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By Ali A. Jenabzadeh

Unlike New York Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo who well-meaningly called the novel coronavirus “the great equalizer”, recent evidence proves covid-19 is anything but an equalizer at least when it comes to race.

In the city of New York, Black people deaths are 28% while making up 22% of the population, as compared to 27% for whites who are 32% of the population, according to a recent New York state health department report.

It is not clear yet what the racial breakdown would look like for hospitalizations and deaths outside of hospital spaces.

Considering the high rate of infected cases, hospitalizations, and fatalities in the state, currently the issue might have a level of security dimension to it, causing a lot of speculation and questions.

In fact, it is not that the coronavirus discriminates itself; but it is the chronic, long-neglected ills of the American society that are popping up under the dire situation.

A spate of media reports exposes similar grim statistics for African-American communities as being disproportionately hit by the pandemic in other places across the country. Racial breakdowns of those affected in Louisiana, Michigan's county of Detroit, Chicago, and Washington, D.C., are more eye-opening.

While one third of Louisiana's total population is black (33%), more than 70% of fatalities from covid-19 are Black residents, according to Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards.

The situation in Chicago is not any better. Black people make up 70% of fatalities despite accounting for only 29% of the city's population. →7

The secret behind COVID-19 death toll in U.S.

TEHRAN — The media is bombarding Americans around the clock with updates on the death count, highlighting death maps and scaring people into staying home.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control said Thursday that there are now 632,220 confirmed cases of coronavirus nationwide, with the death toll in three country rising to 31,071. The latest figures come the same day that President Donald Trump provided guidelines to potentially reopen the nation amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

It also comes the same day New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said he would join

California and other states in extended the Empire State's stay-at-home order to May 15. New York has about a third of all cases in the country.

But why Covid-19 death toll in U.S. is so high?

Senator Dr. Scott Jensen from Minnesota went on The Ingraham Angle on April 8 to discuss how the AMA is encouraging American doctors to over count coronavirus deaths across the U.S.

This was after Dr. Scott Jensen, a Minnesota physician and Republican state senator, told a local station he received a 7-page document coaching him to fill

out death certificates with a COVID-19 diagnosis without a lab test to confirm the patient actually had the virus, The Gateway Pundit reported.

Dr. Jensen also disclosed that hospitals are paid more if they list patients with a COVID-19 diagnosis.

And hospitals get paid “THREE TIMES AS MUCH” if the patient then goes on a ventilator.

Senator Dr. Scott Jensen said: Right now Medicare is determining that if you have a COVID-19 admission to the hospital you get \$13,000. If that COVID-19 patient goes on a ventilator you get \$39,000, three

times as much. Nobody can tell me after 35 years in the world of medicine that sometimes those kinds of things impact on what we do.

“Hospitals to list COVID-19 as cause of death even if it's “assumed to have caused or contributed to death” – Lab Tests Not Required”

The amount of Americans who are reported to have died from the Coronavirus is based on a CDC coding system that will “result in COVID-19 being the underlying cause more often than not.”

A new ICD code was established to keep track of Coronavirus deaths. →7

Why COVID-19 death toll is so high in New York?

By Faranak Bakhtiari

TEHRAN — New York City has been hit so hard by the coronavirus outbreak more than any other city and even some countries around the world, as the number of New Yorkers died of the virus surged to 14,000 on Friday, with a total of 222,000 confirmed cases.

The city's number of infections is even higher than Spain and Italy which previously suffered the highest tolls and also have populations larger than New York.

Out of 34,000 deaths reported in the United States, 42 percent occurred in New York alone, with a death rate of 4.7 percent more than the country's total rate of 3.4 percent and 6 percent above other countries, so that New Yorkers are facing a disproportionate mortality rate due to the pandemic.

Here, the question arises that why New York City is the most haunted by the epidemic?

A combination of factors can be the seen in this regard, including population density, less access to medical services for special populations. →9

Trump ‘could not have been more wrong’ on coronavirus: analyst

By M.A. Saki

TEHRAN — American political analyst Martin Love believes that President Donald Trump has had a terrible performance in handling the coronavirus crisis, saying, “He could not have been more wrong” on the pandemic.

“Spread of Covid-19 is occurring in the U.S. like in no other country,” Love tells the Tehran Times in an exclusive interview.

Love says, “Some countries have managed the crises better than others,

and most are managing their own crises better than the U.S. is currently doing.”

Following is the text of the interview:

■ Reportedly, people are queuing up in the U.S. to get free food. If true, what does this suggest?

There have been numerous reports of so-called “food banks” handing out basic food to those in need in the U.S. One recent report cited a four-mile long line of cars waiting to visit a “food bank” in the state of

Illinois. I imagine people have lined up in places across the country for help because some 22 million people lost their jobs by some reports, and this is bad news because for a majority of the population few have much savings and many jobs created since the last economic recession were not high paying jobs and the so-called “middle class” in the U.S. has been reduced significantly in the past 30 years so while good, manufacturing jobs have been out sourced to

countries where labor has been cheaper, like in China. The country is already in a deep recession and unemployment looks like it is going to eclipse the unemployment rates during the Depression in the 1930s. Some economists have predicted an unemployment rate in the U.S. above 30 percent. During the Depression in the 1930s the unemployment rate did not get above about 25 percent of workers. →3

Why New York?



ARTICLE

Mohammad Jafari
Tehran Times journalist

Chronic health inequities weaken Blacks, putting them at higher risk amid COVID-19 outbreak in U.S.

Long before COVID-19 outbreak, Black communities were experiencing deep health and economic inequities that are only intensified by a public health crisis, a senior policy analyst and adjunct professor at Howard University said.

Judy Lubin, who is also the president of the Center for Urban and Racial Equity (CURE) and a sociologist, criticized the inept government leadership for weak handling of the outbreak which has mainly targeted the communities of color in the United States.

“COVID-19 is a perfect storm of systemic inequities operating together to worsen existing vulnerabilities,” she pointed out in her article published by TruthOut.

“Long before COVID-19, Black communities were experiencing deep health and economic inequities that are only intensified by a public health crisis of this magnitude.”

The COVID-19 global pandemic is a nightmare unfolding before our eyes that could have devastating impacts that Black Americans could feel most acutely. With scarce testing, health care workers and ventilators, combined with a pattern of red state governors ignoring science and placing profits above people, there are signs that Black communities across the country are bearing the brunt of an inept federal response and unjust health care system unprepared to handle the surge of COVID-19 patients.

This, of course, doesn't have to be the case, but government failure and systemic racism means far too many Black people, especially in the South, will lose their lives unless government leaders immediately course correct from the predictable and alarming outcomes ahead.

Preliminary data show high case counts among Black residents in emerging hot-spots, including New Orleans, New York, Detroit, Milwaukee, Charlotte and Albany, Georgia. →7

Iranian Army unique in the world

By Mehdi Azizi

TEHRAN — The Army of the Islamic Republic of Iran and in general the Armed Forces have a distinct and unique feature compared to other military organizations, especially regional and Arabic armies. This fact is based on the elements other armies either do not possess or have at a small level or perhaps do not have the capabilities to develop such elements.

American politicians need to motivate their servicemen not for the purpose of defending the American nation or their values but to keep their military personal ready in the army, especially when these soldiers have been in the Middle East for a long time without any goal and just for killing.

A number of Arab countries show some wonderful and unreal actions scenes on their TVs like Hollywood movies in which their armed forces

perform astonishing things. Organized parades, epic songs, and the picture of Arab kings are only seen on TVs, and in reality the only thing they can do is suppressing the opposition.

Some of them have a rental army. The imports of modern military equipment exceed their daily needs and the increase in their military budgets is such that it has destroyed the educational sector and economic infrastructure. Surprisingly enough, they are not even able to use this equipment and have to rent another army.

The condition is not different in most European countries. The military is only a ceremonial office with the task of controlling the borders and it is not clear what measures it must adopt in the face of military threats.

Moral corruption, high suicide rate, and aggressive behavior are among the major features

of the U.S. army and some other military forces in the world. The recruitment of women in the U.S. and the Zionist regime's militaries and some European countries is only for exploitation. In other words, women are sexual prey for soldiers serving in the American and Zionist regime's militaries.

In some political circles, armed forces are used as a repressing tool against the nations and to ensure the political stability of governments, not to support the people.

The “six-day war” has remained a humiliating term for Arab armies in the history of the Arab conflicts. However, , in the years following these defeats, small groups of the Islamic Resistance were able to make up for this historic humiliation and stand up to the myth of the invincible Zionist regime. →2

Army holds ‘service parades’ on National Day

TEHRAN — The Army of the Islamic Republic of Iran has celebrated its National Day across the country, canceling regular parades to hold what it called “service parades” intended to put on display its power in the battle against the coronavirus pandemic.

Units of the Army's Ground Force, Navy, Air Force, and Khatam al-Anbiya Air Defense Base participated in the nationwide parades, with the motto “Homeland Defenders, Health Assistants”, Mehr reported.

Tehran's parade was attended by Army Chief Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi; Army Deputy Coordinator Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari; Army Ground Force Commander Brigadier General Kioumars Heidari; Navy Commander Rear Admiral Hossein Khanzadi; and Air Force Commander Brigadier General Aziz Nasirzadeh.

Beside Tehran, the parades were also held in Mashhad, Tabriz, Qom, Rasht and Shiraz and some other cities.

During the parades, the Armed Forces displayed their healthcare equipment, including the disinfecting tools and vehicles as well as the mobile hospitals employed to deliver quality relief and medical services to people infected by the novel virus.

Speaking at the event, General Mousavi praised the military for acting like an iron dam protecting people against the enemies.

He assured the Iranian nation that the Armed Forces will keep protecting them like a “sympathetic brother”, according to Tasnim.

The Iranian Armed Forces are an iron dam in the face of foes, the top commander emphasized.

No Army in the world enjoys popular support like in Iran, he underlined, saying the Army will stand by the nation amid the outbreak of the novel coronavirus and will “dedicate their lives” to protection of the Iranian nation.

Paying tribute to all units serving in the



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Army's Ground Force, Air Force, Air Defense and the Navy, General Mousavi said more than 11,000 forces from the Army medical division have rushed to help the Health Ministry personnel in the efforts to contain the coronavirus epidemic.

This year, the Army decided to carry out an alternative plan for military parades to prevent any gathering of people in order to contain the spread of the coronavirus and help the medical staff in the battle with COVID-19.

The Iranian Armed Forces set up a biodefense headquarters after the outbreak of coronavirus and have offered extensive services to treat the patients.

The Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah

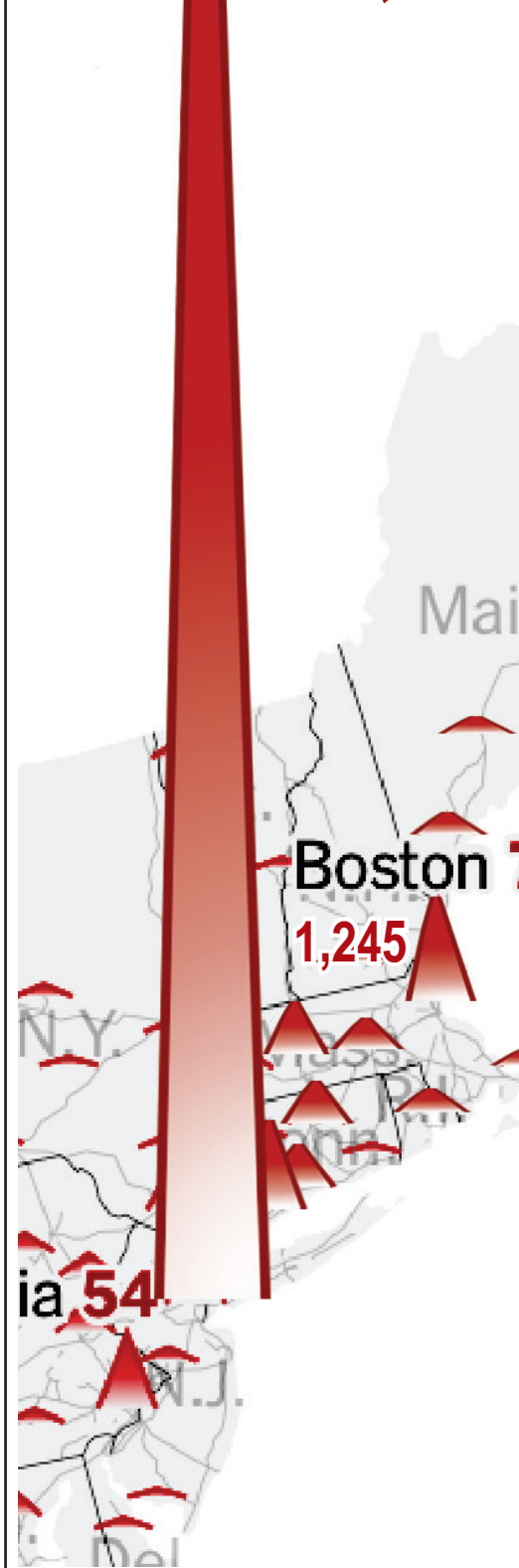
Ali Khamenei sent a message of congratulation to Army personnel on Army day.

The greetings of the Leader was declared through General Mohammad Shirazi, the head of the command office of the commander-in-chief, to Army Commander Mousavi in a telephone call.

“The commander-in-chief said send my greetings to all Army personnel,” the Army public relations department said.

In a Twitter message on Friday, President Hassan Rouhani also said, “Our Army is not symbol of warlordism, but it is symbol of support for the people and national interests. The greatness of your job as ‘defenders of the homeland’ and ‘defenders of health’ has been revealed more than ever.”

New York 14,636



Tehran, Rome in consultation to evacuate Iranian students

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said on Friday that Tehran and Rome are consulting to evacuate the Iranian students in Italy.

“We are consulting to have one flight from Rome and two from Milan to Tehran,” Mousavi explained.



He said that the Iranian students in Italy have been informed about healthcare protocols before, during and after their trip.

Iran's embassy in Rome issued a statement on Thursday announcing Friday's flight to Iran was cancelled due to a number of passengers' failure to observe the healthcare protocols on Wednesday's flight.

Reportedly, so far, 168,941 Italians have been infected by the coronavirus, including 22,170 deaths.

On Friday (April 17), the Iranian Health Ministry also announced that 1,499 new cases of coronavirus have been confirmed over the past 24 hours, a notable decrease compared with 1,606 in the same period the day before.

Over the past 24 hours, 89 new patients have also lost their lives compared with 92 a day earlier, ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour said.

The total number of people diagnosed with the coronavirus in Iran has reached 79,494, of whom 4,958 have died and 54,064 have recovered.

U.S. has weakened security in Persian Gulf: Hatami

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Defense Minister Amir Hatami said on Friday that the United States' “illegal” and “aggressive” presence in the Persian Gulf has weakened security in the region.

“It is the United States' illegal and aggressive presence that weaken security in the Persian Gulf region. They [the U.S.] has come near Iran's borders from other end of the world and make unfounded claims,” he told reporters on the sidelines of a parade held to mark the National Army Day.

He added, “The Iranian people are insightful and know who is right. We are in our home and they have come from other end of the world to cause problems for the regional countries through threats and sanctions.”

U.S. Navy issued a statement on Wednesday claiming that 11 Iranian Islamic Revolution Guards Corps boats had closed in on up to six U.S. naval vessels in the Persian Gulf “in dangerous and harassing approaches”.

The statement also said the incident took place in the “northern Arabian Gulf”, a historically flawed and provocative expression commonly adopted by anti-Iran groups instead of “Persian Gulf” term, according to Press TV.

In a tweet on Thursday, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif reminded Washington that by its presence in the Persian Gulf, the U.S. Navy is 7,000 miles away from home.

He mentioned a 2-year-old tweet of himself that read, “US Navy can't seem to find its way around our waters. Perhaps because it hasn't figured out its name: Persian Gulf, as it's been called for 2,000 yrs longer than US has existed.”

Iranian Army unique in the world

1 → Today, the Iranian Army and the Armed Forces in general are powerful in all fields, especially since they are independent and have the support of people.

The significant point regarding the Iranian Army and the Armed Forces as a whole is that they possess the prominent capability of transferring mission area and changing it.



For example, while being prepared for military action during the war, they also have the ability to be present in the social and cultural sectors in times of peace in order to provide public service.

Therefore, the Iranian Armed Forces have a large and effective presence in case of any unpredicted incident such as the recent outbreak of the coronavirus.

The Iranian Armed Forces have an important ideology both in terms of spirituality and military progress, which is reflected in the concept of martyrdom, and therefore there is no such thing as the erosion of power or losing motivation to fight in this military structure.

Rouhani calls Iran's armed forces ‘symbol of support’ for people and national interests’

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — President Hassan Rouhani on Friday congratulated the National Army Day and called the Iranian Armed Forces “symbol of support” for the people and national interest.

Rouhani made the remarks in separate phone calls with Army chief Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi and and Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Bagheri.

Mousavi and Bagheri also presented reports about actions taken so far by the Armed Forces in the area of healthcare as Iran is grappling with the coronavirus epidemic.

They also said that the Armed Forces will spare no effort in realizing the causes of the revolution.

National Army Day was included in the Iranian calendar after a historic letter from late founder of the Islamic Republic Imam Khomeini in April 1979, in which

he voiced strong support for the Army and ordered Army troops to hold massive parades across the country on April 18 every year to express their combat readiness.

The historic decision by Imam Khomeini came after hostile propaganda was launched to undermine the Army after its successful missions in quelling riots and separatist moves.

In a tweet on Friday, Rouhani also said that “strong voice” of the Army will remain “eternal”.

He added, “Our Army is not symbol of warlordism, but it is symbol of support for the people and national interests. The greatness of your job as ‘defenders of the homeland’ and ‘defenders of health’ has been revealed more than ever.”

■ **‘Army bears message of security’**
Also in a tweet on Thursday, Ali Shamkhani, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), also said the



“Our Army is not symbol of warlordism, but it is symbol of support for the people and national interests. The greatness of your job as ‘defenders of the homeland’ and ‘defenders of health’ has been revealed more than ever,” Rouhani said in a Twitter message.

Army bears message of security and peace.

“The Army's presence in various areas bears message of peace, security and power

for the people and disappointment and fear for the enemies,” the top security official stated.

Iran, China condemn U.S. illegal sanctions

Zarif says he and Wang exchange views on deepening ‘comprehensive strategic partnership’ between Iran and China

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Thursday that Iran and China have condemned the United States' illegal sanctions.

In a tweet in Chinese language, Zarif pointed to his conversation with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Wednesday, saying Iran and China condemned the U.S. illegal sanctions.

“I am very happy that I talked with my old friend, Wang Yi, Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister, again. We exchanged views on issues of common interest, such as fighting the coronavirus pandemic, deepening the comprehensive strategic partnership between the two countries, and the peace process in Afghanistan. I thanked China for providing Iran with materials and sending medical experts. We condemned the continued illegal sanctions by the United States that seriously hindered Iran's efforts to fight the coronavirus,” Zarif tweeted, according to IRNA.

■ **Wang says China ready to enhance anti-epidemic cooperation with Iran**

In the phone conversation with Zarif, the Chinese foreign minister said that China stands ready to enhance anti-epidemic cooperation with Iran.

As comprehensive strategic partners with mutual understanding and support, China and Iran have helped each other



Wang says the development and growth of China and Iran, the two emerging market economies, is an inevitable trend of history.

through thick and thin in the fight against COVID-19 and have jointly written a chapter of cooperation, Wang said, according to Xinhua.

Wang noted that under the leadership of the Iranian government, the Iranian people are united as one and the epidemic curve tends to be flattened, which shows that

Iran's prevention and control measures have achieved positive results.

China stands ready to enhance anti-epidemic cooperation with Iran and will continue to provide as much assistance as its capacity allows to the country, Wang said.

Bilateral cooperation will be deepened and the China-Iran comprehensive strategic

partnership will grow deeper in the fight against the pandemic, Wang said, adding that the development and growth of China and Iran, the two emerging market economies, is an inevitable trend of history.

Wang said the virus is a common enemy for humankind, and that China, as the first country to report the epidemic, has been sharing information and carrying out cooperation with the international community in an open and transparent manner, and has made important contributions to the global fight against the pandemic.

For his part, Zarif said since the onset of the outbreak, China has selflessly helped Iran, for which the Iranian people are deeply grateful.

Under the current situation, certain countries unreasonably find fault with China's anti-epidemic efforts, which is irresponsible and dangerous, Zarif said, adding that Iran strongly condemns such unilateral moves that put pressure on the World Health Organization.

Exchanging in-depth views on Afghanistan, the two sides agreed that the Afghan issue should be resolved by the Afghan people through dialogue and consultation.

Under the current situation, countries in the region, especially neighboring countries, should play a more active role in the peace and reconciliation process in Afghanistan, said the two sides, agreeing to continue to maintain communication and coordination in this regard.

U.S. sanctions on Iran violate human rights: Chinese university professor



POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Fan Hongda, a professor of international relations at Shanghai International Studies University (SISU), has said that the United States sanctions on Iran violate human rights.

“Iran is fighting the coronavirus and faces shortage in medicine and medical equipment because of the United States' long term sanctions. This issue has affected the Iranian people's health seriously,” he told IRNA in an interview published on Thursday.

He added, “Instead of helping the countries to fight the coronavirus, the United States has imposed sanctions on Iran and put pressure on other countries not to help Iran.” Despite the U.S. pressure, China has not stopped sending aid to Iran, he noted.

In a commentary on April 8, CNN said though the sanctions technically exempt food and medical supplies, human rights reports from Iran have repeatedly emphasized the impact of sectoral sanctions on gaining access to essential medicines and medical equipment, including respirators and protective equipment for health-care workers.

And experts say U.S. sanctions on Iran are indeed hurting its response to the pandemic, the news channel said in its analysis.

Sanam Vakil, an Iran expert with Chatham House has also said, “Iran is hampered by sanctions that prevent it

from accessing foreign reserves, foreign currency abroad to purchase the necessary medical equipment -- masks, anything that it might need to take care of its population.”

Chris Murphy, the U.S. senator from Connecticut, warned on Monday that the Trump administration could be partially responsible for “the death of innocent people” if it continues its current policies towards Iran amidst the coronavirus epidemic.

“If this epidemic continues to grow and spread in Iran it will...result in the death of innocent people, partially as a result of U.S. policy that does not accrue to the national security benefit of our country,” he told reporters on the Monday conference call, The National Interest reported.

“Remember, if we don't beat it there, we don't beat it here. This virus doesn't respect borders,” he added. “It's just good public health policy to help even our adversaries beat back this scourge.”

The novel coronavirus disease, also known as COVID-19, hit Iran at a time when U.S.-Iranian tensions were at an all-time high. The Trump administration initially relaxed its “super-maximum economic pressure” campaign in order to allow for humanitarian trade but has refused to budge any further, claiming that the current exemptions are enough. Murphy disagreed.

He had penned a March 26 letter, signed by ten other Democratic senators, asking the Trump administration to ensure that Iran and Venezuela can import medical supplies and other humanitarian goods to deal with the coronavirus outbreak.

Murphy wrote on his Twitter page on April 6 that Iranians are dying of coronavirus partly because of U.S. sanctions.

“Innocent civilians are dying there in part because our sanctions are limiting humanitarian aid during coronavirus,” he tweeted.

Foreign ministers of the European Union have urged suspension of sanctions against countries, including Iran, in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic.

Dane Rowlands, a professor at Carleton University, has said it is “regrettable” that the United States is refusing to ease sanctions on Iran while the country is fighting the deadly virus.

“The United States can reduce restrictions and facilitate

Iran's access to medicine, however, the government of the United States does not prioritize this issue which is regrettable,” Rowlands told ILNA in an interview published on April 6.

He noted that innocent people are losing their lives in Iran due to lack of access to medicine resulting from U.S. sanctions.

On March 31, a UN human rights expert called for lifting international sanctions against countries ranging from Iran to North Korea and Venezuela in coronavirus crisis, according to Reuters.

“The continued imposition of crippling economic sanctions on Syria, Venezuela, Iran, Cuba, and, to a lesser degree, Zimbabwe, to name the most prominent instances, severely undermines the ordinary citizens' fundamental right to sufficient and adequate food,” Hilal Elver, UN special rapporteur on the right to food, said in a statement.

Elver, an independent expert, said that it was a matter of “humanitarian and practical urgency to lift unilateral economic sanctions immediately”.

In a letter to the G-20 economic powers on March 24, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called for rolling back international sanctions regimes around the world.

Guterres said sanctions are heightening the health risks for millions of people and weakening the global effort to contain the spread of the new coronavirus, Foreign Policy reported.

“I am encouraging the waiving of sanctions imposed on countries to ensure access to food, essential health supplies, and COVID-19 medical support. This is the time for solidarity, not exclusion,” he said.

“Let us remember that we are only as strong as the weakest health system in our interconnected world,” the UN chief said.

Michelle Bachelet, the UN high commissioner for human rights, also said on March 24 that “in a context of global pandemic, impeding medical efforts in one country heightens the risk for all of us.”

“At this crucial time, both for global public health reasons, and to support the rights and lives of millions of people in these countries, sectoral sanctions should be eased or suspended,” she said in a statement.

Armed Forces won't let adventurers make mistake: Gen. Bagheri

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian **d e s k** Armed Forces will not let the adventurers make any mistake against the Islamic Republic, says Armed Forces Chief of Staff Major General Mohammad Bagheri.

In a message to Army Chief Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi on the occasion of Army Day on Friday, General Bagheri described Army Day as a turning point in the Army forces' defending of Iran's independence and territorial integrity.

On Thursday, Bagheri also said the Army has spared no efforts to protect people's health amid the battle against the coronavirus pandemic.

In a meeting with General Mousavi, he praised the country's Armed Forces for working sincerely on the front line against coronavirus, saying, "The Army has spared no efforts to protect people's health and sanitation."

■ Salami hails Army's efforts

Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Major General Hossein Salami also on Thursday lauded efforts made by the Army to enhance the country's military might and deterrence power.

In a message, General Salami congratulated the Iranian nation and the Armed Forces on the National Army Day, saying despite the enemy's ongoing hostilities, the Army and the IRGC will not hesitate for a second to boost deterrence power and military strength.

He said the Army, in unity and cooperation with other branches of the Armed



Forces, the IRGC in particular, has played a major role in safeguarding Iran's independence and territorial integrity and countering enemies' threats.

■ Army stands by people facing outbreak: Judiciary chief

Also, Judiciary Chief Ebrahim Raisi said on Thursday that the Army stands by people and helps them resolve their problems in the fight against coronavirus outbreak.

"The Army and Armed Forces of the country stand by the people and take

effective steps in solving their problems," Raisi stated.

Unlike armies of other countries including the U.S. Army in Iraq and Afghanistan and other regions, which kill innocent people, the Iranian Army and Armed Forces are standing by their people, especially in the current situation that the country is grappling with the novel coronavirus, he explained.

Raisi pointed to the vast measures taken by the Army in the fight against coronavirus

in Iran, emphasizing that "from the beginning of the outbreak of coronavirus in the country, Iran's Army set up convalescent centers and mobile hospitals and offered quality medical and treatment services to the corona-hit people."

■ Zarif pays tribute to Army personnel for sacrifices

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif also offered his congratulations to the Army commanders and forces.

In a message on Thursday night, Zarif paid tribute to the selfless sacrifices of the Army's personnel in the way of elevating Iran's name, protecting the country's security, and their recent unrelenting efforts to improve the health of Iranian people in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic.

Army Day was included in the Iranian calendar after a historic letter from the founder of the Islamic Republic Imam Khomeini in April 1979, in which he voiced strong support for the Army and ordered Army troops to hold massive parades across the country on April 18 every year to express their combat readiness.

The historic decision by Imam Khomeini came after hostile propaganda for undermining the Army after its successful missions in quelling riots and separatist moves.

This year, Iran has marked its annual National Army Day by replacing usual parades with a COVID-19 aid march of military vehicles designed and packed with supplies to help assist the country's battle with the coronavirus.

Zarif reminds Yankees to go home

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Foreign Minister Mohammad **d e s k** Javad Zarif has reminded Washington that by its presence in the Persian Gulf, the U.S. Navy is 7,000 miles away from home.

A U.S. Navy statement published on Wednesday claimed that 11 Iranian Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) boats had closed in on up to six U.S. naval vessels in the Persian Gulf "in dangerous and harassing approaches".

The statement also said the incident took place in the "northern Arabian Gulf", a historically flawed and provocative expression commonly adopted by anti-Iran groups instead of "Persian Gulf" term.

In response, Zarif mentioned a 2-year-old tweet of himself which read, "US Navy can't seem to find its way around our waters. Perhaps because it hasn't figured out its name: Persian Gulf, as it's been called for 2,000 yrs longer than US has existed."

"Or maybe it doesn't know what it's doing in our backyard, 7,000 miles from home," Zarif's tweet added.

At the time, Zarif's tweet came shortly after chief spokesman for U.S. Central Command William Urban used the fabricated term "Arabian Gulf" during an interview with the CNN.

Iran has designated April 30 as National Persian Gulf

Day to highlight the fact that the waterway has been referred to by historians and ancient texts as "Persian" since the Achaemenid Empire was established in what is now modern day Iran.

Late last month, the IRGC issue a statement warning that the "slightest mistake" against Iran in any part of the country by the "evil and adventurous enemies" will be their last mistake.

"The decisive and destructive response of the Islamic Revolution Front will be unbelievable and even will not give them the opportunity of expressing regret," the IRGC stated on the anniversary of the Islamic Republic Day.

Trump 'could not have been more wrong' on coronavirus: analyst

‘Iran has done a relatively better job containing the crisis even in the face of scant medical resources, because of sanctions’

1→ Are these things the consequences of capitalism in which a very small percentage, or better say "one percent", keeps everything in its possession.

A: Every time there has been an economic recession in the past 20 to 30 years wealth has shifted to top five to ten percent of the U.S. population, and the gap between the 1 percent and all the rest is larger than it ever has been at least since the start of the Depression in the early 1930s. Capitalism under the "Neo-liberal" definition or practice of it has for the most part been a failure, as we are witnessing in the U.S. right now.

■ Don't you think that the weaknesses of capitalism are being laid bare more evidently in such situations?

A: Yes, and a socialist system seems at present to be the only way out of this economic mess for now, but it appears so far that most of the largesse from the creation of yet more trillions in "money" by the Federal Reserve Bank in the U.S. has once again been mostly directed to cover losses by the rich and Wall Street. Something is very wrong when the stock market goes up after recent market losses at the same time that unemployment rockets higher like never before. Average citizens have been offered a mere \$1200 as a one-time emergency payment when what is needed is vastly more for the American people. The risk of a serious fracture if not breakdown of American society has never been greater. A country that maintains over 800 military bases across the world and spends almost a trillion dollars on military appropriations and

“It appears so far that most of the largesse from the creation of yet more trillions in ‘money’ by the Federal Reserve Bank in the U.S. has once again been mostly directed to cover losses by the rich and Wall Street.”

Parliamentary body rejects fake coronavirus tolls reported by foreign media

TEHRAN (Press TV) — The Iranian Parliament Research Center has rejected the tolls from the coronavirus outbreak in Iran that certain foreign media outlets have reported, referencing a report by the body.

"The figures offered by foreign media about coronavirus cases and casualties [in Iran] are wrong and invalid, and are in no way confirmed by the Parliament's Research Center," said Mohammad Qassemi, the caretaker director of the center, on Thursday.

He said foreign media outlets had distorted the figures presented in a recent report by the center.

The center's data, he said, in no way challenged the fig-

ures released by Iran's National Headquarters to Fight the Coronavirus, and merely examined the sensitivity of the Reverse Transcription-Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT-PCR) diagnostic test for the coronavirus, which is the case in all the countries dealing with the virus.

The center's report explicitly states that the National Headquarters to Fight the Coronavirus is the sole reference for the publication of coronavirus-related statistics and that the main criterion is the people whose test results have come out a definitive positive, Qassemi said.

Several foreign media outlets had misreported the figures presented by the center. In one report, the Associated

A country that maintains over 800 military bases across the world and spends almost a trillion dollars on military appropriations and cannot even provide a reasonable and inexpensive health care system that meets the needs of most Americans is insane.

Press had claimed that the center had said the number of coronavirus deaths in Iran may be as high as 8,500 and the country may have as many as 760,000 cases.

Foreign outlets have been reporting fake news about Iran since the epidemic started in the country.

In an article on March 12, The Washington Post wrongly claimed that Iran was digging "vast" burial pits at the Behesht-e Masoumeh Cemetery in Qom for coronavirus victims.

Iran has so far reported 77,995 infections and 4,869 deaths. Over 52,229 people have also recovered, according to the latest updates released by the Iranian Health Ministry on Thursday.

might be the "Spanish flu" that wreaked havoc at the end of World War 1. Some countries have managed the crises better than others, and most are managing their own crises better than the U.S. is currently doing.

■ What is your assessment of the handling of the virus by the Trump administration?

A: The Trump Administration has been a failure so far in handling the crisis.

■ It seems that East Asian countries, such as Japan and South Korea, have been acting more successfully in containing the virus than the U.S. and European countries. What are the reasons?

A: This is quite true so far. Overall, the reason for it is that the U.S. has been preoccupied with maintaining its "empire" and even its equity markets and has not addressed the needs of most Americans. Some 80 percent of the U.S. population have not benefitted by the record equity valuations engineered by Wall Street and the Federal Reserve, because they don't own stocks. The notion of "trickle down" economics has been, if anything, a false concept since it was first instituted by the Reagan Administration back in the 1980s.

■ How do you see the post-Coronavirus world?

A: This is a tough question. Huge changes are going to occur by necessity in many countries, and one would say especially, in time, in the U.S. — if the U.S. wants to maintain any kind of leadership in the world and any kind of decent standard of living for most of its citizens.

The Onion: Pompeo warns Iran stockpiling tubes to build ventilator

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — U.S. Secretary of State Mike **d e s k** Pompeo has reportedly warned that he strongly suspected Iran of stockpiling tubes to build a ventilator, while declaring that the coronavirus pandemic should not affect America's headline stance against the Islamic Republic.



Of course, it was The Onion — a satirical news website — that put those words into Pompeo's mouth in an article published on Tuesday. But the resemblance of the words to the "concerns" raised over Iran's nuclear program is uncanny.

The Onion continues to quote Pompeo, an unabashed Iran hawk, as saying, "Iran has repeatedly ignored our messages to refrain from building up a medical arsenal, and new intelligence shows that the regime could have a fully functional ventilator up and running in as little as a few weeks."

He, according to The Onion, added that satellite images taken by U.S. spy planes appeared to show Iranian scientists assembling a cache of medical-grade valves.

"There are also credible reports that Iran has acquired high-grade extension cords, and the regime refuses to deny that these cables could be used to power ventilators. This is clearly an effort to undermine American influence in the region, and one that could save thousands of Iranian lives."

"If we fail to act now, Iran will have a fully operational ventilator, which will not only strengthen their medical capacity but could produce a domino effect where they funnel tubes, valves, and knobs to other U.S. adversaries. A ventilator-capable Iran portends a dangerous new era for the world, which is why I call on President Trump to increase sanctions, and, if necessary, explore military action."

According to the article, Pompeo added that the U.S. would only be willing to negotiate if Iranian officials turned over their entire supply of tubes to the UN.

The satire didn't end with the article itself. On Twitter, users piled on, posting memes and comments to further highlight the similarity between the story and the hype surrounding Iran's nuclear program.

"Likely will be reported as real news on FOX," Twitter user @BuffyWebster10 replied to the article.

"Tubes are dual-purpose technology: they can be used in the washrooms of uranium enrichment centers," reacted another user, @ajdemarang.

@lgfocus said, "The Onion has a hard time keeping up with the comedy that is almost anything that comes out of the mouths of USA government officials and its sycophant media. But this is a good one."

Another user, @GelOrangeVEVO, voiced similar sentiments: "i thought this was real until i saw who posted. the theory that the onion writers write for reality grows more credible each day."

"This wouldn't be an issue if we still had the tubular deal," wrote @DradeusKedi, mocking the U.S. Democrats, who have strongly criticized the Trump administration for walking away from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which was clinched under former President Barack Obama.

Iran mulls over producing nuclear-powered submarines: Navy chief

TEHRAN (Press TV) — Iran's Navy commander says the force plans to build nuclear-powered submarines capable of operating in international waters for long periods of time amid the growing threats facing the country from the sea.



Rear Admiral Hossein Khanzadi on Thursday highlighted the capabilities of submarines powered by nuclear reactors compared to the conventional models, saying nuclear propulsion enables the watercraft to stay at high seas for months and rids it of the need for frequent refueling.

He said the plan is in line with the country's defensive agenda, adding that many countries, including the U.S., are using nuclear-powered submarines.

"It would be negligence on the part of Iran if it fails to consider using submarines with nuclear propulsion," he said. "Therefore, we are thinking about its."

"This domestic capability exists at the Defense Ministry regarding the production of submarines larger than Fateh and certainly, the developing of submarine propulsion is on the Navy's agenda," he added.

Fateh (Conqueror) is an Iranian designed class of semi-heavy submarines that can operate for five weeks at a submerged depth of 200 meters.

The near 600-tonne vessel is equipped with torpedoes and naval mines in addition to cruise missiles.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Khanzadi stressed that Iran's stance on the nuclear energy is clear and that Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has on many occasions highlighted the peaceful nature of the country's nuclear activities.

China’s first-quarter GDP shrinks for first time on record

China’s economy shrank in the March quarter for the first time since current records began almost three decades ago, as the coronavirus shut down factories and shopping malls and put millions out of work.

Gross domestic product (GDP) fell 6.8% in January-March year-on-year, official data showed on Friday, a slightly larger decline than the 6.5% forecast by analysts and reversing a 6% expansion in the fourth quarter of 2019.

It was the first contraction in the world’s second-largest economy since at least 1992 when official quarterly GDP records started.



Providing a silver lining was a much smaller-than-expected fall in factory production in March, suggesting tax and credit relief for virus-hit firms was helping restart parts of the economy shut down since February.

However, analysts say Beijing faces an uphill battle to revive growth and stop massive job losses as the global spread of the virus devastates demand from major trading partners and as local consumption slumps.

“First-quarter GDP data is still largely within expectations, reflecting the toll from the economic standstill when the whole society was on lockdown,” said Lu Zhengwei, Shanghai-based chief economist at Industrial Bank.

“Over the next phase, the lack of overall demand is of concern. Domestic demand has not fully recovered as consumption related to social gatherings is still banned while external demand is likely to be hammered as pandemic spreads.”

On a quarter-on-quarter basis, GDP fell 9.8% in the first three months of the year, the National Bureau of Statistics said, just off expectations for a 9.9% contraction, and compared with 1.5% growth in the previous quarter.

Statistics bureau spokesman Mao Shengyong told a press briefing after the data that China’s economic performance in the second-quarter is expected to be much better than in the first.

However, weaker domestic consumption, which has been the biggest growth driver, remains a concern, as incomes slow and the rest of the world falls into recession.

Per capita disposable income, after adjusting for inflation, fell 3.9% from a year earlier in the first quarter, the data showed.

“We are hesitant to think that this is just a one quarter event, Q2 will also likely be lower than expectation,” said Ben Luk, senior multi asset strategist at State Street Global Markets in Hong Kong. “To offset weakness in external demand, we will see some policy support later this month or early May.”

Industrial output fell by a less-than-expected 1.1% in March from a year earlier. Highlighting the challenges in consumption, however, was a 15.8% fall in retail sales, which was larger than expected.

■ Pandemic impact

Economists’ forecasts for first-quarter GDP ranged widely given the many uncertainties around the pandemic’s economic and social impact in China.

The virus has infected more than 2 million globally and killed more than 140,000. China, where the virus first emerged, has reported more than 3,000 deaths although new infections have dropped significantly from their peak.

Of major concern for policymakers is social stability among its 1.4 billion citizens, millions of whom migrate from rural areas to cities to find work each year.

The urban jobless rate fell to 5.9% in March from 6.2% in February, suggesting the pain in the labor market is yet to be reflected in official numbers.

However, analysts warn of nearly 30 million job losses this year due to stuttering work resumptions and plunging global demand, outpacing the more than 20 million layoffs seen during the 2008-09 financial crisis.

■ Rescue package

China’s stability-obsessed leaders have pledged more steps to combat the slump but are mindful of the lessons learned in 2008-09 when massive stimulus saddled the economy with mountains of debt.

Last month, the ruling Communist Party’s Politburo said it was considering measures such as more local government special bonds and special treasury bonds.

“We expect Beijing to deliver a large stimulus package soon to combat the worst recession in decades, with most of the financing to be provided by the PBOC (People’s Bank of China),” Ting Lu, chief China economist at Nomura, said in a note.

The PBOC has already loosened monetary policy to help free up credit to the economy, but its easing so far has been less aggressive than during the global financial crisis.

The government will also lean on fiscal stimulus to spur infrastructure investment and consumption, which could push the 2020 budget deficit to a record high.

For 2020, China’s economic growth is expected to stumble to 2.5%, its slowest annual pace in nearly half a century, a Reuters poll showed this week.

(Source: Reuters)

Global stocks surge as investors look beyond dire GDP report from China

Global stocks and US futures rocketed higher on Friday despite data showing an unprecedented economic slowdown in China caused by the coronavirus and a mounting death toll from the pandemic in the United States.

Investors were focusing instead on signs that industrial giants are reviving production, along with a report of early success in the trial of a potential treatment for the virus.

Japan’s Nikkei (N225) and South Korea’s Kospi (KOSPI) each gained more than 3% as investors brushed off the official Chinese data revealing that the world’s second largest economy contracted by 6.8% in the first three months of the year. Hong Kong’s Hang Seng Index (HSI) added 1.5% and the Shanghai Composite (SHCOMP) rose 0.7%.

The plunge is the worst for a single quarter that China has recorded since it started publishing such figures in 1992. It’s also the first time China’s economy has shrunk since 1976, when Communist Party leader Mao Zedong’s death ended a decade of social and economic tumult.

European markets opened sharply higher, with the FTSE 100 (UKX) increasing 2.4% in London. France’s CAC 40 (CAC40) and Germany’s DAX (DAX) each gained nearly 3%.

(Source: CNN Business)

Indian wheat for Afghanistan arrives in Iran’s Chabahar port

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — A **d e s k** 75,000-metric-ton consignment of Indian wheat heading for Afghanistan has arrived at Iran’s southeastern port of Chabahar to be delivered to the destination country through land borders.

According to the Director-General of Ports and Maritime Department of Sistan-Baluchestan Province Behrouz Aqaei, the Indian government has sent the mentioned cargo aiming to support its trade partner during the coronavirus pandemic, the portal of Iran’s Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) published.

The consignment is comprised of 203 20-metric-feet containers that have been shipped from Kandla Port in eastern India.

As reported, Afghanistan’s Ambassador to Tehran Abdul Ghafoor Liwal, who visited Chabahar port concurrent with the arrival of the Indian shipment, voiced his country’s gratitude for both Iran and India and expressed hope that the shipment would be transferred to his country as soon as possible.

In 2016, Iran, India, and Afghanistan decided to jointly establish a trade route for land-locked Central Asian countries.

India sent its first consignment of wheat

List of products subjected to zero tariff in trade with EAEU announced



ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran’s **d e s k** Deputy Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Hamid Zadboum on Thursday said the list of products subjected to zero tariff in trade with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) has been announced, Mehr News Agency reported.

“The list mainly includes agricultural, pharmaceutical and foodstuff products,” Zadboum stressed.

According to the official, the Eurasian Economic Committee approved a list of essential import products to the union to minimize the negative economic impacts of the coronavirus outbreak and to prevent the shortage of such goods in the union.

Based on the EAEU decisions, the mentioned commodities will be subject to the preferential tariff, exempted from customs duties, as of 1st of April to June 30, 2020, Zadboum emphasized.

Zadboum, who is also the head of Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPO), further noted that zero-tariff goods for exports to Eurasia include some agricultural and food products (potatoes, onions, garlic, cabbage, carrots, peppers, rye, rice, buckwheat, fruit juice, and baby formula) and some pharmaceutical products and medical supplies (endoscope, contactless

thermometers, and disposable medical pipettes).

The import of these goods has been declared ‘essential’ due to the increased demand or short-term shortages caused by the current situation of the pandemic in EAEU member states, he added.

Iran and Eurasian Economic Union reached a free trade agreement in October 2018 based on which about 862 commodity items were subjected to preferential tariffs.

The interim agreement enabling the formation of a free trade area between Iran and the EAEU was signed on May 17, 2018, and officially came into force on October 27, 2019.

Iran is a very important market in the region and the development of ties with this country is of high significance for the EAEU members (Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan).

The free trade agreement between Iran and this union has laid the ground for the expansion of trade ties between the two sides.

The agreement with the bloc has increased Iran’s exports to the EAEU member states significantly, which is a turning point for the Islamic Republic plans for boosting non-oil exports during the U.S. sanctions.

Promoting exports of knowledge-based products is a priority: industry min.

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iranian **d e s k** Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister says the promotion and support of knowledge-based products as well as products with greater value added is the ministry’s priority in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 20). Tasnim reported on Friday.

According to Reza Rahmani, despite the coronavirus pandemic, the country’s major production units, especially in the field of basic goods and healthcare products, were completely active and this could be an opportunity to increase the country’s non-oil exports when the outbreak is over.

Mentioning the rise in the country’s non-oil exports in the recent years, Rahmani noted that in the previous calendar year, which was named the year of “pick up in production” by the Leader, despite the limitations and restrictions imposed by the U.S. sanctions, the country’s non-oil exports witnessed a significant increase.

“The volume of the country’s non-oil exports reached 169 million tons last year, 14 percent more than its preceding year,” the official said.

He went on underlining the great potentials of the country’s production sector,



saying: “The record-breaking non-oil exports, the increase in the country’s trade volume to \$85 billion, the increase in the production of more than two-thirds of strategic commodity groups last year and the multiplication of the production of healthcare products in just one month is an indication of the country’s huge production and trade capabilities.”

Elsewhere in his remarks, the minister pointed to the current year which has been named “Surge in Production” by the Leader and noted that the industry ministry is assessing the previous year’s problems and challenges to come up with a more comprehensive plan to promote non-oil production and exports in the current year.



Iran has seen a nearly two-fold increase in its exports of sponge iron, a raw material mixed with scrap metal to produce steel, despite a 10-percent tariff imposed on the shipments last year.

A report by the Iranian Steel Producers Association (ISPA) shows that exports of sponge

Sponge iron exports up 86% in 11 months on year

iron had surged in the 11-month period ending late February by some 86 percent.

The figures showed that iron mills across Iran had shipped a total 942,000 metric tons of sponge iron over the period, a significant increase compared to the similar period spanning 2018-2019.

Sponge iron exports in the previous calendar year had declined year on year by 25 percent, said the report.

The rising exports of the raw material comes despite a government move in September to



to Afghanistan through Iran’s Chabahar Port back in 2017.

Later on, in February 2019, the Afghanistan-Iran-India trade corridor for the trade between the two countries through Chabahar Port was officially inaugurated.

India which initially committed up to \$500 million for the development of Chabahar Port along with associated roads and rail lines, doubled the allocated funding for the development of the port in its national budget bill for 2020.

TEDPIX gains 8% in a week



ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — TEDPIX, **d e s k** the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), climbed 48,668 points, or eight percent, during the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday), IRNA reported.

The index closed at 645,762 at the end of the week, while the indices of Bank Mellat, Tejarat Bank, and Mobarakeh Steel Company mostly contribute to the rise of TEDPIX.

Past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19) witnessed a very fruitful performance for the country’s stock market.

As TSE Head Ali Sahraei has announced, the value of trades at the Tehran Stock Exchange jumped 2.6 folds, while Return on Investment (ROI) reached 180 percent in the previous year.

TSE is one of the four major stock exchanges of Iran, the other three exchanges are Iran’s over-the-counter (OTC) market known as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME), and Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX). The lucrative status was also witnessed in these markets in the past year.

While growth and development in the Iranian stock market have been started in recent years, the previous year was in fact a time of flourishing for the country’s

stock exchanges.

Different factors contributed to the past year’s prominent success in the stock market.

One important factor was proper ground laid in the stock market and providing better conditions for traders.

The other factor was the status of parallel markets, such as those of foreign currency, gold coin, and housing in the past year that made making investment in the stock market an obviously better and more profitable choice for the investors.

And on Wednesday, Iran’s stock market held its largest-ever IPO.

Social Security Investment Company (SSIC, also known by its Persian acronym Shasta), Iran’s major state-owned investment company, offered eight billion shares, which account for 10 percent of its stakes, for sales at the Tehran Stock Exchange.

Each institutional or individual trader could buy a maximum of 10,000 shares, by placing an order through the book-building method, according to a notice published on the TSE website.

Shasta is the investment arm of the Social Security Organization, which provides healthcare entitlement and pension benefits for a large proportion of Iran’s middle and working-class members of the labor force.

Govt. will finalize export support package by late June

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Head of **d e s k** Iran’s Trade Promotion Organization Hamid Zadboum said the government is going to finalize and offer this year’s export incentive package by the end of the Q1 of the current Iranian calendar year (June 21).

According to the official, the current year’s export support package which is considered in the country’s budget plan is set to include a primary credit of six trillion rials (about \$143 million).

National Development Fund (NDF), the Planning and Budget Organization (PBO), the Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry, the Economy Ministry and the Agriculture Ministry have been tasked with drafting the support package which is expected to be spent on improving export infrastructure, according to Zadboum.

“The first panel for developing this package will be held next week with the participation of the relevant organizations and agencies,” he said.

Given the special circumstances of this year in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak, major problems in the way of non-oil exports will be identified and export infrastructure will be improved

at borders, ports, and centers in order to keep the exports afloat, he added.

According to the official, the Industry Ministry has defined five major projects for the promotion of the country’s non-oil exports.

TPO is in charge of the three of the mentioned projects while the Iran National Carpet Center and the Export Guarantee Fund of Iran (EGFI) are each contributing to one project.

To expand non-oil exports during the sanctions time, Iranian economic and trade organizations have been defining some strategies and resolved to pursue them vigorously.

The major strategy is to focus on the neighboring countries and the trade partners in the region, and it is, in fact, one of the top priorities of the government for defying the U.S. sanctions.

TPO had previously announced that the organization plans to dispatch at least 10 commercial attachés to 10 major export destinations of the country in the current Iranian calendar year (began on March 20) as part of its programs for promoting non-oil exports in the current year.

Iran is only second to India globally in terms of the volume of sponge iron production. The country is the 10th largest steel producer in the world.

Sponge iron production in Iran is expected to increase by two million tons this year with the opening of a large mill in the southern province of Kerman.

That comes after three medium-sized mills with an annual capacity of 800,000 tons apiece were launched in the country last year.

(Source: Press TV)

Iran's nominal electricity generation capacity reaches 85.5GW

ENERGY **TEHRAN** – The nominal capacity of electricity generation at Iranian power plants has reached 85,500 megawatts [85.5 gigawatts (GW)] following the completion of the development of Parand thermal power plant, IRNA reported on Thursday.

Speaking in the inauguration ceremony of the said project, the Iranian Deputy Energy Minister Homayoun Haeri noted that with the addition of three 160 MW steam units to the Parand power plant (near the capital Tehran), 480 MW has been added to its total electricity generation capacity.

He put the mentioned power plant's total power generation capacity at 1,503 MW.

"The addition of these three units saves the country 850 million cubic meters of natural gas annually because instead of fuel consumption, hot steam from the gas turbine outlets is used in the steam units," Haeri added.



Iran's total power generation capacity stood at about 83,350 MW at the end of the past Iranian calendar year 1398 (March 19), up from the 80,000 MW of its preceding year.

Currently, combined cycle power plants account for the biggest share in the country's total power generation capacity followed by gas power plants.

Earlier this week, Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian announced that the ministry plans to inaugurate 12 thermal power plants with a total capacity of 2,100 MW as well as hundreds of solar and wind farms and other small scale power stations.

According to the minister, following a program called "A-B-Iran", the Iranian Energy Ministry is going to inaugurate 250 major water and electricity projects worth 500 trillion rials (about \$11.9 billion) during the current calendar year (ends on March 20, 2021).

Coronavirus not to interrupt South Pars development projects: POGC



ENERGY **TEHRAN** – Managing director of Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC), which is in charge of developing Iran's giant South Pars gas field, says the coronavirus pandemic is not going to interfere with the field's development projects, Shana reported.

Mohammad Meshkinfam made the remarks in a visit to the Assalouyeh and Kangan onshore operational sites in the southwestern Bushehr Province.

The official noted that the operations in the South Pars projects have been started since April 11, in full compliance with safety and healthcare standards.

"The coronavirus outbreak should not interrupt the progress in any of the South Pars development projects," he stressed.

Meshkinfam stressed the need for managing the operations so that simultaneously prevent the spread of COVID-19 and continue the project operations.

"In this regard, we have reduced the number of workers and staff in less sensitive projects," he added.

As one of the world's biggest gas reserves, South Pars gas field covers an area of 9,700 square kilometers, 3,700 square kilometers of which, called South Pars, are in Iran's territorial waters. The remaining 6,000 square kilometers, called North Dome, are situated in Qatar's territorial waters.

The field is estimated to contain a significant amount of natural gas, accounting for about eight percent of the world's reserves, and approximately 18 billion barrels of condensate.

South Pars is divided into 24 standard phases of development in the first stage. All of the phases except for the phase 11 are operational at the moment.

OPEC sees demand for its crude dropping to lowest in 30 years



OPEC expects demand for its crude will fall to the lowest in three decades as the coronavirus outbreak freezes the global economy, underscoring the urgency of its promised production cuts.

Just under 20 million barrels a day will be needed on average from the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries in the second quarter, according to a monthly report from the group. It hasn't pumped this little crude since early 1989.

OPEC and its allies agreed massive production cuts amounting to 10% of global supplies over the weekend, as governments extend lockdowns to contain the pandemic, emptying out roads, drastically reducing flights, and bringing many economic activities to a halt.

The report released Thursday from the cartel's secretariat in Vienna illustrates why they'll need to deliver the pledged reductions in full.

Even if OPEC members fully implement their share of the agreed cutbacks – a fragile assumption, given that many tend to cheat – they'd still be producing more than the market requires in the second quarter.

With perfect compliance, the 13 nations would be pumping about 23.4 million barrels a day, or roughly 3.7 million more than the "call on OPEC."

Things could be even tougher for the organization than it's forecasting.

While the group slashed forecasts for global oil demand this year, their estimates are still considerably more optimistic than those of the International Energy Agency, the institution that advises consuming nations.

OPEC sees world oil demand contracting by 6.8 million barrels a day in 2020, while the Paris-based IEA on Wednesday projected a slump of just over 9 million barrels a day.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Oil falls as Chinese economy outweighs Trump plan to ease lockdown

Oil prices fell on Friday, giving up early gains as China's worst economic contraction on record outweighed news of U.S. President Donald Trump's plans to get the American economy moving again.

Brent was down by 10 cents, or 0.4 percent, at \$27.72 a barrel by 0815 GMT while U.S. crude for May delivery tumbled by \$1.54, or 7.8 percent, to \$18.33. The more active June contract was down 3 cents, or 0.1 percent, at \$25.50.

The extent of the U.S. decline was attributable to the imminent expiry of the May contract, on April 21, and fast-filling crude storage. The more active June contract for U.S. crude was down only 3 cents, or 0.1 percent, at \$25.50.

"The market knows that U.S. crude stocks will fill very rapidly ... as refinery runs continue to be cut tremendously," said Bjornar Tonhaugen, head of oil markets at Rystad Energy.

The hobbling of China's economy, meanwhile, was highlighted by data showing that GDP shrank 6.8 percent

year on year in the first three months of this year, the first such decline since quarterly records began in 1992.

That data was released after President Trump laid out a three-step process for ending U.S. lockdowns.

"The enthusiasm about U.S. President Trump's intention to end the country's lockdown seems to be dying down as traders realize that a full return of the economy will not come overnight," Tonhaugen said.

Brent rose more than \$1 earlier in the session, also boosted by a report detailing encouraging partial data from trials of U.S. company Gilead Sciences' experimental drug remdesivir in severe COVID-19 patients.

Both oil benchmarks are heading for a second consecutive week of losses, with U.S. oil prices around 18-year lows.

China's daily crude oil throughput in March sank to a 15-month low, with state refiners maintaining deep output cuts, but there are some signs of recovery as the country begins to ease coronavirus containment measures.

"If more of the global economy enacts plans to reopen and restores some sense of normality, that could help oil prices find a firmer floor in May, aided by the OPEC+ supply cuts kicking in," said Han Tan, market analyst at FXTM.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and producers including Russia, a grouping known as OPEC+, last weekend agreed on production cuts of nearly 10 million bpd, after an earlier oil supply pact collapsed.

ConocoPhillips on Thursday said that it will reduce planned North American output by 225,000 bpd, the largest cut so far by a major shale oil producer to deal with the unprecedented drop in demand.

"This highlights that the market will see meaningful cuts from outside the OPEC+ group without the need for mandated cuts," ING bank said in a note on Friday.

"Instead, market forces will do the job, with the low-price environment forcing producers to cut back."

(Source: Reuters)

Saudi Arabia, Russia hint at further action to stem oil's plunge

with OPEC+ and other producers if these are deemed necessary," Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak and his Saudi counterpart Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman said in a joint statement published after a phone call.

Oil has plunged more than 10% since the group on Sunday agreed to trim worldwide production by an unprecedented 9.7 million barrels a day. Yet even the historic cuts won't be able to offset the demand loss expected from the coronavirus pandemic. OPEC on Thursday said it projects that demand for the cartel's crude will fall to the lowest in three decades.

The joint statement echoes earlier comments by Saudi Arabia's bin Salman, who has said that his country is ready to cut oil production further if needed when the OPEC+ alliance meets again in June. "Flexibility and pragmatism will enable us to continue to do more if we have to," he said on Sunday.

Even if OPEC members fully implement their share of the agreed cutbacks, they'd still be producing more than the market requires in the second quarter, according to the group's own estimates.

West Texas Intermediate oil futures closed below \$20 a barrel on Wednesday for the

first time since 2002. The oil price crash has been particularly painful for Russia. The nation's coffers will get less than \$1 for each exported barrel of oil, according to Bloomberg calculations based on the data from the Russian Finance Ministry.

OPEC+ came to an agreement on the cuts after four days of contentious meetings that included a walkout by Mexico and intervention by U.S. President Donald Trump. In addition to the OPEC+ cuts, other major oil producers including the U.S., Canada and Brazil pledged that their own output would fall through market-based forces.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Wind turbine factories struggle to get parts in virus lockdown

Wind turbine makers are finding it increasingly difficult to get the parts they need to build their machines, snarling progress on a global shift toward renewables at precisely the time scientists say it needs to speed up.

Manufacturers including Vestas Wind Systems A/S and Siemens Gamesa Renewable Energy SA are wrestling with their own factory shutdowns and disruptions to suppliers after lockdowns related to the coronavirus spread worldwide. Delays at major ports, airports and border crossings have snagged deliveries of raw materials including steel and components from turbine blades to ball bearings. That will hamper completion of wind farms this year and next.

It's also a blow to efforts to slash greenhouse gas emissions close to zero by the middle of the century, a deadline that the International Renewable Energy Agency says requires a rapid deployment of wind and solar technology.

"These delays are important," said Phil Taylor professor of energy systems at Newcastle University in northern England. "We need to make great strides in decarbonization as early as possible to keep the total emissions during the transition period as low as possible."

Slowing down

In order to hit ambitious targets

like the European Union's aim to have net-zero emissions by 2050, wind power must generate some 6,000 gigawatts of electricity -- over 10 times the current level, according to the International Renewable Energy Agency, which is based in Abu Dhabi. It's that or pray for breakthroughs in so-far impossible-to-scale carbon capture technology in cloudy places where solar is not an option.

Building wind turbines -- power generation units that range in size from small backyard models to giants as big as New York's Chrysler building -- rests on a complex network of raw material and component suppliers. Rotor blades, bearings, gearboxes, controls and generators are made up of around 8,000 parts that go into a typical utility-scale wind turbine, according to the U.S. department of energy. Supply chains can often stretch across several continents and include rare earth elements shipped from Asia and high-tech components from Europe.

Going green

Lockdowns designed to slow coronavirus as it spreads through the world's leading industrial powers are rippling through those intricate supply chains, with disruption worsening as the virus hops from country to country, forcing governments to act.

Among a wave of shutdowns: TPI Composites Inc., a maker of turbine blades, last week said it slashed by 50% production at its plant in Izmir, Turkey. It's operating with just a skeleton staff in India, and both countries introduced restrictions on the movement of people. Navantia, a Spanish manufacturer of offshore wind components like protective jackets for nacelles and floating bases, said its factories will remain closed until the emergency lifts.

Those disruptions and others like them are hitting the biggest manufacturers. Siemens Gamesa said it's had to close factories in Spain and India, adding production in the U.S. was disrupted due to a lack of parts. Vestas said its factories in India and Brazil were closed due to parts shortages. That's starting to hamper maintenance and operation of wind farms, Vattenfall AB wind energy chief Gunnar Groebler told the industry journal Recharge news.

Delivery delays caused by the virus shutdowns have put up to 25 gigawatts of U.S. wind farm projects at risk, said John Hensley, vice president of research at the Washington-based American Wind Energy Association.

General Electric Co. had some hiccups with its supply chain in China early on and has worked to contain them, said Jérôme Pécresse, CEO of the renewable energy unit.

"We are monitoring closely the Covid-19 situation," Pécresse said on a March 4 conference call. "We continue the positive recovery of our supply chain in China."

Delivery delays caused by the virus shutdowns have put up to 25 gigawatts of U.S. wind farm projects at risk, said John Hensley, vice president of research at the Washington-based American Wind Energy Association.

"Major delays could cause economic damage," Hensley said on a conference call Thursday.

In China, lockdowns are exacerbating a shortage of ball bearings that help machine-parts move and balsa wood used in turbine blades, according to Leo Wang, analyst at BloombergNEF. Ecuador, exporter of 90% of the world's balsa wood, on March 15 issued a ban on ships and airplanes landing in its territory as authorities grapple with one of South America's deadliest Coronavirus outbreaks.

Plunges in the Australian dollar due to the outbreak are raising costs of imported parts, consultancy Rystad Energy said, casting doubt on whether projects will finish this year. The Australian dollar is viewed as a proxy for risk sentiment and China's economic outlook, both of which are dampened by the crisis.

Most wind and solar projects will experience delays even with construction going ahead and factories remaining open in most countries, according to BloombergNEF. While most governments have not mandated the shutdown of construction or factories, other issues present challenges. Labor shortages due to travel restrictions, slowdowns in permit issuance, financing difficulties and other supply chain shortages are stalling projects. In addition, auctions have been postponed in many countries, and the commissioning deadlines of winners from the previous rounds are being extended. On the operations side, restrictions on travel make it hard to get teams on site. Source: BloombergNEF

In Japan, developers have had difficulties holding meetings to explain their projects to local residents, which may delay the process of getting local approvals, according to the Japan Wind Power Association.

Firms are fighting to keep production moving. Belgian dredging firm DEME -- which clears debris from the sea bed to make way for turbine bases -- will pre-quarantine staff on a hotel boat for two weeks before deploying them to projects, a move designed to avoid costly shutdowns if the virus spreads among workers. Others are re-organizing supply lines and production floors to increase social distancing, but warn the measures entail of delays.

Wind industry executives hope they can make up some of the shortfall next year when restrictions lift and are calling for governments to lighten tax and regulatory burdens to help the process. The Scottish government has extended planning permission for wind projects by six months to help developers cope with delays.

But the moves won't be enough to slow wind construction in 2020. BloombergNEF, which had anticipated installations would grow 24% this year, now expect a more moderate 9% expansion.

"It will not be possible to make up the lost ground in wind energy installations in 2021," a spokesman for Wind Europe said.

(Source: Bloomberg)



Saudi Arabia and Russia signaled they may be open to further output cuts after the latest OPEC+ deal to curb global oil supplies failed to stem the crude's downward spiral.

The two nations said they will "continue to closely monitor the oil market and are prepared to take further measures jointly

Shell greenlights \$6.4b Australia natural gas project

Royal Dutch Shell said on Friday it had taken a final investment decision to develop the first phase of Australia's biggest coal seam gas resource in Queensland state.

The first phase of the A\$10 billion (\$6.4 billion) Surat Gas Project would bring as much as 90 billion cubic feet per year of new natural gas to market at peak production, Shell said in a statement.

The project is being developed by a Shell and PetroChina

joint venture called Arrow Energy. Construction will start this year and its first gas sales are expected in 2021.

The investment is a timely injection of cash for Australia's A\$2 trillion economy now on the verge of its first recession in three decades as businesses shut to fight the new coronavirus, throwing tens of thousands out of work.

Authorities are also eager to see the Surat project start up as Australia's southeastern states face gas shortages by

the mid-2020s.

Queensland Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk welcomed the decision, saying the biggest gas project the state has seen since 2011 would be a shot in the arm for its economy.

"The first phase will mean 200 jobs and we should see people out in the field around August, September this year," said Palaszczuk, who is facing an election within months.

(Source: Reuters)

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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 Thu. with regards to the cooperation of the two countries within the framework of OPEC Plus.

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Chronic health inequities weaken Blacks, putting them at higher risk amid COVID-19 outbreak in U.S.

1 → There are also reports from cities, including St. Louis and Nashville, that predominantly Black neighborhoods have been slow to receive testing sites and equipment compared to white, affluent areas. The stories you care about, right at your

"Black communities across the country are bearing the brunt of an inept federal response and unjust health care system."

COVID-19 is a perfect storm of systemic inequities operating together to worsen existing vulnerabilities. Widespread testing, for example, is still not happening, and tests are being rationed with only the sickest, often at death's door, being provided diagnostic tests to determine if they have the virus. Health care workers are doing heroic work under unimaginable conditions, but stories like that of Rana Mungin — a 30-year-old Black woman and Brooklyn teacher who was turned down three times before receiving a COVID-19 test and was in a coma, clinging for her life — is a warning sign of a system under stress and poised to reproduce known racial inequities in health care services.

With little to no race or ethnicity data being reported on who has been tested and a well-documented history of racial bias shaping health care decisions, a group of doctors and researchers called on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization to report these numbers for COVID-19 testing. Several Democratic leaders including Sen. Elizabeth Warren and Rep. Ayanna Pressley followed with a similar request to Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar. Biases are more likely to shape decisions under stressful situations, and with a system overwhelmed, such biases may enter the equation when health care workers have to make difficult decisions about who qualifies to be tested.

"Biases are more likely to shape decisions under stressful situations."

The same is true for determining who has access to other limited health care resources like ventilators. Recently, I awoke to a heartbreaking email from a public health colleague in a hard-hit state. He was seeking guidance on how to make equitable decisions on ventilators because current crisis standards of care, which are guidelines that state health departments use for these types of public health emergencies, will likely further disadvantage the already disadvantaged — including Black patients that have underlying health conditions that may worsen their prognosis for survival.

Physicians shouldn't be placed in these positions in a nation that has the resources to coordinate a rapid and equitable response



to the demands of this pandemic. Instead, the Trump administration has dragged its feet in using the Defense Production Act to ramp up production of badly needed ventilators and other medical supplies. All along the way, the president has failed as a leader by calling the COVID-19 threat a hoax, and criticizing requests for medical supplies and demanding praise in return for federal aid from Democratic governors in states hit hard by the virus.

Equity — not petty politics — should be the guiding principle in this emergency, and that means resources should be targeted to where they are needed most. Ventilators, for example, should be prioritized for distribution to known hotspots like New York City, New Orleans, Detroit and areas that will likely experience a surge in severe coronavirus cases because of chronic health inequities and under-resourced health care systems, common in the South.

"Current crisis standards of care will likely further disadvantage the already disadvantaged."

African Americans experience higher rates of diabetes, hypertension and respiratory illnesses associated with COVID-19 death not because Black people are inherently sicker, but because systemic racism has created the conditions for these health inequities to develop. Concentrated poverty, substandard housing, lack of health insurance, employment discrimination, poor water and air quality, and the day-to-day stress of living in a society that devalues our humanity all work together to chip away at our health.

Combine these health inequities with resistance among Republican governors to implement stay-at-home orders that public health experts have said are needed to slow the spread of the virus, and we have the conditions for COVID-19 to explode in the South, where close to 60 percent of all Black people in the U.S. live and where the

majority of states in the region have not expanded Medicaid. Alabama's GOP Gov. Kay Ivey, for example, in initially refusing to issue a stay-at-home order, stated that she didn't want to "choke" business, and proudly proclaimed the state was unlike Democratic-led Louisiana, New York and California, which have stay-at-home orders in place. Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina and Tennessee were also among holdout states that refused to promptly issue statewide shelter-in-place orders.

"We have the conditions for COVID-19 to explode in the South, where close to 60 percent of all Black people in the U.S. live."

Inept government leadership in this pandemic is costing lives, and the slow and uncoordinated federal response is having domino effects across the country. Those impacts will be deeper and greater for Black and Brown workers, many of whom are already struggling to make ends meet, have no health care coverage, and have jobs where they are expected to work while everyone else is sheltering at home to flatten the curve and avoid being infected by the virus.

Moreover, Black Americans make up 40 percent of the homeless population, who are especially vulnerable to a pandemic where the public is being asked to stay home as a protective measure. In prisons and jails, where Black people are disproportionately among those incarcerated, these environments are ticking time bombs for an outbreak of COVID-19 due to the difficulty of maintaining social distance in close quarters, unsanitary conditions, and the number of people regularly moving in and out.

Leadership at all levels of government needs to rise to the level of this crisis and do so with a focus on health equity and racial justice. That means widespread universal testing with no age restrictions, free COVID-19 testing and treatment pro-

vided to anyone diagnosed, and targeted outreach to communities of color to allay fears of not having access to treatment or receiving an astronomical health bill after a hospital stay.

"Black and Brown workers have jobs where they are expected to work while everyone else is sheltering at home."

But there are other critical policy solutions that should be considered as part of an equitable COVID-19 response and recovery plan, including immediate action to release incarcerated people, permanent paid sick and family leave for all workers, Medicare for All, housing for the unsheltered and a federal jobs guarantee in the face of massive unemployment. Enacting these policies would begin to address the depths of racial inequities that are intersecting with the COVID-19 crisis and set the stage for a reset as the pandemic subsides.

We're learning in this crisis that we desperately need better planning, leadership, a focus on our shared humanity and targeted strategies to reach, connect with and care for the populations and communities that will experience the most economic harm and loss of health and life. Racial health inequities are not a foreign concept in public health and it should concern all of us that the most basic step for addressing them — reporting racial data — has been largely ignored in local, state and federal reporting on COVID-19. Without an approach that actively addresses the many ways that systemic racism is already shaping outcomes in this pandemic, Black communities will be left without the resources to address the compounding impacts of COVID-19 as the rest of the country recovers and pushes forward.

With intentional policies and actions that prioritize racial equity now, government leaders and policymakers can avoid repeating mistakes of the past. They can reject calls to go back to "business as usual" and seize the moment to usher fundamental change that addresses the generations of neglect and political malpractice that created the pre-existing health, social and economic conditions that are being magnified in this tragedy.

As of April 17, the number of people infected with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) around the world reached 2 million 183 thousand 877, according to the data released by coronavirus research centers. The death toll was over 146,000.

552,771 patients have recovered. U.S. was leading in the world in terms of the largest number of infected people (678,210 confirmed cases). 34,641 deaths were reported.

Why New York?

1 → The fatality rate in Washington, D.C., stands at 62.5% with African Americans forming 46% of the population. Michigan's heavily black area of Detroit has turned into an epicenter, explaining as high as 85% of the state's deaths from the pandemic.

A similar pattern prevails nationwide, as suggested by a recent hospital data report from the first month of the epidemic in 14 states of the U.S. released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Among "580 hospitalized COVID-19 patients with race/ethnicity data, approximately 45 percent were white, 33 percent were black, and 8 percent were Hispanic, suggesting that black populations might be disproportionately affected by COVID-19", the CDC report says. This is while African-Americans make up only 13% of the U.S. population, as contrasted to 76% accounted by white people.

These statistics become all the more meaningful once seen through a wider lens. Only in Chicago, as many as 116,530 African American/Black households received food assistance in 2017, accounting for 58.9% of all.

The trend is consistent with nationwide data. African Americans on average have the lowest household income among all racial/ethnic groups, except Native Americans. The poverty rate among African Americans is almost two

times greater than that of the general U.S. population, according to a 2018 report by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

About 1 in 5 African Americans (22 percent) live below the poverty line, compared with 1 in 8 (13 percent) in the general population, the same report adds.

Poverty has been long considered a major drag on access to health care among African Americans.

Despite the narrowing of the disparities in health care access between Black people and Hispanics and whites between 2013 and 2015 following the implementation of some of the provisions of the Affordable Care Act's (ACA), they still face a harder time accessing required health care than whites, according to a 2017 Commonwealth Fund report. They are more likely to remain uninsured, skip needed health care because of cost, and go without a regular source of care, the same report highlights.

As more racial data on the pandemic becomes available, more experts have expressed concerns. by academia.

"The coronavirus is really exposing class- and race-based vulnerabilities, particularly in the form of what I think of as toxic inequality, especially the clustering of COVID-19 cases by community," said Social Sciences Professor Robert Sampson in a report by the Harvard Gazette.

Epidemiologist Camara Phyllis Jones seems both concerned and at the same time hopeful that the pandemic becomes a wakeup call for those who deny the existence of racism and its ripple effects on other spheres of life.

"If you asked most white people in this country today, they would be in denial that racism exists and continues to have profound impacts on opportunities and exposures, resources and risks. But COVID-19 and the statistics about black excess deaths are pulling away that deniability", she said.

These statistics, however shocking and horrifying they are, do not seem to stand any chance of getting the attention of a lousy administration whose handling of the situation has drawn fiery rebuke from media and governors.

In the first comprehensive assessment of global health security capabilities, the GHS Index ranked the U.S. first among 195 countries.

"We're rated number one," President Trump bragged about the ranking. But he was not mindful of the fact that whereas the country ranked exceptionally high in four out of six indicators, it did not fare so much well in the other two, healthcare access and risk factors such as political and security risk.

And the racial inequality can be explained by both of those factors!

and has advised former Vice President Joe Biden, the presumptive 2020 Democratic presidential nominee.

"This isn't a plan. It's barely a powerpoint," he said on Twitter, noting it did not include provisions to ramp up testing or set a specific standard for levels of the disease before economic opening.

Democrats such as House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Biden said testing was key to opening the country and criticized Trump's presentation for lacking specifics.

"I wouldn't call it a plan. I think what he's done, he's kind of punted," Biden said in an interview on CNN.

The new guidelines effectively end, at least for some states, the 30-day federal virus mitigation rules that were meant to stay in place through the end of April. States that have met the criteria can move into the first phase of re-opening Friday, Trump said. Some 29 states would be in a position to re-open soon, he said.

Prof. not expecting major change in socio-political arrangements

By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Prof. Nicholas Onuf, one of the founders of constructivism in International Relations, has told MNA that "Despite the uneven, laggard response of public health authorities at every level to the pandemic, I do not expect a significant change in what I would call modernist socio-political arrangements."

The following is an exclusive interview on the post-corona world order with Nicholas Greenwood Onuf, renowned as one of the founders of constructivism in International Relations.

■ What will be the effects of coronavirus on the current world order?

This is a very difficult question for a theorist to answer since theories seek to explain in general terms, and the pandemic is not a generalizable phenomenon for the purposes of international relations theory. As a theorist, I think it is most useful to view the pandemic as a potential catalyst for a significant change in the current world situation. In this respect, the influenza pandemic of 1918 (in which my own grandfather died at the age of 32) was not a catalytic event in itself, because it came at the end of an already disruptive world war. The current pandemic comes at a time when the world's political economy is in serious trouble. Financial institutions are over-extended, disparities in wealth are widening, technological innovation is waning, infrastructure is decaying at an alarming rate in the advanced economies, and climate change is relentless. The 2020 pandemic will inevitably cause a deep, global depression possibly lasting several years. Whether a full recovery is even possible remains to be seen. I suspect that the pandemic catalyst will trigger down-growth, at best leading to a Japan-style deflationary stagnation in the wealthier economies. Elsewhere, rapid, uncontrolled down-growth will prompt social unrest within states and beggar-thy-neighbor politics among them. I have publicly warned of this eventuality for many decades, and I often wondered if I would live long enough to see it happen.

■ The current world order is majorly based on liberalism and to some extent on realism approaches. What are the deficiencies of the said approaches revealed by coronavirus?

Political realism is broadly materialist, but it is predicated on a few assumptions about human nature, and not a 'nature' that makes a mockery of our self-regard. Realists have nothing to say about a crisis, not of our making—even if health specialists would argue that it is very much a crisis of our making. Neoliberals smugly believe that the world capitalist economy has brought unprecedented prosperity and relative peace to the world as a whole, but they consistently underestimate the fragility of the current world situation; they will have nothing helpful to say when the world economy fails to recover 'on its own.' Leftists and postmodern theorists will content themselves by saying 'we told you this would happen.'

■ Although the Outbreak of the virus has put the realism and self-help approaches in the center of the focus, it also has revealed deficiencies of the realism which is based on state security and looks at the security issue just militarily. The outbreak of the virus also showed that militaristic economies also are not able to maintain the security of nations and governments in the post-corona era. What do you think of this?

The problem is not just 'militaristic economies.' The modern state in whatever form has shown itself too easily overwhelmed by this crisis in human security. Arguably China is one of the most militarized states in the world and one of the most successful in managing the crisis. The same goes for South Korea. The US has been a disaster in this respect and for many reasons, including an ineffectual president and a constitution that empowers local authorities in matters of human security. It seems to me that real issue is the rise of functionally-oriented administrative regimes at every level, from the World Health Organization to city health departments, and the absence of effective coordinative mechanisms within and between levels.

■ If we accept that the post-corona world order will be different from the existing one, will the changes be structural and fundamental ones? Which meanings will experience fundamental changes?

Despite the uneven, laggard response of public health authorities at every level to the pandemic, I do not expect a significant change in what I would call modernist socio-political arrangements. Publics everywhere will depend more and more on functionally defined administrative regimes for their welfare as the modern world undergoes uneven immiseration in the decades ahead. When and where functionalist elites fail to provide for minimal public needs, social unrest will increase, as I pointed out in my response to the first question. With ever fewer resources to draw on, administrative capacity will diminish, state leaders will dither, and crises in human security can only increase in number and scale.

The secret behind COVID-19 death toll in U.S.

1 → The U07.1 code will be used for death by Coronavirus infection.

However, there's another secondary code, U07.2, "for clinical or epidemiological diagnosis of COVID-19 where a laboratory confirmation is inconclusive or not available," the CDC guidelines read.

"Because laboratory test results are not typically reported on death certificates in the U.S., NCHS is not planning to implement U07.2 for mortality statistics."

This is a huge problem. "The underlying cause depends upon what and where conditions are reported on the death certificate. However, the rules for coding and selection of the underlying cause of death are expected to result in COVID-19 being the underlying cause more often than not," the guidelines read.

"COVID-19 should be reported on the death certificate for all decedents where the disease caused or is assumed to have caused or contributed to death," CDC guidelines issued March 24 read. "Certifiers should include as much detail as possible based on their knowledge of the case, medical records, laboratory testing, etc.," the guidance continued.

"If the decedent had other chronic conditions such as COPD or asthma that may have also contributed, these conditions can be reported in Part II."

Trump unveils three-stage process for states to end coronavirus shutdown

U.S. President Donald Trump laid out new guidelines Thursday for U.S. states to emerge from a coronavirus shutdown in a staggered, three-stage approach meant to revive the U.S. economy even as the country continues to fight the pandemic.

The recommendations call on states to show a "downward trajectory" of COVID-19 cases or positive tests for the disease over 14 days before proceeding with the plan, which gradually loosens restrictions on businesses that have been shuttered to blunt the spread of the virus, Daily Star reported.

"We are not opening all at once, but one careful step at a time," Trump told reporters at the White House. The president had said earlier this month he wanted to reopen the economy with a "big bang."

The plan is a set of recommendations for state governors, not orders. In that sense, it represents a backdown by Trump, who on Monday insisted he had total authority to direct states to re-open or remain closed.



The responsibility for such decisions lies with state, not federal, authorities.

With the onus on governors, the plan also gives Trump political cover if not everything goes well. The president, a Republican who is running for re-election in November,

has faced criticism for downplaying the seriousness of the virus in the early weeks of the outbreak.

The recommendations drew criticism from Ron Klain, who spearheaded the Obama administration's response to Ebola

Iranian police seize historical objects in southwest

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** – Iranian authorities have recently recovered three ancient beads from a home in Izeh, southwestern Khuzestan province.

The objects have been estimated to date from the Achaemenid-era (550-330 BC) and Sassanid era (224 CE–651), provincial tourism chief Mehdi Faraji announced on Wednesday, IRNA reported.

A number of fake objects have been confiscated as well and three people have been detained in this regard, he noted.



Izeh is home to three UNESCO World Heritage sites of Susa, Tchogha Zanbil and Shushtar Historical Hydraulic System yet it is a region of raw beauty where its visitors could spend weeks exploring. The province is also a cradle for handicrafts and arts whose crafters inherited from their preceding generations.

Lying at the head of the Persian Gulf and bordering Iraq on the west, Khuzestan was settled about 6000 BC by a people with affinities to the Sumerians, who came from the Zagros Mountains region. Urban centers appeared there nearly contemporaneously with the first cities in Mesopotamia in the 4th millennium. Khuzestan, according to Encyclopedia Britannica, came to constitute the heart of the Elamite kingdom, with Susa as its capital.

25 tourism projects underway in Ardebil province

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** – A total of 25 tourism-related projects are currently underway in northwestern Ardebil province.

The projects are scheduled to be completed by the end of the current Iranian calendar year 1399 (started March 21), provincial tourism chief Nader Fallahi said on Thursday, CHTN reported.



Last December, President Hassan Rouhani inaugurated some 29 tourism projects including restored historical monuments, newly-built hotels and water treatment complexes, as well as tourism infrastructure facilities, during his visit to Ardebil province.

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

Arrival in Tehran and I am already at home!

(Part 2 /5)

By Monica Scaccabarozi

These incredible modifications really make me reflect on life; roads that I walk and that do not lead me to anything, aikido, zen, the study of Chinese, calligraphy, perhaps this is the meaning of the much-felt Japanese mu-shutoku?

Walk the streets and never arrive, but along the way enjoy the journey and appreciate how, despite the difficulties, the aridity (mostly human) that I encounter along my life path, there are moments in which it is possible to enjoy an oasis, fresh and welcoming. These moments are really moments of suspension, before leaving. Continue, always through difficulties.

The road changes constantly, life changes constantly. The path to the discovery of the self is not a straight line towards paradise, but tortuous, so said Tsuda Sensei.

Here my father and I in one of the most beautiful flies, the “pink” mosque.

Dash and Lut is a desert where the wind is so strong and the temperatures so high, that you must be absolutely well rooted to the ground so as not to be carried away by the very hot wind and the second moment was when we visited an outpost, in full sterile desert; the caravanserai in which Marco Polo has found refreshment (I have already crossed the path of Marco Polo several times during my journeys and it is always a great emotion to think that He was exactly where I was!!)

In the desert of Dasht-e Luth I really felt in that hot but immovable breath; the wind didn't move, my back was straight and my shoulders were open. I felt the wind on my skin (the little that was uncovered) and my clothes that adhered to my body because they were pressed by the power of the wind and on the other side of my silhouette I felt the same clothes whipping me with violence. The veil tried to whirl freely.

In a moment, I feel a sensation that I had ignored up to that point, the feeling of freedom that pervades me is inexplicable; I am the center of my needs, I must learn to no longer have any conditioning, no dependence or restriction, not even by myself. That free wind made me realize that no one can or should harness you.

I further elaborate this thought, while I see the sand blown by the wind in a small tornado, they are born and die continuously at an impressive speed, free. And just like the tornado a whirlwind of other thoughts, they are born and die in me, fast and free.

The wind, impetuous continues its path, inexorable, it creates and destroys, I realize it only because it carries the sand, but the wind has always been there! Sometimes things are not seen, they are not heard but they are right there in front of us. Just pay attention and know how to listen.

This travelogue is posted to the Cultural Institute of Iran, a representative of Iranian cultural institutions in Italy.

Iran’s ‘Taj Mahal’ marks Intl. Day for Monuments and Sites amid virus concerns

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** – As in previous years, the UNESCO-tagged Gonbad-e Soltaniyeh, sometimes referred to as Iran’s ‘Taj Mahal’, celebrated the International Day for Monuments and Sites, but this time, in an online program aimed to help stop transmission of the coronavirus, which is currently challenging the whole world.

The online ceremony was held of Friday, which is a national holiday in the country, a day prior to the original date, which is April 18.

“Every year, the World Heritage site celebrates the International Day for Monuments and Sites holding special programs in accordance to a theme that the ICOMOS [the International Council on Monuments and Sites] selects each year. However, this year the event is scheduled online to prevent the transmission of the coronavirus,” CHTN quoted Amir Arjmand, the tourism director of Zanjan province, as saying on Thursday.

‘Shared Cultures, Shared Heritage, Shared Responsibility’ is the theme of the event this year.

Given the current global outbreak of Covid-19 and the containment measures in different countries around the world, the ICOMOS has encouraged people to celebrate the Day in compliance with instructions from local and national authorities so as to ensure the safety of participants.

“The ceremony includes a report on maintenance projects and restoration workshops, which have recently been carried out in Soltaniyeh complex,” the official said.

Reminding the significance of cultural heritage and its maintenance, he added “Historical relics and sites and their impact on showing the background and history of a nation have always been very important, and preserving them is a huge task.”

Dominating the skyline, the 14th-century Gonbad-e (“The Dome of”) Soltaniyeh is highly recognized as an architectural masterpiece particularly due to its innovative double-shelled dome and elaborate interior decoration. The monument is in fact the mausoleum of Oljaytu, also known as Muhammad Khodabandeh, who was the eighth Ilkhanid dynasty ruler from 1304 to 1316.

According to UNESCO, the mausoleum’s interior decoration is so outstanding that scholars like A.U. Pope have described the building as “anticipating the Taj Mahal”.

The UN cultural body has it that the Mausoleum of Oljaytu is an essential link and key monument in the development of Islamic architecture in central and western Asia. The



A view of the UNESCO-registered Gonbad-e Soltaniyeh in Zanjan, west-central Iran.

fairly large dome is the earliest extant example of its type in the country, and became an important reference for the later development of the Islamic dome.

■ **Why ‘Shared Cultures, Shared Heritage, Shared Responsibility’?**

The 2020 International Day for Monuments and Sites invites participants to explore the idea of sharing—and its counterpoints, contestation and resistance—in relation to cultures, heritage and responsibility.

The theme for ‘Shared Cultures, Shared Heritage, Shared Responsibility’, reflects the global context of heritage as part of cultural identity at a time of rapid population shift, conflict, and environmental uncertainty. The theme recognizes that heritage – whether places, landscapes, practices, or collections – are frequently connected with and valued

by multiple and diverse groups and communities. At its core, the overarching theme is concerned with the relationships between cultures or cultural groups and their collective responsibility for the care and safeguarding of the significant attributes, meanings, and values of heritage.

However, the idea of ‘shared’ is intentionally provocative. In an historic sense, cultures and societies have commonly shared cultural practices, ways of doing, and viewpoints. In adopting the term ‘shared’, the 2020 International Day for Monuments and Sites invites participants to explore the idea of sharing—and its counterpoints, contestation and resistance—in relation to cultures, heritage and responsibility. It invites reviews of traditional thinking on the topic and seeks new and diverse perspectives and insights that encourage discussion and dialogue.

Visits to millennia-old Hasanlu jumps 27 percent yr/yr

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — The number of foreign and domestic tourists visiting the millennia-old site of Hasanlu in northwest Iran jumped 27 percent in the past Iranian calendar year (March 2019-20) compared with a year earlier.

“A total of 5,652 people toured Hasanlu during the past Iranian year 1398 that shows a 27 percent increase year on year,” said Hassan Shiri, the director of the archaeological site, CHTN reported.

Rounds of excavations has so far revealed important knowledge about the prehistory of northwestern Iran, particularly during the late 2nd and early 1st millennia BC.

Among the most important objects uncovered at Hasanlu were an unusually decorated silver bowl, several iron garment pins headed by bronze lions, a solid gold bowl, a knife handle

with gold cloisonné, and two hollow bronze horse heads that served to hold liquids.

According to the Britannica Encyclopedia, Hasanlu was inhabited from about 2100 to about 825 BC, but the richest period yet excavated dates to the 10th and 9th centuries BC. The period, often called “Mannaeen” after the name of the people who lived in the area, is characterized by a gray pottery accompanied by black and red varieties, the black ware being of much finer quality and probably made in imitation of metal vessels.

Experts say parallels to the motifs on the Hasanlu objects have been found in Elam, Assyria, north Syria, and Urartu, indicating that Iran not only received considerable cultural and artistic stimuli from other areas but also in turn exerted influence on the Middle East.

Portion of Achaemenid-era column recovered from dealer

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** – A portion of a millennia-old stone column has recently been recovered from an antique dealer in Dashtestan county, Bushehr province, southwest Iran.

The object dates from the Achaemenid-era (550-330 BC), said Abdolhamid Haqani, a senior police official in charge of protecting cultural heritage, CHTN reported.

The police discovered clues to identify the antique dealer following days of thorough inspection and constant efforts under close collaboration with judicial authorities, Haqani explained.

The Achaemenid [Persian] Empire was the largest and most durable empire of its time. The empire stretched from Ethiopia, through Egypt, to Greece, to Anatolia (modern Turkey), Central Asia and to India.



Building activity was extensive during the height of the empire, and of the several Achaemenian capitals, the ruins at Pasargadae and at Persepolis are probably the most outstanding. Achaemenian sculptured reliefs and a great number of smaller art objects present a remarkably unified style for the period. Metalwork, especially in gold, was highly developed, and a variety of carefully executed examples survive.

Qazvin tourist attractions available online during coronavirus

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** – Some 15 tourist attractions in northwestern province of Qazvin can be visited on virtual tours, as the province’s tourism has gone into lockdown over the coronavirus pandemic, said provincial tourism chief Alireza Khazaei, CHTN reported on Thursday.

Several videos have been produced to facilitate online visiting and virtual trips to the province’s historical sites and natural sights during the quarantine time.

Besides visiting various tourist sites including Sa’d-al Saltaneh caravanserai and Ali Qapu Portal, visitors can obtain information about Qazvin’s handicrafts, souvenir, history and culture.

Qazvin was once capital the mighty Persian Empire, under Safavids,



from 1548 to 98. It is a major tourist destination with a wonderfully restored caravanserai-turned-arts precinct, some quirky museums and a handful of decent eating options. For most travelers Qazvin is also primarily the staging point for excursions to the famous Castles of the Assassins and trekking in the sensational Alamut Valley.

Iranian, German archaeologists to shed more light on history of Persia

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** – Teams of Iranian and German archaeologists are slated to continue research on Tepe Rivi, an ancient site in northeast Iran, which has so far revealed magnificent remains of the Bronze Age up to the Sassanid period.

The teams have completed seven archaeological seasons across the site and based on a new agreement their cooperation will be continued for the next five years, CHTN reported on Monday.

Archaeological research works in Rivi started in 2012. Since then archaeologists accessed remains of settlements from the Bronze and Iron Age, the Achaemenid, the Parthian, the Sassanid dynasties and the early Islamic period.

The previous rounds of research had been hired various experts in archeology, geography, geophysics, geomorphology and ecology who took part from the [Ludwig Maximilian] University of Munich; the [Free] University of Berlin; the University of Tehran; and Shahid Beheshti University, the report said.

Based on the studies, various architectural and archaeological evidence from the Parthian and the Sassanid era were discovered in the Rivi site, which is situated in Maneh-Samalqan county of modern Iran’s North Khorasan province.



The evidence, according to Mohammad-Javad Jafari who headed of the fifth season of archaeological excavation at Rivi site, indicate the sequence of settlement in the area in the aftermath of the Achaemenid era, according to the Archaeology News Network.

Back in October, a number of historical clay stamps, estimated to date from Achaemenid and Parthian eras, were discovered in the ancient site.

“The seals were found alongside clay urns in a large

hall and the seals are imprinted in a variety of geometric patterns [depicting] plants, animals, and human figures. Studying the findings can yield valuable information on economy, culture, and arts of the ancient societies,” Jafari said.

“These stamps represent the widespread and complicated economic relations that people of the time had with other communities in such a way that made them to bring together and store goods.”

Evidence suggests that residents of this area sealed the urns that were loaded with particular goods then tied them with ropes, the archaeologist said.

The Achaemenid Empire (550–330 BC) was the largest and most durable empire of its time, stretching from Ethiopia, through Egypt, to Greece, to Anatolia (modern Turkey), Central Asia and to India.

The Parthian Empire (247 BC – 224 CE), also known as the Arsacid Empire, was a major Iranian political and cultural power in ancient Iran. The Parthians largely adopted the art, architecture, religious beliefs, and royal insignia of their culturally heterogeneous empire, which encompassed Persian, Hellenistic, and regional cultures. At its height, the Parthian Empire stretched from the northern reaches of the Euphrates, in what is now central-eastern Turkey, to eastern Iran.

Tehran, Seoul do not leave each other alone in COVID-19 battle

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Tehran mayor Pirouz Hanachi and Seoul mayor Park Won-soon shared their experiences on fighting coronavirus in an online meeting on Monday.

“Global crises are only managed by global solutions, and there will be no common solution without constructive communication; about the requirements of the battle against Coronavirus, Tehran and Seoul do not leave each other alone on this path,” Hanachi wrote on his Twitter account on Tuesday.

The Tehran mayor said that there are no more difficult conditions in Iran like the very first days of the outbreak, and in some cities, the situation of coronavirus has turned white, and the number of patients and deaths has greatly decreased.

Iran has been infected with the virus since February 20, but before Tehran, other cities became involved with the epidemic.

Lamenting that Iran was fighting two issues of coronavirus and sanctions, Hanachi stated that initially, due to sanctions, the country's ability to deal with the pandemic was limited, so that only two laboratories could test and detect the disease, but now 60 related laboratories testing the virus.

Pointing to the public transport fleet in Tehran, he said that due to the social distancing plan, the municipality is

currently under a lot of pressure in the field of public transport, however, 1,500 subway cars, 5,000 buses, and 60,000 taxis are disinfected daily.

Referring to other measures taken by the municipality to deal with the epidemic, he noted that “Although quarantine is not applied in Tehran, many jobs and some public places such as parks are shot down to prevent the spread, even religious centers, and shrines in different cities of Iran.”

He emphasized that Tehran Municipality also carried out a projection mapping on the iconic Azadi Tower to convey the message of sympathy with the people fighting coronavirus worldwide, which faced a positive response from the countries.

Hanachi also referred to the burial of coronavirus deaths in Tehran and saying that «Tehran Municipality has tried to bury the dead in compliance with all the health standards of the World Health Organization and the Ministry of Health and to respect the health of the survivors while considering the emotional state of the families.

The onset of the epidemic coincided with the Iranian New Year (Noruz), and this helped Iran reduce the number of people in the city, while the people also well cooperated, and resisted to camp in the gardens on the Nature Day (April



1), he said.

Hanachi further expressed appreciation to South Korea and Seoul for their assistance to Iran in dealing with the crisis and called on Won-soon to convey Tehran's message to the world in the Metropolitan Council meetings and the Korean government that Iran is combating two issues of coronavirus and sanctions.

■ **Transparency, South Korea's major principle**

Won-soon for his part stressed the need to share the experiences of all corona-affected countries to combat the virus, adding, from the very beginning, South Korea was transparent with statistics.

When the first cases identified, it has extensively tested the people to determine the exact number of patients, which has led to a significant decrease in the number of patients over the following days, to the point that the number of patients has reached about 10 per day, he explained.

Pointing to the sanctions amid coronavirus crisis, he said that South Korea understands Iran's situation and has tried

its best to help Tehran in this regard.

South Korea experienced the spread of SARS a few years ago so that used the experience of those days to combat the current epidemic, and those actions have led to a significant drop in the number of infections and death toll, he highlighted.

Seoul has reported 600 infections and only 2 deaths death due to the virus, one of the measures was keeping elderly people away from potentially infected areas, he added.

There was also the issue of social distancing and quarantine in Korea; although Korean officials did not quarantine cities, some jobs were closed and efforts were made to reduce traffic in the city, he stated.

However, it was concurrent with Korea's cherry blossom season and people liked to go sightseeing, they were asked not to do so, and they did, he also said.

In Korea, a system was launched for constantly monitoring the situation of coronavirus in different countries and providing successful experiences in this field, which you can use to transfer your experiences, he concluded.

Why COVID-19 death toll is so high in New York?

➔ overwhelmed medical centers, frightened people, high rate of non-communicable diseases, and finally not issuance of a statewide stay-at-home order until March 22.

Although coronavirus started spreading in other states, New York did not seem to become a place where the pandemic peaks, so it did not whether launched any social distancing plan or issued stay-at-home order until three weeks after transmission and victims were confirmed.

Besides, in early March, some officials in the state were reassuring the people and suggesting them to go on with their lives and get out to the town despite coronavirus.

Faced with a disease during which even hours and days matter, any public measure or order may come efficient in breaking the chain of transmission. Early on in an outbreak, the number of cases and deaths can double every few days if protective measures aren't in place.

Taking the state's population and its density into consideration, the city is the most populous one throughout the country, with a population of 8.2 million which is having the highest density as well, though it is not among the top dense cities in the world especially some Asian countries.

So, being the most dense and populated city of the United States might be counted a reason which drove up the number of people killed. With such close quarters,



it seems likely that a virus would spread faster there compared with a rural or even a less-dense city.

Another reason for the elevated mortality rate is overwhelming hospitals across the city, and the inadequate health care given to minorities and the poor throughout New York City, so that black people, in particular, are seeing unequal impacts from COVID-19.

Counties that are majority black, or African American, have three times the rate of infections and nearly six times the death rate for COVID-19 cases than counties

that are majority whites. Even in areas with majority whites, blacks often make up a disproportionate number of deaths from COVID-19. About 22 percent of New York City residents are blacks, though 28 percent of COVID-19 fatalities in the city are occurring in that population, according to the state department of health. That's compared with San Francisco where blacks account for 5 percent of the population, according to Live Science website.

Some of the blame for sky-high COVID-19 numbers in New York City may also lie with the number of NCD patient especially those suffering from heart attacks, strokes, diabetes and chronic lung disease who might have survived in normal circumstances.

The leading causes of death in New York City are heart disease and cancer, more than nine in 10 deaths in New York City are caused by non-communicable diseases or injuries (87 percent non-communicable diseases), which demonstrates the high prevalence of such diseases which are more vulnerable to COVID-19.

And the last factor may go to limited testing which is mainly focusing on the very-symptomatic people and individuals who require hospitalization. Still, New York as a whole has tested more of the state's population than California has, about 257 per 10,000 individuals compared with 54 per 10,000, respectively, as of April 14.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → E

‘City-friendly schools’ scheme launched in Tehran

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

Mojtaba Daneshvar, director general of citizenship education at Tehran Municipality, said that the project covers more than 550 schools, consisting of 160,000 students. It aims to familiarize students with the rights and duties of citizens, the environment, waste, transportation and traffic, safety and security, crisis management, he explained. The training programs will be in the form of workshops, role plays, cultural and educational camps, production of educational content such as books, brochures and posters, he concluded.

آغاز طرح «مدارس دوستدار شهر» در تهران

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

به گزارش ایسنا مجتبی دانشور، مدیرکل آموزش‌های شهروندی شهرداری تهران، گفت این طرح بیش از ۵۵۰ مدرسه شامل ۱۶۰ هزار دانش‌آموز را در بر می‌گیرد. برنامه‌های آموزشی این طرح در قالب برگزاری کارگاه‌های آموزشی، تولید محتوای آموزشی در قالب کتاب، بروشور و پوستر، اجرای نمایش و برگزاری اردوهای فرهنگی و آموزشی خواهد بود.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“agro-, agri-, agr-”

■ **Meaning:** soil or field
■ **For example:** The workshop presents information on sustainable **agricultural** systems.

PHRASAL VERB

Hand something down

■ **Meaning:** to give or leave something to people who will live after you
■ **For example:** The ring was handed down to her from her grandmother.

IDIOM

Broad strokes

■ **Explanation:** if something is described or defined with/in broad strokes, it is outlined in a very general way, without any details
■ **For example:** “In a few broad strokes he summed up the situation.”

School renovation budget increases by 65%

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — A total budget of 48 trillion rials (nearly \$1.1 billion at the official rate of 42,000 rials) has been earmarked to renovate schools nationwide in the current Iranian calendar year (started March 21), an increase of 65 percent year on year.

The organization started operating since the Iranian calendar year 1396 (March 2017- March 2018), which received a budget of 8.5 trillion rials (about \$200 million), Mehrollah Rakhshanimehr, director of the organization for renovation, development, and equipment of schools said, adding, a year later, the budger was nearly doubled.

However, last year, the renovation budget increased to 29 trillion rials (around \$690 million), and this year, we will be provided with a budge 65 percent more than the previous year, he highlighted, stating, the growth is considerable and can cause major developments.

Since the outbreak of coronavirus, construction measures, especially large ones, have been shut down, he said, expressing hope that the situation will improve as soon as possible.

Nature's comeback? No, the coronavirus pandemic threatens the world's wildlife

By Charlie Gardner

There have not been many bright spots in the coronavirus pandemic, but one has been the apparent return of nature as the frantic pace of modern life has slowed. We've seen fish-eating birds return to the clear waters of Venice, wild boar roaming the streets of Bergamo, and of course the feral mountain goats of Llandudno.

In Britain, wildlife seems set for a bountiful spring and summer. Fewer cars on the road means less roadkill, and many birds and voles will be spared as owners decide to keep their cats indoors. In towns and cities, wildflowers will surely flourish as councils realise that mowing their parks and verges is somewhat less than essential. Nature, it seems, is making a comeback.

Unfortunately, this is but a partial picture, and one that is limited to the minority world of industrialised nations. Most of the world's biodiversity is found in the low-income countries and emerging economies of the Global South, and in such places the economic impacts of the pandemic are likely to be devastating for the natural world.

The difference lies in how people respond to the economic shock of losing their livelihood. Social safety nets are a widespread feature of many industrialised economies, keeping the poor and vulnerable from destitution, and the importance of the welfare state has never been more obvious than during the pandemic. In the UK, for example, the government's furlough scheme guarantees that people unable to work will receive 80% of their income. But citizens of many low-income countries simply don't have such back-up from their governments, leaving them incredibly vulnerable. For many, the forest and the ocean will provide their safety net.

Exploiting natural resources is often the only option for the destitute. Wild animals, fish and forest trees are rarely owned by anyone, and they are found in rural areas where policing is difficult. What's more, there are often few technical barriers to exploiting them – you don't need a degree to be able to wield an axe. So, when people are left with nothing, they can always find something to eat or sell in the forest.

(Source: World Economic Forum)

WORDS IN THE NEWS

Corsicans reject autonomy offer

(July 07, 2003)

The French island of Corsica voted on Sunday by a small margin to reject an offer of limited independence. This report from Caroline Wyatt:

For decades, **successive** French governments have sought solutions to the Corsica problem; **none has yet worked**. This time, the government of Jacques Chirac had hoped the offer of a limited form of **devolution** would finally bring peace to the island, which has been **wracked** by violence for nearly thirty years. Corsica's **narrow rejection** of the new regional assembly is a bitter disappointment, especially for the French interior minister Nicholas Sarkozy, who'd campaigned hard for change. Responding to last night's result, he said the French government would respect the wishes of the Corsican people, but he called it a 'wasted opportunity'.

The 'no' vote will also sadden those on the island who'd seen this limited measure of **autonomy** as the best chance to end the **separatist** campaign, while keeping Corsica French. But despite the government's enthusiasm for reform, a slight majority on the island preferred to keep the **status quo**. Some of those voting 'no' had feared the new assembly would give too much power to the separatists. Many **bureaucrats** on the island also worried about losing their jobs in the **shake-up**. Presumably, the 'no' vote may also mean the continuation of the nationalist campaign for full independence from France.

■ **Words**

successive: following one after another, without a break
none has yet worked: here, none of them has been successful so far
devolution: the transfer of authority or power from a central government or organisation to local governments or smaller organisations

wracked: if someone is wracked by something it causes them great suffering or pain

narrow rejection: refusal to accept, but by only a small number of votes

autonomy: self-government

separatist: a member of a group of people within a country who want to establish their own separate government

the status quo: the situation that exists at a particular time. If you keep the status quo, you continue with the situation that already exists, instead of changing it

bureaucrats: officials who work in a large administrative system, especially those who seem to follow rules and procedures too strictly
shake-up: a very great number of changes in an organisation or system

(Source: BBC)

Africa coronavirus cases could hit 10 million in six months: WHO

Coronavirus cases in Africa could surge from just thousands now to 10 million within three to six months, according to provisional modelling, a regional World Health Organization (WHO) official said.

But Michel Yao, head of emergency operations for WHO Africa, said on Thursday it was a tentative projection that could change. He noted worst-case predictions for the Ebola outbreak had not come true because people changed their behaviour in time.

“This is still to be fine-tuned,” he told a media teleconference. “It’s difficult to make a long-term estimation because the context changes too much and also public health measures, when they are fully implemented, they can actually have an impact.”

The world’s poorest continent has seen more than 17,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and about 900 deaths so far - relatively few compared with other regions.

But there are fears that the numbers could balloon and overwhelm shaky health services.

“We are concerned that the virus continues to spread geographically, within countries,” said Matshidiso Moeti, director of WHO’s Africa region, which comprises 46 sub-Saharan nations and Algeria.

“The numbers continue to increase every day.”
(Source: al Jazeera)

Expert says UK likely has Europe’s highest virus death rate

A leading public health expert said Friday that Britain likely has the highest coronavirus death rate in Europe due to what he described as “system errors,” while the government defended its record in responding to the pandemic.

Anthony Costello, director of the Institute for Global Health at University College London, said the U.K. “could see 40,000 deaths” by the time the first wave of the country’s outbreak is over.

The British government reported that as of Thursday, 13,729 people had died in U.K. hospitals after testing positive for the coronavirus. The number does not include hundreds, and maybe thousands, of virus-related deaths in nursing homes and other settings.

Costello has been a vocal critic of the government’s strategy, saying it has not been doing enough testing for the virus and has failed to trace and isolate people who were in contact with infected individuals.

“What were the system errors that led us to have probably the highest death rates in Europe?” he said.

“We’re going to face further waves and so we need to make sure we have a system in place ... that enables you to test people rapidly in the community, in care homes and to make sure that the results are got back to them very quickly,” Costello told a committee of British lawmakers Friday.

(Source: AP)

Unknown gunman shoots dead 6 Afghan workers at main U.S. base

An unknown gunman shot dead six local workers from the main American military base north of Afghanistan’s capital and wounded three others, an Afghan official said Friday.

According to AP, The nine workers, all Afghan nationals, were on their way home late Thursday when a gunman riding a motorcycle opened fire on them about 500 meters (about a quarter mile) from Bagram air base, Parwan provincial governor’s spokeswoman Wahida Shahkar said.

Shahkar said the gunman escaped.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahed said the group had nothing to do with the shooting.

The Daesh (ISIL/ ISIS) affiliate is active in northern areas of Afghanistan and on April 9 Daesh claimed responsibility for firing five rockets from a vehicle at Bagram air base. There were were no casualties.

Shahkar said Afghan national security forces began an investigation to find the person who attacked the workers, who provide cleaning services at the base.

The Afghan government and Taliban are in the process of exchanging prisoners as part of a peace deal signed by the U.S. and the Taliban on Feb. 29 in Doha.

The release of up to 5,000 Taliban prisoners and 1,000 government personnel ahead of intra-Afghan negotiations is a condition of the U.S.-Taliban deal.

China’s Foreign Ministry Rejects Claims of Coronavirus Outbreak Cover-Up

U.S. President Donald Trump as well as Secretary of State Mike Pompeo have openly questioned China’s integrity and the accuracy of the data Beijing provided regarding the scope of the COVID-19 pandemic in the country. China has strongly denied such allegations.

There has never been a cover-up of the coronavirus outbreak in China, as the government never allows any cover-ups, the country’s foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said on Friday.

Speaking to reporters at a daily briefing, Zhao said that the revision of coronavirus cases in Wuhan, where the virus originated, was a common international practice, Sputnik reported.

The statement follows Wuhan’s health authority’s rectification of incorrect reporting, delays and omissions that revised the cumulative death toll by 50%.

China has repeatedly faced accusations from the United States that it has withheld data pertinent to the coronavirus situation in the country.

President Trump has recently cut the funding to the World Health Organisation, which he accused of conspiring with China to conceal the truth about the virus.

China has repeatedly condemned the “shameless” US allegations, noting that Beijing has done everything to be open, transparent, and accountable in regard to the ongoing pandemic.

2,000 protest erosion of democracy under Netanyahu

Riot in Jerusalem over virus regulations



Demonstrators at ‘black flag’ rally in Tel Aviv keep 2 meters distance in line with virus regulations.

Organizers said some 2,000 demonstrators gathered at Habima Square in Tel Aviv to protest what they describe as the erosion of Israeli democracy under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s leadership, amid the coronavirus pandemic, Time Of Israel reported.

The demonstrators, who said they were keeping two meters’ distance between one another in accordance with social distancing rules, waved black flags, as they have done on previous occasions over the past month.

“The citizens of Israel are proving today that Israeli democracy refuses to be subjected to a coup under the pretext of the coronavirus,” an organizer said.

“We won’t back a government whose prime minister is accused of bribery, fraud and breach of trust. We cannot permit a situation in which that same accused man has a role in appointing investigators, prosecutors and judges in the State of Israel.”

Among the demonstrators was Meretz party leader Nitzan Horowitz, who tweeted a photo of himself among the socially distanced crowd wearing a face mask.

Yair Netanyahu, the prime minister’s son, raised eyebrows by responding to

Horowitz’s tweet with an apparent wish for left-wingers to die of COVID-19.

■ Riot in Jerusalem

Meanwhile, riots erupted Thursday night in the hardline ultra-Orthodox neighborhood of Mea Shearim in Jerusalem,

with protesters hurling objects at police forces, who responded by throwing stun grenades, one of which injured a nine-year-old girl passing by.

Approximately 100 people demonstrated against the ban on communal prayers

and restrictions on mikveh ritual baths amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The government on Thursday extended the closure rules in several, mostly Haredi, neighborhoods in the capital until April 19.

The protest hadn’t been coordinated with authorities and did not adhere to Health Ministry guidelines on social distancing.

When police forces arrived to disperse the crowd, some demonstrators hurled rocks, metal rods, eggs and other objects at the cops.

Violence also erupted inside one of the local synagogues after the police officers entered it.

CCTV footage from a local street showed cops throwing the stun grenade that hit the nine-year-old girl who hadn’t been taking part in the riot, and exploded right next to a stroller with a baby in it. The girl’s parents reportedly plan on filing a complaint after Shabbat with the Police Internal Investigations Department.

The girl, Zissel Margalio, told the Ynet news site that she was injured near her eye and had felt her head was “on fire.” She said she had run, panicking, looking for people who would help her.

Syrian villagers force U.S. military convoy to return to base

Local people in Syrian village of Abu Qasaib in north-eastern province of Hasakah stopped a U.S. military convoy on Thursday, forcing the U.S. troops to return to their occupied base.

The U.S. convoy that sought to pass through the village near the city of Qamishli finally retreated, Syria’s official news agency SANA reported.

Earlier this month, a similar incident had occurred in

Hamo, near Qamishli. In that incident, a convoy of five U.S. military vehicles was heading to Hamo village, but was forced to return when locals gathered at a Syrian army checkpoint near the village and prevented the convoy from passing.

Also in late March, local people in another border village prevented a convoy of eleven U.S. military vehicles from passing through their village.

According to Press TV, in the past few days, the United

States has dispatched truckloads of military and logistical equipment to Syria’s Hasakah as part of its plots to seize oil reserves and plunder natural resources in the war-battered country.

On Tuesday, SANA reported that a convoy of at least 40 trucks had crossed into the Syrian territory through illegitimate border crossing of al-Walid, and headed toward U.S. positions in Hamo village, west of Qamishli.

Pentagon readying force to deploy in streets of Washington, DC to enforce Martial Law



Department of Defence officials and civilian authorities have repeatedly played down fears that the U.S. National Guard could be called in to enforce martial law in one or more jurisdictions of the United States in response to the coronavirus pandemic, dismissing claims to the contrary as “false” and akin to “conspiracy theories.”

The Pentagon quietly activated a 10,000 troop-strong task force to secure Washington, DC in case of an emergency over a month ago and never informed the public about it, Newsweek has reported, citing a senior military officer said to be engaged in continuity of government planning, as well as three military sources familiar with United States Northern Command planning, Sputnik reported.

The force, known as Joint Task Force National Capital Region (JTF-NCR), takes its marching orders from Pentagon chief Mark Esper. It’s commanded by Army Maj. Gen. Omar J Jones IV, commander of the Military District of Washington, ordinarily a largely ceremonial unit engaging in parades and duties at the Arlington National Cemetery.

In an emergency, its duties are said to include evacuating government leaders from the capital, as well as “securing” the city and engaging in “homeland defence” against potential enemies both foreign and domestic, including protecting Washington, DC’s airspace and dealing with civil unrest. Its area of operations is said to include the

District of Columbia and the surrounding areas in Maryland and Virginia.

According to Newsweek’s information, the task force was activated on March 16, and in addition to its heretofore secret mission has a public face similar to that of other military units called up in recent weeks to help fight the COVID-19 pandemic, including the provision of medical support, the operation of mobile health-check centers and supply delivery.

Quietly, however, part of the force is being held back from these COVID-19 response duties, and stationed at local military bases to ‘ensure readiness’ in the event that they are called upon. A senior retired NORTHCOM commander told the magazine that in an emergency, the units’ duties may include ‘unilateral action’, including efforts “as immediately required to save lives, prevent human suffering or mitigate great property damage.”

U.S. media gave hints about the task force’s possible duties back in March, when Decatur, Illinois-based newspaper Herald & Review reported on the call up of Illinois National Guard forces being deployed at Fort Belvoir outside Washington, their mission ordinarily including aviation-related duties including fueling, repair work, piloting and logistics. Under the contingency, their tasks could include evacuating officials, lawmakers and members of the judiciary aboard 106th Aviation Regiment helicopters.

Iraq summons Turkish envoy to protest deadly airstrike in Kurdistan region



Iraq’s Foreign Ministry has summoned the Turkish ambassador to Baghdad to protest Ankara’s latest deadly aerial raid on a refugee camp in the Arab country’s semi-autonomous Kurdistan region.

The ministry said in a statement on Thursday that Iraqi Foreign Minister Mo-hamed Ali al-Hakim called in the envoy and handed him a letter of protest over “Turkish violations of Iraqi sovereignty”.

The ministry spokesman, Ahmed al-Sa-haf, also said that the Turkish airstrike was unacceptable and violated its sovereignty and the security of its citizens, Press TV reported.

“The Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemns in the strongest possible terms the attack carried out by the Turkish side, which resulted in loss of life and property,” he said. The ministry demanded an end to the bombing of Iraqi areas, respect for sovereignty of Iraq, and cooperation to ensure border security.

The media office of the Iraqi Joint Operations Command (JOC) earlier said that its air defense detected a Turkish drone breaching the Iraqi airspace and firing a rocket on Maxmur refugee camp near the town of Makhmour on Wednesday. At least three people, including two women, were killed in the raid.

Prominent Iraqi politician Ammar al-Hakim, the Leader of Iraq’s National Wisdom Movement, also denounced the airstrike and said the violation of Iraqi sovereignty is “unjustifiable.”

Kate’ al-Rikabi, a member of the parlia-

mentary Security and Defense Committee, urged the Baghdad the government to file a complaint with the UN Security Council over the aggression.

In a statement on Wednesday, the Patri-otic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) condemned the airstrike on the refugee camp as a breach of Iraq’s sovereignty, saying such attacks threatens peace and stability in the region.

The statement called on the Iraqi government to protect the county’s sovereignty and reconsider trade exchanges with Turkey.

It also called on the federal government and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) to play their part in finding peaceful solutions to prevent recurrence of such attacks.

Turkey occasionally attacks northern Iraq, saying it targets positions of the Kurd-istan Workers’ Party (PKK) militant group.

PKK militants regularly clash with Turkish forces in the Kurdish-dominated southeast of Turkey which borders northern Iraq.

Turkish ground and air forces have also been carrying out operations in neighboring Syria against militants of the Kurdish People’s Protection Units (YPG), considered by Ankara a terrorist organization and an extension of the PKK.

The YPG makes up the bulk of the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a US-backed coalition of militants who control some chunks of land in northern Syria.

The Syrian government has likewise called on Ankara to end its military intervention in the neighboring Arab country.

U.S. alerted Israel, NATO about disease outbreak in November

U.S. intelligence agencies alerted Israel to the corona-virus outbreak in China already in November, Israeli television reported.

According to Channel 12 news, the U.S. intelligence community became aware of the emerging disease in Wuhan in the second week of that month and drew up a classified document.

Information on the disease outbreak was not in the public domain at that stage — and was known only apparently to the Chinese government, Times of Israel reported.

U.S. intelligence informed the Trump administration, “which did not deem it of interest,” but the report said the Americans also decided to update two allies with the clas-sified document: NATO and Israel, specifically the IDF.

The network said Israeli military officials later in

November discussed the possibility of the spread of the virus to the region and how it would affect Israel and neighboring countries.

The intelligence also reached Israel’s decision makers and the Health Ministry, where “nothing was done,” ac-cording to the report.

Last week, ABC News reported that U.S. intelligence officials were warning about the coronavirus in a report prepared in December by the American military’s National Center for Medical Intelligence.

It was unclear if that was the same report that was said to have been shared with Israel.

In its first major step to prevent the spread of the corona-virus, Israel announced on January 30 it was barring all flights from China, ten days after Chinese leader Xi Jinping

issued his first public comments on the virus and the Asian country’s top epidemiologist said for the first time it could be spread from person to person.

An Associated Press report on Wednesday said Xi’s warning came seven days after Chinese officials secretly determined that they were likely facing a pandemic, potentially costing China and other countries valuable time to prepare for the outbreak.

Doctors in Wuhan, the city at the center of the outbreak in China, are reported to have first tried to have warn about the virus in December, but were censored.

The Chinese government has repeatedly denied suppressing information in the early days, saying it immediately reported the outbreak to the World Health Organization.

Dragan Skocic aiming to get Iran back on track

Iran have been a mainstay at the FIFA World Cup in recent years. With Carlos Queiroz at the helm, Team Melli graced Brazil 2014 and were the first Asian side to secure a berth at Russia 2018. And while they failed to go beyond the group stage in the latter tournament, they had the consolation of impressive performances there against Portugal, Spain and Morocco.

After Queiroz's departure, the country's football federation turned to Marc Wilmots, but after some disappointing results in the current round of Asian qualifiers for Qatar 2022, the Belgian was replaced. The new man at the helm is Croatian Dragan Skocic, who spoke with FIFA.com about his appointment and the task ahead.

«Being in charge of Iran is a great honor. My commitment towards the 80 million Iranians who support their national team is huge. I'm ready for this project and am looking forward to it with immense determination.»

A look at Skocic's resume reveals that this is his first time in charge of a national team, the 51-year-old having spent all of his coaching career at clubs in Croatia and the Persian Gulf, such as Al Araby in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia's Al Nasr. Despite his lack of national team experience, he is well aware of the task awaiting ahead.

«In contrast to a club, working with a national team allows you to choose from a large pool of players to instill your philosophy, although the downside is that you always have limited time to implement your ideas.»

■ Staying in the race

Iran suffered two defeats – against Iraq and Bahrain – in their opening four games in the AFC's second qualifying round for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022. Given the quality of their squad, the team's performance was not considered good enough. So how does the new incumbent plan to



get them back on track?

«We'll shortly be carrying out a detailed analysis of our team and those of our opponents as well. We'll also be looking into new players who might join the squad. I have a clear idea of what's required to improve our performances.»

Those two defeats have Team Melli currently occupying third place in Group C, a position that would not take them into the final qualifying round. Asked about the very real danger of early elimination, Skocic says: «Our current position is bad,

but we're not yet despairing. Three of our remaining four games will be at home, where we'll have massive support from our fans. I also believe we have a quality group of players, which is why I'm optimistic.»

■ Help from the schedule

Skocic's side do indeed have grounds for optimism. Their next two fixtures will be against Hong Kong and Cambodia, who on paper at least, should be beatable. They will then host current group front-runners Bahrain and Iraq, which should give them a shot at claiming one of the

group's two qualifying spots in the next round. «We have to be professional and respect all the teams, including Cambodia and Hong Kong.»

Iran have reached the World Cup on five occasions. After back-to-back appearances in 2014 and 2018, the aim now is to secure a third consecutive participation for the first time.

«We've promised the people of Iran that we'll go back to the World Cup, and we'll do our utmost to fulfil that promise.»

(Source: FIFA)

Igor Kolakovic breaks silence on leaving Iran



S P O R T S TEHRAN — Igor Kolakovic has broken silence over leaving Iran national volleyball team.

In an interview with danas.rs, the 54-year-old coach said he would love to lead Iran at the Tokyo Olympic Games, however the Islamic Republic of Iran Volleyball Federation (IRIVF) decided to part company with him.

«I am still head coach of Iran national team because my current expires in September. But things are different. Iran volleyball federation parted company with me after the 2020 Olympic Games were postponed due to Covid-19,» he said.

«Iran parted ways with me because of the economic situation. Although I and my staff fulfilled a main goal booking a place at the Tokyo. We also achieved other notable successes in three years,» Kolakovic stated.

«They asked me not to talk with media. I felt hurt because I really wanted to have a nice Olympic with Iran. I will definitely return to Europe and continue my work in a club but I do not know where I will work,» the Montenegrin said.

«There were prejudices about Iran's lifestyle and culture but on the contrary, Iran is a really beautiful country with wonderful people,» Kolakovic said.

FFIRI proposes new date for the federation's elections



S P O R T S TEHRAN — The Iranian Football Federation, in an official letter to FIFA, has announced its proposed date for holding the elective General Assembly of the federation.

The elections were scheduled for March 15, but it was deferred since FIFA had ordered the Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) to postpone the elections until the national governing body amends its current statutes.

World football's governing body had sent a letter to the Iranian federation on February 24, stressing that the event should be delayed.

The documents were not enough, and

FIFA asked FFIRI officials once again to revise the statutes before holding the elections.

FIFA had hinted that the current version of the FFIRI statutes contains several particularly problematic provisions, such as government interference in the FFIRI elections.

The FFIRI had previously announced that the elective General Assembly and the presidential elections would be held in the first half of 2020 September.

In its latest move, however, the Football Federation has shifted the date from September 22 to October 6. The FFIRI will wait for FIFA's response to confirm the exact date.

Leicester City linked to £30m-rated Zenit striker Sardar Azmoun



Sardar Azmoun has impressed on the world's biggest stages and at just age 25, he still has plenty of time to become a star in one of Europe's top-five leagues.

Azmoun has been a hit in Europe with both Rostov and Zenit and is already the fifth-highest scoring player in Iran history, bagging an impressive 32 goals in just 50 international caps.

Now, he could be set to take the world by storm. According to Italian outlet Area Napoli, Leicester City and West Ham have both registered interest in the player.

While the two sides would like to pay a fee of around £13m (€15m) for the impressive Iranian, it's believed Zenit

will continue to push for a fee in the region of £30m (€35m).

Zenit signed a three-and-a-half-year contract with Zenit on deadline day in last year's winter window, with the Russians paying just £10.5m (€12m) for his services.

This is the second time that Azmoun has been linked to a move to the Foxes, with reports in January 2018 suggesting he could make a Premier League move while he was still with Rubin Kazan.

Azmoun has been spectacular once again for Zenit this season, scoring 14 goals and supplying seven assists in 29 games in all competitions this season.

(Source: Onefootball.com)

Persepolis logo chosen as favorite club badge



The football fans chose Iran's Persepolis's logo as the best Asian club badge.

The-afc.com looked at six different sides from across the breadth of the Asian Football Confederation and explored the meaning behind their unique club crests.

Persepolis FC was named after the historical landmark, Persepolis, the capital of the Achaemenid Empire and, thus, the club logo incorporates elements from one of the Islamic Republic of Iran's most revered landmarks.

The Tehran giants have changed their logo a number of times over the years, with falcon-winged men and bulls to symbolise productivity both previously prominent features. Since 2004, however, among its most striking attributes

has been the two-headed mythical homa bird, attached by one body, to replicate a renowned column at Persepolis.

A cup is located on the top of the body as recognition of the club's achievements, while the Olympic rings beneath represent Persepolis as one of IR Ian's great sporting institutions.

In 2012, ahead of the 74th Tehran derby against their great rivals Esteghlal, Persepolis updated the logo once more.

This shield-shaped version seen today also features the name Persepolis in both Persian and English.

In a poll conducted by the-afc.com, 83 percent voted the club's logo as the best badge.

(Source: the-afc)

Iran's Firouzja makes history at Banter Blitz Cup

S P O R T S TEHRAN — 16-year-old Alireza Firouzja claimed a historic 8.5:7.5 victory to defeat reigning World Chess Champion Magnus Carlsen in the final of the \$14,000 Banter Blitz Cup.

In a thrilling contest, broadcast worldwide, Firouzja, who was featured by Mirror as an upcoming talent recently, earned applause from Carlsen himself.

«Good game Alireza. I was way out of shape, but he deserves full credit. I've just got to be better, but he is amazing strong. Full credit,» Carlsen said.

Firouzja said he had prepared thoroughly for the final. «The only thing I think about all day is chess, so maybe it's all day,» the Iranian teenager said.

There will be a chance for revenge on Monday when they play again in the Magnus Carlsen Invitational.

Beiranvand best goalkeeper in Asia: Ghotbi

Former Iran national football team coach Afshin Ghotbi says that Alireza Beiranvand is the best goalkeeper in Asia.

Beiranvand has been chosen as the Asian FIFA World Cup Hero.

Given the choice of Alireza Beiranvand, Sami Al Jaber, Tim Cahill, Keisuke Honda and Park Ji-sung, the fans' vote was won by Iranian goalkeeper Beiranvand, with Japan's Honda and Saudi legend Al Jaber coming in second and third place respectively – a decision that goes towards 25 percent of the overall result.

«Beiranvand is the best goalkeeper in Asia. His presence, personality, shot-blocking quality, and his distribution range make him a complete goalkeeper,» Ghotbi said.

«His performance at the 2018 FIFA World Cup almost helped Iran reach the knockout stage,» he added.

(Source: the-afc)

Kaveh Rezaei to return to Club Brugge

TASNIM — Iranian striker Kaveh Rezaei will return to Club Brugge at the end of the Belgian First Division A season.

He joined Club Brugge on a four-year contract in August 2018 but failed to meet the expectations and was loaned out to Charleroi for one year.

Charleroi will sign Henk Veerman as Rezaei's replacement, Sport Bild reported.

Rezaei scored 12 goals in 22 matches for the Charleroi this season.

Torabi's goal named most stunning strike from distance

Persepolis midfielder Mehdi Torabi's goal was chosen as the most stunning strike from distance in the AFC Champions Leagues.

Torabi defeated his countryman Andranik Teymourian of Esteghlal who scored a long-distance goal against Buriram in the 2013 quarter-finals.



Torabi also scored a stunning goal against Al Sadd of Qatar at the Azadi Stadium.

The pre-match talk of the 2019 group stage match between Persepolis and the Qatar side focused on Xavi's final game before hanging up his boots, but the crowd left talking about Torabi.

There seemed little danger when the Iranian international received the ball 35 yards from goal, but the midfielder let fly with an unstoppable shot that flew past 'keeper Saad Al Sheeb in the Al Sadd goal and surely left his retiring counterpart suitably impressed.

Ikromjon Alibaev (Lokomotiv), Lee Chang-min (Jeju United) and Abdelkarim Hassan (Al Sadd) were also in the list.

(Source: the-afc)

Guangzhou Evergrande start work on 100,000-capacity stadium

Chinese Super League champions Guangzhou Evergrande on Thursday began building a new stadium costing 12 billion yuan (US\$1.7 billion) and boasting a 100,000 capacity, making it one of the world's largest arenas.

It will be marginally larger than Barcelona's Nou Camp and is scheduled to be ready by the end of 2022, Xinhua news agency said.

Guangzhou Evergrande Football Stadium will have an eye-catching lotus flower design wrapped around it, a nod to the southern city's status as China's «Flower City».

The stadium will be - for a time at least - the world's largest football venue, until Nou Camp expands to 105,000 seats after its ongoing redevelopment.

Eight-time Chinese champions Guangzhou, who are coached by Italian FIFA World Cup winner Fabio Cannavaro and have won the AFC Champions League twice, average about 50,000 fans for home matches.

Evergrande's CSL rivals Shanghai SIPG are constructing a new arena that will seat 33,000 and is expected to be finished in 2021.

China PR will host the newly expanded 2021 FIFA Club World Cup and the AFC Asian Cup 2023, while Shanghai is interested in holding the Olympics.

(Source: AFP)

Iranian photog takes tour of Asia to cover Islamic sites on Silk Road

By Manijeh Rezapoor

TEHRAN — Iranian photographer Hamid Soltanabadian embarked on a cycling adventure in 2011 covering 11 Asian countries on the Silk Road to prepare a collection that represents the influence of Iranian and Islamic architecture on the monuments built along the ancient route.

Soltanabadian began his tour from New Delhi, visiting Bangladesh, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, China, Tajikistan, Kirghizia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, and arrived in Iran the next year.

"I took a series of photos highlighting Iranian and Islamic architecture, part of which was displayed in an exhibition in Mashhad after I returned back home," Soltanabadian told the Tehran Times in an interview on Friday.

"The topic of Chinese Muslims in the holy month of Ramadan was other highlight of the collection, which I later displayed in Mashhad during Ramadan, while my other collection taken of people was displayed in the Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur in an exhibition titled 'Color and Peace'," he said.

Soltanabadian, who is also a photography instructor and is interested in making documentaries, said that the idea was a strong wish that he and two of his friends had for a while. After the Khorasan Razavi branch of the Art Bureau and Mashhad Municipality agreed to pay part of the cost of the journey, he and friends began the year-long cycling. "This had been my wish when I was younger. Photography was a reason to begin the tour, which was full of ups and downs and a wish that finally came true," he added.

"I personally experienced the meaning of kindness and hospitality in the relations I had with people in different cities along the journey," he said.

He said that he believes the real meaning of life is to move and watch the world and keep in contact with people far from the borders. "The variety of cultures was so exciting



Hamid Soltanabadian (L) and his friends pose in front of Zahir Mosque in Alor Star, the state capital of Kedah, Malaysia.

for me. Nothing can give one more energy and motivation than these types of journeys. My attitudes used to change every day or even every hour, and my world became as large as the sky, helping me ponder on this wide world," he explained.

"The road was a companion, which accompanied me in thinking all in patience and silence, and my bicycle was a vehicle, which pushed me forward. And I cannot say enough about people who were the most wonderful creatures in the world for me in this journey," he said.

"Smile was the joint language between me and the people of other lands. It worked like a miracle and had its wonderful influence in beginning a friendly relation every time," he said.

He added that what was of great importance for him on this trip was the people and their appearance in the society.

"I was looking to record the relations between people and the places. Colors have always excited me and I have never missed a moment to record them. I cycled among a great number of original colors and had exciting moments, and I can say that I should have recorded every moment," he noted.

"I did not have a bad feeling in any of the countries, and each of the countries gave me good and everlasting moments, however, I had a very strange feeling in Samarkand and Bukhara in Uzbekistan. These two cities took me back to the depth of my own country and culture. Speaking with the people was an

unforgettable experience for me," he stated.

"Of course, I should say that I also had a very strange feeling in India, as if I had entered another planet. I would like to make still another trip to India," he added.

"I should say the trip was a unique and exciting one, which one will never forget. I believe this one-year journey was the highlight of my life and I always thank God who helped me experience it," he concluded.

Soltanabadian has recently published an account of his cycling adventure in a book named "Bicycle Memories".

The book has been published by Sureh-Mehr Publications and the publisher gives a discount of 10 percent to online buyers of the book.

Iranian, Italian orchestras team up to hearten people in battle with coronavirus

A R T TEHRAN — The Young Musicians European Orchestra and the Tehran Symphony Orchestra have teamed up to record a music video for Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 "Ode to Joy" to encourage people of the countries in the battle with the coronavirus crisis.



Paolo Olmi conducts a joint concert by the Young Musicians European Orchestra and the Tehran Symphony Orchestra at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on January 19, 2017. (Mehr/Mehran Riazi)

Each member of the orchestras is scheduled to record his/her own part separately at home, and the pieces will later be merged together for the music video, the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization (ICRO) announced in a press release on Thursday.

The performances will be supervised by the conductor of the Young Musicians European Orchestra conductor, Paolo Olmi, who will do the final arrangements for the orchestra.

The video will be scheduled to be published on social networks. Olmi conducted a joint concert by the Young Musicians European Orchestra and the Tehran Symphony Orchestra during the 32nd Fajr International Music Festival in Tehran in January 2017.

The two orchestras also gave a joint performance at the Pala de André Center in Ravenna, Italy in July 2017.

"Malakout" to compete in Dallas film festival

A R T TEHRAN — Iranian director Farnush Abedi's short animated movie "Malakout" will be competing in the 50th Annual USA Film Festival taking place in Dallas in May/June 2020, the Iranian Youth Cinema Society has announced.

The horror film is about a pianist, who has lost one of his hands and can't play the piano anymore. Doctors decide to transplant a dead criminal's hand to his body. The pianist with his new hand starts killing people.

The animation received an honorable mention at the Silk Road International Film Festival in Dublin, Ireland in February.

Ukrainian artists live-stream from their studios during lockdown

KIEV (Reuters) — Ukrainian brothers Nikita and Egor Zigura work on their sculpture of a giant fingerprint as art enthusiasts look on via a live-streaming internet link and make bids for the developing work.

The online auction is part of a new "Stay Art Home" scheme set up to raise cash for Ukraine's main children's hospital during the coronavirus lockdown.

Project co-founder Ihor Krivolapov said he had seen musicians and other public figures appearing on social media around the world to raise money and spirits as the pandemic spread.

But many artists had stayed offline, behind closed doors in their studios, he told Reuters.

"We hope that our initiative will be useful ... by gathering money for charity and discovering new opportunities for artists," he added.

Dozens of other artists have joined the brothers in filming themselves making paintings, sculptures and other works while receiving comments and bids from people watching online. Auctions take place every two days.

"We can help people by doing what we normally do, without leaving the studio," Egor Zigura said.

The Zigura brothers' finished work 'Imprint' ended up going for 13,500 hryvnia (around \$500).

Piracicaba humor exhibition unveils poster with design by Iranian illustrator



A poster for the 18th edition of the Piracicaba Humor Hal designed by Iranian illustrator Saba Darabian.

A R T TEHRAN — The 18th edition of the Piracicaba Humor Hall, which is organized on the sidelines of the International Humor Exhibition of Piracicaba in Brazil, has unveiled a poster designed by Iranian illustrator Saba Darabian.

She announced the news in her Instagram post carrying an image of the poster on Thursday.

In a report, which was published about the poster by the Piracicaba City Hall, Darabian has said, "I thought of something that would be attractive to children and teenagers."

She added that she has used many colors in her design to represent the importance of art in the world and the culture and lifestyle of Brazilians.

Darabian's poster depicts a girl painting the city and its surroundings with colors from her palette and brush.

"She creates a rainbow in the real sky, demonstrating the power of art in the playful world of children," Darabian stated.

The 18th Piracicaba Humor Hall is organized by the Municipality of Piracicaba every year to encourage children between 7 and 14 to practice art and develop their intelligence through the language of graphic humor.

Iranian cartoonist Alireza Pakdel, who is the spouse of Darabian, is a member of the jury at the 47th International Humor Exhibition of Piracicaba, which will be held from August 29 to November 1.

The jury also includes Portuguese cartoonist Cristina Sampaio and Brazilian artists Joao Paulo Jindelt, Samuel Andrade, Cleriston Andrade, Marcelo Magon and Mangaba.

Pakdel and Darabian were the members of the jury for the 46th Piracicaba International Humor Exhibition.

Montreux Jazz Festival cancelled for first time in its history

GENEVA (Reuters) — The Montreux Jazz Festival will not be held in July due to the coronavirus pandemic, the first time the Swiss summer festival has not taken place since its launch in 1967, organizers said on Friday.

As the government is keeping most hygiene and social distancing measures in place for now, it is impossible to consider holding an event on such a scale, a statement said. The two-week festival along Lake Geneva draws nearly 250,000 people.

"The program planned for this summer will be partly carried over to next year's festival, which will take place from July 2 to 17, 2021," it added.

Lionel Richie and Lenny Kravitz were among those booked to play this year, it said.

Last year's eclectic line-up featured Elton John, Sting, Janet Jackson, Chick Corea and

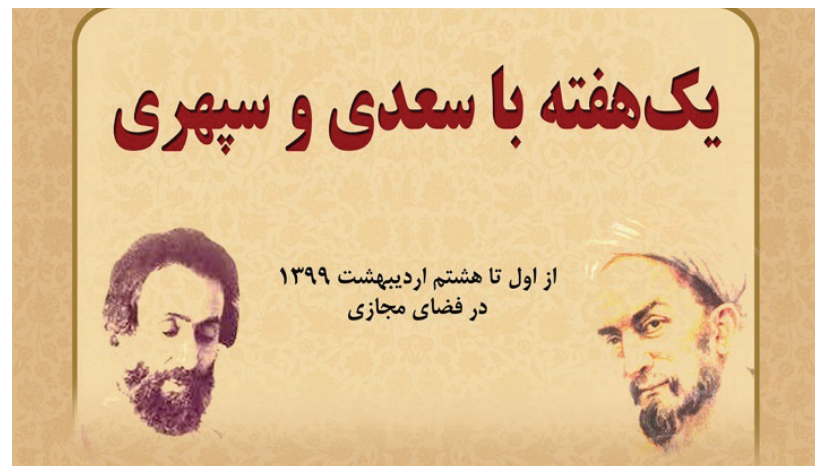


Revellers walks near the Lake shore during the 48th Montreux Jazz Festival in Montreux July 14, 2014. (Reuters/Denis Balibouse)

Radiohead frontman Thom Yorke.

Veteran American producer Quincy Jones, a former co-director of Montreux who still participates each year, calls it the "Rolls-Royce of festivals".

Book City to spend week with Sadi, Sepehri



A poster for "A Week with Sadi and Sepehri"

CULTURE TEHRAN — The Book City Institute in Tehran announced on Thursday its plan to pay tribute to the Persian poets Sheikh Muslih od-Din Sadi Shirazi and Sohrab Sepehri during a weeklong program entitled "A Week with Sadi and Sepehri".

The program, which will be organized online, is scheduled to commence on Monday, which is Sadi Day as well as the 40th anniversary of the passing of Sepehri, one of Iran's icons of Persian blank verse.

The thoughts and poetry of Sadi and Sepehri will be discussed in articles, audio files and videos, which will be presented on the official websites of the Book City Institute and the Center for the Study of Sadi, a major contributor to the program.

In line with its programs held over the past few years, the Book City Institute had first scheduled a meeting to review Sadi's

works and Polish poet Adam Bernard Mickiewicz's poetry, but the meeting was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The institute has previously organized meetings to compare Sadi's poetry with poems by Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin, Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, Yunus Emre, Victor Hugo and several other poets from around the world.

As one of the greatest figures of classical Persian literature, Sadi is famous worldwide for his Bustan (The Orchard) and Gulistan (The Rose Garden), which have been translated into many languages.

Born in 1928, Sepehri is second only to poet Nima Yushij, who is known for his pure style of blank verse. He came to prominence with the publication of his collection "The Water's Footfall" in 1965.

His works have been translated into the English, French, Italian and Spanish languages. He died of leukemia in 1980.

Chilean bestselling author Luis Sepúlveda dies in Spain of COVID-19

MADRID (Reuters) — Chilean author Luis Sepúlveda, best known for his book "The Old Man Who Read Love Stories", died on Thursday of COVID-19 in a hospital in Asturias, the region of northern Spain where he lived for several decades, his publisher and Spanish media reported.

The 70-year-old author, who exiled to Spain during the 1973-1990 dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet, had spent weeks in a hospital in Oviedo fighting the disease caused by the novel coronavirus. The writer had recently returned from a literary festival in Porto, Portugal.

"Sepúlveda traveled to almost every corner of the world from a very young age, and from that restless life emerged the gifted narration of his stories, passionate tales and novels," his Spanish publisher Tusquets Editores said in a statement.



Luis Sepúlveda, pictured in Italy in 2019. (Rex/Shutterstock/Roberto Cano)

The best-selling author, who lived in the coastal city of Gijón, wrote some 20 novels and short stories, among which are "The World at the End of the World", the crime novel "The Name of a Bullfighter" and the "Patagonia Express" travel book.