

Terror acts aimed to provide pretext for foreign presence in Iraq *Page 2*



Iran's Foolad to meet Al Ain at 2021 ACL play-off round *Page 3*



Tehran, Yerevan to ink MOU for boosting trade *Page 4*



Publishers from Serbia, Italy display latest offerings at Tehran Book Fair *Page 8*

Israeli trap

See page 3



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U.S. blocking Iran's payment of overdue UN membership fees, Zarif says

TEHRAN – Iran has allocated funds for the payment of its dues to the UN but the United States prevented Iran from paying the money, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Friday.

Commenting on the suspension of Iran's voting rights at the UN over unpaid membership fees, Zarif told states news IRNA that the dues were the only reason behind the suspension of Iran's voting rights.

"We should have paid \$16 million to

settle our debts to the UN and secure our right to vote. The government allocated the fund and urged that the country's frozen assets in South Korea be used [to pay the debts], but the U.S. blocked the payment to the UN account," the chief Iranian diplomat said.

Iran has proposed paying its membership fees with its seven billion dollars frozen at two South Korean banks due to U.S. sanctions.

Continued on page 3

Healthcare's share of national budget surges twofold

TEHRAN – The national budget bill for the next calendar year (starting on March 20) has proposed 1.5 quadrillion rials (around \$35 billion at the official rate of 42,000 rials) for the healthcare system, a more-than-twofold increase compared to the current year's budget of 700 trillion rials (nearly \$16 billion).

The government submitted the draft of the national budget bill for the next [Iranian calendar] year to Majlis on December 2,

2020. The proposed budget amounted to about 24.357 quadrillion rials (about \$580 billion), with a 20-percent rise from the current year's budget.

Supplying basic goods, treatment, and medical equipment; securing livelihood; supporting production and employment; promoting and supporting non-oil exports and knowledge-based companies are the focal points of the bill.

Continued on page 7

Major gas refinery goes operational in southwestern Iran

TEHRAN – President Hassan Rouhani, on Thursday, officially inaugurated Persian Gulf Bid Boland Gas Refinery in southwestern Khouzestan Province through videoconference.

In addition to the mentioned project, the second phase of a project for collecting flare gas of the fields located in the

country's southern oil-rich regions was also inaugurated.

Some \$4.59 billion has been invested in the mentioned projects, of which \$3.4 billion has been invested in Bid Boland Refinery and nearly \$1.2 billion is spent on the flare gas recovery project.

Continued on page 4

Lack of liquidity a main hurdle for production units

BY MAHNAZ ABDI

In early July last year, the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) instructed the country's banking network the regulations on financing small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with the aim of smoothing the path of national production and supporting enterprises in order to fulfill the slogan of the current Iranian calendar year (March 2020-March 2021), which is "Surge in Production", through directing society's liquidity to productive sectors and financing domestic production units, as well as providing the required working capital for the enterprises.

According to the CBI, following the announcement of the financing instructions for the SMEs in the last four years and the adoption of a regulatory assistance approach, a more suitable ground has been provided for financing the mentioned units.

The aforesaid instructions offer more and more support for small and medium-sized production units in order to provide the possibility of optimal and correct leading of available financial resources in order to improve the employment situation and economic growth in the country, the central bank wrote on its website at the time.

But, the enterprises and those active in the economy sector cite a lack of liquidity and access to finance as one of the biggest problems facing the country's businesses.

Asghar Mosaheb, the acting head of Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO), has mentioned lack of liquidity as one of the main reasons making the production units inactive, while problems in terms of supplying raw materials and machinery, and absence of market are some other hurdles in this due.

ISIPO's Previous Head Mohsen Salehinia had said that providing liquidity is the main issue for many of the country's production units, so based on the arrangements made, these units can receive part of their needed liquidity through bank facilities.

"Currently, the share of the country's production and industrial units in receiving bank facilities is about 31 percent and it is necessary to allocate a larger share of banking facilities to the country's production and industry," he had stated.

Continued on page 4

Washington's policy dependent on sowing sectarian strife: special ambassador to UN

BY MOHAMMAD ALI SAKI

TEHRAN – Criticizing U.S. meddling in West Asia, especially Yemen, the HRC ambassador at large to the Middle East (West Asia) believes that Washington seeks to sow "sectarian discord" among Islamic countries.

"America's role is not only suspicious in Yemen, but wherever it and its armies go, especially in countries that have oil," Haitham Abu Said tells the Tehran Times.

"Washington is dependent on sowing sectarian discord in order to ensure greater results in societal strife and thus preserve interests by using this card," adds the Lebanese ambassador and advisor to the UN human rights body.

The following is the text of the interview:
How do you evaluate Pompeo's statements linking Iran to al-Qaeda? Why did he choose this timing (a few days before the inauguration of Joe Biden) for this misinformation campaign?

There is no doubt that the Trumps' administration and his Secretary of State Pompeo were trying in the last moments of what remained of their rule, to escape their impotence and failure in issues related to West Asia.

Add to this their attempt to cover up the fall of American democracy in a resounding manner at their hands after events America had not witnessed before. Absolutely this represents the decline of freedom. Today the U.S. political system, via accusing Iran of embracing al Qaeda, shows its madness because the latter was established by successive U.S. administrations.

As for why this matter raised now at a time that the U.S. is deploying its army in the (Persian) Gulf, they want to distract international public opinion from the recent events that took place in Washington, as there is the idea of saving President Trump after his presidential term.

Continued on page 5

Biden says U.S. coronavirus death toll will probably top 500,000 next month

Joe Biden has warned Americans that there are difficult days ahead regarding the coronavirus pandemic and predicted the US death toll will surpass half a million next month as he unveiled his "wartime undertaking" to tackle the health crisis.

"Things are going to continue to get worse before they get better," Biden said at the White House on Thursday. "The death toll will likely top 500,000 next month."

"For the past year, we couldn't rely on the federal government to act with the urgency and focus and coordination we needed and we have seen the tragic cost of that failure," Biden said, referencing the more than 24 million COVID cases and more than 408,000 deaths in the U.S. to date, the highest totals in the world.

According to al Jazeera, Biden unveiled his new federal plan to deal with the virus, called the

National Strategy for the COVID-19 Response and Pandemic Preparedness and signed several pandemic-related executive actions.

"Our national strategy is comprehensive. It's based on science, not politics. It's based on truth, not denial," Biden said. The president has been extremely critical of the Trump administration's handling of the pandemic and called the vaccine roll-out to date "a dismal failure so far".

"Our national plan launches a full scale wartime effort to address the supply shortages by ramping up production and protective equipment, syringes, needles, you name it. When I say wartime, people kind of look at me like wartime? Well, as I said last night 400,000 Americans have died, that's more than have died in all of World War Two. 400,000. This is a wartime undertaking."

Continued on page 5

S. Arabia struggling to save face in Yemen: Danish political activist

BY MOHAMMAD MAZHARI

TEHRAN – Noting that Riyadh's influence will be undermined if Washington withdraws its support, a Danish political activist predicts Saudis will maintain the policy of combatting Ansarallah in Yemen to save their face.

"Of course, the Saudis will become significantly weakened in the event that the United States withdraws its support, but they will still maintain the policy of combatting the so-called "Houthi rebels" in Yemen," Rune Agerhus tells

the Tehran Times.

"It is all about saving face for the Saudi regime. If they admit defeat, their own position, and their own domestic legitimacy, would crumble and fall apart. They cannot risk that, let alone afford it," argues the activist, the chairman of the International Solidarity Committee with Yemen.

The following is the text of the interview:
Saudi Arabia always blames Ansarallah for human casualties when it targets

Continued on page 5

Wheat harvest ritual added to intangible cultural heritage list

TEHRAN – A wheat harvest ritual, indigenously known as Kakol ceremony in the eastern South Khorasan province, have been registered on the National Intangible Cultural Heritage list, IRNA reported on Friday.

Continued on page 6



© IRNA / Ehsan Naderipour

Gaza cultural week opens in Tehran

TEHRAN – The Gaza Symbol of Resistance Cultural Week opened at the Iranian Art Museum Garden in Tehran on Thursday.

A large number of artworks are on view in an exhibition during the cultural week, which has been organized by the Sarv Culture Center and Melal Cultural Centers with contributions from some Iranian organizations supporting the Palestinian people.

The cultural event has been organized to observe the anniversary of an Israeli assault on the Gaza Strip, which commenced on December 27, 2008, when Israel launched Operation Cast Lead, pounding the densely populated strip from the air, sea and land for 22 days. The Gazans had 1,417 dead, including 313 children, and more than 5,500 wounded.

"First announcement"

BISOTON TAMIN Paper Company Tehran- Iran

BISOTON TAMIN Paper Industrial Company intends to purchase Stock Preparation Line for its Board Grade paper production plant (225 t/day). Manufacturers who intend to participate in an aforementioned tender are requested to submit their "Intention to participate" letter including references & resume via following email address until Sunday 31st January 2021.

Email address: info@roninco.com

AEI guidelines for Biden: Maximum pressure campaign on the table

The American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, known simply as the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), is a Washington, D.C.-based think tank that researches government, politics, economics, and social welfare.

The AEI is commonly associated with conservatism and neo-conservatism, although it is officially non-partisan.

Some AEI senior fellows and scholars are considered to be among the leading architects of the Bush administration's public and foreign policy. Among them are Dick Cheney, vice president under George W. Bush; John R. Bolton, former ambassador to the United Nations; and Paul Wolfowitz, former deputy secretary of defense.

Also, other current experts in the AEI, with a special focus on Iran and the broader West Asia, are apparently associated with right leaning tendencies and neo-conservatism that advocate interventionist acts such as regime change and military interventions. The most prominent of them are fellows such as Michael Rubin and Kenneth Polack.

Biden's key figures: Apparent hostility towards Iran

A quick glance at recent comments by Joe Biden's key picks for the Oval Office on policies towards the Islamic Republic of Iran in comparison with those released by major Iran experts at the AEI shows significant similarities regarding content and tone let alone of undeniable equivalence between those stated by former Trump's administration.

Given to the fact that the AEI plays a determinant role in the White House decision making towards Iran, monitoring its comments can be quite critical.

For instance, Jake Sullivan, slated by Biden as the next U.S. national security adviser, told the online Wall Street Journal CEO Summit on December 7 that broader issues, including Iran's missile program and its involvement in wider West Asia conflicts, should be negotiated once Iran was back in compliance with the JCPOA. Also, in an interview on "GPS" on CNN, he talked about a "follow-on negotiation" with Tehran over its missile capabilities.



Another example is U.S. secretary of state-designate Antony Blinken's statements on likely Biden's approach to Iran. At his confirmation hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, On January 19 he claimed:

"The breakout time - the time it would take Iran to produce enough fissile material for one weapon - has gone from beyond a year, as it was under the JCPOA, to about three or four months, based at least on public reporting."

The next U.S. secretary of state added: "New administration stronger, longer deal could address Iran's destabilizing activities in the region as well as its missiles".

He also made clear that engagement with Tel Aviv and Persian Gulf Arab states on the Iran deal is "vitaly important".

Besides, Avril Haines, director of national intelligence-designate told the Senate Intelligence Committee during her confirmation hearing that the Biden administration should address Iran's ballistic missiles and destabilizing activities in the Middle East in any future diplomacy with Iran. She also stressed: "I absolutely agree that Iran is a threat and a destabilizing actor in the region. And I think this is an issue that we need to focus in on."

Moreover, Gen. Lloyd Austin, Biden's secretary of defense, also reiterated the above even in the same words. During his confirmation hearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee, he called Iran a "destabilizing element" that posed a "threat" to U.S. forces and partners in the region. And emphasized the necessity of addressing Iran's missile program in future negotiations.

AEI recommendations to Biden: Trump's echo chamber

One of the prominent fellows in the AEI whose analysis on Iran hit the headlines significantly is Michael Rubin. As a former Pentagon official and old-hand expert on Iran, Turkey, and the broader West Asia, he is the author, coauthor, and coeditor of several books exploring diplomacy, Iranian history, Arab culture, Kurdish studies, and Shi'ite politics. He regularly appears on press besides writing pieces mostly for the National Interest and Washington Examiner.

Since the beginning of 2021, he has published nearly 20 articles and analyses to recommend Biden's administration to how encounter and deter the Islamic Republic of Iran effectively and for good. He believes that the Oval Office could take cues from Trump to keep maximum pressure on Tehran.

As expected, the terms "Iran's nuclear weapons", "Iran's threat to Middle East peace and security" and the similar are quite redundant in AEI articles on Iran, outwardly stressing the urgent need of leading a deterring strategy towards Tehran by Biden.

While some fellows such as Rubin, Bolton and Danielle Pletka, one of the former senior professional staff members at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee known for her neoconservative tendencies, boldly denounce any future negotiations with Iran, some at the AEI try to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds. Among them is Kenneth Pollack, a former CIA intelligence analyst and expert on West Asia politics and military affairs who has served on the National Security Council staff. He echoes the same in somehow mild words implying that bring Tehran to the negotiation table to put an end to ballistic missile program as well as containing her malicious activities across the region.

Along the above, on 19th February, Bolton called for the fall of the Iranian establishment in DW interview. The former Trump adviser criticized the JCPOA harshly and former President Trump for failing regime change in Tehran.

Biden's strategy: "Maximum pressure" campaign at the table

Washington's fixed principle in decision making towards strategic regions, mainly in West Asia, is based on geopolitical facts on the ground. Therefore regardless of partisan tendencies of the president, the White House tries to fulfill its multidimensional foreign national interests through SAME STRATEGY with DIFFERENT TACTICS.

Reviewing formal expressions by Biden's key decision makers as well as some AEI strategists as close consultants to every White House administration, reveals that this Democrat president is going to cling to the predetermined U.S. policy towards Iran. In other words, the Democrat hawks of Capitol Hill will likely pursue "maximum pressure" campaign commenced by Trump at the negotiation table with Tehran.

Iran, after tasting 'victory' in resisting Trump, will not succumb to more maximum pressure: Ashton and Hagel

A return to the Iran nuclear deal is the necessary first step

POLITICAL DESK **TEHRAN** — Former European Union foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton, who led nuclear negotiations with Iran before Federica Mogherini, and former U.S. defense secretary Chuck Hagel believe it is a "flawed" idea to imagine that building on Donald Trump's maximum pressure campaign will make Tehran to give more concessions, noting Iran that has tasted "victory" in resisting Trump, "will not succumb to more maximum pressure."

"The American 'get more now' camp argues the world has changed, so a simple return to the Iran nuclear deal is not viable. Its proponents think that the United States should leverage maximum pressure to extract more concessions from Iran on missiles, regional behavior, and sunset clauses. This argument is flawed because Iran, after tasting 'victory' in resisting Trump, will not succumb to more maximum pressure," Ashton and Hagel wrote in The Hill on Thursday.

"A return to the Iran nuclear deal is the necessary first step," insisted Ashton, who is now the global European chair at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, and Hagel, also a former Republican senator from Nebraska.

Under the 2015 nuclear deal, Iran agreed that put limits on its nuclear program in exchange for termination of crippling sanctions. However, Trump unilaterally pulled out of the agreement and introduced the harshest sanctions — nuclear and non-nuclear ones - in history on Iran.

Exactly one year after the return of sanction, Iran announced that its strategic patience is over and started to gradually remove cap on its nuclear work.

Following is an excerpt of the Ashton-Hagel article titled "How to revive the Iran nuclear deal":

The Trump administration withdrawal from the agreement in 2018 and the maximum pressure policy has undermined this objective. The situation led to an escalation of the Iran nuclear program, emboldened the hardliners, decimated the domestic political opposition, increased regional tensions, and



created suffering for Iranian citizens. The Biden administration faces a critical issue on how to reverse the escalation and stabilize the fragile and key region. A return to the Iran nuclear deal is the necessary first step.

Iranian President Rouhani and Foreign Minister Zarif have reiterated a willingness for a full return to the Iran nuclear deal. President Biden has also made clear a wish to return in full. The other countries that have negotiated the Iran nuclear deal remain committed to it. But there are conflicts internally and between the parties on how to move forward.

The American "get more now" camp argues the world has changed, so a simple return to the Iran nuclear deal is not viable. Its proponents think that the United States should leverage maximum pressure to extract more concessions from Iran on missiles, regional behavior, and sunset clauses. This argument is flawed because Iran, after tasting "victory" in resisting Trump, will not succumb to more maximum pressure. Negotiations for a new agreement will take trust and time. The biggest hurdle for the United States is that any new agreement will need approval from Congress.

Further, any rule for negotiations or to



establish conditionality hits the same stumbling blocks, especially in the absence of talks between the United States and Iran. One feasible action remains in the immediate term, which is a full return of the United States to the Iran nuclear deal and unilateral commitment of both sides to full compliance followed by full implementation. Preconditions must be avoided on both sides.

Under this scenario, both the United States and Iran would simultaneously announce a recommitment to obligations under the Iran nuclear deal and a rollback of actions that have undermined the agreement since 2018. For the United States, it means the lifting of all the new or reinstated nuclear sanctions and unraveling the set of psychological and legal constraints on banks and companies. This can be done through executive branch action, and the challenging process of rebuilding private sector confidence can commence with official reassurances from the Treasury Department.

For Iran, it means returning to the agreement limitations on all its nuclear material and other treaty limitations. All other countries involved in the negotiations must remain engaged with the Iran nuclear deal

and provide the supportive environment for full implementation and next steps. Iran has asked for compensation for the impacts of the American withdrawal and for assurances that the United States will be in full compliance in the future. However, neither of these demands are preconditions and can be dealt with in the faithful and reciprocal return to the Iran nuclear deal.

Time is of the essence if the Iran nuclear deal is to stabilize the region. This balanced approach provides the greatest chance for success. It will enable both parties to avoid thorny issues. For Tehran, it is to not engage in unpalatable talks until there is a full return by the United States. For Washington, it is to avoid triggering the legal provision for approval from Congress, though legislative support will be important. It also avoids a hiatus for more nuclear activity by Iran. It will also circumvent delays associated with the Iranian elections this summer and tackle the restrictive aspects of legislation enacted by the Iranian parliament.

Further negotiations could and should be pursued after this first step on whether they address Iranian regional behavior, nuclear sunset clauses, the Iranian ballistic missile program, the American ability to reimpose snapback sanctions, or legitimate Iranian security concerns about United States or other arms deals in the region. Quiet preparations can run in parallel to enable the parties to engage in such talks rather swiftly.

But we cannot and should not put the cart before the horse. A return to the Iran nuclear deal now that Biden is in office will stabilize a dangerous situation and make the region and world more secure. It will also lay the necessary foundation for further negotiations on these other issues.

The real work must start to reverse the Iran nuclear program expansion and relevant United States sanctions, and then to rebuild an environment of diplomacy and establish mutually beneficial security arrangements. These next months will demand from all leaders a clear view of the perils and actions necessary for sustainable security in the Middle East.

Iran says terror acts aimed to provide pretext for foreign presence in Iraq

Iranian parliament speaker sympathizes with Iraqis

POLITICAL DESK **TEHRAN**— Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, the speaker of Iran's Parliament, on Thursday denounced the terror attacks in Baghdad which killed and wounded a number of civilians.

In a message to his Iraqi counterpart Mohammed al-Halbousi, Ghalibaf expressed his worries and said, "I was saddened to hear about the terror acts in Baghdad and death and injury of a number of Baghdad citizens."

Ghalibaf strongly condemned the attacks and said, "I denounce the terrorist and anti-human attacks, I pray for forgiveness of the dead and swift recovery for

the wounded and patience for the bereaved families."

He further noted that Iran will continue to cooperate and strongly support Iraq in the fight against terrorism.

The speaker underlined readiness of the Iranian Parliament for full cooperation with the Iraqi government to provide the legal basis for the fight against the evil phenomenon of terrorism.

Saeed Khatibzadeh, the spokesman of Iran's Foreign Ministry, also condemned the terrorist attacks.

Stressing the sympathy of the Iranian people and government to the government and people of Iraq,

Khatibzadeh added, "Takfiri terrorism has once again targeted Iraq and intends to disrupt the peace and stability of it to provide a pretext for the foreign presence there."

Khatibzadeh noted that Iran supports the Iraqi government, stability, and unity, as well as the measures taken by the Iraqi security forces, to restore security and arrest the perpetrators and to root out Takfiri ideology.

According to Iraqi media, 32 were killed and 100 others injured during the twin suicide attacks in Baghdad on Thursday.

Trump failed to decrease Iranian oil export to zero: minister

POLITICAL DESK **TEHRAN** — Bijan Namdar Zanganeh, Iran's oil minister, said on Friday that the Islamic Republic did not allow the Trump administration to decrease Iranian oil export to zero.

In separate remarks on Thursday, Zanganeh also said, "Trump thought we die due to the sanctions, but we did not, they are knocked down."

Addressing the inaugural ceremony of the 25th Oil, Gas, Refining and Petrochemical Exhibition on Friday, Zanganeh com-

memorated Iranian martyrs, noting that the enemies, especially the U.S., were trying to reduce Iran's crude oil export to zero, but their attempt ended in failure.

After Trump's administration withdrew from the JCPOA, the U.S imposed severe oil sanctions on Iran to ban the main purchasers of Iran's oil from importing crude from the country. Nevertheless, Iran succeeded in manufacturing catalysts and chemical substances, Zanganeh stated.

The minister stated that Iran could hit the

highest and historical record in exporting oil products, noting that the country is alive and it will continue the path with more hope than before and new investment is the main stimulus to improve the Iranian market.

He stressed the need to hold the exhibition in order to preserve the link between producers and consumers, adding that the motto of the fair is support for Iranian goods and services.

According to Zanganeh, the Oil Ministry has allotted 500 million dollars to support

knowledge-based companies active in the development of oil industry.

The ministry will purchase equipment made by Iranian companies in order to uphold domestic innovation, he added.

The 25th Oil, Gas, Refining and Petrochemical Exhibition is being held with the participation of 550 domestic firms, 15 universities, 52 startup companies and 27 firms of the Innovation and Prosperity Fund. The exhibition runs from January 22 to 25 in Tehran.

Analyst: IRGC, Army drills plunge the enemy into defensive position

POLITICAL DESK **TEHRAN** — Jafar Qanadhashi, an expert on West Asian affairs, has said, "The Zionist regime had adjusted its military arrangement in such a way that if the opportunity arose and it received the green light from other powers, it would hit Iran, but the recent exercises plunge them into a defensive position."

In an interview with the Fars news agency published on Friday, he referred to the IRGC and Army missile exercises, saying, "These exercises send several different messages to the enemy. Most importantly, Iran is at the height of its defense power and military capabilities, capabilities that they did not even imagine. Iran's capabilities are set

according to asymmetric wars and the enemy lacks the methods and knowledge to deal with it".

The expert noted that "the recent exercises of the IRGC and the Army send a message that the enemy knows that Iran, despite all the economic pressures, and sanctions, has created such a defense capability."

From his point of view, the readiness of a military force is not only about equipment.

"In recent exercises, we have sent a message to the enemy both in terms of equipment, skills and, most importantly, the morale and capabilities that a military force needs," Qanadhashi remarked.

France uses the opportunity in new U.S. administration to pressure Iran

POLITICAL DESK **TEHRAN** — On Thursday, Jean-Yves Le Drian, the French foreign minister, demanded Iran to immediately return to its commitments under the nuclear deal to restrict Tehran's nuclear program.

European states are waiting to see what steps Joe Biden, the new U.S. president, will take to revive the 2015 Joint Comprehension Plan of Action (JCPOA) after Donald Trump withdrew the U.S. from the agreement.

Biden has said the U.S. will return to the accord if Iran resumes strict compliance with it. Iran insists that the economic, financial, and oil sanctions must be lifted before it reverses its nuclear program. Antony Blinken, Biden's nominee for secretary of state said on Tuesday that the U.S. had to stop what he

called Iran's move to build a nuclear weapon immediately.

The EU wants to save the deal but some Persian Gulf and the Western countries claim that the deal may empower Iran to expand its influence in West Asia.

During a meeting with UAE Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed in Paris, Le Drian urged Iran to reverse its violations of the deal, including increasing uranium enrichment beyond limits set by the nuclear deal.

According to the French Foreign Ministry, "He (Le Drian) noted that Iran should immediately resume full respect of its nuclear commitments under the JCPOA in order to preserve regional stability and avoid a serious proliferation crisis."

Pointing to a possible future deal, Le Drian

said it needs to cover Tehran's missile program and regional activities in West Asia.

Last week, he told France's Journal du Dimanche newspaper, "The Trump administration chose what it called the maximum pressure campaign on Iran. The result was that this strategy only increased the risk and the threat."

In response to Le Drian's claims, in a Twitter post on January 17 Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said the European signatories to the 2015 nuclear deal did nothing to save the deal, officially called the JCPOA.

France, Britain and Germany - commonly known as E3 — are signatory to the JCPOA.

"E3 leaders—who rely on signature of OFAC functionaries to carry out their obli-

gations under JCPOA—have done ZILCH to maintain JCPOA. Remember @Emmanuel-Macron's stillborn initiative or UK non-payment of court-ordered debt? JCPOA is alive because of Iran and not E3, @JY_LeDrian," Zarif tweeted.

The chief Iranian diplomat also said France is destabilizing the West Asia region by selling advanced arms to regional countries.

Iran has clearly said that it will not negotiate on its defensive missile program. However, it has said if the parties to the deal fully honor their commitments Tehran will immediately reverse its nuclear decisions.

France which expresses worry about Iran's defensive missile program was one of the main arms suppliers to the Saddam regime which invaded Iran in the 1980.

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** – From ostensibly revising military options for a possible clash with Iran to signaling a united front with some Persian Gulf's Arab states against Tehran, Israeli are on the run to make any thaw in Iran-U.S. relations a difficult task, something that the new U.S. president needs to be aware of if he wants to avoid repeating the mistakes his predecessor made in the West Asia region.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's whole world came crashing down around him when he learned of Donald Trump's election loss in early November. He lost an ally that spared no efforts to accept Israeli demands against Iran. Over the course of the Trump administration, Netanyahu painstakingly sought to develop a close rapport with Trump who was still pretty much an unknown quantity back in 2016. The Israeli prime minister's efforts culminated in him striking up a bromance with the former president that played a pivotal role in advancing the so-called U.S. "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran.

But all this came to an end in November and now there's a new sheriff in town. To be sure, Biden is no friend of Iran, but he is not as close to Netanyahu as Trump. And this has sent Bibi Netanyahu scrambling to launch a new campaign to prevent any de-escalation between Tehran and Washington.

Israel is obviously concerned over a possible U.S. return to the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The deal which Israel worked hand in glove with the Trump administration to destroy.

Yearning for the "good old days" of the Trump administration, Israeli officials are now seeking to convince the Biden administration that things have changed since May 8, 2018, when Trump unilaterally pulled out of the JCPOA.

"There are significant concerns across the defense establishment that the Biden



Israeli trap

administration will go back to the old nuclear deal as if nothing had changed regarding the intelligence picture," wrote the Jerusalem Post in early January, referring to the alleged nuclear archive of Iran that Israel claimed it had stolen from a warehouse in Tehran more than two years ago.

The Israelis are clearly trying to influence Biden's Iran policy through a multifaceted disinformation campaign. The Israeli Mossad is busy working to "impress" the Biden administration with its fake documents.

"The Mossad views its challenge as presenting the Biden administration with the evidence in order to get it to internalize the new intelligence Israel seized from under Iran's nose in January 2018, and which 2015-2016 Obama era officials never got to see,"

the Israel newspaper claimed, noting that Mossad director Yossi Cohen had impressed former U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and former CIA Director Gina Haspel in 2018. "Cohen would now like to repeat this moment with new officials such as incoming U.S. national security advisor Jake Sullivan and incoming U.S. secretary of state Tony Blinken," the Jerusalem Post reported.

In parallel with intelligence efforts, Israel has worked to portray its recently publicized relations with some of Persian Gulf's Arab states as a new factor that Biden should take into consideration when making decisions on Iran. This was on full display during a recent discussion hosted by an Israeli think tank disguised as an American one.

The Israel-sponsored Foundation for

Defense of Democracies held an event attended by the ambassadors of Israel, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates to the United States five days before Biden's inauguration to convey the message that the region has drastically changed since the last time Biden was a senior White House official.

The discussion also tried to deliver the message that Arab states and Israel are "on the same page" in their approach toward Iran and the U.S. expected return to the JCPOA.

Israel and its new Arab allies keep insisting that the Biden administration must consult with them before rejoining the JCPOA. Biden's officials have signaled that they will consult with Israel and Arab allies before they make decisions about rejoining the JCPOA.

Speaking in his confirmation hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Biden's pick for secretary of state Tony Blinken said if Iran returned to its JCPOA commitments, the U.S. would too.

"But we would use that as a platform with our allies and partners, who would once again be on the same side with us, to seek a longer and stronger agreement," Blinken noted. "It's vitally important that we engage on the takeoff, not the landing, with our allies and partners in the region, to include Israel and to include the [Persian] Gulf countries."

Blinken may have made these remarks to soothe Israel and its Arab allies, who try to secure a seat at the negotiating table with Iran. But the Biden administration needs to be aware of the trap these "allies" are setting for it. Any effort by the Biden administration to appease these allies is a recipe for failure. Israel and its Arab allies are demanding that Biden include Iran's missile program and its regional influence in any future talks with Iran, something that Iran has repeatedly said it will not negotiate. Therefore, consultations with Israel and its Arab allies will only complicate the situation for the Biden administration.

Qatar voices readiness to mediate between Iran, U.S.

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Qatar is ready to mediate between Iran and the United States as the new U.S. president, Joe Biden, assumes office after the turbulent years of the Trump administrations, Lolwah al-Khater, spokeswoman for Qatar's Foreign Ministry, has said.

She also pointed out that Qatar is committed to engaging in a "constructive dialogue" between Tehran and the Arab states of the Persian Gulf.

"Qatar has expressed its willingness to play such a role, yet we have to be invited by both parties, who are still hesitant to take this step, in terms of entering and engaging in direct negotiations," al-Khater told the Spanish EFE news agency.

She stated that Iran and the Persian Gulf's Arab states are both geographical realities in the region and that's why they need to start a direct dialogue.

"Iran is a geographical reality in our region and the [Persian] Gulf states are a geographical reality, no one is going away, and that is why it is very important to engage in a meaningful, constructive and direct dialogue," the spokeswoman asserted.

She said a dialogue between Iran and its Arab neighbors is even more important than a dialogue between Iran and the U.S.

"If it was important for the U.S. to have a dialogue with Iran, then it is even more important for us as [Persian] Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries to have a meaningful and constructive dialogue with Iran, one that will preserve the collective security of our region, the rights of our peoples and ensure a prosperous future for coming generations," she continued.

The Qatari official also pointed to Qatar's trade ties with Iran and Turkey during the GCC crisis, saying that these ties helped Qatar in achieving a GDP growth more than that of its neighbors.

"Looking back, the economic gains are significant," she said of the outcome of the crisis, pointing out that Qatar's GDP grew more than that of its neighbors during the blockade, when Doha strengthened its trade relations with Turkey, Iran and other countries in the area beyond the GCC.

The comments come a few weeks after Qatar mended ties with its Arab neighbors in a reconciliation deal brokered by the U.S. The deal put an end to a three-year-and-half dispute between Qatar and an Arab quartet of Saudi Ara-



bia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt. In June 2017, the Saudi-led quartet severed diplomatic ties with Qatar and imposed a total blockade on the tiny Persian Gulf nation. The four countries closed their airspace, land, and sea routes to Qatari planes, cars, and vessels, a move that prompted Qatar to use Iranian airspace. Kuwait, a country stuck in the middle of the dispute between its neighbors, had studiously worked to reconcile the opposing sides and succeeded in doing so in December.

On January 5, leaders of the GCC - Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait and Oman- attended the al-Ula summit in Saudi Arabia in which they signed a reconciliation deal, putting an end to the years-long GCC crisis.

"There have been no concessions from any side (...) the GCC crisis was a lose-lose situation for everyone, so ending this crisis, I think, will be a gain for everyone", al-Khater said of the deal.

According to al-Khater, Doha has emerged stronger from the crisis, at least from an economic point of view, as in the past three and a half years it has "diversified its supply chains and reinforced its position as one of the largest energy exporters globally."

"The blockade was a situation we did not choose, for sure, but we were able to live with it and sustain the situation. Ending the blockade is about the collective interest of our entire region, not only in Qatar's interest," the spokeswoman insisted.

Al-Khater's remarks came after Qatar's Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani called for dialogue between Iran and its Arab neighbors to resolve outstanding differences, expressing hope that the two sides would hold a summit to deescalate tensions.

"We are hopeful that this [summit] would happen and we still believe that this should happen. And I think this is also a desire that being shared among the other GCC countries. I just mentioned to you that there is a difference between the countries on the way how to approach such a dialogue. Also from the Iranian side. They have expressed their willingness several times to engage with the GCC countries," he said in a recent interview with Bloomberg TV.

Bin Abdulrahman underlined that the time should come when the Persian Gulf's Arab states will sit at the table with Iran and reach a common understanding. "We have to live with each other. We cannot change geography. Iran cannot move the GCC away from its neighborhood and the GCC cannot move Iran from the neighborhood," he continued.

The chief Qatari diplomat also expressed readiness to facilitate dialogue between Iran and the GCC states or back anyone facilitating such a dialogue.

He also hoped that the much-anticipated talks between Iran and the U.S. on the 2015 nuclear deal -officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)- would help soothe tensions between Iran and its Arab neighbors.

Bin Abdulrahman expressed hope that what will happen between Iran and the U.S. on the JCPOA would contribute to resolving the differences between Iran and the GCC. "Of course, things are interconnected at the end of the day," he noted, adding that Qatar will support negotiations between the stakeholders.

"We will be welcoming this idea. We maintain a good relationship with the U.S. and we maintain a good relationship with Iran," bin Abdulrahman stated.

Iran welcomed the Qatari call for dialogue between Iran and the Persian Gulf's Arab states, underlining that the solution to the region's challenges lies in cooperation to form a strong region free from foreign interference.

"Iran welcomes my brother FM @MBA_AIThani's call for inclusive dialogue in our region. As we have consistently emphasized, the solution to our challenges lies in collaboration to jointly form a 'strong region': peaceful, stable, prosperous & free from global or regional hegemony," Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said in a tweet following the Qatari foreign minister's call for dialogue.

Iran won't renegotiate JCPOA: Vaezi

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iran had once negotiated the 2015 nuclear deal - officially called the JCPOA - and it will not renegotiate it anymore, but it will pursue the lifting of sanctions, Mahmoud Vaezi, the Iranian president's chief of staff, said on Friday.

"The JCPOA had been negotiated once and it will not be renegotiated," Vaezi told Iran's state news agency IRNA on Friday, adding that Tehran's priority is to lift the U.S. sanctions on the country.

"It's up to them whether they return to the JCPOA or not but what's important for us is the lifting of sanctions against the Iranian people," he continued.

Commenting on the start of Joe Biden's

presidency, Vaezi said Iran expects him not to follow in the footsteps of his predecessor because the Trump administration has brought the U.S. into disrepute and caused the Iranians to hate the U.S.

The president's chief of staff also ruled out any contact between Iran and the U.S. but he said things will change if the new U.S. administration changes tack on Iran and implement its obligations under the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

On Monday, Vaezi said the new U.S. administration can return to the 2015 nuclear deal only after lifting all sanctions that were imposed on Iran during the Trump administration.

Responding to a question on whether



the Iranian government has set any preconditions for a possible U.S. return to the nuclear deal, Vaezi said, "What we

say is that whatever has happened under Trump's administration must go back to the pre-Trump era. We are serious about this issue."

"Therefore, all kinds of sanctions on companies and individuals should be lifted," he told Tasnim.

Vaezi outlined how Iran would deal with a possible return of the U.S. to the nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). He pointed out that Iranian officials have made it crystal clear that in the next era, Iran's policy would be "commitment for commitment", "implementation for implementation," and "announcement for announcement".

U.S. blocking Iran's payment of overdue UN membership fees, Zarif says

1→ "Iran's latest proposal in this regard was to pay this debt by having the UN use Iran's seized assets in South Korea with the permission of the Central Bank, which is being discussed with the UN Secretariat and the necessary arrangements are being made," Saeed Khatibzadeh, spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry, has recently said.

Khatibzadeh also called on the UN to guarantee the transfer of Iran's unpaid fees through non-American banks.

"Given that the United States has encroached upon Iran's international assets before, the Islamic Republic of Iran insists that the UN not use an American interme-

diary bank to receive our country's membership fee, or that this organization guarantees the financial transfer channel," he noted.

"Despite restrictions caused by the United States' unilateral sanctions, the Islamic Republic of Iran has, in recent years, always paid its UN membership fee using the few financial transfer channels available to it. This year, too, as the U.S. blocked channels available to transfer financial resources, Iran has been in talks with the UN Treasury since long ago in order for the world body to introduce a safe channel [for money transfer]," he continued.



SPORTS

Iran's Foolad to meet Al Ain at 2021 ACL play-off round

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Foolad football team will meet Emirati club Al Ain in play-off round of the 2021 AFC Champions League.

Iran will have three direct slots in the group stage of the 2021 AFC Champions League.

Persepolis will represent Iran in the competition as league champions, while Tractor will take part in the upcoming event as Hazfi Cup winners.

Esteghlal, the league runners-up, will also have a direct slot in the group stage.

Foolad, who finished third in the league last season, will start the campaign with a match against Al Ain in play-off round.

The 2021 AFC Champions League qualifying play-offs will be played from March 2021 to April 2021. A total of 19 teams will compete in the qualifying play-offs to decide the remaining eight of the 40 places in the group stage of the 2021 AFC Champions League.

Iranian parachutist Bozorgi dies in accident

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Parachutist Mohammad Bozorgi was killed in an accident in Tehran, capital of Iran, on Friday.

Bozorgi died after his parachute failed to open during a jump in Ekbatan Town, west of Tehran, when he wanted to commemorate the Iranian firefighters who died in Plasco building in January 2017.

The 36-year-old parachutist fell 58 meters to the ground and died on impact.

The 17-storey Plasco building, a shopping center in Tehran, caught fire and smashed to the ground after hours of effort to put out the fire. Sadly some 16 firefighters got trapped under the building and it took almost nine days to clear through debris to find the bodies.

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

Football icons wish Minavand a speedy recovery in his battle with COVID-19

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — The football coaches and players have wished former Iran midfielder Mehrdad Minavand a speedy recovery in his battle with COVID-19.

Minavand, 45, has been hospitalized at the Laleh Hospital's intensive care unit (ICU) in Tehran.

Iran coach Dragan Skocic has posted a message to his Instagram wishing him a speedy recovery.

"I wish you fast recovery and health from the bottom of my heart," Skocic wrote.

Former Iran and Persepolis coaches Branko Ivankovic and Ali Daei have also posted message on their Instagram accounts.

Minavand represented Iran national football team in the 1998 World Cup.

The left winger played for Persepolis five years. Minavand also was a member of Austrain club Sturm Graz and Charleroi from Belgium.

Iranian Health Ministry Spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari said that at least 1,144,549 patients have recovered from the coronavirus infection so far or have been discharged from hospitals across the country.

She also put the death toll from the coronavirus at 57,150, saying the disease has taken the lives of 93 patients over the past 24 hours.

The number of people tested positive for COVID-19 infection in Iran has exceeded 1,354,520 following the detection of 4,148 new cases since Wednesday noon, the spokeswoman added.

The number of people infected with COVID-19 across the world has surpassed 97 million and the death toll has exceeded 2.08 million.

Jahanbakhsh among players who miss FA Cup tie against Blackpool

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iranian international winger Alireza Jahanbakhsh will be absent in the match against Blackpool on Saturday in FA Cup fourth round tie.

The Seagulls have been without Aaron Connolly, Adam Lallana, Danny Welbeck and Tariq Lamptey in recent weeks due to injury.

Jason Steele and Alireza Jahanbakhsh have also missed the Seagulls last two games through illness and injury as well, The Argus reported.

And Graham Potter gave an update on all six of those players. He said: "None of those will be involved this weekend. Aaron is making progress he will probably be in training with the group tomorrow but it will be too soon for him."

"Adam is feeling a lot better after feeling poorly, but will probably need some training time before we look at games."

"Danny is making progress. It is a little bit slower than we thought but is still making progress and we are looking at a couple of weeks maybe for him. It's similar for Tariq. Ali again will be a couple of weeks."

Potter also confirmed Jason Steele, who was the hero in their win over Newport in the previous round will miss the game through illness.

Esteghlal Forward Diabate on Benevento's radar

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Serie A football team Benevento have shown interest in signing Esteghlal forward Cheick Diabate, contra-attaque.it reported.

The Malian striker had been already linked with a move to Benevento last year but stayed in his current team.

Newly-promoted Benevento, coached by Filippo Inzaghi, have been solid this season, and currently sit in 11th place.

Diabate was a member of Benevento in 2018 and scored eight goals in 11 matches for the team.

Lack of liquidity a main hurdle for production units

1 → According to the most recent data released by the Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry, over 73.93 trillion rials (about \$1.76 billion) in loans has been paid for financing the SMEs and semi-finished projects with the progress of over 60 percent during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-December 20, 2020).



But those active in the production sector say that because of the increase in production costs due to inflation in previous years, the ceiling of facilities to be granted to enterprises should be increased.

They also lament that due to the outbreak of coronavirus, the financing situation of the production units has deteriorated, and despite these problems, the pressure of banks on these units has increased significantly.

While the producers are still facing many problems, they expect the situation to improve with the support of officials and the banking system.

India hopes to export more oil from Iran under new U.S. administration

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Indian Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan has said that his country hopes to boost its oil imports from Iran under the new U.S. administration. Making the remarks in an interview on Bloomberg TV, the minister reiterated the comments that he made last month. “Some geopolitical changes are there,” he said. “Let us wait for how things unfold.”

The South Asian economy is heavily reliant on energy imports and its refiners struggled to cope as the White House’s aggressive foreign policy over the last few years restricted access to Iranian oil.

India halted imports from Iran, previously its third-largest oil supplier, in mid-2019 after the expiration of U.S. exemptions from sanctions.

TEDPIX slides 3.8% in a week

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — TEDPIX, the main index of the Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), dropped 3.8 percent in the past Iranian calendar week.

The index stood at 1.183 million points on Wednesday (the last working day of the week).

During the past week, the indices of Iran Khodro Group, Zar Macaron Industrial Group, Parsian Leasing Company, Saipa Company, and National Iranian Copper Industry Company were the most widely followed indices.

TEDPIX had also fallen 6.5 percent in the calendar week ended on January 15.

PGPIC to begin construction of 2 mega petchem complexes by late Mar.

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Managing Director of Iran’s Persian Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company (PGPIC) has said that the projects for constructing two major petrochemical complexes worth over \$7 billion will be started by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20).

“Preparations have been carried out by Persian Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company for the ground-breaking of the projects for construction of Hormoz and Mahshahr petrochemical complexes in Assaluyeh and Mahshahr [in southwest of Iran]” Jafar Rabiei said.

The \$4.5-billion Hormoz project will receive a combination of ethane and butane feed that will be supplied from South Pars field, the official said, adding: “The necessary licenses have been obtained from the Oil Ministry and hopefully the project will be commenced by the end of the year.”

He further pointed out that the feedstock for Mahshahr Petrochemical Complex is going to be supplied from Persian Gulf Bid Boland Refinery surplus feed.

About \$2.5 billion has been invested in Mahshahr Petrochemical project, he added.



The petrochemical industry plays a crucial role in Iran’s non-oil economy, as the petrochemical export is the second-largest source of revenue for the country after crude oil. Petrochemical exports already constitute nearly 33 percent of the country’s non-oil exports.

According to Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh, the country is currently producing nearly 70 million tons of petrochemical products annually.

Back in August 2020, Zanganeh had announced that 27 petrochemical projects worth \$17 billion will go operational across the country by March 20, 2021.

By the end of the year, the country’s petrochemical production capacity will be increased by 25 million tons per year, the minister had stated.

“One of the most important tasks of the petrochemical industry is to prevent the sale of raw materials by completing the value chain in the oil and gas industry, as well as supplying downstream feedstock for the domestic industries while preventing more than \$5 billion in foreign currency from leaving the country annually.”

Major gas refinery goes operational in southwestern Iran

1 → Bid Boland Refinery has been put into operation with the aim of increasing the production of sweet gas, reducing the consumption of petroleum products, production of propane, butane, and gas condensate, the export of by-products, the supply of natural gas to urban areas, and supplying ethane required by petrochemical units in the region.

The refinery, which took 36 months to complete, has a daily processing capacity of more than 56 million cubic meters of associated gas and when operating at full capacity it will generate \$700 million of revenue every year.

This complex receives about 13,500 tons of sour gas per year from NGL 900 and 1000 Plants while receiving 2.25 million tons of sweet gas from NGL 1200 and 1300 Plants.

As the largest gas refinery project in West Asia, Bid Boland will have an annual production capacity of 10.4 million tons of methane, 1.5 million tons of ethane, one million tons of propane, 600,000 tons of gas condensates, and 500,000 tons of butane.



Bid Boland Refinery project was recently nominated for the International Project

Management Association (IPMA)’s Global Project Excellence Award at the energy sec-

Iran Oil Show running in Tehran

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — The 25th edition of Iran International Oil, Gas, Refining, and Petrochemical Exhibition (Iran Oil Show), which was previously postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic, kicked off at Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds on Friday.

The opening ceremony was attended by senior officials from the country’s oil industry including the Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh, IRIB reported.

The slogan of this year’s exhibition is “National Oil, Iranian Goods and Services” and it is held with the aim of introducing the latest achievements of the oil industry and presenting its future plans.

The three-day exhibition is held in full compliance with health and safety protocols and strict safety and social dis-

tancing procedures are followed to maintain the health of participants and visitors.

Due to the special conditions caused by the pandemic, only managers, businessmen, scholars, and experts are allowed to visit this year’s Oil Show.

The event covers a variety of oil industry areas, including upstream industries, universities and science centers, start-ups, and science and technology parks, petrochemicals and related industries, gas and related industries, pipes and tubes, valves, refining and distribution and related industries, rotary machines, as well as products exporters, and etc.

Iran Oil Show is among the most significant oil and gas events in the world in terms of the number of participants and its diversity.



Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh speaks in the inauguration ceremony of Iran Oil Show.

ICCIMA board member calls on govt. to support stock market

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Chairman of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA)’s Money and Capital Market Committee has blamed the government for the capital market’s recent downward trend and called for its financial support to manage the situation.

In recent weeks, the consistent drop of TEDPIX, the main index of the Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), has caused great concern for the shareholders.

Mohsen Haji-Baba, who believes the main reason for the stock market’s current situation is the government’s interference in the capital market affairs, said: “Government



interference will have catastrophic results not only in the stock market but in all markets. The experience of the past years and the performance of the government-run industries

have shown that wherever the government has deliberately entered a market, the result has been nothing but destruction.”

“The downward trend of the stock market will continue and there is no proper economic solution to this problem unless the government allocates funds from its own financial resources to compensate for these losses.”

The Tehran Stock Exchange’s main index has dropped nearly 800,000 points over the past few months and the shares of some companies have faced a loss of up to 70 percent.

TEDPIX had hit a record high of two million points on August 2, 2020, while it is currently dived to nearly 1.2 million points.

In order to prevent the negative impact

of the external factors on the stock market performance, the government has allocated several support packages for this market.

Earlier this month, First Vice President Es’haq Jahangiri stressed that the stock market is an independent body, but the government always supports it.

The government has a duty to support the stock market and do its best to address the concerns of shareholders and prevent them from being harmed, the official emphasized.

Iran’s National Development Fund (NDF) has so far deposited over 20 trillion rials (about \$476.2 million) with the Capital Market Stabilization Fund, in two stages, for the stabilization of the stock exchange market.

Tehran, Yerevan to ink MOU for boosting trade

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Armenian Economy Minister Vahan Kerobyan arrived in Tehran on Friday to discuss the expansion of trade relations between the two countries.

As reported by the Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) of Iran, upon arrival Kerobyan met with the TPO Head Hamid Zadboum.

During this five-day visit which has been organized by the Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry, the two sides will sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) for boosting trade ties, according to Zadboum.

The minister is also going to meet with senior officials from the Islamic Republic including Industry, Energy, and Economy ministers as well as the Head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA).

Visiting some of the major Iranian production centers, as well as a trip to Isfahan Province are also on the Armenian delegation’s agenda.

Kerobyan’s visit to Tehran is an opportunity to develop economic relations while resolving trade barriers and prob-



TPO Head Hamid Zadboum (L) meets Armenian Economy Minister Vahan Kerobyan (R) in Tehran on Friday.

lems with Armenia as the gateway to the Eurasian market, Zadboum said after a meeting with the official.

The Armenian delegation’s visit to Tehran comes as

the country is trying to replace Turkish commodities with Iranian products in its markets following political conflicts with its Turk neighbor.

This has presented a new opportunity for Iranian producers to have a strong presence in this market and turn the (probably) temporary opportunity into a permanent trade bond between the two countries.

Despite having shared borders, and close cultural and historical relations, the trade between Iran and Armenia has not been at a favorable level over the past few decades.

However, Iran’s preferential trade agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the recent developments in the region has changed the prospect of the country’s trade relations with Armenia, paving the way for a boost in the economic relations between the two sides.

Back in January 2020, the Head of Iran-Armenia Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry Hervik Yarijanian said the preferential trade agreement between Iran and EAEU has had a significant impact on the country’s trade relations with Armenia.

24 idle mines revived in Hormozgan Province

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — According to an official with the Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry, 24 idle mines have been revived in Hormozgan Province, in south of Iran, during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-December 20, 2020).

Iraj Hassanpour, the director for the provinces affairs in the mentioned ministry, said that very good projects have been started and are underway in Hormozgan in the field of industry and mining, which shows that Hormozgan province is on the path of development.

Through implementing a program for reviving idle small-scale mines across the country, Iran has revived 176 mines during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year.

As announced by the Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO), 12 mineral processing plants were also set up in the country through cooperation with the private sector during the mentioned nine-month period.

According to the available statistics,

the number of active mines in the country is more than 5,600 mines, from which an average of 400 million tons of various minerals are extracted annually, and the share of construction materials is estimated at 60 to 65 percent.

Currently, 257 mines are being equipped as part of a comprehensive program for reviving idle small-scale mines across the country.

Reviving 200 idle mines and setting up 25 processing units have been planned for the current Iranian year (ends on March 20, 2021).

Last year, 146 mines were revived throughout the country.

According to the information released by IMIDRO, the most small-scale inactive mines are located in Khorasan Razavi Province and the least of them are located in the south of Kerman Province and North Khorasan Province.

As reported, under the framework of the mentioned program, 672 idle mines have been identified and prioritized in the current Iranian calendar year, and diagnostic procedures have been performed on 194

mines to determine the reasons for the halt in their production.

The mentioned program, which has been at the forefront of IMIDRO’s missions over the past two years, is being pursued in several provinces.

The previous head of IMIDRO has mentioned this plan as one of the most significant plans of “Resistance Economy”, saying that IMIDRO is strongly determined to carry out it.

Reviving the small mines not only is a major step toward materializing “Surge in Production”, which is the motto of the current Iranian calendar year, it also plays a significant role in job creation throughout the country, Khodadad Gharibpour has said.

Following this program, so far various small-scale mines including chromite, manganese, hematite, and dolomite, iron ore, copper, and construction stone mines have been surveyed by monitoring and diagnosing the problems of the mines and providing solutions for resolving their issues.

According to the head of the Iranian Mining Engineering Organization (IMEO), the mines of Iran have 27 widely used minerals,



Taqi Nabi said that Iran produces 13 major minerals in the world and is among the top 10 countries in this due.

He further referred to the government’s plan for reviving the idle mines across the country, and said, “The government has taken good steps to return the closed mines to the production cycle, and good expert measures have been taken.”

Mining units are given a three-month opportunity to determine the status of stagnant and inactive mines in order to revive them, he added.

S. Arabia struggling to save face in Yemen: Danish political activist

1 → When this “government” arrived in Aden, it was not received by neither Saudi nor UAE forces, which used to be a common custom. They were not present, which may indicate that the two (Saudi Arabia and the UAE) either knew about the attack or were directly responsible. Regarding who was behind the bombing of Aden airport, everything points to forces within the Coalition.

What are the reasons for the disagreement between the Saudi-led coalition as they target one another on some occasions?

The Coalition members have conflicting interests in the region. The Saudi regime is doing everything they can to maintain the “hotel government” of Mansour Hadi in order to exert its dominance and influence in Yemen, as well as maintaining a military presence.

The Emiratis on the other hand have focused on funding militias and terrorist mercenaries in the southern part of the country, especially Socotra island which has essentially been annexed by the Emirati regime and turned into a base for espionage and surveillance in the Indian Ocean. The Emiratis are pushing for the country to become separated like it was pre-1990 unification, while the Saudis are maintaining their support for the illegitimate Hadi regime using it as a puppet to control the strings of domestic Yemeni policies.

Sudan, Morocco and Qatar used to be part of this Coalition but withdrew their support for various individual reasons.

What is the Saudi-Emirati achievements in the Yemen war which ignited in 2015?

The Saudi-led Coalition may claim they have achieved substantial success during its genocide against Yemeni civilians, but that remains to be seen. The Government of National Salvation still maintains direct authority over roughly 85% of the Yemeni population and is the only government in Yemen with a parliamentary mandate.



The Yemeni Army and Popular Committees have managed to liberate scores of territories in the past few years and have been able to develop its defensive capabilities despite the blockade and pressure enforced by the Coalition. In every corner of the Republic, the Saudi-led Coalition has failed to achieve any “goal”. They claimed at the very beginning that their bombing campaign would only last a few weeks until they would gain victory.

It has now been over half a decade. However, you might say the Riyadh agreement remains their only achievement, but even that is falling apart.

How do you assess Yemen’s humanitarian and health situation after Saudi waged war on the country?

“To quote Middle East Monitor, the involvement of Israel is an open secret. Their influence in the war has been known since 2015, when the Saudi Embassy was raided and a cache of Israeli-manufactured weapons were discovered, including documents detailing its ambitions with the United States.”

Washington’s policy dependent on sowing sectarian strife: special ambassador to UN

1 → The U.S. which launched a war against Afghanistan under the pretext of fighting the Taliban for hosting Al Qaeda, why does it now negotiate with the Taliban? What is the secret behind this policy shift?

The U.S. failure to achieve its goals in foreign policy due to multiple international factors and geopolitical variables in the West, pushed this administration to believe that it is necessary to change their strategy. They decided to return to the Afghan experience to fight the Islamic Republic of Iran as it proved effective with the Soviet Union at the time.

Therefore, they started to take new steps in Syria, where they established many extremist factions under different names to give the impression of the enormity of these takfiri forces.

That is why the U.S., after its catastrophic

failure in Syria, Lebanon, Yemen and Iraq, sees its presence in the region is coming to an end. In this context, Americans need to come up with new solutions or learn from previous experiences such as Afghanistan to deploy again its army to the region in pursuit of resources.

Why does America constantly include other new groups or movements on the list of terrorism, forgetting the role of certain Arab regimes that sponsored terrorism in the region?

The inclusion of names, persons and groups that are not in U.S. control is a matter of political failure, as it cannot rely on its Arab allies who have failed in the mission entrusted to them, whether in Yemen or other war-ravaged countries. Please explain.

Meanwhile, the United States will not impose sanctions against countries that have



so far been bound by its economic interests.

How do you see the U.S. role in the current disastrous situation in Yemen? Do the governments, which export weapons to the region to ignite wars, are entitled to talk about human rights?

America’s role is not only suspicious in

Yemen, but wherever it and its army go, especially in countries that have oil.

Washington’s policy is dependent on sowing sectarian discord in order to ensure greater results in societal strife and thus preserve interests by using this card.

The United States of America, which called itself the great supporter of peace and human rights, suffered resoundingly in the mob attack on the Capitol Hill and proved that its power-hungry political groups who have been seeking their narrow interests at any price, should not speak and give lessons any longer and for years to come in terms of freedoms, democracy and human rights, although we have issued statements that they must return to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva for rehabilitation, commitment to Sharia and the application of international human rights laws that are outside the UN council.

Unreliable media are info source for people in West on Islam: professor

By Payman Yazdani

TEHRAN – Referring to the profound impact of Islamic thought and culture on the “the west”, Prof. Taliaferro says, “primary source of information in the west about Islam is from public media, which is notoriously unreliable.”

It was on January 21, 2015, that The Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei made important points in a letter addressed to the European youth.

The content of the letter included warnings about the approaches and political behavior of the West and the United States, as well as informing the Western nations about their responsibility to know Islam directly.

The point that can be highlighted in the valuable content of this letter and can even be used as a roadmap and a historical document, is that in that year we were warned about the developments that the world experienced recently.

The post-election period in the United States is the time that has been warned of many times and in different ways.

Although almost the majority of the public opinion accepted these warnings and was well aware that the Western initiatives had failed for the nations, the developments of the last few years, especially the COVID-19 crisis and the U.S. election turmoil indicated the failure much earlier than expected.

Citizens of Europe and the West must not allow organized terrorists to be introduced as representatives of Islam. Defamatory figures should not be allowed to create a gap between European public opinion and the main reality of Islam. The gap leads to the creation of an emotional barrier and the possibility of impartial judgment is further denied.

The West must become acquainted with true Islam without prejudice and intermediaries, and on the other hand, it must not be confined to imaginary borders. The monopoly of the Western media is the most important reason that the West and its citizens are not directly acquainted with Islam.

The measures that are currently being adopted under the name of Islam in the world and the region are aimed at destroying the image of Islam and on the other hand providing

the ground for presenting a deviant model of the religion and replacing it with British or American models. This was the mission of ISIL and terrorist groups.

We discussed the issue of Islamophobia in the west with Charles Taliaferro, a professor of philosophy at St. Olaf College in the U.S.

Why has the old policy of Islamophobia and hatred against Muslims been intensified in recent years?

Even before he was elected, Donald Trump aroused the fear of Muslims as a way to solidify his America-first political base. This, of course, flies in the face of the roughly three and a half million Muslims who are citizens in the United States, let alone those who have distinguished positions in the government; my representative in the House of Representatives is Muslim, as is our Attorney General. Trump fueled resentment over American soldiers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan, accused his opponents of supporting ISIS, and portrayed the Islamic Republic of Iran as not to be trusted in the use of nuclear power.

Does the public opinion of the west have a real knowledge of Islam? and from what source do they get this knowledge?

I suspect that the primary source of information in the west about Islam is from public media, which is notoriously unreliable as television outlets such as Fox News traffic in a combination of fear and entertainment. This is slowly changing as educators and leaders of different faith communities seek solidarity. There has been a national movement in many Christian churches to establish relations with the different branches of Islam. American Muslims have joined Christians in condemning recent police killings of unarmed Black men. Education in the USA is also slowly shifting to Global history. In my own field, philosophy, the history of philosophy is becoming less centered on Euro-American affairs. This is partly due to the evident fact that “the west” has been profoundly impacted by Islamic thought and culture.

Why does the west introduce terrorists like ISIS as the representative of the Islamic world?

Fear, even terror of an enemy can motivate citizens to vote

and comity,” Zarif wrote on his Twitter page.

Trump violated international law by violating UN Security Council Resolution 2231 that endorsed the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and the 5+1 nations.

The Trump administration, which his con-

troversial rule ended in disgrace, introduced “maximum pressure” campaign against Iran by introducing the harshest ever sanctions against Iran. In response, Iran adopted maximum resistance in the face of economic and financial pressures.

Biden says U.S. coronavirus death toll will probably top 500,000 next month

1 → The previous government had set a goal of vaccinating 20 million people before the end of last year. As of Thursday, more than 17,500,000 vaccines have been administered across the U.S., according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

100 million shots in his first 100 days, “mitigate spread” via enhanced public health guidance and mandated mask-wearing, and safely reopen schools and businesses.

Some of these goals are being addressed by executive actions, 10 of which were signed by Biden on Thursday. One will require mask-wearing in airports and on public transportation, including many trains, planes and intercity buses.

McConnell proposes delaying Trump’s impeachment trial until February

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell is proposing that former President Donald Trump’s impeachment trial be delayed until mid-February.

The request comes after Democrats said Thursday that the House of Representatives could send the impeachment charge to the Senate as early as Friday.

Last week, the U.S. House impeached Trump over his support for the attack on the Capitol on Jan. 6 that left five people dead.

Trump was blamed for inciting an insurrection when the lawmakers were busy certifying the victory of Joe Biden in the 2020 presidential election.

The bipartisan effort kicked off in the lower chamber of U.S. Congress in a bid to remove Trump from office before his tenure ended on Wednesday.

Now, Republicans argue that Trump needs time to prepare a defense against the charges and that the House moved quickly on impeachment.

McConnell proposed that the House send the impeachment charge to the Senate on Jan. 28, and that Trump be given two weeks after that to prepare his pre-trial brief, before the Senate trial starts.

“At this time of strong political passions, Senate Republicans believe it is absolutely imperative that we do not allow a half-baked process to short-circuit the due process that former President Trump deserves or damage the Senate or the presidency,” McConnell said in a statement.

His proposal is being reviewed by Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, according to a Schumer’s spokesman.

Iraq pledges ‘earth-shattering response’ after Baghdad blasts

Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi promises a crushing response after a twin blast, that has reportedly been claimed by the Takfiri terror group of Daesh, targeted a busy square in Baghdad claiming at least 32 people.

“Our response to those who shed innocent Iraqi blood will be bold and earth-shattering, and the evil leaders of Daesh will face a force to be reckoned with,” Kadhimi tweeted on Thursday.

Our response to those who shed innocent Iraqi blood will be bold and earth-shattering, and the evil leaders of Daesh will face a force to be reckoned with.

According to Iraq’s Health Ministry, as many as 110 others have also been wounded from the bombings that struck the capital’s Tayaran Square earlier in the day.

The first attacker drew a crowd at the bustling market in the square by claiming to feel sick, then detonating his explosives belt, the Iraqi Interior Ministry was cited by AFP as saying. As more people flocked to the scene to help the victims, a second bomber set off another blast.

Daesh claimed responsibility for both the bombings, according to, what Newsweek has referred to as, a tweet by the terrorist outfit.

According to Press TV, the terror group started its campaign of bloodshed and destruction in Iraq and neighboring Syria in 2014.

It claimed huge swathes of territory in a rather short period, prompting Baghdad to seek out the assistance of its allies, including Iran, which began to lend it military advisory support. The Iraqi military also started enlisting counter-terrorism support from volunteer Shia fighters, known as Hashd al-Sha’abi or the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU).

The combined assistance gradually reversed the terrorists’ fortunes, leading to their ultimate defeat in late 2017. The group, though, has been maintaining scattered sleeper cells across Iraq, staging sporadic attacks from time to time.

Resistance News

Haneyya: Hamas will never compromise on Palestine

INTERNATIONAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Ismail Haneyya, Hamas’s leader, affirmed the Movement’s commitment to its three strategic paths: not to surrender one inch of the land of Palestine, to adhere to the right of return and the rights of Palestinians and to adhere to the option of comprehensive resistance against the occupation.

Haneyya addressed a march of one million people in Pakistan on Thursday rejecting normalization and recognition of Israel. The march grouped leaders and scholars from Pakistan and Palestine.

He saluted the Islamic scholars in Pakistan for organizing the march and praised the great nation of Pakistan which was able to acquire nuclear capability despite all challenges.

Hamas’s leader praised the position of Pakistan and Prime Minister Imran Khan who declared at the UN Security Council and regional and international bodies that Pakistan has not and will not normalize relations with Israel.

Haneyya pointed out the fact that the Palestinian cause is Arab, Islamic and humanitarian, not just Palestinian. He called on the Muslim Pakistani people to continue supporting Palestinians and continue to reject normalization.

“Hamas and the Palestinian people, with all its factions, will continue to resist occupation will all means until the liberation of Palestine and restoring the rights of the Palestinians and the Arab and Islamic nation in the land of Palestine”, he concluded.

POLITICAL d e s k

TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Friday that the new Biden administration can either continue the failed policies of his predecessor Donald Trump and show contempt for international law or seek

“peace and comity”.

“The new US administration has a fundamental choice to make: It can embrace the failed policies of its predecessor, and continue down the path of contempt for int’l cooperation & int’l law. Or, it can reject failed assumptions & seek peace

Wheat harvest ritual added to intangible cultural heritage list

→1 The name Kakol stems from the part of a wheat field in which the clusters are denser and more resistant, and they also gain higher height and larger grains therefore small birds nest on them.

During the harvest time in the middle of summer, the farmers harvest wheat around the area and try their best not to damage the bird nests, as they are considered as a sign of blessing.



Seven more items including the skill of making Puli hat, the art of making Siah-Chador (nomadic black tents), and the art of making tobacco sacks were also registered on the prestigious list.

Located in eastern Iran, South Khorasan province is home to many historical and natural attractions such as Birjand Castle, Dragon Cave, Furg Citadel, and Polond Desert.

Saffron and barberry, the former known as the “red gold” in the country, which are considerably produced in almost all parts of the province, have made it a significant destination for ecotourism.

60,000 relics being re-arranged, documented in Iranian museum

HERITAGE TEHRAN – Some 60,000 relics and historical objects are being documented to be put in the right order in the Great Museum of Khorasan, which is located in Mashhad, northeast Iran.

“60,000 historical objects are being documented and re-arranged in the Great Museum of Khorasan,” CHTN quoted the deputy tourism minister, Mohammad-Hassan Talebian, as saying on Thursday.



Mohammad-Hassan Talebian

He made the remakes addressing the opening ceremony of a calligraphy fair and conference, which was held at the museum, which showcases relics from various segments of the rich Iranian history.

Mashhad is a traditional destination for travelers and pilgrims who come from various Iranian cities, neighboring countries, and even across the globe to visit the imposing, massive holy shrine complex of Imam Reza (AS), the eighth Imam of the Shia Muslims.

Abandoned cistern reopened after 50 years

HERITAGE TEHRAN – An abandoned Ab-Anbar (cistern) has recently been reopened after 50 years of closure in the city of Torbat-e Heydarieh, northeast Iran.

The cistern, which is the biggest in the city, has considerable potential to be a main tourist attraction after fully being restored, CHTN quoted the local tourism chief as saying on Thursday.

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



Such underground reservoirs or Ab-Anbars are parts of the iconic qanat systems, which rely on snow-fed streams flowing down from surrounding mountains. Qanats, according to UNESCO, provide exceptional testimony to cultural traditions and civilizations in desert areas with an arid climate.

According to archaeological studies, Torbat-e Heydarieh is home to several historical caves due to its favorable habitat conditions and traces of habitation from about 40,000 years have been identified in the caves of the region, the official added. The history of the area stretches back to the Achaemenian Empire from the 6th to 4th century BC and the Parthian Empire from the 3rd century BC to the 3rd century CE.

Ancient mosque to gain former glory

TOURISM TEHRAN – The historical Jameh Mosque of Marand, which stands tall in East Azarbaijan province, northwest Iran, is scheduled to undergo rehabilitation works in the near future, the provincial tourism chief has said.

Some urgent restoration works are planned to be commenced on the mosque by the end of the current Iranian calendar year 1399 (March 20), Ahmad Hamzezadeh announced on Thursday.

Restoration of the mosque's mihrab, which is more time consuming and needs more detailed technical studies, will be continuing during the next [Iranian calendar] year under the supervision of the cultural heritage experts, the official added.

Mihrab is a semicircular niche in the wall of a mosque that points out the qibla, the direction of the Kaaba in Mecca, and hence the direction that Muslims should face when praying.

Jameh Mosque of Marand is estimated to date back to the Ilkhanate times (1256–1335/1353). Hulegu, a grandson



of Genghis Khan, was given the task of capturing Iran by the paramount Mongol chieftain Mongke. Hulegu set out in about 1253 with a Mongol army of

about 130,000. He founded the Il-Khanid dynasty in 1256, and by 1258 he had captured Baghdad and all of Iran. The Il-Khans consolidated their position in

Iran and reunited the region as a political and territorial entity after several centuries of fragmented rule by petty dynasties.

Soaked in history and culture for millennia, Tabriz, which is the capital of East Azarbaijan, embraces several historical and religious sites, including the Jameh Mosque of Tabriz and Arg of Tabriz, and UNESCO-registered Tabriz Historic Bazaar Complex to name a few. The city became the capital of the Mongol Il-Khan Mahmud Gazan (1295–1304) and his successor. Timur (Tamerlane), a Turkic conqueror, took it in 1392. Some decades later the Kara Koyunlu Turkmen made it their capital, it was when the famous Blue Mosque was built in Tabriz.

The city retained its administrative status under the Safavid dynasty until 1548, when Shah Tahmasp I relocated his capital westward to Qazvin. During the next two centuries, Tabriz changed hands several times between Persia and Ottoman Empire. During World War I, the city was temporarily occupied by Turkish and then Soviet troops.

Fishing museum to be established in Gilan

TOURISM TEHRAN – A fishing museum will be established in the city of Paresar in Iran's Gilan province, which is bounded by the Caspian Sea.

The museum will be formed under a memorandum of understanding recently signed between the province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department, and Paresar municipality, ILNA reported on Friday.

The provincial tourism chief Masoud Hallajpour and the mayor of Paresar inked the MOU on Wednesday, the report said.

The agreement is aimed to help preserve the indigenous culture of the various regions of the northern province by establishing such an institution.

Hallajpour, on the sidelines of the signing ceremony, expressed his hope that establishing such a museum could promote the “culture and art of fishing”, which has been the profession of the people of this region for a long time.

Earlier this month, the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, and the Agricultural Services

Specialized Holding Co., which is affiliated with the Ministry of Agriculture Jihad, signed an MOU to establish a caviar museum in the northern province.

The MOU aimed at facilitating the establishment of the National Caviar Museum in Gilan to contribute to preserve cultural assets as well as deepen bilateral collaborations between the two ministries.

Developing fisheries tourism, preserving national resources, establishing national and international caviar trade centers, launching sturgeon breeding centers, and holding training courses and educational and recreational tours related to the caviar industry were also among the most important goals of signing the memorandum.

Bounded by the Caspian Sea and the Republic of Azerbaijan on the north, Gilan, in the far past, was within the sphere of influence of the successive Achaemenid, Seleucid, Parthian, and Sassanid empires that ruled Iran until the 7th century CE.

Sophisticated Rasht, capital of Gilan province, has long been a weekend escape for residents of Tehran



who are looking to sample the famous local cuisine and hoping for some pluvial action – it's the largest, and wettest town in the northern region. Gilan is divided into a coastal plain including the large delta of Sefid Rud and adjacent parts of the Alborz mountain range.

Surveillance cameras installed along road to Persepolis

HERITAGE TEHRAN – Sets of surveillance cameras have recently been installed along the local road that leads to the UNESCO-registered Persepolis in southern Iran.

The surveillance cameras were installed due to multiple reasons including traffic speed monitoring, better protection of the World Heritage site, and improve the quality of welfare and security of tourists, a local official announced on Wednesday, CHTN reported.

Persepolis, also known as Takht-e Jamshid, whose magnificent ruins rest at the foot of Kuh-e Rahmat (Mountain of Mercy), was the ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid Empire. It is situated 60



kilometers northeast of the city of Shiraz in Fars province.

The royal city of Persepolis ranks among the archaeological sites which have no equivalent, considering its unique archi-

itecture, urban planning, construction technology, and art. It was burnt by Alexander the Great in 330 BC apparently as revenge to the Persians because it seems the Persian King Xerxes had burnt the Greek City of Athens around 150 years earlier.

The city's immense terrace was begun about 518 BC by Darius the Great, the Achaemenid Empire's king. On this terrace, successive kings erected a series of architecturally stunning palatial buildings, among them the massive Apadana palace and the Throne Hall (“Hundred-Column Hall”).

This 13-ha ensemble of majestic approaches, monumental stairways, throne rooms (Apadana), reception rooms, and

dependencies is classified among the world's greatest archaeological sites. Persepolis was the seat of the government of the Achaemenid Empire, though it was designed primarily to be a showplace and spectacular center for the receptions and festivals of the kings and their empire.

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.

Vast permanent center for handicrafts to be inaugurated near Tehran

HERITAGE TEHRAN – A massive permanent center for the craftsmanship and trade of handicrafts is being constructed in Alborz province, northcentral Iran.

The establishment of a permanent marketplace and exhibition of handicrafts is underway in Alborz since the province is home to many artists and craftspeople from various ethnic minorities, provincial tourism chief Freydom Mohammadi said on Wednesday.

The center, being completed in close collaboration of the state-run institutes, crafters, and private investors, will be running as a comprehensive and all-inclusive center for specialized training in various fields of art, marketing, and sale of products, according to the official.

“And it will be a forum for organizing festivals and exhibitions as well.”

With 14 entries, Iran ranks first globally for the number of cities and villages registered by the World Crafts



Council, as China with seven entries, Chile with four, and India with three ones come next. The country exported \$523 million worth of handicrafts during the past cal-

Sole remaining ‘sabat’ in Sabzevar undergoes restoration

HERITAGE TEHRAN – An old sabat, a kind of mudbrick sun shelter in oasis towns, has undergone some rehabilitation works in the historical texture of Sabzevar, northeastern province of Khorasan Razavi, a local tourism chief has said.

The urban structure, which is the only existing sabat in the region, dates back to the Qajar-era (1789–1925) and is located next to the historical Kian Mansion, Moshen Barabadi said on Thursday.

The restoration project aims at strengthening the mud-brick structure, replacing worn-out materials and repairing the façade, the official added.

Sabat is an arched structure built between the opposite buildings on both sides of a narrow street in tropical and desert areas and it creates shade and a cool place for passers-by. Due to its semi-covered nature, this structure creates air blinds in summer, which cools the air inside sabat and in winter makes the air warmer.

Considering the desert climate of the region, most of the historical neighborhoods had sabats, which also helped to strengthen the side houses.

Sabzevar, located in the west of Khorasan Razavi province, has over 100 historical and natural sites inscribed on the National Heritage list.

The history of Sabzevar goes back to the first millennium BC. After the Mongol invasion of Iran, the city was the first part of Iran that moved towards its freedom, under the lead of the Sarbedaran movement.

In the 14th century, Timur, the Turco-Mongol conqueror and the founder of the Timurid Empire, invaded Iran, and despite the brave defense of people in Sabzevar, the city was destroyed quite completely. It is said that about 90,000 people having been massacred by Timur. After killing all men in the town, he cut their heads and made three pyramids of the heads in a city square, which is known



as Sarberiz (literally means place of heads) square nowadays.

National observatory construction at final stage

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** – Iranian National Observatory (INO), which is being built near the city of Kashan, central Isfahan province, enters the final stage of construction and the functional tests begin, IRNA reported on Friday.

The 3.4-meter telescope will be put into operation by mid-June, executor of the INO project, Habib Khosroshahi said.

The domestically-made telescope will be handed over to the National Observatory of Iran after passing the basic motion tests, installation, the software system, and control, he stated.

The main activities of the national observatory include designing, construction, monitoring, and operating the 3.4-meter INO340 telescope, its instruments, and infrastructures. The range of instruments initially planned for the telescope includes a wave-front sensor, auto-guider, imaging CCDs, and a high-resolution spectrograph.

The INO340 telescope is a Ritchey-Chrétien f/11 which provides unvignetted 20 arcmin field of view at the main Cassegrain focus. In addition, 3 bended focus are also provided each with a field of view of 8 arcmin. The



primary mirror is meniscus shaped and the secondary mirror is convex and together they form a well-corrected focus.

The main mirror (M1) is single segment fast f/1.5 mirror with a diameter of 3.4m, which makes IN340 one of the most compact telescopes at this size. M1 is a meniscus

shape 18 cm thick made of a Zerodur ceramic with a 700mm central hole. The M1 is supported by 60 actuators which are actively or passively controlled to keep the mirror shape undistorted under its own gravity at different pointing.

INO is a national project and has been

envisioned to become an international scientific platform for astronomy in the future. Therefore, educating the general public and especially the younger generation about the basics of astronomy is another important step ahead of the INO project.

An important focus of these activities is the residents close to the area around the INO site whose lifestyles can directly affect the workflow of the INO observatory. So far, about 1,400 students from 22 schools in towns and villages close to Gargash site have been educated about the basics of astronomy and the effects of light pollution on the INO observatory. Furthermore, the project is using social media to engage the general public with the project.

INO scientists selected Mount Gargash in 2009 after a rigorous eight-year campaign spanning the entire country that measured the atmospheric features that could affect the location of the Iranian National Observatory. Many tasks have been done since then including building a dedicated 11.2 km road connecting the national road network to the summit. The observatory building is currently under construction and is planned to be opened by the next 5 months.

Rainfall drops sharply in 4 months on year



SOCIETY **TEHRAN** – Precipitation in Iran amounted to 65.8 millimeters from the beginning of the current water year (September 22, 2020) until January 19, which demonstrates a 44 percent decline compared to the same period last [Iranian calendar] year.

The amount of rainfall recorded in the country over the past four months is also 25 percent lower than the long-term average, with over 20 provinces from 31 provinces of the country facing a lack of rainfall.

According to the National Drought Monitoring Center of the Meteorological Organization, over the aforementioned period, provinces of Ilam, Khorasan Razavi, North Khorasan, Kerman, Hormozgan, Sistan-Baluchestan were short

of rain by 30, 34, 43, 48, 85, 85 percent compared to the long-term mean, respectively.

On the other hand, six provinces of Ardebil, Alborz, Tehran, Qom, Kohgiluyeh-Boyerahmad, and Yazd has met normal or slightly above normal levels of rainfall.

Although the provinces of Gilan and Mazandaran have received the most rainfall since the beginning of the current crop year, both are short of rain in comparison to the long-run.

The National Drought Monitoring Center predicts that low rainfall in Iran will continue until February 18, when precipitation systems enter the country from the south and southwest.

Healthcare's share of national budget surges twofold

1 → The health system accounts for approximately 17 percent of the total public budget. Over 90 percent of the health system's budget is provided from government and public resources and 10 percent from private resources, which are gained from the health system and hospitals.

The budget is spent on health, treatment, research, and development in the health sector and higher education.

The share of health services in the budget is 70 percent, while primary healthcare services and research hold a share of 18 and 12 percent, respectively.

About 67 percent of the health system budget is allocated to medical universities, which shows an increase of 78 percent compared to the current year's budget.

The medical universities' budget for providing inpatient treatment services has increased by 167 percent, while the number of inpatients in medical universities has decreased from 24 million to 13 million.

The share of traditional medicine in the

health budget has grown by 6 percent.

Health reform plan and dealing with crises

The coronavirus outbreak proved that one-dimensional health systems cannot survive from health-threatening crises, which occur every few years in the form of infectious diseases, so that the need for healthcare reforms should be brought into sharp focus.

It is essential to know that as much as creating new hospital beds, developing hospitals, renovating dilapidated hospital tissue and upgrading medical centers are important; the establishment of comprehensive health centers, health houses, health workers training, the launch of electronic health records for the people, and numerous screening schemes, medical supply, quantitative and qualitative improvement of medical education, and medical research are of great importance which needs to be considered.

The healthcare reform plan, aiming at decreasing the out-of-pocket expenses for

the patients, promoting natural birth, and supporting underprivileged patients suffering from rare or incurable diseases, was launched in the country in May 2014.

A plan that has succeeded in enforcing many of the health-deferred laws and regulations, and continues to do so despite all the credit and manpower deficiencies.

Increased access to medicine and treatment was among the achievements of the plan. In addition, 11 million Iranians without any health insurance were covered by public insurance.

Prior to the project, public spending on healthcare services was more than 50 percent. Meanwhile, with the implementation of the plan, the share of payment from the pockets of patients in the field of health has decreased to 32.4 percent.

The plan started supporting physicians in deprived areas, which increased the number of doctors to more than 4,300 general practitioners, specialists, and subspecialists, resulting in increased



access to medical treatment.

About 1,100 comprehensive healthcare centers across the country are now offering medical services to patients and providing the necessary care since the onset of the epidemic.

One of the important health capacities that came to the aid of the country in the coronavirus crisis was the electronic health record, and according to the Minister of Health Saeed Namaki, at least 75 million Iranians with a national code can file electronic health records.

Butterfly wing clap explains mystery of flight

The fluttery flight of butterflies has so far been somewhat of a mystery to researchers, given their unusually large and broad wings relative to their body size. Now researchers at Lund University in Sweden have studied the aerodynamics of butterflies in a wind tunnel. The results suggest that butterflies use a highly effective clap technique, therefore making use of their unique wings. This helps them rapidly take off when escaping predators.

The study explains the benefits of both the wing shape and the flexibility of their wings.

The Lund researchers studied the wingbeats of freely flying butterflies during take-off in a wind tunnel. During the upward stroke, the wings cup, creating an air-filled pocket between them. When the wings then collide, the air is forced out, resulting in a backward jet that propels the butterflies forward. The downward wingbeat has another function: the butterflies stay in the air and do not fall

to the ground.

The wings colliding was described by researchers almost 50 years ago, but it is only in this study that the theory has been tested on real butterflies in free flight. Until now, the common perception has been that butterfly wings are aerodynamically inefficient, however, the researchers suggest that the opposite is actually true.

"That the wings are cupped when butterflies clap them together, makes the wing

stroke much more effective. It is an elegant mechanism that is far more advanced than we imagined, and it is fascinating. The butterflies benefit from the technique when they have to take off quickly to escape from predators," says biology researcher Per Henningsson, who studied the butterflies' aerodynamics together with colleague Christoffer Johansson. "The shape and flexibility of butterfly wings could inspire improved performance and flight technology in small drones," he continues.

ENGLISH IN USE

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A ← → چ

Iranian researchers produce nano-mask with 99.9% lethality to coronavirus

Researchers at the Institute of Materials and Energy affiliated with the Ministry of Science, produced nano face masks that can kill coronavirus by 99.9 percent.

According to ISNA, Abuzar Masoudi, a faculty member of the Materials and Energy Research Institute, said that since the fibers of the fabric are hydrophilic. Therefore, the behavior of the virus is different, so different masks have been offered, including the FFP1 mask, which prevents up to 95 percent of the virus and up to 80 percent of the bacteria. While the N95 mask resists the virus up to 95 percent, and up to 100 percent of the bacteria.

This is while sponge and cloth masks prevent up to 50 percent of bacteria from entering the body, and are not able to fight the virus.

According to Masoudi, this project is planned to enter the industrial production phase.

محققان ایرانی ماسک نانو با قدرت کشندگی ۹۹.۹ درصد ویروس کرونا تولید کردند

محققان پژوهشگاه مواد و انرژی زیر نظر وزارت علوم، تحقیقات و فناوری ایران با استفاده از لایه نشانی نانو ذرات به پارچه به الیافی دست یافتند که قادر به تخریب ۹۹.۹ درصدی ویروس کرونا هستند.

به گزارش ایسنا، ابوزر مسعودی عضو هیات علمی پژوهشگاه مواد و انرژی گفت از آنجایی که الیاف پارچه آب دوست هستند؛ از این رو رفتار ویروس متفاوت است و بر این اساس ماسک‌های مختلفی عرضه شده است که از آن جمله می‌توان به ماسک FFP۱ اشاره کرد که تا ۹۵ درصد از ورود ویروس و تا ۸۰ درصد از ورود باکتری جلوگیری می‌کند. این میزان برای ماسک N۹۵ تا ۹۵ درصد ویروس و تا ۱۰۰ درصد باکتری می‌شود.

این در حالی است که ماسک‌های اسفنجی و پارچه‌ای تا ۵۰ درصد از ورود باکتری به بدن جلوگیری می‌کنند، ولی قادر به مقابله با ویروس نیستند. به گفته آنها این طرح برای ورود به فاز تولید صنعتی برنامه ریزی شده است.

One-third of US rivers have changed color in recent decades, research finds

Rivers may seem like immutable features of the landscape but they are in fact changing color over time, a new study has found.

Researchers compiled a database of satellite images of major rivers in the United States from 1984 to 2018 and learned that about a third have significantly changed color in less than 40 years.



The overall significance of the changes is unclear and could reflect various ways in which humans are impacting the environment, said lead author John Gardner, an assistant professor of geology and environmental science at the University of Pittsburgh.

One stark example from the study of rapid color change is Lake Mead along the Colorado River. Because water levels have declined since the early 2000s owing to drought and increased water demand, the water's color has gone from a blue and green hue to a yellower river. The Double Mountain Fork Brazos River in Texas, on the other hand, went from yellow to blue and green after a dam was built in the early 90s.

Some color shifts reflected a seasonal trend – the lower Mississippi River area had steady seasonal color changes, the Guardian reported.

"We saw that rivers downstream of dams had river color patterns that likely mirrored dam operations, and long-term trends in river color that were caused by shrinking reservoirs and proximity to large cities," Gardner said.

"Rivers – comparatively to other ecosystems – are super degraded since they drain our landscapes," he added. "We use them heavily for all sorts of things for drinking water and transportation."

Legislation like the Clean Water Act has improved water quality in the United States these past 40 years, said Gaboury Benoit, a Yale School of Environment Professor who was not involved with the research. He pointed out that water color isn't always an indicator of declining water quality, because it can also reflect an improvement in cases where fewer industrial or agricultural byproducts are entering the water, and that the study "rightfully does not draw conclusions."

"Stricter enforcement of parts of the Clean Water Act are helping to reduce pollution coming from urban land use," he said in an email. "What remains problematic is agriculture, which has enjoyed exemption from many water quality regulations."

Environmental justice experts say that changing river colors can be cause for alarm. In Maryland, Patuxent River advocate Frederick Tutman said the waterway was currently a murky brown color, but when he was a child the river was green.

Reports on the river's condition have attribute the pollution to a growing population and wastewater treatment facilities in the Patuxent watershed. Maryland residents have also worried that a military base along the river could have contributed to the darker shade.

Tutman recalled the Flint water crisis as an example of how water color can indicate water quality issues. In an effort to save money, officials stopped using the Huron River and began to rely on the polluted Flint River for the city's water supply. Residents reported murky yellow or brown water coming out of their faucets and eventually began citing health problems like hair loss and rashes after drinking the water and using it to bathe.

"You can find 'Flints' across America, where poor people have nobody at all paying attention to the quality of their drinking water or the surface waters nearby," he said.

He did note that in many ways water quality has improved across the country.

"In the 60s we had burning rivers," he said. "We don't have burning rivers anymore."

LET'S LEARN PERSIAN

(Part 113)

(Source: saadifoundation.ir)

Coordinate Conjunction

حرف ربط همپایه

I both work and study. من هم کار می‌کنم (و) هم درس می‌خوانم.

Indefinite

نکره

Indefinite markers are یک, unstressed ی /i/, and zero.

No 3 is the least formal of all:

۱. یک + شاعر ← یک شاعر a poet
۲. شاعر + ی ← شاعری /šā'eri/ a poet
۳. یک + شاعر + ی ← یک شاعری /šā'eri/ a poet
۴. شاعر + ۰ ← شاعر a poet

● تمرین ۳. با "یک" و "ی" نکره کنید:

یک + اسم	اسم + ی
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

اسم بعد از "چه" معمولاً "ی" نکره می‌گیرد:

چه ورزشی؟ چه سنی؟ چه ارتقاعی؟ چه شنایی؟

"ی" نکره بعد از واژه:

عمو، زیبا، کتیه، بازی ← عموی، زیبایی، کتیبه‌ای، بازی‌ای

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GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

When two persons are together, two of them must not whisper to each other, without letting the third hear; because it would hurt him.

Prophet Muhammad (S)

WHAT'S IN ART GALLERIES

Multimedia

■ Saleh Gallery is playing host to an exhibition of artworks in various media by a group of artists, including Adel Yunesi, Mehdi Mirbaqeri, Zahra Nemati, Iman Sadeqi, Afshin Kusha, Maryam Ashkanian and Farshad Alekhamis.

The exhibition entitled "Cocamashadi 2" will run until February 9 at the gallery located at 148 Karim Khan Ave.

Print

■ Artibition Gallery is showcasing an exhibition of prints by Pari Hani. The exhibit runs until January 31 at the gallery located at Qandi Alley, Sasanipur St., Golsabi St., off Shariati Ave.

Painting

■ Paintings by a group of artists, including Hanieh Dezfouli, Maryam Borbor, Farzaneh Shariat, Fatemeh Mosleh, Niusha Jalilvand, and Roya Shirzadlu, are currently on view in an exhibition at Ayrik Gallery. The exhibition will run until January 27 at the gallery located at Ayrik Center on East Ferdows Blvd.

■ An exhibition of paintings by Bahram Ghonchehpur is currently underway at Iranshahr Gallery. The exhibit will run until February 8 at the gallery located at 69 Sepand St., off Karim Khan Ave.

■ Ali Qaemi is hanging his latest paintings in an exhibition named "Floating" at E1 Gallery. The exhibit will run until February 12 at the gallery that can be found at 1 Hamid Dead End, off Lesani Alley, Jebbeh St., off Mahdiah St. in the Elahieh neighborhood.

■ An exhibition of paintings by Atefeh Ebrahimi is currently underway at Atashzad Gallery. The exhibit titled "Experience" will run until January 27 at the gallery that can be found at 3 North Abbaspur (Tavanir) St. near Vanak Sq.

■ An exhibition of paintings by Jalal Shabahngi is underway at Sohrab Gallery. The exhibit named "Where Have I Stood" will run until February 2 at the gallery located at 142 Somayyeh St.

■ Zarna Gallery is playing host to an exhibition of paintings by Fatemeh Gholami. The exhibit named "Happening" will continue until January 26 at 10 Esko Alley near Daneshgah St. and Enqelab Ave.

■ Paintings by Fatemeh Ebrahimi are currently on display in an exhibition at Vista Gallery. The exhibit entitled "Once the Drapes Fall..." will run until February 1 at the gallery located at No. 11, 12th Alley, Mir Emad St.

■ An exhibition of paintings by Nafiseh Sediqi is currently underway at Asar Gallery. The exhibit titled "Nature" will run until February 19 at the gallery located at No. 16 Barforushan St., Iranshahr St.

■ An exhibition of paintings by Iman Sadeqi is currently underway at Farmanfarma Gallery. The exhibit will continue until January 31 at the gallery located at 2nd Araabi St., North Kheradmand St. off Karim Khan Ave.

French academics to discuss Abolfazl Jalili's films

A R T **TEHRAN** – The poetic universe of Iranian filmmaker Abolfazl Jalili will be discussed in a conference, which will be organized by the Institute for Research and Studies on the Arab and Muslim Worlds – Iremam and Aix-Marseille University.

The meeting will stream through Zoom on February 2 at 10 am with a lecture by Seyyed Vahid Yaqubi, an expert on French and comparative literature, who is also a teacher of the Persian language and a specialist in cultural, artistic and cinematographic issues at the Center Franco-Iranien.

He is the author of "L'esthétique de la Courbe Dans la Poésie Surréaliste" ("The Aesthetics of the Curve in Surrealist Poetry").

The conference will be organized in the framework of the Iranian studies group of IREMAM with contributions from Homa Lessan Pezechki, a professor of Persian language and literature, and Camille Rhoné-Quer, a lecturer in medieval history.

Jalili has made over 10 movies, including

Conférence du Groupe d'Études Iraniennes de l'IREMAM



La littérature persane dans le cinéma d'auteur iranien
L'univers poétique d'Abolfazl Jalili, cinéaste iranien

Avec Seyedvahid Yaghoubi

Docteur en littérature française et comparée, spécialiste des questions culturelles, artistiques et cinématographiques au Centre Franco-Iranien

Mardi 2 février 2021
10h, en ligne

Contact :
Homa Lessan Pezechki, Professeur de langue et littérature persanes (AMU/IREMAM)
Camille Rhoné-Quer, Maître de conférences en histoire médiévale (AMU/IREMAM)
Contact : homa.lessan-pezechki@univ-amu.fr ou camille.rhone@univ-amu.fr

Photos © Abolfazl Jalili

A poster for a conference on Abolfazl Jalili's films, which will be held by the Institute for Research and Studies on the Arab and Muslim Worlds – Iremam and Aix-Marseille University in France.

Publishers from Serbia, Italy display latest offerings at Tehran Book Fair



A poster for the Tehran Book Fair.

C U L T U R E **TEHRAN** – Dozens of publishers from Serbia and Italy are attending the Tehran International Book Fair displaying their latest offerings at Iran's most important cultural event that is organized online this year due to the pandemic.

Francesco Brioschi, Ponte and IsMEO – the Institute for the Middle and Far East are among the Italian publishers attending the virtual fair.

Some officials of the Belgrade International Book Fair and several Serbian publishing houses, including

Laguna Publishing, Kreativni Centar, Cigoja Stampa and Utopia, are also attending the fair.

Iran was the guest of honor at the Belgrade International Book Fair in 2016.

In addition, the virtual edition of the Tehran Book Fair, which opened last Tuesday, has organized 17 international webinars on various cultural topics.

Iranian cultural attaché Mehdi Shirazi, Srdan Markovic from the Serbian Publishing House Utopia and translator Aleksandar Dragovic are among the experts participating in the webinars to discuss Iranian books and the Persian translation of books in Serbia.

Dragovic is the translator of a selection from Iranian children's book writer Hushang Moradi Kermani's bestseller "The Stories of Majid", which was unveiled at the 64th Belgrade International Book Fair in 2019.

The Persian language in Europe was discussed in the first webinar of the fair on Wednesday. A number of Iranian and Turkish publishers held a session on the translation of children's books. The topic was also scrutinized in a webinar by Iranian and Arab publishing houses.

On Thursday, the Persian language in the Indian Peninsula was discussed in addition to the translation and publication of resistance and Islamic revolution literature in a session attended by Iranian and Arab publishers. A Spanish translation of the book "Roots of the Islamic Revolution" was also reviewed.

Sixth Intl. Art Festival of Resistance to be held in February

A R T **TEHRAN** – The sixth International Art Festival of Resistance will be held in Tehran in February with artworks in the forms of painting, poster, sculpture, cartoon and caricature.

"The cartoon section of the festival will focus on themes of 'We Defeat Coronavirus' and 'The U.S. Decline'," director of the cartoon section of the festival, Masud Shojaei-Tabatabai, said in a press release published on Friday.

"Over 1000 submissions from 50 countries have been received by the organizers, and a jury is selecting the top works," he said.



A poster for the Sixth International Art Festival of Resistance.

Alireza Zakeri, Majid Khosro-Anjam and Mohammad-Ali Rajabi are the jury members of this section.

He added that the cartoons on the theme of "The U.S. Decline" are quite interesting, and the coronavirus and the health workers have also been warmly welcomed by the cartoonists.

The Revayat Cultural Foundation is the organizer of the event.

Shojaei-Tabatabai, who is the director of Art Bureau's Visual Arts Office, is also a jury member of the "Palestine Is Not Alone", an international cartoon, caricature and poster contest to show solidarity with the oppressed

people of Palestine.

Mohammad Khazai, Masud Ziai, Saedi Sadeqi and Abbas Nasserri are the Iranian jury members who will judge the artworks at the contest.

Luiz Carlos Fernandes from Brazil, Cristina Bernazzani from Italy, Izabela Kowalska from Poland and Balai Kartun Rossem from Malaysia will judge the submissions to the international competition.

Due to the high risk of spreading the coronavirus, the contest "Palestine Is Not Alone" will be held online, and each submitted work will be uploaded on the Irancartoon website.

"Art" embellishes Mehregan Theater, "The Caretaker" to be housed at Malek in Tehran

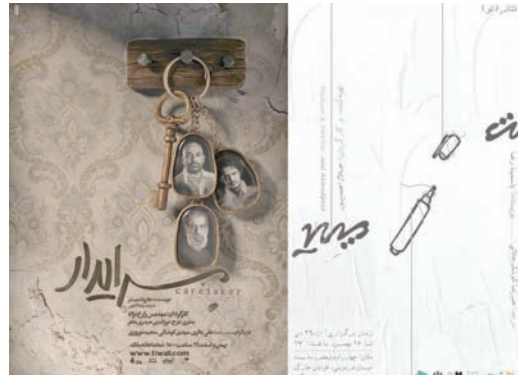
A R T **TEHRAN** – French writer Yasmina Reza's "Art" is currently on stage at Mehregan Theater and British writer Harold Pinter's play "The Caretaker" will go on stage at Malek Theater as the Tehran theaters reopened last week after a long shutdown over the outbreak of COVID-19.

Starring Seyyed Erfan Athari, Jalal Ahmadpur and Danial Karimi, "Art" is being directed by Ahmadpur based on a Persian translation of the play by Alireza Kushk-Jalali.

The Tony Award-winning play "Art" premiered in 1994 at Comédie des Champs-Élysées in Paris. The play subsequently ran in London in 1996 and on Broadway in 1998.

Set in Paris, the story of the play revolves around three friends named Serge, Marc and Yvan, who find their previously solid 15-year friendship on shaky ground when Serge buys an expensive painting. The canvas is white, with several fine white lines.

It focuses on the meaning of art and friendship, to both the man who bought the painting and the two friends who come to see it.



A combination photo shows posters for the plays "The Caretaker" and "Art".

Mahdis Zarenejad also plans to stage "The Caretaker" at Malek Theater this Wednesday.

Reza Dadui has translated the play into Persian and Ali Baqeri, Mehdi Kushki and Majid Noruzi are the members of the cast.

"The Caretaker" is a play in three acts. Although it was the sixth of his major works for stage and television, this psychological study of the confluence of power, allegiance, innocence and corruption among two brothers and a tramp became Pinter's first significant commercial success.

It premiered at the Arts Theatre Club in London's West End in April 1960 and transferred to the Duchess Theatre the following month where it ran for 444 performances before departing London for Broadway.

In 1963, a film version of the play based on Pinter's unpublished screenplay was directed by Clive Donner. The movie starred Alan Bates as Mick and Donald Pleasence as Davies in their original stage roles, while Robert Shaw replaced Peter Woodthorpe as Aston.

First published by both Encore Publishing and Eyre Methuen in 1960, "The Caretaker" remains one of Pinter's most celebrated and oft-performed plays.

Tehran Intl. Short Film Festival announces intl. jury

A R T **TEHRAN** – Members of the jury for the international competition the 37th Tehran International Short Film Festival (TISFF) were announced on Friday.

Filmmaker Behnam Behzadi from Iran, documentarian Lia Beltrami from Italy and Busan International Program Manager Kyeong-yeon Kim are the members of the jury.

Behzadi is a director, screenwriter and editor. He is a graduate of filmmaking from the University of IRIB.

He is the director of numerous movies, including "We Only Live Twice", "The

Second Heart", "The Rules of Accidents" and "Inversion", which have been screened in several international events across the world.

Beltrami is the director of 40 documentaries in Europe, Africa and West Asia, including "A Piece of Bread", "Refresh Your Heart" and "The Wonderful Tapestry of Life", some of which have been honored at international festivals.

A lineup of 63 short films from 19 countries are competing in the international section of the festival.

The films are coming from France, India, the U.S., Spain, Germany, Ghana, China,

Czech, Poland, Italy, Turkey, Australia, Bulgaria, Denmark, Russia, South Africa, Belgium, Kazakhstan and Iran.

All the nine movie theaters at the Iran Mall, a new major trade center in Tehran, have been dedicated to the festival, which will be running for five days with a limited number of visitors.

The short films will also stream online for filmgoers during the event, and winners will be announced on January 25.

Mohammad-Mehdi Asgarpur, Mohammadreza Delpak, Nasser Safarian, Esmaeil Monsef, Bahram Tavakkoli, Ruhollah



This combination photo shows the jury members of the international competition section of 37th Tehran International Short Film Festival.

Hejazi, Roqiyeh Tavakkoli, Ashkan Rahgozar and Hamidreza Lotfian are the jury members for the national competition.