

Report



Know American-Israeli division of labor

TEHRAN — In an unexpected move, the Israeli military has launched a “highly secret” intelligence and analysis base to “monitor” Iran’s nuclear activities, Sputnik reported on Saturday, quoting the Walla news website.

The move was a part of changes undertaken by Israel in their interdisciplinary intelligence. The secret base is mainly directed towards identifying and “thwarting” moves from Tehran, especially related to Iran’s robust nuclear program.

About three months ago, Nour News agency posted a report on its website, saying that the Zionist regime has established a base in UAE to spy on Iran and to sabotage Iranian naval fleet.

On October 17, Nour News posted another report, saying that Walla’s report is confirming its previous news, and the base, is in fact established in the UAE.

Israelis have claimed that they have gathered vital information from Iran! A high-level Israeli army officer told the Walla that they have been able to gather ample information about the Iranian nuclear program. According to Walla, the base plays a key role in identifying Iranian movements in Syria and countering armed groups there. ▶ Page 2

Opinion



Persepolis far from their own style against Al Hilal

By Masoud Hossein

TEHRAN – Persepolis suffered a 3-0 loss against Al Hilal in the 2021 AFC Champions League quarters and fell far short of expectations.

Persepolis’ performance against Al Hilal was not satisfactory regarding the team’s potential and as their coach said they deserved to lose.

Persepolis’ style is usually pushing the opponents back with high pressing but in the match against Al Hilal, the Reds preferred to defend in their own half and dominant Al Hilal maintained possession of the ball as a result.

There were some tactical mistakes which allowed the hosts to put Persepolis under overwhelming pressure.

Vahid Amiri is one of Persepolis’ key players but he was very exhausted since the player was playing his third matches in nine days. Amiri played as left defender and midfielder in the matches against the UAE and Korea Republic in 2022 World Cup qualification but he was used as a forward in the match against Al Hilal.

In my opinion, he didn’t meet the expectations because the change of playing place can cause confusion for every player. ▶ Page 3

Report



Anger mounts after the sale of football club to Saudis

TEHRAN – Since the English Premier League announced their approval of a Saudi Arabian bid to buy Newcastle United Football Club, a barrage of condemnation had been poured in by Human Rights groups who are furious with the takeover.

Civil society actors have also expressed concern over what they see as the Saudi Arabian Kingdom’s attempt to “sport wash” its negative international image.

Amnesty International says ever since this deal was first talked about, “we said it represented a clear attempt by the Saudi authorities to sportswash their appalling human rights record with the glamour of top-flight football.”

“Saudi ownership of St James’ Park (Newcastle’s stadium) was always as much about image management for Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and his government, as it was about football,” adding that “the Premier League needs to understand the dynamic of sportswashing better and tighten its ownership rules.” ▶ Page 5

Iran Unveils New Negotiation Strategy



▶ Page 3

SEO hosting 13th virtual intl. forum on Islamic capital markets

TEHRAN – Iran’s Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO) is hosting the 13th Virtual International Forum on Islamic Capital Markets (ICM) during October 17-18, IRIB reported.

Over 90 guests from 26 countries are participating in the current year’s event which was opened by the SEO Head Majid Eshqi on Sunday.

Some 10 prominent foreign experts and scholars are scheduled to deliver speeches in the forum along with three lecturers from Iran.

The heads of supervisory institutions from Peru, Maldives, Syria, Montenegro as well as the CEOs of stock exchanges of the Central

African Republic and Kazakhstan are also special participants of the mentioned forum.

Given the outbreak of coronavirus and for the safety measures of all respected participants, SEO decided to hold this forum online for the second consecutive year.

The SEO has organized this event for 13 years in a row with the support of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), and Islamic Research and Training Institute (IRTI).

The theme of this year’s forum is “Global All-pervasiveness of Islamic Finance in Crisis”.

The main topics of this ICM include Islamic Capital Market and Sukuk Industry Roles in

Macro-Financial Environment; Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning in the Context of Islamic Finance; Islamic Alternative Investments: Passive Investing, PE Funds, VCs, etc.; Fintech and Islamic Capital Markets: Experiences, Innovations and Challenges; Start-Ups and SMEs Financing in the Context of Islamic Finance to remove Inflammation caused by COVID-19; Socially Responsible Investment during COVID-19 Crisis; and Crypto Assets in the Context of Islamic Capital Market: Practical and Regulatory Issues (Crypto ETFs, Platforms, ICOs, Tokenization, and Related Issues).

Mazandaran holds potential to become intl. tourist destination

TEHRAN – The northern province of Mazandaran has considerable potential to attract vacationers from around the world and become an international tourist destination.

Having a wide range of capacities and potentials, Mazandaran, which is a top destination for domestic travelers, can be turned into a destination for foreign travelers as well through careful planning, the provincial tourism chief has announced.

Given that the provincial capital of Sari has been selected to be the cultural capital of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) in 2022, there is the possibility of promoting it as a tourist destination internationally, Seifollah Farzaneh said on Sunday.

Boosting the province’s tourism infrastructure, however, requires more funding, the official added.

Earlier this month, local tourism officials announced that 214 tourism-related projects were underway in the lush green province estimated to generate more than 14,000 jobs upon their completion. ▶ Page 6



Heads of three branches of govt. hold talks on economy

TEHRAN — The heads of the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government consulted on the most pressing issues, including economic ones. The meeting, held on Saturday, was hosted by Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf.

From Inside



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Interview



Sino-U.S. military rivalry going on: Pakistani researcher

By Mohammad Mazhari

TEHRAN – A researcher at Pakistan’s Centre for Aerospace and Security Studies says that U.S. recent activities in the Asia-Pacific region suggest that a military rivalry with China is already underway.

“China does not want to concede any space to the U.S. in the South China Sea, and recent activities suggest that the military rivalry is already underway,” Ali Haider Saleem tells the Tehran Times.

“The continued support to Taiwan by Washington is a threat to Chinese sovereignty which Beijing will never compromise on.”

Last week a U.S. Special Operations unit and a contingent of Marines were secretly operating in Taiwan to train military forces.

This development has raised questions about U.S.-China military rivalry and even a possible clash.

Although many pundits say China is reluctant to engage in a military competition, the communist-run country sounds sensitive to U.S. moves in the Asia-Pacific region.

“Militarily, China has grown much stronger than many other regional countries, but it is continuing to enhance its military capabilities as it is wary of the anti-China strategy of the U.S.,” Saleem remarks. ▶ Page 5

Bill on protection of Caspian Sea biodiversity approved

TEHRAN – The Majlis (Iranian Parliament) has approved the draft Protocol for the Conservation of Biodiversity, annexed to the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea.

Implementation of this Protocol shall be affected by the Contracting Parties in accordance with their national laws, Mehr reported on Sunday.

Under the bill, the Contracting Parties shall individually or jointly take all appropriate measures to protect, and rehabilitate the marine environment of the Caspian Sea; use the natural resources of the Caspian Sea in a way that does not harm the marine environment and biological resources, and promote, protect and revitalize biodiversity with special emphasis on endangered species. ▶ Page 7

EX-Lebanese FM says Samir Geagea has mission to push Lebanon toward anarchy



TEHRAN — Former Lebanese foreign minister Adnan Mansour has castigated Lebanese Forces Party leader Samir Geagea for the bloody Thursday in Beirut, saying Geagea is seeking to push Lebanon to the verge of collapse and anarchy.

Snipers loyal to Geagea fired on people who were peacefully protesting against the judge investigating blast at the port of Beirut happened in August 2020.

Mansour also said Geagea is not “the representative of the Lebanese people and he enjoys no support among the Lebanese.”

The former senior diplomat said Geagea has a “destructive plan for Lebanon and he does not want Lebanon to live in clam.”

Geagea’s record is “full of assassinations and bloodshed, and the Lebanese government should not allow him to make adventures, he pointed out.

The deadly Thursday shooting came shortly after Hezbollah took practical measures to lessens the pains of the Lebanese people through importing fuel from Iran and relative stability had returned to Lebanon with the election of Najib Mikati as prime minister.

He said the judge investigating the blast is politicizing the issue, adding the Lebanese judicial system is unfortunately politicized.

The Lebanese judicial system should have independence, he said, adding influence on the Judiciary prevents it to issue fair rulings and this does not benefit Lebanon.

“In such an environment one cannot expect fair decisions.”

The former chief diplomat said though investigations have not reached a conclusion, some political groups are seeking to accuse one side for the explosion without presenting evidence.

Mansour also said remarks by American officials and Congress members also show that the United States embassy in Beirut has a role in the Thursday tragic shootings.

“However, Lebanon will not enter into civil war,” the former diplomat assured.

The former foreign minister went on to say that studies about the port explosion should be “transparent.”

The Lebanese seek an investigation of the

port incident far from political motivations, Mansour insisted.

He said political approach toward the port incident prompted negative reactions by the people but snipers fired at them.

He added Lebanon is caught in difficult and dangerous situation.

Lebanon is already in crisis resulting from the U.S. sanctions and bitter political infighting. The value of national currency has sharply decreased and the country is facing tough fuel crisis and power outages.

In a commentary published on Saturday, the Tehran Times said Lebanon took another step closer to a devastating civil war after militants affiliated with firebrand politician Geagea opened fire on peaceful demonstrators protesting against the judge whom they accuse of using blast at Beirut port to politically target Hezbollah and its allies.

The episode began when Tarek Bitar, the judge who leads the investigation into the Beirut port blast, started to issue subpoenas for some Lebanese politicians to interrogate them about the explosion which razed the port to the ground. These politicians accused the judge of exploiting his mandate as a tool to target and discredit them.

Hezbollah Secretary General Sayed Hassan Nasrallah warned about the Bitar-led investigation going astray. In a recent televised speech, the secretary openly cautioned that Bitar is misusing the investigation and that his efforts will lead nowhere.

“We said from the beginning that we wanted to investigate the explosion of Beirut Port, and I say honestly if the families of the martyrs and the wounded abandon the investigation, we do not abandon it, and we consider that we are among those who have been morally, politically and media-affected,” Nasrallah said, adding, “The current judge, instead of learning from all the mistakes of the previous judge, on the contrary, completed these mistakes. And he went even further.”

Underlining that Bitar is politically motivated and has nothing to do with justice, the Hezbollah chief told the families of the victims, “You will not reach justice with Judge Bitar, who engages in politics and uses blood to serve political targets.”

TEHRAN — The spokesman for the presiding board of the Iranian Parliament announced on Sunday that Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian will soon appoint 35 commercial attachés in line with efforts to promote economic diplomacy.

“Soon 35 Commercial attachés will be appointed by the foreign minister and all efforts are made to form active economic diplomacy,” Seyyed Nezam Mousavi told reporters after a closed session of the parliament with the foreign minister in which a range of other issues were raised.

Pointing to the foreign minister’s explanations regarding the measures taken to strengthen economic diplomacy, Mousavi said, “Using the capacity of diplomacy to pursue economic issues has been one of our most important demands.”

Mousavi went on to say that the foreign minister explained the steps taken to activate economic diplomacy with neighboring countries, especially in Asia as well as Africa and Latin America.

The MP also pointed to other issues discussed at the closed session with Abdollahian.

“In recent months and weeks, in the region of West Asia, and especially in the neighborhood of Iran, many developments and events have taken place that are important both from the point of view of the people and from foreign policy’s perspective,” Fars quoted the MP as saying.

Therefore, he said, the foreign minister was invited to present to the closed session of the parliament to present a general analysis of the developments that have taken place and the actions of the diplomatic apparatus in the face of these developments.

The MP added, “We witnessed parliamentary elections in Iraq, which will naturally elect a new government; and in Afghanistan we also saw a change of government.”

The United States and the Zionist regime have also been pursuing movements in the region based on their strategic plans, the parliamentarian said.

FM to name commercial attachés to enhance economic diplomacy



“On the other hand, a series of developments took place in the northwestern region of the country, which became a kind of threat to Iran’s borders. In all these cases, the representatives raised questions and the Minister of Foreign Affairs Amir Abdollahian gave detailed explanations.”

Mousavi was openly referring to the problems created by the Republic of Azerbaijan for Iranian trucks transporting goods to Armenia and accusations made against Iran by Azeri President Ilham Aliyev.

Mousavi said Iran witnessed formation of an implicit threat to its borders, which the Foreign Minister presented a comprehensive and strategic analysis in this regard.

Regarding the measures of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in response to these developments, detailed explanations were provided and finally it was decided that the parliament in general and the National Security Committee and the Foreign Policy Committee in particular to follow the developments more closely and the foreign ministry submit a report in this regard so that the parliament takes necessary measures, Mousavi reiterated.

The MP from the Tehran constituency added: “With the coordina-

tion of the administration and other bodies, measures will be taken that serve our national interests. What is important is that the Islamic Republic of Iran and the diplomatic apparatus closely monitor the issues in the region and have full control over the developments of the enemy, especially the Zionist regime.”

Iran has been advising the Republic of Azerbaijan that it favors close ties with Baku and warned it not to be trapped by Israel which is seeking to undermine ties between Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan.

“Iran’s defensive positions are quite clear and we will not allow our enemies to harm the interests of the Islamic Republic in the face of these developments,” the MP stated, adding the approach of Iran to the developments in the region is to create stability and security.

“We believe that the people and governments of the region themselves must manage their issues and that foreign powers have no right to intervene. The Islamic Republic of Iran is actively pursuing its diplomacy.”

The parliamentarian went on to say, “We have witnessed some issues between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia, and certainly instability and

insecurity in these countries and the conflict between them will have consequences for Iran.”

During this period, some baseless rhetoric and remarks raised by the leaders and the Republic of Azerbaijan against the Islamic Republic, which were answered both politically and in the form of military exercises, the MP stated.

The Iranian military held military exercises in northwest to send the message that it is determined to protect its interests.

Iran’s intention vis-a-vis its neighbors is interaction, Mousavi highlighted, but the fact that foreign powers, especially the Zionist regime, want to intervene and pursue a project around Iran is not acceptable, and the necessary response will be given through both the diplomatic channel and the armed forces.

The parliamentarian also said issues related to the 2015 nuclear deal were discussed with the chief diplomat, stressing, “The nuclear issue is very important for both the public opinion and the representatives. In this meeting, there were discussions about what our approach will be in the future.”

The parliamentarians’ meeting with the foreign minister took place as Iran is analyzing approaches how to resume the stalled Vienna talks for a possible revival of the nuclear agreement.

Regarding the nuclear issue, Iran has followed different models to date, Mousavi said.

In a period, Tehran negotiated with only three European countries as intermediary and later in the form of the P5+1 negotiations, which led to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Mousavi stated.

What model to pursue in the negotiations now requires analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of previous models and choosing a model that serves Iran’s interests, the MP underscored, noting certainly this model will be determined with the consultation between of the administration, the parliament, the Supreme National Security Council and all related departments.

Top Iranian diplomats discuss JCPOA with Austrian official

TEHRAN — Secretary General of the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Peter Launsky, who was in Tehran for the fifth round of political talks with Iran, met with Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian as well as Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Ali Bagheri.

In his first meeting, Abdollahian called the ties between the Islamic Republic and Austria age-old and said, “We attach great importance to these relations.”

Abdollahian expressed hope for increased economic and trade cooperation between the two countries. He also appreciated the donation of vaccine by Austria and called for more cooperation with Vienna on the Covid pandemic and vaccine.

The Iranian foreign minister called on the European Union to adopt a more responsible

approach to the rights of displaced Afghans and condemned the terrorist attacks in recent weeks in Afghanistan. The Iranian foreign minister also described the rise of ISIS and Takfiri terror groups in Afghanistan as “dangerous.”

For his part, Launsky praised the friendly relations between his country and Iran and expressed hope that the Iran nuclear deal will be revived with the cooperation of all parties.

He also condemned the recent terrorist acts in Afghanistan, noting that Iran and Austria share common concerns about ISIS terrorists.

He also stressed Austria’s support for meetings of Afghanistan’s neighbors to resolve the country’s problems.

Launsky and Baqeri discuss JCPOA developments

The fifth round of political talks between Iran and Austria was held on Saturday in Tehran. The meeting was chaired by Bagheri and Launsky.

Bagheri referred to the long history of relations between Tehran and Vienna, saying that it is a valuable asset for bilateral ties.

He also spoke of regional issues. He touched on the latest developments in Yemen and Afghanistan, as well as Iran’s efforts to help reduce the problems in those countries and said the Yemeni people have been under the most severe military attacks for nearly seven years and, from a humanitarian point of view, European countries are expected to take serious action to put an end to the ongoing catastrophes in the country.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Know American-Israeli division of labor

From page 1 ► On the sidelines of the unveiling “secret” military base, Israel Foreign Minister Yair Lapid on Wednesday warned Iran of using the army to force stop nuclear developments. Speaking at a press conference in Washington, Lapid asserted, “Iran has publicly stated it wants to wipe us out. We have no intention of letting (that) happen,” Foreign Policy reported. It is to be noted that the press event was held to mark the first anniversary of the Abraham Accords, the treaty which “normalized” relations between Israel and some Arab states.

The CIA on October 7 announced new “adjustments” to its organizational structure and approach, which include two new mission centers, one of which is solely focused on China.

Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Director William Burns made the moves open in a statement from the agency. The agency claimed that the adjustments would position the CIA to address current and future national security challenges.

The latest moves also include shutting down mission centers focusing on Iran and North Korea, which former CIA Director Mike Pompeo, (also known as Mr. Liar, cheater, and stealer) created. According to the New York Times, the two centers will now be pushed back into the regional centers for the Middle East and East Asia.

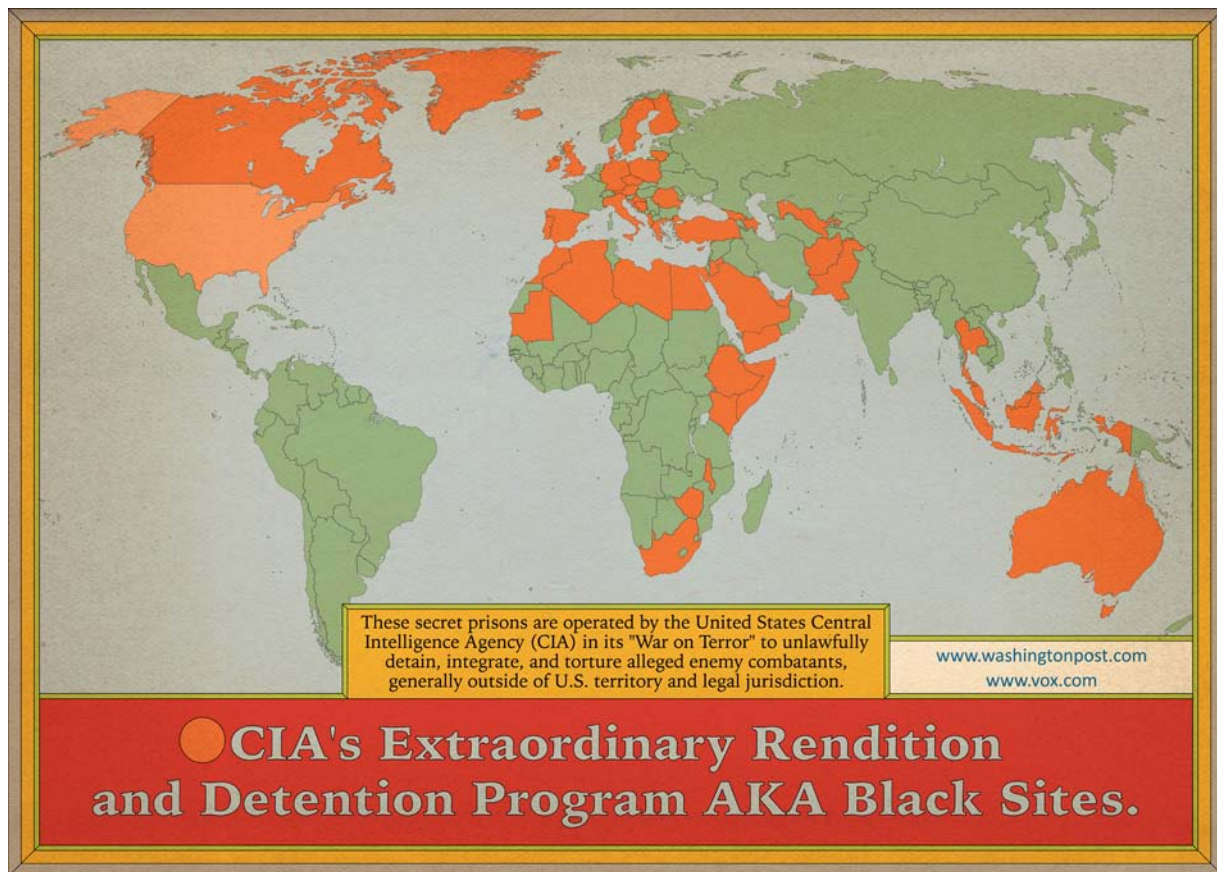
In the CIA statement Thursday, Burns said that the agency would continue “to focus sharply on other important threats,” including Russia, North Korea and Iran.

The two moves are completely in line with one another, as Israel is now playing a more prominent role in Washington’s policies. Yet, the story began when Donald Trump introduced the Israeli regime as one of the areas CENTCOM must cover. The new Israeli Prime Minister, Naftali Bennett, knows the game better than his predecessor. He has employed a whole other strategy to cripple Iran: Kill Iran slowly, with one thousand knife wounds. Part of this strategy is being reflected

in what one can now spot in Azerbaijan. The Iran-Azerbaijan conflict is something that can be simply solved in a peaceful and diplomatic atmosphere. Yet, involvements from the United States and Israel and the dangerous traps they have set for Azeri President Ilham Aliyev, have turned this issue into a tight knot.

The second part of this complex and multi-layered strategy is being revealed now. The division of labor between the United States and the Zionist regime in spying on Iran. First, the CIA dissolves its Iran desk, trying to portray itself as the good cop. Then, they get into media games, saying that this move signals the United States’ goodwill to return to the nuclear deal negotiations in Vienna.

There is no need to mention that Iran knows how to deal with these kinds of threats and strategies during the last 42 years. Over time, the U.S. and Israeli weapons have changed and grown more sophisticated, but so has Iranian defensive strategies.



Iran unveils new negotiation strategy

TEHRAN – While the West is pressuring Iran for a return to the Vienna nuclear talks, the top Iranian diplomat unveiled a new strategy on the talks that could reset the whole negotiation process.

The Iranian parliament held a closed meeting on Sunday at which Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian briefed the lawmakers on a variety of pressing issues including the situation around the stalled nuclear talks between Iran and world powers over reviving the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

The Iranian foreign ministry didn't give any details about the session, but some lawmakers offered an important glimpse into the assessment Abdollahian gave to the parliament.

According to these lawmakers, the Iranian foreign ministry addressed many issues ranging from tensions with Azerbaijan to the latest developments in Iranian-Western relations especially with regard to the JCPOA.

On Azerbaijan, Abdollahian has warned Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev against falling into the trap set by Israel, according to Alireza Salimi, a member of the Iranian Parliament's presiding board who attended the meeting. Salimi also said that the Iranian foreign minister urged Aliyev to not implicate himself in the "Americans'



complexed scheme."

In addition to Azerbaijan, Abdollahian also addressed the current state of play between Iran and the West regarding the JCPOA.

"Regarding the nuclear talks, the foreign minister explicitly stated that the policy of the Islamic Republic is action for action, and that the Americans must show goodwill and honesty," Salimi told Fars News on Sunday.

The remarks were in line with Iran's oft-repeated stance on the JCPOA negotiations. What's new is that the foreign minister determined Iran's agenda for talks after they resume.

Salimi quoted Abdollahian as underlining that the United States "must certainly take serious action before the negotiations."

In addition, the Iranian foreign minister said that Tehran intends to

negotiate over what happened since former U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew the U.S. from the JCPOA, not other issues.

By expanding the scope of negotiations, Abdollahian is highly likely to strike a raw nerve in the West. His emphasis on the need to address the developments ensuing the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA in May 2018 could signal that the new government of President Ayatollah Seyed Ebrahim Raisi is not going to pick up where the previous government left.

This has been a major concern in European diplomatic circles in the wake of the change of administrations in Iran. In fact, the Europeans and the Biden administration have been, and continue to be, worried about two things in the aftermath of Ayatollah Raisi taking the reins in Tehran; one is he refusing to accept the progress made during six

rounds of talks under his predecessor Hassan Rouhani. Second, the possibility that the new government of Ayatollah Raisi would refuse to return to Vienna within a certain period of time.

With Abdollahian speaking of negotiation over developments since Trump's withdrawal, it seems that the Europeans will have to pray that their concerns would not come true.

Of course, the Iranian foreign ministry has not yet announced that how it would deal with a resumed negotiation. But the European are obviously concerned. Before his recent visit to Tehran to encourage it into returning to Vienna, Deputy Director of the EU Action Service Enrique Mora underlined the need to prick up talks where they left in June, when the last round of nuclear talks was concluded with no agreement.

"Travelling to Tehran where I will meet my counterpart at a critical point in time. As coordinator of the JCPOA, I will raise the urgency to resume #JCPOA negotiations in Vienna. Crucial to pick up talks from where we left last June to continue diplomatic work," Mora said on Twitter.

Mora failed to obtain a solid commitment from his interlocutors in Tehran on a specific date to resume the Vienna talk, though Iran told him that it will continue talks with the European Union in the next two weeks.

SPORTS

Persepolis far from their own style against Al Hilal

From Page 1 ► Furthermore, iconic attacking midfielder Mehdi Torabi, who was supposed to shine in this match, was completely disarmed by Al Hilal midfielders and defenders. They had neutralized Torabi's threat in the left flank.

Finally, I believe that Persepolis were derailed by their own mistakes. No matter what result is, the matter is they fell far short of expectations. They could have played more satisfactory at least regarding their strengths in the midfield and defensive lines. The gap between the two areas let Al Hilal to make goalscoring chances for their forwards on and on.

The win means Al Hilal set up a heated Riyadh Derby in the semi-finals, as they face arch rivals Al Nassr on Tuesday for a place in the 2021 AFC Champions League final.

Persepolis have to learn lessons from their awful display. And life goes on.

Persepolis come short against Al Hilal in 2021 ACL quarters

TEHRAN – Al Hilal SFC reached the semi-finals of the 2021 AFC Champions League after defeating Iran's Persepolis FC 3-0 at Prince Faisal bin Fahd Stadium on Saturday.

Al Hilal dominated throughout and controlled the possession of the match.

The scoring was opened on 27 minutes by Saudi Arabia international Salem Al Dawsari, who received a long ball from Mohammed Kanno on the left flank, cut inside while taking on a few players, before lashing out a well-placed shot to Hamed Lak's top corner, with the Iranian flying at full body length but still unable to make the save.

Just five minutes into the second period of play, Frenchman Bafetimbi Gomis doubled Al Hilal's lead after Pereira found space on the flank and intelligently played a low cross to the former Swansea City striker, who was waiting on the shoulder of the last defender and comfortably tapped in past Lak to make it 2-0.

Gomis added Al Hilal's third of the night with 20 minutes of play left, after a beautiful string of passes weaved through the Persepolis backline by Pereira and Al Dawsari, the latter cutting back the ball for Gomis' sixth goal of the campaign.

The win means Al Hilal set up a heated Riyadh Derby in the semi-finals, as they face arch rivals Al Nassr on Tuesday for a place in the 2021 AFC Champions League final.

Al Hilal deserved to beat us: Golmohammadi

TEHRAN – Persepolis football team head coach Yahya Golmohammadi says that Al Hilal deserved to defeat them.

The Saudi Arabia's giants defeated Iran champions 3-0 in Riyadh in the 2021 AFC Champions League quarterfinals Saturday night.

Salem Al-Dawsari scored in the first half and Bafetimbi Gomis made a brace in the second half.

"There is no excuse and I take responsibility for the defeat. I apologize to our fans," Golmohammadi said in the post-match news conference.

"Al Hilal played ahead of their fans and put us under pressure. They are a dangerous team when they attack and deserved to win the match," he added.

"We also had chances in this match but our strikers lacked the cutting edge. I am not satisfied with the way we played.

"I don't want to talk about our problems but we cannot sign foreign players due to financial difficulties. Persepolis are not comparable with Al Hilal and other Arabian teams since our team suffer from lack of adequate Infrastructure," Golmohammadi said.

Iran to take part at Qatar handball tournament

TEHRAN – Iran national handball team will take part in four-team Qatar handball tournament.

The tournament will be held in Doha from October 31 to November 6.

Qatar, Iran, Kuwait and Saudi Arabi will participate in the event.

Iran prepare for the 2022 Asian Men's Handball Championship which is scheduled to be held from January 18 to 31, 2022 in Dammam, Saudi Arabia.

Iran are leading by Spanish coach Montoya Montoya Fernandez since July.

Iran's Nazarian appointed head of FIS Development Program

TEHRAN – Iran's Ski Federation president Abbas Nazarian was appointed as head of Working Group for the Development Program of the International Ski Federation (FIS).

The head of the International Ski Federation (FIS), Johan Eliasch, had appointed Nazarian as a Working Group member for the Development Program of FIS in July.

This is the first time an Iranian was chosen for the post.

The Ski Development Program (SDP) members are directly appointed by the head of FIS.

Nazarian was elected as head of Iran ski federation in July.

Jardim hails 'fantastic' Al Hilal

TEHRAN – Al Hilal SFC head coach Leonardo Jardim hailed his side's display as they brushed aside Persepolis FC 3-0 to reach the 2021 AFC Champions League semi-finals on Saturday.

A second-half brace from Bafetimbi Gomis added to Salem Al Dawsari's fine strike in the first half to help the 2019 champions set up a clash with domestic rivals Al Nassr on Tuesday with a place in the final at stake.

"We played a fantastic game. Other than the three goals, we were in full control and that was our objective before the match," said Jardim.

"At a club like Al Hilal should always have a full stadium. I want every game to be like this, just like Liverpool and other big teams. I want to see this happen here at Al Hilal in the future."

Al Hilal had to make do without the services of Saudi international left-back Yasser Al Shahrani who suffered an injury earlier in the month, and Emanuel offered an update.

"We will look at the situation of Yasser [Al Shahrani] over the next couple of days and assess his condition, this game came too early for him but the most important thing is whoever starts the next game should be able to give 100%."

The former Monaco head coach was excited with the prospect of meeting their arch rivals in what would be his first Riyadh Derby since taking over in the summer.

"It will be a game between the two big teams in Riyadh. The most important thing is the players, not the coaches. We believe that recovery is the most important factor so we go into the next game fully prepared. Our objective is to reach the final," the Portuguese added.

MP says Azeri president's remarks are against good neighborliness

TEHRAN — Mahmoud Abbaszadeh Meshkini, the spokesman for the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee of the Iranian Parliament, has reacted to the recent remarks by Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev.

On Friday, Aliyev accused Iran and Armenia of were using Azerbaijan's territory for drug trafficking, prompting swift rebuttals from both neighbors.

"After restoring its 130-kilometer border with Iran, which was under Armenian control for 30 years, Azerbaijan stopped the illegal trafficking of narcotics from Iran to Armenia and on to Europe through Azerbaijan's Jebail district," Aliyev claimed during a virtual summit of former Soviet republics.

"Armenia and Iran conspired to use Azerbaijan's occupied territories to traffic drugs to Europe," he charged without producing any proof of his allegations.

In an interview with Tasnim published on Saturday, Meshkini reacted to Aliyev's claims, saying: "The efforts of the Islamic Republic of Iran against drug trafficking

are unique in the world. Otherwise, the entire Europe and the Caucasus would suffer the consequences of drugs."

Stating that Iran has lost thousands of security forces in the fight against drug traffickers, the MP underscored that some remarks by Aliyev are against the good neighborliness.

He suggested that there should be no gap between the two Muslim nations.

Abbaszadeh Meshkini, the representative of Meshkinshahr in the parliament, said unfortunately the ill-wishers of the two Muslim nations were looking to create a rift between the two Islamic countries and their neighbors.

"Iran is at the forefront of the fight against drug trafficking," he said, adding even severe criminal laws are being enforced in Iran in the campaign against drug trafficking.

Stating that abuse and trafficking of narcotics is forbidden based on the religious fatwas of the Leader

of the Islamic Revolution, the MP said it seems that Aliyev has been given false information in this regard.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinian denied the allegations raised by the Azeri president when he addressed the summit from Yerevan.

"I want to point out that we have been very closely cooperating with Iran's law-enforcement bodies and very productively fighting against drug trafficking," said Pashinian.

Iran rejected Aliyev's "astonishing" claims in stronger terms. The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman, Saeed Khatibzadeh, said that they serve Israel's geopolitical interests and will further damage Azerbaijan-Iran relations.

In written comments released by the ministry, Khatibzadeh said that Baku is sticking to "baseless statements" despite privately sending "positive messages" to Tehran.

The Islamic Republic will respond to that accordingly, he said.

Nigerien FM congratulates Amir Abdollahian

TEHRAN — Nigerien Foreign Minister Hassoumi Massaoudou has congratulated Iran's top diplomat Hossein Amir Abdollahian on his appointment to the post, the Iranian foreign ministry said.

In a message, Massaoudou wished Amir Abdollahian success as Iran's new foreign minister. The Nigerian foreign minister described Niger-Iran ties as excellent and said his country is ready to strengthen bilateral and multilateral cooperation on international issues of mutual interest.

Earlier last month, Abdollahian received many congratulatory messages and calls from his counterparts and other foreign officials for becoming the new foreign minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The latest message came amid a flurry of diplomatic efforts by Iran and the West to overcome differences over when to resume the stalled Vienna nuclear talks on possibly reviving a 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

On Saturday, Abdollahian met with Secretary General of the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Peter Lausky as part of

the fifth round of political talks between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Austria.

Lausky praised the friendly relations between his country and Iran and expressed hope that the Iran nuclear deal will be revived with the cooperation of all parties.

Earlier, the Austrian diplomat met Ali Bagheri, Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs. During the meeting, Bagheri underlined Tehran's compliance with its commitments under the JCPOA. He added that Europe did not quit the agreement after the withdrawal of the United States, but did not take effective and practical action within the framework of its commitments under the JCPOA.

Lausky also underscored the antiquity of the Iran-Austria relations, noting that mutual respect and understanding have institutionalized the will of the two nations to cooperate with each other.

The Secretary General of the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs also pointed to the significant potential in economic relations between Tehran and Vienna and underlined the willingness of Austrian companies to be present in the Iranian market.

Irani as stating.

The senior military official added: "With this timely action of the army commandos, these two tankers safely passed through the Gulf of Aden, and now domestic ships and ships of other countries are passing through this area in complete safety."

President Raisi to address the nation on Monday night

TEHRAN — Iranian President Ayatollah Seyed Ebrahim Raisi will address the Iranian people via state TV on Monday night, Iran's state news Agency IRNA reported on Sunday.

This will be the second televised speech delivered by Ayatollah Raisi since taking office in August. In the live TV speech, the president will talk to the people about the important issues of the country as well as the plans of the 13th government to solve the problems, according to IRNA.

The Iranian president has been very attentive to the role media outlets, particularly those run by the state, can play in creating hope among the people. He underlined this during his recent meeting with Peyman Jebelli, the Chief of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB).

Referring to the important role of the IRIB as a national media outlet in explaining the issues and problems of the people and expressing the views of the country's officials, the president said, "The Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting should be a

bridge between the government and other officials of the country and the people."

Emphasizing the three important points of accuracy, speed and honesty in informing and explaining the work, achievements and performance of managers and officials, Ayatollah Raisi added, "The result of this performance and joint cooperation between the government and the TV should create hope in the people."

Raisi officials also called for close cooperation with the media. In September, Raisi's chief of staff Gholam-Hossein Esmaili said media outlets play a unique role in shaping the culture and mind of society.

Underlining the importance of media in the face of enemies, Esmaili said the enemies has focused their psychological operations on creating despair among the Iranian people.

Esmaili said the people's trust in government has been damaged and that media should repair the trust by creating attractive and creative content.

Pirate attack on Iranian trade fleet in Gulf of Aden repelled

TEHRAN - The Iranian Navy commander announced on Saturday that in a successful operation the commandos of the 78th Navy Fleet repelled pirate attack on the Iranian trade fleet in the Gulf of Aden.

"The 78th Naval Fleet of the Islamic Republic Army, consisting of the Alborz destroyer, while escorting

two Iranian oil tankers on Saturday morning, was attacked by 5 pirate boats, which in fact we call 'maritime terrorism'. The commandos of this fleet acted quickly and their warning caused the attacking boats to be forced to leave the scene and their attack was repelled," IRNA quoted Rear Admiral Shahram

ICCIMA board of representatives hold talks with industry minister



TEHRAN – The 17th meeting of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) board of representatives was held on Sunday in the presence of the Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister Reza Fatemi Amin, the ICCIMA portal reported.

At this meeting, which was chaired by the ICCIMA Head Gholam-Hossein Shafeie, the representatives of the country's private sector raised concerns and problems related to the industry, mining, and trade sectors and offered some solutions in favor of the Industry Ministry to consider.

Speaking in the meeting, Shafeie enumerated some of the country's economic problems, and said: "The private sector expects the new government to reduce the costs that are imposed on this sector in various ways."

"Preventing unprofessional decisions which are made without consulting experts and considering the private sector views, and facilitating production by reducing transaction costs are some of the main issues that the private sector expects to be considered in this government," Shafeie stressed.

Govt. encourages private sector to participate in economic decision-making

In another meeting held by the ICCIMA's Business Environment Improvement Committee, the mentioned committee encouraged the private sector to participate in the government's economic decision-making and provide it with new theories to improve the country's economy.

During the mentioned meeting, an ICCIMA's proposal on the ways to engage the private sector in the country's economic decision-making

was reviewed and the suggestions provided in it were approved.

Accordingly, the implementation of the mentioned proposal, which has been prepared by the ICCIMA Research Center, was put on the agenda, and cooperation between the chambers of commerce, guilds, and cooperatives was emphasized in doing so.

The members of the ICCIMA Industry and Mining Committee also held a meeting on Saturday to discuss the improvement of the performance of the country's industrial sector in both domestic and export markets.

Chaired by Alireza Kolahi Samadi, the head of the mentioned committee, the meeting was mainly focused on ways to supply raw materials for export-oriented production units and also setting energy carrier prices for such industrial units.

During this meeting, the attendees stressed the need for the government to provide more incentives for the country's industrial sector and noted that the government should remove some raw material items from the list of value-added tax exemptions and allocated the resulted tax revenues for providing incentives for exporters.

"One of our programs is to finalize the list of raw materials that should be excluded from value-added tax exemptions. This is an effective and necessary step, and our goal is to persuade the government to allocate at least one-third of the resulted tax income, which we estimate to be in about \$15 billion, to provide incentives to industrial units," Kolahi Samadi said in the meeting.

Company, and Barekat Pharmaceutical Group were the most widely followed ones.

Capital market analyst, Soheil Kolahchi, believes the stock market is going to be able to compete with other parallel markets for bringing positive returns to investors in the second half of the current Iranian calendar year (September 22, 2021-March 20, 2022), IRNA reported.

Stating that the stock market can be one of the suitable markets for investment in the second half of the year, Kolahchi said: "The capital market can provide an acceptable return to shareholders and experience good growth compared to other parallel markets by the end of the year."

TEDPIX drops 1,300 points on Sunday

TEHRAN- TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), lost 1,398 points to 1,436 million on Sunday.

As reported, over 5.888 billion securities worth 43.85 trillion rials (about \$1.044 billion) were traded at the TSE.

The first market's index rose 398 points, but the second market's index dropped 7,237 points.

TEDPIX fell 6.5 percent in the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday).

The index lost 91,000 points to close at 1.397 million.

During the past week, the indices of Social Security Investment Company, Bandar Abbas Refinery, Isfahan Refining Company, Sepid Makian

Commodities worth over \$460m traded at IME in a week

TEHRAN- During the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday), 1.817 million tons of commodities worth \$464 million was traded at Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME), showing 13 percent growth.

As reported by the IME's Public Relations and International Affairs Department, the exchange experienced trade of 1.323 million tons of commodities valued at more than \$217 million on its metals and mineral trading floor.

On this floor the IME sold 980,520 tons of cement, 184,807 tons of steel, 11,325 tons of copper, 6,725 tons of aluminum, 15 tons of precious metals concentrate, 4,050 tons of zinc, 135,000 tons of iron ore, 2,000 tons of coke, 20 kg of gold bars and 2,500 tons of sponge iron.

Furthermore, the IME saw trade 484,132 tons of commodities on both domestic and export pits of its oil and petrochemical trading floor valued at almost \$236 million.

Commodities sold on this floor included 211,000 tons of vacuum bottom, 104,000 tons of bitumen, 75,393 tons of

polymeric products, 33,935 tons of chemicals, 33,500 tons of lube cut, 4,989 tons of base oil, 500 tons of slops wax, 105 tons of insutation and 20,800 tons of sulfur.

It's worth noting that the IME witnessed trade of 400 kg of saffron on its agricultural trading floor.

Last but not least was the IME's side market with 9,611 tons of commodities traded on it.

As previously reported, the value of trades in Iran Mercantile Exchange rose 50 percent in the sixth Iranian calendar month Shahrivar (ended on September 22), as compared to its previous month.

More than 8.062 million tons of commodities worth \$2.013 billion was traded at the exchange in the mentioned month, showing also 70 percent growth in terms of weight.

The IME sold on its metals and minerals trading floor 6.018 million tons of commodities worth more than \$997 million.

Commodities traded on this floor in-

cluded 1.050 million tons of steel, 4.649 million tons of cement, 19,180 tons of copper, 720 tons of molybdenum concentrate, 84 tons of precious metals concentrate, 28,010 tons of aluminum, 250,000 tons of iron ore, 16,820 tons of zinc, 400 tons of coke, 31,000 tons of sponge iron and 108 kg of gold bars.

Furthermore, the exchange saw on both domestic and export pits of its oil and petrochemical trading floor, trade of 2.004 million tons of commodities valued at more than \$985 million.

The IME's customers purchased on this floor 521,024 tons of bitumen, 417,787 tons of polymeric products, 163,169 tons of chemicals, 17,029 tons of base oil, 3,500 tons of slops wax and 643,000 tons of vacuum bottom.

Moreover, the IME sold on the same floor 34,645 tons of sulfur, 1,610 tons of insulation and 194,000 tons of lube cut.

It's worth noting that there was also 860 kg of saffron traded on the agricultural trading floor.

H1 trade with neighbors rises 52% yr/yr

TEHRAN – The value of Iran's non-oil trade with its 15 neighbors reached \$22.588 billion in the first six months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-September 22) to register a 52 percent rise year on year, the spokesman of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) announced.

The Islamic Republic traded over 47.222 million tons of commodities with the neighboring countries in the mentioned year, IRIB quoted Ruhollah Latifi as saying on Sunday.

According to the official, the volume of the traded goods in the mentioned period also increased by 37 percent compared to the figure for the previous year's same six months.

Iran traded a total of 79.104 million tons of non-oil products worth \$44.926 billion with its trade partners in the mentioned six months, he stated.

Trade with neighboring coun-



tries in the first half of the year accounted for 60 percent and 50 percent of the country's total non-oil trade during the said period, in terms of weight and value, respectively.

The country exported over 36.087 million tons of non-oil goods worth more than \$11.218 billion to the neighboring countries in the period under review, while importing more than 19.138 million tons of goods worth over

\$11.369 billion.

Iraq was Iran's top export destination by importing \$3.840 billion worth of commodities from the Islamic Republic, while the lowest volume of exports was made to Saudi Arabia with only \$39,000, according to Latifi.

After Iraq, the main export destinations for Iranian products and goods were Turkey, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

On the other hand, the highest volume of Iran's imports from neighboring countries was made from the UAE with \$7.305 billion, followed by Turkey, Russia, Iraq, and Oman.

Increasing non-oil exports to the neighboring countries is one of the major plans that the Iranian government has been pursuing in recent years.

Iran shares land or water borders with 15 countries namely UAE, Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Kazakhstan, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Russia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, and Saudi Arabia.

According to IRICA, Iran currently exports non-oil commodities to 40 European countries, 21 Asian countries, 28 African countries, and 12 American countries, while importing from 41 European countries, 31 Asian countries, 12 American countries, and 11 countries in Africa.

Nearly 10m tons of steel ingots produced in 6 months

TEHRAN – Iran's major steel producers have managed to produce over 9.901 million tons of steel ingots in the first half of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-September 22), registering a 12-percent decline year on year.

Among the country's top steel producers, Mobarakeh Steel Company had the best performance in the said period. The company produced 4.406 million tons of the mentioned product.

The mentioned producers produced 1.622 million tons of steel ingots in the sixth month, with 19 percent fall as compared to the same month of the past year.

Major Iranian steel producers had produced over 22.54 million tons of steel ingots in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20), registering an eight percent rise year on year.

The said companies produced over 2.04 million tons of steel ingots in the last month of the previous year (February 19-March 20), 17 percent more than the figure for the same month in the preceding year.

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

After the withdrawal of the United States from Iran's nuclear deal, the Islamic Republic has faced sanctions in various industries, including steel sector.

The United States has sanctioned entities and individuals associated with Iran's steel industry.

In early January, the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) added twelve Iranian producers of steel and other metal products to the list of sanctions.

However, at that time, the U.S. experts said



that the Islamic Republic of Iran had resisted the so-called U.S. maximum pressure policy for the past three years, and the Trump administration had failed to achieve any of its goals in the face of sanctions against Iran.

Also, those active in Iran's steel sector believed that sanctions against Iran which were in place for 40 years had nothing to do with the Iranian industry.

For example, referring to Iran's success in steel production in the country, the vice president of the Iranian Steel Producers Association (ISPA) stated: "Iran is one of the 10 top steel producing countries in the world and no doubt U.S. sanctions will not take special action against Iran's steel industry at this stage."

"Iran's ranking among the top 10 steel producers in the world shows that the decline of Iran's position among steel producing countries will not be easy", Bahador Eshramian noted.

And now, it's proven based on the reports and statistics released by the international bodies and also the Iranian sources that Iran's strong steel sector cannot be hit by the sanctions.

Based on the Iranian Steel Producers Association's data, Iranian steel companies managed to produce 30.2 million tons of steel in the previous Iranian calendar year, registering a three-percent annual growth.

And according to the latest report released by the World Steel Association (WSA), pro-

duction of crude steel in Iran reached 17.8 million tons during January-July, 2021 to register a 9.9-percent growth year on year.

Iran's monthly crude steel output stood at 2.6 million tons in July 2021, rising nine percent compared to the figure for July 2020, the WSA's report also indicated.

The Islamic Republic maintained its place as the world's 10th biggest steel producer during the mentioned time span, the report said.

The rising trend is also witnessed in the export of Iran's steel, as according to the latest report released in this due, Iranian major steel producers, including Mobarakeh Steel Company, Khuzestan Steel Company, Esfahan Steel Company, and Hormozgan Steel Company and some others, exported 3.811 million tons of steel in the first half of the current Iranian calendar year, rising 48 percent as compared to the same period of time in the past year, IRNA reported on Saturday.

As stated by the deputy managing director of Mobarakeh Steel Company, one of Iran's major steel producers, "The sanctions have not only not bent the back of Mobarakeh Steel Company, but has led to various record breakings."

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

According to the Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry, the production capacity of the country's steel chain increased from 123 million tons in the Iranian calendar year 1392 (ended in March 2014) to 230 million tons in the previous year.

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

'All Iran-Turkmenistan border crossings partially active'

TEHRAN – All four border crossings between Iran and Turkmenistan are currently open and active with some restrictions, according to the director-general of Transit and International Transportation Affairs Bureau of Iran Road Maintenance and Transportation Organization (RMTO).

"At present, the four land border crossings between Iran and Turkmenistan have been reopened with some restrictions, and we hope that the trade problems with this country will be resolved soon," Javad Hedayati told ISNA on Sunday.

Following an online meeting between RMTO and the Turkmen International Transport Agency in September, recently, the third border crossing between the two countries on the Incheh Borun border in Golestan province was reopened, the official said.

Iran and Turkmenistan have four common border crossings, namely Sarakhs, Lotfabad, and Bajiran crossings in Khorasan Razavi Province as well as Incheh Borun border crossing in Golestan Province.

During the outbreak of the coronavirus, Turkmenistan had closed all land and air borders with its neighbors, and consequently, its borders with Iran were also closed.

In August 2020, Iran's former Transport and Urban De-

velopment Minister Mohammad Eslami held talks with Turkmenistan's Minister of Foreign Affairs Rasit Meredov via video conference to discuss the situation of road and rail transportation on the common borders between the two countries.

In that meeting, the two sides stressed the need for taking urgent measures to lift transit restrictions between the two countries, and expand regional cooperation, and develop strategic, economic, and trade collaboration, especially during the pandemic.

Following the mentioned meeting two of the border crossings between the two countries (Sarakhs, Lotfabad) were re-opened, Hedayati said.

The fourth common border namely Bajiran is only open for the commute of diplomats, he added.

Back in June 2020, Iran had also opened a key bridge connecting cities on the two sides of the Sarakhs border with Turkmenistan amid efforts to expand trade with countries in the Central Asia region.

Sarakhs Border Bridge was officially inaugurated in the presence of Iran's minister of transport and urban development, the minister of construction and architecture of Turkmenistan, and the ambassadors of the two countries.

Sino-U.S. military rivalry going on: Pakistani researcher



From page 1 ► Following is the text of the interview:

How do you assess U.S.-China differences? Why is the U.S. reluctant to acknowledge China's global position?

For the United States, the transition towards a multipolar world is undesirable as it limits its influence in global affairs. China has emerged as its main challenger, and countries are increasingly aligning themselves with China as it is offering a

beneficial and unconditional partnership. China's growing influence has also been a lifeline for countries being suppressed militarily and economically by the U.S. The U.S. would not like to see its rival gain back strength through the Chinese support, so it attempts to counter its rise but has achieved little success.

On the other hand, China has been able to stretch its influence through BRI and SCO. The SCO has played a critical role in enhancing regional cooperation, and the inclusion of Iran as a full member will further embolden the organization.

Do you think the U.S. is able to curb China's influence through the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD)? How do you see the importance of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in consolidating China's influence and enhancing its deterrence power?

For the U.S., the QUAD is a tool to counter China in the Asia-Pacific region, but like the U.S., all the major economies in the region and QUAD members cannot ignore China's economic might. Moreover, India - the main U.S. ally against China - is also a member of the SCO and is well aware that confrontation with China will not be in its interest. Other SCO

members are unlikely to involve themselves in the tensions escalating in the Asia-Pacific region. Still, the success of the SCO will encourage countries in other parts of Asia to get closer to China.

Some experts claim the U.S. withdrew from Afghanistan to leave a destabilized region for China? What is your comment?

The U.S. presence in Afghanistan did not stop China from increasing its footprint in the region. The new situation does pose a challenge for all regional countries, but the withdrawal of the U.S. will also create more opportunities for regional cooperation, which in the long run will be detrimental to U.S. interests.

Don't you expect Beijing enter military rivalry with the U.S. following China's economic rise?

Militarily, China has grown much stronger than many other regional countries, but it is continuing to enhance its military capabilities as it is wary of the anti-China strategy of the U.S. Washington's continued support to Taiwan is a threat to Chinese sovereignty, which Beijing will never compromise. China also does not want to concede any space to the U.S. in the South China Sea, and recent activities suggest that the military rivalry is already underway.

“The U.S. presence in Afghanistan did not stop China from increasing its footprint in the region.”

Anger mounts after the sale of football club to Saudis

From page 1 ► It comes on the backdrop of a recent report this year that revealed Saudi Arabia had spent \$1.5bn on high-profile international sporting events in a bid to bolster its reputation. The research conducted by the Human Rights Organization Grant Liberty documents the Kingdom's \$650m ten-year deal with Formula One, among many other agreements clinched. These include chess championships to golf, tennis, and \$60m alone on the Saudi Cup, the world's richest horse-racing event with prize money of \$20m.

For more than a year, Human rights groups have lobbied English football chiefs to reject the takeover, warning it is part of Saudi Arabia's efforts to “sportswash” its human rights record.

Amnesty's head of campaigns in the UK, Felix Jakens, says the “decision shows that English football is open for business when it comes to sportswashing. Ever since this deal was first talked about, Amnesty has said it represents a very clear attempt by the Saudi authorities to sportswash their appalling human rights record using the glamour of the Premier League.”

The controversial agreement finally got a green light from the Premier League after settling a piracy dispute over television rights in West Asia between Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

The £300 million (\$408 million) takeover is led by Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund, the Public Investment Fund (PIF), and while the Premier League has said that they had received “legally binding assurances that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will not control Newcastle United Football Club” the Crown Prince's position as chairman of the Fund hasn't gone unnoticed.

PIF's website reads, “under the chairmanship and guidance of His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, the Board is responsible for overseeing PIF's long-term strategy, investment policy, and performance.”

Human Rights Watch says the takeover is a wake up call on rights and that sportswashing cannot conceal the fate of those jailed and abused back home in Saudi Arabia.

It says three years ago, Saudi agents murdered journalist



Jamal Khashoggi. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has marked this grim anniversary by using the Saudi sovereign wealth fund he chairs to buy Premier League football club Newcastle United for a reported £300 million. But as many Newcastle fans cheer the news, women's rights activists and political prisoners are languishing in Saudi jails.

Hosting major sporting events is a significant part of Saudi Arabia's “sportswashing” strategy. It is essentially an effort to distract from its grave human rights abuses by taking over events that celebrate human achievement. Buying a Premier League club is perhaps Saudi leaders' most high-profile effort so far to launder their “appalling” human rights record.

The international organization also says for those who call football “the beautiful game,” Saudi's Newcastle takeover is a wake-up call. Fans, athletes, and journalists who don't want their sport and favorite clubs tarnished with ugly human rights abuses should demand that the English Football Association and the Premier League adopt and immediately implement a human rights policy.”

The Saudi tribal monarchy has already poured hundreds of millions of dollars into this strategy. High-profile sporting events hosted in the Kingdom recently include the Heavyweight World Boxing Title bout, the Saudi Invitational Golf Tournament, World Wrestling pay-per-view professional wrestling events, and the Dakar Rally, a popular desert race.

Saudi Arabian human rights group ALQST accused the Premier League of being driven only by money and employing “profoundly inadequate” criteria for assessing human rights considerations in the wake of Newcastle United being acquired by a Saudi-led consortium.

Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF), chaired by Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman, now owns 80% of the club, with the rest divided between RB Sports & Media and PCP Capital Partners.

While some fans are cheering the takeover, hoping it will help turn the Premier League club's fortunes around, several human rights groups have questioned the Premier League as well

The takeover shows that the UK is open for business when it comes to sportswashing.

for allowing the takeover to go ahead, pointing to its complicity, having been informed in advanced about Saudi Arabia's human rights record. ALQST acting director Nabhan al-Hanashi says, “for Saudi Arabia, the deal shows the success of their PR strategy to invest in sporting ventures in a bid to clean up their image. For the Premier League... they are effectively inviting other abusive leaders to follow suit.”

“[The Premier League's] reasoning that PIF is a separate entity from the Saudi state is farcical, one only has to look at who chairs the PIF, Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman himself, whose rule has been marked by the most brutal forms of repression.”

Omid Memarian, director of communications at Democracy for the Arab World Now (DAWN), says, “the purpose of this

investment is to infiltrate in areas where people invest a lot of emotions... people want to cheer for teams owned by responsible owners and not those who are involved in atrocities.”

DAWN was founded by Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, who was murdered after entering the Saudi consulate in Istanbul in October 2018. A U.S. intelligence report concluded that the Saudi crown prince had approved the operation to kill or capture Khashoggi.

Memarian added that “people should know that the government investing in this club has murdered a journalist and not been held accountable for that.”

Global football's governing body, FIFA, has a Human Rights Policy, and robust due diligence should have been conducted on the owners and directors before Saudi Arabia was allowed to buy the Newcastle club. Rights groups have long called on the British Premier League to consider human rights records and adopt a comprehensive human rights policy when evaluating potential buyers of football clubs.

Football fans need to look past the wealth that Newcastle hopes will be invested in its team. The documentation by Human Rights Groups shows the darker side of Saudi Arabia, with widespread rights abuses including mass arrests and detention, a crackdown on dissent and free speech, surveillance and hacking, and jailing of the Kingdom's most prominent women's rights activists.

After so much delay and dispute, the British Premier League's reasons for approving the deal are also still seriously questionable. And this all comes while Saudi Arabia continues its war on Yemen with indiscriminate bombing campaigns that have killed hundreds of thousands of people. According to the United Nations, the airstrikes go hand in hand with the Kingdom's all out blockade on its southern neighbor that has left Yemen, according to the United Nations, the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

As a result, most of the population is on the brink of famine; but that does not appear to bother the British Premier League or Newcastle Football Club.

Immigration activists walked out on virtual meeting with Biden administration



Immigration activists have walked out on a virtual meeting with top officials in the administration of US President Joe Biden, according to a report.

The video meeting with several Biden administration officials, including people from the Department of Homeland Security officials and the White House Domestic Policy Council's Esther Olavarria, was held on Saturday morning.

Advocates had asked for time before the beginning of the meeting and read a statement in which they accused the administration of “playing politics with human lives,” saying they could not “come into these conversations in good conscience,” according to Politico.

“We have sadly reached a turning point,” they said, then most of them exited the video call.

“I cannot stand one more meeting of them pretending,” said Ariana Saldares, an advocate from the New Mexico-based Colores United, who was in the meeting. “They give us accolades on the outside, but on the inside, we're having to take out the metaphoric knives from our back.”

The advocates were angry with the Biden administration's decision to continue border policies enacted during the administration of former president Donald Trump.

The Biden administration has decided to reinstate Migrant Protection Protocols after a court struck down the Democratic president's initial attempt to do away with the Trump-era policy.

On Friday, the administration announced that, beginning next month, they would reinstate the practice of forcing migrants at the southern border to wait in Mexico while their US asylum cases were processed in the courts.

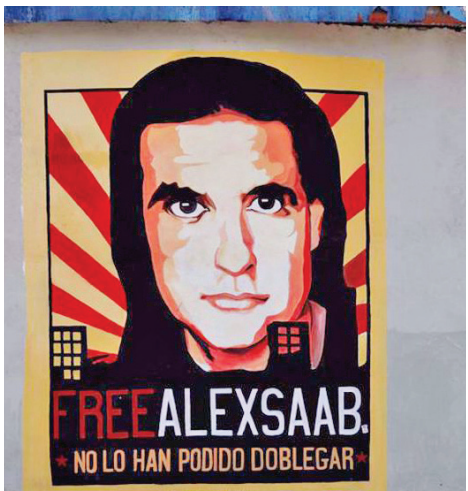
Tensions between the Biden administration and immigration advocates have been increasing for months. Activists argue the Biden administration's decisions are being driven largely by politics, pointing out that senior White House officials see the border as a potentially toxic issue for the Democratic Party.

“I think they're afraid of the backlash of anti-immigrant groups, and we'll continue to remind them that that backlash will exist regardless of what they do,” said Luis Guerra, a strategic capacity officer at the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, who was among those who walked out of Saturday's meeting.

“We don't actually believe they're doing everything in their power to actually restore asylum at the border, the way that they say that they're trying to,” Guerra told Politico.

(Source: Press TV)

Venezuela halts opposition talks after Maduro ally extradited to US



AUS Justice Department spokesperson confirmed Saab's extradition and said he is expected to make his initial court appearance on Monday in the Southern District of Florida.

US charged Saab in 2019 in connection with a bribery scheme and sanctioned him for allegedly orchestrating a corruption network that allowed Caracas to profit from a state-run food subsidy program.

Saab's lawyers have denied the US charges as “politically motivated.”

US-backed opposition figure Juan Guaido reacted to the decision to suspend the talks, accusing the government of evading the nation's problems.

The negotiations mediated by Norway and hosted by Mexico aim to resolve the years-long crisis in the Latin American country.

Caracas aims to ease US-led sanctions on the Venezuelan nation while the opposition says it aims to use the talks to secure guarantees for regional elections to be held in the fall.

Guaido sparked a political crisis in January 2019, after unilaterally declaring himself “interim president.”

Washington has imposed several rounds of sanctions against Venezuela aimed at ousting Maduro and replacing him with Guaido. The sanctions, which include illegal confiscation of Venezuelan assets abroad and an economic blockade, have caused enormous suffering to millions of people in the country.

(Source: Press TV)

Mazandaran holds potential to become intl. tourist destination



From page 1 ► Some 186 trillion rials (\$4.4 billion at the official exchange rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) have been invested in the ongoing projects so far. The developments will also add over 15,000 beds to the hospitality sector of the province.

In Mazandaran province, one of Iran's most popular domestic vacation spots, serious damage was sustained from the coronavirus outbreak, and tourism facilities in the province went through a significant economic recession.

However, the Iranian government has paid 343 billion rials (\$8.1 million) in loans to the tourism businesses affected by the pandemic in the province so far.

Last November, Mehran Hassani, the dep-

uty provincial tourism chief announced that the province's tourism industry has taken six trillion rials (about \$143 million) hit from the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) over the previous months.

He also noted that there are 4,000 active tourism units across the province, generating jobs for about 16,000 people directly.

Sandwiched between the towering Alborz mountain range and the Caspian Sea, Mazandaran has a rich yet turbulent history. An early civilization flourished at the beginning of the first millennium BC in Mazandaran (Tabarestan).

Its insecure eastern and southeastern borders were crossed by Mongol invaders in the 13th and 14th centuries. Cossacks attacked the region in 1668 but were repulsed. It was ceded to the Russian Empire by a treaty in 1723, but the Russians were never secure in their occupation. The area was restored to Iran under the Qajar dynasty.

The northern section of the region consists of lowland alongside the Caspian and upland along the northern slopes of the Alborz Mountains. Marshy backlands dominate the coastal plain, and extensive gravel fans fringe the mountains. The climate is permanently subtropical and humid, with very hot summers.

Qeshm's tourist arrivals up 20 percent y/y

TEHRAN – Qeshm Island recorded over 2.8 million visitors during the first half of the current Iranian calendar year (started March 21).

The official data provided by Qeshm' Department of Ports and Maritime marked a 20 percent increase in tourism flow compared to the same period year on year, IRNA reported.

"In the first half of this year, 2,820,229 people traveled to Qeshm, which shows a 20% growth compared to the same period the last year," Ali Ashtari, who presides over the department, said on Saturday.

The island is a heaven for eco-tourists as it embraces wide-ranging attractions such as the Hara marine forests and about 60 villages

dotted mostly across its rocky coastlines. It also features geologically eye-catching canyons, hills, caves, and valleys, most of which are protected as part of the UNESCO-tagged Qeshm Island Geopark, itself a haven for nature-lovers.

Many travelers to Qeshm believe that the Stars Valley or Valley of Stars is a "MUST SEE". It is home to bizarre-shaped gorges, tall pillars, canyon-like paths, hollowed-out spaces as well as the smooth and round stones, which have been formed by the wind and rain eroding the soil, rocks, and stones. Locals believe that a star once fell on this area thereby creating the rocky shapes that make it seem as if from another planet.

Workshops to revive traditional blacksmithing in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad

TEHRAN – Several old-hand masters of blacksmithing have been invited to help revive the traditional skills of the craft that is on the verge of oblivion across Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad province in southwest Iran.

"Some experienced blacksmiths of the province have been invited to set up training workshops in the first step to revive this field of handicrafts," a local tourism official explained on Sunday.

"In the not-so-distant past, blacksmiths in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad made tools such as sickles, axes, hammers, saws, axes, horseshoes, carpet weaving tools, chains, scissors, rings, locks, keys and oven skewers using traditional manners, but this field is becoming forgotten," Mohammad-Kazem Rahmani explained.

The cultural heritage, tour-



ism, and handicrafts directorate of the province is developing an all-inclusive dossier of the indigenous art of Ahangari (blacksmithing) to be registered as intangible national heritage, the official said.

Traditionally, Chilan is a Persian word used to describe the tools and objects made from iron such as chains, small rings, horse bridle, saddle, and many other light-weighted objects.

Chalanger or blacksmith is a craftsman who heats the iron in the kiln, forges, and turns them into desired objects. Ac-

cording to the Dehkhoda encyclopedia, Chalanger is a person who makes or repairs iron keys, locks, fasteners, shields, chains, pliers, nails, and other objects, and Chilanger and Chalingar are two other names for it.

A Chalingar usually works alone and they have no apprentice. In the past, the artists of this craft made scythes, hammers, horseshoes, nails, horse and cow bindles in the cities and villages.

Today since both agriculture and animal breeding have become automatic or semi-automatic, the blacksmiths now make applicable- decorative objects such as vase bases, dividers, window protectors, etc. The basics of blacksmithing are like making a knife and are done by heating the metal in the kiln, blowing, forging, and making attachments to make the final

Tourism projects to create 11,000 jobs in Khorasan Razavi

TEHRAN – Over 11,000 job opportunities are estimated to be generated by implementing 245 tourism-related projects across the northeastern Khorasan Razavi province, the deputy provincial tourism chief has announced.

Upon the completion of the ongoing projects that have been underway for about ten years, a total of 11,500 jobs will be provided for the locals, CHTN quoted Ahmad Dinari as saying on Sunday.

Some 500 trillion rials (about \$12 billion at the official exchange rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) have been invested in the men-

tioned projects so far, the official added.

The projects include hotels, apartment hotels, guesthouses, travel complexes, recreational centers, and villages specifically developed for health tourism, he noted.

He also noted that foreign investment in the tourism sector of the province amounted to \$90 million last year.

Mashhad, the capital of Khorasan Razavi province, is Iran's holiest and second-largest city. Its raison d'être and main sight is the



striking massive shrine complex of Imam Reza (AS), the eighth Shia Imam

Dozens of five-star hotels and hostels are dotted across Mashhad. The city has also the highest concentration of water parks in the country, and it also embraces a variety of cultural and historical sites that are generally crowded. The metropolis is also a good place to buy top handwoven rugs and carpets, and it's a staging post for travel to Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, and little-touristic Khorasan regions.

Before the coronavirus puts

almost everything on lockdown, Mashhad, played host to thousands of travelers and pilgrims who come from various Iranian cities, neighboring countries, and even across the globe to visit the holy shrine.

According to official statistics, some 37 million Iranian pilgrims and travelers visited the shrine city of Mashhad during the first ten months of the past Iranian calendar year 1398 (March 21, 2019–March 10, 2020). Of whom some eight million came by road, six million by rail, 3.8 million by air, and 18 million by private cars.

Relics discovered from Iron Age cemetery restored, reorganized



TEHRAN – A team of Iranian cultural heritage experts has restored and reorganized tens of prehistorical metallic relics, which have been discovered from Mersin, an Iron Age cemetery in the north-central Semnan province.

"Due to a large number of these magnificent relics, a study on their [physical] status and corrosion was carried out first by the experts of the metal department at Semnan province's Research Institute for the Protection and Restoration of Historical Monuments," the provincial tourism Hamidreza Doustmohammadi said on Saturday.

"Documentation and fault detection were among other measures taken on these objects. Moreover, they were packed in appropriate protective boxes to prevent possible damage to fragile or small metal relics," the official explained.

The cemetery bears corps and relics from Medes, a branch of Indo-European people, who entered northeastern Iran probably as early as the 17th century BC and settled in the plateau land that came to be known as Media. And it was also used during the Achaemenid era (c. 550-330 BC), according to Iranian archaeologist Mehrdad Malekzadeh.

The cemetery is located along the southern slopes of the Alborz mountain range, east of the village of Talajim, near the Sefidrud River. The site was discovered during a rescue archaeological survey in the Fenisk Dam basin area. Based on surface materials, the cemetery was dated to the late Iron Age III and early Iron Age IV (c. 600-400 BC). To corroborate this dating, a radiocarbon date was obtained from human collagen from several graves.

As the Iron Age culture in Semnan province has not been well recognized, in August 2014 the Iranian Centre for Archaeological Research organized regular excavations at the site under the direction of Malekzadeh. Three trenches were excavated, covering a total of 235 square meters.

Within trench 3 (10×5m) fifteen human graves were found, distributed in a regular pattern. Some burials were disturbed, but common features were easy to recognize, including the rectangular shape of the grave and the presence of a single body buried in each grave, being interred in an extended position on the back. Most graves had large stones delimiting the burial place and all contained grave goods except grave 4 that was, however, disturbed.

The graves can be divided into two general categories, being either covered by large flat slabs and wood (like graves 5 and 10) or covered only by soil. There is no uniform orientation of the body within the burial. Grave goods were variable and there were, among others, pottery vessels of different types, such as single-handled pitchers, bridge spout bowls, pots with spouts and handles, small jars, pedestal bowls, and twin joined small jars.

Furthermore, some pottery fragments and personal ornamentations have so far been discovered from the cemetery which bears over 2,000 tomb chambers.

The cemetery has also yielded relics from Medes, a branch of Indo-European people, who entered northeastern Iran as early as the 17th century BC.

Old structure, probably a public bathhouse, discovered in Shiraz



TEHRAN – Sections of an old structure, which probably belongs to a public bathhouse, have been exposed by chance during a grading and site preparation in Shiraz, southern Iran.

"The discovery of an old structure, which was uncovered by construction machinery during a site preparation, was immediately notified to the general directorate [of cultural heritage, tourism, and handicrafts of Fars province] by Shiraz Municipality," deputy provincial tourism chief said on Saturday.

"The age and type of the aging structure are to be announced by cultural heritage experts of the province, however, initial findings suggest it is probably a bathhouse," the official said.

Bathhouses or 'hammams' in Iran were not only

places for bathing and cleaning up. They had a social concept for people who gathered at these places weekly. It was a place where people talked with each other about their daily life and shared humor and news. There are still bathhouses in Iranian cities but they do not have their social function anymore since most people have bathrooms in their homes due to the modern lifestyle. Some cities had separate bathhouses for men and women. They were usually built next to each other. However, there were some bathhouses, which were used by men and women at different times of the day.

Celebrated as the heartland of Persian culture for over 2000 years, Shiraz has become synonymous with education, nightingales, poetry, and crafts skills passed down from generation to generation. It was one of the most important cities in the medieval Islamic world and was the Iranian capital during the Zand dynasty from 1751 to 1794.

Shiraz is home to some of the country's most magnificent buildings and sights such as various bazaars, caravansaries, mosques including Eram Garden, Afif-Abad Garden, Tomb of Hafez, Tomb of Sadi, Jameh Mosque of Atigh, and Shah Cheraq Mausoleum to name a few.

Zanjan hosts 18,000 tourists in H1

TEHRAN – The northwestern Zanjan province hosted over 18,000 travelers during the first half of the current Iranian calendar year 1400 (started March 21), the provincial tourism chief has announced.

"18,755 tourists, of whom 293 were foreign nationals, toured the province during the first six months of the year," Amir Arjmand said on Sunday.

The travelers stayed in various residential centers including hotels, eco-lodge units, guest houses, and tourist complexes, the official added.

During the mentioned time, over 1,000 people visited historical and natural attractions of the province observing strict health protocols and

social distancing rules due to the coronavirus pandemic, he noted.

Zanjan is one of the cities founded by Sassanid King Ardashir I (180-242 CE). The province makes a base for wider explorations with the architectural wonder of Soltaniyeh, the subterranean delights of the Katala-Khor caves, colorful mountains, and the UNESCO-registered Takht-e Soleiman ruins are nearby.

In January 2020, Zanjan was designated as a "world city of filigree" by the World Crafts Council after the WCC assessors visited various craft workshops, stores, exhibits, and bazaars of the city in a two-day itinerary in December 2019.

Handicraft sector creates over 200 jobs in Ardabil

TEHRAN – The handicrafts sector has generated over 200 job opportunities in the northwestern Ardabil province during the first half of the current Iranian calendar year 1400 (started March 21), a local tourism official has announced.

"A total of 220 new jobs were created for the province's artisans and crafters during the first six months of the year, Tohid Delavar-Qavam said on Sunday.

Throughout the mentioned period,

over 240 people were also trained as crafters in mostly in rural areas of the province, the official added.

Back in July, local officials announced that some 835 jobs are expected to be created in Ardabil by several investments in tourism-related projects, which are estimated to get off the ground by the end of the current Iranian year 1400 (ends in March 2022).

Back in January, the provincial tourism chief, Nader Fallahi, announced that more than 150 tourism-related

projects are underway across Ardebil province. The mentioned projects will prepare the province's tourism sector for the post-coronavirus era when the number of tourists and travelers is expected to rise magnificently, the official added.

Sprawling on a high, windswept plateau, Ardabil is well-known for having lush natural beauties, hospitable people, and its silk and carpet trade tradition. It is also home to the UNESCO-registered Sheikh Safi al-Din

Khanegah and Shrine Ensemble.

The province is very cold in winter and mild in summer, attracting thousands every year. The capital city of Ardabil is usually recorded as one of the coldest cities in the country in winter.

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.

TEHRAN – Iran’s nanotechnology products are generally classified into three groups of goods, services, and equipment, and the service sector has grown by nearly 130 percent over the past year (March 2020–March 2021), Mehr reported on Saturday.

Nanotechnology is called the fourth wave of the industrial revolution and has affected all scientific fields and various industries.

Reports show that the largest share of the Iranian nano market, equivalent to 96 percent, belongs to goods. The service sector has grown by about 130 percent last year, from 443 billion rials (nearly \$10.5 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) to 1 trillion rials (about \$24 million).

Sales of nanotechnology laboratory and industrial equipment also increased by 48 percent, despite sanctions and funding limitations. More than 55 percent of the market for nanotechnology goods belongs to the construction sector.

A total of 783 nanoproducts and equipment have been developed in the country and received nanoscale certificates over the first six months of the current [Iranian calendar] year (March 21–September 21), according to the Nanotechnology Initiative Council.

A total of 306 companies have developed these products, 246 of which are active in product development and 60 others in

Nanotechnology services market grew by 130%



equipment production in the are sold in the market; by the nanotechnology sector.

Ali Asghar Najimi, the director of the industry group of the Nanotechnology Development Council announced on June 25 that currently, 750 approved nano products

Iran has been introduced as the 4th leading country in the world in the field of nanotechnology.

Pointing out that so far about 80 large industrial companies have used nano products, he add-

ed that by 2025, more than 200 large industrial companies will use nanotechnology to improve efficiency and productivity.

Iran among five pioneers of nanotechnology

Iran has been introduced as the 4th leading country in the world in the field of nanotechnology, publishing 11,546 scientific articles in 2020.

The country held a 6 percent share of the world’s total nanotechnology articles, according to StatNano’s monthly evaluation accomplished in WoS databases.

Iran ranked 43rd among the 100 most vibrant clusters of science and technology (S&T) worldwide for the third consecutive year, according to the Global Innovation Index (GII) 2020 report.

The country experienced a three-level improvement compared to 2019.

Sourena Sattari, vice president for science and technology, has said that Iran is playing the leading role in the region in the fields of fintech, ICT, stem cell, aerospace, and is unrivaled in artificial intelligence.

Iranian nanotechnology companies have increased sales by 100 percent over the Iranian calendar year 1398 (March 2019–March 2020), and it is predicted that their revenue will reach up to 80 trillion rials (nearly \$1.9 billion at the official rate of 42,000 rials), Sattari announced.

Bird paradise of Iran comes to life again



TEHRAN – Kani Barazan wetland, being lost by 70 percent, has been revived by releasing water from the Mahabad River and is once again ready to host migratory birds.

Located in the northwestern province of West Azarbaijan, Kani Barazan, was once recorded as the first bird-sighting site in the country and birdwatchers call it Iran’s bird paradise.

Stretching to 907 hectares, Kani Barazan wetland is home to various bird species including, flamingo, little cormorant, great white pelican,

stilt, sternidae, great crested grebe, graylag goose, lesser white-fronted goose, heron, common shelduck and etc.

So far, 75 species of water birds belonging to 11 families have been identified in this wetland, which will reach more than 180 species counting terrestrial species, Mehr reported on Sunday.

Drought and lack of water rights caused the loss of 70 percent of the wetland, causing negative environmental effects with the beginning of the bird migration season.

In recent weeks, with the release of 2.5 million cubic meters of water from the Mahabad River, the wetland survived being wiped out, however, due to low rainfall, the wetland is still under threat.

Omid Bonabi, head of the wetland protection and rehabilitation department of West Azarbaijan’s department of environment said that the annual water right of Kani Barazan wetland is 16.7 million cubic meters, which is provided through

dam release and precipitation.

Due to the pesticides and agricultural fertilizers in the past years, this wetland was contaminated, although this problem has not been completely solved, efforts have been made to manage this issue, he added.

Two natural and artificial lagoons (with an area of one hectare and a depth of one meter) have been created in Kani Barazan wetland for improving water quality and rehabilitating the wetland, he explained.

Bonabi went on to note that creating a culture to reduce the use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers by using sustainable agriculture in the upstream lands of Kani Barazan wetland can play an important role in reducing pollution.

In line with tourism, for the first time, comprehensive studies have been carried out in Kani Barazan wetland, and now the studies have been completed and are ready to attract investors, he further stated.

Bill on protection of Caspian Sea biodiversity approved



From page 1 ▶ In order to protect biodiversity, the Contracting Parties shall monitor sources of pollution and any activities that have or may have a significant negative impact on habitats and species; or cooperate with each other and with competent international organizations in the field of biodiversity conservation and the management of endangered habitats and species.

The average annual water level of the Caspian Sea has decreased by about 5 to 10 cm compared to a year before, according to the network information of the Ministry of Energy.

The Caspian Sea is the largest enclosed inland body of water on Earth by area. It is bounded by Kazakhstan to the northeast, Russia to the northwest, Azerbaijan to the west, Iran to the south, and Turkmenistan to the southeast. The sea has an area of 600,384 square kilometers and a coastline of 7,000 kilometers.

Hosting 400 aquatic species and holding third place in terms of oil and gas reserves under its bed after the “Persian Gulf” and “Siberia” has doubled the value of this basin, while sturgeon are the most important inhabitants of the lake.

Frequent oil spills in the coastal areas of Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, the entry of waste of over 40 factories and refineries into the sea, the decline, and extinction of the Caspian Sea aquatic species since 1990, are among the main challenges faced by the Caspian Sea.

Long-term forecasts based on climate change scenarios show a 4–6 meter drop in the lake’s water level over the next 30 to 50 years.

The environmental issues of the Sea have pushed the sole marine mammal inhabiting the Caspian Sea to not have suitable breeding grounds.

Over 729,000 passengers screened for coronavirus at borders

TEHRAN – A total of 729,294 passengers have so far been screened for coronavirus by thermal tests at the country’s official borders since March 10, Mehdi Valipour, head of Relief and Rescue Organization affiliated to the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS), said on Sunday.

During the aforesaid period, IRCS forces have conducted 85,865 PCR tests and 112,751 rapid tests, he said, IRIB reported.

He went on to lament that some 212 individuals, who tested positive, have so far been temporarily quarantined, under a plan to rapidly identify suspected cases of coronavirus and prevent the spread of new UK strain.

A total of 471 members of the IRCS cooperate for carrying out the plan in 16 provinces across the country, Valipour concluded.

With the cooperation of ministries of health and transport, a plan is being implemented with the goal of rapidly identifying and testing incoming passengers and keeping them in quarantine facilities, if necessary.

Twenty-eight border checkpoints have been selected, including 18 land borders, nine air borders, and three sea borders, all incoming passengers will be tested and referred to the quarantine facilities in case of necessity.



Around 8,000 individuals enter the country via borders on a daily basis.

On August 22, Iran announced that all travelers must have a negative PCR test certificate or a health card to enter the country during the Covid-19 pandemic, IRINN reported.

Due to the prevalence of delta variant, negative PCR test is also mandatory for vaccinated passengers, Mohammad Reza Seif, head of safety and quality assurance department of Imam Khomeini Airport Town Co, said.

All passengers entering Iran, even if they have been vaccinated and have a vaccination card, must have a negative test result, he stated.

COVID-19 UPDATES ON OCTOBER 17

New cases	11,396
New deaths	199
Total cases	5,784,815
Total deaths	124,075
New hospitalized patients	1,482
Patients in critical condition	4,769
Total recovered patients	5,324,108
Diagnostic tests conducted	34,008,636
Doses of vaccine injected	72,643,522

ENGLISH IN USE

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Iranian zoos to be monitored online

The Department of Environment (DOE) will launch an online monitoring system in zoos across the country, the Department of Environment’s director general for hunting and fishing has said.

“Putting in place the necessary infrastructure for this plan is underway; newly constructed zoos are supposed to have an online monitoring system, and the old ones must launch the system as soon as possible,” IRNA quoted Ali Teymouri as saying on Saturday.

Teymouri stated that all provincial departments of environment must supervise the zoo online systems to register all animal species entering or leaving the zoo, casualties and causes.

The necessary infrastructure has been prepared to some extent in two zoos, and the rest of the zoos will launch the in the near future gradually, he added.

باغ وحش های کشور آنلاین پایش می شوند

مدیرکل حفاظت و مدیریت شکار و صید سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست گفت: پایش آنلاین باغ وحش های کشور جزو برنامه های سازمان است و در حال تهیه زیر ساخت برای اجرای آن هستیم.

علی تیموری روز شنبه در گفت و گو با خبرنگار علمی ایرنا افزود: باغ وحش هایی که جدید احداث می شوند باید حتما سیستم پایش آنلاین داشته باشند، مجموعه های قدیمی نیز باید هر چه سریعتر این سیستم را راه اندازی کنند.

وی اظهار داشت: باید تمام ادارات کل استان ها آدرس سیستم آنلاین باغ وحش ها را دریافت کنند تا ورود و خروج گونه ها از باغ وحش، ورود گونه های جدید، تلفات و دلایل آن را ثبت و به صورت آنلاین در جریان قرار گیرند.

تیموری با بیان اینکه در حال تهیه یک برنامه زمان بندی برای اجرای این کار هستیم گفت: زیر ساخت های این کار تا حدودی آغاز شده و دو مجموعه کار زیر ساخت را شروع کرده اند و بقیه باغ وحش ها هم به مرور انجام خواهند داد.

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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

He who is deserted by friends and relatives will often find help and sympathy from strangers.

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times » Noon:11:49 Evening: 17:43 Dawn: 4:51 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 6:14 (tomorrow)

Iran: Persian music

Musicians perform at the closing ceremony of the 10th Regional Music Festival in Kerman on July 1, 2017. (IRNA/Abuzar Ahmadzadeh)

Part 4

Instruments: The traditional cultures of Iran possess a large number of instruments, some of national provenance, others regional; some shared with neighboring cultures, and some of European origin.

The following are most prominent in traditional classical music:

- (1) Setar is a lute with small body, frets, and long neck. It has four (sometimes three) strings, one of which is not fingered but used as a drone. The strings are plucked with the nail of the forefinger.
- (2) Tar is a larger, long-necked lute with a large sound box carved from one piece of wood and covered with skin. It has six strings and is plucked with a plectrum.
- (3) Kamancheh is a fiddle with small round body, supported by a spike (like a cello), and held on the player's knee. It has four (sometimes three) strings and is bowed with a horsehair bow held palm upwards.
- (4) Santur is a trapezoid-shaped dulcimer with seventy-two strings; it is hammered with light balsa wood mallets.
- (5) Ney is an end-blown reed flute with (usually) six finger-holes; it is particularly significant in Sufi music and is used also in Arabic, Turkish, and Central Asian cultures.
- (6) Tombak or zarb, a goblet-shaped wooden drum with one skin, is played with the fingers.
- (7) Daf and dayereh is a kind of frame drum which forms an integral element in Sufi music.

These are the central, major instruments of Persian classical music, but there are also others that are widely used. The tanbur is a long-necked ancient instrument with four strings and a small sound box.

It is the favorite instrument in the northeastern and western regions, particularly among the Kurds, and is treated with special respect by the Ahl-e Haqq.

Qeychak (also gheychak, ghichak, ghezak) is a complex-shaped, strong instrument similar to the sarinda of Pakistan and North India. It belonged to village music until it was introduced to the classical in the 20th century. It originally had varying arrangements of bowed and drone strings, but there are only four in classical music.

Oud is a lute with short neck and large body and no frets. It is the principal traditional instrument of Arabic cultures, with five or six identically tuned pair of strings.

The European violin in its traditional form (but with occasional adjustments in tuning) was adapted to Persian classical (and popular) music and became one of the principal instruments in the 20th century.

Piano has also been adapted (sometimes with elaborate retuning of its strings) to Persian classical music.

The instruments used mainly in what was referred to above as vernacular music include the following:

Sorna (also zorna), an oboe-like double-reed instruments similar to many forms found in South and West Asia and southeastern Europe, is an important instrument in ceremonial music and weddings.

Dotar, the prototype of Turkish saz, is a large lute with long neck and oval body and two or three strings (or sometimes more). It is also widely used in urban traditions in Afghanistan and Central Asia.

Qosmeh consists of two clarinet-like instruments in parallel attachment that are played in unison. While the urban instruments are substantially standardized, those of village music exist in many regional or personally invented variant forms.

The classical music: Traditional classical music in its late 20th-century form consists of a number of genres distinguished in various ways.

Some are fundamentally vocal, some instrumental, and others performed either way. Some are composed and memorized, and others, improvised to varying degrees; some are explicitly solo, and others, intended for ensemble performance.

All are based, or so it is claimed, on a body of music known as radif. Radif is the principal distinguishing feature of Persian classical music.

Perhaps the best way to understand the complexity of Persian classical music is to think of radif as a repertoire of music which is not actually performed (except in instruction and practice), but parts of which are selected by a musician to serve as bases for composition and for improvised performance.

All parts of the basic unit of "performance" are based on one dastgah or fundamental mode or tonality. A concert may consist of one long performance; more commonly, in public concerts, there may be two or three. In this regard, Persian performances are somewhat analogous to those of North Indian music.

Radif: Radif is a collection consisting of about 250-300 short pieces of music (from 30 seconds to four minutes). While it is a unified concept to musicians, each master musician has an individual version of radif differing slightly from others, and in a musician's career his version of radif may change.

But most musicians claim that their versions go back, ultimately, to the original version arranged by Mirza Abdollah, son of the famous court musician Ali-Akbar Farahani.

Although the history is unclear, it seems that Mirza Abdollah and some colleagues assembled musical materials already widely used, organizing, standardizing, and codifying customs already extant and in some cases held in common with Arabic, Turkish, and Azerbaijani traditions.

Source: Encyclopedia Iranica

To be continued

Five books by Iranian writers embellish White Ravens Catalogue

By Seyyed Mostafa Mousavi Sabet

TEHRAN – Munich's prestigious International Youth Library (Internationale Jugendbibliothek, IJB) has selected five books by Iranian writers for its 35th edition of the White Ravens Catalogue.

The books are "The Mammals of Iran: Bears and Other Carnivores", "The Battle of Noruz: Mani + Festival-Makers + Festival-Spoilers", "Zahhak, the Snake Shoulder: A Story with Seven Narrators", "Barli, the Balloon Seller and the Dwarf Generals" and "The Orange Girl".

In a preface to the catalogue, International Youth Library director Christiane Raabesaid, "It aims to promote quality in children's book publishing and has become an increasingly useful tool for anyone interested in looking beyond national borders."

She added, "Selecting the books for the White Ravens list is one of the tasks of our language and children's book specialists."

"Throughout the year, they set aside new publications that catch their attention and strike them as being noteworthy. Some of these works are then selected for recommendation to an international audience. Books are chosen for the list based on the universal relevance of the themes they address, their literary and pictorial qualities, or their innovative approaches or design," she noted.

Written by Ali Golshan, "The Mammals of Iran: Bears and Other Carnivores" has been published by the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults – Kanoon.

The outstanding nonfiction book tells a fascinating story about Iran's nature and takes the readers on a magnificent journey, during which they

This combination photo shows the front covers of the Persian books picked for the White Ravens Catalogue 2021.

explore the habitat of bears and other earthbound carnivores native to Iran.

What makes this book very special and distinguishes it from many other works of nonfiction is the author's use of cross-references and embellishments, including the introduction of folk tales, proverbs and works of art about these animals in Iranian culture, as well as a history of their relationship with humans and their occasional presence in human societies.

In "The Battle of Noruz: Mani + Festival-Makers + Festival-Spoilers", writer Hadis Lazar-Gholami centers on the many beautiful traditions practiced as part of Noruz, the Persian New Year celebration.

Throughout the story, the writer mentions them in order to remind her young audience of the history of the most important national festival in Iran and how important it is.

The book has been published by Cheshmeh with illustrations by Mahbubeh Yazdani.

Published by Madreseh, "Zahhak, the Snake Shoulder: A Story with Seven Narrators" has been created by Atusa Salehi based on its original version from the Shahnameh, the epic masterpiece of the Persian poet Abolqasem Ferdowsi.

It is about a good-natured human being who falls into the trap of the devil and becomes an evil-doer and a tyrant himself.

Salehi has streamlined the story for children from the point of view of different characters, including Zahhak the Devil and others.

"Barli, the Balloon Seller and the Dwarf Generals" tells the story of little Barli, a homeless girl who sells balloons under a bridge during the day and sleeps at the same place at night. She finds a way to confront the despotic dwarf generals who rule the country and tries to restore peace and tranquility to her community.

Through literature, writer Seyyed Navid Seyyed Ali-Akbar explains how war, violence and totalitarianism can make our world

unsafe and unpleasant.

Illustrated by Narjes Mohammadi, the book has been released by the Elmi Farhangi Publishing Company.

This book is part of a series published in ten volumes under the title of "Stories of Peace and Friendship".

"The Orange Girl" has been published by Tuti Books, the winner of the BOP - Bologna Prize for the Best Children's Publishers of the Year in Asia.

Written by Asadollah Sha'bani, the book features one of the oldest Iranian folk tales. There are many variations on this story in Iranian oral literature.

This book is based on a version by Fazlollah Mohtadi Sobhi, whose role in Iranian folk literature can be compared to that of the Brothers Grimm.

In this story, a king dreams of having a son and after many years his dream comes true. The son becomes big and strong and nobody is a match for him in horse riding and archery. But when he shoots and breaks an old woman's oil bottle, she says to him, "I hope you fall in love with the orange girl!"

Thus begins the prince's quest to find that girl. But after finding her, he falls ill due to the spell of a different, very jealous girl.

Illustrated by Mahkameh Sha'bani, the story has many similarities to the Grimm's tale "The Goose Girl".

The front cover of this year's White Ravens Catalogue bears an illustration by Montreal-based Iranian artist Nahid Kazemi from her book "Over the Rooftops, Under the Moon" that was selected for the White Ravens 2020.

The White Ravens Catalogue 2021 contains a selection of 200 notable children's and young adult books from 54 countries published in 38 languages.

Iranian artists honored at Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava

TEHRAN – The Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava (BIB) in Czech has honored Iranian artists Ghazal Fathollahi and Mohammad Barrangi Fashtami with BIB Plaques.

Fathollahi received the honor for his illustrations for "You Are an Explorer" (also translated as "We Are Explorers").

The book written by Shahrzad Shahrjerdi has also been published by La Maleta, a publisher in the autonomous community of Asturias in northwest Spain.

The book shows fraternity, imagination, collaboration and self-improvement against the pain of war. This book, through the love between two brothers and their imagination, leads us to reflect on the hardships suffered by some people as a result of conflicts in their countries of origin that force them to leave their homes in search of something better.

Barrangi was honored for his illustrations in "Simorgh, a Story from Attar Neyshaburi's Mantiq at-Tayr" streamlined by Marjan Fuladvand for children and young adults.

Simorgh (Phoenix), a bird in Iranian mythology and literature, plays a significant role in some Persian classics, such as the Shahnameh (Book of Kings) by Ferdowsi and the Mantiq at-Tayr (The Conference of the Birds).

In Attar's parable-like poem, the birds of the world gather to decide who is to be their sovereign. The hoopoe, the wisest of them all, suggests that they should find the legendary Simorgh. At the end of the long journey, only thirty birds remain. They realize that they themselves are the ruler they seek.

The young and talented London-based Iranian illustrator Barrangi uses his feet and toes to paint instead of his disabled hand. That's why his pictures have their own unique look. In his artwork, he combines elements of Persian calligraphy, Eastern stories and imagery, and classical Western painting.

A jury of nine members, including Brenda Dales from the U.S., Victoria Fomina from Russia and Renata Fucikova from Czech, also honored Mamiko Shiotani from Japan for "The Story of Egg, Dale Blankenaar from South Africa for "Quill Soup" and Armando Fonseca from Mexico for "The Howling" with BIB Plaques.

Due to the pandemic, the jury met online and the BIB Grand Prix went to Spanish illustrator Elena Odriozola for "Mixed Feelings".

Lee Myung Ae from South Korea for "Tomorrow Will Be a Sunny Day" and Amanda Mijangos, Armando Fonseca and Juan Palomino from Mexico for "The Sea" are among the five

This combination photo shows the front covers of the Iranian books that won BIB Plaques at the Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava.

winners of Golden Apples.

Sylvie Bello from France for "The First Snow", Anna and Varvara Kendel from Russia for "To the North, Our Earth Breathes" and Chao Zhang from China for "Poetry and Painting Collection, Story of Grandma's Snowflower" also received other Golden Apples.

Verzone from Czech for "Ludwig van Beethoven", Topipittori from Italy for "The First Snow" and Zahori Books from Spain for "Lost Landscapes" were the publishers that won honorable mentions.

Farnush Samadi on panel of Valladolid film festival

TEHRAN – Iranian director Farnush Samadi has been selected as a member of the Meeting Point jury at the SEMINCI – Valladolid International Film Festival in Spain.

Spanish director José Luis Montesinos and Argentinian actress Romina Paula are members of the Meeting Point jury, which will judge first and second fiction films.

Samadi is most famous for her short "Gaze", which was acclaimed at several international events. Her debut feature "180° Rule" won the awards for best feature film and best ensemble cast at the Beirut International Women's Film Festival this year.

She was also a member of the jury of the Same Boat Short Film Competition at the International Migration Film Festival in Turkey

Iranian director Farnush Samadi attends a press conference after a screening of her debut film "180° Rule" during the 39th Fajr Film Festival in Tehran on February 6, 2021. (IRNA/Marziah Musavi)

in 2020.

The Valladolid International Film Festival will take place from October 23 to 30.

"The Son" by Nushin Meraji is the sole Iranian film competing in the Meeting Point category that also features 14 other movies.

It is about Farid, a forty-year-

old man who lives with his mother. He is very vulnerable and escapes loneliness, but in the meantime tries to prove himself independent and supportive of his mother. However, her sudden death makes Farid frustrated. To escape from this unfamiliar situation, he clings to anyone he encounters outside home

to make this loneliness bearable, but he does not know how to communicate and the problem gets worse each time.

In the official competition, the festival will also screen three movies from Iranian filmmakers, including Asghar Farhadi's latest drama "A Hero".

The film, which is a co-production between Iran and France, won the Grand Prix (ex aequo) at Cannes 2021.

"Ballad of a White Cow" co-directed by Behtash Sanaeian and Maryam Moqaddam has been picked to be screened in this category. The film won third place in the Berlinale Competition Audience Award this year.

"Hit the Road" by Panah Panahi will also compete in this section.