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We will expel IAEA inspectors if sanctions not lifted by Feb. 21: MP

TEHRAN – Ahmad Amirabadi, a member of the Parliament Presiding Board, says Iran will definitely expel the International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors if sanctions against the Islamic Republic are not lifted by February 21.

“Iran, without a doubt, will stop the voluntary implementation of Additional Protocol if the sanctions against Iran, especially in finance, banking

and oil sectors are not lifted by the mentioned day. This is a law passed by the Iranian Parliament. The government is committed to implement this law” Amirabadi said in a televised program on Saturday.

The MP added: “We gave the U.S. a one-month opportunity. The new U.S. administration will take the office on January 21.”

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PMO to prepare comprehensive plan for integrated coasts management by late March

TEHRAN – Iran’s Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) is going to prepare a comprehensive program for managing the country’s coasts by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20), an official with the organization said.

According to Mohammadreza Allahyar, the MPO deputy head for engineering and infrastructure development,

the program will be mainly focused on the coastal areas of Boushehr Province as well as the Caspian Sea coast in the north, IRIB reported.

“Sustainable and balanced development of coastal areas is on the PMO’s agenda in order to make maximum use of the country’s coastal and maritime capacity,” Allahyar said.

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‘Strategic alliance’ against COVID-19

TEHRAN – Kianoush Jahanpour, spokesman for Iran’s Food and Drug Administration, has said Iran and Cuba have formed a ‘strategic alliance’ through working jointly on a project for producing a potential coronavirus vaccine.

“Strategic alliance for both #Iran and #Cuba. Together we will move faster,” he wrote on his Twitter account on Saturday. He touched on an agreement recently

signed by the Pasteur Institute of Iran and the Finlay Institute of Cuba which gives the two countries an opportunity to move faster toward realizing the goal of ‘immunization against coronavirus’.

Jahanpour said on January 1 that the first batch of coronavirus vaccine which will reach Iran will be probably purchased directly from a foreign country.

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Increasing tax income in budget bill not logical in current condition

BY MAHNAZ ABDI

Iran’s national budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year 1400 (starts on March 21), whose draft was submitted to the parliament on December 2, 2020, has predicted a tax income of 2.47 quadrillion rials (about \$58.809 billion), rising from 1.95 quadrillion rials (about \$46.42 billion) envisaged in the present year’s budget.

The bill is currently under investigation, while many experts believe that it is unrealistic under the current condition of the country.

One of the issues raising many objections is rising tax income.

The parliament’s insistence on increasing tax revenues, on the one hand, and the government’s efforts to prevent further pressure on low-income people and vulnerable groups, on the other, have made increasing tax revenues one of the main challenges of the budget bill.

Making money from oil sales or tax collection has become one of the most important issues in the 1400 budget, as the government had envisaged the daily oil sales of 2.3 million barrels (which was reduced to 1.5 million barrels by the parliament’s budget review ad-hoc committee), while the MPs say that instead of selling oil, which is difficult under the sanctions condition, more taxes should be collected.

Although it is ideal that taxes replace oil sales in the budget; in the current condition the emphasis on increasing tax revenues does not make sense.

In a cabinet meeting on Wednesday (January 6), President Hasan Rouhani said, “We cannot put pressure on the people, this war [sanctions] has put pressure on us, we do not accept an increase in taxes without logical calculation.”

Although it is necessary to pay more attention to the role of taxes in the government budget and efforts to increase the share of this type of revenue in the annual budget, it is not easy to replace taxes with oil. This requires conditions that are not currently available in Iran.

Taxes, as a sustainable source, play an important role in financing government expenditures. But the reality is that in countries like Iran, governments rely on revenues from the sale of natural resources such as oil to cover their expenses.

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Iran seeks UNESCO recognition for millennia-old petroglyphs

TEHRAN- Iran will put forward clusters of its millennia-old petroglyphs as a candidate for inclusion in UNESCO’s World Heritage list.

A dossier is to be developed for Teymarih petroglyphs, which are scattered in Khomine county of Markazi province, to be presented to UNESCO, Khomine’s tourism chief, Ali Mashhadi, announced on Thursday.

Similar petroglyphs, which have been discovered in the provinces of Isfahan and Lorestan, can be included in the dossier for a collective registration, the official noted.

Teymarih is home to numerous petroglyphs estimated to be carved in a period spanning from 40,000 to 4,000 years ago, providing insights into past eras and cultures both by tools utilized for carving and themes being carved.

Last year, a prehistorical petroglyph, which bears Pahlavi script written by ordinary people of the time, was found during an archaeological

survey in the Teymarih region of central Iran.

“This is the sixth petroglyph, engraved with Pahlavi script, which has so far been found in the highlands of Teymarih. And the petroglyph is estimated to date back to 2,200 years ago,” according to Iranian archaeologist Mohammad Nasserifard.

Nasserifard had earlier proposed a bold hypothesis on a variety of petroglyphs that are scarred in the region, saying “some prehistorical residents of the Iranian plateau migrated to the Americas.” His assumption is based on evidence from similarities between the petroglyphs and cave painting symbols in central Iran and the ones found in the Americas.

“After years of exploring ancient paintings inside Iran’s caves and mountains and other parts of the globe, amazing achievements have been made in this regard,” Nasserifard said.

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Twitter suspends Trump’s account citing risk of more violence

Twitter Inc has that it has permanently suspended U.S. President Donald Trump’s account, citing the risk of further incitement of violence following the storming of the U.S. Capitol by his supporters.

“After close review of recent Tweets from the @realDonaldTrump account and the context around them we have permanently suspended the account due to the risk of further incitement of violence,” Twitter said in a post on Friday explaining its decision.

Social media companies have temporarily suspended Trump’s accounts after he posted messages on the social media platforms to support violent protesters at the U.S. Capitol.

Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg on Thursday said the ban on the outgoing U.S. president’s Facebook account will be extended indefinitely, at least until President-elect Joe Biden’s inauguration on January 20.

On Thursday, Trump deleted the posts that led to the temporary suspension of his account, according to a Twitter spokesperson.

Twitter said the posts violated their policies and required the president to delete them before regaining access to his account which he got.

These were Trump’s tweets which led his intimal suspension of account:

“I know how you feel, but go home and go home in peace. I know you’re in pain. I know you’re hurt.”

“We had an election that was stolen from us.” “It was a landslide election, and everyone knows it, especially the other side.”

“But you have to go home now. We have to have peace. We have to have law and order.”

“We have to respect our great people in law and order. We don’t want anybody hurt.”

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Iran among five pioneers of nanotechnology

BY MEHDI GARSHASBI

TEHRAN – Prioritizing nanotechnology in Iran has led to this country’s steady placement among the five pioneers of the nanotechnology field in recent years, and approximately 20 percent of all articles provided by Iranian researchers in 2020 are relative to this area of technology.

Iran has been introduced as the 4th leading country in the world in the field of nanotechnology, publishing 11,546 scientific articles in 2020. The country held a 6 percent share of the

world’s total nanotechnology articles, according to StatNano’s monthly evaluation accomplished in WoS databases.

There are 227 companies in Iran registered in the WoS databases, manufacturing 419 products, mainly in the fields of construction, textile, medicine, home appliances, automotive, and food.

According to the data, 31 Iranian universities and research centers published more than 50 nano-articles in the last year.

In line with China’s trend in the past few

years, this country is placed in the first stage with 78,000 nano-articles (more than 40 percent of all nano-articles in 2020), and the U.S. is at the next stage with 24,425 papers. These countries have published nearly half of the whole world’s nano-articles.

In the following, India with 9 percent, Iran with 6 percent, and South Korea and Germany with 5 percent are the other head publishers, respectively.

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Professor enumerates problems in Islamic world but promises bright future

BY JAVAD HEIRANNIA

TEHRAN – A professor from the George Washington University elaborates on the problems facing the Islamic world, ranging from injustice, division, corruption, cronyism, bad governance, dictatorship, reliance on foreign powers, oblivious to the plight of their citizens, resistance against peaceful reform, indifference toward injustice against Muslims in Palestine and in countries where they are in minority, etc.

However Professor Hossein Askari predicts that “Muslims will in time discover the essence of their religion” and says “the future is bright.”

In an exclusive interview with the Tehran Times, the professor cites Iran, a Muslim majority country, as a special case, saying the country was invaded by Saddam Hussein’s Iraq in the 1980s and as it was gradually getting back on its feet it was subjected to economic sanctions by Washington. Yet, he says, “Iranians are resilient, innovative and quick to learn”

Following is the text of the interview: **There is a great deal of talk in the West about the “crisis” in Islam. Is there a crisis and what is it?**

Islam has not changed as the holy Qur’an has not changed. So there is no crisis in Islam. Where the crisis lies is with Muslims and in countries that profess Islam or what we refer to as Muslim majority countries.

So then, what is the crisis with Muslims and in Muslim countries?

Muslims have been indoctrinated to memorize the Qur’an and follow all the outward rituals of Islam.

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Nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh remembered at literary meeting

TEHRAN – The Art Bureau of the Islamic Ideology Dissemination Organization organized a literary meeting on Friday to commemorate senior Iranian nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh.

A number of cultural figures and celebrated literati attended the Honor of Iran Literary Meeting held at the Andisheh Hall of the bureau.

The meeting began with poetry recitations and lectures, and came to an end with introducing “Honor of Iran”, a collection of poetry by various poets on Fakhrizadeh, who was assassinated in a terrorist attack in December 2020 in the Abe-Sard region near Tehran.

U.S. antagonizes Iran due to its rejection of Israel: ex-Iraqi PM

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** – Former Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki has said that the U.S. has been pursuing hostile policies against Iran because the country has stood up against the Zionist regime.

In an interview with the Iraqi Afaq television channel, al-Maliki said that the U.S. stood against Iran because it turned into Islamic Republic and rejected Israel.



“The U.S. antagonized Iran due to its rejection of the Zionist entity (Israel),” the former Iraqi prime minister said, adding that the U.S. fears that Iran and its allies become an axis opposing it. Al-Maliki also warned that U.S. President Donald Trump could commit a strategic folly at any time. But, he said, Iran “will respond to any American aggression against it in the region.”

According to the former prime minister, Iran can respond to the U.S. by targeting its interests nearby. Al-Maliki pointed out that the recent U.S.-brokered reconciliation deal between Qatar and Saudi Arabia, pave the way for a potential war against Iran.

We will expel IAEA inspectors if sanctions not lifted by Feb. 21: MP

1 → Recently the Iranian Parliament passed a legislation setting the 21st of February as the deadline for the new U.S. administration to lift the sanctions in violation of the 2015 nuclear deal - JCPOA - that is endorsed by UN Security Council Resolution 2231. According to the parliamentary ratification, if the U.S. does not take action, the Islamic Republic will take steps to ratchet up its nuclear activities.

“The main goal of the JCPOA was to lift all sanctions which did not happen,” the Iranian MP said, adding, “We do not see any reason to fulfill our obligations unless the sanctions are lifted.”

Amirabadi also said, “Certainly the implementation of commitments without the lifting of sanctions is to the detriment of the Iranian nation, and so far the Iranian nation has suffered from this. The Americans and Europeans have not suffered any harm.”

The ratification confirmed by the oversight Guardian Council requires the government to take significant steps to increase nuclear activities after 60 days if Iran’s demands for removal of sanctions are not met. The November 27 assassination of renowned Iranian nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, which was an open act of hostility, likely accelerated the move.

According to the parliamentary approval, the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran will cease implementing the Additional Protocol in 60 days if banking and oil sanctions are not lifted. This leaves a narrow window of time for the President-elect Joe Biden to demonstrate his administration’s commitment to return the U.S. to full compliance with the JCPOA.

Iranian ship arrives at Venezuelan port in defiance of U.S. sanctions

Iran and Venezuela continue to defy illegal U.S. sanctions against the two longtime allies and trade partners, with reports saying an Iranian cargo ship has arrived at the Venezuelan port city of La Guaira.

The vessel tracking data from analyst Refinitiv Eikon, as cited by Reuters, said the Iranian-flagged general cargo ship Golsan berthed at La Guaira on Thursday after it left Iran in late November.



Media reports fell short of providing details as to what cargo the ship was carrying.

Last July, the Golsan brought food to supply Venezuela’s first Iranian supermarket and later returned home carrying a cargo of alumina, a powder refined from bauxite that is used for manufacturing aluminum.

Venezuela is grappling with shortages of gasoline due to sanctions unilaterally imposed by the United States not only on Caracas but also on Iran.

Venezuela sits on the world’s largest oil reserves. The country’s refineries can produce more than 1.3 million barrels per day (bpd) of fuel, but they are working at less than 20% of their capacity mainly due to power outages and lack of spare parts amid the U.S. sanctions.

Iran has already sent several tankers loaded with barrels of gasoline and alkylate to Venezuela to help jump start the oil refineries there amid a fuel crisis.

The fuel shipments to Venezuela’s ports and refineries drew the ire of the U.S. administration in Washington, which had previously threatened to prevent new oil tankers leaving Iran from reaching the Venezuelan coast.

Iran has warned of retaliatory measures against the United States should Washington cause problems for tankers carrying Iranian fuel to gasoline-starved Venezuela.

Moreover, the two OPEC-member countries have deepened their cooperation over the past year, exchanging gold and other commodities for food, condensate and fuel as the U.S. sanctions do not allow them to use the dollar-dominated financial system. (Source: Press TV)

Iranian Army unveils 7 important new drone technologies in the drill

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** – On January 5-6, the Islamic Republic of Iran’s Army staged its first-ever drone drill using its quadruple forces in the Semnan public area and border areas of the country. This was a unique drill unveiling a wide range of technologies that military experts did not expect Iranian Army would possess.

The first footages released by the Army showed a very long runaway covered in full-length with hundreds of different types of operational drones. Some of those drones were later identified to be from classes of Mohajer, Ababil, Kaman-12, Arash, Kian, Simorgh, Sa’eqeh, Hazem, etc.

The diversity of Army’s drones was just the appetizer before the happy meal Army had provided for those seeking any hostility in the region. The technologies used by the Army to upgrade operational capabilities of the drones were the main surprise. Here is the list of 7 new features installed in different homemade drones of the Iranian Army which military experts will be talking about for the coming days.

1- Karrar drone, equipped with Azarakhsh missile

Karrar is mainly from “tracking drones” class which is now part of the tracking & targeting family. In part of this drill, Karrar tracked a target in the air and fired an air-to-air Azarakhsh missile successfully destroying it. This was the first time Karrar had ever been put into practice for a targeting and destroying mission. Karrar had previously been used during Army’s tracking missions and before that, it was merely a suicide drone. But now it has the ability to track, target and fire air-to-air missiles which gives it higher operational sufficiency. A couple of months ago, during the Zolfaqar 99 military drill in Jask, Karrar had successfully tracked three American drones (types RQ-4, MQ-9, P-8) and forced them to leave the drills’ public area.

2- Karrar drone, equipped with heavy automatic machine gun

The second surprise also came from Karrar class. Drones’ nose had something different coming out which attracted the attention. A three-barrel machine gun with high rate of fire which could be used both for warning



shots or engaging the enemy aircraft on the air. These new installations turn the Karrar class into a full house battle air fighter which contrary to the previous versions, can engage the enemy and come back home safe and sound.

3- Introducing the “Diamond” missile fired by Ababil class drone

Diamond missile which was previously produced and successfully tested by the army, is an air-to-surface high accuracy missile from the “top attack” class missiles. This missile, due to its similarities to Israel’s “Spike”, attracted a lot of attention among military experts upon unveiling by the Iranian Army a while ago. As its class name implies, this missile attacks from the top and destroys any target within the range of 8 kilometers. It was mainly designed to penetrate the heavily armored targets like tanks from above because of the weaker armor. It was also the first time Ababil drone was being seen while carrying and firing this type of missile. Ababil successfully targeted and destroyed targets on the ground using this missile.

4- Kaman-12 drone, equipped with a wide range of new armaments

Kaman-12 drone was the Army’s first battle drone produced in 2018. It was first

introduced to public during Eqtedar-40 military exhibition. The “Self-sufficiency Movement of the Iranian Army” was in charge of designing and producing this fully Iranian drone. From the beginning, this drone had the ability of being equipped with wide range of weapons, but until the January 5-6 drill, Akhgar missile was the only weaponry it had ever carried and used. During the drill, new armaments were attached to this drone, giving it a full battle capability and a brand new somehow terrifying looks. It now has the ability to use smart accurate Qaem missiles, Diamond missiles and 25 millimeter rockets. With an operational radius of 1000 kilometers, a top speed of over 200 kilometers per hour, flight continuity of more than 10 hours, ability to carry shipments weighing 100 kg, and a maximum takeoff weight of 450 kg, this little thing can be a nightmare for any heavily or lightly armored vehicle moving on the ground.

5- Launching suicide drones from a portable container

Suicide drone or “loitering munition” or “kamikaze drone” is a weapon system category in which the drone flies around the target for some time and after locating it precisely, attacks. Loitering munitions enable faster

reaction times against concealed or hidden targets that emerge for short periods without placing high-value platforms close to the target area, and also allow more selective targeting as the actual attack mission can be aborted. For those armies having this type of weaponry at their disposal, “portability” is one of the main challenges of using it against the enemy. The recent drill proved that the Iranian Army has now conquered this challenge and can launch the Arash suicide drone from portable containers which even normal cars can carry. This increases the mobility and displacement power of suicide drones during the camouflage. Arash drone from loitering munition class was first manufactured to destroy and paralyze enemy radar systems and now can target sensitive vital infrastructures.

6- Conducting long range drone missions in Makran coasts

Launching suicide drones from Makran coasts and hitting the target deep inside the Semnan public area means successfully tracking, targeting and hitting a target 1400 kilometers away from the launch point. Performing long range drone operations was one of the focuses of the Army’s recent drill. The Iranian Army stated during the drill that it can increase the operational range of its suicide drones up to 2000 kilometers now and with certain preparations, a 4000 radius operation range can be achieved for deployment of this drone class. The “certain preparations” here means in case the Army plans to give up its drone on the scene – the purpose this class of drones is designed for – it can target and hit the enemy 4000 kilometers away from the launching point; as called by some, a one-way trip to the heart of enemy lines.

7- Introducing the “air-based drones” Another achievement of Iran’s Army unveiled during the drill was a new class of drones called the air-based. These drones are mainly from the suicide squad family but slightly different: they can be launched by a helicopter hovering on the air.

* The information employed to write this article was mainly provided by the Fars News Agency

International law experts elaborate on violation of UN Charter in Gen. Soleimani assassination

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** -- The second pre-session of the International Conference on International Law and Armed Conflicts in the region was held online on Wednesday, January 6.

At the conference, several prominent professors of international law expressed their views on regional issues, especially the assassination of Lt. General Qassem Soleimani, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis and their entourage near Baghdad’s international airport on January 3, 2020.

University professor Dr. Hossein Navadeh Topchi, the former president of the National Defense University, Dr. Heibatollah Nejandi Manesh, a faculty member of Allameh Tabataba’i University, and Dr. Mahmoud Khalil Jafar, a faculty member of Baghdad University, spoke at the conference.

Regarding Iran’s response to the assassination of General Soleimani, al-Muhandis and their entourage, Dr. Navadeh Topchi said: “The question is, since the formation of the nation-states, that is, since the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, what process have they gone through to reach the existing system and the Charter of the United Nations? As we can see, the world order has changed in the past because of large-scale wars, as exemplified in the case of Westphalia and the Thirty Years’ War in Europe, in which the governments and borders were established, sovereignty in the sense known today was shaped, and the formation of a modern state happened.”

Topchi said the current world is based on the Articles 1 and 2 of the UN Charter.

“The system in which the humanity is in today is derived from the Charter of the United Nations, which sets out the principles and goals in Articles 1 and 2. That is, the entire international community, international organizations, and the relations of governments and institutions are based on this Charter and Articles 1 and 2 thereof. Behaviors come in a variety of forms, including coexistence, cooperation, competition, debate, and conflict. Among these forms of relationship, the UN Charter and the World Order focus more on cooperation between countries. In other words, the United Nations is the basis for regulating and systematizing societies based on cooperation and friendly relations; and on this basis, principles have been proposed for it,” Topchi explained.

Regarding the state of Iran-U.S. relations, Topchi said: “The Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States of America do not have a political or hostile relationship that is within the framework of armed conflicts, but the operations that the United States of America has started with regard to the Islamic Republic of Iran are all a violation of the principles and goals of the UN Charter. In the early 1990s, Americans

spoke of a doctrine in their military and defense strategies called the ‘doctrine of asymmetric warfare’. This doctrine is now the main strategy of the U.S.”

In terms of the U.S. strategy in the region, the former president of the National Defense University of Iran also said: “It is important to note that the actions of the United States in the region do not fall within the legal framework of armed conflicts regulations. The first is that terrorism is not defined, but they call groups that they see fit, such as the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps, which is a national and well-known body, a terrorist group. This is unprecedented in the world. No organized military organization that is accepted by the constitution of a country has ever been recognized as a terrorist group. The United States not only wants to fluidize the world order, it also wants to shrink governments, and as they shrink, new systems will emerge, each with its own hierarchy.”

General Soleimani, a legendary commander in the war against terrorists, especially Daesh, was on a diplomatic mission to Baghdad when he was targeted upon a direct order by U.S. President Donald Trump.

“About the main topic of this meeting, we can indicate a collection of breaches of international law on the scene, the first one of which is a violation of diplomatic law. The assassination of a special agent carrying a political message violates the 1961 Convention. Murder is a violation of the criminal law and the statute of the International Criminal Court in the field of crimes against humanity. The most important principle of human rights, which is the bedrock of social order and civilization, is the principle of loyalty which the U.S. has violated several times. A very clear of this violation was the withdrawal from the JCPOA by the U.S. government,” the professor stated.

Dr. Nejandi Manesh then spoke about the issue of reactions to Iran’s missile attack on the U.S. military base in western Iraq, saying: “There are a number of countries that have been directly affected by this, such as the United States, Iraq, and to some extent Iran, a country that has suffered from the previous action of the United States. The United States wrote a letter to the Security Council on January 8. A noteworthy point in this official U.S. letter to the Security Council was that it didn’t raise the legal issues about Iran’s action as much as experts expected. There was not any objection to the legitimacy of the missile attack. It was merely aimed to inform the Council, without pointing to the legal aspects of the issue. Experts must analyze this letter to understand what this legal silence means. The United States, although aware that the document was being registered in the United Nations as an official document and could take

a legal stand by claiming Iran violated international law, it did not do so.”

The professor said Iran answered that it had acted in accordance with its right to self-defense as stipulated in Article 51 of the UN Charter.

“In a letter to the Security Council following the attack, Iran stated that it had acted in accordance with its inherent right to self-defense under Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, and the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran have carried out a deliberate, calculated and proportionate response by targeting the American base in Iraq from which the attack on Martyr Soleimani took place. They claimed that the operation was meticulous. Those who drafted the letter had focused well on the legal burden of the words. After the representative of the Iraqi government writes a letter to the Security Council, on January 16, 2020, the Islamic Republic of Iran writes a letter in response to the Republic of Iraq, in which the contents of the first letter were mentioned. But it added a new point based on the fact that Martyr Soleimani was in Baghdad at the invitation of the Iraqi government. Prior to the attack on the Ain al-Assad base, the Islamic Republic of Iran informed the Iraqi government, stating that this legitimate action would only be against the U.S. military base” Professor Nejandi Manesh explained.

Dr. Mahmoud Khalil Jafar from Baghdad University also said: “The issue ahead is a complex one about the violation of international law. From various aspects, this one can be pointed out that the guest who arrived in Iraq had been invited officially, so one of the official and military leaders of Iraq had to be present to welcome him. Another issue which entails consideration is the fact that American forces stationed in Iraq have a set of duties officially set for them and they frequently commit crimes by violating this framework. In terms of proportion principle under international law, as it is considered by different subcategories of this science, Iran’s reaction to the U.S. unlawful action should be studied.”

He continued to explain that “Iran’s reaction to what the U.S. had done, did meet the conditions of proportion principle under international law, in the sense that the Islamic Republic of Iran has targeted American military forces, and this briefly states that proportion conditions were met by the defending country. The main goal of the United States is to weaken the countries in the region and put those weakened countries into war against each other. On the issue of Iran’s missile attack on American military base in Iraq, proportionality conditions were met in the light of the fact that Iran only targeted the U.S. troops and no civilians were harmed during this incident.”

Rouhani: Foreign companies wanted to test their vaccine on our people

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** – President Hassan Rouhani says some foreign companies have requested to test their vaccines on Iranian people but the officials have rejected it.

“Some foreign companies have requested to test their vaccines on our people, but the Ministry of Health and Medical Education rightly rejected this request. Our people should know they will not be subject for trial and error by international vaccine

developers. Of course, some countries accepted this request but this does not relate to us,” he said during the meeting of National Committee for Fighting the Coronavirus on Saturday.

Iran and Cuba are jointly developing a vaccine to counter the coronavirus pandemic.

Rouhani said, “If we can inject the vaccine to 500,000 Iranians every day and multiply this number by 60 million, it takes over 3 months to vaccinate the country” adding,

“This means vaccination is a time consuming process and all these issues were discussed during our meeting today.”

Pointing to the rumors circulating about the corona vaccine, Rouhani said: “I ask all media outlets to stand against these rumors. Some try to involve people in false news. The true sources for news of this kind are experts of the Ministry of Health and Medical Education and the National Committee for Fighting the Coronavirus.”

The president also said purchasing and producing vaccine is a priority of the country.

“Purchasing and providing vaccine is one of our priorities which will be accomplished, and on due time, under the conditions that we will declare, it will be distributed for use.”

He added, “Even if the vaccine comes, everyone should observe health protocols for the coming months so that we can achieve the favorable results.”

SPORTS

Alireza Jahanbakhsh needs to play more at Brighton

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iranian international winger d e s k Alireza Jahanbakhsh says that he has to play a lot more at Brighton.

Jahanbakhsh was quoted in Iranian media this week complaining about his lack of opportunities and claimed conversations that convinced him to stay last summer were “better than what actually happened.”

The 27-year-old has struggled to force his way into the starting line-up this season and the arrival of Percy Tau has increased speculation on Jahanbakhsh's future, brightonand-hoveindependent.co.uk reported.



“One of the reasons I stayed was because I knew I would have a different season ahead of me. I had good offers in the summer, but in the end, after talking to the head coach and the club manager, they asked me to stay anyway and promised that things would get better,” Jahanbakhsh said.

“I started two or three games from the beginning but I told them that this did not satisfy me. I was both satisfied and dissatisfied with my situation this season. The conversations that convinced me to stay were better than what actually happened,” he added.

“Every time I went on the field, I was influential considering the time I was on the field, and I had an acceptable performance compared to the other players with more time on the field. The chances I created were very obvious. I am at a time when I have to play a lot more and have better conditions,” Jahanbakhsh stated.

Brighton may well need Jahanbakhsh in Newport but if an offer arrives, this could also be the month where Brighton decide to cut their losses on what has been a frustrating signing for club and player.

Graham Potter reveals hopes for Alireza Jahanbakhsh

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Brighton coach Graham Potter d e s k says he has no problem with Alireza Jahanbakhsh — but understands he wants more football.

The Iranian was quoted in his country's media this week complaining about his lack of opportunities and claimed conversations that convinced him to stay last summer were “better than what actually happened.”

“I spoke to him this morning. He mentioned that. He doesn't know where that has come from and it's a bit of a mystery to him,” Potter told Theargus.

“He is still a part of our squad, he is still part of the group. He played against Arsenal, he is training well. He trains well every day,” he added.

“He's one of our players and we're trying to help him improve and play more football. Probably it is clear he would like to play more as every player in the group would want to play as much as they can, that's normal. We have no problems with Ali at all.” Potter concluded.

Former Iran weightlifter Attar Ashrafi dies

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Former Iran weightlifter Mehdi d e s k Attar Ashrafi passed away on Saturday.

Attar Ashrafi, who represented Iran at the competed at the 1976 Summer Olympics, died at the age of 72 after a lengthy battle with the disease.

He won a bronze medal at the 1974 Asian Games in Tehran at the 75kg weight class.

Attar Ashrafi also claimed a silver medal at the Asian Weightlifting Championships in 1979.

He will be laid to rest in Tehran's Behesht-Zahra Cemetery on Sunday.

Tehran Times extends deepest sympathy to his family, loved ones, and friends over his demise.

Taremi nets brace as Porto beat Famalicao

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Mehdi Taremi scored a brace d e s k against Famalicao in a match of the 13th round of the Portuguese First League.

It was the Dragons' ninth consecutive win in the league, where they beat their hosts 4-1.

The crucial win comes just one week before the classic fixture against Benfica, as Porto continues its push for the first place.

The Iranian striker scored twice in the 13th and 58th minutes. Taremi also won a penalty kick in the 31st minute and Sergio Oliveira converted the spot-kick.

Joao Mario scored Porto's fourth goal in the 89th minute.

Jhonata Robert scored the only goal of Famalicao in the penalty spot in the 20th minute.

Taremi was also named the Man of the Match.

Paykan defender Haghighverdi reaches agreement with Sumgayit

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iranian defender Hojjat Haghighverdi has reached an agreement with Azerbaigani football club Sumgayit, Paykan general manager Akbar Mohammadi said.

The 27-year-old defender, who had been linked with a move to Persepolis, canceled his contract with Paykan and will sign a contract for the Azerbaigani top-flight club.

Haghighverdi will join his countryman Adam Hemati in Sumgayit. Sumgayit FK are an Azerbaigani football club based in Sumgayit that play in the Azerbaijan Premier League.

Every single sanction an obstacle to reviving JCPOA

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — With the d e s k Biden team gearing up to take the helm in the White House, opponents of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal do their utmost to undercut any U.S. plan to rejoin the nuclear deal and ensure that the current economic pressure on Iran would continue for the foreseeable future.

After Joe Biden won the U.S. presidential election in November, the nuclear deal — officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) — once again become a focal point in the ongoing debate over how the incoming Joe Biden administration should deal with Iran in general. Biden's campaign promise that he would rejoin the JCPOA if he is elected has only exacerbated this debate, which is expected to grow even more heated in the early months of Biden's presidency because the president-elect has vowed to upend Trump's Iran policy once he moved into the White House.

“I will offer Tehran a credible path back to diplomacy. If Iran returns to strict compliance with the nuclear deal, the United States would rejoin the agreement as a starting point for follow-on negotiations. With our allies, we will work to strengthen and extend the nuclear deal's provisions, while also addressing other issues of concern,” then-presidential candidate Biden wrote in a September 13 op-ed for CNN.

Although he refused to elaborate on his plan to rejoin the nuclear deal, Biden reiterated his commitment to return the U.S. to the JCPOA after he won the November election while raising some other issues unrelated to Iran's nuclear program.

In a recent interview with The New York Times' columnist Thomas Friedman, Biden said that he still stands by his views on the nuclear deal that were articulated in the mid-September op-ed, but a U.S. return to the deal would be “hard.” Asked whether he still stands by his views on the deal that he expressed in the op-ed for CNN, Biden answered, “It's going to be hard, but yeah.”

Biden also said in a post-election interview with CNN that dealing with Iran would be “very difficult.”

“He [Trump] has pulled out to get something tougher, and what have they done? They've increased the ability for them to have nuclear material. They're moving closer to the ability to be able to have enough material for a nuclear weapon. And there's the missile issues,” Biden said, adding, “All those things, I think,



are going to be very difficult. But I know one thing: We cannot do this alone. And that's why we have to be part of a larger group, dealing not only with Iran, but with Russia, with China and a whole range of other issues.”

These remarks were widely seen as a retreat from his campaign promise to rejoin the JCPOA or at least an effort to get more concessions from Iran in exchange for rejoining the nuclear deal, a view that is basically grounded on the assumption that Iran is eager to get the U.S. to return to the JCPOA.

Those who call on Biden to refrain from rejoining the nuclear agreement also claim that Iran is in a rush to get Biden to reenter the JCPOA to get rid of sanctions.

“Iran aims to compel Biden to immediately and unconditionally remove the sanctions that President Trump began to impose three years ago after he pulled the United States out of the Iran nuclear deal,” wrote Henry Rome, a senior analyst for Iran, Israel, and global macro issues at Eurasia Group, in an op-ed for NPR.

Rome and other like-minded people are pushing for a delay in U.S. return to the JCPOA because they falsely believe that Iran is so desperate to get a sanctions relief that if Biden “bide his time on Iran”, the country will blink first and make whatever concessions the Biden White House demands.

“Biden should not play into Iran's pattern of nuclear threats combined with artificial deadlines. Biden and his team will have time — and economic leverage

— on their side. The incoming administration should take advantage of its strong position to diligently pursue its goal of strengthening and lengthening nuclear restrictions and should resist the pressure to act hastily,” Rome continued, referring to Iran's latest decision to raise the level of uranium enrichment to 20%.

Opponents of the JCPOA even warned Biden against abandoning what they call a sanctions “leverage” over Iran. They believe that if Biden rejoins the JCPOA, the U.S. will be in a far weaker negotiating position against Iran.

“But if Biden were to give in to nuclear extortion and abandon sanctions, he would surrender his most important leverage against Tehran and never achieve his stated goal of negotiating a longer-lasting, better agreement,” wrote Richard Goldberg, a former Trump National Security official, and Mark Dubowitz, the chief executive officer of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies in an essay for the Foreign Policy magazine.

This flawed logic lacks fundamental coherence. The JCPOA opponents call on the Biden team to preserve the U.S. “leverage” by not lifting the U.S. sanctions on Iran. But they do not explain why Iran should accept a U.S. return to the JCPOA without any remarkable sanctions relief. In fact, Iran has announced that it does not view the U.S. return to the JCPOA, in itself, as a concession from Joe Biden. On the contrary, it has said that a U.S. return without the lifting of sanctions would be harmful to Iran and that Iran may even

oppose the Biden administration's possible return to the JCPOA if the U.S. insists on keeping the sanctions in place.

In a televised appearance on Friday, Leader of the Islamic Revolution of Iran Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei said that any U.S. return to the JCPOA without the lifting of the sanctions would be disadvantageous to Iran.

“Nowadays, they talk about the U.S. returning to the JCPOA. However, we do not insist on this at all and we are in no rush for the U.S. to return to the JCPOA. This is not the issue for us whether the U.S. returns to the JCPOA or not. If the sanctions are not lifted, then the U.S.'s return to the JCPOA might even be to our disadvantage. Not only will it not be to our advantage, it will also be to our disadvantage,” the Leader said.

Therefore, Iran is in no rush to get the U.S. sanctions lifted because the effect of these sanctions is increasingly diminishing. Besides, Iran is drawing up plans to continue to live with sanctions.

“I have repeated this time and time again, and I wish to repeat it one more time. We should assume that sanctions will not be lifted. Of course, the effects of sanctions are gradually diminishing, but we should suppose that they will remain. Therefore, we should formulate plans for the economy of the country in such a way that we will not be faced with any difficulties even if sanctions continue and even if the enemy continues to play these games,” the Leader pointed out.

Unlike what the opponents of the JCPOA claim, sanctions have never forced Iran to make concessions, especially now that Iran seems to believe that Biden will also keep imposing sanctions on Iran.

Majid Takht-Ravanchi, Iran's ambassador to the United Nations, has said in an interview with the website of Iran's Strategic Council on Foreign Relations that the incoming Joe Biden administration is unlikely to fundamentally change Trump's sanctions policy against Iran.

He said that there is no major difference between Republican and Democratic administrations when it comes to foreign policy.

“For example, the use of sanctions against Iran has continued in various U.S. Democratic and Republican administrations. The United States has used the tool of sanctions in recent years, and sees it as a tool it thinks it can use to gain concessions and will continue to do so,” Takht-Ravanchi said.

Tensions with Iran can only be reduced through wise and skillful diplomacy: Russia

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — A senior Russian diplomat d e s k has called on the United States to drop the so-called “economic leverage” against Iran and pursue de-escalation through skillful diplomacy.

The diplomat, Mikhail Ulyanov, who is Russia's permanent representative to international organizations in Vienna, described the U.S. sanctions pressure on Iran as totally failed.

He was commenting on a tweet by Andrea Stricker, a research fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, who called for preserving what she called U.S. “economic leverage” against Iran in order to achieve another nuclear deal. Stricker tweeted a quote from a recent Foreign Policy magazine's essay co-authored by Richard Goldberg, a former Trump National Security official, and Mark Dubowitz, the chief executive officer of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

“If Obama contends sanctions pressure was necessary to produce the nuclear deal, how could Biden ever negotiate far more restrictions on Iran with far less economic leverage?” @rich_goldberg & @mdubowitz expose the flawed strategic logic,” Stricker tweeted.

This tweet elicited a response from Ulyanov. “The answer is clear: reduced tension in the region can only be achieved through a wise and skillful diplomacy which should replace totally failed ‘economic leverage’,” the Russian diplomat said.

Iran's nuclear program has become a matter for debate among pundits and experts after Iran announced last week



that it is resuming 20% uranium enrichment.

Earlier last week, Ulyanov had said that Iran's decision to increase uranium enrichment level up to 20% was predictable.

“Yes, we should have expected something like that, especially in the light of the law adopted recently by the Iranian Parliament. The only question is if this step is being made by Tehran at the right time?” the Russian diplomat tweeted two days before Iran started to enrich uranium to 20%.

Iran had informed the International Atomic Energy Agency of its decision to raise the level of uranium enrichment before it announced the resumption of 20% uranium enrichment. Ulyanov confirmed that Iran has submitted a letter to the UN nuclear watchdog ahead of enriching uranium to 20%, adding that the IAEA director-general has briefed the IAEA Board of Governors and the UN Security Council on the latest Iranian decision.

Afghan president calls for long-term relations with Iran

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — President Ashraf Ghani said on Friday that the Afghanistan government must have short-term, medium-term and long-term relations with Iran.

But the U.S. sanctions, the Afghan president noted, have overshadowed the Tehran-Kabul relations.

Two million Afghans live in Iran, and our relationship must be based on mutual interests, President Ghani said in an interview with CNN, adding that he hopes that the resumption of talks between the United States and Iran will have positive results for Afghanistan.

Ghani also addressed the issue of peace with the Taliban, saying that the Afghan society doesn't want to go back.

“One thing needs to be clear; the Afghan society is not willing to go back and we're not a type of society that the Taliban-type

approach of the past can be imposed on us. That was the peace of the graveyard. We want a positive peace where all of us together overcome our past, embrace each other and together rebuild an Afghanistan that can be what I call a roundabout,” the president noted, calling on the U.S. to chart a predictable process for withdrawing its troops from Afghanistan.

Ghani pointed out that the U.S. has lost 98 lives in Afghanistan since 2015 “while we the Afghan people have lost over 40,000 civilians and military... We're assuming responsibility for our future, so if the U.S. would like to withdraw, all we ask for is a process that is predictable.”

Iran has also called for a responsible U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan. In a recent meeting of the UN Security Council on Afghanistan, Majid Takht-Ravanchi, Iran's ambassador to the United Nations, voiced



support for Afghan peace talks, saying the success of the talks “requires flexibility and patience by all sides, placing the interests of the people of Afghanistan above all other interests.”

Takht-Ravanchi expressed concern over the presence of foreign forces in Afghanistan but at the same time called for an

“orderly and responsible” withdrawal of these forces.

“As a manifestation of external interference, the presence of foreign forces is another source of Afghanistan's instability. However, as many countries have stressed, their withdrawal must be orderly and responsible and must not lead to a security vacuum in Afghanistan. Accordingly, prior and simultaneous to the withdrawal of foreign forces, Afghanistan's military and security forces must be supported and strengthened,” the Iranian diplomat said.

“Afghanistan's decades-long insecurity and instability can end only through a comprehensive and inclusive Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process, involving all Afghan factions, including the Taliban, supported by neighboring, regional and international partners,” he noted.

Increasing tax income in budget bill not logical in current condition

1 → Meanwhile, it should be noted that economic growth is the main platform for increasing tax revenues.

Economic growth means more production of goods and services and thus an increase in tax revenues. The withdrawal of the United States from Iran's nuclear deal and the subsequent imposition of unilateral sanctions on Iran have had detrimental effects on the country's economy.



Opposing some of the views expressed in terms of increase in tax revenues in the budget of 1400, Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Farhad Dejjpasand has said that in the absence of defining new tax bases or reducing tax exemptions, such an increase would mean increasing pressure on the real private sector, especially under the current situation of the coronavirus pandemic.

PMO to prepare comprehensive plan for integrated coasts management by late March

1 → Stating that the Integrated Coastal Management Plan is a national plan on a provincial scale, the official said: "In this program, coasts are studied from various aspects including environmental, political, security, passive defense, and marine."

Once the integrated management plan is prepared, the best use for various coastal areas will be prioritized.

Emphasizing that the sustainable development of coastal areas is aimed at determining the best use of the coastal areas and the sea, Allahyar said: "The integrated management plan of coastal areas in Sistan-Baluchestan province and part of Makran coasts has already started and for the costs of Khuzestan province the primary studies will begin by the yearend."

He also mentioned the primary preparations for a comprehensive plan for the country's islands, adding: "Ports and Maritime Organization is obliged to formulate such programs to ensure the integrated and balanced development of the country's islands as well as the coastal areas."

Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization functions under the supervision of the Ministry of Transport and Urban Development.

Inflation expectations lower as money growth stops

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — The governor of Central Bank of Iran (CBI) said that the money growth has stopped in the ninth Iranian calendar month of Azar (November 21-December 20, 2020), which is an important sign of decreasing inflation expectations.



Writing in an Instagram post on Saturday, Abdolnaser Hemmati mentioned a few points about monetary variables and added: "Today, the Central Bank's analytical report of Azar was published, and two statistical facts have been considered in this report."

The first one is the 15.5-percent growth of monetary base in the first nine months of the current year (March 20-December 20, 2020), and the other one is the money growth stop in Azar, and 10.3 percent drop in 12-month growth of this indicator in the

period ended in Azar compared to its previous month Aban, the official noted.

TEDPIX drops 24,000 points on Saturday

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), fell 24,807 points to 1.285 million on Saturday, which is the first day of the Iranian calendar week.

Over 11.124 billion securities worth 106.5 trillion rials (about \$2.535 billion) were traded at the TSE on Saturday.

The first market's index fell 21,967 points, and the second market's index dropped 36,698 points.

TEDPIX had lost 6.5 percent in the past Iranian calendar week.

The index stood at 1.31 million points on Wednesday (the last working day of the week).



During the past week, the indices of Mobarakeh Steel Company, Iran Khodro Group, Social Security Investment Company, Saipa Company, and National Iranian Copper Industry Company were the most widely followed indices.

Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Farhad Dejjpasand has recently said that the stock market is now on the right track and has reached a stage that can be trusted in terms of performance.

"Except for the peripheral variables that affect this market, we do not have a specific market disturbance", the minister stated.

Domestic investment in special economic zones rises 173% in a year

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — The data released by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs show that 89.843 trillion rials (about \$2.139 billion) of domestic investment has been made in Iran's special economic zones during the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19, 2020), which has been 173 percent more than the figure of its preceding year.

The development of free trade zones and special economic zones through production, exports and investment is one of the goals of creating these zones in the country.

To achieve this target, different measures were taken in the past year, such as attracting innovative and technological units to these areas, and introducing investment opportunities and advantages in these zones.

Morteza Bank, the secretary of Iranian Free Zones High Council, has recently said that 1,000 trillion rials (about \$24 billion) plus \$1.5 billion of foreign investment is forecast to be made in free trade zones and special economic zones of the country, creating 102,500 jobs by August next year.

The job opportunities will be created through implementing 320 development projects in free trade zones and 200 projects in special economic zones by August next year, which marks the end of the administration of President Hassan Rouhani, Bank stated.



More than 40 percent of Iran's exports is done through the country's free trade zones and special economic zones, Bank said in September.

The value of exports from Iran's free trade zones and special economic zones stood at \$17 billion during the past Iranian calendar year.

There are currently seven free trade zones and 25 special economic zones in Iran.

The establishment of free trade zones in Iran dates back to Iranian calendar year 1368 (March 1989- March 1990) following the fall in the country's oil income in the preceding year which prompted the government to promote non-oil exports.

The first two free trade zones of Iran were established in the Persian Gulf is-

lands of Kish and Qeshm.

Some five other free trade zones have been also established in the country since then, including Chabahar in southeastern Sistan-Baluchestan Province, Arvand in southwestern Khuzestan Province, Anzali in northern Gilan Province, Aras in East-Azerbaijan Province and Maku in West-Azerbaijan Province, both in the northwest of the country.

Considering the important role that the free trade zones play in promoting the country's export and employment, Iran is seriously pursuing the development of its existing zones and establishment of new zones as well.

More development measures in this field have been taking since the U.S. re-imposition of sanctions on the Iranian economy in November 2018, as Iran is reducing its dependence on the oil income while elevating its domestic production and non-oil exports.

Although the sanctions have disrupted Iran's economic activities, they could not impede the development of Iranian free zones; in fact, the development of these zones has been even accelerated.

Many strides made for increasing activities in the free zones have played a significant part in boosting the country's non-oil exports and brought prosperity in the other economic sectors.

POGC develops WIMS system to manage South Pars fields

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC), which is in charge of developing Iran's giant South Pars gas field in the Persian Gulf, has developed and implemented a Well Integrity Management System (WIMS) to ensure safe and stable gas production from the field.

According to the POGC Office of Public Relations, this system has been developed and implemented in order to reduce the risk of produced fluids flowing into the environment outside the well or to prevent the inflow of non-reservoir fluids into the wells.

This system can be considered the Oil Ministry's first integrated well management system, which has been developed and implemented after three years of hard work, an official with the POGC said.

"Currently, all the active wells at South Pars gas field as well as the wells of other hydrocarbon fields, including Kish, Golshan, and Belal fields, which will be developed in the future, are covered in this system," Mohammad Ayuman said.

Underlining the importance of implementing this

system, the official said: "Production wells are the most important physical assets in the South Pars upstream sector and the well integration management system is a big step to change traditional well management procedures to a modern and knowledge-based approach."

Mentioning the process of developing this system, Ayuman said first, a list of all existing international standards in this field was prepared and after studying and reviewing all the mentioned documents the first version of the system's regulatory basis was prepared and finalized after two years of expert work within the framework of laws and regulations of the Oil Ministry and other national regulations.

He further emphasized the significant role of this system in the future planning of the field's overhaul operations and for prioritization of repair projects and said: "With this system going operational, operation processes are being carried out more comprehensively and this will be very effective for ensuring safe and sustainable production."

As Iran's major natural gas reserve, the South Pars gas



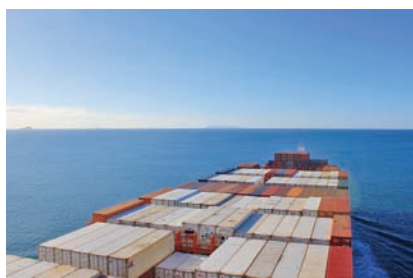
field, which the country shares with Qatar in the Persian Gulf, is currently divided into 24 standard phases on the Iranian side and is estimated to contain a significant amount of natural gas, accounting for about eight percent of the world's reserves, and approximately 18 billion barrels of condensate.

Commodities worth \$174m exported to Oman in 8 months

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** —Iran has exported products worth \$174 million to Oman during the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-November 20, 2020), according to the data released by the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA).

The IRICA data indicate that steel and related products accounted for over 35 percent of the exports during the mentioned time span.

In January 2020, Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) held the first meeting of its Commodity-Country Desk on trade with Oman presided by Farzad Piltan, the director-general of TPO's Office of Arabian



and African Countries.

The meeting was aimed at investigating the ways for increasing exports of construction materials to Oman and removing the barriers related to transporting these

materials to the Arab country, and was participated by the related state-run and private sector officials including representatives of some exporting and marine transport companies.

Despite the U.S. re-imposition of sanctions against Iran, Oman is getting closer to the Islamic Republic both politically and economically. There is also the same approach adopted by Iran, as Iranian companies now prefer to conduct trade with Oman rather than the United Arab Emirates (UAE), given that the UAE is highly complying with the sanctions.

Iran is somehow replacing some of its previous strategic trade partners such as

UAE with Oman, considering the Sultanate as an economic-trade hub.

Over the past two years, there have been many meetings and negotiations between trade and economic officials from the state-run and private sectors of the two sides with the aim of strengthening and expanding bilateral trade ties.

During the 18th meeting of the Iran-Oman Joint Economic Committee in Tehran in December 2019, Omani minister of commerce and industry said his country was trying to boost its trade and economic ties with Iran, stressing that this goal could be achieved through more cooperation between the two sides' private sectors.

Annual mushroom production estimated to reach 180,000 tons

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Some 180,000 tons of mushrooms are estimated to be produced in over 900,000 hectares of farms during the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20), deputy head of the Ministry of Agriculture's Greenhouse, Medicinal Plants and Edible Mushroom Affairs Bureau said.

Last year over 170,000 tons of mushrooms were produced in about 860,000 hectares of farms in various provinces across the country, Elham Fatahi-Far told IRNA on Saturday.

Noting that edible mushrooms are produced in 30 provinces of the country, the official stated: "According to the available reports, Tehran, Alborz, Isfahan, Khorasan Razavi, Fars, and Qazvin are the major provinces producing edible mushrooms across the country."

According to Fatahi-Far, about 6,000 tons of edible



mushrooms worth \$8.7 million were exported to other countries including the UAE, Iraq, Kuwait, and Russia during the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19, 2020).

Back in October 2019, Mohammad Hassan Afshar, chairman of Mushroom Growers Union had said that Iran is the world's sixth-biggest edible mushroom cultivator.

Currently, there are 900 edible mushroom producers in Iran, providing jobs for more than 10,000 people, he said.

Currently, more than 20 types of mushrooms are commercially cultivated worldwide, with China, the U.S., the Netherlands, France, and Poland being the biggest producers.

Per capita mushroom consumption in Iran stands at 1-1.2 kilograms, lower than the global average of two kilograms and Europe's average of four kilograms.

NDF to inject over \$595m into the stock market

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iran's National Development Fund (NDF) is going to inject 25 trillion rials (about \$595.2 million) into the country's stock market by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20), as the second support package for this market in the current year, the Chairman of NDF's Executive Board Morteza Shahidzadeh said.

"We anticipate that in the second phase, 2,500 billion toman (25 trillion rials) will be provided to the Capital Market Stabilization Fund by the end of the year, supplied from the return of the facilities provided [by NDF]

to other projects (in previous years)," Shahidzadeh told IRIB.

According to the official, NDF had paid 10 trillion rials (about \$238 million) to Capital Market Stabilization Fund as its first support package for the capital market in the current year.

"Supporting the capital market must be provided over time and gradually," he said.

The official noted that based on the law on removing barriers to production, since the Iranian calendar year 1394 (March 2015-March 2016), every year, one percent of the resources of the National Development Fund should have

been allocated to support the capital market, but this regulation was not implemented due to some legal problems.

This year, the National Supreme Security Council passed a resolution authorizing the National Development Fund to deposit a part of its assets directly in the Capital Market Stabilization Fund, which was in fact a note in the law that made us able to provide money directly to the stock exchange, Shahidzadeh added.

While Iran's stock market has not received any external shocks such as those from the foreign currency exchange rate, inflation, parallel markets, and international issues, some

internal factors have caused some drops in this market.

The government has been implementing various programs and strategies to support the country's newly grounded stock market.

Back in October 2020, Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Farhad Dejjpasand said that the government is going to continue implementing its support programs to help the capital market flourish.

"The stock market situation is not measured only by the fluctuations of its index. The Iranian stock exchange is in the process of becoming a modern stock market," Dejjpasand said.

Professor enumerates problems in Islamic world but promises bright future

‘There is crisis in the Muslim world but not in Islam’

➡ While these are good things to do, they are not a substitute for living the kind of life that is at the core of Islam, such as standing up for justice and causes that are just, living a modest life and helping those in need, alleviating poverty, supporting good governance and fighting against corruption, and commanding the good and forbidding evil. Practicing these values not just towards other Muslims but it must be done towards all humanity because as Islam preaches we are all one. Muslims have not studied and debated what their religion preaches for their everyday lives. In many countries, Muslims have been spoon fed an Islam that is difficult to reconcile with the Qur'an (see IslamicityIndices.org).

As a result, when you look at many Muslim countries today, what do you see? A few living in grotesque luxury while the vast majority live in poverty, under suppression and with little hope for a better future. In many of these countries, prosperity comes from depleting oil and natural gas assets, which in Islam belong to all current and future generations, yet some rulers behave as if it's theirs and use it for their own for a lifestyle that is condemned in Islam while others are suffer in need.

There is pervasive injustice. Rampant corruption and poverty. Ineffective governance. Limited opportunities and freedom. And still today in the 21st century, some Muslim rulers obey the commands of their colonial masters and don't support the welfare of their people. They collaborate with their foreign benefactors at the expense of their own people.

The weakness of Muslims and Muslim countries is manifested in their fragmentation. Muslim countries do not support Muslims across the world because rulers are beholden to foreign powers for support to stay in power. Muslims are openly incarcerated and

The weakness of Muslims and Muslim countries is manifested in their fragmentation.

mistreated in India, Myanmar, and China and discriminated against in Israel and across North America and Europe, yet many Muslim rulers look the other way. Less than a handful of Muslim countries push back on China, India and Israel. Muslim leaders have the power to demand justice but they are afraid because they are insecure in their rule and are not united across national borders; the talk of Muslim brotherhood is just talk and nothing more. Israel assassinates Iranian scientists, the United States assassinates an Iranian general and an Iraqi militia leader and Trump pardons four murders of Iraqi men, women and children, and Muslims around the world and in particular Muslim rulers say little or nothing. Most egregiously, in the face of these unfolding events and the continued subjugation of Palestinians, some Arab rulers in the Persian Gulf even embrace Israel openly and others do the same behind the scenes. Sadly, what they don't realize is that their colonial masters know one lesson well—divide and conquer. Having divided Muslims, these colonialists will more easily discard any ruler when they have no more use for him. Beware of thine masters!

Let me also say a few words that apply largely to the crisis in the Middle East (West Asia). The whole region is divided over Israel, nuclear arms and sectarian rivalries. Some Arab countries have forgotten the plight of the Palestinians under Israeli subjugation and decided to embrace Israel while demanding nothing for Palestinian rights and statehood. Trump has twisted arms and intervened where he does not belong, such as recognizing Moroccan territorial claims



Israel assassinates Iranian scientists, the United States assassinates an Iranian general and Trump pardons four murders of Iraqi men, women and children, and Muslims around the world and in particular Muslim rulers say little or nothing.

if they recognize Israel. This kind of pressure further emboldens Israel's oppression of Palestinians as they feel Arabs talk but will do nothing to oppose the subjugation of their fellow Arabs. But Israeli policies will in time backfire on Israel. Ordinary Arabs will not take this lying down.

With the implicit support of the United States, Israel is hell bent on regime change in Iran. Israel has an arsenal of over 230 nuclear warheads that threaten the region and dictates that no other country in the region can acquire such weapons and all the while is unwilling to embrace the only sensible solution—a nuclear free zone in the Middle East (West Asia)—supported by Iran and Arabs.

Some Arab rulers, insecure in their illegitimate rule, stoke the fires of sectarianism—Sunni versus Shia—in order to further divide Muslims and to perpetuate an 'us against them' syndrome in order to shore up their regime.

All the while if one criticizes Israel's cruel policies that are akin to apartheid one is called anti-Semitic in the West. It is truly sad that Jews who suffered so under Nazi Germany are indifferent to the suffering of Palestinians. More bombs and U.S. support will not be a long-run substitute for a just peace for everyone in the region, including for Israel.

Muslims must oppose oppression and injustice wherever and against whomever it occurs, as must Christians, Jews and all other persons of faith. If some Muslims oppress Christians, Jews or any human being, all Muslims must stand up in opposition. The same is the moral duty of Christians and Jews and every human being. Humanity is one and evil must be opposed wherever it occurs.

These are some of the reasons for the crisis in the Muslim world but not in Islam. Islam was revealed in the Qur'an and it has remained the same. Muslims must make this distinction and stand up when Islam is attacked. They should look in the mirror and ask what they can do?"

Who is responsible for what is going on in Muslim countries?

Some Arab rulers, insecure in their illegitimate rule, stoke the fires of sectarianism—Sunni versus Shia—in order to further divide Muslims and to perpetuate an 'us against them' syndrome in order to shore up their regime.

Muslims. It is Muslims who tolerate these conditions. They should demand peaceful change. But before they can effectively work for peaceful change, they should study and debate the deeper meaning of their religion that includes—justice, freedom, sharing Allah's bounty, poverty eradication, effective governance and elimination of corruption and waste, modest living, affording everyone a good opportunity to grow, with access to education, healthcare and the minimum in shelter and food for a dignified life.

Again, while rituals are important, the pursuit of the deeper message of Islam is essential and even more important in creating the communities envisaged in Islam.

I believe that if Muslims take the message of the Qur'an to heart and work for peaceful change, unite across the world, rulers and colonial powers will have little choice but to see what's down the road if they don't listen and support the needed reform in Muslim countries. In time, there will be blowback that they will not be able to withstand. This will not happen today or tomorrow but it will happen. How long can you continue to subjugate and deprive hundreds of millions of their basic human rights and the opportunity to enjoy a dignified life?

What shape will this "blowback" take? Against whom?

If things continue as they are, I believe that in time there will be violent upheavals in a number of Muslim countries that will spread like wildfire across the Muslim world as Muslims unite against their oppressive rulers. And in countries where colonial powers hold sway, colonialists will be kicked out to never return. It is best to invite peaceful and measured reforms while such peaceful change is still possible but the sooner the easier it will be. The passage of time accumulates more grievances and hatred and makes reconciliation ever more difficult.

What can the world do to prevent the crisis that you speak of?

Encourage peaceful reform in Muslim majority countries. Stop supporting illegitimate and oppressive rulers who will not support reforms. Stop selling arms that are

invariably used to quell domestic protests and spread mayhem regionally.

Why is there so little effective co-operation among Muslim countries?

The reasons are many. Most Muslims in Muslim majority countries are struggling to provide for their families. They don't have the luxury of time to think and express their views for peaceful change. They live under oppression and are afraid to even discuss what their religion demands, let alone seek peaceful change. For instance, in many Muslim countries opposition to the treatment of Muslims in China or in India would not be tolerated by the authorities. And in an age where misleading labels are an effective instrument of intimidation and control, they would be called Islamists or terrorists and possibly even incarcerated. Many Muslim rulers care little for the long-term welfare of their people. They are focused on themselves, their cronies and important foreign powers for support.

Are you optimistic about the future of Muslims, Muslim countries and of Iran?

Islam is the fastest growing major religion. It has about two billion adherents today. Within a few years, followers of Islam will surpass those who profess Christianity. If numbers are a measure of success, then the future is indeed bright for Muslims. But to my mind, numbers are only a part of the story. Muslims will in time discover the essence of their religion. I am confident that the pressure for reform will be unstoppable and will usher peaceful, as opposed to violent, change. With freedom to think, to dream and to choose, Muslims will contribute to a more prosperous and peaceful world and radicals that have misrepresented Islam and given Muslims a bad name will be permanently sidelined. Given freedom and the opportunity to develop the self, the future is bright.

Muslim countries do not support Muslims across the world because rulers are beholden to foreign powers for support to stay in power.

As for Iran, it has been a special case. Iran was invaded by Iraq, using banned chemical weapons, other lethal arms and intelligence, all from the West. Then as Iran was slowly getting back on its feet, the United States imposed economic sanctions, which over time became ever more stringent and crippling to the Iranian economy. To alleviate the crippling burden of sanctions, Iran gave up some of its sovereign rights and agreed to the JCPOA. Again, as it started to recover, Trump came along and essentially tore up a multilateral agreement endorsed by the United Nations Security Council. Wow! What a history over the last 40 years. But Iranians are resilient, innovative and quick to learn. I have seen this in Iranian students in the United States. Given a supportive environment and the needed opportunities Iran would flourish. Iran's Arab neighbors and Turkey should support Iran's re-integration into the international community. Iran will always be where it is today. Cooperation now would be most appreciated and is the best recipe for a flourishing Middle East (West Asia) (West Asia) of the future. The United States and Europe should embrace such efforts and once and for all extinguish the flame of colonialism and its attendant harm and eventual blowback.

Killer vaccine

More than two-thirds of U.S. Covid-19 vaccines left unused

More than two-thirds of the 15 million coronavirus vaccines shipped within the U.S. have gone unused, U.S. health officials said.

According to Irish Times, in response, the governors of New York and Florida have vowed to penalize hospitals that fail to dispense shots quickly.

In New York, hospitals must administer vaccines within a week of receiving them or face a fine and a reduction in future supplies, governor Andrew Cuomo said, hours before announcing the state's first known case of a new, more infectious coronavirus variant originally detected in Britain.

"I don't want the vaccine in a fridge or a freezer, I want it in somebody's arm," the governor said. "If you're not performing this function, it does raise questions about the operating efficiency of the hospital."

New York hospitals on the whole have dispensed fewer than half of their allocated doses to date, but performance varied from one group of hospitals to another, Mr. Cuomo said. The NYC Health + Hospitals system, the city's main public hospital network, has only administered 31 per cent of its allotment, compared with 99 per cent for a few private hospitals in the state.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported an even lower vaccine uptake for New York overall, saying fewer than one in five of the 896,000 doses shipped to the state since mid-December have been given.

In Florida, where officials have put senior citizens ahead of many essential workers for getting the vaccine, governor Ron DeSantis announced a policy under which the state would allocate more doses to hospitals that dispense them most quickly.

Meanwhile, in a tweet on Friday, U.S. President Trump said the states were to blame for the slow start to inoculating Americans, after the federal government's "successful and very large scale distribution of vaccines."

The Trump administration had said 20 million people would be vaccinated by the end of 2020. The figure was closer to four million.

Killer vaccine

In a notable development, two weeks after getting a first dose of a Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine, a 56-year-old American doctor in South Florida has died, the US media have reported.

Dr. Gregory Michael, a Miami-Beach obstetrician, was in good health, the Sun-Sentinel reported.

Health officials from Florida and the Centers from Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are investigating whether the vaccine played a role in his death, which possibly is the country's first death linked to the vaccine.

The doctor (pictured below) received his first dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine on December 18 at Mount Sinai Medical Center, according to his wife, Heidi Neckelmann.

Small spots began to appear on his feet and hands after three days and he went to the emergency room at Mount Sinai, where he has worked in private practice for 15 years, according to reports.

According to his wife, Michael's blood count was far below normal ranges, and he was admitted to the intensive care unit.

Doctors tried for two weeks but could not raise Michael's platelet count. "Experts from all over the country were involved in his care," she wrote. "No matter what they did, the platelets count refused to go up."

Michael was "conscious and energetic" through the process, but just days before a last resort surgery, he suffered a stroke and died.

Michael's wife said that he spent the pandemic delivering hundreds of babies and was a COVID-19 vaccine advocate.

After quick vaccine, Israel faces new virus woes

Israel imposed a tighter lockdown as coronavirus infections soared, the variant spread, vaccines were running out and a debate erupted over the country's responsibility to the Palestinians.

According to New York Times, Israel faces a tightened lockdown as infections have spiraled to more than 8,000 new cases a day, officials fear the more transmissible variant of the virus first identified in Britain is spreading rapidly and Israel's vaccine supplies are running low.

The prospect that Israel would have the virus under control by spring, once promising, now seems uncertain. Health officials say that in the short term, at least, the vaccine campaign cannot compete with the soaring infection rates.

And the Palestinian Authority, which runs its own health care system in the occupied West Bank, has asked Israel for vaccines, prompting a debate over Israel's responsibility to the Palestinians at a time when Israel's vaccine supplies are dwindling.

Resistance News

For years, U.S. sought to orchestrate Capitol siege-style incident in Lebanon: Nasrallah

INTERNATIONAL DESK TEHRAN — The secretary-general of the Lebanese Hezbollah resistance movement says the United States has for years sought to orchestrate an incident in Lebanon similar to the deadly riot that unfolded at the U.S. Capitol.

Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah made the remarks during a televised speech broadcast by the Arabic-language al-Manar satellite TV station in the Lebanese capital Beirut on Friday night.

He added that what occurred at the U.S. Capitol deserved to be pondered and mused over in a bid to clarify what is really going on in the U.S. and to discern the truth behind the claims of democracy in that country.

On Wednesday, Trump's violent supporters stormed the U.S. Congress building, where the Electoral College votes were being counted. The breach was an attempt to disrupt the counting.

Security staff was overwhelmed and House members and Senators fled the scene as shots were fired to disperse the crowd. Police later cleared the Capitol of Trump supporters, enforced a curfew, and arrested dozens of people.

Five people, including a police officer who later succumbed to his wounds, were killed in the unprecedented violence.

"We have warned about Trump's policies many times before, and what we have seen is just a typical example of the crimes that he committed in Yemen, Syria, Iraq, Palestine, the siege of Iran and Venezuela," Nasrallah further said.

He noted that what Americans witnessed on Wednesday at the U.S. Capitol revealed the falsity of American democracy and the danger of a U.S. president like Trump, warning that the "nuclear button is within the reach of an arrogant and crazy person."

Twitter suspends Trump's account citing risk of more violence

➡ "These are the things and events that happen when a sacred landslide election victory is so unceremoniously & viciously stripped away from great patriots who have been badly & unfairly treated for so long."

"Go home with love & in peace. Remember this day forever!"

In his tweets after he regained access to his account, Trump finally acknowledged President-elect Joe Biden's victory and condemned his supporters who stormed Capitol Hill on Wednesday.

Armed protesters broke into the U.S. Capitol, forcing the chamber to halt the ongoing

vote to certify Biden's election win.

According to Press TV, after two months of refusal to accept his defeat in the November 3 election, Trump sparked violence in the Capitol, calling on his supporters to "fight like hell."

However, in a video he released on Twitter

by the White House, he said, he was "outraged" by Wednesday's "heinous" attack, noting, "This moment calls for healing and reconciliation."

He also said there will be "an orderly transition" to Biden's new administration on 20 January.

Kim Jong Un Calls U.S. North Korea's 'Biggest Enemy

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un staked out a headline position just days ahead of President-elect Joe Biden taking office, calling the United States his country's "biggest enemy," and vowing to advance his country's nuclear arsenal.

"Our external political activities must focus on controlling and subjugating the United States, our archenemy and the biggest stumbling block to the development of our revolution," Kim said, according to the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA).

"No matter who takes power in the United States, its true nature and its policy toward our country will never change," he added.

According to NPR, Kim made the remarks Friday at the ruling Workers Party 8th congress in Pyongyang. Analysts have been parsing reports of the congress for signs of new policies, and this is the first indication of Kim's position towards a new U.S. administration.

President-elect Joe Biden has promised "principled diplomacy" with North Korea, implying a break with President Donald Trump's high-stakes summits with Kim Jong Un. He has also indicated he will work more closely with U.S. allies South Korea and Japan.

At the congress, Kim called for the improvement of the country's nuclear arsenal to include solid-fuel intercontinental ballistic missiles that can be launched from land and sea,

and accurately hit targets at a range of up to 9,320 miles, putting the U.S. mainland in reach.

He also ordered the development of miniaturized nuclear weapons, tactical nukes, military surveillance satellites and hypersonic aircraft.

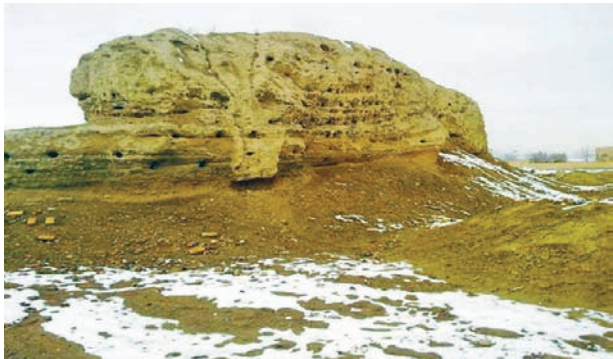
Kim reaffirmed that North Korea would not use its nuclear arsenal in a preemptive strike.

Following the collapse of his second summit with Trump in Vietnam in February 2019, Kim appeared to give up hope of reaching a denuclearization deal with the U.S., and resolved to continue building up nuclear and conventional weapons while diplomacy remained stalemated.

Stratigraphy, excavation project to probe 9,000-year-old hill in northwestern Iran

TOURISM **TEHRAN** — An archaeological project of stratigraphy and excavation works is scheduled to be commenced on Tepe Ahranjan, which is a 9,000-year-old hill in Salmas, northwestern Iran.

Last year, the hill was demarcated by a team of archeologists to protect the ruined archaeological site of Tepe Ahranjan, however, previous constructions among the historical area's boundaries have caused irreparable damages, Afrasyab Geravand, the provincial tourism chief and head of the project announced on Saturday.



During the demarcation project, the researchers found evidence that confirmed that farming and animal breeding was practiced some 9,000 years ago around the historical hill, and implementation of the new project could help further researches, the official added.

Previously, Geravand had said that the northwest of Iran, as a connection bridge between the Iranian plateau, the Caucasus, Asia Minor, and Mesopotamia, has always played an important role in the relations and cultural exchanges.

The region has long been a suitable place for settlement since ancient times due to the presence of permanent rivers, springs, animal and plant resources, fertile land, and pastures, he explained.

The history of agriculture is the story of humankind's development and cultivation of processes for producing food, feed, fiber, fuel, and other goods by the systematic raising of plants and animals. Before the development of plant cultivation, human beings were hunters and gatherers. The knowledge and skill of learning to care for the soil and growth of plants advanced the development of human society, allowing clans and tribes to stay in one location generation after generation. Archaeological evidence indicates that such developments occurred 10,000 or more years ago.

Experts say that by 7000 BC, sowing and harvesting reached Mesopotamia, and there, in the super fertile soil just north of the Persian Gulf, Sumerian ingenuity systematized it and scaled it up. By 6000 BC farming was entrenched on the banks of the Nile River. About this time, agriculture was developed independently in the Far East, probably in China, with rice rather than wheat as the primary crop.

Because of agriculture, cities, as well as trade relations between different regions and groups of people, developed, further enabling the advancement of human societies and cultures. Agriculture has been an important aspect of economics throughout the centuries before and after the Industrial Revolution. Sustainable development of world food supplies impact the long-term survival of the species, so care must be taken to ensure that agricultural methods remain in harmony with the environment.

UNESCO-registered garden, other properties demarcated in Isfahan

TOURISM **TEHRAN** — The UNESCO-recognized Bagh-e Fin, a Persian garden, along with 16 other properties across Isfahan province, have recently been demarcated, IRNA reported on Saturday.

Tahami Mansion, Shah Mansuri Caravanserai, and Shahreza Jameh Mosque were amongst the historical sites and aging monuments whose legal boundaries recently determined, the report added.

The demarcation projects aimed at better preservation, protection, and maintenance of the historical monuments as well as preventing illegal constructions within their boundaries.



Situated in Kashan, Bagh-e Fin together with eight others across the country have been inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list under the title of "The Persian Garden."

The genuine concept of the Persian Garden that is deeply rooted in time interweaves natural elements with manmade components to embody an idea of creating a paradise on Earth by the means of artistic, philosophical, figurative, and religious notions.

The history of Bagh-e Fin in its current shape dates back to the time of Shah Abbas I who was the 5th Safavid king of Iran and reigned from 1588 to 1629. However, some sources say the original premises date far back in time.

Since the oasis city of Kashan lies adjacent to the central Iranian desert, water is scarce, however, inside the garden, water superabundantly flows through a series of turquoise-colored pools and fountains.

The elevated cedars inside the garden that are up to 500 years old contribute to the scenic landscape while the profusion of orange trees permeate pleasant fragrance when the trees are in blossom.

The garden also embraces several historic structures such as a two-story edifice that was once used to be as the lodging for the royal establishment. On one side of the garden is a bathhouse complex, famous as the place where Iranian nationalist hero Amir Kabir was murdered.

The UNESCO website asserts that the flawless design of the Persian Garden, along with its ability to respond to extreme climatic conditions, is the result of an inspired and intelligent application of different fields of knowledge, i.e. technology, water management and engineering, architecture, botany, and agriculture.

Mazandaran prisons to run handicraft courses for inmates

TOURISM **TEHRAN** — Prisons across Mazandaran are scheduled to hold handicraft training courses to broaden job opportunities for the inmates in the northern Iranian province.

The courses will be held under a memorandum of understanding recently signed between the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts and the Prisons, Security, and Corrective Measures Organization, the provincial tourism chief said on Wednesday.

The MOU also aims at creating sustainable employment for the prisoners to prevent the recurrence of their crime and delinquency, Seifollah Farzaneh said.

The prisoners' handmade products, which could become a source of income, are also planned to go on display in handicrafts exhibition, the official added.

He also noted that the prisoners will be provided with facilities and equipment as well as information on marketing and sustainable employment.

Tourism ministry helps empower inmates

In late October, the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts signed a memorandum of understanding with the Prisons, Security, and Corrective Measures Organization to create jobs and make income for prisoners.



The MOU also aimed at implementing special educational and promotional programs, identifying talented prisoners, and improving their social status.

The deputy tourism minister Pouya Mahmoudian said that handicraft products made by prisoners have been displayed in various exhibitions, and the income generated from selling these products

has been returned to the prisoners and their families.

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

In late January, the cities of Shiraz, Malayer, and Zanjan and the village of

Qassemabad were designated by the WCC-Asia Pacific Region, putting Iran's number of world crafts cities and villages from ten to 14.

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

Iran exported \$523 million worth of handicrafts during the past calendar year 1398 (ended March 19). Of the figure, some \$273 million worth of handicrafts were exported officially through customs, and about \$250 million was earned via suitcase trade (allowed for customs-free and tax-free transfer) through various provinces, according to data provided by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts.

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

Government pays \$538,000 in loans to support tourism businesses in Golestan

TOURISM **TEHRAN** — The Iranian government has paid 22.6 billion rials (about \$538,000 at the official rate of 42,000 rials) in loans to the tourism businesses affected by the coronavirus pandemic in the northern Golestan province.

The province's tourism industry, mostly its accommodation centers including hotels, apartment hotels, and motels have taken a major hit from the virus outbreak, the deputy provincial tourism chief has said.

The province has suffered 1.6 trillion rials (over \$38 million) in earnings from tourism over the past couple of months since the virus was first detected in the country, Yasser Qandehari announced on Saturday.

Government's care and support packages

In late October, the deputy tourism chief, Vali Teymouri, announced that a new support package was approved to pay loans to businesses affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

Depending on the type and activity of the businesses, they could benefit from at least 160 million rials (\$3,800 at the official rate of 42,000 rials) to nine billion rials (\$214,000) of bank loans with a 12-percent interest rate, he said.

The loans would be allocated to tourist guides, travel agencies, tourism transport companies, tourism educational institutions, eco-lodges and traditional accommodations, hotels, apartment hotels, motels, and

guesthouses as well as traditional accommodation centers, tourism complexes, and recreational centers, the official explained.

In September, Teymouri pointed to the 1.3 million tourism workers in the country, who are facing several issues due to the coronavirus crisis and said "This number, in addition to their households, includes a significant population that makes a living through tourism, who are needed to be considered in ministry's decisions."

Back in August, Teymouri announced that the tourism ministry had approved a total budget of 4,920 billion rials (over \$117 million) to support corona-affected tourism businesses, covering as much as 36,000 people working in the tourism sector.

Tourism industry in critical situation

Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan in October warned that Iran's cultural heritage and tourism would be in a critical situation if the crises caused by the outbreak of the coronavirus continue.

In August, Mounesan said that Iran's tourism had suffered a loss of 12 trillion rials (some \$2.85 billion) since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic.

He also noted that the coronavirus pandemic should not bring traveling to a complete standstill. "Corona is a fact, but can the virus stop tourism? Certainly not. For us, the coronavirus is a new experience in dealing



with crises that teaches tourism experts around the world how to deal with such a disaster, and thankfully governments are turning this into an opportunity for better planning."

Optimistic forecasts, however, expect Iran to achieve a tourism boom after coronavirus contained, believing its impact would be temporary and short-lived for a country that ranked the third fastest-growing tourism destination in 2019.

The latest available data show eight million tourists visited the Islamic Republic during the first ten months of the past Iranian calendar year (started March 21, 2019).

Iran seeks UNESCO recognition for millennia-old petroglyphs

→ 1 "The ancient paintings of cave walls and mountains in Iran have been compared with ones in other parts of the world, their similarities in appearance and motifs have been 'amazing', according to quotes by professors Jan Brouwer and Gus van Veen," Nasserifard explained, adding "His research and findings are presented to enthusiasts and researchers for the first time."

"Appearance similarities, artistic styles, and uniform themes of ancient



petroglyphs and cave paintings of this land (Iran) reveal many missing links in human history and arts one of which is the resemblance of ancient artifacts in Iran with ones found in the American continent."

In March 2020, a team of entomologists and archaeologists concluded that a previously-founded petroglyph showcases a six-limbed creature with the head and arms of a praying mantis. The rare 14-centimeter rock carving was first spotted in

the Teymarch rock art site during surveys between 2017 and 2018, but could not be identified due to its unusual shape.

International experts Jan Brouwer and Gus van Veen have examined the Teymarch site estimating its carvings were made 40,000-4,000 years ago. Prehistoric rock art provides insights into past eras and cultures as archaeologists classify the tools for the carvings by specific eras. Incising tools include flint, metal, or thigh bones of hunted prey.

Iran extends ban on UK flights as new coronavirus variant spreads

TOURISM **TEHRAN** — Iran has extended the previously-imposed ban on flights to and from the United Kingdom, adding the ban also entails connecting flights at the European country that has become a hotspot for a new coronavirus variant.

Iran's Civil Aviation Organization announced to all domestic and foreign airlines and ticket sales offices that Tehran-London ticket sales, both direct and indirect, are prohibited to prevent the spread of the 'British' variant, Mehr reported on Saturday.

Last month, the Islamic Republic halted flights to and from the United Kingdom, preliminary for two weeks at the discretion of the Health Ministry to prevent the transmission of the disease and to try to maintain public



health.

The new coronavirus variant, which prompted the UK government to impose a Tier 4 lockdown in London and southeastern England, and tighten restrictions for all of England over the festive period, is "out of control," Health Secretary Matt Hancock said on Sunday — the same day that the UK broke its daily coronavirus case record, recording 35,928 new cases.

The ensuing wave of travel bans has also cut off UK travelers from much of Europe and other parts of the world. Some experts believe that there was no evidence the new variant was more deadly or would react differently to vaccines, but it was proving to be up to 70% more transmissible.

Ground broken on new development for UNESCO-tagged qanat

HERITAGE **TEHRAN** — Construction of a reserve reservoir for a UNESCO-registered qanat was officially begun on Thursday in Baghestan, a town in Ferdows county of Iran's South Khorasan province.

The reserve reservoir will be connected to Qanat of Baladeh to help water supply to the agricultural and permanent settlements in a semi-arid region.

The ground-breaking ceremony was attended by Hamid Mollanouri, the governor-general of the eastern province, and several local officials, and cultural heritage experts, CHTN reported on Friday.

"Our ancestors built such a qanat

(aqueduct) years ago, and we are now proud of this qanat, a World Heritage that contributes to the irrigation, agriculture, and development of the region," Mollanouri said.

The qanat system relies on snow-fed streams, which flow down the foothills of surrounding mountains channeling through sloping aqueducts, often over far distances to discharge into the city's underground reservoirs or ab-anbars.

Such constructions are still in practice, many of which were made from the 13th century onwards. Yazd is among ancient cities that have applied this concept to make urban settlements possible in central Iran.

The earliest water supply constructions in Yazd is believed to date from the Sassanid era (224 to 651 CE) while many others have been continually repaired and used over time, most surviving ab-anbars can be today traced to the late Safavid and Qajar periods.

By 2018, some 120,000 qanats had been documented across Iran as nearly 37,000 of which were still in use, according to available data provided by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts.

The concept of "Persian Qanat" was registered on the UNESCO World Heritage list in 2016, representing a selection of



eleven aqueducts across Iran. According to the UN cultural body, qanats provide exceptional testimony to cultural traditions and civilizations in desert areas with an arid climate.

Document on protection of felines inhibiting with cheetahs approved

ENVIRONMENT **TEHRAN** – A national document on protection of felines inhibiting with cheetahs has been adopted in seven provinces of the country, IRNA reported on Saturday.

During the steering committee meeting of the international project on conservation of Asiatic cheetahs held online Saturday, Shahaboddin Montazemi, deputy head of the Department of Environment (DOE), said that utilizing the capacity of local communities, stakeholders, and participatory conservation to protect the Asiatic cheetah is one of the programs of the DOE for Natural Resources and Biodiversity.

Using the potential of other devices and international communities will be of great help in protecting ecosystems and animal species, he further highlighted.

Mazen Gharzeddine, Deputy Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Iran, pointing to the success of the project activity over two decades, emphasized the use of knowledge and experience of the project in other parts of the country and many countries around the world.

The meeting was attended by officials and representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the UNDP Office in Iran, managers, and representatives of the DOE, general managers of 7 provinces, consultants and experts in the field of the natural environment, project experts team.

At this meeting, it was decided to present the annual report of the project, as well as to provide the financial needs of the project by the DOE and UNDP and continue cooperation.



In 2001, conservation of the Asiatic Cheetah Project (CACP) is a comprehensive conservation program established by Iran's government and United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and several concerned national and international NGOs to reverse the endangered specie's drastic decline.

The project has been comprised of three phases aiming at research, protection, and training courses for the integration of local communities as active partners in protected areas, the first phase was co-funded by the Global Environment Facility and was implemented from 2001 to 2008, while the second phase went into effect in 2010.

The project was implemented on some 5 regions in 6 provinces of the country, through which some 47 cheetahs have been identified over the past three years.

Through the third phase of the CACP, all the solutions are classified in three fields of strengthening managing methods and optimization, the participation of local communities, and calling on stakeholders to conserve the precious species.

Fastest mammal endangered

Over the past 60 years, Iran is home to

the last known population of Asiatic cheetah, which once roamed across vast ranges of the west and south Asian countries, from the Middle East to India. Listed as critically endangered by the IUCN, the Asiatic cheetah is among the rarest cats in the world at the subspecies level, with fewer than 50 believed to remain in Iran.

Cheetahs' habitats in Iran are stretching over 12 million hectares of land area and over the past 16 years only experts collaborating with the CACP project have strived to count 48 cheetahs using trap cameras and other technical methods, Majid Kharrazian-Moqaddam, director of aquatic wildlife and biodiversity office at the DOE, said in August 2018.

Roadkill constitutes 70 percent of cheetahs' fatalities, as some 42 Asiatic cheetahs have been killed in the country during the past 16 years, 28 of them died in road crashes and 14 others were either killed in conflicts with guard dogs or due to other unknown reasons, he lamented.

For one Abbasabad-Mayami road, linking north-central Semnan province to Mashhad, the northeastern province of Khorasan Razavi, is one of the deadliest roads for Asiatic cheetahs as 8 cheetahs have been killed in this area over the past 10 years.

Roads fragmenting cheetahs' habitats are the main threats for the species, while guard dogs and stray dogs, drought spells, decreasing population of the prey species to support the cheetahs, and habitat loss are also other factors endangering the sparse population of the cheetahs in the country.

'Strategic alliance' against COVID-19

1 → "Following that, Iran will receive its share of the COVAX vaccines and then the Pasteur Institute of Iran will co-produce a vaccine with a Cuban company, and finally, the domestically-made vaccine will be produced," he explained, IRNA reported.

He went on to say that the human trial phase of the vaccine has been carried out successfully in Cuba. "The second phase of the human trial is being conducted under the supervision of the Pasteur Institute of Iran in Cuba. Provided that the second phase is successful, the third phase will be implemented in Iran."

Jahanpour also retweeted Michael Shifter, the president of the Inter-American Dialogue, a think tank based in Wash-

ington, as saying: "The news that Cuba and Iran are working to produce a COVID-19 vaccine is hardly surprising. Both governments have been subjected to harsh U.S. sanctions, which have limited opportunities to develop and access a vaccine. The alliance is geopolitical, but also pragmatic."

On December 29, 2020, the first coronavirus vaccine made by Iranian researchers, was unveiled and injected into three volunteers.

Hossein Vatanpour, an official with the Ministry of Health, has said 16 Iranian knowledge-based companies are working on all types of vaccine platforms. One company is active in producing DNA-based vaccines, and about three others are working to make mRNA-based vaccines, he added.



Atmospheric CO2 in 2021 will reach level 50% higher than before industrial era

Atmospheric CO2 will hit a level this year that is 50 per cent higher than before the start of the industrial revolution, the Met Office has forecast.

The grim milestone will come as humans continue to drive emissions through fossil fuel burning and deforestation, scientists say.

The Met Office forecasts that CO2 levels in the atmosphere will exceed 417 parts per million (ppm) for several weeks from April to June at the Mauna Loa Observatory in Hawaii this year.

This is 50 per cent higher than CO2 levels in the late 18th century, when the industrial era began. At this time, CO2 levels in the atmosphere were about 278 ppm, according to the Met Office.

Prof Richard Betts, who leads the Met Office's annual CO2 forecast, told The Independent: "CO2 levels did touch above [417 ppm] at Mauna Loa for a few individual days last year but this is the first time they'll do it for a few weeks."

"It wasn't until 1986 that CO2 levels were



around 25 per cent higher, compared to the pre-industrial. So that took about 200 years to happen. And now we've done the next 25 per cent in a little over 30 years. That shows how much the CO2 rise is accelerating."

Exceeding 417ppm this year will not drive any sudden physical changes to the Earth's climate, but it does hold symbolic significance, he added.

"It's iconic because it shows how much we have actually altered the composition of the atmosphere through human action," said Prof Betts.

"We're still going in the wrong direction. It's hard to put a precise number on what CO2 concentrations need to stop at in order to stay at 1.5C of warming, but it's between 425 and 470ppm roughly. So CO2 needs to stop accelerating if we are to bring global warming to a halt."

Limiting global warming to 1.5C above pre-industrial levels is the aspirational target set by countries under the Paris Agreement.

The release of emissions by humans is causing CO2 to build up in the atmosphere over time. Each year, CO2 concentrations rise until reaching a peak around May before dipping slightly. The drop after May follows the start of the plant-growing season in the northern hemisphere, which causes some CO2 to be soaked up from the atmosphere.

This dip is short-lived, however, and CO2 concentrations typically begin rising again in September. This seasonal cycle produces the zig-zagging pattern seen on the chart above.

When considering 2021 as a whole, the Met Office projects that average CO2 concen-

trations will be some 2.29 ppm higher at the Mauna Loa Observatory in Hawaii than in 2020. (The Mauna Loa Observatory in Hawaii is the site of the longest-running continuous record of atmospheric CO2 concentrations, which started in 1958.)

The projected annual rise is slightly smaller than what has been seen in recent years. This is because 2021 is a La Niña year, said Prof Betts.

La Niña is a periodic natural phenomenon that affects weather around the world. La Niña conditions can boost the growth of tropical forests, which will lead to more CO2 being absorbed from the atmosphere, he explained.

"La Niña changes weather patterns around the world, especially in the tropics where you'll get slightly colder and wetter conditions. These conditions tend to enhance ecosystem growth and, so, the take up of CO2."

"This will make the rise slightly slower this year, but it will not stop the rise from happening."

Shadegan wetland home to wintering migratory birds

ENVIRONMENT **TEHRAN** – Shadegan wetland in the southwestern province of Khuzestan is now hosting flocks of migratory birds that came to spend the winter, IRIB reported on Saturday.



Shadegan wetland covers 530,000 hectares, 400,000 hectares of which has been designated as a Ramsar site (defined by the Ramsar Convention for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands, recognizing the fundamental ecological functions of wetlands and their economic, cultural, scientific, and recreational value).

The wetland feeds on Marun and Karun rivers both crossing Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad province, but after dam construction over the Karun river, the wetland went dry not receiving its water right.

After the torrential rains and flooding started on March 19, the wetland has been saturated.

Last winter (December 2019–March 2020), 150,000 migratory birds were observed in the wetlands and reservoirs of Khuzestan. And the highest number of birds was counted in Hour al-Azim wetland, the highest diversity in the Shadegan wetland, and the highest population decrease in Bandoon wetland.

On January 2, IRNA quoted Mostafa Kenarkoobi, the director-general of Khuzestan province's veterinary department, as saying that a comprehensive plan for monitoring highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) has been implemented across Shadegan wetland.

Fourteen types of indigenous and migratory birds are living in the wetland and they are monitored constantly in terms of health, he explained.

Iran among five pioneers of nanotechnology

1 → Almost 9 percent of the whole scientific publications of 2020, indexed in the Web of Science database, have been relevant to nanotechnology.

There have been 191,304 nano-articles indexed in WoS that had to have a 9 percent growth compared to last year. The mentioned articles are 8.8 percent of the whole produced papers in 2020.

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



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

Iran's share of the world's top scientific articles is 3 percent, Gholam Hossein Rahimi She'erbaf, the deputy science minister, has announced.

The country's share in the whole publications worldwide is 2 percent, he noted, highlighting, for the first three consecutive years, Iran has been ranked first in terms of quantity and quality of articles among Islamic countries.

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

LET'S LEARN PERSIAN

(Part 104)

(Source: saadifoundation.ir)

بعد از 'آ' و 'اَ' تلفظ می‌شود:
آقاست ← [آقاست] زیباست ← [زیباست]
خانه است ← [خونه‌ست] بچه است ← [بچه‌ست]
بعد از 'ی'، 'یِ' و 'یِ' تلفظ می‌شود:
تاریخی است ← [تاریخیه] کسی است ← [کسیه]
عمو است ← [عموته] مینوست ← [مینوته]

- آقای ساتوشی، سلام علیکم. حالتان چطور است؟ خوبید؟
- اجازه می‌دهید امروز در باره‌ی خانواده و برنامه‌ی زندگی‌تان صحبت کنیم؟* بفرمایید خانواده‌ی شما کجا زندگی می‌کنند؟
- چند نفرند؟ می‌توانید کمی از فامیل‌تان بگویید؟ ...
- حالا لطفاً در باره‌ی پایتخت کشورتان صحبت کنید.
- مساحت و جمعیتش چقدر است؟ از کی پایتخت است؟
- اسم بزرگراه‌های معروف و ساختمان‌های بلند آنجا چیست؟
- هتل‌ها و رستوران‌های بزرگ آنجا را می‌شناسید؟
- در پایتخت، مردم با چه رفت و آمد می‌کنند؟
- پایتخت جالبی دارید. ان‌شاء‌الله همه آنجا را ببینیم.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ج

Iran breaks U.S. monopoly on aviation navigation charts

Iranian researchers have succeeded to produce aviation navigation charts, known as Inflight AIP (Aeronautical Information Publication), which was monopolized by the United States, IRNA news agency reported on Sunday.

Prepared by Iran's Army, the Inflight AIP was unveiled in Tehran with Air Force Commander Brigadier General Aziz Nasirzadeh and Vice President for Science and Technology Sourena Sattari in attendance.

Digital aeronautical charts, including instrument flight rules (IFR) and visual flight rules (VFR), is a high-quality knowledge-based product which was solely produced by Jeppesen Company and was not available for Iranian airlines due to U.S. sanctions.

ایران انحصار آمریکا در نقشه‌های هوانوردی را شکست

ایران با تولید نقشه‌های هوانوردی (INFLIGHT AIP) که پیش از این در انحصار آمریکا بوده به موفقیت چشمگیری در زمینه صنعت هوانوردی دست یافت.

به گزارش ایرنا، روز یکشنبه با حضور امیر سرتیپ خلبان عزیز نصیرزاده فرمانده نیروی هوایی ارتش و سورنا ستاری معاون علمی و فناوری ریاست جمهوری از نقشه‌های هوانوردی (INFLIGHT AIP) تولید داخل رونمایی شد.

چارت‌های هوایی دیجیتال شامل نقشه‌های پروازی IFR و VFR یک محصول دانش بنیان با فناوری بسیار بالا است که پیش از این انحصار آن در اختیار آمریکا و شرکت جیسن (Jeppesen) قرار داشت که به دلیل اعمال تحریم‌های ظالمانه شرکت‌های هواپیمایی ایرانی از دسترسی به این نقشه‌ها محروم شده بودند.

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GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

The faithful are tied in kindness and affection together like members of a body, one's pain and hardship affect the others.

Prophet Muhammad (S)

“Gabriel”, “Haboob” crowned best at Karama Human Rights Film Festival

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian short movies “Gabriel” and “Haboob” won the awards for best film in two different categories at the 11th Karama Human Rights Film Festival in Amman, Jordan, the organizers announced on Thursday.

Directed by Yusef Kargar, “Gabriel” was selected as best short film. It is about a middle-aged man who lives with his son. His wife has been missing for some time. All the people are suspicious of her. One day news comes to him and he has to choose one: expediency or conscience?!

“Haboob” directed by Mahsa Samani received the award for best short animation. The movie tells the story of a man and his daughter, who are accustomed to living in harmony and peace with nature, but some disruptions change their lovely little life.

The Karama Feather Award for best documentary went to “The Art of Dissent” directed by James Dean Le Sueur from the U.S.

The film celebrates the power of artistic engagement in Czechoslovakia before and after the 1968 Soviet-led invasion. The documentary’s main protagonists – Václav Havel, banned singer Marta Kubišová and the underground rock group the Plastic People of the Universe – became the most recognizable dissidents during the 1970-80s. Havel fused literary, political, philosophical and rock ‘n’ roll worlds into a hybrid network that eventually toppled the totalitarian regime.

“All This Victory”, a co-production from Lebanon, France and Qatar directed by Ahmad Ghossein, won the Karama Feather Award for best fiction.

The Anhar Film Award was given to “200 Meters”, while the Karama Feather Award for best audience film went to “As You Can See” by Egyptian director Ghada Fikri.

Ghada invites her mother to reflect on her life while taking us on a poetic exploration in her mother's hands: the hands that raised five children almost single handedly.

“Humankind: A Hopeful History” appears in Persian

C U L T U R E d e s k **TEHRAN** — A Persian translation of Dutch popular historian Rutger Bregman’s book “Humankind: A Hopeful History” has recently been published by Now Publications in Tehran.

The book has been translated into Persian by Mazda Movahhed. If there is one belief that has united the left and the right, psychologists and philosophers, ancient thinkers and modern ones, it is the tacit assumption that humans are bad. It’s a notion that drives newspaper headlines and guides the laws that shape one’s life. From Machiavelli to Hobbes, Freud to Pinker, the roots of this belief have sunk deep into Western thought. Human beings, are taught, are by nature selfish and governed primarily by self-interest.

Bregman provides new perspective on the past 200,000 years of human history, setting out to prove that man is hardwired for kindness, geared toward cooperation rather than competition, and more inclined to trust rather than distrust one another. In fact this instinct has a firm evolutionary basis going back to the beginning of Homo Sapiens.

From the real-life Lord of the Flies to the solidarity in the aftermath of the Blitz, the hidden flaws in the Stanford prison experiment to the true story of twin brothers on opposite sides who helped Mandela end apartheid, Bregman shows the readers that believing in human generosity and collaboration isn’t merely optimistic, it’s realistic.

Moreover, it has huge implications for how society functions. When one thinks the worst of people, it brings out the worst in politics and economics. But if one believes in the reality of humanity’s kindness and altruism, it will form the foundation for achieving true change in society, a case that Bregman makes convincingly with his signature wit, refreshing frankness, and memorable storytelling.

Bregman has published five books on history, philosophy and economics.

His books “Humankind” and “Utopia for Realists” were both New York Times Bestsellers and have been translated in more than 40 languages. Bregman has twice been nominated for the prestigious European Press Prize for his work at The Correspondent.

French writer Claire Joubert honored at Ammar film festival

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — Tehran-based French writer and illustrator Claire Joubert was honored at the 11th edition of the Ammar Popular Film Festival on Friday.

Joubert received the Nane Esmat Gloves, a special award of the festival, during a meeting held earlier during the closing ceremony of the festival, which was covered by IRIB’s Ofoq Channel.

Joubert has written several books in Persian, including “In Search of God”, “God’s Cookies”, “Goodbye, Old Raccoon”, “The Little Mouse’s Prayer”, “The Stories of the Little Green Lizard” and “The Most Trustworthy Friend”.

Joubert was born in Paris in May 1961. She was brought up in a Christian family. She converted to Islam at the age of nineteen and immigrated to Iran when she got married.

She illustrates her stories herself. With a cursory look at her works, one can easily perceive her preoccupation with issues such as faith and religion, identity, children’s relations with their surroundings, etc. Most of the writer’s works are for primary-age



French writer Claire Joubert in an undated photo.

children.

She is also interested in doing research on children’s literature and philosophy for

children. She writes both in Persian and French and has published some French books in Lebanon and France, but her preference

is to write in Persian.

Film producer Mahmud Razavi was next honored at the Ammar festival. He is the producer of acclaimed movies such as “Blood Trap” and “Standing in the Dust”.

The Golden Lantern for Best Documentary on National Memory was awarded to “Fourteenth Province” by director Mohsen Karimian.

Karimian in his acceptance speech said that documentary films on history help avoid more mistakes.

The Golden Lantern for Best Documentary on Social Monitoring and Refinement was also given to “Qezel Qaya” by Siamak Mokhtari.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all screenings streamed online through the Ammaryar platform.

A selection of 17 films was screened in the official competition.

Established by a number of Iranian revolutionary figures, the Ammar Popular Film Festival has been named after Ammar Yasir, a close companion of Prophet Muhammad (S).

Art Bureau produces teleplays on Commander Qassem Soleimani

“This is a new project. The first five are written and directed by Morteza Shakhkaram, and the other two are written by Meysam Habibi and Mohammad-Amin Minui, and will be directed by Habibi,” added Zarei who is also the television director of the teleplays.

“The team has tried to produce a new project with a different atmosphere. The memoirs of this great man are so interesting and attractive that they will be very appealing to the audience. The military and moral characteristics of the Commander are so extensive that they need more and more works,” he explained.

“Working on projects on Hajji Qassem Soleimani should not be restricted to only his martyrdom anniversary, because he is such a great man who has done great things and acts like our mythical hero. We have closely witnessed his bravery and we need to produce works in different arenas on the Commander to better transfer his characteristics to other people,” he added.

“The teleplays have been recorded in a Chroma key background, a type of visual-effects and post-production technique for compositing (layering) two images together,” Zarei said.

The Art Bureau has organized several programs in memory of the Commander after his martyrdom on January 3, 2020.

The bureau launched a campaign named “My Hero” to remember Qassem Soleimani, a few days before the first anniversary of his assassination.

The campaign takes its name from an album the bureau released featuring nine ballads composed by Alireza Qazveh, Reza Yazdani, Ali-Mohammad Moaddab, Mohammad-Hossein Nemati, Faezeh Zarafshan, Milad Habibi, Mohammadreza Shafiei and Omid Mahdinejad.

Interested applicants can choose, recite and record the ballads and submit them to the bureau, while they can also produce short music videos or even perform and record the ballads in open areas.

The main goal of the campaign is to promote the album “My Hero” and also help the singing style of ballads find its way among the citizens.

The bureau has also organized a contest named “Sarve Ravan Photo Competition”, as people’s love of Soleimani is the main theme.

Photos of the personal ceremonies, which were held at homes by his fans to commemorate the first martyrdom anniversary of Soleimani during the COVID-19 era, and the decorations of the cities and the villages during such ceremonies are eligible for the contest. The top works will be awarded in April 2021.

Fajr Film Festival announces jury of official competition

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — The 39th Fajr Film Festival announced the members of the jury of the official competition on Saturday.

Nima Javidi, director of the acclaimed drama “The Warden” and Sareh Bayat, star of the Asghar Farhadi’s Oscar-winning drama “A Separation”, are among the members.

The jury also has Bahram Tavakkoli, director of the acclaimed war drama “The Lost Strait”, which was highly acclaimed at the Fajr festival in 2018, earning awards in six categories including best film and best director. He is also the director of “Gholamreza Takhti”, a biopic about legendary Iranian wrestler Gholamreza Takhti.



A combination photo shows pictures of the jury members of the 39th Fajr Film Festival.

Mostafa Kiai, director of the comedy film “Motreb”, which has become Iran’s box office hit of the year by grossing 380 billion rials

(about \$9 million) in 2020, has also been selected for the jury.

The jury is also composed of cinematography director Morteza Pursamadi, producer Jamal Sadatian and cultural manager Mohammad Ehsani.

Fajr president Mohammad-Mehdi Tabatabainejad said earlier that the festival, which is Iran’s major film event, will be organized on its regular date from January 31 to February 10, 2021.

He also said that the event would go ahead with screenings but only for the jury due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, he later said that the entries will be screened for a limited number of journalists, critics and filmmakers.

He added that they have no plans for

organizing the festival online.

Earlier in August, Cinema Organization of Iran director Hossein Entezami said that the organization is searching for a safe platform to organize the Fajr Film Festival online if the pandemic continues until February 2021.

He stated that there is no platform in Iran able to guarantee the festival entries against piracy.

The 38th edition of the Fajr festival was held in Tehran from February 1 to 11, just a few days before the first cases of the COVID-19 infection were detected in the country.

Afterwards, the international edition of the festival, which was scheduled to be held in April, was canceled.

“Blue Land” named best at Silver State Film Festival

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — “Blue Land” by Iranian director Ali Fakhr-Musavi has won the award for best international feature at the Silver State Film Festival in the U.S.

The film, which is a co-production of Iran, Czech, Italy and Ukraine, tells the story of Dr. Arash and his wife, who are covering the process of getting divorced and they will appear in the court of justice very soon.

Earlier in July 2019 when Fakhr-Musavi was making the film he said, “I didn’t want to make anymore films showing an Iranian family with a lot of children, all of whom must take turns wearing a single pair of shoes.”

“I am bored with such images that movies are portraying about my country,” he added.

“Unfortunately, Europeans still deem us as nomads while they once knew us by Abbas Kiarostami’s ‘Taste of Cherry,’” he lamented.

“I have frequently told Iranian officials that if we



A scene from Iranian director Ali Fakhr-Musavi’s drama “Blue Land”.

don’t enter the international current, our cinema will fade away,” noted Fakhr-Musavi, who has previously made “Autumn Memories” along with film studios in

Tabari Artspace to showcase Peyman Sha’afi’s “Presence of the Future”

A R T d e s k **TEHRAN** — “Presence of the Future”, a solo exhibition of Iranian mixed media artist Peyman Sha’afi will open on Monday at the Tabari Artspace, a modern art gallery in Dubai.

In a statement published on its website, the gallery wrote, “Amidst the ongoing moment of the pandemic, Sha’afi has returned to the purity of geometric patterns and their structures of strict mathematical precision in order to make sense of his chaotic reality.”

“He conflates cosmic energy flows with

the satisfying order that geometric rhythms propose in order to form a fresh space grounded in positivity.

“The selected works, which span pen and ink sketches and 3-dimensional canvases, form an enriching enquiry into the relationships shared between geometry, astrology and materiality.

“The artist’s modular works on canvas are rooted in his preoccupation with geometric shapes which have been taken as a symbol of universal harmony across cultures. Observing the world through the interpretive systems of

both Western and Persian astrology, Sha’afi regards the universe with awe.

“Sha’afi looks to the future-seekers of the past, such as Nostradamus to better know the shape of the future. Drawing from this wisdom, the artist maintains that the unprecedented patterns in the skies of the present have given way to the uncharted changes in 2020 which we have begun to witness.”

The exhibit will be running until February 15.

Sha’afi currently lives in Paris. He has been working on Persian calligraphy, having



A combination photo shows Iranian artist Peyman Sha’afi and a number of his artworks.

created new forms of nastaliq style of calligraphy. His interest in geometrical forms and shapes reflects his new approach to art.