

Rouhani sends congratulatory messages to Ethiopia, Azerbaijan Page 3

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Iran voices strong support for Palestine

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Indonesia releases Iranian oil tanker

Iran congratulates Syria on 'successful' presidential election

TEHRAN – Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and the Iranian Foreign Ministry have congratulated Syria on holding a successful presidential election which resulted in another seven-year term for President Bashar al-Assad.

"I sincerely congratulate Your Excellency on the successful holding of the elections and your re-election as President of the Syrian Arab Republic. The Syrian people took an important step in determining the future and prosperity of Syria with their large turnout and decisive choice," Rouhani said in a message to al-Assad.

"I am confident that in the new phase of Syrian political life, we will see the development of cooperation between the two friendly and brotherly countries. I wish Your Excellency health and success and the people of Syria dignity and felicity," Rouhani added.

'Massive turnout an important step toward establishing peace in Syria'

In its statement, the Iranian Foreign Ministry said massive turnout in the presidential elections marked an important step towards establishing peace in Syria and help reconstruct the country.

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Vaccination against coronavirus to end by late November: Rouhani

TEHRAN – If the volume of COVID-19 vaccine required by the country is provided, the vaccination of people with underlying diseases will be completed by late July, and the whole population will be vaccinated by late November, President Hassan Rouhani said on Saturday.

Highlighting that vaccination in the country has a special order, he said that

mass vaccination started from the elderly aging 80 years or above, then people above 70 years old received the vaccine and on the next stage, people aging 65 and older will be the target group.

With vaccination of people above 60, virus mortality will reduce sharply, and the situation will be much better than it is today, he added.

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TEHRAN – Iranian-flagged VLCC Horse, belonging to the National Iranian Tanker Company (NITC), which was detained by Indonesian authorities in late January, was released on Friday and will return to Iran after completing its mission.

Indonesian maritime authorities had detained Horse and a Chinese-operated VLCC claiming them to be conducting ship-to-ship transfer in a prohibited area.

Indonesia's coast guard spokesman had claimed the two tankers concealed their identity by not showing their national

flags, turning off automatic identification systems, and did not respond to a radio call.

According to the NITC, the vessel has been released following effective communication between the two sides' authorities for clearing the issue.

Following the seizure, Saeed Khatibzadeh, spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, had said that Iran is "waiting for more reports from the Indonesian government on the seizure of the Iranian oil tanker."

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Close ties with Israel can entail huge risks for Arab leaders: GSA

BY MOHAMMAD MAZHARI
Chief executive officer of Gulf State Analytics (GSA) says that cozy relation with Israel can result in big challenges for Arab leaders.

"Appearing too close to Israel can entail huge risks for Arab leaders from the standpoint of their standing among their own citizens and those of the wider region, even if joining the Abraham Accord scores them major points with Washington," Giorgio Cafiero tells the Tehran Times.

"Amid this latest round of violence in Israel/Palestine, it was obvious that all over the Arab world, the Palestinian struggle remains an issue which brings citizens out on the streets to protest," the DC-based consultant notes.

Following is the text of the interview:
What are the repercussions of the recent escalation in Palestine for West Asia and Israel? Some observers say it was an embarrassment to Arab states who have normalized ties with Israel.

It will most likely require more time for analysts to fully realize the lasting repercussions of the latest confrontation between Israel and Gaza, which lasted for 11 days. Yet, it is probably safe to assume that the process of Arab states normalizing diplomatic relations with Israel will slow down. I am doubtful about any of the four Arab countries currently in the Abraham Accords (UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco) severing diplomatic relations with Israel because of the Israel-Gaza war of May 2021. But I think the Arab governments which have not yet joined the Abraham Accords will be more hesitant to do so now. Amid this latest round of violence in Israel/Palestine, it was obvious that all over the Arab world, the Palestinian struggle remains an issue that brings citizens out on the streets to protest. Appearing too close to Israel can entail huge risks for Arab leaders from the standpoint of their standing among their own citizens and those of the wider region, even if joining the Abraham Accord scores them major points with Washington.

Why is the United States always biased when it comes to Israel's security and interests? Do you see any change in U.S. attitudes towards Palestine under the Biden presidency?

Ever since the Arab-Israeli war of 1967, Washington has seen Israel as a very special and unique ally.

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Rouhani inaugurates 526 tourism projects in 24 provinces

TEHRAN – Iranian President Hassan Rouhani on Thursday inaugurated 526 tourism projects worth 25.37 trillion rials (about \$604 billion at the official rate of 42000 rials) in 24 provinces via video conference.

The projects, which included hotels, apartment hotels, eco-lodge units, and rural guesthouses, are expected to generate jobs for 2697 people, according to data provided by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts.

Addressing the inauguration ceremony, Rouhani said that a surge in the number of accommodation centers can be considered as having a boom in the tourism sector of the country. "As the number of our hotel and accommodation beds across the country has increased from 219,000 to 465,000, it means that we are expecting a surge in domestic and foreign tourism."

Elsewhere in his remarks, he reminded of tourism contribution to economic development,

saying "The tourism industry is a very prosperous economy for the country and a renewable resource, and it is not exhaustible like the crude oil."

The projects were simultaneously inaugurated across the provinces of East Azarbaijan, West Azarbaijan, Ardebil, Isfahan, Alborz, Ilam, Tehran, Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari, Khorasan Razavi, North Khorasan, South Khorasan, Khuzestan, Zanjan, Sistan-Baluchestan, Fars, Qazvin, Yazd, Kord-estan, Kerman, Kermanshah, Gilan, Lorestan, Hoernozgan, and Hamadan.

Some experts believe that the tourist flow from across the world to Iran will return to normal in 2022. "Although there are requests for traveling to Iran in the current year (2021), most travel agencies and tour operators believe that the flow will go back to normal in the next year," according to Ebrahim Pourfaraj who presides over the Iranian Tour Operators Association.

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Hundreds of musicians sign letter pledging to boycott Israel over Palestinian lands occupation

Hundreds of international musicians have signed on to an open letter that calls upon other artists to boycott performances in Israel until the Tel Aviv regime puts an end to its occupation of Palestinian territories, which have been under Israeli military control since 1967.

Members of American rock band Rage Against the Machine, Julian Casablancas – the lead singer and primary songwriter of rock band The Strokes, members of Cypress Hill, Patti Smith and Serj Tankian are some of the musicians who have pledged their support to the boycott call.

The campaign has been organized under the banner "Musicians for Palestine" and has obtained 600 signatures so far.

"As musicians, we cannot be silent. Today it is essential that we stand with Palestine. We are calling on our peers to publicly assert their solidarity with the Palestinian people.

Complicity with Israeli war crimes is found in silence, and today silence is not an option," the letter reads.

"Today, we speak together and demand justice, dignity and the right to self-determination for the Palestinian people and all who are fighting colonial dispossession and violence across the planet," it continues.

The open letter urges fellow artists to refuse "to perform at Israel's complicit cultural institutions, and by standing firm in your support of the Palestinian people and their human right to sovereignty and freedom."

"We believe this is crucial to one day live in a world without segregation and apartheid," it points out.

Cultural and academic boycotts are tenets of the international anti-Israel movement of Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS).

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Iran to use \$125m of assets held in Iraq to buy Covid-19 vaccines

TEHRAN – Iranian Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian, who is the chairman of the Iran-Iraq Joint Economic Committee, has said Iraq is going to transfer \$125 million of its energy dues to Iran to a European bank to be paid for 16 million COVAX Covid-19 vaccines.

"The necessary license has been issued to provide \$125 million of Iran's resources in Iraq for purchasing 16 million doses of the COVAX vaccine and transfer this amount to a European bank," Ardakanian said.

According to the Energy Ministry's portal Paven, the official noted that the paperwork is expected to be done by the end of the week and the vaccines will soon be provided to the Iranian Health Ministry.

Iraq owes Iran over \$6 billion for electricity and gas imports from the Islamic Republic, of which \$3 billion is claimed to be blocked and inaccessible in the Trade Bank of Iraq (TBI).

Back in March, the Deputy Head of Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce said that the Arab

country has started repaying its energy debts to Iran and part of the dues has been settled.

"This achievement is the result of diplomacy and pursuit of the governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI), the energy minister and the head of the Judiciary," Hamid Hosseini told IRNA.

Ardakanian visited Iraq in late December 2020 to meet with senior officials from the country and discuss the country's energy debts to Iran.

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Israel's existence is based on war crimes: special ambassador to UN

BY REZA MOSHFEQ

TEHRAN – The International Commissioner for Human Rights in the Middle East (West Asia) says that Israel considers war crimes part of its strength and permanence.

"Israel's existence is based on murder, assassination and committing major crimes, and it does not need any reason to justify its acts against humanity because it considers war crimes a sign of strength and permanence," Ambassador Haitham Abu Said tells the Tehran Times.

"Israelis believe that war crimes give them a kind of advantage over the rest of the surrounding countries," he adds. The United Nations human rights council is studying whether Israel's recent attacks on the besieged Gaza Strip, that killed more than 250 Palestinians, constitute "war crimes" if they are shown to be disproportionate.

The UN officials said they had seen no evidence that civilian buildings in Gaza, hit by Israeli fighter jets, were being used for military purposes.

The 11-day offensive on the Gaza Strip, which began on May 10, killed at least 253 Palestinians, including 66 children, and wounded more than 1,900 people, according to the Health Ministry in Gaza.

Following is the text of the interview:
Why does Israel commit war crimes once in a while? Who gives Israel the green light to destroy Palestinian homes?

Israel's existence is based on murder, assassination and committing major crimes, and it does not need any reason to justify its acts against humanity because it considers war crimes a sign of strength and permanence.

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Polo competition held in Tehran

TEHRAN – Polo match between Ghasre Firoozeh and Norouzabad women teams was held in Tehran on Friday.

The match took place at the Ghasre Firoozeh Club and Ghasre Firoozeh emerged victorious 4-3.

Polo originates from ancient Persia. Its invention is dated variously from the 6th century BC to the 1st century AD. Iranians still refer to the game of polo by its original Persian name of "Chogan", which means mallet.

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Indonesia releases Iranian oil tanker

→ 1 Speaking in a press conference on January 25, Khatibzadeh said the seizure of the Iranian tanker "was a technical issue and there have been such incidents in the shipping lines before." Khatibzadeh noted the Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) and the ship owner company were looking to investigate the reasons for the seizure to resolve it. "The Iranian embassy and the Iranian Ministry of Transport and Urban Development are pursuing the issue," he added.

Non-oil exports from Arvand Free Zone stands at \$61m in 1.5 months

ECONOMY TEHRAN— Non-oil products worth \$61 million were exported from Arvand Free Trade Zone (FTZ), in Iran's southwestern province of Khuzestan, during the 1.5-month period since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21), according to a provincial official. Seyed Ali Mousavi, the deputy head of Arvand Free Zone Organization for investment and economic affairs, said the exported goods included construction materials, clinker, minerals, bitumen and various industrial oils, dates and dairy products, and were exported from the port of Shalamchah and the ports of Khorramshahr and Abadan, which are located within the Arvand Free Zone.

These goods have been exported to Iraq, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, China, Australia and Germany, and some Central Asian countries, he added.

The official had previously announced that this zone attracted \$52 million in the form of approved foreign investment projects during the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20).

He said the status of investment making is proper in this zone despite the sanctions.

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

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

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

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

On May 11, President Hassan Rouhani inaugurated 94 development projects worth 60 trillion rials (about \$1.42 billion) in the country's free trade and special economic zones through a video conference.

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

According to the official, the country's free and economic zones should become more productive in order to be able to fund their own development projects in the future.

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

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

Some five other free trade zones have been also established in the country since then, including Chabahar in southeastern Sistan-Baluchestan Province, Arvand in southwestern Khuzestan Province, Anzali in northern Gilan Province, Aras in East-Azerbaijan Province, and Maku in West-Azerbaijan Province, both in the northwest of the country.

Production of special cement for oil field drilling operations indigenized

ECONOMY TEHRAN – Managing Director of Kaveh Pars Mining Industries Development Company, which belongs to Iran's Mostazafan Foundation, announced that one of its subsidiaries has indigenized the knowledge for producing a special type of cement used for shotcrete in oil and gas field wells.

"The cement used in oil wells drilling operations is one of the necessities used in the oil industry, and the Mostazafan Foundation has succeeded in producing this strategic product," Mehr News Agency quoted Hashem Nezam-Abadi as saying.

This type of cement, which is currently being produced in one of the factories belonging to the Mostazafan Foundation, has a unique quality and meets the needs of the Iranian drilling industry, Nezam-Abadi said.

He said with the production of this product, the imports of the item will be stopped, adding: "At present, the company produces the mentioned cement with different grades (A, B, D, E, G) and



considering the level of production, the company can both meet the domestic market demand and also export to other countries."

According to the official, the grade E cement produced by the mentioned company is used in deep drilled wells and for high-pressure operations and Iran is currently the only country in the region that has the knowledge to produce this grade of cement.

The Mostazafan Foundation of Islamic Revolution is the second-largest commercial enterprise in Iran behind the state-owned National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC).

Kaveh Pars is a mining industry holding operating under the Mostazafan Foundation. The holding consists of 23 subsidiaries in six fields, including six cement companies, four steel companies, one aluminum company, two mining companies, and seven engineering, consulting, and trading services companies as well as three construction and transportation services companies.

Iran to use \$125m of assets held in Iraq to buy Covid-19 vaccines

→ 1 Upon returning to Tehran, Ardakanian said that Iraq was going to open a euro bank account to pave the way for settling all the country's gas and electricity dues to Iran.

"Based on an agreement which is going to be implemented in the coming days, Iraq is going to open a euro savings bank account in which the country's debts to National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) and the Power Generation, Distribution, and Transmission Company (known as Tavanir) will be saved," Ardakanian said at the time.

"Iraq's recent and past debts to our country will be transferred and saved in this account after being exchanged to euro," the minister said.

This way, transferring the money or using it for purchasing basic goods and medicine will be less problematic considering the U.S. sanctions, he emphasized.

Ardakanian had announced the formation of a committee for working on the issue and said: "As the Iranian head of the two countries' Joint Economic Committee, I



will monitor the process on a daily basis until we achieve desirable results."

Japan ready to resume oil imports from Iran if sanctions lifted

ECONOMY TEHRAN – President of Petroleum Association of Japan has said his country's refiners could resume oil imports from Iran as early as three months after the U.S. sanctions on Iran are lifted, Platts reported.

In the event of confirmation of the lifting of sanctions, "we start our consideration and [the resumption of Iranian oil imports] could come as early as in three months," Tsutomu Sugimori told an online press conference Thursday.

Sugimori's comments came as negotiations between Iran and world powers on the 2015 nuclear deal are underway in Vienna and the two sides signal that an agreement is within reach.



Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said on May 20 a "main agreement" has been made to reinstate a nuclear deal as the U.S. has broadly committed to lifting its sanctions targeting Iran's oil, petrochemical and shipping sectors.

Japan's top three refiners ENEOS, Idemitsu Kosan, and Cosmo Oil said on May 21 that they would consider the potential resumption of Iranian oil imports once there was confirmation of sanctions being lifted.

"Although it depends on the formal decision of lifting the U.S. sanctions as well as the details, we will closely coordinate with the Japanese government, financial institutions, and shipping companies," an Idemitsu Kosan official said.

Japan suspended its Iranian oil imports in May 2019 after briefly resuming imports in February for the first time in four months, as the U.S. did not extend its 180-day sanctions waiver to eight coun-

tries, including Japan, beyond early May. Japan's 2019 Iranian oil imports totaled 17.10 million barrels, down 63.2 percent from 46.51 million barrels in 2018, according to the Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry data.

The return of Iranian condensate, as well as many other crude grades, to the market, will likely set the stage for new competition for the Asian demand pie, prompting major producers to make competitive offers, which would significantly enhance Asian refiners' feedstock economics and overall product margins, according to refinery officials and trading sources in China, South Korea, Japan, Hong Kong and India.

TEDPIX jumps 30,000 points on Saturday

ECONOMY TEHRAN – TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), climbed 30,131 points to 1.139 million on Saturday (the first day of Iranian calendar week).

Over 6.952 billion securities worth 52.072 trillion rials (about \$1.239 billion) were traded at the TSE on Saturday.

The first market's index gained 26,881 points, and the second market's index rose 44,387 points.

TEDPIX lost 45,000 points, or four percent, in the past Iranian calendar week.

The index closed at 1.109 million points on Wednesday (the last working day of the week).

During the past week, the indices of Social Security



Investment Company, Iran Khodro Company, Isfahan Oil Refining Company, National Iranian Copper Industry Company, and Tehran Oil Refining Company were the most widely followed indices.

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.

Private sector to operate 90 mineral zones in Kermanshah

ECONOMY TEHRAN – As announced by a provincial official, mining operation in 90 mineral zones of Kermanshah province, in the west of Iran, will be transferred to the private sector.

Holding tenders in this due has been started since the beginning of this Iranian calendar month (May 22), Mohsen Darabi, the head of the province's Industry, Mining, and Trade Department, stated.

As previously reported, some 50 trillion rials (over \$1.1 billion) worth of mining projects were handed over to the private sector in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19), Iran Minerals Production and Supply Company (IMPASCO), announced.

According to IMPASCO which is a subsidiary of Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO), last year, tenders were held for awarding 12 mining projects in which domestic investors as well as companies from China, Tajikistan, Iraq and Georgia participated.

As reported, contribution of the private sector in the country's mining sector is going to improve the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the current Iranian calendar year which has been called the year of surge in production by the Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran Seyed Ali Khamenei.



Utilizing the private sector's resources, the mining sector is going to generate more employment, production and value added for the country.

Three weeks ago, IMIDRO Head Khodadad Gharibpour announced that IMIDRO is contributing to \$1.93 billion worth of projects that are going to be implemented by the private sector.

According to Gharibpour, IMIDRO and its subsidiaries are going to implement 31 projects, worth \$2.276 billion, in a variety of fields including steel, copper, gold, antimony, nepheline syenite, phosphate and also mining infrastructure in the current year.

Due to the significant role of the mining sector in the country's non-oil exports, the Industry Ministry has provisioned operational targets in the mining sector's

three major areas of exploration, extraction and processing in the current year.

According to Deputy Industry Mining, and Trade Minister Darioush Esmaili, the mining sector accounted for 25 percent of the country's non-oil revenues in the past Iranian calendar year.

Meanwhile, as announced by the IMIDRO head, 253 idle small-scale mines were revived throughout the country in the previous Iranian calendar year.

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

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

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

Emphasizing that the above goals have been achieved as a result of productive cooperation among the Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry, provincial industry organizations, Iran Mines houses, and private sector companies, Jafari noted

that since the beginning of the program in March 2019 up to the end of the previous year, 303 mines have been revived.

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

The program, which has been at the forefront of IMIDRO's missions over the past two years, is being pursued in several provinces.

Khodadad Gharibpour, IMIDRO's former head had mentioned this plan as one of the most significant plans of "Resistance Economy", saying that IMIDRO is strongly determined to carry out it.

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

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

Rouhani inaugurates 526 tourism projects in 24 provinces

The average of international travels to and from Iran fell by 80 percent during the past Iranian calendar year 1399 (ended on March 20, 2021) from a year earlier. "During this period, 4,343,163 passengers entered the country, which included 3,030,464 Iranian passengers and 512,699 international travelers," said Arezou Ghaniun, an official with the Islamic Republic of Iran's Customs Administration.



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

The Islamic Republic expects to reap a bonanza from its numerous tourist spots such as bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, mausoleums, churches, towers, and mansions, of which 24 being inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list. Under the 2025 Tourism Vision Plan, Iran aims to increase the number of tourist arrivals from 4.8 million in 2014 to 20 million in 2025.

Garden dedicated to tribal cultures inaugurated near Tehran

A landscaped garden dedicated to tribal people and their associated cultures, traditions, and rituals has recently been inaugurated in Karaj, which is situated westward of the Iranian capital.



Science Minister Mansour Gholami, Secretary-General of the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO Hojatollah Ayoubi, Karaj Mayor Asghar Kamalizadeh, and Academy of Persian Language and Literature Director Gholam-Ali Haddad-Adel were amongst attendees to the opening ceremony of the cultural garden. The garden is situated within a theme park named "Little Iran" that is home to miniature replicas of many Iranian historical sites, monuments, and travel destinations.

Karaj is the capital of Alborz province, which is surrounded by Mazandaran, Tehran, Markazi, and Qazvin provinces. Its name is driven by the Alborz Mountains. A significant part of the mountains is located in the north part of the province. Historical resources and documents as well as archeological studies indicate that Alborz has a rich culture dating back to prehistoric times.

Iranian handicrafts: Jajim of Alasht

Jajim weaving is a significant handicraft of Alasht village in Savadkuh, Mazandaran province. This craft has passed on from one generation to the next and has turned into a tradition that is learned by daughters from their mothers.

Jajim is used as a floor covering and in terms of thickness it is a midpoint of thick fabrics and Kelims or "Palas" (a kind of coarse fabric). Beginning from a long time ago, artist women of Alasht occupy themselves with weaving Jajims, and by doing so, they not only provide a share of the income of the family but also create a kind of social structure by connecting the producers of the raw materials with the weavers of this product.

Jajim weaving was received national recognition from the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism Organization as the principal handicraft of Alasht village in the May - June of 2018, according to Visit Iran.



In addition to its ancient history and high quality, the supply of all the raw materials from local resources was the reason that led to this recognition. These Jajims are woven using yarns that have been produced from the sheep bred locally and are dyed using herbal pigments from plants that grow frequently in the northern region of Iran.

The patterns and motifs of this colorful hand weave of Alasht, which have gained an international reputation due to their exportation, are completely imaginative. Geometric and stripe patterns in different colors such as green, orange, yellow, brown, white, and blue are mostly found among them. The wrap and weft threads can be from wool, even though cotton wraps and wool weft are combined occasionally.

Parthian underground city getting prepared for public visits

The Parthian underground city is getting prepared to reopen to the public in west-central Iran. The ancient troglodytic settlement dates back to the Parthian era (247 BC - 224 CE) based on archaeological evidence.

Currently, an entrance, which bears Parthian architectural motives and elements, is being constructed next to the underground city, which is located in Hamedan province, CHTN quoted provincial tourism chief Ali-Malmir as saying on Saturday.

Installation of lighting equipment, museum displays, and security devices are amongst other works being carried out in the underground town, the official noted.

He expressed hope that the restoration of the ancient site to be completed by the month of Shahrivar (starting August 23), the report said.

Samen subterranean settlement has 25 rock-carved rooms, interlinked tunnels, and corridors, the official noted.

The subterranean complex appears to have been first used for religious purposes, then as a cemetery, and finally as a shelter during emergencies.

The underground complex, located 400 km west of Tehran, is believed to be built some time between the fall of the Achaemenid Empire (550-330 BC) and the early Parthian era (247 BC-224 CE).

Excavations at the site began in 2005



and are still going on. So far tens of well-preserved skeletons have been retrieved from its interconnected chambers.

Iran is a haven for ancient troglodytic architecture which is somewhat forgotten though they are filled with life and creativity. The northwest Kandovan village is one of

the most famous examples of troglodytic architecture in the country; its ice-cream cone-shaped homes are resembling that of Turkey's Cappadocia.

In October 2018, the country hosted the 3rd International Troglodytic Architecture Conference in which tens of experts, research-

ers, and academia discussed troglodyte-associated architecture, culture, and technology.

Known in classical times as Ecbatana, Hamedan was one of the ancient world's greatest cities. Pitifully little remains from antiquity, but significant parts of the city center are given over to excavations. Ecbatana was the capital of Media and subsequently a summer residence of the Achaemenian kings who ruled Persia from 553 to 330 BC.

Hamedan has had many names: it was possibly the Bit Daiukki of the Assyrians, Hangmatana, or Agbatana, to the Medes, and Ecbatana to the Greeks. One of the Median capitals, under Cyrus II (the Great; died 529 BC) and later Achaemenian rulers, it was the site of a royal summer palace.

About 1220 Hamedan was destroyed by the Mongols. In 1386 it was sacked by Timur (Tamerlane), a Turkic conqueror, and the inhabitants massacred. It was partly restored in the 17th century and subsequently changed hands often between Iranian ruling houses and the Ottomans.

Sitting on a high plain, Hamedan is graciously cool in August but snow prone and freezing from December to March. In summer the air is often hazy. Ali Sadr cave, Ganjnameh inscriptions, Avicenna Mausoleum, Hegmataneh hill, Alaviyan dome, Jameh mosque, and St. Stephanos Gregorian Church are amongst Hamedan's attractions to name a few.

Agritourism development high on agenda for Iran ministry of tourism

The development of agritourism is high on the agenda for the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, the deputy minister said on Thursday.

The implementation of agricultural tourism projects and sustainable management in the realm of agritourism has provided an opportunity for the presentation of tourism products, Vali Teymouri added.

Tourism and cultural heritage projects have unique economic, social and cultural functions and their added value could contribute to economic prosperity and social vitality, the official added.

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

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

Agritourism and nature-tourism enterprises might include outdoor recreation (fishing, hunting, wildlife study, horseback riding), educational experiences (cannery tours, cooking classes, or tea or coffee tasting), entertainment (harvest festivals or barn dances), hospitality services (farm stays, guided tours, or outfitter services), and on-farm direct sales (u-pick operations or roadside stands).

Agritourism is a 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.

Agritourism is a subset of a larger industry called rural tourism that includes resorts, off-site farmers' markets,



non-profit agricultural tours, and other leisure and hospitality businesses that attract visitors to the countryside.

Minister inspects recreational port construction in northern Iran

Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan on Friday paid a visit to the construction of a recreational port in Gilan province.

The minister also promised to attract investors and to convince the government to assist in purchasing pleasure boats and cruise ships for the port, which is situated in the Chamkhaleh region of the lush green province, IRNA reported.

A budget of 500 billion rials (about \$12 million at the official exchange rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) has been allocated to the construction project, said Hamidreza Abai, the director-general of ports



and maritime authority of the province

Abai said the cooperation of tourism investors will be essential for both an acceleration of the project and a subsequent maritime tourism boost.

During the visit, two research projects focusing on seaports were also unveiled,

he said.

"One of the research plans is a comprehensive document of ports and maritime using documents based on photos and evidence on Gilan ports in the Caspian Sea, while the other is about the historical document of the sunken boat discovered in Talesh," the official noted.

Over the past couple of years, the Islamic Republic has made various efforts to exploit maritime tourism potential by developing hospitality infrastructures, diversifying sea routes, and drawing private sector investors along its vast southern and northern coasts.

Prosperous maritime tourism could help the country to meet its ambitious target

of attracting 20 million annual tourists by 2025.

Bounded by the Caspian Sea and the Republic of Azerbaijan on the north, Gilan, in the far past, was within the sphere of influence of the successive Achaemenid, Seleucid, Parthian, and Sassanid empires that ruled Iran until the 7th century CE.

Sophisticated Rasht, capital of Gilan province, has long been a weekend escape for residents of Tehran who are looking to sample the famous local cuisine and hoping for some pluvial action - it is the largest, and wettest town in the northern region. Gilan is divided into a coastal plain including the large delta of Sefid Rud and adjacent parts of the Alborz mountain range.

Cultural complex, square in Isfahan added to national heritage list

Abbasi Cultural Complex and nearby square in downtown Isfahan have recently been inscribed on the National Heritage list.

The Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism announced the inscription in a letter to the governor-general of the province, IRNA reported on Saturday.

The cultural complex and square were built in front of the prominent Abbasi Hotel in 1971. The fully-restored hotel which is one of the most visited tourist attractions in the city was once the Safavid-era caravansera of the Madrasah-ye Chahar Bagh.

The cultural complex is used as a venue for cultural events and handicraft sales, while book sales are conducted in the square.

Soaked in a rich history and culture, Isfahan was once a crossroads of international trade and diplomacy in Iran. Now, it is one of Iran's top tourist destinations for good reasons. The ancient city is filled with many architectural wonders such as unmatched Islamic buildings, bazaars,



museums, Persian gardens, and tree-lined boulevards. It's a city for walking, getting lost in its mazing bazaars, dozing in beautiful gardens, and meeting people.

The city has long been nicknamed as Nesf-e-Jahan which is translated into "half the world"; meaning seeing

it is relevant to see the whole world. In its heyday, it was also one of the largest cities in the region with a population of nearly one million.

Isfahan is renowned not only for the abundance of great historical bridges but also for its 'life-giving river', the Zayandeh-Rood, which has long bestowed the city an original beauty and fertility. The cool blue tiles of Isfahan's Islamic buildings, and the city's majestic bridges, contrast perfectly with the encircling hot, dry Iranian countryside.

The huge Imam Square, best known as Naghsh-e Jahan Sq. (literary meaning "Image of the World"), is one of the largest in the world (500m by 160m), and a majestic example of town planning. Built in the early 17th century, the UNESCO-registered square is punctuated with the most interesting sights in Isfahan.

Modern Isfahan is now home to some heavy industry, including steel factories and a nuclear facility on its outskirts, however, its inner core wants to be preserved as a priceless gem.

Specialized coin museum to be established in Kordestan

Cultural heritage authorities of Kordestan province are slated to establish a museum dedicated to historical coins and currency.

Coins from different historical eras of Iran and other countries will be displayed in the museum in the city of Qorveh, the tourism chief of the western city announced on Saturday.

Covering an area of 250 square meters, the museum is expected to generate over six job opportunities following its inauguration, Mohammad Moradi added.

According to Encyclopedia Iranica, coins and coinage, standardized units of metal used as a medium of exchange, were first introduced into Persia by the Achaemenid Darius I (521-486 BC).

Before modern times the Persian economy consisted of a conglomeration of regional economies, each with a mint and a currency system geared to local commerce, rather than an integrated national economy. For this reason, it is more sensible to study changes in the output (weight, fineness) of a single mint over time, rather than trying to arrive at

an estimation of a nonexistent national norm.

The name Kordestan refers to the region's principal inhabitants. After the Turkish invasion of Iran in the 11th century CE (Seljuq period), the name Kurdistan was applied to the region comprising the northwestern Zagros Mountains.

It was during the reign of Abbas I the Great of Iran's Safavid dynasty (1501-1736) that the Kurds rose to prominence, having been enlisted by Abbas I to help stem the attacks of the marauding Uzbeks from the east in the early 17th century.



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GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

That knowledge which remains only on your tongue is very superficial. The intrinsic value of knowledge is that you act upon it.

Imam Ali (AS)

West-East Divan, Goethe and Hafez poetry

Part 1

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, the most renowned poet of German literature, was already from his youth deeply interested in the East and in Islam.

He planned to write a drama about the Prophet Muhammad (S), as witnessed by the poem Mahomets-Gesang. But it was not until later, during his period of romanticism, that the poet devoted his attention to the literature and history of Persia.

Goethe considered literature (language) and religion as the best aids to discovering other cultures. In addition to Persian literature, he also learned the Arabic language and script and studied the teachings of Zoroaster as well as those of Islam.

Goethe's productive preoccupation with Persia goes back to the years 1814 to 1827; and it was, above all, his acquaintance with Hafez which increasingly awakened his interest in Persian literature.

Goethe's West-East Divan marks a literary encounter between German and Persian literature which began in 1814. In the spring of that year, Goethe received a German translation of Hafez's in two volumes from the publisher Cotta of Stuttgart.

The translator was the Austrian Orientalist Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall (1774-1856), whose translations and commentaries played a major role in acquainting Germans with the East.

Hammer's translation of the divan broadened and expanded the knowledge of the Orient which Goethe had acquired in his youth, so that he could now, at the age of 65, devote himself more intensively to the East, and predominantly to Persia.

Goethe's approach to Hafez began with enthusiasm, which, in its turn, led to interchange and dialogue, and, in the Divan, assumed a lyric-prosaic form. The need for communication, for narrative and for finding one's way into a different society is characteristic of the essence of the Divan.

The dialogue with Hafez, however, demanded a knowledgeable analysis of the Oriental world. For this there was no lack of material; for, apart from the works of such travelers to the Orient as Marco Polo, Pietro della Valle, and Adam Olearius, and, above all, the translations of Sadi's Gulistan and Bustan, Goethe also read works by Orientalists, such as Hammer's Geschichte der Schönen Redekünste Persiens.

Goethe borrowed the term divan, "poetry collection", from Hammer; but he first referred to his work in a letter to his wife Christine dated 29 July 1814, and in his diary on 30 July 1814 as "poems addressed to Hafez", and occasionally also called it "divan".

In May 1815, Goethe described his collection, consisting of 100 poems with an index, as "a little whole". Before deciding on the title West-East Divan, he had given various names to the collection at various stages of its evolution; but in all the titles for this complex work, he retained the word Divan.

Between 1814 and 1815, the Divan was considerably expanded, due to Goethe's acquaintance with Marianne Jung (later Marianne von Willemer), who awakened fresh feelings of love in the aging poet, which he later expressed in the Buch Suleika.

Goethe's lyrical work was publicized by an announcement in Cotta's Morgenblatt für gebildete Stände on February 24, 1816, as also by preprints in the morning paper of March 22, 1816 and in the Taschenbuch für Damen auf das Jahr 1817. Between 1817 and 1819, the year when the divan appeared, several successive phases of development took place.

The last phase included the prose section, which in the first edition of 1819 bore the title Besseren Verständnis. Since certain passages seemed to be incomprehensible to his readers, Goethe decided to supplement them with commentary.

Hammer's Geschichte der schönen Redekünste Persiens reached him on May 3, 1818, and kept him busy studying the history of Persian and Oriental literature until late June; this was a primary source of his commentary.

In early June 1818, the first drafts on Persian culture were prepared; on September 17, the outline for the Besseren Verständnis was completed.

In the prose section, Goethe refers to imperfections in his work and to a plan for a Künftiger Divan; he also explains how he went about his Oriental studies.

His arguments about Eastern poetry, as well as about the Christian Orient, are fully represented. Goethe's preoccupations with travel descriptions by visitors to the East, as well as German translations of Oriental works, which formed the source of his own knowledge about the East, are also discussed in this part.

A characteristic mark of this less lyrical and more prosaic part of the divan is Goethe's passage from travelers to the Orient to Orientalists, which simultaneously marks an evolution from descriptions based on personal experience to scholarly accounts of the East.

Among the main activities of Orientalists was translating from Oriental languages; Goethe ends his Divan with a chapter reflecting on the problems of translation.

Source: Encyclopedia Iranica
To be continued

Iran's Mohammad Hayati among winners of Milky Way photo contest

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iranian **d e s k** photographer Mohammad Hayati is among the 25 winners of the Milky Way Photographer of the Year competition, which is organized every year by the travel and adventure photography blog Capture the Atlas.

Hayati was selected for his "Night Lovers", a single photo taken near the Persian Gulf in Hormozgan Province.

This picture depicts the Milky Way rising on a fascinating spring night in the region.

"The stunning cliffs of this area make every viewer imagine and even talk to them," Hayati wrote in a statement for his photo. "The light pollution from a faraway city was quite strong, so it was a challenging post-processing process," he added.

"I'm a nightscape who tries to achieve an artistic look in my images, and in this image, I tried to convey and capture the magic of this location," he noted.

The spring of each year is considered the peak of the Milky Way season and by its competition, Capture the Atlas aims to inspire others and share the beauty of the galaxy.

There no top winner or runner-up at this competition and 25 of the best and most inspiring images are selected from around the world.

Winning images have been captured in 12 countries, including the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Chile, Iran, Turkey, Brazil, Spain, Italy, Slovenia, Switzerland and Greece.



"Night Lovers" by Iranian photographer Mohammad Hayati is among the winners of the Milky Way Photographer of the Year competition.

Maestro Rahbari's latest music to feature Goethe's Hafez-inspired poetry

A R T **TEHRAN** — Maestro Ali Rahbari plans to **d e s k** compose a piece for a poem from German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's West-East Divan composed under inspiration from the Persian poet Hafez.

The piece has been commissioned by Naxos Records, a Hong Kong-based German record label specializing in classical music, the Persian service of the ILNA reported on Saturday.

Naxos Records has so far released three volumes of Rahbari's album, "My Mother Persia".

The China NCPA Orchestra plans to celebrate 50 years of diplomatic relations between Iran and China by performing two symphonic poems from the album in two concerts during July.

Goethe wrote the West-East Divan between 1814 and 1819 under the influence of Hafez's poetry.

The collection marks a literary encounter between German and Persian literature which began in 1814.

In the spring of that year, Goethe received a German translation of Hafez's divan in two volumes from the publisher Cotta of Stuttgart.

The translator was the Austrian Orientalist Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall, whose translations and commentaries played a major role in acquainting Germans with the East.

Hammer's translation of the divan broadened and expanded the knowledge of the Orient which Goethe had acquired in his youth, so that he could now, at the age of 65, devote himself more intensively to the East, and predominantly to Persia.

"In fact, Hammer-Purgstall built a bridge between Goethe and Hafez," Iranian scholar Kurosh Kamali Sarvestani once said.

The connection between Goethe and Hafez has always been a source of inspiration for other art productions.

Iranian filmmaker Farshad Fereshteh-Hekmat made the docufiction "Hafez and Goethe" in 2018 to shed light on Goethe's great inspiration from Hafez.



Iranian composer Ali Rahbari.

Cologne Visions of Iran spotlights shorts by women filmmakers

Seven films selected by Iranian filmmaker Ghasideh Golmakani and the director of the festival, Amin Farzaneh, will be reviewed in a special section entitled "Women in Iran: Short Films", the organizers have announced.

"Taxi Is Here" directed by Sara Aqababaiyan is one of the films. It is about a mysterious woman in a taxi. The driver looks familiar, so she invites him over - she wants to share a secret with him.

"Origami" is another movie in the lineup. The film directed by Marjan Hashemi tells the story of Sudeh who has feelings for her classmate. The sports teacher finds out about this, becomes jealous and threatens to report this forbidden love to the school principal.

Director Maryam Naraq's drama "Let

the Past Go by" will also be reviewed in this section.

Unlike her father, Bahar hasn't yet overcome the tragedy of her younger brother's death. When his killer is released from jail, she tries to make him suffer emotionally. Her endeavors result in a change in her perspective.

The lineup also includes "Horn" by Ghasideh Golmakani. It follows a woman from Tehran who urgently needs to find a parking space for her car. Men on the street have their concentration disturbed.

"Spotted Yellow" will be screened. Directed by Baran Sarmad, the film is about Roya, a young girl with a yellow spot on her face, who suddenly feels clear signs

of a giraffe.

The section will also review director Mahbubeh Kalai's animated movie "Sink". A tiny man and a small woman emerge from the coffee grounds in the sink. A story of love and death - infinitely delicately designed.

"Cinema Cristal", a documentary co-directed by Marlies Pöschl and Farnaz Jurabchian, has also been selected to be screened. The movie revolves around film lovers and contemporary witnesses who share their memories and stories connected with the old cinemas on Tehran's Lalezar Street.

The Visions of Iran is scheduled to take place online in Cologne, Germany from June 10 to 20.



"Cinema Cristal" by Marlies Pöschl and Farnaz Jurabchian.

A R T **TEHRAN** — Visions **d e s k** of Iran — Iranian Film Festival Cologne has put the spotlight in its 2021 edition on short movies on women's stories by female filmmakers.

Docs from Iran to compete in Sebastopol festival

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iranian short movies **d e s k** "A Horse Has More Blood Than a Human" and "Three Meters and a Few Centimeters" will be competing in the Sebastopol Documentary Film Festival, which will take place in Sonoma County, Northern California, from June 10 to 13.

Directed by Abolfazl Taluni, the acclaimed movie "A Horse Has More Blood Than a Human" is about an older couple, who leave Tehran and return to their idyllic hometown on the Turkish border, but their dreams of quiet retirement are shattered by the realization that their town has become a smuggling gateway into Europe, and everyone they know is involved.

The film brought Iranian cinematographer Mehdi Azadi a Golden Frog of the 28th Energia Camerimage International Film Festival in Poland in November 2020.

"Three Meters and a Few Centimeters" directed by Mostafa Salehinejad revolves around a COVID-19 issue in



"A Horse Has More Blood Than a Human" directed by Abolfazl Taluni.

the southwestern Iranian city of Ahvaz. The coronavirus has not only caused many deaths, but also created a crisis in burial traditions. According to the obligations of Islam, when someone dies, their body must be washed by hand in order to move on to the hereafter cleansed. Because of the COVID-19's wild and deadly infection, few people are willing to touch the bodies of those killed by the virus, which creates a crisis in the city.

A lineup of 66 films from across the world will be screened at the Sebastopol Documentary Film Festival.

This year's festival will also include a number of panel discussions for filmmakers and the general public about issues in documentary filmmaking, from technical topics like editing and musical composition to broader discussions of documentary's place in investigative reporting.

The organizers have said that despite their initial plans for an in-person fest in 2021, safety concerns have dictated that the event remain virtual until 2022.

Swiss writer Barbara Schibli's "Lichen" appears in Persian

C U L T U R E **TEHRAN** — A Persian **d e s k** translation of Swiss writer Barbara Schibli's debut novel "Lichen" ("Flechen") has recently been published in Tehran.

Ketabe Kucheh is the publisher of the book rendered into Persian by Manijeh Nasiri.

In this novel, Schibli portrays a woman looking for her place in the social fabric of her environment and sensitively depicts the movements of attraction and repulsion, appropriation and distancing between two sisters who cannot do without each other and therefore have to find a way to live together and next to each other.

The book tells the story of Anna who

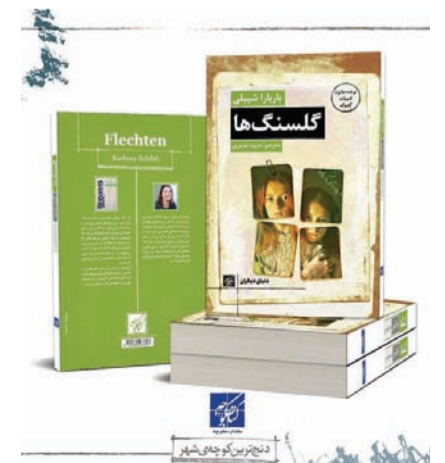
moved to Zurich from Graubünden to study biology. Now she works in lichen research. Leta, Anna's identical twin sister, is dedicated to photography. When Anna drives to Treviso for the opening of Leta's photo installation "Observing the Self", she feels betrayed by her. Because Leta has retouched the only mark in Anna's photos that distinguishes the two.

Who am I if there are two of me? Anna, outwardly indistinguishable from her identical twin sister Leta, has always been asking herself the question of her own identity. After their childhood together in Bever in Graubünden, the sisters brought spatial distance between themselves, pursued very

different professions and did not maintain close contact with one another. Both, however, look at the world through a sharp lens - that of the microscope and that of the camera - with an almost obsessive urge to observe, research and collect.

Anna collects lichens, examples of perfectly symbiotic communities in nature, Leta for her part collects photos - of Anna.

"The special art of this book is not to judge, to leave the doors open, to look deeply close - as it should be for a lichen researcher - and to look for the distance by looking at a nearby surface until it opens," critic Friederike Kretzen wrote in Laudation GEDOK-Förderpreis.



Publisher Ketabe Kucheh's poster for its Persian translation of Swiss writer Barbara Schibli's debut novel "Lichen".