



**Some 70,000 visit Iran's UNESCO sites online in week 8**



**German decision to ban Hezbollah expected 10**



**Experts unanimous on appointing Iranian coach for volleyball team 11**



**"The Silhouettes" honored at Visions du Réel festival 12**

# Parliament approves slashing 4 zeroes off currency



See page 4

## Exclusive: Carlos Queiroz launches attack on former football chief Taj

By Masoud Hossein

**TEHRAN** — Former Iran national football team coach Carlos Queiroz has launched a scathing attack on Mehdi Taj, accusing him of trying to divert attention from contract with Marc Wilmots.

According to a clause in the coach's contract, Wilmot should've been awarded

300,000 bonus had Team Melli finished third in the 2019 AFC Asian Cup.

Iran failed to book a place in the competition's final after being defeated by Japan 3-0, and for the first time there was no third place play-off; however, FIFA has ordered Iran to honor Queiroz with that amount. →11

## Privatization should spur productivity, not just collect capital: expert

By Ebrahim Fallahi

**TEHRAN** — Earlier on Sunday, Government spokesperson Ali Rabiei announced that the shares of four refineries, namely Isfahan, Tabriz, Bandar-Abbas, and Tehran, were due to be offered at Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE) on June 21.

The announcement comes as the government is following a new strategy for listing most of its companies and assets on the stock exchange aiming to accelerate a privatization program which was started

years ago but hasn't reached its goals.

The privatization program was started as a movement aiming for downsizing the government and promoting the private sector's role in the national economy, however, many economic experts and analysts believe that the government's current hasty move for offering its assets on the capital market is mainly aimed to offset the budget deficit which is inevitable due to the low oil prices, coronavirus pandemic and unjust U.S. sanctions. →4

## Iran threatens to give 'firm response' if U.S. extends arms embargo

**TEHRAN** — Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi warned on Monday that Iran will give a "firm response" if the United States extends arms embargo against Iran and take Iran's dossier to the UN Security Council.

"Iran will give a proper and firm response if its dossier is taken to the Security Council and the arms embargo

is extended," Mousavi said in a press conference.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on April 29 that the United States will not allow Iran to buy or sell conventional arms after a UN embargo expires in October, in a move that could prompt Tehran to pull out the 2015 nuclear deal and a major nonproliferation treaty. →2



## ARTICLE

**Faranak Bakhtiari**  
Tehran Times journalist

## Coronavirus brought healthcare reforms into sharp focus

The coronavirus outbreak proved that one-dimensional health systems cannot survive from health-threatening crises, which occur every few years in the form of infectious diseases, a mere view of treatment is not enough, so that the need for healthcare reforms should be brought into sharp focus.

Now that the globe is dealing with a pandemic of such dimension, with the help of transformational measures that have taken place in the country's healthcare, we have been able to take control of the disease.

It is essential to know that as much as creating new hospital beds, developing hospitals, renovating dilapidated hospital tissue and upgrading medical centers are important; the establishment of comprehensive health centers, health houses, health workers training, the launch of electronic health records for the people, and numerous screening schemes, medical supply, quantitative and qualitative improvement of medical education, and medical research are of great importance which needs to be considered.

The healthcare reform plan, aiming at decreasing the out-of-pocket expenses for the patients, promoting natural birth, and supporting underprivileged patients suffering from rare or incurable diseases, was launched in the country in May 2014.

A plan that has succeeded in enforcing many of the health-deferred laws and regulations, and continues to do so despite all the credit and manpower deficiencies.

### ■ Steps toward public health coverage

Increased access to medicine and treatment was among the achievements of the plan. In the first, treatment was considered an emergency, and the increase in hospital beds, the accommodation of specialist physicians in hospitals, and deprived areas were among the important measures taken.

According to Iraj Harirchi, the deputy health minister, at the beginning of last year (March 2019), there were a total of 140,859 beds in the country, with a hospital bed index of 1.7 per 1,000, with 69 percent of which, equaling 97,205 beds, are located in medical universities. →9

## Coronavirus-positive scientist to return home from U.S. jail: Tehran

**TEHRAN** — Sirous Asgari, an Iranian scientist imprisoned in the United States who has contracted the novel coronavirus, will return home soon, according to Iran's Foreign Ministry.

During a press conference on Monday, Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said the ministry is following up on Asgari's case both in Iran and in the U.S.

Asgari, who has been pleading for weeks to be released from a U.S. immigration jail due to health problems, is in an isolation cell inside an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) jail in Louisiana.

His lawyers learned last week that his COVID-19 test was positive, and in a phone call with The Guardian, Asgari had a bad cough and said he

had had a fever for days.

"He is expected to be tested again for coronavirus today and tomorrow, and God willing, if his test becomes negative, all necessary measures have been carried out for his return to the country," Mousavi said.

Asgari and his family have been calling for his transfer to a medical facility where he can receive proper care.

"It makes sense to send me to the hospital as soon as possible. I don't trust them at all," the 59-year-old said last week amid repeated coughing fits. "If something happens, they are not fast responders ... I prefer to leave this dirty place."

Asgari's story sparked international outrage after he spoke about his fears of COVID-19 spread-

ing inside crowded ICE facilities with substandard cleaning practices and a lack of supplies.

The professor, who has a history of respiratory problems, was exonerated in a U.S. sanctions trial last year, but ICE has refused to release him or allow him to return to Iran.

### ■ 'The condition in which Iranian prisoners are held in U.S. is shameful'

Government spokesman Ali Rabiei also criticized the U.S. for its violation of human rights with regard to Iranian prisoners.

"One of these individuals has contracted the coronavirus and if that individual's test becomes negative, he will definitely return to Iran," Rabiei said during a press conference on Monday. →3

## Saudi Arabia runs squalid, abusive jails for women disowned by their male guardians

In the second half of 2019, Saudi Arabia passed sweeping reforms for women, scrapping the need for male permission to travel and even allowing women to enlist in the country's military.

Both hint at a loosening of the guardianship system, a long-standing Islamic legal framework that gives men legal authority over women in many areas of their lives, Insider reported.

But Saudi Arabia's path to a more equal society is a long one, and some sectors remain firmly entrenched.

The Saudi government continues to maintain a network of detention facilities — prisons in all but name — for young women who are formally disowned by their male guardians, often for minor infractions.

The centers are called Dar Alreaya. Reasons for being sent there include oquq (disobeying parents) and khulwa (being alone with a man in a closed area). The government describes people sent there as "delinquents."

Insider talked to rights activists, Saudi academics, and former inmates of Dar Alreaya to discover what life is like inside some of the centers, of which there are 11.

### ■ Brutalized and humiliated

Each woman's guardian (usually, but not always, her father) has wide discretion over whether a woman should be sent there after doing something that displeases him. Guardians also have discretion over whether to take them back. If the guardian refuses, a woman can stay in Dar Alreaya indefinitely.



## Translator Najaf Daryabandari, Iran's Living Human Treasure in cuisine, dies at 90

**TEHRAN** — Najaf Daryabandari, Iranian translator and writer who was selected as a Living Human Treasure in the category of cuisine, died of old age at his home in Tehran on Monday at the age of 90, his son Sohrab announced in a statement.

"I offer my condolences to his fans," Sohrab said and asked his fans and friends not to gather at his home to prevent the spread of coronavirus. →12

## Over \$1b spent so far to revitalize Lake Urmia

**TEHRAN** — Since the beginning of the Lake Urmia Restoration Program in October 2013, a total of 4.6 trillion rials (more than \$1 billion at the official rate of 42,000 rials) has been spent, Masoud Tajrishi, director of the planning office of the Lake Urmia Restoration Program, has announced.

Shared between West Azarbaijan and East Azarbaijan provinces in northwestern Iran, Lake Urmia, was once the largest salt-water lake in West Asia. It was home to many migratory and indigenous animals including flamingos, pelicans, egrets, and ducks and attracted hundreds of tourists every year who had bathed in the water to take advantage of the therapeutic properties of the lake.

However, decades of long-standing drought spells and elevated hot summer temperatures that speed up evaporation as well as increased water demands in the agriculture sector shrank the lake drastically. In 1999 the volume of water which was at 30 billion cubic meters drastically decreased to half a billion cubic meters in 2013. Moreover, the lake surface area of 5,000 square kilometers in 1997 shrunk to one-tenth of that to 500 square kilometers in 2013.

In total, \$5 billion was earmarked for the revitalization of Lake Urmia in the initial plan, of which \$1 billion has been spent so far, IRNA quoted Tajrishi as saying on Sunday.

Now the Lake is in a better condition than in previous years, on May 3 this year, lake's water volume was estimated at more than 5 billion cubic meters, while last year at this time it was about 4 billion cubic meters, he highlighted.

Since the current water year (September 23, 2019), the amount of rainfall in the water basin of Lake Urmia has been 30 percent less than in the previous water year and 7 percent less than the whole country, he stated.

He went on to explain that over the past 51 years, precipitation has increased by 13 percent in this basin and by 35 percent in the whole country, while with 30 percent less rainfall than last year, the lake is almost in a better condition.

Considering the predicted hot summer this year, he said that it is predicted that evaporation will definitely increase.

This year, with 320 mm rise in rainfall in the catchment area of Lake Urmia, the lake's level experienced a 13 cm raise, the other indicator of which is the improvement of the situation of Kaboudan, Arezo, Spir and Ashk islands, he noted. →9



## Iran to hold Quds Day rallies in all cities

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Nosratollah Lotfi, the deputy chief of the Islamic Development Coordinating Council, announced on Monday that the Quds Day rallies will be held in all cities across Iran.

He said the cities which fall on white-zone category, regarding the coronavirus, will hold rallies from cars, carrying flags of Palestine and the resistance front.

In addition, he said, a virtual rally will be held in the remaining cities.

International Quds Day was initiated by the founder of the Islamic Republic Ayatollah Khomeini in 1979 to express solidarity with Palestinians and oppose the Zionist regime.

Rallies are held each year in various cities around the world by both Muslims and non-Muslim communities. Many Jewish people also attend the rallies in order to draw a line between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism.

Quds Day is held at the last Friday of the fasting month of Ramadan.

## Ambassador says U.S. must bear responsibility for abusing UN Security Council

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Esmaeil Baghaei Hamaneh, Iran's ambassador and permanent representative to the UN office in Geneva, has said that the United States must bear responsibility for abusing the UN Security Council and manipulation of its decisions.



"US must be held to account and bear responsibility, not to be APPEASEBOLDENED, for its bullying behavior and recurring pattern of wrongful (ab)use of the #UNSC & manipulation of its decisions," he tweeted on Sunday.

He said in another tweet, "US' invocation of #UNSCR2231 is a travesty, flouting a fundamental principle governing intl relations; ...a party which disowns or doesn't fulfill its own obligations cannot be recognized as retaining the rights

which it claims to derive from the relationship' (#ICJ, 1971)." U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is preparing a legal argument that the U.S. 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, The New York Times reported on April 26.

In a tweet addressed to U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren on Thursday, Pompeo claimed that the rights of the U.S. under the 2231 resolution are separate from the 2015 nuclear agreement, known as the JCPOA.

Warren, a former Democratic presidential candidate, had dismissed the argument by the Trump administration.

Under Resolution 2231, which endorsed the nuclear agreement – JCPOA – arms embargo against Iran expires in October.

Analysts and legal experts say the argument by Pompeo that the U.S. is a participant to the JCPOA is mere hypocrisy.

In a tweet on Friday, Mikhail Ulyanov, Russia's permanent representative to the Vienna-based international organizations, criticized the U.S. for not saying a "single word" about its obligations under the UN Security Council Resolution 2231 that confirms the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

"US officials claim that US retains the rights under UNSC resolution 2231. No single word about US obligations which come together with rights. In particular, what about refraining from "actions that undermine implementation of commitments under #JCPOA" (paragraph 2 of res.2231)?" he tweeted.

## Senior expert: Germany's hostile move against Hezbollah makes ISIL wolves happy

**TEHRAN (FNA)** — A senior political analyst slammed the German government's decision to designate Hezbollah a "terrorist organization", stating that Berlin's abidance by the U.S. and Israeli regime policies against the resistance movement would endanger Germans' lives as it gives a boost to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, ISIS or Daesh) terror group.

Praising Hezbollah's indubitable role in defeating Takfiri militants in Syria, Seyed Mostafa Khoshcheshm, senior Iranian analyst and university professor, said Germany would rather close its eyes to the truth than figure out how to keep the country safe from the danger of the most notorious terror organizations in the world.

"When ISIS was killing" civilians in German towns as well as other Europeans countries, "Hezbollah was killing ISIS militants in Syria", Khoshcheshm wrote on Twitter, adding, "If it hadn't been for Hezbollah, only God knows how many Europeans would've been hunted by 1000s of ISIS terrorists who would have been alive, otherwise."

The analyst warned that Germany has compromised its security by "subordination to U.S. and Israel policy", condemning Berlin's decision which makes "ISIS wolves happy", as it is an open war on the enemy of its enemy.

On Thursday, Berlin banned the Lebanese political party, labeling the movement a terrorist outfit – a move hailed by both Israel and the United States. German police also carried out raids on several mosques and cultural centers – believed to be linked to Hezbollah – in Berlin as well as North Rhine-Westphalia and Bremen.

Germany began to float the idea of banning Hezbollah last year, with the debate being fueled by U.S. Ambassador to Berlin Richard Grenell.

Iran has strongly denounced Germany for labeling Hezbollah as a "terrorist organization" and warned Berlin over the repercussions of the move in the combat against terrorism in the region.

Germany has been a longtime backer of Israel, a safe haven and supporter of the Mojahedin-e Khalq terrorist Organization (MKO, also known as the MEK, PMOI and NCRI) which has killed thousands of Iranians, and stands accused of helping Washington assassinate 6 Iranian nuclear scientists as well as Tehran's top anti-terror commander General Qassem Soleimani months ago.

# Iran threatens to give 'firm response' if U.S. extends arms embargo

**I →** The ban on selling conventional weapons to Iran ends on October 23 under UN Security Council Resolution 2231, which enshrined the 2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers.

Mousavi said that the U.S. is no longer a party to the nuclear deal, known as the JCPOA, to invoke arms embargo against Iran.

"The United States is no longer a party to the nuclear deal. The United States has a record of violating international agreements in history and the JCPOA is one of them. This unilateral approach shows that it is a regime which does not believe in rule of law and international law," Mousavi explained.

In a report on April 26, The New York Times said Pompeo is preparing a legal argument that the U.S. remains a participant in the Iran nuclear accord that President Donald Trump has renounced, part of an intricate strategy to pressure the UN Security Council to extend arms embargo on Tehran or see far more stringent sanctions reimposed on the country.

Trump unilaterally quit the nuclear deal in May 2018 and introduced the harshest ever sanctions in history on Iran as part of his administration's "maximum pressure" strategy against Iran. By its exit from the nuclear accord, the U.S. flagrantly violated UN Security Council Resolution 2231 that approved the pact.

China and Russia, both signatories to the nuclear deal believed to be eager to sell arms to Iran, are likely to exercise their veto at the Security Council to oppose extending the UN arms embargo.

To circumvent China and Russia's veto power, Pompeo said the United States was prepared to argue that it is still a participant in the nuclear accord because it was listed as one under the UN resolution.

That claim comes even as Trump clearly stated in May 2018 he was "terminating the



United States' participation" in the JCPOA.

Professor Frank N. von Hippel, former assistant director for national security in the White House Office of Science and Technology, tells the Tehran Times that "it looks strange to me that the U.S. can cite the fact that it was a party to the JCPOA as a basis for this initiative."

According to the Hill, hundreds of House lawmakers in both parties are calling on Pompeo to take "increased diplomatic action" to renew a United Nations arms embargo on Iran.

EU Foreign Policy Chief Josep Borrell has said that the United States can no longer be considered as a participating member of the nuclear deal.

"It's clear that in the statement by President Trump and the U.S. presidential memorandum of last May (May 218), they announced that he was ending his participation in JCPOA," he said in an exclusive interview with RFE/RL on Thursday.

"And I also want to recall that the U.S. has not participated in any meetings of activities

within the framework of this agreement since then. So it's quite clear for us that the U.S. are no longer a participating member in this agreement," Borrell added.

Ali Shamkhani, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), warned on Sunday that continuation of the illegal arms embargo on Iran will kill the nuclear agreement.

"#JCPOA will die forever by circumventing 2231 Resolution & continuing #Iran's illegal weapons sanctions," Shamkhani wrote in a Twitter post.

Mikhail Ulyanov, Russia's permanent representative to the Vienna-based international organizations, has said that the United States' attempt to extend arms embargo on Iran will reach nowhere.

In an interview with IRNA published on Sunday, he said if the U.S. does not gain the UN Security Council's approval, it will try another way which will reach nowhere.

In a tweet on Friday, Ulyanov criticized the U.S. for not saying a "single word" about

its obligations under the UN Security Council Resolution 2231 that confirms the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

"US officials claim that US retains the rights under UNSC resolution 2231. No single word about US obligations which come together with rights. In particular, what about refraining from "actions that undermine implementation of commitments under #JCPOA" (paragraph 2 of res.2231)?" he tweeted.

In a tweet on Thursday, Ulyanov said, "The US attempts to present itself as 'JCPOA participants' have no future. It is like common sense mockery. Those who invented this idea gave bad advice to US authorities. Cynical approaches must have their own limits in order not to compromise national policy to the worst extent."

Dennis Jett, a former U.S. diplomat, has said that the U.S. attempt to present itself as a participant to the JCPOA proves paradox in Washington's foreign policy.

"Trump [U.S. President Donald Trump] boasts about quitting an agreement signed by Obama [former U.S. president], but his secretary of state [Mike Pompeo] says the United States is a party to the nuclear deal. It shows lack of coordination in Trump's foreign policy which is based on words that have no stable sense," he told IRNA in an interview published on Sunday.

He noted that no member of the UN Security Council will accept the U.S. claim of being a participant in the JCPOA.

Ali Vaez, the Iran Project director at the International Crisis Group, told RFE/RL that an extension was also unlikely to stop China or Russia from selling arms to Iran.

"The removal of the arms embargo is one of the few remaining benefits of the JCPOA for Iran. Depriving Tehran from having access to the arms market will compel Iran... to double down on its ballistic missiles program," he said.

## Rouhani says U.S. moves impeding Iran's fight against coronavirus

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — President Hassan Rouhani said on Monday that the United States' actions, which are against human rights, have impeded Iran's fight against the coronavirus pandemic.

"Anti-human rights' actions of the United States have caused challenges to Iran's targeted program in fighting the coronavirus," Rouhani said during a speech at virtual summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

He also said that President Donald Trump's action in cutting off payments to the World Health Organization was a "strategic mistake" which undermines global fight against the coronavirus.

"However, you cannot expect other than



this from the United States which has repeatedly violated international agreements and law. It has been for many years that the United States deprives the people of their

rights and its actions threaten multilateralism and international cooperation," Rouhani said.

He expressed regret over the fact that the U.S. "illegal" sanctions have prevented Iran

from access to medical equipment.

Elsewhere, the president said that the coronavirus pandemic proved how a disease can endanger health of all the people in the world regardless of their ethnicity and nationality.

"This is a serious warning to all countries. That the human is being exposed to threats such as destruction of the environment, global warming and natural threats such as the coronavirus. It is the time replace pressure, economic and military terrorism with multilateral cooperation to fight common threats," the Iranian president suggested.

He noted that Iran has had such viewpoint and cooperated with other countries since outbreak of the virus.

## Germany is weak against Israel's pressure: professor

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Hadi Borhani, a professor at the University of Tehran, has said that Germany is very weak in the face of pressure by the Zionist regime of Israel.

"Israel's lobbies in Germany are not powerful and influential. However, this country's government is very weak in the face of Israel's pressure because of incidents in the Second World War and gives in to the least pressure by Israel," Borhani told IRNA in an interview published on Monday.

Germany announced on Thursday it has designated the Lebanese political group Hezbollah as a terror organization, banning all of its activities in the country and ordering raids on sites police say are linked to the group.

Police told CNN a number of properties in Berlin, Bremen, and North Rhine-Westphalia were searched early on Thursday. According to the police and the German Interior Ministry, four mosques and cultural associations were raided, as well as private homes of Hezbollah's board members, treasurers, and tax advisers.

Borhani also noted that Hezbollah is a politically and militarily powerful group.

"Hezbollah has many capabilities and is powerful. The United States and Israel could not bring this group to knees militarily, and Hezbollah has become powerful politically and militarily. So, the Western powers make efforts to weaken Hezbollah through such pressure," he pointed out.

Politicians and analysts unanimously believe that Berlin took such a decision to please Israel and the United States. Alaeddin Boroujerdi, a member of the Majlis National

Security and Foreign Policy Committee, has said that Germany blacklisted Lebanon's Hezbollah under pressure of the United States.

"Despite being the first economic power among the European countries, Germany is weak from political point of view and cannot resist the United States' pressure," Boroujerdi told IRNA in an interview published on Sunday.

He noted that Hezbollah is a part of Lebanon's sovereignty and slammed Germany's action in designating it as a terrorist organization.

"This action is not acceptable and the German government must apologize the Lebanese government and people," he said.

Iran's Foreign Ministry has strongly condemned the German government's action, saying the move is in line with objectives of Israel and the United States.

"The German government's decision disrespects the Lebanese government and people because Hezbollah is an official and legitimate part of the country's government and parliament and has always been an effective political party in stabilizing the country and is being supported by the Lebanese and regional people," Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said in a statement on Thursday.

He noted that certain European countries take decisions without considering realities in the West Asia region.

Hezbollah has been a strong force against terrorist groups such as Daesh in (ISIS).

Mousavi noted that the German government must be accountable for the negative consequences of its decision on the fight against the terrorist groups in the region.

Writing on his Twitter page late on Friday, Iran's Supreme



National Security Council secretary Ali Shamkhani strongly criticized Germany, saying if it was not for the sacrifices of resistance groups such as Hezbollah, Daesh (ISIS) would have reached Europe.

"#ISIS did not reach Europe because it was stuck behind the walls of #Resistance," Shamkhani said. "The mask fell down the face of terrorism supporters."

Alireza Sheikh-Attar, a former Iranian ambassador to Germany, has said that Germany's action was to satisfy the U.S. and the Zionist regime of Israel.

"What Germany has done is a gesture to satisfy the United State and the Zionist regime. The move is propagandistic because Hezbollah has no official and unofficial office in Germany," he told ISNA in an interview published on Saturday.

## U.S. military presence endangers regional security, Tehran says

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — The Iranian Foreign Ministry reiterated on Monday that the presence of U.S. forces in the Persian Gulf endangers regional security and also disrupts shipping in the strategic waterway.

"We do not recognize the United States' presence, especially military presence, in the Persian Gulf. The United States have disrupted legal patrolling of our armed forces and we have given necessary warnings," he said in a press conference.

He noted that the U.S. must avoid getting close to Iran's borders.

U.S. Navy issued a statement on April 15 claiming that 11 Iranian IRGC boats had closed in on up to six U.S. naval vessels in the

Persian Gulf "in dangerous and harassing approaches".

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy issued a statement on April 19 calling the U.S. claims "fake", likening them to some "Hollywood" scenarios.

The statement said Iran will respond firmly to any miscalculation of the U.S., advising Washington to avoid any adventurism in the Persian Gulf.

Rear Admiral Ali Reza Tangsiri, the commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy, has said that Iran had warned the U.S. forces to leave its theater.

"They entered our area while it was announced to them that we wanted to conduct practice in this area. They seek to undermine

security by taking such actions. So, we ordered them to leave the area," he told Tasnim in an interview published on Friday.

He noted that the Iranian forces closely watch all the U.S. moves in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman.

President Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday that the United States must know that the waterway in the region is the Persian Gulf and not the New York or Washington Gulf.

"They must understand the situation by the name of the place and the people who have protected it for thousands of years and stop hatching plots against the Iranian people," Rouhani said in a cabinet meeting as Iran marked the Persian Gulf Day.

He said, "The United States has witnessed the Iranian people's success in all areas and also in protecting the Persian Gulf waterway. Our soldiers in armed forces, the Guards [the IRGC], Basij, Army and police forces have always protected and will protect the Persian Gulf."

In a phone conversation with Chinese President Xi Jinping on April 27, Rouhani said that the U.S. interfering behavior can endanger security and stability in the Persian Gulf.

"Security in the region and waterways is important to Iran. However, unfortunately, the United States' dangerous behavior disrupts security and stability in the Persian Gulf region," Rouhani said.



# House lawmakers urge Pompeo to take action to renew Iran arms embargo

**POLITICAL d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Hundreds of U.S. House representatives in both parties are calling on Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to take “increased diplomatic action” to renew a UN arms embargo on Iran set to expire in October.

“We write to urge increased diplomatic action by the United States to renew the expiring United Nations arms embargo against Iran and United Nations travel restrictions on those Iranian individuals involved with dangerous proliferation activities,” the lawmakers wrote in a letter to Pompeo obtained by The Hill ahead of its release.

“America must continue its longstanding, bipartisan leadership in order to limit Iran’s destabilizing activities throughout the world,” they claimed. “We look forward to working with you to reauthorize these expiring UN restrictions, which are essential to protecting our national security and the American people.”

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

According to The Hill, the letter was organized by House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.) and committee ranking member Rep. Michael McCaul (R-Texas). As of Sunday, the letter has 384 signatures.

“Nearly every member of the U.S. House of Representatives is in agreement: Iran must not be allowed to buy or sell weapons,” McCaul said in a statement.

“This isn’t a Republican or Democrat



issue, or even just an American issue. We need to extend the UN arms embargo on Iran for the sake of international peace and security. I am proud the House is speaking with one voice to protect the world against Iran’s aggressive and destabilizing behavior.”

Washington has called on the United Nations Security Council to extend its arms embargo on Iran.

Citing the Islamic Republic’s recent satellite launch, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in a statement on April 25 that Tehran should not be allowed to buy and sell conventional weapons.

Pompeo claimed the satellite launch showed that Iran’s space program was in fact “neither peaceful nor entirely civilian”. Tehran subsequently branded Pompeo as “Secretary of Hate”, saying he 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 April 26.

Ali Shamkhani, secretary of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council (SNSC),

has said continuation of the illegal arms embargo on Iran will kill the nuclear agreement Tehran signed with six world powers in July 2015.

“#JCPOA will die forever by circumventing 2231 Resolution & continuing #Iran’s illegal weapons sanctions,” Shamkhani wrote in a Twitter post on Sunday morning.

Although the administration pulled out from the deal two years ago, the U.S. claims that it retains the right to invoke a sanctions snapback that the deal envisaged in the event of “significant non-performance” by Iran.

That position rests on a novel State Department legal argument that was first presented in December and asserts that although the U.S. is no longer in the nuclear deal, it remains an original “participant” under the terms of the Security Council resolution that enshrined it.

In a briefing Thursday, Brian Hook, the administration’s special envoy for Iran, argued the United States is still a party to the UN resolution because its name is explicitly mentioned in the text.

Kourosh Ahmadi, an international law expert, has said the United States’ legal argument that it remains an original “participant” under the terms of the Security Council resolution “lacks any legal logic”.

In an article published in the Etemad newspaper last week, Ahmadi said headline senators such as Ted Cruz are pushing the Trump administration to take a tough stance in this regard.

## Envoy: No justification for U.S. duplicity with JCPOA

**TEHRAN (FNA)** — Iranian envoy in Paris Bahram Qassemi has said the U.S.’s dual behavior towards the JCPOA cannot be justified by any logic and criterion, and blasted Washington for its attempt to breach international treaties.

“Instrumental usage of UN resolutions to wield pressure and restrictions and violate the natural rights of Iran and any other sovereign country is not justifiable by any logic and criterion. Even the international community is against such an interpretation and logic which contravenes globally recognized norms,” he said.

“By withdrawing from JCPOA, the U.S. both violated its obligations and the UNSC Resolution 2231 and moved toward undermining the UN and even other partners to the Iran nuclear deal,” Qassemi said, adding, “It is not acceptable for a country to both breach its commitments and pursue bogus and selective interests in a deal by pulling out from it.”

On Sunday, too, Iran’s Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the Vienna-based international organ-



izations Kazzem Gharibabdi blasted the U.S. officials for their double-standards vis-a-vis the nuclear deal signed between Tehran and the major world powers in 2015, and said Washington is not a part of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action anymore after it withdrew from the JCPOA on May 8, 2018.

“The Paragraph 10 of the UN Security Council Resolution 2231, which endorses the nuclear deal -- officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action -- is a reflection of Paragraph 1.2 Annex IV of the agreement which ‘enumerates JCPOA participants,’ Gharibabadi tweeted on Sunday.

He added that the U.S. president issued a presidential memorandum on May 8, 2018 announcing the end to Washington’s participation in the JCPOA as Donald Trump said then “I am today making good on my pledge to end the participation of the United States in the JCPOA”.

Gharibabadi said that the U.S. attempts to establish itself as “JCPOA participant have no legal grounds”.

## Germany vulnerable to Israel due to Holocaust: ex-diplomat



**POLITICAL d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Seyyed Hossein Mousavian, a former Iranian nuclear negotiator, believes Germany is the most vulnerable European power toward Israel’s pressure due to the Holocaust.

Speaking with ISNA on Monday, Mousavian said European countries are influenced by Israel because they are members of NATO and they are U.S. allies.

He made the remarks in reference to Germany’s designation of Lebanon’s Hezbollah as a terrorist group.

Mousavian, the Middle East security and nuclear policy specialist at Princeton University, said European countries have to follow what the U.S. and Israel dictate.

Germany announced on April 30 that it had designated Hezbollah a terror organization, banning all of its activities in the country and ordering raids on sites police say are linked to the group.

The German police have raided properties belonging to associations linked to Hezbollah in five German cities including Berlin and Dortmund, the Interior Ministry said in a statement. Hezbollah’s military arm has long been banned in Germany, though the group had been allowed to pursue political and social activities.

In response, Iran’s Foreign Ministry strongly condemned the move, saying it was in line with objectives of the Zionist

regime of Israel and the United States.

“The German government’s decision disrespects the Lebanese government and people because Hezbollah is an official and legitimate part of the country’s government and parliament and has always been an effective political party in stabilizing the country and is being supported by the Lebanese and regional people,” said Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi.

Ali Shamkhani, secretary of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), censured the move, saying ISIS failed to reach Europe because it was defeated by Resistance groups such as Hezbollah.

“#ISIS did not reach Europe because it was stuck behind the walls of #Resistance,” Shamkhani said via Twitter. “The mask fell down the face of terrorism supporters.”

Shamkhani reminded Germany of providing materials to former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein’s regime to build chemical weapons and use them against Iranians and Iraqi Kurds in the 1980s.

Iran’s top security official added that blacklisting is done to please Israel, which has got the title of a “child-killing” regime.

“Sellers of chemical weapons to Saddam have become human rights defenders, fearing of their child-killing friend, called #Hezbollah, terrorist,” Shamkhani said.

## Commander: Iran enjoys most powerful helicopter fleet in West Asia



**TEHRAN (FNA)** — Iranian Army Airborne Commander General Yousef Qorbani said that his country’s powerful helicopter fleet ranks first in West Asia and fifth in the world.

“We are in possession of the most powerful helicopter fleet in West Asia and our great helicopter fleet is the fifth in the world,” General Qorbani told FNA on Monday.

He added that the Iranian helicopters’ winning card in the battleground is their fire power, saying that this power has been enhanced appropriate to the conditions of today wars.

“This means that we do not fire at the enemy from close range, but we target them in the fire and forget format from far distance,” General Qorbani said.

He also added that Iranian experts are combining the helicopters’ arms systems with night-vision systems to strengthen their combat power at night, noting that a large number of the country’s helicopters will also be equipped with self-protection systems.

“Today, we do not send unarmed helicopters to anywhere that it cannot defend itself; meaning that today, even our logistic helicopters have been armed,” General Qorbani said.

In relevant remarks in 2018, General Qorbani announced that the country’s

helicopters have been equipped with night-vision systems.

“Our dear experts in the air industry have had a highly successful performance and have equipped our helicopters with night-vision systems,” he said.

“We have also become fully indigenized in the field of long-range missile systems. Turning ground-based missiles to air-based missiles and enjoying the best fire-and-forget missiles are among other achievements of the Army Airborne Unit,” the Iranian General added.

General Qorbani underlined that Iran is among the pioneering states in developing helicopters with the capability of fighting electronic warfare, targeting guided missiles, interception of targets from distance and using cruise missiles.

He also underlined that his forces are always on alert to show rapid reaction against enemies’ possible moves against the country.

“The enemies of the Islamic Republic of Iran will face the Army Airborne’s rapid reaction in case of any threat,” General Qorbani said.

He added that the Army Airborne unit relies on the capabilities of Iranian experts and has increased its military power in different fields.

## Coronavirus-positive scientist to return home from U.S. jail: Tehran

**1→** He said Iran is pursuing the case of other Iranian citizens jailed in the U.S.

“We hope the U.S. understands Iranians’ concerns about their prisoners,” the spokesman added.

Rabiei described the condition in which Iranian prisoners are held in U.S. jails as “shameful”, expressing the hope that the U.S. releases them unconditionally.

Iran’s Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif recently called for Asgari’s release, as have some U.S. lawmakers and human rights groups.

On Sunday, a member of the parliament urged the U.S. to release Asgari.

“Iranian scientist Mr. Sirous Asgari has contracted the coronavirus in U.S. jails,” Alireza Salimi said during an open session of the parliament.

“The Americans do not observe ethical issues,” Salimi said, adding, “We released American prisoners but they did not comply with this matter.”



## Iran outdoing biggest powers in coronavirus battle: minister

**TEHRAN (Tasnim)** — Iranian Health Minister Saeed Namaki said the country has outperformed the most powerful countries in tackling the novel coronavirus pandemic despite financial problems.



In a post on his Twitter account on Monday, Namaki said, “By God’s grace and with the sacrifices made by my colleagues, we have outperformed the most powerful countries in the fight against coronavirus, (despite) a financial crunch and in comparison with them who have spent billions of dollars.”

Iran’s Health Ministry announced on Saturday that 80 percent of the coronavirus positive cases in the country have fully recovered from the infectious disease and left the hospital.

In April, President Hassan Rouhani said Iran was in better conditions in dealing with the coronavirus outbreak compared to Europe, although Iran is struggling against the virus of sanctions at the same time.

“You (Europeans) are faced with one virus, but we have two viruses, however, our people have resisted in such a good manner. We took each other’s hands and cooperated. This is a glory for all of us. Our conditions in the fight against the coronavirus is almost well and better in comparison with certain countries,” the president said.

## Iran says concerned about revival of Daesh in Iraq

**TEHRAN** — Iran’s Foreign Ministry spokesperson on Monday expressed concern about re-emergence of the Daesh (ISIL or ISIS) terrorist group in Iraq.

“We are worried about a revival of Takfiri terrorists, particularly Daesh, in Iraq,” Abbas Mousavi said at a press conference on Monday, Tasnim reported.

On a recent rise in the terrorist attacks in Iraq, the spokesman said, “We presume that this issue is connected with the Iraqi Parliament’s legitimate request for the withdrawal of the U.S. from that country.”

The U.S. is now under the pressure of the Iraqi nation to leave the Arab country, so Washington may be seeking to replenish and strengthen the terrorist groups, like Daesh, in order to stay in Iraq or postpone its withdrawal, Mousavi pointed out.

“We will provide Iraq with whatever assistance it requests from Iran (in fighting terrorists),” he remarked.

At least 10 members of the Hashd al-Shaabi forces (PMU) were killed in a coordinated attack carried out by Daesh in Iraq’s Salahuddin province on Saturday.

Daesh has intensified its attacks in Iraq amid Baghdad’s call on the U.S. to pull out its forces from the country.

In a vote on January 5, the Iraqi parliament called for an end to the presence of all foreign troops, including Americans.

The vote came two days after the U.S. military - acting on President Donald Trump’s order - launched a fatal drone strike on senior Iranian anti-terror commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani upon his arrival in the Iraqi capital at the invitation of the Baghdad government.

The attack also claimed the lives of Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the second-in-command of the PMU, and eight other Iranian and Iraqi people.

Washington has threatened sanctions should U.S. troops be expelled instead of heeding the Iraqi parliament’s call to end the occupation of the country.



## Iran's Rail Expo 2020 to be held on schedule

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — The eight edition of Iran's International Exhibition of Rail Transportation and Related Industries and Equipment (Rail Expo 2020) is due to be held based on the schedule, Iran International Exhibition Company (IIEC) announced in a statement.

The statement was released in response to a claim by the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (RAI) that this year's exhibition is not going to be held due to the coronavirus outbreak.



The decisions regarding the current year's exhibitions are solely made by Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade and all the events of the current calendar year will be held as scheduled, the statement said.

The 8th International Exhibition of Rail Transportation, Related Industries and Equipment of Iran is due to be held during May 28-31 at the Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds.

## Monthly tire output at nearly 16,000 tons

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Iran has manufactured 1.837 million tons of tires weighting 15,943 tons during the first Iranian calendar month of Farvardin (March 21-April 19), IRNA reported.

Of the mentioned figure, 1.304 million is the number of passenger cars' tires weighting 9,068 tons, which shows a 35-percent rise compared to the same month in the past year.



Some 85,892 van tires with the weight of 1,349 tons were manufactured in the first month of this year, indicating one percent decline from the figure of the previous year's same month.

Also, 3,265 bus tires weighting 52,074 tons were manufactured in Farvardin.

Manufacturing of the tires of agricultural machinery experienced a growth of 13 percent to stand at 23,653 tires with the weight of 1,325 tons.

Having the annual production capacity of 426,000 tons of tire, Iran accounts for 41 percent of tire output in the West Asian region, according to the deputy director of non-metal industries office of Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry.

Mohsen Safdari has said that 11 tire production units are active in the country creating jobs for 14,500 people.

He said 426,000 tons is the nominal capacity, while the real output is less than this figure as some units are working with 60-70 percent of their capacity.

"Iranian tire industry is dependent on foreign raw materials by 40 percent, so we are self-reliant by 60 percent in this field", the official announced.

## Red meat production up 16% in winter

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Statistical Center of Iran (SCI) announced that production of red meat in Iran stood at 94,900 tons in the past winter, indicating 16 percent growth compared to the same season in the preceding year, IRNA reported.



The SCI's report said that beef and veal had the lion's share (52 percent) in the country's red meat output during winter with 49,600 tons, followed by lamb and mutton with 36,300 tons, goat meat with 6,700 tons, and red meat from other livestock with 2,300 tons.

Iran is among the leading consumers of red meat in the West Asia region with lamb being the most sought after.

However, the consumption per person is around a third of what is normally seen in countries like the U.S. and Australia, mainly due to the prohibition of pork in Islamic law.

The major part of Iran's red meat imports comes from countries like Brazil, where Iranian supervisors directly control culling methods to ensure they comply with religious rules.

# Parliament approves slashing 4 zeroes off currency

## Iran changes national currency from 'rial' to 'toman'

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Iranian parliament (Majlis) approved a government's bill proposed by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) for eliminating four zeroes from the national currency, CBI governor wrote in an Instagram post on Monday.

Abdolnaser Hemmati also announced that during the open session of the Majlis in Monday morning, it was also approved that the national currency will be changed from 'rial' to 'toman' which equals 10,000 rials, IRNA reported.

The official further said that the monetary unit 'qeran', which equals 1/100 of toman, will be also used, adding that the old coins and bills will be gradually collected and new ones will replace them.

In Late July last year, Iranian cabinet approved a bill proposed by the CBI for eliminating four zeroes from the national currency, and changing the national currency from rial to toman.

The decision was made in order to maintain the efficiency of the national currency and



facilitate and restore the role of cash in domestic monetary transactions.

Reducing the costs of issuing banknotes and coins, as well as tackling the problems

which people are facing in simple daily transactions, like counting and carrying large volumes of banknotes and coins and finally eliminating coins from the country's economic exchange cycle, are some other goals mentioned for this decision.

The government first put forward the plan for shifting the national currency from rial to toman earlier in December 2016.

However, it decided to postpone implementation of currency reconversion policy in 2016 due to some reasons including the expressed concerns about the time unfitting economic conditions which would ignite inflation and economic instability.

The policy basically seeks to facilitate monetary transactions among the Iranians and match the currency being transcribed in official documents and banking bills (rial) with the one utilized in real daily lives of Iranians (toman).

Rial has practically been replaced by toman in daily transactions as the result of the cumulative inflation over the recent years.

## Privatization should spur productivity, not just collect capital: expert

**1 →** In this regard, the Tehran Times conducted an interview with Economic and Energy Expert Hamidreza Salehi, who is the Head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA)'s Energy Committee:

### ■ Deviation from the privatization nature

Asked about the above-mentioned issue and the extent to which the government's privatization plan is moving towards its main goal which is downsizing the government and empowering the private sector, Salehi said the current listing of the state-owned companies on the stock exchange is not ensuring any role for the "private sector" in the management of the listed companies, thus it cannot be called privatization.

"The government offers the shares of its companies to be bought by thousands of shareholders that are mostly ordinary people and not experts, and as a result, the management of the mentioned companies is still completely in the hands of the government and, in reality, only some shares have been sold to raise funding for the government," he explained.

"Real privatization is handing over the management of a government-owned company or institution to capable and competent real or legal persons in the private sector to increase productivity, investment making, job creation, promotion of trade balance, more competition in the domestic economy while reducing the government's financial and management burden."

But in the current situation, what we see is only attracting public capitals, Salehi added.

The official further noted that engaging big state-owned companies in the capital market and rising liquidity through collecting people's idle assets is not a bad thing in nature, but the way this collected capital is invested and spent is the key factor.

"If the government utilizes the mentioned capital for developing the economy and making its companies more efficient and more productive, then it could be considered a positive step toward economic growth, otherwise it is not going to be in line with the interests of both people and the government in the long run.

### ■ Comprehensive economic growth

Asked about the best way to approach the privatization program considering the country's current economic situation, Salehi said: "As I mentioned before, privatization is not a bad thing in its nature, and now that the government is determined for accelerating this program, it is better to move in line with the spirit and philosophy of privatization; and instead of just thinking about attracting capital for the government, the focus must be on promoting productivity."

"Government must hand over the management and power in its companies to reputable and qualified shareholders and entrepreneurs who are specialized in corporate governance and can ensure growth and productivity," he added.

Another issue that should be taken into consideration is for the government to put "comprehensive economic growth" on the agenda and place importance on all the aspects of the economy and not just on one aspect like the capital market.



"When the forex market is under control, when domestic production is supported and when new job opportunities are created for people, public assets will be distributed logically in all economic areas, and one specific sector won't get hurt if people decide to pull their assets from that sector".

"For instance currently the capital market is booming and since other areas are not productive enough, public assets are flowing into the stock market but if the bubble in this sector bursts the people who have lost their money and the market that loses its investors both are going to get hurt", Salehi concluded.

## Ways of realizing 'surge in production' explored in a TCCIMA meeting

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — The 17th session of Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA)'s committee for "improving the business environment and removing production barriers" was held on Monday to explore the ways to realize "surge in production", which is the motto of this Iranian calendar year (began on March 20).

As reported by the TCCIMA news portal, major barriers in the way of domestic production, economic instability, and the need for pragmatism and eliminating the government's unnecessary interferences in the private sector's production processes were among the issues discussed in the meeting.

In the meeting, Mohammad-Reza Najafi-Manesh, the head of the committee, pointed to some of the solutions proposed by experts in the past weeks to realize the surge in production, and said: each of the executive agencies has announced their



plans in this regard.

"Of course, we all know that the government is currently facing financial problems, so the solutions must have the

least financial burden," Najafi-Manesh said.

According to the official, the first step in realizing the surge in production is for the government to reduce its unnecessary costs.

He went on pointing out that another requirement for promoting domestic production is to provide liquidity, saying: "currently, according to estimates, the amount of liquidity in the country has exceeded 23 quadrillion rials (about \$547.6 billion) which is mostly idle in areas that are not productive."

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has named the current Iranian calendar year the year of "Surge in Production" and has urged all officials to act in line with a general policy for surging domestic production.

Back in March, the 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 the private sector amid the economic pressures resulted from the coronavirus outbreak.

## Stocks fall as U.S.-China tensions threaten rebound

European stock markets and oil prices fell on Monday as a spat between top U.S. officials and China over the origin of the coronavirus fueled fears of a new trade war, derailling a rebound in global markets.

European shares opened down 2.5% with U.S. stock futures trading close to 1% in the red.

Earlier, MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan fell 2.5%, pulled down by Hong Kong where the Hang Seng returned from a two-session holiday with its biggest drop in six weeks.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on Sunday there was "a significant amount of evidence" that the virus emerged from a laboratory in the central Chinese city of Wuhan.

Pompeo did not provide evidence or dispute an earlier U.S. intelligence conclusion that the virus was not man-made.

An editorial in China's Global Times said he was "bluffing" and called on the United States to present its evidence.

"Concern on the potential for another flare up between the US and China is dominating price action", commented RBC strategist Adam Cole in a morning note.

Simon Black, head of investment management at wealth management firm Dolfin said investors were also adjusting their forecasts over the depth of the economic damage inflicted by the pandemic.



"It's also the economic reality sinking in", he said, adding that the rebound of over 20% from lows hit in March by global equities was likely not sustainable.

Companies listed on the pan-European STOXX 600 are currently expected to report a 40% decline in earnings in the second quarter.

Manufacturing activity in the euro zone collapsed last month as government-imposed lockdowns to stop the spread of the new coronavirus forced factories to close and consumers to stay indoors, a survey showed on Monday.

"We've just come off a rally of hopes, not a rally on fundamentals", Black said, pointing to the massive monetary and fiscal stimulus pledged by governments and central banks around the world.

Recent economic data paints a dire picture of the global economy after weeks of lockdowns.

In the United States, manufacturing plunged to an 11-year low last month, consumer spending collapsed, and some 30.3 million Americans have filed claims for unemployment.

Oil prices fell again, paring last week's gains, on worries a global oil glut may persist even as coronavirus pandemic lockdowns start to ease.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures fell to \$18.66 a barrel while Brent crude futures were down 1.7% at \$26, after touching a low of \$25.50. Brent rose about 23% last week following three consecutive weeks of losses.

In currency markets, the dollar rose 0.1% to 99.38 against a basket of currencies while the euro was down 0.48% at \$1.0930.

The safe-haven yen fell 0.2% to 106.72 per dollar.

Global coronavirus cases have surpassed 3.5 million and deaths have neared a quarter of a million, according to a Reuters tally.

(Source: Reuters)



# Nominal electricity generation capacity up 162MW

**E N E R G Y** **TEHRAN** – The second gas unit of Khorramabad Combined Cycle Power Plant with a capacity of 162 megawatt (MW) was connected to the national grid on Sunday as the country approaches the peak summer period, IRNA reported.

According to the Thermal Power Plants Holding Company (TPPHC)'s executive director for private power plant projects, with the completion of the power plant's gas unit, the plant's total capacity has now reached 324 MW.

"After the implementation of the plant's 160-megawatt steam unit this winter [begins on December 21], the plant's total electricity generation capacity will reach 484 MW," Amir Doudabinejad said.

According to the official, the construction of the power plant's gas unit has cost 140 million euros, and the steam units required funding is estimated at 172 million euros, of which about 38 percent is provided by the investors and the remaining 62 percent



is going to be provided from facilities by the foreign exchange reserve account and the National Development Fund.

The nominal capacity of electricity generation at Iranian power plants reached 85,500 megawatts [85.5 gigawatts (GW)]

following the completion of the development of Parand thermal power plant in early April.

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

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

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

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

## Modern irrigation systems implemented in 2.4m hectares of farmlands

**E N E R G Y** **TEHRAN** — Following the Iranian Agriculture Ministry's new irrigation systems development plan, so far 2.4 million hectares of farmlands have been equipped with modern irrigation systems, the ministry's project manager for the mentioned development plan said.

According to Abbas Zare, the plan for developing new irrigation systems has witnessed a significant leap in the past three years, as it is most effective in increasing the efficiency of water and soil resources and

strengthening the country's food security, Mehr news agency reported.

Over the past three years, each year, an average of 150,000 hectares of farmlands have been equipped with modern irrigation systems, and we have witnessed a 300 percent jump, he stated.

The official expressed hope that considering the budget allocation for the provinces at the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 20), the ministry would be able to develop the project in terms of

both quantity and quality.

Last week, Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian said Energy Ministry has implemented 301,000 hectares of irrigation and drainage networks since 2017.

According to Ardakanian, the ministry has it on the agenda to bring 2.86 million hectares of land in the downstream of the country's dams under irrigation systems.

"The number has now reached 2.4 million, and it is hoped that by the Iranian calendar year of 1406 (begins on March 2027) all the



mentioned networks would be implemented," he added.

## Oil prices fall on U.S.-China tensions, weak factory data

Oil prices fell on Monday on worries that a global oil glut may persist even as coronavirus pandemic lockdowns start to ease, amid a fresh spat between the United States and China over the origin of the virus.

Brent crude was down 57 cents, or 2.2 percent, at \$25.87, at 1021 GMT, and U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude fell \$1.41, or 7.1 percent, to \$18.37.

While global oil demand is expected to recover modestly from April lows as countries ease some lockdown measures, the glut created over months in storage facilities will loom over the markets.

"As oil inventories are likely still increasing over the coming weeks, oil prices remain vulnerable to renewed setbacks," said UBS analyst Giovanni Staunovo.

However, Goldman Sachs was more opti-

mistic than before about the rise of oil prices next year due to lower crude production and a partial recovery in oil demand.

The Wall Street bank raised its 2021 forecast for global benchmark Brent to \$55.63 per barrel from \$52.50 earlier. The bank hiked its estimate for WTI to \$51.38 a barrel from \$48.50 previously.

Signs that the output cuts may help reduce the supply overhang have emerged with the narrowing of Brent's contango - the market structure in which later-dated prices are higher than prompt supplies.

The six-month spread of Brent futures LCOc1-LCOc7 hit its narrowest in almost a month at a discount of around \$6.50, up from a record wide discount of almost \$14 in late-March, reflecting decreasing oversupply expectations and making storage for later

sale less profitable.

The re-emergence of trade tensions between the United State and China also weighed on prices.

Adding to U.S. President Donald Trump's threat last week to impose tariffs on China, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on Sunday there was "a significant amount of evidence" that the new coronavirus emerged from a Chinese laboratory.

"Demand projections have sobered up last week's enthusiasm and this, together with the prospect of new U.S.-China trade tensions, have weighted heavily on prices today," said Rystad's senior oil markets analyst Paola Rodriguez-Masiu.

Concerns about weak manufacturing data in Asia and Europe, assessed by Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) of manufacturing

companies, also put pressure on oil prices.

In Asia, a series of PMIs from IHS Markit fell deeper into contraction from March, with some diving to all-time lows and others hitting levels last seen during the 2008-2009 global financial crisis.

PMIs in France, the euro zone's second-biggest economy, dropped in April to the lowest level on record. IHS Markit's Final PMI for German manufacturing, which accounts for about a fifth of Europe's largest economy, shrank at the fastest rate on record.

The U.S. dollar surged against most major currencies on Monday amid fears that last year's U.S.-China dispute will be re-ignited. Oil is usually priced in dollars so a stronger greenback makes crude more expensive for buyers with other currencies.

(Source: Reuters)

## Global oil demand starts a long, painful and uncertain recovery

Few have a better watchtower over oil demand than Joe Gorder, chief executive officer of major U.S. refiner Valero Energy Corp. But this week Gorder didn't even need his business insight to know that fuel consumption was starting to recover in America.

He only needed to look at the streets of San Antonio, the Texas city where he's based, to see traffic emerging after weeks of lockdown.

"People are starting to get out more," Gorder said. "I think there probably is a pent-up demand for folks to get out of their houses and get mobile."

From the streets of San Antonio to Barcelona and Beijing, traffic data, sales at fuel stations, and pipeline flows all suggest that the slump in oil demand probably bottomed out around the middle of April, and has now started a modest -- and very tentative -- recovery. The signs matter beyond the petroleum industry as they provide a glimmer of hope after a torrent of negative economic data.

"I believe we have seen the bottom," said Marco Dunand, co-founder of Mercuria Energy Group Ltd., one of the world's top-5 oil trading houses.

But the recovery is extremely slow. Oil traders believe it's likely to take more than a year, and perhaps much longer, before global demand reaches the pre-pandemic levels of roughly 100 million barrels a day. A growing minority even speculate it may never get there again.

### Historic crash

The likely shape of the revival has been a hotly contested topic. A V-shape was discarded a while ago. It's possible it could be U-shaped, with a relatively long period along bottom, or L-shaped, with demand never returning to where it once was.

Perhaps the Latin alphabet doesn't have a letter for the right shape. The square-root mathematical symbol may offer, to a point, an alternative: first a V-recovery as lockdowns are relaxed, followed by a long, flat tail as lifestyle changes, such as more work-from-home, become more normal.

### 'Bumpy road'

Certainly, airlines don't expect a return to the 2019 level of demand for years to come. It's what Ed Morse, a veteran oil watcher at Citigroup Inc., calls "the winding, bumpy road to an oil recovery."

The sheer scale of the demand destruction -- about 30 million barrels a day in April -- means the comeback is going to be a painful process. The International Energy Agency estimates that consumption will be down 25.8 million barrels a day in May, and 14.6 million in June. In December, it would still be 2.7 million a day below 2019 levels.

"We're seeing improvements really across all three markets, we've seen in May volumes trending up in Europe, we see that happening in the U.S., and we see that also in Asia," Darren Woods, CEO of Exxon Mobil Corp., told investors on Friday. "There are some, I'd say, encouraging early signs."



The very gradual improvement comes just as producers, from the OPEC+ alliance to drillers in Texas, accelerate their output cuts. Together they could progressively push supply and demand into balance over time. In the past week, more companies, including big American firms such as ConocoPhillips, have announced fresh production closures.

"Globally, we are at the inflection point where we are past the worst for oil demand destruction but not for supply destruction," Olivier Jakob, managing director at consultant Petromatrix GmbH. "This should help price stabilization."

The process will take time, with unsold crude and oil products likely to accumulate well into June and perhaps even July. Storage tanks are nearly full, and brings with it the risk of New York crude gyrating wildly again when the June futures near expiry in the middle of this month, mirroring what happened when the May contract ended and sent prices below zero.

Even so, the physical oil market, where actual barrels change hands, is showing tentative signs of recovery, particularly in Europe. Urals, Russia's flagship export grade, has risen to a premium over Brent after Moscow cut exports to a 10-year low.

### Recovery epicenter

The epicentre of the oil recovery is the same as where the public health crisis started in January: Wuhan. Weekday traffic in the Chinese city has almost returned to pre-crisis levels, although it remains depressed on weekends. It's completely back to normal during rush hour in other major cities including Beijing, Guangzhou and Shanghai, according to data from navigation company TomTom International BV.

### Back to work

Rush-hour traffic in Beijing and other cities in China has recovered to pre-crisis levels, but remains depressed on weekends.

"There are a few green shoots in some places like China," said Jessica Uhl, finance head at Royal Dutch Shell Plc. "We have some of our retail stations where demand and volume is up above pre-Covid levels."

Some of these shoots are also visible in one of the most battered industries -- aviation. Commercial operations worldwide are recovering slightly, with Flightradar24 data showing 33,500

flights taking off on April 30, the most in a month. However, that's still two-thirds lower than from before the pandemic. Most airlines do not plan to fly again until July at the earliest.

In the oil industry itself, the recovery is patchy, and many worry that it could quickly reverse if a second wave of infections hit after lockdowns are relaxed. Diesel, which fuels trucks and industries, is holding up better than gasoline, which is doing a lot better than jet-fuel. Even when demand strengthens, crude consumption may remain low because refiners will have first to get rid of the millions of gallons of oil products that have piled up over the past weeks.

### Murky details

As with many economic indicators, oil demand data comes with a significant lag. So traders rely on proxy estimates for a near real-time view. One is highway traffic. Another is the amount of gasoline and diesel that's trucked out from pipeline terminals into fuel stations.

In the U.S., the amount of gasoline supplied to the market increased last week to nearly 5.9 million barrels a day, up from 5.1 million in the first week of April but well below the typically more than 9 million before the virus, according to the official data. Early last month, refiners saw gasoline demand at 55 percent of normal level, which improved to 64 percent in the latest seven-day average. Valero confirmed on Thursday that it's seeing some pick-up.

### Bottom out

"I do think we're going to see more activity," Valero's Gorder said.

Spain, which had one of the strictest lockdowns in Europe, offers a rare window into real-time demand as the nation's biggest pipeline operator is disclosing weekly information. CLH Group said gasoline demand in the week to April 26 was down 75 percent from a year ago, a slight improvement from 81 percent in mid-April and 83 percent in late March.

In the UK, demand for road fuels is currently down between 55 percent and 60 percent from levels before the crisis, compared with 65 percent-70 percent two weeks ago, according to the Petrol Retailers Association.

The data show that the recovery is only marginal. But it also indicates that consumption has, at the very least, bottomed out. Where demand goes, prices follow, and Torbjorn Tornqvist, head of commodity trading giant Gunvor Group Ltd, thinks the worst of oil's slide is over.

Echoing a widely held view in the market, Tornqvist warns, however, that these subdued prices and demand may remain for a while. Prices aren't likely to go much above \$40 a barrel before the end of 2021, Tornqvist said. Only four months ago, at the start of this year, benchmark Brent crude was near \$70. It was at about \$26 a barrel on Monday.

"It's going to take a long time to balance the market," he said.

(Source: Bloomberg)

## In a post-pandemic world, renewable energy is the only way forward

The Economist's regular cartoonist, KAL, summed it up neatly in his cartoon last week: the battle humanity is waging against the coronavirus is only the preliminary round, and after that, we have a much bigger and stronger opponent waiting for us, called the climate emergency. That some people still may think that something as objectively and scientifically proven is still up for debate could be seen as one of the greatest achievements of the fossil fuel industry. It's not. It's the greatest threat to human life.



Pollution affects us all, very much so. In addition to being responsible for some seven million deaths annually, it makes us more vulnerable to all kinds of respiratory diseases, including, of course, those caused by viruses such as SARS-CoV-2, which could also become seasonal and repetitive. Not only do we know that we need to fix this problem: we also know that not doing so is killing us, and we now have a pressing example of this.

Electricity generated by fossil fuels accounts for 25 percent of harmful emissions in the world, while manufacturing and transport, also big consumers, are responsible for 21 percent and 14 percent respectively. If one change could have a major impact on the climate emergency, it would be the pivot to renewable energy. And the news in this regard could not be more propitious: the two fundamental components needed to do so, solar panels and batteries to store energy, are subject to economies of scale that make them increasingly efficient and affordable.

The economics of renewable energy are well known. Years ago, it was only competitive when backed by government subsidies. Now, the situation has been reversed: while oil companies receive more than \$5 billion dollars each year in government subsidies, they bribe politicians who oppose environmental legislation, and they have no problem finding banks to lend them money, renewable energies are already cheaper than oil, gas or coal, a fact that should consequently change the global energy landscape. Microsoft's ambitious plan to offset all emissions produced by the company's activities throughout its history is driven by a desire to implement that kind of change.

Renewables accounted for 72 percent of new energy sources installed in 2019, backed by investments that could achieve returns of 800 percent. Coal, on the other hand, is a money-losing machine, and its economics are as toxic as its emissions. Reconstructing the energy supply map of a country, even those in the developing world, has never made more sense. Even a major coal producer like Australia plans to make huge savings from falling costs of renewables, and estimates that 90 percent of its energy supply could be based on solar and wind energy by 2040 without charging consumers to pay for installation. Norway aims to electrify all its domestic flights by 2040. Some oil companies are now investing in solar energy, partly as greenwashing, but partly just because it is profitable.

The United Kingdom has just gone for a record 23 days without using coal to power electricity generation, while American states like Iowa, Virginia and others are rethinking their plans, based on using renewable energy. The Democrats want to include action against climate change in the response packages to the coronavirus crisis, and are considering funding 30 million solar roofs across the nation.

Changing the world's energy map seems like a costly thing to do, but in practice, it is cheap, especially if we factor in the disasters caused by fires, hurricanes, floods and so on. If we include the cost of treating the diseases it causes, or if we simply put a price on the viability of the human species as a whole, it's clear that pivoting to renewables is a no-brainer.

A post-pandemic economic reconstruction based on restructuring the energy map makes sense. We know we have to do it, and we know the reason we haven't done it so far is because it challenges the interests of a powerful few. The time has come to abandon outdated concepts, to change our mindset, and to put the use of renewables at the top of our list of priorities.

(Source: Forbes)

## France's Total looks to expand in Australia selling power

France's Total SA is seeking to expand its power retailing business in Australia from the middle of this year as part of a global plan to sell electricity to 9 million sites by 2023.

Total already sells power to the Gladstone liquefied natural gas (LNG) project, in which it is a stakeholder, and wants to supply electricity to other large customers across Australia's eastern states, it said in an application to the Australian Energy Regulator.

"TGPAU's proposed target market is the very large customer end of the market (for example industrial and government customers)," Total Gas & Power Australia (TGPAU) said in its application.



The application was filed in March and released by the regulator on Monday for public comment.

The oil and gas supermajor is targeting a similar market as rival Royal Dutch Shell, which last year entered the Australian power industry taking over ERM Power, the country's No.2 energy retailer to businesses and industry.

As of 2018, Total said it sold 37 terrawatt hours of electricity to more than 5 million customers and traded 250 TWh of electricity in 11 countries.

Total's footprint in Australia includes stakes in the Ichthys LNG project in northern Australia, solar farms in Victoria and New South Wales and a battery project in Western Australia.

(Source: Reuters)



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**National Iranian Drilling Company**

**Subject of Tender:**

Tender No.	Description
FP/20-98/191	P/F: CPT-N4 CEMENTING TRAICKERS HYDRAULIC
FP/20-98/149	P/F: GATE VALVE TYPE

**Tender descriptions:**

The Tender holder	Registration No. through national electronic tendering system	Tender No. /Indent No.	Estimated value /Rial/Euro(
National Iranian Drilling Company	3/234/662	Tender No.:FP/20-98/191 Indent No.: 08-22-9845079	66,000,000,000
	3/234/658	Tender No.:FP/20-98/149 Indent No.: 08-22-9845057	14,625,000,000

**Qualitative evaluation of tenderers**

Method	Based on minimum scoring (50 Points) made in award criterion reflected in the tenderers pre-qualification forms.
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**Purchasing & Submitting**

Tender Document Distribution by Company	The distribution of the documents will be started one day after the publishing of second advertisement and ended on the following tenth day thereof.
Distribution Place	Hall No.:113, 1 <sup>st</sup> floor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN 061-34148707- Room No. 431, 4 <sup>th</sup> floor, Oil central building No.8,Yaghma alley, Jomhori Islami st., Tehran - Iran
Submitting Method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt in the amount of 190,000 Iranian Rials under account number 4001114004020491 (Shaba No. IR 520100004001114004020491) in name of "NIDC Incomes Centralized Fund" issued by I.R. of Iran Central Bank.</li> <li>Submitting format Request for the purpose of receiving Tender Documents.</li> </ul>
Documents Receiving Method	<p><b>Closing date</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>14Days after the last time of Purchasing.</li> </ul> <p><b>Address</b></p> <p>Hall No. 107, 1<sup>st</sup> floor, Tender Committee, Operation building, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN. Tel: +98-61-34148580 +98-61-34148569</p>

**Tender Guarantee**

Value of guarantee	3,288,000,000Rial / 24 243.Euro Regarding Tender No FP/20-98/191
	732,000,000Rial / 6 139.Euro Regarding Tender No FP/20-98/149
Type of guarantee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that obtain activity license from the central bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran.</li> <li>Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt under account number 4001114006376636 ( Shaba No. IR 350100004001114006376636) in name of "NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran.</li> </ul>
Duration of credit & quotation	Tender Guarantee and quotation should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum for one time in initial validity duration.

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**ساخت تعیین دستمزد کارگران / دولت تورم را کنترل کند**

تهران، ۲۰ اردیبهشت - وزیر امور اقتصادی و دارایی، محمد شمس، در جلسه هیئت مدیره سازمان امور مالیاتی، با حضور مدیران این سازمان و نمایندگان دستگاه های اجرایی، با موضوع تعیین دستمزد کارگران، جلسه برگزار کرد. شمس در این جلسه، با اشاره به تورم ۳۰ درصدی در کشور، اظهار داشت: دولت متعهد است که تورم را کنترل کند و دستمزد کارگران را متناسب با تورم تعیین کند. وی افزود: دولت در حال مذاکراتی با اتحادیه های کارگری است تا به توافق برسد. شمس همچنین به موضوع کاهش نرخ بهره بانکی اشاره کرد و گفت: دولت قصد دارد نرخ بهره بانکی را کاهش دهد تا به تورم کنترل شود.

**قاجاق سوخت**

تهران، ۲۰ اردیبهشت - وزیر امور اقتصادی و دارایی، محمد شمس، در جلسه هیئت مدیره سازمان امور مالیاتی، با حضور مدیران این سازمان و نمایندگان دستگاه های اجرایی، با موضوع تعیین دستمزد کارگران، جلسه برگزار کرد. شمس در این جلسه، با اشاره به تورم ۳۰ درصدی در کشور، اظهار داشت: دولت متعهد است که تورم را کنترل کند و دستمزد کارگران را متناسب با تورم تعیین کند. وی افزود: دولت در حال مذاکراتی با اتحادیه های کارگری است تا به توافق برسد. شمس همچنین به موضوع کاهش نرخ بهره بانکی اشاره کرد و گفت: دولت قصد دارد نرخ بهره بانکی را کاهش دهد تا به تورم کنترل شود.

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**Oil min. holds phone talk with Russia's energy min. on reducing oil output**

TEHRAN, Feb. 20 (MNA) - Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh held a phone conversation with the Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak on Thursday, with regards to the cooperation of the two countries within the framework of OPEC Plus.

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# Time is ripe for establishment of United Nations' Armed Forces!

This is the right moment to serve humanity in a new framework via urging the world countries to assist the United Nations to set up the international bodies' own Rapid Deployment Force to act in time wherever and whenever is necessary to protect innocent people from being harmed by violence, war, dictatorship, coup and ethnic cleansing.

Tad Daley, Director of Policy Analysis at Citizens for Global Solutions, has pointed out in his article published by the Responsible Statecraft that if we are resolved to bring an end to crimes against humanity, we must shape an army of humanity under the United Nations' command.

In 1945, as World War II ground its way toward a conclusion at Hiroshima and Nagasaki that portended darker days ahead, a young man named Duncan Cameron was charged by the United Kingdom with treason. His offense? Refusing to take up arms for his country. When questioned under oath, however, the precocious 18-year-old insisted he was no coward, and no pacifist. Duncan Cameron announced that he was quite willing to fight to defend not the nation where he happened to have been born, but all of humankind. He declared that he would gladly put his life on the line to enforce a universal rule of law, by serving as an officer in a "World Police Force."

We might call him, in retrospect, a planetary patriot. This year marks the 75th anniversary of not only the end of that terrible war, but the birth of the United Nations. The UN Charter was signed by 50 countries in San Francisco on June 26, 1945, and came into force four months later on October 24. World leaders plan to gather this September in New York, coronavirus permitting, both to celebrate the occasion and to chart a course for the years ahead.

Two major civil society initiatives, known as UN2020 and Together First, have emerged to focus on that latter ambition. Mostly outside the United States, they are laboring to craft global governance innovations which might be enacted as soon as that September 2020 summit. They are also exploring larger, longer-term ideas — perhaps aiming for the UN's centennial in 2045 — regarding the ideal global structures by which nine or ten billion humans might optimally organize themselves as a global civilization.

One of the most important proposals now circulating in this debate is to invent at last the force that was not available for young Cameron to join. The United Nations needs soldiers of its own — to put a stop to genocide and crimes against humanity when national governments are unwilling to dispatch their own forces to do so.

There has never been any shortage of violent conflicts inside one state which directly engage the interests of outside states, leading to military intervention. This rarely leads to optimal outcomes for the citizens inside that state. Syria might be the best contemporary example. It is perhaps not hyperbole to assert that the main reason for the humanitarian catastrophe inside that country since 2011 is the sharply divergent interests of outside actors which have deployed their own boots on the ground in Syria.

But there is equally no shortage of internal violent conflicts where the opposite strategic calculus prevails. UN member states, over and over again, have proven unwilling to put their own forces at risk — no matter how macabre the atrocities — when the fight in question does not directly engage their own national interests. The catalogue of such cases just since the Cold War's end wears the soul. Bosnia. Darfur. Congo. The abuses of the Rohingya by the government of Myanmar. The violence done by Boko Haram in West Africa.

"Never again" we say. Again and again we see.

Rwanda remains the prototypical case study. After Hutu extremists began massacring members of the Tutsi minority, UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali pleaded with 19 developed UN member states to dispatch just a handful of troops — who could have quickly established safe corridors and safe havens, and provided refuge for hundreds of thousands of innocents. All 19



turned him down.

Most Americans were sickened by the violence in Rwanda. But no one could credibly argue that America had any vital national interests in Rwanda. President Clinton, under pressure to intervene, made that clear, "We cannot dispatch our troops to solve every human misery... We are prepared to defend ourselves and our fundamental interests when they are threatened." The same was true for virtually every other country in the world. So for ten long weeks, about three quarters of a million souls were tortured, and raped, and hacked to pieces in Rwanda.

"I swear to you," said Boutros-Ghali later, "that we could have stopped the genocide in Rwanda with 400 paratroopers."

Enter the proposal to create a standing, all-volunteer, directly-recruited "UN Rapid Deployment Force." Its raison d'être would be to defend not the national interests of any state, but our common human interest in creating a world free of such outrages. It would be filled with crack soldiers from around the planet, well-equipped, extensively trained, and led by experienced military officers. They would explicitly volunteer to put their lives on the line not to defend their own country but to protect humanity — even when their own country has no dog in the fight. To bring an end to crimes against humanity, the world needs an army of humanity.

This idea was first formally put forth in 1948, when the first UN Secretary-General, Trygve Lie, called for establishing a "UN Legion." Former President Ronald Reagan endorsed it in a speech at Oxford in 1992 — calling it "an army of conscience." Bill Clinton advocated it during his 1992 presidential campaign, and in 1993 his new Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, placed it on the UN Security Council agenda. It was considerably elaborated by Sir Brian Urquhart in a landmark 1993 New York Review article, "For a UN Volunteer Military Force." One of the central recommendations of the 1995 Commission on Global Governance was the creation of "a highly trained UN Volunteer Force ... willing to take combat risks." In 2001 Congressman James McGovern of Virginia introduced a "UN Rapid Deployment Act," co-sponsored by more than 50 members. And American foreign policy establishment heavyweights Morton Abramowitz and Thomas Pickering revived the proposal again in a 2008 essay in Foreign Affairs.

Many mistakenly believe the UN already possesses

such a force — the "UN Blue Helmets." But while the UN may own the helmets, the nations still own the troops. The Secretary-General must implore member states to contribute to new UN peacekeeping missions every time, from scratch. That's why Secretary-General Kofi Annan often observed that the UN is the only fire department in the world which can't even hire firefighters until after the blaze breaks out.

Perhaps most importantly from the American perspective, the United Nations Rapid Deployment Force (UNRDF) could free American presidents from facing the excruciating dilemma that confronted President Clinton in Rwanda. He faced two options, and both of them were miserable. One was dispatching U.S. forces, and incurring some inevitable American casualties, to stop atrocities that, however dreadful, had little impact upon us. The other, which by all accounts he chose with much agony, was doing nothing — while the nightmare continued to unfold before our eyes.

Who would authorize the deployment of a UNRDF? Could preventive deployments sometimes forestall violence? Might its very existence serve as a deterrent? These kinds of questions have been thoroughly explored in the literature over the years. None of them are inherently unanswerable.

Perhaps the most important question is whether a UNRDF might inspire people to think anew about their primary identities and allegiances — which brings us back to Duncan Cameron. Might his world police force move more than a few — including many who have no intention of signing up — to openly proclaim themselves to be citizens of the world?

That term has come in for a lot of abuse recently — not least from the current occupant of the White House. Perhaps the brutal coronavirus plague, driving home the big truth that we all live in one interconnected global civilization, will cause more than a few to reconsider the lure of hypernationalism, and to reject sentiments like "America First" in favor of "Humanity First."

A UNRDF would give individual citizens all around the world the ability to volunteer to do more than just "serve their countries." It would give them the opportunity to serve humanity. And then thousands of brave young soldiers might hear the ubiquitous refrain — "thank you for your service" — not just from their fellow nationals.

They would hear it from their fellow Earthlings.

## Turkey is playing with fire in Eastern Mediterranean

By Mohammad Jafari

It is not so difficult for the political-military observers to realize that Ankara is making great mistakes in the Eastern Mediterranean via providing unsparing military supports for the Government of National Accord (GNA) in Libya for economic interests, trying to confront Greece and Cyprus for hydrocarbon deposits, driving a wedge amongst the European nations to revenge on the EU, and resorting to military meddling in northern Syria to gain upper hand against Russia in the region.

A report by Ali Demirdas, a senior political analyst, has revealed that how Turkey has orchestrated its foreign policy in the Eastern Mediterranean.

"Whereas the entire world seems to have turned in on itself trying desperately to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, interestingly Turkey's foreign policy is displaying signs of an outward dynamism," Demirdas wrote in his report published by Anti-War.

In Libya, for example, in early April, the Turkish-backed, and the United Nations-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) struck a serious blow against the rebel warlord Khalifa Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA). The GNA captured strategic cities of Surman, Sabratha and al-Ajaylat in West Libya.

The GNA victory came at a time when Haftar had become the most likely winner of the now 6-year old Libyan civil war since his forces captured the strategic coastal town of Sirte in January, a vital outlet to the Mediterranean Sea for Libya's oil export.

Turkey's deep involvement in the Libyan civil war is closely related to Ankara's perception that Greece and the Greek Cypriots are trying to divide up the Eastern Mediterranean, rendering Turkish maritime navigation difficult without Greek consent.

Furthermore, the lucrative hydrocarbon deposits around the island of Cyprus, Ankara posits, would be exploited ignoring the island's Turkish population.

France, Russia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have also thrown their political and material support behind Haftar. By propping up a pro-Turkish government in Libya, Ankara hopes to save the maritime deal it signed with GNA prime minister Fayez al-Sarraj, and spoil any plan in which it is not included.



Turkey's recent critical gains in Libya are the direct result of the anti-Turkey coalition being rendered debilitated by a variety of factors closely associated with COVID-19. Simply put, Turkey, which has fared the pandemic relatively unharmed, used this opportunity to advance its interests in Libya.

The UAE, Haftar's main financial backer, has been hit hard by the all-time low oil prices due to plummeting demand because of COVID-19, which has made its involvement in Libya even more costly. Abu Dhabi announced on April 20 that it had borrowed \$7 billion to counter slumping oil prices.

Moreover, for Russia, as if having to fund its costly involvements in Syria and Ukraine as well as the constricting U.S. sanctions were not enough, the plummeting oil prices and the ruble's simultaneous nose-dive has had Moscow reevaluate the purpose of its Libya commitment.

The withdrawal from Libya of the majority of forces from the Russian paramilitary group Wagner corresponded with the beginning of the declining oil prices in late February.

"Syria has become Putin's headache" says Alexander Shumilin, a former Russian diplomat who runs the state-financed Europe-Middle East Center in Moscow. Finally, Putin's abrupt decision to pull the Russian oil giant Rosneft from Venezuela in March is a clear sign of Russia being overstretched.

French President Emmanuel Macron has thrown his support behind Haftar with the conviction that a pro-French authoritarian regime in Libya would facilitate Paris's policies towards its former colonies in North and West Africa.

However, a series of predicaments have forced Paris to recalibrate its Africa policies. The signs of France getting bogged down in West Africa abound. The French military's mounting casualties in Operation Barkhane, which it started in the Sahel in 2014 with some 5,000 troops, is obstructing Paris's ability to fully commit in Libya.

In November 2019, two French helicopters in pursuit of militants in Mali collided, killing all 13 French soldiers aboard. To make things worse for France, its only nuclear-powered aircraft carrier Charles De Gaulle, which it has used as a deterrent against Turkey's naval and air advances in Libya, is currently out of commission as more than 1,000 French sailors are believed to be infected with COVID-19. Having been hit hard by the pandemic at home, coupled with the ever increasing mission creep in the Sahel, France has shifted its priority away from Libya.

Turkey has seemingly seen this as a window of opportunity. Last week, in an unprecedented show of resolve, it sent 11 F-16s accompanied by refueling, early warning radar, and other support aircraft to Haftar controlled airspace in a clear message that Turkey is ready to escalate its involvement in Libya.

Turkey has over the past year shipped a multitude of weapons including drones, armored vehicles, electronic warfare tools, laser weapons, and other arms and ammunition to the GNA. Of these, the low cost but extremely effective armed drones are rapidly changing the face of the Libyan battlefield. With the help of Turkey's proven armed drone supremacy, Sarraj's militia inflicted serious damage on Haftar, turning the tide in Libya.

Turkey has further scored points in its foreign policy by sending, in early April, medical supplies to Italy and Spain, two of the most important Mediterranean countries, of which Ankara would very much want to see on its side against the France-Greece block. Ankara's gesture came at a time when Italy and Spain had been imploring the European Union for supplies, only to get a cold shoulder from Brussels. The situation further eroded when France confiscated much-needed masks, some six million, destined for Italy and Spain.

Even before the pandemic outbreak, Italy had moved closer to Turkey's Libya policies, expressing its support for Sarraj and voiced concern with Macron's support for Haftar.

It appears the COVID-19 pandemic has bestowed Turkey with favorable foreign policy opportunities by reducing the ability of its rivals to meaningfully sway Ankara's advancements in the East Mediterranean, particularly in Libya and reinforce its position vis-a-vis the European Union. One should expect a more active foreign policy of Ankara in the post-COVID19 era.

## United States remain top military spender in 2019

United States' military expenditure amounted to more than \$730 billion in 2019, placing the U.S. at the top of the list of global military spenders.

According to new data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), total global military expenditure rose to \$1917 billion in 2019. The total for 2019 represents an increase of 3.6 percent from 2018 and the largest annual growth in spending since 2010. The five largest spenders in 2019, which accounted for 62 percent of expenditure, were the United States, China, India, Russia and Saudi Arabia. This is the first time that two Asian states have featured among the top three military spenders.

The SIPRI, established in 1966, is an independent international institute dedicated to research into conflict, armaments, arms control and disarmament.

Global military spending in 2019 represented 2.2 percent of the global gross domestic product (GDP), which equates to approximately \$249 per person. 'Global military expenditure was 7.2 percent higher in 2019 than it was in 2010, showing a trend that military spending growth has accelerated in recent years,' said Nan Tian, SIPRI Researcher. 'This is the highest level of spending since the 2008 global financial crisis and probably represents a peak in expenditure.'

Military spending by the United States grew by 5.3 percent to a total of \$732 billion in 2019 and accounted for 38 percent of global military spending. The increase in U.S. spending in 2019 alone was equivalent to the entirety of Germany's military expenditure for that year. 'The recent growth in U.S. military spending is largely based on a perceived return to competition between



the great powers,' said Pieter D. Wezeman, Senior Researcher at SIPRI.

In 2019 China and India were, respectively, the second- and third-largest military spenders in the world. China's military expenditure reached \$261 billion in 2019, a 5.1 percent increase compared with 2018, while India's grew by 6.8 percent to \$71.1 billion. 'India's tensions and rivalry with both Pakistan and China are among the major drivers for its increased military spending,' said Siemon T. Wezeman, SIPRI Senior Researcher.

In addition to China and India, Japan (\$47.6 billion) and South Korea (\$43.9 billion) were the largest military spenders in Asia and Oceania. Military expenditure in the region has risen every year since at least 1989.

Germany's military spending rose by 10 percent in 2019, to \$49.3 billion. This

was the largest increase in spending among the top 15 military spenders in 2019. 'The growth in German military spending can partly be explained by the perception of an increased threat from Russia, shared by many North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member states,' said Diego Lopes da Silva, Researcher at SIPRI. 'At the same time, however, military spending by France and the United Kingdom remained relatively stable.'

There were sharp increases in military expenditure among NATO member states in Central Europe: for example, Bulgaria's increased by 127 percent—mainly due to payments for new combat aircraft—and Romania's rose by 17 percent. Total military spending by all 29 NATO member states was \$1035 billion in 2019.

In 2019 Russia was the fourth-largest

spender in the world and increased its military expenditure by 4.5 percent to \$65.1 billion. 'At 3.9 percent of its GDP, Russia's military spending burden was among the highest in Europe in 2019,' said Alexandra Kuimova, Researcher at SIPRI.

Armed conflict is one of the main drivers for the volatile nature of military spending in sub-Saharan Africa. For example, in the Sahel and Lake Chad region, where there are several ongoing armed conflicts, military spending in 2019 increased in Burkina Faso (22 percent), Cameroon (1.4 percent) and Mali (3.6 percent) but fell in Chad (−5.1 percent), Niger (−20 percent) and Nigeria (−8.2 percent). Among Central African countries that were involved in armed conflict, military spending in 2019 rose overall. The Central African Republic (8.7 percent), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (16 percent) and Uganda (52 percent) all increased military spending in 2019.

South America: Military expenditure in South America was relatively unchanged in 2019, at \$52.8 billion. Brazil accounted for 51 percent of total military expenditure in the subregion.

Africa: The combined military expenditure of states in Africa grew by 1.5 percent to an estimated \$41.2 billion in 2019—the region's first spending increase for five years.

South East Asia: Military spending in South East Asia increased by 4.2 percent in 2019 to reach \$40.5 billion.

The average military spending burden was 1.4 percent of GDP for countries in the Americas, 1.6 percent for Africa, 1.7 percent for Asia and Oceania and for Europe and 4.5 percent for the Middle East (in countries for which data is available).



## Some 70,000 visit Iran's UNESCO sites online in week

**TOURISM d e s k** TEHRAN – Some 70,000 people visited Iran's UNESCO World Heritage sites on virtual tours from April 27 to May 3, CHTN quoted Mohammad-Hassan Talebian, deputy cultural heritage, tourism, and handicrafts minister, as saying on Monday.

Considering the coronavirus outbreak in the country and the holy month of Ramadan, these virtual tours are a good opportunity for Iranians to visit the country's most popular cultural heritage sites, he added.



As the country's tourism has gone into lockdown over the coronavirus pandemic, the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts decided to arrange virtual tours on the country's 24 World Heritage sites in collaboration with the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) during the holy month of Ramadan.

Last month, Talebian expressed his hope that such projects would continue after the end of Ramadan, referring to the success of the virtual tours and online visits of the museums and some other tourist attractions during the Persian New Year holiday (Noruz).

The virtual tours, which are available on Aparat, an Iranian video sharing service, will continue until May 19.

"Arg-e Bam" (Bam Citadel) that represents an outstanding example of an ancient fortified settlement, "Bisotun" in western Kermanshah province, which is notable for its Achaemenid-era inscription carved on a limestone cliff, lavish "Golestan Palace" in downtown Tehran which is a masterpiece of the Qajar era (1789 to 1925), and millennium-old "Gonbad-e Qabus" which is a mudbrick tomb tower for Qabus ibn Wushmagir, are among the UNESCO-designated sites in Iran.

## Kermanshah reopening hotels as coronavirus lockdown eased

**TOURISM d e s k** TEHRAN – Residential centers in western Iranian province of Kermanshah have been allowed to reopen as the coronavirus lockdown has been eased, said Sirus Golanbar, vice president of the Association of Kermanshah Hoteliers.



Hotels are reopening their doors gradually, observing strict sanitary and social distancing requirements, he added, CHTN reported on Monday.

Kermanshah embraces a variety of awe-inspiring historical sites including Bisotun and Taq-e Bostan, both on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

Last week, President Hassan Rouhani said the country will be divided into three risk zones based on the number of COVID-19 infections and fatalities.

Rouhani said the Health Ministry would draw up a map of "white," "yellow" and "red" risk zones in the country.

Meanwhile, travel advertising has been resumed in the country mainly for destinations that have no traces of the coronavirus.

## Ancient relics of Iran: Safavid-era dish made in Kerman

**(Louvre museum)** – This beautiful dish with its attractive graphic decoration was made in the city of Kerman, a major ceramic production center during the Safavid period, located in the Kerman province in the south-east of Iran.



The simple yet striking decoration consists of a large rosette in the center of the dish; this rosette is composed of six central palmettes (eslimi) surrounded by six smaller palmettes of the same shape, connected by slender floral scrolls. These stylized split palmettes are a regular feature of Persian manuscripts—especially in illuminations—from the 15th century onward, though their origin remains obscure.

The white decoration stands out against the uniform blue ground of the dish. A special technique called "champlève" was used to achieve this contrasting effect: the dish was coated with a thick layer of smooth slip, which was then scraped away to allow the pure white of the paste to show through, creating the desired pattern. The dish was coated with a transparent glaze which added an effect of depth to the decoration and smoothed the surface.

# Iran formulates coronavirus safety guidelines ahead of anticipated travel surge

**HERITAGE d e s k** TEHRAN – In response to the coronavirus pandemic, Iran's Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts has announced new guidelines and instructions to ramp up the safety of travels across the country.

In an effort made in cooperation with the Health Ministry, the procedures are initially formulated for "emergency or work travels" to be implemented in hotels, guest houses, eco-lodge unites, tourist destinations, transport facilities, recreational centers, and restaurants as the country gradually prepares for travels to start amid the pandemic.

Elaborating on the measures taken to lessen the impact of coronavirus on the tourism sector and future measures to restore the situation, deputy tourism minister Vali Teymouri said: "A smart travel protocol, which is aimed to reassure healthy travels, has been developed to be implemented across the country," Mehr reported on Monday.

"Smart travel means traveling along with a strict observance of health and wellness protocols," the official noted.

"Though we hadn't left our homes or started traveling till now, and the accommodation and tourism centers are being closed; we have reports that people are gradually launching work or urgent travels so they need to stay in the right place. If there is now a demand for travel, even in small numbers, then we need to be prepared for travels under the health protocols."

"The smart travel protocol states what considerations a hotel, agency, or tour guide should follow. It's as if accommodation units need to focus more on renting one-bedroom than two-bedroom. Or if the hotel has been closed until now, with what considerations will it start working and under what conditions will it accept passengers. These cases are detailed in the present protocol we should revise its articles using the opinion of the relevant organizations."

In response to a question that if travel ads are illegal in face of the virus pandemic, the official said: "We have not officially announced anything for tourism advertising, but in the form of a smart trip, we have addressed the issue of whether they should advertise tourism



An undated photo shows vehicles jamming the road that goes from Tehran to the Caspian Sea coast, northern Iran.

activities, of course, if the coronavirus is due by the end of the holy month of Ramadan."

"We have to take into account both health issues and the interests of the travel activists, because now people have come out of their homes, so if we can't provide standard health services, they go to unauthorized centers which triggers more spread of the disease. So we can help people travel in a safe and secure way."

Last week, Hormatollah Rafiee, the head of the Association of Iranian Travel Agents, said on Saturday that "Advertisements for [package] tours have been started for Khordad holidays (June 3 to 5) by some tourism agencies. He, however, warned that no tour operator or travel agency should give customers promises they could not fulfill."

"None of them should create a commitment for a traveler that they will not be able to do it."

President Hassan Rouhani has said the country will be divided into three risk zones based on the number of COVID-19 infections and fatalities.

Rouhani said the Health Ministry would draw up a map of "white," "yellow" and "red" risk zones in the country.

In the white areas, religious sites, mosques, and holy shrines would be allowed to reopen and hold Friday prayers under the health guidelines issued to curtail the coronavirus pandemic.

On April 20, Iran lifted intercity travel bans days after President Hassan Rouhani unveiled a "Smart Social Distancing Initiative"

as a new phase of measures to prevent the virus spread.

Over the past couple of months, many countries, including the Islamic Republic, imposed travel restrictions to help curb the spread of novel coronavirus. In this line, incoming and outgoing flights have been suspended, and road travels restricted to a great extent.

Some experts expect Iran to achieve a tourism boom after coronavirus contained, believing its impact would be temporary and short-lived for a country that ranked the third fastest-growing tourism destination in 2019.

Latest available data show eight million tourists visited the Islamic Republic during the first ten months of the past Iranian calendar year (started March 21, 2019).

## National Shiraz Day: an emblem of Persian history, culture, and literature

**HERITAGE d e s k** TEHRAN – Yesterday, many lovers of Persian culture, history and literature marked the National Shiraz Day mainly through online programs and visits to Hafezieh where Hafez, an illustrious 14th-century Persian poet, is laid to rest in the southern Iranian city.

Ordibehesht 15 in the Iranian calendar (which falls on May 4 this year) has been designated as National Shiraz Day due to its unique nature in spring, as well as historical and cultural importance.

Eram Garden, Afif-Abad Garden, Tomb of Hafez, Tomb of Sa'di, Jameh Mosque of Atigh, and Persepolis are among the historical, cultural, and ancient sites of Shiraz that are of interest to domestic and foreign tourists.

Every year on Shiraz Day, different ceremonies are held in this city, but this year, due to the outbreak of coronavirus, the historical, cultural, and literary places of Shiraz refused to host people.



File photo depicts Hafezieh where Hafez, an illustrious 14th-century Persian poet, is laid to rest in the city of Shiraz, southern Iran.

Almost all Iranians love Hafez poetry which is soaked in deep sense of humanity echoing ranges of historical events, biographical descriptions and details of life in his hometown, Shiraz.

Hafez is most famous for his Divan and among the many partial English translations of this work are those by Gertrude Bell and H. Wilberforce Clarke.

Encyclopedia Britannica comments that the extraordinary popularity of Hafez poetry in all Persian-speaking lands stems from his simple and often colloquial though musical language, free from artificial virtuosity, and his unaffected use of homely images and proverbial expressions.

Shiraz is home to some of the country's most magnificent buildings and sights. Increasingly, it draws more and more foreign and domestic sightseers flocking into this provincial capital which was the literary capital of Persia during the Zand dynasty from 1751 to 1794.

## Cheshmeh-Ali spring awaiting national heritage status



**TOURISM d e s k** TEHRAN – Cheshmeh-Ali historical spring in the city of Rey, southern Tehran, is planned to

be inscribed on the national heritage list, a provincial tourism official has said.

The national registration of the

thousands-year-old spring will lead to its better preservation as well as help tourism develop in the region, Rey's cultural heritage department director Amir Mosayeb Rahimzadeh said on Sunday, CHTN reported.

Cheshmeh-Ali, literally meaning "Spring of Ali", is a historical and recreational spot in Rey. It is also home to 19th-century rock-carved bas-relief, which was commissioned by the Qajar king Fath Ali Shah (r. 1797 – 1834).

In the summertime, the site is occupied by tens of locals who come for a swim to escape the harsh surrounding environment.

In the past, people used to clean their rugs and carpets in the pool that is fed by an underground mineral spring, with the idea in mind that its water better cleans their carpets making the colors more vivid.

Cheshmeh-Ali is in the neighborhood of the ancient Ebn-e Babveyh cemetery, the 12th-century Tughrul Tower, the historical Rashkan Castle, and next to the aged Rey

Castle.

Rey was one of the capital cities of the Parthian empire (3rd century BC–3rd century CE) and it was captured by the Muslim Arabs in 641 CE. During the reign of the Muslim caliph al-Mahdi in the 8th century, the city grew in importance until it was rivaled in western Asia only by Damascus and Baghdad.

According to Encyclopedia Britannica, Islamic writers described it as a city of extraordinary beauty, built largely of fired brick and brilliantly ornamented with blue faience (glazed earthenware).

It continued to be an important city and was briefly a capital under the rule of the Seljuqs, but in the 12th century it was weakened by the fierce quarrels of rival religious sects. In 1220 the city was almost destroyed by the Mongols, and its inhabitants were massacred. Most of the survivors of the massacre moved to nearby Tehran, and the deserted remnants of Rey soon fell into complete ruin.



## Armardeh projected to be named national city of handicrafts

**HERITAGE d e s k** TEHRAN – Armardeh, a small city in Baneh county, western province of Kordestan, is planned to be named as the national city of handicrafts, a provincial tourism official has said.

Being recognized as a hub for handicrafts gives craftspeople the opportunity of promoting their works as well as help tourism develop in the region, Baneh's cultural heritage department director Sadollah Rahimikhah

said on Monday, CHTN reported.

He also noted that being a national city of handicrafts can play an important and significant role in the growth and development of the city, and the city's cultural and natural potentials can be recognized more properly.

Shawlbafe (knitting shawls) is considered as Armardeh's main handicrafts product. Shawl is a type of hand-made men's clothing that has been popular among Kurdish

people since ancient times, and is made of a type of goat's wool. Women are the main producers of shawls.

Various Iranian cities and villages have been named as national hubs of handicrafts.

Zanjan for filigree, Kashan for traditional textile, Iranshahr for needlework, Abadeh for wood carving as well as the village of Fash for crafting indigenous musical instruments are among them.



# Coronavirus brought healthcare reforms into sharp focus

➡ At the same time, the creation of 32,000 hospital beds, renovation of more than 45,000 hospital beds, commissioning of 42 air emergency bases, development of 180 emergency departments in the country and construction and equipping of 3,000 new ICU special care beds are other measures taken in the field of treatment.

## ■ 11 million people covered by free insurance

With increasing access to healthcare, it was necessary to plan for cost-effectiveness so that people could benefit from healthcare, as one of the major goals of the plan was to protect patients financially from the debilitating costs of health.

So, 11 million Iranians who did not have any health insurance coverage were covered by public insurance.

## ■ People's share of medical expenses reduced

Prior to the project, public spending on healthcare services was more than 50 percent. Meanwhile, with the implementation of the plan, the share of payment from the pockets of patients in the field of health has decreased to 32.4 percent.

Also, it was also forbidden to refer patients outside the hospital for medication and medical supplies, and hospitals were required to provide the patients with the items they needed.

## ■ 250 special clinics launched

At the same time, it should be noted that before the plan was implemented, public hospitals affiliated with the Ministry of Health were not providing outpatient services appropriately, and patients usually did not go to these hospitals to receive specialized services, but outpatient services in the form of 250 special clinics could achieve the three main goals of financially protecting people against healthcare costs, increasing access to healthcare, and improving the quality of healthcare.

## ■ Physicians stayed in deprived areas

On the other hand, specialist physicians and doctors were dispatched to deprived areas temporarily as a force for specialized services, and in most cases, they left these areas due to lack of necessary incentives to stay.

The plan started supporting physicians in those areas, which increased the number of doctors in deprived areas, so that more than 4,300 general practitioners, specialists, and subspecialists in deprived areas of the country



are offering services, which has increased people's access to medical treatment.

## ■ 55,000 health workers in the front line

The healthcare network in rural areas of the country is called Health House and with the efforts of healthcare providers, primary care is provided to the people covered with an approximate population of about 1,000 people.

On the other hand, on average, each five health houses are supervised and connected to a comprehensive rural service center where doctors, nurses, and, in some areas, laboratory and dental services are provided free of charge to the public.

In cities, the first units are health service providers. Healthcare providers are operating at these bases, providing services similar to those provided by health workers in the villages, with the difference that the population covered by healthcare providers is about 2,500.

It should be noted that each three to four health bases are a subset of a comprehensive urban health service center.

There is one doctor for every 12,000 people in the city's comprehensive health centers. Oral care, mental health, nutrition, environmental health, occupational health and midwifery services, and breastfeeding

education are also provided in these centers, although these services have been added to the capacity of these centers after the implementation of the plan.

Therefore, one of the important health measures was the construction, equipment, and development of health houses and comprehensive health centers, so that currently 17,800 health houses are active in the villages in the whole country, with 31,500 health workers. There are also 4,700 comprehensive healthcare centers in operation.

There are about 5,700 active health centers in the cities, which employ 24,000 healthcare workers. According to the Ministry of Health, a total of 55,000 people in the country are providing prevention, healthcare, and treatment services, who also have made a good record in the coronavirus crisis.

After doctors and nurses in hospitals, healthcare providers, urban and rural doctors, who are responsible for screening the entire population in remote areas for COVID-19 detection, are in charge of providing services to the people.

## ■ Health houses in COVID-19 crisis

About 1,100 comprehensive healthcare centers across the country are now offering medical services to patients and providing the necessary care since the onset of the epidemic. If the person has more problems, they will

refer them to the hospitals. So far, more than 72 million Iranians have been screened by healthcare providers in remote areas.

One of the important health capacities that came to the aid of the country in the coronavirus crisis was the electronic health record, and according to the Minister of Health Saeed Namaki, at least 75 million Iranians with a national code can file electronic health records.

Undoubtedly, the construction of more than one hundred hospitals in the form of 32,000 hospital beds and thousands of special beds and new ICUs and equipping them played a significant role in providing services to critically ill corona patients and reduce the number of deaths in the country.

These capacities, along with the sacrifices of the healthcare staff, have enabled the country's "health" structure to cope with COVID-19 and manage its process in the country. Coronavirus showed that not only should "health" not be viewed through the lens of "politics", but that far from any kind of political work, the margins of this field should be promoted and its capacities should be upgraded in accordance with modern international standards, because novel diseases may revolt against humans at any moment.

## Over \$1b spent so far to revitalize Lake Urmia

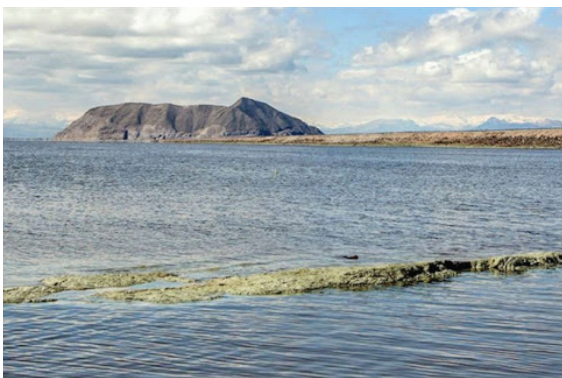
➡ He also added that Kaboudan and Arezoo islands are connected when water overflows, almost over a thousand urials have been counted in the islands, in addition to more than 64,000 flamingos.

Referring to 6 years of restoration program, he said that the lake's condition is currently being stabilized, the revitalization of the lake is divided into three phases: stabilization, revitalization, and final revitalization.

However, once we can claim that the lake is revived when there is no more sand and dust resources, and that the quality of water, ecology and recreation in this basin is in best condition, he highlighted.

The water right of the lake is 3.3 billion cubic meters annually, he further emphasized.

In previous years, not providing the water right of the lake was considered as the most important cause of its gradual drying up; in the past, the main rivers in the catchment area were not dredged and due to sedimentation, but over the past 6 years, 253 kilometers of lake beds were dredged, Tajrish explained.



He went on to point out that excessive farming and cultivation of water consuming crops in the surrounding areas are other causes of its drying up so that the Restoration Program tried to reduce water consumption by 40 percent in agriculture.

Therefore, modern irrigation and modification of cultivation patterns are on the agenda, he said, pointing out that in the past, water-consuming crops such as beets and corn were abundantly cultivated in its catchment area, but we improved and replaced medicinal plants such as saffron to minimize the use of water, he explained.

Under the biological stabilization project of dust centers in the catchment area of Lake Urmia, some 23,000 hectares have undergone seedling and vegetation planting, and also in one million hectares were smoothed, which had a favorable effect on plant growth and dust control, he also explained.

This is while Lake Urmia still needs 9.5 billion cubic meters of water to reach its ecological level of 1274.10.

These days, life has returned to Lake Urmia. The lake now has so much water that tourists can swim in its shiny water and birds and aquatic species such as flamingos and Artemia have returned to it, but we should not forget the hard days it went through. Lake Urmia still has a long way to completely survive, and neglect can threaten this precious gem of Iran again.

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ◀ ▶ ع

## E-motorbikes come to curb air pollution in metropolises

The first phase of electric motorcycles development project will be implemented aiming at reducing air pollution in Tehran and other metropolises, IRNA news agency reported.

Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian said on Tuesday that electric motorcycles will be promoted in big cities in collaboration with the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade.

Through the first phase of the project, electric motorcycles will replace the regular ones used by the Ministry of Energy and state-run companies, he explained.

Ardakanian went on to say that, in addition to electric motorcycles being manufactured and marketed from now on, existing motorcycles will also change to use electricity sources.

## آغاز طرح برقی کردن موتورسیکلت‌ها با هدف کاهش آلودگی هوا

مرحله نخست طرح برقی کردن موتورسیکلت‌ها با هدف کاهش آلودگی هوای تهران و دیگر کلانشهرها آغاز می شود.

به گزارش ایرنا، رضا اردکانیان وزیر نیرو روز سه شنبه گفت برقی کردن موتورسیکلت‌ها با همکاری وزارت صنعت، معدن و تجارت انجام خواهد شد.

وی افزود: هدف این طرح در گام نخست، برقی کردن موتورسیکلت‌های مورد استفاده وزارت نیرو و شرکت‌های دولتی است.

اردکانیان اضافه کرد بر این اساس علاوه بر اینکه از این پس موتورسیکلت برقی تولید و وارد بازار می شود، موتورسیکلت‌های موجود نیز برای مالکان آنها برقی می شوند.

## PREFIX/SUFFIX

### “-agog, -agogue”

■ **Meaning:** leader

■ **For example:** he was a **pedagogue** whose classroom lessons consisted entirely of reading directly from the textbook in a monotone.

## PHRASAL VERB

### put something back

■ **Meaning:** to put people or things in the place or situation they were in before

■ **For example:** Our win today put us back into third place in the league.

## IDIOM

### Dodge a bullet

■ **Explanation:** If you dodge a bullet, you narrowly avoid a very serious problem or a disaster

■ **For example:** I dodged a bullet when I missed the plane. It crashed just after take-off.

## Over 80% of coronavirus patients in Iran recovered

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — More than 80 percent of people who had been infected with the coronavirus in Iran are now recovered.

The Iranian health ministry on Monday announced that the total number of people diagnosed with the coronavirus has reached 98,647 of whom 79,397 equaling 80.4 percent, have recovered, while 6,277 have lost their lives so far.

“Iran is one of the leading countries in West Asia for dealing with the pandemic,” Health Minister Saeed Namaki said on April 23 in a video conference on the sidelines of a joint meeting with the World Health Organization. As a representative of the Eastern Mediterranean region, Iran has good experience in the fight against coronavirus to transfer to other countries, he added.

“The number of hospital beds in Iran is 1.6 per 1,000 people, while in European countries it is 5 to 6 times more, and the number of nurses in European countries is 2 to 3 times higher than Iran per bed,” he concluded.

## Scientists hope to hunt down ‘murder hornets’ before they decimate bee population

As if 2020 weren't terrifying enough, now we have to worry about “murder hornets”.

The world's largest hornet – the size of a matchbox – is known for invading honeybee hives, decapitating all the bees in a matter of hours and carrying the mangled thoraxes back to feed their young.

And now they're in the United States.

The Washington State Department of Agriculture is trying to track down the fearsome insects, also nicknamed “yak-killer hornets” or “giant sparrow bees”, after officials received and verified four reports of them in December in the northwestern part of the state. They were also spotted in two sites in the Canadian province of British Columbia in the fall.

In a New York Times story that made the term “murder hornets” trend on Twitter on Saturday, Conrad Bérubé, a beekeeper and entomologist in Nanaimo, Canada, described being stung by an Asian giant hornet as “like having red-hot thumbtacks being driven into my flesh”. The hornets primarily attack insects but will direct their aggression towards people if they're threatened. Their quarter-inch stingers, which can penetrate beekeeping suits, deploy a venom potent enough to dissolve human flesh.

Absorbing multiple stings can be deadly. The nervous system can shut down, and an allergic reaction may occur and cause anaphylactic shock. The insects kill 30 to 40 people each year in Japan, where they're most common.

But the giant hornets are primarily a danger to bees. Scientists are now hunting for the insects, whose queens can grow to two inches long, in hopes of rounding them up before they become rooted in the United States and destroy bee populations that are crucial to crop pollination.

“This is our window to keep it from establishing,” Chris Looney, an entomologist at the Washington State Department of Agriculture, told the Times. “If we can't do it in the next couple of years, it probably can't be done.”

Some insects native to the northwestern United States have been confused for the invasive hornets, but real Asian giant hornets have distinctive qualities: large orange and yellow heads with teardrop eyes, black and yellow striped abdomens and papery wings that span up to three inches.

A colony of Asian giant hornets can kill nearly 30,000 bees in a few hours. The attack begins when a scout finds a new hive and marks it with a pheromone secreted from glands in its back legs, signalling to other hornets that they should gather.

As the bees try to defend their colonies, worker hornets use powerful mandibles – appendages near their mouths – to chop up the bees and chew them into gooey “meatballs” before carrying the protein-heavy remains back to their young.

Asian giant hornets mostly fly under the radar in the winter, when queen hornets hibernate in soil or other covered places. Mated queens emerge when the temperature warms between mid-March and May and eat sap for energy to start a new colony. The hornets launch most of their attacks on bees in the late summer and early fall.

## WORDS IN THE NEWS

### Toothfish ‘pirates’ held after chase

(September 05, 2003)

The Australian customs ship which chased an illegal fishing boat thousands of kilometres through the southern ocean has arrived in Cape Town. The crew told of a three-week chase through the Antarctic, surviving high winds, icebergs and pack-ice, before finally catching up with and boarding the Uruguayan registered ship. This report from Alistair Leithhead:

The crew of the Southern Supporter, an Australian customs vessel, has finally arrived here in Cape Town harbour after an epic three-week chase through the **treacherous** southern ocean, **dodging** icebergs and high seas to arrest the crew of a ship caught **poaching** rare Patagonian toothfish.

The Australian customs officials described how **the pursuit** began, south of Australia, when they **stumbled upon** an illegal fishing-boat in a restricted area. The Uruguayan registered ship, Viarsa, headed south towards **the winter pack-ice** around Antarctica, trying to **outrun the pursuers** and leading them through ten-metre high waves, dangerously thickening ice and hurricane force winds.

Eventually, with support from two ships from South Africa and Britain, the Viarsa was stopped and boarded and 85 tons of the Patagonian toothfish, which are **facing extinction**, were discovered frozen in the hold. The catch is worth millions of dollars and the Viarsa and its crew, currently being guarded off the South African coast, will be escorted back to Australia **to face prosecution**.

## ■ Words

**treacherous:** very dangerous

**dodging:** trying not to crash into

**poaching:** illegally catching

**the pursuit:** the chase

**stumbled upon:** found by accident

**the winter pack-ice:** very thick ice which spreads over a large area during the winter

**to outrun:** to go faster than

**the pursuers:** the people chasing

**facing extinction:** if an animal is facing extinction, there are very few remaining – it is possible that in a short time this animal will be gone forever

**to face prosecution:** to be charged with a crime

(Source: BBC)



## German decision to ban Hezbollah expected: Nasrallah

**TEHRAN (MNA)** — In a live speech on Monday evening, Secretary-General of the Lebanese Hezbollah Resistance Movement Hassan Nasrallah said German decision to ban Hezbollah was expected as it has come in response to U.S. pressure.

In his televised speech, Nasrallah initially addressed Germany's decision to ban Hezbollah naming it as expected since it has come in response to the U.S. pressure.

"Germany failed to submit any proof of terrorist acts allegedly attributed to Hezbollah," he said. "The German decision targets the resistance in the region and it is part of the U.S.-Israeli- war on the Resistance."



He denounced Germany blacklisting of Hezbollah, attributing it to political purposes.

The Hezbollah chief also condemned the German raids on some mosques and Islamic associations.

"Germany provided no evidence of Hezbollah activities. This confirms that this is a political decision to please the Israeli regime and the U.S.," he pointed out.

"We are honest when we say that we have no organization in Germany, France, or any other country," he noted, "We have stopped establishing networks in foreign countries since years ago."

"Hezbollah has decided to avoid having any organized existence abroad in order to avoid involving followers in foreign countries in troubles and embarrassing situations."

Addressing the Lebanese people in Germany, Sayyed Nasrallah said: "Don't feel worried because you are abiding by the law and the Lebanese government is concerned with protecting its citizens."

Nasrallah calls on the Lebanese government to protect the expatriates in Germany because Hezbollah's intervention in this issue has a different nature.

He urged the German government to clarify its position because the citizens were attacked without any evidence.

"What happened does not affect our will. Rather, it increases it to continue our resistance to the occupation," he underlined.

He also announced that Hezbollah will participate in a meeting called for by the Lebanese president in Baabda.

"Regardless of our evaluation, the approval of the economic plan amid the coronavirus outbreak is a positive move."

Elsewhere, he referred to the economic status quo of his country saying the government's reform plan needs "national immunization".

He said, "We call for avoiding political ambushes to save the interest of the country."

"Just as we succeeded in facing Covid-19, and as the atmosphere was positive and cooperative, we must face the economic crisis in the same manner," he added.

"Major discussions took place prior to the approval of the plan."

Regarding assistance from the IMF, he said, "We are not against Lebanon requesting assistance from any side in the world, except for Lebanon's enemies, who are known."

"We're not against requesting assistance from the IMF but surrendering to it is rejected and the government must hold talks to know the conditions. We must discuss the conditions and the program with the IMF, and the issue must be dealt with great responsibility and caution. So far, there is nothing settled. We do not want to destroy, control or take revenge on the banking sector."

He informed that "Hezbollah has told the banks that we understand its commitment to the American regulations, but not to be American more than the Americans."

"Defending people aggrieved by the banking sector is not an attack on the banking sector," he added.

"The banking sector has exaggerated in its procedures against Hezbollah. Some have been American more than the Americans themselves," he noted.

"The banking sector has not made any step to help the country during this period," he lamented.

"The humiliating behavior of banks with depositors is one of the reasons we announced our rejection to the banking policy."

He noted that the Lebanese banking sector has been one of the biggest beneficiaries of monetary policies since 1993.

"Hezbollah does not want to control the central bank's governorship," Nasrallah said, adding, "There are other ideas if the banking sector does not take the initiative to assist the Lebanese government in facing the current crisis."

He underscored that "Hezbollah has nothing to do with the money exchange sector. We're customers in this sector."

"We call upon all money-changers to adhere to the law, not to violate it in any way, and to abide by sharia controls," he said.

"There might be money changers who are supporters of Hezbollah," he said, "We do not take a dollar from the country and export it abroad, and whoever accuses us with this must double-check."

"We are bringing dollar to Lebanon and our positive role is preventing the dollar from going crazy."

"The burden is bigger than the Lebanese Economy Ministry as to the hike in prices. The entire government must intervene and devise an emergency plan," he added.

"There are traders practicing monopoly and greed, which leads to expensive prices in addition to the loss of materials and lack of price controls."

"The Lebanese government must confront monopolization and raid warehouses," he announced, "The high prices should be a priority in the work of the Lebanese government."

Nasrallah informed that Hezbollah MP Hassan Fadlallah will hold a press conference in the coming days to address the corruption file.

"There are internal and external parties seeking to find rift between the Amal movement and Hezbollah, and this will not happen," he added.

Sayyed Nasrallah urged the Lebanese political sides to give the Lebanese government time and one cannot ask it for miracles in light of the difficulties and circumstances.

"Our relation with the Amal Movement is excellent," he said, "The public of both Hezbollah and the Amal movement shouldn't be dragged into strife, especially on social media."

He added that "Hezbollah is keen on the interests of Lebanon and is ready to help and bridge the points of view between Lebanese regions or sides experiencing any tension."

"Lebanon needs calm and cooperation to get out of the economic and financial crisis."

# Mossad behind German blacklisting of Hezbollah: Israeli TV



Israel's Mossad spy agency has reportedly been behind Germany's recent decision to blacklist Lebanon's resistance movement Hezbollah.

Berlin on Thursday designated Hezbollah as a "terrorist organization," banned all its activities in the European country and ordered raids on sites police claimed were linked to the movement.

Citing Israelis unnamed officials, Israel's Channel 12 news reported Saturday that Mossad had provided Germans with information on Hezbollah's activities on its soil.

The spy agency, the television, said, had carried out a months-long delicate operation to assess the movement's operations in Germany and presented its findings to German intelligence and law agencies.

"The move is the result of many months of work with all parties in Germany. The heads of services were required to present explicit evidence and legal proof... linking the organization to significant terrorist activity, and that is what we did," one official said.

According to the official, head of the German intelligence organization BND Bruno Kahl is a close friend of Mossad.

Berlin has been a longtime backer of Israel, providing billions of dollars in aid enabling the occupation of Palestine in the

name of reparations for Jewish persecution by the Nazi Germany.

On Thursday, Israel was effusive in its praise of Germany, with the regime's foreign minister Israel Katz hailing the blacklisting as a "very important decision".

Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netan-

yahu also welcomed the decision, calling on "all peace-loving countries" to follow Germany's lead.

Iran, Syria, Yemen, Palestinians and Iraqis, however, condemned the blacklisting, saying it had been the result of pressure by the U.S. and Israel.

## Venezuela on high alert after abortive U.S.-backed military raid

The Venezuelan military has been placed on heightened alert after foiling a raid by U.S. backed mercenaries.

Venezuelan Interior Minister Nestor Reverol said the attackers had launched a pre-dawn raid on Sunday.

The mercenaries tried to invade the northern state of La Guaira on high-speed boats, Reverol said, adding that eight of the armed men were killed and two others were captured.

He said one of them was an agent of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration.

One of the mercenaries killed, nicknamed "the Panther," was identified as having been involved in obtaining weapons for the covert force in Colombia.

Reverol added that Venezuelan forces had seized their weapons and were searching the sea bottom near the beach

where they landed looking for more weapons after one of the boats capsized.

### ■ 'Another coup attempt'

Sergey Melik-Bagdasarov, the Russian ambassador to Venezuela, said on Sunday that the objective of the failed operation had been to bring weapons into Venezuela to be later used by trained opposition forces to destabilize the country and topple the government in a coup d'etat. The Russian diplomat pointed out that it was not the first time that such an operation had been launched against Caracas.

"On the night of May 3, the Venezuelan security forces stopped another attempt to illegally import into the Venezuelan territory a batch of weapons used to organize terrorist attacks,

various sabotage acts, and destabilize the situation in order to overthrow the legitimate government of Venezuela led by [President] Nicolas Maduro," Melik-Bagdasarov said. "So who are these criminals who staged another coup attempt?"

"It is such mercenaries — the products of a factory of terror and murder, fostered with the support of the U.S. — that comprise such armed groups, one of which was neutralized today," he added.

The Russian envoy said military camps had been set up with U.S. support in countries neighboring Venezuela, such as Colombia, to give training to anti-Caracas forces to topple the government.

Colombian officials have dismissed allegations of involvement of any sorts in the failed attack.

## Trump says up to 100,000 Americans may die from coronavirus



U.S. President Donald Trump said he now believes as many as 100,000 Americans could die in the coronavirus pandemic, after the death toll passed his earlier estimates, but said he was confident a vaccine would be developed by the year's end.

Trump alternated during a two-hour virtual town hall broadcast by FOX News between forecasting a rapid recovery for the U.S. economy and casting blame for the pandemic's spread on China, where the disease is believed to have originated, Reuters reported.

The COVID-19 illness, caused by the new coronavirus, has sickened more than 1.1 million in the United States and killed more than 67,000 Americans, shut wide swaths of society, including most schools and many businesses.

"We're going to lose anywhere from 75, 80 to 100,000 people. That's a horrible thing," said Trump, who as recently on

Friday had said he hoped fewer than 100,000 Americans would die and earlier in the week had talked about 60,000 to 70,000 deaths.

About half the states have now moved toward at least partial lifting of shut-downs as the number of new cases of the COVID-19 illness has begun to drop or level off and as citizens agitate for relief from restrictions that have sent the economy into a tailspin.

"We can't stay closed as a country (or) we're not gonna have a country left," Trump said.

Trump has criticized FOX recently, casting the conservative-leaning network as insufficiently supportive. He faced few tough questions in the event, which gave him a new format to reach the public while he is unable to hold campaign rallies and after he faced widespread criticism for his combative daily briefings.

## China firmly opposes U.S. support for Taiwan's participation in UN



The U.S. UN mission has gravely interfered with China's internal affairs by openly supporting Taiwan's participation in the United Nations, said a spokesperson of the permanent mission of China to the UN.

"In a tweet on May 1, the U.S. mission to the United Nations gave open support to the Taiwan region for participating in the UN. This is a serious violation of Resolution 2758 of the UN General Assembly (UNGA), the three joint communiques between China and the United States and China's sovereignty and territorial integrity. It gravely interferes with China's internal affairs and deeply hurts the feelings of the 1.4 billion Chinese people," said the spokesperson, Xinhua reported.

"The Chinese mission hereby expresses strong indignation and firm opposition," the spokesperson noted.

"There is only one China in the world. The Government of the People's Repub-

lic of China is the sole legal government representing the whole China, and Taiwan is an inalienable part of China. The one-China principle enjoys popular support and meets the call of the times, and represents the consensus of the international community. Resolution 2758 of the UNGA has restored the lawful seat of the People's Republic of China at the UN and affirmed the one-China principle at the organization, which has been strictly observed across the UN system and widely respected by UN member states," the spokesperson added.

"The U.S. mission is in no position to speak for the Taiwan region under the excuse of the UN's welcome of diverse views. The United States has repeatedly used visa issuance to block or delay access of member states or civil society to UN activities. This points to the hypocrisy of the U.S. position," said the spokesperson.

## PMU repels several Daesh attacks as report warns of U.S.-Saudi scheme to revive group



The ISIL (Daesh) terrorist group has launched several attacks across Iraq as the Kata'ib Hezbollah resistance group warns of a Saudi-U.S. plan to revive the group.

The Arabic Al-Mayadeen news network reported on Sunday that Iraqi Popular Mobilization Units' 21st Brigade thwarted a Daesh assault on the al-Eith region of the eastern Salahuddin Province.

The PMU's 47th Brigade also repelled a Daesh operation in the Jurf al-Sakhar region in the central Babil province, resulting in one PMU casualty.

Another attack in the eastern Diyala province, however, led to five casualties among the country's pro-government tribal units, according to a security official.

Earlier on Sunday, a Daesh operation seeking to infiltrate the central Karbala province from the western Anbar province was forced to retreat with casualties following the intervention of Iraqi security services.

Iraqi forces also launched numerous raids on Daesh terror cells on Sunday.

Four terrorists were killed after PMU artillery units targeted Daesh elements east of the city of Tikrit in Salahuddin.

Another four terrorists were captured in the northern Kirkuk province.

Separate Iraqi security operations also led to the arrests of two prominent Daesh figures in the northern Nineveh province, known as "Abu Talha al-Ansari" and "Humam al-A'li".

The spike in terror and anti-terror operations comes after at least 10 PMU fighters were killed in a coordinated attack in the cities of Mekeeshfa and Balad in the Salahuddin Province in a Daesh raid on Saturday.

The engagements mark the latest of an increasing string of Daesh sleeper cell attacks in the past few weeks, usually concentrated between the provinces of Salahuddin, Kirkuk and Diyala.

The uptick in Daesh operations has happened nearly simultaneously with Washington's latest string of airstrikes openly targeting PMU forces, which are formally part of the Iraqi security forces.

Washington most notably assassinated the PMU's deputy commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, alongside Iran's top anti-terror Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, in the

capital city Baghdad in January.

Iraqi resistance groups have responded by vowing to take up arms against U.S. military presence if Washington fails to comply with a parliamentary order calling for the expulsion of U.S. troops following the assassination.

The increased Daesh attacks across the country also come as the government's ability to respond has been affected by political uncertainty and preoccupation with controlling the COVID-19 outbreak in the country.

Daesh overrun large swathes of the country after unleashing a deadly campaign in 2014.

The formation of voluntary forces later known as the PMU, however, allowed Iraq to gradually bring the Daesh advance to a standstill, ultimately leading to the group losing all control over Iraqi territory in 2017.

### ■ 'Daesh attacks incited by Saudi-U.S. plot'

Speaking in an exclusive interview with Iran's IRNA news agency, Mohammed Muhyee, spokesman for the Iraqi Kata'ib Hezbollah resistance group affiliated with the PMU, said that the recent Daesh operations stemmed from U.S. and Saudi provocations.

Muhyee's remarks echoed statements published by numerous other Iraqi resistance groups in the last few days.

Muhyee added that Riyadh and Washington were using the group to impose their will on the country, with the U.S. specifically seeking to justify prolonging its military presence.



# Exclusive: Carlos Queiroz launches attack on former football chief Taj

**I →** Now, the football federation is going to lodge a complaint to Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), because Team Iran didn't win a bronze medal in the UAE.

In an exclusive interview with Tehran Times, Queiroz has criticized Mehdi Taj who stepped down from his role in late December with heart problems.

"The present general secretary of the Iran Football Federation, Mr. Nabi, is one of top executive members along with President Kafashian who agreed and signed the words of my first contractual agreement with Iran federation, more than eight years ago," Queiroz said.

"My second contract with Mr. Taj, as head of Iran Football Federation, was just a copy of the same words and same good faith agreed with gentleman Dr. Eslamian and Mr. Saket.

"I am sure Mr. Kafashian and Mr. Nabi, people that I trust and believe, will be my witnesses, because before God they cannot deny our good faith and agreements. I can also trust and believe in Dr. Eslamian and Mr. Saket, and they will be on my side in front of God and CAS," the Colombia coach added.

"Unfortunately, when you face and deal with fake people with no character and ethics, you cannot expect anything different. However, CAS is an independent, respectable and reliable institution. CAS is not one of those instruments that the ex-president of



the Football Federation used in the past to intimidate and create fear among his own players and staff," Queiroz explained.

"To spend time and money at CAS with files against Carlos Queiroz is just one way they choose to divert attention from the real

problem they must investigate, the contract agreement with the last Team Melli Manager," he concluded.

## Experts unanimous on appointing Iranian coach for volleyball team

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — In a meeting held in Tehran's Olympic Academy, the most experts were unanimous on appointing an Iranian coach for Iran National Volleyball Team.

Iran Volleyball Federation parted ways with Igor Kolakovic in late March following cancellation of 2020 Olympic Games due to the pandemic coronavirus (COVID-19).

On Monday, Mohammadreza Davarzani, head of Islamic Republic of Iran Volleyball Federation (IRIVF), attended in a meeting along with volleyball coaches, experts and journalists for thinking together about finding the best replacement for the Montenegrin coach.

The coaches and experts believe that the Iranian coach



has the potential to lead the team but it seems the top officials of the federation are reluctant to appoint an Iranian coach since the National Team are preparing to participate in the most prestigious event.

"It will be a great honor for us to appoint an Iranian coach for the national team but we are going to win a medal at the Olympics and should consider all aspects. We have to meet expectations," Davarzani said.

Iran debuted in 2016 Olympic Games and finished in fifth place behind Brazil, Italy, the U.S. and Russia.

In Tokyo, Iran will meet Japan, Poland, Italy, Canada and Venezuela in Pool A, while Pool B consists of Brazil, the U.S., Russia, Argentina, France, and Tunisia.

## When will I see you again? Sport bids to step out of virus shadow

Sports' big ticket events, the 2020 Olympics, European football championships, Wimbledon and the British Open golf tournament have gone to the wall due to the coronavirus.

However, there are some shoots of recovery as sports worldwide make tentative plans to return to action.

AFP Sport looks at what we know so far with the major events:

### ■ FOOTBALL

-- English Premier League, which still has 92 games to play, has reconfirmed their commitment to finish the season. But matches would be behind closed doors and reportedly at up to 10 neutral venues. Liverpool are on the brink of a first league title for 30 years with a 25-point lead at the top of the table.

-- Horst Seehofer, the German minister for the interior and sport, said he supports a resumption of the season despite three people testing positive for coronavirus at Bundesliga club Cologne. A resumption would not be possible before May 16. A final decision is expected Wednesday.

-- In Spain, La Liga is reportedly planning to start testing players for the coronavirus between Tuesday and Thursday, after which they would then be able to resume individual training programmes within 48 hours.

-- Italy's footballers can now take part in individual training sessions as the strictest coronavirus lockdown measures begin to ease. But Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte will only allow teams to resume organised group activities on May 18.

-- South Korea look certain to have the honour of being the first league back in action. The season will start on May 8 but behind closed doors.

-- In France, Paris Saint-Germain were declared Ligue 1 champions after French Prime Minister Edouard Philippe announced professional sport could not resume before September.



### ■ TENNIS

-- The ATP and WTA will not resume tournament play until July 13 at the earliest.

-- The French Open at Roland Garros has already been moved to Sept 20-Oct 4 although there are suggestions that it may even be put back by a further week.

-- The United States Tennis Association will decide mid-June whether or not the US Open will take place in New York.

-- Low-key action has returned with an eight-man exhibition competition in the tiny town of Hoeher-Grenzhausen in Germany. The series does not have spectators, ball boys or line judges.

-- Patrick Mouratoglou, the coach of Serena Williams, says he is planning a league of 50 matches at his academy near Nice in the south of France with "millions of US dollars in prize money". It will be broadcast live under the title "Ultimate Tennis Showdown" starting on the weekend of May 16.

### ■ MOTOR SPORT

-- After 10 races were either cancelled or postponed, Formula One hopes to open its season in Austria with back-to-back races on July 5 and 12.

-- NASCAR in the United States will return on May 17 at Darlington Raceway, the first of four oval races over 11 days.

-- MotoGP, with eight races already off, is scheduled to return on August 9 at Brno in the Czech Republic.

(Source: AFP)

## ASEAN & East Asia Wrap: K League opener nears

Excitement is building ahead of the return of Korea Republic's K League, with the sides undergoing their final preparations ahead of the big kick-off at the weekend.

Elsewhere, the action in the Chinese Taipei Premier League continues, clubs in Vietnam have returned to training, while home workouts remain the essential way to keep fit in many other countries, so join the-AFC.com as we look back at the highlights from on and off the field in the East and ASEAN Zones.

### ■ Korea Republic: Preparations continue ahead of K League kick off

We're now just days away from the start of the 2020 K League as sides from Korea Republic continue their bids to regain match sharpness ahead of the opening round of fixtures at the weekend.

Defending champions Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors, who open the season with a clash against FA Cup winners Suwon Samsung Bluewings on Friday,

posted a 3-1 victory in a warm-up match against Daejeon Citizen at Jeonju World Cup Stadium on Saturday, with Son Jun-ho and Lee Seung-gi both getting on the scoresheet.

### ■ Chinese Taipei: Big wins for Taipower and Tatung FC

It was top versus bottom in the Chinese Taipei Premier League on the weekend but there was to be no fairytale outcome as leaders Taipower knocked Red Lions 6-1 to maintain their perfect record after four matches.

Hang Yuan FC remain second after a much slimmer margin of victory, as they defeated Ming Chuan University 1-0, to keep the gap between themselves and the front-runners at just two points.

Holders Tatung FC bounced back from dropping points on Matchday Three to enjoy a big win of their own as they defeated TSU FC 5-1, while pre-season dark horses Tainan City suffered a disappointing 1-0 defeat to Taichung Futuro.



### ■ China PR: Guangzhou Evergrande step up pre-season preparations

Although there is still no date set for the start of the 2020 Chinese Super League, defending champions Guangzhou Evergrande played a closed doors friendly on Saturday, defeating China League One side Meizhou Hakka 5-0.

Elkeson, Ricardo Goulart and Wei Shihao were among the scorers as was academy graduate Permainjan Kiyum, who netted a brace.

### ■ Vietnam: Precautions aplenty as clubs return to training

In more positive news, the V.League sides are back in training but it's safety first as 2020 AFC Cup participants Ho Chi Minh City FC displayed on their Instagram page.

Arriving staff are all temperature checked while each player has their specially designated water bottles. Let's hope to see competitive action return to the country sometime in the not too distant future.

### ■ Japan: Chin-up challenge with Makino

Colourful Urawa Red Diamonds defender Tomoaki Makino released a new video on his Instagram over the weekend entitled "Chining Challenge" that sees the Reds star perform a series of chin-ups with a call to his followers to do likewise.

He's already inspired another fellow J-League star with former England and current Hokkaido Consadole Sapporo striker Jay Bothroyd commenting on the post: "I'm gonna do your challenge."

(Source: AFC)

## Ali Alipour linked with Rio Ave

**PLDC** — Record newspaper has reported that Persepolis forward Ali Alipour will leave his team in the summer to join Rio Ave.

The Portuguese club are going to sell Iranian striker Mehdi Taremi in the transfer window and now are searching for a new forward.

Alipour reportedly is a target to join the Portuguese top-flight football team.

His contract expires at the end of the Iran Professional League (IPL) season and he can join his new team as a free agent player.

Alipour, 26, has scored 51 goals in 145 matches for Persepolis in five years.

Porto, Benfica and Sporting Lisbon have already shown their interest in signing Taremi and Rio Ave are thinking about his replacement for the next season.



## Iranian karateka grabs bronze at online IFK World Championship

**IRNA** — Iranian female karate fighter Touran Karate fighter has won the bronze medal of IFK World Kata Championship which is being held online this year due to the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

The competitions are being held with participation of 398 karate fighters from 53 different countries.

Another female world Kata competition is due to be held online next month.

## Virus forces cancellation of Japan sumo tournament

Japan's sumo association said Monday it would cancel its upcoming tournament and aim to hold the following one behind closed doors, as the country extended a state of emergency over the coronavirus.

The next sumo "basho" or tournament had been scheduled to begin on May 24, after organisers of the nation's ancient sport delayed the event by two weeks over the pandemic.

But chairman Hakkaku said in a statement that the association had decided to cancel the May tournament "in order to secure the health and safety of fans and people involved."

The announcement came shortly after Prime Minister Shinzo Abe extended a state of emergency over the virus until the end of May.

It is the first cancellation of a basho since 2011 when a spring sumo tournament was scrapped over a bout-fixing scandal. That was the first cancellation in more than half a century.

There are usually six tournaments across Japan each year, and the association said it "aims" to hold the July basho without spectators and would move the tournament from Nagoya in central Japan to Tokyo where sumo wrestlers are based.

(Source: AFP)

## Saudi plans for Newcastle may not be on scale of Man City transformation

A bid by a Saudi Arabian state fund to secure ownership of Newcastle United is drawing scrutiny, but even if it succeeds it is unlikely that the petrodollars will transform the Premier League club into a powerhouse in the near future.

The prospect of the Saudi bid fueling a rapid rise to the top, in the manner of Manchester City's four title successes under owners from the United Arab Emirates, has thrilled many Newcastle fans, but several analysts believe that the investment impact may not be on such a scale.

A group fronted by British financier Amanda Staveley, with an expected 80% investment from the Saudi sovereign wealth fund PIF and 10 percent involvement from billionaire brothers David and Simon Reuben, have made a reported 300 million pound (\$375 million) bid to buy the club from British businessman Mike Ashley.

The proposal faces some early obstacles and the prospect of Saudi ownership of a top English club has been condemned by human rights groups.

(Source: Eurosport)

## MLS to resume individual workouts next week

Starting Wednesday, Major League Soccer clubs can resume using outdoor training fields for individual player workouts.

All workouts are voluntary and must adhere to safety protocols created in consultation with medical and infectious disease experts, the league announced Friday.

In addition, the workouts must not conflict with policies of local public health and government officials.

Players participating in the workouts will still be prohibited from accessing the team locker rooms, gyms and training rooms. Gyms and training rooms are only accessible by players receiving post-operative or rehabilitation treatment.

Before initiating individual player workouts, each team just submit a plan to the league outlining how it will implement certain healthy and safety protocols.

Those include sanitization and disinfection of the equipment (balls, cones and goals) between sessions; health screening and temperature checks; staggered arrivals and departures with designated parking spaces; use of personal protective equipment from the parking lot to the field; maintaining at least 10 feet between staff and players at all times; and hand-washing and disinfectant stations.

(Source: Reuters)

## Cologne squad tests negative for coronavirus after three positive cases

The Bundesliga's hopes of a restart were lifted on Monday when tests on the Cologne squad revealed no further cases of coronavirus.

The German league's plans to restart this month hit a road bump on Friday when it emerged that three people at Cologne -- midfielder Niklas Hauptmann and defender Ismail Jakobs, and a club physio -- had tested positive.

The trio remain in quarantine and a second round of tests on Sunday on the other squad members and staff were all negative, the club said Monday.

The German Football League (DFL) plans to resume from May 16 behind closed doors, providing it gets permission from Angela Merkel's government.

A decision is expected on Wednesday.

On Sunday, Horst Seehofer, Germany's minister for sport and the interior, said he supported a resumption of the Bundesliga, despite the positive tests in Cologne.

Part of the restart plan is that players are tested every few days and are only be allowed to play after returning two negatives.

The 18 clubs in Germany's top flight started testing their players and staff last week.

On Monday, defending champions Bayern Munich, who were four points clear when the Bundesliga was halted on March 13, announced that all those tested had negative results.

Since early April, Germany's top clubs have been training

mainly in small groups in anticipation of the league resuming.

Germany had reported 163,175 cases of COVID-19 as of Monday, but its death toll of 6,692 remains much lower than in Spain, France, the UK and Italy, home to Europe's other top football leagues.

A return in May would make the Bundesliga the first top league in Europe to resume as Germany cautiously eases lockdown measures.

Germany's top clubs are desperate for the season to be completed by June 30 in order to claim an instalment of television money worth 300 million euros (\$325 million).

(Source: Mirror)



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GUIDE TO  
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

A trouble that saddens you is better than a blessing that rouses your selfishness and loses you God's favor; for, the former grinds your body like a rasp, and the latter burns your spirit little by little.  
Imam Ali (AS)

**Mehdi Azar Yazdi's "Stories from Quran" published in Thailand**

**CULTURE** **TEHRAN** — The electronic version of "Stories from Quran" from Iranian children's book writer Mehdi Azar Yazdi's popular series "Good Stories for Good Children" has recently been published in Thailand.



A copy of an electronic version of "Stories from Quran" published in Thailand.

The ebook has been translated into the Thai language by Sheikh Ebrahim Aveh and published by Iran's Center for Organizing Translation and Publication of Islamic Instructions and Humanities in collaboration with Iran's Cultural Office in Thailand.

The book is the fifth of the series and includes stories from several prophets including Prophet Noah, Prophet Ibrahim, Prophet Joseph and Prophet Muhammad (S) with a simple narration for children.

Azar Yazdi's series "Good Stories for Good Children" won a UNESCO prize in 1966 and was selected as Iran's best book of the year in 1967.

## Translator Najaf Daryabandari, Iran's Living Human Treasure in cuisine, dies at 90

➔1 Daryabandari is most famous for translating stories from Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, Mark Twain and several other American writers.

Since 2001, Daryabandari was translating "The Complete Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway", which comprises 99 short stories and was published by Random House in the United States in 1979.

The best Persian translations of Hemingway's "A Farewell to Arms" and "The Old Man and the Sea", and William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" and "As I Lay Dying" were produced by Daryabandari.

With the help of his wife Fahimeh Rastkar, he wrote the cookbook "From Garlic to Onion" that brought him the title "Living Human Treasure" from the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization in 2017.

He also rendered Bertrand Russell's "A History of Western Philosophy" and "Power" into Persian.

## Algerian singer Idir, a Berber icon, has died in Paris

**PARIS (AP)** — Idir, an Algerian singer who gave voice to the Berber and Kabyle cultures, has died in Paris. He was 70.

Saturday's death of the singer, whose real name was Hamid Cheriet, was confirmed on a post on his official Facebook page that read "we regret to announce the passing of our father (to all), Idir. Rest in peace."

French media report that he died from pulmonary disease after being hospitalized on Friday.

Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune paid tribute to him on Twitter, saying that "with his passing, Algeria has lost one of its monuments," and referred to him as "an icon of Algerian art."

Idir was a national treasure in his native Algeria.

Born on Oct. 25, 1949 in Ait Lahcene, near the Kabylie capital of Tizi Ouzou and part of French Algeria at the time, he studied to be a geologist, but his life took a twist in 1973 when he was called up as a last-minute replacement on the radio to sing "A Vava Inouva." It was a lullaby with the "rich oral traditions" of the Berber culture and became a beloved song in the country.

# "The Silhouettes" honored at Visions du Réel festival

**A R T TEHRAN** — "The d e s k Silhouettes", a co-production between Iran the Philippines, has received an honorable mention at the Visions du Réel, an international film festival organized in Nyon, Switzerland, the organizers have announced.

Directed by Iranian filmmaker Afsaneh Salari, the documentary was screened in the international feature film competition of the event, which came to an end on Saturday.

The documentary is about Taqi, a man who was born to an Afghan migrant family in Iran. He decides to move back to the country of his parents, but unexpected challenges await there for him.

"Punta Sacra" directed by Francesca Mazzoleni from Italy was selected as best feature film while "Anerca, Breath of Life" co-directed by Johannes Lehmuskallio and Markku Lehmuskallio from Finland won the award for the most innovative feature film.

Ten Iranian documentaries, including "Life among War Flags" by Mohsen Eslamzadeh and "Shadegan" by Ako Salemi, were screened in the festival's Media Library, which provides an opportunity for films to get the attention of key industry professionals, including festival programmers and buyers.



A scene from Iranian filmmaker Afsaneh Salari's documentary "The Silhouettes".

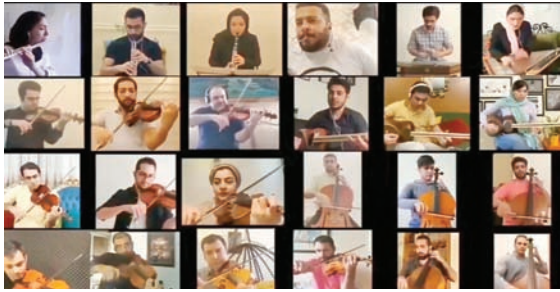
## Iran's National Orchestra performs hits during home quarantine

**A R T TEHRAN** — Members of Iran's National d e s k Orchestra invited people to watch the videos of famous hits "Sabokbal" and "Romantic Passion" in their houses during home quarantine to appreciate efforts made by the healthcare staff.

Each musician recorded a video of her/his performances of composer Hossein Dehlavi's "Sabokbal" and Morteza Neydavid's "Romantic Passion" in an innovation by the Rudaki Artistic Cultural Foundation. The two videos were produced based on the videos recorded by each musician.

Promoting the motto "We Stay Home in Order to Go on Stage Sooner", the first performance was released online on April 9 at TVA, the Iranian video sharing and film streaming website, and the second was released last week.

Composer and tar player Masih Tahvildari who took part in the project said that the orchestra canceled rehearsals



Members of Iran's National Orchestra perform Hossein Dehlavi's "Sabokbal" in an online project.

from the very beginning of the spread of the coronavirus in the country.

## Long lines, lots of kids, and plenty to touch: How does Disney reopen its parks?

**NEW YORK (Reuters)** — For a glimpse at how Disney recovers from the coronavirus pandemic, look no further than Shanghai, where the entertainment giant has staged a limited reopening of Shanghai Disney Resort. Adults, kids and senior citizens wear masks while wandering among staff and security guards who carry contact-less thermometers and hand sanitizer.

As some U.S. states lift stay-at-home orders, investors and park fans are watching to see how Walt Disney Co — which makes a third of its revenue from parks, experiences and products — reimagines the "happiest place on earth" for a world altered by the coronavirus.

The high-touch, high-volume, kid-centered nature of the parks, and Disney's need to prevent damage to a brand synonymous with safety and families, will make reopening difficult, experts said.

Disney's ability to reopen its parks in Asia, the United States and France will also be a powerful signal about how the world can get back to a semblance of normal as it deals with COVID-19.

"This is the greatest challenge that the industry has ever faced," said Phil Hettema, founder of The Hettema Group, which designs theme park rides and other experiences.

Disney, which has not announced any plans to reopen the parks, declined to comment for this story.

Executive Chairman Bob Iger recently said checking guests' temperature could become routine at Disney park entrances. Among other plans under consideration,

according to a source briefed on Disney's thinking: Rides like the Space Mountain roller coaster could stagger guests in each "rocket" to enforce social distancing. Guests could be notified via app or another technology when they can go on a ride or in a restaurant to eliminate lines.

Staffers, known as cast members, and guests could be required to wear masks. But in true Disney fashion, employees' masks would be fun, not scary, the source said.

Disney on Thursday began online sales of face masks featuring Mickey Mouse, Baby Yoda and other characters and said up to \$1 million in profits would go to charity.

Masks, now worn commonly across China, are ubiquitous in the shopping district outside Shanghai Disney, where workers disinfect a playground for 5- to 12-year-olds at noon and 3 p.m. daily. Temperature checks are mandated by local regulations, according to Shanghai Disney's website.

Business and political leaders in Florida, home to Walt Disney World, have floated ideas such as limiting capacity at all theme parks during an initial re-opening phase.

The question that health experts and financial analysts are asking is whether any of these measures will be enough to protect employees, guests or Disney's bottom line.

Social distancing could come at a steep price.

In April, UBS downgraded its rating on Disney and lowered its division profit estimates to \$500 million in fiscal 2020 and just \$200 million in 2021 compared to \$6.8 billion in 2019.

Disney parks need to be running at roughly 50% of capacity to be profitable, according to the firm.

Investors will see a fuller impact of coronavirus when Disney releases its second-quarter results on May 5; Comcast said on Thursday that if its Universal Studios parks remain closed for the entire second quarter, the company would suffer an earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortization loss of roughly \$500 million.

Financial analysts have predicted reopen dates for Disney ranging from as early as June to Jan. 1. Guidelines will be set by governors in California and Florida, where Iger and Walt Disney World Resort President Josh D'Amato sit on state reopening task forces. The rest is up to Disney.

Although Disney and other large venues face an unprecedented challenge protecting guests from an easily spread airborne virus, experts and a former executive pointed to its experience handling crowds.

More than 157 million people visited Disney parks in 2018, according to the Themed Entertainment Association.

"If anybody can figure it out, Disney will," said Dave Schmitt, founder of MR-ProFun, a consultant to theme parks.

Safeguards have limits. Temperature checks will not catch everyone infected, and most vaccines are not 100% effective, said Dr. Megan Murray, a global health professor at Harvard Medical School.

Even so, a vaccine would provide some reassurance for park-goers, according to a Reuters/Ipsos poll conducted from April



Fireworks go off around Cinderella's castle during the grand opening ceremony for Walt Disney World's new Fantasyland in Lake Buena Vista, Florida December 6, 2012. (Reuters/Scott Audette)

15-21. While a fifth of respondents said they would attend an amusement, theme or water park whenever they reopen, about 30% would go if a vaccine was available. The poll, which surveyed 4,429 American adults, noted that a vaccine might not be available for more than a year.

Loyal fans are counting on Disney to get this right. Chicago resident Kelly Alexis, 50, has been to Disney resorts 35 to 40 times and plans to go to Disney World with her family in October if the park is open.

"It's just the feeling that they do things so perfectly and they will take every precaution," Alexis said. "They're not going to want to have an epidemic where everyone gets sick at Disney. They would never let that happen."

## Historic England launches lockdown photography project

**LONDON (Guardian)** -- The British public is being invited to contribute to a national collection of photographs billed as a "unique time capsule for the future", which will show future generations what the Covid-19 lockdown was like for everyday people.

The week-long project, which was launched by Historic England on Wednesday and runs until today, encourages people to share images that reveal how they are dealing with lockdown, self-isolation and social distancing.

Ten artists, including Scottee, based in Southend on Sea, and photographers Chloe Dewe Mathews, based in St Leonards-on-Sea, and Coralie Datta, based in Leeds, have also been asked to participate and they will produce "special images". 100 of the submitted photographs and images will be inducted into the Historic England Archive.

Claudia Kenyatta, the director of regions at Historic England, said the project was a chance to "record history" and "create a unique time capsule for the future" during one of the most extraordinary moments in living memory.

She said: "We want people to show us their experiences of lockdown, how places local to them have transformed, communities have come together,



A striking graphic supporting the NHS and key workers, spotted by Katharine Grice in Hackney, London. (Historic England/ Katharine Grice)

and life has changed for us all.

"These challenging times are encouraging us all to pause and reflect upon our relationship with our surroundings. We hope this project inspires creativity and reflection, allowing the public create a unique time capsule for the future."

The final selection of images will be made up of 50 of the most "evocative, informative and inspiring" images submitted by the public and 50 works from the contemporary artists, which will be catalogued by the Historic England Archive and be available online.

It is the first time the British public has been asked to contribute to the archive, which contains more than 12m photographs taken since 1939, when the social research organization Mass Observation collected accounts of everyday life during wartime.

These diaries are still held in archive storage and Mass Observation's work has been praised for touching "the parts that other archives cannot reach" by drawing an anthropologist's gaze on the British people.

Founded in 1937, Mass Observation "sought to bridge the gap between how the media represented public opinion and what ordinary people actually felt and thought", according to the historian Benjamin Jones.

In 2013, the Photographers' Gallery in London put on an exhibition of material selected from the Mass Observation archive, which the Guardian critic Sean O'Hagan said showed the anthropologists to be "left-leaning and optimistic, but with a tendency to view the working-class as a kind of species to be studied under an anthropological microscope".