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# Definite policy

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## Iran supports Iraqi mediation between Tehran and Riyadh: ambassador

TEHRAN – The Islamic Republic supports Baghdad's mediation to bring Tehran closer to countries with which relations have soured, Iranian Ambassador to Baghdad Iraj Masjedi told state news IRNA in an interview published on Tuesday.

Commenting on Iraqi efforts to de-escalate tensions between the region's countries, the ambassador said, "Iran welcomes and encourages any move that leads to the improvement of relations, cooperation and closeness between Iraq and the Arab countries, neighbors and the region."

Ambassador Masjedi underlined that Iran also supports the expansion of ties between Iraq and the Arab world as Baghdad deserves to restore its political status among Arab states.

A few days after foreign media outlets reported that the Iraqi capital hosted a meeting between Iranian and Saudi security officials, the ambassador voiced Tehran's support for Baghdad's mediation between Iran and countries that have challenges with Iran.

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## Iran breaks U.S. monopoly on recombinant flu vaccine

TEHRAN – An Iranian knowledge-based company has acquired the technology to produce a recombinant human influenza vaccine, which was monopolized by the United States, IRNA reported on Tuesday. "Recombinant influenza vaccines are produced using recombinant technology. This method does not require an egg-grown vaccine virus and does not use chicken

eggs in the production process. Currently, the recombinant flu vaccine and the cell culture-based flu vaccine are the only egg-free flu vaccines licensed for use in the United States," Amir Hossein Abdolghaffari, CEO of a knowledge-based company active in the health sector stated.

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TEHRAN – Iranian President Hassan Rouhani on Tuesday unveiled the country's first domestically-made steam turbine rotor which is installed in a power plant in the capital Tehran, IRNA reported.

The construction of the mentioned turbine has placed Iran among the world's top five steam turbine manufacturers.

As reported, the unveiling ceremony was held in the third week of the Energy

Ministry's A-B-Iran program. This 82.5 MW turbine rotor which has been manufactured by Iran Power Plant Repairs Company has saved the country over 550 billion rials (about \$13 million) since for importing the mentioned rotor nearly 900 billion rials (about \$21.4 million) had to be spent while the production cost has been reported to be only 350 billion rials (about \$8.3 million).

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## Iran joins world's top 5 steam turbine builders



## What a great start to 2021 ACL for Iranian teams

**BY FARROKH HESABI**  
The four Iranian teams have been amazing so far at the 2021 AFC Champions League. There's none of the usual gathering of tens of thousands of supporters in the host city; however, five wins and three draws in the eight matches of the stage groups means that the Iranian clubs are well-prepared and well-equipped for the most prestigious club tournament of the Asian Football Confederation, even without their fans. Esteghlal have destroyed their opponents so far. They cruised to a 5-2 victory against Al Ahli Saudi FC and then run riot against Al Shorta of Iraq with a 3-0 win on Matchday Two in Group C. Farhad Majidi has established his tactical instructions at the team. Group C was supposed to be "the group of death," but the Blues make it the group of life for themselves.

Brilliant performances by Mehdi Ghaedi, Farshid Esmaili, Mohammad Naderi, and Cheick Diabaté have made Esteghlal's fans hoping to see their team on the knockout stage sooner than expected. Persepolis, last year's ACL finalists, started the campaign with a 1-0 win over the UAE's Al Wahda. They have shown the highest intensity and determination in their games as they came from behind to beat Al Rayyan of Qatar in their second game in Group E.

The champions of four consecutive past seasons of Iran Professional League (IPL) have transferred their excellent run of domestic games to the continental tournament. Their devastating attacking talent is a constant threat to any opponents' defense, and the Reds can score in every minute of every game. After failing in last year's final, Yahya Golmohammadi's side are targeting Champions League glory.

Tractor continue their pursuit of the first win in Group B, although they have played thrilling matches so far and have kept their hopes intact to qualify for the next round with the new coach Rasoul Khatibi.

Foolad Khuzestan have maintained their intensity in their past three games, beginning with the playoff win against UAE's Al Ain. With one draw and one victory, they have reached a crucial stage. Brazilian striker Chimba has been in form and is the main hope for Javad Nekounam's side to score at the tournament.

Iranian teams are to continue their successful start to their 2021 ACLs; focus and recovery will be key for them in the path to glory.

## Energy diplomacy

**BY CHRIS COOK**  
Now the U.S. administration has made the transition to President Biden we see the U.S. engaging with Iran indirectly in Vienna via the other JCPOA participants. Meanwhile although the global Covid demand shock lingers, the recovery of the oil price which began immediately after the U.S. election has been more or less sustained. President Trump had prepared neither a strategy nor a competent team prior to taking office and he never really filled this vacuum while golfing, tweeting and generally 'surfing the edge of chaos'. President Biden, on the other hand has assembled a comprehensive and competent team, many of them veterans of the Obama administration. **U.S. energy strategy** For over a century, U.S. foreign policy has been defined by the U.S. need for energy security. The muscular Bush/Cheney U.S. energy

strategy based on military dominance ended in 2007/2008 after a Chinese economic veto led to financial meltdown. As I have documented many times, President Obama's smart energy strategy was a "Transition through Gas" from oil to renewables. A Clinton presidency would have continued this strategy, but the interruption of President Trump's "Energy Dominance" strategy from July 2017 saw instead a reversion to oil "molecules of U.S. freedom" via financialisation/monetisation of U.S. shale oil.

In my analysis, President Biden's administration is now reconfiguring the U.S. relationship with China generally and their competing needs for energy security in particular. John Kerry's pre-eminent status as U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Climate indicates that Transition Through Gas to a low carbon economy remains central to U.S. energy strategy.

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## U.S. cities on alert as anti-racism protests rage ahead of Chauvin murder trial verdict

U.S. anti-racism protesters have rallied in Minneapolis as the murder trial of former police officer Derek Chauvin was taking place.

The protesters chanted "guilty" as they marched through the Minnesota city, carrying banners reading: "Justice for George Floyd. The World is watching."

The jury went into deliberation to determine whether Chauvin is guilty of killing African American George Floyd by kneeling on his neck for almost 9 minutes last May. Deliberations resume on Tuesday.

Chauvin has pleaded not guilty to second-degree murder, third-degree "depraved mind" murder and second-degree manslaughter.

Minneapolis and state officials have ramped up security precautions in the city, in particular around the tower in which the courtroom sits. The tower is ringed by barbed wire and armed soldiers from the National Guard.

Civil rights activist Jesse Jackson joined the Minneapolis demonstrations on Monday, saying that, "Tomorrow, even if we win. It's relief, not victory. They're still killing our people."

For the second-degree murder charge, 12 U.S. jurors will have to agree that prosecutors proved beyond a reasonable doubt that Chauvin committed a felony that was a substantial cause in Floyd's death. They do not have to find that Chauvin intended to kill Floyd, according to U.S. media.

That crime carries a punishment of up to 40 years in prison.

**U.S. cities on alert** Minnesota Democratic Governor Tim Walz declared a preemptive state of emergency in the Minneapolis metropolitan area and requested security assistance from other states, citing the "threat of civil unrest."

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## UNESCO to assess Iran's "land of caravanserais" for world heritage

TEHRAN - Caravanserais in the city of Miami, which is known as the "land of caravanserais" in Iran, are being prepared to be assessed by UNESCO for inclusion in the World Heritage list.

"Today, the condition of caravanserais in the city of Miami was inspected for the presence of UNESCO representative, IRNA quoted Hamidreza Doost-Mohammadi, head of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department of Semnan Province, as saying on Monday.

The official went on to say that Miami city is known as the land of caravanserais due to the existence of 10 caravanserais with historical value.

He added: "Existence of Miami Caravanserai, Spange (Jahanabad), Miandasht Caravanserai including three caravanserais of Abbasabad Caravanserai, Alhak, Sadrabad, Mohammadabad Silk Bridge and the historic Nishgarab shows the historical importance of this city and the glory of Iranian architecture."

The city of Miami has four exemplar areas and seven villages targeted for tourism. The largest caravanserai complex in Iran is located in this city.

In August 2020, deputy tourism minister Mohammad Hassan Talebian said a total of 50 Iranian properties have already been placed on the tentative list for [possible] inclusion on UNESCO's World Heritage list in the years to come.

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## MP says 60% enrichment shows Iran's nuclear technology capacity

**BY SAEID MAWADDAT**  
TEHRAN - A senior member of the Iranian Parliament (Majlis) says increasing the level of uranium enrichment to 60% shows that Iran's nuclear technology is "too strong" to be stopped by a sabotage act. "Through enrichment to 60%, Iran shows that its capacity for nuclear knowledge is too strong to be stopped by a sabotage, and that Iran has the ability to rely on indigenous knowledge to meet its needs," Abolfazl Amouei tells the Tehran Times.

At 00:40 midnight on Friday, April 16, the young Iranian scientists were able to enrich uranium to 60 percent purity, Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said in a message on his Twitter account.

The move came as a response to the Israeli sabotage operation at the Natanz nuclear facility in Isfahan province.

"According to the act of 'Strategic Action to Lift the Sanctions and Protect the Interests of the Iranian Nation,' the Atomic Energy Organization is assigned to keep on enriching uranium at any level to meet the peaceful needs of the country," emphasizes Amouei, the spokesman for the Iranian Parliament National Security and Foreign Policy Committee.

Following is the text of the interview: **Could you update us about what happened at the Natanz facility?**

The Natanz incident occurred as a result of a sabotage operation that caused electricity outage. On the one hand, we consider this incident as a terrorist act that comes under "nuclear terrorism".

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## Mourners bid farewell to Quds Force deputy chief Gen. Hejazi

Mourners in the central city of Isfahan, the hometown of General Mohammad Hejazi, the deputy chief of the IRGC Quds Force, attended the funeral ceremony for the commander on Tuesday.

Quds Force chief General Esmail Qa'ani and former IRGC chief Rahim Safavi were among the top figures who attended the funeral ceremony.

Qa'ani praised his deputy's sacrifices to safeguard the ideals of Islam as he shared memories of cooperation with the senior figure of the resistance movement in a speech during the funeral.



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## Iran's representative elected OPCW vice president for third time

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN — Iran's representative to The Hague-based Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) was elected for a third time in a row as the vice-chairperson of the international body. Alireza Kazemi Abadi was nominated for the post by the Asia group.

## EU: JCPOA Joint Commission agree to create third expert group to look into possible respective measures

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN — As the coordinator of the nuclear deal talks in Vienna, the European Union issued a statement on Tuesday in which it said the JCPOA Joint Commission will convene next week.

Enrique Mora, deputy secretary general of the European External Action Service (EEAS), also said "the Joint Commission decided to create a third expert group to start looking into the possible sequencing of respective measures."

Following is the text of the statement: The Joint Commission of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) resumed its work in Vienna in a physical format this Tuesday. The Joint Commission is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the JCPOA.

The Joint Commission was chaired, on behalf of EU High Representative Josep Borrell, by the EEAS Political Director Enrique Mora and was attended by representatives of China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom and Iran.

Participants took stock of progress made in the ongoing discussions in Vienna regarding specific measures needed in terms of sanctions lifting and nuclear implementation for the possible return of the U.S. to the JCPOA and its full and effective implementation.

The Joint Commission decided to create a third expert group to start looking into the possible sequencing of respective measures.

Participants reiterated their resolve to further pursue their joint diplomatic effort including in the Joint Commission and through continued separate contacts of the Coordinator with all JCPOA participants and the United States.

The Joint Commission will reconvene in the course of next week.

## Pakistan's chief diplomat visits Tehran for talks on mutual ties, regional issues

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN — Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Pakistan's foreign minister, visited Tehran on Tuesday for talks with top Iranian officials on mutual relations and the latest regional security issues.

Qureshi visited Tehran at the invitation of his Iranian counterpart, Mohammad Javad Zarif.



According to a Tuesday statement by Pakistani Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the top Pakistani diplomat is planned to have delegation-level talks with Zarif, President Hassan Rouhani and Speaker of the Parliament Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf during his three-day stay.

Qureshi will also travel to the holy city of Mashhad.

During the visit, Iranian and Pakistani officials will open the third border terminal between the two countries.

Zarif and Qureshi will "review bilateral relations with a view to further deepening cooperation in diverse fields," the statement said.

"The two sides will discuss regional security situation including the latest developments in the Afghan peace process and the Jammu & Kashmir dispute. They will also deliberate on strengthening regional cooperation under the umbrella of Economic Cooperation Organization," it added, according to Press TV.

It further said that the visit is part of regular high-level exchanges between the two countries, which follow a trip by the Iranian foreign minister to Islamabad in November 2020. The two foreign ministers also met on the sidelines of the 9th Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process (HoA-IP) ministerial conference in Tajikistan's capital Dushanbe in late March.

Qureshi last visited Iran in January 2020. Prior to his departure for Tehran on Tuesday, Pakistan's foreign minister shed light on the objectives and purposes of the visit in a video message.

Pakistan, under the leadership of Imran Khan, has tried to resolve disputes between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

**Qureshi says the Afghan peace process is "equally important for Iran"**

In the message, Qureshi thanked his Iranian counterpart for visiting Pakistan several times, saying the visits helped the two neighbors hold crucial meetings.

"There have been several developments in the Afghan peace process," the minister said. "Being neighbors to Afghanistan, the peace process is equally important for Iran."

He emphasized that he would be informed about Iran's views in this regard so that "the two sides will be able to develop a focus of strategy following talks."

Efforts to stabilize Afghanistan has speeded up as the Biden administration has announced that the United States will withdraw its troops from Afghanistan by September 11.

The U.S. invaded Afghanistan after the September 11 attacks in 2001.

Pakistan's chief diplomat also expressed gratitude for Leader of the Islamic Revolution for his clear stance on the Kashmir issue.

"We will also talk about progressing with regard to the bilateral relations. Iran had expressed interest in Pakistan's proposal of border markets, and we would talk about it, too," the Pakistani foreign minister said.

He added that Iran is not only a neighbor of Pakistan but also a tested friend, saying, "We have always supported each other in difficult times."

"We will be in efforts to cement the existing bilateral relations and bring stability in them," Qureshi said.

At a recent meeting with top Pakistani media figures and researchers, Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan expressed hope that the sanctions against Tehran will be lifted, saying that Iran has the capacity to turn into an economic power in the region.

# Solana: Since 'maximum pressure' on Iran proved a 'resounding failure' we must hope Vienna talks succeed

'The JCPOA was not intended to be a panacea,' former EU chief diplomat notes

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN — Former European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana says since Donald Trump's "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran proved to be total failure "we must hope" the talks in Vienna to revitalize the nuclear deal will succeed.

"We must hope that they succeed, because Trump's 'maximum pressure' proved to be a resounding failure," Solana wrote in an article in the Project Syndicate on Monday, April 19.

Solana, who was NATO secretary general from 1995-1999 and led the 5+1 nuclear talks with Iran for certain years, also criticized Trump's "ill-advised strategy" toward the 2015 nuclear deal, saying, "In international relations, the perfect is the enemy of the good, and illusions are not a useful yardstick."

Following is an excerpt of Solana's article titled "Reviving Nuclear Diplomacy with Iran":

Diplomacy has always been the only sensible way to address U.S.-Iranian tensions. But when foreign policy rides on emotional currents and succumbs to gimmicky temptations, wise and subtle statecraft is relegated to the background.

This happened in the United States after the terror attacks of September 11, 2001, and it happened again during Donald Trump's bombastic presidency. Perhaps the best example was Trump's impetuous unilateral decision to withdraw the U.S. from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

That agreement — formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) — came about after years of arduous negotiations, only for Trump to dismiss it in a huff as part of his arrogant and shortsighted "maximum pressure" strategy toward Iran. But with Joe Biden now president, talks that began this month in Vienna provide the main global powers with a diplomatic opportunity to salvage the pact.

We must hope that they succeed, because Trump's "maximum pressure" proved to be a resounding failure. Iran began to violate certain provisions of the JCPOA about a year after the U.S. withdrew from it in 2018. Since then, Iran has progressively increased the purity of its uranium enrichment, expanded its enriched-uranium stockpile 14-fold, and limited international inspections of its nuclear facilities. U.S. estimates of Iran's nuclear breakout time recently fell from over a year to three or four months.



Trump's ill-advised strategy not only increased the risks of nuclear proliferation, but also failed abysmally to curb Iran's regional activities. U.S.-Iranian tensions have intensified in the Persian Gulf, compounded by increasingly frequent (if barely seen) skirmishes between Iran and Israel.

Another cause for U.S. concern is that Iran has mitigated its international isolation by strengthening its relationship with China — including through a recent 25-year bilateral agreement that envisages heavy Chinese investment in the Islamic Republic in exchange for cheap and steady supplies of Iranian oil and gas. Enhanced security and intelligence cooperation is also part of the package.

As Trump intended, U.S. sanctions have wreaked havoc on the Iranian economy.

Iran has even had serious difficulties importing COVID-19 vaccines and medical supplies.

In this regard, it bodes well that Biden has moved quickly to repudiate or recalibrate many of Trump's policies toward the Middle East (West Asia). Biden has tempered U.S. relations with Saudi Arabia, imposing sanctions on 76 individuals and the elite unit assigned to protect Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in connection with their role in the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi. Likewise, Biden has distanced the U.S. from the Saudi-led military offensive in Yemen and reversed Trump's designation of the Houthis rebels as a terrorist group, in order to facilitate the delivery of food and other essential aid to a country currently suffering the world's worst humanitarian crisis. The U.S. has also restored economic assis-

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## General Fallahzadeh named IRGC Quds Force deputy chief

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN — After a confirmation by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Fallahzadeh was appointed as the new deputy chief of the IRGC Quds Force.

One day after the death of IRGC Quds Force Deputy Commander Brigadier General Mohammad Hejazi, Ayatol-

lah Khamenei approved a proposal from IRGC Chief Major General Hossein Salami to appoint General Fallahzadeh to the vacant post, Tasnim reported.

Fallahzadeh served as the IRGC Quds Force's deputy for coordination affairs before taking the new job. He has also the experience of commanding many provincial IRGC divisions and construction bases.



## Energy diplomacy

strategy to take control of oil market pricing. The combination of massive purchasing power as a 'Buyer of Last Resort', scant respect for U.S. sanctions and a fleet of new oil refineries sees China routinely refining over 14m barrels of oil a day and able to daily export millions of barrels of oil products at prices with which no regional refiner can compete.

So China is now in a position to control and manipulate the market from the buy-side in the same way that the sell-side has supported or manipulated the benchmark price since at least 2001. How does this affect Iran? I asked Mahmood Khaghani, my long-standing colleague, especially bearing in mind Iran's strategic alliance with China.

"It seems to me firstly, that Iran's resources are as strategically important to President Biden as to President Xi and secondly, that Iran has always been skillful in negotiations with powerful competing nations. But I believe that such destructive and negative 'dollar diplomacy', while possibly gaining a tactical short term commercial advantage, would be a gross strategic error bearing in mind Iran's unique financially isolated position," Khaghani explained.

In my view, there is a historic opportunity for Iranian energy diplomacy addressing our health and climate and challenges through 'energy for peace'.

I have always been reluctant to stray beyond my field of expertise to Iranian nuclear energy issues so I asked Mr. Khaghani's view.

"From the Shah's time onwards, the Iranian scientific and political consensus has always been that nuclear power generation would come to replace oil and gas. But it seems to me that energy efficiencies and cost reductions in renewable energy are now at such a level that nuclear energy can simply no longer compete with renewables on cost," Khaghani stated.

I was reminded by the recent launch in Abu Dhabi of the Murban oil benchmark contract of my 2001 proposal for an Iran-led Middle East oil and product pricing benchmark contract. Unfortunately, the resulting Iran Oil Bourse was not as we would have wished. The global

oil market benchmarks have been subject, as I predicted, to great volatility for 20 years making budgeting and economic planning by producer and consumer nations difficult at best.

So it seems to me that while such Middle East benchmark would if successful be a battleground between the U.S. and China for oil market dominance which would be good for exchanges, traders, investment banks and the professionals who feed off them, but even worse for market end-users.

I recalled Mr. Khaghani's role in Iran's imaginative and humanitarian "Energy for Peace" intervention during the first Nakhchivan conflict. Gas was supplied by Iran to Armenia in exchange for a supply of power and I asked Mr. Khaghani if he still had such swaps in mind?

Khaghani said, "Indeed, there is a historic opportunity to transform global physical oil and gas markets through supply (rather than sales) of flows of upstream raw energy in exchange for downstream flows of refined fuels. These downstream fuel flows may then in turn be swapped for heat/cooling, power, mobility and so on. Such flow swaps may be geographical swaps such as the Caspian oil swap of oil supplied into North Iran swapped for Persian Gulf oil flows; energy conversion swaps, such as Iranian gas for Armenian power or even swaps of technology use in exchange for flows of energy savings."

Mr. Khaghani added that the problem with such flows is that they rarely meet the needs of both parties at the same time. He reminded me of the Energy Fintech presentation I made two years ago in Tehran to several audiences introducing the Energy Credit Obligation ("ECO") funding instrument.

The ECO is so simple it can be difficult to comprehend. It is essentially a promise issued by an energy producer in exchange for value received from an acceptor who may pass on (assign) the ECO in exchange for value so creating a chain of acceptors A>B>C>D. Eventually an ultimate acceptor will return the ECO to a producer in payment for supply rather than paying \$ or €.

An 'ECO Clearing Union' agreement will

mutually assure acceptance of all ECOs issued, managed, clearing and settled on a shared transparent energy accounting system. Mr. Khaghani and I first proposed an Energy Clearing Union in Tehran in 2008, and subsequently proposed a Gas Clearing Union to the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) in 2011. Note there is nothing new about circular clearing A>B>C>D>A of obligations. Such chain settlement routinely occurs during the North Sea Brent crude oil forward physical contract settlement process.

Perhaps now, 10 years on, such a Gas Clearing Union and Gas ECO funding offers a constructive solution to the current U.S./China dispute which Iran is very well placed to facilitate from the current isolated position. In doing so, Iran would not only achieve a Transition Through Gas to a low carbon economy but could also use ECOs to finance the reanimation of Iran's economy. Here I propose the creation of a distributed Iranian Energy Treasury through joint participation of Iran's Central Bank (as monetary authority) and energy complex.

I asked Mr. Khaghani how such an ambitious proposal should be implemented. "My approach as a scientist has always been through proof of concept 'pilot' projects. I recommend that these should be rapidly implemented on a small scale in rural Iranian locations which by suffering the highest legacy carbon fuel costs also offer the greatest returns from smart investment in renewable energy and energy efficiency," Khaghani remarked.

Since natural gas (CH4), once processed, is the same everywhere it is perfect as the basis of a transitional global means of exchange and funding. Mr. Khaghani and I have long believed that through a global Gas Clearing Union, the pricing of oil in dollars and gas against oil will give way to the pricing of oil and dollars in the intrinsic and stable energy value of natural gas.

It seems to me that there is sufficient time for such a simple but radical proposal for funding the transition to a low carbon economy to be presented to the COP26 event in Glasgow, Scotland, in November.

Chris Cookis University College London lecturer

# Definite policy

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — As Iran and the remaining parties to the tattered 2015 nuclear deal resumed their work on Tuesday, several press reports resurfaced that Iran and the U.S. could proceed with a step-by-step plan to revive the nuclear deal.

But these reports stood in contrast to the policy declared by high-level Iranian authorities that the nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), must be revived in one major step.

From the outset, there has been a wave of speculations on social media platforms over how the JCPOA would be revived. Some said the nuclear deal should be revived by convincing the United States to lift all of its sanctions on Iran and then encourage Iran to reverse its remedial nuclear measures while others speculated that a gradual process is needed to revitalize the JCPOA, one that would see both Iran and the U.S. taking simultaneous steps to gradually return to compliance with the JCPOA.

These speculations intensified over the past few weeks as Iran and the P4+1 (China, Russia, France, and the UK plus Germany) entered the stage of drafting an agreement on how Tehran and Washington would return to the JCPOA.

The Washington Post reported on Monday that Iran and the U.S. are moving toward what can be called a step-by-step plan to revive the JCPOA. Citing officials familiar with the Vienna talks, the American paper claimed, "both Iran and the Biden administration — which initially made a similar demand that Iran act first by returning to compliance with the original terms of the deal — are moving toward simultaneous, sequential steps."

It also noted that Iran wants all sanctions initially lifted as part of the agreement but reimposed by Trump, along



with an estimated 1,500 new measures his administration adopted as part of its "maximum pressure" campaign, to be removed.

Iran has made it clear that it wants all U.S. sanctions to be lifted but it said the lifting of the sanctions should be done all at once, thus ruling out any gradual or sequential steps.

The Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei has stated that Iran has a definite nuclear policy that will guide Iranian negotiators.

"The country's policy on the interaction with the JCPOA sides and on the nuclear deal itself has already been explicitly declared. This policy will not be violated in any way. It is a policy which has already been announced and which is adopted with everyone's agreement. It is not the case that this policy was an exception to other policies. Everyone has agreed to it," the Leader said in a televised speech on March 21.

"This policy is that the Americans should lift all sanctions. After that, we will verify. If the sanctions have been

lifted, we will return to our JCPOA commitments. We will return without any problem. This is a definite policy. We do not consider American promises to be valid. If they say that they will lift them on paper, this is of no use. What is necessary is action! They should lift the sanctions in practice. Subsequently, we will verify their statements to make sure that the sanctions have been lifted. Then, we will resume our commitments," he continued.

This position is of particular importance given the fact the Vienna nuclear deal talks have reached a point where the negotiators need to make decisions. Following the Tuesday meeting of the JCPOA Joint Commission, top Iranian nuclear negotiator Seyed Abbas Araghchi said negotiating teams will return to their capitals and then resume their work next week.

So it's quite possible that the Iranian team will brief high-level officials on the outcome of the recent rounds of the Vienna talks. Araghchi said the Iranian negotiating team reports on the

status of the talks to senior officials on a regular basis and that the fate of talks will be determined in Tehran.

But Tehran is clear about what wants. The Leader made it crystal clear that the U.S. must lift its sanctions first and then Iran will return to commitments after verifying the lifting of sanctions.

Therefore, the Iranian delegation is likely to return to Vienna next week with the determination that the definite policy outlined by the Leader should be implemented.

It's too early to say that this policy is going to lead the Vienna negotiation to the endgame, which is the lifting of the U.S. sanctions all at once. But indications from Vienna suggest that the talks may be moving toward that goal.

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

Following the Tuesday meeting, Araghchi said the remaining parties to the JCPOA have decided to establish a third expert-level group next week to discuss practical arrangements required to lift the U.S. sanctions and realize the U.S. return to the JCPOA.

However, the top nuclear negotiator warned that Iran will stop the Vienna talks if the process of discussions tilts toward bullying, bargaining, and wasting time.

Araghchi described the Tuesday talks as "difficult and challenging" but said they are moving forward.

During the meeting of the JCPOA Joint Commission, Araghchi said, the negotiators discussed the latest technical talks, preliminary drafts, and how to continue the talks.

## Iran rejects reports of 'temporary agreement,' says it only negotiates final step

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — A top Iranian nuclear negotiator leading Iran's negotiating team in Vienna has rejected the possibility of Iran and the remaining parties to the 2015 nuclear deal reaching a "temporary deal."

Seyed Abbas Araghchi, Iran's deputy foreign minister for political affairs, said the subject of reaching a temporary agreement has never been broached at the talks between Iran and the P4+1 (China, Russia, France, and the UK plus Germany).

He was responding to press reports in Western media outlets claiming that Iran and the P4+1 could soon reach a temporary agreement to revive the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"There is no discussion of a 'temporary agreement' or similar issues in the talks between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the P4 + 1," Araghchi said in a statement published on his Telegram Channel late on Monday night.

He also underlined that Iran is only negotiating a "final step" to lift U.S. sanctions. "The Islamic Republic of Iran only talks about the final step in lifting the cruel sanctions against the Iranian people, and rumors such as step-by-step plans or a temporary agreement are baseless," Araghchi said.

**"Iran will not be in a rush to get results"**

The chief Iranian negotiator reiterated the Leader of the Islamic Revolution's reiteration that the Vienna talks should not become draining or attritional.

"As the Leader reiterated, the Islamic Republic of Iran will never allow negotiations to become attritional. At the same time, it will not be in a rush to get the results. The talks should proceed accurately and protect the country's interests and definite positions," Araghchi continued.

He noted that the fate of the talks will be determined in Tehran. "Any decision on the process and outcome of the talks will be made in Tehran, and the negotiating team reports on the status of the talks to senior officials on an ongoing basis," he concluded.

Araghchi's remarks came a day before the JCPOA Joint Commission holds another round of talks on Tuesday. The European Union announced on Monday that the Joint Commission will resume its work on Tuesday.

"The Joint Commission will be chaired on behalf of EU High Representative Josep Borrell by the Deputy Secretary General/Political Director of the European External Action Service, Enrique Mora. It will be attended by representatives of China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom and Iran," the European Union said in a statement.

"Participants will take stock of the progress in the ongoing discussions on the prospect of a possible return of the United States to the JCPOA and on how to ensure the full and effective implementation of the JCPOA by all sides," the statement added.

Diplomats from Iran and the P4+1 are in the Austrian capital of Vienna to discuss ways of reviving the 2015 Iran nuclear deal. They have entered the stage of drafting a new agreement to revive the nuclear deal, according to the Russian envoy to the Vienna nuclear talks.

"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," Mikhail Ulyanov said on Twitter.

The tweet came two days after the top Iranian nuclear negotiator announced that the talks are leading to a "new understanding." Araghchi 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 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 European Union's top diplomat, Josep Borrell, also said on Monday he saw a willingness to save the nuclear deal.

"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 EU chief diplomat was quoted by Reuters as saying.

The Vienna talks are moving in the right direction, according to Saeed Khatibzadeh, the spokesman for

Iran's Foreign Ministry.

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."

He added, "As our delegation is not in Vienna for attritional talks, we tried to present our own texts and asked the other side to enter into common examples and texts immediately. The sooner this happens, the better we can think about the outcome. It's too early to think about it. We are now at a stage where discussions on difficult issues need to take place. We are not in a hurry. What is important is that we can serve the interests of the great people of Iran within the framework of the instructions of the Leader of the Revolution and the general policy of the system."

According to Khatibzadeh, Iran has expressed all its views decisively within the framework of the general policies of the system.

"Of course, there are difficult issues, and we think it will be easier if the U.S. government decides to distance itself from Trump's failed legacy and try to live up to its commitments," the spokesman pointed out.

Despite difficulties, Iran and the P4+1 seem to be moving toward "simultaneous, sequential steps," according to The Washington Post.

"Throughout the talks, Iranian officials have taken a hard public line, insisting the United States, having withdrawn from the deal, must take the first steps back into compliance. Iran wants all sanctions initially lifted as part of the agreement but reimposed by Trump, along with an estimated 1,500 new measures his administration adopted as part of its 'maximum pressure' campaign, to be removed," the Post said.

Citing officials familiar with the talks, the American paper claimed that both Iran and the Biden administration — which initially made a similar demand that Iran act first by returning to compliance with the original terms of the deal — are moving toward simultaneous, sequential steps.

However, Araghchi made it clear that Iran is only discussing a final step for the U.S. and Iran to return to full compliance with the nuclear deal.

## Iran supports Iraqi mediation between Tehran and Riyadh: ambassador

**→1** 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.

AFP also confirmed the talks, saying the official-level meetings aim to restore relations severed five years ago between Tehran and Riyadh. An Iraqi government official confirmed the talks to AFP, while a Western diplomat said he had been "briefed in advance" about the effort to "broker a

better relationship ... and decrease tensions."

Saudi Arabia severed diplomatic relations with Iran in January 2016 after Iranian protesters, enraged by the Saudi execution of prominent Shia cleric Sheikh Nimer 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.

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, on Monday 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."

While Iran stopped short of openly confirming or denying the Baghdad talks, Saudi state media denied these talks, indicating a Saudi unwillingness to publicize behind-the-scenes diplomatic efforts.

## SPORTS

### Mehdi Ghaedi, key player to Esteghlal attacking form

**SPORTS** **TEHRAN** — Esteghlal football team midfielder Mehdi Ghaedi has been key to the Iranian team's attacking form in the 2021 AFC Champions League group stage.



The Group C leader has been hugely impressive going forward, and its eight goals in picking up back-to-back wins is at least double the amount any other side has racked up. Key to that form has been attacking midfielder Ghaedi, the-afc.com wrote.

The 22-year-old bagged a brace against Al-Ahli Saudi in a game that saw him create five chances, before providing a beautiful assist against Al-Shorta for Mohammad Naderi to score.

The playmaker displayed his talents in the 2020 edition and is already looking even better this time round.

Two points separate the top two in Group C ahead of a meeting on Wednesday that Al-Duhail will surely consider 'must not lose'.

### Mohammad Jamshidi proud to represent Iran basketball

**SPORTS** **TEHRAN** — Mohammad Jamshidi and Iran are used to rolling over their opponents. They was clear when they beat their first opponents in the FIBA Asia Cup 2021 Qualifiers by an average margin of 44.5 points per game.

That's why it was a surprise when they found themselves struggling to ward off Saudi Arabia in a clash during the second window last November.

"We found them to be really tough team," Mohammad Jamshidi said in a recent interview with FIBA Media. "They are a really good team and they have many good players. We expected an easy game, but it didn't go like that and we had a close game."

"Respect to them as a basketball team and I think we'll have a tough game against them in the third window."

Iran will be facing Saudi Arabia one more time in June for the final window of the Asia Cup Qualifier with all qualification spots from Group E still up for grabs. The matchup between these two teams already have a long, intense history and the next time they play will only add to the fire of this rivalry.

"I think they are really dangerous in transition, especially on offense. They have two big centers who can really dominate the board for rebounds and I think this makes them dangerous."

For Jamshidi, "whatever it takes" to help Iran get a win is usually scoring. The sweet shooting forward currently leads the team with 15.3 points and has been consistent from the start.

"I think I'm a scorer and I can really play pick and roll and feed the other guy. That's what I can do in national team and also in my club right now. Coach and the other guys trust in me and give me the ball in the crucial moments when they need to score or create some offense. I think this is the most important part of my game."

"It's the highest honor for everybody to represent the country. Us as Iranians, we're proud of our country. We love our country and I think anybody playing for Iran will have much pride and honor that they can represent this country."

### Iran blind football team to play Russia in Kish Island

**SPORTS** **TEHRAN** — Iran 5-a-side football team will meet Russia in two friendly matches in May in Kish Island.

The Iranian team are preparing for the 2022 Asian Para Games in Hangzhou, China.

Iran blind football team became runners-up at the 2016 Paralympic Games.

"The two warm-up matches are an opportunity for us to know our talented players for the future," Iran coach Javad Felfeli said.

Football 5-a-side is played by athletes with a vision impairment. They must pass, tackle and shoot by relying on the sound of the ball and the voice of their guide.

### Cycling official Naseri chosen to officiate at 2020 Tokyo

**SPORTS** **TEHRAN** — World Cycling Union (UCI) has chosen Iranian international referee Majid Naseri to officiate in the 2020 Tokyo.

This is for the first time that an Iranian referee is chosen to judge in the Olympic Games' cycling competitions.

Naseri will officiate at the track cycling in the tournament.

The Tokyo 2020 Olympics are scheduled for July 23 to August 8, with the Paralympics due to follow between August 24 and September 5.

### Farhad Ghaemi joins Sepahan volleyball team

**SPORTS** **TEHRAN** — Sepahan volleyball club completed the signing of outside spiker Farhad Ghaemi on Monday.

Ghaemi, who announced his retirement from the national duty last month, has penned a one-year contract with the Iranian club.

Ghaemi has most recently played at Iranian side Haraz Amol. Sepahan have already signed Amir Ghafour, Masoud Gholami and Saman Faezi.

Sepahan, headed by Rahman Mohammadi Rad, are going to win a title in the Iran Super League for the first time ever.

## Thermal power plants' capacity to rise 69,000 MW by mid-June

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — As announced by the managing director of Iran's Thermal Power Plants Holding Company (TPPH), 69,000 megawatts (MW) new capacity of thermal power plants will enter the network by mid-June and after the end of the overhaul operations.

The overhaul operations of the power plants are now underway and efforts are being made to complete this before the peak load, Mohsen Tarzatab said on Tuesday.

He said there is a 60-day schedule to complete the overhaul operations in 582 units of 29 power plants.



As announced by the official, the efficiency of Iran's thermal power plants will reach 40 percent by the end of current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2022).

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

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

The official had announced last week that the efficiency of Iran's thermal power plants has reached a new record high of 39 percent for the first time in the history of the country's electricity industry.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## TEDPIX gains 2,000 points on Tuesday

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — After several days of decline, TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), rose 2,824 points to 1.219 million on Tuesday.

Over 5.614 billion securities worth 45.043 trillion rials (about \$1.072 billion) were traded at the TSE on Tuesday.

The first market's index gained 3,042 points, and the second market's index rose 2,341 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.



# Iran joins world's top 5 steam turbine builders

→ Earlier in March, the managing director of Iran's MAPNA Group, which is the first and leading West Asia-based general contractor of thermal power plants in the MENA region, said that Iran was going to become an exporter of new classes of gas turbines in near future.

Speaking on the sidelines of the signing ceremony of a deal for manufacturing an MGT-75 gas turbine for Iran's Thermal Power Plant Holding (TPPH) on March 14, Abbas Ali-Abadi said: "Iran now has the knowledge and technology to design and manufacture a variety of new gas turbines on a global scale." "We will present this turbine [MGT-75] in the global market soon and it will undoubtedly be well received," Ali-Abadi added.

Mentioning some of the significant features of the mentioned turbine, the official said that the power plants that use these new turbines will have very low water consumption so that the water consumption in such power plants would be reduced to one-tenth.

According to the official, the new turbines can also use hydrogen as an alternative fuel in the regions where pollution is an issue.

"This product is made completely inside



the country using local knowledge and technology and it is definitely cheaper than foreign

models," Ali-Abadi said.

He further noted that the MGT-75 tur-

bine has been designed according to the requirements of the country's power network and can be used for the development of the network in the future.

The MGT-75 turbine has improved efficiency by 60 percent over the previous designs and increased output capacity to 220 megawatts, he noted.

This turbine will impose the least fluctuation on the electricity network while improving the efficiency of the country's thermal power plants, according to the head of MAPNA Group.

As Iran's top engineering and energy enterprise, MAPNA had previously manufactured E-class and F-class turbines such as MGT-70.

The mentioned turbines have been used in domestic power stations as well as major power projects in neighboring countries like Iraq.

Iran used to import such pieces of equipment from foreign sources such as Germany's Siemens. And now enjoying such technology, the country is among the world's top manufacturers of power plants with high efficiency.

## Over \$30b worth of state-owned properties privatized in a year

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN- Iranian Finance and Economic Affairs Ministry announced that over 1.27 quadrillion rials (about \$30.2 billion) worth of government properties and assets have been transferred to the private sector during the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20), IRIB reported.

Speaking in a parliament open session on Tuesday, Farhad Dejjasand said during the previous year 350 trillion rials (about \$8.33 billion) of the revenues earned from the privatization program was directly injected into the treasury of which 320 trillion rials (about \$7.6 billion) was earned from offering the state-owned companies' shares through exchange-traded funds (ETFs).

Dejjasand has previously announced that offering the shares of state-owned companies, which are planned to be privatized, will be sped up.

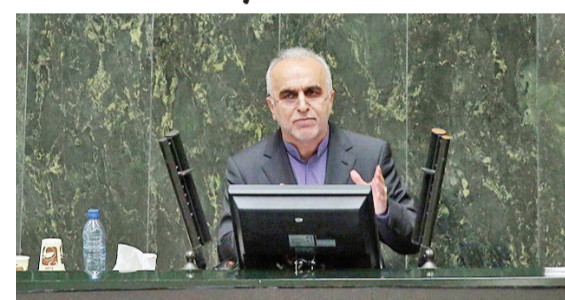
He has also said that the government should amend its policies and methods of setting the prices and transferring

the shares in the process of privatization.

In Iran, the implementation of the privatization plan aimed at more productivity, investment making, job creation, promotion of trade balance, more competition in the domestic economy, and reducing financial and management burden on the government has been under the spotlight over the past decade.

The law on the implementation of the general policies of Article 44 of Iran's Constitution on privatizing state-owned companies was declared in 2006 in a bid to downsize the government and promote the private sector's role in the national economy.

The government envisioned a large privatization program in the Fifth Five-Year National Development Plan (2010-2015), aiming to privatize about 20 percent of the state-owned firms each year. Under the present interpretation of Article 44, some state-owned companies have been privatized to reduce their financial burden on the country's



budget and also increase their productivity.

Although downsizing the government has been on the agenda for many years, but a number of factors have been hindering the privatization trend in the country, among them, the government's high interference in the management of the transferred companies is a challenging one.

## Electricity supplied to 62 villages in 16 provinces

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — The projects for supplying electricity to 62 villages in 16 provinces were inaugurated by Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian in a ceremony on Tuesday.

The projects were inaugurated in the framework of the ministry's "A-B-Iran" program in Ardebil, Ilam, East Azarbaijan, West Azarbaijan, Kerman, North Khorasan, South Khorasan, Khorasan Razavi, Khuzestan, Sistan-Baluchestan, Mazandaran, Qazvin, Kermanshah, Kohgiluyeh-Boyer-Ahmad, Lorestan and Yazd provinces.

Ardakanian had announced last month that electricity will be supplied to the villages with less than 10 families in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 20).

The minister said that power supply to

these villages and also supplying electricity to the nomadic areas through mobile solar panels are among the major priorities of the ministry's A-B-Iran program.

A-B-Iran program (the acronyms A and B stand for water and electricity in Persian) was initiated in the Iranian calendar year 1398 (ended on March 19, 2020), during which the minister made several trips to various provinces for inaugurating over 220 major projects with a total investment of 335.6 trillion rials (about \$7.99 billion).

Villages are often mentioned as some keys to the development of countries, and the allocation of a proper amount of budget to rural development always brings fruitful economic results.

In Iran, where villages account for gen-

erating 20-23 percent of the value added in the country, development of rural areas has been always a top agenda of the governments' activities.

The sustainable economic, social, and cultural development of the villages is one of the major priorities of the current government, and many projects implemented and underway in this regard have led to outstanding development in the rural regions.

It is while the sanctions have created many limitations and difficulties for the Iranian economy in recent years.

One of the sectors with noticeable achievements in this field is gas supplying, while the number of villages supplied with natural gas has doubled during the past eight years since the current government started

its activity.

The current government has paid 290 trillion rials (about \$6.904 billion) for supplying gas to the rural areas.

It should be noted that supplying gas to the villages has been a big help for the development of infrastructures, the establishment of complementary industries, and job creation in these areas.

The supply of drinking water to the villages has been also expedited by the current government, especially since the Iranian calendar year 1398 (March 2019-March 2020).

Under the framework of a program titled A-B-Iran, the Energy Ministry has inaugurated many projects to supply drinking water to the rural areas.

## Bulgarian companies eager for entering Iranian market

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — Bulgaria's Ambassador to Tehran Nikolina Kuneva in a meeting with the Head of Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mining and Agriculture (TCCIMA) Masoud Khansari said her country's companies are eager for cooperation with their Iranian counterparts.

In the meeting held on Monday at the place of TCCIMA, the two sides stressed the need for the expansion of mutual trade ties, the TCCIMA portal reported.

Speaking in the meeting, Khansari put the two countries' annual trade value at \$110 million, saying that this figure is mostly related to the imports of Iran from the European country.

Noting that the development of economic relations with Bulgaria is important for Iran, the official continued: "Cooperation in the field of industry and especially in transportation can be an incentive to develop relations between the two countries."

According to Khansari cooperation between the private



Bulgaria's Ambassador to Tehran Nikolina Kuneva (3rd R) meets with TCCIMA Head Masoud Khansari (3rd L) in Tehran on Monday.

sectors of the two countries would lead to the expansion of trade ties.

He also pointed to the technical and engineering services as one of the suitable fields of cooperation saying: "Due to the connections that the Tehran Chamber of Commerce has with the engineering system of Tehran province, it can invite reputable Iranian companies in this field to participate in construction projects in Bulgaria or to transfer technical and engineering experiences to the country."

Kuneva for her part underlined the expansion of cooperation between the two sides' private sectors as a prerequisite for increasing and diversifying the two countries' trade and suggested holding video conferences between the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the TCCIMA for acquaintance and exchange of views between the two sides.

She said that the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry is ready to introduce Bulgarian companies that are interested in cooperating with Iranian companies during these video conferences.

## Iran launches plan to produce 14m cellphones, tablets in 5 years

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — Iran's Deputy Minister of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Sattar Hashemi has announced the launch of a five-year plan for the domestic production of 14 million cellphone and tablets.

According to Hashemi, the mentioned program is going to create job opportunities for over 43,000 people and save the country over \$1 billion during the said five years, IRNA reported.

Expressing his ministry's readiness for the full support of the country's cellphone and tablet manufacturers, the official invited them to participate in the mentioned plan.

He noted that the said program is aimed at increasing the share of domestic products in the country's cellphone market in line with



the motto of the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 20) which has been named the year of "Production: Support and the Elimination of Obstacles" by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Seyed Ali Khamenei.

Improving the share of the digital economy, promoting the use of new communica-

tion tools, development of communication justice, testing and evaluation of products, financing of production units and ultimately achieving a target for producing 20 percent of the smartphones needed in the country by domestic producers are mentioned as the main goals of the said program.

In this regard, the ICT ministry has been pursuing a comprehensive support program in cooperation with relevant institutions and organizations, including the National Planning and Budget Organization (PBO), the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade, the National Virtual Space Center, and the private sector companies active in the production and import of smartphones, the official said.

According to Hashemi, with the partici-

ipation of local operators and bundling of communication services on certain SIM cards designed for the domestically-produced phones and the provision of installment sale programs for consumers, a good movement has also been started in the demand side to achieve the goals set for gaining the market share.

Iranian mobile phone traders imported 15.8 million smartphones over the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20), according to the Iranian Association of Cellphones, Tablet, and Accessories Importers.

Back in January, the spokesman of the Iranian Association of Cellphone, Tablet, and Accessories Importers had announced that the price of cellphones had dropped 12-20 percent in domestic markets.

# China's Belt and Road Initiative can change regional balance: Turkish expert

TEHRAN — A Turkish expert in international relations says that China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) can change the regional balance in West Asia and other parts of the world, including South Asia and Africa.

"This project has the potential to change the regional balance not only of the Middle East (West Asia) but also other parts of the world, from South Asia to Africa, with the new trading routes it creates," Oral Toga tells the Tehran Times.

The BRI is emerging as a vital lynchpin in China's efforts to establish a maritime and continental zone of activity in Asia.

Experts believe that the BRI project will change economic and strategic landscape in the region and beyond.

"It is clear that this initiative and Chinese investments will change the political calculus and economic-development landscape of the Middle East (West Asia) and elsewhere," Toga says.

Following is the text of the interview:  
**How do you assess Iran-Turkey relations? Some experts point to two dimensions: friendship and rivalry. How could two countries succeed in managing the tensions and raise cooperation despite disputes?**

I also agree with the dynamic of "friendship and rivalry". They can regularly compartmentalize policy issues meaning both countries consider the subjects of dispute between them separately from the issues with which they can cooperate. I think this is something that must be taken into account and examined.

After the Islamic Revolution, many people thought that the relations between Turkey and Iran would fall victim to ideological conflict, but the opposite happened. Turkey immediately recognized the Islamic Republic as a state and has consistently refused to join the embargos on Iran. On the other hand, while the trade volume between both countries was less than one billion dollars in 1980, despite all the harsh conditions of the Iran-Iraq War, it increased to two and a half-billion dollars by 1985. Of course, a number of political issues did arise during the Iran-Iraq War period: Turkey's operations in Northern Iraq, Iranian leaders' comments about the headscarf issue in Turkey, and Iranian leaders refusing to pay a visit to Anitkabir (Ataturk's mausoleum), etc. However, these problems have never prevented a mutually beneficial relationship between the two countries. Always have, always will.

Furthermore, if we ignore some exceptional groups in both countries, the people of both countries are curious about each other; they are also interconnected in terms of history, culture, and languages. While Iranians watch Turkish series, Iranian films are also trendy in Turkey. Both countries' people learn each other's language, and many vloggers in Turkey come to visit Iran and make vlogs about the country, which have become quite



**"Iran's influence in countries with high geopolitical importance, such as Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, will facilitate China's implementation of its policies... in the future."**

popular among Turks. In fact, many people want to visit Iran. And the same applies vice versa: many people in Iran have a particular interest in cities such as Istanbul, Antalya, Konya and Izmir, and Turkey is a popular destination for Iranians during Nowruz. These types of exchanges have been and remain crucial for Turkish-Iranian relations, as their peoples discover and learn about their commonalities rather than be shrouded in uninformed prejudices. After all, "people are hostile towards what they do not know or cannot understand."

**Given China's massive Belt and Road Initiative, how can China impact regional balance in West Asia?**

The scope and enormity of the project is an indisputable fact. This project has the potential to change the regional balance not only of the Middle East (West Asia) but also other parts of the world, from South Asia to Africa, with the new trading routes it creates. For example, Central Asian countries are historically in Russia's sphere of interest, and Russia will not welcome China's influence which is increasing with this initiative. Likewise, most of the financing of the "Renaissance Dam", one of the most critical projects of Ethiopia, is provided by Chinese banks. As is known, this dam is building on the Nile River, and Egypt sees it as a threat to its national interests. As a result, it is

**"I don't think this rapprochement (between Israel, the UAE, Greece, and Cyprus) will be long-lasting because no equation that excludes Turkey from the region has been successful in the past."**

clear that this initiative and Chinese investments will change the political calculus and economic-development landscape of the Middle East (West Asia) and elsewhere.

**Do you think that Turkey prioritizes economic ties with Asian countries such as Iran, China, and Iraq? Is there a possibility of forming a new economic bloc in the region?**

Well, if one looks at the data, it is clear that countries in the European Union, notably Germany and the UK, still dominate Turkey's trade relations. However, recent political developments have turned Turkey's gaze increasingly towards Asia, and Iraq has long been one of Turkey's top trading partners. And Turkey is a "trading nation" by nature. Unlike its neighbors, Turkey does not have rich natural gas and oil reserves. Therefore, trading and tourism have an essential economic role, and these require a solid trading network and good relations. Thus, Turkey has been working with all countries to maintain good relations without compromising its own national interest and dignity. It endeavors to build an economic model that prioritizes production. So, from this point of view, the answer is "maybe", it is possible Turkey will come to prioritize economic relations with Asian economies, especially as China's Belt and Road Initiative develops further and political relations with the West continue to become strained.

The economic bloc that you mentioned was previously tested under the name of RCD (Regional Cooperation for Development) in 1964 and then under ECO (Economic Cooperation Organization) in 1985. These attempts, which have been experienced in the past, may well be tried in the future.

**How do you see the 25-year comprehensive strategic partnership between Iran and China? Is China a reliable partner when it comes to economic ties?**

As you know, the text that was signed was not an agreement, per se, with a great deal of specificity but rather a memorandum of understanding. For the agreement itself, we have to wait for the new government that will come after the June election in Iran. It is evident that this agreement will contribute to Beijing's economic vision for the region and Iran's strategic political calculus in cultivating closer ties with China. Besides, when we consider the overlapping attitudes of Iran and China regarding the developments in the Middle East (West Asia), it will also pave the way for the cooperation of both countries. Iran's influence in countries with high geopolitical importance, such as Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, will facilitate China's implementation of its policies within these areas in the future. Of course, Iran will also benefit, economically and politically, from greater engagement with China, but it will need to ensure that Chinese investment is balanced across various sectors within the Iranian economy that is critical to its development, not just oil and gas so that trade relations are mutually beneficial. But since there are still uncertainties, it is too early to make any judgments.

**What is Turkey's position towards rapprochement between Israel, the UAE, Greece, and Cyprus?**

Turkey follows these developments very closely. I don't think this rapprochement will be long-lasting because no equation that excludes Turkey from the region has been successful in the past. The clearest example of this, and one that still weighs heavy on the collective Turkish mindset, is the treaty of Sevres, which was tried to be implemented despite the Turkish people, and its aftermath.

Briefly, I can say that it is not reasonable to ignore a country with an 85 million population and a 1,577 km coastline in the Mediterranean. All of these countries will need to invest in their respective and joint relations with Turkey at some point. Nevertheless, Turkey has a better hand. The Maritime Boundary Deal and good relations with Libya constitute a barrier to Greece. Additionally, the Turkish defense industry has developed significantly. Today, Turkey produces its own warships, submarines, and missiles. Also, it is almost eight times bigger than Greece in terms of human resources. All in all, Turkey has the ability to defend its rights both legally and in the field.

## MP says 60% enrichment shows Iran's nuclear technology capacity

→ 1 On the other hand, since this attack took place on a site that is operating under the nuclear safeguard regime, it can be classified as a "crime against humanity". Under international law, military action against these sites is prohibited because radioactive leaks can have devastating effects on people.

Therefore, this is a criminal act. Although no leakage of radioactive has occurred on the site, Iran will pursue this issue at the international bodies due to the possible consequences of this sabotage operation. The Iranian foreign minister has written a letter to the UN secretary general. There is evidence that the Zionist regime was involved in this action.

**Iranian officials have accused Israel of the sabotage operation in Natanz. Some believe that enriching uranium to 60% is a response to the sabotage. What is your view?**

According to the act of "Strategic Action to Lift the Sanctions and Protect the Interests of the Iranian Nation," the Atomic Energy Organization is assigned to keep on enriching uranium at any level to meet the peaceful needs of the country. To that end, while our country needs molybdenum to supply some radiopharmaceuticals, producing this substance requires enrichment to 60%.

Under these circumstances, we made a political decision to start producing the molybdenum, which is a must for Iran at this time. For this reason, we gave a clear answer to the enemies that the capability of the Islamic Republic is not limited, and even after the sabotage operation, the enrichment at the Natanz site did not stop at all.

Due to the power outage, a number of centrifuges



ran into problems that can be recovered.

However, the Islamic Republic is determined to continue this path with more power and replace the damaged centrifuges with more advanced ones.

With the start of enrichment to 60%, Iran shows that its capacity for nuclear knowledge is too strong to be stopped by sabotage, and that Iran has the ability to rely on indigenous knowledge to meet its needs.

**The Natanz incident took place in the midst of nuclear deal talks between Iran and the P4 +1 group in Vienna. The Iranian foreign minister said the incident was aimed at weakening Iran's negotiating position. Do you think the incident can negatively affect the nuclear deal talks in Vienna? Given that this incident took place after the Mossad chief visited the United States and at the same day that the American secretary of**

**defense visited Israel, do you think the United States was also involved in the Natanz incident?**

Some analysts point to the role of the United States in the Natanz incident. In our view, the reactions of Western countries to the Natanz incident have not been constructive. Instead of worrying about sabotage at a nuclear site, European countries have expressed concern about Iran's 60% enrichment for radiopharmaceutical production. This shows a double standard in the European behavior, which is quite disappointing.

Despite claiming that the policy of maximum pressure on Iran has failed, the United States has refused to condemn the Israeli operation and is trying to use it as a political card against Iran, but this dream will never come true.

There are reports about the coordination of the Zionist regime and the United States, but we have not yet seen an official position from them, although we do not allow the Americans to take advantage of the Israeli sabotages in the political negotiations.

Therefore, we are completely distrustful of the intention of the United States to return to its commitments. That is why we will not lose our cards on the table until the United States returns to its (nuclear deal) commitments. We are waiting for them to return to their commitments first and to lift the sanctions completely.

Iran will then conduct a thorough verification of the lifting of sanctions before a return to its obligations under the JCPOA to demonstrate its commitment to international agreements. Otherwise, the U.S. proposals are not acceptable to us. But we feel that the Biden administration, despite giving different slogans, still intends to follow Trump's policies in the face of Iran.

## U.S. cities on alert as anti-racism protests rage ahead of Chauvin murder trial verdict

→ 1 At a news briefing, Walz said "systemic changes" were necessary to protect Black Americans but said, "We cannot allow civil unrest to descend into chaos. We must protect life and property."

Minneapolis has been on high alert amid protests over the fatal police shooting of a Black man in Brooklyn Center, a Minneapolis suburb, on April 11 and over the Chauvin trial verdict.

## Xi says world needs justice, not hegemony in veiled reference to U.S.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has called for a fairer world order in the face of the West's unilateralism, warning hegemonic countries against "bossing others around."

Speaking at the annual Boao Forum for Asia on Tuesday, Xi said that "the future destiny of the world should be decided by all countries."

"One or a few countries shouldn't impose their rules on others, and the world shouldn't be led on by the unilateralism of a few countries," Xi said.

Without singling out the U.S., the Chinese president warned against building barriers that are against market principles.

"Attempts to erect walls or decouple run counter to the law of economics and market principles. They would hurt others' interests without benefiting oneself," Xi stated, in a veiled reference to Washington's efforts to reduce dependence on Chinese supply chains and curb export of products such as advanced computer chips to China.

## Chad President Idriss Deby has died

Chad's newly re-elected President Idriss Deby has died of injuries suffered on the frontline while fighting rebels in the north of the Sahel country, an army spokesman said on Tuesday.

Deby, 68, "has just breathed his last defending the sovereign nation on the battlefield" over the weekend, army spokesman General Azem Bermandou Agouna said in a statement read out on state television.

General Mahamat Kaka, the son of the deceased Chadian leader, is named interim head of state, the army spokesman said.

## Diaz-Canel becomes Cuba's Communist Party chief

Cuba's ruling Communist Party has elected President Miguel Diaz-Canel to replace Raul Castro as its leader -- the most powerful position in the Caribbean island nation, that was held by the Castro brothers for six decades.

Diaz-Canel was elected as the Communist Party's first secretary on the final day of the party's 8th congress on Monday.

The 60-year-old Diaz-Canel, who already succeeded Castro as president in 2018, has emphasized continuity since he took office and is expected to retain Cuba's one-party socialist system.

"Comrade Raul ... will be consulted on the most important strategic decisions of greatest weight for the destiny of our nation. He will always be present," Diaz-Canel told hundreds of delegates in his first speech as party chief.

Castro would also continue to dispense guidance and "alerts in the face of any error or deficiency," he added.

## New constitution sole way out of crisis in protest-hit Bahrain: Sheikh Qassim

Bahrain's most prominent cleric Ayatollah Sheikh Isa Qassim says drawing up a new constitution is the only way out of the political crisis in the protest-hit kingdom, urging the regime in Manama to pursue an agreement with the Bahraini opposition instead of increasingly suppressing the dissidents.

"Since the people do not find anything to persuade themselves to stop their protest movement and are witnessing a surge in the [regime's] policy of repression, dictatorship and marginalization, they are pressing ahead with their uprising, whatever the cost may be," Sheikh Qassim said in a statement released on Monday and carried by the Bahrain Mirror news website.

"There would be no way out of the current situation unless the government reaches an agreement with the opposition to draw up a new constitution and found relevant institutions so as to protect the citizens' rights and recognize their sovereign position in the country's politics," the senior cleric pointed out.

## Resistance News

### Israeli forces carry out training raids on cells of Hamas prisoners

INTERNATIONAL TEHRAN— Israeli prison forces on Tuesday morning carried out provocative simulated raids on cells of Hamas prisoners in the Ofer jail.

According to Asra Media Office, prison forces violently stormed sections of the Ofer jail where Hamas prisoners are held and carried out drills inside them.

Consequently, such practice provoked tension inside the jail and raised the ire of the prisoners, who may respond by taking protest steps.

Asra Media quoted the Captive Movement in Israeli jails as saying that what happened in the morning in the Ofer jail was "a blatant violation of the inviolability of the holy month of Ramadan and an assault on the prisoners."

The Palestinian prisoners in the Ofer jail are exposed to systematic suppression and maltreatment by Israeli jailers and recently they considered staging a mass hunger strike after their talks with the prison administration failed to improve their incarceration conditions.

## Saudi female activist wins top Europe rights award

Prominent Saudi female activist Loujain al-Hathloul has been awarded a high-profile European prize owing to her campaigns for women's human rights in the ultra-con-

servative kingdom.

Hathloul was announced on Monday as the winner of the Vaclav Havel Human Rights Prize in recognition of her fight for women's

rights in Saudi Arabia, including her efforts to end a ban on women's driving.

According to Press TV, named after the former Czech dissident and later presi-

dent, the prize is awarded annually for civil society action in defense of human rights by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE).

## Popular souvenirs to buy while visiting Iran

PART 3

**TOURISM** 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.

### Mat Weaving

Mat Weaving (mat plaiting) refers to the weaving of plant (cellulose) fibers by hand and simple tools to create products like ground cloth, table cloth, baskets, utensils, etc. This traditional art includes weaving other materials, too (such as bamboo, Morvar, wand, etc.). Chigh Weaving is also a subset of mat weaving where wool threads are also used along with the plant fibers to create traditional designs and patterns.

### Wheat Stalk Muharaq

Wheat Stalk Muharaq (burning) includes cutting moist wheat stalks, heating them to change their color and form, and pasting them on a special background. An artist in this field must be competent in providing and providing what stalk, cutting them, dyeing them, pasting the background cloth, heating, creating embossed patterns, etc.

### Chiqbafi

Making mat products using Chiq technique for mat and winding colored fibers taken from animal wool (goat and sheep) around them is called Chiqbafi.

### Sea Handicrafts



Cutting and making various items like necklace, bracelet, tableau, frame, etc. from various seashells. Seashell artist must be familiar with seashell and cutting it to create decorative and practical items.

### Glassblowing

Glassblowing is a traditional glassforming technique that involves inflating molten glass (1260°C) into a bubble with the aid of a blowpipe and simple tools like scissors, pliers, etc. Then the glass is put in Garmkhaneh (warm room) for 24 hours to cool down slowly. A skillful glassblower can

shape the items without using any cast.

### Glass Cutting

Glass Cutting using small electromotor that rotate a disk and the artist can cut the glass by special stones. The speed of the cutting disks is regulated according to the type of cut and the deeper the required cut is, the higher speed would be needed.

### Glass Fusing

Glass Fusing refers to the skill of cutting colored glasses and fusing them to other pieces of glass, without using any glue. The glass is put in electric furnace till the film of the pieces is loosen and fused together. Then the product is cooled and installed in place.

### Namadmali

Namadmali (making felt) refers to the process of making a cloth that is produced completely natural by rubbing wool along with water and soap. As a result, the small fibers of the wool are woven together.

### Traditional Padlock Making

This art major refers to making various types of padlocks (mostly traditional ones with special appearances) using iron or copper by hand and smithery tools.

### Zomood-gari

Zomood-gari refers to a part of products made by traditional blacksmiths and includes door and window fittings. In other words, Zomood-gari is the profession of making metal fittings for traditional doors and windows. The most common material for Zomood-gari is iron.

### Lithography

Lithography (stone carving) is the art of carving different designs on stone and cutting it to use in architecture and making various items. In Persian it is called "stone cutting" and refers to any work on stone.

### Lapidary

Cutting precious stones and semi-precious stones (lapidary) is a practical handicraft in Iran. Precious stones and semi-precious stones refer to some stones such as Jade, Amatis, Agate, Turquoise, Emerald, etc. These stones are cut using a special electric machine. After polishing the stone, it is set on golden or silver pedals to be used as ring, earring, necklace, etc. Some artist cut the stones to be used in utensils, decorative items.

### Silk Weaving

Silk Weaving refers to the skill of weaving thin silk fabrics using raw or un-colored silk by a special traditional weaving machine. Silk weaver is a person who can recognize raw silk, dyeing the threads, wrapping, and weaving simple silk fabrics.

### Twig Weaving

The art of weaving willow twigs (called Arghavan or Tarakeh in Persian) is a handicraft profession in Iran. The artists use small and thin twigs called Morvar and weave them together to create baskets, utensils, trays, etc. the hubs for this art have been Gilan, Hamedan, Isfahan, Khuzestan, and Sistan and Baloochestan.

### Towel Weaving

Towel Weaving is one of the traditional handicrafts in Iran. The ingredients include cotton or silk threads colored using herbal dyes. The practical products for this fabric include towel, scarf, shawl, dress, etc. Towel Weaving has been popular in Khorasan.

### Chogha Weaving

Chogha is a long, sleeveless coat made of wool, worn by nomads and shepherds on their clothes like a cloak. Chogha is mostly in black and white, and Chogha-weaving is a handicraft art in Khuzestan Province.

### Charoogh Weaving

Charoogh Weaving refers to the art of weaving special footwear that is mostly made of leather. The footwear has special lashes, twisted around the shin. Charoogh is one of North Khorasan Handicrafts and is mostly woven in Qoochan.

# UNESCO to assess Iran's "land of caravanserais" for world heritage

→ 1 "They are the foundations of tourism industry development in the country," Mehr quoted Talebian as saying.

"Among the properties are some caravanserais located in Semnan province."

The case for Bastam and Kharaghan includes the complex of Sheikh Bayazid Bastami, the chief mosque, the towering dome of Kashaneh, and a part of the old wall of the city. The complex of Sheikh Bayazid Bastami comprises the grave of Sheikh Bayazid Bastami, one of the five elevated Sufis of the world. For the same reason, from the 19th century onward, several important properties have been constructed around it. The oldest property of the complex dates back to the 8th and 9th centuries CE.

Authenticity and integrity have been kept for one thousand years. Scientifically, the properties have been confirmed through excavations and renovations. The complex of Sheikh Bayazid Bastami can be compared with other religious complexes in the Islamic world but its remarkable issue is that it has had a regular trend of development through one thousand years.

In the file submitted to UNESCO, there are 25 caravanserais, selected from hundreds of caravanserais from all over Iran.

As Iran historically is located between



the main ancient civilizations, the historical roads are playing a critical role in Persian civilization. From the beginning of history to the current time, the role of Iran as a bridge has encouraged the rulers and people to always care about roads and related structures as one of the main financial income resources. For

example, Silk Road is one of these long-lasting corridors which played an important role in the Persian Empire during history.

The historical roads have had several elements related to their functions. Bridges, checkpoints, castles, bazaars, and caravanserais as the main element of the historical

road in Iran, were not only a simple place for travelers to rest and keeping safe their belongs, also were a meeting point for travelers, merchants, scientists, and many other scholars who wanted to exchange knowledge and ideas, as well as discover new civilizations.

Caravanserais are usually a place that provides safety for Caravans and travelers against natural risks like rain, snow, storms, and floods, or danger of robbers on the roads. That's why the structure of caravanserais is like a castle and good fortified. From a simple enclosure building at the first prototypes to the highly decorated ones in the middle centuries or the very fortified types of it, are the evidence of progress, improvement, and evolution of this kind of buildings.

The most characteristic element of Persian caravanserai is the central courtyard, this design is very functional and it's the result of evolution. The central court allows the best form of fortification and provides four rows of rooms around the yard. On the back of the rooms, there are four halls for animals and stores.

Caravanserais are from unique examples of Iranian architecture in each historical period and in different parts of Iran, significant examples have remained which can be considered as architectural masterpieces.

## 324 eco-lodge units come on stream in Kerman

**TOURISM** TEHRAN – The director general of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department of Kerman province has said 324 eco-lodge units have been inaugurated in this province until the end of the past Iranian calendar year (March 19).

In an interview with IRNA on Tuesday, Fereydoun Fa'ali added: "Last year, nine eco-lodge units were inaugurated, increasing the accommodation capacity of Kerman province. Also, 10 agreements in principle were issued to launch eco-lodge units."

Referring to the efforts made to improve the quality of ecotourism services in the province, the official went on to say: "A short-term tourism course was held attended by 30 persons to empower local communities."

"Meanwhile, seven courses for the empowerment of tourism

workers and five short-term tourism courses were held, in which 205 and 95 managers and employees of tourism facilities in this province attended, respectively", he continued.

Building two hotels and an apartment hotel was one of the most important activities of the department in the last year, he said.

"Moreover, 122,496 people visited tourist attractions of this province last year, of whom 3,434 were foreign tourists. The tourism industry has suffered a lot from the coronavirus, however, during the last year we tried to support the tourism sector against the damage caused by the pandemic.

With seven world-registered monuments, 700 national monuments, and thousands of historical and natural attractions Kerman province is one of the important tourist destinations in the country.



## 55 properties in East Azarbaijan added to cultural heritage list

**HERITAGE** TEHRAN – In the past Iranian calendar year (ended March 19) a total of 55 historical, cultural and natural properties in the northwestern East Azarbaijan province were added to the national heritage list.

Protection of historical monuments and buildings is one of the needs of different countries today to support the identity and culture of tomorrow, and East Azarbaijan, with its history of several thousand years, natural, human and political geography and culture is a forerunner in this field," ISNA quoted Ahmad Hamzehzadeh, director general of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department of East Azarbaijan, as saying.

Stating that this department had put the restoration, protection, reconstruction, and organization of 34 valuable and historical monuments of the province on the agenda during the last year, went on to say: "In order to achieve



the goals of protection and preservation of historical buildings, this general administration made conservation, restoration, reconstruction and excavation of 34 works, including excavation, restoration, and organization of "Rab-e Rashidi Historical Complex", "Hassan Padshah Complex", "Chahar Menar Tomb" and "Tabriz Historical Bazaar" as well as renovation and

organization of Sheikh Shahabuddin Ahari Complex its priority."

He announced documenting the tombstones of the Islamic period of Ahari city and collecting them in the historical monument of Qasem Khan Ahari and also documenting the tombstones of the Islamic period of Varzeqan city and collecting them in the historical monument of Amir Arshad in order to set up a stone museum.

The official said that one of the most important and effective measures in preserving historical and cultural monuments is their registration in the list of national monuments, noting: "During the last year, it has nationally registered its historical and natural works, of which 17 registered works belong to historical monuments (immovable works), 11 works belong to movable works, 13 natural works, 14 spiritual works, and in the field of historical monuments, it has also done demarcation for

17 works.

Currently, over 85 handicrafts fields are being practiced by 14,000 artisans and crafters across the province.

Capital of East Azarbaijan province, Tabriz, which is well-soaked in history and culture for millennia, embraces several historical and religious sites, including Jameh Mosque of Tabriz and Arg of Tabriz, and UNESCO-registered Tabriz Historic Bazaar Complex to name a few.

The ancient city was declared a world craft city of carpet weaving by the World Craft in 2016. It also bore the title of 2018 Islamic Tourism Capital.

Tabriz became the capital of the Mongol Il-Khan Mahmud Gazan (1295-1304) and his successor. Timur (Tamerlane), a Turkic conqueror, took it in 1392. Some decades later the Kara Koyunlu Turkmen made it their capital, it was when the famous Blue Mosque was built in Tabriz.

## Gilan's handicraft artisans provided with \$360,000 in loans

**TOURISM** TEHRAN – The deputy director of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department of Gilan Province announced that a total of 145 billion rials in loans were paid to the handicraft artisans in the last Iranian year (ended March 19).

The facilities were paid to 1,467 artisans and craftsmen in the field of handicrafts, Farzad Rashidi highlighted.

"Last year, due to the outbreak of coronavirus and the impact of the disease on employment, the facilities were provided in the form of job creation packages which created jobs for 1,546 persons."

Last year, deputy tourism minister Pouya Mahmoudian noted that due to the outbreak of coronavirus, official exports of handicrafts experienced a steep decline.

"Some 295 fields of handicrafts are currently practiced across Iran with more than two million people engaging, majority of whom are women... Handicrafts also play an



important role in the economy in our rural villages," she said.

Over the past couple of years, dozens of high-quality Iranian handicrafts have been honored with the UNESCO Seal of Excellence. With 14 entries, Iran ranks first globally for the

number of cities and villages registered by the World Crafts Council, as China with seven entries, Chile with four, and India with three ones come next. In late January, the cities of Shiraz, Malayer, and Zanjan and the village of Qasemabad were designated by the WCC-Asia Pacific Region, putting Iran's number of world crafts cities and villages from ten to 14.

Iran exported \$523 million worth of handicrafts during the past calendar year 1398 (ended March 19, 2020). Of the figure, some \$273 million worth of handicrafts were exported officially through customs, and about \$250 million was earned via suitcase trade (allowed for customs-free and tax-free transfer) through various provinces, according to data provided by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts. Ceramics, pottery vessels, handwoven cloths as well as personal ornaments with precious and semi-precious gemstones are traditionally exported to Iraq, Afghanistan, Germany, the U.S., the UK, and other countries.

## Some \$2m paid to support handicraft sector in West Azarbaijan

**HERITAGE** TEHRAN – The director general of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department of West Azarbaijan province has said that 8 billion rials (some \$2 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) in loans were paid to handicraft artisans of the province in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended March 19).

Jalil Jabbari told Tasnim News Agency that the accommodation capacity in the province was 2,291 rooms and 5,395 beds, noting: "With the implementation of the projects under construction, 869 rooms and 1,712 beds will be added to this capacity."

Five projects including a three-star hotel, two tourism complexes, an accommodation complex, and a four-star hotel with a total

investment of 2,595 billion rials will be operational over the next few months, creating jobs for 318 persons.

Jabbari noted that last year seven permits were issued for tourism facilities in the province and prediction for an investment volume of 409 billion rials and employment of 57 people, said: "Also last year, five tourist accommodation units in the province were launched."

Jabbari added: "Also, visits by members of the executive staff of the province's travel services, issuance of operating licenses for accommodation and recreation units in three cases, registration of the crated jobs in the country's employment monitoring system, issuance of price rates for accommodation and catering units in the province and prevention

of illegal activities of residential units in cooperation with the Law Enforcement officials for the use of residential units and reception were another measure of the General Directorate during the past year."

He also referred to the training and empowerment of tourism activists during the last year and said: "Holding virtual training courses for empowering professional tourism activists, holding a workshop for tourism activists in one workshop, holding courses, short-term tourism training courses, coordinating training webinars with the tourism regulations of the Ministry of Tourism and travel and tourism services offices and tour guides are some of the measures taken by this department."

In October 2020, the deputy tourism chief, Vali Teymouri, announced that a new support package was approved to pay loans to businesses affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

Depending on the type and activity of the businesses, they could benefit from at least 160 million rials (\$3,800) to nine billion rials (\$214,000) of bank loans with a 12-percent interest rate, he said.

The loans would be allocated to tourist guides, travel agencies, tourism transport companies, tourism educational institutions, eco-lodges and traditional accommodations, hotels, apartment hotels, motels, and guest-houses as well as traditional accommodation centers, tourism complexes, and recreational centers, the official explained.

# Health sector holds 15% share in national budget

**SOCIETY** TEHRAN — Some 15 percent of the national budget for the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 20) has been allocated to the health sector, deputy health minister Kamel Taqavinejad has said.

The national budget bill has proposed 1.5 quadrillion rials (around \$35 billion at the official rate of 42,000 rials) for the health-care system, a more than twofold increase compared to the last year's budget of 700 trillion rials (nearly \$16 billion).

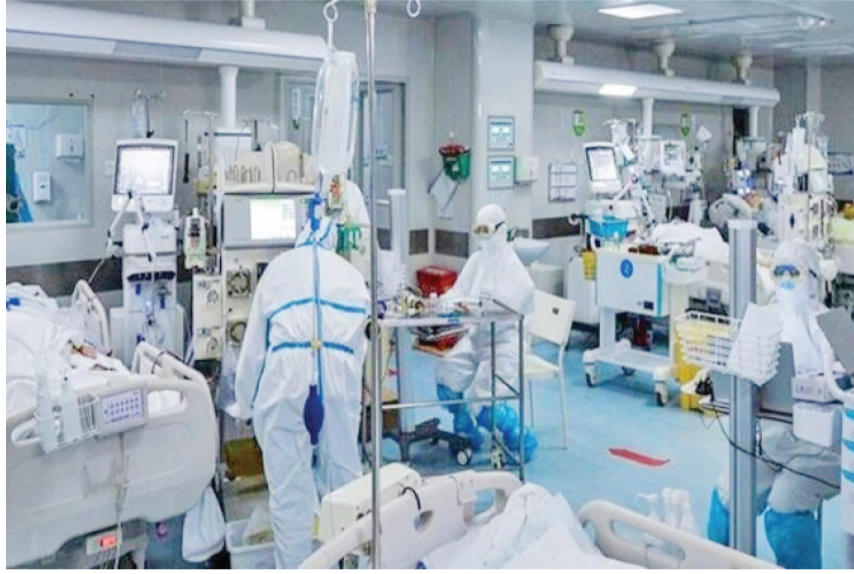
Last year, despite all the constraints on funding, was a successful year for the Ministry of Health and the universities. This year, with the efforts made to increase the budget this year, good capacity has been predicted for medical universities, Taqavinejad said.

The health system accounts for approximately 15 percent of the total public budget. Over 90 percent of the health system's budget is provided from government and public resources and 10 percent from private resources, which are gained from the health system and hospitals, he explained.

Taqavinejad went on to add that the budget is spent on health, treatment, research, and development in the health sector and higher education, IRNA reported on Tuesday.

The largest increase in the budget health system budget is allocated to medical universities, with a 73 percent increase compared to the last year's budget, he highlighted.

The share of health services in the budget is 70 percent, while primary healthcare services and research hold a share of 18 and 12



percent, respectively.

The share of traditional medicine in the health budget has grown by 6 percent.

In the area of the health reform plan, there has not been a considerable budget growth.

### Health reform plan and dealing with crises

The coronavirus outbreak proved that one-dimensional health systems cannot survive health-threatening crises, which occur every few years in the form of infectious diseases so that the need for healthcare reforms should be brought into sharp focus.

It is essential to know that as much as creating new hospital beds, developing hospitals, renovating dilapidated hospital tissue, and upgrading medical centers are important; the establishment of comprehensive health centers, health houses, health workers training, the launch of electronic health records for the people, and numerous screening schemes, medical supply, quantitative and qualitative improvement of medical education, and medical research are of great importance which needs to be considered. The healthcare reform plan, aiming at

decreasing the out-of-pocket expenses for the patients, promoting natural birth, and supporting underprivileged patients suffering from rare or incurable diseases, was launched in the country in May 2014.

A plan that has succeeded in enforcing many of the health-deferred laws and regulations, and continues to do so despite all the credit and manpower deficiencies.

Increased access to medicine and treatment was among the achievements of the plan. In addition, 11 million Iranians without any health insurance were covered by public insurance.

Prior to the project, public spending on healthcare services was more than 50 percent. Meanwhile, with the implementation of the plan, the share of payment from the pockets of patients in the field of health has decreased to 32.4 percent.

The plan started supporting physicians in deprived areas, which increased the number of doctors to more than 4,300 general practitioners, specialists, and subspecialists, resulting in increased access to medical treatment.

About 1,100 comprehensive healthcare centers across the country are now offering medical services to patients and providing the necessary care since the onset of the epidemic.

One of the important health capacities that came to the aid of the country in the coronavirus crisis was the electronic health record, and according to the Minister of Health Saeed Namaki, at least 75 million Iranians with a national code can file electronic health records.

## Iran breaks U.S. monopoly on recombinant flu vaccine

→ 1 "As the second producer of recombinant seasonal influenza vaccine in the world, we were able to acquire the technical knowledge to develop the vaccine with the help of experts," he highlighted.

In previous years, the domestic need was 3 and 3.5 million doses, but due to coronavirus pandemic, the flu vaccine is needed more than before, he said, expressing hope that the vaccine to hit the market by September.

In fact, due to the U.S. sanctions and import limitations, we often have problems in supplying vaccines. Relying on the previous knowledge of our technical team over

the past 6 years, we started the production process of the recombinant influenza vaccine in December 2018.

So far, the vaccine has been injected into about 430 people, which has had satisfactory results, he also said.

At present, other flu vaccines cost 7 to 9 Euros to import, so that, 2 to 3 million doses of the vaccine costs us 18-27 million Euros, which with the domestic production, will be reduced to at least one third, he emphasized.

According to IRNA, the first seasonal flu vaccine was unveiled on April 8. In addition, the vaccine is made

in accordance with the standards of the World Health Organization, the Food and Drugs Administration, and the Ministry of Health.

In October 2020, the Ministry of Health implemented a national plan to provide two million doses of influenza vaccines for at-risk groups such as the elderly, transplant patients, cardiopulmonary patients, and pregnant women to reduce COVID-19 effects.

According to the national plan on influenza vaccination, up to 80,000 people who are supported by the welfare organization have received free vaccines.

## Over 9,000 prisoners of involuntary crimes freed

**SOCIETY** TEHRAN — Iranian benefactors helped release a total of 9,398 inmates of unintentional crimes across the country over the past Iranian calendar year (March 2020-March 2021), according to the Blood Money Organization.

Some 9,108 male and 290 female prisoners, who were convicts or financial crimes, have been released.

Freeing prisoners of involuntary crimes is done in three ways; the first way is granting prisoners leave and the second way is providing a number of them with

loans to be paid inside the prison. The third way of assistance is the release of unintentional convicts by paying their debt; last year, a total of 35 trillion rials (nearly \$833 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) has been donated to pay the debt of the released prisoners.

Last year, Isfahan province topped the list for releasing the highest number of prisoners amounting to 677 involuntary crime doers, while Sistan-Baluchestan at the bottom of the list.

As an annual tradition, benefactors

come together in a ceremony to raise funds for releasing prisoners of unintentional crimes during the holy month of Ramadan (which started on April 13 this year), through which, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has donated 5 billion rials (about \$120,000 at the official rate of 42,000 rials).

Last year (March 2020-March 2021), heads of the three branches of the government and the private sector donated 6.5 billion rials (nearly \$150,000) to release prisoners who had committed involuntary crimes.

President Hassan Rouhani, former Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani, and Judiciary Chief Ayatollah Seyed Ebrahim Raeisi made a total of 3.9 billion rials (around \$92,000) in contributions to free prisoners of unintentional crimes.

During the first nine months of last year, some 5,068 inmates of unintentional crimes were released from prison with the help of charities.

According to Asadollah Joolaei, head of Blood Money Organization, there are currently 12,874 inmates of unintentional crimes in the country's prisons.

## Charity foundation supports 110,000 job plans for the deprived

**SOCIETY** TEHRAN — Barekat Charity Foundation, affiliated to Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam, has supported 110,000 job plans for the people residing in deprived areas over the past Iranian calendar year (March 2020-March 2021), deputy head of the foundation has said.

By the end of last year, 110,000 community-based job creation projects had been launched across the country, creating 330,000 small and home-based job opportunities, Mehr quoted Morteza Niazi as saying on Tuesday.

The foundation aims to launch 8,250 employment

projects in Sistan-Baluchestan province this year, which will create 25,750 direct and indirect jobs in deprived and rural areas of the province, he further announced.

By the end of the past year, over 15,000 job plans, created 45,000 micro and household businesses in this province, have been fully operational, he added.

Production of livestock, clothing, handicrafts, technical and service jobs, poultry, and greenhouse products are among the priority areas for job generation in deprived and rural areas of Sistan-Baluchestan.

Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam was founded in 1989. In the Iranian calendar year, 1386

(March 2017-March 2018) Barekat Charity Foundation—the social arm of the organization—with the aim of promoting social justice was established.

Socio-economic empowerment of communities by encouraging entrepreneurship prioritizing breadwinner women, developing infrastructures such as water supply and power grids, building roads, constructing schools and increasing educational spaces, promoting health for all, granting non-repayable loans and insurance especially in less developed areas and regions most affected by 1980s war and natural disasters are of the priorities of the charity foundation.

## Carbon emissions to soar in 2021 by second highest rate in history

Carbon dioxide emissions are forecast to jump this year by the second biggest annual rise in history, as global economies pour stimulus cash into fossil fuels in the recovery from the Covid-19 recession.

The leap will be second only to the massive rebound 10 years ago after the financial crisis, and will put climate hopes out of reach unless governments act quickly, the International Energy Agency has warned.

Surging use of coal, the dirtiest fossil fuel, for electricity is largely driving the emissions rise, especially across Asia but also in the US. Coal's rebound causes particular concern because it comes despite plunging prices for renewable energy, which is now cheaper than coal.

Speaking exclusively to the Guardian, Fatih Birol, the executive director of the IEA, and one of the world's leading authorities on energy and climate, said: "This is shocking and very disturbing. On the one hand, governments today are saying climate change is their priority. But on the other hand, we are seeing the second biggest emissions rise in history. It is really disappointing."

Emissions need to be cut by 45% this decade, if the world is to limit global heating to 1.5C (2.7F), scientists have warned. That means the 2020s must be the decade when the world changes course, before the level of carbon in the atmosphere rises too high to avoid dangerous levels of heating. But the scale of the current emissions rebound from the Covid-19 crisis means "our starting point is definitely not a good one", said Birol.

Birol compared the current surge of emissions to the financial crisis, when emissions rose by more than 6% in 2010 after countries tried to stimulate their economies through cheap fossil fuel energy. "It seems we are back on course to repeat the same mistakes," he warned. "I am more disappointed this time than in 2010."

Emissions plunged by a record 7% globally last year, owing to the lockdowns that followed the Covid-19 outbreak. But by the end of the year, they were already rebounding, and on track to exceed 2019 levels in some areas.

The IEA's projections for 2021 show emissions are likely to end this year still down slightly on 2019 levels, but on a rising path. Next year there could be even stronger rises as air travel returns, Birol added. Aviation would normally contribute more than 2% of global emissions, but has been almost absent this past year.

He called on governments to bring forward new climate policies urgently and seek a green recovery from the Covid-19 crisis. "Last year, I expressed my hope that the economic recovery from Covid-19 should be green and sustainable. But these numbers indicate that this recovery is currently anything but sustainable for our climate," he said.

The US president, Joe Biden, is convening a climate summit this week, with the leaders of 40 countries expected to attend, at which he will urge countries to come forward with strong commitments on cutting emissions this decade. Birol said this was an opportunity for countries to change course and put policies in place for a green recovery.

"If governments take clear and imminent action, with the amount of cheap clean energy technologies we have, we can transform this disappointment to some good outcomes," he said.

The IEA is considered the global gold standard for energy data, and its projections for 2021 are based on comprehensive soundings from around the world, including data from existing energy sources and new plants scheduled to come onstream. Energy data from the end of last year showed fossil fuels ahead of 2019 levels, and the surge has continued in the first part of this year.

In its Global Energy Review, published on Tuesday, the IEA found that global carbon emissions from energy use, which accounts for the great majority of greenhouse gas emissions, were on course to rise by 1.5bn tonnes in 2021, after having fallen last year. That represents a 5% rise to 33bn tonnes of carbon dioxide for the year. After more than half a decade of decline, global coal demand is forecast to grow by 4.5%, approaching its all-time peak in 2014.

## LET'S LEARN PERSIAN

(Part 163) (Source: saadifoundation.ir)

جدول (با عدد بنویسید)

۱	۲	۳	۴	۵	۶	۷	افقی
۱							۱. صد × سه + سه × سیصد و سه × سه
۲							۲. هشتصد و بیست و هشت - چهارصد
۳							۳. دو میلیون و پنجاه و شش هزار و هفتصد و هشتاد و یک × بیست و
۴							۴. سه × دو × هفتاد - شش × هفت میلیون و چهارصد و هفتاد و یک هزار و پانصد و
۵							۵. نه میلیون و هشتصد و هفتاد و شش هزار و پانصد و بیست و نه × هشتاد و دو، چهار ×
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							۵. نه میلیون و هشتصد و هفتاد و شش هزار و پانصد و سیصد و هشتاد و پنج - پنجاه - هشت × نه × صد × یک × نهصد و یک + چهار

- تمرین ۵. جمله‌هایی را که در آنها "را" لازم است بنویسید:
- ۱. ما برنامه‌های شب تماشا می‌کنیم.
- ۲. او هنوز کارش تمام نکرده است.
- ۳. تو همیشه معلم خوبی بوده‌ای.
- ۴. هنوز هیچ‌کس تکلیفش نداده است.
- ۵. بچه‌ها اجازه ندارند بروند.
- ۶. ما تهران با ستول مقایسه می‌کنیم.

### ENGLISH IN USE

#### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

## Plans on agenda to address sand and dust storms in 4 provinces

Studies to combat sand and dust storms are almost completed and next year (starting on March 21) plans will be implemented in four provinces of Khuzestan, Sistan-Baluchestan, Kerman and Hormozgan, director of the national headquarters for combatting sand and dust storms has said.

Ali Mohammad Tahmasbi-Birgani explained that the national document to fight sand and dust storms will be hammered out next week and will be implemented once it is approved.

The five-year plan will set strategies and guidelines for developing early warning systems for sand and dust storms and restoration plans for wetlands and also task responsible bodies to tackle the environmental issue, ISNA quoted Tahmasbi-Birgani as saying on Friday.

## ۴ استان جنوبی در اولویت مقابله با گرد و غبار

مدیر ملی ستاد مقابله با پدیده گرد و غبار از تهیه سند ملی مقابله با گرد و غبار و نهایی شدن مطالعات طوفان ماسه و گرد و غبار خبر داد و اظهار کرد: سال بعد استان‌های خوزستان، سیستان و بلوچستان، کرمان و هرمزگان در اولویت مقابله با گرد و غبار قرار می‌گیرند.

علی محمد طهماسبی بیرگانی با اشاره به تهیه سند ملی مقابله با پدیده گرد و غبار اعلام کرد: این سند هفته آینده بررسی خواهد شد و بعد از تصویب اعمال شود.

به گزارش روز جمعه خبرگزاری ایسنا وی ادامه داد: برنامه پنج ساله مقابله با گرد و غبار برنامه‌ها و رهنمودهای کلی را در حوزه سیستم‌های پیش‌بینی هشدار گرد و غبار، عملیات اصلاحی و روش‌های احیایی را شامل می‌شود و وظایف همه دستگاه‌های اجرایی را مشخص می‌کند.

INTERNATIONAL DAILY  
www.tehrantimes.com

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► Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 88805807  
► Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051603  
► Printed at: Jame Jam Bartar Borna - 44197737

Tehrantimes79 Tehrantimes79 Tehrantimes79

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P.O. Box: 14155-4843  
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GUIDE TO  
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

The people whom I hate the most and who are the farthest from me on the Day of Judgment are those who talk uselessly, and those who put down others, and those who show off when they talk.

Prophet Muhammad (S)

Iran's "Sun" to be screened in Spanish cinemas

**CULTURE** TEHRAN — The Iranian movie "Sun" directed by Majid Majidi is to be screened in Spanish cinemas by May 14, Islamic Culture and Relations Organization (ICRO) has announced.



The movie's trailer in Spanish has already been released by Caramel Films, a distributor in Spain.

After its screening at the 38th Fajr Film Festival in 2019, the movie which is titled "Sun Children" by the Internet Movie Database (IMDb), participated in the Venice Film Festival, where the child actor Ruhollah Zamani won the 'Marcello Mastroianni Award' as an Emerging Star for his leading role.

Nicholas Barber's review of the movie published on the IndieWire website describes the movie as "quite the thrill ride" and narrates the movie as "mixing a Dickensian, social-realist account of children in poverty in Tehran with a kinetic, far-fetched heist movie and a well-meaning drama about a kindly teacher who would, in a 1980s American film, have been played by Robin Williams"

Majidi's movie represented Iran in the Oscars as the best international film and was enlisted in the initial list of the 15 films selected to participate in the 93rd Academy Awards. Majidi's "Children of Heaven" movie still remains the first and only film that has been nominated for the Oscar's best foreign-language film.

The only Iranian filmmaker to win an Oscar was Asghar Farhadi, who received the prestigious award on two occasions, one in 2011 for his film "A Separation" and another in 2017 for the "The Salesman" which was also screened in London's iconic Trafalgar square.

"Sky Sun, Tile Sun" competing in London Kurdish Film Festival

**A R T** TEHRAN — Iranian director Ziba Arjang's short animation "Sky Sun, Tile Sun" is on screen at the 12th edition of the London Kurdish Film Festival, which is currently underway virtually in the UK capital, ILNA reported on Monday.



The six-minute animated movie is about a village where people live a happy life until the day when the sun breaks due to bombardment and it becomes dark everywhere. They help each other build a new sun for their sky.

"Sky Sun, Tile Sun" is a symbolic animation without dialogue. The animation has 12 characters, all of whom are considered to be the main characters because they work together to rebuild their world.

The animation is inspired by the tiled designs of the Qajar-era (1789–1925) Moaven al-Molk Tekyeh in the western Kermanshah province as well as Tehran's Golestan Palace. Parts of the areas of both buildings have been used in the film. The tilework of buildings is remarkable, unique, and exceptional with very beautiful designs and 100% natural colors used in them.

Arjang's previous animation "My Sardasht", about Kaja, a carpet weaver, who is the only survivor of her family after Iraq's chemical attack on Iranian town Sardasht in 1987, has been awarded in many national and international festivals.

London Kurdish Film Festival will run until April 27.

Iranian Film Festival Australia to open with "TiTi"

**A R T** TEHRAN — "TiTi" by Ida Panahandeh will open the 10th edition of the Iranian Film Festival Australia (IFFA) in Perth on May 20, the organizers have announced.

The film tells the story of a hospitalized, critically ill physicist, working on a theory about black holes and the end of the world, who meets a rather eccentric hospital housekeeper named TiTi. Though single, TiTi is acting as a surrogate mother for an infertile couple in order to serve humanity and raise money to build a small room of her own. When the physicist falls into a deep coma, TiTi, rose by Iranian gypsies and possessing

supernatural powers, performs a strange ritual to save him. This is the start of an odyssey; an odyssey that changes their lives forever.

The film has been screened at several international events, including the Tokyo International Film Festival.

The Iranian Film Festival Australia will continue in Perth until May 26 and then will move to Brisbane from May 27 to June 2.

Melbourne will be the next city to host the festival from June 3 to 9, and the festival will come to an end in Sydney on June 16.

The festival's lineup will be announced in the near future.



A scene from "TiTi" by Iranian director Ida Panahandeh.

Animation series on Persian poet Sadi's Bustan produced

**A R T** TEHRAN — An animation series based on the tales of the 13th-century Iranian poet Sadi's major work Bustan has been produced by the IRIB's Fars provincial channel, ISNA reported on Tuesday. Entitled "Travels of Sadi", the series is composed of 26 episodes in two seasons and is produced on the occasion of National Sadi Day, which is celebrated

annually on April 20.

Alireza Maskuki and Saman Abdinejad are the directors of the series, which is written by Abbas Karimi.

One of the greatest figures of classical Persian literature, Sheikh Mushih od-Din Sadi Shirazi (C. 1213-1291) is famous worldwide for his Bustan (The Orchard) and Gulistan (The Rose Garden).



Joint U.S.-UAE Film glorifies Daesh terrorists

**CULTURE** TEHRAN — Exposing the U.S. and the UAE propaganda, a critique published by IRNA looks at the political dimensions of the film "Mosul" and its attempts to distort historical facts

U.S. funded film and movie productions are now pursuing the agenda of establishing a fabricated narrative of the war on the so-called ISIS (Daesh) and changing the horrific realities of terrorist groups that committed crimes against humanity in Iraq and Syria.

A critique published recently by the Islamic Republic News Agency reviews the anti-Iranian propaganda film with reference to evidence and historical facts:

In recent years, especially during the Trump era, while in the midst of the election campaign, the two political factions in the United States confessed to the creation of ISIS, and despite the fact that it became clear who created and supported this terrorist group in Iraq and Syria, their attempts in misleading and misrepresenting history based on lies and distortions continues, both through press and news coverages as well as social media and most recently on a larger scale in the world of cinema.

For months now, an Emirati-American film called "Mosul" has been screened by affiliated networks and the Western-Arabic-Hebrew media, with the aim of distorting history and attempting to turn victims into war criminals.

The film "Mosul" tells the story of a battle that took place between the ISIS terrorists

and the so-called Ninawa "SWAT Team", which the filmmakers try to pass as the main unit that liberated Mosul in 2016. It is immediately clear to an informed audience that despite the fabricated and exaggerated narratives and cinematic effects, the Mosul film is based on minimal accounts of real events. The character of Major Jassim, who commands the SWAT team in the film, is actually inspired by the character of two senior commanders of the SWAT forces, Colonel Ryan Abdul Razzaq and Major Mazhar Saadoun.

Contrary to the narration of "Mosul", there was no conflict between SWAT teams and other forces fighting ISIS, and all of them followed a single command in the operation. The differences were so small that they did not appear to be in the media at all.

Another point that should be mentioned is the many historical references in the film Mosul. In the sequence of the conversation between the commander of the Ninawa SWAT team and the Iranian commander of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), the commander appears in the unusual uniform of the Revolutionary Guards. The filmmakers of Mosul have made a direct reference to Iran's hegemony in the region during the Safavid period. This becomes even more important when we consider that in anti-Iranian videos released by the ISIS propaganda media, the Revolutionary Guards were always referred to as the "Safavid Army."

The use of the word Safavid by the SWAT team and its reference to Iranians is another

indication of the filmmakers' blunders, showing they were unaware that this term was used by the ISIS and Al Qaeda terrorists to refer to Iranians, while in the film this fact has been neglected.

In addition, the Iranian military advisers who were present during the war against ISIS never wore military uniforms, with General Soleimani being the best representation of this, who always dressed in unmarked khaki military clothing in war zones.

Nevertheless, making such films is in fact intended to distort history and mislead the public to pave the way for changes that the United States and its allies are pursuing in the infrastructure of the Iraqi security and military forces.

"Mosul" was made with the investment of the Emirates Film Company 'Image Nation', with Mohammad Khalifa Al-Mubarak as director, who is a close associate of Al Nahyan and a member of the Abu Dhabi Executive Council, who also had a major role in lobbying to normalize relations between the UAE and the Zionist regime.

In a sequence of the film, an IRGC commander makes the false claim of Iran not recognizing the Iraqi government and of Iran's attempts to dominate Iraq. There is also reference made to historical events such as the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of Iraq by the British.

The film "Mosul" fails to mention the centuries-old historical friendship between the nations of Iran and Iraq. The Ninawa SWAT team has also tried to include all Iraqi



religious and ethnic groups to show that only the United States seeks to build a single nation in Iraq, and that Iran only supports a certain section of the Iraqi population. This is despite the fact that Washington, in recent years, has sought to divide Iraq, secede it from the Kurdish region, and wage a religious and ethnic war, in contrast to Tehran, which has always insisted on maintaining unity and respecting Iraq's territorial integrity.

The film tries to portray Iran as the cause of Iraq's problems, whereas it was the Americans who occupied Iraq, brought al-Qaeda from Afghanistan to Iraq, and fueled the killings that took place during the years of civil war, after which they formed ISIS, triggering crises across the region, and yet they continue to occupy Iraq to this day.

In consideration of the mentioned critique, it is vital to mention the courageous and patriotic ventures of the martyrs defending the holy shrines and the sacrifices of the beloved Iraqi, Lebanese, Syrian, Yemeni, Palestinian, Afghan and Pakistani brothers and sisters. Without a doubt Iran's enemies will fail in their attempt to distort historical facts.

Sohrab Sepehri, great Persian poet and painter

Part 4

Perhaps the most notorious critique of the book, and in deed of Sepehri's poetry in general, was written at this same time by Reza Baraheni (b. 1935) in three consecutive issues of Ferdowsi in which he famously referred to Sepehri as "an aristocratic Buddha-boy" sitting high in his holly ivory tower of sanctity and peace. Explicitly intended as a scathing remark, the implications of Baraheni's commentary were potentially devastating at a time when political commitment was a central issue for a literati who defined literature as a political vehicle. The term "aristocratic Buddha-boy" not only dismissed Sepehri as a child in an ageist patriarchal society where authority can only be gained by virtue of life experience, but it further disenfranchised him from the Persian literati by associating him with a Far Eastern, hence alien, mystical figure who stands as a universal emblem of passivity and political disengagement.

Baraheni was not alone in his opinion. Many, including Nader Naderpur, Mehdi Akhavan-Saless (1928-1991), and Ahmad Shamlu (1925-1999) followed suit, some of whom consistently held the party line on the issue of Sepehri's poetics until the end of their life. History, however, would prove the shortsightedness of this school of criticism about Sepehri's work. Starting with the presumption that Sepehri was disconnected from his time, his critics failed to understand not only the depth of his commitment but also its very nature. Recognizing many of the same problems in his world as did his contemporaries, Sepehri's commitment was not defined by a call for social upheaval and political change, but rather by a drive to reform society through the perfection of the individual from within, and the concomitant belief that society's problems will invariably correct themselves upon the spiritual and emotional awakening of its people.

In 1979 Sepehri published his famous Hasht ketab, a compendium of his previously published books—with some omissions and revisions of earlier poems—and a new series of poems written between 1967-1979 called Ma hich, ma negah. The most abstract of Sepehri's poems, Ma hich, ma negah constitutes the fifth and final phase in his poetic development. While many have criticized Sepehri for excessive abstractions that allegedly render these poems

incomprehensible, others have succeeded in revealing the elusive yet profound philosophy that underlies them. The key to decoding these admittedly abstract poems lies in the collection's title and it's not so faint echo of a quote from the American transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson's (1803-1882) essay "Nature," "I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing, I see all." Reverberating this echo, the poems in the collection reflect the Emersonian idea that a direct union with nature can take mankind back to an Edenic state void of the fixed social structures and inflexible belief systems that hinder spiritual evolution. Sepehri's exceptional economy of words, unorthodox phraseology, and elusive imagery convey this philosophy by forcing the reader actively to engage with an excessively abstract text ultimately to forge a new subjective meaning of life.

Though unfinished, Sepehri's final work Otaq-e abi remains nevertheless an indispensable tool in any serious study of Sepehri's work, as it provides invaluable insight into the workings of his mind, and reveals the breadth of his knowledge about various ideologies ranging from Taoism and Sufism to Hindu mythology and Jungian analytical psychology. More importantly, Otaq-e abi offers a wealth of intertexts to Sepehri's poetry with concepts that elucidate not only some of his more abstract poems but also the techniques and symbolism of his painting.

As was the case with his poetry, the developmental course of Sepehri's painting can also be divided into various phases, each with its respective aesthetic features and thematic characteristics. And while many of the central tenets of his poetry clearly carry over to his paintings, the five distinct phases of his work as a painter were not always strictly synchronous with those of his development as a poet, even though both began with a classical phase. In his portrait of a young girl reading, landscape with shepherds, and landscape with mud brick house. Sepehri's classicism comes through in his concern with perspective, light, and shadow, all characteristic features of the figurative representational school of Kamal al-Molk (Mohammad Ghaffari, 1848-1940), the father of realist painting in Persia. As was the case with his poetry, this classical phase ended before Sepehri enrolled in Tehran University, without offering any notable innovations in

technique, style, or subject matter.

Sepehri's meeting with Sheybani and his subsequent affiliation with Khorus jangi marked the beginning of the second period in his painting. Like Hushang Pezeshknia (1917-1972), Jalil Ziapur, Mahmud Javadipur and other early Persian modernist painters who moved away from Kamal al-Molk's realist style to follow post-impressionist techniques as seen in Paul Cézanne's (1839-1906) landscapes, Sepehri was now relying on color-contrast and simplified geometric forms with heavy black outlines to express depth and space, rather than defining form with perspective, light, and shade. And though Sepehri's post-impressionist period in painting would prove as short as his Nimaic one in poetry, its central principles of a) emphasis upon volumes of space through simple geometric forms as the basis of composition; b) definition of form through color rather than light and shade; and c) the use of series of planes in conveying principles of space, depth, and structural development from a flat surface would stay with him throughout the remainder of his life as a painter.

The next important period in Sepehri's painting is commonly referred to as his Far Eastern phase, examples of which were first displayed at his exhibition at the Farhang Gallery in June 1962. Over the course of the next two to three years, Sepehri's medium and technique varied, but his subject matter remained essentially the same: semi-abstract figurative still lives or landscapes with reeds, branches, occasional tree trunks, tulips, and poppy flowers, along with minimalist abstract-expressionist compositions mostly in earth tones with rapidly drawn lines resembling reeds or abstractions of Japanese and Chinese characters. While some have resisted referring to any of these works as Japanese or Chinese per se by arguing that none comprise any of the defining traits of either tradition, the overt influence of Chinese and Japanese painting in certain aspects of Sepehri's technique, composition, and subject matter is irrefutable. This influence is first and foremost noticeable in Sepehri's preoccupation during this period with semi-abstract natural landscapes that both in composition and subject matter emulate Far Eastern natural landscapes in general, and Chinese monumental landscapes in particular.