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FAO, Iran cooperate to support capacity building

Maximo Torero, assistant director general for the Economic and Social Development Department at FAO

ARTICLE
Mohammad Jafari
Tehran Times journalist

Tel Aviv must adhere to Geneva Conventions, render medical services to Palestinians amid COVID-19 pandemic

According to Article 56 of the 4th Geneva Convention, the Occupying Power has the duty of ensuring and maintaining, with the co-operation of national and local authorities, the medical and hospital establishments and services to the occupied country's people.

Head of the Mental Health Unit at the Palestine Ministry of Health Samah Jabr, in her report published by the Middle East Monitor, criticized Tel Aviv for ignoring its commitments to the Geneva Conventions and leaving the Palestinians in West Bank and Gaza widely underserved during coronavirus spread.

The Geneva Conventions are a body of international law designed to establish acceptable and humanitarian conduct under conditions of war and occupation. There are four Geneva Conventions, established in 1949, and two additional "Protocols" adopted in 1977. Israel signed the Geneva Conventions on Dec. 8, 1949, and ratified them on Jul. 6, 1951.

On Dec. 5, 2001, 114 of the "High Contracting Parties" (i.e. the sponsors) of the Fourth Geneva Convention unanimously "reaffirmed the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem..." In addition, they "reaffirmed the illegality of the settlements in the said territories and the extension thereof." This specifically counters Israeli arguments that the Fourth Geneva Convention doesn't apply to Jewish colonies in the Occupied Territories.

"I write this on a day that saw the confirmation of a sudden and delayed rise of Covid-19 cases among Palestinians in the small neighborhood of Silwan, East Jerusalem. On this very day, I had been denied access to my workplace in Ramallah by Israeli soldiers at the Qalandia Checkpoint, in spite of having shown them my card as an official emergency officer from the Palestinian Ministry of Health—a document which was dismissed by the soldiers with the statement, "We don't recognize such a card," she went on to say. →7

Iran monitoring U.S. moves, but will never start a war: Rouhani

TEHRAN — President Hassan Rouhani said on Saturday that Iran is monitoring the United States' moves in the region, however, it will never start a war in the region.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran monitors the United States' moves activity and accurately, however, it will never start a conflict and tension in the region," he told Qatari Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani in a phone conversation.

The Qatari Emir highlighted the need that all countries make efforts to prevent tension in the region.

Iran's Foreign Ministry on Thursday summoned the Swiss ambassador to protest President Donald Trump's provocative statement and the U.S. Navy's acts of harassment in the Persian Gulf.

The Swiss envoy to Tehran, as representative of the United States' interests, was summoned to the Foreign Ministry in this respect. Iran's strong

protest over the country's presence and illegal and destabilizing actions in northern parts of the Persian Gulf and Iran's coasts was conveyed in a note," Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi stated.

Iran has also warned that it is essential for all sides to observe international law of shipping, Mousavi said.

He added Iran has warned that it will give a proper response to any threat or illegal action.

U.S. Navy issued a statement on April 15 claiming that 11 Iranian IRGC boats had closed in on up to six U.S. naval vessels in the Persian Gulf "in dangerous and harassing approaches".

Following the statement, U.S. President Donald Trump said on April 22 that he had told the Navy to "shoot down and destroy" Iranian gunboats that "harass" U.S. ships.

Making such open military threats as the world,

including the U.S. and Iran, are caught in the struggle against the coronavirus pandemic is surprising.

Mousavi said, "The Islamic Republic of Iran condemns threatening and provocative remarks by the president of the United States and advised Mr. Trump to use its military fleet in helping contain the coronavirus inside the United States, which has turned into the most contaminated spot in the world, instead of seeking adventurism."

Foreign Minister Zarif also reacted to Trump's military threats, suggesting that it is better that Trump pay attention to the needs of U.S. military personnel that over 5000 of them are suffering from the Covid-19 rather than "engage in threats cheered on by Saddam's terrorists".

Writing on his Twitter account, Zarif also said, "U.S. forces have no business 7,000 miles away from home, provoking our sailors off our OWN Persian Gulf shores."

Iran's monthly crude steel output up 14% yr/yr: WSA

TEHRAN — Production of crude steel in Iran has risen 14.1 percent in March 2020 from March 2019, Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMDR) announced citing the data indicated in the World Steel Association (WSA)'s latest report.

The WSA's report, which is on steel production by 64 countries, put Iran's steel output at over 2.8 million tons in March, IRNA reported.

The report also says that crude steel production by the 64 producers has fallen 1.3 percent during the first quarter of this year from the same time span in the past year.

Production by China, the world's largest

steel producer, dropped 1.7 percent in March, while rising 1.2 percent in the first quarter on an annual basis, the same report confirmed.

Meanwhile, production by India, Japan, and South Korea fell 13.9 percent, 9.7 percent and 7.9 percent, respectively, during the first month of the current year compared to the same month in the previous year.

Iran's monthly performance was reported as being prominent in the region, as its rival Turkey could achieve a growth of just 4.1 percent in March.

WSA has previously announced that Iran's crude steel production climbed 30 percent in

2019 while the average global growth in this sector stood at 3.5 percent.

According to the global organization, Iran produced 31.9 million tons of crude steel in 2019, while the figure was 24 million tons in 2018.

The data and reports released by Iranian organizations also show that the country's steel sector is still experiencing growth in output and export despite the U.S. sanctions.

In early May 2019, Washington imposed new sanctions on Iran's metals and minerals sectors in an attempt to [as the U.S. president Trump put it] "choke off the country's largest non-petroleum related sources of export revenue".



Rosewater festivals go virtual amid virus pandemic

TEHRAN — Every year, by late April, tens of festivals of rose and rosewater starts to take the center stage in the central Iranian city of Kashan along with other nearby townships and villages.

This year, however, as the country is battling coronavirus outbreak, the festivals are available to visitors on social media.

The distillation ceremonies, which are commonly known as "Golab-giri", usually attract thousands of people from different parts of the country and abroad to witness the iconic tradition of the region. →8

Exclusive: IWF acting president Papandrea lauds Iranians

By Masoud Hossein
TEHRAN — International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) acting president Ursula Papandrea says the Iranian women lifters have risen faster than even expected and she is very happy for them.

Papandrea was elected the first-ever female vice president for the International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) in May 2017. Now, she is the IWF acting president

after Tamas Ajan was forced to step down from active duty.

This resignation comes amid the ongoing investigation of allegations of financial corruption, false drug testing, and subsequent cover-up made against Ajan and the IWF.

The IWF's Oversight and Integrity Commission, which is chaired by Papandrea, has also been mandated to continue its work until June 19. →11

Jiroft, a magnificent cradle of civilization

TEHRAN — The discovery of the magnificent Jiroft site came by accident in the very early 21st century when rounds of heavy flood along the Halil River swept the topsoil off thousands of previously unknown tombs and led to discovery of many artifacts believed by archeologists to belong to the early

Bronze Age (late 3rd millennium BC).

Early reports said, "An old object was seen floating on the surface of the water." Realizing it was precious, the following day, villagers impoverished by two years of drought, swarmed the river banks in search of 5,000-year-old antiquities. →8

Iran says France and Britain have given in to U.S. bullying

TEHRAN — Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said on Friday that France and Britain's stance on Iran's launch of a military satellite shows that Paris and London have given in to the United States' bullying.

"The European countries' lack of action against the United States while it violated the United Nations Security Council's Resolution 2231 by quitting the JCPOA [the 2015 nuclear deal] shows their double

standards and also giving in to the United States' bullying," Mousavi pointed out.

He strongly dismissed France and Britain's biased interpretation of the UN Security Council Resolution 2231.

"Iran's nuclear program is just for peaceful purposes based on fatwa issued by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution [Ayatollah Ali Khamenei] which has been approved by reports of the International Atomic Energy Agency. →2

World leaders launch plan to speed COVID-19 drugs, vaccine; U.S. stays away

World leaders pledged to accelerate work on tests, drugs and vaccines against COVID-19 and to share them around the globe, but the United States did not take part in the launch of the World Health Organization (WHO) initiative.

French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and South African President Cyril Ramaphosa were among those who joined a video conference to launch what the WHO billed as a "landmark collaboration" to fight the pandemic, Reuters reported.

The aim is to speed development of safe and effective drugs, tests and vaccines to prevent, diagnose and treat COVID-19, the lung disease caused by the novel coronavirus - and ensure equal access to treatments for rich and poor.

■ **"Common fight"**

Leaders from Asia, the Middle East and the Americas also joined the video-conference, but several big countries did not participate, including China, India and Russia.

A spokesman for the U.S. mission in Geneva had earlier told Reuters that the United States would not be involved.

"Although the United States was not in attendance at the meeting in question, there should be no doubt about our continuing determination to lead on global health matters, including the current COVID crisis," he said by email.

"We remain deeply concerned about the WHO's effectiveness, given that its gross failures helped fuel the current pandemic," he later said.

U.S. President Donald Trump has lambasted the WHO as being slow to react to the outbreak and being "China-centric" and announced a suspension of funding.

Tedros has steadfastly defended the WHO's handling of the pandemic and repeatedly committed to conducting a post-pandemic evaluation, as the agency does with all crises.

Macron, Merkel, Ramaphosa, and Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez were among those voicing strong support to WHO.

Macron urged all G7 and G20 countries to get behind the initiative, adding: "And I hope we'll manage to reconcile around this joint initiative both China and the U.S., because this is about saying 'the fight against COVID-19 is a common human good and there should be no division in order to win this battle'."