



**Iran rejects gradual revival of JCPOA as EU mulls sequential return** *Page 3*



**Iran advance to FIFA Futsal World Cup Lithuania 2021** *Page 3*



**Imports of COVID-19 test kits reduced to zero** *Page 7*



**"We Are Here We Are Close" to compete in Fajr Intl. Film Festival** *Page 8*

# Powerful explosion rocks sensitive Israeli missile factory

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## Israel seeks an unchecked nuclear monopoly: ex-Senate candidate

**BY MOHAMMAD ALI SAKI**  
A former U.S. Senate candidate says Israel resorts to assassination and sabotage because it needs an unchecked nuclear monopoly in West Asia.

"This demonic agenda involves the need for an unchecked nuclear monopoly in the Middle East (West Asia) and one not under the scrutiny of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as Iran is," Mark Dankof tells the Tehran Times.

"The Natanz sabotage is only the latest criminal action directed by Israel against Iran within its own borders, and with the full support of the United States and the West," he argues.

A power failure caused by a deliberately planned explosion struck Iran's Natanz uranium enrichment site on April 11. Iranian officials called sabotage "nuclear terrorism" and held Israel's Mossad responsible for the act.

Following is the text of the interview:  
**How do you assess Israeli sabotage operation in the Natanz nuclear facility? What are the reasons and motives?**

Israel simply wants a monopoly on nuclear weaponry in the Middle East (West Asia) to continue its pursuit of Eretz Yisrael (Greater Israel) from the Tigris to the Euphrates Rivers. Its history of terrorism, land theft, and the quest for the establishment of a World Government based in Jerusalem and enforced by a Zionist-controlled global banking system and enabled by its puppets in the Zionist Occupied Governments (ZOG) of the United States specifically and the Western World generally. This demonic agenda involves the need for an unchecked nuclear monopoly in the Middle East (West Asia) and one not under the scrutiny of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as Iran is.

The Natanz sabotage is only the latest criminal action directed by Israel against Iran within its own borders and with the full support of the United States and the West. The United Nations is absolutely powerless to enforce any semblance of international law where all of this is concerned. The Zionist State is a law unto itself, protected by Zionist Occupied Governments in the West in full alliance with Zionist Occupied Media Consortiums who spin the false narratives Israel wants and gets with impunity.

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## Rouhani: Security is Iran-Pakistan 'common concern'

TEHRAN — In his meeting with Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi on Wednesday, President Rouhani emphasized the need to ensure peace and stability in the region with a focus on regional mechanisms and securing the borders of the two neighboring countries.

He called security a "common concern" of the two countries and said that strengthening cooperation in this field is "necessary".

The president noted the importance of cooperation with Pakistan as Iran's Muslim neighbor and stressed the need to develop and deepen relations between the two countries in various fields, including economic and trade relations, as well as the development and strengthening of the border markets.

Referring to the U.S. decision to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan by September 11, Rouhani said that the U.S. military presence in the region has not helped maintain security and stability, adding that Iran and Pakistan, as the most important and

influential neighbors of Afghanistan, should play their role through interaction and cooperation to manage the peace process in Afghanistan.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran welcomes cooperation with Pakistan and Afghanistan to play its role in this regard," the president said.

**"Iran-Pakistan relationship is fraternal"**  
For his turn, Qureshi described the relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran as "unique, valuable and fraternal" and emphasized the need to strengthen and consolidate these relations in all fields.

Referring to the emphasis that Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan puts on developing relations with Iran, the Pakistani foreign minister expressed hope that in the near future, bilateral relations will enter a new phase and will witness new openings in the development of relations between the two countries, especially in commercial and economic fields.

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## Iran has taken air superiority from U.S., says CENTCOM

TEHRAN — "For the first time since the Korean War, we are operating without complete air superiority," Central Command (CENTCOM) Commander Gen. Kenneth McKenzie acknowledged on Tuesday.

The Marine Corps general in charge of the U.S. CENTCOM made the acknowledgment in a House Armed Services Committee hearing.

McKenzie said that Iran is extensively using small and medium-sized drones for

surveillance and attack.

He added, "What we have found is that, particularly against Iran, they do not like their activities to be exposed."

On June 20, 2019, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) shot down a United States RQ-4A Global Hawk BAMS-D surveillance drone with a surface-to-air missile over the Strait of Hormuz.

The U.S. has been flying surveillance drones in the West Asia region for many years to spy on Iran.

## Annual iron ore pellet output up 10%

TEHRAN - Latest data released by the Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) indicate that iron ore pellet production by major Iranian mining companies exceeded 46 million tons in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20), registering a 10 percent growth year on year.

The mentioned companies had man-

aged to produce 41.7 million tons of pellets in the preceding year, IRNA reported.

According to the data, Golgozar was the largest producer of pellets in the said year with 12.2 million tons of production, followed by Mobarakeh Steel Company with 7.3 million tons, MIDHCO with 6.2 million tons, and Khuzestan Steel Company with 5.5 million tons.

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TEHRAN — Yemeni forces have closed in on the strategic oil-rich city of Marib in their latest efforts to liberate the city from Saudi-backed mercenaries.

The Yemeni Army and "popular committees" have launched an operation to capture Marib, the last stronghold of the Saudi-backed forces in northern Yemen. The Yemeni forces have successfully advanced toward the city and besieged it but they are yet to enter Marib.

Over the last few days, these forc-

es have intensified their war efforts prompting Saudi Arabia to carry out another bombing campaign in various parts of Yemen.

On Wednesday, Yemeni news channel Al Masirah reported that the U.S.-Saudi aerial aggression launched 14 airstrikes in Marib governorate, east of Sanaa.

Citing a security source, the channel said the airstrikes targeted Wadi Nakhl in the Sirwah district.

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## U.S. protests: Black teen girl fatally shot by Ohio police

A Black teenage girl was fatally shot by police in Columbus, Ohio, on Tuesday afternoon, shortly before a U.S. jury found former Minneapolis officer Derek Chauvin guilty of third-degree murder in the May 2020 death of George Floyd.

The shooting was confirmed on Twitter by the city's mayor, Andrew Ginther, who said there was police body camera footage of the incident, calling on residents to remain calm as protesters descended on the scene.

"This afternoon a young woman tragically lost her life," he said. "It's a tragic day in the city of Columbus. A horrible, heartbreaking situation. I'm not just the mayor, I'm a father. The city of Columbus lost a 15-year-old girl today."

He went on to say that "we do not know all of the details. There is body-worn camera footage of the incident. We are working to review it as soon as possible."

Officers were responding to a call about an attempted stabbing when the shooting happened around 4:45 pm in the southeastern part of Columbus, according to The Columbus Dispatch.

The verdict in the Chauvin case was announced in Hennepin County court about 20 minutes later.

"It is clear the officer took action to protect another young life," Ginther said.

Following the shooting, the girl, identified by her family as Ma'Khia Bryant, was taken to Mount Carmel East in critical condition where she was pronounced dead.

Meanwhile, Public Safety Director Ned Pettus said the death of Bryant is "devastating."

"She could be my grandchild," Pettus said. "My heart breaks for the family tonight. No matter what the circumstances, that family is in agony and they are in my prayers."

## Lack of trust exists in Vienna talks: American foreign policy expert

**BY MOHAMMAD MAZHARI**

TEHRAN - Barbara Slavin, an American foreign policy expert, is of the opinion that there is a lack of trust between Iran and the U.S., which makes it a must to design a roadmap to restore the nuclear deal.

Iran has been negotiating with five powers that remain in the agreement – France, Germany, Britain, Russia, and China – in Vienna over the past two weeks.

An American delegation also has been in Vienna but not talking directly to the Iranian team.

"I think there is a lack of trust and a need for a mutual roadmap to compliance necessary for both sides," Slavin tells the Tehran Times.

Many pundits and politicians inside America criticize President Biden's hesitation in taking the first step to revitalize the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the official name for

the 2015 nuclear deal.

Speaking on March 31 on a webinar hosted by the National Iranian American Council, U.S. Senator Chris Murphy and Rep. Ro Khanna, both Democrats, addressed the stalemate between the U.S. and Iran regarding the return to the 2015 nuclear agreement and urged the administration to be open and willing to take early steps back into the deal.

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## Iran-Pakistan 3rd border crossing launched

TEHRAN — The third border crossing between Iran and Pakistan called Pishin-Mand was officially inaugurated on Wednesday in a ceremony attended by Iranian Transport and Urban Development Minister Mohammad Eslami and some Pakistani officials.

Pishin-Mand border crossing is located in Sistan-Baluchestan Province, southeastern Iran, IRNA reported.

Trade exchanges and commutes between the two countries are currently carried out via Mirjaveh and Rimdan borders.

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## COVIRAN vaccine starts third phase of human trial

TEHRAN — COVIRAN BAREKAT, the first coronavirus vaccine made by Iranian researchers, started the third phase of the human trial, Mostafa Qanei, secretary of the biotechnology development office of the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology, announced.

Developed by researchers at the Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam, the vaccine was unveiled on December 29, 2020, and started to be mass-produced on March 29.

If the third phase of the human test is successful, the vaccine will enter the market in mid-June, he stated, adding, COVIRAN BAREKAT will be the first homegrown vaccine to enter the market.

Out of 16 vaccine production cases, four cases will start mass-production and another three to four cases will succeed in receiving license by September, he said, IRNA reported on Wednesday.

Iran is currently producing vaccines jointly with three countries of Cuba, Russia, and Australia, he noted, expressing hope that these vaccines can also be released by September.

One of the vaccines is the Cuban-Iranian Soberana-02 vaccine, and the other is the Russian-Iranian Gamaleya vaccine, while the third joint vaccine will be produced in Iran in cooperation with Australia, Qanei further explained.

Iran started mass vaccination against COVID-19 with Russian-made Sputnik V vaccine on February 9; which is also going to be co-produced by the two countries.

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## Iranian ambassador to Russia consults with Swiss counterpart

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Kazem Jalali, Iran's ambassador to the Russian Federation met with Krystyna Marty, the new Swiss Ambassador to the Russian Federation, at the embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran on Wednesday.

In the meeting, Kazem Jalali, referred to the historical relations between the two countries, highlighting more than one hundred years of relations between Iran and Switzerland.

The diplomat stressed the need for mutual trust and strengthening political dialogue at different levels between the two countries and explained the latest status of the JCPOA talks.

Referring to the country's good relations with Iran, Marty said that Iran is an important partner for Switzerland and expressed hope that the JCPOA talks would produce positive results.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed ways to work together to build regional and international peace, stability and security.

## Iraqi national security advisor: No talk of Baghdad mediation between Iran and S. Arabia

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Media office of the Iraqi National Security Council (INSC) released a statement on Wednesday saying that he did not discuss any intermediary talks between Iran and Saudi Arabia during his meeting with the Saudi ambassador to Baghdad.



According to the statement, during the meeting, they discussed fraternal relations between Iraq and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and work to strengthen them in all fields.

Iran has recently acknowledged that it welcomes dialogue with Saudi Arabia and considered it "in the interest of the peoples of the two countries as well as regional peace and stability," said Saeed Khatibzadeh, spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Iraj Masjedi, the Iranian ambassador to Baghdad, spoke to state news IRNA on April 20, supporting Baghdad's mediation to bring Tehran closer to countries with which relations have soured.

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."

## PMF chief meets Iranian deputy defense minister

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Faleh Al-Fayyad, head of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), met with Iranian Deputy Defense Minister Gen. Hojatollah Ghoreishi in the PMF's office in Baghdad on Wednesday.



Iran's Deputy Defense Minister Ghoreishi (left) meeting with PMF chief Al-Fayyad

The two sides talked about military issues, focusing on bilateral cooperation and counter-terrorism.

The meeting seems to be a continuation of consultations between the neighboring countries.

On April 12, Iraqi National Security Advisor Ghasem Mohammad Al-Araji met with his Iranian counterpart Admiral Ali Shamkhani to discuss causes of instability in the region.

## Rouhani: Security is Iran-Pakistan 'common concern'

➔ Foreign Minister Qureshi also praised Iran's position in supporting Pakistan on regional and international issues, declaring his country's support for the JCPOA as a major achievement of diplomacy in the world.

"We are very happy to be in talks again to revive the multilateral agreement," he said.

**"The third Iran-Pakistan crossing point inaugurated"**

On Wednesday, Pakistan's Defense Production Minister Zobaidda Jalal and Iran's Transport and Urban Development Minister Mohammad Eslami traveled from their respective capitals to the border to inaugurate the Pishin-Mand crossing.

According to Jalal, Tehran and Islamabad are on the path to deepening long-standing ties, and the rise in border crossings demonstrates their determination and dedication to strengthen relations and improve the living standards of border residents.

According to Minister Eslami, the gateways would revolutionize cross-border exchanges and trade with Pakistan.

"The addition of two official trade exchange terminals as well as six official border markets will assist us in moving towards a good business," he said.

The Pakistani foreign minister also sent a tweet expressing his joy over the inauguration of the third border crossing point.

"Happy to announce joint inauguration of Mand-Pishin today as third international border crossing point with #Iran. Together, Pakistan and Iran are committed to connect people on both sides and to enhance bilateral trade," Qureshi tweeted.

**Rouhani says Iran and Pakistan, as the most important and influential neighbors of Afghanistan, should play their role through interaction and cooperation to manage the peace process in Afghanistan.**

# Iran's definite policy is close cooperation with neighbors, says parliament speaker

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf met with Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi on Wednesday, emphasizing the need to open border points and border markets.

At the beginning of the meeting, Ghalibaf expressed satisfaction with the good and cordial relations between Iran and Pakistan, saying, "The definite policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran is close cooperation with neighboring countries."

He said that Iran is pleased to have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Pakistan regarding border markets.

He also expressed his joy over the opening of the Pishin-Mand border crossing point.

The top parliamentarian stated that when Iran sees that the enemies are seeking to destroy the two sides' deep and heartfelt connections through their interventions, Iran and Pakistan become more determined to strengthen relations.

Ghalibaf also referred to the desirable level of political and security cooperation between the two countries, saying that the level of economic relations between the two countries is



Pakistan's FM Qureshi (left) meeting with Parliament speaker Ghalibaf (right)

unacceptable and it should be higher, given the capacities of the two countries.

He also thanked Pakistan for its stance on combating Islamophobia, saying, "The government, parliament and people of the Islamic Republic of Iran oppose any divisive voice among the Muslim ummah and live far from ethnic and religious differences."

Senior MP referred to the webinar held for

the speakers of the parliaments of Afghanistan's neighboring countries, saying that important ideas for economic cooperation and the fight against terrorism and the promotion of peace and security in Afghanistan and the region were emphasized.

He pointed to the U.S. withdrawal plan from Afghanistan, saying, "With the exit of the United States from Afghanistan, the role of

## We don't want JCPOA+, says Rouhani

Rouhani says three steps to revive JCPOA are: sanctions removal, verification, and reversing remedial measures

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Speaking to his cabinet on Wednesday, President Hassan Rouhani said the only solution to the nuclear issue is the implementation of the JCPOA and Iran will not accept any other form of the deal.

"Today, everyone knows that the solution to Iran's nuclear issue is to implement the nuclear deal (JCPOA), and it is clear to the P4+1, the P5+1, Europe, the region, and everyone that the agreement must be implemented well," he stated.

He stressed that the implementation of the JCPOA must be in complete accordance to the text of the agreement. "Not a word too much and not a word too little."

According to the president, Iran has lost billions of dollars in the last four years, thus, it has demands that it will raise later.

"We do not want JCPOA+ and etc. We want the same JCPOA," he reiterated.

Rouhani said that there are three steps in reviving the nuclear deal.

"The first step is to lift the sanctions, which is the responsibility of the United States, and of course the P4+1 must also help. The Americans must lift all the sanctions and the situation must return to what was predicted in 2015 in the JCPOA. They must put aside any sanctions that were imposed under other pretexts or with new labels, and we can return to a healthy, balanced and acceptable economy."

He added that the Americans seem serious at the moment, "but the 'titles' are not enough for us."

The president then went on to draw a framework for the U.S. to lift the sanctions, saying, "They must bring all the numbered sanctions that are known on paper and the whole world should know that they have been lifted."

The United States has imposed numerous unfair sanctions

over the years against Iran.

Rouhani reiterated that Iran is moving within the framework designed by the Leader, and criticized the U.S. for adopting an ambiguous approach.

"So in the area of sanctions, the whole burden is on the United States, which we have seen in new steps, and in some places they are talking ambiguously. Of course, we have taken the right steps to date and we have taken our actions within the framework of the policies of the Leader."

He pointed to Iran's next steps in the revival of the nuclear deal, saying that Iran has to verify that all the sanctions are lifted. He explained that the verification procedure would be done by the Central Bank, the Ministry of Petroleum and the Ministry of Transport and Urban Development.

"When they say they have been removed, we will announce this issue. We have discussed in detail how it should be verified and how long it will take. It is not a very complicated task. If there is cooperation and good faith, we can reach to the conclusion in a short time," he reiterated.

He then moved to elaborate on the third step in reviving the nuclear deal, which is reversing the nuclear steps that Iran has taken as remedial measures.

"The third step is what we have to do and our nuclear program must be completely in accordance with the JCPOA, which we will precisely do and we do not want an extra millimeter," he pointed out.

Rouhani described the third step as "a simple task," since Iran's obligations in the JCPOA have been clearly defined and Iran will implement the same JCPOA.

Reiterating the three steps needed to bring the JCPOA to life, he stated that the first step should be taken by the United



States, which is lifting all the sanctions.

Only then, after a verification of the lifting of all sanctions, Iran will return to full obligations of its commitments, he remarked.

He expressed hope that in the next steps by the P5+1, Iran would feel honesty and seriousness to reach a quick solution to the problem, reiterating Tehran's position that this process "should not be long."

Talks for a possible revival of the JCPOA has already started in Vienna. The latest round of talks within the framework of the JCPOA Joint Commission ended on Tuesday, with the delegates returning to their countries for further consultations. The Joint Commission will reconvene in the following days.

Seyed Abbas Aragbchi, head of the Iranian delegate, said on Tuesday night that there are "fixed principles" for the Iranian side.

"We definitely oppose the step-by-step process," he emphasized.

## Principlist activist calls on presidential candidates to avoid smear campaigns, disappointing remarks

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — A principlist political activist has called on potential presidential candidates to avoid disappointing remarks or smear campaigns.

"Individuals and candidates should not defame each other like what happened in previous" elections, Hassan Ghafouri-Fard, a member of the Islamic Coalition Party, told IRNA on Tuesday.

"Instead of defaming each other they should elaborate on their plans. They should make people hopeful," said Ghafouri-Fard.

He also said political parties should ask presidential candidates to present their plans for running the country.

The presidential and council elections will be held simultaneously on June 18.

The presidential candidates should be confirmed by the Guardian Council. **"Meritocracy"**

Ghafouri-Fard who ran for president in 2001 elections, said a resolution of the problems in the country lies on "meritocracy".

He also said people's participation in the election is very important and rejected speculation that the oversight Guardian Council has a role in demotivating people by rejecting some candidates for parliament or president.

"In my view it is not fair to say that the Guardian Council causes a decrease in people's participation in the elections," the senior principlist activist remarked.

Citing an example, he said, "In the eleventh presidential elections there were 100 candidates for each (parliament) seat." **Assadollah Badamchian announces presidential candidacy**

In a press conference on Wednesday, Assadollah Badamchian, the secretary general of the Islamic Coalition Party, announces presidential candidacy.

However, he did not reject withdrawing candidacy is the unity council of the principlists agree on a single candidate.

The veteran politician also his party respects all candidates in order to avoid an "atmosphere of insult and defamation"

"There is no need that candidates to defame each other."



GHASSEMI



BADAMCHIAN



GHAFOURI-FARD

**"If I announce candidacy, I won't withdraw in anybody's favor"**

Rostam Ghassemi, the oil minister in the Ahmadinejad administration, on Tuesday hinted that he may enter the presidential race. However, he said if he fields candidacy, he will not withdraw in favor any candidate.

"I have not announced candidacy yet, but if I announce candidacy, I will not withdraw in favor of anybody," Ghassemi told a press conference on Tuesday.

He said he is fully aware of Iran's situation and its capacities.

The former IRGC official said he has a "plan and a record"

"The sacred defense era is my record. After the war I was active in reconstruction and I was one of the founders of the Khatam-al-Anbiya (Construction) Headquarters."

Ghassemi was the chief of the Khatam-al-Anbiya (Construction) Headquarters before becoming oil minister.

He said he has a plan to overcome the "difficult living conditions" but his major plan is restructure of the country's institutions.

"We need to change the rail. I have drafted plans in many areas which are based on global experience."

**"Lifting sanctions is first priority and making them ineffective comes next"**

He also said lifting sanctions on Iran is a "first priority" and making sanctions ineffective comes next.

Iran and the remaining parties to the 2015 nuclear deal — JCPOA — started talks in Vienna on April 9 to possibly revitalize the agreement now that the Biden adminis-

tration has expressed willingness to rejoin the multilateral pact. The last round of talks which ended on Tuesday will be resumed next week. The delegations have returned to the capitals for consultations.

Though all sides have expressed optimism over the revitalization of the JCPOA there is no guarantee that the nuclear deal talks will bear fruit during the Rouhani administration, whose term ends in August.

"Now removing sanctions is the first priority and making them ineffective is the next priority. If I want to want to negotiate, I will strengthen the country's economy," Ghassemi pointed out.

The former director of the IRGC construction unit added, "I see no ban on having relations with all countries in the world except the Zionist regime."

On who would be his main competitor, he said it is difficult to predict because the two main rival factions — principlists and reformists - have not yet made decisions.

It is not possible to make such predictions until candidates are endorsed by the Guardian Council, he suggested.

Ghassemi also rejected speculation that he is eyeing the post of mayor in the metropolis of Tehran, saying, "I have no second plan."

The term of the council elections will also come to an end in August and Tehran will see a new mayor.

Parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf and former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad served as Tehran mayors.

Manouchehr Mottaki, the director of the unity council of principlists for the presidential

election, has said he council's most favored figure for the presidential post is Ebrahim Raisi, the current chairman of the Judiciary. However, Raisi has so far been silent about his possible candidacy.

**"Pragmatic government is needed"**

The former chief of the construction body of the IRGC added, "Today, we need a pragmatic government."

Noting that he is aware of the country's potential, Ghassemi said, "I know the world very well and I have had the most foreign trips after the Foreign minister and have met many heads of state."

He added, "We are among the rich countries in the world and people should not live in hardship."

This is a reality that today the country is economically is in a bad situation, the former oil minister said, adding the situation is "not favorable at all" and claimed that "we have reached from poverty to starvation."

In a televised program a few days ago, Mottaki said so far letters have been sent to Judiciary Chief Raisi; Expediency Council secretary Mohsen Rezaei; Parliament speaker Ghalibaf; former Supreme National Security Council secretary Saeed Jalili; Deputy Parliament speaker Amir Hossein Ghazizadeh; and Ali Nikzad, second deputy parliament speaker and former housing and transport minister.

Mottaki also said in recent days letters have also been sent to former director Khatam-al-Anbiya Construction Headquarters Saeed Mohammad; former defense secretary Hossein Dehqan; and former chief of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) to present letters.

Accordingly, Rostam Ghassemi has also been added to the list.



# On the verge of liberation

→1 These airstrikes came after the aggression warplanes launched a raid on the Shada district of Sa'adah governorate, in conjunction with Saudi missile and artillery shelling in various areas of the Razih border district.

However, these strikes didn't prevent the Yemeni forces from marching toward Marib.

Al-Jaish, a Yemeni newspaper affiliated with Yemen's Defense Ministry, said on Monday that the Yemeni Army and Popular Committees are about to liberate the city. According to Al-Jaish, Sanaa has completed all the preparations required to liberate Marib after it successfully targeted and weakened the forces of Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi and other forces affiliated with Daesh and Al Qaeda. The Yemeni newspaper said the army and the committees, which have reached the outskirts of the city, are quietly conducting the battle in the areas where the displaced persons' camps are located, in order to protect the lives of civilians.

It also said that the Hadi forces are hiding behind the displaced people in the vicinity of Marib.

While Sanaa forces are preparing for another round of battles, the Saudi-backed forces seem to be losing interest in the fight against Sanaa. On Tuesday, at least 20 people including a member of parliament defected to Sanaa from Marib. Upon their arrival in Sanaa, they said that the coalition of aggression and



mercenaries live in a difficult situation after the army and the popular committees were able to beleaguer them and confine them to narrow places.

They said that the Saudi-backed forces have suffered great defeats and losses over the course of the fight in Marib.

This is while the Sanaa forces are now planning new operations. The spokesman for the Yemeni Armed Forces, Brigadier General Yahya Saree, said on Tuesday that the armed forces of Yemen are preparing to carry out specific military operations in the name of martyr President Saleh Al-Sammar.

Commenting on the third martyrdom anniversary of Al-Sammar, Saree said the next operation, which will be in the name of Al-Sammar, will be carried out in the proper time and place.

Al-Sammar was the head of the Supreme Political Council of Yemen and martyred in April 2018 after the Saudi-led coalition targeted his convoy in western Yemen.

The Saudis began a war on Yemen in March 2015 in the hope of eradicating Yemen's Ansarallah movement, which they accused of being backed by Iran.

But after more than five years of non-

stop aggression, the Saudis not only failed to defeat Ansarallah, but they also helped the movement become even stronger than ever by continuing their aggression.

With the Sanaa forces advancing toward the center of Marib, the U.S. ramped up its face to rescue the Saudis by presenting a ceasefire initiative that, if accepted, would prevent Sanaa from liberating Marib. The initiative was coldly received by Sanaa as it sees the initiative as an American ploy aimed to protect the Saudis from suffering a defeat in Marib. That may explain why the Saudis rushed to welcome the American initiative.

Reuters reported on Tuesday that the Sanaa forces battling the Saudi-backed troops in Marib are in a better situation and have more advanced weaponry than pro-Saudi troops.

Citing military sources, Reuter said that Saudi strikes are the only thing keeping Marib, home to major oil and gas fields, from falling.

In an attempt to prevent Marib city from falling in the hands of the Yemen forces, Saudi Arabia has launched an air campaign against the Yemeni forces in a number of provinces.

However, Saudi Arabia failed to stop the march of the Sanaa forces toward Marib. This debacle is the latest in a series of failures that Saudi Arabia has faced in Yemen in recent weeks despite enjoying overwhelming international support, including from the United States.

## Iran rejects gradual revival of JCPOA as EU mulls sequential return

**POLITICAL DESK** **TEHRAN** — The European Union has raised the prospect of reviving the 2015 Iran nuclear deal by pursuing a possible sequencing of measures as Iran underlined the need to revive the nuclear deal in one major step.

Iran and the remaining parties to the nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), resumed their talks on Tuesday with the purpose of finding a way to resolve challenges related to the JCPOA.

The Tuesday meeting of the JCPOA 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. Seyed Abbas Araghchi, the deputy foreign minister of Iran, led the Iranian negotiating team at the Vienna talks.

"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 US to the JCPOA and its full and effective implementation," the European Union External Action Service said in a statement following the Tuesday meeting.

The statement claimed that Iran and the P4+1 — China, Russia, France, and the UK plus Germany — decided to create another expert group to study the possible sequencing of measures intended to revive the nuclear deal.

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

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.

Araghchi issued a statement after the meeting, but he did not point to any sequential plan to revive the JCPOA. He denied reports of Iran agreeing to a temporary agreement to revive the JCPOA.

He said the subject of reaching a temporary agreement has never been broached at the talks between Iran and the P4+1. Araghchi 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.

"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.

While the EU openly spoke of a sequential return, an informed source told Press TV that Iran does not accept the sequential lifting of sanctions in the ongoing talks on the revival of the nuclear agreement and the bans must be removed altogether.

"The Islamic Republic would by no means settle for the suspension, easing or extending waiver of sanctions and that the bans should entirely be removed," the source said, adding, "A one-week verification of lifting anti-Iran bans is not possible and it takes between three and six months to verify the lifting of sanctions."

Iran has made it clear that it won't accept any gradual or step-by-step return to the JCPOA and that all the sanctions that the previous U.S. administration imposed on Iran must be lifted all at once. Iran said it will verify the lifting of these sanctions and then decide on whether to return to the tattered nuclear deal.

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.

Negotiating teams of Iran and the P4+1 as well as the U.S. are expected to return to their capitals to conduct consultations with decision-makers. They will resume their negotiations next week. The top Iranian nuclear negotiator has warned that Tehran will stop the Vienna talks if the process of discussions tilts toward bullying, bargaining, and wasting time. Iran has said it only wants to revive the deal without adding anything to its original version while the U.S. has expressed interest in "lengthening and strengthening" it. Some U.S. officials have said that the nuclear deal needs to be reopened.

## Russia, China hail success at Vienna nuclear talks

**POLITICAL DESK** **TEHRAN** — Russian and Chinese diplomats participating in Vienna discussions over how to resurrect the 2015 Iran nuclear deal welcome progress made in the latest round of talks.

Wang Qun, the Chinese envoy to the United Nations and other international organizations in Vienna, said that the negotiations in recent days have been "beneficial" and that the current negotiations have entered a new stage, according to the Chinese state news agency Xinhua.

Wang, who leads the Chinese negotiating team at the Vienna talks, underlined the need to completely lift U.S. sanctions on Iran and third parties.

"Complete lifting of all relevant sanctions, including those on Iran and third parties, is the key to the success of the current negotiations to revive the 2015 Iran nuclear deal," the Chinese diplomat was quoted by Xinhua as saying after attending the latest round of talks between Iran and the P4+1 (China, Russia, France, and the UK plus Germany).

Diplomats from Iran and the P4+1 are in the Austrian capital of Vienna to discuss ways to revitalize the nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Over the past few weeks, they held several rounds of intensive talks aimed at bringing Iran and the U.S. back to full compliance with the nuclear deal.

The latest meeting of the JCPOA Joint Commission was held on Tuesday. The meeting was chaired by Enrique Mora, the



deputy secretary general and political director of the European External Action Service (EEAS), and attended by representatives of China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom and Iran. Seyed Abbas Araghchi, the deputy foreign minister of Iran, led the Iranian negotiating team.

"China welcomes the Joint Commission's intensive talks through the two processes -- the nuclear implementation and sanctions-lifting working groups' work, and the 'proximity talks' with the United States -- to draft texts of an arrangement for the U.S. and Iran to resume compliance with the deal,"

Wang noted.

The Chinese diplomat said that all parties now have a clearer understanding of the framework and main elements of the aforementioned arrangement. These efforts laid a solid foundation for the next stage of negotiations of the Joint Commission, he noted.

Wang pointed out that China firmly supports the resumption of JCPOA implementation by the U.S. and Iran "as soon as possible," and that China is ready to work hand in hand with relevant parties to promote the talks on substantive texts, with the aim

of achieving results acceptable to all parties at an early date.

Russia also welcomed the Vienna talks by saying the so-called "maximum pressure" campaign launched by the previous U.S. administration against Iran has failed.

Russia's representative to the international organizations in Vienna Mikhail Ulyanov said on Twitter that there is no realistic alternative to the JCPOA.

"Why do almost all countries support restoration of JCPOA? Because it is a key element of the international non-proliferation architecture. The deal, if restored, can provide credible assurances of peaceful character of the Iranian nuclear program via intrusive IAEA verification," the Russian diplomat tweeted.

He added, "Some people oppose JCPOA restoration. But is there a realistic alternative? No. Maximum pressure policy totally failed and just prompted development of the Iranian nuclear program beyond 2015 parameters. This is a matter of fact. Does anybody want this trend to continue?"

Former U.S. President Donald Trump initiated his so-called pressure campaign against Iran after withdrawing the U.S. from the JCPOA in May 2018. According to this policy, the White House imposed far-reaching economic sanctions on Iran, which prompted Iran to reduce its commitments under the JCPOA. Iran is now calling on the U.S. to remove sanctions in exchange for reversing its own nuclear activities.

## SPORTS

### Iran advance to FIFA Futsal World Cup Lithuania 2021

**SPORTS DESK** **TEHRAN** — Iran will represent Asia at the FIFA Futsal World Cup Lithuania 2021.

The AFC Executive Committee has agreed to the criteria of establishing the AFC's representatives for the World Cup, following the cancellation of the AFC Futsal Championship Kuwait 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The AFC Executive Committee decided to combine two sets of criteria — the first takes reference from the top five teams of the most recent edition (the AFC Futsal Championship Chinese Taipei 2018), and the second applies a point system which calculates the top five teams from the overall ranking of the last three editions of the AFC Futsal Championship (i.e., 2014, 2016 and 2018 editions).

Based on the results of Criteria 1 and 2, the top three recurring teams — Iran, Japan and Uzbekistan — will be nominated as the AFC's representatives for the global futsal showpiece, which is scheduled to take place from September 12 to October 3.

Additionally, playoff matches will be organized for the remaining teams — Iraq, Lebanon, Thailand and Vietnam — to determine the final two slots for Asia, with the draw to be held next week at the AFC House in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

### Golmohammadi proud of Persepolis after tough win against Goa

**SPORTS DESK** **TEHRAN** — Persepolis football coach Yahya Golmohammadi is happy and proud with a win against Goa at the 2021 AFC Champions League Group E tie on Tuesday.

Persepolis fell behind against Goa, with Edu Bedia scoring a historic first AFC Champions League goal for the Indian team but Iran side's superior quality prevailed with Mahdi Torabi and Jalal Hosseini shutting back as last season's finalists made it three wins out of three.

Golmohammadi said he knew his side would get the job done against FC Goa but admitted the Indian side had proven tough to beat.

"Everyone thought it was going to be an easy match for Persepolis," said Golmohammadi. "As head coach I knew it was going to be a tough match."

"We controlled the game in the first half and in the second half, we controlled the pace of the match and the players never surrendered."

"I want to thank all the players for their efforts. We could have scored the third goal but our opponents did well in defending. Getting three points in a match is tough but we will continue the way we have been playing in the next match. This win is dedicated to all Iran fans," he concluded.

### Khatibi blames fatigue for Tractor's inability to score

**SPORTS DESK** **TEHRAN** — Tractor FC head coach Rasoul Khatibi blamed fatigue for his side's inability to score in their 0-0 draw against Iraq's Air Force Club of Iraq in the 2021 AFC Champions League on Tuesday.

The Iranian side huffed and puffed but could not penetrate its opponent defense.

Tractor has earned three draw out of three matches at Sharjah Stadium.

"This game was totally physical, and we tried to fight man on man and we did well," said Khatibi.

"After the 70th minute our players were exhausted and both teams had to stay focused to see it through. We had a couple of chances to score but their goalkeeper was focused and stopped us scoring."

"For the next match, we will make sure we have a quick recovery to avoid this experience of losing energy in the latter part of the game. The team with the better recovery will have a better chance in the next match," he added.

### Persepolis legend Jasemian hospitalized with coronavirus

**SPORTS DESK** **TEHRAN** — Persepolis football club legend Hamid Jasemian has tested positive for COVID-19.

Jasemian, 85, has been hospitalized at a hospital in Tehran, capital of Iran.

He is the Persepolis' first ever captain.

Providing the latest statistics on the coronavirus infection, Sima Sadat Lari said on Wednesday that the total number of people tested positive for COVID-19 in the country has surpassed 2,311,800 after the detection of 24,886 new cases since yesterday.

The pandemic has claimed 388 lives over the past 24 hours, bringing the overall coronavirus death toll in Iran to 67,913, she added.

More than 1,823,950 patients have recovered from the coronavirus infection so far or have been discharged from hospitals across Iran, Lari said.

Among those undergoing treatment at present, 4,991 are being kept in the intensive care units of medical centers because of critical health conditions, she said.

The spokeswoman also said more than 14.73 million coronavirus diagnostic tests have been carried out in Iran so far and over 497,000 people have received the first dose of coronavirus vaccine.

The number of people infected with COVID-19 across the world has surpassed 143 million and the death toll has exceeded 3.06 million.

### Moghanlou's goal chosen the Best Goal of ACL Matchday Two

**SPORTS DESK** **TEHRAN** — Shahriar Moghanlou's first goal against Al Rayyan of Qatar was voted the best goal of the 2021 AFC Champions League Matchday Two (West).

The Persepolis forward won the poll with 58 percent of votes. Persepolis scored just two minutes after the interval against Al Rayyan to draw level, but it was far from finished.

Lulling the defense into a false sense of security with a jogging build up, Moghanlou used one well-timed burst of speed to leap and get on the end of a perfectly placed Siamak Nemati cross to give his side the lead.

Esteghlal winger Mohammad Naderi came second with 41 percent for his goal against Iraq's Al Shorta.



## Industry ministry to revive 1,600 idle units in this calendar year

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — As announced by the head of Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO), Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry plans to revive 1,600 idle industrial units throughout the country in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 20).

Ali Rasoulani said that these units are generally stagnant or operating below capacity for a variety of reasons.

Referring to reviving 1,557 idle units in the country during the past Iranian calendar year, the official said that 59 percent of those units' problem was due to the financing.

With the aim of reactivating stagnant units or units that are operating below capacity, 900 consultants from the private sector and knowledge-based companies were selected in the form of industry clinics across the country to recognize the weaknesses of these units, the official stated.

He also informed that the new incentive package of ISIPO, which has also been approved by the minister of industry, mining and trade, has been announced.

Deputy Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister Mehdi Sadeqi Niaraki has said that over 6,500 new industrial units were established across the country during the past year which created jobs for over 121,000 people.

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Commodities worth \$915m exported from Markazi province

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Commodities valued at \$915 million were exported from Markazi province, in central Iran, during the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20), the governor general of the province stated.

Ali Aqazadeh also put the value of imports to the province at \$475 million in the past year, saying that the positive trade balance was achieved in the province due to the good cooperation between the production units and enterprises with the Industry, Mining and Trade Department, Customs Department, and Chamber of Commerce.

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

Mehdi Mir-Ashrafi also put the weight of non-oil trade at 146.4 million tons, and said that the figure shows a 25-million-ton annual decline, which is the result of sanctions and coronavirus pandemic.

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

Among the country's non-oil export destinations, China was the first, with importing \$8.9 billion worth of products, Iraq was the second with importing \$7.3 billion, the United Arab Emirates the third with importing \$4.6 billion, Turkey the fourth with importing \$2.5 billion, and Afghanistan the fifth with importing \$2.2 billion, Mir-Ashrafi announced, and named gasoline, natural gas, polyethylene, propane, and pistachio as Iran's major exported products during the past year.

He further named Iran's top sources of non-oil imports in the said time, as China with exporting \$9.7 billion worth of products to the Islamic Republic, the UAE with \$9.6 billion, Turkey with \$4.3 billion, India with \$2.1 billion, and Germany with \$1.8 billion, respectively, and mentioned corn, cellphone, rice, oil meal and oil seeds, wheat, and raw oil as the major imported items.

# Annual iron ore pellet output up 10%

**→ 1** Iran's iron ore pellet production capacity exceeded 66 million tons in the previous Iranian calendar year.

IMIDRO's latest report on under-construction iron ore pellet production units in Iran indicates that a total of 25.92 million tons are expected to be added to Iran's iron ore pellet production capacity by the time these units are completed in the fiscal year 1402 (2023-24).

Production of iron ore concentrate also reached 49.714 million tons during the previous calendar year to register a five-percent rise year on year.

According to the Industry, Mining and

Trade Ministry data, of the mentioned figure 3.533 million tons were produced in the last month of the previous year (February 19-March 20).

As reported, the country's major iron ore concentrate producers had managed to produce about 47.306 million tons of the mentioned product in the Iranian calendar year 1398.

Last year, major mining companies also produced 902,454 tons of granulated iron ore, to register a decrease of 54 percent compared to the preceding year (1,965,733 tons).

In its outlook plan for the Iranian calendar year 1404 (2025-2026) Iran has envisaged



production of 55 million tons of steel per annum, and to achieve this target the country requires to extract 160 million tons of iron ore.

In a bid to prevent the exports of unprocessed minerals, creating more value-added and meeting the requirements of domestic producers for the raw materials, Iran has

levied a 25-percent duty on the exports of raw minerals (especially iron ore) since September 2019.

The duty is aimed at encouraging the production of more processed minerals such as pellets and concentrate instead of selling the raw minerals.

## Iran-Pakistan 3rd border crossing launched

**→ 1** Speaking in the inauguration ceremony, Eslami praised the two countries' efforts for the expansion of trade ties and said: "In order to develop our relations and exchanges with our friend and neighbor Pakistan, we pursued some serious measures in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the first of which was the inauguration of the second border crossing between the two countries last year and this year too we are witnessing the opening of the third official border with this country."

"This will completely change the level and nature of trade exchanges and commutes between the two countries," Eslami stressed.

"Adding two official trading terminals as well as six border markets will help us move towards good trade conditions with Pakistan," he added.

As reported, so far 280 billion rials (about \$6.6 million) has been invested for the construction of the Pishin-Mand crossing which is expanded over 13 hectares of land.

Iran and Pakistan share 950-kilometer of borders and the two countries have created several markets across the border unilaterally, however establishing a joint market is also on the agenda.

Back in March, Iran and Pakistan had held an online meeting to discuss issues related to developing border trade and reached an agreement to establish the two

countries' first joint border market.

The development of the joint border markets is expected to improve the business activities of border residents, he added.

Earlier in December 2020, Pakistan's Advisor to Prime Minister on Commerce and Investment Abdul Razak Dawood had said his country was seeking to enhance ties with the Islamic Republic of Iran, especially in economic areas.

Considering Pakistan's relatively large consumer market, expansion of trade with the country and boosting exports to its market has become one of Iran's priorities in recent years.

## South Korea releases \$30m of Iran's blocked money

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Hossein Tanhaei, head of the Iran-South Korea Joint Chamber of Commerce, said on Wednesday that South Korea has released \$30 million of the Islamic Republic's frozen oil money in the Asian country to be used for purchasing COVID-19 vaccine.

According to Tanhaei, South Korea had reached an agreement with Iran on releasing \$1 billion of the mentioned frozen funds but so far only a small portion of this agreement has been realized.

The official underlined the significance of the negotiations on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) for the return of the country's blocked resources in other countries, saying: "If the negotiations reach an agreement, the



process of repaying South Korea's debt to Iran will be facilitated and accelerated."

Iran and South Korea appear to be moving toward settling the thorny issue of Iran's assets after a few rounds of failed negotiations in January. They are eager to

find a solution to the issue. Over the past few months, both of them had proposed a number of solutions none of which broke the deadlock over the assets.

Back in January, Tanhaei had announced that the Islamic Republic was going to negotiate to barter its \$7 billion of frozen oil money in South Korean banks for the COVID-19 vaccine and other basic goods.

"Yesterday, we had a meeting with First Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri about our country's blocked money in South Korea, and suggestions were made to be presented to South Korea on how to barter our money in this country with a variety of goods including COVID-19 vaccine," Tanhaei told ILNA on January 3.

During his visit to Iran in January,

Jong-kun met with Iran's central banker to discuss how to release the Iranian assets. According to Iranian media, the South Korean diplomat proposed to provide Iran with ambulances and coronavirus test kits using Iran's assets, but Iran rejected the offer, saying that it wants to use the money to purchase foods and medicines. Iran also said that the Korean proposal did not include the release of all Iran's frozen assets.

With the negotiations still going on, Tehran and Seoul seem to be in the final stage of resolving the assets issue given South Korea's close contacts with the Biden administration, which has promised to rekindle diplomacy with Iran by reviving the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, formally known as the JCPOA.

## Heads of joint chambers of commerce gather to discuss economic issues

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — The first meeting of the heads of Iran's joint chambers of commerce council in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 21) was held on Wednesday to explore the country's economic issues in the current year.

The meeting which was partly physical and partly virtual, was attended by the Head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Gholam-Hossein Shafeie and the heads of the country's joint chambers of commerce.

Addressing the meeting, Shafeie mentioned some of the main issues that the country's foreign trade is currently facing, saying: "In our country, politics has overshadowed the economy and the economy is paying the price for politics. We cannot expect a positive change in foreign trade and the economy unless there is a change in this situation."

"Development and economic growth determine the power and security of each country. In the past, world powers used to establish military bases in other countries, but now this approach has changed, for example, China



ICCIMA Head Gholam-Hossein Shafeie (C)

is trying to establish a Chinatown in every country. We still do not believe in this strategy in our country," he explained.

The official stressed the need for having economic representatives in any major negotiation or bilateral meet-

ings with foreign countries, saying: "We must also have an economic representative on joint foreign negotiation committees; even if it is not a specialized committee, a sub-committee for the economy should be formed and a trade delegation or representative should be present in any negotiation."

Shafei further pointed to the situation of Iran's joint chambers with the neighboring countries and said: "The infrastructure should be developed on the borders with these countries."

"Transportation and customs have serious problems in many of these borders. Even if the sanctions are lifted, serious problems will continue to exist in such regions," he regretted.

Further in the meeting, the heads of the country's joint chambers of commerce presented reports on the trade relations with their associated countries.

They also underlined the most important issues and problems facing the traders and called for the removal of internal barriers and restrictions and integrated management in foreign trade.

## TEDPIX drops 12,500 points on Wednesday

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), lost 12,527 points to 1.207 million on Wednesday.

Over 5.528 billion securities worth 39.019 trillion rials (about \$929 million) were traded at the TSE on Wednesday.

The first market's index fell 9,745 points, and the second market's index dropped 23,336 points.

After several days of decline, TEDPIX had risen 2,824 points to 1.219 million on Tuesday.

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

Some, on the other hand, believe that the government should not interfere in

the stock market, saying the government's pre-ordered and unrealistic pricing of some state-owned shares is the main reason for the capital market's current downward trend.

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

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

Last week, in the 216th meeting of the Government Economic Coordination Headquarters, President Rouhani presented a report on the government's supportive measures for the stock market, saying: "This year, which has been named the year of supporting production and eliminating obstacles, the government is trying to remove obstacles to the growth of the capital market and will try to encourage people

to enter this market with the necessary training and arrangements."

The government supports the capital market to direct liquidity into productive sectors and, in general, to de-centralize the economy and to help economic transparency, he said, adding that the government will continue to offer shares in state-owned enterprises and institutions in the capital market.

In its latest supportive decision, the government has approved to inject 240 trillion rials (about \$5.7 billion) of resources into the market in the form of bonds which most experts evaluate as a positive measure. It is said that these funds are gradually injected into the market and help increase the liquidity until new resources enter the market.

It has been said that these resources that enter the market will also motivate shareholders, and therefore real investors will be encouraged to invest in the market.

In response to Rouhani's remarks, stock



market expert Amirali Amirbaqeri, believes that letting the supply and demand to determine the prices in the market is the most important support that the government can have for the capital market.

"The situation must develop in such a way that the country's economy can continue to live in real life based on the real forces of supply and demand," Amirbaqeri stressed.



# Israel seeks an unchecked nuclear monopoly: ex-Senate candidate

## ➔ 1 What is Israel's history in sabotage operations and assassinations of scientists and political figures?

Israel's history of terrorism goes back to its inception with the Deir Yassin massacre, the bombing of the King David Hotel, and the assassination of Count Bernadotte.

In the case of Iran, the involvement of Israel in the assassinations of Iranian nuclear scientists and acts of terror in Tehran, Baluchistan Province, Khuzestan Province, and Iranian Azerbaijan is a matter of record. So Sabra and Shatila in 1982, the ongoing murders of Palestinians, the atrocities in Gaza, and all of the illegal military operations and support of terrorist acts directed against Lebanon, Libya, and Assad's Syria are among others.

But what is most incredible is the record of Israeli acts of subversion, espionage and terror directed against the United States, its chief supporter. Look at the record: The Lavon Affair; the Ben Gurion-Meyer Lansky link to the Kennedy Assassination in Dallas over Dimona; the USS Library attack in June of 1967; the NUMEC nuclear materials thefts in Apollo, Pennsylvania; the PROMIS Affair; the Pollard, Ben-Ami, and AIPAC spy cases; the Israeli role with Saudi Arabia in 9-11; and the Mossad connection to the Epstein-Maxwell sex trafficking ring used to blackmail American and Western politicians.

And yet, the American public still doesn't get it: Iran isn't their enemy. Assad isn't their enemy; Putin and Russia aren't their enemies; the Palestinians aren't their enemy. Israel and the Zionist Occupied Government they have are their enemies.

**Don't you think Israel, with this behavior, has turned into the most dangerous regime in West Asia? How could the countries in West Asia deal with this problem?**

Iran is a model for the proper Resistance



Model to apply in self-defense against the Zionist Beast:

Oppose the deliberate cultural subversion of sovereign people by Zionist utilization of sexual perversion, pornography, and abortion on demand to weaken the moral will and impose demographic winter upon those nations Israel and Zionism consider their primary opponents.

Strengthen one's national defense, intelligence capabilities, and domestic security apparatuses.

Most importantly, enter into alliances with those whose military strength is feared by Israel and its Western enablers. I'm referring principally to Putin and Russia, along with the Chinese, who understand that opposition to the Beast is also based on working toward the de-dollarization of indigenous economies and the larger global economy. The undermining of the American dollar as the reserve currency

of the globe will work hand-in-glove with the United States' national debt and its military over-extensions to end the global aspirations of the Zio-American-Anglo Empire.

Iran has also worked very well with American dissidents on the American Right who want their Old Republic restored and who are sick of Zionism, Globalism, and the tyranny directed at them as well as foreign peoples they do not want wars with. These relationships are as important as the alliances with Putin and China.

**Do you think the U.S. and Israel are accomplices in sabotaging Iran's nuclear facility or is Israel acting unilaterally?**

It is clear that the Zionist Occupied Government of the United States is absolutely supporting Israel's criminal activity directed against Natanz, Israel's use of the MEK-MKO, ISIS, and al-Qaeda against Iran and Syria, and

actual and potential illegal Israeli military actions directed against the countries of the region, especially Iran, Syria, and Southern Lebanon.

In the case of the Soleimani Assassination, the President of the United States in January of 2020 carried out this international crime in the explicit interest of his Zionist advisors, domestic Zionist supporters, and the Netanyahu regime. This illustrates how bad and how dangerously reckless all of this really is.

**How could Iran contain Israel's attempts to undermine Tehran's influence and power?**

Simply by continuing the multi-faceted strategy of resistance I have already outlined. In this regard, it is my hope that Mr. Putin and Mr. Lavrov in particular, will make it very clear that American Zionist and Neo-Conservative aggression against Iran will be no more tolerated than Zionist subversion and threats over the Donbass and Crimea, or in the Baltics, Eastern Europe, the Eastern Mediterranean, the Black Sea, and the Bosphorus. In this regard, the Russians understand that Zio-subversion is military, political, economic, and cultural and that the perpetrators must be made to understand that their persistence will not be met with appeasement, but with retaliation that will extract a price these evil people will realize they cannot pay.

Meet evil with moral, political, economic, cultural, and military strength that the Zionist and Globalist Beast cannot match. That is the key.

And know that innocent Americans need liberation from their own captivity at the hands of this evil monster. In this regard, I see Iran, Syria, and Putin's Russia as my allies against what has hijacked my own country in my own lifetime. God be with you.

## Lack of trust exists in Vienna talks: American foreign policy expert

➔ 1 Nevertheless, Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araçchi has said the Vienna talks have entered a new phase, adding that Iran has proposed a draft agreement that could be a basis for revitalizing the multilateral agreement.

While opponents of the Iran nuclear deal are skeptical of the result of negotiations, Slavin emphasizes that she is optimistic. "It sounds like steady progress is occurring even though things would be much faster if the U.S.-Iran talks were direct."

Asked about the role of certain groups and politicians that oppose restoring the JCPOA, including Republicans and some Democrats in the Senate, Slavin, who is acting director of Future of Iran Initiative at the Atlantic Council's South Asia Center, notes that "they do not have the power

to interfere. As long as we are talking about a return to the original deal, Congress can't stop the president from using his executive authority."

Commenting on Israel's Mossad sabotage operation in the Natanz nuclear facility, Slavin points out that "Israel wants to retain its monopoly as a possessor of nuclear weapons and will never let an adversary in the region get close to a bomb."

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei as Iran's religious and political leader has issued a decree declaring production, stockpiling and use of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear arms, as haram (religiously banned).

Slavin also says Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu orders such sabotage acts for domestic consumption.

"Bibi Netanyahu also has domestic political problems and he thinks these kinds of actions make him look tough," she adds.

Given Stuxnet experience, many political figures in Iran believe that Israel and U.S. administration are accomplices in targeting Iran's nuclear facilities.

In an interview with the Tehran Times, Fereydoon Abbasi Davani, the head of the Parliament Energy Committee, said that the U.S. and UK are accomplices in the nuclear sabotage at the Natanz site because their intelligence services helped the Israeli regime to conduct such act.

Questioning the idea, Slavin says that "despite the U.S. and Israel collaborated on Stuxnet, the subsequent sabotage and assassinations are by Israel alone."

## Islamicity Indices useful tool for both Muslims, non-Muslims

**BY ZAHRA MIRZAFARJOUYAN**  
TEHRAN — Stating that Islamicity Indices are truly a useful instrument, Prof. Askari believes Islam has said all that modern economics recommends but much more for a flourishing society, economic system, and institutions.

"Islamicity Indices are truly a useful instrument. They can encourage reform in Muslim countries. They also provide a simple instrument to explain Islamic teachings to both Muslims and non-Muslims. What Islam besides its mechanical demands. And in the process, they provide a ray of hope for illuminating the real meaning of Islam to non-Muslims and unifying our divided world," says Professor Hossein Askari, a scholar of economic development in West Asia and in Islam and the founder of Islamicity Indices.

Following is the full text of the interview with him:

**How would you summarize the general state of Muslim countries around the world?**

Sad. Most of the world has prospered and moved on over the last 50 years but the Muslim world has lagged in almost every way—in economic prosperity, education, healthcare, social justice, freedom, political participation and plagued by corruption. There are internal conflicts in many Muslim countries as well as Muslim countries squaring off against one another in regional conflicts. Many Muslim countries are still in the grips of invisible colonialism and subservience to others, while most leaders dare not stand up when Muslims are mistreated in powerful countries in fear of repercussions. In sum, Muslim countries are in the grips of a crisis from which there is little hope of escape if they continue as they have been doing. They are in dire need of transformative reforms.

**What you have said paints a dismal picture. So what foundational reforms are needed in Muslim countries to enhance their economic and social progress?**

Countries prosper when they establish effective institutions. Effective institutions promote trust, moral behavior, cooperation, hard work and self-improvement. These in turn support prosperity and progress. The most important institution is the rule of law—everyone

equal in front of the law, treated equally and without bias. The rule of law goes a long way in promoting better human behavior. Hope conquers resentment and promotes trust and cooperation. The rule of law creates an environment where an individual feels anything is possible with dedication and hard work, not for a privileged few but for all. It is the magical potion for positive change.

Next, establishing the proper framework for what is allowed and what is prohibited, monitoring it and enforcing it. That is the rules of the game. What can individuals and companies do and what they cannot. Establishing the needed guardrails to protect society and all its members from harm and exploitation. A responsible government would also set out forward-looking and economic programs, such as availability of quality education for all, first-class infrastructure, and consistent monetary and fiscal policies.

Invariably, there is a need for institutions that protect the vulnerable. That is a social safety net. Everyone should have the minimum for a dignified life. This does not discourage hard work but protects those who cannot care for themselves.

Finally, I must add the absolute need for freedom for everyone to pursue their dreams. None of this would lead to much unless there is individual freedom to pursue one's calling in life.

If all of this is done, a country would bloom and blossom. Such a foundation is what modern economics advises. Effective institutions plus freedom are the magical potions for success. Within 20 years you would not recognize a country that adopted such a vision. Unfortunately, most countries are too timid and will not stick it out for the few years needed.

**Can these reforms be done on a piecemeal basis or are they best adopted in combination and as a whole?**

Reforms have a synergy. You should not adopt them one at a time with long lags in between. If you do, then you will not get the hoped-for results. So yes, you want to adopt reforms simultaneously. Islamic teachings provide a roadmap for such a journey and for its success.

**How can Islamic teachings help in this quest?**

It may surprise some of your readers but Islam has a lot to say about the ideal economic system and its institutions. In fact, I would add that Islam says all that modern economics and its experts like Adam Smith recommend but much more for a flourishing society, economic system and its institutions and all of this with morality and justice as scaffolding. I will not repeat what is readily available. Professor Abbas Mirakhor, from whom I have learned much about Islam, and I wrote a book—Ideal Islamic Economy—that says a great deal about this subject. Later, I tried to capture these teachings in numbers in what I have called Islamicity Indices in another book co-authored with Hossein Mohammadkhan and Liza Mydin—Reformation and Development in the Muslim World: Islamicity Indices as Benchmark—that explains Islamicity Indices as the instrument for assessing how closely a country follows Islamic teachings and monitoring the country's successes and failures. These indices can help in much-needed reforms.

**What are Islamicity Indices?**

These are four basic indices that are based on teachings from the holy Qur'an—Economy, Legal and Governance, Human and Political Rights, International Relations—and these are combined to form a fifth Overall Islamicity Index. The goal of these indices is to paint a panorama of how a country would look if the people and government adopted the institutions and practices recommended in Islam. These indices tell us what a Muslim community that follows Islamic teachings would look to an observer. The indices are constructed in this way so that Muslim and non-Muslim countries can be compared. In this way, we can see which countries have knowingly or unknowingly followed this principle and what has been the result or outcome.

**How can Islamic Indices help?**

Recall what we are asking is what reforms does a country need. These are reforms that would be in line with what Islam preaches. So in each of these four indices, we can see where a country is succeeding and where it is failing. In each index, while we may focus on one number, the index has many components or teachings and thus there is much more

detail available. So a country can see what it needs to do in order to do better. Then this can be monitored from year to year to assess its progress and where policies have succeeded and where they have failed. Broadly speaking, in a rule-abiding Muslim community there must be freedom, no poverty alongside wealth, accountability of rulers and governments and socio-economic justice. It is crucial to note that in most Muslim countries sustained and meaningful change will come in an Islamic context. It is for this reason that prevailing conditions and progress should be assessed in an Islamic context.

**What do your Indices show? Which countries appear to follow these teachings?**

A: We have estimated these indices beginning in the year 2000. The results are pretty consistent over time. For the latest year, 2019, the top ten countries, that is countries that have adopted the institutions recommended in Islam are: New Zealand, Sweden, Iceland, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Denmark, Ireland, Norway, Luxembourg and Australia. These are generally regarded as successful and peaceful countries. Sadly, Muslim countries are way down the list. You can see the details and much more by going onto our website: IslamicityIndices.Org.

**Are you hopeful that positive change can be achieved and what is the role of individual Muslims in this?**

All I can do is hope and pray. Muslims must learn more about their religion. Debate its meaning for their lives and their country. And demand their governments to adopt the needed reforms. And see each year how they have performed and try to do better in following years.

**Is there anything else you would like to say?**

A: Yes. Islamicity Indices are truly a useful instrument. They can encourage reform in Muslim countries. They also provide a simple instrument to explain Islamic teachings to both Muslims and non-Muslims. What Islam besides its mechanical demands. And in the process, they provide a ray of hope for illuminating the real meaning of Islam to non-Muslims and unifying our divided world. Thank you for this opportunity and for your questions.

## Powerful explosion rocks sensitive Israeli missile factory

A powerful explosion took place on Tuesday at a sensitive defense factory during a test in central Israel. There are so far no reports of casualties.

According to Haaretz, the explosion occurred during a 'routine test' by the Tomer factory for advanced weapons, which develops rocket engines, the Ofek satellite launchers and houses various types of missiles. Locals say they heard an explosion and saw a mushroom cloud, with some filming it. The Israeli daily said there were no reports of injuries from the explosion.

"Ramle locals say they heard an explosion and saw a mushroom cloud, with some filming it," the newspaper said, adding that an investigation was launched into the incident. Officials may have underestimated the collateral damage of the test which led

In response to the blast, Tomer said "this was a controlled test with no exceptional circumstances."

Tomer's offices are located in central Israel, and in proximity to residential areas. The company manufactures missiles for use by the IDF and other Israeli defense systems. They are the manufacturers behind Israel's Arrow 4 missile interception system.

Senior defense officials are now investigating what went wrong, and whether guidelines were adhered to.

Established in 2018, Tomer is affiliated to the Israeli ministry of military affairs and is the manufacturer of a new ballistic missile system, the Arrow-4. Israel's Arrow-2 and Arrow-3 missile systems are already operational to intercept incoming missiles in the atmosphere and space.

Back in February, Israel announced that it was developing the Arrow-4 with the United States.

"The development of Arrow-4 together with our American partners will result in a technological and operational leap forward, preparing us for the future battlefield and evolving threats in the Middle East and beyond," Israeli minister of military affairs Benny Gantz said in a statement at the time.

## Turkey postpones Afghanistan peace summit over Taliban no-show

Turkey says it is postponing a much-anticipated Afghan peace conference in Istanbul until the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

"We thought that it would be beneficial to postpone it... We consulted Qatar, the United States and the United Nations and decided to hold it after Ramadan and Eid festivities," Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu told the Haberturk news channel.

Cavusoglu added that there is "no need to hurry" after the recent decision by the US to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan.

The Eid al-Fitr holiday follows Ramadan, which ends this year in mid-May. The international conference, deemed essential for the war-torn country's future amid escalating violence, was scheduled to be held from April 24 until May 4.

The Taliban had earlier refused to attend any Afghan peace summit until all foreign forces were pulled out of Afghanistan.

## Bin Salman backed Israeli plot to overthrow Jordan king

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has reportedly backed an Israeli "scheme" to overthrow Jordanian King Abdullah II in exchange for the guardianship of al-Aqsa Mosque in the occupied Old City of Jerusalem al-Quds.

Lebanon's Al Akhbar newspaper, quoting a Jordanian security official, said in a report on Tuesday that the coup attempt against King Abdullah II was a "scheme" involving Israel, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and the United States.

The Beirut-based daily said the Saudi crown prince had agreed to support the Israeli plot in return for the transfer of the guardianship over the holy sites in the occupied Jerusalem al-Quds from Jordan to Saudi Arabia. According to the unnamed official, Israel planned the coup against the Jordanian king over Amman's opposition to the so-called U.S. deal of the century, which allows the Tel Aviv regime to annex settlements in the occupied West Bank and the Jordan Valley.

The source said bin Salman, with U.S. approval, had authorized the Saudi royal court to make the necessary preparations for the transfer of power at the family level, and had tasked former Fatah leader Muhammad Dahlan with mobilizing Palestinians in Jordan and local tribes.

According to the report, Saudi Arabia armed some southern tribes, issuing them citizenship in return for carrying out military actions if necessary. In the meantime, the unnamed official referred to the plot as "large and complicated" and underlined that the coup involved many parties but the Jordanian King had succeeded in foiling it.

"The king's vigilance and the rapid movement of the military and security forces have thwarted the coup's attempt to remove him and replace him with his brother Prince Hamzah bin Hussein," the official added.

According to Press TV, Jordan announced earlier in the month that it has arrested a number of high-profile figures on charges of hatching an alleged plot against King Abdullah II.

## Yemen army hits 'military site' inside SW Saudi airport in new retaliation

The Yemeni army has carried out a successful drone attack against a "military site" within the Abha International Airport in southwestern Saudi Arabia, keeping up the impoverished country's retaliation against a Riyadh-led war.

The reprisal against the terminal that lies in the kingdom's Asir region took place on Tuesday, using one of the Yemeni armed forces' indigenously-manufactured Qasef-2K UAVs, army spokesman Brigadier General Yahya Saree said in a brief statement.

"The hit was accurate," Saree noted in the statement that was reported by Yemen's al-Masirah television network. "This targeting comes in response to the escalation of aggression and the ongoing siege on our dear country."

The Saudi kingdom and its allies have been waging the war for more than seven years in a futile attempt to restore Yemen's former Riyadh-allied officials.

According to Press TV, Tens of thousands of Yemenis have perished during the aggression that has been accompanied by a crippling siege of the Arab world's already poorest nation.

The Abha airport that is based in a city of the same name and the nearby King Khalid Airbase, located close to the city of Khamis Mushait, are the two locations, from which most of the Saudi-led coalition's attacks against Yemen originate.

The Tuesday retaliation came shortly after Saree said the Yemeni defense forces were preparing for a large-scale counteroffensive to avenge the blood of Saleh Ali al-Sammad, the first president of Yemen's Supreme Political Council.



## Six tourism projects underway in Meshginshahr

**TOURISM d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Six tourism projects with a total investment of 2 trillion rials (about \$47 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) are being implemented in Meshginshahr, northwestern Ardebil province.

Imanali Imani, head of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department of Meshginshahr, said: “Last year, more than 50 requests for tourism projects in this city were reviewed and investment cases were filed in the form of rural and urban facilities.”

In July 2020, provincial tourism chief Nader Fallahi noted that Ardebil can be named the province of suspension bridges, pointing to Meshginshahr suspension bridge and Hir curved glass suspension bridge as well as Azna suspension bridge, which is under construction and will come on stream in June 2021.

Hir curved glass suspension bridge is the first of its kind in the world. Measuring 220 meters in length, the bridge’s all-glass parts and metal cables have been constructed by domestic engineers using high-quality materials.



Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan said in February that Ardebil province has immense potential to become the next tourism hub of the country.

The development of infrastructures, which is currently taking place in Ardebil, could facilitate this region’s transformation into a new tourism hub, IRNA quoted Mounesan as saying.

The implementation of tourism-related projects worth 40 trillion rials (\$952 million at the official exchange rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) shows the decisive decision of the province’s tourism officials for the development in this field, he explained.

The completion of the mentioned projects will add capacity to the tourism sector of the country, the minister noted.

He also expressed hope that the province would become a duly deserving host of the 2023 Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) tourism capital program.

Last April tourism authorities of the province announced that they have developed extensive plans to draw more tourists during the winter season to the province and make it the winter tourism hub of the country.

In December 2019, provincial tourism chief Nader Fallahi announced that the objective to launch tourism projects is to provide tourists from all over the world and domestic tourists as well with the opportunity to use these facilities and select Ardebil as their prime destination.

Sprawling on a high, windswept plateau, Ardebil is well-known for having lush natural beauties, hospitable people, and its silk and carpet trade tradition. It is also home to the UNESCO-registered Sheikh Safi al-Din Khanegah and Shrine Ensemble.

The province is freezing in winter and mild in summer, attracting thousands every year. The capital city of Ardebil is usually recorded as one of the coldest cities in the country in winter.

## Popular souvenirs to buy while visiting Iran

PART 4

**TOURISM d e s k** 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.

### Coin Sewing



Sekeh-doozi (Coin Sewing) refers to the art of decorating fabrics using coins and other decorative items such as spangles, beads, mirror pieces, button, etc. The fabric is then used as a cover for home furniture such as mirror frame and other decorative furniture. This traditional art is specific to Baloochestan region.

### Copper Hammering

Making copper utensils is the traditional art of making everyday tools and utensils by hammering copper plates or ingots. The artist is a person who is able to create copper utensils

and tools by hammering.

### Kapoo Weaving

Kapoo is a handicraft common in south of Iran and made of palm leaves. Kapoo Weaving refers to making straw baskets using palm leaves and decorating them with colorful woolen threads geometric patterns. In some cases, the whole straw texture is covered by woolen threads and a tassel is added to the lid to make it more beautiful and more convenient to use. Kapoo baskets can be used for many everyday usages and is made in Khuzestan province, especially Dezfool City.

### Handy Pottery

Handy Pottery refers to a field of pottery made without using any rotatory machine or other moving devices. This type of pottery is made by pinching, coiling and slabbing. After shaping the clay, it is baked in 800 °C to reach a reasonable durability.

### Over-glaze Painting

Over-glaze painting refers to the art of painting traditional patterns on clay pottery. The painting is done after the clay is baked and glazed. After painting, the product is glazed and baked for the second time.

# Caravanserais, Asbads in South Khorasan eye World Heritage status

**HERITAGE d e s k** **TEHRAN** — The process of preparing four caravanserais and Asbads (ancient vertical-axis windmills) in South Khorasan province is being carried out and the UNESCO assessors are projected to visit the sites by mid-May to register them in the World Heritage list.

UNESCO assessors will travel to Iran for a final evaluation, and we hope to see the province’s fifth property inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list this year, Hassan Ramezani, director general of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Department of South Khorasan said on Wednesday, ILNA reported.

Located in eastern Iran, South Khorasan province is home to many historical and natural attractions such as Birjand Castle, Dragon Cave, Furg Citadel, and Polond Desert.

It is also known for its famous rugs as well as its saffron and barberry which are produced in almost all parts of the province.

Asbad used to be a smart technique to grind grains. It also bears testimony to the human being’s adaption with nature by transforming environmental obstacles into opportunities.

Iran plans to register a wide collection of its Asbads in different provinces on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

The architectural spaces of these caravanserais include entrance porches, cells, docks, stables, water reservoirs, and the royal sitting hall, and in some caravanserais, impressive and very beautiful brick decorations have been used, and this architectural style and characteristics have made these works valuable.”



“We are trying to prioritize the excavations of Kaleh Koob site in the form of joint studies with foreign groups through the Cultural Heritage Research Institute so that we can use modern Iranian methods in exploring this site.”

He explained the province’s progress plans in the field of cultural heritage and said: “We have some research work in the field of very rich and valuable areas of South Khorasan which we continue them to reach a clear result. One of them is the ancient site of “Kaleh Koob” around the city of Sarayan, where we have done three seasons of archeological excavations so far, and there are artifacts and remains that date back to the

late Neolithic to the Bronze Age.”

He continued: “We are trying to prioritize the excavations of Kaleh Koob site in the form of joint studies with foreign groups through the Cultural Heritage Research Institute so that we can use up-to-date Iranian methods in excavating this site.”

He also pointed out that so far three seasons of archeological excavations and speculation operations have been carried out in the area of “Takhcherabad”, noting: “During the study of architectural works and evidence obtained, in the opinion of many of my colleagues and experts and archaeologists, the antiquity of this hill, which is located around Birjand, can be traced back

## Tehran, Zagreb underline need to enhance tourism ties

**TOURISM d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iran and Croatia have discussed ways to enhance relations in the field of tourism.

The Iranian ambassador in Zagreb Parviz Esmaili met with Croatian Tourism and Sports Minister Nikolina Berniats, emphasizing the need to implement the previously signed agreements, IRIB reported.

Extensive historical, cultural, and natural capacities of the two countries, as well as cultural commonalities and friendship between the two nations were underlined as basic components for the development of cooperation in the tourism sector.

Specialized tourism in the fields of health, nature, and technology was also among the areas discussed by the two sides. The two sides agreed to launch a joint tourism working group between Iran and Croatia soon.

In the field of sports, it was decided that the parties will put a memorandum of understanding on the agenda to set the general framework for cooperation.

The mutual assistance of the two countries in modernizing the structure of some sports such as swimming and wrestling, exchange of coaches and athletes, joint camps as well as scientific-sports cooperation were emphasized by both sides.



## 1,834 smuggled historical objects back home in 4 years

**HERITAGE d e s k** **TEHRAN** — A total of 1,834 historical objects have been returned to the country over the past four years, deputy tourism minister Mohammad-Hassan Talebian said on Wednesday.

In December 2020, a total of 49 glazed bricks attributed to the Qalaichi archaeological site in West Azarbaijan province, which had been looted and smuggled out of Iran some four decades ago, were returned home with the aid of Swiss officials.

The exhibit will be running for a month as of May 18. And the event is intended to highlight the history and culture of the region to the visitors, the provincial tourism chief, Jalil Jabari, said on Tuesday.

Situated about nine air km northwest of Bukan, Qalaichi (or Ghalay-chi) is an ancient settlement that so far yielded a large number of glazed objects. Some of which are monochrome and the others show complex compositions. The glazed objects from the regular excavations were curated in Urmia Museum and Tehran National Museum.



The artifacts are connected to the Mannai civilization, which was once flourished in northwestern Iran in the 1st millennium BC. Mannai, also spelled Manna, was an ancient country surrounded by three major powers of the time namely Assyria, Urartu, and Media.

In July 2020, a batch of Iranian ancient relics, which had been smuggled to Austria, was recovered and surrendered to a representative of the Islamic Republic in Vienna.

“A number of antiquities belonging to Iran that were illegally smuggled into Austria were handed over to our country’s representative in Austria flowing a series of legal investigation

and as the result of judicial assistance between the two countries and in cooperation with Interpol departments in the two countries,” ISNA reported.

Among the seized objects, there are examples of bronze objects known as Lorestan’s pins, similar examples of which are being kept at the museums of Reza Abbasi and the National Museum of Iran.

Tourism minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan has said more than 3,000 historical objects that had been looted and smuggled out of Iran decades ago have been returned home since August 2017, when Presiden Hassan Rouhani began his second administration.

The twelfth government of the Islamic Republic of Iran has set a new [national] record for the repatriation of once smuggled historical relics by the means of cultural pursuits, [effective] diplomacy, and the legal actions, Mounesan explained.

Only in one case, over Achaemenid-era clay tablets, which were on loan from Iran to the Oriental Institute of the University of

Chicago since 1935, were returned home in 2019, the official added.

In December, 49 works of ancient art that had been smuggled out of the country some four decades ago were brought back home with the aid of Swiss officials.

In February 2018, and following years of ups and downs, the fate of those ancient Persian artifacts, was left in the hands of a U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled in favor of Iran.

Archaeologists affiliated with the University of Chicago discovered the tablets in the 1930s while excavating in Persepolis, the ceremonial capital of the Persian Empire. However, the institute has resumed work in collaboration with colleagues in Iran, and the return of the tablets is part of a broadening of contacts between scholars in the two countries, said Gil Stein, director of the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago.

The tablets reveal the economic, social, and religious history of the Achaemenid Empire (550-330 BC) and the larger Near Eastern region in the fifth century BC.

## Sadi Cultural Complex ready to be inaugurated

**TOURISM d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Sadi Cultural Complex will be inaugurated as a research and scientific center adjacent to the mausoleum of the great Persian poet in the city of Shiraz, southern Fars province.

Mosayeb Amiri, general manager of Sadi Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department announced the completion of the Sadi Cultural Complex at the opening ceremony of Sadi’s National Day (April 21), which was held virtually, and said: “Fortunately, this center, which will be used as a research and scientific center, simultaneously with the commemoration day of this prominent Persian poet, is ready for use.

Referring to the different parts of Sadi Cultural Complex, he said: “This complex is located next to the mausoleum of the poet with an area of 2700 square meters and has several sections, including a library and documents center with a space of 432 square meters, a special space for temporary exhibitions with an area of 324 square meters, service and



public spaces with an area of 760 square meters and also an amphitheater with a capacity of 270 people.

He added: “Despite the fact that this space is located next to Sadi’s mausoleum, its design is such that it does not visually affect Sadi’s mausoleum, and on the other hand,

## Qajar-era castle in Khash restored

**HERITAGE d e s k** **TEHRAN** — The restoration of Heydarabad Castle in the city of Khash, southeastern Sistan-Baluchestan province has been completed at the cost of one billion rials (about \$24,000 at the official rate of 42,000 rials).

Today, in an interview with Fars in Zahedan, Mansoureh Mollahelah, deputy director of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department of the province, said measures taken in the restoration project included debris

removal, bricklaying of the yard, traditional covering, thatch coating, whitewashing the interior spaces of the ruler sitting part of the castle, Fars reported on Wednesday.

The monument has been registered in the national heritage list in May 2001.

Earlier this month, it was announced that a total of eight new cultural elements, which are practiced in Sistan-Baluchestan, have been added to the National Intangible Cultural Heritage list.

The skills of making several local dishes such as Chicken Abgoosht, Kalehjoosh, and Kashk-e Baluchi were amongst entrees to the prestigious list.

The expertise of making waterskins, and the skill of making Sistan’s traditional broom were other elements being registered, the report added.

The collective province -- Sistan in the north and Baluchestan in the south -- accounts for one of the driest regions of Iran

with a slight increase in rainfall from east to west, and an obvious rise in humidity in the coastal regions. In ancient times, the region was a crossword of the Indus Valley and the Babylonian civilizations.

The province possesses special significance because of being located in a strategic and transit location, especially Chabahar which is the only ocean port in Iran and the best and easiest access route of the middle Asian countries to free waters.



# Imports of COVID-19 test kits reduced to zero

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** – Imports of coronavirus detection kits have dropped to zero as some 24 knowledge-based companies are producing kits to meet the domestic needs, Sepideh Golbaz, an official with the Food and Drug Administration said on Wednesday.

There are currently over 5 companies in the field of molecular detection kits, 9 companies in the field of rapid antigen test kits, and 10 companies in the field of RNA kits, she stated, IRNA reported.

She went on to say that knowledge-based companies from the beginning of the outbreak began their activities to develop test kits, and fortunately today the country has no need to import this strategic product.

Not only has it fully met the country's needs, but it has also the capacity to be exported, she noted, adding, serology kits are currently being exported.

The price of each rapid antigen kit is \$3, and according to the Ministry of Health, 50,000 to 70,000 tests are performed daily in the country, and the monthly cost of diagnostic kits is estimated at four to six million euros, which caused a considerable currency saving, she explained.

Golbaz stated that we have not imported any rapid tests. With the efforts of experts and related bodies, the raw materials were provided on time, and domestic production started in the country.

#### Self-sufficiency

With the outbreak of coronavirus,



Iran surged its production to meet the country's need for self-protective equipment along with medical and pharmaceutical items to fight against the virus, at a time when other developed countries were struggling with a severe lack of personal protective tools.

Iran is one of the top five manufacturers of coronavirus antigen-based rapid detection kits in the world; as homegrown antibody rapid test, which can detect coronavirus in 15 to 20 minutes, was unveiled in Tehran on November 17, 2020.

Sourena Sattari, vice president for science and technology, told the Tehran

Times in September 2020 that some of the knowledge-based companies reached a production capacity of more than 200-300 thousand diagnostic kits per day, which surpassed the country's need for diagnostic kits, and there is a great export potential.

Pointing out that multiplying the production of COVID-19 equipment led to significant measures that led to foreign currency saving for the country, he said "it also helped us cope with problems and not to run out of equipment because no matter how much money we gave, no country had the equipment to sell."

He also announced that two types of

diagnostic kits are now mass-produced by knowledge-based companies, first one is the RT-PCR tests, 8 million of which are being produced per month; while the other is serology-based tests that a total of 400,000 are being manufactured monthly and is expected to reach up to 2 million.

At present, 40 advanced ventilators are manufactured daily in the medical equipment sector, he explained.

Knowledge-based companies can produce any medicine effective in countering coronavirus or approved by the scientific committee within a week to 10 days, he noted.

Mehdi Kashmiri, director for technology and planning at the science ministry, said in July that about 450 knowledge-based companies were active in the country for manufacturing protective equipment and treatment products to fight the coronavirus.

Production of more than one million face masks per day, production of more than 1.5 liters of disinfectants per day, diagnostic kits, non-contact thermometers, protective clothing, ventilator are among the produces manufactured by these companies, he added.

Iranian-made innovative products in the field of diagnosis, screening, and fighting coronavirus were also unveiled to combat the disease, namely, ozone generator, nanotechnology face shields, disinfection gate, and molecular COVID-19 diagnostic kits.

## Fourth national festival of Maryam Mirzakhani to be held

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** – The 4th National Festival on Women and Science will be held in the fourth Iranian calendar month Tir (starting June 22), commemorating the late Iranian mathematician, Maryam Mirzakhani.

The event is to be held to honor exemplary women who are active in scientific and social sections.

According to the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, interested women in three age groups of under 40, 40-65, and over 65 are permitted to attend the festival.

Also in the scientific section, participants compete in 6 groups of humanities, basic sciences, engineering, agriculture, veterinary and environment, medical sciences, art, and architecture.

In the social section of the third festival, women univer-

sity graduates who are currently serving in non-university settings can also compete.

Mirzakhani won a gold medal in the Hong Kong International Mathematical Olympiad, in 1994, to be the first female Iranian student to have snatched a gold medal.

In the 1995 Toronto International Mathematical Olympiad, she became the first Iranian student to win two gold medals.

She obtained her BSc in mathematics from Sharif University of Technology, Tehran, in 1999. Mirzakhani then moved to the U.S. and finished a Ph.D. from Harvard University in 2004.

In 2017, Mirzakhani, the winner of the Fields Medal, also known as the Nobel Prize of mathematics, succumbed to breast cancer at 40.



## National plan implemented to fight hoarding of essential goods

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** – The first nationwide plan to intensify the fight against hoarding of basic goods was implemented across the country for 72 hours last week, Mohammad Reza Moghimi, the police chief, said on Wednesday.

Under the plan, police detectives identified the location of the depot through round-the-clock efforts and specialized actions, he explained.

He went on to say that essential goods worth 656 billion rials (nearly \$15.6 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) have been discovered and 95 criminals have been arrested during the implementation of the first phase of the national plan last week.

Basic goods such as rice, flour, wheat and barley, tomato paste, oil, sugar, car spare parts, home appliances, livestock,



meat, fuel, detergent, oil, and pesticides were seized from the culprits, IRNA quoted Amini as saying.

In March, police forces have seized hoarded goods worth 523 billion rials (nearly \$12.4 million) across the country since February 19.

#### Smugglers fined \$570m in 8 months

From the beginning of the current

Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2020) until November 16, 2020, smugglers of fuel and livestock were fined 24 trillion rials (about \$570 million), representing a 47 percent increase compared to the same period last [Iranian calendar] year.

Out of a total of about 42,000 smuggling cases, about 28,000 were related to export smuggling, of which 20,000 are related to the smuggling of fuel and petroleum products, mostly to Pakistan and Afghanistan, and to a lesser extent to Turkey and Iraq.

A number of these cases are related to livestock trafficking. Most of the cattle are smuggled to Iraq, and then to the Persian Gulf countries.

Every year, \$20-25 billion are smuggled in and out of the country, which, if stopped, will create hundreds

of thousands of jobs, Hassan Norouzi, a member of the parliament, has said.

In the Iranian calendar year 1396 (March 2017-March 2018), \$12 billion was smuggled into Iran and \$900 million out of the country, according to the Headquarters for Combating the Smuggling of Commodities and Foreign Exchange.

Iran, which has a 900-kilometer border with Afghanistan, has been used as the main conduit for smuggling Afghan drugs to narcotics kingpins in Europe.

Despite high economic and human costs, Iran has been actively fighting drug-trafficking over the past decades.

In June 2020, the first phase of the national anti-smuggling plan was implemented with the priority given to customs, tobacco, and transit goods.

### ENGLISH IN USE

#### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → E

## \$7b to be allocated to retrofit, rebuild flood-devastated houses

A budget of 290 trillion rials (nearly \$7 billion) will be allotted to reconstruct and repair housing units destroyed by flood in 18 provinces across the country, Mehdi Jamalinejad, deputy interior minister for urban and rural development has announced.

Flood has devastated some 169,377 housing units, 68,333 of which are beyond repair and must be reconstructed, he stated.

Moreover, household appliances of 109,832 families also have suffered damages, he further regretted.

He went on to say that 20,000 housing units, undergone devastation by recent flooding in Aq-Oala county in northern Golestan province, are under construction. Non-repayable loans amounting to 25 trillion rials (nearly \$600 million) will be provided for retrofitting of houses, 7.4 trillion rials (around \$177 million) will also be earmarked to compensate for the infrastructure damages, he explained.

## اختصاص بیش از ۲۹ هزار میلیارد تومان برای بازسازی خانه های سیل زده

معاون عمران و توسعه امور شهری و روستایی وزیر کشور گفت: براساس مصوبه اخیر هیات وزیران مبلغ ۲۹ هزار و ۱۳۰ میلیارد ریال برای بازسازی و جبران خسارات ناشی از سیل در بخشهای مختلف ۱۸ استان پرداخت می شود.

بر اساس ارزیابی های انجام شده در ۲۱ استان کشور، بیش از ۱۶۹ هزار و ۳۷۷ واحد مسکونی شهری و روستایی در سیل های اخیر در کشور آسیب دیده اند که باید دوباره احداث شوند. جمالی نژاد بیان داشت: در اثر سیل به ۱۰۹ هزار و ۸۳۲ واحد مسکونی نیز خسارت معیشتی وارد شده است.

وی اضافه کرد: امروز ساخت ۲۰ هزار دستگاه واحد مسکونی که در سیل آسیب دیده بودند نیز در آق قلا شروع شد.

دبیر کمیته نوسازی و بازسازی قرارگاه بازسازی مناطق سیل زده در ادامه گفت: ۲۵ هزار میلیارد ریال تسهیلات قرض الحسنه و همچنین مبلغ ۷ هزار و ۴۶۰ میلیارد ریال برای مرمت زیرساخت های آسیب دیده از سیل پرداخت خواهد شد.

## COVIRAN vaccine starts third phase of human trial

➔ **1** Alireza Raeisi, spokesman for the National Headquarters for Coronavirus control said that so far, a total of 1,895,000 doses of vaccine has been delivered to the country, including, 420,000 doses of Sputnik V vaccine from Russia, 650,000 doses of vaccine from China, 125,000 doses from India, 700,000 doses of Astrazeneca vaccine from South Korea (from the World Health Organization's COVAX facility).

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

#### Homegrown vaccines

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

Fakhra vaccine, the third homegrown vaccine, was unveiled and started the clinical trial on March 16.

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

#### New cases and mortalities

In a press briefing on Wednesday, Health Ministry's spokesperson Sima-Sadat Lari confirmed 24,886 new cases of COVID-19 infection, raising the total number of infections to 2,311,813. She added that 1,823,958 patients have so far recovered, but 4,991 remain in critical conditions of the disease.

During the past 24 hours, 388 patients have lost their lives, bringing the total number of deaths to 67,913, she added.

So far, 14,739,719 COVID-19 diagnostic tests have been performed in the country.



## More than 5,000 tons of extraterrestrial dust fall to Earth each year

Every year, our planet encounters dust from comets and asteroids. These interplanetary dust particles pass through our atmosphere and give rise to shooting stars. Some of them reach the ground in the form of micrometeorites. An international program conducted for nearly 20 years by scientists from the CNRS, the Université Paris-Saclay and the National museum of natural history with the support of the French polar institute, has determined that 5,200 tons per year of these micrometeorites reach the ground. The study will be available in the journal Earth & Planetary Science Letters from April 15.

Micrometeorites have always fallen on our planet. These interplanetary dust particles from comets or asteroids are particles of a few tenths to hundredths of a millimetre that have passed through the atmosphere and reached the Earth's surface.

To collect and analyse these micrometeorites, six expeditions led by CNRS researcher Jean Duprat have taken place over the last two decades near the Franco-Italian Concordia station (Dome C), which is located 1,100 kilometres off the coast of Adélie Land, in the heart of Antarctica. Dome C is an ideal collection spot due to the low accumulation rate of snow and the near absence of terrestrial dust.

These expeditions have collected enough extraterrestrial particles (ranging from 30 to 200 micrometres in size), to measure their annual flux, which corresponds to the mass accreted on Earth per square metre per year.

If these results are applied to the whole planet, the total annual flux of micrometeorites represents 5,200 tons per year. This is the main source of extraterrestrial matter on our planet, far ahead of larger objects such as meteorites, for which the flux is less than ten tons per year.

A comparison of the flux of micrometeorites with theoretical predictions confirms that most micrometeorites probably come from comets (80%) and the rest from asteroids.

This is valuable information to better understand the role played by these interplanetary dust particles in supplying water and carbonaceous molecules on the young Earth.

## LET'S LEARN PERSIAN

(Part 163)

(Source: saadifoundation.ir)

#### ● تمرین ۱. جواب سؤال های زیر را کامل بنویسید:

۱. کدام استاد روسی است؟
۲. کدام استاد در هند درس می دهد؟
۳. کدام استاد اهل انگلستان است؟
۴. نام استاد آمریکایی چیست؟
۵. آنها کی به ایران خواهند آمد؟
۶. به کدام هتل خواهند رفت؟

respect	احترام	
value	ارزش	
the great	بزرگان	
excellent	بَدَبَه /bahbah/	
honourable, respectable (as a title)	حَضَرَت	حضرت عبدالعظیم
tired	خَسْتِه	
in fact	دَر واقع	
right	راست	
to hear	شَنیدن - شَنُو	امام زاده حمزه
forgotten	قَراموش	
to forget	قَراموش کردن	
before	قَبْلًا /qablan/	
	قبول کردن : پَدِرُفتن	امام زاده طاهر



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GUIDE TO  
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Allah will cover up on the day of resurrection the defects (faults) of the one who covers up the faults of the others in this world.

Prophet Muhammad (S)

Hot Docs to screen Iranian documentaries

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** —Three Iranian movies will be screened at the Hot Docs, a major Canadian international documentary festival, which is scheduled to be held online from April 29 to May 9 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Holy Bread” and “Neighboring the Moon” will go on screen at the World Showcase section of the festival, while “The Doll” will be screened in the short documentary section.

Directed by late Iranian director Rahim Zabih, “Holy Bread” documents the highly dangerous work of Kurdish Kulbars - workers who try to support their families by transporting goods across the Iranian border.

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

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

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

The film has recently won the Special Youth Jury Award at the 6th edition of the Ulju Mountain Film Festival in Ulsan, South Korea.

A co-production between Iran and Syria by Iranian director Reza Farahmand, “Neighboring the Moon” Syrian sisters Juli and Maryam, who like other teen girls their age, love animals, makeup, and music. But unlike others, the sisters and their mother have been living for nine years in a cramped room inside Aleppo’s biggest hospital.

With the Syrian uprising at a near standstill, their mother attends to COVID-19 patients while the two sisters form their own brigade of young hospital helpers. Spirited Juli ceaselessly voices her desire to escape their living situation, but this pits her against her mother, who prefers the safety of the hospital to an unpredictable life on the outside.

Beautifully observed and interspersed with poetic moments of reverie between the girls, the film captures their day-to-day lives against the backdrop of the pandemic. What emerges is a touching portrait of a broken family dealing with the trauma of war, chasing an elusive dream of a normal life.

“The Doll” by Elahe Esmaeili is a short documentary about a father who consents to the marriage of his 14-year-old daughter Asal.

The Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival is the largest documentary festival in North America. The event takes place annually in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Photo: A scene from “Neighboring the Moon”, a co-production between Iran and Syria by Iranian director Reza Farahmand.

211-year-old Qajar-era painting being restored

**C U L T U R E d e s k** **TEHRAN** — The restoration of an exquisite oil-painted artwork by Shaban Ali belonging to the early Qajar period will be completed by the end of July.

Afarin Emami, the director of Golestan Palace World Heritage Complex, referring to the process of restoring the exquisite oil paintings of the artist Shaban Ali, said “The artist’s oil paintings have been transferred from the Anthropology Museum’s storage to the Palace’s restoration workshop for safety and security and for restoration works to begin”

Golestan Palace is one of the most unique historical wonders in Iran with a history that dates back 442 years.

The history of the Golestan Palace dates back to the time of Shah Abbas Safavid (988 AH). The Palace complex has undergone fundamental changes with the construction of new sections including a court.

The Palace represents an important part of Iran’s cultural history, not only because of the heritage itself but also due to significant historical events that the palace was involved in. Incidents that took place in the Golestan Palace or were in a way related to the Palace have made it an important part of Iranian history.

This painting depicts various narrations of the holy Imams, including the event of Ashura painted by the artist in the year 1231 AH in the dimensions of 148 by 415 square centimeters, she concluded.

“We Are Here We Are Close” to compete in Fajr Intl. Film Festival

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN**—Renowned Ukrainian-Armenian filmmaker Roman Balayan’s 2020 movie “We Are Here We Are Close” will be screened in the official competition of the 38th Fajr International Film Festival, the organizers have announced.

The film tells the story of Alex, an experienced surgeon, who makes a mistake in the diagnosis of his seven-year-old godson, which leads to the boy’s death on the operating table. Stunned, the man tenders his resignation. One autumn morning as he is sitting on the riverbank in a favorite place where he used to fish with his godson, he notices the figure of a girl emerging from the fog. She is shivering with cold, so Alex spontaneously offers his help, and thus becomes part of an incredible adventure story.

Born in 1941, Balayan calls himself a student of Sergei Parajanov, one of the most prominent Armenian film directors, who invented his own cinematic style. Balayan has been nominated and won several international prizes.

“Lone Wolf”, “Flights in Dreams and



Reality”, “Guard Me, My Talisman”, and “Birds of Paradise” are among his credits.

The 38th Fajr International Film Festival is scheduled to be held from May 21 to June

2 in Tehran.

The festival has a reputation for featuring productions that highlight moral values, as well as films that seek justice and freedom. The festival celebrates cultural diversity through displaying creative productions of renowned filmmakers as well as showcasing selected productions from beginners whose work possesses a high standard and has a potential for excelling in the film industry.

Productions from West Asia, Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Anatolia are the main focus of the festival, with a lot of attention and interest from the organizers towards Islamic featured films depicting the true teachings of Islamic prophets.

The unique platform provided by the Fajr International Film Festival in this diverse geographic region offers the opportunity for international collaboration on a professional basis for the advancement of media production and development of a regional filmmaking industry at the highest standards.

The previous edition of the festival was canceled due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Documentary on vocalist Mohammadreza Shajarian produced

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iranian filmmaker Keyvan Mehregan has made a documentary on legendary vocalist Mohammadreza Shajarian, who passed away last October at 80, years after suffering from kidney cancer.

The production of 129-minute documentary entitled “Siavash in Fire” took 35 months, Honaronline reported on Wednesday.

The documentary surveys the life and career of Master Shajarian as well as the transformation of Persian music and poetry in the context of Iranian history at that time.

Known as Iran’s king of song who once called himself the “son of Iran”, Shajarian was born in the religious city of Mashhad and began his vocal career from childhood with his father who taught him Quran recitation. His recitations of the Holy Quran were aired by Mashhad Radio when he was only 12.

At the same time, he was also pursuing a career in vocal music.

His collaborations with Golha, a professional music program of Tehran Radio that had many top musicians, in 1972 opened a window of opportunity for Shajarian. He started a friendship with many elites of Persian traditional music who played a key role in the development of his virtuosity.

As he was completing his education with the top maestros such as Faramarz Payvar, Nurali Khan Borumand and Abdollah Davami, he also pursued his Quran recitations professionally. In 1978, he finished first in Iran’s nationwide Quran competition. In summer 1979, he took second place in the recitation category of a Malaysian Quran contest.

He split from Golha, and consequently, radio in early 1978. “At that time, the program was not in harmony with my feelings. I felt that the radio’s policy was being made by cabarets and cultural triviality.”

His friends in the Sheida and Aref music ensembles also separated from the radio in protest at the killing of demonstrators on Black Friday on 8 September 1979. They teamed up to produce some protest songs, which were released in album series named Chavosh.

The epic song “Sepideh” (“Dawn”) composed by Mohammadreza Lotfi with a poem by their close friend Hushang Ebtehaj, who is also known by his pseudonym “Sayeh”, become a smash hit that Shajarian performed with the Sheida ensemble at National University in Tehran in 1980. “In Memory of Aref” and “The Soul of the Beloved” were among the albums Sheida recorded with Shajarian.

In 1980, a recitation of an invocation, known as “Shajarian’s Rabbana”, that he improvised for his students was recorded at Iran’s national radio. The divine recitation, which is composed of four verses of the Holy Quran, opens with a prelude featuring verses of a mesmerizing Rumi poem promoting the fast during Ramadan.

In 2017, the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization registered “Rabbana” on the National Intangible Cultural Heritage list.

In the 1980s, he pursued a teaching career in music courses, one of the outcomes of which was that his son, Homayun, is now a popular vocalist of the new generation.

He worked with many musicians and finally in 2008, founded his own group Shahnaz named after his master



and tar virtuoso Jilil Shahnaz. His daughter Mojgan and composer and tar virtuoso Majid Derakhshani were among the members of the ensemble, along with whom he embarked on a world tour in 2010, using his innovative instruments, including the sorahi, argahanun and barbad.

Shajarian was also quite agreeable to the innovations made by his son, Homayun, in the traditions of Persian song.

He was nominated for a Grammy Award in Best World Music 2004 and 2006, and was the recipient of numerous awards and honors, including a UNESCO Golden Picasso Medal in 1999. He was also decorated with France’s Chevalier of the Legion of Honor in June 2014.

Shajarian was also known for his skills in Persian calligraphy, and showcased his works in several exhibitions.



“One Hundred Days” at Iranian bookstores

**C U L T U R E d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Swiss writer Lukas Bärfuss’ acclaimed novel “One Hundred Days” has recently been published by Markaz Publications in Tehran.

The book has been rendered into Persian by Dara Moafi Madani.

Published in 2008, the book tells the story of a Swiss aid worker David Hohl, who arrives in Rwanda in 1990. He wants to know what it feels like to make a difference. Instead, he finds himself among expatriates, living a life of postcolonial privilege and boredom, and

he begins to suspect that the agency is more concerned with political expedience than improving lives.

When civil war breaks out and David goes into hiding, he is forced to examine his own relationship to the country he wants to help and to the cosmopolitan Rwandan woman he loves. As the genocide rages over the course of one hundred desperate days, the clear line David has always drawn between idealism and complicity quickly begins to blur.

Born in Thun, Switzerland in 1971, Lukas

Bärfuss is one of the most successful dramatists to emerge in recent years, and his plays are staged all over the world. Bärfuss was voted playwright of the year in the critic poll featured by the magazine “Theater Heute” in 2005. Bärfuss was awarded the Mara-Cassens Prize, the Schiller Prize and the Erich-Maria-Remarque-Friedenspreis for “One Hundred Days”. He was also nominated for the German and Swiss Book Prize.

Photo: Front cover of the Persian version of Swiss writer Lukas Bärfuss’ acclaimed novel “One Hundred Days”.

Sohrab Sepehri, great Persian poet and painter

*Part 5*

A direct expression of the Taoist and Zen Buddhist conception of nature, Chinese monumental landscapes provided Sepehri with the ideal model in his strive to express in painting the same notion of the undifferentiated primal unity of the cosmos expressed in Avar-e aftab. Valuing suggestion over direct declarations, the predominantly vertical composition of these landscapes was meant to invite the onlooker into a hierarchical ascent towards the understanding of the dynamics of the spiritual and natural worlds. Within the composition, what may seem an excessive abstraction of a mountain, river, tree trunk, or tulip by extension proves an intentional expression of the Taoist principle of the inexpressibility of an absolute ‘Truth’ that can only be suggested through vague images and composition. That which is not painted thus reflects the imperceptible, indiscernible mystery of unified universe; that which is painted, reflects the boundaries of our perception.

Sepehri’s persistence in painting in thematic series, beginning with his Far Eastern landscapes, reached its mature climax in the series he devoted to tree trunks, which comprise the fourth period of his painting. Introducing the subject circa 1965, Sepehri continued to paint his tree trunks well into the mid-1970s. Produced with basic variations in style, composition, and color scheme to convey the individual character of each scene, the paintings depict clusters of tree trunks in tight close-ups that leave branches and foliage out of the frame. As evidenced by Sepehri’s experimentation with series of abstract composition of geometric patterns in 1968-1969 or clusters of rocks and minimalist still-lives later in 1975-1976, in this fourth period Sepehri was arguably less concerned with the actual subject matter than with the metaphorically imbued potential of the very act of series painting. And while the other subjects did not prove as popular as his tree trunks, they were undoubtedly produced with the same intent.

In his fifth and final period, Sepehri returned to his figurative representational watercolor desertscapes of the scenery

around his hometown of Kashan. While the subject matter of this final series arguably lacked the more overt metaphoric potential of his abstract compositions and semi-abstract tree trunks and Far Eastern landscapes, their intent was quite conceivably the same. For here again, faced with frame after frame of virtually identical scenery, the onlooker is left with little choice but to look for those differences that set the simple and serene desertscapes apart from one another. Instinctively driven to look for those particular nuances in each painting that engender a different emotion in us, we are led to break out of our habitual perception of things, to look anew and see the world in a different light.

A panoramic view on Sepehri’s collected creative output reveals that he ranks among the poets and painters whose work is not only based on a particular set of aesthetic values, but is further informed by a consciously selected set of tenets appropriated from a broad range of cultures and worldviews. In his vision of the world and of mankind’s place within it, Sepehri believed above all in the importance of people’s direct relationship with nature, one unencumbered by the anesthetizing effect of daily habits and preoccupations with preconceived ideas. Unwavering in his belief in a delicate yet essential unity between mankind, nature, and a greater cosmic order, Sepehri spent the length of his artistic life in search of the most effective expression of this central belief. To this end, he freely crossed over to a variety of myths and philosophies ranging from Zen Buddhism and Taoism to Sufism and European Romanticism, retaining from each those tenets most organically suitable to his vision. From romantic poets and Far Eastern philosophers he came to understand creative imagination as a necessary antidote to the banalities of ordinary life and a conduit to a higher, ideal state of spiritual awareness. Symbolic interpretations of myths, faraway places, and the historic past, and a profound subjective connection to nature are also themes Sepehri retained from Romanticism. From Nima and European post-impressionists he learned to react against classical formalism and restrictions on individual

expressions of creativity. Thus with a simple verse like So long as the corn poppy exists, life shall go on, he encapsulates the perpetual, random, and ephemeral nature of life in the image of a self-seeding wild flower that instantly wilts when picked. Closer to home, from Persian Sufis he learned that the presence of a divine spirit in both nature and the human soul makes self-understanding and the contemplation of subtle beauties of the natural world ideal venues for arriving at a first-hand experience of the divine and a deeper understanding of a universal truth. And in accord with all of these worldviews, he came to believe that while a higher unifying truth was innate in all of creation and the knowledge of it intuitively available to all mankind, a conclusive understanding of it was impossible in an individual’s life time and the search for it a life-long journey for all.

While the reason for Sepehri’s growing popularity both as poet and painter remain perpetually open to investigation, his influence on generations of artists after him is irrefutable. In poetry this influence began before his death, as his signature voice became the model for Ahmad Reza Ahmadi (b. 1937) and the New Wave Movement (Mowj-e now) in Persian poetry. Since Sepehri’s death, one of the more internationally recognizable reflections of his worldview can be seen in the work of the Iranian film maker Abbas Kiarostami who selected a verse from Sepehri’s poem “Neshani” as the title for one of his earlier films “Where is the friend’s home”. As evidenced by multiple reprints of his Hasht ketab, the ever-growing bibliography of criticism on his work, numerous versions of his poetry on tape, recordings of Persian classical music with his poems for lyrics, and the extreme desirability of his paintings for private and institutional collectors, Sepehri has only become more admired since his death. In this exponentially growing popularity, it is above all the unique combination of his deceptively simple style, his philosophy about life, and his transcendental perception of the world that have captivated his audience.

(Source: Encyclopedia Iranica)