



Iran congratulates Lebanon on anniv. of victory against Israel *Page 3*



Para shooter Javanmardi ready to shine at Paralympics *Page 3*



Quarterly trade between Iran, Turkey rises 53% *Page 4*



Play depicts Zargham's change from reprobate to revolutionary *Page 8*

Iran steps up diplomacy amid border tensions between Armenia, Azerbaijan

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File photo

Transit of goods via Iran rising

BY MAHNAZ ABDI

Today, transit has become more important due to the expanded global trade relations and the intensity of competition for new markets. So that many countries have achieved huge incomes in this way by planning and making optimal use of their transit opportunities and facilities.

Iran is one of the countries that has a special status in trade and transit relations due to its strategic location and special geography, as the country is the passage of several important international corridors.

In the south of Iran is the Persian Gulf, which is home to the world's major oil-producing countries. This region is considered as the energy bottleneck of the world.

In the north of Iran is the Caspian Sea, which is the best bridge between Iran, Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan and can play an important role in trade between these countries.

The country, on the other hand, borders Iraq, Turkey, Pakistan and Afghanistan to the west and east.

In other words, it can be said that Iran communicates with 15 countries through land and water borders, and at the same time it can act as a bridge between these countries (with each other and other parts of the world).

These countries have a large population and high income which can be effective as a factor in the development of transit and trade in the region. The connection of Central Asian countries with the Persian Gulf, as well as the establishment of trade relations between East Asia and European countries through Iran, is very cost-effective, so that many of these countries seek to establish such relations through Iran.

This status has provided the country with many opportunities that making optimal use of them through the expansion of the transportation network and reliable and efficient communication, Iran can achieve foreign currency earnings and economic growth, and make transit revenue a suitable alternative to oil export, while improving its strategic position in the region.

Considering the country's transit statistics, it is obvious that Iran is taking the advantage of its strategic status in this due.

As reported by the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), 7.532 million tons of commodities were transited through Iran in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20) despite the restrictions created by the coronavirus pandemic.

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'Iranians, Armenians enjoy deep, long-standing correlation'

TEHRAN – The secretary-general of the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO has praised historical relations between Iran and Armenia, saying the two nations enjoy a deep and long-standing correlation.

"The people of Iran and Armenia have a long and deep relationship with each other and our cultural relations with Armenians is very extensive," IRNA quoted Hojatollah Ayoubi as saying on Wednesday.

He made the remarks on Tuesday at the opening ceremony of a virtual photo exhibit, which is dedicated to the UNESCO-registered Armenian Monastic Ensembles of Iran.

"As you know, Armenians are part of the proud history of the people of this land, and the name of Armenia is inscribed on [the UNESCO- designated] Bisotun."

A selection of 70 pictures captured by Iranian photographer Ebrahim Khadembayat

has been put on show for the event, according to organizers.

Experts believe that to the untrained eye, Iran's earliest churches may seem modest structures to some but they bear testimony to a vast panorama of architectural and decorative scenes associated with Armenian culture blended with other regional cultures: Byzantine, Orthodox, Assyrian, Persian, and Muslim.

St. Thaddeus, St. Stepanos, and the Chapel of Dzordzor are three photogenic ancient churches that constitute the Armenian Monastic Ensembles of Iran, which were collectively inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage in 2008. They are dotted in fresh and green lands of northwest Iran and are important pilgrimage sites for Armenian-Iranians and others from across the globe.

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Syrians vote in presidential election

Voters in liberated parts of Syria are heading to the polls to cast ballots in an election that is set to determine who is the next president.

Wednesday's presidential vote is the second since the beginning of Syria's crisis a decade ago, a conflict that has killed hundreds of thousands of people and forced millions to leave the country. In 2014, Bashar Assad won nearly 89 percent of the vote.

Assad is running against two opposition candidates: Abdullah Salloum Abdullah, former state minister of parliamentary affairs; and Mahmoud Ahmad Marei, head of the National Democratic Front. Forty-eight other presidential aspirants had submitted requests for candidacy, but their applications were rejected.

Assad casted his ballot in Douma near the capital, Damascus, a previous rebel

stronghold in 2018.

Damascus-based correspondents reported polling stations were packed with voters all morning and that many voters were waiting to cast ballots.

Assad, whose "Hope Through Work" electoral campaign heavily focused on creating jobs, is hopeful to secure another seven-year term despite 10 years of war.

Iran and Russia, as well as Belarus, sent delegations to monitor the election.

Meanwhile, the foreign ministers of the United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany and Italy issued a joint statement in which they criticized the Syrian election.

Addressing his critics, Assad said Syrians had made their feelings clear by coming out in large numbers. "The value of your opinions is zero," he said.

Iran says stands by Africa against 'vaccine apartheid'

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said the country will fight against 'vaccine apartheid' in Africa as the coronavirus continues to ravage the world.

"Iran will always be a reliable partner to all African friends," Zarif wrote on his Twitter account on Tuesday. Inspired by Africa's victory over domination, Iran stands by the continent, Javad added, congratulating Africa Day 2021.

"As COVID-19 continues to ravage the world,

we're again joined in the fight against apartheid—this time #VaccineApartheid."

While Iran continues efforts to mass-produce local candidates, several foreign vaccines have already been imported and mass-vaccination started.

Several countries have asked for purchasing the Iranian-made coronavirus vaccine (COVIRAN BAREKAT), Mohammad Mokhber, the head of the Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam, said on May 18.

At least two European countries and three countries in the region are now seeking to negotiate on purchasing vaccines, but we will export once the domestic needs are met, Mokhber stated.

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.

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IRNA/ Hasan Shirvani

Sculpture exhibit observes Iranian women's self-sacrifices in war

TEHRAN – An exhibition of sculptures opened at the Lorzadeh Gallery of the Iranian Academy of Arts on Monday to highlight Iranian women's self-sacrifices during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war.

About 17,000 Iranian women were martyred, injured or taken captive during the war.

The exhibition will be running at the gallery until June 8.

U.S. failed badly in West Asia: academic

BY MOHAMMAD MAZHARI

TEHRAN - An associate professor in the department of political science from the National University of Singapore says that the U.S. will be the big loser in West Asia until it supports Israel.

"Until the U.S. does not decouple itself from Israel, the Americans will always be losers in the Middle East (West Asia) and will not win much support and sympathy in the Muslim world," Bilveer Singh tells the Tehran Times.

According to Bilveer, Trump's U.S. "failed badly in the Middle East (West Asia) and Asia. He was badly served by hawkish advisers who did more harm to U.S. interests than anyone else in the last 50 years or so."

For decades, Democrats and Republicans alike have stood by Israel, almost unconditionally, claiming the regime has a right to defend itself.

President Biden followed the same policy in the recent escalation in Gaza as Hamas fired hundreds of rockets at Israel in response to the eviction of Palestinians from their homes in Jerusalem and Israeli security forces stormed Al-Aqsa Mosque and targeted prayers.

But this latest violence marked a shift in the American political debate over Israel and its position in U.S. foreign policy. The criticism from the left was louder than the past, with progressives pressuring Biden to speak up forcefully in support of Palestinians, who saw a far greater civilian death toll in recent days.

This shift is tied to two main factors: the growing power of racial justice movements in the United States and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's embrace of the American right-wing in recent years.

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Qalibaf reelected parliament speaker

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — One year after the current parliament started its work, Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf was reelected as parliament speaker on Tuesday. Qalibaf won 230 votes for the post. His rival, Fereydoon Abbasi, only garnered 18 votes.



Abbasi, a nuclear physicist, is the head of the parliament's Energy Committee.

Qalibaf had also won 230 votes in the 290-seat parliament which was held last year on May 29.

Last year, Amir Hossein Qazizadeh Hashemi and Ali Nikzad were also elected as the first and second deputy speakers respectively. However, this year Qazizadeh Hashemi did not seek the post of vice speaker because he has been confirmed by the Guardian Council to contest the June presidential elections.

In the Tuesday voting, Nikzad, who represents Ardabil in the parliament, was elected as first deputy speaker by winning 206 votes and Abdolreza Mesri, who represents Kermanshah, won 205.

In Ahmadinejad's second administration Nikzad and Mesri served as ministers. Nikzad was the minister of housing and transport and Mesri the minister of labor and social welfare.

Iran: Israel must be held accountable for heinous crimes against Palestinians

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Majid Takht-Ravanchi, Iran's UN Ambassador, says Israeli officials must face justice for committing "heinous" crimes against the Palestinian people in flagrant violation of international law.

On Tuesday, the Iranian diplomat told the United Nations Security Council session on "protection of civilians in armed conflict" that Israeli officials had recently demolished 847 Palestinian-owned structures, including homes, sanitation assets, and 156 buildings donated as humanitarian aid, and displaced at least 996 Palestinians in the occupied West Bank.

He also stated that Palestinians are being forcibly evicted from their homes and territories on a large scale, with an estimated 90,000 Palestinians facing eviction in occupied East Jerusalem.

He cited the recent Israeli military assault on the besieged Gaza Strip, claiming that in addition to killing hundreds of people, including 66 children and 39 women, Israeli forces destroyed 30 health facilities, nearly 50 schools and educational centers, half of the water network, 33 media offices, and damaged 43 mosques during the 12-day brutal and all-out aggression.

"The worst part is that when Palestinians protested such illegal forced evictions, including in Sheikh Jarrah [neighborhood], where they have lived for generations, and complained about attacks on Muslim worshippers in al-Aqsa Mosque [compound] during the holy month of Ramadan, Israeli security and military forces committed the most brutal crimes against Palestinians," Takht-Ravanchi stated.

"Such crimes, which materially violate fundamental norms and principles of international law, imply international responsibility for the Israeli regime, whose officials must therefore be brought to justice for committing such heinous crimes," Takht-Ravanchi said.

The Israeli bombardment of the densely populated coastal enclave killed at least 253 Palestinians, including 66 children. Israel's bombardment also wreaked havoc on the already impoverished territory.

The Gaza Strip experienced a ceasefire in the early hours of May 21 after Egypt brokered an agreement between Israel and Palestinian resistance factions to end the 11-day conflict.

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, more than 90,000 people in Gaza have been displaced as a result of Israeli bombardment.

Takht-Ravanchi then criticized the UN Security Council for failing to carry out its Charter-based mandate and even issued a mild press statement calling for an end to Israel's aggression against civilians in Gaza.

The Iranian UN ambassador also slammed the U.S. for its "shameful" protection of the Israeli regime, emphasizing that the Security Council's May 22 statement, which came after the Israeli government and Palestinian resistance groups agreed to a ceasefire, was ineffective.

Kadkhodaei predicts high voter turnout

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The spokesman for Iran's Constitutional Council has dismissed the notion that the disqualification of several high-profile figures by the vetting body in the run-up to the June 18 presidential election could affect voter turnout, claiming that opinion polls conducted by state bodies show that low participation in elections often has social and economic roots.

In an interview with Press TV on Tuesday, Abbasali Kadkhodaei said, "When it comes to verification and vetting, the impact of the Constitutional Council's votes on the people's participation is very little."

That, he said, is what opinion polls conducted by state institutions show. "It's usually most likely about economic issues, and maybe some political and social issues."

He said the council carries out its responsibilities based on the Constitution, as the fundamental law of the country, and is duty-bound to do the vetting process. "If a person is vetted and not approved, we are not to blame. We have to act on the basis of law."

Earlier in the day, the Constitutional Council — which supervises elections and vets candidates — released a final list of seven hopefuls it found qualified to join the presidential race slotted for June 18. A number of prominent figures — including Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri and former Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani — were barred from contesting the presidential election.

Over 590 individuals had put their names down to vie for the presidency in the key vote, but the council only examined the qualifications of the 40 hopefuls who had

submitted all the documents required by the panel.

Kadkhodaei said the hopefuls who had failed to secure the council's approval could not object to the decision under law. Only the Leader of the Islamic Revolution has the power under the Constitution to intervene and alter the decision, he said, adding that until then in the process this year, the council had not been informed of any such move on the part of Ayatollah Khamenei.

Earlier, Kadkhodaei responded to criticism of the council's decision to bar the reformist camp's senior figures from running in the election next month, saying the body bases its decisions on election law, and not on political affiliations.

He assured that the council had meticulously examined the qualifications.

President advises candidates to follow health protocols

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Speaking at the meeting of National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control (NHCC), President Hassan Rouhani advised the presidential candidates to follow health protocols announced by the NHCC during the campaigns.

"Protecting the lives and votes of the people in the elections is the most important duty of the government as the executor of the elections, and our performance must be such that the people feel confident about their health and the protection of their votes," he noted.

Stating that the government will do its utmost to protect the lives and votes of the people, Rouhani said that it is very important to monitor the strict implementation of the health protocols related

to the elections and it can ensure the health of the people on the day of the elections.

Insisting on using past experiences, the president said, "Using past experiences in the field of training for accurate and complete implementation of health instructions by making special training programs and broadcasting them through various media outlets, the exact implementation of the protocols by the people and candidates during the campaign days and election day should be ensured."

The presidential elections will be held on June 18. The election headquarters had previously announced that they will increase the number of ballot boxes to prevent congestion and long lines.

Guardian Council deputy head clarifies on confusions over qualifications

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Siamak Rahpeyk, deputy head of the Guardian Council, spoke to state TV on Tuesday night, responding to rumors of disorders in assessing the qualifications of presidential candidates.

"The council has examined records of 40 people, out of 592 registrants," Rahpeyk said.

Rahpeyk added that there is no time left for presidential hopefuls to protest, and the list released on Tuesday is final.

"Just because a first-degree relative resides in another country does not necessarily preclude assessing qualification,

but among other things, it may have led to a disqualification," he noted.

There are reports that Ali Larijani was disqualified because his daughter is studying in Ohio.

The Guardian Council official stated that discussion of management and indicators, such as several years of service in national managerial positions, is part of the qualification requirements.

"Two people may be in the same position; one may be qualified and the other may be disqualified. They may have achieved conditions for successful management, but

there are other conditions. The one who is not qualified has not met other criteria," Rahpeyk stated.

Judiciary Chief Seyyed Ebrahim Raeisi, a cleric presidential candidate endorsed by the Guardian Council, said on Tuesday that he had made some calls to make the "election scene more competitive."

The presidential elections will be held on June 18.

Election hype has begun as candidates officially started campaigning on Tuesday, after the names of competent hopefuls were announced.

Qazizadeh Hashemi elaborates on his foreign policy agenda

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Speaking to the Fars News Agency, Amir Hossein Qazizadeh Hashemi, a presidential candidate and sitting MP has said that if he wins the June 18 presidential elections his administration will continue the Vienna negotiations better than the current administration.

Qazizadeh Hashemi emphasized his program in foreign policy areas, saying, "Dialogue with the world is necessary, we have talked to the world all these years, but how and with whom to talk is very important."

He added that what is important is the result of relations with other countries, noting people should taste the sweetness of the result of the negotiations because they ask what has been added to their table.

Speaking about his plan for the Vienna negotiations, the presidential aspirant said that his administration will "definitely conclude the Vienna talks better than the current government."

"I am against writing and reading articles in the talks," he added.

The fifth round of nuclear talks for possible revival the 2015 nuclear deal were resumed on Tuesday. Iranian chief nuclear negotiator Abbas Araghchi has said all sides are showing strong will to restore the deal. However, he said though many issues have been settled still some key issue remain unresolved.

The presidential candidate continued by saying that it must be clear that diplomacy is a kind of give and take.

"We must be clear about what we give and what we receive in return."

Calling the Americans "shrewd," he said their shrewdness requires the Islamic Republic to seal a strong treaty in terms of international law. "We intend to move this forward powerfully," he noted.

Stressing that his administration feels the urgency to lift sanctions, he said, "When we fight trafficking, the black market will disappear."

The presidential elections will be held on June 18. The candidates have started campaigning since Tuesday.

Zakani forms campaign office

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Ruhollah Motefaker Azad has been appointed as the campaign manager of presidential candidate

Alireza Zakani.

In a statement issued on Wednesday, Zakani also has named Malek Shariati Niasar as his campaign

spokesperson.

Informing the people on his Twitter account, he used #RevolutionaryYouthGovernment and #1980s_campaign.

7 candidates in 7 days

CANDIDATE PROFILE



Abdolnasser Hemmati

Age	63	Place Of Birth	Kabodar Ahang, Hamedan
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Education

PhD in economics from Tehran University

Career

News director at IRIB
Deputy political director at IRIB
Head of the Iran Central Insurance Organization
Member of economic committee at the Supreme National Security Council
Head of the Central Bank of Iran

Social Media Accounts



Supporters

It is expected that current administration would support him as he is now the central banker.

Political position on JCPOA

The CBI has a representative in the JCPOA negotiations. When Hemmati took over as the CBI governor he tried his best through negotiations to help release frozen Iranian funds in Western banks. On the ongoing Vienna talks to possibly revive the 2015 nuclear deal, Hemmati has expressed hope that sanctions on SWIFT, the CBI, and transfer of money overseas would soon be lifted. He reiterated that the U.S. must lift those sanctions, and the CBI must verify this. He added that CBI representatives are present in the Vienna talks to make sure that sanctions are lifted tangibly and verifiably.

Political position on interaction with neighbors and the West

He defends interaction with neighbors and the West. Hemmati traveled to Baghdad to help release Iran's assets frozen in Iraq due to U.S. sanctions. He is also trying to unfreeze Iranian assets in South Korea.

Candidates' views on foreign policy



Seyyed Ebrahim Raeisi

He has reiterated the stance by the Islamic Republic system, stating that the U.S. has to lift all sanctions, and after extensive verification Iran will return to its JCPOA obligations. He calls the JCPOA a "blank cheque" that should have been cashed by the government. He believes that Iran should interact with all countries. He says his foreign policy will be in accordance with the Leader's remarks, and that Iran's national pride and dignity should be respected. He says that Iran needs to increase relations with other countries to improve the economic situation. "Neighbors first" is his slogan.



Saeed Jalili

He believes in negotiation with all countries, yet he believes that Iran must have the upper hand in the negotiations. Serving as Iran's chief nuclear negotiator when he was secretary of the Supreme National Security Council during Ahmadinejad's administration, he is familiar with negotiation techniques.

He basically agrees with the nuclear negotiations in principle, but has opinions different from those in the current administration over various paragraphs of the JCPOA, believing Iran has given many concessions to the United States.



Mohsen Rezaei

Rezaei's plan is more focused on economic development, thus his priority is to build strong economic relations with neighbors. On the issue of the JCPOA, Rezaei seems skeptical, believing the Biden administration will not rejoin the deal without forcing new terms and conditions on Iran. He thinks that banking and financial sanctions should be lifted in the first month. His controversial remarks got the Foreign Ministry to issue a statement saying that Rezaei's words were not Iran's official position.



Mohsen Mehr Alizadeh

He has made no comments on foreign policy issues.



Alireza Zakani

Zakani is a serious critic of the JCPOA deal. He has opposed the JCPOA several times. On the ongoing nuclear talks in Vienna to possibly revive the deal, Zakani says the U.S should return to the deal, compensate Iran for leaving the JCPOA, lift banking and oil sanctions and that Iran must be able to easily receive its oil money. Zakani believes that the Islamic Republic should boost its domestic capacities and invest more on defense industry.



Abdolnasser Hemmati

He defends interaction with neighbors and the West. Hemmati traveled to Baghdad to help release Iran's assets frozen in Iraq due to U.S. sanctions. He is also trying to unfreeze Iranian assets in South Korea. The CBI has a representative in the JCPOA negotiations. When Hemmati took over as the CBI governor he tried his best through negotiations to help release frozen Iranian funds in Western banks. On the ongoing Vienna talks, Hemmati has expressed hope that sanctions on SWIFT, the CBI, and transfer of money overseas would soon be lifted.



Amir Hossein Qazizadeh Hashemi

In an interview with the Fars News Agency, Ghazi Zadeh Hashemi said that he will continue the negotiations in a better way than the current administration. He says that he opposes "essay-writing" in negotiations. Qazizadeh Hashemi believes that since Americans are shrewd, "we have to sign a strong deal with a strong legal basis." He says, "The demands must be clear about what we are giving and what we are taking." He believes that it is necessary to make dialogue with the world, yet it is important with whom Iran is trying to converse.

Iran steps up diplomacy amid border tensions between Armenia, Azerbaijan

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The spiral escalation of tensions between two of Iran's neighbors in the South Caucasus region has taken the top Iran diplomat to the region amid a decisive round of nuclear talks between Iran and world powers in the Austrian capital of Vienna.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif began a regional tour of the South Caucasus that included visits to Azerbaijan and Armenia. The visits began amid reports of border tensions between two rivals grappling with the consequences of a deadly 44-day war that resulted in Azerbaijan retaking large swathes of Armenian-controlled territories in the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

In mid-May, Armenia accused Azerbaijan of advancing into its southern territory. Armenian Acting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has said Azerbaijan's armed forces crossed the state border of the Republic of Armenia and advanced as far as 3.5 kilometers in Syunik province.

"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 in a meeting with Armenian military officials.

Azerbaijan rejected the Armenian account of the tensions, saying it deployed troops to areas bordering Armenia but this deployment occurred inside Azerbaijan's territories.

The episode required a position by Iran. So, Saeed Khatibzadeh, spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry, called on the two South Caucasus rivals to settle their border disputes in peaceful ways and through dialogue.



Khatibzadeh also said that Iran was "closely and sensitively following the developments" between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Underlining Iran's readiness to facilitate the settlement of the dispute, Khatibzadeh said, "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."

Earlier, a senior Iranian lawmaker warned against change in Iran-Armenia borders. The lawmaker, Mojtaba Zolnouri, who serves as the head of the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, said Tehran has made it clear that it will not accept any change in international borders in the region.

"If part of the territory of Armenia is to be taken and our border conditions change, that is, to have a new neighbor, it is not acceptable for us. The existing borders must be completely protected and the shared border

of the Islamic Republic of Iran with Armenia must be maintained," Zolnouri said.

During his visit to Azerbaijan and Armenia, Zarif raised the issue of borders. In Baku, the top Iranian diplomat discussed with Azeri President Ilham Aliyev issues such as border tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan and communication corridors.

"Now you can play a historic role in bringing peace to the region," Zarif told Aliyev, according to a statement issued by the Azerbaijani presidency.

In Yerevan, Zarif received the Armenian account of border tensions. Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia Ara Aivazian thanked Zarif for paying a visit to Armenia during "disturbing days" in the region.

Aivazian noted, "It has been two weeks since the Azerbaijani armed forces invaded the border areas of the Republic of Armenia, trying to provoke a new escalation, which is fraught with new regional threats."

He also said that Azerbaijan strives to

create "new geopolitical realities" amid global silence towards Baku.

"Undoubtedly, this encroachment on Armenia's territorial integrity is a direct consequence of the war unleashed on September 27 last year by Azerbaijan against the people of Artsakh, their right to self-determination and life, as well as the inadequate international and regional response to Azerbaijan's actions towards endangering regional peace. Encouraged by the sense of impunity, Azerbaijan is trying to create new geopolitical realities which do not proceed from the interests of countries concerned in regional stability. In these conditions, the dialogue with our regional partners is more than important," Aivazian pointed out.

In response, Zarif called the Caucasus a "vital region" that protection of its security is a national security issue for Iran.

Expressing concerns over the recent tensions, Zarif said Iran made efforts over the past months to peacefully settle disputes between Armenia and Azerbaijan. He called on both sides to exercise restraint, respect each other's borders, and resolve disagreements through dialogue.

Zarif also underlined the need to respect international borders and protect the territorial integrity of countries as well as the need to refrain from changing borders as a red line outlined by Iran.

The Iranian foreign minister also met with Acting Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. "Our good-neighborly relations with Iran are of strategic importance. The common border with Iran has ensured the security of our country in a number of ways ever since the first years of Armenia's independence. It is my pleasure to note that there is a similar perception in Iran about our relationship," Pashinyan told Zarif, according to a statement issued by the Armenian acting prime minister.

Key issues remain unresolved, top nuclear negotiator says

→1 "All parties are still serious"

He added, "All parties are still serious and have taken these talks seriously, many delegations are hoping that this round can be the last round of talks and we will reach a conclusion. You can have such hope, but you have to be a little bit cautious. The issues that remain to be finalized and decided are still important issues, although their number has decreased and we have made great strides in writing the text in previous periods. We can move forward further, but the few issues that remain are still key issues that need to be decided."

The top nuclear negotiator pointed out, "One should still speak cautiously about whether this round can be the last round or not. We hope to be able to do this as soon as possible, but we are looking for an agreement that meets our definite demands and positions that have been repeatedly mentioned before. We have been seriously involved in these talks, and the experts with me will participate in the working groups, and we will take the discussions seriously, and we hope to be able to make faster progress than in the past."

As regards the remaining issues and how long the negotiations will take, he said, "No date can be set. I cannot even say for sure that this will be the last round. The remaining issues, in our view, must be resolved in a way that satisfies us. This may be in two or three days or more, we do not sacrifice our desires and positions for time. It is important that what serves Iran's national interests must be carefully considered and met in the negotiations and in the texts that are written. Of course, we do not intend to waste time and we will not allow others to waste time. If we can move things forward faster, we will move forward faster, but we will not allow haste to move forward quickly, reduce our demands and impede our interest from being secured. We will carry out the negotiations carefully and tactfully, and



"One should still speak cautiously about whether this round can be the last round or not," says Iran's senior nuclear negotiator Abbas Araghchi.

we hope that, by the grace of God, we will be able to meet the demands and what are the definite positions of the system and have been expressed by the Leader on several occasions, and then we will report to Tehran."

Araghchi continued, "I need to reiterate that any decision will ultimately be made in Tehran. Our task as functionaries of the establishment is to move the issues forward in the first line of the negotiations and then report the outcome. Decisions in Tehran are made by the relevant authorities and we are also told how to behave. We will move forward

carefully and calmly and with wisdom; we will not rush for no reason, nor will we allow [the negotiations] to become long and draining. We hope that results can be achieved in this round. But we are not bound to do so in this round, but we are bound to have our interests fully met."

"We will not sacrifice accuracy for speed"

Responding to a question about whether in his opinion this round can be the final round of negotiations and an agreement can be reached, Araghchi stated, "I have said this many times. As a diplomat, I am always hopeful and it is our duty to move forward with hope, but not with optimism. As long as the negotiations need to take, they will take. We will not sacrifice accuracy for speed, we will not sacrifice benefits for speed. We will not rush unnecessarily, and at the same time we will not prolong the negotiations without reason and logic. For us, time is not the criterion, for us, securing the interests of the country is the criterion, and until these interests are secured, the negotiations will continue."

Araghchi echoed the same assessment in an interview with Press TV. He told the English-language broadcaster that he still cannot ascertain that a conclusion was possibly within reach despite progress made on some key differences over reviving the landmark deal.

"In the last round, we were able to make some meaningful progress in our negotiations but still there are some key issues to be resolved," Araghchi said.

"I cannot say that we are able to conclude our job in this round of negotiations but this is possible; it depends on how much we are able to make progress on key issues and how much the other parties are prepared to make their own difficult decisions," the Iranian deputy foreign minister underlined. "I am not confident that it would be possible to conclude the negotiations but there is a possibility."

Iran congratulates Lebanon on anniv. of victory against Israel

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif have sent congratulatory messages to Lebanese leaders congratulating them on the anniversary of the victory against Israel.

Rouhani sent a message to the president of Lebanon to congratulate the Lebanese government and nation on the anniversary of the victorious and glorious festival of resistance and freedom that led to the liberation of the country's southern parts from the Zionist regime's aggressor forces, according to the website of the Iranian presidency.

"I would like to offer my sincerest congratulations to Your Excellency and the noble people of Lebanon on the anniversary of the victorious and glorious festival of resistance and freedom that led to the liberation of the country's southern parts from the Zionist regime's aggressor forces with the self-sacrifice of the people of Lebanon," Rouhani told his Lebanese counterpart Michel Aoun.

Rouhani added, "The nature of the Zionist regime that stems from its aggressive temperament showed that the only way to confront the aggressors is people's resistance and steadfastness. I hope that this path continues under your leadership until the entire Lebanese land is liberated."

"In line with the will of the Lebanese nation, army and resistance for maintaining unity and defending their country's lands, the Islamic Republic of Iran will be alongside the Lebanese government and nation like before. I wish Your Excellency health and success and the noble people of Lebanon prosperity and felicity," Rouhani continued.

Zarif also congratulated Lebanese officials on the anniversary of the victory against Israel. Iran's foreign minister, in separate messages, congratulated Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah, the secretary general of the Lebanese resistance movement Hezbollah, and Zeina Akar, the acting foreign minister of Lebanon, on the Eid of resistance and freedom and the anniversary of the victorious liberation of Southern Lebanon from the Israeli occupation forces through the bravery and devotion of resistance fighters, according to a statement issued by the Iranian foreign ministry.

Zarif said rapport and strategic unity among the Lebanese people, government and army hold the key to victory against Israel.

In the messages, the top Iranian diplomat wished dignity and honor for the Lebanese government and nation as well as families of resistance fighters martyred or disabled during their struggles.

Zarif added he is confident that the path which has started with the prudence of

Lebanon's wise leaders will lead the country to development, progress and stability.

Nasrallah delivered a speech Tuesday on the anniversary of the Resistance and Liberation Day in which he congratulated the Palestinian resistance for its great victory.

"We are now celebrating two great victories, the 25th of May 2000 in Lebanon and the 21st of May 2021 in Gaza," Sayyed Nasrallah initiated, saluting the bravery of the Palestinian resistance in the latest battle, according to the Lebanese Al-Manar website.

"The liberation that the Lebanese people attained in 2000 was dedicated to Palestine because it is where our goal lies, and this victory shifted the strategic path of the Palestinian cause and the conflict with the enemy," he noted.

As he remembered the martyrs who fell on this path and reminded of the great role that Hajj Qassem Soleimani played in supporting the resistance, Sayyed Nasrallah praised the "historic stance" of the Palestinian resistance in standing up against violations in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood, assuring that "the displacement taking place in Sheikh Jarrah is not a normal development considering the symbolism of this neighborhood. It is a step forward in Judaizing Al-Quds."

"The Palestinian resistance took a firm and historic decision after witnessing the



violations that the occupation practiced in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood, and the cause of this battle was the arrogance and stupidity of the enemy as well as its miscalculations and underestimation of the resistance," Nasrallah said, adding that "despite all that is taking place in Palestine, some Arab countries are still normalizing and working on improving the Israeli entity's image."

He noted that "the Israelis assumed that the Judaization procedures in Al-Quds will only be faced with statements and denunciations. They didn't expect that the resistance will take this historic decision."

"Gaza surprised the friend and enemy with its threat in defense of Al-Quds... This historic development in 'Al-Quds Sword' must be highly appreciated as Gaza has engaged in this battle not to protect itself or its own people but to protect Al-Quds," he added, according to Al-Manar.

SPORTS

Para shooter Javanmardi ready to shine at Paralympics

SPORTS **TEHRAN** — Iran's Para shooter Sareh Javanmardi says that she is ready to shine at the 2020 Paralympic Games, despite the competition's postponement.

Javanmardi won two gold medals at the 2016 Rio in the 10 m air pistol SH1 and Mixed 50 m pistol SH1. She had already won a bronze medal at the 2012 London in the 10 m air pistol and now is looking forward for another accolade in Tokyo.

She says the Games' postponement can be an opportunity or a threat.

"I really don't know the postponement of the Games is a threat or an opportunity but I have to say training during the lockdown was very difficult," Javanmardi said in an interview with Tehran Times. "I hope the Olympic and Paralympic Games will be held. We have had difficult situation during the past year due to coronavirus condition."

"The Iranian Para shooters are ready for the Paralympics since we've trained very well despite COVID-19 restrictions. However, our shooters still face difficulties for lack of equipment due to the sanctions," she added.

"We participated in a tournament in the UAE and I personally think it was a good preparatory competition ahead of Paralympic Games."

"I promise we will participate in the Tokyo with all our might," Javanmardi concluded.

Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games will be held from Aug. 24 to Sept. 5.

Haddadi almost misses FIBA Asia Cup 2021 Qualifiers

SPORTS **TEHRAN** — Iran center Hamed Haddadi will most likely be absent in the FIBA Asia Cup 2021 Qualifiers due to knee injury.

Iran aim to top Group E and claim direct qualification to Asia Cup 2021 in June.

"I have a severe knee cartilage injury and need the rest. I think I will be back after six weeks," Haddadi said.

"I want to be ready for the Olympics and I will most likely miss FIBA Asia Cup 2021 Qualifiers."

Iran have been drawn with the U.S. and France in Group A of the Olympic Games. Haddadi says to play with the world's strong teams is an opportunity for Iran's basketball.

"We've been drawn in a tough group but I think it's a good chance for us to play the strong teams. The U.S. failed to shine in the 2019 FIBA Basketball World Cup and will be highly motivated when participate in the Games," he stated.

Iran team receive vaccines ahead of World Cup qualifiers

SPORTS **TEHRAN** — Iranian national football team players along with coaching staff received the second dose of the coronavirus vaccine on Wednesday.

The team have started the training in Tehran for the 2022 FIFA World Cup qualification.

Iran will depart for Bahrain on May 31. The 'Persian Leopards' will meet Hong Kong on June 3 and play Bahrain four days later.

Dragan Skocic's team are scheduled to face Cambodia and Iraq on June 11 and 15, respectively in Group C.

Iran are third with six points in their group of five, but have a game in hand over their opponents.

Iraq are top on 11 points, with Bahrain second on nine after five matches.

Iran suffer two defeats at FIBA 3x3 Olympic Qualifying Day 1

SPORTS **TEHRAN** — Iran lost their first two matches against Japan and Thailand on Day 1 of the FIBA 3x3 Olympic Qualifying Tournament on Wednesday.

Iran began the campaign with a 22-4 loss against Japan and suffered a narrow 22-21 defeat against Thailand.

Iran will have to play powerhouses Ukraine and Australia on Friday.

The team have a difficult task ahead since the top two teams in each pool will advance to the knock-out rounds on the final day.

A total of 20 teams are vying for just three spots in the competition.

The 3x3 basketball will make its Olympic debut in Tokyo.

2021 VNL a chance for Iranian youngsters

SPORTS **TEHRAN** — Iran national volleyball team will begin the 2021 Volleyball Nations league (VNL) on Friday against Japan. The competition is a great chance for newly-appointed coach Vladimir Alekno to field the young players.

A total of 32 of the world's top national teams have joined the VNL 2021 bubble in Rimini, Italy to showcase electrifying volleyball action for millions of fans worldwide.

Alekno has already said the campaign is an opportunity for him to field the young players.

"We have a chance to field our young players in the VNL. The competition can prepare us for the Olympics. Several players have a bright future in Iran volleyball. Javad Karimi and Amirhossein Esfandiar must change their mentality if they want to be successful. Saber Kazemi and Bardia Saadat will have a bright future," Alekno said in a press conference last week.

The 16-team tournament begins with a round-robin phase where each side will play 15 games.

The third edition of the competition will be held from May 28 to June 27 in Rimini, Italy.

The 2021 VNL will be really a good tournament for the teams to prepare for the 2020 Olympic Games.

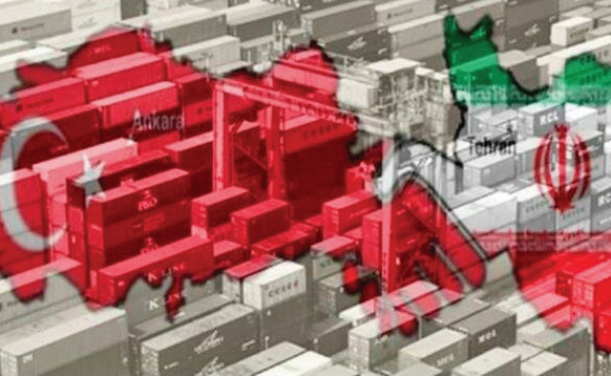
This Games' edition will be special for Iran since the country's golden generation will likely represent the Asian powerhouses in the event for the last time.

Quarterly trade between Iran, Turkey rises 53%

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The value of trade between Iran and Turkey rose by 53 percent in the first quarter of 2021 from the first quarter of 2020, Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (TCCIMA) reported, based on the official statistics released by Turkey.

The report put the worth of the two countries' bilateral trade at \$986 million in the first three months of this year.

Of the mentioned figure about \$505 million was related to Iran's exports to Turkey and about \$481 million was related to Iran's imports from this country. Meanwhile, in the first quarter of 2020, Iran's main trade with Turkey was related to Iran's imports from this country, while during the first quarter of 2021, Iran's trade balance with Turkey was positive.



During the first quarter of 2021, Iran's imports from Turkey increased by about 29 percent compared to the same period last year, and during the same period, Iran's exports to this country increased by 87 percent, which caused Iran's trade balance with Turkey from minus \$104 million in the first quarter of 2020 reach a positive \$24.4 million in the first quarter of 2021.

As previously reported by the head of Iran-Turkey Joint Chamber of Commerce, Iran has exported \$2 billion of commodities to Turkey in 2020.

Putting Iran's imports from Turkey at \$2.254 billion in 2020, Mehrdad Sa'adat said, "Iran-Turkey trade declined highly in 2020, while we had experienced an annual bilateral trade of \$15 billion, and meanwhile our target is to reach \$30 billion".

Different factors led to decline in trade between the two neighbors in the previous year, among them the U.S. sanctions and the coronavirus pandemic were the most outstanding ones, he noted.

Saying that Iran-Turkey Joint Chamber of Commerce is looking for a roadmap to improve trade transactions between the two sides, Sa'adat said, "In this regard, last year, the issue of trade ethics between the two countries was addressed and some indicators were selected in this field, because if we want to improve the volume of trade and achieve the goals, we must take action to solve the root problems."

"Preliminary studies have shown that many problems arise from business ethics that need to be addressed in order to alleviate the problems that traders are struggling with, and this issue was addressed last year, and we hope for a favorable outcome", he added.

During the 27th meeting of Iran-Turkey Joint Economic Committee, which was held in Ankara in mid-September last year, the two sides investigated different ways of reaching the targeted \$30-billion bilateral trade and reiterated that reaching this figure is possible despite the pressures of the U.S. sanctions.

During the meeting, the Iranian president's chief of staff, Mahmoud Vaezi, who is the Iranian chairman of the committee, mentioned expediting the process of implementing bilateral agreements on trade and economic issues as the most prioritized objective of the joint committee and said Iran has no limitation for expanding and deepening cooperation with Turkey.

Parliament approves general outlines of CGT plan

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — During an open session of the parliament on Wednesday, the Iranian MPs approved the general outline of capital gains tax (CGT) plan.

As reported, the parliament's Economic Committee's report on the mentioned plan was discussed and approved in the session.

The recent shift of liquidity from production to the unproductive markets in Iran has caused high inflation and damage to some industries in the country.



As many experts believe, the imposition of capital gains tax is the only way to exit the liquidity from the unproductive markets and lead it to production.

As defined by the Investopedia, capital gains tax is a levy assessed on the positive difference between the sale price of the asset and its original purchase price. Long-term capital gains tax is a levy on the profits from the sale of assets held for more than a year. Short-term capital gains tax applies to assets held for a year or less, and is taxed as ordinary income.

While CGT prevents the wealth to be owned just by a few people, it leads the liquidity toward production, and help re-distribution of wealth and income in the society.

It was in the middle of the Iranian calendar year 1391 (March 2012-March 2013) that economic officials apparently thought of passing a capital gains tax law.

Non-oil exports hit \$6.3b in 2 months, up 48% yr/yr

→ 1 Iran's top five non-oil export destinations during this period were China with \$2 billion worth of exports, Iraq with \$953 million, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) with over \$849 million, Turkey with \$388 million, and Afghanistan with \$365 million.

According to the official, the mentioned five countries accounted for 68 percent and 73 percent of Iran's total non-oil exports

in terms of weight and value, respectively.

Meanwhile, the country's top five sources of imports during these two months were the UAE with \$1.8 billion, China with \$1.5 billion, Turkey with \$642 million, Germany with \$285 million, and Switzerland with \$283 million worth of imports.

Mobile phones, corn, sunflower oil, meal, wheat, soybeans, rice, barley, sugar and crude



soybean oil were the most imported items during this period.

These 10 items accounted for 69.5

percent of the weight and 33 percent of the total value of imports, according to Mir-Ashrafi.

Transit of goods via Iran rising

→ 1 The IRICA report said that Shahid Rajaei Special Zone in Hormozgan province with 3,305 million tons, Bazargan in West Azarbaijan province with 703,000 tons, Bashmaq in Kurdistan province with 687,000 tons, Sarakhs in Khorasan Razavi with 457,000 tons, Imam Khomeini Port in Khuzestan province with 447,000 tons, Bileh Savar in Ardabil province with 337,000 tons, Jolfa in East Azarbaijan province with 312,000 thousand tons, Razi in West Azarbaijan province with 188,000 tons, Astara in Gilan province with 156,000 tons and Bandar Lengeh in Hormozgan province with 139,000 tons of transited goods, were the country's top 10 customs in terms of the volume of transits.

Also, the reports related to the transit via the country in the current Iranian year indicate a rising trend.

For example, transit of goods through Shahid Rajaei port, Iran's largest and best-equipped container port, increased 160 percent in the first month of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-April 20), as compared to the same period of time in the past year, according to a provincial official.

Alireza Mohammadi Karajiran, the director-general of Ports and Maritime Department of Iran's southern Hormozgan



province, where the port lies, said that 20,231 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) of commodities were transited via Shahid Rajaei port in the said month.

Enjoying the most modern container terminals and port equipment, Shahid Rajaei accounts for 85 percent of the total loading and unloading at the Iranian ports.

Negotiations underway for renewing gas export deal with Turkey

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Head of the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) said natural gas exports to Turkey are ongoing under the framework of the current 25-year contract between the two countries and negotiations are also underway for extending the deal.

"The current contract with Turkey is effective and exports to this country are ongoing while correspondence has been made to extend the contract," Hassan Montazer Torbati told ILNA on Wednesday.

Many of Turkey's gas contracts with other countries are in the final stages, all of which affect each other, Torbati noted, adding: "In any case, I think that given that we are going to offer part of our natural gas in the energy exchange, there is room for the development of contracts, whether through the NIGC and the Oil Ministry or private companies and in this regard the energy exchange can be a good space for future gas exports."

The NIGC head further said that Turkey has made some changes in its energy import procedures and has somehow included the private sector in its gas contracts, In Iran, in addition to the Oil Ministry, the private sector may also enter the arena as well.

Regarding gas exports to Afghanistan, the official noted: "Exports to this country are also being pursued and we are mainly focused on regional companies and exports to cities near the border."

"Exports to Afghanistan depend on communication and initial assurances by



the two governments, but in any case, we try to export to this country through private sector companies," Torbati added.

Iran is Turkey's second-biggest supplier of natural gas after Russia. Tehran sells about 10 billion cubic meters a year of gas under a 25-year supply deal to Turkey which it uses for electricity generation.

The gas exports are carried out via a 2,577 km (1,601 miles) pipeline running from Tabriz to Ankara.

Turkey imported 7.7 billion cubic meters of gas from Iran in 2019 or some 17 percent of its total gas imports.

After the re-imposition of U.S. sanctions in November 2018, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan made it clear that his country would continue to buy natural gas from the Islamic Republic.

Natural gas exports from Iran to Turkey came to a halt on March 31, 2020, after an explosion and fire at a pipeline on the Turkish side of the border; the reasons for the blast were not officially announced.

Iran resumed gas exports to Turkey after a three-month hiatus.

TCCIMA hosts seminar on Iran-Armenia trade opportunities

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA), on Wednesday, hosted a seminar on Iran and Armenia's trade opportunities and ways for boosting mutual economic relations.

As reported by the TCCIMA portal, the event was attended by government officials from the two sides including TCCIMA Head Masoud Khansari and Head of Armenia's state revenue committee Edvard Hovhannisyan, Armenian Ambassador to Tehran Artashes Toumanian as well as the representatives of the two countries private sectors.

The attendees of the seminar explored ways of increasing the level of trade between the two countries and stressed the need for taking necessary measures for the facilitation of economic interactions between the two countries' private sectors.

They also addressed some of the barriers and issues on the trade of Iranian commercial and manufacturing companies with their Armenian counterparts.

Speaking in the meeting, which was organized by the Iran-Armenia Joint Chamber of Commerce in collaboration with TCCIMA, Hovhannisyan announced his country's readiness for facilitation of cooperation between the two sides to improve the trade relations between Iranian and Armenian companies.

He also announced his country's decision to reduce customs duties on Iranian trucks entering Armenian territory, noting that Iranian trucks will have no problem crossing

Armenia and entering Georgia and then Russia.

Before the seminar, the Armenian officials had also held a meeting with the TCCIMA head to discuss ways of expanding trade and economic relations between the two neighbors.

In that meeting, Khansari mentioned the free trade agreement signed between Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and noted that Armenia is the only member of the union that shares a land border with Iran.

He called the development of economic relations between the two countries a big step for Iran and Armenia's presence in third markets.

Khansari further expressed dissatisfaction with the current level of trade between the two countries and noted that Iran and Armenia have great potentials for boosting their economic transactions.

Referring to the establishment of specialized desks for promoting trade with some of the neighboring countries in TCCIMA, the official announced the establishment of an Armenian desk in this chamber with the cooperation of the two countries' Joint Chamber of Commerce in the near future.

Hovhannisyan for his part described the seminar on Iran and Armenia trade opportunities as the first serious step in the development of economic relations between the two countries and said that the Armenian state-run and private sectors welcome any measure to improve mutual trade relations.

Private sectors of Iran, Ukraine hold online meeting to discuss trade

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) held an online specialized meeting in collaboration with the Ukrainian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (UCCI) to explore ways of expanding trade ties between the two countries.

The virtual event was attended by the head of the two countries' chambers of commerce, the head of Iran-Ukraine Joint Chamber of Commerce, as well as officials and private sector representatives from both sides, the ICCIMA portal reported.

Cooperation in the agriculture sector was the main focus of the mentioned event since most of the trade exchanges between the two countries in the previous year were related to agricultural products.

Speaking in the meeting, ICCIMA Head Gholam-Hossein Shafeie called the meeting a new beginning for trade talks between the private sectors of the two countries and stated: "This is the first specialized meeting between businessmen of the two countries, and due to the high capacities of the two countries in the agriculture sector, we dedicated this meeting to this field."

Referring to the close relations between the two coun-



ICCIMA Head Gholam-Hossein Shafeie (C) and Head of Iran-Ukraine Joint Chamber of Commerce Hamidreza Ghadi (L)

tries' chambers of commerce and the exchanges of trade delegations in the past, Shafeie praised the activities of the Iran-Ukraine Joint Chamber of Commerce and its impact on the future of trade between the two countries.

According to the official, unfortunately, in recent years,

restrictions imposed by the U.S. sanctions on Iran have negatively affected the two countries' trade with each other, mainly due to problems with financial exchanges.

"One of the best solutions for increasing the volume of trade between the two countries is a serious focus on the agriculture sector," he stressed.

Gennadiy Chyzykhov, the UCCI president, for his part expressed satisfaction with the appropriate level of cooperation between the two countries' chambers of commerce.

He referred to a memorandum of understanding signed between the two chambers in 2017, and said: "This cooperation has been established according to the 2017 memorandum and fortunately, is still ongoing."

Chyzykhov put the level of trade between the two countries in the previous year at about \$400 million, noting that 95 percent of the mentioned figure was allocated to agricultural products.

"This indicates the significant role of the agricultural sector in relations between Iran and Ukraine," he added.

Elsewhere in the meeting, the Head of Iran-Ukraine Joint Chamber of Commerce Hamidreza Ghadi stressed the need for promoting barter trade between the two countries as a good way for boosting the two sides' trade level.

TEDPIX gains 3,900 points on Wednesday

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), rose 3,916 points to 1.109 million on Wednesday.

As reported, 4,542 billion securities worth 34,305 trillion rials (about \$816.7 million) were traded at the TSE on Wednesday.

The first market's index increased 4,139 points, and the second market's index rose 3,540 points.

The Governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) has said predictability of the economy is a prerequisite for the stability of markets adding that the central bank welcomes the

prosperity of the capital market.

"Stability of all markets along each other is of utmost importance for the central bank, therefore the bank supports the stability of the capital market," Abdolnasser Hemmati said in a meeting with the representatives of the capital market.

He emphasized that the approach of the Central Bank is to support the capital market, stating: "One of my personal economic beliefs is that our problem in economics is the underdevelopment of financial markets and capital market in particular."

U.S. failed badly in West Asia: academic

→ 1 Those forces sparked the biggest public disagreement yet between Biden and some American political circles.

Bilveer points to the influence of Zionist lobbies in the U.S. and the pressure they put on Biden to support Israel.

“The political culture and immense influence of the Jewish lobby will constrain when Biden as what he can do will be limited by the Jewish and Zionist hawks to pressure the U.S. including Biden to support their policies even if is negative for the U.S. as is the present Israeli aggression against the Palestinians.”

Following is the text of the interview:

What is your view of China's position in the new world order? Is China going to be a new hegemon?

China is a rising power; it still got a long way to go to reach the level and status of being a superpower where it can dictate and act like a gangster, as the U.S. has been; it will probably reach the status of a superpower in the next 10-15 years, assisted by the fact that the U.S. is a fast-declining power; the former USSR is only regional power with some global outreach; Japan is essentially a weak state and India got a long way to go before achieving great power hood.

So, yes, China will be a great power but whether it will be a hegemon is another story. I think China will emerge as a global economic power in the next decade or so, and the more the West, esp. the U.S., places blocks in its way, the faster it will rise. But hegemony in a new world and where there is no real order, is difficult. As a military and political power, China got a long way to go.

Hence, China will only be a hegemon, meaning able to dictate its way and rules in its immediate neighborhood but not further away in Africa, Latin America, or North America. Even as China rises as a powerful state, there are other states that can constrain China and hence, China's outreach and ability to impose its will and influence will not be that easy. It will have to negotiate, not impose, its influence in the coming years. Yet unlike the U.S., China does not use force as liberally as Western states. Today, Chinese leaders will ask – what is the use of force and what benefit will it accrue here – none. So, the logic today is not to use force but rather use diplomacy and economic power to gain its influence, something it has been successful for quite some time. The U.S. has been trying to engage and force the Chinese to use military power in order to weak and bankrupt her, including forcing states to become anti-China, esp. in Asia but so far, the U.S. has failed. All the American provocations in the South China Sea or Taiwan Straits areas are not working and only forcing states into the region to realize that China cannot be ignored; the Americans can come and go, but China is permanently basing here, and hence, Chinese power is a fact and reality that no one in the region can ignore.

It seems that the U.S. under the Trump presidency undermined global stability, especially in West Asia. Do you see any change in the new U.S. administration's policies?

Compared to Trump, Biden's U.S. is more constructive and creative in trying to impose and gain its influence. Trump was totally inexperienced in foreign policy, and he thought that he could make a deal anywhere as he would make business deals; he failed badly in the Middle East (West Asia) and Asia. He was badly served by hawkish advisers who



“The first Western power to play the politics of extremism in the Middle East (West Asia) was Britain which nurtured the Saudis and Wahhabis into an alliance in order to contain the Ottomans.”

did more harm to U.S. interests than anyone else in the last 50 years or so. Just look at how Trump and his advisers failed the U.S. and Americans when it came to COVID-19. I think Biden is more experienced and better adept rather than Trump in the complex world of diplomacy esp. with former Obama experienced officials to help him.

So, Biden will be much more effective, constructive and will be trying to gain U.S.'s influence in a more constructive fashion. Except maybe in Israel where the political culture and immense influence of the Jewish lobby will constrain when Biden as what he can do will be limited by the Jewish and Zionist hawks to pressure the U.S. including Biden, to support their policies even if is negative for the U.S. as is the present Israeli aggression against the Palestinians. Until the U.S. does not decouple itself from Israel, the Americans will always be losers in the Middle East (West Asia) and will not win much support and sympathy in the Muslim World.

What are the roots of emerging terrorist groups in West Asia? Some observers attribute it to poverty and injustice, while others think that these groups have been fabricated to secure Western powers' interests.

I don't think there is a simple answer: no terrorist is born; he becomes one over time. This is due to internal and external failures. The states in the Middle East (West Asia) have failed their people badly and this has created all kinds of conditions to promote extremism and terrorism. At the same time, external parties have exploited these internal fault lines to pursue their policies to create a cauldron of instability in the region so that the West esp. the U.S. and allies can control these weak and largely feudalistic Arab states,

“The Saudi Wahhabis have been the key sources of instability in the Middle East (West Asia) and Muslim regions in the world at large, including in Southeast Asia, because they want to spread their Wahhabi-Salafi-Jihadi ideology through their petrodollars [now in decline] in competition with Iran, the Shia leader, for the hearts and minds of the Muslims world over.”

gain control of their oil and gas resources as well as the strategic (Persian) Gulf region.

The first Western power to play the politics of extremism in the Middle East (West Asia) was Britain which nurtured the Saudis and Wahhabis into an alliance in order to contain the Ottomans. Since then, this practice has continued with new variants and complexities. The external players are not just the West but also champions of various Islamist ideologies such as the Saudi Wahhabis, who have been the key sources of instability in the Middle East (West Asia) and Muslim regions in the world at large, including in Southeast Asia, because they want to spread their Wahhabi-Salafi-Jihadi ideology through their petrodollars [now in decline] as well as in competition with Iran, the Shia leader, for the hearts and minds of the Muslims world over.

I believe the Middle East (West Asia), being the centers of Sunni and Shia Islam even though not demographically, will continue to be the fountainheads of extremism and this will harm the world at large, as it has till today. Whether it is the al-Bannas, Qutbs, Osamas, or Baghdadis, a key export of the Middle East (West Asia) has been extremism and this will remain for some time.

How may China's Belt and Road initiative change the regional security regimes? Do you expect development of trade ties between Asian countries that would help bring them closer together?

The BRI is a major game-changer; it is purported an economic strategy but with severe political, diplomatic and even strategic implications. The Chinese have been at work in the world, esp. Third World since the 1970s and over the last ten years or so,

have synergized all these projects, tactics and strategies into the BRI, a largely capitalist development mode to build land and sea infrastructures that would benefit the economic development of the world at large. That is the great part of the BRI and China, and there is no competitor to this esp. at a time when the West is weak and declining, and the West's decline would be sped up by the COVID-19 pandemic and the general decline in global trade.

In short, you ask yourself this question: what has the West give the world today? Political democracy when even in the U.S. and Western Europe minorities are at risk [Blacks and Asians are being attacked on a daily basis]. Economic growth when these Western societies are in decline and in grave, perpetual debt; Military security when they Westerners, though still powerful, are losing one war after another; remember, ISIS was defeated not by the U.S. but by Russia, Iran and Syria.

So, what does the West have to offer the world? Nothing; China does not pretend it wants to export democracy or human rights, something which even the West is in great deficit; China just wants to develop the world economically and if you want this good, commodity, or service, then you go to China only; and no one wants the dysfunctional Western democracy, human rights, etc. when these societies themselves are historical purveyors of genocides and human rights violations and violence in the past; what did the Whites do to the native Americans, or the Whites do to the natives in Australia and New Zealand, or the Whites did to many natives in Africa, like the Germans in Namibia?

So, the Whites, esp. the U.S., the UK, and Australia should stop playing the game of being champions of human beings when their hands are soaked with the blood of millions of non-Whites.

So, in today's realities, China has much to offer, not the West, and this is why it would win this coming war, with the support of the rest of the world except for those who perpetrated crimes against humanity in the past. This war will be won through economics and if the West tries to use military power to stop this from happening, it will then be destroyed permanently.

How do you assess the 25-year partnership between Iran and China? Is China a trustworthy party when it comes to partnership?

I think no country can be trusted. China will not trust Iran and Iran will not trust China. That is political common sense. Just remember, through the 1950s and 1960s, Iran and the U.S. were one family, but by the end of 1979, they became sworn enemies till today. This is politics. Both China and Iran are civilizational states and they know what really drives close relations is the convergence of interests. As long as Beijing and Teheran can align their interests, they will be compelled to work closely together for mutual benefits. The 25-year Iran-China Partnership is a great start in this direction; a political commitment by both countries and leaders to work together and with many areas identified, including military, the challenge will be to put meat into the partnership and make it alive and relevant for decades to come. I believe Iran and China are natural partners and they will go a great length in developing close ties for the benefit of regional and global peace, and more importantly, for the benefit of their people.

Hundreds of Amazon employees call for the company leadership to support Palestine

More than 500 Amazon employees have signed an internal letter to Jeff Bezos and Andy Jassy calling for the company to acknowledge the plight of the Palestinian people.

The move comes after Israeli airstrikes devastated Palestinians in Gaza, leaving 248 people dead. Hamas and Israel have since agreed to a ceasefire.

“We ask Amazon leadership to acknowledge the continued assault upon Palestinians' basic human rights under an illegal occupation... without using language that implies a power symmetry or situational equivalency, which minimizes and misrepresents the disruption, destruction, and death that has disproportionately been inflicted upon the Palestinians in recent days and over several decades,” employees wrote. “Amazon employs Palestinians in Tel Aviv and Haifa offices and around the world. Ignoring the suffering faced by Palestinians and their families at home erases our Palestinian coworkers.”

Employees want the company to terminate business contracts with organizations that are complicit in human rights violations, like the Israeli Defense Forces. In April, Amazon and Google signed a \$1.2 billion cloud computing contract with the Israeli government.

The note echoes similar petitions from workers at Apple and Google. On May 18th, Jewish employees at Google penned a letter to Sundar Pichai calling for the company to “reject any definition of antisemitism that holds that criticism of Israel or Zionism is antisemitic.” Two days later, The Verge published a note from Muslim employees at Apple.

Muslim tech workers say executives have been slow to voice support for Palestinians, or condemn the violence in Gaza. Many feel their CEOs are choosing to ignore Israeli human rights abuses because the situation is fraught. The result, according to multiple sources, is that Muslims in tech feel undervalued and ignored.

Mali's ex-junta chief seizes power after military nabs interim president

Mali's military strongman Assimi Goita says the removal from power of the country's interim president and vice president in recent days was the right move, alleging that the now detained leaders intended to sabotage the transition process with an uncalled-for decision to reshuffle the cabinet.

Transitional President Bah Ndaw and Prime Minister Moctar Ouane – tasked with steering Mali to civilian rule nearly ten months after a Goita-led coup – were taken into custody at a military base outside the capital Bamako on Monday evening, sparking an immediate reaction by former colonial power France.

French President Emmanuel Macron slammed the move as a “coup within a coup” and threatened to impose sanctions.

Former junta leader Goita, who was lately serving as interim vice president, justified the arrest of the interim leaders and seizure of power by claiming that the two had failed to consult him about a government reshuffle in which two former coup leaders lost their cabinet positions.

In his statement, Goita further pledged to hold elections next year to restore an elected government as previously planned.

France, which continues to hold major political and military influence over Mali, joined the U.S., the European Union as well as the United Nations, the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to condemn the detentions and demanded their immediate release.

The demand was further echoed on Tuesday by other Western governments such as Britain and Germany.

“We are prepared to take in the coming hours targeted sanctions against those” responsible, Macron declared during a press briefing at the end of an EU summit.

France has deployed more than 5,000 troops in Mali in a purported move to combat the growing presence of militants in the Sahel.

“Sanctions will be adopted against those who stand in the way of the transition,” EU's foreign affairs chief Josep Borrell also warned in a Twitter post.

A delegation from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) arrived in Mali on Monday to help resolve the dispute. ECOWAS played a key role in the formation of the interim government after the August coup.

Resistance News

Palestinian protesters slam Blinken's visit to Ramallah

INTERNATIONAL **TEHRAN** — Palestinian protesters have taken to the streets of Ramallah to protest a visit by U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken to the West Bank city and his meeting with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

The demonstration, which was organized by the Palestinian National and Islamic Forces, took place on Tuesday.

Before being met with police, the participants marched in Ramallah, chanting slogans such as “America is the head of the snake,” “Security coordination is shameful,” and “The Oslo Accords are gone.”

They also carried mock coffins of children who lost their lives during the recent Israeli onslaught on the blockaded Gaza Strip.

Tel Aviv launched the bombing campaign against Gaza on May 10, after Palestinian retaliation against violent raids on worshippers at the al-Aqsa Mosque compound and the regime's plans to force a number of Palestinian families out of their homes at Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of Jerusalem al-Quds.

Apparently caught off guard by unprecedented rocket barrages from Gaza, Israel announced a unilateral ceasefire on May 21, which Palestinian resistance groups accepted with Egyptian mediation.

According to Gaza's Health Ministry, 253 Palestinians were killed in the Israeli offensive, including 66 children and 39 women, and 1948 others were wounded.

Political activist Amal Khraisheh, who took part in the demonstration, stressed, “America's pro-Israel policies have to change to achieve real peace and justice in West Asia.”

During a meeting with Blinken, Abbas said the reinforcement of the Gaza truce paves the way for the prompt start of a political process that ends the Israeli occupation of Palestine under the supervision of West Asia Quartet and in line with international legitimacy resolutions.

The top U.S. diplomat, for his part, announced plans to provide tens of millions of dollars in aid to Gaza.

He also said the process to reopen the U.S. Consulate in al-Quds will begin soon. The measure will restore ties with the Palestinians, which had been downgraded by the administration of former U.S. president Donald Trump.

China slams latest deceptive U.S. push to wage new COVID-19 probe

China has slammed the U.S. for “spreading conspiracy theories and disinformation” following Washington's latest push to wage a new probe into the origins of the coronavirus, even after a recent World Health Organization (WHO) mission to China proved inconclusive.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian once again accused Washington on Wednesday of “spreading conspiracy theories and disinformation such as a laboratory leak” after the right-wing Wall Street Journal newspaper cited U.S. intelligence to claim that three lab workers from Wuhan – where the contagion originated – were hospitalized with COVID-19-like symptoms in November 2019, a month before the pandemic's first declared case.

Zhao further described the U.S.-led revival of the theory as “disrespectful” to the WHO investigation, insisting that the move amounted to “undermining of global solidarity to fight the virus.”

Calling on Washington to open its own virology facilities to scrutiny, the Chinese official then emphasized, “If the U.S. really wants full transparency, then it should, like China did, invite WHO experts to visit the U.S. and investigate.”

“Open up Fort Detrick military base as early as possible, and all the bio labs the U.S. has around the world,” Zhao further underlined, referring to an American research facility in Maryland, near Washington, DC.

The development came after the theory that the coronavirus emerged from the Wuhan Institute of Virology was again highlighted by U.S. authorities and media outlets in an apparent bid to wage yet another probe into the origins of the deadly virus following the WHO mission to the Chinese city.

The long-delayed report by WHO, by the team of international experts sent to Wuhan and their Chinese counterparts, drew no strong conclusions about the origins of the pandemic.

Instead, the WHO-led team pointed out that the virus most likely jumped from bats to humans via an intermediate animal. The expert report had initially emphasized that a theory involving the virus leaking from a lab was “extremely unlikely.”

The Wall Street Journal also claimed in its latest report on the matter that the Chinese researchers had collected samples seven years earlier from a mine in southwestern China, where miners contracted a mysterious illness from a new, bat-borne coronavirus.

The theory that the contagion had leaked from the Chinese lab was originally hyped up by, among others, the administration of former U.S. president Donald Trump as part of his hawkish anti-China policies.

Since infecting its first victims in the central Chinese city of Wuhan in late 2019, the pandemic has spread to nearly every country across the globe, killing more than 3.4 million people so far.

Meanwhile, China also called on the US earlier this month to give a full clarification on its bio-military activities at home and abroad, a matter of concern shared by Russia and others.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said during a May 12 press briefing that it was essential for Washington to place such activities under effective international control.

“We insist the US side should take real action to ensure full transparency and security of projects that are related to biological experiments at U.S. laboratories,” Hua added.

“We once again call on the U.S. side to give a detailed clarification and take concrete actions, to ensure the legitimacy, transparency and security of its bio-labs and relevant activities. A verification mechanism should be established under the Biological Weapons Convention, which is a global



consensus and an effective way to address concerns and build mutual trust.”

The Chinese diplomat further underlined that the United States must agree to the creation of a special monitoring mechanism that would ensure the effective exchange of crucial biotechnological information with other countries.

However, she expressed regret that no meaningful response has yet been received from the American side.

“The whole international community is interested in this,” she said. “It is very annoying that the United States has shrugged off the concerns of other countries, including Russia.”

The United States dropped hundreds of thousands of germ bombs with cholera and plague on Pyongyang alone during the Korean War, and hundreds of thousands or even millions elsewhere all over China and Korea.

‘Iranians, Armenians enjoy deep, long-standing correlation’

➔1 Also known as the Qareh Klise (“the Black Church”), St. Thaddeus, as one of the oldest surviving Christian monuments in the country, is situated in Chaldoran county some 20 kilometers from Maku, adjacent to the borders of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Turkey. The ancient Church shows off elaborate bas-reliefs of flowers, animals, and human figures on its façade and exterior walls. It bears verses of Old and New Testament in Armenian calligraphy as well.



The Chapel of Dzordzortzi stands tall on the outskirts of Maku. The name narratively originates from a famous painter Hovans Yertz, known as Dzordzortzi, who supervised the chapel's restoration for a while. What is present now is a remnant of the large monastery that once existed there, as the entire chapel has been shifted to a new location 600 meters away due to submergence resulting from a dam that was built on the river.

St. Thaddeus Monastery plays hosts an annual religious ritual every summer. Last July, it hosted over 3,000 Christian worshippers coming together from Iran, Armenia, Syria, Lebanon, the Netherlands, France, Austria, Germany, Canada, and some other countries.

Earlier this month, the Islamic Republic unveiled a commemorative stamp of Saint Thaddeus Church on the sidelines of a joint online philatelic exhibition.

Sassanid-era bridge in Lorestan undergoes restoration

HERITAGE TEHRAN – A new round of restoration has commenced on Pol-e Si-Pelleh, a Sassanid era (224 CE–651) arch bridge located in Kuhdasht, western Lorestan province, the provincial tourism chief has said.

The project involves strengthening the foundation and the deck, using traditional and local materials to preserve the originality of the structure, Amin Qasemi announced on Tuesday.

The historical monument was inscribed on the National Heritage list in 1996.



Lorestan, which is a region of raw beauty, was inhabited by Iranian Indo-European peoples, including the Medes, c. 1000 BC. Cimmerians and Scythians intermittently ruled the region from about 700 to 625 BC.

The Luristan Bronzes noted for their eclectic array of Assyrian, Babylonian, and Iranian artistic motifs, date from this turbulent period. Lorestan was incorporated into the growing Achaemenid Empire in about 540 BC and successively was part of the Seleucid, Parthian, and Sassanid dynasties.

Five tourism projects worth \$22.6m inaugurated in Ramsar

TOURISM TEHRAN –A total of five tourism-related projects were inaugurated simultaneously across the northern city of Ramsar on Tuesday.

A traditional restaurant, hydrotherapy center, apartment hotel, and two eco-lodge units came on stream, expected to generate 184 job opportunities, directly and indirectly, Ramsar's tourism chief said during the inauguration ceremony.

A budget of 950 billion rials (\$22.6 million at the official exchange rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) was allocated to the projects, Nader Saharkhiz mentioned.

Back in February, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani inaugurated tens of tourism-related projects worth 14 trillion rials (about \$334 million) across the country.



Tourism-related projects worth 220 trillion rials (\$5.2 billion) had previously come on stream since President Rouhani inaugurated his second four-year term in 2017, setting a new record with a total investment of 234 trillion rials (\$5.5 billion) in this sector.

Possibly the most scenic spot on the Caspian coast, Ramsar is where the jungle-clad lower ridges of the snow-topped Alborz tumble into the sea. It's a verdant, photogenic area, lush with orange groves, and there are walking trails into the nearby hills. Time seems to move more slowly here (especially once you leave the highway), and the town and its hinterland make a nice place to kick back for a few days, especially in spring and autumn.

Gigantic agritourism site to open in Ardebil

TOURISM TEHRAN – A massive agritourism site will open its doors to the public in Ardebil province, the provincial tourism chief has said.

The site, which is reportedly the largest in West Asia, is scheduled to be inaugurated by the Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan in his future visit to the northwestern province, Nader Falahi announced on Wednesday.

The agritourism site includes large agricultural lands, 2,600 hectares of orchards, livestock complex, sugar factory, dairy factory, fruit processing factory, and several other units, the official explained.

This relatively new branch of tourism is expected to develop in the province since Ardebil issues most of the agritourism permits in the country, he added.

He also expressed hope that Ardebil would be turning into one of the main hubs of agritourism in the country in near future.

Agritourism is a relatively new branch of the travel industry in which tourists stay with local people in rural areas. Farm/ranch recreation refers



to activities conducted on private agricultural lands, which might include fee-hunting and fishing, overnight stays, educational activities, etc.

Experts believe that in addition to

the customer services jobs, agritourism pays special attention to the production sector, saying agricultural tourism is much more important and practical than other branches of tourism because

Museum of Turkmen arts inaugurated

HERITAGE TEHRAN – A cultural heritage museum dedicated to traditional arts of Turkmen tribes has been inaugurated in Gonbad-e Kavus in the northern Golestan province.

The official opening ceremony of the private museum was attended by Mohammadreza Kargar, the director of museums and historical properties at the tourism ministry, and several local officials on Monday.

Addressing the ceremony, Kargar said: “We are pleased that culture-loving people, who feel responsible for the history and culture of their region, are entering the field of museum management and creating museums at their own expense that can be a source of many [other] cultural services.”

Turkmen are people who speak a language belonging to the southwestern branch of the Turkic languages. The majority live in Turkmenistan and neighboring

parts of Central Asia and numbered more than six million at the beginning of the 21st century, according to Britannica.

About one-third of the total population lives in Iran, especially in the north, and another 500,000 live in northeastern and northwestern Afghanistan. These groups are called the Transcasian Turkmen. Pockets of Turkmen are found in northern Iraq and Syria. Smaller groups live in central Turkey, where they have experienced minority discrimination, especially after 1958.

Golestan is home to hundreds of historical and natural sites, with UNESCO-registered Gonbad-e Qabus – a one-millennium-old brick tower – amongst its most famous. Narratives say the tower has influenced various subsequent designers of tomb towers and other cylindrical commemorative structures both in the region and beyond. The UNESCO comments that the tower



bears testimony to the cultural exchange between Central Asian nomads and the ancient civilization of Iran.

Traditional footwear craft experiences boom in Zanjan province

HERITAGE TEHRAN – The art of handcrafting Givoh, which is a lightweight and breathable footwear native to Iran, is flourishing in towns and villages of Zanjan province, a local tourism official has said.

“Weaving Givoh has never lost its traditional value in Zanjan province, and today many enthusiastic young men and women pursue this profession in the villages of Zanjan province,” Elnaz Khodaei added on Tuesday, CHTN reported.

“Each year, hundreds of people across



the province are trained to weave the traditional footwear as home jobs... and for the time being, the craft is practiced by

over 3,000 people in the province.”

Also called Kalash, particularly in western regions of the country, the footwear used to be very popular all over Iran till a couple of decades ago. It was originally intended to wear by men, however, in some regions, they are welcomed by women too in the hot summertime.

Givoh is usually made from carpet yarn, leather, and other raw materials so that it lets the air circulate from its tiny pores. Such shoes traditionally come in white color, but one can find them in red, blue,

orange, and black as well.

In January 2020, Zanjan was designated as a “world city of filigree” by the World Crafts Council after the WCC assessors visited various craft workshops, stores, exhibits, and bazaars of the city in a two-day itinerary.

Zanjan makes a base for wider explorations with the architectural wonder of Soltaniyeh, the subterranean delights of the Katala-Khor caves, colorful mountains, and the UNESCO-registered Takht-e Soleiman ruins are nearby.

Restoration to help Ilkhanid mausoleum gain former splendor

HERITAGE TEHRAN –A restoration work has been commenced on the Ilkhanid era (1256–1353) mausoleum of Chalabi Oghlou, which stands tall in Soltaniyeh, northwestern Zanjan province, the provincial tourism chief has announced.

The restoration project involves strengthening the building's rooftop and dome as well as moisture insulation, Amir Arjmand said on Wednesday.

A budget of 400 million rials (\$9,500 at the official exchange rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) has been allocated to the project, which is being carried out by experienced restorers and cultural heritage experts, the official added.

Also known as Sheikh Barragh mausoleum, Chalabi Oghlou mausoleum is a historical octagonal structure neighboring the UNESCO-registered Dome of Soltaniyeh. According to its inscriptions, the mausoleum is the



burial place of Sheikh Barragh Baba, a prominent mystic in the Ilkhanid era.

Meaning “Town of the Sultans”, the ancient city of Soltaniyeh was briefly the capital of Persia's Ilkhanid dynasty (a branch of the Mongol dynasty) during the 14th century.

Gonbad-e (“The Dome of”) Soltaniyeh is highly recognized as an architectural masterpiece particularly due to its innovative double-shelled dome and elaborate interior decoration. The very imposing dome stands about 50 meters tall from its base. Covered with turquoise-blue faience tiles, the stunning structure dominates the skyline of Soltaniyeh.

Zanjan is one of the cities founded by Sassanid King Ardashir I (180-242 CE). The province makes a base for wider explorations with the architectural wonder of Soltaniyeh, the subterranean delights of the Katala-Khor caves, colorful mountains, and the UNESCO-registered Takht-e Soleiman ruins are nearby.

Pottery vessels unearthed from Kale Kub in eastern Iran

HERITAGE TEHRAN – A team of Iranian and foreign archaeologists has unearthed relics including pottery vessels during seasons of excavation in Kale Kub in Sarayan, eastern Iran.

“To date, Kale Kub has been the subject of two research projects and three seasons of archaeological excavations, which have yielded positive results,” Sarayan's tourism chief announced on Wednesday.

A series of pottery vessels found in the excavations indicate the beginning of urbanization in the region, the official explained.

Kale Kub is one of the few prehistoric sites identified in South Khorasan province that demonstrate a cultural sequence spanning between the fifth and third mil-

lennia BC, IRNA quoted Mohammad Arab as saying

The official also noted that allocating more funds to research and archeological activities could lead to better and more detailed information.

The site has also been fenced to prevent further damage and unauthorized entry by vehicles, he added.

A budget of 400 million rials (\$9,500 at the official exchange rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) has been allocated to the fencing project, he mentioned.

The first season of archeological excavations on Kale Kub site was implemented in 2019 in collaboration with Japanese archeologists.

The project revealed the chronological sequence from the 5th to late 4th mil-

lennium BC. However, poor preservation and protection have damaged most parts of the site.

A special pottery style of 4th millennium BC, which is seen on the relics found in Kale Kub, is the most important discovery on the site, as this style has been previously seen in the western Iranian plateau.

Since there are two deserts, Dasht-e Kavir and Lut desert, between these two parts of the country, the Kale Kub excavations could help us to comprehend how the culture made its way to the east.

Covering an area of over nine hectares, the historical site is a listed National Heritage property.

Located in eastern Iran, South Khorasan is home to many historical and natural attractions such as Birjand Castle, Dragon



Cave, Furg Citadel, and Polond Desert.

Saffron and barberry, the former known as the “red gold” in the country, which is considerably produced in almost all parts of the province, have made it a significant destination for ecotourism.

Attracting foreign students more than projected: official

→ 1 Also, according to the 20-Year National Vision Document (ending 2025), foreign students should account for 1.8 percent of the whole student population, which is likely to even reach 2 percent, Akhoundzadeh explained.

“Some 57,675 foreign nationals from 133 countries are studying in Iranian universities, 30,600 of whom are studying in universities affiliated with the Ministry of Science, while 25,000 others are receiving education in Azad University, and about 2,000 in medical universities.”

Fifty-seven percent of the international students are studying for a master's degree, 27 percent for a bachelor's degree and 15 percent are educating to receive a Ph.D., while the remaining one percent study at other levels.

Law, Persian literature and computer engineering are the top three fields of study for foreign students in Iran, while civil engineering, business management, political science, English language and literature, Quran and hadith sciences, international relations, and electrical engineering, and other majors with the highest number of non-Iranian students.

In 2013, 35 centers were allowed to admit foreign students, which has increased to 77 in 2021.



Iranian universities shine at world rankings

Times Higher Education has published its annual ranking of the world's top universities for 2021, listing 47 Iranian universities, which shows an increase of 7 universities compared to the last year.

Six Iranian universities have been placed among the world's top universities announced by the prestigious Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings 2021.

With 47 Iranian universities ranked among 1,527 top universities of 93 countries in the world in 2021 rankings, Iran achieved a great improvement in the academic field.

Some 21 Islamic countries were also listed in the ranking. However, Iran holds the highest share with 47 universities.

With a scientific growth rate of 10.4 percent in 2019, Iran ranked second among the top 25 countries in the world, next to China with a growth rate of 12.9 percent, according

to the Web of Science website.

According to statistics released by the International Web of Science Database, Iran's citation rank has always been on the rise over the last eight years, from 24 in 2012 to 16 in 2019.

Iran ranks first in terms of the number of universities in the region and among Islamic countries, according to Shanghai Ranking's Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) 2020.

Two Iranian universities have been ranked among the top 100 universities in Asia, according to Webometrics Ranking of World Universities for July 2020.

Moreover, 7 Iranian universities have been listed among the best 1000 worldwide; including, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences, Sharif University of Technology, Tarbiat Modares University, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Isfahan University of Technology, Iran University of Science and Technology.

In June 2020, THE Asia University Rankings 2020 ranked five Iranian universities among the top 100 universities worldwide.

The Center for Science and Technology Studies Leiden Ranking has placed 36 Iranian universities in the list of over 1,000 major universities worldwide in 2020 compared with 26 universities in 2019.

Tehran, Vienna working on €400,000 of joint environmental projects

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** – Iran and Austria are working on 17 joint environmental projects worth €400,000, seven of which have so far been completed, ISNA reported on Wednesday.

Out of 17 joint projects between Iran and Austria, seven projects are almost completed and nine other projects were delayed due to the conditions caused by the coronavirus pandemic, which are expected to be completed by 2022, Azizollah Habibi, Iran's Kharazmi University chancellor, said.

Estimating the financial capacity of the projects at €400,000 and said that “half of this budget, amounting to €200,000, is the share of support from Austria and the other half will be paid by Iran.

Pointing out that the focus of all of the projects is to meet the needs of society, he added that issues that people are

dealing with daily such as the environment, water, renewable energy, sustainable development, etc.

Iran's significant contribution to world's scientific growth

The share of Iranian articles with international participation has had significant growth of 209 percent during an eight-year period (2013-2020), becoming the Islamic world's leading country in science diplomacy, according to the Scopus International Citation Database.

The number of articles indexed by the Iranian researchers on the Web of Science website in 2020 increased by 122 percent compared to that of 2013, which made Iran 16th in the world with 69,779 articles, and first among the Islamic countries for several consecutive years, Gholam Hossein Rahimi, deputy minister of science has said.

In November 2020, scientific studies and analyses extracted from the Scopus International Citation Database showed that the rate of scientific contributions of Iranian researchers to the world increased from 17 percent in 2011 to 31 percent in 2020, becoming the world's leading country in science diplomacy with 14 percent growth.

The development of international scientific partnerships and diplomacy is one of the main policies of Iran, which is also emphasized by the country's higher education system, Mohammad Javad Dehghani, head of the Islamic World Science Citation Center (ISC), said.

One of the most important indicators of scientific participation is the share of the latest joint international scientific findings in the total scientific publications of the country, he added.

More drought predicted for Iran over next 5 years

ENVIRONMENT **TEHRAN** – According to the World Meteorological Organization's multiannual forecast, in the next five years, Iran's average rainfall will decline by 75 percent, and the temperature rises by 50-75 percent compared to the long-term average.

According to the national center for drought and crisis management, since the beginning of the current water year (September 23, 2020), precipitation has declined by 41 percent compared to the long-term average and 53 percent compared to the same period last year.

None of the provinces of the country received above-normal rainfall during this period. The lowest rainfall occurred in Hormozgan, Sistan-Baluchestan, and Kerman provinces, being short of rain by 86, 82, and 65 percent, respectively.

In the next four months (June to September), the central and northwestern provinces will experience normal rainfall or lower than normal.

According to the World Meteorological Organization, over the next five years (2021-2025) the average rainfall is expected to be 75 percent lower than normal and the average temperature between 50 to 75 percent higher than the long-term average.

Accordingly, the adoption of national policies to adapt to low rainfall and reduce the consequences of drought is inevitable,

and the Seventh Development Plan should be prepared on the basis of drought and climate change, Ahad Vazifeh, head of the national center for drought and crisis management said.

A large part of the country has been hit by severe drought during the past 12 months. Forecasts indicate that we will not have significant rainfall in the remaining months of the current water year, so that, we face severe to very severe drought in most parts of the country, he stated.

Watershed management: a solution

In April, Abolghasem Hosseinpour, director of flood control at Forests, Rangelands, and Watershed Management Organization, said that Iran will probably experience drought over the current [Iranian calendar] year (began on March 21), as only four provinces out of 31 provinces of the country received normal rainfall last year.

Given that Iran is an arid and semi-arid region, the rainfall rate is low, in other words, the fluctuations of rainfall vary significantly from year to year, he added.

Over the last two years, Iran was doused with rain which was unprecedented during the past 50 years, but last year, the country faced drought, which shows a 40 percent decrease in rainfall, he explained.

Watershed management is a solution



to strengthen the ecosystem in the face of subsequent droughts by penetrating rainfall into the ground.

What would be the consequences?

Climate change is a fact that cannot be run over, whether the temperature raises over 2 or 6°C, natural incidents such as flooding, droughts, and severe storms are among the main consequences of climate change.

Moreover, water and food shortages, water-borne illnesses, cold or heat-related deaths will come up as the results of temperature variations; in tropical areas also the risk of floods will raise.

Heavy rain and other extreme weather events will become more frequent, which can lead to floods along with decreasing water quality, but also decreasing availability of water resources in some regions.

Climate change will also bring extreme

wet and dry seasons, which mainly causes rainfall fluctuations and water scarcity; the same experience happened in the country this year, as torrential rain started on March 19 led to floods in at least 25 out of 31 provinces of Iran and caused extensive damages.

While there have been prolonged droughts nationwide in past recent years leaving people scrambling for water, then precipitation started since the current crop year (September 23, 2018), hitting the record highs and being so heavy that cities flood.

Based on the latest data published by the National Drought Warning and Monitoring Center, since the current crop year (September 23, 2018), precipitation in the country considerably increased to 312 from 159.3 millimeters in the previous water year, demonstrating a rise of 95.9 percent.

So, nations must take steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the future, preventing the emissions peak, otherwise, they might not be able to breathe on the planet in the future, or migrate to other places if found.

The study may also come efficient when it comes to making the people aware of climate change impact in their own city, within their lifetime, to avoid experiencing an entirely new climate that is beyond human experience.

COVID-19 UPDATES

The statistics are related to 24 hours started 2:00 p.m. May 25

New cases	10,468
New deaths	163
Total cases	2,865,864
Total deaths	79,219
New hospitalized patients	1,154
Total recovered patients	2,362,428
Diagnostic tests conducted	19,185,933
Doses of vaccine injected	3,330,309

Iran says stands by Africa against 'vaccine apartheid'

→ 1 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.

“Osvid-19”, the fourth domestic vaccine produced by Osvah Pharmaceutical Company is also undergoing human trials, which will also be available in early September.

On May 24, the first coronavirus vaccine made by the private sector in Iran succeeded in receiving the code of ethics and entered the phase of clinical studies.

A glimpse at Iran's north-central national parks

North-central Semnan province is home to two extraordinary arrays of wildlife and natural landscapes, from Touran to Kavir National Parks, areas with the largest population of endangered Asiatic cheetah. Here, we take a glimpse at these wild, wonderful places.

To preserve the existing biodiversity over the wide geographic expanse of Iran, four types of areas have been designated for preservation and protection, including, national parks, wildlife refuges, protected areas, and natural national monuments. In 1997, the Department of the Environment (DOE) held supervision over 7,563,983 hectares of such areas. By the year 2003, the size of the DOE supervised areas reached 11,791,788.225 hectares.



The national park is a designated part of Iran's environment - including forests, rangelands, woodlands, prairies, water or mountains - that is an outstanding representation of Iranian nature. As such, it is brought under protection in order to permanently preserve its natural ecology and to create a suitable environment for the flourishing of wildlife and the growth of flora under natural conditions. The national parks currently cover 1,649,771 hectares of the country's area.

Protected areas also are significantly important natural resources due to its impact on wildlife breeding, preservation of plant life or its natural state. The total area of regions protected is 6,600,601 hectares.

A Wildlife refuge has natural habitats and special climate qualifications, which brought under protection in order to revive wild animals and is stretching to 3,524,181 hectares.

Khar Turan National Park

Khar Turan National Park or Touran Wildlife Refuge, situated in the southeast of Shahrud city, stretches to 1,400,000 hectares while being the second largest reserve in the country after Naybandan Wildlife Refuge.

Defined a protected area in 1972, the region also received the title of biosphere reserve by UNESCO and ranked the second biosphere in the world after the Serengeti ecosystem (a geographical region in Africa).

A wide range of flora and fauna, valuable genetic resources are seen in the area, more importantly, the precious species of Asiatic cheetah inhabit in the area.

National Park, Wildlife Refuge, and Protected Area constitute 8, 17, and 75 percent of the entire area. Ghosts have been nicknamed Iran's Africa.

Some 41 species of mammals, 167 bird species, 42 reptile species, and 2 amphibian species have been identified in Touran. The reserve also hosts wild sheep and goats, the goitered gazelle and Indian gazelle, in addition to the largest population of Persian onager.

The most important animal species are leopard, cheetah, jebeer gazelle, goitered gazelle, wild goat, Northern three-toed jerboa, hamster, gerbil, hyrna, wildcat, cape hare, marbled, polecat, caracal, houbara bustard, Pleske's ground jay, heron, ferruginous duck, eagle, falcon, peregrine falcon, sand grouse, see-see partridge, different buzzards, goshawk, eagle owl, agama, monitor, Iranian spiny-tailed lizard, saw-scaled viper, and cobra.

The high biodiversity of the region has paved the way for scientific, educational and research activities in the refuge.

(to be contd.)

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Precipitation forecast to reach above normal in next 3 months

The country is predicted to receive above normal rainfall over the next three months (February 20-May 21), head of the climatological research institute affiliated to Iran's Meteorological Organization (IMO) has said.

The whole country will meet normal and above normal rainfalls, the northern parts will receive above normal rainfall while southern provinces will receive normal to lower-than-normal rainfall, IRNA quoted Iman Babaeian as saying on Sunday.

This month, northern and eastern provinces will receive rain above normal averages, while in the first month of spring precipitation will be at normal amounts across the country, he noted, adding, during the second month of spring rainfall will reach its peak.

بارش‌های کشور در سه ماه پیش رو بیش از نرمال است

رئیس پژوهشکده اقلیم‌شناسی سازمان هواشناسی گفت: پیش‌بینی‌ها نشان می‌دهد میزان بارش در کشور در سه ماهه پیش رو (اسفند ۹۷، فروردین و اردیبهشت ۹۸) در حد نرمال و متمایل به بیش از نرمال خواهد بود.

ایمان باباییان روز یکشنبه در گفت‌وگو با خبرنگار ایرنا افزود: مجموع بارش‌ها در سطح کشور نرمال و متمایل به بیشتر از نرمال است اما در نیمه شمالی، بیشتر از نرمال و در نیمه جنوبی در محدوده نرمال تا کمتر از نرمال خواهد بود.

وی اظهار داشت: بارش‌ها در اسفندماه ۹۷ در نیمه شمالی و شرقی بیشتر از نرمال است، در فروردین ماه ۹۸ نیز بارش‌ها در محدوده نرمال و برای اردیبهشت بیشتر از نرمال پیش‌بینی شده است.

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One who imagines himself to be all-knowing
will surely suffer on account of his ignorance.
Imam Ali (AS)

Demotte Shahnameh

The Demotte Shahnameh, illustrated manuscript, now dispersed, of Ferdowsi's epic poem, often identified by the name of a former owner, the Paris dealer Georges Demotte (active ca. 1900-23).

A more accurate designation is "the great Mongol Shahnameh", for it is generally believed to have been produced for a patron associated with the Il-khanid court and is particularly renowned for the intrinsic quality of its paintings. The large format of the manuscript and the incorporation of Chinese motifs into the paintings are characteristic of other Il-khanid examples, like Rashid ad-Din's Jame at-tawarikh.

The paintings in the Shahnameh are exceptional, however, for their depiction of emotion, particularly grief, which is achieved through the figures' gestures and postures, often echoed and amplified by the expressive use of settings. Some features of the compositions continued in use in later 14th-century and 15th-century paintings, but the expressive quality of the illustrations in the Mongol Shahnameh was rarely matched in later works.

The Mongol Shahnameh has also acquired notoriety from the circumstances surrounding its appearance on the art market and the subsequent dispersal of its pages in various public and private collections.

Demotte is said to have acquired the manuscript in Paris in about 1910; he bought it from Shemavan Malayan, brother-in-law of the well-known dealer Hagop Kevorkian, who had brought it from Tehran.

The manuscript is thought to have belonged to the Qajar royal library, for it was photographed while still bound by Antoin Sevrugin, court photographer to the rulers Nasser ad-Din Shah (1848-96) and Mozaffar ad-Din Shah (1896-1907).

Mohammad-Ali Shah (1907-09) and members of his household are said to have been selling manuscripts from the dynastic collection as early as 1908, in order to meet personal expenses. Some of these manuscripts were transmitted to Paris, where collectors were learning to appreciate Persian painting.

It is reported that when the manuscript of the Mongol Shahnameh came into Demotte's hands it was still bound but that, after he had failed to find a purchaser at the desired price, he removed the binding in order to sell the pages separately, an approach that was well received by collectors.

In 1913, Demotte sold several pages to the collector Charles Vever, and by 1914 ten illustrations from the manuscript had been published by W. P. Schulz. Over the next sixty years, illustrations from this manuscript were gradually dispersed by Demotte and other dealers.

Dispersed paintings from the Shahnameh have been repeatedly exhibited and published by scholars. There have been two particularly noteworthy attempts to record and analyze the scattered miniatures.

In 1939, Doris Brian prepared an inventory of all fifty-eight known miniatures, and in 1980 Oleg Grabar and Sheila Blair published a more thoroughly documented list, along with a series of hypotheses about the original state of the manuscript and a historical interpretation of the paintings.

They argue that the manuscript originally contained about 280 folios and as many as 180 illustrations, of which, beside the fifty-eight identified illustrations, only a few unillustrated text pages are known to have survived.

Their study also revealed that changes to the Shahnameh after it reached Paris went far beyond removal of the binding, a conclusion that is confirmed by more recent information about the pages purchased by Vever, which are now in the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, the Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.

A close examination of Vever's pages, which include some bifolios, reveals that they had been subjected to a complex process of alteration and restoration, which has been documented for other pages as well.

The apparent purpose of these changes was to increase the number of salable pages by splitting leaves originally illustrated on both sides into two separate sheets, each with a painting on one side; the remaining side of each new "page" was thus blank.

Various kinds of damage resulting from this process were repaired in various ways; blank pages were covered with new text, either an existing text page or newly written, and miniatures were often partly repainted.

Sometimes miniatures were glued to pages from different sections of the text. Contiguous unillustrated pages from the story of Siavush are thus now paired with illustrations about Fereidun, Rustam, Eskandar, and Ardashir; one illustration of Fereidun and another of Eskandar are now backed by identical verses from the Siavush story. The creation of these new "pages" must have been accomplished by persons literate in Persian, including a trained calligrapher, but the forgeries were clearly aimed at buyers ignorant of the language.

Although the surviving portions of this Shahnameh manuscript carry no direct information about its original owner or the circumstances surrounding its manufacture, since its first appearance in Paris it has been associated with 14th-century Persia.

Various opinions have been expressed about its illustrations, which reflect tensions between the Il-khanid dynasty and Persian subjects; it was probably commissioned by Rashid ad-Din's son Ghias ad-Din Mohammad in about 1335.

Source: Encyclopedia Iranica

Play depicting Shahrokh Zargham's change from reprobate to revolutionary on stage

A R T **TEHRAN** — Director Reza Bahrami's troupe is performing a play based on a true story that recounts how the 1979 Islamic Revolution transformed Shahrokh Zargham from a lowlife into an honest and fervent revolutionary.

The play entitled "Buckle" has been written by Kabbod Taraj and is currently on stage at Tehran's Iranshahr Theater Complex.

Zargham, as a professional wrestler, was famous for his gang activities in Tehran.

A few months before the victory of the Islamic Revolution, he learned about Imam Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Republic, and his struggles against Mohammadreza Pahlavi, Iran's last monarch.

Consequently, he became an ardent follower of Imam Khomeini and joined the revolutionaries.

After the Iran-Iraq broke out, he recruited a group of his friends to fight against the



Members of director Reza Bahrami's troupe perform "Buckle" at Tehran's Iranshahr Theater Complex.

Iraqi forces in the southwestern Iranian city of Abadan.

However, in a battle with an Iraqi armored company, he was shot dead by heavy machinegun fire. He was beheaded by Iraqi forces and Iraqi television announced the news of his killing by showing his beheaded body.

No information was published by Iraq about the fate of Zargham's remains, as in his homeland he was called "Hurr of the Revolution", a phrase that compares Zargham with Hurr ibn Riahi, one of Yazid's commanders who joined the troops of Imam Hussein (AS) on the eve of Ashura.

Tinu Salehi stars as Zargham in the play. Parisa Moqtadi, Mohammadreza Imanian, Labkhand Badiie, Mahtab Shokrian and Amir Adlparvar are the other members of the cast.

In 2019, a book named "Shahrokh, Hurr of the Islamic Revolution" containing articles by a number of writers about Zargham was published.

Tehran exhibit showcases posters for '80s, '90s hits of Iranian cinema

A R T **TEHRAN** — An exhibition displaying a collection of posters for the hits of Iranian cinema during the 1980s and 1990s opened on Tuesday at Tehran's Charsu Cineplex.

The showcase has been organized to spice up the 38th Fajr International Film Festival, which opened at the cineplex on Wednesday.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the exhibition, the veteran graphic designer Ebrahim Haqiqi who has created posters for numerous Iranian movies, "In the early 1980s, when the Farabi Cinema Foundation was launched, its managers asked for posters of high international quality."

"Our designers proved that they could deliver such posters," he added.

"Many of those posters are now on view at this exhibition and several of them were awarded during international festivals," Haqiqi noted.

A poster for celebrated filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami's

1990 masterwork "Close-Up", which was created by Haqiqi, is a highlight of the exhibition.

"I designed that poster, but I did not put my signature on it," Haqiqi said and added, "Because, Mr. Kiarostami rejected my proposal to sign it jointly."

"When I was preparing the design for the poster, he proposed that I use a font applied to a brand of toothpaste of the same title for 'Close-Up'... it was a creative suggestion."

Haqiqi said that no poster was published for Iranian new wave cinema filmmaker Dariush Mehrjui's 1989 cult film "Hamun".

"I designed a poster for the film, however, it was never published... only several stills from the movie bearing the writing 'Hamun, a film by Dariush Mehrjui' were published to introduce the film," he said.

The exhibition, which will run until June 2, is also showcasing a collection of posters for a number of Cuban films.



Graphic designer Ebrahim Haqiqi speaks during the opening ceremony of a film poster exhibition at Tehran's Charsu Cineplex on May 24, 2021. (FIFF/Sahand Taki)

IIDCYA nominates Hamidreza Shahabadi, bookmobiles for ALMA 2022

on writers' works, the IIDCYA decided to announce the previous nominees for the award again," the IIDCYA said in a press release.

The Iranian Association of Writers for Children and Youth nominated Shahabadi for the honor in 2021. In addition, the IIDCYA bookmobiles project received a nomination in 2020 for the award, the prestigious Swedish honor to promote children's and youths' literature in the world.

Shahabadi is also the manager of Madreseh Publications, a publisher of school textbooks.

He is the author of "A Smiling Banana", which was selected by the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY)

for its 2021 Collection for Young People with Disabilities.

He has also written "No One Dares to Do That", a thriller that was also published in braille. His credits also include "Goethe Street Café", "When Moji Was Lost" and "Vertical Cemetery"

The Institute for Research on History of Children's Literature and the Children's Book Council of Iran are other Iranian cultural centers allowed to select Iran's nominations for the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award.

Previously on Monday, the Iranian Association of Writers for Children and Youth announced writer Fereidun Amuzadeh-Khalili

and book reading promoter Shahla Eftekhari as its nominees for the award in 2022.

In addition, the Children's Book Council of Iran has selected the celebrated writer Jamshid Khanian and book reading promoter Abdolhakim Bahar as its nominees for the 2022 ALMA.

The Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award amounts to SEK 5 million (about €570,000), making it the world's largest award for children's and young adults' literature.

The award was established in 2002 by the Swedish National Council for Cultural Affairs to commemorate writer Astrid Lindgren and to promote children's and youths' literature from around the world.

"The Madness of George III" published in Persian

C U L T U R E **TEHRAN** — A Persian translation of "The Madness of George III", a fictionalized biography of George III, has recently been published by Nashre Ney in Tehran.

The play has been translated into Persian by Mazdak Bulori, a professor at Allameh Tabatabai University.

Written by Alan Bennett in 1991, "The Madness of George III" is about the struggle of George III with his mental illness and his court's incompetence to handle his condition.

George III's behavior has often been odd, but now he is deranged, with rumors circulating that he has even addressed an oak tree as the King of Prussia. Doctors are brought in, the government wavers and the Prince Regent maneuvers himself into power.

Bennett's play explores the court of a mad king, and the



Copies of a Persian translation of Alan Bennett's play "The Madness of George III".

Iranian classic "Beyond the Fire" opens Fajr Intl. Film Festival

A R T **TEHRAN** — The 38th Fajr International Film Festival opened on Wednesday with a screening of Iranian director Kianush Ayyari's 1987 classic "Beyond the Fire".

Due to the pandemic, the organizers avoided a long, drawn-out opening ceremony, such as traditionally had been held at previous editions, as they, along with Ayyari and a group of journalists, sat in Tehran's Charsu Cineplex to watch the nostalgic drama.

Starring Siamak Atlasi, Parvin Soleimani and Khosro Shojazea, "Beyond the Fire" has recently been restored for screening at the festival.

This film highlights part of the miseries that petroleum brought to Iran.

The story of the film is about Nozar and Abdolhamid, two brothers who are involved

in a confrontation with each other over their shares from their house, which was purchased by the National Iranian Oil Company. Nozar is in love Asieh, a deaf milkmaid, who helps resolve the disagreement.

Ayyari won the Crystal Simorgh for best director for this film at the Fajr festival. The movie also received the award for best sound engineer at the event.

Over 120 films have been selected to be screened in nine categories during the festival, which will be running until June 2.

Fifteen movies, which have previously been acclaimed at international events, will be competing in Cinema Salvation, the official section of the festival.

Among the films are "Magic Mountains" by Polish-Dutch director Urszula Antoniak, "The Island of Lies" by Spanish director Paula Cons, "Should the Wind Drop" by Armenian

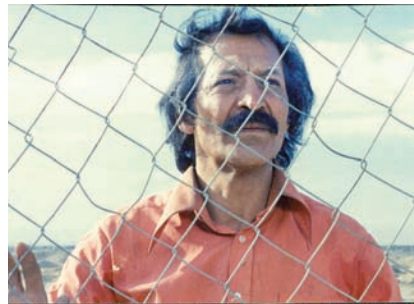
director Nora Martirosyan and "Miracle" by Min Byung-hun from Korea.

The official lineup also features Oscar-winning Hungarian director Istvan Szabo's movie "Final Report", Italian director Claudio Noce's drama "Padrenostro", Ukrainian-Armenian filmmaker Roman Balayan's "We Are Here We Are Close", Finnish filmmaker Antti J. Jokinen's romance historical drama "Helene", Bulgarian director Ivaylo Hristov's drama "Fear" and Polish director Piotr Domalewski's drama "I Never Cry".

"Major" directed by Ehsan Abdipour, "Shahrbanu" by Maryam Bahrololumi and "Gisum" by Navid Behtoui are the Iranian films competing in this category.

15 movies are scheduled to be screened in Eastern Vista, a section dedicated to films from Asian filmmakers.

"200 Meters" by Palestinian director



Siamak Atlasi acts in a scene from director Kianush Ayyari's 1987 classic "Beyond the Fire".

Ameen Nayfeh is a highlight of the lineup. "Along the Sea" directed by Akio Fujimoto from Japan, "Anima" by Cao Jinling from China, "In the Shadows" by Erdem Tepegoz from Turkey and "Dogs Did Not Sleep Last Night" by Ramin Rasuli from Afghanistan will also be screened in this section.

The Iranian movies on the lineup are "Magic Genie" directed by Habib Ahmadvadeh, "Asteroid" by Mehdi Hosseiniwand and "Staging" by Alireza Samadi.