

Opinion **T**

## MBS is not a reformer; he is mostly driven by egoism

By M. A. Saki

Saudi Arabia on Saturday executed 81 people, the largest known mass execution carried out in the kingdom over the past four decades.

Reportedly, the executed were convicted of crimes ranging from killings to belonging to extremist militant groups.

It is naïve to think that all those who were executed were murderers or aligned to extremist groups like al-Qaeda or ISIS.

The fact that Saudi Arabia chose this time to execute 81 men is that the world is greatly focused on the Russian invasion of Ukraine and hesitation by the West, especially the U.S., to antagonize the kingdom in order to encourage it to raise oil export to lower record-high gasoline prices.

Most probably, the majority of those who were put to death were opposed to the ruling system as the kingdom shows the least tolerance for opposition voice.

Sending 81 people to gallows in a single day is hard to believe. It is for such reasons that the name of Saudi Arabia has become synonymous with beheading. That its flag is also emblazoned with a sword conveys many things.

Probably, there were murderers and persons loyal to terrorist groups among those executed as the Saudi Kingdom has been the hotbed of extremism and terrorism, but this is not the way to handle issues. ▶ Page 2

Report **T**

## Russia, China dismiss U.S. claims over Ukraine

The Kremlin says Russian forces can take full control of major Ukrainian cities and it has sufficient military clout to fulfill all of its aims in Ukraine without any assistance from China.

Responding to questions about claims made by U.S. officials who claim Moscow had asked Beijing for military equipment, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said “No. Russia possesses its own independent potential to continue the operation. As we said, it is going according to plan and will be completed on time and in full.”

Peskov added, “the defense ministry of the Russian Federation while ensuring the maximum safety of the civilian population, does not exclude the possibility of taking major population centers under full control.”

He has dismissed remarks by the United States and European Union that President Vladimir Putin was somehow disappointed with the progress of what the Kremlin says is a special military operation, saying the statements amounted to a provocation; aimed at prompting Russian forces to storm cities.

The United States, Peskov said, had shown its complete disregard for human life with the bombing of Yugoslavia and its capital Belgrade in 1999, as well as its wars in West Asia including the invasion of Afghanistan.

“We don’t need advice from such strategists,” Peskov noted. “All the plans of the Russian leadership will be achieved on time and in full.”

Peskov said Putin had at the start of the operation explicitly asked the defense ministry to avoid storming major cities such as Kyiv because he believes some Ukrainian units would use civilians as human shields.

The Kremlin spokesman says some Ukrainian cities are already surrounded by Russian forces.

China has also rejected Washington’s claims over any alleged military support for Moscow.

In a meeting with Chinese diplomat Yang Jiechi, U.S. national security adviser Jake Sullivan raised concerns about ▶ Page 5

# Iran, Russia Debunk Western Allegations Over JCPOA

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## Non-oil trade with neighbors up 42% in 11 months yr/yr

TEHRAN – The value of Iran’s non-oil trade with its neighbors stood at \$46.245 billion during the first 11 months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2021-February 19, 2022) to register a 42 percent increase year on year, the spokesman of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) announced.

Rohollah Latifi put the weight of non-oil trade with the neighboring countries at 92,256,219 million tons in the said time span,

stating that trade with the neighbors also increased by 22 percent in terms of weight, IRIB reported.

Latifi put the 11-month non-oil exports at 70,259 million tons valued at \$23.528 billion, with a 28-percent rise in value and 13 percent growth in weight.

He said major export destinations of the Iranian non-oil goods were Iraq, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Afghanistan, and Pakistan followed by Oman, Russia, Azerbai-

jan, Turkmenistan, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia.

The official further noted that the Islamic Republic imported 21.996 million tons of non-oil commodities worth over \$22.717 billion in the first 11 months of the present year, with a 62-percent growth in value and a 65-percent rise in weight year on year.

The United Arab Emirates was the top exporter to Iran in the said period, followed by Turkey, Russia, Iraq, and Oman, he stated. ▶ Page 4

## Iran calls for an effective UN-led approach to counter narcotics

TEHRAN – Eskandar Momeni, the director of anti-narcotics police headquarters, has called on the United Nations to present a comprehensive and effective action plan to curb opium cultivation and production and to address the destructive problem of narcotics.

He made the remarks in the 65th session of the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs which took place on March 14-18 in Vienna, Austria, ILNA reported.

In 2021, Iran succeeded in carrying out about 5,000 anti-narcotics operations and armed conflicts, destroying more than 2,300 active local, regional and international gangs and networks, and fighting against money laundering by enforcing effective laws and regulations.

During the mentioned operations, the counter-narcotics forces of the ▶ Page 7



## Iran honors top books of the year

TEHRAN – Top publications in different categories of the 39th Iran’s Book of the Year Awards were honored during a special ceremony at Tehran’s Vahdat Hall on Tuesday.

In each category, two books were selected as winners and authors received their awards from President Ebrahim Raisi. ▶ Page 8

## Iran seeks to recover smuggled relics from U.S., France, England, Hungary, and Norway

TEHRAN – The Islamic Republic of Iran seeks to bring back some 100 relics that have been smuggled into the U.S., France, England, Hungary, and Norway.

“We are following 13 cases of returning historical objects, including about one hundred specific pieces from the United States, Hungary, France, England, and Norway, which will be returned home in [the Iranian calendar year] 1401,” Director Gen-

eral of Museums and Historical-Cultural Properties Morteza Adibzadeh said on Monday.

Adibzadeh made the remarks at the National Museum of Iran during the opening ceremony of an exhibition of prehistorical glazed bricks recovered from a smuggler in Switzerland.

“Today, we are glad to see the result of one of the most important cases in this field,” the official noted.

In one of the cases, the [Oriental Institute of the] University of Chicago is getting prepared to deliver us Achaemenid-era clay tablets, which were on loan from Iran [since 1935], the official explained.

In 2019, the fourth batch of the loaned objects, composed of 1,783 pieces of clay tablets, was returned home after 84 years.

The artifacts were recuperated with a great deal of efforts made by the Ministry ▶ Page 6

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Interview **T**

## Risks of nuclear war are growing, but still remain low: political scientist

By Mohammad Mazhari

TEHRAN – A senior researcher in nuclear arms control at the Center for Security Studies (CSS) at ETH Zurich says that the risk of nuclear conflict is increasing despite its low possibility as the Ukraine war has quickly become a conflict involving NATO.

“The risks of nuclear war are growing, but they still remain quite low,” Stephen Herzog tells the Tehran Times.

For example, Herzog says, “Cold War examples show that some NATO or Russian troop deaths, or aircraft losses, will not result in a ‘Moscow-for-Washington’ strategic nuclear exchange.”

While the Ukraine war is going on, some political observers warn about the expansion of war to other countries and a perilous confrontation between Russia and NATO.

“This has quickly become a conflict involving NATO. Western countries are providing weapons and intelligence to help Ukraine resist the Russian military,” Herzog, also an associate of Harvard University’s Project on Managing the Atom, notes.

Following is the text of the interview:

**Given ongoing tensions between Russia and NATO over Ukraine, how can we read recent developments in terms of nuclear deterrence theory? It seems the United States is reluctant to engage in a direct clash with Russia because the result would be catastrophic.**

Nuclear deterrence, like Russian President Vladimir Putin’s threat directed at any state considering intervention ▶ Page 5

## Iran’s women’s U18 crowned champions of CAFA

TEHRAN – Iran defeated Kyrgyz Republic 2-1 to win the title of the CAFA U18 Women’s Championship on Tuesday.

Nursuluu Murzakulova scored for Kyrgyz Republic in the 27th minute but Elahe Afshardoost leveled the score in the 55th minute. Iran captain Negin Zandi scored the winner on the hour mark.

Iran started the competition on Friday with a 1-0 win over Uzbekistan and also defeated Tajikistan 11-0 in their second match on Sunday.

Four Central Asian teams took their first preparatory steps on the road to the 2024 AFC U20 Women’s Asian Cup.

The tournament brought Tajikistan, Iran, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyz Republic in the round-robin event together in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

This competition featured players from the age group that will compete in the opening qualification stage of AFC U20 Women’s Asian Cup, which is scheduled to be held in March 2023.

All six matches were held at Central Republican Stadium.



## Lavrov says Russia has received U.S. guarantees over JCPOA

TEHRAN – Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on Tuesday that Moscow has received written guarantees from Washington that Western sanctions on Russia over Ukraine will not affect cooperation with Iran within the framework of the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Lavrov made the announcement as he hosted his Iranian counterpart, Hossein Amir Abdollahian, for talks in Moscow.

According to Al Jazeera, the remarks by Lavrov could potentially signal that Russia's demand that the sanctions would not impede its future dealings with Iran has been fulfilled.

Moscow made the demand last week amid reports of an imminent agreement after more than 11 months of negotiations aimed at reviving the JCPOA. The United States called Russia's last-minute demand "irrelevant", while the so-called E3 countries – France, Germany and the United Kingdom – had warned it could lead to the collapse of the talks.

In a joint news conference, Lavrov and Amir Abdollahian rejected claims that Russia's demand was presenting an "obstacle" to negotiations in the Austrian capital and backed a quick return to the deal that the U.S. unilaterally abandoned in 2018.

"We received written guarantees. They are included in the text of the agreement itself on the resumption of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on the Iranian nuclear program," Lavrov said.

For his part, Amir Abdollahian said, "There will be no connection between developments in Ukraine and the Vienna talks."

He added, "If we reach an agreement with the U.S. on remaining issues which relate to some of Iran's

main red lines, based on my talks with Mr. Lavrov today Russia will remain beside the Islamic Republic of Iran until reaching a good and sustainable agreement, continuing to play the constructive role it has played since the start."

Amir Abdollahian also stressed Iran was now a "strong and independent" party in the talks and would not allow pressure to prevent its cooperation with any country. He also called on the U.S. to abandon its "excessive demands" so an agreement could be reached as soon as possible.

Amir Abdollahian and Lavrov also discussed a host of issues, including Ukraine and regional affairs such as developments in Afghanistan, Syria and Yemen.

The Russian foreign minister thanked Iran for its "objective" approach to the war in Ukraine, which Moscow calls a "special military operation", and its rejection of sanctions rolled out by Western countries.

His Iranian counterpart, who was carrying a message from Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba urging an end to fighting, reiterated Iran's stance that the roots of the crisis could be traced to NATO's expansion, and that Iran opposed the war and called for a political solution.

Expanding bilateral relations was also on the agenda. To this end, Amir Abdollahian invited Lavrov to visit Tehran in the foreseeable future, which the latter accepted.

Lavrov hailed increasing Iran-Russia trade, which he said has exceeded \$4bn annually for the first time despite the coronavirus pandemic, and said a new bilateral cooperation agreement that Tehran has proposed would soon be signed.

Amir Abdollahian's trip followed a visit to the Kremlin by President Ebrahim Raisi in January.

## IRGC foils Israeli sabotage at Fordow, captures plotters: IRNA

TEHRAN – The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has detained members of a spy network planning to sabotage the underground Fordow nuclear facility, the official news agency IRNA reported on Monday.

The plot involved an agent paid by Israel attempting to approach a person working with advanced IR-6 centrifuges at the plant, the news agency said.

The agent was provided with secure communications and paid in cash and cryptocurrencies to approach the plant employee using a contact at a cover company in Hong Kong as a mediator who was in reality an Israeli spy officer, according to Press TV.

After approaching the plant employee, all wages are exchanged in cash and digital currency so that no traces remain.

The Israeli operative then contacts the plant employee through the agent and orders a software as he gradually moves to approach him himself.

The plant employee continues to cooperate after knowing about the real identity of the Israeli spy, but that is when all their moves are being monitored by the IRGC's intelligence arm.

According to IRNA, the IRGC Nuclear Command was able to prevent one of the major sabotages of the country's nuclear facilities in cooperation with the IRGC's Counterintelligence Command.

The sabotage attack was set to happen before Noruz which marks the end of the Iranian year on March 20.

Iran's nuclear program has been the subject of sabotage for more than a decade. Several Iranian scientists have also been assassinated by Israel.

The last Iranian scientist assassinated by Israel was Mohsen Fakhri-zadeh. He was assassinated in a convoy outside Tehran on November 27, 2020, in a complicated operation. A satellite-controlled machine-gun with "artificial intelligence" was used to assassinate the scientist, IRGC deputy chief Brigadier General Ali Fadavi said at the time.

## MBS is not a reformer; he is mostly driven by egoism

From page 1 ► If Saudi Arabia is really sincere in its campaign against extremism and terrorism, it must first take a deep look at its record in creating fertile grounds for violent religionists through Wahhabi and Takfiri ideologies and then take workable and careful steps to address them through effective educational and cultural programs.

The country's Interior Ministry claimed the defendants had been able to exercise "their full rights under Saudi law" before Saudi courts, including the right to a lawyer.

But the European Saudi Organization for Human Rights said it had documented cases in which defendants had been denied access to a lawyer, tortured, and held incommunicado.

The organization said that of the cases it had been able to monitor and document among the 81 executed, it had found no charges that merited the death penalty under the criteria that Saudi Arabia has made public, the New York Times reported on Saturday. The organization added some of the charges were related to participation in human rights demonstrations.

The mass execution happened despite the fact that Saudi Arabia had promised to reform the judicial system and claims of reform by Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman, also called MBS, have reverberated across the world.

The execution shows that if Saudi Arabia takes a single step toward reformism, like allowing women to drive, it disappoints the world by taking a sudden astonishing decision.

Soraya Bauwens, the deputy director of Reprieve, a London-based advocacy group, said in a statement on Saturday that "the world should know by now that when Mohammed bin Salman promises to reform, bloodshed is bound to follow."

It seems that MBS, the Saudi de facto leader, is driven mostly by his egoism. While he envies the progress the world has made in many areas and he pretends to imitate them, suddenly his egoism prevails and makes him look unpredictable and deceitful. A concrete example is the slaying and dismemberment of Jamal Khashoggi by Saudi death squads. Though he denies he was not aware of the murder, it is unimaginable that something like this happens outside a foreign country without his authorization.

It is also his egoism that doesn't allow him to put an end to senseless seven-year airstrikes on Yemen which have cost thousands of civilian lives, including children.

All these moves have proven that MBS is unstable. And, although he has portrayed himself as a reformer, finally his egoism has prevailed and undermined some meager reforms he has made.

# Iranian parliament links Saudi mass execution to NATO-created Ukraine war

TEHRAN – The Iranian parliament issued a statement on Tuesday faulting the United States and its Western allies for creating the Ukraine crisis which instead provided an opportunity for Saudi Arabia to execute 81 persons.

The Russian military operation in Ukraine, which many say has resulted from efforts by Ukraine to join NATO, is being abused by Saudi Arabia to kill opponents in large numbers at home, though the Saudi kingdom claims they were murderers and aligned to terrorist groups.

The Iranian parliament said now that the global community remains focused on a commotion created through NATO expansion to the east under the leadership of the United States, "the cruel regime in Saudi Arabia has beheaded more than 80 freedom-

seeking Shia and Sunni individuals."

Elsewhere in its statement, the parliamentarians said, "This regime (Saudi Arabia), which has been destroying Yemen's infrastructures and committing the most heinous acts against its oppressed people for long years before the eyes of the international community and the self-proclaimed human rights defenders, is committing horrific murders and no protest voice is heard from the satanic throats" of the United States and its friends.

They added "we as the representatives of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, while condemning this horrific crime and being disappointed by the international bodies toward such crimes, ask the Foreign Ministry of the Islamic Republic



of Iran" to do its duties to shed light on this mass execution through "legal measures".

Saudi Arabia on Saturday executed 81 people. It was the largest known mass execution carried out in the kingdom in its modern history.

According to AP, the kingdom claimed some of those executed were members of al-Qaeda, the Islamic State group and also backers of Yemen's Houthis rebels.

A Saudi-led coalition has been battling the Houthis since 2015 in neighboring Yemen.

Those executed included 73 Saudis, seven Yemenis and one Syrian. The report did not say where the executions took place.

Saudi Arabia did not say how the prisoners were executed, though death-row inmates typically are beheaded in

## Iranian rights chief says Riyadh must be held accountable for mass execution

TEHRAN – Iran's human rights chief said on Monday that Saudi authorities must be held accountable for the latest execution of dozens of prisoners in a single day, noting that the kingdom must make clarifications on the charges leveled against those put to death.

Kazem Gharibabadi, the Judiciary chief's deputy for international affairs and secretary of Iran's High Council for Human Rights, said the execution of 81 men, that 41 of them were Shia Muslims, can be examined from different perspectives.

He raised questions about the judicial process under which the people were tried and sentenced to death, noting that the death penalty might have been carried out actually because of the political opposition and dissent of the defendants, Press TV reported.

Gharibabadi went on to denounce the double standards and silence of international human rights organizations vis-à-vis the recent mass execution in the Saudi kingdom.

While the institutions tend to kick up a fuss about a court ruling passed in Iran, they have questionably kept mum in the face of the execution of 81 people, the senior human rights official said.

"The double standards of human rights organizations and international bodies are very destructive. The question is: Are the so-called advocates of human rights sincere in their claims or not?" he said.

The Iranian parliament also issued a statement on Tuesday strongly condemning the mass execution in Saudi Arabia and Riyadh's relentless

attacks against the Yemeni people since 2015.

"This regime (Saudi Arabia), which has been destroying Yemen's infrastructures and committing the most heinous acts against its oppressed people for long years before the eyes of the international community and the self-proclaimed human rights defenders, is committing horrific murders and no protest voice is heard from the satanic throats" of the United States and its friends, the Iranian parliament said.

The Saudi Press Agency said on Saturday that the authorities had executed 81 people in a single day on a variety of offences.

Of the 81 people, 73 were Saudi citizens, seven were Yemeni and one was a Syrian national.

Muslim scholars have been executed and women's rights campaigners have been put behind bars and tortured as freedom of expression, association, and belief continue to be denied.

Over the past years, Riyadh has also redefined its anti-terrorism laws to target activism.

**UN says mass execution in Saudi Arabia "may amount to a war crime"** slams decapitation of 81 persons in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia has claimed that all those executed were murderers or aligned with terrorist groups.

Michelle Bachelet, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, has also condemned the recent record mass execution in Saudi

Arabia, urging authorities in the ultra-conservative kingdom to completely align the country's counter-terrorism legislation with international norms.

She asked the Saudi officials in a statement to "bring the country's counterterrorism laws fully into line with international standards."

Bachelet stated that 41 of those executed were young men from the Qatif district of the oil-rich Shia-populated Eastern Province, who had participated in anti-regime rallies in early 2010s calling for greater political freedom.

Seven of the executed were Yemenis and one was a Syrian national.

Saudi Arabia has increased politically motivated arrests, prosecutions, and convictions of nonviolent dissident authors and human rights activists, especially in Eastern Province.

Since February 2011, the province has been the site of nonviolent protests. Protesters have called for changes, freedom of expression, the release of political prisoners, and an end to economic and religious discrimination against the region.

The protests have been met with a harsh repression, with troops beefing up security across the region.

"Our monitoring indicates that some of those executed were sentenced to death following trials that did not meet fair trial and due process guarantees, and for crimes that did not appear to meet the most serious crimes threshold, as required under international law," Bachelet lamented.

She was especially concerned that

the country.

An announcement by Saudi state television described those executed as having "followed the footsteps of Satan" in carrying out their crimes.

The kingdom's last mass execution came in January 2016, when the kingdom executed 47 people, including a prominent opposition Shiite cleric who had rallied demonstrations in the kingdom.

In 2019, the kingdom beheaded 37 Saudi citizens, most of them minority Shiites, in a mass execution across the country for alleged terrorism-related crimes.

Protests erupted Saturday night in the island kingdom of Bahrain — which has a majority Shiite population but is ruled by a Sunni monarchy, a Saudi ally — over the mass execution.

some of the killings looked to be related to Saudi Arabia's disastrous military campaign on Yemen.

The UN rights director emphasized that handing out death sentences following trials that do not give the essential "fair trial guarantees" is illegal under international human rights and humanitarian law, and "may amount to a war crime."

She said the failure to provide family with information about the circumstances of their loved ones "may amount to torture and ill-treatment"

"Authorities should return the bodies of those executed to their families," Bachelet underlined.

The top UN human rights official also expressed alarm over Saudi legislation's broad definition of terrorism, saying that "this risks criminalizing people exercising their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly."

"I call on the Saudi authorities to halt all executions, immediately establish a moratorium on the use of the death penalty, and commute the death sentences against those on death row," she noted.

Meanwhile, U.S. State Department spokesperson Ned Price declined to comment on whether Washington had talked with Riyadh in the aftermath of the weekend mass execution.

"We are continuing to raise concerns about fair trial guarantees," he said in a briefing on Monday.

"Can't speak to the timing of that (communication) but we have raised these (human rights) concerns," Price added.





# Iran, Russia debunk Western allegations over JCPOA

TEHRAN – Iran and Russia set the record straight on the real obstacle to reviving the 2015 Iran nuclear deal. They said they support the talks in Vienna.

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian landed in Moscow on Tuesday morning in a highly charged atmosphere. In Russia, he met with his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov and discussed a variety of issues ranging from the Vienna talks to the war in Yemen.

The discussions about the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), stood out among all other issues due to the repeated allegations by the West that Russia has endangered the conclusion of the Vienna talks by presenting new demands.

Nearly three weeks after the start of the Russia-Ukraine war, Russia said it needed guarantees that sanctions being imposed on Moscow by the West over the war in Ukraine won't impede Russia's cooperation with Iran in all fields.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on March 5, "We need guarantees that sanctions [over Ukraine] will not affect in any way the regime of trade, economic and investment ties set out in the JCPOA on Iran's nuclear program. We asked our American colleagues (because they are running the whole show here) to give us guarantees in writing, at least at the level of the



Secretary of State, that the current process launched by the U.S. will not impinge in any way on our free full-scale trade, economic, investment and military-technical cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Iran."

Despite the Western allegations, Iran and Russia said the latter's demand for guarantees wasn't the obstacle to reviving the JCPOA. Iran said it was the U.S.'s new demands that hampered the conclusion of the talks.

Ali Shamkhani, the secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, said the lack of U.S. political decision regarding the Vienna talks has hampered the conclusion of a deal.

"US approach to Iran's principled demands, coupled with its unreasonable offers and unjustified pressure to hastily reach an agreement, show that US isn't

interested in a strong deal that would satisfy both parties. Absent US political decision, the talks get knottier by the hour," he tweeted.

Shamkhani's latest tweet came after the chief European coordinator of the talks, Josep Borrell, announced a pause in the talks due to "external factors."

In his visit to Moscow, Amir Abdollahian reiterated what Iran has been saying over the past few weeks: That it is the U.S., not Russia, that is hampering the conclusion of the talks.

The Iranian foreign minister said Russia won't be an obstacle to resuscitating the JCPOA.

"Russia will be no obstacle to reaching an agreement and there will be no connection between the developments in Ukraine and the Vienna talks," Amir Abdollahian said in Moscow.

He further said that if Iran reaches an agreement with the U.S. on certain issues that are part of Iran's red lines Russia will support such an agreement.

He added, "We hope that the American side will stop being extravagant in the near future and that we will be able to announce a good and lasting agreement in the near future with the support of all parties involved in the Vienna talks."

On the other side, the Russian foreign minister said the Kremlin has received "written guarantees" from the U.S. that sanctions imposed on Russia over Ukraine won't impede Moscow's cooperation with Iran within the framework of the JCPOA.

Responding to a question on whether Russian requests have derailed the Vienna talks, Lavrov said, "We have received a written guarantee and they will include this in the text of the [agreement] of reviving the JCPOA. In this regard, a reliable protection for all projects and activities, companies and specialists that were within the framework of JCPOA, including cooperation regarding the main project of the Bushehr power plant, is mentioned."

He noted, "I also heard that the Americans are trying every day to accuse us of blocking the deal. This is a lie, the agreement has not yet been approved by some capitals, and Moscow is not one of them."

## Amir Abdollahian holds phone talks with foreign counterparts

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian held phone conversations with a number of foreign diplomats to discuss a variety of issues.

Amir Abdollahian and his Ukrainian counterpart Dmytry Kuleba have in a phone call held talks over the Ukraine crisis, the need for protection of diplomatic missions and dispatch of humanitarian aid, and also bilateral issues, according to the Iranian foreign ministry.

In the telephone conversation, Amir Abdollahian outlined the Islamic Republic of Iran's stance which is based on opposition to war and the necessity of finding a peaceful solution to disputes through diplomatic talks. The Iranian foreign minister also described the recent meeting between his Russian and Ukrainian counterparts in Turkey as important and underlined the significance of continuing and strengthening the diplomatic path. Amir Abdollahian referred to the root-cause of the Ukraine crisis, saying the Islamic Republic of Iran supports any political effort to resolve the crisis. He said, "We oppose war in Ukraine, Afghanistan, Yemen and other countries without adopting double standards."

The Iranian foreign minister also spoke about the dispatch of humanitarian aid by Iran for Ukrainian refugees along the Polish border. He underlined that Tehran is making coordination with the Polish foreign minister to station a Red Crescent medical team on the Poland-Ukraine border to provide assistance to refugees there.

Amir Abdollahian further called on the Ukrainian government to help a 4-member Iranian family stuck in the war zones to leave the unsafe areas.

Dmytry Kuleba thanked Iran's stance to oppose war and also for sending humanitarian aid to the Ukrainian refugees along the Ukraine-Poland border. He underlined that the Ukrainian government will do its utmost to protect foreign

diplomatic missions including those belonging to the Islamic Republic of Iran.

He also underscored his country's demand for stopping the war and hostilities. Kuleba referred to his recent talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and said continuation of talks is necessary for ending the crisis. While thanking Iran for opposing war, Kuleba asked for Tehran's political assistance to stop the war.

### Conversation with Omani counterpart

Amir Abdollahian and his Omani counterpart Badr bin Albusaidi have in a telephone conversation held consultations over bilateral ties, regional and international developments as well as the Vienna talks and the Ukraine crisis.

Amir Abdollahian said the process of talks in Vienna has not stopped and that there is just a short hiatus in the negotiations in coordination with the EU coordinator.

Amir Abdollahian noted that Iran's top negotiator in Vienna is diligently continuing efforts to reach a good, robust and lasting deal. He added that the resolution of the remaining issues which are red lines for Iran is contingent on the will of the US side and its decision to avoid wasting time.

The Iranian foreign minister underlined that the Islamic Republic of Iran is quite serious about reaching a good, reliable and lasting deal. During the phone call, the Omani foreign minister also hailed positive relations between the two countries and spoke about some bilateral issues.

Albusaidi thanked Iran for its logical stances, saying the Sultanate of Oman always believes in talks and dialog for the purpose of resolving various crises and moves on the path of peace. The Omani foreign minister also expressed hope the two countries will soon finalize their agreements and make them operational. Albusaidi also spoke of the Vienna talks. He expressed hope that a deal will finally be reached,

saying such an agreement will be in the interest of all sides and the region.

The two top diplomats also underlined the need to continue their consultations over different issues.

### OIC meeting discussed with Pakistan's top diplomat

In a telephone conversation between the foreign minister Iran and Pakistan's top diplomat Shah Mahmood Qureshi, initiated by the Pakistani side, the two discussed the Organization of Islamic Cooperation foreign ministers' meeting, the Palestinian issue, Yemen, Afghanistan, the Ukraine crisis and bilateral relations.

In this telephone conversation, the Pakistani foreign minister invited Amir Abdollahian to attend the OIC foreign ministers' meeting in Islamabad and the ceremony to celebrate the 70th anniversary of Pakistan's National Day. He stated that the Palestinian issue is the reason the OIC came into existence. He described the principled positions of the Islamic Republic of Iran in this regard as important and key.

The two sides discussed different aspects of bilateral relations, the Ukraine crisis, regional issues and those of the Islamic world.

Amir Abdollahian congratulated the Pakistani government and people on Pakistan's National Day and thanked his counterpart for his invitation.

The Iranian foreign minister emphasized that draft resolutions on the normalization of relations with the Zionist regime, as well as the resolution against Yemen, which have been drafted by some countries, are not compatible with the principled positions of the Islamic Republic of Iran regarding the unity of the Islamic Ummah.

Emphasizing the importance of the unity of Islamic countries, Qureshi stressed that Pakistan will spare no effort in this direction and in support of Palestine.

## Foreign Ministry holds specialized meeting on oppressive U.S. sanctions

TEHRAN – The Iranian Foreign Ministry held a meeting with a number of high-ranking officials on Monday to discuss the U.S. sanctions on Iran.

The inhumane aspects and consequences of the cruel and illegal U.S. sanctions on the people of targeted countries were discussed at a meeting hosted by Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian at the Foreign Ministry.

The specialized meeting was held with the presence of Vice President for Economic Affairs Mohsen Rezaei, and former foreign minister Manouchehr Mottaki, and senior directors of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the

Foreign Ministry said.

Rezaei pointed out that the focal point of the sanctions imposed by the United States is targeting the economies of countries and to put pressure on the people to break the resistance of those who do not approve of the U.S. unilateralist policies. He emphasized that the Islamic Republic of Iran has a lot of experience in neutralizing and countering unilateral and oppressive U.S. sanctions.

Rezaei added that the illegal and arrogant withdrawal of the U.S. government from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action is the best evidence of Washington's arrogant behavior, and its approach

in the current negotiations also shows that America arrogantly wants Iran to take practical action and be committed to the JCPOA while the U.S. does not consider itself bound by the commitments that Washington has already made under the JCPOA.

The vice president for economic affairs expressed hope that the U.S. government would show its determination to return to its commitments by taking the necessary decisions.

Foreign Minister Amir Abdollahian also stressed at the meeting that the U.S. government's oppressive and unilateral sanctions, which are imposed on

independent nations, are contrary to all international norms and human rights.

Amir Abdollahian emphasized that the government of the Islamic Republic will continue with strength and logic on the two paths of neutralizing sanctions and removing them through the Vienna talks.

It is worth mentioning that the participants in the meeting, while exchanging views on the different dimensions of sanctions and ways to counter them, put emphasis on documenting and writing about Iran's successful experience in dealing with oppressive U.S. sanctions.

## SPORTS

### Referee named for Tehran derby between Persepolis and Esteghlal

TEHRAN – The Iranian Football Federation has appointed referee Mehdi Seyedali as the man in charge of Thursday's Tehran derby between Persepolis and Esteghlal football teams.



He will be assisted by Mohammadreza Mansouri and Farhad Moraveji in this match.

The match will take place in Tehran's Azadi Stadium.

The match will be title decider since Esteghlal sit top of the table with 54 points, six points adrift of their archrivals Persepolis with eight weeks remaining.

### Iran's Veisi chosen as Asian Women's Handball Championship best right back

TEHRAN – Iran's Hedieh Veisi was selected as the best right back of the 2022 Asian Women's Junior Handball Championship.

She helped Iran qualify for the 2022 Women's Junior World Handball Championship held in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

The Iranian team won a silver medal in the 2022 Asian Women's Junior Handball Championship and advanced to the world championship as one of top two finishers.

India edged past Iran on goal difference and bagged the top spot on the podium.

The 2022 Women's Junior World Handball Championship will be held in Slovenia from June 22 to July 3.

### Hamed Haddadi joins Shahrdari Gorgan

TEHRAN – Iran and Sichuan Blue Whales center Hamed Haddadi joined Iranian basketball club Shahrdari Gorgan.

Shahrdari Gorgan won the title of the Iranian Basketball Super League (IBSL) for the first-time ever last season and is going to defend its title in the current season.

Shahrdari Gorgan has advanced to the 2021-22 IBSL playoffs.

The team is scheduled to play Exxon Tehran.

Haddadi is the first Iranian to play in the National Basketball Association (NBA) when he debuted with the Memphis Grizzlies in 2008.

### Iran fall short against Bangladesh in 2022 Men's AHF Cup

TEHRAN – Iran national hockey team were defeated against Bangladesh 6-2 in the 2022 Men's AHF Cup on Tuesday.

Iran started the campaign with a 2-1 win over Singapore but lost to Oman 10-2 in Group B.

Iran will play Indonesia on Thursday.

Group A consists of Kazakhstan, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Uzbekistan.

The 2022 Men's AHF Cup is the sixth edition of the Men's AHF Cup, the quadrennial qualification tournament for the Men's Hockey Asia Cup organized by the Asian Hockey Federation.

The competition is being held at the GBK Hockey Field in Jakarta, Indonesia from March 11 to 20.

The top three teams qualify for the 2022 Men's Hockey Asia Cup.

### Iran beat Mongolia in NSDF Futsal Invitation Championship

TEHRAN – Iran U19 futsal team defeated Mongolia 8-0 in the 2022 NSDF Futsal Invitation Championship.

The tournament is being held in Bangkok, Thailand from March 15 to 20.

Iran are in Group B with Myanmar and Mongolia while hosts Thailand, Oman and Maldives are in Group A.

Iran U19 futsal team, headed by Ali Sanei, will play Myanmar on Thursday.

### Iran to compete at 2022 Asian Canoe Slalom Championships

TEHRAN – Three paddlers will represent Iran at the 2022 Asian Canoe Slalom Continental Championships.

The competition will be held in Pattaya, Thailand from March 20 to 22.

Nirvana Asadbeigi will compete at the women's canoe slalom, Mohadeseh Hassanpour take part at the women's kayak slalom and Mohammad Mahdavinia participate at the men's canoe slalom.

### Bento names national team for Iran match

TEHRAN – Korean national football team head coach Paulo Bento announced his squad for Korea's final two World Cup qualifiers set to begin on March 24 against Iran.

Korea have already secured a place at the 2022 Qatar World Cup with 20 points to land securely within the two qualifying spots at the top of Group A in the third round of Asia qualifiers. Yet despite having already qualified, Bento has called up a full-strength squad for the final two games.

The majority of Korea's European stars have been called up, with Tottenham Hotspur's Son Heung-min, Wolverhampton Wanderers' Hwang Hee-chan, Bordeaux's Hwang Ui-jo, Mainz's Lee Jae-sung, Freiburg's Jeong Woo-yeong and Fenerbahce's Kim Min-jae all named to the squad.

Jung Woo-young of Qatari side Al Saad, Kim Seung-gyu of Kashiwa Reysol and Kwon Kyung-won of Gamba Osaka complete the international lineup.

K League stars are also out in force, including national team regulars like Kwon Chang-hoon of Gimcheon Sangmu, Kim Young-gwon of Ulsan Hyundai and Kim Jin-su of Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors.

One noticeable absence is midfielder Hwang In-beom of Russian club Rubin Kazan, who recently returned to Korea to recover from an injury. Hwang Hee-chan's availability is also questionable, as he left a game against Everton on Sunday in the 16th minute with what appeared to be a leg injury.

Both Hwang Hee-chan and Son missed out on Korea's most recent round of World Cup qualifiers due to injury sustained during their Premier League careers. Son at least appears to be fit and looks likely to return to his place at the helm of the national team.

Korea have two World Cup qualifiers left to play — on March 24 against Iran and March 29 against the United Arab Emirates.



## Non-oil trade with neighbors up 42% in 11 months yr/yr



From page 1 ► Back in January, IRICA Head Alireza Moghadasi had put the value of Iran's non-oil trade with its neighbors at \$36.8 billion for the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21, 2021), saying that the figure had registered a 42 percent increase year on year.

Moghadasi put the weight of non-oil trade with the neighboring countries at 75 million tons in the said time span, stating that trade with the neighbors also increased by 18 percent in terms of weight.

## Bandar Abbas Refinery's development project to complete fuel oil value chain

TEHRAN – Bandar Abbas Refinery in Southern Iran is going to fully process fuel oil into products with higher added value including petroleum coke after the implementation of a development project designed by Iranian engineers and experts.

The official documents on the various aspects of the mentioned project were unveiled in a ceremony attended by Oil Minister Javad Oji and Managing Director of Bandar Abbas Refinery Hashem Namvar on Tuesday at the place of the Oil Ministry in Tehran, Shana reported.

According to Namvar, the project was first supposed to be designed and implemented by Japanese engineers, however, after the implementation of the U.S. sanctions they withdrew from the project and now domestic engineers and experts have successfully completed the project's design.

The official noted that the major focus of the mentioned project is to produce high-quality petroleum coke as the end product, adding: "The quality of coke produced through the designed process has been confirmed during three stages of trial and testing at the Research Institute of Petroleum Industry."

The project is divided into three sub-projects; The first step is to set up processing units for which the necessary permits have been obtained and a public call notice has also been issued, Namvar said.

According to him, the contractor for the first section of the project will be selected by the first quarter of the next Iranian calendar year (begins



*Oil Minister Javad Oji (4th L) and Managing Director of Bandar Abbas Refinery Hashem Namvar (1st L) attend the unveiling ceremony of official documents on Bandar Abbas Refinery development project*

on March 21).

He mentioned the second part of the project as ancillary services and facilities, while the third sub-project will be the construction of an oil production unit.

Noting that for the first time in the country a refinery is completely using the technical knowledge of domestic institutions for such a major project, the official added: "This project is 100 percent done by local experts and has turned the threat of sanctions into an opportunity."

The head of Bandar Abbas refinery said the coke produced after the implementation of the mentioned project will be used to meet the demands inside the country and the surplus production will also be exported.

## Export from Markazi province increases 39 percent

TEHRAN – The value of export from Markazi province, in the center of Iran, rose 39 percent during the first 11 months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2021-February 19, 2022), from the same period of time in the past year, a provincial official announced.

Esmail Hosseini, the director-general of the province's customs department, said that 1483 million tons of commodities worth \$1109 billion were exported from the province in the 11-month period.

"The goods were exported to 98 countries, of which more than 80 percent was to neighboring countries, the first five countries for which a lot of exports were made, Iraq ranks first, followed by Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Uzbekistan", the official stated.

He named light and heavy polyethylene, aluminum, food and beverages, glass and crystal products, and steel sections as the major exported products.

Hosseini further announced that 128,921 tons of commodities worth \$446 million were imported from 49 countries to the province in the first 11 months of this year, rising 17 percent as compared to the same period of time in the past year.

He named United Arab Emirates, Turkey, China,

India, and South Korea as the main sources of imports, and said, "Our main imports are factory raw materials, as well as machinery and parts, steel products and other raw materials."

"About 99 percent of our imported goods belong to manufacturing companies that use machinery, raw materials and parts", he added.

As previously announced by the deputy head of Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), the value of Iran's non-oil trade rose 38 percent during the first 11 months of the current year.

Foroud Asgari said that Iran traded over 149.4 million tons of non-oil products worth \$90 billion with other countries in the mentioned period.

He noted that the weight of trade in the mentioned period also grew by 12 percent in comparison to the figure for the previous year's same 11 months.

The official put the 11-month non-oil exports at 112,658 million tons valued at \$43.517 billion, with a 40-percent rise in value and 10 percent growth in weight.

The Islamic Republic imported 36,777 million tons of non-oil commodities worth \$46.577 billion in the first 11 months of the present year, with a 36 percent growth in value and a 19 percent rise in weight year on year, according to the official.

## Oil Ministry connected to national permitting system

TEHRAN- Deputy oil minister for planning announced the connection of Oil Ministry to the national permitting system and said: "Applicants can refer to this system to apply for a permit for five projects of the ministry."

Saying that the organizations had time until

March 9 of this year to connect to the national permitting system, and apply electronically for the issuance of business permits, Houshang Falahatian said, "In this due, Oil Ministry has put the NGL, LNG, petrochemical/GTL, and refining/petrochemical projects as well as establishment of gas and CNG stations at the mentioned system."

Stating that the connection between Oil Ministry's system and its main companies has been established with the national system of business

# Steel ingot exports rise 19%

TEHRAN- Iran exported over 6.642 million tons of steel ingots during the first 11 months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2021-February 19, 2022) which was 19 percent more than the figure of the same period of time in the past year.

According to the Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry data, Iranian producers also exported over 3.01 million tons of steel products including sheets, rebars, studs, corners, beams in the mentioned period to register a 14-percent rise as well, IRNA reported.

Based on the mentioned data, steel ingot output in the previous

year's same period stood at 5.6 million tons, while the production of steel products was 2.64 million tons.

The export of sponge iron also increased by 20 percent during this 11-month period to reach 985,000 tons from 819,000 tons in the previous year's same 11 months.

As reported, the import of steel products and ingots in the mentioned 11 months were 650,000 tons and 5,000 tons, respectively.

The imports of steel products fell 23 percent compared to the same period last year when



Iran imported 847,000 tons of products, while the imports of ingots didn't change and stood at 5,000 tons.

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.

The country is expected to climb to seventh place among the world's top steel producers by the Iranian calendar year 1404 (March 2025).

The production capacity of the country's steel chain increased from 123 million tons in the Iranian calendar year 1392 (ended in March 2014) to 230 million tons in the previous year (ended on March 20).

Based on the latest report released by the World Steel Association (WSA), Iran has maintained its place as the world's 10th biggest steel producer during January-October, 2021.

Production of crude steel in Iran reached 22.4 million tons during the mentioned time span to register a 5.7-percent decline year on year, the report said.

## 360 idle production units revived in Tehran province

TEHRAN- The governor-general of Tehran province announced that 360 idle production units have been revived in the province during the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20).

Mohsen Mansouri made the remarks while visiting Shams-Abad Industrial Park, that according to the official, is Tehran's and Iran's largest industrial park and enjoys high capacities in different economic and industrial areas.

In terms of job creation in the province, Mansouri said: "The job commitment that the government had set for the province this year was to create jobs for 96,000 people, which has been created for 104,000 people so far, and in fact we fulfilled more than 100 percent of our commitment."

As announced last week by the head of Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO), over 1,900 idle industrial units have been revived in the industrial parks and zones of the country in the current Iranian calendar year.

Ali Rasoulion also said the number of idle units is decreasing.

Referring to the high demand for investment in industrial parks and zones he said: "Given that the demand for investment in this filed is high, we seek to provide infrastructure such as water, electricity and gas for the companies so that the capabilities of these areas to attract investors will be developed."

Of course, the important point is that the applicants must also complete the construction, install the machinery, obtain the operation and production licenses within the framework of the obligations and within the legal period specified

in the land use right contract, he added.

The official had previously said that the number of idle industrial units is hoped to reach 2,000 units by the end of the present year.

The ISIPO head had also announced that 1,557 stagnant and semi-active units returned to the production cycle in the industrial parks with a financing of 35 trillion rials (nearly \$140 million), providing employment for 27,000 people, in the last Iranian calendar year.

With the aim of reactivating stagnant units or units that are operating below capacity, 900 consultants from the private sector and knowledge-based companies were selected in the form of industry clinics across the country to recognize the weaknesses of these units, Rasoulion stated.

"Despite the two major challenges of sanctions and coronavirus pandemic, which imposed severe restrictions on the country, we tried to activate domestic capacities by turning to localizing the technology of manufacturing parts and equipment", he added.

Sanctions have caused problems for financial exchanges and the export of goods to other countries, he said, adding, "The negative effects of coronavirus pandemic on various parts of the country, including industry, are not hidden from anyone, and the economic growth of some countries has reached below zero during this period."

Iran is proud that despite these restrictions and pressure from these two important challenges, its industry has grown by more than seven percent, according to the statistics and reports from various sectors, the official further highlighted.

Also, as announced by Deputy Industry,

## TEDPIX gains 2,000 points on Tuesday

TEHRAN- TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), rose 2,492 points to 1,337 million on Tuesday.

As reported, 8,063 billion securities worth 48.977 trillion rials (about \$ 188.3 million) were traded at the TSE.

TEDPIX rose 67,000 points (5.2 percent) to 1.348 million in the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday).

During the past week, the indices of Tehran Oil Refining Company, Mobarakeh Steel Company, Iran Khodro Company, Saipa Company, National Iranian Copper Company, Social Security Investment Company, and Isfahan Oil Refinery were the most widely followed ones.

The Money and Capital Market Committee of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) hosted a meeting with Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO) Head Majid Eshqi on January 30 to discuss the capital markets' current issues and challenges.

The meeting was attended by the members

of the mentioned committee as well as the representatives of some of the companies active in the stock market.

Lack of sufficient training for shareholders, facilitating the entry of new companies into the stock market, offering bonds by the capital market instead of banks to provide fixed and working capital for production units, accelerating the formation of credit rating companies in the stock market, and tax exemption for undistributed dividends of companies, as well as pricing problems, were some of the most important issues pointed out by the businessmen and officials attending the mentioned meeting.

Government Economic Coordination Headquarters in its meeting in the last week of January approved five new resolutions for supporting the country's stock market, and the directives in this regard were sent to relative ministries, First Vice President Mohammad Mokhber announced at the time.

The mentioned resolutions include the



Mining, and Trade Minister Mehdi Sadeqi Niaraki, over 6,500 new industrial units were established across the country during the past year which created jobs for over 121,000 people.

Touching upon the Industry Ministry's plans for the realization of the motto of the current year which is named the year of "Production: support and the elimination of obstacles" by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, the official has said: "In the year that has been dedicated to the production sector by the Leader of the revolution, the orientation of all government organizations and executive bodies should be towards supporting the country's industrial and mining units."

Niaraki pointed to a 40-percent increase in the issuance of establishment licenses for industrial units in the previous year, saying: "The number of establishment licenses increased to more than 36,000 last year, which shows that people are encouraged to invest in the productive sectors."

He also mentioned an 85-percent rise in the allocation of land for establishing industrial units across the country and noted that over 4,500 hectares of land were handed over to applicants in the previous calendar year.

reduction of petrochemical feed prices, the reduction of interbank interest rates, the restriction of the sale of securities, preventing the increase of government mining salaries, and the increase of the exchange rate of banks.

According to Mokhber, the decisions made in the meeting of the Government Economic Coordination Headquarters have been communicated with Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Ehsan Khandouzi, Minister of Industry, Mining and Trade Reza Fatemi-Amin, Oil Minister Javad Oji, Head of Planning and Budget Organization (PMO) Masoud Mir-Kazemi, and Governor of Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Ali Saleh-Abadi.

Speaking about the positive impacts of the mentioned decisions on the capital market, Finance Minister Ehsan Khandouzi said that the mentioned resolutions carry the message of government's serious support for industries and indicate stable economic activity, predictability of variables, and ultimately a positive outlook for the economy in the coming months.

permitting is a new chapter in business environment with deregulation and facilitation of the permitting process.

As reported, at the beginning of the electronic permitting project, most of the organizations did not cooperate in this field, but now all of them are seriously trying to have access to it.

With the launch of this system, applicants no longer need to apply in person to start a business and can obtain the relevant permits electronically.

investment permits so that the process of providing services to enterprises can proceed according to a clear schedule."

The electronic permitting system has been launched and according to the law, March 9 was the deadline for all organizations to connect to the national permitting system, as the issuance of permits for the start of businesses became electronic since that date.

In fact, the implementation of electronic



# Risks of nuclear war are growing, but still remain low: political scientist

*‘One key distinction in the analogy between Ukraine and the Cuban Missile Crisis is the ability to deescalate’*

From page 1 ▶ in Ukraine, raises the stakes of military conflict. Thus, I don't believe we would witness war in a NATO member state like Estonia, Latvia, or Lithuania.

But Ukraine shows that deterrence cannot prevent peripheral conflicts in states outside military alliances or unprotected by great power nuclear assurances. Putin's gamble appears to be that Moscow would win the so-called "balance of resolve." He bet controlling Ukraine's trajectory was more important to Russia than NATO.

Yet, this has quickly become a conflict involving NATO. Western countries are providing weapons and intelligence to help Ukraine resist the Russian military. They are using economic sanctions to punish not just Putin but everyday Russian people. Refugees are fleeing to NATO states and neutral countries. Nuclear weapon use or accidents due to conflict near Ukrainian nuclear power plants will have severe consequences for Europe and beyond.

As videos of the humanitarian crisis disseminate through traditional and social media, calls will grow for intervention. This will likely pose great risks because it is unclear what actions will result in escalation. Cold War examples show that some NATO or Russian troop deaths, or aircraft losses, will not result in a "Moscow-for-Washington" strategic nuclear exchange. The risks of nuclear war are growing, but they still remain quite low.

**Could you update us about assessments when it comes to the comparison between U.S. and Russia in terms of nuclear power?**

According to the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, the United States has 5,428 nuclear weapons and Russia has 5,977. These two countries account for over 90% of global nuclear stockpiles. This has created a situation where potential conflict between them could escalate with worldwide ramifications.

Some analysts have suggested, instead of using strategic nuclear arms against cities, Putin may consider "low-yield" tactical nuclear weapons. This could occur on the battlefield to target Ukrainian military infrastructure and tip the balance in Russia's favor.

I don't see this as likely. Such an action would risk severe escalation and devastate the norm of nuclear non-use dating to 1945. The Russians are also capable of destroying Ukrainian targets with conventional weaponry alone. However, we should be increasingly concerned about weapons of mass destruction if Russia fails to achieve its objectives with conventional weapons and Putin appears disinterested in serious diplomacy.

**What does Cold War history tell us about crisis escalation and possibilities for diplomacy? For example, what can we learn from the Cuban Missile Crisis?**

I would return to the balance of resolve. The United States emerged victorious in the Cuban Missile Crisis



because President John F. Kennedy made nuclear threats deemed credible by Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev. It was clear that Washington wanted to eliminate Soviet nuclear missile deployments close to its shores, capable of targeting major U.S. cities. Likewise, Putin threatened Western powers that might consider intervening in Ukraine. This threat will likely do a great deal to deter a NATO-Russia conflict. One key distinction in the analogy between Ukraine and the Cuban Missile Crisis is the ability to deescalate. U.S. President Joe Biden doesn't have nearly as much control over whether Ukraine might stand down as Khrushchev did over the U.S.S.R. Escalatory risks will likely force the hand of the Americans toward nonintervention and promoting diplomacy. But this does not mean a quick end to the war, which is in the hands of the Ukrainians and the Russians.

Also, as I mentioned earlier, lower-level provocations like the 1960 U-2 spy plane incident reveal nuclear powers showing restraint. Not all military actions to support the Ukrainians will necessarily lead to nuclear escalation. NATO will tread carefully in probing Russian "red lines."

**How do you see the global distribution of nuclear power? Israel possesses a nuclear arsenal, but the media stigmatizes peaceful nuclear energy programs like Iran's. It seems having a nuclear weapon is a political matter based on alignment with the superpowers.**

This distribution is the product of a long politicized history. Western powers knew Israel, Pakistan, Apartheid South Africa (later denuclearized), and others were building the bomb. In some cases, technology suppliers turned a blind eye even as evidence mounted that civilian nuclear exports might be used for weapons. Likewise, China and Russia have engaged

in "gray area" nuclear transfers with allies. There's also subjectivity even within blocs and a history of—particularly in the U.S. case—superpower nonproliferation promotion within alliances.

But generally, your point is well taken. Countries like Iran have committed to remaining non-nuclear in the 1968 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. One reason they joined is that Article 6 says the superpowers have to eventually eliminate their arsenals. There has been some progress, as there were up to 70,000 global nuclear weapons in the 1980s, now down to roughly 13,000 today. Yet, a huge number remain, and NATO-Russia tensions are an obstacle to disarmament.

Indeed, the media often ignores some nuclear weapons while stigmatizing civilian efforts. Iran is entitled to peaceful nuclear energy under Article 4 of the Nonproliferation Treaty. Still, the Islamic Republic's recent actions with centrifuge and uranium enrichment levels could be seen as worrisome.

I believe Iran doesn't seek nuclear weapons and is trying to persuade the United States and others to return to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. But intentional or not, Iran's actions reduce its breakout time to develop a bomb should Tehran ever decide to do so. The best solution to avoid misperception

is a return to the deal—which the Donald Trump administration was foolish to leave—and a permanent end to the failed policy of "maximum pressure." As energy tensions between Russia and the West grow, so does the market for Iranian oil and natural gas provided by sanctions relief.

**“The legacy of Saddam’s atrocities against the Iranians should remind that no country should ever use chemical arms. Their use is a grave human rights violation.”**

**Can possession of nuclear arsenal survive a political system? The USSR collapsed despite having nuclear weapons. What can the United States learn from this?**

As energy tensions between Russia and the West grow, so does the market for Iranian oil and natural gas provided by sanctions relief.

I am afraid the conflict in Ukraine might be read in some capitals as a call for nuclear proliferation. Kyiv doesn't have nuclear weapons and isn't protected by a nuclear umbrella. But having an arsenal is a perilous state of affairs. If you're pointing nuclear weapons at a nuclear-armed adversary, they're probably pointing theirs back at you. Right now, every major NATO city in Europe is about 20 minutes from being destroyed by Russian nuclear missiles, and cities in the United States are a half-hour from destruction.

The reverse is also true. This is essentially hostage-taking that may seem acceptable so long as deterrence works. If it fails spectacularly, the consequences are unimaginable.

And yes, I agree, nuclear weapons didn't stop Soviet disintegration. They also haven't prevented North Korea from becoming a pariah with an economy in shambles. They will not guarantee the future of Russia or the United States. Of course, political regimes need to ensure their populations' security. But they also should focus on democratic governance and transparency. Money spent on a nuclear arsenal could be better spent on people's well-being. For this and other reasons, a return to the path of nuclear arms control would be well advised to reduce NATO-Russia tensions.

**After Russia alleged the United States and NATO were coordinating with Ukraine to develop and release biological weapons, U.S. officials labeled these claims as “propaganda.” It now seems Russia’s claim may be true. What are the implications?**

To date, there is no verifiable evidence from the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons corroborating these assertions. The lessons of Iraq in 2003 are critical here. The George W. Bush administration was wrong to make accusations about weapons of mass destruction and invade without legitimate support for its claims. This is why impartial inspections are vital for verifying the global arms control regime.

Ukraine is a member of the Biological Weapons Convention. Biological weapons are indiscriminate, and I see no reason to believe the Ukrainian government would risk harming its civilian population. More concerning is Russia employing these allegations to justify using chemical weapons against Ukrainian cities. Moscow has a large chemical arsenal despite being party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, and there are allegations its intelligence agencies used chemical weapons in the 2018 Skripal incident on British soil.

The legacy of Saddam Hussein's atrocities against the Iranian people should remind everyone that no country should ever use chemical weapons. Chemical agents inflict massive suffering. Their use is a grave human rights violation.

## Russia, China dismiss U.S. claims over Ukraine



From page 1 ▶ China's alliance with Russia warning of the isolation and penalties Beijing will face if it supports Moscow's military operation.

The U.S. administration has offered no evidence to back up its accusations of China's willingness to provide any aid to Russia.

China's official Xinhua news agency cited Yang as saying that Beijing was committed to promoting negotiations to resolve the Ukraine conflict.

"China firmly opposes any words and deeds that spread false information and distort and smear China's position," Yang said, in an apparent oblique reference to Washington's claims about support for Russia.

The meeting between Yang and Sullivan which had long been planned was not timed to events in Ukraine and covered other issues including North Korea and tense bilateral relations.

Before the talks, U.S. officials had said Sullivan planned to warn of the isolation China could face globally if it supported Russia.

Last week the U.S. Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo said Chinese companies defying U.S. restrictions on exports to Russia may be cut off from American equipment and software they need to make their products.

China is the world's-largest exporter, the European Union's largest trading partner, and the top foreign supplier of goods to the United States. Any pressure on Chinese trade could have economic effects on the United States and its allies.

Last week Chinese President Xi Jinping called for "maximum restraint" and expressed concern about the impact of Western sanctions on the global economy.

The U.S. and its allies have imposed sweeping sanctions on Russia and banned its energy imports while providing billions of dollars of military assistance to Ukraine.

The European Union has approved a fourth wave of sanctions over Russia's military operation in Ukraine.

France, which holds the EU's rotating presidency, said in a statement that the bloc approved a package targeting "individuals and entities involved in the conflict with Ukraine" along with sectors of the Russian economy.

Paris confirmed the fourth set of sanctions against Russia will target its iron, steel, and energy industries, along with luxury goods exports to Moscow.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen had previously stated the EU was working to suspend Russia's membership rights of leading multilateral institutions like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

The EU has adopted tough measures targeting the Russian Presidency, Russia's financial system, and other Russian individuals.

Last week, the bloc agreed to slap further sanctions on 160 individuals and added new restrictions on the export of maritime navigation and radio communication technology.

This comes as the International Monetary Fund has warned Ukraine's economy could collapse, contracting by as much as 35 percent if the conflict drags on, and the fighting could also jeopardize global food security.

In an analysis of Ukraine's economy in the wake of Russia's military operations the IMF said "there is massive uncertainty around the baseline," but at a minimum the country would see "output falling 10

percent this year assuming a prompt resolution of the war."

Kyiv and Moscow have shown greater will to seek a diplomatic solution to the crisis with multiple rounds of negotiations.

A senior member of Ukraine's negotiating team announced the talks had paused on Monday and will continue on Tuesday.

Mykhailo Podolyak explained that "a technical pause has been taken in the negotiations until [Tuesday]. For additional work in the working subgroups and clarification of individual definitions. Negotiations continue."

Turkey and Germany have appealed for a ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine to open humanitarian corridors for civilian evacuations.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz met in the Turkish capital Ankara with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who is hoping to facilitate a solution through direct talks with Moscow.

The meeting was the first between the leaders since Scholz replaced Angela Merkel.

"We are in agreement on the issue of reaching a ceasefire as soon as possible," Scholz told a joint news conference.

Erdogan says Turkey and Germany shared "common views and concerns" over Russia's military operation, stressing "we will continue our relentless efforts for a long-lasting ceasefire."

Ankara is seeking to play a mediating role and has direct links to the two warring sides. Turkey has so far avoided implementing Western sanctions targeting the Russian economy.

"We need to preserve our friendship with (Volodymyr) Zelensky and (Vladimir) Putin," the Turkish President said.

The UN human rights office (OHCHR) says it had confirmed the deaths of at least 636 civilians in Ukraine until March 13, including 46 children.

The actual toll is believed to be likely higher, it said since there have been delays receiving and corroborating reports from places with intense clashes such as the cities of Kharkiv and Mariupol.

OHCHR is said to have 50 staff monitors in the country.

Russia says an attack by Kyiv's forces on the separatist stronghold of Donetsk in eastern Ukraine had left 23 people dead, with the military accusing Kyiv of committing a "war crime".

Meanwhile, UN chief Antonio Guterres has warned that the world must act to prevent a crippling effect on poorer countries who will feel the impact from the Ukraine conflict.

The secretary-general told reporters in New York that the war risks sparking far-reaching consequences for the global food supply that will have a devastating impact on the poorest.

"This war goes far beyond Ukraine. It is also an assault on the world's most vulnerable people and countries," Guterres said.

Guterres has warned that the world's 45 least developed countries import at least one-third of their wheat from Ukraine or Russia.

They include Burkina Faso, Egypt, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen.

"We must do everything possible to avert a hurricane of hunger and a meltdown of the global food system," Guterres implored, calling for an immediate ceasefire.

## OIC to focus on Islamophobia at upcoming meeting: Pakistan's envoy

Pakistan will be hosting the 48th session of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Council of Foreign Ministers on March 22-23 to further discuss topics on Islamophobia, Afghanistan, Kashmir and Palestine, according to Pakistan's ambassador to Türkiye.

Muhammad Syrus Sajjad Qazi told Anadolu Agency in an interview that this year's session also coincides with Pakistan Day parade, where the OIC foreign ministers will be guests at the event as well.

"In 1940, the All-India Muslim League met in Lahore and decided that the Muslims of South Asia deserved and wanted an independent homeland of their own. Seven years later on Aug. 14, 1947, Pakistan came into being as a result of the resolutions adopted in 1940 on March 23," Qazi said.

Regarding the meeting's agenda, Qazi said it will encompass everything that is of interest to the Muslim world, with this year's theme "Partnership for unity, justice and development."

"But specifically, Palestine will be discussed, Kashmir, and other important issues for our various member states. Islamophobia, the trend of hate speech against Muslims, negative stereotyping of Muslims, and the situation in Afghanistan and its humanitarian dimensions will be discussed," he said.

Qazi recalled the extraordinary session of the OIC held in Pakistan in December 2021, which exclusively focused on the situation in Afghanistan and helping its citizens with the economic and humanitarian challenges they were confronting.

"The situation in Afghanistan will be discussed. In fact, we will look at one of the conclusions of the December extraordinary session to establish a trust fund. We hope to be able to operationalize this trust fund at this coming meeting, so Afghanistan will be a very significant part of the extensive agenda of the meeting. Our main focus is to help our Afghan brothers and sisters overcome the humanitarian challenges," he said.

"The event will highlight the unity of the Muslim ummah in the face of very serious challenges facing the world. We will also be looking at a productive session. We expect to be adopting about 100 or so resolutions on various teams. It will be an important venue to give voice to the Muslim countries and their causes."

**OIC criticized for its inability to resolve various problems**

"Imagine if the OIC was not speaking on the Palestinian and Kashmiri issues. One would see that the picture immediately changes. So sometimes unfortunately the OIC comes in for a bit of

criticism on account of its perceived inability to solve various problems," Qazi said.

He said the problems of the OIC were very serious and complicated and that the media does not reflect on the events in these regions.

"But most importantly, what the OIC does is to lend a voice to these issues and to keep them alive, to highlight them, to inform the world to look at these issues. So the OIC allows the individual voices of Muslim countries to be heard in the collective," he said.

Qazi emphasized that the OIC in these issues comes up with solid resolutions but that there was a wider international community also that needs to take up its responsibility and speak up like the OIC on these issues.

"When this happens, these issues will come closer to a resolution," he said.

Pakistan has previously hosted four sessions of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers. It is the second-largest intergovernmental organization in the world after the UN, with 57 Muslim member states spread across four continents.

Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi confirmed that the top diplomats of 46 Islamic countries will be attending the meeting.

(Source: Anadolu Agency)



## People of Switzerland recognize Iran by its history and culture: Swiss diplomat

TEHRAN - Swiss deputy ambassador to Iran Kim Sitzler has said people of his country recognize Iran by its juicy history and culture.

Swiss people know Iran for its culture and history and [many of whom] like to visit the ancient country. Of course, this has its complexities, such as visa issuance, ILNA quoted Sitzler as saying on Tuesday.

“Iran is a country with a rich culture that can be one of the destinations for Swiss travelers.”

The Swiss diplomat made the remarks on Monday at the opening ceremony of the cultural heritage exhibition which depicts a collection of prehistorical glazed bricks recovered from a smuggler in Switzerland.

Being looted and smuggled out of Iran some four decades ago, the decorated bricks were returned home from Switzerland last year. They were originally been excavated in the Qalaichi archaeological sites in western Iran near the city of Boukan. Qalaichi was once the capital of the Mannaeen kingdom.

“I’m not an archaeologist, but I can tell by the sheer exquisiteness of the bricks,” Sitzler said.

“I can recognize the extraordinary beauty of bricks and try to visualize the buildings adorned with them.”

Dating back to the 7th or 8th centuries BC, the bricks bear a wide variety of motifs: winged lions and bulls with human heads, mythological figures, birds of prey, deer, and floral or geometric designs.

The artists who made these bricks were masters of their own art. These objects give us considerable insight into the Mannaeen civilization that had been buried in the soil for millennia, the diplomat stated.

Elsewhere in his remarks, he referred to the 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property.

“Although I do not know how these bricks were discovered or stolen and found in a sealed warehouse in Switzerland in the 1980s, I do know that the protection and preservation of historical objects have made significant progress around the world over the past 50 years, including in Switzerland, which is a reflection of a 1970 UNESCO Convention,” Sitzler was quoted as saying by the news agency.

Iran is also one of the signatories of this agreement... We pursue a common goal of protecting cultural heritage and combating its trafficking, he explained.

“I am glad that this part of Iran’s cultural heritage is now on public display.”

The artifacts are connected to the Mannai civilization, which was once flourished in northwestern Iran in the 1st millennium BC. Mannai, also spelled Manna, was an ancient country surrounded by three major powers of the time namely Assyria, Urartu, and Media.

According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, the Mannaeans are first recorded in the annals of the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III (reigned 858–824 BC) and are last mentioned in Urartu by Rusa II (reigned



685–645 BC) and in Assyria by Esarhaddon (reigned 680–669 BC). With the intrusion of the Scythians and the rise of the Medes in the 7th century, the Manneans lost their identity and were subsumed under the term Medes.

In the 1970s, a farmer plowing at Qalaichi came across a decorated brick, probably from the columned hall of its citadel. This discovery led to extremely damaging illegal excavations, partly using a bulldozer. Eventually, in 1985, there was an official rescue excavation, but this was quickly abandoned because of an intensification of the Iran-Iraq war. There were then 14 more years of illegal digging until 1999 when there was another official excavation. But by this time only small fragments of broken bricks were found.

In 1991, an Iranian antiquities dealer with a base in Switzerland contacted John Curtis, the British Museum’s keeper of the Middle East (West Asia) at the time, intending to sell a collection of Qalaichi bricks. Curtis traveled to a warehouse in Chiasso, very close to the Italian border. He warned the vendor that the bricks may have been illegally exported from Iran and advised that they should be returned. His advice was ignored.

The bricks remained in Chiasso for years, but in 2008 the warehouse owners took action after the dealer’s storage bill had remained unpaid. The warehouse obtained authority to seize the contents and on finding the bricks, the Swiss authorities were alerted. Curtis, together with a London-based lawyer, Jeremy Scott, contacted Tehran’s National Museum, which submitted a formal request for their return.

The objects have led to a reconsideration of Mannaeen civilization since they show that its people were highly skilled artists. Their designs also reveal a strong Assyrian influence, such as the human-headed winged bulls.

Curtis, who is now the academic director of the Iran Heritage Foundation, says that before the discovery of the bricks, “the richness of Mannaeen civilization and its links with Assyria had not been appreciated”.

Composed of 51 pieces of bricks, each bearing a particular figure or motif, the collection will remain on show till April 19 at the National Museum of Iran.

## Iran seeks to recover smuggled relics from U.S., France, England, Hungary, and Norway



From page 1 of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts and the presidential office for legal affairs, according to the ministry officials.

Archaeologists affiliated with the University of Chicago discovered the

tablets in the 1930s while excavating in Persepolis, the ceremonial capital of the Persian Empire. However, the institute has resumed work in collaboration with colleagues in Iran, and the return of the tablets is part of a broadening of contacts between scholars in the two countries, said Gil Stein, director of the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago.

The tablets reveal the economic, social, and religious history of the Achaemenid Empire (550–330 BC) and the larger Near Eastern region in the fifth century BC.

The Achaemenid [Persian] Empire was the largest and most durable empire of its time. The empire stretched from Ethiopia and Egypt to Greece, Anatolia (modern Turkey), Central Asia, and India.

# Bukan arts show Iranian originality of Persepolis decorations

TEHRAN - Bukan’s collection of glazed bricks shows the Iranian originality of similar motifs and bas-reliefs that adorn the UNESCO-registered Persepolis, a senior researcher with the National Museum of Iran has said.

“Some researchers have doubts about the originality of designs and reliefs of Persepolis, especially the designs of winged creatures, as being made by Iranians, which that idea can be refuted because Bukan bricks also bear those motifs,” Yousef Hassanzadeh explained.

Moreover, motifs and designs of Bukan bricks have already been seen in Assyrian works of art, the archaeologists stated.

Dating back to the 7th or 8th centuries BC, the bricks bear a wide variety of motifs such as winged lions and bulls with human heads, mythological figures, birds of prey, deer, and floral or geometric designs.

Being looted and smuggled out of Iran some four decades ago, the decorated bricks were returned home from Switzerland



last year. They were originally been excavated in the Qalaichi archaeological sites in western Iran near the city of Boukan. Qalaichi was once the capital of the Mannaeen kingdom.

Situated about 70 km from the Iranian city of Shiraz, Persepolis was the capital of the Persian Empire during the Achaemenid era (c. 550 – 330 BC). Its construction began in 521 BC by order of Darius the

Great as part of a vast program of monumental constructions focused on emphasizing the unity and diversity of the Achaemenid Persian Empire, the legitimacy of royal power, and showing the greatness of his kingdom.

The works of Persepolis attracted workers and artisans from all the satrapies of the empire and therefore its architecture resulted from an original combination of forms

from these provinces that created a Persian architectural style already outlined in Pasargadae and that is also found in Susa and Ecbatana.

Persepolis comprises a huge palatial complex on a monumental terrace that supports multiple hypostyle buildings that had specific ceremonial, ritual, emblematic or administrative functions: audiences, royal apartments, administration of the treasury, or reception.

Near the terrace were other items: royal tombs, altars, and gardens. There were also the houses of the lower city, of which almost nothing visible remains today.

Many bas-reliefs carved on the steps and doors of the palace represent the diversity of the peoples that made up the empire. Others enshrine the image of a royal protective, sovereign, legitimate and absolute power, where Xerxes I is designated as the legitimate successor of Darius the Great.

## Rotating celebration herald of Persian new year

TEHRAN - On Monday, a rotating celebration kicked off in Tehran as a herald of the Persian new year 1401 (which starts on March 21).

Organized by the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO, the event is scheduled to be held in the west-central Hamedan province and later in the western province of Kermanshah. The next stop will be Sanandaj, the capital of the western Kordestan province.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by the director of the commission Hojjatollah Ayyubi, the president of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Cultural Institute Sarvar Bakhti, the deputy tourism minister Mohammad Hossein Soufi and the ambassadors of various countries, ILNA reported on Tuesday.

Noruz has been acknowledged as a unique ceremony that has its own characteristics, said Ayyubi during the opening ceremony.

So far, Noruz has been registered as a collective cultural heritage for 12 countries, he noted

Peace, love, affection, and friendship are the messages of Noruz and the world

needs them more now than ever before, he added.

Despite the various Noruz ceremonies in each region, most involve dancing and joy, which is deeply rooted in the culture of Iran and the hearts of its people, the official explained.

For his part, Sarvar Bakhti said that Noruz is one of the most important and prominent celebrations that have survived through the ages.

“Noruz celebration is enlightening, and at the same time, with this celebration, changes and transformations will take place, friendship will strengthen, and vitality and happiness will return to our land.”

It is a celebration of man’s connection with God, nature, and other people, whose philosophy focuses on a happy and meaningful life, forgiveness, freshness, contentment, and tolerance, he added.

Despite the ups and downs of the times, the people of the region never stopped celebrating Noruz and tried to hold it with all their enthusiasm and joy, he explained.

## Mud-brick cistern undergoes restoration

TEHRAN - A historical cistern in Garmsar, north-central province of Semnan has undergone some rehabilitation works, Garmsar’s tourism chief has announced.

The project involves strengthening the historical structure as well as repairing the damaged parts of Noh-Hesar Ab-Anbar, Mahvash Kamali explained on Tuesday.

The historical monument that has two wind catchers (bad-gir), has been inscribed on the national heritage list.

The term Ab-Anbar is common throughout Iran as a designation for roofed underground water cisterns. It associates with water management systems in arid areas that are reliant on permanent



springs or seasonal rainwater.

Such underground reservoirs or Ab-Anbars are parts of the iconic qanat systems, which rely on snow-fed streams flowing down from surrounding mountains.

Qanats, according to UNESCO, provide exceptional testimony to cultural traditions and civilizations in desert areas with an arid

### Exhibit to explore heritage Iran, Afghanistan have in common

TEHRAN - A joint photo exhibition featuring works by Iranian and Afghan photographers will open in Herat on March 27, CHTN reported on Tuesday.

The exhibit is aimed to explore cultural heritage, rituals, and traditions the two nations have in common.

The Persian new year (Noruz) has been selected as the main theme of the event to represent a symbol of peace and friendship, according to organizers.

Moreover, the exhibit is planned to be held in Iran next year.

Noruz heralds the arrival of the new year and new spring. It is the harbinger of hope. The day has a long and rich history in Afghanistan where it is marked with tremendous enthusiasm and festive spirit.

Each year, people come together to



Noruz is a celebration of the unity of the nations of the region and takes them back to a distant past full of unity and coexistence, he noted.

Noruz represents the beginning of a new season that reminds people of human life and brings with it joy and vigor, Soufi said during the ceremony.

Moreover, he said that Noruz has brought together Persian-speaking people and lovers of Persian culture and literature across the world.

Earlier this month, Tehran Municipality announced that the Iranian capital is being prepared to host new year travelers during the Noruz holidays.

climate.

The main population centers of Semnan province lie along the ancient Silk Road (and modern-day Imam Reza Expressway), linking Rey (Tehran) with Khorasan (Mashhad). While few visitors spend much time in the area, driving through you can easily seek out several well-preserved caravanserais (notably Dehnamak and Ahowan), cisterns (the Cafe Abenbar in Garmsar is a special treat), and ruined mud citadels (Padeh is lumpy but fascinating). The large, bustling cities of Semnan, Damghan, and Shahrud (Bastam) all have a small selection of historic buildings and Semnan has a fine old covered bazaar.



celebrate the occasion traditionally, cutting across the regional and ethnic divide. It’s one of those rare occasions when war-weary people forget their daily struggles and break into celebrations.

Noruz is celebrated in Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, and some other regional countries. Each place has its own unique way of celebrating the day, with exquisite customs and traditions.



# ‘Unilateral coercive sanctions violate women’s right to development’

TEHRAN – Iran calls on the international community to stand up against unilateral coercive sanctions which have violated the right to development of Iranian women, Ensieh Khazali, Vice President for Women and Family Affairs, said in the 66th session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

“Despite the pressures and restrictions of illegal and inhumane sanctions, especially on access to some medicine and medical equipment, my country has come out of the global coronavirus fight by relying solely on indigenous capabilities producing an effective domestic vaccine. To date, we have been able to vaccinate 63 million people with the first dose of vaccine, 55.5 million with the second dose, and 23.5 million with the third dose of the vaccine.

During this time, about 12,000 female-heads of households underwent empowerment training and entered the traditional and virtual market. Also, more than 1.1 million women heads of households are covered by the Relief Committee and more than 300,000 are covered by the Welfare Organization, benefiting from special support such as facilities, insurance, and livelihood services.

In order to reduce the economic damage, recession, and financial pressure on families, subsidies were allocated to 17 million households (more than 50 million people). also, with the approval of the cabinet, the loan for women heads of households affected by the pandemic was doubled.

Preparing and implementing a plan to promote social resilience of women and families for 31 provinces in 1,100 points of the country, supporting plans to reduce social harms with thousands of training hours, empowerment plan for social emergency experts, were among the development measures on



the status of Iranian women.

In addition, due to the importance of empowering rural and nomadic women in order to help protect the environment, a number of rural and nomadic women have become landowners by running more than 2,000 rural and nomadic cooperatives over the past 5 years.

With all the efforts, it is necessary to pay attention to the fact that the women of my country are practically fighting against the effects of unilateral coercive sanctions. The heroic women of this land, who in various fields, along with the men, have recorded remarkable achievements and proved that they do not lag behind; They are currently battling the pressure of oppressive and unilateral sanctions.

Providing fair access for women and men to professions, empowering women in the face of climate change, increasing the presence of women and influence are other measures.

In addition to training 17,454 female rescuers, as well as providing first aid to more than 56,250 women volunteers in person and online, as well as empowering thousands of women across the country to prepare for all kinds of hazards are another action to increase the effective social presence

of women in my country.

Appreciating social solidarity, Iran calls on the international community to stand up against the violation of the right to life, health, employment and, in another word, the right to development of Iranian women through unilateral coercive sanctions,” she said.

The session took place from March 14 to 25.

## Achievements in empowering women remarkable

Earlier in March, Zahra Ershadi, Iran’s ambassador and deputy representative to the United Nations, has said that Iran has made significant progress in empowering women, despite U.S. illegal and inhumane sanctions.

“The United States-imposed illegal and inhumane sanctions against the country have negatively affected the financing and executing of the programs planned by the Government, civil society, and private sectors aiming at women advancement and empowerment. However, Iran has made significant achievements in this regard.

Women have an undeniable role to play in promoting dialogue and confidence in the peace and security process. It is a well-known fact that

encouraging women to participate in the peace process increases the possibility of peace.

As a result, women’s participation in the peace process increases the effectiveness of humanitarian aid, enhances civilian protection, contributes to the political settlement of disputes and the maintenance of long-term peace, and accelerates economic reconstruction,” she highlighted.

On February 15, Ershadi slammed U.S. sanctions against the Iranian nation, saying “these illegal actions have directly impacted the lives of Iran’s most vulnerable citizens, including women, children, and patients.”

Iran has repeatedly denounced the sanctions as an act of “economic war”, “economic terrorism”, and “medical terrorism”.

Claudio Providas, UNDP Representative in Iran, has said Iran was among the first countries to be hard hit by COVID-19.

In an article published by the Tehran Times on Monday, he wrote that the pandemic broke out at a time when the nation was still reeling under the impact of the unilateral economic sanctions, and this added to the pressures on daily life, particularly on women.

“The participation of Iranian women in the economy post-pandemic declined. The effect of this reduction was worse among Women’s Head Households (WHH) – and in low-income households headed by women, the situation was even more complicated.

According to the Statistical Center of Iran, out of twenty-two (22) million families in Iran, over three (3) million are WHH and most of them are in less-developed areas. The Government prioritized such families for targeting socio-economic support.”

## Iran receives 2m vaccine doses through COVAX

TEHRAN – Iran has received 2,191,500 doses of AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccines donated by the German Government.

The vaccines were shipped to Iran through UNICEF procurement channels on behalf of the COVAX facility in two consignments, of which the first one containing 1,413,600 doses landed in Imam Khomeini International Airport on 13th March, and the other one, containing 777,900 doses, scheduled to arrive on 14th March 2022.

The COVAX Facility is a partnership, co-led by Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), Gavi-The Vaccine Alliance, and the World Health Organization (WHO), alongside key delivery partner United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

In October 2021, the German government donated 302,400 doses of AZ COVID-19 vac-



cines which were shipped to Iran through UNICEF procurement channels on behalf of the COVAX facility, UNICEF reported.

Earlier in December 2021, the Federal Republic of Germany donated 2 million automated nucleic acid extraction tests to the Ministry of Health of Iran.

## Botanical gardens in Iran



### Part 1

There are only three botanical gardens in the exact scientific sense of this term in Iran. These rather new establishments are described below in chronological order.

#### The botanical garden of the University of Tehran

It was started in 1931 on the lands belonging to the former College of Agronomy on the initiative of the French Julien Gauthier, who had been recruited by the former Department of Agriculture and Industry to teach botany and rural crafts at that school.

He was helped in this project by his Iranian assistant Esfandiar Esfandiari. Nearly one hectare of land was allocated for the project. The state greenhouses were transferred from the former Ministry of Public Welfare to the site of the garden and installed there.

The Austrian botanist and agronomist Erwin Gauba (1891-1964), who was recruited in 1933 as director of the institution and botany professor at the Faculty of Agriculture, carried on the project earnestly and systematically until 1941 when he had to leave the country.

Under his administration, the garden became a reputable establishment for scientific and educational purposes in the country.

The garden’s area was expanded and plotted out for various cultivations; a pond was created for aquatic plants and an artificial hill for special plants was set up in the southern part of the garden; more and more indigenous and exotic plants were cultivated, and, from 1936 on, Gauba made the necessary preparations for carrying out the various studies and experiments requested by various government institutions (e.g., the cultivation of some medicinal plants at the request of the School of pharmacy, the cultivation and study of plants used in insecticides, the study of native gavyans [Astragalus spp./ and exudation process of katra [gum tragacanth], and the study of some native and exotic latex-producing plants).

Source: Encyclopedia Iranica

## Iran calls for an effective UN-led approach to counter narcotics

From page 1 ► Islamic Republic discovered about 1,100 types of narcotics and psychotropic substances, including 62 tons of heroin and morphine, 835 tons of opium, 125 tons of cannabis, and about 25 tons of methamphetamine from the global drug trafficking cycle.

Last year, some 14 of the best forces have been martyred in the fight against drug smuggling, and 26 in the fight against miscreants and terrorist groups.

Discussing Iran’s actions and achievements in the field of prevention and treatment of addiction, Momeni said that a total of 9,002 authorized treatment centers in the country have provided services to 1,413,075 people.

The Islamic Republic has also paid special attention to the establishment of women’s rehabilitation and empowerment centers and the use of the capacities of non-governmental organizations.

The presence of extra-regional powers, the link between drugs and terrorism, the lack of proper accountability of some countries, the lack of proper control and effective prevention of financial flows of international traffickers are major challenges and the main driver of drug trafficking growth in West Asia and the world.

According to a report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in 2021, opium poppy cultivation and production in Afghanistan has increased, and in the lack of serious attention, the country has become a center for the production and trafficking of methamphetamine.

He also warned about the transit of drugs from Afghanistan to European countries and called for serious and urgent action in this regard.

Criticizing that despite numerous UN documents and the constant emphasis on the principle of shared responsibility, Iran has had the least amount of in-

ternational support, despite its global anti-narcotics actions, hosting more than a few million refugees and fighting terrorist threats in the region, he noted that it is time for the United Nations to present a comprehensive and effective action plan to curb opium cultivation and production to address the devastating problem of narcotics.

He also addressed the issue of unilateral sanctions against Iran, saying that the actions of some countries in imposing harsh sanctions against Iran, politicizing international cooperation, and disrupting Iran’s relentless struggle against international drug networks is a clear violation of international law, human rights, and UN resolutions.

At the end, Momeni made suggestions to the Commission to reduce challenges and enhance international efforts to address narcotics trafficking, including, full financial, technical, and equipment support to countries at the forefront of combating international drug and psychotropic substances trafficking.

Full cooperation of countries of origin, route, and destination of drug substances shipments to combat the diversion and illegal use of them in the production of drugs, targeting the financial flow of the drug traffickers using all available capacities, he suggested, highlighting the need for the United Nations to review and adopt an effective approach to pay serious attention to alternative cultivation, livelihoods and sustainable development in Afghanistan in line with recent incidents and developments.

#### Iran holds world record for narcotics confiscation

Iran holds the record for narcotics confiscation in the world, Momeni said in December 2021.

However, great achievements in the field of counter-measures have been gained, and the United Nations

has officially announced that 90 percent of opium, 70 percent of morphine, and 20 percent of world heroin have been discovered by Iran.

Last year, about 1,200 tons of drugs were discovered, which was the highest rate of discovery in the world,” he explained.

According to figures released by the United Nations in 2000, Afghanistan produced about 200 tons of narcotics, but in 2018, it has grown to 9,500 tons.

In other words, the production of narcotics has increased fifty times, which has doubled the need for prevention efforts, he highlighted.

Despite the conditions caused by the coronavirus outbreak and the imposition of harsh sanctions against the country, fortunately, with the efforts of anti-narcotics police in 2020, drug detection increased by 41 percent.

After the Islamic Revolution (in 1979), 3,800 were martyred, 12,000 were wounded and disabled in the fight against drug trafficking.

The UNODC has praised Iran’s efforts to fight against narcotics trafficking on the occasion of International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking.

The organization also officially announced that the world’s first place in the discovery of opium, heroin, and morphine belongs to Iran.

According to UNODC, Iran remains one of the major transit routes for drug trafficking from Afghanistan to European countries and has had a leading role at the global level in drug-control campaigns.

UNODC World Drug Report 2020 estimates that in 2018, 91 percent of world opium, 48 percent of the world morphine, and 26 percent of the world heroin were seized by Iran.

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

## 97% of Iran affected by long-term drought: expert

Based on the data collected over the past decade approximately 97 percent of the country is affected by long-term drought, director of the national drought warning and monitoring center, Sadeq Ziaieian, has said.

Some 12.7 percent of the country is hit by extremely severe drought, 53.6 percent of the country is affected by severe drought while 24.8 percent of the country is facing moderate drought and 5.9 percent of the country is withstanding mild drought, ISNA news agency quoted Ziaieian as saying on Wednesday.

He went on to say that extremely severe long-term drought has had negative effects on 14.2 percent of the country’s total population, severe long-term drought has hit 47 percent of the country’s population, 30.7 percent of the country’s population is affected by moderate long-term drought and 5.1 percent of the population is stricken with mild drought.

## ۹۷ درصد مساحت ایران تحت تاثیر خشکسالی است

صادق ضیائی‌ان رئیس مرکز ملی خشکسالی و مدیریت بحران سازمان هواشناسی اعلام کرد: بررسی داده‌های ۱۰ ساله خشکسالی بیانگر آن است که ۹۷ درصد مساحت ایران تحت تأثیر خشکسالی بلندمدت است. ضیائی‌ان در گفت‌وگو با ایسنا گفت: از این مقدار ۵۳۶ درصد مساحت کشور با خشکسالی شدید، ۱۲.۷ درصد با خشکسالی بسیار شدید، ۲۴.۸ درصد مساحت با خشکسالی متوسط و ۵.۹ درصد مساحت با خشکسالی خفیف مواجه هستند. وی ادامه داد: ۲ درصد جمعیت ایران با خشکسالی بسیار شدید بلندمدت است همچنین ۴۷ درصد جمعیت کشور با خشکسالی شدید، ۳۰.۷ درصد جمعیت با خشکسالی متوسط و ۵.۱ درصد جمعیت با خشکسالی خفیف دست و پنجه نرم می‌کنند.



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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Overlook and forgive the weaknesses of the generous people because if they fall down, Allah will help them.

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times» Noon:12:13    Evening: 18:31    Dawn: 4:49 (tomorrow)    Sunrise: 6:13 (tomorrow)

## Abulqasem Ferdowsi: Life

Part 4

But it is very probable that the vizier who was Ferdowsi's benefactor was Abul-Abbas Fazl ibn Ahmad Esfarayeni, whom Ferdowsi praised in the Shahnameh, and not, as Nezami Aruzi writes, Ahmad ibn Hasan Meymandi.

The latter, although holding an important position at Mahmud's place, is never mentioned in the Shahnameh. In the legends written in some of the introductions to Shahnameh's manuscripts, Meymandi has been mentioned among Ferdowsi's adversaries at Mahmud's court.

This vizier was a fanatical Sunni, strongly opposed to heretics and the Qarmatis, and it is possible that he was influential in the removal of Esfarayeni from office in 1011 and his murder in 1014, and also in the execution of Hasanak Mikal in 1031, who was accused of harboring Qarmati tendencies.

In like fashion, after he became vizier in Esfarayeni's place in 1011, he directed that the language of the court records, which Esfarayeni had caused to be kept in Persian, be changed back to Arabic.

Meymandi was vizier until 1025. He was then removed from office and imprisoned, and the vizierate was transferred to Hasanak Mikal.

Thus the vizier who is said to have caused Mahmud to regret his treatment of Ferdowsi, if the story is to be believed, was probably Hasanak and not Meymandi. If Nezami Aruzi's story is true, 1025 is therefore the more probable date of Ferdowsi's death.

Certain other details of Nezami Aruzi's version of events are confirmed by various sources. For example, the author of the Tarikh-e Sistan also gives a report of Ferdowsi's journey to Ghazna and his encounter with Mahmud.

Similarly, Nezami Ganjavi (Haft Peykar, Eqbal-nama, Khosrow o Shirin) and Attar (Elahi-nama, Asrar-nama, Mosibat-nama) frequently refer to the differences between the poet and the king, to Mahmud's ingratitude toward Ferdowsi, and even to the incident of the poet's drinking beer and giving the king's gift away.

Attar also refers to the preacher's refusing to say prayers over the body of Ferdowsi. Further, in the introduction to the Baysonghori Shahnameh, a statement in Naser-e Khosrow's Safar-nama is quoted to the effect that in 1045 on the road from Sarakhs to Tus, in the village of Chaha, Naser-e Khosrow saw a large caravansary and was told that this had been built with the money from the gift that Mahmud had sent to the poet, which, since he had already died, his heir refused to accept.

This report is absent from extant manuscripts of the Safar-nama, but Sayyed Hasan Taqizadeh is of the opinion that it is probably genuine.

Theodore Nöldeke at first considered it spurious but later changed his mind. Although it is possible to doubt some of the details in Nezami Aruzi's account, we do not at the moment have any absolute reasons to reject all the particulars in his narrative.

Social background: In the introductions to various manuscripts of the Shahnameh, Ferdowsi's father is referred to as a dehqan who was a victim of oppression by the financial controller of Tus.

Even though this account may be no more than a legend, there is no doubt that Ferdowsi belonged to the landed nobility, or dehqans.

According to Nezami Aruzi, Ferdowsi was one of the dehqans of Tus and in his own village "had considerable possessions, such that with the income from his properties he was able to live independently of others help."

Source: Encyclopedia Iranica  
To be continued

According to the same account, "within the city gate there was an orchard belonging to Ferdowsi," where he was buried. The dehqans were preservers of traditional civilization, customs, and culture, including the national legends.

On the one hand, in the Shahnameh, dehqan appears along with the azada (freeborn) with the meaning of "Iranian," and, on the other, beside mobad (Zoroastrian priest), with the meaning of "preserver and narrator of the ancient lore."

In the Shahnameh, a legend concerning a dehqan by the name of Borzen gives us an opportunity to glimpse, to some extent, the nature of the life of this class.

By comparing this with the story of a farmer's wife in the same reign, the difference between the life of a dehqan and that of a simple farmer is apparent.

At all events, Ferdowsi belonged to one of these reasonably wealthy dehqan families, which in the second and third centuries of the Islamic era accepted Islam mainly as a way of preserving their own social position, and for this reason, contrary to what is usually the case with new converts, not only did they not turn their backs on the culture of their forefathers but made its preservation and transmission the chief goal of their lives.

The basis of Ferdowsi's character, and the national spirit of his work, were founded in the first place on this class consciousness of the poet and the milieu in which his genius was nurtured.

Khorasan had been a center of political, religious, national, and cultural movements at least since the rise of Abu Moslem (killed in 755).

With the compilation and translation of the prose Shahnameh known as the Shahname-ye Abu Mansuri, which later became Ferdowsi's major source, on the orders of Abu Mansur Mohammad ibn Abd ur-Razzaq in 957, the national language and culture, which had been lacking in previous movements in Khorasan, found a special place in Abu Mansur's political ambition.

The young Ferdowsi, who was no more than seventeen years old when the Shahnameh of Abu Mansur was completed, must have been profoundly affected by this national and cultural movement.

It was in these years that the education of a dehqan together with the poet's national sentiment were able to mature in a congenial environment and to take shape, and thus become the foundation of the whole of his poem, so that, as Nöldeke put it, the poet's attachment to Iran is clear in every line of the Shahnameh.

The effects of Ferdowsi's love for Iran must be considered not only in the transmission of the culture, mores, customs, and literature of ancient Iran to Islamic Persia but also in the spread of Persian as the national language.

In this way the struggle for the preservation of Iranian identity while Persia was in danger of being Arabized in the name of the Islamic community—although the movement had begun before Ferdowsi's time with the Sho'ubiya movement—finally bore fruit through Ferdowsi's efforts.

In this way Persia is deeply indebted to Ferdowsi, both as regards its historical continuity and its national and cultural identity.

Education: Since Ferdowsi, unlike many other poets, did not make his work a showcase for his own erudition, discussion of his education is a difficult matter.

# Iran honors top books of the year

From Page 1 ► "The Persian Mirror: Reflections of the Safavid Empire in Early Modern France", published by Oxford University Press, was one of the winners.

Written by Susan Makhberi, the book is an interdisciplinary study that makes use of visual, diplomatic and literary sources.

"101 Middle Eastern Tales and Their Impact on Western Oral" by Ulrich Marzolph, "The Ka'ba Orientations: Readings in Islam's Ancient House" by Simon O'Meara, "Baharestan of Jami" by Shen Yi-Ming and "Poet and Poetry of Modern Iran" by Muhammad Abdus Sabur Khan also received awards.

"Feast in Exile", a collection by Alireza Rajabizadeh, and "Animah" by Aalieh Mehrabi were selected as the best classic poetry in the literature category.

"Azarbaijan and Shahnameh", a study by Sajjad Aidanlu about the lofty status of Ferdowsi's Persian epic masterpiece among people in the Azarbaijan region, was chosen as one of the best books in the literary research section.

"Pronunciation in the Classic Persian Poetry" written by Vahid Eidgah Torqabei was another book honored in this section.



Susan Makhberi (R) accepts an award from President Ebrahim Raisi for her book "The Persian Mirror" at the 39th Iran's Book of the Year Awards at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on March 15, 2022. (ISNA/Majid Khahi)

"Fascinating Grief" by Meisam Amiri and "A Man Named Reza Who Was Then Called Reza Khan" by Hedayatollah Behbudi were picked as top books of the year in the documentation category. These books were honored at the Jalal Al-e Ahmad Literary Awards in February.

"Fascinating Grief" gives a comprehensive account of what happened during Lieutenant-General Qassem Soleimani's funeral procession across Iran in 2020.

"A Man Named Reza Who Was Then Called Reza Khan" is a biography of Reza Shah. It recounts the life story of Reza Shah, the first monarch of the Pahlavi dynasty from his birth in 1878 until 1921 when he was selected as the commander of the Iranian Army in the new government after the 1921 coup.

Earlier last December, this book was honored in the History Narration category at the 2nd edition of the Seyyed Ali Andarzgu Literary Awards,

## CEO of Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art sacked after "Oil Pool" gaffe

TEHRAN – Director of the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (TMCA) Ehsan Aqai was dismissed on Monday just two days after a thespian slightly damaged "Oil Pool", an artwork at the museum, by mistake during his performance.

Deputy Culture Minister for Artistic Affairs Mahmud Salari announced Ebadorreza Eslami-Kulai as the new director of the museum on Monday with no comment on the blunder.

In an interview with the Persian service of ISNA, Aqai also refused to comment if there is any connection between his dismissal and the "Oil Pool" gaffe.

The solo performance entitled "Cat of the Silk Road" was put on by Yasser Khaseb as part of a program for the opening ceremony of the Panj Ganj Exhibition organized to commemorate Iranian poet Nezami Ganjavi.

During the performance, Kahseb's body was suspended by a belt over Japanese artist Noriyuki Haraguchi's "Oil Pool" and a part of it was immersed in the artwork's oil, some of which dripped on the floor.

## "US Arms Policies Towards the Shah's Iran" published in Persian

TEHRAN – "US Arms Policies Towards the Shah's Iran" by Stephen McGlinchey has been published in Persian.

Translated by Mohammad-Shamseddin Abdollahinejad, the book was originally published in 2014. Qoqnus is the publisher of the book.

This book reconstructs and explains the arms relationship that successive U.S. administrations developed with the Shah of Iran between 1950 and 1979.

This relationship has generally been neglected in the extant literature leading to a series of omissions and distortions in the historical record.

By detailing how and why Iran



transitioned from a primitive military aid recipient in the 1950s to America's primary military credit customer in the late 1960s and 1970s, this book provides a detailed and original contribution to the understanding of a key Cold War episode in the U.S. foreign policy.

By drawing on extensive declassified documents from more than 10 archives, the investigation demonstrates not only the importance of the arms relationship but also how it reflected, and contributed to, the wider evolution of U.S.-Iranian relations from a position of



Japanese artist Noriyuki Haraguchi glances at his sculpture "Oil Pool" on display at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art on October 21, 2017. (Mehr/Majid Asgaripour)

He noted that the culture of Iran and Japan enjoy a common perspective that encourages the museum to retain the artwork.

which are given to books on the 1979 Islamic revolution.

Several books were awarded honorable mentions in the art category. A translation of Norman Bryson's "Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze" by Mehdi Habibzadeh received an honorable mention in the theory of art category.

"Hidden Line: History and Stylistics of Eastern Kufi Calligraphy" written by Mehdi Sahragard and a Persian translation of Shirin Suresrafi's "Kashan Carpet in the Bright Shade of History" by Sara Sefati were honored in the visual arts section.

Mary Warner Marien's "Photography: A Cultural History" translated into Persian by Hadi Azari Azghandi won an honorable mention in the photography section.

In the dramatic arts category, Tom Stern's "Philosophy and Theatre: An Introduction" translated by Ali Mansuri, Ted Nannicelli's "A Philosophy of the Screenplay" translated by Ehsan Shahqasemi and Andr s B l nt Kov cs's "Screening Modernism: European Art Cinema, 1950-1980" translated by Mohammadreza Sohrabi won honorable mentions.

Books in various categories of science were also honored.

## The Storm Came and Took us

### An interview with Fardin Arish

The searching and interviewing were done by my friends at the Institute of Oral History. The initial plan was to narrate the stories of people who participated in volunteer initiatives during the early days of the pandemic, so the interviewers went to hospitals, mask production factories, mortuaries and talked to more than 100 people.

So, the interviewers were in danger too?

Yes, and one of the main features of this book is that the narrations of the crisis are at the time of its occurrence, and it's not a post-pandemic narrative.

What, in your opinion, is the most distinguishing feature of people who voluntarily risk their lives to help in a crisis?

When Corona began to spread in our country, the extent of the disease was unclear, as was the way to deal with it, but these people possess a unique sense of humanity and face the crisis with a combination of courage and fear.

Which of the different stories in this book do you believe is the most effective?

I believe the one that narrates the story of a woman who volunteered to wash the bodies of those who died as a result of the virus.

What inspired you to choose this title for the book?

In one of the stories, a lady doctor mentioned that at the beginning of the COVID, they wanted to do something with the dangerous waves, such as surfing, but instead, a storm came and took us all. Sometimes the elders who have experienced the war claim that if there is another war, fewer people will be ready to protect the country, but reading this book proves them wrong, and we can still hope for a sense of compassion and brotherhood.

Are you working on any other books right now?

I'm working on two other books that are also documentation, as I believe reality is the most valid source to write.