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Ali Karimi the best ever Iranian player: Podolski 11



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Private sector bidding to shield production from coronavirus



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The shape of things to come

By Chris Cook & Mahmood Khaghani

Like everyone else, Iranians observed the extraordinary U.S. oil market events of 20th & 21st April 2020 and wondered what on earth was going on, and what it means for Iran's future as a major oil producer. In Tehran in October 2008 I recall similar astonishment as the global dollar financial system experienced a meltdown from which Iran was safely insulated. It has been said that history does not

repeat itself, but it does rhyme. Once again, Iran is insulated from market turmoil through US financial and physical oil market sanctions and is 'on the outside looking in'. Global lockdowns are believed to have cut oil product demand by up to 30m barrels per day and this demand shock is propagating up the supply chain of refineries and oil distribution systems to producers at the well. →5

124 historical monuments restored in northeast Iran

TEHRAN — Some 124 historical buildings and structures in Khorasan Razavi province, northeast Iran, were restored during the previous Iranian calendar year 1398 (ended March 20).

Ferdowsi mausoleum, Tus Tower, Ancient Windmills of Nashtifan, Ghyasieh School and Ribat-i Sharaf are among the restored sites, IRNA quoted Abolfazl Mokarramifard, the provincial tourism chief, as saying on Monday.

He also explained that some of these historical buildings have the potential to be placed on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

The restoration projects aimed at preserving, protecting and strengthening the historical sites, which were damaged over the years, he concluded.

The holy shrine of Imam Reza (AS), the eighth Shia Imam, in the province's capital city of Mashhad, attracts thousands of pilgrims each day. →8

Martyr Soleimani's memories of Iran-Iraq war up for release

TEHRAN — Sebte Akbar Publications announced on Monday that a book recounting commander Qassem Soleimani's memories of the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war will be released after the end of the holy month of Ramadan.

The book named "Our Blessed Comrade" has been compiled by Asadollah Mohammadinia and Mohammad Mohammadinia, the director of the publisher,

Gholamhossein Qasemi, told the Persian service of MNA.

The book also contains a chapter covering comments by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei about Soleimani and some of his memories of the former commander of IRGC Quds Forces who was assassinated in a U.S. airstrike in Baghdad in January. →12



ARTICLE

Bill Van Auker
Political analyst

Merchants of death: Multibillion-dollar bailout for arms industry amid rising COVID-19 toll

"I have instructed the United States Navy to shoot down and destroy any and all Iranian gunboats if they harass our ships at sea," U.S. President Donald Trump tweeted Wednesday in a startling threat that could trigger a catastrophic war throughout the Middle East and beyond.

The threat to launch a war 7,000 miles from U.S. shores in the midst of coronavirus pandemic, whose death toll in the U.S. is rapidly approaching 50,000, comes on the heels of Trump's Monday night tweet announcing a suspension of all immigration into the United States, a transparent attempt to scapegoat immigrants for the ravages of the pandemic and the layoffs of tens of millions of workers.

There is in both of these actions an expression of desperation and a flailing about in the face of a national and global crisis for which the U.S. ruling class has no viable solution. It is a crude attempt to change the subject and divert public attention from the catastrophic consequences of the criminal indifference of the government and the ruling oligarchy it represents to the lives and well-being of the vast majority of the population.

Pentagon officials reported Wednesday that they had received no prior notification of Trump's tweet, much less any orders for a change in the rules of engagement in the Persian Gulf.

Nonetheless, the brutal and fascist rhetoric of Trump reflects a drive to war by U.S. imperialism that has not been tempered, but rather intensified, by the global pandemic.

Even as Trump issued his tweet, U.S. warships were sailing toward a confrontation with China in the South China Sea. At the same time, the Pentagon was announcing a shift in its deployment of long-range, nuclear capable B-52 bombers to make their presence less predictable to Beijing and Moscow and thereby ratchet up tensions. →7

Russia calls U.S. claims about Iran's launch of satellite 'hypocrisy'

TEHRAN — Mikhail Ulyanov, Russia's permanent representative to the Vienna-based international organizations, has said claims by the United States that the launch of a satellite by Iran is a violation of the UN Security Council Resolution 2231 are instances of "double standards" and "hypocrisy".

"US claims that recent launch of a military satellite by Iran is a violation of 2231 UNSC res. Wrong interpretation. But there is also a different curious aspect- the US attempt to build on the resolution, which it undermines by all possible means. Double standards and hypocrisy," Ulyanov tweeted on Sunday.

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps successfully launched Iran's first military satellite into the orbit on Wednesday, April 22.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo claimed

the launch violated the Security Council resolution.

"I think every nation has an obligation to go to the United Nations and evaluate whether this missile launch was consistent with that Security Council resolution," Pompeo told reporters, according to the Guardian.

In a statement on Thursday, France also claimed the launch was in contravention of Resolution 2231 and called on Tehran to immediately cease all activities related to the development of ballistic missiles designed to be capable of carrying nuclear warheads.

Britain also claimed on Friday that Iran's launch of the military satellite is inconsistent with a UN Security Council resolution.

Germany also said that Berlin's position on the Islamic Republic's missile program has not changed, and the program has a destabilizing impact on the region.

In response, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Friday that both the U.S. and Europe cannot lecture Iran based on misreading of the Resolution 2231 which endorsed the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

Zarif said the United States has violated Resolution 2231 and Europe has obeyed Washington instead of abiding by the resolution.

"US has been bullying all against UNSC Resolution 2231 since 2017. Europe obeyed US instead of 2231. Neither can lecture Iran based on flimsy misreadings of UNSCR 2231," Zarif tweeted.

Zarif said, "Iran neither has nukes nor missiles 'DESIGNED' to be capable of carrying such horrific arms."

Zarif also posted news headlines which say the U.S., France, Britain and the Zionist regime of Israel possess and develop nuclear weapons. →2

Syria air defenses down Israeli missiles over Damascus

Syrian air defenses have thwarted an Israeli aggression, and shot down a number of "hostile" missiles in the skies over the capital, Damascus, before reaching their targets.

The official Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) said the aggression took place in the early hours of Monday, which left three civilians dead.

According to the report, the Israeli missiles came from the Lebanese airspace.

Since the start of the foreign-backed war on Syria in 2011, Israel has carried out hundreds of strikes in the country, targeting government troops and their allies.

Last Monday, the Syrian air defenses intercepted a number of Israeli missiles over the ancient

city of Palmyra in the central province of Homs, and downed "a number of enemy's missiles".

Back then, Israeli media claimed that the target site was the T4 base in Homs, a base that Israel has attacked a number of times in the past.

The air defense units of the Syrian army responded to the Israeli aggression over the airspace of Palmyra, Syria's official news agency reported on Monday night.

"A number of enemy's missiles have been shot down" by the Syrian air defenses, SANA quoted its correspondent as saying.

Israeli media claim that the target site was the T4 base in Homs, a base that Israel had attacked a number of times in the past.



Iran's flag on Swiss iconic mountain shows sympathy in battling coronavirus

TEHRAN — In a symbolic gesture, Switzerland sympathized with the Iranian people in the face of the coronavirus pandemic by projecting the Iranian flag on mountain of the Matterhorn, one of the country's most famous peaks.

The Swiss Embassy in Tehran posted a picture on its official page on Instagram, last night, on the most iconic mountain in Switzerland, Matterhorn, the Iranian flag was projected to send a message of hope, strength and perseverance to the Iranian people in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis. The image went viral among Iranian users in social media who highly praised the move.

Since almost a month, every night the Matterhorn is illuminating different symbols, to give the people hope and show solidarity to the world, the projections are also 'to say thank you to all the people working hard during this crisis.



REPORT

Faranak Bakhtiari
Tehran Times journalist

Building resilient cities, a post-coronavirus necessity

When a global disaster spreads out in the form of coronavirus pandemic, how communities will survive the aftermath crosses everyone's mind. However, how can one particular intervention succeed in strengthening a city against epidemics and disasters?

Some economists and social scientists believe that should not be returned to the current dense life because large cities are more vulnerable to viruses and accidents.

The analysis on various incidents and crises, such as the outbreak of coronavirus and biological warfare, shows that the most affected areas are densely populated, large and crowded cities, and what mostly remains will be villages and suburbs. Accordingly, experts believe that resilient cities should be developed and prepared for the future.

Urban resilience is the ability or capacity of a city to survive and thrive in the face of disaster, any kind of disaster. It turns out that the capacities that cities or states, or nations need to survive and thrive in the face of all these different threats are pretty broad. It includes a good infrastructure that promotes mobility and sustainable transportation. It's also cohesive communities where neighbors check in on neighbors. It's a diverse economy with a strong middle-class jobs base. It's good governance with multiple stakeholders at a decision-making table. All of those things help communities overcome whatever the next crisis might be.

The outbreak of diseases, which affects all countries today and has claimed millions of lives and killed hundreds of thousands, has doubled the importance of addressing resilient cities where new crises such as biological warfare are more likely to be countered.

Seyyed Abdul-Hossein Sasan, an economic and political analyst, explained that resilience is used for cities, villages, and industry; in all three cases, reliance is defined from the perspectives of natural disasters, accidents, health, economic, social, cultural, physical and ecological characteristics. →9

Iranian general calls U.S. 'uninvited guest' of Persian Gulf

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The chief of the Iranian Army Command and General Staff College (DAFOOS) said on Monday that the United States is an “uninvited guest” in the Persian Gulf region.



“The Persian Gulf is like a big old house which has eight doors and independent rooms and also a yard which is shared by this eight neighbors. If a guest comes, he has to leave after a while, because a guest should not stay permanently,” General Hossein Valivand told reporters on the sidelines of a ceremony held to mark the national day of the Persian Gulf.

He said this “uninvited guest” is the U.S. who must leave. The top military officer noted that Iran wants the U.S. and all other foreign forces to leave the Persian Gulf region.

“We guarantee security of the Persian Gulf by the Army's Navy and the Guards [the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps] and also by cooperation with other neighbors and the countries we have formed military coalition with,” he said.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said on April 20 that foreign forces' presence in the region is the source of insecurity, instability and tension.

“We consider presence of the foreign forces, especially forces of the United States, in the region a source of tension, instability and insecurity. Their presence is illegal and illegitimate. This is our region and our armed forces must be able to patrol without hurdle,” he said in a press conference held through video conference.

He said, “This issue led to our forces' response. It has been for thousands of years that Iran is in this region and the regional security must be provided by the regional countries, especially Oman which is in the Strait of Hormuz region.”

He urged foreign forces to leave the region and not make Iran give them warning.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif wrote on his Twitter page on April 23 that “US forces have no business 7,000 miles away from home, provoking our sailors off our OWN Persian Gulf shores.”

It came after U.S. President Donald Trump said he had ordered the U.S. Navy to destroy Iranian boats “if they harass” U.S. ships in the Persian Gulf.

“I have instructed the United States Navy to shoot down and destroy any and all Iranian gunboats if they harass our ships at sea,” Trump said in a tweet on April 22.

The IRGC has rejected the U.S. description of the Iranian boats' behavior in the Persian Gulf, saying such such description is like “Hollywood scenarios”.

Respect international rules while passing Persian Gulf and Sea of Oman, Iranian military tells U.S.

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The General Headquarters of the Iranian Armed Forces issued a statement on Monday advising the U.S. and its allies to honor international rules and regulations while passing Iran's exclusive economic waters in the Sea of Oman and the Persian Gulf and avoid creating any tension or conflict.

These rules also apply in the airspace (FIR) and air defense identification zone (ADIZ) of the two mentioned regions, the statement said.

It added any “illegal and provocative move” will face the crushing response of the Iranian armed forces.

Iran's FM felicitates Netherlands on National Day

TEHRAN (ISNA) — Iran's Foreign Minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, has felicitated the National Day of the Netherlands.

In a message to Dutch Foreign Minister Stef Blok on Monday, Zarif also wished evermore success and prosperity for the Dutch government and people.

Emphasizing the need for cooperation between countries at global level to contain the coronavirus, he expressed hope that friendly ties between the two countries would be developed in the areas of mutual interests.

Judiciary chief: U.S., European anti-Iran allegations 'natural'

TEHRAN (FNA) — Iranian Judiciary Chief Ayatollah Seyed Ebrahim Raisi said on Monday that it is natural for the U.S. and European countries to heap up accusations against Iran as they oppose the country's progress.

“Today, they are against what the Guard (the IRGC) did to make Iran stronger, and this is natural,” Raisi stressed.

He strongly ruled out U.S. and some European countries' accusations that the recent Noor-1 satellite launch was in breach of UN Security Council Resolution 2231.

“We should not pay attention to this ballyhoo, rather we should continue the course with more power,” he said.

Meanwhile, Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Seyed Abbas Mousavi said on Thursday April 23 that advancing in science and technology, especially in the field of aerospace, is Iran's legal right, emphasizing that launching satellite ‘Nour’ is in line with Iran's defense policy.

The spokesman made the remarks in reaction to the U.S. recent stance on Tehran's putting its military satellite in the orbit, describing it as interference in Iran's internal affairs.

Zarif to Pompeo: Stop dreaming

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has advised U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to “stop dreaming”, saying the Iranians always decide their destiny.

“2 yrs ago, @SecPompeo and his boss declared ‘CEASING US participation’ in JCPOA, dreaming that their ‘max pressure’ would bring Iran to its knees. Given that policy's abject failure, he now wants to be JCPOA participant. Stop dreaming: Iranian Nation always decides its destiny,” Zarif tweeted on Monday.

In a report published by The New York Times on Sunday, it is said that Pompeo is preparing a legal argument that the United States remains a participant in the Iran nuclear accord that President Trump has renounced, part of an intricate strategy to pressure the United Nations Security Council to extend an arms embargo on Tehran or see far more stringent sanctions reimposed on the country.

“In an effort to force the issue, Mr. Pompeo has approved a plan, bound to be opposed by many of Washington's European allies, under which the United



States would, in essence, claim it legally remains a ‘participant state’ in the nuclear accord that Mr. Trump has denounced — but only for the purposes of invoking

a ‘snapback’ that would restore the UN sanctions on Iran that were in place before the accord,” The Times said. Trump unilaterally quit the nuclear deal

Rouhani talks to Widodo, says U.S. sanctions go against fundamental human rights

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — President Hassan Rouhani said on Monday that the United States' sanctions are against the fundamental human rights.

“Illegal opposition, when all the countries in the world are fighting the coronavirus, can be dangerous,” he said in a phone conversation with Indonesian President Joko Widodo.

Rouhani said that Iran has made great achievements in producing diagnostic kits, ventilators, CT scan system and N95 face masks and is ready to cooperate and interact with Indonesia.

Donald Trump's administration is not only refusing to remove its illegal sanctions on Iran, it is also blocking Tehran's efforts to get emergency loan from the International Monetary Fund to cope with

the coronavirus crisis.

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.

■ Rouhani, Widodo discuss expansion of ties

Rouhani and Widodo also discussed expansion of ties and cooperation in various areas in line with benefits of the two nations.

Widodo said, “Today, the coronavirus has caused a difficult situation in the world and all Islamic countries must help each other in this situation.”

Russia calls U.S. claims about Iran's launch of satellite 'hypocrisy'

1 → Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said on Friday that France and Britain's stance on Iran's launch of the 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 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 resolution.

“Iran's nuclear program is just for peaceful purposes based on the fatwa issued by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution [Ayatollah Ali Khamenei] which has been approved by (numerous) reports of the International Atomic Energy Agency. So, Iran's space program is for defensive objectives and has not been designed for other purposes,” he said.



Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova on Thursday dismissed the U.S. claim that Iran violated resolution 2231 and accused Washington of being in violation of the nuclear deal.

Addressing a news conference in Moscow on Thursday, she said that this would not be the first time that a nation (U.S.) that has “flagrantly breached the norms of international law and violated the UNSC Resolution 2231”.

The 2015 nuclear deal, known as the JCPOA, was endorsed by the Resolution 2231. The United States officially quit the JCPOA in May 2018 and the European countries have since failed to guarantee Iran's benefits from the international deal.

Resolution 2231 terminated the provisions of previous UN resolutions against Iran. It also “calls on” Iran “not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons, including launches using such ballistic missile technology.”

Tehran has always said it has no nuclear warheads and that none of its missiles have been designed to carry nuclear weapons.

Launch of satellite proves sanctions have not impeded Iran's growth: IRGC spokesman

making progress.

Sharif praised scientists and all the people involved in manufacturing and launching the satellite.

On Wednesday, the IRGC fired the Noor-1 aboard Qassed (messenger) satellite carrier during an operation that was staged in Dasht-e Kavir, Iran's sprawling central desert, which was placed into the orbit 425 kilometers above Earth's surface.

In a series of tweets on Friday, Chris Murphy, a U.S. senator, said that Iran's satellite launch proved that the policies adopted by President Donald Trump have strengthened Iran and weakened America in West Asia compared with four years ago.

He described Iran's action as “more proof that Trump's Iran policy just strengthens Iran.”

“Today we learned Iran has launched its first military satellite - more proof that Trump's Iran policy just strengthens Iran and causes them to act more aggressively,” the senator wrote.

“In virtually every way, Iran is stronger today in the Middle East [West Asia], and America is weaker, than 4 years ago,” he said.

Referring to the Trump-ordered assassination of Iran's top general Qassem Soleimani, Murphy remarked that although “Trump told us that the Soleimani killing would deter Iran, attacks on U.S. forces have increased, not decreased, since the Soleimani strike.”

“Trump blew up the nuclear deal and promised to build a new system of international pressure to force the Iranians into a new, better deal,” Murphy said, adding, “Obviously, that failed miserably.

Nobody signed up for the new sanctions & Iran restarted their nuclear program. And no new, better deal.”

“Trump's policy of diplomatic withdrawal, unilateral economic sanctions, and blind, non-strategic military escalation has done nothing but play into Iran's hands,” said the senator.

“They are stronger. We are weaker. And the launch of this satellite is just more proof,” he concluded.

On May 8, 2018, Trump withdrew the United States from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which Iran struck with six countries including the U.S., the UK, France, Russia, China and Germany.

Under the JCPOA, Iran had agreed to limit parts of its peaceful nuclear program in exchange for the removal of all economic and financial sanctions.

Pompeo to claim U.S. didn't quit Iran nuclear deal to make UN impose arms embargo

(Press TV) — U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is reportedly going to claim that Washington has not quit the Iran nuclear deal and technically remains a “participant state,” in order to use a mechanism embedded within the accord to make the UN impose arms embargo on Tehran.

This way, the American war hawk and former CIA chief aims to invoke a “snapback” in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action to restore the United Nations sanctions on Iran, lifted after the internationally backed accord was reached in the President Barrack Obama administration, The New York Times reported Sunday.

“We cannot allow the Islamic Republic of Iran to purchase conventional weapons in six months. President Obama should never have agreed to end the UN arms embargo,” Pompeo claimed. “We are prepared to exercise all of our diplomatic options to ensure the arms embargo stays in

place at the UN Security Council.”

This is while United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres called on the U.S. last month to suspend its sanctions due to the fast growing Covid-19 pandemic.

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

The American-drafted resolution, concocted by Pompeo, has already been given to the Europeans, the Saudis and the United Arab Emirates.

Revealing the depth of the U.S. double policies, Pompeo's argument comes after his boss, President Donald Trump, unilaterally withdrew the United States from the JCPOA, also backed by Britain, Germany, France, China and Russia.



During Pompeo's office the world has become 'less secure': Foreign Ministry

Tehran refers to Pompeo as 'Secretary of Hate'

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Tehran has referred to U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo as "Secretary of Hate", saying Pompeo has achieved nothing since he assumed the post two years ago.

"After 2 years in office, US Secretary of State Pompeo, a.k.a #Secretary_of_Hate, has literally achieved NOTHING in diplomacy," Iran's Foreign Ministry said via Twitter on Sunday evening.

It added, "During his tenure, the Earth globe europe-africa has been less secure & the Flag of United States has been more hated, humiliated; no peace achieved and no stability restored globally! #Shame"

It came a day after Pompeo called on the United Nations Security Council to extend its arms embargo on Iran, which will otherwise expire in October.

Citing the Islamic Republic's recent satellite launch, Pompeo said in a statement on Saturday that Tehran should not be allowed to buy and sell conventional weapons.



On Wednesday, the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) successfully launched

Iran's first military satellite into the orbit. The first military satellite, dubbed

Noor 1 [Light 1], was launched upon Ghased (Messenger) satellite carrier in the early hours of Wednesday from a location in the central desert of Iran, Sepah News reported.

Pompeo pointed to the announcement, claiming it showed that Iran's space program was in fact "neither peaceful nor entirely civilian".

He claimed that the technology used to launch the satellite was compatible with that used to launch ballistic missiles, saying "Iran's dangerous missile programs" need to be constrained.

Under the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, which the U.S. abandoned in May 2018, a UN ban on weapons sales to Tehran will end in October 2020.

In December 2019, President Hassan Rouhani said Iran intends to stay in the nuclear deal despite the U.S. actions, arguing that the internationally-endorsed pact will be put to good use in 2020 when the arms embargo comes to an end.

If forced to choose, Iraq will choose Iran over the U.S.: Atlantic Council

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — If forced to choose, Baghdad will choose Iran, not the United States, argues an Atlantic Council article.

"It is, therefore, not in U.S. interests to force Iraq to make such a choice," read the article, which was published on April 23.

The following is an excerpt of the article:

A withdrawal of most U.S. military forces from Iraq seems likely this year as the Iraqi government seeks to maintain some sort of diplomatic and economic relationship with the United States without alienating its powerful neighbor Iran. How this withdrawal is managed will help determine future U.S. influence not only in Iraq but in the Middle East [West Asia] as a whole.

Iranian support for Prime Minister-designate Mustafa al-Kadhimi—who has had good relations with the United States—appears to be predicated on his agreeing to negotiate a new Status of Forces agreement (SFA) with Washington, which aims to remove the bulk of the several thousand U.S. troops still deployed in Iraq.

The Americans' mission was ostensibly to prevent the resurgence of the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) and to train Iraqi armed forces. However, the U.S. jeopardized their continued presence in the country by breaching the terms of a 2008 SFA; they targeted Iran-backed Shia militias and the leader of Iran's Quds Force, Qassem Soleimani, on Iraqi soil (on January 3 near Baghdad airport). The U.S. actions represented



a significant escalation in the rules of the game—an unprecedented targeting of a senior Iranian official in a foreign country.

The attack near Baghdad, when Soleimani was on an official visit, put Iraq in an untenable position. Iraq cannot afford to alienate a powerful neighbor with which it shares a 1,400-kilometer border and which has deep relations with a variety of Iraqi groups. If forced to choose, Baghdad will choose Iran, not the United States. It is, therefore, not in U.S. interests to force Iraq to make such a choice.

While Tehran has long sought an exit of U.S. forces from Iraq, Iran-backed militias did not attack U.S. forces

in Iraq while the U.S. remained in compliance with the 2015 nuclear deal. The situation deteriorated after the U.S. withdrew unilaterally from that deal in 2018 and sought to put a total embargo on Iran's oil exports in 2019.

Also killed by the drone strike near Baghdad airport, were several Iraqis, including Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the leader of the Kataib Hezbollah militia and deputy commander of all of the Popular Mobilization Forces that had battled ISIS. The assassinations led the Iraqi parliament to pass a non-binding resolution expelling American forces.

Tensions abated somewhat after Tehran accidentally shot down a Ukrainian civilian airliner on January 8, mistaking it for a hostile U.S. missile. The outbreak of the coronavirus in Iran and its neighbors also took attention away from U.S.-Iran strains. However, a second spate of tit-for-tat attacks occurred in March, leading to the death of two more Americans and a British citizen, as well as three Iraqi soldiers, an Iraqi civilian, and several militia members. U.S. forces have now been withdrawn from three isolated outposts in Iraq and consolidated in the relatively safe Kurdish city of Erbil and at the al-Assad air base outside Baghdad. The United States also brought in Patriot missile batteries to defend these bases against militia rockets.

Ideally, the United States should re-examine its policy of "maximum pressure" toward Iran, which has not and will not achieve its stated goals.

Zarif talks with Emirati counterpart on regional issues



POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif talked on the phone with his Emirati counterpart Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan on Sunday evening.

During the phone call, the two sides offered felicitations on the beginning of the holy Islamic month of Ramadan, according to the Foreign Ministry website.

The two sides also exchanged views on the latest regional developments, the battle against the coronavirus pandemic and other issues of mutual interest.

Zarif also held separate phone talks on Sunday with his Iraqi and Omani counterparts about bilateral relations and the latest developments in the region.

In the talks with Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohamed Ali Alhakim, the two

diplomats congratulated each other's nations on the start of the holy month of Ramadan. They also discussed various issues including Tehran-Baghdad ties, the latest political developments in Iraq and the region, and the fight against the novel coronavirus.

Zarif and Oman's Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah also talked about the latest developments in Tehran-Muscat ties, regional issues, and joint efforts in the battle with COVID-19.

Prior to talks with the two counterparts, Zarif and UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres held a telephone conversations on the need to send humanitarian aid to the war-stricken Yemen, which is also facing the coronavirus pandemic.

Iranian embassy in Moscow advises students to leave Russia



POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iran's embassy in Moscow has advised Iranian students to return to Iran over concerns about the spread of coronavirus in Russia.

"Given the outbreak of the coronavirus in Russia and the concerns about the possibility of outbreak of the disease in university dormitories and with reference to the previous proclamations, we'd advise dear Iranian students to give priority to protecting their health and return to Iran until the end of the epidemic and improvement of the situation," the embassy said in an advisory, Tasnim reported.

It also said efforts have been made to operate one or two one-way flights every week from Moscow to Tehran to

return Iranian nationals.

The embassy reminded Iranian citizens that any decision to reopen the Russian borders and allow foreigners to enter Russia again will be within the purview of authorities in Moscow.

Earlier this month, the Office of Scientific Consultation and Administration of Iranian Students in Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and Central Asia advised Iranian university students in Russia to return to Iran amid the pandemic and proceed with their education via distance learning.

The advisory had pointed to a bleak prospect for the settlement of coronavirus issues in Russia in short term, saying such conditions could even continue into the next semester.

IRGC aiding 3.5 million families affected by coronavirus pandemic

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has prepared aid packages for 3.5 million Iranian families affected by the outbreak of the novel coronavirus, a spokesman said.

In a radio interview on Monday, IRGC spokesman General Ramezan Sharif said the IRGC and the Basij forces are constantly contributing to the national campaign against COVID-19.

During the first weeks of outbreak of the coronavirus, the IRGC rushed to help the Health Ministry by providing hospitals and convalescent homes, he noted, adding that

the IRGC and the Basij forces later launched countrywide programs to disinfect public places and hospitals.

Following the recent remarks by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei about the necessity of helping the needy in the holy month of Ramadan and helping those who have been out of work due to the coronavirus outbreak, the IRGC established the "Imam Hassan (AS) Headquarters" to organize humanitarian aid programs, the spokesman added.

General Sharif said the IRGC has so far prepared livelihood aid packages to 3.5 million families.

He said the second and third stages of the nationwide scheme will be carried out later in the holy month of Ramadan.

In comments on April 14, IRGC Commander Major General Hossein Salami said although the coronavirus outbreak has shut down many businesses in Iran and created difficult conditions for people, the prudent recommendations made by Ayatollah Khamenei for "rapport exercise and the devout help movement" have been welcomed by all organizations and provided an opportunity to assist vulnerable groups and mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on underprivileged people.

Free speech under U.S. regime equals blocking other countries' media: Guardian Council

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Guardian Council spokesman Abassali Kadkhodaei has censured the United States' blocking of some Iranian media outlets while seemingly championing free speech.



"Freedom of expression in the American regime means blocking other countries' media," Kadkhodaei tweeted on Monday, referring to the U.S. blocking and seizing of the .com domain of some Iranian news websites.

"In addition to assassinating individuals and economic terrorism (sanctions), they have now resorted to media terrorism as well and have made their records of terror activities heavier by seizing Iranian media outlets' domains," he added.

The U.S. Treasury Department has recently blocked and seized the .com domain of the Iran newspaper and other Iranian media outlets in its latest wave of anti-Iran measures.

Mahdi Shafiei, the Iran newspaper's managing director, said on Saturday that legal efforts were underway to take back the domain.

Shafiei said in the meantime that the newspaper's website can be accessed via "Irannewspaper.ir".

The newspaper's .com domain was seized by the Treasury Department's Florida-based "OFAC Holding".

According to Deutsche Welle, the .com domains of some other Iranian websites including the Iran Daily, Al Vefagh, Iran Varzeshi and Iran Sepid have also been blocked and seized by the OFAC Holding.

In a statement on Sunday, Iran's Foreign Ministry strongly denounced the U.S. Treasury's hostile measure, describing it as a violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and freedom of expression.

"The [U.S.] regime's act of silencing the alternative media movement has reduced America to the main violator of the law-based international order," it added.

Back in January, the .com domain of Fars news agency went offline worldwide due to U.S. sanctions.

In a post on its Twitter account at the time, Fars said access to its .com domain had been blocked upon the U.S. Treasury's order.

Internet users trying to access farsnews.com also found only a blank screen, along with a message stating "farsnews.com's server IP address could not be found."

The news agency said it had received an email from its server company, which "explicitly said that the blockage is due to an order by the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) and its inclusion in the list of Specially Designated Nationals (SDN)." However, Fars can still be accessed through its .ir domain.

U.S. proved being the real terrorist by assassinating of General Soleimani: Ardeshtir Zahedi

TEHRAN (MNA) — Ardeshtir Zahedi, a former Iranian foreign minister and ambassador to the United States during the Pahlavi regime, has said Washington's breach of the international law and assassination of the top Iranian anti-terror commander Major General Qassem Soleimani showed who is the real terrorist.

"I have always been and will always be proud of Qassem Soleimani; he was the one who sacrificed his life for his country unlike those who sell themselves for money," Zahedi told BBC on Sunday.

Lauding the Iranian armed forces' great might and commitment to the country and nation, the former diplomat said, "Since they [the U.S.] were opposed to Iran's military and Generals, they acted contrary to international law."



"Now, they [U.S. government] call others terrorists, while themselves trample international law, commit terrors and announce it proudly," he added.

On January 3, the U.S. assassinated General Soleimani, commander of the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps, and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the second-in-command of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), and a group of their companions in Baghdad. The operation was conducted with the authorization of Trump. The Pentagon took responsibility for the assassination.

Commenting on the United States' policy of regime change in Iran Zahedi said, "The U.S. and its allies, such as the Israeli regime and the Saudis, have failed in their plots against Iran."

He called those pushing for regime change as traitors. "Many of these anti-revolutionary groups living outside of Iran who seek regime change are kind of corrupt. They receive money from the foreigner, work against their own people, I would call them traitors."

Zahedi served as Iran's foreign minister from 1966 to 1971. He served two stints as ambassador to the U.S. from 1960 to 1962 and from 1973 to 1979.

Strategic storage of basic goods enough despite coronavirus pandemic

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Despite the coronavirus outbreak in the country, Iran is supplied with the strategic amount of basic commodities, according to an official with Government Trading Corporation (GTC).



Hojat Barati, the GTC's director general for distribution and sales, told IRNA on Monday, "Our strategic storage of these goods is even more than domestic need and there is no concern in this due".

Government Trading Corporation is in charge of regulatory control in the markets of basic goods such as wheat, sugar and rice, the official said.

On Sunday, Amir Talebi, the acting director of GTC's foreign trade department, announced that Iran's import of basic goods has risen by 2.5 folds in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19).

Amir Talebi said that last year most of the basic commodities imported via ports were unloaded directly from vessels to the trains which reduced the cost and time of transportation significantly.

"Our duty is supplying the basic goods required in the country and to do so we are constantly monitoring and investigating the markets to purchase these goods in the best condition", Talebi noted.

The official said that over two million tons of rice, oil, and sugar have been imported to the country in the past year, some of which has been distributed and some has been stored.

Deutsche Bank beats on profit, warns on capital buffers

Deutsche Bank beat first quarter earnings forecasts, lifting its shares, though the German lender warned it might miss its capital requirement target this year as it extends credit and defaults spike due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In an unscheduled statement late on Sunday, Deutsche Bank said it expected to report quarterly net income of 66 million euros (\$71.42 million) on revenue of 6.4 billion euros. Provisions for credit losses hit 500 million euros, more than three times higher than a year ago.

Deutsche Bank said it would give full details of the results as planned on Wednesday.

Analysts had expected the bank to post a net loss in the quarter and revenue of 5.7 billion euros. The figures indicate that Deutsche, like its competitors on Wall Street, got a revenue lift from a surge in trading as markets swung wildly.

Its shares jumped almost 12% on Monday morning in Frankfurt.

Andreas Thomae, a fund manager with Deka Investment, said the profit and revenue figures look "very positive" and that the loan loss provisions were still reasonable.

Deutsche Bank has been trying to engineer a turnaround, and some executives and investors privately fear that the pandemic could stall the bank's restructuring efforts.

"We are firmly committed to mobilizing our balance sheet to support our clients, who need us now even more," Chief Executive Officer Christian Sewing said.



Deutsche Bank's CEO Christian Sewing

■ Credit extension

Germany's biggest lender said it was possible that the bank would fall "modestly and temporarily" below its previous common equity tier 1 (CET 1) target of at least 12.5% due to the current global recession sparked by the coronavirus.

The ratio was 12.8% at the end of the first quarter, down from 13.6% at the end of 2019, including 30 basis points of negative impact from a revised securitization framework and approximately 40 basis points due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"This revised outlook acknowledges that credit extension to support clients

at this time could increase risk weighted assets for several quarters," it said, adding that pending regulatory changes could also improve the bank's reported CET 1 ratio.

Deutsche said it remained committed to keeping a "significant buffer" above its regulatory requirements.

Andreas Plaesier, an analyst with Warburg Research, said that the bank needs to make sure the ratio doesn't fall toward 11%. "This could lead to renewed questions about capital strength and speculation about a capital increase," he said.

The bank said it was also unlikely to reach its 2020 fully-loaded leverage ratio target of 4.5% without regulatory adjustments to the leverage ratio calculation.

It confirmed its other financial targets, including for 2020 adjusted costs excluding transformation charges and reimbursable expenses of 19.5 billion euros.

Deutsche Bank already warned last month that the impact of the coronavirus outbreak may affect its ability to meet its financial targets as the bank undergoes a major revamp after years of losses.

Last year, Deutsche posted a 5.7-billion-euro loss, its fifth in a row, as the cost of its latest turnaround attempt hit earnings.

Until the outbreak of the coronavirus in Europe, things had been looking up for Deutsche this year. Its shares had rallied, it successfully issued a risky bond, regained market share in Germany and added a new top investor.

Europe's banks are expected to have to set aside billions for potential loan losses because of the coronavirus crisis when Credit ratings agencies have lowered their outlooks for banks in Germany and throughout Europe.

S&P last week tweaked its outlook for Deutsche to negative from stable, noting the bank's restructuring was "fundamentally on track" but acknowledged "substantial downside risks".

(Source: Reuters)

Iran's annual sponge iron exports up 77%

ECONOMY **TEHRAN**

— Iran's exports of sponge iron rose 77 percent in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19) from its preceding year, IRNA reported on Monday citing the data released by Iranian Steel Producers Association (ISPA).

The data put the country's steel exports at 942,000 tons in the past year, rising from 533,000 tons in its previous year.

Iran's annual production of sponge iron also climbed six percent to 27.907 million

tons from 26.359 million tons.

Meanwhile, sponge iron consumption in the country increased four percent to 26.965 million tons from 25.826 million tons on an annual basis.

Iran plans to put a two-million-ton capacity sponge iron project into operation in the southeastern province of Kerman in the current Iranian calendar year (began on March 20).

Three projects each with a capacity of 800,000 tons were launched in the country



during the past Iranian year. The projects were put into operation in Kerman Province, South Khorasan Province in the east and Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari Province in southwest of the country.

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 is a metallic product produced through the direct reduction of iron ore in the strong state. It is a substitute for scrap and therefore is mostly applicable in making steel through the secondary route. The procedure of sponge iron making aims to expel the oxygen from iron ore.

Private sector bidding to shield production from coronavirus

ECONOMY **TEHRAN**

— Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA), which represents the Iranian private sector, has proposed ways to support the domestic economy against the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic.

In a letter to President Hassan Rouhani, the ICCIMA head Gholamhossein Shafeie noted that the cabinet's decision to support 10 major business categories does not include the production sector and this sector has been largely neglected.

Shafeie underlined the need for supporting the production units that were fully active before the coronavirus outbreak and had great potentials for contributing to the country's economic growth but the pandemic interrupted their activities.

Extension of the tax deferrals offered by the government, returning of at least 50 percent of the value added tax that exporters paid in the previous year, granting tax exemption or tax reduction of at least 5 percent for the previous year, and extension or renewal of all business licenses without the need to obtain a tax certificate subject to Article 186 of the Law on direct taxes, were some of the supportive measures suggested by the ICCIMA head.

The suggestions also included providing



working capital facilities with easy conditions and low rates for those production units and production support services that have been unable to pay their debts and settle their payments due to reduced sales, releasing a part of the deposits that have been blocked in the banks as guarantees and receiving non-cash guarantees by the banks, and obligating the executive bodies to adjust the duration and amount of their contracts with the production units in accordance with force majeure conditions to protect them and prevent them from bankruptcy.

Back in March, Heads of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture, Iran Chamber of Cooperatives (ICC), and Iran Chamber of Guilds (ICG) had also wrote a letter to President Rouhani, calling for special measures to be taken for supporting various economic sectors at least until the end of the summer (September 22, 2020).

Investment in Iranian ports up 61% in a year

ECONOMY **TEHRAN**

— Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO)'s Deputy Head for Ports and Economic Affairs Farhad Montaser Kouhsari says investment in the country's ports increased by 61 percent in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19) compared to its preceding year, IRIB reported.

According to the official, in the past few years, PMO has changed its approach and strategies from authority and ownership to supervision and support and that has had a great impact on the involvement of the private sector in the port projects and has increased the level of investments.

"This change in approach has had a positive effect on the private sector performance and has encouraged investors to engage in economic activities in the country's ports," Kouhsari said.

According to the official, preparation and updating of various packages for attract-



ing domestic and foreign investment, and development and updating of appropriate regulations to allocate a percentage of gov-

ernment revenues from maritime trade activities to the development of coastal areas and protection of the marine environment

can be mentioned as factors that can contribute to the increase of investment in the country's ports.

He further underlined the establishment of specialized maritime insurance companies and supporting the insurance companies active in this field for providing special insurance coverage are other factors that can increase investment in the Iranian ports.

Facilitate the issuance of guarantees by Iran Marine Fund, granting facilities according to the participation and operation in marine projects, upgrading Iran Marine Fund to the level of a maritime development financial institution and the provision of appropriate working capital, as well as the development of executive regulations for acknowledging international maritime industry and service activities as export products are other issues that have been reviewed by the Ports and Maritime Organization to attract more investment in ports.

Bank of Japan expands stimulus again as pandemic pain deepens

The Bank of Japan expanded monetary stimulus on Monday and pledged to buy unlimited amount of bonds to keep borrowing costs low as the government tries to spend its way out of the deepening economic pain from the coronavirus pandemic.

The move puts the BOJ in line with other major central banks that have unleashed unprecedented amounts of monetary support as the health crisis stokes fears of a deep global recession.

The central bank also sharply cut its economic forecast and projected inflation would fall well short of its 2% target for three more years, suggesting its near-term focus will be to battle the crisis.

"The spread of the coronavirus at home and abroad is inflicting a severe impact on Japan's economy," BOJ Governor Haruhiko Kuroda told a news conference after the policy meeting.

"The achievement of the BOJ's 2% inflation target ... will take time. The outlook for prices is highly uncertain," he added.

To ease corporate funding strains, the BOJ said, it will boost by three-fold the maximum amount of corporate bonds and commercial debt it buys to 20 trillion yen (\$186 billion).

The central bank also clarified its commitment to buy unlimited amounts of government bonds by scrapping loose guidance to buy them at an annual pace of 80 trillion yen.

"The BOJ will purchase necessary amounts of government bonds without setting an upper limit" to keep long-term interest rates around its 0% target, the statement said.

The central bank said it would buy government bonds and short-term securities "actively" for the time being to keep markets stable as the government issues more bonds to pay for its huge stimulus package.

"For the BOJ, the removal of the bond-buying target is like killing two birds with one stone," as it can ramp up bond buying now and whittle it down later if it wants to end ultra-loose policy, said Toru Suehiro, senior market economist at Mizuho Securities.

"With today's move, the BOJ can stand pat on monetary policy for the time being void of a disruptive market move," he said.

At the meeting on Monday, cut short by a day as a precaution against the spread of the pandemic, the BOJ kept its interest rate targets unchanged, as had been widely expected.

The central bank, however, offered to pay a 0.1% interest to financial institutions that tap its new loan program to combat the pandemic - a move aimed at encouraging commercial banks to boost lending to cash-strapped firms.

Under a policy dubbed yield curve control, the BOJ targets short-term interest rates at -0.1% and 10-year bond yields around 0%. It also buys government bonds and risky assets to pump money aggressively into the economy.

■ Policy mix welcomed

The BOJ's rate review precedes those this week by the Federal Reserve and the European Central Bank, which have sailed into uncharted territories to keep their economies afloat.

Corporate funding costs have crept up in Japan despite the BOJ's decision last month to boost buying of risky assets, including corporate bonds and commercial debt, and create a loan program to assist funding of firms hit by the pandemic.

Removing the guidance on its bond buying is largely a symbolic move. The BOJ has only purchased less than 20 trillion yen per year, as the bank's huge presence in the market allows it to control yields with fewer purchases.



Still, the government welcome the move as a sign the central bank would help keep borrowing costs low to pay for the huge cost of battling the pandemic.

"Today's decision would enhance the effect of a policy mix," between the government and the central bank, Economy Minister Yasutoshi Nishimura told reporters after attending the BOJ's meeting.

Japan expanded a state of emergency this month that asks citizens to stay home and businesses to close, adding to woes for an economy already on the cusp of recession.

To ease the pain on the economy, the government boosted its spending package last week to a record \$1.1 trillion yen, which will be paid for partly by issuing more bonds - straining Japan's already tattered finances.

(Source: Reuters)

The shape of things to come

Market shocks

Coronavirus has shocked the physical oil market into cardiac arrest. Fragmented and viciously competitive producer members of oil institutions such as OPEC and "OPEC+" have no viable response. The media stories everywhere of a Saudi/Russia "Price War" reminded me of two bald men fighting over a comb, because there is no physical demand other than for strategic reserves even for cheap oil until product oversupply is cleared and shut down refineries re-open.

Of course, this is not the first oil market cardiac arrest. In 2008, oil prices went into free-fall from a clearly manipulated 'spike' to \$147/bbl in July 2008 all the way to \$35/bbl in December and nothing OPEC did could arrest the fall. The reason was that the 2008 shock was not due to any lack of physical demand to refine oil, but rather to the inability of buyers to finance global oil deliveries as the dollar trade finance banking system froze as banks lost trust in each other. In order to understand the current market cardiac arrest and how to revive the patient, I shall outline my perspective of U.S. physical and financial energy strategy since 2008.

Obama: Transition through Gas

The organizing principle of U.S. foreign policy has for 100 years been U.S. energy security and independence and President Obama's smart Transition through Gas energy strategy reflected this. The aim of Transition through Gas was to reduce U.S. reliance on Saudi oil by increasing U.S. oil production and to swing domestic and global energy investment to gas & renewable energy production and energy efficiency ('Fifth Fuel').

Obama was a Wall Street president who took an unconventional approach to funding such colossal energy investment. His strategy followed that of Henry Kissinger who convinced the Shah of Iran to agree to a 400 percent increase in oil prices after the 1973 'Oil Shock' which had the effect of making development of Alaska, U.S. Gulf and North Sea oil economic. So immediately after Obama took office in 2009 he acted to re-inflate, support and hold oil prices above \$80/barrel for four years, while capping politically sensitive U.S. gasoline prices to avoid putting at risk his 2012 re-election.

This four year oil boom with prices between \$80 & \$120/barrel brought a wave of petrodollars from producers flooding into U.S. Federal Reserve Bank ("Fed") accounts, particularly from Saudi Arabia under an energy security agreement with U.S. made in 1945. To avoid exchange rate problems, the Fed created new petrodollars and swapped them for U.S. Treasury Bills in a neutral asset swap operation termed Quantitative Easing ("QE"). However, the economic myth propagated by the Fed and sustained by uncritical global media was that this neutral financial asset swap could in some magical way act as a "stimulus" for the U.S. economy when the true reason was to quietly accommodate oil producer Petrodollars.

In order for oil producers to support high oil prices they must be able to fund stocks of excess oil held off the market, and be able to access bank finance for the flow of oil payments. In order to achieve this, Wall Street used new investment instruments: firstly 'passive' oil funds investing in oil market futures contracts, and secondly, secret Enron-style oil pre-pay funding.

In this way Wall Street and North Sea oil producers were able to support the global benchmark price set by ICE Brent/BFOE crude oil contracts, and Saudi Arabia's BWAWE pricing formula based on it. From 2001 to date the North Sea oil market tail has wagged the global oil market dog.

So the vast inflows of petrodollars during President Obama's first term in office enabled U.S. banks to fund shale oil & gas and renewable energy projects, while historically high U.S. fuel prices encouraged energy efficient vehicles. By 2014 the U.S. had transitioned from natural gas deficit to surplus; U.S. shale oil production had increased by some 5m bpd, while fuel consumption had fallen by 2m bpd. Similar trends elsewhere of increasing supply and falling consumption saw structural global oil deficit quietly transform into a surplus.

In late 2011 in Tehran, with oil prices well over \$100/bbl, I forecast to general disbelief that when the Fed ended QE, the oil price would collapse to \$45/\$50 bbl. This is exactly what happened when the U.S. finally turned off the QE dollar hosepipe in 2014, while opening a massive military base in gas-rich Qatar. The U.S. also commenced overtures to Iran bearing in mind both the greatest global gas reserves and immense development opportunities for low cost oil long coveted by U.S. oil majors.

In late 2014, Saudi Arabia awoke from a petrodollar coma to see their power over



The story of a so-called oil war between Saudi Arabia and Russia aimed at killing off U.S. shale oil production is a myth: the true struggle for market share appears to be an attempt by a U.S./Saudi Arabia partnership to out-compete Russian oil sales to Europe and elsewhere.

the U.S. vanish along with their energy security. As a result, Saudi Arabia redirected oil proceeds to the Euro, where a main aim of European Central Bank policy since inception has been to back Euro currency with no intrinsic value with lending based on objective utility of oil and gas energy. So as with Fed dollar QE, the true reason for Euro QE in March 2015 was not stimulus but was simply to accommodate purchases of € securities.

However, the unexpected election in November 2016 of President Trump changed everything.

Trump and energy dominance

Perhaps the most important of President Trump's motivations, due to an intense personal animosity, is to erase Obama's political legacy, and in particular his energy strategy. But it was a surprise to many observers that Gary Cohn (ex-Goldman Sachs and a Democrat) as Director of the U.S. Economic Council and Rex Tillerson (ex-Exxon CEO) as U.S. Secretary of State were willing and able to serve the Trump administration. Cohn architected and co-founded in 2001 what became the globally dominant Intercontinental Exchange (ICE) through which Wall Street came to dominate and financialise oil markets, while Tillerson was the most powerful U.S. oil executive by far. Together they devised and implemented the U.S. Energy Dominance strategy which was announced by President Trump on 29th June 2017.

As the name suggests, President Trump's 'America First' doctrine when applied to oil and gas markets aimed to massively increase U.S. production in order to dominate global markets with what officials have termed "Molecules of U.S. Freedom" and so take back control of global oil market pricing via oil & gas exports.

So on 1st July 2017 after 16 years of pricing oil using the ICE BWAWE formula, Saudi Arabia switched to prices generated by the Platts reporting service for cargoes of Brent/BFOE oil. For six months huge passive fund investment poured into global oil futures contracts, thereby re-inflating the price. Three months later at the end of March 2018 and nine months to the day after the strategy commenced, Cohn and Tillerson simultaneously left the Trump administration, leaving the strategy to be rolled out over the next two years.

So for the next 18 months the Fed steadily reduced its balance sheet by selling Treasury Bills to release dollars. Within six months in September 2018 the ECB ended Euro QE, and Fed Treasury Bill sales continued until September 2019.

U.S. and the oil standard

Whoever was responsible for the Abqaiq attack on Saturday, 14th September 2019, the resulting spike in oil and product prices required massive amounts of dollar funding to cover losses on derivative contracts. So Monday 16th September saw an unprecedented 'spike' in the sale and repurchase ("Repo") of US Treasury Bills through which the Fed supplies dollar liquidity to four major U.S. clearing banks. However, this massive Repo spike was only the beginning: from then on, the programme of exchanging dollars for

short term Treasury Bills involving only these four banks which became known as 'NotQE' continued at a rapid rate.

Meanwhile, through the second half of 2019, oil prices were otherwise stable in a range between \$55 and \$60/barrel. The more the price exceeded \$60/bbl the more shale producers sold oil forward, which enabled them to borrow from banks to finance drilling. When prices fell below \$55/barrel, financial buyers appeared.

As a result, the U.S. petrodollar funding system has quietly been completely reconfigured, as Saudi PetroEuros returned to U.S. to be swapped for short term Treasury Bill petrodollar holdings. Where petrodollars indirectly funded shale oil producers through bank lending, shale oil production will now be funded via the same three-way prepay mechanism used by Enron for a decade to secretly defraud their investors and creditors. The difference now is that where Enron's third party funders were two of the Big Four private banks, now it is the Fed itself which is the third party funder.

Meanwhile the waves of debt advanced to the U.S. shale oil industry are beginning to come due and the Big Four banks are all preparing to foreclose on these debts and take ownership of shale oil assets. These banks plan to use production sharing LLC 'capital partnerships' with operating partners while oil majors such as Exxon appear also to be aiming to consolidate distressed shale oil assets using similar funding.

So to cut a long story short, the planned outcome of the US Energy Dominance financial energy strategy, was to support and loosely peg oil prices by controlling the benchmark price around \$55 to \$60/barrel. By pegging the dollar to an "Oil Standard" in this way prepay funding of U.S. oil reserves has essentially monetised U.S. oil.

Enter the dragon

Producers have controlled the oil market for so long they believe this to be their God-given right, forgetting that buyers are also capable of asserting market power. For years China's energy strategy has been to build and fill enormous oil storage capacity, now in excess of 1.2 billion barrels, while a fleet of new and efficient oil refineries has been built with capacity well in excess of China's product needs, and aimed at exports.

As Iran is painfully aware, China's ability to ignore U.S. sanctions means that they have become oil buyer of last resort at distressed prices, and may therefore dump cheap oil products into the market with which other refiners cannot compete. China has also discussed cooperation with other major oil buyers, particularly India. Other countries in oil deficit, notably EU nations, also have an incentive to join a cooperative 'buyer's club'.

So in my view, China has been preparing for years to assert 'buy-side' consumer oil market pricing power and the unprecedented demand shock propagating from China has created the perfect opportunity. When the oil market recovers from this cardiac arrest which broke the U.S./Saudi oil peg I believe that China can and will assert buy-side market power, probably in loose cooperation with other major consumers who see no reason to

continue to transfer up to an additional \$30/barrel to producers.

Oil wars

The story of a so-called oil war between Saudi Arabia and Russia aimed at killing off U.S. shale oil production is a myth: the true struggle for market share appears to be an attempt by a U.S./Saudi Arabia partnership to out-compete Russian oil sales to Europe and elsewhere. Whatever the geopolitical truth of it, the collapse of product demand far in excess of any feasible voluntary oil production cuts makes talk of market share redundant, when there simply is no market to share.

So once enough refineries shut down to allow surplus oil on the market to begin to clear and a physical market price to re-emerge we will see two struggles begin. Firstly the struggle between buyers and sellers, and when, as I expect, the buyers win, the continuing struggle for oil market share between producers.

In my view, the crazy spike in prices of the U.S. WTI oil futures benchmark price to a negative price of \$37/bbl represents a historic point of failure from which the contract will not recover. It seems to me there is now an urgent need for a temporary resolution of the broken oil and products markets while a transition to new and sustainable global energy and financial markets get underway.

On the outside looking in

As the great author Arthur Conan Doyle wrote: "Once you eliminate the impossible, whatever remains, no matter how improbable, must be the truth"

Iran now has no options other than to pursue improbable and unorthodox market solutions in order to resolve an impossible economic situation, by a two stage process of resolution and transition. The resolution step is to re-purpose existing structures and infrastructure with no change in the law. This then provides the basis for proof of concept of smart market and energy fintech innovations which enable transition to sustainable low carbon and low cost physical and financial solutions.

Resolution

My colleagues and I have long promoted 21st C Iranian physical and financial markets in oil products, but these have always been resisted by vested interests. However, global collapse of product prices has now seen Iranian product prices converge with neighbouring countries, thereby neutralising certain vested interests. Our proposal for an interim resolution of Iran's economy builds upon existing subsidy and rationing policy and technology for oil products. Firstly, our innovation is to simply for the government to issue an "Energy Dividend" of vouchers or credits, to Iran's population, each of which will be accepted in payment for products.

Because the Euro 5 standard for gasoline is used throughout Eurasia, we propose that each "Energy Credit Obligation" (ECO) will be returnable in payment for 1 litre of Euro 5 gasoline. Such standard ECOs will also be accepted by refiners and distributors, in payment for other fuels at a discount or premium to Euro 5 gasoline.

Refineries who issue such ECOs would no longer buy crude oil in exchange for conventional currency such as riyals or dollars since to do so exposes them to the risk of oil price fluctuations. Instead, refiners will enter into production sharing partnership agreements or oil/product swaps with oil suppliers in exchange for a percentage entitlement to the flow of ECOs.

So the ECO represents prepayment backed by the Iranian government and energy complex for the eternal intrinsic use value of energy, and in uncertain times many investors seeks such assets. In order to build trust in the ECO, issuance must be transparent to everyone, and I addition must be overseen by professional service providers with a stake in the outcome who manage issuance and redemption of ECOs against use.

Transition

The ECO represents a fixed point upon which 21st C smart energy markets and economy may be introduced by Iran's greatest resource — one of the greatest global pools of intellectual capacity - to collaborate in solving humanity's greatest challenges.

Chris Cook is former director of the International Petroleum Exchange where his innovations included legal design of the UK Natural Gas futures contract. His focus at ISRS – University College London is to create 21st C networked markets in services through Financial Technology based on mutual agreements between people, not machines.

Mahmood Khaghani, former director general of the Caspian Sea and Central Asia Department at Iran's Ministry of Petroleum. He is now advisor to IRIEMP-University of Tehran & Education and Research Institute - ICCIMA

Iran's daily gas exports to Iraq at 32 mcm

ENERGY DESK TEHRAN — National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) Dispatching Director Mehdi Jamshidi-Dana said the country is exporting 32 million cubic meters (mcm) of natural gas to Iraq on a daily basis.

Mentioning the incident in the Iran-Turkey gas pipeline, Jamshidi-Dana said "although the exports to Turkey are still halted but our exports to Iraq continues."

As reported, Iran's gas export to Turkey was halted on March 31, for the 11th time in the last 15 years due to an explosion.

According to the official, the Turkish side has not determined the schedule for the construction and repairing the pipeline due to the coronavirus outbreak.

Jamshidi-Dana further mentioned the gas supply to the power plants, saying that every day, 190 mcm of gas is also supplied to the country's power plants.

He further noted that since the beginning of the spring and with the temperature rising, the country's daily gas consumption has fallen to 250 mcm.

Iraq inked a deal in late 2017 to import gas from Iran to the eastern border province of Diyala, increasing purchases of the Iranian fuel, which started in June that year after several years of delay.

As per the deal, Iran committed itself to exporting gas to the Iraqi capital Baghdad and the southern Iraqi city of Basra.

Iranian gas exports to Turkey (the country's oldest customer) were supposed to be 10 billion cubic meters a year based on a 2001 agreement signed between the two countries which is valid for 25 years.

420 projects for supplying water to nomadic households to be completed by late June

ENERGY DESK TEHRAN — Deputy head of Nomads Affairs Organization of Iran (NAOI) says 420 projects for supplying drinkable water to nomadic households which were started last year are going to be completed by the Iranian calendar month of Tir (starts on June 21).



"With the implementation of these projects, sustainable, high-quality drinking water will be provided to about 17,000 nomadic households," Shahpour Alaei-Mogadam told IRNA.

According to the official, the government has defined 300 projects to resolve water-related problems for the nomads in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 19).

He stated that Iran's nomadic population currently stands at 1.2 million people who live in 230,000 households.

"Based on the plans for the current year, we are trying to increase the red meat production of the nomadic community," Alaei-Mogadam said.

He further expressed hope that the government would provide the nomadic households with supportive facilities to help them increase their production.

Currently, 34 million hectares of the country's pastures with a capacity of providing 4.5 million tons of fodder are available to the country's nomadic community, the official said.

Singapore coastline packed with ships full of oil no one wants

A narrow waterway off Singapore has become even more congested as oil-laden tankers wait out a slump in global fuel consumption that's crimped demand and boosted the use of ships to store cargoes.

About 60 clean fuel tankers are currently anchored along the busy strait, up from the usual 30-40 ships, according to Rahul Kapoor, head of commodity analytics and research at IHS Markit. Some vessels are being used to hoard fuel at sea as onshore tanks fill up. Others are probably parked, waiting to be redirected to any willing buyer across Asia and the world as the coronavirus pummels economies worldwide.

Ships filled with oil products including gasoline and jet fuel are moving from major refinery hubs such as South Korea and China due to a crash in domestic demand and swelling stockpiles. These tankers are finding their way to the Singapore Strait, where the glut is being compounded by offloading delays at the city state. Vessels currently have to wait about two weeks to discharge cargoes in Singapore, compared to the typical 4-5 days, according to shipbrokers and traders, leaving ships stranded in local waters.

Storage options are dwindling globally as onshore tanks rapidly fill to capacity, prompting traders, refiners and infrastructure companies to seek alternatives such as pipelines and ships. Bloomberg earlier reported that those who managed to snag some highly-coveted tanks in Singapore were being charged much higher rates, even as the nation stopped leasing out space to new customers.

Major fuel-exporting countries are facing difficulties finding homes for their surplus barrels," said Sri Paravaikkarasu, Asia oil head at industry consultant FGE. In Singapore, crude processing rates at refineries have probably dropped to around 60 percent of capacity, and may drop further to as low as 50 percent during the second quarter, she said.

The onshore storage squeeze is being seen across the region. In India, tanks were 95 percent full as of last week as refiners scrambled to find space to hold their excess fuel, even turning to pump stations and depots. In Singapore, fuel stockpiles rose to a four-year high in mid-April.

Utilizing tankers has become the next best option, with analytics firm Vortexa estimating floating crude oil storage in Asia at a four-year high. Taking into account the waters off Singapore as well as Malaysia, data intelligence firm Kpler saw a 45 percent month-on-month increase in the volume of clean fuels — comprising naphtha, gasoline, jet fuel and diesel — stored on ships to 6.64 million barrels as of April 23.

(Source: Bloomberg)

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WHO's non-political nature prevents it from questioning U.S. for poor healthcare services amid COVID-19 outbreak

By Mohammad Jafari



The World Health Organization has always rendered its services to the world countries away from political considerations otherwise it could held accountable the U.S. for the Washington's poor healthcare services to the Americans when the country faces the heaviest waves of the novel coronavirus disease.

Dalton Price, an incoming Ph.D. candidate at the University of Oxford whose research focuses on the politics of global health and effective coordination of actors during times of crisis, says, "If the WHO did get political, maybe the U.S. wouldn't have chosen corporate profit over basic human rights, because the WHO would question why the world's richest country is unable to provide healthcare."

"I agree, Mr. President. The WHO is ill-prepared to handle the COVID-19 pandemic but not for the reasons you claim. You suggest they are China-centric, misled and lied to the U.S., and got "every aspect" of the response wrong. These falsities led you to the dangerous decision to halt funding for a lead health agency during an unprecedented health crisis and when we need them the most," he wrote in his research published by Common Dreams.

But you miss the mark on where the WHO goes wrong. There is an elephant in the room, a piece of history, that we overlook yet explains this ill-preparedness: that one of the WHO's earliest and most important rules was to avoid politics at all costs. It isn't set up to deal with, well, you. This forgotten history seems to be more relevant now than ever before.

Imagine it is the 1920s and you are given a seat at the table of what would soon become a 30-year-long discussion about a new international, intergovernmental health organization that is tasked with safeguarding humanity. It is among the earliest conversations, and it would be the first of its kind. The need for global cooperation in bringing this bold idea to life is abundantly clear. Yet outside the walls of the building in which you sit are growing tensions between communist and capitalist countries, authoritarian and democratic regimes alike.

National politics are just as unstable as the international conflicts that recently manifested as a global war, World War I. You watch the rise of communism and a civil war in China in 1927, a newfound authoritarian dictatorship after the Spanish Civil War in 1939, and the rise of Nazism in Germany and fascism in Italy. Domestic tensions quickly become international actions with many engaging in expansionist and interventionist policies, despite the League of Nations' continued call for world peace.

You hear about Germany's remilitarization of the Rhineland, Italy's colonization of Ethiopia, and countless other offensive moves in China and Poland. The French president, Prince of Yugoslavia, and Chancellor of Austria are all assassinated. You are fully embedded in these tumultuous conditions and fearfully watch as World War II begins. There is the intensifying Arab-Israeli conflict and Indo-Pakistani war; United States' use of nuclear weapons to bomb Nagasaki and Hiroshima; and Japanese invasion of Hong Kong, the Philippines, French Indochina, Portuguese Timor, Indonesia, and Malaya. You hear about millions of Jews dying in Germany, but you were not quite sure how many. Europe is weary of more war, divided and jaded, but so are you. And when you think it is finally over, your home continent is suddenly up for grabs in the eyes of the Western world and Soviet Union.

A geopolitically-tense Cold War and battle between capitalism and communism ensues, and you're right in the middle of it—both geographically and ideologically. You watch as the parliaments of Rome, Berlin, and Tokyo fall and the Second World War comes to a slow conclusion.

But OK. Snap out of it. You have to get back to the mission: global cooperation at the largest scale in history. You need to build this thing—the International Health Organization, the World Health Organization, you are still unsure of what it will be called. You are confident it will save lives. And frankly, that is all you want to do during these dark, bloody, tense, and painful times.

You try to make this all work, you try to bring the right people to the table and make something productive happen, but wartime politics drowns out your efforts. You are forced to speak with foreign-affairs ministers, diplomatic commissions,

and other governmental figureheads. They are suspicious of hidden political agendas—and really just all things Western. The tension and hostility among them are palpable. You wish there are more medical representatives or health ministries involved, as you feel that they are always the delightful ones. You see regional blocs quickly form with some countries already pooling and sharing public health data, but these pools are not made available to everyone.

You expect the divide between capitalist and communist countries but are then taken aback by secretive collaborations between the United States and Great Britain, both of whom you catch trying to suppress conversations about an independent health organization. You are exhausted, sick of politics, and regretfully wonder if a new worldwide agreement would even be possible. You quiver at the thought of this game-changing health organization, the one in which you wholly believe, being left to agreements negotiated between certain countries or regions. You realize there is only one way out. You need to do whatever you can to depoliticize the topics, to make international, cross-bloc cooperation possible. You need to avoid politics at all costs.

And so you do. You weave an antipolitics into the fabric of what will soon become the world's largest and most influential international health organization, the WHO.

You are right, Mr. President. The WHO is flawed; it is ill-prepared. An effective response to COVID-19 would require politics. Yet they have avoided politics since their founding in a politically-fraught time and continue to do so today. It is the perfect anachronism.

But if they did get political, maybe our outbreak in the U.S. wouldn't be so bad. Maybe we wouldn't be the only O.E.C.D. country without universal health coverage, because the WHO would have pushed us to meet this standard. Maybe we wouldn't have chosen corporate profit over basic human rights, because the WHO would question why the world's richest country is unable to provide healthcare. Maybe black Americans wouldn't disproportionately suffer the burden of COVID-19, because the WHO would have long ago called out the institutionalized racism and deep-rooted health disparities it has created. Maybe, just maybe, thousands of Americans wouldn't have lost their lives to COVID-19, because the WHO would have pushed us over the past 70 years since its founding to simply do better.

And boy, do I wish the WHO would get political. It seems more necessary now than ever before.

In mid April, President Trump announced that he would U.S. funding for the World Health Organization for 60 to 90 days as his administration reviews the group's handling of the coronavirus pandemic. He made the announcement at his press conference at the time, saying he wanted to suspend U.S. contributions "while a review is conducted to assess the World Health Organization's role in severely mismanaging and covering up the spread of the coronavirus."

Trump said that the WHO was slow to respond to the crisis and that the organization has been "China-centric."

"We regret the decision of the president of the United States," WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in a press conference a day after Trump's decision. "WHO is reviewing the impact of our work of any withdrawal of U.S. funding, and will work with our partners to fill any financial gaps we face and to ensure our work continues uninterrupted."

The agency, founded in 1948, describes itself as "the directing and coordinating authority on international health within the United Nations system." It coordinates activities and provides guidance for their 194 member states and two associate members (Puerto Rico and Tokelau).

Activities range from promoting the polio vaccine to supporting childhood nutrition to playing a leadership role in the case of health emergencies.

"There will be guidelines on what kind of essential medicines there should be, what kind of essential diagnostics there should be, what might be the regimens to use in relation to HIV in different countries, taking into account the resources available," says Rifat Atun, professor of global health systems at Harvard University, was quoted as saying by NPR news website, adding, "Countries are not under any obligation legally to follow these guidelines, but many do in relation to epidemics."

The World Health Organization runs on a two-year budget cycle. For 2020 and 2021, its budget for carrying out its programs is \$4.8 billion, or \$2.4 billion per year.

"The WHO has a budget around the size of a large U.S. hospital. It's about one quarter of the budget of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention," says Lawrence Gostin, a law professor at Georgetown University and director of the World Health Organization Collaborating Center on National and Global Health Law, which is an independent agency that works with that WHO.

Annual donations from its member states made up 51% of the WHO's funding, according to a report from its 2018-2019 budget cycle.

These contributions fall into two categories: assessments (i.e. membership dues) and voluntary contributions.

"The assessed money is like operational support," says Jennifer Kates, director of global health and HIV policy at the Kaiser Family Foundation. "Here's the money. You can figure out what to do with it."

Each member state pays assessment fees based on the country's wealth and population.

Countries also make additional voluntary contributions, as does the United Nations, philanthropic foundations and nongovernmental organizations. Donors typically earmark these monies for specific causes. The largest allocation from voluntary contributions goes to polio, which has an \$863 million budget in 2020-2021. "It means that the organization is primarily driven by a lot of the outside influences of donors in terms of how it can budget," says Kates.

Over time, Kates says, voluntary contributions have grown to dominate the WHO's budget.

For the 2020-2021 budget, \$957 million comes from assessments and \$4.9 billion comes from voluntary contributions.

"The U.S. is the largest single government donor in the world," says Gostin, "so WHO's budget does rely very much on U.S. contributions."

For the two-year cycle of 2018 and 2019, U.S. contributions accounted for about 20% of the WHO's total budget.

The money comes in two streams. The U.S. contribution to the pool of assessed fees is \$237 million. That's 22% of the total assessed fees, the largest share of any nation. By comparison, China contributes 12% of this pool of monies, and some low-income countries pay 0.1%.

In addition, the U.S. pledged more than \$656 million for specific programs, according to the WHO's program budget portal. These voluntary contributions were earmarked for programs including polio eradication, health and nutrition services, vaccine-preventable diseases, tuberculosis, HIV—and preventing and controlling outbreaks.

What does a U.S. funding freeze mean? There is no definitive answer to this question. At the press conference, Trump said that the review would take 60 to 90 days and that a "very thorough investigation" is underway. But no details have been released on how the funding suspension will be executed.

And it is unclear whether the president has the authority to unilaterally halt funding for an international institution such as the WHO.

"If the money is already committed and already given, he probably can't take it away," says Gostin, but the president could withhold outstanding payments or instruct agencies such as the United States Agency for International Development to scale back on cooperation with the WHO.

"A lot of the voluntary money is provided at the agency level," says Kates, so it's possible that the president could demand that the CDC for State Department stop providing money to the WHO for project work.

How serious are tensions between Turkey and Saudi-UAE bloc?

By Mohammad Jafari

The Khashoggi murder, disagreement over Qatar and Syrian crisis, Turkey's support for the so-called Arab Spring uprisings and many other disputing issues have in past years soured relations between Ankara and Riyadh but neither sides feel required responsibility to take practical step towards de-escalation in the region.

In a report published by the Middle East Monitor, Ahmed al-Burai, a senior lecturer at Istanbul Aydin University, has touched upon a number of reasons behind tensions between Turkey and certain Arab nations, including Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

"The antagonism of Saudi Arabia and the UAE against Turkey has been incremental and provocative. Nevertheless, Turkey is maintaining its de-escalation strategy with a conciliatory approach. For how long, though? Can Turkey remain tolerant? What cards can it play against the reckless calculations of some of the Persian Gulf monarchies? These are important questions," he went on to say.

The current clique heading the Saudi royal family regards Turkey as a threat simply because Ankara doesn't give the current leadership in Riyadh the chance to accomplish its plans. In 2017, Turkey played a major role to rein in the Saudis' intended invasion of Qatar; it was a checkmate move.

Turkey's support for the Arab Spring uprisings infuriated the Persian Gulf monarchies which believed that they were contagious revolutions and an imminent threat to their own domestic stability. Ankara has also accused the UAE of backing the 2016 coup attempt against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

After the fall of Daesh and its self-proclaimed caliphate in the Syrian city of Raqqa, Saudi (Persian) Gulf Affairs Minister Thamer Al-Sabhan visited the area and met the Raqqa Civil Council controlled by the Syrian offshoot of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) that has been fighting Turkey for more than 40 years. Most importantly, the renowned Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi was murdered by fellow countrymen in the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul in October 2018, Turkey has played a major role in implicating Saudi Arabian officials in the killing and holding Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman responsible.

The Saudi-UAE campaign against Turkey hasn't eased; Saudi and Emirati media outlets are forever calling for Arab tourists to stop visiting Turkey, citing fictional or exaggerated reports of crimes, and the alleged kidnapping and harassment of Saudi women in the country. Saudi Arabia has also designated the former Ottoman Caliphate as an "occupation" of Arab land in a new curriculum. The Saudi-UAE bloc is even using drama to distort history, with an Emirati-produced soap opera called Kingdom of Fire which focuses on Ottoman rule not as the zenith of Muslim unity but as a dark time for the Arabs. Most recently, Turkey was accused on Saudi television of working to spread coronavirus in Saudi Arabia and Arab countries.

Turkey's response to the immature policies of the Emirati and Saudi princes has been proportionate to their provocative and hostile actions. The authorities in Ankara have recently blocked Saudi and UAE state-owned news websites in response to the Saudis blocking TRT Arabi and Anadolu Agency. Interestingly, the move by Saudi Arabia came after Turkish prosecutors indicted 20 Saudi citizens for the Khashoggi murder, which soured relations between Ankara and Riyadh.

The UAE, a neighboring ally of Saudi has reportedly yet to take action against any online Turkish media outlets.

The Saudi-owned Turkish edition of the Independent and state-owned Okaz are also affected by the ban. A column in Okaz by a Saudi prince had earlier called on the kingdom to use the publication against Ankara.

"Perhaps the most appropriate approach would be to reciprocate the Turks and transfer the battle to the opponent's land by working to find Arabic-language Turkish media platforms, and rushing to operate the Turkish-edition of The Independent, whose rights were acquired by the Saudi Research and Publishing Group nearly a year ago," Prince Bader Bin Saud wrote.

Since the 2018 murder, Turkey has adopted a "drip-drip" approach to mobilize the international media to expose the true face of Bin Salman and his supporters in the West. If such a crime had been committed by any other country, Turkey might have been more decisive; in a sense, therefore, it still considers its relations with Saudi Arabia to be based on Islamic brotherhood. Ankara's strategy is to capitalize on the interests of Middle Eastern nations and minimize the gains of their rulers and amateur adventurers, like the Saudi-UAE princes, who are clearly interested in demonizing Turkey across the region.

This doesn't mean that Turkey will let the defamatory campaigns and allegations pass unanswered. In response to the Saudi campaign, Turkey claims that Riyadh is concealing the number of coronavirus victims among Muslim pilgrims, hindering international efforts to contain the pandemic. Moreover, Turkey offered a bounty of four million Turkish lira for any information leading to the capture of "the Emirati mercenary" Mohammed Dahlan for his alleged part in the 2016 coup attempt.

To a certain extent, Turkey counts on a change in the Saudi royal family. It is believed that the Crown Prince deposed by King Salman in June 2017, Muhammad Bin Nayef, was closer to Turkey and an adversary of the UAE and that was why he was removed from his position. Until and unless such a change occurs, though, Turkey will not hesitate to take all measures necessary to protect its interests.

In Libya, for instance, President Erdogan is supporting the internationally-recognized Government of National Accord, not only logistically but also by deploying military hardware and fighters in the ongoing civil war against the Saudi-UAE backed General Khalifa Haftar. This proxy conflict is expected to intensify in various parts of the Middle East and North Africa. It has been reported that Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Zayed of Abu Dhabi is making strenuous and tenacious efforts to get the Syrian regime to break a ceasefire with Turkish-backed rebels in Idlib province and escalate the struggle against Turkey.

For the Saudi-led front, it's not only a matter of seeking the leadership of the Muslim world; it's also about an ideology that is based on the exclusion of differences of opinion or perspective. Former US President George W Bush demonstrated a similar mentality when he told the world, post-9/11, "You are either with us or with the terrorists." Turkey doesn't buy into this rhetoric and won't back down as it protects its interests and supports the aspirations the people suffering under oppression and dictatorships, wherever they might be.

It should be added that Twitter, in early April, removed 7,800 fake accounts linked to the governments of Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the UAE for violating its policies and being a "targeted attempt to undermine the public conversation".

The company explained that 5,350 accounts received directions from governments "amplifying content praising Saudi leadership, and critical of Qatar and Turkish activity in Yemen".

A network of accounts associated with Saudi Arabia and operating out of multiple countries including KSA, Egypt and UAE, were amplifying content praising Saudi leadership, and critical of Qatar and Turkish activity in Yemen. A total of 5,350 accounts were removed.

Merchants of death: Multibillion-dollar bailout for arms industry amid rising COVID-19 toll

1 → In recent days, the U.S. has sharply escalated its air strikes against the impoverished African nation of Somalia, even as the coronavirus pandemic threatens to ravage its population. Escalating war threats continue against Venezuela, and the Pentagon continues to provide support for the near-genocidal Saudi-led war against the people of Yemen.

Nowhere does this war drive find more naked expression than in the massive government bailout that is being organized for the U.S. arms industry. With tens of millions of workers unemployed, many facing hunger, and a drive by both the Trump administration and state governors to force a premature return to work, billions upon billions of dollars are being lavished upon military contractors to sustain their guaranteed profits and the obscene fortunes generated for their major shareholders.

The Pentagon's top weapons procurer, Undersecretary of Defense Ellen Lord, told a press conference Monday that some \$3 billion has already been funneled to the arms makers in the form of early payments for existing contracts, in addition to billions more approved by Congress in the first CARES Act, which pumped trillions of dollars into the financial markets. She indicated that much more will be doled out once Congress passes another stimulus package.

Asked by a reporter how much would be needed to insure Washington's Merchants of Death from any losses due to the coronavirus pandemic, she replied, "We're talking billions and billions on that one." Lord added that the first priority for this aid program was the "modernization process of the nuclear triad."

These industries are hardly the picture of the deserving poor. The fact that massive financial resources that are desperately needed to save lives and rescue millions of workers from poverty are instead being poured into their pockets is a crime.

In a conference call this week to inform Lockheed Martin shareholders of first-quarter earnings, the company's CEO, Marilyn Hewson, boasted that the corporation's "portfolio is broad and expanding" and its "cash generation" strong. She said the company looked forward to "supporting our warfighters' needs."

Indeed, Lockheed Martin pulled in \$2.3 billion in cash during the single quarter and expects to top \$7.6 billion—coronavirus effects notwithstanding—over the year. It has a \$144 billion backlog in orders, an all-time high.

Asked whether she had any qualms about political fallout over completing a \$1 billion stock buyback in the midst of the crisis, she replied, "We're very different, I think, than those who have experienced a very significant impact to their demands." Hewson announced that the company had set aside a grand total of \$10 million for COVID-19-related relief and assistance.

The "very different" character of these companies was also noted in a financial column published in the New York Times for the benefit of its well-heeled readers, titled "Opportunity in the Military-Industrial Complex."

Pointing to the projected \$741 billion Pentagon budget for the coming year, the Times counsels: "That combination of federal dollars and corporate heft may represent an opportunity for investors who don't mind profiting from warfare. A modest bet on a mutual fund or exchange-traded fund that buys military contractors and aerospace companies may help buffer the deep recession brought on by the coronavirus."

In short, one can reap substantial wealth from—and amid—mass death.

One of the principal concerns expressed by Undersecretary of Defense Lord as she spelled out plans for the multibillion-dollar bailout of the arms industry was the disruption of

supply chains, particularly those originating in the maquiladora sweatshops just across the U.S. border in Mexico. She also mentioned problems in India.

Thousands of Mexican workers have struck and protested against the deadly conditions inside these plants, conditions that are being prepared for workers throughout the planet as back-to-work orders are shoved through. At a plant in Ciudad Juárez owned by Michigan-based Lear Corporation, 16 workers have died from COVID-19, while area hospitals are overflowing with victims of the virus.

The Pentagon and U.S. Ambassador to Mexico Christopher Landau have intervened with the Mexican government, demanding that the maquiladora workers be forced back into the plants as "essential" to US imperialism's war machine, just like their counterparts in the U.S. Lockheed relies on low-paid Mexican workers in Chihuahua, Mexico to produce electrical wiring for the U.S. military's Black Hawk and S-92 helicopters and F-16 fighter jets, while Boeing gets parts from a plant run by PCC Aerostructures in Monterrey. General Electric, Honeywell and other military contractors also profit off the labor of Mexican workers across the border.

Transmitting the dictates of the Pentagon in the language of contempt for human life that characterizes all of the policies of the Trump administration and the U.S. ruling class, Ambassador Landau launched a Twitter campaign demanding that Mexican workers go back into the maquiladoras for the greater good of U.S. imperialism. He enjoys the full collaboration of Mexico's President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, promoted by the pseudo-left as a "progressive" and even "socialist," who has prepared the country's National Guard for deployment against strikers.

Warning that workers' jobs are tied to

supply chains linking them to U.S. arms manufacturers, Ambassador Landau said, "if we do not coordinate our response, these chains can evaporate."

He added, "There are risks everywhere, but we don't all stay at home for fear we are going to get in a car accident. The destruction of the economy is also a health threat."

These are the same reactionary, antiscientific and misanthropic arguments being made in the U.S. and internationally in an attempt to force workers back into the factories and workplaces with the certainty that many will fall sick and die.

Workers in the arms industry in the U.S., like their counterparts in Mexico, have also struck and protested over being forced to work as part of the "critical infrastructure" of U.S. imperialism. Workers at the Bath Iron Works in Maine and the BAE Systems shipyard in Norfolk, Virginia, both run by General Dynamics, have struck over the failure of the employers to provide them with protection against infection and death. Similarly, workers at the GE Aviation plant in Lynn, Massachusetts, which produces engines for U.S. Marine helicopters, picketed the plant over the lack of protective measures or any guarantee for workers who fall victim to COVID-19.

This resistance of the working class across national boundaries is directly opposed to the rabid nationalism and reaction that characterizes the response of the ruling classes, not only in the U.S., but in Europe and internationally, to the intensification of the capitalist crisis triggered by the coronavirus pandemic. To defend their profit interests, they will condemn millions to sickness and death, even as they prepare for world war and fascist dictatorship. The only alternative is for the international working class to put an end to the profit system and rebuild society on socialist foundations.

(Source: Information Clearing House)

124 historical monuments restored in northeast Iran

➔ The province has also the highest concentration of water parks in the country, and it also embraces variety of cultural and historical sites which are generally crowded. Mausoleum of Ferdowsi, the illustrious Persian poet, in Tus is one of the tourist attractions of the region. Many Iranians regard Ferdowsi as the greatest of their poets. Down through the centuries they have continued to read and to listen to recitations from his masterwork, the Shahnameh.



Nashtifan Asbad or ancient Windmills of Nashtifan are vertical-axis windmills which have been in use for several centuries in the Nashtifan region. Such windmills are fueled with strong northern winds blow throughout the year in the eastern parts of the country.

“Asbad is a smart technique to grind grains, a technique which goes back to ancient times when the people living in the eastern parts of Iran, in an attempt to adapt themselves with the nature and transform environmental obstacles into opportunities, managed to invent it,” according to UNESCO’s website.

Precious manuscripts on show at Golestan Palace

TOURISM **TEHRAN** – The UNESCO-registered Golestan Palace in Tehran has launched online visits and virtual tours of some of its precious manuscripts during the holy month of Ramadan, Afarin Emami, the director of Golestan Palace announced on Monday, CHTN reported.

While all museums and historical sites across Iran are on lockdown over the coronavirus pandemic, the museum decided to exhibit some of its centuries-old manuscripts of the holy Quran as well as religious manuscripts related to Ramadan, she explained.



Earlier this month, the museum announced that a series of videos have been produced to introduce the palace to online visitors during the quarantine time.

Entitled “59 Seconds of Golestan”, the series are presenting museums, buildings and galleries inside the palace as well as several interviews with different Iranian historians, researchers and scholars.

A destination for domestic and international travelers, Golestan Palace is located in the heart and historic core of Tehran. The palace complex is one of the oldest in the Iranian capital, originally built during the Safavid dynasty (1501–1736) in the historic walled city.

Following extensions and additions, it received its most characteristic features in the 19th century, when the palace complex was selected as the royal residence and seat of power by the Qajar ruling family (1789-1925). At present, Golestan Palace complex consists of eight key palace structures mostly used as museums and the eponymous gardens, a green shared center of the complex, surrounded by an outer wall with gates.

UNESCO has it that the complex exemplifies architectural and artistic achievements of the Qajar era including the introduction of European motifs and styles into Persian arts.

Golestan Palace represents a unique and rich testimony of the architectural language and decorative art during the Qajar era represented mostly in the legacy of Naser ed-Din Shah. It reflects artistic inspirations of European origin as the earliest representations of synthesized European and Persian style, which became so characteristic of Iranian art and architecture of the time.

Tehran in four elements

By Edoardo Ferrari

(Part 3/3)

Air

The air full of combustion gases cannot be forgotten anywhere. Coming out of traffic the senses are still confused by the smell of gasoline. The noise of the machines leaves almost no respite. We feel the need to have to float on all this, leaving everything far below us, to feel lighter. It is at the end of the trip to Tehran, out of every car, within the walls of the house or in a small hidden cafe, that the heaviness of the air can vanish. In front of a cup of tea everything magically dissolves. A small pink flower moves slowly on the hot liquid. The air becomes light. Memories lead to the fragrant gardens of the desert, in those brief moments when you can smell the barren landscapes after the rain.

Scents forgotten among the city streets. A slight scent leads our thoughts away from the city once again. A small rose bud in tea: “Goal-e Mohammadi”, it is not only a flower, but a hope when the air seems consumed.

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

Interpol seizes cache of ancient Iranian artifacts in Europe

HERITAGE **TEHRAN** – Police in a European country have seized a cache of ancient Iranian relics hidden at a safety-deposit box of a bank, ILNA reported on Monday.

“According to the Interpol, one of the banks in a European country intends to renovate and open the safe-deposit boxes inside the bank (previously informed the holders of the safe-deposit boxes that the bank intended to open them). Then, the bank finds out that one of the holders keeps some antiques of gold and silver in his/her box,” said Second Brigadier General Hadi Shirzad, the head of the Iranian Police’s international department.

The senior police official, however, did not mention the name of the European country.

“Due to the importance of the issue, the objects were examined by experienced cultural heritage experts, who concluded they belong to the Achaemenid, Parthian and Sassanid eras,” Shirzad said, adding further investigation reviled the holder of the safe-deposit locker is an Iranian national.

“After Interpol’s branch in Tehran was informed of the issue and it received inquiries from the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, it became clear that the objects belong to the Islamic Republic of Iran.”

“Finally with the coordination of judicial authorities, a police squad was dispatched to the defendant’s residence and he was arrested.”

The senior police official noted that Iran is pursuing efforts to repatriate the ancient relics.

“In coordination with the judicial authorities and with their assistance, a lawsuit has been prepared, translated and submitted to that country. We are following the case through Interpol and diplomatic channels until the relics are back home.”

Last October, Iran managed to repatriate the fourth batch of Achaemenid-era clay tablets (1,783 pieces), which were on loan to the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago since 1935.

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



File photo depicts Achaemenid golden bowl with lioness imagery

Turkey), Central Asia, and to India.

The Parthian Empire, 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.

The Sassanid era (224 CE–651) is of very high importance in the Iranian history, under which Persian art and architecture experienced a general renaissance.

Petroglyphs hold clues to 14,000 years of human life in Iran

TOURISM **TEHRAN** – Archaeologists have found prehistoric rock drawings near Natanz in central Iran which give clues about the rise of human presence that is rooted in 14,000 years of history.

Existing findings prove that human life goes back to 6,000 years in the region.

“A 14,000-year-old evidence of human social life has been identified by experts who examining rock carvings being found near Natanz, which is situated in the heart of the Iranian plateau,” CHTN quoted Natanz tourism chief Hossein Yazdanmehr as saying on Saturday.

“Undoubtedly, petroglyphs can be considered as one of the oldest-known surviving works of art from the beginning of human social life.”

“Archaeologists believe that the custom of creating petroglyphs began at the end of the Paleolithic period, so the style of petroglyphs and symbols the bear, as well as the tools used to create them, along with influencing environmental factors, are valuable criteria for determining the historical background of these objects,” the official explained.

He said the petroglyphs were previously discovered near Arisman, a village in Emamzadeh district of Natanz county, Isfahan province.

“With the discovery of the ancient site of Arisman in previous years and the study of excavated works in it, the historical



background of the civilized life of the people of this region reached six thousand years ago.”

“Over the past years, various petroglyphs have been discovered in nearby plains of various townships such as Afushteh, Badrud and Natanz, so research on the structure of these petroglyphs, as well as determining their historical values, began in the past.”

“In the beginning of the current year, archaeologists found that the collection of

petroglyphs, which are located open-air sites, dates from the late Paleolithic era onwards,”

“With the completion of these studies, the history of human social life in the northern part of Isfahan province is spanned from six to fourteen thousand years ago,” he noted.

Yazdanmehr expressed hope that these valuable collection of petroglyphs could be protected against atmospheric factors by allocating the necessary funds (from the

Zanjan’s historical mosque to undergo urgent restoration

TOURISM **TEHRAN** – Parts of Mirbahaeddin historical mosque in northwestern Zanjan province will undergo urgent rehabilitation works, provincial tourism chief Amir Arjmand announced on Monday, CHTN reported.

The mosque’s walls, arches and foundation as well as its electrical installations and insulation need urgent restoration, which will be done in the near future, he added.

The Qajar-era (1789-1925) mosque, which is a national cultural heritage, has a cistern and a columnar shabestan (an underground space that can be usually found in Iran’s traditional mosques, houses, and schools).

Zanjan is one of the cities founded by Sassanid King

Ardashir I (180-242 CE). The province makes a base for wider explorations with the architectural wonder of Soltaniyeh, the subterranean delights of the Katala-Khor caves, colorful mountains and the UNESCO-registered Takht-e Soleiman ruins are nearby.

In late January, Zanjan was designated as a “world city of filigree” by the World Crafts Council after the WCC assessors visited various craft workshops, stores, exhibits and bazaars of city in a two-day itinerary in last December.

Filigree consists of curling, twisting, or plaiting fine, pliable metal threads and soldering them at their points of contact with each other with a metal groundwork.

Sassanid-era bas-relief discovered in southern Iran

HERITAGE **TEHRAN** – A historical bas-relief carving, which is estimated to date from the Sassanid era, has recently been found in the vicinity of Naqsh-e Rostam, a royal rock-hewn necropolis in Fars province, southern Iran.

A bas-relief that bears the Pahlavi-Sassanid script, has been discovered among a large number of other ones, which are located on top of Hossein mount, ILNA quoted Hamid Fadaei, a provincial cultural heritage official, as saying on Monday.

The experts are currently reading (or deciphering codes of) the relief that dates back to the times of Sassanids (224 CE–651) the official noted.

Naqsh-e Rostam, meaning “Picture of Rostam”,

incorporates memorials of the Elamites, the Achaemenids and the Sassanians. It is where four Persian Achaemenid kings are laid to rest, those of Darius II, Artaxerxes I, Darius I and Xerxes I (from left to right facing the cliff), although some historians are still debating this.

There are gorgeous bas-relief carvings above the tomb chambers that are similar to those in Persepolis, with the kings standing on thrones supported by figures representing the subject nations below. Beneath the funerary chambers are dotted with seven Sassanian era (224–651) bas-reliefs cut into the cliff depict vivid scenes of imperial conquests and royal ceremonies; signboards below each relief give a detailed description in English.



Building resilient cities, a post-coronavirus necessity

1 → Common factors defined for resilience in urban, rural, and industrial areas include resistance to “natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes, and landslides,” “accidents such as airstrikes, explosions, chemical, and microbial bombings, fires, and crime.” And “ecological devastation such as air pollution, acid rain, drought and destruction of natural resources,” he explained.

Social resilience addresses healthy and constructive relationships between citizens, such as different clubs for different ages, genders, religions, and parties, and cultural resilience is a situation in which all social classes with different cultures in the city feel safe and secure, he added.

Resilient cities protect human against crises

Resilient cities can produce as few crises as they can and protect humans against humanitarian crises and unexpected events such as virus spreads, environmental pollution, biological warfare, floods, and earthquakes, and minimize human mortality, Sasan said.

Pointing out that after the coronavirus subsidies, we should not be proud and go back to the past, he said “We should not forget that if coronavirus was controlled, crises such as air pollution and the environment would not have been controlled yet so that we need to take the opportunity to promote resilient cities.

Referring to the dark ages before the Renaissance, he said that even now, humans have returned to the dark ages and have no complete information about the novel coronavirus, and even have doubts about recommendations such as whether or not to wear a mask, indicating that humans do not have the most basic information about the disease.

“Today, human beings do not know whether COVID-19 creates immunity among people who have recovered from the disease, and the World Health Organization warns that the second wave of the disease is far more deadly than the first,” he said.

He emphasized that “Today, after gaining great achievements in industrial, scientific and technological life, human beings have suddenly been thrown into a period in which all the achievements and lifestyles that they had organized must be revised.”

According to Sasan, public transport is one of the main causes of coronavirus



transmission these days, while various communities have tried to make public trains, buses, and taxis available to everyone, but now they do not know what to do with these expensive vehicles.

Some people are saying that the world will always be the host of coronavirus from now on, he said, adding, all of this shows that we have entered a dark and uncertain age because man does not know whether everything he knows as civilization is in his comfort and well-being.

Emphasizing that during the outbreak, the economy suffered the most, especially in the tourism, transportation, car manufacturing, petrochemical, and fossil fuel sectors, he noted that on the other hand, other industries such as software, computer games, and entertainment have grown.

Given the circumstances caused by the coronavirus, the biggest changes will be in urban development, human housing, and lifestyle, he added.

Human lifestyle will change
If Sars, Ebola, and corona are the new generation of viruses, then the human lifestyle will change more than anything else, and it is probably the most important change in residential complexes, Sasan said.

Studies show that about 110 cities in the world are resilient, he further highlighted.

He went on to In the future, the density of the city created by the new civilization may lose efficiency, and humanity may

promote less density.

Global resilience

Referring to coronavirus being completely global and transboundary, Morteza Pedarian, a sociologist, said that post-corona resilience and any decision-making and planning for it, should be international and global.

All countries, rich and poor, developed and developing, now consider the four principles of using masks, continuous hand washing, social distancing, and precise behavior in social communication, he said.

Unlike other disasters that have affected most developing countries, COVID-19 has pushed the boundaries of development, and even developed countries have suffered heavy casualties, he lamented.

In various disasters such as floods, earthquakes and wars, there is emotional support among different members of human society that increases resilience, but in coronavirus crisis, social gatherings and support are less employed, he explained.

Pedarian went on to add that In this case, due to the special conditions of the phenomenon, such as quarantine and the risk of the high prevalence of the disease, it is not possible to approach the infected people and even those around them for sympathy.

He said that all these issues cause the post-corona ecosystem to have certain characteristics and to show its effect in different sectors, This has greatly affected

the resilience and vision of humankind in the areas of economics, beliefs, religions, culture, social relations, and collective action.

Pedarian stressed that phenomena such as this pandemic affect human life psychologically and sociologically and that behaviors need to be re-read, which is why we should think of long-term life.

Comprehensive look at city resilience implementation

Ahmad Shahivand, an architecture and urbanism expert, said that the environment of the city is safe, lively, dynamic, its people are smart with the basic information needed, and the performance and activities of this city are defined following human and environmental characteristics.

The resilient city must be able to maintain and sustain stability in these three areas of disasters and crises. For example, in an earthquake, certain groups, such as children and the elderly, must be safe, he added.

He went on to explain that in urban planning, there is a lot of emphasis on having open and semi-open spaces in residential units, but unfortunately, some construction companies blind these spaces and make them part of the built space to make more profit in sales while resilience in such houses is very difficult.

In such cities, for example, there must be public spaces in every neighborhood to provide basic services in times of crisis, and for people to be able to take refuge there, while in our cities today we have ignored that, he lamented.

Gender differences need to be eliminated in creating urban spaces to increase the resilience of cities, he noted, adding, in the post-coronavirus period, all sectors, with government support, need to identify and address challenges, including how urban planning seeks to build buildings from now on or what the transportation system is like.

Planning for all of these requires a comprehensive look at the executive details to make cities resilient, and each of the related bodies and social groups must help each other achieve that, he noted.

With these cities, it is possible to live alongside natural disasters and survive, given the emergence of phenomena such as the outbreak of coronavirus, the development of such cities needs to be seriously on the agenda of community planners and policymakers, he concluded.

NGOs in Japan send 30 anti-corona packages to Iran

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — In the past two days, 30 packages of donations from Iranian non-governmental organizations residing in Japan and some other groups have been sent to Iran, the Iranian ambassador to Tokyo has said.

Morteza Rahmani-Movahed said in a video message that despite the U.S. claims that it does not prevent the sending of medical aid to Iran, there is still no possibility of any transaction and activity in Japan in favor of humanitarian affairs or helping to deal with the disease, ISNA reported.

“However, with the help of the Japanese government, we have provided 23.5 million dollars worth of assistance to the Iranian people in the fight against coronavirus through



six international organizations.”

Also, aid has been sent by the Japanese people and NGOs, and in the last two days, 30 packages of donations have been sent to Iran, and some others are on the way.

In these difficult times, Iran and Iranians need more solidarity and support, and the Iranian embassy is always ready to help.

Last week, Japan sent a shipment of medical equipment worth \$4 million to Iran to help the country combat the coronavirus outbreak, it has allocated \$7 million aid to Iran, \$4 million of which has been so far provided to the World Food Program in Iran, head of Rescue and Relief Organization, Morteza Salimi, stated.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ع

Educational projects worth \$330m to be inaugurated

A total of 1,015 educational projects worth 14 trillion rials (nearly \$330 million) will be inaugurated across the country, Mehrollah Rakhshanimehr, director of the organization for renovation, development, and equipment of schools, has announced.

The projects will be inaugurated by the next 10 days, on the occasion of the 41st anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, he stated, ISNA reported on Sunday.

According to Rakhshanimehr, the projects include 4,168 classrooms, 11 swimming pools, and 32 gyms.

About 14,000 classrooms have been built so far this year (started March 21, 2019), compared with some 10,000 last year, he concluded.

افتتاح ۱۴۰۰ میلیارد تومان پروژه آموزشی

رئیس سازمان نوسازی، توسعه و تجهیز مدارس کشور گفت ۱۰۱۵ پروژه آموزشی با اعتباری به میزان ۱۴۰۰ میلیارد تومان در سراسر کشور به بهره‌برداری می‌رسد.

به گزارش ایسنا، مه‌راله رخشانی مهر افزود این پروژه‌ها طی ۱۰ روز آینده و به مناسبت چهل‌ویکمین سالگرد پیروزی انقلاب اسلامی افتتاح خواهند شد.

به گفته او، این پروژه‌ها شامل ۴۱۶۸ کلاس درس، ۱۱ استخر، و ۳۲ سالن ورزشی هستند.

رخشانی مهر ادامه داد تاکنون در سال ۹۸ حدود ۱۴ هزار کلاس درس افتتاح شده است در حالیکه در سال ۹۷ حدود ۱۰ هزار کلاس افتتاح شده بود.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“galacto-, gala-, galact-”

■ **Meaning:** milk

■ **For example:** The Milky Way is the *galaxy* which is the home of our solar system.

PHRASAL VERB

Grasp at something

■ **Meaning:** to try to hold on to something

■ **For example:** His foot slipped and he grasped at the top of the wall.

IDIOM

Bring nothing to the table

■ **Explanation:** to have nothing of interest to offer the other side in a negotiation

■ **For example:** We'll never reach an agreement if we don't all bring something to the table.

Special Iranian sweets, pastries for Ramadan

Ramadan is one of the holiest months of the Muslim calendar and is a time for self-reflection, helping others, and most importantly, fasting.

During the month of Ramadan, Iranian people normally gather together and have a special meal which is generally combined with dinner. The ceremony is called Iftar and it's the time when Muslim people are going to break their fast.

To make it more special, people prepare certain types of foods, cookies, and sweets which are specifically cooked for the holy month of Ramadan.

In Iran -where everybody is in love with pastries and sweets! - people celebrate Ramadan by cooking special kinds of sweets such as Zoolbia and Bamieh, Reshte Khoshkar, Ranginak, Shole Zard, Fereni, and so many other desserts. Some come from specific regions and the others are common throughout the whole country.

The main reason for such variety in producing sweets is probably because after so many hours of not eating anything, the level of blood sugar drops and as a result, people tend to break their fast, eating something sweet.

Since many years ago, many changes have been made in people's diet during this month. However, there are still certain sweets and cookies which remind Iranian people of the arrival of the holy month of Ramadan, according to the SurfIran website.

Zoolbia and Bamieh



Probably the most famous sweets of Ramadan, Zoolbia and Bamieh are basically like churro or doughnuts and are fried pastry coated in saffron and rose water sweet syrup. They are an inseparable part of Iftar's meal which is like dinner after fasting.

Shole Zard

This sweet Iranian traditional dessert is, in fact, the combination of rice, sugar, and saffron and is very popular during many religious ceremonies and holy months like Moharam or Ramadan.

It takes about 6 hours for Shole Zard to be prepared and people normally design it with almond, pistachio, and cinnamon before serving.

Reshteh Khoshkar

In the northern province of Gilan, the most popular cookie is Reshteh khoshkar which is made from fried rice paste and is filled with a mixture of nuts. You probably won't be able to find it easily in other cities in Iran, especially in central parts. Also, the process of producing it is so special and is worth watching. So, don't forget to try it if you visit Rasht or other northern cities in Iran.

Fereni

This is a traditional pudding dessert that can be served both cold and warm. It is generally prepared by dissolving rice flour in milk and then, you can add rose water and sugar to make it sweet. People normally add sprinkle crushed pistachio on top before serving it.

Halva

One of the most popular Iranian dessert -which is associated with death and is served in Iranian's funerals- is Halva. But it is also common to have it on the Iftar table. This delicious and tasty dessert is made from fried flour and people normally design it with crushed almond and pistachio or coconut powder.

Ranginak

Hailing from Shiraz, this traditional Iranian dessert is prepared with toasted wheat flour and walnut-stuffed dates. Toasted flour, which is usually enriched with cinnamon, sugar, and cardamom, makes the bottom and the top layer of the dessert, while the center is filled with stuffed dates.

Ranginak is prepared in round cake pans and usually comes topped with ground pistachios. The cake is traditionally served chilled, usually accompanied by freshly brewed tea.

WORDS IN THE NEWS

Missile plot arrests

(August 13, 2003)

The FBI has arrested two more men for reportedly trying to bring a Russian missile into the United States and sell it to terrorists. A British citizen had already been arrested. The FBI says that the man wanted to make money and that they do not know of any plan to attack the President's plane, Air Force One. This report from Justin Webb:

The **identities** of the three arrested men and the precise **charges** they face are still not known but all three are due to appear in court [today] in Newark, New Jersey, and all three appear to be linked to an **alleged** plot to sell a Russian **surface-to-air missile** to terrorists.

The first man to be held - said to be a British arms dealer - was reportedly arrested when he met **undercover FBI agents** posing as terrorists wanting to buy the weapon. The other two **suspects** were picked up at a New York **gem dealership**.

The weapon itself was said by FBI sources to have been supplied by the Russian secret service, which co-operated in the **sting operation**. The missile they shipped to America had been modified so that it couldn't work.

FBI officials also stressed that, although the arms dealer might have boasted that he could supply a weapon capable of **downing** Air Force One, they were aware of no specific plot to attack that or any other aircraft.

Words

identities: who people are; names and other details about them
charges: official statements that accuse someone of a crime
alleged: not yet proved to be true

surface-to-air missile: weapon sent from the ground into the air, which explodes when it reaches a target

arms dealer: someone who buys and sells weapons
undercover FBI agents: secret investigators for the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation, which looks into crimes that break a national law or put the country in danger

suspects: people thought to be guilty of a crime
gem dealership: a business that buys and sells precious stones or jewels, for example diamonds

sting operation: undercover police using a clever secret plan to catch criminals

downing: bringing down, causing to fall

(Source: BBC)

Syria air defenses down Israeli missiles over Damascus

→ 1 Israel has been a main supporter of terrorist groups that have opposed the government of President Bashar al-Assad since militancy erupted in Syria in March 2011.

According to Press TV, Israel's aggressive moves have been viewed by observers as an attempt to weaken the Damascus government as it increasingly gains the upper hand in its fight against terrorist groups.

Syria has been gripped by foreign-backed militancy since March 2011. The Syrian government says the Israeli regime and its Western and regional allies are aiding Takfiri terrorist groups that are wreaking havoc in the country.

Syrian government forces have taken back many areas once controlled by the terrorist groups. The government and allied forces are currently busy fighting last bastions of militants in the northwestern province of Idlib and areas in the neighboring Aleppo province.

Turkish forces gun down two protesters in northwest Syria

Turkish forces have reportedly opened live fire on people protesting their patrolling of a key highway in northwestern Syria, killing two people and wounding three more.

The protesters had set up roadblocks across the part of the M4 Highway that runs close to the government-held village of Nairab in the Idlib Province to oppose the patrols.

The casualties were caused after the Turkish military attacked them on Sunday, using live rounds and tear gas canisters, the Associated Press reported, citing activists.

According to Press TV, The Turkish forces have been allowed to man a number of observation posts in Idlib as part of a de-escalation deal reached between Turkey and Russia in the Black Sea resort of Sochi in September 2018.

Earlier this year, however, Turkish troops were reported to have ventured far outside the areas that are assigned to the posts and engaged in heavy clashes with Syrian soldiers.

Pandemic could create 'human rights disaster': UN

The UN rights chief warned Monday that countries flouting the rule of law in the name of fighting the novel coronavirus pandemic risk sparking a "human rights disaster".

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet called on countries to refrain from violating fundamental rights "under the guise of exceptional or emergency measures."

"Emergency powers should not be a weapon governments can wield to quash dissent, control the population, and even perpetuate their time in power," she warned in a statement. "They should be used to cope effectively with the pandemic -- nothing more, nothing less."



Her comments came after more than 200,000 people have perished in the pandemic and nearly three million have been infected worldwide by the novel coronavirus since it surfaced in China late last year.

Bachelet acknowledged that states have the right to restrict some rights to protect public health, but she insisted that any restrictions should be necessary, proportionate and non-discriminatory, and also limited in duration.

"There have been numerous reports from different regions that police and other security forces have been using excessive, and at times lethal, force to make people abide by lockdowns and curfews," she said, lamenting that "such violations have often been committed against people belonging to the poorest and most vulnerable segments of the population."

"Shooting, detaining, or abusing someone for breaking a curfew because they are desperately searching for food is clearly an unacceptable and unlawful response."

"So is making it difficult or dangerous for a woman to get to hospital to give birth."

■ 'Incalculable damage'

"In some cases, people are dying because of the inappropriate application of measures that have been supposedly put in place to save them," Bachelet said.

She also decried the mass arrests in some countries over curfew violations as "both unnecessary and unsafe."

"Jails and prisons are high risk environments, and states should focus on releasing whoever can be safely released, not detaining more people."

The UN rights chief also warned that efforts to rein in dangerous misinformation around the pandemic was in some cases being used as an excuse to crack down on legitimate free speech.

"It is important to counter misinformation, but shutting down the free exchange of ideas and information not only violates rights, it undermines trust," she said.

"Undermining rights such as freedom of expression may do incalculable damage to the effort to contain COVID-19 and its pernicious socioeconomic side-effects," she warned.

Bachelet also insisted that any exceptional measures or state of emergencies introduced in the name of fighting COVID-19 should be subject to proper parliamentary, judicial and public oversight to avoid abuses.

"If the rule of law is not upheld, then the public health emergency risks becoming a human rights disaster, with negative effects that will long outlast the pandemic itself," she said.

(Source: AFP)

Arab league to meet over Israel's plans to annex West Bank

Netanyahu confident U.S. would allow Israel to annex parts of occupied West Bank

By staff & agencies

The Arab League said Monday it will convene an urgent virtual meeting this week to discuss how to galvanize opposition to Israeli plans to annex parts of the occupied West Bank.

The extraordinary meeting -- scheduled for Thursday at the request of the Palestinian leadership -- will bring together Arab foreign ministers via video conference, rather than a face-to-face meeting, due to the global coronavirus pandemic, AFP reported.

The Arab League's deputy secretary Hossam Zaki said the ministers will "discuss in their virtual meeting providing political, legal and financial support to the Palestinian leadership to confront the Israeli plans".

It comes after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his political rival Benny Gantz signed a deal for a unity government that could accelerate the premier's plans to annex parts of the West Bank in the coming months.

Those Israeli plans -- while subject to caveats, including the need to maintain "regional stability" and uphold the peace agreement with Jordan -- have drawn wide criticism including from the United Nations and the European Union.

Arab League chief Ahmed Ahmed Aboul



Gheit had last week sent a message to UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres warning against Israel's plans saying they risk "igniting tension in the region".

He also accused Israel of "exploiting the world's preoccupation with the novel coronavirus to impose a new reality on the ground".

Israel occupied the West Bank in the 1967 Six-Day War and has since extended

its control by expanding its settlements there.

On Wednesday, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said a decision regarding the annexation of West Bank territories was up to Israel's new unity government.

Earlier this year, the U.S. unveiled a controversial Middle East peace plan that would allow Israel to retain control of the contested city of Jerusalem as its "undivided capital" and annex Jewish settlements on

Palestinian lands including in the West Bank.

Arab states rejected Trump's plan, saying it favored Israel and failed to grant Palestinians their minimum rights.

The Palestinians as well as the European Union have likewise criticized the plan, saying it effectively closes the door to a two-state solution in the Middle East.

Meanwhile, the Israeli prime minister has voiced confidence that Washington would give Tel Aviv the nod within two months to move ahead with annexation of parts of the occupied West Bank.

Benjamin Netanyahu said the so-called peace proposal announced by U.S. President Donald Trump in January was a promise to recognize Israel's authority over West Bank, Press TV reported.

"A couple of months from now I am confident that pledge will be honored," Netanyahu told the European Commission for Israel.

Netanyahu set July 1st for the start of cabinet discussions on extending Israeli sovereignty to settlements in the West Bank and annexing the Jordan Valley.

Palestinians have flatly rejected Trump's alleged peace proposal as it awards the Israeli regime nearly all the occupied land on which it has built its settlements.

All Israeli settlements are illegal under international law.

Shop owner at closed Jerusalem market dies by suicide amid financial woes

An owner of a shop in Jerusalem's open-air Mahane Yehuda market has died by suicide due to the financial hardship caused by coronavirus restrictions, Hebrew-language media reported Sunday.

At his family's request, no further details were published about the veteran shop owner.

He took his own life a week and a half ago, Army Radio reported, Times of Israel reported.

Jerusalem Mayor Moshe Lion confirmed the reports, saying he was "shocked and pained by the sad news."

Lion called on the government to "immediately reopen the market," arguing that "the livelihood of thousands of families is in danger. Any delay could cost lives."

Labor MK Itzik Shmuli, slated to be-

come welfare minister in the new government, called the news an "emergency wake-up call" and urged the leadership to "change course and significantly broaden the financial safety net for the self-employed and the unemployed."

Earlier Sunday, Mahane Yehuda merchants clashed with police during a demonstration protesting the continued closure of the landmark market even as most stores nationwide have been allowed to reopen on Sunday.

Videos posted online showed a scrum of small businessmen scuffling with uniformed officers at the market's Agrippas Street entrance. One of the protesters was arrested and later released and Tali Friedman, who represents Mahane Yehuda's shop owners, was summoned for questioning by the police.

South Korean officials call for caution amid reports that Kim is ill

South Korean officials are calling for caution amid reports that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un may be ill or is being isolated because of coronavirus concerns, emphasizing that they have detected no unusual movements in North Korea.

At a closed door forum on Sunday, South Korea's Unification Minister Kim Yeon-chul, who oversees engagement with the North, said the government has the intelligence capabilities to say with confidence that there was no indications of anything unusual, Reuters reported.

Rumours and speculation over the North Korean leader's health began after he made no public appearance at a key state holiday on April 15, and has since remained out of sight.

South Korea media last week reported that Kim may have undergone cardiovascular surgery or was in isolation to avoid exposure to the new coronavirus.

Unification minister Kim cast doubt on the report of surgery, arguing that the hospital mentioned did not have the capabilities for such an operation.

Still, Yoon Sang-hyun, chairman of the foreign and unification committee in South Korea's National Assembly, told a gathering of experts on Monday that Kim Jong Un's absence from the public eye suggests "he has not been working as normally".

"There has not been any report showing he's making



policy decisions as usual since April 11, which leads us to assume that he is either sick or being isolated because of coronavirus concerns," Yoon said. North Korea has said it has no confirmed cases of the new coronavirus, but some international experts have cast doubts on that claim.

On Monday, North Korean state media once again showed no new photos of Kim nor reported on his whereabouts.

However, they did carry reports that he had sent a message of gratitude to workers building a tourist resort in Wonsan, an area where some South Korean media reports have said Kim may be staying.

"Our government position is firm," Moon Chung-in, the top foreign policy adviser to South Korean President Moon Jae-in, said in comments to news outlets in the United States.

"Kim Jong Un is alive and well. He has been staying in the Wonsan area since April 13. No suspicious movements have so far been detected."

Satellite images from last week showed a special train possibly belonging to Kim at Wonsan, lending weight to those reports, according to 38 North, a Washington-based North Korea monitoring project.

Though the group said it was probably the North Korean leader's personal train, Reuters has not been able to confirm that independently, or whether he was in Wonsan.

A spokeswoman for the Unification Ministry said on Monday she had nothing to confirm when asked about reports that Kim was in Wonsan.

Last week China dispatched a team to North Korea including medical experts to advise on Kim Jong Un, according to three people familiar with the situation.

Reuters was unable to immediately determine what the trip by the Chinese team signalled in terms of Kim's health.

On Friday a South Korean source told Reuters their intelligence was that Kim Jong Un was alive and would likely make an appearance soon.

'UAE against unilateral changes to situation in Yemen'

Saudi-led coalition rejects south Yemen self-rule declaration

By staff & agencies

The United Arab Emirates stands against a decision by a main Yemeni southern separatist group to declare self-rule in areas it controls, and urges full implementation of a peace deal agreed last year for the south, minister of state for foreign affairs Anwar Gargash said on Monday

According to Reuters, the UAE backs the separatist Southern Transitional Council (STC) group and is also a key player in the Saudi-led coalition which is fighting the Houthi movement in Yemen and backs the internationally recognized Yemeni government.

■ Saudi Arabia rejects self-rule declaration

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia-led military coalition has rejected a separatist group's declaration of self-rule in Yemen's south, demanding "an end to escalatory actions" and return to a peace deal signed in November last year.

The Saudi statement on Monday comes a day after Yemen's Southern Transitional Council (STC) declared a state of emergency and announced "self-administration rule"

in regions under their control, including in the port city of Aden.

The key city serves as the interim capital of the internationally recognised and Saudi-backed government of President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi.

The STC and Hadi's forces are supposed allies in Yemen's complicated conflict and both have fought together in the Saudi-led coalition's war against the Houthi rebels, who overran parts of northern Yemen in 2014, including the capital, Sanaa.

But the STC turned on Hadi's government in August last year and seized Aden. The fighting stopped when the two groups reached a deal in the Saudi capital, Riyadh.

In its statement on Monday, the Saudi-led coalition urged the council to return to the terms of the Riyadh agreement. That deal had called for all sides to remove heavy military equipment from Yemeni cities under their control and form a unity government that included equal representation, al Jazeera reported.

But that had yet to be implemented as the war continued and enormous floods



struck Aden, killing at least 21 people earlier this month. Compounding the troubles, Yemen on April 10 announced its first case of the COVID-19.

The Saudi-led coalition said it "demands an end to any escalatory actions and calls for return to the agreement by the participating parties".

The deal "entails forming a competent government that operate from the interim capital Aden to tackle economic and developmental

challenges, in light of natural disasters such as floods, fears of the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak and work to provide services to the brotherly people of Yemen".

The statement offered no warning on what Saudi Arabia would do if the council refused. The kingdom, itself focused on the coronavirus outbreak there, began a unilateral ceasefire with the Houthis in April that it said will continue throughout the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan.

No other way but to resume the league: Majid Jalali

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Majid Jalali, head coach of Gol Gohar Sirjan Football Club, believes that there is no other way but to resume the Iran Professional League (IPL) matches.

Gol Gohar are in the 13th place in the table, three points above the relegation zone.

Before the football season was halted by coronavirus pandemic, the Sirjan-based team were on an unbeaten run, stretching back to the end of December, with three draws and three wins, including their 1-0 win against the league's giants Esteghlal.

Asked about the impact of coronavirus crisis on football, Jalali answered: "How sport, in particular football, might recover post-corona is important, as well as interesting issue to consider in the near future."

"But for now, we should think about the problems that we face during this chaos. The competition calendars in all sports events have been changed. All countries will suffer from this situation, even if they want to continue playing football. And the most critical damage is that we must get ready for a drop in the quality of the games."

"To get football back would be excellent as we all attempt to heal from the damage that coronavirus crisis has inflicted upon the world and our country, but it wouldn't be the football that we're used to. The number of injuries will increase, and we will probably face some unusual damages to players as they are sitting at home for a long time," Jalali said in an



exclusive interview with Tehran Times.

He has managed several clubs in Iran, namely Pas, Saba Battery, Foolad, and also national football teams at youth levels.

"The most crucial point that we should take into account is to take steps to make sure that the problems caused by the crisis in the current football season will not affect the next season of the league."

The 63-year-old coach is hopeful his team can pick up from where they left off when the season resumes: "Training every day is very competitive, and the players will be missing that, but we have been monitoring everything from the players' fitness and their weight and nutrition during lockdown condition. We were on a good run, and

the suspension of the tournament was not in our favor."

He believes that the country's plans to continue the sports events will be announced soon: "The league will be resumed. There is no other way. In my opinion, we can start the competitions after the holy month of Ramadan, and the teams can move to training in groups by next week."

Ali Karimi the best ever Iranian player: Podolski



S P O R T S TEHRAN — Former Bayern Munich and Arsenal forward Lukas Podolski says that Ali Karimi is the best ever Iranian player in history.

Podolski, who was a member of Bayern Munich from 2006 to 2009, has lauded the Iranian iconic midfielder.

"My first year at Bayern, a pleasure to play with this legend Ali Karimi. He is the best ever from Iran," Podolski shared on

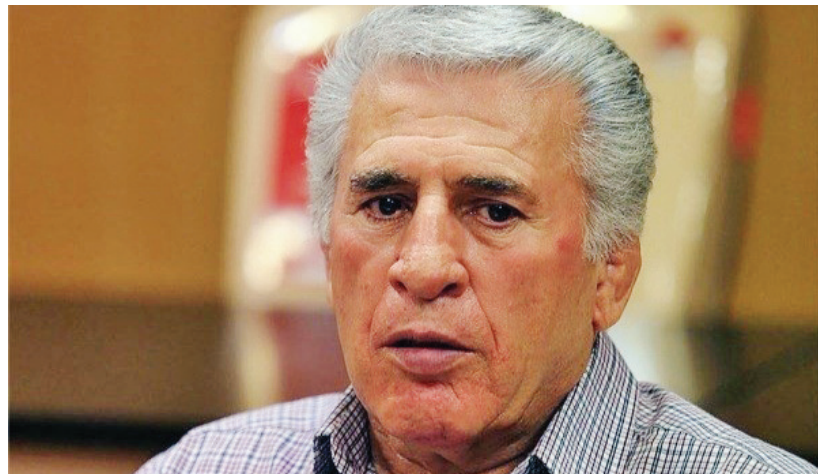
his Instagram account.

Karimi joined Bayern Munich in 2005 and scored three goals in 33 matches for the German giants.

He became the third Iranian after Ali Daei and Vahid Hashemian to try his luck with Bayern.

The "Wizard of Tehran" is arguably one of the Asia's greatest players, and is often listed as one of the greatest Iranian players of all time.

Ex-Olympian Ebrahim Javadi's medals stolen



S P O R T S TEHRAN — Burglars have stolen medals and cups belonging to former Iranian Olympian Ebrahim Javadi.

Javadi said the robbers have stolen the trophies from his home in Karaj, west of Tehran, when he was not there.

"They stole my valuable items, the appliances and my 18 medals. I've informed the police and hope they find my medals because I can never win them once again," Javadi said.

The freestyle wrestler won a bronze medal at the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich in 48kg. He also claimed four gold medals in the World Championships as well as two gold medals in Asian Games.

Javadi is in the United World Wrestling (formerly FILA) Hall of Fame.

Javadi was born in Qazvin in 1943, but spent a few of his early years in Tehran, where his father worked for the Ministry of Labor.

Player of the Week: Milad Ebadipour

Milad Ebadipour has been leading Iran for the past six years, ever since he was first called to the national team in 2014, ahead of that year's FIVB Volleyball World League. He has been one of the side's driving forces at all the major competitions they have been at since.

The 26-year-old who hails from Urmia began to make a name for himself after joining Kalleh Mazandaran Volleyball Club and winning both the national championship and the Asian Club Championship in his first year there in 2013.

After a couple of seasons with Shahrdari Urmia, Ebadipour moved on to Iranian powerhouse Sarmayeh Bank Tehran, with which he won two more continental club titles in 2016 and 2017, as well as another national title in 2017.

Ebadipour hopped over to Europe in 2017 to play in Poland's PlusLiga with PGE Skra Belchatow, winning the Polish Super Cup and the league title in his first season there and another Super Cup in 2019. His club also claimed



third place in 2020, before the league was halted due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Following a successful appearance at the 2012 Asian U21

Championship, when Iran won the bronze medal, Ebadipour made the senior team in 2014, competing in the World League and going on to strike gold in the Asian Games that same year (and helping defend that title in 2018).

He was part of the Iranian squad in their historic appearance at the Rio 2016 Olympic Games and was picked as an outside hitter of the Dream Team at the 2017 FIVB Grand Champions Cup when Iran picked up their only medal in a major FIVB competition - a bronze.

In 2019, Ebadipour steered Iran to their first participation in the Finals of the FIVB Volleyball Nations League, held in Chicago, USA. And in January 2020 he helped his country qualify for the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 contributing in the build up to and victory against hosts China in the final of the Asian qualification tournament in Jiangmen.

(Source: FIVB)

British sprinter Henry says will put health before Olympics

British sprinter Desiree Henry will prioritize her health and family's well-being over competing at the Tokyo Olympics next year if the COVID-19 pandemic has not been brought under control.

The Games were pushed back by a year to July-August 2021 due to the new coronavirus and Henry, a 4x100 meters relay bronze medalist at the 2016 Rio Games, urged athletes not to risk their health, saying she wouldn't "die for the sport".

"We are more than just athletes and performers that want to entertain people in a crowd. We're humans that have families and lives to think of," Henry told Reuters.

"You have to put your health first. I want to live, I want all the other athletes to live and be healthy. If the pandemic hasn't been sorted by 2021, I would have

to put my health first, I have a family to come back to.

"I would personally take a step back, because I'm not trying to say, 'I'm going to die for the sport'... I'm not going to do that."

"I really do care about my own health and my family and I would honestly encourage others to think outside of being an athlete and just remember you're an individual where people and family love you."

With training centers closed due to lockdown measures in the United Kingdom, Henry has been getting her designated daily exercise on a golf course in London.

The 24-year-old said the uncertainty surrounding upcoming events made it mentally tough to "train towards a goal" but she was looking forward to competing in smaller competitions

throughout the year.

Henry also said she was not worried about being unable to fulfill her potential but that the Olympics postponement must have hit some athletes hard, particularly those who looked at Tokyo as their swansong.

"It's probably the hardest for athletes that are either looking to retire, looking to start a family and their sights were set on making the Olympics one more time as the largest pinnacle of our sport," she added.

"That must be kind of a hard moment where you have to really change everything in your life... I kind of do have age on my side. So I'm not thinking of anything too far ahead in terms of 'oh, I can never reach my potential'."

(Source: Reuters)



Bashar Resan set to leave Persepolis

IRNA — Persepolis iconic midfielder Bashar Resan will reportedly leave the Iranian team at the end of the season.

The club is not likely to accept the player's demand and will lead the Iraqi off in the next transfer window.



Resan joined Persepolis in 2017 and helped the Reds win two Iran Professional League titles and one Hazfi Cup. He has been also linked with Qatari teams.

Some clubs want Iran cancels league

PLDC — Some football clubs have requested the Iran League Organization to cancel the current season in response to the coronavirus crisis.

Machine Sazi, Tractor, Gol Gohar and Nassaji are the clubs who have written a letter to the organization.

Media reports suggest that Iran Professional League will restart from the next month.

Persepolis leads the table, 10 points above second team Sepahan.

Soheil Mehdi, head of league organization, has said they will hold a session soon to determine whether the league will continue or not.

Iran to send athletic team to Asian Beach Games

TASNIM — Iran will send athletic team to the sixth edition of the Asian Beach Games.

The competition is scheduled to take place in Sanya, China from November 28 to December 5.

Iran had already announced that it will send beach handball team to the competition.

In the previous edition held in Vietnam, Iranian athletes claimed three medals. Ali Samari seized a gold medal in shot put, Reza Ghasemi claimed a silver in 60m and Sobhan Taherkhani took a bronze medal in long jump.

Formula 1 expects to start delayed season in Austria in July

Formula One hopes to start its delayed 2020 season in Austria in July without spectators before ending in Abu Dhabi in December after races in Asia and the Americas, chairman and CEO Chase Carey said on Monday.

The opening race at the Red Bull Ring, belonging to the Austrian energy drink company that owns two of the 10 teams on the starting grid, would be held as planned over the Jul 3 to Jul 5 weekend.

The French Grand Prix at Le Castellet in June was earlier cancelled, becoming the 10th race in what was to have been a record 22-round season starting in March to be hit by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We are now increasingly confident with the progress of our plans to begin our season this summer," said Carey in a statement. "We're targeting a start to racing in Europe through July, August and (the) beginning of September."

"September, October and November would see us race in Eurasia, Asia and the Americas, finishing the season in the Gulf in December with Bahrain before the traditional finale in Abu Dhabi, having completed between 15 and 18 races."

(Source: CAN)

Three-year doping ban for Oman rider among latest FEI Tribunal decisions

Endurance rider Said Al Balushi of Oman has been banned for three years by the International Equestrian Federation (FEI) Tribunal after two of his horses tested positive for a prohibited substance.

The sanction from the FEI Tribunal is one of seven final decisions rendered in doping cases, while it has also suspended an athlete for horse abuse.

Al Balushi has been hit with an extended suspension from the sport, and will not be able to return until February 2022, after two horses he rode in December 2018 failed drugs tests.

Samples taken from Kekmadar and Si Quilombo following events in the United Arab Emirates were both found to have contained arsenic.

"Due to these aggravating circumstances, the FEI Tribunal decision imposed a three-year period of ineligibility on the athlete, with the provisional suspension (effective from 7 February 2019) credited against the full suspension, meaning the athlete will be ineligible until 6 February 2022," the FEI said.

Adel Mohd Ali Al Housani of the UAE, Saudi Arabia's Aayed Saud Alosaimi, Rodrigo Picão Abreu of Portugal and Saudi Arabian rider Ahmad Althmaly have all been handed two-year bans.

(Source: Insidethegames)

INTERNATIONAL DAILY
www.tehrantimes.com

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» www.eshterak.ir Distributor: Padideh Novin Co.
Tel: 88911433
» Webmaster: webmaster@tehrantimes.com
» Printed at: Jame Jam Barta Borna - 44197737



Tehrantimes79



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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

A person who analyzes himself receives a benefit, and he who neglects it, is a loser. He who learns a lesson from others, finds insight, and with such insight comes understanding and avoiding ignorance, and he who understands, will be well aware.

Imam Ali (AS)

Martyr Soleimani's memories of Iran-Iraq war up for release

→1 An album of his photos from childhood until weeks before his martyrdom and his last will and testament have also been compiled.

Earlier in 2016, scholar Ali-Akbar Mozdabadi published "Hajji Qassem", which contains Soleimani's memories of the Iran-Iraq war and some other topics and articles published about the commander by several international studies centers.



Commander Qassem Soleimani (L) among a group of volunteers on the frontline during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war.

"The Soldiers of the Commander" authored by Morteza Keramati was also published the same year. In this book, the writer gives an account of Soleimani's leadership as the Quds Force commander. In addition, it also carries the memories of his soldiers in the fight against the ISIS terrorists in Syria and Iraq.

A Turkish translation of the book by Aykut Pazarbasi was published by Feta Publishing in Istanbul under the title "Haci Kasim Suleymani ve Harem Savunuculari" ("Hajji Qassem Soleimani and Sacred Shrine Defenders") in March 2020.

"Cradle of Silence" to compete in Indian festival

A R T **TEHRAN** — "Cradle of Silence" by Mostafa Mehraban will be competing in the Jehlum Short and Long Film Festival, which will be running in the Indian city of Srinagar from May 1 to 10, the Iranian Youth Cinema Society has announced.

"Cradle of Silence" depicts Rasul who has to deliver a cradle to the widow of his martyred friend. With Rasul returning from the southern warzone to the northern part of the country, his wife Laya plans on going back to the warzone with him. The cradle becomes an excuse for Rasul to reject his wife's request.

Jehlum is a festival with the specific goal of supporting and promoting photography and fresh filmmaking talent.

Majority of authors "hear" their characters speak, finds study

LONDON (Guardian) — Some writers have always claimed they can hear their characters speaking, with Enid Blyton suggesting she could "watch and hear everything" and Alice Walker describing how her characters would "come for a visit ... and talk". But a new study has shown this uncanny experience is very widespread, with almost two-thirds of authors reporting that they hear their characters' voices while they work.

Researchers at Durham University teamed up with the Guardian and the Edinburgh international book festival to survey 181 authors appearing at the 2014 and 2018 festivals. Sixty-three per cent said they heard their characters speak while writing, with 61% reporting characters were capable of acting independently.

"I hear them in my mind. They have distinct voice patterns and tones, and I can make them carry on conversations with each other in which I can always tell who is 'talking'," said one anonymous writer. "They sometimes tell me that what I have in mind for them isn't right – that they would never behave or speak that way. I don't usually answer back," said another.

The study, which appeared last month in the journal Consciousness and Cognition, also found that 56% of the writers surveyed reported visual or other sensory experiences of their characters when they were writing, while a fifth had the sense that their character was occupying the same physical space. Fifteen per cent of writers said they could even enter a dialogue with their creations.

Iran exempts cultural centers from paying rent during pandemic

C U L T U R E **TEHRAN** — Iran has exempted private art and cultural centers from paying rent during the COVID-19 pandemic in the country to support the centers during the nationwide lockdown.

The decision that has recently been made during the last session of the government also allows public organizations and municipalities to extend the deadline for receiving rent from private art and cultural centers, the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance announced on Monday.

All movie theaters and art and cultural centers across Iran have been shut down over the spread of COVID-19. Iran has also canceled all art, cultural and cinematic events due to the new virus pandemic.

Earlier on April 12, Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Seyyed Abbas Salehi announced that the coronavirus outbreak in the country would cause an estimated loss of over 9,700 billion rials (Over \$230 million) in the art and culture sectors by April 19, the end of the first month of the Iranian calendar year.

Iranian bookstores were allowed last week to resume activities from Saturday after a nearly two-month shutdown due to the pandemic.

In addition, several film distributors in Iran have decided to offer some of their new productions through the platforms providing video on demand (VOD) service in order to deal with the lockdown of the movie theaters.



Empty seats in a Tehran movie theater in an undated photo.

Netflix pens deal with MK2 to screen Abbas Kiarostami films

A R T **TEHRAN** — Netflix has penned a new deal with France's MK2 Films to screen a number of remastered versions of films by Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami.

The deal has also brought a total of 50 movies to the streaming service, including many versions of classics by famous filmmakers Charles Chaplin, Buster Keaton and others, announced Slashgear, a website that covers everything from cutting-edge tech gear to digital lifestyle trends.

The Netflix deal kicked off on April 24, having first launched a dozen of Truffaut classics such as "Fahrenheit 451", "The 400 Blows", "The Woman Next Door" and "Confidentially Yours".

Also in February, India's Alliance Media & Entertainment acquired a collection of works by Kiarostami from France's

MK2 Films for distribution in the country.

The collection included 33 features, documentaries and shorts from Kiarostami's oeuvre including "Taste of Cherry", "The Wind Will Carry Us" and "Where Is the Friend's Home?".

According to Variety, MK2 Films acquired all rights to the first 20 movies made by Kiarostami in a deal with Iran's Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA) in 2017.

As part of the deal with IIDCYA, MK2 Films has restored the films in 4K. The titles include "The Traveler" and "Where Is the Friend's Home?".

A winner of the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival in 1997 for his "Taste of Cherry", Kiarostami died of cancer on July 5, 2016 at the age of 76.

Iranian seminar to scrutinize impacts of coronavirus on art in October

A R T **TEHRAN** — The Iranian Academy of Arts has announced its plan to study the effects of the coronavirus on art and artists during a seminar to be held in late October.

The spread of the new virus around the world has affected all political, social and cultural relations, and art and artists are no exceptions, the academy wrote in a statement published on Monday.

Interested researchers are asked to submit their research articles on the major topics of the seminar before September 20.

The topics include "Changes in Artistic Creations", "Artistic Innovations and Technology", "Art Review", "Artistic Philosophy and Aesthetics", "Economy and Art", "Artistic Education", "Art and Crisis", "Art and Social-Mental Crisis", "Artistic Management and Policymaking" and "Infectious Diseases and Artistic Intercultural Relations".



A poster for the Iranian Academy of Arts' Seminar on Art and Coronavirus.

Stephen Sondheim gets starry but tardy 90th birthday concert

NEW YORK (AP) — Josh Groban, Nathan Lane and Jake Gyllenhaal honored composer and lyricist Stephen Sondheim on Sunday with an online 90th birthday concert that was stuffed with his songs, but delayed by technical difficulties.

The starry special called "Take Me to the World" featured performances by Lin-Manuel Miranda, Kelli O'Hara, Lea Salonga, Judy Kuhn, Katrina Lenk, Aaron Tveit, Laura Benanti, Brian Stokes Mitchell, Patti LuPone and Bernadette Peters, who closed out the show with a triumphant version of "No One Is Alone" without any accompanying music.

Sondheim actually turned 90 on March 22, but plans to celebrate were taken online after Broadway shut down because of the coronavirus pandemic. The celebration on Sunday night coincided with the 50th anniversary of the opening of Sondheim's Broadway show "Company", and served as a fundraiser for Artists Striving to End Poverty.

Sutton Foster was the first to sing, picking "There Won't Be Trumpets" and her young daughter, Emily, wished Sondheim a happy birthday at the end. Christine Baranski, Audra McDonald and Meryl Streep each teamed up for a raucous "The Ladies Who Lunch."

Neil Patrick Harris sang "The Witch's Rap" and thanked Sondheim: "He made me love theater, he made me love music, he made me love rhythm," he said. Harris' children also played a role in the performance, bowing at the end.

Jason Alexander of "Seinfeld" fame told of being challenged by the composer, while AnnaLeigh Ashford and Gyllenhaal reunited for a song from their 2017 Broadway partnership, the Sondheim revival of "Sunday in the Park with George."

There was a duet from Beanie Feldstein and Ben Platt, who sang "It Takes Two." Victor Garber recalled raply hearing "Johanna" from "Sweeney Todd" for the

first time. In a video from a field with his dog, Mandy Patinkin said of Sondheim: "He simply turns my darkness into light."

There was an intimate vibe to the event, with many musicians and singers dressed in T-shirts, minimal makeup and in front of simple backdrops.

"I've got to go make dinner," said Melissa Errico confessed after singing "Children and Art."

Starting fashionably late, the tribute kicked off on YouTube more than an hour after the announced start time.

"Send in the singers!" one cranky fan posted, riffing off Sondheim's classic tune "Send in the Clowns" — that was later sung by Donna Murphy.

It was hosted and produced by Raúl Esparza, who starred in the Tony Award-winning revival of "Company" in 2006. Esparza blamed the tardiness on technical difficulties, tweeting, "The curtain always goes up late on opening night."

During one aborted start, Esparza appeared, but his opening speech could not be heard and he abruptly walked off-screen. ("They should have hired the 'SNL' folks," said one online commentator.) Esparza later appeared in short videos offering personal commentary and sang "Take Me to the World."

The delay and the fact that many of the videos were pre-taped reminded some of Fox's 2019 broadcast of the musical "Rent," which used pre-recorded material for much of the show after a performer was injured during a rehearsal.

Sondheim's shows include "Merrily We Roll Along," "Sweeney Todd" and "A Little Night Music." He also worked alongside Leonard Bernstein as a lyricist for "West Side Story."

Steven Spielberg honored Sondheim's photographic knowledge of film and thanked him for helping on the filmmaker's upcoming version of "West Side Story."

Silenced by virus, Met Opera links for digital global gala

NEW YORK (AP) — Javier Camarena was at his home in Zurich singing an aria from Bellini's "Il Pirata" when the screen for the video feed split, and he was joined by Metropolitan Opera music director Yannick Nézet-Séguin in Montreal and general manager Peter Gelb in New York.

"Just a second," the tenor from Mexico said, raising an index finger.

He had just finished the slow-moving first section. An associate director an ocean away didn't realize he also planned to perform the cabaletta, the faster-moving second part. Restored to a full screen, Camarena continued.

With the entertainment world shut down by the coronavirus pandemic, the Met staged an At-Home Gala on Saturday that would have been inconceivable to the Vanderbilts and Morgans who helped found the company in 1883. A starry array of classical music's biggest names sang live on Skype from their living rooms across 13 nations, including Renée Fleming in Virginia, Jonas Kaufmann in Germany, Bryn Terfel in Wales and Roberto Alagna in France.

Thirty-three live and seven prerecorded performances stretched for four hours. The Met said the live stream on its website that started at 1 p.m. EDT Saturday peaked at about 300,000 views in 162 countries and the total with replays was expected to reach 1 million by Sunday night.

Gelb, trying to overcome a budget deficit of up to \$60 million, said there were many small donations but it was too early to total.

"It was a temporary kind of panacea and it just lifted people's spirits in a way that would never have happened. This type of program only works because of the horrible conditions that we're in right now," Gelb said Sunday. "I got so many e-mails and text messages from people that said that they were in tears for large portions of this program."

Joyce DiDonato, in Spain, joined seven

violinists and Nézet-Séguin in a recorded tribute to Vincent Lioni, a Met violinist for 33 years who died on April 4 after contracting the coronavirus. Nézet-Séguin sniffled after watching the playback of Handel's "Ombra mai fu."

"To lose him to the virus made this reality so much closer, immediate, that we could lose a member of our family to this threat," Nézet-Séguin said.

Erin Morley, Matthew Polenzani, Étienne Dupuis and Günther Groissböck showed off their piano-playing abilities, accompanying themselves. Dupuis and wife Nicole Car sang a duet from Massenet's "Thaïs" after an initial connectivity delay.

Artists' homes were on showcase: Kaufmann has a Bösendorfer piano surrounded by red theater-style seats in Munich; Anita Rachvelishvili has a "NO AUTOGRAPHS PLEASE" sign on her piano in Tbilisi, Georgia; René Pape has a red Le Corbusier chair and decorative Fornasetti globe in Dresden. Groissböck has a model of the Met on his piano and a statue of composer Richard Wagner in a corner wearing a blue facemask with the word: "No."

Morley provided one of the best performances with fluid voice, considerable piano skill and ebullient personality in "Chacun le sait" from Donizetti's "La fille du régiment (The Daughter of the Regiment)," imploring viewers to "sing along" for the choruses. Isabel Leonard sang an inspiring a cappella for "Somewhere" from Bernstein's "West Side Story."

Another highlight was Diana Damrau and husband Nicolas Testé in "La ci darem la mano" from Mozart's "Don Giovanni" while standing in front of their kitchen in Orange, France, joined after by excited sons Alexander and Colyn. Unable to perform at home in Vienna, Anna Netrebko and husband Yusif Eyvazov recorded separate pieces at an ORF network studio.