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# Medical centers opened in memory of health martyrs



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**By Mahnaz Abdi**  
Tehran Times journalist

**Factors contributing to recent falling trend in stock market**

Iranian capital market, which had been unprecedentedly experiencing growth over the recent months, has been witnessing a falling trend over the past two weeks.

The market, which had managed to absorb some high amount of liquidity in the current Iranian calendar year (began on March 20), has passed several consecutive days of losses recently.

TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), which is Iran's major stock exchange, fell 89,693 points to 1.813 million on August 16, which was a record of daily drop for the index in the history of the country's stock market.

It should be mentioned that gaining 45,672 points on August 2, the index had stood at 2,007 million, notching up another outstanding record in the current year.

It had hit the record high of 1.5 million points on June 30, and then it climbed half a million points in just one month to hit the record high of two million.

While this market has not received any external shocks such as those from the foreign currency exchange rate, inflation, parallel markets, and international issues, some internal factors have caused the recent drops in the stock market.

**■ Cancellation of Dara II offering**

One of the major factors was cancelling the offering of shares through the second exchange traded fund (ETF) on due time.

On May 2, the Tehran Stock Exchange listed the first ETF from a series of three ETFs, through them shares of some state-owned organizations and companies are planned to be offered.

The shares to be offered via the mentioned Iranian ETFs belong to those governmental bodies defined in Iran's privatization program, a comprehensive plan seriously followed up by the government to downsize and reduce its role in the economy.

The three ETFs are planned to offer 550 trillion rials (about \$13 billion) worth of the governmental stakes.

In mid-June, the finance and economic affairs minister announced that the value of shares offered by the first ETF (named Dara I) had doubled. → 4

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## IAEA should be impartial and professional, Zarif asserts

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN — At a meeting with IAEA Director-General Rafael Grossi on Tuesday, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif underlined the need for the UN nuclear watchdog to be "impartial" and "professional" in its dealings with Iran.

"The Agency must adhere to the principles of impartiality and professionalism in its dealings. The Islamic Republic seeks to continue cooperating with the Agency under normal circumstances and within the framework of international regulations," Iran's chief diplomat said.

Grossi arrived in Iran late on Monday in a bid to address what he called "outstanding questions" that currently overshadow the International Atomic Energy Agency's dealings with Iran.

"My objective is that my meetings in Tehran will lead to concrete progress in addressing the outstanding questions that the Agency has related to safeguards in Iran and, in particular, to resolve the issue of access," the director-general said in a statement before he visited Iran.

Grossi met with several other high-ranking Iranian officials including Ali Akbar Salehi, the director of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), and AEOI deputy chief and spokesman Behrouz Kamalvandi. He is also expected to meet with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani.

Zarif expressed Iran's readiness to continue cooperation with the IAEA in the safeguards arena. He also hoped that the two sides would continue their cooperation in good faith and within the safeguards' regulations by resolving the existing disagreements based on mutual trust, according to a Foreign Ministry statement.

For his part, Grossi underlined that the IAEA will fulfill its obligations in accordance with the principles of impartiality and professionalism as well as technical considerations.

## Iran, Croatia have expanded ties despite sanctions: diplomat

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN — The Iranians ambassador to Croatia has said that Tehran and Zagreb have expanded ties despite sanctions and seek to boost relations in various spheres.

In an interview with IRNA published on Tuesday, Parviz Esmaeili said that the Iranian and Croatian officials attach great importance to expansion of political and economic relations.

Esmaeili also praised Croatia's support for preserving the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the JCPOA.

Croatian Foreign Minister Gordan Grlic-Radman said in June that the nuclear deal is a great achievement of diplomacy that must be preserved.

During a meeting with Esmaeili, Grlic-Radman also called for expansion of relations in various areas with Tehran.

During the meeting, Esmaeili said the two countries are firm to increase ties.

U.S. President Donald Trump quit the multilateral nuclear deal in May 2018 and introduced the harshest ever sanctions on Iran as part of his administration's "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran.

The U.S. move was in violation of the UN Security Council Resolution 2231 that endorsed the JCPOA.

Under the JCPOA, Iran promised to put limits on its nuclear activities in exchange for the termination of economic and financial sanctions.

In May 2019, exactly one year after the U.S. unilaterally quit the deal and imposed sanctions on Iran, Tehran began to gradually reduce its commitments under the JCPOA to both retaliate for Washington's departure and Europeans' failure to honor their commitments.

Now, the Trump administration has embarked on destroying the JCPOA completely before the November elections. It has submitted a letter to the UN Security Council chief seeking a return of UN Sanctions against Iran despite the fact that Trump officially withdrew the U.S. from the multilateral agreement in May 2018.

## 'There is no limit to expansion of Iran-Venezuela ties'

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN — David Paravisini, a member of the Constituent National Assembly of Venezuela, has said that there is no limit to expand ties between Iran and Venezuela.

"Along with constructive relations with Iran in oil industry... we can have many advances in cooperation in areas of military and defense cooperation," IRNA quoted him as saying on Tuesday in an interview with Sputnik.

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro has said that Venezuela will boost strategic ties with Iran in energy sphere.

"Iran's experiences will help us in development projects," IRNA quoted Maduro as saying on Sunday in an interview with a Venezuelan TV channel.

Maduro said in August that relations between Iran and Venezuela are "deep" and "unbreakable".

"Deep, brotherly and unbreakable relations have been formed between the two countries during recent years and have been boosted through defending sovereignty," Maduro said in a statement on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of Iran-Venezuela diplomatic ties, IRNA reported.

Maduro said Venezuela is proud of this history.

Presidential chief of staff Mahmoud Vaezi said in July that Iran respects the Venezuela government and people and welcomes expansion of ties and cooperation with the Latin American country.

"Iran's political determination is supporting the legal Venezuelan government and helping the people of this country solve their problems," Vaezi said during a meeting with the Venezuelan president's special envoy Jorge Marquez.

Vaezi also noted that the United States seeks to exert pressure and hatch plots against the freedom-seeking people, especially Iran and Venezuela.

"We have to prevent any harm to the people's well-being by the enemies' sanctions through solidarity and expansion of cooperation and relations," the presidential chief of staff said.

The Venezuelan envoy had visited Iran to deliver a written message from Maduro to President Hassan Rouhani.

Rouhani also praised Iran's support for Venezuela.

Marquez said that Iran and Venezuela should deepen "strategic" and "friendly" ties.

# Rouhani says U.S. failure at UN shows Iran's diplomatic power

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN — President Hassan Rouhani said on Tuesday that the United States' failure at the UN Security Council in extending arms embargo on Iran showed the power of Iran's diplomacy.

"We have the diplomatic power to stand against the United States at the United Nations and gain success. They create a commotion against Iran for 42 years and gained only one vote in favor of the arms embargo extension. It means Iran's diplomatic success and power," Rouhani said during a question and answer session with a number of media chiefs.

On Thursday, the U.S. sent a letter to the UN Security Council requesting to initiate the "snapback" mechanism, which allows a participant to the JCPOA to seek reimposition against Iran of UN sanctions lifted under the 2015 nuclear deal.

The U.S. took the move following its failure on August 13 at the UN Security Council to extend arms embargo on Iran which will expire in October in accordance with Resolution 2231.

Thirteen countries out of the 15-member



UN Security Council have expressed their opposition to the U.S. bid to reimpose the UN sanctions on Iran, arguing that Washington's move is void given it is using a process under a nuclear deal that it quit more than two years ago.

On August 13, only the Dominican Republic

voted in favor of the UN draft resolution to extend arms sanctions. So far, the Dominican Republic has remained silent on the U.S. illegal move to return UN sanctions.

■ **'Policy of maximum pressure has failed'**

Rouhani also said that the U.S. policy

of maximum pressure has failed.

"Maximum pressure aimed at forcing Iran to go to the negotiating table while it has been weakened. They said that they would quit the deal and put pressure on Iran and bring the country to the negotiating table," he said.

Washington has definitely failed in imposing policy of maximum pressure against Iran, he said.

The president noted that the future administration of the U.S. will definitely adopt another way.

■ **'Government plans to take departure from export of crude oil'**

The president also said for the first time over past 60 years, export of non-oil products has superseded oil exports.

The president also said departure from export of crude oil and cutting reliance on oil export are on the agenda of his administration.

The president also said national power will act as a deterrence in the face of problems, suggesting that the country's power should be upgraded in all areas.

## Iran says expects ties with IAEA to be based on mutual commitments

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN — Iran expects its relations with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to be based on legal commitments of both sides, spokesman for the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) has said.

"Iran expects its relations with the agency to be based on legal commitments of both sides, and if the agency has questions, Iran is tasked with responding," Behrooz Kamalvandi said, ISNA reported on Tuesday.

Kamalvandi said Iran has had many legal discussions with the IAEA due to the problems in the last two reports of the IAEA.

"In the second report, a resolution was issued against Iran, even though the resolution was not ratified with a high number of votes and different countries opposed it," he said.

The spokesman said both Iran and the IAEA emphasize the importance of strengthening bilateral ties. "We shouldn't allow countries that intend to abuse [the IAEA] to provide the ground for this through pressuring the Agency."

Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Rafael Grossi arrived in Tehran on Monday on his first visit to the country since taking office in December. Grossi was welcomed by Kamalvandi upon his arrival.

According to Kamalvandi, Iran has had good interactions with the IAEA over the past 20 years, and "we have witnessed numerous trips to Iran by the Agency's director generals in

different terms."

Grossi's visit to Tehran comes a week after Washington officially informed the UN Security Council it is demanding the restoration of all UN sanctions on Iran, insisting that the U.S. has the legal right to "snap back" UN sanctions even though U.S. President Donald Trump pulled out of the nuclear deal (JCPOA) endorsed by the UN Security Council.

Other parties to the nuclear deal, including Russia, China, France, Britain and Germany, have voiced strong opposition to Washington's push for return of UN sanctions on Iran.

However, the spokesman said Grossi's visit is not related to the United States' attempts to reimpose sanctions on Iran.

"The visit by the director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency is not related to the snapback mechanism and political issues," Kamalvandi said, adding, "Iran's interaction with the Agency is going to be discussed during the visit."

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif also made similar remarks on Monday, saying the so-called "snapback mechanism" is an incorrect term which the Americans coined, but as 13 countries out of 15 UN Security Council members announced, the U.S. is not entitled to reimpose the UN sanctions on Iran.

Washington has accused Tehran of violating the 2015 nuclear pact, which Trump unilaterally withdrew from in May 2018 while denouncing it as the "worst deal ever".



The U.S. move to trigger the snapback mechanism came a week after its efforts to extend the UN arms embargo on Tehran failed miserably. Only the Dominican Republic joined Washington in voting yes.

The United States argues that it can trigger the sanctions snapback process because the 2015 Security Council resolution still names it as a nuclear deal participant.

However, in a joint letter to the Security Council on Thursday hours after the U.S. submitted its complaint, Britain, Germany and France said: "Any decisions and actions which would be taken based on this procedure or on its possible outcome would also be devoid of any legal effect."

## Defense minister: Iran interested in new military co-op agreements with Russia

**MOSCOW** — Defense Minister Amir Hatami said on Monday that Iran is interested in reaching new agreements with Russia on defense cooperation once the UN-mandated restrictions on arms sales expire, UrduPoint News/Sputnik reported.

On August 14, the UN Security Council turned down the United States' proposal to extend the Iranian arms embargo.

Under the 2015 international nuclear deal, arms embargo against Iran ends on October 18.

"When the embargo expires, given the depth of our relations with Russia, we will need new agreements and new documents. Our relationships is growing more genuine and, of course, we will be discussing new opportunities," Hatami told Russia's Rossiya 24 broadcaster.

■ **'Iran to unveil new naval air defense gear'**

Brigadier General Amir Hatami also said his ministry is going to unveil new homegrown military products, including

air defense systems for naval vessels.

In an interview with Sputnik, the defense minister said Tehran continues to make progress in the air defense industry.

Highlighting the great advances in manufacturing anti-cruise missile and agile air defense systems, Hatami said Iran is going to unveil new products relating to air defense systems of vessels.

According to Tasnim, he also said Iran has developed anti-armor missiles and produced smart ammunition.

Iranian military experts and technicians have in recent years made great headways in manufacturing a broad range of indigenous equipment, making the armed forces self-sufficient in the arms sphere.

Iranian officials have repeatedly underscored that the country will not hesitate to strengthen its military capabilities, including its missile power, which are entirely meant for defense, and that Iran's defense capabilities will be never subject to negotiations.

## Intl. community will definitely counter U.S. snapback push: Rabiei

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN — Government spokesman Ali Rabiei said on Tuesday that the international community will definitely counter the United States' illegal action in triggering the snapback mechanism to return all UN sanctions on Iran.

"The phrase snapback has not been mentioned in neither the JCPOA [the 2015 nuclear deal] nor the 2231 resolution of the Security Council," Rabiei said during a press conference.

He noted that the U.S. quit the nuclear deal and has no right to invoke the mechanism.

Russia's ambassador to the Vienna-based international organizations warned on Tuesday against the U.S. move, saying it could only damage the credibility of the UN.

"Once again: US attempts to trigger snapback can damage the UNSC, including in the field of sanctions. So far UN sanctions sometimes were not fully implemented, but their validity wasn't questioned. Snapback can change everything. Is that what U.S. wants to achieve? We don't," Mikhail Ulyanov tweeted.



On Sunday, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov also said that the push will get nowhere and will only undermine the UN Security Council's authority.

Last week, Washington officially informed the UN Security Council it is demanding the restoration of all UN

sanctions on Iran, insisting that the U.S. has the legal right to "snap back" UN sanctions even though U.S. President Donald Trump pulled out of the nuclear deal confirmed by the UN Security Council under the resolution 2231.

Other parties to the nuclear deal, including Russia, China, France, Britain and Germany, have voiced strong opposition to Washington's push for sanctions on Iran.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said on Monday that should the so-called snapback mechanism be triggered, Iran's response will be "definitely decisive".

"The Islamic Republic of Iran's response to any violation of Resolution 2231 and Barjam (the nuclear deal) will be carried out by [Iran's] Supreme National Security Council, and this has been sent to the head of different countries in a previous letter," Khatibzadeh said during his first official press briefing.

"Iran's response will be definitely decisive," he added, Mehr reported.

## Iranian scholars urge UN to investigate systemic racial discrimination in U.S.

**(Press TV)** — A group of Iranian scholars have written to the United Nations in condemnation of systematic racism against people of color in the U.S., calling for the formation of a committee to investigate widespread injustice and social discrimination in the country.

The demand was made in a letter to the United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and Michelle Bachelet UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on Tuesday.

"Today, despite the progress and advancement of science and knowledge as well as access to more effective routes to a healthy, just and better quality life, we are witness to a more widespread domineering world system and deepening of the wounds and exacerbation of the pain of oppression, social discrimination and racist divisions based on the interests of all

nations across the word," they said.

"The murder and harassment of black Americans is not an exceptional case, rather it stems from a social racist mentality according to which a small group enjoys a very high status, but the rest are not entitled to lowest degree of civil rights," the letter added.

The letter called on Guterres and Bachelet "to insightfully utilize the global capacity to help end social discrimination and basically the racist mentality, particularly discrimination against black Americans, and take the necessary measures for setting up a "Committee for Investigating the Widespread Social Discrimination in the United States," especially against black Americans."

The signatories said the "bullying approach" of the U.S. was shaped during the formation of the country when it waged war against the

native owners of America.

"In the course of the establishment of the new American system, history bears testimony to widespread genocides and deterritorialization as well as systematic social discrimination against the real owner of America. Those who were considered a kind of "others or aliens", included the native Americans, black Americans and somehow the entire nonwhite community, who are the referents of the discriminated communities," the letter read.

The signatories further enumerated some examples of "discrimination and injustice" against black Americans throughout history, the latest of which

"Regrettably, the exceptionalist mentality of a small, but powerful and rich American group, is the source of widespread oppressions, sanctions and historical falsifications

as well as trampling upon human rights and evaluation of human values based on wealth, ethnicity, geographical situation and religion," the letter said.

# Tehran says won't succumb to illegal requests over its nuclear program

**1→** "Our today's talks were constructive and it was planned that the Agency push ahead with its work professionally and independently and we (Iran) also act within the framework of duties," he remarked.

Salehi and Grossi who held talks for about one-and-a-half hours behind closed doors planned to meet again in the afternoon.

Rafael arrived in Tehran late on Monday.

Salehi, a nuclear physicist who is the director of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), expressed hope that the visit by Rafael would have mutual benefit "so that the two sides would do their duties reciprocally and within the necessary framework."

"A new chapter has begun with this trip and our cooperation will continue more than before," Salehi he stated.

Salehi concluded his remarks by thanking Grossi and his accompanying delegation and the IAEA for their cooperation.

Grossi claimed that the IAEA under his leadership is not influenced by other countries.

"There is no political approach towards Iran," claimed Grossi, responding



to whether the IAEA's approach was a politicized one towards Iran ever since he became the IAEA director general, according to ISNA.

"The cooperation between Iran and the IAEA has not been seized, and since I assumed office, no change has been made

in our approach," he added.

He also said the IAEA has had extensive cooperation with Iran in monitoring its nuclear program. "The IAEA's judgments and conclusions is merely based on its technical findings."

Grossi's trip comes after Washington

pressured the UN Security Council to reimpose sanctions on Tehran that were lifted under Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, from which the United States has withdrawn.

Tehran said on Monday that Grossi's visit would "strengthen ties and build trust" between Tehran and the IAEA, "as long as the IAEA moves based on impartiality, independence and distances itself from political pressure of another countries".

Iran's Foreign Ministry has also announced that should the so-called snapback mechanism is triggered, Iran's response will be "definitely decisive".

"The Islamic Republic of Iran's response to any violation of Resolution 2231 and Barjam (the nuclear deal) will be carried out by [Iran's] Supreme National Security Council, and this has been sent to the head of different countries in a previous letter," Khatibzadeh said on Monday.

Also on Monday, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif reiterated Iran's readiness to cooperate with the IAEA, adding that the Islamic Republic will not allow the U.S. and Israel, which possess nuclear weapons, to ridicule the IAEA's objectives.

## Rouhani admin seeking sanctions relief until last days, says Vaezi

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN — Presidential chief of staff Mahmood Vaezi has said the Rouhani administration will strive until its last days so that the sanctions on Iran will be lifted.

"It's true that we have one year left, but if we can, even if we have three or days left, we will strive to lift the sanctions so that the next government will be able to start its work without sanctions," Vaezi said, Mehr reported on Tuesday.

He further said the Rouhani administration's efforts is not limited to its own interests, adding that the sanctions have

created troubles for the whole establishment and people.

"A country that has banned medicine or foodstuff is not concerned about people or human rights," Vaezi argued.

U.S. President Donald Trump unilaterally quit the nuclear deal in May 2018 and introduced the harshest ever sanctions in history on Iran as part of his administration's "maximum pressure" strategy against Iran.

Iran waited a year until it began to partially reduce its commitments to the agreement at bi-monthly intervals. Finally, on January 5 of this year, Iran issued a statement announcing suspension of all limits under the JCPOA.

Observers say Trump's maximum pressure policy has failed.

From the very beginning that Iran started to remove ban on its nuclear program, officials in Tehran announced if the Europeans, especially its big trio (Germany, France, and Britain which are signatory the deal), take steps to compensate the sanctions' effect it will immediately reverse its decision.

In his remarks, Vaezi said the Rouhani administration has plans for the post-sanctions era.

"I hope the sanctions would be lifted and I hope our nation can move forward without sanctions," he added.

## Judiciary voices readiness to help government to reduce economic problems

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN — Judiciary spokesman Gholam-Hossein Esmaeili said on Tuesday that the Judiciary is ready to help the administration to lessen the economic problems.

The Judiciary is ready to cooperate in the areas needed to resolve people's problems even where the government

has direct responsibility, Esmaeili said at a regular press briefing.

He said everyone should cooperate so that the most effective measures would be taken by the administration to implement necessary executive plans.

The spokesman also pointed to the Judiciary's contribution to the administration's efforts to collect taxes from

major tax debtors.

Last month, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said all economic problems can be solved through self-reliance thinking and national confidence.

If self-reliance thinking and national confidence, especially among the youth, be on the rise and the country's strong

capabilities are tapped, and illusory hopes on outside borders... are weakened, I am quite confident that economic problems are solvable," the Leader told the parliament via videoconferencing on July 12.

The parliament should prioritize issues, avoid being drawn into marginal issues and also work honestly for the people, Ayatollah Khamenei added.

## Zarif: UAE cannot buy security from Israel

**POLITICAL** TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Monday that the United Arab Emirates cannot become more secure through buying security from Israel, according to a Press TV report.

"The United Arab Emirates has turned to Israel to buy security, while Israel is unable to keep even itself secure," Iran's chief diplomat said in a speech delivered at the Faculty of World Studies at the University of Tehran, the fifth and final part of a five-part course in international relations entitled, "World in Transition."

Zarif's remarks come after the UAE and Israel reached a peace deal that will lead to full normalization of diplomatic relations between the two sides. Under the deal, which was brokered by the U.S., Israel agreed to suspend its plans to annex large swaths of the West Bank.

Iran's Foreign Ministry strongly condemned the UAE-Israel, saying it was a "strategic folly" that will only end up strengthening the regional resistance front.

"Undoubtedly, the agreement will result in fortification of the resistance axis in the region," the ministry said in a statement.

"History will reveal how this strategic mistake by the Zionist regime and this act of backstabbing by the Emirates against the Palestinians and, by extension, the entire Muslim community, will conversely result in fortifying the resistance axis," the ministry added.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the Iranian foreign minister said regional countries should realize and accept that they cannot purchase security, but it should be established by regional states.

"You cannot be secure if your neighbors are not secure ... We should understand that we can compete with each other, but cannot dominate or delete each other," Zarif underlined.

He said neighboring countries live closely together and have no other option, adding, "No one can be crossed out from the region, but foreign powers can be expelled."

He emphasized that countries in the Middle East region are spending the highest amount of money on the purchase of arms, noting that the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council's member states allocated some 116 billion dollars to buying lethal weapons in 2017.

The Iranian foreign minister added that Saudi Arabia is the world's third-largest arms importer after the United States and China, saying, "We, in the Middle East, are in need of a powerful region rather than a powerful individual."

## Iran, Turkey stress respect for Syrian national sovereignty, territorial Integrity

**TEHRAN (FNA)** — Senior Assistant to the Iranian Foreign Minister for Special Political Affairs Ali Asghar Khaji and Turkish Deputy Foreign Minister Sedat Onal exchanged views on the latest developments in Syria, and emphasized the need to respect Syria's national sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity.

Khaji, heading a high-ranking delegation, met Onal on the sidelines of the third meeting of Syria's Constitutional Committee in Geneva on Monday.

The two diplomats emphasized respect for Syria's national sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity that had been agreed upon by the Astana trend guarantor (consisting of Iran, Turkey and Russia).

They also stressed the need to continue supporting the political process and Syrian-Syrian talks within the framework of the Constitutional

Committee and the fight against terrorism.

Pointing to his last week's visit to Syria and his meetings with the Syrian president and other officials, Khaji expressed Iran's readiness to continue supports for the meetings of the Constitutional Committee while ruling out any foreign interference.

Onal, also, voiced Ankara's readiness to continue talks within the framework of the Astana Process and to hold consultations with Iran on this issue.

Last week, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and Ali Asqar Khaji in a meeting in Damascus conferred on the latest developments in Syria as well as ways to boost cooperation between the two countries.

During the meeting on Monday August 17, the two sides held talks on the latest developments in Syria and the meeting of the Constitution Committee in Geneva.

President al-Assad affirmed that Syria will go forward on the present track despite all attempts by some parties to divert the committee from its tasks and the objective of its formation and change its mechanisms.

The two sides also discussed means to enhance cooperation between the two countries to face the siege imposed by the U.S. and its allies against Syria.

Khaji, for his part, underlined the importance of deepening economic cooperation between the two countries to confront the siege.

He also congratulated the Syrian people and leadership for holding parliamentary elections, saying that elections in this period of time proves the adherence of the Syrian people to their land and state and their keenness to participate in the important constitutional events despite all conditions that they are facing.

Khaji had also met and held talks with Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Muallem.

In the meeting, they conferred on the latest developments in the region and the world.

The Syrian foreign ministry in a statement released on its official Facebook page said in addition to the regional and international issues, the two high-ranking officials also discussed bilateral ties.

The two sides expressed pleasure in continued progress in strategic relations between Iran and Syria in different fields, and stressed the need for exchange of experiences to strengthen the two nations and confront common challenges, including the coronavirus epidemic and the U.S.-imposed economic terrorism, it added.

They also agreed to continue coordination and consultations on different developments, the statement said.



## Top Iranian, French diplomats hold talks on JCPOA

**TEHRAN (Tasnim)** — The foreign ministers of Iran and France discussed a range of issues in a telephone conversation on Monday, including the developments surrounding the JCPOA.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and his French counterpart Jean-Yves Le Drian discussed issues relating to Iran-France bilateral relations, the latest developments regarding the JCPOA, and the situation in Lebanon in the wake of the recent blast in

Beirut's port.

France was one of the UN Security Council permanent members that refused to vote in favor of a U.S.-initiated resolution proposed recently to extend a UN arms embargo on Iran that expires in October under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

The European country has also stepped up efforts in recent weeks to play a leading role in Lebanon's politics after the huge blast that hit Beirut in early August.

## Ashura is integral part of Iranian identity

**1→** If the tyrannical regime of Iran was at war with the Maraji and was opposed to the Islamic scholars, why did they oppose the Quran, why did they attack the Faizieh school, what did they want from the students of religious sciences? What did they want from our 18-year-old Seyed, what did our 18-year-old Seyed do to the Shah? What had he done to the government? What had he done to the tyrannical regime? So we come to the conclusion that they are basically opposed to [Islam], they are against the basis of Islam and the clergymen."



After the revolution, the Ashura uprising continued to be a guiding principle for the new establishment. It was also the driving force behind Iran's resistance against Saddam Hussein's war on Iran in the 1980s.

Imam Khomeini said that the victory of the Islamic revolution was because of Imam Hussein's uprising.

"We all should understand that if it had not been for the uprising of Imam Hussein (AS), we would not have won. The Islamic Revolution of Iran is a reflection of Ashura and its great divine revolution," he stated.

He also said that the mourning ceremonies for Imam Hussein (AS) played a major role in unifying the Iranian people against the Shah.

In Imam Khomeini's view, the martyrdom of Imam Hussein (AS), who is also known as the master of martyrs, is the main reason that preserved the Muslim countries.

"We have to see what the secret of the survival of this religion and the survival of Muslim and Shiite countries is. And we should protect that secret. The biggest secret in this regard is the issue of the master of martyrs," the late Leader said.

Under Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Iran continued to follow in Imam Hussein's footsteps.

"Today, fortunately, the Iranian nation has learned this lesson from Hussein ibn Ali. For thirty years, the majority of the Iranian nation has been moving in this direction. There have been some few people who didn't move in this direction, but the majority of the Iranian nation follows in Hussein ibn Ali's footsteps," Ayatollah Khamenei said on June 12, 2013. He said on many occasions that the Islamic Republic is moving in the direction of Imam Hussein (AS).

Imam Hussein's martyrdom is not only a source of inspiration for the Islamic Republic, but it also became an integral part of the Iranian culture. During the first 10 days of Muharram, cities all over Iran are filled with black banners and posters in memory of Imam Hussein (AS), and people gather at mosques and other religious centers to mourn and cry while eulogists recite poems glorifying the martyrdom of the Imam. This year, the mourning ceremonies are being held in open areas to reduce the risk of contracting the novel coronavirus. These ceremonies are of great importance for people from all walks of life. And they are also a show of solidarity in the face of U.S. pressure on Iran, which seeks to drive a wedge between the establishment and the people.

"The legacy of Hussein is still invoked as a source of strength when Iranians face insurmountable challenges, such as threats of war," said a National Interest article published on August 29, 2019.

The article added, "The epic of Karbala is ultimately a legacy of resistance against injustice, with a central hero that is easy to revere for his repudiation of tyranny. Hussein's moment of sacrifice immortalized him. The power of this imagery is crucial to recognize in any analysis that considers the costs of war with Iran."

People and governments in Iran are deeply indebted to Imam Hussein whose martyrdom created a long-lasting unity among them that protected Iran at many critical junctures during the past few centuries. This unity still exists and could be further strengthened due to foreign pressures.

## Official: No military solution to problems in Afghanistan

**TEHRAN (FNA)** — Assistant to Iranian Foreign Minister and Foreign Ministry's Director-General for West Asia Seyed Rasoul Mousavi reiterated his country's support for the peace process in Afghanistan, saying that problems in the war-hit country should be settled through talks.

"We support the peace process by Afghans with the participation of all Afghan groups, including the Taliban, and without any foreign influence and interference," Mousavi said, addressing a meeting of the Heart of Asia - Istanbul Process via a video conference on Tuesday.

He underlined that the problems in Afghanistan have no military solution, adding, "We consider the responsible withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan as a necessary step towards peace."

Mousavi said that Iran invites the Taliban to join the Afghan-Afghan talks, view peace talks as the only way to reach an acceptable political solution and avoid violence during the negotiations.

"We are ready to help strengthening the peace negotiations by the help of our capacity and capability upon the demand of participants," he said.

In relevant remarks on Sunday, Iran's Special Envoy on Afghanistan Mohammad Ebrahim Taherian Fard voiced concern about increased insecurities in Afghanistan, after the Saturday blasts in Kabul, stressing Tehran's readiness to help the country in holding intra-Afghan talks.

"Establishment of peace and stability not only is the general demand of people, government and different Afghan streams but also is considered as a need on the path of development of regional cooperation and collective security," Taherian said.

He referred to the recent approvals of the Loya Jirga (the grand tribal council) in Afghanistan to establish peace, and underlined the necessity for paving the ground for holding Afghan-Afghan talks with the aim of reaching an agreement.

Taherian reiterated the Islamic Republic of Iran's preparedness for cooperation in holding the intra-Afghan talks.

Kabul witnessed four explosions on Saturday that killed at least one security force member and wounded six others--including a civilian--and an assault by gunmen on a vehicle killing an MoD official and his driver, amid hopes for potential peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban.

## Non-oil trade tops \$24b in 5 months

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — The value of Iran's non-oil trade during the first five months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-August 21) reached \$24.6 billion, about \$5 billion more than the figure for the first four months, IRNA reported.

According to the Head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) Mehdi Mirashrafi, the significant increase in the value of trade indicates that the negative impact of the Covid-19 outbreak on Iran's foreign trade has alleviated.

"The impact of the pandemic on Iran's trade has decreased from 54 percent in late March to 27 percent in August," Mirashrafi said.

As reported, in the mentioned five months, Iran imported \$13.7 billion worth of goods, while exporting \$10.9 billion.

The volume of traded goods was estimated at about 52 million tons, of which over 38 million tons were related to exports and about 13.8 million tons were imported goods.



Iran's top five non-oil export destinations during this period were China with over \$3 billion worth of exports, Iraq with \$2.406 billion, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) with over \$1.554 billion and Afghanistan with \$871 million as well as Turkey with \$513 million, so the country's top five export destinations remained the same in comparison to previous months, according to IRICA.

China accounted for over 28 percent of Iran's total exports, followed by Iraq, UAE, Afghanistan, and Turkey with 22 percent, 14 percent, 8 percent, and 4.7 percent respectively.

According to the IRICA head, polyethylene, natural gas, liquefied propane, and other light oils and products rather than gasoline were Iran's top five exported items during this period, and gasoline was the top export commodity with \$1 billion worth of exports.

The top five sources of imports during this period were China with \$3.552 billion, the UAE with \$3.186 billion, Turkey with \$1.475 billion, India with \$941 million, and Germany with \$548 million worth of imports.

China accounted for nearly 26 percent of Iran's total imports, followed by UAE, Turkey, India, and Germany with 23 percent, 10.7 percent, 6.8 percent, and 4.8 percent, respectively.

Iran's non-oil trade stood at \$19.635 billion during the first four months of the current fiscal year (March 20-July 21), of which exports accounted for \$8.713 billion and imports for \$10.922 billion.

Like all other countries around the world, Iran's trade with its foreign partners has been affected by the coronavirus pandemic, however, the situation is getting back to normal and the country's trade borders are opening one by one.

## Annual agricultural output expected to hit 130m tons by Mar. 2021

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — Iran's agricultural production is expected to reach 130 million tons in the current Iranian calendar year (March 2020-March 2021), according to the Agriculture Minister Kazem Khavazi.

Speaking in a meeting with some officials from Golestan Province, Khavazi put the country's agriculture production in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19) at 125 million tons, IRNA reported.

"This year, the government is paying special attention to the agricultural sector for achieving self-sufficiency in most agricultural and strategic products," the official said.

He noted that apart from increasing production, the Agriculture Ministry also seeks to increase productivity by developing processing industries in this sector.



The minister pointed to the sales of raw materials as an important damage to the agricultural sector and said: "Currently, seven million tons of garden products, four million tons of vegetables, seven million tons of tomatoes and five million tons of potatoes are produced in the country, all of which need to be processed and not to be sold raw."

The Agriculture Minister visited the northern Golestan Province for inaugurating some agricultural projects on Tuesday.

In late June, the Acting Head of Agriculture Ministry's Economic Affairs Department Shahrokh Shajari had said that development of new irrigation systems and greenhouses to improve water productivity, development of aquaculture, especially shrimp and fish farming at sea, and development of medicinal plants cultivation are among the plans underway by the ministry for increasing productivity in the agricultural sectors.

Noting that one of the major indicators of the development of the agricultural sector is the value-added, the official said in most years, the growth of value-added in the agricultural sector has been more than the growth of the country's non-oil Gross Domestic Products (GDP).

"The value-added growth of the agricultural sector last year was 8.8 percent, despite the negative growth of the domestic value-added," he said.

According to Shajari, production of grains reached 83.5 million tons in the previous year and the figure is expected to reach 86 million tons in the current year.

As for the horticulture sector, the production of this sector reached 23 million tons in the past year and the output is expected to increase by 1.7 million tons in the current year.

# Factors contributing to recent falling trend in stock market

**1 →** The second ETF (named Dara II), is to offer shares of four refineries of Tehran, Tabriz, Bandar-Abbas and Isfahan, and with the cancellation of Dara II offering, a drastic fall occurred in the stock market.

### ■ Justice Shares liberalization

Liberalization of "Justice Shares", so that trading them in the stock market would be possible, was another contributing factor for the drop in the market.

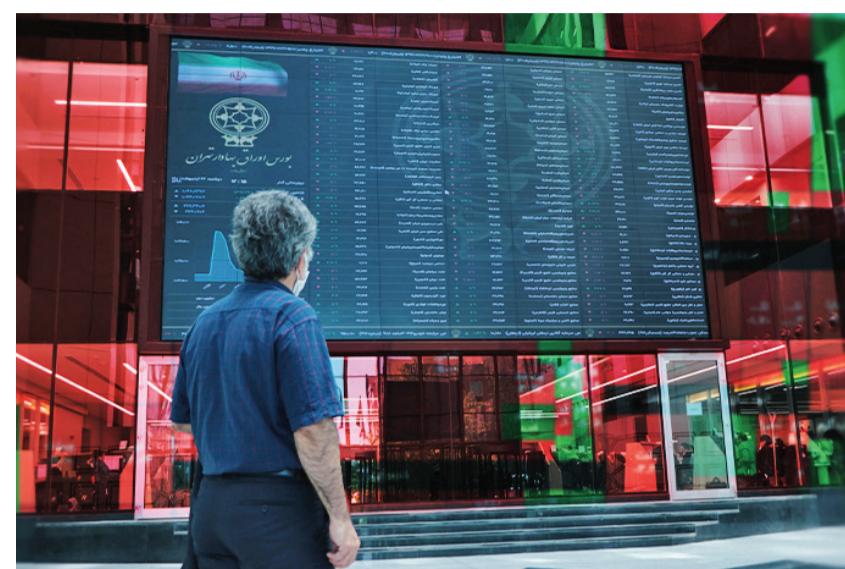
Justice Shares are shares of government-owned companies that were given free to the six lowest income groups of the society almost a decade ago. Shareholders were not allowed to sell the shares until May, when based on a government's plan, the shares were allowed to be tradable in the stock market.

The shareholders were given the option to either directly gain the ownership of their shares and sell it in the stock exchange, or let the investment companies manage their portfolio as in the past.

### ■ 'Economic Breakthrough' plan

The government's plan named "Economic Breakthrough" was the other issue affecting the stock market, as no details were announced about this plan.

During a meeting of the Supreme Council of Economic Coordination on August 10, the heads of the three branches of the government, namely the executive, legislative and judicial powers decided to draw up plans to



counter oil embargo and redirect the high liquidity, which is partly blamed for the high inflation rate.

After the meeting, Eghtesad News website quoted an informed source as saying that the heads of three branches had made an agreement on the plan for the pre-selling of oil, which should be approved by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution to be implemented.

It is said that based on this plan, the government is to sell 220 million barrels of oil through issuing parallel

salaf bonds in a course of one year.

A standard parallel salaf is an Islamic contract similar to futures, with the difference being that the contract's total price must be paid in advance.

### ■ Shasta's index dropping

On April 15, Iran's stock market witnessed its largest-ever initial public offering, as Social Security Investment Company (SSIC, also known by its Persian acronym Shasta) offered eight billion shares, which account for 10 percent of its stakes, for sales in

Tehran Stock Exchange.

Shasta's index, which experienced a sharp decline after being closed for three days, has been another contributor to the TEDPIX's recent fall.

### ■ Other factors

There are also some other factors leading to the recent drops in the stock market, of them it could be referred to reducing the value of brokerage credit, and conducting trades in two shifts per day at the TSE.

It should be noted that a number of measures have been already made to tackle the mentioned factors which have put the stock market in a decline status.

Data II offering is due to be held on Wednesday (August 26), Justice Shares offering has been stopped, and trades are done in a single shift per day as before. Also, the market is receiving the expected support from the institutional traders.

While some of those active in the capital market and also some economists believe that the recent trend of falling has been a normal correction condition in the stock market, the above-mentioned measures also create some hope for the market's returning to the previous growth status.

Some even believe that TEDPIX will regain its losses to return to the previous two-million-point level, and even go up to 2.5 million points by the yearend.

## Energy Ministry inaugurates 2,230 electricity supply projects

**1 →** According to Rakhshani, there are currently 37 million subscribers that enjoy the electricity supplied by the national electricity network.

The official noted that the Energy Ministry has defined new projects valued at 60 trillion rials (about \$1.4 billion) for reforming and improving the national grid and also a project for promoting smart electricity meters is a top priority for the ministry.

Ardakanian who visited Alborz Province to attend the inauguration ceremony also put 26 water and waste-water projects worth 1.32 trillion rials (about \$3.4 million) into operation in the mentioned province.

Energy Ministry has been inaugurating numerous water and electricity projects in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 20) under the frame-

work of a program called A-B-Iran.

Earlier this month, Ardakanian had said that 53 major water and electricity projects had gone operational since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20) up to August 3.

According to the minister, the total investment made in the mentioned projects was 147.25 trillion rials (about \$3.5 billion).

In the second phase of the A-B-Iran scheme (the acronyms A and B stand for water and electricity in Persian) 250 projects are going to be inaugurated by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2021).

A total of 500 trillion rials (about \$11.9 billion) of investment will be made in the mentioned 250 projects.



## Rouhani inaugurates 3 major industrial, mining projects worth \$641.6m

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — Iranian President Hassan Rouhani on Tuesday inaugurated three major industrial and mining projects worth 26.95 trillion rials (about \$641.66 million) via video conference concurrent with the Government Week (August 23-29), IRNA reported.

The projects, which were put into operation in Yazd, Fars, and Kordistan provinces in the tenth week of implementing the "Persistent Production-Effective Employment-Sustainable Exports" program in the current Iranian calendar year (began on March 20), create direct jobs for 950 people.

The mentioned projects are for production of sponge iron and gold bars, as well as manufacturing of tow trucks in the mentioned provinces.



Based on the "Persistent Production-Effective Employment-Sustainable Exports" program, which is being implemented by the Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry in the current year, 200 industrial, mining, and trade projects valued at 1.7

quadrillion rials (about \$40.47 billion) have been planned to be inaugurated across the country, creating direct job opportunities for 41,000 people.

According to the deputy industry, mining, and trade minister for industry affairs, completing semi-finished industrial projects and boosting the production of active units are the main goals of the ministry in the current Iranian calendar year.

"This year, the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade has identified four axes as the priorities for its programs, one of which is completing semi-finished projects and increasing the production capacity of active units," Mehdi Sadeqi Niaraki has said.

The official also mentioned the ministry's plans for reviving idle production units and said: "Based on this program,

which has been planned by the ministry and is being pursued by Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO), reviving 1,500 industrial units in the current year is on the agenda."

"Since the beginning of this year, more than 381 units with the capacity to restore employment for more than 10,000 people have returned to the production cycle," Niaraki said.

Since the year start, Industry Ministry has been inaugurating several industrial, mining, or trade projects in various provinces every week.

The ministry's "Persistent Production-Effective Employment-Sustainable Exports" program was implemented following the Energy Ministry's A-B-Iran scheme which kicked off last year and is continuing in the current year.

## Economy Ministry issues over \$19.5b of bonds in a year

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — Iranian Finance and Economic Affairs Ministry's Deputy for Financial Supervision and Treasury Affairs issued a total of 820 trillion rials (about \$19.5 billion) of Islamic bonds in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19), IRNA reported citing the deputy's annual performance report.

The annual performance reports include the mentioned deputy's policies, action plans, executive measures, and achievements in a year.

According to the report, the ministry balanced a total of 131.835 trillion rials (about \$3.13 billion) of the government debts and receivables through the issuance of treasury bonds in the previous Iranian calendar year.

Smartening of the government financial operations



has been mentioned in the report as one of the major duties of the said deputy, for which several measures have been taken since the previous year including implementation of credit allocation system, comprehensive treasury accounting system, electronic money request system, bank account management system.

Raising funds through the debt market is seen as critical for the government saddled with deep budget holes that have become bigger due to the coronavirus pandemic, collapsing oil prices, U.S. sanctions and loss of oil export revenue.

Economy Minister Farhad Dejpasand had previously said the government may not be able to realize 1.4 quadrillion rials (\$33.3 billion) of its projected revenue in the current fiscal budget.

## Switzerland ready to invest in Iran: Swiss envoy

**ECONOMY** TEHRAN — Swiss Ambassador to Tehran Markus Leitner expressed his country's readiness to make investment in Iran.

The Swiss envoy made the remarks in a meeting with the Head of Iran's Budget and Planning Organization (BPO) Mohammad Baqer Nobakht who had traveled to Qazvin Province on Monday, IRNA reported.

Also, in a meeting with Iranian Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Farhad Dejpasand in mid-February, Leitner had said

that his country was eager for maintaining and even expanding economic relations with Iran, Finance and Economic Affairs Ministry's news portal Shada reported at the time.

In the meeting, the Iranian minister pointed to the long history of the two countries' relations and called for further expansion of economic ties.

Mentioning the recent agreements reached between the two countries during Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's visit to the European country, Dejpasand

expressed hope that these agreements would be realized soon.

The official once again voiced the country's readiness for expanding trade with Europe and in the region.

In the end, Leitner called for the participation of the finance ministry's representatives in the joint economic committee of the two countries, and expressed readiness for taking any necessary measures for developing economic cooperation between the two sides.



# NRI to bring renewable energy to Iranian schools

**ENERGY TEHRAN** — Director of Renewable Energy Department of Niroo Research Institute (NRI) said the institute has defined a new program for the promotion and expansion of the use of renewable energy sources in schools, IRNA reported.

The program titled "Development of Renewable Energy in Schools" has been already started in the NRI's Renewable Energy Department, Shahriar Bozorgmehri said.

Under the framework of this project, financial and economic models will be proposed for implementing small solar energy units in the country's schools to supply electricity and also to educate the children, and promote the development of this type of energy.

Also, based on this program, the proceeds from the sale of electricity generated in schools in disadvantaged regions will be used as a source of funding for the development of the schools; also, the development of a course covering renewable



energy is another step that will be followed in this project.

Bozorgmehri further noted that it is

expected that the expansion of the use of renewable energy in schools will help create a culture and promote the use of

such energies by the masses.

According to Iran's Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization (known as SATBA), the country's nominal renewable power generation capacity reached 825 megawatts (MW) at the end of the Q1 of the current Iranian calendar year (June 20).

The figure is expected to double as other projects with a total capacity of 821 MW are underway across the country, the SATBA data suggest.

Currently, over 100 large-scale farms ranging from 2MW to 12MW and over 2,000 small-scale and rooftop renewable power plants are operating across Iran, the number of which has noticeably been growing as Iranian households and small industries have also embraced the new technology with open arms and investors also seem eager for more contribution in this area.

Overall, in the next five years, Iran is aiming for a 5,000 MW increase in renewable capacity to meet growing domestic demand and expand its presence in the regional electricity market.

## Turkey's gas imports from Iran, Russia fall sharply

Turkey's natural gas imports from Iran and Russia declined by 44.8 percent and 41.5 percent, respectively in the first half of this year compared to the same period of 2019, according to Energy Market Regulatory data compiled by Anadolu Agency on Monday.

Turkey's natural gas imports in the January-June period of this year dropped by 3.5 percent to 22.5 billion cubic meters (bcm). Out of this amount, Turkey imported 12.1 bcm via pipeline and 10.3 bcm as liquefied natural gas (LNG).

Turkey's pipeline gas imports fell by 22.8 percent while LNG imports grew 44.8 percent during this period.

The country imported the highest amount of gas at 5.44 bcm in the first half of this year from Azerbaijan, marking a 23.4 percent increase compared to the same period of 2019. Transmission from the Trans Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline was a factor in the growth of imports.

Turkey imported 46 percent less gas from Iran in the

## Gas trade with Turkmenistan on NIGC agenda

**TEHRAN (Shana)** — The head of the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) said that the company is considering gas trade with the neighboring countries, especially with Turkmenistan.

"Now we do not need to balance our network with Turkmen gas, but we consider gas trade with Turkmenistan and other neighboring countries," Hassan Montazer Torbati said in a press conference on Monday.

Montazer Torbati noted that Iran's gas industry is currently at its peak, given the country's huge gas reserves, saying: "we have witnessed favorable events in increasing gas production in recent years; and production has increased in South Pars."

He said NIGC had built over 5,000 kilometers of pipelines in the last seven years, which has provided a rich infrastructure for gas distribution throughout the country.



The official underlined that there is enough capacity for gas swap with Iran's neighbors, adding, "Currently some companies are still looking for gas swaps to be able to bring gas from Turkmenistan. The issue of gas exports to Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey is also on the table. We have prepared the ground and fortunately there is enough capacity for gas swap. This means that we can receive gas in the Northeast and transit and swap it wherever necessary; this infrastructure is now ready."

## Iranian oil industry continues' development despite sanctions

**TEHRAN (Shana)** — The Iranian Oil Minister has said the country made great achievements in oil and gas projects despite the sanctions.

Addressing a virtual ceremony to launch three major oil, gas and petrochemical projects on Monday, Bijan Namdar Zanganeh said the total investment in the three projects which include national gas network lines 9 and 6, the first phase of Bushehr Petrochemical Plant and West Karoun power plant, was 4.7 billion Euros, and said: "Despite the most severe sanctions, the oil industry has not only succeeded in operating production facilities, but has also carried out development plans in such difficult circumstances."

He stated these projects include about 3.1 billion Euros of investment in the sixth and ninth transmission pipelines and its stations, 1.3 billion Euros for Bushehr Pet-

rochemical Plant and 320 million Euros West Karoun Power Plant.

He said in the gas pipelines, the private sector contributed 1.4 billion Euros of the investment for the first time in the country. The pipelines will allow gas exports to Iraq.

Zanganeh said that the total amount of Iranian gas exports to Turkey and Iraq is currently 80 million cubic meters per day.

The Minister of Petroleum mentioned West Karoun Power Plant as another national project of the Ministry of Petroleum to be inaugurated on Monday, and said that West Karoun Power Plant is the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC)'s own power plant for West Karoun oil fields cluster.

We crossed 70,000 barrels per day and reached a production capacity of 400,000 barrels per day which will reach a million barrels a day once Azadegan, Yadavaran and Yaran projects become complete."

## U.S. Gulf of Mexico operators shut in more oil, gas as twin storms race toward coast

U.S. Gulf of Mexico upstream operators have shut more production, the U.S. Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement said Aug. 24, as twin storms expected to make landfall virtually back to back raced toward the Gulf Coast, Platts reported.

Domestic offshore operators have shut about 1.523 million bpd of oil from U.S. Gulf platforms, or about 82 percent of the region's crude production, and 1,542 Bcf/d of gas, or nearly 57 percent of its gas output, BSEE said in its daily update. A day earlier, 57.6 percent of oil and 44.6 percent of gas production was shut, the agency said.

In addition, roughly 281 platforms, nearly 44 percent of the Gulf's total, had been evacuated as of 11:30 am CT Aug. 24 as Tropical Depression Marco and Tropical Storm Laura moved closer to the Gulf Coast. Also, six rigs, or 60 percent of the total in the region, had been evacuated.

Ten ports in the New Orleans area have been closed, the U.S. Coast Guard said, and the Houston Pilots have halted inbound traffic on the Houston Ship Channel.

Houston-area and Corpus Christi-area ports remained open Aug. 24, but the USCG set port condition Whiskey, requiring vessel owners, operators and managers to review plans to depart or remain at port.

The Louisiana Offshore Oil Port (LOOP) said late Aug. 23 it had suspended operations at its Marine Terminal, although deliveries to its Clovelly Hub remained normal.

Most majors and large public operators have announced



shut-in production, including BP, Shell, Chevron, Norway's Equinor and Australia's BHP.

Marco, which as recently as Aug. 23 had been a hurricane, is now projected to make landfall in eastern Louisiana late Aug. 24 as a tropical depression and head west through East Texas, according to the National Hurricane Center.

Laura, which has the more uncertain track and is considered potentially stronger and more dangerous, is forecast to make landfall as a hurricane late Aug. 26 or early Aug. 27 around the Texas-Louisiana border, according to the NHC. The storm is then forecast to head north into Louisiana and Arkansas before making a sharp turn east.

### ■ Active storm season

The 2020 Atlantic hurricane season, which runs June 1 to November 30, has already produced 11 storms, including three hurricanes, and was forecast to result in 20 storms (nine hurricanes and four major storms).

Activity is expected to be higher than the average and has the potential to significantly disrupt production from the U.S. Gulf of Mexico and impact imports, exports and refining capacity in the area, S&P Global Platts Analytics said.

Year to date, about 67,000 bpd (annual average) of oil production has been disrupted, mainly from Hurricane Cristobal, and there's potential to significantly increase that total this year since the peak of hurricane season in mid-September is yet to come.

The largest impact on production in the past 15 years was 220,000 bpd in 2005, with hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

NYMEX October crude settled Aug. 24 up 28 cents at \$42.62/b, as production losses in the Gulf of Mexico were offset by high inventories and low demand stemming from coronavirus pandemic.

However, the production outages boosted spot crude differentials for offshore grades. Heavy Louisiana Sweet crude was assessed by S&P Global Platts at a \$2.75/b premium to cash WTI, \$1.60/b stronger from Aug. 21, while medium sour crude Mars was assessed at a \$2.25/b premium to WTI, up 45 cents.

## Solar and wind generation break new record in Australia

A new record for variable renewable energy was set in parts of Australia last week, with solar and wind contributing to 46.5 percent of the total energy used for 30 minutes on 20 August in the country's National Electricity Market (NEM).

Output from renewables reached 11.7GW across the NEM, which interconnects Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and

Tasmania. The previous record of 11.3GW was set in November 2019. Pv-tech.org reported.

Alex Wonhas, chief system design and engineering officer at the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO), said the milestone reflects the rapid generation transformation underway

"In the last six months, we've commissioned

five new wind and solar farms with a generation capacity of 580MW that are feeding into the NEM, and another seven committed projects working towards construction of a further 1.785MW," he said.

The new record follows AEMO's recently 2020 Integrated System Plan, which forecasted that more than 26GW of new variable renewable

energy is needed to replace the 63 percent of NEM's coal-fired generation that is set to retire by 2040.

According to the plan, the least-cost transition of the NEM will be a diverse portfolio consisting of distributed energy resources and variable renewable energy, supported by multiple dispatchable resources.

## Venezuela restarts gasoline output at Cardon refinery reformer unit

Venezuela's state-run oil company, Petroleos de Venezuela [PDVSA.UL], has restarted gasoline output at the 310,000-barrel-per-day (bpd) Cardon refinery, Reuters reported, quoting people familiar with the matter.

The move will provide partial relief to widespread fuel shortages in the once-prosperous OPEC nation, whose 1.3 million-bpd refining network is mostly halted because of years of underinvestment and lack of maintenance, as U.S. sanctions restrict the country's ability to import fuel.



Cardon's reformer is currently producing some 25,000 bpd of gasoline for the internal market by processing naphtha and raising its octane levels, according to the people, most of whom spoke on condition of anonymity. The reformer had been halted for several months due to a lack of naphtha supply.

The company is still working to restart Cardon's fluid catalytic cracking (FCC) unit, which is also crucial for gasoline production, one of the people said. That unit was halted in July, just days after restarting.

PDVSA did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The only other plant producing gasoline in Venezuela is PDVSA's 146,000-bpd El Palito refinery, whose FCC is producing some 20,000 bpd of gasoline. That is not nearly enough to satisfy domestic demand, leading to sprawling lines outside service stations across the country.

Union leader Ivan Freites told Reuters that the gasoline being produced at Cardon's reformer had an octane level of 90, whereas most vehicles in Venezuela required gasoline with an octane level of either 91 or 95.

## OPEC shares in India's oil imports fall to decade low

The Covid-19 disruptions have changed the structure of the country's oil and gas sector with the share of OPEC crude in Indian oil imports falling to a decade-low level in July, Business Standard reported.

As per data with industry sources, the oil cartel's share in India's oil imports fell to about 67 percent in July as against highs of 75-80 percent maintained earlier.

While the share of OPEC crude has been reducing for some time in wake of India expanding its oil import basket to include newer territories in Africa, South and North America, the fall in July has come in wake of Covid-19 which has squeezed demand in the domestic market.

In July, India's oil imports had also fallen by 36.6 percent (YoY) to 12.3 million tons, the lowest in a decade. The demand is also low on account of restricted movement of vehicles that is the case during the monsoon months.

The lower domestic demand has also pushed Indian refiners to operate their refineries at 70-80 percent capacity. This means they are using less crude to produce products. This has also impacted imports of crude.

Iraq and Saudi Arabia are the two of country's largest oil sourcing markets. Iraq currently enjoys the top position among markets that supply crude to India.

## Saudi Arabia slips to 3rd-biggest in China crude supply for July

Saudi Arabia's crude oil exports to China fell in July, taking it out of the top two supplier slots for the first time in two years, after a historic production cut to cope with a plunge in fuel demand and prices that was by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Saudi Arabia shipped 5.36 million tons to China last month, the equivalent of 1.26 million barrels per day (bpd), data from the General Administration of Customs showed on Tuesday. That compares to 8.88 million tons in June and 6.99 million tons in July last year.

Russia, the biggest crude supplier to China in July, shipped 7.38 million tons, or 1.74 million bpd. Iraq rose to second place, shipping 5.79 million tons of crude oil to China, Reuters reported.



Iraq failed to meet its output reduction target in May and June, when other members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its allies, known together as OPEC+, agreed to cut the equivalent of about 10 percent of global output to shore up oil prices.

But Iraq said it would cut an additional 400,000 bpd in both August and September, on top of its 850,000 bpd commitment under the OPEC+ pact.

Crude imports from the United States in July rose 139 percent year-on-year to 3.7 million bpd as Chinese bargain hunters boosted purchases of U.S. crude grades after benchmark crude future prices became negative in April.

China imported 387,792 tons of crude oil from Malaysia in July, down 71 percent from a month ago, the data showed.

**Second Announcement**  
**Call for public tender (First/Second publish)**  
**TWO-Stages (semi compressed) tender**  
**Subject of Tender: DRILL COLLAR**

**N.I.O.C  
1399.2679**

**Tender descriptions:**

The Tender holder	Registration No. through national electronic tendering system	Tender No./Indent No.	Estimated value (Rial/Euro)
National Iranian Drilling Company	15/465/057	Tender No.:FP/22-98/161 Indent No.: 22-43-9504648003	337,505,630,000

**• Qualitative evaluation of tenderers**  
 Based on minimum scoring (50) made in award criterion reflected in the tenderers pre-qualification forms.

**• Purchasing & Submitting**

Tender Document Distribution by Company	The distribution of the documents will be started one day after the publishing of second advertisement and ended on the following tenth day thereof.		
	Distribution Place	Hall No.:113, 1 <sup>st</sup> floor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN 061-34148253 -09163358864	
Documents Receiving Method	Submitting Method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt in the amount of 190,000 Iranian Rials under account number 4001114004020491 (Shaba No. IR 520100004001114004020491) in name of "NIDC Incomes Centralized Fund" issued by I.R. of Iran Central Bank.</li> <li>Submitting format Request for the purpose of receiving Tender Documents.</li> </ul>	
	Closing date	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 14Days after the last time of Purchasing.	
	Address	Hall No. 107, 1 <sup>st</sup> floor, Tender Committee, Operation building, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN. Tel: +98-61-34148580 +98-61-34148569	

**• Tender Guarantee**

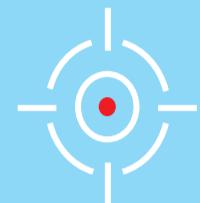
Value of guarantee	Rial 9/451/000/000	Euro 42/706
Type of guarantee	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that obtain activity license from the central bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt under account number 4001114006376636 ( Shaba No. IR 350100004001114006376636) in name of "NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran.	
Duration of credit & quotation	Tender Guarantee and quotation should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum for one time in initial validity duration.	

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**Oil min. holds phone talk with Russia's energy min. on reducing oil output**

TEHRAN, Feb. 20 (MNA) – Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh held a phone conversation with the Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak on Thursday, with regards to the cooperation of the two countries within the framework of OPEC Plus.

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# The world's distrust of America has speeded up: Russian analyst

By Mohammad Mazhari

**TEHRAN** — Andrew Korybko, a Moscow-based political analyst, believes that the world is heading towards multipolarity and many countries' distrust of the U.S. is increasing more than before.

The signs that the world is moving toward multipolarity can be easily noticed. The most concrete example is an impending 25-year agreement between Iran, a regional power, and China as a great economic and military superpower.

The 25-year agreement, called Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP), includes sweeping economic and security cooperation that would clear the way for billions of dollars of Chinese investments in Iranian energy and other sectors, undercutting the Trump administration's efforts to isolate Iran.

Analysts believe that the Trump administration has endangered American economic hegemony by its unilateral sanctions on countries that don't follow Washington's policies.

Many countries, even the Europeans, have started to think about alternatives.

"The world was already naturally moving towards multipolarity even prior to Trump's ascent to power and many across the world distrusting America much more than before," Korybko tells the Tehran Times.

Following is the full text of the interview:

■ The U.S. administration withdrew from the 2015 nuclear deal and unilaterally reimposed sanctions. Do you think this move has been successful?

A: It's been a mixed bag. It clearly didn't succeed in getting Iran to submit to the U.S., nor did it catalyze a regime change, but it did end up damage to the country's economy and pressuring the EU and India to distance themselves from the Islamic Republic. These are serious consequences, the impact of which shouldn't be downplayed.

Nevertheless, there are "silver linings" to those proverbial clouds since the very fact that Iran survived this vicious sanction onslaught is extremely embarrassing for the U.S.

It's also very concerning for them that China is reportedly moving in real rapidly nowadays to fill the economic void left by the EU over the past few years. All told, while the unilateral reimposition of sanctions devastated Iran's economy and drove away some major investment partners, it failed to return Iran to the vassal status that it held prior to the 1979 Islamic Revolution and eventually created a strategic opportunity for China to deepen its economic presence in the region, provided of course that details about the reported deal are true and that it actually enters into force.

■ What can Iran legally and politically do to confront U.S. policies, especially what the "maximum pressure" campaign? The other side of the nuclear deal, including the European troika, isn't able to compensate for the U.S. sanctions and violations.

A: International law only matters if there are credible enforcement mechanisms that are applied equally irrespective of a violator's power and prestige; otherwise, it just functions as guidelines for making state behavior more predictable, and thus theoretically more manageable for everyone else. There were no punishments imposed upon the U.S. for unilaterally pulling out of the Iran nuclear deal and reimposing sanctions. On the contrary, it imposed punishments upon others who violated its unilateral sanctions via so-called "secondary sanctions." It was this sort of pressure that compelled the EU and India to bend to America's hegemonic will, though such a scenario was predictable in hindsight considering how comparatively weak those countries are relative to the U.S. and the large extent to which the latter exerts its influence over them.

In fact, I predicted just a few days after the deal was signed that it could be spoiled if a Republican candidate won the 2016 election. In my article about "How The Next U.S. President Could Spoil The Iran Deal For Everyone," I accurately foresaw that the future Republican President would do this in order to "fulfill a campaign promise," and "payback old friends" like "Israel" and Saudi Arabia, "crash Iran's economy," all



**"Any belief in the EU as a key player in these dynamics was naive because it overlooked the fact that the bloc has extreme difficulty operating independently of the U.S. and wasn't prepared to deal with the 'secondary sanctions' scenario."**

out of "economic jealousy." I concluded my piece by writing that "It doesn't matter if they're unilateral American sanctions (which could be the catalyst for this entire process) or the multilateral UNSC ones that the Republican President might want, once sanctions return, the deal is dead." My analysis proved to be very accurate because I keenly understood the underlying strategic dynamics of this issue.

A Democrat President had an interest in preserving their 'predecessor's deal,' whereas a Republican one had the opposite in wanting to reverse it. The agreement itself was extremely contentious because of the geopolitical pivot that it implied, namely that the U.S. would move closer to Iran at the expense of its traditional "Israeli" and GCC allies as part of a risky gambit to revolutionize West Asian geopolitics.

The deal was premised on the belief that the U.S. and Iran would gradually grow closer to one another through economic means, after which their relationship could eventually take on an important regional political significance. The purpose was to preempt American rivals like China and Russia from turning Iran into their strategic partner and taking advantage of its enormous economic potential to revolutionize regional geopolitics, albeit in the direction of challenging American influence Mideast.

Respectfully speaking, any belief in the EU as a key player in these dynamics was naive because it overlooked the fact that the bloc has extreme difficulty operating independently of the U.S. and wasn't prepared to deal with the "secondary sanctions" scenario. It assumed that European rhetoric was sincere, which it probably was to a large degree until Trump came to office, but it wrongly assumed that the EU would risk devastating economic punishments from him through "secondary sanctions" just for the sake of preserving the Iran deal whose economic benefits they had yet to reap. They naturally had no interest in doing this because there wasn't any immediate incentive to do so. These strategic dynamics haven't really changed since then, which is why trusting the EU once again would be a mistake for Iran after it already learned this lesson the hard way.

■ How do you assess the Iran-China 25-year agreement and Iran-Russia 20-year deal? Americans slam these agreements, claiming that deals with China and Russia are against Iran's interests. What will be the fate of JCPOA in light of the Iran-China and Iran-Russia agreements?

A: For starters, neither deal has entered into force just yet. There were only unconfirmed

**"Iran will seek to 'balance' between China, Russia, and India in the order of their reliability."**

reports about the details of the Iran-China one while its Iran-Russia counterpart refers to the renewal of an earlier weapons and petrochemical deal originally signed in early 2001 and, therefore, not renewable until early 2021. It's too early to talk about any details concerning them because of the simple fact that neither has actually happened yet. Nevertheless, it's still possible to broadly analyze the geopolitical impact if both of them are successfully clinched, as many expect will happen.

Beginning with the Iran-Russia one, very little has been achieved in the past 20 years, so there isn't much precedent for predicting that it'll be a game-changer, though it would definitely be a positive development to renew the agreement. Because of simple geopolitical reasons, it's mutually beneficial for these two countries to continue to cooperate with one another through economic means, after which their relationship could eventually take on an important regional political significance. The purpose was to preempt American rivals like China and Russia from turning Iran into their strategic partner and taking advantage of its enormous economic potential to revolutionize regional geopolitics, albeit in the direction of challenging American influence Mideast.

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and China, the agreement itself will probably continue to be redundant since it only exists on paper nowadays after the U.S. left the deal and pressured the EU to de-facto to do the same. These prospective agreements are only related to the Iranian nuclear deal insofar as they might not have been seriously considered had the deal remained in force since Iran expected at the time that its future economic partners would be Western ones, not non-Western ones. It can thus be said that the U.S.' actions created opportunities for Russia and especially China.

■ Do you think the world is heading towards multipolarity as a result of U.S. policies and distrust in the American administration, especially its exploitation of the dollar through sanctions and "secondary sanctions"?

A: The world was already naturally moving towards multipolarity even prior to Trump's ascent to power and many across the world distrusting America much more than before. It's actually for this reason why his administration has sought to weaponize access to its economy through sanctions and "secondary sanctions" so as to slow down this process and potentially reverse it.

In other words, that was the symptom, not the cause, of multipolarity, which had been slowly and to a great extent, silently developing for a while prior to the 2016 election. Instead of passively going along with the flow like Hillary would have done and therefore facilitating the gradual transition from unipolarity to multipolarity, Trump sought to aggressively push back against it out of the belief that such dramatic actions could make a meaningful difference.

Instead of preserving unipolarity, however, he only accelerated what could have possibly only been the brief transitional state of bipolarity and instead made that model the most likely one for the indefinite future. The world is increasingly being divided between the U.S. and China along the geopolitical, economic, technological, scientific, and other planes, which has changed the dynamics of the New Cold War. This global rivalry could have been mostly multi-sided in what was expected to be the Multipolar World Order, but nowadays, it is disproportionately two-sided whereby countries are being pressured to broadly choose between the U.S. and China. Some geo-strategically positioned players are attempting to "balance" between both, but as seen from the Indian example, sometimes such rhetoric is just a deception to disguise a de-facto pivot towards the U.S.

Iran had previously thought that it could "balance" between its Russian and Indian multipolar partners, but the latter's preference for the U.S. (motivated by their shared desire to "contain" China) made it difficult for Tehran to do so since Moscow, in turn, realized that the planned North-South Transport Corridor (NSTC) through the Islamic Republic probably won't materialize to the extent that was originally expected as a result of New Delhi's general compliance with Washington's threatened "secondary sanctions."

As a result, Iran had no realistic choice but to move even closer to China in today's increasingly bipolar world, which I wrote about for Pakistan's Express Tribune in a recent piece explaining how "India and Russia are responsible for pushing Iran into China's Arms."

Returning back to the question about whether the world is becoming multipolar, it's actually more bipolar, though its dynamics are more complex than they previously were during the Old Cold War and can, therefore, be best described as Complex Bipolarity considering some of the multipolar tendencies within this model such as the decline of the dollar and the rising importance of other Great Powers. Iran is obviously choosing China over the U.S., but it has an interest in not becoming too dependent on the People's Republic, hence why it'll probably seek to repair its relations with India and create incentives to motivate Russia to play a larger role in its economic and military affairs. Ideally, Iran will seek to "balance" between China, Russia, and India in the order of their reliability. China can certainly be counted on, Russia only sometimes, and India very rarely.

## Why was UAE chosen as 1st destination for normalization?

By Mehdi Azizi

**TEHRAN** — Various analyzes were presented on the process of formalizing the normalization of ties between the UAE and the Zionist regime, but the question that has occupied minds of analysts and observers is this 'why UAE was chosen'?

As mentioned above, various analyzes were presented on the process of formalizing the normalization of ties between the United Arab Emirates and the Zionist regime. The reason of this irrational political approach, its negative consequences in the geography of Palestine and the Axis of Resistance and focus on the reaction of public opinion to it were put at the focal attention of regional and Arab media; but the important question that received less attention is why the UAE was chosen as the first destination for the normalization of ties with the Zionist regime?

Has this choice been taken due to influence or economic power? Or were the characteristics of this Arab country considered as the main reason for this choice? Is the UAE basically capable of changing the rules of the game in the region and imposing a new equation on Palestine and Resistance Front? UAE has normalized its ties with Israel at the condition that Resistance and Palestinian groups have imposed new equations on Israel at the political, field, and media levels.

Obviously, none of these cases, as mentioned above, has played a role in choosing the UAE as a formalization option for normalizing ties with Israel. The UAE has neither enjoyed the economic power of the past nor the components of the national authority.

In terms of political approach, it (UAE) has played no role in the Palestinian cause. Therefore, the influence and role of this country, i.e., the United Arab Emirates, are not as great as that of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and even Bahrain. Choosing UAE will be less expensive for the United States and Saudi Arabia, and Israelis can conduct their laboratory experiments in this country.

This country has been the same in the past historical period. What the UAE has done and is doing today and in the past is based on the division of role and the mission, which has been defined for it in line with the westernization scenario. Countries like the UAE were not formed based on components of national authority, popular support, common history, and deep culture, but have been formed based on the oil-for-security agreement (Of course, the security of the political structure and rulers, not the people).

But why was UAE chosen as the first destination for normalization of ties with Israel? / What is the Broken Window Theory?

In general, it can be said that UAE is a "broken window" in the formal structure rather than a popular structure for advancing and realizing Israel's plans in the region. Undoubtedly, the Broken Window Theory applies to the political behavior of Westerners towards the Emirati people. This theory states that if there is a broken window in a building, then it can be easily penetrated everywhere.

Imagine the UAE as a building that has a small amount of capability and influence in the course of developments of the Islamic world due to historical, cultural, and national conditions. It can be considered a broken window. By choosing the UAE, the West and Israel seek to create an opening for entry into the Arab and Islamic world and formalize the normalization of ties as well as the destruction of all national and Islamic priorities of the nation.

### ■ Normalization and detection stage / from security relationships to sports competitions

Another important issue is that the normalization of relations between the UAE and some other countries has basically existed at the security level for many years. But last year, a new stage began with the disclosure of these relations and their formalization. Sports competitions, as well as literary awards, were a good excuse to enter the normalization stage and make it public. So that the Zionist regime's judo team participated in the competitions that were held in the UAE, and more interestingly, Israel's Minister of Sports was also present, and the national anthem of this regime was echoed in the competition hall!!

The UAE is prone to advance and realize the Israeli plan due to its special and demographic characteristics as well as its identity formation. The population of this country until 2018 was about 9.6 million people, most of whom are immigrants and a relatively small number of citizens of this country. Of course, it is said that some regions and major citizens of the UAE are opposed to this normalization process. However, there is no concern about the reactions and protests in this Persian Gulf country due to the combination of the population that is mostly immigrant and dispersion of the main population in areas other than Dubai.

Therefore, this country's selection to formalize the normalization of ties was a good benchmark for the Israelis to go through it without any cost or slight protest.

### ■ UAE, Center for Cultural and Literary Awards and Festivals

The important point that should be taken into consideration is this that UAE has tried over the past years to be a center for awarding literary, cultural and literary prizes and a gathering place for the cultural, artistic and literary elites of the Arab and non-Arab world so that they can be used politically in different situations. The multimillion-dollar and thrilling prizes made this Arab country the focus of all Arab elites.

Bashir Zaïfullah, a Lebanese poet who withdrew from Sheikh Zayed Book Award

However, after this initiative, some Arab elites withdrew from participating in festivals in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). For example, the famous Lebanese poet withdrew from receiving the "Sheikh Zayed Book Award." Algerian poet and critic "Bashir Zaïfullah" also withdrew from the "Sheikh Zayed Book Award" in solidarity with the Palestinian people against the normalization of ties with the Zionist regime. Amani bin Ali, a 19-year-old Tunisian novelist, also refused to participate in the "Arabic Reading Challenge" competition.

### ■ Playing Role as a tool to pave the way for Saudi Arabia

In the process of normalization, the UAE is essentially paving the way for the Saudis. Of course, Bahrain and some countries, with the UAE's characteristics, are also in the line of normalization. Saudi Arabia seeks to assess domestic reactions to the UAE issue in order to pave the way for normalization of its ties with Israel through internal and external assessments and reactions in the Islamic world.

It can be said that since Trump came to power as US President, all his political behavior has focused on the issue of Palestine and the Arab cases in order to gain the support of the Zionist regime and its powerful lobbies in the United States. Especially today, Trump has distanced himself from his political rivals in the domestic arena in the face of dealing with the coronavirus, COVID-19 as well as internal protests of this country and is seeking to strengthen his voting portfolio at any cost.

## U.S. lacks the legal basis for calling the snapback Iran's sanctions: Turkish politician

By Payman Yazdani

**TEHRAN** — Commenting on the U.S. intense efforts to activate the 'snapback' mechanism of the JCPOA, veteran Turkish politician says the U.S. may have multiple motives to push Iran matter for the second time in the UNSC.

The U.S. aims to activate a "snapback" mechanism in the 2015 Iran nuclear deal that would restore international sanctions on Iran. The move escalates a dispute between the U.S. and other members of the U.N. security council.

The United States demands the United Nations Security Council to activate the "snapback" mechanism of the JCPOA to reimpose all sanctions against Iran, while other parties to the deal believe that the U.S. is not allowed to resort to this mechanism because it is not a party to the JCPOA anymore since the country left it in May 2018.

Donald Trump is doing his best to activate the mechanism just a couple of days after his failure in the UNSC to extend Iran's arms embargo.

To know more about the issue, we reached out to Dr. Os-

man Faruk Logoglu, a senior member of Turkey's CHP and veteran politician.

Here is the text of the interview with him:

■ How do you assess the U.S. move to reimpose U.N. sanctions on Iran by activating the snapback mechanism of the JCPOA, despite unanimous opposition from other UNSC members and considering the fact that the U.S. has already left the JCPOA?

A: It was clear from the start that the U.S. lacked both the legal basis for calling the snapback Iran's sanctions or the support it needed to have it pass. Why then did the U.S. push the matter for a second time? There might be at least three motives: One is to build a case against the U.N. with which the Trump administration has never been happy, a case to justify an eventual U.S. challenge to the U.N. system. A second motive is to better argue for the continuation of bilateral U.S. sanctions. Finally, it might be part of a more general attempt by the U.S. to go alone in trying to isolate Iran in the Middle East, thinking - mistakenly - that the UAE-Israel deal was a great success with more to follow.

■ Can such unilateral moves weaken the UNSC's role in

maintaining peace in the world?

A: I do not believe the U.S. move affects - however, limited that might be - the efficacy of the UNSC. We witness time and again that any of the permanent 5 can veto action by the UNSC. I think the Trump administration wants to sell to the American public; the U.N. is no good and does not serve American interests. President Trump might be thinking that taking on the U.N. might help him in the November elections.

■ Many thinkers like Richard Hoss believe that President Trump's foreign policy has isolated the U.S. What do you think of this?

A: I agree with Richard Hoss. But it is not just foreign policy, but the overall domestic and international demeanor of the Trump administration that has undercut America's so-called "exceptionalism." The American system is undergoing a severe challenge under President Trump. The Trump administration is on bad terms with the U.N., NATO, E.U., UNESCO, WHO, and many countries individually, including Germany. Trump's foreign policy is based on Israel and Israeli interests. That basis is not enough for a sound, comprehensive foreign policy. "

## A glimpse of Muharram mourning rituals across Iran: Playing senj, damam and chest thumping

(Part 7/8)

In Bushehr, southwest Iran, people commemorate Muharram most notably through playing senj, and damam that are percussion instruments.

People gather in big squares of the city and hold mourning ceremonies in the first days of Muharram. The harmony between mourners make their senj and damam playing as well as chest thumping as a great work.



They form different sizes of circles with a unique center. They hug each other with one hand and with others they perform chest-thumping. Senj and damam are played in harmony with their mourning. The rhythm of their performance makes it one of the most tranquil kinds of mournings.

### The origin

The ritual roots in Iranian as well as Arab culture. It is a great combination of Iranian and Arab mourning ceremony. Besides, the unity, coherence, and gathering between mourners make the ceremony fantastic.

## UNESCO-tagged hydraulic ensemble to be dredged

**HERITAGE** TEHRAN – A dredging project has started at parts of Shushtar Historical Hydraulic System, a UNESCO-registered ensemble in southwest Iran, which is known globally as a 'masterpiece of creative genius'.



Last April, the prehistorical ensemble was slightly affected by flash floods and heavy rainfall that stroke almost all of the country.

"A budget of 10 billion rials (some \$240,000 based on the official rate of 42,000 rials) has been ratified for the project that will take some two months to be completed," a local official said on Monday, IRNA reported.

The ensemble comprises bridges, weirs, tunnels, canals, and a series of ancient watermills powered by human-made waterfalls. It is named after an ancient city of the same name with its history dating back to the time of Darius the Great, the Achaemenid king.

Inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list in 2009, the Shushtar Historical Hydraulic System may testify to the heritage and the synthesis of earlier Elamite and Mesopotamian knowhow. According to UNESCO, the ensemble was probably influenced by the Petra dam and tunnel and by Roman civil engineering.

## Restoration begins on Boroujerdi-ha House in central Iran

**HERITAGE** TEHRAN – A new round of restoration work has recently commenced on Boroujerdi-ha House, a 19th-century merchant mansion that is now one of major travel destinations in the oasis city of Kashan, central Iran.

With a budget of 500 million rials (some \$12,000 at the official rate of 42,000 rials), the project involves cleaning, strengthening and reconstructing the plasterwork, which was damaged by rain, wind and air pollution, according to Mehran Sarmadian who presides over Kashan's office for the cultural heritage and tourism.



Locally known as Khaneh-ye Boroujerdi-ha, the traditional house has been inscribed on the National Heritage list. It bears aesthetic significance due to its rich architectural layout and designs that include abundant molded ornaments, intricate plasterwork, murals, glasswork, mirrorwork, and woodwork.

Elaborately decorated, its courtyard is laid out around a central fountain pool which sits below ground level in order to help reduce the ambient temperature.

The mansion originally consisted of two sections, an inner part dedicated to only immediate family and an outer part where guests are entertained but today the latter is usually open to the public.

The historical monument was inscribed on the National Heritage list in 1975.

An alluring destination, Kashan boasts a bunch of architectural wonders, an atmospheric covered bazaar, boutique hotels, and a UNESCO-registered garden.

Many travelers opt to bypass the delightful oasis city that is sprawled on the edge of the Dasht-e Kavir on their journeys between Tehran and Isfahan provinces.

# People's health is our first priority: tourism minister

**TOURISM** TEHRAN – Iranian tourism minister has said that his ministry is in full coordination with the Ministry of Health for strictly implementing health protocols in travel destinations, hospitably centers, and museums, amongst others, underlining that "people's health is our first priority."

"Protocols outlined by the [both] Ministry of Health, and National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control are being strictly implemented," Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan said on Monday.

Speaking in a radio program, he said that travels which are not within the framework of tours are highly probable to spread the coronavirus. This issue has prompted the Ministry of Health to ask people not to travel.

"People's health is first on the list and we will implement what the Ministry of Health decides in full coordination."

"Corona has caused damage to many countries around the world, and our country's travel sector has so far suffered a loss of 12 trillion rials (some \$2.85 billion at the official rate of 42,000 rials)."

Answering a controversial question about him previously claiming "traveling has no impact on coronavirus spread", the minister explained: "I did not say that travel has no effect on the corona outbreak, this



Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan wears a mask while addressing a press conference in an undated photo.

part of my speech is badly reflected,... the medical staff in the country is working very hard, God forbid, their efforts should not be ignored."

"We are in full coordination with the Ministry of Health, and the National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control and the point is that we follow strict protocols in

the field of tourism."

Earlier this month, Mounesan proclaimed: "If the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic is contained, all the tourism businesses across the country will have the capacity to fully resume their activities both in domestic and foreign markets."

"Many tourism projects have been com-

pleted, or are being implemented, showing that a very good capacity has been created in the field of tourism in the country and [this trend] should not be stopped," he explained.

According to Mounesan, 2,451 tourism-related projects worth 1,370 trillion rials (around \$32 billion) are currently being implemented across the country that "signals a prosperous future for Iran's tourism sector."

In August, the tourism minister said the coronavirus pandemic should not bring traveling to a complete standstill. "Corona is a fact, but can the virus stop tourism? Certainly not. For us, the coronavirus is a new experience in dealing with crises that teaches tourism experts around the world how to deal with such a disaster, and thankfully governments are turning this into an opportunity for better planning."

Iran expects to reap a bonanza from its numerous tourist spots such as bazars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, mausoleums, churches, towers, and mansions, of which 24 being inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list. Under the 2025 Tourism Vision Plan, it aims to increase the number of tourist arrivals from 4.8 million in 2014 to 20 million in 2025. The latest available data show eight million tourists visited the Islamic Republic during the first ten months of the past Iranian calendar year (started March 21, 2019).

## Elymais coin found in southwestern Iran

**TOURISM** TEHRAN – A historical copper coin minted by the ancient dynasty of Elymais, has recently been found in Shekal historical site, in the southwestern port city of Bandar Mahshahr, Khuzestan province, a provincial tourism chief has said.

The coin was discovered while the police forces in charge of protecting cultural heritage were chasing a number of illegal excavators in the southwest region, Ahmadreza Hosseini said on Tuesday.

Elymais was one of the powerful local governments in Khuzestan during the Parthian Empire (247 BC – 224 CE). The dynasty is believed to be established by Kamnaskires, known from coins dated 81 BC, and it survived until its extinction by the Sassanid king Ardashir I (180-242 CE).

Though the capital city of Susa belonged to Elymais, it seems to have been administered by a Persian satrap. The heart of the kingdom centered near the mountains of Lorestan near modern Behbehan and Izeh, where the



local dynasty left rock reliefs and inscriptions in a form of Aramaic.

The UNESCO-registered Susa, nowadays, is a top destination for history buffs. Part of Susa is still inhabited as Shush on a strip of land between the rivers Shaour (a

tributary of the Karkheh) and Dez.

Archaeological evidence suggests that Susa has been continuously inhabited from 4,200 BC placing it among the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world. In addition, there are traces at Susa of a village inhabited around 7,000 BC and painted pottery dating from 5,000 BC at the site.

The archaeological site includes the ruins of the Achaemenid palace complex of Darius I, the Great, and is located on a fifteen meter high artificially raised 100-hectare terrace. It has suffered greatly in the past seventy years.

Susa became part of the Persian Empire under Cyrus II, the Great in 538 or 539 BC. During the balance of the Achaemenian period (to 330 BC), Susa functioned as one of the rotting capitals (a winter capital) of the Achaemenian Kings.

It is said that Alexander of Macedonia captured Susa in 330 BC and plundered the city, seizing some 40,000 talents of gold and silver from the treasury.

## Tourism projects worth \$6.6m to come on stream in Sistan-Baluchestan

**TOURISM** TEHRAN – A total of 17 tourism-related projects, worth 280 billion rials (\$6.6 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) are scheduled to be inaugurated across Iran's southeastern Sistan-Baluchestan province on the occasion of the National Week (August 24-30), provincial tourism chief has said.

Seven tourism complexes, eight eco-lodge units, a traditional restaurant, and a travel agency will get off the ground in various cities of the province, CHTN quoted Alireza Jalalzai as saying on Tuesday.



The mentioned projects will generate job opportunities for 140 people, the official added.

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

For mainstream Iranians, the name of Sistan-Baluchestan was conjuring up stories



## Tehran's Glass and Ceramic Museum closed for repairs

**TOURISM** TEHRAN – The Glass and Ceramic Museum in Tehran has closed its doors to the public for one month due to some repair works.

The repair project includes parquets and exquisite wooden stairs as well as doors and windows, the museum's director Hamid Vakilbashi announced on Tuesday.

All exhibitions and educational meetings will be held online during the time, he added.

Also known as Abgineh Museum, the museum offers visitors a wide range of glasswork, brickwork, plasterwork, mirror work as well as inlaid artworks that

date from the 2nd millennium BC to the present day, all housed within an elegant Qajar-era (1789 to 1925) edifice.

The two-story octagonal structure itself retains a lot of charm as seamlessly blends genuine Iranian architecture with the 19th-century European motifs.

It was originally constructed upon the orders of the 20th-century politician Ahmad Qavam better known as Qavam ol-Saltaneh for his personal lodging. It is situated a short walk northward of the National Museum of Iran on Si-e Tir St.

## Candle and Lamp Ceremony in Shahroud Tekiyehs during Muharram

By Seyed Hossein Hosseini seddiq

Tekiyehs (prayer halls) of Bazaar, Golshan, Qaleh, Sharifat, and especially Tekiyeh of Bid Abad, which is one of the old Tekiyehs of Shahroud, hold this traditional ceremony with special ceremonies. In this ritual, which begins minutes after sunset, the servants of these Tekiyehs, known as "watchmen", stand in a row in front of the Saqqakhaneh (A small indent in the wall overlooking some passages where water was poured for people to drink and had a kind of religious sanctity), which is called the lampstand. It is also common to play the trumpet to inform local servants during candle and lamp ceremonies. The custodian of the mosque and the elders also stand in front of the lighthouse, and the servants, who are on duty, line up in front of them.

To start the ceremony, someone in charge of the lights brings candlesticks and lanterns from the lampstand and arranges them on the floor in such a way that the candlesticks and lamps are arranged alternate. The lamp-holder then takes the candlestick from the row



of lamps and candlesticks and recites the following poems and prayers aloud:

1st verse: It was night and the torch of Mohammadi religion was lit / the horizons became a flower garden because of his step

2nd verse: send the first blessings (Salawat) for the Prophet of Islam Muhammad in Medina/ send the second blessings for the Lion of God, Imam Ali in Najaf

3rd verse: third, curse the accused Shemr (the killer of Imam Hussein) in Karbala / fourth, send blessings to Imam Reza in Tus

"Then the servants of Tekiyeh send prayers (Salawat) in harmony"

In front of the Saqqakhaneh, the sermon reader recites a special sermon on candles and lamps in such a way that it contains literary themes about the Prophet of Islam, Imam Ali, his wife Holiness Fatima, Imam Hassan, Imam Hussein and his descendants and seventy-two the martyrs of Karbala desert such as Hazrat Abul-Fazl Al-Abbas, Qasim Ibn Al-Hassan, Moslem Ibn Aqeel, Hani Ibn Orwa, Habib Ibn Mazahir, Moslim Ibn Awsajeh, Al-Hurr Al-Riyahi, Holiness Zainab, Hazrat Umm Al-Kulthum, Hazrat Sakineh and Hazrat Roqayeh and finally, the sermon reader says Fatiyah (reciting some verses from Quran) and then the servants of Tekiyeh bow.

After the sermon reader, Chavosh Khan (the singer of poems in praise of the Imams suitable for the pilgrimage to the holy shrines) recites poems by Mohtasham Kashani related to the Karbala tragedy in a melodious voice and at the end of each hemistich, the servants say prayers (Salawat).

At the end of the candle and lamp ceremony, the people who are on duty kiss the candles and lights and give them to their

servant next. In the same way, candlesticks and lights are pilgrimage by all the servants and then handed over to reach the original place. In this way, the service of the previous guard ends and it is the turn of the next guard. In addition to being called the "candle and lamp" ceremony, it is sometimes called the "servants' evening" ceremony. In the end, it is noted that the occupations of sermon reading, the responsibility of the ceremony of candles and lights, and chanting (Chavosh Khan) in Tekiyeh of Bid Abad are inherited. For example, the ancestors of the present sermon readers fathers are mentioned who recited sermons during the first decade of Muharram during their lifetime:

Hajj Zayn al-Abedin Ibrahimian the current sermon reader is the son of Karbala'i Hajji Mohammad, Karbala'i Hajji Mohammad is the brother of Karbala'i Ahmad, Karbala'i Ahmad is the son of Sheikh Ibrahim, Sheikh Ibrahim is the son of Hajj Muhammad who was the son of Hajj Ibrahim. He also inherited the job of a sermon reader from his ancestors.

(The author is a faculty member at the Islamic Azad University)



## U.S. protests: Wisconsin deploys National Guard amid protests

→ It was not clear what prompted officers to use deadly force and it was not immediately clear if just one or both of the officers opened fire. The two officers have been placed on administrative leave.

Blake, whose children were present during the shooting, was rushed to a hospital after the shooting and survived. His father told U.S. broadcaster NBC News that his son was out of surgery and in stable condition.

Wisconsin police imposed a curfew on the city of Kenosha, after a night of unrest over the shooting. Officers used tear gas in the early hours of Monday to break up hundreds of people who had taken to the streets.



### Democrats, Republicans clash over shooting

The images of the incident drew a wave of reactions among political leaders in Wisconsin and nationally, which fell largely along party lines. Democratic Governor Tony Evers expressed solidarity for the African-American community and asked for justice.

"While we do not have all of the details yet, what we know for certain is that he is not the first Black man or person to have been shot or injured or mercilessly killed at the hands of individuals in law enforcement in our state or our country," Evers said.

But Republicans condemned Evers for his comments, saying he jumped to conclusions without first having all the facts.

"Everyone should take a deep breath... We must let law and reason, not emotion, guide the next steps," Republican state Sen. Van Wanggaard, a retired police officer from the city of Racine, which is next to Kenosha.

"The best leaders attempt to diffuse situations, not escalate them," Wanggaard said. "Evers' statement was irresponsible and inflammatory. At a time when stereotyping situations is especially risky, Evers stereotyped every police interaction with people of color, harming both," he added.

Pete Deates, president of the Kenosha police union, called Evers' statement "wholly irresponsible," saying that the video did not "capture all the intricacies of a highly dynamic incident."

Evers has called a special session of the Republican-controlled Legislature starting August 31 in order to pass a package of police reform bills he put forward in June, following the death of George Floyd at the hands of police in neighboring Minnesota.

But the Legislature has not taken any action on the measures and has not sought to vote on them.

## Resistance News

### Scores of Jewish settlers defile al-Aqsa Mosque

**INTERNATIONAL** TEHRAN— Dozens of Jewish settlers on Monday stormed al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem under heavy police presence.

The Islamic Awqaf Council said that 111 Israeli settlers broke into al-Aqsa Mosque and roamed its courtyards while accompanied by a large police force.

The settlers spent most of their tour in the eastern area of the Mosque where they performed Talmudic rituals.

Meanwhile, tight restrictions were imposed on the Palestinian worshipers entering the site.

### Hamas: Gaza will not 'remain silent' as Israel escalates siege

**INTERNATIONAL** TEHRAN— The threat of a new Gaza war continues to rise as Palestinians demand an end to the devastating 13-year-long blockade and Israel tightens the screws on Gaza's economy while targeting Hamas positions.

Israeli warplanes and tanks bombed Hamas military sites early on Tuesday in response to the incendiary balloons launched from Gaza towards Israel's south, according to an Israeli army statement.

According to al-Jazeera, It was the 15th day in a row that Israel launched attacks against Hamas's infrastructure and agricultural land in the Gaza Strip. Gaza's military factions did not respond on Tuesday, although they previously launched rockets towards Israel after attacks last week.

No serious injuries were reported on either side.

The current escalation between Palestinian factions in the Gaza Strip and Israel was caused by the launching of incendiary balloons by Palestinians into southern Israel in the past two weeks as a way to pressure Israel to lift its crippling blockade imposed in 2007. The rigged balloons and kites often start blazes on farms in Israel.

### Four Palestinians killed in Gaza explosion

**INTERNATIONAL** TEHRAN— Al-Quds Brigades, the armed wing of the Islamic Jihad, on Monday evening announced that four of its resistance fighters were killed in an explosion east of Shijaiya neighborhood in Gaza.

The martyrs are Eyad al-Jedi, 42, Mu'taz al-Mubayyed, 29, Ya'coub Zeidiya, 25, and Yahya al-Mubayyed, 23.

All of them are residents of Shijaiya neighborhood in the eastern area of Gaza City.

Initial reports said that the explosion was accidental, yet no official information has been revealed yet.

# UAE snubs three-way meeting with U.S., Israel over F-35 spat

**'We oppose sale of 'even one screw' of the F-35 to UAE'**

→ Netanyahu also rejected earlier reports that he had given the green light to such sales to the UAE as part of the normalization deal.

Walla further said Emirati officials would refrain from holding any such high-level meetings with Israeli officials until Netanyahu "clarifies" his position on potential sales of the F35-s to Abu Dhabi.

Tel Aviv claims to have a "military edge" in the region and invariably pressures Washington into helping it retain the self-proclaimed primacy.

The UAE says the peace agreement with Israel should remove "any hurdle" for Abu Dhabi to purchase the advanced jets.

"We have legitimate requests that are there. We ought to get them," said Emirati Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Anwar Gargash in an interview with the Atlantic Council on Thursday. "The whole idea of a state of belligerency or war with Israel no longer exists" following normalization.

Observers say the complications that have followed the UAE-Israel normalization



agreement point to the flimsy nature of their relations, which have been received with uniform opposition from all Palestinian factions and many other countries.

Speaking alongside Netanyahu during a trip to the occupied city of Jerusalem al-Quds, U.S. Secretary of State, reiterated America's commitment to protecting Israel, while suggesting that Washington could rethink selling the warplanes to the UAE.

"The United States has a legal requirement with respect to [Israel's alleged] qualitative military edge, and we will continue to honor that," Pompeo said, adding the U.S. "will now continue to review" its military ties with the UAE.

As per America's Israel policy, Washington has to take protecting Israel's security into consideration before selling any weapons to countries in the Middle East region.

With that in mind, the U.S. has so far sold 16 of the warplanes to the occupying regime and plans to add dozens more to the fleet.

### Turkey, Greece to hold rival naval drills as Germany aims to cool row

Turkey and Greece were set to hold separate naval drills in the same region of the eastern Mediterranean on Tuesday, escalating tensions over overlapping resource claims ahead of talks in Athens and Ankara by Germany's top diplomat.

The NATO members have traded rhetorical barbs over offshore hydrocarbon rights, drawing the European Union and nearby countries into the dispute that earlier this month involved a light collision between Turkish and Greek frigates, Reuters reported.

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas aims to cool temperatures in

separate talks with his Greek and Turkish counterparts Tuesday. A ministry spokesman said Germany regrets Turkey's decision to extend its exploration work at sea.

Tensions rose after Turkey deployed its Oruc Reis survey vessel to waters Ankara claims in a move Athens called illegal.

On Sunday, Turkey issued an advisory known as a Navtex to extend the vessel's operations until Aug. 27. Greece then issued its own advisory that it will hold military exercises in the same area, off the Greek island of Crete.

### Pompeo flies to Sudan from Israel as U.S. pushes stronger regional links

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo was due to land in Sudan from Israel Tuesday, on what he said was the first official non-stop flight between the two countries, as the United States promotes stronger Sudan-Israel ties.

His visit is part of a regional tour following an accord between Israel and the UAE this month to forge full relations, and comes as Israel and the United States push more Arab countries to follow, Daily Star reported.

"Happy to announce that we are on the FIRST official NONSTOP flight from Israel to Sudan!" Pompeo said on Twitter.

Pompeo will meet Sudan's prime minister and the head of its ruling council during a brief stopover in Khartoum to discuss U.S. support for the civilian-led government and for "deepening the Sudan-Israel relationship", according to the State Department.

Sudan has been restoring its own ties with the United States following the ouster of former Islamist leader Omar al-Bashir in April 2019, and is pushing to be removed from the list of countries that Washington considers state sponsors of terrorism.

### Rohingya hold 'silent protest' on anniversary of exodus to Bangladesh

Rohingya Muslim refugees in Bangladesh held a "silent protest" Tuesday to mark the third anniversary of clashes between Rohingya insurgents and Myanmar security forces that set off a huge movement into Bangladesh of people seeking safety.

More than 1 million Rohingya live in the world's largest refugee settlement in southern Bangladesh, with little prospect of returning to Myanmar, where they are mostly denied citizenship and other rights, Daily Star reported.

The refugees said that because of the novel coronavirus they would not hold a mass gathering to mark what they call "Remembrance Day". Authorities say 88 cases of the virus have been found in the camps and six people have died.

Three years ago, Rohingya insurgents raided 30 police posts and an army base in Myanmar's Rakhine State, killing at least 12 members of the security forces.

The Myanmar military crackdown that followed forced 730,000 Rohingya to flee to Bangladesh, joining more than



200,000 already there.

"We were forcibly driven out from our motherland to

the world's largest refugee camp," Rohingya groups said in a statement.

The United Nations said the crackdown by the Myanmar military was carried out with genocidal intent.

Myanmar denies genocide, saying its forces were engaged in a legitimate campaign against the Rohingya insurgents, and it was the insurgents who were responsible for most of the violence, including the torching of villages.

The refugees said Rohingya had faced "hidden genocide" in Myanmar for decades and they appealed to the United Nations and other organizations to declare what happened in 2017 genocide.

"Please stand with innocent Rohingya, and then hopefully we can return to our home," they said in the statement.

In some rare good news for the refugees, Bangladesh said Monday it would soon lift a ban on high-speed mobile internet in the camps that authorities imposed last year citing concern that social media would be used to stir panic.

### No normalization with Israel until Palestine establishes viable state: OIC

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) says its member states would not follow the United Arab Emirates in normalizing ties with Israel until the regime ends the occupation of Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem al-Quds, which Palestine wants as the capital of its sovereign state.

In a statement issued on Monday, OIC Secretary General Yusuf bin Ahmed al-Uthaymeen highlighted the issue of Palestine and Israeli-occupied Jerusalem al-Quds as the organization's raison d'être and pivotal cause.

"It is at the heart of the OIC's joint Islamic action and the main consensus of all Member States, which all endeavor to end the Israeli occupation and help the Palestinian people realize their legitimate rights," he said.

He further pointed to the so-called Arab Peace Initiative as "a strategic choice, a historic opportunity, and a common reference on which a peaceful, just and comprehensive solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict must be based."

The Initiative calls on Israel to agree to a "two-state solution" along the 1967 bor-

ders and a "just" solution to the Palestinian refugee issue.

"The OIC supports all efforts exerted to enable the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable national rights, including the right of return, self-determination, and the establishment of their independent and sovereign state on the borders of June 4, 1967," he said.

He further censured unilateral Israeli measures to annex Palestinian territories and build settlements on occupied land, saying the illegal moves undermine the so-called two-state solution.

The OIC chief said normalization "will never take place until after the end of the Israeli occupation of the Arab and Palestinian lands occupied since 1967, including al-Quds, and the establishment of the viable Palestinian State with East al-Quds as its capital."

On August 13, the UAE and the Israeli regime reached the deal for a full normalization of their relations. The deal was apparently brokered by US President Donald Trump.

The intended normalization has angered Muslim nations and supporters of the Pal-

estinian cause against Israel's occupation.

Palestinian leaders have described the Emirates' deal with Israel as a betrayal of the Palestinian cause and a "stab in the back" of the Palestinian people.

The Emirati officials have described the peace deal as a step toward helping Palestinian statehood by halting annexation plans. Palestine, however, rejects that claim, saying normalization attempts had been in the offing for a long time.

**British FM to visit Israeli, Palestinian officials**

Meanwhile, Britain's Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab is due to visit Israel and the occupied West Bank on Tuesday for meetings with top Israeli and Palestinian officials to reportedly express London's opposition to any future Israeli annexation in the West Bank.

According to a statement by the British embassy in Israel, he would "press for renewed dialogue" between the sides.

He is slated to meet with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, minister of military affairs Benny Gantz and Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi.

In Ramallah, he is scheduled to sit down

with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayeh.

"Israel's suspension of annexation is an important step towards a more peaceful West Asia," Raab said in a statement released by his office.

According to press TV, he was referring to Netanyahu's agreement to suspend his plan to annex some 30 percent of the West Bank, including all the settlements and the Jordan Valley, as one of the conditions of the August 13 normalization deal between Israel and the United Arab Emirates.

"It is now time for both sides to come together and engage in the dialogue that's needed to deliver the negotiated two-state solution that can secure lasting peace, security and justice for both Israelis and Palestinians," Raab said.

On his visit to Ramallah, Raab "will reaffirm UK opposition to annexation – which is illegal under international law," and "call on the Palestinians to resume cooperation with Israel and pursue direct negotiations, as a step towards a negotiated two-state solution and a viable, sovereign Palestinian state," according to the press release.

The swap has stumbled over the final few hundred prisoners. Kabul is reluctant to release 'dangerous' Taliban militants tied to deadly attacks.

In October 2019, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar – the Taliban's co-founder who spent eight years in Pakistani custody – led a delegation to Islamabad ahead of a deal the insurgents signed in February with Washington.

### Taliban stage deadly bomb attack on Afghan commandos, civilians

By staff & agencies

At least three people have been killed and dozens of others injured in a truck bomb attack near a military base in Afghanistan's northern province of Balkh.

The Afghan Defense Ministry said in a statement that 41 people, including civilians, had been injured in the truck bomb explosion, which occurred early on Tuesday morning.

The Taliban claimed responsibility for the blast, saying on Twitter they had attacked commando units.

According to the ministry, the attack killed two members of the commando force and wounded six others, while the rest of the casualties were civilians.

The blast came even as Taliban representatives visited Pakistan to discuss a promise to open talks with the Afghan

government.

**Taliban negotiators in Islamabad**

Pakistan has invited key members of the Taliban's negotiating team to Islamabad, where senior officials are to convince them on the importance of starting talks with the Afghan government.

Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi told a press briefing on Monday that negotiations between the two sides were the only way forward" in Afghanistan.

"The delegation is in Islamabad and we will have a round of talks with them tomorrow as part of efforts aimed at (building) mutual confidence," Qureshi said.

"This is for Afghans to reconcile, and our task is that of facilitator."

"The main objective is to secure peace and the next phase should be the start of intra-Afghan dialogue."

Talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government stalled again in the wake of a controversial prisoner swap.

The both sides had signaled they were prepared to start negotiations immediately after the Muslim festival of Eid, which ended earlier this month.

The swap has stumbled over the final few hundred prisoners.

Kabul is reluctant to release 'dangerous' Taliban militants tied to deadly attacks.

In October 2019, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar – the Taliban's co-founder who spent eight years in Pakistani custody – led a delegation to Islamabad ahead of a deal the insurgents signed in February with Washington.

# Hazfi Cup semi-final: Persepolis and Esteghlal set for thrilling Tehran derby

By Farrokh Hesabi

**TEHRAN** — Persepolis and Esteghlal football team will meet in the Hazfi Cup semi-final on Wednesday in what would be the penultimate match of the Iranian football season which will be held behind closed doors.

The Tehran Derby at Azadi Stadium will be a game to watch with both teams eyeing for the coveted Hazfi Cup trophy.

Esteghlal are the record holders as they have won the Iranian football knockout cup competition seven times while Persepolis, as defending champions, have won six times.

The teams have met before in Hazfi Cup in three occasions, where the Reds defeated their crosstown rivals two times and lost one.

In a derby, excitements are always high but the game being a cup semi-final has magnified the excitement.

Persepolis have performed excellently during the past four years. Having won four consecutive Iran Professional League (IPL)



## Reyhaneh Mobini breaks Iran's long jump record after 45 years

**SPORTS DESK** TEHRAN — Reyhaneh Mobini set a new

record in the Iran's running long jump in Tehran Grand Prix on Monday.

Mobini leapt 6.17 meters and bettered the record by three

centimeters, set by Touran Shadpour in 1974 Asian Games.

Shaghayegh Khatibi registered a new record in 5,000

meters with a time of 18:50 minutes, bettering Parichehr

titles, and they are looking for their second domestic treble as well after winning the league, Hazfi Cup and super cup titles in the 2019-2020 season.

Another trophy in Hazfi Cup would be brilliant as their focus will shift to the remaining matches of the AFC Champions League, beginning from Sept. 14 in Qatar.

Esteghlal, who have been frustrated in the current seasons, are more eager to win the match. Having finished second at IPL under the young manager Farhad Majidi, Esteghlal have already qualified for the next year's Asian Champions League.

### Road to final

Persepolis started with two narrow 1-0 victories over Machine Sazi and Sanat Naft to reach quarter-final before defeating Shahrdari Mahshahr 2-0 at home.

Esteghlal got the better of Gol-e-Rehan Alborz and Fajr Spasi comfortably before defeating giants Sepahan comfortably in a 2-0 victory at Azadi to book their place in the last four of the Hazfi Cup.

## GameChangers: Golnoosh Khosravi, Iran's teenage trailblazer



**ISFAHAN:** There were any number of reasons for Golnoosh Khosravi to give up on her football dream. She refused to take no for an answer.

In the latest edition of GameChangers — which tells great stories from women's football in Asia — we meet the 19-year-old who overcame tremendous obstacles to secure a history-making transfer and emerge as a potentially transformative figure for Iranian football.

"The best advice that I can give is that there is no excuse," said Khosravi, from her home in Isfahan.

"Even if you don't have food, or if you don't have shoes, if you don't have support from your family or from your coach. No, there is no excuse, because I have experienced a lot."

"If you want to gain something, you have to work hard."

After two momentous years, Khosravi has the opportunity to reflect on a notable rise.

Barely out of what she describes as an 'extremely hard' childhood, Khosravi signed her first overseas contract last August, overcoming personal tragedy and the weight of history in the process.

The winger's contract with the Izmir-based, five-time Turkish champions Konak Belediyespor made her, according to some sources, the first Iranian woman to play club football in Europe. She was certainly the youngest, and she will be far from the last.

Since Khosravi's move, Saba Salimi has joined FC Marcal in Azerbaijan, while Yasaman Farmani — the wife of men's national team star Ali Ghilizadeh — signed for Belgium's Charleroi over the past weekend, underlining the growing trend of female talent from one of Asia's great footballing epicentres testing themselves abroad.

None of it seemed possible when Khosravi's journey began a decade ago. Growing up in the late 2000s, a professional football career seemed a world away for the "very skinny" and football-obsessed Khosravi, who dreamt of playing, but lacked a clear pathway.

Opportunities and money were equally hard to come by, but nothing hit harder than the death of Khosravi's father when she was just eight years old.

"When I lost my father, that was really, really hard for me and also for my mother," she told the AFC.com.

"We were living in a very small village with almost nothing. I didn't have shoes for running outside. I didn't have lunch. I was eating very small snacks, that's why I was really skinny."

"But I would run a lot, all the time, to achieve my goal. My mum was sacrificing a lot. She was doing everything. Doing low level jobs, just to make things possible."

Few knew how significantly those sacrifices would pay off. Without a local women's club to join, Khosravi began playing futsal at the age of nine, before switching back to football after catching the attention of officials higher up and training with the U-14 women's national team as a 10-year-old, not that any of it came easily.

Khosravi knew how to run but had to learn almost everything else before she was ready to face real opposi-

## 'Adios Suarez' - speculation grows over Uruguayan's future at Barca

After six years sprinkled with goals that have brought Barcelona 13 trophies, Luis Suarez may be heading for an unceremonious exit from the Camp Nou.

The Uruguayan was Barca's second-highest scorer last season behind captain Lionel Messi. But speculation about his future has grown since he was absent from a list of players Barca president Josep Maria Bartomeu declared were not for sale as he promised big changes after the side's seismic 8-2 defeat to Bayern Munich in the Champions League.

Catalan radio station Rac1 reported on Monday that the striker had been told by new Barca coach Ronald Koeman that

he was not in his plans for next season.

Spain's sports papers followed suit on Tuesday: "Adios Suarez" read the front cover of Barcelona-based Sport, while the 33-year-old also appeared on the front of the other three national sports dailies.

"Koeman doesn't want them", said Mundo Deportivo, picturing Suarez, midfielders Ivan Rakitic and Arturo Vidal and defender Samuel Umtiti. "The clear out begins", said newspaper AS, while Marca showed Suarez walking out of a door below the headline 'Clean up at Barca'.

Barcelona and Suarez's representative did not wish to comment on the reports,

although the Uruguayan made his discontent known in a Sunday interview with newspaper El Pais.

"People are talking about the names the president gave, of the changes that could happen, but no-one has told me they want to get rid of me," he said.

"I've spent six years at Barca - enough time for them to tell me what they think."

Suarez has scored 198 goals in 283 games for Barca and overtook Laszlo Kubala as the club's third-highest scorer of all time last July, only trailing the late Cesar and runaway leading scorer Messi.

**Blamed for Bayern humiliation**

Suarez recognized that he was among

those blamed for the humiliating loss to Bayern, the club's heaviest defeat ever in European competition, but said the answer was not to get rid of every player who had spent a long time at the club.

"Everyone looks at those who have spent the most time at the club. That's normal, but it's also foolish," added Suarez, who joined Barca from Liverpool in 2014 for a then club record fee of \$82 million euros.

"Look at when Real Madrid were beaten by Ajax last year and they said Toni Kroos was finished, they wanted to retire Luka Modric, they said Sergio Ramos was a disaster and no-one was worth anything."

(Source: Eurosport)

## Skocic's future remains unclear in Iran football

**1 →** Under current circumstances, the Iranian federation and the Croat will part way.

Iran, who sit five points behind Bahrain and Iraq in Group C, have four must-win games to have a chance of qualifying for the next stage.

The Persians are going to continue their quest for a sixth World Cup appearance but it could be very hard since the federation is challenging multiple problems because of mismanagement over the past years.

Skocic's future remains unclear in the country's football since there are so many unsolved problems ahead.

The football federation needs amendment as soon as possible because the football-mad nation will be harmed more if the National Team fail to qualify for the World Cup.

## we must unite in Wilmots' contract case; Sport Minister

**SPORTS** TEHRAN — Iran's Minister of Sport and Youth believes that the FIFA's verdict against the Iranian football federation in regard to the former Iran national football team Marc Wilmots' contract is not finalized and there is still time to defend for the federation.

Masoud Soltanifar spoke at a meeting at the Iranian Parliament about the case of Wilmots who had filed a complaint against the FFIRI to FIFA for non-payment during his time as head coach.

The directors of the Iranian football federation had a lot of hopes to win the lawsuit. Still, the verdict of the FIFA Players' Status Committee was against the Iranians so that the FFIRI became obliged to pay 6,500,000 euros to Wilmots.

"Don't forget the despite all that has happened and the unjust and unusual verdict issued against our football federation, we are still in the middle of the process and it's not the final verdict. We two steps ahead to appeal against the ruling made by the FIFA Players' Status Committee," Soltanifar said.

The meeting was held at the presence of members of the Parliamentary Article 90 Commission, Cultural Affairs Committee, deputies of the Ministry of Sports, members of the Iranian football federation's board of directors and also the former president of the Football Federation of the Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI).



## UEFA to allow fans to attend Super Cup in Budapest

Fans will be allowed to attend the UEFA Super Cup match between Bayern Munich and Sevilla in Budapest on Sept. 24, European soccer's governing body said on Tuesday.

All games in the recent Champions League and Europa League final-stage mini-tournaments were behind closed doors, but UEFA's executive committee ruled that up to 30% of the 67,215 capacity Puskas Arena in the Hungarian capital can be taken by fans.

However, UEFA said that all other UEFA matches, including the upcoming Nations League matches and club competition qualifiers, will continue to be played behind closed doors until further notice.

The Budapest match is being viewed by UEFA as a test for their 'Return to Play' plans. It has not yet been decided whether only local fans will be allowed to attend the match or also travelling supporters.

"While it has been important to show that football can carry on in difficult times, without fans, the game has lost something of its character. We hope to use the UEFA Super Cup in Budapest as a pilot that will begin to see the return of fans to our matches," said UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin.

"We are working closely with the Hungarian Federation and its government to implement measures to ensure the health of all those attending and participating in the game. We will not take risks with people's safety," he added.

The Super Cup is seen as Europe's international club season opener, featuring the previous season's Champions League winner against the Europa League winner.

(Source: Reuters)

## Ali Al Habsi honoured by Oman Olympic Committee

Legendary goalkeeper Ali Al Habsi has been honoured by the Oman Olympic Committee (OOC) for his immense contributions to football in the country.

Khalid bin Hamad Al Busaidi, the Chairman of the Oman Olympic Committee, thanked Al Habsi and highlighted his tremendous contribution to football which includes playing in Europe.

A statement from the Committee said, "This honour is in tribute to Ali Al Habsi for the effort and dedication he put into his gold-studded football career, which were full of many honourable achievements he accomplished with the national team, and the clubs he represented in the best possible manner during his professional career. His efforts will remain engraved in the history of Omani sports."

Al Habsi's accomplishments at club and international level have made him a role model and his solid, reliable performances have seen him earn plenty of praise over the years.

Al Habsi earned 135 caps for Oman, and enjoyed a professional career spanning more than 20 years. He started his football career with home town club Al Mudhaibi in 1998, before transferring to Al Nasr and then Norwegian outfit Lyn Oslo.

His journey took off when he entered the English Premier League, with Bolton Wanderers, and then moved to Wigan Athletic, Brighton & Hove Albion and Reading.

Al Habsi continued to excel when he joined Saudi side Al Hilal, before returning to England last August to play for West Bromwich Albion.

(Source: AFC)

# Iranian photographers win top prizes at Somoni exhibit in Tajikistan

By Seyyed Mostafa Mousavi Sabet

**TEHRAN** — Iranian photographers Amin Mahdavi and Mehrdad Maqsudian have won top prizes of the 1st Somoni International Exhibition of Photography in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

The exhibition, which announced its winners on Sunday, was organized under the auspices of the Photographic Society of America (PSA) and Fédération Internationale de l'Art Photographique (FIAP).

Mahdavi was awarded the FIAP Gold Medal for his photo "Bold" depicting a boy who is carrying a kid on his shoulders in a northern Iranian rural region.

Earlier in 2018, the photo won the FIAP Gold Medal in the Open – Monochrome category at the 2nd Danube Digital Circuit in Belarus.

It also received the PSA Gold Medal



"Bold" by Iranian photographer Amin Mahdavi won the FIAP Gold Medal at the 1st Somoni International Exhibition of Photography in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

in the Open Monochrome category at the MNE PBK CIRCUIT 2018 in Macedonia.

Maqsudian was presented a FIAP Ribbon for "The Boy" that is a portrait of a boy gazing at the camera.

Iranian photographers Amir-Hossein Honarvar, Mahmud Kameli, Amir-Ali Navadeshahla, Seyyed Mohammad-Javad Sadri and Mehdi Zabolabbasi also received honorable mentions.

The PSA Gold Medal went to Jo Kelly from England for the photo "Headshot", while Daniel Lybaert from the Netherlands won a FIAP Ribbon for "Treinmachinist".

Italian photographer Adriano Favero was honored with FPC Bronze Medal for his photo "The Brothers".

A jury composed of Yulia Artemyeva, Djordje Vukicevic and Viktor Kanunnikov judged a large number of submissions from across the world to select the winners.

## GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Be steadfast and firm in the way toward what is right, even if your journey is full of pain and challenges.

Imam Hussein (AS)

## Majlis Library showcases rare manuscripts on Ashura in virtual exhibit

**CULTURE TEHRAN** — The Majlis Library, desk Museum and Documentation Center in Tehran has showcased a selection of rare manuscripts on Ashura in a virtual exhibit.

Ashura is the 10th day of Muharram, the day upon which Imam Hussein (AS) and his companions were martyred in Karbala as a result of their valiant stand against the injustices of the oppressive Umayyad dynasty in 680 CE.

The collection is a great source for researchers and those interested in manuscripts on Ashura, the library said in a press release issued on Tuesday.

Each day, pictures of one or two more manuscripts will be added to the exhibition, which can be found at [www.ical.ir](http://www.ical.ir).



Filmmaker Manuchehr Tayyab speaks during the opening ceremony of the 10th Cinema Verite at Tehran's Charsus Cineplex on December 4, 2016. (Mehr/Ashraf Tabatabai)

## Manuchehr Tayyab, director of painstaking docs on Iran cultural heritage, dies at 83

**A R T TEHRAN** — Iranian filmmaker Manuchehr Tayyab, who was mostly known for his documentaries on Iran and its cultural heritage, has died at a hospital in Vienna on Tuesday. He was 83.

Earlier in January, the Documentary and Experimental Film Center announced that after a checkup in a Vienna hospital, Tayyab had learned about "a severe disease" in him and begun receiving treatments.

Born in Tehran, Tayyab moved to Austria in his youth to study architecture at the Vienna University of Technology.

After receiving a degree in architecture, he began studying filmmaking at the International Academy of Music and Performing Arts Vienna.

He directed his focus toward Iran and its cultural heritage in his professional career, making his debut with "Pottery"

in 1963 about the history of pottery in Iran.

"Persian Sea", "Isfahan Jame Mosque", "Iran, Land of Religions", "Lorestan, Ancient Land of the Kassites" and "Architecture in the Safavid Period" are among numerous documentaries he made about Iran.

Kaveh Bahrami-Moqaddam made the documentary "Through the Ancient Land" about Tayyab in 2007. Reza Mirkarimi was the director of the film.

Cinema Organization of Iran director Hossein Entezami offered his condolences over the death of Tayyab in a message.

"The loss of Manuchehr Tayyab, the great teacher of documentary cinema and the man of morals, is really unforgettable, but all his acclaimed works will be eternal in the memory of Iranian cinema," he wrote.

## Ali Radmand tops at Iran's We Defeat Coronavirus Intl. Cartoon Contest

→ About 2000 cartoons were showcased for 28 days on [irancartoon.ir](http://irancartoon.ir), which was visited by 1,340,000 people.

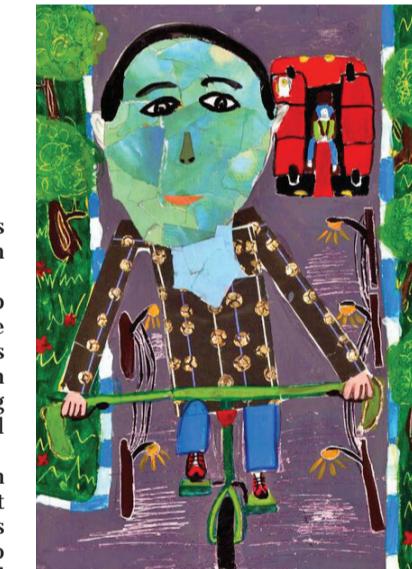
The book of the exhibit bearing over 430

cartoons has been published with an introduction by Health Minister Namaki.

Turkish cartoonist Eray Ozbek presided over the international jury, which was

composed of cartoonists Spiro Radulovic from Serbia, Nikola Vorontsov from Russia, Liuyi Wang from China and Marcio Leite from Brazil.

The jury for the national section consisted of Mohammad-Hossein Nirumand, Bahram Azimi, Masud Shojaei-Tabatabai and Salman Mohazzabieh.



Self-portrait of nine-year-old Iranian boy Hossein Karimi was picked for an exhibition at the Internationale Jugendbibliothek (IJB) in Munich, Germany.

## German exhibit picks self-portrait of Iranian boy in coronavirus era

**A R T TEHRAN** — The Internationale Jugendbibliothek (IJB) in the southern German city of Munich has selected a painting by nine-year-old Iranian boy Hossein Karimi for an exhibition displaying self-portraits of children from across the world during the coronavirus pandemic.

Hossein is a member of the Kerman branch of the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults.

In a call published in March, the library asked children around the world to create their self-portraits in the coronavirus era.

They asked children to draw how

they are feeling in the coronavirus times and how they are dealing with the disease.

The library grants the scholarship to foreign scholars with the objective of supporting research in the areas of international children's and youth literature, illustration, and promoting scientific exchange and international co-operation.

Several Iranian writers have been awarded the scholarship over the past few decades. One of them is children's literature scholar Ali Hejvani who received the scholarship in 2005 and 2008.

His accounts of the two trips were published in "Munich on Tehran Time".

## Tazieh expert Davud Fat'hali Beigi offering courses for young adults on TV



A young adult gives a tazieh performance at the Imam Khomeini Mosalla in Tehran in an undated photo. (Shabestan/Amir-Hossein Salehi)

**A R T TEHRAN** — Davud Fat'hali Beigi, a top expert on traditional Iranian dramatic performances, is teaching young adults tazieh in a TV program, which is being on air on IRIB Channel 2.

The program named "On the Wing of Tazieh" is being broadcasted during the first ten days of the lunar month of Muharram.

"The 10-episode program by director Mohsen Ameri tells the story of two young adults who would like to learn tazieh and they meet master Fat'hali Beigi who teaches them a part of tazieh in

each episode," producer Ruzbeh Gilani said on Tuesday.

He added that the tazieh performances are seen in the program besides the play by Fat'hali Beigi named "Uncle Hashem".

"Uncle Hashem" has been written by Fat'hali Beigi and centers on the life of Fayyaz, an expert who mostly used to play the role of Shimr, the villain who beheaded Imam Hussain (AS) in the Battle of Karbala.

Gilani said that "On the Wing of Tazieh" is also available virtually.

Fat'hali Beigi plans to restage "Uncle Hashem" at the Sangelaj Hall in Tehran.

"The play is actually a recreation of part of the memories of Hashem Fayyaz. In older times, tazieh troupes used to travel to remote places and on the way they used to stop in the villages and perform tazieh."

Of course, they might have been through hard times but they had also helped promote the culture of tazieh and religious stories among those who have been far from any facilities," Fat'hali Beigi had said.

He added that the play is based on one of Fayyaz's memories of his performances when he was invited by an elderly woman living in a remote region to perform a tazieh at her house for her and her husband, neither of whom had seen a tazieh performance previously.

Fayyaz said that he plays the role of Shimr, and the elderly man begins to quarrel with his wife as to why she invited him. Fayyaz then has to leave the house and spends the night in a mosque.

Manijeh Davari, Hamid Madankan and Amir Azadrusta will be acting in the play, which will go on stage within the next two weeks.

## Only for God

He invited us to a religious ceremony in the village he was born in. We thought it was a big ceremony with special formalities and preparations.

When we got there, twenty people were sitting together in his father's house. A cleric came and offered congregational prayers, then prayed for a few minutes and that was it.

"We hold the religious rituals in the village as simple as before," he told us.

Several times he made efforts to get to this simple ceremony from Syria, Lebanon, or Iraq.