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Dragan Skocic the best possible choice for Iran: Masoud Moeini

BY FARROKH HESABI
Iranian football expert, Masoud Moeini, believes that the football federation's decision to keep Dragan Skocic as the head coach of the Iran national team is the best decision at this time.

Skocic's contract expired with Iran after the end of the 2022 World Cup qualification Round 2, where Iran won their four matches out of four under the tutelage of the Croat.

After the successful run of the 'Persian Leopards' with Skocic, some argument was raised in Iranian sports media and among the football experts that a bigger name than the Croatian coach should sit on the bench of the Iranian national team for the next stage.

The local media reports even suggested that the Iranian federation has negotiated with some coaches, including two ex-Iran coaches Branko Ivankovic and Carlos Queiroz.

However, the Football Federation of the Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) announced on Monday Skocic will remain as Iran coach in the 2022 World Cup qualifiers Round 3.

"For speaking about Dragan Skocic, we must first take it into account that he took the responsibility of Iran national team at a difficult time when the team had lost two out of their four matches in the first leg and the ex-coach Marc Wilmots had created a lot of problems for the country's football in general and the national team in particular," Moeini said.

"Skocic has been able to showcase the truest sense of his ability in my opinion. He was the best choice at that time after Wilmots, and now again, I believe the best decision was to continue cooperating with him.

"I know him from years ago when I was a member of Esteghlal's board of directors, and we negotiated with him as a candidate of coaching Esteghlal at that time. He is a nice man who knows how to create a good connection with his players. In the national team, he used this strategy in the best way possible and gained the trust of the players as well as Iranian football fans," added the former national team player.

Moeini emphasized that the next round of the World Cup qualification requires specific planning.

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Grab a slice of Iranian traditions at Gilan Rural Heritage Museum

Gilan Rural Heritage Museum strives to represent traditional, cultural, architectural, and anthropological areas of the northern Iranian province.

Many traditional Gilani cottages have been reassembled on the grounds of this fascinating open-air museum in an area of 45 hectares within the Saravan Forest Park, 18km south of Rasht (2km off the Qazvin highway).

The lush green province is known for its tourist attractions and warm-hearted and hospitable people. The people of Gilan from different ethnic groups, including Gilak, Talesh, and Tat, have come together and formed a very rich and diverse culture and customs. In recent years, the Gilan Rural Heritage Museum has been trying to bring together all the cultural diversity of the people of Gilan in a 263-hectare complex on the outskirts of Rasht, in the heart of the Saravan forest.

In this complex, separate areas are provided for restaurants, teahouses, markets, tea gardens, paddy fields, training workshops, and handicraft production. Other sections of this site also include indigenous theaters and playgrounds, agricultural and livestock research centers, architecture and anthropology research institute, children's park, garden for growing medicinal plants and native trees, amusement camp, and two guest complexes with a capacity of 150 units of 3 to 5 people Inspired by rural architecture.

Due to its humid and somewhat hot weather, the best time to visit Gilan Rural Heritage Museum is in spring or fall. If you chose to visit it in spring, you can enjoy spring blossoms and mild weather. But in the fall you will be greeted by the color of the trees. Either way, it would be a sight to see.

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New details of UK's arms sales to repressive regimes condemned

New data shows the UK has made a nice profit over the past decade selling weapons to countries classified by London itself as having a dire record on human rights and civil liberties. Between 2011-2020, the UK sold 16.8 billion pounds sterling worth of military equipment to 53 countries. Two-thirds of whom (39 nations) have been condemned for a poor human rights record.

Further research by the London-based Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT) found that 11.8 billion pounds sterling worth of arms had been authorized by the UK government during the same period to the UK Foreign Ministry's own list of nations that London acknowledges has human rights problems. These include Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Libya. Two-thirds of the countries – 21 out of 30 – are on the government's list of repressive regimes.

Another government branch, the Department

for International Trade has also identified nations as 'core markets' for arms exports those campaigners say are guilty of many human rights cases of abuse. Downing Street has already admitted that Saudi Arabia is attacking Yemen using British-made weapons. The UK has also supplied more than half of the warplanes used by Riyadh for its almost daily bombing raids. CAAT says 'Right now, UK-made weapons are playing a devastating role in Yemen'. The group added that "the arms sales that are being pushed today could be used in atrocities and abuses for years to come."

In the future, the UK is likely to be affected by two major markets, namely the European Union's tax-free Single Market following Brexit and, amid rising tensions with Beijing, it could lose out on contracts with another major booming market; China.

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Iranian National Observatory inaugurated

The Iranian National Observatory (INO), which is said to kick off a big movement in the area of astronomy in the country was inaugurated near the city of Kashan, central Isfahan province, on Monday.

The project places Iran among the ten countries in the world capable of manufacturing observatories, ISNA reported.

INO has been built on Gargash peak at an altitude of 3600m above the sea level.

The main activities of the national observatory include designing, construction, monitoring, and operating the 3.4-meter INO340 telescope, its instruments, and infrastructures. The range of instruments initially planned for the telescope includes a wave-front sensor, auto-guider, imaging CCDs, and a high-resolution spectrograph.

The INO340 telescope is a Ritchey-Chretien f/11 which provides unvignetted 20 arcmin field of view at the main Cassegrain focus. In addition, 3

bent focuses are also provided each with a field of view of 8 arcmins. The primary mirror is meniscus shaped and the secondary mirror is convex and together they form a well-corrected focus.

The main mirror (M1) is a single-segment fast f/1.5 mirror with a diameter of 3.4m, which makes IN340 one of the most compact telescopes of this size. M1 is a meniscus shape 18 cm thick made of a Zerudor ceramic with a 700mm central hole.

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Taliban accommodating all ethnic groups: analyst

BY MOHAMMAD MAZHARI

A member of an Islamabad-based think tank believes that the "Taliban are accommodating all ethnic groups" as it looks forward to seize the power in Kabul.

"Taliban are accommodating all the ethnic groups in their organization as they have eyes on the upcoming administration in Kabul," Zafar Iqbal Yousafzai, a senior research associate at Strategic Vision Institute (SVI), tells the Tehran Times.

"Last year, the Taliban appointed a Shia Taliban commander in one of the districts that showed they are accommodating all the ethnic and religious groups," Yousafzai adds.

The Taliban are advancing at lightning speed across Afghanistan as U.S. troops withdraw. They now control a third of the country, are fighting for control of 42 percent more – and may even be slowing their advance on purpose.

According to Afghan media reports, eyewitness accounts and statements from local Afghan officials, the Taliban are advancing in rural areas and near Kabul. They now hold almost twice as much of Afghanistan as they did just two months ago, raising fresh doubts about whether the Afghan government can survive once U.S. forces depart by Sept. 11.

Following is the text of the interview with Zafar Iqbal Yousafzai:

How do you see repercussions of U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan? What does it mean for the world and the American public after two decades of war?

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Lion tombstones, a symbol of heroic Bakhtiari

Lion tombstones, locally called Shir-sangi or bardshir, are a type of tombstone in the form of a lion, found mostly on the graves of Bakhtiari nomads in the west, southwest, and parts of southern Iran.

The word for lion is often used to refer to a hero, and it is also attached to the name of certain individuals.

Today, the stone lions are a source of pride for the Bakhtiari.

President-elect Raisi will be sworn in on August 5

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** – Ebrahim Raisi will be sworn in as president in parliament on August 5, Majlis presiding board spokesman Seyyed Nezamodin Mousavi told IRNA on Monday.

The swearing-in ceremony will take place after a confirmation of the president-elect by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution.

According to IRNA, like the previous times the confirmation is expected to take place two days before the swearing-in ceremony. In the previous times confirmations took place at the presence of political and military officials. However, this time due to the Coronavirus pandemic it will naturally be different.

The swearing-in of president is based on Article 121 of the constitution.

According to the constitution, in the swearing-in ceremony the Judiciary chief and members of the Expediency Council should be present in the parliament.

Currently, President-elect Raisi is the Judiciary chief. Naturally, weeks or days before the ceremony the Leader will appoint the new top judge.

Mousavi also said certain foreign and national figures have been invited to attend the ceremony.

The spokesman also said the Majlis coronavirus headquarters have devised protocols for observing health issues during the swearing-in ceremony.

Iran says Taliban doesn't represent entire Afghanistan but should be part of solution

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** – Iran on Monday said the Taliban represent only part of Afghanistan and not the entire country not now and not in the future.

However, Iran said Taliban should be seen as part of the solution to end the protracted conflict in the Central Asian country.

"The Taliban does not constitute all Afghanistan, but is part of that country and part of the way out of crisis," Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said, according to Tasnim.

Khatibzadeh stressed the need for the formation of an inclusive government in Afghanistan through "peaceful and sustainable solutions" that would involve all Afghan groups and ethnicities.

Khatibzadeh also said Iran is closely monitoring the situation in Afghanistan at high security and political levels and is negotiating with all Afghan groups.

"It is necessary to protect the territorial integrity (of Afghanistan) and its achievements of the past two decades. Moreover, authentic intra-Afghan dialogue is the sole sustainable solution. We are prepared to facilitate the talks," Khatibzadeh stated.

He also underlined that Iran would not rush to comment or make any forecast on the possible collapse of Kabul and the subsequent developments in Afghanistan. "What matters to us is (the formations of) an inclusive government, security, and territorial integrity of Afghanistan. We are monitoring the moves of Daesh in Afghanistan."

Reiterating that Iran is ready to facilitate the intra-Afghan dialogue with the participation of all groups, including the Taliban, Khatibzadeh said, "Violence has escalated in Afghanistan. Some ethnicities are under pressure, and we called for respect for their rights. The political solution would guarantee the future of Afghanistan."

Iranian officials maintain that the intra-Afghan negotiations should include all Afghan groups and be held in accordance with the Afghan constitution.

The Taliban is making rapid advances in Afghanistan. It views the Ashraf Ghani government as a puppet regime. Last week the UN expressed alarm at their gains.

Some analysts say Taliban have been moderated over the years.

A member of an Islamabad-based think tank believes that the "Taliban are accommodating all ethnic groups" as it looks forward to seize the power in Kabul.

"Taliban are accommodating all the ethnic groups in their organization as they have eyes on the upcoming administration in Kabul," Zafar Iqbal Yousafzai, a senior research associate at Strategic Vision Institute (SVI), tells the Tehran Times.

The U.S. intelligence community has concluded that the government of Afghanistan could collapse as soon as six months after the American military withdrawal from the country is completed, according to officials with knowledge of the new assessment, The Wall Street Journal reported last week.

American intelligence agencies revised their previously more optimistic estimates as the Taliban swept through northern Afghanistan in recently days, seizing dozens of districts and surrounding major cities. Afghan security forces frequently surrendered without a fight, leaving their Humvees and other American-supplied equipment to the insurgents.

The new assessment of the overall U.S. intelligence community, which hasn't been previously reported, has now aligned more closely with the analysis that had been generated by the U.S. military. The military has already withdrawn more than half of its 3,500 troops and its equipment, with the rest due to be out by Sept. 11.

On Wednesday, Taliban fighters were battling government troops inside the northern city of Kunduz after occupying the main border crossing with Tajikistan the previous day and reaching the outskirts of northern Afghanistan's main hub, Mazar-e-Sharif. Tajikistan's border service said 134 Afghan troops at the crossing were granted refuge while some 100 others were killed or captured by the Taliban.

The U.S. is pulling out from Afghanistan, ending the country's longest overseas war, as a result of the February 2020 agreement that the Trump administration negotiated with the Taliban in Doha, Qatar. White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said Wednesday that, while Taliban attacks on Afghan forces are increasing, there has been no such rise in attacks on American troops. "Had we not begun to draw down, violence would have increased against us as well," she said. "So the status quo, in our view, was not an option."

U.S. President Joe Biden has said that Afghans "are going to have to decide their future" as Afghan President Ashraf Ghani visited the White House on Friday.

According to al Jazeera, about 5,000 Afghan families have fled their homes in the northern city of Kunduz after days of fighting between Taliban fighters and government forces, officials said on Saturday.

Heavy fighting has also been reported in the provinces of Kandahar and Baghlan, where the Afghan forces claimed to have retaken areas from Taliban control but the armed group still held on to parts of Pul-e-Khumri area in central Baghlan, according to local media.

According to the WSJ, the setbacks suffered by the Afghan military in recent days prompted the prominent mujahedeen commanders who fought the Taliban before 2001, such as Atta Mohammad Noor, to call on supporters to rejoin armed militias in a national mobilization. While this mobilization is ostensibly in support of Afghan government forces, it shifts the power away from Ghani's embattled administration and toward the warlords whose authority he long tried to curb.

Leader hails Iran election, takes jab at U.S. political bickering during presidential race

➔ I "They used as an excuse some of the incidents that happened later, such as the issue of qualification or non-qualification (of some candidates).

The Leader then pointed to the analysis put forward by some experts regarding the percentage of voter turnout, which said a minimum of 10% did not participate due to the dangers of the coronavirus pandemic.

"Due to the coronavirus pandemic, analysts predicted a low-turnout election, such as 20 or 25%. Well, under such circumstances, people participated like this. It's good, as analysts predicted 10% would not show up at the ballot boxes. If we take this issue into consideration, we will have a 60% turnout, which is good," the Leader elaborated.

Ayatollah Khamenei then moved on to the issue of invalid votes, that some foreign media outlets tried hard to highlight with the intention to undermine the great achievement.

He said, "Some rely on invalid votes. What is the reason for that? Are invalid votes the reason for the estrangement of the people from the establishment? Not at all, not at all. The opposite is true. This shows that people did not miff with the ballot boxes they showed up, and wrote the name of the person they wanted to be their president. It shows the people's trust in the establishment."

The Leader then pointed to the three live presidential debates, broadcasted live on the TV.

"A variety of opinions was observed in election debates. All of the respected candidates agreed that the country's economic problems could be resolved," he stated.

He then noted that the presidential debates foiled the enemy's plans, as it was the exact opposite of what enemy said.

"What the enemy wants to say is that there is no solution. They (the candidates)



all agreed there is a solution, but one said my solution is right, other said my solution is right, yet they all denied existence of a dead-end. This is a very important thing," he underlined.

The Leader lauded the positive atmosphere created after the elections, referencing in particular to the outgoing president's visit to Raisi on its victory day, calling it "a sign of peace and tranquility that the country needs."

"The officials and people's reactions were very well, which is one of God's gifts. Compare this with the U.S. elections.

"It is very good that the first and top officials of the country come to meet with the elected president and meet and talk and comment, to exchange views," he remarked.

He also praised the behavior of the rival candidates who failed to win enough votes, stating that their congratulatory message to the president-elect was an act of high moral

values.

"It is very good that the candidates who did not win, congratulated the candidate who won and expressed their joy and happiness. This is also a divine blessing," he noted.

"We need to appreciate Mr. Raisi's efforts in the Judiciary"

Elsewhere in his remarks, the Leader thanked Ayatollah Raisi for his good work at the Judiciary, saying "good work" was done in this branch of government and Raisi's move in the Judiciary "was an example of what we always repeat; that is, serious, round-the-clock, hard-working, motivated work."

The Leader then said that during Raisi's tenure, the people's hope for the Judiciary was revived.

"The trust of the nation is a great social asset for the Islamic Republic of Iran," he added.

The Leader then said that the process of reform in the Judiciary must continue and

not be affected by the change in its leadership.

"Transformation in the true sense of the word doesn't happen in a year or two, but starting the movement in the Judiciary and adopting this kind of orientation and approach was very important. It must continue, it must not stop, and it must be intensified," the Leader underlined.

He then referred to the Judicial Transformation Document, introduced by Raisi, saying that this document is highly important.

"It is literally operational and not a slogan. Use this document as a criterion," he advised the Judiciary officials.

'Terrorists are freely roaming around in streets of France'

The Leader then moved on to the topic of the 40th anniversary of martyrdom of Ayatollah Beheshti, stating that the Mojahedin-e-Khalgh (MEK) terrorists committed "a horrendous crime on a day like this, by assassinating Martyr Dr. Beheshti and 72 others. They confessed to this murder themselves."

He criticized the European governments, with particular reference to France, which has been hosting the MEK since 1981.

"But they (MEK) walk free today in those same European countries that claim to advocate human rights, including France, which is shameful," the Leader remarked.

He then began to harshly criticize the French government for being hypocritical, saying, "The French government and some Western governments support Mojahedin-e-Khalgh terrorists and give them an official place to talk, even in their national parliaments, yet they claim to advocate human rights. Some of the Western governments' chutzpah is truly appalling and strange."

Prior to the Leader's remarks, the Judiciary chief presented a report of his two-year tenure as the Judiciary chief.

Zarif commemorates victims of Sardasht chemical bombardment

"Brutal sanctions prevent import of medicine to alleviate sufferings of chemical warfare victims"

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — In a message on Monday morning, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif commemorated the 34th anniversary of the horrendous chemical weapons attack by Saddam Hussein's regime on the Iranian city of Sardasht.

The chemical attack took place on June 28, 1987, in the northwestern province of West Azarbaijan. The Iraqi war planes dropped chemical weapons on four residential areas, which resulted in the killing of over 100 citizens and injury of 8000.

Zarif's message posted on IranGov.ir reads as follows:

"Our dear chemical warfare veterans have twice fallen victim to some Western governments' inhumane policies. Once, when Western companies provided Saddam's regime with chemicals and chemical weapons technology, and the representatives of their governments in the United Nations Security Council remained silent and turned a blind eye to Saddam's chemical crimes and let him continue using chemical weapons against the military forces and civilians and once again during the Trump era, when the most brutal sanctions against humanity prevented sending medicine and medical equipment to alleviate the suffering of our dear chemical warfare victims.

Despite our efforts and the cooperation of Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the new U.S. administration has not let go of the failed policy of the previous administration and continued imposing illegal sanctions on our chemical warfare veterans to access medical equipment.

Iranian government's legal pursuits through international



channels to realize the rights of respected chemical warfare victims have become difficult due to the lack of Western governments' political will to hand over the perpetrators, assistants and real and legal managers of the chemical attacks to justice and the shortcomings and obstacles in the international penal system. Non-discrimination and segregation in their aims are commonalities between weapons of mass destruction and sanctions.

This is while, the global crisis caused by the COVID-19 once again underscored the need to strengthen international cooperation to overcome global crises.

There are two effective solutions to prevent the recurrence of human catastrophes caused by use of weapons of mass destruction in the future: 1. Handing over the perpetrators of chemical weapons together with their accomplices and

managers to justice.

2. Continuous commemoration of the victims of chemical weapons and chemical warfare veterans.

The members of the Chemical Weapons Convention are expected to pursue the complete and rapid elimination of chemical weapons as well as the universality of the convention, to abide by their obligations under the relevant provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention and to comply with their commitments to approvals of the conference on international support for chemical weapons victims and chemical victims assistance fund."

OPCW chief: Chemical weapons victims deserve our respect and solidarity

OPCW Director General Fernando Arias also said in a statement on Monday that the Sardasht victims and all others who have experienced the torment and pain caused by chemical weapons "deserve all our respect and solidarity".

Arias further stated, "I deliver these remarks on the 34th anniversary of the 1987 chemical weapons attack on the village of Sardasht in Iran. The 28th of June is a solemn day of commemoration for the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) as we pause to remember the victims of that brutal attack. I have been with the victims in Tehran and in The Hague and I share with them their pain and their feelings. On behalf of the OPCW, I wish to extend my deepest sympathies to and express my solidarity with the people of Sardasht. This tragic anniversary is a momentous occasion for the international community to reunify in our shared condemnation of chemical weapons."

No decision yet on extending agreement with IAEA: Iran

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** – The Iranian Foreign Ministry announced on Monday that still no decision has been taken to extend or not to extend a monitoring deal with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

"Still no decision has been taken about agreement or no agreement, or how to continue or not to continue cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency," Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh told a regular news briefing.

In February the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) and the IAEA agreed on a three-month monitoring deal to give time to the nuclear to possibly revive the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. However, after the three-month period, which ended in May, the negotiators failed to reach an agreement. To give more time to the negotiators, the temporary monitoring deal was extended for another month. The deadline came to an end on June 24.

The February agreement was made during a visit by IAEA Director-General Rafael Grossi to Tehran. According to a joint statement issued by the IAEA and the AEOI at the time, it was agreed that "Iran continues to implement fully and without limitation its Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement with the IAEA as before."

The decision to limit the IAEA monitoring of Iran's nuclear activities followed a ratification by the Iranian parliament late last

year in retaliation to the abrogation of the JCPOA by the United States and imposition of illegal sanctions and a failure by the European parties to the JCPOA to honor their commitments.

Iran advises Grossi to avoid politicizing the Iranian nuclear program

Iranian Ambassador to the IAEA Kazem Gharibabadi has responded to Grossi's assessment about the quality of cooperation between Iran and the UN body, advising him to avoid politicizing the Iranian nuclear program.

Gharibabadi said Grossi's assessment that a lack of progress in cooperation between Iran and the IAEA seriously affects the Agency's ability to make sure that Iran's nuclear program is exclusively peaceful was not credible.

In his opening statement to the quarterly session of the IAEA Board of Governors in early June, Grossi claimed that technical discussions between the IAEA and Iran have not yielded the expected results, and the lack of progress in clarifying the Agency's questions concerning the correctness and completeness of Iran's safeguards declarations seriously affects the ability of the IAEA to provide assurance of the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program.

The Iranian diplomat called on the IAEA to avoid politicization of Iran's nuclear program.

"The Agency has to distance itself from any political agenda," Gharibabadi remarked.

Diplomatic tensions have escalated between Iran and the IAEA in recent weeks as

the Agency refused the level of cooperation Iran provided.

Recently Iran sent a letter to the IAEA announcing the expiration of a February deal between the IAEA and Iran. Gharibabadi, who delivered the letter to the IAEA, had provided details about the February deal, which contained details about Iran's decision to announce the expiration of the deal.

"We delivered this letter to the Director-General of the Agency..., which addresses two issues. One [aspect of the letter] is about a joint agreement we had with the Agency to record data from some of the Agency's surveillance cameras for three months without providing the data to the Agency, and if we reach an agreement on nuclear issues and the outcome as well as the lifting of sanctions after three months, then we will provide information to the Agency," Gharibabadi told the Iranian TV.

According to Gharibabadi, safeguards issues constitute another aspect of the letter. "The letter explicitly states that Iran has all kinds of interactions and cooperation with the Agency and that we are still ready to work with the Agency to resolve a number of safeguards issues, but the Agency must work with a neutral and non-political approach to conclude these issues as soon as possible," he explained.

Underlining that the AEOI-IAEA deal expired on May 24, the Iranian diplomat said, "There were contacts and requests from the Agency and the countries that are

negotiating with us in the framework of the JCPOA talks to extend this understanding for another period. This issue was examined internally and the conclusion was that this understanding could not be legally extended, but the Islamic Republic of Iran decided to continue recording data for another month in its own good faith and as an independent decision and not a legal decision."

He added, "What happens next month and what we do with this data is an independent sovereign decision that takes into account a number of factors, including the Agency's approach and technical approaches, especially in negotiations with us on safeguards as well as political negotiations in the field of the JCPOA."

According to the parliamentary ratification if the nuclear deal is restored and sanctions are completely lifted, Iran will return to the original terms of the multilateral agreement.

Negotiators from Iran and the remaining parties to the JCPOA (Germany, France, Britain, Russia and China) resumed nuclear deal talks in April. The U.S. is also participating in the talks indirectly. The sides have so far held six rounds of talks and made considerable progresses. However, the remaining issues left unsolved is dependent on political decisions in the capitals.

Abbas Araqchi, Iran's chief nuclear negotiator, said on Sunday that there have been enough negotiations over some key issues and it is time for the negotiation parties to make decisions.

Why the U.S. targeted Iran allies ahead of nuclear talks

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** – In what appeared to be a concerted campaign of turning up the heat ahead of the potentially last round of nuclear talks in Vienna, the United States initiated a series of targeted measures against Iran possibly to pressure it into giving more concessions in the thorny issues that the negotiating parties have so far failed to make headway on.

The sixth round of Vienna nuclear talks, aimed at reviving the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), ended more than a week ago with some key issues still hanging in the balance. At the end of the sixth round, Iranian chief nuclear negotiator Seyed Abbas Araqchi underlined the need for the parties involved in the talks to make "serious decisions" in order to get Iran and the U.S. back to full compliance with the tattered nuclear deal.

He said serious decisions need to be made in the capitals of the countries which are parties to the talks in order to resolve key outstanding issues, according to an Iranian Foreign Ministry statement issued at the end of the latest round. Araqchi called on parties to the negotiations to adopt the necessary measures seriously, realistically and resolutely in order to protect and revive the JCPOA.

The top Iranian nuclear negotiator's remarks were indicative of how tough the next round of talks would be because he made it clear that the seventh round would be successful only if all sides made a tough decision to forgo some of their initial demands.

But what are these demands? And how are they affecting the state of play between Iran and the U.S. in the region?

Apropos Iranian demands, the Iranian negotiators have clearly outlined what they want, which does not go beyond full implementation of the JCPOA with all its economic dividends. Iran demanded that the U.S. remove all the sanctions imposed,



re-imposed, or relabeled by the Trump administration as these sanctions were primarily part of a broader design to make it hard, if not impossible, for the next U.S. administration to rejoin the JCPOA.

For its part, the Biden administration has demanded a commitment to engage in follow-on talks to bolster and expand on the existing JCPOA, but Iran has virtually ruled that out, saying they are only interested in renewing the 2015 accord, according to an NBC News report.

With the negotiating teams poised to return to Vienna for the seventh round of talks, resuscitation of the JCPOA seems as far away from being within grasp as it has been before the sixth round during which little progress was reportedly made. And this is mainly because the U.S. still insists on "lengthening and strengthening" the JCPOA while also refusing to lift all the Trump-era sanctions.

To break this deadlock, the U.S. seems

to be resorting to elements of Trump's Iran policy, which include regional mobilization and targeted strikes against the so-called Iran-backed groups. The Pentagon announced early Monday that it carried out airstrikes against Iraqi and Syrian targets in what it described as a "self-defense" move. "Specifically, the U.S. strikes targeted operational and weapons storage facilities at two locations in Syria and one location in Iraq, both of which lie close to the border between those countries," the Pentagon statement said, claiming that the facilities have been used by Kata'ib Hezbollah (KH) and Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada (KSS).

The Pentagon justified its move by saying that the groups targeted were "Iran-backed militia groups," which "are engaged in unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) attacks against U.S. personnel and facilities in Iraq."

What made the airstrikes more suspicious is a move by the U.S. to block a number of news websites affiliated with Iranian state

media or those of regional groups close to Iran. Last week, websites belonging to Iranian news media outlets, most notably the English-language Press TV and the Arabic-language Al Alam, as well as regional media outlets close to Iran, were blocked with a message showing that the websites were seized by the government of the United States.

Taken together, the U.S. measures against Iran can be construed as a U.S. message that Washington remains focused on combating Iran's regional influence regardless of the JCPOA talks. And this, in its turn, sends another signal that if regional issues are not addressed whether in Vienna or elsewhere, tensions will continue to run high even after the JCPOA is revived in its original format. So, does the U.S. want to use this messaging to force Iran into making commitments that it will continue the discussions even after reviving the JCPOA? The answer to this vexing question may well determine the trajectory of negotiations in the coming days.

Whether Iran would change its position in the seventh round remains an open question. But the top Iranian nuclear negotiator said Iran has already made tough decisions to remain in the JCPOA and now it's Washington's turn to face up to the moment of making tough decisions.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has already made tough decisions. When the United States withdrew from the JCPOA and Iran decided to stay in the JCPOA. It was Iran's big and difficult decision that led to the preservation of the JCPOA so far. Now it is the turn of the opposing parties, and according to the negotiations we had, they must decide and reach a conclusion on the revival of the JCPOA in order to reach an agreement," Araqchi told Iranian state media after briefing lawmakers sitting on the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee on the Vienna talks on Sunday.

JCPOA alive because of Iran: spokesman

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** – The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman has credited the Islamic Republic with keeping the 2015 nuclear deal alive despite continued U.S. violation of its commitments.

Saeed Khatibzadeh said the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is still alive and is now being discussed in the Vienna nuclear talks.

Speaking at his weekly press conference, Khatibzadeh said, "If the JCPOA is alive today, it is because of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and if today there exist such thing as the JCPOA, the implementation of which is being discussed, it is because of the decision that Iran made after the unilateral and illegal withdrawal of the United States from the JCPOA and the inactions of the European parties."

He added, "Iran and the Iranian people have played their part in protecting the JCPOA and made the tough decision they had to make that year. Today is the time when the other side should know that it is present in the negotiations in the position of the culprit, and it is the side that has made every effort to destroy the JCPOA."

Everyone knows that if there is a reason for distrust of the United States, it is the hypocritical and bullying behavior of the United States. What is being discussed

in Vienna is how to implement the JCPOA. We are not talking about its origin or its future. We are only talking about the implementation of the JCPOA and the return of the United States to the JCPOA."

He noted, "The JCPOA is still going on between Iran and the P4+1, and Iran's compensatory measures are defined as per the JCPOA to restore the chances of reviving the JCPOA and restore the balance that was upset by the withdrawal of the United States and the inaction of the United States."

He stated, "We think that all parties know both the logic and the solution. Let me not rush about the result, but I assure you that nothing will matter to us except the interests of the great people of Iran. If the United States returns to the full, effective and accurate implementation of the JCPOA, the Iranian people will stand by their signature, as they once showed, with full implementation of the JCPOA, that they fully comply with what they sign despite all differences over the nuclear issue inside Iran."

Responding to a question on whether a representative of the incoming Iranian government will join the talks if they continue, the spokesman said, "It basically does not matter in which time period and in which govern-

ment the agreement is reached. If this agreement is concluded now and decisions are made by all parties, we will not delay even one hour of work. It is important to ensure the best interests of Iran and the Iranian people through these talks, and we will announce it whenever this happens."

He added, "The decision on this issue is not up to this government and that government. The mechanism is set at the highest levels and pursued at the highest levels, and governments are part of the decision-making process."

Diplomats from Iran and the U.S. as well as Europe are preparing for a potentially decisive round of talks this week in Vienna that is expected to result in a consensus to revive the JCPOA. Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araqchi, who leads the Iranian negotiating team in Vienna, said on Sunday that the Vienna talks have almost reached their end and that the time has come for the negotiating parties to make decisions.

Speaking after a briefing session with lawmakers, Araqchi said, "So far, six rounds of talks have been held with the P4+1, and we are almost close to the final stages. There is a series of issues that have been sufficiently negotiated and it is time for the countries to decide."

U.S. destabilizes region by attacking Iraqi, Syrian groups, Iran says

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** – Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman has reacted to U.S. attacks against Resistance groups in Iraq and Syria, calling the attacks a step in the wrong direction.

Speaking at his weekly press briefing on Monday, Saeed Khatibzadeh said, "The U.S. still continues along the wrong road in the region."

The U.S. Department of Defense announced airstrikes on the positions of Iraqi and Syrian groups in the border areas of Iraq and Syria. The Pentagon said in an official statement that its fighter jets had targeted two weapons depots and military installations in Syria and a position in Iraq.

"Specifically, the U.S. strikes targeted operational and weapons storage facilities at two locations in Syria and one location in Iraq, both of which lie close to the border between those countries," the Pentagon statement said, claiming that the facilities have been used by Kata'ib Hezbollah (KH) and Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada (KSS).

The Pentagon also said that the airstrikes were carried out at the U.S. president's direction and were in line with the U.S. "right to self-defense." The Pentagon also justified its move by saying that the groups targeted were "Iran-backed militia groups," which "are engaged in unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) attacks against U.S. personnel and facilities in Iraq."

Khatibzadeh said the U.S. air raids are yet another indication that the Biden administration is following in the Trump administration's footsteps in terms of pursuing hostile acts against Iran whether by using sanctions or regional airstrikes.

"Unfortunately, not only in the field of imposing oppressive sanctions against the Iranian nation, but also in the field of

regional behavior, we see the continuation of the failed U.S. policy and legacy in the region," Khatibzadeh lamented.

'Sentimental behaviors'

He described the U.S. move as "sentimental," calling on Washington to let the region's people determine their destiny away from foreign interference.

"The advice to the new administration in the United States is to change its course instead of these sentimental behaviors and instead of creating crises and living in tension and creating problems for the people of the region, it should let the people of this region decide their own destiny without their intervention," Khatibzadeh continued.

"What the United States is doing is disrupting regional security, and one of the victims of this disrupted regional security will be the United States itself in the region," the spokesman pointed out.

Syrian state news SANA reported early Monday that the border area with Iraq in the far eastern countryside of Deir Ezzor was subjected to an aerial attack by warplanes after midnight, which caused the martyrdom of a child and the injury of 3 civilians.

SANA's reporter in Deir Ezzor, quoting local sources, stated that warplanes believed to be American attacked with missiles at around 01:00 a.m. on residential houses near the Syrian-Iraqi borders in the countryside of al-Bokmal on Monday.

The border area with Iraq in the eastern region has been subjected in previous times to more than one attack by the American occupation air force, which works to undermine the efforts of the Syrian state and its allies to enhance security and stability in the eastern region and to eliminate the remnants of Daesh (ISIS) terrorists and

to prevent their infiltration between Iraq and Syria, SANA added.

Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada issued a statement confirmed that its positions were targeted by the U.S., noting that the American strikes martyred a number of fighters. "At 2:00 in the morning of Monday, on June 28, 2021, the United States of America carried out an airstrike targeting the headquarters of the Popular Mobilization Forces, the 14th Brigade stationed on the Iraqi-Syrian border, as part of the sacred national duty," the Iraqi group said in a statement.

Al-Jazeera quoted Iraqi security sources as saying that there were four attacks in the al-Hurra area in Bokmal, Syria, near Iraq's Anbar province, followed by explosions that may have been caused by explosions of weapons storages. The network quoted sources close to the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces as saying that at least four members of Kata'ib Hezbollah and Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada, as well as members of the PMF, had been martyred in the attacks. The Qatari news television also quoted the Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada as saying that the forces had announced that they would henceforth enter into a "relentless war with the American occupiers" and threatened to target U.S. aircraft in Iraqi airspace.

In response to Monday's attack by U.S. fighter jets on the PMF positions, Iraqi resistance groups issued a joint statement declaring that they would not remain silent in the face of U.S. troops in Iraq and would take revenge.

"We have said before that we will not remain silent in the face of the continued presence of the American occupying forces, which is against the constitution, the decision of the parliament and the will of

the Iraqi people," the joint statement said, according to Fars News.

The statement went on to say that the American occupying forces are continuing their crimes by attacking the PMF forces. The Iraqi resistance groups also vowed to take revenge for the fallen soldiers.

The al-Fatah faction, a parliamentary bloc close to the PMF, issued a statement leveling trenchant criticism against the U.S. for targeting the PMF positions.

"The targeting of the PMF affiliates confirmed the futility of the U.S. presence in Iraq. The Iraqi government must immediately and without delay must act to expel the foreign troops from the country, especially the Americans," the faction's statement said.

The statement went on to say that the United States seeks to maintain chaos and conflict in Iraq with these aggressions. Therefore, the Commander-in-Chief of the Iraqi Armed Forces should order an investigation into the targeting of the PMF positions, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should condemn this aggression, it added.

Social media users in Iraq also called for the condemnation of the U.S. move. A spokesman for the Iraqi Armed Forces Command responded by condemning the US airstrikes on the Iraqi-Syrian border and calling on everyone to calm down and avoid escalating tensions. General Yahya Rasoul said that "This U.S. airstrike is a clear violation of Iraqi sovereignty and is rejected."

He called on everyone to calm down and avoid any escalation of tensions in any way, and said that Iraq will conduct investigations, take measures and establish the necessary contacts at all levels to prevent the recurrence of such incidents.

SPORTS

Dragan Skocic the best possible choice for Iran: Masoud Moeini

→1 "In Round 3, the opponents are much stronger than the previous ones, and they will invest for their preparation. Therefore, it needs particular planning in terms of technical and mental preparation. Now that the FFIRI has decided to cooperate with Scocic again, it should support him with the best facilities that the national team need," he concluded.

Skocic to lead Iran at World Cup qualifiers Round 3

SPORTS **TEHRAN** - The Football Federation of the Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) announced that Dragan Skocic will remain as Iran coach in the 2022 World Cup qualifiers Round 3.



The Croat led Iran in the Round 2, where the 'Persian Leopards' earned four successive wins over Hong Kong, Bahrain, Cambodia and Iraq in Group C.

FFIRI president Shahabeddin Azizi Khadem said that the federation reached an agreement with Skocic to cooperate with him until the end of the 2022 World Cup qualifiers Round 3.

The media reports had already suggested that the football federation would make decision about the coach after the draw for the next round of World Cup qualifying, scheduled for July 1.

Skocic was appointed as Iran coach on February 2020 and under his leadership Iran have won seven matches in a row.

Former Iran coaches Branko Ivankovic and Carlos Queiroz were rumored to be in consideration for coaching job in Iran national team.

IPL: Sepahan football team held by Foolad

SPORTS **TEHRAN** – Sepahan football team missed the chance to move top of Iran Professional League (IPL) after the team were held by Foolad Sunday night.

In the match held in Ahvaz's Foolad Arena, two teams created several opportunities but they shared the spoils in a goalless draw.

Sepahan could move top of the table with an away win but remained in second place, two points behind Persepolis.

Furthermore, Paykan drew 1-1 with Naft Masjed Soleyman in Tehran.

Sirvan Ghorbani gave the visiting team a lead in the 86th minute and Reza Jabireh leveled the score in the dying moments of the match.

Hassan Taftian takes silver at True Athletic Classic

SPORTS **TEHRAN** – Iranian sprinter Hassan Taftian seized a silver medal in the 100 meters event of the 2021 True Athletic Classic.

In the competitions, held at the Stadion Manfort in Leverkusen, Germany, Taftian finished in second place with a time of 10.24 seconds.

Ivorian Arthur Cisse won the gold with 10.19 and Ghanaian sprinter Sean Safo-Antwi seized bronze with 10.26.

Taftian is preparing for the 2020 Olympic Games.

Firouz Karimi takes charge of Tractor football team

SPORTS **TEHRAN** – Long-serving Iranian coach Firouz Karimi was named as new Tractor coach until the end of the season.

Karimi replaced Rasoul Khatibi in the Tabriz based football club following the team's poor results in the Iran Professional League.

The 65-year-old coach had been named as Tractor's technical advisor in May.

With six weeks left, Karimi will head Tractor in the league, where the team are going to book a spot in the 2022 ACL.

He will also head Tractor in the match against Al Nassr of Saudi Arabia, scheduled for Sept. 14 in the 2021 AFC Champions League Round of 16.

Brazil claim title:2021 VNL

SPORTS **TEHRAN** – Brazil defeated Poland 3-1 (22-25, 25-23, 25-16, 25-14) to win 2021 FIVB Men's Volleyball Nations League.

A brilliant scoring performance by Wallace de Souza, who bagged 22 points in this match, helped Brazil to claim the title and the convincing win boosts the confidence of the South Americans who next head out to defend their Olympic title in Tokyo.

Earlier in the day, France overpowered Slovenia 3-0 (25-20, 25-18, 25-19) in the bronze-medal match.

Iran finished in 12th place in the competition.

Team Standing:

1. Brazil, 2. Poland, 3. France, 4. Slovenia, 5. Russia, 6. Serbia, 7. USA, 8. Canada, 9. Argentina, 10. Italy, 11. Japan, 12. Iran, 13. Germany, 14. Netherlands, 15. Bulgaria, 16. Australia

TEDPIX increases 5,000 points on Monday

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), rose 5,261 points to 1.243 million on Monday.

Over 8.545 billion securities worth 62.45 trillion rials (about \$1.486 billion) were traded at the TSE on Monday.



The first market's index rose 4,779 points, and the second market's index gained 7,460 points.

TEDPIX rose 66,000 points in the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday).

The index returned to the uptrend after a long period of fluctuation and continuation of the downward trend.

Renewables account for generating 8% of electricity in South Khorasan

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — About eight percent of Iran's western South Khorasan province's electricity comes from renewable sources, and there are currently 456 solar farms in the province that generate 23 megawatts (MW) of electricity, according to a provincial official.

Making the remarks in a Sunday press conference of water and electricity industry directors of South Khorasan, which was held on the occasion of water and electricity consumption saving week, Saeed Dadgar, the managing director of the province's Power Distribution Company, said that investing in wind and solar energy is a unique capacity in the province that can be used."

He said: "Due to the fact that many power plants in the country are dependent on water, the low rainfall last year and this spring has had an adverse effect on the water stored behind dams and electricity generation."

"Due to the decrease in rainfall and drop in the amount of water behind the dams this year, we have special conditions in the generation and distribution of electricity, and South Khorasan Power Distribution Company is a provincial company that must receive electricity from the province's entry points and distribute it throughout the province", he stated.

He said that the average rate of power outages in South Khorasan is lower than the country, adding, "Blackouts and power outages are not specific to South Khorasan and is a national program. However, the plan of each province and city will be informed in advance."

The capacity of Iran's renewable power plants currently exceeds 920 megawatts of which solar power plants with 452.75 MW have the biggest share.

Wind power plants with 317 MW of energy production stand in second place, followed by small hydropower plants with a generation of 105.65 MW.

Renewables, including hydropower, account for about seven percent of the country's total energy generation, versus natural gas' 90 percent share.

Overall, in the next four years, Iran is aiming for a 5,000 MW increase in renewable capacity to meet growing domestic demand and expand its presence in the regional electricity market.

According to Iran's Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization (known as SATBA), the number of small-scale solar power plants across the country which are used by households or small industries is increasing noticeably as Iranian households and small industries are embracing the new technology with open arms and investors also seem eager for more contribution in this area.

Iran is also planning on expanding its presence in the region's renewable energy market.

According to the Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian, the country has great potentials in the field of renewable energies and can have a significant role in developing the region's market for such energies.



"Relying on the high potential of renewable energy sources, including solar, wind, biomass, geothermal, etc., the Energy Ministry has planned good measures in order to implement new policies for creating positive changes in the development of the country's renewable energy sector," Ardakanian has said.

Back in December 2020, SATBA Head Mohammad Satakin said the capacity of the country's renewable power plants was going to reach 1,000 MW (one gigawatt) by the end of the current government's incumbency (August 2021).

With the early arrival of the hot season across Iran, once again the issue of electricity shortage and systematic power outages has come under the spotlight. These days Iranians are left in the dark for several hours each day based on a pre-planned outage program implemented by the Energy Ministry.

Considering the country's special conditions this year due to the coronavirus pandemic and the risks that the electricity outages could impose on Covid-19 patients, the Energy Ministry is facing a much bigger challenge compared to the previous years.

Furthermore, new deteriorating factors like severe drought and the decline in the country's water resources as well as a new wave of illegal cryptocurrency mining across the country have also worsened the situation this year. Iran's Power Generation, Distribution, and Transmission Company (known as Tavanir) has previously announced that the company is implementing over 40 different programs for managing the situation and to prevent blackouts in the country, however, so far these programs do not seem to be working as expected.

Iran ranked world's 10th largest steelmaker in Jan.-May 2021: WSA

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Also, the production of world's major steel producers reached 174.4 million tons in the said month, with a 16.5 percent increase over the same period last year.

Producing 473.1 million and 48.6 million tons of the product, China and India stood at the first and second places in the said period, respectively, while Japan stood at third place producing 40 million tons of crude steel.

The U.S., Russia, South Korea, Germany, Turkey, and Brazil took fourth to

ninth places, respectively.

The Iranian Steel industry has been constantly developing over the past years against all the pressures and obstacles created by outside forces like the U.S. sanctions and the coronavirus outbreak that has severely affected the performance of the world's top producers.

The country is expected to climb to seventh place among the world's top steel producers by the Iranian calendar year 1404 (March 2025).



According to the former Acting Minister of Industry, Mining, and Trade Hossein Modares Khiabani, the production capacity of the country's steel chain increased from

123 million tons in the Iranian calendar year 1392 (ended in March 2014) to 230 million tons in the previous year (ended on March 20).

Petchem industry to add 22 new products to output basket

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — National Petrochemical Company (NPC)'s Director of Planning and Development Hassan Abbaszadeh has said the implementation of 33 new pioneering projects is going to add 22 new products to the country's petrochemical products basket.

Speaking in a press conference on Monday, Abbaszadeh said: "The petrochemical industry is the most important link in the oil industry's value chain that prevents crude sales, completes the chain, and creates value from hydrocarbon resources."

According to the official, there are currently 67 active petrochemical complexes in the country, of which three are utility plants.

"Last year, these complexes received about 40 million tons (equivalent to 992,000 barrels of crude oil per day) of feed from the upstream sector from which about 35 million tons of final product was produced," he said.

He further noted that 25 million tons of the mentioned products were exported and about 10 million tons were



supplied domestically.

The official pointed out that 48 development projects are being implemented under the framework of the second and third leaps of the petrochemical industry,

noting that these projects will increase the industry's capacity by 45 million tons and require \$30 billion of investment to be completed.

"So far \$8 billion has been spent on the mentioned projects, and the rest will be supplied in the coming years," he added.

The NPC planning and development director further stated that 11 projects have remained for the second leap of the petrochemical industry to be realized, and with the completion of these projects the capacity of this industry will increase by 10 million to reach 100 million tons.

According to Abbaszadeh, the third leap of the petrochemical industry includes 38 projects which will be completed by the Iranian calendar year 1404 (March 2026).

The petrochemical industry plays a crucial role in Iran's non-oil economy, as the petrochemical export is the second-largest source of revenue for the country after crude oil. Petrochemical exports already constitute nearly 33 percent of the country's non-oil exports.

Iran-China 5-month trade stands at \$5.5b

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The value of trade between Iran and China reached \$5.5 billion in the first five months of 2021, registering a 14-percent decline compared to the figure for the previous year's same period.

According to the data released by the Chinese customs administration, the trade between the two countries stood at 6.4 billion in the first five months of 2020, Tasnim news agency reported.

Iranian exports to China reached \$2.5 billion in the said period, seven percent less than the figure for the same time span in 2020. Iran had exported \$2.7 billion of commodities to China in January-May 2020. Crude oil accounted for the biggest share



of Iranian exports to China in 2020, according to the customs data.

The imports from the Asian country stood at \$3 billion in the mentioned five months, 19 percent less than the \$3.7-billion in the

previous year's same five months.

Iran's trade balance with China was \$500 million negative in the said five months.

The value of Iran-China non-oil trade stood at \$18.715 billion in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20), according to the spokesman of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA).

Ruhollah Latifi put the weight of bilateral trade at 30.128 million tons and said that China was Iran's first non-oil trade partner in the past year.

Iran's export to China was 26.585 million tons worth \$8.954 billion, and its imports from that country were 3.543 million tons valued at \$9.761 billion in the previous year, the official announced.

Pistachios, nuts and spices, mineral and industrial raw materials, construction materials, methanol, polyethylene, carpets, glassware, iron ingots, iron products, dates, grapes, and fruits, along with petroleum products were Iran's main exported items to China, Latifi stated.

He mentioned machinery and industrial raw materials, medical equipment, cereals, yeasts, paper, wood and boards, fabrics and yarns, auto parts, all kinds of wires, sports equipment, data processing machines, glasses, and all kinds of yeasts and seeds as Iran's major imported items from China.

Iran and China officially signed a document for 25-year comprehensive cooperation in late March.

Quarterly tax revenues up 70% yr/yr

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran has managed to collect 590 trillion rials (about \$14 billion) of tax revenues during the first three months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-June 21), registering a 70 percent rise compared to the previous year's same period, an official with the Iranian National Tax Administration said.

According to Mohammad Masihi, Iran's national budget bill for the current Iranian calendar year has predicted a tax income of 2.7 quadrillion rials (about \$64.2 billion), which indicates that so far 25 percent of the country's annual tax income plan has been realized.

As INSA reported, the share of direct taxes and value-added tax in the total tax revenues collected in the mentioned quarter were 330 trillion rials (about \$7.85 billion) and 260 trillion rials (over \$6.15 billion), respectively.

The government collected 1.92 quadrillion rials (about \$45.7 billion) of tax revenues during the past Iranian calendar year of 1399 (ended on March 20), showing that the country's annual tax income plan came true by 107 percent.



According to Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Farhad Dejpasand, tax revenues accounted for 84 percent of the total funding made in various sectors in the previous year.

Over 100 trillion rials (about \$2.38 billion) of deferred taxes were also collected in the previous Iranian

calendar year, the official said.

According to the head of Iran's National Tax Administration (INTA) Omid-Ali Parsa, Iran's tax revenue increased 31 percent in the Iranian calendar year 1398 (ended on March 19, 2020).

Putting the country's tax income at 1.43 quadrillion rials (about \$34.04 billion) in the mentioned year, the official said, "We managed to collect 250 trillion rials (about \$5.9 billion) as value-added tax (VAT)".

"One of the most important achievements of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs in recent years has been the smartening of the tax system, the most important outcome of which has been the complete realization of the tax income plan," Parsa has said.

The country also managed to collect 1.09 quadrillion rials (about \$25.952 billion) of tax revenues during the Iranian calendar year of 1397 (ended on March 20, 2019), showing that the country's annual tax income plan came true by 97 percent.

The realization of tax income plans in recent years has taken place in the condition that the country is facing severe economic sanctions.

Housing price in Tehran city rises 3% in a month

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Average housing price rose three percent in Tehran City during the past Iranian calendar month of Khordad (ended on June 21), compared to its previous month, according to a report by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI).

The housing price in the capital city also experienced a 56.6-percent rise as compared to the same month in the past year.

The CBI report put the average price for one square meter of a residential unit at 296 million rials (about \$7,047) in the capital city in the mentioned month.

As reported, the number of real estate deals increased 29.6 percent in the past month from its preceding month.

The housing market in Tehran was the second-highest returning market in Iran among the country's four major markets in

the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20) with 85 percent annual growth.

The information obtained from Kilid website (which is a major platform for housing trades) indicated that the housing price index in Tehran grew by 85 percent in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20) compared to its preceding year.

The highest monthly price increase of 12.5 percent occurred in the Iranian calendar month of Mordad (July 22-August 21, 2020), while the biggest monthly price decrease occurred in Azar (November 21-December 20, 2020) with a decline of 8.1 percent.

Last month, the head of Iran's Property Advisers Union said housing prices in the country should decrease at least 25 percent in order for people to be able to afford to purchase.

Mostafa Gholi Khosravi noted that the closure of real estate agencies due to the coronavirus pandemic has caused some problems in this market, calling for the re-opening of the agencies in compliance with health protocols.

The official also stressed the need for establishing a market regulation headquarters for the housing sector to monitor the activities of dealers and real estate agencies in order to balance the prices.

Housing prices in Iran have been constantly rising over the past year due to various internal and external factors.

Coronavirus has been reported to be a major factor affecting the housing prices in Iran as the pandemic has stoked concerns about losing one's savings and more people entered the housing market.

"People are turning to the housing mar-



ket in order to protect their savings in the face of rising inflation. No one sees housing as a short-term consumer commodity. Even real consumers view purchasing a home as a long-term investment," Mehdi Soltan-Mohammadi, a housing expert, said.

Israel is intimidated by Raisi election: Lebanese expert

By Ali A. Jenabzadeh

TEHRAN — A senior Lebanese political analyst says that Ebrahim Raisi's firmness and decisiveness have frightened Israel and its Western allies.

"Raisi is a decisive man who is obeyed by all armed forces because of his reputation and knowledge as a person who represents the revolution," Amin Hoteit tells the Tehran Times.

"Therefore, Israel is concerned about the future and all its sabotage attempts that are intended to push the country towards chaos. Israel feels intimidated and won't dare to repeat aggression," Hoteit notes.

Following is the text of the interview: **What messages do the Iranian elections carry to the world and the region?**

Iran succeeded in organizing its presidential elections in a way that surprised the world. This election sent important messages to the world that can be summed up in three main messages.

The first message is that Iran adheres to a rational democracy in accordance with Islamic principles and respects the will of the people, and their role in all its history and circumstances.

The second message is that the Iranian people are committed to their revolution, especially since they found in the election a position that represents the causes of the revolution and its principles. In fact, it was a referendum on the political system, and thus heading to the polls means adherence to the principles of the revolution and the republic.

The third message is that the people and institutions in the state are all working together for the sake of achieving the goals, and they are harmonious and leave no room for external interference. At this point, the election's success was a decisive message that all acts of sabotage and distortion led by the United States of America failed to



achieve its goals. America mobilized 250 television stations and media outlets in order to distort and change reality, but they failed to reach this goal.

What changes do you expect from the new Iranian government?

We should mention that Iran is a state based on institutions, not persons. Institutions survive and maintain their functions and people activate the functions of institutions. As for the new policies that Iranian politicians and administrative officials may take, it will be on two sides: the first aspect is to speed up internal progress, and the second aspect is seriousness in dealing with foreign powers and decisiveness in foreign policy and important decisions.

Why does Western media insist on presenting an extremist image of the elected president, Ibrahim Raisi?

Ibrahim Raisi represents an honest and accurate model of the Islamic Revolution, as he contributed to the revolution. He joined the revolution since he was young and the revolution's principles are entrenched in

his mind.

Since the West fears this revolution and has encountered it since 1979, whoever was more adherent and more committed to the principles of this revolution will face Western rejection. The reason why the West feared the presidency of Ibrahim Raisi is because it embodies the reality of the Islamic Revolution in its depth and comprehensiveness.

Especially since the history of this person shows his decisiveness, firmness, strength and decision-making power. He is not a man of weak decisions or gray solutions. He is a man of decisiveness and clear decision.

How do you evaluate Israel's reaction to the election results? Do you expect an escalation between Iran and Israel?

The West in general, and Israel in particular, fear strong and good governance in Iran and the region. They look for weak, volatile and unstable governance.

Given their knowledge of the personality of Ibrahim Raisi, they see that all their maneuvers, operations, tricks, and decep-

tions in pushing Iran towards instability and chaos would fail.

Raisi is a decisive man that all armed forces will obey him because of his reputation and knowledge as a person who represents the revolution. Therefore, Israel is concerned about the future and all its sabotage attempts that are intended to push the country towards chaos. Israel feels intimidated and won't dare to repeat aggression.

The Zionists always fear decisiveness and firmness in decisions taken in accordance with the principles of the Islamic Republic.

What are the main challenges facing the new Iranian government in the region?

In my opinion, there are four main challenges facing Ibrahim Raisi. The first challenge is internal when the Iranian people need to preserve national unity and rally about the principles of the Islamic Revolution as a matter that constitutes a wealth for Iran that must be preserved. The second challenge is economic and confronting the economic war or economic terrorism practiced by America and its allies against the Iranian state. The third challenge is strategic, and it relates to Iran's position in the axis of resistance.

Iran enjoys a geopolitical position in the region, especially with the important changes that have been taking place now, including the failure of the global war that targeted the axis of resistance in Syria, the American decision to withdraw from Afghanistan and the Turkish engagement in Afghanistan, as well as the American decision to reduce its military presence in the Middle East (West Asia).

Add to it the war on Yemen, and there are many things that require serious and resolute action on the strategic level. But the fourth challenge is international relations, especially its look to the East, and the proper regulation of its relations with Russia and China.

Taliban accommodating all ethnic groups: analyst

➔ The U.S. withdrawal was due since long as the Taliban and the regional countries do not want the U.S. long presence in Afghanistan to be a threat to them. The repercussions of the withdrawal will depend on the U.S. role in the intra-Afghan talks where Washington needs to pressurize Kabul to make any compromise as the U.S. did in Doha deal with the Taliban last year. The Afghan government has no way but to make a compromise but they are just taking time and prolonging their rule to the maximum possible time. The recent Ghani administration visit and the report suggest Biden want Kabul to make a deal with the Taliban to end this conflict. However, if the U.S. does not pressurize Kabul and the U.S. either further prolongs its presence, it will provide for an intensified conflict for which the Taliban seems ready.

How do you assess Pakistan's stance towards the U.S. presence in Afghanistan?

Pakistan in post-September 11 period provided the U.S. with bases and another sort of support due to the changing international arena otherwise Pakistan did not want to withdraw its support to the Taliban. However, Pakistan had no choice but to support the U.S. in its war on terror. The current circumstances are quite different from that of 2001 where Pakistan's position is strong vis-à-vis the Afghan conflict while Washington is in a weak position. Similarly, Pakistan cannot afford enmity with the Taliban by providing bases to the U.S. The Taliban has strongly warned any neighboring country for providing bases to the U.S. for operations in Afghanistan. Imran Khan in an interview clearly said Pakistan will not provide bases to the U.S. If Washington further pressurizes Pakistan for the same, it could affect Pakistan's support in the Afghan peace process that is still going on. Washington knows it well that path to peace in Afghanistan goes through Pakistan.

Some Afghan groups, including Hazaras, are

preparing to confront the Taliban. Do you predict an exacerbation of clashes between Afghan groups?

There are reports for months various groups are arming their militias against the Taliban. However, that could not challenge the Taliban in a way that could create serious problems for the Taliban. Likewise, the Afghan government and NDS are arranging fake ceremonies where they gather people and weapons and show them as a surrender of the Taliban. They assume it will boost the morale of the Afghan forces yet it's not going to work. Taliban are accommodating all the ethnic groups in their organization as they have eyes on the upcoming administration in Kabul. Last year, the Taliban appointed a Shia Taliban commander in one of the districts that showed they are accommodating all the ethnic and religious groups.

How can Iran and Pakistan collaborate to establish peace in Afghanistan? Is there any possibility for a new peace initiative?

In the past, there was a divergence between Pakistan and Iran over Afghanistan due to Pakistan's support of the Taliban and Iran's support to the opposite groups. Since the Taliban killed a dozen of Iranian diplomats in Mazar Sharif in 1996, it created a huge trust deficit and divergence between the Taliban and Tehran. However, at the moment, there is close contact between the Taliban and Tehran which has abridged the Islamabad-Iran gap that was there due to the Taliban. Being neighbors, both Iran and Pakistan have to play a crucial role in Afghan peace.

Former Afghan President Hamid Karzai has harshly criticized U.S. war tactics in Afghanistan over the past twenty years. What is the Afghan people's view of the U.S. performance?

When Karzai became interim president, he wanted



the Taliban to be merged and accommodated in the new setup which was strongly opposed by the U.S. authorities. Karzai made many attempts and made it clear to the U.S. to negotiate with the Taliban yet Washington always dismissed the idea. There is mixed view of the U.S. role in the Afghan populace. However, many consider them invaders that's why the Taliban insurgency was supported by the masses, otherwise the Taliban insurgency would not succeed. What we see on Afghan mainstem media is only elites view sitting in Kabul who want the U.S. presence in Afghanistan while the ground reality is different. The U.S. did its best what it could do against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. Now it's time for them to get out of Afghanistan as soon as possible and provide an opportunity to the Afghans and facilitate them to agree on a settlement to resolve the Afghan quagmire.

Syria condemns Biden's position over Trump's Israel Golan recognition

Syria has strongly condemned statements by Washington and Tel Aviv affirming U.S. recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the occupied Golan Heights. The Syrian Foreign Ministry says the statements prove that U.S. measures against Syria are based on the interests of the Israeli regime.

The ministry noted Syria's sovereign right to the Golan through UN resolutions. Earlier, Washington rejected reports, circulating over the last few days, that it is planning to rescind then President Donald Trump's move of U.S. recognition towards Israeli sovereignty over the occupied Golan Heights.

Israel also dismissed the reports saying they are aimed at undermining its ties with the current U.S. administration. In March 2019, Trump signed an executive order officially recognizing Israeli sovereignty over the occupied Golan, which widely believed to have been an attempt at the time to boost then Israeli Prime Minister

Benjamin Netanyahu's popularity ahead of elections. Israel seized and annexed the region in 1981, a move that is not recognized internationally. The United Nations says its position on the Golan occupation has not changed. Syria says it will soon liberate the territory by any means possible.

U.S. carries out deadly airstrikes in Iraq and Syria

In a statement, the Pentagon claims American F-15 and F-16 warplanes struck "operational and weapons storage facilities at two locations in Syria and one location in Iraq."

Syria's state news agency, SANA, has reported that one child has been killed and at least three other civilians have sustained injuries on the outskirts of al-Bukamal in Syria's eastern Dayr al-Zor province next to the Iraqi border.

SANA says residential buildings had been damaged. The attack in Iraq is reported to have occurred in the country's Western Anbar province, along the Syrian border. It's not the first time American warplanes have struck this important border crossing region and the second time

President Joe Biden has authorized attacks against it since taking office. The Pentagon statement added that Kata'ib Hezbollah and Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada have been targeted in Iraq. Two battalions that are part of the Popular Mobilization Forces, the most efficient branch of the Iraqi armed forces that fought and liberated towns and cities from the Daesh terrorist group. In a statement, Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada has said that it mourns the martyrdom of four of its members in new American aggression. The statement added that it will avenge their deaths. The airstrikes come as bases where American troops are stationed and American logistical convoys have come

under constant attack by Iraqi resistance movements, demanding the withdrawal of U.S. forces from the country.

Since Washington assassinated Iranian Lieutenant General, Qassem Soleimani, and top Iraqi commander, Abu Mehdi al-Muhandis, in an act of terrorism at the direct orders of then-President Donald Trump, at Baghdad International Airport on January 3rd 2020, the Iraqi parliament passed a bill calling on the U.S. to withdraw its forces from the country. Following the legislation, a million-man march also took place in the Iraqi capital demanding the same. However, the U.S. has so far refused to end the occupation.

Yemen launches new massive retaliatory operation in Southern Saudi Arabia

➔ The spokesman added that the missiles and drones hit the designated targets with precision but no immediate details were available regarding possible casualties among Saudi military personnel. Yemen's armed forces are expected to expand their military attacks in the coming weeks and months to force Saudi Arabia to end the war on their country and lift the blockade. The operation comes as the country's forces have made significant advances in Marib, Saudi Arabia's last major stronghold in Yemen. Heavy clashes have resumed in the flashpoint city as peace talks between the UN and other world powers collapse in Oman.

Over the past two years, the Yemeni armed forces have strengthened their military capabilities and increased retaliatory attacks against Saudi Arabia in response to a deadly war waged by Riyadh on its southern Arab neighbor in March 2015. The almost daily Saudi bombardment has killed hundreds of thousands of Yemenis, many of them women and children. Riyadh backed by Washington has also imposed an all-out blockade on Yemen that has led to what the United Nations says is the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

New details of UK's arms sales to repressive regimes condemned

➔ In order to restore its economy, badly hit by the coronavirus, more arms deals are expected in the near future in what has become a lucrative but ugly market where profit is put ahead of lives and human rights. CAAT says "Wherever there is oppression and conflict there will always be arms companies trying to profit from it, and complicit governments helping them to do so, many of these sales are going to despots, dictatorships and human rights-abusing regimes. They haven't happened by accident. None of these arm's sales would have been possible without the direct support of Boris Johnson and his colleagues."

Iraqi resistance factions vow revenge after deadly U.S. airstrikes

Iraqi resistance forces have pledged revenge after the United States conducted deadly airstrikes on the Iraq-Syria border.

U.S. warplanes attacked three targets allegedly belonging to Iraqi resistance groups along the border between Iraq and Syria at around 6 pm Eastern Time Sunday in the early hours of Monday in the region.

According to Sabereen News, four Iraqi fighters were killed in the attack on the headquarters of the 14th Brigade of Popular Mobilization Forces, better known as Hashd al-Sha'abi.

In a statement issued on Monday, the Iraqi resistance factions pledged to "avenge the blood of our righteous martyrs and wreak vengeance on the perpetrators of this heinous crime". They also warned the U.S. against repeating its aggression.

Earlier in the day, Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada group, which operates under the command of Hashd al-Sha'abi, warned of severe retaliation.

"From now on, we will enter an open war with the American occupation. The first of which is targeting its hostile aircraft in the sky over our beloved Iraq," the group said.

According to Press TV, the group stressed that the US bases in Iraq are "within the range of our missiles and we would avenge the blood of our martyrs".

Ahmed al-Maksousi, the commander of the 14th Brigade of Hashd al-Sha'abi, has stressed that the brigade is "fully prepared" to respond to the U.S. airstrikes.

French far right beaten in key regional elections

France's far right has failed to win any region while the centrist ruling party of President Emmanuel Macron suffered another poll drubbing in the second round of regional elections again marked by a woeful turnout, according to exit polls.

Marine Le Pen's National Rally (RN) failed to realize its main ambition of winning the Provence-Alpes-Cote d'Azur (PACA) region that includes Marseille and Nice.

Victory there would have given the RN control of a region for the first time and was seen by the party as the best prospect for bringing credibility to Le Pen's claim that it was fit for power ahead of the 2022 presidential election.

An exit poll by IFOP showed the far right winning 44.2 percent of the runoff vote in PACA compared with 55.8 percent for the mainstream conservatives.

Resistance News

PGFTU warns against Israel's persistence in closing Gaza crossings

INTERNATIONAL DESK **TEHRAN** — The Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU) has warned that Israel's continued closure of the Gaza border crossings will lead to a major humanitarian catastrophe and force many factories to shrink or shut down their activities and lay off thousands of workers.

In press remarks, PGFTU head Sami al-Amsi said that the closure of crossings for the 46th consecutive day prevented shipments of raw materials needed by the industrial sector from entering Gaza and thus forced hundreds of factories to operate partially or irregularly.

Such situation has affected the income of thousands of workers and worsened the living conditions of their families, Amsi added, pointing out that there are about 21,000 people working in 15,000 affected factories in Gaza after 500 closed due to the siege and wars.

He explained that such closure led factories to run out of many items and raw materials and caused a considerable shortage of basic goods that Gaza citizens need and use on a daily basis.

The official also denounced the Israeli occupation authority for imposing "prohibitive conditions" on Gaza farmers in order to allow them to export some of their agricultural products, affirming that such measure made the agricultural sector incur losses of around \$16 million.

Historical properties in southeast Iran made national heritage

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** – A total of nine historical sites and aging structures in Sistan-Baluchestan province have recently been inscribed on the national heritage list.

The Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts on Monday announced the inscriptions in an official document it submitted to the governor-general of the south-eastern province, IRNA reported.



Gurkatan and Mil petroglyphs, remnants of Kheyraab castle, Docheshmeh Bridge, and Lut Zangi Ahmad Caravanserai are among the properties registered on the list.

The collective province -- Sistan in the north and Baluchestan in the south -- accounts for one of the driest regions of Iran with a slight increase in rainfall from east to west, and an obvious rise in humidity in the coastal regions. In ancient times, the region was a crossword of the Indus Valley and the Babylonian civilizations.

The province possesses special significance because of being located in a strategic and transit location, especially Chabahar which is the only ocean port in Iran and the best and easiest access route of the middle Asian countries to free waters. The vast province is home to several distinctive archaeological sites and natural attractions, including two UNESCO World Heritage sites, namely Shahr-e-Soukhteh (Burnt City) and Lut desert.

Hotels under construction in Kordestan

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** – A total of 13 tourism-related structures including three hotels are currently under construction in Sanandaj, the capital of Kordestan province.



A budget of 1.2 trillion rials (\$28.5 million at the official exchange rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) has been allocated to the projects, Sanandaj's tourism chief has announced.

The projects, which constitute three four or five-star hotels, are expected to generate 450 job opportunities when completed, Khodadad Moludi said on Monday.

The name Kordestan refers to the region's principal inhabitants. After the Turkish invasion of Iran in the 11th century CE (Seljuq period), the name Kurdistan was applied to the region comprising the northwestern Zagros Mountains. It was during the reign of Abbas I the Great of Iran's Safavid dynasty (1501–1736) that the Kurds rose to prominence, having been enlisted by Abbas I to help stem the attacks of the marauding Uzbeks from the east in the early 17th century.

Illegal diggers arrested in central Iran

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** – Iranian police have arrested two illegal excavators in Mahalat county of Markazi province.

The police detained the culprits in a quick and surprising action while they were digging into a private house in search of antiquities, Mahalat tourism chief said on Monday.



The diggers were surrendered to the judicial system for further investigation, Mehdi La'ibar added.

Markazi province is rich in natural, historical, cultural, and religious attractions. Hand-woven carpets and kilims, made in its cities including Farahan, Sarugh, Lilivan, Senejan, and Vafs are known internationally.

Explore Na'in old mosque as remarkable feat of architecture

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — The oasis town's Friday Mosque is the highlight of a visit to Na'in. Constructed between the 10th and 11th centuries, it was one of the first mosques built in Iran and is unusual in that it does not conform to the usual four-iwan plan of its time.

The exterior facade and minaret are austere beautiful and many parts of the interior (including the mihrab) are decorated with finely detailed stucco work.

The courtyard is decorated with 14 columns, each of which displays a different brickwork pattern. Further interesting features include the exquisitely carved wooden minbar, which an inscription identifies as being 700 years old, and an underground prayer hall, designed to keep the faithful cool in summer and warm in winter.

There is also an underground prayer hall, designed to keep the faithful cool in summer and warm in winter. Alabaster casements have been set in the ceiling of this dug-out basement, which allows natural light to come through. A qanat below the mosque supplies water to the



Grab a slice of Iranian traditions at Gilan Rural Heritage Museum

→1 If you want to know almost everything about the life of the people of Gilan, be sure to visit the Gilan Rural Heritage Museum. In this museum, you will get acquainted with the life of the Gilak family in all parts of the province and face experiences such as traditional ceremonies, authentic local clothing, food, handicraft souvenirs, and musical instruments of these people. But even if you are not interested in this kind of experience, the green and clean environment of this rural complex will be a beautiful and unique experience for you.

According to Visit Iran, the feasible studies and fieldwork for establishing a rural museum were started in 2002. Including the projects of determining the location and recognizing Gilan cultural fields.

These fields can be divided into nine parts, according to the findings of these studies, based on the cultural and architectural diversity of the



province and regardless of the country divisions. These fields include two main branches of the east and west each one with four coastal, plain, submontane, and mountainous subcategories.

Gilan was within the sphere of influence of the successive Achaemenian, Seleucid, Parthian, and Sasanian empires that ruled Iran until the 7th century CE. The subsequent Arab conquest of Iran led to the rise of many local dynasties, and Gilan acquired an independent status that continued until 1567.

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

Ferdowsi Mausoleum, Naderi Garden reopen as coronavirus restrictions relax

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** – Visitors are once again welcome to visit Ferdowsi Mausoleum and Naderi Garden in Khorasan Razavi as the northeastern province relaxes restrictions imposed to curb the spread of COVID-19, a local tourism official announced on Monday.

"There are still health protocols associated with the virus that visitors should observe," Amir Ziaieian added, IRNA reported.

For activities of museums and historical locations indoors across the province, an opinion will be announced after the completion of a field visit and a review of the conditions of these places in terms of health protocols, the official added.

The garden-mausoleum of illustrious



Persian poet Ferdowsi is located in Tus, near the provincial capital of Mashhad, which is one of the top tourist attractions of the country. Tus has been the birthplace of some important cultural and scientific

Iranian figures in the past centuries.

Many Iranians regard Ferdowsi as the greatest of their poets. Down through the centuries they have continued to read and to listen to recitations from his masterwork, the Shahnameh.

Tus and its historical gates, citadel, and ramparts were registered on the National Heritage list in 1996.

Located in downtown Mashhad, Naderi Garden is of high importance for embracing the tomb of Nader Shah Afshar, one of the few post-Islamic Iranian kings who accomplished Iran's independence and solidarity.

The tomb was designed and built by Iranian prominent architect, sculptor, and painter Hooshang Seyhoun. A 6.5-meter bronze sculpture of Nader Shah mounted

on a horse with three soldiers standing next to the horse was created in Rome, Italy. The sculpture was then transported to Mashhad and placed on its pedestal. The sculpture was designed by Abolhasan Seddiqi and bronzed at Berotti Factory in Italy.

The capital city of Mashhad is home to the holy shrine of Imam Reza (AS), the eighth Shia Imam, which attracts thousands of pilgrims from various Iranian cities, neighboring countries, and even across the globe.

Dozens of five-star hotels and hostels are dotted around the holy shrine. The metropolis has the highest concentration of water parks in the country, and it also embraces a variety of cultural and historical sites that are generally crowded.

Archaeologists to probe once-prosperous hill in northeast Iran

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** – A team of Iranian archaeologists is to probe into Masumzadeh hill, which is situated near Bojnurd, the capital of North Khorasan province.

It would be the second season of archaeology aimed at completing studies on Masumzadeh hill and its surroundings, provincial tourism chief Ali Mostofian said on Monday.

The project also aims to determine the chronology of the hill as well as to analyze its formation, expansion, natural and historical aspects, and its relationship to the modern-day city of Bojnurd, the official added.

Based on previous findings, it seems that this urban settlement had been very prosperous, especially during the Seljuk-era (1037–1194), he noted.



Moreover, he expressed the hope that preservation and protection of the historic site would be ensured

Iranian handicrafts: Firuzehkubi

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — One of the most popular handicrafts of Iran, which is both decorative and applicable, is 'Firuzehkubi' or turquoise inlaying.

To practice the craft, tiny pieces of turquoise are being inlaid, like mosaics, on a surface such as tools or utensils made of copper, silver, brass, or bronze.

Firuzehkubi is a rather new handicraft, beginning some seventy years ago. It was invented for the first time by the Iranian craftsman Yusef Hakimian to decorate pieces of jewelry like earrings, bracelets, brooches, etc.

Today Firuzehkubi is one of the most celebrated souvenirs of Isfahan. The

Firuzeh or turquoise gems that are used in this craft are supplied by the stone workshops and stone grinds that cannot be used for other purposes.

To embellish an abject by the means of Firuzehkubi, the surrounding of the parts where turquoise is to be inlaid will be soldered and divided by a thin wire with a height of about two to three millimeters. If there are motifs and designs to be applied in the intended area, they are also drawn and soldered by the same wire. This process not only adds to the beauty of the product but also improves its durability and resistance. Then, after being washed, large or small pieces of turquoise are picked, according to

Visit Iran.

The main object is heated to 30 degrees of centigrade. While heating a special kind of gum powder called "Gerdooyi" or "Walnut varnish" that acts as a glue, is poured upon the object so that it melts.

The turquoise pieces are then laid on the surface. This is the most important part of the process. If the base is a round object, the laying step is repeated. To fill the empty spaces between the inlaid pieces, the base is heated once more to forty degrees of centigrade, the gum powder is poured and the spaces are filled with smaller pieces of turquoise.

The remaining gaps that cannot be filled with stones are filled with a blue



mortar. In the next step, the surface is sanded. Finally, the product is polished and obtains a shiny and smooth surface. The more elaborate a Firuzehkubi work, the more valuable it is.

Netherlands praises Iran's efforts to combat narcotics

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** – The Netherlands has lauded Iran for its activities to deal with the trafficking of narcotics, expressing readiness to share knowledge and expertise with Iran in this regard.

Max Daniel, the drugs portfolio holder of the Dutch police force, held an online meeting on Sunday with the Iranian anti-narcotics police chief Majid Karimi, discussing challenges facing the battle against the drug trade.

The Iranian police official, for his part, presented a report on activities to seize narcotics and restrict the transit of narcotics, calling on the Netherlands to help disband smugglers.

Iranian anti-narcotics police discovered 1,200 tons of various drugs during the past [Iranian calendar] year (March 2020-March 2021), which is two-folded compared to the recent years, Eskandar Momeni, the director



of headquarters for the fight against narcotics, said on Saturday.

Iran is the leading country in the fight against narcotics worldwide; despite its proximity to Afghanistan, which is the largest producer of narcotics, he explained, IRIB reported on Saturday.

The country has also carried on a battle against narcotics in spite of being highly affected by cruel sanctions and the COVID-19 pandemic, he added.

"Last year, more than 1,200 tons of various drugs were confiscated, which shows a decrease in drug trafficking and transit to Europe," he highlighted.

According to the UN Office, the Islamic Republic's continuous efforts to combat narcotics trafficking came up with the seizure of more than 90 percent of opium, 70 percent of morphine, and 20 percent of world heroin.

Iranian National Observatory inaugurated

➔ **1** The M1 is supported by 60 actuators that are actively or passively controlled to keep the mirror shape undistorted under its own gravity at different points.

INO is a national project and has been envisioned to become an international scientific platform for astronomy in the future. Therefore, educating the general public and especially the younger generation about the basics of astronomy is another important step ahead of the INO project.

An important focus of these activities is the residents close to the area around the INO site whose lifestyles can directly affect the workflow of the INO observatory. So far, about 1,400 students from 22 schools in towns and villages close to the Gargash site have been educated about the basics of astronomy and the effects of light pollution on the INO observatory. Furthermore, the project is using social media to engage the general public with the project.



'Farmers unaware of ozone's impact on crop loss'

Tropospheric and surface ozone pollution pose significant threats to global crop production and food security, but farmers are largely unaware of its impact on agriculture and damage to ecosystems, say scientists.

According to scientists, ozone, as an air pollutant, is highly oxidising and damages plant tissues. But because it is an invisible, odourless gas that often co-occurs with other stresses, such as heat stress, farmers do not directly experience it.

Baerbel Sinha, head of the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences at the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, in Mohali, India, says: "If one wants to look at where ozone is possibly disturbing the economics on a large scale, and where one may also be able to educate farmers better, it would be the legumes — soybean, chickpeas and beans in general are very ozone sensitive, their prices are not regulated and they display visible ozone damage on the leaf."

Monitoring stations in agricultural areas can help farmers get a better understanding of ozone concentrations and raise knowledge and awareness of the issue, besides providing useful data for the science, say Sinha and other scientists who presented at a session on 'Air Pollution and Sustainable and Resilient Food Production' at the 2021 Sustainability Research and Innovation Congress (12-15 June) held in Brisbane, Australia.

Amos Tai, associate professor of the Earth System Science Programme at the Chinese University of Hong Kong says that where there is no ozone pollution, current crop production can be two to 18 per cent higher. "In our study, we have found that about 10 to 50 per cent of the observed crop sensitivities to excess heat can arise from the higher ozone that actually comes with higher temperature."

A 2018 landmark study showed on a



global scale how the spatial variation and severity of tropospheric ozone effects on yield compare with effects of other stresses such as heat and water stress, pests and diseases, rising CO₂ and, to a lesser extent, aridity and nutrient stress.

Their modelling showed that the highest ozone-induced production losses for wheat are in India and China; for rice in parts of India, Bangladesh, China and Indonesia; for maize in China and the US; and for soybean in North and South America.

"At present ozone levels in the Indo-Gangetic Plain are sensitive to both nitrogen oxides (NO_x) and volatile organic compounds (VOC) emissions, which fuel ozone production leading to high levels of ozone pollution," warns Sinha. "Since the emissions of these pollutants look set to continue into the foreseeable future, we have to prepare for higher losses in the future."

Adaptation options may play an important role in enhancing food supply while mitigation strategies are being implemented.

"Encouraging farmers to create windbreaks may actually protect crops not only against a bad storm, but also heat and ozone," adds Sinha, "Wheat residue burning raises ozone levels over the Indo Gangetic Plains by 20 ppb (parts per billion). Farmers are burning it next to their own sugarcane and summer vegetable fields and damaging their own crops."

EU Climate Law: MEPs confirm deal on climate neutrality by 2050

Parliament endorsed the Climate Law, agreed informally with member states in April, with 442 votes to 203 and 51 abstentions. It transforms the European Green Deal's political commitment to EU climate neutrality by 2050 into a binding obligation. It gives European citizens and businesses the legal certainty and predictability they need to plan for this transition. After 2050, the EU will aim for negative emissions.

Stepping up ambition in 2030

The new EU Climate Law increases the EU's target for reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2030 from 40% to at least 55%, compared to 1990 levels. Additionally, an upcoming proposal from the Commission on the LULUCF Regulation to regulate GHG emissions and removals from land use, land use change and forestry, will increase EU carbon sinks and will hence de facto increase the 2030 EU's target to 57%.

Greenhouse gas budget must guide upcoming 2040 target

The Commission will make a proposal for a 2040 target at the latest six months after the first global review in 2023 foreseen in the Paris Agreement. In line with Parliament's proposal, the Commission will publish the maximum amount of GHG emissions estimated the EU can emit until 2050 without endangering the EU's commitments under the Agreement. This so-called 'GHG budget' will be one of the criteria to define the EU's revised 2040 target.

By 30 September 2023, and every five years thereafter, the Commission will assess the collective progress made by all EU countries, as well as the consistency of national measures, towards the EU's goal of becoming climate neutral by 2050.

European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change

Given the importance of independent



scientific advice, and on the basis of a proposal from Parliament, a European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change will be set-up to monitor progress and to assess whether European policy is consistent with these objectives.

Parliament rapporteur Jytte Guteland (S&D, Sweden) said: "I am proud that we finally have a climate law. We confirmed a net emissions reductions target of at least 55%, closer to 57% by 2030 according to our agreement with the Commission. I would have preferred to go even further, but this is a good deal based on science that will make a big difference. The EU must now reduce emissions more in the next decade than it has in the previous three decades combined, and we have new and more ambitious targets that can inspire more countries to step up."

Next steps

The deal is expected to be approved by the Council shortly. The Regulation will then be published in the Official Journal and enter into force 20 days later. The Commission plans to present a series of proposals on 14 July 2021 in order for the EU to be able to reach the more ambitious 2030-target.

Parliament has played an important role in pushing for more ambitious EU climate legislation and declared a climate emergency on 28 November 2019.

COVID-19 UPDATES

The statistics are related to 24 hours started 2:00 p.m. June 27

New cases	12,351
New deaths	140
Total cases	3,180,092
Total deaths	83,985
New hospitalized patients	1,417
Patients in critical condition	3,185
Total recovered patients	2,848,042
Diagnostic tests conducted	23,421,222
Doses of vaccine injected	5,804,286

Forests and forestry in Iran

(Part 5)

It was not until the post-World War II period that the intricate balance and interdependence of land-use and land cover were destroyed by the expansion of agricultural land, firewood collection, and forest-pastoralism, producing the devastating effects summarized by Bobek (1968, pp. 281-82) as follows: "Two of the most devastating human activities have been fuel collecting and charcoal-making, vital though these may be in a country with low winter temperatures.

Together with extensive cutting of timber for building, these activities have not only greatly reduced the forest areas (which were restricted to begin with), but have also degraded the character of woodland. In addition, the steppes and even the desert areas have also been deprived of their woody component; other fundamental changes in the composition of the steppes have been affected by continual animal grazing. This had led ultimately to the disappearance of the perennial grasses and to their replacement by non-palatable weeds or spiny shrubs.

Finally, man's collection of edible herbs, bulbs, and roots for food and medical purposes is by no means negligible, and contributes to the same ultimate effects: that is, extreme impoverishment."

Essentially the same mechanisms, but condensed in terms of space and time, became instrumental in the destruction of the Caspian-Hyrcanian forests. Given its remoteness and inaccessibility, as well as its entirely different botanical composition and appearance and, finally, due to the problems created by the humid climate, the Caspian Forest belt remained more or less untouched until the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century.



The dense forest-cover in combination with a supposedly extremely unhealthy climate, with malaria being endemic, made many Persians regard the Caspian forests as the incarnation of a hostile nature. European travelers of the 19th and early 20th centuries describe the Caspian lowlands and even its urban centers as heavily forested and covered with jungle. The following is a typical description, "Of the present extent of population of Babol, it is hard to form any estimate. I never saw a place of which it was so difficult to acquire an idea from ocular observation. The whole town being built in and surrounded by a forest of high trees..., there is no one spot from whence a spectator can see to any distance..." (Fraser, pp. 83-84).

At the end of the 19th century, Curzon (Persian Question, p. 382) described Amol as follows: "The town is so overgrown with jungle and orchards as to be collectively invisible."

British silk merchants in the late 18th century, attracted by the prospects of developing large mulberry plantations (which never materialized), were the first to have an impact, even though a very limited one, on the thick and almost impenetrable Caspian forests.

More important was imperial Russia's interest in the Caspian forests in connection with the Russian advance into Central Asia and its steppe regions in the mid-19th century. Charcoal produced on the southern coast of the Caspian Sea became a major export, shipped across the Caspian Sea from Astarabad, Rudsar, Anzali, and Langard to Baku and other Russian ports.

The most decisive attack on the Caspian forests, however, came with the construction of all-weather-roads across the Alborz from 1920 onwards. The period from 1918 to 1950 can be regarded as the most decisive phase of uncoordinated deforestation. The rapid expansion of Tehran created huge demands for charcoal and timber for construction leading to rapid depletion of the easily accessible tracts of the Caspian Forest belt. Only in 1958 was the production of charcoal officially forbidden. The nationalization of all forests after 1960 was another major step in the preservation of the remaining forests.

(Source: Encyclopædia Iranica)



Without water, everything withers

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Medical waste disposal become possible using plasma technology in Iran

Using plasma gasification, Iranian researchers managed to dispose medical wastes and disassemble all its hazardous gases by filters, IRNA reported on Sunday.

Considering numerous problems encountered in medical and urban waste management in the country, we decided to employ high technology to overcome them, Mahmood Quran-Nevis, an official with Vice Presidency for Science and Technology has said.

He went on to add that currently, autoclaves are used as waste disposal facilities in hospitals; the temperature of the autoclave is 130 degrees and most of the bacteria are not killed and subsequently they can contribute to various environmental problems.

امحای زباله‌های بیمارستانی با کمک فناوری پلاسما

محققان کشورمان با بهره‌گیری از فناوری پلاسما موفق شدند ضمن امحای تمام زباله‌ها، گازهای خطرناک آن را توسط فیلتری جداسازی کنند.

محمود قرآن‌نویس مجری طرح امحای زباله‌های بیمارستانی به روش پلاسما گفت: با توجه به مشکلات زیادی که در حوزه زباله‌های بیمارستانی و شهری در کشور وجود داشت، به این نتیجه رسیدیم که باید این مشکل را از طریق فناوری «های تک» حل کنیم.

وی افزود: در حال حاضر در بیمارستان‌ها برای امحای زباله از اتوکلاوها استفاده می‌شود که دمای حرارت این اتوکلاوها ۱۳۰ درجه بوده و بیشتر باکتری‌ها در این دما از بین نمی‌روند و مشکلات زیست محیطی زیادی را به وجود می‌آورند.

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

» Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 88808214 — 88808895
info@tehrantimes.com
» Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000
» Advertisements Dept.: Telefax: (+98 21) 43051430
» Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 88805807
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GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

When you get ill do not get nervous about it and try as much as possible to be hopeful.

Imam Ali (AS)

History of art in Iran during Safavid to Qajar Periods

Part 7

According to contemporary accounts, Sadeqi was a difficult individual. He was dismissed from his post in 1596-97 and succeeded by his enemy, the calligrapher Ali Reza, who apparently prevented Sadeqi from receiving further important commissions.

In the following year the painter retaliated by lodging a formal complaint with the shah that the new director had been derelict in his duties. The coup failed; Ali Reza was a tough man who adroitly outmaneuvered attacks on his position and successfully protected himself from rivals, including Mir Emad, who was murdered in 1615-16 in a plot apparently organized by Ali Reza.

Despite his ruthless art politics, Ali Reza was active as a scribe and a designer of architectural inscriptions and was honored with choice commissions in Mashhad and Isfahan.

Calligraphers had long performed multiple duties they wrote official letters for the court, often served as directors of libraries and of specific manuscript projects, wrote new copies of treasured literary works and produced single pages of calligraphy for albums.

They also were called upon to design inscriptions for a variety of purposes exteriors and interiors of mosques, shrines, and tombs needed appropriate epigraphs; so too did objects—metalworks, ceramics, carpets, textiles, and tiles. The calligrapher's role was central to the production of art in the Safavid world.

In 1614, Shah Abbas commissioned a second Shahnameh, which is in many ways a visual rejection of 16th-century painting. Its illustrations are based upon the high court style of Prince Baysonghor of Herat many of them are, in fact, copies or pastiches of paintings in the Shahnameh (Tehran, Golestan Library) produced for that prince about 1430.

While archaic renderings of earlier works are not uncommon in Iranian painting, such a concerted effort by an imperial patron is unique in the history of Iranian painting. During the same period the shah's taste for Timurid-revival forms of architecture was also most pronounced, and it may be that this conscious return to 15th-century forms reflected the monarch's ambition to create an Iranian state as powerful as that of Timur's descendants.

The Timurid revival was brief and evidently limited to the monarch alone. In other areas of painting and drawing and in other arts the establishment of new directions affected the course of Iranian art for the rest of the Safavid period.

In painting, drawing, and calligraphy the single page replaced the lavish illustrated manuscript as the dominant mode. Quicker and cheaper to produce, yet authentically revealing the hand of a master whose work was prized, small works of this sort were eagerly sought, not only in Iran but also by connoisseurs in India and the Ottoman empire.

In comparison with earlier, literary subject matter, the content of painting became fragmented; and scenes that had been small parts of earlier illustrations were now fit to be independent works of art, promoting an attention to naturalism comparable to that in contemporary Mughal India.

Idealized beauties became the most common image of all, visual metaphors of the ideal beloved of Iranian mystical poetry. Thinner pigments and more daring colors were also used, and line became sketchier, so that the impression of polished and enduring finish of 15th- and early 16th-century painting is replaced by visions of greater transience.

Many of the images of graceful dandies that abound in Safavid painting are also to be found on ceramics, particularly of the "Kubachi" type produced in northwestern Iran and yet virtually identical with figures of the so-called Isfahan school.

But these are not the most common type of ceramic of this period. Recognizing the importance of a widely based trade with Europe, where Chinese pottery fetched high prices, Shah Abbas brought Chinese potters to his state-operated workshops in Isfahan, Mashhad, Kerman, and other cities where they and Iranian potters produced skillful variants on Chinese types for sale in Europe and Iran.

In keeping with Safavid attention to pre-Safavid arts, lusterware pottery, not seen in Iran since the Ilkhanid period, was produced again in the early 17th century.

Though Safavid metalwork does not appear to have been widely exported, there are important changes in the mid-Safavid period. Stocky candlesticks of Seljuk and Ilkhanid times were replaced by more attenuated shapes that relied on simpler decorative patterns, gilding and silvering instead of inlays, and mystical verses for their ornamentation. Much Safavid metalwork of the period was made of cut steel, a new material in the Islamic repertory.

Textiles too are sometimes inscribed with mystical verses. Both figures and poetry were supplied by painters and calligraphers employed as designers in royal workshops producing cloths for the aristocracy and for export, primarily to Mughal India. Techniques are varied weaves of silk and metal thread had been dominant in the 16th century, but brocades became the most common form of decorative technique in the 17th.

Carpets were an important source of revenue, and the industry rested to a large extent under the shah's control. While designs were selected to appeal to European customers and sometimes even incorporated European insignia, technique tended to be showier and less fine than in early Safavid times.

Source: Encyclopedia Iranica
To be continued

Iranian cultural festival opens in Tokyo

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iran is organizing a cultural festival in Tokyo, which opened at the Japan International Cooperation Agency on Monday.

The month-long festival includes the exhibition "Beautiful Iran" showcasing photos of cultural and tourist attractions, Iran's Islamic Culture and Relations Organization (ICRO), which is the organizer of the festival, announced.

Top documentaries on Iran have been selected to be screened during the festival. The organizers also plan to screen videos of performances by a large number of top Iranian music ensembles.

Several exhibitions of Iranian handicrafts and cuisine will also be organized during the festival.

Earlier in February and March, the Embassy of Japan in Tehran organized the Japan Cultural Month online from February 28.

In a platform designed by the embassy, Japanese artists taught origami and a number

of chefs from the country and Iranian martial arts experts organized workshops.

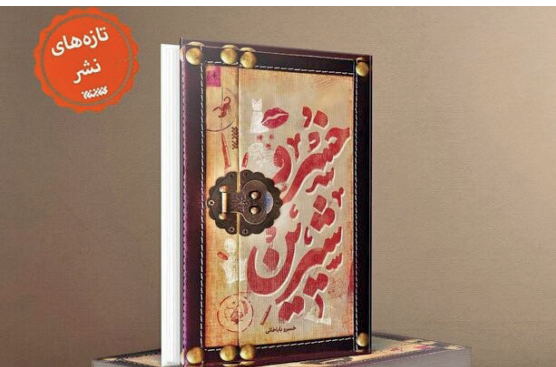
Several documentaries produced at NHK, Japan Broadcasting Corporation, were screened.

The organizers also held a mini-short film competition on the theme of "What things make me as a Japanese in Tehran feel at home?"

In order to promote mutual understanding between Iranian and Japanese people, the two countries organize mutual cultural events every year.

The Japanese capital of Tokyo in Minato City on August 2020 hosted the 3rd Iranian Film Festival, which opened by screening "Villa Dwellers", Monir Qeidi's debut feature film on the Iran-Iraq 1980-1988 war.

The festival was organized by the Iranian Culture Center and Farabi Cinema Foundation in collaboration with the Motion Picture Producers Association of Japan and UNIJAPAN, a non-profit



A poster for Iranian writer Khosro Babakhani's latest novel "Khosro and Shirin".

C U L T U R E **TEHRAN** — Iranian writer Khosro Babakhani has adapted Nezami's classical Persian love story Khosrow and Shirin for a modern novel of the same title, which is set in Iran of 1979 in the heat of the Islamic Revolution.

In "Khosro and Shirin", Babakhani focuses on ordinary love, however, his outlook of love is different

Classical love story Khosrow and Shirin adapted for modern novel on revolution

from the clichés, publisher Ketabestan-e Marefat said in an introduction to the book.

The story begins few years before the Islamic Revolution, when Khosro, the main protagonist, is an adolescent and goes on until the early years of the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war.

The story is set in the southwestern Iranian city Abadan, which had different urban spaces after World War II.

Babakhani uses lucid dynamic prose in the book to represent the world from the protagonist's perspective.

The book also provides a deep insight into the revolutionary struggles in Abadan and, away from political propaganda, features the valor the city's people showed in the early months of the Iran-Iraq war.

The original story of Khosrow and Shirin was created by Persian poet Nezami Ganjavi in 1177.

Nezami's great work had a tremendous influence on later authors and many imitations of this work were made. With complete artistic and structural unity, the epic of Khosrow

and Shirin turned out to be a turning point not only for Nezami, but also for all Persian literature.

The story of pre-Islamic Persian origin, which is found in the great epic-historical poems of the Shahnameh, is based on a true story that was further romanticized by Persian poets.

The story was commissioned by and dedicated to the Seljuk Sultan Toghril II, the Atabek Muhammad ibn Eldiguz Jahan Pahlavan and his brother Qizil Arsalan.

About 6,500 distiches in length, the story depicts the love of Sassanid Khosrow Parviz towards his Armenian princess Shirin.

The book recounts the story of King Khosrow's courtship of Princess Shirin, and vanquishing of his love rival, Farhad.

The story has a complex structure with several genres exploited simultaneously and contains many verbal exchanges and letters, all imbued with lyrical intensity. Khosrow endures long journeys, physical and spiritual, before returning to Shirin, his true love.

Isfahan galleries host exhibitions by Austrian artist Walter Kratner

A R T **TEHRAN** — Three sets of installation art by Austrian artist Walter Kratner are currently on view in exhibitions at the galleries of Aknoon and Safavi in the central Iranian city of Isfahan.

Due to the pandemic, Kratner could not attend the exhibitions, which opened on Sunday, and the sets of installation named "Broken Books 3", "Clean Hands" and "The Flaw" were arranged by curator Elnaz Rajabian under the supervision of the artist, the organizers have announced in a press release.

The Austrian Cultural Forum in Tehran is organizing the exhibitions with contributions from the Embassy of Austria.

The sculptural work "Broken Book 3" shows paper in the status between medium and material, Kratner wrote about the installation on his website.

As a material, it is shown in its pure physical "objectivity" - bound to a book it

is a paper memory store.

The object installation "Broken Book 3" is an open book by the Wehrmacht general and commander, Paul Klatt, who also tried in the post-war period to downplay the German Wehrmacht's involvement in Nazi war crimes and to excuse it with an absurd code of honor.

Original notes from the personal war diary of a Wehrmacht soldier are inserted and pressed between the bound pages of this document. As a result, the private, personal war experiences come to lie in a publicly published "historical review" in the sense of right-wing national ideas.

The rigid mounting of the open book by means of iron screw clamps, however, makes it impossible to read both contents. It may also be to keep the "demon" in place. It also remains uncertain whether the author of the handwritten notes was a compliant perpetrator or whether the notes were written with the inclusion of the victim's perspective.

The picture series "The Flaw" is about police identification photos, which have been retouched by Kratner with graphite and oil. The photos emphasize particularly oppressive socio-political aspects.

The images show how we see "others". Which clichés and prejudices do we use in order to classify "others"? Are those portrayed murderers, innocents, or rapists, or are they guilty of a petty crime? The viewer has to admit that nationality or cultural background cannot even be guessed at a second glance.

"Clean Hands" is a field of pink gloves collocated between the columns in the exhibition space. It forms a kind of prelude to a body of works with over-painted dark photos.

Born in 1954 in Graz, Kratner received his education from the University of Florence in design and history of art).

He lived in Switzerland and San Francisco for many years and now lives in Austria. He received a 2002 Carl Djerassi Artists-In-



A poster for Austrian artist Walter Kratner's exhibitions in Isfahan, Iran.

Residence Program Award. He exhibited his works at numerous art centers in San Francisco, Tehran, Istanbul, Vienna, Berlin, Rome, Hamburg, Graz and many other cities across the world.

The Isfahan exhibitions will be running until Wednesday.

Barbara Dee's "Halfway Normal" appears in Persian

published by Ofoq in Tehran.

A cancer survivor must readjust to "normal" middle school life in this hopeful novel from the author of "Star-Crossed" and "Truth or Dare".

Norah Levy has just completed two years of treatment for leukemia and is ready to go back to the "real world" of middle school.

The hospital social worker warns her the transition back may be tricky, but Norah isn't worried. Compared with battling cancer, how tricky can seventh grade be?

Very. Everyone is either treating Norah like she will break at any second, or acting weird about all the attention she's getting.

Her best friend, Harper, does her best to be there for Norah, but she doesn't get it, really—and is hanging out with a new group of girls, leaving Norah feeling a little unsteady. Norah's other good friend, Silas, is avoiding her. What's that about, anyway?

When Norah is placed with the eighth graders for math and science she meets Griffin, a cute boy who encourages her love of drawing and Greek mythology.

And Norah decides not to tell him her secret that she was "that girl" who had cancer. But when something happens to make secret-keeping impossible, Norah must figure out a way to share her cancer story.

But how do you explain something to others that you can't explain to yourself? And then, once you find the words, how do you move forward with a whole new "normal"?

As the author of several middle-grade novels, including "Maybe He Just Likes You", "Everything I Know About You" and "Star-Crossed", Dee has said, "I've always been a big reader."

"Growing up in Brooklyn, N.Y., I also rode my bike and went to camp and did all the regular-kid stuff, but mostly what I did was read," he added.

Wendy Brown's "Walled States" coming to Iranian bookstores

C U L T U R E **TEHRAN** — American political theorist Wendy Brown's 2010 book "Walled States, Waning Sovereignty" has been rendered into Persian by Sahand Sattari.

Markaz Publications is scheduled to release the book in the near future.

Why do nation-states wall themselves off despite widespread proclamations of global connectedness?

Why do walls marking national boundaries proliferate amid widespread proclamations of global connectedness and

despite anticipation of a world without borders? Why are barricades built of concrete, steel and barbed wire when threats to the nation today are so often miniaturized, vaporous, clandestine, dispersed, or networked?

In "Walled States, Waning Sovereignty", Brown considers the recent spate of wall building in contrast to the erosion of nation-state sovereignty.

Drawing on classical and contemporary political theories of state sovereignty in order to understand how state power

and national identity persist amid its decline, Brown considers both the need of the state for legitimacy and the popular desires that incite the contemporary building of walls.

The new walls dividing Texas from Mexico, Israel from Palestine, South Africa from Zimbabwe consecrate the broken boundaries they would seem to contest and signify the ungovernability of a range of forces unleashed by globalization.

Yet these same walls often amount to

little more than theatrical props, frequently breached, and blur the distinction between law and lawlessness that they are intended to represent.

But if today's walls fail to resolve the conflicts between globalization and national identity, they nonetheless project a stark image of sovereign power.

Walls, Brown argues, address human desires for containment and protection in a world increasingly without these provisions. Walls respond to the wish for horizons even as horizons are vanquished.