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War on Gaza reveals Saudi-Emirati bromance with Israel

Iran taking big steps for development of free trade, special economic zones

BY EBRAHIM FALLAHI
Over the past two decades, free and special economic zones have played a significant role in Iran's economy, and the Iranian government has been seriously pursuing a program for the development of the existing zones and establishing new ones.

According to Morteza Bank, the former secretary of Iranian Free Zones High Council, over 40 percent of Iran's exports are done through the country's free trade zones and special economic zones and \$169 billion worth of commodities have been exported from these areas in the past seven years.

Development of the mentioned zones became more significant since the re-imposition of U.S. sanctions on the Iranian economy in November 2018, as the Islamic Republic started reducing dependence on oil incomes while elevating its domestic production and non-oil exports.

Although the sanctions have disrupted Iran's economic activities, they could not impede the development of Iranian free trade and special economic zones; in fact, the development of these zones has been even accelerated.

Earlier on Thursday, President Hassan Rouhani inaugurated 94 development projects worth 60 trillion rials (about \$1.42 billion) in the country's free trade and special economic zones through a video conference.

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

This was the fourth series of inaugurations in the country's free trade and special economic zones since the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20).

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) had been inaugurated.

The measures taken by the government for the development of the mentioned zones have been paying off significantly so that despite the negative impacts of the U.S. sanctions and the coronavirus pandemic, the trade balance of the mentioned zones has stayed positive in recent years.

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Palestinian blood on Germans hands

On October 28, 1964, the foreign minister in Jerusalem received a report of a meeting that was co-chaired by the deputy defense minister and senior Foreign Ministry officials. The topic was "scientific and military cooperation between Israel and Germany."

Germany is 4,000 kilometers (2,500 miles) away from Israel. But, these days, distance is relative. The escalation in the conflict has shaken many in Germany. Now the conflict is spilling over onto German streets. Israeli flags are burning; insecurity and fear are growing among Israelis in Germany and German Jews, DW reported.

According to Haaretz, classified as "top secret," the cable reported that a decision had been made to prevent the matter from being reported in the Israeli media. More specifically, in the spirit of the times, the participants decided "to convene the editors of the Israeli

newspapers and ask them to keep the matter quiet." It then added, "The deputy defense minister has done this."

What were the foreign and defense ministries trying to hide? On Wednesday, the Israel State Archives published on its website hundreds of documents relating to Israeli-German relations. Some of them have to do with the details of a secret arms deal that collapsed in the mid-1960s and caused a serious crisis in bilateral relations, even before these relations had been formally established.

The documents are part of a series the archive has been publishing on the history of the Foreign Ministry that offer interesting lessons in diplomacy, politics, foreign relations and history. The documents also reveal how dependent both Israel's security and its economy were on Germany.

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Israeli troops kill Jordanian after attacking anti-occupation rally on Jordan border

Israeli troops have reportedly shot and killed a Jordanian after opening fire on Jordanian border troops and anti-occupation protesters, amid fierce clashes between Palestinians and Israeli forces in the occupied West Bank and the Tel Aviv regime's bloody onslaught against the blockaded Gaza Strip.

According to a report by Maraya International news portal, the Jordanian national was killed in the early hours of Saturday when Israeli soldiers attacked Jordanian demonstrators gathering on the border with the occupied West Bank to protest Israeli brutality against Palestinians. Users on Twitter identified the victim as Ali al-Safadi.

An unspecified number of protesters were also injured as a result of the Israeli assault, the report said. Jordan's border troops also engaged in an exchange of fire with the Israeli soldiers, according to reports.

The development came after about 2,000 Jordanians on Friday afternoon held a protest

rally near the border to voice their dissent against the Israeli regime, which has been pounding the besieged Gaza Strip with repeated airstrikes for the past several days.

The brutal attacks have so far killed at least 122 Palestinians, including 31 children, in the blockaded enclave.

The report added that hundreds of Jordanian demonstrators broke away from the scheduled route and marched toward the King Hussein Bridge, known in Israel as the Allenby Bridge, which is situated in the Jordan Valley, opposite the Palestinian city of Aribha (Jericho) in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

They wanted to cross the bridge, but Jordanian soldiers dispersed them after firing tear gas and shooting into the air.

In the Jordanian capital Amman, several thousand demonstrators also took to the streets after Friday prayers chanting anti-Israel slogans.

Intl. travels fall by 80% in Iran due to coronavirus

TEHRAN – The average of international travels to and from Iran fell by 80 percent during the past Iranian calendar year 1399 (ended on March 20, 2021) from a year earlier.

"During this period, 4,343,163 passengers entered the country, which included 3,030,464 Iranian passengers and 512,699 international travelers," Mehr quoted Aezou Ghanian, an official with the Islamic Republic of Iran's Customs Administration, as saying on Saturday.

"From the beginning of 1399 to the end of it, we saw a significant reduction in passenger traffic to the country or vice versa in land, sea, rail and air borders, which were caused by various coronavirus restrictions."

International tourist arrivals to Iran plunged 72 percent during the first eight months of the year when compared to 2019, according to data compiled by the World Tourism Organization. Restrictions on travel introduced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic continue to hit global tourism hard, with the latest

data from the UNWTO showing a 70 percent fall in international arrivals for the first eight months of 2020.

Iran, however, has experienced different rates of downfall for inbound passengers over the past months. In the first three months of 2020 (January, February, March), the tourism industry of the country recorded negative rates of 90, 92, and 94 percent, respectively, compared to the same period last year, according to the organization.

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People over 75 being vaccinated against coronavirus

TEHRAN – Coronavirus vaccination started for people aged 75 or above on Saturday, Alireza Raeisi, the deputy health minister, has announced.

Vaccination is underway for people above 80 years of age, and no one will be left unvaccinated despite the start of vaccination in the younger age groups, he added. On April 27, vaccination of the elderly began with priority given to people aged 80 and above, IRNA reported on Saturday.

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U.S. policies consist of double standards: Azeri expert

BY REZA MOSHFEGH

TEHRAN – Head of the Azerbaijan Institute for Democracy and Human Rights says that the United States exercises double standards in the world extensively.

"U.S. policy consists of double standards. Not only on the Karabakh issue but also on other conflicts in the world, Washington's position is aimed at ensuring its own interests," Ahmad Shahidov tells the Tehran Times.

While many had expected U.S. President Biden to follow a softer foreign policy and marginalize hawkish politicians in the White House, it seems that Biden pursues a more aggressive approach.

"This is not only the case with Turkey. We also see this predatory policy against Russia, China, Iran and other countries. The goal is to restore U.S. global leadership. But it is too late. America is no longer a world leader," Shahidov remarks.

The following is the text of the interview:
Could you update us about the last developments in Azerbaijan-Armenia relations?

Certain tensions remain between Azerbaijan and Armenia after the historic peace agreement of November 10, 2020. The two main issues have caused tension between the parties. The Azerbaijani side demands a map of mines in the liberated territories from Armenia, but officially Yerevan refuses to provide these maps.

The problem is that over the past six months, about 50 Azerbaijani servicemen and civilians have been killed by landmines in those areas. Azerbaijan has also appealed to international organizations on this issue, but, unfortunately, there is no positive result yet.

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ELECTION WIRE

Prominent presidential hopefuls register on last day

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — On the last day of registration for the presidential elections, many prominent political figures went to the Ministry of Interior to register as presidential candidates for the June 18 elections.

Seyyed Ebrahim Raeisi, the Judiciary chief, was perhaps the most well-known figure to enter the presidential race.

He said his nomination as a candidate does not negate the candidacy of others.

The main principlist faction, which consists of several principlist groups, has said its favored candidate is Raisi.

“Though many groups asked me” to enter the presidential race “but my presence does not negate the presence of anybody,” the top judge remarked.

“Competitor of aristocracy, incompetence, and corruption”

He said like all others who felt it is necessary to contest the elections “I also felt that we need a great reform in the country.”

Talking to reporters at the premises of the Interior Ministry, Raisi said he considers himself a “competitor of aristocracy, incompetence, and corruption.”

He added, “I am not the competitor of political factions and different groups.”

The top judge said his priorities are foreign policy, especially establishing good relations with neighbors, promoting production sector, improving economy and reducing unemployment.

Raisi said he decided to enter the race upon requests by clerical associations, university professors, students, farmers, investors, and entrepreneurs.

The presidential candidate added, “The current disappointments (about economy) can turn into hope in another government.”

Raeisi challenged the post of president in the 2017 election. He came second after Hassan Rouhani.

‘Politician registers to run for president’

Former Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani registered to run for the presidential post on Saturday.

Larijani, a three-time parliament speaker, ran for president in 2005.

Larijani, a philosopher-turned politician, also was the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) for ten years.

He was also the secretary of the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) in the early years of the Ahmadinejad administration in 2005. As top security chief, he also served as Iran’s chief nuclear negotiator with the European trio of Britain, Germany and France as well as the EU foreign policy chief who at the time was Javier Solana.

Mohsen Hashemi, a member of the central council of the Executives of Construction Party, on Saturday registered to run for the presidential post.

Mohsen Hashemi is currently the president of the Tehran City Council which is dominated by reformists.

A pro-reform figure, Mohsen Hashemi is the son of former late president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.

Jalili nominates as presidential candidate, says country should progress steadily

On Saturday, the last day to register to run as presidential candidate, Saeed Jalili, former secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, also went to the Interior Ministry to announce his candidacy.

He said that the country cannot be administered with “shows.”

He reiterated that the country should not just be administered in the next four years, but it should progress as well.

The former SNSC chief expressed hope that the upcoming elections would be “passionate and stress-free.”

Jalili ran unsuccessfully for the post of president in the 2013 elections, losing the battle to current president Hassan Rouhani.

Es’hagh Jahangiri, the first vice president, also nominated to contest the presidential race.

At a press conference held in the Ministry of Interior after his registration, Jahangiri stated that his administration would move towards resolving Iran’s fundamental problems, securing national interests and reduce tension inside and outside the country.

Former MP Mohammad Khoshchereh, a trained economist, also nominated to run for the post of president.

Khoshchereh came to prominence as he represented Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in a televised presidential debate against Mohammad Reza Nobakht (the current chief of the Budget and Planning Organization) who represented Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani in the runoff presidential elections in 2005.

However, later Khoshchereh became a fierce opponent of Ahmadinejad’s economic policies.

Masoud Pezeshkian, a heart surgeon who served as health minister in the Mohammad Khatami administration, also registered on Saturday to run for the post of president.

Pezeshkian, a pro-reform figure, was vice speaker in the previous parliament. He currently represents the Tabriz constituency in the parliament. The sitting MP was accompanied by her daughter while going to the Interior Ministry to register.

He said it is a wrong idea to resolve problems through people who have held posts and caused these problems.

On Saturday afternoon, central banker Abdolnaser Hemmati also registered to run for the presidential election. Hemmati is considered as a figure who succeeded to put a brake on the skyrocketing inflation rate resulting from Trump’s “maximum pressure” campaign against Iran.

The registration for presidential election ends on Saturday, May, 15. Candidates should refer to the Interior Ministry to register.

The presidential election will be held on June 12.

Inside presidential elections: Plans and promises

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — As the registration began to close on

Saturday, the Ministry of Interior witnessed many prominent political figures coming and going, including key figures Ebrahim Raeisi and Ali Larijani.

Ayatollah Raeisi, the Judiciary chief, showed up at the ministry on Saturday to register as a presidential candidate.

A highly favored candidate, he is widely welcomed by principlists and the Endurance Front.

Like anyone else who thought it was important to run for office, Raeisi said, “I also felt that we needed a great change in the country.”

He added, “I am not the competitor of political factions and different groups.”

‘I have no affiliations’

Ali Larijani, the former Parliament speaker and current advisor to the Leader, also came to the ministry at the early hours of Saturday to officially announce his presidential candidacy.

He stated that he is running independently and he has no affiliations whatsoever with the current administration.

Larijani, also a former secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, said that the fate of the nation should be handed to young experts.

“They have high goals and are driven by strong motivations,” Larijani stated.

He noted that a dynamic economy and a predictable life are provided for the people when “the world is under our tune and culture.”

Many analysts believe that the Raisi-Larijani duel will create an enthusiastic election atmosphere and bring more people to the ballot boxes, as it will depict a moderate principlist vs. a principlist.

‘Iran for all Iranians’

Es’hagh Jahangiri, the first vice president, also nominated to contest the elections race.

At a press conference held in the Ministry of Interior after his registration, Jahangiri stated that his possible administration would move towards resolving Iran’s fundamental problems, securing national interests and agreements and de-escalation the situation inside and outside the country.

He said that he had hoped that there would have been no need for him to run for the presidency, yet, he fielded candidacy as his “dear brother, Dr. Mohammad Javad Zariif” refused presidential candidacy.

He said that he would continue the path opened to revive the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and “untangle the knot of the brutal three-year old sanctions that has badly damaged the Iranian economy.”

He reiterated that Iran should be for all Iranians, regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion and place of residence.



Backed up by the reformist front, Jahangiri is said to be the main reformist candidate in the elections. It is likely that other pro-reform candidates such as former MP Mahmoud Sadeghi and Mohsen Hashemi, the president of the Tehran City Council, would quit the race in favor of Jahangiri.

On his future plans, he said, “I will promote government rejuvenation and institutional reforms that reduce corruption and all forms of discrimination and increase efficiency.”

‘I don’t have a 100-day plan’

On the very first hours of the first day of the election registration, Saeed Mohammed, former director of the Khatam-al Anbiya Construction Headquarters, registered as a presidential candidate.

He said that his registration in the first hours of the process shows his good intentions and added that he is determined to proceed forward with his presidential bid.

He also stated that he is not backed by any parties or groups, neither does he want to be backed up by any of the political parties, as he considers himself one of the ordinary people.

Mohammad noted that he has “a good resume and a strong team of experts” that helped him set foot in the path of presidential race.

“Building the country and improving the infrastructure cannot be done in 100 days, and I have a 4-year plan in this field to bring the country to an acceptable level,” he said when asked about his first 100-day plan.

‘I register due to insistence of people’

The Ministry of Interior witnessed one of its most controversial days to this date when Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the former president, showed up to register as a nominee for the upcoming presidential elections.

Coming with a group of his fans, he said

that he registered in the elections due to an insistence by the people.

‘My administration will be honest’

Mohsen Rezaei, current secretary of the Expediency Council, came to register as a presidential candidate late on Saturday.

Rezaei declared that he is running independently and this time, he is running on a strong campaign.

“I’m not here to cover-up the truth. We will tell everything to the people honestly,” he promised.

Stating that he has come to shield people against difficulties, not to use the people as shields, Rezaei said that he has plans to bring welfare for the people.

Stating that had the government solved economic issues, he wouldn’t have registered as a candidate, he said that Iran needs what he called an “economic and social uprising” by the people.

“We will initiate a structural change in the administration of the country,” he said.

‘Burden of sanctions should be on officials’ shoulders, not people’

Saeed Jalili, former secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, also showed up at the Ministry of Interior on Saturday to register for the presidential elections.

Citing Iran’s fundamental issues, he said that employment, inflation, and sanctions are Iran’s important issues that need to be tackled with.

Challenging other nominees to present their plans to the people, he said that the candidates should tell the people the result of their 4-year plan.

“If we do not address the main issues well, some rhetoric can take even the main issues. I hope that in the upcoming elections, rhetoric will not overcome the needs of the people,”

Iran, Russia consult about Vienna talks

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Russian Federation, Kazem Jalali, met with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov on Friday.

The meeting focused on the current situation regarding the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the official name for the 2015 nuclear deal.

The two sides also stressed the importance of coordination and efforts of all members of the JCPOA for a sustainable

implementation of the nuclear deal in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231.

During the meeting, Jalali praised Russia’s “principled and rational stance in support of UNSC Resolution 2231 and its opposition to the illegal U.S. actions and sanctions” against Iran.

The fourth round of the Vienna talks began last week and the delegates have not left Vienna to accelerate the process of reviving the nuclear deal.



Guardian Council says recent interpretation of law is yardstick for vetting presidential candidates

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The Constitutional Council, commonly called the Guardian Council, says the body’s recent interpretation of the law governing the necessary qualifications of presidential hopefuls will serve as the yardstick for vetting the candidates.

Abbas-Ali Kadkhodaei, the spokesman for Guardian Council, made the remarks on Friday while visiting the election headquarters at the Interior Ministry in Tehran, where the hopefuls registered for the presidential election slated for June 18.

“Given the recent resolution by the Constitutional Council, the registration in the election has fortunately gone through a balanced process. We are moving forward and not witnessing the problems of the past,”



he told reporters, according to Press TV.

“This time, the Constitutional Council will review the qualifications of those who are qualified based on the body’s recent resolution. Therefore, regarding the examination of the eligibility of the candidates,

the criterion is the Constitutional Council’s resolution.”

On May 5, the Guardian Council approved an amendment to a measure that it had ratified earlier to clarify the criteria that apply to candidates applying for the post of president.

Accordingly, presidential hopefuls are required to be between 40 and 70 years of age, hold at least a master’s degree or its equivalent, have a work experience of at least four years in managerial posts (with specific criteria of its own), and have no criminal record.

Notably, top military commanders with the status of major general and higher are also allowed to run.

On Tuesday, candidates registered to

he remarked.

Discussing sanctions, the nuclear negotiator during the Ahmadinejad presidency, stated that the burden of sanctions should be on the officials’ shoulders, not the people.

Many analysts claim that Jalili would not quit the race in favor of anyone. Backed up by the Endurance Front, analysts say that he should be a cover-up for Raisi in order not to divide the cleric’s votes.

‘I won’t forfeit’

General Hossein Dehghan, former Minister of Defense, also registered on the first day of the election registration. He said that his likely administration would be “the administration of strong Iranian civilians.”

Stating that the administration of a country is not an arena for “political celebrities,” he said that the people of Iran deserve a better life and his administration will be honest with people.

He also said he is not aligned to any political faction, including reformist or principlist camps.

“My government will be a government of construction that will be formed solely on the basis of merit and will seek to bring real peace to the lives of the people,” the general said.

On his future administration’s foreign policy plan, Dehghan said that according to his belief, the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran is based on interaction with all countries with the priority of neighbors and friendly countries.

“This relationship will not be unilateral, but bilateral and multilateral, and certainly the fake Israeli regime has no place on this, but in relation to other countries based on national principles and interests from the position of power and authority and dignity we will move forward by relying on the three principles of dignity, expediency and wisdom”.

When asked if he would quit the race in favor of any other nominees, he said that he’d fight the battle to the very end, as he did not wait for anyone.

‘Government of welfare and justice’

Another politician who registered in the early hours of the last day was Mohsen Hashemi, the president of the Tehran City Council and a member of the central council of the Executives of Construction Party.

He stated that his government will be the government of “welfare and justice.”

Exemplifying his late father, Ayatollah Hashemi Rafsanjani, he stated that at this time he can, with the national will, compensate the damages to the welfare and livelihood of the people and their trust, just as his father’s government of construction and labor was able to compensate the underdevelopment caused by the Iraq war in the 1980s.

IRGC commander: Israeli regime completely surrounded by resistance front

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — According to a senior commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), the Zionist regime of Israel has been caught off guard and is completely surrounded by the resistance front.

According to Press TV, Brigadier General Yadollah Javani, the IRGC deputy commander for political affairs, said on Saturday that the incidents over the past days in the occupied territories well displayed the resistance [front]’s capability in confronting the Zionists’ military power and revealed the Zionist regime’s faulted defense system.

The Zionist regime is under pressure both from inside the occupied territories and from international public opinion, he added, noting that the situation is changed in favor of Palestine and the resistance front.

“The Zionist regime has no capability at all to change the situation in its own favor, and based on realities on the ground, the process of the Zionists’ decline has gained momentum,” the IRGC commander said.

Javani added that the fake and usurping Israeli regime has been facing unprecedented developments in the occupied territories and the Gaza Strip during recent days.

The regime has forcefully occupied territories and is now under pressure from the main owners of these lands, he said, adding, “The future belongs to the Palestinian people and the resistance front and the Zionist regime has no fate but destruction.”

He emphasized that resistance front in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Yemen and the entire region fully supports the Palestinian people in their confrontation with the Israeli regime.

Gaza and other Palestinian territories have been simmering with anger over Israel’s land grab policies in occupied Jerusalem al-Quds as well as the regime’s desecration of the

al-Aqsa Mosque complex, the third holiest site in Islam.

The tensions spiraled into a broader conflict between Gaza and Israel on Monday, days after the regime in Tel Aviv launched a heavy-handed crackdown on Palestinian worshippers at al-Aqsa Mosque during the final days of the holy fasting month of Ramadan.

Since then, the Israeli military has been launching large-scale airstrikes across Gaza, razing homes and civilian infrastructure to the ground. The regime’s artillery and tanks have also been targeting the blockaded coastal enclave.

SPORTS

Iran announce squad for FIBA Asia Cup Qualifiers

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** – Iran have named an 18-player roster that will be preparing for their upcoming games in the FIBA Asia Cup 2021 Qualifiers.

The pool is filled with the big-named stars of Iran basketball whether it's Hamed Haddadi, Samad Nikkakh Bahrami, Mohammad Jamshidi, Arsalan Kazemi, and Behnam Yakhchali. Two recent key additions to the team's core, Mike Rostampour and Aron Geramipour, are also listed in the roster.

Rising youngsters are also named to the squad whether it's Sina Vahedi, who has already made his senior national debut in the previous windows, or Matin Aghajanpour, who has starred for Iran's youth national teams in the past.

The team will be led by head coach Mehran Shahintab as they aim to top Group E and claim direct qualification to Asia Cup 2021.

There are 24 teams competing in the FIBA Asia Cup 2021 Qualifiers. Once the three windows of the Qualifiers conclude, the top two teams in each group will qualify directly to Asia Cup 2021. The six last-placed teams in each group are eliminated.

Meanwhile, the six third-placed teams in each group will then play in a separate qualifying tournament. Teams will be placed into two different groups of three teams. The top two teams of those respective groups will then lock in their spots at Asia Cup 2021, completing the 16-team roster who will also compete in the FIBA Basketball World Cup 2023 Asian Qualifiers.

Squad:

Matin Aghajanpour, Rouzbeh Arghavan, Pooyan Jalalpour, Mohammad Jamshidi, Hamed Haddadi, Mohammad Hassanzadeh, Hamed Hosseinzadeh, Saeid Davarpanah, Mike Rostampour, Navid Rezaeifar, Arsalan Kazemi, Aron Geramipour, Rasool Mozaffari, Salar Monji, Samad Nikkakh Bahrami, Behnam Yakhchali, Sina Vahedi, Mohammad Yousefvand



Two Iranian women heading to Asian Taekwondo Olympic Qualification

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** – Mahla Momenzadeh and Nahid Kiani will participate at the 2021 Asian Taekwondo Olympic Qualification Tournament.

The tournament will be held from May 19 to 23 at Amman, Jordan.

Momenzadeh will feature Iran at the -49kg weight category while Kiani will compete at -57kg.

The pair will be headed by Mahroo Kamrani in the competition. At this tournament, the winner and runner-up athletes in each division will qualify for Tokyo. While many notable taekwondo athletes have already qualified for the Games, this tournament gives some lesser known athletes to punch their ticket to Tokyo.

Esteghlal almost out of IPL title race

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Esteghlal's hopes of winning the Iran Professional League (IPL) took another hit on Friday as they suffered a 1-0 defeat against Persepolis in Tehran derby.

It was the second blow to Farhad Majidi's side after they slumped to a messy 2-0 loss against struggling Zob Ahan in the last week.

The Blue's efforts to improve their positions in the IPL table went from bad to waste, and they bowed out of the title race in less than seven days.

Of course, there are still nine remaining matches for Esteghlal in the league, and mathematically it's still possible for them to win the league. Still, their 11-points difference with the two top teams, Sepahan and Persepolis, has diminished the hopes of the Tehran giants and their fans to win the tournament.

Farhad Majidi has admitted that his side must now focus on the Hazfi Cup if they want to end the current season with a title.

Esteghlal will face Zob Ahan in the round of 16 of Hazfi Cup on Wednesday in Tehran, and Majidi describes the match as a "crucial game" for his side. On their IPL title hopes, the head coach feels they must do what they can and need to rely on results going their way.

He took responsibility for the defeat against their archrivals and said: "My players did well on the game. We were much better than Persepolis in both half times and didn't deserve to lose the game. In such big matches, whoever makes the best use of their opportunities will win the match. Persepolis used their only chance and took go the result."

Esteghlal will need a small miracle in their remaining games to win the league as they have left themselves with a mountain to climb in title hunting.

IPL title race is set to enter critical weeks as Iranian football fans will witness a fierce competition for a title between Persepolis and Sepahan, who lead the league with the same points and are running a two-horse race.

It seems that it will be a seismic summer ahead at the Esteghlal club as Majidi has complained several times that the team's current players are not his selection. He insisted that he needs time to rebuild a team to win the title. In recent years Esteghlal have failed to fulfill their fans' expectations.

Sohrab Moradi misses Olympic Games

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** – Iranian weightlifter Sohrab Moradi missed the Tokyo Olympic Games in the Ibero-American Championship and the Open Specialty Qualifications held in Cali, Colombia.

The 96kg weightlifter appeared to injure his left wrist in making his second snatch of 170 kilograms and withdrew, leaving Venezuela's Keydomar Vallenilla to complete a comfortable victory with 173-211-384.

Kianoush Rostami, another Iranian weightlifter, had also missed the Olympics because he did not score any points in phase two of qualifying, and that ended his chances of making it to Tokyo.

The 89kg weight class weightlifter accused the Iran Weightlifting Federation of "lack of work".

There has not been a good relationship between the federation and Rostami for some time, and he said he was "displaced" and did not feel "part of the family."

War on Gaza reveals Saudi-Emirati bromance with Israel

P O L I T I C A L **TEHRAN** – While most Islamic and Arab as well as other states strongly condemned Israeli atrocities against civilians in Gaza and elsewhere in Palestine, Abu Dhabi and Riyadh adopted a low-key approach toward the latest round of Israeli violence against the Palestinian people.

As the war on Gaza continues to rage on, anger and frustration among public opinion in the Arab world are being directed at Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates for their inaction on the Israeli crimes against the Palestinians. These two states, along with their allies such as Bahrain, have largely refrained from providing support, at least morally, to the besieged people of Gaza.

The UAE, which normalized relations with Israel last year, remained silent on the Israeli war on Gaza. Instead, it expressed sympathy with what it called "victims" in Israel. To apparently balance its position, the UAE also dryly voiced sympathy with the Palestinians fallen victims to the Israeli warmongering.

UAE Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan issued a belated statement on the crisis in Palestine saying that he was concerned about the violence there.

He "has expressed the UAE's grave concern over the escalating spiral of violence in Israel and Palestine and offered condolences to all victims of the recent fighting," according to the UAE Foreign Ministry's statement.

"The UAE is alarmed by the escalating spiral of violence in Israel and Palestine. We express our condolences to all victims of the recent fighting, and join others in calling for an immediate cessation of violence and hostilities. The UAE calls on all parties to



take immediate steps to commit to a cease-fire, initiate a political dialogue, and exercise maximum restraint," the chief Emirati diplomat continued.

The statement equated the Palestinians with the Israelis as if it was the Palestinians who are occupying and besieging the Israelis. Israel, which is the only possessor of nuclear weapons in the region, bears ultimate responsibility for what's happening in Palestine. The latest round of fighting began after Israel moved to evict Palestinian families from their ancestral homes in Jerusalem's Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood, something that left the Palestinians with no option but to hit back. Also, Israel's provocative move in

desecrating Muslim sanctities in al-Quds (Jerusalem) plays a major role in provoking the Palestinians to push back against Israel. Israel killed defenseless children and women in Gaza and desecrated places of sanctity for Muslims in Jerusalem (al-Quds) especially the al-Aqsa Mosque, which stands as the first Qiblah (direction of prayer) and the third-holiest site in Islam.

But all this apparently was not enough for the UAE to take a stand against Israel. Abu Dhabi has been increasingly tilting toward Israel since it normalized relations with Tel Aviv. In the beginning, it was thought that the UAE normalized relations with Israel under pressure from the Trump administration.

But now that Israel blatantly violates human rights in Palestine, the UAE showed that its decision to establish ties with Israel goes far beyond Trump's pressures.

The same goes for Saudi Arabia, though the Saudis have not yet normalized relations with Israel. Of course, at the official level, Saudi Arabia has sought to distance itself from the Israelis' crimes in Palestine. However, a close examination of Saudi media coverage of the war on Gaza indicates Riyadh's low-key approach to the war. Saudi Arabia condemned the Israeli attack against the Al-Aqsa Mosque but it stopped short of sanding by the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

In fact, Saudi Arabia even gave airtime to Israeli officials to justify their crimes against Palestinians. For example, the Saudi-own Al Arabia news television hosted Avichay Adraee, the Arabic-language spokesman for the Israel army, twice over the past few days. During his appearances on Al Arabiya, the Israeli mouth-piece was explaining why Israel was right to kill defenseless children and women in Gaza.

The Saudi and Emirati indifference to the Palestinians' sufferings sparked outrage on social media platforms in the Arab world. It also cast doubts over their willingness to mend ties with Iran, which strongly condemned Israel's atrocities against the Palestinians. Security officials from Iran and Saudi Arabia have held behind-the-scenes talks in Baghdad. The talks have so far produced no concrete results and they are expected to become even more complicated after the Israel-Gaza flare-up as it showed that the Saudis and Emiratis have tilted too much toward Israel, something that Iran considers a grave national security threat.

Zarif cancels Vienna visit as Iran criticizes Austrian sympathy with Israel

P O L I T I C A L **TEHRAN** – Iran's top diplomat canceled a trip to Vienna amid Iranian criticism over a controversial decision by Austria to fly the Israeli flag over government offices.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif was expected to pay a visit to Austria on Saturday but the visit was suddenly canceled. Iran's Foreign Ministry said Zarif aborted his visit because he didn't see it useful.

"Mr. Zarif did not consider the trip expedient in these circumstances, and therefore the visit's arrangements were not finalized," Saeed Khatibzadeh, spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry, told the ISNA news agency.

A Vienna-based journalist claimed that the cancellation was due to Austria flying the Israeli flag over government buildings.

"In a last-minute move Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif canceled his bilateral visit to Austria, that was planned for today, due to the Israeli flags on the roof of the Chancellery and the Foreign Ministry in Vienna," Stephanie Liechtenstein said on Twitter, adding, "The Austrian Foreign Ministry just confirmed this to me and added: 'This cancellation will not



change our traditionally good relations and open channels of communication with Iran. But we will not make our statement of solidarity with Israel dependent on the diplomatic visits of other countries."

Earlier on Friday, Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi, who is in Vienna for nuclear talks, also expressed dismay at Austria's controversial decision regarding

the Israeli flag.

"Vienna is the seat of IAEA & UN, and Austria so far [has] been a great host for negotiations. Shocking & painful to see flag of the occupying regime, that brutally killed tens of innocent civilians, including many children in just few days, over government offices in Vienna. We stand with Palestine," Araghchi said on Twitter.

Diplomats from Iran and the P4+1 group of countries as well as the U.S. are in Vienna to discuss the measures needed to be taken to bring Tehran and Washington back into full compliance with a 2015 nuclear deal officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Almost all parties to the negotiations said progress was made during the talks, though this progress did not amount to a complete revival of the JCPOA.

On Friday, Araghchi met with the Chinese envoy to the Vienna talks, Wang Qun. During the meeting, the two diplomats discussed the latest developments concerning the talks.

Over the past few days, the Iranian delegation in Vienna held several meetings with the P4+1.

Iran calls on Armenia, Azerbaijan to resolve dispute peacefully amid border tensions

→1 The Islamic Republic of Iran underlines the necessity of maintaining stability and calm in the region, and calls on both sides to show restraint, avoid fueling the disagreements, and respect the two countries' borders," he added.

He also expressed Iran's preparedness to contribute to the peaceful settlement of the two countries' differences, including the recent dispute.

The statement came after Armenia accused Azerbaijan of incursion into Armenian territories.

On Friday night, Armenian Foreign Minister Ara Aivazian held telephone conversations with a number of his counterparts to inform them of the situation at the border with Azerbaijan.

"Had phone conversations with colleagues presenting the situation resulted from the incursion of Azerbaijani armed forces in Armenia's state border. This encroachment attempt on the sovereign territory of Armenia, violating international law, is unacceptable," he said on Twitter.

On Wednesday, Armenia accused Azerbaijan of advancing into its Southern territory. On the same day, Armenia's Security Council

held a meeting in which Acting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan briefed the military leaders of the tensions between Baku and Yerevan.

"Today's Security Council sitting is dedicated to the events taking place at the border section close to Sev Lich in Syunik Marz and the surrounding area. Earlier today Azerbaijan's armed forces crossed the state border of the Republic of Armenia and advanced as far as 3.5 kilometers in that section. In fact, they are trying to surround and siege the Lake," the prime minister said at the meeting.

He added, "Of course, this is unacceptable to the Armenian side, because it represents an encroachment on the sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia. It still remains to be seen why such an action was possible, but it should be noted that this is an act of subversive infiltration. It should also be stated that our armed forces responded early this morning with appropriate tactical maneuvers and other necessary measures."

Pashinyan said Armenia "cannot in any way tolerate and come to terms with the situation at hand."

On the other hand, the Republic of Azerbaijan has confirmed that it deployed troops to areas bordering Armenia but said

this deployment occurred inside Azerbaijani territories.

"According to the trilateral statement signed on November 10, 2020, with the improvement of weather conditions in the settlements of the liberated Lachin and Kalbajar regions bordering with Armenia, which have a difficult mountainous terrain and climatic conditions, the Azerbaijani border forces are deployed in the positions of our country. This process is carried out in the usual mode and in a systematic manner," Azerbaijan's Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

The statement added, "Measures to strengthen the border protection system implemented within the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan are carried out on the basis of maps available to each of the sides that define the border line between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Since regaining its independence, there has been no state border between the two countries for obvious reasons, and for this reason we speak about the complicated technical process, which is currently accompanied by disagreements between the sides."

The Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry accused "official circles" in Armenia of using border tensions for pre-election purposes.

FM Zarif holds talks in Spain

P O L I T I C A L **TEHRAN** – Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif met with Spain's Minister for Industry, Trade and Tourism Maria Reyes Maroto, who also co-chairs the Iran-Spain Joint Economic Cooperation Commission.

During the meeting, the two ministers discussed mutual cooperation in economic and trade areas, according to the Iranian Foreign Ministry.

During the discussions, Zarif touched upon the great potential in both countries for bilateral economic cooperation, especially in the domain of trade exchanges as well as collaboration in the areas of oil and gas, agriculture, tourism infrastructure as well as air and sea transportation.

He underlined the need to improve and upgrade relations in those domains by removing the existing barriers and setting objectives to reach a status proportionate to the potentialities of both sides.

The Spanish minister, in turn, highlighted the significance of Tehran-Madrid relations, saying Spain is interested

in boosting economic and trade ties with Iran within the framework of a roadmap for bilateral cooperation.

She expressed hope that a new era of economic cooperation will begin when the coronavirus crisis ends.

The chief Iranian diplomat has embarked on a tour of several European countries which began with a visit to Spain where he met with Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation Arancha Gonzalez Laya.

In his Thursday meeting with Laya, Zarif discussed the latest status of Tehran-Madrid relations in various political and economic fields.

Foreign Minister Zarif reviewed bilateral relations in different spheres, and said the potential for Iran-Spain economic cooperation is beyond the current level.

He then underlined the necessity of exploring avenues for promoting collaborations in different economic areas by removing some of the existing barriers.

Zarif also highlighted the significance of developing co-operation in the field of small and medium-sized enterprises

as well as the tourism industry and its infrastructure for activation of Iran-Spain economic relations.

The Iranian foreign minister elaborated on Tehran's viewpoints regarding the regional issues, especially the need for intra-regional interaction among countries and other important issues of the region including Yemen, Afghanistan, and Iraq.

Zarif further pointed to the recent developments in the occupied Palestine and the tough conditions faced by its people in the occupied territories, and stressed the necessity for cessation of the usurping Zionist regime's brutish measures against the people of Palestine.

He also expounded on Iran's viewpoint regarding the Vienna talks to revive the 2015 nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

The Spanish foreign minister, in turn, described Iran's position in the region as important, and elaborated on her country's viewpoints regarding various issues including the JCPOA, the regional and bilateral issues.

TEDPIX rises 5,500 points on Saturday

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), gained 5,519 points to 1.189 million on Saturday (the first day of Iranian calendar week).

Over 3.942 billion securities worth 38.946 trillion rials (about \$927.2 million) were traded at the TSE on Saturday.

The first market's index rose 5,863 points, and the second market's index climbed 4,871 points.

TEDPIX gained 11,000 points, or one percent, in the past Iranian calendar week.



The index closed at 1.183 million points on Wednesday (the last working day of the week).

During the past week, the indices of Barekat Pharmaceutical Group (BPG), Social Security Investment Company, Mobarakeh Steel Company, Iran Khodro Company, Isfahan Oil Refining Company, National Iranian Copper Industry Company, and Bank Mellat were the most widely followed indices.

Rouzbah Shariati, a capital market analyst, says that TEDPIX is going to improve over the next 1.5 months in comparison to the first 1.5 months of the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 21).

Over 26m tons of minerals extracted from East Azarbaijan mines in a year

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** —As stated by a provincial official, over 26 million tons of minerals were extracted from the mines of East Azarbaijan province, in the northwest of Iran, during the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20).

Habib Aminzadeh, the head of East Azarbaijan's Industry, Mining, and Trade Department, also said that the issuance of exploration permits rose 44.7 percent in the province during the previous year.

He announced the growth of indicators related to the mines and mineral industries in the province, and said despite all the restrictions, last year a total of 55 exploration permits were issued for 14 types of minerals in East Azarbaijan.

Meanwhile, as previously reported, the value of annual steel export from East Azarbaijan province is more than \$100 million.

East Azarbaijan province's steel industry, as the largest production hub of this product in the private sector of the country, has grown significantly in recent years.

East Azerbaijan, after Isfahan and Khuzestan provinces, where most of the steel production units are state-owned, ranks third in the country's steel production, with 85 percent of this production being done by the private sector.

With an annual processing of 5.5 million tons of steel, this province accounts for 24 percent of the total production of this widely used product in Iran and supplies it to the foreign markets as well.

Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry data show that 680 mining operation licenses have been issued in the previous Iranian calendar year 1399 to register an 18.1-percent increase compared to the preceding year.

Based on the mentioned data, 576 licenses had been issued in the Iranian calendar year 1398.

During the previous year, 1,020 mineral exploration licenses were also issued in the country, which in comparison with 960 licenses issued in the year 1398, a 6.3-percent increase is registered in this sector.



As reported, the inaugurated mines have created job opportunities for 5,516 people in the previous year, 15.4 percent more than the figure for the preceding year.

Expenses for exploration operations also increased by 39.5 percent in 1399 compared to its preceding year; accordingly, the cost of exploration operations last year was 1.549 trillion rials (about \$36.8 million) while the figure was 1.111 trillion rials (about \$26.4 million) in 1398.

In early April, Head of the explorations department of the Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) Ali Asgharzadeh announced the identification of 1,700 new promising mineral zones across the country.

In the past few years with new resilient economy strategies coming into play, the mining sector has become a major point of focus for the Iranian government and various organizations and bodies active in this sector have been tasked to implement new programs for boosting this sector.

As a major state-owned holding company active in the mining sector in the country, IMIDRO has been playing a significant part in the mentioned planning.

The organization has been implementing several new programs in all the main fields of the mining industry including exploration, machinery development, extraction and also reviving the country's idle mines.

According to the IMIDRO head, the organization has put the development of mines and mining industries on the agenda with three main strategies: increasing exploration operations, developing infrastructure, and reviving the country's idle small-scale mines.

Major strategies to boost trade between Iran, Armenia

→ 1 Iran is a very important market in the region and development of ties with this country is of high significance for the EAEU members (Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan).

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

Back in January 2020, the Head of Iran-Armenia Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry Hervik Yarijanian said the preferential trade agreement between Iran and EAEU has had a significant impact on the country's trade relations with Armenia.

According to the official, the volume of trade between the two countries has witnessed an outstanding rise since the agreement became effective.

Iran mainly imports red meat from Armenia, while Armenia imports polymer raw materials, machinery, industrial gases, manufactured artifacts, leather and leather goods from Iran, he said.

Establishment of neighboring free trade zones (FTZs) is another measure that can boost bilateral trade between Iran and Armenia.

As stated by Yarijanian, setting up such zones on the borderlines can boost Iran-Armenia trade to over \$1.2 billion in less than



a year.

Saying that trade between Iran and Armenia has fluctuated up to \$500 million in recent years, he noted that Mogri Free Zone in Armenia will soon be set up next to Aras Free Zone in Iran, which could increase the volume of trade between the two countries.

This proximity provides more free conditions for both countries to facilitate exchanges and can increase trade between the two sides to \$1.2 billion in less than a year, he added.

"On the other hand, for the growth of trade between the two countries, due to the common border, we should consider

exemption facilities for the entry and exit of some goods, and exclude countries with commercial interests from related laws", the head of Iran-Armenia Joint Chamber of Commerce further stressed.

"Currently, there is a good market for Iranian goods in this country, which we can get, but the imposition of some import bans in the mid-term will make this market out of Iran's access", Yarijanian noted, adding, exports and imports in the two countries must be balanced, because if exports increase and import bans are imposed in the mid-term, trade between the two sides will face obstacles.

Holding exhibitions in the other country is the other main strategy to cement trade ties between the two neighbors.

One of the ways to enter the markets of other countries is to hold and participate in exhibitions, and the Eurasian market is one of the most important commercial spaces due to its location in the region and its proximity to Iran.

Hassan Mortaji, a member of Iran's Committee of Foreign Events, says, "Armenia has demanded the replacement of some items by Iran, and now that this market is available for our country, we can introduce and offer goods and services by holding various exhibitions."

Iran taking big steps for development of free trade, special economic zones

→ 1 In late April, the Secretary of Iranian Free Zones High Council Hamidreza Mo'meni announced that the trade balance of the country's free and special economic zones has been positive in the past two years despite the negative balance of the country's foreign trade.

Today, the free zones are in a good condition and positive development measures have been taken which have led to significant growth in these zones, the official said.

He further announced the establishment of a finance council in the Iranian Free Zones High Council, saying that soon advisory groups will be sent to all of the country's free zones and the zones can access sustainable financial resources for implementing new development programs.

According to the official, the country's free and economic zones should become more productive in order to be able to

fund their own development projects in the future.

The establishment of free trade zones in Iran dates back to the Iranian calendar year 1368 (March 1989- March 1990) following the fall in the country's oil income in the preceding year which prompted the government to promote non-oil exports.

The first two free trade zones of Iran were established in the south of the country. The first one was Kish Free Trade Zone established in 1368 on Kish Island in the Persian Gulf and the second one was Qeshm Free Trade Zone established the year after on Qeshm Island in the Strait of Hormuz.

Some five other free trade zones have been also established in the country since then, including Chabahar in southeastern Sistan-Baluchestan Province, Arvand in southwestern Khuzestan Province, Anzali in northern Gilan Province, Aras



in East-Azarbaijan Province, and Maku in West-Azarbaijan Province, both in the northwest of the country.

Stock market to get back on track this year: MP

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Mohamadreza Pour-Ebrahimi, the chairman of the Iranian parliament's economic committee has said that the stock market is going to follow a positive trend in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 21).

"[This year] the profits of major industries and influential companies in the capital market have been assessed positively, which is why the market will follow a positive trend this year," Pour-Ebrahimi told IRIB.

The official said that part of the current negative trend in the market is due to psychological factors and the fact that people have lost their trust in the capital market.

"In the first half of the previous year, the government failed to manage and monitor the capital market and did not do its job properly, which is why the capital market [index] witnessed such a severe decline,"



he said.

The government must act in such a way that the people's trust is restored and the capital market is taken out of the current psychological atmosphere, he stressed.

Earlier this month, Market Analyst Rouzbah Shariati said that TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), is going to improve over the next 1.5 months in comparison to the first 1.5 months of the current Iranian calendar year.

Shariati noted that reaching a possible

agreement on the nuclear deal, the stability of the national currency, as well as the less attractive situation of the parallel markets are the important factors that would contribute to the improvement of the capital market.

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

Following the rising concerns over the market conditions, in early April, the Government Economic Coordination Headquarters, in its 216th meeting, approved some new directives for regulating the stock market.

Also in late April, senior officials including the parliament speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, the Governor of the Central Bank of

Iran (CBI) Abdolnaser Hemmati, Finance, and Economic Affairs Minister Farhad Delpasand, and the Head of Iran's Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO) Mohamad-Ali Dehqan Dehnavi gathered at the country's parliament to explore ways for supporting the stock market and resolving its current issues.

After the mentioned meetings, SEO unveiled a new directive package dubbed "7+3" which include allocation of one percent of the National Development Fund (NDF) resources to the stock market stabilization fund, lifting the ban on capital market financial institutions to use banking facilities, and granting five-year residency to foreign investors who buy shares in the Iranian capital market.

The above-mentioned directives have been implemented in the capital market as of April 27th, according to Dehqan Dehnavi.

Subsidy reform plan allocates \$7.6b to support domestic production

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Managing Director of Iranian Organization of Targeted Subsidies has said that 320 trillion rials (about \$7.61 billion) of the revenues earned from the government's subsidy reform plan has been allocated for supporting domestic production in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 21).

Referring to the need to support production and improve the employment of youth in the year which has been named the year of "Production: Support and Elimination of Obstacles" by the Leader of the Islamic revolution Seyed Ali Khamenei, Omid Hajati said the priority for the allocation of the mentioned resources would be for development projects and export-oriented production units.

The Iranian targeted subsidy plan, also known as the subsidy reform plan, was passed by the Iranian parliament on January 5, 2010.

The government has described the subsidy plan as



the "biggest surgery" to the nation's economy in half a century and "one of the most important undertakings in

Cryptocurrency issues discussed at ICCIMA meeting

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The Macroeconomic Committee of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA) hosted a meeting on Saturday to discuss the issues related to the exchange of cryptocurrencies in the country.

The meeting was also attended by the members of other ICCIMA committees including the development of non-oil exports, energy, knowledge-based businesses, as well as money and capital markets, ICCIMA portal reported.

The attendees of the meeting stressed the need for passing definitive laws and

regulations in this field as the first and most important factor to create the necessary basis for the development of this sector.

Speaking in the meeting, Ali Shams Ardakani, the head of ICCIMA Energy Committee presented a report on the cryptocurrency markets around the world and said: "First, the private sector needs to have a comprehensive understanding of the cryptocurrency market and after identifying the functions of such currencies necessary meetings should be held with officials and policymakers for presenting the demands in this field."

"The private sector should be aware that

policymakers may make wrong decisions due to lack of knowledge in this area, and we should try to collaborate to make the context of this industry known to them," he added.

Further in the event, Farzin Fardis, a member of the ICCIMA committee of knowledge-based businesses, mentioned some of the challenges and issues that the people active in this area are currently facing and said: "The biggest concern of people and businesses in the field of cryptocurrencies is uncertainty with legal issues, sharp fluctuations in value, lack of security and fraud, lack of transparent support and religious considerations."



The technical-legal structure of the cryptocurrency market should be reformed under the supervision of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI), he stressed.

Western powers have exploited takfiri groups to divide Islamic world: academic

‘Extremist forces were used by the British to fight against the Ottomans’

By Mohammad Mazhari

TEHRAN – An Indonesian researcher says extremist forces have been used as foot soldiers of Western powers since the Cold War.

“These extremist forces were used by the British to fight against the Ottomans,” Dina Y. Sulaeman tells the Tehran Times.

“In the Cold War era, the West again used this ideology of takfirim for their benefit.”

For decades West Asia failed to experience stability and peace, especially in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Besides tyrannical regimes that suppress peoples' liberties, the Islamic world endures a long-term sectarian division, ignited by takfiri extremists.

But who supports sectarian conflicts and who benefits from destabilization in the region?

“There needs to be political awareness among Muslims themselves so that they can detect the evil intentions of the West that want to divide Muslims for their interests,” the lecturer of international relations at Padjadjaran university remarks.

Following is the text of the interview:

What are the roots of conflicts in the Islamic world, especially sectarian conflicts?

From a political perspective, the root of conflict in the Muslim world is the political greed of a few parties. They use religion for political gain and power. If we examine the sectarian conflicts in Muslim World, we can see that the cause is the ideology of takfirim. Many countries have clearly stated the name of the doctrine, namely Wahhabism. But the question is, who spread this ideology with huge funds? What's in their interest to pass it on? The answer to this question was conveyed by the Prince of Saudi Arabia himself, Mohammed Bin Salman, in his interview with the Washington Post in 2018. He said that the Saudi govern-

“Thank God, Indonesia has two major organizations, namely Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, which have a total membership of around 80 million people. These two organizations are like solid pillars that keep Indonesia from falling into extremism and sectarianism.”



ment was spreading Wahhabism by building mosques and schools around the world at the request of the Western powers to prevent the influence of the Soviet Union in Muslim countries.

If we look far back, in the 18th century, in the Middle East (West Asia), especially the Hijaz and Iraq, there were massacres carried out by the Wahhabists. Their jargon was religious purification, but we also saw that they worked together with the rulers, and the goal was territorial control. Then, these extremist forces were used by the British to fight against the Ottomans. In the Cold War era, the West again used this ideology of takfirim for their benefit. It continues to the present. The Syrian war clearly shows that takfiri groups are only being used by the West for their interests. The proof is that the U.S., which has so far claimed to be fighting against terrorism in Syria, has supplied weapons to militias affiliated with Al-Qaeda.

What are the main challenges that threaten the unity of the Islamic world?

As I explained in the first question, the root of conflict in the Muslim world is power politics. I have already said that the West takes advantage of the ideology of takfirim for their benefit. Muslim people need to recognize that takfirim is not the true teaching of Islam. It is necessary to disseminate what true Islamic teachings are. We must spread the values of tolerance, compassion, and brotherhood in Islam because this is the core of Islamic teaching. Furthermore, there needs to be political awareness among Muslims themselves so that they can detect the evil intentions of the West that want to divide Muslims for their interests.

How can takfiri groups gain influence in some Islamic countries?

Mainly because of the significant funds and political protection provided by the West. The big question is, why are the figures who divide Muslims always protected by the West? For example, Yaser Habib, who claims to be a Shia figure, makes various behaviors that deliberately anger the Sunni community. Ayatollah Khamenei has issued a fatwa that is forbidden to commit acts that insult Sunni figures. Why was Yaser Habib even facilitated by the British broadcasts? Of course, because the West has an interest in continuing to divide Muslims.

How do you describe Islamic thought in Indonesia when it comes to confronting extremism?

As I have quoted earlier, Prince MBS's statement, Saudi Arabia spread its ideology throughout the world, at the request of the West in the Cold War era. Indonesia had also received a flow of those funds. Recently there is an increase in radical attitudes and even acts of terror, such as the bombing of churches. But, thank God, Indonesia has two major organizations, namely Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, which have a total membership of around 80 million people. These two organizations are like solid pillars that keep Indonesia from falling into extremism and sectarianism.

How can Muslims reinforce women's role in politics and Islamic activities? Could you update us about women's role in Indonesia's social sphere?

We in Indonesia have no problem regarding women's activities. Indonesian women have the freedom to choose their activities in society. Mainly because the two prominent organizations in Indonesia, Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, have always been moderate and supported the involvement of women in the life of the country. Learning from Indonesia, we can conclude that women's role in politics and Islamic activities should be encouraged by scholars and community leaders.

“Saudi Prince Mohammed Bin Salman, in his interview with the Washington Post in 2018, said that the Saudi government was spreading Wahhabism by building mosques and schools around the world at the request of the Western powers to prevent the influence of the Soviet Union in Muslim countries.”

U.S. policies consist of double standards: Azeri expert

“Unlike previous presidents, Joe Biden pursues a more aggressive and predatory policy”

➔ The second issue is related to military saboteurs detained on the Azerbaijani side. After the November 10 agreement, a group of Armenian saboteurs attacked Azerbaijani military positions and killed Azerbaijani border guards. Reacting to this, the Azerbaijani army carried out anti-terrorist operations, and those terrorist saboteurs were neutralized. At present, they are expected to be tried under Azerbaijani law. Azerbaijan considers them terrorists, while Armenia calls them prisoners of war and demands their return from Baku. These two issues cause tensions between the parties.

Do you predict a long-run peace in the region? What factors threaten the peace and stability there?

Of course, the November 10 agreement serves to establish long-term peace in the region. Azerbaijan is ready for this and fully complies with the terms of the agreement. There are certain revanchist forces

in Armenia that are threatening Azerbaijan with a new war. There is still calm in the region, but it is too early to say that long-term peace will be fully established. First, refugees must return to their homes, coexist in the region, and infrastructure restored. We are at the beginning of a long and difficult path to peace.

How do you see U.S. position and policy when it comes to the Azerbaijan-Armenia dispute? Do you see any change in U.S. policies?

U.S. policy consists of double standards. Not only on the Karabakh issue, but also on other conflicts in the world. Washington's position is aimed at ensuring its own interests. The United States is one of the co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group in resolving the Azerbaijani-Armenian conflict. But over the last 30 years, we have not seen a serious Washington mediation mission. During the 44-day war, the Biden administration also made statements in support of the occupation, which rightly deepened distrust of the United States in Azerbaijan.

Joe Biden's statement about the Armenian genocide is also a method of pressure and blackmail against Turkey. This issue has been used as a threat for years, and this year the mask of Washington was finally torn, and we have seen the real America.

Unlike previous presidents, Joe Biden pursues a more aggressive and predatory policy. This is not only the case with Turkey. We also see this predatory policy against Russia, China, Iran and other countries. The goal is to restore U.S. global leadership. But it is too late. America is no longer a world leader.

How do you evaluate Iran-Azerbaijan's economic ties? Is there any development after Tehran declared that it is ready to contribute to the reconstruction of Karabakh?

Iran-Azerbaijan relations continue to develop. In the 44-day war, official Tehran's position was also fair, and the Islamic Republic of Iran officially supported the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. This was what we expected from Iran.

Economic relations between the two countries continue. Even last week, when Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev visited the liberated Jabrayil and Zangilan regions, he called the Azerbaijani-Iranian border a friendly border. During the official visit of Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif to Baku, Iranian companies' participation in the reconstruction work in Karabakh was also discussed. I think that Iran should take more active initiatives in this regard. Iran has extensive experience in this field, and there is a need to apply these practices in Karabakh as well.

What is your take of the Chinese Belt and Road initiative? Would it consolidate the ties between regional players?

“Iran-Azerbaijan relations continue to develop. In the 44-day war, official Tehran's position was also fair, and the Islamic Republic of Iran officially supported the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. This was what we expected from Iran.”



China's "Belt and Road Initiative" project is a global project that will benefit all countries in the region. The countries of the South Caucasus also play a key role in the implementation of this project. This project worries the imperialist circles of the West. Because with the realization of this project, the importance of China in the world is growing, while the importance of the United States and the West is seriously declining. The winners of this project will also be Iran, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Georgia and other countries. I think that this project will change not only the economic weight of the world, but also its geopolitical shape as a whole.

Palestinian blood on Germans hands

➔ The first Israeli-German defense talks took place in 1957, between then-Defense Ministry Director General Shimon Peres and West German Defense Minister Franz Josef Strauss. In 1960, Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion met in New York with German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer in which "emphasis was put on Israel's need for small submarines and anti-aircraft missiles," the archivists wrote in an introduction to the documents posted on the website.

But information about the defense ties between the two countries during those



years is still in complete. "Documentation on the start of these relations or of the contents of the transactions and their scope

is not yet available," the introduction said.

In the early 1960s, Israel decided to buy surplus American tanks that had been given to Germany. The deal ultimately included 200 tanks, mobile cannons, six boats (intended as missile boats) and submarines. "This was a large scale arms deal, of supreme importance for renewing the IDF's military arsenal, as well as having important political significance," the introduction noted.

The deal was kept secret, and the first shipments went off without a hitch. But in late October 1964, word of the deal leaked

to the German press. Israel at first denied the deal's existence, but in Germany the reports sparked a lively public debate that led to a severe crisis in bilateral relations.

In response to the media reports, the German government revealed the scope of the deal, saying it was worth 200 million deutsche marks a year and included arms, planes and boats. Domestic opposition resulted in a decision to stop supplying weapons to conflict regions in general and to cancel the deal with Israel in particular. In place of the arms it wasn't supplying, Germany offered Israel cash.

Resistance responds to Israeli massacre of Gaza family with massive barrage

Hamas military wing, Qassam Brigades, and other resistance factions launched dozens of missiles after a number of Palestinians were killed in fresh Israeli aggression in the occupied West Bank and the besieged Gaza Strip.

Cities in southern Israel faced an intense barrage of rockets overnight Friday and Saturday, with several heavy waves of projectile fire targeting Ashkelon, Ashdod, Beersheva, Sderot and the surrounding areas.

Alert sirens were heard in cities and towns near Gaza, in Kissufim, Ein Hashlosha, Nir Oz, Yad Mordechai, Netiv Ha'asara and other locations, the Times of Israel reported.

The daily said 19 people were taken to Beersheva's Soroka Medical Center.

A huge fire broke out in an industrial zone and several buildings were damaged after a barrage of missiles was fired at Ashdod in response to the massacre of an entire family at the Shati refugee camp in Gaza.

Qassam Brigade said it had fired several rockets at Hatzetim Airbase in the Negev Desert on the outskirts of Beersheva.

Al-Quds Brigades, the military wing of the Islamic Jihad movement, also said it targeted Tel Aviv with several rockets.

The pre-dawn airstrike by Israeli warplanes killed eight children and two women from the Abu Hatab family and injured 15 others, the Palestinian Ma'an news agency reported.

Russia officially dubs U.S. and Czech Republic ‘unfriendly’ states

The Russian government has officially deemed the United States and the Czech Republic "unfriendly" states, and announced that U.S. diplomatic missions could no longer employ local staff while Czech missions could employ a maximum of 19.

Moscow first announced the ban on the U.S. hiring local staff last month as part of its retaliation for a slew of new US sanctions against Russia for interfering in the 2020 US presidential election and for involvement in the Solar Wind hack of U.S. federal agencies.

A Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman, Maria Zakharova, said the United States has until 1 August to comply with the new requirements.

According to Guardian, relations between Russia and the Czechs were badly hit last month when the Czechs accused Russian military intelligence of being behind a 2014 blast at an ammunition depot, and expelled dozens of Russian diplomats.

Russia rejected the allegations and retaliated by expelling Czech diplomats, and also ordered the Czechs to dismiss the majority of their local employees in Moscow, many of whom have staffed a Czech hospitality and business center in the city.

The Czech foreign ministry deplored the latest Russian move as "another step in the escalation of the relations, not just with the Czech Republic but also with the European Union and its allies".

Taliban and Afghanistan government negotiators meet in Qatar

Negotiators from the Taliban and Afghanistan's government have met in Qatar, according to the warring sides, after a long pause in peace talks between the two.

The development came on Friday, the second day of a three-day ceasefire announced by the Taliban for the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Fitr, al Jazeera reported.

They began negotiations in September last year to find a way to end decades of war. But the talks stalled after a few rounds and violence has escalated since the United States started a final pullout of troops from Afghanistan on May 1.

"The two sides discussed the on-going situation of the country and emphasized speeding up the peace talks in Doha," the negotiating team representing the Afghan government said on Twitter.

The spokesman for the Taliban's political office, Mohammad Naeem, posted a similar message on Twitter, and added that both sides had agreed to continue talks after the Eid holidays.

Finding common ground between the two warring sides has been a top priority for Western capitals, particularly Washington, which has announced it will withdraw all U.S. troops by September to end its 20-year military presence in Afghanistan.

Resistance News

Hamas unveils ‘equation’: Shelling for shelling, city for city, missile for missile

INTERNATIONAL DESK **TEHRAN** — A spokesman for the Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, says his group has well laid down the law of retaliation for bloody Israeli airstrikes on the besieged Gaza Strip by launching missile attacks on Tel Aviv, emphasizing that his fellow fighters will respond to any act of aggression to the coastal enclave.

"The resistance front has managed to establish an equation in the current round of confrontations under the theme of 'Shelling for shelling, city for city and missile for missile,'" Fawzi Barhoum told Iran's Tasnim news agency in an exclusive interview on Friday.

He added, "When the resistance bloc entered the battle with the Zionist regime, it was familiar with its boundaries and mechanisms to control and manage it. This is not something new for Palestinian resistance factions that the ongoing combat is going to last longer. It is something unprecedented for the Zionist regime as it has suffered unlike first-time and severe blows since its inception, including the launch of 150 missiles on Tel Aviv within just three minutes."

Barhoum went on to say that the Israeli military considered the latest round of fighting with Hamas to be limited, so it waged a psychological war that the conflict is going to last long.

"We are ready to continue the battle no matter how long it will take," the senior Hamas official pointed out.

First stamp museum house to open in Tabriz

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** —A museum house, dedicated to historical postage stamps, will open in Tabriz, the capital of the East Azarbaijan province.

The museum, which would be the first of its kind in the north-east province, is scheduled to be inaugurated on Thursday at the 200-year-old Mojtahediha Mansion.



The inauguration ceremony is scheduled to be attended by the CEO of the National Post Company, Ramezan-Ali Sobhani-far who also doubles as the deputy minister of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), and several cultural officials and cultural heritage experts.

A selection of stamps printed since 1962 will be on display at the museum.

Back in February, Iran’s first Post-Museum School opened in Rasht, northern Gilan province.

The museum aims at educating children in various fields of communication and media as well as promoting the culture of the post by holding communication courses and classes.

The second Post-Museum School is also scheduled to be inaugurated in Delgan county, southeastern province of Sistan-Balouchestan in the near future.

It was only in 1851 when the government of Iran started to produce its own stamps, thus the creation of a unique mailing and communication arrangement.

It was through the Nasser al-Din Shah Qajar’s (1848-1896) that the postal system in Iran has begun developing.

He was inspired by the reported successes of a postal system in many regions, so he decided to send a group to France to study the system and launch it in Iran.

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

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

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

The city retained its administrative status under the Safavid dynasty until 1548 when Shah Tahmasp I relocated his capital westward to Qazvin. During the next two centuries, Tabriz changed hands several times between Persia and Ottoman Empire. During World War I, the city was temporarily occupied by Turkish and then Soviet troops.

Historical bazaar, defensive wall in Ardakan undergo restoration

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — Restoration work has begun on a historical bazaar and a defensive mudbrick wall, which are situated in Ardakan county of Yazd province.

The second phase of a restoration project, which involves lightening the rooftops as well as repairing the damaged parts, has been commenced on Mirza Hadi Bazaar and Khajeh Nasir defensive wall, Ardakan’s tourism chief Mohsen Mirjani said on Saturday.

Established in the Pahlavi era (1925-1979), the historical bazaar was inscribed on the National Heritage list in 2005.



Parts of the Khajeh Nasir defensive wall in the city of Aqda, which was damaged due to the heavy seasonal rains, are also being restored, the official added.

The restoration project includes repairing damaged parts using traditional and local materials to preserve the originality of the barrier, he explained.

Located in Yazd province, Ardakan is a living testimony to the intelligent use of limited available resources in the desert for survival. Water is brought to the city by the qanat system. Each district of the city is built on a qanat and has a communal center.

The use of earth in buildings includes walls and roofs by the construction of vaults and domes. Houses are built with courtyards below ground level, serving underground areas. Wind-catchers, courtyards, and thick earthen walls create a pleasant microclimate.

The word Ardakan in Persian means “holy place” or “clean place” (Modern Persian: arda+kan / Middle Persian: arta+gan) and the city has many historical religious attractions such as the Grand Mosque of Ardakan (Masjed-e Jame’), Zire-deh Mosque, Emam-Zadeh Mir Seyyed Mohammad and Tekyeh bazaar.

The region is one of the Zoroastrian centers of Iran, and there are numerous holy sites for Zoroastrians in Sharif-Abad, a village near Ardakan. Each summer thousands of Zoroastrians from around the world gather there for pilgrimage.

Intl. webinar to discuss ways to preserve Persepolis for future generations

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — A host of experts will be discussing archaeological findings and the latest attempts for the conservation of the UNESCO-registered Persepolis for future generations.

“In this webinar, experts and researchers in the fields of archaeology, conservation and restoration, archeology, linguistics, documentation, architecture and civil engineering, geology, biology, law, statistics, etc. will discuss and exchange views on the ancient Persepolis during a four-day international webinar, which starts on Sunday,” CHTN quoted the organizers as saying on Saturday.

Archaeological achievements in the World Heritage site will be discussed on the first day of the conference while decades of conservation, restoration, documentation projects would be topics for the second day.

On the third day, applied research on conservation and restoration, documentation will be scrutinized. Moreover, comprehensive conservation plans for the architecture and conservation of the site are set to be conferred on the last day of the event.

Persepolis, also known as Takht-e Jamshid, whose magnificent ruins rest at the foot of Kuh-e Rahmat (Mountain of Mercy) is situated 60 kilometers northeast of the city of Shiraz in Fars province.

The ruined royal city ranks among the archaeological sites which have no equivalent, considering its unique architecture,



urban planning, construction technology, and art.

Persepolis was burnt by Alexander the Great in 330 BC apparently as revenge to the Persians because it seems the Persian King Xerxes had burnt the Greek City of Athens around 150 years earlier.

The city’s immense terrace was begun about 518 BC by Darius the Great, the Achae-

menid Empire’s king. On this terrace, successive kings erected a series of architecturally stunning palatial buildings, among them the massive Apadana palace and the Throne Hall (“Hundred-Column Hall”).

This 13-ha ensemble of majestic approaches, monumental stairways, throne rooms (Apadana), reception rooms, and dependencies is classified among the world’s

Intl. travels fall by 80% in Iran due to coronavirus

→1 The fall reached 96 and 97 percent in April and May. And in June, a negative 84% was recorded. But the interesting point in the statistics published by the World Tourism Organization is a steep slope of the improvement of Iran’s tourism arrivals during the last two months, as such growth has leaped 35% in July and August.

Optimistic forecasts, expect the country would 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.

According to the newest UNWTO Barometer, international arrivals plunged 81% in July and 79% in August, traditionally the two busiest months of the year and the peak of the Northern Hemisphere summer season. The drop until August represents 700 million fewer arrivals compared to the same period in 2019 and translates into a loss of US\$ 730 billion in export revenues from international tourism. This is more than eight times the loss experienced

on the back of the 2009 global economic and financial crisis.

“This unprecedented decline is having dramatic social and economic consequences, and puts millions of jobs and businesses at risk,” warned UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili. “This underlines the urgent need to safely restart tourism, in a timely and coordinated manner”.

UNWTO’s Panel of Experts foresees a rebound in international tourism in the current year, mostly in the third quarter. However, some experts suggest the rebound could occur only in 2022.

Travel restrictions are seen as the main barrier standing in the way of the recovery of international tourism, along with slow virus containment and low consumer confidence. The lack of coordinated response among countries to ensure harmonized protocols and coordinated restrictions, as well as the deteriorating economic environment, were also identified by experts as important obstacles for recovery.

The Islamic Republic expects to reap a bonanza from its numerous tourist spots such as bazaars, museums, mosques,



bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, mausoleums, churches, towers, and mansions, of which 24 being inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list. Under the 2025 Tourism Vision Plan, Iran aims to increase the number of tourist arrivals from 4.8 million in 2014 to 20 million in 2025.

Rural museum house makes debut in Golestan province

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — The first rural museum house in Golestan province has recently opened its doors to the public, a local tourism official announced on Saturday.

“Some 100 objects, including various agricultural tools, implements of daily life, handicrafts, spinning and weaving tools, etc., have been put on show at the museum house,” Mohammad-Taha Asgaripour added.

The museum house, which is located in Farsiyan, is expected to put the village on the tourism map for domestic and international travelers, he said.



“Turing the spotlight on the history of the village, its historical capacities, handicrafts,

and travel attractions are expected to lay the ground for a sustainable tourism in the village,” he explained.

Experts believe that rural tourism, agri-tourism, and farm-stays can be regarded as a win-win both for local communities, and post-modern travelers who are tracing unique experiences.

Sightseers may stay with a rural or nomadic family for a while or enjoy an independent stay and assist them with day-to-day life. It also opens up an opportunity to feel rustic routines, their agriculture, traditions, arts, and culture.

Rural tourism, most of all, sets the ground for economic development in rural areas by creating additional income and employment especially for young people and women; the prosperity of handicrafts, and more entrepreneurship prospects. It can also improve the social wellbeing in rural areas, for instance by stimulating improvements in infrastructure, sanitation, and electricity networks.

Golestan is reportedly embracing some 2,500 historical and natural sites, with UNESCO-registered Gonbad-e Qabus — a one-millennium-old brick tower — amongst its most famous.

Semi-precious stones, ring, and necklace recovered from smugglers

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — Several historical objects have recently been confiscated from smugglers in Qirokarzin county, southern Fars province, a senior police official in charge of protecting cultural heritage said on Saturday. CHTN reported.

The objects that include some semi-precious stones, a tray, ring, and a necklace were recovered after the police stopped a suspicious driver for a routine inspection.

The antique dealers were traced and arrested at a checkpoint at the Qirokarzin-Firuzabad road after the police received reports from cultural heritage aficionados, Mohammadreza Bahmaninejad announced.

The culprits were detained and surrendered to the



judicial system for further investigation, he noted.

The official, however, did not refer to the exact age of the relics.

The ancient region of Fars also spelled Pars, or Persis was the heart of the Achaemenian Empire (550–330 BC), which was founded by Cyrus the Great and had its capital at Pasargadae. Darius I the Great moved the capital to nearby Persepolis in the late 6th or early 5th century BC.

The capital city of Shiraz is home to some of the country’s most magnificent buildings and sights. Increasingly, it draws more and more foreign and domestic sightseers flocking into this provincial capital which was the literary capital of Persia during the Zand dynasty from 1751 to 1794.

New eco-lodges to come on stream in Lorestan

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — Two new eco-lodges are scheduled to be constructed in the western province of Lorestan in near future, the provincial tourism chief has said.

The eco-lodges will be built in Borujerd in Dehpir to foster tourism infrastructure in the rural areas, Amin Qasemi announced on Saturday.

A budget of 47 billion rials (\$1.1 million at the official exchange rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) has been allocated to the projects, the official added.

The construction of these units is expected to generate job opportunities for 30 local people directly, he explained.

As a four-season country with pristine and beautiful nature in different parts of the country, Iran has a lot to offer nature lovers and eco-tourists.

Eco-lodge units in rural areas and the heart of nature, away from the hustle and bustle of the city, smoke, and pollution, could free people from the chaos and turmoil of modern life.

In recent years, several historical mansions and rural houses across the country have been repurposed into eco-lodge units to attract more domestic and foreign tourists.

The houses represent the indigenous culture, local customs, traditions, and stories, while the guests are served delicious food with local ingredients.

The growing tendency of tourists to experience indigenous and local cultures has made them want to get closer to natural and indigenous living conditions, experiencing the old-fashioned way of life, considering that staying in these eco-lodge units is much cheaper than other accommodation centers.

In January 2020, Research Institute for Cultural Heritage and Tourism Director Behrouz Omrani announced that Iran has been constructing hundreds of eco-lodge guesthouses over the past couple of years to meet the demands of rising eco-travelers and sightseers.

“At present, issuing guidelines for eco-tourism development is on the agenda. Historical villages are amongst target destinations for eco-tourism development,” the official said.

Iran’s tourism body said in 2018 that 2,000 eco-lodges will be constructed nationwide until 2021. Experts say each eco-lodge unit generates jobs for seven to eight people on average so that the scheme could create 160,000 jobs.

Having a very diverse natural setting, Iran offers varied excursions to nature lov-



ers. Sightseers may live with a nomad or rural family or enjoy an independent stay. The country is home to abundant historical mansions, caravanserais, bathhouses, madrasas, and other massive monuments, which can buttress its budding tourism and hospitality sectors if managed appropriately and refurbished properly.

Lake Urmia revival eradicates 450,000 ha of SDS hotspots

SOCIETY
d e s k

TEHRAN – The restoration of Lake Urmia has eradicated 450,000 hectares of sand and dust storm (SDS) hotspots, according to the latest studies.

Prior to the start of the executive activities for Lake Urmia rehabilitation, an area of approximately 100,000 hectares was considered as land sensitive to wind erosion due to the lake's retreat.

In addition to the specialized measures in controlling the critical hotspots of SDS, a 50 percent increase in the Lake's surface and an eightfold increase in its water level caused many lands prone to wind erosion to return to normal again.

Currently, there are less than 50,000 hectares of land generating dust in the province.

Some 1.46 million hectares of the country's wetlands and 3.5 million hectares of habitats under the management of the Department of Environment contribute to dust generation.

The government has spent 100 trillion rials (about \$2.3 billion at the official rate of 42,000 rials) to implement rehabilitation projects on the lake.

During a five-year period until last year, a total of 673 billion rials (nearly \$16 million) have been earmarked to counter sand and dust storms generated by the resources surrounding Lake Urmia.

The SDSs control operations in the area are either completed or in their final stage, which is a significant measure as saved 14 million people.

A few years ago, the destruction of agricultural lands and the occurrence of some respiratory problems due to sand and dust storm has caused the migration of some villagers.

Rehabilitation measures have made the situation much better, and many displaced



The lowest amount of water in Lake Urmia was recorded in 2012, a year before the beginning of the Restoration Program, amounting to 500 million cubic meters, which now has reached more than 4 billion cubic meters, showing an increase of almost eight times.

locals returned back to their villages.

The lowest amount of water in Lake Urmia was recorded in 2012, a year before the beginning of the Restoration Program, amounting to 500 million cubic meters, which now has reached more than 4 billion cubic meters, showing an increase of almost eight times.

However, achieving sustainable rehabilitation requires countless efforts, such as increased rainfall and optimal use of water resources.

Although the ecological level of Lake Urmia

is estimated at 1,274 meters, the lake will have favorable conditions at 1,272 meters and will eliminate more than 95 percent of the dust centers.

So far, the government has earmarked 100 trillion rials (nearly \$2.3 billion at the official rate of 42,000 rials) for the lake's revitalization.

International contribution to Lake Urmia revival

On February 17, the Government of Japan

contributed \$3 million to help revive Lake Urmia through the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

The contribution will be implemented as a component of UNDP's ongoing Conservation of Iranian Wetlands Project – a joint project between Iran's Department of Environment and UNDP. This was Japan's eighth contribution to UNDP Iran.

So far, UNDP has implemented several initiatives to stop the degradation trend and restore this important Lake and other wetlands in the country. These efforts have significantly contributed to the stability of Lake Urmia and introducing new approaches based on the improved management of its basin. By the end of the seventh phase, the project was implemented in 183 villages.

In addition to almost \$7 million in financial support from the Japanese government, so far more than \$1 billion has been spent on the project in total.

Lake's surface increased by over 1500 km²

Lake Urmia's surface area has reached up to 2,917 square kilometers, indicating 1,582 square kilometers increase in comparison to 2013.

The water transfer projects will cause Lake Urmia to reach its ecological level over the next seven years, with 15 billion cubic meters of water through increasing the lake's level by one meter each year.

Lake Urmia, located in the northwest of Iran, was once the most extensive permanent hypersaline lake in the world. Unsustainable water management in response to increasing demand together with climatic extremes has given rise to the lake's depletion during the last two decades. The lake's restoration program was established in 2013 and aims to restore the lake within a 10-year program.

Philanthropists donate 71% more to support orphans

SOCIETY
d e s k

TEHRAN – Iranian benefactors have made cash contributions amounting to 15 trillion rials (about \$357 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) to orphaned children over the last [Iranian calendar] year (March 2020 – March 2021), an increase of 71 percent year on year.

The Foundation currently covers 147,000 orphaned children and 260,000 children with families who cannot afford to bring them up on their own, IRNA quoted Alireza Asgarian, deputy director of Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation, as saying on Saturday.

"We anticipate that donations will increase by 100 percent this year and exceeds 25 trillion rials (about \$595 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials)," he noted.

Over the past four months, 60,000 benefactors have been added to the whole supporters, he added.

He further called on the donors to join hands and support 200,000 of such children.

In May 2020, Seyyed Morteza Bakhtiari, head of Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation, said there were 710,265 active philanthropists in the country who sup-

port orphans.

Adoption for orphans

There is a basic slogan in the country that children must grow in the family so that the priority is to foster the orphans.

Since [the Iranian calendar year] 1392, the number of adoption cases has increased and 2,000 children are placed for adoption annually, some of whom are placed under temporary custody because a temporary trustee is better than care centers, Masoudi-Farid said in May 2020.

Montazer Shabar, the Welfare Organization's director for children affairs, said in July 2019 that there are 10 applicants for fostering each child in the country.

Currently, some 2,800 applicants are waiting for adoption, most of whom are parents not having children or intending to foster a child, he added.

According to the Welfare Organization, the country's adoption and foster laws that dated back to some 44 years ago were revised and modified in 2013. Within the new law, kids could be adopted up to the age of 16 while the former law states that kids aged 12 or less could be adopted. In addition to families with no child now families with one kid



and single women are able to apply for adoption.

The law formerly authorized adoption only for orphans while the new law permit adoption for children with dysfunctional families as well in case the judge concludes that the new family is suitable for adoption.

Previously, the adoptive families were required to sign over one-third of their property to their child-to-be but some could not afford to do so and now the judge gets to decide how a family, depending on their financial status, should be treated.

People over 75 being vaccinated against coronavirus

→ 1 According to the Ministry of Health, about 3.2 million coronavirus vaccines have been imported into the country so far. Some 1,713,648 people received the first dose and 342,950 people have also received the second dose so that the total number of vaccines injected in the country has reached 2,056,598 doses.

Mass vaccination against COVID-19 started on Iranian citizens with the Russian-made Sputnik V vaccine on February 9.

While Iran continues efforts to mass-produce local candidates, several foreign vaccines have already been imported and others are expected soon.

Iran is currently producing vaccines jointly with three countries of Cuba, Russia, and Australia, which may also be released by September.

Domestic vaccines

COVIRAN BAREKAT, the first coronavirus vaccine made by Iranian researchers, started the third phase of the human trial in early May by being administrated to 20,000 people.

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

Meanwhile, a vaccine developed by the

Razi Vaccine and Serum Research Institute (Razi Cov Pars) is expected to become the second Iranian-made vaccine to be administered among the population in early August; which started the clinical trial on February 27.

Iran has also successfully completed the first phase of the human trial for Fakhra vaccine, the third domestically developed COVID-19 vaccine, named after nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh (he was assassinated in November 2020 near Tehran), that was unveiled and started the clinical trial on March 16.

"Osvd-19", the fourth domestic vaccine produced by Osvah Pharmaceutical Company

is also undergoing human trials, which will also be available in early September.

New cases and mortalities

In a press briefing on Saturday, Health Ministry's spokesperson, Sima-Sadat Lari, confirmed 7,723 new cases of COVID-19 infection, raising the total number of infections to 2,739,875. She added that 2,210,851 patients have so far recovered, but 5,396 remain in critical conditions of the disease.

During the past 24 hours, 200 patients have lost their lives, bringing the total number of deaths to 76,633, she added.

So far, 17,882,461 COVID-19 diagnostic tests have been performed in the country.

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Iran to carry out cloud seeding project within two weeks

A cloud seeding project will be carried out within the next two weeks in some northern, central and southern provinces of the country, Farid Golkar, head of Iran's National Cloud Seeding Research Center, has announced.

Golkar explained that the operation will be carried out on the Zagros and Alborz Mountains in the north, Isfahan and Yazd provinces in the center, and Fars and Kerman provinces in the south.

The first cloud seeding project was launched in the Iranian calendar year 1395 (March 2016-March 2017), he stated, adding that, each operation can lead to a 10-15 percent increase in precipitation.

He went on to highlight that this year, a total budget of 70 billion rials (about \$1.6 million) has been earmarked in this regard.

آغاز عملیات باروری ابرها تا دو هفته دیگر

عملیات بارورسازی ابرها تا دو هفته دیگر در بخش هایی از شمال، مرکز، و جنوب کشور انجام می شود.

فرید گلکار، رئیس مرکز ملی تحقیقات و مطالعات باروری ابرها، در گفتگو با ایسنا، توضیح داد این عملیات روی کوهستان های زاگرس و البرز در شمال کشور، استان های اصفهان و یزد در مرکز، و استان های فارس و کرمان در جنوب انجام می شود.

او با بیان این که نخستین پروژه بارورسازی ابرها در سال ۱۳۹۵ انجام شد، اظهار کرد تاثیر یکبار عملیات در میزان افزایش بارش ها ۱۰ تا ۱۵ درصد است.

گلکار اضافه کرد: امسال هفت میلیارد تومان بودجه برای این موضوع در نظر گرفته شده است.

Forests the size of France have regenerated over past 20 years

Over the past two decades, 59 million hectares of forest – an area equivalent to the size of France – have regenerated around the world with minimal human intervention, a new study shows.

Major hotspots where woodlands have recovered include parts of Brazil's Atlantic Forest, areas of northern Canada, central Africa and the boreal forests in Mongolia's northern wilderness.

This area of forest has the potential to store the equivalent of 5.9 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide – more than the annual emissions of the US.



The authors said forest regeneration is where "nature takes the lead". Some areas require no human activity to help them regenerate, while others require invasive species or farm animals to be removed or fenced out of the area.

The research, which was based on satellite imaging and ground surveys, comes amid a growing awareness of the importance of tree cover in efforts to mitigate the worst impacts of the climate crisis.

The analysis was carried out by Trillion Trees, a joint venture between BirdLife International, the Wildlife Conservation Society and the WWF, which is aiming to "urgently speed up and scale up" forest regeneration, and is aiming to protect and restore one trillion trees by 2050.

As well as specific regeneration areas, the study's authors said other reasons for forest expansion included more responsible industry practices and factors such as human migration towards cities.

The WWF's William Baldwin-Cantello said allowing woodlands to naturally regenerate is often more effective than human efforts to bring back trees.

He said: "The science is clear: if we are to avoid dangerous climate change and turn around the loss of nature, we must both halt deforestation and restore natural forests.

"We've known for a long time that natural forest regeneration is often cheaper, richer in carbon and better for biodiversity than actively planted forests, and this research tells us where and why regeneration is happening, and how we can recreate those conditions elsewhere."

But he warned that despite the good news the study highlighted, the rate of deforestation is still far outpacing that of regrowth, and called on the government to take action on supply lines which result in deforestation around the world.

He said: "We can't take this regeneration for granted – deforestation still claims millions of hectares every year, vastly more than is regenerated.

"To realise the potential of forests as a climate solution, we need support for regeneration in climate delivery plans and must tackle the drivers of deforestation, which in the UK means strong domestic laws to prevent our food causing deforestation overseas."

The researchers highlighted the Atlantic Forest in Brazil as one particular area which was seeing considerable regeneration. An estimated 4.2 million hectares – an area roughly the size of the Netherlands – has regrown since 2000.

In the boreal forests of Mongolia's northern wilderness, the study suggests around 1.2 million hectares of forest have regenerated in the last 20 years. The study said this progress was partly due to the work of the WWF, as well as increased emphasis from the Mongolian government on protected areas.

The WWF warned that despite apparent momentum behind woodland restoration, in many cases, government plans "involve very limited expansion of natural forests, despite the strong climate and biodiversity benefits they offer".

The authors of the study warn that encouraging signs of regeneration cannot be taken for granted. Forests across Brazil face significant threats today, even the Atlantic Forests – a recognised success story in restoration. Such is the extent of historic deforestation that the area of this unique forest still needs to more than double from currently 12 per cent of its original area to 30 per cent, in order to reach what scientists believe is a minimal threshold for its lasting conservation.

LET'S LEARN PERSIAN

(Part 183)

(Source: saadifoundation.ir)

■ Persian Orthography

■ املای فارسی *

بسیاری از ایرانیان بعضی کلمات فارسی را به شکل پیوسته می نویسند مانند کلمات زیر:

آن : آنروز، آنزن، آنمرد

است : آنست، اینست، خوبست، لازمست، شلوغست

به : بمن، بتو، باو، بما، بشما، بآنها، بایشان، بآن، باین، بیدر

تر : آسانتر، قشنگتر، شلوغتر، ارزانتر، تاریکتر

ترین : جوانترین، خوشحالتین، سنگینترین، معروفترین

را : آنرا، اینرا، زترا، کتابرا، جهانرا، آبر، نانرا

می : میروم، میشوی، میکند، میخوانیم، میدانید، میدهند

نمی : نمیروم، نمیشوی، نمیکند، نمیخوانیم، نمیدانید، نمیدهند

ها : زنها، شبها، جواها، جوانها، چوبها، مرغها، زبانها، چیستانها

هم : آنهم، اینهم، منهم

هیچ : هیچکس، هیچکسی، هیچوقت

در کتاب حاضر، کلمات بالا را جدا نوشته ایم تا خواندن و آموختن

آنها آسان تر باشد. دانشجویان عزیز بهتر است به جدا نوشتن واژه های فارسی ادامه دهند و فقط کلمات کوتاهی را که شامل 'ها'، 'تر'،

ترین' می شود به شکل پیوسته بنویسند: زنها، دهها، کیفها، بهتر، بهترین،

بیشتر، بیشتری، کمتر، کمترین

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■ Managing Director: Mohammad Shojaeian
■ Editor-in-Chief: Ali A.Jenabzadeh

» Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 88808214 — 88808895
info@tehrantimes.com

» Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000

» Advertisements Dept.: Telefax: (+98 21) 43051430

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GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING



The mind of a wise man is the safest custody of secrets; cheerfulness is the key to friendship; patience and forbearance will conceal many defects.

Imam Ali (AS)

Iranian bookstores take young adults to Ally Condie’s underwater city “Atlantia”

CULTURE d e s k TEHRAN — American writer Ally Condie’s 2014 young adult novel “Atlantia” has recently been published in Persian in Tehran.

Peydayesh is the publisher of the book translated by Sahand Nasr. The story of “Atlantia” is told from the perspective of Rio, a girl from the underwater city of Atlantia. This novel is recommended for ages 12 and up, and is a New York Times bestseller.

Can you hear Atlantia breathing? For as long as she can remember, Rio has dreamed of the sand and sky Above — of life beyond her underwater city of Atlantia. But in a single moment, all Rio’s hopes for the future are shattered when her twin sister, Bay, makes an unexpected choice, stranding Rio Below.

Alone, ripped away from the last person who knew Rio’s true self — and the powerful siren voice she has long silenced — she has nothing left to lose.

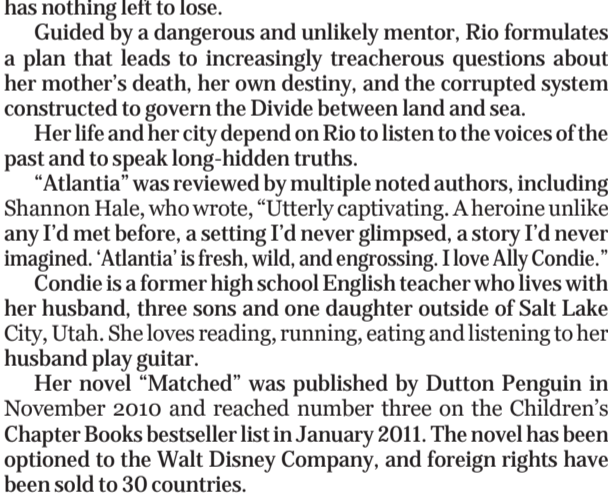
Guided by a dangerous and unlikely mentor, Rio formulates a plan that leads to increasingly treacherous questions about her mother’s death, her own destiny, and the corrupted system constructed to govern the Divide between land and sea.

Her life and her city depend on Rio to listen to the voices of the past and to speak long-hidden truths.

“Atlantia” was reviewed by multiple noted authors, including Shannon Hale, who wrote, “Utterly captivating. A heroine unlike any I’d met before, a setting I’d never glimpsed, a story I’d never imagined. ‘Atlantia’ is fresh, wild, and engrossing. I love Ally Condie.”

Condie is a former high school English teacher who lives with her husband, three sons and one daughter outside of Salt Lake City, Utah. She loves reading, running, eating and listening to her husband play guitar.

Her novel “Matched” was published by Dutton Penguin in November 2010 and reached number three on the Children’s Chapter Books bestseller list in January 2011. The novel has been optioned to the Walt Disney Company, and foreign rights have been sold to 30 countries.



Lyman Tower Sargent’s “Utopianism” published in Persian

CULTURE d e s k TEHRAN — Tehran-based Iranian publisher Afkar has recently published a Persian translation of American academic Lyman Tower Sargent’s book “Utopianism: A Very Short Introduction”.

Mohammad Nasravi is the translator of the book originally published by Oxford University Press in 2010.

There are many debates about what constitutes a utopia. Are utopias benign or dangerous? Is the idea of utopianism essential to Christianity or heretical? What is the relationship between utopia and ideology?

In this short introduction, Lyman Sargent, one of the leading scholars in the field of utopian studies, explores these issues and examines utopianism and its history, discussing the role of utopianism in literature and in the development of colonies and in immigration.

The idea of utopia has become commonplace in social and political thought, both negatively and positively.

Sargent notes that some thinkers see a trajectory from utopia to totalitarianism, with violence an inevitable part of the mix.

Others see utopia directly connected to freedom and as a necessary element in the fight against totalitarianism.

In Christianity, utopia is labeled as both heretical and as a fundamental part of Christian belief, and such debates are also central to such fields as architecture, town and city planning, and sociology among many others. Sargent addresses all these issues in this clear, compact introduction.



Painter Hassan Ruholamin unveils new artwork on Hadith of Golden Chain

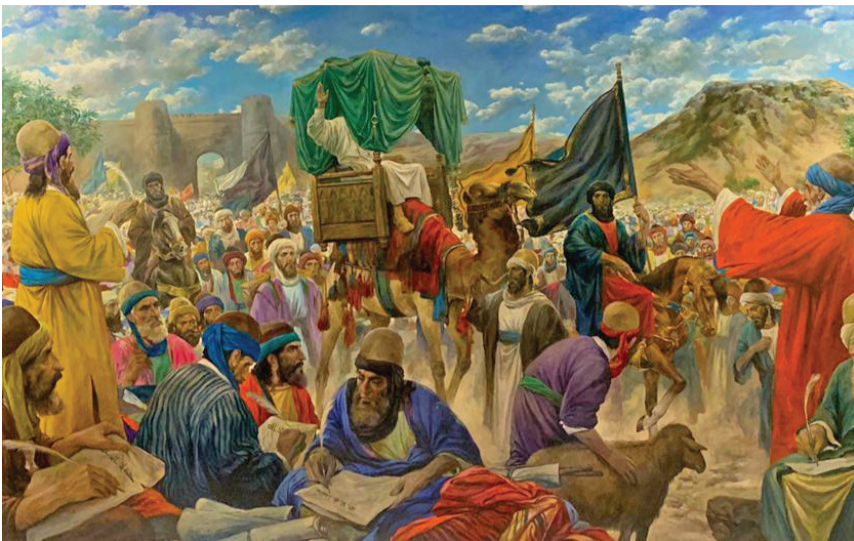
➔ This painting has been commissioned by the Imam Reza (AS) International Foundation for Culture and Arts based on a contract with Ruholamin. Four other paintings about the life of the Imam will be created under this contract.

“I have tried to use colors and the figures common in Iranian paintings to create this work,” Ruholamin said at the unveiling ceremony, which was also attended by Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Seyyed Abbas Salehi.

In his brief speech, Salehi said, “This tableau takes us into history and represents a spiritual and individual dimension of our ties with the Ahlul Beit (AS).”

Story of Hadith of Golden Chain

The Hadith of Silsilah al-Dhahab is a hadith narrated from Imam Reza (AS), the eighth Imam of the Shia. The “chain” is a reference to the continuity of spiritual authority that is passed down from the Prophet Muhammad (S) to Imam Ali (AS), the first Imam of the Shia, through each of the successive Imams to Imam Reza (AS). As transmitters of Hadith, the Imams link subsequent generations to the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (S). This transmission makes the Hadith of the Golden Chain valued



“Condition of Tawheed” by Iranian painter Hassan Ruholamin depicts the story of the Hadith of the Golden Chain.

as among the most truthful and accurate of all Hadiths for the Shias.

The story had its origins when thousands of people gathered to welcome Imam Reza (AS) in his arrival at the entrance to Neyshabur,

The narrations mentioning “twenty thousand” reporters are more famous. Many Sunni laymen and scholars participated in welcoming the Imam. Scholars asked Imam Reza (AS) to narrate a hadith for them, so the Imam related Al-Silsilah al-Dhahab.

The chain of the narrators of the hadith reaches the Prophet of Islam (S) through Ahl ul-Beit, hence it is called the Hadith of Golden Chain.

He said, “I have heard my father Musa ibn Jafar (AS) saying that he heard from his father Jafar ibn Muhammad (AS) saying that he heard his father Muhammad ibn Ali (AS) saying that he heard from his father Ali ibn al-Hussein (AS) saying that he heard from his father al-Hussein ibn Ali (AS) saying that he heard from his father Ali ibn Abi Talib (AS) saying that he heard from the Holy Prophet (S) saying that he heard from Gabriel saying that Allah told him, ‘The kalimatu Laa ilaaha illallah (the saying that there’s no god but Allah) is My fortress. Whoever recites it, enters My fortress; and whoever enters My fortress shall be safe from My punishment’.”

The Imam (AS) then paused for a moment and continued, “There are a few conditions to be entitled to enter the fortress and I am one of its conditions.”

Iran to organize webinar on Persian poet Ferdowsi in Lahore



Tomb of Ferdowsi, Tus.

CULTURE d e s k TEHRAN — The Iranian Culture Center in Lahore, Pakistan, plans to hold the webinar “Ferdowsi’s Shahnameh and the Secret of Persian

Language Eternality” on Sunday.

The webinar, which will commence at 11 a.m., will be held one day after the nationwide celebration of Ferdowsi Day in Iran.

Experts on Ferdowsi from Iran, Turkey, Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, England, Uzbekistan and Pakistan will share the latest studies during the online colloquium.

Nimet Yildirim of Ataturk University in Turkey, Elham Haddadi of Sadi Foundation in Iran, Muhammad Nasir of the University of the Punjab in Pakistan and Jaimee Comstock-Skipp of Leiden University in the Netherlands are among the scholars.

In addition, Abbas Behmanesh from Iran is scheduled to enrich the virtual meeting with a naqqali, a dramatic style of storytelling dedicated to stories from Ferdowsi’s Shahnameh and other epic Persian stories.

Iranian celebrates Ferdowsi, the composer of the Persian epic masterpiece Shahnameh (The Book of Kings), on a special day that falls on May 15 this year.

A Shahnameh verse reading “I toiled much over thirty

years. By the Persian language I remade Iran”, which refers to the fact that Ferdowsi spent 30 years writing the Shahnameh over a millennium ago.

The Iran Book and Literature House in Tehran also organized two virtual meetings on Saturday to observe Ferdowsi Day.

The topics “Importance of the Expansion of Persian Literature and Language in Modern World” and “Persian Language’s Long Life from Ancient Times to Today” were discussed during the meetings.

Many movies and artistic productions have been made based on stories from the Shahnameh.

Young director Ashkan Rahgozar’s 2019 animated movie “The Last Fiction” is one of the latest of numerous artistic productions inspired by the Shahnameh.

It is about Zahak’s treacherous rise to the throne of Jamshid in Persia. The young and naive hero Afaridoun wants to save the kingdom and its people from darkness. But he must first conquer his own demons in this portrayal of Persian mythology that reveals human nature.

Ivaylo Hristov’s “Fear” at Fajr film festival

A R T d e s k TEHRAN — Bulgarian director Ivaylo Hristov’s drama “Fear” will be competing in the 38th Fajr International Film Festival in Tehran, the organizers announced on Saturday.

The film tells the story of Svetla, a widow who has recently lost her job and is living next to the Bulgarian-Turkish border. There are many cases of refugees in her village due to its location. One day she meets a refugee from Africa and this changes her life.

Starring Svetlana Yancheva and Michael Flemming, the film won the Golden Rose for best film at the 38th

Golden Rose Film Festival in Varna, Bulgaria.

It also received the grand prix for best film at the Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival (PÖFF) in Estonia.

In a statement published by the PÖFF, the jury called “Fear” “a beautifully-made film that astutely balances dry humor with important contemporary drama. At a period when the subject of immigration is very much in the headlines this feature is very much a film for our times.”

The Fajr International Film Festival, which is scheduled to take place in Tehran from May 26 to June 2, has not announced the lineup for the official competition as yet.

However, the organizers previously announced that Oscar-winning Hungarian director Istvan Szabo’s latest movie “Final Report”, Italian director Claudio Noce’s drama “Padrenostro”, Ukrainian-Armenian filmmaker Roman Balayan’s movie “We Are Here We Are Close”, Finnish filmmaker Antti J. Jokinen’s romance historical drama “Helene” and Polish director Piotr Domalewski’s drama “I Never Cry” have been selected to compete in the event.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Fajr International Film Festival was cancelled in 2020. However, the organizers have said that this year’s



A scene from Bulgarian director Ivaylo Hristov’s drama “Fear”.

festival will definitely be held as planned. Meanwhile, the virus is currently claiming hundreds lives every day.

Moscow anthropology festival hosts “Wedding of Zinat’s Son”

A R T d e s k TEHRAN — The Moscow International Visual Anthropology Festival – Mediating Camera screened the Iranian documentary “Wedding of Zinat’s Son” on Friday.

Directed by Farhad Varahram, the film is about Mohsen, the eldest son of an Iranian family who is studying for his MS degree in electronics and computer science at a university in Italy.

Because of loneliness and years of separation from their children, his mother Zinat and her husband convince him to return to Iran forever and marry the girl they have chosen for him.

This film is for the story of the wedding of Zinat’s son, which is held over six days in Salkh Village on Qeshm Island. Qeshm is the largest island in the Persian Gulf and Salkh is a small village on the south part of the island. Most of the villagers



A scene from Iranian filmmaker Farhad Varahram’s documentary “Wedding of Zinat’s Son”.

are fishermen.

The village is famous for two things: catching large sharks with the simplest fishing tools, which has been banned for some years, and holding indigenous rituals, in particular Zaar, which is still held a few times a year.

“Wedding of Zinat’s Son” had its world premiere during the 6th Herat International Women’s Film Festival (HIWFF) in the Afghan city in November 2020.

The Moscow International Visual Anthropology Festival – Mediating Camera is a biennial event, which aims to show the diversity and unity of peoples cultures of the world, acquainting the audience with the daily lives of people in the most remote places of the globe, and the establishment of a dialogue with them through the screen.

The event will come to an end today.



Ever since the appearance of the Shahnameh, Ferdowsi has been held in high esteem, and many poets have referred to him and his work, the best known being Sadi’s tribute in the Bustan to “Ferdowsi-ye pak-zad” (Ferdowsi of noble birth), quoting a line from him even though the verse itself has not been found in the Shahnameh.

In recent times, beginning with the famous

Ferdowsi celebrations of 1934, tributes in different forms have been paid to him by both government and private institutions.

These include naming streets, squares, schools, libraries and foundations, and installing statues of him in different places.

Among these are the following: A statue of Ferdowsi donated by Parsees of India was formerly in Ferdowsi Square in Tehran but was removed to a new location in the campus of the University of Tehran at the front of the Faculty of Letters and Humanities.

At its original location, a new statue of the poet by Abolhassan Sediqi was placed in 1976. The city of Tehran presented the city of Rome with a statue of Ferdowsi by Sediqi in 1966. It is in a small square also bearing the name of the poet (Pizzale Firdusi). In Tajikistan a statue of Ferdowsi was erected in a street bearing his name in 1992.

The poet’s name has been used in relation to many educational and academic institutions. Many schools in Persia and Tajikistan bear his name.

The University in Mashhad, a lecture hall in the Faculty of Letters and Humanities of University of Tehran, and the National Library of Tajikistan in Dushanbe, are all named after him.

The college library of Wadham College, Oxford, which contains a collection of Persian books and manuscripts, was also officially named the Ferdowsi Library in 1995.

Iran’s former Ministry of Arts and Culture instituted an organization called the Shahnameh Foundation whose main brief was the preparation and edition of a critical edition of the Shahnameh.

Recently Mohammad-Ali Eslami-Nodushan has founded an organization the aim

of which is to celebrate the poet and pay homage to his work.

Following the already mentioned 1934 celebrations, there have been many conferences specifically devoted to Ferdowsi and his poetry in Persia and other parts of the world.

The series of conferences at Tus in the 1970s, the international conference held in Tehran after the 1979 Revolution, major conferences in other Persian cities like Isfahan and Bandar Abbas, and other recent conferences in Cologne, at Columbia University, New York, and at Harvard University, supported by the Ilex Foundation, are examples of this perennial interest in the poet and his work among readers and scholars worldwide.

Photo: This combination photo shows a statue of Ferdowsi and a tea-house painting depicting a story from his Shahnameh.

(Source: Encyclopedia Iranica)

Homages to Persian poet Ferdowsi