

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year

On the occasion of 2019th Birthday of Jesus Christ, the announcer of Abraham's Ritual, I wish to convey my best wishes to all Christians from Iran and other parts of the world for a Merry Christmas & Happy New Year.

This message is sent with the hope that the New Year, and the years to come, more than ever, will be year of friendship, fellowship, peace, and tranquility, in the region and all over the world. A peace and tranquility that will bring mutual understanding and cooperation in the field of economics between various countries.

A year to end all the international and regional shortcomings, and failures. A year of workmanship, effort, and economic development at both international and regional levels. A year of improvement of commercial relationship between Iran and Britain as two old trade partners.

Dr. Amir Houshang Amini

Iran's foreign trade during the eight month of year 1397

(20 March 2018 to 20 November 2018)

According to the statistics of the IR of Iran's Customs Department, the Iran's foreign trades volume during the eight month

of the year 1397 are as indicated in the following tables:

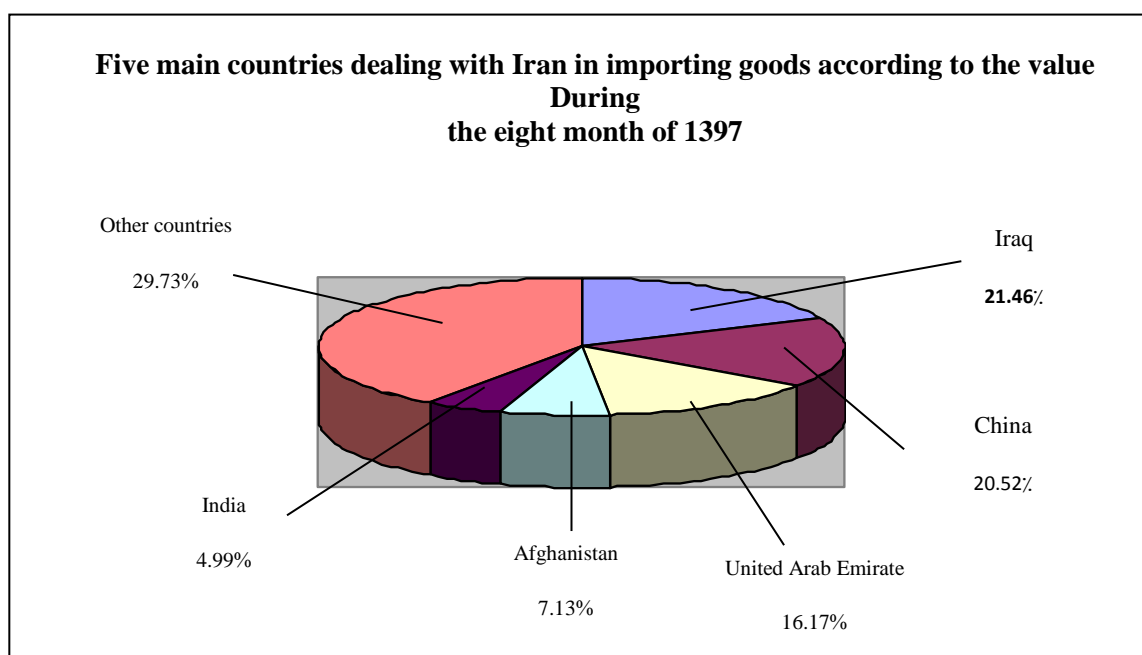
Primary import/export statistics of non-oil goods with the calculation of gas's Liquidities during the eight month of 1397

Activity	eight month of the year 1397		eight month of the year 1396		Percent of changes	
	Weight (Thousand tons)	Value (Million Dollar)	Weight (Thousand tons)	Value (Million Dollar)	Weight	Value
Import	21.498	29.549	24.590	34.376	-12.58	-14.04
Export	75.270	31.491	79.354	27.877	-5.15	12.96

Imports:

The most important imports during the two month of 1397, have been done with countries, as follows: 1) "Iraq" with 14.216 thousand tons and 6.757 million Dollars and 18.89 percent of weight and 21.46 percent of value, 2) "China" with 19.442 thousand Tons and 6.462 million Dollars and 25.83 percent of weight and 20.52 percent of value, 3) "United Arab

Emirate" with 11.062 thousand tons and 5.092 million Dollars and 14.70 percent of weight and 16.17 percent of value, 4) "Afghanistan" with 3.922 thousand tons and 2.244 million Dollars and 5.21 percent of weight and 7.13 percent of value and 5) "India" with 6.029 thousand tons and 1.570 million Dollars and 8.01 percent of weight and 4.99 percent of value.



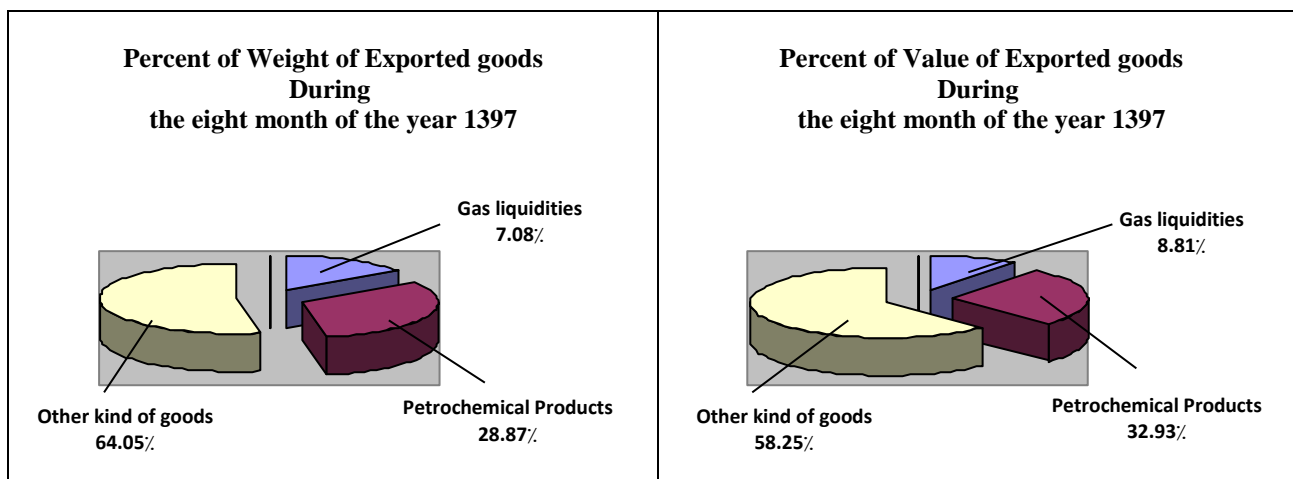
Exports:

During the eight month of 1397, a compound of exported goods with the separation of gas liquidities, petrochemical products and other kinds of goods

such as industrial, agricultural, mineral, carpet and handicrafts are as follows:

**Export statistics of goods separating of gas liquidities, petrochemical products
And other kinds of goods during eight month of the years 1396-97**

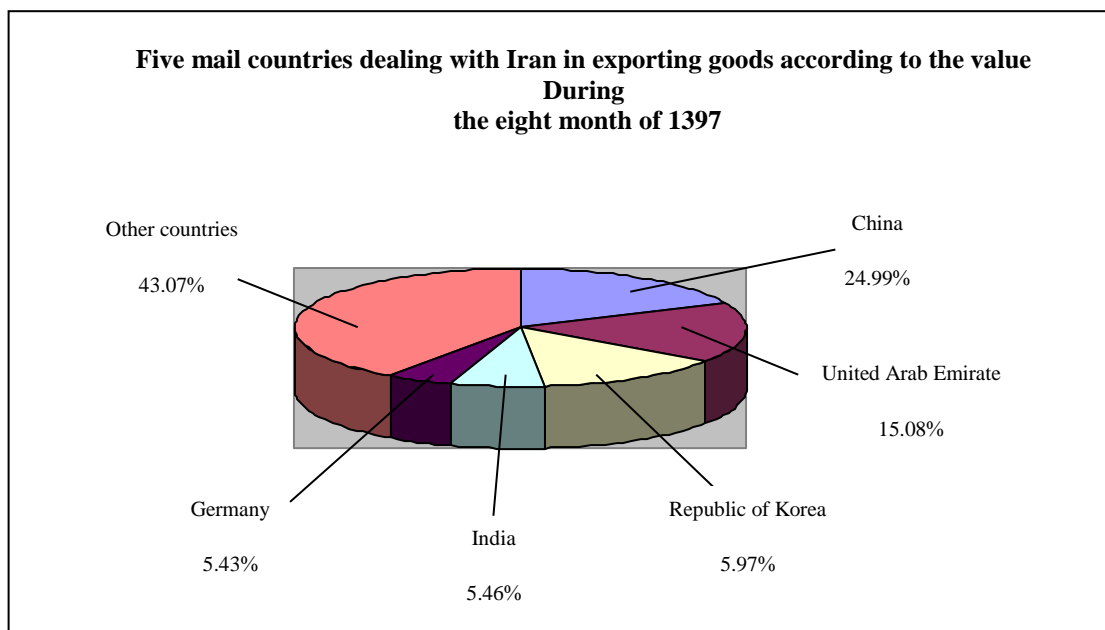
Sort of exported goods	eight month of the year 1397		eight month of the year 1396		Share of Total	
	Weight (Thousand Tons)	value (Million Dollar)	Weight (Thousand Tons)	value (Million Dollar)	Weight	Dollar
Petrochemical products	21.728	10.371	19.210	7.838	13.10	32.32
Gas liquidities	5.331	2.776	11.366	4.459	-53.09	-37.75
Other kind of goods	48.211	18.344	48.779	15.580	-1.16	17.74
Total	75.270	31.491	79.354	27.877	-5.15	12.96



During the eight month of 1397, most of exports have done with the countries, as follows:

1)"China" with 2.429 thousand tons and value of 7.385 million Dollars and 11.30 percent of weight and 24.99 percent of value, 2)"United Arab Emirate" with 2.795 thousand tons value of 4.454 million Dollars and 13.00 percent of weight and 15.08 percent of value, 3) "Republic of Korea" with 655

thousand tons and value of 1.763 Million Dollars and 3.05 percent of weight and 5.97 percent of value, 4)"India" with 1.143 thousand tons and value of 1.615 million Dollars and 5.32 percent of weight and 5.46 percent of value, and 5)"Germany" with 531 thousand tons and value of 1.604 million dollars and 2.47 percent of weight and 5.43 percent of value.



Average price of each ton of exported goods has been 1.374 Dollars, decreasing 1.72 percent in value compared with the similar period last year.

Pomegranate

Historical Culture and Production



Pomegranate is native to a region from modern-day Iran to northern India. Pomegranates have been cultivated throughout the Middle East, South Asia, and Mediterranean region for several millennia, and thrive in the drier climates of California and Arizona. Pomegranates may have been domesticated as early as the 5th millennium BC, as they were one of the first fruit trees to be domesticated in the eastern Mediterranean region. Iran, with 1 million tons annual production, is the second largest producer and largest exporter of pomegranates in the world. The fruit's juice and paste have a role in Iranian cuisine, e.g. chicken, ghormes, and refreshment bars. Pomegranate skins may be used to stain wool and silk in the carpet industry.

A shrub or small tree growing 5 to 10 m (16 to 33 ft.) high, the pomegranate has multiple spiny branches and is extremely long-lived, with some specimens in France surviving for 200 years.

Pomegranate leaves are opposite or sub opposite, glossy, narrow oblong, entire, 3–7 cm (1.2–2.8 in) long and 2 cm (0.79 in) wide. The flowers are bright red and 3 cm (1.2 in) in diameter, with three to seven petals. Some fruitless varieties are grown for the flowers alone. Red-purple in colour, the pomegranate fruit husk has two parts: an outer, hard pericarp, and an inner, spongy mesocarp (white "albedo"), which comprises the fruit inner wall where arils attach. Membranes of the mesocarp are organized as nonsymmetrical chambers that contain seeds inside arils, which are embedded without attachment to the mesocarp. Containing juice, the arils are formed as a thin membrane derived from the epidermal cells of the seeds. The number of seeds in a pomegranate can vary from 200 to about 1,400. Botanically, the edible fruit is a berry with seeds and pulp produced from the

ovary of a single flower. The fruit is intermediate in size between a lemon and a grapefruit, 5–12 cm (2–5 in) in diameter with a rounded shape and thick, reddish husk. In mature fruits, the juice obtained by compressing the arils and seeds yields a sour flavour due to low pH (4.4) and high contents of polyphenols, which may cause a red indelible stain on fabrics. Primarily, the pigmentation of pomegranate juice results from the presence of anthocyanin and ellagitannins. Its fruit crop, and as ornamental trees and shrubs in parks and gardens. Mature specimens

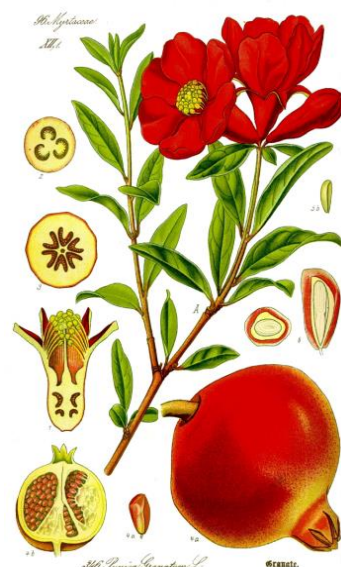


Illustration by
Otto Wilhelm Thome, 1885

can develop sculptural twisted-bark multiple trunks and a distinctive overall form. Pomegranates are grown in dry areas either with a Mediterranean winter rainfall climate or summer rainfalls. Pomegranates are drought-tolerant. In wetter areas, they can be prone to root decay from fungal diseases. They can be tolerant of moderate frost, down to about -12°C (10°F). Insect pests of the pomegranate can include the pomegranate butterfly *Virachola Isocrates* and the leaf-footed bug (*Leptoglossus zonatus*), and fruit flies and ants are attracted to unharvested ripe fruit. Pomegranate grows easily from seed, but is commonly propagated from 25 to 50 cm (10 to 20 in) hardwood cuttings to avoid the genetic variation of seedlings. Air layering is also an option for propagation. Why you should eat pomegranates: You have probably seen the superhero-themed publicity campaign for pomegranates and pomegranate juice. But is the health buzz on this exotic fruit really backed up by facts? While no single food or drink is the magic (speeding) bullet of disease prevention, a growing body of research suggests that pomegranate seeds, fruit, and extract really may deliver serious health benefits—including improving cholesterol levels and fighting prostate cancer. Grotto explains that much of the medical community's excitement about pomegranates stems from the fruit's high level of antioxidant polyphenols. Antioxidants help protect the body from free-radical damage—cell damage that is linked to cancer, heart disease, and a host of other illnesses. In *101 Foods That Could Save Your Life*, Grotto writes, "Polyphenol research is most promising in the areas of heart disease and cancer prevention." He adds that the polyphenol content in pomegranate juice is three times the amount found in red wine and green tea—two other drinks that have been studied and touted for their roles in fighting cancer and heart disease. To learn more about the health benefits of pomegranates, and how to open one, and for delicious recipes made with the seeds and juice, read on.

How to open a pomegranate: Put on an apron or



outfit that you do not care about staining. Cut the fruit into quarters, or score the skin in quarters, then pull the fruit apart. Working over a large, deep bowl, gently loosen the seeds with your fingers. Discard the pith and skin.

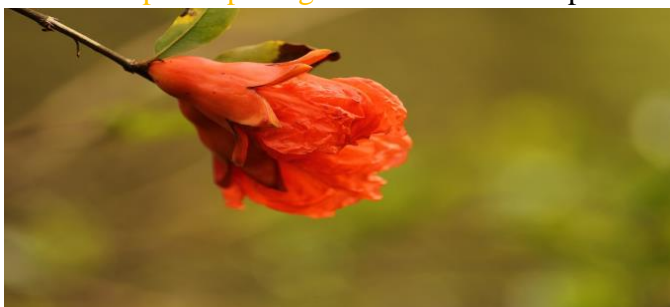
You can also remove the seeds with the fruit completely submerged in a bowl of water. The pith will float to the top; the seeds will sink. Scoop out and discard the pith, then drain the seeds in a colander. While this technique is less messy, you will lose a bit more of the fruit's precious juices.

Pomegranates promote heart health

A lot of the buzz about pomegranates has to do with their ability to help the heart. "Several animal and human studies have demonstrated pomegranates' ability to reduce artery wall thickness, decrease plaque formation, and reduce oxidation of LDL cholesterol, all thought to be risk factors for heart disease," confirms Grotto. He adds, "Pomegranates are rich in polyphenols, plant chemicals known to reduce the inflammation process associated with heart disease." As we explained in The Anti-Inflammatory Diet, chronic low-grade inflammation in the body has been linked to increased risk of disease, including heart disease and stroke. Boost the benefits to your arteries by pairing pomegranates with other heart-healthy ingredients such as almonds and avocados, both of which contain "good" fats and are also anti-inflammatory, according to Epicurious's sister site Nutrition Data.

Pomegranates lower blood pressure and may decrease stroke risk

"In a human study, participants with hypertension were given eight ounces of pomegranate juice to drink daily for 14 days," says Grotto. "Average systolic blood pressure dropped, resulting in a 36 percent decrease in risk of stroke." Drink the juice straight up, mixed with seltzer, or in cocktails. Also try substituting pomegranate juice for other juices in recipes—its tartness makes it a particularly good stand-in for cranberry juice. (A note on cocktails: Excessive alcohol consumption has been linked to increased risk for stroke and heart



Flower of Pomegranate

disease, but some research suggests a link between light alcohol consumption and decreased risk. Pomegranates fight prostate cancer. Various studies suggest that pomegranate juice or extract can both inhibit the growth of cancer cells and actually kill cancer cells. "Men who underwent prostate cancer treatment and consumed eight ounces of pomegranate juice over a two-year period had, on average, significantly slower rises in Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA), a prostate cancer progression marker," says Grotto. "The polyphenols in pomegranates are known to increase apoptosis, or programmed cell death, in certain cancer cells." For prostate health, experts recommend cutting back on red meat and full-fat dairy and loading up on fresh produce.

Pomegranates may kill harmful bacteria

Grotto cites a recent study featured in the journal *Molecules* that showed that extracts from six Turkish varieties of pomegranates were effective in killing seven different harmful bacterial strains, including strains of *E. coli* and *Staphylococcus*. While the study was done in the lab with extracts, it does suggest that adding more pomegranate seeds and juice to your diet could bolster your body against some kinds of bacteria. Pomegranates, along with grape skins, wine, and tea, contain tannins, compounds that have "demonstrated antibacterial and antimicrobial properties," says Grotto. Eat pomegranates with other antibacterial ingredients such as garlic, onion, allspice, and oregano, which have been found to be "the best all-around bacteria killers," according to a *Cornell Chronicle* article about antibacterial spices. Those heavy-hitters are followed by thyme, cinnamon, tarragon, and cumin (which kill up to 80 percent of bacteria), then chiles and other hot peppers (which kill or inhibit up to 75 percent of bacteria), states the article. White and black pepper, ginger, anise seed, celery seed, and lemon and lime juice round out the list (killing 25 percent of bacteria).

Pomegranates may increase bone density

Grotto cites a study in which mice that were given pomegranate extract for two weeks had signifi-

cantly less bone loss when compared to mice that did not consume pomegranate (the study abstract is available from PubMed.gov). While the study was done on mice and not humans, the next time you are making a calcium-rich milk or yogurt smoothie, it couldn't hurt—and might help—to add some pomegranate juice. (Source: epicurious.com)

Nutrition: Pomegranate is of numerous benefits. It both relieves hunger and improves digestion. Pomegranate juice can reduce inflammation in the gut and improve digestion. It may be beneficial for people with inflammatory bowel diseases.

Pomegranate juice contains higher levels of antioxidants than most other fruit juices. Pomegranate juice is in the running as the most heart-healthy juice. It appears to protect the heart and arteries.

A 100 g (3.5 oz.) serving of pomegranate arils provides 12% of the DV (Daily Value) for vitamin C, 16% DV for vitamin K and 10% DV for folate. Pomegranate seeds are a rich source of dietary fiber (20% DV) which is entirely contained in the edible seeds. People who choose to discard the seeds forfeit nutritional benefits conveyed by the seed fiber and micronutrients. Pomegranate seed oil contains punicic acid (65.3%), palmitic acid (4.8%), stearic acid (2.3%), oleic acid (6.3%), and linoleic acid (6.6%)

Nutritional value per 100 g (3.5 oz)

Energy	346 kJ (83 kcal)
Carbohydrates	18.7 g
Sugars	13.67 g
Dietary fiber	4 g
Fat	1.17 g
Protein	1.67 g
Vitamins	Quantity %DV[†]
Thiamine (B1)	6% 0.067 mg
Riboflavin (B2)	4% 0.053 mg
Niacin (B3)	2% 0.293 mg
Pantothenic acid (B5)	8% 0.377 mg
Vitamin B6	6% 0.075 mg
Folate (B9)	10% 38 µg
Choline	2% 7.6 mg
Vitamin C	12% 10.2 mg
Vitamin E	4% 0.6 mg
Vitamin K	16% 16.4 µg
Minerals	Quantity %DV[†]
Calcium	1% 10 mg
Iron	2% 0.3 mg
Magnesium	3% 12 mg
Manganese	6% 0.119 mg
Phosphorus	5% 36 mg
Potassium	5% 236 mg
Sodium	0% 3 mg
Zinc	4% 0.35 mg



A bowl of
Ash-e-Anar
an Iranian soup
made with
pomegranate
juice

Pomegranate Festival Celebration



Iran Hosts “Yalda, Christmas Festival” to Strengthen Inter-Cultural Ties

(MNA)-Tehran based Niavaran Complex hosted 7-day festival, starting on December 15. The event focused on culture of Iran’s Western regions regarding pomegranate harvest and use.

It is considered a sacred fruit and a fruit originated from paradise. Called “Anar” in Persian, Iranians for long believed the fruit purifies the blood.

Anar is an ever-present part of many Iranian special events such as national celebrations and festivals. One of the most important Iranian festivals is Yalda (winter solstice), the longest night of the year. Yalda has been observed since the ancient times in Iran.

Pomegranate, as one of the fruits in Yalda, is the symbol of fertility and happiness. Blood as an obvious sign of life and blood purifying power of pomegranate makes this fruit a symbol of fertility.



Today it is scientifically proved that pomegranate is very high in antioxidant.

Every year in mid-autumn farmers in Khaneghah, a village in the western province of Kermanshah, hold a festival to thank God for their pomegranate harvest. Annually after harvesting pomegranates, the villagers run a festival by preparing local foods, playing games and performing other recreational activities.



A pomegranate festival was recently held in tourist resorts in Kurdish-majority provinces of western Iran along with other performances and programs. The three-day event was held in tourist villages in Uraman region in Kurdistan and Kermanshah provinces.

The festival's performances began from Naav village before moving on to other villages. Nestled among several mountains, Naav is a hardly negotiable village with traditional, terraced architecture.

Part of the festival featured visits to pomegranate orchards in local gardens by journalists.

Due to the huge crowd visiting the festival, there was heavy traffic in routes leading to the venue of the event.

Even torrential rain could not cancel the event and visitors stayed there till the end.

On the first day after speeches were delivered, village boys and girls with Kurdish clothes on began playing musical instruments while singing local poems.

They entered the venue, each carrying a basket full of pomegranates on their heads. They then grabbed the baskets in their hands before putting them before the officials present there.

The show is known as the "Pomegranate Dance" in the region. According to local officials, some 200 foreign tourists attended the event. More than 3,000 tonnes of pomegranates are harvested in Uraman orchards annually.

At the closing ceremony, a text was read out to visitors in Kurdish, Urami, Persian and English, and the beauties of Uraman were introduced to them.

Then all visitors were entertained with pomegranates and they visited the pavilions at the festival. Besides Yalda, almost everywhere in Iran, we have pomegranate festivals in autumn when the fruit is in season.

In this festival many different types of the fruit is displayed and numerous byproducts of pomegranate are introduced. Because of the resemblance of pomegranate's seed to ruby, the festival is called: one hundred rubies or the festival of one hundred rubies.

There are different kinds of pomegranates based on the colour of the seeds, the taste and even the colour of the skin. One of the widely used by-products of the fruit is the paste as a major ingredient in one of the most popular Iranian dish called "Fesenjan".

Lavashak or fruit roll made of pomegranate juice is also a very popular snack.

There are many chain stores offering fresh pomegranate juice and other products of pomegranate such as

ice cream and jelly in almost every major city in Iran.

Although, Iran is a four-season country to visit, our two major tourism seasons are spring and autumn. If you happen to be in Iran in autumn, you would have the best opportunity to enjoy fresh pomegranate.



photo : Keyvan Firouzeli

Sohrab Sepehri



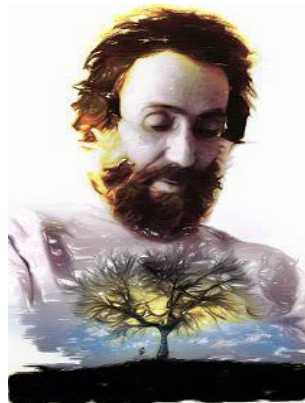
The most eminent poet & painter of Modern Iran

(b. Qom, 14 Mehr 1307 Š/6 October 1928; d. Tehran, 1 Ordibehešt 1359 Š./21 April 1980)

Life. He was the third of five children. About three months after Sohrab's birth, his family went to Golpayegan and then to Khansar, before settling in the Darvazeh 'Attar quarter of Kashan. A painter, skilled calligrapher, *tar* maker and player, Sepehri's father worked for the telegraph and post office there until he became paralyzed early in Sohrab's adolescence, leaving Sohrab's mother to take a position in the same office to support the family.

For the first part of his life, Sepehri lived in their family home, which had a large orchard, an experience he would later recount in his posthumously published book *Otaq-e Abi* (The blue room, 2003). From September 1940 to June 1943, he attended Pahlavi High School where he briefly studied the *Santur* (hammer dulcimer) and continued painting. In September 1943, Sepehri moved to Tehran to attend the Teachers' Training School. Graduating in June 1945, he returned to Kashan and in December found employment at Kashan's Office of Education, where he met the poet Moshfeq Kashani (pen-name of 'Abbas Key-Manesh, b. 1925) who familiarized him with Persian prosody.

In summer 1948, Sepehri met the poet and painter Manuchehr Sheybani (1923-1991) who introduced him to the works of Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890)



and Nima Yooshij (1897-1960), the first Persian modern poet successfully to break free of Persian classical prosody and its traditional imagery and conventions.

According to Sepehri himself, the impact of this meeting changed his course: he quit his job, moved to Tehran, and enrolled at Tehran University's Faculty of Fine Arts. While living in the capital, he worked for eight months for the then Anglo-Persian Oil Company and be-

came more immersed in the works of Nima Yooshij, as well as Fereyduun Tavallali (1919-1985), whose poetry was generally more lyrical than Nima's, with more regular stanzaic patterns. His first poem in the manner of Nima, entitled "Bimar" (The patient), was published in September 1948 in the journal *Jahan-e no*.

Founded in Tehran in June 1946, this modern literary journal was edited by Morteza Keyvan (1923 - 1954), an intellectual and political activist, who was later sentenced to death for collaborating with the military branch of Tudeh Party. Three other poems followed this one in 1949 in consecutive issues of *Jam-e Jam* (est. March 1949, Tehran), another literary journal that folded after six issues.

In fall 1951, Sepehri published his first collection of Nimaic poetry titled *Marg-e rang* (The death of



colour). The early 1950s also marked the beginning of his friendship and acquaintance with other notable poets and painters. Many of them would become important figures in Persian modernism in their own right, namely Forugh Farrokhzad (1935-1967), Marko Gregorian (1925-2007, painter), Parviz Kalantari (b. 1931, painter), Bahman Mohasses (b. 1930, painter), Nader Naderpur (1929-2000, poet), Nosrat Rahmani (1929-2000, poet), Sadeq Tabrizi (b. 1938, painter), and Parviz Tanavoli (b. 1937, sculptor). Around this time, he also met Biyuk Mostafavi (1925-1992), a life-long friend to whom Sepehri later dedicated *Hajm-e Sabz* (The expanse of green, 1967).

In June 1953, Sepehri completed his bachelor's degree with honours, took a position as a designer with the Organization of Public Health (Sazeman-e behdasht),

In January 1960, Sepehri briefly travelled to Tokyo before returning to Tehran to participate in the second Tehran Biennale, where he won the Grand Prize of Fine Arts. Very soon thereafter, Homayun San'atizadeh, director of the Franklin Book Program, purchased 150 of Sepehri's paintings. That August, Sepehri used the proceeds from this sale to return to Tokyo for nearly six months to study woodblock printing with Unichi Hiratsuka (1895-1997), one of the most noted names of the 20th century Japanese art. On his way home, in late winter 1961 he travelled to India for the first of several visits, completing a journey that would leave a permanent mark in his creative life. Back in Tehran, Sepehri had his first solo exhibit at Reza Abasi Gallery, and a group show at The Export Bank of Iran (Bank Saderat Iran). In September, he took a teaching position at the School of Decorative Arts, and gave up his post six months later. This would be his last government or public service position. The same year, three of his poems appeared

in an anthology of modern Persian poetry called *Nemunaha-ye She'r-e Azad* (Examples of free verse, Tehran, 1960). He also published his next book of poetry *Avar-e Aftab* (The downpour of sunshine) with an introduction by himself. In May-June 1962, Sepehri had another solo exhibit at Farhang Gallery (Talar-e Farhang) and published, along with a number of his own poems, translations of Chinese poetry in *Sokhan* (est. June 1943, Tehran), a prominent academic literary journal edited by Parviz Natel Khanlari.

In 1963, Sepehri had six solo and group exhibitions, and one of his paintings appeared on the cover of Naderpur's selected poems entitled *Bar-gozida-ye Ash'ar-e Nader Naderpur, 1326-1341*. The same year, Abby Weed Grey purchased a number of his paintings for the Ben and Abby Grey Foundation. These pieces were subsequently included in a show called Fourteen Contemporary Iranian Artists, which opened in Tehran before circulating in the United States for four years under the auspices of the Western Association of Art Museums. A selection of these and other paintings by Sepehri were later included in other exhibits funded by the Grey Foundation, namely Contemporary Art of India and Iran, which circulated throughout the United States by the Smithsonian Institution Travelling Exhibition Programme from 1967 to 1969, and One World Through Art, at the Minnesota State Fairgrounds Gallery in 1972.

In 1964, the journal *Musiqi* (est. March 1939, Tehran), a prominent literary and cultural journal edited by Gholamhossein Minbashian, published Sepehri's translation of a Japanese play, and he designed the set for the production of the play *Ahan* (Iron) written and directed by Khojasteh Kia. The same year, he travelled extensively throughout India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. In 1965, he had one group and one solo exhibition in the Borghese Gallery in Tehran, and published his poem *Seda-ye Paye Ab* (tr. by Karim Emami as "The Sound of Water's Footsteps") in *Arash*, a popular modern literary journal of the 1960s edited by Sirus Tahbaz. The poem, which made a great impact at the time also,



showed that the poet had at last found his own voice and style. The year also marked the beginning of Sepehri's decade-long work on his famous tree trunk painting series. For the next two years, Sepehri continued his extensive travels, visiting Munich and London in 1965, and France, Spain, Holland, Italy, and Austria the following year. In 1966, he published *Mosafer* (Traveller), again in *Arash*, and translations of hymns from the *Rig Veda*.

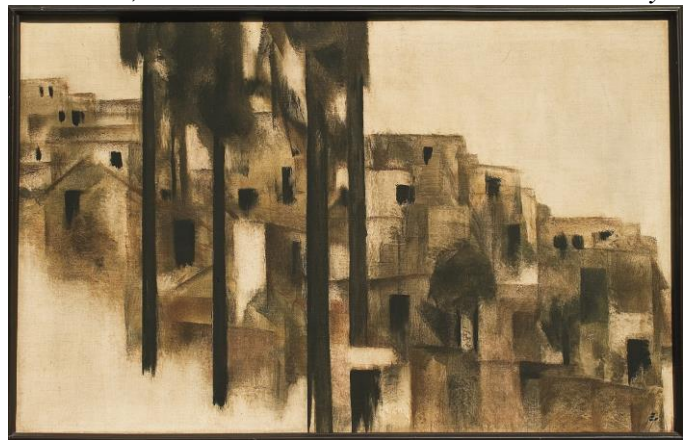
The death of Forugh Farrokhzad in a car accident on 13 February 1967 had a profound impact on Iranian literati in general, and Sepehri in particular. As reflected in his famous elegy for her called *Doust* (Friend, *Hajm-e Sabz*, 1968), with her death, Sepehri lost not only a close friend, but a fellow poet who shared much of his world vision and sensibilities, both emotional and poetic. In 1968, Sepehri published *Hajm-e Sabz*. Its release coincided with the opening of his exhibit at Seyhün Gallery in February 1968. In the next decade, he published few poems, yet remained extremely active as a painter. In April and March 1969, he travelled to London, and then to Cagnes-sur-Mer in South of France where he exhibited his work at the town's International Art Festival. In late spring 1970, Sepehri went to New York and briefly stayed with his friend Manuchehr Yekta'i (b. 1921, painter and poet) in Long Island before moving to Manhattan in late August for eight months, during which time he had a group show in Bridgehampton. After a brief return to Tehran, he was back in Manhattan by mid-May 1971 for a solo exhibit at Elain Benson Gallery in Bridgehampton, which opened on 10 July. He had an extended stay in Paris in 1974 and travelled to Greece and Egypt on his way back to Iran. In 1975, he participated in Tehran's First International Arts Festival, and later that year he received the Forugh Farrokhzad Poetry Award. From 16-21 June 1976, he participated in a group exhibit of modern Persian art at the International Art Fair in Basel, Switzerland. In winter 1977, Sepehri moved back to Kashan, and published *Hasht Ketab* (Eight books), an almost complete collection of his published work since *Marg-e rang* with the addition of the new collection *Ma Hich*, *Ma Negah* (We nothing but Look). In 1978, Sepehri had another solo exhibit at Seyhün Gallery. This would be his last exhibit before his untimely death. In fall 1979, Sohrab Sepehri was diagnosed with leukemia. He travelled to London with his sister Paridokht in December 1979, where they stayed until January 1980 for treatment, before returning

to Tehran. On 2 April 1980, Sohrab was admitted to Tehran's Pars Hospital where he died at 6:00 PM on 21 April 1980.

Sepehri was buried on 22 April 1980 in Mashhad-e Ardahal, a village near Kashan.

Sepehri never married and had no children.

Poetry. In the course of his development as a poet and painter, Sepehri went through different phases of preoccupation with one or another tenet of his personal poetics and ultimate world vision. For practical purposes, we can break these down into five general periods, the first of which is a classical one comprising various *ghazals*, quatrains and, foremost, his first book *Dar Kenar-e Chaman ya*



Aramgah-e 'Eshq, a twenty-six page *masnavi* (a poem in couplet form) in the style of Iraj Mirza's (1874-1926) *Zohreh o Manuchehr*. Written in classical meter, these works are replete with traditional tropes and imagery, and reveal the sentimentality of a teenage poet emulating his late 19th century Persian predecessors. Though Sepehri would later discard all of these poems as naïve, they remain nevertheless critically valuable as they demonstrate both his familiarity with prosodic and imaginal staples of Persian classical poetry, and the span of his linguistic and stylistic trajectory as a poet.

The second phase of Sepehri's poetic development begins with his discovery of Nima Yooshij's poetry in mid-1948. The regular stanzaic form of his poem, "Bimar," portraying a hopeless man smoking in his sickbed, clearly reveal Nima's influence in structure, language, and conceit, as do *Zendegi* (Life), *Jazireh-ye Tala'i* (The golden island), and *Sham'-e Balin* (Bedside candle), all published in *Jahan-e no* in Spring 1949. Sepehri's Nimaic phase comes to full fruition in *Marg-e rang* (1951). With respect to meter, form, and subject matter, all the poems in the collection so self-evidently bear the stamp of Nima's influence. In the case of *Morgh-e Gharib* (The alien bird, reprinted with some changes in *Hasht Ketab* as *Morġ-e mo'ammā* (The riddle

bird), *Darya va mard* (The sea and the man), *Naqsh* (Design), and *Sargozasht* (Tale) one could easily mistake them for Nima's own. What distinguishes Sepehri from his predecessor, however, is the absence of Nima's urgent sense of social commitment, which is replaced in Sepehri's work by an introspective self-contemplation that gives his voice a quality and tone comparable to those of mid to late 19th century English poets. Thus, while in *Marg-e rang*, Sepehri's tone echoes the characteristic nostalgia and hopelessness of Nima's poetic language, Sepehri's symbols point to a romantic poet's existential despair with respect to his personal path in life, both as an artist and as an individual. This is while Nima's convey instead a socially committed poet's perception of a people lost in the course of history and a nation with little, if any, future prospects. *Marg-e rang* furthermore represents the height of Sepehri's romanticism, especially with respect to his use of elements of nature as mirrors of the poet's emotions. *Ru be Ghorub* (Facing sunset), a poem in which all the elements of the natural landscape at sunset uniformly reflect the persona's depressive state, is arguably the best example of this conceit. Though less obvious, the influence of Fereyduun Tavallali is also noticeable in this collection, especially with respect to language.

Sepehri's third period in poetry starts around 1951 and ends in 1961 with the publication of *Avar-e Aftab*, a compendium of three collections: *Zendegi-ye Khabha*, previously published as an autonomous volume in 1952; the title collection of poems written between 1952 and 1958; and *Sharq-e Anduh* (East of sorrow). The volume also includes an introduction by Sepehri himself, in which he argues for an inherent dichotomy between Eastern and Western worldviews, with the former being presented as one in which mankind's intuitive connection with the organic laws of the cosmos are more overtly cultivated by the values and nuances of their ancient myths and pervading philosophies. With numerous references to Hindu mythology, Taoism, Confucianism, and Zen Buddhism, Sepehri argues for the comparably more favourable nature of the Eastern *Weltanschauung*.

The decade of poetry comprised in this compendium constitutes the next and arguably richest formative period of Sepehri's development. Having completed his studies, Sepehri travelled abroad frequently and translated poems from French, English, Chinese, and Japanese, and experimented widely with language, writing blank and metered

verse, prose poetry (e.g. *Sayeh* 'Shadow'), and poems written in folk and nursery rhyme meters (e.g. *Morgh-e Seda Tala'i* 'The bird with a golden voice'). He even tried his hand at French poetry. During this decade, Sepehri also studied Hindu mythology and Eastern philosophy, all of which had a direct impact on his aesthetics as poet and painter, and informed the central tenets of his nascent worldview.

Sepehri followed the call and in 1952 published *Zendegi-ye Khabha*, a collection of sixteen poems in blank verse depicting the surrealist dreamscapes of an introspective poet in search of his personal voice. *Gol-e Kashi* (Tile flower), *Nilufar* (Lotus), and *Safar* (Journey) offer glimpses into the preliminary stages of a language that was to become his signature voice, with the last two also providing the first examples of Zen, Buddhist, and Taoist influences on Sepehri's worldview. In *Yadbud* (Memento), for instance, a clock pendulum's perpetual motion in space and time emerges as a symbol of the Buddhist principle of perpetual reincarnation. Irani's influence on Sepehri's language is easily recognizable in this collection, as is the absence of Nimaic poetics. The poems' often convoluted language and their surrealist imagery further offer one of the earliest examples of the burgeoning homogeneity between form and content in Sepehri's work, in this instance reflecting the Taoist principle that 'Truth' defies verbal definition and can only be hinted at in such a way as to lead to an intuitive or mystical understanding of it.

(The freshness of faces wilted in the air of dichotomy
Let us come leave the shadow-lights
Let us stand on the dewdrop's edge, let us land in the leaf.
And should we see a foot print, let us follow the



ancient traveller) (*Hasht Ketab*)

Here, as elsewhere throughout the collection, the poem's language reflects Irani's influence, while further showing Sepehri's growing connection with nature and his increased belief in mankind's purpose in the universe. Throughout the collection, this and other poems like *Ay nazdik* (O near), *Faratar* (Beyond), and *Ku Qatreh-ye Vahm* (Where is the illusion drop) call on the reader to embark on a quest for 'Truth' through an unmitigated connec-



tion with nature. And to realize that *Ramz ha chon anar-e tarak khordeh nimeh shekofteh-and* (Mysteries, like cracked pomegranates, are in half-bloom; *Hasht Ketab*).

Sepehri's own quest took on a more mystical dimension in *Sharq-e Anduh*, a collection of twenty-five poems, many of which reflect the obvious influence of Rumi's *Divan-e Shams*, influence as much in ideology and content as in rhythm and inner rhymes. As evidenced by titles like *Bodhi* and *Vid* (Veda), and a language that frequently recalls the minimalist simplicity of haikus, *Sharq-e Anduh* further forges a peculiar combination of Sufism and Eastern philosophy. It ultimately offers the first glimpses of Sepehri's vision of a higher spiritual being: an omnipresent yet ever fleeting god whose presence can be experienced in everything from nature to random objects of daily life. The poems in *Sharq-e Anduh* also reveal Sepehri's broad view of all religions, their basic unity, and the futility of doctrinal dispute. This ideology is epitomized in *Suram ra* (My fervor). There he writes: "*Qoran bala-ye saram, balesh-e man Enjil, bestar-e man Towrat, va zirpusham Avesta, mibinam khab: Buda-i dar nilufar-e ab / Har ja golha-ye niyayesh rost, man chidam.* (The Quran above my head; my pillow the New Testament; my bed the Hebrew Bible; my undergarment the Avesta; I dream: a Buddha in the water lotus / Wherever a flower of prayer grew, I picked it). These verses, more than anything else, distinguish Sepehri from his contemporaries not only as a poet ceaselessly searching for a

unique personal voice, but further as a thinker propelled by an urgent drive to conceptualize and convey an universal vision of existence above and beyond the mundane socio-political dynamics of daily life. In 1965, Sepehri published his watershed poem *Seda-ye Pa-ye Ab*, a loosely autobiographical work that introduced not only the fourth phase in Sepehri's poetry in particular, but a novel and hitherto unique voice in modern Persian poetry. The poem revolves around a central dichotomy between the restrictive formalities of received knowledge and the dehumanizing materialism of modern times, on the one hand, and the need to reevaluate preconceived ideas and ultimately to attain a closer connection with nature, on the other hand. "Chashmha ra bayad shost," Sepehri advises, "jur-e digar bayad did" (We must wash our eyes; we must learn to see otherwise). This urgent call to see everything anew emerged as one of the major themes of all of Sepehri's subsequent poetry.

In his next long poem, *Mosafer*, Sepehri turns to ancient Persian, Hindu, and Abrahamic mythologies within the panoramic context of the world history, to elaborate on the mystical dimension of his thought, carrying faint echoes of Coleridge's (1772-1834) "Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner" and subtle affinities with Eliot's (1888-1965) "The Wasteland." *Mosafer* comprises the tale of its traveller-persona, who upon arriving at a friend's home, recounts the story of his spiritual wanderings, a mythical soul journey through time and across lands, which ends with the Ulyssean lesson that Ithaca is an ever-fleeting ideal in time and space, always longed for, but never reached. This soul journey, together with the urge to see anew, lie at the core of Sepehri's next and most famous collection, *Hajm-e Sabz*.

A collection of twenty-five poems written between 1962 and the summer of 1967, *Hajm-e Sabz* comprises virtually all of Sepehri's best-known and most anthologized works. The first edition has a run of two thousand copies, twice the average print run of the time. *Neda-ye Aghaz* (Primeval call), *Vaheh-i dar Lahzeh* (An oasis in a fleeting moment), *Posht-e daryaha* (Beyond the seas), and *Neshani* (Address) are among the book's best received poems, each one rendering various aspects of the above delineated themes with the simplicity, frankness, and subtle urgency that have become emblematic of Sepehri's voice. The striking shift in *Hajm-e Sabz* is Sepehri's existential awareness of his loneliness in the world. It is also in this collection that the new poetic language Sepehri originally

introduced in *Seda-ye Pa-ye Ab*, takes on many of its unique and characteristic features, subsequently to become unmistakably associated with him.

Sepehri's language at this stage is characterized by his forging of unorthodox associations of words, conceptually elusive images, and semantically 'non-logical' utterances, to create a crisis of meaning in language; a crisis that ineluctably mobilizes the reader to reach beyond the familiarity of ordinary language ultimately to conceptualize an otherwise indescribable abstraction. A closer look at a section of one of Sepehri's most characteristic poems, *Neshani*, will help clarify the point. Looking for a friend's home, a horseman asks a passerby for directions. The passerby points to a tall aspen and replies:

*Just before the tree,
there is a lane greener than God's dream
where love is as blue as the feathers of truth.
Go to the end of that lane that leads behind puberty
Turn towards the flower of solitude,
two steps before the flower,
you will stop next to the immortal fountain of
Earthly myths
where a translucent fear takes hold of you.
There, in the fluid sincerity of the atmosphere,
you will hear a rustling:
You will see a child,
who has climbed up a tall pine tree,
to take a nestling from light's nest.
And there you ask the child:
where is the friend's house?*

While the passerby's simple diction and unquestionably familiar syntax give any speaker of colloquial Persian basic and easy-to-follow directions, the poem's abstract imagery and elusive concepts make for road signs that are essentially impossible to follow. Nevertheless, the delicate balance between the syntax's simplicity and the images' abstraction mobilize the reader to interject meaning where none otherwise exists, ultimately to recognize that the friend's house is an otherworldly place beyond the familiar and ordinary perimeters of day-to-day reality. Unlike Nima, who often coins new symbols out of concrete objects to convey abstract notions, Sepehri generates meaning through an association of an abstract image with an equally abstract concept, both expressed in a simple language.

While other features further contribute to the novelty of Sepehri's language, his success in generating easily accessible abstractions in a simple and highly economical language remains at the core of

his success in coining a language that has become infallibly associated with him that the echo of its influence remains recognizable to any reader of Persian modern poetry. In spite of Sepehri's achievement to introduce a novel language in the then fervent atmosphere of Persian modern poetic production, the publication of *Hajm-e Sabz* was met with an onslaught of mixed reviews. Mirroring this split in the Persian literati, two popular newspapers *Ayandegan* and *Keyhan* named *Hajm-e Sabz* the best book of the year, while others called it the worst. Perhaps the most notorious critique of the book, and indeed of Sepehri's poetry in general, was written at this same time by Reza Baraheni (b. 1935). It was in three consecutive issues of *Ferdowsi*, in which he famously referred to Sepehri as "an aristocratic Buddha-boy", sitting high in his holly ivory tower of sanctity and peace. Explicitly intended as a scathing remark, the implications of Baraheni's commentary were potentially devastating, at a time when political commitment was a central issue for a literati who defined literature as a political vehicle. The term "aristocratic Buddha-boy" not only dismissed Sepehri as a child in an ageist patriarchal society where authority can only be gained by virtue of life experience, but it further disenfranchised him from the Persian literati by associating him with a Far Eastern, hence alien, mystical figure who stands as a universal emblem of passivity and political disengagement.

More poignantly still, the term "aristocratic" also carried the subtle connotation of associating Sepehri with royalty, hence the court and the Shah: the quintessential



'Other' of the *mote'ahhed* literati. Baraheni was not alone in his opinion. Many, including Nader Naderpur, Mehdi Akhavan Saless (1928-1991), and Ahmad Shamlu (1925-1999) followed suit, some of whom consistently held the party line on the issue of Sepehri's poetics until the end of their lives. History, however, would prove the short-sightedness of this school of criticism about

Sepehri's work. Starting with the presumption that Sepehri was disconnected from his time, his critics failed to understand not only the depth of his commitment but also its very nature.

Recognizing many of the same problems in his world, as did his contemporaries, Sepehri's commitment was not defined by a call for social upheaval and political change, but rather by a drive to reform society through the perfection of the individual from within, and the concomitant belief that society's problems will invariably correct themselves upon the spiritual and emotional awakening of its people.

In 1979 Sepehri published his famous *Hasht Ketab*, a compendium of his previously published books - with some omissions and revisions of earlier poems - and a new series of poems written between 1967-1979 called *Ma Hich, Ma Negah*. The most abstract of Sepehri's poems, *Ma Hich, Ma Negah* constitutes the fifth and final phase in his poetic development. While many have criticized Sepehri for excessive abstractions that allegedly render these poems incomprehensible, others have succeeded in revealing the elusive yet profound philosophy that underlies them.

The key to decoding these admittedly abstract poems lies in the collection's title and its not so faint echo of a quote from the American transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson's (1803-1882) essay *Nature*: "I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing, I see all".

Reverberating this echo, the poems in the collection reflect the Emersonian idea that a direct union with nature can take mankind back to an Edenic state, void of the fixed social structures and inflexible belief systems that hinder spiritual evolution. Sepehri's exceptional economy of words, unorthodox phraseology, and elusive imagery convey this philosophy by forcing the reader actively to engage with an excessively abstract text ultimately to forge a new subjective meaning of life. Though unfinished, Sepehri's final work *Otaq-e Abi* remains nevertheless an indispensable tool in any serious study of Sepehri's work, as it provides invaluable insight into the workings of his mind, and reveals the breadth of his knowledge about various ideologies ranging from Taoism and Sufism to Hindu mythology and Jungian analytical psychology. More importantly, *Otaq-e Abi* offers a wealth of intertexts to Sepehri's poetry with concepts that elucidate not only some of his more abstract poems but also the techniques and symbolism of his painting.

Painting. As was the case with his poetry, the developmental course of Sepehri's painting can also be divided into various phases, each with its respective aesthetic features and thematic characteristics. Sepehri's meeting with Sheybani and his subsequent affiliation with *Khorus Jangi* marked the beginning of the second period in his painting. Like Hushang Pezeshknia, Jalil Zia'pur, Mahmud Javadipur and other early Persian modernist painters who moved away from Kamal ol-Molk's realist style to follow post-impressionist techniques as seen in Paul Cézanne's landscapes, Sepehri was now relying on colour-contrast and simplified geometric forms with heavy black outlines to express depth and space, rather than defining form with perspective, light, and shade. And though Sepehri's post-impressionist period in painting would prove as short as his Nimaic one in poetry, its central principles would stay with him throughout the remainder of his life as a painter. These include: a) emphasis upon volumes of space through simple geometric forms as the basis of composition; b) definition of form through colour rather than light and shade; and c) the use of series of planes in conveying principles of space, depth, and structural development from a flat surface.

In his vision of the world and of mankind's place within it, Sepehri believed above all in the importance of people's direct relationship with nature, one unencumbered by the anesthetizing effect of daily habits and preoccupations with preconceived ideas. Unwavering in his belief in a delicate yet essential unity between mankind, nature, and a greater cosmic order, Sepehri spent the length of his artistic life in search of the most effective expression of this central belief. To this end, he freely crossed over to a variety of myths and philosophies ranging from Zen Buddhism and Taoism to Sufism and European Romanticism, retaining from each those tenets most organically suitable to his vision. From romantic poets and Far Eastern philosophers he came to understand creative imagination as a necessary antidote to the banalities of ordinary life and a conduit to a higher, ideal state of spiritual awareness. Symbolic interpretations of myths, faraway places, and the historic past, and a profound subjective connection to nature are also themes Sepehri retained from Romanticism. While the reason for Sepehri's growing popularity both as poet and painter remain perpetually open to investigation, his influence on generations of artists after him is irrefutable.

Extracted from Iranica

Chabahar and two new berths

(MNA) – In southeastern Iran, on the Sea of Oman, there is a port city called Chabahar, which is the home for Iran's only oceanic port. Due to its strategic geographical positioning, Chabahar port has a great significance for Iran, both politically and economically. After years of negotiation, Iran has awarded the development project of this port to India, and the South Asian country committed \$500 million to build two new berths in this port.

However, after the US reimposed sanctions on Iran in November, the future of many Iranian projects including Chabahar port were shadowed by the consequences of the sanctions.

However, following several rounds of negotiations and discussions with New Delhi, the US administration finally exempted the Chabahar project from the sanctions. The new improvements around this important port intrigued the Tehran Times to pay a visit to Chabahar and conduct an interview with Behrouz Aghaie, the director general of Ports and Maritime Department of Sistan and Baluchestan Province (where Chabahar lies). What follows is the gist of the interview with the official.

An introduction to Chabahar port and development project

Chabahar has two main ports, Shahid Kalantari port and Shahid Beheshti port. Shahid Kalantari port's development finished in 1983. However, the development project for Chabahar's Shahid Beheshti port has been planned to be implemented in five phases, the first phase of which started in 2007, and due to financial problems resulted from US's first round of sanctions on Iran, the project almost halted until 2016 in which the sanctions were lifted over Iran's economy.

"In May 2016, Iran, India and Afghanistan signed a trilateral transit agreement in Tehran, a part of which is dedicated to Chabahar port's development project," Aghaie said. India for long, has been negotiating with Iran for cooperation in development of this important port. Since through



Chabahar port India can bypass Pakistan and transport goods to Afghanistan and Central Asia, while Afghanistan can get linked to India via sea. At the time, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that New Delhi would be investing \$500 million in the strategic port.

Then during the visit of the Iranian president to India in February 2018, the lease contract for Shahid Beheshti Port - Phase 1 was signed between Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) and India's Ports Global Limited (IPGL).

Aghaie noted that after settlements, the Indian party has chosen an Iranian company to cooperate in the development project.

"They held a tender in which various Iranian candidates attended and in the end a company named Kaveh Group was chosen as the Iranian partner in this project", he mentioned. According to the official, technology transfer is an important part of the deal with the Indian side and in this regard most of the work force that is going to be employed for this project are going to be from Iran, and the Indian side is also committed to transfer port related knowledge and technology into the country.

Aghaie further mentioned the progress of Shahid Beheshti Port - Phase 1 so far, saying: "During this phase, over 203 hectares of land has been reclaimed, construction of three multi-purpose berths with a total length of over 1700 meters has been completed, and over 15.5 million cubic meters of dredging has been executed, which creates 16.5 meters of depth for berthing of vessels with even highest drafts."

"We have also constructed a 1470-meter breakwater tail to make it completely safe for vessels to berth during monsoon season," he added.

Asked about the equipment and machinery, the official explained that near €60 million worth of equipment, mobile cranes, towers and pneumatic ship unloaders, lifts and tractors have been purchased, and have been operated during the phase 1 of development project. Most of them have been bought from renowned European companies in-

cluding those from Germany and Finland, and some have been supplied by Iranian Machin Sazi Arak Company.

Role of private sector

Speaking about the role of the country's private sector in this project, Aghaie stressed the importance of this sector's presence in Chabahar development. He said: "The Ports and Maritime Organization has so far invested over \$1 billion in Chabahar development project and this has made the private sector to see the importance of this port for the country's economy and made them to come forward." "They need to come forward and we always welcome them and support every company that is willing to cooperate with us in making this port what it is deserved to be", he underlined. According to Aghaie, since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 2018) the private sector has invested over 450 billion rials (near \$107 million) in the first phase of developing Shahid Beheshti port and he expressed hope that another \$105 million will also be attracted by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 2019).

Progress in port activities

Regarding the improvements of Chabahar's ports in terms of commodity transit, exports, imports and transship, Aghaie explained: "Since the inauguration of the phase 1 of Shahid Beheshti Port, in container area we have witnessed a 70 percent rise in various fields of transit and transshipment, as for the oil terminal, the figure for the oil cargoes loading and unloading has jumped by 50 percent and finally as a whole we can say that on average the trade activities of Chabahar port have increased by 50 percent up to date."

"In the past six months over 110,000 tons of goods have been transited through Chabahar's ports", he added.

Advantages and features

As Iran's only ocean port with over 500 kilometers of marine border, Chabahar has a great deal to offer to the country's economy, the investors, the neighboring countries and even the region.

This port is located outside the Persian Gulf region and Hormuz area and so does not have the limitations of the country's other ports in regard to the South East Asian trade. This port could be a transit gate from Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) countries to CIS countries, as well as Afghanistan. It is the most cost-efficient and optimal route to link IORA and CIS and event to Europe and Africa. The port has also one of the largest

international passenger terminals in the region with a capacity of simultaneous reception of over 600 passengers.

Exemptions and potentials

Sistan and Baluchestan Province's Ports and Maritime Department offers significant incentives for both investors and shipping companies who are willing to cooperate and operate in this port.

Some of the great incentives and opportunities that Chabahar offers to those who are willing to invest or cooperate in this port are as follows. Land delegation as long-term lease agreements in form of B.O.O.T, B.L.T, B.O.T, and B.O.O investment contracts, offering the opportunity for warehouse delegation in form of short- and long-term lease agreements, bringing equipment into Chabahar in form of partnership agreements subject to rules and regulations of free industrial-trade zones and especial economic zones, etc. There are also several discount items for shipping cargoes among which a 30-percent discount for all terminal handling charges (THC), and over 75 percent discount for the storage of import containers and 80 percent discount for storing export goods can be mentioned.

Rail projects related to Chabahar port

Connecting the ports to the railway network is among the prioritized plans that will contribute significantly to the promotion of the country's transit status. For example, a railway is under construction to connect Chabahar Port to Zahedan, the capital city of Sistan and Baluchestan Province, which will elevate the role of this strategic port in transit of goods. According to Aghaie, the project of building this railway has a 30-percent progress and it will be complete by the next three years. "Railway and rail development is one of the most important requirements of any improvement in Chabahar port's commodity transit and traffic", he emphasized. It is worth mentioning that last October India launched a trade route to Afghanistan via Iran through shipping its first consignment of wheat to Afghanistan via Chabahar, bypassing longtime rival Pakistan. The country sent its second consignment of wheat to Afghanistan via Chabahar in last November and has said that it plans to send more shipments of wheat to Afghanistan via the Iranian port. According to the official since the beginning of the phase 1, over 12,000 twenty-foot-equivalent units (TEU) loading and unloading has been done in this port, which is 100 percent more than the figure for all the loading and unloading done in the history of this port.

Zarathustra's message seems to have impressed Greeks:

Prof. Kreyenbroek



(MNA) – "Zoroastrianism" as one of the oldest religions still in existence and probably the world's first monotheistic faith, had been the state religion of three Persian dynasties, while shaped one of the ancient world's largest empires—the mighty Persia Empire, before the Muslim conquest of Persia in the seventh century A.D.

Although it was the dominant religion in Iran, Afghanistan, and central Asia, today Zoroastrians remain primarily in Iran, India, and Pakistan.

To highlight the impact of Zoroastrianism on western thought and the other religions in the world, we conducted an interview with Dr. Philip G. Kreyenbroek, professor and Director of Iranian Studies in Georg-August University of Göttingen (1996-2017).

Here is the full text of his interview with Mehr News correspondent:

Some believe that the book of Avesta does not represent teachings and philosophy of Zarathustra as it was compiled in the Sassanid era for nearly 300 years and eventually it formed a set of beliefs and rituals that were common among Iranian religions in that time. Hence, this book is neither heavenly nor represents the thoughts and teachings of Zarathustra. What is your opinion?

Only the Gathas are the words of Zarathustra. He was the founder of the Zoroastrian religion (daena, din) so that other Zoroastrian texts were either adapted to his teachings or originated after him. These 'later' texts represent the way Zarathustra's followers understood his teachings in the light of their contemporary culture and experiences. This is inevitable, especially in the case of teachings, like those of Zarathustra, which are not easy to understand.

Over the ages, these later texts have been recognized as holy expressions of Zoroastrianism by the communities in Iran and India. However, anyone is free to choose to base his or her religious beliefs on Zarathustra's message alone, as some Zoroastrians now do.

To what extent Zarathustra has an impact on Western philosophy and thinking? Do you regard that Nietzsche and Aristotle were influenced by Zarathustra?

In my view, the great revolution in human thinking that Zarathustra brought about was the recognition that this world was not as God had intended. In earlier religions, people believed that the conditions in this world represented the will of 'the gods', and all that a human being could do was try to befriend the gods so that they would not

harm him. Zarathustra, on the other hand, taught that there was one pure and heavenly Creator God, who had created what we might call the 'algorithms' (manthra) for a perfect world. However, these divine laws had not been realized correctly in this world because an evil power also existed. The task of humans, therefore, was to follow the will of the Creator God (Ahura Mazda), and the Angels who represented him in this world, in order to make the world perfect.

This new worldview (or divine message) helped to advance human thinking (as people's thought and actions were seen as important for this first time) and spread far and wide. It is implicitly present in Christianity and other later, 'Abrahamic' belief systems.

Zarathustra's message seems to have impressed the Greeks, who had many contacts with Iranians under the Achaemenids and later, and may have influenced Plato (there is no agreement about this among specialists). I doubt if Aristotle was much influenced by this, but I am not a specialist on Greek philosophy.

Nietzsche knew about Zoroastrianism because he was a close friend of Lou Andreas Salomé, the wife of F.C. Andreas. Andreas was one of my predecessors as Professor of Iranian Studies in Goettingen, and he had worked on ancient Iranian texts. Nietzsche regarded Zarathustra as the first 'moralist' (because man chooses between good and evil) and himself as the first 'a-moralist'. This apparently led him to choose the title 'Thus spoke Zarathustra'.

It is said that before the Zarathustra, Iranian worshiped Gods of the ancient Indo-Iranian religions while Zarathustra rejected these beliefs, believing that only Ahura Mazda, whose name means "wise lord" should be worshiped. Do you agree that Zarathustra separated from the Indo-Iranian religions through emphasis on monotheism?

This is almost entirely correct. From ca. 3000 – ca. 2000 BC, the Indians, and Iranians were a single people, who had their own religious tradition. Around 2000 BCE these two groups separated, and each presumably kept and developed their common, Indo-Iranian religion. Zarathustra was a highly educated priest in that Indo-Iranian religion, but probably because of social pressures in

his community he proposed the new interpretation I outlined earlier. He did not reject the whole Indo-Iranian tradition, however, only one group of 'angels', the daeva, (diw), whom he associated with unlawful and wicked behaviour, reflecting the ways of powerful men who do not care for morality. For the first time, Zarathustra preached that there was one God who was above all other 'angels' (izad, yazad), and who was inherently good.

How do you interpret the dualism and conflict between light and darkness in Zoroastrianism?

In Zarathustra's worldview, God the Creator was too pure and too elevated to interfere directly in this impure world. Only the Angels could do this, by being in touch with humans. And helping them. The Great Angel representing God's Goodness was called the 'Holy Spirit' (Spenta Mainyu), and his opponent in this world was Angra Mainyu (Ahriman), the 'Evil Spirit'.

As time went by, it became difficult for ordinary people to understand the difference between God and his Holy Spirit, and eventually, Zoroastrians came to believe that the two were identical. As a result, they thought that Ahura Mazda was the direct opponent of Ahriman, which implied that they had a similar status. That led to the belief that – instead of one Absolute God in the Universe and two opposed 'Spirits' in this world – there were two equal divine forces; this inspired a dualist way of thinking.

How did Zoroastrian teachings influence "Abrahamic faiths" and other beliefs?

The insight that this world is not as God intended was such a fundamental step in human thinking that it seems to have been accepted by many of those who came into contact with it.

From Achaemenid times onwards there were close contacts between Zoroastrianism and Judaism in Babylon and elsewhere.

These contacts would have contributed to the spread of this 'moralistic' worldview. In any case, this idea must have been fully accepted in the environment that gave rise to Christianity, which cannot be understood without it.

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Winter is coming with Yalda, Persian winter solstice celebration



On the eve of the first day of winter, the winter solstice, sometime between December 21 and 22, a Persian nocturnal celebration will be celebrated in Iran. It is commonly known as 'Yalda' (Night of Birth), or 'Shab-e Chelle', for 'chelle' meaning 40, and Yalda celebration takes place 40 days prior to the Zoroastrian fire festival of Sadeh, according to the Circle of Ancient Iranian Studies.

The ritual was registered in the National Heritage List in 2008, and proposed for a global status on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage List in 2015. Yalda is a social occasion, when friends and family join in making wishes, feasting on nuts, pomegranates and other festive foods and reading poetry, especially the work of the 14th-century Persian poet Hafez. Somewhat awake all night to rejoice in the moment when the sun rises, banishing evil and announcing the arrival of goodness.

Dried fruits, nuts, sweets and fruits such as watermelons and pomegranates are served at the get-together. The presence of dried and fresh fruits in mid-winter is a reminiscence of an ancient agricultural concern about the crops of different seasons. Pomegranates and watermelons are especially significant. On this night, the oldest member of the family says prayers, thanking God for previous year's blessings and praying for prosperity in the coming year. Then the melon is cut and everyone is given a share. The cutting symbolizes the removal of sickness and pain from the family.

Before modern heating facilities came to existence, the family and friends gathered in a night-long vigil around 'korsi' - a low table with a brazier of hot coals underneath. At the time when only seasonal fruits and vegetables were available, the host, usually an elder, carefully dried and preserved grapes, honeydew melons, pears, tange-

rines and apples. These were then enjoyed by everyone gathered around the 'korsi', or a fireplace. Eating nuts has led to prosperity in the days to come. A more substantial fare for the night's feast includes eggplant stew with plain saffron-flavoured rice, rice with chicken, thick yogurt, and halva.

Winter solstice history

"Since the Earth is tilted on its axis, the arc the Sun moves through the day rising and falling across the year, as Earth's pole points either towards or away from the Sun," according to the Royal Museums of Greenwich, home to the UK Royal Observatory - which is best known for the fact that the prime meridian runs through it. "The winter solstice occurs at the minimum point for the Northern Hemisphere, when the Sun is the lowest in the sky. At this time, the Earth's North Pole is pointing away from the Sun (which is why it is much colder in the Northern Hemisphere). For people living in the Southern Hemisphere, the South Pole is pointing towards the Sun, making it summertime 'down-under'.

In astronomical terms, the December 21st Solstice marks the end of the autumn in the Northern Hemisphere and the beginning of the winter, which will technically end on March 20, 2019. It is one of the four days when the new season begins alongside the spring equinox, the summer solstice and the fall equinox. However, in meteorological terms, winter begins on December 1 and ends on February 28. This is because the meteorological definition takes into account annual temperature cycles. The solstice is important because it marks the beginning of the days getting longer (a trend that will continue until the spring equinox). As such, it has been celebrated by cultures throughout human history. The December Solstice occurs far more often on the 21 or 22 than it does on the 20 or 23. In fact, the last December 23 solstice took place in 1903, and it will not happen again until 2303. Likewise, the 20 December's solstice is very rare; with the next one not set to take place until 2080. The reason that the date of the solstices varies can be explained by the differences between the Gregorian calendar and the 'tropical year'.

Source: Iran Daily

Will there be another referendum over Brexit?

(MNA) – Brexit continues to be an implicit term in the Britain's political equations. Complicating the process of the British withdrawal from the European Union is a joint measure taken by the British government and European authorities.

At the same time, the British government, with its widespread negative propaganda against the Brexit, is seeking to re-arrange a referendum. In other words, the European authorities are trying to direct the public opinion about the Brexit.

Recently, some western news sources are speaking of an issue called "repeating the Brexit referendum", and name it as a possible option! An option that had been previously denied by British authorities, including Theresa May, the Prime Minister of the country. According to the France news agency, regarding the increasing doubt about the British Prime Minister's efforts to conclude an agreement with the United Europe, the possibility of holding a second referendum on Brexit has multiplied.

This source has also announced that there are major obstacles on the way of confirming this agreement between Theresa May and European leaders, which has, in turn, intensified this trend. The existence of legal complexities in this agreement made its implementation difficult for both sides. Meanwhile, it is possible that the members of the parliament will vote in favour of Theresa May's decision.

Although it seems that Theresa May is trying to convince legislators to give a positive vote to this agreement, not only members of the Labour Party, but also some members of the Conservative Party are opposing it. The MPs argue that the Brexit is basically contrary to the interests of the UK.

Meanwhile, supporters of the "People's Vote" campaign, who are now very active in England, believe that the parliament's negative vote will



pave the way for a new referendum on the Brexit. This issue is no way contrary to the demands of Theresa May and the Conservative Party, but it's secretly supported by them. The negative propaganda of the Theresa May's government against the Brexit since 2016 is known to everyone. After the British citizens

voted to leave the European Union in 2016, the two Labour and Conservative parties (as UK's two traditional parties) tried their best to change the general vote on this issue. The active role played by people like former British Prime Minister Tony Blair can well indicate the dissatisfaction among British authorities over the Brexit.

Supporters of the People's Vote campaign are currently trying to convince the public for holding a new referendum on Brexit. "The People's Vote campaign seeks to ensure that the government's Brexit deal is put before the country in a public vote so that we can decide if a decision that will affect our lives for generations makes the country better or worse off. Good deal or bad deal, it's definitely a big deal - and that's why it should be put to a People's Vote", that's how the campaign's supporters define their goal.

Proponents of this campaign believe that the parliament's negative vote to May's plan is the best opportunity to hold another referendum. On the other hand, Theresa May doesn't intend to violate the people's vote in the 2016 referendum explicitly, so she tries to appear to be opposed to a new referendum, but she set the game in a way that it will eventually lead to the UK's remain as part of the European Union.

Labour Party officials led by Jeremy Corbyn have also agreed to vote again on the Brexit, and have officially backed this issue. The fact that Britain's two rival parties have come to an agreement on holding a new referendum has provided the ground for its ultimate realization.

Short Economic News

Iran Short Economic News:

4 Iranian Chess players to attend WRBCC 2018

(MNA) – Four Iranian chess players will participate in World Rapid and Blitz Chess Competition 2018, which will be held in St. Petersburg, Russia, from 25 to 31 Dec. The chess grandmasters Parham Maghsoodloo, Alireza Firouzja, Ehsan Ghaem Maghami, and Sara Khademalsharieh will represent the Islamic Republic in the competition.

The world's strongest chess players have expressed readiness to vie at WRBCC 2018 where only those with chess ratings over 2,500 are accepted. The event's total prize fund is \$1.15 million. Iranian players have shown an outstanding presence in in-



ternational competitions during the past years. According to the latest FIDE ratings, in the ranking of countries, Iran moved one place up compared to last month with 2555 points, sitting in the 25th place.

The ranking is measured by the average rating of the country's top 10 players. Maghsoodloo stands at the world's 4th place with 2,688 points in the juniors' standard category. Another teen player, Firouzja (2607) stands in 12th spot in the same category. With 2470 points, grandmaster Khademalsharieh gained the rank of 19th in the standard women's section in the December ratings of FIDE.

Envoy lauds political successes in UN resolution of Yemen

(MNA) – Iranian Ambassador to London, Hamid Baeidinejad, has hailed the two important political successes achieved in a new resolution that was endorsed by the UN Security Council on Yemen on Friday.

“After several days of lengthy negotiations between UN Security Council Member States and the countries concerned, the Security Council endorsed a new resolution on Yemen. It approves the measures agreed on in Stockholm, and has tasked the UN Secretary General with adopting the necessary measures to monitor a truce in port of Hudaydah,” wrote Iranian Ambassador to London, Hamid Baeidinejad in a tweet on Friday. He noted “two important political developments” in the new resolution. Namely “the



failure of the US-Saudi Arabia-UAE coalition in lodging the baseless accusation about the transfer of Iranian missiles to Yemen thanks to the dynamic diplomacy of Iran in cooperation with the Council members; and their insistence on rejecting the UK's proposal on identifying the causes of the human catastrophe

in Yemen.” On Friday, the United Nations Security Council voted unanimously to authorize the deployment of UN monitors to observe the implementation of a newly-agreed ceasefire in Yemen's strategic Red Sea port of Hudaydah, and the pullout of rival forces from the vital area under a ceasefire that was reached during the UN-brokered peace talks in Sweden last week.

World Short Economic News:

Macron, Trump and Iran's future

(MNA) – The incident of the city of Strasbourg in France was a very primitive scenario for facing the deep social and political crisis that the Macron government is facing.

As predicted, French Interior Minister Christophe Castaner announced that the “terrorist”, who “apparently” was responsible for the shooting in Strasbourg, at 9 p.m. on Thursday, December 13th was killed in a street clash with three policemen. Shortly thereafter, ISIS released a statement, claiming responsibility for the shooting and killing of Strasbourg. The extent and depth of the crisis in France is such that it does not allow the creation of a tense security and repression under the pretext of “terrorism”. On the contrary, the scenario of Macron and Castaner, which, regardless of its tragic human dimensions, resembles Louis de Funès comedies, adds to the severity of the crisis. On the other hand, on Thursday, the United States Senate unanimously condemned Mohamed bin Salman for the murder of Jamal Khashoggi and called on Trump to end support for the Saudi war in Yemen.

This is a major change in the US policy that occurred in the final days of the 115th Congress, a congress that is run by both the Senate and the House of Representatives under the control of the Republican Party. The incident shows that Trump



will be greatly affected by the start of the 116th Congressional Congress on January 3, 2019, where the House of Representatives will be controlled by the Democratic Party.

Robert Muller's investigation on Russia's role in the 2016 US presidential election is also underway. In addition, there is concern over the US stock market.

The current Inverted Yield Curve shows that the number of short-term bank deposits is more than long-term deposits. Financial analysts consider the Inverted Yield Curve a serious indication of the probability of a recession and a financial crisis because it reflects lack of confidence of Americans in the future of their bank savings.

Accordingly, some conservative analysts, such as Michael Wilson, senior strategist at Morgan Stanley Bank, predicted a 50 percent market downturn in 2019. If so, the “golden age”, which began in the second semester of 2009, with the first year of the Obama Administration, ended in the first two years of the Trump Administration. Such conditions will have serious implications for US foreign policy.

In the turn of events, this incident will once again provide Iran with a historic opportunity to work alongside its dynamic and tactful foreign policy, with the advent of fundamental domestic reforms, to modernize the economic system that was launched forty years ago.

China's population set to peak at 1.44 billion in 2029: government report

SHANGHAI (Reuters) - China's population is set to reach a peak of 1.442 billion in 2029 and start a long period of “unstoppable” decline in 2030, government scholars said in a research report published on Friday. The world's most populous country must now draw up policies to try to cope with

a declining labor force and a rapidly ageing population, according to the summary of the latest edition of the “Green Book of Population and Labor” published by the China Academy of Social Sciences (CASS). Growth in the working population had now stagnated, the report said, and the rising

number of elderly people will have a far-reaching impact on the social and economic development in the country, especially if fertility rates remain low. "From a theoretical point of view, the long-term population decline, especially when it is accompanied by a continuously ageing population, is bound to cause very unfavorable social and economic consequences," it said.



China's population is expected to fall back to 1.36 billion by the middle of the century, it said, which

could mean a decline in the workforce of as much as 200 million. If fertility rates remain unchanged, the population could fall to 1.17 billion by 2065, it said.

China decided in 2016 to relax a controversial "one-child policy" aimed at curbing population growth and allow all couples to have two children. However, the country's birth rate still fell 3.5 percent in 2017 and is expected to have fallen again last year. China's "dependency rate" - or the proportion of non-working people, including children and the elderly, in the total population - rose for the first time in more than 30 years in 2011, and is widely predicted to increase further for at least the next few decades.

The proportion of retirees is projected to rise until 2060, the CASS report said, and while the decision to relax "one-child" rules was designed to rebalance China's age structure, in the short term it will also lead to a greater dependency rate.

According to previous forecasts, China's elderly population is expected to reach 400 million by the end of 2035, up from around 240 million last year.

UK pay gap between CEOs and staff widens-lobby group

LONDON (Reuters) - The earnings of Britain's top bosses will match a typical worker's entire annual salary even faster than last year, hitting the mark by Friday lunchtime, a report by the Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development and High Pay Centre said.

The widening pay gap comes despite pressure from leading investors for excessive pay to be reined in and after several high-profile revolts at company annual meetings in 2018, most notably at Persimmon (PSN.L).

Median pay for a FTSE 100 .FTSE CEO in 2017, the most recently disclosed data, was 3.9 million pounds (\$4.9 million), the report said, up 11 percent from the previous year. Average full-time worker pay in 2018 was 29,574 pounds a year, it added.

"Excessive executive pay represents a massive corporate governance failure and is a barrier to a fairer economy," said Luke Hildyard, director of the High Pay Centre, an independent think-tank.

Many companies say high executive pay levels are needed to recruit and retain the best talent to oversee corporate strategy and drive shareholder returns through higher share prices, to which bonuses are linked.

Dubbing the day when CEO pay passes that of the average worker as "Fat Cat Friday" was unhelpful, said the Institute of Directors, which represents company executives.

"Determining executive pay requires sober and objective analysis. It should pay heed to public concerns but not be driven by populism," said IoD Head of Corporate Governance Roger Barker.



IBCCIM's New Members

Member Companies:

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Key Economic Indicators in 1397, Q1

Population and Labor Force

Population (1397)	82.1 million
Urban	61.3 million
Rural ¹	20.8 million
Population Growth	1.3 percent
Population Density	49.8 per sq km
Active Population (1397, Q1)	27.4 million
Unemployment Rate (1397, Q1)	12.1 percent
Urban	13.6 percent
Rural	7.9 percent
Male	10.3 percent
Female	19.2 percent
15-29 years old	25.5 percent
15-24 years old	28.3 percent

Source: Statistical Center of Iran (SCI).

¹Includes non-resident population.

External Sector (million US\$)

Current Account Balance	11,061
Trade Balance (goods account)	12,983
Exports (FOB)	29,336
Imports (FOB)	16,353
Total External Debt (end of period)	10,441
Exchange Rate (US\$/IRR)	
Interbank Market (average)	Rls. 41,159

Monetary Sector (growth rate, percent) (Khordad 1397 compared with Esfand 1396)

Liquidity (M2)	3.4
Money (M1)	5.8
Quasi-money	3.1
Non-public Sector Deposits	3.8

Real Sector

GDP Growth (1390=100)	
Oil	1.8 percent
Non-oil	0.7 percent
Performance of 1397, Q1 (current prices; trillion Rls.)	
GDP (at basic price)	3,988
Gross Fixed Capital Formation	584
Private Consumption Expenditures	1,991
Public Consumption Expenditures	469

Government Fiscal Position (trillion Rls.)

Revenues	264.2
Expenses	588.1
Disposal of Non-financial Assets	326.4
Acquisition of Non-financial Assets	226.7
Net Lending/Borrowing	290.1

Changes in Consumer Price Index (CPI) of Goods and Services (1395=100)

Twelve months ending Khordad 1397 compared with same period previous year (inflation rate)	9.4 percent
Khordad 1397 compared with previous month	4.3 percent
Khordad 1397 compared with same month previous year	13.7 percent

Tehran Stock Exchange

Tehran Stock Exchange Price Index (TEPIX) (end of period)	108,873.0
Value of Shares and Rights Traded	Rls. 122.2 trillion
Volume of Shares and Rights Traded	57.6 billion

Source: CBI