



## Zarif to travel to Qatar and Iraq

Page 2



## Iran's Motamedi wins gold at Asian Weightlifting Championships

Page 3



## Iran-Oman trade could be boosted to \$5b

Page 4



## Iran organizes webinar for Japanese devotees of Sadi poetry

Page 8

# Al-Quds uprising puts Israel in a bind

See page 3



© Xinhua

## Terrorist team demolished in Sistan

TEHRAN — The Quds headquarters of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corp ground forces demolished a terrorist team in the southeastern Sistan-Balouchestan province on Saturday.

The Public Relations office of the Quds headquarters of the IRGC ground forces released a statement announcing that the brave fighters identified a terrorist team affiliated with the global imperialism who had recently entered the region to carry out subversive and terrorist acts.

The Quds base said it demolished the

group by conducting "accurate surveillance and intelligence operations."

The statement said that the IRGC fighters trapped the terrorist team during a successful operation and smashed them in one of the border areas of the province.

According to the statement, three terrorists were killed in the attack, which also resulted in the confiscation of ammunition and arms.

The IRGC is given the mission to ensure security at Iran's southeastern borders that once in a while Takfiri militant groups seek to commit terrorist attacks there.

## Annual rail transit up 29% despite pandemic

TEHRAN - Transit of goods through Iran's railway network rose 29 percent during the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20) despite the limitations created by the coronavirus pandemic, the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (known as RAI), announced.

Speaking at the 36th Conference of the Managers of Organization for Cooperation of Railways (OSJD) which was held

virtually during April 19-23, Saeid Rasouli said: "In the past year, the Railways of the Islamic Republic of Iran took significant positive steps to develop cooperation with the railways of the neighboring counties and regional railways, and to continue cooperating with international railway organizations, despite the pandemic and the intensification of sanctions."

Continued on page 4

## Qom center planning for biopic about wife of Prophet Muhammad (S)

TEHRAN — The Religion of Spirituality Art and Culture Institute, an Islamic center in Qom, plans to make a biopic about Hazrat Khadijah (SA), the wife the Prophet Muhammad (S). Speaking at a press conference last Wednesday, Hojjatoleslam Hojjat Maleki, the director of the institute, said that an experienced professional crew will be employed for the project.

He also added that great Islamic role

models and their lifestyles should be introduced through films and TV series to the Muslim world in order to promote unity among Muslims.

Maleki pointed to the materialistic and spiritual support Hazrat Khadijah (SA) provided for the Prophet of Islam, and said that the screenplay is being written for an international audience.

Continued on page 8

## Tire production industry materializes slogan of 'Surge in Production'

BY MAHNAZ ABDI

In a bid to nullify the U.S. sanctions, Iran is determined to strengthen its domestic production to achieve self-reliance.

Selecting the motto of "Pickup in Production" for the Iranian calendar year 1398 (March 2019-March 2020), and the slogan of "Surge in Production" for the year 1399 (March 2020-March 2021) indicates the Islamic Republic's determination to achieve this goal.

To this end, the Iranian ministries besides the private sector outlined their programs for the surge in production in the past year, and pursued the set objectives seriously in this due.

It is clear that among different ministries, the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade was one with a somehow heavier responsibility to materialize the motto of the year.

The ministry managed to fulfill its duty as the production of some major industrial products was noticeably increased in the previous year.

One of the sectors, which achieved outstanding output growth, was the tire production industry.

The country's tire industry, despite the continuation of sanctions and the coronavirus pandemic conditions, as well as some domestic restrictions, has had a thriving and successful year overall; a year that was accompanied by record-breaking production and entry into some new fields.

In this regard, breaking of production records in the production of various types of tires was witnessed, and for the first time the annual output surpassed 24 million tires.

Based on the latest released data, 250,186 tons of different types of tires were produced during the 11-month period since the beginning of the past year (March 20, 2020) until February 18, 2021, which was 18 percent more than the figure of the same period of time in its preceding year.

An 18-percent rise was also achieved in terms of number, as 23.124 million tires were produced in the 11-month period of the previous year.

As reported, 146,458 tons of tires of passenger cars were produced in the mentioned time span of the past year, indicating a 22-percent growth year on year.

Continued on page 4

## COVID-19 vaccination system to be launched

TEHRAN — A comprehensive system will be launched in the country for coronavirus vaccination of the whole population, Alireza Raeisi, spokesman for the National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control, announced on Saturday.

People can express their occupation and illness on this website and be informed about the time of their vaccination, he explained.

He went on to add that by the end of July, mass vaccination will begin and all the people will be informed of when to receive the vaccine, IRNA reported on Saturday.

Iran started mass vaccination against COVID-19 with Sputnik V vaccine on February 9; which is also being co-produced by the two countries and will be released by the end of spring (June 21). So far, 718,510 doses of coronavirus vaccine, including the first and second doses, have been injected in the country.

Iran is currently producing vaccines joint-

ly with three countries of Cuba, Russia, and Australia, he noted, expressing hope that these vaccines can also be released by September.

Raeisi announced on Thursday that the sixth batch of the "Sputnik V" vaccine, including over 100,000 doses, has been sent to the country.

Of the total vaccines imported so far, we have received about 420,000 doses of Sputnik V, some 650,000 doses from China, and 125,000 from India. We also received 700,000 doses of Astrazeneca vaccine from South Korea, so that a total of 1.895 million doses of vaccine have been provided to the Ministry of Health, he explained.

**Homegrown vaccines**

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

Continued on page 7

## Bahrainis continue nationwide rallies in solidarity with political prisoners

People in Bahrain have staged nationwide demonstrations in the tiny Persian Gulf kingdom to express solidarity with pro-democracy campaigners and opposition figures being held behind bars, and demanded the ruling Al Khalifah regime release them amid the deadly coronavirus pandemic.

The rallies were held under the banner of "Friday of Prisoners' Rage," with protesters voicing concerns over the alarming situation of the country's prisons and condemning Bahraini authorities' mistreatment of imprisoned activists.

The participants carried Bahrain's national flags, held up pictures of imprisoned political opponents and called for their immediate and unconditional release as they staged rallies in several villages, namely Hamala, Abu Saiba, Shakhura, South Sehla, Nuwaidrat, Bu Quwah, Samahej, Diraz, Karzakan, Bani Jamra, al-Markh, Dar Kulaib and al-Maqsha.

People also took part in similar demonstra-

tions in Sitra Island and Bilad al-Qadeem suburb of the capital Manama, chanting anti-regime slogans and holding the Al Khalifah regime fully responsible for the lives of the political inmates.

According to Press TV, on April 19, Bahrain's most prominent cleric Ayatollah Sheikh Isa Qassim said drawing up a new constitution was the only way out of the political crisis in the protest-hit tiny kingdom, urging the regime in Manama to pursue an agreement with the Bahraini opposition instead of increasingly suppressing the dissidents.

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

Continued on page 5

## Land of ghosts: a journey to the 'Bermuda triangle' of Iran

TEHRAN - Imagine traveling through a bizarre-shaded desert full of golden dunes that locals believe to be once home to evil spirits and demons, and for this reason, whoever steps on it will be swallowed up and never returns! That's why the area is known as the "Bermuda triangle" of Iran!

Eastern Iran is dominated by vast deserts known worldwide for adrenaline chasers. Rig-e Jenn assumed its name from whom believed

that it was haunted by spirits and the devil. The bizarre desert can be reached after hours first on asphalt roads, and then for some hours through uninhabited terrain.

Rig-e Jenn is situated in a border area between Semnan and Isfahan provinces. In another world, it is part of Dasht-e Kavir (the central desert of Iran). The bizarre desert can be reached after hours first on asphalt roads, and then for some hours through uninhabited terrain.

Narratives say that even caravans used to skip passing through Rig-e Jenn, believing it to be a place where evil spirits and "jinn" dwell. A "jinn" is a spirit in Islamic culture and Rig-e Jenn was once (and in some places still) believed to accommodate evil spirits!

Even today, amongst the neighboring towns and villages some still hold this belief. Sources say that Sven Hedin,

Continued on page 6

## MEK is front organization of Israeli imperialism against Muslims: Albanian historian

BY REZA MOSHFEGH

TEHRAN - Olsi Jazexhi, an Albanian historian, believes that terrorist groups like Jahbat al-Nusra, Daesh and MEK are mercenaries of Israel and the U.S. to undermine the Muslim world.

"Jahbat al-Nusra, Daesh and MEK are front organizations of Israeli and American imperialism against the Muslim world," Jazexhi tells the Tehran Times.

"They are the foot soldiers of the Zionist allegiance in the destruction of Muslim nation-states," he adds.

Iranian officials have directly pointed the finger at Israel for assassinating top nuclear scientists, including Mohsen Fakhrazadeh, by using the terrorist cult group of Mujahedin-e Khalq, known as MEK, as foot soldiers.

Though the European Union and the U.S. have removed MEK from the list of terrorist organizations, they are still committing terrorist acts inside Iran with direct order of Israel. Iran has been censuring certain European states for harboring the cultish terrorist organization.

"Even though Israel officially has not shown any direct relation with MEK, unofficially, it as well as the Evangelical U.S. administration of President Trump used MEK and its experience in terrorism and false flag attacks as a tool for attacking and blackmailing Iran," the Albanian historian notes.

Continued on page 5

## Kish Island hosting 30% of Iran's bird species

BY FARANAK BAKHTIARI

TEHRAN — Kish island, stretching to 91 square kilometers, is home to 30 percent of the whole bird species in the country.

The island enjoys a unique situation in the strategic Persian Gulf region among tens of large and small islands, which is known as the Pearl of the Persian Gulf since ancient times. Its calm coasts are covered with coral sands. Diverse plants and native trees, as well as a pleasant climate seven months a year are among the outstanding characteristics of the island.

Continued on page 7



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## Presidential elections in Iran: transparency and expertise are pathways to a prosperous economy

It is necessary to shun demagoguery in presidential campaigns

By M.A. Saki

**TEHRAN** — As Iran is approaching the June 18 presidential elections, discussions are being raised about the competence of a president and policies that he should follow and things that he should avoid.

Fortunately, there is now talk that a person who wants to contest the presidential post should have a plan.

Actually, there is no single panacea for all problems that a country like Iran faces. However, it has been proven that certain principles are highly effective in creating a prosperous and dynamic economy and society.

Probably the most important things that a country or president must follow are accountability, transparency, and expertise.



The countries which have succeeded to present a model of economic and scientific progress have been pursuing these important principles. Examples are many. The most concrete examples with a rather great population are Germany, Japan, and South Korea.

This does not mean that corruption has been uprooted in these countries. Once in a while, certain reports surface about money laundering, bribery, or other wrongdoings in such countries. However, they deal with them seriously and make plans to close possible loopholes for the reemergence of such wrongdoings.

There is a misconception among a great percentage of our people that having a good relationship with the outside world, especially the West, is the key to many problems. Of course, having a good relationship with countries for economic ties is a necessity, but each country must reform itself and rely on its own talents.

There are certain countries that have an amicable relationship with Western countries but their population suffers from poverty, their economy is afflicted with corruption, and favoritism is preferred over meritocracy.

If Iran wants to emerge as an economically prosperous country, it should give priority to the aforementioned principles or approaches. So far, Iran has made tangible progress in terms of science, especially in the field of nanotechnology. But this is not enough. The pace of technological progress should be expedited. Due attention should be paid to research and development (R&D). The talented persons as the main assets of the country should be highly treasured.

If the talents are valued and transparency prevails, there will be less brain drain. In such a situation, brain drain may even be reversed.

Now it is true that Iran is subject to cruel and illegal sanctions and the export of oil, as the main source of the country's income, has been incredibly reduced, but what is dangerous is to pin hope again on oil incomes because the sanctions will not remain in place forever.

Officials in Iran, especially the ones who will win the June 18 presidential elections, must also be aware of the fact that renewable sources of energy are rapidly pushing fossil fuels, such as oil and gas, to the sideline. However, this does not mean that Iran should not use all its diplomatic and political power to remove sanctions because the current financial bans are debilitating the economy.

Talents are much valuable than natural resources, especially in a country as big as Iran with about 85 million population. Abundant natural resources bring welfare for small countries such as Qatar and Kuwait, whose native population is hardly over one million.

In the remaining time to the presidential elections, experts have the duty to make the masses as the main electorate aware that the airing of hollow slogans by presidential candidates is just populism and even treachery.

During the presidential campaigns, certain candidates resort to demagoguery and give slogans as if they have magic hands. They speak as if they are superhuman and are able to do miracles.

It is mostly through making the system accountable and transparent and giving top priority to science and technology that can pave the way for a successful Iran.

## Zarif to travel to Qatar and Iraq

**POLITICAL d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif will travel to Qatar and Iraq respectively on Sunday.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said the trips to Qatar and Iraq will take place within the framework of developing relations between the countries and sharing views on regional and trans-regional issues.

Zarif will meet with high-ranking officials in both countries, the spokesman added.

## Stop crimes against Palestinian nation, says Iran

**POLITICAL d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh on Saturday condemned the actions and aggressions of the Zionist regime and Israeli settlers against the holy places and the inhabitants of al-Quds (Jerusalem), stressing it is urgent to stop the brutal actions by the Zionists.

Praising the resistance and resilience of the Palestinian people, especially the residents and youth of al-Quds against the criminal Zionists, the Foreign Ministry spokesman urged the international community to put pressure on Israel to stop human rights abuses against the defenseless Palestinian people and its acts in al-Quds.

Referring to the continued occupation of Palestine and its crimes against the native Palestinians, Khatibzadeh said it is necessary to support the resistance movement until the liberation of Palestine.

He added, "The land of Palestine belongs to the Palestinian people and the Zionist regime is an occupier and the only solution to the Palestinian crisis is holding a referendum among the main inhabitants of the land of Palestine."

# Diplomacy, according to history, is more efficient than deception

**POLITICAL d e s k** **TEHRAN**— Nearly two weeks have passed since an act of sabotage disrupted the power system at the Natanz nuclear facility. After receiving many reports and claims, and after observing the recent round of negotiations in Vienna, several questions that have been raised can be answered much easier.

After the act of sabotage destroyed the power system in the Natanz nuclear site, Iranian officials identified an Iranian suspect, named Reza Karimi for the attack widely attributed to Mossad.

Alireza Zakani, a senior Iranian MP, claimed that "several thousand" centrifuges were affected. The New York Times quoted U.S. intelligence sources as estimating that the repairs could take Iran nine months. These claims were widely contrasted when Iran started enriching uranium to up to 60% within two days.

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

However, there are several questions to be answered. How will this attack affect Iran's obligations and aptitude to expand its nuclear program? How will the attack influence the likelihood that the United States and Iran can reach an agreement on reviving the Iran deal, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action—or JCPOA, for short? Will Iran succumb its nuclear program, right after enriching uranium to up to 60%? Here are the answers, based on research.

Sabotage attempts have a short-term impact.

The history of Iran's nuclear program suggests any impact on expansion capacity will be restricted. In fact, it seems that the Islamic Republic's motive to expand its capability will probably increase—at least until the United States agrees to remove all sanctions and move back toward the JCPOA.

U.S. and Israeli determinations to physically sabotage Iran's nuclear program goes back to more than a decade. In 2009-2010, the Stuxnet computer worm decommissioned 1,000 Iranian centrifuges at Natanz. However, this was only a fraction of Iran's centrifuges, whose numbers quickly recovered and continued to increase after the attack. Similarly, Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium continued to grow. Thus, Stuxnet left a reverse impact on Iran's nuclear program, enhancing its capacity instead.

In addition to piloting cyber-attacks, Israel assassinated Iranian nuclear scientists, with its father-figure, the United States and other European countries that have no will of



their own, disrupting Iran's supply chains. In a recent analysis, political analysts concluded that the overall impact of these activities on Iran's nuclear program was "limited and short-lived."

Iran's nuclear program continued to expand until the Islamic Republic and the United States, UK, China, France, Germany and Russia—the "P5+1"—signed the JCPOA. The 2015 deal traded sanctions relief for restrictions on Iran's nuclear program, such as the removal of two-thirds of its centrifuges, the elimination of 98 percent of its enriched uranium, and a requirement that Iran only enriched uranium to 3.67%, with less efficient, first-generation centrifuges. For the first time, Iran's nuclear capabilities were decisively and substantially retracted.

Iran's commitments remained in place until Donald Trump's 2018 decision to withdraw from the deal and impose harsh and illegal sanctions. One year later Iran responded by gradually stepping back from its commitments and expanding its enrichment program.

This acceleration of Iran's nuclear program seemed to prompt Israel to turn back to acts of sabotage. Last summer, an explosion—also widely credited to Israel—seriously damaged a facility at Natanz used for assembling the advanced centrifuges Iran had been barred from using under terms of the JCPOA. The attack limited Iran's centrifuge production, giving them a short break only to recover stronger and led to the construction of a new sturdy, underground site for centrifuge assembly. Iran then moved some advanced centrifuges underground, where they are more protected from drone and missile attacks.

As expected, the enriched uranium stockpile continued to grow.

Iran's initial response to this recent sabotage act is consistent with the research noted above.

Despite the damage and delay inflicted, officials in Tehran announced that Iran has begun enriching uranium to 60 percent just two days after the Natanz sabotage act—moving closer to the 90 percent benchmark that president Hassan Rouhani said—and would install 1,000 additional advanced centrifuges.

"Our response in Natanz was that instead of IR-1, we would use IR-6 and instead of 3.67% enrichment we would do 60% enrichment. We can even go to 90% enrichment if we want, but at the same time our activities will definitely be peaceful and under the supervision of the (International Atomic Energy) Agency," said the president on April 14, the morning after 60% uranium enrichment.

This response shows Iran's determination and capability to pursue its nuclear program. Unless and until the JCPOA is resurrected, Iran is likely to extend its nuclear activities.

The next question is, will the attack confound nuclear diplomacy?

The attack and Iran's subsequent reaction could conceivably make a diplomatic solution more difficult to achieve. The attack on Natanz reinforces the Iranian instinct to drive a hard bargain. Iran considers the recently taken nuclear steps as "remedial measures" as Foreign Minister Zarif puts it, done in response to the sabotage act at Natanz. Thus, the Islamic Republic will not concede in response to foreign pressure.

For the U.S. side, Iran's 60% uranium enrichment and operation of advanced centrifuges could flop. Joe Biden's administration may seek to avoid the appearance of giving in to its adversary's pressure, both for domestic and geopolitical reasons. Or it could take a harder line in talks if it perceives Iran's leverage has declined and the threat is less urgent as a result of the damage to its nuclear program.

To summarize, the attack and Iran's re-

sponse to it could make a compromise solution more difficult and it puts further pressure on negotiators.

But there are other reasons to believe the attack will have a limited effect—or may even aid the negotiations. "Both Washington and Tehran may see a greater urgency to strike a deal on reviving the JCPOA, as both countries presumably have an interest in preventing further escalation in the Israeli-Iran shadow war, which has significantly increased since Iran began walking back from its JCPOA commitments," The Washington Post commented.

Iran's "remedial" nuclear measures in response to the attack could have put pressure on the Biden administration to reach an agreement before Iran escalates further. Indeed, recent research by Muhammet Bas and Andrew Coe demonstrates that non-proliferation agreements are often struck in this type of scenario—when a proliferator is relatively close to the nuclear weapons mark, generating a sense of urgency in the U.S. to solve the problem and a willingness on the proliferator's part to avoid a possible war.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken's recent comments reflect this logic. He told the press in Brussels that Iran's move toward 60 percent enrichment "underscores the imperative of returning to mutual compliance with the JCPOA," even as he questioned Iran's commitment to a diplomatic resolution.

It seems that Blinken has forgotten May 8, 2018 when Donald Trump pulled out of the JCPOA. Iran was fully committed to the deal. It was the U.S. which left the deal and threw it out of the window. If a country should be interpellated about its commitment to a diplomatic solution, it is the United States.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Leader of the Islamic Revolution, has issued a fatwa (decree) banning production, stockpiling and use of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear arms, as haram (religiously banned).

So far, the United States and Iranian attitudes are encouraging. Iran chose not to shut down the indirect talks in Vienna despite the attack and the two sides are apparently narrowing the gaps in their negotiating positions.

Seyed Abbas Araghchi, the top Iranian nuclear negotiator, said a "new understanding" was taking shape at key talks in Vienna.

"The drafting of the text can begin now, and the Iranian delegation has prepared and presented its text on the nuclear sphere and the lifting of sanctions," he told Iranian TV.

To be sure, a successful resolution remains elusive. However, there is a real chance of success, and history shows that the JCPOA has been much more effective than sabotage in restricting Iran's nuclear program.

## West has 'darkest record' in violating human rights: Iran's human rights chief

**POLITICAL d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Ali Bagheri Kani, the secretary of the Iranian Judiciary's High Council for Human Rights, met on Saturday with the Japanese ambassador to Tehran, Kazutoshi Aikawa to discuss a possibility of launching a global disarmament movement.

Bagheri said that self-proclaimed Western human rights activists have the "darkest record" in abusing the rights of other nations throughout history.

According to Press TV, Bagheri remarked, "By establishing a global WMD (weapons of mass destruction) disarmament movement, Tehran and Tokyo can build a front involving all human beings to confront those who create, manufacture, sell, and use WMDs, bringing peace and security to the world."

He also invited Japan to participate in the initiative and expressed Iran's willingness to work with the Japanese side on the campaign.

The human right chief said, "The nations of Iran and



Japan have been the most significant casualties of WMDs in the twentieth century."

He explained that Hiroshima and Sardasht are unmitigable symbols of U.S. and European violations against humanity.

## Ansarallah confirms Iranian Foreign Ministry position on Yemen

**POLITICAL d e s k** **TEHRAN**— A member of the Yemeni Ansarallah movement has reacted to former Iranian oil minister Rostam Ghasemi's recent remarks claiming Iran's advisory support to Yemen in its resistance against the Saudi-led military invasion. Mohammad Ali Al-Houthi confirmed the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' statement on Friday in which the Islamic Republic only gives political support to Yemen and does not provide military advice to the country.

Since the start of the Saudi-led war on Yemen in March 2015 Iran has been pushing for an end to the war, which the United Nations has described as the worst humanitarian disaster in the contemporary history.

In April 2015, Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif submitted a letter to then UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon outlining a four-point peace plan for Yemen.

The plan called for an immediate ceasefire and end of all foreign military attacks, humanitarian assistance, a re-



sumption of broad national dialogue and "establishment of an inclusive national unity government."

"It is imperative for the international community to get more effectively involved in ending the senseless aerial attacks and establishing a ceasefire, ensuring delivery of humanitarian and medical assistance to the people of Yemen and restoring peace and stability to this country through dialogue and national reconciliation without pre-conditions," said Zarif's letter.

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# Al-Quds uprising puts Israel in a bind

**POLITICAL d e s k** **TEHRAN** – Palestinians from all walks of life took to the streets last night in the occupied Jerusalem (al-Quds) for the 11th night in a row to protest against Israeli police and settlers' provocations against the city's Palestinians.

More than 100 Palestinians have been wounded after Israeli police moved to attack and arrest protesters.

Armed Israeli police scuffled with Palestinians angered by extremist Jews in the occupied Jerusalem (al-Quds) for a second night on Friday amid simmering tensions caused by provocative measures by Israeli authorities and settlers.

Tensions have been intensifying in al-Quds since at least the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan when Muslims across the world begin a 30-day period of prayers and fasting. Muslims, including the Palestinians, usually pray and worship God more in Ramadan. That happens in public places such as mosques. However, Israeli authorities imposed strict restrictions and bans on gathering in public places.

In an attempt to prevent Palestinians from observing their Ramadan traditions, the Israeli police set up checkpoints in some squares and closed them to the Palestinians at night.

To make things worse, authorities paved the way for extremist far-right Jews to stage anti-Arab marches. These extremists marched in the occupied Jerusalem chanting provocative slogans such as "death to Arabs," something that enraged Palestinians and prompted them to launch what some observers called another Intifada which soon spread to other parts of Palestine, including the Gaza Strip.

Three people were injured by Israeli army gunfire and many sites were destroyed in several Israeli strikes on the besieged Gaza Strip Friday night and early Saturday morning, Palestinian news Wafa reported on Saturday.

It said that Israeli soldiers stationed at the northern Gaza border opened fire at Palestinians who gathered near the fence



to protest Israeli treatment of fellow Palestinians in occupied East Jerusalem, injuring three of them. In the meantime, Israeli artillery fired three missiles at two locations in the northern Gaza Strip causing fire and damaging the sites and nearby homes, Wafa reported, adding that Israeli tanks also fired two shells at locations in the central and southern Gaza Strip causing damage but no injuries.

Israeli warplanes joined in the strikes on the besieged Gaza Strip and fired several missiles at locations in the north and south of the Gaza Strip, causing fire and heavy damage to the sites as well as damage to homes in the vicinity of the attacked sites.

Israel announced that it launched attacks against Gaza after resistance groups stationed there retaliated against Israel for its mistreatment of Palestinians in Jerusalem.

National Palestinian groups in the Gaza Strip reiterated Saturday that the escalating events in the occupied city of Jerusalem are a "battle to prove national sovereignty" in light of the escalation of Israeli settlers' attacks and daily assaults against Palestinians in the city.

Representatives from these groups demonstrated in Gaza in support of their fellow Palestinians and to protest against the Israeli aggression against the residents of Jerusalem.

Despite Covid-19 bans, Palestinian youths in Gaza staged demonstrations in solidarity with the occupied Jerusalem and to demand resistance against Israel's attacks.

The armed wings of the Palestinian resistance groups in Gaza launched a barrage of rockets against Israeli targets bordering the strip as the Israeli army bombed Palestinian sites in Gaza.

The Palestinians are locked in a decades-long struggle against Israel to protect their cities and identity. They have staged countless demonstrations so far to make the world understand that Israel is an occupying force and that the Palestinians have the right to live in peace on their ancestral land.

Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem said that the Palestinian resistance will not allow the occupation to change the identity of the occupied city of Jerusalem, as it is the eternal capital of the Palestinians, and

will not accept the continued incursion by settlers towards its people.

On the other hand, Israel claims that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel, a claim recognized only by a handful of countries while the international community does not recognize Israel's sovereignty over the Palestinian territories it occupied in the 1960s.

Hazem told Al Araby Al Jadeed that what is happening is part of a major and continuous struggle between the Palestinian people and the occupation project aimed at eliminating the Palestinian presence.

The timing of Israel unleashing far-right extremists against Palestinians in the occupied East Jerusalem raised questions on whether Israel is deliberately stirring the pot of East Jerusalem to prevent the Palestinians from holding their first national election in 15 years.

The vote is scheduled for May 22. But Israel is still insisting that it won't let Palestinians residing in East Jerusalem participate in the election, a clear violation of democratic rules and previous agreements between the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel.

Israel's stubborn opposition to trappings of democracy caused the United Nations and European members of the Security Council to call on Tel Aviv to allow Palestinians in East Jerusalem to exercise their right to vote.

"It is very important that Palestinians in all parts of the occupied Palestinian territory are able to participate in this very important democratic process," UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.

Some current and former members of the UN Security Council also called for a similar thing.

"We stand ready to support free, fair, and inclusive elections across the occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and welcome the constructive engagement by the Palestinian factions," Security Council members Estonia, France, and Ireland, and former members Germany and Belgium said in a statement.

## Ankara, Islamabad and Kabul acknowledge Tehran's role in hosting Afghan refugees

**POLITICAL d e s k** **TEHRAN** – Turkey, Pakistan, Afghanistan have issued a joint statement appreciating Iran's role in hosting Afghan refugees amid renewed efforts to establish peace in Afghanistan.

The joint statement was adopted at the conclusion of a trilateral meeting of the foreign ministers of Turkey, Afghanistan and Pakistan held in Istanbul on Friday.

The three foreign ministers "acknowledged the role of the regional and neighboring countries, in particular Pakistan and Iran in hosting Afghan refugees for more than four decades and called for creating conducive conditions in Afghanistan for their voluntary, safe, dignified, expeditious and sustainable repatriation through a well-resourced plan," according to the joint statement.

They also called on the international community to assist the host countries in providing the essential needs of the refugees.

The foreign ministers "urged international community to continue to assist host countries in taking care of the essential needs of Afghan refugees and to provide support to the repatriation and reintegration efforts of the Government of Afghanistan," the statement noted.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu, Afghan Foreign Minister Mohammad Haneef Atmar, and Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi held a trilateral meeting on Afghanistan in Istanbul on April 23.

They discussed the prospect of advancing the Afghan peace process ahead of a high-level meeting expected to take place in Istanbul. They said the Istanbul Conference is "aimed at giving momentum to the ongoing Afghanistan Peace Negotiations."

The three foreign ministers noted that the Istanbul Conference had been postponed after extensive discussions with all relevant parties with a view to holding the conference when conditions for making meaningful progress would be more favorable.

The Afghan peace talks are not moving smoothly. The talks were due to go ahead on April 24 and run through May 4, known officially as the Istanbul Conference on the Afghan Peace Process, and the co-conveners said they were committed to supporting a "sovereign, independent and unified Afghanistan," according to the UN.

But the talks were postponed. Iran had said it will attend the Istanbul meeting provided that the Islamic Republic's principles are observed.

"We carefully examine the issues related to this matter. Iran has always stood by the government and people of Afghanistan," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said.

He added, "For us, a stable and completely secure Afghanistan is a high priority. As we have said before, we emphasize

that the Afghan peace dialogue should be an inter-Afghan dialogue, and Iran has always been prepared as a neighbor to make every effort to achieve this."

The foreign ministers of Turkey, Pakistan and Afghanistan also recognized that sustainable peace can be achieved only through an inclusive Afghan-led and Afghan-owned political process that aims for a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire along with an inclusive political settlement to end the conflict in Afghanistan.

Diplomatic efforts by regional countries to establish peace in Afghanistan have intensified in the past few weeks as the United States announced that it will withdraw its troops from Afghanistan by September 11, causing concerns over further instability in the war-torn country.

These efforts were done against a backdrop of international debate over the United States' upcoming withdrawal from Afghanistan. U.S. President Joe Biden announced last week that the U.S. should end "forever war" in Afghanistan.

"We went to Afghanistan because of a horrific attack that happened 20 years ago. That cannot explain why we should remain there in 2021," the U.S. president said. "We were attacked, we went to war with clear goals," he noted. "We achieved those objectives. Bin Laden is dead and al-Qaida is degraded in Afghanistan, and it's time to end this forever war."

## Senior Iranian diplomat meets ICC chief

**POLITICAL d e s k** **TEHRAN** - Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs Mohsen Baharvand met with Piotr Hofmanski, the president of the International Criminal Court (ICC), in The Hague on Thursday, the Iranian Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

During the meeting, Baharvand and Judge Hofmanski conferred on the latest developments related to the International Criminal Court, including the cases of Afghanistan and the occupied Palestine brought to the ICC, the statement noted.

"The Iranian official referred to the ICC president's remarks about a change in the United States' approach to the International Criminal Court, and expressed hope that the U.S. will not impose unlawful sanctions against nations and international bodies in the future," it concluded.

Also on Thursday, the Iranian diplomat

met with Christophe Bernasconi, the Secretary-General of the Hague Conference on Private International Law (HCCH) at the organization's headquarters in The Hague.

During the meeting, Baharvand underlined the importance of the documents developed within the framework of the HCCH for facilitating the exchanges and interactions between individuals and companies and also for the economic development of countries, the Iranian Foreign Ministry said in a separate statement.

He pointed to the latest developments pertaining to the process of Iran's accession to the Hague Convention Abolishing the Requirement of Legalization for Foreign Public Documents (the Apostille), and said, "The Islamic Republic of Iran will soon submit the documents of its accession to the Convention after finalizing its implementation instruc-

tions in coordination with relevant bodies."

Last week, Baharvand also met with Fernando Arias, the director-general of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). The meeting was held on the sidelines of the 25th annual Conference of the OPCW States Parties.

During the meeting, the Iranian diplomat reiterated that Iran has been the main victim of chemical arms in the contemporary era.

"Although more than three decades have passed since the bitter experience of chemical weapons being used by the regime of [former Iraqi dictator] Saddam Hussein against Iranian military troops as well as civilians and even Iraqis themselves, still this harrowing memory cannot be forgotten as those injured in the chemical attacks are still suffering, especially at a time when they have numerous problems gaining full access to drugs and medical equipment due

accordance with Tehran's instructions," he noted.

The chief Iranian nuclear negotiator described the Vienna talks as "difficult" and vowed that Iran will not allow negotiations to become attritional.

Last week, he said a new understanding is emerging following days of talks in Vienna, but the path ahead is not an easy one.

"It seems that a new understanding is being developed and there is now common ground among all [the sides] on the final goal," the Iranian diplomat pointed out.

Araghchi said the path that must be trodden is a little bit more familiar now.

"However, the path ahead will not be an easy one. The differences have not been settled yet. There are some serious disagreements that need to be decreased during next negotiations," he noted.

"As we have repeatedly announced, Iran is not at all

interested in and does not seek protracted and lengthy negotiations," Araghchi said, adding that the talks will be continued as long as necessary.

"We believe the talks have reached a stage where the sides can now start working on preparing a joint text. They can start drafting the text at least on sectors on which they share views," he noted.

However, Araghchi denied press reports of Iran and its negotiating partners reaching a temporary agreement.

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

member of the UN Security Council plus Germany).

"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 on Monday night.

## SPORTS

### Iran's Motamedi wins gold at Asian Weightlifting Championships

**SPORTS d e s k** **TEHRAN** – Rasoul Motamedi from Iran claimed a gold medal at the 2020 Asian Weightlifting Championships in Tashkent, Uzbekistan on Saturday.

Motamedi lifted the 173kg in the snatch and 227kg in the clean and jerk. He won a gold medal for a total of 400kg in the 102kg weight class.

Qatari weightlifter Fares El-Bakh snatched a silver medal with a total of 396 and Kazakhstan's Artyom Antropov claimed the bronze medal with 390kg.

Iran weightlifters Kianoush Rostami and Sohrab Moradi have already won two gold and silver medals in the 89kg and 96kg.

The rescheduled 2020 Asian Weightlifting Championships (AWC) are taking place in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, from April 16-25, 2021.



### Moradi claims silver at Asian Weightlifting Championships

**SPORTS d e s k** **TEHRAN** – Sohrab Moradi seized a silver medal at the 2021 Asian Weightlifting Championships on Friday in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

The 96kg weightlifter, who has had serious shoulder and spinal injuries over the past years, lifted the 174kg in the snatch and 210kg in the clean and jerk.

He won the silver medal, making total of 384kg in the weight class.

Chinese representative Tian Tao won the gold medal with 175-211-386.

The bronze medal went to Korean Jang Yeon-hak with 379kg.

### Iran sitting volleyball eye seventh Paralympic gold: Hadi Rezaei

**SPORTS d e s k** **TEHRAN** – Hadi Rezaei says that Iran sitting volleyball team are going to win their seventh gold in the Paralympic Games.

Iran have won six gold medals in eight Paralympics editions so far. The Dream Team are training in Kish Island as part of preparation for the Tokyo 2020.

"As you know, Iran sitting volleyball team have won six gold medals so far and we are determined to add another gold to our tally," Rezaei said in an interview with Tehran Times.

"The team are holding their training camp in Kish Island at the moment. We have chosen 15 players from nine provinces but the final 12-man list will be announced after the camps," he added.

"We have been the best team in the world ranking over the past 30 years. With all due respect to our opponents, we are going to win the gold medal once again.

The World ParaVolley Day will be held annually on April 24. Rezaei, who has won five Paralympics gold medals as player and coach, congratulated the World ParaVolley Day to all players and coaches.

"As a member of sitting volleyball family, I praise the significant progress which has been made over the past years in the sport. I congratulate the World ParaVolley Day to all sitting volleyball players and coaches," Rezaei concluded.

### ACL: Khatibi praises Tractor's fighting spirit

**SPORTS d e s k** **TEHRAN** – Tractor football team head coach Rasoul Khatibi credited his side's fighting spirit for their 1-0 victory over Air Force Club on Matchday Four of the 2021 AFC Champions League Group B on Friday.

Mehdi Tikdari's fastest goal of the 2021 AFC Champions League was the difference at the final whistle, the Tractor forward firing home a rebound after Peyman Babaei's initial chance was stopped by goalkeeper Fahad Taleb inside two minutes.

The win took Tractor to six points, two behind leader Sharjah of the UAE, while Air Force Club is on two points. Uzbekistan's Pakhtakor is third in the standings with three points. Air Force Club faces Sharjah on Monday while Tractor plays Pakhtakor.

"We hadn't won in our previous three games," said Khatibi. "But before this game I told my players if we keep fighting and try hard, we will eventually get the win. Fighting spirit paved the way to win the match."

"I would have preferred if Air Force Club had not lost a man to a red card, because after the red card they all doubled their efforts to compensate for it.

"We had to keep some players out to inject new energy and freshness into the team and I hope we can have a similar approach in the next game. This match is now behind us and from this second on, we turn our attention to the next one," Khatibi concluded.

### Ahmad Nourollahi on Al Wakra's radar

**SPORTS d e s k** **TEHRAN** – Persepolis Iconic midfielder Ahmad Nourollahi has been linked with a move to Qatari club Al Wakra.

The 28-year-old midfielder has played key role in Persepolis' success over the past years.

He helped Persepolis win Iran Professional League title in the past three years.

Nourollahi also was part of the team who advanced to the 2018 and 2020 AFC Champions League.

Al Wakrah Sport Club are a Qatari professional sports club based in Al Wakrah. Their professional football team compete in the Qatar Stars League and play their home games at the Al Wakrah Stadium.

## Top nuclear negotiator to brief Iranian lawmakers on Vienna talks

**POLITICAL d e s k** **TEHRAN** – Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi will attend a meeting at the Iranian parliament to brief lawmakers on the outcome of the Vienna nuclear talks over the 2015 nuclear deal.

The meeting will be held at the Parliament National Security and Foreign Policy Committee to discuss the progress made during the recent round of talks in Vienna, Araghchi said in a statement published on his Telegram channel.

Araghchi also said that he will explain the process of the Vienna nuclear talks. The deputy foreign minister has recently returned home after concluding another round of talks in Vienna.

In Tehran, Araghchi said, he will present an "accurate" report to relevant officials and that decisions will be made in Tehran. "We will proceed with the negotiations in



## NIDC digs 9 oil, gas wells in a month

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — National Iranian Drilling Company (NIDC) dug and completed digging operation of nine oil and gas wells during the first month of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-April 20), according to the deputy managing director of the company for digging operation.

Ahmad Tamadon said the drilled wells consisted of one development well, one appraisal well, and seven workover wells.

NIDC has managed to carry out 10,182 meters of horizontal and directional drilling in 43 oil and gas wells across the country during the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20).



According to the Head of NIDC's Special Operations Department Ali Daqaeyeqi, some 654 meters of core extraction drilling was also conducted in the mentioned period which was a huge achievement for assessing the condition of the country's oil and gas reserves.

Referring to the indigenization of the necessary equipment and machinery for directional and horizontal drilling operations in the country, Daqaeyeqi said: "With the acquisition of the necessary technical and engineering knowledge, a number of basic parts and equipment for horizontal and directional drilling and core extraction are currently under construction inside the country."

"This has been achieved as a result of synergy between the company's specialists, scientific and research centers, and knowledge-based companies," he said.

Referring to NIDC's capabilities and capacities in various sectors including technical equipment, as well as specialized and experienced workforce, the official said: "NIDC's Special Operations Department is fully prepared to respond in a timely manner to the requests of the applicant companies, and several such requests for cooperation have been received from domestic oil companies since the beginning of this year which are on the agenda."

After the re-imposition of U.S. sanctions against Iran, indigenizing the know-how for the manufacturing of the parts and equipment applied in different industrial sectors is one of the major strategies that the Islamic Republic has been strongly following up to reach self-reliance and nullify the sanctions.

Oil, gas, and petrochemical industries have had outstanding performances in this due, with indigenizing the knowledge for manufacturing many parts and equipment that were previously imported.

Among different sectors of the mentioned industries, drilling could be mentioned as a prominent example in this regard.

NIDC managed to indigenize the knowledge for manufacturing 6,000 drilling equipment in collaboration with domestic manufacturers and engineers in the Iranian calendar year 1398 (ended on March 19).

Before this success, the technology for manufacturing the mentioned equipment was in the possession of a handful of foreign companies.

The equipment indigenized by NIDC includes drilling mud pumps, blowout preventers, traction motors, draw-works, drilling fluid recycling systems, mission centrifugal pumps, top drives, and drilling rig slow circulation rate pressure systems.

The company has also managed to indigenize the know-how for manufacturing 242 parts that are highly used in the drilling industry during the first half of the previous Iranian calendar year (March 20-September 21, 2020).

In order to indigenize the technology to manufacture these parts, NIDC inked six research deals with domestic universities and knowledge-based companies.

## TEDPIX loses 7,700 points on Saturday

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), lost 7,711 points on Saturday, which is the first day of Iranian calendar week.

Over 3.095 billion securities worth 22.75 trillion rials (about \$541.6 million) were traded at the TSE on Saturday.

The first market's index dropped 4,845 points, and the second market's index fell 18,353 points.

TEDPIX dropped 36,000 points, or three percent, in the past Iranian calendar week.



The index closed at 1.207 million points on Wednesday (the last working day of the week).

During the past week, the indices of Social Security Investment Company, National Iranian Copper Industry Company, Iran Khodro Company, Isfahan Oil Refining Company, and Bank Mellat were the most widely followed indices.

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

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

Two weeks ago, 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."

# Annual rail transit up 29% despite pandemic

**→ 1** Mentioning a four-month blockade of borders with neighboring countries due to the coronavirus pandemic in the previous year, Rasouli said: "We created the conditions for rail transport and trade with neighboring countries to continue according to international health protocols and consequently witnessed a significant increase in rail transport despite the blockades."

According to the official, Iranian exports through the country's railway also increased by five percent in the previous year.

At the railway border with Turkey,

with the increase and equipping of the fleet and the development of the railway infrastructure, the volume of transport reached more than 650,000 tons, which has been the highest record for the last 10 years, he said.

The increase in the country's rail transit has been achieved when according to Mostafa Ayati, the director-general of IRICA's Transit Bureau, transit of commodities through Iran was expected to fall 30 percent in the previous calendar year.

The Organization for Cooperation



of Railways was established as the equivalent of the International Union of Railways (UIC) to create and improve the coordination of international rail transport.

This organization is comprised of

29 active members, eight supervisory members, and 40 institutions and companies as affiliated members. RAI is considered one of the active members of the organization.

## Tire production industry materializes slogan of ‘Surge in Production’

**→ 1** The data of 12-month period of the year is not still released, but it is obvious that the figures will be more outstanding.

In addition to the successes achieved in terms of the output amount, the tire manufacturers entered new areas including production of the wide base tires and the tires of SUVs.

Wide base tires, which are a new generation of the heavy vehicles' tires, were produced for the first time in West Asia by the Iranian producers.

In recent years, with the high investment making of domestic companies and with more emphasis on research and development (R&D), the production of this type of tires with a high-quality standard has been on the agenda, it is while in the past, Iran had to rely on foreign aid to change the generation of tires.

Mostafa Tanha, the spokesman of the Iranian Tire Syndicate, has recently said, "The investments made

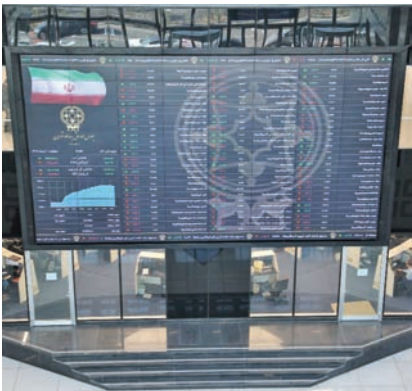


## Iranian stock market's short-term outlook positive: expert

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — The current trend of stock exchange trading will continue until relative stability is established in the market and the investors are expected to return to the market, the capital market expert Amirali Amir-Aqaei stated.

"The demand side is now waiting for the internal and international political condition to become clear, and investors will invest in the stock market again as soon as the horizons are clear," Amir-Aqaei told IRNA.

The point to be noted is that the increase in the sales side in the market over the past week was due to the clearing of the



political outlook, the elimination of the expected high inflation, and the outlook for higher exchange rates, the expert said.

According to Amir-Baqeri, traders came to the conclusion that it is likely that a stagnant atmosphere will prevail in the country's physical markets in the short run, and consequently the capital market has been affected by this issue.

He referred to the trend of trades in the previous Iranian calendar month (March 21-April 20) and continued: "In the first half of the previous year, the market index recorded a peak of near 2.3 million units; reaching such a peak was somewhat justifiable considering the very

high exchange rate and the inflation rate.

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.

## Combined cycle power plants' output reaches new record high

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — The electricity generated by Iran's combined cycle power plants increased by 20 percent in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20) compared to the preceding year, reaching over 158 million megawatt-hours (MWh), IRNA reported.

Iran has been turning its thermal power plans into combined cycle plants in order to reduce greenhouse gases and save energy, according to the country's Thermal Power Plant Holding (TPPH).

Turning gas power plants into combined cycle ones is one of the most efficient ways to improve the efficiency of thermal power plants in the country, which is very effective not only for generating more electricity but also for protecting the environment and reducing fuel consumption.

According to TPPH data, last year 343 million MWh of electricity was generated by the country's power plants (including thermal, hydropower, nuclear and renewable), of which the share of thermal power plants (steam, gas, and combined cycle) was more than 314 million MWh.

Last year, about 92 percent of the country's electricity needs were supplied by thermal power plants, the production of which increased by more than nine



percent compared to the preceding year.

Last week, TPPH Managing Director Mohsen Tarzatab said 69,000 MW new capacity of thermal power plants will join the country's power grid by mid-June and after the end of the overhaul operations.

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

## Iran-Oman trade could be boosted to \$5b

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Head of Iran-Oman Joint Chamber of Commerce said the two countries have the potential to raise their trade level to \$5 billion per year.

"Given the favorable conditions for diversifying Iranian exports to Oman and the existing infrastructure for re-export in Oman, there is a capacity to increase the volume of trade between the two sides to five billion dollars," Mohsen Zarabi told IRNA on Saturday.

Referring to the good political and economic relations between the two countries, Zarabi said: "Eight years ago, when the Iran-Oman Joint Chamber was established, the volume of trade between the two countries was only \$221 million due to the lack of necessary infrastructure."

"In the Iranian calendar year 1397

(March 2018-March 2019), with the improvement of infrastructure such as shipping lines, facilitation of company registration and elimination of visas, Iran's trade with Oman reached about \$1.161 billion, but in 1398 (March 2019-March 2020) due to internal problems such as the ban on the export of some goods or imposition of new export duties, the bilateral trade fell by 40 percent," he explained.

Mentioning the previous year's problems caused by the outbreak of the coronavirus, the official noted that despite all the problems caused by the sanctions and the spread of the coronavirus, in the first 11 months of the previous year (March 20, 2020- February 18, 2021), trade between Iran and Oman increased by \$103 million to reach \$797 million.

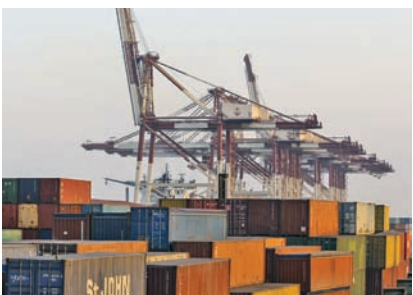
According to Zarabi, minerals, agricul-

tural products, food, industrial machinery, and equipment, as well as construction materials, are among the top items exported to Oman.

He further noted that Iran-Oman Joint Chamber of Commerce has put it on the agenda to increase exports to Oman and boost trade with the country in various fields including tourism, fishery, transportation, industry, and education in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 21).

Iran exported products worth \$174 million to Oman during the first eight months of the previous Iranian calendar year (March 20-November 20, 2020), according to the data released by the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA).

The IRICA data indicate that steel and related products accounted for over 35 per-



cent of the exports during the mentioned time span.

In January 2020, Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) held the first meeting of its Commodity-Country Desk on trade with Oman presided by Farzad Piltan, the director-general of TPO's Office of Arabian and African Countries.



# Opponents strong enough to delay JCPOA revival but not to stop it, says ex-WH official

By Mohammad Mazhari

**TEHRAN** — Former assistant director for national security in the White House Office of Science and Technology believes that opponents of restoring the nuclear deal are strong enough to delay it “but not to stop it”.

“They were strong enough to delay the Biden Administration’s move but not to stop it,” Professor Frank N. von Hippel tells the Tehran Times.

Iran is negotiating with the five powers that remain in the agreement - France, Germany, Britain, Russia, and China - in Vienna to revitalize the pact.

An American delegation is also in Vienna but not talking directly to Iran.

Iran’s Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, who leads Iran’s negotiating team in Vienna, has said the talks have entered a new phase.

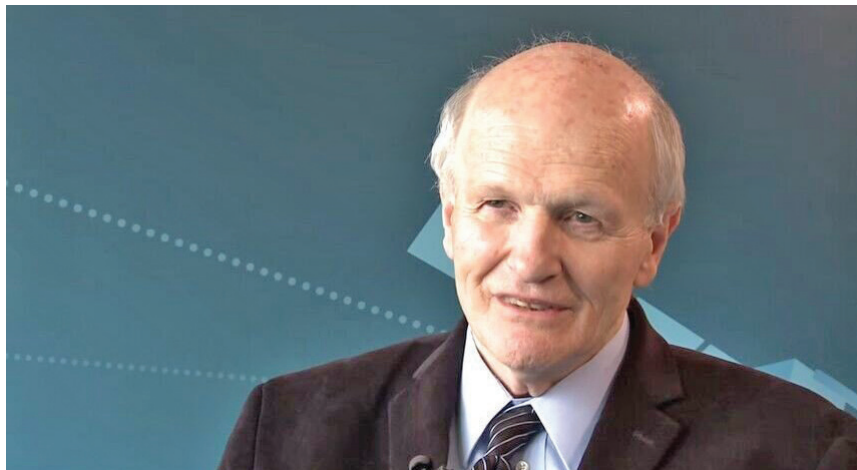
Iran had proposed draft agreements that could be a basis for negotiations, he has said.

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.

Outside America, the nuclear deal has its opponents like Israel and Saudi Arabia.

In recent weeks Israel has started secret vicious moves against Iran, especially its sabotage operation in Iran’s nuclear facility in Natanz, in order to derail the revitalization of the JCPOA.

“The leaders of Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE are all against the JCPOA,” von Hippel



notes. “They have been trying to get the U.S. into a war with Iran, and I think the Trump Administration could have ended up in a war with Iran had President Trump been reelected.”

Following is the text of the interview:  
**How do you see the fate of talks to restore the JCPOA? Are you optimistic?**

The negotiators on both sides are optimistic, and Israel’s intelligence agency reportedly warned Israel’s security cabinet that an agreement would happen. Such reports make me optimistic too.

**Despite the U.S. unilateral withdrawal from the JCPOA in 2018, and reimposition of sanctions on Iran, the Biden administration seems hesitant to take the first step to revive the agreement. Why?**

The Biden Administration inherited many disasters from the Trump Administration and, because of the almost even division of Congress and opposition to the JCPOA from some important Democrats in Congress, decided to delay reentering the JCPOA until it had some domestic policy victories first.

**Do you think that opponents of the Iran nuclear deal inside the U.S., including Republicans and some Democrats and certain lobbies, are strong enough to dictate their will on Biden’s White House?**

They were strong enough to delay the Biden Administration’s move but not to stop it.

**How do you see the role of some regional players in divergence between Iran and the U.S. while they have com-**

**mon interests in West Asia.**

The leaders of Israel, Saudi Arabia and the UAE are all against the JCPOA. They have been trying to get the U.S. into a war with Iran and I think the Trump Administration could have ended up in a war with Iran had President Trump been reelected. But Biden is not interested in another Middle East (West Asia) war. Indeed, in his speech about ending U.S. ground involvement in the civil war inside Afghanistan, he made clear that he sees China as the pre-eminent global challenge to the U.S. I am concerned about the developing Cold War between the U.S. and China and I worry that Taiwan could become a nuclear flashpoint in that war as West Berlin almost was in the Cold War with the Soviet Union.)

**Do you think Israel’s sabotage operations can stop Iran’s nuclear progress?**

Israel cannot stop Iran’s nuclear program by sabotage, but it has succeeded in provoking Iran to make that program look more threatening, which raises the risk of war between the U.S. and Iran. I will be very relieved when both sides return to the JCPOA. I hope Iran will be willing to negotiate a longer-term agreement. I worry that Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Egypt will all launch their own enrichment programs. Far better would be a regional enrichment program under multinational control that threatens no one. That was the solution arrived at in Europe after World War II. URENCO is jointly controlled by Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom and France and URENCO has a joint company to make the centrifuges used in Europe and the United States.

## MEK is front organization of Israeli imperialism against Muslims: Albanian historian

➔ **1** Following is the text of the interview:  
**What was your impression when you noticed that Kosovo has opened an embassy in Jerusalem?**

The opening of Kosovo’s embassy in Jerusalem was an illegal act which the government of Benjamin Netanyahu forced on the government of Abdullah Hoti. The opening was the result of lengthy machinations that Richard Grenell, the Evangelical Presidential Envoy for Serbia and Kosovo for President Trump, did from 2019 to 2020 as part of his project to force the government of Kosovo and Serbia to sign a “Normalization Agreement.”

Kosovo’s embassy opening was part of the project Zionist Abraham Accords which Israel and the Trump administration imposed on many Muslim majority countries. These accords wanted to subjugate the rest of Islamic Ummah to Israel and force the Muslim world to capitulate on the question of Palestine to the Evangelical/Zionist bloc.

The opening of the Kosovo embassy in Jerusalem was made by blackmail and a coup against the Albin Kurti government, which the Americans organized in 2020.

**What are the ties between Israel and MEK in Albania?**

Israel, which during the era of Socialism was considered an aggressor state by Albania, nowadays enjoys a very privileged status in Albanian politics. Israel has an embassy in Tirana, Albania, and our corrupt politicians do all they can to please the Israeli ambassadors in our country since they know that they have a lot of power over the Americans. During the past years the Israeli embassy has been very successful in turning the state of Albania against the Arab and Muslim countries, and today Israel should be very happy by the fact that Albania hosts an ex-terrorist organization, the Mojahedin/Monafeqeen (MEK), in its soil. Jabbat al-Nusra, Daesh and MEK are front organizations of Israeli and American imperialism against the Muslim world. They are the foot soldiers of the Zionist allegiance in the destruction of Muslim nation-states. Since Israel is the enemy of Iran, we can easily conclude that the enemy of Iran should be the best friend of Israel.

During the era of the Trump administration, MEK was boosted in Albania and in Europe and presented as the ‘Iranian opposition’ who will overthrow the Islamic Republic of Iran and replace the current government with a pro-American puppet regime headed by the cult leader of MEK, Maryam Rajavi. Since its coming to Albania in 2016, MEK has been used by their American /Israeli supporters to make countless false claims against the Islamic Republic of Iran and attack and downgrade the presence of Iran in the Balkans. MEK uses its paramilitary base in Albania to attack every Iranian institution in the world and these attacks are later presented as facts by Israeli agencies. Israeli

**The regimes of the Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain today have turned against their civilization and incite hate against the Turks and the Iranians who defended and developed them for 1400 years.**

think tank organizations like the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) and its researchers like Dr. Shaul Shay have openly supported ex-terrorist MEK, called them “Iranian Opposition,” and propagated their lies as truths. The American Jewish Committee (AJC) has also promoted MEK and hosted Prime Minister Edi Rama to deliver a speech to this committee where he defended this Iranian ex-terrorists cult and compared them with the Jews during the Holocaust.

Even though Israel officially has not shown any direct relation with MEK, unofficially it as well as the Evangelical U.S. administration of President Trump used MEK and its experience in terrorism and false flag attacks as a tool for attacking and blackmailing Iran, many European governments and citizens who wanted to have normal relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

However, the good news is that since the coming of Joe Biden in power in the White House, MEK seems to have downgraded its illegal activities from Albania towards Iran and Europe. Albanians pray and hope that the new U.S. administration will force Albania to dismantle the MEK paramilitary camp and force MEK to be deradicalized and abandon terrorism.

**How do you assess Arab states’ position regarding the Palestine cause especially after Bahrain and the Emirates normalized ties with Israel?**

After the U.S. invasion and destruction of the Arab republics in Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen, the Arab world has plunged into chaos and desperation. The dictatorial regimes of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, who have seen the destruction of their Arab neighbors have submitted their national sovereignty to the United States and Israel. They have accepted the defeat and understood that their survival depends on their total submission to the Western alliance. As a part of this submission (Persian) Gulf Arabs have accepted to abandon their glorious Islamic and Arab identity and turn back to the days of pre-Islamic jahiliyyah, when Arab tribes were ruled by the tribes of Banu Qaynuqa. The Saudis, Emiratis and Bahrainis have betrayed the victories of Prophet Muhammed, Hazrat Umar, Khalid ibn al-Walid, the Abbasids and the Ottomans and have descended back to the era of pre-Islamic Arabia when they were clients of the Byzantine and Sassanid Empire. The regimes of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain today have turned against their civilization and incite hate against the Turks and the Iranians who defended and developed them for 1400 years.

Part of the Arab defeat is even abandoning Palestine and the Holy Mosque of Masjid al-Aqsa to the Zionist colonizers. Trump and Israel have made clear to the dictatorial regimes of the (Persian) Gulf that their survival is at the hand of the United States and Israel. For this reason, they are begging Israel to support their despotic regimes and, in exchange, have agreed to sell the Holy Land of Palestine, which the Sahabas of Prophet Muhammed, Abu Ubaidah ibn al-Jarrah and Umar gave to Islam 1384 years ago. The Abraham Accords have exposed to the world the most humiliating time for Arab regimes. However, some Arabs, or the so-called Arabs of the Axis of Resistance which is directed by Iran, show that nowadays, there are still some Arabs who are alive and refuse the humiliation and defeat.

**How do you see the Biden administration’s approach towards Palestine?**

Today, the American Empire is facing an existential threat arising from China. While the Trump administration had an



open hostility towards Islam and Palestine and the Evangelical lunatics of the White House like Mike Pompeo, Mike Pence and Richard Grenell had convinced Sinner Trump that he was the Biblical Esther who will save Israel from the Persians, the Biden administration seems to be more down to earth and pragmatic.

The Biden administration is not as zealous towards the fundamentalist regime of Israel. While it will not cause undue crimes that the Trump administration committed against Palestine, I believe that this administration will show more respect for Muslims and Palestinians. It does not mean that Biden will return to Catholicism and liberate Palestine for Christianity; however, I believe that the Estherian dream of the Evangelicals of Trump wanted to see the Armageddon against Muslims will not happen any time soon.

I believe that the Biden administration, which is desperate to contain China, will try to have a new approach with Iran, Palestine and the Axis of Resistance in order to turn these Arab and Islamic countries away from the Chinese project of One Road, One Belt. Even though Biden is under a lot of pressure from the Zionist groups in the United States, I believe that the new Chinese expansion in Asia is a major threat for the Anglo-American civilization, which will halt for the time being any major Zionist lunacy against Palestine.

**How do you assess European countries’ position when it comes to Palestine?**

Europe is a divided continent. The historical left, which was the major supporter of Palestine nowadays, is very weak. The American interference in Europe’s internal affairs in regard to Islam, Iran and Palestine has shown that European countries are no longer able to defend their national interest and impose peace in the Holy Land. While countries like France, Germany and Italy would love to see an independent Palestine and peace in the Middle East (West Asia), the European policies towards Palestine will continue to be dictated by the U.S. projects for the New Middle East (West Asia).

**Israeli think tank organizations like the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) and its researchers like Dr. Shaul Shay have openly supported ex-terrorist MEK, called them “Iranian Opposition,” and propagated their lies as truths.**

## CIA head said to have made unannounced trip to Afghanistan

CIA Director William Burns made a recent unannounced visit to Kabul, a senior politician and a well-placed public figure told The Associated Press, as concerns mount about Afghanistan’s capability to fight terrorism once the U.S. has withdrawn its remaining troops by summer.

Separately, a senior former Afghan security official deeply familiar with the country’s counterterrorism program said two of six units trained and run by the CIA to track militants have already been transferred to Afghanistan.

In deciding this month on an unconditional troop pullout by Sept. 11, President Joe Biden had argued that a key objective of the U.S. invasion, to prevent terror attacks on the U.S. from Afghan soil, has been met. The pullout deadline marks the 20th anniversary of the al-Qaida terror attacks on the U.S., which triggered the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan.

However, senior U.S. officials have cautioned that the withdrawal poses risks.

## Biden tells Erdogan he plans to recognize Armenian ‘genocide’

United States President Joe Biden told Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan that he plans to recognize the mass killing of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire during World War I as an act of “genocide”, Bloomberg and the Reuters news agencies reported Friday, citing people familiar with the call between the leaders.

Biden would be the first U.S. president to formally recognize the killings of 1.5 million Armenians in the Ottoman Empire from 1915 to 1917 as genocide.

Turkey has acknowledged the deaths of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire during World War I, but has steadfastly denied that the killings were systematically orchestrated and constitute a genocide.

## U.S. deploys weapon system at key base in Iraq after rocket attack

The U.S. military has reportedly deployed a C-RAM weapon system at a key base near Baghdad International Airport, hours after a number of rockets targeted the facility.

Iraq’s Nas news agency reported on Friday that a C-RAM system — which is used to intercept and destroy incoming rockets, artillery and mortar rounds — had been stationed to protect Camp Victory, shortly after three rockets landed in the vicinity of the base.

In addition, U.S. warplanes conducted aerial patrols over the heavily-secured Green Zone in the capital, Baghdad, which hosts Iraqi government institutions and foreign diplomatic missions.

This is the second such deployment in a week with the declared goal of protecting American positions and interests in Iraq. The first C-RAM system, which had been transferred to the site last Friday, failed to successfully counter today’s raid.

## Bahrainis continue nationwide rallies in solidarity with political prisoners

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

Demonstrations in Bahrain have been held on a regular basis ever since a popular uprising began in mid-February 2011.

The participants demand that the Al Khalifah regime relinquish power and allow a just system representing all Bahrainis to be established.

Manama, however, has gone to great lengths to clamp down on any sign of dissent.

## Russia: Terrorists plotting to stage false flag chemical attack in Syria’s Idlib

The Russian Defense Ministry has warned that foreign-sponsored terrorists in Syria’s northwestern province of Idlib are plotting to carry out a chemical attack there, and blame it on government forces.

Rear Admiral Alexander Karpov, deputy head of the Russian Defense Ministry’s Center for Reconciliation of the Opposing Parties in Syria, made the remarks on Friday.

He said the center had received information that the Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) terrorists were seeking to launch a chemical attack in the de-escalation zone of the province in order “to frame the Damascus government for the use of chemical warfare against civilians.”

Karpov added that the plot was hatched in the wake of an unfounded resolution adopted by members of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to limit Syria’s rights and privileges at the international organization.

According to Press TV, on Wednesday, the 25th session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) suspended the voting rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic, accusing Damascus of failing to comply with the treaty, which prohibits the use of all chemicals on the battlefield.

The resolution was passed by 87 votes in favor to 15 against. There were also 34 abstentions out of 136 countries taking part.

## Resistance News

## Hamas warns Israel of continued aggression in Jerusalem

**INTERNATIONAL** **TEHRAN** — Hamas Movement on Saturday warned Israel of escalating the aggression and committing crimes against the Jerusalemites and the holy Al-Aqsa Mosque.

Fawzi Barhoum, Hamas’s spokesman, held the Israeli occupation authority responsible for the repercussions of the racist provocative actions carried out by its soldiers and settlers against Jerusalemites and Muslim worshippers in the courtyards of the Mosque.

Barhoum stressed that all these crimes and violations will not discourage the Palestinians from continuing the struggle and resistance in all its forms to defend Jerusalem and the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

He called on the Arab League, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the people of the Arabic and Islamic nations to assume their responsibilities in protecting the Jerusalemites and the Al-Aqsa Mosque and to expedite taking measures to check the Israeli aggression.

## Israel admits failure to intercept Syria missile landing near Dimona

Israel has admitted its missile-defense system tried but failed to intercept a Syrian missile that landed near the regime’s top-secret and most sensitive Dimona military nuclear site.

Tel Aviv reclaimed the missile had landed in the Israeli-occupied territories as a result of “errant” Syrian anti-aircraft fire. Israeli minister of military affairs Benny Gantz said the incident was under investigation.

Experts, however, say the path of the projectile

few triggered speculation that Dimona had been the target. They added that Israel insisted to keep the incident mysterious and it had imposed its own story on the media.

The Israeli military said, that in response to the launch, it attacked several missile batteries in Syria, including the one that fired the projectile that struck its territory. Syria’s state news agency said Syrian air defences intercepted the Israeli attack that targeted areas in the

Damascus suburbs.

Israeli officials were angered by what happened. Avigdor Lieberman, the former minister of military affairs and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s rival, said the regime had “no functioning government and the power of the deterrence is spent.

The incident happened only weeks after Israel said it had upgraded Iron Dome, in a latest step in Mideast arms race, these upgrades included

the ability to knock out threats at higher and lower altitudes, and to strike larger numbers of incoming rockets could be fired mainly from Lebanon, Syria and the besieged Gaza strip.

Tel Aviv has always praised its own Iron Dome missile defense system in repelling attacks. But this time it failed to intercept the Syrian-fired missile which Israel said landed near its nuclear site underscoring Tel Aviv’s military fragility.

(Source: Press TV)



## Iran suspends all commercial flights with India and Pakistan over COVID-19 variant

**TOURISM** **TEHRAN** — Iran on Saturday announced the halt of all flights to and from India and Pakistan until further notice over a COVID-19 variant to avert its spread in the already-stricken country.



Given the high numbers of COVID-19 cases detected in India and Pakistan, the Islamic Republic has decided to suspend all direct and indirect passenger flights with the two upon the request of the Health Ministry, Mehr reported on Saturday.

The ban, which takes effect at midnight local time on Saturday according to Iran's civil aviation organization, the report said.

Health Minister Saeed Namaki has asked the interior minister to "halt the direct and indirect transport of travelers from India", Iranian media reported.

India on Thursday recorded the world's highest daily tally of 314,835 COVID-19 infections amid fears about the ability to crumble health services to cope.

## Mosayeb Amiri appointed new director of RICHT

**TOURISM** **TEHRAN** – Iranian tourism minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan on Thursday appointed Mosayeb Amiri as the new director of the Research Institute of Cultural Heritage & Tourism (RICHT).



Previously presided over Fars province's directorate of the tourism and cultural heritage, Amiri replaced Behrouz Omrani who held the position for over two years, CHTN reported.

RICHT is by nature an academic entity that comprises of the following centers: the Iranian Center for Archaeology Research (ICAR); the Anthropological Research Center (ARC); the Research Center for Conservation of Cultural Relics (RCCCR); the Research Center for Linguistics, Inscriptions and Texts (RCLIT); The Research Group of the Iranian Traditional (National) Arts (RGITR); the Research Group of Tourism (RGT); and the Research Group of Naural Heritage (RGNH).

Ancient Iran embraces hundreds of historical sites such as bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, mausoleums, churches, towers, and mansions, of which 24 being inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list. Under the 2025 Tourism Vision Plan, the country aims to increase the number of tourist arrivals from 4.8 million in 2014 to 20 million in 2025.

## Historical cave now enjoys more protection against damage

**TOURISM** **TEHRAN** – A series of fences have been set up to protect the historical cave of Espahbod Khorshid and its surrounding areas against potential damage, the director of the historical site has announced.

The conservation project, which also involved evacuating all mining machinery from the historical area, has recently come to an end after months of hard work and pursuit, Mehdi Abedini said on Saturday.

The fencing also aims at preventing cattle from entering the area, the official added.

The ancient cave is situated in the northern Mazandaran province, which is bounded by the Caspian Sea.

The project was implemented in collaboration with the Department of Natural Resources and Watershed Management of Savadkuh as well some non-governmental groups (NGOs), he explained.

Exploring a cave may not be on the "to-do list" of travelers in Iran. However, Karaftu, Ali-Sadr and Quri Qaleh, and Katale-Khor are amongst the most visited caves.



Iran is geologically a part of the Alpine-Himalayan organic belt. According to Britannica Encyclopedia, the enigmatic evidence of human presence on the Iranian plateau is as early as Lower Paleolithic times.

The first well-documented evidence of human habitation is in deposits from several excavated cave and rock-shelter sites, located mainly in the Zagros Mountains of western Iran and dated to Middle Paleolithic or Mousterian times (c. 100,000 BC).

Soaked in a vibrant history, Mazandaran (also known as Tabarestan) was a cradle of civilization since the beginning of the first millennium BC. According to Britannica Encyclopedia, it was almost overrun in about 720 CE by the Arab raiders.

Its insecure eastern and southeastern borders were crossed by Mongol invaders in the 13th and 14th centuries. Cossacks attacked the region in 1668 but were repulsed. It was ceded to the Russian Empire by a treaty in 1723, but the Russians were never secure in their occupation. The area was restored to Iran under the Qajar dynasty. The northern section of the region consists of a lowland alongside the Caspian and an upland along the northern slopes of the Alborz Mountains.

# Land of ghosts: a journey to the ‘Bermuda triangle’ of Iran

→ 1 the famous Swedish desert explorer avoided the area during his 1900s travels to Iranian deserts and in the 1930s, Alfons Gabriel only managed to cross the southern 'tail' of the desert on his way from Ashin to Aroosan.

According to Visit Iran, an official travel guide to the country, Rig-e Jenn marshes are among the most dangerous parts of this desert coming out of which is not easy so that it can even lead to death.

But apart from these dangers, most of the statements about Rig-e Jenn are related to fiction. Locals believe in some fiction and stories that left many questions unanswered. However, the cause of most of these phenomena has today been recognized. For example, a sound is heard in the desert that is known as the Cry of Stone. The cause of this natural phenomenon is the expansion and contraction of stones and breaking them as a result of the temperature difference between day and night.

However, you can enjoy, regardless of these fictions, an exciting journey to Rig-e Jenn. Also, you can experience attractive travel across the desert by off-road equipped vehicles or by motorcycle. One can also cross



the desert barefoot and enjoy being touched by the hot sands of Kavir. If you want to stay for a night in this region observing the desert sky that is full of stars is highly recommended.

If you still dare to visit Rig-e Jen ("Dune of the Jinn"), a name given to the mysterious

desert by the locals, to have some adventure, you have to be careful about safety tips.

Experienced adventurers say one should not choose this desert as their first hiking and trekking destination and they should not travel alone; it's in the middle of nowhere and the only way to access it is by

## Castles, traditional ice storage in Semnan made national heritage

**HERITAGE** **TEHRAN** – Three ancient castles and a traditional Yakhchal (ice storage), scattered across Semnan province, have recently been added to the national cultural heritage list.

The Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts announced the inscriptions on Saturday in a letter to the governor-general of the north-central province.

Dastkand Castle in Javin village, and two others located in Hassan-Abad Qahab village, and Qatul village near Garmsar, are among the properties added to the prestigious list. The newly-registered properties also include a historical Yakhchal in Aliabad-e Motalleb Khan village.

From very early history to modern times, defensive walls have often been necessary for cities to survive in an ever-changing world of invasion and conquest.

Fortifications in antiquity were designed primarily to defeat attempts at the escalade, and to the defense of ter-

ritories in warfare, and were also used to solidify rule in a region during peacetime.

When there was no electricity, no refrigerators, and no appliances, people kept a huge amount of water next to the high walls of Yakhchal, which cast a shadow that kept the water cool.

The water turned into ice during the wintertime. Then people cut the ice into many portable parts and put them in the ice house and covered the surface of the ice with special local grass.

The structure is built high to minimize the contact of warm air with the ice surface as the warm air floats upwards. The feature of the ice storage was essential to its functioning.

There were also wells behind the ice storages with a connective canal at the bottom of the ice storage to the wells with a slight slope.

When people piled up the ice, a little amount of water

remained under the heap of ice. If the water was not removed it would make the rest of the ice melt. By channeling the water into the well, not only did they prevent the ice stored in the ice house from melting, but also they had cold and tasty water during summer months when the weather went up to 40 degrees Celsius.

The main population centers of Semnan province lie along the ancient Silk Road (and modern-day Imam Reza Expressway), linking Rey (Tehran) with Khorasan (Mashhad). While few visitors spend much time in the area, driving through you can easily seek out several well-preserved caravanserais (notably Dehnamak and Ahowan), cisterns (the Cafe Abenbar in Garmsar is a special treat), and ruined mud citadels (Padeh is lumpy but fascinating). The large, bustling cities of Semnan, Damghan, and Shahrud (Bastam) all have a small selection of historic buildings and Semnan has a fine old covered bazaar.

## Tourism expected to rocket up in lesser-known Iranian province

**TOURISM** **TEHRAN** – Extra support for digital businesses and various travel branches could rocket up the tourism industry in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad province, the provincial tourism chief has said.

Digital businesses amid the outbreak of the coronavirus in the country, which causes a major hit to the economic sectors including tourism, could help to increase the income of people active in this field, IRNA quoted Majid Safai as saying on Saturday.



Considering the weather of the area and the farms of fish, saffron, silkworm, and ostrich as well as rice paddies scattered across the province, it has the potential to become a hub for agritourism and other new branches of tourism, the official added.

Agritourism is a relatively new branch of the travel industry in which tourists stay with local people in rural areas. Farm/ranch recreation refers to activities conducted on private agricultural lands, which might include fee-hunting and fishing, overnight stays, educational activities, etc.

To achieve this goal, residential units, echo-lodges, and tourist complexes need to be improved, he explained.

He also noted that ongoing tourism-related projects need to be completed, while new investment packages are being defined to attract more investors to the region.

While most of the activities in this field are on halt due to the coronavirus pandemic over the globe, virtual festivals and online tours could help to promote the tourist attractions of the province, he said.

Last year, the official announced that the tourism sector of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad province is prepared to improve quickly after the coronavirus crisis ends.

He also noted that innovative plans and programs and various cultural festivals are being organized to attract tourists and travelers to the alluring destinations of the province.

The lesser-known Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad province is a cradle for nomadic life. Sightseers may live with a nomadic or rural family for a while or enjoy an independent stay and assist them with day-to-day life. It also opens up an opportunity to feel rustic routines, their agriculture, traditions, arts, and culture.

First Announcement



Iran Tobacco Company

### ONE TIER GENERAL INTERNATIONAL TENDER NOTICE

Iran Tobacco Co. located at Qazvin Ave, Qazvin square, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, P.O.Box 1331838734, intends to purchase below non- tobacco raw materials through international tender:

Row	Description	unit	Quantity
1	filter rod 108mm - T4	Rod	189,000,000
2	Bahman super slim blue 120mm filter rod	Rod	146,000,000
3	Bahman ketabi 108 mm filter rod	Rod	28,000,000
4	Acetate cellulose tow 3y35000	kilo	131,000
5	Acetate cellulose tow 5y30000	kilo	121,000
6	Acetate cellulose tow4y35000	kilo	109,500
7	Tipping paper 50mm X 3000m	Bobin	13,160
8	Tipping paper 38mm X 2400m	Bobin	12,000
9	Tipping paper 70mm X3000m Bahman super slim Blue	Bobin	2,200
10	Tipping paper 64mm X3000m bahman super slim nano	Bobin	1,400
11	Tipping paper 70mm x 3000m bahman super slim black	Bobin	1,000
12	Tipping paper 64mm x 3000m	Bobin	1,710
13	Tipping paper 64mm x 3000 m – T4	Bobin	600
14	Tipping paper 64mm x 3000 m bahman ultra	Bobin	850
15	Cigarette paper 22mmX6000m	Bobin	12,000
16	Cigarette paper 19mmX6000m Bahman super slim	Bobin	7,000
17	Cigarette paper 27mmX6000m	Bobin	2,000
18	Cigarette paper 27mmX6000m Light	Bobin	5,000
19	Cigarette paper 27mm DoubleX6000m	Bobin	3,918
20	Cigarette paper 54mmX6000m	Bobin	1,165
21	Plug Wrap 22mmX6000m	Bobin	5,356
22	Plug Wrap 26.5mmX6000m	Bobin	9,544
23	MAX glue	kilo	53,000
24	Glue7302	kilo	31,000
25	SE glue	kilo	16,000
26	Glue7301	kilo	7,000
27	Triacetin	kilo	35,800
28	Adhesive Tear tape 1.6X12000m	Bobin	4000
29	Adhesive Tear tape 1.6X60000m	Bobin	500

Please note the following:

- Tender documents in English and Farsi will be obtainable from 25.04.2021 till 2.05.2021 at Tender and Contract Unit, first floor, Education Department of Iran tobacco company, Qazvin Ave, Qazvin square, Tehran, Iran, or from the national tender website: [www.iets.MPORG.ir](http://www.iets.MPORG.ir) register the participation process and receive tender documents after payment 1000000 Rls. to the account number 47000701336609 of Parsian Bank, Azadi branch in favor of Iran Tobacco Company

Note: Tender winner will be responsible for all advertisement expenses.

- The samples of each item and the related data sheet and safety data sheet should be dispatched in standard reinforced packing format as below to Security department of Iran Tobacco Company, first floor of Shahid Golchin building, Qazvin Ave, Qazvin square, Tehran, Iran, P.O.Box 1331838734 exact and complete information of seller should be indicated on each sample.

Description	Quantity of sample	Description	Quantity of sample
Filter rod	10000 rods	Cigarette paper	5 Bobins of each size
Tipping Paper	5 Bobins of each size	Plug Wrap Paper	5 Bobins of each size
Golden & Clear Self Adhesive Tear Ta	5 Bobins of each size	Plasticizer	60 Kgs
Acetate Tow	2 bale 200- 250kgs	–	–

The samples are receivable from 25.04.2021 till 22.05.2021 and Offers must be submitted to our Security Department secretariat office located at, Shahid Golchin building,Qazvin Ave.,Qazvin square, Tehran Islamic Republic of Iran P.O.Box:1331838734 Iran Tobacco Company until 15:00 pm on Thursday 10.06.2021

The offers will be opened at Imam Ali Conference Hall, located at Iran Tobacco Company at 10:00 Am.saturday 12.06.2021

For more information, you can contact to 0098 21 51261651-1920

The management of Communications and International Affairs,  
Iran Tobacco Company



# Over 200,000 passengers tested for COVID-19 at borders

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — Some 200,081 passengers have so far been screened for coronavirus by thermal tests at the country's official borders since March 10, Mehdi Valipour, head of Relief and Rescue Organization affiliated to the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS), has stated.

During the aforesaid period, IRCS forces have screened 200,081 passengers for COVID-19, 10,028 of whom with symptoms underwent PCR and 31,558 rapid tests, he said, IRNA reported on Saturday.

He went on to lament that some 55 individuals, who tested positive, have so far been temporarily quarantined, under a plan to rapidly identify suspected cases of coronavirus and prevent the spread of new UK strain.

Some 431 members of the IRCS cooperate for carrying out the plan in 16 provinces across the country, Valipour concluded.

With the cooperation of ministries of health and transport, a plan is being imple-



mented with the goal of rapidly identifying and testing incoming passengers and keeping them in quarantine facilities, if necessary.

Thirty border checkpoints have been selected, including 18 land borders, nine air borders, and three sea borders, all incoming passengers will be tested and referred to the quarantine facilities in case of necessity.

Around 8,000 individuals enter the country via borders on a daily basis.

## New cases and mortalities

In a press briefing on Saturday Health Ministry's spokesperson, Sima-Sadat Lari, confirmed 18,230 new cases of COVID-19 infection, raising the total number of infections to 2,377,039. She added that 1,863,405 patients have so far recovered, but 5,156 remain in critical conditions of the disease.

During the past 24 hours, 374 patients have lost their lives, bringing the total number of deaths to 69,120, she added.

So far, 15,078,540 COVID-19 diagnostic tests have been performed in the country.

## Kish Island hosting 30% of Iran's bird species

**→ 1** Kish has a long history of about 3,000 years, which ranks it among the world's 10 most beautiful islands and it is the 3rd most visited vacation destination in West Asia. Kish, like the other Persian Gulf islands, especially the islands in the Strait of Hormuz, is located on a narrow strip of tropical vegetation in the Northern Hemisphere, which has special geographic and climatic attributes.

Environmentalists have identified 193 different bird species on the island so far IRNA quoted Maryam Mohammadi, head of the department of environment of Kish Free Zone Organization, as saying on Saturday.

Over the last four years, images of 137 endangered, rare, migratory, and native bird species of this island have been collected, she added.

Many birds have been observed on Kish Island after many years, including cinereous bunting, and the Jacobin cuckoo, she noted.

Green-backed herons and birds of prey such as the crested honey buzzard, osprey, Eurasian hobby, and lesser kestrel are rare in the region and even in the world, which chooses Kish island to winter, Mohammadi concluded.

## Iran's impressive bird diversity

Iran is host to over 600 species of birds, the number of which is increasing year by year.

Iran is decorated with impressive wetlands that hold a great share of aquatic and bird species and wildlife; Anzali Wetland, Qeshm Island, Orumieh Lake, and Miankaleh Peninsula are among the most important locations for bird watching in Iran.

Miankaleh International Wetland in Mazandaran, called the birdwatching paradise of Iran, stretches to a total area of 68,000 hectares, which is home to at least 130 species of migratory species with a population of 1.5 million.

Being an impressive bird-watching destination, the wetland displays a variety of bird species such as otters, all kinds of fish-eating ducks (common goldeneye and Mergus), pelicans, flamingos and cormorants, common pheasants, partridges, mute swan, tundra swan, and coots. Ashuradeh was introduced and registered as one of the world's first biosphere zones in 1975.

Gomishan wetland in Golestan province is home to over 20,000 water birds, and more than 20 species of birds, which supports three IUCN Red List vulnerable

species of waterbirds, i.e., *Pelecanus crispus*, *Aythya nyroca*, and *Vanellus gregarius*, as well as the vulnerable mammal *Phoca (Pusa) caspica*; it is also an important staging area for the fish subspecies *Rutilus rutilus caspica*.

Located at the foot of the Zagros mountains in north-western Iran, Zarivar is a freshwater wetland hosting over 74 bird species, which is designated as a Ramsar Site.

The Site provides a suitable breeding and resting place for birds and other wetland animals, and due to the relatively extensive reed beds, it is an important overwintering site for northern migratory birds.

Located in Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari province, Choghakhor Wetland is flowing on 1687 hectares; designated as a hunting restricted area. It supports more than 47 bird species, with breeding populations of migratory birds such as the Northern Pintail (*Anas acuta*).

It supports more than 1 percent of the population of Gadwall (*Anas strepera*) and harbors threatened species such as the endangered White-headed Duck (*Oxyura leucocephala*) and the vulnerable Eastern Imperial Eagle (*Aquila heliaca*).

## Africans contribute the least to the climate crisis but suffer the most

This week the UK pledged to cut its emissions by 78 per cent by 2035. Crucially, it included the polluting industries of shipping and aviation in its sixth carbon budget. But setting targets is much easier than meeting them and currently the UK is not on track to meet its fifth carbon budget.

While some progress is being made at home to usher in a green, clean future for Britain, those of us overseas are keen to see the hosts of this year's Cop26 climate summit using their international leadership role to encourage this clean energy revolution elsewhere too, the Independent reported.

For too long the UK has funded, and profited from, the expansion of fossil fuels in my continent of Africa. While it was reaping the benefits of decarbonising its own energy system it was shackling poorer nations with dirty fossil fuel infrastructure, which the world must now move away from.

In order to help undo this legacy, Boris Johnson should embrace his 'Global Britain' mantra and ensure it becomes the leading force in the spread of clean energy around the world. Africa has an abundance of renewable energy poten-

tial; from the equatorial sunshine to the winds that whip across our plains. Yet, the number of people lacking access to electricity is set to rise in sub-Saharan Africa.

Africans have done the least to cause the climate crisis and yet are suffering the most from it. In fact, we make up 17 per cent of the world's population but have contributed to just 4 per cent of global emissions between 1990 and 2017. All we're asking for now is help from rich polluters to help us leapfrog the dirty development path they have taken and enable us to harness clean energy.

There are plenty of examples of what this could look like. Under Barrack Obama's Power Africa programme, the US helped create one of the fastest built solar farms in Rwanda as well as the first wind power project in Senegal. The UK's Department for International Development, which Boris Johnson has closed, launched a campaign in 2015 under David Cameron to help boost uptake of off-grid solar in Africa. This was a welcome recognition of the potential of renewables to bring electricity to the remotest places where grid infrastructure can't reach.

There is certainly not a lack of need. Rich countries promised to mobilise \$100 billion (£79 billion) a year by 2020 to help the poor countries adapt to the climate crisis and transition to clean energy, but have failed to deliver this. The total is not only much lower, it is also made up of loans rather than grants which will saddle already struggling countries with yet more debt.

As the first major economy in the world to set a 2050 net-zero target, the UK understandably wants other countries to follow suit, and many have. With the right support, African nations could be great allies to climate leaders keen to create a positive coalition for action. My home country of Kenya already has ambitious goals to reach 100 per cent renewable electricity in the near future.

There is also a geopolitical advantage for 'Global Britain' to engage with African countries on their clean energy ambitions. In Western capitals, there is much consternation about China's global influence, including its Belt and Road Initiative, which has seen it gaining friends and building major infrastructure projects across Africa. With Joe Biden in the White House and Cop26 host Boris



Johnson in Number 10, there is scope for a new Anglo-American force for good that, if working alongside African countries, could help bring clean energy to some of the poorest people on earth while allowing them to truly achieve greater climate ambitions, something which would benefit us all.

At the end of Cop26 in Glasgow this year Boris Johnson will pass the torch to an African country, where Cop27 will take place. This would be the perfect time to forge a new partnership between the UK and Africa, one built not on a legacy of colonialism but of ending the scourge of fossil fuels and liberating a continent with clean power.

## COVID-19 vaccination system to be launched

**→ 1** 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.



Homegrown vaccine "Osvid-19" produced by Osvah Pharmaceutical Company vaccine will also be available in early September.

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

## 500,000 foreign nationals leave Iran during pandemic

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — Some 500,000 foreign nationals have so far left the country during the coronavirus pandemic, Mohsen Ebrahimi, deputy labor minister has said.

There are currently 3.5 million foreign nationals working in the country, he stated, IRNA reported on Saturday.

The impact of the pandemic on livelihoods has been particularly severe for refugees, who usually rely on precarious and unstable jobs. Many can no longer cover their most basic needs, let alone the costs of health insurance and treatment costs.



## Two million foreign nationals residing in Iran

Deputy interior minister Javad Naserian said in February that about one million documented foreign nationals are residing in Iran, and perhaps another one million are illegally living in the country.

At the end of 2018, Iran hosted close to one million refugees, making it the sixth-largest refugee host country in the world. The country was also the eighth largest refugee-hosting country in the world in 2019, hosting 951,142 Afghan refugees and 28,268 Iraqi refugees, according to the UNHCR.

One of the largest and most protracted urban refugee populations in the world is living in Iran; about 97 percent of refugees live in urban and semi-urban areas, while three percent are residing in 20 refugee resorts run by the UNHCR's main government counterpart.

Undocumented Afghans have access to free primary health services and similarly free COVID-19 related testing, treatment, and hospitalization, just like nationals.

## Education, health for foreign nationals

Many of the refugees living in Iran are the second and third generation, according to the UNHCR.

There are 40,000 Afghan students in the country, according to the official report, 17,000 of them are graduated, while the unofficial report is estimated at 26,000.

Some 47,000 people were trained and 10 percent of legal refugees were covered by social insurance with the help of the UNHCR, and other foreign nationals can pay for health insurance like Iranians.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, undocumented Afghans have access to free primary health services and similarly free COVID-19 related testing, treatment, and hospitalization, just like nationals.

## LET'S LEARN PERSIAN

(Part 167)

(Source: saadifoundation.ir)

### گذشته‌ی جاری

گذشته‌ی جاری از گذشته‌ی ساده‌ی 'داشتن' + گذشته‌ی استمراری ساخته می‌شود. جای 'داشتن' معمولاً بعد از فاعل است:

I was	من + داشتم + می‌رفتم	—	من داشتم می‌رفتم
in the	تو + داشتی + می‌رفتی	—	تو داشتی می‌رفتی
act of	او + داشت + می‌رفت	—	او داشت می‌رفت
going	ما + داشتیم + می‌رفتیم	—	ما داشتیم می‌رفتیم
...	شما + داشتید + می‌رفتید	—	شما داشتید می‌رفتید
	آنها + داشتند + می‌رفتند	—	آنها داشتند می‌رفتند

● تمرین ۱. جمله‌ها را به گذشته‌ی جاری بنویسید:

۱. ما به راننده (کمک کردن)
۲. من به عکس‌ها (نگاه کردن)
۳. باران تندی (باریدن)
۴. پسرها یکی یکی (برگشتن)
۵. مادر مریم کم‌کم (خسته شدن)
۶. من و مهیار جدول (حل کردن)

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

## Tehran short of 12,000 classrooms

Considering the current population of students educating in Tehran, there is a shortage of 12,000 classrooms which will increase to 18,000 over the next few years, director of the organization for renovation of Tehran schools has stated.

Currently, 8,500 classrooms are beyond repair and must be reconstructed, while 14,500 others need retrofitting, ISNA quoted Ali Shahri as saying on Wednesday.

There is also a high density of students in the capital, and despite the average capacity of classrooms accommodating 24 students, the number of students in some areas is twice the average, he lamented.

Referring to the current construction projects, he said that there are 110 projects under construction, half of which will be completed by the new school year (September 23).

## کمبود ۱۲ هزار کلاس درس در پایتخت

مدیرکل نوسازی مدارس استان تهران اظهار کرد: با توجه به جمعیت فعلی دانش آموزی به ۱۲ هزار کلاس درس جدید نیاز داریم که البته با احتساب رشد جمعیت به ۱۸ هزار کلاس طی چندسال آینده می‌رسد.

علی شهری در گفت‌وگو با ایسنا، گفت: ۸۵۰۰ کلاس درس در تهران باید مورد تخریب و بازسازی قرار گرفته و ۱۴ هزار و ۵۰۰ کلاس درس مقاوم سازی شوند. همچنین با تراکم بالای جمعیت دانش‌آموزی در استان روبرویم و علیرغم آنکه تراکم میانگین در مدارس کشور ۲۴ نفر است، شاهد دوبرابر این میزان تراکم در برخی مناطق هستیم.

مدیرکل نوسازی مدارس استان تهران تاکید کرد که در حال حاضر ۱۱۰ پروژه نیمه تمام دیگر داریم که امیدواریم نیمی از آنها را تا مهر ماه به مرحله بهره‌برداری برسانیم.



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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

There are five activities that I won't leave off till I'm alive so that they would become part of my tradition. [One of them] is greeting children.  
*Prophet Muhammad (S)*

“The Shyness & Social Anxiety Workbook” published in Persian

**CULTURE** **TEHRAN** — “The Shyness & Social Anxiety Workbook: Proven Techniques for Overcoming Your Fears” has recently been published in Persian. The book co-written by Martin M. Anthony and Richard P. Swinson has been translated into Persian by Javad Khalatbari, Tabassom Bahreini and Leila Sajjadi.



Saless, a major Tehran-based company, is the publisher of the book. There's nothing wrong with being shy. But if social anxiety keeps you from forming relationships with others, advancing in your education or your career, or carrying on with everyday activities, you may need to confront your fears to live an enjoyable, satisfying life. “The Shyness and Social Anxiety Workbook” offers a comprehensive program to help you do just that. As you complete the activities in this workbook, you'll learn to find your strengths and weaknesses with a self-evaluation, explore and examine your fears, create a personalized plan for change, and put your plan into action through gentle and gradual exposure to social situations. Information about therapy, medications, and other resources is also included. After completing this program, you'll be well-equipped to make connections with the people around you. Soon, you'll be on your way to enjoying all the benefits of being actively involved in the social world. This book has been awarded The Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies Self-Help Seal of Merit — an award bestowed on outstanding self-help books that are consistent with cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) principles and that incorporate scientifically tested strategies for overcoming mental health difficulties.

Iranian artist among Sovereign Asian Art Prize finalists

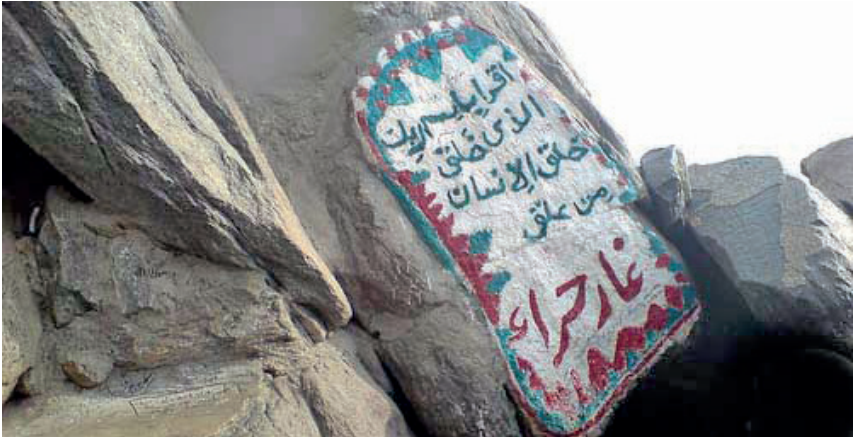
**A R T** **TEHRAN** —Iranian artist Mamali Shafahi is among the 30 finalists of the 2021 Sovereign Asian Art Prize, Honaronline reported on Friday. Shafahi is competing with artists from India, Taiwan, the Philippines, Australia, South Korea, Pakistan, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, China, Japan, Cambodia, and Hong Kong.



The Sovereign Asian Art Prize was launched in 2003 to increase the international exposure of artists in the region, whilst raising funds for programs that support disadvantaged children using expressive arts. Held annually, The Prize is now recognized as the most established and prestigious annual art award in Asia-Pacific. The Prize invites mid-career contemporary artists, nominated by a board of independent art professionals, to each enter up to three artworks online. A judging panel comprised of world-class art experts shortlist the 30 best artworks from a range of digital images. The shortlisted artworks are then exhibited in Hong Kong, where they are judged for a second time and voted on by the public. The Grand Prize Winner receives \$30,000, while the winner of the Public Vote Prize receives \$1,000. The shortlisted artworks, except for The Grand Prize-winning entry, are sold and proceeds are split evenly between the artists and the charity. The 2021 winners will be announced on May 23.

Qom center planning for biopic about wife of Prophet Muhammad (S)

→1 Maleki pointed to the materialistic and spiritual support Hazrat Khadijah (SA) provided for the Prophet of Islam, and said that the screenplay is being written for an international audience. The screenplay can be a prelude to producing more films and animations about the lives of other Islamic figures. Welcoming great Islamic scholars and thinkers to be more seriously involved in the production of such movies, Maleki expressed his concern regarding the heavy prerequisites that are necessary for producing historical films. He stated that in order to make this movie, “a big step must be taken, and it is predicted that the preproduction phases of this movie will be lengthy and extensive.” Maleki also called on all cultural and



A view of the Hira Cave.

religious institutions as well as activists and artists, especially screenwriters, to get involved in the project in order to produce an ideal movie. Stating that Hazrat Khadijah (SA) is one of the 4 holiest women in the world of humanity, Maleki said that the institute will hire one of Iran's top professional directors for the project. The Farabi Cinema Foundation has recently announced that Farhad Tohidi has completed writing a screenplay about the life of Hazrat Khadijah (SA). The foundation also plans to make “The First Lady” based on the screenplay. Hazrat Khadijah (SA) was the first person to convert to Islam and lived with the Prophet of Islam (S) for more than 25 years.

Iran organizes webinar for Japanese devotees of Sadi poetry

The webinar in observance of Sadi Day was organized in collaboration with Iran's Sadi Foundation, an organization that promotes the Persian language abroad, the center announced. The event began with a video message from Gholam-Ali Haddad-Adel, director of the foundation who is also the director of the Academy of Persian Language and Literature. The virtual colloquium continued with a speech by Naho Nakamura, a professor of the Persian language at Daito Bunka University in Tokyo. Nakamura and Shuri Suzuki have earlier co-translated Iranian scholar Zahra Taheri's book “The Silence of Old Mirrors: The Lost Voice of a Muslim Woman in the Constitutional Period” into Japanese. The book was released by Michitani Publishing House in Tokyo in 2012. Sadi Day, which marks the anniversary of the completion of his masterpiece Gulistan (The Rose Garden), was celebrated

during virtual meetings in Iran and several other countries on April 21. The Iranian Culture Center in the Azerbaijani capital of Baku also commemorated the day along with students of the Persian language. “The Persian language is rooted in the works and thoughts of great figures such as Sadi, Ferdowsi, Rumi, Nezami and Rudaki,” Iranian cultural attache Qorbanali Purmarjan said during the webinar. He described the personalities as “the stars of the sky of Persian literature” and added that Sadi has always been known as “an ambassador of humanity and a promoter of coexistence in the world.” As one of the greatest figures of classical Persian literature, Sadi is famous worldwide for his Bustan (The Orchard) and Gulistan (The Rose Garden), which have been translated into many languages.

Actress Merila Zarei turns into Qajar king's mother Mahde Olya in “Jeyran”

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — Merila Zarei has signed up to play the role of Mahde Olya, an influential woman and the mother of Qajar king Nasser ad-Din Shah, in director Hassan Fathi's TV series “Jeyran”. She had worked in Fathi's 2010 drama “Retribution”, which also starred Hooman Barqnavard, Jamshid Hashempur and Hanieh Tavassoli. In June 2020, Fathi announced his new project “Jeyran”, which is about Nasser ad-Din Shah's favorite in the harem. The shooting of the TV series started few weeks ago, however, the new wave COVID-19 in the country has brought a halt to the project. Producer Esmail Afifeh had earlier

said, “History has always been a source of inspiration for everybody, and Nasser ad-Din Shah has previously been the subject of several movies and series.” The series is being produced for the home video network. “The rise in people's regard for the platforms providing video on demand (VOD) service and the platforms' development will help foster film productions,” he stated. Ehsan Javanmard, the writer of “The Lady of the Edifice”, a popular series directed by Fathi a few years ago, is also writing “Jeyran”. Parinaz Izadyar, a star in Fathi's popular series “Shahrzad”, also is starring in the new project. Jeyran, originally called Khadijeh, was

the daughter of Mohammad-Ali, a gardener and carpenter in the village of Tajrish near Tehran during the reign of Nasser ad-Din Shah, who had 84 women in his harem. Due to her large dark-hued eyes, the shah renamed her Jeyran, which means gazelle in the Azerbaijani language. She was then honored with the royal nickname “Forugh us-Saltaneh”, which literally means “the light of the kingdom”. There are different stories about her first meeting with Nasser ad-Din Shah. Historian Abbas Amanat has said that Jeyran was among the dancers that were invited to the court on various special royal celebrations and the shah met her among the entourage of Mahde Olya.



Merila Zarei in a scene from “Jeyran”.

In his memoir, poet Taqi Daneshvar said that the shah met her on one of his trips for hunting around Tajrish. Fathi is also director “Intoxicated by Love”, a co-production between Iran and Turkey about the Persian poet and mystic Molana Jalal ad-Din Rumi and Shams-i Tabrizi, the wandering sage who later became the mentor of Rumi in the 13th century CE.

“Yalda” wins best screenplay award at Barcelona film festival

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — Iranian drama “Yalda, a Night for Forgiveness” directed by Masud Bakhshi has won the award for best film at the Barcelona Sant Jordi International Film Festival (BCN Film Fest). Written by Bakhshi, the Persian-language film is a co-production from Iran, France, Germany, Switzerland, Luxembourg and Lebanon. It is about Maryam, a young woman who has been sentenced to death for murdering her husband, Nasser. Iranian law allows the victim's family to forgive her and spare her life, so Maryam's fate will be decided by Nasser's daughter, Mona, on the country's most popular televised reality show. In front of millions of viewers during Yalda, the winter solstice celebration, Maryam and Mona discover that forgiveness can be difficult as they relive the past. The film has been screened at several international festivals and has won honors, including the Grand Jury Prize of



Behnaz Jafari acts in a scene from Iranian drama “Yalda, a Night for Forgiveness” directed by Masud Bakhshi.

the World Cinema Dramatic section of the Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah in February 2020.

New Persian translation brings “A Sorrow Beyond Dreams” to Iranian bookstores

**CULTURE** **TEHRAN** — A news Persian translation of Austrian novelist Peter Handke's “A Sorrow Beyond Dreams” has recently been published in Tehran. Farhange Nashre No is the publisher of the book, which has been translated into Persian from a German version by Nasser Ghiasi. Handke's mother was an invisible woman. Throughout her life, which spanned the Nazi era, the war and the postwar consumer economy, she struggled to maintain appearances, only to arrive at a terrible

realization: “I'm not human any more.” Not long after that, she killed herself with an overdose of sleeping pills. In “A Sorrow Beyond Dreams”, her son sits down to record what he knows, or thinks he knows, about his mother's life and death before, in his words, “the dull speechlessness — the extreme speechlessness” of grief takes hold forever. And yet the experience of speechlessness, as it marks both suffering and love, lies at the heart of Handke's brief but unforgettable

elegy. This austere, scrupulous and deeply moving book is one of the finest achievements of a great contemporary writer. An English translation by Ralph Manheim with an introduction by Jeffrey Eugenides previously has been published. Handke is an avant-garde novelist and playwright whose body of work has been awarded numerous literary prizes, including the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2019. He has also collaborated with German director Wim Wenders, writing the script

for “The Wrong Move” and co-writing the screenplay for “Wings of Desire”. Handke has received other awards, including the 1973 Georg Buchner Prize, the 1987 Vilenica International Literary Prize, and the 2018 Austrian Nestroy Theatre Prize for Lifetime Achievement. At least three Persian translations of “A Sorrow Beyond Dreams” have previously been published in Iran. All these translations have been rendered from English translations of the book.

“The Cow”, a pioneering masterpiece of Iranian cinema

**Part 2** When the cow dies they place blame upon 'evil eye' or on the outsiders. This process of blaming 'outside' parties (for all misfortune), while continuing to commit morally reprehensible acts could be interpreted on different levels. From a social perspective, the villagers' conclusion about the 'outside' threat is similar to the government's blame on every misstep on parties outside their nation's borders. Whatever our choice of interpretation is, “The Cow” works primarily as a moving human drama. Director Mehrjui's rich aesthetic sensibilities and Saedi profound psychological exploration doesn't underwhelm the emotional power we derive from Hassan's personal experiences. By signifying the importance of the cow, from

the both social and personal perspective, the filmmaker is able to deliver the hard-hitting impact in the second-half. Nevertheless, the director doesn't turn the narrative into a very dark territory. There's a 'Fellini-esque' touch in how Mehrjui frames the baffled expressions of the villagers. Their reactions seen from distance allows for a small undercurrent of humor. He allows us to perceive the twisted nature of Hassan's transformation (where he proclaims 'I am Hassan's cow'), without ever downplaying our emotional connection with Hassan. The distressing factor of the film is not just Hassan's descent into madness; it lies in how the village community reacts to it. As they repeatedly find themselves in a situation unable to address (or find solution to) Hassan's mental illness, the community slowly seem to

give in to his illusion. As the man is stripped off his identity, the villagers overstep their boundaries to reach for some kind of resolution. At the end, the rebelling man/animal becomes a just a burden to be abolished. This disturbing notion is sharply expressed in the climax when Islam loses his senses to treat stubborn Hassan as an animal ('get going you beast!', he shouts). The movie's success also belongs to the stupendous performance of Ezzatollah Entezami in the central character. “The Cow” aka “Gaav” (100 minutes) is a seminal work of Iranian cinema which could serve both as a touching cinematic experience and contemplated deeply from a philosophical point of view.

(Source: Highonfilms)