



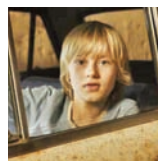
**Iran closely watching Tajikistan-Kyrgyzstan border conflict** *Page 2*



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# Deciphering bin Salman's change of tone



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## Dozens 'crushed to death' in Israel pilgrimage stampede

A stampede at a religious festival attended by tens of thousands of ultra-Orthodox Jews in northern Israel has killed at least 44 people and injured about 150 early Friday, medical officials said.

Magen David Adom, the Israeli emergency service, said that at least 44 people were killed during the event early on Friday, adding "MDA is fighting for the lives of dozens wounded, and

will not give up until the last victim is evacuated."

Zaki Heller, spokesman for the Magen David Adom, said that among the 150 people who had been hospitalized, six were in critical condition.

On social media, Benjamin Netanyahu called it a "heavy disaster" and added: "We are all praying for the wellbeing of the casualties."

## Water, development projects worth over \$619m inaugurated

TEHRAN - Iranian President Hassan Rouhani on Thursday inaugurated three water supply projects as well as a dam in three provinces through vide conference, IRNA reported.

The mentioned projects including a water supply project, a water treatment plant, a wastewater treatment plant, and a dam were put into operation with a total investment of 26 trillion rials (over \$619

million) in Khuzestan, Mazandaran and Hormozgan provinces.

The projects were inaugurated under the framework of the Energy Ministry's A-B-Iran program and also as part of the series of inaugurations made by the president over the past year and in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 21).

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## Book on Lorish activist of Iran's Constitutional Revolution published in Johannesburg

TEHRAN - A book on Bibi Maryam Bakhtiari, a Lorish Iranian revolutionary and activist of the Constitutional Revolution, has recently been published in the South African capital of Johannesburg.

Parichehr Soltani-Kharaji is the writer of the book "Sardar Bibi Maryam Bakhtiari" published by Krown Printers in collaboration with the Iranian Cultural Center in Johannesburg, the center announced on Thursday.

Soltani-Kharaji has spent 11 years collecting information for writing the book translated into English by Shima Elahi.

As a military commander, Bibi Maryam played a distinguished role when Bakhtiari tribal forces, with the help of modern arms from the German Empire, successfully captured Tehran in 1909 as part of the revolutionary campaign to force the central government to establish democratic reforms.

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## Biden's team is very anti-Russian in its ideology: Russian expert

**BY MOHAMMAD MAZHARI**

Russian expert believes the Biden administration is anti-Russian and needs to prove its seriousness through sanctions on Moscow.

«Biden's team is very anti-Russian in its ideology, at the same time they need to show their seriousness with anti-Russian sanctions to prove they are "more effective in a struggle with Moscow" than Trump,» Stanislav Mitrokhovich from the National Energy Security Fund and the Financial University tells the Tehran Times.

U.S sanctions on Russia are not limited to political struggles between two powers; it is a competition over economic interest.

«Washington will intensify its war against Nord Stream 2 project,» according to Mitrokhovich.

Observers say that U.S. policy on Nord Stream 2 is mainly dictated by a bipartisan approach of lawmakers led by Texas Senator Ted Cruz.

They are insisting on sanctions on all companies engaged in the project, eventually including German ones. For this group of lawmakers, especially Cruz, the U.S. response to Nord Stream 2 boils down to one aim: A harsh stance against Russia.

However European countries, see Nord Stream 2 as strengthening the EU's energy security and believe that U.S. hawkishness on Russia is unconstructive. In the long term, Europe considers the relations with Russia as a clear-eyed and cautious step to get rid of America's hegemony.

American policymakers need to acknowledge other powers, including Russia and China.

«Without modern and strengthened Russia and China, American — actions definitively might have been much harsher,» the Russia expert emphasizes. «One can easily remember wars against Serbia and Iraq just one decade ago.»

Now Vienna talks about reviving Iran's nuclear deal (signed in 2015) is going on; Iran is negotiating with five powers that remain in the agreement - France, Germany, Britain, China, and Russia.

Political pundits believe that China and Russia had a crucial role in balancing Western powers' demands.

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## The IRGC and the army monitoring enemy's movements in Persian Gulf : Tangsiri

TEHRAN— the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps Navy Force Commander Admiral Alireza Tangsiri spoke at the "National Persian Gulf and Makran Coast" conference on Thursday and warned the enemies that Iran "authoritatively" monitors and controls any movement of the enemy and ships entering the waters of the Persian Gulf.

"Today, every ship that enters the Persian Gulf is monitored in the Strait of Hormuz, citing the law on channel control, and is forced to introduce itself," he said.

The general stressed that the presence of the Islamic Republic in the Persian Gulf region is not merely related to the military field, but Iran also has a strategic presence in various economic, political and even cultural sectors in the national and international domains.

"Currently, over 62% of the world's oil reserves of 730 billion barrels of proven oil reserves, 40% of the world's gas resources equivalent to

70 trillion natural gas reserves are available in this region, which has doubled its strategic importance and role," Tangsiri said on the importance of Persian Gulf.

He noted that the strategic and geopolitical situations of the Persian Gulf have caused the illegitimate presence of some Western powers and foreign countries.

The general noted, "This important and strategic position of the Persian Gulf has led to some regional challenges, including the fierce competition in the field of military arms sales in the region."

According to General Tangsiri, the wrong policies of some countries in the Persian Gulf have led to the formation of a kind of market for sale and trade of arms between trans-regional and western countries in the Persian Gulf, and "its position will be challenged in the future."

April 30 marks the Persian Gulf National Day.

## Abbas delays first Palestinian elections in 15 year

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas has postponed planned parliamentary elections amid a dispute over voting in Israeli-annexed East Jerusalem al-Quds as well as splits in his Fatah movement and its unpopularity, triggering protests in the occupied West Bank and the besieged Gaza Strip.

Abbas told a conference of senior Palestinian officials on Thursday night that the first Palestinian national elections in 15 years would be indefinitely delayed. The dispute over East Jerusalem al-Quds was reportedly the official rationale for the postponement cited by Abbas in a speech early Friday following the meeting of Palestinian political factions.

"Facing this difficult situation, we decided to postpone the date of holding legislative elections until the participation of al-Quds and its people is guaranteed," Abbas said in the speech on Palestinian TV.

Most observers see the indefinite delay as,

effectively, a cancellation.

The decision came three months after he issued a formal decree ordering a vote for the Palestinian legislature on May 22 and a Palestinian presidential election on July 31.

Several demonstrations took place in the occupied West Bank and the besieged Gaza Strip just after Abbas postponed next month's long-awaited parliamentary vote.

Hundreds of protesters took to the streets in the central occupied West Bank city of Ramallah, located 10 kilometers (6 miles) north of Jerusalem al-Quds, late on Thursday to demonstrate against the postponement of legislative elections.

The marchers waved placards as well as national Palestinian flags and chanted slogans such as "We are looking for a legitimate government" and "The people want the ballot box" in al-Manara Square.

*Continued on page 5*

## Army to set up five field hospitals nationwide

TEHRAN – The Iranian Army will set up five field hospitals in the country to offer services to COVID-19 patients, IRIB reported on Thursday.

A 120-bed field hospital built by the Army, equipped with advanced medical devices to provide services to the people and medical staff, was inaugurated on April 24 in Isfahan province.

This field hospital is equipped with an ICU

ward, ventilators, cardiac monitoring systems, oxygen generators, and resuscitation rooms, which offer services to coronavirus patients.

The Army, as it is present in various fields, can provide significant services to those infected with the pandemic with all its might, Abdolrahim Mousavi, Commander-in-Chief of the Army said.

Earlier this month, due to the rising number of coronavirus patients, the Islamic Revolution-

ary Guard Corps (IRGC) doubled the number of beds in its affiliated hospitals allocated to the treatment of COVID-19 patients.

The IRGC-affiliated health and medical centers are fully prepared to provide the necessary assistance in the treatment of COVID-19 patients whenever the Ministry of Health announces, IRGC's health department head Brigadier General Ahmad Abdollahi said.



## Iranian anti-corona spray unveiled

TEHRAN – Iran unveiled a domestically-made spray on Thursday, which is used to convert ordinary masks into masks that can kill coronavirus.

In addition to masks, this product can also be used on personal protective equipment and clothing to prevent the virus from entering the body, which has been developed by the researchers of Masih Daneshvari Hospital.

What sets the coronavirus apart from other viruses is the S protein that when it is eliminated or removed, the virus is virtually inactivated, Jalaleddin Ghanavi, research project director said.

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## Intl. conference addresses tourism potentials of Lut Desert

TEHRAN – Tens of tourism and cultural heritage experts, academia, and researchers discussed the lesser-known tourism potentials of Lut Desert in a two-day online conference that ended on Friday.

The second International Conference on Lut Desert and Tourism was co-organized by the University of Sistan-Baluchestan and the tourism directorate of Sistan-Baluchestan province, CHTN reported.

The event aimed to boost tourism across the UNESCO-registered desert through both scientific methods and regional studies, paving the way for sustainable development of tourism in the province.

The Lut Desert, widely referred to as Dasht-e Lut ("Emptiness Plain"), is a large salt desert encircled by the provinces of Kerman and Sistan-Baluchestan, and South Khorasan. It is the world's 27th-largest desert and was inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List on July 17, 2016.

The vast desert is teemed with giant dunes, shifting sands, salt plains, and wind-hewn kaluts, offering visitors epic journeys of breathtaking beauty and wilderness. It is a destination for people who are in search of new adventures; outstanding scenery and unparalleled serenity.

It is considered as one of the top areas in the world for finding meteorites, thanks to its unique parameters. In recent years, significant finds have been made, with the efforts of national and international teams of researchers.

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## Top Iranian general sends message of condolence to Iraqi counterpart

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Hossein Baqeri sent a message of condolence to Brigadier General Abdul- Amir Rashid Yarallah regarding the explosion at Ibn Khatib hospital in Baghdad on Friday. In his message, he stated that the news caused him “great sorrow and grief.”



The top general also expressed his condolences to the Iraqi Armed Forces, Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), the government and the brotherly nation of Iraq, and expressed his sympathies with the grieving families and prayed that may God grant patience to them.

The tragic incident at Ibn Khatib hospital took place in the Diyala Bridge area of the Iraqi capital on April 24, resulted in the death of at least 82 people and the injury of another 110 citizens.

Iraq’s Health Ministry said the fire occurred after an accident caused an oxygen tank to explode.

## Iran closely watching Tajikistan-Kyrgyzstan border conflict

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said on Friday that Iran is following the recent border conflicts between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan with “concern.”



In his statement, he said, “The Islamic Republic of Iran is following with concern the recent clashes in the border areas between the two friendly and brotherly countries of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, which have resulted in the death and injury of some citizens of both sides.”

Khatibzadeh thanked the leaders of the two countries for taking “urgent measures” that have led to the cessation of these conflicts and stated that Iran is confident that the continuation of negotiations between the two countries will lead to the peaceful settlement of any border dispute.

The spokesman emphasized that the Islamic Republic of Iran declares its readiness to assist in advancing the negotiations of the parties and present its legal and technical experiences in this field.

Clashes between the two sides started on Wednesday when people from both countries threw stones at each other after installing surveillance cameras at a water facility.

The disputed area is around the Batken region of Kyrgyzstan.

According to the local Kyrgyz media, 13 people were killed, while the Tajik numbers remain vague.

Dozens have been injured, and according to the Guardian, more than 800 people were evacuated from several villages surrounded by the clashes.

## Mohsen Rezaei officially announces presidential candidacy

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Mohsen Rezaei, Secretary of the Expediency Discernment Council, officially announced that he would run for the president on Friday.

In his statement, he explained that this decade would be the “last step to the victory of the Islamic Republic and consolidation of successes and independence and freedom of the country.”



He noted that the imperialist system tries to prevent the advancement of the front and the movement of resistance in the region by using evil-seeking, rioting and expanding the scope of psychological and perceptual warfare in various political, social, cultural and economic fields.

“Iran seeks the establishment, stability and consolidation of successes and the growing growth of the horizons of progress and independence of the country and right and justice,” he remarked.

The secretary stated that his future government, with the help of God and the talented youth of Iran, will be named “The government of the national movement for the development of Iran and the fight against corruption and the network of influence.”

The upcoming presidential elections will be held on June 18. So far, many prominent political figures have announced presidential candidacy, such as Rostam Ghasemi, former Minister of Petroleum, Feraydoun Abbasi, head of the Energy Committee in the parliament, Ezzatollah Zarghami, former director of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting,

# Foreign Minister holds week-long regional tour

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif continued his regional tour by visiting Oman on Wednesday, April 28 and Kuwait on April 29.

Zarif went to Qatar and met with Qatar’s Emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, and his Qatari counterpart, Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani.

During his meetings with the Qatari officials, Zarif discussed the approaches to the Hormuz Peace Endeavor (HOPE) and stressed that “Neighbors are Iran’s priority.”

“Excellent consultations with my brothers H.H. Emir of Qatar @TamimBinHamad & DPM/FM @MBA\_AlThani\_ on the expansion of constructive bilateral relations & enhanced coordination on regional & global issues. #HOPE initiative is Iran’s approach to the region. Neighbours are our priority,” he tweeted on Monday.

**‘Busy days in Iraq’**  
Zarif arrived in Baghdad on Monday for the second leg of his regional tour and was greeted at Baghdad International Airport by Iraqi deputy Foreign Minister Nazar Khairallah, some officials from the prime minister’s office, Iran’s ambassador to Baghdad, and some Iranian diplomats in Iraq.

Zarif met with his counterpart Fuad Hussein. He called for Iraq to play a more prominent role in the Middle East, praised the Arab country’s importance in the area, and expressed Tehran’s hope that Baghdad’s role would result in positive developments in the region.

In a meeting with Iraqi President Barham Salih on Monday, Zarif emphasized Iraq’s influential position in the region while describing Iran’s perspective on regional stability, which has already been introduced to the world in the context of HOPE.

He also met with Ammar Al-Hakim, head of the Hikma National Movement, Nouri Al-Maleki, Leader of the State of Law Coalition, Adil Abdul-Mahdi, former Iraqi Prime Minister, and Qassim Al-Araji, Iraqi National Security Advisor.

He then went to the Kurdistan Region to meet the leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, Masoud Barzani, Masrour Barzani,



ni, Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region, Qubad Talabani, Deputy Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region, Nechirevan Barzani, President of the Kurdistan Region, and Bafel Jalal Talabani, Co-President of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan.

According to Zarif’s tweet, “extensive consultations” happened at the numerous meetings in Iraq.

**‘Iran thanks Oman for having a positive mediatory role in the Iranian foreign affairs’**

After he visited Qatar and Iraq, Zarif arrived at the Omani capital of Muscat to discuss regional and bilateral issues.

He was welcomed by his Omani counterpart, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad bin Hamood Al Busaidi and Iranian Ambassador Ali Najafi.

According to Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh, the intention of Zarif’s visit to Oman is to hold talks on Tehran-Muscat relations and their cooperation on regional issues.

**Excellent meetings in Muscat w/ Omani friends. Fruitful talks/ w H.H. Fahad bin Mahmoud, FM @badrbusaidi, Royal Min. Numani, former FM Yousuf bin Alawi. Focus: Enhanced bilateral, regional & global coordination Discussed Yemen w/ Omanis & @abdusalamalah Next stop: Kuwait**

## We are at full-blown economic war, says Iranian diplomat

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Seyed Rasoul Mohajer, Deputy Foreign Minister in Economic Diplomacy, spoke with state news IRNA on Friday, stating that the United States government and its various entities are trying to close all of the economic openings in Iran.

The senior diplomat stated that the interpretation of full-blown economic war is not an exaggeration. “In recent years, all of our Iranian banks and shipping have been sanctioned, and the Americans have tried to prevent any Iranian ships from sailing.”

He explained that the main task of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is to direct and balance foreign relations in various matters, including economic.

He stated that the sweetest fruit of the Islamic Revolution is the independence of Iran.

“It is no exaggeration to say that the Islamic Republic is the most independent country in the world. Even the United States is not independent, and its policies depend on the Zionist regime. In the years after the revolution, the slogan of ‘neither the East nor the West’ has been well preserved in the country,” he said.

**‘Iran-China cooperation plan is a symbol of development’**

He described the 25-year cooperation plan with China as one of the symbols of the development of relations and moderation.

“Despite the fact that the enemies sought to provoke public opinion in this field to consider the signing of this document incorrect. In their view, if the document had been signed with a European country, there would have been no such media controversy,” Mohajer stated.

Referring to the signing of the 25-year cooperation plan with China, Mohajer said that Iran has already signed such a document with Russia, and now it’s looking to develop that document.

Elaborating on the Iran-China cooperation plan, he described it as a roadmap that was drafted and signed and therefore did not need parliamentary approval.

“Iran has maintained its independence despite this document, and cooperation will be based on mutual respect and win-win. We do not give our market to any country,” he said.

Stating that Iran has to start signing contracts and implement the 25-year Iran-China cooperation plan as soon as possible, the senior diplomat said that the Chinese are looking for this document to become operational soon, and Iran will present the operational results of this document soon.

**‘Europe’s lack of free will is the reason for less Iran-Europe relations’**

The Deputy Foreign Minister stressed that the ministry is the flagship of supporting and developing foreign relations and Iran’s relations with Europe.

“We are preparing this document with other neighbouring countries, including Afghanistan, and it will be finalized and signed,” the diplomat said.

Explaining the reasons for having less relations with Europe than other countries, Mohajer said that this is due to the lack of free will in the Europeans.

“This is because Europe owes itself to American policies and could not even develop its economic relations with Iran through the INSTEX mechanism,” he remarked.

He reminded the global community that Iran would not forget the countries that kept their relations with the Islamic Republic during harsh and unjust sanctions.

**‘Biden is following in Trump’s footsteps’**

Responding to a question about the differences between the Biden administration and the Trump administration, the diplomat said that the methods of Trump and Biden are different. Still, there is no difference between how the Islamic Republic will encounter the U.S. governments.

“The Vienna talks are underway now, but the Biden administration is still following in Trump’s footsteps, but the government has managed to handle the country despite all the pressure and oppressive sanctions, and the US has not been able to reduce Iran’s oil sales to zero,” Mohajer said.

He expressed hope that the Vienna negotiations would open economic opportunities.

The senior diplomat stated that he is optimistic about unfreezing Iranian assets.

“I am optimistic about the release of Iranian resources. Trump’s maximum pressure was not effective against the endurance of the Iranian people. The purpose of the sanctions was to put pressure on the people, but the people bravely resisted,



and this resistance of the people has made our diplomats have the upper hand in the Vienna talks. The outlook is positive, and I hope we will see new openings based on the resistance of the people of our country,” the senior diplomat said.

Mohajer believes that Iran has to join two United Nations conventions. Terrorist Financing Convention (CFT), and United Nations Conventions against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Convention)

“These two conventions are a prerequisite for the action plan we have agreed with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), and by joining them, we will be removed from the FATF blacklist,” the diplomat explained.

The Deputy Foreign Minister elaborated that if Iran were not removed from the blacklist, it would not benefit from the lifting of sanctions if the sanctions were lifted.

Mohajer stated, “The FATF has nothing to do with Iranian’s private accounts. Iran is involved in drafting the Palermo and the CFT conventions and is a party to the UN conventions.”

“It is contrary to popular belief that if we become a member of the FATF, our surveillance will increase. Now that we are on the blacklist, our surveillance has increased a lot, and there are many restrictions for Iranians abroad,” he explained.

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is an international organization founded in 1989 to develop policies to combat money laundering. As of March 2021, Iran and North Korea are blacklisted.

## Ballet boxes to increase for presidential elections

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Jamal Orf, the election headquarters chief, spoke at a press conference on Thursday, discussing election news and updates, stating that about 7,000 to 8,000 ballot boxes will be added to crowded constituencies.

“An increase of about 7,000 to 8,000 ballot boxes is projected on 18 June to reduce congestion in crowded constituencies,” he said.

He asked the media to play a more significant and more influential role in the field of elections.

The election official said that after the registration stage, there is the reviewing process of eligibility of candidates, which the Guardian Council must finalize in the period of 16



to 20 May.

He noted that a five-day extension period is also provided for the consideration of candidates’ qualifications for further in-

vestigation and review of objections in the election calendar.

Noting that there won’t be campaigns and meetings due to the coronavirus pandemic, he said, “The pandemic conditions make it impossible to hold rallies and election campaigns, and for this reason, the candidates will present their strategic plans during the opportunities they will have in the media.”

Orf stressed that the Ministry of Interior has taken the necessary health precautions into account, saying, “With the planning done by the Ministry of Interior, all the necessary health principles and protocols have been considered for the voting day, and we are trying to hold the elections while keeping the lives of the people

healthy and safe.”

As a precautionary method, the Ministry of Interior is planning to hold council elections electronically in more than 30 cities.

Responding to a question about electronic elections in Tehran, he said, “In Tehran, the approach of the Ministry of Interior is to hold electronic elections, yet, Central Election Monitoring Board has not given its final response.”

The election official noted that the media should build trust and hope for the people.

“We must try to show that the voting is strong and effective (in making people’s demands come true) by building trust and hope, and this depends on the professional and coherent work of the media,” Orf told the media.



# Deciphering bin Salman's change of tone

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler has expressed desire to mend ties with Iran for the first time in years but he refrained from offering any goodwill gesture to build confidence between Tehran and Riyadh.

In a dramatic turnabout in his views on Iran, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman called for a "distinguished relationship" with Iran amid reports of a possible thaw in Tehran-Riyadh ties.

"At the end of the day, Iran is a neighboring country. All we ask for is to have a good and distinguished relationship with Iran. We do not want the situation with Iran to be difficult. On the contrary, we want it to prosper and grow as we have Saudi interests in Iran, and they have Iranian interests in Saudi Arabia, which is to drive prosperity and growth in the region and the entire world," the Saudi crown prince said in a recent televised interview.

He also expressed hope that his country would be able to overcome some challenges affecting Iranian-Saudi relations. "We really hope we would overcome them and build a good and positive relationship with Iran that would benefit all parties," bin Salman pointed out.

Iran was quick to welcome this change of tone. "By presenting proposals and initiatives

for dialogue and cooperation in the Persian Gulf region, including the Hormuz Peace Endeavour (HOPE), the Islamic Republic of Iran has been a pioneer in the path of amity and regional cooperation, and welcomes the change in Saudi Arabia's tone," Saeed Khatibzadeh, a spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry, said in a statement on Thursday.

Public diplomacy between Iran and Saudi Arabia came after several Western media outlets reported that the two countries held direct talks in Baghdad in early April for the first time in at least five years. These talks are widely expected to continue in the coming weeks especially after Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif visited a number of regional countries -Iraq, Qatar, Oman, and Kuwait- enjoying good relations with Tehran and some of them with both Tehran and Riyadh.

During his regional tour, Zarif once again presented the long-standing Iranian peace initiative Hormuz Peace Endeavor (HOPE), which is mainly intended to foster dialogue among regional states on security.

Zarif's tour raised speculations over a possible exchange of messages between Tehran and Riyadh. The Arab Weekly, a publication close to the United Arab Emirates, has put Zarif's visits into a broader context of de-escalation

between Iran and Saudi Arabia, implying that the tour is aimed to "bridge the divide between long-standing rivals Iran and Saudi Arabia and launch a dialogue between them."

Regardless of the motivation behind Zarif's visits, relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia seem to be experiencing a period of de-escalation at least for now. Whether this thaw would continue for a long time or advance to a full-fledged restoration of diplomatic ties remains to be seen.

But the Saudis demonstrated little enthusiasm about mending ties with Iran beyond a change of tone that was more likely necessitated by the changing dynamics of the region's politics after Joe Biden moved into the White House. The Saudi apparent flexibility came amid renewed American diplomatic efforts meant to put an end to the world's worst humanitarian crisis in Yemen.

Right from the start, Biden made it clear to the Saudis that the days of them having full American support for their regional adventurism are over. He started his new Saudi policy by focusing more attention on the Yemen crisis, naming a special envoy for the war-torn country. He then announced that his administration would pursue diplomacy with Iran to revive the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehen-

sive Plan of Action (JCPOA), from which the Trump administration withdrew in May 2018.

As regards Yemen, the Saudis welcomed the new American effort without offering any serious concession to the Sanaa-based government. They even refused to lift their blockade on the import of humanitarian goods, conditioning it on a political solution to the long-running Yemen crisis.

On Iran, the Saudis first called on the U.S. to include them in the ongoing Vienna nuclear talks and expand the JCPOA in a way that encompasses other thorny issues such as Iran's missile program and its regional influence. The U.S. rejected the call to include the Saudis in the nuclear talks while assuring them that these talks will not harm their interests.

Facing a changing international environment, the Saudis seem to have decided to tone down their rhetoric against Iran and increase diplomatic contacts with the U.S. and other Western powers. Therefore, bin Salman's diplomatic maneuver is unlikely to heal the wounds Iranian-Saudi relations suffered in the past few years because this maneuver is not driven by a genuine desire to change tack on Iran but by an intention to ingratiate bin Salman with the new American administration.

## Iran welcomes change in Saudi tone: spokesman

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — In its first reaction to the recent remarks by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman, Iran welcomed the change in Saudi Arabia's tone, expressing hope of a beginning for convergence among Muslim countries.

"By presenting proposals and initiatives for dialogue and cooperation in the Persian Gulf region, including the Hormuz Peace Endeavour (HOPE), the Islamic Republic of Iran has been a pioneer in the path of amity and regional cooperation, and welcomes the change in Saudi Arabia's tone," Saeed Khatibzadeh, spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry, said in a statement on Thursday.

The statement came in response to a recent interview by the Saudi crown prince in which he expressed willingness to mend ties with Iran.

"At the end of the day, Iran is a neighboring country. All we ask for is to have a good and distinguished relationship with Iran," Mohammad bin Salman said on Tuesday.

"We do not want the situation with Iran to be difficult. On the contrary, we want it to prosper and grow as we have Saudi interests in Iran, and they have Iranian interests in Saudi Arabia, which is to drive prosperity and growth in the region and the entire world," he added.

At the same time, the Saudi crown prince highlighted

"problems" with Iran, hoping that his country would be able to overcome these problems.

"We are working now with our partners in the region and the world to find solutions for these problems. We really hope we would overcome them and build a good and positive relationship with Iran that would benefit all parties," bin Salman said. Khatibzadeh said Tehran and Riyadh can open a new chapter of cooperation.

"Iran and Saudi Arabia, as two important countries in the region and the Muslim world, can enter a new chapter of interaction and cooperation to achieve regional peace, stability, and development by adopting constructive and dialogue-based approaches," the spokesman said.

Khatibzadeh finally expressed hope that the holy month of Ramadan, the month of divine mercy, would be a blessed beginning for convergence among the Islamic society and end of war, displacement, and insecurity in this region.

The recent thaw in Iranian-Saudi relations comes against a backdrop of renewed diplomacy between the two regional powerhouses.

Western media outlets have reported in recent weeks that officials from Iran and Saudi Arabia held direct talks in Baghdad for the first time since the two regional rivals severed diplomatic ties in 2016.

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

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

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

But tensions in Saudi-Iranian relations seem to be coming to an end at least for now. Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has embarked on a regional tour that included Qatar, Iraq, Oman, and Kuwait. During his trip to these counties, the chief Iranian diplomat discussed ways to reduce tensions in the region. He once again presented the Iranian peace initiative Hormuz Peace Endeavor (HOPE), which is aimed to foster dialogue and security in the region.

## Iran, P4+1 hold all-day talks in Vienna

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Diplomats from Iran and the P4+1 group of countries held on Thursday intensive talks aimed at reviving the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

Top Iranian nuclear negotiator Seyed Abbas Araghchi said the talks began in the early hours of the morning and lasted until late at night.

"Talks between Iran and the P4+1 group were intensively followed in Vienna yesterday, and meetings were held at various levels and formats from the early morning hours until late last night," Araghchi, who serves as Iran's deputy foreign minister, said in a statement on Friday noon.

"A quadripartite meeting was also held yesterday between Seyed Abbas Araghchi, head of the Iranian negotiating team, and heads of delegations from three European countries," the top Iranian negotiator added.

Araghchi also met with the Deputy Secretary General and Political Director of the European External Action Service, Enrique Mora, and Austrian Foreign Minister Alexander Schallenberg.

According to Araghchi, talks will continue on Friday on texts at various expert-level working groups.

So far, the Vienna talks have resulted in the establishment of three expert-level working groups, one to identify the sanctions that the U.S. should remove in order to return to the JCPOA, and another to specify the nuclear activities that Iran should reverse. The third group was set up recently and is called "Expert Group on Practical Arrangements," which is formed with the aim of holding talks on the practical arrangements required for the



removal of sanctions and then the US return to the JCPOA. The Third group held its first meeting on Wednesday.

These groups report their discussions to the JCPOA Joint Commission.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Thursday that there are positive signs coming from Vienna talks and his regional talks with several regional countries such as Qatar, Iraq, Oman, and Kuwait.

"As DFM @araghchi ably leads Vienna talks on resuscitating JCPOA, I wind up my tour of the Persian Gulf in Kuwait, meeting PM H.H. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid and FM Dr. Sheikh Ahmad Nasser. Focus: HOPE for our region. Indications of positive signs on horizon in both tracks," the Iranian foreign

minister said on Twitter.

Meanwhile, two informed Iranian sources told Press TV that the United States must first remove all sanctions that do not allow Iran to benefit from the nuclear deal it signed with world powers in 2015, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), before the Islamic Republic accepts results of the ongoing talks in Vienna.

The sources told Press TV on Thursday that the Islamic Republic's authorities would accept the outcomes of the ongoing Vienna talks on the revival of the JCPOA only when all sanctions unilaterally imposed on the country by the US are removed and Iran verifies the removal of sanctions.

According to Press TV, at the present time,

the main hurdles that prevent Iran from taking full advantage of the JCPOA are executive orders 12959, 13599, 13876, and 13949 signed by the US president. Based on Press TV's report, such U.S. acts as CAATSA and ISA as well as visa and U-turn regulations and the so-called Section 311 of the USA Patriot Act are other major obstacles that prevent Iran from availing itself of the full benefits of the JCPOA.

Press TV reported that other problems not allowing Iran to benefit from the JCPOA include non-removal of sanctions and temporary 120- and 180-day lifting of U.S. bans.

On Thursday, the informed Iranian sources told Press TV that the U.S. must accept that in case of restoration of sanctions, foreign companies would be authorized to continue to work with Iran for a period of four years.

Press TV also quoted informed Iranian sources as saying that the United States must accept that in case of Washington's return to the JCPOA, it would never activate the so-called "snapback" mechanism of the nuclear deal.

The sources further told Press TV that the United States must accept to make up for all the losses incurred by Iran as a result of Washington's illegal withdrawal from the JCPOA.

The remarks by the Iranian sources came after the Associated Press quoted "current and former US officials and others familiar with the matter" as saying that the Biden administration is considering a near wholesale rollback of some of the most stringent sanctions imposed on Iran in a bid to get the Islamic Republic to return to compliance with the JCPOA.

lift sanctions against Iran.

Removing all illegal unilateral sanctions is "the key to the success of the negotiations," said Wang Qun, Chinese envoy to the United Nations and other international organizations in Vienna.

"The one who began the trouble should end it. The negotiations have entered a crucial stage, and steps by the United States are of paramount importance to the fate of the historic nuclear deal and future stability of the region and the world. It is time for Washington to shoulder its global responsibility by taking the first step toward a breakthrough in the nuclear talks," the Chinese news agency concluded.

## SPORTS

### Iran learn fate at FIBA U19 Basketball World Cup

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Iran knew their rivals at the summer's FIBA U19 Basketball World Cup 2021 on Wednesday.

In the 15th edition of the FIBA U19 Basketball World Cup 2021, which will take place in the cities of Riga and Daugavpils from July 3 to 11, teams were divided into four groups of four teams each.

Iran have been drawn with hosts Latvia, Serbia and Puerto Rico in Group B.

Eight different countries have won the FIBA U19 Basketball World Cup since its inception in 1979, with the reigning champions USA leading the field with seven titles. The USA won the FIBA U19 Basketball World Cup 2019 in Crete, Greece, after defeating Mali in the Final.

#### Groups:

Group A: Canada, Lithuania, Japan, Senegal

Group B: Latvia, Iran, Puerto Rico, Serbia

Group C: Spain, France, South Korea, Argentina

Group D: USA, Turkey, Australia, Mali

### Ex-Iran weightlifter Amirian dies

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Former Iran national team weightlifter Mangashti Amirian passed away on Thursday.

He died at the age of 82.

Amirian represented Iran at the 1960 Summer Olympics, where he finished seventh at the 82.5 kg weight class.

Tehran Times extends deepest sympathy to Amirian's family, loved ones, and friends over his demise.

### Persepolis delegation return to Iran

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Persepolis football club delegation returned to Tehran early Friday.

The Iranian giants qualified for 2021 AFC Champions League round of 16 with 15 points.

Persepolis are forced into 14 days of hotel quarantine after returning from India.

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

A charter flight brought back Persepolis home and the team's members went to Azadi Football Academy Hotel.

### Golmohammadi hopes Persepolis to continue good form

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Yahya Golmohammadi hopes that Persepolis football team can continue its good form in the next stage of 2021 AFC Champions League.

Persepolis announced their arrival into the 2021 Round of 16 in style after defeating Al Rayyan SC 4-2 to top the Group E standings on Thursday.

Golmohammadi was all smiles after watching his team hold off Al Rayyan's second half resurgence, with the former Iran defender saying his players never surrendered.

"I want to thank everyone from the club, the players, and the fans. They players never surrendered and they did their best for the Persepolis fans," said Golmohammadi.

"It was a good match, everyone who watched the match would be happy because there were plenty of goals scored and it was an energetic game. Technically, we were better than our opponents. Hopefully we can continue producing this form in the next stage of the competition as well as in the Iran Pro League," he added.

"It doesn't matter who we will face in the Round of 16. What matters is our focus on reaching the final," Golmohammadi concluded.

### Former Iran water polo player Shariat passes away

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Former Iran water polo national team player Morteza Shariat passed away on Thursday.

Shariat lost his battle with pancreatic cancer at the age of 68.

He was a member of Iran water polo national team who made history in the 1974 Asian Games, winning the gold medal by beating China in the final match.

Tehran Times extends deepest sympathy to Shariat's family, loved ones, and friends over his demise.

### Manavinejhad joins French team Stade Poitevin Poitiers

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — French volleyball team Stade Poitevin Poitiers completed the signing of Iranian outside hitter Mohammadjavad Manavinejhad.

The 26-year-old player will play for the French team in the 2021/22 season.

Manavinejhad started his playing career in his homeland Isfahan in 2011 and was a member of Italian club BluVolley Verona from 2017 to 2019.

He has most recently played at Iranian club Saipa.

Manavinejhad will represent Iran at the 2021 Volleyball Nations league and Tokyo Olympic Games.

### Tractor did a great job: Khatibi

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Tractor football club head coach Rasoul Khatibi was full of praise for his players and technical staff as his side completed the 2021 AFC Champions League group stage unbeaten.

Tractor defeated Sharjah 2-0 in Group B and became the only unbeaten side in the West zone of the 2021 AFC Champions League.

"First of all I have to congratulate the very real fans of Tractor all around the world for the result. The players did a great job and played well in a very technical game," said Khatibi.

"We gained three points. I admire the technical staff and their analysis in this match. As you have seen, we have rotated our team and changed players based on our needs and played well. We collected seven points in the second half of the competition.

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — The United States should act first to save the 2015 Iran nuclear deal if it is sincere in its intent to return to the pact, Chinese state news said on Thursday.

In a commentary on the ongoing Vienna talks over the nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Xinhua said the unilaterally withdrew from the JCPOA and applied pressure on Iran, and set off the current crisis. Therefore, it is the U.S. that should act first to salvage the nuclear deal.

"Washington, if sincere in its intent to return to the pact, should act first, given its decision to unilaterally withdraw

from the JCPOA and apply maximum pressure on Iran thereafter, setting off the current crisis," Xinhua wrote. "The U.S. administration under former President Donald Trump withdrew from the JCPOA in May 2018 and unilaterally reimposed sanctions on Iran. In response to the U.S. moves, Iran gradually stopped implementing parts of its JCPOA commitments from May 2019. Therefore, in the quest for some real progress, Washington must take the first step by lifting all illegal unilateral sanctions against Iran and involved third parties."

Xinhua noted that China shares the view of Iran and Russia that the U.S. should immediately and completely



## \$4.8b of non-oil income injected to NIMA in a month

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iran’s non-oil exporters injected \$4.8 billion of their revenues into the Forex Management Integrated System, locally known as NIMA, during the first Iranian calendar month of Farvardin (March 21-April 20), according to the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) data.

NIMA, which seeks to boost transparency, creates competitiveness among exchange shops, and promotes a secure environment for traders, is a new chance for importers to supply their required foreign currency without specific problems and for exporters to re-inject their earned foreign currency to the domestic forex market. It was inaugurated to allow exporters of non-oil commodities to sell their foreign currency earnings to importers of consumer products.

As stated by Hamid Zadboum, the head of Iran’s Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), expediting the process of returning non-oil export revenues to the economic cycle through NIMA has been the result of expert policies of the TPO and cooperation among the industry, mining, and trade departments of the provinces as well as chambers of cooperatives and guilds, and many fruitful measures have been taken in this regard.



In late May 2019, the CBI unveiled a directive package that provided the country’s exporters with guidelines about how they should re-inject their foreign currency incomes into the country’s economy.

Based on the new directive, for the petrochemical sector, the exporters should present at least 60 percent of their foreign currency incomes into NIMA, and a maximum of 10 percent could be injected into the financial system in the form of hard currency and the rest could be used for importing necessary goods.

As for other exporters, at least 50 percent of the total earnings should be presented at the NIMA system and a maximum of 20 percent could be distributed in form of hard currency and the rest can be used for imports.

The instructions aimed to lead the export revenues from the non-oil exports back into the country’s economy through NIMA, mandate all the exporters of goods and services to guarantee to bring back to the country the foreign currency amount allocated to them by the government at lower prices than the free market.

## TSE admits 68 new companies in a year

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN**— A director in Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), which is Iran’s main stock exchange, said 68 new companies have been accepted to the TSE in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20).

Mohammad-Amin Qahremani put the nominal capital of these companies at 4.259 quadrillion rials (about \$101.404 billion).

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.



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.”

Meanwhile on Tuesday, senior Iranian officials gathered at the country’s parliament to explore ways for supporting the stock market and resolving its current issues.

Chaired by the parliament speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, the meeting was also attended by the Governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Abdolnaser Hemmati, Finance, and Economic Affairs Minister Farhad Dejpasand, and the Head of Iran’s Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO) Mohammad-Ali Dehqan Dehnavi.

# Water, development projects worth over \$619m inaugurated

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — The president also ordered the beginning of a project for constructing another dam in Mazandaran province in which nine trillion rials (about \$214.2 million) is going to be invested.

The first phase of the A-B-Iran program (the acronyms A and B stand for water and electricity in Persian) was initiated in the Iranian calendar year 1398 (ended on March 19, 2020), during which 220 major projects with a total investment of 335.6 trillion rials (about \$7.99 billion) were put into operation

across the country.

In the second phase of the program that was carried out in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20) 250 water and energy projects worth 500 trillion rials (about \$11.9 billion) were inaugurated in several provinces.

The third phase of the program was officially started on April 6 and like the previous phases, this year, too, the Energy Ministry is planning to inaugurate numerous water and electricity projects in various provinces



every week.

In the first week of the third phase, Iranian Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian inaugurated five major electricity projects worth 29 trillion rials (about \$690.4 million) across the country to mark the beginning of the third

phase of the ministry’s A-B-Iran program.

The inaugurated projects comprised of 8,142 sub-projects including numerous electricity supply projects, as well as power network modification and optimization projects.

## Home appliance production increases by 36%

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iran’s Deputy Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister Mehdi Sadeqi Niaraki said on Thursday that the production of home appliances in the country has increased by 36 percent following the exit of foreign brands.

“Following the imposition of U.S. sanctions and the withdrawal of South Korean companies from Iran, the production of Iranian home appliances increased by 36 percent,” Niaraki said on the sidelines of a visit to a production unit.

According to Niaraki, the indigenization of the knowledge for the production of such products has also increased by 20 percent since the Iranian calendar year 1396 (ended on March 20, 2018).

“Currently, Iranian producers have indigenized the knowledge for manufacturing about 70 percent of the country’s home appliance needs, and the figure has reached 90 percent for some products,” he said.

Niaraki noted that considering the Iranian home appliance industry’s infrastructure and capacities, the country will be able to become an exporter of such products in the near future because most of the raw materials needed by



the mentioned sector are produced domestically.

Regarding the return of foreign brands like Samsung and LG to the country, Niaraki said: “Currently, the return of foreign companies is not on the agenda; domestic companies have found their place and are fully capable to produce and meet the needs of the country.”

## Iran exports sanitary, hygienic products to EU, U.S. despite pandemic

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — The head of the Iranian Association of Detergent, Hygiene, and Cosmetics Industries (DHCI) said on Thursday that the country has been able to export sanitary and hygienic products to the European and American markets despite the restrictions created by the coronavirus pandemic.

“Despite all the problems caused by the pandemic and the sanctions, the production of such products is sufficient in the country, and some companies have even exported to the markets of the United States, Canada, and Europe,” Bakhtiar Alam-Beygi told IRNA.

According to Alam-Beygi, the production of the mentioned products in the country increased by 10 percent in the previous



Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20).

Domestic producers managed to export over \$117 million worth of sanitary and hygienic products in the first 10 months of the

previous Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2020-January 19, 2021), the official said.

He mentioned the decline of the said products’ exports due to the special conditions created by the coronavirus pandemic and the U.S. sanctions and said: “In previous years we were able to export over \$1 billion worth of such products.”

“Although, in addition to the neighboring countries and other CIS nations, Iranian companies have also been able to export their products to the U.S., Canada, and EU, but sanctions restrictions have made it difficult for them to boost their exports and transfer their revenues,” Alam-Beygi added.

The official further mentioned some of the problems that the production units

active in this sector are currently facing in the country, saying that supply of raw materials especially petrochemical products, and also liquidity problems are the two main challenges that the producers are currently struggling with.

Iranian Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry has been following new strategies for supporting the country’s producers in order to decrease reliance on imports and promote exports in various sectors.

Earlier this year, Industry Minister Alireza Razm Hosseini had said that the country’s idle hygiene and sanitary production units should be revived to meet the domestic needs and to boost the export of such products to help other countries.

## 40 idle production units revived in Qazvin province in a year

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN**—As announced by a provincial official, 40 idle production units were revived in Qazvin province, in the northwest of Iran, in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20).

Hamidreza Khanpour, the managing director of Qazvin’s Industrial Parks Company, also said that 100 idle units are planned to return to the production cycle in the province in the current year, which is named the year of “Production: support and the elimination of obstacles”.

The official further said that in addition to attracting new investors, reviving stagnant and inactive production units and adding them to the active industries is one of the priorities of Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO) and provincial subsidiaries.

He went on to say that the problem of liquidity and working capital, shortage of raw materials, management issues and disputes, wear and tear of machinery and equipment, and the problem of marketing along with sanctions are among the issues and problems facing stagnant production units.

As announced by Deputy Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister Mehdi Sadeqi Niaraki, 1,500 idle industrial units have been revived in the country during the past year.

According to Niaraki, over 6,500 new industrial units



were also established across the country during the mentioned year which created jobs for over 121,000 people.

Touching upon the Industry Ministry’s plans for the realization of the motto of the current year which is named the year of “Production: support and the elimination of obstacles” by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, the official said: “In the year that has been dedicated to the production sector by the Leader of the revolution, the

orientation of all government organizations and executive bodies should be towards supporting the country’s industrial and mining units.”

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

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

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

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

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

## Monthly export from Kerman province rises 306% yr/yr

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — The value of non-oil exports from Kerman province, in the southeast of Iran, rose 306 percent during the first month of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-April 20), as compared to the same month of the past year, according to a provincial official.

Mohammadreza Qader, the director-general of Kerman’s customs department, said that 27,328 tons of commodities worth over \$57 million have been exported from the province during the first month of this year, indicating also a 650-percent rise in terms of weight year on year.

He named China, India, Germany, Iraq, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Italy, and Russia as the export destinations of the province’s commodities.

The official further announced that

commodities worth \$22.674 million have been imported to the province during the first month, and mentioned China, Britain, the UAE, Japan, South Korea, India, Malaysia, Germany, Spain, and Italy as the main sources of export to Kerman in the mentioned month.

Iran exported 8.302 million tons of non-oil commodities worth \$2.968 billion in the first month of the current Iranian calendar year, registering an 80 percent rise in terms of value compared to the same period in the previous year.

According to the Head of Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) Mehdi Mir-Ashrafi, the country’s non-oil exports in the said period also increased by 56 percent in terms of weight.

Iran traded 10.343 million tons of non-oil goods worth \$5.762 billion with its trade partners in the mentioned month,

Mir-Ashrafi stated.

The country’s trade balance was \$174 million positive in the said month, according to the official.

China, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Turkey, and Afghanistan were the Islamic Republic’s top export destinations in the period under review.

Mir-Ashrafi noted that gasoline was the top exported item in the mentioned month.

According to the official, Iran also imported 2.041 million tons of goods worth \$2.794 billion in the said month, which indicated an 18 percent decrease in terms of weight and a 47 percent increase in terms of value.

Mobile phones, sunflower oil, wheat, rice, and meal were the top imported items of the country during the mentioned period.

The UAE, China, Turkey, India, and



Russia were Iran’s top five import sources in the mentioned month.

The value of Iran’s non-oil trade stood at \$73 billion in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20).

According to Mir-Ashrafi, Iran’s non-oil export was 112 million tons valued at \$34.5 billion, while that of import was 34.4 million tons worth \$38.5 billion in the past year, the official added.



# Biden's team is very anti-Russian in its ideology: Russian expert

➔ **1** On the one hand, Iran says that the nuclear deal won't be restored until Washington lift all sanctions reimposed on Iran by the Trump administration. On the other hand, American diplomats are making every effort to retains some parts of relabeled sanctions on Iran.

Nevertheless, Mitrakhovich notes that "current talks are still on a preliminary stage because the U.S. and Iran can't talk face to face openly and need mediators. Sanction's lift is still long away from the current moment."

Afghanistan is the other point that reflects confrontation between Russia and the U.S.

U.S. administration is going to withdraw American troopers from Afghanistan by September 11, declaring an end to the nation's longest war.

Biden, in fact, is overruling warnings from Pentagon that the departure could prompt a resurgence of the same threats that sent hundreds of thousands of troops into combat over the past 20 years.

In rejecting the military advisors' push to remain until Afghan security forces can assert themselves against the Taliban, Biden forcibly stamped his views. Now, after 20 years of American military presence in Afghanistan, the American president is doing



**"Washington won't leave the Middle East (West Asia); it's a region of interest for any world superpower,"**

things his way.

But many experts rule out America's

pullout from West Asia because it has vital interest there.

## Hezbollah is the main target of Riyadh's ban on Lebanon

**TEHRAN** — Riyadh has kicked off a series of widespread economic pressures on Beirut to push the Lebanese government to exclude Hezbollah from the country's political and military scene.

Saudi officials announced on Friday an indefinite ban on Lebanese agricultural products under the pretext of a failed attempt to smuggle 5.3 million pills of the illegal amphetamine Captagon hidden in a shipment of pomegranates at Jeddah Port.

Waleed Bukhari, the Saudi ambassador to the Republic of Lebanon, has said in a tweet the kingdom had found more than 57 million illicit pills from cash-strapped Lebanon since the beginning of 2020.

Riyadh is going to prevent Lebanese vegetables from entering or passing through Saudi Arabia.

The move has provoked reactions inside Lebanon. Lebanon's caretaker Prime Minister Hassan Diab, reacted to the Saudi ban on his country, saying that "Lebanon and the Lebanese people do not want to irritate the Saudi brothers. We want the best relations with Saudi Arabia. We support Saudi Arabia in fighting the smuggling networks and their perpetrators."

Furthermore, Lebanese President Michel Aoun commented on the Saudi ban on Lebanon. "It is important for us to maintain economic cooperation with Saudi Arabia, and we are working today to explain the existing ambiguities and return to the right stance."

But many experts say that Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf states are well aware that banning the import of Lebanese crops does not prevent drug trafficking.

This is an unjust decision in the eyes of Lebanese farmers and agriculture workers who are astonished that



a country like Saudi Arabia has made such a hasty and unstudied decision.

Lebanon is concerned about other countries' intention to follow Riyadh's decision, endorsed by Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates.

Lebanese farmers and the agricultural sector are facing an immense tragedy as every farmer is going to yield less and earn less. According to Aljazeera, various estimates say the Lebanese fruit and vegetable trade is worth between \$20m and \$34m annually.

Although Saudi Arabia's sanction against Lebanon has caused controversy in the country's agricultural sector and among farmers, it seems that Riyadh is exploiting the story of smuggling only as a pretext to put pressure on Hezbollah.

Indeed, this is an attempt to cover up the actual dimensions of Riyadh's policies against Beirut.

The Saudis are aware that Lebanon is living through

a severe economic crisis at the moment. They (the Saudis) became convinced of this a while ago after Hassan Diab's remarks about the deterioration of the economic conditions in Lebanon. Then, they have made every effort to achieve their political goals through a package of economic pressure on Lebanese people.

Arab political observers believe that Saudi Arabia tries to tighten the siege on Lebanon, a move encouraged by the United States and the Zionist regime to keep the Lebanese people hungry and lead the country to a civil war.

So, it seems quite clear that the primary goal of Saudi Arabia in banning the import of fruits and vegetables from Lebanon is to increase political pressure on a country that has lost 85 percent of its value against the U.S. dollar, pushing it into alarming inflation rates that are hamstringing farmers.

Saudi officials seek to take full advantage of the current dire economic situation in Lebanon so that the Lebanese government gives up and kneels.

One of the most critical demands of Saudi Arabia from Lebanon is to exclude Hezbollah from the country's political structure.

This is a demand that the Saudis have made from Lebanese officials for at least over a decade.

Indeed, Saudi Arabia has always been a staunch opponent of Hezbollah's role in Lebanon's political scene and system. Now, the Saudis who never miss the opportunity to apply their agenda against Hezbollah are trying to fish in troubled waters and make their old dreams come true.

Marginalize Hezbollah through spreading dissent in the country, because in their eyes, Lebanon as a whole must pay the price for hosting the resistance axis and defending Palestine's cause.

## China's economy gets off to a good start

By Chang Hua

According to the statistics recently released by China's National Bureau of Statistics, China's GDP increased by 18.3% year-on-year in the first quarter of 2021. Considering the test by the COVID-19 pandemic in winter and spring and the uncertainty of the external environment, it is fair to say that China's economy has witnessed an exciting start at the beginning of this year. China's economic data in the first quarter have attracted worldwide attention, and Iranian people and media are also highly interested in it. Therefore, I would like to make a few comments on this aspect.

Firstly, the sustained and stable recovery of China's economy is the result of China's overall coordinated planning of pandemic prevention and control as well as the continuous socio-economic development. All regions and sectors in China have been determined to act on the general principle of pursuing progress while ensuring stability, ground their efforts in the new development stage, apply the new development concept, create a new pattern of development, pursue high-quality development, and ensure stability on six key fronts and maintain security in six key areas. In the end, China's economy showed a steady recovery with solid and sound growth in the first quarter. The supply increased both in quantity and quality while demand continued to pick up. The vitality of market entities kept being released, which provided stronger momentum for high-quality development. With the employment and people's livelihood being secured, the society also maintained harmony and stability. It can be said that the giant ship of China's economy has returned to the track of stability after experiencing short turbulence caused by the pandemic.

Secondly, China's economic growth in the first quarter has rich connotations and many highlights. First, the employment is generally stable. In the first quarter, the surveyed urban unemployment nationwide

averaged 5.4%, with a decrease of 0.4% year-on-year, and there were 2.97 million new jobs created in urban areas. Second, industrial production grows rapidly. In the first quarter, the added value of industries above the designated size increased by 24.5%. The industrial electricity consumption and the railway freight volume rose by 23.9% and 13.9%, respectively, and the utilization rate of industrial capacity was the highest since 2013. Third, the development of new driving forces is strong. The added value of high-tech manufacturing increased by 31.2% in the first quarter. Fourth, the market vitality is effectively stimulated. In the first quarter, there were 2.792 million new market entities nationwide handling tax-related matters, showing an increase of 86%. Fifth, the growth of foreign trade and foreign investment is substantial. In the first quarter, the value of exports and imports of goods trade denominated in RMB increased by 38.7% and 19.3%, respectively, and the actual use of foreign capital denominated in RMB grew by 39.9%. Sixth, investment and consumption steadily recover. In the first quarter, the fixed-asset investment increased by 25.6%, and the total retail sales of consumer goods increased by 33.9%. Seventh, the market confidence and expectations significantly improve. In March, the manufacturing manager purchasing index was 51.9%, 1.3% higher than the previous month. The non-manufacturing business activity index was 56.3%, 4.9% higher than the previous month. Eighth, people's living standard steadily improves. In the first quarter, the personal disposable income per capita increased by 13.7% in real terms. The proportion of days with favorable air quality nationwide was 80.9%, and the average concentration of particulates in the air dropped by 2.2% in large and medium cities.

Thirdly, the steady and orderly advancement of key tasks has provided a strong impetus for China's economic development. The first is to continue to strengthen the employment-first policy.

Entrepreneurship enhances employment, we support the healthy development of new forms of employment, safeguard the legitimate rights of flexible employees, and continue to strengthen employment promotion and services for key groups such as college graduates, veterans, and migrant workers. The second is to continue to reduce the burden on market entities. We use more fair and inclusive policies to increase the support for market entities, continue to promote mass entrepreneurship and innovations, pay close attention to the tax and fee reduction policies for small and micro enterprises, and promote the implementation of new structural tax reduction measures. The third is to optimize the business environment to promote fair competition. We continue to promote the reforms to "streamline administration and delegate power, improve regulation, and upgrade services", promote the reduction of links, materials, and expenses related to enterprise approval, strengthen innovative supervision during and after the event, carry out business environment assessment in some regions, issue an action plan for building a high-standard market system, and release anti-monopoly guidelines in the field of the platform economy. The reform of market-based allocation of factors of production has made positive progress. The fourth is to promote a high-level opening-up. We implement various foreign trade and investment support policies, consolidate the overall performance of foreign trade and investment, steadily advance the construction of pilot free trade zones, accelerate the construction of the Hainan Free Trade Port, which has achieved initial results, and make preparations for the implementation of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). The development of BRI and international economic and trade cooperation has made remarkable achievements. In addition, China has also steadily promoted a new type of urbanization, implemented major regional strategies



in depth, further strengthened the building of science and technology innovation capabilities, continuously promoted the high-quality development of manufacturing. Rural revitalization and agricultural modernization have taken new steps. We also actively carry out the work on carbon peak and carbon neutrality.

China's economy has developed through overcoming hardships and has grown in braving challenges. Reviewing the achievements of the first quarter and looking at new prospects for high-quality development, China's economy has shown strong resilience to move forward steadily without fear of setbacks, highlighting the basic trend of steady and long-term bright prospects. At present, the global economic recovery, the international financial market, and the international trade situation are still facing many uncertain and unstable factors. China will continue to consolidate the foundation of "stability", accumulate the strength of "progress", hold the bottom line of "guarantee", and do a solid job on our own business to push China's economy to get through hard times and move forward steadily. At the same time, China welcomes all countries around the world, including Iran, to actively make use of the opportunities brought by China's development to promote the high-quality construction of BRI and help the world's economic recovery and further development through continuous expansion of mutual openness and cooperation in trade, investment, industry, and other fields.

## Abbas delays first Palestinian elections in 15 year

➔ **1** Earlier in the day, hundreds of people had staged rallies in the Gaza Strip to condemn the Palestinian Authority chief's plans to call off the vote.

**Hamas slams 'coup'**

The Palestinian resistance movement Hamas denounced Abbas's decision, calling it "a coup." "This represents a coup against the path of partnership and national consensus. Our popular and national consensus cannot be pawned as collateral for the agenda of a faction," Hamas said in a statement. "We knew in advance that Fatah and the Palestinian Authority were going to disrupt the electoral process, due to other interests that have nothing to do with the issue of al-Quds (Jerusalem)," the statement added.

"The Fatah movement and the Palestinian president bear full responsibility for this decision and its consequences," it added.

## U.S., NATO begin Afghanistan pullout as Taliban vow forced eviction

U.S. and NATO troops have started to withdraw from Afghanistan, the White House and several alliance officials say, amid a reported surge in Taliban attacks.

"NATO Allies decided in mid-April to start the withdrawal of Resolute Support Mission forces by May 1 and this withdrawal has begun. This will be an orderly, coordinated, and deliberate process," a NATO official said.

The White House said earlier Thursday that U.S. troops had started withdrawing, confirming comments made over the week-end by a senior U.S. general.

President Joe Biden earlier this month announced the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan by September 11, four months later than the May 1 deadline agreed to with the Taliban by the previous administration of Donald Trump.

The decision came amid warnings by Taliban militants to resume attacks on U.S.-led forces in the country.

The NATO official threatened a "forceful response" to any attacks by Taliban militants, who have opposed Biden's postponement of withdrawing U.S. forces from Afghanistan.

"Any Taliban attacks during the withdrawal will be met with a forceful response. We plan to have our withdrawal completed within a few months," the NATO official added, refusing to elaborate further on details about the timeline of the pullout.

## Turkish military base in northern Syria hit by unknown aircraft

An unidentified aircraft has reportedly bombarded a base belonging to Turkish military forces in Syria's northern province of Raqqah as the troops are conducting a military campaign in the area against U.S.-sponsored Kurdish militants from the so-called People's Protection Units (YPG).

Russia's RT Arabic television news network, citing a report published by online Kurdish news service Hawar, said the unknown plane conducted an airstrike on the outskirts of Ayn Issa town on Thursday evening. The report, however, did not provide any further information about the extent of damage caused.

The Tal Abyad region in northern Syria, where the town of Ayn Issa is located, has been the scene of bitter clashes between the Turkish forces and the YPG militants.

Turkey views the YPG as a terrorist organization tied to the homegrown Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). The PKK has been seeking an autonomous Kurdish region in Turkey since 1984.

According to Press TV, on October 9, 2019, Turkey launched a cross-border invasion of northeastern Syria in an attempt to push Kurdish militants affiliated with the YPG away from its borders.

## Israel's Iron Dome missile system causing cancer among soldiers

A group of Israeli soldiers, who served at the battery units of the Iron Dome mobile missile system and who became ill with cancer, say there is a connection between the anti-missile armament and their ailment.

At least 10 Israeli soldiers, in their 20s and 30s, said at the end of their military service or after they were discharged that they had developed cancer following their stint with the Iron Dome unit, according to an investigative report by the Hebrew-language Yedioth Ahronoth daily newspaper.

They called the radar box of the Iron Dome system, which intercepts short-range missiles, "the toaster."

Many of the soldiers have already filed lawsuits against Israel's ministry of military affairs, while others say they are too weak to fight it.

The Israeli army has denied any connection between their service at the Iron Dome and contracting cancer.

Ran Mazor, who served in an Iron Dome unit, said he suffered from constant leg and back pain during his service for which members of his unit called him a "crybaby."

## Resistance News

## Hamas delegation meets Qatar's foreign minister in Doha

**INTERNATIONAL DESK** **TEHRAN**—A high-level delegation from the Hamas Movement led by head of its political bureau Ismail Haneyya met in Doha with Qatari foreign minister Mohamed Al Thani on Thursday.

The meeting was attended by deputy head of Hamas's foreign political bureau Mousa Abu Marzouq and political bureau members Ezzat al-Resheq and Husam Badran.

According to a statement released by Hamas, the delegation and the Qatari foreign minister had in-depth discussions on several issues of mutual interest and the latest developments pertaining to the Palestinian question.

The Hamas delegation briefed the Qatari minister on Israel's recent aggressive practices in the holy city of Jerusalem and the steadfastness of the Palestinian people there in the face of different violations.

The delegation highlighted the importance of Jerusalem as the focal point of the Palestinian struggle against the occupation and confirmed the Palestinian people's upholding of their rights fully in the holy city.



## Intl. conference addresses tourism potentials of Lut Desert

➔ 1 Seven years of satellite temperature data analyzed by NASA show that the Lut Desert is the hottest spot on Earth. Based on the research, it was hottest during 5 of the 7 years and had the highest temperature overall: 70.7°C in 2005.



The collective province -- Sistan in the north and Baluchestan in the south -- accounts for one of the driest regions of Iran with a slight increase in rainfall from east to west, and an obvious rise in humidity in the coastal regions. In ancient times, the region was a crossword of the Indus Valley and the Babylonian civilizations.

Sistan-Baluchestan possesses special significance because of being located in a strategic and transit location, especially Chabahar which is the only ocean port in Iran and the best and easiest access route of the middle Asian countries to free waters. It is home to several distinctive archaeological sites and natural attractions, including two UNESCO World Heritage sites, namely Shahr-e-Soukhteh (Burnt City) and Lut desert.

## Restoration begins on historical palace in southernmost Iran

**TOURISM TEHRAN** — Restoration and vital rehabilitation works have been commenced on Marjan Palace, a historical palace located in Kish Island of the Persian Gulf.

The project involves strengthening the historical structure, which has been damaged over the years due to poor maintenance, an island tourism official has said.

Furthermore, it is aimed at preparing the historical monument for future stages of restoration and revival in the near future, Mahan Modavvan announced on Friday.



A budget of 110 billion rials (\$2.6 million at the official exchange rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) has been allocated to the first round of the restoration project, the official added.

After the Islamic Revolution in 1979, some attachments have been added to the palace, which adds to the weight of the building and constitutes the greatest damage to it, he explained.

The Marjan Palace is the latest monument built on the island during the Pahlavi period (1925-1979). The building which was completed in 1975 was inscribed on the National Heritage list in 2009.

Amongst the Persian Gulf islands, Kish is the more luxurious and developed. Except for its unique nature such as waters and shallow beaches, the tourist attractions of this charming island are due to its rich historical background as well as kind and hospitable people.

The pristine and beautiful nature, the meeting of land and sea, the clear sky, the pleasant air, and the pleasurable reverberation of the waves create such a sense of calm that one cannot even distinguish between imagination and reality.

About one million foreign and domestic tourists travel to the island every year and it is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Iran as it has magnificent attractions such as Kariz Underground City, Harireh Ancient City, Greek Ship, and Grand Recreational Pier to name a few.

## Iranian police seize ancient relics from smuggler

**HERITAGE TEHRAN** — A total of thirteen historical objects have recently been confiscated from a smuggler in Hamedan, according to a senior police official in charge of protecting cultural heritage.

Recovered from the house of the smuggler, the objects date from various periods including the prehistorical times and the Islamic era, IRIB reported.



The accused was traced and lastly arrested after the police received reports from cultural heritage aficionados about the (illegal) possession of the relics. The police detained and surrendered him to the judicial system for further investigation.

Known in classical times as Ecbatana, Hamedan was once one of the world's greatest cities of ancient times. Pitifully little remains from antiquity, but significant parts of the city center are given over to excavations, and there's a scattering of historical curiosities.

Sprawling on a high plain, Hamedan is graciously cool in August but snow prone and freezing from December to March. In summer the air is often hazy, but on a rare, clear spring day there are impressive glimpses of snow-capped Alvand Kuh (3580m), sitting aloof above the ragged neocolonial cupolas of Imam Khomeini Sq.

# First tourism farm to be launched in Qom

**TOURISM TEHRAN** — The first-ever agritourism permit has been issued for Bidak farm in Qom province, a provincial tourism official has announced.

Such permits are granted to eligible farm owners in the country to launch agritourism businesses, aiming to set certain standards in a move to ensure the quality of such services in the country.

The farm, covering almost 20 hectares, is the first of its kind in the province, Alireza Arjmandi said on Thursday.

Pomegranate trees are the main part of the farm and harvesting in this farm is planned to be carried out by tourists, the official added.

When the farm becomes a tourist attraction in the region, eco-lodge units can be set up nearby to give travelers the chance to experience rural life, he explained.

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.



Experts believe that in addition to the customer services jobs, agritourism pays special attention to the production sector, saying agricultural tourism is much more important and practical than other branches of tourism because it creates

a new chain and diversity in the field of production and services.

Agritourism and nature-tourism enterprises might include outdoor recreation (fishing, hunting, wildlife study, horseback riding), educational experiences (cannery

tours, cooking classes, or tea or coffee tasting), entertainment (harvest festivals or barn dances), hospitality services (farm stays, guided tours, or outfitter services), and on-farm direct sales (u-pick operations or roadside stands).

Agritourism is a subset of a larger industry called rural tourism that includes resorts, off-site farmers' markets, non-profit agricultural tours, and other leisure and hospitality businesses that attract visitors to the countryside.

The country's second-holiest city after Mashhad, Qom is home to both the magnificent shrine of Hazrat-e Masumeh (SA) and the major religious madrasas (schools).

Apart from sightseers and pilgrims who visit Qom to pay homage at the holy shrine, the city is also a top destination for Shiite scholars and students who come from across the world to learn Islamic studies at its madrasas and browse through eminent religious bookshops.

The city's antiquity goes back to the Sassanid era (224 CE–651) and several historical mosques, mansions, and natural sceneries have been scattered across the city as well as towns and villages nearby.

## Glimpses of traditional locksmithing in Chaleshtar

**HERITAGE TEHRAN** — Available evidence suggests that locks have been made in Chaleshtar for centuries. Experts believe that the artistic values of Ghoflsazi (locksmithing) are more significant from its industrial aspects.

Chaleshtar is one of the oldest cities in the neighborhood of Shahr-e Kord in Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari province.

In Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari the padlocks were more used as means of protection of objects such as saddlebags or Namakdan (a kind of handmade satchel). In addition to protection, people used some padlocks as talismans.

According to Visit Iran, people believed their prayers would be answered if they latched padlocks to holy shrines. And sometimes they locked them as thanks to an answered prayer. In some cases, specially designed padlocks were ordered by the rulers. They were ornated by the name of God and holy Imams. One example is the padlock on the door of Kaaba. It was made by Haj Abdolvahab Riyahi Chaleshtari (of Chaleshtar) in Mecca.

One kind of these padlocks highlights the cultural aspect and the belief of people. They are called "Ghofl-e Kamar". Another kind, Bakhooh, was made to lock the mules to stop them from scattering. Today traditional padlocks of Chaleshtar are made in small sizes and as jewelry such as necklaces.

A typical Chaleshtar padlock consists of 13 parts named Toopeh (the body), Do Payeh, Dasteh (handle), Mikh (nail), Tah Ghofl (base), Tablak, Dari, Fanar (spring), Zabaneh, Marpich, Washer, Masoureh and

Dari Masoureh. All of them are handmade. The key has four parts: Dasteh (handle), Varband, Masoureh and Marpich. Each key has its own unique padlock and cannot be used to unlock another. That is why the keys turn either clockwise or counterclockwise. The padlocks are usually made of copper, iron, brass, and iron cast.

One of the most ancient locks, dating to the 13th century BC, was excavated at Tchogha Zanbil, a UNESCO World Heritage in southwest Iran. The lock consisted of a bolt and a tumbler and was probably used on a wooden door, according to Iranica.

Numerous mechanisms are found in Iranian padlocks, including barbed spring, bent spring, helical spring, shackle spring, notched shackle, hook and revolving catch, and notched shackle with rotating discs, as well as combination and multiple mechanisms.

Until not long ago, every bazaar had a section for locksmiths (bazaar-e ghoflsazha), but the importation of machine-made locks from the West drove the locksmiths out of the city bazaars. Those in the villages, however, managed to survive until the 1970s.

Locks have also played an important role in popular beliefs. Pregnant women were hoping to prevent miscarriage, wearing a small lock on a cord around their waist.

In addition to animals, many new shapes for locks made of steel were inspired by objects and vessels such as the cradle, kashkul (a bowl in which dervishes put the alms and food given to them), suitcase, and lantern, as well as all kinds of geometric shapes.

Talismanic locks constitute a great number of locks



and come in all shapes. These are often small and made of silver or steel inscribed with talismanic writing, and they have various functions, such as protecting a child from the evil eye, "locking" an enemy's tongue, and so forth.

Throughout the Islamic period in Iran, locks were made in all shapes and sizes. In the first centuries after the introduction of Islam (7th-9th centuries) in Iran, locks followed the same style as those of the Sasanians.

With the rise of the Safavids (1501-1722) to power, there was a major evolution in lock-making. The Safavids' love of steel arms and other steel implements encouraged locksmiths to use this metal for locks, which were previously made of bronze and brass.

## Traditional skills of sailing Lenj boats come one step closer to elimination

**HERITAGE TEHRAN** — Iranian cabinet has approved a bill that may, according to cultural heritage experts, lead to the elimination of the UNESCO-listed traditional skills of building and sailing Iranian Lenj boats in the Persian Gulf.

"Despite the opposition of cultural heritage enthusiasts to a possible decision of elimination the traditional wooden lenjs, the cabinet agreed to allocate a budget for the destruction of these vessels," Mehr reported on Friday.

Members of government on Wednesday rectified a bill for the replacement of traditional commercial vessels with a capacity of less than 500 tons, the report said.

The Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts had previously notified the cabinet that the traditional



knowledge of shipbuilding and navigation in the Persian Gulf was on the UNESCO list of intangible heritage.

Various activists, including the World Maritime Forum, Kang Municipality, ICOM officials, cultural heritage lovers, and the media, have repeatedly stated their opposition to the resolution.

Iranian Lenj vessels are traditionally

hand-built and are used by inhabitants of the northern coast of the Persian Gulf for sea journeys, trading, fishing, and pearl diving. The traditional knowledge surrounding Lenjs includes oral literature, performing arts and festivals, in addition to the sailing and navigation techniques and terminology, and weather forecasting that is closely associated with sailing, and the skills of wooden boat-building itself. The navigational knowledge used to sail Lenjes was traditionally passed on from father to son.

Experts believe that specific music and rhythms also constituted inseparable parts of sailing in the Persian Gulf, with sailors singing particular songs while working. Nowadays, the community of practitioners is small and mainly comprises older people. Wooden Lenjes are being replaced by cheaper

fiberglass substitutes, and wooden Lenj construction workshops are being transformed into repair shops for older Lenjes. The philosophy, ritualistic background, culture, and traditional knowledge of sailing in the Persian Gulf are gradually fading, although some of the associated ceremonies continue to be practiced in a few places.

The List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding is composed of the intangible heritage elements that concerned world cultural communities and the states' parties should consider urgent measures to keep them alive. Inscription on this list helps to mobilize international cooperation and assistance for stakeholders to undertake appropriate safeguarding measures, according to the UN cultural body.

## Mansions, mosques, cemetery made national heritage in Iran

**HERITAGE TEHRAN** — A total of nine properties including three mansions and two mosques scattered across the Iranian Yazd province, have recently been added to the national cultural heritage list.

The Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts announced the inscriptions on Thursday in separate letters to the governor-general of the central province, CHTN reported.

Mostufi, Rahim Lari, and Purnemati mansions as well as Namadmal and Taghar Sanjar mosques are among the properties added to the National Heritage list.

The list also includes Kahdueieh Hosseinieh (a place used for religious mourning ceremonies) and Khezrabad and Sarhoz public bathhouses. The centuries-old cemetery of Juy-e Horhor is inscribed on the prestigious list as well.

The cemetery dates back centuries ago, but the structures and some mausoleums inside it belong to the Qajar-era (1789–1925).



Juy-e Horhor belongs to both Muslims and Jews with two different entrance gates on the north and south sides. There are several graves of scientists, mystics, literati, and clergymen from different his-

torical eras in the cemetery.

Although there are currently no burials in the Muslim section of the cemetery, the Jewish section, with its 22,000 square meters of area, still retains its use, and religious services are also performed there apart from burying the dead.

In July 2017, the historical structure of the city of Yazd was named a UNESCO World Heritage. Wedged between the northern Dasht-e Kavir and the southern Dasht-e Lut on a flat plain, the oasis city enjoys a very harmonious public-religious architecture that dates from different eras.

With its winding lanes, a forest of badgirs (wind catchers), mud-brick houses, atmospheric alleyways, and centuries of history, Yazd is a delightful place to stay, referring to as a 'don't miss' destination by almost all travel associates in the region.

Yazd Jameh Mosque, Dowlatabad Garden, the Yazd Atash Behram, also known as Atashkadeh-e Yazd, Towers of Silence, and adjacent desert landscape are among its tourist sites.



# Eastern borders closed as virus surges

SOCIETY

**TEHRAN** – Iran halted the entry of Pakistani and Afghan travelers and other foreign nationals from the eastern borders to the country to contain the new wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, IRIB reported on Friday.

On April 28, shared borders with Pakistan were closed, and a day later, the eastern border terminals of the country stopped operation, Seyed Rouhollah Latifi, Customs Administration spokesman stated.

All entry to the country is prohibited and travelers can only return to their country, he noted.

**Over 2,000 passengers prohibited at the borders**

Over the past few days, 2,100 Indian, Pakistani and Afghan nationals have been barred from entering the country, Ahmad-Ali Goudarzi, the border police chief announced.

Due to the outbreak of the Indian coronavirus, the National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control with the cooperation of related organizations and the Police Force implemented a plan to prevent the virus from spread through



the border crossing, he explained.

Through the plan, people infected with the coronavirus are tested and prevented to enter the country through the southeastern and southern borders.

**COVID-19 screening for 224,000 passengers at borders**

Mehdi Valipour, head of Relief and Rescue Organization affiliated to the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS), stated that

some 224,150 passengers have so far been screened for coronavirus by thermal tests at the country's official borders since March 10.

During the aforesaid period, IRCS forces have screened 224,150 passengers for COVID-19, 11,107 of whom with symptoms underwent PCR and 31,366 rapid tests, he said, ILNA reported on Friday.

He went on to lament that some 56 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.

With the cooperation of ministries of health and transport, a plan is being implemented 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.

## Iranian anti-corona spray unveiled

→ 1 Therefore, a molecule was designed to attack the S protein and kill the virus, he noted, adding, each spray of this molecule on the mask and other protective equipment lasts up to 8 hours.

Alireza Zali, head of coronavirus control working group in Tehran said that currently, Tehran is going through tragic and very difficult days of the pandemic, and Masih Daneshvari Hospital provides very good and quality services to the people, and these scientific and research efforts have made this center a reference for COVID-19 protocols and treatments.

"Today, the use of masks and protective equipment is still a very effective and inexpensive way and strategy to prevent virus transmission."

However, using a mask can still be effective even after vaccination and in case of new mutations which is occurring around the world, he added.

"But with the method we unveiled today, we can make ordinary masks very durable and turn them into special masks that inactivate the virus, and we can take a much more effective way to deal with the pandemic."

Zali went on to note that this is while sponge and cloth masks prevent up to 50 percent of bacteria from entering the body, and are not able to fight the virus.

**Self-sufficiency**

With the outbreak of coronavirus, Iran surged its production to meet the country's need for self-protective equipment along with medical and pharmaceutical items to fight against

the virus, at a time when other developed countries were struggling with a severe lack of personal protective tools.

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

Sepideh Golbaz, an official with the Food and Drug Administration said on April 20 that imports of coronavirus detection kits have dropped to zero as some 24 knowledge-based companies are producing kits to meet the domestic needs.

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

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

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

Knowledge-based companies can produce any medicine

effective in countering coronavirus or approved by the scientific committee within a week to 10 days, he noted.

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

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

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

**COVID-19 taking high toll in Iran**

In a press briefing on Friday Health Ministry's spokesperson, Sima-Sadat Lari, confirmed 19,272 new cases of COVID-19 infection, raising the total number of infections to 2,499,077. She added that 1,954,321 patients have so far recovered, but 5,398 remain in critical conditions of the disease.

During the past 24 hours, 407 patients have lost their lives, bringing the total number of deaths to 71,758, she added.

So far, 15,435,147 COVID-19 diagnostic tests have been performed in the country.

## Some 40,000 premature deaths occur in Iran due to air pollution

SOCIETY

**TEHRAN** – Air pollution is responsible for around 40,000 premature deaths in Iran annually, Mohammad- Sadeq Hassanvand, head of the air pollution research center at Tehran University of Medical Sciences, has said.

Referring to Iran's cooperation in compiling a new guideline of the World Organization for Air Pollution, he said that according to the findings of the study, the average annual concentration of the most important air pollutant (PM2.5) in the country is almost three times the standard and six times the new WHO guidelines.

The last time the WHO developed a guideline for air pollution was in 2005. A new guideline will be released in the summer of 2021, as new studies on air pollution and its impact on humans have been published, he explained.

"Our national standard for the average annual PM2.5 is 12 micrograms per cubic meter, while it was 10 micrograms per cubic meter, according to the 2005 WHO guideline. However, new studies have shown that air pollution can cause serious damage even in less than the standard range, so the new WHO guideline

announces the standard as 5 micrograms."

"We conducted surveys based on sulfur dioxide pollutant data at monitoring stations. This study showed that the number of peak hours of sulfur dioxide concentration over the past year (March 2020-March 2021) compared to a year before in Tehran and other cities of the country have increased significantly," he lamented.

"Sulfur dioxide increases the risk of developing respiratory diseases such as asthma and asthma attacks. Long-term exposure to it reduces lung capacity in children and impairs the respiratory system. Sulfur dioxide can cause the production of secondary particles. Some of these secondary particles are suspended particles that have the greatest effect on the human body. In addition, studies have shown that they have synergistic effects when sulfur dioxide and particulate matter increase simultaneously, their effects are intensified," he explained.

Air pollution kills an estimated seven million people worldwide every year. WHO data shows that 9 out of 10 people breathe air that exceeds WHO guideline limits contain-

ing high levels of pollutants, with low- and middle-income countries suffering from the highest exposures.

From smog hanging over cities to smoke inside the home, air pollution poses a major threat to health and climate. The combined effects of ambient (outdoor) and household air pollution cause about seven million premature deaths every year, largely as a result of increased mortality from stroke, heart disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, lung cancer, and acute respiratory infections.

Air quality is closely linked to the earth's climate and ecosystems globally. Many of the drivers of air pollution (i.e. combustion of fossil fuels) are also sources of greenhouse gas emissions. Policies to reduce air pollution, therefore, offer a "win-win" strategy for both climate and health, lowering the burden of disease attributable to air pollution, as well as contributing to the near- and long-term mitigation of climate change.

**Over 4,000 deaths in Tehran annually**

Between 4,000 and 5,000 people residing in the capital city of Tehran lose their

lives per year due to air pollution, according to statistics published by the ministry of health in 2019.

There are numerous vehicular trips per day in Tehran, which are the leading cause of air pollution in the capital so that the air in Tehran is amongst the most polluted in the world, Tehran City Council member, Arash Milani, said.

According to a report by World Bank published in April 2018, Tehran is ranked 12th among 26 megacities in terms of ambient PM10 levels. After Cairo, Tehran is the most polluted non-Asian megacity. In 2016, the annual ambient level of PM10 was estimated at 77 micrograms per cubic meter. This is almost four times the WHO's recommended threshold of 20 micrograms per cubic meter.

The pandemic has indirectly produced both positive and negative effects on the environment, particularly in terms of air quality; in the city of Tehran, however, air reported even more polluted than it was before the outbreak.

Contrary to expectation, the average concentrations of both the PM2.5 and the PM10 were markedly higher.

## ENGLISH IN USE

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## Lake Urmia water level keeps rising

The level of water at Lake Urmia is on the rise, as increased by a 1.7 billion cubic meters compared to the previous year, according to the studies conducted by the Lake Urmia restoration program committee.

The lake is expected to reach its ecological level (1,274 meters) within 10 years by completing the restoration plans which started four years ago.

Farhad Sarkhosh, head of the Lake Urmia restoration program's office in West Azarbaijan province, said the lake's level has reached 1,271 meters, adding the figure has increased by 68 centimeters compared to last year, according to the latest survey.

He said that the lake surface area has reached 2,828 square kilometers, adding that the figure is increased by 689 square kilometers compared to the same period last year.

## روند صعودی تراز دریاچه ارومیه

تراز دریاچه ارومیه روند صعودی به خود گرفته است به طوری که حجم آب دریاچه در مقایسه با سال گذشته یک میلیارد و ۷۰۰ میلیون مترمکعب افزایش یافته است.

دریاچه ارومیه از اواسط دهه ۱۳۸۰ شروع به خشک شدن کرد و بنا بر آمار بین‌المللی تا سال ۲۰۱۵ میلادی حدود ۸۰ درصد از مساحت آن خشک شد. این دریاچه در قالب طرح‌های احیا قرار است ظرف مدت ۱۰ سال از ۱۳۹۴/ به تراز اکولوژیک خود (یک‌هزار و ۲۷۴ متر) برسد.

به گزارش ایرنا، فرهاد سرخوش رییس دفتر استانی ستاد احیای دریاچه ارومیه در آذربایجان غربی با اشاره به ثبت تراز یک‌هزار و ۲۷۱ متر و ۳۰ سانتی‌متری طبق آخرین پایش برای دریاچه ارومیه اظهار داشت ارتفاع دریاچه نسبت به سال گذشته ۶۸ سانتی‌متر بیشتر شده است.

وی با بیان اینکه مساحت دریاچه به ۲ هزار و ۸۲۸ کیلومترمربع رسیده، بیان کرد این رقم نسبت به زمان مشابه سال گذشته ۶۸۹ کیلومترمربع افزایش نشان می‌دهد.

## World will lose 10% of glacier ice even if it hits climate targets

A tenth of the world's mountain glacier ice will have melted by the middle of this century even if humanity meets the goals of the Paris climate agreement, according to figures compiled exclusively for the Guardian.

The loss is equivalent to more than 13,200 cubic kilometres of water – enough to fill Lake Superior, or more than 10m Wembley Stadiums – with knock-on effects on highly populated river deltas, wildlife habitats and sea levels.



In some particularly hard-hit areas, including central Europe, North America and low latitudes, glacier mass is expected to decline by more than half.

Scientists said the overwhelming bulk of this melt-off, which does not include Greenland or Antarctica, is unavoidable because it has been locked in by the global heating caused by humans in recent years.

However, they say the actions governments take today – including the recent announcements of more ambitious emissions-cutting goals by the US, the UK and others – can make a big difference to the landscape in the second half of this century.

"What we see in the mountains now was caused by greenhouse gases two or three decades ago," said the glaciologist Ben Marzeion from the University of Bremen. "In one way, we could see it as a doomsday because it is already too late to stop many glaciers melting. But it is also important that people are aware of how decisions taken now can affect how our world will look two or three generations from now."

Marzeion extracted the data from a synthesis last year of more than 100 computer models generated by research institutes around the world.

These studies projected various possible behaviours of the planet's roughly 200,000 mountain glaciers, depending on different emissions pathways and weather circulation patterns.

The compiled results are considered the most accurate estimate yet of how mountains will lose their white snow-caps and blue ice-rivers.

Between 2021 and 2050, Marzeion calculated the average mass loss over the various scenarios is 13,200 Gt. This is equivalent to melting almost five Olympic swimming pools of ice every second over the next 30 years.

Aggressive emissions cuts would barely slow this. The difference between the best and worst-case scenarios was less than 20%. The remaining 80% is already locked in.

That contrasts with projections for the second half of the century, when the decisions taken now will make a huge difference. In a low-emissions scenario, current glacier mass is projected to diminish by about 18% by 2100, which would be a slowdown. By contrast, in a high-emissions scenario, the loss would accelerate to reach 36%.

This has multiple consequences. Mountain glacier melt contributes more than a third of sea-level rise, a higher contribution than the Antarctic, according to the latest European State of the Climate Report, which was released last week. This is steadily raising the risk of floods and inundations along coastal regions and rivers.

Depending on how quickly emissions can be cut, the extra runoff is likely to add 79-159mm to sea levels by 2100, according to the synthesis paper.

At a local and regional level, it can also reduce the stability of river systems. On a seasonal level, Alpine glaciers help to regulate water supply by storing precipitation in winter and releasing it in summer.

But as they melt away over decades due to global heating, more downstream areas will first experience a water boom, then a bust. Previous studies suggest 1.9 billion people are at risk of mountain water shortages, most of them in China and India.

The urgency varies according to altitude, ice thickness, weather patterns and a host of other factors. Lower mountain ranges, such as the European Alps or the Pyrenees, are expected to be among the worst affected. In Switzerland and Italy, there are already cases of famous glaciers retreating rapidly or melting completely.

## LET'S LEARN PERSIAN

(Part 172)

(Source: saadifoundation.ir)

■ Passive Verb

■ فعل مَجْهُول

فعل مجهول با صفتِ مفعولی فعل معلوم + شدن درست می‌شود:

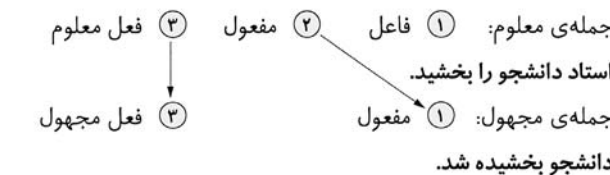
The past participle + شدن is a formal structure, used mainly

in the written language, rarely in speech:

I was forgiven;	شدم ← بخشیده شدم	} + بخشیده
you were forgiven;	شدی ← بخشیده شدی	
...	شد ← بخشیده شد	
	شدیم ← بخشیده شدیم	
	شدید ← بخشیده شدید	
	شدند ← بخشیده شدند	

The passive is used far less in Persian than it is in English; a

passive form is not used if the active form is possible:



The original subject is not mentioned in a passive sentence either because it is not known or it is basically considered unimportant.



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GUIDE TO  
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

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

Prophet Muhammad (S)

## WHAT'S IN ART GALLERIES



### Calligraphy

A collection of calligraphy works featuring verses of the Holy Quran by a group of female calligraphers are on view in a virtual exhibition at the Iranian Academy of Arts. The exhibition named "Fragrance of Inspiration" has been organized to celebrate the holy month of Ramadan, in collaboration with Tehran's Palestine Museum of Contemporary Art. Nafiseh Taqavi, Marzieh Saeidi, Maryam Khajerasuli, Leila Khazai, Mahbubeh Jeirani, Zahra Shirazipur, Azra Abdollahpur, Faezeh Saeidi, and dozens of other calligraphers are contributing to the exhibit. The showcase will run until May 12 at <http://honar.ac.ir/index.aspx?key-id=&siteid=1&&siteid=1&page-id=3012>.

### Painting

■ Najmeh Kazazi is hanging her latest collection of paintings in an exhibition at Inja Gallery. The exhibit named "Where the Fish Goes the Water Flows" will run until May 8 at the gallery located at 4 Pedram Alley, Neauphle-le-Chateau St. ■ A group of artists, including Siavash Kasrai, Behjat Sadr, Manuchehr Niazi, Farid Jahangir, Sassan Nasiri, Ali Golestaneh and Mostafa Dashti, is displaying their paintings in an exhibition at Saleh Gallery. The exhibit named "Living Nature" will be running until May 19 at the gallery that can be found at 148 Karim Khan Ave.

■ An exhibition of paintings by Mojgan Bakhtiari is currently underway at Asar Gallery. The exhibit will run until May 28 at the gallery located at No. 16 Barforushan St., Iranshahr St.

### Calligraphic painting

■ Negar Gallery is playing host to an exhibition of calligraphic paintings by Alireza Aastaneh, Fereidun Omid, Mohammad Bozorgi, Kurosh Qazimorad and Maryam Qanbarian. Hassan Mehrabani is the curator of the exhibition entitled "Selection 3" and will be running until May 11 at the gallery located at 33 Delaram Alley, East Roshanai St. in the Qeitarieh neighborhood.

### Multimedia

■ Artworks in various media by Maryam Nuri, Ruhollah Mohammadi, Azadeh Masumi, Nasrin Rahimi, Zahra Abedini, Kiana Yazdanju, Sanaz Hamed, Saeideh Farahani, Shahram Sharifi and several other artists are on display in an exhibition at Golhaye Davudi Gallery. The exhibition entitled "Water Lilies" will be running until May 5 at the gallery located at 263 near Nejatollahi St., Taleqani Ave.

■ Five Five Gallery is hanging artworks in various media by Sima Shababhangpur, Behnaz Abbasi, Elaheh Parsai, Nadia Delbaste, Elnaz Sadeqi, Maryam Golmohammadi, Nikta Jalali, Zahra Zanjani, Fatemeh Jahedi, Faezeh Moqaddam and Azadeh Darvari in an exhibition named "To My Sight". The exhibit will be running until May 5 at the gallery that can be found at No. 55, Seventh Negarestan, Pasdaran Ave.

■ An exhibition of artworks in various media by Alireza Arab, Shabnam Darvish, Aida Sadeqi, Amir Haddadi, Parisa Bakhshi, Sara Fakhrai, Shiva Ahrari, Farahnaz Mojtahedi and several other artists is currently underway at Ehsan Gallery.



The exhibit entitled "New Season" will run until May 4 at the gallery located at No. 22, East 14th St. in the Ajudanieh neighborhood.

# Book on Lorish activist of Iran's Constitutional Revolution published in Johannesburg

→1 The book is reminiscent of Bibi Maryam, known as Sardar Maryam, the daughter of Hussein Quli Khan Ilkhani Bakhtiari Dorki Haft Lang and Bibi Fatima, the daughter of Alireza Khan Chaharlang Kiansi.

The book carries memories from the childhood of Bibi Maryam until her thirties, at the time of the beginning of the Constitutional Revolution and a few years after her liberation from the husband who lived with her. He was severely tormented and hindered by his struggles.

Bibi Maryam was an activist during the Constitutional Revolution and, afterwards, an active nationalist and freedom activist until the end of her life as a political fighter.

She received the honorary certificate from the German government. Bibi Maryam died in Isfahan in 1316, three years after the death of her son, Ali Mardan Khan.

The final pages of the book showcase photos of Bakhtiari's leaders.

In June 2018, a bust of Bibi Maryam Bakhtiari was set up at the NLAI Women's Studies Section of the National Library and Archives of Iran.



"Bandar Band" by Iranian director Manijeh Hekmat.

**A R T** **TEHRAN** – Iranian film "Bandar Band" directed by Manijeh Hekmat has been

## Claudio Noce's "Padrenostro" to compete in Fajr filmfest

**A R T** **TEHRAN** – Italian director Claudio Noce's drama "Padrenostro" will be screened at the 38th Fajr International Film Festival in Tehran following its world premiere at The Venice International Film Festival 2020. "Padrenostro", which means "our father", is Noce's third film, and it is based on his own personal life, narrating the powerful friendship of two boys who manage to form a different narrative of life.

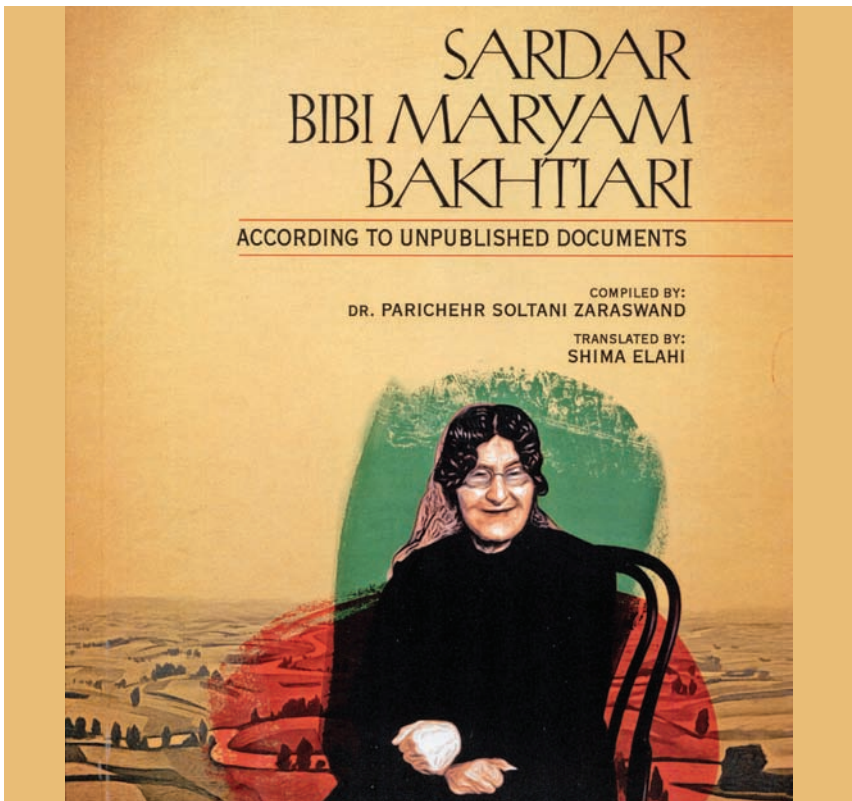
The film's story unfolds in Rome during 1976 where Valerio, played by Mattia Garaci, suffers trauma after witnessing a terrorist attack on his father Alfonso, played by

Pierfrancesco Favino, and later meets Christian, played by Francesco Ghoghi.

The film narrates the perspective of Valerio whose heroic father was a decorated police officer. The powerful friendship of the two young boys is portrayed using Antonio Vivaldi's composition "Summer from Four Seasons".

The music along with the mysterious feel it brings to the film adds excitement to the scenes where the boys make discoveries that will change their lives forever.

The film was screened at the 77th Venice Film Festival, and Favino won the Volpi Cup for best actor.



Front cover of the English version of "Sardar Bibi Maryam Bakhtiari".

## Canadian distributor Mongrel Media buys Iranian film "Bandar Band"

purchased by Canadian distributor Mongrel Media.

The film co-produced by Hekmat and Mahshid Ahangarani Farahani, has been screened in several international festivals. "Bandar Band" is about some Iranian women singers who are going to enter an unofficial competition in a coffee shop in Tehran.

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

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

The film was named best film at the 26th Kolkata

International Film Festival, which took place in the Indian city in January.

It also received the NETPAC Award at the 6th Ulju Mountain Film Festival in Ulsan, South Korea in April.

Mongrel Media is an independent Canadian film distributor, which is the exclusive Canadian theatrical distributor for Sony Pictures Classics, Neon and Lionsgate, and titles from A24, Amazon Studios, Saban Films and IFC Films.

Asghar Farhadi's Oscar-winning drama "A Separation", Majid Majidi's "Sun Children", Bahman Farmanara's "Smell of Camphor, Scent of Jasmine", Faramarz Qaribian's "Her Eyes", Rasul Sadr-Ameli's "The Girl In the Sneakers" and several other acclaimed Iranian movies have previously been purchased by the company.



"Padrenostro" by Italian director Claudio Noce.

However, the organizers announced last week that Oscar-winning Hungarian director Istvan Szabo's latest movie "Final Report" and Ukrainian-Armenian filmmaker Roman Balayan's 2020 movie "We Are Here We Are Close" have been selected to compete in the event.

## "The White Darkness" falls on Iranian bookstores

**CULTURE** **TEHRAN** – English writer Geraldine McCaughrean's novel "The White Darkness" has recently been published in Persian by Peydayesh Publishing House in Tehran.

Farmehr Amirdoost is the translator of the book originally published in 2005 by HarperCollins Publishers.

In her first contemporary young adult novel, Carnegie Medalist and three-time Whitbread Award winner McCaughrean delivers a spellbinding journey into the frozen heart of darkness.

In this book, shy teenager Symone "Sym" Wates is taken to Antarctica by her domineering "uncle", Victor Briggs, who after the death of her real parent has appointed himself as her surrogate father.

An obsessive believer in the hollow earth theories of John Cleves Symmes, Jr., Briggs is convinced that in Antarctica he will find the entrance to the Inner World and its inhabitants.

He is ready to sacrifice Sym and others to prove his theory, and increasingly puts her in danger until she finally sees the truth about him. She is then able to escape his plans for her. Briggs dies still pursuing his obsession while Sym returns to her own life with new freedom.

The book won Michael L. Printz Award in 2008.



Front cover of the Persian translation of English writer Geraldine McCaughrean's novel "The White Darkness".

"Symone's unforgettable voice propels this journey of discovery in a book that is intricately plotted, richly imaged and brings new meaning to the term unreliable narrator," said Printz Award Committee Chair Lynn Rutan.

"Readers will need to hang onto their snowy goggles in this compelling book in which nothing is as it seems at first glance."

It was also shortlisted for the Calderdale Children's Book Award in 2006.

## Peter Singer's "Animal Liberation" appears in Persian

**CULTURE** **TEHRAN** – Australian philosopher Peter Singer's book "Animal Liberation" has been published in Persian.

Qoqnus is the publisher of the book translated into Persian by Behnam Khodapanah.

Since its original publication in 1975, this groundbreaking work has awakened millions of concerned men and women to the shocking abuse of animals everywhere, inspiring a worldwide movement to eliminate much of the cruel and unnecessary laboratory animal experimentation of years past.

In this newly revised and expanded edition, Singer exposes the chilling realities of today's "factory farms" and product-testing procedures, offering sound, humane solutions to what has become a profound environmental and social as well as moral issue.



A poster for the Persian translation of Australian philosopher Peter Singer's book "Animal Liberation".

An important and persuasive appeal to conscience, fairness, decency and justice, "Animal Liberation" is essential reading for

the supporter and the skeptic alike.

"Animal Liberation" is widely considered within the animal liberation movement to be the founding philosophical statement of its ideas.

Singer himself rejected the use of the theoretical framework of rights when it comes to human and nonhuman animals.

Following Jeremy Bentham, Singer argued that the interests of animals should be considered because of their ability to experience suffering and that the idea of rights was not necessary in order to consider them.

He popularized the term "speciesism" in the book, which had been coined by Richard D. Ryder to describe the exploitative treatment of animals.

In "Animal Liberation", Singer argues against what he calls speciesism: discrimination on the grounds that a being belongs to a certain species.

In particular, he argues that while animals show lower intelligence than the average human, many severely intellectually challenged humans show equally diminished, if not lower, mental capacity and that some animals have displayed signs of intelligence (for example, primates learning elements of American sign language and other symbolic languages) sometimes on a par with that of human children.

Therefore, intelligence does not provide a basis for giving nonhuman animals any less consideration than such intellectually challenged humans.

Singer concludes that the most practical solution is to adopt a vegetarian or vegan diet. He also condemns vivisection except where the benefit (in terms of improved medical treatment, etc.) outweighs the harm done to the animals used.