measures.

"Slowly Iran will also take action after verification, and we have no problem returning to fulfilling our obligations," Zarif reiterated.

'Sabotage and sanctions won't give U.S. tools for pressure in nuclear deal talks'

Zarif added, "Americans need to know that neither sanctions nor sabotage will give them the tools to negotiate, and they need to know that these actions will make things more difficult for them."

Zarif also urged the U.S. to provide a list of all sanctions it has imposed on Iran.

Reportedly the U.S. imposed 1,600 sanctions on Iran under different designations.

"If the United States wants to be able to return to the JCPOA, it must lift all sanctions and provide a list of all sanctions," the chief diplomat said.

He added, "According to the JCPOA, it is the duty of the United States to provide a list of sanctions."

"EU losing relevance"

The minister then shifted to European Union's Monday action in boycotting a number of Iranian military and judicial officials.

"In recent years, the European Union has shown that it is gradually losing its relevance in international relations by failing to meet its obligations and succumbing to U.S. pressure."

Zarif went on to bash the EU for their shameful position in regard to sabotage in Natanz along with sanctioning a number of Iranian officials, saying the EU should condemn the U.S. "terrorist threat" against the food and medicine security of more than 82 million Iranians.

Iran has called U.S. illegal sanctions imposed during the Trump presidency as examples of "economic terrorism" and "medical terrorism".

So far, the EU has avoided to condemn sabotage in Natanz, just saying the incident "might be a destructive action" amid nuclear deal talks with Iran.

"Instead of what happened at Iran's enrichment complex,

which is under the supervision of the IAEA, they ignore these issues very softly and at the same time act against the Iranian military authorities," Zarif regretted.

"Great shame for Europe"

Foreign Minister Zarif also said it is "great shame" for Europe that it follows the policies pursued by most extremist groups in the U.S. and Israel.

These events prove to the world that the European Union "has no place in the world", he said, adding, "The European Union is not only following the policies of the United States, but also the most extremist groups within the United States and the Zionist regime, and I think this is a great shame for Europe."

He said the Foreign Ministry will definitely deal with this action by the EU, announcing that Iran is considering the possibility of imposing sanctions on Europeans who were involved in "this illegal move".

He said the European Union is not morally in a superior position in respect in terms of upholding human rights.

"Europe should know that it is not in a moral superior position and cannot preach to the world, a Europe in which xenophobia and anti-Islamism have created terrible conditions for Muslims. This Europe has neither the reputation nor the position to boycott the Iranian authorities."

Zarif expresses hope production of Sputnik V vaccine will start in Iran

Elsewhere in his remarks, Zarif expressed hope that with the agreement reached between Tehran and Moscow production of Sputnik V vaccine will start in Iran.

He also expressed hope that it will be possible for Iran to buy more vaccines from Russia to meet its needs.

Iran-Russia at "highest level of interaction," Lavrov says

For his part, Lavrov said that Tehran and Moscow have reached the "highest level of interaction" in bilateral relations.

He also said that in his Monday talks with Zarif the two parties discussed the prospects of bilateral cooperation in political, trade, economic, human rights and other fields with a primary focus on joint projects in the field of energy transfer.

We will avenge sabotage in Natanz in the aggressor's land, says government

→ 1 Rabbie said that this sabotage act is intended to prevent the country's development on the one hand and successful negotiations to lift the cruel sanctions on the other.

The Atomic Energy Organization of Iran has assured that a large part of the damage caused by the sabotage will be restored in a short period of time and more advanced technologies will be used in the reconstruction according to the agreed decision.

He reminded, "It is clear to us that the root of this terrorist act is the anger of the Zionist enemies against the efforts of the members of the JCPOA to fully revive this agreement in recent weeks, and its ultimate goal is to prevent the continuation of this constructive diplomatic process."

The government spokesman stressed that Iran will retaliate at the appropriate time and with proportionate intensity but "we will not allow the enemies to achieve their political goals."

He added, "We expect all parties to the JCPOA, as well as the U.S. government, which considers itself a fan of diplomacy, to condemn this attack and to declare their commitment to the contrast between acts

of sabotage and terrorism and the ongoing diplomatic process."

On a question about the details of Sunday's sabotage in the Natanz site and the extent of the damage, he said, "On Sunday, a sabotage occurred in the power supply cable to the centrifuge machine system. This is not an external attack and the location of sabotage is well-known. The damage can be repaired quickly and the passionate personnel of the Atomic Energy Organization are working around the clock."

He confirmed that it was decided to install IR6 centrifuges instead of IR1 centrifuges, pointing that the new and more advanced centrifuges will work like a clock.

"Certainly, the purpose of these destructions was to disable the centrifuges, and I declare today that, based on a national decision, the wheel of our centrifuges will spin forever."

Emphasizing that the main purpose of the sabotage is political in order to prevent the Iranian people from achieving their rights in the world, Rabbie said, "Experience shows us that whenever we take effective steps in the world, strategic enemy of Iran and its people are viciously committing cowardly terrorist

acts against the interests of the nation."

Noting that the aim of such destruction was to attack both Iran's technical and political capabilities, he added, "They seek to weaken the spirit of the enthusiastic youth in the nuclear industry and create despair and hopelessness in the people, but we will definitely respond firmly."

He stated that Iran is pursuing a three-fold response to such evil actions.

"First, we have reserved our right to act against the perpetrators, commanders and consultants (of the sabotage), and warning Israel that, 'this punishment will be carried out in the land of the aggressor'."

Rabbie said Iran's second response is development and expansion of peaceful nuclear activities.

He said Iran's third answer is in the political field by lifting the sanctions and putting more efforts to secure the rights of the Iranian people.

"We will thwart the goals of the terrorists. We will not fall into the trap of provocative operations of the enemy of Iran. We will continue on the right path in the international community. We will break the sanctions and

we will help ensure and spread peace and security in the world and the region."

Addressing the enemies of the Islamic Republic, the government spokesman said, "We will not allow you to continue your disgraceful life, which, like a parasite, you can only continue in an insecure environment." According to Rabbie, there is very strong evidence that the Zionist regime has a hand in this incident.

Citing the reasons that Israel was behind the sabotage, he said, "First of all, the officials of this regime express their joy with two-sided statements because they are afraid of a decisive response from Iran."

He also lightened the mood with some good news, saying that the Ministry of Intelligence and the counterintelligence specialists have arrested several assassination and sabotage teams affiliated with the Israeli security services in recent months after the martyrdom of Mohsen Fakhri-zadeh, and now their case is under judicial investigation.

"The traitor to the nation has been identified and his identity has been determined and the necessary measures are being taken," Rabbie said.

Youth Union of Turkey condemns terrorist act at Natanz site

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — In a letter to the Beautiful Peace's International Institute for Human Rights, the Youth Union of Turkey has condemned the terrorist act at the Natanz nuclear site

in Iran, thanking Tehran for continuing to enrich uranium.

In the letter to Saman Niazi, vice president of the Beautiful Peace institute, union president Yildirim Gencer bashed the Western media

for propagating sabotage at the Natanz site as "incident", calling for condemnation of the act by international authorities.

"Iran's determination to develop nuclear technology is a sign of the country's determi-

nation to stand up to imperialist sanctions," Gencer wrote.

Youth Union of Turkey is an organization founded in 2006. It contains 65 student clubs and societies from over 40 Turkish universities.

SPORTS

Persepolis aim to reach ACL final for third time: Golmohammadi

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Persepolis football team head coach Yahya Golmohammadi says that they will be aiming to qualify for the AFC Champions League for the third time.

The Iranian giants are scheduled to meet Al Wahda from United Arab Emirates in Group E opener on Wednesday.

Golmohammadi's side head into the tournament having assumed top spot in the Iran Professional League and they will be eager to maintain their form in the continental showpiece.

Persepolis hold a better head to head record, with the Iranian club winning twice in 2017, while Al Wahda's last victory against them was back in 2011.

Persepolis, having lost the 2018 and 2020 AFC Champions League finals, are well-prepared to face Al Wahda, the coach said.

"We know that there is a difficult task ahead of us since all the teams in the group want to book a place in the next stage. We are ready for the six matches in the group stage and I hope we can make our fans happy," Golmohammadi said in the pre-match news conference.

"We are motivated and ready for the competition and I have to say we have a generation of the players who fight to win and this is our strong point. The players are concentrating to book a place in the final for a third time," he added.

"I hope we advance to the next stage as the group winners. Al Wahda are a good team and the match against them will not be an easy game for us," Golmohammadi stated.

Italian volleyball coach Totolo arrives in Iran

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Italian volleyball coach Totolo arrived in Tehran, capital of Iran Tuesday morning.

Totolo is Vladimir Alekno's assistant in Iran national volleyball team.

The 55-year-old Italian analyst has already worked as Serbia men's national volleyball assistant.

Russian coach Alekno will also travel to Tehran within the next few days.

Iran are training in Tehran's Azadi Hall as part of preparation for the 2021 FIVB Volleyball Nations League and Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games.

The Persians are grouped with hosts Japan, Poland, Italy, Canada and Venezuela in Pool A at Tokyo 2020. The other pool comprises of Brazil, the U.S., Russia, Argentina, France and Tunisia.

Iran aims to be among top countries in 2020 Paralympics: official

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran's National Paralympic Committee (NPC) peresident Mahmoud Khosravi Vafa said that they want to be among top 10 countries at the 2020 Paralympic Games in Tokyo.

Iran came 15th at the previous edition in Rio, winning eight gold, nine silver and seven bronze medals.

The Iranian delegation had finished in 11th place at the 2012 Paralympic Games in London.

Khosravi Vafa once again emphasized that they are going to finish among top 10 in Tokyo.

"We've earned 53 quota places so far. We will participate at the Tokyo 2020 with fewer athletes but we send the athletes who have chance to win the medal," Khosravi Vafa said.

"We aim to be among top 10 countries. I am sure it's not out of reach because we will send our very well-prepared athletes to the Games," he added.

The Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games have been rescheduled to take place between 24 August and 5 September 2021.

A record 4,400 Para athletes from more than 160 countries will compete in 540 events across 22 sports, which will be held at 21 venues in Tokyo, Saitama, Chiba and Shizuoka prefectures.

Iran starts COVID-19 vaccinations for Olympians

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iranian athletes, who will participate at the 2020 Olympic Games, are eligible to jump the queue for the COVID-19 vaccines.

The vaccination started on Tuesday in Tehran, capital of Iran.

A total of 58 Olympic berths have been secured by Iranian athletes in 12 sports so far, and there are still more spots to grab for the country at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games.

The Paralympians were vaccinated against COVID-19 at the Iran Sports Federation for the Disabled headquarters last week.

Iran on Tuesday reported a record 24,760 new COVID-19 cases in the past 24 hours, taking the country's total infections to 2,118,212 cases.

The daily death toll rose to 291, the highest since Dec. 9, to bring the total to 65,055, Sima Sadat Lari, spokeswoman for the Iranian Ministry of Health and Medical Education, said.

A total of 1,729,293 people have recovered from the disease or been discharged from hospitals across the country, while 4,481 remain in intensive care units, she noted.

Ebrahim Sadeghi no longer Saipa Coach

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Saipa head coach Ebrahim Sadeghi stepped down as his role following a 1-0 loss to Mes Rafsanjan in Iran Professional League (IPL).

Saipa sit 13th in the IPL table, two points ahead of relegation zone.

Sadeghi was named as Saipa coach in May 2019 as Ali Daei's replacement but has failed to meet the expectations in the current season.

Mehdi Pashazadeh, Ali Karimi, Omid Ravankhah and Mohsen Bayatnia are shortlisted to lead the team until the end of the season.

Russian FM discusses regional issues in Tehran

→1 We sense that our consistent calls to create the necessary conditions for resolving it are meeting with an increasingly engaged and positive response. I can reaffirm that this is precisely the takeaway from our recent visit to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar."

The Russian foreign minister said he discussed this issue in detail in Cairo and heard everyone he talked to say that restoring Syria's membership in the Arab League has "critical advantages" for both Syria and the Arab League.

However, despite Arab willingness to bring Syria back to the Arab League, Russian efforts in this regard have achieved little success due to the U.S. far-reaching economic sanctions on Syria, commonly known as the Caesar Act. The U.S. has effectively vetoed all political and diplomatic efforts by some of its Arab allies, particularly the United Arab Emirates, to return Syria to the Arab fold.

In March, during a visit by Lavrov to the UAE, Emirati Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed complained that the U.S. Caesar Act hinders Syria's return to the Arab League.

The Russian efforts to return Syria to the Arab League seem to be part of the Kremlin's vision for peace and stability in the broader West Asia region. In Tehran, Lavrov discussed the Syrian issue while outlining Russia's new concept for peace in the Persian Gulf region.

In addition to usual bilateral issues, the Russian foreign minister held detailed talks on regional issues that seem to be in keeping with what he pursued in Cairo.

During his meeting with President Rouhani, Lavrov said, "Iran and Russia share common and close goals in regional and international cooperation."

He was referring to the recent nuclear talks in Vienna and the desire by the United



States to return to the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"Moscow considers the unconditional, complete return of the United States to the JCPOA by implementing the UN Security Council Resolution 2231 as the only solution to the problem," the Russian foreign minister as quoted by the Iranian presidency's website as saying.

The chief Russian diplomat opposed the U.S. and European demands to expand the JCPOA and said other thorny issues should be addressed separately in what appeared to be a new Russian initiative to achieve stability in the Persian Gulf region.

"In our opinion, it is completely useless to ask Iran to accept new conditions within the framework of the deal or to act beyond

its obligations in the framework of the deal," Lavrov pointed out, adding, "Any additional documents on various issues, including regional or military development, can be examined separately outside the framework of the nuclear deal in order to ensure the security of the region and the Persian Gulf with the presence of regional countries."

The top Russian diplomat once again presented Russia's initiative of "collective security."

The Iranian Foreign Ministry said in a statement that Lavrov presented a collective security initiative in the Persian Gulf.

"Russia has proposed a collective security initiative with the Persian Gulf, and it continuously adheres to the premise that overcoming accumulated differences in the Persian Gulf region is possible only through

comprehensive dialogue and mutual respect, and taking into account the interests and concerns of all parties," the statement quoted Lavrov as saying at a meeting with Zarif.

Russia presented its initiative to the UN in 2019 as tensions soared in the region following the unilateral withdrawal of U.S. President Donald Trump from the Iran nuclear deal. At that time, the Russian initiative was distributed as an official document approved by the United Nations. Russia's state news agency TASS published some of the initiative's contents shortly after it was distributed in the UN.

According to TASS, Russia's concept of collective security calls for creating a security system that would enhance consultations between countries in the region and outside of it.

"Practical work on launching the process of creating a security system in the Persian Gulf may be started by holding bilateral and multilateral consultations between interested parties, including countries both within the region and outside of it, UN Security Council, LAS [League of Arab States], OIC [Organization of Islamic Cooperation], GCC [Persian Gulf Cooperation Council]," the document said.

Tensions soared in the Persian Gulf region following Trump's withdrawal from the JCPOA. Normalization deals between Israel and some Arab states in the region further escalated the tensions as Iran warned these Arab states against giving Israel a foothold on its doorstep.

During his meeting with Lavrov, President Rouhani underlined the need for Tehran and Moscow to continue cooperation to resolve regional crises and problems but said that "inviting the Zionist regime [Israel], as a destabilizing and tension-promoting element, to enter the Persian Gulf region is a dangerous step."

Zarif writes to UN chief on Natanz, accuses Israel of derailing nuclear deal talks

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif wrote a letter to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on the sabotage at the Natanz Fuel Enrichment Plant, accusing Israel of pursuing policies aimed at disrupting nuclear deal talks between Iran and the West.

"I am writing to inform you that in the early morning hours of 11 April 2021, a dangerous, reckless sabotage at the electricity distribution network of the Natanz Fuel Enrichment Plant caused a blackout and the disruption of the operations of this sensitive nuclear facility which has been under IAEA safeguards and extensive monitoring. The timely and professional containment measures adopted by the highly dedicated management and staff of the NFEP and Iranian Atomic Energy Organization averted what could have become a human and environmental catastrophe," Zarif wrote.

Behrouz Kamalvandi, a spokesman for the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), told Iranian news outlets on Sunday that the electricity distribution grid of Natanz has been damaged due to an incident that later turned out to be an act of sabotage.

Iran pointed the finger at Israel. Saeed Khatibzadeh, spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry, described the sabotage as a "trap" set by Israel to disrupt the process of lifting U.S. sanctions on Iran, saying that Iran will not fall into this "deceitful trap." Israel, Khatibzadeh vowed, should know that Iran will retaliate at the proper time and place.

Zarif also placed the blame on Israel in his first response to the sabotage. Commenting on the sabotage at the Natanz plant, he said the Israelis want to disrupt the ongoing nuclear talks in Vienna. The chief Iranian diplomat said, "The Zionists want to take revenge on the Iranian people for their success in lifting the cruel sanctions, but we will not allow this and we will take revenge for these actions from the Zionists themselves."

Underlining the need for Iranian people and officials to avoid falling in the "deceitful trap set by the Zionist regime," Zarif reiterated that the political and military officials of the Zionist regime had explicitly stated that they would not allow progress in lifting the cruel sanctions and now they think that they will achieve their goal, but the Zionists will get their answer in further nuclear progress, according to state news agency IRNA.

"Sabotage in nuclear site is a war crime"

In his letter, Zarif described the Natanz sabotage as a "war crime," which must not go unpunished given its high risk of releasing dangerous materials.

"The deliberate targeting of a highly sensitive safeguarded nuclear facility—with the high risk of potential release of radioactive material—constitutes reckless criminal nuclear terrorism. Considering the possible indiscriminate human and environmental consequences of this international crime, those who planned, ordered, participated and carried out this cowardly act committed a grave war crime; one that must not go unpunished. Any power with knowledge of, or acquiescence in, this act must also be held accountable as an accomplice to this war crime," the Iranian foreign minister noted.

He added, "While several officials of the Israeli regime have since autumn of 2020 publicly and openly threatened to carry out such operations to prevent the restoration of the JCPOA, and many Israeli and western media outlets tacitly confirmed (and even boasted about) the complicity of Israeli war criminals in this latest terrorist act, Iran is refraining from any final judgement as to the culprit while a thorough investigation

over the sabotage and its perpetrators is underway."

But Zarif underlined that the Israelis did everything in their power to derail the nuclear negotiations between Iran and the West.

"It must however be borne in mind that since the beginning of the negotiations of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2013, the Israeli regime has missed no opportunity to torpedo the negotiations and, following the conclusion of the Plan and its unanimous endorsement by the Security Council in resolution 2231 (2015), it has made every effort—shamelessly in a public way—to prevent its successful implementation and its restoration after the recent U.S. election," he said.

Iran and the P4+1 resumed nuclear talks over how to revive the JCPOA. To this end, the JCPOA Joint Commission held several meetings in Vienna. The latest meeting of the Commission, a group comprised of Iran and the P4+1 responsible for overseeing the implementation of the deal, was held on April 9.

During the meeting, participants received a report from the two newly-established expert groups, which were put together on April 7 to conduct technical talks over how to revive the JCPOA and what measures are needed to be done by Iran and the U.S. in this regard. One of the groups is tasked with specifying the sanctions that the U.S. should lift to revive the deal while the other is discussing how to reverse the nuclear measures taken by Iran in response to the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA.

The sabotage occurred amid a charged atmosphere prevailing in Vienna. During the Vienna talks, Iran demanded that the U.S. lift at least 1,600 sanctions all at once, something that the U.S. rejected. American officials interpreted this demand as Iranian "intransigence," warning that this so-called intransigence will lead the talks to a deadlock.

Analysts and officials in Iran believe that the sabotage happened when Iran showed some resistance in Vienna, thus suggesting a link between what happened in Vienna and Natanz. Mohsen Rezaei, the secretary of the Expediency Council, said the Natanz incident is still under investigation, but Iranian officials don't rule out American participation in the Natanz sabotage.

"Iran is investigating the Natanz incident and the investigation has not finished. So, there is no official conclusion on what happened at Natanz. But a U.S. role in the incident cannot be ruled out given Washington's behavior toward Iran," Rezaei told the Tehran Times.

Rezaei told the Tehran Times that the Americans want to restrain Iran's nuclear enrichment capability while retaining economic sanctions. Therefore, he said, they were likely implicated in what happened at the Natanz nuclear plant as the sabotage serves American interest.

In his letter, Zarif stopped short of accusing the U.S. of playing a role in the Natanz sabotage, but he pointed to the past Israeli-American joint efforts to derail Iran's nuclear program.

"Recalling the long record of the Israeli regime in sabotage operations against our peaceful nuclear activities—including the cowardly assassination of several Iranian nuclear and other scientists in the past years (A/65/622-S/2010/634, A/66/656-S/2012/27 and S/2020/1148) as well as the joint U.S.-Israeli cyber operation against Iran's nuclear facilities through the use of a malicious computer worm known as Stuxnet—the international community must strongly condemn this act of nuclear terrorism and hold the culprits and their accomplices accountable for the act; one that threatens



to further destabilize our already tense region," the chief Iranian diplomat said.

He added, "The Islamic Republic of Iran reserves its right under international law to take all necessary measures to protect and defend its citizens, interests and installations against any terrorist or disruptive acts. During the past 42 years, pressure, economic warfare and terrorism—in most of its forms and manifestations—have all failed to dent our resolve, shake or disrupt our progress in science and technology, or compel us to submit to the whims of the arrogant forces and their stooges."

Zarif says "even most advanced" will be installed at Natanz

Zarif also suggested that Iran will replace the damaged centrifuges at Natanz with "even most advanced" machines.

"This most recent cowardly act of nuclear terrorism will only strengthen our determination to march forward and to replace all the damaged centrifuges with even more advanced and sophisticated machines. Even the most insane criminals will finally—and soon—realize that they must never threaten Iranians," he said.

Following the sabotage, several Iranian officials underlined the need to install advanced centrifuges instead of those that were damaged due to the sabotage.

"All the centrifuges knocked out due to this incident were of IR1 type and they will be replaced with advanced centrifuges. The Islamic Republic now has the ability at the highest level to replace these [damaged centrifuges] with the most advanced ones," Saeed Khatibzadeh said on Monday during his weekly presser.

Mojtaba Zolnour, the head of the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, also said the damaged centrifuges will be replaced with the more advanced IR6 centrifuges, which have the capacity of enriching 6 to 7 tons of uranium per year.

At the end of his letter, Zarif called on the Biden administration to lift all the sanctions imposed by its predecessor.

"If the United States wants to avert the drastic consequences of foolish gambles by its terrorist stooges, it must cease forthwith to consider unlawful measures—whether economic terrorism perpetrated by Trump (and continued by the current U.S. administration) or the recent nuclear terrorism—as negotiating leverage and remove all sanctions imposed, re-imposed or relabeled since the adoption of the JCPOA. Iran will, after timely verification of the aforementioned, respond by stopping all remedial measures—which will now take a significant upward leap following this latest terrorist sabotage," Zarif stated.

Water, electricity projects worth \$122.5m inaugurated in 3 provinces

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Six major water and electricity projects worth 5.145 trillion rials (about \$122.5 million) were put into operation through a video conference in three provinces to mark the second week of the third phase of the Energy Ministry's A-B-Iran program.

The mentioned projects including electricity supply projects, a water treatment plant, some water supply projects in rural areas, and a rubber dam were inaugurated in Khuzestan, Mazandaran and Sistan-Baluchestan provinces, IRNA reported.

Out of the mentioned six projects, three projects were put into operation in Khuzestan Province, two projects were in Sistan-Baluchestan Province and one project was inaugurated in Mazandaran Province.



The first phase of the A-B-Iran program (the acronyms A and B stand for water and electricity in Persian) was initiated in the Iranian calendar year 1398 (ended on March 19, 2020), during which 220 major projects with a total investment of 335.6 trillion rials (about \$7.99 billion) were put into operation across the country.

In the second phase of the program that was carried out in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20) 250 water and energy projects worth 500 trillion rials (about \$11.9 billion) were inaugurated in several provinces.

The third phase of the program was officially started on April 6 and like the previous phases, this year, too, the Energy Ministry is planning to inaugurate numerous water and electricity projects in various provinces every week.

In the first week of the third phase, Iranian Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian inaugurated five major electricity projects worth 29 trillion rials (about \$690.4 million) across the country to mark the beginning of the third phase of the ministry's A-B-Iran program.

The inaugurated projects comprised of 8,142 sub-projects including numerous electricity supply projects, as well as power network modification and optimization projects.

37 idle industrial units revived in Qom province

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — As announced by a provincial official, 37 idle industrial units were revived in Iran's central Qom province during the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20).

Azizollah Qorbani, the director general of economic affairs co-ordination office of Qom governorate, said that reviving these units has created jobs for 605 persons.

According to the official, 35 idle units are also planned to come back to the production cycle in the present year.

As announced by Deputy Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister Mehdi Sadeqi Niaraki, 1,500 idle industrial units have been revived in the country during the past year.

According to Niaraki, over 6,500 new industrial units were also established across the country during the mentioned year which created jobs for over 121,000 people.

Touching upon the Industry Ministry's plans for the realization of the motto of the current year which is named the year of "Production: support and the elimination of obstacles" by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, the official said: "In the year that has been dedicated to the production sector by the Leader of the revolution, the orientation of all government organizations and executive bodies should be towards supporting the country's industrial and mining units."



Niaraki pointed to a 40-percent increase in the issuance of establishment licenses for industrial units in the previous year, saying: "The number of establishment licenses increased to more than 36,000 last year, which shows that people are encouraged to invest in the productive sectors."

He also mentioned an 85-percent rise in the allocation of land for establishing industrial units across the country and noted that over 4,500 hectares of land were handed over to applicants in the previous calendar year.

According to the official, there are over 46,000 small and medium-sized industrial units in Iran's industrial parks and zones, of them about 9,200 units are inactive.

Iran's industrial parks play a significant role in making the country independent through boosting production, which is a major strategy of Iran to combat the U.S. sanctions.

In fact, strengthening domestic production to achieve self-reliance is the most important program that Iran is following up in its industry sector in a bid to nullify the effects of the U.S. sanctions on its economy.

In this due, the current Iranian calendar year (began on March 21) has been named the year of "Production: support and the elimination of obstacles", and all governmental bodies, as well as the private sector, are moving in line with the materialization of this motto.

Regarding its significant role in the realization of the mentioned goal, the Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry has already defined its main programs for supporting domestic production in the current year.

In this regard, the development of industrial parks and supporting the units located in these areas is one of the major programs underway by the ministry.

Foreign investment in industrial, trade sectors up nearly 190% in a year

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The highest volume of foreign investment approved in the industry, mining, and trade sectors in the period under review were in the categories of chemical materials and products, base metals, paper and paper products, as well as transportation logistic activities, respectively.

China, Germany, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Canada, and Austria were the top five countries with the highest volume of investment, while, Khuzestan, Sistan-Baluchestan, Fars, Hormozgan, and East Azarbaijan provinces were the top five provinces in terms of the volume



of approved foreign investment.

Afghanistan, Turkey, China, Germany, and the United Arab Emirates were also the top five investors in terms of the number of approved projects.

As previously reported by the Industry Ministry, Iran expects a 10-fold increase of foreign investment in the industry and mining sectors by the end of the Sixth Five-Year National Development Plan (March 2022).

Lion-dragon alliance: a serious threat to U.S. influence in region

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The accord also brings Iran into China's Belt and Road Initiative, a multi-trillion-dollar infrastructure scheme intended to stretch from East Asia to Europe.

Iran and the U.S.

When assessing the Iran-China comprehensive partnership agreement, the first and foremost issue to be considered is that this agreement has seriously undermined U.S. leverage over Iran in the nuclear negotiations and has lessened American influence in the region.

The U.S. has been trying to isolate Iran by imposing unprecedented sanctions on various sectors of the country's economy in the hope to bring Tehran to bend to Washington's wishes.

Iran, however, has been strongly withstanding the pressures and following new strategies for promoting a resilient economy, has embarked on a journey for developing domestic production and reducing reliance on oil.

Reaching this long-term partnership with China has further cemented the Islamic Republic's position against the U.S. in the region, opening a new window for the country to further gear up for battling the U.S.'s unilateralism



and totalitarianism.

China-U.S. relations

Another important issue that is needed to be considered with regard to the Iran-China partnership is the extent of trade between the United States and China and the impact of Washington's sanctions on this cooperation.

According to official reports, the trade between the U.S. and China reaches more than \$700 billion a year, most of

Over 7m tons of goods transited through Iran

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Some 7.532 million tons of commodities were transited through Iran in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20) despite the restrictions created by the coronavirus pandemic, the spokesman of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) announced.

According to Ruhollah Latifi, transit of goods via Iran declined only 67 tons or 0.8 percent compared to the preceding year 1398 (March 2019-March 2020).

The mentioned volume of transit was achieved despite the fact that the figure was expected to fall significantly in the said year.

Back in July 2020, Mostafa Ayati, the director-general of IRICA's Transit Bureau had announced that the transit of commodities through Iran was expected to fall 30 percent in the mentioned year.

As reported, Shahid Rajaei Special Zone in Hormozgan province with 3.305 million tons, Bazargan in West Azarbaijan province with 703,000 tons, Bashmaq in Kurdistan province with 687,000 tons, Sarakhs in Khorasan Razavi with 457,000 tons, Imam Khomeini Port in Khuzestan province with 447,000 tons, Bileh Savar in Ardabil province with 337,000 tons, Jolfa in East Azarbaijan province with 312,000 thousand tons, Razi in West Azarbaijan



province with 188,000 tons, Astara in Gilan province with 156,000 tons and Bandar Lengeh in Hormozgan province with 139,000 tons of transited goods, were the country's top 10 customs in terms of the volume of transits.

Considering its geographical location, Iran can play a significant role in the transit of goods in the region and benefit a lot from its status in this due. To take full advantage of its location for transit, the country has many plans underway and, on the agenda, to boost its transit capacity.

Some of these plans include developing Iran's largest container port, Shahid Rajaei Port in the southern province of Hormozgan, and also Chabahar Port in the southeast of the country, connecting the ports to the railway network, development of transit via railway, and also some customs measures such as improving transit procedures in the customs offices.

Electricity bills increase 33% for high consuming subscribers

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The managing director of Iran's Power Generation and Distribution Company (TAVANIR) announced a 33-percent increase in electricity prices for high consuming subscribers who will not reduce their consumption by the next Iranian calendar month Ordibehesht (begins on April 20).

Mohammad-Hassan Motevalizadeh said the increase in electricity prices will be done according to the government's decree in recent years.

He said that based on the "power of Hope" program the electricity subscribers are categorized in three groups of high consuming, normal consuming and low consuming, adding that after the implementation of this program seven million low-consuming subscribers were subject to a 100-percent discount, and the number of the high consuming subscribers was decreased by six percent.

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

Implementation of a program by the Iranian Energy Ministry for rewarding efficient electricity subscribers with a 100 percent discount on their bills, has reduced

the number of high-consuming subscribers across the country by 6.1 percent.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Tax on luxury houses, cars to be imposed since late May

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The head of Iran National Tax Administration (INTA) said that the taxes on the luxury houses and cars will be imposed since the third Iranian calendar month Khordad (begins in May 21).

Omid-Ali Parsa said that the people subject to taxes on luxury cars and houses will be identified by then and this issue will be notified to them.

Speaking on the sidelines of the deregulation board meeting, the official added, "According to the budget law, houses worth more than 100 billion rials (about \$2.38 million) will be taxed this year."

Also, for luxury cars, if the total value of the cars of a person and his/her children under 18 years of age is more than 10 billion rials (about \$238,095) it will be subject to tax, he added.

Meanwhile, the deputy transport and urban development minister said last week that the vacancy taxes are planned to be deposited in the National Housing Fund to be allocated for supplying homes for the low-income people.

Mahmoud Mahmoudzadeh said, "The real estate and housing system is a basic measure to identify the housing situation of the country. The goal is not just taxes, but the main program is to identify the living conditions of the



households for housing planning."

Saying that any tax levied on vacant homes goes directly to the National Housing Fund and is used as a facility for the housing of the low-income people, the official said that it is a mistake to think that the government has created this system to increase tax revenues.

In late March, the head of Iran National Tax Administration announced that that the first taxes on vacant houses will

be received in the fifth Iranian calendar month of Mordad (July 23 – August 22), and added that this tax will be half the value of the monthly rent of the property.

Parsa had announced in early February that the regulations for the tax on houses and luxury cars would be announced soon, adding that this annual tax has been collected and a heavy fine has been imposed on those who run away from it.

Back in last October, Transport and Urban Development Minister Mohammad Eslami had said that the ministry has referred a list of 194,000 vacant housing units to Iran National Tax Administration to be taxed under the new vacancy tax law.

The minister said that the owners of these houses have been informed in this regard via receiving SMSs.

In September 2020, Mahmoudzadeh had said that in the first stage of the implementation of the program for collecting tax from the country's vacant housing units, only units belonging to natural persons are targeted.

The Iranian parliament (Majlis) had approved the double-urgency plan of the vacancy tax law in mid-July 2020.

The mentioned plan is mainly aimed at lowering the housing rental rate in the country.

Growth returns to stock market

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — After several days of drops, TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), climbed on Tuesday.

The index rose 18,457 points to 1.244 million, as 6.973 billion securities worth 51.605 trillion rials (about \$1.228 billion) were traded at the TSE.

The first market's index rose 15,343 points,

and the second market's index went up 30,980 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.

Market analysts and experts suggest investors to focus more on long-term in-

vestment 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 worse course of action that a shareholder can take.

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

Losing Iran won't help Biden in his China policy: Turkish academic

By Mohammad Mazhari

TEHRAN — Losing Turkey and Iran will not help Joe Biden to contain China, says Mustafa Caner, a Turkish academic.

"To contain Chinese economic power and expansion, Biden should get along with other important states," Caner, the research assistant in the Middle East Institute at Sakarya University, tells the Tehran Times.

Former President Donald Trump's Iran policy was an abject failure, applying maximum pressure to minimal benefit. The United States withdrew from the Iran nuclear deal and ratcheted up sanctions on Tehran.

Iran and remaining parties in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action have started talks in Vienna to revitalize the 2015 nuclear pact.

However, pundits say, Biden is too slow to restore the deal, warning his window of opportunity is closing.

Tehran recently inked a 25-year comprehensive strategic partnership with China which raised concerns in Washington.

In this regard the Turkish academic notes that "losing Iran will not help Biden to confront China's expansionist policies."

Following is the text of the interview: **How do you see the Biden administration's policies from confronting China and Russia to rapprochement with the EU? Can Biden curb Chinese economic expansion?**

I think Biden has lots of powerful challenges ahead of him and he has not shown that he is capable of dealing with them yet. For instance, Washington does not provide enough support for Ukraine against Russia. Kremlin is increasing its influence both in the Middle East (West Asia) and East Europe. Biden is not intervening in. Apart from that, to contain Chinese economic power and expansion, Biden should get along with other important states. Losing Turkey and Iran will not help him to contain China. The U.S. still acts as "the Great Arbitrator of the World", however it is lacking an adequate legitimacy ground. In order to regain its



respectful position, Washington has to fuel multilateralism, empower international organizations, make diplomacy work and accommodate its rhetoric with concordant actions. Without fostering multilateralism, the U.S.-EU rapprochement cannot be fulfilled.

It seems that after Biden took the reign in the White House in January Turkey has lost its importance for America. Some media outlets also claim that Turkey is approaching Israel to fill this gap. Is that right?

It is not Turkey that lost its position but Israel. Israel had been enjoying full support from the Trump administration. Declaring Jerusalem as the so-called capital of Israel, legitimizing Israel's occupation in Palestine with so-called "peace" plans, and Israel's normalization with some Arab states were realized with Washington's backing. With Biden coming to power, Israel partially lost that support. Washington and Tel Aviv's Middle East (West Asia) prospects differed. For example, Biden wants to settle with Iran and Netanyahu challenges it.

On the other hand, Turkey-U.S. relations have been problematic since the Obama administration. Trump's era also

was no picnic for Turkey. The latest U.S. sanctions against Turkey was imposed in December 2020 when Trump was in power. Harboring Fetullah Gulen, the mastermind of the failed coup attempt in 2016, and supporting PKK/YPG terrorists in Syria are the two unacceptable faults of Washington against Turkey. If Turkey wanted to fill the U.S. gap with Israel, it would have done that long ago.

Possible Turkey-Israel rapprochement is primarily about Eastern Mediterranean and relevant regional issues. Positive messages are coming from both sides. However, this rapprochement will not clear both countries' differences on many subjects, i.e., Iran nuclear issue, and the Israel-Palestine conflict. Turkey has always defended the peaceful nuclear rights of Iran and criticized U.S. sanctions. Turkey will continue to do so.

What will be the possible effects of Iran's talks with other nuclear deal parties on regional balances? Can Israel and Saudi Arabia hamper the negotiation process?

First of all, some (Persian) Gulf countries are strongly opposing a deal between Iran and other parties. The reason for that they think by lifting the sanctions,

the U.S. is empowering Iran and this will pose a threat to Arab states in the (Persian) Gulf.

Iran will indeed gain significant leverage in the context of its competition with other regional powers by coming to terms with JCPOA parties. Lifting the sanctions will hugely benefit Iran's economy and that will fuel Iran's regional instruments in the simplest terms. Israel also fears the same development. (Persian) Gulf states and Israel can limit and delay the agreement. Especially, Israel can use sabotages and assassinations in this regard. However, they cannot prevent the deal from happening.

How do you evaluate the 25-year partnership between Iran and China? Why do Americans are worried about the partnership?

I think the deal is a clear message to the U.S. that the clock is ticking and it should expedite the nuclear deal process before it is too late. The Iran-China deal is a framework agreement so far. The details have not been revealed and it has not come to the Iranian Parliament yet. That makes me think that it could be a strategy to make the U.S. more careful and quicker in its steps towards Iran. Because Iran has other options. And losing Iran will not help Biden to confront China's expansionist policies.

How does Turkey regard Chinese Belt and Road Initiative? How can it strengthen countries' ties in the region?

A: Turkey's approach towards "the Belt and Road Initiative" is rather positive. Ankara supports the initiative and feels glad to be a part of it. Connecting countries together in terms of their economy, will strengthen both their economy and political ties. By creating an economic dependency between countries, the belt and road initiative will prevent conflicts and boost diplomacy. It will also contribute to cultural interactions and enlarge different groups and people's visions toward each other. Underdeveloped countries will enjoy a great deal of the project since it will help them to enhance their economy.

Israeli ship attacked near UAE: Al-Mayadeen

An Israeli ship called the Hyperion affiliated with the Israeli PCC company was attacked near the shores of the Fujairah emirate in the United Arab Emirates on Tuesday, according to the Al-Mayadeen news.

Data available on MarineTraffic.com showed the Hyperion, a vehicle carrier sailing under the flag of the Bahamas, stopped off the coast of Fujairah.

The vessel is associated with the Israeli Ray Shipping company, the same company that owns the vessel that was hit in February.

The IDF declined to comment on the reports.

The attack came just two days after a sabotage attack on Iran's Natanz nuclear facility.

The incident also comes after two strikes on Israeli vessels in the region and reports of dozens of earlier strikes carried out by Israel in locations ranging from the Mediterranean Sea to the Persian Gulf.

In March, The Jerusalem Post's sister publication Maariv reported that dozens of Iranian ships had been attacked by Israel throughout West Asia, after The Wall Street Journal reported that a dozen Iranian oil tankers headed to Syria had been attacked by Israel.



Iran-China partnership is a combined battle against Washington: columnist

→ 1 Both counties are less or more are under the U.S. sanctions and competition. Iran needs market for its oil and gas while China needs large amount of energy for its huge industry. Except China, other countries of the region can't go against the U.S. sanctions, thus it makes China a better partner for Iran to export its oil and gas to its markets. Besides, it will bring Chinese investment to Iran which will help boost its sanctions-crippled economy. The U.S. latest sanctions following scrapping the JCPOA, Iran's economy is quite in tatters. Apart from economic gains, this partnership than can convert to a security alliance in future will serve both the states interests against its adversary — the U.S. Apart from economic cooperation, the agreement also calls for security cooperation and an intelligence partnership. Most importantly, it projects an image of Iran's strength and represents an attempt to break out of the diplomatic isolation imposed by the United States.

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

China has deep economic relations with Asian countries. Markets all over the world including South Asia are dumped with the Chinese goods. China is the largest trade partners of many of the Asian countries including Japan with whom China's trade value is around \$400 billion. China is steadily laying the groundwork for its ambitious 'One Belt, One Road' (OBOR) program. Given that it is an expansive regional infrastructure and connectivity initiative, the dismantling of trade barriers throughout the OBOR region is important. China realizes this, and has been actively pursuing free trade agreements with all key stakeholders. OBOR is now labeled the Belt and Road



Initiative (BRI) to reflect the fact that it will connect Asia, Europe, and Africa along five maritime and land routes. This includes two South Asian economic corridors: Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) and China-Pakistan (CPEC). As a result, China is actively seeking to further improve its trade relations with South Asia. Deeper connectivity, once achieved under the BRI, will boost the development and commercial aspirations of South Asia's lagging economies, and open up new markets for China. As for as China's reliability for Iran is concerned so international politics spin around interests. And secondly history matters in this regard. Having convergence if interests, Iran hopes that China will potentially tip the balance in its favor. Moreover, Iranian officials appear to believe that China's interests are closely tied to Iran.

Do you predict China can economically surpass the U.S. in coming years? Do you also foresee a clash over the Chinese power?

Reports by economic experts say China is set to overtake the United States as the world's largest economy a few years earlier than anticipated due to the coronavirus pandemic. The latest GDP reports show that of the U.S. fell by 2.3% in 2020, while China's grew by 2.3% amid the Corona pandemic. The

UK-based Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR) said China's "skilful" management of Covid-19 would boost its relative growth compared to the U.S. and Europe in coming years. On the other hand, the U.S. economy has been hit hard by the world's worst coronavirus epidemic in terms of sheer numbers.

As for as a clash between Washington and Beijing is concerned, it is certain where they may fall in the Thucydides trap. China has shown the ability and the intention to increasingly close its power gap with the United States both economically and militarily. The economic competition is global while the military competition is regional where China wants to secure its backyards like Western Pacific from the U.S. military threats. In the geopolitical hotspots of the South and East China Seas, Beijing seems to be putting into practice Sun Tzu's stratagem of subduing the enemy without fighting. Without becoming involved a kinetic form of war, where U.S. military firepower would be currently hard to match, Beijing has attempted to militarize the geopolitical space in the western Pacific and make it costlier for the United States to stay the course.

What are the effects of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative on the region?

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) ill have profound impacts on the region's geo-political and geo-economic situation. Beyond its more obvious impacts, the BRI has also influenced several other aspects indirectly, including the overall regional order, infrastructure financing, and the nature of trade ties between many regional states. The most important geo-economic impact of the BRI relates to connectivity. Previously, different modes of regional connectivity

were often viewed in isolation from each other. Land connectivity, for example, was viewed exclusively through the lens of driveable roads and multi-lane highways, without any consideration for maritime transport capacity. Throughout the Asian region, and particularly in relation to the land-locked countries of South and Central Asia, the focus was mainly on land-based links.

Is Pakistan ready to play a key role in regional economy? What are the challenges and opportunities when it comes to Pakistan's economy and infrastructure?

Pakistan has achieved steady growth since 2013 in the aftermath of a credit facility agreement with the IMF. Economic growth slowed in 2019 due to measures taken by the authorities to address macroeconomic imbalances. In 2020, Pakistan's economy collapsed due to the COVID-19 outbreak, reporting a negative growth balance of 0.4%. According to the IMF's October 2020 forecast, growth is expected to resume in 2021, estimated at 1% of GDP, and stabilise in 2022 at 4%. In its most recent January 2021 update of the World Economic Outlook, the IMF revised its GDP growth projections for Pakistan to 1.5% in 2021 and 4% in 2022 (representing a difference from the October 2020 WEO projections of 0.5% in 2021). While domestic economic activity is expected to rebound as blocking measures are removed, Pakistan's short-term economic outlook is subdued. However, the revenue Pakistan is receiving from the overseas Pakistanis are substantial and more than \$2 billion per month consecutively in the last ten months which is stabilizing Pakistani economy. Nonetheless, serious measure needed to be adopted to help sustain the economy and the inflation in the country.

Wright shooting: Minneapolis erupts in another night of protests

→ 1 "I'll Tase you! I'll Tase you! Taser! Taser! Taser!" she can be heard saying. She draws her weapon after the man breaks free from police outside his car and gets back behind the wheel.

After firing a single shot from her handgun, the car speeds away and the officer is heard saying, "Holy sh*t! I shot him."

Gannon commented: "This appears to me, from what I viewed and the officers' reaction and distress immediately after, that this was an accidental discharge that resulted in the tragic death of Mr. Wright."

But Wright's brother, Dallas Bryant, told about 100 people gathered for a candlelight vigil on Monday evening that his brother sounded scared during the phone call, and questioned how the officer could mistake a gun for a Taser.

"You know the difference between plastic and metal. We all know it," he said.

Taliban refuse to attend Afghan talks in Turkey if held this week

The Taliban will not attend a meeting on the Afghan peace process in Turkey if it took place this week, the armed group's spokesman said.

Turkey is hosting a crucial meeting this month to be attended by the United Nations and Qatar as part of a United States-backed push to see a peace agreement between Afghanistan's warring sides finalized.

According to al Jazeera, diplomats and officials briefed on the matter said it was planned to take place over 10 days from April 16, though the date had not been finalized or officially announced.

"We can't take part in Turkey's conference on 16 April as discussions on attending the conference are under way," Taliban spokesman Mohammed Naeem said in a message sent to news agencies.

While no date for the Turkey conference has been set, time is running out on a May 1 deadline for the withdrawal of US and NATO troops from Afghanistan in keeping with a deal the administration of former US President Donald Trump made with the Taliban more than a year ago.

Russia calls U.S. an adversary, warns its warships to avoid Crimea

Russia on Tuesday called the United States an adversary and told U.S. warships to stay well away from Crimea "for their own good", calling their deployment in the Black Sea a provocation designed to test Russian nerves.

"The United States is our adversary and does everything it can to undermine Russia's position on the world stage," Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov was cited as saying by Russian news agencies.

"We do not see any other elements in their approach. Those are our conclusions," they quoted him as saying. The comment was a sharp break with the usual language from Moscow, which has often referred to the United States in the past as "a partner".

Moscow annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014 and two U.S. warships are due to arrive in the Black Sea this week amid an escalation in fighting in eastern Ukraine where government forces have battled Russian-backed separatists in a conflict Kyiv says has killed 14,000 people.

Japan to release contaminated Fukushima water into sea after treatment

Japan will release more than 1 million tons of contaminated water from the destroyed Fukushima nuclear plant into the sea, the government said on Tuesday, a move China called "extremely irresponsible", while South Korea summoned Tokyo's ambassador in Seoul to protest.

The first release of water will take place in about two years, giving plant operator Tokyo Electric Power time to begin filtering the water to remove harmful isotopes, build infrastructure and acquire regulatory approval.

Japan has argued the water release is necessary to press ahead with the complex decommissioning of the plant after it was crippled by a 2011 earthquake and tsunami. It says similarly filtered water is routinely released from nuclear plants around the world.

Nearly 1.3 million tons of contaminated water, or enough to fill about 500 Olympic-sized swimming pools, is stored in huge tanks at the plant at an annual cost of about 100 billion yen (\$912.66 million) -- and space is running out.

"Releasing the ... treated water is an unavoidable task to decommission the Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Power Plant and reconstruct the Fukushima area," Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said of the process that will take decades to complete.

Resistance News

Mishaal elected new leader of Hamas abroad, Abu Marzouk his deputy

INTERNATIONAL DESK TEHRAN- he Hamas Movement has announced the election of Khaled Mishaal as its leader abroad and Mousa Abu Marzouk as his deputy.

In a statement, Hamas said that its leadership abroad was able to hold the internal elections for over a month to choose its new Shura Council and convene it in the presence of its members.

It added that such elections are held by the Movement periodically in all areas of its presence abroad.

The Movement asked Almighty Allah (God) to help Mishaal and Abu Marzouk successfully assume the tasks they were entrusted with and carry the resistance banner until the liberation of Palestine.

In this regard, head of Hamas's political bureau Ismail Haniyeh phoned Khaled Mishaal and congratulated him for winning the confidence of his comrades who elected him as head of the Movement abroad.

Haniyeh also phoned Abu Marzouk and congratulated him on his election as deputy head of Hamas abroad.

Iranian handicrafts: calligraphy of Qazvin

HERITAGE **TEHRAN** — Calligraphy is widely deemed **d e s k** as one of the most revered arts throughout the history of Iran. According to Iranian legends, calligraphy was invented by Tahmuras, the third king of the Pishdadian dynasty.

It has been recited in the Book of King (Shahnameh) by the illustrious poet Ferdowsi that after the demons were captivated by Tahmuras, they asked for mercy and in return, they taught him calligraphy. At the beginning of the Islamic Era, the formal alphabet of Iran was a kind of Pahlavi called “Farsi-e Miyaneh” or Middle Persian.



According to Visit Iran, the scientific, literature, and political texts were written in Pahlavi and only religious texts were written in the Avestan alphabet. After the conquest of Iran by the Arab world and their cultural influence, and due to technical shortcomings of the Pahlavi alphabet, Pahlavi was replaced by Kufic in many cities of Iran. It was during 14th and 15th centuries that Ta’liq, Nasta’liq, and Shekasteh Nasta’liq were developed by the Iranian.

They were enhanced in the 16th and 17th centuries and reached perfection in the 18th and 19th centuries. Today very few people write in Ta’liq, but Nasta’liq and Shekasteh Nasta’liq are both very common and prominent. Persian-Islamic calligraphy is one of the flourishing arts mesmerizing both eyes and ears. As if the written words are met by the eyes, read by the heart, and heard by the ears, arousing the two feelings.

It is quite certain that calligraphy did not reach perfection, not in a fraction of a second, but years of practicing, hard work, and innovation of many artists have resulted in its high position as a form of art. Calligraphy is categorized as one of the fields of Fine Arts. The practitioner, based on the taste of the buyer, may use handmade, marble, plain, or colorful papers that are also chosen inappropriate with the text. The finished work can be illuminated too.

This art is mostly used to write copies of the holy Quran, book of the poets, or famous sayings of the elder. One of the greatest masters of Nasta’liq who played the most important part in its perfection was Mir Emad from Qazvin. He is considered one of the most celebrated calligraphists of Islamic calligraphy. In addition to Mir Emad, artists such as Mirza Mohammad Hosein Emad ol-Ketab Qazvini, who famously designed “Besmellah (In the name of God) in the form of Tughra bird for the first time), Abd ol-Majid Taleqani and Malek Mohammad Qazvini have all helped for the city of Qazvin to be known as the calligraphy capital of Iran.

Mirror work in Fars

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — Mirror works not only enhance decorations of architecture but also illuminates the space by multiplying the reflection of the light. It is considered as the Iranian’s last innovation in the field of architecture and internal decoration. Since many glass artifacts belonging to the Parthian and Sassanid dynasties have been discovered, it has been concluded that glasswork has also been practiced from a long ago.



In Iranian culture mirror and water have been symbols of purity, fortune, honesty, and light. The use of mirrors may relate to this very symbolism. In the 19th-century mirror works gained popularity. Fine mirror vases were made in Germany and then sent to Iran. Iranian could simply cut the vases into mosaics of their desired forms and use them.

In the beginning, a common practice in mirror works was to install one-piece panels of the mirror in the building. One example is the “Chehel Sotoun (literally Forty Columns)” palace in Isfahan. In the past, a mirror was installed over one of the entrances, so large that the reflection of the people passing through the entrance was quite visible. However, the size of the pieces gradually grew smaller.

By the end of the 19th century, mirrors were used in small triangles, diamond, or hexagonal pieces. Also, Iranian architects used convex glasses that were turned to mirror. In the Qajar dynasty, a new style of architecture was born, even though the architects were following the trends that were common in the Safavid dynasty. But generally, architecture is considered to have declined. It was only during the reign of Naser al-Din Shah of Qajar that western art trends influenced Iranian art, and architecture and applied arts such as stucco, mirror work and mosaics improved. At that time, mirror works were greatly used to ornate royal buildings and also shrines.

That is why mirror work grew in Qajar, and fascinating ornate in forms of Muqarnas, arabesque, and also painting and calligraphy on the mirror was created. “Mirror Hall” of Golestan Palace, or “Shams-ol-Emarat” are only two examples of many unmatched works of art that remained today. Shiraz, Isfahan, and Tehran are the major centers of mirror works of Iran.

From mazy bazaars to nomadic lands: visit Iran in a slow, no-tech fashion

→ 1 A walking tour in its narrow alleys yields a unique opportunity to listen to the stories behind this Iranian heritage. While in Shiraz, local guides help to revive the traditions by showing visitors the old and forgotten jobs of the bazaar.

Here, a woman is sewing “Giveh”, the oldest type of handwoven Iranian shoes; over there, a man is repairing old books in its old shop, while his neighbor quietly prepares nuts with saffron and salt all day long. Crossing the threshold of their old shops with a walking tour would be a priceless opportunity to meet with the last representative of these ancient jobs before they become part of the past.

From another point of view, bazaars are also synonyms of foods, with their unmissable colorful stalls of vegetables, herbs, and spices. Yet, most of these ingredients might be mysterious to a foreign eye.

It is possible to pierce the mystery of Persian cookery, and getting familiar with the concept of hot and cold natures in food, through joining a walking tour in the bazaars of Tehran, Shiraz, Yazd, or Isfahan. Not only it’s an opportunity to discover dozens of unique local ingredients, but it’s also a chance to taste the Iranian street foods and delicacies, in some traditional bakery known only by locals and shopkeepers.

People watching and even mingling with them in the bazaars is one of the best ways to take the pulse of the country. Bazaars have traditionally been major economic and social centers in



any Iranian city.

But for those who wish to have insights into the authentic Persian culture, adding a cooking workshop to a walking tour seems to be a must. Some believe that Persian cuisine is the soul of the country and meals are a cheerful moment beloved by every Iranian family.

From Tehran to Shiraz, participating in a cooking class allows discovering local cuisine far from the usual restaurants. For instance, in the town of Taft, near Yazd, there is an eco-lodge managed by a Zoroastrian couple, which aims to share their traditions with tourists, through cooking workshops performed in a pomegranate field.

People watching and even mingling with them in the bazaars is one of the best ways to take the pulse of the country. Bazaars have traditionally been major economic and social centers in any Iranian city.

Relic attributed to Neo-Assyrian king discovered in western Iran

HERITAGE **TEHRAN** — Iranian archaeologists **d e s k** have discovered a portion of a royal memorial inscription, which is attributed to a Neo-Assyrian king, in western Iran.

“During an excavation project in Qabaq Tappeh of Kermanshah province, a team of Iranian archaeologists has unearthed a portion of a royal memorial inscription, which is attributed to Sargon II, who was the king of the Neo-Assyrian Empire,” ISNA quoted archaeologists Sajad Alibeigi, who leads the survey, as saying on Monday.

However, the royal inscription, which bears 23 lines of writing in cuneiform, is so far deemed as the most significant discovery of the survey, according to the archaeologist.

“Qabaq Tappeh was once an important and extensive settlement inhabited at least from the third millennium BC to the Islamic era,” Alibeigi noted.

Sargon II, (reigned 721–705 BC) extended and consolidated the conquests of his presumed father, Tiglath-pileser III. Upon his accession to the throne, he was faced immediately with three major problems: dealing with the Chaldean and Aramaean chieftainships in the southern parts of Babylonia, with the kingdom of Urartu and the peoples to the north in the

Armenian highlands, and with Syria and Palestine.

By and large, these were the conquests made by Tiglath-pileser III. Sargon’s problem was not only to maintain the status quo but to make further conquests to prove the might of the god Ashur, the national god of the Assyrian empire.

Assyria was a kingdom of northern Mesopotamia that became the center of one of the great empires of the ancient Middle East. It was located in what is now northern Iraq and southeastern Turkey.

Assyria was a dependency of Babylonia and later of the Mitanni kingdom during most of the 2nd millennium BC. It emerged as an independent state in the 14th century BC, and in the subsequent period it became a major power in Mesopotamia, Armenia, and sometimes in northern Syria. Assyrian power declined after the death of Tukulti-Ninurta I (c. 1208 BC). It was restored briefly in the 11th century BC by Tiglath-pileser I, but during the following period, both Assyria and its rivals were preoccupied with the incursions of the seminomadic Aramaeans.

According to Britannica, the Assyrian kings began a new period of expansion in the 9th century BC, and from the mid-8th to the late 7th century BC, a series of strong Assyrian kings—among them Tiglath-pileser



III, Sargon II, Sennacherib, and Esarhaddon—united most of the Middle East, from Egypt to the Persian Gulf, under Assyrian rule.

The last great Assyrian ruler was Ashurbanipal, but his last years and the period following his death, in 627 BC, are obscure. The state was finally destroyed by a Chaldean-Median coalition in 612–609 BC. Famous for their cruelty and fighting prowess, the Assyrians were also monumental builders, as shown by archaeological sites at Nineveh, Ashur, and Nimrud.

Sarab-e Qandil: a puzzling Sassanid bas-relief in southern Iran

HERITAGE **TEHRAN** — Sarab-e **d e s k** Qandil (literary meaning “Ice-cold Spring”), is one of many reliefs in southern Iran, which may still bear untold stories. Its isolation from frequented roads might explain its excellent state of conservation: it was not accessible for vandals.

Situated near the modern city of Kazerun in Fars province, the Sassanid-era (224-651 CE) relief has a quadrangular frame, carved on an isolated rock beside the bed of a river, without having been much eroded or damaged by the water.

It depicts a queen offering a lotus flower to her husband [widely believed to be the Iranian king Bahram II (r.276-293)]. The



two characters look at each other, while a prince (probably their son, the future king Bahram III) holds a ring of power.

The carving is well-executed; special attention has been paid to the clothes, which show beautiful and fine details, giving an

impression of lightness, of aerial movement. The king appears to wear his winged crown and jewels. His left hand is on the top of his sword. His right hand is open, waiting for the gift. The composition shows the royal figure at the center of the panel, the queen is on his right, the prince being on his left/back.

Although this relief is generally attributed to Bahram II, the lack of an inscription makes that experts couldn’t be completely certain. The main arguments for identification with Bahram II lay in the fact that he is the only Sasanian king who showed his queen on coins, and that the female figure might appear to be dressed more like a queen and not a goddess. Scholars like Vanden

Berghe and Aerinck, therefore, think that the relief can be attributed to Bahram II. However, Lewitt-Tawill maintains that the relief represents Ardashir I and the goddess, the prince being Shapur I.

Soon after Bahram II, the son and successor of Bahram I was enthroned, he was forced to defend his position against a brother, Hormizd, viceroy of the eastern provinces.

The Sassanid era is of very high importance in the history of Iran. Under Sassanids, Persian art and architecture experienced a general renaissance. Architecture often took grandiose proportions such as palaces at Ctesiphon, Firuzabad, and Sarvestan that are amongst highlights of the ensemble.

Archaeological museum to open near mighty Bam citadel

HERITAGE **TEHRAN** — An archaeological museum is to be established near the adobe Bam citadel, which is a mighty UNESCO-registered site in southeast Iran.

“The museum will be dedicated to the history and archaeological achievements of Bam and its Cultural Landscape,” CHTN quoted the director of the World Heritage site, as saying on Tuesday.

The museum is expected to open by the end of the current Iranian calendar year, the official added.

The property of Bam and its Cultural Landscape is located on the southern edge of the Iranian high plateau, in Kerman province, close to the Pakistan border. The origins of the citadel of Bam (“Arg-e Bam”), can be traced back to the Achaemenid period (6th to 4th centuries BC) and even beyond. The heyday of the citadel was from the 7th to 11th centuries, being at the crossroads of important trade routes and known for the production of silk and cotton garments.

The citadel, which contains the governor’s quarters and the fortified residential area, forms the central



focus of a vast cultural landscape, which is marked by a series of forts and citadels, now in ruins. The existence of life in the oasis was based on the underground irrigation canals, the qanats, of which Bam has preserved some of the earliest evidence in Iran

and which continue to function till the present time.

According to UNESCO, Arg-e Bam is the most representative example of a fortified medieval town built in vernacular technique using mud layers (Chineh), sun-dried mud bricks (khesht), and vaulted and domed structures.

Bam and its Cultural Landscape represents an outstanding example of an ancient fortified settlement that developed around the Iranian central plateau and is an exceptional testimony to the development of a trading settlement in the desert environment of the Central Asian region. This impressive construction undoubtedly represents the climax and is the most important achievement of its type not only in the area of Bam but also in a much wider cultural region of Western Asia.

The cultural landscape of Bam is an important representation of the interaction between man and nature and retains a rich resource of ancient canalizations, settlements, and forts as landmarks and as tangible evidence of the evolution of the area.

Iran’s fight against drugs continues despite sanctions, pandemic

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Iran has carried on a battle against narcotics in spite of being highly affected by cruel sanctions and COVID-19 pandemic, Eskandar Momeni, the director of headquarters for the fight against narcotics, said.

Iran has received the least possible assistance and cooperation in the global fight against narcotics while facing the most oppressive U.S. sanctions and unilateral coercive measures in supplying equipment and forces for this global fight, he lamented.

He went on to note that the issue of counter-narcotic is no exception to the consequences of COVID-19 disease, and all current programs and activities in this area have been affected by the current situation.

Last year (March 2020 – March 2021), amid the pandemic, Iran has participated in more than 20 regional and international events online, in cooperation with the UN-ODC office in Tehran, he highlighted, IRNA reported on Tuesday.

The counter-narcotics agencies and police forces succeeded in detecting about 1,150 tons of various types of narcotics by strengthening the mechanisms for monitoring and exchanging information between the responsible organizations.

This volume of discoveries is a new and unprecedented record in the fight against drugs, which shows a growth of about 41



Iran seized some 1,000 tons of narcotics in the Iranian calendar year 1398 (ended March 20, 2020), putting the country in first place in the world.

percent compared to 2019, he noted, adding, some 90 percent of the substances found were opium, 26 percent heroin, and 48 percent morphine.

This success has been achieved with the martyrdom of 10 law enforcement and counter-narcotics forces in the global front against drug transit, he further stated.

Iran’s anti-narcotics measures

Iran seized some 1,000 tons of narcotics in the Iranian calendar year 1398 (ended March 20, 2020), putting the country in first place in the world, Momeni said in July 2020.

After the Islamic Revolution (in 1979), 3,800 were martyred, 12,000 were wounded and disabled in the fight against drug trafficking, Momeni announced.

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

The organization also officially announced that the world’s first place in the discovery of opium, heroin, and morphine belongs to Iran.

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

UNODC World Drug Report 2020 estimates that in 2018, 91 percent of world opium, 48 percent of the world morphine, and 26 percent of the world heroin were seized by Iran.

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

National health week aims at “building a fairer, healthier world”

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — The national health week will be celebrated on April 21-27 under the theme of “building a fairer, healthier world”, concurrent with the World Health Day, IRNA reported on Tuesday.

April 7 of each year marks the celebration of World Health Day. From its inception at the First Health Assembly in 1948 and since taking effect in 1950, the celebration has aimed to create awareness of a specific health theme to highlight a priority area of concern for the World Health Organization.

In recent years, countries in the Western Pacific have experienced rapid economic growth, migration, and urbanization. This created opportunities for better lives for many but left others behind. The COVID-19 pandemic has undercut recent health gains, pushed more people into poverty and food insecurity, and amplified gender, social and health inequities.

So that, this year, the day focuses on a theme of “Building



a fairer, healthier world for everyone”, to ensure that all people are able to access quality health services depending on their needs and values within their communities.

The health ministry has assigned each day of the week with a special theme as follows:

Wednesday, April 21: Supporting health advocates for building a fairer and healthier world

Thursday, April 22: Social participation, empathy, and national harmony for building a fairer and healthier world

Friday, April 23: Religious teachings and linking religious institutions to build a fairer and healthier world

Saturday, April 24: Improving the system of health care network and primary health care to build a fairer and healthier world

Sunday, April 25: Media, education, and culture to build a fairer and healthier world

Monday, April 26: Research, Technology, support, and disruption of production to build a fairer and healthier world

Tuesday, April 27: Inter-sectoral partnerships and social responsibility to build a fairer and healthier world.

Carbon dioxide levels in atmosphere reach record high

Concentrations of climate-warming carbon dioxide in the atmosphere have hit record highs, despite a dip in emissions during the Covid pandemic, scientists have said.

The latest measurements from the long-running recording station at Mauna Loa Observatory, Hawaii, show global levels of carbon dioxide are 50% above what they were when the Industrial Revolution began in Britain.

The data released by the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, University of California San Diego, shows atmospheric concentrations of the greenhouse gas in March averaged 417.14 parts per million (ppm), a new record high.

The UK’s Met Office predicts monthly concentrations of carbon dioxide, the main driver of rising temperatures and the climate crisis, will peak in 2021 at about 419.5 ppm.

The previous record for monthly carbon dioxide concentrations at Mauna Loa in the Scripps dataset was 417.10ppm in May 2020.

Last year’s annual average figure was 413.94ppm – with 2021’s level forecast to be about 416.3ppm.

Carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere fluctuate slightly during the year, dropping as some is absorbed during the spring and summer by plants growing in the northern hemisphere, before it rises again in autumn and winter.

But the long-term trend in rising concentrations of carbon dioxide is caused by human activity, mainly through the burning of fossil fuels and also from deforestation, the Met Office said.

Global emissions reduced temporarily in 2020 as a result of a drop in transport use and economic activity as the coronavirus pandemic struck.

But the emissions reduction in 2020 was not enough to substantially affect the buildup of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, which continues to rise.

Much larger, longer-term reductions in emissions will be required to slow or stop the rise, the Met Office warned.

Projections from the UN’s climate sci-



ence body, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warns that to halt global warming at 1.5C – beyond which the worst impacts of rising temperatures are expected – global emissions will need to reach net zero by around 2050, or sooner.

Reaching net zero involves cutting emissions to as near to zero as possible and taking steps such as planting trees to absorb any remaining pollution.

Commenting on the latest data, Prof Martin Siegert, of the Grantham Institute, Imperial College London, said the new

record high was completely expected.

“Emissions may have been reduced but we are still emitting lots of carbon dioxide, and so its atmospheric concentration is bound to go up – and will continue to do so until we get to somewhere near net-zero emissions.

“Our path to net zero is obvious, challenging and necessary – and we must get on with the transition urgently,” he said.

Prof Simon Lewis, from University College London, said: “It is easy to forget just how much and just how fast fossil fuel emissions are affecting our planet.

“It took over 200 years to increase the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere by 25%, and just 30 years to reach 50% above pre-industrial levels. This dramatic change is like a human meteorite hitting Earth.”

But he added: “If countries make plans now to put society on a path of sustained and dramatic cuts to emissions from today, we can avoid ever-rising emissions and the dangerously accelerating impacts of climate change.”

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → چ

Afghanistan thanks Iran for free services to refugees during COVID-19

Afghanistan has appreciated Iran for offering health and treatment services to Afghan refugees infected with coronavirus free of charge.

The Afghan Foreign Ministry in a statement on Saturday announced its gratitude and appreciation to Iran for its humanitarian efforts to address the issue of Afghan refugees in the country.

All measures, especially the recent decree by the Iranian president to provide free medical treatment to Afghan refugees in Iranian public hospitals, have assured the Afghan government, IRNA reported on Sunday.

According to the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, providing transportation services to transit trucks and providing the necessary health assistance to vulnerable Afghan nationals are among the measures that are highly appreciated.

افغانستان از همکاری ایران برای مداوای مهاجران مبتلا به کرونا قدردانی کرد

وزارت امور خارجه افغانستان از کمک و همکاری جمهوری اسلامی ایران به مهاجران افغانی مبتلا به ویروس کرونا و مداوای رایگان آنها قدردانی کرد. وزارت امور خارجه افغانستان روز شنبه در اطلاعیه‌ای اعلام کرد: مراتب امتنان و سپاسگزاری خود را از جمهوری اسلامی ایران در رابطه به اقدامات بشردوستانه آن کشور درباره رسیدگی به مهاجرین افغان در آن کشور ابراز می‌دارد.

در این اطلاعیه آمده است: تمام اقدامات به ویژه صدور حکم اخیر رئیس جمهوری ایران برای درمان رایگان مهاجران افغان در بیمارستان های دولتی ایران موجب خاطر جمعی رهبری دولت افغانستان شد.

براساس اطلاعیه وزارت خارجه افغانستان، ایجاد تسهیلات در رفت و آمد کامیون های ترانزیتی و فراهم آوری مساعدت های لازم بهداشتی برای مهاجران در مناطق آسیب پذیر آن کشور اقداماتی هستند که از جانب دولت افغانستان به چشم قدردانی نگریسته می‌شوند.

Annual budget for forest protection doubles

➔ 1 Last year, about 47,000 hectares of damaged forests were covered by a development and reforestation plan, he said.

According to the measures taken to reduce wood smuggling in the northern forests of the country, last year compared to the same period a year before, wood logging decreased by 30 percent and the number of discoveries by 20 percent.

Mansour explained that today, inside the protected forests, we are witnessing a decrease in the level of density, which needs to be controlled, and by implementing the Hyrcanian forest aerial surveys, the destruction of northern forests can be prevented.

Currently, the first phase will be piloted on about 100 km, and it is planned to expand the project to all northern forests and a year later to all forests across the country, he stated.

The proposed budget amounted to about 24.357 quadrillion rials (about \$580 billion), with a 20-percent rise from last year’s budget.

Supplying basic goods, treatment, and medical equipment; securing livelihood; supporting production and employment; promoting and supporting non-oil exports and knowledge-based companies are the focal points of the bill.

Airborne plastic pollution ‘spiralling around the globe’, study finds

Microplastic pollution is now “spiralling around the globe”, according to a study of airborne plastic particles.

The researchers said human pollution has led to a global plastic cycle, akin to natural processes such as the carbon cycle, with plastic moving through the atmosphere, oceans and land. The result is the “plastification” of the planet, said one scientist.

The analysis calls plastic pollution one of the most pressing environmental issues of the 21st century. It indicates that the billions of tonnes of plastic discarded into the oceans and land and being broken down into tiny pieces are being thrown back into the air by road traffic and winds over seas and farmland.

People are already known to breathe, drink and eat microplastics and the other research suggests levels of pollution will continue to rise rapidly. The scientists said this “raises questions on the impact of accumulating plastics in the atmosphere on human health. The inhalation of particles can be irritating to lung tissue and lead to serious diseases.”

Prof Natalie Mahowald, at Cornell University in the US and part of the research team, said: “What we’re seeing right now is the accumulation of mismanaged plastics just going up. Some people think it’s going to increase by tenfold [per decade].

“But maybe we could solve this before it becomes a huge problem, if we manage our plastics better, before they accumulate in the environment and swirl around everywhere.”

She said clearing up ocean plastic could help reduce the amount that gets thrown back up into the atmosphere, and that more biodegradable plastics could be part of the solution.

The research, published in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, examined airborne microplastics, which have been far less studied than plastic in oceans and rivers.

The team had more than 300 samples of airborne microplastics from 11 sites across the western US, the best dataset available globally. These were the basis for atmospheric modelling that estimated the contribution from different sources, the first such study to do so.

Virtually none of the airborne microplastics came directly from plastic being discarded in cities and towns, the scientists found, but were the result of road traffic and winds across oceans and farmland whipping up plastic particles already in the environment.

“We thought population centres would be a much better source, obviously, but it just didn’t work out that way,” Mahowald said. “Resuspension [of microplastics] makes the most sense with this set of data.”

They found that roads were the dominant factor in the western US, linked to about 85% of the microplastics in the air. These are likely to include particles from tyres and brake pads on vehicles, and plastics from litter that had been ground down. The oceans were estimated to be the source of about 10% of the airborne plastics in western US, and soils 5%.

The researchers extended their modelling work to a global level and this suggested that while roads are also likely to be the dominant driver of airborne plastics in Europe, South America and Australia, plastic particles blown up from fields may be a much bigger factor in Africa and Asia.

The modelling showed that smaller microplastics can remain in the atmosphere for a week, long enough to be blown across continents. It also showed plastic pollution will be falling on Antarctica.

The scientists said the lack of observations in many parts of the world meant there were significant uncertainties in their estimates. Their work shows in particular a lack of data on plastics in the air above the oceans. They said work to understand the sources and consequences of microplastics in the atmosphere should be a priority.

Prof Andreas Stohl, at the Norwegian Institute for Air Research and not part of the study team, said: “What humans have been doing for decades now is what I call a ‘plastification’ of the landscape and oceans.

LET’S LEARN PERSIAN

(Part 158)

(Source: saadifoundation.ir)

The past continuous is used to describe an action as being still in progress in the past:

موقعی که آمد من نماز می‌خواندم.

It also describes a habitual or repeated action in the past:

هر روز به پارک می‌رفتم.

● تمرین ۲. به گذشته‌ی استمراری تبدیل کنید:

۱. من هر روز به گل‌ها آب (دادن)

۲. دخترها راحت با هم (حرف زدن)

۳. بقیه‌ی بیمارها در بیمارستان (ماندن)

۴. حتی پیرها خودشان را به اتوبوس (رساندن)

۵. دانشجویها سؤال‌های زیادی (پرسیدن)

۶. او روزی یک ساعت در ایستگاه (ایستادن)

INTERNATIONAL DAILY
www.tehrantimes.com

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» Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 88805807

» Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051603

» Printed at: Jame Jam Barta Borna - 44197737


Tehrantimes79

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





GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Be afraid of nothing but sins.

Prophet Muhammad (S)

“Doctor Nice” introduced to Iranian children

CULTURE DESK TEHRAN — Children’s book writer Valeri Gorbachev’s “Doctor Nice” has been published in Persian.

Cheshmeh is the publisher of the book translated into Persian by Shiva Hariari.



Front cover of the Persian translation of children’s book writer Valeri Gorbachev’s “Doctor Nice”.

Gorbachev is the author and illustrator of a number of children’s books, both in the United States and Europe, including “Nicky And The Big Bad Wolves” and “Where Is the Apple Pie?”

Gorbachev immigrated to the United States from the Ukraine in 1991 and now lives with his family in Brooklyn, New York.

“Recreation” to compete in Alicante Film Festival

ART DESK TEHRAN — “Recreation” by Iranian director Navid Nikkhah-Azad will go on screen at the short film section of the 18th edition of the Alicante Film Festival, which will begin in the Spanish city on May 29.

The film tells the story of Sahar, a rebel who decides to run away from school, disguise herself and go to a football game.

The film is competing with 11 shorts including “Will I” by Vladimir Koptsev from Russia, “Taxi” by Isaak Gracia from Mexico, “Mirage” by Sil van der Woerd from the Netherlands, “The crossing” by Edio Raven from Venezuela, and “Closer” by Gerrit Magnus Beduhn from Germany.

The star of “Recreation”, Mojan Kordi, won the award for the best performance at the 33rd Living Skies Student Film Festival in Canada for her role earlier in March.

Alicante Film Festival will come to an end on June 5.

“Solar Eclipse” nominated for Côté Court Festival

ART DESK TEHRAN — The short film “Solar Eclipse” directed by Raha Amirfazli and Alireza Ghasemi made its way to the 30th edition of the Côté Court International Film Festival in France.



The festival is held every year in the Pantin district of Paris with the aim of expanding cinematic productions in other languages.

The synopsis of the film states: “Shortly before the eclipse is complete, the reality of the cupbearer’s life changes”.

“Solar Eclipse” is a joint production of the Iranian company ‘Zel Sheshom’ and the ‘White Star’ which is a film and audiovisual production company based in France, and the international distribution of the short film is provided by the ‘Manifest’ Company.

The Côté Court Association runs the Short Film Festival annually, inviting film and movie enthusiasts as well as adults and children to portray cinema in a short format. Acting as an ambassador for the Short Film Festival, the Association has announced on its official website that the festival has adopted an online setting for the Festival and will announce any in-person meetings where applicable in order to comply with health protocols and regulations.

“Apostasy” writer Vahid Yaminpur crowned Islamic Revolution Artist of the Year

ART DESK TEHRAN — Author Vahid Yaminpur was named on Monday the Islamic Revolution Artist of the Year.

He received the title for “Apostasy”, an alternate history novel about the Islamic Revolution, as well as for his travelogue of Japan “The Jinja Monk”.

Director and screenwriter Jalil Saman, poets Afshin Ala and Ali-Mohammad Moaddab, and graphic artist Mohammadreza Doostmohammadi were other nominees of the of the title.

Speaking at a ceremony organized at the Art Bureau of the Islamic Ideology Dissemination Organization (IIDO), Yaminpur said, “This honor is so great that I am not sure if I deserve it; I don’t let the title deceive me... By this title, they want to encourage us to increase our efforts in creation of



Author Vahid Yaminpur accepts the award for the Islamic Revolution Artist of the Year at the Art Bureau on April 12, 2021. (Mehr/Saeidreza Razavi)

Iranian children’s cinema, simple but not easy to portrait



A scene from “The Runner” by Iranian director Amir Naderi

➔ Despite their linguistic, ethnic, and racial differences, neighbors’ gossip, and the economic challenge of feeding a new family member, Naii accepts Bashu and prepares to convince her disabled husband when he arrives home from a work-related trip.

The touching acclaimed drama, however, carries subtle undertones about human emotions like love, acceptance, loneliness, and unfamiliarity.

In 1999, “Bashu, the Little Stranger” was voted the best Iranian movie of all time by a poll of 150 movie experts.

“Children of Heaven” (Majid Majidi, 1998) “Children of Heaven” is about the hard life of a nine-year-old boy but it is free of cynicism without becoming idealistic.

The charming movie tries to draw the audience into the warm and hopeful world it creates.

The film is about a young boy, Ali, who accidentally lets her sister’s pink shoes get thrown away by a bin collector.

Worried to tell their parents about such a significant loss for a poor family, they conspire to share Ali’s shoes. Zahra will wear them in the morning, when she

goes to school, and give them to Ali in the afternoon when his classes begin. There’s not quite enough time, however, and although Ali races across the city every day to meet his sister, he’s continually late, so he tries a new way to win a new pair of shoes.

Majidi’s classic family film received a nomination for the best foreign-language film in 1999, becoming the first Iranian film ever nominated for an Oscar.

“The Color of Paradise” (Majid Majidi, 1999) Following the success of his previous film “Children of Heaven”, Majidi decided to continue with the children-centered movies.

“The Color of Paradise” depicts a visually impaired boy, Mohammad, who returns home to spend his holiday. Mohammad doesn’t let his lack of sight hinder him. Indeed, his heightened remaining senses make him even more receptive to the world around him.

Young Mohammad’s optimism, however, is not shared by his widowed father, a bitter man who sees the boy’s condition as nothing but a liability, especially as it pertains to his desire to marry the village beauty.

Through some magnificent, colorful, vivid scenes, the director tries to depict how the world is experienced through touch and sound by the blind boy.

“Birth of a Butterfly” (Mojtaba Raei, 1997) “Birth of a Butterfly” is a collection of three simple stories, which capture the audience’s emotions.

The stories are linked together by themes of intense emotions, faith, loss, isolation, spiritual transformation, and children.

The first story is about a stern father banishing his young son from the household to spare him the sight of his dying mother; the second follows the good deeds of a devout disabled boy left at home when his family visit a religious shrine; and the third shows the dilemma in which a teacher finds himself when local villagers are eager to believe he possesses spiritual powers.

Although the scenes of the pristine nature in Iranian rural areas could capture audiences’ eyes all over the

world, the didactic lessons of the movie seem more obvious to Iranian audiences than to Western eyes.

“The Runner” (Amir Naderi, 1984) New York-based Iranian filmmaker Amir Naderi’s acclaimed drama “The Runner” is perhaps the first feature film of Iranian New Wave cinema after the revolution, with an unconventional structure, that deliberately rejects all the traditional film principles, from narrative to basic cinematic.

The film is about Amiru, an impoverished boy who has lost his home during the war. He spends his days working odd jobs until he realizes that the only way he could fulfill his dreams is by enrolling in school.

In school, he has conflicts with other students. He decides to participate in a competition to see who can say the whole alphabet in one breath to earn others respect.

“Where Is the Friend’s House?” (Abbas Kiarostami, 1987)

Last but not least is definitely late Iranian master Abbas Kiarostami’s “Where Is the Friend’s House?”.

The film is the first of three interrelated films in Abbas Kiarostami’s “Koker trilogy”, named after the northern Iranian village where the films are set, which is followed by “Life and Nothing More” and “Under the Olive Trees”.

“Where Is the Friend’s House?” draws its title from a mystical poem by Iranian poet and painter Sohrab Sephehri (1928–1980), and echoes the equivocal journey undertaken in the poem.

The film is about eight-year-old Ahmad, who mistakenly takes his friend Mohammad Reza Nematzadeh’s notebook home after school one day. To save his friend from the overly strict teacher’s harsh punishment, he starts a journey to return the notebook, zigzagging through landscapes, maze-like alleyways, and a host of unhelpful people along the way.

The film was well-received at the time and it has stayed one of the most popular works by Kiarostami.

Book on ‘Political Digital Gaming’ published in Iran

CULTURE DESK TEHRAN — The National Computer Games Foundation has published a new book on ‘Political Digital Gaming’ with a focus on diplomacy in computer gaming.

The authors of the book consist of Akbar Nasrollahi, dean of the Faculty of Communication Sciences and Media Studies at the Islamic Azad University, and Farzaneh Sharifi, director of the National Institute for Gaming.

The book is based on Sharifi’s thesis entitled “A Representation of the American Media’s Diplomacy in the Digital Cultural Industry: A Case Study of the “Call of Duty” Game from 2007 to 2014” which was authored in 7 chapters on the concept of digital games, exploring sev-



eral theories ranging from terminology identification to chronological studies with an analytical study on games created in the categories of politics and culture.

The preface of the book outlines the purposes of the publication as a means to enhance university students’ vision in the field of digital studies in order to pave the way for ‘Digital Game Studies’ to be

introduced as a new course in Iranian universities, an addition to the already existing ‘Gaming’ course which is currently being delivered nationally as a field of study. The new field will allow students to focus more on research and critical approaches in digital gaming.

The book’s preface also introduces the book as the first-ever Iranian publication in the field of political digital gaming, providing a theoretical basis and a complete collection of opinions and observations of domestic and international researchers in this field. The book is based on extensive research on the “Call of Duty” game and provides an analysis and a modeled conclusion of the research findings.

The book has been authored with the approach of integrating diplomacy with digital games while providing the prerequisites for further research in the future. The authors believe that the capacity of games to indoctrinate hyper-textual, cultural, religious, and social ideologies is both extensive and widespread, and the threats and opportunities of this media should be accepted reciprocally and utilized to provide an “authoritative representation” against “misrepresentation”.

Documented interviews with a number of game analysts, university professors, and game researchers, as well as their insights into the “Call of Duty” game and similar games, are among the sections covered in Chapter 7 of this book.

The modern literature of Iran

By Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak

Throughout the nineteenth century, Iran’s increasing contacts with the Western world resulted in a series of radical changes in Iranian society, culture and literature. For centuries, Persian literature consisting of a vast body of predominately poetic works, had remained essentially poems called qasidahs, verse stories and romances, and a variety of animal fables often with explicit moral lessons.

There were also the Shahnameh, a monumental national epic in verse that enshrined Persian mythology and mythical history, the Spiritual Couplets, a great number of prose histories all of which were considered literature because of their formal and stylistic characteristics. This great body of literary works had been produced for the most part under royal patronage, and as read by princes, philosophers and other members of the elite. The tradition dictated a rather rigid set of rules governing the forms and genres of this literature as well as its production and communication in high circles.

Gradually, Iran’s exposure to Western cultures changed all that. Many nineteenth-century intellectuals and social critics began to question the stringent rules and regulations to which literature had been subjected. They also questioned the propriety and relevance of the themes and topics of the classical canon to what they sensed to be a new and very different age. All the



talk of medieval lyrics about doe-eyed beloveds and desperate lovers, they argued, was defunct; as was the kind of morality taught through the animal fables of olden times.

The Persian epic called The Shahnameh (Book of Kings), on the other hand, was thought to be a good and useful book because it made Iranians aware of their national identity and proud of their ancient glory. Just as the system of government had to be changed in order to provide for people’s population in the affairs of their country, Iran’s literature also had to be changed in a way that would make it understandable and enjoyable to the masses of people rather than to kings and courtiers.

In order to be effective, they concluded, literary works must be simple in form, direct in language and thematically relevant to people’s lives. After the Constitutional Movement of 1906, many writers and poets began to experiment with the ideas that the previous generation had expressed. Instead of celebrating the actions of kings and princes, they wrote qasidahs that commemorated those who had lost their lives for the revolution. Rather than composing ghazals that would describe the indescribable beauty of the beloved, they wrote ghazals that would instill the love of the motherland in the reader’s heart. Through their animal fables and parables they advocated greater civil and religious freedoms rather than upholding old virtues of justice on the part of rulers and obedience on the part of their subjects. In prose, a great number of socially oriented writings, thinly disguised as travel accounts, historical novels, and epistolary debates between religious conservatives and secular reformers began to appear, and satire became the dominant mode of social criticism.

In content, the body of Iranian literature written in the first two decades of twentieth century is marked by a desire to make literature socially relevant and emulate the literatures of the West. In language and form, however, this literature has an ambivalent character. While its differences with those of classical literature, it remains within the traditional formal and generic categories. Whereas it demonstrates ever bolder departures in subject matter, it still remains grounded in age-old narrative techniques and characterization.