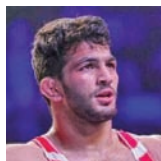




Iran says it always welcomes dialogue with Saudi Arabia *Page 3*



Hassan Yazdani just wants gold at Tokyo Olympics *Page 3*



Pakistan: TLP protesters free abducted policemen after violence *Page 5*



Seven metropolises to become age-friendly *Page 7*

Netanyahu is in sheer despair

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Loss of Gen. Hejazi is really a sorrowful tragedy, says Leader

TEHRAN— In a message on Monday Ayatollah Ali Khamenei offered his condolences on the death of Brigadier General Seyyed Mohammad Hejazi, Deputy Commander of the IRGC Quds Force.

“With great regret, I received the news of the passing of the honorable General Seyed Mohammad Hejazi. May God bless him and grant him peace,” Ayatollah Khamenei remarked.

The Leader of the Islamic Revolution described General Hejazi as a person with “dynamic thought, a heart full of true faith

and full of motivation and determination.”

Other senior Iranian officials including President Hassan Rouhani; Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf; Armed Forces Chief of Staff Major General Mohammad Bagheri; IRGC Commander Major General Hossein Salami; Vice-President Es'hagh Jahangiri; Judiciary Chief Ayatollah Seyed Ebrahim Raisi; and Defense Minister Brigadier General Amir Hatami sent messages of condolences over the death of the general.

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Iran puts a 21% rise in annual foreign trade on agenda

TEHRAN – Head of Iran’s Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) said the country has put a 21-percent rise in foreign trade on the agenda for the current Iranian calendar year 1400 (started on March 21), IRNA reported.

Speaking in a press conference on Monday, Hamid Zadboum said two scenarios have been considered for the current calendar year with regard to the

country’s foreign trade, one is the case in which Iran will reach an agreement with the world powers on the nuclear deal and the U.S. sanctions are lifted and the other one is the remaining of the U.S. sanctions.

“In the worst-case scenario we will continue the plans implemented in the previous year,” Zadboum said, adding:

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Iran jointly producing COVID-19 vaccines with three countries

TEHRAN – Iran is currently producing COVID-19 vaccines jointly with three countries of Cuba, Russia, and Australia, Mostafa Qanei, secretary of the biotechnology development office of the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology, said on Monday.

One of the vaccines is the Cuban-Iranian Soberana-02 vaccine, and the other is the Rus-

sian-Iranian Gamaleya vaccine, he explained.

The third joint vaccine will be produced in Iran in cooperation with Australia, Qanei added. ISNA reported. The COVIRAN BAREKAT vaccine will be available sooner than other domestic vaccines, and the Soberana-02 will also be mass-produced sooner than other jointly-developed vaccines, he noted.

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U.S. and UK are accomplices in the attack on Natanz nuclear facility: senior MP

BY SAEID MAWADDAT

The head of the Parliament Energy Committee believes that the U.S. and UK are accomplices in the nuclear sabotage at the Natanz site because their intelligence services helped the Israeli regime to conduct such act.

“I blame the United States and the United Kingdom because most of the intelligence gathering is done by the American and British intelligence services, despite the fact that the operation was done by the Zionist regime,” Fereydoun Abbasi Davani, a professor of nuclear physics at Shahid Beheshti University, tells the Tehran Times.

Abbasi who survived an assassination attempt by Mossad agents in northern Tehran in November 29, 2010, says, “The data at our disposal and the actions of these countries, including the assassinations they have carried out against Iranian scientific figures and their past industrial sabotage, confirm that they are behind the sabotage operation in Natanz.”

Sabotage in the Natanz nuclear site occurred on April 11 at night time. Israeli media claimed that Mossad has conducted the attack.

An official at the Iranian Intelligence Ministry has said the saboteur has been identified. Abbasi, who was appointed as the chief of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) in February 2011 and kept the post until August 2013, is of the opinion that “Iran should take tough action” in response to the sabotage.

Following is the text of the interview: **Could you update us about details of the Natanz incident? How did it happen?**

What happened in the Natanz facility actually has its history and dates back to a few years ago. For more than ten years, we have been facing various movements of Iran’s enemies in order to prevent the country’s progress in scientific fields.

The enemy wanted to hinder Iran’s nuclear program and, either through the Stuxnet virus or sabotaging industrial equipment, or placing limited explosives in the centrifuge balancing equipment and causing electricity outage at the Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant and even in the Natanz facility. That is, they tried to cut power from outside to destroy the centrifuges.

Continued on page 5

Iran tourism minister hopes for a ‘sincere return’ to cherish global heritage

TEHRAN – Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan issued a message on the occasion of International Day for Monuments and Sites, hoping for an “imminent end to the coronavirus [crisis] and a sincere return of human to cherish the global heritage”.

The message highlights cultural assets of the country and its importance for the world, saying: “April 18, which is known as the International Day for Monuments and Sites, is a great opportunity to pay more attention to the issue of cultural heritage in general and the programs and policies related to this occasion in particular.

Fortunately, we live in a land that is one of the richest countries in the world in terms of manifestations of culture and civilization, including arts, traditions, and rituals, and in this respect, Iran is one of the most exceptional

lands in the world. Cultural heritage is one of the assets. Its importance in recent years has received more public attention, experts and officials on local, national and global scales and is a treasure trove of experiences, techniques, knowledge, and art of the past for the use of present and future generations.”

Mounesan, also referred to a significant responsibility for all human beings regarding the preservation of cultural heritage for next generations: “Today, cultural heritage is also important from the perspective that we, as current protectors, have a responsibility to pass it on to future generations, so we must strive to preserve world history for future generations so that everyone can know about their background and values. Undoubtedly, in this context, what is known as historical monuments need to be preserved in the first place.”

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4 officers injured as protesters in Sacramento speak out against police brutality

Four officers were injured as protesters again gathered in downtown Sacramento speaking out against the killing of Daunte Wright and others by police.

The officers were reportedly hospitalized after being sprayed with an unknown liquid irritant, police said. No arrests were made.

Five people shot in Louisiana incident; 3rd U.S. multiple shooting in one day

Meanwhile, five people were hospitalized after being shot and injured in Shreveport, Louisiana, CBS-affiliated television station KSLA reported late on Sunday, the third multiple shooting reported in the United States with 24 hours.

In a briefing to local news outlets, police said they were in the first stages of investigating the incident, without confirming the number of people admitted to hospital nor their condition.

Police officers were responding to traffic congestion reports when shots were heard, a

police spokesman told reporters. “We responded this evening to a traffic congestion and during that congestion, numerous shots were fired,” the spokesman said.

One victim was shot in the head, while another suffered multiple gunshot wounds, according to local news outlet Love Shreveport-Bossier.

Sunday’s incidents came with the United States already on edge over a surge in shootings in recent weeks. A gunman killed eight workers and himself at an Indianapolis FedEx center on Thursday night, with at least seven deadly mass shootings reported in the United States over the past month.

7-Year-Old Girl Shot and Killed

In another event, a 7-year-old girl was fatally shot Sunday afternoon and a second person sustained gunshot injuries while sitting inside a vehicle at a McDonald’s drive-thru in Chicago’s Homan Square neighborhood, police said.

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Rocket attack targets Iraqi air base housing occupying U.S. forces

At least five rockets have targeted an Iraqi air base hosting the occupying U.S. soldiers and warplanes following a string of similar attacks on the base during past months.

According to the latest reports, during the Sunday attack, at least two projectiles hit the facilities of an American firm inside al-Balad air base, which provides maintenance to planes, a security source was quoted by AFP as saying.

Three more rockets fell outside the premises of the base.

Two foreign contractors and three Iraqi soldiers

were wounded, an unnamed source told AFP.

Another report by Reuters quoted officials as saying that Katyusha rockets were used in the attack.

No group has immediately claimed responsibility for the latest attack on the base, which is located 85 kilometers north of the capital Baghdad, and houses, among other things, F-16 fighter jets in addition to several maintenance companies employing Iraqi and foreign staff.

The Sunday’s assault was the latest in a string of attacks against U.S. positions that were carried

out after U.S. President Joe Biden, in February, ordered airstrikes on positions of anti-terror Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) along the Iraqi-Syrian border, where they were fighting remnants of the Takfiri Daesh terrorist group.

The Iraqi counter-terrorism forces pledged retaliation, prompting the U.S. military forces to go on high alert and adopt maximum security measures in anticipation of a response.

According to Press TV, the last attack on Balad air base was on April 4 when at least two rockets hit the site.

Iran, Serbia stress expansion of agricultural trade co-op

TEHRAN - Iranian Agriculture Minister Kazem Khavazi, in a meeting with Serbia’s Foreign Minister Nikola Selakovic on Sunday, has stressed the need to expand trade and agricultural relations between the two countries.

“Iran and Serbia can have constructive co-operation in various economic fields, especially in agriculture,” IRNA quoted Khavazi as saying in the meeting.

“We have had very good relations with the

Eastern European countries in the agricultural sector,” he said, adding that “Balkan countries, especially Serbia, are making good progress in this regard and Iran is willing to develop its relations with Serbia in different sectors.”

The official expressed Iran’s agreement for the establishment of a Joint Economic Committee with Serbia, saying that the two sides have great potentials for the investment of their private sectors in various fields like

fertilizers and pesticides.

“Iran has oil resources and many petroleum products can be used for producing pesticides, and we can make a good contribution in this regard,” Khavazi added.

“There are also very good fields in seed production in Iran and positive cooperation can be formed between Iran and Serbia regarding seed exchanges,” he further noted.

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Tender invitation No. 1400-1001

Iran Aluminium Company (IRALCO) would like to invite eligible suppliers for the supply of 15000 MT Calcined Petroleum Coke on tender basis.

Interested companies are allowed to send their competitive offer till 5.May.2021 based on our required instruction to following address: P.o. Box 31, opposite Bahonar Park, Natural Resources Boulevard, Arak-Iran Postal code : 3818998116

Attention : Mr. Omid / Mr. Nabuini

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 and Turkey reject band-wagoning strategies: researcher

BY MOHAMMAD MAZHARI

TEHRAN – A Turkish academic says that Western powers consider Iran and Turkey as problematic because of “their avoidance in band-wagoning strategies.”

“Turkish procurement of S-400 tactical missile defense system and Iran’s pursuit of nuclear power is presented as problematic because these states are well-known for their avoidance in band-wagoning strategies,” Furkan Halit Yolcu tells the Tehran Times.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, in a meeting with Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu on March 24, urged Ankara not to retain Russia’s S-400 missile defense system, the U.S. State Department said in a statement.

Yolcu, the research assistant in the Middle East Institute at Sakarya University, notes that “Western powers symbolize the first ring of arms production enjoying the innovative superiority for almost over three centuries.”

Despite Western powers’ traditional ties with some monarchies in West Asia, especially Persian Gulf Arab countries, China has succeeded to extend its influence in the region over recent years.

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

Continued on page 5

EU’s Borrell cites progress in nuclear deal talks

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Josep Borrell, The European Union’s top diplomat, said on Monday he saw a willingness to save the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and global powers, citing progress in talks in Vienna to bring the United States back to the accord.

The optimism follows comments by China’s envoy to the negotiations, Wang Qun, on Saturday that negotiations were starting to pick up pace.

“I think that there is real good will among both parties (Iran and the United States) to reach an agreement, and that’s good news,” Reuters quoted Borrell as saying, citing progress but not giving details.

“I think that both parties are really interested in reaching an agreement, and they have been moving from general to more focused issues, which are clearly, on one side sanction-lifting, and on the other side, nuclear implementation issues.”

The second round of talks began last Thursday in the basement of a luxury hotel in Vienna. The United States is not present as Iran has declined face-to-face negotiation, but EU officials are carrying out shuttle diplomacy with a U.S. delegation based at another hotel across the road.

Borrell said that his political director Enrique Mora, who is chairing the talks, had gone back to Vienna after returning to Brussels on Friday.

Iran has breached many of the deal’s restrictions on its nuclear activities in response to the U.S. withdrawal and reimposition of sanctions against Tehran under former U.S. President Donald Trump. Negotiators are working on steps both sides must take, on sanctions and nuclear activities, to return to full compliance.

Diplomats from Iran and the remaining parties to the 2015 Iran nuclear deal have entered the stage of drafting a new agreement to revive the nuclear deal, the Russian envoy to the Vienna nuclear talks said on Monday.

In a tweet on Monday, Russia’s representative to the international organizations in Vienna Mikhail Ulyanov also said, “Summing up the results of 2 weeks of deliberations on JCPOA restoration we can note with satisfaction that the negotiations entered the drafting stage. Practical solutions are still far away, but we have moved from general words to agreeing on specific steps towards the goal.”

EU foreign ministers discuss JCPOA

The Council on Foreign Relations of the EU was to hold a meeting on Monday night with the 2015 Iran nuclear deal as one of the topics on the agenda.

The meeting was to be chaired by Borrell. The meeting was to be held in the form of a video conference with participation of EU foreign ministers.

“The EU foreign ministers will meet this evening at a meeting of the Council on Foreign Relations, chaired by Joseph Borrell, the EU’s foreign policy chief, to discuss recent developments and future developments. These issues will include recent developments in Georgia, India, Myanmar, Mozambique and the JCPOA negotiations,” according to the European Union website.

U.S. scholar says Natanz attack aimed to undermine nuclear talks

American scholar Richard A. Falk believes Israel was behind the recent act of sabotage at Iran’s Natanz nuclear facility, saying the attack aimed to derail efforts to revive a landmark 2015 nuclear deal signed between Iran and major world powers.

“Israel is responsible for this attack on Iran’s nuclear facility at Natanz,” Falk, an American professor emeritus of international law at Princeton University and the author or co-author of some 20 books, said in an interview with Press TV.

He said Tel Aviv “would certainly have issued an immediate and convincing denial” if it were not behind that “perverse and reckless” move.

The Natanz nuclear site was hit by an attack on April 11 which Iran called “nuclear terrorism” and a “war crime”. The attack targeted the electricity distribution network of the Natanz enrichment facility and caused a blackout.

Following the attack, Iran informed the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) of its plan to start enriching uranium to 60 percent purity, under which 1,000 advanced centrifuges will be installed at the site.

The most obvious explanation of the attack is an expression of Israel’s opposition to the Vienna talks aimed at returning the U.S. to participation in the 2015 nuclear agreement, known as JCPOA or the P5+1 Agreement, especially as there were disclosures that talks were ‘constructive,’ with optimism about setting the stage for direct negotiations between Iran and the U.S. to resume soon, Falk said.

The talks began early this month with the participation of the remaining parties to the JCPOA, namely Iran, Russia, China, France, Britain and Germany, while excluding the US, which unilaterally left the deal three years ago.

Falk described as “reasonable” the call by Ali Akbar Salehi, the head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), on the international community as well as the IAEA to deal with the “nuclear terrorism” that targets Iran’s facilities.

The American professor said the call points to the failures of the IAEA to act as a responsible international institution.

“Iran has long been victimized by Israeli nuclear terrorism without any appropriate international response against such serious wrongdoing,” he said.

“A condemnation of the attack as an instance of ‘nuclear terrorism’ would constitute an important step by the IAEA to establish its credibility,” Falk said.

“For the IAEA and Washington to refrain from criticism of the Natanz attack plays into Israel’s hands, particularly if allowed to disrupt the gaining momentum toward ending sanctions and restoring U.S. membership in JCPOA.”

Commenting on Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif’s remarks in which he warned the U.S. that neither sanctions nor acts of sabotage can serve as leverage in negotiations, Falk stressed that Tehran cannot be intimidated.

Iran has been subjected to “unlawful sanctions and coercive threats for decades, and yet has withstood these unlawful encroachments on its sovereign rights”, he said.

“I see no indications that Iran will be intimidated on this occasion to any greater extent than in responding to past provocations,” he said, stressing that “Iran has shown its subtle understanding of how to respond without itself being dangerously provocative”.

Falk said the administration of Joe Biden is focused on taking steps to bring the COVID-19 pandemic to a rapid end and restore the American economy as quickly as possible.

The Biden administration, Falk said, seems “eager to avoid being accused by pro-Israeli sentiments in Congress and within the Israeli Lobby of neglecting Israeli concerns about Iran’s alleged nuclear weapons program”.

“In effect, there exist cross-cutting pressures that make it difficult to predict how the United States leadership will respond. So far, its failure to distance itself from the Israeli provocation is a disturbing indication that it will again allow its policy to be pushed in dysfunctional directions so as not to displease Israel’s militant supporters.”

Loss of Gen. Hejazi is really a sorrowful tragedy, says Leader

➔ I “Committed veteran and an intuitive devotee”

Rouhani called Hejazi a “committed veteran, who spent all his life serving the Islamic Republic in all sincerity.”

Raisi praised Hejazi “an intuitive devotee”. In another part of his message, the senior cleric pointed to Gen. Hejazi’s services throughout his fruitful life, including providing security, attracting and nurturing the faithful and revolutionary youth, and upgrading the defense industry capabilities.

“Sincere, faithful, brave, and tireless”

Ghalibaf expressed condolences to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution and the honorable people of Iran and all the general’s comrades. The senior parliamentarian said Hejazi was a person with a “key role in organizing the Basij Force.”

He also described late military officer as a “sincere, faithful, brave, and tireless” person.

“Unique moral characteristics”

Vice-President Jahangiri praised Hejazi as a “veteran devotee with unique moral characteristics,” and wished the Leader of the Islamic Revolution patience over his sorrowful loss.

Major General Bagheri also expressed his deepest condolences to Commander-in-chief Ayatollah Khamenei and wished the Leader patience over the general’s loss.



“Powerful and intelligent and honest friend”

Expressing condolences to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution and the martyr’s family, Salami said General Hejazi was a “powerful and intelligent and honest friend.”

General Seyed Mohammad Hosseinzadeh Hejazi, born in Isfahan in 1956, was a veteran commander of the IRGC. He joined the IRGC

from the very beginning of its establishment.

General Hejazi graduated from the University of Tehran with a master’s degree in public administration, and received a doctorate degree in strategic management from the Faculty of National Defense. He was also a faculty member of Imam Hossein University.

Hejazi was appointed the Quds Force commander of the Lebanese Corps in 2009 and

Tehran says will consider participation at Istanbul summit if matches its principles

‘We are trying to remove barriers to import vaccine from India’

POLITICAL d e s k

TEHRAN — The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman on Monday set conditions for participating at the Istanbul summit about Afghanistan, saying Iran will attend the meeting provided that the Islamic Republic’s principles are observed.

Talking to reporters at his weekly press briefing, Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said, “We carefully examine the issues related to this matter. Iran has always stood by the government and people of Afghanistan.”

He added, “For us, a stable and completely secure Afghanistan is a high priority. As we have said before, we emphasize that the Afghan peace dialogue should be an inter-Afghan dialogue, and Iran has always been prepared as a neighbor to make every effort to achieve this.”

Khatibzadeh referred to the recent telephone conversation between Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and his Afghan counterpart Atmar, saying issues related to the Afghanistan peace negotiations were discussed during the conversation.

He reiterated that nobody should dictate a plan on Afghanistan.

On the Iran-Afghanistan comprehensive cooperation plan, Khatibzadeh also said, “More than 99% of this document has been achieved. Talks are still ongoing on some issues.”

He expressed hope that the “small remaining issues” will be resolved in the near future.

“Ramadan diplomacy”

The Foreign Ministry spokesman also said Zarif’s tour to Indonesia is intended to remove trade barriers among other things.

“In the last two years, any trade relations between the two countries have almost doubled, and this trip has been made to pursue bilateral relations, improve relations and remove trade barriers. This trip was already on the agenda,” Khatibzadeh explained.

He also said that “Ramadan diplomacy” will continue by Zarif during the holy month which falls between April14 to May 12.

last year was the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Iran and Indonesia.

Zarif praises Indonesia’s “valuable support” at UN

In a tweet on Monday, Zarif expressed joy over his visit to Jakarta, saying the talks focused on boosting ties and making close coordination on regional and international issues.

Zarif also thanked Indonesia for its “valuable support” in the UN Security Council when former U.S. President Donald Trump sought to “undermine international law” by pushing for ratification of a resolution against Iran.

“Two parallel documents”

On the visit by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov to Tehran on April 13, Khatibzadeh said, “We are completing two parallel documents. What is known as the cooperation program between the two countries is renewed every five years. In April of this year, its term expired, but according to the contents of the document, it has been automatically renewed and is a valid document between the two countries. We are working on an upgraded document. Good agreements have been reached to follow up on this document.”

During Lavrov’s visit to Tehran, the document to expand cultural cooperation between the two countries was also approved.

Foreign Ministry attaches importance to Pakistan FM’s visit to Tehran

Khatibzadeh also described visit by Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi to Tehran as “important”, saying Tehran-Islamabad relations are vast and deep.

The chief Pakistani diplomat has started a tour of regional countries with a focus on the Afghan peace talks.

He also discussed opening a third border terminal between Iran and Pakistan.

“During this visit, in addition to discussing bilateral issues, the two countries will open a third border terminal between the two countries,” Khatibzadeh explained.

“Efforts to facilitate purchase of COVID-19 Vaccine”

Asked about efforts by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to facilitate a purchase of COVID-19 vaccine, he said, “Regarding the purchase of the COVID-19 vaccine, the ministry has taken the issue very seriously since day one. It has written letters, done various follow-ups at different levels.”

He mentioned India as an example and said, “We have held



FM Zarif emphasizes the importance of finalizing a preferential trade agreement in his talks with Indonesian FM Retno Marsudi in Jakarta on Monday.

intensive negotiations with India and part of the vaccine was imported from India, but due to some issues, including the widespread spread of the coronavirus in India, this process was interfered with the judicial order of this country. We have consulted with India in this regard and the Indian side has stated that it is removing obstacles to fulfill its obligations.”

Regarding the visit by the Iraqi National Security Advisor to Tehran in recent days, Khatibzadeh said that the during the visit, high-priority issues were discussed. He declared that Admiral Ali Shamkhani, Iran’s secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, was his Iraqi counterpart’s host.

On the visit Iran’s Judiciary chief to Iraq in the last Iranian calendar year, the Foreign Ministry official said Ebrahim Raisi’s trip to Iraq last year was a successful one, and one of the achievements of that trip was the release and transfer of a number of Iranian prisoners in Iraq.

The spokesman continued, “We also have prisoners in the Iraqi Kurdistan region and we are trying to transfer these people to Iran within the framework of these talks and the visit of the head of the Judiciary to Iraq.”

Signs of thaw on JCPOA emerge in Vienna talks: Bloomberg

POLITICAL d e s k

TEHRAN — The U.S. and Iran edged closer to ending their standoff over the nuclear deal abandoned by former President Donald Trump, with Washington describing talks as “constructive” and the Islamic Republic signaling that it was ready to debate the details of how the two sides can revive the stricken 2015 accord.

Jake Sullivan, United States National Security Adviser, told Fox News on Sunday “the talks in Vienna have been constructive in the sense that there is real effort underway there” and that world powers were focused on restoring the agreement on a “compliance for compliance” basis. His comments come after Iran’s lead negotiator, Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, injected fresh hope into the process on Saturday, by saying that a “new understanding” was taking shape at the talks and that his country would start work on a full draft text for negotiators to discuss. Negotiators, which include the European Union, Russia and China, have said the talks will continue this week.

World powers have been meeting in Vienna since April 9 to help the U.S. and Iran map a path back to a restored nuclear deal and reduce tensions in the energy-rich Persian Gulf. The talks were almost derailed last week after sabotage attack on Iran’s biggest uranium enrichment facility that Tehran blamed on Israel.

In response, the Islamic Republic dramatically increased the levels at which it is enriching uranium to 60% from 20%. President Joe Biden sharply criticized the move but pledged to continue talks.

In a tweet last week, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said the “nuclear terrorism” at Natanz “has unleashed a dangerous spiral that can only be contained” by ending the “economic terrorism” that started against Iran during Donald Trump’s presidency.

“Biden and his vice president Kamala Harris have a clear choice and that is either restore the Obama-era nuclear deal or follow Trump’s “maximum failure” campaign, Zarif asserted.

The chief diplomat, who helped craft the 2015 nuclear deal – JCPOA – said there is “no alternative” other than choosing one of these two approaches.

Iran wants the U.S. to remove hundreds of sanctions that Trump imposed on its economy after he took office in 2017, including those that he reinstated when he broke away from the nuclear deal. Araghchi said on Saturday Iran wants all the penalties that it expects the U.S. to remove, to be formally listed and agreed on.

Tehran insists that the U.S. must take these measures before Iran agrees to scale back its nuclear work back to within the original terms of the nuclear deal. On Sunday Sullivan

said sanctions would be lifted once the U.S. has “clarity and confidence” that the Islamic Republic will reduce its nuclear work.

“Until we have confidence in all of those things the United States is not going to make any concessions at all,” he said.

The nuclear deal, which imposed strict limits on Iran’s nuclear program in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions, was a signature achievement of the Obama administration. Abandonment of the accord by Trump kept relations between the longstanding foes close to breaking point and convulsed the Persian Gulf with assassinations and tanker seizures.

The Islamic republic began in 2019 to gradually increase its nuclear activity -- enriching uranium beyond the limit of 3.67% allowed in the deal -- in response to Trump’s so-called “maximum pressure” strategy.

Iran did this exactly one year after Trump quit the nuclear deal and the European parties to the deal failed to compensate Iran for the U.S. sanctions.

“The drafting of the text can begin now, and the Iranian delegation has prepared and presented its text on the nuclear sphere and the lifting of sanctions,” Araghchi told Iranian state TV, cautioning that serious disagreements remained.

In an apparent further sign of easing tension, the Financial Times reported Sunday that senior officials from Saudi Arabia and

remained there until 2019. He performed special services in order to strengthen the resistance front. During the Syrian war, along with martyr Major General Soleimani, he performed effective services in the fight against the Takfiri terrorism.

The commander passed away at the age of 65 on Sunday night. The IRGC said on Monday morning that the veteran general passed away due to the side effects of the chemical weapons used by Saddam Hussein’s regime in eight years of war against Iran in the 1980s.

Gen. Hejazi’s martyr-like death came as shock. Several high-rank foreign officials, including Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, also expressed condolences to the people of Iran over the death of the Quds Force deputy chief.

In his message to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Haniyeh asked God to bless the general’s soul. He also offered his sincere condolences to the Quds Force commander as well as Hejzai’s family and the brotherly nation of Iran.

He also thanked and appreciated Hejazi’s valuable positions in “support of the heroic resistance of Palestine” and his prominent role in solidarity with the Palestinian people.

Seyyed Hassan Nasrallah, the Hezbollah’s secretary general, also sent a message to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution and offered his condolences to the IRGC staff, Quds Force, and Hejazi’s family.

SPORTS

Hassan Yazdani just wants gold at Tokyo Olympics

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iranian freestyle wrestler Hassan Yazdani says that he participated in the Asian Championships as part of preparation for the 2020 Tokyo, where he just wants to win a gold medal.

Yazdani proved once again he is in a class by himself, schooling Indian Deepak Punia in their long-delayed first encounter to take the 86kg gold medal as the six-day tournament in Almaty concluded Sunday night.

"After the pandemic started, it was hard to compete," Yazdani said in an interview with uww.org.

"I thought I would compete in the World Cup for preparation, but I did not," he said, referring to the Individual World Cup held in December last year in lieu of a World Championships.

"The Asian Championships was a good event and I wanted to see my preparations and now I will continue to prepare for the Olympics as a wrestler who will win the gold medal. Only the gold."

Yazdani said he plans to compete again before Tokyo, although he did not specify what events.

"I will participate in some more competitions until the Olympics so that I can keep working on myself and my flaws," Yazdani said. "This is my preparation for the Olympics and to win the gold medal in Tokyo. That is what matters in the end."

Looking at the competition in Tokyo, Yazdani said he is not focusing on any certain opponent.

"All of the competitors are important because all of them are good and everybody comes to win," he said. "All of them are doing their best to win because it's a dream for all. But my American and Russian competitors are much more difficult, but I take all my competitors serious. I have to make a good program together with my coach and team to beat them."

ACL Group C: Esteghlal defeat Al Shorta

S P O R T S **TEHRN** — Iran's Esteghlal cruised past 10-man Al Shorta of Iraq 3-0 on Matchday Two of the 2021 AFC Champions League Group C on Sunday.

The two sides entered the game on the back of contrasting Matchday One results, with Al Shorta having lost to Al Duhail SC 2-0 while Esteghlal overpowered Al Ahli Saudi FC 5-2.

Al Shorta suffered an early blow at King Abdullah Sports City Stadium as they were reduced to 10 men after Hussam Kadhim received a straight red card for a violent challenge against Farshid Esmaili just 11 minutes into the game.

Just as the first half looked headed to a goalless end, youngster Medhi Ghayedi produced a moment of magic. Marked by two defenders out on the left flank, the Esteghlal starlet mustered a sublime scooped pass between his markers into the path of marauding left-back Mohammad Naderi who rifled home his second goal of the campaign to send his side into the dressing room with the lead.

The Iranians doubled their tally 10 minutes after the restart as Arash Rezavand sent a defense-splitting pass to Esmaili who controlled on the turn and powered past Taleb into the bottom corner to make it 2-0.

Malian striker Cheick Diabate made it 3-0 in the 65th minute.

With no points from their first two games, Al Shorta face Al Ahli on Matchday Three, while Esteghlal - with a perfect record - will look to extend their lead at the top of Group C when they face Al Duhail on Wednesday.

Moghanlou, Naderi's goals nominated for Best Goal of ACL Matchday Two

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Shariar Moghanlou and Mohammad Naderi's goals have been nominated for the Best Goal of 2021 AFC Champions League Matchday Two (West).

With a number of dramatic games in the campaign on Saturday and Sunday, the-AFC.com has announced the nominees for the best goal.

Shahriar Moghanlou – Persepolis FC vs Al Rayyan, April 18, 2021

Persepolis scored just two minutes after the interval against Al Rayyan to draw level, but it was far from finished. Lulling the defense into a false sense of security with a jogging build up, Moghanlou used one well-timed burst of speed to leap and get on the end of a perfectly placed Siamak Nemati cross to give his side the lead.

Mohammad Naderi – Esteghlal FC vs Al Shorta SC, April 19, 2021

Esteghlal FC's opener was a masterclass in recognition and cohesion starting with Mehdi Ghaedi's well-timed run to the edge of the penalty box to get on the end of a through ball. With barely a glance, he saw the advancing Naderi, chipped it through two defenders and set it up beautifully for the Iranian defender to volley home.

Omar Al Soma (Al Ahli Saudi FC), Manuchehr Dzhililov (FC Istiklol) and Santi Cazorla (Al-Sadd SC) are also nominated for the accolade.

Esteghlal coach Majidi happy for clinching tough three points

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Esteghlal coach Farhad Majidi is happy to win 10-man Al Shorta in the 2021 AFC Champions League Matchday Two (west).

Goals from Mohammad Naderi, Farshid Esmaili and Cheick Diabaté at the King Abdullah Sports City Stadium steered the Tehran giants to their second win in Group C.

"We expected that it would be a very difficult match but luckily we managed to finish the first half with a lead," said Majidi in the post-match press conference. "In the second half we controlled the play and scored two more goals."

"Al Shorta played a good match despite playing with 10 men. From our experience, playing against 10 men can be more difficult as the opponents fight back more."

"At the end of the day, we put our identity into the match and we managed to get the three points," he concluded.

Netanyahu is in sheer despair

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — As Iran and world powers move toward drafting a new agreement on reviving the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, Israel feels more isolated on Iran while lacking enough diplomatic tools to derail the Vienna nuclear talks.

Israel seems deeply troubled by the progress made over the past few days in Vienna. The Israeli officials did everything in their power to kill the nuclear deal, formally called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), or at least pave the way for the United States to "improve" it, but all of their efforts ended in failure, causing more headaches for Benjamin Netanyahu, who is grappling with political turmoil at home.

Israel now believes that the Vienna talks will lead to a U.S. return to the JCPOA, according to Axios. Israeli officials told the American news website that Israeli military intelligence and senior officials in the Mossad briefed a meeting of Israel's security cabinet that talks in Vienna between Iran and other world powers will lead to the U.S. returning to the 2015 nuclear deal.

According to Axios, the Israeli regime is very concerned about a U.S. return to the nuclear deal and is trying to convince the Biden administration not to take the pressure off Iran.

Israeli media outlets close to Netanyahu also detailed the Israeli prime minister's frustration. Israel Hayom said on Sunday that the U.S. has accepted, in principle, Tehran's demands for compensation due to the sanctions imposed by the administration of former President Donald Trump, according to Al Araby Al Jadeed.

The Israeli newspaper confirmed that "great disappointment" prevails in Israel over the positions expressed by the Biden administration in the Vienna negotiations.



noting that the gap between the positions of Washington and Tel Aviv are "huge."

All this happened despite the fact that Netanyahu, out of utter despair, tried to derail the Vienna talks by pursuing sabotage of a key Iranian uranium enrichment facility. Israel orchestrated an act of sabotage at the Natanz facility in the midst of the Vienna talks. Iranian officials and analysts said the sabotage was meant to derail the talks or at least undermine Iran's position at the talks by knocking out thousands of centrifuges at the facility.

Earlier this month, Israel targeted Iranian commercial ship Saviz in the Red Sea exactly on the same day Iran and the P4+1 resumed in-person talks in the Austrian

capital of Vienna.

So, Netanyahu did whatever he could to prevent Iran from pursuing talks aimed at lifting U.S. sanctions. His subversive efforts were so brazen that the U.S. demanded Israeli officials to cut down "embarrassing chatter" concerning the attacks against Iran.

Despite Netanyahu's desperate efforts, Iran and the P4+1 continued talks in Vienna and, to Netanyahu's chagrin, they began drafting a new agreement to revitalize the JCPOA.

The Russian envoy to the Vienna talks, Mikhail Ulyanov, said on Monday that "the negotiations entered the drafting stage. Practical solutions are still far away, but we have moved from general words to agreeing on specific steps towards the goal."

Iran says it always welcomes dialogue with Saudi Arabia

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — In its first official reaction to media reports of talks between Iran and Saudi Arabia, the Iranian Foreign Ministry said it welcomes dialogue with the Saudi kingdom because such a dialogue is in the interest of the region.

Saeed Khatibzadeh, spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry, responded to foreign media reports of talks between Tehran and Riyadh in Baghdad by saying that Iran supports dialogue with the Saudis. The spokesman did not deny that such talks took place in Iraq.

Speaking at a weekly press briefing, Khatibzadeh said, "We have seen these press reports. Conflicting quotes have been reported in these reports. The Islamic Republic of Iran has always welcomed dialogue with the Saudi kingdom and considered it in the interest of the peoples of the two countries as well as regional peace and stability. [Iran] will continue to think this way."

The Financial Times reported on Sunday that Saudi and Iranian officials held the first round of their bilateral talks in Baghdad on April 9 and the next round is scheduled to take place next week. Citing regional officials, the newspaper said the Yemeni Ansarallah's attacks on Saudi Arabia were discussed in the negotiations.

Reuters confirmed the Saudi-Iranian talks, saying they touched on Lebanon, which is facing a political vacuum amid a dire financial crisis.

Saudi Arabia severed diplomatic relations with Iran in January 2016 after Iranian protesters, enraged by the Saudi execution of prominent Shia cleric Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr, stormed its embassy in Tehran. Since then, Saudi Arabia has struck a tough tone on Iran and strongly supported former U.S. President Donald Trump's so-called "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran.

The reported talks in Baghdad are thought to be the first serious contact between Tehran and Riyadh since 2016.

Saudi Arabia denied the talks. Citing a senior Saudi official, the Saudi-owned Arab News said no direct talks have been held with Iran.

Earlier this year, Khatibzadeh expressed Iran's readiness to patch up relations with Saudi Arabia. He pointed out that if Riyadh seriously puts policy reforms on its agenda and concludes that the solution to problems lies in "regional



cooperation," Iran will be the first country to welcome these reforms.

"We have always underlined that regional countries should arrive at a common understanding regarding the regional problems," Khatibzadeh stated, noting that such understanding would help establish a "security mechanism" that could be used to govern the region.

"The Saudis may have some concerns, and by the way, we emphasize that we need to talk about these concerns," Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman said.

The Baghdad talks come amid a new round of diplomatic tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia over the renewed nuclear deal talks in Vienna. Last week the heads of the Arab League and the (Persian) Gulf Cooperation Council issued statements criticizing Iran. The Arab League expressed "extreme concern" over Iran's decision to enrich uranium up to 60% purity, calling it a "dangerous development."

Secretary-General of the Arab League Ahmad Abul Gheit also accused Iran of taking a step toward developing a nuclear weapon.

In addition, an official source at the pan-Arab organization also accused Iran of violating its obligations under the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"This regrettable development comes as part of Iran's continued violations of its obligations under the nuclear agreement, which is currently at the center of intense negotiations to revive it," the official said, underlining the need to reach an agreement that will address the Arab

countries' concerns related to Iran's regional activities.

On Wednesday, the (P)GCC secretary general echoed similar concerns. In letters to the negotiating parties in Vienna — China, Russia, France, the U.S., UK, and Germany — Nayef Al-Hajraf said the Iran nuclear deal talks in Vienna must address the concerns and interests of the Persian Gulf countries to boost security and stability in the region.

Al-Hajraf claimed that the (P)GCC is a major contributor to strengthening the security and stability of the region, and that the negotiations currently underway in Vienna should not be limited to the Iranian nuclear program, but rather should include Iran's alleged "destabilizing" behavior, and ballistic missiles, according to Arab News. Iran rejected the remarks by Abul Gheit and Al-Hajraf as "interventionist and irresponsible," saying they are intended to disrupt the Vienna talks.

"These statements are not aimed at calling for cooperation; rather, they seek to disrupt the trend of technical talks in Vienna," Khatibzadeh said.

"The secretaries general of these institutions should know that Iran is a member of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and all of Iran's nuclear activities are monitored by the safeguards programs of this agency," said the spokesman.

"Easing ongoing tensions in the region"

If true, the Baghdad talks could even soothe tensions over the Vienna talks. Reuters quoted an Iran official as underlining that these talks could lead to easing tensions in the region.

"This was a low-level meeting to explore whether there might be a way to ease ongoing tensions in the region," the official said.

Over the past few years, Saudi Arabia has repeatedly shunned Iranian offers of talks, aligning itself with the now failed maximum pressure campaign led by the Trump administration against Iran. The Saudis pinned hope on the Trump administration and were waiting to see how the U.S. economic pressure would end with Iran. But their whole world came crashing down when they saw American officials admitting that the so-called maximum pressure campaign failed to bring Iran to its knees.

Iran, P4+1 start drafting nuclear deal, Russia says

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Diplomats from Iran and the remaining parties to the 2015 Iran nuclear deal have entered the stage of drafting a new agreement to revive the nuclear deal, the Russian envoy to the Vienna nuclear talks said on Monday.

Russia's representative to the international organizations in Vienna Mikhail Ulyanov expressed satisfaction with the fact that negotiating teams in Vienna started drafting a new agreement on how to revive the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"Summing up the results of 2 weeks of deliberations on JCPOA restoration we can note with satisfaction that the negotiations entered the drafting stage. Practical solutions are still far away, but we have moved from general words to agreeing on specific steps towards the goal," Ulyanov said on Twitter.

The tweet came two days after a top Iranian nuclear negotiator announced that the talks are leading to a "new understanding". Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi, who is leading Iran's negotiating team in the Vienna nuclear deal talks, said on Saturday that serious disagreements remain but that his country was working on a draft text for reviving the accord that could work as a framework for subsequent discussions.

He said after almost three days of the JCPOA Joint Commission's work, they have formed a commission once again to examine the progress of the discussions that have taken place so far.

The top negotiator noted that not only in the field of lifting sanctions but also in the nuclear issue they reviewed the working groups' report, adding that good discussions took place within the JCPOA Joint Commission.

He further noted that it seems a new understanding is being formed and there is an agreement on the ultimate goal among all parties, adding that the path that needs to be taken is a path that is now somewhat more well-known, according to the official website of the Iranian government.

The path will not be easy and there are some disagreements, he highlighted.

He stated that there are sometimes serious disagreements that need to be modified during the next negotiations.

EU's Borrell cites progress in nuclear talks

The European Union's top diplomat, Josep Borrell, also said on Monday he saw a willingness to save the nuclear deal.

"I think that there is real good will among both parties (Iran and the United States) to reach an agreement, and that's good news,"

Borrell said, citing progress but not giving details.

According to Reuters, the EU chief diplomat added, "I think that both parties are really interested in reaching an agreement, and they have been moving from general to more focused issues, which are clearly, on one side sanction-lifting, and on the other side, nuclear implementation issues."

As Iran has said many times, the Islamic Republic is not interested in long-term negotiations at all and as much as needed, discussions should be considered and negotiations would continue, Araghchi reiterated.

He went on to say that the negotiations have reached a stage where the parties can start working on a common text and start writing the text at least in areas where there is a sharing of opinion.

Saeed Khatibzadeh, spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry, reiterated that progress has been made in the Vienna talks.

Speaking at a weekly press briefing on Monday, Khatibzadeh said, "What is happening in Vienna is a technical dialogue on how to lift the U.S. sanctions and return the U.S. government to its obligations under the JCPOA and Resolution 2231. We are on the right track and progress has been made, but that does not mean that the talks have reached the final stage."

Parliament's committee reforms plan of car offering at IME

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — A member of the parliament's Industries and Mines Committee said that the plan of offering cars at Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) has been investigated and reformed in a meeting of this committee on Sunday.

Rouhollah Izadkhah said, "In today's meeting, the committee approved that in a situation where the car market is facing imbalances and the demand for different types of cars is more than the supply, car manufacturers should offer the types of cars determined and priced by the Competition Council through the IME."



In recent months, the price of cars in the free market has become significantly different from the factory price.

While this gap has led to a massive influx of people and professional dealers to buy cars from the factory, it did not benefit the automotive industry and those active in this sector, as the automakers sold their products at prices set by the Competition Council.

As a result, the car industry suffered losses and the profit of price gaps went to the pockets of dealers.

To tackle the problem, the offering of cars in the commodity exchange has been a top issue under discussion in recent months, and different views have been expressed by officials and related organizations.

However, after contradictory comments, the plan to organize the automotive industry, the most important axis of which is the offering of cars in the stock market, was approved in a meeting of the Industries Committee of the parliament.

Talking about the offering of cars in the commodity exchange and discovering the price of this product is in a situation when just some time ago car was a consumer product and not an investment.

But the situation in the country these days has turned the car into a commodity for investment, and in the meantime, the lack of a transparent market for pricing has caused a sharp rise in car prices in Iran.

Before talking about the plan to organize the automotive industry, it should be noted that mandatory pricing in the commodity exchange is prohibited and the discovery of real prices must be accepted.

In fact, selling a car in a commodity exchange means moving away from orderly pricing, and the car is available to the public at more reasonable prices.

With the sale of cars in the commodity exchange, car pricing is not done by the Consumers and Producers Protection Organization and the Competition Council. Rather, prices are determined by supply and demand.

The plan to organize the automotive industry seeks to balance supply and demand as well as turn the car into a consumer good.

This plan has been recently revised, and in the revised plan, the Competition Council determines which cars should be offered in the commodity exchange.

In fact, in the revised plan, which is based on the regulated supply of cars in the stock exchange, the Competition Council is obliged to determine the cars subject to this plan every six months according to indicators such as inflation, factory-market price gap, number of manufactured cars and impact on the market.

TEDPIX loses 8,000 points on Monday

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), lost 8,082 points to 1.216 million on Monday.

Over 3.139 billion securities worth 30.516 trillion rials (about \$726.5 million) were traded at the TSE on Monday.

The first market's index fell 7,065 points, and the second market's index dropped 12,364 points.



Unprecedented fluctuations in the Iranian stock market over the past few months have led shareholders, experts, and scholars to call for the government to increase its support for the market, some shareholders want the government to guarantee the return of their stocks, some believe providing infrastructure is the best way to help this market.

Some, on the other hand, believe that the government should not interfere in the stock market, saying the government's pre-ordered and unrealistic pricing of some state-owned shares is the main reason for the capital market's current downward trend.

Now the question is how the government can really support the stock market to help it get back on its trail?

So far, the government has repeatedly stated that the activities carried out in this market are not aimed at interfering in stock exchange transactions or directing the market, but are efforts for reducing the bubble created in the market and to prevent further decline of the stock market index.

Iran puts a 21% rise in annual foreign trade on agenda

→ 1 "Over the past year, the outbreak of the coronavirus and the escalation of sanctions affected our foreign trade but we managed to pull through."

The official noted that a 21-percent growth for the country's foreign trade is attainable if the conditions are right.

"Sanctions have been imposed to block Iran's trade channels; the country's production sectors need to import some raw materials in order for exports to flourish, this requires favorable trade conditions,

and sanctions are the main obstacle in this regard," he explained.

"If transportation and banking issues are to continue like before due to the sanctions, they will affect the Trade Development Organization plans for the current year," Zadboum added.

However, if the barriers to the import of raw materials for factories and production sectors are removed, the country will be able to move in line with this year's slogan set by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution



Seyed Ali Khamenei and export-oriented production will be boosted, according to the official.

The TPO head mentioned the decline in the country's foreign trade during the previous year due to the pandemic and said: "Last year we saw a 15 percent decrease in the weight and value of exports, while that

imports also decreased by 11.7 percent in terms of value and about 5.8 percent in terms of weight."

Considering the special conditions of the previous year, TPO is going to set the trade levels for the Iranian calendar year 1398 (two years ago) as the criterion for the trade goals of the current year, he stated.

Annual production of textile, clothing and leather products doubles

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Production of textile, clothing, and leather products in Iran doubled in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20), a board member of the Iranian Tanners Association announced.

"This success was achieved at a time when entrepreneurs in the textile, apparel, and leather industries were facing lots of problems in the previous year due to the outbreak of coronavirus, the sanctions, and, more importantly, the problems regarding the supply of raw materials," Javad Hosseini-Khah told IRNA on Monday.

Underlining the potentials and capacities of the mentioned industries in the country, Hosseini-Khah called on the government to provide the necessary support for them in order to pave the way for further development and growth in this sector.

According to the official, one of the major factors that have contributed to the flourishing of the clothing industry in the country over the past two years has been the ban on the imports of foreign products and the restrictions imposed on the smuggling of such products.



"In recent years, smugglers have come to the conclusion that importing clothing items through smuggling is no longer profitable for them," he said.

The official noted that the outbreak of the coronavirus and the travel restrictions were other events that minimized the import of clothing and leather

Italian companies eager for return to Iranian market

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Chairman of Iran-Italy Joint Chamber of Commerce Ahmad Pourfallah has said Italian companies are still eager to engage in trade with Iran and are preparing to return to the Islamic Republic, ILNA reported on Monday.

"Many Italian companies are preparing to re-enter Iran after the sanctions are lifted and in this regard, we have advised the 5000 members we have in the Iran-Italy Chamber of commerce to be prepared as well," Pourfallah said.

In the previous period, unfortunately, we were not prepared and could not benefit from the opportunity created by the arrival of various business groups from Europe,



especially Italy and Germany, the official regretted.

"After the lifting of the previous sanctions, we saw the largest presence of Italian businessmen in Iran. Even the first

high-ranking political figure to come to Iran was the Italian Foreign Minister, and the Italian Prime Minister also visited Iran; this shows how much Italy is interested in collaborating with Iran."

"For many years, Italy was our first trading partner and the only European country with which our trade balance was positive," he added.

Mentioning the potential impact of the lifting of sanctions on trade between the two countries, the official said: "It is expected that immediately after the lifting of sanctions, Italian companies and entrepreneurs will flock to the Iranian market."

In response to a question about the number of Italian companies ready to enter

the Islamic Republic, he said: "We do not have specific statistics on the number of Italian companies that have announced their readiness to pursue their activities in Iran, but all Italian and Iranian members of the joint chamber in Rome, which are more than 105 companies, are ready to resume their activities in Iran."

Regarding Iran's blocked resources in Italy, Pourfallah said: "According to the latest official data, we do not have a large amount of money blocked in Italy and the figure is lower than Iran's frozen assets in many other countries."

"We have never had a problem with Italy on this issue like other countries," he stressed.

Power of Hope program boosts number of low consuming subscribers by 4%

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iranian Energy Ministry's Spokesman for Electricity Industry Mostafa Rajabi Mashhadi announced that the implementation of the "Power of Hope" program has increased the number of low consuming subscribers by four percent.

He said, "It seems that the Power of Hope program is on its way and the subscribers have been informed about this issue."

Mashhadi went on to say that in the warm seasons (beginning of June to the end of September), the consumption pattern changes, i.e. the low-consumption pattern for normal areas increases from 200 kWh to 300 kWh and from 80 kWh to 100 kWh.

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

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

He said that based on the "power of Hope" program the electricity subscribers are categorized in three groups of high consuming, normal consuming and low consuming, adding that after the implementation of



this program seven million low-consuming subscribers were subject to a 100-percent discount, and the number of the high consuming subscribers was decreased by six percent.

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

Implementation of a program by the Iranian Energy Ministry for rewarding efficient electricity

subscribers with a 100 percent discount on their bills, has reduced the number of high-consuming subscribers across the country by 6.1 percent.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Iran, Serbia stress expansion of agricultural trade co-op

→ 1 The Iranian minister also expressed the Islamic Republic's readiness for barter trading with Serbia saying: "in exchange for oil and other petroleum products, we can have a memorandum of understanding with the Serbian Agriculture Ministry to import grain from Serbia, and we can also trade saffron,

herbs, shrimp and caviar."

He went on to say, "We can meet Serbia's needs for veterinary medicines and vaccines through Razi Vaccine and Serum Research Institute."

Emphasizing the need for the expansion of agricultural trade relations between Iran and Serbia, Selakovic said for his part: "Political cooperation between the two countries is at a very high

level, and this should be used to develop trade relations, especially in the field of agriculture."

Stating that the Serbian Foreign Ministry is also responsible for economic diplomacy, he added, "We are seriously pursuing the expansion of trade relations between the two countries at the State Department."



Iran and Turkey reject band-wagoning strategies: researcher

➔ 1 Also, Beijing is planning to consolidate its ties with Arab states in the region when it comes to economic exchanges. “The Chinese influence may reduce some of the dependence and sole U.S. authority in the region but might create further dependencies towards the East,” according to Yolcu.

Following is the text of the interview:
Donald Trump inked highly profitable arms agreement with Saudi Arabia. However, Joe Biden prefers to decrease the volume of weapon sales to the kingdom. Now, how do you assess the current U.S. administration’s policies when it comes to selling weapons to Arab monarchies like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates?

The U.S. arms sales policies did not actually change in a broad perspective since the 1960s. The U.S. designated two Middle Eastern (West Asian) states as ‘twin pillars’ and supported them with almost the highest technology available. One thing that never changed also was the military edge provided to Israel against the Arab states. Well, yes, Donald Jr. Trump has accommodated most of the military procurement demands from the Saudi and Emirati governments, but the reason behind such huge amounts was Obama’s lack of appreciation towards them. The deals have piled up during the 2nd Obama administration, and Donald Jr. Trump has approved these ‘old’ and ‘stalled’ procurement deals. President Biden acknowledged that they would maintain the F-35 deal with the Emirati government. However, the military demands of the Saudi government may be hindered under the democrat vision.

How do Western powers try to control weapon deals in West Asia while they neglect Israel’s nuclear arsenal, especially as they are concerned about Turkey’s S-400 purchase or Iran’s peaceful nuclear program?

Western powers symbolize the first ring of arms production, enjoying innovative superiority for almost over three centuries. This technological edge provides comfort for Western states and their allies in the other regions while it is used as leverage against the challengers. Israel’s nuclear arsenal is almost accepted by every scholar in the discipline and several international institutions, but it is never acknowledged



as a disturbance to the Middle East (West Asia) military balance. However, Turkish procurement of the S-400 tactical missile defense system and Iran’s pursuit of nuclear power is problematic because these states are well-known for their avoidance of band-wagoning strategies. These states tend to challenge the Bretton Woods system and the current world order. This is why the Turkish S-400s and Iranian ballistic missiles, and nuclear capacity concern the status holders.

What is the impact of Turkey’s move to purchase Russian S-400 missile system on the security of the region?

Turkish procurement of S-400s was actually an act of balance since the country did not even have the air defense capacity of Syria for almost a decade. Turkish air defense capacity was relying on the outdated Rapier’s with high risks of malfunction when needed. The Greek S-300s, Syrian S-200s, Iranian Bavar-373, and Russian S-400 in Latakia were

considered a certain military problem for the Turkish aerial capacity. Thus, this move was a mere act of self-defense against the several booming threats in the region. Israel is the country that most actively uses F-35s and the existence of S-400s mostly bothers only them. However, the S-400 system was in Syria for years, and the Turkish S-400 procurement should not be a particular problem for them since Israel also has functional bilateral affairs with Russia.

Do you expect China to extend its military presence in West Asia besides the development of its economic ties with the countries in the region?

China has now the 2nd largest maritime military power in the world, with a large capacity-building process still on the run. It is widely expected by the scholarship that the Chinese influence will disperse into the Middle East (West Asia) sooner or later. The main factor that would be definitive for the

Chinese involvement is going to be the Middle Eastern (West Asian) states’ demand towards a Chinese military existence in the region. The Chinese influence may reduce some of the dependence and sole U.S. authority in the region but might create further dependencies towards the East. The Middle Eastern (West Asian) states are mostly aware that partnerships and alliances with great powers bring along a lot of responsibilities and, at the domestic level, more interventions. Most Middle Eastern (West Asian) economies have welcomed the Chinese benefits while they are hesitant to accept the Chinese military presence in the region. I expect China to first become militarily engaged to Africa before the Middle East (West Asia). The vulnerabilities and the opportunities for foreign intervention are much higher and less costly for China in Africa.

What is the main reason behind competition between Persian Gulf Arab countries in purchasing arms?

The Persian Gulf has never been a safe haven for any states in the regions since the Iran-Iraq war and the 1991 (Persian) Gulf War, which produced several prolonged effects for the region with rifts not easy to repair. This atmosphere of mistrust and conflict of interest was also escalated by the great powers with military interventions such as the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

The great powers contributed to the conflict more than thought for resolutions. These reciprocal escalation mindsets naturally led to a security dilemma in the region where states tried to maximize their power with an offensive realist perspective. However, the increase in the offensive military capacity disturbed the offense-defense balance in the region, and this gap posed higher threats for small states like Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates. These countries demanded great power military presence in the region, which almost brought the Persian Gulf to a state of pre-war preparation zone. The recent tensions between Iran and the U.S. keep these countries on edge and push them for more security bargains. All in all, if there was one single reason behind this situation, it would be the Persian Gulf states’ ambition towards each other’s territorial integrity and the conflicts of interest between them such as border issues, territorial disputes, and maritime security.

“The Persian Gulf has never been a safe haven for any states in the regions since the Iran-Iraq war and the 1991 (Persian) Gulf War, which produced several prolonged effects for the region with rifts not easy to repair. This atmosphere of mistrust and conflict of interest was also escalated by the great powers with military interventions such as the invasion of Iraq in 2003.”

U.S. and UK are accomplices in the attack on Natanz nuclear facility: senior MP

➔ 1 We had already experienced what happened in Natanz, and some predictions were made to prevent it. Here again, we had the issue of power outages, and most likely the cable that came from the emergency batteries had been cut off. Of course, this is only a possibility because I do not have the details.

If this is the case, the centrifuges that were placed in the underground hall may have been completely shut down due to a power outage, and the rotors may malfunction, which can lead to trouble in restarting them. All machines must be inspected and relaunched if there is no problem.

What will be the possible repercussions of the sabotage on the Vienna talks?

These negotiations should not have taken place at the present time because the position of the Islamic Republic of Iran became clear after the ratification by the Majlis (the Iranian parliament).

The United States (According to the ratification) must lift all sanctions and then sit at the negotiating table. So, there is no need for technical discussions.

There is no need to talk about how the Americans can lift

the sanctions and how Iran may return to its commitments. All this can be fulfilled by a signature (by the American president). That is, the Americans must announce that they will lift all sanctions.

When Iran verified and saw that the way is paved to buy any goods and import any medicine, banking and financial exchanges channels are open, problems related to shipping and insurance are resolved, and the countries that trade with Iran are no longer subject to sanctions (which all these processes will take six months), then the Americans can return to the JCPOA. After that, Iran will return to its full obligations according to the nuclear deal.

Therefore, there was no need to negotiate. Now we see the explosion hit our nuclear facilities at the same time as the negotiations are under way. Some argue that the purpose of the sabotage operation was to interrupt the negotiations. As a result, it could weaken the Iranian negotiating team’s position by burning their cards on the table. So the Iranian negotiating team must take into account this tactic of the enemy.

Is it enough to enrich uranium up to 60 percent

“When Iran verified and saw that the way is paved to buy any goods and import any medicine, banking and financial exchanges channels are open, problems related to shipping and insurance are resolved, and the countries that trade with Iran are no longer subject to sanctions, then the Americans can return to the JCPOA.”



Failure of globalization: problems of inequality and discrimination in the U.S.

By Prof. Nicholas J. Cull

Nowadays, there is clearly a problem with increased inequality in the U.S. (and in many other countries too). Globalization has failed to deliver for many Americans and, in their anger; some have gravitated to political extremes. It is also clear that the United States has unresolved business in its race relations and that issue of race is part of every issue included the pandemic and the appeal to some of President Trump.

The country has experienced such divisions before. What is needed now is leadership and a resolution to address inequality, and to listen to one-another.

I should add that gender is also a key issue now and should be included in any assessment of American social issues. President Trump’s self-admitted abuse of women and the wider #metoo movement have raised issues of women’s rights in the U.S. and there is progress in the election of the first female Vice President. Of course,

sometimes all these issues come together and we can see an interlinked problem of discrimination against women who are also from ethnic minorities and examples of cross-community organization to push back against this.

Nicholas J. Cull is Professor of Public Diplomacy and Founding Director of the Master’s Program in Public Diplomacy at USC, and a CPD Faculty Fellow. His research and teaching focus on the role of public engagement in foreign policy.

Bahrain’s crackdown continues in Ramadan as regime forces attack political inmates in Jau prison

Bahraini regime forces have reportedly attacked and injured dozens of inmates at the notorious Jau Prison as the ruling Al Khalifah regime presses ahead with its crackdown even during the holy fasting month of Ramadan.

The Britain-based and Arabic-language Bahrain al-Youm news agency, citing Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei, a human rights activist and director of advocacy at the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD)

NGO, reported that prison guards stormed into Building 13 of the detention facility over the weekend and assaulted the inmates.

The activist added that blood stains could be seen all along the corridor of the ward as the attack was filmed by closed-circuit television cameras.

Wadaei then expressed concerns that the victims – all political prisoners – could be subjected to further torture in other build-

ings at the prison, or at the so-called Royal Academy of Policing, where torture has been widely reported.

A Bahraini opposition figure and former legislator says more than 3,500 opponents of the Al Khalifah regime are subjected to various forms of torture at prisons across the country.

Jalal Firooz, a member of the opposition al-Wefaq National Islamic Society, told the

Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) on Saturday that torture, overnight raids, arrest campaigns, human rights violations and revocations of citizenship continue unabated in the Persian Gulf country.

“The popular Bahraini uprising has not been suppressed. It is like fire under the ashes. People continue to stage nightly demonstrations and the rallies have not stopped,” he said.

(Source: Press TV)

4 officers injured as protesters in Sacramento speak out against police brutality

➔ 1 The shooting was reported at 4:18 p.m. at the McDonald’s located at 3200 West Roosevelt Road, near the intersection of South Kedzie Avenue. According to Chicago police, both victims were inside the vehicle when they “heard gunshots and felt pain.”

The 7-year-old, who sustained multiple gunshot wound, was taken by Chicago police officers to Stroger Hospital where she was pronounced dead. She was identified as Jaslyn Adams, of Oak Park, according to the Cook County Medical Examiner’s Office.

Russia expels 20 Czech diplomats in retaliatory move

Russia on Sunday expelled 20 Czech diplomats in retaliation for a slew of diplomatic expulsions by Prague and gave the affected Czech diplomats just over 24 hours to leave the country, the RIA news agency quoted the foreign ministry as saying.

The Czech Republic on Saturday expelled 18 Russian diplomats, giving them 72 hours to leave, after saying that two alleged Russian spies accused of a nerve agent poisoning in Britain in 2018 were behind a deadly explosion at a Czech ammunition depot four years earlier.

The Czech Republic said it had informed NATO and European Union allies that it suspected Russia of causing the 2014 blast, and European Union foreign ministers were set to discuss the matter at their meeting on Monday.

The U.S. State Department commended Prague’s firm response to “Russia’s subversive actions on Czech soil”.

According to al Jazeera, the row is the biggest between Prague and Moscow since the end of decades of Soviet domination of Eastern Europe in 1989.

Pakistan: TLP protesters free abducted policemen after violence

Protesters belonging to Pakistan’s far-right Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) group have released 11 police officers abducted during violent clashes in the eastern city of Lahore, the country’s interior minister says, as negotiations remain ongoing.



Interior Minister Sheikh Rasheed, speaking in a video message issued early on Monday, said “a lot of progress” had been made in the first round of negotiations.

Several policemen and protesters were wounded in clashes on Sunday, which began after TLP activists attacked a police station in the Sodhiwal area of Pakistan’s second city Lahore, police spokesperson Nayab Haider told Al Jazeera.

Syria to hold presidential election on May 26

The Syrian parliament speaker has announced that presidential election will be held in the war-ravaged Arab country on May 26.

In a statement on Sunday, speaker of the People’s Council of Syria, Hammouda Youssef Sabbagh called on prospective candidates to submit their applications to the Supreme Constitutional Court from Monday April 19 within a period of 10 days.

“The date of the presidential election for Syrians abroad will start on May 20, 2021, while the date of the presidential election on May 26,” Sabbagh said.

“We are facing the most important constitutional deadline and holding the election is an honest expression on belonging to the homeland,” he added.

President Bashar al-Assad has not yet officially announced that he will stand for re-election in the upcoming vote.

Resistance News

Top Hamas official: We will force Israel to free Palestinian prisoners

INTERNATIONAL DESK TEHRAN — A senior leader of the Palestinian resistance movement, Hamas, says the issue of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails is a top priority for the people of Palestine, stressing that the movement is determined to secure their freedom.

“We say that we are keen on conveying the prisoners’ message to all regional and international platforms,” Khaled Meshaal said in a television interview on the occasion of the Prisoner’s Day on Sunday, which is marked by the Palestinians on April 17 every year, the Palestinian Information Center reported.

Meshaal went on to say that the main task for Hamas and all Palestinian factions is to guarantee the freedom of Palestinian prisoners, noting that the Gaza-based resistance movement is pursuing all available means to alleviate the suffering of the detainees and to release them.

He underlined the fact that Israel does not release Palestinian prisoners except through resistance, not through negotiations or bargaining, stressing that they will force Israel to free the detainees.

“The resistance is the way to liberate Palestinian land and prisoners”, Meshaal said.

Earlier in the day, the Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates called upon the international community as well as signatories to the Geneva Conventions to take on their responsibilities concerning protection of Palestinian detainees.

Popular souvenirs to buy while visiting Iran

PART 2

T**O****U****R****I****S****M** One of the traditions of Ancient Persia is handicrafts, which are preserved in the culture of the nation and passed on from generation to generation.

Today handmade products are highly regarded outside Iran as a unique art. Popular way of Iranian handicraft are true masterpieces, and each of them has its own history.

Art is a fine industry in Iran and is famous for its unique handicrafts. There are presently nine million Iranians, involved in the production of handicrafts and other rural industries like Persian carpets, Kilim & Jajim, hand-made and hand-painted glassware and ceramics, pottery items and jewellery making. The Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts has listed popular souvenirs to buy while visiting Iran as below.

Woodcarving



Woodcarving refers to wood carved according to mostly traditional patterns (Islamic, Xetay) using simple tools (cave, wedge, knife). The designs are mostly protuberant and solid. Generally, woodcarving refers to the art of carving and engraving various designs on wood.

Woodturning

Woodturning refers to the act of shaping wood using horizontal wood scraping rotational machine to build products like sofa legs, bowl, plate, etc. A woodturning artist is a person who is able and skilled in regulating the woodturning machine, selecting the appropriate wood, and shaping and finishing the wood.

Saddlery

Saddlery (hand-made leatherwork) refers to the traditional art of cutting and sewing leather in order to produce leather bags, shoes, belts, etc. A saddler is a person who is skilled in recognizing various types of leather, cutting methods, and sewing leather pieces

Chadorshab

Chadorshab is a beautiful and colorful cloth, woven in Mazandaran, Gilan, and Khorasan Provinces of Iran, which local women wear it on their waist. In past, Chadorshab was used as coverlet or for packing quilts, blankets and pillows and the name “Chadorshab”, meaning the “cover of night” is also taken from this traditional usage. The patterns are geometrical and the cloth is usually waved from silk or colored wool.

Shaar

Shaar refers to a type of cloth made of silk. This cloth is woven by a special textile machine. The cloth is woven in two methods: simple and striped. There is no specific design for the cloth and it is woven in purple, red, black, yellow, green, etc. in two-meter-long pieces. The cloth is used for men and women wears. This type of traditional art is popular in Kashan, Yazd and Isfahan.

Velvet



Velvet is one of the most exquisite hand-made fabrics in Iran, which had been popular in Kashan, Yazd, Tabriz and Mashhad. Velvet is a type of woven tufted fabric in which the cut threads are evenly distributed, with a short dense pile, giving it a distinctive soft feel. Velvet can be made from either synthetic or natural fiber like silk, cotton, etc. there are two types of velvet fabric: simple and protuberant. Traditional designs are used to decorate this hand-made cloth.

Kalamkari

Kalamkari is a type of hand-painted or block-printed cotton textile, produced in Isfahan using wooden or metallic clocks. Only natural dyes are used in Kalamkari and it involves twenty-three steps and vaporizing is applied to stabilize the color.

Firoozeh-Koobi

Firoozeh-Koobi (Turquoise-ramming) is a stone handicraft field that is conducted by inlaying small pieces of turquoise in a mosaic pattern on utensils, jewelry, decorative items, etc. A special type of dark-colored lacquer is used between the turquoise pieces. The lesser the space between the turquoise pieces, the quality is higher. This art is popular in Isfahan.

Painting on leather

Painting on leather refers to the traditional painting and sketching on leather products using herbal and durable paints. The final layer is gloss to insulate the work. Painting on leather is a handicraft art that require skills like sketching different designs, leather stretching, transferring the design, stenciling, painting different designs, varnishing, and finishing.

Vitreous Enamel

Vitreous Enamel (enamel painting) refers to the art of painting copper items using glazed colors. The color is stabilized by baking the item. Enamel painting is popular in Isfahan. Vitreous enamel is a handicraft art and the artist must be skilled in painting Iranian and Islamic designs, geometric patterns, Xatay designs, animal and flora designs, etc. on copper items. The artist must be able to glaze paint, bake the items, finish the works, etc.

Traditional Jewelry

Traditional Jewelry is produced using metallic wires made of gold, silver and copper to create traditional designs by intertwining, welding and soldering the pieces together. Most of the designs are local and traditional.

Glass Enamel

Glass Enamel refers to the technique of painting on glass bodies using brushes and enamel glazes. In order to stabilize the glazes and paints, the final work must be baked in 350 to 550°C. A glass painter is a person who has artistic taste and can recognize glass glazes, combine different solvents, use brushes for designing and painting, and regulate the furnace to bake the products.

Under-glaze Painting

Under-glaze Painting refers to the act of painting and decorating clay pots that have baked and glazed once. After painting, the pot is glazed and baked for the second time. An under-glaze painter is a person who is skilled in creating the substructure (the first glaze), baking, painting on the glaze and re-baking the item.

Leather Carving

Leather Carving (Engraving) is the traditional art of carving and designing various patterns on leather. A leather carver is a person who is skilled in designing and copying various designs, patterning, selecting the appropriate leather, transferring the design, using carving tools, carving on leather, decorating the design and making various products from the carved leather.

Tourism minister hopes for a ‘sincere return’ to cherish global heritage

→ 1 “In recent years, while performing its legal duties in the field of protection of historical and cultural monuments, has tried to restore a significant number of historical monuments, which has been welcomed by the private sector and various members of society,” the message also reads.

Mounesan also explained about the ministry’s plan for protecting the historical monuments which are under private ownership, saying, “the plan of partnership with the owners of historical monuments for their protection and restoration, as well as the creation and development of private museums have been other ongoing programs of this ministry to create the ground for public participation in the protection of historical monuments.

In the future, strengthening and developing this program, expanding cooperation with public institutions and institutions for the protection and restoration of buildings, complexes, sites, and historical and cultural contexts, as well as paying special attention to identifying and introducing historical and cultural landscapes as neglected wealth for sustainable development have been on the agenda of serious attention.”

“It seems that according to this year’s slogan of the International Council of Monuments and Historic Sites, which is called “complex pasts, diverse futures”, the issue of paying attention and using past experiences to plan for future development is of double importance. To this end, the Ministry will play a more active and driving role in development.



On the other hand, this year we are celebrating the International Day for Monuments and Sites while the world is grappling with the Coronavirus crisis, a pandemic that has inevitably led to travel restrictions and reduced tourists’ familiarity with historical attractions. In such circumstances, this year’s slogan, while looking at the challenges that threaten human heritage and affect our approach to it, emphasizes the need to identify life-saving strategies for the preservation and introduction of cultural heritage in the future.”

He also mentioned, “this year’s slogan also shows the worries and concerns that may obscure the future of historical monuments, so it is a public invitation from all countries to increase their past experiences and resources in the light of international consensus and cohesion and each has a stake in charting a hopeful and bright future for the common human heritage.”

Mounesan also called the “creative use of virtual capacities” as “necessary more than ever” and highlighted: “undoubtedly, in the current situation, the creative use of virtual capacities is more necessary

Six historical buildings in Gorgan to be turned into guest houses

T**O****U****R****I****S****M** **TEHRAN** – Six historical buildings in the city of Gorgan, northern Golestan province, will be repurposed into guest houses, director general of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department of Golestan said.

“Following the process of restoring the city’s historical buildings, six buildings measuring 1,795 square meters in area with 1,108 square meters of superstructure are being renovated with an investment of 148 billion rials (about \$3.5 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials),” ILNA quoted Ahmad Tajarri as saying on Sunday.

The official underlined: “These buildings include the historical houses of Ahmad Doost (Nonhal), Asyaban and Mirzaei with residential and reception use, Sefidian historical house with reception use, Taghavi historical house with recreation and entertainment center use and also the ancestral historical house with

residential use and according to the planning done this year will be operational.”

Tajarri pointed out that in order to protect, and restore historical monuments and create sustainable employment in the historic city of Astarabad (Gorgan) to this number of projects, 45 billion rials in loans have been paid from technical and credit assistance, noting: “After the launch with the use of tourism, these units provide employment for 31 people directly in Gorgan city.”

In the past Iranian calendar year (ended March 19), four historical monuments of the historical city of Astarabad (Gorgan) including the endowment of Mollasanam (Khalili House) with accommodation and catering use, Gorgan Bagheris historical house with accommodation and catering use, Reza Gholinejad historical house of Gorgan with catering use, and



Shafiee of Gorgan with accommodation use were put into operation with an investment 198 billion and 700 million rials, he concluded.

Target villages aim to promote handicrafts in Kordestan

H**E****R****I****T****A****G****E** **TEHRAN** – Thirty-six villages have been identified in the western Kordestan province with the aim of creating jobs through promoting handicrafts in the region.

“The development and promotion of handicrafts in the villages will be seriously pursued,” ISNA quoted Yaghoub Guilian, director general of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department of Kordestan, as saying on Monday.

Referring to the key and fundamental role of women in the production of



handicrafts and rural development, he said: “More than 80% of employees in the field of handicrafts in the province are women. In this regard, we will do our best to support this group of entrepreneurs.”

Guilian referred to the creative and innovative methods as well as precision and delicacy which are seen in handicrafts made by rural artisans in Kordestan province and said: “Improving the quality level of rural handicraft products by holding specialized courses and workshops, setting up temporary and permanent markets,

development and strengthening target villages are among the executive plans in the current year.”

Marivan has been registered as the world city of Kalash, while Armardeh has been named the national city of scarf weaving, Diuznav as the national city of purple weaving, and Kako as the national city of kilim weaving, he explained.

Elsewhere in his remarks, he said that a total of 633 projects in the handicrafts sector will be implemented this year (began March 20), creating jobs for 870 persons.

35 historical, natural sites in North Khorasan listed as national heritage

T**O****U****R****I****S****M** **TEHRAN** – A total of 35 historical and natural sites in the northeastern province of North Khorasan were added to the national cultural heritage list in the past Iranian calendar year (ended March 19).

“Of these, 24 were related to historical monuments and buildings, six were movable historical and cultural properties and five were natural sites,” Habib Yazdanpanah, director general of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department of North Khorasan said on Monday, CHTN reported.

Referring to the study of cultural, historical, and natural sites in order to register them in the national heritage list, he announced plans to identify and introduce the values of the intellectual and natural heritage of the province in order to preserve and promote their historical and cultural identity.



Referring to the existence of 523 historical monuments in the province that have been registered in the national heritage list, Yazdanpanah noted: “Preservation and restoration of these monuments is a continuous activity that should be considered throughout the year. Due to the limited funds in this area, we are trying to make the most of this important work this year as well, with the maximum use of the power of the personnel and workshops.”

“Last year, 43 billion rials (about \$1 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) were spent on the restoration of the province’s historical monuments,” he added.

“So far, 743 sites in North Khorasan have been registered in the national heritage list, of which 523 are historical sites, 54 are natural sites, 109 are intangible properties, 25 are movable properties, and 32 are joint intangible heritage sites.”

Export of handicrafts from Zanjan surpasses \$1.3m

H**E****R****I****T****A****G****E** **TEHRAN** — Handicraft products worth more than \$1.3 million were exported from Zanjan province in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended March 19).

Handicrafts provided a very good capacity to generate income and jobs, and led to development of the province, Amir Arjmand, director general of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department of Zanjan Province said on Sunday, IRNA reported.

“Zanjan, as one of the most important provinces of metal handicrafts in the country, has a prominent position in production and handicraft artists of the province are at the forefront of production.”

He also said Zanjan’s handicrafts, including knives, Giveh (kind of traditional shoe), traditional jewelry, leather products, and tapestry are mostly exported to Iraq, the Persian Gulf littoral states, Turkey, and Eu-

ropean countries.

According to IRNA, in 2019, the World Handicrafts Council registered Zanjan as the world city of picot.

The official announced that 50 kinds of handicraft arts are being practiced in the province, adding: “At present, over 12,000 persons in the province are active in the field of handicrafts.”

In 2019, handicraft exports from Zanjan province stood at \$1.26 million dollars.



Seven metropolises to become age-friendly

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** – The national document on elderly-friendly cities is being implemented on seven metropolises across the country, Hesamoddin Allameh, head of the secretariat of the National Council of the Elderly, has said.

The age-friendly guidelines focus on eight areas, including accessible environment, appropriate transportation, social and civic participation, employment, respect for the elderly, information and communication, social support, and health services for the elderly, he explained, IRNA reported on Monday.

He went on to note that after the implementation of the adaptation phase, the age-friendly city roadmap was outlined in a five-year plan for Isfahan, and this year (beginning on March 21), it is planned to present the educational process and roadmap to other metropolises, as well.

According to United Nations estimates, the number of older persons (60+) will double from the current 600 million to 1.2 billion by 2025, and again, to 2 billion by 2050. The vast majority of older people live in their homes and communities, but in environments that have not been designed with their needs and capacities in mind. Older people face increasing challenges



due to the sensory and other changes that age brings. In an age-friendly community, policies, services, and structures related to the physical and social environment are designed to support and enable older people to “age actively” – that is, to live in security, enjoy good health and continue to participate fully in society.

Public and commercial settings and ser-

vices are made accessible to accommodate varying levels of ability. Many aspects of urban settings and services can contribute to the participation, health, independence, and security of older persons in an age-friendly city.

Iran: the world's oldest
Mohammad Esmail Akbari, a senior advisor to the minister of health, has said

that the world has grown about 5 years older over the past 70 years, but the population of Iran has unfortunately grown 10 years older in the past 60 years.

“Currently, the elderly constitutes less than 10 percent of the population and we are considered a young country, but we are getting older every year so that in the next 20 years, we will be one of the oldest countries in the world and the oldest by the next 30 years,” he explained.

The population of senior citizens currently exceeds 8 million in Iran, and the annual growth rate of the country's aging population is about 3.8 percent, head of the secretariat national council of the elderly Hassan Salmannejad said in December 2018.

The 2011 census observed a significant demographic change in the elderly population of Iran (the percentage of the elderly population increased from 7.27 to 8.20 percent from 2006 to 2011, and to 8.65 percent in 2016). The aging population is predicted to rise to 10.5 percent in 2025 and to 21.7 percent in 2050.

Although the increase in the number of old persons in any country indicates an increase in life expectancy, the elderly population growth needs more welfare and social institutions, which affects the policies and capacities of the country.

Iran jointly producing COVID-19 vaccines with three countries

→ **1** 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.

BAREKAT vaccine will be released in mid-June, he stated, adding that the fourth homegrown vaccine “Osvid-19” produced by Osvah Pharmaceutical Company vaccine will also be available in early September.

Out of 16 vaccine production cases, four cases received a code of ethics and it is hoped that another three to four cases will succeed in receiving license by September, he concluded.

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.

Iran started mass vaccination against COVID-19 with Russian-made Sputnik V vaccine on February 9; which is



also going to be co-produced by the two countries.

Alireza Raeisi, spokesman for the National Headquarters for Coronavirus control said that so far, a total of 1,895,000 doses of vaccine has been delivered to the country, including,

420,000 doses of Sputnik V vaccine from Russia, 650,000 doses of vaccine from China, 125,000 doses from India, 700,000 doses of Astrazeneca vaccine from South Korea (from the World Health Organization's COVAX facility).

According to the latest announcement of the Ministry of Health, 376,684 people have received the first dose of Corona vaccine and 121,803 people the second dose of the vaccine in Iran.

New cases and mortalities

In a press briefing on Monday, Health Ministry's spokesperson Sima-Sadat Lari confirmed 24,346 new cases of COVID-19 infection, raising the total number of infections to 2,261,435. She added that 1,797,319 patients have so far recovered, but 4,843 remain in critical conditions of the disease.

During the past 24 hours, 398 patients have lost their lives, bringing the total number of deaths to 67,130, she added.

So far, 14,500,519 COVID-19 diagnostic tests have been performed in the country.

Iran to mark World Earth Day 2021

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** – Iran will mark World Earth Day 2021 on April 22-29 with the national theme of “preserving the planet, increasing productivity for sustainable development”.

The annual event, which always falls on April 22, is the world's largest environmental

movement. It was started in 1970 after 3 million gallons of oil spilled off the coast of California the year before.

By the end of 1970, the Environmental Protection Agency had been formed. Earth Day, or “International Mother Earth Day,” as it's officially called by the United Nations,

is today celebrated by more than 1 billion people worldwide to increase awareness of the impact humans have on the environment.

Iran also joined the rest of the world and every year organizes events for Earth Day for a week throughout the country.

Many challenges and opportunities facing

planet restoration measures have made this issue the most important one so that the national theme is to revitalize the earth along with increasing productivity for sustainable development.

However, this year, due to the coronavirus, conferences and festivals are held virtually everywhere in the world.

Microbes are ‘unknown unknowns’ despite being vital to all life, says study

A new study has highlighted how little is known about microbes – the hidden majority of life on Earth.

Life on the planet relies on an enormous quantity of bacteria, fungi and other tiny organisms. They generate oxygen, keep soils healthy and regulate the climate. Microbes play a crucial role in food production, such as cheese, beer, yoghurt and bread.

But despite their importance to human life and the health of the Earth, a new scientific paper has shown our “profound ignorance” of microbial biodiversity and how it is changing.

“We have no idea whether global microbial diversity is increasing, decreasing, or staying the same,” said David Thaler, a biologist at Basel University and author of the

paper. “Most scientific papers tell us new facts. This is a different kind of paper; it does not answer anything but asks a new question.”

Many plant and animal populations are rapidly decreasing, with about 1 million species at risk of extinction, according to a 2019 UN-backed report. Plants and animals are counted over time to monitor how their populations change.

Microbes are often found in extreme environments – surviving at the bottom of the ocean, frozen deep inside glaciers and even inside a toxic volcanic lake – making them hard to study. Although poorly understood, bacteria and other tiny organisms are widespread in the deep biosphere below the Earth's surface.

Prof Frederick Cohan, a microbial ecologist at Wesleyan University, Connecticut, who reviewed the study prior to publication, said that although animal and microbe extinctions may go hand in hand, new bacterial species could form at such high rates that they may be increasing regardless of plant and animal extinctions.

“When a mammal species goes extinct, we should expect that all the microbes that depend primarily or exclusively on that species should also go extinct,” he said.

“On the other hand, microbial ecologists like me who study the diversity of extremely closely related bacteria find that there are always new bacterial species being formed. There are always new ways for bacteria to divvy up the existing resource to allow for new species.”

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → E

Wildfire extinguished in northern forests

Wildfire, erupted in northern forests of Gilan province over the past 2 days, has been fully extinguished, commander of the protection unit of natural resources and watershed management organization of Gilan has stated.

According to the latest statistics, approximately 130 hectares of forests in Gilan province have been burnt in recent days, IRNA quoted Mohammad Qorbani as saying on Sunday. He went on to say that 99 percent of fires in 13 cities of Gilan province have caused no serious damage to the trees. In spite of the complete containment of fire, the protection unit is on full alert, he further noted.

Appreciating all the forces who made efforts to control the wildfire, he concluded that fire broke out in various cities, including Rezvanshahr, Talesh, Roudbar, Siahkal and some others.

آتش سوزی جنگل های گیلان مهار شد

فرمانده یگان حفاظت اداره کل منابع طبیعی و آبخیزداری گیلان گفت: آتش سوزی جنگل های استان گیلان پس از ۷۲ ساعت تلاش ، کاملاً مهار شد. سرهنگ محمد قربانی لرد عصر روز شنبه در گفت و گوی اختصاصی با خبرنگار ایرنا اظهار داشت: بر اساس آخرین آمارها به صورت تقریبی حدود ۱۳۰ هکتار از اراضی جنگلی استان گیلان در چند روز اخیر دچار آتش سوزی شدند.

وی افزود: ۹۹ درصد از آتش سوزی جنگل های ۱۳ شهرستان استان گیلان سطحی بوده و خسارت جدی به درختان وارد نشده است.

فرمانده یگان حفاظت اداره کل منابع طبیعی و آبخیزداری گیلان خاطر نشان کرد: به رغم مهار کامل آتش در جنگل های استان ، نیروهای یگان حفاظت اداره کل منابع طبیعی و آبخیزداری در آماده باش کامل هستند.

وی ضمن قدردانی از تمامی نیروها در مهار آتش در جنگل های استان گیلان اضافه کرد: آتش سوزی در سطح شهرستان های مختلف استان از جمله رضوانشهر، تالش، رودبار، سیاهاکل و غیره روی داده.

India's monsoon rains to get 5% heavier for every 1C of global warming, study finds

Summer monsoon rainfall in India could increase by five per cent for every 1C increase in global temperatures, a new study finds – putting millions at greater risk of flooding and crop failure.

The seasonal downpours, which typically arrive in June and finish in September, are relied on by around a fifth of the world's population for drinking water and farming, and account for four-fifths India's annual rainfall.

The research finds that global warming could turn summer rains to become both more intense and more erratic from year to year by the end of the century.

Prof Anders Levermann, co-author of the study published in Earth System Dynamics and a climate scientist at the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impacts Research, told The Independent: “We found the monsoon will get more chaotic – it will get less predictable from year to year because the differences between years will become stronger.”

“What we also found is that the increase in monsoon rainfall is stronger than what has been found in the previous set of climate models.”

For the study, the researchers made use of 31 of the latest generation of climate models, studying possible future changes to India's summer monsoon under four future climate scenarios.

These scenarios ranged from a future where the world successfully meets the Paris Agreement goal of limiting global warming to well below 2C above pre-industrial levels to a scenario where very little is done to tackle greenhouse gas emissions.

The research finds that, in a scenario where global warming is limited to 2C, mean seasonal rainfall from the monsoon is likely to increase by nearly 10 per cent by the end of the century, when compared to levels from 1985 to 2015.

However, in the scenario where very little is done to tackle emissions, mean seasonal rainfall is expected to increase by nearly a quarter (24 per cent) by the end of the century.

The scientists also studied how “sensitive” the Indian summer monsoon was to increases in global temperatures.

These findings show that monsoon rains are likely to increase by around 5 per cent per 1C of global temperature rise, with a possible range of 1.7 to 13.4 per cent.

Previous research using an older set of climate models had put this figure at around 3 percent, according to the study authors.

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There are several reasons why the climate crisis could make the monsoon's rainfall more intense. One of the simplest reasons is that warmer air is able to hold more moisture, Prof Levermann said.

The findings “support earlier research that tends to show increased Indian summer monsoon rainfall under enhanced greenhouse gas conditions”, said Dr Andrew Turner, a monsoon scientist from the University of Reading who was not involved in the study.

LET'S LEARN PERSIAN

(Part 162)

(Source: saadifoundation.ir)

مصدر کوتاه

مصدر کوتاه شکل ستاک گذشته را دارد و در فعل آینده به معنی مصدر است:

خواندن، رفتن، گفتن ← خواند، رفت، گفت

آینده

زمان آینده از حال سادهی ‘خواستن’ + مصدر کوتاه ساخته می‌شود:

I shall go	→ خواهم رفت	+ رفت	خواهم
You will go	→ خواهی رفت		خواهی
He will go	→ خواهد رفت		خواهد
We shall go	→ خواهیم رفت		خواهیم
You will go	→ خواهید رفت		خواهید
They will go	→ خواهند رفت		خواهند

● تمرین ۱. مصدرها را به زمان آینده بنویسید:

- ما شما را در آینده به کشورمان (دعوت کردن)
- شما با هواپیمای ایرانی به تهران (آمدن)
- راننده شما را از فرودگاه به هتل (آوردن)
- پیشخدمت هتل اتقانتان را (نشان دادن)
- در این اتاق بسیار راحت (بودن)
- موقع رفتن، گذرنامه و بلیت را از پذیرش (گرفتن)

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

» Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 88808214 — 88808895
info@tehrantimes.com
» Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000
» Advertisements Dept.: Telefax: (+98 21) 43051430
» Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 88805807
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No. 18, Bimeh Alley, Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran
P.O. Box: 14155-4843
Zip Code: 1599814713



When a husband and wife look at each other with love, Allah looks at both of them with mercy.

Prophet Muhammad (S)

Swedish “Cineasterna” releases Iranian movie “Searing Summer”

CULTURE **TEHRAN** — “Searing Summer”, an internationally awarded Iranian movie, was released by the Swedish ‘Cineasterna’ online streaming service.

Directed by Ebrahim Irajzad as his debut film, starring actress Parinaz Izadyar, the movie explores the struggles of women in the new era and the problems surrounding the segregation of social classes in modern society.

Written by Payam Karami in 2017, the movie has already participated in other festivals including Stockholm, Beijing, and most notably the festival in Dhaka, where Izadyar along with Mina Sadati jointly received the best actress award in the City’s 16th International Film Festival.

Cineasterna, which is the main database of the country’s movie libraries, currently streams over 3,000 movies from 82 countries and 52 different languages and has added ‘Searing Summer’ as a new release which is available to stream and watch online.

The ‘Crystal Simorgh’ nominated movie features the main character Izadyar as Nasrin who is unable to win her daughter from her husband and follows with a series of problems as she struggles with social flaws, featuring other actors, Yasna Mir-tahmasb, Mania Alijani, and Saber Abar.

‘Dream Lab Films’ managed by Nasrin Mirshab is the exclusive international distributor of this 2017 movie.

With the Iranian culture and lifestyle gaining more interest across the world, many Iranian productions ranging from movies and documentaries to animated films and movies, are met with increasing demand from international broadcasters and online streaming services.

“Holy Bread” wins award at Ulju Mountain Film Festival

A R T **TEHRAN**— “Holy Bread”, a documentary by late Iranian director Rahim Zabihi, won the Special Youth Jury Award at the 6th edition of the Ulju Mountain Film Festival in Ulsan, South Korea last week, the organizers announced.



A scene from “Holy Bread” by Iranian director Rahim Zabihi

Produced by Iranian cinematographer Turaj Aslani, the film documents the highly dangerous work of Kurdish Kulbars - workers who try to support their families by transporting goods across the Iranian border.

On foot, they carry their loads along mountain paths that are rocky, steep, and either slippery due to snow or blisteringly hot. Along the way, many of them suffer injuries, die in blizzards, or are shot by border police.

The powerful scenes of the men’s journeys are matched by their harrowing stories. No one chooses to become a Kulbar, it’s simply an unavoidable consequence of not having any other form of work.

The film crew followed these workers for nine years to document the impact of living like a human pack mule. “Holy Bread” gives exposure to a group of mostly men, who, driven by poverty, hunger, and despair, operate in the margins of society.

Last week the organizers announced that “Bandar Band” by Iranian filmmaker Manijeh Hekmat received the NETPAC Award at the festival.

The film is about some Iranian women singers who are going to enter an unofficial competition in a coffee shop in Tehran.

Pregnant Mahla along with the other members of Bandar Band, her husband, and one of their closest friends, starts her journey to Tehran from a southern province just when they have lost all they had in the flood.

They still keep their hopes alive, however, every road they take leads to a dead-end in a flood-stricken land. They intend to go to Tehran, but they wonder if it is just another turn around a vicious circle.

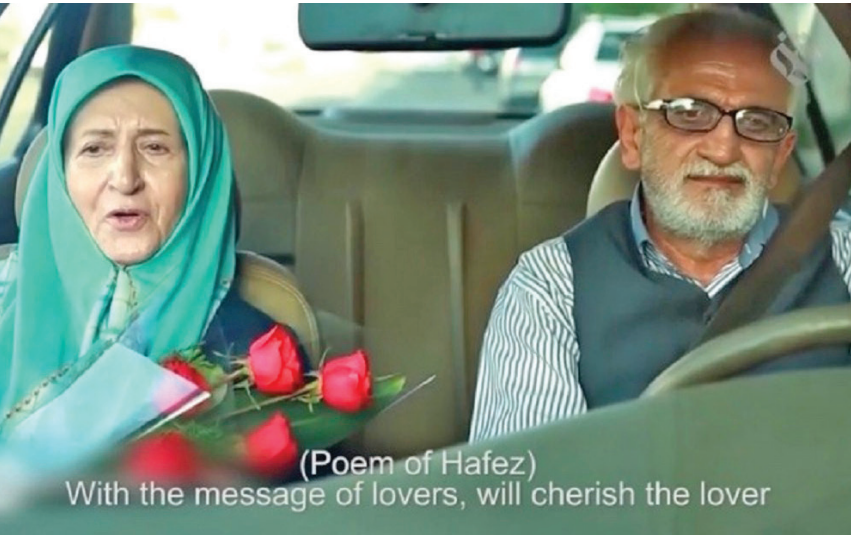
“The Wall of Shadows” a co-production between Poland and Germany by polish director Eliza Kubarska won the festival’s Grand Prize, while “Climbing”, an animated movie by Kim Hye-mi from Korea received the Special Jury Prize.

Australian website praises ‘another gem from Iranian cinema’

A R T **TEHRAN** — Mercator-desk Net, an Australian website promoting the family and human dignity, has praised Iranian director Mohammadreza Kheradmandan’s two-minute movie “Thursday Appointment”, calling it ‘another gem from Iranian cinema’.

The 2019 film is about an elderly couple making their way through traffic and reciting to each other a poem by the great Persian poet Hafez. Meanwhile, the old man notices a young girl who is sad in the back seat of her parent’s car, they are too busy arguing. He intervenes and gives his wife’s flowers to the young couple to stop them from arguing. We only realize how important those flowers were to the old man when he drives off.

“It never ceases to amaze me that despite all the wealth, experience, and tradition of American cinema, it seldom matches the depth and humanity of the best Iranian films. Asghar Farhadi’s family drama A Separation, for instance, won an Oscar in 2012. I can’t think of many films which combine so suc-



A scene from Iranian director Mohammadreza Kheradmandan’s short film “Thursday Appointment”

cessfully deep moral issues, intricate plotting, and painfully realistic human drama,” reads part of the article titled “Is this the best short film about marriage you’ll ever see?”, written by Australian editor Michael Cook, which was published on April 14.

Calling it ‘another gem from Iranian cinema’, Cook invites the readers to watch “Thursday Appointment”, a short film about poetry, traffic, child poverty, the wisdom of old age, good marriages, bad marriages, empathy, and kindness.

“A good short film is a kind of cinematic haiku which leaves you breathless with its insight. This is a very good short film,” it continues.

Born in 1984, Kheradmandan directed his first feature film “21 Days Later” in 2017, which won the audience award at the 35th Fajr International Film Festival.

He has made several short films and animated movies as well as TV series and has been nominated and awarded in various national and international events.

Maryland film festival to screen Iran’s “The Badger”

A R T **TEHRAN** — “The Badger” by Iranian director Kazem Mollai will be competing at the Maryland film festival, which will be held in the U.S. city of Baltimore from May 19 to 27.

The film is about Sudeh, a 40-year-old woman who faces a strange incident right before her second marriage. Sudeh and her son Matiar live in an old apartment. One day, she hires a pest control company to solve the termite problems in the apartment. While the pest control company is working, Matiar is recording the procedures, as this is his hobby. The next day, Matiar gets kidnapped after school, and the kidnapper asks Sudeh to pay 10 Bitcoins for her son. Tremendous pressure is put on Sudeh, but the truth

hidden beneath will surprise everyone.

The film will compete with 19 more films including “We’re All Going to the World’s Fair” by Jane Schoenbrun, “Lily Topples the World” by Jeremy Workman, both from the U.S., and “Rival” by Marcus Lenz from Germany.

“The Badger” has been acclaimed at numerous international events. It was selected as the best fiction feature at the 6th Bangkok Thai International Film Festival in Thailand last November.

It also won the Grand prize for the best foreign feature at the 29th Berkeley Video and Film Festival last October, and the award for best narrative feature at the Austin Film Festival in the U.S.

“Journey in Blue” comes to Iranian bookstores

CULTURE **TEHRAN**—A Persian translation of Danish writer Stig Dalager’s “Journey in Blue: A Novel about Hans Christian Andersen” has recently been published by Salees Publications in Tehran.

The book has been translated into Persian by Shaqayeq Qandehari.

The book tells the story of Hans Christian Andersen, who is on his deathbed. Doses of morphine cause his brain to oscillate between dreamy states and

fleeting moments of clarity. The complex and elastic mind that drives his personality and his work wrestle with his own perceived fate as a stranger in the world, his longing for love, and his religiosity.

To believe in his own talent to the extent that Andersen has done and to have lived so one-dimensionally has left him socially deficient and isolated. There is also torment: although internationally renowned, he was rejected in his

own country until late in his life when a leading Danish literary critic discovered his fairytales and confirmed their importance to his fellow countrymen. As Andersen’s death approaches, his memories grow more vivid and material, yet at the same time fairytale-like.

In this remarkable novel, Stig Dalager takes the reader on a journey through the mind, body, spirit, and works of one of the truly great names in world literature.



Front cover of the Persian translation of Danish writer Stig Dalager’s “Journey in Blue: A Novel about Hans Christian Andersen”.

Sohrab Sepehri, great Persian poet and painter

Part 3

By the early 1950s Sepehri had gradually integrated himself into Tehran’s burgeoning modernist literati and artistic society, gravitating most towards members of Khorus jangi (The fighting rooster), an art and literary journal started in 1949 by the painter Jalil Ziapur (b. 1928), the pioneer of cubism in Iran. Khorus jangi’s original promotion of Nimaic poetry and modern art had made it a natural niche for Sepehri, whose principal link to the group was his first mentor Manuchehr Sheybani, the journal’s first poetry editor. In 1951 Khorus jangi was revamped with a new board of editors. Hushang Irani (1925-1973, poet, painter), the journal’s new poetry editor and the avant-garde poet, commonly known to readers of modern Persian poetry by his notorious coinage “jigh-e banafsh” (purple scream), declared poetics based on Nima’s writings passé, and urged the search for a new poetic language.

Sepehri followed the call and in 1952 published Zende-gi-ye khabha, a collection of sixteen poems in blank verse depicting the surrealist dreamscapes of an introspective poet in search of his personal voice. “Gol-e kashi” (Tile flower), “Nilufar” (Lotus), and “Safar” (Journey) offer glimpses into the preliminary stages of a language that was to become his signature voice, with the last two also providing the first examples of Zen, Buddhist, and Taoist influences on Sepehri’s worldview. In “Yadbud” (Memento), for instance, a clock pendulum’s perpetual motion in space and time emerges as a symbol of the Buddhist principle of perpetual reincarnation. Irani’s influence on Sepehri’s language is easily recognizable in this collection, as is the absence of Nimaic poetics. The poems’ often convoluted language and their surrealist imagery further offer one of the earliest examples of the burgeoning homogeneity between form and content in Sepehri’s work, in this instance reflecting the Taoist principle that “Truth” defies verbal definition and can only be hinted at in such a way as to lead to an intuitive or mystical understanding of it.

Written between 1952 and 1958, the poems in Avar-e aftab continued to reflect Sepehri’s preoccupation with this principle. In “Sayaban-e aramesh-e ma, maim” (We are the parol of our own sanctity), for instance, Sepehri writes:

The freshness of faces wilted in the air of dichotomy
Let us come leave the shadow-lights
Let us stand on the dewdrop’s edge, let us land in the leaf.
And should we see a foot print, let us follow the ancient traveler.

Here, as elsewhere throughout the collection, the poem’s language reflects Irani’s influence, while further showing Sepehri’s growing connection with nature and his increased belief in mankind’s purpose in the universe. Throughout the collection this and other poems like “Ay nazdik” (O near), “Faratar” (Beyond), and “Ku qatra-ye vahm” (Where is the illusion drop) call on the reader to embark on a quest for ‘Truth’ through an unmitigated connection with nature, and to realize that Mysteries, like cracked pomegranates, are in half-blown.

Sepehri’s own quest took on a more mystical dimension in Sharq-e anduh, a collection of twenty five poems, many of which reflect the obvious influence of Rumi’s Divan-e Shams influence as much in ideology and content as in

rhythm and inner rhymes. As evidenced by titles like “Bodhi” and “Vid” (Veda), and a language that frequently recalls the minimalist simplicity of haikus, Sharq-e anduh further forges a peculiar combination of Sufism and Eastern philosophy ultimately to offer the first glimpses of Sepehri’s vision of a higher spiritual being: an omnipresent yet ever fleeting god whose presence can be experienced in everything from nature to random objects of daily life. The poems in Sharq-e anduh also reveal Sepehri’s broad view of all religions, their basic unity, and the futility of doctrinal dispute. This ideology is epitomized in “Shuram ra” (My fervor) where he writes: The Quran above my head; my pillow the New Testament; my bed the Hebrew Bible; my undergarment the Avesta; I dream: a Buddha in the water lotus. / Wherever a flower of prayer grew, I picked it. These verses, more than anything else, distinguish Sepehri from his contemporaries not only as a poet ceaselessly searching for a unique personal voice, but further as a thinker propelled by an urgent drive to conceptualize and convey an universal vision of existence above and beyond the mundane socio-political dynamics of daily life.

In 1965 Sepehri published his watershed poem “Seda-ye pa-ye ab,” a loosely autobiographical work that introduced not only the fourth phase in Sepehri’s poetry in particular, but a novel and hitherto unique voice in modern Persian poetry. The poem revolves around a central dichotomy between the restrictive formalities of received knowledge and the dehumanizing materialism of modern times, on the one hand, and the need to reevaluate preconceived ideas and ultimately to attain a closer connection with nature, on the other. This urgent call to see everything anew emerged as one of the major themes of all of Sepehri’s subsequent poetry.

In his next long poem “Mosafer” Sepehri turns to ancient Persian, Hindu, and Abrahamic mythologies within the panoramic context of the world history to elaborate on the mystical dimension of his thought. Carrying faint echoes of Coleridge’s (1772-1834) “Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner” and subtle affinities with Eliot’s (1888-1965) “The Wasteland,” “Mosafer” comprises the tale of its traveler-persona who, upon arriving at a friend’s home, recounts the story of his spiritual wanderings, a mythical soul journey through time and across lands, which ends with the Ulyssean lesson that Ithaca is an ever-fleeting ideal in time and space, always longed for, but never reached. This soul journey, together with the urge to see anew, lie at the core of Sepehri’s next and most famous collection, hajm-e sabz.

A collection of twenty-five poems written between 1962 and the summer of 1967, hajm-e sabz comprises virtually all of Sepehri’s best-known and most anthologized works. The first edition has a run of two thousand copies, twice the average print run of the time. “Neda-ye aghaz” (Primeval call), “Vaha-i dar lahya,” “Posht-e daryaha” (Beyond the seas), and “Neshani” (Address) are among the book’s best received poems, each one rendering various aspects of the above delineated themes with the simplicity, frankness, and subtle urgency that have become emblematic of Sepehri’s voice. The striking shift in hajm-e sabz is Sepehri’s existential awareness of his loneliness in the world. It is also in this

collection that the new poetic language Sepehri originally introduced in “Seda-ye pa-ye ab” takes on many of its unique and characteristic features, subsequently to become unmistakably associated with him.

Sepehri’s language at this stage is characterized by his forging of unorthodox associations of words, conceptually elusive images, and semantically ‘non-logical’ utterances, to create a crisis of meaning in language; a crisis that ineluctably mobilizes the reader to reach beyond the familiarity of ordinary language ultimately to conceptualize an otherwise indescribable abstraction. A closer look at a section of one of Sepehri’s most characteristic poems “Neshani” will help clarify the point. Looking for a friend’s home, a horseman asks a passerby for directions. The passerby points to a tall aspen and replies:

Just before the tree,
There is a lane greener than God’s dream
Where love is as blue as the feathers of truth.
Go to the end of that lane that leads behind puberty
Turn toward the flower of solitude,
Two steps before the flower,
You will stop next to the immortal fountain of Earthly myths

Where a translucent fear takes hold of you.
There, in the fluid sincerity of the atmosphere,
You will hear a rustling:
You will see a child,
Who has climbed up a tall pine tree?
To take a nestling from light’s nest.
And there you ask the child:
Where is the friend’s house?

While the passerby’s simple diction and unquestionably familiar syntax give any speaker of colloquial Persian basic and easy-to-follow directions, the poem’s abstract imagery and elusive concepts make for road signs that are essentially impossible to follow. Nevertheless, the delicate balance between the syntax’s simplicity and the images’ abstraction mobilize the reader to interject meaning where none otherwise exists, ultimately to recognize that the friend’s house is an otherworldly place beyond the familiar and ordinary perimeters of day-to-day reality. Unlike Nima, who often coins new symbols out of concrete objects to convey abstract notions, Sepehri generates meaning through an association of an abstract image with an equally abstract concept, both expressed in a simple language. While other features further contribute to the novelty of Sepehri’s language, his success in generating easily accessible abstractions in a simple and highly economical language remains at the core of his success in coining a language that has become infallibly associated with him that the echo of its influence remains recognizable to any reader of Persian modern poetry.

In spite of Sepehri’s achievement to introduce a novel language in the then fervent atmosphere of Persian modern poetic production, the publication of Hajm-e sabz was met with an onslaught of mixed reviews. Mirroring this split in the Persian literati, two popular newspapers Ayandagan and Keyhan named Hajm-e sabz the best book of the year, while others called it the worst.