

# TEHRAN TIMES

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# Iran Elaborates on Its Afghanistan Policy



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STAY UPDATED #AfghanistanDevelopments

## Opinion **T** Offering cement on commodity exchange, a right decision?

By Mahnaz Abdi

The market of cement, which is one of the most important construction materials, has witnessed huge turmoil in Iran in the past three months, that has been unprecedented in the history of production and consumption of this product.

The price of cement, that was 2.2 million rials (about \$52.3) per ton at the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (late March), fell to 1.2 million rials (about \$28.5) in a period of less than three months, which led to the closure of ready-mixed concrete production plants and the cessation of concrete pouring in the constructional projects, and these closures continue.

The reason behind this condition is said to be offering cement on Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME), something arousing many debates.

Some experts and also those active in the cement market say that ordinary pricing for cement has always challenged producers, so this product is offered on the commodity exchange.

Gholamreza Shariati, a member of the parliament's development committee, is one of those supporting this idea.

He says cement is one of the basic commodities that should be offered in the commodity exchange and get rid of government pricing. Market surveillance should replace dictatorial interference in commodity price trends. **Page 4**



Opportunity in Crisis/ The staged photograph taken on March 3, 2021, pays homage to dedicated healthcare workers fighting coronavirus.

## National Doctors Day: let's appreciate health advocates

By Farnak Bakhtiari

TEHRAN – Iran marks the birth anniversary of Abu Ali Sina, known in the West as Avicenna, as the National Doctors Day, to appreciate the efforts of medical staff and health advocates.

Avicenna, born 980 CE in a village near Bukhara, then capital of the Iranian Samanid Empire, was a great Iranian philosopher, physician, and scientist who had some 450 books on a wide range of issues, among them medicine and philosophy. As a result of efforts by such pioneers as Avicenna, Iran is now among the 12 countries with advanced technology

and knowledge in medicine and can serve as a health tourism center.

He was a polymath regarded both in the West and East as one of the most significant thinkers and writers of the Islamic Golden Age.

Iran honors top doctors and physicians who have made great contributions to the country's health system on National Doctors Day, celebrated annually on August 23.

Despite their hard work, Iranian doctors have been

struggling with the coronavirus for 552 days.

Since March 25, 2020, it is reported that 300 healthcare workers in the country have lost their lives due to the coronavirus infection, according to Mohammad Reza Zafarghandi, head of the Medical Council of Iran.

### Medical staff showed selfless devotion to public health

According to the statistics, 160 doctors were among those 300 medical staff who have lost their lives fighting the coronavirus pandemic.

The healthcare workers who lost their lives in the fight against **Page 7**

## Op-ed **T**

## The unwinnable war in Afghanistan: What is left to learn?

By Mahmood Monshipouri

Long known as the "Graveyard of Empires," Afghanistan has been vehemently inhospitable to outside intervention. The lessons that should be learned from the legion of failed outside attempts to conquer Afghanistan are varied and many and yet none have been taken deeply to heart by US military strategists in recent decades. Anyone who believes in the success of the long-term occupation of Afghanistan or tilting the balance of power in its favor by military intervention of that country is either naive, delusional, or downright irresponsible. Several imperial powers have come to terms with this reality: The Persian Empire (539 until 331 BC), Alexander the Great (330 until 327 BC), Great Britain (1839-42), Russia (1980-88), and the United States (2001-2021).

In virtually all these cases, an outside power has failed to impose an alien political system and cultural values upon the Afghans. Today, there can be little doubt that the Americans have lost the Afghanistan war. American dollars and military power have failed to make an ally of Afghanistan or a stable democratic state in its own right. The Biden administration's recent decision to disengage from Afghanistan has raised the issue of strategy, expectations, and more importantly, logistics. Twenty years of US military intervention under multiple US administrations, which spent \$83 billion on building the Afghan army, have failed to build a reliable fighting and security force—only one whose soldiers had the will to fight. In the end, Afghan security forces were revealed to be hollow as they impotently collapsed in the face of the Taliban assault and occupation of the capital city, Kabul.

The American record of nation building has been abysmal. The United States has hardly been successful at establishing stable or long-lasting democracies in the past: Of the more than dozen democratic nation-building projects undertaken by the United States in the 20th century and beyond, democracy resumed in only few of them—most notably Japan, and Germany—a decade after U.S. forces departed. The experience of Germany and Japan proved to be unique and thus not easily replicable today by any metrics. **Page 5**

## World will miss Siamand Rahman: IPC spokesman

### Interview **T**

By Masoud Hossein

TOKYO – The International Paralympic Committee (IPC) spokesman Craig Spence says that not only the Iranian people but also sports fans across the world miss powerlifting legend Siamand Rahman.

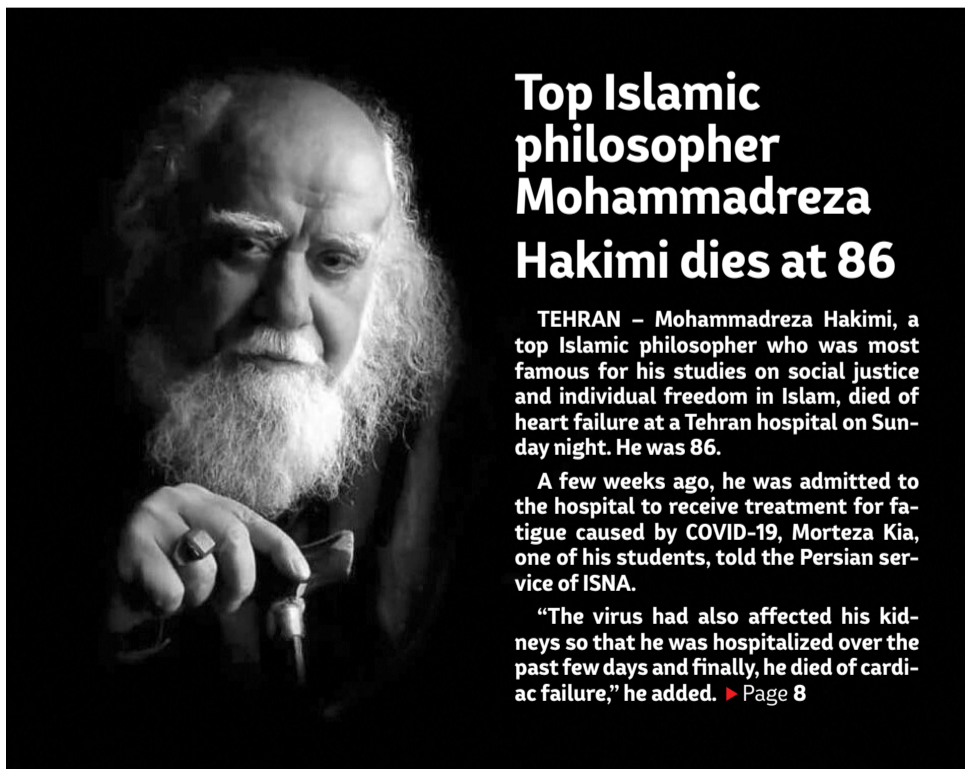
In an exclusive interview with Tehran Times, Spence paid tribute to Rahman and said that his world record may take decades until it is beaten.

He also talked about the 2020 Paralympic Games, where Japan prepares to hold the event in the best possible way.

Tehran Times: International Paralympic Com-

mittee has been always successful in holding the greatest event for the people with disability. Do you think the Tokyo 2020 can be successful again regarding the COVID-19 restrictions?

Craig Spence: I think the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games can be extremely successful. Prior to the pandemic, Tokyo 2020 has generated record awareness and interest. **Page 3**



## Top Islamic philosopher Mohammadreza Hakimi dies at 86

TEHRAN – Mohammadreza Hakimi, a top Islamic philosopher who was most famous for his studies on social justice and individual freedom in Islam, died of heart failure at a Tehran hospital on Sunday night. He was 86.

A few weeks ago, he was admitted to the hospital to receive treatment for fatigue caused by COVID-19. Morteza Kia, one of his students, told the Persian service of ISNA.

"The virus had also affected his kidneys so that he was hospitalized over the past few days and finally, he died of cardiac failure," he added. **Page 8**

## We cannot witness 'planned' suffering of the Lebanese, Iran says

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said on Sunday that Iran sells oil and fuel to its friends and allies upon their request.

Speaking at his weekly press briefing on Monday, Khatibzadeh also said it is yet unclear whether President Raisi would attend the Baghdad Summit or not.

Asked about the shipment of Iranian fuel to Lebanon, Khatibzadeh said trade is a common decision between all governments.

"We cannot witness the 'planned' suffering of the Lebanese people," he underlined.

The spokesman said that the Islamic Republic will stand against actions done to harm regional countries.

"As a country subjected to oppressive U.S. sanctions, we know some countries are addicted to sanctioning others and use their pains for their gains," he highlighted. **Page 2**

## Iran pavilion to spotlight vacation destinations, ancient crafts at Expo 2020

TEHRAN – Visitors to the Iran pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai will be able to soak up the ancient land in terms of rituals, handicrafts, cultural heritage, and travel destinations. The pavilion will also reveal more about medical tourism, novel startups, and off-the-beaten tracks.

"Agendas we are preparing to pursue at this international event includes countering Iranophobia allegations, and highlighting attractive and unique capacities of the country in terms of cultural, natural and intangible heritage," IRNA quoted Khashayar Nikzadfar, the CEO of the parent company of Iran Tourism and Tourism Development, as saying on Monday.

The pavilion will also shift the focus on tourism infrastructure of the country, medical tourism, magnificent traditional handicrafts, and startup companies active in the three arenas of tourism, cultural heritage, and handicrafts, he added.

The pavilion is planned to showcase each province's strengths and assets in tourism, cultural heritage, handicrafts, as well as its natural sites, traditional ceremonial practices, and historical significance.

Exhibitors and representatives from each province have been invited to take part in the event, he said. "Accordingly, scheduling has been done for (the representatives of) all Iranian provinces, and on average, (the representatives of) two provinces will be present in the Expo every 10 days..."

Iranian islands arranged to host Expo visitors

The Iranian islands of Kish and Qeshm are ready to welcome visitors and participants of the Dubai Expo 2020, deputy tourism minister Vali Teymouri announced last month. "Dubai's short distance from Iran's southern cities and islands means that expo visitors and foreign tourists can easily travel to and enter the country's free zones during the six-month event."

Considering more than 192 countries participating and more than 25 million visitors anticipated, the expo would be a great opportunity to promote Iranian tourism, the official said. **Page 6**

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## Interview **T**

## Asian Americans always considered foreigners in America: anti-racist activist

By M. A. Saki

TEHRAN – An American anti-racist activist says that Asian Americans are always considered strangers in their own country.

"Asian Americans are always considered perpetual foreigners in our own country," Jason Lee tells the Tehran Times.

"Trump definitely stoked the flames with his anti-Asian rhetoric," he adds.

"A lot of Americans were racist to Asians long before this but the pandemic basically gave them the green light to verbally and physically attack Asians," Lee states. An analysis of police department statistics has revealed that the United States experienced a significant hike in anti-Asian hate crimes last year across major cities.

The analysis released by the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino examined hate crimes in 16 of America's largest cities. It revealed that while such crimes in 2020 decreased overall by 7 percent, those targeting Asian people rose by nearly 150 percent.

While some analysts refuse to entirely attribute this phenomenon to the Trump administration's incendiary, racist rhetoric about the coronavirus, there is no doubt that Trump's repeated rhetoric of "China virus" did play a part in fostering hate. **Page 5**

## Egypt to close vital border crossing with Gaza

A spokesman for the Hamas movement says Egypt is planning to close the Rafah border crossing with the besieged Gaza Strip indefinitely starting early this week.

Iyad al-Bozom, a spokesman for the Gaza interior ministry, announced the move without elaborating on what might have triggered the closure.

In a statement, al-Bozom said "we were informed by the Egyptian authorities that the Rafah crossing will be closed tomorrow, Monday, in both directions"

In Cairo, security sources confirmed the move, saying the crossing would be closed until further notice. The Egyptian sources also failed to offer details regarding why the decision was made.

Egypt had ordered the Rafah crossing - the enclave's only point of entry or exit not controlled by Israel - to open in May to allow the delivery of aid.

The opening came in the aftermath of Israel's 11-day bombardment of the Gaza Strip, which killed at least 250 Palestinians, including 63 children.

Egypt had brokered the ceasefire between Israel and the Hamas movement, which ended the May war.

However, nearly three months later, the two million people living in the besieged Gaza Strip, also known as the world's largest open-air prison, continue to face tight Israeli restrictions on the entry of goods into the war-torn territory, causing a major economic recession while making reconstruction impossible.

## Raisi, Austrian chancellor exchange views on Afghanistan, nuclear talks

### President Raisi invites Kurz to visit Tehran

TEHRAN — In a phone call with Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz on Monday afternoon, Iranian President Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi said the Islamic Republic is ready to cooperate with all responsible governments to achieve peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Raisi said Afghan groups should consider the withdrawal of U.S. forces as a turning point in order to achieve an acceptable model of governance.

The new Iranian president underlined that Tehran's efforts to stabilize Afghanistan has not stopped.

"Since the beginning of the American intervention in Afghan affairs, Afghanistan has not enjoyed a good situation," he added.

Raisi also said that Iran is ready to cooperate with all responsible governments to achieve peace and stability in Afghanistan.

President Raisi also invited Kurz to visit Tehran.

For his part, the Austrian chancellor said, "We hope that the new government of Iran will be more suc-



cessful in creating economic and social prosperity for the people of this country... and the nuclear negotiations of the Iranian government with the negotiating countries would begin as soon as possible and end successfully."

Kurz also thanked Iran for hosting Afghan refugees.

He also thanked President Raisi over his invitation to visit Tehran.

## Russia, Iran and China plan to hold joint drills in Persian Gulf

TEHRAN — Russia, Iran and China will hold joint maritime drills in the Persian Gulf around late 2021 or early 2022, Moscow's ambassador to Tehran has said, the RIA news agency reported on Monday.

The exercises involving naval vessels from the three countries will be focused on shipping security and combating piracy, Levan Dzhagaryan was quoted as saying.

In an interview with Sputnik, Ambassador Dzhagaryan also said following the lifting of the UN arms embargo on Iran, Moscow and Tehran plan

to engage in a constructive dialogue on an entire range of military products.

"Our defense cooperation with Iran has a rather long history of over 50 years. It is being developed on a mutually beneficial basis, with Russia's strict compliance with its international obligations in the arms trade area. Taking into account the lifting of restrictions, the Russian side is engaged in a constructive dialogue with Iranian partners on the entire range of military products," Dzhagaryan stated.

# Resolution of complicated issues entails more talks, Japan FM says of JCPOA

TEHRAN — Noting that Tokyo is closely following the Vienna talks aimed to revive the 2015 nuclear deal officially called the JCPOA, Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi suggested on Sunday that resolution of "very complicated issues" entails "more negotiations".

Japan's chief diplomat made the remarks in a meeting with Iranian Parliament speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf.

In addition, Motegi said, Japan is closely monitoring developments in West Asia. The Japanese foreign minister added, "On the other hand we insist the JCPOA sides to commit themselves to the document and continue (nuclear deal) talks."

The Japanese Foreign Ministry said on Sunday that Motegi urged Iran's new President Ebrahim Raisi to return the multilateral deal over Tehran's nuclear program, the Kyodo news agency reported.

The U.S. under Donald Trump quit the JCPOA in May 2018 and introduced the harshest sanctions against Iran in violation of international law. The JCPOA was endorsed by UN Security Council Resolution 2231.

One year after the Trump administration unilaterally abrogated the multilateral deal, Iran started to gradually reduce bans on its nuclear activities. Iran took such a step after the European parties to the JCPOA failed to honor their commitments. At the time Iran announced if the Europeans compensate Iran for the sanctions, it will reverse its decision.

The Trump administration intended to force Iran to forego its nuclear rights stipulated in the JCPOA. His sanctions measures on Iran, which he arrogantly called "maximum pressure", failed to

force Iran to rewrite the text of the nuclear agreement. Iran adopted "maximum resistance" against maximum pressure.

However, the remaining parties to the JCPOA started talks in Vienna in April to bring the U.S. back to the deal as President Biden greenlighted his administration's willingness to rejoin the international nuclear deal. Six rounds of talks were held until June 20. Though the sides made significant progresses to revive the JCPOA, the Biden administration has set new conditions, linking the JCPOA to Iran's defensive missile program and its influence in the West Asia region.

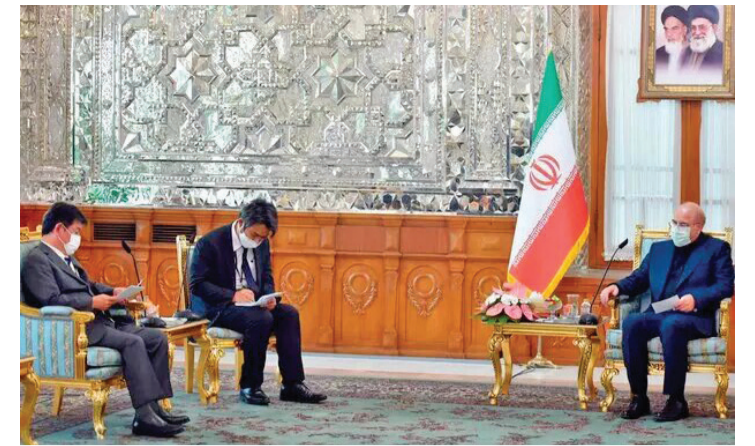
In 2019, former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe visited Tehran to convey a message from Trump to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. However, the Leader said Trump is not worthy of an exchange of messages.

Japan's foreign minister also stressed the importance of improving trade and economic cooperation between Tehran and Tokyo.

Motegi also said his country is willing to expand talks with the Iranian parliament (Majlis) and expressed hope that in the coming days the heads of parliamentary friendship groups hold virtual talks.

He also referred to donation of Coronavirus vaccine by Japan to Iran, saying Japan's humanitarian help to Iran in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic "shows the depth of friendly relations between Iran and Japan."

Recently, Japan donated some 3 million doses of AstraZeneca vaccine to Iran,



which has suffered the worst virus outbreak in West Asia.

**Qalibaf calls for roadmap cooperation with Japan**

During the talks, the Iranian parliament speaker pointed to 90 years of diplomatic relations between Iran and Japan, saying this shows that the history of relations between Iran and Japan is long and deep-rooted.

Qalibaf also called for crafting a long-term roadmap for cooperation between Iran and Japan.

"Relations between the two countries should be defined within a framework of long-term roadmap," especially in the areas of environment protection and natural disasters, the speaker remarked.

Qalibaf also said delivery of humanitarian aid between the two countries is a "symbol of friendship between the people of Iran and Japan."

Elsewhere in his remarks, Qalibaf said Iranians have a "positive view" toward Japan.

The two sides also discussed bilateral ties as well as regional and global developments.

**Iranian speaker urges Japan to take serious steps to unfreeze Iranian assets**

At the meeting, Iran's parliament speaker also said it is necessary that Japan take serious steps to unfreeze Iran's assets blocked in the country's banks, especially under the present circumstances that Iran is grappling with the deadly coronavirus pandemic, Press TV reported.

Qalibaf also pointed to Washington's unilateral move to pull out of the 2015 nuclear deal, saying, "By leaving the JCPOA, this country stepped on all forms of multilateral and international interactions and caused illegal sanctions to be imposed on our nation and government."

He added, "Americans must live up to their commitments. The U.S. acts of obstruction have made it impossible [for Iran] to even purchase medicine during the coronavirus pandemic, and we expect Japan, as a peace-loving country, to show serious reaction to this issue."

Iran has been fighting back against one of the deadliest Covid-19 outbreaks in the world, with the harsh U.S. sanctions significantly hampering efforts to contain the spread of the virus.

The sanctions that were imposed by the Trump administration have been maintained by the Biden administration.

Iranian officials have occasionally described the sanctions as "economic terrorism" and "medical terrorism" over their deadly impact on ordinary people.

So far, 102,648 people have lost their lives in Iran due to the coronavirus, with 610 deaths registered in the last 24 hours.

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## Iran calls for inclusive Afghan government

"Watch what you say!"

TEHRAN — In his weekly press briefing on Monday, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said that Iran favors an "inclusive" government in Afghanistan, and will continue to stand by the Afghan people.

He added, "Iran is monitoring the latest developments in Afghanistan and we are in contact with various groups."

The spokesman said while Iran wants all parties to maintain stability, it also hopes that the groups will make utmost use of the created opportunity resulting from the withdrawal of trans-regional forces from the country and to create an inclusive government and establish good relations with neighbors.

The diplomat added, "Afghanistan's history shows that there is no military solution to the issue and Iran is ready to cooperate and facilitate talks in this regard."

The head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Center for Public Diplomacy and Media stressed that Iran has always stood by the Afghan people over the past 40 years.

Emphasizing the protection of the lives, properties, women's rights, and cultural heritage, Khatibzadeh said Iran hopes the coordination council that has been formed to "bring

peace" to the country.

The Afghan coordination council is being led by former Afghan president Hamid Karzai and chief peace negotiator Abdullah Abdullah and some other figures.

The spokesman went on to say, "Obviously, in the current situation, a new wave of migrants has been formed, which doubles the need for continued humanitarian assistance to alleviate the suffering of the Afghan people."

Iran has hosting millions of Afghan refugees since the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in December 1979.

When asked about the U.S. record in Afghanistan, the senior diplomat said, "The United States came to Afghanistan as an aggressor. Its entry into Afghanistan was a 'tragedy' and its departure was 'disgraceful'.

This is a historic lesson to all that America has wreaked a havoc wherever it has gone, rather than bringing peace and security."

Emphasizing that Iran has made every effort to bring tranquility and peace to the region, despite the United States' sinister legacy, Khatibzadeh said,

"The images that came out of Afghanistan hurt the feelings of everyone and is a 'historical shame'. It is for those who scream human rights and will not open



their mouths at these times unless they want to justify their aggressions. Our advice to Washington is to respect the rights of nations and international law."

In response to a question about the Islamic Republic of Iran's opinion on the resistance formed in the Panjshir Valley, the spokesman said that Iran calls on all parties to show restraint and pursue dialogue to reach a political solution.

"Whatever happens in Afghanistan that would lead to the formation of a stable government must reflect the demographic and ethnic composition of Afghanistan, and this can be achieved through a political solution and genuine dialogue," he pointed out.

According to the spokesman, the principled position of the Islamic Republic is to facilitate the dialogue in Afghanistan.

"In this way, as brothers, we have tried to reduce the differences and we

will continue our efforts to reach a safe Afghanistan," he added.

Asked under what circumstances Iran would recognize the Taliban, Khatibzadeh said that it is too soon to do so.

"We are not at that stage at the moment. We must now try to form an inclusive government in Afghanistan. Certainly, this government can move in this direction if it reflects all the realities of this country," the spokesman said.

Khatibzadeh also said that the behavior of the future government of Afghanistan can surely facilitate this path.

"Watch what you say!"

In response to the intrusive and rude remarks of the former United States secretary of state Mike Pompeo, Khatibzadeh said what is quoted from "the current Fox News commentator and the former notorious U.S. secretary of state is, of course, disappointing. When he was the secretary of state, I gave him the necessary answers at the time. The Americans themselves say that Trump's administration was a collection of vices and that this minister was well-known in that group and admitted that he was a master of cheating and stealing."

He added, "He (Pompeo) does not know that for Iranians martyrdom in the way of God is a success. Our commander of peace was martyred by the foes."

"We showed and said that we will not allow those who were involved in the cowardly assassination (General Soleimani) to go unpunished," he highlighted.

The spokesman continued, "What we did in Ain Al-Assad was to respond to their aggression and not to respond to the assassination of late General Soleimani, and we will continue to pursue this issue."

He further stated, "The Fox News commentator must know what he is talking about. I have made remarks about the statements of other U.S. officials about Afghanistan and their scandal may never be forgotten."

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**'A stable government must reflect demographic and ethnic composition of Afghanistan'**

**'Americans themselves say the Trump administration was a collection of vices'**

## We cannot witness 'planned' suffering of the Lebanese, Iran says

### Raisi presence in Baghdad Summit is unclear

From page 1 ► The senior diplomat added that Iran sells oil and fuel upon the request of "its friends and allies."

"We announce readiness for exporting fuel to Lebanon upon their request," he emphasized.

Nasrallah dropped a bombshell last week when he announced that an oil tanker carrying Iranian fuel oil was bound for Lebanon. Addressing a commemorative ceremony marking the Day of Ashura on Thursday, Hezbollah's chief announced that the first of several ships loaded with fuel oil would sail from Iran to Lebanon within hours, warning the United States and Israel against targeting it.

"Our first ship has completed all arrangements and will sail within hours from Iran to Lebanon with the blessing

of Imam Hussein (peace be upon him)," he said, noting, "This ship will be followed by other ships, but we gave priority to diesel oil on the first ship because it is a top priority and is linked to people's lives."

Nasrallah announced the import of Iranian fuel only after the fuel crisis in Lebanon reached new heights with almost all Western countries and their Arab allies refusing to alleviate the crisis.

The Hezbollah chief has offered a third way that would protect Lebanon's sovereignty and improve the lives of its people.

Iran does not dictate any terms what-

soever on the Lebanese and that they can buy anything from Iran without needing to sacrifice their interests on the altar of the American promise of help.

While many observers in Lebanon and beyond were projecting a total collapse of order in the Mediterranean Arab country, Hezbollah Secretary-General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah opened a new pathway for Lebanon to break free from a U.S.-led economic straitjacket.

**"Iran will definitely attend Baghdad summit at a reasonable level"**

In response to a question about the Baghdad summit, Khatibzadeh said that

the neighborhood summit in Baghdad is not a new initiative.

"Our brothers in Baghdad have been pursuing it for a long time. The details

of this meeting have not been announced yet, but we will definitely be present at a reasonable level," he added.

Khatibzadeh stated that the level at which Iran will be attending the Baghdad summit needs more details, and "we need to see at what levels the summit will be held."

"This meeting will be better when it benefits all countries," he highlighted. Referring to Iraq's position in the re-

gion, Khatibzadeh said that Iran considers the role of Iraq in the region significant, and "we have always tried to highlight this role."

Regarding the Foreign Ministry's measures about the Arba'een ritual, he said that during his visit to Iraq talks took place and the Iranian ambassador to Iraq had separate talks with Iraqi officials.

"Of course, the coronavirus pandemic has limited us. We have to see if it will be possible for the lovers of Imam Hussein (AS) to be present in this march, even if it is limited," he added.

The head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Center for Public Diplomacy and Media went on to say that all the efforts of the ministry and officials are to help in this regard.

"Our effort is to make this operational within the framework of people's health, if possible," he underlined.

In response to a question about the meeting between Iraqi and Kuwaiti officials and the bilateral cooperation and the Arab coalition formed in this regard, the spokesman stated, "Iraq is an important country in the region and Iran has tried to regain its regional role in recent years, and we support all of these actions."

Khatibzadeh stated that Iraq must be supported by all countries to expand its relations.



## Russia renews support for Iran's permanent membership in SCO

TEHRAN — Moscow hopes that Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi can come on a visit to Russia once the coronavirus situation permits, Russian Ambassador to Iran Levan Dzhagaryan has told Sputnik.

"As you know, before the start of the pandemic, our presidents regularly met in Russia, Iran, on the margins of various international events. We hope that as the epidemiological situation normalizes, the right conditions will emerge for it (the visit) to take place," Dzhagaryan said.

The ambassador also said that Russia supports Iran's application for full membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), filed in 2008.

"We have close, and on a number of international and regional issues, coinciding positions. In connection with the SCO summit scheduled for September of this year in Dushanbe, I would like to confirm that Russia supports Iran's application for full membership in this organization," Dzhagaryan told Sputnik.

In another part of the interview, Dzhagaryan stated that Moscow and Tehran are interested in boosting the bilateral energy cooperation and see potential for it.

"Ministries are already conducting relevant negotiation," he added.

"The Russian-Iranian energy cooperation is developing successfully. At the same time, there is still a great potential for further growth. Relevant ministries and companies of the two countries are interested in launching projects to expand the engagement of Russian economic operators," Ambassador Dzhagaryan said.

Russia and Iran maintain dialogue "on the whole range of bilateral and international issues, including energy issues," the diplomat added.

Russian President Vladimir Putin discussed preparations for the upcoming SCO summit with Raisi when he congratulated his Iranian counterpart on winning the June presidential election.

# Iran elaborates on its Afghanistan policy

TEHRAN — More than a week after the fall of Kabul to the Taliban and the collapse of the Afghan government, Iran outlined its nascent policy toward the new reality in a neighboring country with which Tehran is likely to have difficulty dealing.

In his weekly press briefing on Monday, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh spent much of his time speaking about developments in Afghanistan. He took some difficult questions on the future of Iran's dealings with the Taliban's Afghanistan.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran is closely following the latest developments in Afghanistan," Khatibzadeh said.

He was keen to underline the need for dialogue and peaceful resolution of conflicts. "It [Iran] is in constant contact and dialogue with all parties and groups in Afghanistan," the spokesman added.

Khatibzadeh did not name any of these parties or groups. And this was a usual diplomatic practice. In times of mayhem, one should always be careful not to take sides until the dust settles.

The Taliban is no friend of Iran; it is widely seen as a culprit in shedding the blood of Iranian diplomats in Mazar-i-Sharif, though Iranian officials had yet to blame it for the massacre. This may explain why Iranian public opinion holds a gloomy view of the militant group. In fact, many social media users in Iran have largely sympathized with Ahmad Massoud of the Panjshir Valley which became the last beacon of hope for large swaths of the Afghan population to establish a political order with democratic trappings.

During his Monday presser, Khatibzadeh had to answer a question on Massoud. Despite knowing the public mood, the spokesman sought



to keep a safe distance from Massoud and the Taliban alike.

When asked whether Iran was in contact with Massoud, Khatibzadeh said Iran is in contact with all parties and groups of Afghanistan. This answer is part of a broader strategy to establish relations with all stakeholders in Afghanistan with the aim of encouraging them to form an all-inclusive government that would ensure and protect the rights of all of Afghanistan's ethno-religious groups.

Khatibzadeh made it clear that Iran wants to see the formation of an all-inclusive government in Kabul, one that excludes no one and put an end to the interethnic war.

Responding to a question on whether Iran would recognize the Taliban's rule, he said, "We are basically not at that stage right now. We are now at a stage where we must strive to form an all-inclusive government in Afghanistan that reflects all the realities of Afghanistan and the

ethnic and popular composition of Afghanistan from different perspectives."

Khatibzadeh implied that the formation of such a government would pave the way for Iran to more positively deal with the Taliban. "If the future all-inclusive government of Afghanistan reflects these issues, it can facilitate this path. It is too early for us to decide now on the future government of Afghanistan. Our priority now is to preserve the lives, property, and honor of the Afghan people and to engage in comprehensive dialogue between the various Afghan groups and the formation of an all-inclusive government in this country."

To this end, Iran will host Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi on Thursday. Khatibzadeh said this visit will focus on developments in bilateral relations and Afghanistan.

Like Iran, Pakistan has also expressed interest in the formation of an all-inclusive government in Kabul

in the wake of the Taliban takeover. "We believe an inclusive political settlement is best way forward," Qureshi said of Afghanistan on Twitter.

Iran and Pakistan have a shared interest in bringing peace to Afghanistan. Both are neighbors of Afghanistan and any insecurity there would have a direct impact on them. Iran and Pakistan both host a great number of Afghan refugees and they can't endure another refugee surge.

Preventing another wave of refugees along with other objectives such as preventing extremism and ensuring the rights of Afghan ethno-religious rights in the new order is the underlying reason for Iran to urge dialogue and tolerance in Kabul.

"We welcome the peaceful transition of power in Afghanistan to an all-inclusive government and hope that the Coordination Council formed in this country will be able to move towards peace in this neighboring country," Khatibzadeh said.

## Iran says position on JCPOA talks has not changed

TEHRAN — Iran has reiterated its position on the 2015 nuclear deal that the United States must effectively lift all its sanctions on Iran, suggesting that Tehran's stance on the Vienna nuclear talks has not undergone any change after the inauguration of a new government.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh pointed to the change of government in Tehran and said that this may cause some changes but Iran's position on the Vienna talks has not changed.

Iran and the remaining parties to the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), have started nuclear talks in the Austrian capital in order to get the U.S. and Iran back into full compliance with the nuclear deal. So far, six rounds of talks have been held with no tangible success in terms of resuscitating the JCPOA. The last round was concluded in June.

"Some changes may take place during the developments currently underway in Iran's executive branch. But our positions have not changed. The effective lifting of all U.S. sanctions and other sides' compliance with the JCPOA are still a prelude to any agreement in Vienna," Khatibzadeh said on Monday.

Speaking at a weekly press briefing, the spokesman also touched on the possible resumption date of the next round but he refused to set a certain date for the talks. He only said that a decision would be made on the resumption of talks.

"That a decision would be made on the date of holding a new round of negotiations is natural and this would happen," Khatibzadeh said.

### "Time is not on JCPOA side"

He also warned that the JCPOA may be running out of time. "Due to the complete violation of the JCPOA by the Americans and the non-compliance of European parties as well as other parties in terms of lifting the sanctions, time is not on JCPOA's side," the spokesman cautioned.

"Iran's compensatory measures have been taken within the framework of the JCPOA and the other parties should know that our patience will not be forever and during this period we have not seen anything but words from the new U.S. officials and they have unfortunately continued the failed path of the previous U.S. administration," he continued.

Khatibzadeh added, "Negotiations for the revival of the JCPOA should not become draining. We have emphasized this issue from the very beginning, and it must be done within a certain timeframe and criteria, and if the other parties are realistically present at the negotiating table, the negotiations will definitely not become draining, and we will not allow this to happen."

The spokesman also responded to a joint statement by the three European countries that are party to the JCPOA. On August 19, the European trio, known as the E3, issued a statement to express concern over Iran's nuclear activities.

"We, the governments of France, Germany and the United Kingdom, note with grave concern the latest reports by the IAEA confirming that Iran has produced uranium metal enriched up to 20% for the first time, and has significantly increased its production capacity of uranium enriched up to 60%," the statement said.

The E3 once again accused Iran of violating the JCPOA and pursuing nuclear activities that are of no "credible civilian" use.

"Our concerns are deepened by the fact that Iran has significantly limited IAEA access through withdrawing from JCPOA-agreed monitoring arrangements and ceasing application of the Additional Protocol," the E3 added. "Iran's activities are all the more troubling given the fact talks in Vienna have been interrupted upon Tehran's request for two months now and that Iran has not yet committed to a date for their resumption. While refusing to negotiate, Iran is instead establishing facts on the ground which make a return to the JCPOA more complicated."

They concluded, "Iran must halt all activities in violation of the JCPOA without delay. We urge Iran to return to the negotiations in Vienna as soon as possible with a view to bringing them to a swift, successful conclusion. We have repeatedly stressed that time is on no-one's side."

Khatibzadeh said Iran's measures were all in line with its international obligations. "What Iran has done has been all within the framework of regulation and adherence to safeguards and the NPT, and these have been done with prior notification to the [International Atomic Energy] Agency. All activities have been monitored by the Agency and there are no undeclared activities. All our activities were carried out for peaceful purposes and, as I said, the Agency was aware of them," he said.

Khatibzadeh stressed that such political statements do not absolve the three European countries of responsibility for violating the JCPOA.

He noted, "These statements are not constructive, these statements are illegal and political. These three countries must answer where they were after the withdrawal of the United States from the JCPOA and [the start of] the maximum pressure of the Washington administration against the people of Iran and the economic terrorism that it committed against the people of Iran in various fields. What statement did they make and what did they do about these actions? The European parties are a clear example of inaction, and the best path that European countries can take to revive the JCPOA is to fulfill their obligations to the JCPOA and Iran."

The spokesman pointed out, "During the time that the new U.S. administration is in office and the Vienna talks are underway, no positive action has been taken by

European countries in fulfilling their obligations under the JCPOA, and European countries should fulfill their obligations instead of repeating these illusions."

Khatibzadeh stated, "Iran has at least complied with its obligations under safeguards, and they have not complied with any obligations other than political, unconstructive and irresponsible statements.

We strive to make the Vienna dialogue meaningful. Opposing parties should pay attention to the facts and come to Vienna based on the view that they should fulfill their obligations."

He also commented on remarks by U.S. special envoy for Iran Rob Malley regarding the JCPOA and the Vienna talks and the choices facing the United States.

Khatibzadeh said, "From the day the Americans stubbornly withdrew from the JCPOA and violated UN Security Council Resolution 2231, all parties had different choices, and we had the right to make different decisions based on our interests and commitments, and we took compensatory measures in this regard."

He said, "What is important is that the Americans, by their actions, have left the fate of the JCPOA in a haze of ambiguity and have shown that they do not even adhere to the signature of their president."

The spokesman added, "We recommend that all parties pay attention to the fact that all parties have the right to choose, and we act according to our interests."

Iranian President Ayatollah Seyed Ebrahim Raisi made similar remarks during his Sunday meeting with Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi.

Responding to the Japanese foreign minister's remarks on the necessity and importance of implementing the JCPOA as an international agreement, the president said, "Iran has complied with all its obligations under the JCPOA and it is the Americans who have not fulfilled their obligations and unilaterally withdrew from the international agreement and expanded sanctions."

Stating that the Europeans have also refused to fulfill their obligations under the deal following the United States, Ayatollah Raisi clarified, "Naturally, a country that has adhered to its obligations should be commended, and if a country that has withdrawn from the deal and not fulfilled its obligations must be reprimanded, and the Americans must be accountable to the world public opinion," according to a statement by the Iranian presidency.

Emphasizing that Iran has no problem with the principle of negotiation, the president clarified, "With what justification should the U.S. sanctions against the Iranian nation continue?"

to form a national and inclusive government"

He denied that he had paid a visit to Kabul, saying allegation of such a visit came from media outlets in the Indian subcontinent.

"As Afghanistan's immediate neighbors, we must consider the efforts of the opposing parties and the enemies of peace, because the saboteurs are still trying to sabotage," the top Pakistani diplomat noted.

A Pakistani Foreign Ministry spokesman had earlier announced that Qureshi would travel to several countries in the region, including the Islamic Republic of Iran, as part of Islamabad's diplomatic efforts for peace in Afghanistan.

# IRAN IN FOCUS

AUGUST 24, 2021

Straight Truth  
TEHRAN TIMES

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## SPORTS

### World will miss Siamand Rahman: IPC spokesman

From Page 1 ▶ in the Paralympic Games, even surpassing London 2012. The demand for Paralympic tickets was twice that of London 2012.

Despite having no spectators, the Games will still have a significant impact globally. The Games will be viewed in a record 150 countries, reaching an estimated cumulative TV audience of 4.25 billion, this is more than ever before. With record TV audiences expected, they can look forward to watching tremendous sport as our athletes always deliver outstanding performances. These performances will help change attitudes towards disability globally, and combined with the efforts of the WeThe15 campaign (which aims to end discrimination towards persons with disabilities) will create greater opportunities for the world's 1.2 billion persons with disabilities who make up 15% of the global population.

Three athletes Siamand Rahman, Bahman Golbarnejhad and Razieh Shirmohammadi, who represented Iran at 2016 Rio, have passed away. Rahman was going to make splash once again in Tokyo. I think his absence could be a huge blow to Iran delegation and the world's as well.



We will really miss all three athletes at these Games and our thoughts during Tokyo 2020 will be with the families of the deceased. All three were great ambassadors for the Paralympic Movement and, in the case of Siamand Rahman, a global star who will not just be missed by the Iranian delegation but sport fans across the world. What Siamand delivered at Rio 2016 with his world record lift was truly astonishing, his world record may take decades until it is beaten. In the same way people talk about Usain Bolt's 100m world record from Berlin, people will always remember Siamand's world record from Rio. It was a magical sporting moment. I will miss his presence greatly.

The spectators will not be allowed to the venues. The decision was announced after a meeting with IPC president Andrew Parsons, organizing committee president Seiko Hashimoto, Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike and Olympic Minister Tamayo Marukawa. Is this a setback?

Of course we would have loved to have full venues here at Tokyo 2020 and the Organizing Committee before the pandemic was on course to sell every single ticket. However, we are realistic, and the health and welfare of everybody during this pandemic is a priority. If this means we are not allowed spectators then so be it, it's a decision we respect. We knew it was unlikely we would have spectators so Monday's decision was not a surprise. We are excited however that more people than ever before are likely to watch on TV, especially here in Japan where NHK will be broadcasting more than 500 hours of coverage.

The Tokyo Paralympic Games will be held with 4,400 athletes. What the strategies do you have for the next edition in Paris 2024 to normalize the condition?

We are expecting 4,400 to take part at Tokyo 2020, this is the most athletes we have ever had at the Paralympic Games. At Rio 2016 we had 4,328 athletes. To achieve a record number of athletes during a pandemic is testament to the outstanding work of National Paralympic Committees and International Federations.

President of International Olympic Committee Thomas Bach hailed "unprecedented 2020 Olympics" after the end of the Games. Can Paralympics 2020 be an extraordinary event?

Every Paralympic Games is an extraordinary event. Tokyo 2020 is the most important Paralympic Games in the Paralympic Movement's history because of the disproportionate impact the pandemic has had on persons with disabilities around the world. These Games will be very special.

### Iran GR Team runner-up at Junior World

TEHRAN — Iran Greco-Roman team became runner-up at the Junior World Championships in Ufa, Russia. Iran captured one gold, one silver and five bronze

medals in the competition and finished in second place with 130 points.

Host Russia won the title with 183 points and Azerbaijan came third with 101 points.

Amirreza Dehbozorgi won a gold after beating Alimardon Abdulraev from Uzbekistan 3-1 in the 55kg final bout.

Saeid Esmaeili lost to Dinislam Bammatorov from Russia 7-3 in 60kg final bout and snatched a silver medal.

Iman Mohammadi defeated Romanian Manuel Stoica 9-0 in the 63kg bronze medal match.

Mohammadhossein Azarmokht beat Egyptian Emad Abouelatta 8-4 in the bronze medal match of 77kg.

Mohammadaziz Naghousi emerged victorious over Ukraine's Mykyta Alieksieiev 11-5 in the 82kg and won the bronze medal.

Morteza Alghosi defeated Marcus Worren from Norway 5-3 in the 97kg bronze medal match.

And Amir Mohammad Bayat defeated Nikolaos Ntounias from Greece 6-3 in the 130kg and seized a bronze.

### Aghakouchaki optimistic about Iran wheelchair basketball team in Tokyo

TOKYO — Iran wheelchair basketball coach Abbas Aghakouchaki is hopeful to qualify for the 2020 Paralympic Games quarterfinals.

The Persians are pitted against reigning world champions Great Britain, 2016 Paralympic champions US, world bronze medalists Australia, Germany and Algeria in Group B.

Group A consists of hosts Japan, Rio 2016 silver medalists Spain, Paralympic bronze medalists Turkey, Canada, South Korea and Colombia.

The top four in each group will qualify for the quarterfinals.

"As you know, Iran have been drawn in a tough group but I think we are capable of qualifying for the quarterfinals," Aghakouchaki, who

led Iran to a bronze medal at the 2014 Asian Para Games, said.

"We held seven training camps ahead of the Games and analyzed our tactics in the camps. We moved forward according to the plans," he added.

"We know that how difficult is our group but we want to show a better performance than what we did in Rio. I have to say our team are completely ready for the Paralympic Games," Aghakouchaki stated.

Wheelchair basketball will be played at two venues in Tokyo. The preliminary round will be split between the 10,000+ seat Musashino Forest Sports Plaza and the 12,000+ seat Ariake Arena, which will host the playoffs.

Iran will partake at Tokyo 2020 with 62 athletes in 10 sports.

It will be the nation's smallest team since sending 40 to Sydney 2000.

Since then, Iran sent 89 athletes to Athens 2004, 72 to Beijing 2008, 79 to London 2012 and 110 to Rio 2016.

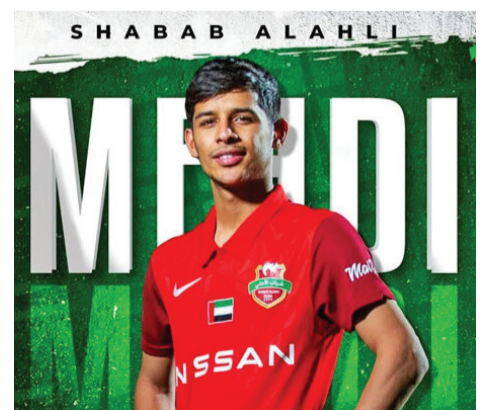
Iran finished 15th in the medal table in 2016 with 24 medals after winning eight golds, nine silvers and seven bronzes.

About 4,400 competitors from more than 160 countries were set to compete at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics before it was delayed by a year.

### Mehdi Ghaedi joins Shabab Al Ahli

TEHRAN — Esteghlal football team winger Mehdi Ghaedi joined Emirati football club Shabab Al Ahli.

The 23-year-old player has joined Shabab Al Ahli on a five-year contract.



The details of the fee contract have not been revealed. Persepolis midfielder Ahmad Nourollahi joined Shabab Al Ahli last week.

Ghaedi joined Esteghlal from Iranjavan Bushehr in 2017 but failed to win a league title with the Blues.

His absence could be a big blow to Esteghlal in the upcoming season.

## Pakistan FM to visit Iran for Afghanistan talks

TEHRAN — Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi will pay a visit to Iran on Thursday to discuss bilateral relations and developments in Afghanistan, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh announced on Monday.

Speaking at a press briefing, Khatibzadeh said the visit will take place at the request of the Pakistani foreign minister on Thursday and will focus on bilateral issues and Afghanistan.

"Iran, as a country that has made efforts to bring peace to Afghanistan, is consulting, and God willing, this trip will be in line with the continuation of friendly relations," the spokesman added.

The Pakistani foreign minister, who is scheduled to

embark on a regional tour that will include the Islamic Republic of Iran, stressed the importance of the position of players in regions such as Tehran for consensus aimed at helping to establish lasting peace in Afghanistan, according to Iran's state news agency IRNA.

"Peace in Afghanistan is inevitable for its neighbors and neighboring countries," Shah Mahmood Qureshi said on Monday, ahead of a trip to Central Asia and Iran.

He added, "Islamabad seeks a regional consensus for Afghanistan and emphasizes the role of its neighbors in contributing to peace and stability in Afghanistan."

Referring to his plans to visit Iran, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, Qureshi said, "We want the participation of all domestic groups in Afghanistan

## Tehran, Tokyo ink MOU on customs co-op



IRICA Head Mehdi Mir-Ashrafi (R) and Japanese Ambassador to Iran Ikawa Kazutoshi signed MOU documents in Tehran on Sunday.

TEHRAN – Iran and Japan have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on customs cooperation, ILNA reported on Sunday.

The MOU was signed by the Head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) Mehdi Mir-Ashrafi and the Japanese Ambassador to Iran Ikawa Kazutoshi in Tehran.

The signing ceremony was attended by the foreign affairs ministers of the two countries.

According to the Director General of IRICA's International Cooperation Department Hossein Kakhaki, the MOU, which is prepared based on the model of the World Customs Organization (WCO) agreement, will provide the ground for mutual assistance and cooperation in customs affairs between Iran and Japan.

Noting that this document is the first MOU signed between the customs of the two countries, Kakhaki added: "By signing this document, the exchange and inquiry of customs documents between the two countries will be facilitated and accelerated."

According to the official, based on this MOU, the two countries' customs will cooperate in the fields of research, development, and coordination of new customs procedures, implementation of new methods for training of cus-

toms officers, and exchange of customs staff.

Japan has one of the most active customs among the members of the World Customs Organization and the country has a very high potential in the field of technical and technological experiences, he said, adding that the signing of this document provides the necessary basis for developing administrative, technical, educational and research cooperation between the two countries.

The MOU has been signed on the sidelines of a visit by Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi to Tehran.

During his two-day visit to Tehran, the Japanese foreign minister held talks with a number of senior Iranian officials including President Ebrahim Raisi and Hossein Amir Abdollahian, a former foreign minister who is nominated to succeed outgoing Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif in the new Iranian administration.

Japan has been one of the top trade partners of the Islamic Republic in Asia, however, since the re-imposition of the U.S. sanctions the trade exchanges between the two countries declined significantly.

The two countries are once again taking serious measures for boosting trade as hopes for the revival of the nuclear deal are rising.

# Offering cement on commodity exchange, a right decision?

From page 1 ▶ Achieving transparency in trades is made possible by the supply of cement on the stock exchange, he believes.

Referring to the opponents of offering cement on the commodity exchange, the MP says, "Some profiteers who suffer from the transparency of the cement trading process are looking to create chaos in the market."

Alireza Asgari Marani, a capital market expert, is another person supporting the idea of offering cement on the IME.

In a recent published essay titled "Why the supply of cement in the commodity exchange helps the national economy?", the expert says:

"Since last year, due to the structuring that was done in some of the large cement holdings, more supervision over the sales and cash sales cycle began gradually.

And further, with the continuation of the entry of a number of products of those companies in the commodity exchange, it causes the transparency in the market of this national product, which is worth over five billion dollars in GDP.

Gradually, it moved a way that could be followed by a reconstruction of the existing units to increase the capacities and a semi-finished development plan in line with the production leap.

Although, the unfair power outage in this industry and the steel industry, without observing fairness compared



to the rest of the industries, caused the production of this product to stop and consequently disrupt the supply and demand mechanism in the high consumption seasons (spring and summer), and the excuse of shortage and price increase was provided by the permanent rent-seekers of this strategic commodity, so that they could continue their corruption and rent-seeking by appearing in the corridors of the Ministry of Industry and Mining and chanting deceptively popular slogans."

On the other side, there are those

opposing the offering of cement on the commodity exchange.

They say that the beginning of this strange crisis in the cement market was the arbitrary decision of cement factories to change the pattern of sales and listing cement on the commodity exchange.

The decision that according to the minister of transport and urban development, was made and implemented

without observing the rules and regulations of the country, and despite the opposition of this ministry and even the market regulation headquarters,

and the condition has not returned to its previous routine.

One of the cement distributors in Tehran city also criticizes the process of offering cement on the IME, saying, "Under no circumstances the ordinary people are able to enter the stock market. We arrive at the stock exchange early in the morning. The big investors buy the cement production line together and then sell it to us at several times the price; Only if we get a chance and the goods reach us."

Such opponents say that although offering cement and also steel on the IME could have helped producers, housing builders and buyers by eliminating intermediaries, this remains a matter of concern so far.

Meanwhile, one of the current problems is the supply of half-and-half of cement in the stock market, with some cement entering the stock market and others being sold directly. This causes the market of this product to be affected by stock market rates and creates a price distortion.

The Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO) has announced that all companies are obliged to offer all their products on the exchange. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Transport and Urban Development and the Standard Organization are opposed to offering cement on the exchange.

It is said that the entry of cement into the stock market has been adopted and implemented without observing the rules and laws of the country.

## Offering products on commodity exchange for more transparency in trades

## New gas reserve in Caspian Sea could make Iran a major supplier to Europe

TEHRAN – Iran's Khazar Exploration and Production Company (KEPCO) is exploring a new gas reserve in the Caspian Sea region in the north of the country, which according to estimates can meet one-fifth of Europe's gas needs.

"If the initial estimates are confirmed and exploration success is achieved, the Iranian sector of the Caspian Sea will play a significant role in gas exports to Europe in the near future, in which case Iran's new gas hub will be formed in the north to let the country supply 20 percent of Europe's gas needs from this region," KEPCO Head Ali Osouli said.

Central Asian and European demand for gas has broadened the horizons for the development of Iran's exploration blocks in the Caspian Sea region. The project called "Chalous Superstructure Drilling and Exploration" has been assigned to KEPCO with a view to forming a new gas hub in northern Iran.

As reported by the KEPCO portal, the company is planning to complete the "Chalous Superstructure Drilling and Exploration" project over the coming two years.

Chalous structure is the second-largest natural gas block in the Caspian Sea, just behind the Alborz structure. Based on various studies conducted on that structure, it is estimated to hold gas reserves equivalent to one-fourth of the giant South Pars gas field. That would put Chalous in 10th position in the world in terms of gas reserves.

According to estimates, this structure has a production capacity equivalent to 11 phases of South Pars. If the estimates are accurate and the operation to explore the Chalous structure proves successful, the volume of recoverable gas from this structure alone would be 1.5 times the total recoverable gas in Azerbaijan and equivalent of 30 percent of the total recoverable gas in

the Caspian Sea.

Based on available evidence, this structure can also have significant oil reserves. Chalous structure may be compared with giant oil and gas fields in southern Iran in terms of in-place and recoverable hydrocarbon deposits.

According to KEPCO, exploration drilling has to begin in Chalous in the shortest possible time. Immediately after exploration, long-term well testing will be carried out to make a proper assessment of recovery from this reservoir in order to facilitate the formulation of the best development plan for the field.

This concordance of results and evaluations has led KEPCO to start its exploration activities in the Chalous structure in the best possible way by benefiting from the maximum existing capacities and mark a turning point in the exploration of huge oil and gas resources in northern Iran.

## Trade between Iran, Afghanistan getting back to normal

TEHRAN – Iran, and Afghanistan have resumed trade exchanges as the tension in Kabul has eased, IRIB reported on Monday, quoting the spokesman of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA).

According to Rouhollah Latifi, the trade between the two sides, which had declined 15 percent over the past two months, is now back to normal levels.

"Considering the recent conflicts in Afghanistan, the weight of Iran-Afghanistan trade declined 15 percent, however, the latest statistics show that the trade has reached about 1,300 trucks per day by August 21," Latifi said.

The official noted that recently, more than 500 trucks passed through Mahiroud border, about 600 trucks were exchanged in Dogharun border and 185 trucks were cleared at Milak border.

"In Milak border, 97 trucks were headed for Afghanistan and 88 entered Iran, of which 22 were export cargoes, 15 were



transit cargoes, 17 were cement trucks, 33 trucks were tankers and five were return trucks," he explained.

According to the IRICA spokesman, the trade level in Milak border is still 75 percent less than pre-conflict levels; however, the exchanges are rapidly getting back to normal.

He noted that considering Afghanistan's need for Iranian foodstuff prod-

ucts, it is expected that the exchange of two countries across the Milak border will exceed the average of 200 trucks and reach 300 trucks.

Latifi further mentioned the situation in other borders, saying: "At the Mahiroud border, we are witnessing a 60 percent increase in trade, and trade at the border of Dogharun in Khorasan Razavi Province is also growing due to the end

of the conflict and the amount of trade is returning to normal"

Following the recent unrest in Afghanistan, Iran's exports to the country had fallen significantly and Iranian exporters were looking for alternative markets to replace the neighboring country.

Afghanistan accounted for 11 percent of Iran's total non-oil exports in the first quarter of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-June 21), during which the country imported 296,000 tons of agricultural and food products worth \$134 million from Iran.

Tomatoes, apples, potatoes, sweets, and fruit juice concentrate were the top exported items to the neighboring country.

Afghanistan imported about \$8 billion worth of non-oil goods in 2020, of which \$2.3 billion came from Iran; this indicates that one-third of the country's needs were supplied by the Islamic Republic.

## TSE experiences a slight growth of main index on Monday

TEHRAN – TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), rose 337 points to 1515 million on Monday.

Over 12,055 billion securities worth 93,783 trillion rials (about \$2,232 billion) were traded at the TSE on Monday.

The first market's index fell 429 points, while the second market's index climbed 2,783 points.

Head of Iran's Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO) has said that the country's production units and companies can boost their employment and production by raising capital through the stock market.

"When people's resources are directed into the capital market, enterprises and companies listed on the stock exchange can have stronger financing from this market, and consequently have more investment and increases production and employment," Mohammad-Ali Dehqan Dehnavi told IRNA.

Referring to the government's performance in directing people's capital to the stock market, Dehnavi said: "SEO believes the government has a great role to play in the country's economy, the government is the macro policy-maker and the main regulator of the country's economy, therefore in countries like Iran where the government is directly involved in the economic decisions, it should also be present in the production sector."

## Over \$452m of facilities paid to export companies in about 5 months

TEHRAN – The Iranian banking system has paid about 19 trillion rials (about \$452.3 million) of facilities to export-oriented production units since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21) up to July 31, Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry's data showed.

As IRNA reported, the mentioned facilities have been paid under the framework of the government's non-oil export support package which is allocated to finance and support export-oriented production units.

To this due, the facilities are allocated to direct resources to achieve export goals and also to provide working capital to the mentioned units.

According to the Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry, production units that are producing items more needed in the target countries are the priority for receiving the mentioned facilities.

Applicants for these facilities can register and submit their applications on a website created for this purpose.

Promoting exports in line with the support of domestic production has been one of the main strategies of the Ministry of Industry over the past two years.

In this regard, the trade policies of the ministry for the current Iranian calendar year which is named the year of "Production: Support and Elimination of Obstacles", have been mainly focused on the development of production, employment, and developing non-oil exports and eventually entering new markets.

Iranian banks paid 5.951 trillion rials (about \$141.6 million) of facilities to export-oriented companies during the first two months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-May 21).

According to the Central Bank of Iran's (CBI) latest data, the banking system also paid 4.976 quadrillion rials (over \$118.4 billion) of facilities to domestic economic sectors in the first three months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-June 21), registering a 71.3-percent rise from the same period in the previous year.

## Fishery export rises 9% in a quarter on year

TEHRAN – The value of Iran's fishery export has increased nine percent during the first quarter of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-June 21), as compared to the same period of time in the past year, according to an official with Iran Fisheries Organization (IFO).

Isa Golshahi, IFO's director-general for quality improvement, processing, and market development, said that over 28,000 tons of different types of fisheries worth over \$52 million has been exported in the three-month period, indicating 12 percent growth in terms of weight as well.

In terms of accessing some new target markets in the field of fisheries, the official said that cooperation with the relevant organizations such as chambers of commerce, Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as the non-governmental sector to open new markets in the international arena is one the agenda of the IFO's plans.

Over the past two years, the efforts of the Aquatics' Production and Trade Union of Iran, and the non-governmental sector have led to the addition of markets in countries such as Oman and Malaysia to Iran's target export markets in this

field, he further noted.

Fishery production has increased noticeably in Iran in recent years.

Enjoying high quality, Iran's fishery products were sold easily in the export markets, and also some new export destinations welcomed these products in the past two years; as new markets including China, South Korea, and the Eurasian Union nations opened up for Iranian fishery products.

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

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

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

## West Azarbaijan provides 60% of apples exported



TEHRAN – West Azarbaijan province, in the northwest of Iran, provided 60 percent of the apples exported from the country in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20), a provincial official announced.

Nader Sadeqi, the deputy governor-general of the province for economic coordination, said that 885,000 tons of apple worth \$327 million has been exported from the country in the past year.

As announced by the spokesman of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), Iraq bought \$105 million, Russia \$95.4 million, Afghanistan \$51.7 million, India \$26.6 million, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) \$21.1 million of apples from Iran last year and were the top five export buyers of Iranian apples in that year.

Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Oman, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Pakistan, Qatar, Armenia, Kuwait, Georgia, Syria, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Libya, Bahrain, Uzbekistan, Malay-

sia, Mongolia, Sri Lanka, Egypt, Norway and the United Kingdom were the sixth to 27th destinations, respectively, Rouhollah Latifi added.

The official further said that 207,257 tons of apples worth \$62,587 million have been exported in the first quarter of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-June 21).

As Latifi has previously announced, food and agricultural products accounted for 77 percent of the country's weight of exports in the previous year, and the share of these goods in terms of value was more than 17.6 percent of the total value of exports.

In the past year, more than 8.832 million tons of agricultural products, livestock products, fisheries, and foodstuff worth \$6,167 billion were exported, the average value of each ton was \$698, which is about 70 cents per kilogram, he stated.

Iran's non-oil export was 112 million tons valued at \$34.5 billion in the previous year.

Among the country's non-oil export destinations, China was the first, with importing \$8.9 billion worth of products, Iraq was the second with importing \$7.3 billion, the United Arab Emirates the third with importing \$4.6 billion, Turkey the fourth with importing \$2.5 billion, and Afghanistan the fifth with importing \$2.2 billion.

Gasoline, natural gas, polyethylene, propane, and pistachio were Iran's major exported products during the past year.

# How Ghani's terrible miscalculations proved his undoing

By Syed Zafar Mehdi

On May 17, talking to PBS News Hour, Afghanistan's then president Ashraf Ghani blatantly downplayed Taliban's rapid territorial gains, saying they were not capable of "holding" the ground.

"If there is war, I am the commander in chief. I will not abandon my people. I will not abandon my forces. I am willing to die for my country. I have no interest in power. I'm committed to the principle of ensuring order. Afghan society wants order," he boasted, with measured pauses.

The U.S.-backed leader also expressed confidence in Washington's support for his embattled government, saying the U.S. "shares the values of supporting the gains of last 20 years".

On August 15, almost three months later, the academic-turned-politician quietly whisked away in a government plane, accompanied by his wife and some close aides, to Dushanbe.

The unannounced and unceremonious departure came hours after the Taliban laid siege to Kabul, after days of dizzying military advances that saw it overrunning many strategic provincial cities.

When Ghani was desperately looking for a savior to protect his presidential palace in the heart of Kabul, American black hawks and apache helicopters were busy ferrying U.S. diplomats to the airport.

Biden administration on Saturday authorized 5,000 troops to ensure safe evacuation of U.S. diplomats from the besieged city, while leaving its allies and ordinary people to fend for themselves.

It came after the diplomats were asked to destroy documents, U.S. flags or other items at the embassy, officially marking the end of America's longest war that cost around \$2 trillion.

Ghani's over-reliance on foreign forces that militarily occupied his country for 20 years eventually proved his undoing. Americans came with an agen-

da, failed to deliver and abandoned the country.

They did it before in Vietnam, Guatemala, El Salvador, Panama, Cuba, Nicaragua, Congo, Haiti, Grenada, Greece, Cambodia, etc. It's been their standard operating procedure always.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken's remarks to CNN on Sunday, just when the Taliban militants were making their way to Ghani's former office 'Arg', made it emphatically clear.

"Remaining in Afghanistan for another one, five, ten years was not in the (U.S.) national interest," he declared. "If the president had decided to stay, all gloves would have been off. We would have been back at war with the Taliban."

It means Americans were clearly in no mood to "again" fight the Taliban, which is at its strongest since 2001, even though the stated objective of the U.S. military invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 was to "decimate" the militant group.

After the 9/11 attacks, the Taliban had offered to hand over Osama bin Laden, the alleged mastermind of the devastating attacks, to a third country to be tried, dropping the demand for evidence of his guilt. But the Bush administration rejected the offer and launched deadly air raids.

Some reports from that time suggest that the Taliban had even written to then Afghan president Hamid Karzai, offering to lay down arms and recognize his government. The move was blocked by Gul Agha Sherzai, an influential U.S.-backed tribal leader from eastern Afghanistan.

Ghani, an accomplished economist, didn't really fancy history. A cursory look at the U.S. involvement in Afghanistan over the past 20 years makes one thing amply clear: U.S. interests come first, even if that means collaborating with hardened enemies and betraying loyal friends.

In June, Ghani dismissed a report by American intelligence agencies that Kabul could fall within six months. "There have been many such predictions, and



they have all turned out false," Ghani said that time, before his meeting with top Pentagon officials.

Americans knew it was coming, but they didn't quite realize it will take less than two months. And Ghani didn't even know that. He was solely banking on the U.S. defense secretary Lloyd Austin's commitment to "continue providing critical security assistance" to Afghan forces.

On Sunday, an Aljazeera reporter quoted Taliban officials saying that their entry into Kabul, which had been turned into a fortress, came without objection from the American side, which shows that Americans not only knew its inevitability but they had decided not to preempt it.

Ghani clearly failed to read the situation. He terribly miscalculated the threat from the Taliban, which is far inferior than his U.S.-trained military, and then he also over-relied on the American help.

"The Taliban have won... and are now responsible for the honor, property and self-preservation of their countrymen," he confessed in a statement late on Sunday, from somewhere in Tajikistan.

The sheer swiftness of the former president's exit from the country he vowed to give his blood for surprised top government functionaries including the head of Afghanistan's national reconciliation council Dr. Abdullah Abdullah and acting defense minister Bismillah Mohammadi.

Abdullah, the former political rival of Ghani from Panjshir, released a video statement, looking visibly distraught by the dramatic turn of events. He confirmed that Ghani had left the country, while urging people to stay patient. Mohammadi, a fellow Panjshiri and Tajik, lashed out at his former boss, saying his hands were "tied from the back" and the "country was sold".

Following Ghani's dramatic flight out of the country, a coordination council was constituted to facilitate the smooth transfer of power, with Abdullah, for-

mer Afghan president Hamid Karzai and Hezb-e Islami leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar as its core members.

The pictures shared online late on Sunday showed Taliban fighters sitting inside the presidential palace, which was Ghani's bastion and safe haven since 2014 when he rose to power in a controversy-marred vote.

What also needs to be stressed here is Ghani's failure to mobilize and unite different political forces within the country and his questionable policy decisions. He sidelined some of his key political allies, played wily games to bring down rivals and detractors, pursued discriminatory policies toward some ethnic minorities, and failed to establish good ties with neighbors.

More importantly, he failed to directly engage with the Taliban, and wasted enough time in Qatar to reach a mutually agreeable political settlement. He perhaps over-estimated his leverage in the talks.

Now that his eventful political innings are over, Ghani will have enough time to reflect on his miscalculations, even as some of his political rivals have chosen to stay back in Kabul to test their political waters.

Meanwhile, the U.S. and its allies have temporarily suspended their diplomatic operations in the country. Some countries like China, Russia and Pakistan are more than willing to recognize the new government, which is likely to be led by a senior Taliban figure like Mullah Baradar or a consensus candidate between the Taliban and the mainstream Afghan political leadership like Ali Ahmad Jalali.

Iran's position as an important neighbor is clear and unambiguous. The new government must be "inclusive" with representation from all ethnic groups, which Ghani's administration unfortunately couldn't ensure, and which works for the country's progress and development. That is the only way forward for the war-ravaged country.

(Source: Press TV)

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## Anti-Taliban leader says ready to fight Taliban

In a sign of the fragile state of Afghanistan, Ahmed Massoud, the leader of a military alliance that includes former Afghan government soldiers says he and his forces are ready to fight the Taliban in Panjshir valley.

Panjshir Valley is one of the last major bastions that are not in the hands of the Taliban.

Massoud says he hopes to hold peace talks with the movement that seized power in Kabul a week ago but that his forces are ready to counter any Taliban offensive near the Afghan capital.

Massoud says "we want to make the Taliban realize that the only way forward is through negotiation," he told media outlets by telephone from his stronghold northwest of Kabul, where he has gathered forces made up of remnants of former regular army units and special forces as well as local militia fighters.

Massoud added that "we do not want a war to break out." The remarks were made as a statement on the Taliban's social media accounts said hundreds of fighters were heading towards Panjshir "after local state officials refused to hand it over peacefully".

A short video released by the Taliban shows a column of captured trucks with the white Taliban flag but still bearing their government markings moving along a highway.

According to Massoud, son of Ahmad Shah Massoud, his supporters were ready to fight if Taliban forces tried to invade the valley. He says "they want to defend, they want to fight, they want to resist against any totalitarian regime."

However, there is some uncertainty about whether the operation by Taliban forces had begun or not.

A Taliban official says an offensive had been launched on Panjshir, while an aide to Massoud says there were no signs that the column had actually entered the narrow pass into the valley and there have been no reports of fighting.

In the only confirmed fighting since the fall of Kabul on Sunday, anti-Taliban forces took back three districts in the northern province of Baghlan, bordering Panjshir last week.

But Massoud insists he was not involved in any operation which he says had been carried out by local militia groups reacting to "brutality" in the area.

Massoud has also called for an inclusive, broad-based government in Kabul representing all of Afghanistan's different ethnic groups and said a "totalitarian regime" should not be recognized by the international community.

The wreckage of decade's old armored vehicles can still be seen near the valley indicating how difficult Panjshir has been to capture in the past.

Nevertheless, many outside observers have questioned whether Massoud's forces will be able to resist for long without outside support.

Experts say his forces, which one aide claims number more than 6,000 fighters, would need international support if it comes down to battling the Taliban.

Massoud's aide says the forces are not just limited from Panjshir, a region of Persian-speaking Tajiks long at odds with the Pashtuns who form the core of the Taliban movement.

He added, "there are many other people from many other provinces who are seeking refuge in the Panjshir valley who are standing with us and who do not want to accept another identity for Afghanistan".

The Taliban have repeatedly stressed they are open to an inclusive new Afghan government.

## UK to "push for sanctions" on Taliban at G7 meeting

Sources say Britain plans to push world leaders to consider new sanctions on the Taliban when the G7 group of advanced economies meets on Tuesday to discuss the crisis in Afghanistan.

British Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, who currently leads the group that includes the United States, Italy, France, Germany, Japan and Canada, has called for the virtual meeting, in the wake of the Taliban's swift takeover of Afghanistan.

According to a British government official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, and a second Western diplomat, Britain believes the G7 should consider economic sanctions and withhold aid if the Taliban commits human rights abuses and allows its territory to be used as a haven for militants.

Critics say by withholding vital aid supplies (especially food aid), it would push Afghanistan to the brink and the unknown; the perfect recipe for the break out of violence.

British Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab, first raised the possibility of sanctions to pressure the Taliban last week.

On Sunday Johnson said, "It is vital that the international community works together to ensure safe evacuations, prevent a humanitarian crisis and support the Afghan people to secure the gains of the last 20 years".

Analysts say the British Premier is taking a hypocritical approach. On one hand claiming he wants to avoid a humanitarian crisis and on the other hand, pushing for sanctions.

With the Taliban tightening their grip at the airport, Downing Street says Boris Johnson will personally lobby U.S. President Joe Biden at the G7 leaders' summit.

One Western diplomat says sanctions against the Taliban are unlikely to be imposed immediately.

British government sources say Johnson will also plead with Biden to keep U.S. troops at Kabul airport beyond the end of August, after a weekend of tension between the UK and its closest ally over the chaotic evacuation process.

That was echoed by British media reports that say Johnson also plans to push Biden to extend his August 31 deadline for withdrawing U.S. forces from Afghanistan so that more people can be evacuated.

The news came as Taliban forces are seeking to assert their own authority, blaming Washington for the "anarchy" at the airport and insisting they were the only ones capable of restoring order.

Taliban forces have stepped up their efforts to bring order, firing guns into the air and using batons to bring people into orderly queues in an attempt to halt the desperate scenes in which at least 20 people have died.

Speaking at a press conference, Biden suggested that the date for ending evacuations and keeping troops in the country beyond the August 31st deadline was not out of the question, saying discussions were ongoing. He did add that "our hope is we will not have to extend (the deadline)".

Meanwhile, Biden has told reporters that the Taliban had not taken any action against U.S. forces controlling Kabul airport, and had largely followed through on their pledge to let Americans reach the airport safely.

Asked whether he would support a push for sanctions if the Taliban committed abuses, Biden said, "The answer is yes. It depends on (their) conduct."

Last week, the Taliban seized control of Kabul in an upheaval that sent civilians and Afghan military allies fleeing for safety.

Some fear a return to strict rules and laws during the previous Taliban era in power that ended 20 years ago.

Biden, under fire at home and abroad for his handling of the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan, last week said G7 leaders would work out a joint approach to the Taliban and has already held bilateral talks with Johnson, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President Emmanuel Macron and Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi.

Biden said Washington would consider an extension if asked to do so by G7 allies, but was working closely with those countries and others to help evacuate their citizens.

On Sunday, the U.S. military said it had ordered commercial aircraft to help transport people who have already been evacuated from Afghanistan and sent to a third country.

Biden also told reporters that he and U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken would work with other countries to set "harsh conditions" for any cooperation with or recognition of the Taliban, based on their treatment of Afghans and overall human rights record.

## U.S.-led "coalition" aircraft shoots down drone over Syria

An American warplane with the so-called U.S.-led coalition occupying Syria has reportedly shot down a drone in the country's east.

The U.S. military claims the unmanned aircraft was brought down after it was deemed a threat.

U.S. Army Colonel Wayne Marotto says "coalition aircraft successfully engaged and defeated a UAS through the air to air engagement in the vicinity of Mission Support Site Green Village"

The Pentagon last month said it was deeply concerned about attacks on U.S. personnel in Syria and Iraq after U.S. interests were targeted in three rocket and drone attacks.

The Iraqi resistance says it is prepared to use force to end the illegal presence of American forces in Iraq and along the country's border with Syria.

## The unwinnable war in Afghanistan: What is left to learn?

From page 1 ► From the Bush administration's democracy promotion to the Trump administration's push for the Doha Agreement to negotiate with the Taliban, the task of nation-building overseas has presented the U.S. government with serious challenges—not to mention the failure to address the systemic and widespread corruption in a country gripped with poverty and religious fundamentalism.

### What happens next?

Several questions deserve our attention. What strategic leverage does the United States have on the Taliban 2.0? Could Al Qaeda find a new foothold in Afghanistan? What are the regional implications of the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan? Many experts believe that the United States will have little or no strategic leverage over the Taliban. It is vitally important to contemplate the prospects for the resurgence of terrorism and triggering an influx of refugees in the coming days, months, and years, with dire consequences

for its neighboring countries, especially for Iran that is already home to millions of Afghan refugees and Pakistan in which many Taliban members have resided since they fled the country some two decades ago.

It is clear that US counter-insurgency efforts to upend the Taliban's presence and influence have all but failed. Counter-insurgency was in the end not a military solution—only the means for creating a political settlement. The two most important elements of any successful counter-insurgency operations are local collaboration by the ordinary people and the absence of safe haven for terrorists or guerrilla forces. Both of these elements were conspicuously lacking in the case of Afghanistan, as the corruption at the local and regional levels was pervasive and Pakistan provided a safe haven for the Taliban members who had fled the country waiting for an opportunity to strike back. The swift and immediate collapse of the Afghan army is proof of the failed

long-term viability of expensive and complicated counter-insurgency operations. The return of the Taliban to power in Afghanistan will inject new uncertainties in the region in more ways than one—a region that is already reeling from the unexpectedly rapid collapse of healthcare infrastructure in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change consequences, unemployment, and refugee crisis—not to mention terrorism and sectarian strife. The lasting impact of this failed US mission should instruct future leaders about the viability of implementing foreign governance regimes on target states and the notion of creating pockets of stability and control while the vast expanse of the state is left to a committed oppositional fighting force. If the lesson is learned, perhaps blood and treasure need not be spent errantly and without focus. Otherwise, the same policies will achieve the same disastrous ends.

Mahmood Monshipouri, PhD, teaches Middle Eastern Politics at San Francisco State University.

## Asian Americans always considered foreigners in America: anti-racist activist

From page 1 ► "The anti-hate crimes against Asians have skyrocketed because people wanted to blame Asian Americans for the pandemic even though COVID-19 reportedly started in Wuhan, China," Lee argues.

Following is the text of the interview:

Reports say anti-Asian hate crime in the U.S. has skyrocketed since the Covid-19 pandemic began. What is the reason for that? Is the U.S. government, especially during Trump's presidency, responsible for igniting such a hatred?

The anti-hate crimes against Asians have skyrocketed because people wanted to blame Asian Americans for the pandemic even though COVID-19 reportedly started in Wuhan, China. Donald Trump added fuel to the fire by saying "Kung Flu and the Wuhan Virus as well as the China virus." Asian Americans are always considered perpetual foreigners in our own country. Trump definitely stoked the flames with his anti-Asian rhetoric. A lot of Americans were racist to Asians long before this but the pandemic basically gave them the green light to verbally and physically attack Asians.

Is there widespread awareness among American minorities against racism? Some black activists say that Asian-Americans collaborate with whites in suppressing people of color.

Every minority and person of color has encountered forms of racism living in America. We all know it and experience it, some in more ways than others. It's a battle to fight white supremacy. Asians are people of color too. We are all minorities. Some peo-

ple say Asians are the "model minority" and "white adjacent" and that's far from the case and not true at all. It's dangerous and ignorant to keep thinking of Asians that way. People need to understand and educate themselves.

What are the main obstacles to the integration of Asian-Americans into American society?

It's easy for Asian Americans who were born in the United States to integrate since we are born here and speak English but it can be tough for immigrants from Asia with no or limited command of the English language.

It's easier for them if there's other people just like them in the community.

Do you see any correlation between deterioration of U.S.-China ties and spread of pandemic and anti-Asian hatred?

There's definitely a correlation and it's going to get more dangerous and scary in the future. Biden seems hell-bent on making China the "enemy" and a foe instead of being allies and China isn't going to back down. China isn't afraid of the United States and China is getting stronger and more powerful all the time.

It would be better if this country didn't make China the enemy and there's so much anti-China propaganda spewed by the Western media and government too. Both countries are better off as allies and part-

ners working together.

All the anti-China propaganda falls back on Asians living in America. We are considered outsiders and perpetual foreigners and not real Americans even though we pay taxes and have jobs and contribute immensely to our communities and to our country. It's racist and unfair.

Is there any holistic solution to eradicate crimes against Asian-Americans?

We need tougher laws and to punish criminals and racists who attack Asians and commit hate crimes. Asian Hate would decrease if our elected officials punish severely the perpetrators who do harm to Asians. For example, I live in San Francisco and our district attorney, Chesa Boudin, prioritizes criminals over victims and law abiding residents.

His policies and ideology allows criminals to be key off the hook and these criminals don't get much or any jail time so they are released back to the streets and then they commit more crimes against Asians. Most or all of the racist people attacking Asians are repeat offenders. Our mayor is a Black woman, London Breed, and she doesn't help much too since 95% of the racist attacks are being done by black perpetrators. It's crazy out here with no justice for the Asian community.

## Trump added fuel to the fire by saying "Kung Flu and the Wuhan Virus as well as the China virus"

## Iran pavilion to spotlight vacation destinations, ancient crafts at Expo 2020



From page 1 ▶ Teymouri said that Iran will attend the event with the motto of "Iran, An Ancient and Stable Civilization with a Diversity of Ethnicities" to introduce the Iranian rich culture to the visitors. Taking part in the Expo is also intended to promote economic, social, and cultural

links with the countries attending the event, he mentioned.

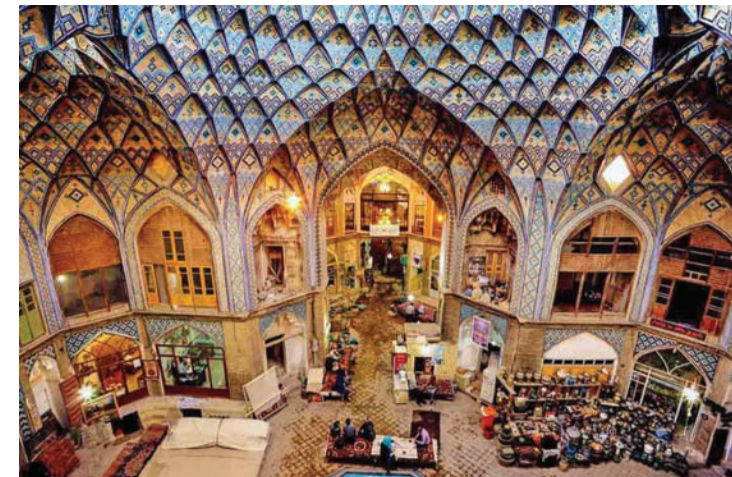
### Postponement

Expo 2020 was originally scheduled for 20 October 2020 – 10 April 2021. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic in the United Arab Emirates, the new dates are 1 October 2021 – 31 March 2022.

Throughout the years, World Expos have been global events dedicated to sharing top-notch innovation, showcasing ground-breaking inventions, and discovering resolutions to fundamental challenges by facing humanity. They are organized every five years and last for six months.

The Islamic Republic expects to reap a bonanza from its numerous tourist spots such as bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, mausoleums, churches, towers, and mansions, of which 26 being inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

# Labyrinthine Bazaar of Isfahan undergoes beautification project



TEHRAN – The labyrinthine Bazaar of Isfahan, one of the fascinating traditional marketplaces in central Iran, has undergone a beautification project, Isfahan's tourism chief announced on Monday.

A budget of 200 billion rials (\$4.7 million at the official exchange rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) has been allocated to the project, which is being carried out by the province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department in collaboration with Isfahan Municipality, Ali Kamyabi said on Monday.

Locally known as Bazaar-e Bozorg, the Bazaar of Isfahan links the UNESCO-registered Imam Square (originally known as Meydan-e Naqsh-e

Jahan) with the Jameh Mosque of Isfahan. Its charms may never end for enthusiasts of Persian culture seeing numerous craftspeople boasting skills in the mazing arcades producing handicrafts with copper, woods, ceramics, and wool.

Sometimes called "a city within another", the bazaar is a maze of lanes, madrasas, caravanserais, and timchehs (domed halls or arcaded centers of a single trade, such as carpet vendors or coppersmiths). It can be entered at dozens of points, but the main en-

trance is via the Qeysarieh Portal at the northern end of Naqsh-e Jahan Square.

## Soaked in a rich history, Isfahan was once a crossroads of international trade.

At its busiest in the mornings, the bazaar's arched passageways are topped by a series of small perforated domes, each spilling shafts of light onto the commerce below. While the oldest parts of the bazaar (those around the mosque) are more than a thousand years old, most of what can be seen today were built during Shah Abbas' ambitious expansions of the early 1600s.

Soaked in a rich history, Isfahan was once a crossroads of international trade and diplomacy in Iran and now it is one of Iran's top tourist destinations for good reasons. The city is filled with many architectural wonders such as unmatched Islamic buildings, bazaars, museums, Persian gardens, and tree-lined boulevards.

Many international travelers to the central Iranian city believe that it equals an endless charm by embracing so many diverse monuments, landscapes, and above all; hospitable people. The historical core of Isfahan is a masterpiece of Safavid-era architecture popularly known as "half of the world" meaning seeing it is relevant to see the whole world.

## Religious tourism: 12 Iranian mosques inscribed on national heritage list

TEHRAN – A selection of 12 mosques, which stand tall in various cities of Iran's Markazi province, have recently been added to the national heritage list of the country.

"12 historical mosques, many of which bearing magnificent architectural elements, have recently been registered on the national heritage list in order to receive better protection," provincial tourism chief Morteza Marzban said on Sunday.

"Currently, the total number of nationally-registered mosques reaches 34 that is a considerable potential for religious tourism across the province," the official added.

The newly-registered mosques are located in the cities of Ashtian, Arak, Tafresh, Khomein, Khondab, Delijan, Zandeh, Saveh, and Mahallat, he said.

Cascades of photogenic domes and minarets can be seen in every corner of Iran as inseparable ele-



ments of mosques some of which are widely known as timeless benchmarks of Islamic architecture.

Iran is home to hundreds of shrines, Imamzadehs, mausoleums, churches, and even fire temples amongst other religious destinations which are dedicated to different faiths. For instance, the holy shrine of Imam Reza (As), the eighth Imam of the Shia Muslims, annually attracts millions of domestic and foreign pilgrims to Mashhad, the capital of Khorasan Razavi province.

Mosque locally called masjid, or masjid ("a place of prostration" to God), is any house or open area of prayer in Islam. Generally speaking, the architecture of mosques in Iran is a combination of symmetry, geometric designs, and vibrant colors.

The architecture of the mosques in Iran varies from one region to another, due to geometric structures, materials, and styles specific to each location. These mosques often have very complex structures in which color variations, tiles, and symbolic designs are used.

## Workshop set up to cater for overlooked crafts

TEHRAN – A handicrafts workshop has recently been set up in a vast historical caravanserai in Ardakan aimed to cater for arrays of the often overlooked crafts across the central Iranian city and its outskirts.

"The workshop has been established at the Qajar-era (1789-1925) Rashti Caravanserai to develop traditional arts, introduce and encourage people interested in handicrafts, and create a conducive working environment for entrepreneurs and youth," Ardakan's tourism chief said on Monday.

"Handicrafts fields should be updated to reflect the modern way of life and be connected to it," Mahmud Adiban said.

Handicraft products can be economically viable and activists in this field will be more eager to help if they are taken away from the forms of decorative and museum-like art and seen in the light of modern society's needs, the official explained.

Currently, the workshop offers two handicrafts fields of kilim-bafi and kar-bafi (a kind of traditional textile), he added.

Kar-bafi, which has recently been revived after years of being forgotten, is one of the oldest professions in the region, he noted. "Kar-bafi's products are being used for the tents, women's traditional clothes, sheets, spreads, and towels."

Rashti Caravanserai, modeled after the Safavid-era Shah Abbasi caravanserais, has been inscribed on the national heritage list.

Iran's earliest caravanserais were built during the



Achaemenid era (550–330 BC). Centuries later, when Shah Abbas I assumed power from 1588 – to 1629, he ordered the construction of network caravanserais across the country.

Such roadside inns were originally built in various epochs along ancient caravan routes in the Muslim world to shelter people, their goods, and animals. The former Silk Roads may be the most famous example dotted by caravanserais.

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.

In January 2020, the cities of Shiraz, Malayer, and Zanjan and the village of Qassemabad were designated by the WCC- Asia Pacific Region, putting

Iran's number of world crafts cities and villages from ten to 14.

Shiraz was named a "world city of [diverse] handicrafts". Malayer was made a global hub for wood-carving and carved-wood furniture. Zanjan gained the title of a "world city of filigree". And Qassemabad village, which is nationally known for its traditional costumes, was also promoted to a world hub of handicrafts. Chador Shab, a kind of homemade outer garment for women, was, however, the main subject for the WCC assessment for the village.

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 ornaments with precious and semi-precious gemstones are traditionally exported to Iraq, Afghanistan, Germany, the U.S., the UK, and other countries.

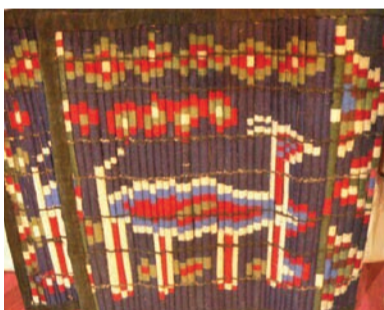
## Iranian handicrafts: Chigh of Ilam

TEHRAN – "Chigh" is the local word for a colorful nomadic wall-covering, which is woven by the skillful hands of crafters in Ilam province.

As stated by Visit Iran, the most important material of Chigh is a kind of reed and hair goat that is produced from the herd of nomads themselves. The reed is hollow and grows wildly in the natural habitat of nomads.

The weaver gathers the reeds from the surrounding land of the rivers. Depending on the diameter of the reeds, they are divided into three or four pieces, so that each piece is ten centimeters in width. Then they are woven together by the spun wool yarn that is usually colorful. The woman weavers analyze the design in their minds and weave each piece separately. Then they are arranged next to each other to make the intended design. Since the nomads have always been tent-dwellers and the Chigh has been used as the covering of the tent walls, the history of the Chigh has entwined with the history of nomadic tents.

Not only is Chigh a beautiful and fascinating product, but also it prevents heat, cold, wind, and dust to enter the internal



space. One reason is that the reeds are hollow which allows them to act as a filter. On the occasion of rainy and cold weather, the humidity adds to the volume of the reeds and makes them attach and prevent the cold. When the weather is hot and dry, the reeds shrink and leave spaces for the air to pass through. In addition, the hair goat produces a strong shade which makes a Chigh an ideal awning. Another interesting characteristic of hair goats is that it is a natural repeller of insects and snakes.

The traditional Chigh is decorated with symbolic and versatile motifs such as "Togh Savar", "Eask" or gazelle, "Ghezhak" or crab, "Pardal" or eagle feather, star,

duck, and geometric motifs that are inspired by both nature and memory of the weaver.

The tools of making a Chigh are no more than the simple and primitive sickle, knives, grinds, scissors, needle, and stitching awl, and it is the taste and skills of the women weavers that make these products valuable. Today, considering the design of the Chigh and the fact that the distance between the reeds is adjustable, this product can also be used as shutters, dividers, wall coverings, and decorations in urban houses, too.

According to Dehkhoda Dictionary, Chigh is "a Turkish word and shutter-like weave that is made of common reed and thin wood branches and hanged in front of the entrance door. However, in different regions, it is known with different names such as Alaghigh, Chikh, Chit, and Chig."

The majority of land in the lesser-known Ilam province is a continuation of the valley of Mesopotamia and was formed by the deposition of sediments eroded from the Zagros Mountains. Agriculture is the principal occupation of the region; barley, wheat, rice, oilseeds, potatoes, and dates are grown.

## More eco-lodges to come on stream in northern Iran

TEHRAN- Government permits have been issued for the establishment of five eco-lodge complexes in rural areas of northern Gilan province, a provincial tourism official has announced.

A budget of 47 billion rials (over \$11 million at the official exchange rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) will be allocated to the projects, Reza Hassanpur said on Monday, CHTN reported.

The projects aim at creating efficient and effective employment in rural areas, the official added.

The lodging complexes are expected to generate at least 40 job opportunities directly upon their completion, he noted.

In 2019, Gilan was selected



as the first province to start the country's comprehensive tourism plan, which is being developed under the auspices of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). The comprehensive plan is aimed to serve as a roadmap to guide tourists from all over the globe to achieve a sustainable and


competitive tourism market.

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

The tourism ministry has set a target to help build 2,000 eco-lodges by 2021, believing such guest houses could cater to sustainable development and job creation in the countryside and rural areas. Experts say each eco-lodge unit generates jobs for seven to eight people on average so that the scheme could create 160,000 jobs.

The culturally diverse country never disappoints visitors when it comes to eco-tourism, sightseeing, and even tribal tourism as it is home to many regional people including ones with Turk and Arab elements in addition to the Kurds, Baloch, Bakhtyari, Lurs, and other smaller minorities such as Armenians, Assyrians, Jews, and others.

Second Announcement



**K S C**  
Khouzestan Steel Company

### Two-phase public tender announcement

**Tender subject:**  
**Khuzestan Steel Combined Cycle Power Plant with a nominal capacity of 520 MW**

Identifying investors and evaluating them for financing, design, supply of equipment, construction and operation and then transfer of "Khuzestan Steel Combined Cycle Power Plant with a nominal capacity of 520 MW "under a BOT contract

**Tender type:** tow – phase public tender

**Deadline for announcement of readiness:** until the end of office hours on Tuesday August 17, 2021 bidders could participate in the tender by visiting the "pim.ksc.ir" website and entering their general and supplementary information and attaching the required documents.

**Important note:**  
All bidders, in addition to posting information on the website "pim.ksc.ir", need to announce their readiness to participate in the tender by sending an email to the address "M.SALJOOGHIPOUR@ksc.ir"

Applicants who are recognized by the Supplier Evaluation Committee as eligible to participate in the tender, by paying the amount of 500,000 Iranian Rials (can not be reimbursed) from August 31, to September 2, 2021 they could receive the tender documents from the "pim.ksc.ir" website.

**Offer delivery date:** Saturday September 18, 2021

The first stage of the tender does not have guarantee amount

Address: Iran, Ahvaz, 10 km of Bandar Imam Khomeini Road, Services and Contracts Management Department

# Martyr Soleimani plan begins fifth phase to confront COVID-19

TEHRAN – The fifth phase of Martyr Soleimani plan began on Monday aiming to curb the fifth wave of the coronavirus pandemic.

Some 35,000 volunteer forces have taken part in the national plan, IRIB reported.

In December 2020, the first phase of the plan named after martyr Qassem Soleimani started to help contain the disease.

Aimed at cutting the transmission chain of the disease, the plan is being implemented in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, Basij, and the Red Crescent Society, through which volunteer forces provide information, testing, diagnosis, referral of suspects to health centers, and offer services by visiting people's homes.

One of the most valuable measures of the plan was to prevent the death of 400 people across the country, and today it continues focusing on vaccination with the opening of centers within the next two weeks, Hassan Hassanzadeh, Commander of Mohammad Rasulullah Corps said.

It is planned to prepare and educate the people to follow the health protocols, and there are also diagnostic treatment cards and home quarantine among the programs, he added.

Hassanzadeh went on to note that the Basij is directly involved in vaccination in 40 centers, and Mohammad



Rasulullah Corps is operating in 30 vaccination centers.

## Volunteer efforts in light of pandemic

In the fight against coronavirus, the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS), Basij along with the Ministry of Health and other responsible organizations, has undertaken important activities, from rapid diagnosis and screening to providing medical services and shelter, but the most important activity of this

population has been informing the public about healthcare and treatment.

Since the onset of the outbreak, more than 980 voluntary plans and projects to contain the epidemic has been implemented across the country, with 72,694 volunteers participating in the implementation of these projects, Karim Hemmati, the head of the Iranian Red Crescent Society, said in May 2020.

Some 35,000 volunteer forces provide information, testing, and diagnosis.

The first phase of public donations was

allocated to provide health and essential items for the deprived and unprivileged areas, and besides, 500,000 patients suffering special diseases were provided with essential health items, he stated.

Through the second phase, the IRCS, to provide medical items for COVID-19 patients in hospitals, purchased 100 ventilators worth approximately 160 billion rials (around \$3.8 million), 52 devices have been provided with the help of charities and public participation, he added.

With the efforts of the Basij, the Soleimani plan decreased the transmission chain of the disease by 50 percent.

Some 22,530 monitoring teams have been formed within the framework of the plan since December 2020 with 103,000 members, of which more than 270,000 are in contact to identify COVID-19 patients, said Jafar Sadeq-Tabrizi, head of the Network Management Center of the Ministry of Health.

Some 6,730 home care teams have been formed in the country with the participation of 18,000 forces, who have taken care of 41,000 people at home, and rapid result tests have been performed on 7,500 suspects, he explained.

Since December 2020, with the participation of 61,000 people, more than 10,000 monitoring teams have been formed. About 782,000 visits and monitoring of various places and centers have been formed.

## Iranian university to grant more scholarships to Afghans

TEHRAN – Allameh Tabatabai University of Tehran will award scholarships to 35 faculty members and talented students of Afghanistan this year, compared to 20 scholarships in previous years, ISNA reported on Monday.

At the seventh meeting of the Board of Trustees of Allameh Tabatabai University, it was approved that the university award scholarships to 35 faculty members and talented students of Afghanistan annually with the aim of expanding scientific and cultural ties between the academic community and the media of the two countries.

Accordingly, Allameh is the first Iranian university to offer scholarships to faculty members, talented students, and Afghan journalists since 2016 with the aim of expanding scientific and cultural ties between the two countries.

The number of recipients of this scholarship in previous years was 20, which has increased to 35 this year.

### Supports for Afghan refugees in Iran

Iran is hosting the world's fourth-largest refugee community. The country has generously hosted approximately 1 million refugees for the past 30 years.



Based on the latest statistics, over 3 million Afghans are living in Iran – some 780,000 Afghan refugees, over 2 million undocumented Afghans, and another 600,000 Afghan passport-holders with Iranian visas.

Iran spends about 20 trillion rials (nearly \$477 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) every year on the education of foreign national students residing in the country, head of the international affairs department of the Ministry of Education Gholamreza Karimi said in March.

Over 474,000 Afghan national children are receiving

education in Iran completely free of charge, he added.

Out of 970,000 foreigners (men and women) in working-age of 15 to 60 years, some 36,000 are under social insurance coverage in the country, head of Social Security Organization's department for foreign nationals Ahmad Reza Khazaei said in July 2018.

### Foreign nationals studying at Iranian universities

"Some 57,675 foreign nationals from 133 countries are studying in Iranian universities, many of whom have returned to their country with the outbreak of the pandemic," Afshin Akhoundzadeh, an official at the Organization of Student Affairs has said.

However, 4,000 non-Iranian students have been applied with a scholarship, he further added.

Fifty-seven percent of the international students are studying for a master's degree, 27 percent for a bachelor's degree and 15 percent are educating to receive a Ph.D., while the remaining one percent study at other levels.

Law, Persian literature, and computer engineering are the top three fields of study for foreign students in Iran, while civil engineering, business management, political science, English language and literature, Quran and hadith sciences, international relations, and electrical engineering, and other majors with the highest number of non-Iranian students.

Scholarships will increase to 35 this year from 20 in previous years.

## National Doctors Day: let's appreciate health advocates

From page 1 ► coronavirus are called martyrs of health.

Although, physicians and doctors have been recognized for their selfless devotion and efforts to public health. Working around the clock, fighting at the frontline against the pandemic, putting their lives in danger made us salute and admire these exceptional caregivers.

The sacrifices made by the medical staff to treat the coronavirus patients are indescribable, when all their relatives were forced to leave them, the medical community stood still that many of them even lost their lives.

### Health sector growth

After the Islamic Revolution (1979), many advances have been made in the health sector, namely, increased medical facilities, increased life expectancy and reduced infant and maternal mortality, growth of medical universities, and up-graded medical equipment.

Before the Islamic Revolution, there were about 558 medical institutions with 57,927 beds in the country, which was insufficient in comparison to the country's population.

Meanwhile, after the fourth decades of the Islamic Revolution, primary health care (PHC) has reached a coverage of 93

percent for the urban population and over 97 percent for the rural residents. At the same time, the establishment of the health care network system as a global model has taken place with more than 31,400 Health Houses and 7,400 healthcare centers.

Moreover, the distribution of hospitals in different provinces and regions demonstrates the observance of health justice in all parts of the country.

Before the Revolution, there were only a limited number of physicians for the entire population of 36 million in Iran, so all the cities of the country and the country's villages were suffering from the lack of doctors and specialists in 1,500 rural health centers.

The number of physicians in the country, including general practitioners and specialists in various fields, amounted to about 14,000, while a significant number of whom were foreign physicians. So, there were still about 9.3 physicians per 10,000 people.

According to the World Bank, the physician-to-population ratio improved six-fold in the post-revolutionary period.

Also the specialized physicians were 7000 in 1979 who reached up to 72,792 in 2017, and it is noteworthy to say that people from many countries travel to Iran to receive treatment from Iranian physicians.

Before the Islamic Revolution, four medical faculties were established in universities, but now there are about 59 medical universities across the country.

The number of medical students increased from 600 to 3,000 a year, after the Revolution.

Before 1979, there were about 50 manufacturing companies in the field of medical equipment across Iran, all of which imported raw materials from abroad and assembled them inside Iran. These companies were only able to supply 3 percent of the domestic needs.

According to the statistics in 2017, medical equipment companies reached 500, which supplied over 80 percent of hospitals' needs across the country, producing more than 8,000 types of medical equipment and supplying them to domestic and foreign markets.

### Health sector's share in national budget

Some 15 percent of the national budget for the current Iranian calendar year

(started on March 20) has been allocated to the health sector, deputy health minister Kamel Taqavinejad has said in April.

The national budget bill has proposed 1.5 quadrillion rials (around \$35 billion at the official rate of 42,000 rials) for the healthcare system, a more than twofold increase compared to the last year's budget of 700 trillion rials (nearly \$16 billion).

Last year, despite all the constraints on funding, was a successful year for the Ministry of Health and the universities. This year, with the efforts made to increase the budget this year, good capacity has been predicted for medical universities, Taqavinejad said.

The health system accounts for approximately 15 percent of the total public budget. Over 90 percent of the health system's budget is provided from government and public resources and 10 percent from private resources, which are gained from the health system and hospitals, he explained.

Since March, 25,200, over 300 healthcare workers have lost their lives fighting coronavirus.

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

#### Iran to carry out cloud seeding project within two weeks

A cloud seeding project will be carried out within the next two weeks in some northern, central and southern provinces of the country, Farid Golkar, head of Iran's National Cloud Seeding Research Center, has announced.

Golkar explained that the operation will be carried out on the Zagros and Alborz Mountains in the north, Isfahan and Yazd provinces in the center, and Fars and Kerman provinces in the south.

The first cloud seeding project was launched in the Iranian calendar year 1395 (March 2016-March 2017), he stated, adding that, each operation can lead to a 10-15 percent increase in precipitation.

He went on to highlight that this year, a total budget of 70 billion rials (about \$1.6 million) has been earmarked in this regard.

#### آغاز عملیات باروری ابرها تا دو هفته دیگر

عملیات بارورسازی ابرها تا دو هفته دیگر در بخش هایی از شمال، مرکز، و جنوب کشور انجام می شود.

فرید گلکار، رئیس مرکز ملی تحقیقات و مطالعات باروری ابرها، در گفت و گو با ایسنا، توضیح داد این عملیات روی کوهستان های زاگرس و البرز در شمال کشور، استان های اصفهان و یزد در مرکز، و استان های فارس و کرمان در جنوب انجام می شود.

او با بیان این که نخستین پروژه بارورسازی ابرها در سال ۱۳۹۵ انجام شد، اظهار کرد تاثیر یکبار عملیات در میزان افزایش بارش ها ۱۰ تا ۱۵ درصد است.

گلکار اضافه کرد: امسال هفت میلیارد تومان بوجه برای این موضوع در نظر گرفته شده است.

## Over 26,000 Iranians donate blood on Tasua, Ashura

TEHRAN – A total of 26,504 Iranians donated blood under a national campaign during Tasua and Ashura (the ninth and tenth days of the month of Muharram), Bashir Haji-Beigi, spokesman for the Blood Transfusion Organization announced on Monday.

Launched for forty days since Tasua, the campaign is held annually to elicit people's participation in providing the country's need for blood.

Compared to the same period last year, Yazd province with 79 percent growth in blood donation is the top province and then Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari province with 48 percent growth ranks the second, he added.

### Over 2.1m Iranians donate blood per year

Blood donation in Iran has long been done voluntarily as over 2.1 million Iranians donate blood annually, Haji-Beigi said on June 14.

There are currently 178 blood donation centers in the country, with Fars, Khorasan Razavi, Khuzestan, Tehran, and Mazandaran provinces having the largest number of blood donation centers, he stated.

### Highest blood donation in Eastern Mediterranean

While blood donation in 70 countries still depends on replacement or paid donors, Iran is the first country in the region that has enjoyed voluntary blood donation by 100 percent since 2007.

More than 85 percent of all donated blood worldwide is used to produce blood products, while the rate is 65 percent in Eastern Mediterranean coun-



tries. Iran ranks among the highest-income countries in terms of converting more than 97 percent of the blood donated by people to plasma-derived medicinal products (PDMP).

Only 55 of 171 countries produce PDMP through the fractionation of plasma collected in the reporting country. A total of 90 countries reported that all PDMP are imported, 16 countries reported that no PDMP was used during the reporting period, and 10 countries did not respond to the question, according to WHO.

Iran currently has the highest blood donation rate in the Eastern Mediterranean region so that out of 9.9 million blood donation units in this region, more than two million belongs to Iran.

Also, the index of blood donation is 25 per 1,000 populations, while in the member states of the Eastern Mediterranean region, this number is 14.9 per 1000.

## Half of world's children at 'extremely high risk' of climate change impacts, Unicef report says

Close to a billion children live in one of the 33 countries most at risk of the impacts of the climate crisis, finds a new report launched by Unicef in collaboration with youth activists including Greta Thunberg on the third anniversary of the Fridays For Future climate strike movement.

According to the report, people living in countries including the Central African Republic, Chad, Nigeria, Guinea, and Guinea-Bissau are at "extremely high-risk" with climate change threatening their health, education, protection, as well as exposing them to deadly diseases.

The report, entitled "The Climate Crisis Is a Child Rights Crisis: Introducing the Children's Climate Risk Index", is the first comprehensive analysis of climate risk from a child's perspective.

In the report, experts ranked countries based on children's exposure to climate and environmental shocks, such as cyclones and heatwaves, as well as their vulnerability to those shocks, based on the access they have to essential services.

People living in the 33 countries that are at extreme risk face a deadly combination of exposure to multiple climate and environmental shocks with a high vulnerability due to inadequate essential services like water, sanitation, healthcare, and education, the report finds.

While these countries suffer the worst impact, the report says they collectively emit just 9 per cent of global CO2 emissions.

With nearly half the world's 2.2 billion children affected by climate change, the figures are likely to get worse as the impacts of the global crisis accelerate, the UN experts warn.

"For the first time, we have a complete picture of where and how children are vulnerable to climate change, and that picture is almost unimaginably dire," Henrietta Fore, Unicef's executive director, said in a statement.

"Climate and environmental shocks are undermining the complete spectrum of children's rights, from access to clean air, food and safe water; to education, housing, freedom from exploitation, and even their right to survive. Virtually no child's life will be unaffected," Ms Fore added.

She said Unicef supports the calls for change from the youth activists with an unarguable message – "the climate crisis is a child's rights crisis."

The report warns that a billion children around the world are exposed to exceedingly high levels of air pollution, and over 900 million are extremely vulnerable to water scarcity.

According to the Children's Climate Risk Index (CCRI), between 240 and 820 million children are highly exposed to different kinds of environmental shocks, including coastal flooding, cyclones, vector borne diseases, and heatwaves, with a third of the world's children living in areas where four of the shocks combine.

It warned that the worst affected countries face multiple and "often overlapping shocks", which could erode development progress and deepen child deprivations.

"Climate change is deeply inequitable. While no child is responsible for rising global temperatures, they will pay the highest costs. The children from countries least responsible will suffer most of all," Ms Fore said.

While children require more food and water per unit of their body weight compared to adults, they are less able to survive extreme weather events, and are more susceptible to toxic chemicals, temperature changes and diseases, among other factors, the experts say.

## COVID-19 UPDATES ON AUGUST 23

New cases	38,657
New deaths	610
Total cases	4,715,771
Total deaths	102,648
New hospitalized patients	5,108
Patients in critical condition	7,695
Total recovered patients	3,961,024
Diagnostic tests conducted	27,974,949
Doses of vaccine injected	22,137,699

## GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

When this world favors somebody, it lends him the attributes, and surpassing merits of others and when it turns its face away from him it snatches away even his own excellences and fame.

**Imam Ali (AS)**

Prayer Times » Noon:13:07 Evening: 21:03 Dawn: 5:01 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 6:30 (tomorrow)

## History of art in Iran: Sassanid period



A Sassanid-era plate with king hunting rams on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

### Part 4

Beneath the standing figures on the back wall is a horseman in full armor, holding a lance and a shield. The identity of this horseman is uncertain. A royal device and a senmurv, the fantastic creature believed to be the bearer of prosperity, on his garment suggest that this is the warrior king.

An alternative suggestion is that the rider is the fravahr or genius of the king. The close relationship in form between the mounted warrior and certain monumental sculptures in the late antique world has also been observed.

Entirely new in form and design are the low relief hunting scenes carved on the side walls of the avvan of Khosrow II at Taq-e Bostan. These resemble wall paintings or mosaics rather than rock sculptures and may be stone imitations of the wall decorations in similarly shaped audience halls in Sassanid palaces.

The rock cut monument at Taq-e Bostan, the last attributable to the Sassanid period, is a magnificent expression of royal authority. The large scale figures are solid masses, the body hidden beneath heavy drapery.

A rich and elaborate style of workmanship is apparent in the treatment of the hair and dress. On the side walls similar attention is paid to minute details—the textiles, patterns, hair, and equipment of the human figures as well as the surface of the animal and landscape motifs.

It is impossible to know whether all three parts of the decoration—royal investiture, mounted warrior, and hunting panels—are contemporary in date. Differences in style and equipment may indicate that the reliefs were executed over a period of time.

A few final observations can be made concerning the Sassanid rock reliefs. It is evident that some rulers added to the reliefs of their predecessors. This is the case in Bishapur where, on the relief of Bahram I, Narseh substituted his own name in the inscription and added a dead enemy, possibly Bahram III, beneath the royal mount. It has been suggested that the relief in Darab was begun by Ardashir I and reworked into a victory monument by his son Shapur I.

Another fact is that the monuments are frequently unfinished, with some portions carved only in outline. The interruption of historical events (death, war, social upheavals) might explain this phenomenon in occasional instances.

However, the large number of reliefs with unfinished details is surprising, and it is possible that paint or some other material was originally used to complete the scenes.

### Other stone sculpture

Four busts of Narseh decorate the sides of a square tower erected by that king at Paikuli; the inscription describes his assumption of royal power. Much weathered and damaged, the busts are unique examples of a type of royal sculpture that may once have existed in greater quantity.

More unusual and much better preserved is a three times life size statue in the round of Shapur I in Bishapur, which is the only sizeable stone sculpture in

the round to have survived from Sassanid times.

The figure is carved from a natural column of stone in a grotto above the river running past the Bishapur rock reliefs. The king's informal stance, frontal but with arms bent, one hand resting on his hip, presumably placed on the hilt of a now missing sword, is without parallel in Sassanid art and reflects ultimately the influence of Greco Roman prototypes.

Another stone figure, terribly worn and mutilated (the entire lower portion is missing) was found in Taq-e Bostan. Probably this is Khosrow II, but the surface is much abraded and no details are observable.

The pose is related to that of the Bishapur statue in that the royal figure grasps his sword, but the weapon is, in this instance, centered on the body.

A Middle Persian text carved on a stone column in Bishapur mentions another statue of king Shapur I erected by Apasay, his secretary. Regrettably nothing remains of this work of art.

### Silver plate

During the long period from the end of the 4th century to the end of the 6th century, royal rock reliefs were no longer carved, perhaps because the firm establishment of the dynasty eliminated the political reasons for this type of monumental royal sculpture.

In any event, the second half of the Sassanid period, beginning with the latter part of the reign of Shapur II, is characterized by another medium of dynastic art: silver vessels with the image of the king hunting.

A few vessels with representations of nobles and princes of the royal family pursuing animal quarry precede the adoption and exclusive use of this motif by the king himself in the latter part of the 4th century.

Two examples have survived, both found west of Iran in the Caucasus and Soviet Azerbaijan.

A third plate, now lost but known through a drawing, was acquired in Afghanistan. The hunters on all three of these plates may be rulers of newly acquired realms: on the example found in the western Caucasus the inscription names Bahram, probably the son and heir apparent of Bahram I.

The earliest silver vessel with an image of a Sassanid king is also from the western part of the empire. Bahram II, his wife, and son appear on a two handled cup discovered at Zargveshi in Georgia.

The royal figures are enclosed within medallions, a form of portraiture employed by princes and nobles on silver plate of the 3rd and early 4th centuries.

Late in the 4th century, the medallion portrait was superseded on the royal court silver by the hunting scene, and this became the standard type, strictly reserved for the king of kings.

Existing evidence suggests that from the 4th century until some time in the 6th, no person other than the Sassanid king was permitted to represent himself or his family on silver vessels.

The images on the royal silver plate are stereotyped and the representations remain largely unchanged in style and form for several centuries.

Only minor variations occur in the iconography and design. Particularly distinctive is the representation of drapery in a series of short, paired lines.

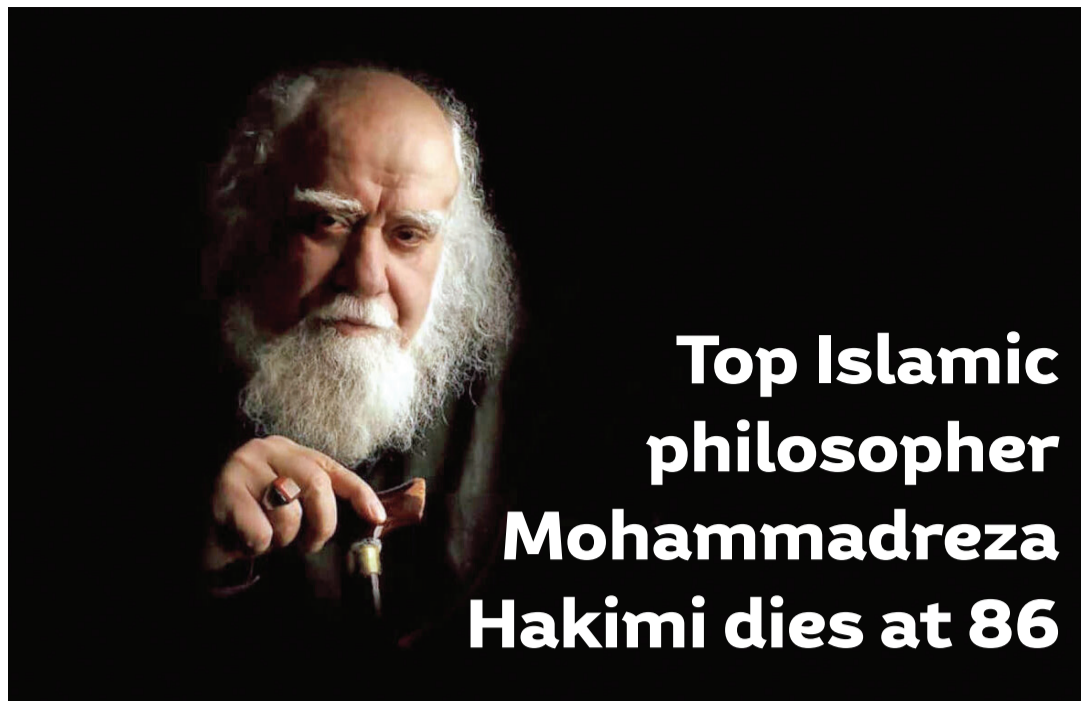
Gilding covers the figural scene or, on the latest examples, the background shell of the plate. Specific weapons are used, customarily the bow, occasionally a lasso. The compositions combine horizontal (horse and dead animals) and vertical (king and the bodies of the living quarry) elements.

In general, there is a trend from simple compositions with few figures to more elaborate arrangements in which the numbers and species of animals increases.

The date of these vessels with royal hunters is suggested in part by the appearance of the royal crown, often identifiable through a comparison with Sassanid coins.

Details of dress and equipment compared with images on securely dated monuments (reliefs, coins, seals) also provide some guidance in establishing a chronological sequence.

Source: Encyclopedia Iranica  
To be continued



Islamic philosopher Mohammadreza Hakimi in an undated photo.

## Top Islamic philosopher Mohammadreza Hakimi dies at 86

From Page 1 ► Hakimi's family confirmed his death in a statement calling him "the guardian of monotheism, justice philosopher, and the supporter of the deprived and helpless people."

In another statement published on his Instagram account, his family also wrote, "He wanted to be the horizon to slake the thirsty desert of the onlookers and nourish the hopes of the desperate."

Many cultural and political figures, including Culture Minister Seyyed Abbas Salehi and the Leader of

the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, have offered condolences over the death of Hakimi.

"I sadly received the news of the death of the learned man and great thinker, His Excellency Mr. Mohammadreza Hakimi, may God sanctify his soul," Ayatollah Khamenei wrote in his message of condolences published on Monday.

He called Hakimi "a great philosopher, skilled litterateur, innovative thinker and a pro-justice Islamologist," and added, "I offer my sincere condolences over the tragic

death of this long-standing friend to his honorable family and relatives, especially his great brother, and friends and fans; may God bless his soul."

Hakimi was born into a religious family in Mashhad, a major Iranian city, which is revered by Shia Muslims as it houses the holy shrine of Imam Reza (AS), the eighth Imam of the Shia.

His father, Abdolvahab, was respected by top businessmen in the bazaar for his honesty. Hakimi began his education in 1941. He was admitted to the Khorasan Islamic

seminary six years later, spending 20 years learning Islamic sciences from top clerics such as Seyyed Abolhassan Hafezi and Sheikh Mojtaba Qazvini.

In 1969, Grand Ayatollah Sheikh Mohammed-Mohsen Razi popularly known as Aqa Bozorge Tehrani qualified him to exercise ijihad, however, he never wore the common Muslim clerics' attire.

He wrote over 100 books and articles on Islamic issues. "Al-Hayat" ("The Life") is one of his greatest books written in Arabic in twelve volumes dating from 1974 to 2015.

This book is actually an encyclopedia of Islamic sciences, which holds a lofty place in the Islamic world.

This book, which received contributions from some other Islamic scholars, provides a deep insight into the image of Islam and Shiism. The book centers on Hakimi's views on social justice and individual freedom derived from the Holy Quran and hadiths.

Ahmad Aram has translated six volumes of the collection into Persian.

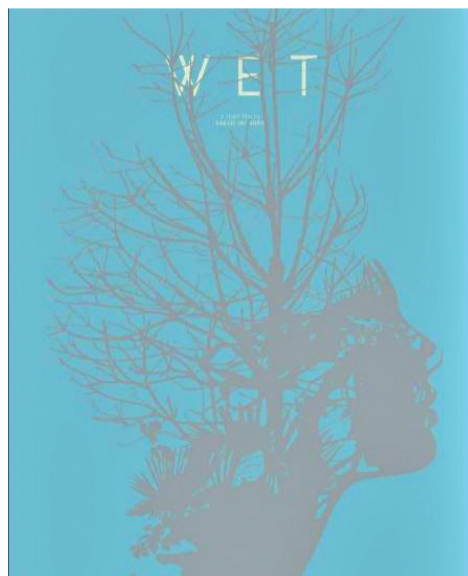
"Minus Poverty" is another book written by Hakimi, which discusses his pro-justice views of economic issues in Islam.

"Based on a hadith from Imam Sadeq (AS), if one person, just one person, lives in poverty and scarcity in a society, even if in a remote village, the society cannot be considered as an Islamic one," Hakimi had once said.

Among his credits are also "The Sun of the Occident", "Sun Interpretation", "The Red Wisdom" and "The Cry of Days".

Hakimi is scheduled to be buried in the holy shrine of Imam Reza (AS) today.

## "Wet" wins grand prize at Flickers' Rhode Island filmfest



A poster for Iranian short drama "Wet" by Saeid Jafarian.

TEHRAN – Iranian short movie "Wet" has won the Flickers' International Humanitarian Award at the 39th Flickers' Rhode Island International Film Festival in the United States.

The is a grand prize of the festival, which is given annually to films or filmmakers who inspire social change and community outreach, and strive to better the world in which we live.

Directed by Saeid Jafarian, "Wet" is about a young girl who decides to go to a forbidden party.

The winners of the festival were announced last Wednesday in Providence as the annual awards ceremony was held virtually on Zoom and Facebook Live, receiving 2,450 international views.

First prize in the Flickers' International Humanitarian Award category went to "The Heartland" directed by Marquise Mays from the United States.

Second prize was given to director Kavery Kaul's movie "The Bengali", a co-production between the United States and India.

In the feature film category, "Waikiki" directed by Christopher Kahunahana from the United States won the grand prize.

"Surdina" directed by Rodrigo Areias from Portugal won first prize, and Italian director Marco Filiberti's "Parsifal" was chosen as the runner-up.

The grand prize for best director went to Joanne Rakotoarisoa from France for "We Are Not Dead Yet", while Emmanuel Tenenbaum from France received first prize for "Free Fall", and Canadian director Anya Chirkova was honored with the runner-up award for "Flower Boy".

"The Sailor" by Lucia Kasova from Slovakia was awarded the grand prize for best feature documentary.

The documentary is about Paul Johnson who sailed the world all his life. He loved, drank and lived foolishly, never truly living on land. Now he is turning 80. He drinks a liter of vodka a day and contemplates his life, his death. What is at the end of such a journey?

First prize for best feature documentary was given to director Nadia Tass's "Oleg: The Oleg Vidov Story" co-produced by the U.S. and Australia "Blue Code of Silence", co-directed by Magnus Skatvold and Greg Mallozzi from Norway was selected as the runner-up.

## Zero Plus festival picks "Ocean behind the Window", "The Kites"

TEHRAN – Iranian movies "Ocean behind the Window" and "The Kites" will be competing in the various sections of the 8th Zero Plus (0+) International Film Festival in Siberia, Russia.

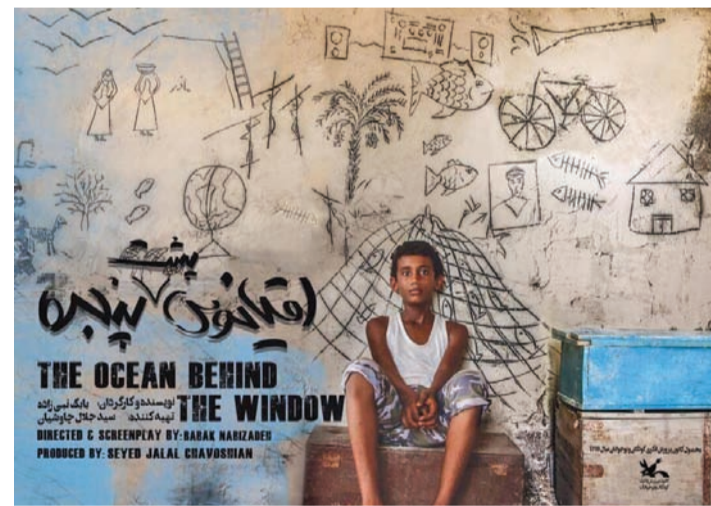
"Ocean behind the Window" by Babak Nabizadeh will be screened in the competition of feature films.

The film centers on a small and remote island where people live under hardship. Borhan is an adolescent who has made an interesting decision to help his family and to introduce the island. He collects a group, holds a carnival and performs traditional music and theater for tourists. Their lives on the island improve and more tourists come, but there is a big problem on the way.

The film was picked as best children's film at the 13th Annual Iranian Film Festival – San Francisco in 2020.

Directed by Seyyed Payam Hosseini "The Kites" is competing in the short section of the Zero Plus festival.

The film tells the story of a girl whose kite flies away along the Iraqi-Iranian



A poster for "Ocean behind the Window" by Iranian director Babak Nabizadeh.

border of Kurdistan. She calls three boys for help. However, the children are not only separated by a river, but also by the explosive legacies of past wars.

It was screened in the Generation section of the 70th edition of the Berlin International Film Festival in February and March 2020.

## "Beyond Grace's Rainbow" published in Persian

TEHRAN – Irish writer Carmel Harrington's debut novel "Beyond Grace's Rainbow" has been published in Persian.

Adash is the publisher of the novel rendered into Persian by Behnaz Sheibani.

The novel was first published on August 9, 2012 and won a Kindle Book Award and was honored as Romantic Ebook of the Year-Festival of Romance in 2013.

When Grace is diagnosed with cancer her best chance of survival is to find a bone marrow transplant from a family member.

Only Grace is adopted, and her one previous attempt to connect with her birth mother resulted in bitter disappointment.

But with her young son, Jack, to think about, and the return of her ex Liam, Jack's father, reminding her of feelings she'd thought she'd buried long ago, Grace refuses to give up hope just yet. With the help of her friends, she bravely embarks on a journey of discovery, one that will bring her from her home in vibrant Dublin to the unspoiled beauty of the picturesque Wexford coast where Grace must unravel a web of lies and deceit that has spanned over thirty years.

Harrington is from Co. Wexford, where she lives with her husband, her children and their rescue dog, George Bailey.

As an Irish Times bestseller and regular panelist on radio and TV, her warm and emotional storytelling



Front cover of the Persian translation of Carmel Harrington's debut novel "Beyond Grace's Rainbow".

has captured the hearts of readers worldwide. Her books have been translated into nine languages and have sold hundreds of thousands of copies worldwide.

Carmel's novels have been shortlisted for an Irish Book Award

in 2016 and 2017, and her debut was awarded Kindle Book of the Year and Romantic eBook of the Year in 2013.

Her credits also include "The Moon over Kilmore Quay", "My Pear-Shaped Life", "A Thousand Roads Home" and "Cold Feet: The Lost Years".