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## Positive Signs on Afghanistan

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Exclusive 

### Meeting of Afghanistan's neighbors in Tehran: Together for peace and development

By Dr. Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, Minister of Foreign Affairs

The presence of U.S. troops and their allied forces in Afghanistan, as well as their embarrassing, catastrophic departure, has left in its wake an overwhelmingly disorganized country and an agitated and anguished nation, causing an ambiguous future for a country which suffered military invasion in a modern fashion under the clichéd slogan of democratic development.

In 2002, when U.S. warmongers were recklessly invading our region in their unilateral practice to achieve the so-called globalization under the guise of "war on terror", there were voices which praised the insanity and envisioned a brighter future for the invaded countries. West Asia underwent developments at the time, but the developments were characterized by instability, war, and, indeed, lessons to learn. The state of affairs which has persisted to this day and has permeated the entire region has further fuelled terrorism and extremism, creating an insecure environment prone to tensions and conflict.

This tragic period teaches a lesson to all of us in West Asia, not least to those who continue to pin their hopes on foreign powers. The lesson is the fact that outsourcing security and relying upon domineering powers is a pipe dream and an instable mirage.

This tragic history of Afghanistan's past is reminiscent of the authentic principle that the countries in the region must join forces and respond collectively to their people's questions and expectations and strive to create a more prosperous, secure, and stable environment. ▶ Page 2

### Thousands of migratory birds wintering in Mighan wetland

TEHRAN – Mighan wetland in the central province of Markazi is hosting over 6,000 migratory birds which have come to spend the winter, Zohreh Mousavi, head of the provincial department of environment, has said.

The wetland is among the most important sites for ecotourism and bird-sighting in the country, which is home to over 130 migratory bird species, including cranes, ducks, flamingos, and geese.

Drought and climate change have caused the migration of migratory birds to start with a delay of more than 20 days (according to the annual migration calendar), but the first flock of birds came to spend the autumn in Mighan wetland, which has so far increased to 6,000, she explained.

Every year, with the arrival of autumn and falling temperature, birds migrate from the north to the southern and tropical regions of the country. Some of these birds winter in the wetland and some travel to warmer areas, she added.

Pointing out that Mighan wetland is one of the 105 bird migration destinations in the world, she noted that up to 20,000 migratory birds of 46 species migrate to Mighan wetland annually, including, crane, Flamingo, mallard, Eurasian teal, common shelduck, and Geese.

She also stressed that patrolling in wetlands and areas where migratory birds spend the winter intensifies in the fall. ▶ Page 7



### One in four Londoners unable to buy vital food as UK petrol price hits record high

TEHRAN – A new survey has found that one in four Londoners have been unable to buy essential food items over the past two weeks. The data, which has been released by the Office for National Statistics, will add fuel to the debate over shortages Britain has faced

in the past weeks ranging from food all the way to petrol, which has just hit an all-time record high at the pumps.

One of the factors cited in the survey was less choice of food products, with one quarter of people living in the British capital say-

ing the items they needed have not been available and they have not been able to find a replacement anywhere else. As many as 23 percent of people could not access non-essential goods. ▶ Page 5

[STAY UPDATED #UKFuelCrisis](#)

### Loading, unloading of goods in ports up over 10% in 7 months yr/yr

TEHRAN – Loading and unloading of goods in the ports of Iran rose 10.7 percent during the first seven months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21–October 22), as compared to the same period in the previous year, IRNA reported.

According to PMO's Ports Affairs Director Ravanbakhsh Behzadian, loading and unloading of goods at the country's commercial ports reached 82.24 million tons in the mentioned

period, while the figure stood at 74.31 million tons in the past year's same time span.

During the said seven months, unloading and loading operations in the container sector reached 11.09 million tons, for dry bulk the figure stood at 26.56 million tons, in liquid bulk the figure was 2.56 million tons, while for general cargo (general and miscellaneous goods) it was 11.46 million tons and for the petroleum products loading and unloading volume amounted

to 30.57 million tons, Behzadian said.

He noted that the loading and unloading operations in the dry bulk sector grew by 14.5 percent in the mentioned period compared to the last year's same time span, while in the liquid bulk sector the figure increased by 27.5 percent, in the general cargo sector the growth was 8.8 Percent and the petroleum sector also experienced a growth of 17.1 percent compared to the same period last year. ▶ Page 4

### Military chief: Iran continues to monitor foes' activities

TEHRAN – Major General Mohammad Hossein Baqeri, Chief of the Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces, said on Tuesday that the Iranian military is constantly monitoring the threats and enhance their operational preparedness as the threats have become more complicated.

The comments by the military chief comes as the Zionist regime of Israel is openly threatening military attacks against Iran.

Baqeri said today's condition entails more vigilance by the armed forces.

"When the threats are open, clear and direct it is a rather easier to counter them, but when the threats are complicated... naturally our duty in countering them is heavier," the top general remarked.

Highlighting the diminishing power of the U.S. and its regional cohorts, he warned that American and Zionist threats are still in place. ▶ Page 2



### Iranian, Turkmen FM's hold extensive talks

TEHRAN — Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and his Turkmen counterpart Rashid Meredov met on Tuesday morning. They exchanged views over bilateral relations, regional issues, including Afghanistan, and international developments.

### Untold stories' now available for you to re-discover majestic Isfahan'

Report 

By Afshin Majlesi

TEHRAN – A selection of 200 "untold stories" about Isfahan is now available for you to re-discover the ancient city, which has long been nicknamed as "half the world".

Each story is narrated within a one-minute video clip in different languages to make

culture lovers and avid travelers familiar with the off-the-beaten tracks, lesser-known destinations, souvenirs, foods, traditions, rituals, cultural heritage, handicrafts, and above all the hospitable people of Isfahan.

Directed by Iranian globetrotter and researcher Majid Erfanian, the clips have been produced jointly by Isfahan Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA), and the private company of Rah

Abrisham Iranian Zamin.

100 of the videos, containing 100 fascinating stories, had already been uploaded to social media outlets, while the others were unveiled in an official ceremony hosted by the ICCIMA on Saturday evening.

The event was attended by the deputy tourism minister Ali-Asghar Shalbafian, Isfahan governor-general Seyyed Reza Mortazavi, ▶ Page 6

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Interview 

### Shahrdari Urmia have a challenging season ahead: coach

By Farrokh Hesabi

TEHRAN – Mohammadreza Tondraan, Shahrdari Urmia Volleyball team head coach, believes that his side have a difficult task ahead in the new season of Iran's Volleyball Super League (VSL).

Tondraan won the Iran's Volleyball Super League last season with Foolad Sirjan and now, after joining the Urmia-based squad, wants to extend his successful run with his new team.

On the first day of VSL, his side beat Rahyab Melal 3-1 in a hard-fought game.

"The first weeks in the leagues all over the world are difficult. Most of the teams have some changes in their squad and sometimes in their coaching staff, and it leads to lack of coordination between the players," said Tondraan in his interview with Tehran Times.

"For this reason, the condition of the teams is unknown in the first weeks, and it is not possible to speak with certainty about the strengths and weaknesses of them and the ones who are favorites to win the title," he added. ▶ Page 3

Interview 

### China is on par with U.S. on all fronts: researcher

By Mohammad M. Farahani

TEHRAN – A Pakistani researcher believes that Beijing can compete with Washington in military power, highlighting China's economic rise.

"China is already on a par with the U.S. on all fronts, including military," Mahrukh Khan tells the Tehran Times.

"Both the nations have extraordinary military capabilities including nuclear power," Khan adds.

However, many political pundits believe that economy gives China a significant advantage over other aspects.

"China is also cognizant of the fact that it will be more able to defeat the U.S. as well as maintain Beijing's influence and role of a superpower by increasing its economic might rather than military," Khan remarks.

Following is the text of the interview:

**How do you assess U.S.-China differences? Why doesn't the U.S. want to acknowledge China's rising global status?**

The differences between the U.S. and China are on a constant rise, whether it is in the realm of economy, diplomacy, or securing strategic upper hand. Over the course of many years, China has been able to establish its footprint on all the continents across the globe through its diplomatic efforts and through building infrastructures such as the BRI and CPEC. This has created an atmosphere of bipartisan stress in the U.S. and its Congress with mutual consensus to curb the rise of China. ▶ Page 5

Meeting of Afghanistan's neighbors in Tehran: Together for peace and development



From page 1 ▶ This valuable endeavor shall be materialized based not upon an imposed or hackneyed model but upon an indigenous, all-inclusive framework for regional cooperation.

Iran's hand of friendship and brotherhood is always extended towards all countries in the region, neighbors in particular. Working in this spirit, Dr. Raisi, the president of the Islamic Republic of Iran, has started his great undertaking by placing on his agenda the formulation of a balanced, dynamic and smart foreign policy. On this new agenda, relations which neighbors and Asian countries is prioritized and the improvement of political and economic relations in the region by relying on historical, cultural, religious and geographical bonds will serve as the basis for new mobility and connectivity. This framework demonstrates the profound belief that our commonalities in this region are much greater and stronger than our short-lived differences and grievances.

Today, the countries in the region have learned by experience that the objectives of sustainable security, welfare, and development are achievable only through regional synergy and cooperation among neighbors. Regional cooperation is aimed at reviving the opportunities and reducing the threats caused by geographical adjacency by relying upon the moral components of neighborliness. The new round of our joint efforts on Afghanistan serves as an important test for Afghanistan's neighbors by factoring in their extensive and diverse potentials in this regard.

The second meeting of the foreign ministers of Afghanistan's neighbors in Tehran is a new step in diplomacy taken by the new government of Iran to improve convergence and regional bonds without the interference of foreign powers and based upon neighborliness and to lay the foundation for the participants to adopt real and practical decisions in order to assist the people of Afghanistan in resolving the current crisis in their country, including by countering insecurity and multi-dimensional threats and reducing poverty. Today, after four decades of insecurity in the country, Afghanistan's neighbors consider the improvement of people's security and livelihood as the cornerstone for

stability and development and the formation of an "inclusive government."

Iran and Afghanistan are two friendly and brotherly neighbors with historical relations and abundant bonds, ranging from a shared comprehensive historical-civilizational area to religious, cultural connectivity, and the Persian language which has bonded the two countries together.

In all sensitive and decisive stages of Afghanistan's history, including the time of struggle and resistance against occupation, the Islamic Republic of Iran has stood with the Muslim and neighboring nation of Afghanistan. The new government of the Islamic Republic of Iran attaches great significance to this long-standing history in its foreign policy. And it is a source of delight that today there is a greater-than-ever consensus over the importance of neighborhood policy in Iran. There is no limitation on the expansion and deepening of relations with neighbors, most notably with Afghanistan which has a special position in the Iranian foreign policy.

Fortunately, all the neighbors of Afghanistan have this consensus that the country must be purged of insecurity and instability, that it should become a center for constructive and productive activities, and that the Afghan soil should not be used to launch threats against neighboring countries. As a pivotal country in the battle against ISIS and terrorism, and as a nation which has suffered the loss of its great general, Martyr Qassem Soleimani, as well as other martyrs in this path, the Islamic Republic of Iran together with other neighbors emphasizes counterterrorism. In this regard, establishment of an inclusive government which serves as the sole cause of unity and cohesion among Afghanistan's people will pave the way for a bright future for Afghanistan and is an important theme for discussion at the Tehran meeting.

The neighboring countries want a stable, secure, and economically prosperous Afghanistan, emphasizing the fact that the issue of displaced people and the livelihood of Afghanistan's people required intense attention in the short-term. Now, with the termination of Afghanistan's occupation, with the help of international organizations and the countries in the region, necessary arrangements should be made to aid the vulnerable people of Afghanistan in their current ordeal. At the Tehran Meeting, we will strive wholeheartedly to explore avenues to resolve this chronic problem, proving that engagement and cooperation of the neighbors and the assistance of all the members is a vast and constructive potential which can put an eternal end to foreign domination and reliance upon extraregional forces.

Military chief: Iran continues to monitor foes' activities

From page 1 ▶ Speaking at a military event, Baqeri said the era of decline and weakness of "the criminal U.S." and its regional cohorts has already begun, Tasnim reported.

He said the signs of United States' diminishing power and shift of power in the world have become obvious after the escape of Americans from Afghanistan, pullout of U.S. military forces from Iraq and parts of Syria, removal and reduction of advanced American air defense and anti-missile system from the Persian Gulf region, and decreased number of U.S. naval forces in the region and their deployment to the southern waters of

China. "However, none of these means a reduction in the threats or considering the situation as normal in relation to the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran," the commander warned.

"The criminal U.S. and the Zionists have shown that although it has become difficult for them to take direct military action, they will never abandon plots and hostility against the sacred administration of the Islamic Republic and will continue to pose threats and create problems for Islamic Iran and our country's regional partners in different shapes," the general added.

Tehran summit intended to find 'Afghan solution' for Afghanistan

President Raisi to inaugurate conference on Afghanistan

TEHRAN — The Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs said on Tuesday that the conference on Afghanistan in Tehran on Wednesday is aimed to find solutions to the problems facing the country based on "Afghan solution".

President Ebrahim Raisi will inaugurate the meeting which will be attended by the foreign ministers of six countries neighboring Afghanistan. Russia will also participate in the conference.

Foreign ministers of Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan arrived in Tehran on Tuesday.

Saeed Khatibzadeh, the Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman, told reporters that the foreign ministers of China and Russia will address the conference virtually. However, he said, the special representatives of these two countries will attend the conference in-person.

He added, "Foreign ambassadors based in Tehran have been invited and then profound discussions will be raised, and we expect this meeting to continue for a few hours and then we will try to reach a conclusion on a joint statement."

Khatibzadeh also reiterated Tehran's position that the current rulers of Afghanistan should pay attention to the will of the people.

He noted that the Tehran meeting is intended to help resolve problems facing Afghanistan based on "Afghan solution" and that Afghanistan's neighbors would work together to help bring lasting peace and stability to Afghanistan.

The meeting is continuation of a previous one held virtually in which the foreign ministers "agreed on the basic principles for the future of Afghanistan based on the will of the people of Afghanistan."

The virtual summit agreed to focus on an inclusive government in Afghanistan, a government in which one can only think of a "stable Afghanistan that is part of an inclusive regional cooperation arrangement," the spokesman noted.

The foreign ministry official also said: "It seems that the people of Afghanistan want a government that reflects the current demographic and ethnic composition of Afghanistan. The Islamic Republic of Iran has been by the side of the Afghan people for the past four decades, both during the resistance in Afghanistan and after it, and even during the occupation, and made every effort to be an effective actor and as a neighbor to the people of this country."

Iran supported the Afghan Mujaheddin in their resistance against the Soviets in the 1980s.

He added Iran has been hosting nearly four million Afghan citizens as "dear guests" who live and study along with Iranian citizens in different cities in Iran.

"Of course," he added, "recent developments in Afghanistan have created a new wave of asylum seekers, and displaced people, which amid all the economic pressures and hardships that Iran is suffering due to U.S. unilateral sanctions, has created new difficulties for the Islamic Republic."

Naturally, all international organizations and institutions that have direct responsibility for the situation of the displaced people

are obliged to act responsibly, and fulfil their responsibility vis-à-vis host countries such as Iran, which has the largest population of Afghan refugees, he suggested.

They should help and provide the necessary assistance that they have not done so far, or have done very little, the diplomat highlighted.

A senior UN official has warned that millions of Afghans, including children, could die of starvation unless urgent action is taken to pull Afghanistan back from the brink of collapse, Al Jazeera reported on Monday.

The World Food Programme (WFP) Executive Director David Beasley told Reuters news agency that 22.8 million people – more than half of Afghanistan's 39 million population – were facing acute food insecurity and "marching to starvation" compared with 14 million just two months ago.

Afghanistan is witnessing economic and social problems today, the Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman said, stressing that the Afghan people in particular are under a lot of economic pressure.

In such a situation, Khatibzadeh said, Iran has tried to reduce the economic hardship of the Afghan people and has not reduced or cut trade and economic relations.

Khatibzadeh added, "What we are witnessing today in Afghanistan is accompanied by concerns... and at the same time there are hopes. We hope to see a comprehensive mechanism inside Afghanistan with the help of all responsible countries and without foreign interference."

He went on to say that a political mechanism that meets the will of the Afghan people through an inclusive government will not only have the support of the people, but



also the support of the international community, including neighbors.

The spokesman said the security of Afghan people and their rights are Iran's first priority.

Khatibzadeh said: "We told the current governing body of Afghanistan to do their best to act as a responsible governing body and to provide the necessary political, economic and security conditions. Unfortunately, there are very serious concerns about the growth of terrorism and violence and extremism in Afghanistan. The bombings and terrorist acts in various cities of Afghanistan, including Kunduz and Kandahar, are very worrying."

No side can accept that Afghanistan is going backward politically, socially and economically or that the security situation is worsening, the foreign ministry spokesman said.

Khatibzadeh noted: "Efforts will be made to help the people of Afghanistan get through this transition period safely with the help of everyone. The Islamic Republic of Iran, as a responsible actor, has tried to be a responsible companion. While preventing and rejecting foreign interference and respecting the territorial integrity, independence and will of the Afghan people, it is also trying to enable the Afghan people to achieve what they believe and want"

The purpose of the Tehran summit

Regarding the purpose of the Tehran summit and its message, Khatibzadeh stated: "The summit is formed with the main goal of joint efforts of Afghanistan's neighbors. The Tehran summit will be a forum for participation and cooperation, and it conveys the message that instead of competing, all of Afghanistan's neighbors are looking for collaboration and cooperation for Afghanistan's future."

The diplomat underlined that of course, no country, including Afghanistan's neighbors, had the right to decide for the future of Afghanistan.

"Of course, our role is to facilitate and clarify the things that the Afghan governing body must respect in the future. We are trying to establish a common understanding... that the international community and neighboring countries have a collective opinion. We will try to make these ideas clear in the (final) statement."

Khatibzadeh added that the conference is also clearly sending a

message to Afghanistan that it cannot be a place for violence, terrorism and extremism.

Afghanistan must also be free of violence and terror, be calm and stable, and be a partner for regional cooperation, he said.

The spokesman further stated that the message of Tehran summit is that the people of Afghanistan will embrace a government that reflects their will and their ethnic and demographic composition.

"The Tehran summit seeks to show that solution to the Afghan problem is something that we should all be looking for: comprehensive and inclusive inter-Afghan dialogue aimed at reaching a mutually satisfactory solution."

Khatibzadeh also said: "The UN secretary general will send a message to this meeting and will announce his support for this initiative and the efforts of neighboring countries, including Iran. All this shows that Tehran will be a venue of active diplomacy in the region, with the help of the countries of the region to solve the problem of Afghanistan today."

About how to address the root causes of problems in Afghanistan in order to prevent similar incidents in the region, he said: "What we see as a catastrophic and scandalous

U.S. escape from Afghanistan after two decades of occupation and violence in Afghanistan led to nothing but the destruction of Afghanistan's social, political or security foundations. Many agree that it is one of the main roots of the current situation in Afghanistan."

The spokesman went on to say that the United States left Afghanistan even without proper consultation with its allies.

On whether representatives from the ruling Taliban would attend the meeting in Tehran, Khatibzadeh said that the mechanism of the conference is to take action based on consensus.

"We had requests from various parties inside and outside Afghanistan to attend the summit, and we also had requests from international actors from Europe, but since all decisions in this mechanism are based on consensus, all requests will be sent to Iran and based on the outcome of the talks regarding some of these requests at the next meeting, which will probably be in Beijing, proper decisions will be taken."

"The summit is formed with the main goal of joint efforts of Afghanistan's neighbors."

The foreign ministry says the conference is clearly sending a message to Afghanistan that it cannot be a place for violence, terrorism and extremism.

Taliban welcomes Ayatollah Khamenei's remarks on Shia-Sunni unity

TEHRAN — The Taliban spokesman has issued a statement welcoming the remarks by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on the unity of Shias and Sunnis, the Mehr news agency reported on Tuesday.

Taliban spokesman Mohammad Naeem tweeted that the group welcomed Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's remarks on the unity of Sunnis and Shias.

"The Islamic Emirate welcomes the words of the Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ayatollah Khamenei, who called for more unity of Shias and Sunnis in Afghanistan," Naeem



wrote on his Twitter:

Naeem also wrote that the Afghans would stand together against the conspiracies as much as possible and thwart them.

Earlier, in a meeting with

the guests of the Islamic unity conference, Ayatollah Khamenei called the reason for repeated emphasis on the issue of unity the division between religions and the serious efforts of the enemies to increase this division. The Leader also told the participants at the unity conference that today the terms Shia and Sunni have entered the American political literature while they are basically opposed to the principle of Islam.

The Leader added: "The recent unfortunate and tearful explosions in the mosques of Afghanistan against the Muslim and worshippers

are among the same incidents that were carried out by Daesh, and the Americans had explicitly stated that we created Daesh."

Ayatollah Khamenei said the annual meetings or gatherings on the issue of unity are not sufficient, suggesting: "In this regard, permanent discussion, explanation, encouragement, and planning should be done, and for example in the case of Afghanistan, one of the ways to prevent accidents is the presence of the current respected officials of this country in the centers and mosques or encouraging the Sunni brothers to attend joint gatherings."

Cyberattack disrupts fuel distribution in Iran



TEHRAN — A cyberattack at 11:00 AM local time on Tuesday disrupted fuel distribution in Iran.

The National Center for Cyberspace released a statement on Tuesday afternoon saying that

the fuel distribution process will soon go back to normal.

Prior to releasing the statement, Nour News, a website close to the Supreme National Security Council, confirmed that a cyberattack had disrupted the distribution of fuel in Iran's petrol stations.

"Technicians are trying to resolve the issue," an informed source at the SNSC said.

According to Fereydoun Hasanvand, head of the Energy Committee at the parliament, Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf himself is pursuing the fuel case.

He rejected rumors in social media regarding an increase in fuel price, saying that the problem will be resolved in the coming hours.

TEHRAN – After weeks of uncertainty and mayhem, positive signals are now coming out of Afghanistan. The Taliban has made efforts to address the concerns among some countries over the recent developments in Afghanistan.

Two deadly attacks against Shia mosques in Kunduz and Kandahar over the last few weeks sounded alarm bells in Tehran. The first attack targeted Shia worshippers in the northern Afghan city of Kunduz in the first week of October. A week later, another attack targeted Shia worshippers performing Friday prayers, this time in the southern city of Kandahar.

The twin attacks took place while ethnoreligious conflicts in Afghanistan had noticeably subsided after the Taliban takeover of Kabul in August. Hence, the attacks raised questions in Iran about the motives behind them.

Iran quickly moved to prevent a sectarian crisis in its eastern neighbor. The Kandahar attack made it quite clear for Iran that there were plans to create instability in Afghanistan by fomenting conflicts along the sectarian lines.

In its statement on the Kandahar attack, the Iranian foreign ministry openly warned of “plots” to sow discord between Shia and Sunni Muslims in Afghanistan. “The foreign ministry also warns of plots by the Islamic ummah’s enemies to cause divisions and stresses the need for unity and solidarity among Shias and Sunnis and for rejection



of violence and extremism in the name of Islam,” the statement said. “The Islamic Republic of Iran is confident that our Muslim brothers and sisters in Afghanistan will foil the divisive schemes of their enemies through solidarity, co-thinking and joint efforts.”

Meanwhile, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian launched an extensive diplomatic effort to prevent Afghanistan from getting dragged into a sectarian conflict. He called his Turkish and Indonesian counterparts as well as Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Yousef Al-Othaimeen.

Abdollahian told Al-Othaimeen that the aim of these terrorist acts was to cause sectarian division in Afghanistan and called for “a more active role by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, especially its secretary general, in Afghanistan.”

In the meantime, several high-ranking Iranian officials including the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, put the spotlight on the

enemies to destabilize Afghanistan by creating sectarian conflict.

In his recent speech delivered on the occasion of the birthday anniversary of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and Imam Sadiq (PBUH), Ayatollah Khamenei said the United States played a role in the attacks on Afghan Shias.

“The closest example is the tragic events that have taken place in Afghanistan the last two Fridays where they blew up a mosque with the Muslims in it while they were praying. Who blew these up? DAESH [ISIS]. Who are the DAESH? The DAESH is the same group that the Americans—the Democrats in the United States—have clearly stated, ‘We created them.’ Of course, they do not acknowledge this at the present time. They deny it now,” he said.

The speech was delivered during a celebration known as Unity Week which cherishes commonalities between Shia and Sunni sects of Islam. During the speech, the Leader underlined the need for beefing up unity among Muslims a

strategic principle.

Ayatollah Khamenei’s remarks were welcomed by the Taliban, indicating that Tehran-Kabul relations are in the direction of improvement.

“The Islamic Emirate welcomes the statements of the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ayatollah Khamenei, who called for greater unity between Sunnis and Shiites in Afghanistan. The Afghan people of all stripes have gained independence. And they will keep it together. We will not allow any conspiracy to harm or threaten the unity of our people and our country,” Mohammad Naeem, the spokesman of the Political Office of the Taliban, said on Twitter.

Abdul Qahar Balkhi, the spokesman for the foreign ministry of the Taliban, also echoed the same statement. “The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan welcomes remarks by Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran urging further unity between Ahl Sunnah & Ahl Tashayyu in Afghanistan. Afghans have gained independence with unity & will also neuter plots of discord with unity, inshaAllah,” he tweeted.

These statements came after a meeting between Iranian Ambassador to Afghanistan Bahadur Aminian and Taliban Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi. “During the meeting, Mr. Aminian said that economic challenge is our common enemy that creates turmoil, & Iran is ready to invest in energy,” Balkhi noted.

language of the Americans while they oppose and are enemy of Islam itself,” he said, noting that the U.S. and its agents are making efforts to create section all over the Muslim world.

“The sorrowful and heart-wrenching explosions in Afghanistan’s mosques against the Muslim and worshipping people are a case in point which was carried out by Daesh, and the Americans openly stated that they created Daesh,” the Leader added.

He was referring to recent two explosions targeting mostly Shia Muslim worshippers performing Friday prayers. The Daesh terrorist group claimed responsibility for the deadly attacks, raising alarm bells in Tehran over a possible plot to pitch Afghanistan’s Shia Muslims against the Sunni Taliban and then pitch the Taliban against Tehran.

Iran quickly warned about this plot and increased diplomatic contacts with other Muslim countries and institutions in a bid to prevent an internecine war in Afghanistan, one that if unleashed, would have severe implications for Tehran and the entire region. Amir Abdollahian discussed the situation in Afghanistan with his Turkish and Indonesian counterparts as well as Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Yousef Al-Othaimeen.

Amir Abdollahian told the OIC chief that Daesh attacks in Kunduz and Kandahar are aimed to cause sectarian division in Afghanistan.

It is expected that the Daesh attacks in Afghanistan would be discussed in the Tehran meeting. During his weekly press conference, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said the meeting aims to foster cooperation for the future of Afghanistan.

“The Afghanistan meeting is organized with the aim of joint efforts of Afghanistan’s neighboring countries. The Tehran meeting will be a forum for participation and cooperation in which countries, instead of competing, seek to work and cooperate for the future of Afghanistan. No one has the right to decide on the future of Afghanistan, the decision is with the Afghan people. The Afghan solution to the Afghan problem is something we should all be looking for,” he said.

The spokesman added, “Some argue that the root of much of the unrest in Afghanistan today is the catastrophic U.S. escape from Afghanistan after two decades of violence and destruction in Afghanistan, although pathology will be part of the solution, not all. What the Afghan people expect from countries like Iran is to help their will come true.”

He noted, “I think that the Afghan governing body must listen to the will of the Afghan people. In this case, they will be able to present themselves as a responsible governing body.”

He added: “Iranian citizens and the people of Iraq from now on do not need to have a visa and they can travel by holding an official passport of their own country and respecting the announced health

protocols. They must also have a negative corona test.”

The ambassador also said: “They may ask if anyone enters Iraq by plane, can he or she return to Iran through land border, the answer is yes; he or she can return.”

## SPORTS

### Shahrdari Urmia have a challenging season ahead: coach

From Page 1 ▶ Speaking about Shahrdari Urmia, the team which finished runners-up last season, the 44-year-old coach said: “We have some injured players such as Aliasghar Mojarad. Moreover, players like Saeid Mostafavand, Saber Kazemi, and Alireza Behboudi have recently joined our training camp and later than the rest of the players. So, we had little time to practice and review our tactical plan with the full squad.”

Kazemi and Behboudi played for Foolad at the 2021 Asian Men’s Club Volleyball Championship and joined their new team after the competition.

“It was a big problem for us because we didn’t have our key players. Of course, it was based on the rules and the federation’s statutes that the players had to play for their former team till the end of the Asian Club Championship. However, in my opinion, this law should be changed,” Tondravan insisted.

When asked about the schedule of the new season of the league, he responded: “The problem is that we do not have a complete schedule of games, including second-leg games and playoffs. Playing two matches in a week is also problematic in our country that has long distances between cities. However, I’m aware that the organizers of the super league also have some restrictions on the timing and scheduling of matches, and I understand their condition.”

Tondravan knows how difficult is his job in the current season: “All the teams are motivated against us and want to get the best result against the runners-up of the last season. Shahrdari have a tough job ahead this season, and all the players are completely ready for a challenging season.”

### Iran’s women’s basketball team to hold camp in Turkey

TEHRAN – Iran’s women’s basketball team intend to hold a training camp in Ankara, Turkey as part of preparation for the FIBA Women’s Asia Cup 2021 Division B.

The Iranian team are going to play Botas, Cankaya Universitesi and Ormanspor ahead of the competition.

The FIBA Women’s Asia Cup 2021 Division B will be played at the Prince Hamza Hall in Amman, Jordan from Nov. 7 to 13.

For the Group Phase, the six teams are separated into two groups of three according to the latest update of the FIBA World Ranking.

Iran will play Lebanon in their opening match on Nov. 7. The 2017 runners up Kazakhstan will then start their search for promotion to Division A against Indonesia. Hosts Jordan will play their first game against Indonesia later on Nov. 8 against Indonesia.

The Final Phase starts on Nov. 10 with two Qualification to Semi-Finals games between teams that finished 2nd and 3rd place in their groups.

The top team from each group will directly advance to the semi-finals which will be played on Nov. 12 after a rest day. The 5th place classification game will also be played as the first game on this day.

The Final of the FIBA Women’s Asia Cup 2021 Division B will then be played on Nov. 13 as well as the 3rd place classification game.

The winner of the FIBA Women’s Asia Cup 2021 Division B gain promotion to play in the Division A for the next edition of the Women’s Asia Cup.

### Hassan Kamranifar elected FFIRI general secretary

TEHRAN — Hassan Kamranifar was elected as secretary general of the Football Federation of the Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) on Tuesday.

He replaced Mansour Ghanbarzadeh as acting secretary general in July.

Kamranifar is an Iranian retired assistant referee.

He officiated in two 2010 and 2014 FIFA World Cups. Kamranifar also officiated at 2008 Olympic Games, African Cup of Nations 2010, 2011 AFC Asian Cup, 2012 and 2013 FIFA World Club Cups, and 2013 FIFA U-20 World Cup.

### Mohammad Naderi sidelined for four weeks

TEHRAN –Altay winger Mohammad Naderi has been sidelined for four weeks due to foot injury.

The Iranian player has sustained an injury to his left foot.

Naderi was forced to leave the field in the match against Yeni Malatyaspor in the 20th minute.

Altay lost 2-1 their away match.

### Akbar Misaghian takes charge of Padideh

TEHRAN – Akbar Misaghian has been named as Padideh football team coach.

He replaced Reza Mohajeri, who had been named Padideh coach in September.

Misaghian, 68, is a long-serving Iranian coach and has worked at several clubs since 1995.

Padideh were held to a goalless draw against Aluminum in Matchday 1 of Iran Professional League and also didn’t travel to Rafsanjan to meet Mes on Sunday.

### Hossein Vafaei stuns Ronnie O’Sullivan in German Masters Qualifier

TEHRAN – Iranian snooker player Hossein Vafaei produced a stunning display to beat Ronnie O’Sullivan 5-0 in their German Masters qualifying match.

Vafaei rattled off breaks of 52, 50, 81, 141 and 64 to dump out the six-time world champion, who lost a tight opening frame and was unable to threaten the comeback.

Vafaei’s reward is a meeting with Andrew Higginson, with the winner then taking their place in the main draw next January.

### AFC Women’s Asian Cup India 2022 draw set to reveal exciting battles

TEHRAN – The spotlight will be on the stars of Asian women’s football when the leading 12 teams discover their opponents at the anticipated AFC Women’s Asian Cup India 2022 draw ceremony held in Kuala Lumpur on Thursday, October 28, 2021.

The excitement around Asia’s marquee women’s national team competition is starting to build following the completion of the enthralling qualifiers where Chinese Taipei, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Korea Republic, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam secured their spots to the Finals.

They will join the top three teams from the 2018 showpiece – Japan, Australia and China PR – alongside host India when the AFC Women’s Asian Cup India 2022™ takes place from January 20 to February 6 with the theme ‘Our Goal for All’.

The contenders for the AFC Women’s Asian Cup India 2022 will be separated into four pots based on their ranking from the previous edition. At the end of the draw, 12 teams will be divided into three groups of four teams with host India placed in Pot 1 alongside reigning champions Japan and Australia, while Pot 2 will feature China PR, Thailand and Korea Republic.

The Philippines, Vietnam and the Islamic Republic of Iran, who made history by qualifying to the Finals for the first time, will occupy Pot 3 while Chinese Taipei, Myanmar and Indonesia are placed in Pot 4.

## Iranian president’s special envoy for Afghanistan inaugurated

TEHRAN – The new Iranian envoy for Afghanistan started discharging his duty on Tuesday after being inaugurated at a handover ceremony held at the Iranian foreign ministry.

A ceremony was held in the presence of Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian at the Foreign Ministry to inaugurate the Islamic Republic of Iran’s special envoy for Afghanistan Hassan Kazemi Qomi and appreciate the efforts of Mohammad Ibrahim Taherian who served as the foreign minister’s special envoy for Afghanistan, the foreign ministry said.

The ceremony marked a significant shift in Iran’s foreign policy toward Afghanistan. This was manifested by the fact that the new Iranian envoy for Afghanistan is appointed by the president, not the foreign minister, as was the case with Taherian.

In the Tuesday ceremony, which was attended by the deputies and directors general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and some civilian and military figures, Amir Abdollahian thanked Mohammad Ebrahim Taherian for his valuable services.

The foreign minister referred to Kazemi Qomi’s diplomatic record as Iran’s ambassador to Iraq, and Iran’s consul general in Herat, calling him the right choice by the president.

Emphasizing Hassan Kazemi Qomi’s command of the Afghanistan affairs and his presence at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Amir Abdollahian expressed hope that his appointment will complement the right approach adopted towards Afghanistan.

During the ceremony, Kazemi Qomi referred to President Raisi’s appointment of a special envoy for Afghanistan and talked about the strategic point of view of the new Iranian administration in the case of Afghanistan.

He said making use of all regional and international capacities to help establish stability and security in Afghanistan and form an inclusive government in the country and planning to implement a comprehensive roadmap regarding the neighboring country are among his plans.

Kazemi Qomi was appointed as Iran’s special envoy for Afghanistan by President Ayatollah Seyed Ebrahim Raisi in mid-October. The appointment came after a deadly attack on a Shia mosque in Kandahar.

The president expressed condolences over the martyrdom and wounding of a number of prayers at the mosque in Kandahar, saying, “Daesh terrorism is after finalizing the failed mission of western usurpers in Afghanistan, and such attacks are done with the aim of sowing discord, war and religious bloodshed.”

Speaking in a cabinet session after the introduction

## Ambassador says travel visas for Iranian pilgrims to Iraq canceled

TEHRAN — The Iranian ambassador to Baghdad has announced cancellation of air travel visas for Iranian pilgrims to Iraq.

“In follow-up to the blessed birthday of the Prophet of Islam, the

two countries of Iran and Iraq on Monday agreed that travelers and pilgrims of the two countries enter the two countries without a visa.”

Iraj Masjedi said on Monday, Mehr reported.

He added: “Iranian citizens and the people of Iraq from now on do not need to have a visa and they can travel by holding an official passport of their own country and respecting the announced health

## Loading, unloading of goods in ports up over 10% in 7 months yr/yr



From page 1 ▶ While Iran is combating the U.S. unilateral sanctions on its economy, the country's ports as the major gates of exports and imports play some significant role in this battle. This role makes all-out support to ports and more development of them serious and vital.

Such necessity has led the government

to define projects for more development of the ports and also take some measures to encourage investment making in ports, in addition, to facilitate loading and unloading of goods, especially basic commodities, there.

It is worth mentioning that PMO has defined a high number of projects to develop and improve the country's ports, as the country aims to double the capacity of its ports in a course of five years.

According to the Ports and Maritime Organization, the capacity of the country's ports has increased from 180 million tons in the Iranian calendar year 1392 (ended in March 2014) to 250 million tons in the previous calendar year.

The total capacity of the country's ports is expected to reach 280 million tons by the end of the current fiscal year (late March 2022).

## Tehran determined to settle gas dues to Turkmenistan

TEHRAN – Iranian Oil Minister Javad Oji has said the country is determined to settle its natural gas dues to Turkmenistan as soon as possible, Shana reported.

Oji made the remarks following a meeting with a Turkmen delegation headed by the country's Foreign Minister Rashid Muradov on Tuesday.

According to Oji, Iran has two long-term (25 years) deals with Turkmenistan based on which the country imported 40 million cubic meters (mcm) of gas on a daily basis.

"Unfortunately, in the previous government, Turkmenistan's gas exports to Iran were cut off due to the delay in payment of Turkmenistan's dues," he said, adding that the issue was referred to the International Court of Arbitration, and this court determined the exact amount of Iran's debt to Turkmenistan.

The oil minister noted that the negotiations with the Turkmen delegation which



consisted of representatives of the country's energy and banking sectors were positive, adding: "Fortunately, with appropriate planning that we had already done, positive negotiations were done to settle the mentioned debt."

According to the official, representatives of the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) and the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) will continue the negotiations between the two countries at the expert level in the coming

# Iran plans to double non-oil exports in 4 years

TEHRAN – Head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) Alireza Peyman Pak has said plans are underway for doubling the country's non-oil exports over the next four years, the TPO portal reported.

Speaking in a meeting with Iran Chamber of Cooperatives (ICC) representatives on Monday, Peyman Pak emphasized the importance of establishing international links for promoting exports and said: "it is necessary to prepare a roadmap in the field of exports to know exactly what institutions and sectors should be used to achieve the desired result."

According to Peyman Pak, based on a comprehensive four-year plan, the export target countries are divided into two groups, the first priority, and the second priority. The first priority group is comprised of 23 countries including neighboring countries, China, India, Russia, Kenya, and Malaysia, while the second priority includes the rest of the Islamic republic's trade partners.



"Our approach is to do business with preferential and complementary tariffs to develop exports. We can also provide logistics subsidies to establish links between us and our trade partners," he noted.

He further mentioned the importance of benefiting from international treaties and agreements to realize the country's export targets, saying: "If the free trade agreement with Eurasia is fully implemented, we will have the capacity to export \$10 billion to the union in the short term, which should be used to the best of our ability."

We need to produce goods that have supply stability, quality, and a proper pricing system, the official added.

The official also underlined the significant role that organizations and institutions like the Iran Chamber of Cooperatives can play in supporting small production units to reach global markets and said ICC plays a significant role in supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and also in establishing supply chains domestically and internationally.

"The chamber of cooperatives has an important role to play

in supporting small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as in supply chains domestically and internationally, and can help small traders to produce and export their goods," he added.

Noting that the ICC's major task is to support small and medium-sized enterprises, he said: "Export consortia and supply chains are important areas in which the chamber of cooperatives can make significant contributions because the micro-producer cannot enter global markets and in this regard Institutions such as the ICC should play an intermediary role."

Peyman Pak had earlier said that the government was trying to boost non-oil exports by improving the logistics sector, preferential tariffs, and also by reforming laws, regulations, and structures in the trade advisory sector.

According to the plans, the country's exports are set to increase by \$35 billion over the next four years, he said earlier this month.

## Over \$2.2b of foreign investment approved in industrial, mining sectors in H1

TEHRAN – The Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade has approved 74 foreign investment projects valued at about \$2.227 billion in the first six months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-September 22), IRNA reported.

According to the latest data released by the ministry, a total of 113 foreign investment projects valued at \$2.614 billion were approved in the country during the mentioned period, of which the share of the industry, mining, and trade sector was 65 percent and 85 percent in terms of number and value, respectively.

Of the total number of investment projects in the current year's six-month period, 94.5 percent was the share of the industry sector, 4.2 percent was the share of the mining sector, while trade-related projects

accounted for 1.3 percent of the total figure.

The highest volume of foreign investment approved in the industry, mining, and trade sectors in the period under review were in the categories of chemical materials, base metals, radio, television and communication equipment, and tobacco-related products.

Ghana, the United Arab Emirates, Afghanistan, the Netherlands, and Germany were the top five countries with the highest volume of investment, while, Khuzestan, Sistan-Baluchestan, Kerman, Zanjan, Markazi, and East Azarbaijan were the top five provinces in terms of the volume of approved foreign investment.

Afghanistan, Turkey, China, the UAE, and Germany were also the top five investors in terms of the number of approved projects during the said time span.

## Steel products export rises 69% in 6 months on year

TEHRAN- Iran's export of steel products increased 69 percent during the first half of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-September 22), as compared to the same period of time in the past year.

Based on the statistics, 1.62 million tons of steel products was exported in the six-month period of this year, while the figure was 960,000 tons in the same time span of the previous year.

As previously reported, over 6.768 million tons of steel products has been produced in the first half of the current year, showing a nine-percent fall as compared to the figure for the same period of time in the past year, which was a result of constant power outages in the country.

In early May, Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry issued a three-month waiver for some approved steel production units to be able to export steel products especially long sections.

The ministry had restricted the exports of steel products and obliged all steel producers to offer their products at Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME).

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

Based on the mentioned data, over 2.839 million tons of steel products were exported in the mentioned year, registering an 18-percent decline year on year.

As ISPA data indicated, the exports of



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

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).

According to the latest data released by the World Steel Association (WSA), production 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 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.

days.

"Considering the solutions and proposals that we have presented, the debt to the Turkmen side will undoubtedly be settled, and we are determined in this regard," Oji stated.

The minister further announced Iran's readiness to export technical and engineering services to Turkmenistan, saying that Iran has a high capacity in the petrochemical, refinery, onshore and offshore drilling, as well as oil and gas industries that it can provide to Turkmenistan.

He stressed that the main purpose of the meeting between the two sides was to promote comprehensive relations with Turkmenistan, adding: "With the good planning done by the Oil Ministry, more such events will undoubtedly take place during this government considering the positive and good attitude that we saw from the Turkmen side."

## Export from Qom province increases 89%

TEHRAN- The value of export from Qom province in the center of Iran rose 89 percent during the first half of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-September 22), as compared to the same period of time in the past year, a provincial official announced.

Mojtaba Farhadi, the deputy head of the province's Industry, Mining and Trade Department, said that 94,500 tons of goods valued at \$108.5 million were exported from Qom in the six-month period of this year, while 48,000 tons of goods worth \$57.5 million had been exported in the same time span of the previous year.

The official said that the export also indicates a 97-percent growth in terms of weight.

The official named Iraq, Turkey, Afghanistan, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Pakistan, Germany, India, Russia, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan as the export destinations, and copper, lead, plastics, machinery including air purifiers and valves, fuel and mineral oils, shoes and slippers, fibers, eggs, and aluminum as some major exported items.

As announced by the head of the



Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), the value of Iran's non-oil trade rose 47 percent during the first half of the current Iranian calendar year, as compared to the same period of time in the past year.

Mehdi Mir-Ashrafi said that Iran has traded 79.1 million tons of non-oil products worth \$45 billion with other countries in the mentioned period.

The official put the six-month non-oil exports at 60 million tons valued at \$21.8 billion, with a 61-percent rise in value and a 30-percent growth in weight.

The IRICA head mentioned liquefied natural gas, methanol, polyethylene, semi-finished iron products, iron ingots, propane, urea,

gasoline, iron rods and cathodes as the main exported products in the said time span.

He said major export destinations of the Iranian non-oil goods were China with about 14.8 million tons worth \$6.5 billion, Iraq with 13.9 million tons worth \$3.8 billion, Turkey with 7.2 million tons worth \$2.3 billion, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) with 5.8 million tons worth \$2.2 billion, and Afghanistan with 2.5 million tons worth \$1.0 billion.

The official further announced that Iran has imported 19.1 million tons of non-oil commodities worth \$23.1 billion in the first six months of the present year, with a 37-percent growth in value and a 15-percent rise in weight year on year.

Mir-Ashrafi named cellphones, livestock corn, sunflower oil, barley, meal, wheat, soybeans, sugar, palm oil, and rice as the main imported commodities.

The United Arab Emirates with 5.9 million tons of goods worth \$7.3 billion was the top exporter to Iran in the said period, followed by China with 1.5 million tons of goods worth \$5.0 billion, Turkey with 2.1 million tons worth \$2.4 billion, and Switzerland with one million tons worth \$900,000, the official stated.

According to the official, out of the total 19.1 million tons of goods imported into the country in the first six months of this year, 14.3 million worth \$8.9 billion were basic goods, which constitutes 75 percent of the total imported goods.

The IRICA head has announced that the value of Iran's non-oil trade stood at \$73 billion in the past Iranian calendar year.

Mir-Ashrafi has put the weight of non-oil trade at 146.4 million tons, and said that the figure shows a 25-million-ton annual decline, which is the result of sanctions and coronavirus pandemic.

## TEDPIX rises on Tuesday

TEHRAN- After several days of decline, TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), rose 336 points to 1.384 million on Tuesday.

As reported, over 5.155 billion securities worth 38.106 trillion rials (about \$907.28 million) were traded at the TSE.

The first market's index gained 467 points while the second market's index lost 19

points.

TEDPIX rose 2.7 percent in the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday).

The index gained 39,000 points to 1.436 million in the past week.

During the past week, the indices of Social Security Investment Company, Bandar Abbas Refinery, Isfahan Refining Company, National Iranian Copper Industries Compa-

ny, Iran Mercantile Exchange, and Sabzevar Pars Steel Complex 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.

## CORRECTION

In the news story titled "Tehran hosts Iran-Turkey trade conference" published on October 25, it was mistakenly reported that the Iran-Turkey Joint Chamber of Commerce participated in the event.

# China is on par with U.S. on all fronts: researcher

From page 1 ▶ The U.S. is in no mood to acknowledge the rise of China because it will in return bring Beijing at par with Washington something that the U.S. doesn't want. Moreover, the rise of China and its acknowledgment will be a direct threat to the international world order established in the aftermath of WWII which has constantly put the West at an advantage.

**Do you think the U.S. is able to curb China's influence through QUAD?**

It is fairly difficult to suggest or assume that the U.S. will be able to curb the growing Chinese influence by or through the QUAD. While the basic construct of the QUAD is against China the countries in the Quad have been unable to achieve it as they differ in doing so. Australia is not interested to take China by its horns as it has reasonably good trade and economic ties. Similarly, the only nations on one page to go against China are the U.S. and India alone for obvious reasons and have become a desperate attempt by Washington and New Delhi to counter China.

**How do you see the importance of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in consolidating China's influence and promoting its deterrence power?**

SCO has played a significant role in putting China's perspective across the globe. While it has not given it a deterrence power in a pure sense, it has provided it with a platform to put its voice across



in multiple ways and infiltrate and influence countries in the region and beyond through economic and diplomatic agendas.

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

**A:** Not really. I believe that there was a general Afghanistan fatigue prevalent in the U.S. for many years. It was a lost cause that only needed some political realization and materialization

which happened while Trump was in office. China has been a keen neutral player in the perusal of an end to the Afghan crisis and if anything the exit of the U.S. from Afghanistan is more or less a relief for Beijing and Moscow and it has given them more space to maneuver without the U.S. policing their moves.

**Do you think that China is able to contain U.S. moves in the Far East through the SCO?**

China doesn't need SCO in a realist sense to contain the U.S. Its

obvious rise both in the diplomatic sense as well as strategic sense has worked as deterrence for the U.S. Moreover, whatever the U.S. says, it cannot take China by its horns as it cannot afford to do so for multiple reasons.

**Do you expect China enter military rivalry with the U.S. after its economic rise?**

China is already at par with the U.S. on all fronts, including the military. Both nations have extraordinary military capabilities, including nuclear power. China is also cognizant of the fact that it will be more able to defeat the U.S. as well as maintain Beijing's influence and role of superpower by increasing its economic might rather than military.

**"China has established its footprint on all the continents, through its diplomatic efforts."**

## One in four Londoners unable to buy vital food as UK petrol price hits record high

From page 1 ▶ Meanwhile, nearly half of those surveyed (47 percent) said there was less variety of goods in the supermarkets than usual.

In the past two weeks, food shortages in London have been 43 percent more than the national average, and one in nine Londoners said they had been forced to purchase less food due to the shortages.

After London, which was found to be the region worst hit with food shortages in the UK, Wales was the region with the second-worst food shortages. The research shows one in five people have been unable to purchase essential food in Wales.

Next Day Delivery, which conducted the study, said that "with the country facing significant delays in the delivery of food and other essentials, the experiences of families in the UK – particularly in London, where food shortages are hitting hardest – give us a clear picture of how the situation is impacting our everyday lives."

It added that "with Christmas approaching, the pressure will be on to resolve the various supply chain issues (including driver vacancies and CO2 shortages) so that warehouses can remain stocked and consumers can purchase the essential products they need."

The research also revealed that more than a third of Londoners were not able to purchase petrol for their cars in the past two weeks as a result of the fuel shortages.

It comes as the average UK petrol price per liter hit 142.94p (\$2.05) on Sunday; in data that was reported on Monday by the British automotive services company and Experian Catalist, which is separate from the weekly average record price reported by the government.

The previous record was more than nine years ago, in April 2012.

The spokesman for Britain's Royal Automobile Club Simon Williams, says, "This is truly a dark day for drivers, and one which we hoped we wouldn't see again after the high prices of April 2012. This will hurt many household budgets, and no doubt have knock-on implications for the wider economy."

"The big question now is: where will it stop and what price will petrol hit? If oil gets to \$100 a barrel, we could very easily see the average price climb to 150p a liter."

He adds that "even though many people aren't driving quite as much as they have in the past due to the pandemic, drivers tell us they are more reliant on their cars now than they have been in years, and many simply don't have a choice but to drive."

"There's a risk those on lower incomes who



have to drive to work will seriously struggle to find the extra money for the petrol they so badly need.

The Royal Automobile Club also urged the government "to help ease the burden at the pumps by temporarily reducing VAT, and for the biggest retailers to bring the amount they make on every liter of petrol back down to the level it was prior to the pandemic."

The situation for petrol is unlikely to improve soon, with analysts forecasting Brent crude prices to remain high for the rest of the year.

According to the Royal Automobile Club, in the UK, an astonishing 57% of the average retail price for a liter of petrol goes to tax.

This is while the UK Automobile Association (AA) believes the high petrol prices could force more drivers to think about switching to electric vehicles, with electricity prices as low as 4.5p per kWh off peak at home.

The organization's fuel spokesman says: "whether it's down to oil producers, market speculators, Treasury taxes or struggling retailers trying to balance their margins, record pump prices must be saying to drivers with the means that it is time to make the switch to electric."

However, the spokesperson warned "as for poorer motorists, many of them now facing daily charges to drive in cities, there is no escape. It's a return to cutting back on other consumer spending, perhaps even heating or food, to keep the car that gets them to work on the road."

The record-high prices come just weeks after much of the UK saw fuel shortages due to a lack of tanker drivers.

Senior oil and gas analyst at BCS Global Markets, Ron Smith, told British media that this shortage would also continue to affect motorists, adding: "The problem for motorists is only partly one of higher prices. As more important for many will be the ability to get petrol at

any price, given the lack of fuel at forecourts across the country."

He adds, "of course, even if the trucking situation is solved, petrol prices seem likely to remain elevated for the coming months due to the simple reason that crude prices have risen substantially."

The British chancellor is set to increase the national living wage in Wednesday's budget.

Since 2016, the national living wage is what the government has called the national minimum wage for anybody above 22-years-old. Despite its name, experts agree the national living wage is not based on the true cost of living.

Speaking to British media, senior research economist Tom Waters says

"rising inflation will blunt the real-term value of this minimum wage hike, and of course, while prices are rising now, the increase in the minimum wage won't kick in until April."

The opposition Labour's party's shadow chief secretary to the Treasury, Bridget Phillipson, called the rise "underwhelming" saying

"much of it will be swallowed up by the government's tax rises, Universal Credit cuts, and failure to get a grip on energy bills."

The Living Wage Foundation also reacted to the news by saying, "we all need a wage that provides a decent standard of living. If we're to recover and rebuild over the coming months and years, we'll need to see more employers commit to go beyond this new government minimum, do the right thing, and commit to pay a real living wage."

Over the past month, the forecast for prices had sharply increased, during a period when a driver shortage caused major supply problems and led to panic buying that resulted in filling stations across the country running out of fuel. The UK government went to the extent of deploying the army to help deliver the fuel to petrol stations.

According to an Office for National Statistics survey carried out between 6 and 17 October, the fallout from the crisis has not gone away, with almost two in five drivers unable to buy fuel over the past fortnight because it was not available.

## China's economy continued to recover steadily in the third quarter of 2021

By Fu Lihua

According to the data recently released by China's National Bureau of statistics, China's GDP increased by 9.8% year-on-year in the first three quarters of 2021, with an average growth rate of 5.2% in two years. The economy continued to recover and improve steadily, and performed within a reasonable range, showing strong toughness and great potential. China's economic situation in the third quarter has attracted worldwide attention, and many Iranian media and people are also very interested in learning more about it, I would like to make a few comments on this aspect.

First, the sustained and stable recovery of China's economy is attributable to China's comprehensive coordination of epidemic response and economic and social development. All regions and sectors in China adhered to the general tone of seeking progress while maintaining stability, ensured 'stability on the six fronts' and 'security in the six areas' in accordance with the requirements of grounding their works in this new stage of development, fully and faithfully applying the new development paradigm, fostering a new pattern of development, and promoting high-quality development. As a result, China's economy continued to recover and performed steadily in the third quarter. The agricultural production situation was good, and the harvest was a foregone conclusion. The production in industry and service sectors increased, and the supply of important livelihood goods was sufficient. The supply and demand of the consumer market was basically balanced, thus the price remained stable on the whole. It can be said that the overall performance of China's economy is within a reasonable range, showing strong toughness and great potential, which provides strong driving forces for the world economic recovery.

Second, China's economic growth in the third quarter was rich in connotation and full of highlights. First, the consumer price index was at a low level. From January to September, CPI increased by 0.6% year-on-year, which was lower than the expected target of about 3%. The prices of goods related to peoples' livelihood decreased steadily, and the food prices decreased by 1.6% year-on-year. Second, the employment situation was generally stable. From January to September, the surveyed urban unemployment rate was 5.2% in average, lower than the expected target of 5.5%. 10.45 million new urban jobs were created, and the youth unemployment rate decreased for two consecutive months. Third, there was steady progress in the development of industry. From January to August, the added value and the investment of high-tech manufacturing industry increased by 13.1% and 17.7% respectively on average in two years. Fourth, foreign trade and foreign investment increased rapidly.

The import and export of goods increased by 22.7% from January to September. The actual use of foreign capital increased by 22.3% from January to August, and the foreign exchange reserves remained above \$3.2 trillion for five consecutive months. Fifth, domestic demand continued to recover. From January to August, the manufacturing investment increased by an average of 3.3% in two years, and the private investment increased by an average of 3.9% in two years, an increase of 0.2% and 0.5% respectively compared with that of January to July. Sixth, the momentum of innovation and entrepreneurship was good. According to the ranking of the global innovation index released by the World Intellectual Property Organization recently, China rose by 2 places and rank 12th globally. The total number of market participants was about 150 million, and the overall activity rate was stable at about 70%. Seventh, market vitality increased. From January to August, the added value of medium-sized, small and micro industrial enterprises increased by 16.3% and 14.1% respectively, and the total profits of industrial enterprises above designated size increased by an average of 19.5% in two years. Eighth, the overall financing cost decreased steadily. From January to August, the corporate loan rate was 4.63% which was 0.13% lower than last year.

Third, the steady and orderly advancement of key tasks has provided strong driving forces for China's economic development. First, we improved macro regulation. We adhered to interval regulation, refrained from adopting a deluge of strong stimulus policies, strengthened the linkage of fiscal, financial and employment policies, improved the mechanism of fiscal and monetary policies, and maintained the continuity and stability of our policies. Second, we adhered to the policy of giving priority to employment. The 14th five-year plan for employment pro-



motion was formulated and promulgated to promote market-oriented employment, provide assistance to key groups such as college graduates and migrant workers and people with difficulties, encourage entrepreneurship-driven employment, and ensure people's income and basic livelihoods through employment. Third, we focused on helping market participants to solve difficulties. The Chinese government formulated and promulgated the Regulations of the People's Republic of China on the Administration of the Registration of Market Entities, reduced the reserve requirements to guide financial institutions to make good use of the funds, increased the amount of re-loans to 300 billion yuan designated for small business, and encouraged financial institutions to provide loans to enterprises in industries seriously affected by the epidemic. Fourth, through reform, we stimulated the vitality of market participants. We deepened the reform to 'streamline administration and delegate power, improve regulation and upgrade services,' carried out anti-monopoly actions, strengthened the protection of workers' rights and interests in new areas of employment, established monetary policy tools to support carbon emission reduction, and promoted green and low-carbon development. Fifth, we continued to expand and raise the level of opening up. We comprehensively coordinated port epidemic response and the promotion of international trade, deepened the reform of cross-border trade facilitation, deepened the implementation of the foreign investment law and its implementation regulations, and accelerated the preparation for the entry into force of RCEP. Sixth, continued to ensure and improve people's livelihoods. We paid close attention to epidemic response, ensured energy supply, continued to implement the basic livelihoods assurance mechanism, accelerated the development of affordable rental housing, optimized Fertility Policies to promote the long-term balanced development of the population, and further promoted the efficiency and convenience of medical insurance services.

The sustained and stable recovery of China's economy has provided strong driving forces for the recovery of the world economy. Despite the impact of the epidemic on the global industrial chains, supply chains and trade, China has continued to consolidate and expand the achievements of epidemic response and economic and social development, which has played a vital role in alleviating global supply pressure and improving the well-being of consumers in various countries. At the same time, guided by the principles of openness, cooperation, unity and win-win cooperation, China will unswervingly expand opening-up in all respects so as to make the Chinese market a market for the world and share the opportunities in China with the world. All countries around the world, including Iran, are welcomed to benefit from China's economic development, promote high-quality Belt and Road cooperation through greater openness and cooperation in trade, investment, industry and other fields, and collectively build a community with a shared future for mankind.

Ms. Fu Lihua is the Charge d'Affaires of Chinese Embassy in Iran.

## Restoration completed on Sassanid arch bridge



TEHRAN – A restoration project has recently been completed on a historical arch bridge in Kuhdasht county, western Lorestan province, the provincial tourism chief has announced.

Some of the pillars and arches of the Sassanid-era (224 CE–651) Siah Pelleh Bridge were repaired as a part of the project, Seyyed Amin Qasemi said on Tuesday.

The material and restoration methods of the project were traditional and the bridge was restored according to international standards, the official added.

The bridge, which is built over the Seymareh River, one of the largest rivers in western Iran, has been designated as a national heritage site.

An arch bridge carries loads primarily by compression, which exerts on the foundation both vertical and horizontal forces. Arch foundations must therefore prevent both vertical settling and horizontal sliding. Despite the more complicated foundation design, the structure itself normally requires less material than a beam bridge of the same span.

## Permanent handicrafts markets to open in Kermanshah

TEHRAN – A number of permanent markets for handicrafts are planned to be established across the western province of Kermanshah, the provincial tourism chief has announced.

"There are plans to establish permanent handicraft markets in several cities across the province," Jalil Jabbari said on Tuesday.

There is, however, a need for private sector investment in this area, the official added.

Kalash (lightweight traditional footwear also called Givah), textile, door locks, musical instruments, woodwork, leatherwork, figurines, and rugs are among the highlights of native handicrafts in Kermanshah.

In late 2017, Marivan, a historical city in Kermanshah, officially celebrated being named a world crafts city by Kalash.

With 14 entries, Iran ranks first globally for the number of cities and villages registered by the World Crafts Council, as China with seven entries, Chile with four, and India with three ones come next.

The value of Iran's handicrafts exports stood at \$120 million during the first eleven months of the past Iranian calendar year 1399 (March 20, 2020 – February 18, 2021), Mehr reported. The country's handicrafts exports slumped during

Arch bridges can be classified into deck arch bridges (featuring arches below the deck) and through arch bridges (those with arches above the deck, generally tied arches). In all arch bridges, the structural difficulty can be found in the minimization of the misalignment of the arch axis and the line of thrust, as well as a sufficient bending and buckling resistance. General design recommendations focus principally on the arch-to-span ratio, the arch and deck slenderness, and the number of hangers or piers.

Recent innovative arch bridges include high-speed railway (HSR) bridges, concrete-filled steel tubular and precast concrete arches, high-performance concrete or ultra-high performance concrete arches, and steel-concrete composite arches, and feature innovative erection methods. Recent research has been dedicated to the shape and magnitude of equivalent geometric imperfections, fatigue detailing, erection methods, reduction of the arch's self-weight, and new materials for arches, hangers, and ties.

Lorestan, which is a region of raw beauty, was inhabited by Iranian Indo-European peoples, including the Medes, c. 1000 BC. Cimmerians and Scythians intermittently ruled the region from about 700 to 625 BC.

The Luristan Bronzes noted for their eclectic array of Assyrian, Babylonian, and Iranian artistic motifs, date from this turbulent period. Lorestan was incorporated into the growing Achaemenid Empire in about 540 BC and successively was part of the Seleucid, Parthian, and Sassanid dynasties.



the mentioned months in comparison to the same period last a year earlier due to the damage the coronavirus pandemic has inflicted on global trade.

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

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

# 'Untold stories' now available for you to re-discover majestic Isfahan

From page 1 ► the mayor of Isfahan Ali Qasemzadeh, and Alireza Salarian, the head of Representative Office of Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Isfahan, and a host of travel insiders, reporters, and journalists who discussed ways to jumpstart tourism.

Erfanian stressed the need for greater public awareness about the cultural heritage of the ancient land, saying the "untold stories" are produced for that purpose.

"Redefining destinations has rarely happened in the field of tourism [in the country], and now the city [of Isfahan] is a forerunner of such a trend to express the brand in a new way," he said.

Talking about the clips, Erfanian said "In these multi-language videos, we have tried to put the spotlight on inaccessible or lesser-known historical sites, foods, intangible heritage, people... characters, craftsmen and figures who have played a role in shaping the identity of Isfahan."

"The issue of sisterhood in cities, the diversity of religions, and intangible heritage are amongst other elements we have addressed in the videos," he added.

In an address to the unveiling ceremony, the deputy tourism minister used the context of modern architecture to discuss ways to highlight contemporary Isfahan shoulder to shoulder with its historical core.

"We see in the videos that they mostly bring centuries-old architecture and culture into focus, however, we should consider casting light on the new and modern side of Isfahan as well."

"In the production of extra videos, newer ideas may be added to improve the quality of the work," Shalabafian added.

The governor-general of Isfahan reminded the attendees of the unique feature of stories and narratives, in general, to preserve cultural heritage for the coming generations.

"In all over the world, paying attention to stories and narratives is of special importance for the development of tourism.... and we have many of such stories that have been forgotten in the course of history."

What you have done in this project is to revive such stories and distinct identities that if ignored, will lead to their disappearance, Mortazavi explained.

Ali Karbasizadeh, a senior advisor to the ICCIMA, expressed the need for paying much more attention to the tourism industry, content production, training of all stakeholders and activists, conducting relevant studies, productive investments, tourism start-ups, and further cooperation with other provinces to develop the tourism paradigm in the country.

Furthermore, Karbasizadeh discussed the advantage of adequate official holidays in Iran, saying the number of national holidays in Iran, which has a pivotal role in domestic tourism, is currently insufficient in comparison to many other countries. "If this issue is not addressed and solved, our efforts in other areas would not have desired results."

Salarian for his part noted that making one-minute videos of Isfahan is a good fit. "When we sent [some of the earliest] clips of the series to our embassies in various countries, they expressed a wish to have them translated into other languages as well.... Now I see that this has happened."

"Even the municipality [of Isfahan] has produced a series of professional five-minute videos in ten languages that are well received by the audiences."

"Isfahan is one of the important destinations of the high-ranking officials of the country and the officials of other countries must also refer to it. Therefore, it has a unique feature in the field of tourism and of course in the field of health that should be taken into account," the senior diplomat explained.

The mayor of Isfahan outlined the importance of storytelling for the time being and in various fields including tourism, saying: "Story [and storytelling] still works in the present day even in psychiatric discussions, story therapy is a growing concept."

"We are ready to expand cooperation and join hands with other activists in the realm of tourism because Isfahan has enormous potential to become a major destination for international travelers," Qasemzadeh said.

**Half the world?**  
Soaked in a rich history, Isfa-



han was once a crossroad of international trade and diplomacy in Iran and now it is one of Iran's top tourist destinations for good reasons.

It is filled with many architectural wonders such as unmatched Islamic buildings, bazaars, museums, Persian gardens, and tree-lined boulevards. It's a city for walking, getting lost in its mazing bazaars, dozing in beautiful gardens, and meeting people.

Isfahan is renowned not only for the abundance of great historical bridges but also for its 'life-giving river', the Zayandeh-Rood, which has long bestowed the city an original beauty and fertility.

Isfahan has long been nicknamed as Nesf-e-Jahan which is translated into "half the world";

meaning seeing it is relevant to see the whole world. In its heyday, it was also one of the largest cities in the region with a population of nearly one million.

The cool blue tiles of Isfahan's Islamic buildings, and the city's majestic bridges, contrast perfectly with the encircling hot, dry Iranian countryside.

The huge Imam Square, best known as Naghsh-e Jahan Sq. (literary meaning "Image of the World"), is one of the largest in the world (500m by 160m), and a majestic example of town planning. Constructed in the early 17th century, the UNESCO-registered square is punctuated with the most interesting sights in Isfahan.

It was laid out under the reign of the Safavid ruler, Shah Abbas the Great, to signal the importance of Isfahan as the capital of his powerful empire.

It is hemmed on four sides by magnificent buildings: to

the east, the Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque; to the west, the palace of Ali Qapu; to the north, the portico of Qeysarieh; and to the south, the eminent Imam Mosque.

"The square was at the heart of the Safavid capital's culture, economy, religion, social power, government, and politics. Its vast sandy esplanade was used for celebrations, promenades, and public executions, for playing polo and for assembling troops," according to the UNESCO website.

Right at the northern limit of the Imam Square, one will find "Qeysarieh Gate", which leads to the unique and unforgettable "Grand Bazaar of Isfahan". This vaulted marketplace is one of the largest and most labyrinthine bazaars in the country. Shops offering handicrafts, souvenirs, jewelry, silverware, traditional ceramics, and authentic Persian carpets.

Modern Isfahan is now home to some heavy industry, including steel factories and a nuclear facility on its outskirts, however, its inner core wants to be preserved as a priceless gem. The city is also home to a gigantic, professional, and state-of-the-art healthcare city, which is a major destination in the realm of medical tourism.

**Unknown destination**  
Even before the pandemic, Iran's tourism was already grappling with some challenges, on top of those Western "media propaganda" aimed at scaring potential travelers away from the Islamic Republic. Some experts believe Iran is still somehow "unknown" for many potential travelers due to such a "media war". They, however, consider bright prospects for the tourism sector of the country if it vigorously pursues comprehensive strategies to counter U.S.-led propaganda and strict sanctions, yet does its best to loosen tough travel regulations.

## Sarvestan, the enigmatic monument of ancient Iran, finally dated

TEHRAN – A joint research team of Iranian and French scientists has published their results of the dating of the Sarvestan Monument in the journal *ARCHAEOOMETRY*.

The state-of-the-art radiocarbon techniques used to date the monument determined the age of 658–684 CE as the major construction phase of the monument, according to Edouard Bard and Manuela Capano, the National Museum of Iran told the Tehran Times.

This age puts an end to a long debate about the Sasanian versus Islamic age of the monument and indicates that it was constructed during the invasion of Sasanian territories by Arab Muslims under the Rashidun caliphates, stated Morteza Djamali. However, the Sarvestan is a late Sasanian project accomplished during the very Early Islamic period, added Djamali.

This age clearly shows that the Sarvestan monument is a Sasanian Heritage in

the Early Islamic era and shows the continuity of Sasanian architectural tradition during the early Islamic era, according to Dr. Alireza Askari Chaverdi.

Almost all wood samples belong to cypress tree which has very resistant wood to insects and is a perfect choice of timber for constructions, according to Frédéric Guibal, a dendrochronologist and wood anatomist in French National Centre for Scientific Research and Aix-Marseille University. The choice of this tree may also be related to its symbolic and religious value to Iranians.

The construction of the monument during the geopolitical unrest of the mid-seventh century suggests that our understanding of the historical events at the advent of Islam in Southwest Asia can be improved in the light of new archaeological and archaeometric investigations explained by Askari and Djamali.

The findings of Sarvestan are not only

important to understand the architectural history of Iran during the Late Antiquity but also help to understand the roots of the so-called Islamic architecture which in turn influenced the Mediterranean and European architecture during the Medieval time, explained by Nicolas Faucher, professor of Medieval Archaeology at Aix-Marseille University in France.

Such archaeometrical investigations are currently very useful for any proposal to nominate the archaeological sites to be included in the World Heritage list and to add value to visibility and conservation of the sites, according to this expert of UNESCO.

This extraordinary architectural masterpiece has fascinated archaeologists, architects, and historians of art since the 19th century. The monument was added to the UNESCO World Heritage list in July 2018.

Located about 70 km to the southeast of Shiraz and very close to the city of

Sarvestan, this monument is one of the most significant constructions of ancient Iran in that it displays an array of both pre-Islamic and Islamic architectural features.

Its age has thus been a matter of a two-century long debate. While the early European archaeologists and architects attributed it to the middle Sasanian period (5th century CE), others have considered it as a typical early Islamic building dated to Abbasid Caliphate (8th century CE) and even the Buyid dynasty (945–1055 CE).

This long uncertainty of proposed ages made a team of Iranian and French scientists led by Alireza Askari Chaverdi (Shiraz University) and Morteza Djamali (French National Centre for Scientific Research/Iranian National Centre for Oceanography and Atmospheric Science) to attempt to solve the chronological mystery of the monument. The timbers used in the

monument were used for precise 14C dating under the supervision of Professor Edouard Bard, a leading scientist in the field of radiocarbon dating, assisted by Manuela Capano (Collège de France, Aix-Marseille University).

The survey is conducted with the support of Iran's Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Ministry.

The Sasanian era is of very high importance in the history of Iran. Under Sasanians, Persian art and architecture experienced a general renaissance.

Architecture often took grandiose proportions such as palaces at Ctesiphon, Firuzabad, and Sarvestan that are amongst highlights of the ensemble.

Crafts such as metalwork and gem-engraving grew highly sophisticated, yet scholarship was encouraged by the state. In those years, works from both the East and West were translated into Pahlavi, the

language of the Sasanians.

Rock-carved sculptures and bas-reliefs on abrupt limestone cliffs are widely deemed as characteristics and striking relics of the Sasanian art, top examples of which can be traced at Bishapur, Naqsh-e Rostam, and Naqsh-e Rostam in southern Iran.

In 2018, UNESCO added an ensemble of Sasanian historical cities in southern Iran -- titled "Sasanian Archaeological Landscape of Fars Region" -- to its World Heritage list.

The ensemble is comprised of eight archaeological sites situated in three geographical parts of Firuzabad, Bishapur, and Sarvestan. It reflects the optimized utilization of natural topography and bears witness to the influence of Achaemenid and Parthian cultural traditions and of Roman art, which later had a significant impact on the architecture and artistic styles of the Islamic era.

# Benefactors donate \$98m to support deprived students

TEHRAN – People across the country have donated a sum of 4.1 trillion rials (around \$98 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) for the financially struggling students through a charity event prior to the upcoming school year (starting September 23).

Known as Jashn-e Atefaha (literally meaning the festival of kindnesses), the event which solicits contributions in-kind or cash by referring to schools, mosques, or online banking, has been held for 24 years by Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation.

The first phase of the event is held in mosques a week before the beginning of the new school year (September 23), and the second phase of the event is held at schools a week later when students can grant their donations to those students in need.

The event spreads altruistic culture and promotes the Islamic tradition for helping others, through which many financially struggling students are provided with the opportunity to continue



their education.

This year, a total of 4.1 trillion rials (about \$98 million) in cash and kind have been donated, cash donations increased by 90 percent compared to last year and reached about 360 billion rials (about \$8.5 million), Alireza Asgarian, deputy head of the Relief Foundation said.

Non-cash donations in the form of stationery and other essential items were also provided to the students, which shows a 96 percent growth compared to last

year, he further added.

This edition of the event was held with the aim of providing equipment for online education and paying tuition fees due to the prevalence of the coronavirus pandemic and changes in the educational system.

All educational centers in Iran were closed from late February 2020, due to the outbreak of coronavirus.

In order for students to keep in touch with their studies, the

Ministry of Education launched a homegrown mobile application on April 9, called SHAD, providing students with distance learning programs.

Moreover, the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) also began to broadcast televised educational programs on a daily basis after school closures.

This year, schools reopened with a delay of one month under health protocols, but education is followed in three forms of in-person, virtual, and television-based.

Known as Jashn-e Atefaha (the festival of kindnesses), the event which solicits contributions in-kind or cash to support deprived students.

## Thousands of migratory birds wintering in Mighan wetland



From page 1 ▶ No hunting licenses, including bird hunting, have been issued in Markazi Province, and any violation or attempted poaching in the province will be dealt with through legal authorities and violators will be punished, she concluded.

The annual census for migratory birds in Iran begins in the middle of the Iranian calendar month of Dey (December 22-January 20) and ends in the middle of the month of Bahman (January 21-February 19), through which Iran hosts rare species of migratory birds heading from north to the southern countries due to reduced seasonal temperatures and food availability.

### Iran's bird species

Hosting over 600 species of birds, Iran is a climatologically rich country, so it is said that the number of bird species in Iran is higher than in the whole of Europe. A wide range of wetlands is the reason behind migratory birds choosing Iran for an annual wintering habitat, as a large number of birds fly a thousand miles each year to benefit from this rich climate.

Every year, from early September to late February, Iran hosts rare species of migratory birds

heading from north to the southern countries due to reduced seasonal temperatures and food availability.

It is estimated that there are about 50 billion birds in the world out of 9,000 species, many of which are migratory. Accordingly, about five to seven million birds migrate to Iran in different seasons. There are about 530 species of birds in Iran, 320 of which are migratory species, some of which are native species.

The wetland is among the most important sites for bird-sighting in Iran, being home to over 130 migratory bird species.

Among the various groups of migratory birds wintering in Iran, the largest population belongs to the group of geese, swans, and ducks amounting to 781,499 and the smallest population of seven are the long-tailed ducks or oldsquaw.

The provinces of Mazandaran and Golestan are the first provinces with the highest number of migratory birds for having sufficient resources, as the movement of migratory birds is closely linked to the seasonal availability of resources.

## Climate crisis: economists 'grossly undervalue young lives', warns Stern

Many economic assessments of the climate crisis "grossly undervalue the lives of young people and future generations", Prof Nicholas Stern warned on Tuesday, before the Cop26 climate summit in Glasgow.

Economists have failed to take account of the "immense risks and potential loss of life" that could occur as a result of the climate crisis, he said, as well as badly underestimating the speed at which the costs of clean technologies, such as solar and wind energy, have fallen.

Stern said the economics profession had also misunderstood the basics of "discounting", the way in which economic models value future assets and lives compared with their value today. "It means economists have grossly undervalued the lives of young people and future generations who are most at threat from the devastating impacts of climate change," he said. "Discounting has been applied in such a way that it is effectively discrimination by date of birth."

Youth protests around the world, sparked by the school strike of Greta Thunberg, have been a key factor in increasing demands for action in recent years, along with rising extreme weather events. Recent research shows people born today will suffer many times more extreme heatwaves and other climate disasters over their lifetimes than their grandparents.

However, Stern said: "The move to net zero [emissions] can be the great driver of a new form

of growth – the growth story of the 21st century. This growth will be more resource-efficient, more productive, and healthier, and will offer greater protection to our biodiversity."

Renewable energy costs have fallen dramatically and electric cars are moving to scale, he said, while 75% of global emissions are now covered by national commitments to net zero emissions by the middle part of century, though "some of those commitments are more credible than others".

Stern's remarks are based on a paper to be published in the Economic Journal of the Royal Economic Society and made to mark the 15th anniversary of the landmark Stern review on the economics of the climate crisis in 2006. It concluded that the costs of inaction on climate were far greater than the costs of action and that the climate crisis was the biggest market failure in history.

Since the publication of the report, carbon emissions have risen by 20% and Stern was scathing about much of the economic analysis that has informed policymakers. "Cavalier treatment of risk, and the missing of the very rapid technical progress, means the models have been profoundly misleading," he said. The theory of discounting had not been related to its ethical foundations, he added, or allowed for the risk that global heating will make future generations poorer.

## Tehran, Berlin universities to enhance health, academic co-op

TEHRAN – Tehran University of Medical Sciences and the Charité University of Berlin inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to expand cooperation in the field of education and health.

The MOU was signed between Axel Radlach Pries, head of the Charité University, and Mahmoud Farazandeh, Iran's Ambassador to Germany, on the sidelines of the 13th session of the World Health Assembly.

The two officials discussed enhancing academic cooperation, exchange of professors and students, joint research projects, and joint training courses, IRNA reported.

The Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin is one of Europe's largest university hospitals, affiliated with Humboldt University and Free University Berlin.



### Iranian universities make progress in world rankings

Most recently, the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) Graduate Employability Rankings 2022 list has been released, which included three Iranian universities out of a total of 550 institutes worldwide that highlighted graduate employment processes.

Some 41 Iranian universities in engineering sciences and 12 universities in computer sciences have made a place among the top 1,188 universities in the world with the announcement of Higher Education World University Rankings 2022 by subject.

It also has introduced 59 Iranian universities among the top institutions in World University Rankings 2022.

The THE Education Young University Rankings 2021 listed 26 Iranian institutions among the world's best universities that are 50 years old or younger.

Moreover, some 34 Iranian universities and institutions were listed among the top 1,000 in the world, according to Shanghai Ranking's Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) 2021.

## Japan allocates \$6.3m to strengthen COVID-19 fight in Iran

TEHRAN – The Government of Japan has signed a financial donation agreement with the World Health Organization to support the consolidation of national efforts to respond to the COVID-19 emergency across Iran.

The agreement was signed between Syed Jaffar Hussain, WHO Representative and Head of Mission to Iran, and Hirotaka Matsuo, Charge d'Affaires ad interim in Japan to the Islamic Republic, during a ceremony in Tehran on Tuesday.

The grant aid project worth \$6.3 million will provide a total of six MRI machines to Iran to strengthen its capacity to address the ongoing COVID-19 crisis in the country. These MRI machines will be delivered to public hospitals in five provinces of Tehran, Kuzestan, South Khorasan, North Khorasan, and Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, by WHO Country Office.

"The 6.3-million-dollar grant will greatly facilitate the effective response of the government of Iran to COVID-19, particularly in the diagnostic and therapeutic aspect. The MRI machines will not only serve the COVID-19 response but at the same time for a medium-to-long-term to many other illnesses and diseases, which currently are of very important nature," Hussain said.

"The coronavirus infection rapidly expanded all over the world and threatened not only human lives but also the world's economy. From the very beginning of the outbreak of coronavirus, the Government of Japan considers that the emergency response to protect human lives and minimize socio-economic impacts is essential," said Matsuo at the event. "I am convinced that these six MRI machines will contribute to

preventing the further spread of the coronavirus infection in each region in Iran and will help local people to cure diseases."

"Japanese knowledge and technology in this sector can play a key role to strengthen the relations between Japan and Iran," he noted.

Matsuo also thanked the Iranian Ministry of Health and Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as WHO for all the efforts made to fight against COVID-19 and hoped that the world will soon overcome the challenges posed by this pandemic.

Since the emergence of COVID-19 in early 2020, the Government of Japan has donated about \$34 million to support Iran in combating the pandemic through partnerships with various United Nations agencies in the country including WHO, UNDP, IOM, UNHCR, WFP, and IFRC.



The assistance to the day comprises a considerable number of CT scanners, echo sonographies, ABG analyzers along with their consumables, ventilators, portable ventilators, in addition to partial financing of an x-ray angiography machine and a portable digital x-ray system to tackle COVID-19.

Japan has also supported Iran by rapidly procuring about three million doses of the Japan-made AstraZeneca vaccine in July 2021 when the country was going through the immense fifth wave of the pandemic.

## ENGLISH IN USE

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#### Non-repayable loans for e-bikes must increase: Tehran City Council chairman

While an important strategy to contain Tehran's air pollution is using clean energies, non-repayable loans to incentivize the owners to replace their motorcycles with electric ones is not sufficient and must increase, Mohsen Hashemi, Tehran City Council chairman, has said.

The scheme on encouraging the citizens to replace carbureted motorcycles with electric ones has started over a few years ago, however, the process has been evolving slowly, he said, adding, we hope to increase the use of electric motorbikes by allocating the necessary funds along with supporting the manufacturers next year (March 2019-March 2020).

The handouts supporting the residents to purchase the motorbikes has been about 25 million rials (nearly \$600), which is not adequate anymore given the current economic condition, he stated, Tasnim reported on Saturday.

#### تاکید رئیس شورای شهر تهران بر افزایش وام بلاعوض خرید «موتورسیکلت‌های برقی»

محسن هاشمی رئیس شورای شهر تهران با اشاره به اینکه یکی از راه‌های کاهش آلودگی هوای تهران استفاده از انرژی‌های پاک است، گفت: رقی که به عنوان وام بلاعوض خرید موتورسیکلت برقی برای تشویق دارندگان موتورسیکلت پرداخت شده است، پاسخگوی این شرایط نیست و این رقم باید افزایش یابد.

وی تصریح کرد: جایگزینی کردن موتورسیکلت‌های برقی به جای موتورسیکلت‌های کاربراتور از چند سال پیش آغاز شده است اما این کار با کندی پیش رفته است و امیدواریم در سال آینده با تخصیص اعتبارات لازم و حمایت از تولیدکنندگان، میزان استفاده از موتورسیکلت‌های برقی افزایش یابد.

به گزارش روز شنبه خبرگزاری تسنیم هاشمی با اشاره به میزان تسهیلاتی که تا به امروز به عنوان وام بلاعوض برای خرید موتورسیکلت برقی در نظر گرفته شده است، یادآور شد: با توجه به افزایش قیمت خرید موتورسیکلت برقی، رقم ۲ میلیون و ۵۰۰ هزار تومان رقم قابل قبولی به عنوان وام بلاعوض نیست و باید این رقم افزایش یابد.

## COVID-19 UPDATES ON OCTOBER 26

New cases	9,096
New deaths	156
Total cases	5,877,456
Total deaths	125,363
New hospitalized patients	1,277
Patients in critical condition	4,184
Total recovered patients	5,443,243
Diagnostic tests conducted	34,970,103
Doses of vaccine injected	82,473,271



OCTOBER 27, 2021

## GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Hearts of people are like wild beasts. They attach themselves to those who love and train them.

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times » Noon: 11:48 Evening: 17:33 Dawn: 4:58 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 6:23 (tomorrow)

## History of music in Iranian lands: Pre-Islamic Iran

Part 4

Since panel IV is drawn on an uneven surface, it is difficult to determine whether the group is one sextet or two trios, though the former interpretation seems more likely because of the conductor.

The harps of Kul-e Farah differ from other vertical angular models, for which the harps of Madaktu are typical, with regard to the various arrangements of tassels hanging from the rod.

They seem to follow the vagaries of fashion. On panel I tassels are tied in a knot and flare into small pom-poms. On panel III, the knots are higher and more prominent, and the pom-poms' flare is more pronounced. But on panel IV, there are no tassels at all.

### (3) Secular music on the Arjan bowl, Elam, 620-580 BCE

This large pictorial bowl of 43.5 cm diameter was found at Arjan in western Iran, and portrays royal activities. It is dated to the last period of the Elamite kingdom.

The activities are shown in five concentric circles, and the fourth (reproduced as a linear frieze, distributed over several lines) is a scene of feasting with musical entertainment.

Most of the evidence discussed so far concerned music performed in religious contexts, but this lively scene has elements that point to a more secular setting.

The king sits on a high throne. Before him stand various vessels, one of which has a drinking straw hanging over the edge. This jar may possibly contain an alcoholic beverage. Behind his back is the kitchen department with steaming pots, and attendants bring food to the king. He seems to be watching musicians and acrobats doing hand-stands and walking on stilts. One acrobat is doing a backward flip, next to the first group of musicians.

Five instruments can be clearly recognized, moving from right to left: a lute, a double pipe, two vertical harps, a round-bodied lyre, and, perhaps, small percussion.

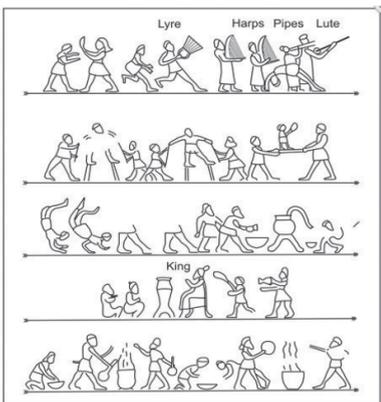
A similar scene with musicians, acrobats, and cooks appears on a much older Hittite vase from Inandik, dated to the middle of the 2nd millennium BCE. But unlike the scene on the Arjan bowl, it also shows an altar, a sacrifice, and a copulating couple. These elements indicate a religious ceremony, even though it is unclear whether the music played was different from secular music.

### (4) Achaemenid period, 550-331 BCE

There is little contemporary information on music during this time. Drawing on later texts, M. Boyce concluded that minstrels had flourished and held privileged positions at court. Likewise, there is no pictorial Iranian evidence, but evidence for Achaemenid influence on Chinese instruments has recently emerged in China.

The qinzher of the Warring States period (5th-4th centuries BCE) had a tuning key that was decorated with a bull-man resembling the large bull-men atop architectural pillars at Persepolis, the Achaemenid capital.

Another example are Chinese harps, which will be discussed below in section iv. First Millennium CE. Such long-distance musical influences on China were facilitated by horse-riders traveling along the east-west



Musical scene from the Arjan bowl, and the five segments of this circle are presented in a linear sequence.

expanse of the Eurasian steppes.

Greek writers have left much information on Achaemenid Persia, and some concerns music. Herodotus (5th century BCE) remarked on Achaemenid priests who did not perform their rites to aulos music.

In the Cyropaedia, Xenophon (ca. 430-after 356 BCE), who had visited Persia in 401 BCE, told of the great number of singing women at the Achaemenid court.

Athenaios of Naucratis (3rd century CE) mentioned a court singer who sang a warning to the king of the Medes of the acquisitive plans of Cyrus II (ca. 600-530 BCE). He also related that the Macedonian general Parmenio captured the 329 singing girls of the court of Darius III, ca. 380-mid-330 BCE) and that a royal officer at Babylon had 150 singing girls at his table.

Because Greek writers are fairly unanimous, they should probably be trusted in their account of the many singing women. The tradition of woman musicians entertaining men continued in the Islamic period with the singing slave woman.

### (5) Spread of Iranian harps throughout the Asian steppe zone

Both vertical and horizontal angular harps flourished in Iran and Mesopotamia, but the former dominated. The above mentioned reliefs at Madaktu and Kul-e Farah reflect the Iranian use, and the number ratio of vertical to horizontal harps is 4:3.

During the Achaemenid period angular harps spread east from this region along the steppe. Several examples have recently come to light in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region, China's western borderland. But already half a century ago harps had been found at two widely dispersed locations: Pazyryk, near Bashadar, and Olbia in the Ukraine.

The Achaemenid empire controlled western Asia, and incorporated the heartland of the former Assyrian empire with its capitals Nimrud and Nineveh. In the Assyrian palaces, there are numerous depictions of horizontal harps.

Since these harp images were sculpted between 865 and 650 BCE, Assyrian instruments are likely to have served as models for the steppe harps, all of which are later than 500 BCE; the Olbia harp is as late as 75 CE.

Source: Encyclopedia Iranica  
To be continued

# Fajr national, international filmfests to reunite in 2022

TEHRAN – The Cinema Organization of Iran announced on Tuesday that the Fajr national and international film festivals will be combined again for 2022.

Accordingly, the festival will be organized jointly under the title of "Fajr International Film Festival", the director of the organization, Mohammad Khazaei, said in a press release.

"Organizing these major festivals jointly and simultaneously on the anniversary of the Islamic Revolution will certainly provide additional practical opportunities for cineastes, people and foreign guests to make the best use of the event," he said.

"Iran's modern cinema, i.e. the post-revolution cinema, with all its ups and downs has always played a key role in conducting the country's public diplomacy," he noted.

"The presence of foreign guests



A poster for the Fajr International Festival.

and their direct witnessing of people's regard for the Fajr festival and cinema would nullify propaganda promulgated by world arrogance against the country. This opportunity should be taken

advantage of, and the glitches observed in previous editions of the festival must be fixed," he added.

Khazaei, who has recently taken up the key position in the Cinema

Organization of Iran, asked his colleagues to regard topics such as "family, morals and hope in the new era of the cinema."

Established in 1982, the festival was set to be held under the title of "Fajr International Film Festival" during the Ten-Day Dawn celebration, which is held every year from February 1 to 11 to commemorate the anniversary of the Islamic Revolution.

In 2014, the Cinema Organization of Iran, which is affiliated with the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance and was also the main organizer of the Fajr International Film Festival, announced that the international section of the festival would be held separately from the national section for the first time in 2015.

Thus, the international section was held from April 25 to May 2, 2015.

## "Peoples' lives still matter": Cinema Vérité again online over COVID-19 concerns

TEHRAN – Peoples' lives still matter for the organizers of Iran's Cinema Vérité festival as they have announced their plans to organize the upcoming edition of the event online once again due to the ongoing pandemic.

The decision was announced during a period of time in which the government has begun easing curbs on regular activities despite the gravity and numerous casualties of COVID-19.

Speaking to the Persian service of Honaronline on Tuesday, Mohammad Hamidi-Moqaddam, the director of the Documentary and Experimental Film Center (DEFC), the main organizers of the festival, said, "According to an expert forecast, a new wave of COVID-19 will begin during November and December, therefore, like the previous edition, we have prepared all our plans based on an online festival."

However, he added that some programs have also been set up to be organized physically, should the next wave of the disease turn out to be not as serious as anticipated.

Cinema Vérité, Iran's major international festival for documentary films, is organized every year in December.

"A handful of fascinating films have applied to participate in the festival, therefore we will be seeing a selection of high-grade movies in the international competition," Hamidi-Moqaddam said.

"Like any other festival, we were monitoring entries to other A-list international festivals over the past year and have selected a lineup of top films to be screened in Cinema Vérité," he noted.

"You will typically see documentaries that survey major issues, providing real insight into current affairs," he added.

Hamidi-Moqaddam said that no restrictions should be placed on filmmakers' treatment of strategic subjects and current political and social issues facing society.

He added that such an attitude would aid in the search for solutions to these problems,



DEFC director Mohammad Hamidi-Moqaddam. (DEFC)

and thereby infusing hope into society.

The 2020 edition of Cinéma Vérité was held entirely online and the programs were streamed on Filimo, TVA and Hashure, the Iranian platforms providing video on demand (VOD) service for films.

Due to the pandemic, the international section was non-competitive and "Get Filled in the Blanks", a documentary by Atieh Zare' Aranadi about children of divorce, won the award for best film in the national competition.

## Arlington festival to review Iran's modern cinema

TEHRAN – A review of movies from Iran's modern cinema will be held in a special program at the Arlington International Film Festival, which will be held online from November 4 to 14 due to the pandemic.

The American festival is an annual nonprofit film event dedicated to promoting and increasing multicultural awareness through showcasing world cinema and independent films.

"47" by Alireza Ataollah Tabrizi and Ahmad Otrachi is among the films to be screened during the program.

The feature drama tells three separate stories that become rivetingly interwoven, illustrating the difficulty of being a single woman.

The program will also showcase the short documentary "Gando" by Teimur Qaderi

The film tells the story of a 9-year-old girl, Hawa and her experience with a Gando.

Girls in Sistan and Baluchestan Province of Iran are tasked with



Shaqayeq Farahani and Ladan Mostofi act in a scene from "47" directed by Alireza Ataollah Tabrizi and Ahmad Otrachi.

bringing water to their villages by going to the pond, which can be quite a distance to walk. Most ponds are inhabited by the Iranian crocodile, the Gando, and the saying and belief is that where there is a Gando there is also water. They will attack; thus, it is not uncommon for these children to lose a leg or hand to these creatures.

The narrative short "The Kids" by Amir Daryani about the devastating effects a separation and divorce can have on children will also be screened.

A brother and sister wander into a

judge's office in family court and ask to legally separate from each other. The judge is confronted with their questions that he realizes deserve serious consideration.

"Fukushima Traveler" and "Dead Name" will be screened in the documentary category.

Directed by Masumeh Nurmohammadi, the film is about Afshin Valinejad, an accomplished Iranian journalist and photographer who worked for the Associated Press in Tehran for several years and was invited by Japan's national

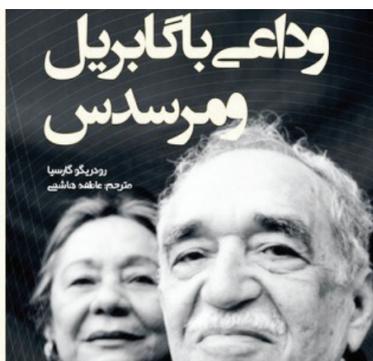
public broadcasting organization, NHK, to go to Tokyo. He lived and worked in Japan for 8 years and eventually became a freelance journalist. His report of the 2011 Fukushima earthquake is an insider's perspective on this serious accident.

The short documentary "Dead Name" by Hossein Mirza-Mohammadi follows a journalist who begins to suspect there is more to the story than what she is being told during her investigation of a reported suicide at a shelter for homeless boys.

"Aparat" by Hassan Najmabadi, "Abration" by Dariush Alizadeh, "Love Can't Be Quarantined" by Zhinus Pedram and "Good Girl" by Raheleh Karami will be reviewed in the short section.

"Cloudy Dream" by Rayhaneh Einollahi and Bahareh Einollahi, "Wood" by Yasin Zohrabi, "Egg" and "Creative Mind", both by Mehdi Barzadegan, and "Politics" by Fardin Zarei will be showcased in the animation category.

## Persian publisher makes debut with "A Farewell to Gabo and Mercedes"



Front cover of the Persian translation of Rodrigo Garcia's book "A Farewell to Gabo and Mercedes".

TEHRAN – Iranian publisher Khish has come on stream with the release of a Persian translation of "A Farewell to Gabo and Mercedes: A Son's Memoir of

Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Mercedes Barcha".

Written by Rodrigo Garcia, the book has been rendered into Persian by Atefeh Hashemi.

In March 2014, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, one of the most acclaimed writers of the twentieth century, came down with a cold. The woman who had been beside him for more than fifty years, his wife Mercedes Barcha, was not hopeful; her husband, affectionately known as "Gabo," was then nearly 87 and battling dementia.

"I don't think we'll get out of this one," she told their son Rodrigo.

Hearing his mother's words, Rodrigo wondered, "Is this how the end begins?" To make sense of events as they unfolded, he began to write the story of Garcia Marquez's final days. The result is this intimate and honest account that not only contemplates his father's mortality but reveals his remarkable humanity.

Both an illuminating memoir and a heartbreaking

work of reportage, "A Farewell to Gabo and Mercedes" transforms this towering genius from literary creator to protagonist, and paints a rich and revelatory portrait of a family coping with loss.

At its center is a man at his most vulnerable, whose wry humor shines even as his lucidity wanes. Gabo savors affection and attention from those in his orbit, but wrestles with what he will lose—and what is already lost. Throughout his final journey is the charismatic Mercedes, his constant companion and the creative muse who was one of the foremost influences on Gabo's life and his art.

Bittersweet and insightful, surprising and powerful, "A Farewell to Gabo and Mercedes" celebrates the formidable legacy of Rodrigo's parents, offering an unprecedented look at the private family life of a literary giant.

It is at once a gift to Gabriel Garcia Marquez's readers worldwide, and a grand tribute from a writer who knew him well.