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Iran dismisses sending Syrian youth to Yemen

TEHRAN – The Iranian embassy in Ankara on Sunday dismissed a claim by Turkey's Anadolu News Agency claim that Iran was sending troops from Syria to Yemen, calling it a "lack of information about the realities on the ground in Yemen."

On Sunday, the Iranian embassy issued a statement saying, "This false claim contradicts the Islamic Republic of Iran's approach to the catastrophic

and inhumane war against the Yemeni people. The Islamic Republic of Iran has always called for an end to this war and has supported UN efforts to find a political solution."

Anadolu News Agency had recently claimed that Iranian forces stationed in Syria would send Syrian youth to Yemen to fight in the country.

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Over 130,000 public transport vehicles to become dual-fuel

TEHRAN - The Director of the National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company (NIORDC)'s compressed natural gas (CNG) programs Mohammad-Hossein Baqeri has said that 132,000 public transport vehicles are going to become dual-fueled across the country.

The mentioned vehicles are going to become dual-fuel under the framework

of a program launched back in May 2020, for the promotion of CNG consumption instead of gasoline. The program is aimed at converting over 1.46 million public vehicles into dual-fuel ones.

According to Baqeri, so far over 306,000 vehicles have registered in this program of which only 132,000 have met the required criteria to become dual-fuel.

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Turkish translation of Claire Jobert collection of Quran stories reviewed

TEHRAN – A Turkish translation of a collection of stories that the Tehran-based French writer and illustrator Claire Jobert (Joubert) has created based on Quranic concepts was reviewed during an online session on Sunday.

The collection entitled "A Fiction with Quranic Concept" is composed of eight books published by Nar Cocuk, a major Turkish publishing house

for children's books.

The review session organized by the Iran Book and Literature House was attended by Jobert, translator Milad Salmani and Nar director Tayfur Esen.

Seyyed Ahmad Mirzadeh, the deputy director of Beh Nashr, the Iranian publisher of the collection, also attended the session.

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Iranian plateau in Pleistocene: a bridge between East and West

BY AFSHIN MAJLESI

A new study reinforces a hypothesis that the Iranian plateau was like a bridge between East and West during the Pleistocene epoch, which began about 2.6 million years ago and lasted until about 11,700 years ago.

In an article published in the International Research Journal of Modernization in Engineering Technology and Science (IRJMETS) in April 2021, Iranian researchers Mohsen Zeidi, Cyrus Barfi, and Shahram Zare concluded that the Iranian plateau served as a human migratory pathway in the Pleistocene.

"Increasing Paleolithic finds in this region and neighboring countries (Pakistan and Afghanistan) reinforces the hypothesis that the Iranian Plateau has been used as a human migratory pathway in the Pleistocene linking East and West."

"The results of the archaeological survey we presented here emphasized the great potential and the importance of south-eastern Iran in general and southern margins of Lut Desert in particular, for the understanding of the Pleistocene culture history of this region," stated the authors of the research.

The survey was conducted in parts of the Fahraj-Rigan area in Kerman province, believing that new Paleolithic localities bear great potentials for this region for understanding the dynamics of Pleistocene hominin populations in south-eastern Iran.

During summer 2020, and in the framework of a Paleolithic survey in the Fahraj-Rigan area in the southern margins of Lut Desert, one of the authors collected a series of surface stone artifacts and as a result of this, 12 new Paleolithic localities were identified.

The surveyed area with a semi-arid to the arid climate has a mean elevation of 700 meters above sea level and is limited to the northwest, south, west, and east by volcanic mountains. Alluvial sedimentary deposits of Quaternary origin have covered the region between these mountains. All of the recorded sites are located either along the low-height hills of Quaternary river terraces or flat alluvial deposits.

The survey zone also included part of the volcanic band of south-eastern Iran which is contained mainly of igneous rock formations. Therefore, according to the authors, as the results of the geology of the region, except for a few examples, various types of igneous rocks have been used for the production of chipped stone artifacts.

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Over 50,000 ha of desert areas to be rehabilitated

TEHRAN – At least 50,000 hectares of the country's desert areas will be protected and rehabilitated through implementing sustainable exploitation projects with the participation of local communities, Vahid Jafarian, an official with the Forests, Rangelands, and Watershed Management Organization said.

Technical and executive guidelines on desert rehabilitation have been prepared based on the latest scientific achievements and experiences of successful projects in the country and the world, he stated.

Studying, identifying, and managing the phenomenon of desertification and controlling wind erosion in the desert areas of the country are among our tasks, he explained, ISNA reported on Sunday.

Using windbreaks, planting, care, and irrigation, reforested forest management, runoff management, protection, and seeding were among the plans implemented since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21), he said.

According to Jafarian, the most important approach of these guidelines is defined based on the participation of people.

Annually, about 25,000 hectares of land undergo reforestation in Iran, which is more than twice the annual deforestation. However, the reforested land may not have the same biodiversity and vegetation as the original forests.

Reforestation is the natural or intentional restocking of existing forests and woodlands (forestation) that have been depleted, usually through deforestation. Reforestation can be used to rectify or improve the quality of human life by soaking up pollution and dust from the air, rebuild natural habitats and ecosystems, mitigate global warming since forests facilitate biosequestration of atmospheric carbon dioxide, and harvest for resources, particularly timber, but also non-timber forest products.

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Death toll rises to 58 in Kabul school district attack

The death toll from an explosion outside a school in Afghanistan's capital city Kabul has risen to 58, Afghan officials say.

Officials said on Sunday that medical staff in hospitals were struggling to provide medical care to at least 150 people, mostly schoolgirls, who were injured in the blast on Saturday.

The blast occurred in front of a school in the Shia majority neighborhood of Dasht-e-Barchi in western Kabul.

An eyewitness reported that the victims of the attack were mostly female students headed on their way back home after finishing school.

The death toll in the blasts might increase, Tariq Arian, a spokesman for the Interior Ministry, said on Sunday.

According to the ministry, there were a total of three consecutive blasts in the afternoon near Kabul's Seyyed ul-Shohada Girls School in Dasht-e-Barchi.

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani said the Taliban militant group was responsible for the attack.

The Taliban, however, did not claim responsibility for the blast.

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh condemned the terrorist attack in Kabul. Khatibzadeh described the attack against civilians as detestable, particularly as the targets were girl students. He offered condolences to the survivors and families of those killed in the attack.

The violent attack came a week after the United States and its NATO allies began pulling their troops and military hardware out of Afghanistan.

U.S. President Joe Biden announced the schedule to complete the drawdown of US forces by September 11. The Taliban have issued a warning, pledging to attack U.S. troops if they failed to withdraw as scheduled.

Twenty years on, violence is increasingly rampant in the conflict-stricken country.

Sports minister Soltanifar slams U.S. sanctions against Iran

BY FARROKH HESABI

TEHRAN - Iran's Minister of Sports and Youth, Masoud Soltanifar, slammed the international sanctions against Iran and mentioned them as the root of "the most of the current problems of Iran's sports" in a webinar with provincial sports managers on Sunday.

Over the years, sanctions against Iran, mostly imposed by the United States, have taken a serious toll on Iran's economy in different domains,

including sports.

"The Iranian football federation, as an example, has not been able to use its funds at the FIFA. Also, Iranian football clubs, who have participated in continental competitions, were not awarded their prize money relating to the AFC Champions League," Soltanifar said.

"The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) owes more than \$3m to Persepolis club that has reached the AFC Champions League final twice

in the last three years. Other Iranian clubs, such as Esteghlal and Tractor, should be also paid money rewards by advancing to the knockout stages of the ACL," he added.

According to the AFC and FIFA rules, any financial payments to be made by these football governing bodies are subject to all applicable laws, regulations, orders, by-laws, and international sanctions.

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Drive through Covid-19 vaccination

On Sunday Covid-19 drive-through vaccination facility launched its scheduled program in Sorkheh Hesaar, Tehran. Furthermore Covid-19 drive-through vaccination for elderlies of 80 plus age has been done in Derak, Shiraz.

This Zionist apartheid regime: An outlawed state and an international terrorist military base

BY AMAL WAHDAN

This year, and while millions of the free people of the world rallied on International Quds day in support for the Palestinian cause and to call for an end to the Zionist apartheid regime's atrocities and occupation of Palestine, Palestinians in Jerusalem are escalating their protests against the continuous policies of ethnic cleansing of Jerusalem from its Palestinian indigenous people, who have lived there for thousands of years, at the hands of the apartheid military occupying power.

On this significant occasion, Palestinians are extremely grateful for the Late Imam Khomeini, the inspirational leader of the modern Iranian revolution, for designating the last Friday of the holy month of Ramadan as the International Quds Day in the act of uniting Muslims and freedom-loving people in solidarity with the just cause of Palestinians in the face of the Zionist apartheid regime and its global war crimes.

Today, after forty-two years, millions of people from different religions, races and nationalities around the world are rushing into the streets in mass demonstrations to show their full support and persistence in defending the Palestinian people. This is a global referendum and recognition of holy Jerusalem as the eternal capital of Palestine, the right of Palestinians to resist the colonial apartheid system, achieve their freedom, independence and the right of millions of refugees to return to their Homeland.

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Iran dismisses sending Syrian youth to Yemen

➔1 The false claim comes as Yemen has been under a complete siege by Saudi and American forces for several years, so that even the sending of medicine and food is not possible except in some cases by the United Nations.

In recent months, there has been a lot of news about Turkish drone assistance to Saudi Arabia in the Yemeni war, so that several of its drones have crashed in Yemen.

Also, due to the proximity of the Salah Brotherhood party to Ankara and the presence of its party officials in Istanbul, efforts have been made for Turkey to have a field presence in Yemen in support of the Brotherhood party and proximity to Saudi Arabia.

Ghalibaf: Iran is not waiting for enemies

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Speaking at a parliament session on Sunday, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said that Iran, despite trying to lift sanctions, will not wait for the enemies.

“Iran has the upper hand, so we urge them not to delay further lifting the sanctions once they have fully fulfilled their obligations, because over time, the cost of returning to the sanctions will be heavier,” he said.



The parliamentarian stressed that the Islamic Republic is seeking to remove all sanctions verifiably, and at once.

“The united voice of the officials of the Islamic Republic, created under the intelligent management of the Leader, has played an important role in preventing the enemy’s ambitions. It is necessary to maintain this alliance until the final result is reached.”

Ghalibaf highlighted that if all sanctions are lifted and its economic effects are verified in practice, there should

be no delay in agreeing to Iran’s commitments to the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231 confirming the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

On the Vienna negotiations, the speaker said, “These days, negotiations between Iran and the P4+1 are ongoing with many ups and downs. One day the news of the progress of the negotiations and the next day the news of the disputes are published. All this shows the seriousness of the negotiations.”

Referring to the approval of the parliamentary law on Strategic Action for Lifting Sanctions, the senior MP said the law has “opened the locks of the nuclear industry” and provided the necessary capacity for talks for the negotiating team.

He noted that the same capacities have been the focus of trade-offs in the current negotiations in order to secure the interests of the people.

House of Parties chief writes to national TV director urging him to fully observe neutrality in presidential campaigns

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The head of the House of Parties has written a letter to the national TV chief asking him to observe full impartiality and give equal time to presidential candidates.

The presidential elections will be held on June 18.

“The House of Parties of Iran urges national TV to fully observe impartiality in arranging plans and allocating time and equal opportunity to presidential candidates,” Shahabodin Sadr, a former parliamentarian, suggested.

Sadr said the House of Parties as the representative of legal political parties and groups as well as party chiefs is ready to help the national TV to perform its duty properly.

Sadr has urged the national TV director to issue the necessary order to all program directors at different TV channels.

Registration of the candidates for presidential election will start on May 11 and will last until May 15. The Guardian council has five days to qualify or disqualify candidates.

After they are confirmed by the oversight body, they will start campaigns on May 28 that will last until June 16.

Iran appoints new ambassador to Syria

POLITICAL **TEHRAN**— At the suggestion of Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and with the approval of President Hassan Rouhani, Mehdi Sobhani was appointed as the new ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Syria.

Mehdi Sobhani has previously served as Director General of the Foreign Ministry Office of Strategic Planning and Monitoring, Consul General of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Karachi, Pakistan, Deputy Director General of West Asia at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Deputy Ambassador to Turkmenistan and Ukraine.

The former Iranian ambassador to Syria was Javad Torkabadi.

Iran denies presence of trucks at Karabakh

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Baku has denied reports claiming the movement of Iranian trucks carrying goods in Karabakh.

Following the publication of some images on social media alleging a presence of Iranian trucks carrying goods in Karabakh, the Iranian embassy in Baku, denied the report, stating that the images and videos are “incorrect.”

The embassy added that at a time when relations between the two friendly and brotherly countries are developing, groups that do not want these relations to develop publish such baseless and false information.

On November 9, 2020, in the aftermath of the capture of Shusha, a ceasefire agreement was signed by Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, and Russian President Vladimir Putin ending all hostilities in the zone of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict from November 10, 2020.

Leaked documents show details of failed Arab-U.S. move to form anti-Iran alliance

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — A Lebanese newspaper has published

top-secret documents outlining details of a failed plan by former U.S. president Donald Trump and certain Arab countries in the region, particularly Saudi Arabia, to form a large regional coalition against Iran.

According to Beirut-based al-Akhbar newspaper, the documents show that Trump began to lure its allies in West Asia into forming an anti-Iran front months after his first foreign trip to Riyadh as the president of the United States.

Trump’s plan, under the names “the Middle East Strategic Alliance (MESA)” and the “Arab NATO”, was accompanied by his milking of the Arab countries while going on with implementing the so-called “maximum pressure” policy against Iran, the report said.

The report also revealed that Riyadh was very enthusiastic about and had faith in Trump’s strategy and put all its eggs in his basket while raising its hopes to unrealistic levels.

According to a confidential Saudi document dated July 4, 2019, the U.S. demanded that all parties must “accelerate arms deals” with the United States, the Lebanese paper reported, hinting at Trump’s famous phrase that “they need to pay” for Washington’s support.

It added that the document exempts the U.S. from taking “any military action” in the event of attacks against those countries, making the Saudis realize that such deals give “important benefits to the U.S.” without imposing any burdens on it, while giving “very limited benefits to other countries, including the Kingdom.”

Al-Akhbar argued that Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain’s insistence on the necessity of confronting Iran and its “regional wings” as the main focus of the alliance shows that they were skeptical about the intentions of the U.S. for the creation of the so-called Arab NATO.

According to the leaked documents, minutes of a coordination meeting between the Persian Gulf states at the headquarters of the Saudi military attaché in Washington show that the Saudis were concerned about a lack of commitment on the American side and also about the fact that it did not offer any benefits to the member states.

“We want the coalition to be limited to the military-security aspect only, and to include sources of threats, in addition to the possibility of establishing strategic partnerships with other allied countries,” the head of the Saudi delegation said at the meeting.

At that meeting, Bahrain wanted the U.S. to be harsher in confronting what it called “Iranian threats,” while worrying that Washington might not remain committed



to the alliance.

“After the first proposal submitted by the White House clearly referred to confronting Iranian threats, the second proposal that came from the U.S. Defense and State Ministries was less severe,” the head of the Bahrain delegation regretted, adding, “We want to obtain guarantees that the United States will not abandon this alliance as it did by withdrawing from the nuclear agreement with Iran.”

The Trump administration withdrew from the 2015 nuclear deal – officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action – on May 2018 and imposed the harshest sanctions on Iran with the its “maximum pressure” campaign.

Citing the leaked documents, al-Akhbar said the main objective of the United States’ proposal was said to be “building institutions to create power against (what it called) the Iranian aggression, terrorism and extremism, and promoting economic growth and diversity.”

The report came more than a week after Saudi Arabia’s de-facto ruler, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS), said he is seeking to have “good relations” with Iran while pointing to some differences in the path toward rapprochement.

“Iran is a neighboring state, we are seeking

Al-Akhbar argued that Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain’s insistence on the necessity of confronting Iran and its “regional wings” as the main focus of the alliance shows that they were skeptical about the intentions of the U.S. for the creation of the so-called Arab NATO.

to have good relations with Iran, we have interests in Iran,” Bin Salman said in an interview broadcast on Saudi state TV on April 27.

Tehran has reacted positively to the recent “change in Saudi Arabia’s tone” towards the Islamic Republic and welcomed bilateral efforts to secure regional peace and stability.

Qatar has voiced support for dialogue between Iran and Saudi Arabia, calling such a dialogue a constructive step toward regional stability.

Qatari Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani has said his country welcomes any dialogue between Tehran and Riyadh.

“We welcome any dialogue or efforts and a positive spirit related to relations between Iran and the [Persian] Gulf, especially Saudi Arabia, and we support such efforts and believe that dialogue is a constructive step toward the stability of the region,” the chief Qatari diplomat said in an interview with Al Jazeera.

Iran and Qatar are in close contact. Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad paid a visit to the Persian Gulf nation in late April. During his meeting with the Qatari foreign minister, the Iranian foreign minister highlighted the importance of Tehran-Doha

relations as well as bilateral and regional cooperation, according to a statement issued by the Iranian Foreign Ministry. Zarif said Iran’s approach is to boost its relations with the regional countries.

Earlier in January, Qatar called on the Persian Gulf’s Arab states to seize on the momentum of reconciliation drive in the region and patch up their differences with Iran. In an interview with Bloomberg TV, the Qatari foreign minister expressed hope that a summit between leaders of the six-member Persian Gulf Cooperation Council and Iran would happen.

“We are hopeful that this [summit] would happen and we still believe that this should happen. And I think this is also a desire that being shared among the other GCC countries. I just mentioned to you that there is a difference between the countries on the way how to approach such a dialogue. Also from the Iranian side. They have expressed their willingness several times to engage with the GCC countries,” the Qatari foreign minister said.

He said the time should come when the Persian Gulf’s Arab states will sit at the table with Iran and reach a common understanding. “We have to live with each other. We cannot change geography. Iran cannot move the GCC away from its neighborhood and the GCC cannot move Iran from the neighborhood,” bin Abdulrahman continued.

Iran welcomed the Qatari call for dialogue between Iran and the Persian Gulf’s Arab states, underlining that the solution to the region’s challenges lies in cooperation to form a strong region free from foreign interference.

“Iran welcomes my brother FM @MBA_AlThani’s call for inclusive dialogue in our region. As we have consistently emphasized, the solution to our challenges lies in collaboration to jointly form a ‘strong region’: peaceful, stable, prosperous & free from global or regional hegemony,” Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said in a tweet following the Qatari foreign minister’s call for dialogue.

Over the past few weeks, there have been plenty of press reports saying that Iran and Saudi Arabia have held a direct meeting in Baghdad for the first time in years. A Saudi official at the Saudi Foreign Ministry confirmed the Baghdad talks on Friday, saying they aim to reduce regional tensions.

“As to current Saudi-Iranian talks they aim to explore ways to reduce tensions in the region,” Rayed Krimly, head of policy planning at the Saudi Foreign Ministry, told Reuters. “We hope they prove successful, but it is too early, and premature, to reach any definitive conclusions. Our evaluation will be based on verifiable deeds, and not proclamations.”

Hamas chief writes to Leader, asks Muslim world to support al-Quds

POLITICAL **TEHRAN**— In a letter to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Sayyed Ali Khamenei, Ismail Haniyeh, head of the Hamas Islamic Resistance Movement’s political bureau, elaborated on current events in the occupied Quds and called on the Islamic world to take a tough position in favor of the citizens of Quds and stop the Israeli occupiers’ atrocities.

The text of the letter is as follows: Ayatollah Sayyed Ali Khamenei Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution of Iran

It is a source of satisfaction for us in the Hamas movement to offer our sincere greetings to your Excellency during these blessed days and the last days of the month of Ramadan. We ask God Almighty to grant this great month and Eid al-Fitr once again with blessings to the Islamic Republic of Iran and its great nation and the Islamic Ummah.

As you are and were aware, the attacks and aggressions of the usurping Zionists against Al-Quds and its inhabitants, including the intensification of Judaization, settlement building, forced displacement of Palestinians, ethnic cleansing and attacks on Bab al-Amoud and Sheikh Jarrah, as well as aggression against Al-Aqsa Mosque and the believers as well as attacking the blessed Mosque or suppressing worshippers and closing its doors and preventing Palestinians from entering it for prayers and worship are ongoing which are widespread efforts by the occupying regime to legitimize settlements, relocate Palestinians, and confiscate homes and their property and the establishment of the temporal and spatial division of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the change of the status quo, and this is a new crime that has crossed all red lines and wounded the feelings and emotions of the

Islamic Ummah, targeting the city of Quds and its Islamic history and existence, the living conditions, the future and the legitimate rights of its inhabitants, as directly are targeting the Al-Aqsa Mosque and its guardians.

We in the Hamas movement warn against the aggressions and crimes of the Zionist enemy during the holy month of Ramadan and the tense and dangerous situation in Al-Quds and Al-Aqsa Mosque and the dangerous consequences and calls for the immediate response of the Islamic world to take a firm stand against these crimes and to try to mobilize Islamic positions and Arab, Islamic and international diplomacy to prevent the Zionist enemy from continuing its brutal crimes against the Palestinian people and its land and sanctuaries in occupied Quds, especially Al-Aqsa Mosque.

The continuous and widespread efforts of the Zionist occupiers in the city of Al-Quds to forcibly relocate 28 Palestinian families in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood and the heinous attacks against the residents of Bab al-Amoud neighborhood and the aggressive and provocative attacks on Al-Aqsa Mosque, and the suppression of its believers are a crime and dangerous action which nobody must keep silent or must not leave it behind without a strong reaction to stop the occupying regime and its leaders from continuing crimes against Quds and Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Palestinian people, especially the decision of the occupying Israeli settlers to attack Al-Aqsa Mosque during the 28th month of Ramadan with the coordination of Jewish groups and army support.

These days, in the holy month of Ramadan, the month of solidarity, cooperation, and victory, we extend this message to your Excellency, and we all believe and hope that the



Islamic Ummah- that will be united like a stronghold which has always been paving the way for victory in Quds and defending the sanctities - to support the Palestinian people in Quds and Al-Aqsa Mosque to confront the crimes of the Zionist occupiers and to stop the occupying settlers from continuing the aggression and to support the resistance and endurance of the residents of Al-Quds and the guardians of Al-Aqsa Mosque.

The Palestinian people in occupied Quds, which has been occupied for more than 50 years, and has taken the path of resistance and patience to defend the land and sanctities of Palestine on behalf of the Islamic and Arab Ummah, will never halt continuing this path to victory, returning to this land and forming the independent state of Palestine with Holy Quds as its capital.

Iran expresses abhorrence over terrorist attack against students in Afghanistan

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Various officials at the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs have expressed condolences over the tragic Saturday explosion near a girl high school in Kabul.

Mohammad Javad Zarif, the Iranian Foreign Minister, expressed his condolences with the Afghan nation, tweeting, “We mourn the innocent and fasting girls who were the oppressed victims of ISIS takfiris; The Takfiris who showed that they are alien to Islam and humanity.”

It is time for all those who have a heart for Islam and Afghanistan to end the fratricide and unite the arena against the stateless ISIS.”

Iran’s Foreign Ministry Spokesman, Saeed



Khatibzadeh, also condemned the act of terrorism in western Kabul, expressing his disgust at the act of terrorism which targeted ordinary people, particularly students.

He also offered condolences to the relatives of the victims, and wished recovery for those injured in the terrorist attack.

Mohammad Ebrahim Taherian, Iran’s special envoy for Afghanistan, also strongly condemned the brutal terrorist attack and condoled with the Afghan government and nation over the tragic accident.

Taherian described the attack as “very tragic and sorrowful.”

The diplomat expressed hope that war and violence in Afghanistan will soon come to an end, so that the Muslim community and Afghan people will not see such catastrophes and incidents in the holy month of Ramadan.

He said that the only way to achieve peace

and stability in Afghanistan is for all Afghan groups to work together.

He went on to say that Iran has always tried to create a national consensus in Afghanistan in order to help establish understanding, maintain successes, and encourage progress.

At least 50 people have been killed and more than 100 others wounded in an explosion near the high school for girls in the Afghan capital Kabul, officials said Sunday.

The explosion was caused by a car bomb followed by two IED explosions, Interior Ministry spokesman Tariq Ariani said Sunday.

In a message to the media, Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mojahid denied involvement in the explosion.

SPORTS

Sports minister Soltanifar slams U.S. sanctions against Iran

→1 They cannot pay financial assistance as operating funds or money prize to the Iranian teams due to the international sanctions and Iran's place on the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) blacklist.

The country's minister of sports said that he had negotiations with the presidents of both FIFA and the AFC, Gianni Infantino and Sheik Salman, respectively, to solve the problems. However, they have not fulfilled their promises.

"Before the final match of the 2020 ACL, I spoke with the presidents of FIFA and the AFC, and there have been several correspondences so far. They promised to address the issue, but we have not seen the slightest practical steps or actions toward solving the problems," Soltanifar added.

Soltanifar called the imposed sanctions on Iran are "unfair and cruel." He asked FIFA and other sports' international governing bodies to review the conditions of Iranian federations and give them the financial resources that legally belong to the Iranian teams or federations.

Nemati nominated for IPC Athletes' Council elections

SPORTS TEHRAN — Archer Zahra Nemati - a two-time Paralympic champion - has been nominated for the IPC Athletes' Council elections at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games.



Nemati became the first Iranian woman to win gold at either a Paralympic or Olympic Games at 2012 Paralympic Games.

The International Paralympic Committee (IPC) has announced that athletes from every continent for the elections. A record-equaling 22 athletes have been accepted as candidates to fill the six summer representative positions.

The IPC Athletes' Council is a group of elected athlete representatives who act as the voice of the Para athlete community to the IPC. The chairperson of the IPC Athletes' Council is also one of the members of the IPC Governing Board.

The IPC Athletes' Council elections will take place from 19 August to 3 September during the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games in the Proud Paralympian area in the Main Dining Hall.

The IPC Electoral Commission will be chaired by Mark Copeland, chairperson of the IPC Legal and Ethics Committee.

The Athletes' Council acts as the liaison between athletes and decision-makers and influences how Paralympic sport and the Movement grow and develop.

All candidates are active Paralympic athletes. This means he or she must compete in the current edition of the Paralympic Games at which the election is taking place, or have competed in either of the previous two editions of the Paralympic Games (London 2012 and Rio 2016). There were a record 22 candidates for the IPC Athletes' Council elections in Rio 2016.

Wushu athlete Mansourian undergoes surgery

SPORTS TEHRAN — Five-time wushu world champion, Shahrbanoo Mansourian, underwent surgery after her bowels had become twisted and blocked.

Mansourian's sister, Elaheh, says that the surgery has been successful and she will discharge from hospital after she becomes stable in the coming days.

Shahrbanoo had traveled to Thailand to participate in a competition but was forced to hospitalize in Bangkok. She returned to Iran to undergo surgery in Tehran," she said.

Shahrbanoo Mansourian must be out of training and competing for two months.

Iran to open FIBA U19 Basketball World Cup with Serbia

SPORTS TEHRAN — Iran will play Serbia at the 2021 FIBA U19 Basketball World Cup opener.

The tournament will be hosted in Riga and Daugavpils, Latvia from July 3 to 11, 2021.

Iran have been pitted against Latvia, Puerto Rico and Serbia in Group B.

Eight different countries have won the FIBA U-19 Basketball World Cup since its inception in 1979, with the reigning champion USA leading the field with seven titles. The USA won the FIBA U-19 Basketball World Cup 2019 in Crete, Greece, after defeating Mali in the Final.

Fixtures:

July 3: Iran v Serbia

July 4: Latvia v Iran

July 6: Iran v Puerto Rico

Shiraz to host J4 Tennis Tournament

SPORTS TEHRAN — International Tennis Federation's J4 tournament will be held in Shiraz, Iran from May 17 to 22.

The J4 Shiraz Tournament 2021 will bring a total of 93 tennis players from 12 countries together.

The tennis players from Iran, Turkey, France, Russia, Romania, the U.S., Denmark, England, Germany and Slovakia will participate in the boys' division.

In the girls' division, tennis players from Iran, Russia, Turkey, Italy and Belgium will compete together.

Iranian umpire Adel Borghei will officiate the competition.

Israeli hubris par excellence

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Israel's new round of crackdown against the defenseless people of occupied East Jerusalem has left hundreds of Jerusalemites injured in the latest effort by Israeli authorities to steal the house of Palestinians.

Once again Israel showed its true colors to the world: An occupying regime that is hubristically ignoring international rules by suppressing the Palestinian people in a bid to appropriate their own houses.

Israel doubled down on its restrictive measures against the Palestinian residents of Jerusalem (al-Quds) since the early days of the holy month of Ramadan when far-right extremist Jews, backed by the police, prevented Palestinians from practicing their faith in a clear violation of human rights. While Palestinians were barred from staging Ramadan public gatherings, extremist Jews freely roamed the streets of Jerusalem chanting racist slogans such as "death to Arabs," something that enraged the Palestinians and provoked them to backlash.

Facing an increasingly violent Israeli crackdown, Palestinians peacefully staged protests against Israeli atrocities. They turned in large numbers in the al-Aqsa mosque. Some 90,000 Palestinians participated in a Ramadan prayer called Tarawih in the al-Aqsa mosque in what appeared to be a message to Israeli authorities that the Palestinians will not acquiesce in Israeli measures.

Sheikh Akrima Sabry, the imam of the mosque, warned that Israeli authorities are trying to pave the way for extremist Israelis to break into the mosque, underlining that the Palestinians will not allow such an atrocity to take place.

"We will remain in al-Quds, and we will not accept any harm to the sanctities of the Holy Mosque," he said. The Palestinian Minister of al-Quds Affairs also condemned Israeli violence against peaceful protesters.

He pointed out that "the use of excessive force against the worshipers requires a decisive stand by the international community."

Israel also launched a campaign of arrests among Jerusalemites, especially the freed prisoners, in a continuation of the escalation



of its attacks against Palestinians. But this campaign failed to intimidate Palestinians, who now fight to protect their houses in the face of a renewed desire by Israelis to steal the houses of Palestinians. Following Sunday dawn prayer, violent confrontations erupted between worshipers and Israeli forces leading to many injuries among the citizens. Israeli officers on horseback and in riot gear fired stun grenades and water cannon against Palestinians.

Israel is planning to expel a number of Palestinian families from their ancestral homes on land claimed by illegal Jewish settlers in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of East Jerusalem. Israel's Supreme Court is expected to decide on the fate of dozens of Palestinians who are fighting attempts by Israeli settlers to evict them from their homes in the neighbourhood.

The neighbourhood has been the scene of regular confrontations, particularly during Ramadan, between Palestinian residents and their supporters on one side, and Israeli police and Jewish settlers on the other.

Israeli authorities also plan to launch marches in al-Quds to commemorate what Israelis call Jerusalem Day. Many Israelis mark the day East Jerusalem was occupied in 1967 — and later annexed by Israel — with

marches throughout Jerusalem each year. About 30,000 Jewish settlers are expected to participate in a march towards Damascus Gate in the Old City on Monday, according to Al Jazeera.

This march is expected to further inflame tensions in Jerusalem as it can provoke pushback by Palestinians who are fed up with Israel's racist policies. Amos Gilad, a former senior military official, told Army Radio the parade should be canceled or rerouted away from the Old City's Damascus Gate, saying "the powder keg is burning and can explode at any time," according to Al Jazeera.

In light of these developments, Ismail Haniyeh, chairman of the Hamas Political Bureau, sent a letter to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution of Iran Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei appreciating Iran's support for Palestine and demanding a unified Muslim stance against Israeli atrocities in Palestine.

On Friday, the Leader delivered a speech on Palestine and condemned Israeli crimes against Palestinians.

"The issue of Palestine continues to be the most important and active issue for the Islamic Ummah collectively. The policies of the oppressive and cruel capitalism have driven a people out of their homes, their

homeland and their ancestral roots, and instead, it has installed a terrorist regime and has housed a foreign people therein," Ayatollah Khamenei said.

Meanwhile, Israeli is holding its largest-ever military drills simulating an all-out war on all fronts. Israeli media reported that the Israeli army has begun to conduct the largest military exercises in its history, which simulates a month of all-out war on all fronts from north to south.

Aviv Kochavi, chief of staff of Israel's armed forces, decided not to delay or postpone these drills due to tensions in Jerusalem.

Seyed Hassan Nasrallah, secretary general of the Lebanese Hezbollah movement, pointed to these drills in his latest speech, which was delivered on the occasion of International Quds Day.

"Special sources" told Lebanese El-Nashra news website that these drills are very dangerous because they simulate "a major war imposed on Israel on the southern and northern borders of Palestine with the Sinai front and the home front, in addition to Israel being exposed to a huge number of rockets being fired by the resistance forces."

These sources also warned that these drills may indicate an Israeli desire to wage a war. "Hezbollah warned against these drills because Israel worked during past wars to take soldiers and personnel from the training camps directly to the field, and this is what is happening now at the southern front of Lebanon and the north of Palestine," the sources said.

They also said that Hezbollah has put its troops on the highest alert level since 2006 out of concern that Israel may wage war. Independent analysts also warned that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, facing internal security and political chaos, could resort to war to deflect attention away from his mismanagement. "It's not unlikely that the defeated, isolated Netanyahu, who may spend his last years behind bars, will make the biggest mistake of his life and go to a big or small war," wrote Abdel Bari Atwan, editor-in-chief of Raialyoum, in a recent editorial.

Iran will extend deal with IAEA if needed, top negotiator says

POLITICAL TEHRAN — A top Iranian nuclear negotiator leading Iran's negotiating team at the Vienna nuclear deal talks said Iran will extend a monitoring access deal with the UN nuclear watchdog if needed.

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi told Japanese broadcaster NHK that Iran hopes enough progress will be made so that there will be no need for an extension. But he said that if needed, Iran will consider an extension at a proper time.

The Iranian negotiator was referring to a February deal between Iran and the IAEA which allowed the latter to continue its monitoring access to Iranian nuclear sites ahead of the implementation of a parliamentary nuclear law obligating the Iranian government to strictly restrict cooperation with the IAEA in case the West failed to lift sanctions.

The deal was reached during a two-day visit by IAEA Director-General Mariano Grossi to Iran. During the visit, Grossi met with Ali Akbar Salehi, head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), and Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif.

"Intensive consultations led to a good result. A temporary technical understanding has been reached. The IAEA will continue its necessary verification and monitoring in Iran," the UN nuclear watchdog chief said in a tweet following his visit to Iran.

The IAEA and the AEOI issued a joint statement outlining the content of the understanding moments after Grossi concluded his visit to Iran.

"The Atomic Energy Organization of Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency recalled and reaffirmed the spirit of cooperation and enhanced mutual trust that led to the Joint Statement in Tehran on 26 August 2020, and the importance of continuing that cooperation and trust," the statement said. "The AEOI informed the IAEA that in order to comply with the act passed by the Parliament of the Islamic Republic of Iran called 'Strategic Action to Cease Actions and Protect the interest



of Iranian Nation' Iran will stop the implementation of the voluntary measures as envisaged in the JCPOA, as of 23 February 2021."

The statement added, "In view of the above and in order for the Agency to continue its verification and monitoring activities, the AEOI and the IAEA agreed: 1. That Iran continues to implement fully and without limitation its Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement with the IAEA as before. 2. To a temporary bilateral technical understanding, compatible with the Law, whereby the IAEA will continue with its necessary verification and monitoring activities for up to 3 months (as per technical annex). 3. To keep the technical understanding under regular review to ensure it continues to achieve its purposes."

The deal was reached only two days before Iran starts the implementation of the nuclear law.

The parliamentary law stipulates that the Iranian government should take certain nuclear measures such as raising the level of uranium enrichment to 20% and suspending the voluntary implementation of the Additional Protocol if the Western parties failed to honor their obligations under the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, formally called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

As the Vienna nuclear talks moved ahead, there has

been speculation that the IAEA may need to discuss the extension of the February deal if no progress is made in the Vienna talks. Last week, Araghchi met with Grossi in the midst of the JCPOA talks.

"DFM @araghchi met @rafaelmgrossi today before the JCPOA JC meeting. Two sides discussed the latest developments on JCPOA revival talks and the role of the @iaeaorg as well as mutually interested issues between Iran and the Agency," Kazem Gharibabadi, Iran's permanent representative to the UN in Vienna, said of the meeting.

But Gharibabadi did not say if Araghchi and Grossi discussed the issue of extending the February deal. Araghchi and Grossi provided no details about their meeting.

Iran and the remaining parties to the 2015 nuclear deal held another meeting on Friday to discuss the latest developments concerning the nuclear deal. During the meeting, participants agreed to expedite talks and start working on a draft text of the final agreement to revive the nuclear deal. The Friday meeting marked the start of the fourth round of nuclear talks, which took place in the Austrian capital of Vienna within the framework of the JCPOA Joint Commission.

Araghchi issued a brief statement shortly after the JCPOA Joint Commission saying that during the meeting "it was decided to start expert and technical consultations and work on the draft texts immediately."

The statement added, "All parties reaffirmed their seriousness to achieve the result in the shortest possible time."

The Friday meeting also opened a new round of talks, according to Mikhail Ulyanov, who serves as the head of the Russian delegation to the Vienna talks.

"The Joint Commission of JCPOA at its meeting today opened a new round of the talks on full restoration of the nuclear deal. The participants agreed on the need to intensify the process. The delegations seem to be ready to stay in Vienna as long as necessary to achieve the goal," Ulyanov said on Twitter.

Zarif calls on U.S. to end JCPOA lawlessness

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Saturday called on the United States to end its lawlessness by rejoining a 2015 nuclear deal abandoned by former President Donald Trump on May 8, 2018.

Zarif recalled how the controversy over the nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), started in the first place. The foreign minister called Trump a "buffoon" who reneged on U.S. obligations under the nuclear deal.

"As we try to revive JCPOA in Vienna, it's necessary to remember how it all started. 3 years ago today, a disgraced buffoon violated US obligations under JCPOA & UNSCR 2231. Today, @POTUS has to decide whether U.S. continues lawlessness or adheres to law. Onus is on U.S., not Iran," the chief Iranian diplomat said on Twitter.

The comments came amid a new round

of nuclear talks in Vienna between Iran and the remaining parties to the JCPOA. The talks began in April and entered a new stage on Friday when the fourth round kicked off. The latest meeting of the JCPOA Joint Commission was held on Friday.

Iran and its negotiating partners in Vienna said progress was made in the talks but they have not yet reached a conclusive understanding about how to revive the JCPOA.

Meanwhile, a senior Iranian lawmaker warned on Saturday that Iran will restrict cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency if no progress is made by May 24 when a temporary deal between Iran and the IAEA on monitoring access is expected to expire.

The lawmaker, Mojtaba Zolnouri, who is the head of the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, said the nuclear talks in Vienna have so far failed to produce a concrete result and



they have become "draining."

"We hope that the lock of negotiations will be broken and the path will continue quickly," the lawmaker said. But at the same time, he warned, if this lock is not broken by May 24, Iran will implement a parliamentary nuclear law obligating the Iranian government to rapidly increase nuclear activities and restrict the International Atomic Energy Agency's access to Iranian nuclear facilities.

The nuclear law, officially called "Strategic Action to Lift Sanctions and Protect

the Nation's Rights," outlines a step-by-step strategy for Iran to increase nuclear activities in case the West failed to honor its obligations under the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

"If this lock is not broken, according to the strategic law for lifting sanctions, the opportunity for the West to fulfill its obligations will end on May 24, and the Islamic Republic of Iran will take action in accordance with this law," Zolnouri told Tasnim.

He said the first thing Iran will do in case the Vienna talks failed is the non-implementation of the Additional Protocol to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

At present, the offline agency cameras are operating in our country's nuclear facilities. If the negotiations are unlocked by May 24, the Agency can access the content of these cameras," Zolnouri pointed out. "If the negotiations are not concluded by May 24, the content of the cameras will be deleted and the cameras will be turned off."

Nearly 10,000 national housing units ready to be handed over to applicants

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran's deputy transport and urban development minister announced that nearly 10,000 national housing units are ready to be handed over to the applicants.

Mahmoud Mahmoudzadeh also said, "We at the Ministry of Transport and Urban Development are looking to implement the national housing action plan on a larger scale."

As reported last week, the ministry has provided Housing Foundation of the Islamic Revolution with land for the construction of 81,000 housing units under the framework of the mentioned plan.

According to Transport and Urban Development Minister Mohammad Eslami, the Housing Foundation of the Islamic Revolution is going to construct 100,000 housing unit under the mentioned plan of which so far, the land for 81,000 units has been provided.

The official noted that so far 56,000 applicants have registered with the foundation to receive the mentioned housing units.

The National Housing Action Plan aims to construct 400,000 small and medium-size apartments (70-100 square meters in size) across the country and particularly in Tehran, where housing prices have risen most sharply.



Nearly half of the total number of the said houses will be constructed in Tehran's suburban "new towns" such as Parand and Pardis, respectively located in the west and east of the city.

Back in March Eslami had announced that 510,000 residential units will be provided for the applicants under the framework of the National Housing Action Plan during the coming months.

Earlier that month Mahmoudzadeh had said that the construction costs for the National Housing Action Plan are set based on the current year's construction material price list and haven't changed.

The official made the remarks in response to some rumors about the rise in the prices of such housing units as a result of the increase in construction costs.

40 idle mines revived in South Khorasan province in a year

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — As announced by a provincial official, 40 idle mines were revived in South Khorasan province, in the east of Iran, during the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20).

Abbas Jorjani, the head of the province's Industry, Mining, and Trade Department, said that during the last six years, mines in South Khorasan province have been stagnant, inactive or semi-active for various reasons, and with the follow-ups done since last year, 40 mines have returned to the production cycle.

He said that several meetings have been held with the presence of exploiters for this purpose, adding that the mines activated by these exploiters are coal, copper, gold, granite, travertine, bentonite, and other mineral mines.

South Khorasan has a lot of potential in the field of mines and mining industries, and the proper use of these capacities can play an important role in developing employment, creating added value and generating income for the province, the official further noted.

The head of Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) has announced that 253 idle small-scale mines were revived throughout the country in the previous Iranian calendar year.

According to Vajihollah Jafari, the plan for reviving idle mines in the previous year was realized by 126 percent.

Saying that the mentioned mines have been reactivated as part of a comprehensive program for reviving idle small mines across the country, Jafari also announced that under the framework of the mentioned program 200 mines are planned to be put back into operation in the current year.



The official noted that the successful implementation of the said program in the previous year was achieved despite the problems created by the outbreak of coronavirus.

Emphasizing that the above goals have been achieved as a result of productive cooperation among the Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry, provincial industry organizations, Iran Mines houses, and private sector companies, Jafari noted that since the beginning of the program in March 2019 up to the end of the previous year, 303 mines have been revived.

As reported, under the framework of the mentioned program, 672 idle mines were identified and prioritized in the previous year, and diagnostic procedures were performed on 194 mines to determine the reasons for the halt in their production.

The program, which has been at the forefront of IMIDRO's missions over the past two years, is being pursued in several provinces. Khodadad Gharibpour, IMIDRO's former head had mentioned this plan as one of the most significant plans of "Resistance Economy", saying that IMIDRO is strongly determined to carry out it.

Reviving the small mines not only is a major step for supporting and boosting domestic production, it also plays a significant role in job creation throughout the country, Gharibpour said back in June 2020.

Following this program, so far various small-scale mines including chromite, manganese, hematite, and dolomite, iron ore, copper, and construction stone mines have been surveyed by monitoring and diagnosing the problems of the mines and providing solutions for resolving their issues.

Iran ranks 1st among West Asia's top electricity producers

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Deputy Head of Iran Electricity Industry Syndicate said Iran is currently the region's top country in terms of power generation with over 85 gigawatts of installed capacity, IRNA reported.

Payam Baqeri said the electricity industry is a productive and strategic industry which is considered infrastructure for many other sectors and is a prerequisite for their development.

In this regard Iran is considered one of the most advanced countries in the region in terms of electricity industry, he said.

According to Baqeri, the electricity industry also has great potentials for exports due to its good capacities and domestic production of almost all the equipment needed in this industry.

The official noted that the country's electricity industry has not been able to grow in proportion to its potentials and capacities over the past few years due to some problems and obstacles.

He further mentioned the current Iranian calendar year's (started on March



21) motto which is "Production: Support and Elimination of Obstacles" and said: "this approach can create a great driving force for this industry and help it reach its

development targets."

The Islamic Republic's total power generation capacity currently stands at about 85,500 gigawatts most of which is supplied

Over 130,000 public transport vehicles to become dual-fuel

→ 1 Some 16,400 of the approved vehicles have been introduced to designated centers and are currently in line to be converted and 15,500 are also in line to be introduced to the mentioned centers, the official said.

Baqeri further noted that six contractors have been selected for converting the mentioned vehicles, and to this end, 279 centers have been equipped across the country.

The official also announced the preparation for turning 200,000 vehicles active in car agencies and internet taxi platforms into dual-fuel cars.

Since the implementation of a program for rationing

subsidized gasoline and increasing fuel prices in November 2019, CNG consumption has been rising in the country.

Iran's CNG consumption which stood at 19 million cubic meters (mcm) per day before the implementation of the fuel rationing scheme, has now reached 21 mcm.

There are currently 2,400 CNG stations across Iran that supply 22 percent of the country's fuel basket.

Iranian Oil Ministry considers CNG as the national fuel, therefore, to increase the share of this fuel in the country's energy basket, it was planned to turn public vehicles into dual-fuel cars, which can increase CNG consumption by 10 mcm per day.



SATKAB paving way for Iranian power companies to enter Eurasia market

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iranian Electrical Power Equipment Manufacturing and Provision Company (known as SATKAB) is taking necessary measures for facilitating the presence of Iranian companies active in the power sector in Eurasian markets.

According to SATKAB's Director-General for Commercial Affairs Abbas Jafari, the company is trying to identify capable companies active in the water and electricity industry to help them reach international standards and support them to enter the target markets.

In this regard, Russia and Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) member countries are of particular importance for us,



"the official said.

Referring to the desirable capabilities of Iran's water and electricity industry, Jafari stressed the importance of supporting domes-

tic companies' presence in foreign markets and noted: "By identifying and introducing companies that have desirable quantitative and qualitative capacities, SATKAB seeks to develop and maintain their presence in target markets to create more employment and bring more income to the country."

He mentioned consulting, business, banking, customs, and marketing as the fields in which supportive measures have been taken by SATKAB to increase the presence of Iranian companies active in the water and electricity industry in foreign markets.

Jafari further underlined holding international exhibitions as an opportunity for the promotion of companies active in various fields, including water and electricity indus-

tries, and continued: "Holding the first Eurasia International Exhibition in Tehran is one of the opportunities that knowledge-based companies and startups in the water and electricity industry can use to maximize their presence in such countries."

The exclusive exhibition of Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) member states' economic capabilities is planned to be held in Tehran on May 17.

Iran is a very important market in the region and the development of ties with this country is of high significance for the EAEU members.

The free trade agreement between Iran and this union has laid the ground for the expansion of trade ties between the two sides.

94 development projects to be inaugurated in free trade, special economic zones

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Some 94 development projects worth 60 trillion rials (about \$1.42 billion) are going to be put into operation in Iran's free trade and special economic zones on Thursday, the Secretary of Iranian Free Zones High Council Hamidreza Mo'meni announced.

According to Mo'meni, as the fourth series of inaugurations in the country's free trade and special economic zones, the mentioned projects are going to be inaugurated by President Hassan Rouhani in an online ceremony.

Covering a variety of fields including tourism, oil and gas, industry, production, renewable energies, and power plants, fisheries, and agriculture, the mentioned projects will be put into operation in Qeshm, Chabahar, Aras, Arvand, Salafchegan, and Payam zones, the official said.

The official noted that in the previous three rounds of



inaugurations in the country's free and special economic zones, 163 projects with a total investment of 340 trillion rials (about \$8.095 billion) have been inaugurated.

Over 600,000 tons of commodities traded at IME in a week

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — During the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday), 617,484 tons of commodities worth \$408 million was traded at Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME).

As reported by the IME's Public Relations and International Affairs Department, the exchange traded on its mineral and industrial trading floor, 302,541 tons of commodities worth more than \$237 million.

Products sold on this floor included 248,631 tons of steel, 1,320 tons of copper, 2,470 tons of aluminum, 120 tons of molybdenum concentrate and 50,000 tons of iron ore concentrate.

The next trading floor was the IME's oil and petrochemical with 313,650 tons of commodities traded on its both domestic and export pits valued at more than \$169 million.

On this floor the IME saw trades of 112,500 tons of vacuum bottom, 97,695 tons of bitumen, 41,578 tons of polymeric products, 32,485 tons of chemicals, 33,000 tons of lube cut, 3,000 tons of base oil, 100 tons of argon and 1,250 tons of sulfur.

Also, the exchange traded 1,292 tons of commodities on its side market.

As previously reported, the value of commodities traded at Iran Mercantile Exchange rose 54 percent during the past Iranian calendar month (March 21-April 20), compared to the same month in the past year.

The exchange's Public Relations and International Affairs Department reported that 2.7 million tons of commodities worth \$1.5 billion were traded at the exchange in the past month, showing also a 350-percent growth in terms of weight as compared to the same month of the previous year.

On its metal and mineral trading floor, the exchange traded within that month 1.421 million tons of commodities worth more than \$790 million.

Commodities purchased were 1.097 million tons of steel, 11,780 tons of copper, 360 tons of molybdenum concentrate, 11,325 tons of aluminum, 400 tons of coke, 300,000 tons of iron ore, 200 tons of cast iron and 100 tons of lead.

Oil and petrochemical was the next trad-

ing floor on which the IME saw trades of more than 1.318 million tons of various types of commodities in both its domestic and export rings with a trading value of more than \$700 million.

On this floor the IME traded 354,567 tons of bitumen, 237,258 tons of polymeric products, 124,668 tons of chemicals, 12,446 tons of base oil and 460,100 tons of vacuum bottom.

There were also 10,040 tons of sulfur, 310 tons of argon, 500 tons of insulation rolls and 111,200 tons of lube cut traded on the same floor.

Moreover, on its agricultural trading floor the IME saw trade of 2,500 kg of saffron.

The last trading floor was the IME's side market with 3,754 tons of commodities - not listed on the exchange's main spot market - sold on it.

The value of trades at Iran Mercantile Exchange in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20) rose 108 percent compared to the preceding year.

During the past year, about 3.5 quadrillion rials (about \$83.5 billion) worth of



commodities were traded at the mentioned market.

In the past year, several new records were achieved in terms of the volume and value of transactions in the mentioned market's various floors including the industrial, petroleum, and petrochemical floors.

IME is one of the four major stock markets of Iran, the other three markets are Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market known also as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), and Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX).

This Zionist apartheid regime: An outlawed state and an international terrorist military base

➔ 1 Since the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan, the escalation of Palestinian's peaceful resistance in Jerusalem of the Zionist criminal regime and its extreme right-wing government, which is actually sponsoring financially and military the terrorist settlement associations and companies in their constant attempts to change the demographical content of the holy city shows the real nature of this fabricated colonial apartheid regime bluntly.

Unfortunately, and despite the excessive Zionist aggression measures against the Palestinians in the aftermath of the Oslo agreement such as demolition of houses, persecution of the people, expropriation of lands, random incarceration of civilians, ethnically cleansing of occupied Jerusalem, continuous seizure of Gaza, the normalization trend of some Persian Gulf states is endangering Jerusalem and the Palestinian cause and encouraging the Zionist settlers to continue their colonization process of the holy Jerusalem.

The United Arab Emirates has been investing billions of dollars through local collaborators to broker sales of land and property inside the old city and in the surrounding neighborhoods of Shaikh Jarrah, Albustan and Batn Alhawa by forged deeds.

As millions of Palestinians were expelled from their villages and cities and took refuge in 58 refugee camps, including 28 in the West Bank, Jerusalem and Gaza, while the rest of the camps were distributed in neighboring countries, Palestinians in the Shaikh Jarrah neighborhood of Jerusalem who have been forcefully displaced from their homes in Jafa and Haifa which was occupied in 1948 are enduring another tragedy (Nakba) at the hands of zealous Zionist settlers' companies who falsely claim ownership of Palestinian houses.

The United Nations Relief and Welfare Agency (UNRWA) have declared on April 7, 2021, in a letter to Palestinian residents of Shaikh Jarrah that the Hashemite Kingdome of Jordan and UNRWA have entered into an agreement on November 16, 1954, for the construction of housing units



in Shaikh Jarrah with an objective to lease twenty-eight units to twenty-eight Palestinian refugee families for a nominal rent for three years, after which the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan would transfer the ownership of the property to the families.

Since the 1970s, this agreement has been subjected to constant violation by the settlers' association, who intentionally manipulated the Palestinian owners in order to expel them from their homes. The "Israeli" High Court, which is part of a racist judiciary system, has lately released a court order to evacuate the Palestinian residents based on false claims and forged deeds.

On May 7, 2021, the case was sent to the "Israeli" High Court after both parties; the Palestinian attorneys representing the Palestinian owners of the land and estate

from one side and the Nehlat Shimon International, a settler organization that falsely claim ownership to the land, from the other side, failed to reach an agreement.

The status of Shiakh Jarrah residents, as well as millions of Palestinian refugees inside and outside Palestine, has remained conditional on the implementation of the UN Right of Return Resolution 194 to return to their homes and properties, which they were forced to leave in 1948.

It is ironic but not surprising that hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who have been living in Jerusalem for centuries are not recognized as citizens of their own country; rather they are called residents, contrary to "Jews" with different nationalities which are entitled to be citizens of the same country based on their religion.

Thus, the behavior and procedures of this extreme right-wing government and the leaders of the ultra-Zionist parties in Jerusalem and Al Aqsa mosque is pushing the radical settlers to ignite a religious war against the indigenous Palestinian people of the holy city under false pretext and superstitious myth that God promised them the holy land of Palestine, while we know for a fact that most Zionist leaders are non-believers.

This Zionist apartheid regime is an outlawed state is considered as an international imperial military base that is continuously violating the resolutions of the UN Security Council, the UN General Assembly, international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention and human rights, and causes an imminent threat not only to Palestinians but also to regional and global peace, security, and stability of humanity. This fake colonial regime must be dismantled.

Dr. Amal Wahdan is the founder and editor of the Arab Gazette. She has also served as director of Shaikh Hasan Foundation for Culture and Science, which aims to preserve and protect the Palestinian cultural and historic heritage in the wake of the pressure exerted by years of occupation. Moreover, Amal has been a permanent member of the Palestinian Coalition for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Those Arabs who might be discontented with realtions with Israel won't dare to express their opinions: professor

By Mohammad Javdan

Sasan Fayazmanesh, a professor of economics and the director of the Middle East (West Asia) studies Program in California State University, believes that just like Israel, many Arab regimes are also the creatures of western imperialism and it's not hard to expect that such countries become close to each other.

"The close relations between Israel and some Arab countries, such as UAE and Saudi Arabia, have been in existence for a long time. It is only lately that these relations are coming into the open and being formalized [...] those who might be opposed to such relations will not dare to express their opinions, given the repercussion that they might face", Fayazmanesh tells in an interview with the Tehran Times.

Calling Israel "an apartheid regime", Fayazmanesh hopes progressive Jewish and Palestinian groups outside the Palestine would be successful in taking effective political actions against it, such as advocating Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions.

Following is the full text of the interview: **Today, more than 70 years after Israel's occupation of Palestine, the Islamic world has yet to take concrete steps to fight this occupation. What are the reasons for this, as well as the Islamic world's divergence toward Israel?**

I am afraid to say that I do not see colonialism through the lens of religion. Thus, for example, I do not see the European invasion of the New World, and the genocidal wars against the native population, as an extension of Christianity, even though Christianity was used as an excuse to colonize the Ameri-

cas. Similarly, I don't see the occupation of Palestine as an extension of Judaism, and the resistance to it as an extension of Islam. Judaism as a religion was used to concoct a colonial ideology called Zionism to occupy Palestine. And most Palestinians, but not all, happen to be Muslims; but that is not why they were colonized. How and why they were colonized requires looking at the history of Zionism, which is beyond this interview. Moreover, I do not believe that the abstract notion of "Islamic world" would render itself useful to this analysis. A Muslim living in Indonesia is not the same as one residing in Iran, Kenya or Saudi Arabia. The attitude of all these people, even within a country such as Iran, toward the plight of the Palestinians differs. Thus, it would be meaningless to talk about the Islamic world's response to the occupation of Palestine and expect a uniform reaction.

We have seen in recent years that some Arab countries have been lenient with Israel. What is the reason for this closeness?

Many Arab regimes, particularly those around the Persian Gulf, are themselves creatures of Western imperialism and their survival depends on the support of American and European powers. Israel is also a creature of such powers. It is therefore not too hard to expect that such countries become close to each other, particularly when their interests coincide.

The normalization of relations between certain Arab countries and Israel is regarded as a critical and problem in the Islamic world today. What is the explanation for this normalization at

a time when Israelis are putting the most pressure on Palestinians and violating their rights?

As mentioned above, the interests of Arab regimes and Israel are becoming more and more aligned. One reason for this alignment, of course, is that they see Iran and its relationship with such groups as Hezbollah, Hamas and the Houthis as common threats.

The normalization of relations between certain Arab rulers in the region and Israel is happening despite the disagreements in public opinion and Muslim communities. How can the rulers of the countries that follow this practice justify their public opinion?

Unfortunately, many countries with mostly Muslim population are dictatorial and it is hard to gauge their public opinion. So, we do not know much about the way that most of the people in these countries think. Some are probably concerned with the plight of the Palestinians and oppose the congenial relations that their rulers have developed with the apartheid regime in Palestine. But given dictatorial rulers, they cannot express their opinions.

What will be the long-term impact of normalizing relations with Israel on public opinion and their relationship with their rulers for the region?

The close relations between Israel and some Arab countries, such as UAE and Saudi Arabia, have been in existence for a long time. It is only lately that these relations are coming into the open and being formalized. I am certain that most people in such countries have known about the existence of these relations. Formalizing them will make



very little difference as far as the public is concerned. As mentioned above, even those who might be opposed to such relations will not dare to express their opinions, given the repercussion that they might face.

I am left with little hope for the future of Palestine. Beside the emergence of a more effective, intelligent and capable Palestinian leadership, I hope various groups in the West, led by progressive Jewish and Palestinian people, will be successful in advancing political awareness about the nature of the apartheid regime and in taking effective political actions against it, such as advocating Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions.

Many Arab regimes, particularly those around the Persian Gulf, are themselves creatures of Western imperialism and their survival depends on the support of American and European powers. Israel is also a creature of such powers. It is therefore not too hard to expect that such countries become close to each other

What makes the Palestinian catastrophe incomparable to any crime that has occurred for humanity?

By Batoul Sbeity

Why is Palestine considered the core issue when it comes to human justice, such that Al-Quds Day- a day to raise awareness about the plight of all oppressed groups is done in the name and the sanctity of Al-Aqsa?

1) The perpetrating entities of the oppression: The formation of Israel was a settler-colonial conspiracy project- the biggest of its kind in history that was founded by the hegemonic global ruling system solely to serve their interest.

The reality is that the Zionists were hunters for sources of power in the world that could actualize their vision of a Jewish homeland, and wherever the imperialists place the Zionists, they will follow.

During the beginning of the 20th century, imperial Britain was adamant about creating for itself an extension in the land of Palestine, which was specifically chosen due to the benefits of the strategic location and the history of the land that could be used as a justifying pretext to the world.

The Zionists and their imperial masters weaponized the anti-semitism that existed within sections of the people and activated this into a slogan that was used to justify the containment of settler Jews in Palestine whilst blackmailing those resisting the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians into accepting this new reality.

The U.S.S.R was the first government to recognize the illegitimate establishment of Israel and sent a large number of settler Jews there, whilst the U.S. took over Britain's role after rising to power in post-WWII, providing the bulk of financial, political, security and military support to the

occupying state- to the extent that its existence is purely dependent and linked to the U.S.

Israel's functional role is to act as a stick for the world superpower, namely the U.S., used in order to punish other entities in the region that fail to obey U.S. orders and for them to maintain a direct presence at the heart of the strategic Middle East (West Asia).

2) The nature of the oppression:

Israel is the only settler-colonial state existing today. This means the existence of the occupying Israeli settlers is predicated on the forced and violent removal of the land's indigenous inhabitants prior to 1948.

During the 1948 Nakba, Israeli forces killed an estimated 13,000 Palestinians and forcibly evicted 700,000-1 million Palestinians from their homes and land. Five hundred and thirty-one (50%) of Palestinian villages were entirely depopulated and destroyed.

The Nakba continues today. Palestinians are the largest and longest-suffering group of refugees in the world. One in three refugees worldwide is Palestinian and over 60% are registered for humanitarian assistance with the UN.

Within occupied Palestine, the occupying state has displayed no limits to their aggression in pursuit of their expansionist ideals while have not been held to any account for their crimes against humanity.

3) The magnitude of the oppression:

The perpetrators realize a great magnitude of direct force and violence is needed to prevent any rebellion movement since the thief understands the victim will resist with whatever they have, and they, therefore, seek to crush the spirit of this resistance. The occupying state has made it

mandatory for every Israeli Jew to serve in the 'IDF', and they are indoctrinated from a young age to believe every Palestinian is a 'terrorist', whilst their survival is dependent on getting rid of the indigenous Palestinians.

With over 2.5 million Palestinian's living in the West Bank, an extremely densely populated region, Israel is not only seizing the best land and resources through annexing the territories and giving themselves false authority over the land, but they are striving to create an unbearable condition for the Palestinian's living within, such that they become hopeless and would want to immigrate and abandon their own homeland.

4) Continuity of the oppression:

Since the financial and military existence of Israel is completely linked to the U.S., this oppression will continue until Israel loses its functional role due to the balance of powers that are increasingly not in the U.S.'s favor in the region.

Besides the axis of resistance and its proponents, all countries are turning a blind eye to the continuous oppression in Palestine, which is legitimized by the majority of the world since there is an overlap between their aims and they only account for what is in their interests. They seek to wipe the history of Palestine and grant legitimacy to Israel's existence, although acknowledging its illegality should by any standards create an uprising.

It is the responsibility of all of humanity to correct the biggest shame that have occurred. All nations need to apply pressure on their governments to sever ties with the occupying state and grant the right of return and compensation for all Palestinian citizens.

Huge fires breakouts in Haifa Israel near Rafael Defense Co

Tens of thousands of people have been evacuated from their homes in Haifa where fires have been raging. Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has warned that anyone who may have started the fires deliberately will be "punished severely".

Israeli media, Ynetnews claimed that fire broke out at several points along the railway line between Kiryat Motzkin and Kiryat Yam on the outskirts of Haifa.

More than a dozen firefighters are operating in the area, and have yet to gain control of the fire.

According to Israeli officials, the fire may be the result of sparks created by a passing cargo train.

Also, Hamodia, another Israeli media claimed that "A fault in train brakes caused huge fires to flare."

"The fires are between the neighborhoods of Neve Ganim in Kiryat Motzkin and Savyoni Yam in Kiryat Yam. One of the fires is located near the "David Institute" factory of the Rafael Defense Company (Weapons Development Authority). Train traffic from Haifa Central Station to the north has been suspended," according to Hamodia.

Leaked documents prove UK funded anti-Damascus groups

A senior aide to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has accused the United Kingdom of funding anti-Damascus groups to stoke further unrest in the Arab country and said Western states were exerting pressure on Syrian officials to dissent from the government.

Bouthaina Shaaban, Assad's political and media adviser, made the remarks in a video conference organized by the German Schiller Institute on Saturday, entitled "The Moral Collapse of the Trans-Atlantic World Cries Out for a New Paradigm," Syria's official news agency SANA reported.

Shaaban said Syria has been waging a "double-edged" war over the past decade, one on the ground against terrorists wreaking havoc in the country and the other against a Western-backed drive for inciting dissent within government ranks.

"All that happened in Syria of destruction, death, and displacement, were because of Western intelligence institutions which, in cooperation with Turkey, trained thousands of terrorists to achieve a single goal which is destroying Syria," the presidential aide said, adding that the West was dealing with Syria as if it were still under their colonization, ignoring its deep-rooted history and values.

Yemeni army launches new drone strike on King Khalid Airbase in Saudi Arabia

The Yemeni army says it has launched a fresh drone strike on a major airbase in Saudi Arabia's southwestern province of Asir in retaliation for the kingdom's military aggression and blockade against the impoverished country.

Army troops and allied fighters from Popular Committees hit designated targets inside the King Khalid Airbase near the city of Khamis Mushait in the early hours of Sunday, army spokesman Brigadier General Yahya Saree announced on his Twitter page.

The media bureau of Yemen's Ansarullah movement quoted Saree as saying that the retaliatory attack was carried out by a domestically-developed Qasef-2K (Striker-2K) combat drone.

The strike, he said, was "accurate" and a "legitimate response" to the continuing aggression and brutal siege on his country.

According to Press TV, on May 3, Yemeni forces targeted the same airbase and military installations at Najran Airport in southwest Saudi Arabia with four Qasef-2K drones as well as two Badr ballistic missiles.

Saree noted that the strikes were accurate, and came in retaliation for the Saudi-led military campaign and blockade against Yemen.

About 90 Palestinians injured in Israeli crackdown

Dozens of Palestinians have been injured in Israeli police crackdown on protesters outside the Old City of Jerusalem as tens of thousands of Muslim worshippers prayed at the nearby Al-Aqsa Mosque on Islam's holy night of Laylat al-Qadr.

At least 90 people were injured on Saturday, the Palestine Red Crescent said, a day after Israeli forces stormed Al-Aqsa and injured more than 200 Palestinians. Israeli police said at least one officer was hurt.

Israeli security forces on horseback and in riot gear deployed stun grenades and water cannon against Palestinian youth who threw stones, lit fires and tore down police barricades in the streets leading to the walled Old City gates.

Tensions have mounted in the city, the occupied West Bank and Gaza throughout the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, amid growing anger about the potential eviction of Palestinians from East Jerusalem homes on land claimed by Jewish settlers.

Israeli border guards have, during the past few days, used skunk water, tear gas, rubber-coated bullets and shock grenades to disperse sit-ins held in support of the families facing eviction in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood.

Resistance News

Palestinian ministry warns of Israeli calls for storming Al-Aqsa

INTERNATIONAL DESK TEHRAN— The Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates warned of the Israeli calls for organizing provocative rallies in the streets and neighborhoods of Occupied East Jerusalem and its Old City and for a mass storming of the Al-Aqsa Mosque on Monday to celebrate the so-called "unification of Jerusalem" day.

The ministry stated in a statement on Sunday that this "day" is exploited by settlement societies in the most heinous way to intensify their violent attacks against Palestinians, their homes, and their sanctities.

These Israeli calls aim to attract more young Jewish settlers to defile the Al-Aqsa Mosque to implement the plans of Judaizing the city and implement the temporal and spatial division policy of the Mosque, the ministry added.

It noted that Israel also resorted to broadening the participation of settlers, the settlement associations and terrorist organizations in the continuous attacks against Jerusalem, its Islamic holy sites and its citizens.

The ministry held the occupation state and its institutions fully and directly responsible for the consequences of its open war on Jerusalem and its residents.

Ilkhanid-era mausoleum under restoration to gain former glory

HERITAGE **TEHRAN** — An extensive restoration work has been commenced on the mausoleum of Seyyed Fathollah, one of the 13th-century mystics in Varamin, an ancient city in Tehran province.

The project involves strengthening building's walls and dome as well as repairing its arches. Varamin's tourism chief, Zhila Khodadadi, announced on Sunday.

A budget of one billion rials (almost \$24,000 at the official exchange rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) has been allocated to the project, the official added.

The monument has a double-shell dome and in bears embossed inscriptions in other color, which is one of the architectural features of that period, she explained.

The historical structure dates back to the era of Ilkhanids (1256–1353), who were a branch of the Mongol dynasty. The Mongol ruler Hulegu Khan (c. 1217–1265), who founded the Ilkhanid dynasty in Iran, selected the north central region of Iran for his center of government.

The mausoleum was inscribed on the National Heritage list in 2003.

The first time Tehran is mentioned in historical accounts is in an 11th-century chronicle in which it is described as a small village north of Rey.

Tehran has many to offer its visitors including Golestan Palace, Grand Bazaar, Treasury of National Jewels, National Museum of Iran, Glass & Ceramic Museum, Masoudieh Palace, Sarkis Cathedral, Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, Carpet Museum of Iran, to name a few.

Local authorities target tourism boost for enigmatic Karaftu caves, Zivieh hill

TOURISM **TEHRAN** — Local authorities hope to boost travel to the enigmatic Karaftu caves and the neighboring Zivieh archaeological hill when the tourism sector backs on track in the post-coronavirus era.

"Tourism infrastructure of the Zivieh ancient hill and Karaftu caves in the western Kordestan province needs to be strengthened to facilitate tourism for the post-corona era," the provincial tourism chief, Yaqub Guylian, said on Sunday while visiting the sites.

Before the outbreak of coronavirus, the number of tourists visiting these monuments was growing, but sadly, after the pandemic, the number of visitors has declined sharply, the official said.



Allocating some budgets to reviving and restoring these tourist spots could attract domestic and foreign tourists to the region after the crisis of coronavirus comes to an end eventually, he added.

Constructing proper access paths, setting up eco-lodge units, establishing traditional restaurants and tourist camps around the sites in collaboration with the private sector, would be supported, he explained.

Located 50 kilometers to Saqqez, the Zivieh ancient hill and castle was the residence of the Medes and Scythians and was considered their capital, and its history date back to the first millennium BC.

Set on the side of a large cliff, 42km from Takab, the Karaftu cave ensemble was used for habitation from early Sassanid times (224–651). The enigmatic caves were formed naturally but were modified by inhabitants over the centuries. In ancient times, these caves were important from an economic point of view, as they were situated on the Silk Roads. Today, the caves are also significant for a Greek inscription found in them, as this is one of the few examples of such a script preserved in situ in Iran.

Tourism industry in critical situation

Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan in October 2020 warned that Iran's cultural heritage and tourism would be in a critical situation if the crises caused by the outbreak of the coronavirus continue.

Last August, the tourism minister said that the tourism sector of the Islamic Republic had suffered a loss of 12 trillion rials (some \$2.85 billion) since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic.

He also noted that the coronavirus pandemic should not bring traveling to a complete standstill. "Corona is a fact, but can the virus stop tourism? Certainly not. For us, the coronavirus is a new experience in dealing with crises that teaches tourism experts around the world how to deal with such a disaster, and thankfully governments are turning this into an opportunity for better planning."

Optimistic forecasts, however, expect Iran to achieve a tourism boom after coronavirus contained, believing its impact would be temporary and short-lived for a country that ranked the third fastest-growing tourism destination in 2019.

The latest available data show eight million tourists visited the Islamic Republic during the first ten months of the Iranian calendar year 1398 (started March 21, 2019).

Iranian plateau in Pleistocene: a bridge between East and West

→ 1 The researchers found that the abundance and relatively large size of the available raw material blocks in the region demonstrate easy access to primary and secondary sources of raw material.

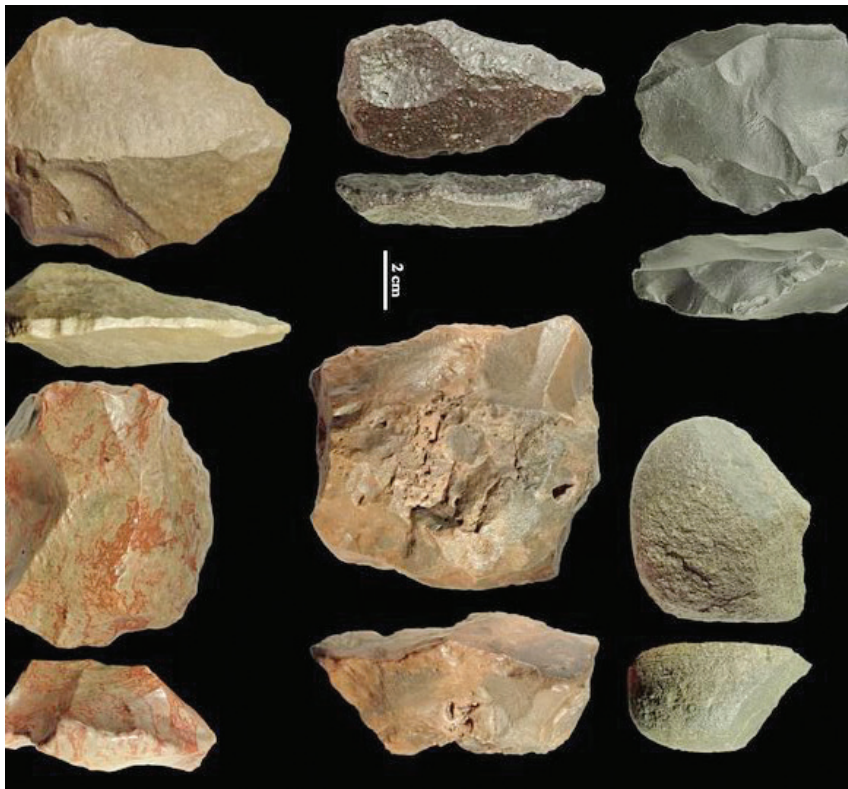
Among collected stone artifacts, core-tool/core-chopper and Levallois core and flakes are the most frequent types. A large unifacial point and heavily retouched flake are between the collected pieces.

All of the stone artifacts that the researchers studied were covered with a natural post-depositional surface alteration called gloss patina, which caused smoothness, pronounced luster and, reduction of surface topography of stone artifacts.

This type of patination is considered to be typical of desert areas. However, striking platform, core removals, bulb of percussion and, flake negative removals are obviously visible on many stone artifacts.

"Overall, based on preliminary techno-typological observations of the stone artifacts, direct percussion using Levallois technique mainly applied for making cores and stone tools. Therefore, it is possible to propose both Lower and especially Middle Paleolithic dates at least for five localities. However, these are the first Lower and Middle Paleolithic finds reported from the systematic survey of southern margins of Lut Desert and make this area an important and very promising area for further Paleolithic investigations," the study revealed.

"Our knowledge about the Paleolithic of Iran is still little," the authors say although, Iran in general and south-eastern Iran, in particular, has been considered as one of the major hominin dispersal corridors during the Pleistocene connecting East



Examples of stone artifacts collected during an archaeological survey in the southeastern parts of the Iranian plateau. (Photo: Mohsen Zeidi)

and West.

The study explored parts of the Lut Desert (Dasht-e Lut) that is located in the southeast of the country and is one of the largest desert basins of high aridity in the Iranian plateau. This large salt desert is

located in the provinces of Kerman and Sistan-Baluchestan.

This area was archaeologically unknown for a long period, due to its harsh climate and marginal location in the country. The first visit in the regions of Sistan-Baluch-

estan and Kerman was made in the 1930s by the prehistoric archaeologist-explorer Marc Aurel Stein who visited south-eastern Iran and documented many late prehistoric and historic sites in his expedition.

Based on the field observations, the surveyed areas seem to be mostly undisturbed through natural and modern human activities and our initial insight suggests that surface scatters of stone tools and debitage are usually located in the large area along the drainages and seasonal river terraces where probably water sources were attractive to the Pleistocene hominins. However, documenting the full extent of the localities and their lithic scatter needs further intensive survey.

Since the early 20th century, the Iranian plateau has undergone several Paleolithic-based research. The German geologist Reinhold von Hückriede discovered a late Mesolithic site near Kuhbanan in Kerman in the framework of his geological investigations.

In 1964, Gary W. Hume at the request of Joseph R. Caldwell, director of the Kerman project explored the potential for Paleolithic sites in Bardsir valley near Kerman. Moreover, a later archaeological investigation in the Bam-Narmashir region of Kerman province revealed several archaeological sites dating from the Neolithic period to the Iron Age.

Throughout history, the big and sprawling Kerman region has been something of a cultural melting pot, blending various regional cultures over time. It is bounded by the modern provinces of Fars on the west, Yazd on the north, South Khorasan on the northeast, Sistan-Baluchestan on the east, and Hormozgan on the south.

Aging monuments undergo restoration in Kish Island

TOURISM **TEHRAN** — Rounds of restoration and vital rehabilitation work have been commenced on four historical buildings across Kish Island of the Persian Gulf, a local tourism official has said.

Jameh Mosque of Kish, which is also known as Amir Mosque, as well as Masheh Mosque, both date back to the Qajar-era (1789-1925), are being restored to their former glory, IRNA quoted Mahan Modavvan as saying on Saturday.

Masheh Mosque, which was inscribed on the National Heritage list in 1998, is planned to turn into a museum dedicated to Quran and historical manuscripts after being fully restored, the official added.

Historical Marjan Palace, the latest monument built on the island during the Pahlavi period (1925-1979), which has been damaged over the years due to poor maintenance, is also being restored, he explained.

The palace's restoration project is scheduled to be

completed within six months and the palace will be repurposed into a cultural heritage museum, he noted.

He also mentioned that the Pahlavi era (1925-1979) French Bazaar, which is one of the unique monuments on the island in terms of architecture, is also under restoration.

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.



TOURISM **TEHRAN** — Training courses in different fields of handicraft are currently being held in prisons across Markazi province, the provincial tourism chief has said.

On average, some 800 to 1,000 inmates are annually trained to make various handicrafts including kilim, pottery, mosaics, and cutting precious stones annually. Mostafa Marzban announced on Thursday.

The courses aim at providing job opportunities for the prisoners after their release as well as motivating them and promoting handicraft fields as sources of income, the official added.

Tourism ministry helps empower inmates

In October 2020, the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts signed a memorandum of understanding with the Prisons, Security, and Corrective Measures Organization to create jobs and make income for prisoners.

The MOU also aimed at implementing special educational and promotional programs, identifying talented prisoners, and improving their social status.

The deputy tourism minister Pouya Mahmoudian said that handicraft products made by prisoners

Handicraft courses to help create jobs for inmates

have been displayed in various exhibitions, and the income generated from selling these products has been returned to the prisoners and their families.

With 14 entries, Iran ranks first globally for the number of cities and villages registered by the World Crafts Council, as China with seven entries, Chile with four, and India with three ones come next.

In January 2020, the cities of Shiraz, Malayer, and Zanjan and the village of Qassemabad were designated by the WCC- Asia Pacific Region, putting Iran's number of world crafts cities and villages from ten to 14.

Shiraz was named a "world city of [diverse] handicrafts". Malayer was made a global hub for woodcarving and carved-wood furniture. Zanjan gained the title of a "world city of filigree". And Qassemabad village, which is nationally known for its traditional costumes, was

also promoted to a world hub of handicrafts. Chadour Shab, a kind of homemade outer-garment for women, was, however, the main subject for the WCC assessment for the village.

Iran exported \$523 million worth of handicrafts during the calendar year 1398 (ended March 19, 2020). Of the figure, some \$273 million worth of handicrafts were exported officially through customs, and about \$250 million was earned via suitcase trade (allowed for customs-free and tax-free transfer) through various provinces, according to data provided by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts.

Ceramics, pottery vessels, handwoven cloths as well as personal ornamentations with precious and semi-precious gemstones are traditionally exported to Iraq, Afghanistan, Germany, the U.S., the UK, and other countries.

Announcement for extension of the period for receiving one-tier general tender documents for the purchase of foreign non-tobacco raw materials required in the year 2021 of Iran Tobacco Company



Iran Tobacco Company

Considering to the publication of the call for public one-tier general international tender for the purchase of foreign non-tobacco raw materials in widely circulated domestic and English-language newspapers with the call code: 48/125/981, by the decision of the members of the tender committee to observe cost-effectiveness. Participation and in order to create the conditions for the presence of more applicants in the above-mentioned tenders, the deadline for receiving the mentioned tender documents for one week until Wednesday, 12/May/2021, according to paragraph "c" of Article 17 of the executive regulations of the tender documentation and information, will be extended.

It should be noted that the tender deadlines will be amended as follows and other conditions will be unchanged according to the original documents.

Tenders for the supply of foreign non-tobacco raw materials: Deadline for receipt of documents will be until 12 May 2021 - Deadline for submission of proposed envelopes will be until 20 June 2021 and Opening date will be Monday 21 June 2021.

Tender documents will be obtainable after remittance the amount of one million Rials to the account number 47000701336609 in the name of Iran Tobacco Company at Parsian Bank (Azadi Branch), from Tehran, Qazvin St., Iran Tobacco Company, Education Department, First Floor, Office of the Secretariat of Transaction department. Or after registering in the National Tender website at <https://iets.mporg.ir>, receive the tender documents free of charge. (For more information, you can contact to 51261651-51261944.)

Public Relations and International Affairs of Iran Tobacco Company

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I/c PRINCIPAL

Let’s unite to preserve bird habitats

By Faranak Bakhtiari

TEHRAN – We must unite globally to protect the migratory birds and the habitats they depend on to survive.

“Sing, Fly, Soar – Like a Bird!” is the theme of this year’s World Migratory Bird Day, an annual global campaign dedicated to raising awareness of migratory birds and the need for international cooperation to conserve them.

This year the campaign focused on the phenomena of “bird song” and “bird flight” as a way to inspire and connect people of all ages around the world in their shared desire to celebrate migratory birds and to unite in a common, global effort to protect birds and the habitats they need to survive.

Celebrated across the world on two peak days each year – on the second Saturday in May and the second Saturday in October – World Migratory Bird Day is the only international awareness-raising and education program that celebrates the migration of bird species along all the major flyways of the world.

The birds’ sound has always been pleasant and soulful, the pleasure of hearing the sound of birds in the morning is indescribable especially in these days that the pandemic has kept many at home.

Birds also play an important role in maintaining ecosystem function by controlling pests, pollination, and helping seed dispersal.

Hosting over 600 species of birds, Iran is a climatically rich country, so it is said that the number of bird species in Iran is higher than in the whole of Europe. A wide range of wetlands is the reason behind migratory birds choosing Iran for an annual winter-



ing habitat, as a large number of birds fly a thousand miles each year to benefit from this rich climate.

Every year, from early-September to late-February, Iran hosts rare species of migratory birds heading from north to the southern countries due to reduced seasonal temperatures and food availability.

It is estimated that there are about 50 billion birds in the world out of 9,000 species, many of which are migratory. Accordingly, about 5 to 7 million birds migrate to Iran in different seasons. There are about 530 species of birds in Iran, 320 of which are migratory species, some of which are native species.

Among the various groups of migratory

birds wintering in Iran, the largest population belongs to the group of geese, swans, and ducks amounting to 781,499 and the smallest population of 7 are the long-tailed ducks or oldsquaw.

The provinces of Mazandaran and Golestan are the first provinces with the highest number of migratory birds for having sufficient resources, as the movement of migratory birds is closely linked to the seasonal availability of resources.

What pushes migratory birds toward disappearance?

Bird migration is the regular seasonal movement, often north and south along a flyway, between breeding and wintering grounds.

Many species of bird migrate. Migration carries high costs in predation and mortality, including from hunting by humans, and is driven primarily by the availability of food.

Unsustainable development in Iran has resulted in habitat fragmentation posing a serious threat to the migratory birds. Also, anthropogenic disturbance such as agricultural expansion has resulted in dramatic global habitat loss and fragmentation.

Moreover, poaching, overgrazing, and long-standing drought spells have also impacted habitat destruction which ultimately results in birds’ total extinction.

The most tragic of which was the death of over 30,000 migratory birds in Miankaleh international wetland in late January 2020, which was announced by the veterinary organization that the birds have been killed due to the “botulinum toxin”, but it was finally announced that some fishermen, landowners or hunters may have thrown poison into the water and killed these species.

Dalmatian pelican, Siberian crane, lesser white-fronted goose, and white-headed duck are among the endangered migratory birds which migrate to Iran.

Protection of precious species

The protection of the habitats of these amazing creatures and the prevention of their destruction requires more coordination between related bodies, the support, and participation of local communities.

With the protective measures and cooperation of responsible organizations, every year, we will host a much larger number of migratory birds and the prosperity of more responsible nature tourism and bird watching.

Meeting climate goals would ‘halve’ sea level rise from melting ice, study says

Limiting global heating to 1.5C above pre-industrial levels could halve the amount of sea level rise from melting land ice this century, when compared to a scenario based on current climate pledges, a study finds.

Under the Paris Agreement, countries agreed to restrict global heating to “well below” 2C by the end of the century, with an aspiration of keeping temperatures at 1.5C. However, current pledges put forward by countries would see the world reach around 3C of warming by 2100.



The new research, published in the journal Nature, examines the extent to which the world’s glaciers and ice sheets will contribute to sea level rise by 2100 under different levels of global heating.

It finds that, under current climate pledges, the melting of land ice could cause sea levels to increase by a median of 25cm by the end of the century. However, if efforts are made to keep global temperature rise to 1.5C, this figure could be reduced to 13cm.

The contribution of melting ice to rising seas could be much higher if Antarctica follows a “pessimistic” pathway in the future, the research adds.

The findings come as a second study, also published in Nature, warns that sea level rise from Antarctica could increase substantially if global temperatures exceed 3C, with an “abrupt jump” in the pace of Antarctic ice loss expected around 2060.

Dr Tamsin Edwards, a climate scientist at King’s College London and lead author of the first research paper, told a press briefing: “We know that global sea levels are going to continue to rise, but we could halve the contribution from ice melt if we limit warming to 1.5C above pre-industrial levels, relative to current pledges.

“That means that coastal flooding will still increase but less severely if we manage to limit warming to 1.5C.”

Global sea levels have risen by a total of around 18 to 20cm since 1900, raising the risk of coastal flooding and the loss of low-lying small islands, among other impacts.

Melting land ice – glaciers and the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets – currently account for around half of all sea level rises. The other major driver is “thermal expansion”, a term for how seawater expands as it heats up.

The research makes use of high-resolution models and a wide range possible scenarios for how humans will heat the planet over the coming decades.

It finds that increasing global temperatures will continue to drive the loss of glaciers, slow-moving rivers of ice that supply drinking water for millions.

It also finds that increasing heat will continue to have a large impact on the Greenland ice sheet, a mass of frozen freshwater around three times the size of Texas that sits on the island.

The study says that limiting global heating to 1.5C could reduce the amount of mass lost from Greenland’s ice sheet by 70 per cent by the end of the century, when compared to a scenario based on current climate pledges.

The researchers also find that global heating will continue to affect the Antarctic ice sheet – the single largest mass of ice on Earth.

However, in the research paper, the authors say their findings come up with “no clear” picture of how Antarctica is likely to respond to rising emissions.

The reason for this is that the factors affecting Antarctica as the world heats up are likely to be complex and are not yet fully understood, the scientists say. In addition, the different regions of the vast ice sheet are expected to vary in their response to heating.

To account for this, the authors include a range of possible scenarios of Antarctic ice loss over the course of the 21st century. “If we’re unlucky with the future of Antarctica and the predictions are at the upper end of the modelling uncertainty range ... that makes a big difference,” Dr Edwards said.

The results suggest that, under a pessimistic scenario, Arctic ice loss could be five times higher – leading to 42cm of sea level rise from melting ice by the end of the century under current pledges and 30cm of sea level rise if global heating is limited to 1.5C.

ICRC asked to provide 2m COVID-19 vaccines for Afghan refugees

SOCIETY TEHRAN – The Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) has asked the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to provide 2 million doses of coronavirus vaccine to be used for Afghan refugees.

The population of Afghan immigrants residing in Iran is about two to three million, some of whom sometimes have problems with identity cards or do not have identification codes, IRCS head Karim Hemmati said.

The Ministry of Interior is trying to provide an identification code for these people so that they can receive the vaccine, he added.

“We requested the Red Cross to provide us with two million doses of vaccine for this target group, but so far, no consignment has been delivered to the country for the refugees,” he explained.

“If these people are among our priority groups, they will be vaccinated. For example, if an Afghan national is part of the medical staff in Iran, they will be vaccinated,” he noted.

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

One of the largest and most protracted urban refugee populations in the world is living in Iran; about 97 percent of refugees live in urban and semi-urban areas, while



three percent are residing in 20 refugee resorts run by the UNHCR’s main government counterpart.

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

Some 120,000 refugees residing in Iran are now covered by health insurance. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Despite the challenges, Iran has continued to generously give refugees access to education and health services. Iran is one of the handfuls of countries in the world that offer refugees the option to enroll in national health insurance for essential secondary and tertiary public health services in the same way as Iranian nationals.

The national insurance scheme allows for free COVID-19 treatment and hospitalization. It also subsidizes the cost of surgeries, dialysis, radiology, laboratory tests, outpatient care, and more.

Medicine trafficking gang disbanded at eastern airport

SOCIETY TEHRAN – A gang that was trying to smuggle medicine to Afghanistan was disbanded at Mashhad airport in Khorasan Razavi province, IRNA reported on Sunday.

While eight tons of drugs worth 14 billion rials (nearly \$333,000 at the official rate of 42,000 rials) were seized, three smugglers were arrested, Ebrahim Qorbanzadeh, a provincial police official, said.

Two of the suspects were foreign nationals, investigations are ongoing to find their accomplices inside the country, he further stated.

A pharmacy involved in the case was also identified and shut down, he also added.

Mohammad Reza Shanehsaz, head of the Food and Drug Administration, said in January 2020 that smuggling medicine out of the country has increased due to depreciation of the Iranian rial against foreign currencies which has lowered medicine costs inside the country.

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

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



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

Every year, \$20-25 billion are smuggled in and out of the country, which, if stopped, will create hundreds of thousands of jobs, Hassan Norouzi, a member of the parliament, has said.

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

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

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

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

Over 50,000 ha of desert areas to be rehabilitated

➔1 Nonetheless, the reestablishment of forests is not just simple tree planting. Forests are made up of a community of species and they build dead organic matter into soils over time.

Last year, Reza Bayani an official with Forests, Range and Watershed Management Organization, said between 2015 and 2020, approximately 12,000 hectares of forests across the country wiped out annually. He went on to say that the country’s forests are estimated at 14.3 million hectares, lamenting, deforestation occurs for a variety of reasons, including dam construction, road construction, fire, and wood smuggling.

Iran, like many other countries in West Asia, is primarily made up of arid deserts, while compared to nearby Saudi

Arabia (95% desert), Turkmenistan (80% desert), and Iraq (40% desert), only about 23 percent of its land area is covered with desert areas.

Why deserts need protection?

Deserts are topographic landscapes that receive little precipitation in a typical year. The threshold is 10 inches or 25cm. But more than simply having low rainfall, a desert is “arid”, which means a high rate of water loss through plant reclamation (called transpiration) and through evaporation.

Deserts will differ depending on their climate and location and their overall aridity can influence many things, not least of all the ecology, food chain, plant and animal types. High evaporation leaves behind higher salt levels,

affecting further which plants can grow and the individual size and the numbers of herbivores that may feed on them and, in turn, carnivores.

Some experience vast temperature fluctuations, especially hot deserts which may reach unbearable heat during the day and extreme cold at night. This is because the rock and sand absorb heat during the day and release it at night. There may also be an extreme variation between warm and cool seasons, including extreme winds and storms due to the mixing of cold and warm air.

Deserts are vitally important to the planetary ecosystem. They cover approximately 1/3 of the dry land of our planet. They are also amongst the most fragile and endangered biomes.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ج

97% of Iran affected by long-term drought: expert

Based on the data collected over the past decade approximately 97 percent of the country is affected by long-term drought, director of the national drought warning and monitoring center, Sadeq Ziaeeian, has said.

Some 12.7 percent of the country is hit by extremely severe drought, 53.6 percent of the country is affected by severe drought while 24.8 percent of the country is facing moderate drought and 5.9 percent of the country is withstanding mild drought, ISNA news agency quoted Ziaeeian as saying on Wednesday.

He went on to say that extremely severe long-term drought has had negative effects on 14.2 percent of the country’s total population, severe long-term drought has hit 47 percent of the country’s population, 30.7 percent of the country’s population is affected by moderate long-term drought and 5.1 percent of the population is stricken with mild drought.

۹۷ درصد مساحت ایران تحت تاثیر خشکسالی است

صادق ضیائی‌ان رئیس مرکز ملی خشکسالی و مدیریت بحران سازمان هواشناسی اعلام کرد: بررسی داده‌های ۱۰ ساله خشکسالی بیانگر آن است که ۹۷ درصد مساحت ایران تحت تأثیر خشکسالی بلندمدت است.

ضیائی‌ان در گفت‌وگو با ایسنا گفت: از این مقدار ۵۳٫۶ درصد مساحت کشور با خشکسالی شدید، ۱۲٫۷ درصد با خشکسالی بسیار شدید، ۲۴٫۸ درصد مساحت با خشکسالی متوسط و ۵٫۹ درصد مساحت با خشکسالی خفیف مواجه هستند.

وی ادامه داد: ۲ درصد جمعیت ایران با خشکسالی بسیار شدید بلندمدت است همچنین ۴۷ درصد جمعیت کشور با خشکسالی شدید، ۳۰٫۷ درصد جمعیت با خشکسالی متوسط و ۵٫۱ درصد جمعیت با خشکسالی خفیف دست و پنجه نرم می‌کنند.

LET’S LEARN PERSIAN

(Part 179)

(Source: saadifoundation.ir)

■ Possible Condition	■ شرطِ ممکن
	حالِ اِلتِزامی + حالِ اِخباری
اگر بروم آن را می‌خرم.	اگر بروم آن را می‌خرم.
اگر رفتی ساید + حالِ اِخباری	اگر رفتی ساید + حالِ اِخباری
اگر رفتم آن را می‌خرم.	اگر رفتم آن را می‌خرم.
حالِ اِخباری + حالِ اِخباری	حالِ اِخباری + حالِ اِخباری
اگر شما می‌روید من هم می‌روم.	اگر شما می‌روید من هم می‌روم.
حالِ اِخباری یا کُذَشْتِی ساید + آمر	حالِ اِخباری یا کُذَشْتِی ساید + آمر
اگر می‌خواهی بخور. = اگر خواهستی بخور.	اگر می‌خواهی بخور. = اگر خواهستی بخور.
● تمرین ۱. با کلمات هر گروه جمله‌ای به شرطِ ممکن بنویسید:	● تمرین ۱. با کلمات هر گروه جمله‌ای به شرطِ ممکن بنویسید:
من. به بانک رفتن. پول گرفتن	من. به بانک رفتن. پول گرفتن
۱. شما. سوار مترو شدن. لذت بردن	۱. شما. سوار مترو شدن. لذت بردن
۲. ما. غذا پختن. به زیارتگاه بردن	۲. ما. غذا پختن. به زیارتگاه بردن
۳. او. امیدوار بودن. موفق شدن	۳. او. امیدوار بودن. موفق شدن
۴. تو. درس خواندن. قبول شدن	۴. تو. درس خواندن. قبول شدن
۵. ما. کمک کردن. خوشحال شدن	۵. ما. کمک کردن. خوشحال شدن
۶. ایشان. آمدن. شیرینی آوردن	۶. ایشان. آمدن. شیرینی آوردن

INTERNATIONAL DAILY
www.tehrantimes.com

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

Tehrantimes79 Tehrantimes79 Tehrantimes79

No. 18, Bimeh Alley, Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran
P.O. Box: 14155-4843
Zip Code: 1599814713



GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Our affairs are attached to the destiny decreed by Allah,
even our best plans may lead us to destruction.

Imam Ali (AS)

Nezami's Leili and Majnun, heroism of sentiment

Par 1

The Leili and O Majnun, a narrative poem of approximately 4,600 lines composed in 1188 by the famous poet Nezami Ganjavi (1141-1209). It is the third of his five long narrative poems known collectively as the Khamseh (The Quintuplet).

A summary of the story

The plot of the romance is simple. Qays falls in love with Leili at school but Leili's father forbids any contact. Separated from Leili, Majnun becomes obsessed with her, singing of his love for her in public. The obsession grows to the point that he sees and evaluates everything in terms of Leili; hence his sobriquet "the possessed" (Majnun). When he realizes that he cannot obtain union even when other people intercede for him, he grows disillusioned with society and roams naked in the desert among the beasts.

Contemplating the image of Leili increases his love so that he cannot eat or sleep. His only activity is thinking of Leili and composing love songs for her.

Meanwhile, Leili is betrothed against her will but she guards her virginity by resisting her husband's advances. She arranges secret meetings with Majnun, and when they meet, they have no physical contact, rather they recite poetry to each other from a distance.

When Leili's husband dies, removing the legal obstacles to a licit union, Majnun is so focused on the ideal picture of Leili that he runs away to the desert.

Leili dies out of grief and is buried in her bridal dress. Hearing this news, Majnun rushes to her grave where he instantly dies. They are buried side by side and their graves become a site of pilgrimage. In the coda, someone dreams that they are united in Paradise, living as a king and queen.

Analysis of the story

Leili and Majnun was not the first Arabic romance to be versified in Persian. Ayyuqi's Vargha and Golshah comes first and Nezami adapted several narrative elements from this romance: the lovers meeting in school; war between two clans; the insertion of ghazals, protecting virginity, and their grave as sites of pilgrimage.

Nezami composed his romance at the request of the ruler Shervan Shah Akhsetan. Nezami initially doubted that this simple story about the agony and pain of an Arab boy wandering in rough mountains and burning deserts would be a suitable subject for his cultured audience.

It was his son who persuaded him to undertake the project, saying: "wherever tales of love are read, this will add spice to them."

It seems as if Nezami did not want to spend much time on it, for he states that he would have composed the whole story in even less than four months if he had not had other things to do.

Despite his initial reluctance, Nezami writes a story from Majnun's birth until his death, with a clear climax.

Since the plot is thin, Nezami inserted many descriptions of nature which have several narrative functions in the romance: indicating time and setting, forming a decorative backdrop for an episode, providing a meditative pause, or reflecting the mental and physical conditions of the protagonists.

When the desperate Majnun complains to heaven about his wretched state, Nezami places him in a setting in which he gives an animated description of a night laden with stars and all constellations.

In his description, Nezami follows Fakhr ad-Din Gorgani's description of the night in the Vis and Ramin.

Likewise, when Leili desires to see Majnun, she is placed in an exquisitely designed palm grove in spring. Analogous to this vernal garden, Leili's death is placed in a gloomy garden in autumn.

Nezami's treatment of the female characters, especially Leili, is completely different from the existing anecdotes.

Despite the patriarchal setting of the original story and the limited role of women in it, Nezami allots a more active role to Leili. She composes exquisite poems, and takes the initiative in arranging meetings with Majnun.

To prove her fidelity to Majnun, she fights for her virginity against her wedded husband, Ibn Salam: she slaps him in the face.

Nezami's portrayal of Leili's character raises several questions about the role of women in such stories. Leili's loyalty lies with Majnun, but she remains obedient to her father and faithful to her husband. While married, she does not share her bed with her husband and even arranges secret meetings with Majnun.

But when Majnun comes near her, she reminds him that she is married and any physical contact is against the religious code. Nezami reveals her dilemmas in a medieval patriarchal society, emphasizing the problems generated by a closed society in which there is no freedom of choice in selecting a marriage partner, and tribal fealty and religious tenets come first.

As in Arabic sources, Nezami refers to Majnun's poetic genius at least thirty times. He is presented as a poet who is able to compose dazzling poetry in various poetic genres. As in other Udri stories, the language of his poetry is devotional.

Nezami puts love poems and elegies in Majnun's mouth, which can be seen as psychological self-analysis displaying his frustrations and reasons for his actions. In his comments on Majnun's speech, the narrator always takes his side, a fact that influences the reader's interpretation.

to be continued

Turkish translation of Claire Jobert collection of Quran stories reviewed

→1 Safekeeping, truthfulness, donation and several other Quranic concepts have been introduced through stories to children in this collection.

The collection includes "The Secret of the Centipede", "Say So", "Grumpy Hippo", "Meatball Competition", "Peace Soup", "Deposited Cake", "What's up?" and "Red Apple".

Jobert is also the writer of "In Search of God", "God's Cookies", "Goodbye, Old Raccoon", "The Little Mouse's Prayer", "The Stories of the Little Green Lizard" and "The Most Trustworthy Friend".

She was born in Paris in May 1961, and was brought up in a Christian family. She converted to Islam at the age of nineteen and immigrated to Iran when she got married.

She illustrates her stories herself. With a cursory look at her works, one can easily perceive her preoccupation with issues such as faith and religion, identity, children's relations with their surroundings, etc. Most of the writer's works are for primary-age children.

She is also interested in doing research on children's literature and philosophy for children. She writes both in Persian and French and has published some French books in Lebanon and France, but her preference is to write in Persian.

Jobert was nominated for the title of Islamic Revolution Artist of the Year in 2021 for her books created based on stories from the Holy Quran, including "The Woven Shoes" and "Small Drops".



This combination photo shows the front covers of some books of the Turkish translation of Claire Jobert's collection "A Fiction with Quranic Concept".

Ali Rahbari to add new tracks to album "My Mother Persia"



Maestro Ali Rahbari conducts the Tehran Symphony Orchestra in an undated photo. (Mehr/Hossein Esmaeili)

CULTURE TEHRAN – World-renowned Iranian composer Ali Rahbari has announced

his plan to add two new tracks to his upcoming album "My Mother Persia".

Speaking to the Persian service of ISNA on Sunday, Rahbari said that he has composed the tracks "The Persian Elegy", which is Opera in English, and "Persian Nightingales" in his home quarantine during the pandemic in Khmelnytskyi, Ukraine.

The two new tracks will form parts 12 and 13 of Rahbari's album.

He plans to record the pieces with the Khmelnytsky State Philharmonic Orchestra, which performs under the baton of Iranian conductor Parviz Yahyavi.

Iranian vocalist brothers Ali and Mohammad Saeidi are scheduled to work on "Persian Nightingales".

He pointed to a comment by Italian conductor Arturo Toscanini and said, "Arturo Toscanini had said that there is no bad orchestra and it is the conductor who makes

the orchestra."

Naxos Records, a Hong Kong-based German record label specializing in classical music, is scheduled to release Iranian composer Ali (Alexander) Rahbari's upcoming album, "My Mother Persia".

The album features melodies and improvisations in Iranian traditional styles, including a violin concerto entitled "Nohe Khan" by soloist Paula Rahbari.

"Mother's Tears" and "Children's Prayer" are other tracks on the album.

The Prague Metropolitan Orchestra and Antalya State Symphony have also cooperated with Rahbari on this album.

Rahbari, the former conductor of the Tehran Symphony Orchestra, performed the composition at Aspendos Hall in Antalya in April 2018 along with the Antalya State Symphony Orchestra and prominent Iranian vocalist Mohammad Motamedi.

"The Doll" from Iran named best short at Hot Docs

A R T TEHRAN – Iranian filmmaker

Elaheh Esmaeili's "The Doll" has been selected as best short documentary at the Canadian documentary festival Hot Docs in Toronto.

The film is about 14-year-old Asal, whose father consents to her marriage. Through a series of astoundingly frank interviews, the secrets and indiscretions of Asal's father are slowly revealed and his true intentions come to light.

The documentary received the award "for its complex and nuanced portrait of a family caught between traditions and personal values," the jury said on Sunday in its statement on the closing day of the festival, which was held online due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"With a sensitive and attentive look at her subjects, the filmmaker offers

us a film of incredible richness on a human experience that would be easy to judge from a Western point of view. Unsettling, endearing and sometimes even shocking, this film will not leave anyone indifferent," the jury added.

The award for best international feature documentary went to "Ostrov – Lost Island" directed by Svetlana Rodina and Laurent Stoop from Switzerland.

Once home to a thriving fishing collective farm, the island of Ostrov in the Caspian Sea has fallen into despair. Caught between political turmoil after the fall of the USSR, the few remaining inhabitants have been abandoned by the government of Russia and must rely on poaching to survive. With no jobs and no electricity or gas, the fishermen are forced to illegally fish the heavily patrolled seas, risking both their lives

and freedom.

"School of Hope", a co-production from Finland, France and Morocco directed by Mohamed El Aboudi, won the special jury prize in the international feature documentary category.

In the expansive desert east of the Atlas Mountains in Morocco, where seasonal rain and snow once supported livestock and nomadic traditions, an extended drought caused by the climate crisis never seems to end. Despite generating a tiny carbon footprint, the Oulad Boukais tribe deal with the threat of environmental collapse every day. So, to ensure their children's future, they establish a school.

Annabel Verbeke received the emerging international filmmaker award for "Four Seasons in a Day", a coproduction by Belgium, Norway and Croatia.

It may only take 15 minutes to cross



"The Doll" by Iranian filmmaker Elaheh Esmaeili won the best short documentary award at the Hot Docs festival, Toronto, Canada.

the lough between British-controlled Northern Ireland and EU member Republic of Ireland, but this refreshingly politics-free look at Brexit's brand-new border covers a huge gulf of public confusion. Filmmaker Verbeke placed cameras on board Carlingford ferry to eavesdrop on tourists and locals from both sides as they discussed what boundaries mean to them.

"Silent Voice", a co-production between France and Belgium was selected as best mid-length documentary.

Brussels festival picks shorts "Asho", "Exam", "Chauffeur" from Iran

A R T TEHRAN – Iranian movies

"Asho", "Exam" and "Chauffeur" will be competing in the 24th edition of the Brussels Short Film Festival, which will take place in the Belgian capital from August 28 to September 5.

"Asho" directed by Jafar Najafi is about a little shepherd interested in cinema. The routine with his herd is challenging, but passion for Hollywood and acting allows his dreams to mix in with real life. Asho and a girl, who were promised for each other in marriage since they were small as dictated by tradition in his village, try to ignore love with their childish tenacity.

"Asho" was selected as the best children's documentary at the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam (IDFA) in November 2020.

It also won the award for best short and medium-length



"Asho" by Iranian filmmaker Jafar Najafi.

documentary at the 23rd Olympia International Film Festival for Children and Young People in early December.

"Chauffeur" by Reza Nejati is about a father whose ignorance and false beliefs make his son go through a crisis, which costs him an innocent man's life.

Directed by Sonia Haddad, "Exam" tells the story of a teenage girl who gets involved in the process of delivering a pack of cocaine to a client, and gets stuck in a weird cycle of occurrences.

The film has been screened at numerous international events, garnering several prizes, including the award for Best Live Action Short Film at the 18th Tirana International Film Festival in Albania last September.

It also shared the grand prize of the jury with "Pizza Boy" by Italian director Gianluca Zonta at the 15th Diecimmini Film Festival in Italy in January.

"The Shadow of the Wind" comes to Iranian bookstores

CULTURE TEHRAN — A Persian

translation of Spanish writer Carlos Ruiz Zafón's bestselling novel "Shadow of the Wind", translated by Ali Sanavi, has arrived in Iranian bookstores.

The book has been published by Nimaj, a publishing house based in Tehran.

Sanavi has previously rendered works by renowned writers into Persian. His translations have always been acclaimed by his readers.

"If the translator cannot convey the beauty of the concept, he loses the reader as well as the text," Sanavi has said earlier.

Translated into 20 other languages

worldwide, "Shadow of the Wind" was originally published in 2001 and sold over a million copies in the UK after it was translated into English by Lucia Graves in 2004.

Ruiz Zafón was born in the city of Barcelona in 1964 and is the winner of several book awards and prizes.

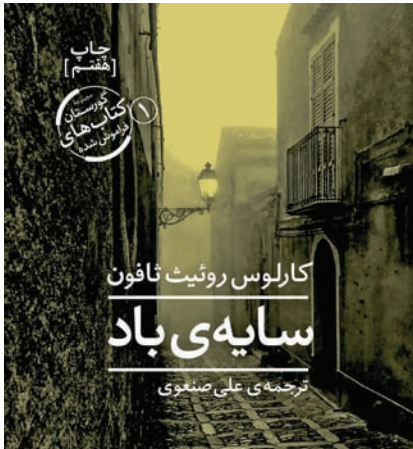
His first novel was "El Principe de la Niebla" in 1993 that won the Edebe literary prize for young adult fiction, and was later published in English as "The Prince of Mist" in 2010.

Ruiz Zafón authored several other young adult novels from 1994 to 1999, including "El Palacio de la Medianoche", "Las Luces

de Septiembre" and "Marina".

He published "La Sombra del Viento" ("Shadow of the Wind") as his first adult novel in 2001, and its first English translation was published in 2004, selling millions of copies worldwide since its publication as well as winning numerous international awards.

Often labelled the "story of a book within a book," the novel's narrative revolves around Daniel, the son of a book dealer who discovers that all the works of a certain author have been destroyed, with only one book remaining in his possession. The story then evolves into a tale of murder and unsuccessful love unveiling the dark side of the city of Barcelona.



Front cover of the Persian translation of Carlos Ruiz Zafón's novel "Shadow of the Wind".