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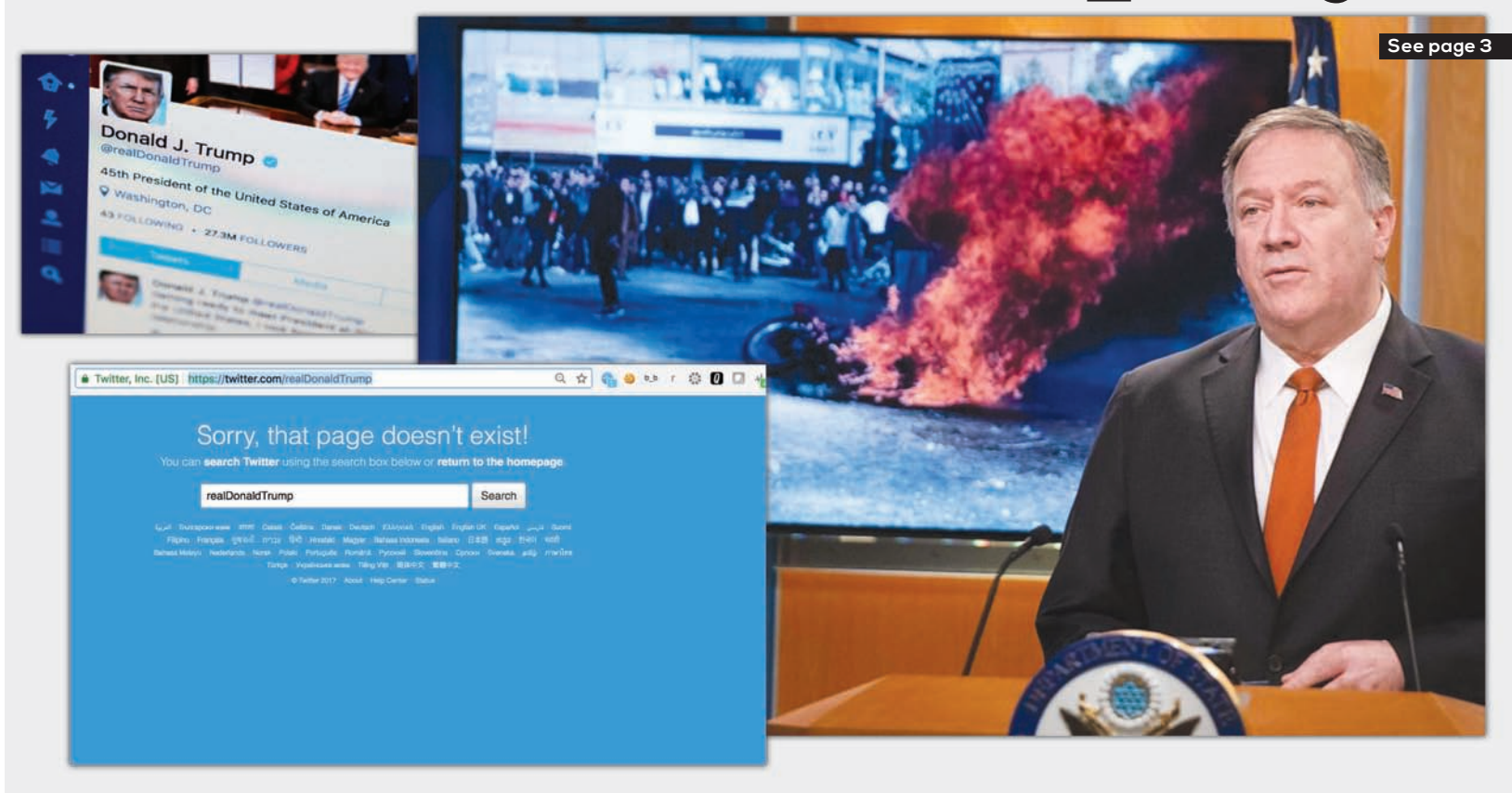


**Replica of prehistorical 'alchemy' vessel built by Iranian potters** *Page 6*



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# Social media double standards at play



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## Parliament backs Iranian vaccine

TEHRAN – More than 200 members of the Iranian Parliament issued a statement on Sunday expressing support for the production of the Iranian coronavirus vaccine, calling it an achievement that brings honor and pride to the nation.

Amid the global debates over the effectiveness of the American vaccines Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna as well as

Britain's Oxford-AstraZeneca, the MPs emphasized their support for the vaccine being produced in Iran.

The statement which was read aloud in the Parliament's open session praised the development of the Iranian vaccine by the Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam and knowledge-based institutions.

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## Kabul to host exclusive exhibition of Iranian products next month

TEHRAN - The 14th exclusive exhibition of Iranian products will be held in Afghanistan's capital Kabul in the next Iranian calendar month (begins on January 20), the head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization announced.

Holding this exhibition after a period of about one year due to the coronavirus pandemic restrictions is a great opportunity to enter the Afghan market and

reconnect with old customers and find new markets, Hamid Zadboum stated.

Last week, the director general of TPO's Asia-Pacific Office said that a preferential trade agreement with Afghanistan is going to be signed in the near future.

Speaking in the fourth meeting of Khorasan Razavi-Herat Joint Trade Committee in Mashhad, Reza Seyed-Aqazadeh said:

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## Album featuring folk music of Kish Island released

**BY SEYYED MOSTAFAMOUSAVISABET**  
TEHRAN – An album featuring the folk music of Kish Island in the Persian Gulf has been released.

The album entitled "Music of Kish Island" is the 77th collection of the regional music of Iran that has been released by the Mahoor Institute of Culture and Arts.

The collection features 19 tracks recorded and performed based on extensive research by Mohsen Sharifian, an expert

on the folk music of southern Iran who is also a neyban virtuoso.

The album features contributions from Saleh Ahmadpur, Abdollah Hajizadeh, Mohammad Akbari, Ahmad Gharib, Foad Ahmadpur, Masud Ahmadpur, Khaled Salehi, Ahmad Khaladeh, Mohammad-Ali Majidi, Khaled Hajizadeh, Reza Gharib, Abdollah Ahmadpur and Hassan Khaludun.

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## Pushing COVID-19 'toward zero deaths'

**BY MEHDI GARSHASBI**

The second phase of a national plan named after martyr Qassem Soleimani will start at the beginning of the next Iranian calendar year (March 20), aiming to reduce the coronavirus deaths to zero.

Some 22,530 monitoring teams have been formed within the framework of the plan since December 15 with 103,000 members, of which more than 270,000 are in contact to identify COVID-19 patients,

The project is implemented in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, Basij, and the Red Crescent Society through which volunteer forces provide information, testing, diagnosis, referral of suspects to health centers, and offer services by visiting people's homes.

The first phase of the plan has so far resulted in cutting the transmission chain of the coronavirus and increasing the interdisciplinary coordination, IRNA quoted Hamid Soori, an official with the National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control, as saying.

"Activities which are planned to be implemented to reach the goal include monitoring confirmed and suspected cases of the disease and covering all their family members and relatives with protective measures," he explained.

"Cities which are in the 'red zone' or places in which the outbreak is the worst will be quarantined and traffic will be intensely restricted."

**Better than expected**

Health Minister Saeed Namaki has said that the situation of coronavirus containment in the country is better than expected contrary to forecasts, and fortunately, new cases and deaths are declining.

The coronavirus control in the country, especially in the cities where restrictions were imposed, is improving, Namaki noted.

For the quarantine of patients who are financially struggling, over 40,000 beds in hotels, and guesthouses are needed, he stated.

When the plan started, 160 cities were in the 'red zone', but the figure has decreased to just six in the current situation, according to the National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control.

The coronavirus hit the country hardest on November 24, with 483 new cases of death. However, the death toll has been declining since December, so that 71 deaths were registered on January 10.

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## Majlis decides to unify forex rates; is it a good thing?

**BY EBRAHIM FALLAHI**

TEHRAN - The budget review committee of the Iranian Parliament (Majlis) has recently voted in favor of changing the foreign currency exchange rate for the import of essential goods from 42,000 rials to 175,000 rials per dollar, suggesting that the prices of essential imports should be set in accordance with the exchange rate prevailing in the Forex Management Integrated System (locally known as NIMA).

According to the committee's Spokesman Rahim Zare, the move is aimed at unifying the country's multiple exchange rates, preventing rent-seeking and corrupt practices.

Although in line with the mentioned committee, Iran's multiple exchange rate economic system has been criticized by several economic and political bodies as well as scholars and experts, many still believe that creating these extreme changes in a situation where Iran's sanctioned economy has been severely affected

by exchange rate fluctuations, will not be beneficial for the economy and is going to result in an inflation shock. To see how really this decision is going to project on the Iranian economy and domestic market in the upcoming year, the Tehran Times held talks with Mohammad Jafari, the chairman of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Trade Committee. What follows is the conclusion:

**The multiple exchange rate strategy**

Before we begin talking about the parliament budget committee's recent decision, we should have a clear picture of the forex market in Iran.

The Iranian economy has been under pressure for a long time by a variety of external factors like sanctions, and consequently, the Iranian rial, negatively affected by these imposed factors, has devalued quite significantly over the past few years.

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## 'Hang Mike Pence' trends on Twitter amid plans for armed protests on Jan. 17

"Hang Mike Pence" trended on Twitter amid plans for armed protests on Jan. 17 by supporters of U.S. President Donald Trump.

"Hang Mike Pence" hit around 14,000 tweets on Friday night, according to reports, amid the social media giant's permanent ban on Trump over inciting violence in the U.S. Capitol protest on Wednesday.

"We blocked the phrase and other variations of it from trending," a Twitter spokesperson told Fox News on Saturday. "We want trends to promote healthy discussions on Twitter."

Some protesters reportedly shouted "Hang Mike Pence" during the Wednesday protest at the Capitol, where the lawmakers were engaged in the process to certify the victory of President-elect Joe Biden in the 2020 presidential election.

"This means that at times, we may prevent certain content from trending. As per our Help Center, there are rules for trends -- if we identify accounts that violate these rules, we'll take enforcement action."

## The American riots: A vertical trench in process

**BY ABIR BASSAM**

On Wednesday evening, it was not the first time that Americans poured into the streets in protest. However, a long time has not passed since the world has witnessed that rioters and demonstrators assaulted the symbol of American democracy: The Capitol.

It is an irony! When the riots filled the Arab streets in several countries, they were identified as the "revolutionaries". The rioters were assaulting governmental buildings and national

symbols of the states, but it was portrayed under the name of democracy and freedom of speech by the Wild West. While the American riots were immediately branded by Europe and Western officials as chaotic anti-democratic behavior.

During the last 10 years, the rioters have filled the Arab streets and attacked government buildings, stolen documents, and burned them, especially in Syria and Libya. The two countries were initially targeted by the Wild West to change regimes and the system in the name of "democ-

racy" and the West was anticipating the moment to attack like a predator.

The same irony brings back the role played by the media, in particular Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya, and many others. The media has played a major role in advocating the rioters and demonizing the opponents of radical behaviors. This role was also perfectly executed by the Western media in supporting the riots against the government institutions in the Arab countries.

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## Museum of Luminaries unveils wax effigy of Commander Qassem Soleimani

TEHRAN – A wax effigy of Commander Qassem Soleimani was unveiled at the Museum of Luminaries at Tehran's Milad Tower on Saturday evening.

A large number of artists and cultural figures and Martyr Soleimani's family attended the unveiling ceremony of the statue created by Hamid Lankarani.

Sirus Moqaddam, director of the popular TV series "Paytakht" delivered a speech during the ceremony and spoke about a consultation he held with Soleimani to make the fifth season of the series that in its final episodes revolves around the ISIS terrorists.

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## Capitol debacle shows U.S. lacks democratic culture: Turkish academic

**BY MOHAMMAD MAZHARI**

TEHRAN – The Wednesday events clearly displayed that the U.S. has no "democratic culture" or strong institutions to show itself as a model of ideal democracy, says Mustafa Caner, a Turkish academic.

"The U.S. has never been a shining example of a country that internalized democratic or humanitarian values," Caner, the research assistant in the Middle East Institute at Sakarya University, tells the Tehran Times.

"The U.S. media is controlled by various powerful actors and they use their newspapers, TVs, and journalists to achieve their political goals," according to Caner.

"Media freedom and objectivity is a funny joke in the U.S.," the Turkish scholar notes.

The following is the text of the interview:

**How do you assess the recent events in Washington in which pro-Trump protesters stormed Capitol Hill?**

I think this is more than what is seen on the surface. This is not about Trump or Biden holds the White House. This is rather an acute symptom of the world economic order in a deep crisis. The deep wave of this crisis made Trump's presidency possible 4 years ago. We have been witnessing an economic crisis in America for almost 10 years. International capital easily flows to different places in the world where labor is very cheap and government taxes are no issue.

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## Presidential candidates' plans to come under spotlight after new bill

**POLITICAL d e s k** TEHRAN — A new bill ratified by the Parliament allows the Guardian Council to evaluate plans proposed by potential presidential candidates three months before the elections.

The Parliament ratified the bill with 191 votes in favor that allows the Guardian Council to carry out a preliminary evaluation of the presidential candidates' plans and assess their competence for the job.

According to the bill, the Guardian Council can ask the candidates three months before the election day to study their plans for the time in office.

The bill also requires the Intelligence Ministry, Islamic Revolution Guards Corps Intelligence Department, General Inspection Organization of Iran, Supreme Audit Court of Iran, and other authorized organizations to provide documents and records relating to the candidates to the oversight council within 15 days after a request from the body.

The next presidential election in Iran will be held on June 18, 2021. The presidential candidates will apply in early April and after an approval by the Guardian Council, the campaigns will start.

## Former Qatari PM: It's good time for Persian Gulf states, Iran begin talks

**POLITICAL d e s k** TEHRAN — Hamad bin Jassim bin Jaber Al Thani, the former Qatari prime minister, has suggested that it is now a good time for Persian Gulf Arab countries and Iran to start talks to settle the disputes peacefully.

"I have said before during the escalation of tensions during the Trump administration that opening a dialogue between Iran and the GCC countries could have important results. Such a dialogue could end tensions in the region and strengthen trust between the parties" Hamad bin Jassim wrote on his Twitter page.



The former prime minister added, "I believe that today, after the end of the tensions between the GCC countries and the arrival of the new administration in the White House, there is an opportunity for this dialogue, and I recommend that we seize it and ignore the existing tensions between the U.S. and Iran, especially with the Biden administration. We need a plan at all levels without relying on irrational calculations."

The former top official also suggested there should be no hesitation to "open doors for

dialogue" between the two sides.

"We should not hesitate to open doors to such a dialogue, because it will help us resolve the many tensions surrounding us. We know that there are different views between us and Iran on many issues, but this should not prevent dialogue with Iran, because we also cooperate with countries with which we do not agree on many issues."

## Pompeo: Iran should not be allowed to enrich uranium at any level

**POLITICAL d e s k** TEHRAN — Following a ratification by the Iranian Parliament which has tasked the government to resume nuclear enrichment to 20 percent in reaction to the violation of the 2015 nuclear deal and imposition of harsh sanctions on Iran, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Sunday said Iran "should not be allowed to enrich uranium at any level."

As a signatory to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), Iran is entitled to enrich uranium for civilian purposes.

On Saturday, Iranian lawmaker Ahmad Amirabadi said if financial, banking and oil sanctions against Iran are no lifted Iran will stop voluntary implementation of the Additional Protocol to the NPT by February 21.

"Iran's threat goes much further than violating the JCPOA. Iran has a legal treaty obligation to allow IAEA inspector access pursuant to Iran's NPT-required safeguards agreement. Violating those obligations would thus go beyond Iran's past actions inconsistent with its JCPOA nuclear commitments. Every nation, not only the United States, will attach great importance to Iran's compliance with these obligations. Nuclear brinkmanship will not strengthen Iran's position, but instead lead to further isolation and pressure," Pompeo said in a statement.

Repeating his unsubstantiated claims against Iran, Pompeo added, "This threat follows on the heels of the Iranian regime announcing it has resumed 20% uranium enrichment at Fordow, the fortified, underground facility Iran originally constructed in secret, further breaching its nuclear pact. The world's top sponsor of terrorism should not be allowed to enrich uranium at any level. The United States fully supports the IAEA's continued professional and independent verification and monitoring of Iran's nuclear program. Iran's expulsion of international inspectors must be met by universal condemnation."

As the only country which unilaterally withdrew from the JCPOA, the United States has repeatedly accused Iran of behaviors inconsistent with JCPOA.

Though the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA practically made the agreement irrelevant, Iran remained fully loyal to the agreement until May 9, 2019, exactly one year after the Trump administration pulled out of the deal and imposed the harshest sanctions in history against Iran.

Before Iran started to gradually reduce its commitments under the JCPOA, the IAEA was confirming Iran's full compliance with the agreement in its regular quarterly reports.

Even at the time Iran announced if the remaining parties to the nuclear deal, especially Europeans, protect Iran from illegal sanctions it will reverse its decision.

Foreign Minister Javad Zarif has also said Iran's decision to enrich uranium to 20 percent is "fully reversible" if all parties honor their obligations.

"We resumed 20% enrichment, as legislated by our Parliament. IAEA has been duly notified. Our remedial action conforms fully with Para 36 of JCPOA, after years of non-compliance by several other JCPOA participants. Our measures are fully reversible upon FULL compliance by ALL," Zarif said in a tweet on January 4.

# Ghalibaf: If the West does not recognize the rights of Iranians, it will pay the price

**POLITICAL d e s k** TEHRAN — Iran's Parliament speaker says the European countries that have been following the U.S. illegal sanctions should recognize and respect the rights of the Iranian people, otherwise they should pay a price.

During the Parliament's open session on Sunday, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said, "The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action is not a sacred agreement. It is merely a deal to remove sanctions under conditions accepted by the Islamic Republic of Iran. Therefore, the return of the United States to the JCPOA is not important to us. [...] It is the practical and tangible lifting of sanctions that really matters."

He said, "Ayatollah Khamenei's advice clarified the roadmap for all authorities in fulfilling the demands of the people."

Pointing to the recent remarks by the Leader of Islamic Revolution, Ghalibaf said, "It became clear to everyone that the main strategy in the face of the enemy is to neutralize the sanctions, which is also a prelude to the lifting of sanctions. The country must increase its power in different sectors, including the nuclear industry".

Addressing the European countries that



have been complying with the U.S. illegal behaviors, Ghalibaf said. "The Western front should know that it must recognize the rights of the Iranian people. If not, it should be prepared to pay the 'appropriate price'."

Earlier on Friday, Ayatollah Khamenei

said in a televised speech that Iran is not in a rush and has no insistence on America's return to the JCPOA. He added, "Instead, our logical demand is the lifting of sanctions and taking back the usurped right of the nation, a duty that should be performed by America

## Tehran's UN ambassador: It's highly unlikely that Trump would resort to nukes against Iran

**POLITICAL d e s k** TEHRAN — Iran's envoy to the United Nations says it is highly unlikely that U.S. President Donald Trump would use nuclear arms against Iran during his last days in office.

"The U.S. president has done a lot of weird things over the past years, raising concerns that he may do something unexpected, even in the final days of his presidency. But given the current international atmosphere, including (the atmosphere) within the United States, towards Trump's possible decisions and measures in his final days in office, I personally find it highly unlikely that Trump would cause concerns, especially with regard to the issue of nuclear action," Majid Takht

Ravanchi said in an interview with the Strategic Council on Foreign Relations website, Press TV reported.

However, the Iranian envoy said, since Trump is an unpredictable person, nothing should be ruled out, and "we should be vigilant and ready."

On the recent movements by the U.S. military in the Persian Gulf, Takht Ravanchi dismissed the moves as "mischievous" and said Iran should be ready to counter possible threats, but anticipated no new act of adventurism.

He also noted that there is not much difference between the Democrats and Republicans when it comes to foreign policy.

"For instance, the use of sanctions against Iran has continued

under both Democratic and Republican administrations in the U.S.," he said. "Hence, to say that the new administration will abandon the use of sanctions may not reflect reality."

Tehran's ambassador to the UN then pointed to Trump's humiliating actions towards European leaders and his harsh policies toward China, saying while the administration of president-elect Joe Biden may be subtler in its conduct, it will not completely change course.

"We will see a series of policies that may be different on the surface, but they are, deep down, a continuation of the same policies and there will be no U-turn in this regard," the envoy said.

## Parliament backs Iranian vaccine

olution," the statement said.

It added, "From the earliest days of the virus outbreak, different sections of the Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam commenced their activities in areas such as the production of health items including facial masks and disinfectants, production of sanctioned drugs, production of medical equipment for respiratory patients, as well as immediate coronavirus test kits. They did not leave the Ministry of Health and Medical Education alone at the forefront of the fight against this deadly global disease and turned the sanctions into opportunities and prevented a major crisis."

Pointing to the huge achievement of Iranian scientists by producing the first homemade Iranian coronavirus vaccine, the statement said, "But what has caught the world's attention most in recent weeks is the success of the young Iranian scientists... in manufacturing the first Iranian corona vaccine and obtaining permission from the competent authorities to perform the human test phase of the vaccine".

"We, the representatives of the Iranian people, consider this great and valuable achievement the result of revolutionary management and belief in the domestic capabilities and experts," it stated.

The MPs also said, "We congratulate all the staff of the Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam and all the staff of the health sector of the country for their efforts to save the lives of noble Iranian people".

The parliamentarians noted that considering the impossibility of examining the safety, health, and efficacy of vaccines produced by American and British companies, as well as the available evidence of shock, side effects, and deaths caused by foreign vaccines, the Iranian Parliament fully supports the order of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in this regard and urges the administration to act accordingly.

## Local police have seized over 1 ton of opium in southeastern province

**POLITICAL d e s k** TEHRAN — The police in southeastern province of Sistan-Balouchestan have confiscated over 1 ton of narcotics, the local police commander has said.

"1,011 kilograms of narcotics were confiscated and nine smugglers were captured in an armed clash in two operations," Brigadier General Ahmad Taheri said, according to the Fars news agency.

He said the police forces of Iranshahr and Bampur counties succeeded to dismantle drug-trafficking bands who were planning to transfer two large hauls of illicit drugs to central Iran.

"Five smugglers have been arrested during this operation," the police commander said, adding, "The police seized 375 kg of opium in addition to some weapons and ammunition."

Taheri went on to say that in another operation in Iranshahr county, the police arrested four smugglers and seized 636 kg of opium and some weapons from them.

The Iranian anti-narcotics police have always staged periodic operations against drug traffickers and dealers, but the latest reports - which among others indicate an improved and systematic dissemination of information - reveal that the world's most dedicated anti-narcotic force (as UN drug-campaign assessments put it) has embarked

on a long-term countrywide plan to crack down on the drug trade since several years ago.

Iran is in the forefront of the fight against drug trafficking and thousands of Iranian police forces have been so far martyred to protect the world from the danger of drugs produced in Afghanistan.

The Iranian police officials maintain that drug production in Afghanistan has undergone a 40-fold increase since the U.S.-led invasion of the country in 2001.

Afghan and Western officials blame Washington and NATO for the surge, saying the allies have "overlooked" the drug problem since invading the country 19 years ago.

## Deranged Trump may start war against Iran in final days: Vietnam War whistleblower

Daniel Ellsberg, a whistleblower who leaked the Pentagon Papers, which revealed the U.S. government had lied to the American public about the Vietnam War, has blamed Donald Trump for the Nov. 27 assassination of Iranian nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh in order to find a pretext to start a large-scale war against Iran.

"The assassination of Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, Iran's top nuclear scientist, in November was probably intended to be such a provocation. If so, it has failed so far, as did the assassination exactly a year ago of General Soleimani," Ellsberg, was special assistant to the assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs during the Vietnam War, wrote in a commentary in the Guardian on Friday, January 8.

Following is the text of the article titled "Donald Trump's parting gift to the world? It may be war with Iran".

President Trump's incitement of criminal mob violence and occupation of the Capitol makes clear there is no limitation whatever on the abuse of power he may commit in the next two weeks he remains in office. Outrageous as his incendiary performance was on Wednesday, I fear he may incite something far more dangerous in the next few days: his long-desired war with Iran.

Could he possibly be so delusional as to imagine that such a war would be in the interests of the nation or region or even his own short-term interests? His behavior and evident state of mind this week and over

the last two months answers that question.

The dispatch this week of B-52's nonstop round-trip from North Dakota to the Iranian coast - the fourth such flight in seven weeks, one at year's end - along with his build-up of U.S. forces in the area, is a warning not only to Iran but to us.

In mid-November, as these flights began, the president had to be dissuaded at the highest levels from directing an unprovoked attack on Iran's nuclear facilities.

U.S. military and intelligence agencies have frequently, as in Vietnam and Iraq, provided pretexts with false information that offered pretexts to attack our perceived adversaries. Or they've suggested covert actions that could provoke the adversaries to some response that justifies a U.S. "retaliation".

The assassination of Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, Iran's top nuclear scientist, in November was probably intended to be such a provocation. If so, it has failed so far, as did the assassination exactly a year ago of General Soleimani.

But time is now short to generate an exchange of violent actions and reactions that will serve to block resumption of the Iran nuclear deal by the incoming Biden administration: a pre-eminent goal not only of Donald Trump but of the allies he has helped bring together in recent months, Israel, Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

Evidently it would take more than individual murders to induce Iran to risk responses justifying a large-scale air attack before Trump

leaves office. But U.S. military and covert planning staffs are up to the task of attempting to meet that challenge, on schedule.

I was a participant-observer of such planning myself, with respect to Vietnam half a century ago. On 3 September 1964 - just a month after I had become special assistant to the assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs, John T McNaughton - a memo came across my desk in the Pentagon written by my boss. He was recommending actions "likely at some point to provoke a military DRV [North Vietnam] response ... likely to provide good grounds for us to escalate if we wished".

Such actions "that would tend deliberately to provoke a DRV reaction" (sic), as spelled out five days later by McNaughton's counterpart at the State Department, the assistant secretary of state William Bundy, might include "running U.S. naval patrols increasingly close to the North Vietnamese coast" - ie running them within the 12-mile coastal waters the North Vietnamese claimed: as close to the beach as necessary, to get a response that might justify what McNaughton called "a full-fledged squeeze on North Vietnam [a progressively all-out bombing campaign]", which would follow "especially if a U.S. ship were sunk".

I have little doubt that such contingency planning, directed by the Oval Office, for provoking, if necessary, an excuse for attacking Iran while this administration is still in office exists right now, in safes and computers in

the Pentagon, CIA and the White House. That means there are officials in those agencies - perhaps one sitting at my old desk in the Pentagon - who have seen on their secure computer screens highly classified recommendations exactly like the McNaughton and Bundy memos that came across my desk in September 1964.

I will always regret that I did not copy and convey those memos - along with many other files in the top-secret safe in my office at that time, all giving the lie to the president's false campaign promises that same fall that "we seek no wider war" - to Senator Fulbright's foreign relations committee in September 1964 rather than five years later in 1969, or to the press in 1971. A war's worth of lives might have been saved.

Current documents or digital files that contemplate provoking or "retaliating to" Iranian actions covertly provoked by us should not remain secret another moment from the U.S. Congress and the American public, lest we be presented with a disastrous fait accompli before January 20, instigating a war potentially worse than Vietnam plus all the wars of the Middle East combined. It is neither too late for such plans to be carried out by this deranged president nor for an informed public and Congress to block him from doing so.

I am urging courageous whistleblowing today, this week, not months or years from now, after bombs have begun falling. It could be the most patriotic act of a lifetime.



# Social media double standards at play

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Donald d e s k Trump is under attack from everywhere. Many social media platforms, most notably Twitter, suspended Trump's accounts. Mainstream media keeps grilling him. Lehigh University has rescinded and revoked an honorary degree it granted to Trump more than three decades ago. For what? All because a number of Trump supporters held a demonstration in front of the U.S. Congress and some of them broke into the offices of some Congressmen and Congresswomen.

As U.S. lawmakers geared up to take part in sessions to certify Joe Biden's elections as president on Wednesday, thousands of Trump's angry supporters stormed the building to vent their rage on the lawmakers, leaving at least four people dead and forcing the Senate to evacuate.

The attack created a dramatic scene during which police officers drew their guns as rioters tried to break into the House chamber. Vice President Mike Pence, who was presiding over the joint session of Congress, rushed out of the Senate for fear of being caught by the angry rioters. Some senators were taken to a secure location amid the sounds of throngs of President Donald Trump's supporters who surrounded the Capitol.

At least four people, including a woman fatally shot by U.S. Capitol police, were killed during the Wednesday riot.

Trump was widely blamed for the attack as it happened after he urged his supporters to stop the ceremonial counting of the electoral votes that would confirm President-elect Joe Biden's win. Trump even asked Pence to do so but the vice president refused to obstruct the Congress ceremonial session.

DC Police Chief Robert Contee confirmed the killing of four people during the Wednesday attack on Capitol.

"One adult female and two adult males appear to have suffered from separate medical emergencies, which resulted in their deaths. Any loss of life in the District is tragic and our thoughts are with anyone impacted by their loss," Contee said at a news conference on Wednesday night.

Trump who has instigated his supporters to demonstrate against the Congress in the first place, quickly sought to distance himself from the violence on the Capitol. But it was too late.



On Wednesday morning, Trump held a rally nearby the White House, urging his supporters to "walk down to the Capitol" to fight against the outcome of the November election, which he described as an "egregious assault on our democracy."

"We are going to cheer on our brave senators and congressmen and women," he continued, "and we are probably not going to be cheering so much for some of them — because you will never take back our country with weakness," Trump told his supporters.

Meanwhile, Trump's eldest son, Donald Trump Jr., warned the Republican members of Congress that if they don't back Trump, they will face challenges. "We're coming for you," Donald Trump Jr threatened.

These statements and remarks united all Trump's opponents against him, paving the way for Twitter to put an end to Trump's social media empire. Following the attack on the Capitol, Twitter took the controversial step of permanently suspending Trump's account, a move that separated the U.S. president from his more than 80 million followers on Twitter.

"After close review of recent Tweets from the @realDonaldTrump account and the context around them — specifically how they are being received and interpreted on and off Twitter — we have permanently suspended the account due to the risk of further incitement of violence," Twitter said in a statement on Friday.

In suspending Trump's account, Twitter referred to two tweets as inciting violence without giving any evidence that Trump has incited violence. Instead, Twitter said it suspended the Trump account because of how the president's supporters receive his tweets. In other words, Twitter did not suspend Trump's account because he incited violence, rather it suspended the account because Trump has supporters who could use Trump's tweet as a justification for committing violent acts.

Twitter's action against Trump was another case of Twitter using a double standard in dealing with violence. Over the past few years, Trump has issued several violent threats against Iran, including threats to attack Iran's cultural sites, but Twitter did nothing to stop these threats.

"Let this serve as a warning that if Iran strikes any Americans or American assets, we have targeted 52 Iranian sites (representing 52 American hostages taken by Iran many years ago), some at a very high level and important to Iran and Iranian culture, will be hit very fast and hard," Trump said in a tweet last year in January following the U.S. assassination of top Iranian General Qassem Soleimani.

Trump's threat against Iran's cultural sites elicited a strong response from pundits all over the world. "Trump says he'll target Iran's cultural sites. That's illegal," NPR said in a

report at that time.

However, Twitter did not move to restrict Trump's threatening tweet, let alone suspending his account. This duplicity has caused some Twitter users in Iran to castigate it for its double standards.

"When Trump used Twitter to threaten attacks against 52 Iranian cultural sites, in Twitter's view there was no danger posed against anyone. But they just got the meaning of violence with the attack on Congress. Of course, violence against the people of the Middle East [West Asia] is completely legitimate and a tool of democracy," a Twitter user called Maryam Zmohazabiyeh said in a tweet.

In addition to violence, Twitter's decision to expel Trump has a political dimension, something that has long been obvious for Iran. It referred to concerns over an "orderly transition" as a reason for suspending Trump's account.

"President Trump's statement that he will not be attending the Inauguration is being received by a number of his supporters as further confirmation that the election was not legitimate and is seen as him disavowing his previous claim made via two Tweets by his Deputy Chief of Staff, Dan Scavino, that there would be an 'orderly transition' on January 20," Twitter said, adding, "The mention of his supporters having a 'GIANT VOICE long into the future' and that 'They will not be disrespected or treated unfairly in any way, shape or form!!' is being interpreted as further indication that President Trump does not plan to facilitate an 'orderly transition' and instead that he plans to continue to support, empower, and shield those who believe he won the election."

This is all while Twitter moved to undermine the transition of power during Iran's 2009 presidential election when it delayed maintenance operation at the behest of the U.S. State Department to foment unrest in Iran and help spread rumors about the outcome of that year's election. Writing on the company's blog on June 15, 2009, Biz Stone of Twitter said that the company will delay "a critical network upgrade" because of the "role Twitter is currently playing as an important communication tool in Iran." A day later, the Obama administration admitted that it asked Twitter to stay open to help unrest in Iran.

## Senior South Korean diplomat travels to Iran amid tensions over ship seizure

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — South Korea's First Vice Foreign Minister Choi Jong-kun left Seoul for Tehran early on Sunday to hold talks with Iranian officials over a range of issues including Iran's seizure of a South Korean ship in the Strait of Hormuz.

The South Korean diplomat is expected to meet his counterpart and other high-level officials at the Iranian Foreign Ministry. He will join a South Korean delegation currently visiting Tehran. The delegation, hosted by the country's ambassador to Iran, is part of the entourage accompanying the East Asian country's deputy foreign minister, according to Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh.

Tehran and Seoul are locked in a bitter dispute over Iran's blocked assets in South Korea, with the seizure of the South Korean being the latest in a series of disagreements between the two Asian countries. Some 7 billion dollars of Iranian oil revenues have been frozen in two South Korean banks since September 2019, when Washington's sanctions waiver for South Korea's imports of Iranian oil expired.

On January 4, the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) impounded the MT Hankuk Chemi carrying 20 crew members, including five South Koreans, for polluting the environment.

Khatibzadeh said the Korean vessel's seizure was "a totally technical issue."

"Based on initial reports coming from local authorities, the issue is completely technical, and the vessel was led ashore upon a judicial order because the vessel had been polluting the sea," the spokesman said in a statement following the seizure of the ship.

"Like other countries, the Islamic Republic of Iran is sensitive about such offenses, especially polluting the



marine environment; so, it deals with such offenses in accordance with the law," he continued. "This was not an exceptional incident, and similar incidents had earlier occurred in Iran and in other countries' waters, and it is something usual, and further information will be announced accordingly."

The ship is currently in dock at the southern Iranian port of Bandar Abbas. And the South Korean embassy in Tehran confirmed the safety and health of all 20 sailors Wednesday.

"I'm a little relieved to know that the crew is safe, but the situation is serious," Choi told reporters at Incheon International Airport, west of Seoul, according to the South Korean Yonhap News Agency.

While Iran says that the ship was impounded for environmental issues, South Korea implied that the ship was seized in an effort to put pressure on Seoul to release Iran's frozen money.

Citing a diplomatic source in South Korea, Yonhap claimed that Iran made a request to South Korea for the use of the frozen money to purchase medicine, medical equipment and COVID-19 vaccines from the COVAX

Facility, a global vaccine procurement mechanism.

"It will be a good opportunity to clearly hear once again what the Iranian government wants and to distinguish what (we) can do and cannot do regarding the issue, as well as what needs to be consulted on with the U.S.," Choi noted.

On the other hand, Iran has urged Seoul to behave logically in dealing with Tehran's seizure of the vessel due to technical issues rather than politicizing it.

"The South Korean government's behavior in this regard is not understandable and is rejected," Khatibzadeh said. "We urge the Korean government to deal with this technical issue logically and responsibly."

Khatibzadeh once again reiterated that the problem with the South Korean ship is a completely technical one, adding that Iran is very sensitive about protecting its marine environment and deals with any violations in accordance with the law.

"As the authority in charge of such issues, the [Iranian] Ports and Maritime Organization is professionally trying to offer the necessary assistance to the ship and its crew, and will inform the public about it accordingly," the spokesman pointed out.

According to Khatibzadeh, Iran and South Korea are in close contact to resolve outstanding issues. He said during the visit of the South Korean delegation, the two sides will hold negotiations on how to give Iran access to its financial resources in Korea. On the other side, South Korea said that Choi will negotiate an early release of the South Korean oil tanker and its crew seized by Iranian authorities last week.

"We hope to hold in-depth talks with key officials whether it is a consular issue or other major issues between South Korea and Iran," the South Korean diplomat said.

## Senior Iraqi MP: Iran was the only country that backed Iraq in anti-Daesh fight

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Hadi al-Amiri, the head of Fatah Alliance in the Iraqi parliament, has praised the role Iran played in support of Iraq during the country's fight against the Daesh terrorist group.

Speaking at a ceremony held in the holy city of Najaf on Saturday to mark the first anniversary of the U.S. assassination of General Qassem Soleimani and his Iraqi trenchmate Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, al-Amiri said Iran was the only country that supported Iraq in the difficult times of anti-Daesh fight.

"During the difficult situation in Iraq, it was only the Islamic Republic of Iran that stood by us and supported our nation in the fight against the Daesh terrorist group," the Iraqi politician was quoted as saying on Saturday by Press TV. "We thank Martyr Qassem Soleimani for his role in supporting the Iraqi nation in difficulties and hardships."

General Soleimani and al-Muhandis were assassinated in an American drone strike on January 3, 2020, along with their entourage, near Baghdad's international airport. The

strike was ordered by U.S. President Donald Trump, a reckless move that brought Iran and the United States close to an all-out war as General Soleimani was an influential figure in Iran and beyond. In response, Iran showered a U.S. airbase in western Iran with missiles, causing brain injury among dozens of American servicemen.

General Soleimani earned praise from all Iraqis for his role in helping them thwart Daesh's march toward Baghdad in 2014, when the terrorist group unleashed its campaign of terror in Iraq and occupied large swathes of the country's western territories. At that time, the Iraqi government asked Iran for help and within a very short period, Iran provided the Iraqis whatever they needed to repel Daesh attacks. Iraqi leaders have said in various occasions that Baghdad would have been occupied by Daesh if Iran had not rushed to help them.

Former Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, that during whose tenure Daesh occupied large territories of Iraq, has praised Iran for opening its arms depots to the Iraqis during



the war against Daesh.

"Daesh has come [to Iraq] because they [Americans] stopped all types of military support to Iraq and undercut the foundation of the Iraqi army," the former prime minister said in June last year.

"Washington told the Iraqi delegation as long as al-Maliki is in power, they will not give weapons to Baghdad to fight Daesh. This is all while Iran and Russia have opened their arms depots to Baghdad in support of the Iraqi army and the Popular Mobilization Forces," al-Maliki stated.

Al-Amiri also pointed to the role of the fatwa (religious decree) issued by the prom-

inent Iraqi cleric Grand Ayatollah Seyed Ali al-Sistani.

"The Daesh sedition had international backing, but the fatwa issued by the Iraqi religious authority thwarted and defeated it," the Iraqi politician pointed out.

Al-Amiri also called for U.S. withdrawal from Iraq, saying that Iraq would be stable only if the U.S. pulls out its troops.

"Our first demand is the pullout of American troops and the handover of Iraq's affairs to the Iraqis because they are able to provide security and build their country by themselves," he noted.

Following the assassination of General Soleimani and al-Muhandis, the Iraqi Parliament passed a law requiring the country's government to pursue the issue of the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq. The U.S. has thousands of troops stationed in Iraq under the pretext of fighting terrorism. Iraqi politicians and people have long been calling on the U.S. to withdraw its forces but the U.S. keeps insisting on its military presence in Iraq.

## SPORTS

### Sanat Naft beat Nassaji to move top of IPL

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Sanat Naft football team earned d e s k an important away win against Nassaji and moved to top of the Iran Professional League (IPL) on Sunday.

The Yellows edged past Nassaji 1-0 thanks to a Taleb Reykani's long-range strike in the 36th minute. Nassaji could have equalized the match in the second half but Hamed Shiri missed a penalty.

In Isfahan, Sepahan battled back from a goal down to draw 1-1 with Foolad.

Ayanda Patosi was on target for the visiting team in the 8th minute and Mohammadreza Hosseini leveled the score in the 34th minute.



Aluminum earned a late 2-2 draw against Zob Ahan in Arak. Hamed Pakdel put the hosts into the lead in the 27th minute but two second half's goals from Darko Bjedov and Abdollah Hosseini put Zob Ahan on the verge of winning the first win in the current season.

Pakdel equalized the match at the dying moments of the match. In Rafsanjan, Faraz Emamali scored a winning goal for Mes against struggling Machine Sazi.

On Monday, Esteghlal will play Persepolis in Tehran derby. Sanat Naft sit top of the table with 21 points. Esteghlal are second with 18 points and two games in hands.

### Tehran derby referees confirmed

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Reza Kermanshahi will be the d e s k man in charge of Tehran derby between Esteghlal and Persepolis.

The match has been scheduled for Monday in Tehran's Azadi Stadium. The 42-year-old coach will be assisted by Arman Assadi and Touraj Eyvaz Mohammadi, with Hassan Yousefi named as the fourth official.

The match will be 94 competitive meetings between the teams. Esteghlal have won 26, Persepolis 24 and the remaining 43 games finished as draws.

Esteghlal sit top of Iran Professional League (IPL) and a win against their archrivals will help the Blues cement their places at top.

IPL holders Persepolis have not won a single match after losing to Ulsan Hyundai on Dec. 19 in the final match of the 2020 AFC Champions League.

### Respecting rivals more important than winning: Golmohammadi

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Persepolis football team head d e s k coach Yahya Golmohammadi says that to respect the opponents is more important than winning the match.

Titleholders Persepolis are scheduled to meet Iran Professional League favorites Esteghlal on Monday in Tehran's Azadi Stadium. Persepolis have not won a single match after losing to Ulsan Hyundai on Dec. 19 in the final match of the 2020 AFC Champions League.

"To win the match is important but we are not allowed to defeat our opponents at any cost. We have to respect our rivals and the players must concentrate on the match. They have to fight for three points as a soldier," Golmohammadi said.

"Persepolis and Esteghlal are the great teams with millions of the fans and so many people have memories of their teams' encounters. I have told my players the first important thing is to respect the opponent and they are not allowed to use social media to ridicule the other teams. It's worthless and cannot change anything," the ex-Iran defender added.

Persepolis have been held against Nassaji, Zob Ahan and Sepahan in their past three matches in the league. Golmohammadi says they want to start winning from Esteghlal match.

"We have to prove that Persepolis are a great club. We want to start our winning way from Esteghlal match. We could have won our previous match but our players missed their chances. Now, we have learned from the matches and the derby could be turning point for us," Golmohammadi stated.

"Persepolis want to win the title for the fifth successive time and important thing is to claim three points in the remaining matches. In the match against Esteghlal, our players have to capitalize on their opportunities and that's what we need to do in this match," he concluded.

### Esteghlal ready to beat Persepolis: Mahmoud Fekri

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Esteghlal football team head coach d e s k Mahmoud Fekri says that they are well-prepared to beat Persepolis at the Tehran derby.

Iran Professional League favorites Esteghlal are to meet holders Persepolis on Monday in Tehran's Azadi Stadium.

"We will be prepared to battle with a desire to win because we know how important that game is going to be for both teams," Fekri said.

"We know that so many people around the world will follow the match and we have to avoid being involved in the controversy. This is a sport competition and both teams will have to consider sportsmanship," he added.

Esteghlal are going to end their eight-year's title drought. The win in the match will send them to top of the IPL table.

"We don't want to lose the match but will not play not to lose. We will do our best and play calmly to defeat Persepolis. Persepolis play an attacking football and we have to control the match at the first minutes of the game," Fekri went on to say.

"Esteghlal will play logically on Monday and I hope we will be happy at the end of the day. We want to make our fans happy," Fekri concluded.



## IRAN PLAST expo to be held in early February

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — The 14th International Exhibition of Plastic, Rubber, Machinery, and Equipment of Iran (IRAN PLAST) is going to be held at the Tehran Permanent International Fairground during February 7-10, Shana reported.

As reported, since the pandemic condition has been once again controlled and its second wave is almost contained, the National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control and the Health Ministry have approved the holding of the IRAN PLAST exhibition in accordance with health and safety protocols.



IRAN PLAST is a platform to make connections between the petrochemical industry and enterprises, while flourishing downstream industries, according to the National Petrochemical Company (NPC) Managing Director Behzad Mohammadi.

The strong presence of knowledge-based companies and startups in this event is one of its prominent features which has been achieved as the result of the high attention and support by the Oil Ministry to these companies over the past few years.

Due to the special conditions caused by the pandemic, in almost all exhibitions held this year only managers, businessmen, scholars, and experts have been allowed to participate and visit.

Iranian manufacturers exported 590,000 tons of plastic products worth over \$1.4 billion, mostly to the neighboring countries, during the past Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2018-March 20, 2019).

According to the Deputy Industry, Mining and Trade Minister for Industry Affairs Mehdi Sadeqi Niaraki, the private sector should increase investment in the plastic industry and the government needs to promote the use of innovative ways and modern technologies for producing new products with higher quality.

Such exhibitions can be a good platform for introducing new technologies in this industry and to promote the production of consumption of high-quality products.

According to Niaraki, currently, more than \$50 million tons of petrochemical products are produced annually inside the country, a big chunk of which (about \$12 billion) is being exported in the form of basic raw products.

If these raw materials are converted into products with higher value-added in the downstream sector, the value of exports from the country's petrochemical industry would be multiplied.

## Nearly 441,000 tons of commodities traded at IME in a week

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — During the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday), 440,986 tons of products valued at over \$230 million were traded at Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME).

As reported by the IME's International Affairs and Public Relations Department, the exchange sold on its mineral and industrial trading floor 107,895 tons of commodities valued at more than \$71 million, including 100,670 tons of steel, 840 tons of copper, 5,700 tons of aluminum, 120 tons of molybdenum concentrate, 15 tons of precious metals concentrate, 800 tons of coke and 3 kg of gold bars.



Moreover, on both domestic and export rings of the IME's oil and petrochemical trading floor, customers purchased 330,381 tons of commodities with a total trading value of more than \$131 million.

Commodities sold on this floor included 64,760 tons of vacuum bottom, 118,909 tons of bitumen, 57,672 tons of polymeric products, 33,282 tons of chemicals, 16,000 tons of lube cut, 2,574 tons of base oil, 50 tons of argon and 38,500 tons of sulfur.

It's worth noting that the IME also traded 2,710 tons of commodities on its side market.

As previously reported, over 2.77 million tons of products worth \$1.32 billion were traded at the IME during the ninth Iranian calendar month Azar (November 21-December 20, 2020), indicating 57 percent growth in terms of value compared to its preceding month.

IME is one of the four major stock markets of Iran, the other three markets are Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market known also as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), and Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX).

In late April, 2020, IME Managing Director Hamed Soltani-Nejad unveiled the market's new outlook plan, which depicts IME's development roadmap until the Iranian calendar year of 1404 (March 20205-March 2026). Materializing the slogan of this Iranian year, which is "Surge in Production" is seriously considered in the mentioned plan and it is, in fact, the strategic approach of the outlook plan.

# Majlis decides to unify forex rates; is it a good thing?

**1 →** The decline in the value of the rial has created some problems for the country's private sector which accounts for the lion's share of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the country. The private sector is directly or indirectly dependent on international trade by being engaged in the export-import supply chain or being consumers of imported goods or both, so the fluctuations of the exchange rate would severely affect their performance and interfere with the country's normal economic cycle.

Seeking to compensate for these inevitable drops, and to support the country's private sector, the government has established a complex economic system operating on multiple exchange rates.

Currently, Iranian businesses have to navigate three different exchange rates for their daily international affairs: the official rate, the NIMA rate controlled by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI), and the market rate.

The official rate is the subsidized rate set by the government, the market rate is in fact the one controlled by the market's supply and demand, and the NIMA rate is defined in accordance to the market for providing hard currency at an acceptable rate to the importers and exporters of essential goods.

So basically, Iranian companies that import basic goods like medicines, grains and etc. are entitled to use the subsidized official exchange rate (42,000 rials per dollar), the importers of essential products like machin-



ery, and raw materials can use the NIMA exchange rate which is slightly less than the floating market rate, and finally, other importers will operate on the market rate.

Exporters, on the other hand, are obliged to declare and inject a portion of their export revenues into the NIMA system. This varies from 60 percent to up to 90 percent of their hard currency, depending on the size of their earnings and the commodities they export.

### The Majlis decision

Getting back to our primary question, we

asked Mohammad Jafari about his point of view on the parliament's budget committee decision regarding the removal of 42,000 rials per dollar exchange rate for essential goods: According to Mohammadi the IC-CIMA had previously voiced its opposition toward the multiple exchange rate strategy and considered it a bad decision.

"Setting multiple exchange rates will only create more turbulence in the domestic market and faces the economy with new challenges," he stressed.

## Kabul to host exclusive exhibition of Iranian products next month

**1 →** "Necessary coordination has been made with the Ministry of Commerce of Afghanistan and primary talks will be held on January 13 in the form of a video conference between the officials of the two sides to finalize and operationalize this agreement as soon as possible."

He mentioned previous tariff agreements between the two countries and said: "Previously, in 2015, the tariffs for the imports of five commodity items from Afghanistan including the imports of sesame were reduced; the tariffs on sesame imports were reduced from 10 percent to five percent."

According to the official, balancing international trade, especially with Afghanistan is one of the major strategies of Iran in foreign trade, and TPO's goal is to establish a balanced trade between the two countries.

Special strategies have been adopted by the Trade Promotion Organization for balancing trade with Afghanistan and for resolving problems in this field, he said, adding that the issues and demands of Afghan businessmen will also be reviewed in a special working group in this organization to take the necessary measures and resolve their issues.

Having shared historical, cultural, political, and economic backgrounds, Iran and Afghanistan have been allies for many years and the strategic cooperation between the two countries has been broadened especially over the past two decades.

The value of Iran's exports to Afghanistan is anticipated to reach \$3 billion in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20), according to Hossein Salimi, the chairman of Iran-Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce.



## Apple export rises 60% in 9 months on year

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Iran has exported 403,000 tons of apple worth \$764 million during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-December 20, 2020), which was 60 percent more than the export in the same period of time in the past year in terms of value.

The nine-month export of the product also shows a 34-percent rise in terms of weight, according to an official with the Agriculture Ministry.

The annual production of apple in Iran is predicted to rise three percent to 4.12 million tons in the current Iranian calendar



year (ended on March 20, 2021), according to an official with the Agriculture Ministry.

Darab Hasani, the director-general of the ministry's office of cold and dry regions

fruits, said that the annual export of apples is estimated to hit 1.3 million tons in this year, which is three percent more than the figure of the previous year, which was 740,000 tons.

The export of apple has had a proper status in recent years.

As previously announced by the head of the Central Organization for Rural Cooperatives of Iran, apples have been exported to Russia and Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU)'s member countries in the past year.

Ali Tahmasbi said that 50 percent of the exported apples were produced in the northwestern West Azarbaijan province.

## Over \$12b of facilities to be paid to idle production units

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Industry, mining and trade minister said that 520 trillion rials (about \$12.38 billion) will be paid to the idle production units.

Alireza Razm Hosseini said according to the government's decree, 520 trillion rials of facilities will be paid to inactive and stagnant production units, which will significantly contribute to surge in production in the current economic conditions.

Last week, the deputy interior minister for economic coordination announced that 1,200 idle industrial units have been revived throughout the country in the current Iranian calendar year, which started on March 20, 2020.

Babak Dinparast said that there are over 46,500 industrial units in Iran's industrial parks and zones, of them 37,000 units (over 80 percent) are active.

He also said that 743,000 persons are working in these units, and if the 9,200 idle units will return to the production cycle, jobs will be created for 192,000 persons.

Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry was initially planning to revive 1,500 idle units in the current year, but then it revised its programs to revive 2,000 units.



Iran's industrial parks play a significant role in making the country independent through boosting production, which is a major strategy of Iran to combat the U.S. sanctions.

In fact, strengthening domestic production to achieve self-reliance is the most important program that Iran is following up in its industry sector in a bid to nullify the

effects of the U.S. sanctions on its economy.

In this due, the current Iranian calendar year has been named the year of "Surge in Production", and all governmental bodies, as well as the private sector, are moving in line with the materialization of this motto.

Regarding its significant role in the realization of the mentioned goal, the Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry has already defined its main programs for supporting domestic production in the current year.

The ministry's seven main axes of the surge in production are being pursued under 40 major programs.

In this regard, the development of industrial parks and supporting the units located in these areas is one of the major programs underway by the ministry.

According to Asghar Mosaheb, the acting head of Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO), preventing the inactive status of the industrial units is a major plan of ISIPO, while lack of liquidity, problems in terms of supplying raw materials and machinery, and absence of market are the main reasons making the units inactive.



As a result, all people who want to use their phones for more than one month in the Islamic Republic will need to register their phones as a way to pay the customs fees.

## Cellphone imports up 27%

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Iran's imports of mobile phones registered a 27 percent growth in the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-December 20, 2020) as compared to the last year's corresponding period.

Some 8,617,438 cellphones worth over \$1.34 billion were imported into the country in the mentioned period, placing the commodity at second among the top imported items, according to the Spokesman of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) Ruhollah Latifi.

The official noted that 6,779,012 mobile phones were cleared from the country's customs during the previous year's same nine months.

The value of the imported products in the said nine months also increased by 65 percent compared to the previous year, Latifi said.

Mobile phones were the second most valuable commodity items imported into the country in the period under review.

According to IRICA data, the value of Iran's non-oil trade in the first nine months of the current calendar year stood at \$52

billion. The total value of the imports into the country during the said time span was \$26.8 billion, while the value of exports amounted to \$25.1 billion.

The country's top five sources of imports during this period were China with \$7 billion, the UAE with \$6.3 billion, Turkey with \$3 billion, India with \$1.6 billion, and Germany with \$1.6 billion worth of imports.

With the implementation of Iran's National Mobile Registry Plan back in October 2017, people must register all new mobile phones to be eligible for use in the country. This law is to fight smuggling phones to Iran.



# Capitol debacle shows U.S. lacks democratic culture: Turkish academic

**1 →** In this way, not only many people lost their jobs in the U.S., but also the state apparatus found itself in a very weak position against the international capital. The state has to carry the burden of a bad economic situation. Because political authority is held responsible for the economy.

Furthermore, the state lost its tax revenues because factories operate outside of the U.S. since it is more profitable. That crucial shift in the state-capital relations generated a significant crisis. Donald. J. Trump, simply read it very well and promoted himself as the solution to this crisis. He was not a lunatic. His presidency was no accident. Although the media prefers to see him as an irrational crazy man, he is a very successful politician. Nobody can be a U.S. president accidentally. He promised to bring factories back to the U.S. soil and tax them so that many people can find jobs and the U.S. state can take its power back. These protestors who stormed the capitol building are the ones who had been badly affected by this economic crisis. Trump was very successful in turning their hatred against the establishment of his own political force.

**Is the U.S. entitled to say which country is democratic or not? How do you measure the American administration's policies in West Asia?**

In order to judge countries in terms of democracy or human rights, you have to be a good example of it in the first place. However, these events clearly and undisputedly showed that the U.S. has no democratic culture or strong institutions to present itself as an example of a democratic country. This is not breaking news. The U.S. has never been a shining example of a country that internalized democratic or humanitarian values. Once late Marlon



Brando said in a TV interview, "We were the most rapacious, aggressive, destructive, torturing, monstrous, people who swept from one coast to the other murdering and causing mayhem among the Indians. That isn't revealed, because we don't like that image of ourselves."

Their presidential elections did not meet democratic standards. One of the first qualifications of a democracy is that power should be transferred peacefully through elections. In the U.S., it did not happen. The U.S. has no word to utter in that sense.

**Do you think Biden's victory may lead to a fundamental change in U.S. foreign policy?**

I think we will witness an era more or less the same as Obama's. Because most of Biden's foreign policy crew worked under Obama and contributed his foreign policy agenda. I don't expect any radical departure from Obama's policies. Biden himself is

recurrently emphasizing that he is sharing Obama's perspective on many issues.

**It is notable that the U.S. media and its social media platforms support and greatly cover violent and peaceful protests all around the world. However, when it comes to U.S. security these platforms and American institutes impose restrictions. Isn't that a kind of double-standard?**

It is not surprising at all. There is no media freedom in the U.S. Many Journalists arrested in these last protests. They were arrested and beaten by the police before during George Floyd's protests. And we can count many examples of it. The fact that nobody should count on the U.S. when it speaks about freedom and justice. It has no credibility and authority to speak, assess, and judge for freedom. We have to talk about another aspect of the issue; Censorship. Apparently, the media is a strong po-

litical force in the U.S. Despite the media presents itself as neutral, independent, and objective, it is simply not true. When Trump says "fake news", he is displaying his discontent with the media acting as a political actor. Therefore, it is a battle between political forces. Because the U.S. media is controlled by various powerful actors and they use their newspapers, TV's and journalists to achieve their political goals. They even banned the U.S. president from using his Twitter account. They censored him numerous times. Media freedom and objectivity is a funny joke in the U.S.

**How do you see U.S.-Turkey relations under a Biden administration?**

Well, there has been tension if not a crisis between Turkey and the U.S. for the last 5-6 years. The U.S. is harboring terrorist Fetullah Gulen who was behind the failed coup attempt of July 15, 2016. The U.S. is also supporting PKK/YPG terrorists in Syria. These problems should be solved. It is up to Biden and his team to alleviate tension between Turkey and the U.S.

If they continue to support terrorists in the region, there will be no improvement in relations between Ankara and Washington. Turkey showed its strength in fighting terrorists and securing its borders. Turkey cleaned its borders from DAESH and YPG groups. Turkey also showed how it is capable of solving a regional crisis with its neighbors like Iran and Qatar. Turkey, Iran, and Russia are conducting a very fruitful platform called Astana and it has been very functional in stopping the war in Syria. Now, it is time to run a political solution process in Syria. The U.S. can be part of the solution. Washington can make the right decisions and Turkey is always willing to develop friendly and constructive relations with the U.S.

## The American riots: A vertical trench in process

**1 →** In reverse, the same American media is pushing towards demonizing their incumbent president and its supporters because they attacked the Capitol, the temple of the American democracy. And now they are pushing towards the impeachment of their president for instigating it.

The impeachment of Trump looks as humiliating as the impeachment of president Gaddafi in the same media, with the exception that in the U.S. the riots on the Capitol were a real version of what was going on, whereas the scenes that were transmitted by Al-Jazeera and many others were costume made.

The American media is now promoting more than 200 bills waiting to be examined by Congress. All of them were set to criminate Trump and isolate him. Trump was always identified as silly, shallow, and arrogant, even though the American media role is best described as an attempt to bully the man and his partisans. Whether we like the man or not, Trump was supported by around 75 million Americans in the elections, who believed that it was about time to make America great again.

After all, he is just another American president that led the American policy to the best interest of the American lobbies that enabled him to reach his position. Electing Trump in 2016 was the beginning of the end to the American system and democracy as we know it. Accordingly, the attack on the Capitol is a sign that the temple is about to fall down!

American democracy is proved to be a masquerade beyond doubt. Our region has been suffering from it, as well as different countries in the world, especially Latin America. The Americans worked excessively on toppling down elected governments that did not match their policies.

In addition, it seems that the situation is going to be escalated in the coming days. Even though Trump is no longer able to tweet on social media, his partisans are tweeting for another rally during Biden's inauguration ceremony as the U.S. president. Besides, the U.S. media

are promoting the impeachment of the president.

There is a miscomprehension of the danger of the impeachment on the American society, which is now vertically divided. After the impeachment, the vertical crack will become deeper and weaken America furthermore. For this reason, the Wall Street Journal has accused Nancy Pelosi, the speaker of the House of Representatives, of planning a coup against the president by demanding the chief of staff to refuse to execute Trump's orders. The journal was wondering "what if the U.S. was under nuclear attack?"

In addition, the radical right wing groups are calling for more escalation and plan to attend the demonstrations with their guns. What would this lead to? Actually, to one of two following results: the first one would be intimidating other national groups whether they were the middle or the left wings. Secondly, clashing with the authorities, if they try to stop them or arrest them for disturbing the peace.

In either way, this would mean that the U.S. is on the verge of civil war.

Over the last ten years, there have been several calls for separation from different American states. They have even gone to federal courts, but they have failed. Hence the intent to divide America is present in the Americans' minds. This cry for division shows how much incohesive the American social tissue is, even before Trump. Add to that that racism is rising within American society but in reverse.

Nowadays, there is a rising sense of unfairness among the White Anglo Saxon Protestants [WASPs], who initially immigrated to America believing that it was the Promised Land, which was once again occupied by the inferior subjects that the WASPs had imported in the first place as their servants and slaves. It seems that the inferior subjects proved to be smart and hard-working and reached the highest positions leaving God's chosen people behind.

Therefore, the slogans made during Trump's cam-



paigns that "Let us make America great again", or in his declaration that he will go national instead of international, were most appealing to Trump's partisans, amongst them the WASPs that constitute the majority. However, the slogans went against the deep state's goals, especially the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and transnational corporations, and many others. The latter was highly affected by the economic sanctions applied by Trump.

It is clear that Trump's slogans and behavior were an embarrassment for his vice president Mike Pence and the Republican Party. However, they betrayed him. Many of Trump's partisans, who elected them to the House of Representatives, feel that they were betrayed as well. Accordingly, the Republicans will need to work harder than ever to gain the trust of their voters again. Therefore, the announcement by Donald Trump junior that now they need to reconstruct the Republican Party again, is a serious message to be considered, since the impeachment of Trump will not go without consequences in the American streets. And his partisans are unlikely to slow down.

## U.S. military budget is three times more than announced

By Stephen Lendman

Trump's veto of the U.S. fiscal year 2021, good to remember it's no longer 2020, 2021 that ends on September 30 this year. That's the way the fiscal year runs. It was a meaningless gesture. It had no meaning at all.

He wasted his time doing it and why he did it I really don't know. What was explained by the establishment media is just gibberish, rubbish, meaningless stuff, doesn't mean a thing, and what politicians in Congress say that's meaningless as well. Well, he did it for whatever reasons he had in mind. I mean if you have no reasons, he and other politicians invent them, and they do that all the time.

But the \$740 billion NDAA isn't the whole story by any means. The U.S. spends more on militarism, belligerence, so-called Homeland Security, and everything connected to it, including black budgets that can amount to maybe hundreds of billions of dollars. They're black, I don't know how much is in them, but I mean it's literally an open book - open checkbook, for whatever the U.S. forces want. Whatever they want they get. It is printed up. The Fed prints



it up, trillions of dollars.

Since around the mid-1990s, something like over \$21 trillion supposedly for national defense went down a black hole of waste, fraud, and abuse. It went for so-called defense. That's all about offense, militarism, and belligerence. \$21 trillion unaccounted for? \$740 billion is a pocket change compared to that. This is the way the U.S. operates.

Money is printed up in any amounts that corporate America wants, mainly the military-industrial security complex, Wall Street, Big Pharma, these interests. They get whatever they want.

One more thing, that 740 billion for the

current fiscal year is maybe a third of what officially will be spent, which probably exceeds \$2 trillion in the current fiscal year. But you only hear about 740 billion, about one-third of it.

The U.S. spends as much or more on militarism, belligerence, and all the rest, than the rest of the world combined at a time when its only enemies are invented. Why are they invented? Because there are no real ones. So, to justify what's unjustifiable. They invent the enemies for all of the stuff they do against them.

You know war, hot wars, wars by other means. It is done to Iran since 1979. It never attacked its territory, except by cyberwar assassinations and related dirty tricks, but never attacked the Iranian territory, never attacked the territory of Venezuela, Cuba, and other countries on its target list for regime change, not Russia since the 1917 revolution.

There was an attack on Russian territory back then when the Bolsheviks were around. U.S. Marines invaded Russia. Few people realized that. That's in U.S. history. You probably could read it in the history books, in the U.S. history books.

It never attacked the Chinese mainland

I'm aware of. There was conflict around Taiwan. China was an ally during World War Two. So why would you attack them? But the military spending and everything else the U.S. does is for nefarious interests at the expense of world peace, stability, the rule of law, and governance of by and for everybody equitably.

These are no democracy, the way it should be. These are notions the U.S. opposes and doesn't tolerate anywhere, not at home or abroad. When a country like Venezuela, which has a model of democracy and wants to be left alone not bothering anybody. The U.S. going all out to topple the government to reinstall a fascist tyranny, that existed before the Bolivarian Revolution took hold and Hugo Chavez was elected in December 1998.

Anyway, that's what the budget is all about. It's a rubber stamp. It's automatic. The President vetoes it, which is almost unheard of. It's routine to override it and get into an accidental law, which I guess it is right now because at the House overrode the veto the Senate has now overridden the veto. So, it is U.S. law, and it will be enforced as far ahead as anyone could imagine.

(Source: Press TV)

## Iraq, Lebanon's Hezbollah, Yemen's Ansarullah censure U.S. sanctions on PMU chairman

Iraq's Foreign Ministry has slammed as "unacceptable" Washington's sanctions on Chairman of the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) Falih al-Fayyadh, a day after the U.S. took the hostile measure against the popular anti-terror forces.

On Friday, the U.S. Treasury Department sanctioned 64-year-old Fayyadh, accusing him of serious human rights abuses during anti-government demonstrations in the Arab country in late 2019.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin claimed in a statement that Fayyadh was involved in waging a "violent campaign against Iraqi democracy and civil society," and said that the U.S. would "continue to hold accountable human rights abusers in Iraq."

The Iraqi Foreign Ministry expressed surprise in response to the move, describing it as an "unexpected and unacceptable" decision, IRNA reported on Saturday, citing Iraqi media.

The ministry said it will carefully pursue all decisions made by the Treasury against Iraqi figures during both the current and the incoming U.S. administrations and will attempt to address their ramifications.

Fighters of the PMU, better known in Iraq as Hashd al-Sha'abi, have helped the Iraqi Army regain control of Daesh-held territories, which were captured by the terrorist group ever since it launched an offensive in the country in June 2014.

The Iraqi Army finally managed to regain control of all the lost territories in 2017, thanks to the PMU fighters and Iran's military advisory assistance.

The PMU has been recognized by Iraq's Parliament as an official force with similar rights as those of the regular army, including the right to receive salaries and pensions.

## Pakistani authorities work to restore power after blackout

Authorities have restored electricity supply to parts of several main Pakistani cities and work on power restoration is continuing on Sunday after a major fault at a thermal power plant caused a countrywide blackout, plunging millions into darkness.

According to al Jazeera, power across the South Asian country of 220 million people was abruptly cut late on Saturday because of a fault at the Guddu thermal power plant, sending the entire country into darkness, Energy Minister Omar Ayub Khan said.

## Israelis restart Netanyahu protests amid third virus lockdown

Thousands of people demonstrated against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu calling on the long-serving leader to resign over corruption charges against him and his alleged mishandling of the coronavirus crisis.

Protesters early on Sunday held signs reading "Go," and "Bibi, let my people go", referring to Netanyahu by his nickname.

According to al Jazeera, the protest in a Jerusalem square near Netanyahu's official residence came as Israel is in the middle of its third national lockdown, which was recently tightened to shutter schools, and as the country presses forward with a world-leading vaccination drive.

Netanyahu's trial was set to resume this week but was postponed indefinitely amid the tighter restrictions.

The 71-year-old leader has been indicted on charges of bribery, fraud and breach of trust connected to three long-running investigations. He has denied any wrongdoing and says he is the victim of a "witch hunt" by hostile media, law enforcement and judicial officials.

He has in recent months faced near-weekly protests calling on him to resign over the allegations and the government's handling of the coronavirus crisis.

## New coronavirus variant with similarities to UK & South Africa strains discovered in Japan

The Japanese Health Ministry said it has tracked down yet another variant of Covid-19 partly similar to the UK and South Africa strains, which are believed to be more contagious and linked to a spike in infections in Britain.

The mutant strain was found in four people who flew into Japan from Brazil. The passengers tested positive for Covid-19 in airport quarantine, the ministry said.

One of them was a man in his 40s, who showed no symptoms on arrival, but was later hospitalized with breathing difficulties. Another was a woman in her 30s who reported having a headache. A male, aged between 10 and 19, had fewer signs of the illness, while a female in the same age group was asymptomatic.

The new variant of the virus was detected by National Institute of Infectious Diseases (NIID), which thoroughly studied the passengers' samples.

According to RT, the NIID said that the mutant strain had similarities to the variants of the virus that were discovered in Britain and South Africa in recent weeks and quickly spread to other countries. However, it pointed out that it currently has no evidence to suggest that the variant found in Japan is highly contagious.

Experts have been studying the strain to determine whether it could cause more serious symptoms or be resistant to vaccines. Cases of Covid-19 have been on the rise in Japan since the start of the year, leading to the declaration of a month-long state of emergency in Tokyo on Thursday.

## Resistance News

## Israeli police allow settlers to defile Aqsa despite lockdown

**INTERNATIONAL DESK** TEHRAN — Despite the Israeli coronavirus lockdown on the holy city, a horde of Jewish settlers escorted by police forces on Sunday morning desecrated the Aqsa Mosque in Occupied Jerusalem.

According to the Islamic Awqaf Administration in the holy city, 14 settlers entered the Mosque through al-Maghariba Gate and provocatively toured its courtyards under police guard.

The settlers also performed Jewish prayers during their tours at the Islamic holy site.

Since the first day of the lockdown, the Israeli police have facilitated the entry of many settlers to the Aqsa Mosque.

At the pretext of preventing the spread of coronavirus, the Israeli police recently imposed a tight lockdown on the holy city and announced a number of movement restrictions on the Palestinian local residents, such as "traveling more than 1,000 meters from home, except in special circumstances, is forbidden."



## Exhibit of handwoven Persian carpets opens in China

**HERITAGE** **TEHRAN** — Iran on Saturday inaugurated an exhibition of hand-woven carpets in Shanghai to commemorate the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations with China.

The exhibition has jointly been arranged by Bordbar Cultural Foundation, Mahan Air, and Shanghai Art Museum, according to the consulate general of Iran in Shanghai, IRNA reported on Saturday.

Iranian Consul General in Shanghai Ramezan Parvaz was amongst attendees to the inauguration ceremony of the exhibit, which will be running for a month, the report said.



On the sidelines of the ceremony, Parvaz said other cultural and art ceremonies are scheduled to be held in Shanghai and its neighboring provinces on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Iran-China diplomatic relations.

Weaving rugs and carpets based on traditional patterns is widely practiced across many Iranian villages as home jobs or at small workshops with know-how passed down from generation to generation.

Persian carpets are sought after internationally for their delicate designs and high quality. Official figures show handmade carpets have a significant share in Iran's non-oil exports.

## Assessment of Ardebil completed as touristic city

**TOURISM** **TEHRAN** — Iran's Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts has completed a comprehensive assessment of Ardebil as a touristic city, the tourism minister announced on Sunday.

The evaluation was conducted under the country's comprehensive tourism plan, which is being developed under the auspices of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

Ardebil is the first Iranian city that is completely evaluated as a touristic city, the tourism minister Ali-Asgar Mounesan said.



"Ardabil was evaluated as the first tourist city in the country... and the evaluation document of this city will soon be awarded to its municipality, and the general directorate of the cultural heritage of this province in a ceremony."

Experts say this comprehensive plan will serve as a roadmap to guide tourists from all over the globe to achieve a sustainable and competitive tourism market.

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

Iran expects to reap a bonanza from its numerous tourist spots such as bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, mausoleums, churches, towers, and mansions, of which 24 being inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list. Under the 2025 Tourism Vision Plan, it aims to increase the number of tourist arrivals from 4.8 million in 2014 to 20 million in 2025. 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).

## 25 restoration projects launched across Sistan-Baluchestan

**HERITAGE** **TEHRAN** — A total of 25 restoration projects have been launched across Sistan-Baluchestan since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 2020).

"25 restoration projects have been launched to rehabilitate historical monuments in the cities of Zabol, Zahedan, Khash, and Qasr-e Qand from the beginning of the year up to the present," a provincial tourism official said on Sunday.



A budget of over 20 billion rials (some \$476,190 at the official exchange rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) have so far been allocated to the missions which have been carried out on mansions, historical houses, ruined castles to name a few, the official explained.

The vast province was long shunned by potential foreign and domestic travelers though it is home to several distinctive archaeological sites and natural attractions, including two UNESCO World Heritage sites, namely Shahr-e-Soukhteh (Burnt City) and Lut desert, parts of the latter is situated in Kerman province.

For mainstream Iranians, the name of Sistan-Baluchestan conjures up stories of drought, desiccated wetlands, and dust storms. On the international scale, foreigners may consider it a reminiscent of the big red blot on the Iran safety map.

# Lush Golestan province to extend support for agritourism

**TOURISM** **TEHRAN** — Iran's Golestan province will be extending support for bolstering agritourism across its vast lush green lands.

The provincial government in close collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture will provide low-interest loans to those who are want to establish tourism farms, the governor-general Hadi Haqshenas said on Saturday.

Haqshenas also referred to Tuskestan village as a "successful sample", adding: "Over the past couple of years, the development of a tourism farm in Tuskestan village, has introduced a new chapter of investment in agritourism across the province."

"In line with this successful experience, the province is ready to provide loans and tourism facilities to eligible applicants to establish the same tourism farms."

Nowadays, urban life has largely shifted to apartment living. Creating a mindset of working on farms and using its products will create a link between industrial life and nature, he explained.

The village includes sections for growing raspberries, strawberries, vegetables, and summer vegetables, as well as animal breeding



and agricultural education space.

Some experts believe that in addition to the customer services jobs, agritourism pays special attention to the production sector, saying "For this reason, agricultural tour-

ism is much more important and practical than other branches of tourism because it creates a new chain and diversity in the field of production and services."

Agritourism and nature-tourism enter-

## Replica of prehistorical 'alchemy' vessel built by Iranian potters

**HERITAGE** **TEHRAN** — A group of Iranian researchers and potters has reconstructed a replica of a prehistorical vessel, which is believed to be used for alchemy, a form of speculative hypothesis tried to transform base metals such as lead or copper into silver or gold and to discover a cure for disease and a way of extending life.

"A replica of a clay vessel belonging to the first millennium BC, which is said to be once an alchemy instrument, is made by the artists of a pottery workshop of the Research Institute of Cultural Heritage & Tourism," CHTN quoted Seyyed Abdolmajid Sharifzadeh, who presides over the traditional arts group of the institute, as saying on Saturday.

"The [original] earthen vessel, which was the subject of this research was unearthed in the village of Kaluraz, Rudbar county, Gilan province," Sharifzadeh said.

Such a vessel has also been discovered in Jiroft of Kerman province, he added. Jiroft is one of the richest historical areas in the world, with ruins and artifacts dating back to the third millennium BC. Many Iranian and foreign experts believe the findings in Jiroft as signs of a civilization as great as Sumer and ancient Mesopotamia.

"Unlike other types of pottery, which are made to hold liquids such as water and are filled from above, this pottery, which is shaped like a teapot, is filled from the bottom and its upper side is closed."

He also explained the pottery can be used for traditional distillation, and concentrate (separation of substances) in ancient chemistry.

"This pottery is also referred to as an alchemical vessel," Sharifzadeh said.

### A closer look at alchemy

Alchemy was the name given in Latin Europe in the 12th century to an aspect of thought that corresponds to astrology, which is an older tradition. Both represent attempts

to discover the relationship of man to the cosmos and to exploit that relationship to his benefit. The first of these objectives may be called scientific, the second technological. Astrology is concerned with man's relationship to "the stars" (including the members of the solar system); alchemy, with terrestrial nature.

But the distinction is far from absolute since both are interested in the influence of the stars on terrestrial events. Moreover, both have always been pursued in the belief that the processes human beings witness in heaven and on earth manifest the will of the Creator and, if correctly understood, will yield the key to the Creator's intentions, according to Britania.

Superficially, the chemistry involved in alchemy appears a hopelessly complicated succession of heatings of multiple mixtures of obscurely named materials, but it seems likely that a relative simplicity underlies this complexity.

The metals gold, silver, copper, lead, iron, and tin were all known before the rise of alchemy. Mercury, the liquid metal, certainly known before 300 BC, when it appears in both Eastern and Western sources, was crucial to alchemy.

Sulfur, "the stone that burns," was also crucial. It was known from prehistoric times in native deposits and was also given off in metallurgic processes (the "roasting" of sulfide ores). Mercury united with most of the other metals, and the amalgam formed colored powders (the sulfides) when treated with sulfur. Mercury itself occurs in nature in a red sulfide, cinnabar, which can also be made artificially. All of these, except possibly the last, were operations known to the metallurgist and were adopted by the alchemist.

The alchemist added the action on metals of several corrosive salts, mainly the vitriols (copper and iron sulfates), alums (the aluminum sulfates of potassium and ammonium), and the chlorides of sodium and ammonium. And he made



much of arsenic's property of coloring metals. All of these materials, except the chloride of ammonia, were known in ancient times.

Finally, the manipulation of these materials was to lead to the discovery of the mineral acids, the history of which began in Europe in the 13th century. The first was probably nitric acid, made by distilling together saltpetre (potassium nitrate) and vitriol or alum. More difficult to discover was sulfuric acid, which was distilled from vitriol or alum alone but required apparatus resistant to corrosion and heat. And most difficult was hydrochloric acid, distilled from common salt or sal ammoniac and vitriol or alum, for the vapors of this acid cannot be simply condensed but must be dissolved in water.

## Course examines standards to be enforced in traditional glass workshops

**HERITAGE** **TEHRAN** — Certain standards, which should be enforced in traditional glass workshops, were discussed in a training course held on Saturday for a host of glassmakers and related individuals in Tehran province.

It was the first course of its kind held for glass-blowing workshops in Varamin that produces some 70 percent of Iran's glassware and crystal.

Glass blowing is a glass-forming technique that humans have used to shape glass since the 1st century BC. The technique consists of inflating molten glass with a blowpipe to form a sort of glass bubble, that



can be molded into glassware for practical or artistic purposes.

Varamin, a hectic hub of glass production

with 100 active workshops, annually exports some two trillion rials (\$47.6 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) worth of glassware to the Persian Gulf littoral states and some European countries, according to Zhila Khodadadi, who presides over Varamin's cultural heritage and tourism office.

She also noted that \$5 million worth of handmade glassware and crystals were exported directly and indirectly from Varamin to other countries during the last Iranian calendar year 1398 (ended on March 19, 2020).

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.

## Oriental Institute and its Persian expeditions in 1930s

(part 1/2)

**HERITAGE** **TEHRAN** —During the winter of 1930-31, the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago organized a Persian Expedition to conduct excavations in the largely unexplored mountainous regions east and southeast of the Mesopotamian plain.

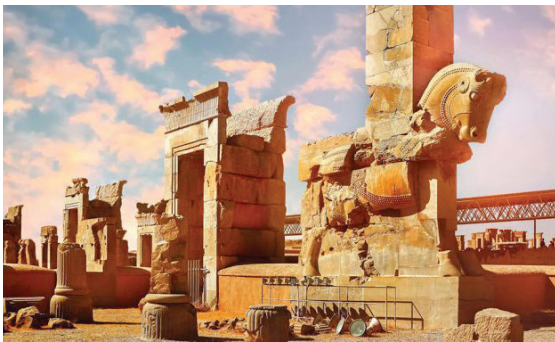
James Henry Breasted requested, and was granted, a concession to excavate the remains of Persepolis, an Achaemenid royal administrative center in the province of Fars, according to the Oriental Institute.

Thanks to an anonymous benefactress, work started the same year under the direction of Ernst Herzfeld, Professor of Oriental Archaeology at the University of Berlin. Herzfeld served as director of the Persian Expedition until the end of 1934, when he was succeeded by Erich Schmidt, who continued to excavate in the region until 1939.

Over an eight-year period, the Persian Expedition worked not only in the royal center of Persepolis, but also at a number of sites that fell within a radius of 10 km. - the two prehistoric mounds of Tall-e Bakun, an Achaemenid tower and tombs of the Achaemenid kings at Naqsh-e Rostam, and portions of the Sasanian/Islamic city of Istakhr. In addition, Erich Schmidt led two air-reconnaissance and ground expeditions into the mountains of Lurestan in 1935-36 and 1937.

### Persepolis

Persepolis was founded as a royal administrative center by the Achaemenid king Darius I between 520 and 510 BC



and was destroyed by the troops of Alexander the Great in 330 BC.

The Oriental Institute cleared and investigated most of the buildings that stand on the Achaemenid terrace, including the gatehouse of King Xerxes, the great audience hall (Apadana) with its monumental eastern stairway begun by Darius and finished by Xerxes; the treasury of the Persian kings; the residential areas; and fortifications including garrison quarters along the eastern edge of the terrace.

### Tall-e Bakun

The Oriental Institute excavated the two low mounds of Tall-e Bakun, southeast of Persepolis, in 1932 and 1937. Mound A was found to contain at least four levels of pre-

historic houses dating roughly to 4000 BC.

The main level was surprisingly well preserved, suggesting a sudden abandonment of the settlement. The walls of some of the houses were preserved to a height of 6-7 feet and bore the remains of geometric wall paintings in red and yellow. Resting on the floors, as though still in use, were knives and other household utensils, including cooking pots that still contained the bones of the meat that was being prepared in them. Much of the pottery found on Mound A bore elaborate painted designs of extraordinary beauty and sophistication.

Mound B was comprised of earlier remains (ca. 4600 BC) of a culture that used only unpainted wares.

### Naqsh-e Rostam

Over the course of several seasons, the Persian Expedition conducted archaeological excavations at Naqsh-e Rostam and recorded the major monuments on the site.

Darius the Great and his three successors chose the imposing cliff face at Naqsh-e Rostam, north of Persepolis, as the site of their rock-cut tombs. Near these tombs stands a square tower, which may have been built by Darius I to shelter the royal fire of the Achaemenid monarchs. Both the tower and the royal tombs were enclosed in a sacred precinct, whose outer wall, with rounded towers, was traced by Herzfeld. Further Oriental Institute excavations within the precinct revealed occupation extending from the Achaemenid into the Early Islamic period (ca. 500 BC-800 CE).



# Soil erosion control requires special attention

By Faranak Bakhtiari

**TEHRAN** — Iran loses 2 billion tons of soil annually and is moving towards recovery at a very slow pace, so one of the most important points to be addressed in the Seventh Development Plan is soil erosion control, head of the environmental committee of Expediency Discernment Council, has said.

Soil is one of the most vital non-renewable resources that many organisms on the planet depend on, as it ensures food security of the nations; so that it needs urgent attention, ISNA quoted Seyed Mohammad Mojabi as saying on Sunday.

Noting that it takes an average of 400 years to form a centimeter of soil on the planet, he said that in Iran's climate, this time is between 700 and 1000 years. Also, Iran stretches to 165 million hectares, where 90 million hectares are not covered by soil.

On the other hand, 76 million hectares have soil, 18.5 million hectares of which are agricultural lands, he added.

According to estimates, 16.4 tons of soil erodes in Iran per hectare, which is more than three times the global average, he said, adding, also, a total of 2 billion tons of soil erosion occurs in Iran annually, although this amount has increased in recent years due to heavy floods.

Each ton of soil is valued at \$28 in terms of metal ores, so the loss of two billion tons of soil annually means the annual loss of \$56 billion, which is more than revenues from the sale of oil and agricultural products, gardens, livestock, poultry, and fisheries.

Of course, measures have been taken to control soil erosion in the country, and the Forests, Rangelands, and Watershed Management Organization (FRWMO) has been able to reduce soil erosion by 1 ton per hectare through two programs, but due to severe soil erosion, it is still far from the global average, he explained.

Noting that in Article 38 of the Sixth Development Plan, certain tasks have been assigned to the responsible bodies in charge of soil protection, he added that these tasks include the implementation of watershed and aquifer management



plans as well as soil protection operations on 10 million hectares and desertification operations and control of sand and dust storm hotspots on 1.1 million hectares.

The issue of soil, erosion, and pollution are mentioned in the Soil Protection Law. For example, Article 12 of this law states that a plan must be prepared to protect and rehabilitate the soil in areas that have been destroyed or contaminated. Article 16 of the law also states that destroyers and contaminants of the soil must stop their activities after being warned, and take action for compensation, he stated.

The soil conservation law was ratified by Guardian Council in June 2019, which has been passed by the Majlis (Iranian Parliament) in February 2020.

The bill has been approved after 14 years of effort put in by the Department of Environment, which is the responsible body to deal with business units polluting the soil or even shut down industries contributing to soil contamination. Moreover, the owners of mining, industrial, and manufacturing units active in the field of trade are obliged to comply with the law.

As per the law, any trade or export of soil is prohibited, and only the excretion

of minerals or exportation of low amounts of soil for research purposes is excluded after meeting the legal process.

**Soil protection awaiting funds**  
The FRWMO has achieved almost 50 percent of its goals in the Sixth Development Plan on controlling wind erosion hotspots, Mojabi stated.

He went on to note that of course, it can be said that this organization did not have enough funds to fully contain the issue, which means that with sufficient funds, we could significantly reduce soil erosion in the country.

In general, it can be said that Iran is moving towards curbing soil depletion at a very slow pace which is still far from the global average, he lamented, highlighting that hence, one of the most important points to be addressed in the Seventh Development Plan is the control of soil erosion.

More attention is required to be paid to this issue in the seventh plan as well as the required funds so that we are able to reduce soil erosion by one ton per hectare annually, he further emphasized.

Moreover, an accurate atlas of wind erosion hotspots is needed according to climate change and flash floods map so

that we can take effective action at the right time, he suggested.

He also emphasized that land-use-change should be stopped especially on agricultural lands with fertile soils.

**Soil importance**  
Kioumars Kalantari, head of the natural environment and biodiversity of the Department of Environment, said in December 2020 that "rich biodiversity and organism of soil, by storing more and better carbon, reduce greenhouse gases that cause climate change and global warming.

There are about 3,000 billion tons of carbon in the soil, which is about 315 times the amount of carbon currently released into the Earth's atmosphere.

One of the things that makes soil such a fundamental component of climate change is its long-term storage capacity of carbon, carbon can only live for 1 or 2 years if left on the surface, while can survive for hundreds or even thousands of years in the soil.

Carbon, in combination with soil minerals, is stabilized and will not be able to return to the Earth's atmosphere as greenhouse gases."

In addition, soil that stores large amounts of carbon is healthy, fertile and flexible, and is able to retain large amounts of water and nutrients, so to maintain soil health, it should not be contaminated in the first place and with new methods of crop and agricultural management increase the biological potential and health of the soil to preserve the components of biodiversity, genetic resources, and human health, he emphasized.

In the current situation, along with climate change, there are two important challenges globally, he noted, adding, at the national level, unfortunately, Iran is facing severe soil erosion.

Soil protection ensures the country's food security, environmental health, biodiversity conservation, climate balance, and sustainable development, and we all need to have a correct understanding of the high values of soil in terms of planning, policy, conservation, as well as raising public awareness and protect it for present and future generations.

## Khuzestan, Iran's unique haven for birds

ENVIRONMENT  
d e s k

**TEHRAN** — The southwestern province of Khuzestan is the most diverse region in terms of different bird species, its unique and pleasant climate, as well as rich natural habitats have turned this province into a paradise for rare and endangered species of birds.

Khuzestan is home to some 379 recognized species of birds supporting a variety of breeding and wintering waterfowl and seabirds. Every year, with the onset of the cold season, flocks of migratory birds come to winter in the province from the cold regions of Central Asia.

Due to the existence of numerous rivers, wetlands, and special bird habitats, at least 6 species of rare birds of Iran that live in the margins of wetlands and rivers have been recorded in Khuzestan province, two species of which have been seen only in this region.

From terns and ibises to house sparrows, various subspecies of birds will surely be recorded in Khuzestan province by researching and expanding the science of bird watching in the country.

While today, poachers and hunters travel to Khuzestan from neighboring cities and in addition to hunting birds, endanger the species by pushing them toward extinction.

In this regard, Mohammad Javad Ashrafi, chief of Khuzestan's department of environment, stated

that about 20 percent of the country's wetlands are located in Khuzestan, this is why the province is home to most migratory birds, along with the favorable weather conditions.

**Bird-watching in Iran**

Iran is home to more than 527 bird species. In fact, although large portions of the country are arid to semi-arid, Iran possesses a very rich and diverse bird fauna.

Two main factors are responsible for this; the great range of habitats—from permanent snows to deep deserts and from lush deciduous forests in the north to palm groves and mangroves in the south—and Iran's position at a crossroads between three major faunal regions, according to the Iran Paradise website.

The bulk of the country lies within the Palearctic faunal region, which stretches from Europe and North Africa across north and central Asia to the Soviet Far East and Japan. Lying along the southern edge of this region, Iran's bird fauna includes a large Western Palearctic faunal element, reaching its eastern extremity in the central Alborz and Zagros mountains, and a smaller, but still marked, Eastern Palearctic element, which extends into northeastern Iran in the highlands of Khorasan.

In Iran's south coast, the tidal mudflats, mangrove, sand beaches, rocky shores, and sea-cliffs support a variety of breeding and wintering habitats for sea-



birds. Breeding species include Crab Plover *Dromas ardeola*, Great Thick-knee *Burhinus recurvirostris* (only in the sea); several species of herons and egrets such as Indian Pond-Heron *Ardeola grayii*, Western Reef Heron *Egretta gularis* and Goliath Heron *Ardea goliath* (in mangrove); and several species of terns.

Wintering species include Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*, Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*, White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*, and also many shorebirds notably African Black Oystercatcher *Heamatopus ostralegus*, Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*, Curlew *Numenius arquata* and Plovers *Charadrius* spp., *Scuas Stercorarius* spp., Gulls *Larus* spp., and Terns *Sterna* spp.

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ج

## 'City-friendly schools' scheme launched in Tehran

The "city-friendly schools" scheme was launched in the capital to promote environmental protection and urban development issues among students, ISNA reported on Wednesday.

Mojtaba Daneshvar, director general of citizenship education at Tehran Municipality, said that the project covers more than 550 schools, consisting of 160,000 students.

It aims to familiarize students with the rights and duties of citizens, the environment, waste, transportation and traffic, safety and security, crisis management, he explained.

The training programs will be in the form of workshops, role plays, cultural and educational camps, production of educational content such as books, brochures and posters, he concluded.

## آغاز طرح «مدارس دوستدار شهر» در تهران

طرح «مدارس دوستدار شهر» با هدف آشنا کردن دانش آموزان با حقوق و تکالیف شهروندی، محیط زیست و پسماند، حمل و نقل و ترافیک، و ایمنی و مدیریت بحران در مدارس منتخب شهر تهران آغاز شد.

به گزارش ایسنا مجتبی دانشور، مدیرکل آموزش‌های شهروندی شهرداری تهران، گفت این طرح بیش از ۵۵۰ مدرسه شامل ۱۶۰ هزار دانش‌آموز را در بر می‌گیرد.

برنامه‌های آموزشی این طرح در قالب برگزاری کارگاه‌های آموزشی، تولید محتوای آموزشی در قالب کتاب، بروشور و پوستر، اجرای نمایش و برگزاری اردوهای فرهنگی و آموزشی خواهد بود.

## Iran confirms four new cases of mutated coronavirus

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Health Minister Saeed Namaki announced on Sunday that four new cases of mutated COVID-19, which first emerged in the United Kingdom, have been identified in the country.

The patients are an Iranian family living in a European country who came back to Iran late last week, the minister stated, IRNA reported.

"Although the individuals have undergone a PCR test in the host country, after entering Iran, they were tested and the results showed COVID-19 infection of the mutated type."

"Currently, the British mutated virus has spread to most European countries, and we have also established restrictions on the entry of people from these countries to Iran, including a negative PCR test.

So, all passengers from European countries will be tested for PCR and will be quarantined until the result is determined," he explained.

On January 5, Iran announced the first case of the highly contagious coronavirus variant.

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

**COVID-19 new cases, toll**

In a press briefing on Sunday, Health Ministry spokesperson Sima-Sadat Lari confirmed 5,968 new cases of COVID-19 infection, raising the total number of infections to 1,286,406. She added that 1,074,887 patients have so far recovered, but 4,664 still remain in critical conditions of the disease.

During the past 24 hours, 71 patients have lost their lives, bringing the total number of deaths to 56,171, she added.

So far, 8,153,264 COVID-19 diagnostic tests have been performed in the country.

Lari noted that currently, 7 cities are in high-risk "red" zones, and 30 cities are in orange zone and 219 in low-risk "yellow" zones.

## Pushing COVID-19 'toward zero deaths'

**I →** 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.

## 2020 tied with 2016 for hottest year on record, says EU's climate service

The year 2020 is tied with 2016 as the hottest on record, according to data from the EU's climate tracker.

Average temperatures in 2020 were about 1.25C above pre-industrial levels, according to data from the Copernicus Climate Change Service.

This means that the six hottest years on record have all occurred in the last six years, according to Copernicus. It also means the period 2011-2020 was the hottest decade on record.

The data also finds that Europe experienced its hottest year on record in 2020. Temperatures across Europe last year were some 0.4C higher than in 2019, the previous hottest year.

Europe's 2020 winter, which is considered to be the period between December 2019 and February 2020, exceeded the previous hottest winter observed in 2016 by 1.4C, according to the data.

Matthias Petschke, who leads the European Union's satellite programmes for the European Commission, said: "The extraordinary climate events of 2020 and the data from the Copernicus Climate Change Service show us that we have no time to lose."

"We must come together as a global community, to ensure a just transition to a net zero future. It will be difficult, but the cost of inaction is too great."

Some of the most extreme temperatures of 2020 occurred in the Arctic, according to the data. A quick-fire analysis published in 2020 found that the prolonged heat seen in Siberia from January to June was made at least 600 times more likely by human-caused climate change.

Copernicus is just one of several research organisations tracking year-to-year changes to global temperatures.

The UK's Met Office also keeps track of changes to global temperatures. Early results from the Met Office suggest their dataset will have 2020 as the third-hottest year on record.

## LET'S LEARN PERSIAN

(Part 105)

(Source: saadifoundation.ir)

free; open	آزاد	
Islam	اسلام	
Islamic	اسلامی	
this year	امسال	
tonight	امشب	استخر
game; playing	بازی	
to play	بازی کردن	
exercise	ورزش	تسکینال
to exercise	ورزش کردن	
	ولی / vali : آقا	
to learn	یاد گرفتن	والیبال
	دارای ... بودن : داشتن	
faculty	دانشکده	
ground	زمین	
special	مخصوص	شنا



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## GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

When Allah chooses to favor someone, He makes him the source of satisfying other people's needs.

Prophet Muhammad (S)

## Feelsales offers Iran's "Jebeer", "Think about It"

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iranian animations "Jebeer" and "Think about It" have been offered by Feelsales, an international VOD platform dedicated to documentary, animated and short films.

Located in the Spanish capital of Madrid, Feelsales is also an international sales agency devoted to documentary films and short films.



Posters for Iranian animations "Think about It" and "Jebeer".

"Think about It" directed by Faezeh Sepehr-Sadeqian is a free adaption of "Anecdote on the Decline of the Work Ethic" by German writer Heinrich Boll.

The movie competed in numerous international events, including the Golden Sun Short Film Festival in Zebbug, Malta and the Izmir International Short Film Festival in Turkey.

"Jebeer" by Reyhaneh Mirhashemi is about a wildlife ranger who is patrolling a protective area while his soul is intertwined with nature and all the creatures he is protecting. He runs freely and lives with the animals, surrounded by beauty. But, as fate would have it, he is confronted with some poachers.

The movies have been produced at Hoorakhsh Studio, an animation studio in Tehran that produced the acclaimed movie "The Last Fiction" directed by Ashkan Rahgozar.

Hoorakhsh's graphic novels "Arshia", "Arshia I" and "Jamshid", all written by Rahgozar, had been published earlier by Markosia, a leading UK publisher of graphic novels and comic books.

## "Faulkner in the University" comes to Iranian bookstores

**CULTURE d e s k** **TEHRAN** — "Faulkner in the University" by Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph L. Blotner has recently been published in Persian in Tehran.

Markaz Publications is the publisher of the book translated into Persian by Ahad Aliqolian.

The material collected in this book offers testimony to some fascinating exchanges between the author and his public, and makes up one of the few sourcebooks available on Faulkner's personal views.

As an American novelist and short-story writer, William Faulkner (1897-1962) was awarded the 1949 Nobel Prize for Literature.

In 1940, he published the first volume of his "Snopes" trilogy, "The Hamlet", to be followed by two volumes, "The Town" and "The Mansion", all of them tracing the rise of the insidious Snopes family to positions of power and wealth in the community. "The Reivers", his last and most humorous work, with great many similarities to Mark Twain's "Huckleberry Finn", appeared in 1962, the year of Faulkner's death.

In 1957 and 1958, Faulkner was a writer-in-residence at the University of Virginia. During that time he held 37 conferences and answered over two thousand questions on a wide range of concerns, from exegetic problems in his novels to the role of the writer in modern society.

Almost every word uttered during these exchanges was recorded on tape, and the result is the classic "Faulkner in the University", originally published in 1959.

The writer himself commented, "These are questions answered without rehearsal or preparation, by a man old enough in the craft of the human heart to have learned that there are no definitive answers to anything, yet still young enough in spirit to believe that truth may still be found provided one seeks enough, tests and discards, and still tries again."

# Museum of Luminaries unveils wax effigy of Commander Qassem Soleimani

→1 "I had expected to visit with a strict commander who was unfamiliar with artistic issues, however, I changed my mind about him in the early moments of our meeting," Moqaddam said.

"Due to the fact that the story of the series was about the ISIS terrorists, we found his guidance on the series really helpful," he added.

"He told me that his comrades have a hard time fighting the ISIS terrorists, and watching recordings of 'Paytakht' in their spare time is their sole entertainment that makes them happy," he stated.

The ceremony went on with a brief speech by poet Afshin Ala, whose book "Sarbaznameh" ("Book of Soldiers") on Commander Soleimani was released last week.

"I suppose that the long versified story



Actors pose for a selfie with Martyr Qassem Soleimani's family and an effigy of the commander at the Museum of Luminaries at Tehran's Milad Tower on January 9, 2021. (Mehr/Fatemeh Aali)

is the least that I could do about our hero and mujahid, who awakened humankind of the modern world again," he said.

A music video by actor and singer Amiryal Arjmand was screened during the ceremony.

In addition, actor Dariush Arjmand also delivered a speech, expressing his regret that it is a pity that Martyr Soleimani could not do his salat at Al-Aqsa Mosque.

The artists and cultural figures posed for photos with the effigy of Soleimani and his family at the end of the ceremony.

Wax effigies of physician and philosopher Avicenna (980–1037 CE), prominent painter Mahmud Farshchian and many other Iranian cultural figures created by Lankarani are on display at the Museum of Luminaries.

## Album featuring folk music of Kish Island released

He added that search for pearls as an occupation has developed over the years by migration and invasion or under the influence of the peaceful co-existence of various ethnic groups in the island, because many people have done this work over the course of history optionally or under compulsion as a slave.

The songs and music being performed during the Zar traditional ceremony are another part of the music of the island.

The Zar rite, commonplace in southern Iran, is a legacy from slavery as it was performed by African slaves who were brought to southern Iran.

The rite is performed by a man called babazar or a woman known as mamazar to free the body and mind of a person from evil spirits. The musical rite also is comprised of ecstatic dance by workers in a group named ahl-e hava.

People on Kish also have their own special songs and music for wedding ceremonies.

Families prepare a special place decorated with colorful lights and fabrics, and music performers arrive at the place carrying the national flag, which is a symbol of happiness.

The men's band in each village or neighborhood has a leader named Bab al-Hava, who is highly respected by

people, and the women's band is led by a woman named Umm al-Hava.

Over the past few decades, musical bands on Kish perform during wedding ceremonies without Bab al-Hava or Umm al-Hava, Sharifian lamented and added that the lack of the leaders has remarkably affected the performances at wedding ceremonies.

Lullabies sung by mothers are part of the music of the region. Lullaby is called "tahwid" by the locals. The mothers also sing songs to entertain their children.

During wedding ceremonies, female singers or performers, who are mostly black, traditionally perform only for audiences of women.

Arrangement for each ceremony is also different and musicians use many local instruments in their performances. However, the neyanban, the dammam — the king of the percussion instruments — and the tar, another percussion instrument (not be confused with another Iranian stringed instrument of the same name), are common to all performances.

Sharifian is the leader of the Lian ensemble from the southern Iranian city of Bushehr, which has performed many concerts across the world.

## Iranian movie theaters reopen with "Watching This Movie Is a Crime"

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Director Reza Zehtabchian's debut movie "Watching This Movie Is a Crime" has reopened movie theaters across Tehran and several other cities after a lengthy closure of all cinemas and theaters in the country designed to slow the spread of COVID-19.

The film is about Amir, a religious man, whose pregnant wife loses her baby after being beaten by a drunken English-Iranian man. He files a lawsuit against the man, but the perpetrator is released based on political convenience.

The film won the Golden Barberry Award for the worst film participating in the 37th Fajr Film Festival in 2019.



"Watching This Movie Is a Crime" by Reza Zehtabchian.

The director of Iran's Dramatic Arts Center Qader Ashena also said that since the transmission chain of the coronavirus has decreased and Tehran has turned

from the high-risk red zone to orange and yellow, the theaters will also reopen.

He further noted that all the theaters can reopen in the yellow zone cities, adding that the theater troupes that are ready can begin their performances while other troupes can also prepare.

"We are happy that there is this opportunity to reopen the halls and we hope all the cities turn into the white zone," Ashena said.

"One of the first plays that will go on stage at the City Theater Complex will be 'Gorgas or Good Morning Mr. Minister' by director Hamidreza Naeimi," Ashena said.

Although theater halls are facing

stricter conditions as compared to movie theaters, the cinema owners believe that good films need to be screened to attract audiences, while the directive banning private vehicles from 9 pm to 4 am is still observed in Tehran and large cities.

The National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control, issued the directive in large cities to control the spread of coronavirus.

One thing to mention is that only a few weeks remain to the beginning of the Fajr Film Festival, and this time is always known as the dead season of cinema in Iran since not many producers are willing to screen their movies during this time of the year.

## Depiction of the Soldier Photo Competition honors winners

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** — The winners of the Depiction of the Soldier Photo Competition were honored on Saturday during a ceremony held at the Vahdat Hall in Tehran.

Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Seyyed Abbas Salehi was among the guests attending the honoring ceremony.

Organized by the Rudaki Foundation, the competition covered several topics including jihad, martyrdom, national and international activities, and social activities, as well as Commander Qassem Soleimani and his funeral ceremony across the country.

Mehdi Qasemi from Tehran with his photo of Commander Soleimani and Jihad Mughniyeh, the son of Hezbollah's former head of operations, at the funeral ceremony of Soleimani's mother took first prize.

Hassan Yarahmadi from Kerman took second prize for his photo of the funeral ceremony of Soleimani in his hometown Kerman. Saied Qassemi from East Azarbaijan received third prize for his photo "Hurand".

Ahmad Balbasi, Majid Asgaripur, Puya Bazargard and Javad Mirhosseini were also photographers who were honored at the ceremony.



A winner accepts his award from Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Seyyed Abbas Salehi (C) at the Depiction of the Soldier Photo Competition at Vahdat Hall in Tehran on January 9, 2021. (Mehr/Mohammad Khodabakhsh)

## Tehran Intl. Animation Festival to screen world's top movies

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** — A lineup of movies that have won worldwide acclaim will go on screen at the Tehran International Animation Festival, the organizers announced on Sunday.

The movies will go on screen in the international section of the festival, which is organized by the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA).

The lineup includes "Daughter", a 2019 Czech short animated drama by Daria Kashcheeva.

The animated puppet drama explores the subject of the father-daughter relationship. The film had its international premiere at the biggest world animation festival in Annecy,

France, where it won the main Crystal prize for the best student film in 2019.

"The Kite" by Martin Smatana from Czech is also included. The film is a short puppet animated film for children. It talks about the issue of death, but in a simple metaphoric and symbolic way.

"Uncle Thomas: Accounting for the Days", a Canadian, Portuguese and French coproduced animated short film by director Regina Pessoa, and "Serial Parallels" by Max Hattler from Hong Kong are also included.

"Per Aspera Ad Astra" by Franck Dion from France is one of the highlights. It centers on the ordinary day-to-day life of a small cleaning hen, hard-working and

constantly rushed, who is torn between its work and its family.

Inspired by century-old negatives found preserved in ice, Soetkin Verstegen's "Freeze Frame", a co-production of Belgium, Germany and Finland, is another highlight.

"Gravedad" by Matisse Gonzalez from Germany and "Muedra" by Cesar Diaz Melendez from Spain are also included.

The animation festival was called off due to a rise in the COVID-19 cases in the Iranian capital.

In November 2020, the organizer announced that the event would be running from February 28 to March 4. However, the event was postponed to a later time next year.



"Daughter" by Czech animator Daria Kashcheeva.