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Iran agrees to pay \$150,000 for victims of Ukrainian plane crash

TEHRAN – A senior Iranian diplomat leading the legal discussions on the Ukrainian plane crash has said that Iran agreed to pay \$150,000 in compensation for each victim of the crash.

Speaking after the third round of Iran-Ukraine talks in Kyiv, Mohsen Baharvand said during these talks several aspects of the Ukrainian plane crash in Tehran were discussed.

He told Iran Press that a detailed legal

discussion had taken place, and the Iranian court had jurisdiction to hear the case of the Ukrainian plane crash because it was inside Iran.

"The indictment in the case of the Ukrainian plane crash has been issued in an Iranian court, and three judges are examining the case, and if there is a shortcoming in this regard, it will be dealt with according to the law," Baharvand noted.

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Tehran, Baku discuss expansion of trade ties

TEHRAN – Expansion of economic ties between Iran and Azerbaijan was discussed in a meeting between the Iranian Ambassador to Baku Abbas Mousavi and Azerbaijan's Deputy Economy Minister Elnur Aliyev, IRNA reported on Monday.

In the meeting, the two sides stressed close cultural, historical, and religious ties between the two countries and emphasized the willingness of the presidents of Azerbaijan and Iran for the develop-

ment of bilateral relations.

Speaking in the meeting, Aliyev pointed to the expansion of cooperation between his country and the Islamic Republic of Iran in various economic fields over the past few years and mentioned the increase in the number of Iranian companies operating in Azerbaijan, as well as the boost in mutual investment and implementation of joint economic projects as signs of further growth.

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Zamani stars as teenage trooper in war drama "The Bakeri Martyrs"

TEHRAN – Ruhollah Zamani, the star of the acclaimed child labor drama "Sun Children", is playing the role of veteran Khosro Mollazadeh in the war drama "The Bakeri Martyrs" during his teens.

Mollazadeh joined the Iranian volunteers during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war when he was only 14. He fought in Operation Kheibar beside Hamid Bakeri, an

IRGC chief, who has been portrayed in the TV series project.

Mollazadeh had to leave the frontline at 18 when he was seriously wounded in combat.

The series focuses on the life story of Mehdi Bakeri, the chief of IRGC 31st Shura Division, and his brothers Ali and Hamid.

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Iran's presidential election: private sector expectations and demands

BY EBRAHIM FALLAHI

Iran is on the verge of yet another political turning point as the current government incumbency gets closer to its end and seven new presidential candidates line up to try their luck for leading the next government.

Iran's thirteenth presidential election is scheduled to be held on June 18 and this round, the current incumbent president Hassan Rouhani would be ineligible to run for re-election as he was limited to two terms or eight years in office.

Since the last presidential election in 2017, a series of events have drastically changed the Iranian political and economic landscape, on top of which the re-imposition of the U.S. sanctions and the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic can be mentioned.

The economy, among other factors, has always played a key role in the Iranian elections and it has been high on the agenda of every candidate years after years. Due to the country's current economic situation, this year, however, the issue is more significant in comparison to the previous rounds.

The impact of sanctions, exacerbated by the pandemic, has caused one of the toughest economic situations in the country's history, imposing a huge burden on people's livelihood and business activities, so the majority of people and businesses are closely monitoring the new candidates' programs for addressing the current economic issues.

It can be said that economic programs will be the determining factor for the success of the presidential candidates in the current round of elections.

As one of the most influential parts of the country's economic scene, the private sector is playing a significant role in determining the outcome of the elections. The private sector has been strongly participating in various presidential programs and several proposal packages and roadmaps have been offered by the country's chambers of commerce for the next government on how to tackle the country's economic issues.

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Karkhaneh praises volleyball team's performance in VNL

BY FARROKH HESABI

TEHRAN - Iran national volleyball team have done a great job in the 2021 FIVB Volleyball Men's Nations League (VNL), according to Iranian coach Mostafa Karkhaneh.

After two defeats against Japan and Russia, the Iranian side grabbed four consecutive wins and jumped up in the standing.

Karkhaneh has been so impressed with the work done by the Russian head coach, Vladimir Alekno, in Iran national team during his brief stint.

"In my opinion, we have been great so far. There were some reasons behind the two defeats of our national team at the start of the tournament. First of all, the players had not played along with each other for more than two years. Second, the coach was not familiar enough with the team and the players. Moreover, Saeid Marouf's absence was a shock for the national team, and it caused kind of tactical incoherence

in the team," Karkhaneh said.

"Unfortunately, our first game was against Japan who are a team to beat. Also, the second match was against Russia, who have brought all of their best players and are the second team in the world ranking.

"However, at the third game, the Iranian team changed in the best way possible. In my eyes, the secret of this success lies in the harmony, cohesion, calmness, and the way Vladimir Alekno treats his players.

"Along with being a good man-manager, Alekno is a clever tactician. He is a great and influential coach. The names are not important for him. He tries different squads as well as different systems in every match. He set his goals before the tournaments and explained clearly that he sought to gain a deeper understanding of the team for the Olympic Games," Karkhaneh added.

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Hezbollah official warns Israel of 'fire of hell'

A senior official of Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance movement has warned the Israeli regime against another military adventurism, saying the aggressors would see "fire of hell" in the event of another war.

Hassan Baghdadi, a member of the central council of Hezbollah resistance movement, on Sunday said the Israeli regime officials should be "less arrogant" and get off the high horse of pride and arrogance.

"They (Israelis) should not err in their calculations again," the official said. "If there is a war with Hezbollah, they will see the fire of hell as they have never imagined." Baghdadi said the Israeli officials "do not learn lessons" and "do not understand real politics", adding that their "aggressive and criminal nature" leads them toward miscalculations.

This arrogance and aggression, the Lebanese resistance movement official said, would soon spell the end of the regime.

Baghdadi's comments came days after Israel's

minister of military affairs Benny Gantz threatened Lebanon with military strikes, saying raids on Lebanon would include bigger targets than those hit during the recent aggression on the besieged Gaza Strip.

"If an attack comes from the north, Lebanon will tremble... the houses in which weapons and terrorist operatives are being hidden will become rubble," Gantz said in a speech on May 26. "Our list of targets for Lebanon is bigger and more significant than the one for Gaza, and the bill is ready to be settled if necessary."

Destruction of Israeli regime

Gantz's bellicose remarks came after Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, the secretary-general of Hezbollah resistance movement, in a speech warned Israel that any aggression on holy sites in the occupied Jerusalem al-Quds would lead to regional war and destruction of the Tel Aviv regime.

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At the end of Israel-Palestine conflict: The acquisition of Hamas

BY RAKIB AL HASAN

After series of devastating Israeli airstrikes for more than 10 days, a ceasefire was declared by both Hamas and the Israeli regime. The fighting cost more than 248 Palestinian lives. It also led to massive destruction of properties in the Gaza strip.

Now with the end of the conflict, both sides are measuring their costs and successes. Both sides are claiming major victory. According to the Israeli leadership, the offensives have achieved their goals and they can measure these as successes. On the

other hand, Hamas is also claiming that it has successfully defended the Palestinian people.

Hamas is an armed resistance group that Western powers consider it as a "terrorist" organization. On the other hand, Israel is a regime with massive military strength. Thus, the objectives of a conflict between such two actors depend mainly on military and political grounds.

If we talk about the Israeli side, the government and military claimed that Hamas can be dealt with in two ways. One, by completely conquering it, and

two, by destroying its combat capability. So, have Israel achieved these two goals so far?

First of all, militarily Israel has destroyed many civil targets. In the latest fight against Hamas, they killed at least 63 children, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry. Although Israel could intercept some of 340 rockets launched from Gaza, Israel's Iron Dome showed that it is incapable to work in any possible clash. They also destroyed a key research and development center claiming that it was a Hamas base.

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Environment missing from presidential debates

BY FARANAK BAKHTIARI

TEHRAN – Low rainfall and water scarcity are among the major environmental issues that Iran has been dealing with throughout history. However, all the seven presidential candidates for the upcoming elections have missed out on environmental issues in their debates.

The presidential election will be held on June 18. The first televised debate between the contenders was held on Saturday afternoon, when almost all of them pointed their fingers at the banking system and economic growth, disregarding the environment.

"If the future government does not pay attention to the problem of water scarcity, it will not be able to manage its social consequences," said a water expert Mohsen Mousavi-Khansari, warning of the drought crisis and its serious consequences.

It was in March that Ahad Vazifeh, head of the national center for drought and crisis management, forecasted that the country will not receive much rain until the end of summer (September 23). A month later, he announced that an unprecedented drought had occurred in some parts of the country.

This is while in the following weeks, statistics showed that precipitation has declined by 60 percent in Iran over the first two months of the current [Iranian calendar] year (March 21-May 21) compared to the same period last year.

And, it dropped by 41 percent compared to the long-term average.

Economic growth dependent on environment
Of course, water scarcity and drought are not new issues for a country with an arid and semi-arid climate like Iran, so it is necessary for the government to take the necessary measures to manage the issue, Mousavi-Khansari stated.

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Funeral for defender of holy shrine in Arak

TEHRAN – A funeral procession was held in Arak on Monday morning for Majid Saeidi, a "defender of the holy shrine". He was martyred in an ambush by the Daesh terrorist group in Syria on June 3. Saeidi was laid to rest in the Arak cemetery in the defenders of holy shrine section. Iran calls those who are martyred in the battle against terrorists in Syria "defenders of holy shrine".

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UN envoy holds talks on Afghanistan in Tehran

POLITICAL TEHRAN — UN Secretary-General's Personal Envoy on Afghanistan Jean Arnault discussed on Monday issues related to the latest developments in Afghanistan.

Heading a UN delegation, Arnault met with Mohammad Ebrahim Taherian, Iran's special envoy for Afghanistan.

During the meeting, the current developments in Afghanistan, including the dialogue process and the security situation in the country, were discussed.

Pointing out that Iran considers peace and security in Afghanistan as peace and security in the Islamic Republic, Taherian expressed Tehran's support for the Afghan-owned and Afghan-led peace process.

He also said Iran is ready to cooperate in facilitating and advancing intra-Afghan dialogue, according to Fars News. The special envoy also insisted on the need to preserve the achievements of the Afghan people over the past two decades.



The two sides also expressed concern about the escalation of violence in Afghanistan in recent months and called for a reduction in violence and the prevention of civilian casualties.

Iran has long voiced support for the Afghan peace talks while stressing the necessity for these talks to be owned and led by the Afghans themselves.

Last week, during his weekly press conference, spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry Saeed Khatibzadeh said Tehran's diplomatic efforts are focused on bringing peace and prosperity to Afghanistan.

"The future of Afghanistan and its prosperity and peace and stability in Afghanistan has always been the main focus of our consultations," he said.

Iran has ratcheted up its diplomatic efforts to push forward the Afghan peace process. Seyed Rasoul Mousavi, the director of the Southern Asia Bureau at the Iranian Foreign Ministry, recently paid a 10-day visit to Afghanistan to discuss the peace process.

During his visit to Afghanistan, Mousavi discussed ways to expand political and diplomatic relations and reviewed the current situation in Afghanistan and met with the Afghan Foreign Ministry and government officials. He stressed in the meetings that Iran will continue to stand by Afghanistan and continue its friendly activities.

"Now, after the withdrawal of the occupying forces from Afghanistan, a new development has taken place in this country, and its construction depends on how the government and the people of the country use this opportunity. It is not a question of the presence of a military power that dominates the people, it is important which group or faction can gain the trust of the people and rule the hearts of the people," Mousavi told the Afghan service of Fars News.

According to Mousavi, Afghanistan needs to reach a national consensus and what guarantees the future of the country.

"In the Doha process, it seems that the U.S. and the Taliban have reached a greater agreement than what is stated in the text of the agreement, and the Taliban attach special importance to this agreement and consider the Doha Accords as the basis for future negotiations. In the Doha negotiations, there are issues that have not yet been released but are important to the Taliban," he continued.

"For a national consensus, the trust that has been developed between the United States and the Taliban needs to be transferred to the government, political figures, Mujahidin and the people, and the future of Afghanistan should not be based on the U.S. agreement, but on the intra-Afghan agreement," Mousavi noted.

Pointing to the Istanbul conference, he said, "During the trip to Afghanistan and discussions with the ambassadors of different countries and the United Nations representative in Afghanistan and before, [we concluded that] it seems that the Istanbul meeting may not take place because they did not give an independent identity to this meeting and considered this meeting as a continuation of the Doha meeting in Qatar. When nothing new is unveiled and the United Nations does not play a more serious role in the Afghan peace process, all meetings are like the Doha meeting and will make no difference."

Mousavi pointed out, "If you look at the role of the United Nations in the current peace process, it claims that it can invite others to the Istanbul summit alongside Qatar and Turkey, but UNAMA's activities in Afghanistan are based on Chapter VI of the UN Charter. Chapter VI of the UN Charter is based on humanitarian services, reconstruction and issues that do not form the basis of responsibility for the peace process, and the resolution that formed UNAMA is a post-Bonn resolution based on ostracizing the Taliban. UNAMA is structured in such an atmosphere."

The Iranian diplomat noted, "Now that the Taliban are invited to participate in the future of Afghanistan, we must have a new order for the United Nations in Afghanistan, which is in the framework of Chapter VII of the Charter. If dozens of other meetings are held in different cities, but if there is no new agenda, it is not possible to hope for negotiations and the Doha process will continue."

He stated, "The United Nations should take a fresh look at Afghanistan and issue a resolution under Chapter VII, appointing a special envoy to examine the peace process in a special way."

Former interior minister Mohtashamipour dies of COVID-19

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Ali Akbar Mohtashamipour, the former Iranian interior minister and one of the founders of the Hezbollah resistance movement, has died of COVID-19.

Israel's Mossad spy agency attempted to assassinate him when he was the Iranian ambassador to Syria, severely injuring his hand, ear and eye.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei sent a message of condolence over his death, asking for forgiveness and mercy from God, and patience for his family.

In separate messages, President Hassan Rouhani, Judiciary Chief Seyyed Ebrahim Raeisi, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and other officials asked God for blessing for Mohtashamipour's soul.

'Decline of political ethics in presidential debates noticeable'

POLITICAL TEHRAN — The first televised presidential debate was a manifestation of the decline of ethics, says head of the Foundation for the Iranians' Hope.

"The first election debate was the decline of ethics," Mohammad Reza Aref told ISNA in an interview published on Monday.

"What has obsessed the minds more than anything else in the recent debates is the decline of political ethics," Aref added.

He said in the Islamic Republic system republicanism was going to be governed by ethics. However, Aref said, when personal tastes cast shadow over republicanism, Islamic and humane ethics are sidelined.

The former first vice president said if the qualifications of candidates were studied with due care the candidates would have acted ethically, humanely and observed the codes of conduct based on Islamic teachings.

Also, in series of tweets on Tuesday, First Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri described as "strange" debates among presidential candidates both in terms of planning and implementation.

He also said if a real understanding of the country's situation and solutions for problems are important, the TV should provide a situation



for ministers and experts to provide answers to remarks by certain candidates.

Jahangiri said seven candidates were asked questions about the country's economic situation but no question was asked about the "cruel sanctions" and their effects on the economy and also the repercussions of the Coronavirus pandemic on employment and people's livelihood.

'Candidates manifested little command in proposing solutions'

Jamshid Ansari, the vice president and chief of the Administrative Recruitment Organization, has also assessed the first televised debates between presidential contenders as weak, saying the candidates had little command of presenting solutions for

the country's problems.

"What was more conspicuous in the Saturday debates was the little command of candidates for presenting solutions for the country's issues and problems," Ansari tweeted on Sunday morning.

Ansari said the candidates mostly pointed to issues that people are feeling them without presenting a "strategy" and "clear plan". The vice president said repetition of problems will not prove effective.

The first televised debate between the seven presidential candidates was held on Saturday afternoon. Among the candidates five — namely Mohsen Rezaei, Alireza Zakani, Saeed Jalili and Qazizadeh Hashemi and Ebrahim Raeisi — mostly pointed their finger at Nasser Hemmati, the central banker, for the problems. However, the government dismissed Hemmati last week and replaced him with his deputy Akbar Komejani.

Only Hemmati and Mohsen Mehr Ali Zadeh, a pro-reform candidate, did not trade accusations against each other.

Most analysts say that the Saturday debates had no winner. Rezaei accused Hemmati as a candidate for the Rouhani administration, a claim refuted strongly by Hemmati.

Mehr Alizadeh: I will interact with all countries

POLITICAL TEHRAN — In an interview with Al Mayadeen news network on Monday, presidential candidate Mohsen Mehr Alizadeh said that if he wins the election, he will interact with all countries, especially the United States, with respect to the national interests and protecting the dignity of the Iranians and the national security of the country.

"There is no obstacle to interacting with all the countries of the world except the countries that insist on enmity with Iran," he said.

Mehr Alizadeh continued by saying that Iran is a great country with an ancient civilization and the foes must respect Iran and Iranians.

"Our religion is common with the Arab world and we have common borders with some Arab countries, and if foreign pressures do not affect the policies of these countries, there will be no problem," said the presidential candidate on relations with Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries.

Mehr Alizadeh said that if he wins the elections, his administration, along with Arab countries can protect the security of the region together and Iran must prevent the presence of forces that are trying to incite sedition between the Islamic Republic and Arab countries.

The presidential election will be held on June 18. The candidates have been campaigning since May 25.

Raeisi: President has no 'shortage of authority'

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Speaking at a televised program on Monday, presidential contender Ebrahim Raeisi said that the president has no "shortage of authority" in Iran, but whoever becomes president must consider coordination with other branches of government (Parliament and Judiciary) under the supervision of the leadership.

"The frustration of the people due to some actions and the invitation of many different strata made me enter the election arena," he said.

Raeisi said that the 40-year management has given him the knowledge to solve problems, and he wants to solve the problems by acting eagerly alongside the people.

"I told some presidents who were at the end of their term to see the constitution, to see the powers of the president, the powers given to the president by the constitution. I suggested to some gentlemen to read the constitution once and then step into the field of elections," the presidential contender stated.

Raeisi also said that the world economy cannot be put on hold.

"We will interact with the world. Iran's influence in the region, along with active diplomacy in the economic field will be one of our plans. The principle of interaction with other countries is certain, but it is not logical to tie the country's progress to it and condition the economy," he pointed out.

Raeisi went on to say that today sanc-

tions under the "maximum pressure" strategy by the U.S. have not bended Iran.

"What we see in the country today has nothing to do with sanctions, it is related to internal mismanagement. Sanctions have created problems, but they are more about mismanagement," he remarked.

In response to the question whether he has unemployed people in his family, he said, "Yes, we also have unemployed people; it is impossible not to have an unemployed member in the family."

The top judge, that in the opinion polls far ahead of his competitors for the presidential post, said unemployment, housing and health issues are the major problems Iranians are facing right now.

Mehr Alizadeh releases economic plans

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Presidential candidate Mohsen Mehr Alizadeh has released a blueprint explaining his economic plans to revive the country's economy.

Mehr Alizadeh has given the plan to the ISNA news agency to publish it on its website.

The plans are respectively titled "Pattern of the

Governance of Social Economy", "Social Economy", "Countering Iran's Economic, Social and Political Challenges", "Social Economy", and "Economic, Social, Cultural and Political Development Plan".

The presidential election will be held on June 18. The first presidential debate aired live on June 5, with seven candidates clashing on economic plans and their views.

Ex-British envoy: Quitting JCPOA harmed U.S. reputation as reliable ally

POLITICAL TEHRAN — A former British ambassador to the United States says the Joe Biden administration is aware that abrogating the 2015 Iran nuclear deal — JCPOA — as well as other unilateral measures by former U.S. President Donald Trump have harmed Washington's reputation as a reliable ally.

"What Biden and many of the other members of his team who have been hearing from those countries who they are trying to persuade to do this or that is, 'How can we take America's word for it? Look what happened to the Iran nuclear deal: it got torn up by the next president.'" said Sir Peter Westmacott.

"What happens if there's another Trump or a Trump clone in the White House in four years' time? What's the point of reaching an agreement with you guys at this stage when it's not worth the paper it's printed on? So I think they are conscious that harm has been done to America's reputation as a reliable ally," Westmacott warned.

Trump unilaterally withdrew the U.S. from the JCPOA on May 8, 2018, against a background of worldwide disapproval, with the aim of putting enormous pressure on Tehran through sanctions.

The JCPOA was signed at the time of the administration of Barack Obama, when

Biden was vice president. Biden and other Democrats also slammed Trump's withdrawal. When campaigning for president, Biden promised to rejoin the JCPOA and repeal Trump's so-called "maximum pressure" policy on Tehran.

Multilateral talks began two months ago in Vienna to revive the JCPOA by returning the U.S. to all of its contractual commitments, including the lifting of sanctions, followed by Iran's reversal of its nuclear activities beyond the JCPOA limits.

Trump also withdrew from other multilateral agreements during his four years of presidency. The Paris agreement was one of them. Overall, his policy harmed the United States' relations with its traditional European allies.

"There's no question that trust in the United States was badly impacted by the Trump administration in the way he handled our alliances," Leon Panetta, a former U.S. defense secretary and CIA director, said.

Panetta noted that Biden must heal the damage done.

"He can, but he's probably dealing with allies that are trying to figure out whether this is just another passing phase in the United States' foreign policy or something more permanent."

Biden will make his first overseas trip as

the president of the United States this week, seeking to regain some lost confidence in the U.S. around the world.

May 12 (Washington Post) UK's Peter Westmacott hopes Biden will prioritize Iran nuclear accord

Westmacott says bigger, more restrictive deal with Iran not realistic

In a report on May 12, the Washington Diplomat said Westmacott hopes Biden will prioritize the 2015 nuclear accord.

According to the Washington Diplomat, Westmacott said the original deal "wasn't what we set out to do because it wasn't realistic."

Westmacott added that he's very skeptical of a "bigger and better deal," as some on Capitol Hill are pushing for.

"Yes we should extend the timeline, but most people want to include the Iranian missile program. I understand the logic of that, but the missile program is essential to their defense and their ability to project power against the Israelis. I just don't see why the Iranians would give up missiles."

"My sense is that trying to get a bigger, more restrictive deal on constraints [against] Iran first off is not realistic," he said. "The reality is that on the Iranian side, there are quite a lot of people who feel that because the U.S. broke its word and walked away, it's the U.S. who should be putting more

bread on the table rather than asking Iran to give up more."

Westmacott added, "Now diplomats in Vienna are looking very actively with genuine political will from both Tehran and the U.S. If the deal can be put back together again, there could be further negotiations on other issues. There are 150 members of the House of Representatives who have asked the Biden administration to give priority to this deal. That's a significant message to the administration, and I'm personally very pleased."

One wild card remains Israel, whose right-wing government under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu claims Iran is an existential threat.

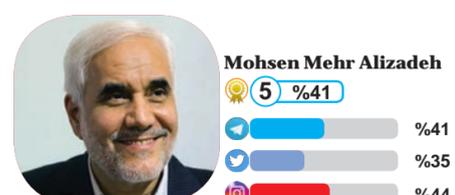
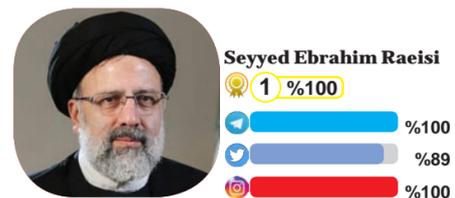
Westmacott recalled that when he was ambassador in Washington, "we had daily calls coming in from Netanyahu saying this is a terrible deal."

Yet Netanyahu himself is in serious trouble now. Facing a corruption trial and failure to form a government amid strong opposition from the left and right, "Bibi"—as he's known informally—may find himself out of power for the first time in 12 years.

"Netanyahu has been the most outspoken opponent of the JCPOA. He even took the step of addressing Congress without asking the president's approval," said Westmacott.

Comparative analysis of the presidential candidates in Instagram, Telegram and Twitter

Total of 540,179,139 data analyzed



- Dataak score
- Total retweets and likes
- Total likes and comments
- Total views

Source: Dataak

The big loot

U.S. sells off Iranian crude oil

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — According to the recent document leaks, Donald Trump ordered seizure of oil tankers carrying Iranian oil off the coast of the United Arab Emirates.

The U.S. also sold the two million barrels of the stolen oil despite the fact that Iran was cash-strapped resulting from Washington's heavy sanctions.

Of course, this is not a first for the big looters. On July 2, 2020, a seizure order for the cargo from four vessels was issued by U.S. District Court Judge Jeb Boasberg of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. The statement said, "The government announced today that it has successfully executed the seizure order and confiscated the cargo from all four vessels, totaling approximately 1.116 million barrels of petroleum. With the assistance of foreign partners, this seized property is now in U.S. custody."

The story, however, is different this time. The United States has stolen \$110 million, put it into a bank account and freezing Iran's access to it.

Both countries were and continue to be in need of cash and raw materials to sustain their economies and remain afloat during the devastating COVID-19 outbreaks, which is why Iran dispatched five ships packed with oil to Venezuela in May of last year, bravely breaking past a U.S. blockade. This particular instance demonstrated how critical these trade networks are, which the U.S. considers "clandestine" but are, in fact, conventional trading contacts between sovereign states.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif referred to the recent seizure of Iranian oil tankers as "piracy," tweeting, "In 'black is white' world, UN deprived Iran of its voting rights in the #UNGA as we're in arrears. Not considered: US #EconomicTerrorism prevents Iran paying for FOOD, let alone UN dues



My letter to @antonioguterres: ps: UN can also collect from \$110M US stole in recent piracy."

The United States continues to show that it does not accept a pluralistic world in which states can conduct commerce free of political influences, and will even resort to outright piracy to force regime change. It demonstrates that the Washington dictatorship has little regard for the human misery caused by its activities as sanctions, blockades, and piracy do not achieve the desired result; instead, it only hurts innocent people.

Donald Trump had proven time and again that he does not know a thing about international law, diplomacy, or even multilateral institutions, thus, this piracy did not seem surprising at all. The fact that the Biden administration went forward with this act of piracy is concerning.

The U.S. seems to have forgotten that

they have left the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which allowed Iran to sell its crude oil on the international market without U.S. interference. Under Trump's guidance, the U.S. Navy acted as Pirates of the Caribbean, seizing Iranian oil tankers.

The oil came from the MT Achilleas, a ship seized by the U.S. in February off the coast of Fujairah, an Emirati port city. According to court filings in the United States, the Achilleas was susceptible to confiscation under American anti-terrorism statutes as it was ascribed to Iran's Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC). The IRGC denied such claims.

According to court filings, the U.S. government moved the Achilleas to Houston, Texas, and sold the slightly more than 2 million barrels of crude oil contained within it for \$110 million, or roughly \$55 a barrel. The payments will be held in escrow while

a legal case is pending.

When queried about the issue on Monday, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh stated he had "no details."

"No oil has been acquired from Iran because of their laws since the time of former U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton," Khatibzadeh stated.

Biden's devotion to this strategy, which he could change right now without requiring congressional action, demonstrates that his administration is carrying out Trump's "maximum pressure" policy against Iran.

This is clearly not a good basis for developing diplomatic relations, given that Trump's policies were designed specifically to destroy them, and the news of the U.S. selling Iranian oil is also odd given that the remaining parties to the nuclear deal — Iran, Russia, China, France, Britain, Germany, and the European Union — are holding talks on the topic in Vienna.

It's particularly hilarious that, in light of current NSA surveillance revelations in Europe, every single surviving participant to the nuclear deal has been sanctioned, surveilled, defrauded, or somehow bullied by the U.S. As the remaining parties begin new negotiations on the topic of Iran's nuclear program, Washington's plainly illegal and provocative activities must be basic context when setting up a plan for how this subject proceeds ahead.

According to EIA data, the United States imported 1.1 million barrels of Iranian oil last October, most likely as a result of a similar confiscation.

If Biden wants to win the trust of Iranians, he must immediately end piracy in the Persian Gulf, lift unilateral sanctions, and return the money generated from stealing the Iranian oil to the impacted parties. Without such moves, there is simply no possibility to create a productive working relationship with Tehran.

Iran slams outgoing Netanyahu's crimes

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh has condemned the outgoing Israeli prime minister's crimes against the Palestinian people.

Writing on Twitter, Khatibzadeh said Benjamin Netanyahu was insisting on spilling the blood of the Palestinian children even in his waning days as Israel's prime minister.

"Even on his way out, Netanyahu pathologically insisted on filling his quota of innocent Palestinian blood. Shame on those who effectively aided and abetted Israel's crimes. Time will come for criminals to be held accountable. World will never forget Israeli regime's record," the spokesman said.

Iranian officials have welcomed the end of Netanyahu's premiership, celebrating his journey into the "dustbin of history."

"Netanyahu has joined the disgraceful journey of his anti-Iran co-conspirators—Bolton, Trump and Pompeo—to the dustbin of history. Iran continues to stand tall. This destiny has been repeated over several millennia for all those wishing Iranians harm. Time to change course," Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said on Twitter.

During his long premiership, Netanyahu has tried his best to put pressure on Iran and smear it in the West. He encouraged the former Donald Trump administration to withdraw from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and choke off Iran's economy in hope of bringing Iran to its knees.

He ended his premiership with a devastating war on the Gaza Strip which resulted in a total defeat of Israel and global outcry against Israeli crimes against the Palestinian people.

Michelle Bachelet, the UN rights chief, said Israeli forces may have committed war crimes during the 11-day war against Gaza.

Bachelet also called on Israel to allow an independent



probe of military actions in the latest spasm of deadly violence, according to The Associated Press.

"Air strikes in such densely populated areas resulted in a high level of civilian fatalities and injuries, as well as the widespread destruction of civilian infrastructure," Bachelet said.

"Such attacks may constitute war crimes," she added. As usual, Netanyahu accused the UN Human Rights Council of being obsessed with Israel. "Today's shameful decision is yet another example of the UN Human Rights Council's blatant anti-Israel obsession," he said on Twitter.

Netanyahu also failed to rally the cantankerous Israeli political factions behind himself to prolong his premiership. His rivals from different political backgrounds have reached a deal to put together a new government and get rid of Netanyahu's grip on power.

Facing fierce opposition from his rival, Netanyahu ramped up his anti-Iran rhetoric, claiming that his rivals, who are busy working to form the new government, will fail to withstand U.S. pressures regarding the U.S. stated goal of reviving the JCPOA. Netanyahu also tasked the new Israeli spymaster to focus efforts on countering Iran's

nuclear program.

Netanyahu has said Israel must "do everything, but everything" to confront Iran's nuclear program. Netanyahu once again repeated his outworn claim that Iran is pursuing an unpeaceful nuclear program, describing this program as the "greatest threat" against Israel. He even went so far as to say that he would eliminate this threat if he was to choose between friction with the U.S. and eliminating the threat, a claim that drew a backlash from Netanyahu's rival Benny Gantz, who tries to snuggle up to the Biden administration.

New Mossad chief David Barnea also said that Israel will continue to confront the Iranian nuclear program.

Barnea said Israel is isolated on the issue of the nuclear talks between Iran and major world powers that are underway in the Austrian capital of Vienna but nevertheless it will continue to confront Iran's nuclear work. Speaking at a ceremony marking his entry into office as head of the intelligence agency, Barnea said, "The agreement with world powers that is taking shape only reinforces the sense of isolation in which we find ourselves on this issue."

He added, "I say it clearly — no, we do not intend to act according to the majority opinion since this majority will not bear the consequences for the erroneous assessment of this threat."

The new Mossad director threatened that Iran's nuclear program will continue to feel Mossad's might, accusing Iran of pursuing nuclear weapons.

Prior to reducing its commitments to the 2105 nuclear deal in response to the harsh sanctions imposed during the Trump administration in violation of international law, Iran's activities were subject to the most intensive inspections by the UN nuclear watchdog's International Atomic Energy Agency.

If the nuclear deal is revived, Iran's nuclear work will again be closely monitored by the IAEA.

Iran agrees to pay \$150,000 for victims of Ukrainian plane crash

→1 He pointed out that military investigations, judicial investigations, and investigations by Iranian aviation specialists, in collaboration with an International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) advisory group and experts from the U.S. and UK, showed that human error caused the crash.

Baharvand underlined that the compensation set by Iran to pay the families of the victims was much higher than what is stated in international law.

He said the Iranian government had agreed to pay \$150,000 for each victim, whether Iranian or foreigner, which some

families have received as compensation.

"Politicizing specialized issues hurts everyone because there are aviation standards, whoever abuses politics, the whole international community suffers; the political use of specialized issues causes a country like Canada to commercialize the grief of bereaved families and the blood of victims," he added.

He announced Iran's readiness to cooperate in any way, provided that the authority of the Islamic Republic would be recognized and the sovereignty and immunity of the Iranian government would be respected.

The Ukrainian airliner was shot down shortly after taking off from Tehran's Imam Khomeini airport on January 8, killing all 167 passengers and nine crew members.

On January 11, the Armed Forces' General Staff released a statement saying the plane was mistakenly downed near the airport.

The incident happened a few hours after Iran fired dozens of ballistic missiles at a U.S. airbase inside Iraq in retaliation for the assassination of top Iranian military commander, Lt. Gen. Qassem Soleimani.

The airplane had been mistaken for an invading missile.



Iran condemns terrorist attack in Burkina Faso

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh has expressed Iran's deep regret and sorrow over the deaths of more than 100 Burkinabes in a terrorist attack along the country's border with Mali and Niger, the Iranian foreign ministry said in a statement.

In a statement on Sunday, Khatibzadeh condemned the attack and offered sympathy to the government and nation of Burkina Faso and the victims' families.

He also expressed Tehran's preparedness to share its experiences in the fight against terrorism with African countries, especially Burkina Faso.

More than 130 people were killed in the terrorist attack which occurred in Solhan, northern Burkina Faso, on Friday night. The assailants first targeted a civilian group called the "Volunteers for the Defense of the Fatherland," which provide support to the army.

Following the attack, a security source told AFP that the attackers killed dozens of men and women in a deadly incursion. "On Friday night, armed individuals carried out a deadly incursion in Solhan, in the Yagha province. The death toll, still provisional, is about a hundred people killed, men and women," the source said.

The Friday attack was the deadliest one in the African country since the start of terror violence in 2015.

SPORTS

Karkhaneh praises volleyball team's performance in VNL

→1 "From the three opponents of Week 3, I think Serbia are the best, and they will cause us the most trouble. Alekno instills a winning spirit in our players and wants them to get used to winning. Young players such as Bardia Saadat, Saber Kazemi, Arman Salehi, Amirhossein Esfandiari, and Meysam Rahmani have all done extraordinary so far, and their confidence has increased," Karkhaneh concluded.

Iran's women's football team start camp in Belarus

SPORTS **TEHRAN** — Iran's women's football team started their training camp in Belarus from Monday.

Maryam Irandoost's team will face Belarus on June 8 and meet Uzbekistan three days later in the camp.

Iran are 70th in FIFA ranking while Belarus and Uzbekistan sit on 54th and 43rd place, respectively.



The warm-up games will be held as part of preparation for the 2022 AFC Women's Asian Cup qualification in September.

A total of 12 teams will qualify for the final tournament in India. The hosts and the top three teams of the previous tournament in 2018 (Japan, Australia and China) have advanced to the event automatically, while the other eight teams will be decided by qualification, with the matches scheduled to be played between 13–25 September 2021 in a centralized venue.

Limuchi appointed as APC Games & Sport Development Committee vice chairperson

SPORTS **TEHRAN** — Sima Limuchi from Iran has been appointed as vice chairperson of the APC Games & Sport Development Committee.

"We, at the Asian Paralympic Committee, would like to thank you for your availability and dedication to the Paralympic Movement. On behalf of the Asian Paralympic Committee, we would like to acknowledge your expertise and knowledge which will be a huge contribution to the APC Games & Sport Development Committee.

"In this regard, and following a strong recommendation from Ms. Lesley Fung, the Chairperson of APC Games & Sport Development Committee, we would like to appoint you as the vice chairperson of the Committee for the remaining period of this term until 2023. We are delighted that you will be working closely with Ms. Lesley to help grow Para sports in the Asian region together with other members of the Committee," APC wrote in a letter sent to Iran's National Paralympic Committee.

Iranian girls look for title at CAFA Junior Championship

SPORTS **TEHRAN** — Iran's U19 women football team will participate at the CAFA Junior Championship to win the title in the second edition.

The Persians won the silver medal in the previous edition held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan in 2016. Now, Maryam Azmoun's girls are ready to win the title in Dushanbe.

The CAFA tournament will be held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan from June 9 to 18.

A total of five nations namely, Tajikistan, Iran, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan and Kyrgyzstan will take part in a round-robin tournament

The CAFA Junior Championship is an international football competition in Central Asia for the member nations of the Central Asian Football Association (CAFA).

Kamal Kamyabnia returns to Iran

SPORTS **TEHRAN** — Iran national football team midfielder Kamal Kamyabnia returned to Tehran due to injury.

The Persepolis player suffered an injury in the match against Zob Ahan in the Iran league but was invite to the national Team by Dragan Skocic.

Kamyabnia's injury got worsened in the national team training and the player was forced to return to Iran for treatment, Tasnim news agency wrote.

His absence will be a blow for Iran in their remaining matches against Cambodia and Iran in the 2022 World Cup qualification.

Iran to send four karate athletes to Karate 2020 Qualification

SPORTS **TEHRAN** — Four Iranian karate athletes will participate at the Karate 2020 Qualification Tournament.

Amir Mehdi Zadeh in the men's 67kg and Rozita Alipour in the women's 61kg and Abolfazl Shahrjerdi and Fatemeh Sadeghi will represent Iran in the individual kata.

The Karate 2020 Qualification Tournament will be held from June 11 to 13 in Paris, France.

Nearly 500 competitors from 93 countries are registered to participate in the tournament.

Issuance of industrial unit establishment permits increases 162%

ECONOMY TEHRAN — According to the data released by Iran's Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry, during the first month of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, April 20), 2,094 permits have been issued for establishing new industrial units in the country, which marked a 162-percent increase year on year.

As reported, 278.906 trillion rials (about \$6.64 billion) have been invested for the establishment of the mentioned units, which was 329.5 percent higher than the figure of the same month of the previous year.

The units are predicted to create jobs for 43,046 persons, indicating 158.5 percent growth year on year.

During the said period, also 347 licenses were issued for the commission of newly completed industrial units, creating jobs for 6,079 persons.

As announced by Deputy Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister Mehdi Sadeqi Niaraki, over 6,500 new industrial units were established across the country during the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20), which created jobs for over 121,000 people.

Touching upon the Industry Ministry's plans for the realization of the motto of the current year which is named the year of "Production: support and the elimination of obstacles" by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, the official has said: "In the year that has been dedicated to the production sector by the Leader of the revolution, the orientation of all government organizations and executive bodies should be towards supporting the country's industrial and mining units."

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

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

The official further announced that 1,500 idle industrial units have been revived in the country during the past year.

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

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

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

Economy Ministry considers special tax support for corona-affected industries

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iranian Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Farhad Dejpasand said his ministry has considered special tax-related support for industries negatively affected by the coronavirus pandemic, IRIB reported on Monday.



"Our tourism industry has had special conditions in the past year, and the food and hotel industries have also experienced severe damage due to the outbreak of the coronavirus, so they have been among the sectors exempted from tax payment," Dejpasand said.

Pointing to the goals for the current year's tax revenues and the impact that these exemptions could have on the realization of these goals, the official said: "Gradually, by planning and completing smart tax projects, it is possible to achieve these goals."

Since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic in Iran, the government has been implementing several programs for supporting the sectors affected by the pandemic.

One of the major points of focus in government programs has been considering tax exemption and tax relief programs for supporting certain industries that endured the most damage from the situation.

The taken measures, however, have not been enough so that back in May 2020, members of the industry committee of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA), in a meeting, criticized the inefficiency of the government's support packages against the impacts of the coronavirus outbreak.

The committee members criticized the performance of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI), Iranian National Tax Admission Organization and Social Security Organization in dealing with the problems of the industry sector, especially during the pandemic recession, and called for the strict implementation of the resolutions of the National Coronavirus Combat and Prevention Headquarters.

In April 2020, ICCIMA Head Gholam-Hossein Shafeie had written a letter to President Hasan Rouhani, suggesting ways for supporting domestic production against the economic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic.

TEDPIX gains 8,500 points on Monday

ECONOMY TEHRAN — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), climbed 8,586 points to 1.157 million on Monday.

As reported, over 5.931 billion securities worth 46.838 trillion rials (about \$1.115 billion) were traded at the TSE on Monday.

The first market's index climbed 8,126 points, and the second market's index went up 11,047 points.

TEDPIX gained 39,000 points, or 3.5 percent, in the past Iranian calendar week.

Iranian ports' capacity can double in a 5-year course

By Mahnaz Abdi

TEHRAN — Iran's ports, as the major gates of exports and imports, play some significant role in the country's global trade, and the ongoing operation at the ports indicates that they are playing their part perfectly in this regard.

Attaching great importance to the role of ports, Iranian government has been always put the development of ports a top agenda of its activities.

The current government has also taken noticeable steps in this regard, which has resulted in boosting the capacity of ports to 250 million tons from 180 million tons during nearly eight years. The figure is now reaching 280 million tons.

By examining the regional conditions and capacities of ports, Iran's maritime sector has always put the development and equipping of the country's ports in line with the developments and advances of technology and the latest technologies in the world, and despite the limitations due to the expansion of sanctions, it has been able to increase the capacity of commercial ports through relying on the specialized and experienced manpower and utilizing the power of domestic expert consultants by defining and advancing development projects in the country's ports.

In this regard, Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) defined a high number of projects at the beginning of the current government's incumbency to develop and improve the country's ports.

Among the most significant projects in this field, it could be referred to the development of Shahid Beheshti port in Chabahar, continuing implementation of the first phase of



container terminal of Shahid Beheshti port, completing the first phase of Shahid Rajaei port's development, continuing the second phase of developing Shahid Rajaei port, continuing the first phase and implementing the second phase of Amir-Abad port development, continuing development of Anzali port, development of Negin island in Bushehr, development of infrastructure in logistic areas of Shahid Rajaei port, Imam Khomeini port, Amir-Abad port, and Negin island, maintenance of the docks of commercial ports, rebuilding and supplying strategic maritime, port, and telecommunication equipment, improving buildings and infrastructure in the ports, development of passenger terminals in Anzali port, Khorramshahr port, Lengeh port, Khark port, and Genvahe port, as well as equipping the passenger terminals with the modern equipment.

It worth mentioning that the above-mentioned projects in terms of developing the passenger terminals have increased the passenger capacity of ports to 25 million

people from 14 million people in a course of eight years.

Given that 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, the role of ports comes more under the spotlight.

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

The most recent reports released in terms of the operation of Shahid Rajaei port, which is Iran's largest and most modern container port located in the southern Hormozgan province, indicates that the transit of goods via this port has 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, as 20,231 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) of commodities were transited via Shahid

Rajaei port in the said month.

Given all the measures being taken for the development of ports, and also the PMO's plans for the attraction of more investment in this regard, it could be said that the target of doubling Iran's ports capacity in a course of five years is clearly possible.

Last month, an official with the PMO announced that the organization plans to increase the attraction of private sector investment in the country's ports by five trillion rials (about \$119 million) in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 21).

According to PMO's Deputy Head for Ports and Economic Affairs Farhad Montaser Kouhsari, the organization has increased the target for attracting investment in the current year from 160 trillion rials (about \$3.8 billion) to 165 trillion rials (about \$3.9 billion).

"This goal will be achieved by creating a proper space for investment in the ports and by providing the necessary incentives for investors, as well as awarding production and conversion projects," Montaser Kouhsari said.

Considering the significant role of ports in the promotion of foreign trade especially export, Iran, which has adopted the strategy of boosting its non-oil export to counter the U.S. sanctions on its economy, has many programs underway for the development of its ports.

In this regard, the PMO has put the attraction of investment to the ports on agenda, and despite the restrictions and limitations created by the outbreak of the coronavirus, investment-making in the Iranian ports increased significantly over the previous Iranian calendar year.

Tehran, Baku discuss expansion of trade ties

→ 1 "There are good opportunities for Iranian companies to participate in the reconstruction of Azerbaijan's liberated territories and to cooperate in the fields of transport, energy, and the establishment of public infrastructure in these areas," Aliyev said.

Mousavi for his part reminded of the historical friendship of the people of Iran and Azerbaijan and, referring to the development of economic and trade relations between the two countries, said: "There is a lot of potential for expanding cooperation in various economic fields."

He also announced Iran's readiness for cooperation in

the reconstruction of Azerbaijan's liberated regions.

The two sides also explored new ways for the expansion of bilateral economic and trade relations and some other issues of mutual interest.

Back in late May, Azerbaijan's Deputy Prime Minister Shahin Mustafayev had visited Tehran on top of a high-ranking delegation to discuss the expansion of economic ties between the two countries, especially in energy fields.

Mustafayev met with Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh to discuss the expansion of economic and energy ties.

Speaking in the meeting, Zanganeh stressed positive political and economic relations between the two countries, saying: "Iran-Azerbaijan relations have grown well in all fields over the recent years, mostly in the oil, gas and energy sectors and the development of joint fields in the Caspian Sea."

Mustafayev for his part emphasized the expansion of mutual relations between the two countries, and said: "I agree that our relations have developed in recent years, which was due to the political will of the presidents of the two countries."

Iran's presidential election: private sector expectations and demands

→ 1 According to the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA), the private sector accounts for up to 20 percent of Iran's economy, so the next government should have a clear program for addressing the issues pertaining to the activities of this sector.

Back in May, ICCIMA announced the preparation of a package of proposals, aiming to help the next government boost the national economy.

According to ICCIMA Head Gholam-Hossein Shafeie, from the perspective of the private sector, the first priority of the future president should be to accelerate the country's economic growth in a sustainable, stable, and comprehensive manner.

Curbing inflation, restoring people's

trust in the system, providing accurate and honest statistical-analytical reports on the country's economic condition, and controlling tensions in international relations are some of the major demands of the private sector highlighted in the ICCIMA's proposal for the next government.

Privatization, managing the forex market, development of non-oil exports, completing semi-finished projects, eliminating redundant bureaucracy, and fighting corruption were also among the issues addressed in the mentioned proposal.

Also, considering the challenges of the country's economy in the coming years, such as water and environmental problems, budget deficit, inflation, unemployment, etc., ICCIMA emphasizes that the country will face even more complex issues in the



next decade if the current issues are not resolved.

According to the ICCIMA proposal package, the future government can solve many of the country's problems regarding production and employment by transferring economic activities to the private sector.

"Undoubtedly, if more authority is given to the private sector in the national econ-

omy, capable businessmen and economists can transform Iran's economy," a member of the ICCIMA board of directors has said.

Many believe that privatization, in its true form, can be the country's gateway to economic growth and prosperity; since Iranian economy has been facing external challenges like sanctions, therefore the more the economy is decentralized, the harder it will get to be restricted and limited by sanctions.

Hopefully, with the new developments in the White House and the nuclear deal talks progressing in Vienna, the situation will become easier for the next government. However, having clear, resilient, and robust economic planning for the coming years would be a must for the future government.

Iraq hopes to resume full imports of Iranian gas

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iraq's electricity ministry hopes to resume full imports of Iranian gas after reaching an agreement with Tehran over how to pay its outstanding debts, Argus Media reported.

The news comes just as the temperatures in Iraq have begun to soar.

Iraq's ministers of electricity and finance and the director general of the Trade Bank of Iraq have agreed to schedule the debts so as to resume Iranian gas exports over the coming days, electricity ministry spokesman Ahmed Moussa said.

Gas supplies from Iran were temporarily cut in December over Baghdad's debts of more than \$6 billion, and although supplies resumed several weeks after, volumes have been severely restricted since.

Moussa said imports were currently 20mn m³/d, less than a third of the contracted 70mn m³/d Iraq needs to meet its peak summer demand as temperatures rise to more than 50°C.

If full gas imports were to resume, Iraq's electricity generation would reach 22,000 MW, Moussa said. But this is still likely to be well short of peak demand.

Iraq has been importing Iranian gas under two supply agreements signed in 2013 and 2015. Under the first, Iran is committed to export a maximum of 35mn m³/d of pipeline gas to the 3GW Bismaya power plant, Iraq's largest gas-fired plant, which powers the capital. The second calls on Iraq to supply southern Iraq with 20-35mn m³/d, with the volumes adjusted depending on the regions' needs.

The country's reliance on gas and electricity imports from Iran also presents political risk as it depends on U.S. sanctions waivers. The U.S. government gave Baghdad a 120-day waiver in March allowing it to continue importing gas and 1,200MW of electricity from Iran.

The government is under pressure to tackle a growing power supply deficit as basic services suffer from under-investment in critical infrastructure and poor governance.

The electricity ministry plans to add 8.3GW of generation capacity in 2021-23.

Last week, during the visit of Iraqi Finance Minister Ali Abdul-Amir Allawi to Iran on top of a high-ranking delegation to hold talks with senior Iranian officials for exploring ways of expanding economic ties between the two neighbors, the two sides discussed Iraq's energy debts to Iran.

In a meeting of Allawi with Iranian Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Farhad Dejpasand, the two sides negotiated a schedule and ways for repaying Iraq's energy debts to Iran.

Allawi also met with Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh and Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian on the same day to discuss settling his country's natural gas dues in detail with the Iranian ministers.

In this meeting, Zanganeh noted that Iran is ready to even boost its natural gas exports to Iraq and expressed hope that the Iraqi government would settle its dues to Iran soon.

Expansion of economic ties stressed by Iran, Tatarstan

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) Hamid Zadboum has met with the Minister of Industry and Trade of the Republic of Tatarstan Albert Karimov to discuss expansion of economic relations.

The officials who met on the sideline of the 24th St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF 2021) stressed the need for taking serious measures for boosting the level of trade between the two sides, Shata reported.

In this meeting, Zadboum stated that currently Iran's priority is cooperation with the members of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the Republic of Tatarstan as well, adding: "the exchange of official and trade delegations will help develop the interactions between the two countries."

He also invited the Republic of Tatarstan to attend the exclusive Eurasian exhibition which is going to be held in Tehran in the near future.

Further in the meeting Karimov expressed

his country's eagerness for expansion of economic ties with the Islamic Republic and called on Iranian companies to attend trade fairs like Halal industry festival in Tatarstan.

Emphasizing Tatarstan's efforts to establish a direct flight between Kazan and Tehran, Karimov said: "This measure will increase tourist exchange between the two countries and boost economic and trade relations with Iran."

He underlined the bright future of his country's economic cooperation with Iran

and announced the support of the Republic of Tatarstan for joint ventures with the Islamic Republic.

Referring to the establishment of Iranian bank branches in Tatarstan and the existence of the Consulate of the Islamic Republic of Iran in this country, he expressed hope that interactions between the two sides would increase.

At the end of the meeting the Iranian side also expressed readiness for cooperation in holding exhibitions in both countries.

Policy of 'maximum pressure' has been ineffective: Fitzpatrick

By Mohammad Mazhari

TEHRAN - Mark Fitzpatrick, an associate fellow at the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), says that "strategy of continuing maximum pressure has been proven to be ineffective."

"I frankly do not pay much attention anymore to opponents of the JCPOA, who no longer are in power. They should be ignored, because their preferred strategy of continuing maximum pressure has been proven to be ineffective," Fitzpatrick tells the Tehran Times.

Former U.S. President Donald Trump, in his few public appearances since leaving office, has called President Joe Biden's foreign policy "shameful and embarrassing", particularly his approach to Iran.

Before Biden took office, he announced his intention to return to the 2015 Iran nuclear deal that Trump had abandoned in May 2018. Trump called the Obama-era agreement a "disaster", abandoned it and imposed hundreds of sanctions as part of his "maximum pressure" strategy against Iran.

However, many political pundits believe that Trump's policies ended in failure.

"Although Trump himself retains support from a large segment of the Republican Party, to the rest of the country he is viewed as both a traitor and a clown. Without access to social media, his power is waning," the former executive director of the IISS-Americas office notes.

Following is the text of the interview:

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action showed the limitations of presidential authority in making deals. The absence of any Congressional endorsement on the agreement made it easy for Donald Trump to pull out of the deal. Don't you think the Vienna talks can offer a fundamental solution to revive the JCPOA, or is it only a temporary mechanism to avoid a clash?

It is a misreading of U.S. politics to think that Congressional endorsement of the JCPOA would have prevented Trump from withdrawing from the deal. Look at how he withdrew from Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) and Open Skies



"He (Trump) is viewed as both a traitor and a clown," says associate fellow at the International Institute for Strategic Studies

treaties, both of which had been ratified by Congress. And his former National Security Adviser, John Bolton, said Trump would have withdrawn from the JCPOA even if it had been a treaty (endorsed by Congress). Of course, it would be ideal if the current talks in Vienna produce a deal that the Congress would support, but this is unlikely. Most Republican Senators would oppose any conceivable deal with Iran short of one that amounted to wholesale Iranian surrender. I hope that the JCPOA can be restored quickly and that the parties can address other issues of concern in ways that will build support for rapprochement.

What is your prediction of Israel's reaction after a possible revival of the JCPOA? Can America curb Israel?

I do not think that any state can "curb" another when the latter sees an existential threat in the way that Israel regards the po-

tential for a nuclear-armed Iran. Outgoing Prime Minister Netanyahu had indicated that Israel would go its own way regardless of what the U.S. negotiates with Iran. I expect that his successor will not be so cavalier about endangering the U.S.-Israel relationship. And note that during the time when the JCPOA was in full operation, Israel refrained from conducting any attacks. What would spark an Israeli attack would be clear evidence of an Iranian dash for nuclear weapons in violation of its NPT and JCPOA obligations. In this case, the U.S. might actually welcome Israeli action.

What are the solutions suggested by critics and opponents of the JCPOA, especially Trump, who slams Biden? War or continuing sanctions? Do you think the policy of "maximum pressure" could change Iran's policy?

I frankly do not pay much attention an-

ymore to opponents of the JCPOA, who no longer are in power. They should be ignored because their preferred strategy of continuing maximum pressure has been proven to be ineffective. And although Trump himself retains support from a large segment of the Republican Party to the rest of the country, he is viewed as both a traitor and a clown. Without access to social media, his power is waning.

Given Trump's performance when it comes to international treaties, how can Iran and the U.S. trust each other? Do they need a treaty like the "treaty of amity" to reconstruct their ties from scratch?

It will take time to establish trust between two states which each have such vivid memories of mistreatment by the other. In the meantime, implementation of a restored JCPOA will be based on verification. I would not hold my breath waiting for a "Treaty of Amity", but I do hope Iran and the U.S. can talk about other issues of concern to each of them and find ways to mitigate the dangers and harm each perceives.

What can we learn from the Trump administration's withdrawal from the nuclear deal and its repercussions, especially when Iran resumed to enrich uranium to a higher purity? Do you think Biden's successors may repeat Trump's experience?

I hope Americans learn the lesson that Trump's withdrawal from the JCPOA was a disastrous strategy, not to be repeated.

It produced nothing favorable for the United States; to the contrary, it only gave Iran an excuse to ramp up its nuclear program in ways that brought it closer to a nuclear weapons capability.

Unfortunately, it seems that half of the U.S. body politic has not yet learned this lesson. The best way to prevent a repetition of Trump's decision would be to give Republican supporters an economic reason to support engagement with Iran. Ideally, the JCPOA should be complemented by a new agreement based on "more for more," under which the U.S. would remove its ban on direct trade with Iran in exchange for changes in Iranian policies of concern to the U.S.

At the end of Israel-Palestine conflict: The acquisition of Hamas

→ 1 In terms of the political achievements from the latest fight, Israel has gained lesser. The fight could have given a lifeline domestically for the Israeli PM Netanyahu but it has cost Israel a lot diplomatically. The international support for the Palestinians has gained new momentum.

If we go to war, there will be casualties. Many people have to give their lives. No war has ever taken place without revenge. So, the main issue is who has won the war and whose objective has been achieved more than the loss in the war. So, the achievements of Hamas in this war can be seen by analyzing a little.

• In this battle, the Iron Dome was seen playing a little. If too many rockets or missiles are fired at once, the Iron Dome cannot properly detect it. About 60% of Hamas's 4,000-plus rockets have been detected. This weakness of the Iron Dome became known, which would later make Hamas more practical.

• For so long, everyone believed in the exclusive Western narrative. Even the barbaric attacks on Muslims in the name of self-defense did not deter the Western world. CNN, New York Times, Guardian, Reuters, etc. also blindly believed such a narrative. But international media outlets such as Al Jazeera, Middle East Eye, TRT, Anadolu have been able to unmask the West against this propaganda. As a result, although the name of Israel was not mentioned in the beginning, now almost all the Western media is mentioning the name of Israel.

After a loss in the media war, Israel demolished the Al Jazeera building in Gaza. Had it not been for the AP in the same building, they might not have hesitated to kill the Al Jazeera team.

• Palestine has received unprecedented support in this war. Many figures and leaders, including the Irish MP, the Austrian MP, Mark Ruffalo, Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan, Ayatollah Khamenei and Erdogan were in favor of Palestine. There have been small and large rallies in almost all countries, including London, the United States, Paris, Turkey, and Qatar. A fund has been set up in distant Bangladesh at the initiative of the Palestinian embassy. In the outside world, it will play a huge role in increasing the acceptance of Palestine and Hamas as well as motivating the fighters.

• The project that the West has undertaken to make Hamas a terrorist group has come to naught. They have also shown through their protests the mischievous attempts to portray Hamas as a terrorist group and to show the world who the real terrorists are.

• It has become clear to the Muslim world, including



Hamas has been successful to draw attention to President Mahmoud Abbas and his incompetence. Hamas showed him as a weak leader.

Hamas, who are the friends and who are the enemies of the Muslims. Who incites the killing of innocent children by uttering the words of humanity. Israel lacks moral right to talk about this issue, especially when it violates international human rights law.

• Israel has been portrayed in recent times as invincible or irresistible, but in practice they are not. The death of an Israeli citizen is a very sensitive issue in Israel. The politicians of that country do not want to take that risk. So, they are also a bit timid. This idea has now been established with Hamas. Hamas now believes that only a good range

The most important event in this conflict is that for the first time Hamas has been able to provoke the Arab population inside Israel. This is a big strategic achievement for Hamas and a big headache for Israel.

of missiles can stop Israel.

• The Muslim world is growing angry and uneasy over, day after day, of bombings and civilian casualties in Gaza. An emergency meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation called OIC was held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Israeli security analysts believe that the so-called "Abraham Accord" peace agreement, following the Israeli attack on the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound and the subsequent deaths in Gaza, will be under more pressure.

• Iran has helped Hamas with technology. Several other Muslim countries are helping with the intelligence team. Training in Syria. As a result, a strong bond will be formed between these countries because of Palestine. Together, they can do everything possible to help rescue Gaza, as Turkey has done to Azerbaijan.

• From now on, Muslim children may want to be as brave as Palestinian children in the way the protests of Palestinian children in Gaza have sparked worldwide discussion. Maybe this Palestinian issue can reunite Muslims around the world.

• The most important event in this conflict is that for the first time Hamas has been able to provoke the Arab population inside Israel. This is a big strategic achievement for Hamas and a big headache for Israel. Hamas has now successfully hijacked the protests that erupted between Palestinians and Israeli police in Jerusalem in the beginning of Ramadan. Mohammad Deif, Hamas military wing leader, issued a threat against Israel over protests. Many Palestinians even in Jerusalem began chanting slogans and praised Hamas.

Hamas decision to fire rockets at Jerusalem has enabled it to present itself as a very credible Resistance Group. They present themselves as those people who would do anything to support the Palestinians in Jerusalem. They say they are protecting Al-Aqsa Mosque compound from being Judaized.

• Hamas has been successful to draw attention to President Mahmoud Abbas and his incompetence. Hamas showed him as a weak leader. Now Hamas has achieved the center stage in negotiations with Egyptian, Qatari and United Nations mediators. It is said that Hamas lost the power to show its influence through the ballot box after the elections were postponed by Mahmoud Abbas. They were set to take place on May 22 and July 31, 2021. Now through these current events Hamas has shown that it is the leading player in Palestinian arena and is popular among the population.

It is expected that when the next elections would take place Hamas would enter the fray with an upper hand. It is also expected that Jerusalem would be the main theme of Hamas in contesting the next elections. It would be acting as a defender of Al-Aqsa Mosque and a liberator of Jerusalem.

Aung San Suu Kyi's trial to begin next week

The trial of Myanmar's deposed leader Aung San Suu Kyi will begin next week, her lawyer said, with the Nobel laureate facing a raft of criminal charges including possessing unlicensed walkie-talkies and flouting coronavirus restrictions.

Her trial will start on June 14 and is expected to wrap up by July 26, her legal team told the AFP news agency on Monday.

Myanmar has been in chaos since the military seized power on February 1 and detained Aung San Suu Kyi and other elected leaders.

But the military has failed to impose control, with the takeover triggering near-daily protests and a nationwide civil disobedience movement. At least 849 people have been killed and 4,500 others detained.

Aung San Suu Kyi, 75, has meanwhile been held under house arrest in Myanmar's capital, Naypyidaw, and appeared in public for the first time on May 24 when she attended a 30-minute court hearing.

Her lawyers have been allowed to meet with her just twice since she was placed under house arrest, with weeks of delays to her legal case.

Hezbollah official warns Israel of 'fire of hell'

→ 1 "You must know that harming al-Quds, al-Aqsa Mosque, and the nation's sanctities is different from any other aggression you carry out," Nasrallah said. "Harming the al-Aqsa Mosque and the holy sites will not stop at the borders of the Gaza resistance, and will lead to a regional war and Israel's destruction."

According to press TV, in the recent 11-day Israeli regime aggression, at least 260 people were killed in the Gaza Strip, and thousands were rendered homeless. A large number of residential and commercial properties, including high-rise buildings housing media offices, were bombed.

Palestinian resistance groups in Gaza retaliated strongly, eventually resulting in a unilateral ceasefire announced by Tel Aviv following mediation by Cairo.

Dozens killed as two trains collide in southern Pakistan

At least 40 people have been killed and more than 120 injured after a train collision near the southern Pakistani town of Dharki, officials say, with rescue work still under way to find survivors trapped in the debris.

The collision took place early on Monday morning near the town of Dharki, about 440km (273 miles) north of Pakistan's largest city of Karachi, officials say.

Senior Dharki police officer Umar Tufail said 40 people were killed.

The death toll was likely to rise as rescuers struggled to reach people trapped in several mangled compartments strewn across the tracks.

"One coach is under the engine, and we can see three bodies trapped inside," he told AFP news agency.

"Two other bodies have been reported elsewhere too, so we fear that the death toll will rise," Tufail added.

Television footage from the site of the crash showed the mangled wreckage of the two trains strewn across the track, with rescuers using cranes and other equipment to try and reach those trapped inside.

Resistance News

Israel refuses to give legal opinion on Sheikh Jarrah evictions

INTERNATIONAL TEHRAN — Avichai Mendelblit, the **d e s k** Israeli government's attorney general, on Monday informed the higher court of justice that he would avoid submitting any recommendation regarding the eviction of Palestinian families from their homes in the east Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah, in a move that bodes ill for the local residents facing displacement.

Haaretz newspaper quoted officials in Mendelblit's office as saying that "they believe the families' case is too weak and that his legal opinion would not be able to prevent their pending eviction."

A source close to Mendelblit also told Haaretz that the political leadership backs the attorney general's decision to refrain from making arguments before the court on behalf of the government.

In a statement, Mendelblit cited "a multiplicity of legal cases over the years" and "the factual and legal determinations" concerning the Sheikh Jarrah plots as a reason for his decision, claiming any arguments made by him in this case are unlikely to change its outcome, according to Haaretz.

Last month, the higher court ordered Mendelblit to submit a legal opinion on the eviction case that has sparked a wave of protests and has drawn international attention and condemnation.

The court gave Mendelblit until June 8 to submit his legal opinion, approving his request to give him extra time in this regard.

"Mendelblit's latest statement now means the court isn't expected to wait for any other material before ruling on the case," Haaretz said.

"It directly affects three Sheikh Jarrah families, but there are several similar cases pending ruling, and any decision by Israel's top court is likely to affect those [cases] as well, potentially paving the way for the eviction of at least dozens of Palestinian families," the Israeli newspaper added.

The rights group, Peace Now, criticized Mendelblit's decision in a statement, calling it "a cynical attempt to evade responsibility."

Peace Now called on the Israeli government "to present to the public and to the court its stance, as families are thrown out into the street by employing a set of laws that discriminates between Israelis and Palestinians."

Putin signs Russian withdrawal from Open Skies Treaty after U.S. exit

President Vladimir Putin has signed legislation to pull Russia out of the Open Skies arms control treaty following the U.S. exit from the pact.

The United States initially left the Open Skies Treaty, which allows unarmed surveillance flights over member countries, in November in one of Donald Trump's final acts as president. Trump accused Russia of violating the treaty. Russia responded

in January, saying it would also withdraw.

The Russian upper house voted Wednesday to leave the treaty, leaving the matter up to President Putin to sign the legislation into law.

Moscow has described the decision by U.S. President Joe Biden, who had criticized Trump's withdrawal as "short-sighted," not to rejoin the pact as a political mistake.

"This caused serious damage to the treaty's

observance and its significance in building confidence and transparency, (causing) a threat to Russia's national security," the Kremlin said in a statement on Monday.

The Biden administration claimed it was still reviewing the previous administration's reasons for withdrawing from the post-Cold War accord.

Open Skies was signed soon after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1992 and

came into force in 2002.

The treaty allowed its signatories, including the U.S., Russia, European countries and Canada, to carry out short-notice flights over each other's territory to monitor potential military operations. It also allowed members to request copies of images taken during surveillance flights carried out by other members.

No harm to Ilam historical sites by quake

HERITAGE TEHRAN — A medium-sized 5.3 magnitude earthquake rattled parts of Salehabad city in the western province of Ilam on Sunday, but caused no damage to historical sites across the province.

Based on field visits by the province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department, no serious damage to historical structures and monuments has been reported so far, the provincial tourism chief Abdolmalek Shanbehzadeh announced on Monday, CHTN reported.



Due to the possible occurrence of aftershocks, experts are on standby to inspect the possible harms to historical sites of the province, the official added.

Iran is crisscrossed by major geological fault lines and has suffered several devastating earthquakes in recent years.

Home to almost half of Iran's UNESCO sites, western Iran is a land of hospitable people, wild extremes, and wilder history, and it may be an independent traveler's adventure playground. The region also witnessed the rise and fall of many great empires once bordering Mesopotamia, Ottoman Turkey, and Czarist Russia.

The name "Ilam" comes from "Elam", the pre-historic civilization that ruled the area in modern southwest Iran from 2700 BC to 539 BC. Archaeological findings date human settlement of the area to around 5000 BC.

Old trees in Bushehr made national heritage

HERITAGE TEHRAN — A total of seven old trees across the southwestern Bushehr province have recently been inscribed on the national heritage list.

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

Three babul trees which stand in the cities of Bushehr and Asaluyeh as well as three jujube and a prosopis trees in Dashtestan county make up the entrees.

These trees often thrive in arid soil and are resistant to drought, so they have survived for centuries.

Having an opulent tourist circuit with 24 UNESCO World Heritage sites, of which the vast Hyrcanian Forest and Lut Desert are among the natural properties, Iran seeks to acquire a greater share of the global tourism industry by 2025.

With over 6,000 years of history and significant monuments from the Elamite, Achaemenid, Parthian, and Sassanid eras, Bushehr is one of Iran's most important historical centers.

Besides its cultural heritage, beautiful beaches and lush palm groves make it an attractive destination for world travelers.

The historical and architectural monuments of Bushehr include Islamic buildings like mosques and praying centers, mansions, old towers, castles, as well as gardens.

When it comes to cultural attractions, there are many historical mounds in Bushehr including Tall-e Khandaq with Sassanid architectural style, Tall-e Marv located near an Achaemenid Palace, and Qajar era Malek al-Tojar Mansion. Qajar era Kazeruni Mansion, which has been inscribed on the World Heritage List, is another attraction that world travelers love to see among various ancient sites.

Museum treasure troves being organized, documented in Bandar Abbas

HERITAGE TEHRAN — A total of 500 historical relics, being kept in the Persian Gulf Museum of Anthropology in Bandar Abbas, southern Hormozgan province, are being organized and documented, the provincial tourism chief has announced.

The relics include coins, potteries, glassware, and stone vessels, dating back from the prehistoric period to the Islamic era, Sohrab Banavand said on Monday.

A budget of 240 million rials (\$5,700 at the official exchange rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) has been allocated to the project, which involves separation and classification of works, preparation of digital images, labeling, and registering on a databank, the official added.

The historical objects, which have been discovered during several archaeological excavations across the province, will go on display in the near future, he noted.

Iran is home to one of the world's oldest continuous major civilizations, embracing settlements dating back to 4000 BC. It also hosts some of the world's oldest cultural monuments including bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, gardens, rich natural, rural landscapes as well as 24 UNESCO World Heritage sites.

From a wider point of view, Iranian history can be divided into Pre-Islamic and Islamic eras. The Medes unified Iran as a nation and empire in 625 BC. The Islamic conquest of Persia (633–656) that put an end to the mighty Sassanid Empire (224–651) was a turning point in the history of the nation.

Tehran, Moscow ink action plan on visa-free agreement

TOURISM TEHRAN — An action plan to implement a bilateral visa-free agreement for tourist groups has been signed between Iran and Russia.

The plan was inked by Iran's Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan and Russia's Head of the Federal Agency for Tourism Zarina Doguzova during a meeting in Moscow on Monday, IRNA reported.

The signing of the agreement, which emphasizes a waiver of visas for tourist groups, was due to the good relations between the two countries as well as the interest of Iranians in visiting Russia and the existing capacity in the country for cultural tourists and history buffs, said Mounesan on the sidelines of the signing ceremony.

He also expressed hope that the signing of the joint action plan, as well as the process of increasing vaccination and overcoming the corona crisis, would result in a growth of tourism between Iran and Russia.

Prior to the coronavirus outbreak, over 60,000 Iranian tourists traveled to Russia every year, while more than 36,000 Russian tourists visited Iran, he explained.

Now, with the short distance and good capacities of the two countries, this number is expected to grow even more, he added.

For her part, Doguzova said that considering the good relations between the two countries and the excellent tourism capacities, it is necessary to boost the volume of tourists in the tourist areas of the two countries.

In 2017, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and his Russian counterpart Vladimir



Putin inked a visa-free agreement for tourist groups.

A joint technical committee has been developing an action plan for the previously agreed visa-free travel arrangements since then, in order to put the agreement into effect.

Based on the 2017 agreement tour groups of 5 to 50 people heading to [easternmost parts of] Russia from Iran or vice versa are granted a visa-free stay of up to 15 days.

Earlier this month, Mostafa Sarvari, who presides over the tourism marketing

and advertising office of the Iranian Tour Operators Association, announced many Russian tourists are eager to travel to Iran, recounting his Russian counterparts. "Many [potential] Russian travelers are motivated to visit novel and lesser-known destinations such as Iran that could be a safe and attractive destination," he said.

"According to Russian tourism experts, the feedback from Russian tourists who have traveled to Iran has been very positive, and its reflection, especially on social media,

has caused a great deal of enthusiasm and interest."

According to Ebrahim Pourfaraj, who heads the Iranian Tour Operators Association, rounds of negotiations have been held between Iranian tour operators, travel marketers, and their Russian counterparts. "We've been commenced talks with some Russian travel agents to put Iranian destinations on their itineraries.... And the Iranian Tour Operators Association has also entered negotiations with Russian unions for outbound tours to attract more travelers from Russia."

Pourfaraj says the majority of potential Russian travelers are unaware of the vast tourist attractions that exist in every corner of Iran. "The fact is that Iran's political and economic relations with Russia are considered as good, but this has nothing to do with attracting tourists because it is directly connected with the Russian people. It is the Russian people who must choose Iran as their destination."

Maya Lomidze, executive director of the Association of Tour Operators of Russia, had told Sputnik that the visa agreement may significantly surge the tourist flows between the two countries, just like it happened when a similar deal was signed between Russia and China. The flow of Iranian tourists to Russia increased by 50-70 percent following the operation of direct flights that connect Iran to St. Petersburg, Moscow, and Sochi, she said.

Iran is taking proactive measures in line with the long-term goal of 20 million tourists by 2025.

Martian Mountains, a must-see tourist destination in southeastern Iran

TOURISM TEHRAN — The "Martian Mountains", also called the "Miniature Mountains", situated near Chabahar in southeastern Sistan-Baluchestan province, are a breathtaking tourist attraction to behold.

Locals call Martian Mountains "Koochay Merikhi" since it seemed as if aliens — in this case people from Mars — built them, and their curvy scenery stands in strong contrast with the landscape around.

A natural phenomenon, the attraction provides a truly unique travel experience for tourists and nature lovers alike.

It is not easy to travel to the mountains as the road is steep and winding, however, with the huge golden beach and the dark blues of the Gulf of Oman on one side and the greyish white mountains on the other, choosing a side to enjoy could be a challenge.

For most tourists, the first sighting of the mountains is like stepping into a sci-fi movie, but in reality, the mountains belong to the lesser-known scintillating attractions of the real world, not the fantasy world of movies.

Due to rapid erosion caused by exposure to wind and rain, the mountains are a residual type, with a good deal of edgy slits.

Five to 100 meters is the height of the mountains and there is no vegetation in the grooves of them. The texture is highly resistant and feels like a hard rock when climbing. It is rare, however, for people to climb these mountains, as the pleasure of sight outweighs that of climbing.

Geologists have offered different explanations for the formation of these mountains. While some believe they are a continuation of the Zagros Mountains, a range that ends in Pakistan, others believe they were buried under tons of soil thousands of years ago, and have come to light as climate change and seasonal rains washed soil off their faces.

There are some who believe that the wide horizon in the region can be used to observe the infinite universe and stars, so the mountains have become a source of income for the locals. In exchange for money, they give rides to tourists on their decorated camels.

Ramin village, with an ecotourism residence, is just a short distance from the Martian Mountains. The village has a surfing club where men and women can enjoy surfing. A straw hut is located near the mountains as a place to rest. The straw scent makes it easier to tune in to the atmosphere while it is cool inside.

Besides Chabahar, similar mountains can be found in eastern South Khorasan province, southern Hormozgan province, and southwestern Khuzestan province, as well as Qeshm island in the Persian Gulf.

Back in 2019, provincial tourism officials announced that they were planning on developing a dossier for Martian Mountains for a possible inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

With 24 entries, Iran ranks 10th in the world in terms of the number of historical monuments and sites registered on the UNESCO World Heritage list.



Amongst the UNESCO-designated sites in Iran are "Arg-e Bam" (Bam Citadel) that represents an outstanding example of an ancient fortified settlement, "Bisotun" in western Kermanshah province, which is notable for its Achaemenid-era inscription carved on a limestone cliff, lavish "Golestan Palace" in downtown Tehran which is a masterpiece of the Qajar era (1789 to 1925), and millennium-old "Gonbad-e Qabus" which is a mudbrick tomb tower for Qabus ibn Wushmagir.

For decades, Sistan-Baluchestan used to be shunned by potential foreign travelers though it is home to several distinctive archaeological sites and natural attractions, including two UNESCO World Heritage sites of Shahr-e-Soukhteh (Burnt City) and Lut Desert, shared with Kerman Province.

Shahdad Desert: The Hottest Place on Earth

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — A trip to the uncharted desert and the fantastic city of Kalout, in southeastern province of Kerman, is a special treat, cherished even by native Iranians. You will experience the walk among the fantasy-land structures, carved out of sand hills through echoes of the blowing winds.

Shahdad Desert is 100 Kilometers from Kerman. From east, it is 30 Kilometers from Dasht-e Lut and overlooks a plain called Tekab that makes up the main part of Khabis.

You will let yourself roll down the soft sand hills, see the Nebka's (the flower pots of the desert), the in-congruent citrus gardens in the heart of the desert and old fortresses.

You will explore the historic cities of Kerman, Mahan and surrounding villages,



and visit the lush green Bagh-e Shazdeh (Prince Garden) known as the 'Paradise of the Desert'.

The inner tranquility that will descend upon you by spending a night or two under the dark and starry skies of Shahdad, in the heart of Lut Desert surrounded by the deep silence of the desert, will add so much more to the pleasures of your trip.

Lut Desert is divided into three sections: The northern, central and southern sections. The central section, which is the largest part of Lut Desert, also reaches its lowest altitude. There are several kalouts, a moving sand castle that is built one day and moves on the next, in this region that extends from central Lut to the west.

These kalouts are located in an area 40km east and northeast of Shahdad. They have been generated by the extreme soil and water erosion and extend from northwest to the

southeast of the region. The kalouts cover part of the western fringe of Lut Desert with an average length of 145 km. There is little vegetation in the desert region. In addition to the kalouts, there are other beautiful attractions to the east of Kerman, the lowest region of Lut Desert to the east of a salt mine called 'Gowd-e Namak', which is situated in the western region of the kalouts.

At this point, the altitude is a mere 56 meters above sea level and is recorded as the lowest region in Iran and not only the hottest place in Iran, but the hottest place on Earth. They call this place 'Gandom Beryan', which means roasted grain. The temperature in Lut Desert can exceed 70C in the shade, which makes it even hotter than 'Death Valley'.

A peek into Persian handicrafts: Semnan felts

One of Semnan's many handicrafts are felts that have been produced from a long time ago. The method of making felts are almost similar in different areas of Iran, but they sometimes vary in color, pattern and thickness. Felts are known to be the oldest floor covering that was made by mankind. There is a famous story told by the felt makers of Semnan, narrating that Soleiman the prophet had a son who was a shepherd. He wanted to make a textile from the wool of his sheep. He tried so hard only to fail. In despair and anger, he beat the wool by fist while he wept over them. His tears poured on the wool, and intertwined them together. And that is how the first felt was made.

Felt is a kind of textile that is made without the use of loom. It is not knitted, but is created based on two basics. First, moisture and second applying pressure. In the process of making felts, the water is poured over layers of used materials while they are being compressed, causing the fibers to hook together into a single piece of fabric. The

most commonly used material of felts are sheep wool that is sheared in spring time. It has long fibers and comes in different colors. A piece of felt can be made in one day of work which is a reason why this product is not very expensive. However it is a very exhausting process. To create a felt, the maker first lays pieces of colored wool on Karbas, a kind of fabric which is also used for painting canvases, according to the final design. Then layers of combed wool is arranged on top. The Karbas is rolled together, holding the layers of wool. The felt maker begins rubbing and pressing the roll while applying hot water. This is done repeatedly and step by step.

Felts are mainly floor coverings. But they are also used to make other tools, such as Korsi (a low table with heater underneath it in Iran) cover, horse cover, kitchen utensils, dolls and clothes. Patterns and designs of felts are commonly created by abstract motifs inspired by nature. Some examples are Chahar Goosh-e Khorshidi, a symbol of the



Sun, paisley, or diamonds. Today, felt making is practiced in cities such as Semnan, and Shahroud.

(Source: Visit Iran)

COVIRAN vaccine closer to completing human trials

SOCIETY TEHRAN – Eight thousand volunteers in four cities will receive the first dose of the COVIRAN vaccine on June 10, moving toward completing the third phase of human testing.

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

So far, injections have been performed on 10,500 volunteers in the provinces of Tehran and Alborz through the third phase of the human trial, Hassan Jalili, director of the vaccine research team, said.

The volunteers are announced to be 18-75 years old, he added.

"Some one million doses of the vaccine have been produced. By June, this number will reach 12 million doses per month, and in August, and by September we will produce 20 to 25 million doses of vaccine."

South America, African countries, several neighboring and two European countries have asked to purchase COVIRAN vaccine, Jalili said.

Although, we are capable of exporting the vaccine, however, through the policies adopted by the Ministry of Health, no vaccine will be exported until the domestic need is fully met, he stated.



Health Minister Saeed Namaki announced that immunization against coronavirus by the domestic vaccine will start by the next week, ISNA reported on May 30.

Vaccination to end by late November
President Hassan Rouhani said on Saturday that 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.

To vaccinate people with underlying diseases, about 14-15 million doses of vaccine is required, while we now have 5 million doses, so another 10 million must be provided to complete the process by the end of July, then we will continue the process with foreign and domestic vaccines, he explained.

He expressed hope to start vaccination of the whole population by the end of the summer (September 23), noting that given the country's ability of vaccine administration, vaccinating 500,000 people in 24 hours, the entire population can receive the vaccine within three to four months.

Homegrown vaccines

The second Iranian-made vaccine developed by the Razi Vaccine and Serum Research Institute (Razi Cov Pars) to be administered among the population in early August; which started the clinical trial on February 27, entered the second phase of the human trial on Friday.

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.

Environment missing from presidential debates

→ 1 Unfortunately, none of the seven candidates who have presented their plans in presidential debates have mentioned the environment and water scarcity, and have only spoken about their plans for economic growth and increased production without considering the environment, he explained.

Meanwhile, the construction of the smallest factory or the slightest increase in production depends on water, and according to the conditions of the country's water resources, it will only lead to the exploitation of more fragile groundwater resources and the intensification of drought, he added.

He went on to state that "the environment situation and water resources of the country are very fragile, that should be dubbed as water bankruptcy, but none of the candidates discuss the negative points.

Economy, production, and other matters are indirectly dependent on the environment and water. Therefore, it is necessary to use experienced consultants and experts in the field of water, agriculture, and environment in the 13th government in order to prevent problems such as land subsidence, dried wetlands, and sand and dust storms before reaching the irreversible stage."

Social consequences of drought

If the government officials have only an economic view without considering the fragile environment of the country, no development and economic growth will be sustainable. Also, if the issue of water shortage, which has widespread social consequences such as migration and increasing suburbanization, is not taken seriously, it cannot be managed, Mousavi-Khansari said.

Even, national TV is not broadcasting any programs about the phenomenon of drought, its effects, and ways to reduce consumption to overcome the problem, he emphasized.

Three types of water scarcity

Pointing that Iran is facing three types of drought, he said that it is a kind of territorial and natural drought that has existed for many years from the past so that a few years of good spells and a few years of drought spells happened in the country.

Our predecessors also thought of measures in connection with drought management, one of which was the invention of the qanat system, which was a way of optimal use of water resources so that during the seasonal rains, rainwater penetrated into the aquifers. Thus, in spring and summer, when the need for water was higher, qanat was used for cultivation, he said.

Another type of drought is caused by climate change, he said, adding that the development of human societies around the world and the consequent overuse of fossil fuels



The presidential election will be held on June 18. The first televised debate between the contenders was held on Saturday afternoon, when almost all of them pointed their fingers at the banking system and economic growth, disregarding the environment and water crisis.

have led to climate change and global warming.

The temperature of the earth has risen by about 1.5 degrees Celsius since before industrialization, and this increase has caused the melting of glaciers.

Also, due to global warming, other altitudes in Iran do not store snow and snowfall melts very quickly, which causes the flow of rivers to change the gradual melting of snow and its penetration into aquifers into flood currents.

"Simultaneously with climate change, we are also witnessing a change in the pattern of precipitation, in the event of climate change, precipitation occurs briefly and reduces the water penetration into aquifers. Therefore, depletion of groundwater resources will be more severe," he further lamented.

He described the third type of drought as "human-caused" due to the excessive water withdrawal, stating that over the last four decades, there has been a lot of pressure on groundwater resources in the country.

The depletion of groundwater resources has caused a kind of artificial drought that has caused land subsidence in many parts of the country, especially in the south of Tehran, he explained.

Another factor that has caused human drought is the lack of adherence to the patterns of less water-intensive crops and the cultivation of water-intensive crops in the open air. Hence, these unwise actions have led to the intensification of the drought.

This year will be one of the driest years in the last 50 years, which is likely to continue with even greater intensity in the coming years, he further regretted.

80% of groundwater resources withdrawn

Iran is greatly affected by the phenomena, Alireza Shahidi, head of Geological Survey and Mineral Exploration told ISNA on Monday.

In the whole world, water resources withdrawal is between 3 to 20 percent, and when it reaches 40 to 60 percent which is considered problematic, and it will be a crisis when exceeding 60-80 percent, Shahidi noted.

"Yet the contribution of groundwater withdrawal to subsidence in Iran is outpacing the world, withdrawing over 80 percent," he further noted.

Drought impacts on human societies

The drought consequences will be very severe, and as long as we do not manage water consumption, we will attack groundwater resources. All the lakes, rivers, and wetlands of the country have environmental water rights, but in drought conditions, it is always natural ecosystems that are neglected and their water rights are not paid, he said.

In drought conditions, the water right of rivers and wetlands must be granted, but not only does this not happen, but the water goes to agricultural lands where water-intensive crops such as onions and watermelons are grown. Therefore, water resources are wasted, because the Ministry of Agriculture has not succeeded in implementing the cultivation pattern.

Iran is a country where rainfall is one-third of the world average and has gone through many periods of drought throughout history, some of which have led to famine.

However, employment in the country is water-based and based on agriculture. However, due to the dry climate of the country, we should have used the tourism and handicraft capacities of local communities, but unfortunately, we have put all our energy, capital, and focus on agriculture.

During the severe drought of this year, the possibility of migration from rural to urban areas and from southern to northern provinces will definitely increase, he further concluded.

COVID-19 UPDATES

The statistics are related to 24 hours started 2:00 p.m. June 6

New cases	4907
New deaths	120
Total cases	2,971,270
Total deaths	81,183
New hospitalized patients	940
Patients in critical condition	3,687
Total recovered patients	2,565,972
Diagnostic tests conducted	20,812,819
Doses of vaccine injected	4,888,769

Tehran to host revitalization ceremony of ECO Park

SOCIETY TEHRAN – The revitalization ceremony of ECO Park will be held in Tehran on June 9, with ambassadors of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) member countries in attendance.



The ceremony will be hosted by Abbasabad cultural and tourism zone with the aim of increasing the joint cooperation of the member states in order to strengthen cultural participation and to promote the status of Norouz (the Persian new year celebration), ISNA reported.

In order to enhance the level of cooperation, a memorandum of understanding will be signed between Abbasabad Renovation Company and ECO Cultural Institute.

Eco Park with an area of 27,000 square meters in the northern part of Norouz Park in the cultural and tourism region of Abbasabad, is considered as one of the common cultural characteristics between the member countries of this organization.

Established as Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD) in 1964 by Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey, ECO is an intergovernmental regional organization encompassing countries from Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia, West Asia, and South Asia with more than 460 million inhabitants and over 8 million square kilometers connecting Russia to the Persian Gulf and China to Europe. The overall objective of the Organization is the sustainable economic development of its member states and the region as a whole.

Plant and animal life in Iran

(Part one)

Flora

Iran is one of the world's richest in biodiversity having the most diverse fauna and flora.

Topography, elevation, water supply, and soil determine the character of the vegetation. Approximately one-tenth of Iran is forested, most extensively in the Caspian region.



In the area are found broad-leaved deciduous trees—oak, beech, linden, elm, walnut, ash, and hornbeam—and a few broad-leaved evergreens. Thorny shrubs and ferns also abound.

The Zagros Mountains are covered by scrub oak forests, together with elm, maple, hackberry, walnut, pear, and pistachio trees. Willow, poplar, and plane trees grow in the ravines, as do many species of creepers.

Thin stands of juniper, almond, barberry, cotoneaster, and wild fruit trees grow on the intermediate dry plateau. Thorny shrubs form the ground cover of the steppes, while species of Artemisia (wormwood) grow at medium elevations of the desert plains and the rolling country.

Acacia, dwarf palm, kunar trees (of the genus Ziziphus), and scattered shrubs are found below 3,000 feet (900 metres). Desert sand dunes, which hold water, support thickets of brush.

Forests follow the courses of surface or subterranean waters. Oases support vines and tamarisk, poplar, date palm, myrtle, oleander, acacia, willow, elm, plum, and mulberry trees. In swamp areas reeds and grass provide good pasture.

(Source: britannica.com)

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Clean air bill projected to create 10,000 green jobs

The clean air bill, proposed by the Department of Environment to curb air pollution, is projected to generate some 10,000 green jobs over the course of the sixth five-year national development plan (2016-2021), an environmental official said. In line with the one of the articles of clean air bill units of Health, Safety, and the Environment (HSE), with regard to health and safety of the employees, customers, and contractors as well as the protection of the environment are bound to be established in all industrial and manufacturing enterprises, Shina Ansari told ISNA news agency.

"Accordingly, those graduates in the field of environment can apply for job opportunities in HSE units," Ansari added.

ایجاد ۱۰ هزار فرصت شغلی نتیجه اجرای لایحه هوای پاک

مدیرکل دفتر پایش فراگیر سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست ضمن اشاره به مواد قانون هوای پاک - که به پیشنهاد سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست اخیراً به تصویب مجلس شورای اسلامی رسید- از ایجاد ۱۰ هزار فرصت شغلی طی برنامه ششم توسعه از طریق اجرای مواد این قانون خبر داد.

شینا انصاری در گفت‌وگو با ایسنا افزود: در ماده ۱۶ لایحه هوای پاک، کلیه مراکز و واحدهای صنعتی و تولیدی، برای انجام امور مربوط به سلامت و ایمنی مشتریان و کارمندان و کارفرمایان مکلف به ایجاد واحدهای سلامت، بهداشت و محیط زیست (HSE) و به کارگیری نیروهای متخصص این حوزه هستند بنابراین تعداد زیادی از فارغ التحصیلان محیط زیست می‌توانند جذب هسته‌ها و بخش‌های زیست محیطی صنایع متوسط و بزرگ کشور به منظور پایش صنایع شوند.

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GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

One who says unpleasant things about others, will himself quickly become a target of their scandal.

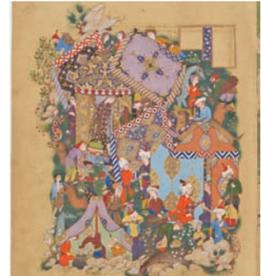
Imam Ali (AS)

Jami and Persian art

Part 1

Jami, in full Abd ur-Rahmn Nur ad-Din bin Nezam ad-Din Ahmad Dashti, was a Persian poet, scholar, and Sufi of the 15th century. Jami's writings are among the most frequently illustrated in the history of Persian manuscript painting.

By the fifteenth century, the intense devotion of Timurid warlords and princes to Sufi elders had created the most favorable conditions for the spread of Sufism and an increase in the influence of Sufi orders.



Folio from a manuscript of Jami's Haft Owrang (Seven Thrones) dating back to the Safavid period (1556-1565)

Whether in prose or verse, books and treatises on Sufism, its ideology, and exposition of its goals, continued to be written both in Arabic and Persian.

The popularity of Sufism led to the ascendance of literary works with Sufi contents among texts that were commissioned for illustration.

During the reign of the Timurid Hosayn Bayqara (1470-1506), Herat, where Jami resided for most of his life, became the center of literature and book production in the Iranian world.

The later years of Jami's life thus coincided with the high point in the history of Persian miniature painting. The last decade of Jami's life also corresponds with the emergence, as master miniaturists, of a number of individuals known by name, including Kamal ad-Din Behzad (d. 1535-36), whose name was to become proverbial for skill in painting.

Wide scale patronage of poetry and painting by members of the court at Herat, most notably, Hosayn Bayqara, and his confidant and childhood companion, Mir Ali Shir Navai (1441-1501), and Jami's own eminent position, as a poet and a master of the Naqshbandi order of Sufis, must have contributed to the desirability of his works as subjects for book illustrations while he was still alive.

This desirability did not diminish during the Safavid period and in fact increased during the latter part of the 16th century. The fact that Jami's works were illustrated during his lifetime distinguishes him from most other major literary figures of the so-called classical period.

Completed by Jami in 1483 a manuscript copy of the mystical romance Yusuf o Zoleykha, dated 1488 — four years before Jami's death — contains two spaces reserved for paintings, in one of which a sketch can be seen representing Yusuf and Zoleykha in the latter's palace.

One often noted miniature painting from this same year was likewise inspired by Jami's Yusuf o Zoleykha. This illustration, depicting the attempted seduction of Yusuf by Zoleykha, is not in a manuscript of Jami's own works but is rather one of four paintings, undisputedly by Behzad, in a Bustan of Sadi that was made for the library of Hosayn Bayqara, with a text colophon of 1488.

Although the scene illustrated corresponds with Sadi's text regarding Zoleykha's seduction scheme, the elaborate architectural setting illustrated by Behzad is that described in Jami's romance, where Zoleykha's palace, its conception, building, decoration, and completion are detailed.

Following Jami's description, the painting shows Yusuf who, having been led from room to room, at last flees from Zoleykha's reach to make his escape through all the rooms that according to Jami's text, she had carefully bolted as she led him through the building.

Inspired by the often illustrated Khamseh of Nezami and with strong Sufi content, the seven masnavi comprising the Haft Owrang, whether as individual poems, selections of poems or compilations of all seven, have been the most popular of Jami's works for illustrations, as evidenced by at least two hundred manuscripts held in collections around the world.

However, among his works commissioned for illustration his divan of poems, his work Baharestan, modeled on Sadi's Golestan, his Nafahat al-Ons on the lives and works of Sufi saints, and his Laywahi, a treatise on Sufism can be mentioned.

Popularity of Jami is particularly prominent in Bukhara during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Under the Uzbek rulers, numerous manuscripts of his works, such as selections from his divan, copied by Soltan Ali Mashhadi (d. 1519) with later miniatures attributed to Mahmud and Khwajakak Naqqash, were copied and illustrated.

From Bukhara is also a manuscript of Baharestan (at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Museum in Lisbon), which has illustrations that have been dated to circa 1525-30.

An illustration belonging to a copy of the Nafahat al-Ons (presently at Chester Beatty Library in Dublin) was also executed in Bukhara circa 1650s for Abd al-Aziz Bahador Khan and is attributed to Farhad.

Source: Encyclopedia Iranica
To be continued

Ruhollah Zamani stars as teenage trooper in war drama "The Bakeri Martyrs"

Mehdi commanded the IRGC division in several major operations during the war and was martyred along with Hamid. Ali, their older brother, was killed earlier by the SAVAK intelligence services in 1972. The director of the project is Hadi Hejazifar who also stars as Mehdi Bakeri. The series is being made at Sima Films, a film production studio affiliated with IRIB. Zamani and other child actors in "Sun Children" were selected by director Majid Majidi from over 3,000 auditions held over a four-month period at a school for child workers in Tehran. Like other child stars of "Sun Children", including Shamila Shirzad and her brother Abolfazl, Ruhollah had never acted before. However, he won the Marcello

Mastroianni Award for best young actor at the Venice Film Festival in 2020 for his role in "Sun Children", which was later shortlisted for the 2021 Oscars. "He was pure, filled with raw energy, determined to give more than expected," Majidi said about Ruhollah. "Casting the main character was the hardest task. But Ruhollah surpassed all the others because he had such an intensity, such a desire to get the lead — much like the character in the movie, so determined to find the treasure and save his mother," he added. With the "Sun Children" team's assistance, Ruhollah has enrolled in an acting school, which he will attend once the pandemic is over.



Ruhollah Zamani (C) acts in a scene from "The Bakeri Martyrs" by director-actor Hadi Hejazifar. (Ali Nikraftar)



"Like a Fish on the Moon" by Iranian director Dornaz Hajiha.

Asian Shadows handles global sales for "Like a Fish on the Moon"

TEHRAN — The Hong-Kong-based company Asian Shadows has purchased rights to the Iranian family drama "Like a Fish on the Moon".

The film produced by renowned Iranian producer Ehsan Rasulof is the directorial debut feature by Dornaz Hajiha, whose short film "Marzieh" was acclaimed at several international festivals.

"Like a Fish on the Moon" is about a couple who must learn to adapt when their young son suddenly stops talking.

The film tells the story of Haleh, a very protective mother, who easily spoils her 4-year-old boy, Ilya. When one day the boy stops talking, Haleh and her husband Amir start searching for the reason and the remedy for this problem.

The more they try to talk to the boy or consults experts, the worst things become with the couple and in the family. Hajiha, who studied at the London Film School, is now developing her second feature "Diaphanous", which is being produced by Chinese Shadows.

Her 2017 short movie "Marzieh" received two awards at the 14th Vancouver International Women in Film Festival in Canada in 2019.

The film won the award for best director and also brought Mastaneh Mohajer the award for best editor.

It was also picked as the best short film at the Iranian Film Festival in Prague, Czech, in 2018.

The film tells the story of a couple whose life changes drastically after they return home from a funeral for a relative.

Actress Niki Karimi spurns jury invite over Shanghai festival pandemic restrictions

TEHRAN — Iranian actress-director Niki Karimi has declined an invitation to join the jury of the main competition of the Shanghai International Film Festival (SIFF) over the organizers' COVID-19 pandemic prevention and control measures for the jury members.

In a report published on Sunday, a number of Persian news agencies announced that Karimi has turned down the festival's invitation to join the jury due to a fortnight's quarantine for the jury members at the festival venue and COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.

Karimi, who has played roles in over 60 movies, was selected for the jury of the 57th International Antalya Film Festival organized in October 2020 in the Turkish tourist resort.

She made her directorial debut feature, "One Night", in 2005, which premiered in Un Certain Regard at the Cannes Film Festival.

Karimi has also served as a jury member

for numerous festivals, including Cannes, Berlin, Locarno, Karlovy Vary, Edinburgh, Dubai and Damascus.

Chinese filmmaker Huang Jianxin will preside over the jury of the 24th edition of the Shanghai International Film Festival, which will take place in China's major business center from June 11 to 20.

Singaporean filmmaker Anthony Chen, Chinese actor and director Deng Chao, Italian film critic and historian Marco Müller, French producer Natacha Devillers and Chinese actress Song Jia are other jurors of the festival.

Iran's cinema at SIFF 2021

Iranian director Abolfazl Jalili's latest drama "The Contrary Route" is among 13 movies that will be contending for a Golden Goblet in the main competition of the festival.

The film follows Emkan, a 17-year-old teenager who has not seen his father for many years and his mother works the late-night

shift in a factory. He has a small recording camera and he decides to make a film to give a twist to his routine life, however, he is not very proficient.

Jalili has said that the movie is a screen adaptation of his own life story.

"By this film, I wanted to make children watch the night sky, crying until morning, but children in this modern day do not have any idea about the subject of the film. They stay awake all the night wasting their time in cyberspace," he lamented.

Six other Iranian films will be competing in the various categories of the Shanghai festival.

The acclaimed dramas "Sun Children" by Majid Majidi and "The Wasteland" by Ahmad Bahrami have been selected to be screened in the SIFF Highlights: Viva la Festival.

"No Choice" by Reza Dormishian and "Walnut Tree" by Mohammad-Hosseini



Iranian actress-director Niki Karimi in an undated photo. Mahdavian will be competing in the Spectrum: Alternatives section.

"Maya", a co-production between Iran and the UK co-directed by Jamshid Mojaddadi and Anson Hartford, will be screened in SIFF Documentaries.

"The White Whale" by Amir Mehran will be competing in the SIFF Short Films section.

Director of Music Museum of Iran Ali Moradkhani dies of COVID-19

TEHRAN — The director of the Music Museum of Iran, Ali Moradkhani, died of COVID-19 at Tehran's Khatam Ul-Anbia Hospital on Monday. He was 63.

Earlier on Sunday, Iran House of Music managing director Hamidreza Nurbakhsh announced that Moradkhani had gone into a coma in his struggle with the effects of the virus.

Moradkhani was the director of the Music Center before he was appointed as the deputy culture minister for artistic affairs in 2013 when Ali Jannati took the helm of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance in Hassan

Rouhani's first administration.

In December 2017, Moradkhani was replaced with Mojtaba Hosseini by the new culture minister, Seyyed Abbas Salehi, following some changes made within the ministry to lessen pressure from certain people who had been critical of the organization for its more tolerant policies.

In a message published on Monday, Salehi expressed his condolence over the death of Moradkhani.

"His long career in cultural management and his creative, constructive and systematic actions in this field had changed him into an efficient manager for artists and cultural figures," he said in the message.

Japanese writer Fumio Sasaki's "Goodbye, Things" published in Persian

TEHRAN — Iranian publisher Qoqnu has recently released a Persian translation of Japanese writer Fumio Sasaki's "Goodbye, Things: The New Japanese Minimalism".

Shabnam Samieian is the translator of the bestselling phenomenon that shows us a minimalist life is a happy life.

The original book came out in 2015 and an English translation by Eriko Sugita was published by W. W. Norton & Company in 2017.

Sasaki is not an enlightened minimalism expert or organizing guru like Marie Kondo—he's just a regular guy who was stressed out and constantly comparing himself to others, until one day he decided to change his life by saying goodbye to everything he didn't absolutely need.

The effects were remarkable: Sasaki gained true freedom, new focus, and a real sense of gratitude for everything around him.

In "Goodbye, Things", Sasaki modestly shares his personal minimalist experience, offering specific tips on the minimizing process and revealing how the new minimalist movement can not only transform your space but truly enrich your life.

The benefits of a minimalist life can be realized by anyone, and Sasaki's humble vision of true happiness will open your eyes to minimalism's potential.

In the book, he has said, "There's happiness in having less. That's why it's time to say goodbye to all our extra things. That's the minimal version of the message that I'd like to convey in this book."

"It's also partly why I wrote this book,

although it wasn't my sole motivation, I wanted to prove to myself that there's some kind of value to my existence."

He added, "In this book, I've defined minimalism as reducing our necessary items to a minimum, and doing away with excess so we can focus on the things that are truly important to us. People who live that way are the ones I consider to be minimalists."

"Minimalism is a lifestyle in which you reduce your possessions to the absolute minimum you need... reducing your belongings to just the minimal essentials."

"My definition of a minimalist is a person who knows what is truly essential for him or herself, who reduces the number of possessions that they have for the sake of things that are really important to them."

Sasaki is the former co-editor-in-chief of



A poster for the Persian translation of Japanese writer Fumio Sasaki's book "Goodbye, Things".

Wani Books, and lives in a 215-square-foot apartment in Tokyo, furnished with a small wooden box, a desk, and a roll-up futon pad.