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# Iran facilitates Afghan peace talks

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## No insecurity along Iran's border with Afghanistan, Tehran says

TEHRAN - Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh has offered assurances about the security of the Iran-Afghanistan border amid ongoing clashes between the Taliban and the Afghan government along the border. In a statement on Saturday, Khatibzadeh said there is no insecurity along Iran's borders with Afghanistan thanks to the efforts of Iranian border guards. "Thanks to the efforts of our zealous border guards, the borders of the Islamic Republic of Iran are secure and peaceful,

and there is no insecurity along our country's borders with Afghanistan," Khatibzadeh said in response to a question about the situation of Iran's borders and border crossings with Afghanistan following the recent developments along the borders. "Considering the clashes that erupted at Islam-Qala and Abu Nasr Farahi customs facilities inside the Afghan territory, a number of Afghan staff members entered into the Iranian soil," the spokesman said.

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## Israeli settlements amount to 'war crime': UN expert

A top UN rights expert has called for Israeli settlements to be classified as war crimes, urging the international community to demand accountability for a practice it has long deemed illegal.

Presenting his latest report to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, Michael Lynk, the United Nations special rapporteur on the

rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, said the settlements constitute a "violation of the absolute prohibition against settler implantation".

"In my report, I conclude that the Israeli settlements do amount to a war crime," the UN expert said.

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## Tehran-Havana strategic cooperation on coronavirus vaccine production

TEHRAN - The long history of cooperation between Iran and Cuba in biotechnology has led to a strategic relationship to develop a COVID-19 vaccine to fight against the global pandemic.

The recent collaboration between the Finlay Vaccine Institute of Cuba and the Pasteur Institute of Iran is on the research and development of vaccine technologies. Both institutions agreed to transfer

technology for the production of Soberana 02, in Iran, following a phase III clinical trial in the country.

### 92% effectiveness

Through the third phase of the clinical trial on 24,000 Iranian volunteers and 44,000 Cubans, it was found that the vaccine is 92 percent effective, Alireza Biglari, head of the Pasteur Institute, said.

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## Iran's memories in Afghanistan: two sisters apart

BY SAMANEH ABOUTALEBI

For years, many people including Iranians, have dreamed of visiting Afghanistan and viewing its colorful sights, a beautiful country that has been unrested for many years and engulfed in a war that is getting fiercer every day.

With roots dating back thousands of years and many similarities in dialects and history, Iran and Afghanistan share strong cultural ties.

Even though these two countries are separate now, they used to be one united empire once, which means that a lot of historical places and monuments have been left in Afghanistan belonging to ancient Iran.

There is hope among Iranians that walk under the blue sky of Herat, Kandahar, Kabul, and Balkh with their neighbors one day.

In the absence of a possibility of visiting these places and attractions, we can explore a list of Persian historical monuments and sites preserved in Afghanistan.

### Herat

Afghanistan's third-largest city, Herat, situated just 80 miles from the Iranian border, was the capital of the Persian Empire.

Dating back to ancient times, the city was known as Haraiva during the Achaemenid Empire (ca. 550-330 BC).

Herat became a provincial capital during the Safavid era (1501-1736). The Persian king Abbas was born in Herat, and in Safavid texts, Herat is known as a'zam-i bilad-i Iran, meaning "the greatest of Iranian cities". In the 16th century, a number of future Safavid rulers, from Tahmasp to Abbas I, served as governors of Herat in their youth.

### Bamyan

Bamyan was one of the main states of Iran during the Achaemenid period and was considered one of the important centers of Buddhism during the Kushan Empire.

It was a place where East met West, and its archeology contains influences from Greek, Turkic, Persian, Chinese and Indian cultures. The region is one of Afghanistan's most touristic places.

Along with the Buddhas of Bamyan, two 6th-century monumental statues of Gautama Buddha carved into the side of a cliff in the Bamyan valley, which was destroyed by the Taliban, a number of Persian temples dating back to the Sassanid era (224-651 CE) were also among the attractions of Bamyan.

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## Iran, Oman determined to boost trade ties

BY MAHNAZ ABDI

TEHRAN- Iran shares borders with fifteen countries, namely the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Iraq, Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Russia, Oman, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kuwait, Qatar, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia.

Expansion of trade with these neighbors, especially increasing non-oil exports to them, is one of the major plans that the Iranian government is now pursuing.

Among the mentioned countries, Oman is one that the Islamic Republic has attached priority in this due, as the two neighbors enjoy an old history of good political and economic relations as well as many religious and cultural commonalities.

In a meeting with Iran's new ambassador to Muscat in last November, Sultan of Oman Haitham bin Tariq Al Said expressed his country's

determination to enhance relations with Iran.

The Sultan of Oman said his country is resolved to promote and strengthen relations with the Islamic Republic.

As stated several times by the officials of the two countries, the ground is completely prepared for the expansion of trade relations between Iran and Oman.

Emphasizing that the basic infrastructure is prepared for the development of trade relations between Iran and Oman, Mohsen Zarrabi, the head of Iran-Oman Joint Chamber of Commerce, has said that with the beginning of sanctions and the severance of some countries' relations with Iran, the government of Oman not only did not cut its trade relations with Iran, but also they are trying to increase economic relations with the Islamic Republic in the framework of international relations and with a win-win approach.

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## U.S. State Dept. official urges Iraqi resistance groups to 'leave us alone' after new wave of attacks

A senior US State Department official has pleaded with Iraqi resistance groups to "just leave us alone" following a surge in attacks against American bases and forces in the Arab country.

"I understand that some of these militias completely disagree with what the United States is trying to do in Iraq in fighting ISIS (Daesh), but we're asking them, we're demanding, that they just leave us alone and we'll leave them alone, so that we can fight this common enemy, which is ISIS," Acting Assistant Secretary of State Joey Hood said in an interview with Al Arabiya.

The emergence of Daesh in Iraq in 2014 was facilitated by the chaos resulting from the U.S.-led military intervention, but the United States has used the fight against the terror organization as an excuse to extend its military presence in the oil-rich country.

Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), better known by their Arabic name Hashd al-Sha'abi, have been leading a double fight against both Daesh and the occupation forces.

Hood claimed that the United States was not directly engaged in an "open war" with the resistance groups, and said the recurring attacks "serve no one's interest."

Late last month, the Pentagon said it had conducted airstrikes against three targets belonging to Iraqi resistance groups along the country's common border with Syria.

Pentagon Press Secretary John Kirby said at the time that President Joe Biden had ordered the "precision strikes" because the positions were allegedly being used by groups "that are engaged in unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) attacks against U.S. personnel and facilities in Iraq."

## FFIRI to introduce U23 football coach by next week

BY FARROKH HESABI

TEHRAN - The Football Federation of the Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) will introduce the new head coach of Iran's national U23 football team by the next week, FFIRI's Head of Youth Committee, Mirshad Majedi, said in an interview with Tehran Times.

Iran learned their AFC U23 Asian Cup Uzbekistan 2022 Qualifiers group stage on Friday. The Iranian team have been drawn in Group B

along with Tajikistan (hosts), Nepal, and Lebanon.

Yet, the Iranian U23 team are without a head coach since January 2020, where Iran, with Hamid Estili as head coach, were knocked out of the 2020 AFC U23 Championship and failed to bring an end to a 44-year Olympic qualification drought.

"Now that the draw is held and we have learned the rivals awaiting us in the qualifiers, the FFIRI should appoint and introduce the coaching staff of the U23 national team by the next week. The

competitions will be held in October, so we have no time to waste in preparation for the tournament," Majedi said.

The head of FFIRI's Youth Committee believes that it's not going to be easy for Iran in the qualifiers: "After the draw was held, some people have said that the group is so easy for Iran. But we should not forget that only one team will qualify from each group."

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## Maryam Mirzakhani festival honors 25 women scientists

TEHRAN - Twenty-five female scientists received an award by the fourth National Festival of Women and Science, which kicked off earlier in June.

The event aims to honor exemplary women who are active in scientific and social sections, commemorating the late Iranian mathematician, Maryam Mirzakhani.

Interested women participated in 6 groups of humanities, basic sciences, engineering, agriculture, veterinary and environment, medical sciences, art, and architecture, IRIB reported.

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© ISNA/Hemmat Khaki

## People angry with Palestinian Authority's security coordination with Israel: lawyer

BY ALI A. JENABZADEH

TEHRAN - The public is unhappy with the Palestinian Authority's security coordination with Israel, a Palestinian lawyer says.

"There is real awareness among the Palestinian public of the need to change the behavior of the Palestinian Authority," Saleh Abou-Izzah tells the Tehran Times.

"Palestinians through their parties, institutions, associations, gatherings and popular movements have expressed their rejection of the practices of the Authority in Ramallah, especially with regard to security issues, whether in its dealings with the Palestinian people, or its coordination with the Israeli occupation," the lawyer, who was jailed by Israel, explains.

People expressed their resentment in the streets after the killing of activist Nizar Banat by security forces under the leadership of the Palestinian Authority.

Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian Authority president, has also killed any hope for reform as he cancelled the planned election.

"The Palestinian people had hoped for reforms to be made through the elections, so more than 35 blocs were formed to participate in the Palestinian elections, but President Mahmoud Abbas canceled it," notes Abou-Izzah.

Following is the text of the interview:

**Could you update us about the "unnatural death" of the Palestinian political and human rights activist, Nizar Banat? What is the role of the Palestinian Authority in the incident?**

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## Croatian president congratulates President-elect Raisi

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — According to the embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Zagreb, Croatian President Zoran Milanovic has sent a congratulatory message to the President-elect Seyed Ebrahim Raisi on behalf of himself, the people and the government of Croatia.



He also expressed hope that relations between the two countries would be strengthened during Raisi's presidency. The Croatian president also wished success to the people and government of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

## Serbian ambassador says ties with Iran are in best state

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Belgrade's Ambassador to Tehran, Dragan Todorovic, on Saturday called relationship between Iran and Serbia "at its best state in history". In a meeting with the governor of Qazvin province, Todorovic said that Serbia is willing to strengthen its ties with Iran, IRNA reported.

He said the two countries have always enjoyed good ties. The ambassador further said Serbia doesn't restrict its ties with Iran to the capital Tehran, adding his country is trying to establish tourism, cultural, scientific and economic ties with all cities in Iran, including Qazvin.

Iran, especially Qazvin Province, has a high capacity in tourism industry and Serbia can have good cooperation in this area with Iran, the diplomat added.

In cultural arena, the ambassador said, there are many commonalities between Iran and Serbia and over 130 volumes of Farsi books have been translated into Serbian language and many Serbians are familiar with famous Persian poets.

He also said efforts are underway between the two counties to produce a joint film.

Serbia is an Eastern European country with a population of about 7.5 million people. It borders with Bulgaria, Hungary, Croatia, Romania, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro.

## Oman: Iran supports peace efforts in the region

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — In an interview with Asharq Al-Awsat newspaper published on Saturday, Omani foreign minister Badr al-Busaidi has said that Iran is an advocate of peace and stability in the region.

Al-Busaidi also said that Oman supports peace initiatives, but has not pushed for regional talks with Tehran.

"We believe that Iran's role is to support the peace and efforts to maintain stability as we want," Oman's foreign minister said. In response to a question about a change in Iran's behavior with the change of the U.S government, he said, "All behaviors can change and this political will is now growing in the direction of regional security and stability."

The chief diplomat stated that Oman is not directing any efforts in this regard to shape regional talks with Tehran.

He added, "Any regional dialogue must be between the countries of the region themselves."

Oman supports dialogue and encourages all to take steps in line with the common interest of regional countries.

## Senior U.S. lawmakers plans to address MKO meeting

A bipartisan group of U.S. lawmakers will address an online gathering of the Mujahedin-e-Khalq (MKO), a terrorist organization that has carried out numerous attacks against Iranian civilians and government officials since the Islamic Revolution in 1979.

House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, a Republican from California, and Senator Bob Menendez, a New Jersey Democrat who chairs the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, are among those that organizers say will address the three-day event.

They will be joined by Democratic Sens. Cory Booker of New Jersey and Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire, as well as Republican Sens. Rick Scott of Florida, John Cornyn and Ted Cruz of Texas.

The summit, being organized by major Iranian exile organizations in the U.S. and Europe, touted itself as "the largest-ever online international event dedicated to liberating Iran." Organizers said they hoped the annual event will help incite uprisings against the government in the Islamic Republic.

"Iranian society is a powder keg on the verge of explosion," Mar-yam Rajavi, leader of the MKO terrorist cult and president of its umbrella National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRD), told The Washington Times. "More ferocious and extensive uprisings are waiting to erupt at a moment's notice."

The planned summit comes as the administration of U.S. President Joe Biden is working to potentially rejoin a landmark 2015 nuclear deal with Iran that his predecessor, Donald Trump, abandoned three years ago in defiance of international criticism.

The congressional roster addressing the online MKO event indicates the political headwinds the Biden administration faces on Capitol Hill in diplomacy with Iran.

The MKO had been designated as a terrorist organization by the United States for 15 years before it was delisted in 2012, following an intense lobbying campaign by pressure groups in Washington and Iranian exiles.

Ever since, the cult, responsible for the death of more than 12,000 Iranians, has been heavily propagandized as an "Iranian opposition group" by the West.

The European Union (EU) also removed the MKO from its list of terrorist organizations in 2009, seven years after blacklisting the outfit.

MKO throws lavish conferences every year in the French capital, with senior American, Western, and Saudi Arabian officials in attendance as guests of honor.

Past attendees include former US national security advisor John Bolton, Trump's personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani, former Canadian prime minister Stephen Harper, and former Saudi Arabian spy chief Prince Turki al-Faisal.

(Source: Press TV)

# Israel's new approach: From sabotage to soft war

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — If anyone wants to exemplify failure, he can look at 15 years of Benjamin Netanyahu's failure against Iran.

Nevertheless, the United States now has new cronies in Tel Aviv, Naftali Bennett and Yair Lapid.

During the Netanyahu administration, Israel committed some sabotage acts against Iran: from cyber-attacks to assassination of Iranian scientists and academicians. Israel launched assassinations in 2010. In 2 years, Mossad assassinated four Iranian scientists - Masoud Alimohammadi, Majid Shahriari, Darioush Rezaeinejad and Mostafa Ahmadi Roshan. Another scientist, Fereydoon Abbasi, survived assassination attempt.

In November 2020, Israel assassinated Mossad's long-time target, Mohsen Fakhrazadeh, whom Netanyahu personally asked the IAEA and its allies to "remember that name" in 2018.

Israel, under Netanyahu, carried out several attempts of sabotage, particularly at the Natanz nuclear site.

In June 2010 Stuxnet, an advanced computer worm was discovered. It was believed that it had been developed jointly by the U.S. and Israel to attack Iran's nuclear facilities. Other computer viruses and malware, including Duqu and Flame, were reportedly related to Stuxnet.

In addition, adversaries regularly sold faulty equipment to undermine Iran's nuclear program.

Tasnim news agency published a report on January 2021, quoting Ronen Bergman's book, Rise and Kill First, saying that Meir Dagan ordered Mossad to assassinate General Tehrani Moqaddam on his last day as Mossad chief. Israel conducted an explosion at an Islamic Revolution Guard Corps base in November 2011. The blast martyred 17 IRGC personnel, including General Hassan Tehrani Moqaddam, a key figure in Iran's



missile program.

In 2014, the IRGC downed an Israeli drone near the Natanz nuclear enrichment plant.

On April 10, 2021 Iran began injecting uranium hexafluoride gas into advanced IR-6 and IR- 5 centrifuges at Natanz, but an act of sabotage occurred in the electricity distribution network the next day. In response to the sabotage, Iran quickly replaced damaged centrifuges with more advanced ones and began enriching uranium up to 63% within days from the sabotage act.

In his statements to Israel's Channel 12 investigative program "Uvda" aired on June 11, former Mossad chief Yossi Cohen did not outright claim responsibility for the strikes, but his specificity was the closest confirmation yet of Israeli involvement.

## Israel, under Netanyahu, carried out several attempts of sabotage, particularly at the Natanz nuclear site.

## Iran and Russia move to fill diplomatic vacuum in Afghanistan: Guardian

**POLITICAL** Iran, Turkey, Pakistan and Russia have moved to fill the military and diplomatic vacuum opening up in Afghanistan as a result of the departure of U.S. forces and military advances by the Taliban, The Guardian said in a report on Friday.

In Tehran the Iranian Foreign Minister, Javad Zarif, met Taliban negotiators to discuss their intentions towards the country, and secured a joint statement saying the Taliban do not support attacks on civilians, schools, mosques and hospitals and want a negotiated settlement on Afghanistan's future.

The Taliban side was led by Abbas Stanekzai, a senior negotiator and head of the group's political bureau in Qatar, while the Afghan government side was led by the former vice-president Yunus Qanooni.

Three other Afghan delegations were in Tehran at the same time.

Russia has also sought assurances that the Taliban

will not allow Afghanistan's northern borders to be used as a base for attacks on the former Soviet republics.

In a move designed in part to please the U.S. but also to advance Ankara's self-interest, Turkey has conditionally offered Turkish troops for a NATO-overseen project to protect Kabul international airport. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has offered to provide Turkish troops in a possible unlikely alliance with Hungary.

The Taliban delegation who visited Iran on Tuesday and Wednesday at Tehran's invitation, alongside three other Afghan delegations, were told by Zarif that they may have to take tough decisions. Courage in peace was more important than courage in war, he said, arguing that courage lay in sacrificing maximalist demands and listening to the other side.

Zarif also said a continuation of conflicts between the government and the Taliban would have "unfavorable" consequences for Afghanistan, and a return to the in-

tra-Afghan negotiations was the "best solution". Iran has not attended the stalled Doha negotiations for over two years.

Saeed Laylaz, a prominent economist and adviser to previous governments, said, "The Taliban could not have survived so long without genuine political support and they might now serve Iran's regional diplomatic interests. The Taliban are no longer the Taliban of the past, they have also realized that we must interact with the world, we must cooperate with the countries of the region."

The director general of the west Asia office at Iran's Foreign Ministry, Rasoul Mousavi, also sounded sympathetic if more reserved. "The Taliban are from the Afghan people," Mousavi said. "They are not separated from Afghanistan's traditional society, and they have always been part of it. Moreover, they have military power. The U.S. has lost the war and can no longer carry out a military operation against the Taliban."

## Jaishankar-Raisi meet in Tehran

### Iran-India bonhomie to bloom once sanction lifted



chine-related concerns in mind, India preferred Iran to import oil over others. The demand of oil is rising in the third largest oil consumer of the world India every year. India fulfills 80 percent of her requirements through imports from Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Iran. Till three years back, Iran was the third largest supplier of crude oil to India. But when the Trump administration began raising eyebrows over sanction causes, New Delhi temporarily scaled back importing crude oils from Iran temporarily from May 2019. It all started when the U.S. under the Trump administration jettisoned the nuclear deal with Iran in 2018.

Needless to say that 123 Civil Nuclear deal brought New Delhi and Washington closer than ever. An arrogant Trump's presidency didn't affect India's bonhomie with the U.S. On the other hand, India's adoration for Israel is rising and rising under Modi. Moreover, Iranian leadership admonished India's decision of emasculating the special right of Kashmir.

However, India has a high hope to make

Iran the gateway to Central Asia. Once Chabahar turns a reality, a smooth passage will be built and India's trade with Eurasia can be expected to cross the \$170 billion mark. Of course, Iran will win a fortune. India has already completed the initial phase of Chabahar Port and immediate next ambition is to establish a railway connectivity between the southeastern peninsular cities with Zahedan. This connectivity link is destined to widen the path of Iran's prosperity as well. The emergence of a pent lateral strategic alliance consisting of mighty Russia, fast-marching China, ambitious Turkey, India's neighbor Pakistan, and sanction-torn Iran will dismay India. Politically, economically and after all, strategically.

Apart from the biggest market and civilian concerns, a slew of grounds are there in front of Tehran to warm up bilateral relations with the South Asian legend. India and Iran both have mutual clubs like Indian Ocean Rim Association and Indian Ocean Naval Symposium through which they can mitigate maritime security related challenges, boost up the blue economy and maritime connectivity.

Iran is well-aware of India's importance and India relies on Iran. The civilization-link is survived, despite differences in the styles and functions of these two ambitious republics. Not sure, how many Persian words are adopted in Indian tongues or how many Bollywood movies have entertained the Iranian society.

At the very initial phase of the COVID pandemic, President Hassan Rouhani sought help from the Indian prime minister. Iran reciprocated the help by sending oxygen concentrators and other medical aid, when the catastrophe hit India earlier

During the Vienna talks, the U.S. demanded that Iran "destroy" the advanced centrifuges it had installed at the Fordow and Natanz facilities one year after the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA.

The centrifuges, known as IR9, are 50 times more powerful at producing uranium than the ones covered by the JCPOA, according to Reuters.

Iran flatly rejected the U.S. demand just as Washington is refusing to lift all the sanctions imposed, re-imposed, or relabeled by the Trump administration against Iran.

Iran has time and again shown that just like a phoenix, it rises from the flames. Israel assassinated scientists, committed acts of sabotage to slow down the development process in Iran. It is needless to say that all their plans went horribly wrong.

The Bennett-Lapid administration are seemingly trying a new approach on the Islamic Republic: Launching a "soft war" on Iran. Since their takeover, Israeli agents, and mainstream media that have close ties with the Tel Aviv regime, have tried to spread fake news about Iran. From rumors of sabotage at railway station to creating a havoc from a simple sound bomb.

Iranian people, whose morale is at an all-time high, are well-aware that these outlets cannot stop the train of progress. They clearly showed this in the ballot boxes at the June 18 presidential elections. A turnout that contrary to their illusions, surprised Western media and left them in shock and awe.

Israel's tactics have grown more sophisticated, but, so has Iran's defensive capabilities.

Iranian media have progressed significantly over the past few years. Israel must know that it cannot create confusion among Iranian media, since they are all united to reveal the enemy's plans and expose them.

this year.

Whereas Iran imports cereals, tea leaves and coffee, chemicals as well as spices in big consignments from India, India's import dependency on Iran rests on crude oil, petrochemicals and fertilizers.

India, world's most pluralistic secular democracy has been the habitat of millions of Shia Muslims. They are spread across the states right from Kashmir in the north to down south Hyderabad or Tamil Nadu. Iran and India set up the Indo-Iran Joint Commission in 1983. An MOU called Tehran Declaration 2001 was inked by the duo on the Afghan affairs. When Iran sells oil at dirt cheap prices, India witnesses petrol prices reaching all-time highest, irking the bulky middle-class citizens in the country. The bilateral trade is unusually low, which can easily cross the \$10 billion mark once the preferential trade agreement comes into effect.

In the post-COVID century, Iran and India should come into normal terms to fulfill their respective domestic needs and fostering economies via trade. India's envoy at the UN has clarified India's stance to support the effective implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and Resolution 2231. The ongoing Vienna nuclear deal talks started in April 2021 is the ray of hope mending ties between two opponents: Washington and Tehran. Washington's full return to the JCPOA and Iran's compliance with the terms of the agreement will not just be a sigh of relief for India but an avenue for Indo-Iranian bilateral bonhomie and trade as well.

*Ayanangsha Maitra is a Indian freelance journalist, PhD researcher and associated to Centre for Governance Studies, Bangladesh.*



# Iran facilitates Afghan peace talks

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — With the **d e s k** Taliban taking over Afghan cities and districts one after another, a number of Afghanistan's neighbors, including Iran, moved to hedge their bets and establish contacts with both warring sides in the war-torn country.

This pragmatic policy was necessitated by the fact that the U.S. left Afghanistan without taking care about what might take place once its troops are moved out of the country. After two decades of heavy military presence in Afghanistan, the U.S. clumsily left the country even though its intelligence community presciently predicted that Afghanistan is susceptible to falling in the hands of the Taliban in few months after the withdrawal of foreign troops.

The U.S. policy toward Afghanistan was best indicated by its unusual withdrawal from the Bagram base, the sprawling military facility housing foreign troops over the past two decades. The U.S. had a whole host of military equipment and troops stationed there for years and almost all U.S. presidents since the invasion of Afghanistan had paid a visit to this base.

Last week on Friday, the U.S. announced that it vacated its largest airfield of Bagram in Afghanistan. Afghan officials have lamented the way the U.S. left. They said that the U.S. left Bagram Airfield after nearly 20 years by shutting off the electricity and slipping away in the night without notifying the base's new Afghan commander, according to press reports.

"We [heard] some rumor that the Americans had left Bagram ... and finally by 7:00 in the morning, we understood that it was confirmed that they had already left Bagram," General Mir Asadullah Kohistani, Bagram's new commander, told The Associated Press.

"They (Americans) are completely out now and everything is under our control, including watchtowers, air traffic and the hospital," a senior Afghan government official told the Reuters news agency.



Afghan soldiers are deeply critical of how the U.S. left Bagram. "In one night, they lost all the goodwill of 20 years by leaving the way they did, in the night, without telling the Afghan soldiers who were outside patrolling the area," said Afghan soldier Naematullah, who asked that only his one name be used.

This irresponsible act of the U.S. left the Afghan government's forces scrambling to protect the airbase against the Taliban, whose forces reportedly mounted an attack on Bagram hours after it was evacuated.

The way Bagram was evacuated also sent a message that the U.S. no longer cares about what might happen to its allies in Kabul, who found themselves on the defensive against the Taliban. As expected, the Taliban intensified its attacks on a number of cities and border crossings. They conquered many cities and at least three border crossings with Tajikistan and Iran, pushing hundreds of Afghan troops to seek refuge in neighboring countries.

Over the past few days, videos circulated on social media that showed Taliban militants taking over the Islam Qala and Abu Nasr

Farahi border crossings along Iran-Afghanistan borders, a move that led to Afghan staff fleeing to Iran, whose authorities confirmed that Afghan staff entered Iranian territories due to clashes between the Taliban and the Afghan government.

"Considering the clashes that erupted at the Islam-Qala and Abu Nasr Farahi customs facilities inside the Afghan territory, a number of Afghan staff members entered into the Iranian soil," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said in a statement. He pointed out that Iran will take the necessary measures according to the rules and regulations and based on its border agreements with Afghanistan and within the framework of good neighborliness principle.

Iranian media outlets quoted sources in the military as saying that Iran is preparing a flight to Kabul at the request of the Afghan government to return the staff and troops.

Facing turmoil in neighboring Afghanistan, Iran tried to broker peace by getting the warring sides of Afghanistan to sit together at the table and discuss ways

to put an end to hostilities.

To this end, Iran hosted a meeting between a Taliban delegation and a group of figures who support the republican system on Wednesday and Thursday. Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, who led the talks, urged both sides to show courage in making peace.

"Courage in peace is more important than courage in war, because peace needs sacrifice and forgiveness, needs ignoring one's maximal demands, and paying attention to the other side's demands, especially in these talks where there is no other side, and both sides are brothers seeking peace and calm for the Afghan nation," Zarif told the Afghan participants.

The Iranian foreign minister added, "What I ask you is that use this opportunity and end the war in Afghanistan as soon as possible, and provide the Afghan people with the chance to develop."

He also voiced Iran's readiness to facilitate peace talks. "The Islamic Republic of Iran is always ready to facilitate your talks in any way you prefer," he pointed out.

The recent talks were the second time Iran officially host a delegation from the Taliban, a group with which Iran has avoided talking given its track record of bad relations with Iran when it was in power. The history of Iran-Taliban relations carries a lot of antagonistic baggage, most notably due to the group's anti-Shia leanings and its killing of Iranian diplomats in Mazar-i-Sharif in 1998, which brought Iran and the Taliban-led Afghanistan close to an all-out war.

But now the Taliban is part of the reality on the ground and Iran has said that the group cannot be ignored, though it should not be seen as the whole reality either. According to this assessment, Iran has done everything in its power to bring peace to its war-torn neighbor and it has the support of Pakistan in this regard. Now, it's up to the Afghan people and leaders to decide which path they want to tread.

## Iran envoy meets Iraqi, Lebanese, UN delegations in Astana

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — A senior Iranian diplomat leading the Iranian delegation at the Astana Syrian talks has met with delegations from Iraq, Lebanon, and the United Nations.

On the second day of the 16th round of Astana talks in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan, the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran, headed by Ali Asghar Khaji, held meetings with the Lebanese and Iraqi delegations, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the representative of International Committee of the Red Cross, the Iranian Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

In these meetings, the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran discussed the latest situation in Syria, including the country's elections, Syrian refugees and the situation of refugees in the country, as well as sanctions and other issues.

The meeting of the working group on the exchange of prisoners, missing persons and detainees was also held with the participation of the guarantor states within the framework of the Astana process. In this meeting, Mir-Massoud Hosseinian, Director General of the Middle East and North Africa of the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, expressed the views of Iran in this regard and emphasized ethical-human principles and called for speeding up these efforts.



The delegations of Turkey, Russia, the United Nations and the Red Cross also presented proposals on the progress of the process and their latest performance reports.

At the end of the bilateral and multilateral talks, the final meeting of the Astana process was held and the participants agreed on and approved the communique of the summit.

Speaking to different news agencies, including Russia's Tass news agency, and Russian and Syrian journalists, Khaji talked about the recent successful presidential election in Syria and stressed the people's right to sovereignty.

In the press conference, Khaji, the senior adviser to Iran's

foreign minister, elaborated on the issue of the return of internally displaced persons to their homes and stressed the need to confront any separatist and terrorist moves in Syria.

In earlier remarks to the Russian news agency RIA Novosti, the diplomat said the main decision to resolve the Syrian issue must be made by the government and people of the country. He made the remarks at the end of the talks in Nur-Sultan, the new name for Astana.

Khaji pointed out that during the tripartite meeting on the final statement of the committee, Iran's views were unanimous with other members, including Turkey and Russia.

The Iranian diplomat said that everyone should remember that the participants are not "making a decision" on the Syrian issue, but putting forward their own opinions to help the Syrian government and people make the final decision.

The situation in Syria, the activities of the Syrian Constitutional Committee in Geneva, international assistance, the exchange of prisoners, the release of hostages and other measures were on the agenda of the talks in Kazakhstan.

At the end of the talks, Iran, Russia, and Turkey announced in a joint statement that they will continue to cooperate until Daesh and other terrorist organizations are completely eliminated in Syria.

## No insecurity along Iran's border with Afghanistan, Tehran says

**→1** "The Islamic Republic of Iran will take the necessary measures according to the rules and regulations and based on its border agreements with Afghanistan and within the framework of good neighborliness principle," he added.

The Taliban has attacked the Afghan government's positions along the Iran-Afghanistan borders, taking control of at least two border crossings. The group's advances pushed some Afghan government forces to flee to Iran.

The Afghan government has called on Iran to make arrangements for the return of its border troops to Kabul, and by accepting this request, Iran is preparing a direct flight to Kabul to return the troops, according to Nour News.

Citing a source in the Iranian armed forces, the news website said that the Afghan government has asked Tehran for help in returning its border guards, who took refuge in Iran on Thursday following a Taliban attack on the Islam Qala border crossing.

"Kabul officials have called on Iran to make arrangements for the return of the troops to Kabul, and Iran is preparing a direct flight to Kabul to repatriate the troops, given its humanitarian approach," the source said.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, meanwhile, hosted a meeting of delegations from the parties involved in Afghanistan on Wednesday and Thursday to discuss issues between them, which ended with a joint statement.

Tehran, with the support of the legitimate government of Afghanistan, has always called for the warring parties to avoid unrest and war, and has done its utmost to resolve the country's problems through political dialogue between Afghan groups.

The first round of intra-Afghan talks among the heads of delegations repre-

sented the Taliban group and prominent figures supporting the Republic system in Afghanistan wrapped up in Tehran with a speech by Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and a six-article communique.

In his speech at the final meeting of the first round of intra-Afghan talks in Tehran, which was held at the Foreign Ministry's Institute for Political and International Studies (IPIS), Foreign Minister Zarif thanked both delegations for giving priority to the peace, convenience and welfare of the Afghan people in their talks, according to a statement issued by the Iranian Foreign Ministry.

"Courage in peace is more important than courage in war, because peace needs sacrifice and forgiveness, needs ignoring one's maximal demands, and paying attention to the other side's demands, especially in these talks where there is no other side, and both sides are brothers seeking peace and calm for the Afghan nation," Zarif said.

The Iranian foreign minister said a nation that has been in pain and suffering for forty years has every right to be opposed to war.

"What I ask you is that use this opportunity and end the war in Afghanistan as soon as possible, and provide the Afghan people with the chance to develop," he added.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran is always ready to facilitate your talks in any way you prefer," Zarif noted.

Before the Iranian foreign minister's speech at the conclusion of talks, Yunus Qanuni as the representative of the delegation of those supporting the Republic system and Abbas Stanikzai as the representative of the Taliban delegation expressed their views about the Tehran summit.

In their comments, the two representatives supported the other side's round-up of the peace talks.

Iranian diplomatic efforts were welcomed

by neighboring Pakistan, which also shares some of Iran's concerns about Afghanistan. Pakistani Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri said, "We welcome Iran's engagement with Afghan parties so that a political solution can be reached through dialogue."

In response to media questions about the visit of Taliban and Afghan government delegations to Tehran, he said, "Pakistan considers Tehran's role in the Afghan peace process important."

According to Chaudhri, Iran, like Pakistan, is Afghanistan's neighbor and hosts millions of Afghan refugees.

The Pakistani Foreign Ministry spokesperson expressed hope that the Afghan parties would seize this opportunity to reach a collective, comprehensive political solution.

Last week, Iranian President-elect Ayatollah Ebrahim Raisi and Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan spoke by phone discussing the recent developments in neighboring Afghanistan.

During the phone conversation, which came at the initiative of the Pakistani prime minister, Imran Khan voiced concern over the conflict in Afghanistan.

"In the regional context, the PM expressed concern at the worsening security situation in Afghanistan, & cautioned that the latest developments could lead to serious repercussions for both Pakistan & Iran, resulting in an influx of refugees towards the bordering areas of the two countries. Prime Minister Imran Khan strongly underscored the imperative of a negotiated political solution to the conflict in Afghanistan. Both sides emphasized the need to continue facilitating an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned inclusive political settlement," according to a statement put out by the premier office.

Imran Khan also was quoted by Iranian media as saying, "we are concerned



about the situation in Afghanistan and its involvement in a longstanding war."

He described the political solution as the best solution to Afghanistan but said it is difficult to achieve this solution in the current situation.

Ayatollah Raisi also expressed concern over the situation in Afghanistan and said, "Afghanistan's security is important to us and this security must be established by Afghans."

Afghanistan has become an issue of concern for both Tehran and Islamabad as the conflict there worsened in the wake of foreign troops' withdrawal. In recent weeks, Iran has intensified its diplomatic efforts to de-escalate tensions in the war-torn Afghanistan. To this end, a number of Iranian diplomats traveled to Pakistan and Afghanistan.

In late June, the Iranian foreign minister's special envoy for Afghanistan traveled to Kabul and left the Afghan capital for Islamabad for talks with Pakistani officials on the latest security developments in Afghanistan and then returned to Kabul again to resume his meetings with the country's political and defense officials.

## SPORTS

### FFIRI to introduce U23 football coach by next week

**→1** Moreover, Tajikistan, the host country of Group B, have done great jobs on the academic levels during the past years, and now they have a competitive team. They had a great U16 national team in recent years, and the same players now play for their U23. We need careful planning to fully prepare our team.

"If we qualify, then the 2022 AFC U23 Asian Cup will be held in Uzbekistan between 1–19 June 2022. After that, we have the Olympic qualifiers in 2023. So, we now need to build a team including the players that can help the team in 2023 as well. We will decide about this issue in a meeting with experts and the managers of the football federation," Majedi added.

While avoiding to name Iran's U23 coaching candidates, Majedi said: "Our priority in choosing a head coach is his experience and his track record with the teams he has managed throughout his career."

### Iran goalkeeper Beiranvand officially joins Boavista

**SPORTS** **TEHRAN** — Iran international goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand officially joined Portuguese football club Boavista on Saturday.

The 28-year-old player has joined Boavista on loan from Belgian team Antwerp.

Beiranvand represented Iran at the 2018 World Cup in Russia. Last season, he played 12 games for Antwerp but failed to meet the club's expectations.

Beiranvand was a member of Naft Tehran from 2011 to 2016 in his homeland and joined Iranian giants Persepolis in 2016.

He has made 44 games for Iran national football team.

Boavista Futebol Clube, commonly known as Boavista are a Portuguese sports club from the city of Porto.

### Iran know rivals at Continental Futsal Championship

**SPORTS** **TEHRAN** — Iran discovered their fate at the Continental Futsal Championship Thailand 2021.

The Persians have been drawn in Group B along with Lithuania, Tajikistan and Egypt.

Group A consists of Thailand, Uzbekistan, Kosovo and Mozambique.

The eight-nation tournament will be held in Bangkok, Thailand from July 25 to 30.

Iran will participate in the competition as part of preparation for the 2021 FIFA Futsal World Cup, which will be held in Lithuania from Sept. 12 to Oct. 3.

Iran are in Group F along with Argentina, the U.S. and Serbia.

### Alamian brothers to compete at 2021 World Table Tennis C'ships in U.S.

**SPORTS** **TEHRAN** — Noshad and Nima Alamian will participate at the 2021 World Table Tennis Championships which will be held in Houston, the U.S. from Nov. 23 to 29.

The Championships will take place in the American city with robust protocols enforced to create a safe environment to ensure that the event can be held in the United States for the first time ever.

The Iranian duo will take part in the men's doubles division.

A total of 400 players are expected to participate at the competition.

### Tractor to meet Al Nassr in Qatar in 2021 ACL Round of 16

**SPORTS** **TEHRAN** — Iran's Tractor football team will play Al Nassr of Saudi Arabia in Qatar in Round of 16 of the 2021 AFC Champions League.

The match was originally scheduled to be held at the Mrsool Park in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia on Sept. 14 but the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) has announced that the match should be played in a neutral venue.

According to the media reports, Al Nassr have chosen Qatar as the third country for the match.

Esteghlal will have to announce a neutral country for the match against Al Hilal of Saudi Arabia in the same round.

### Weightlifter Jahanfekrian not to compete at Olympics

**SPORTS** **TEHRAN** — Iranian woman weightlifter Parisa Jahanfekrian will not participate at the 2020 Olympic Games.

After withdrawal of Iuniarra Sipaia from Samoa, Jahanfekrian replaced her to take part in the Games.

But the medical council of Iran's Sports Medicine Federation announced that Jahanfekrian cannot participate at the 2020 Olympic Games since she will not be ready for the competition.

The 87kg weightlifter has recently undergone a hand surgery.

### Alireza Faghani to officiate in Iran league

**SPORTS** **TEHRAN** — International referee Alireza Faghani will travel to Iran to officiate at the Iran Professional League (IPL).

The 43-year-old referee, who migrated to Australia for family reasons in 2019, has shown his readiness to officiate in IPL in the final weeks of the competition.

Persepolis, Sepahan and Esteghlal are favorites to win the IPL title and it's while the football stadiums in Iran have not equipped with VAR system so far.

Faghani can ease pressure on the Iranian referees.

He is also a nominee to officiate a match between Esteghlal and Persepolis in Hazfi Cup, scheduled for July 15.



## Stability in forex market to bring growth to stock market: expert

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN** – Iranian stock market is expected to follow an upward trend as the country's foreign currency exchange market has become more stabilized over the past few months, according to stock market analyst Azim Sabet. "As one of the important factors in the market, [foreign] exchange rates have reached a stage of stability; therefore, one can expect a reasonable upward trend in the market," Sabet told IRNA on Saturday.

He pointed to the effective measures taken for improving the current trend of stock exchange transactions and added: "One of the significant issues regarding the stock market's current trading environment is the management of fluctuations in the market."

The expert stressed that people should not expect the stock market to always follow an upward trend, saying: "Sometimes companies report on their performance and activities in a certain period of time and shareholders must use that information to make decisions based on the value of the companies."

Exchange transactions can take a reasonable course if the macroeconomics of the country is managed and no sudden changes are made, he said.

Unprecedented fluctuations in the Iranian stock market over the past few months have led shareholders, experts, and scholars to call for the government to increase its support for the market.

Following the supportive measures taken by the government, the market has been gradually getting back on track and experts believe that the market is regaining people's trust.

Market Expert Reza Alavi believes that the inflow of liquidity into the market and the increase in the value of transactions indicate that people are once again trusting the capital market.

"At present, other markets such as gold, foreign currency, and cars are not attractive enough for investors, and the stock market is still a good place for people's investments," Alavi told IRIB.

"After the election debates, people have come to the conclusion that the stock market is one of the priorities of the new government, and for this reason, they have re-trusted this market, and as a result, the inflow of new capital into the market has increased," he said.

He further mentioned the rise in the global oil prices and the stability of the foreign currency exchange market as factors that resulted in the stability of the stock market.

## Quarterly exports via Sistan-Baluchestan's border markets up 241%

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN** —Exports through the border markets of Iran's southeastern Sistan-Baluchestan province rose 241 percent in terms of weight in the first quarter of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-June 21), as compared to the same period of time in the past year, a provincial official announced.



Mobin Ali-Mir, the director of the province's border markets, said if the border markets' restrictive laws are removed, meat, rice and other necessary items, even cars, can be imported through the foreign currency earned by the exporters who export commodities via the border markets of the province.

Back in March, Iran and Pakistan held an online meeting to discuss issues related to developing border trade and reached an agreement to establish the two countries' first joint border market.

"A virtual meeting was held to discuss a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on the establishment of joint border markets between Iran and Pakistan, and agreements were reached in this regard," IRNA quoted Reza Seyed Aqazadeh, an official with Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), as saying at the time.

According to the official, following the preparation of the draft for the mentioned MOU in December 2020, additional negotiations were made for finalizing the memorandum in the online meeting which was held at the level of deputy ministers.

Referring to the 950-kilometer border between Iran and Pakistan, as well as the two countries' interest in developing trade, Seyed Aqazadeh noted: "Border markets have so far been created unilaterally by Iran or Pakistan, and a joint market will be established between the two countries for the first time."

The development of the joint border markets is expected to improve the business activities of border residents, he added.

"Based on the agreements reached, the two sides have appointed technical teams to determine the location and size of the joint markets and to prepare a list of the items that would be traded in the markets," the official explained.

He stated that joint markets will be set up in Kuhak and Pishin (Saravan) in the near future, and specified: "Pakistan has proposed six points on the border to create joint markets, and the Iranian side is interested in setting up joint markets as much as possible in place of existing approved markets."

Currently, border markets of Saravan-Jaleq, Saravan-Kuhak, Sarbaz-Pishin and Chabahar-Rimdan in Sistan-Baluchestan province are active on the border with Pakistan, and the Mirjaveh market has been merged with Mirjaveh customs, according to Seyed Aqazadeh.

As announced by the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), the value of Iran's non-oil exports reached \$10.7 billion in the first three months of the current Iranian calendar year, up 69 percent compared to the last year's same period.

According to Mehdi Mir-Ashrafi, Iran exported 30 million tons of non-oil commodities in the mentioned three months, registering a 38-percent rise compared to the figure for the last year's Q1.

Iran's top five non-oil export destinations during this period were China with \$3.1 billion worth of exports, Iraq with \$2.3 billion, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) with over \$1.3 billion, Turkey with \$595 million, and Afghanistan with \$570 million.

# Cabinet approves new directives for managing electricity outages

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iran's First Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri on Saturday announced the cabinet's new resolution for organizing systematic power outages for the household and commercial units and to prevent blackouts in the country, IRNA reported.

As reported, in a meeting on July 7, the cabinet made some decisions based on the Energy Ministry proposals for reducing the duration of systematic power outages in urban areas and for managing the country's current electricity situation, the result of which was announced in the form of the mentioned resolution.

Accordingly, all government organizations, banks, and other public institutions will be closed on Thursdays in Tehran and throughout the country until the end of the Iranian calendar month of Mordad (August 22) in accordance with Article (87) of the Civil Service Management Law.

Also, to maintain the stability of the country's electricity network, the instructions provided by the National Dispatching Center (Iran Electricity Network Management Company) should be followed by all power distribution



departments across the country and also by large-scale subscribers.

Furthermore, in order to reduce the country's electricity consumption by 4,000 megawatts, all industries are obliged to reduce their consumption by at least 10 percent by overhauling their equipment or closing for summer vacations within two weeks. In case of non-compliance, the electricity companies are allowed to cut

off the subscribers' electricity immediately.

A working group comprised of the ministries of Energy, Industry, Mining and Trade, Finance, and Economic Affairs will also be formed to allocate incentives such as tax deferral, and long-term tax installments to units complying with this resolution.

The cabinet has also allowed the Energy Ministry to prioritize, limit, or, if necessary,

cut off the electricity of the high-consuming subscribers in order to balance the supply and demand of electricity in the country (until the end of the summer peak consumption period).

Over the past decade, constant temperature rising and the significant decrease of rainfalls across Iran have put the country in a hard situation regarding electricity supply during peak consumption periods.

This year, however, 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.

Iranians are currently left in the dark for several hours each day based on a pre-planned outage program implemented by the Energy Ministry.

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, Oman determined to boost trade ties

**→ 1** "This approach of Oman was maintained even during the outbreak of the coronavirus, and we saw an increase in the shipping lines of this country to Iran in the first month of the current [Iranian calendar] year (March 21-April 21) and the following months", he stated.

Oman not only did not close its borders during the pandemic, when most countries closed their borders to Iranian goods, but also increased shipping lines to Iran, Zarrabi further emphasized.

According to the official, currently, port relations between the two countries are relatively good and Iranian ships are moving between the ports of Iran and Oman.

He also mentioned Oman as a base for re-exporting Iranian goods noting that the sultanate has free trade agreement with 16 Arab-African countries, the United States, Singapore and four European countries, and noted that Iran should take advantage of this golden opportunity.

Agricultural products, construction materials, building stones, minerals, metals, bitumen, and cement are the major products Iran exports to Oman.

Given the favorable conditions for increasing the diversity of Iranian exports and the existing infrastructure for re-export in Oman, there is a capacity to increase the value of trade

between the two sides to \$5 billion.

Iran has currently an increasing trend in re-exporting its goods from Oman. In fact, Oman is the only Arab country in the Persian Gulf that accepts Iranian companies through which Iran can reach the markets of other countries.

In a recent meeting with the governor-general of Iran's southern Hormozgan province, Omani ambassador to Tehran Ibrahim bin Ahmad Al-Moeini has stressed that his country welcomes the promotion of trade relations with Iran and there will be a good cooperation from the Omani side in this due.

"We try to have good and close relations between the businessmen and traders of the two countries and to ensure the interests of both parties", the envoy emphasized, adding, "We are also ready to cooperate with Iranian investors to be present and active in Oman."

Meanwhile in an online meeting between Iranian and Omani ports and maritime officials on Friday, the two sides emphasized the necessity of boosting port and maritime cooperation in a bid to promote bilateral trade ties.

During the meeting, Khosro Saraei, the director-general of Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO)'s Department of Transit, Logistics, and Agreements, said, "The good relations between the two countries should be reflected in

the increase of their trade ties, and in the meantime, we are interested in developing joint cooperation, resolving problems and optimizing the existing conditions in maritime transport and port operations of the two countries' ports."

Ahmed Al-Abri, the CEO of Oman's MARAFI Port Operations & Management Company, said, "Continuation of these meetings and joint cooperation, while resolving the executive problems between the ports of Iran and Oman, can increase the amount of trade between the two countries by creating more coordination."

In January 2020, Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) held the first meeting of its Commodity-Country Desk on trade with Oman presided by Farzad Piltan, the director-general of TPO's Office of Arabian and African Countries.

Despite the U.S. re-imposition of sanctions against Iran, Oman is getting closer to the Islamic Republic both politically and economically. There is also the same approach adopted by Iran, as Iranian companies now prefer to conduct trade with Oman rather than the United Arab Emirates, given that the UAE is highly complying with the sanctions.

Iran is somehow replacing some of its previous strategic trade partners such as UAE with Oman, considering the Sultanate as an economic-trade hub.

## South Korea, U.S. hold talks over releasing Iran's frozen assets

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN** – Senior economy officials from South Korea and the United States have held talks to discuss cooperation in various areas including releasing Iran's frozen oil money in Korean banks.

South Korean Finance Minister Hong Namki and the U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen held a meeting in Venice, Italy, on Friday on the sidelines of the G-20 Summit to discuss the mentioned issue, according to the South Korean Economy and Finance Ministry.

As reported, South Korea has proposed to use a Swiss channel for transferring Iranian money to be used for purchasing basic goods and medicine and the U.S. has agreed to cooperate

in resolving the issue.

Some seven billion dollars of Iranian oil revenues have been frozen in two South Korean banks since September 2019, when Washington's sanctions waiver for South Korea's imports of Iranian oil expired.

The two sides now appear to be moving toward a solution for the thorny issue after a few rounds of failed negotiations in January, in which both countries proposed a number of solutions none of which broke the deadlock over the issue.

Earlier in February, Abdolnasser Hemmati, the former governor of Central Bank of Iran (CBD), met with the South Korean Ambassador

to Iran Ryu Jeong-Hyun to discuss the issue and the two sides announced they have reached a deal on how to release the assets blocked in South Korean banks.

Following the meeting, Iran's state news agency IRNA reported that at the meeting, the necessary agreements regarding the transfer of assets to the intended destinations were made and the South Korean side was informed of the decisions of the CBI regarding the volume of transferred assets and the destination banks.

During a visit to Iran in January, South Korea's First Vice Foreign Minister Choi Jong-kun met with Iran's former central banker to discuss how to release the Iranian assets. According

to Iranian media, the South Korean diplomat proposed to provide Iran with ambulances and coronavirus test kits using Iran's assets. But Iran rejected the offer, saying that it wants to use the money to purchase foods and medicines. Iran also said that the Korean proposal did not include the release of all Iran's frozen assets.

With the negotiations still going on, Tehran and Seoul seem to be in the final stage of resolving the assets issue given South Korea's close contacts with the Biden administration, which has promised to rekindle diplomacy with Iran by reviving the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

## Tehran, Bishkek discuss ways of boosting bilateral trade

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN** – Head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Gholam-Hossein Shafeie met with the President of the Kyrgyz Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs Danil Ibraev in Tehran on Saturday to discuss ways of expanding trade ties between the two countries.

As reported by the ICCIMA portal, in this meeting Ibraev offered some suggestions for increasing the level of trade between the two countries which were welcomed by the Iranian side.

Holding monthly specialized meetings to determine potential areas for mutual cooperation between the two countries and using Bandar Abbas-Sarakhs railway for transiting goods from India, China and the Persian Gulf nations to Kyrgyzstan and vice versa, were among these suggestions.

In the meantime, the officials also proposed to define an integrated mechanism for boosting trade between the two countries and agreed to pursue the issue.

Referring to the importance of developing a clear and



ICCIMA Head Gholam-Hossein Shafeie (R) and the President of the Kyrgyz Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs Danil Ibraev meet in Tehran on Saturday.

integrated mechanism for trade between the two countries, Ibraev suggested: "Online specialized meetings should be

held between the businessmen of the two countries in areas where there is a capacity for cooperation."

He noted that holding such monthly meetings will have positive effects on strengthening the level of relations between the two countries. In this regard, the two sides agreed to hold the first meeting next month.

Further in the meeting, Shafeie underlined Kyrgyzstan's trade, production and regional capacities, and praised the country's strong laws for supporting the private sector, foreign investment and move towards a free economy.

According to Shafeie, a significant number of Iranian businessmen have invested in the free zones of Kyrgyzstan and are demanding the facilitation of joint cooperation between the countries.

The official noted that the two countries can have good cooperation in various fields including agriculture, tourism and energy.

He further invited the head of Kyrgyzstan Chamber of Commerce to visit Iran in the near future.

## TEDPIX loses 11,300 points on Saturday

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), fell 11,308 points to 1.27 million on Saturday, which is the first day of Iranian calendar week.

As reported, over 5.87 billion securities worth 43.985 trillion rials (about \$1.047 billion) were traded at the TSE on Saturday.

The first market's index fell 8,104 points, and the second market's index dropped 23,433 points.

TEDPIX rose 43,000 points in the past Iranian calendar week.

The index closed at 1.282 million points on Wednesday (the last working day of the week).

During the past week, the indices of Civil Servants Pension Fund (CSPF), Social Security Investment Company, Isfahan Oil Refining Company, Mobarakeh Steel Company, and

Barekat Pharmaceutical Group were the most widely followed indices.

Iran's Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO) has launched three single window systems for facilitating the processes and procedures related to the stock market activities.

The unveiling ceremony of the mentioned systems, held on Tuesday, was attended by Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Farhad Dejjasand and the SEO Head Mohammad-Ali Dehqan Dehnavi.

According to Dehnavi, these systems are going to offer various services to the companies and people active in the market.

"Companies or financial institutions had to go through many processes which took a long time for their activities in the stock market; this issue was considered as one of the concerns of

the traders and people active in this market," the official said.

Dehnavi noted that launching these single window systems would accelerate and facilitate many affairs and hopefully services would be provided more quickly and easily to the clients and companies.

Through the mentioned systems, the SEO, in collaboration with the Real Estate Registration Organization of Iran, the Iranian National Tax Administration (INTA), official newspapers, and the Iran Post, will provide all the necessary services in the shortest possible time, he explained.

According to the official, the single window services will be accessible at the SEO's new building, and by launching these windows, services that need frequent commute will be provided

more easily and in shorter times.

SEO had launched another single-window system, on June 30 2020 to accelerate the process of private companies' acceptance to the stock market.

Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA), Iranian Association of Internal Audits (IAIA), Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), and Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market, known as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on June 30, 2020, for launching the mentioned single-window system.

The mentioned system was aimed at creating a single portal for evaluating, assessing and monitoring the financial and technical situation of private sector companies for approving their entrance into the capital market.



# People angry with Palestinian Authority's security coordination with Israel: lawyer

→ There are two main narratives that circulate among the Palestinian people: The first is that what happened with martyr Nizar Banat is an intentional assassination by the Palestinian security services, and this narrative is adopted by most of the Palestinian people, including the Palestinian parties, political activists, and the martyr's family.

As for the narrative of the Palestinian Authority and the Fatah movement, the activist died during his arrest by security forces in the occupied West Bank city of Hebron. He was subjected to physical violence and beating.

Despite the fundamental difference between the two narratives, it remains a crime that shook the Palestinian people and the political parties that viewed the matter as a threat to the lives of activists, lawyers, journalists and opponents in general.

**How do you read the events that followed the killing of Nizar Banat, especially the suppression of popular protests in many Palestinian cities and the attack on journalists who tried to cover the events by beating, breaking and confiscating their equipment?**

There is no doubt that the security services of the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah were not satisfied with this extent of crime (assassinating Nizar Banat). They even resorted to suppressing the peaceful demonstrators who took to the streets in solidarity with Nizar and his cause, demanding the Authority to hold the killers and perpetrators of the crime accountable.

This is another crime in addition to the murder of Nizar Banat. The authority ignores popular demands for investigation, accountability, and refuses to dismiss some officials in the security services.



This has angered the Palestinian public, and the people consider it a double insult to all Palestinians, both through the crime of killing Nizar and the crime of attacking those who supported Nizar in the streets.

**How do the Palestinians view the policies and performance of the Authority that rules in their name but is in coordination with their enemy in matters of security and military?**

The Palestinian people are dissatisfied with the performance of the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah, especially its security performance. The people reject security coordination that besieges the legitimate Palestinian resistance. This coordination leads to the occupiers' pursuit of Palestinian activists.

The people also reject the behavior of security authority, such as its detention of journalists, lawyers and political activists. What the Palestinian Authority is doing is immoral and against the national interests of Palestine. It affects the Palestinian people's identity, history and resistance.

**What are the repercussions of the recent Israeli aggression on Gaza? And how did it lay bare Israel's approach toward the press and freedom of expression?**

Israel has practiced and still is continuing oppression against the Palestinians in all fields, before and after the recent battle in Gaza.

This regime has never stopped its crimes against the Palestinian people at any moment. But after the last war, Israel looked

at the danger of the media in undermining its narrative, so it arrested thousands of Palestinians in Jerusalem, the West Bank and the occupied interior. Israel is fighting the people and their media as well.

**Is there a glimmer of hope to change the situation in the occupied regions? Is there a popular movement or an increase in public awareness of the reality of Israeli occupation?**

There is real awareness among the Palestinian public of the need to change the behavior of the Palestinian Authority. Palestinian through their parties, institutions, associations, gatherings and popular movements have expressed their rejection of the practices of the Authority in Ramallah, especially with regard to security issues, whether in its dealings with the Palestinian people, or its coordination with the Israeli occupiers.

The Palestinian people had hoped for reforms to be made through the elections, so more than 35 blocs were formed to participate in the Palestinian elections, but President Mahmoud Abbas canceled it.

Political activities are still going on, and they will continue without stop because there is a popular consensus for change.

But this change will not happen soon for more than one reason, and one of the most important of these reasons is the people's fear of any civil war or great strife which may end in bleeding, and distract the world's attention from the occupation.

On the other hand, just as popular movements have a pivotal role in the political scene, there is a role entrusted to the parties to boost solidarity among all Palestinian sides to make changes that help the people, their rights and resistance.

## Israeli settlers: The face of U.S. imperialism in West Asia

By Haythem Guesmi

"Death to Arabs!" "May your village burn!" "A second Nakba is coming!"

These were the slogans young Israeli settlers chanted as they marched through occupied East Jerusalem's old city on June 15.

The Zionist nationalist march, celebrating the anniversary of Israel's 1967 occupation of East Jerusalem, had eerie similarities not only with last century's Nazi rallies in Europe, but also with the more recent examples of racial hatred we have seen on the other side of the Atlantic, in the United States.

For example, watching last month's so-called "March of the flags" in Jerusalem, it was difficult not to be reminded of the 2017 white supremacist march in Charlottesville, Virginia, where American white nationalists carrying tiki torches chanted slogans like "You will not replace us" and "The South will rise again". Perhaps the only difference between these two public declarations of racial hatred and the genocidal intention was the fact that, unlike their American counterparts, the Israeli racists faced no backlash or punishment.

Indeed, as genocidal policies filled the streets of occupied Jerusalem, the Israeli police refrained from making any attempts to control the settlers, but arrested 17 Palestinians protesting against this blatant provocation for "disturbing the peace".

The similarities between white supremacists in the U.S. and Zionist settlers in Israel are not coincidental. The connection between the two groups goes much deeper than a shared disdain for "the other". In fact, the Israeli settlers epitomize the ideals and policies of U.S. imperialism in the MENA region.

**The faces of American white supremacy in Israel**  
"Jacob, you know that this is not your home," she told him in English.

The settler replied in a thick U.S. accent: "Yes, but if I go, you don't go back, so what's the problem? Why are you yelling at me?"

Jacob, who gained worldwide infamy after a video of the above interaction went viral, was later revealed to be Yaakov Fauci – a Trump supporter from New York who is affiliated with the U.S.-based settler organization Nahalat Shimon.

No one, of course, was surprised to find out that the new poster boy of violent settler colonialism in Palestine is an Israeli American with apparent ties to white supremacist politics in the U.S.

Israeli American settlers have long been leading the efforts to dispossess Palestinians of their homes and land with the support of the Israeli Supreme Court and the Israeli government.

And the arguments settlers use to justify their violence – that they are the rightful owners of the land, that they are culturally superior to the Indigenous population, that they are only "defending" themselves – are almost identical to those that are being used by white supremacists in the U.S.

The best place to look to understand the obvious parallels between the goals and methods of Israeli settlers and U.S. white supremacists is perhaps the life and politics of Naftali Bennett, Israel's new prime minister.

Born to American parents who emigrated from San Francisco after the 1967 Six-Day War, Bennett was once the head of the settlers' Yesha Council, whose objective is "to safeguard Israel's strategic expanses – between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea". He built his political career as the protégé of Benjamin Netanyahu and boasted of being even more right wing than the warmonger former prime minister.

To this day, he is a staunch supporter of the one-state solution and the annexation of the West Bank by Israel. "I've killed lots of Arabs in my life," he once declared, "and there's no problem with that." Like the white supremacists in the U.S., Bennett is adamant that the Indigenous inhabitants of the lands his people are trying to claim for themselves are somewhat sub-human, and he is willing to imprison, abuse, and even kill them to achieve his goals. His story is an ethno-nationalist one penned in Palestinian blood and stolen soil.

Israeli settlers, from Naftali Bennett to Yaakov Fauci, are undoubtedly genuine embodiments of violent ethno-nationalism and the U.S. brand of white supremacy in Israel. But they are also more than that.

Today, Israeli settlers are the "Jewish face" of U.S. imperialism in the MENA region.

The "Jewish face" of U.S. imperialism

Palestinian-American intellectual and literary critic Edward Said famously talked about the connection between imperialism and Zionism.

"There is an unmistakable coincidence between the experiences of Arab Palestinians at the hands of Zionism and the experiences of those black, yellow, and brown people who were described as inferior and subhuman by nineteenth-century imperialists," he wrote in his 1979 essay, Zionism from the Standpoint of its Victims. "It is important to remember that in joining the general Western enthusiasm for overseas territorial acquisition, Zionism never spoke of itself unambiguously as a Jewish liberation movement, but rather as a Jewish movement for colonial settlement in the Orient."

For Said, it was clear that the same policies of ghettoized segregation and pogroms perpetuated against Indigenous peoples and cultures and on which the very ideas of U.S. nationalism and imperialism were built are integral to how Zionists have imagined and executed the dispossession and annihilation of Palestinians.

Today, in light of the global dominance of the U.S., there is little doubt that Zionism, and thus Israel's settler colonialism, is an extension of American imperialism.

And not only Palestinians but also Jews across the globe, are its victims.

**Jews as 'middle agents' of American imperial oppression**

In her popular 2007 pamphlet, The Past Didn't Go An-



ywhere, Jewish activist April Rosenblum argued that "the point of anti-Jewish oppression is to keep a Jewish face in front, so that Jews, instead of ruling classes, become the target for peoples' rage."

She explained how for centuries the ruling classes used Jews for "middlemen" jobs "that put them in direct contact with the exploited, disgruntled peasantry, shielding themselves from the backlash for their unjust policies". And today, the U.S. imperialists and Zionists are using Jews as a buffer, a middle agent, to shield themselves from any backlash against their imperial and ethno-nationalist ambitions in West Asia.

Indeed, for centuries, ruling classes in Europe and beyond allowed anti-semitism to rage and Jews to be scapegoated for their oppressive actions and policies. Today, they are doing the very same thing by politically and culturally pushing the idea that the violent settler colonialism of Israel represents all Jews and that anti-Zionism is in fact anti-semitism.

The U.S. anti-BDS laws, which continue to be effective under the Biden government, have driven much of the political and institutional decisions in the Western world against any criticism of anti-Zionism.

Also, mainstream media in the West is routinely pushing anti-Semitic narratives alongside arguments in support of Israel and its violent settler colonialism. They are repeatedly equating the Israeli state to Jews at large, once again laying the ground for Jews to be scapegoated for the genocidal excesses and misdeeds of violent imperial powers – this time the U.S. and its Zionist allies.

In sum, despite its self-declared commitment to protecting Jews in Israel, what the U.S. is trying to protect in Israel is its own imperial interests and ambitions. And Israeli settlers, the carbon-copies of America's own home-grown white supremacists, are acting as the foot soldiers of the empire.

Today, as the racist violence of Israeli settlers continues to rage, it is time to acknowledge and disempower the zealous efforts by U.S. imperialists and Zionists to put a "Jewish face" to their pogroms and genocidal oppression and dispossession of Palestinians – for the sake of Jews and Palestinians alike.

(Source: Alzaera)

## Taliban claims to control most of Afghanistan after rapid gains

The Taliban said it has seized control of 85 percent of territory in Afghanistan, a declaration government officials dismissed as part of a propaganda campaign.

But local Afghan officials said Taliban fighters, emboldened by NATO's withdrawal, captured an important district in Herat province, home to tens of thousands of minority Shia Hazaras.

Torghundi, a northern town on the border with Turkmenistan, was also captured by the Taliban overnight, Afghan and Taliban officials said.

The recent rapid gains come as foreign forces – including the United States – withdraw after nearly 20 years of fighting.

Afghanistan's interior ministry spokesman Tareq Arian said efforts were under way to dislodge the Taliban from their newly acquired positions.

The Afghan government has repeatedly dismissed the Taliban's gains as having little strategic value, but the seizure of multiple border crossings along with mineral-rich areas will likely fill the armed group's coffers with new sources of revenue.

With the Taliban having routed much of northern Afghanistan in recent weeks, the government holds little more than a constellation of provincial capitals that must largely be reinforced and resupplied by air.

### Prison break

Taliban fighters also attacked a prison on the edge of southern Kandahar city, the capital of their former bastion of Kandahar province, on Friday.

"The Taliban ... tried to get to the prison there. Fighting continues and we have deployed reinforcements including special forces to clear the area," said Kandahar police spokesman Jamal Naser Barekza.

Hundreds of Afghan security personnel and refugees continued to flee across the border into neighboring Iran and Tajikistan, causing concern in Russia and nearby nations that the Taliban could infiltrate Central Asia.

Three visiting Taliban officials sought to address those concerns during a visit to Moscow on Friday.

## Israeli settlements amount to 'war crime': UN expert

→ He said the settlements violate an absolute ban on an occupying power transferring part of its civilian population into occupied territory, thereby meeting the definition of a war crime under the Rome Statute founding the International Criminal Court (ICC).

"I submit to you that this finding compels the international community ... to make it clear to Israel that its illegal occupation, and its defiance of international law and international opinion, can and will no longer be cost-free," Lynk told the Geneva rights forum.

Responding to Lynk's report, former member of the Palestinian Liberation Organization executive committee Hanan Ashrawi posted on Twitter: "Calling things by their name!"

## France to withdraw over 2,000 troops from Africa

French President Emmanuel Macron says his country will withdraw more than 2,000 troops from West Africa's Sahel region in the coming months.

During the past years, the former colonial power has maintained military intervention in the volatile area under the pretext of fighting terrorism, but has failed in its purported mission.

After talks in a virtual summit with the leaders of five West African nations at the Elysee presidential Palace in Paris on Friday, Macron said France will pull out over 2,000 troops from its Barkhane force in Africa's Sahel region by early next year and instead pivot its military presence to specialized regional forces.

The French Barkhane force, operating in Mali, Chad, Niger, Burkina Faso and Mauritania, currently has 5,000 troops in the region.

Macron said France would focus over the next six months on dismantling the Barkhane operation, closing bases in Sahel's north and reorganizing troops in the south of the region.

"France will first move its troops further south and then later start reducing their presence to around half the current level of some 5,100 soldiers," he said.

## Resistance News

## Israeli forces injure over 400 Palestinians in Nablus

Israeli forces have injured 411 Palestinians during clashes with anti-settlement protesters in the town of Beita and the nearby village of Qusra in the occupied West Bank province of Nablus.

According to the Palestine Red Crescent Society, 23 Palestinians were shot with live ammunition fired by Israeli forces during clashes on Sobeih Mountain in the town of Beita, and Qusra, south of Nablus, on Friday.

The injured also included 70 Palestinians who were hit by rubber bullets and 260 others who suffered breathing difficulties due to inhaling tear gas fired by the Israeli troops during the clashes.

Over the past two months, Beita has seen intensified clashes between Israeli forces and Palestinians protesting against a settlement outpost that has been recently established on the mountain by settlers under the protection of Israeli forces.

To the east of Nablus, Israeli forces attacked a weekly anti-settlement protest in the village of Beit Dajan on Friday, using live ammunition and sound bombs against the demonstrators.

Meanwhile, dozens of Palestinians, including children, suffered breathing difficulties due to inhaling tear gas fired by Israeli troops at a weekly anti-settlement rally that was held in the West Bank village of Kafr Qaddum.

Also on Friday, Israeli forces attacked a protest condemning Israel's settlement expansion policy and Israeli settlers' repeated attacks on the Palestinians and their properties in Masafer Yatta, south of the West Bank city of al-Khalil (Hebron).

The protesters urged the international community and human rights organizations to shoulder their responsibility and protect the Palestinians from the persistent Israeli attacks.

Israeli forces also attacked Palestinians who gathered in al-Ras area, west of the West Bank city of Salfit, to perform Friday prayers.

Al-Ras area is threatened with seizure by Israel for the construction of a settlement outpost.

More than 600,000 Israelis live in over 230 settlements built since the 1967 Israeli occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem al-Quds.

All Israeli settlements are illegal under international law as they are built on occupied land. The United Nations Security Council has condemned Israel's settlement activities in the occupied territories in several resolutions.

## Over 1,250 Irish artists pledge to boycott Israel in protest at mistreatment of Palestinians

Hundreds of Irish artists, including actors, novelists, playwrights, poets, designers, composers, architects, painters, sculptors, filmmakers and others, have expressed solid support for the international anti-Israel movement of Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS), and announced that they intend not to perform or exhibit in the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories.

The Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign (IPSC) announced that its "Irish Artists' Pledge to Boycott Israel" has just

passed the 1,250 signatory mark.

The IPSC said the boycott of Israel also means that the cultural workers would not accept any funding from institutions linked to the Tel Aviv regime.

The pledge signed by the artists stated that the boycott would continue, "until such time as Israel complies with international law and universal principles of human rights".

The Irish artists' pledge was initiated by renowned composer, and IPSC co-founder, Raymond Deane.

It commits signatories to refrain from performing in Israel. The campaign was launched by the Ireland-Palestine Solidarity Campaign (IPSC) in August 2010.

Irish singer and songwriter Damien Dempsey hoped the boycott would encourage young people in Israel who disagreed with the regime to "speak out".

Musician Donal Lunny said he was taking part to "express solidarity with the Palestinian people".

When asked about the boycott's chances for success, Eoin Dillon, a performer with

Irish and world music band Kila, said: "It worked in South Africa."

The BDS movement was initiated in 2005 by over 170 Palestinian organizations that were pushing for "various forms of boycott against Israel until it meets its obligations under international law."

Thousands of volunteers worldwide have since then joined the BDS movement, which calls for people and groups across the world to cut economic, cultural and academic ties to Tel Aviv, to help promote the Palestinian cause.



## Yazd to boost astronomical tourism

**TOURISM d e s k** **TEHRAN** – The astronomical tourism is planned to be developed in the city of Bahabad, the central province of Yazd, a local tourism official has announced.

The tourism infrastructure of the region will be improved in the near future, Alireza Kazemi said on Saturday.

In addition to its location as one of the darkest observation spots in West Asia, Bahabad has many natural tourist areas, low light pollution, and little dust in the air, which makes it a great place for stargazing, the official added.

By arranging astronomical tours, the region could attract astronomical groups and night sky enthusiasts, thereby boosting tourism, he noted.

Astronomical tourism represents a less-studied segment of sustainable tourism, where a dark night sky is an underlying resource, and this branch of tourism could lead to sustainable development in rural areas.

Modern life, never-sleeping cities, air pollution, and industrial dust have ruined the human experience of starry velvet nights our ancestors used to praise. In modern cities, the chance to see a sky full of stars is rare, but there are some places in the world, which are still safe from human reach.

Illuminated only by the stars and having a clear sky, Iranian deserts are dream places for astronomy enthusiasts and sky lovers to experience dark night observatories.

The country is also home to several historical caravanserais hosting astronomical tourists from ancient eras to the present, which are restored and facilitated to receive guests.



Astronomy has a long and rich history among Iranians. Stars have fascinated humans for ages, while some have worshiped them. Iranians have studied them and there are world-renowned Iranian scientists in this field such as Nasir ad-Din Tusi, who was the founder of Maragheh observatory, an astronomical observatory established in 1259, with a library, which is said at one time to have held over 400,000 volumes of literature related to astronomy and astrology.

Some countries in the world have used their regional potentials to develop the tourism industry in this particular field and have been able to introduce themselves as an attractive destination for astronomy tours.

For several years, Chile has been able to become a leader in astronomical tourism by focusing on this type of tourism. Countries such as Canada, Sweden, Russia, India, and China have also been successful in this industry, and many tourists from all over the world travel to these countries every year.

With its winding lanes, a forest of badgirs (wind catchers), mud-brick houses, atmospheric alleyways, and centuries of history, Yazd is a delightful place to stay, referring to as a ‘don’t miss’ destination by almost all travel associates in the region. The oasis city is wedged between the northern Dasht-e Kavir and the southern Dasht-e Lut on a flat plain ringed by mountains.

Yazd Jameh Mosque, Dowlatabad Garden, the Yazd Atash Behram, also known as Atashkadeh-e Yazd, Towers of Silence, and adjacent desert landscape are among its tourist sites.

## Cultural elements in Qazvin added to national heritage list

**HERITAGE d e s k** **TEHRAN** – A total of eight new cultural elements, which are practiced in the northwestern province of Qazvin, have been inscribed on the national intangible cultural heritage list.

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

The talent of making doimaj, the skill of making Aloulak dolls and the skill of making Arsuleh Ash were among the items added to the prestigious list.

Qazvin was once the capital of the mighty Persian Empire, under Safavids, from 1548 to 98. It is a major tourist destination with a wonderfully restored caravanserai-turned-arts precinct, some quirky museums, and a handful of decent eating options. For most travelers, Qazvin is also primarily the staging point for excursions to the famous Castles of the Assassins and trekking in the sensational Alamut Valley.



Also known as the castle of the Assassins, the 12th-century Alamut castle is nestled on top of a peak. It was once a shelter for the followers of Hasan-e Sabbah (1070–1124) who was a spiritual leader of an Islamic sect. In the early 1930s, British-Italian explorer and travel writer Freya Stark described her exploration of the place in her book “The Valleys of the Assassins”.

Qazvin is also home to one of the biggest roofed caravanserais of the country, Sa’-d-al Saltaneh caravanserai. Dating back to the Qajar era, it’s a place for discovering tens of Højreh or shops, cafes, yards, and a stunning mosque. It’s a place for visitors who want to experience the culture, culinary, and hospitality of Iran.

# Iran’s memories in Afghanistan: two sisters apart

## → 1 Aq Koprok Archaeological Sites

Aq Koprok is a collection of four archaeological sites in Afghanistan dating back to the prehistoric period, which spans from Paleolithic time to the Sassanid period.

**Ghazni**  
Located in southeastern Afghanistan, Ghazni, historically known as Ghaznin or Ghazna, was conquered by the Achaemenid king Cyrus II and incorporated into the Persian Empire in the 6th century BC.

The city was the capital of Ghaznavids, a Persian Muslim dynasty from 977 to 1163. In the first decades of the 11th century, Ghazni was the most important center of Persian literature.

For centuries, travelers and archeologists have been drawn to beautiful places like the Ghazni Citadel, the Ghazni Minarets, and the Palace of Sultan Masoud III, all built during the time of Iranian rulers.

**Taq Bost**  
The structure is a large brick arch that is cut with bricks on both sides and is about 25 meters. The monument was built during Ghaznavid-era and was restored over time.

The arch was the entrance gate to the historic city of Bost or Lashkar Gah, which was the winter capital at the time.

**Lashkari Bazaar**  
Near the city of Lashkargah, there are the remains of some places known as Lashkari Bazaar or Al-Asqar, meaning



the area of the troops.

Located on the banks of the Helmand River, one of the palaces known as Southern Castle has remained a little intact.

Based on both textual sources and finds made during excavations at the site, scholars attribute the palace to Ghaznavid king Mahmud I and date it to the early years of his reign (r. 998-1030).

The palace is situated at a point on the

Helmand approximately eight kilometers north of the Citadel of Bust where the riverbank forms a natural corner so that two facades of the palace afford river-front views.

The plan is roughly rectangular and is aligned nearly perfectly with the cardinal directions. Its main axis runs from south to north. It was constructed largely of mud-brick, with baked brick used for

the most monumental and important components.

Even though the palace has been destroyed, looted, rebuilt, and restored a few times, there are still murals and paintings inside that attract visitors.

**Persian elite’ mausoleums and tombs**

Afghanistan is the final resting place of many Iranian poets, scientists, artists, and kings.

The mausoleum of Mahmud of Ghazni, who was the first independent ruler of Ghaznavids (999-1030) is six kilometers from the city of Ghazni.

Hakim Abul-Majd Sanai Ghaznavi, more commonly known as Sanai, was a Persian poet from Ghazni who lived his life in the Ghaznavid Empire at the time of its golden age, in medieval Khorasan, which is now located in Afghanistan. He was buried in Ghazni.

Iranian poet and theologian Naser Khosrow Qubadiani (1004-c.1072/77), who is known for Safar-nameh (“Book of Travel”), a diary describing his seven-year journey is buried on a hill in Badakhshan.

The tomb of Khwaja Abdullah Ansari (1006–1088), a devout Sufi, known as “The Pious One” during his lifetime, is in Herat.

The mausoleum of Persian scholar, polymath, and historian, Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, who became the most original polymath the Islamic world had ever known, is located in the city of Ghazni.

## Jameh Mosque of Ardestan gains former glory

**HERITAGE d e s k** **TEHRAN** – Parts of the Jameh Mosque of Ardestan, which is named after an ancient oasis town of the same name in central Iran, underwent some rehabilitation works, Ardestan’s tourism chief has said.

The project involved repairing one of the five entrance gates to the mosque, which was damaged by termites, Mehdi Mashhadi announced on Saturday.

Experienced restorers and cultural heritage experts carried out the project, which lasted one month, the official added.

The Jameh Mosque of Ardestan is of high historical importance as it incorporates successive architectural styles of the Sassanids, Buyids, Seljuks, and Safavids.

The Congregational Mosque of Ardestan is an early Islamic building with many accretions over its long history of use. However, a majority of what visitors to the mosque see dates from the Seljuk era (ca. 1040–1196).

Located in Isfahan province, the two-story hypostyle mosque has a four-portico (iwan) courtyard surrounded by encircling arcades. The place of worship is part of larger premises that also include other mudbrick structures such as a cistern, a caravanserai, a marketplace, a bathhouse, and a madrasa.

According to ARCHNET, the earliest dated inscription on the building is from the 12th/6th c. AH, but evidence of an earlier mosque remains, suggesting that

its original foundation could date to the 10th-11th/4th-5th c. AH or earlier.

The mosque stands on a site once occupied by a Sasanian structure, as evidenced by remains discovered in archaeological excavations. The early mosque was likely a hypostyle type, having a central courtyard surrounded by arcades.

Remains of some of these arcades in the current mosque show that they were covered with barrel vaults. As it stands today, the mosque occupies an irregular space centered on a rectangular courtyard with four iwans, incorporating pieces of the earlier hypostyle structure.

The iwans on the southwest (qibla) and northeast sides of the courtyard are larger, rising to a greater height and being wider as well. Behind the southwest iwan is a square chamber surmounted by a dome resting on an octagonal transition zone formed by eight engaged arches.

Between the iwans are vaulted bays of irregular size and shape on two stories. Behind the vaulted bays in the southern quadrant of the mosque, a long corridor leads from two entrances onto the vaulted bays on the southeastern side of the courtyard.

The exterior of the mosque is quite irregular while the facades of the courtyard are harmonious, with the iwans aligned and roughly the same size, not unlike the situation in the Great Mosque of Isfahan, which also



evolved over centuries and went through a major renovation during the Seljuk period. Currently, the mosque has several entrances.

The interior of the dome chamber and iwan are extensively covered in plaster. The dome and zone of transition are articulated with simulated brickwork; the iwan vault is uniquely faced with a complex stucco design of interlacing arabesques. The mihrab exemplifies skilled stucco carving and may represent Mongol restoration.

The mosque was inscribed on the national heritage list in 1931.

## Ancient bridge in Lorestan restored, strengthened

**HERITAGE d e s k** **TEHRAN** – A restoration project has been recently completed on the historical Kashkan Bridge, which suffered damage from heavy flooding in 2019.

The Sassanid-era (224 CE to 651) monument is located in the western province of Lorestan.

The project intended to strengthen and repair the foundation and the pillars of the bridge, CHTN quoted the provincial tourism chief as saying on Saturday.

A budget of three billion rials (\$71,400 at the official exchange rate of 42,000 rials per



dollar) was allocated to the project, Amin Qasemi added.

The bridge was restored as close to its

original condition as possible using the same materials similar to those used in its construction, he explained.

Kashkan Bridge is 300 meters long, and it originally had 11 columns and 12 arches, some parts of which are ruined or wiped away. Its height varies between 10 to 26 meters. Inscribed on the National Heritage List, the bridge is one of the most spectacular attractions of the ancient region.

Days of devastating flooding and heavy rain in March 2019 inflicted damage to tens of cultural heritage sites in Lorestan. For instance, it washed away parts of a historic

hill, on top of which the famed Falak-ol-Aflak Castle is nested.

Lorestan, which is a region of raw beauty, was inhabited by Iranian Indo-European peoples, including the Medes, c. 1000 BC. Cimmerians and Scythians intermittently ruled the region from about 700 to 625 BC. The Luristan Bronzes noted for their eclectic array of Assyrian, Babylonian, and Iranian artistic motifs, date from this turbulent period. Lorestan was incorporated into the growing Achaemenid Empire in about 540 BC and successively was part of the Seleucid, Parthian, and Sasanid dynasties.

## “Ab Pashoonak” or Splashing Water: The ceremony of the beginning of summer

Ancient Iranian people celebrated the beginning of every season in groups, including summer. In that period, an indicator of the beginning of summer and the summer revolution was the solar structures (solar calendars), such as Chahar Taqi.

The sun can be seen from a special angel between the columns of these structures during sunrise when the new cycle of four-season began. There is an example of these Chahar Taqi in Niasar. According to the gahambers calendar (meaning “proper season” and it is the oldest known calendar in Iran which divided a year into four seasons and four semi seasons), the beginning of the summer was the commencement of the New Year too and it has remained in the Tabari calendar.

At the beginning of summer, the sun rises from its highest position on the northeast horizon and falls to its highest place on the northwest horizon. In that era, people had a particular attachment to cosmic phenomena and interfered them with their daily lives, rituals, and beliefs and many rituals and celebrations were held at this time.

Although the memory of many ceremonies is weak today, the beginning of summer is celebrated as “Ab Pashoonak” or Splashing Water in Arak, Farahan, Mahallat and many other cities in the center of Iran. It is called Avval Toostooni (the beginning of the summer) and



many participate in this ceremony by splashing water to the others.

There are a lot of hypotheses and theories for this celebration. For example, it is said that there was one time which there was no rain in Iran for seven years and Firooz, the son of Yazdgerd the Iranian king, was worried about starvation or death. However, no one died of hunger and after the first raining, people were

so happy that they thanked God and splashed water to each other.

Another hypothesis says that one of the Iranian kings returned home happily after his victory in the battle and it was the first day of the summer. He reached the qanat of Zolf Abad (located in Markazi Province) where he imagined a beautiful woman who splashed some water. The king was delighted and he splashed water on the faces of his companions.

There are other forgotten ceremonies at the beginning of the summer; in the sixth day of Tir (the fourth month of solar calendar and the first month of the summer), there was a ceremony that Ab? Ray??n Al-B?r?n? also spoke of it, and it was called “Ceremony of Lotus” which was related to the flourishing of lotus at the beginning of the summer, or “Eid Mah (the ceremony of the moon)”.

The people from Savadkooh and some other mountainous regions in Tabarestan and Mazandaran celebrated it by making fires on the mountains. The ritual of “Goje Aroos (bride tomato)” or “Gol Arros (bride flower)” was held in some parts of Khorasan and the west of Afghanistan. During this ceremony, they celebrate the beginning of the summer by giving the fruits, flour, and rock candy to the newlywed brides.

(Source: Visit Iran)



# Tehran-Havana strategic cooperation on coronavirus vaccine production

→ **1** An emergency permit for the Iranian-Cuban vaccine (called Pastu Covac in Iran) was issued on June 29, IRINN reported on Saturday.

The vaccine is also 100 percent effective in preventing severe forms of disease and mortality.

Pastu Covac is a conjugate vaccine with two injectable doses. It consists of the receptor-binding domain of the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein conjugated chemically to tetanus toxoid. This is the first vaccine to have a booster dose, and it is a great help to evaluate the results of human trials.

## Vaccine production achievements

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

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



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

To date, the first Iranian-made vaccine has received an emergency use license, called COVIRAN BAREKAT, which is being injected to people across the country and can provide probably between 30 and 50 million doses, by the end of September.

Christoph Hamelmann, the former representative of the World Health Organization in Iran, said in March that Iran has one of the most successful platforms in the world for COVID-19 vaccine production.

"Considering the production line of the Pasteur vaccine, Iran is very advanced and successful in developing a vaccine while being able to help other countries, I am sure that Iran's vaccine production platform is one of the most successful ones in the region," he said.

## Maryam Mirzakhani festival honors 25 women scientists

→ **1** In this edition of the festival, 416 women competed in various scientific fields, 25 of whom were among the winners that were announced on the closing date (July 10).

Some 13 people are selected as scientists who will receive Maryam Mirzakhani national award, two women are worthy of appreciation in the scientific section, one will be granted the Parvaneh Farzaneh Award, four won

the award of social activists, three people will be granted the award of scientific excellence and two others are the winners of the UNESCO award.

Mirzakhani won a gold medal in the Hong Kong International Mathematical Olympiad, in 1994, to be the first female Iranian student to have snatched a gold medal.

In the 1995 Toronto International Mathematical Olympiad, she became the first Iranian student to win two

gold medals.

She obtained her BSc in mathematics from Sharif University of Technology, Tehran, in 1999. Mirzakhani then moved to the U.S. and finished a Ph.D. from Harvard University in 2004.

In 2017, Mirzakhani, the winner of the Fields Medal, also known as the Nobel Prize of mathematics, succumbed to breast cancer at 40.

## COVID-19 impact on fertility should take center stage



By Faranak Bakhtiari

**TEHRAN** – In this second year of COVID-19, many countries are expressing growing concern over changing fertility rates, in addition to losing hundreds of people daily due to the virus infection. So that, this World Population Day will focus on the impact of the pandemic on fertility.

The pandemic has compromised health care systems particularly in the area of reproductive health.

UNFPA advises against reactionary policy responses, which can be extremely harmful if they violate rights, health, and choices. The agency emphasizes that women must be empowered educationally, economically, and politically to exercise choice over their bodies and fertility.

World Population Day is observed on July 11 each year. It took hundreds of thousands of years for the world population to grow to 1 billion – then in just another 200 years or so, it grew sevenfold. In 2011, the global population reached the 7 billion mark, and today, it stands at about 7.7 billion, and it's expected to grow to around 8.5 billion in 2030, 9.7 billion in 2050, and 10.9 billion in 2100.

This dramatic growth has been driven largely by increasing numbers of people surviving to reproductive age and has been accompanied by major changes in fertility rates, increasing urbanization, and accelerating migration. These trends will have far-reaching implications for generations to come.

The recent past has seen enormous changes in fertility rates and life expectancy. In the early 1970s, women had on average 4.5 children each; by 2015, total fertility for the world had fallen to below 2.5 children per woman. Meanwhile, average global lifespans have risen, from 64.6 years

in the early 1990s to 72.6 years in 2019.

In addition, the world is seeing high levels of urbanization and accelerating migration. 2007 was the first year in which more people lived in urban areas than in rural areas, and by 2050 about 66 percent of the world population will be living in cities.

These megatrends have far-reaching implications. They affect economic development, employment, income distribution, poverty, and social protections. They also affect efforts to ensure universal access to health care, education, housing, sanitation, water, food, and energy. To more sustainably address the needs of individuals, policymakers must understand how many people are living on the planet, where they are, how old they are, and how many people will come after them.

### Zero population growth in 20 years

Iran, which is now called "middle-aged" with about 70 percent of the active population, is sounding the alarm about the declining trend of population growth and the upward trend of aging.

In 1977, the country's population grew by 3.4 percent annually, however, suddenly, it dropped to about 1.6 percent in 2006, and a decade later, the population growth rate stood at 1.24, showing a considerable decline.

However, some experts claimed that the rate has declined to 0.6 percent in 2020.

Generally, three factors of birth, mortality, and immigration are effective in population growth.

In 1977, the average number of children per woman was 7, which reached 1.8 children in 2006, and finally, in 2016, the ratio was estimated at 1.24.

It is estimated that population growth will reach zero in 2040 and then becomes negative, so the biggest concern is that Iran's population will age in the coming years, fertility will decline, and the population of youth will decrease.

The causes of declining fertility as increasing literacy, education, and urbanization, she said that "whenever development indicators increase in each country, the fertility rate decreases and in Iran the fertility rate has decreased."

### Demographic window of opportunity

In demography, the population under the age of 15 is called "young". In 1977, 46 percent of the people were young, while now 23 percent of the population are below 15 years of age.

In 2006, the elderly constituted 3 percent of the population, which now increased to 8-9 percent. At that time, the population was very young and now is middle-aged.

Iran has achieved a demographic window of opportunity

which in all other countries led to economic prosperity so that Iran must seize the opportunity now before its working-age population starts to shrink and get older in the 2050s.

### Highest fertility decline in human history

According to the data released by the National Organization for Civil Registration, the number of births registered during the [Iranian calendar] year 1390 (March 2011-March 2012) was equal to 1,382,118, which increased to 1,528,053 births in the [Iranian calendar] year 1395 (March 2016-March 2017).

However, the number of births in the whole country faced a downturn over the past three years, as registered births decreased to 1,196,135 over the [Iranian calendar] year 1398 (March 2019- March 2020); a difference of roughly over 120,000 to 16,000 per year.

Nicholas Eberstadt, the Henry Wendt Chair in Political Economy at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) wrote in an article in July 2020 that the fertility rate in Iran has dropped by 70 percent over the past 30 years, which has been the highest decline in human history.

Melinda Gates, an American philanthropist and co-founder of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, also wrote on her Twitter account that "The fastest decrease in the rate of childbearing per woman in the history of the world has happened in Iran!"

Seyed Hamed Barakati, deputy health minister for family and school population, said in May that Iran's population growth rate has decreased to less than one percent for the first time over the past four decades.

At the beginning of the Islamic Revolution (in 1979), the country's population grew by 2.5 percent annually, however, suddenly, population growth reached about 1.5 percent in the 1980s, he highlighted.

### How to reverse the trend?

Although, several plan and programs on population growth and family support have been proposed in the country to solve the downward trend of fertility, not an effective result have yet achieved.

Recently, the Majlis (Iranian Parliament) approved on March 16 to implement a population growth and family support plan for 7 years to change the declining trend of childbearing.

However, it would be a good plan if it is strictly enforced and well implemented. If it is not implemented well or only some clauses are implemented, the plan will not seem to be successful, according to Shahla Kazemipour, a demographer.

## COVID-19 UPDATES

The statistics are related to 24 hours started 2:00 p.m. July 9

New cases	11,664
New deaths	151
Total cases	3,355,786
Total deaths	85,694
New hospitalized patients	1,418
Patients in critical condition	3,602
Total recovered patients	3,010,090
Diagnostic tests conducted	24,437,503
Doses of vaccine injected	6,726,801

## Iranian artists weave exquisite rug specially for Tokyo Olympics

**SOCIETY TEHRAN** – For the first time, an elegant and luxury carpet has been produced by Iranian artists aiming to showcase the history of the Olympics at the 2020 Tokyo games.



Some 250 colors have been used in weaving the carpet, measuring 230cm by 170cm in dimensions, IRNA reported on Saturday.

It is somehow a kind of encyclopedia for the games, as pictures of renowned figures such as the founder of the modern Olympic Games, Pierre de Coubertin; the Japanese emperor Meiji; the Iranian legendary wrestler, Gholamreza Takhti; and the American former swimmer and the most successful Olympian, Michael Phelps; are seen on the rug.

Eight masters of carpet weaving have endeavored round the clock over the course of six months to complete the artwork.

Flags of participating countries have also been woven in the form of scales on two koi fish, which are symbols of love and friendship in Japan. Persian carpets are sought after internationally for their delicate designs and high quality. Official figures show handmade carpets have a significant share in Iran's non-oil exports.

For millennia, Iran's eminent carpets, which are adored for their intricate designs, lavish colors, and matchless craftsmanship, have been produced by hand along the nomad trail across the foothills and high plains of the ancient land.

Weavers, almost all of them women, spend several months in front of a loom, stringing and knotting thousands of threads. Some practice established patterns, some make their own.

## Climate characteristic of Iran

### (Part 3)

Clashes in atmospheric pressure over smaller areas result in another very characteristic feature of Persian weather: the "dust devils" that occur daily all over the plateau during the summer months. They are formed wherever there are slight differences in the heating of the earth's surface, for example, when there is extreme localized heating of exposed rock.

These dust devils, frequently only a few meters in diameter, suck sand and dust up into wind spouts, sometimes several hundred meters high, and usually blow themselves out after traveling very short distances.

Temperature and precipitation. Persia's situation on the boundary between the "subtropical Saharan-Ara-bian portion of the desert belt controlled by the trade winds" of the eastern hemisphere, on one hand, and the "Turkestan-Central Asian portion, which belongs to the temperate zone" (Bobek, 1952, p. 65), on the other, is extremely significant.

As already suggested, both the climate and the topography of the country contribute to distinct regional differences. Harry Bobek (1952, p. 65) has remarked correctly that, if it were not for the Zagros and Alborz, which disrupt the general system of wind circulation and force humid air masses to give up their moisture in precipitation, the two zones mentioned would be "desert spaces flowing into each other without boundaries," and neither the Caspian Sea nor the Persian Gulf would be sufficient to water the wasteland.

An attempt to plot the average temperatures for the entire country reveals a general increase from north-west to southeast reflecting both the respective geo-graphical positions and the elevations of the different regions. Whereas most of Azerbaijan is characterized by average annual temperatures of about 10° C, the average annual temperature on the Persian plateau is between 15 and 20° C.

The entire Persian Gulf coast area, on the other hand, registers an annual average of more than 25° C; the highest annual average, about 30° C, occurs in southeastern Persia (station: Iranshahr). In many respects average monthly temperatures and the annual extremes are much more significant than annual averages, especially in determining land use.

The climate on the plateau is characterized by hot summers and extremely cold winters, with resulting broad ranges between the annual maximum and minimum temperatures, 20° C or more at many upland stations (e.g., Tabriz, -1.7° C in January, 25.4° C in July). Indeed, the annual temperature range can be as much as 50-60° C, with winter lows of -25° C or less and summer highs of more than 40° C, often lasting as long as a day or even a week in certain enclosed stream basins in the mountainous border areas of the north and west.

(Source: Encyclopaedia Iranica)

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A ← → E

## Iran gets ready for two-week coronavirus closure

The National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control will implement a plan, according to which all occupations, except for emergency services and basic food suppliers, will be closed for two weeks in more than 100 cities in an attempt to curb the coronavirus. Alireza Reisi, a spokesman for the Headquarters, said that "the plan will go into effect on November 21."

The plan divides cities into three levels of alert, according to which, if a city is in a state of high alert, all other occupations will be closed, except for the most essential jobs, which are related to the provision of basic necessities, security, and health.

Deputy health minister Iraj Harirchi has predicted that the COVID-19 death toll would double in the next two weeks.

## اجرای طرح تعطیلی دو هفته ای سراسری برای مقابله با کرونا هفته آینده

ستاد ملی مقابله با کرونا در ایران طرحی را اجرا خواهد کرد که بر مبنای آن بیش از ۱۰۰ شهر از جمله تهران با وضعیت هشدار بالای کرونا به مدت دو هفته تعطیل خواهند بود.

به گزارش ایسنا، علیرضا ریسی سخنگوی ستاد ملی مقابله با کرونا گفت: این طرح از اول آذرماه آغاز می شود.

این طرح شهرها را به سه سطح هشدار تقسیم بندی می کند که بر اساس آن، اگر شهری در وضعیت سطح هشدار بالا قرار گیرد به جز مشاغل خیلی ضروری که مربوط به تهیه مایحتاج ضروری مردم، امنیت و سلامت می شوند، بقیه مشاغل همه تعطیل هستند. ایرج حریرچی معاون وزیر بهداشت از پیش بینی ها در دو برابر شدن مرگ ناشی از کرونا در دو هفته آینده خبر داد.



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Recommended prayers cannot attain the pleasures of Allah for you when obligatory prayers are left unattended.  
*Imam Ali (AS)*

## Iranian pre-Islamic elements in Islamic art

### Part 1

Numerous Iranian pre-Islamic elements have contributed significantly to the formation and development of Islamic art, and they can be easily recognized in various contexts, from town-planning to architecture, from the continuity of techniques of both manufacture and decoration to iconography and some of its symbols.

Among the latter, one may mention the Sassanid crowns illustrated in the mosaic of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem (dated 691), or the interesting image on the reverse of an Arab-Sassanid dirham of 694-99, preserved in four examples and showing a lance within an arch.

The lance “was one of the formal symbols of the Prophetic and caliphal power”, and when placed within an arch, it also represented an axis mundi connecting the earth to the sky, in the sense of the vault of heaven.

The most striking example of such town-planning is the round city of Baghdad, the Abbasid capital founded by caliph Abu Jafar al-Mansur in 762.

This circular plan, originally derived most probably from the structure of Assyrian military camps (circular or oval enclosures), was a characteristic feature of major Parthian and Sassanid towns.

Baghdad is particularly similar to the Sassanid circular cities of Ardashir I, especially Ardashir Corra, later known as Firuzabad, which according to Ebn al-Faqih was built on the model of Darabjerd.

There is evidence in the Islamic architecture of some planimetric solutions and building techniques suggesting that they were derived from pre-Islamic Iranian precedents.

The plan of the Sassanid chahar taq has met with considerable success in Iranian religious architecture. According to some scholars, the mosque (of uncertain date) in the village of Yazd-e Khast, on the border between Fars and Isfahan, was established on a chahar taq.

The Masjid-e Digaran in Khazara, near Bukhara, had a similar plan, surrounded by a corridor (on the Islamic chahar taq functioning as emamzadeh).

Two buildings in Damghan share similar significant features, namely a Sassanid building at Tepe Hessar and the Tarikkhaneh, a mosque dating from the 8th century.

The vestibule of the Sassanid building (divided into three aisles) shows two arcades resting on massive round piers and side walls supporting three parallel tunnel-vaults opening into the courtyard, a layout also used in the Tarikkhaneh.

Both in the Sassanid building and in the Tarikkhaneh, the round piers, constructed of baked bricks, are set vertically and horizontally in alternate courses, without foundations; moreover, their diameters are nearly the same.

The later Friday Mosque (Masjed-e jame) of Nain (dating from ca. 960), while possessing narrower round pillars, is entirely covered with stucco decoration like the Sassanid building at Tepe Hessar (for other Iranian mosques deriving from Sassanid architectural prototypes).

Lionel Bier was skeptical of the supposed influence of Sassanid palace architecture on early Islamic architecture. Making reference to Gertrude Bell, who in Bier’s words, in her survey of the Sassanid palaces “was sometimes obliged to make analogies with the better-preserved palace at Ukhaidir in Iraq to fill in the missing parts,” Bier sarcastically states: “Put less delicately, it seems to me a fine example of how Sassanid architecture can be influenced by early Islam”.

Although the ayvan and the domed chamber are certainly the most important elements of Sassanid architecture surviving in the Islamic context, Bier hesitates to acknowledge a precise correspondence between the continuity of the Sassanid court ceremonial which survived into the Islamic period, and the continuity of form and function of the architectural background, which is not clearly recognizable either in the sources or from the archeological evidence.

Concerning the Umayyad throne complex at Moshatta (dated to 743-44), now a ruined structure in Jordan, Bier states, “neither the triconch nor the pillared hall is known in Sassanid palace architecture ..., the Sassanid audience was connected primarily, if not exclusively, with the ayvan hall, with or without a domed chamber in back.”

With regard to the affinity between the pillared hall/ayvan with a square domed chamber at Tepe Hessar near Damghan and the Emarat-e Khosrow in Qasr-e Shirin (dated 590-628), Bier says, “the Imarat-i Khusraw is a fantasy based partly on Damghan itself, the arrangement at Damghan must remain an anomaly.”

However, the same complex is in the dar ul-emara in Kufa, in Iraq, and, as regards the three-aisled hall, Masudi, in the 10th century, makes reference to the prototype of Hira.

The last section of Bier’s study, however, is focused on the most probable methods of transmission of elements from Sassanid to Islamic architecture.

The Sassanid four axial ayvans fronting a domed room can be found in Abbasid palaces of the 8th and 9th centuries.

Source: Encyclopedia Iranica  
To be continued

# Prophet Muhammad (S) subject of Ruholamin’s latest painting “Jabal an-Nur”

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — Hassan Ruholamin, the Iranian painter who is most famous for illustrating stories from the history of Islam, put his spotlight on the Prophet Muhammad (S) in his latest artwork “Jabal an-Nur”.

The painting depicts the Prophet of Islam (S) climbing the rocks toward the cave of Hira, where he received his first revelation, which consisted of the first five ayats of Surah Al-Alaq from the angel Gabriel.

On pilgrimage to the Kaaba, Muslims usually visit the site located near Mecca in Saudi Arabia.

The acrylic painting was done on a 100 X 150-centimeter canvas on July 6 and 7 during the World Congress of Arts for Muhammad (S), the Prophet of Mercy at Nasirolmolk Mosque, a historical site in the southern Iranian city of Shiraz.

The Center for Artistic Creations of Professors in Shiraz organizes the congress in collaboration with several Islamic centers.

The deadline for applications was July 9. Top works in painting, calligraphy, calligraphic painting, poster design, typography, digital art, short film, music video, play, and short story and poetry will be honored on October 24.

Ruholamin, 36, unveiled his painting



This combination photo shows artist Hassan Ruholamin drawing “Jabal an-Nur” about the Prophet Muhammad (S) at Nasirolmolk Mosque in Shiraz on July 7, 2021 and the painting after completion.

“Cave of Hira” about Prophet Muhammad (S) in 2018.

He was selected as the Islamic Revolution Artist of the Year 2020 by the Art Bureau of the Islamic Ideology Dissemination

Organization. He also received a nomination for the title in 2018.

The Khial Gallery of the Saba Art and Cultural Institute in Tehran showcased a collection of his paintings in October 2020

## “Sfumato” wins award at Archaeology Channel film festival

In the process of documenting these challenges, the film explores Iranian culture, the role of children in the Iranian family dynamic, and the role of females in Iranian society.

It shows how one family is breaking free of those traditional constraints by encouraging their daughter in her effort to obtain a license and drive a motorcycle.

“Sfumato” also won honorable mentions for inspiration and music.

Several other Iranian films were also awarded honorable mentions in various categories of the festival, which ended on June 27.

“Sarevo” directed Mohammad Abdollahi received the honorable mention in the Best Narration category.

The documentary is about Saeid and Abdollah, two rural Iranian teenagers who have decided to revive a camel farm in a remote region near the border between Iran and Afghanistan.

The purpose of this documentary is to show the efforts

and solidarity of two peoples who strive to improve their lives by removing divergent ideologies.

“Sarevo” also received an honorable mention for music. Directed by Mohammad Abdollahi, “Dehsalm” won an honorable mention for cinematography.

Located in southeastern Iran, Dehsalm is the village closest to the Lut Desert, about 80 kilometers southwest of Nehbandan City. It is one of the hottest places in the world, yet it is lush with natural beauty, such as the palm trees from which the people gather and eat dates.

The history, culture, and customs of Dehsalm are recounted by the oldest person in the village, 100-year-old Gholam Marvi, who touches on important subjects, such as wedding rituals, commerce and the aqueducts that are part of the village.

“Riddle of the Bones: Gender Revolution” by German directors Birgit Tanner and Carsten Gutschmidt was named best film.

## Fresco festival to screen movies by Iranian filmmakers

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — Iranian short movies “Take a Nap”, “The Land of Ants” and “The Kids” will be screened at the Fresco International Film Festival, which will take place in the Armenian capital of Yerevan from August 20 to 29.

Directed by Mina Qaseminia, the animated movie “Take a Nap” is about a boy under the tree blinking while looking upward.

The camera traces the boy’s sight. A baby bird falls down from a tree and hits the ground. The camera passes by the grass and shows a playing field, in which some boys are playing football. The last shoot concludes with a ball that morphs into a bomb and then an explosion. The camera

tracks back to the first position. A victim of war, the boy sits silently and motionless in a wheelchair.

“The Land of Ants” tells the story of people living hopefully with the mines left from the war, however, they are involved unintentionally in an accident. Isa Babai is the director of the movie.

“The Kids” directed by Amir Daryani is about Sina and Mobina, a brother and sister, who appear in a family court to separate due to a hostile environment in their domestic life. This is the first time a brother and sister decide to break up legally.

The Fresco festival is an annual event, which is a great opportunity

for the reassessment of spiritual and cultural heritage, for cultural dialogue with people of other countries and for self-knowledge and raising the national consciousness in this context, the organizers have said.

The festival also places special importance on the employment of special social groups and especially individuals with limited abilities.

Due to the cooperation with institutions specializing in the field of individuals with disabilities, not only do such persons participate in all aspects of the festival, but also are actively involved in all the organizational activities of the Fresco festival.



A poster for “The Land of Ants” by Isa Babai.

## “Botox” to compete in Burgas International Film Festival

“Botox”, a co-production between Iran and Canada directed by Kaveh Mazaheri, will be screened in the official section of the festival.

The movie tells the story of sisters Akram and Azar. Both lie about their brother’s disappearance, telling everyone he fled to Germany. Day after day, the lie becomes bigger and more unmanageable, leading everyone to a dark and mysterious destiny.

“Botox” has been screened at numerous international film festivals.

It was named the best feature at the 38th Torino Film Festival in 2020. Co-written by Mazaheri and Sepinud Najian, it also won the award for best screenplay at the Italian festival.

The first-film director award went to Mazaheri “Botox” at the 38th Fajr International Film Festival in Tehran in June.

The Burgas festival is one of the most important Bulgarian film festivals. All events are free and open

to the public, and participants and guests are welcome to attend a large variety of exciting events, including art exhibitions, master classes, presentations, as well as various meetings with directors, actors and producers.

Colombia-Mexico co-production “The Night of the Beast” directed by Mauricio Leiva-Cock and “Pebbles” by P.S. Vinothraj from India are also on the official lineup.

Serbian director Ivan Ikić’s drama “Oasis” and “The Girl and the Spider” by Ramon Zürcher and Silvan Zürcher from Germany will also be screened in the official competition.

“All-In” by Volkan Uce from Belgium and “Mighty Flash” by Ainhua Rodriguez from Spain are other movies competing in the festival.

A jury composed of directors Kamen Kalev and Deben Van Dam, cinematographer Kaloyan Bozhilov, actress Martina Apostolova and sound designer Atanas Tcholakov will judge the films.

## “The Girl Who Smiled Beads” comes to Iranian bookstores

**CULTURE** **TEHRAN** — Tadaei publishing house in Tehran has released a Persian translation of “The Girl Who Smiled Beads: A Story of War and What Comes After” written by Clemantine Wamariya and Elizabeth Weil.

The book originally published by Doubleday Canada in 2018 has been translated into Persian by Mehdi Gazor.

The book is a riveting story of dislocation, survival and the power of the imagination to save us.

Clemantine was six years old when her mother and father began to speak in whispers, when neighbors began to disappear, and when she heard the loud, ugly sounds her brother said were “thunder”.

It was 1994, and in 100 days more than 800,000 people would be murdered in Rwanda and millions more displaced.

Clemantine and her fifteen-year-old sister, Claire, ran and spent the next six years wandering through seven African countries searching for safety, hiding under beds, foraging for food, surviving and fleeing refugee camps, finding unexpected kindness, witnessing unimaginable cruelty. They did not know whether their parents were alive.

At age twelve, Clemantine, along with Claire, was granted asylum in the United States, a chance to build a new life.

Chicago was disorienting, filled with neon lights, antiseptic smells, endless concrete. Clemantine spoke five languages but almost

no English, and had barely gone to school. Many people wanted to help. A family in the North Shore suburbs invited Clemantine to live with them as their daughter. Others saw her only as broken. They thought she needed, and wanted, to be saved.

Meanwhile, Claire, who had for so long protected and provided for Clemantine, found herself on a very different path, cleaning hotel rooms to support her three children.

Raw, urgent, yet disarmingly beautiful, “The Girl Who Smiled Beads” captures the true costs and aftershocks of war: what is forever lost, what can be repaired, the fragility and importance of memory, the faith that one can learn, again, to love oneself, even with deep scars.



Front cover of the Persian translation of “The Girl Who Smiled Beads: A Story of War and What Comes After”.