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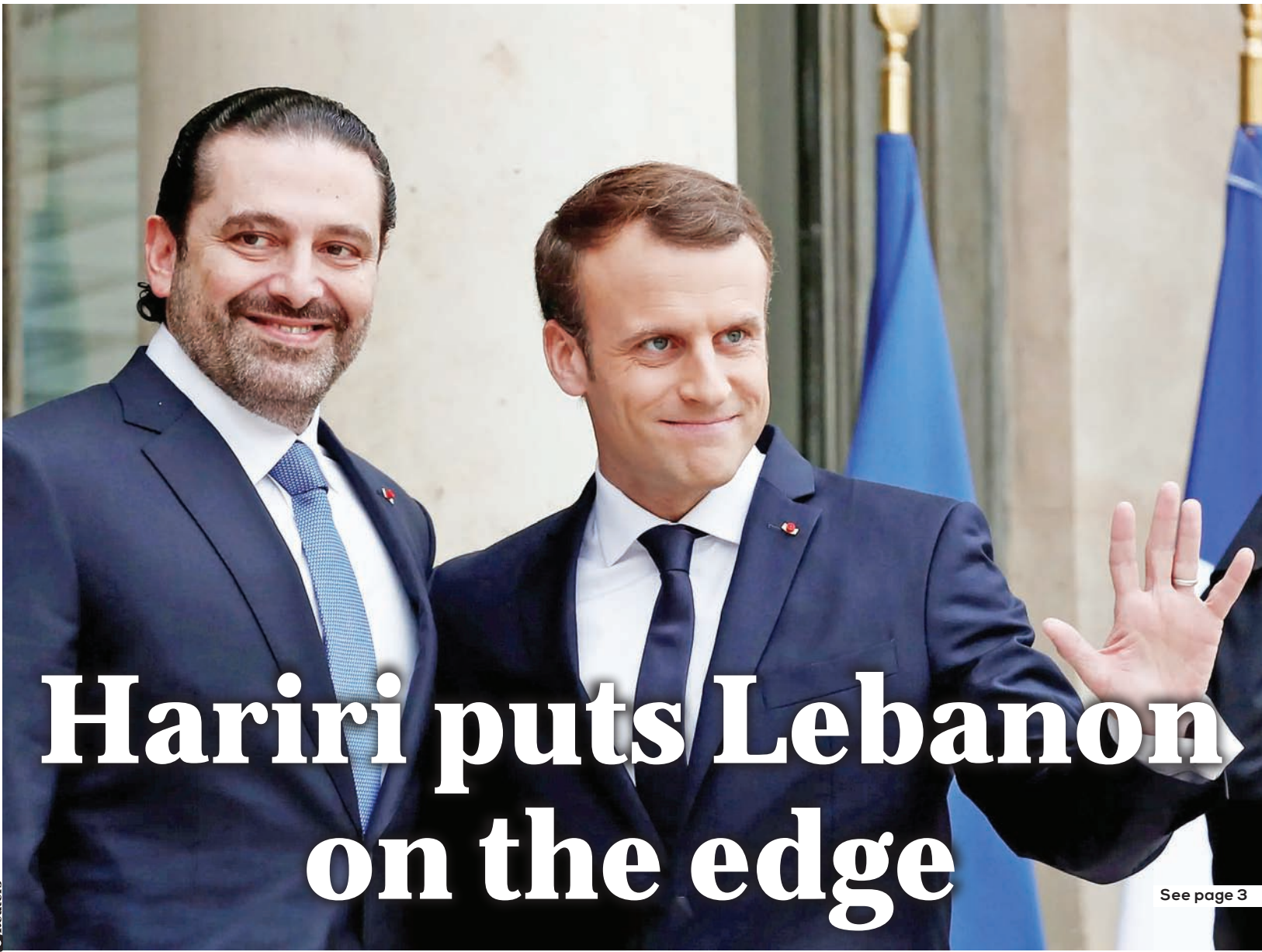
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Raisi calls for speedy vaccination drive

TEHRAN – President-elect Ebrahim Raisi held a meeting on Saturday with authorities and experts engaged in producing and distributing vaccines for the Covid-19 pandemic, urging an immediate action to vaccinate the citizens against the highly contagious virus.

The meeting took place a few weeks before he is officially sworn in as president.

The meeting was attended by Health Minister Saeed Namaki, Head of the Iranian Red Crescent Society Karim Hemmati, Chairman of the Headquar-

ters for Executing the Order of Imam Khomeini Mohammad Mokher, a number of lawmakers, the CEOs of producers of vaccine, managers of the institutions and companies working on the distribution of vaccine, and the vaccination program experts, Tasnim reported.

Campaign against controlling the deadly virus should continue unstopably, he said, adding his future government will prioritize allocating the necessary fund for vaccinating the citizens.

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Steel exports rise 128% in 3 months yr/yr

TEHRAN – Iran's major steel producers exported over 2.78 million tons of steel during the first three months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-June 21), which was 128 percent more than the figure of the same period of time in the past year.

The mentioned producers exported over 916,236 tons of steel in the third month of this year, which was 104 percent higher

than the figure of the third month of the previous year, IRNA reported.

Meanwhile, the highest amount of steel exports was made by Khuzestan Steel Company with 523,321 tons, followed by Esfahan Steel Company with 315,844 tons and Mobarakeh Steel Company with 267,861 tons in the second and third places.

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Winners of 2021 Iran Press Photo Awards announced

TEHRAN – Iran's top photojournalists of the year were honored at the Fifth Iran Press Photo Awards on Friday.

They received their awards during a special ceremony held at the IIDCYA Open-Air Cinema in Tehran.

Majid Khahi received the Best Single Photo Award in the Contemporary Issues category, while Fatemeh Abedi won the Best Photo Series Award in this section. Abedi received the award for his story

"A House with Double Ceilings" depicting a 67-year-old couple who live a boring life separately in a house after their retirement. They each spend all days with their own favorite hobbies without any dialogue or relationship.

"Lack of any plan for retirement years has caused damage to their marriage and mental health, and they are absolutely indifferent to each other," Abedi told the Persian service of IRNA.

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'Armenian market a special opportunity for Iranian SMEs'

BY MAHNAZ ABDI

The Armenian market is a special opportunity for Iranian small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), especially in the field of foodstuff and home appliances, according to Iran's deputy industry, mining, and trade minister.

Ali Rasoulzadeh, who is also the head of Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO), made the remarks on Friday while referring to a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that his organization signed on Thursday with Armenia's Investor Support Center for cooperation in various areas, including the establishment of joint industrial parks in border areas.

Iran-Armenia economic relations have been growing noticeably over the past three decades.

It has always been said that the two neighbors' trade relations have many capacities and facilities, which is an indisputable fact.

The economic and trade ties between the two sides have been even more cemented after Iran signed a free trade agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) in October 2018 based on which about 862 commodity items were subjected to preferential tariffs.

The interim agreement enabling the formation of a free trade area between Iran and the EAEU was signed on May 17, 2018, and officially came into force on October 27, 2019.

Iran is a very important market in the region and the development of ties with this country is of high significance for the EAEU members (Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan).

The free trade agreement between Iran and this union has laid the ground for the expansion of trade ties between the two sides.

Among the EAEU member states, the neighbor Armenia is of special significance for Iran to expand bilateral trade relation with, as Iran is now seriously pursuing the policy of boosting trade with the neighboring countries as a strong strategy to nullify the U.S. sanctions.

According to the Head of Iran-Armenia Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry Hervik Yarijanian, the preferential trade agreement between Iran and EAEU has had a significant impact on the country's trade relations with Armenia.

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A father with 42 daughters in Tehran

TEHRAN – Akbar Karimi is a married man living in Tehran. He wanted to have a child for 14 years, but his wife could not conceive. The man vowed that God would give him a child so that he could take care of the orphaned girls. Days passed and finally, the wait was over and his vow was fulfilled.

Now, he is the father of 42 daughters.

Akbar and his wife had been living together for 14 years and there was no child in their quiet home. The man wanted to adopt a child, but his wife disagreed.

When he heard that his wife is pregnant, eager to become a father, he tried hard and sought to obtain a license for establishing his own care center, which he finally got in 2010 when his daughter was one year old and started by taking care of 15 orphaned girls.

It has been 11 years now and he has two children named "Reyhaneh and Shokraneh" and 40 orphaned girls who call him "dad".

He spends 6 hours a day in two branches of the care centers with the girls who miss him and write him letters.

But the life story of these girls is bitter, one of them is a girl who hates the rain and when it rains, she sits in the corner of her room and pulls the curtains.

The bitter story of her homelessness began on a rainy night when her mother hugged her after a phone call and ran into the street in a panic until they were hit by a vehicle and killed her mother, and now the girl lives in this institution.

There were also girls who were adopted and left the center, one of them is Zahra, a 9-year-old girl who was adopted by a man and a woman in a charity event.

Akbar says that since 2010, 30 girls have been living here but have left this institution, two of whom got married and now he has a grandson named "Matin".

Two more girls are about to get married, and their dowries have been provided by charities.

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Europe suffers devastating floods as death toll rises

Devastating floods have torn through entire villages and killed at least 150 people in Europe, most of them in western Germany. Hundreds of others are missing, while officials say thousands have been left homeless. The unprecedented flooding has stunned emergency services who are still combing the wreckage. Unsuspecting locals have been caught completely off guard by the disaster.

Entire streets and houses have been submerged by water in some regions, while cars have been left overturned on soaked streets after the floodwaters passed. Some districts have been completely cut off. Officials in the southwest German state of Rhineland-Palatinate (one of the worst-hit regions) say the death toll is likely to climb as emergency services need several days to search the affected areas.

In the district of Ahrweiler, northern Rhineland-Palatinate, some 1,300 people are unaccounted for, but local authorities say this could

be because of damaged telephone networks. German chancellor, Angela Merkel, says she fears 'the full extent of this tragedy will only be seen in the coming days.'

Meanwhile, in neighboring Belgium, the government confirmed the death toll had risen to at least 20, with more than 21,000 people left without electricity in one region. The army has been sent to four of the country's 10 provinces to help with rescue and evacuations. Belgian Prime Minister, Alexander De Croo, described the floods as 'possibly the most catastrophic our country has ever seen.'

He also declared Tuesday a day of national mourning. Luxembourg and the Netherlands have also been hammered by heavy rains. According to the World Meteorological Organization, some parts of Western Europe received up to two months' worth of rainfall in just two days.

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Jiroft: the story of how Iran became a cradle of civilization

TEHRAN – Until the very early 21st century, no one had ever dreamed that a refined forgotten culture could re-emerge from the sands of a remote and arid region in southeast Iran.

The story started when rounds of heavy flood swept the topsoil off thousands of previously unknown tombs in Bronze Age cemetery in Jiroft. Arrays of remarkable findings at Jiroft demanded a reassessment of a previous interpretation, based on which Mesopotamia was considered

the cradle of civilization.

According to a National Geographic article, a flood of archaeological objects began appearing in the antiquities market seemingly off of nowhere in 2001.

Here are edited excerpts from the article:

In a short time, distinctive pieces of jewelry, weapons, finely crafted ceramics, drinking vessels, and game boards—featuring unusual artistry and magnificent inlays of carnelian and lapis lazuli

found their ways to antique markets for sale.

These extraordinary pieces featured a complex symbology of animals, both wild and domesticated, depicted fighting among themselves or with human figures, the humans always triumphant. There were beautifully realized bucolic scenes of animals grazing in vast palm groves and architectural reproductions of temples or palaces.

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Ardabil hosts Arabian horse beauty contest

A trainer works with an Arabian horse during a horse beauty contest held in Ardabil, July 15, 2021. A selection of 120 animals from across Iran have been brought to the equestrian competition in the northwest Iranian city. Arabian horses are traditionally being trained in preparation for horse beauty contests.

Turkish-Israeli ties are strategic and deep: Syrian politician

BY ALI A. JENABZADEH

TEHRAN – A member of the National Reconciliation Committee in Syria stresses that Turkey-Israel ties are profound and on the rise.

"The Turkish-Israeli relations are strategic and deep-rooted, though they fluctuate according to the attitudes of the two governments, so it is generally getting stronger day by day," Omar Rahmoun tells the Tehran Times.

On Monday, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan called his new Israeli counterpart Isaac Herzog, in a sign of a possible thaw between the two former allies after years of frosty relations.

The rare telephone talks between two leaders came after Erdogan held talks on Saturday with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas.

While Erdogan tries to present himself as a vocal champion of the Palestinian cause during his 18-year rule, his critics say that the recent call and accentuation of boosting bilateral ties shows Erdogan's mendacity.

"Erdogan's claims about supporting the Palestinian cause are nonsense that only lunatics or those without brains may believe him. It is very easy for Erdogan to claim, but the people in the region are not blind and the truth is visible," Rahmoun remarks.

"Turkish-Israeli ties are not subject to the mood of their leaders. It is a well-established and strong relationship and it is in progress every day despite the rumors about some disputes," according to the Syrian politician.

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IRGC ground force armed with missiles and other new arms

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — In a ceremony on July 7, the Islamic Revolution Guards Corp were delivered dozens of new military equipment including missiles.

The IRGC has provided a detailed report of the delivered equipment.

During the ceremony, one of the latest achievements in Iran's missile industry, called Fath, was provided to the IRGC ground forces with several types of launchers.

For the first time, a missile with a very high resemblance to Fateh-110 but with smaller dimensions were observed in the military exercises of the Great Prophet 14 in the summer of last year. It was observed that while confirming the maximum similarity, its smaller dimensions were recognizable compared to the successful family of Fateh-110 and the Zelzal rocket which was the basis of the propulsion design and body of Fateh-110.

Although no official information has been released about the Fath missile, it has been handed over to at IRGC naval and ground forces.

In March 2017, the missile was mounted inside a cylindrical launcher or canister that was mounted on a truck twice, and a large number of these canisters were delivered to this force in the naval missile cities of the IRGC, which is a great change in a combat.



But in the delivery to the IRGC ground forces, three types of launchers were observed for the Fath missile; the launcher with 6 canisters and a double rail launcher as well as four camouflaged trucks. By using four- and six-launcher launchers, it is possible for the ground forces to achieve massive but very accurate fire volumes, making this force somewhat independent of the need for IRGC air force missile systems in tactical missions. In missions that require heavy warfare or longer range, cooperation between the air forces and ground forces will continue to pave the way for future missions.

Another important aspect of delivered new equipment and weapons was the observation of several new anti-tank missiles. In addition to delivering several Dehlawieh missile launchers and samples based on the Safir tactical vehicle, a new type of Dehlawieh missile was also delivered to the ground forces. As previously seen in recent years at the Ministry of Defense exhibitions, it is being evaluated based on a comparison with similar Russian models with a range of 8 km instead of the previous 5.5 km, but official sources have not yet released information about the missile.

The missile has a larger diameter in the middle of its body than the Dehlawieh base model, which can be a larger space for propulsion. Also, the end blocks of the body are made in a semi-oval shape instead of the trapezoidal shape in the previous model, which creates less induction delay at subsonic speed.

Another weapon handed over to the ground forces was the ground model of the new diamond rocket. For the first time, a picture of a new missile similar to the Israeli Spike was seen during the visit of the members of the national security committee of the parliament to the Defense Achievements Exhibition in January 2016. Then, a picture of a new anti-tank missile launcher in the evolution of Iranian anti-tank missiles was seen in the exhibition of the 40-year Achievements of the Islamic Revolution in Tehran, in February 2016.

This launcher, which was very similar to the model used in the Spike missile made by the Zionist regime, brought closer the speculation that the Iranian experts have somehow acquired this missile and have produced a new product based on it.

The mentioned missile was also seen launching from the Ababil-3 light UAV in the videos released on the sidelines of the mass delivery of UAVs to the Army in April 2016 and was introduced as the Almas missile in a joint UAV exercise in December 2016.

This weapon is an air-launched missile with a solid-fuel rocket engine and wings that open from inside the fuselage and uses a thermal image finder as its guidance system. The range of the missile after being launched from drones is 8 km.

Among the aircraft used by the IRGC ground force, in addition to the Mi-171 helicopters, which are equipped with heavy weapons such as the 240 mm S24 rocket, improved gyroplanes were also present at the ceremony.

These lightweight gyroplanes have been developed for use by ranger teams and can land and take off almost vertically. One of the birds had an electro-optical detection platform and the other had a bed to carry the wounded. The ground transport truck of this flying vehicle, which can transport it quickly, was also seen in the pictures.

Last year, images of the use of a new, advanced design drone called Meraj 1 were published by the IRGC ground force. Despite its light weight, the drone has a high flight continuity and its design is very similar to an advanced American drone.

Meraj 1 with a take-off mass of 33 kg can reach a flight duration of ten and a half hours and can carry up to 5 kg of cargo. The drone reaches a speed of 140 kilometers per hour and a flight ceiling of 3,650 meters (about 12,000 feet). The vertical flight model of Ascension 1 was also delivered to the IRGC Navy last year.

It is hoped that the process of equipping the armed forces in the Army and the IRGC with new weapons, equipment, and more advanced vehicles, especially in the field of personal protection and individual weapons would be developed further.

One-sided justice is my ideal!

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — July 17 marks the World Day for International Justice. The Day of International Criminal Justice is celebrated by honoring individuals working to advocate the fundamental human rights of victims affected by criminal acts. People also come together around the world to host events promoting international criminal justice and support for the International Criminal Court.

International Justice Day commemorates the historic adoption of the Rome Statute on 17 July 1998 and marks the importance of continuing the fight against impunity and bringing justice for the victims of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide.

The day is a reminder of the urgency for all states committed to justice around the world to ensure continued support for the international justice system. It demonstrates the crucial role of civil society members in ensuring that ICC member states live up to their obligations.

This year's theme for the Day of International Criminal Justice is "social justice in the digital economy", a timely topic for a modern age where criminals are increasingly relying on advanced internet-based means instead of traditional criminal tactics.

However, true justice cannot be tolerated by some Americans and their friends, the occupiers, as they think of the concept of justice as something that needs to be done based on their belief system. They cannot accept an opposite view.

On September 2, 2020, the United States imposed sanctions on the International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, and another senior prosecution official, Phakiso Mochochoko. In addition, U.S. then-Secretary of State Michael Pompeo announced that Washington had restricted the issuance of visas for certain unnamed individuals "involved in the ICC's efforts to investigate U.S. personnel."

The sanctions on Bensouda and Mochochoko followed a sweeping executive order issued on June 11, 2020, by President Donald Trump. This order declared a national emergency and authorized asset freezes and family entry bans



against ICC officials who were identified as being involved in certain activities. Earlier, the Trump administration had repeatedly threatened action to thwart ICC investigations in Afghanistan and Palestine. In a precursor step, in 2019, the Trump administration revoked the prosecutor's U.S. visa.

The U.S. addiction to sanctions is not something hidden. The whole world knows of it. Yet, this time, Trump and his associates took the issue many steps further. They sanctioned justice as well. Can International Justice Day be celebrated while oppressive countries such as the United States live and breathe?

Justice can only be fully accomplished when countries like Afghanistan, Yemen, Iraq, and Syria get rid of war, violence, occupation, and terrorism. Of course, let's not forget the biggest violator of justice, the occupying regime of Israel.

The people of Palestine have not tasted the sweet taste of justice and liberty for well over 70 years.

Palestinians are being continuously killed and injured by the Israeli occupying forces in deadly military raids, and by extremist Israeli settlers. Palestinians are regularly arrested and imprisoned without a charge or trial. Children have not been spared, but are rather growing in numbers on both the casualty and prisoner

lists. Palestinian homes and properties continue to be seized and demolished regularly. Palestinian families continue to be forcibly displaced, callously rendered homeless, and destitute. And the state of Palestine continues to be fragmented and scarred as the occupiers persist with their settlement policies to annex as many Palestinian lands as possible. All of this is being done in a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention and against the backdrop of deafening silence and paralysis of the international community, particularly the Security Council.

While it is impossible to list all the violations and crimes committed by Israel in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem al-Quds, I am compelled to highlight certain incidents reflective of the systematic, unlawful behavior and insidious intentions of the occupying regime, neither of which render any hope for progress towards peace soon.

For over 70 years, Israel has subjected Palestinians to systematic human rights abuses, severe discrimination, and deadly military force. The fourth generation of Palestinian children are being brought up in refugee camps, in chronic poverty, denied the right to return to their family homes. Over a million Palestinians suffer discrimination over access to public services, land, and employment. Israel's

siege of Gaza has condemned its 1.9 million inhabitants to poverty and psychological violence. The construction of the apartheid wall, the military closure of the Jordan Valley, and the annexation of East Jerusalem are creating an irreversible reality of permanent occupation.

This is pure injustice, committed by the Israeli regime, but if you imagine that Israel has no accomplice, you are wrong.

The United States has imposed several brutal and crippling sanctions on Iran, some were so brutal it even caused United Nations to react.

"These unjust and harmful sanctions are destroying the economy and currency of Iran, driving millions of people into poverty and making imported goods unaffordable," United Nations Special Rapporteur Idriss Jazairy stressed while questioning whether the United States would provide food and medicines to the millions of Iranians no longer able to afford them.

"The current system creates doubt and ambiguity which makes it all but impossible for Iran to import these urgently needed humanitarian goods. This ambiguity causes a "chilling effect" which is likely to lead to silent deaths in hospitals as medicines run out, while the international media fail to notice," Mr. Jazairy said.

"We had always said the sanctions are unjust but coronavirus revealed this injustice to the world," Foreign Minister Javad Zarif said in a recent video message. He referred to the sanctions as "economic terrorism."

The United States tried to use the virus to squeeze Iran beyond what sanctions alone could do.

The U.S. Treasury Department on November 5, 2018, imposed sanctions on Iran's crucial oil, banking, and transportation sectors. The sanctions cover 50 Iranian banks and subsidiaries, more than 200 persons and vessels in its shipping sector, and targets Tehran's national airline, Iran Air, and more than 65 of its aircraft.

The United States and its long-time friend Israel, don't deserve to celebrate International Justice Day, as they are the biggest violators of the very notion of justice itself.

Raisi calls for speedy vaccination drive

→ 1 "Undoubtedly, what has been done so far in areas of vaccination has been necessary but definitely not enough," he added.

Asking what has been done so far is a complete use of the country's potential, he said, "I personally believe no."

He added there is a great potential in "producing and importing" vaccines.

The president-elect said the main focus is on production of vaccine at home but import of vaccines should also be done speedily.

Elsewhere in his remarks, he said it is a "source of honor" that Iranian experts are producing vaccines that are comparable with foreign ones.

In comments on Saturday, outgoing President Hassan Rouhani called for strict compliance with health protocols as the country is facing a rise in the number of people diagnosed with the virus, saying the virus has afflicted almost all parts of the country.

Rouhani promised that his administration will make



another 10 million doses of COVID vaccine available within the next two weeks and will complete the vaccination of people above the age of 65 and those with underlying

diseases before the end of his tenure.

The death toll from the coronavirus in Iran has surpassed 86,960 since its outbreak in February 2020. So far, some 5.89 million people have received the first dose of coronavirus vaccine in the country.

Speaking at the meeting of the Coronavirus Combat and Prevention Headquarters, Rouhani said the number of patients infected with the new Delta variant of the coronavirus has soared in many provinces.

"Today, we are again facing a rising trend in the pandemic in almost all of the country," the president added, blaming the spread of the disease on unnecessary travels and laxity in observing health protocols, among other reasons.

Voicing concern about the latest reports that the level of public compliance with the health protocols has fallen to 48 percent, Rouhani said all efforts should be focused on convincing people to take the pandemic seriously and obey the health rules.

MP says Iran's assets not released but handed to other countries

POLITICAL **TEHRAN**— In an interview with the Fars news agency on Saturday, MP Hossein Ali Haji Deligani said an unfreezing of Iranian assets is achieved when the control of these assets is in the hands of the Islamic Republic, not when these assets are released and given to South Korea and Japan.

"According to the formal announcement of the American officials, these assets have been released but they cannot be transferred to Iran and only Korean and Japanese companies can use them," Haji Deligani remarked.

The member of the presiding board of the parliament stated that Iran's assets have been released in Korea and Japan

and given to the companies of these two countries to sell their goods and products to Iran without any hassle and well away from any competitive market.

According to a report by the Yonhap news agency published on July 11, South Korea is seeking to use a Swiss channel backed by the U.S. in a bid to use part of the money for Swiss companies' sale of humanitarian items to Iran.

Iran has called on Korea to unlock more than \$7 billion of its forex assets held due to the U.S. economic blockade, stressing that unlocking the assets is a priority in mutually respectful bilateral ties.

Haji Deligani pointed out, "This action

not only is not the release of assets but also a means that has handed out Iranian assets to other countries."

He added that Iran's foreign policy officials should be smart about this way of unfreezing Iran's assets and not accept it in any way as the release of the Islamic Republic's funds by the U.S.

"As I said, this is not the release of our funds but our country's assets in South Korea and Japan is in the hands of these two countries, not in our hands; and on the other hand, our foreign policy officials must react to the fact that our country's assets have been given to the other two countries," he reiterated.

Following talks with the South Korean ambassador to Tehran in February, the former head of the Central Bank of Iran, Abdolnasser Hemmati, said the two sides had reached an agreement on using "part" of Iran's assets held in that country.

Soon after, the Foreign Ministry in Seoul said the assets would be released after consultations with the Americans. Unnamed Foreign Ministry officials then told Korean news outlets that Washington had "agreed in principle" on the partial transfer of Iranian funds to Switzerland, from where it could be used via the Swiss Humanitarian Trade Arrangement (SHTA).

Iran's JCPOA policies are fixed, says MP

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — "Nullifying sanctions as our main approach is to deal with the problems raised by sanctions", Spokesman for Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission said in an interview with Mehr News Agency.

He went on to say, "We must be able to strengthen national products by relying on our own domestic capacities."

"We must first focus on relations with our neighbors and then strengthen our relations with Asian countries and emerging economies", he stressed.

Principled policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran toward nuclear negotiations will never change by the change of governments, Abolfazl Amouei said.

Saying that the complete lifting of sanctions is a logical and fundamental demand, he added that Iran's economic benefit in the nuclear deal will be achieved only with the complete lifting of sanctions.

It was the Americans who illegally withdrew from the JCPOA in 2018, Amouei said, adding that today, they acknowledge that their maximum pressure policy has failed and must return to the nuclear deal.

In fact, with passing a law on Strategic Action Plan to Lift Sanctions and Protect Iranian Nation's Interests, Iran's nuclear program was strengthened and the other parties to JCPOA concluded that the policy of maximum pressure was a failed policy, he explained.

The JCPOA was agreed on in July 2015 between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council along with Germany, known as the P5+1. The agreement was approved by the Supreme National Security Council, the Islamic Consultative Assembly and finally by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei.

Iran strictly complied with the nuclear deal. However, this did not prevent the Trump administration from quit-

ting it. In May 2018, former U.S. President Donald Trump announced the unilateral withdrawal of the U.S. from the JCPOA, setting off a series of confrontations with Iran.

After quitting the JCPOA the Trump administration started imposing sweeping economic sanctions on Iran. Trump piled up sanctions on Iran in a bid to force Iran into making more concessions to the U.S. within the framework of a new nuclear deal. Trump, however, failed to get his deal, bequeathing his successor a litany of unresolved issues with Iran. The Biden administration has said it wants to open a new chapter with Iran and change tack, though it is yet to make any move to break with the Trump legacy on Iran.

Since April, diplomats from the remaining parties to the JCPOA and the U.S. have held six rounds of talks in a bid to revive the deal. They made significant progress but failed to get Iran and the U.S. back to full compliance with the nuclear deal.

SPORTS

Feyenoord complete signing of Alireza Jahanbakhsh

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Feyenoord Rotterdam completed signing of Iranian international winger Alireza Jahanbakhsh on Saturday.

The 27-year-old joined the Eredivisie top-flight team from English Premier league team Brighton & Hove Albion on a three-year contract with an option for another season.

"I can't wait to get back on the field. During my time at AZ, Arne Slot was one of the people who helped me to become a better player. So, when he asked if I wanted to come to Feyenoord, I told him I would do everything I could to make the transfer happen. I had no doubts," Jahanbakhsh said.

He was transferred to the Netherlands in 2013 from Iranian team Damash and played 140 league games and scored 51 goals in the Eredivisie yeams.

Jahanbakhsh represented Iran national football team at the 2014 and 2018 World Cups.

He will join the group next week and wear No. 9 jersey. Jahanbakhsh was in and out of the Brighton side since a £17 million move from Eredivisie outfit AZ Alkmaar in 2018.

He still had two years left on his contract but became increasingly frustrated by a lack of sustained opportunities.

He made only 21 starts in a total of 50 Premier League appearances over the past three seasons.



Iran drawn into tough group at Asian Women's Volleyball C'ship

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran have been drawn in a tough group at the 21st Asian Senior Women's Volleyball Championship.

The competition will be held in Pampanga, Clark, Subic, the Philippines from Aug. 29 to Sept. 4, 2021, with 8 teams vying for top honors.

According to the draw results, hosts Philippines are in Pool A with Kazakhstan, Chinese Taipei and Uzbekistan.

Thailand and South Korea, podium finishers in the last two tournaments, are bracketed in Pool B, along with Iran and Australia.

Japan, which ruled the 2017 Binan and 2019 Seoul editions, withdrew from this year's competition.

The tournament also serves as part of Asian qualification for the 2022 FIVB Volleyball Women's World Championship, with the top two nations including winners and runner-up advancing to the qualifying tournaments.

Iran 12th in latest FIBA power rankings

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran national basketball team have been ranked 12th among the 12 countries that will be featuring at the 2020 Olympics.

Australia sit top in the rankings, followed by Spain, the U.S., Nigeria and Slovenia.

France, Italy, Argentina, Germany, Czech Republic and Japan are sixth to 11th in the rankings.

Iran troubled Spain back at the summit in China in 2019 but were nowhere near to an upset in the two exhibition games played in Spain this summer.

A pair of defeats by 43 and 27 in Madrid and Valencia, respectively, serve as another wake-up call since Iran also went 1-2 against Japan earlier in the preparation period. While the elimination phase may be a tough task for them, Iran will try and end the drought by simply winning a game at these Olympics. Their last win at the Summer Olympics was way back in 1948.

Iran will start the 2020 Tokyo with a match against Czech Republic on July 25.

The Persians have been drawn in Group A along with the U.S., France and Czech Republic.

*The power rankings are entirely subjective and is in no way a true, accurate ranking system.

Pourmirzaei wants to honor Siamand Rahman's legacy

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — There will only be one Siamand Rahman, known as the strongest Paralympian ever who sadly passed away in March 2020, but Mansour Pourmirzaei seeks to honor his compatriot's legacy as he forges his own path in the men's over 107kg category.

Pourmirzaei had usually finished behind Rahman, whose world record 310kg lift has been unmatched since 2016., Paralympic. org reported.

Going at his own pace, Pourmirzaei has shown his own strength, recently winning the Bangkok 2021 World Cup with a 249kg lift. Tokyo 2020 will be his first Games.

The 2020 Tokyo Paralympics will be held between August 24 and September 5.

Ghaedi's goal among best long-range goals: 2021 ACL

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — The 2021 AFC Champions League group stage saw some great goals over the last few months and, with continental action on a temporary break, the-afc has selected some of the very best from various categories.

Kicking off the-AFC.com's '5 of the Best' series, here are five long-range rockets for the fans to tell which is their favorite by voting at the fans poll.

Tipped to be one of the stars of the 2021 AFC Champions League, Mehdi Ghaedi graced the competition with a demonstration of his prodigious talent in the very first match, rifling home from 30 yards out for his second of the game in a 5-2 win against Al-Ahli Saudi.

He will have to compete with Sharof Mukhiddinov (Pakhtakor), Yoichiro Kakitani (Nagoya Grampus), Pakorn Prempak (Port FC) and Shu Kurata (Gamba Osaka) to win the accolade.

Hariri puts Lebanon on the edge

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — After nine months of procrastination, Lebanese Prime Minister-designate Saad Hariri announced Thursday that he was unable to put together a government, pushing the crisis-stricken country one step closer to an all-out collapse.

Hariri's decision came as no surprise given his deep-running differences with President Michel Aoun and the president's son-in-law Gebran Bassil. The prime minister-designate submitted his proposed cabinet to the president and give him only few hours to decide. After a meeting with Aoun, Hariri announced that he couldn't agree with the president on the proposed cabinet.

"It is clear we will not be able to agree with his Excellency the president," Hariri told reporters after a 20-minute meeting with Aoun. "That is why I excuse myself from government formation."

He justified his decision by saying that Aoun had requested fundamental changes to a cabinet line-up he had presented to him on Wednesday. According to Hariri, the president also requested more time to do consultations. But Hariri refused to give Aoun enough time to think and maybe negotiate about the cabinet line-up.

Forming a government has never been an easy task in the sectarian system of Lebanon. Prime minister-designates would always try to build consensus among various politico-religious factions before any government formation. Even Hariri himself had abided by these factional rules to forming his previous governments.

But this time, Hariri struck a slightly discordant note, knowing that his stepping down would further complicate the situation and increase the pressure on his political rivals. After stepping down, Hariri mounted an attack on Hezbollah, accusing it of obstructing his efforts to form a technocratic government.

Hariri was named by Aoun on October 22, 2020, to form a government after the Hassan Diab government resigned in the wake of a devastating blast at Beirut Port in August last year that razed to the ground much of the



city. At that time, Hariri portrayed himself as the savior of Lebanon, which continued to sink deeper into an economic crisis ever since 2019. Over the past nine months, since he began the government formation efforts, Lebanon's economy continued to tailspin into chaos, with widespread power outages and lack of basic goods as well as the sharp loss of the value of the country's currency against the U.S. dollar.

This dire situation has caused many observers to ignore the fact that Hariri himself is part of the system that created these problems in the first place. Hariri was prime minister when an unprecedented wave of protests swept across Lebanon in 2019, prompting him to tender resignation to Aoun amid chants by the protesters demanding the change of all the political class. Hariri parted way with his onetime partners in the government in the belief that the protesters' anger would be directed at them. The Beirut blast provided him with a golden opportunity for both returning to power and accusing his rivals of incompetence.

A year after his resignation, Hariri was once again nominated by Aoun to form the

government. By this time, Lebanon's economy was in shambles. Again, Hariri saw an opportunity for smearing his rivals by accusing them of blocking his efforts to save the country's deteriorating economy.

But instead of making consultations with Lebanese factions, Hariri spent most of his time traveling to countries such as France, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Egypt in the hopes of getting support from these countries. He spent more time traveling abroad than consulting with Lebanese political factions.

Pundits believe that this approach embroiled Lebanon in a worse situation where foreign countries would demand concessions in exchange for their support. This happened with Saudi Arabia, the United States, and France, which mounted a concerted effort to undermine Hezbollah while pressuring the Lebanese president into accelerating the formation of a government that would both restrict Hezbollah's influence and implement tough economic reforms.

Saudi Arabia has refrained from giving economic aid to Lebanon while France is leading a European effort to pressure Aoun

to expedite the process of forming a government. France also will host a new international conference on Lebanon next month on the first anniversary of the Beirut port explosion.

Lebanese political sources told The Arab Weekly that the French announcement reflects the exasperation of Paris over the failure of Lebanon's leaders to end a political and economic crisis that dates back to well before the explosion.

Europe also threatened Lebanese politicians with sanctions if they failed to form a government. These pressures could be designed to make Aoun accept the next cabinet line-up without insisting on compliance with the long-standing power-sharing rules in Lebanon.

Meanwhile, Israel and its allies could seek to use the deteriorating situation in Lebanon to undermine Hezbollah by portraying it as the main cause of the country's dire economic crisis. Western countries and their allies in the region refused to provide Lebanon with economic aids by conditioning these aids on reducing the influence of Hezbollah. This is part of a broader policy to keep Hezbollah busy with internal issues, according to an opinion piece published by Al Mayadeen.

And when this plan did not succeed, Al Mayadeen said, the choice was a political vacuum and the destruction of the economic system by targeting the banking system in Lebanon. According to Al Mayadeen, in Israel there are two trends: the first believes that the conditions in Lebanon will form Hezbollah's priority concern in the internal Lebanese affairs, which diverts it from the priority of confronting Israel and changing the rules of engagement with it for its own benefit. And the second trend believes that the state of chaos in Lebanon will give Hezbollah more strength and control over the south and the state, and that it will be able to divert the attention of the Lebanese from their crises and take them in the direction of war with Israel. The author of the article believes that the second trend is overestimated and that Israel prefers the first one.

Iran to host intra-Afghan peace talks: report

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iran is planning to host a meeting between the Afghan government and other Afghan groups to bring peace to war-torn Afghanistan, Fars News reported.

The Iranian news agency did not say if the Taliban will take part in the Tehran peace talks but it said all Afghanistans' "internal groups" will be present in the meeting, implying that a delegation from the Taliban may participate in the meeting. It also did not set any date for the talks, but said they will take place "soon."

According to Fars News, these days Iran is trying to ensure peace, stability and lasting security for the people of Afghanistan by holding dialogue sessions and interaction between the groups and the government, while denying violence and focusing on a political solution. Iran's initiative in holding this meeting can save the people of Afghanistan from the current crisis to a great extent, it added.

The meeting will be hosted by an Iranian organization called "Global Forum of Islamic Awakening" and will be held virtually.

Iran has recently played host to Afghan peace talks for the second time. In early July, delegations from the Afghan government and the Taliban descended on Tehran to discuss ways to achieve peace in the midst of U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan.

To this end, Iran hosted a meeting between a Taliban delegation and a group of figures who support the republican system. Iran hosted a meeting between a Taliban delegation and a group of figures who support the republican system on July 8-9. 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.

It was the second time Iran officially hosted 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.

Iran was also affected by the ongoing infighting in Afghanistan as a number of Afghan border guards fled to Iran during a clash with the Taliban.

"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.

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.

It was in these circumstances that Iran hosted talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban. Iran also intensified diplomatic contacts with Kabul. Mohammad-Ebrahim Taherian, the Iranian foreign minister's special envoy for Afghanistan affairs, held phone talks with former Afghan president Hamid Karzai on the latest security developments in the country and the current situation in Afghanistan.

In the phone call, the two sides exchanged views on the latest status of peace talks and negotiations between the parties involved in Afghanistan.

Taherian also underlined the necessity for the settlement of the ongoing crisis in Afghanistan through peaceful ways and preventing the outbreak of a civil war in the country.

A senior delegation of the Afghan government and Taliban representatives have met in Doha for high-stakes negotiations as violence escalates on the ground in Afghanistan, Al Jazeera reported on Saturday.

The two sides have been meeting on and off for months in the Qatari capital but the talks have lost momentum as a string of battlefield gains by the armed group has coincided with foreign forces finalizing their withdrawal from Afghanistan.

The government delegation is comprised of several high-ranking officials, including former chief executive Abdullah Abdullah. Its reported aim is to support the government's negotiating team in terms of speeding up the stalled talks.

"During his visit, Abdullah Abdullah will discuss important and crucial issues with Taliban representatives," Fraidoun Kwazon, the Afghan government delegation spokesman, told Al Jazeera.

"The solution to the conflict in Afghanistan lies in negotiations, and peace can be reached through dialogue," he said.

For his part, Taliban spokesman Mohammad Naem said the group has "repeatedly confirmed its readiness for dialogue and negotiations", adding that the problems can "only be solved by dialogue".

Iran deputy FM addresses conference on Central-South Asia connectivity

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iran's deputy foreign minister for economic diplomacy, who is visiting Uzbekistan to attend the International Conference on Central and South Asia Regional Connectivity, Challenges and Opportunities, delivered a speech at the conference.

In his speech, Seyyed Rasoul Mohajer called for a focus on cultural commonalities to enhance regional cooperation, according to a statement issued by the Iranian Foreign Ministry.

"The modern world requires the recreation of this valuable legacy at the political, economic-commercial and cultural-human levels," he said in a reference to cultural and civilizational commonalities that lead to his-

torical connectivity in the region.

Mohajer also said intra-regional trade, expansion of transportation and development of transportation infrastructure are elements that help the development of regional countries.

The deputy foreign minister also touched on some of Iran's advantages in connecting Central and South Asia regions, saying Iran has taken a number of steps in this area:

- Cooperation with land-locked countries and transit countries in the region, such as Pakistan and Turkey, as part of the transportation corridor of the Economic Cooperation Organization.
- Strengthening multi-dimensional transportation in the region and equipping the

Chabahar and Bandar Abbas port cities in the south and Amirabad and Caspian port cities along the Caspian Sea.

- Designing and implementing national and international projects to create rail links with neighboring countries including the Khaf-Herat project, which, after being linked to Mazar-i-Sharif, will connect Central Asian countries to Iran's railway network, and through Iran, to regional and global destinations.

- Seriously examining mechanisms for cooperation between major port cities, such as Chabahar, and other major port cities along the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf.

- Serious pursuit of launching the North-South, TRACECA and Persian

Gulf-Black Sea corridors as well as the Rasht-Astara-Azerbaijan Republic and Shalamchek-Basra rail links.

- Examining the establishment of a trade-transportation corridor between Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union to facilitate trade among the five members of the union and Iran within the framework of a free trade agreement, which is being negotiated.

The one-day International Conference on Central and South Asia Regional Connectivity, Challenges and Opportunities, an initiative of Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, was held in the Uzbek capital city of Tashkent with the presence of officials from 44 countries and 30 international organizations.

TEDPIX gains 5,700 points on Saturday

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), rose 5,725 points to 1.311 million on Saturday, the first day of Iranian calendar week.

As reported, over 8.607 billion securities worth 62.137 trillion rials (about \$1.479 billion) were traded at the TSE on Saturday.

The first market's index gains 3,325 points, and the second market's index climbed 14,266 points.

TEDPIX rose 23,000 points in the past Iranian calendar week. The index closed at 1.305 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, Russia exchange views on expanding bilateral trade

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) Hamdi Zadboum in a meeting with the representatives of the private sector of Russia's Tver region on Saturday discuss the expansion of trade ties between the two sides.

In the meeting, the two sides emphasized on increasing cooperation between Tver and Iranian provinces and also removing obstacles to the development of trade relations, TPO portal published.

Speaking in this meeting, Zadboum underlined the good political relations between Iran and Russia and expressed hope that the two countries' private sectors would benefit from these positive political relations between the two sides.

Referring to his recent visit to St. Petersburg and the interest of Russian businessmen in cooperating with their Iranian counterparts, he stressed the need for collaborating on finding practical solutions for the development of relations and to remove possible obstacles.

Zadboum also considered it necessary to connect the provinces of the two countries through the governors and provincial chambers of commerce.

In this regard, it was decided to exchange information between the two sides in order to develop trade cooperation.

The President of Tver Chamber of Commerce and Industry, who headed the Russian delegation, also expressed eagerness for the expansion of ties between the two sides' private sectors and mentioned his province's participation in the exclusive Eurasian exhibition in Tehran as an important step for boosting the level of trade between the two sides.

Explaining the capacities of Tver province in the production of livestock inputs and other agricultural products, the official stressed the need for removing existing barriers in the way of developing economic cooperation.

Tver is the largest province in central Russia with over 1.5 million population.

Iranian Industrial parks lack 8GW of electricity

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The deputy head of Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO) has said the country's industrial parks currently lack 8,000 megawatts (MW) [eight gigawatts] of electricity which could be provided through small-scale power plants.

According to Fathali Mohammadzadeh, the government has considered special incentives for industries active in such industrial parks for constructing small-scale solar power plants to meet their needs.

"For those industrial units that can install solar panels on their roofs simultaneously with constructing their units, we will give a five to 10 percent discount on the price of their allocated land [in the industrial parks]," Mohammadzadeh told ISNA.

He also referred to a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between ISIPO and the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization (known as SATBA), saying: "under the framework of this memorandum, various training courses have been held in industrial parks to explain the tariffs and legal capacities that the government and the Energy Ministry are offering for the development of renewable energies and the use of solar energy in industrial zones."

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.

Earlier this month, Deputy Industry Minister Saeed Zarandi announced that the ministries of Energy and Industry, Mining and Trade are going to sign an MOU for collaboration in constructing 13 power plants for industrial units across the country.

"A memorandum of understanding will be signed between the two ministers of industry and energy to start the construction of 13 power plants for industrial units across the country," Zarandi said.

"Since earlier this year, the Industry Ministry, on behalf of the industrial sector, started seeking a permit for building 13 power plants. We held several meetings with Tavanir [Iran's Power Generation, Distribution, and Transmission Company] and the Energy Ministry and proposed to sign a memorandum of understanding with the ministry. We also sent a letter to the Energy Ministry last week to expedite the issuance of the permit," he explained.

Steel exports rise 128% in 3 months yr/yr

→ 1 Iran's export of steel during the previous Iranian calendar year 1399 (ended on March 20) declined 13.1 percent compared to the figure for the preceding year, data released by the Iranian Steel Producers Association (ISPA) showed.

Based on the mentioned data, the country exported nine million tons of steel in the previous year while the exports in the Iranian calendar year 1398 stood at 10.362 million tons.

According to ISPA, over 2.839 million tons of steel products were also exported in the mentioned year, registering an 18-percent decline year on year.

As ISPA data indicated, the exports of steel products, intermediate steel and sponge iron all declined last year, and despite significant output growth and the demand decline in domestic construction sector, the exports of the mentioned products did not increase due to the pandemic.

Iran is planning to produce 32 million tons of steel in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 2022) to register a 27.7 percent rise compared to the figure for the previous year.



Based on the Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry data, Iranian steel companies managed to produce 28.374 million tons of steel in the previous Iranian calendar year.

According to the ministry's programs for the current year, the production of 23 million tons of steel products has been also put on the agenda, while last year 25 million tons of such products were manufactured.

Sponge iron production is expected to reach 33 million tons in the current year to register a 2.5 million tons rise compared to the previous year's 30.5 million tons.

Based on the Industry Ministry data, major Iranian steel producers managed to produce over 22.54 million tons of steel ingots in the previous calendar year, registering an eight percent rise year on year.

Mobarakeh Steel Company had the best performance with a production of 9.8 million tons of the mentioned product while the highest production growth was registered by Sirjan Steel World Company with 141 percent growth.

Iran is currently the tenth largest steel-maker in the world and is estimated to climb to seventh place by the Iranian calendar year 1404 (March 2025).

The country produced 7.5 million tons of crude steel in Q1 2021, to maintain its place as the 10th biggest steel producer in the first three-month of 2021, Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) announced referring to the data released by the World Steel Association (WSA).

'Armenian market a special opportunity for Iranian SMEs'

→ 1 According to the official, the volume of trade between the two countries has witnessed an outstanding rise since the agreement became effective.

Iran mainly imports red meat from Armenia, while Armenia imports polymer raw materials, machinery, industrial gases, manufactured artifacts, leather and leather goods from Iran, he said.

Iran considers Armenia as a gateway to international markets, as the country offers many opportunities for the expansion of trade with the EAEU as well as Europe.

Armenia is the first country to connect Iran to the Eurasian region. This condition alone can increase trade between the two countries so that Iran can use the territory of Armenia as a gateway to other countries.

This proper ground is also an opportunity for the Iranian SMEs to expand trade activities.

The recent MOU signed between Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO) and Armenia's

Investor Support Center is a good step in this due.

The development of bilateral cooperation, offering appropriate solutions for resolving trade issues, promotion and improvement of mutual investment and creation of an operational framework to strengthen and develop stronger trade relations between the two countries were reported to be the main goals of the mentioned MOU.

During the online signing ceremony of the MOU, which was attended by senior officials from the two sides including the ISIPO Head Ali Rasoulman and Armenian Ambassador to Iran Artashes Toumanian, Rasoulman expressed hope that considering the expansion of economic and industrial cooperation between Iran and Armenia, the two countries will take serious measures for promoting SMEs and for the establishment of joint industrial parks.

During his visit to Armenia last year, Rasoulman had met the Armenian economy minister, and had announced ISIPO's readiness to locate, design and build industrial

parks in Armenia.

Meanwhile, Iran held its first exhibition of its production an industrial capabilities in Yerevan two months ago.

All such measures provide good opportunities for the activity of Iranian SMEs.

Armenia's industry sector is in need of help, and Iran can take advantage of this opportunity in the best way.

As the ISIPO head says, "Opportunities must be used on time, because if we do not take advantage of opportunities on time, other countries and competitors will replace us in this neighboring country."

Iran plans to provide conditions for the presence of Iranian companies, especially small and medium enterprises that can compete in the Armenian market, in that country in a way that besides gaining a noticeable share of that market and having permanent presence in that country, they will enter other global markets through Armenia.

TCCIMA offers economic suggestions for next govt.

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Head of Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) has offered some suggestions to the next government for improving the country's business environment and for resolving some of the current economic issues.

In a statement published on the TCCIMA portal, Masoud Khansari has noted that the beginning of each government incumbency will coincide with major changes in the country's economic scene which would impose serious stress on the country's private sector.

Khansari noted that such changes should be toward economic growth and create some new ways for the improvement of the country's economy.



The official believes that some minimal changes, although not structural reforms, can be done quickly and very effectively.

He also stressed the need for attracting foreign investment and being open to having trade exchanges with other countries.

The TCCIMA head further underlined the fact that with the new president taking office, the cabinet is also expected to go through significant changes, and new ministers and deputies are expected to take office as well.

"Choosing new efficient officials which are familiar with the problems of the country's economy and are capable in leading the administrative system can be reassuring for the society; such managers do not allow hundreds of new directives and unnecessary regulations to be imposed on the economic system in the very first days of their presence."

Elsewhere in the statement, Khansari pointed to some minor reforms in the tax, customs, banking, and social security systems, which can lead to effective improvements

in the country's business environment, and called on the new government to take them into serious consideration.

Another important issue that Khansari has mentioned in his suggestions for the 13th president is the need for forging ties with the global economy and opening the doors of the country to international trade.

"Iran's economy must emerge from the shadow of sanctions. It does not matter what executive policy is to end the economic war, what is important is accelerating their implementation. The 13th government must send a message to businessmen, people, and investors that it supports any policy that would end the sanctions," the statement said.

Agriculture Ministry launches project to construct affordable housing units for employees

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iranian Agriculture Ministry, in collaboration with the Transport and Urban Development Ministry, has launched a program for constructing 5,903 housing units for its employees under the framework of the National Housing Action Plan.

The construction of the mentioned units was started in a ceremony attended by the Transport and Urban Development Minister Mohammad Eslami and the Agriculture Minister Kazem Khavazi on Saturday, the portal of the Transport Ministry announced.

As reported, 1,647 of the mentioned units will be constructed in Sistan-Baluchestan Province, 1,972 units in Khorasan



Razavi, 1,020 units in North Khorasan, and finally 1,264 units in Hormozgan province.

Based on a memorandum of understanding (MOU) signed between the two ministries, a total of 100,000 affordable housing units are going to be constructed for the employees of the Agriculture Ministry under the framework of the National Housing Plan.

According to the MOU, the Agriculture Ministry will be responsible for the construction, supervision and control of projects, while the Transport and Urban Development Ministry would be in charge of the transfer of land and processing the legal documents for the applicants.

Over 440,000 tons of basic goods imported via Shahid Rajaee port since late March

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Over 440,000 tons of basic commodities have been imported to Iran via Shahid Rajaee port, the country's largest and best-equipped container port, since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21), according to a provincial official.

Masoud Doshvargar, the director-general of Cereals and Commercial Services Department of southern Hormozgan Province, where the port is located, said that 13 vessels imported the mentioned commodities during the said time span.

He put the amount of imported rise, raw sugar, and oil at more than 440,000 tons since the year start and said that over the past few months, 115,298 tons of rice, 125,288 tons of oil and 129,440 tons of raw sugar have been unloaded and stored at the port wharf.

As announced by the head of Iran Road Maintenance and Transportation Organi-

zation, over 154 million tons (mt) of goods were transported through Iran's roads in the first three months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-June 21) of which 6.5 million tons of basic goods were distributed from the country's ports.

"Some 62 percent of these basic goods were distributed from Imam Khomeini port and the rest from Bandar Abbas and Amirabad ports," Darioush Amani told IRIB.

According to Amani, last year, a total of 502 million tons of goods were transported through the country's road network, which was unprecedented and grew by 5.6 percent compared to the preceding year.

Over 25 million tons of the transported goods in the previous calendar year were basic goods, the official explained.

Amani stated that currently, 2,000 trucks transport 50,000 tons of goods per day from Imam Khomeini Port, adding that the number of trucks should be increased to 2,400 vehicles a day in order to offset

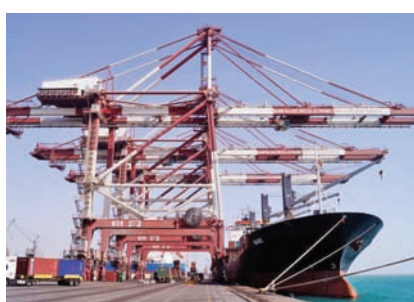
imports and increase the clearance process of the goods in the said port.

The official added that over 3,600 vehicles and machines are currently operating to unload goods at the country's ports.

Back in May, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani ordered the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) to take the necessary measures to accelerate the clearance of basic goods deposited at the country's customs.

According to IRICA Deputy Head Mehrdad Jamal Orounaqi, in a meeting of the government economic coordination headquarters, some problems and issues were raised regarding the clearance of goods in the country's customs, and a report was presented to the president.

Following the mentioned meeting, Rouhani issued a decree ordering to investigate and resolve the mentioned problems and also agreed with the IRICA and Industry Ministry's proposals in this regard.



According to Orounaqi, currently, over 5.2 million tons of basic goods were piled up in the country's ports at the time, of which 3.8 million tons were deposited at Imam Khomeini Port.

Head of Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) Mohammad Rastad had earlier said that the outbreak of the coronavirus was the main reason for the delay in the clearance of goods from ports and customs.

U.S.-China quest for soft power

By Dost Muhammad Barrech

Soft power, arguably, for great powers is as significant as hard power. The tenet of soft power is based on attraction rather than coercion. The history of international politics is a tangible testimony that hard power caused enduring wars, devastation and economic woes. Soft power, cheaper than hard power, winning the hearts and minds of the people, in a prevailing era of science and technology proves to be more instrumental in the construction of a soft image of the country. Joseph Nye, who coined the term soft power, argues that "It is the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments".

To be fair, Nye replicated the soft power idea from China's sixth century BC strategist Sun Tzu who in his renowned book "Art of War" accentuates the value of soft power saying that "The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without a war."

"The best tactics is to take by strategy," and "Those who win people's hearts can win the world." Sun Tzu's doctrine appears to be the key component in the manufacturing of China's soft power. Meanwhile, great power competition between the U.S. and China has become a buzzword in the experts' circle. A new cold war between the U.S. and China seems to be intensifying. Soft power is another crucial area where both powers will leave no stone unturned to supersede the other.

For rising China, to dominate the 21st-century soft power remains as important as hard power. China's obsession with soft power has constantly been increasing. Unlike the U.S., China believes it would be a benign power, crafting consent rather than coercion in its foreign policy. Joshua Kurlantzick while sharing his empirical observation regarding the U.S. image in the post-9/11 period asserted that people in Australia and Thailand had a better image of China than that of the U.S. against the



backdrop of the Bush Administration's foreign policy in the post-9/11 world. China's non-interference in the internal politics of other states invariably cements its soft image across the globe. Martin Jacques prognosticates that China's culture will dominate Western cultural norms, gaining ascendancy and superiority over others as each "civilization-state perceives the world order and international relations with its own history and culture".

Globalization enables Beijing to circulate its ideas and culture to reshape the world order. David Schambaugh states that China has made remarkable headway in economic development, using the robust economy as a soft power granting \$50 billion for the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), \$41 billion for the New Development Bank, \$40 billion for the Silk Road Economic last but not the least \$25 billion for the Maritime Silk Road. Beijing is committed to investing \$4.8 trillion in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The U.S. and USSR, two great powers during the Cold War, collectively did not spend as much money across the world as China single-handedly spends today in BRI.

The book titled "Soft Power and the U.S. Foreign Policy Theoretical, Historical and Contemporary Perspective" written by Inderjeet Parmar and Michal Cox, in a fascinating chapter titled "The future of soft power in U.S. foreign policy" written by Joseph S. Nye, argues that in the last decade the U.S. has considerably lost its soft power. Public opinion poll demonstrates a rapid decline in the U.S. attractiveness in the Muslim world, Europe and Latin America.

In the war on terror, the U.S. remained engaged in attacking Iraq, Afghanistan, while China impressed the world with its exhilarating economic progress and eschewed interference in domestic affairs of other states that culminated in the rise of the latter's soft power and witnessed a rapid decline in the former's. China's statecrafts follow various means in the projection of soft power including self-restraint over controversial issues, reassuring China's political discourse, promoting trade assistance and its culture. Joshua Kurlantzick in his fascinating book titled "Charm Offensive: How China's Soft Power is Transforming the World" articulates that

China's charm offensive as soft power began in 2000 believing in desired stability and harmony with all its fourteen neighboring states. China's charm offensive revolves around "safeguarding peace, promoting development and enhancing cooperation, which is the common desire of all peoples, represents the irresistible historical trend."

It is pertinent to mention here the peaceful rise of China is deliberately crafted in its political discourse as a soft power means. Scholars of China successfully developed the term "heping jueqi" or Peaceful Rise. The term "jueqi" or Peaceful Rise was first used by Zheng Bijian a renowned and senior adviser to the Chinese leadership, term peaceful rise soon materialized in Chinese leaders' speeches. China's phenomenal success in poverty reduction, exponential headway in artificial intelligence (AI), research and development, non-interference in other states' internal politics resulted in buttressing of its soft power.

Realistically speaking, the U.S. somehow has an edge over China in the soft power realm, the former's democratic values, freedom of speech; educational institutions, Hollywood film industry and its culture and cuisine still attract and captivate the people. Beijing will have to improve the aforementioned areas to outstrip the U.S. in a soft power race.

China ostensibly has a bad image in the West. The U.S. and Western countries in a foreseeable future, by all means, will go for maligning China's soft image by rubbishing its political system, debt trap policy under BRI, human rights violation, and laborers' exploitation in African states. Presumably, the U.S.-China soft power competition is on the cards. Both powers will strive for soft power ascendancy in the 21st century to perpetuate hegemony across the globe.

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Turkish-Israeli ties are strategic and deep: Syrian politician

➔ 1 Following is the text of the interview:

On Monday evening (July 12), Erdogan called Israel's Herzog congratulating him on being sworn into his new role as president. What are the reasons for such a rare direct communication between officials of Turkey and Israel after over a decade of fraught relations?

The contact of the Turkish president with the Israeli president is not strange but a normal expectable measure. It was a normal protocol that usually takes place after every similar occasion between the two sides.

Don't forget that Turkey was the first Islamic country to recognize the Zionist regime in 1949, one year after the occupation of Palestine. In the eyes of those who know the nature of Turkish-Israeli ties, this is a normal phone call. But it is surprising for those who view Erdogan as the caliph of the Muslims.

How do you evaluate the Turkish-Israeli relations under Erdogan's presidency, especially Erdogan claims Turkey supports the Palestinian cause?

The Turkish-Israeli relations are strategic and deep, though they fluctuate according to policies of the two governments, so it is generally getting stronger day by day.

Turkish-Israeli ties are not subject to the mood of their leaders. It is a well-established and strong relationship and it is in progress every day despite the rumors about some disputes.



Erdogan's claims about supporting the Palestinian cause are nonsense that only lunatics or those without brains may believe him. It is very easy for Erdogan to claim, but the people in the region are not blind and the truth is visible.

All of Turkey's relationship with Palestine and the Palestinians is to set their pace in a way that serves Israel, as will happen later with the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Some reports suggest that Erdogan is trying to get close to Israel to appease U.S. President Joe Biden, who does not like the current Turkish government. What's your comment?

Biden's dispute with Erdogan is well known, and Biden

does not like Erdogan for several reasons. The hypothesis that Erdogan is approaching the Israeli government to strengthen its ties with Biden is an acceptable reason.

Erdogan is trying to open channels with Biden without looking at the means, and Erdogan's communication with the Israeli government is not far from this goal.

What is Turkey's role in establishing peace in the region from Libya to Syria and Afghanistan? How do you evaluate Turkish existence in these areas?

Turkey's role in the region is the role of NATO's regional policeman. After Turkey's participation in destabilizing Syria, Iraq and Libya, it is now moving to Afghanistan.

The Turkish presence in Syria, Iraq and Libya is an occupation, which in our view is worse than the Israeli occupation, as Turkish presence can be a step to pave the way for the Western presence including the U.S. and Europe.

Do you expect Turkey to normalize relations with Syria as Saudi Arabia and Syria have taken steps to normalize ties?

Turkey has offered to normalize its relations with Syria since 2016, through the Russian mediator, but Syria refused.

The matter relies on the approval of the Syrian side, not vice versa.

Turkey's interest in normalizing the relationship with Syria is greater than Syria's interest in such a move.

High-stakes as Afghan government, Taliban delegations gather in Doha

Representatives of the Afghan government and the Taliban are holding a new round of talks in Doha, as foreign forces finalize their withdrawal from the war-ravaged country.

High-ranking officials including the former president, Hamid Karzai, and former chief executive Abdullah Abdullah are expected to attend the negotiations to help push for a final agreement. A spokesperson for the Afghan government says "the high-level delegation is here to talk to both sides, guide them and support the (government) negotiating team in terms of speeding up the talks and have progress".

The spokesperson expressed enthusiasm over the negotiations saying "we

expect that it (will) speed the talks and... in a short time, both sides will reach a result and we will witness a durable and dignified peace in Afghanistan."

Ahead of the talks, a Taliban spokesman told Al-Jazeera news that "[the Taliban] are ready for dialogue, for talks and negotiations, and our priority is to solve the problems through dialogue. Muhammad Naeem added that "the other side must have a true and sincere will to end the problems." The Afghan government has repeatedly said that the only way towards peaceful coexistence among all factions is through intra-Afghan negotiations.

The two sides have been meeting on and off for months in the Qatari capital

but the talks have lost momentum as violence has recently surged.

The latest round of talks indicates willingness from both sides towards a peaceful settlement after the American withdrawal, which is expected to be wrapped up before a September deadline. Meanwhile, Russia has said that the United States' two decades military mission in the country has been a failure.

Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, says the White House has tried to portray the withdrawal of U.S.-led foreign forces "in the most positive colors." Speaking to reporters at a conference in Uzbekistan, where Afghan President Ashraf Ghani was also in attendance, Lavrov noted

"but everyone understands that the mission has failed." U.S. troops have been in Afghanistan for nearly two decades following an American-led invasion back in late 2001.

The Pentagon stated the goal of the mission was to topple the Taliban. However, almost 20 years later, Washington has negotiated with the Taliban on how to withdraw its military forces. During the American occupation, poverty, unemployment, instability and violence have increased significantly; while terrorist groups, such as Daesh, which had no presence in the country before the U.S. invasion, have emerged and waged vicious terror campaigns.

U.S. sending dozens of advanced warplanes to the Pacific amid tensions with China

Washington is reportedly deploying around two dozen F-22 warplanes to Guam and Tinian islands to participate in military drills near China. The U.S. Pacific Air Forces in Hawaii say around 25 F-22 warplanes from the Hawaii Air National Guard and from Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska will be deployed this month for the drills dubbed Operation Pacific Island 2021.

According to the Pentagon, the F-22s are supposed 'the world's most advanced fighter jets' with 'stealth technology' and alleged ability to evade radar detection as well as sensor systems that give pilots a detailed view of the battlespace.

General Ken Wilsbach, a Pacific Air Forces commander has told American media that "we have never had this many raptors deployed together in the Pacific Air Forces area of operations.

A statement from the U.S. Air Force in the Pacific says ten F-15 fighter jets and two C-130J Hercules transport planes will also join the drills. The exercise will take place at some point in July, the exact date has not been confirmed to the public. American analysts say deploying such a large number of these warplanes is aimed at sending a message to China at a time of heightened tensions in Pacific flashpoint areas such as the South China Sea and Taiwan.

Critics say the United States has been trying (unsuccessfully), since the days of former U.S. President Barack Obama, to contain China's growing economic strength and its world superpower status.

They also question what Washington's response would be if Beijing were to send its military and conduct exercises near the borders of the United States? Ana-

lysts also say America has been playing a troublesome role in multiple regions around the world, scaremongering nations of 'invincible' threats that don't exist for the sake of the U.S. Military Industrial Complex. Over the decades, U.S. military adventurism abroad and imperialist plots have not shaped out exactly how Washington had planned. Other analysts have said the U.S. is trying to export its domestic problems overseas. In any case, research shows that China will overtake the United States as the number one economic power in the world, over the next ten years, sooner than initially predicted. America's disastrous mishandling of the coronavirus which ravaged its economy has been noted as one of the factors behind this, whereas China has been praised for its swift and effective response to the pandemic.

Europe suffers devastating floods as death toll rises

➔ 1 Gerd Landsberg, the head of the German Association of Towns and Municipalities, said the cost of the damage was likely to run into 'billions of euros.'

The insurance industry is preparing for a huge payout with the disaster, poised to become one of the costliest flooding episodes in history. The exact figure is difficult to estimate as the impact of the floods is ongoing. However, the German insurers' association, GDV, says so far this year, weather conditions such as storms, heavy rain and flooding could make it one of the most damaging since 2013, a year which saw losses of up to €9 billion.

Saudi-led coalition, mercenaries plunder 3-4mn barrels of Yemeni oil every month

The Saudi-led military coalition and its mercenaries plunder "three to four million barrels" of Yemeni oil every month, Yemen's oil director says.

Executive Director of the Yemeni Oil Company Ammar al-Azra'i announced the grim news in an interview with Yemen's Arabic-language al-Masirah television news network on Friday, saying, "We do not know where the proceeds will be deposited."



He stressed that the looting of crude oil and liquefied natural gas by the invading forces has prevented the payment of Yemenis' salaries.

Al-Azra'i said that Saudi-led forces have seized four ships near the Saudi port of Jizan, "two of which are carrying gasoline for public use, one carrying fuel oil for factories and the al-Hudaydah power plant, and another one carrying natural gas."

According to Press TV, the Saudi-led coalition has imposed a crippling siege on Yemen, from land, air, and sea.

The blockade includes the closure of the port of Hudaydah, which is a lifeline for millions of Yemenis. The invading forces have seized vessels carrying fuel and prevented them from entering the port.

U.S. causes all sufferings in Lebanon, interferes in Lebanese affairs: Hezbollah

The head of the Executive Council of the Lebanese resistance movement Hezbollah says all the sufferings in Lebanon today have been directly or indirectly caused by the United States.

"Today, the one who has destroyed Lebanon is the United States, which continues to interfere in all of the affairs of this country," Hashim Safi al-Din said, Lebanon's al-Ahed news website reported on Friday.

Safi al-Din pointed to the US sanctions on Lebanon, saying the US has targeted the needs of all the people of the region with sanctions.

The remarks came after Lebanon's Prime Minister-designate Saad al-Hariri said he had abandoned his efforts to form a new government, citing disagreements with the country's president, Michel Aoun, on the formation of a new cabinet.

Hariri was designated to form the new government in October, after the resignation of Prime Minister Hassan Diab in the aftermath of the deadly August 4 Beirut port explosion.

U.S. attempts to destroy Cuba have failed: President Diaz-Canel

Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel says attempts by the United States to "destroy" Cuba have failed.

Diaz-Canel said on Twitter on Friday that Washington "has failed in its efforts to destroy Cuba, despite spending billions of dollars to do so," a day after U.S. President Joe Biden called Cuba a "failed State."

"A failed state is a state which, in order to please and blackmail a reactionary minority, is capable of multiplying the damage to 11 million human beings, ignoring the will of the majority of Cubans, Americans, and the international community," he said on Friday, referring to the United States.

Diaz-Canel was referring to the U.S. trade embargo that has been in place against Cuba since 1962 and that was reinforced under former President Donald Trump.

Resistance News

IOF kidnaps Sheikh Suleiman Haddaleen from Masafer Yatta

INTERNATIONAL **TEHRAN** — The Israeli occupation forces (IOF) kidnaped Sheikh Suleiman Haddaleen, a noted national figure from Masafer Yatta, and detained a number of Palestinian journalists during their presence in Masafer Yatta area, south of al-Khalil.

According to local sources, the IOF rounded up Sheikh Haddaleen from Masafer Yatta and detained journalists Mash'ur al-Wahwah, Iyad al-Hashlamon and Sari Jaradat as they were heading for the area to cover an event staged by local residents and national figures against Israel's settlement activity.

The IOF checked the journalists' IDs card and the cameras and equipment they were carrying before letting them go.

Sheikh Haddaleen is known for his outstanding role in resisting the occupation and leading popular rallies against settlement in Masafer Yatta.

Zabol seeks national status for native needlework

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** – Zabol seeks to gain a national status for Siah-duzi, an indigenous needlework skill, which is passed down from generation to generation in the southeastern Iranian city.

As part of the process of claiming the city as a national hub of handicrafts, a dossier is being prepared and artisans and craft-people active in this field have been identified, Zabol tourism chief Sadeq Mirhosseini said on Saturday.



“The dossier is expected to be completed with more dedication and determination of experienced artists and craftsmen,” the official noted.

Zabol is situated in Sistan-Baluchestan province near the border of Afghanistan.

Siah-duzi is traditionally practiced in the Sistan region to decorate the chest and sleeves of clothes, and in this method of sewing, only black threads are used, which is usually silk.

Most light and white clothes in this region are adorned with triangular patterns of Siah-duzi.

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

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

With 14 entries, Iran ranks first globally for the number of cities and villages registered by the World Crafts Council, as China with seven entries, Chile with four, and India with three ones come next. The value of Iran’s handicrafts exports stood at \$120 million during the first eleven months of the past Iranian calendar year 1399 (March 20, 2020 – February 18, 2021), Mehr reported. The country’s handicrafts exports slumped during the mentioned months in comparison to the same period last year earlier due to the damage the coronavirus pandemic has inflicted on global trade.

The Islamic Republic exported \$427 million worth of handicrafts during the first eleven months of the calendar year 1398. Of the figure, some \$190 million was earned via suitcase trade (allowed for customs-free and tax-free transfer) through 20 provinces, according to data compiled by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts.

Ceramics, pottery vessels, handwoven cloths as well as personal ornamentations with precious and semi-precious gemstones are traditionally exported to Iraq, Afghanistan, Germany, the U.S., the UK, and other countries.

UNESCO-tagged brick tower undergoes partial restoration

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** – A restoration project has recently been completed on the UNESCO-registered Gonbad-e Qabus in the northern province of Golestan, the director of the World Heritage site has said.

As a part of the project, pieces of wood flooring were installed inside the building to safeguard the interior from damage caused by visitors, CHTN quoted Abdolhamid Nurtaqani as saying on Saturday.

The wood pieces have been designed based on the geometry of the structure so that they could be moved easily without damaging the monument, he added.



Before the outbreak of the coronavirus, the historical site was visited by approximately 20,000 people each year during the New Year (Noruz) holiday, and despite the limited time people can spend inside the monument, visitors can damage the floor bricks, he explained.

Visitors should not stay in the monument for more than ten minutes, because even their breathing can increase the humidity inside, adversely affecting the building, he noted.

The one-millennium-old brick tower is of high architectural importance as an exemplar and innovative design of the early-Islamic-era architecture.

Also called Gonbad-e Kavus, the brick tower is located in a city of the same name.

The UNESCO comments that the tower bears testimony to the cultural exchange between Central Asian nomads and the ancient civilization of Iran.

The long-lasting structure capped by an eye-catching conical roof boasts intricate geometric principles and patterns which embellish parts of its load-bearing brickwork.

Narratives say the tower has influenced various subsequent designers of tomb towers and other cylindrical commemorative structures both in the region and beyond.

Two encircling inscriptions in Kufic calligraphy date the tower to 1006-7 CE while commemorating Qabus Ibn Voshmgir, Ziyarid ruler, and literati (reigned 978–1012).

The UNESCO also credits Gonbad-e Qabus as “an outstanding and technologically innovative example of Islamic architecture that influenced sacril building in Iran, Anatolia, and Central Asia.”

Jiroft: the story of how Iran became a cradle of civilization

→1 Data provided by the internet sites and auction houses selling these mysterious pieces were sparse and, at best, vague. Their origins were often listed as “from Central Asia.”

Mysterious artifacts

At first, it was assumed that the pieces were the work of expert forgers, but as more came on the market in the following months, scholars began to speculate that they could be genuine, deriving from an undocumented site whose location was unknown to them. In 2002 more appeared on the market.

Iranian police solved the mystery later that year. A coordinated investigation led to the arrest of several traffickers and the confiscation of a hoard of artifacts. These objects were being prepared to be shipped from Tehran, Bandar ‘Abbas, and Kerman to buyers around the world. Investigators revealed that most of these distinctive pieces could be traced back to a location in the Halil River Valley, about 25 miles south of Jiroft, a remote and peaceful city in southeastern Iran, not far from the Persian Gulf.

But where did these mystery artifacts come from? At the time, scholars knew of no-dig sites in the area, but when they looked closer, they found a simple yet surprising explanation. In early 2001 flooding caused the Halil River to overflow its banks and erode the surrounding lands.

Layers of sediment were washed away, and the remains of an ancient cemetery were exposed. Locals and looters quickly recognized the importance of the find and moved to collect and sell the artifacts they were found.

Surveys by intl. archaeologists

The full import of the discovery became clearer after archaeologists made formal surveys of the area and found that this undocumented culture dated back nearly 5,000 years to the Bronze Age. Looters had ransacked thousands of graves in the necropolis, taking artifacts and damaging the site, but archaeologists were determined to study what remained. They traveled from universities around the world to join an Iranian team to protect as much of the exposed site as possible and excavate nearby areas to learn more about this ancient culture and its people.

Lasting for several seasons, excavations near Jiroft began in February 2003, under the direction of Iranian archaeologist Yousef Madjidzadeh. Madjidzadeh’s team identified the main necropolis, which they named Mahtoutabad. Most of the initial findings and artifacts are believed to have come from this site despite the looting of grave goods before the excavations. Almost a mile to the west of the necropolis, archaeologists targeted for further study two large artificial mounds that rose above the plain.

About a mile apart from each other, the two mounds were named Konar Sandal South and Konar Sandal North. They turned out to contain the remains of two major architectural complexes. The northern mound included a cult building, while in the southern one were the remains of a fortified citadel. At the foot of the mounds, buried under many feet of sediment, were the



Scorpions flank a human figure with hooved feet who has caught two cheetahs by their tails, on a chlorite artifact recovered from Jiroft. (Photo: Pejman Akbarzadeh/Persian Dutch Network)

remains of smaller buildings. It’s believed that the two mounds had once formed part of a unified urban settlement that stretched many miles across the plateau.

Madjidzadeh’s preliminary conclusions from the partial data available made a big impression on the scientific community. Some scholars, most notably American archaeologist Oscar White Muscarella, strongly questioned his findings, sparking furious academic debates. Critics were concerned that the initial looting of the site’s artifacts made it difficult to accurately assess their age and authenticity.

Despite the controversies, work continued at the Iranian site throughout several seasons with visiting scholars from all over the world, including American archaeologist Holly Pittman from the University of Pennsylvania. The first phase of excavations at the site lasted through 2007.

The initial picture of the Jiroft civilization that existed became clearer. Madjidzadeh published the team’s findings, which suggested that an urban center had been established at the Jiroft site as long ago as the end of the fifth millennium BC. His optimistic conclusion stated that “the region of Jiroft . . . was a major occupation of urban character in the region during the third millennium BC. Its center was in the valley of the Halil River where large sites with monumental architecture, sizable craft production areas, domestic quarters, and extensive extramural cemeteries dominated the landscape.”

Contact with Mesopotamia

Archaeologists found distinctive objects—some practical, some decorative, and others sacred—that often featured carved semiprecious stones such as calcite,

chlorite, obsidian, and lapis lazuli. The citizens of this city seem to have maintained close contact with cities in Mesopotamia, the region located between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers (roughly coinciding with present-day Iraq). Painstaking excavation of Konar Sandal South revealed that the citadel there had once been surrounded by a monumental wall of brick and had several rooms that through radiocarbon analysis have been dated to between 2500 and 2200 BC.

Digging at the Jiroft site halted for seven years and began again in 2014 as Iranian archaeologists returned to the site. Scholars from Italy, France, Germany, and other nations have taken part in these new digs, which have been uncovering even more detailed information about the Bronze Age people of Jiroft.

Archaeologists were thrilled to discover the complexity and beauty of the artworks found at the Jiroft site. The decorative iconography present on hundreds of the vessels is rich with skillfully executed symbolism and shows remarkable similarities with the iconography associated with the Mesopotamian tradition. The scorpion images found at Jiroft echo the scorpion-men depicted in the royal necropolis at Ur (mid-third millennium BC). The bull-men of Jiroft call to mind the bull-man Enkidu from the Akkadian Epic of Gilgamesh. The parallels are so pronounced that it is theorized that the two cultures could share a common cultural heritage.

In one of the entrances to the citadel of Konar Sandal South, scholars found a fragment from a baked clay tablet inscribed with writing. In another spot, some 500 feet to the north, three other tablets bear-

ing written texts in two different writing systems were found. Whoever these people were, they had a writing system. One of them appears similar to the so-called linear Elamite, a script used in the cities of the kingdom of Elam, on the border with Mesopotamia. The other script was geometric in form and had not been seen before. The obvious inference from the two finds is that the civilization at Jiroft was literate.

In 2003, after examining the huge collection of confiscated archaeological finds, Madjidzadeh, the director of operations, put forward an intriguing hypothesis. Based on his observations of the site and a study of ancient Mesopotamian cuneiform texts, Madjidzadeh believes that the Jiroft civilization is Aratta, a land that was praised for its wealth in numerous Sumerian poems. An ancient text describes a conflict between Aratta and the Mesopotamian city of Uruk. In the telling, Aratta is a vibrant place: “battlements are of green lapis lazuli, its walls and its towering brickwork are bright red, their brick clay is made of tinstone dug out in the mountains.”

Madjidzadeh points to the site’s geographical position surrounded by mountains, the abundance of semiprecious stones, and the high degree of civilization as factors in favor of an Aratta identification. Skeptics criticize Madjidzadeh’s theory as lacking in solid evidence. There is no documentary proof to suggest that Aratta existed anywhere outside of the Sumerian poems and that Aratta was just a Bronze Age myth.

Other scholars have theorized that the civilization near Jiroft may correspond to the ancient kingdom of Marhasi. This theory has some textual support. First, there are the inscriptions of the kings of Akkad, a Mesopotamian empire, that describe their glorious Akkadian feats during the fight against a powerful state in the Iranian highlands. In one of these texts, the epilogue of the conflict is narrated in great detail: “Rimush [King of Akkad] defeated Abalgamash King of Marhasi in battle . . . When he conquered Elam and Marhasi he took 30 gold mines, 3,600 silver mines and 300 male and female slaves.” There is firm evidence that the city of Akkad existed between 2350 and 2200 BC. Since Marhasi was Akkad’s contemporary, Marhasi can also be dated to that time, which lines up with the data from the Jiroft dig sites. Unlike Marhasi, Aratta cannot be identified with a specific period.

A complex Bronze Age civilization

No one had ever dreamed that from the sands of such a remote and arid region, considered by many to be an unlikely spot for the development of a complex civilization, that a refined culture could emerge. Since excavations began nearly two decades ago, numerous discoveries—once thoroughly analyzed—will make it possible to place Jiroft in its proper historical perspective. Since 1869, when the remnants of Sumerian culture were uncovered, Mesopotamia has been considered the cradle of civilization. But the remarkable findings at Jiroft demanded a reassessment of that interpretation.

Farms get approval to lift agritourism in northern Iran

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** – A total of seven farms have recently been granted official approval for becoming agritourism hubs across the lush green province of Golestan in northern Iran.

“Agritourism is being developed in Golestan by launching new tourist farms,” the provincial tourism chief has said.

“The province has issued seven agritourism permits in less than a year, which is expected to attract more tourists,” Ahmad Tajari announced on Saturday.

Such permits are granted to eligible farm owners in the country to launch agritourism businesses, aiming to set certain standards in a move to ensure the quality of such services in the country.

A total of 720 billion rials (\$17.1 million at the official exchange rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) has been invested in these tourist farms, which are expected to generate almost 120 job opportunities, the official added.

As tourism and agriculture are the two axes to the development of the province, their combination serves a crucial role in creating jobs and economic prosperity, particularly in the villages, he noted.

Agritourism is a relatively new branch of the travel industry in which tourists stay with local people in



rural areas. Farm/ranch recreation refers to activities conducted on private agricultural lands, which might include fee-hunting and fishing, overnight stays, educational activities, etc.

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

1000-year old silver bowl recovered in Semnan

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** – Iranian police have discovered an ancient silver bowl from the house of an authorized antique dealer in Semnan province.

The object, which is estimated to date 1000 years, was skillfully embedded in the house, IRNA quoted the

provincial police commander Abdollah Hassani as saying on Saturday.

After days of intelligence operations, the illegal dealer was traced and arrested after police received reports from cultural heritage aficionados about his misdeeds, the report said. Semnan is well placed to give swift

access to both the Alborz Mountains and the vast Dasht-e Kavir desert, while still being an easy some 200km drive by expressway from Tehran. Since Sassanian times it has been a key stop on the Silk Road, attracting wealth and regular destruction in equal measure.



1,100 villages with no unemployed

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — By the end of the current [Iranian calendar] year (March 2022), the number of villages with no unemployed residents will reach 1,100 across the country.

With the beginning of the national campaign called “Blessed Village”, 1,100 villages of the country will not have any unemployed people by the end of this year.

The Barekat Charity Foundation, affiliated with the Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam, has supported 110,000 community-based job plans in 8,400 deprived villages of the country, creating 330,000 jobs.

A total of 100 trillion rials (nearly \$2.3 billion at the official rate of 42,000 rials) have so far been allocated to create 330,000 jobs in the deprived villages, IRIB reported on Saturday.

Currently, there are 100 villages in the country with no unemployed people, another 1,000 villages will be added to this number by the end of this year.

The Barekat Foundation aims to create 70,000 community-based job projects in rural areas this year, which will lead to the creation of 210,000 job opportunities.

The number of villages covered by the Foundation’s employment activities will increase to 12,000 by the end of this year.

Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam was founded in 1989. In the Iranian calendar year, 1386 (March 2017-March 2018) Barekat Charity Foundation- the social arm of the organization- with the aim of promoting social justice was established.

Socio-economic empowerment of communities by encouraging entrepreneurship prioritizing breadwinner women, developing



A total of 100 trillion rials (nearly \$2.3 billion at the official rate of 42,000 rials) have so far been allocated to create 330,000 jobs in the deprived villages.

infrastructures such as water supply and power grids, building roads, constructing schools and increasing educational spaces, promoting health for all, granting non-repayable loans and insurance especially in less developed areas and regions most affected by 1980s war and natural disasters are of the priorities of the charity foundation.

Rural development budget increases by 2.5 folds

Currently, 26 percent of the country’s population lives in villages, around 39,000 villages have more than 20 households and 23,000 villages have less than 20 households.

Thus, more than 97 percent of the country’s rural population lives in villages with

over 20,000 households.

The budget for rural development projects has increased by 2.5 times in the current [Iranian calendar] year (March 2021-March 2022) compared to that of the previous year, Mohammad Reza Shamloo deputy head of the Housing Foundation of Islamic Revolution has announced in July.

A total of 80 trillion rials (nearly \$1.9 billion at the official rate of 42,000 rials) were allocated this year for the implementation of rural development projects across the country, he added.

The credit will be spent on preparing, reviewing, and implementing the rural plans, improving the rural infrastructure, and the development of the villages, he explained.

Rural-urban migration reverse

In Iran, where villages account for generating 20-23 percent of the value-added in the country, the development of rural areas has been always a top agenda of the governments’ activities.

Many efforts have been made over the past couple of years by the government to support villagers and slow down the trend of migration from rural areas to cities.

Rural tourism, agritourism, religious tourism, and ecotourism are alternatives or complementary economic activities that could further stimulate rural development while decreasing rural community dependency on one main economic sector (agriculture, forestry, energy, or mining).

Mohammad Omid, the vice president for rural development, said in November 2020 that for the first time in the country, the migration of people from rural areas to cities has reached zero.

Persian Gulf water transfer project in pipe-laying phase

ENVIRONMENT **TEHRAN** — A project for transferring water from the Persian Gulf to the southern Fars province is on its pipe-laying phase, IRNA reported on Saturday.

The project with the aim of supplying water for drinking, agriculture, and industry of Fars province was started in February 2019.

So far, out of 7.5 million cubic meters, 2.2 million cubic meters of excavation has been done.

Currently, about 30 km of 67 km (the entire route) is ready for laying the water transfer pipeline, by now, pipelines to the length of about one kilometer have been laid.

Iran started water desalination and transfer project in recent years aiming at alleviating and meeting the urgent need of central arid areas for water.

However, redistribution of water resources is inevitably involved in changes in the ecological environment and endangering nature.

Changes are divided into two negative and positive impacts, including water supply in water-deficient areas, facilitating the water cycle, improving meteorological conditions in the recipient basins, mitigating ecological water shortage, repairing the damaged ecological system, and preserving the endangered wild fauna and flora.

The negative impacts include salinization and acidification of the donor basins, damage to the ecological environment of the donor basins, and both sides of the conveying channel system, an increase of water consumption in the recipient



basins, and spread of diseases, etc.

In Iran, two water transfer projects also have been proposed by the government to ensure water supplies for the provinces of Semnan and Sistan-Baluchestan suffering severe water shortages, which have been controversial over the past years.

One of the projects is the water transfer from the Caspian Sea to the central province of Semnan proposed in 2012, but not proceeded at the time due to concerns raised by the department of environment, while is now back on the table and at the planning stage.

The other looked to Oman seawater quenching the thirst of the southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchestan, Hormozgan, and Khorasan Razavi provinces, which have been allocated

a budget of \$400 million by the president in March 2016.

Water transfer projects beneficial or detrimental?

Experts believe that these projects entailing economic and environmental burden are no solution to droughts, and demanded the water transfer projects to be dismissed due to the irreparable damages to the environment namely deforestation, wildlife habitat destruction, biodiversity degradation, improper land change use, and contaminated seawater.

In a news piece published by Khabaronline, Mehdi Zare, a seismic expert, said that human intervention, speeding up climate change, is one of the major threats to today’s human life and even the future. One of the threats is that transferring water to dry areas increases the population burden in those areas while imposing unsustainable development where there is no suitable climate for such a concentration.

The disastrous consequences of such interventions have so far been appeared in the country, especially in the provinces of Tehran and Isfahan located in arid areas, which have been demolished being accommodated a population of three to five times the size of their carrying capacity in the last 50 years, he lamented.

This is while, some others are a staunch supporters of water transfer projects as well as the Department of Environment (DOE) chief Issa Kalantari arguing that to provide the amount of water needed for drinking purposes and industries, there is no choice but to use seawater, the incredible and abundant resources, now and in the future.

A father with 42 daughters in Tehran

→ 1 In this institute, various programs are planned, including girls’ education, employment, and independence, while vocational and scientific courses are offered.

Referring to the outbreak of coronavirus, Karimi said: “During the pandemic, we provided online education for girls to attend various classes in schools and universities.”

The two branches of the “Angels” institute have 9 members of the board of directors, 6 of whom are all war veterans and freedmen.

560 children are cared for in welfare centers

Seyed Saeed Aram, an official with Tehran welfare organization said that “some 560 girls and boys live in 30 care centers in Tehran, of which three are state-run centers and 27 non-governmental centers.

Of these 27 non-governmental centers, 13 centers are for boys, 12 for girls, and 2 for children aging 3-6 years old.”

“Girls and boys are empowered in non-governmental centers, as they continue their education and can live independent-

ly by acquiring life skills and vocational training,” he noted.

In non-governmental centers, education is provided to these children, including scientific, artistic, cultural, vocational training, counseling, and psychological courses, said Aram.

If girls or boys gain independence after the age of 18 and are able to manage their life, they can be discharged from the centers, otherwise, there is no age limit for attending these centers, he stated.

“Welfare Organization is a bridge between



charities and the needy in providing assistance and empowerment to the target community.

These institutions have not only provided support to homeless girls but have also created employment for a number of female-headed households,” he concluded.

ENGLISH IN USE

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A ← → ع

Existing vaccines are effective against mutated coronavirus: Iranian expert

The COVID-19 vaccines, which have been so far produced in the world are also effective on the mutated virus, so people who receive the vaccines will be protected against the new virus strain, Massoud Mardani, a member of the National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control, has said.

What raised concerns about the newly-produced vaccine was the ineffectiveness against the mutated virus, which fortunately studies show, the mutation of the virus and the chromosomal alteration are not enough to change its general nature, he explained.

According to Mardani, it is possible to detect the new coronavirus in Iran. All British and European passengers are tested at the airport for a quick and PCR test, while so far no case has been confirmed in the country, IRNA reported on Tuesday.

واکسن کرونا بر روی ویروس جهش یافته هم اثر می کند

مسعود مردانی عضو ستاد ملی مقابله با کرونا می گوید واکسن تولید و تایید شده در دنیا بر روی ویروس جهش یافته هم اثر می کند و افرادی که واکسن تایید شده را بزنند علیه این ویروس هم مصونیت پیدا می کنند.

مردانی روز سه شنبه در گفت و گو با خبرنگار ایرنا افزود: آنچه نگران آن هستیم این است که واکسن تولید شده برای کووید ۱۹ در دنیا نسبت به ویروس جهش یافته بی اثر باشد که خوشبختانه بررسی ها نشان می دهد، جهش ویروس و تغییر کروموزومی ویروس به قدری نیست که ماهیت کلی آن تغییر کند.

به گفته او، امکان تشخیص ویروس کرونا جهش یافته در ایران وجود دارد. از همه مسافران انگلیس و اروپا در فرودگاه تست سریع و از موارد مشکوک تست دقیق تر «پی سی آر» گرفته و بررسی می شود و تاکنون موردی از این ویروس در ایران تایید نشده است.

COVID-19 UPDATES

The statistics are related to 24 hours started 2:00 p.m. July 16

New cases	15,139
New deaths	175
Total cases	3,118,348
Total deaths	86,966
New hospitalized patients	1,725
Patients in critical condition	4,237
Total recovered patients	3,118,348
Diagnostic tests conducted	24,968,443
Doses of vaccine injected	8,143,406

Pesticide caused children’s brain damage, California lawsuits say

Lawsuits filed Monday in California seek potential class-action damages from Dow Chemical and its successor company over a widely used bug killer linked to brain damage in children.

Chlorpyrifos is approved for use on more than 80 crops, including oranges, berries, grapes, soybeans, almonds and walnuts, though California banned sales of the pesticide last year and spraying of it this year. Some other states, including New York, have moved to ban it.



Stuart Calwell, lead attorney in the lawsuits, argued that its effects linger in Central Valley agricultural communities contaminated by chlorpyrifos during decades of use, with measurable levels still found in his clients’ homes.

Lawyers project that at least 100,000 homes in the nation’s largest agricultural state may need to dispose of most of their belongings because they are contaminated with the pesticide.

“We have found it in the houses, we have found it in carpet, in upholstered furniture, we found it in a teddy bear, and we found it on the walls and surfaces,” Calwell said. “Then a little child picks up a teddy bear and holds on to it.”

All that needs to be cleaned up, he says, because “it’s not going away on its own.”

State records show 61 million pounds of the pesticide were applied from 1974 through 2017 in four counties where the lawsuits were filed, Calwell said.

Officials with Dow and its affiliated Corteva Inc. did not immediately respond to telephone and email requests seeking comment.

Corteva stopped producing the pesticide last year. The Delaware-based company was created after a merger of Dow Chemical and Dupont and had been the world’s largest manufacturer of chlorpyrifos. The company has said it believes the product is safe and said it stopped production because of declining sales.

Scientific studies have shown that chlorpyrifos damages the brains of fetuses and children. It was first used in 1965 but was banned for household use in 2001.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is weighing whether to ban the product or declare it safe, including for infants and children. The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in April ordered the EPA to make a decision after studying the product for more than a decade. The Trump administration had halted the rule-making process.

The lawsuits were filed on behalf of people in Fresno, Kings, Madera and Tulare counties, though Calwell said they are a precursor to seeking class-action status. Aside from Dow-related companies, they name various farming companies they say applied the chemical near the plaintiffs’ homes.

In each case, the plaintiffs are parents suing on behalf of children who suffer from severe neurological injuries that the lawsuits blame on their exposure to the chemical while they were in the womb or when they were very young.

Aside from nearby spraying, the lawsuits say the parent, relatives or others in frequent contact with the child worked in the fields or packing plants and became contaminated with the chemical that they passed on to the child.

Calwell filed related lawsuits last fall on behalf of farmworkers who his firm said “spent years marinating in the pesticide.”

The first of those related lawsuits blames chlorpyrifos for causing autism, cognitive and intellectual disabilities in a now-teenager born in 2003.

The teen’s father worked spraying pesticides on farm fields and his mother packed what the lawsuit says was chlorpyrifos-covered produce in a facility surrounded by fields treated with the pesticide, often applied by aerial spraying.

Calwell similarly sued Monsanto for damages he alleged it caused to homes in Nitro, West Virginia, with its use of dioxin to make the defoliant known during the Vietnam War era as Agent Orange.

That case settled for \$93 million, with Monsanto paying to decontaminate 4,500 homes, a fraction of those that he alleges in California will require more extensive decontamination followed by medical monitoring.

INTERNATIONAL DAILY
www.tehrantimes.com

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» Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051603
» Printed at: Jame Jam Bartar Borna - 44197737

Tehrantimes79 Tehrantimes79 Tehrantimes79

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GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

An ignorant person will always overdo a thing or neglect it totally.

Imam Ali (AS)

Prophet Joseph (AS) in Persian literature

Part 3

In another poem, in a metaphorical reference to the happy life of Joseph (AS) after suffering in a well, he mentions the arduous crossing of the desert before the pilgrim reaches Mecca, and, with an allusion to the Quran (94.5), creates an image illustrating the virtues of being patient and steadfast.

In another poem, he uses the story of Joseph (AS) to elaborate on the theme of a Quranic verse (2.156): "To God we belong and to Him we return," which is the favorite subject matter in Sufi literature.

As Joseph (AS) was kept in a prison, the soul is a prisoner in the physical cage of the body and this dismal world of matter.

C) Sufi and mystical esotericism: Mysticism and Sufism (used as synonyms in this paper) are the expression of spiritual and intuitive interpretation of religious ideas through the symbolic and metaphorical application of terms, which, according to the mystics, signifies the true sense of words.

The exertion of effort by the pilgrim on the Path (salek) is for the perception of those true meanings. With the metaphorical and symbolic use of the key terms (well, prison, Egypt, Zolaykha, etc.) in the story of Joseph (AS), they describe the descent of the soul from Godhead, its imprisonment in the physical cage (body) in the material world, and its final salvation through self-mortification.

Thus, the story of Joseph (AS) in the well and his imprisonment are turned into a symbolic description of the downward journey of the soul in stages into the body in the prison of this world of matter.

Joseph (AS) bears a great deal of hardships (the self-mortification of the pilgrim) before his knowledge of dream interpretation leads to his release from the prison and his investment with the highest office in Egypt, as the intuitive knowledge of the mystic pilgrim brings the soul to the world of Reality to realize his optimum desire (joining Zolaykha).

This is the general outline that poets with mystical orientation have employed allegorically according to their own styles and modes of expression.

For instance, Sanai (d. ca. 1124), in an ode, uses desert (sahra) as the symbol of the transcendental world (the world of Reality) vis-à-vis the material world (the well) or the body (the prison), in which the soul is kept prisoner.

Elsewhere he refers to the scent of Joseph (AS) or of his shirt as the divine breath (dam-e elahi, nafka) or the inner soul (ruh-e baten), which has been lost to man, as Joseph (AS) was to Jacob (AS).

He exhorts that it would be unbecoming of man, who carries the divine soul (lit. has the Joseph (AS) of Egypt as companion), to be subservient to Satan and absorbed by its ungodly manifestations.

The same general theme is elaborated on in his Hadiqat al-Haqiqah with expressive religious exhortations. He calls the Quran the rope that man's wisdom may use to save him from the abyss that the trickery of Satan has made him remain, as Joseph (AS) was from the well into which he had fallen through the duplicity of his brothers. Thus, man will reach salvation and bliss like Joseph (AS) when he can discover the hidden secrets of the Quran.

Joseph's story in other Sufi works is mostly along the same lines as that which one finds in the poetry of Sanai, distinct only in terms of the imagery and poetic expressions. For instance, Farid ad-Din Attar (d. 1221) refers to the transcendental world as Mesr-e jan (the Egypt/city of souls), Mesr-e alam-e jan, and Mesr-e ezzat (the Egypt/city of glory).

According to him, the Joseph (AS) of soul, which must return to the Mesr-e jan from his captivity in the abyss of this world, succeeds in this pursuit only when he has replaced the lascivious spirit (nafs-e ammarah) by the Solomon of pure soul on the throne of his existence.

Thus, he will be able to release the truthful Joseph of pure soul from this dusty residence and set him on the throne in the Egypt of glory.

Elsewhere, Attar uses Joseph (AS) as the symbol of the beloved in the profane love of those who consider divine love, which is the one and only true love, beyond the reach of man.

In most mystical interpretations of the story, however, Joseph (AS), or the human soul, is able to be in command of the higher universe through self-mortification, and that is when the soul that has reached perfection leaves its physical prison and returns to its original abode.

Versified versions of the story

The composition of versified romantic epics dates from the early phase of the history of Persian poetry. The earliest versified version of the romance of Joseph (AS) in Persian (Yusuf o Zolaykha), now lost, was composed by the 10th-century poet Abul-Moayyed Balkhi.

More versified versions were composed during the following centuries, all of which, bearing the same title of Yusuf o Zolaykha, were based on the Quranic narrative (chap. 12).

The first version is the one that is attributed to Ferdowsi by some copyist, a view taken at face value by a number of scholars, including Theodore Noldeke, Hermann Ethé, and Edward G. Browne.

Source: Encyclopedia Iranica
To be continued

Winners of 2021 Iran Press Photo Awards announced

→1 In the news photo category, the Best Single Photo Award went to Mahshad Jalalian, and the Best Photo Series Award was given to Amin Nazari.

Nazari won the award for his collection depicting the health workers' struggle in fighting against COVID-19.

Ahmad Zohrabi won the Best Single Photo Award in the Environment category, and Zohreh Sabbaghnejad received the Best Photo Series Award.

A collection by Armin Karami won the award in the Portrait Section. A single

portrait by Hamed Malekpour also received an award in this section.

The Best Single Photo in the Sports Section was given to Aria Jafari, and a series by Fereshteh Eslahi was also awarded in this section.

The award in the Multimedia category went to Moahmmadreza Abbasi.

Maryam Kazemzadeh, Sassan Moayyedi, Alireza Abedi and Saeid Sadeqi were honored for their lifetime achievements at the ceremony, which was attended by Deputy Culture Minister for Press Affairs Mohammad



Winners pose after accepting their awards during the Fifth Iran Press Photo Awards at IIDCYA Open-Air Cinema in Tehran on July 16, 2021. (Mehr/Ali Haddadi-Asl)

Khodadi and a group of cultural figures. The Iran Press Photo Awards is organized by the Iranian Photojournalists Association.

Persian poetry collection “Middle East Trilogy” appears in Italian

themes expressed, the publisher has said.

The reference to war evokes the early years of the poet's childhood marked by the tragic war between Iran and Iraq from 1980 to 1988, and recalls recent conflicts in Syria, Iraq and Yemen, in which he was emotionally involved.

The narrative verse used by the author makes writing a privileged instrument of excavation, of surgical analysis both of the surrounding reality and of the inner universe of man.

"We must accept / that no soldier ever / has returned alive / from the war" reads a passage from this sad account of life.

Poems in the collection were composed between 2014 and 2018.

The front cover of the Persian edition bears a picture by Iraqi photographer Ali Fahdawi, depicting a girl from Mosul who was fleeing along with her family from ISIS forces. The publishing house purchased the copyright to the picture, which was later titled "Mona Lisa of Mosul".

Abdolmalekian's works have also been published in

several other languages.

A selection of his works was published in Arabic in a collection named "A Bridge That Doesn't Lead Anybody to Home" in Kuwait in 2020.

Asghar Alikarami is the translator of the collection released by Takween, a publishing house and bookshop in the country that has published works by world-renowned poets such as Rainer Maria Rilke, Anna Akhmatova, Sylvia Plath and Fernando Pessoa.

His poems have been translated into French, German, Kurdish and Spanish.

Abdolmalekian is presently the editor of the poetry section at Cheshmeh Publications in Tehran and the executive editor of publications at the Youth Poetry Office in Iran.

Penguin Books has published a selection of his poems in English in "Lean against This Late Hour" translated by Idra Novey and Ahmad Nadalizadeh.

A Swedish translation of a selection of his work was published in Sweden under the title, "Raderna Byter Plats i Mörkret" in 2016.

Works by Iranian artist Armin Amirian on view at KMA Intl. Juried Biennial

A R T TEHRAN — Works by Iranian artist Armin Amirian, who merges staged photography with other arts, are on view at Cladogram: 2ND KMA International Juried Biennial.

The biennial is organized by the Katonah Museum of Art (KMA) in Katonah, New York.

Two works from Amirian's series Sarapardeh have been selected to be showcased at the biennial, which opened on July 11 and will run until September 19.

The biennial, juried by Yasmeen Siddiqui, brings together almost 60 artists working in written and visual media, the organizers have announced.

A cladogram is a branching diagram that shows relationships among different species

and their history of evolution.

Similarly, this exhibition will include work that engages with personal or family history, explores the ways in which historical objects and ideas are organized, categorized and displayed, and challenges the dominant narrative of history and art history.

With Cladogram, the KMA presents a broad range of contemporary work created by artists based locally, regionally, and from 21 countries around the world, in an effort to build networks of artists internationally.

Siddiqui is a curator, essayist, lecturer and founding director of Minerva Projects, which supports interdisciplinary artists. The top three submissions will receive awards during the closing ceremony of the exhibition.

Accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, the Katonah Museum of Art originates three to four exhibitions annually, covering a broad range of art and humanities topics.

From the beginning, the KMA was committed to presenting exceptional art from all cultures and time periods.

The founders' decision to be a non-collecting institution resulted in a dynamic and flexible exhibition program, which remains one of the most distinctive features of the KMA.

The KMA offers lectures, films, workshops, concerts and other events for a general audience; and presents innovative and substantive programs for over 100 member schools.



An artwork from Iranian artist Armin Amirian's series Sarapardeh is on display at Cladogram: 2ND KMA International Juried Biennial.

Movies from Iran competing in Dresden short film festival



"Gray Body" by Samaneh Shojaei.

A R T TEHRAN — Four movies by Iranian filmmakers are competing in the 33rd Dresden International Short Film Festival currently underway in the German city.

"The Crab" by Shiva Sadeq-Asadi is one of the movies.

It is about a shy schoolboy who is interested in performing in a play with his school's theater troupe. But the only part offered to him is to play the role of a crab.

Produced at the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults, the animated movie has been screened in various international events, including the 23rd Shanghai International Film Festival in China.

"Gray Body" is another film on the Iranian lineup. The animation is about a doctor who is calmly attending to the patient. There are some psychiatric patients sitting in the waiting room. But these patients cannot be expected to be calm.

Directed by Samaneh Shojaei, the animation received two awards including best animated effects at the 11th Iran Independent Animation Celebration in 2019.

The film produced by the Documentary And Experimental Film Center brought the best writing award for its writer Amin Kafashzadeh, while Shojaei received an honorable mention for directing the animation.

It also won the Association Internationale du Film d'Animation (ASIFA) award at the 36th Tehran

International Short Film Festival.

"May She Rest in Peace", a co-production between Iran and Germany directed by Nazgol Kashani, is also competing in the festival.

The drama shows that the social status of a former bourgeois family is in decline. The family's preoccupation with their socio-economic identity continues even into death, as they decide what the best burial plot is for their aunt.

The festival also is screening "Tehran Recyclers", an animation by Austrian-German Nikki Schuster.

The movie co-produced by Iran, Germany and Austria portrays the diverse cultural, social and urban fabrics of this metropolis by means of experimental animation. In the urban hideouts of this city little creatures come to life. These are digitally composed of collected waste from the streets and typical local products. The clatter of the limbs of these creatures interacts with the soundscapes of Tehran.

The 33rd Dresden International Short Film Festival will come to end with the announcing of winners on Sunday.

Agatha Christie's "Curtain" comes to Iranian bookstores

CULTURE TEHRAN — A Persian translation of "Curtain: Poirot's Last Case", a work of detective fiction by British writer Agatha Christie, has been released by Mahi Publications in Tehran.

Fereshteh Shayani is the translator of the book first published in the UK by the Collins Crime Club in September 1975.

Arthritic and immobilized, Poirot calls on his old friend Captain Hastings to join him at Styles to be the eyes and ears that will feed observations to Poirot's still razor-sharp mind.

Though aware of the criminal's identity, Poirot will not reveal it to the frustrated Hastings, and dubs the nameless person-

age "X". Already responsible for several murders, X, Poirot warns, is ready to strike again, and the partners must work swiftly to prevent imminent murder.

Poirot's final case, a mystery that brings him and Hastings back to Styles where they first solved a crime together. The story was both anticipated and dreaded by Agatha Christie fans worldwide, many of whom still refuse to read it, as it is known to contain Poirot's death.

Christie wrote it during World War II, as a gift for her daughter should she not survive the bombings, and it was kept in a safe for over thirty years.

It was agreed among the family that

"Curtain" would be published finally in 1975 by Collins, her long-standing publishers, and that "Sleeping Murder" (the Marple story written during the war for her husband, Max) would follow.

The reception of Poirot's death was international, even earning him an obituary in The New York Times; he is still the only fictional character to have received such an honor.

The first actor to take on the role of portraying Poirot in his final hours was David Suchet, as the final episode of the series Agatha Christie's Poirot for which he'd been playing the role for twenty-five years. The episode was made in 2013.

پرده
آخرین پرواز
آگاتا کریستی
فرشته شایان



Front cover of the Persian translation of "Curtain: Poirot's Last Case".