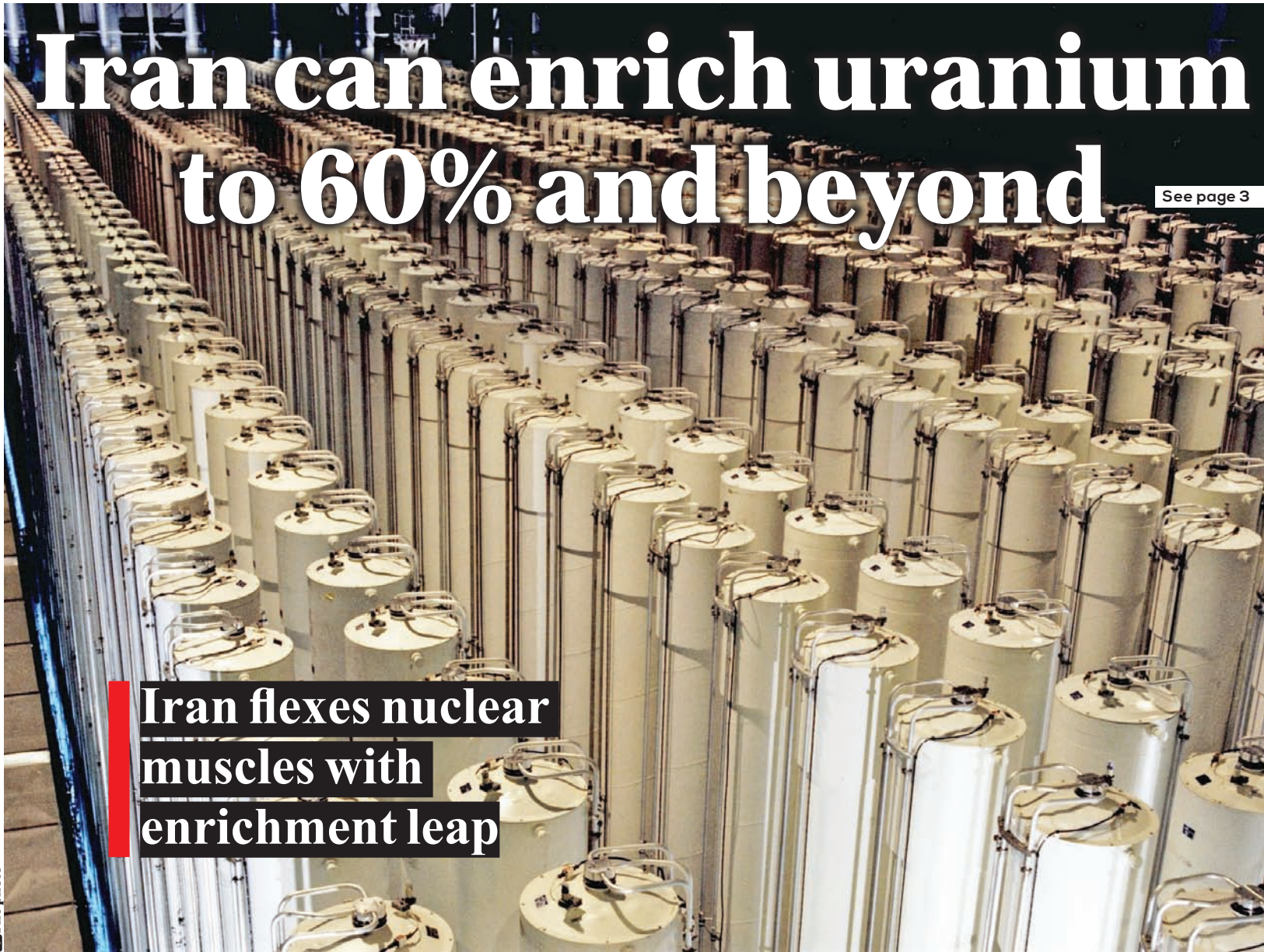


E3 delegates meet with Araghchi Page 2

Vladimir Alekno to arrive in Tehran on Sunday Page 3

IMF revises estimates of Iran's reserves following CBI objection Page 4

Iranian universities hosting students from 133 countries Page 7



Iran can enrich uranium to 60% and beyond

See page 3

Iran flexes nuclear muscles with enrichment leap

Iranian scientists produce 60% enriched uranium

TEHRAN — In a tweet on Friday, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, speaker of the parliament, congratulated the Iranian nation on enrichment of uranium to 60% purity. At 00:40 midnight on Friday, the young Iranian scientists were able to enrich uranium to 60 percent purity with their beliefs in God, the parliament speaker stated. He congratulated the Iranian nation, describing the will of the Iranian nation as "miraculous". The senior lawmaker pointed out that

the country will defy all conspiracies. President Hassan Rouhani told a cabinet meeting on Wednesday that the decision to enrich uranium to the level of 60 percent is a response to sabotage at the Natanz nuclear facility. Rouhani called the sabotage attack "mischievous". Presidential chief of staff Mahmoud Vaezi also said on Friday that producing uranium to purity of 60% is a response to Iran's ill-wishers.

Continued on page 2

Major petchem catalyst production units launched in Iran

TEHRAN - Iranian President Hassan Rouhani on Thursday ordered the official inauguration of two major petrochemical catalyst production projects worth about \$10 million in central Markazi Province via videoconference. As Shana reported, in a virtual ceremony, Rouhani inaugurated the knowledge-based projects for the production

of polypropylene and high-density polyethylene (HDPE) catalysts, which have been implemented for the first time in the country with Iranian technical knowledge. All the equipment and machinery used in the mentioned catalyst production units have been made inside the country by capable Iranian engineers and experts.

Continued on page 4

Iran finalizes deal for 60 million "Sputnik V" vaccines

TEHRAN — Iran has finalized a deal with Russia to purchase 60 million doses of Sputnik V vaccine, Iranian Ambassador to Moscow Kazem Jalali said on Thursday. Supported by Iran's Ministry of Health, the contract was signed between the Iranian Embassy in Moscow and the Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) to buy 60 million doses of vaccine, which is enough to vaccinate 30 million people.

Jalali said that Iran will receive the vaccines through a period of seven months (May 22-December 21), IRNA reported. Referring to the current contract for two million doses, Jalali stated that some five shipments, amounting to 520,000 doses of vaccine, have so far been sent to Iran, while the Russian side would deliver the rest as soon as possible.

Continued on page 7

Natanz sabotage: A sign of Biden's unwillingness to revive the JCPOA

BY SONJA VAN DEN ENDE
The attack on Iran's nuclear facility Natanz, coincidentally, happened on the day that the U.S. secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin visited Israel. Lloyd Austin, who was heavily involved in the Afghanistan and Iraq U.S. occupation (war), was the senior military commander in charge of all U.S. and remaining coalition forces in Iraq, since 2010. Iraq was the scenery of the assassination of General Qasem Soleimani, who was killed at the airport in Baghdad on 3 January 2020. General Soleimani was on a diplomatic mission and brutally killed by an U.S. drone.

Behind the sabotage
That is very easy to answer, you might think, of course, it was Israel, who is not hiding its hatred against the Islamic Republic of Iran and would do anything and everything to destroy Iran and is trying to do so for many years, to provoke war. But Israel is not the only country that wants to destroy Iran, of course, the U.S. wants the same, for other reasons than Israel.

The U.S. wants retaliation for the 1979 Islamic revolution, which removed their puppet Shah Reza Pahlavi, who protected U.S. interest (oil) in Iran and was the absolute ruler. Another example of U.S. involvement is Mohammad Mossadeq, who became Iran's Prime Minister in 1951. After he nationalized Iranian oil companies in 1953, he was deposed in a coup d'état by the United States and Shah Reza Pahlavi was installed as a puppet for the U.S., to protect the U.S. - Iranian oil theft. Israel and the U.S. have a long history in sabotaging Iran, since 1979, Israel (with approval of the U.S.) assassinated many scientists, the last assassination was the murder on nuclear physicists, Mohsen Fakhrazadeh, who was assassinated last November 2020 inside Iran by Israel.

Under the ultra-right-wing government of Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel has become a totalitarian state, with emphasis on war with Iran and ignoring human rights about the Palestinians, which they see, together with Iran, as the biggest threat for their own security. They even formed alliances of so-called peace with Wahhabi states like Saudi Arabia and Bahrain.

Continued on page 5

Most popular festivals that reflect Iran's cultural spirit

BY MOHAMMAD ARAGHI
TEHRAN - In order to promote the rich Iranian culture, we have explored the most popular Iranian festive and commemorative events by going on a journey into the Iranian world of religious spirituality and cultural entertainment. Over the past four decades, Iran has had a significant cultural influence in the region and specifically the Islamic World, with many of its traditional customs getting the attention of other nations, for example, Noruz, which was used on several occasions by world leaders to send political messages to Iranians. Of the many events and festivals which are held in Iran, the most popular Iranian festivals that reflect the spirit of the Iranian cultural influence are presented in chronological order:

1. Noruz: The Iranian New Year celebration is called Noruz, which translates into 'New Day' and it is usually held until the 13th of Farvardin. Farvardin 13 is called '13 Bedar' which means 'Thirteen

Outdoor' signifying the tradition to spend the day outdoors and marks the end of Noruz holidays in Iran. One of the interesting facts regarding Noruz is its concurrence with the Vernal Equinox which is the moment of the year when the sun positions itself exactly above the equator, making day and night of equal length. For the northern hemisphere, the Vernal Equinox falls on March 20 or 21, which coincides with Farvardin 1 marking the beginning of the Iranian New Year.

More than 13 countries and ethnicities around the world celebrate Noruz each year and have marked it as a public holiday, some of them include Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan all of which also share their official language with Iran. Some eastern European countries and regions also celebrate Noruz, like Georgia, Kosovo, and Albania, as well as other regions such as Iraqi Kurdistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan.

Continued on page 8

Palestinians mark 73rd anniversary of Nakba as sirens wail in Israel

Palestinians have staged rallies across the occupied territories to commemorate the 73rd anniversary of the Nakba Day (the Day of Catastrophe), during which hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were ethnically cleansed from their homes by Zionist paramilitaries to make way for the creation of Israel.

Palestinians, whose families were uprooted in the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, on Thursday visited several destroyed towns and villages that once accommodated their ancestors, reiterating their right to return as they have done for decades.

Even though the Association for the Defense of the Rights of the Displaced (ADRID), the organizer of the annual March of Return, had called upon people to participate in online demonstrations and activities due to the coronavirus pandemic, many in-person demonstrations went ahead regardless.

The ADRID called on Palestinians inside Israel to display the name of their families'

destroyed villages and raise Palestinian flags on rooftops, terraces and balconies.

They walked to the depopulated Arab village of al-Damun, located 11.5 kilometers from the city of Acre, raising Palestinian flags and giving speeches. According to Press TV, similar rallies were also held in the former Arab villages of Umm az-Zinat, Saffuriya, al-Bassa, Lajjun and Malul.

Palestinians inside Israel raised placards bearing the slogan "Their independence day is our Nakba day," and performed several cultural activities.

Israel strikes Hamas targets in Gaza
The Israeli military struck targets in the Gaza Strip early Friday, hours after Palestinian resistance fighters in the besieged coastal enclave fired a rocket at southern Israel.

The military said in a statement that fighter jets and other aircraft hit a number of sites linked to Hamas resistance movement.

Rouhani criticizes Europeans for misconception about Iran's nuclear decision

TEHRAN — Iranian President Hassan Rouhani on Thursday harshly criticized the European countries for their recent comments on Iran's nuclear activities, saying Europeans have formulated a wrong perception about Iran's nuclear activities.

The Europeans have expressed concerns about Iran's move to enrich uranium to 60 percent purity in response to an act of sabotage at the Natanz nuclear plant.

Rouhani said that the Europeans have said that

with one move, Iran can increase its enrichment from 60 percent to 90 percent, "but what you have in mind is that we pave the way for a bomb."

The president added, "Today we can do 90% enrichment and we will do it if we want to, but our nuclear activity is peaceful and we are not looking for a nuclear bomb. You have been looking for a nuclear bomb and every year, you build and store new bombs."

He said that this accusation is pointed at the

Europeans themselves. Opening a number of oil projects through a videoconference, Rouhani reiterated Iran's long-held position, saying, "Any day you return to your commitments, we will return to our commitments and stop enriching 60% and return to 3.67% enrichment. Iran has shown that it promises manfully, and you have shown that your promise is invalid. You do not want to worry about Iran. Iran has moved bravely and morally and is committed to its commitments."

No guarantee Biden's successor will abide by the nuclear deal: professor

BY REZA MOSHFEGH
TEHRAN - An American professor is of the view that Biden's administration is keen to revitalize the 2015 nuclear deal but there is no guarantee the next U.S. administration will honor the pact. "I think that the Biden administration wants the JCPOA - after all, it was Obama and Biden that helped to create it in the first place," Wyn Rees tells the Tehran Times. "But an administration cannot bind its successor and a subsequent U.S. president could take a different view."

Pointing to the ongoing nuclear talks in Vienna

with the hope of reviving the JCPOA, the professor in the School of Politics and International Relations at the University of Nottingham, says, "The U.S. sees containment of the nuclear program as its highest priority in its policy towards Iran."

"But once/if that is achieved, the U.S. has other objectives that relate to Iran's ballistic missile program, and its regional influence in Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Lebanon," he adds.

Talks to revive the Iran nuclear deal started in Austrian capital some two weeks ago. However, a sabotage attack on the Natanz nuclear facility

on April 11 was a blow to the talks. In reaction to the sabotage, which is mostly blamed on Israel, Iran is ramping up uranium enrichment. Iran has been criticizing the European parties to the nuclear deal for failing to condemn the sabotage.

The sabotage operation took place after Iran and other parties to the 2015 agreement - Britain, France, Germany, China, and Russia - described the talks as "constructive" in efforts to bring Washington into full compliance with the accord.

Continued on page 5

Indianapolis: At least eight dead in shooting at FedEx site

At least eight people were killed in a late-night shooting at a FedEx facility in the U.S. city of Indianapolis by a gunman who is believed to have then killed himself, police said.

Multiple others were injured on Thursday night when gunfire erupted at the facility near Indianapolis International Airport, police spokesperson Genae Cook said. At least four people were hospitalized, including one person with critical injuries. Another two people were treated and released at the scene, Cook said.

The shooter was not immediately identified and investigators were still in the process of conducting interviews and gathering information.

Cook said it was too early to tell whether the shooter was an employee at the facility.

Police were called to reports of gunfire just after 11pm and officers observed an active shooting scene, Cook said. "We're still trying to ascertain the exact reason and cause for this incident," Cook said.

FedEx released a statement saying it is cooperating with authorities and working to get more information. "We are aware of the tragic shooting at our FedEx Ground facility near the Indianapolis airport. Safety is our top priority, and our thoughts are with all those who are affected," the statement said.

Family members gathered at a local hotel to await word on loved ones.

Some said employees are not allowed to have their phones with them while working shifts at the facility, making it difficult to contact them, WTHR-TV reported.

A witness, who said he works at the facility, told WISH-TV that he saw a man with a gun after hearing several gunshots.

"I saw a man with a submachine gun of some sort, an automatic rifle, and he was firing in the open," Jeremiah Miller said.

Regarding our previous Tender under Ref. No. 99-1019 we hereby renew mentioned Tender till 24-April-2021 TENDER INVITATION NO. 99-1019

IRAN ALUMINIUM COMPANY (IRALCO) would like to invite eligible suppliers for the supply of 30.000 MT Anode Carbone

Blocks on tender basis.
Interested companies are allowed to send their competitive offer till 7-April -2021
Based on our required instruction to following address:
PO Box 31, opposite Bahonar Park, Natural Resources Boulevard, Arak- Iran, Postal code: 3818998116
Attention: Mr. Omid - Mr. Nabium
Tel: +98 86 32162014 +98 86 32162181
NO.49, Mollasadra Ave., Vanak Square, Tehran- Iran, Postal code: 1991614581
Name of office: Managing Director Office, Iranian Aluminium Company.
Fax: +98 21 88049028 Tel: +98 21 88049024
For obtaining tender's documents and more information, please check: www.iralco.ir
Public Relations Department of Iran Aluminium Company



Iran insists Ukrainian plane shutdown was accidental

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Spokesman for the secretariat of the Supreme National Security Council said on Friday that Iran has explained to the Ukrainian National Defense and Security Council secretary that the downing of the Ukrainian passenger plane near Tehran on January 8, 2020 was a result of human error.

Keyvan Khosravi noted that in February 2020, when Oleksiy Danilov was Ukraine's representative in the plane incident, he and his Iranian counterpart Admiral Ali Shamkhani had a meeting at the presence of the two countries' aviation organizations' representatives.

In that meeting, a comprehensive technical explanation was provided to Danilov and it was emphasized that the tragic incident was caused by "human error" and was "unintentional".

"In a joint meeting with Danilov, Shamkhani, by pointing to the comprehensive and accurate research carried out by various expert groups of our country, categorically rejected any other possibility and hypothesis in this regard," he said.

Khosravi added, "Mr. Danilov's only specific request from Iran was to send the black box of the plane to Ukraine for re-reading, and he described this issue as a matter of honor for his country."

On Thursday, Danilov accused Iran of intentionally downing the Ukrainian plane.

Referring to Danilov's accusations, Khosravi said, "This could reinforce the suspicion that the remarks were custom-made to divert public opinion and promote controversy based on fake content."

Iran expresses 'grave concern' over recent events in Iraq

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh on Friday expressed grave concern over the events in the past few days in Iraq, particularly a car explosion at Baghdad, which left four people killed and 20 wounded.



He said, "The Islamic Republic of Iran has always supported the security, stability and territorial integrity of Iraq, and strongly rejects any action that threatens these inviolable principles."

Khatibzadeh added, "Iraq is moving in the direction of active internal development and activism and playing a constructive role in the region, but some are trying to prevent the realization of these goals in Iraq through explosions, terrorist acts, inciting insecurity and crisis-creating actions."

The spokesman further stated that the Islamic Republic believes that Iraq, given its capabilities, can leave behind these difficult days.

"We consider the security and stability of Iraq an integral part of security and stability in Iran and the region."

Expressing Iran's support for Iraq, he said, "Supporting the friendly and brotherly country of Iraq, we will not hesitate to help."

According to the Kurdistan Regional Government, Erbil International Airport was hit on Thursday by an explosive-laden drone.

The Iraqi people were still shocked by the Erbil incident when another bad news emerged as a car bomb in Sadr City in Baghdad left four people killed and 20 wounded.

Tehran calls Washington's sanctions on Russia a wrong move

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said on Friday that new U.S. sanctions against Russia is a wrong move and completely unacceptable.

He added, "Apparently, the U.S. government's addiction to sanctions against other countries under false pretenses has become an institutionalized approach in this country, and the change of administrations has not had an effect on correcting this attitude."

Biden's administration placed further sanctions on Russia on Thursday and officially blamed the country's premier intelligence service for alleged sophisticated hacking operation that compromised American government agencies and the nation's largest corporations.

The sanctions included steps designed to make it more difficult for Russia to participate in the global economy.

E3 top negotiators meet with Araghchi

POLITICAL TEHRAN — In continuation of the consultations between Iran and the P4+1 talks, heads of the E3 delegates met with Seyed Abbas Araghchi, head of the Iranian delegate on Friday.

Also today, another meeting was held between Seyed Abbas Araghchi, the Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister and Enrique Mora, Deputy Secretary General of the European Union's Foreign Action Service.

Separate meetings are scheduled to take place this evening between the Araghchi and the heads of the Russian and Chinese delegations.

Natanz sabotage is U.S. job, says Iranian MP

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Seyed Mahmood Nabavian, a senior Iranian MP, on Friday blamed the U.S. for the sabotage in the Natanz nuclear facility, saying Israel will not do anything without the permission of the United States.

"This is the United States of America that has even imposed a medicine embargo on us. The medicine embargo shows America's cowardice and savagery," Nabavian said.

Speaking at a ceremony in Qom about the Sabotage attack, he said,

"The government wants to say that it is Israel's job, but it is the United States' job, unless Israel does something without U.S. permission."

Sabotage in the Natanz nuclear site occurred on Sunday morning. Israeli media claimed that Mossad has conducted the attack.

An official at the Iranian Intelligence Ministry has said the saboteur has been identified.

Iranian scientists produce 60% enriched uranium

"We can produce uranium at any level of enrichment we want instantaneously and whenever we want," Salehi says

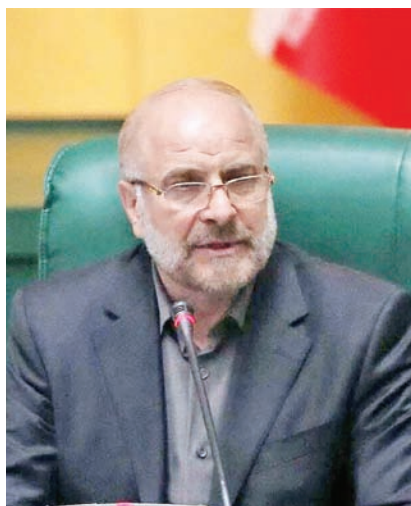
→ 1 "The launch of 60 percent uranium for peaceful uses is a clear sign of progresses and capabilities of the country, and a clear message to the ill-wishers of this land," Vaezi wrote on his Twitter account.

9 grams of nuclear fuel enriched to 60% produced per hour

Ali Akbar Salehi, head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran confirmed that he let Ghalibaf know at the midnight on Friday that Iran now owns 60% enriched uranium.

Speaking to state TV on Friday, Salehi said, "The rate of production of 60% enriched uranium is 9 grams per hour. Of course, 20% uranium will also be produced at the same time."

He went on to deny the rumors surrounding contamination at the Natanz nuclear site, stating, "We would not allow our colleagues to work in Natanz if there was contamination. If there had been contamination in Natanz, the inspectors would not have visited it, and based on



Ghalibaf

that, we completely deny this." Salehi, a nuclear physicist, also said that Iran is now capable of producing



Salehi

enriched uranium at any rate. "We can produce uranium with any (level of) enrichment we want, instan-

aneously and whenever we want."

He went on to elaborate on the enrichment process, describing it as a big, technical development. "This is a very big technical development that our colleagues in the Atomic Energy Organization (of Iran) are doing. This means that we produce both 60% enriched uranium and 20% uranium simultaneously, and these optimizations will be completed within the next day or two."

On Tuesday, Abbas Araghchi, the top Iranian negotiator in the Vienna talks, told the press that Iran will start enriching uranium to up to 60%.

Salehi also confirmed the announcement that experts have produced uranium to the purity of 60 percent at the Natanz facility.

In an interview with ISNA on Wednesday, the AEOI chief told ISNA that the 60% enriched uranium would be used to produce various types of radiopharmaceuticals.

Army, IRGC guarantee Iran's unparalleled peace, says military chief

POLITICAL TEHRAN — In a congratulatory message to the Army chief on Friday, Armed Forces Chief of Staff Major General Mohammad Bagheri said the Army and the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps serve as a guarantee for the lasting security and unparalleled peace of the Iranian nation.

General Bagheri sent the message ahead of the Islamic Republic of Army Day anniversary which falls on Sunday, April 18.

The top general considered the honors of the army in various fields as a valuable and path-breaking gift for the enthusiastic generations to responsibly serve the organization and emphasized, "The dear army is the supporter of the nation and national interests and a working reserve to meet the needs of the country."

He also praised the unity among the IRGC, the Army, and other branches of the armed forces, stating that all

armed forces are ready and waiting to hear from the Leader of the Islamic Revolution to "respond decisively" and give a "regrettable" response to any "kinds of threats and evil actions" by the enemies.

"Army, IRGC are iron fist of the nation"

Major General Hossein Salami, the commander of the IRGC, also gave a congratulatory message to the Army commander, highlighting the unity between the Army and the IRGC.

The top general put an emphasis on the cleverness of the two military branches in defying the enemies' threats, calling the two forces "the iron fist" of the Iranian nation.

On Wednesday, April 18, 1979, Imam Khomeini issued a message declaring April 18 as the "Islamic Republic of Iran's Army Day," and asked the army to march in cities with all its power and military equipment.



Taliban needs to reform based on democratic ways, says Zarif

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif spoke at the Raisina Dialogue 2021 forum on situation in Afghanistan on Friday, saying the Taliban needs to reform itself.

The forum, organized by the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, was also attended by Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, India's Minister of External Affairs, and Hamdullah Mohib, National Security Advisor to the Afghan government.

According to the Raisina 2021 Twitter page, Zarif stated that Iran is prepared to provide any forum for the Taliban and any other groups including the government to engage in serious talks and move forward towards peace, without threats and violence.

"The commitment of the U.S. to finally withdraw from Afghanistan is a positive move. The Taliban should not use this opportunity to increase their violence. They should understand that the people



of Afghanistan have had enough violence," said the minister.

Zarif said he believes that the Taliban has to reform based on democratic ways.

"If they want to go back to their 90s ideology, it will be impossible, as there is a new and different Afghanistan today," Zarif remarked.

The chief Iranian diplomat said, "It is important for all Afghans to agree on what they want and then work on the details

on how to create it. Regional countries should help Afghanistan create that picture, a democratic government, balanced ethnic representation, and a strong economy."

Chabahar port has a particular promise as a means of access to the Indian Ocean for landlocked Afghanistan.

On that note, Zarif added, "If we provide Afghanistan with transit opportunities through Chabahar to international markets, we will be able to build a viable public economy that is not dependent on drugs or any other criminal activity."

The Iranian foreign minister said it is needed that regional countries to set aside differences and focus on affinities.

"We need to put aside our differences and focus on our commonalities, including the fact that an Islamic emirate in Afghanistan is an existential threat to Pakistan and a national security threat to Iran and India," Raisina 2021 Twitter page quoted Zarif as saying.

He said the role of civil society in Af-

ghanistan today is not comparable to 2001 or the 1990s.

The minister added, "While there are problems that remain in the country, Iran, India and Pakistan need to preserve what has been achieved in Afghanistan and ensure its continuity."

Iran has tried to maintain peace and security in Afghanistan, through dialogue with the Taliban, and the Afghan government in the past years. Although the presence of a Taliban delegate in Iran was shocking to many analysts, the Afghan government had been notified in advance.

Afghanistan's Foreign Ministry confirmed that Tehran had in fact sought the Afghan government's views in advance.

According to Zarif, who met with the Taliban delegation on January 31, "political decisions cannot be made in a vacuum and an inclusive government must be formed in a participatory process and needs to consider all fundamental structures, institutions, and laws, such as the constitution."

West considers Iran-China strategic ties a threat, says Iranian diplomat

POLITICAL TEHRAN — In an interview with the Global Times published on Thursday, Mohammad Keshavarzadeh, the Iranian ambassador to Beijing has pointed out that the West is propagating against strategic ties between Iran and China, since it considers the cooperation as a "threat."

Keshavarzadeh said he believes that the Western media continue to use the "media" as a leverage to expand its colonial dominance.

"They spread false and manipulated information through social media and mass media to prevent Iran-China friendly cooperation," he said.

According to Keshavarzadeh, Iran and China have had friendly and peaceful relations for centuries and have never been at war with each other.

The top Iranian diplomat to China said the Western nations see China, an emerging world power, as a "threat to their strategic dominance."

On the Iran-China strategic cooperation plan, Keshavarzadeh said the West sees the establishment of long-term strategic and friendly relations between China and other independent countries such as Iran as a threat to its core interests in the region.

"They try to paint a bad image of China to intimidate people in other countries," he told the Global Times.

"When the economic cooperation brings prosperity to the local people and improves their livelihood, this poisonous and unrealistic propaganda of the West loses its effect," he said on the economic effects of the cooperation plan.

According to the ambassador, Iran and China face common threats such as terrorism, extremism, organized crime, and drug trafficking, which require continued cooperation on important regional and international issues to address these challenges and increase regional peace, stability, and transportation,



and trade in international waters.

Achieving these goals requires greater cooperation between the security and military sectors of the two countries to exchange information and plan joint maneuvers. "In this regard, close contacts are underway between the military, security and defense sectors of the two countries," said the Iranian ambassador.

The foundation for the comprehensive 25-year cooperation plan between Iran and China was set in line with the implementation of the joint statement of Chinese President Xi Jinping and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani during Xi's official visit to Tehran in 2016.

As the title suggests, it primarily covers all the different aspects of cooperation between the two countries, and the second aspect is the duration of cooperation, which is a roadmap for a quarter of a century.

Keshavarzadeh called Iran and China two ancient Asian civilizations that have been linked for thousands of years, adding, "The purpose of this plan is to deepen and strengthen these bilateral relations and it is not against any third country," he said.

On the Xinjiang controversy, he said, "Last week, I visited the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region with diplomatic delegates from more than 20 countries. I thought it was very beautiful there. I witnessed how the efforts of the Chinese central government have changed the lives of the local people and brought prosperity and development to the region. The goal of the Western countries in raising the Xinjiang issue is not benevolent, but only political, and its purpose is to put pressure on the Chinese government. The Islamic Republic of Iran strongly opposes these double standards of the West."

Keshavarzadeh also said the U.S. officials have acknowledged that the policy of maximum pressure on Iran has failed.

"Iran and China both see the sanctions as interference in domestic affairs and a violation of international law," he added.

The ambassador also said decision-making system in Iran is based on "national interests" and said that these decisions will not be influenced by Western pressures. "China is now a major global player, and our officials agree with China on the expansion of comprehensive strategic partnerships," Keshavarzadeh said.

He said Iran has a prominent geographical location in West Asia that could connect China to Europe.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the diplomat said, "China has played a constructive role in the issue of Iran's nuclear program."

The ambassador went on to say that the two countries exchange views on this issue and China has criticized the United States for violating the 2015 nuclear deal endorsed by the UN Security Council resolution.

Pointing to Iran's stance, he stated, "We expect the members of the JCPOA and the international community to act in accordance with their commitments."

Iran can enrich uranium to 60% and beyond

POLITICAL TEHRAN — In the latest move to achieve advanced nuclear technology, Iran announced on Friday that it produced the first batch of 60% enriched uranium for the first time.

"On Wednesday, we ordered the launch of 60% and today at 00:40 AM (Friday) we got the 60% product. The product we produce now is about 9 grams per hour. They are working on arranging the chains, which reduces our production of 60% [enriched uranium] and may reach 5 to 6 grams. But with these two chains, we produce 20% [enriched uranium] at the same time," Ali Akbar Salehi, head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), told state TV on Friday noon.

The nuclear chief described the new level of uranium enrichment as a "big move." Salehi said Iran acted within the framework of a nuclear law passed by the Iranian parliament, which obligated the Iranian government to step up nuclear activities in response to the West's inaction regarding the lifting of U.S. sanctions on Iran.

Salehi said he informed the parliament speaker, Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, of the nuclear achievement early in the morning. The speaker, for his part, announced the matter using pompous words.

"I am proud to announce that at 00:40 last night ... young and pious Iranian scientists were able to obtain a 60% enriched uranium product," the speaker said on Twitter, congratulating the Iranian people on this success. "The will of the Iranian people is miraculous and will thwart any conspiracy."

Enrichment at any level

The rapid production of 60% enriched uranium, Salehi said, showed the preparedness of the AEOI in such a way that when officials issue instructions it can carry out



them immediately. This may have caught many observers off guard given the drama that followed the recent act of sabotage targeting the Natanz uranium enrichment plant, where Iran now produces 60% enriched uranium. Western intelligence sources were quoted by Western media outlets as estimating that the sabotage at Natanz undermined Iran's ability to enrich uranium - let alone raising the enrichment level - for at least nine months, a claim that was rejected by Iran immediately.

However, Iran surprised the world by informing the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) of its decision to enrich uranium to 60% purity at Natanz. And even when Iran announced the decision, some sought to cast doubts on it by highlighting

the difficult technical aspects of the matter. Undaunted by discouragement, Iran pressed ahead with the decision and got the first batch of 60% enriched uranium on Friday. Iran is now underlining that it can enrich uranium at any level.

"Any enrichment is now possible and we can do it anytime," Salehi said one day after President Hassan Rouhani noted that Iran is capable of enriching uranium to 90% purity.

The 60% uranium enrichment was another indication that the West failed to prevent Iran from making scientific progress including in the nuclear field. Iran's nuclear program has been steadily moving forward despite Western pressures and sabotage in the past two decades.

Now that Iran is once again engaging in talks with the West it's worth recalling that Iran refused to bow to pressure and that's was the main reason for ratcheting up nuclear activities. There is a growing belief in Iran that the West wants to bully Iran into shutting down its nuclear program while keeping the sanctions structure in place. But Tehran has made it clear that the U.S. must lift all the sanctions that were imposed on Iran during the Trump administration and then the Islamic Republic will reverse its remedial nuclear measures after verifying the sanctions relief.

Whether the U.S. will return to the voice of reason by lifting its sanctions remains to be seen. Iran has agreed to engage in the Vienna nuclear talks but it said its engagement is not unconditional. Iranian is now demanding that these talks be concluded within a specific time frame without any protraction.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei has recently warned against prolonging the talks.

"I have discussed the country's policy with officials both in public and private meetings and also in writing. It is clear what the country's policy is and what officials should do. Now, they have decided to negotiate in order to implement this same policy. I have no problem with this, but they should be careful not to let negotiations become too draining or allow the other side to lengthen the negotiations too much, because this is detrimental to the country," the Leader stated.

Therefore, the United States now should decide between lifting its sanctions in a reasonable time frame and facing an ever-progressing Iran that is intent on pressing ahead with its nuclear measures.

EU sanctions meant to derail JCPOA talks, Araghchi says

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Seyed Abbas Araghchi said Iran criticized the European countries during the latest round of nuclear talks in Vienna for imposing so-called human rights sanctions on Iran and ignoring recent sabotage at key Iranian nuclear plant.

Araghchi said the new EU sanctions are meant to undermine talks on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and the deal altogether.

"The Europeans not only ignored this important act of sabotage, but also they were busy imposing new sanctions on Iran and that was totally unacceptable," Araghchi told Press TV from Vienna.

In the early hours of April 11, 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, according to a letter sent by Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif to UN Secretary-General António Guterres.

Zarif described the sabotage as a "war crime." "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," he said.

"EU sanctions were JCPOA-related"

In the midst of the uproar over the sabotage, the EU imposed sanctions on several Iranian individuals and entities for alleged violation human rights, a move that enraged Iran during the sensitive Vienna nuclear talks.

The EU claimed that its sanctions were not related to the JCPOA. But Araghchi said he told the Europeans that these sanctions were JCPOA-related.

"We told them that even your human rights sanctions that you imposed two days ago, we consider them as JCPOA-related sanctions, because right in the middle of negotiations you decided to impose sanctions and that is certainly [meant] to undermine the current negotiations and to undermine the JCPOA altogether," he noted.

Pointing to the new sanctions, the chief Iranian negotiator said this is a significant non-performance by the European Union.

Iran condemned the European Union for putting the names of several Iranian officials and institutions on its human rights sanctions list.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran strongly condemns this move and considers it invalid," Saeed Khatibzadeh, the Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman, said last week after the EU announced the sanctions.

"Such acts are committed by those who claim to be supporters of, and falsely preach [respect for] human rights with political motives, but they have not only remained silent in the face of violations of Iranian people's rights due to the United States' inhuman and illegal sanctions, but also approved of such violations," he noted.

"Such acts are rejected and will further disgrace those who abuse lofty concepts such as human rights," said the spokesman.

"In reaction to this EU move, the Islamic Republic of Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs suspends comprehensive talks with the European Union, including human rights discussion, and all cooperation thereof, especially in the domains of terrorism, narcotics and refugees," Khatibzadeh noted.

"In reaction to this move by the European Union, the Islamic Republic of Iran is considering [imposing] reciprocal sanctions, which will be announced in due time," he said.

Diplomats from Iran and the P4+1 are in the Austrian capital to discuss ways to revitalize the 2015 Iran nuclear deal. The talks were described by all parties as constructive and moving forward, although they acknowledged that the Vienna talks are difficult.

"Very tough exchanges of views"

Araghchi said the participants had "very tough exchanges of views" at the Thursday session of the JCPOA Joint Commission, but they all agreed to move forward.

"Although we still have differences, we share this common interest that we have to move forward, and we have to expedite this process in order to come to a conclusion as soon as possible," he pointed out.

If there is good faith on the U.S. side, Araghchi continued, the way is quite clear.

"I don't think we can make progress without a list of sanctions"

"They have to lift all sanctions and we need the list of sanctions and this should be our job in this round of discussion," he said, asserting that without a list, "I don't think we can make any progress."

According to Araghchi, Tehran is also prepared to make a similar list on the nuclear measures that it should take.

"With this understanding, the Joint Commission decided to mandate the two working groups on the nuclear and sanctions-lifting [parts] to re-start the job this afternoon and try to make a concrete, specified list of measures to be taken by Iran and the U.S.," he stated.

The deputy foreign minister further underlined the need for the U.S. to prepare a list of sanctions, because without it "nothing will happen."

"I cannot say that I am optimistic, but I think we are on a good track, although we had the negative impacts of last days' developments and we have to somehow manage that," he remarked.

Araghchi said the list of sanctions should also include third parties who have been sanctioned because of their cooperation with Iran.

"Before we see the list, we cannot judge whether it is as complete as we want or not," he pointed out.

Iran has also said that it will need to verify the lifting of sanctions by the U.S. before reversing its nuclear activities that were done in response to the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA in May 2018.

Iran to avoid protracted nuclear talks: FM Zarif

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has ruled out the prospect of Iran and the P4+1 engaging in a process of talks for the sake of talks, saying the duration of the nuclear negotiations is determined by national interests.

The chief Iranian diplomat's comments were posted in Persian on his Instagram page. He thanked Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei for supporting the Iranian negotiators, underlining that the Leader's recent remarks "once again, as in previous difficult times, revived hopes and made [our] steps stronger."

"The Leader's advice to refrain from 'attritional negotiations' has always been a beacon for us," Zarif said.

"We considered 'negotiations for the sake of negotiations' a failed experience and we negotiated only to achieve national goals," he continued.

The remarks came after the Leader called on Iranian negotiators to be careful not to let the nuclear talks become too long or draining.

"I have discussed the country's policy

with officials both in public and private meetings and also in writing. It is clear what the country's policy is and what officials should do. Now, they have decided to negotiate in order to implement this same policy. I have no problem with this, but they should be careful not to let negotiations become too draining or allow the other side to lengthen the negotiations too much, because this is detrimental to the country," Ayatollah Khamenei said on Wednesday.

He added, "When the Americans continuously speak of their willingness to negotiate directly with Iran, they do not intend to negotiate in order to accept the truth. Rather, their purpose in negotiating is to impose their false claims. This is what they always do. They do not want to listen to and accept the truth."

Iran and the remaining parties to the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), are holding talks over how to restore the deal from which the U.S. withdrew in May 2018.

The latest meeting of the JCPOA Joint Commission was held in Vienna on Thurs-



day. Participants agreed to continue talks at expert-level working groups, according to a statement issued by the Iranian Foreign Ministry after the meeting.

So far, the Vienna talks have resulted in the establishment of two expert-level working groups, one to identify the sanctions that the U.S. should remove in order to return to the JCPOA, and another to specify the nuclear activities that Iran should reverse. These groups report their discussions to the Joint Commission.

"At the beginning of today's meeting of the Joint Commission, Dr. Araghchi, head of the Iranian delegation, while condemning the recent sabotage of the

Natanz facility and lamenting the weak reaction of European countries to the incident, stressed that JCPOA members should unanimously and without political considerations condemn this act, which is an example of nuclear terrorism and a gross violation of international law," the statement said, according to the Iranian Foreign Ministry.

The Iranian diplomat also said the negotiating team of the Islamic Republic does not seek erosive negotiations and a waste of time. He underlined that the talks should take place within a specific framework and within an acceptable time frame.

Speaking on the sidelines of the Thursday meeting of the JCPOA Joint Commission, Araghchi underlined the need for the U.S. to prepare a list of sanctions that should be lifted. Without such a list, Araghchi said, "nothing will happen."

The Iranian diplomat pointed out that he couldn't say that he was optimistic but he thinks that the negotiations are "on a good track." At the same time, the chief Iranian nuclear negotiator said there were some negative impacts on the nuclear talks that should be somehow managed.

SPORTS

Vladimir Alekno to arrive in Tehran on Sunday

SPORTS TEHRAN — National Volleyball Team head coach Vladimir Alekno will travel to Tehran, Iran on Sunday.

The Russian coach was named as Iran coach in November 2020 but has yet to travel to the country since he was leading Zenit.

Alekno will start with Iran at the 2021 FIVB Volleyball Men's Nations League which will begin on May 28.

His Italian assistant Tomaso Totolo arrived in Iran on Tuesday. Alekno, who led Russia to a bronze and gold medal in the 2008 and 2012 Olympic Games respectively, will also lead the Persians at the Tokyo 2020.

In the Olympic Games, Iran have been drawn in Pool A along with Japan, Poland, Italy, Canada and Venezuela.

Pool B consists of Brazil, the U.S., Russia, Argentina, France and Tunisia.

Three Iranians shortlisted for Best Goal of ACL2021 Matchday One

SPORTS TEHRAN — Jalal Hosseini, Mohammad Abbaszadeh and Mehdi Ghayedi's goals have been shortlisted for the 2021 AFC Champions League's Best Goal of Matchday 1 (West).

With the kick off of the 2021 AFC Champions League, The-AFC.com has announced the nominees for this week's Vote.

Jalal Hosseini — Persepolis

vs Al Wahda FSCC, April 14, 2021

With all the attacking ability on display in the 2021 AFC Champions League's opener between Persepolis FC and Al Wahda FSCC it might have come as some surprise that the tie's only goal was scored by a 39-year-old center-back. But Jalal Hosseini has previous when it comes to crucial goals in the AFC Champions League and he rounded off a neat move with an adept strike.

Mohammad Abbaszadeh — Tractor

vs Pakhtakor, April 14, 2021

One of the most action-packed games of the opening Matchday was the 3-3 draw between Tractor FC of Iran and Uzbekistan's Pakhtakor and dangerman Mohammad Abbaszadeh lived up to his pre-tournament hype with a brace. The 30-year-old forward's own was the pick for the pair, blasting his shot into the roof of the net after he was sent through by Akbar Imani.

Mehdi Ghayedi — Esteghal

vs Al Ahli Saudi FC, April 14, 2021

Tipped to be one of the stars of the 2021 AFC Champions League, Mehdi Ghayedi has already graced the competition with a demonstration of his prodigious talent in the very first game, rifling home from 30 yards out for his second of the game against Al Ahli Saudi. (West)

Pakhtakor forward Sharof Mukhiddinov's goal against Tractor and goal of Khaled Bawazir (Sharjah) against Air Force are among the nominees.

Persepolis have winning mentality: coach

SPORTS TEHRAN — Persepolis football team assistant coach Hamid Motehary said the team have a winning mentality and want to become champions in the 2021 AFC Champions League.

Persepolis will meet Al Rayyan of Qatar on Matchday 2 of 2021 ACL in Group E at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, Fatorda.

"We have prepared everything for this match and we have prepared them well for the six games we have here for this edition of the AFC Champions League," said Persepolis assistant head coach Hamid Motehary. "Persepolis has always had a winning mentality built in the players and we are fully committed to achieving success by being the best and becoming champions."

Al Rayyan will be aiming for an upset at Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium after failing to secure three points against FC Goa.

Their Matchday One stalemate means Laurent Blanc's men have not tasted victory in their last five encounters in all competitions after three losses and one draw in the Qatar Stars League.

However, with only the group winners assured of advancing, Al Rayyan will definitely take the game to Goa.

"The result from the last match was not good for Al Rayyan because I think we deserved to win and scoring the first goal is very important," said Blanc.

"Against Persepolis, we need to apply the same intensity and that is to keep the ball high up and score at least one or two goals."

"The pressure is on Persepolis and not with Al Rayyan. Persepolis and Al Wahda are the favorites of the group. Last year they (Persepolis) reached the final of the AFC Champions League and a couple of times reached the semi-finals."

Mohsen Bayatnia named Saipa interim coach: IPL

SPORTS TEHRAN — Mohsen Bayatnia has been named as Saipa football team interim coach.

The 40-year-old coach has replaced Ebrahim Sadeghi who left the team last week.

Bayatnia is head of Saipa football academy at the same time. Saipa sit 14th in Iran Professional League (IPL) table, two points ahead of relegation zone.

Iranian coach Dastneshan dies from COVID-19

SPORTS TEHRAN — Iranian football coach Nader Dastneshan passed away on Friday due to COVID-19.

The 60-year-old coach was hospitalized at the Razi Hospital in Ghaemshahr since last week but lost his battle with coronavirus.

Dastneshan coached so many Iranian football clubs including Nassaji, Malavan, Mes Kerman, Naft Tehran, Steel Azin and Sepidrood Rasht in his 17-year coaching career.

Some 328 more Iranians have died from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) over the past 24 hours bringing the total deaths to 66,008, Iran's Health Ministry spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari announced on Friday.

25,261 new cases of infection with the COVID-19 were found over the past 24 hours, 3,207 of whom were hospitalized, Lari said.

She added that with the 328 new deaths, the country's total COVID-19 deaths mounted to 66,008.

Lari noted that 1,761,497 patients out of a total of 2,194,133 infected people have recovered or been discharged from hospitals.

Some 4,652 COVID-19 patients are in critical condition and being treated in intensive care units, the spokeswoman said.

She went on to say that 14,165,771 coronavirus diagnosis tests have so far been carried out across the country.

IMF revises estimates of Iran's reserves following CBI objection

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has revised its estimate of Iran's total gross official reserves to \$115 billion, following the Central Bank of Iran (CBI)'s objection about the fund's incorrect estimates of the mentioned index.

Earlier this week, CBI Governor Abdolnasser Hemmati rejected as flawed and unverified IMF's recent data which suggested that Iran's gross official reserves declined significantly in 2020 to only \$4 billion.

Hemmati wrote in an Instagram post on Tuesday that IMF's estimate about the state of Iran's reserves is reflective of the organization's mistaken approach towards the Iranian economy.



As reported by IRNA, in an official email to CBI, the IMF, while regretting the misunderstanding, announced that the previous estimates had been based on assumptions of the country's "usable reserves" and its estimate of Iran's "total gross official reserves" is in fact \$115 billion.

There are still problems with the fund's other estimates, and the central bank is following up to address these problems, according to Hemmati.

In a report published earlier this month about general economic indicators in economies of West and Central Asia, the IMF said Iran's official reserves had declined from \$122.5 billion in 2018 to \$12.4 billion in 2019.

Tables published in the report showed that the reserves had further dwindled by over 67.7 percent last year to settle at \$4 billion.

The U.S. sanctions on Iran have cut off the country's banking system from the rest of the world with private and state-owned banks unable to process international payments.

CBI had earlier criticized the IMF for refusing to process an Iranian request for a \$5-billion loan that the country needs to tackle the economic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic.

The new IMF data, however, shows that Iran was in positive economic growth in the previous year after the U.S.-based organization revised up its estimates about the country's gross domestic products (GDP).

Tables of the recent IMF report show that Iran's GDP would grow by 2.5 percent this year and by another 2.1 percent in 2022.

Nearly \$4b paid to SMEs, semi-finished projects in a year

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran's Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade's data show that 167 trillion rials (nearly \$3.97 billion) has been paid to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and semi-finished industrial projects with an over 60 percent physical progress during the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20).

The mentioned payments were made in the form of bank loans paid to 5,044 projects and production units, IRIB reported.

As reported, about 15,182 manufacturing units and semi-finished projects with physical progress of over 60 percent in 31 provinces and free zones had registered to receive facilities in the previous year.



Back in November 2020, the Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry had announced that 51.48 trillion rials (over \$1.225 billion) had been paid to production units as part of a program for supporting domestic production during the first seven months of the previous Iranian calendar year (March 20-October 21, 2020).

Based on the mentioned program, 201,299 trillion rials of facilities (about \$4.79 billion) were planned to be paid to production units to support domestic production and maintain or create job opportunities in the previous year.

Central Bank of Iran (CBI) defined supporting production as its major plan in the previous Iranian calendar year, which was named the Year of Surge in Production.

CBI Governor Abdolnasser Hemmati has several times stressed that supporting production units to flourish production is the priority of the country's banking system.

In early May 2019, Hemmati had outlined CBI plans for neutralizing or relieving the impact of U.S. sanctions on the country's economy and mentioned providing liquidity and working capital to maintain and boost domestic production as one of those plans.

CBI's plans take two major approaches, one of which is to secure finance for production activities and also to provide the working capital needed for such activities.

Major petchem catalyst production units launched

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The production capacity of the polypropylene catalyst unit is reported to be 12 tons per year, equivalent to 30 percent of the needs of the country's petrochemical industry; this unit can be further expanded to fully meet the needs of the country.

The HDPE catalyst unit, which has been implemented with CX technology, also has an annual production capacity of 20 tons, equivalent to 25 percent of the petrochemical industry's needs, this unit can also be expanded to fully meet the country's needs.

Catalysts are critical for the operation

of petrochemical process units. The value of catalysts used in Iran's petrochemical industry is about \$270 million per year.

Of the 40 major types of catalysts used in the petrochemical industry, the knowledge for the production of 19 has been indigenized so far, and nine more are scheduled to be indigenized by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 2022).

"We plan to produce over \$100m worth of petrochemical catalysts annually, by the end of the Iranian calendar year of 1400 (March 20, 2022)," Ali Pajouhan the



managing director of Iranian Petrochemical Research and Technology Company (PRTC) has said.

According to the official, the National Petrochemical Company (NPC) has already signed 20 contracts with knowledge-based

companies for mass production of catalysts and 70 research projects are also underway in this regard.

Back in January 2020, NPC had held a seminar on the indigenization of petrochemical industry catalysts in Kish Island.

'Iranian free zones register positive trade balance over past 2 years'

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The Secretary of Iranian Free Zones High Council Hamidreza Mo'meni said the trade balance of the country's free and special economic zones has been positive in the past two years despite the negative balance of the country's foreign trade.

Mo'meni made the remarks in a meeting with the deputies and managers of Imam Khomeini Airport City (IKAC) on Thursday, IRNA reported.

Today, the free zones are in a good condition trade as well and positive development measures have been taken which have led to significant growth in these zones, the official said.

He further announced the establishment of a finance council in the Iranian Free Zones High Council, saying that soon advisory groups will be sent to all of the country's free zones and the zones can access sustainable financial resources for implementing new development programs.

According to the official, the country's free and economic zones should become more productive in order to be able to fund their own development projects in the future.

Mentioning the trade advantages of IKAC as a free zone, Mo'meni said IKAC can benefit from the experience of other free zones across the country in order to maximize its capacities.

Earlier this month, Mo'meni had said that removing the problems of the private sector active in the country's free and economic zones is the new approach of this council.

The development of free trade zones and special economic zones through production, exports, and investment is one of

the goals of creating these zones in the country.

To achieve this target, different measures were taken in the past two years, such as attracting innovative and technological units to these areas and introducing investment opportunities and advantages in these zones.

The establishment of free trade zones in Iran dates back to the Iranian calendar year 1368 (March 1989- March 1990) following the fall in the country's oil income in the preceding year which prompted the government to promote non-oil exports.

The first two free trade zones of Iran were established in the south of the country. The first one was Kish Free Trade Zone established in 1368 on Kish Island in the Persian Gulf and the second one was Qeshm Free Trade Zone established the year after on Qeshm Island in the Strait of Hormuz.

Some five other free trade zones have been also established in the country since then, including Chabahar in southeastern Sistan-Baluchestan Province, Arvand in southwestern Khuzestan Province, Anzali in northern Gilan Province, Aras in East-Azərbayjan Province, and Maku in West-Azərbayjan Province, both in the northwest of the country.

Considering the important role that the free zones play in promoting the country's export and employment, Iran is seriously pursuing the development of its existing zones and the establishment of new zones as well.

More development measures in this field have been taking since the U.S. re-imposition of sanctions on the Iranian econ-



omy in November 2018, as Iran is reducing its dependence on the oil income while elevating its domestic production and non-oil exports.

Although the sanctions have disrupted Iran's economic activities, they could not impede the development of Iranian free zones; in fact, the development of these zones has been even accelerated.

Many strides made for increasing activities in the free zones have played a significant part in boosting the country's non-oil exports and brought prosperity in the other economic sectors.

Thermal power plants' efficiency to reach 40% by March 2022

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The efficiency of Iran's thermal power plants will reach 40 percent by the end of current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2022), the managing director of the country's Thermal Power Plants Holding Company (TPPH) announced.

Mohsen Tarzatabab also said that the conversion of gas-fired power plants to combined cycle ones, applying gas turbines with new technology, upgrading the gas units and scrapping the worn-out power plants are some of the programs to increase efficiency in thermal power plants.

Referring to the announcement of the new energy document to the electricity industry, he said: "According to this document, by Iranian calendar year 1420 (started in March 2041) the efficiency of the country's thermal power plants should reach 50 percent, which will require heavy investments."

The official had announced last week that the efficiency of Iran's thermal power plants has reached a new record high of 39



percent for the first time in the history of the country's electricity industry.

"The efficiency of the country's thermal power plants improved by over 0.4 percent from the 38.56 percent in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20) to reach 39 percent," Tarzatabab announced.

According to Tarzatabab, the mentioned improvement has decreased the fuel consumption of the country's power plants by 846 million cubic meters in the mentioned year.

The TPPH head emphasized that the 0.4-percent increase in the efficiency of power plants has resulted in more than one percent increase in annual fuel saving.

"Annual fuel savings add value and preserve national capital, so measures to increase the power plants efficiency are among the most important goals of the company," he stressed.

Tarzatabab underlined the implementation of the annual overhaul program at the country's power plants as one of the determining factors in achieving the mentioned efficiency ratio and added: "Technical issues and problems that occur during operation can affect the power plants' efficiency; such issues are resolved during the implementation of the annual overhaul program to prevent the decline in the power plants' efficiency", he stated.

The official also stressed the significant impact of installing steam units in the country's gas power plants on improving their efficiency and said: "The efficiency of large gas power plants is 31 percent on average; this figure can be increased to more than 45 percent by turning them into combined cycle plants."

In this regard, last year, a total of 1,936 megawatts (MW) capacity of combined cycle power plants joined the country's national electricity network, he added.

Back in October 2018, Tarzatabab had unveiled plans for an increase in the efficiency of the country's power plants up to 40 percent in three years.

According to the official, the efficiency improvement program was provisioned following a development initiative foreseen in the country's Sixth Five-Year National Development Plan (2016-2021), based on which the average efficiency of the country's power plants was to increase by 2.1 percent.

According to the sixth development plan, new power plants in Iran should operate with an efficiency of at least 55 percent.

Currently, with a total generation capacity of 25,083 MW (31.2 percent) combined cycle power plants account for the biggest share in the country's total power generation capacity followed by gas power plants generating 29.9 percent.

177 industrial units start activity in Zanjan province in a year

ECONOMY TEHRAN — As announced by a provincial official, 177 new industrial units started activity in Zanjan province during the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20).

Nasser Faghfour, the head of Industry, Mining and Trade Department of the province, said that with these units entering the production cycle jobs were created for 3,226 persons.

The official also announced that 2,141 working permits were issued in the province last year.

During the past years, support for production and industrial units has been on the agenda and many measures have been taken in the province in this regard, he added.

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.

TSE experiences a slight weekly decline of its main index

ECONOMY TEHRAN — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), dropped 6,000 points, or 0.5 percent, in the past Iranian calendar week.

The index closed at 1.243 million points on Wednesday (the last working day of the week).

During the past week, the indices of Opal Kani Pars Mining and Processing Company, Social Security Investment Company, Mobarakeh Steel Company, Iran Khodro Company, Isfahan Oil Refining Company, and National Iranian Copper Industry Company were the most widely followed indices.

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

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

Market analysts and experts suggest investors to focus more on long-term investment in the Iranian stock market and

to invest through intermediary tools like exchange-traded funds (ETFs) to prevent possible losses in the current Iranian calendar year (began on March 21).

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

Natanz sabotage: A sign of Biden's unwillingness to revive the JCPOA

→ 1 They all oppose the Iranian government because of the above-mentioned reasons and most important to gain power of the whole region, as laid out in their Yinon plan. Saudi Arabia, in particular (also Qatar and Bahrain) are fierce supporters of the Wahhabi ideology and therefore, since the battle of Karbala in 680 AD (the schism in Islam) Iran is an obstacle, an obstacle for them and Israel to implement the Yinon plan and therefore, in their eyes Iran must be destroyed.

American-Israeli coordination
As I wrote in various articles, the U.S. and actually the whole Western world, is not ruled by politicians they are merely the puppets, the deep state are the ones who possess the real power, they are united in secret lobbies, which is now revealed to the majority of the Western public during the COVID-19 pandemic (World Economic Forum). The most powerful lobby in the U.S. is AIPAC the Zionist Organization, which write on their website:

"The U.S.-Israel partnership is the premier venue for pro-Israel Americans to lobby their elected officials in support of the U.S.-Israel relationship. The mission of AIPAC—the American Israel Public Affairs Committee—is to strengthen and expand the U.S.-Israel relationship in ways that enhance the security of the United States and Israel."

Many Jewish people immigrated to the U.S., especially just before and after WWII and united in AIPAC. The concentration of Jewish immigrants to be found in the U.S. is Washington DC and New York. They are very active in politics and over the last decades they are the real power behind U.S. politics, without the consent of AIPAC, your political career is over. Also, they have absolute power in media and control Hollywood, they are the masterminds behind war movies, propaganda and indoctrination.

So, definitely, the U.S. is always coordinating with Israel (Mossad) attacks on Iran, or other countries like in the Syria conflict, the U.S. government is controlled by Zionists. I would like to point out that Zionism is not Judaism, Zionism is an ideology, anyone can be a Zionist, like Christian-Zionists. Judaism



is a religion, originated in West Asia. Also, unfortunately, Europe is under the control of the Zionist lobby. Also, every U.S. administration is dominated by Zionists. The Government of President Joe Biden consists of nearly only Zionists, even the Jerusalem Post is reporting on this.

It doesn't matter Democratic or Republican, the real power are the Zionists, they are in control in the U.S. and Western world for that matter, together with other lobbies like the Open Society Foundation of George Soros (also a Zionist) they control the Western world, the U.S. and the European Union (EU) and conduct color-revolutions and provoke war throughout the non-controlled Zionist world.

Passiveness of the UN and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

The IAEA signed an agreement with Iran on 23 February 2021, a Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) Safeguards Agreement, meaning: It describes the Agency's efforts and interactions with Iran to clarify information relating to the correctness and completeness of Iran's declarations under its Safeguards Agreement. The IAEA has access to Iran, to conduct investigations, by taking

samples and inspections. However, Israel being pressed by the IAEA to consider acceding to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and to place all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive IAEA safeguards, has no effect and Israel didn't react to the IAEA, since 2010.

Until the present, Israel's nuclear capability is not known and therefore, poses a threat to the safety of the entire world. The only and last whistle blower, an Israeli was a nuclear technician, called Mordechai Vanunu working at the Dimona facility and became a whistleblower in 1985. After his jail sentence, he is still kept in house-arrest in Israel. In my opinion, the whole international community should pressure Israel to sign the non-proliferation treaty and make a safeguard agreement. This should perhaps be done through the UN Security Council; especially, after their latest barbaric terror act of a cyber-attack on the Iranian Natanz nuclear facility. Before this latest terror act, they committed many atrocities, like the killing of nuclear scientists in broad daylight.

Reviving the JCPOA after failure of maximum pressure campaign

meeting. As I expected, European diplomats are acting as intermediaries and helping to facilitate the dialogue."

The American professor said, "The two sides need to agree a series of steps that will enable them to return to the terms of the JCPOA. This will be done in stages as confidence is re-established between the two sides."

No guarantee Biden's successor will abide by the nuclear deal: professor

→ 1 "Israel believes that an Iranian nuclear device could lead to the destruction of Israel. It is prepared to use a variety of means to prevent this including sabotage, cyber-attacks and assassination," the American academic opines.

Rees points out that Israel's "last resort would be to use force to destroy any Iranian nuclear facilities, as it did in the case of the Iraqi reactor at Osiraq."

But on April 13, Iran announced it would start enriching uranium at up to 60 percent purity, higher than it has ever done before, proving that it will not give in acts of sabotage.

While some experts say that the road to reach an understanding between two countries (the U.S. and Iran), is long and rocky, Rees believes that "it is encouraging that the two sides are now

Primary purpose of Natanz attack was to retard enrichment

By Hamid Bayati

TEHRAN— An Associate Fellow at the International Institute for Strategic Studies believes that the primary purpose of the attack was to retard Iran's enrichment program.

Mark Fitzpatrick, who was Executive Director of the IISS Americas office and head of the Non-Proliferation and Nuclear Policy Programme until 2019, notes that "Israel decided to take matters into its own hands by employing kinetic means to slow Iran's nuclear progress."

Here is the full text of the interview:
As you know Iran's Natanz nuclear facility was hit by "sabotage" a day after it unveiled new uranium enrichment equipment. However, Israeli public media, cited intelligence sources who said it was the result of an Israeli cyber-attack. So why did Israel do this attack?



Israel does not trust diplomacy to resolve the stop Iran's acquisition of a nuclear weapons capability and thus apparently decided to

take matters into its own hands by employing kinetic means to slow Iran's nuclear progress.

Some experts believe that Israel did this attack in coordination with the United States, what do you think about this view?

The United States certainly had nothing to do with the attack, neither coordinating it nor giving Israel a green light to carry it out. At a time when the Biden Administration is making a concerted push for a "compliance for compliance" restoration of the JCPOA, it would be wholly counterproductive to risk diplomatic success by helping an attack. The United States was not involved, of that, I am sure.

Is the attack related to the new round of JCPOA talks?

I believe the primary purpose of the attack was to retard Iran's enrichment

program. Whether it was also intended to sabotage diplomacy is hard to say. In any case, I do not think that Iran would take the bait and stop negotiations. It is very much in Iran's interests to benefit from a lifting of sanctions that would come with a revival of the nuclear deal.

Is it possible for IAEA to prevent attacks such as the attack in Natanz?

The IAEA has no role or ability to stop such attacks. The UN Security Council is the only international body that is empowered to take action. I do not see this happening, however. One reason is that the damage was not so severe: there were no human casualties and no environmental impact. Another reason is that Israel's presumed role remains unproven. And the United States will not want to see Israel punished.

Israel biggest threat to West Asia

By Robert Inlakesh

This Sunday's act of "nuclear terrorism", as Iranian officials have called it, not only showed the world the recklessness of the Israeli regime, but served to prove a point about the uselessness of the International Community.

The attack on Iran's Natanz nuclear site could have resulted in an environmental catastrophe, the effects of which could have been devastating upon surrounding civilian populations. Despite this, later that same day, Israeli Premier Benjamin Netanyahu continued to aggressively address Israel's "major task" of combating Iran.

When the recent alleged Mossad operation occurred - according to Israeli media sources - U.S. Secretary of Defense, Lloyd Austin, had just arrived upon a two-day trip to meet with his Israeli counterparts. What was striking from his visit, was that during both press conferences he attended with the Minister of War Benny Gantz and Prime Minister Netanyahu, he didn't utter a word about Iran. This, as both Gantz and Netanyahu performed their routine about Iran's alleged nuclear weapons program and how they fear for their existence, claims which have no evidence to support them.

Every time the United States seems to be making small strides in the direction of lifting its illegal sanctions and re-entering the 'Iran Nuclear Deal', Israel acts violently and recklessly. This could point to a mixture or any of these following possibilities; Israel is applying pressure on the

U.S. not to re-enter the deal; Israel is working with elements of the U.S. government to stop it or Israel is looking to get a retaliatory strike in order to push the deal further away.

When Israel claims that its actions work to ensure peace in the region and that they aim to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, they fail to make sense even by their own logic.

Now, there is no proof of anything but a peaceful nuclear program in Iran. However, if we were to believe Netanyahu when he says Iran is heading towards a nuclear weapon, then how would these attacks work to stop this when every single action Israel takes leads Iran to further enrich uranium. Iran has in fact just announced it will begin 60% uranium enrichment come this Wednesday and has notified the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) of this intention.

But the problem still remains as to whether the U.S. and EU are together able to surpass the pressure of hardline pro-war members of their governments and the lobbying efforts of Israel. To its credit, the Obama administration was able to withstand the pressures, whilst Israel was also at the time threatening to open up a regional war in order to stop the agreement. Former U.S. President Barack Obama even managed to disobey AIPAC and signed the JCPOA as the deal clearly worked to the advantage of the U.S.

Israel is a far-right wing ethno-regime, which constantly threatens to attack and actually attacks its neighbors. Israel operates an 'Apartheid Regime' according to Human Rights Organization B'Tselem and is in possession of between 80-

300 nuclear weapons which it refuses to declare, whilst being a non-signatory to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

Iran has endured the assassination of its top General, Qassem Soleimani, with Israeli involvement and the Israeli assassination of its top nuclear scientist, Mohsen Fakhri-zadeh, on Iranian soil. In addition to this Israel has committed attacks on Iranian vessels at sea, acts of sabotage inside the country, constant spying, threatens to attack Iran, pushes for U.S. sanctions which hurt Iran's civilian population and have just attacked Iran's Natanz Nuclear facility.

Israeli aggression against Iran seems to have now started a wave of retaliatory attacks too, not yet confirmed to be directly connected to Iran. On Tuesday, an Israeli vessel named 'Hyperm' was reportedly struck by either mines or a missile - according to Israeli media - near the Emirate of Fujairah, UAE. Later that same day, reports began to emerge from Iraq that Iranian-backed forces had reportedly attacked a Mossad base, killing and injuring multiple Israeli agents, according to reports from both PressTV and Iraq's Al-Saberin news.

In the face of all of this, somehow Iran has been able to maintain an admirable level of self-control, which has been the difference between the descent into all out regional war and relative peace. However, this patience can at any point wear thin, which could be the case if the United States cannot rein in their mad-dog.

(Source: Press TV)

Erdogan, Pakistani PM talk before Afghan peace summit

The leaders of Pakistan and Turkey have conferred on the continuing Afghan peace process, with Prime Minister Imran Khan reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to a negotiated political settlement to the conflict in advance of key talks in Turkey this month, a statement says.



Khan spoke with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan via telephone on Thursday, a statement released by his office said.

Khan said the intra-Afghan peace talks had provided a "historic opportunity ... to achieve an inclusive, broad-based and comprehensive political settlement".

The Turkish government did not immediately release a statement on the conversation.

According to al Jazeera, Turkey will host a 10-day Afghan peace summit from April 24, with representatives of the Afghan government, United States, United Nations, Qatar and others taking part.

The Taliban has refused to participate in talks. It issued a statement on Tuesday saying it would not engage in any further talks "until all foreign forces completely withdraw from our homeland".

U.S. expels Russian diplomats, imposes sanctions for hacking

The Kremlin says there will be an "inevitable" response to a fresh round of sanctions imposed by the United States against Russia, as a result of which Moscow has summoned the American ambassador in protest at the provocative move.

"A response to sanctions is inevitable," said Russia's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova on Thursday.

Her remarks came a few hours after Washington announced economic sanctions against Russia and the expulsion of 10 Russian diplomats in retaliation for what it alleged as election interference, a massive cyber-attack, and other hostile activity.

"The United States is not ready to come to terms with the objective reality that there is a multipolar world that excludes American hegemony," Zakharova said in televised remarks.

She said Moscow had repeatedly warned Washington about "the consequences of its hostile steps, which dangerously increase the degree of confrontation between our countries."

Under the new sanctions, the U.S. Treasury Department will block American financial institutions from purchasing bonds from the Central Bank of the Russian Federation, the National Wealth Fund of the Russian Federation, or the Ministry of Finance of the Russian Federation after June 14 and from lending funds to those institutions.

The measures are part of an executive order signed by U.S. President Joe Biden that also leaves open the possibility for the White House to expand the sanctions on Russian sovereign debt.

Washington has also announced plans to expel 10 personnel from the Russian diplomatic mission in Washington, alleging that some of them are representatives of Russian intelligence services.

3 drones hit U.S. Ain al-Asad air base in Iraq: report

According to some reports released by Iraqi media outlets, the U.S. Ain al-Asad base in Iraq has been targeted by 3 drones.

Some Iraqi news sources suggest unconfirmed reports about a drone attack on the U.S. Ain al-Asad base.

Sabereen News, a Telegram channel close to the Resistance Front, reported on Friday morning that 3 drones have been used in this aerial attack.

This is the second "drone attack" on the bases of the occupiers, after the Erbil attack which happened two days ago.

Meanwhile, a drone carrying explosives attacked a U.S. air base in northern Iraq on Wednesday, U.S. and Iraqi officials said.

No casualties were reported in the attack on the airport in Erbil, which doubles as a base for U.S. troops, according to the interior ministry of the Kurdistan Regional Government and the U.S.-led military coalition in Iraq.

The attack on the military section of the airport was carried out by a drone carrying explosives, according to a statement from the interior ministry. The drone landed on a storage hangar at the air base, causing a fire that was later extinguished, according to the U.S.-led coalition.

Resistance News

Hamas asks Saudi Arabia to release Palestinian detainees

INTERNATIONAL DESK **TEHRAN**— The Hamas Movement has reiterated its appeal for the release of Palestinian detainees, including Mohamed al-Khudari and his son Hani, from Saudi jails, describing their continued detention as "unjustified."

"They were supposed to be honored and treated well for the services they have provided for the Kingdom and its people and not be arrested and tortured, especially since they have committed no offence or crime," Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum said in a press release on Thursday.

Spokesman Barhoum highlighted that the Saudi authorities are religiously and morally obligated to release all the Palestinian detainees from their jails and allow them to return to their families, especially during the holy month of Ramadan

Iconic souvenirs and gifts to bring home from Iran

TOURISM TEHRAN — Strolling through any bazaar in Iran, you see rich diversity, especially in Persian handicrafts and confectionery, that makes it difficult to choose one.

Iran is a big and culturally-diverse country. For this reason, preparing a full list of souvenirs of Iran is virtually impossible. Different cities and regions have their own culture and traditions, which means they have their own local handicrafts, products, and pastries to offer to tourists as souvenirs. That said, in major cities in Iran, including the capital Tehran, one can find a wide variety of commodities that are either produced in the city itself or are imported from other parts of the country.

Handicrafts are vivid windows into each culture, city, village, tradition, ceremony, rite, ethnicity, language and dialect, each owning different backgrounds and narrating unique stories of their own. If you are into arts and crafts of any kind, the colorful Iranian handicrafts will definitely catch your attention.

If you have a sweet tooth or you have friends back home that get a kick out of testing different sweets, buying some of those mouth-watering Iranian food souvenirs is a must.

Here are few ideas to inspire you what to bring back home from your Iran trip:

Ghalamzani

A Persian version of 'toreutics', this metalworking art involves engraving fine pictures and designs on metals like brass, silver, and copper. Ghalamzani is a traditional handicraft in Iran, dating back to thousands of years ago.

Ghalamzani is performed on different objects such as vases, plates, sugar bowls, candlesticks, teaware, tablets, and other ornamental objects. While the hub of this art is Esfahan, you can find shops in Tehran, Tabriz, Mashhad, and other major cities that offer these impressive handmade objects.

Minakari

This intricate art of Iranian enameling, Minakari is painting and decoration of objects by fusing bright colors over them. This classical art dates back to 1500 BC and has survived up to the present time. It is performed on gold, silver, and copper utensils such as vases, plates, and mugs, as well as pottery.

Today, the hub of Minakari is Isfahan, where the best craftsmen and craftsmen are active in producing quality Minakari handicrafts, which are also sent to other cities including Tehran.

Khatamkari

This Iranian art is a form of 'marquetry' in which small pieces of wood, bone (usually camel bone), or metal is inlaid on the surface of different articles. In this traditional craft, beautiful patterns are intricately created, often in geometrical shapes, and then glued together on the surface of the object. Khatamkari products include jewelry cases, candy bowls, chess boards, tissue cases, clocks, photo frames, etc.

Pottery and ceramics

Iranian pottery is a deep-rooted tradition dating back to more than 7000 years ago. Although pottery doesn't have the status it had in the past, it has survived in several parts of Iran, including Yazd, Natanz, and Lalejin. Moreover, ornamental painted ceramic articles such as mugs or bowls can be good picks to buy as souvenirs from Iran.

Persian rugs and kilims

Persian rug is perhaps the most famous Iranian souvenir, which is widely known across the world. These handwoven pieces of genuine art are produced by highly-skilled carpet weavers in different parts of the country. Persian rugs come in different sizes and styles, which offers a wide range of choices for tourists who want to buy one for home use or decorative purposes only.

Among the other types of hand-knotted rugs is kilim, which has usually coarse texture and is less expensive than Persian rugs. They have been woven by tribeswomen since ancient times using goat hair and sheep wool. Kilims can be used for covering the floor or being hung on the wall for decoration.

Turquoise

This semi-precious gemstone is a rare inorganic substance that can only be found in particular places. In Mashhad and Nishapur, turquoise (Persian: firouzeh) is used to make beautiful ornaments and accessories such as necklaces, rings, bracelets and earrings.

This is not the only use of turquoise. Through a process called 'turquoise inlay' (Persian: Firouzehkoubi), small pieces of turquoise are finely embedded into the surface of different objects and utensils to produce ornamental objects. The turquoise inlay is like a mosaic work on various metallic dishes such as trays, vases, mirrors, candlesticks, jewelry boxes, plates, etc., which make for great souvenirs to buy in Iran. Souvenir shops at Iranian traditional bazaars offer various turquoise knickknacks at low prices.

Gaz

Commonly known as Persian nougat in Western countries, Gaz is one of the most popular souvenirs of Isfahan and is also popular in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, Kerman, Yazd, and Hamedan. This white chewy nougat has taken its name from gaz-angebin (one of its ingredients) meaning sap of angebin, a kind of wild tamarisk tree that grows in the Zagros Mountains in Iran. It is usually frilled with pistachios.

Sohan

This traditional saffron brittle toffee is mainly produced in the city of Qom and that's why it is sometimes called Sohan-e Qom. Made from flour, sugar, wheat sprout, egg yolks, butter, rose water, saffron, cardamom, and slivered pistachios or almonds. Sohan-e Qom comes in different shapes, flavors, and qualities and is distributed across the country, so you can find it in most cities, including Tehran. In large Sohan stores, free samples are offered to visitors so that you can get an idea of how it tastes before picking a box or two as a souvenir to take home from Iran.

Qottab

Yazd is known for various and sundry pastries and sweets. A popular sweet souvenir of Yazd is Qottab, a tasty treat made from flour, powdered sugar, vegetable oil, and cardamom with almond or walnut fillings. It is one of the oldest Iranian pastries and other than Yazd, it is also popular in Kerman.

Saffron

This red jewel of Iran used to be exported to Greece, the Roman empire, China, and Arab countries during ancient times. Iran is currently the biggest producer of this precious spice in the world and 94% of the world's saffron is cultivated in Iran, mainly in the eastern region of Khorasan. However, due to poor marketing and packaging, Iranian saffron is exported to other countries like Spain in bulk, where it is packaged and re-exported to other countries under those countries' own brands.

Saffron is a dominant food seasoning ingredient in Persian cuisine and it's a very famous Iranian souvenir among foreign tourists. Mashhad is the best place to buy saffron in Iran as a souvenir because, as said above, saffron is mainly cultivated in the Khorasan region, of which Mashhad is the largest city.

Dried nuts

Iran is also known for pistachios and is the biggest producer of them in the world. These toothsome nuts are very popular among tourists. The super-long 'Akbari' pistachio is the most popular variety of pistachio in Iran. Pistachios can be eaten roasted and salted or raw. In Iran, pistachios are also used in different pastries, including Gaz and Sohan.

'Mirror of the sky' Hoz-e Sultan to be turned into tourism hub

TOURISM TEHRAN — Tourism directorate of Qom province is set to turn Hoz-e Sultan, a lonely salt lake in the heart of Iran, into a tourism hub.

"Hoz-e Sultan, which is one of the biggest natural mirrors in the country, will be turned into a tourism hub... and one of its goals is to empower the local communities by creating job opportunities," the provincial tourism chief, Alireza Arjmandi, said on Thursday.

Salt lakes sometimes appear like giant expanses of mirror, making it hard to differentiate between the sky and the ground. Hoz-e Sultan is one of those.

Covering 37,075 hectares, the lake gives its visitors the impression of a gigantic natural mirror on earth. The light is reflected through dense layers minerals and salt deposits beneath.

With an altitude of about 720 meters above the sea level, the lake is said to be one of the lowest parts of the Iranian plateau. The lake assumes different characteristics,



sizes and shapes in various seasons of the year so that its attractiveness varies from time to time. Situated some 40 kilometers northward

of Qom, the lake is adjacent to the Qom – Tehran highway. The lake is also an epicenter of a relatively rich fauna. Locals say, it is a suitable place for breeding a kind of shrimp, called Artemia.

Shour, Ghara-Chai and Varamin are amongst rivers that discharge into the lake. The latter come from southern parts of Tehran Province. Melting snows and some seasonal rainfalls contribute to the inputs as well.

The region is a haven for some breeds of migratory birds, a majority of them come from the north Caspian countries. There can be found footprints of houbara, pigeon, grey goose, mallard, duck, ruddy shelduck, stork, flamingo, falcons, grey goose, stork and different kinds of eagles.

Hoz-e Sultan and its surroundings were used to be a natural habitat for mammals like rabbit, rat, fox and deer, which may still be spotted in the region.

Best time to tour the lake starts from early spring to late autumn.

Kashi Haft Rang 'Seven-Colored Tiles', magnificent beauty of Iranian art

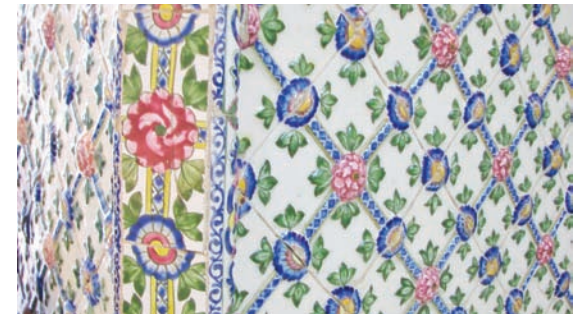
HERITAGE TEHRAN — Tiles industry and tile-work crafts, that can be more found in ornaments of many architectures and specially shrines of Iran, has a very ancient history just like pottery. Based on the found artifacts, the beginning of tile-work is traced back to Achaemenid dynasty (550–330 BC). But this kind of tile-work was not common until Seljuk dynasty (1037–1194).

The term "Haft Rang" (meaning seven-colored, also known specifically as Cuerda Seca or Dry Cord) tiles was first used by a royal historian of Ilkhanate (1256–1335/1353) to describe the technic of painting on glaze, and is still used today. The number seven however does not refer to the exact number of colors, because in this technic it is the composition and relation of colors that matters the most. Today, Haft Rang tiles are made in 15x15 cm in seven colors: blue, turquoise, red, yellow, fawn, black and white. This technic prevents the colors to be mixed into

each other because they are separated by lines of a special kind of ink with oil and magnesium components. Haft Rang tile reached its perfection in Shiraz. Haft Rang tiles of Shiraz differ from other cities in quality and chemical components of its glaze.

Another difference is that the motif of "Gol o Morgh" (flowers and birds) are more used in Shiraz. Colors such as light green, pink, yellow and white are more common in Shiraz, and among these colors pink is used more impressively. One of the best examples of using Haft Rang tiles is Nassir ol-Molk mosque that is also called the Pink Mosque. Other architectures of Shiraz that have benefited from Haft Rang tiles are Vakil mosque, Narenjestan mansion, and Afif Abad Garden.

It takes twelve steps to make Haft Rang tiles. 1. Choosing the right soil 2. "Chagh Kardan", where the clay is kneaded and prepared 3. Making the adobes and partly drying the tiles 4. Pressing the tiles 5. "Barshouyi" or



cutting away the residue by water 6. First round of firing (firing adobe) 7. Applying white glaze 8. Second round of firing (firing white glaze) 9. Sketching the design on paper 10. Applying the design on tiles 11. Painting and coloring by glaze 12. Final round of firing.

Vacation destinations in northern Iran: Gilan awaits you with wonders

TOURISM TEHRAN — The lush green Gilan province, bounded by the Caspian Sea and the Republic of Azerbaijan on the north, is one of the most picturesque places to visit in Iran.

Gilan favors from mild climate and stunning landscape such as sea, dense timberlands, waterfalls, plenty of flowing rivers, green gardens, and the forested coastal plains rise up quickly into the Alborz mountain range. Rasht is the capital city of Gilan province.

Local authorities expect to maximize sustainable employment of rural households by the means of expanding tribe tourism across the northern Iranian province. In this regard, a committee of experts was formed last year to formulate effective factors in the sustainable employment of the rural population under an accelerated development of infrastructures linked with nomadic tourism.

In 2019, Gilan was selected as the first province to start the country's comprehensive tourism plan, which is being developed under the auspices of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). The comprehensive plan is aimed to serve as a roadmap to guide tourists from all over the globe to achieve a sustainable and competitive tourism market.

Over the past couple of years, tribe tourism has gained a lot of support and attention in the country by both the government and the private sector, as well as sightseers and local communities. Many tour operators believe that tribal regions could be deemed as the legacy of human authenticity in its novel cultural and human aspects. In Iranian culture, literature, and public opinion, nomads have always been a proud part of the nation.

Iranian nomads surprise visitors with the dignity in their rough and overworked hands and integrity in their compassionate eyes at first sight. Migration is a way of life for nomads because herding cattle is their main source of income. In spring they with all their belongings head for the cooler pastures usually in mountain hillsides where the grass is abundant for their flocks of sheep and goats. And in autumn they return to previous tropic plains as their well-fed livestock getting stronger to bear the winter.

Accompanying nomads during their migration, even for a day or two, maybe a lifetime experience. As a traveler, one has the chance to visit, live, eat, and sleep in a nomadic camp with a real nomad family. Colorful dresses, vast black tents, colored-eyed children with rosy cheeks, modest lifestyle, scenic landscape, and local dishes are probably among the delights of such visits.

Language, music, indigenous cuisine, clothing, songs, anecdotes, crafts, live per-



formances, and local rituals such as celebrations and wedding ceremonies have always spurred many to experience life among the tribes.

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

Rudkhan Castle

Some 50 kilometers southwest of Rasht, in deep green and temperate rainforests of Gilan, well-preserved Rudkhan Castle or Qal'e Rudkhan in Farsi overlooks the lush woods with the streams cascading down the mountain. Some historians say the construction of the castle dates back to the Sasanian era, over 14 centuries ago. But it has been renovated around the 10th century during Seljuq dynasty.

The castle is built from stone and is famous for about 1000 stairs which get you to top of it, then prepare yourself for a 50-minute steep trekking and wear your hiking shoes. Climb up to have a great view of the fortress and its surroundings. There are vendors and shops along the way where you can have snack and else. If you want to feel the mysterious atmosphere of this intact ancient castle, visit it on a foggy day. You can also enjoy plenty of traditional food and drinks along the way.

The Jelveh building

A cultural heritage building is Rasht's first private high-rise and identifiable landmark, erected circa 1931, with its distinctive French-Russian architectural.

Shahrdari building

The Shahrdari building is the Rasht's most identifiable landmark. its colonial style tempered by a token mini-dome topping a distinctive whitewashed tower. It looks great when floodlit at night

The Rasht Museum

The Rasht Museum is somewhat tiny, but well presented in a 1930s house. Its mannequin displays illustrate Gilaki lifestyle, amid a selection of 3000-year-old terracotta rhyton drinking horns in the shape of bulls, rams and deer. Supping from such vessels supposedly endowed the drinker with the powers and skills of the animal depicted

Rasht Grand Bazaar

Rasht Great Bazaar is the heart of the economy in Gilan province and is located in the old texture of Rasht. The bazaar dates back to the Safavid era (1501–1736). Unlike similar traditional bazaars, it is not covered and has no ceiling domes or lightwells. The bazaar has maintained its traditional appearance throughout the years and is still a place where agricultural products, different fish, local foods and handicrafts are sold.

Anzali Lagoon

Anzali Lagoon is one of the most stunning natural attractions of the northern Iranian province of Gilan. The lagoon, which is actually a wetland, divides the city of Bandar-e-Anzali into two parts and is considered to be one of the best locations for bird watching. That is to say, until 2012, around 187 bird species have been observed and recorded here.

It is also home to more than 80,000 wintering birds such as ducks, geese, swans, and coots. This astonishing wetland is surrounded by paddy fields and fish ponds and about two-thirds of the whole lagoon is covered by reeds.

Gilan Rural Heritage Museum

Showcasing traditions and customs give you the opportunity to explore the rural living environment and even take a picture local clothes. You can also buy handicrafts or even have a piece of hot flat bread. There are coffee shops and restaurants in which you can have a bite of Sour Kabob or Baqali-Qatoq. Many rural houses demonstrating the architectural style of the coastal or plain as well as mountainous areas of Gilan have been identified and subsequently, have been dismantled and reconstructed in the museum.

Visadar waterfall

Visadar waterfall, with 15 m high, is an impressive place located in a mountainous area and along a lush road. The surrounding rock cliffs are also attractive. Adventurous visitors can swim downstream from the waterfall.

Lake Saqalaksar

Lake Saqalaksar Lake is a unique place having a beautiful and calm nature where you can get relaxed and enjoy the silent atmosphere of the forest around the lake. There is also a cozy café beside this lake. The route to this place is scenic and picturesque as well.

Gisum Forest

Gisum is another tourist attraction and an area with a really beautiful nature in Gilan province, including forest and beach. You will depart from forest to the beach through a really amazing road in the heart of the dense Gisum Forest.

Masal county

The city of Masal is a countryside in lush highlands of Gilan province, it's a relatively untouched spot in the nature of northern

Iran. It's hard to express its beauty through words. There is a really picturesque village in this region which is called "Olabselagh" with lovely wooden houses. It's also possible for Visitors to stay in hotel or local homes there.

Lahijan Lake

Lahijan Lake is an artificial lake at the foot of Sheitan Kooh in the city of Lahijan. It's a green area with pleasant weather which is a great place for walking and family picnics and it has a friendly atmosphere. The mountain across from the lake (Sheitan Kooh) offers a great view of the lake and the whole city. There are also traditional cafés and restaurants around the lake.

Asalem-Khalkhal road

Asalem-Khalkhal is a dreamlike forest road and one of Iran most beautiful roads in the midst of foggy forests which connects Gilan province to Ardabil province. It is about 20 hours of hiking in forests and mountains, but it should be accompanied by an experienced guide. Visitors can find hostels on this way. Best time for going to this area is summer. Read more...

Subatan

The countryside of Subatan is a dreamlike lush land amongst mountains. Although reaching to this hidden paradise is tough, it's absolutely worth all the effort. There are lots of things to see and enjoy, including rural cottages and groups of horses. This place is also near to exquisite Neor Lake and Talesh Forests. It's suggested not to go there in cold months.

Boujagh

Boujagh is a wetland (national park) by Sefidrud river. It is home to over 200 species of birds that come from different parts of the world to this place every autumn. Besides birds, there are groups of horses and fishermen in their boats. Visitors could see many stunning views there, especially in spring.

Laton waterfall

Laton is the highest waterfall in Iran (105 m high) near to the city of Astara. For reaching to this attractive waterfall, you should pass through beautiful dense forests in highlands which it takes you 4 hours.

Heyran pass

Heyran pass which connects Astara to Ardabil is the most beautiful road in Iran. This road passes among mountains, forests and green lands and you will be enchanted by its exquisite scenery. The gondola lift is 1,500 meters long through beautiful landscapes of Alborz mountain range, there are really wonderful views of foggy lush highlands.

Chamkhaleh beach

The best beach of Caspian Coastline is the sandy Chamkhaleh Beach which is a great and peaceful place for swimming or sun tanning. You will also enjoy watching wonderful view of the sea, and unforgettable sunrise by the sea from this lovely beach.

Iranian universities hosting students from 133 countries

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Students from 133 countries are currently studying in Iranian universities, Afshin Akhondzadeh, head of the office for non-Iranian students at the Organization of Student Affairs said on Thursday.

In 2013, 18,684 Iranian students were studying in Iran, which increased to 57,675 in 2020, he added, IRNA reported.

Some 25,000 of the students are studying in universities affiliated with the Ministry of Science (4,000 with scholarship, 16,600 without a scholarship, and 10,000 through the Iranian national university entrance exam), while 25,000 others are receiving education in Azad University, and about 2,000 in medical universities, he explained.

Fifty-seven percent of the international students are studying for a master's degree, 27 percent for a bachelor's degree and 15 percent are educating to receive a Ph.D., while the remaining one percent study at other levels, Akhondzadeh noted.

He went on to say that law, Persian literature, and computer engineering are the top three fields of study for foreign students in Iran, while civil engineering, business management, political science, English language and literature, Quran and hadith sciences, international relations, and electrical engineering and other majors with the highest number of non-Iranian students.

In 2013, 35 centers were allowed to admit foreign students, which has increased to 77 in 2021, he said.

Abdol-Hamid Alizadeh, deputy minis-



ter of science has said that 40,000 foreign nationals are studying in 43 Iranian universities, 22,000 of whom are studying at the universities affiliated with the Ministry of Science, 8,000 at the Azad University, 3,000 at the Ministry of Health, and the rest at other universities.

Iranian universities shine at world rankings

Times Higher Education has published its annual ranking of the world's top universities for 2021, listing 47 Iranian universities,

which shows an increase of 7 universities compared to the last year.

Six Iranian universities have been placed among the world's top universities announced by the prestigious Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings 2021.

With 47 Iranian universities ranked among 1,527 top universities of 93 countries in the world in 2021 rankings, Iran achieved a great improvement in the academic field.

Some 21 Islamic countries were also listed in the ranking. However, Iran holds the

highest share with 47 universities.

With a scientific growth rate of 10.4 percent in 2019, Iran ranked second among the top 25 countries in the world, next to China with a growth rate of 12.9 percent, according to the Web of Science website.

According to statistics released by the International Web of Science Database, Iran's citation rank has always been on the rise over the last eight years, from 24 in 2012 to 16 in 2019.

Iran ranks first in terms of the number of universities in the region and among Islamic countries, according to Shanghai Ranking's Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) 2020.

Two Iranian universities have been ranked among the top 100 universities in Asia, according to Webometrics Ranking of World Universities for July 2020.

Moreover, 7 Iranian universities have been listed among the best 1000 worldwide; including, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences, Sharif University of Technology, Tarbiat Modares University, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Isfahan University of Technology, Iran University of Science and Technology.

In June 2020, THE Asia University Rankings 2020 ranked five Iranian universities among the top 100 universities worldwide.

The Center for Science and Technology Studies Leiden Ranking has placed 36 Iranian universities in the list of over 1,000 major universities worldwide in 2020 compared with 26 universities in 2019.

Iran finalizes deal for 60 million "Sputnik V" vaccines

→ 1 So far, two Iranian companies have signed a contract with the Russian side for the joint production of vaccines in the country, and the third company also has been introduced and is awaiting approval, he concluded.

Last Saturday, Iran began a 10-day lockdown amid the fourth wave of infections.

During the lockdown, shops, parks, restaurants, bakeries, beauty salons, malls, and bookstores are closed and offices restricted to one-third capacity in cities declared as "red zones" with the highest infection rates.

The capital city of Tehran and 250 other cities across the country have been declared red zones.

Homegrown vaccines

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

The second Iranian coronavirus vaccine, Razi Cov Pars, which started the clinical trial on February 27, will be mass-produced in early August.

Fakhra vaccine, the third homegrown vaccine, was



unveiled and started the clinical trial on March 16.

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

Mass-vaccination

Iran started mass vaccination against COVID-19 with Russian-made Sputnik V vaccine on February 9, with the priority given to medical staff, the elderly, and

people with underlying diseases; which is also going to be co-produced by the two countries.

The first shipment of the COVAX vaccine was also delivered to Tehran in early April.

"Currently, about 250,000 people in the country have been vaccinated and about 56,000 others have received the second dose of the vaccine," Alireza Raeisi, spokesman for the National Headquarters for Coronavirus control said.

New cases and mortalities surge

In a press briefing on Friday, Health Ministry's spokesperson Sima-Sadat Lari confirmed 25,261 new cases of COVID-19 infection, raising the total number of infections to 2,194,133. She added that 1,761,497 patients have so far recovered, but 4,652 remain in critical conditions of the disease.

During the past 24 hours, 328 patients have lost their lives, bringing the total number of deaths to 66,008, she added.

So far, 14,165,771 COVID-19 diagnostic tests have been performed in the country.

Health projects worth \$12.6m inaugurated

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Some 29 health projects worth 530 billion rials (nearly \$12.6 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) were inaugurated in Zanjan province on Thursday.

The projects were inaugurated during a ceremony held through video conferencing with Health Minister Saeed Namaki in attendance.

Referring to the opening of more than 1,400 health projects by the end of May across the country, Namaki said that the most important of these projects include the establishment of a pediatric oncology department, the establishment of an endoscopy department, the increase of ICU beds, and CT scans, the development of emergency departments in hospitals, and the construction of comprehensive rural health centers.

Health sector growth in 40 years

After the Islamic Revolution (1979), many advances have been made in the health sector, namely, increased medical facilities, increased life expectancy and reduced infant and maternal mortality, growth of medical universities, and upgraded medical equipment.

Before the Islamic Revolution, there were about 558 medical institutions with 57,927 beds in the country, which was insufficient in comparison to the country's population.

Meanwhile, after the fourth decades of the Islamic Revolution, primary health care (PHC) has reached a coverage of 93 percent for the urban population and over 97 percent for the rural residents. At the same time, the establishment of the health care network system as a global model has taken place with more than 31,400 Health Houses and 7,400 healthcare centers.



Before the Revolution, there were only a limited number of physicians for the entire population of 36 million in Iran, so all the cities of the country and the country's villages were suffering from the lack of doctors and specialists in 1,500 rural health centers.

The number of physicians in the country, including general practitioners and specialists in various fields, amounted to about 14,000,

while a significant number of whom were foreign physicians. So, there were still about 9.3 physicians per 10,000 people.

Before the Islamic Revolution, four medical faculties were established in universities, but now there are about 59 medical universities across the country.

Before 1979, there were about 50 manufacturing companies in the field of medical equipment across Iran, all of which imported raw materials from abroad and assembled them inside Iran. These companies were only able to supply 3 percent of the domestic needs.

According to the statistics in 2017, medical equipment companies reached 500, which supplied over 80 percent of hospitals' needs across the country, producing more than 8,000 types of medical equipment and supplying them to domestic and foreign markets.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → €

'City-friendly schools' scheme launched in Tehran

The "city-friendly schools" scheme was launched in the capital to promote environmental protection and urban development issues among students, ISNA reported on Wednesday.

Mojtaba Daneshvar, director general of citizenship education at Tehran Municipality, said that the project covers more than 550 schools, consisting of 160,000 students.

It aims to familiarize students with the rights and duties of citizens, the environment, waste, transportation and traffic, safety and security, crisis management, he explained.

The training programs will be in the form of workshops, role plays, cultural and educational camps, production of educational content such as books, brochures and posters, he concluded.

آغاز طرح «مدارس دوستدار شهر» در تهران

طرح «مدارس دوستدار شهر» با هدف آشنا کردن دانش آموزان با حقوق و تکالیف شهروندی، محیط زیست و پسماند، حمل و نقل و ترافیک، و ایمنی و مدیریت بحران در مدارس منتخب شهر تهران آغاز شد.

به گزارش ایسنا مجتبی دانشور، مدیرکل آموزش‌های شهروندی شهرداری تهران، گفت این طرح بیش از ۵۵۰ مدرسه شامل ۱۶۰ هزار دانش‌آموز را در بر می‌گیرد.

برنامه‌های آموزشی این طرح در قالب برگزاری کارگاه‌های آموزشی، تولید محتوای آموزشی در قالب کتاب، بروشور و پوستر، اجرای نمایش و برگزاری اردوهای فرهنگی و آموزشی خواهد بود.

Airborne microplastics 'now spiral around the globe'

Biology students may remember learning the water cycle, the carbon cycle or the nitrogen cycle. Now, new research suggests we may need to add "the plastic cycle" to the list of Earth's list of biogeochemical processes, reports Damian Carrington for the Guardian.

The authors of the new paper, published this week in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, write "microplastic particles and fibers generated from the breakdown of mismanaged waste are now so prevalent that they cycle through the Earth in a manner akin to global biogeochemical cycles." The authors focused on airborne microplastics, which they say "now spiral around the globe with distinct atmospheric, oceanic, cryospheric, and terrestrial residence times."

The study's models suggest some 1,100 tons of microplastic, defined as particles smaller than 0.2 inches, currently swirl over the western United States and many stay airborne for almost a week, reports Matt Simon for Wired. Some 84 percent of that plastic in the air comes from roads where cars and trucks kick microplastics up in their wakes, and, surprisingly, the offending stretches of asphalt tend to be located outside of major cities. Another 11 percent of the petrochemical miasma may waft in from the oceans, with dust from agricultural soils contributing the remaining five percent.

One of the major implications of these results is much of the plastic suspended in the atmosphere isn't coming from fresh sources.

"We found a lot of legacy plastic pollution everywhere we looked; it travels in the atmosphere and it deposits all over the world," says Janice Brahney, an environmental scientist at Utah State University and the study's lead author, in a statement. "This plastic is not new from this year. It's from what we've already dumped into the environment over several decades."

In the ocean, as the tens of millions of tons of plastic already floating at sea break down into microscopic pieces, some of those minute particles take flight into the atmosphere via sea spray and get carried around the world by wind.

The team arrived at these figures by collecting more than 300 samples of airborne plastics at 11 sites across the American West and used those data to inform their model which then created hypothetical scenarios for how the microscopic trash reached its destination.

In addition to identifying the potential sources of the pollution raining down across the western U.S., the study also suggests these airborne plastics can travel far enough to fall on Antarctica in significant quantities.

"What humans have been doing for decades now is what I call a 'plastification' of the landscape and oceans," Andreas Stohl, an atmospheric scientist at the University of Vienna who was not involved in the research, tells the Guardian. "The study confirms the global-scale nature of microplastic transport in the atmosphere and does a good job in highlighting highly relevant and concerning possibilities, but more measurement data is needed to get a better idea of the sources."

Carbon tax could help Asian countries hit climate targets: IMF

A carbon price that starts low and rises steadily could help Asian countries reach their targets under the Paris climate accord over the next decade, the head of the International Monetary Fund said on Thursday, citing new IMF research.

IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva told an event hosted by the People's Bank of China that there was a growing consensus that carbon pricing was the most efficient and cost-effective way to curbing emissions.

By raising energy prices overall, carbon pricing creates incentives for households and firms to shift toward greener options, while promoting energy efficiency, boosting green investments and spurring innovation, she said.

The IMF is urging the world's largest emitters to adopt carbon price floors to ensure more substantial climate change mitigation, she said.

London-based climate data provider TransitionZero on Thursday said China needs to halve carbon dioxide emissions from its coal-fired power plants by the end of the decade if it is to remain on course to become carbon neutral by 2060.

Georgieva said changes were critical in Asia, which is home to the majority of the world's population and accounts for almost half of the world's carbon emissions.

The Asia-Pacific region is already experiencing faster-rising temperatures and more weather-related natural disasters than anywhere else, and climate change is a key driver of rising poverty and worsening food insecurity, she said.

But accelerating the switch to greener economies could help boost the economic recovery from the coronavirus crisis.

Carbon taxes could also generate substantial revenues, but countries could use other instruments, such as China's coal tax, which could eventually be scaled up to curb CO2 emissions.

LET'S LEARN PERSIAN

(Part 159)

(Source: saadifoundation.ir)

■ **یَکُم، اَوَّل** - یَکُم فارسی است و اَوَّل عَرَبی. یَکُم کمی رسمی‌تر است. دُوُم و سِیُوم فارسی هستند اما معمولاً تشدید می‌گیرند. در عدد مرکب از یَکُم استفاده می‌کنیم، نه از اَوَّل: بیست و یکم

● **تمرین ۳. عدد را به شکل ترتیبی با حرف بنویسید:**

۱. (۵) _____
۲. (۱۰) _____
۳. (۱۴) _____
۴. (۲۰) _____
۵. (۵۵) _____

● **تمرین ۱. "من" یا "خ" بگذارید و غلطها را تصحیح کنید:**

۱. () مردم می‌توانند با تله کابین به توجال بروند.
۲. () تله کابین توجال هفت ایستگاه دارد.
۳. () مردم یا پیاده به قله می‌روند یا با تله کابین.
۴. () مردم برای اسکی به ایستگاه آخر می‌روند.

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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Kindness is a mark of faith and whoever is not kind has no faith.
Prophet Muhammad (S)

WHAT'S IN ART GALLERIES

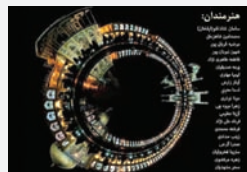
Note: Some of the following art exhibitions are being organized online in order to prevent the spread of novel coronavirus.

Painting



■ An exhibition of paintings by a group of artists, including Saeideh Arian, Farhang Atefi, Hassan Noruznia, Behdad Najafi, Hamid Jafari, Fatemeh Tehrani, and Abolhasan Riazi is on view in an exhibition at Rasul-e Mehr Gallery. The exhibition will be running on tehran.farhang.gov.ir/fa/ne-garkhaneh/namayeshgahhonari. In addition, visiting the exhibition is possible by appointment and observing health protocols at the gallery that can be found in East Arghavan St. off North Motahhari St., Darya Blvd. in the Saadatabad neighborhood.

Multimedia



■ A group of artists in various media are displaying their artworks in an exhibition named "Similar" at Ehsan Gallery. Works by Saman Shadanlu, Marzieh Qorbani, Fatemeh Taherinejad, Ainaz Zarei, Azita Azimi, Zeinab Hadadi, and Sahar Mashhadian have been selected for the exhibition, which will be held until April 21 at the gallery located at No. 22, East 14th St. in the Ajudanieh neighborhood.

Troupe to give reading of Simon's "The Good Doctor" in Tehran

■ TEHRAN — A group of actors will perform a reading of American playwright Neil Simon's "The Good Doctor" in Tehran, Mehr reported on Friday.



The reading performance is scheduled to be held online due to the outbreak of the coronavirus from April 20 to 23. The performance will be directed by Nushin Tabrizi, based on a Persian version translated by Shahram Zargar. The play is a musical comedy set in 19th-century Russia and consists of a series of short plays based on short stories and other works by Russian writer Anton Chekhov. The only connecting thread between the series is the character of the writer, who is reminiscent of Chekhov.

"The Good Doctor" has previously been performed at several theaters in Tehran and other Iranian cities.

Namayesh Radio reviews works by Mark Twain

■ TEHRAN — Works by American writer, humorist, novelist, and lecturer Mark Twain were reviewed during a program on Thursday on Namayesh Radio, an IRIB's radio station dedicated to audio plays and performances.

Actor Reza Omrani, actress Behnaz Bostandust and scholar and translator Keyhan Bahmani participated in the program, which involved reading and reviewing some of Twain's short stories such as "Mrs. McWilliams and the Lightning", a short story from his collection "Merry Tales" (1892), as well as his biography.

Mark Twain (1835-1910) acquired international fame for his travel narratives, especially *The Innocents Abroad* (1869), *Roughing It* (1872), and *Life on the Mississippi* (1883), and for his adventure stories of boyhood, especially *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885).

A gifted raconteur, distinctive humorist, and irascible moralist, he transcended the apparent limitations of his origins to become a popular public figure and one of America's best and most beloved writers.

A complete bibliography of Twain's works is nearly impossible to compile because of the vast number of pieces he wrote (often in obscure newspapers) and his use of several different pen names. Additionally, a large portion of his speeches and lectures have been lost or were not recorded; thus, the compilation of Twain's works is an ongoing process.

Most popular festivals that reflect Iran's cultural spirit

➔ 1. 2. Ramadan: It is the ninth month of the Islamic Calendar and because of it being based on the lunar cycles, it rotates around the Iranian calendar which is based on the solar year. This year Ramadan started on Farvardin 25 and while Ramadhan is an Islamic occasion and ritual, nevertheless it has become part of the Iranian tradition and culture to the extent that many non-Muslim Iranians also observe the Ramadhan rituals during this holy month. According to Islam, Muslims are instructed to fast during this month by refraining from eating, drinking while observing behavioral etiquette and protocols, as well as performing prayers and gaining spiritual reflection.

Iranians have developed a unique accustomed relationship with this holy month, with a few traits now fully associated with the feeling and essence of Ramadhan. Iranian Muslims eat a meal called 'Sahari' before dawn and refrain from eating or drinking until sunset when they eat another meal called 'Eftar' to break their fasts. The fasting routine has become a tradition for families to get together, especially for 'Eftar' and to



perform prayers and participate in religious ceremonies.

3. Yalda: Occurring every year on December 20 or 21, the Yalda night is the longest night of the year also known as the 'winter solstice' when the northern hemisphere is at its longest distance from the Sun.

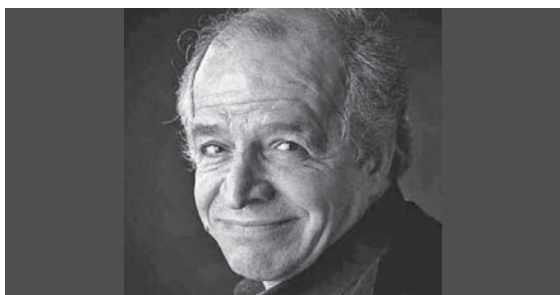
Iranian families and friends gather during the longest and darkest night of the year to read poetry, eat and drink until after midnight. Pomegranates, watermelons, and different types of nuts are served throughout the night, while the elders read excerpts of the famous Hafez poetry book to the family.

Similar to Noruz, the night of Yalda is also celebrated by many other countries in the region and is a shared culture in many countries influenced by Iranian tradition and the Iranians' diligence in upholding their cultural values.

4. 22nd of Bahman: The final and perhaps the most significant event that has now been embedded into Iranian culture, and which has also influenced many other cultures alike is the anniversary of the Islamic Revolution on 22nd of Bahman equivalent to February 11 in the year 1979. This was the day that the royal dynasties ruling Iran and Persia for thousands of years ended and the Islamic Republic was formed based on popular vote offering the national democratic rights and freedoms. Every year this day is celebrated by Iranians worldwide, as well as many non-Iranians across different countries including Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon.

On 22nd of Bahman Iran enjoys an official holiday and Iranians take to the streets to participate in parades and carnivals celebrating their freedom and independence from the dictatorship of the Pahlavi dynasty.

Actor Mohsen Qazi-Moradi dies at 80



Actor Mohsen Qazi-Moradi in an undated photo.

■ TEHRAN — Iranian actor Mohsen Qazi-Moradi died at his home in Tehran at the age of 80 on Wednesday, his wife actress Mahvash Vaqari announced.

He was suffering from Parkinson's disease.

Qazi-Moradi, who is most famous for his roles in comic series and movies, was born in Tehran in 1941.

He began his acting career by playing a minor role in the movie "Hassan, the Black" directed by Parviz Osanlu in 1972.

He was an actor in many popular TV series, including Mohammad-Hossein Latifi's "The Great Escape", Ahmad Kavari's "Bitter Sugar", Parisa Bakhtavar's "I Am a Tenant" and Kianush Ayyari's "Thousands of Eyes".

He also starred in Ahmadreza Motamedi's "The Rules of the Game", Bahman Farmanara's "A House Built on Water", Bahram Baizai's "Killing Mad Dogs" and Rakhshan Bani-Etemad's "Under the Skin of the City".

"Radiograph of a Family" to compete in Krakow film festival

■ TEHRAN — "Radiograph of a Family", a co-production of Norway, Iran, and Switzerland by Firuzeh Khosrovani will go on screen at the International Documentary Competition at the 61st Krakow Film Festival.

Khosrovani in the film uses the metaphor of the X-ray photographs to see right through the complicated relationship between her parents: the mother dedicated to the Iranian revolution and the secularized father, a radiologist.

The film will be competing with 14 films in this section

including "The Wheel" by Nomin Lkhagvasuren from Mongolia, "Blue Code of Silence," by Magnus Skatvold and Gregory Mallozzi from Norway, "Writing with Fire" by Rintu Thomas and Sushmit Ghosh from India, "Walk with Angels" by Tomasz Wysoki from Poland and "Lost Boys" by Joonas Neuvonen and Satri Cetinkaya from Finland.

Back in November, "Radiograph of a Family" received the IDFA Award for Best Feature-Length Documentary.

Krakow Film Festival will be held in the Polish city from May 30 to June 6.



A scene from "Radiograph of a Family", a co-production of Norway, Iran, and Switzerland by Firuzeh Khosrovani.

Savushun, first Persian novel by female writer

Savushun (1969) is the most acclaimed novel of the prominent writer Simin Daneshvar (1921-2012), and the first novel in Persian written by an Iranian female fiction writer.

Savushun is set in Shiraz, in the last years of World War II, after the invasion by the Allied troops and the occupation of southern Iran by the British army. It chronicles, in 23 chapters, the life of a middle class landowning family in this period, when everyday life had been brought into turmoil by the presence of the occupying troops and the pressure they brought to bear on the economic and social fabrics of the society, with soaring food prices contributing to tension and strife in the local community.

The story is narrated through the eyes of Zari, a happily married woman whose behavior, as she struggles to protect her family, runs counter to that of the traditionally marginalized Persian woman. Much of what is not directly experienced by Zari is recounted through accounts of social visits and other encounters between Zari and her friends and relatives. The household also includes Zari's son, Khosrow, her twin daughters, and her sister-in-law.

The plot is set in motion when Zari's husband, Yusof, driven by patriotic fervor, and frustrated by the indecency of local opportunists and the harsh behavior of the occupying forces, refuses to sell his estates' crops either to the foreign invaders, or to the Qashqai tribal leaders, Malek Rostam and Malek Sohrab, who are in the midst of a rebellion against the central government. A web of political intrigues and hostilities is created that leads to the novel's explosive and tragic end. Yusof "unwillingly to submit to pressure from the occupying forces and their Iranian supporters, and also traditional in his just treatment of peasants," pays for his idealistic sentiments with his life, when he is assassinated on a trip to his village. Zari, in defiance of orders issued by the local authorities, proceeds to hold a burial procession. The mourners, rapidly increasing in number, are soon dispersed by government troops called in to avoid a mass demonstration. Zari is forced to bury Yusof unceremoniously at night.

The dramatic depiction of Yusof's death and burial as the inescapable fate of an unyielding visionary hero trumped by the forces of injustice and deceit mirrors the metaphorical implications of the novel's title which alludes to an ancient ritual of mourning in Iran. The participants in the ancient ritual lament the betrayal and death of Siavosh, a pre-Islamic

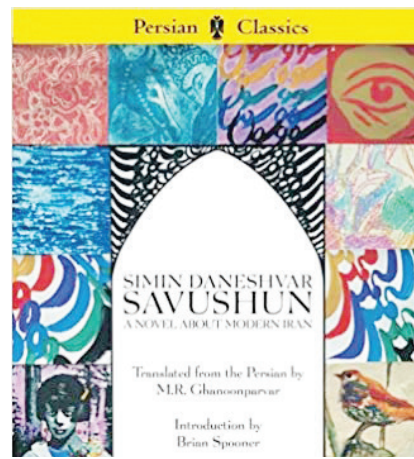
legendary figure, who exhibits many features of a vegetation deity and from whose blood a plant grows.

Siavosh is murdered by the Turanian king Afrasiab, the archenemy of the Iranian peoples, whose villainy is depicted in the suppression of waters, draining of rivers, and causing of famine and draught. The ritual, surviving in the folklore of the Fars province, has been entangled over the centuries 'with too close resemblance in imagery and emotive underpinnings,' with the Shia Muslim passion of Imam Hussain, the Prophet Mohammad's grandson, and the tragedy of his unjust demise at Karbala. The recurrence in the novel of names and characters, such as Sudaba, Khosrow, and Rostam, all drawn from the legend of Siavosh, and the ensuing spread of famine and draught after the Allied occupation of the region, leaves little ambiguity in the symbolic significance of the novel as the modern retelling of the ancient legend.

The martyrdom of Yusof, and the foretold destiny of his son, Khosrow, who, in the final pages of the novel, again reminiscent of his namesake in the legend, vows to take up his father's cause, follow his path, and avenge his death, acquires a prophetic tone when McMahon, an Irish poet and the family's friend, dedicates a poem to Yusof's memory and assures Zari that 'In your home, a tree shall grow, and others in your city and many throughout your country. And the wind shall carry the message from tree to tree and the trees shall ask the wind, 'Did you see the dawn on your way?'

Savushun, unlike classical fictions, in which the narrative space often extends beyond frontiers, shrinks this space to a small house. The house, however, is emblematic of the country itself, and its tale, enmeshed in the major events of Iran's contemporary history, turns the novel into a coded political and historical narrative, engaging the reader in a constant shift from the microcosm of the family to the larger framework of the country. The novel exemplifies the work of a new generation of writers who, unlike the historical novelists of the preceding era, attend to the near past in order to shed light on the present.

Enconced in the tradition of storytelling in Iran, the novel, like most of Daneshvar's fictions, employs conventional narrative forms and follows a linear plot. The technique, described by Daneshvar herself as 'documentary-imaginative,' resembles, as contended by some critics, that of the American novelist E. L. Doktorow (b.1931), particularly



his treatment of contemporary history in his most celebrated novel Ragtime. Some commentators have traced similarities between Zari and Daneshvar herself, who, like Zari, was educated at a British missionary school in Shiraz. Parallels have also been drawn between Yusof and Daneshvar's husband, Jalal Al-e Ahmad (1923-1969), a literary figure and a notable critic of Western influence in Iran to whose memory the novel is dedicated.

Hushang Golshiri (1937-2000) sees Savushun as an imaginative literary expression of Gharbzadegi (Plagued by the West) and Dar Khedmat va Khianat-e roshanfekran (On the service and treason of intellectuals), two major works by Al-e Ahmad.

Daneshvar had already published two collections of short stories, *Atash-Khamush* (Fire quenched, 1948), and *Shahri Chon Behesht* (A city like paradise, 1961), as well as essays on aesthetics and classical Persian literature, when she wrote Savushun, but it was only with the publication of this novel that she achieved something of a celebrity status and established herself as a distinct literary voice. The metaphorical allusions of the novel struck a particularly sympathetic chord with contemporary political dissidents and intellectuals.

The book was also a popular success. Many readers were absorbed by the novel's setting, language, and narrative techniques, and many more were enthralled by Daneshvar's portrayal of Zari, the novel's protagonist, who, in response to the turn of fortune, transforms from a housewife supporting her children and family to a defiant woman capable of brave decisions, vowing to fight injustice and carrying on the struggle. Zari, as noted by some critics, unlike the inaccessible ethereal women of classical Persian literature, or the fallen women of the first Persian social novels, is portrayed in a more tangible manner;

as a 'real' woman who exhibits an evolving character, and represents a pioneering attempt to probe the multifaceted aspects of women's lives, without ideological or sexual stereotyping.

Some commentators, however, arguing that Daneshvar forces a patriarchal notion of revolution upon her fictional characters, disfavor her portrayal of Zari, as a passive, subservient personage. As noted by one critic "beneath the straightforward and explicit description of Zari's innermost feelings there exists some deep emotion which has found no expression, as if some deep resentment wishes to surface and mock Zari's most sacred loyalties. But Daneshvar never dwells on this hidden and disturbing aspect of Zari".

Most critics have praised the unadorned eloquence of Savushun's prose, occasionally colored by the use of Shirazi dialect and expressions. But her prose has also been criticized as too verbose, especially in the side stories that supplement the main plot and occasionally disrupt its continuity. It is further argued that while the portrayal of Fotuhi, as a pro-Soviet Marxist who not only remains unaware of the social realities and national interests of the country, but also fails to take care of his ill sister, effectively amounts to a critique of Marxism in Iran, some characters, such as the young shepherd and McMahon are reduced to stereotypes. The reductive portrayal of the British, as the quintessential agents of intrigue and conspiracy, is also a worn out cliché of the time.

Some critics have seen implicit references in the final pages of the novel to the socio-political unrests that led to the fall of the popular government of Mohammad Mossaddeq in the early 1950s. It has been further suggested that the novel encapsulated the experience of a generation who struggled with social and historical forces that gave pre-revolutionary Iran its characteristic hopelessness and emerging depression. It highlighted the anti-Western sentiments, and intoned history's scary tune that would be later heard in the Revolution of 1979. Reprinted over 20 times with a circulation of over half a million, Savushun has enjoyed a sustained popularity since its publication almost forty years ago. The German translation of the novel, entitled *Drama der Trauer-Savushun*, and its Spanish translation by Joaquin Rodriguez, entitled *Savushun*, appeared in 1997 and 2005, respectively. It has also been translated into French, Japanese, Russian, Chinese, and Turkish, among other languages. (Source: Encyclopedia Iranica)