

**Ayatollah Khamenei praises IRGC's performance** **2****Youths clash with police in new night of trouble in Paris suburbs** **10****FFIRI to provide 'model contract' for clubs** **11****IA A to display treasure trove during home quarantine** **12**

# IRGC launches first military satellite into orbit

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## U.S. opposing good relations between Iran, neighbors: Takht-Ravanchi

**TEHRAN** — Majid Takht-Ravanchi, Iran's ambassador to the United Nations, has said Iran is ready to make amends with its neighbors while the U.S. remains the main obstacle to peace in Western Asia.

"The U.S. is definitely not interested in the improvement of relations between Iran and its neighbors," Takht-Ravanchi said in an interview with Asia Times published on Wednesday.

"We have always said that we want to live in peace with our neighbors," he said.

"We believe that through inclusion [rather] than exclusion, cooperation [rather] than rivalry, good neighborliness [rather] than interference in the internal affairs of others and detente [rather] than tension building, regional countries can build a better and safer region," the senior diplomat pointed out. [→3](#)

## Iranian charities donate \$83m to support COVID-19 relief

**TEHRAN** — Iranian benefactors and charity organizations have contributed 3.5 trillion rials (around \$83 million at an official rate of 42,000 rials) since the beginning of the coronavirus outbreak until March 29, Social Security Organization's deputy director announced on Wednesday.

More than 1.7 trillion rials (about \$40 million) has been provided by the national association of health donors and over 210 billion rials (nearly \$5 million) has been donated by charities affiliated to the country's hospitals, IRNA quoted Zahra Abedini as saying. [→9](#)

## How is COVID-19 affecting travel in Iran? Experts explain

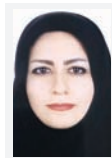
**By Afshin Majlesi**

**TEHRAN** — As you are well aware, nearly all travel businesses have been disrupted worldwide in the wake of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Weighing tourism losses is not easy to gage, as the data changes rapidly and the virus behavior is less-known. However, one thing is evident; if the pandemic continues

for the months to come, it will lead to the loss of tens of millions of jobs and billions of dollars in revenues in the global scene.

Being shut down for the past two months, Iran's travel industry is among the hardest hit. If the question is, 'Will there be light at the end of the tunnel?' Many experts say yes, considering Iran's gigantic tourism potentials. [→8](#)



### ARTICLE

**Haniyeh Sadat Jafariyeh**  
Tehran Times Journalist

## Iran practicing, learning corona-friendly lifestyle

**T**wo months since the first cases of Covid-19 were detected in Iran in mid-February, the Iranian nation is getting adapted to its new lifestyle under the toughest US sanctions.

All 31 provinces of the country are now battling against the disease; with more than 85,996 confirmed cases and 5,391 deaths as of Monday April, 22.

How Iran reacted to the breakout can be discussed in two aspects: governmental measures and society's spontaneous moves.

### ■ Governmental measures:

Iranian administration avoided a coronavirus lockdown in cities. Its pivotal anti-coronavirus policy to break the transmission chain mainly revolves around 'public awareness' besides 'formation of a national unity to combat the disease'. It urges people to stay at home, warning that Iran may face loops of coronavirus resurgence in case mass closures policy is not followed. The government has assured Iranians that 85 percent of Covid-19 cases recover by self-quarantine, without any treatment.

In general, the Rouhani administration has preferred people to go on with their normal economic and social life. In his remarks in late February President Rouhni admitted that "Coronavirus must not be turned into a weapon for our enemies to halt work and production in our country."

The government has sought to carry out economic activities and health protocols together, letting administrative, productive and economic activities go on.

The government started implementation of a plan initially titled 'social distancing' or 'physical distancing plan', in late March. With the first and second phases of the physical distancing plan's good achievements, the scheme was then improved to its third phase i.e. 'smart social distancing', in early April across the country; including development of health protocols according to the needs of each sector for the safe reopening of businesses and other protective measures to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

Some initiatives and plans to curb spread of the lethal virus have been implemented as of the outbreak. [→9](#)

## Historic fall in U.S. oil prices amid virus outbreak

**By Salman Parviz**

**TEHRAN** — When the capital city of Tehran partially emerged out of the shutdown on Saturday, we witnessed some traffic on the roads for the first time after almost a month, since the beginning of Nowruz holidays. President Hassan Rouhani has refused to implement 24-hour lockdowns seen in other Middle Eastern countries.

The demand for crude has been on a downward trend as most of the major cities of the world still remain in lockdown as Western Texas Intermediate (WTI) plunged 40 percent on Monday trading at negative \$37.63. This is the first time in history that U.S. oil futures has entered the red zone.

Oil prices collapsed to more than 60 percent since beginning of 2020, helping pave the way for Saudi Arabia and Russia to co-

ordinate a record 9.7 million barrels a day of output cuts until end of June at OPEC+ April 10 meeting. However, the meeting failed to produce results.

Storage facilities are now struggling to deal with the glut of oil caused by the reduction in demand. Analysts say negative prices could return for June, given the surplus environment and absence of meaningful demand recovery. The fall on Monday was also partly a result of market technicality, with Tuesday marking the final trading day of WTI futures contract for delivery in May.

WTI contracts for delivery in June were still trading above \$20 a barrel, even though they had fallen from near \$60 at the start of the year. Brent crude, the international benchmark, is better insulated as it is a seaborne crude, making storage less of an issue as long as traders can

charter supertankers. Brent price is hovering around \$26 a barrel on Wednesday.

The economic impact of the lockdowns has resulted in bleak economic figures all over the world.

According to Tehran-based economic daily Financial Tribune the most biting of Iran's economic challenges for the new year (started March 21) are the U.S. sanctions, depletion of foreign reserves combined by economic losses due to coronavirus outbreak and disruption caused to business that would reduce tax revenue.

IMF predicts the country's economic growth (real GDP) to reach 3.1 percent in 2021 after a contraction of minus six percent in 2020.

With official unemployment rate at 10.6 percent last year (ended March 21) we are expected to brace for a tough year ahead due to the impact of COVID-19 outbreak. [→7](#)

## Projects worth over \$1.4b underway in Iranian ports

**TERHAN** — Some 11 new development projects with 59 trillion rials (over \$1.4 billion) of investment are currently underway in the Iranian ports, according to the head of Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO).

Mohammad Rastad said, "In the last [Iranian calendar] year (ended on March 19), despite the difficult economic conditions, 11 private investment projects valued at 59 trillion rials were started in the country's ports under BOT (build-operate-transfer) contracts", IRNA reported on Wednesday.

According to the official, following the PMO plans for development of the country's ports, last year 12 development projects worth 9 trillion

rials (about \$214 million) were completed in collaboration with the private sector.

He further noted that his organization has also allocated 21 trillion rials (about \$500 million) of its internal resources to such development projects in the current year.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Rastad noted that port machinery worth over €20 million, which were supposed to be imported into the country in the previous year, were built by domestic companies and installed in Shahid Rajaei Port (Iran's largest container port) in the southern province of Hormozgan).

According to the deputy transport minister,

52.5 million tons of non-oil commodities were exported from Iranian ports in the previous year.

The official further noted that this year, three phases of Shahid Rajaei port will be put into operation and 900 meters of wharves will also be inaugurated to increase the port's container capacity.

In late March, Rastad announced that PMO is going to pay 36 trillion rials (about \$857 million) for supplying marine fleet during the current Iranian calendar year.

The official said this fund will be paid to the marine industries of the country for supplying the required fleet this year, which is named the year of "Surge in Production".



## Drawing "National Heroes" embellishes Iranian medical staff

**TEHRAN** — Iran's State Post Company has recently unveiled a postage stamp bearing graphic designer Alireza Zakeri's drawing "National Heroes" to salute doctors and medical staff fighting COVID-19.

The design depicts doctors and health workers wearing face masks beside Iranian soldiers wearing chemical gas masks in the frontline during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war.

"During the first days of the spread of the new virus I had to go to the emergency department of a hospital and I saw the difficult moments of doctors and nurses in visiting the patients, and I vividly remembered the war days and the hardships on the frontlines," Zakeri told the Persian service of Honaronline. [→12](#)



### ARTICLE

**Faranak Bakhtiari**  
Tehran Times journalist

## Why corona lockdown did not bring Tehran cleaner air?

**M**any cities around the world have enjoyed cleaner air since restrictive measures were applied due to the coronavirus outbreak. However, Tehran, being hit by nitrogen oxides (NOX) pollutant, has experienced less clean air days.

Many countries across the world declared a lockdown to prevent disease transmission, so that polluted megacities such as Bangkok, Beijing, New Delhi, Sao Paulo and Bogota, all reported an unprecedented decline in air pollution.

A national social distancing plan started in Iran on March 28 to stop the spread of the virus, which resulted in a 50 to 90 percent reduction in traffic in cities. This is while, the capital city of Tehran is still choking on NOX pollutant.

Ozone in the lower atmosphere is formed by the reaction of sunlight on air containing hydrocarbons and nitrogen oxides (NOX) that react to form ozone directly at the source of the pollution namely, cars, industry, gas vapors, chemical solvents, fuel combustion.

According to the statistics published by Air Quality Control Company, Tehran air quality index (AQI) demonstrated 14 days of excellent air since the beginning of this year (March 21), while during the same period last year, Tehraners breathed 22 days of clean air.

An AQI is used to communicate to the public how polluted the air currently is or how polluted it is forecast to become.

The index categorizes conditions according to a measure of polluting matters into excellent (0-50), good (51-100), lightly polluted or unhealthy for sensitive groups (101-150), moderately polluted (151-200), heavily polluted (201-300) and severely polluted (301-500).

This is while, last year over the same period 11 days of good quality air reported in the city, while this year it increased to 19 days.

The concentration of other pollutants in Tehran also has increased in the first month of spring compared to the same period last year. [→9](#)