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Charities release 8,599 inmates of unintentional crimes

©File photo



ARTICLE
Salman Parviz
Journalist

Cloud seeding projects to help erode crude income dependence

Lack of rainfall followed by frequent droughts is nothing new in Iran. Meteorologists claim that the country has faced an annual lack of rain by 50mm over the past five decades. However, in the recent past, we have witnessed higher than average rainfalls. Remember the sound of thunder last week? Whether these are just wet spells or have been caused by another phenomenon, needs some scrutiny.

Cloud seeding operations is being carried out in many countries with arid geography and high underground water consumption which is depleting the precious resource.

Head of Iran's National Cloud Seeding Research Center (NCSRC), Farid Golkar, informed in February that after a two-year delay a cloud seeding project will be carried out for two weeks in some northern (Zagros and Alborz Mountains), central (Yazd and Isfahan) and southern provinces (Fars and Kerman).

The latest statistics released by the Meteorological Organization show that the country received 136.9 millimeters of precipitations since the beginning of the current water year (Sept 2019-August 2020), which is 4.9 percent more than the same period a year before.

Moreover, the long-term average rainfall for the country was estimated at 109 mm, demonstrating a 25 percent raise in the rainfall this year. However, some provinces of the country are dealing with rainfall shortages and cloud seeding may be a way to ease precipitation scarcity.

"Average rainfall in the country is usually one third of the world average. Iran is always in the red zone when it comes to rains and depletion of water resources," Golkar said.

Located in an arid and semi-arid region, Iran has suffered from drought for decades. "We must control water consumption," said Golkar adding that "rain can be increased with the help of cloud seeding." The global warming had made the situation with the droughts worse all around the word, including Iran. ➔3

COVID-19 cuts foreign arrivals in Iran by 15.8%: UNWTO

TEHRAN – Iran has suffered an average 15.8 percent fall in foreign arrivals during the first three months of 2020 compared to the same period last year, according to data released by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) that analyzes impact of the COVID-19 on international tourism.

Iran hosted 666,550 foreign travelers in January 2020 while the figure was 497,750 people in the same month last year, according to the UNWTO's report titled "INTERNATIONAL TOURISM AND COVID-19."

The figures were also 673,180 and 606,250 for February 2020 and February 2019 respectively, the report said.

And finally, the Islamic republic, like many other countries across the globe, faced more decline in foreign arrivals in March as it hosted 116,350 tourists this year compared to 625,540 in the same month last year.

The worldwide outbreak of COVID-19 has brought the world to a standstill, and tourism has been the worst affected of all major economic sectors. Against a backdrop of heightened uncertainty, up-to-date and

reliable information is more important than ever, both for tourists and for the tourism sector.

Back in March, the UN specialized agency for tourism announced that it expected international tourist arrivals would be down by 20 percent to 30 percent in 2020 when compared with 2019 figures.

An expected fall of between 20-30 percent could translate into a decline in international tourism receipts (exports) of between \$300-450 billion, almost one third of the \$1.5 trillion generated in 2019. ➔8

It is legal charade to claim right out of U.S. name in Resolution 2231: ex-diplomat

By M.A. Saki

TEHRAN – A former diplomat says it is legally "absurd" that the U.S. claims it is still a participant to the 2015 nuclear deal just because its name is mentioned in UN Security Council Resolution 2231, which endorses the pact.

"It is definitely a legal charade to claim any right out of the U.S. name in a UNSC resolution," Kourosh Ahmadi tells the Tehran Times in an exclusive interview.

The Trump administration is making such an argument to extend arms embargo against Iran which expires in October based on Resolution 2231.

"The resolution is a one legal whole that the U.S. either embraces or abandons," Ahmadi asserts.

Following is the text of the interview:

■ The U.S. has made a claim that it is a participant to the nuclear deal. How do you assess such an argument?

Answer- This is absurd. Legally speaking, the

U.S. government at the highest level and in the most explicit way ceased to participate in the Join Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) provided for by the "Presidential Memorandum" issued by President Trump on 8 May 2018. In terms of this formal document, entitled "ceasing United States Participation in the JCPOA", the U.S. withdrew from the deal. Subsequently, the restoration of the lifted or waived secondary sanctions against Iran and the U.S. ceasing to participate in the JCPOA Joint Commission were two major legal consequences of this withdrawal, which consummated it.

■ The U.S. is claiming it has the right to ask the UN Security Council to extend the arms embargo because its name is mentioned in Resolution 2231 which has endorsed the JCPO? What is your analysis?

A: This is right that UNSC resolution 2231 is a UN document. But the U.S. president's move to cease participating in the JCPOA has

superseded all the references in the resolution to the U.S. participation in the JCPOA and made it null and void. It is definitely a legal charade to claim any right out of the US name in a UNSC resolution, which was included under a completely different circumstances. Moreover, the resolution is a one legal whole that the U.S. either embraces or abandons. Cherry picking a document without any regard for its entirety is ridiculous. The resolution begins by endorsing the JCPOA and urging all states to fully implement it. One cannot take one paragraph out of a 154-page document and wishes to only implement it and contravene the rest.

■ Such an argument is made as the U.S. has reportedly proposed a draft resolution to put to vote at the UN Security Council to extend arms embargo against Iran which will expire in October based on Resolution 2231. How do you analyze such argument from a legal point of view? ➔2



©IRNA/ Mohsen Bakshandeh

Dam spills out water after 21 years

Toroq Dam, which is one of the main sources of supplying drinking water to the metropolis of Mashhad, the capital of northeastern Khorasan Razavi province, has spilled for the first time since it was built 21 years ago thanks to heavy rainfalls in recent months.

Some experts believe that Iran has entered a period of wet spell after experiencing dry spells over the past few decades as rainfall in the past three years has met normal and above normal levels.

Zarif to Guterres: U.S. trying illegal paths to reverse Resolution 2231

TEHRAN – In a letter addressed to UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has elaborated on the U.S. violation of the 2015 nuclear deal – JCPOA - and gross violation of the UN Charter in a continuous manner.

Following is an excerpt of his letter published on the Foreign Ministry website on Saturday:

Further to my letter of 10 May 2018

(A/72/869-S/2018/453), I would like to bring to your attention several matters related to the unlawful withdrawal of the United States of America from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and the unlawful imposition of its unilateral sanctions against the people and government of the Islamic Republic of Iran in clear violation of its obligations under international law. ➔2

Iranian galleries prefer to continue lockdown in pandemic

TEHRAN — Art galleries across Iran are allowed to resume activities during the new coronavirus pandemic, however, gallery owners prefer to continue the lockdown since there are no visitors, buyers, or dealers.

"Any art exhibit which opens these days will be spoiled, because there are no visitors and no buyers," Lili Golestan, owner of Tehran's Golestan Gallery, told

the Persian service of ISNA on Saturday.

The Visual Arts Office of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance has agreed since April 20 that art galleries may reopen after an over two-month shutdown due to the pandemic.

The galleries may reopen provided that they avoid any gatherings, and have registered online with the Health Ministry, the office said. ➔12

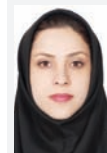
U.S. tightens visa rules for Chinese journalists amid coronavirus tensions

The United States issued a new rule on Friday tightening visa guidelines for Chinese journalists, saying it was in response to the treatment of U.S. journalists in China, a shift that comes amid tensions between the two nations over the coronavirus global pandemic.

The United States and China have been engaged in a series of retaliatory actions involving journalists in recent months.

In March, China expelled American

journalists from three U.S. newspapers, a month after the United States said it would begin to treat five Chinese state-run media entities with U.S. operations the same as foreign embassies. One day after the U.S. verdict on the state-run entities, Beijing expelled three Wall Street Journal correspondents, two Americans and an Australian, following the publication of an opinion column that China denounced as racist. ➔10



ARTICLE
Mahnaz Abdi
Head of the TehranTimes Economy Desk

ETFs to speed up privatization, support ordinary investors

On May 2, the Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), which is the main stock exchange of Iran, listed the first exchange-traded fund (ETF) from a series of three ETFs, through them shares of some state-owned organizations and companies are planned to be offered.

An exchange-traded fund (ETF) is an investment fund traded on stock exchanges, much like stocks. An ETF holds assets such as stocks, commodities, or bonds and generally operates with an arbitrage mechanism designed to keep it trading close to its net asset value, although deviations can occasionally occur.

As described by Investopedia, ETFs can contain many types of investments, including stocks, commodities, bonds, or a mixture of investment types. An exchange-traded fund is a marketable security, meaning it has an associated price that allows it to be easily bought and sold.

The shares to be offered via the above mentioned Iranian ETFs belong to those governmental bodies defined in Iran's privatization program, a comprehensive plan seriously followed up by the government to downsize and reduce its role in the economy.

The three ETFs are planned to offer 550 trillion rials (about \$13 billion) worth of the governmental stakes, of which 165 trillion rials (about \$3.9 billion) is to be offered via the first fund.

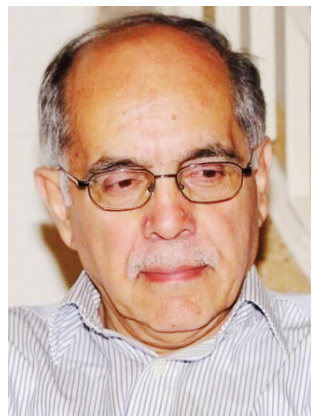
The first ETF, established by Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, comprises government shares in three banks, including Bank Mellat, Tejarat Bank, and Bank Saderat, as well as the shares of two insurance companies, i.e. Iranian Reinsurance Company and Alborz Company.

The government has a 17-percent stake in Bank Mellat, a 17-percent stake in Tejarat Bank, and an 18-percent stake in Bank Saderat.

While the individual traders can subscribe for the shares offered via the ETF, the institutional shareholders are not allowed.

Subscription has started on May 3 and will continue until the end of the current Iranian calendar month (May 20). ➔4

It is legal charade to claim right out of U.S. name in Resolution 2231: ex-diplomat ‘Cherry picking Resolution 2231 without regard for its entirety is ridiculous’



1 → A: Any member of the Security Council is entitled to submit a draft resolution and elicit the views of the other members of the Council. The problem is that, based on the U.S. maneuvering and machinations in past days, it appears that the US seeks to push its draft resolution by threatening the Council by wielding the so-called snapback mechanism and having the Council members choose between the lesser bad (extending the arms embargo) and bad (the triggering of the snapback mechanism to revive the terminated Security Council resolutions against Iran) options. The latter is a false threat and should not deceive anybody. Because the U.S., which is not anymore a JCPOA participant has no legal right to trigger the snapback mechanism. Any U.S. attempt in this area would aggravate the relationship between big powers and inflict a damage to the Council, resulting in weakening it with long-lasting consequences.

■ Diplomats, including Europeans, and analysts have predicted that such a move will most probably face a resistance by Russia or China as veto-wielding powers. Yet, there are reports that say if the move is aborted the U.S. side can call for “snapback” sanctions and return the previous UN sanctions resolutions. Is it technically or legally possible?

A: Other members of the council should indeed fail the U.S. attempt in this area. It is not an issue that solely concerns Iran. Any country wishing to maintain and strengthen international law and help advance the rule of law at the international level has a stake in the encounter that will unfold in the Security Council in the coming weeks and months. A win for the U.S. in its attempt to undermine the Iranian security and interest will come later to haunt every UN member state and will represent a backward move in the investment in building a just and equitable world order.

■ Do you believe that a prolongation of arms embargo is synonymous with the complete death of the JCPOA?

A: Apart from the normalization of the Iranian economic relation with the outside world, which was the major benefit for Iran from the JCPOA, the terminating of the arms embargo against Iran in October and the removal of the limitations on Iran’s missile program in 2023 and the abandonment of the restriction on Iran’s peaceful atomic energy program in 2025 were to be the other benefits Iran was to enjoy in the course of the JCPOA’s implementation. Depriving Iran from these benefits wouldn’t come with no consequences. Apart from leaving the JCPOA, Iranian officials have already talked about the possibility of withdrawing from the NPT as well. Thus the international community should understand that if the U.S. could have its way in the Council, they could expect everything to happen in the wider Middle East.

■ Do you agree with such a view that if the remaining parties to the JCPOA fail to halt the U.S. move, Iran should completely abandon the agreement or even suspend its adherence to the NPT?

A: It is difficult to answer this question at this point in time. We have to see how things will proceed and what would be the result and especially how other big and lesser big will react to the U.S. moves. If Iran notes a genuine effort by the international community towards blocking the U.S. attempts and Iran’s benefits from the JCPOA will be still substantial, the situation will be much different and may require some adjustment of Iran’s position.

‘U.S. has no right to use nuclear deal to reach its objectives’

POLITICAL d e s k TEHRAN — Russian military expert Igor Korotchenko has said that the United States is no longer a party to the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the JCPOA, and has no “moral” and “political” right to use the deal to reach its political objectives.



In an interview with IRNA published on Saturday, Korotchenko said that the U.S. has no authority in the UN 2231 resolution, which endorsed the nuclear deal.

Extension of arms embargo on Iran by the U.S. has no legal credibility, the military expert added.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is preparing an 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.

Under the JCPOA, the arms embargo against Iran expires in October.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Tuesday that Pompeo pretends UNSCR 2231 is independent from the JCPOA, noting that the JCPOA is “PART of 2231”.

In a tweet, Zarif advised Pompeo to read the 2231 resolution. “JCPOA is PART of 2231. That’s why it’s 104 pages—& why he’s not read it.

2231 for Dummies:

-It would NOT EXIST w/o JCPOA

-US violated it & prevented others from complying

-US has NO standing,” he added in his tweet.

Esmail 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.

Zarif to Guterres: U.S. trying illegal paths to reverse Resolution 2231 in contempt for international law

By quitting JCPOA, U.S. has lost any right therein, Zarif asserts

1 → Most notably, I would like to bring to the attention of the Security Council –through you in your capacity as the Secretary-General– matters related to the multiple, continuous and grave cases of violation of the United Nations Charter, in particular Article 25 thereof, thereby jeopardizing the credibility and the integrity of the United Nations and threatening the maintenance of international peace and security.

■ **U.S. unilateral and unlawful withdrawal from the JCPOA**

As you are well aware, on 8 May 2018, the President of the United States officially announced the unilateral withdrawal of the United States from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), in material breach of Security Council Resolution 2231 (2015) to which the JCPOA is annexed. Accordingly, the United States administration terminated the participation of the United States in the JCPOA and re-imposed all United States sanctions lifted in connection with the JCPOA, thus committing multiple cases of “significant non-performance” under the JCPOA, and in flagrant contravention of UNSCR 2231 (2015).

The unlawful U.S. act of unwarranted withdrawal from the JCPOA and the re-imposition of its sanctions entail the U.S. responsibility under the UN Charter and international law. The U.S. has violated UNSCR 2231 (2015) which was in fact submitted by the United States itself and was adopted unanimously by the Security Council on 20 July 2015. The United Nations needs to address swiftly the U.S. responsibility and hold it accountable for the consequences of its wrongful act that flies in the face of the United Nations Charter and international law. Impunity of the United States in this case and other instances would greatly impair the credibility of the United Nations.

It is now clear to everyone, that the unlawful conducts of the United States constitute a complete disregard for international law and the Charter of the United Nations, undermine the principle of peaceful settlement of disputes, endanger multilateralism and its institutions, indicate a regress to the failed and disastrous era of unilateralism, and encourage intransigence and illegality; representing a clear threat to international peace and security.

■ **U.S. malpractices to undermine the provisions of UNSCR 2231**

Resolution 2231 emphasizes that “the JCPOA is conducive to promoting and facilitating the development of normal economic and trade contacts and cooperation with Iran” and urges “its full implementation on the timetable established in the JCPOA” and calls upon all member states “to take such actions as may be appropriate to support the implementation of the JCPOA, including by taking actions commensurate with the implementation plan set out in the JCPOA and this resolution and by refraining from actions that undermine implementation of commitments under the JCPOA”.

Not only has the United States failed to honor its own commitments under the JCPOA, but also it has substantively obstructed the discharge of commitments by the remaining JCPOA participants and other member states. Since assumption of office by Trump, the U.S. once again resorted to the practice of Unilateral Coercive Measures and has imposed 129 sanctions against Iran inflicting irreparable harm to Iran’s economy and its international business relations. These actions bear a direct effect on Iran’s private sector, cut the revenues of ordinary Iranians and reduced the private sector’s capacity for production and employment. Today, the situation is far worse as compared to the JCPOA status quo ante.

It is time for Security Council and its members to ensure and guarantee the full implementation of the JCPOA by all sides. Rather than allowing the U.S. to repeat such abusive pattern, the Council should strongly condemn the U.S. for (re)imposing its illegal sanctions against Iranians in violation of the UN Charter, UNSCR 2231 and international law. The United States should be held responsible for these damages, and the Iranian nation must be compensated adequately. The international community must ensure the implementation of and compliance with the JCPOA.

■ **Iran’s efforts in good faith to preserve the JCPOA**

Following the unlawful withdrawal of the United States



and the (re)imposition of its sanctions that had been lifted in accordance with the JCPOA, while reserving its immediate right under paragraph 26, my Government initiated the Dispute Resolution Mechanism under paragraph 36 of the JCPOA on 10 May 2018. Acting in good faith, we refrained from applying the ‘remedy’ and did not immediately resort to “cease performing its commitments under the JCPOA”, in order to enable the remaining JCPOA participants to make good on their promises.

As you asserted in your statement following the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA “It is essential that all concerns regarding the implementation of the Plan be addressed through the mechanisms established in the JCPOA” and upon the request of JCPOA participants, and the international community, while Iran was entitled to exercise its rights immediately after U.S. unlawful withdrawal on May 8th 2018, my Government decided to pursue its right within the framework of the JCPOA Joint Commission and continued the full implementation of the JCPOA. I trust you are aware of 15 consecutive IAEA reports all verifying Iran’s full compliance with its JCPOA commitments.

Iran exercised restrained in good faith and exhausted all recourses under paragraph 36 for one full year after the U.S. withdrawal. However, in the post 8 May destructive atmosphere, the E3/EU failed to honor their commitments and Iran was left with no choice but to decide to exercise its rights under paragraphs 26 and 36 of the JCPOA to cease performing its commitments in part on 8 May 2019. As a matter of fact, Iran did officially, and in a clear fashion, trigger and exhaust the mechanism under paragraph 36.

In order to manifest our good faith and serious desire to protect the JCPOA, I wish to underline once again that the Islamic Republic of Iran remains prepared to continue dialogue at all levels to ensure the full implementation of the JCPOA by all participants and will continue its full and effective cooperation with the IAEA.

■ **U.S. ill-defined interpretations of UNSCR 2231**

UN member states are obliged to comply with Security Council decisions adopted under Article 25. To hold otherwise, would be to deprive this principal organ of its essential functions and powers under the Charter. For this reason, the Security Council referred in the fourteenth preambular Paragraph of UNSCR 2231 to Article 25 of the Charter and underscored that “Member States are obligated under Article 25 of the Charter of the United Nations to accept and carry out the Security Council’s

Zarif warns U.S. ‘would bear responsibility’ for ‘illegal behavior’ toward Resolution 2231 endorsing the JCPOA

Trump should understand he has no authority to go to war with Iran without Congressional authorization: Joe Biden

By staff and agency

Former U.S. Vice President Joe Biden has said that U.S. President Donald Trump should understand that he does not have the authority to go to war with Iran without Congressional authorization.

“The President’s message in vetoing the war powers resolution on Iran demonstrates yet again his contempt for the U.S. Congress as a co-equal branch of government. The war power is shared under our Constitution, for a simple but profound reason: the Framers understood that the solemn decision to take the country to war requires the informed consent of the American people, as expressed through their elected representatives and their President,” Medium quoted Biden as saying on Saturday in a statement.

He added, “When I am President, I will work closely with Congress on decisions to use force, not dismiss congressional legislation as ‘very insulting’.”

Trump’s policy decisions have increased the risk of war in the Middle East, he noted.

He also said, “Two years ago today, he withdrew from the Iran nuclear agreement — a deal that was verifiably blocking Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. Back then,



he promised us a better deal. He hasn’t delivered.”

The U.S. Senate on Thursday failed to override a presidential veto of a War Powers resolution that would have required the U.S. president to seek congressional authorization before taking any military action against Iran.

The vote was 49-44. A two-thirds majority would have been required for a successful override, which was not expected to happen after President Donald Trump vetoed the resolution on Wednesday, CNN reported.

In a statement released by the White House, Trump portrayed the measure as not only an encroachment on his presidential

powers but also a personal political attack.

“This was a very insulting resolution, introduced by Democrats as part of a strategy to win an election on November 3 by dividing the Republican Party,” Trump said. “The few Republicans who voted for it played right into their hands.”

The resolution called for “the President to terminate the use of United States Armed Forces for hostilities against the Islamic Republic of Iran or any part of its government or military unless explicitly authorized by a declaration of war or specific authorization for use of military force against Iran.”

Its chief sponsor, Democratic Sen. Tim Kaine of Virginia, described the measure as an important reassertion of congressional power to declare war, saying it was not about Trump or even the presidency.

“It’s not insulting. It’s our job,” he said ahead of Thursday’s vote, adding the measure was introduced “to stop an unnecessary war”.

“Congress needed to stand up in a bipartisan way to make plain that this president should not get into a war with Iran, or any war, without a vote of Congress,” said Kaine. “Congress has expressed what is popular will.”

Sanctions make Iran's coronavirus crisis more deadly, former diplomat warns

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Seyed Hossein Mousavian, a former Iranian nuclear negotiator who now works as a researcher at Princeton University, has urged the United States to abandon its maximum pressure campaign against Iran and lift the sanctions, which have made Iran's coronavirus crisis more deadly.

In an article published on Al Jazeera on Friday, Mousavian said the sanctions have made it impossible for the country to swiftly take the necessary medical, economic and social measures to protect its citizens from the coronavirus.

The text of the article is as follows:

As COVID-19 continues to wreck lives and livelihoods across the globe, some countries, such as the United States, seem to be suffering the consequences of this deadly pandemic more than others, largely due to the shortsightedness of their governments.

Indeed, President Donald Trump's reluctance at the outset of the pandemic to take the necessary measures to stem the spread of the virus in his country led to the U.S. having the world's largest number of confirmed coronavirus cases and deaths. So far, more than 1.2 million Americans have tested positive for COVID-19 and some 76,000 others have lost their lives to this highly infectious disease.

Iran is another country that was hit particularly hard by the pandemic. According to official figures, there are more than 100,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Iran and some 6,500 people have succumbed to the disease. Experts and officials both in Iran and abroad, however, have cast doubts over these figures, saying the real numbers of cases and deaths are likely even higher than reported.

The Trump administration, seemingly in denial about its own shambolic response to the crisis, tried to blame the pandemic's high toll in Iran on the incompetence and corruption of the Iranian government. The Iranian leadership indeed made some mistakes in its handling of this public health emergency, such as initially underestimating the threat posed by the virus and failing to close the country's borders in time. It is, however, impossible to claim that the Iranian government is solely responsible for the devastation the pandemic has caused in the country.

Ever since Trump unilaterally withdrew the U.S. from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and embarked on a maximum pressure strategy against Iran some two years ago, the Islamic Republic has been under strict economic sanctions that limit its ability to trade with other nations. These sanctions, which choked of Iran's oil exports, crippled its economy and practically pushed it out of the international banking system, made it impossible for the country to swiftly take the necessary medical, economic and social measures to protect its citizens from the coronavirus.



“For now, the Trump administration seems to be heeding the calls from right-wing figures and institutions to use the coronavirus pandemic as an opportunity to double down on its “maximum pressure” policy against Iran.”

The role U.S. sanctions have played, and continue to play, in the devastation caused by the coronavirus in Iran led to renewed discussions on the effectiveness, legality and legitimacy of sanctions not only in Iran and the U.S., but also across the world.

Political leaders, diplomats, defense officials, experts, civic organizations and activists from Asia to Europe have urged the Trump administration to ease its sanctions against Iran to help the country's fight against coronavirus and help save “hundreds of thousands of lives”.

In Iran, the government admitted that the sanctions make it difficult to obtain vital medical supplies and equipment to treat COVID-19 patients and called for their immediate lifting. Iran's Foreign Minister Javad Zarif, for example, tweeted that the U.S. has moved from “economic terrorism” to “medical terror” by declining to lift the sanctions after the beginning of the outbreak in Iran in mid-February, and urged the international community to stop aiding “war crimes” by obeying “illegal and immoral” sanctions.

There have also been widespread calls for the lifting of sanctions in the U.S. Nine U.S. politicians, including former Democratic presidential candidates Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders, for example, sent an open letter to the Trump administration asking for sanctions relief for Iran amid the COVID-19 crisis. The New York Times, meanwhile, published an editorial calling for the easing of sanctions.

But there have also been calls within the U.S. for the sanctions to not only remain in place, but also to be tightened

during this time of crisis. A cluster of right-wing think tanks in Washington, led by The Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD) and American Enterprise (AEI), for example, have been aggressively lobbying the Trump administration to escalate militarily towards Iran and tighten sanctions amid the pandemic. The Wall Street Journal, meanwhile, published an editorial claiming it is “no time to end Iran sanctions”. We have seen similar think pieces published in other reputable American media organizations, such as Foreign Policy and Bloomberg.

For now, the Trump administration seems to be heeding the calls from right-wing figures and institutions to use the coronavirus pandemic as an opportunity to double down on its “maximum pressure” policy against Iran. So far, Washington has not only blocked Iran's attempt to get a loan of \$5bn from the World Bank to combat COVID-19, but it also further tightened its sanctions on the country. On May 6, he vetoed a U.S. Congress resolution that would have terminated the president's power to use armed forces in hostilities against Iran.

Trump appears to be eager to please Saudi Arabia and Israel, the primary supporters of his administration in the Middle East, by increasing pressure on Iran during this global crisis. Moreover, amid the pandemic, he seems more confident than ever before that the economic sanctions would eventually force Iran to return to the negotiating table in a weak and desperate position. He also likely believes by hardening his stance against an adversary during this difficult time, he

can rile up his support base, encourage jingoism, and increase his chances of being re-elected in November.

But the U.S. president is known for making major U-turns when it suits his political needs and desires. If Iran continues to stand tall in the face of increasing economic, political and diplomatic pressures, Trump may decide that easing the pressures on the country, and paving the way for peace may be more beneficial for his political future. He can point to the ongoing humanitarian emergency in Iran caused by the coronavirus pandemic to explain this about-turn. This way, he can claim that he sorted out “the Iran problem” without admitting that his maximum pressure policy failed to deliver the desired results.

It is impossible to ascertain which one of the two paths the most unpredictable U.S. president in living memory is going to follow. If Trump continues to follow the advice of conflict-hungry hawks in Washington and the Middle East, we can see a military escalation between the U.S. and Iran in the coming months. This outcome would not only further devastate an already conflict-ridden region, but also exacerbate Iran's coronavirus crisis.

But Trump can still change course and use the COVID-19 crisis as an opportunity for “humanitarian diplomacy”.

As a first step, he can remove the sanctions on Iran's financial institutions and allow the country to receive at least a portion of its oil revenue. This would allow the Iranian government to swiftly buy the medical equipment and drugs it needs to treat coronavirus patients.

Then he can allow Iranians living in the U.S. to send money and medical goods to their families back home — this would help elevate many Iranian families from poverty and help Iran's fight against the pandemic.

Next, Trump can greenlight a prisoner swap between the two countries, and end the suffering of hundreds of families who are worried about the wellbeing of their loved ones during the pandemic.

As the final step in a “COVID-19 humanitarian diplomacy package”, Trump can allow for the normalization of relations between the American and Iranian peoples. By allowing the private sector entities, and private citizens, in the two countries to interact normally, Trump could trigger a surge in American-Iranian partnerships in many sectors, including medical research and development.

All this would not compromise the negotiating positions of the two governments, but would encourage them to move towards peace rather than war.

The novel coronavirus pandemic is the most serious public health threat our world has faced in a century. It made the inhumane and unjust sanctions the U.S. has imposed on Iran deadlier than ever. The Trump administration should immediately change course and lift the sanctions on Iran before it is too late. If it fails to do so, the consequences for millions of Iranians will be dire.

U.S. ridicules international law: envoy

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iran's ambassador to the United Nations says the United States has ridiculed international law by violating the UN Security Council Resolution 2231 and threatening other countries.

Speaking at a UN Security Council meeting on Friday to mark the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe, Majid Takht-Ravanchi warned that multilateralism is facing many challenges which need to be addressed, IRNA reported.

The full text of Takht-Ravanchi's speech is presented below: The main lesson humanity has learned from World War II is to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. We have only one choice, that is to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations ... [under] international law can be maintained.

Accordingly, through the Charter, we agreed that such a noble objective can best be realized if we live together in peace ... as good neighbors, develop friendly relations, settle ... disputes by peaceful means, refrain ... from the threat or use of force, achieve international cooperation in solving international problems, and employ international machinery for the ... advancement of all peoples.

Consequently, we established the United Nations as a center for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of these common ends.

This was promoted by developing a great number of international instruments and institutions that form the current multilateral system, which proved that, while not ideal and perfect, but is the only available tool at our disposal.

However, today, all those lessons learned and achievements gained are at high risk and, as the UNSG rightly puts it, the world order is increasingly chaotic, democratic principles are under siege; the rule of law is being undermined; and multilateralism is under fire precisely when we need it most.

Therefore, our most urgent and key question today is how to address the challenges of multilateralism.

The illegal unilateral actions of the U.S., with its excessive addiction to sanctions and economic terrorism as well as its policy to withdraw from international instruments and institutions, are alarming.

One of the living examples of the systematic mockery of international law is the violation of the Council's resolution 2231 by the U.S. which is brazenly threatening others to either violate that resolution or face punishment.

Such bullying policies and unlawful practices are growingly eroding the pillars of multilateralism, tarnishing the credibility of this Organization and mainly the Security Council.

To conclude, today, multilateralism is not only an option, but it is also the only option. There is no magic solution or alternative; as challenges such as coronavirus do not recognize boundaries and thus cannot be managed with one country or certain countries alone, no matter how powerful they are.

Let's be united in pursuing the common goods of all states and in promoting true multilateralism founded on inclusion instead of exclusion; cooperation in place of confrontation; and the rule of law instead of the rule of power.

Sanctions target 'regimes' in word, but damage 'children' in practice, govt. spokesman laments

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Government spokesman Ali Rabiei has condemned in the United States' “inhuman” sanctions on Iran, which have hampered the Islamic Republic's fight against coronavirus.

One of the most deviant behaviors was shown in the international arena on May 8, 2018, prototypical of U.S. President Donald Trump's conduct with regard to international issues, Rabiei said in a message, IRNA reported on Saturday.

He made the remarks on the second anniversary of the U.S. withdrawal from the Iran nuclear agreement, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Rabiei said the U.S. unleashed the highest level of sanctions on Iran due to pressure from Saudi Arabia and Israel.

Although Trump claimed at that time that the sanctions reimposed on Iran on November 5, 2018 have targeted the government of the Islamic Republic, they were imposed solely for dividing people and the government, he said.

Referring to the U.S. unilateral exit from the JCPOA, Rabiei said that was a new sour experience, like a movie with a sad ending, as seen in Iraq before.

“Iran is definitely not like the then Iraq, and the Iranian nation will not have the same fate the Iraqis suffered in 2001-2003,” he asserted.

The spokesman went on to say that the sad experience of sanctions that occurred in Iraq proved that the sanctions can put people more in danger gradually.

Sanctions target the “regimes” in word, but damage “children” in practice, he lamented.

According to Rabiei, the U.S. sanctions can be defeated through resistance. The sanctions will fade away and their brutal effect will decrease through cooperation and solidarity of the communities and regional governments, different bodies and academics, he remarked.

An active diplomacy, he said, is needed to stand against the U.S. allegations made freshly to proceed the sanctions via misusing dissatisfaction inside Iran.

In May 2019, exactly one year after the U.S. unilaterally quit the deal and imposed sanctions on Iran, Tehran began to gradually reduce its commitments under the JCPOA to both retaliate for Washington's departure and Europeans' failure to honor their commitments.

On January 5, Iran took a fifth and last step in reducing its commitments and said it would no longer observe any operational limitations on its nuclear industry, whether concerning the capacity and level of uranium enrichment, the volume of stockpiled uranium or research and development. However, Iran has insisted if the Europeans honor their obligations it will immediately reverse its decisions.

Cloud seeding projects to help erode crude income dependence

Frequent rain to help agricultural, industrial sectors

1→ NCSRC works in cooperation with IRGC to carry out cloud seeding projects across the country.

For those unfamiliar this procedure induces rain artificially by exposing chemicals to the cloud which would have otherwise been blown away by the wind to another region.

Cloud seeding is a process where chemicals, including salt, are shot into the clouds using planes, generators over mountains, rockets or drones that make clouds release their moisture as water. Rainfall occurs when supercooled droplets of rain — those that are still liquid but are at a temperature below the usual freezing point to zero centigrade — form ice crystals. Too heavy to remain suspended in the air, these then fall, often on the way down as to form snow.

Water shortage is crucial in many provinces in Iran. Researchers at the NCSRC in Yazd province, central Iran, laid plans for cloud-seeding operations to induce rain in 12 provinces over the upcoming water years in September 2014.

On January 7, 2015 cloud-seeding operations were launched in Yazd province without reports on the outcome.

In 2016, Iranian elite scientist, Hasan Akbari-Layegh, designed and manufactured a drone for this specific purpose aimed at reviving dry lakes in the country with seeding operations.

Following rumors on social media regarding last spring's flash floods in Iran Golkar told the Persian daily 'Iran' that the “NCSRC is developing infrastructure and the last that we carried out an operation goes back to 2017.”

While seeding technology in Iran is at its infancy such a technology has been successfully implemented in over 20 countries around the world.

In India, cloud seeding operations were conducted as far back as 1983 by Tamil Nadu state government due to severe drought.

China used seeding in Beijing just before the 2008



Frequent rain falls in April brings out the umbrellas and rain jackets in Tehran.

Olympic Games in order to clear the air pollution.

The UAE is one of the first countries in the Persian Gulf region to use cloud seeding technology for more than a decade using sophisticated weather radar to monitor the atmosphere of the country round the clock.

Last November, the National Center of Meteorology (NCM) informed that five cloud seeding operations had been carried out in a matter of 48 hours. As a result heavy rainfall lashed the country, with videos circulating on social media on debris flying around, water entering sections of the Dubai Mall, major traffic jams and waterlogged roads.

It was announced by several UAE-based newspapers that NCM carried out 95 cloud seeding operations across the UAE in the first quarter of 2020. Due to heavy widespread rainfalls from January 9-12 (190.4mm) UAE broke the highest rainfall record since 1996.

120 families in the Al Fahleen area in Dubai were badly affected by storms and there were reports of damaged roads, fallen walls and rocks, landslides and uprooted trees, raising the question whether cloud-seeding in UAE has gone too far? Following

this incidence UAE announced plans to invest \$136 million in flood protection measures.

The Arab news reported in February that Saudi Arabia approved cloud-seeding technology for rain enhancement to increase the amount of rain by 20 percent. The kingdom is one of the world's most arid countries, with less than 100 millimeters of rainfall a year. About 85 percent of the water demand is met by groundwater sources but the rate of extraction is treater than replacement due to low rainfall.

Although there are no laws against seeding operations there is political strife over neighboring regions that accuse each other of 'stealing rain' and the issue remains an ongoing concern today.

Iran's non-oil exports are crucial to the country's economy as the U.S. sanctions are gradually eroding the country's dependence on crude exports. The country had a record agricultural production with total exports of over \$5.8 billion in agricultural and foodstuff products in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19) because of better rainfalls in certain areas.

Water resources are essential in industrial production of value-added mineral exports as an alternative to crude. It will also help the country to resist the U.S. sanctions intended to bring “maximum pressure”.

Friday marked two years since U.S. President Trump announced America's withdrawal from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal. For two years the U.S. has imposed unprecedented economic pressure on Tehran. For the Islamic Republic to resist such injustice amid this coronavirus pandemic it needs to erode its dependence on oil and focus on other sources of income, e.g. tourism, agriculture, industrial, etc. Water resources are essential in all these sectors. Oil development projects, especially in this global pandemic environment should be put on hold for now.

It was hard to miss the sound of thunder in the recent days in Tehran. Whether cloudseeding has helped with the rainfalls remains to be answered by the government officials.

TEDPIX notches record high, hitting one million points

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), hit the record high of one million points on Saturday, which is the first day of Iranian calendar week. ISNA reported.

As reported, the index's daily jump was also unprecedented as it gained 42,372 points during the Saturday trades to stand at 1.2 million points.

Securities worth 101.018 trillion rials (about \$2.405 billion) were traded through one million deals at the TSE.



Mobarakeh Steel Company, Persian Gulf Petrochemical Industry Company, Pars Petrochemical Company, and National Iranian Copper Industry were the biggest contributors to the index jump on Saturday.

While the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19) was full of success for the TSE, the market is also preserving its successful performance in the current year, and the noticeable point in this due is that the other economic sectors are experiencing some declining trend due to the coronavirus pandemic.

We have been witnessing new record highs continuously posted by the exchange since the year start, and climbing to the peak of one million points, something almost unbelievable just some time ago, came true on Saturday.

Investors exit stocks at fastest rate since March, 'tech fatigue' sets in: BOFA

Investors pulled \$16.2 billion from stocks in the past week in the largest weekly redemption since the March stock market slump, according to the Bank of America's weekly flows data.

Stock markets have staged a remarkable recovery in the past month after the coronavirus crisis cause a massive tumble in March. The rebound has been powered by technology stocks but BofA said there were signs of "tech fatigue".

Technology stocks saw the first week of outflows so far this year, with investors redeeming \$43 million worth, BofA said its weekly research note.

Gold and high-yield bond funds both saw their biggest six-week inflows on record, with \$32 billion flowing into high-yielding bonds in what analysts called a "high-yield comeback".

Investors added \$11.3 billion into bonds and \$53.5 billion into cash in the past week, BofA said, with an internal indicator of sentiment at "extreme bearish".

As lockdown measures aiming to limit the spread of the new coronavirus have brought the global economy to a halt, BofA analysts said that they had seen a massive inflow to cash from BofA private clients in the past four to eight weeks.

The U.S. bank also said that nine of ten clients believed the current market recover was a "bear market rally" and seven out of ten said they would only buy the assets that the U.S. Federal Reserve purchases through it various stimulus schemes.

(Source: Reuters)

Global economic downturn from COVID-19 could be worse than first projected: IMF

The head of the International Monetary Fund on Friday signaled a possible downward revision of global economic forecasts, and warned the United States and China against rekindling a trade war that could weaken a recovery from the coronavirus pandemic.

Kristalina Georgieva, the IMF's managing director, told an online event hosted by the European University Institute that recent economic data for many countries was coming in below the fund's already pessimistic forecast for a 3% contraction in 2020.

"With no immediate medical solutions, more adverse scenarios might unfortunately materialize for some economies," Georgieva said. "It is the unknown about the behavior of this virus that is clouding the horizon for projections."

The IMF's April projection for a 3% contraction the global economy would mark the steepest downturn since the Great Depression of the 1930s. The IMF forecast a partial rebound would follow in 2021, but warned that outcomes could be far worse, depending on the course of the pandemic.

The U.S. economy — the largest in the world — has been particularly hard hit by widespread shutdowns aimed at containing the spread of the virus. U.S. government data on Friday showed the unemployment rate surging to 14.7% last month. The White House said joblessness could hit 20% in May.

President Donald Trump has threatened to punish China for its handling of the virus by imposing new tariffs, and on Friday suggested he could end a Phase 1 U.S.-China trade deal.

Top U.S. and Chinese trade officials on Friday said they would press ahead with implementing the initial trade deal, but some observers say China's promised purchases of U.S. goods are running far behind the pace needed to meet the first-year goal of a \$77 billion increase over 2017 levels.

On Friday, Georgieva warned that a retreat into protectionism could weaken the prospects for a global recovery at a critical juncture.

Asked how concerned she was that rising U.S.-China tensions could jeopardize the global economy, Georgieva said, "It is hugely important for us to resist what may be a natural tendency to retreat behind our borders."

Reigniting world trade was critical to ensuring a global economic recovery, she said. "Otherwise," she said, "costs go up, incomes go down, and we will be in a less secure world."

(Source: globalnews.ca)

ETFs to speed up privatization, support ordinary investors

1→ The highest amount for a subscription is 20 million rials (about \$476) for each individual with a national code, and the prominent feature of this offering is allocation of a 20-percent discount for Iranian people of any age.

It is why many economists and financial experts say that the concept of launching these ETFs is to support the ordinary people's contribution to the stock market activities.

While meeting the satisfaction of people and encouraging them to investment in the

stock market, establishment of the ETFs is also said to be a promising step in the process of privatization plan.

While, the law on the implementation of the general policies of Article 44 of Iran's Constitution on privatizing state-owned companies was declared in 2006 in a bid to downsize the government and promote the private sector's role in the national economy, since then, the privatization process has been facing several challenges in the country, and has fallen behind schedule, drawing attention



to the fact that an urgent action should be done in this due.

President Hassan Rouhani has recently instructed Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Farhad Dejjpasand that the process of divesting state shares should be expedited and the proper ground should be rapidly laid in the stock market to this end.

Now, it seems that the ETFs can play an

effective role in materializing this objective, and while facilitating investment making at the stock market for the ordinary people, they are expected to speed up the privatization program.

Although, given the structure of these funds into account, people are advised to become completely familiar with the related process first and then take action for investment making.

Steel producers obliged to offer 60% of annual output at commodity exchange



ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The **d e s k** Iranian government has obliged the country's steel companies to offer at least 60 percent of their annual production at the commodity exchange market, IRIB reported on Saturday.

As reported, steel ingot producers must also plan for 25 percent of their remaining production to be allocated for exports, and the rest will also be set aside for long-term contracts or exports, according to the Islamic Republic of Iran's Customs Administration (IRICA).

Based on the new regulations by the country's market regulation committee, steel ingots can only be traded at the country's commodity exchange and the companies that do not follow the mentioned regulations will face legal penalties.

Iran's annual steel ingot production is planned to increase 3.2 million tons in the current Iranian calendar year, which began on March 20, according to Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO).

In its latest report, the World Steel Association (WSA) announced that Iran's crude steel production increased by 30 percent in 2019 while the average global growth in this sector stood at 3.5 percent.

Based on the WSA report, Iran produced 31.9 million tons of the mentioned commodity during 2019 compared to the last year's nearly 24 million tons.

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

While at the first glance [considering Trump's comments], this might seem to be a heavy hit to Iran's economy in the near future but a close look into the country's export data could reveal Trump's great miscalculations. In fact, this could even be considered a "blessing in disguise" for the country's minerals and metal industry.

80 million Chinese may already be out of work. 9 million more will soon be competing for jobs, too

Wang is used to job hunting in China.

The 26-year old tech worker spent the last year jumping from one startup to another in what already felt like a precarious job market. But when he was laid off again in January, this time from a Beijing-based internet company, he never expected things to become as difficult as they are.

Last year "already felt like living in a hell mode," Wang told CNN Business in a telephone interview. "But 2020 is even worse. The coronavirus is like a head-on blow."

Wang is not his full name. He asked CNN Business to not use his entire name because he didn't want friends or family to know the details of his unemployment — a fear echoed by others in China who spoke about losing their jobs. Some also voiced concerns that making their personal predicament public could hurt their chances of finding work.

The pandemic all but shut down China for several weeks this year, wreaking havoc on the world's second largest economy and forcing millions of people out of work.

The full scale of how many people have lost their jobs in the country is hard to capture. Data from Beijing is notoriously opaque, and the official unemployment rate — which only tracks jobless numbers in urban areas — has barely moved beyond 4% to just over 5% for years.

But even the official tally has started to register a spike. Unemployment in March was 5.9%, just shy of the record 6.2% reported a month earlier. That would represent more than 27 million people out of work, according to a CNN Business calculation using government data.

"China's unemployment could be seriously understated," said Willy Lam, an adjunct professor for the Center of China Studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. "It's unusual they are willing to report that bad data. Given the government often massages the figures, the real situation must be worse."

■ An 'unprecedented' problem

Beijing's data, after all, does not include people in rural communities or a large number of the 290 million migrant workers who work in construction, manufacturing and other low paying but vital activities. If those migrants are included, as many as 80 million people could have been out of work at the end of March, according to an article co-authored last month by Zhang Bin, an economist at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, a think tank run by the government.

Other experts say that the 80 million figure is likely much



closer to reality. It's also a lot more disturbing — it would mean that nearly 10% of people in China who are supposed to be employed are actually out of work, according to economists at Société Générale.

"The Covid-19 shock to the job market is unprecedented in its scale, length and nature," wrote Wei Yao and Michelle Lam in a research report last week.

The Ministry of Commerce did not respond to a request from CNN Business for comment on this story. Speaking last month, a spokesman for China's National Bureau of Statistics acknowledged that the labor market was under a lot of pressure, but he insisted overall employment was "stable."

"Although the coronavirus has had a severe impact [on jobs], there are no massive layoffs in the country," Mao Shengyong said at a press conference.

But Beijing is bracing for additional pain in the coming months. A record number of people are graduating from universities this year, which will put more pressure on the job market. And while the economy may still eke out some growth in 2020, its road to a full recovery will likely be a long one.

The Chinese government has never been candid about its economic woes. But recent messaging from officials has made it clear that unemployment is a big problem.

Economic growth was already the weakest in decades before the outbreak pushed the country into its first contraction since 1976, when Communist Party leader Mao Zedong's death ended a decade of social and economic tumult.

Shoring up the economy — and preventing the jobless rate from spiraling out of control — has only gotten more critical in recent months. In April, the Communist Party's Politburo, its

top ruling body, told all government officials to prioritize job security and social stability above anything else, according to the state news agency Xinhua.

Getting people back to work is important in part because authorities fear a wave of unemployment could lead to social unrest, creating a massive political headache, according to Lam, the Chinese University of Hong Kong professor.

"Beijing's biggest concern is not GDP growth, but employment," he said.

■ 'I feel miserable'

Job seekers aren't optimistic that the situation will improve soon. Wang, the tech worker from Beijing, said it seems life is tough for everyone right now.

"I feel miserable, but I can't do anything about it," he said. "I don't think anyone can."

Wang said the current environment contrasts starkly to when he graduated from college in 2015. Beijing at that time was offering subsidies and other forms of financial support to startups, which encouraged entrepreneurs to create millions of new companies. The unemployment rate that year was about 5%.

Even before the coronavirus outbreak, Wang said offers were drying up. The tech startups he worked at in 2018 and 2019 ran out of cash as Beijing tightened regulations on how they could obtain investment.

But now he says finding work is almost impossible. He and his friends have started lowering their expectations, and some of them aren't even sure whether they can stay in Beijing.

"There were already signs last year [of mass unemployment], but this year it's getting worse," Wang said. "I don't know when things will turn better ... I'll just wait."

There is evidence that it's gotten tougher to find work. Job vacancies plunged 28% in the first three months of 2020 compared to the fourth quarter of last year, according to a recent survey by the China Institute for Employment Research and Zhaopin.com, one of China's largest job sites. Competition, meanwhile, was fiercer: The number of job seekers jumped nearly 9% in the first quarter, the survey showed.

And companies in China's services sector — which accounts for almost half of all jobs in the country — shed workers at a record rate in April, according to survey data released Thursday by media group Caixin and research firm Markit.

(Source: CNN Business)

RIPi to conduct 4 major research projects by March 2021

ENERGY TEHRAN — Iran's Research Institute of Petroleum Industry (RIPI) is due to carry out four major research projects aimed at increasing the recovery factor of the country's oil fields by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2021), Shana reported quoting the head of RIPI's upstream faculty.

According to Ezatollah Kazemzadeh, the mentioned projects include comprehensive studies and laboratory research on water- and gas-based methods in Asmari and Bangestan reservoirs in Dana field, as well as two projects in Bibi Hakimeh and Ahvaz fields.

Mentioning the RIPI's achievements in the previous calendar year, Kazemzadeh noted that the institute signed 12 research agreements with private companies and government-owned firms for conducting a wide range of research activities in various fields of exploration, drilling, production, harvesting and laboratory technology services in the previous year.

On average, RIPI was able to sign a contract every month, and in the mentioned agreements 18 of the current issues and problems in the



oil industry have been addressed in order to provide research and technology solutions, he explained.

Emphasizing that all projects of the

institute have been defined with the aim of solving the oil industry's problems, and to provide research and technological solutions for them, the official said: "In addition to

the above [mentioned projects], 24 research titles and proposals have been sent to the Oil Ministry to be pursued in the current year."

Back in April, RIPI Head Jafar Tofiqi said the institute has it on the agenda to diversify the basket of technological products in the oil industry in the current year.

"The research institute is not just a research contractor, it plays a strategic role in addressing the needs of the oil industry," Tofiqi said.

"We will be facing more demand from the oil industry in the current [Iranian calendar] year (began on March 20), so we need to expand the basket of our technological products in order to meet those requirements; this requires more capacity building and empowerment within the Petroleum Industry Research Institute," the official stressed.

RIPI was initially established under the title of the "Iran Petroleum Industry Research Development Office" in 1959. Its primary aim was carrying out research on the application of petroleum materials.

The main strategy of PIRI is creating value-added via development and indigenization of new technologies used in the oil industry.

Coronavirus lockdown speeds India's shift from coal to solar power

Travel restrictions to halt the spread of coronavirus are speeding the switch from coal to renewable energy in India.

The world's second largest coal consumer has seen its energy demand collapse by nearly 30% during the lockdown which started on 25 March, with coal generators bearing the brunt.

In 2018, the International Energy Agency forecast Indian coal demand would more than double by 2040 – a major challenge to international efforts to prevent climate breakdown.

With the right policy framework in place, coal generation in India could peak much sooner, analysts have told Climate Home News.

"I think we will see the peak in coal use for power generation this decade," said Tim Buckley, director of energy finance studies for the Australia and South Asia region at the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (Ieefa).



"There is potential for India to really surprise the global community and contribute to the decarbonization story while doing it in a very cost-effective way."

There was political backing for renewable energy prior to the Covid-19 crisis, emboldened by rapidly falling costs.

At the UN Climate Action Summit in New York last year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi promised to double India's renewable target to 450GW by 2030, up from around 87GW installed capacity today. The bulk will come from solar panels.

The cost of adding solar electricity stands at about 2.5 rupees per unit generated, compared with around 4.5 rupees for new coal capacity, according to analysts. Even coupled with more expensive batteries to store electricity for after dark, solar energy was auctioned at a cheaper price than new coal earlier this year.

Meanwhile, the coal sector has been faced with cash flow issues over the past few years, with most plants running well under capacity.

An analysis by Ieefa found that renewables delivered more than two-thirds of India's new generating capacity additions in the 2019-20 fiscal year.

Before the outbreak, Sunil Dahiya, analyst at the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air, said there was "a clear signal that coal will not fuel future electricity growth," which will mostly be provided by renewables.

"Now the pandemic makes that trend much clearer," Dahiya said. "Coal capacity could peak before 2025," he said, noting a peak in coal generation will take longer.

The competitive cost of renewable energy is not the only reason for the sector's resilience in a period of low demand.

In India, the sector benefits from a "must-run" status compelling power distribution companies to use solar or wind energy whenever it is generated.

Powered by sun and wind, renewable generators are not exposed to the same supply chain disruptions as fossil fueled plants.

"The resilience of the renewable model was established during the lockdown," Abhishek Dangra, senior director at S&P Global Ratings, told Climate Home News.

"The pandemic tipped the scale in favor of renewables for cleaner and cheaper power," he said, adding that coal's share in power generation will continue to decline in the medium to long term.

For Dangra, 2027 could mark the peak in capacity when India "will likely not need any new coal plants".

In recent years, private investors have also been increasingly reluctant to invest in Indian coal infrastructure with much new finance coming from state-backed banks and companies. On the contrary, global investors are ready to invest "aggressively" in new renewable infrastructure, Buckley said.

"You can't build a power plant if it's not funded and if it's not going to provide a return. And from a financial perspective, you can't justify a new coal-fired power plant," he added.

"The pandemic has accelerated the debate about what choices India will have to make" for its energy sector, Swati Dsouza, a New Delhi-based consultant at the Brookings Institute told CHN.

Despite the favorable conditions for boosting renewables, Dsouza did not rule out an uptick in coal generation and new capacity once the lockdown lifts, saying coal will continue to meet baseload demand. "Renewables have not been a substitute for coal," she said. None of the new coal plants in the pipeline for construction have so far been cancelled.

IMF chief: \$1 trillion post-coronavirus stimulus must tackle climate crisis

Buckley said he was confident the Indian government could deliver on its target of 450GW of renewable energy by the end of the decade despite the huge effort needed to scale up the sector.

The pace of renewable deployment and the growth of the Indian economy will remain key factors in determining the shape of the transition. It will also depend on the grid being ready to match variable solar and wind generation with consumer demand.

As Prime Minister Modi called on the nation to turn off their lights for nine minutes at 9pm on 5 April in a call for solidarity against coronavirus, there were concerns the grid might collapse.

"This was a huge test of resilience for the grid," Buckley told CHN. "But it passed with flying colours."

With a looming global recession and an Indian government strapped for cash while fighting the pandemic, there can be no trillion-recovery package expected to accelerate India's clean energy transition.

For Buckley, that will require Modi to think "laterally" about ways to boost renewable deployment "and marshal all the private capital on it".

(Source: www.climatechangenews.com)

National gas network transmission capacity rises to 1bcm/d

ENERGY TEHRAN — National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) dispatching director says the transmission capacity of the national gas network has risen to one billion cubic meters per day (bcm/d), IRNA reported on Friday.

Noting that several projects were carried out last calendar year (ended on March 19) to increase the country's gas network capacity, the official said: "Most of the mentioned projects have been implemented in the ninth national line, most of which will be operational this year."

Mehdi Jamshidi-Dana further mentioned the South Pars gas field's new platforms going operational in the current year and noted that with the increase of the national gas network's capacity the new production capacity from the South Pars platforms won't be idle.

"The country's [natural] gas production capacity is expected to be increased to one billion cubic meters per day and now the national network is capable of transmitting this ca-

capacity," he said.

■ **Export pipeline to Turkey being repaired**

Elsewhere in his remarks, Jamshidi-Dana mentioned the blast in the Iran-Turkey gas pipeline and noted: "We are negotiating with the Turkish side and they are taking necessary measures for repairing the pipeline."

The flow of Iranian natural gas to Turkey was disrupted in late March (due to a pipeline explosion) but the pipeline hasn't been repaired due to the pandemic.

Although the equipment needed to repair the pipeline has been ordered by Turkey, but due to Coronavirus outbreak, the supply of equipment has been delayed.

According to the official, Iran has offered Turkey to repair the export gas pipeline and supply equipment. "However, the Turkish side has only thanked Iran for the offer."

In early April, the operation and production manager of Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC) which is in charge of the development of Iran's giant South Pars gas field



announced that all of the platforms of the field are operating in full swing so that their

total output has exceeded the figure projected by the Oil Ministry's approved plan.

Asia faces costlier LPG as low U.S. oil price prompts NGL estimate cuts

Low U.S. oil prices have prompted a significant downward revision of the U.S. NGL production over the next few years, which may increase LPG import prices for Asia, according to S&P Global Platts Analytics.

The drop in 2020 is expected to be about 289,000 bpd, or 4.6 percent below initial estimates, followed by 776,000 bpd in 2021, down 12 percent and then reaching the maximum decline of about 1.12 million bpd in 2022, down 16 percent, said Platts Analytics.

"Due to the significant drop in recent oil prices, our latest forecast shows the near term, April-June, U.S. NGL production falling. This essentially means low purity product -- ethane, propane and butane -- production," Platts Analytics said.

Upstream companies' debt-related issues have also led most of them to significantly revise down the capital expenditure guidance.

Enterprise Products Partners said it will slash 2020 capital spending by more than \$1 billion and delay projects, as it adjusts to the changing energy environment and as the midstream sector adjusts to declining business and volumes due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Unlike crude oil, storage for NGLs is currently, or in the foreseeable future, not an issue, while lower NGL production makes this even less of a problem.

This was seen in Enterprise's decision to convert its NGL storage for oil products, while infrastructure constraints for gas processing, fractionation, and terminal capacity have been resolved, said Platts Analytics.

Traders said lower NGL production would push Mont Belvieu prices higher, which will then drive up Asian markers Argus Far East Index and Saudi contract prices in the short term, even as term supply from Saudi Arabia for May loading saw some cancellations and deferments due cuts in OPEC+ oil production.

India would continue to take West Asia supply, though imports have paused on ample stocks. However, China -- which recently resumed imports of U.S. LPG with easing of trade tensions -- as well as South Korea, Japan and



Indonesia, would need to compete for West Asia volumes. They will also seek alternatives from West and North Africa, Australia, Canada and Russia, traders said.

The recent return of Chinese propane dehydrogenation plants from shutdowns have restored demand for propane as feedstock and pushed the premium of propane to butane above \$30/mt this week.

But traders said after Chinese imports hit about 1.7 million-1.8 million mt in May, June volumes are estimated at 1.5 million mt, which could somewhat ease the impact of lower U.S. shipments. Chinese imports fell almost 17 percent year on year in March to 1.27 million mt, customs data showed, as demand was dampened by government measures to contain the coronavirus spread.

■ **U.S. market could be short by June/July**

As lower U.S. crude oil production targets take hold for May, June and July, unconventional producers are shutting-in some 1.3 million bpd of crude, which suggests a lowering of LPG volumes by around 275,000 bpd, Platts Analytics said.

"Depending on the duration and further magnitude of

those cuts that shortfall may tighten up markets from the supply side. Alternatively, the current WTI price around \$25/b suggests that those shut-ins may not hold out for very long and we may see some production coming back," according to Platts Analytics.

Lower production beginning this year would also reduce U.S. domestic propane stocks for winter, and lead to lower exports, traders said.

Expectations of a rare Arctic blast into the U.S. Northeastern states this weekend, bringing record cold temperatures, adds to concerns of a jump in demand for heating fuels, trade sources said.

U.S. exports have been fluctuating in recent months, according to industry estimates, with 2.4 million mt loaded in January, 1.7 million mt in February, 2.3 million in March, 1.5 million-2 million mt estimated for April loading and around 1.3 million mt for May loading that is due for June arrival to Asia.

Lower availability at the dock will depend on demand overseas to set the price, Platts Analytics said. "If India, Indonesia, and Brazil are able to satisfy their domestic demand, then there may be some room in the market."

Platts Analytics said if U.S. propane stocks do not rise to 70 million barrels by the end of summer, "we think there could be a lot of pressure on Mont Belvieu propane prices."

"If product availability does become limited in the June/July time frame, a price increase may come out against shippers rather than passed through to prices in Asia. Cancellations on lack of product will leave a few vessels free to cut freight costs," according to Platts Analytics.

But overall, U.S. LPG exports are expected to remain high this year on open arbitrage to Asia, where residential and household demand remains firm.

CFR North Asia prices have rebounded from around two-decade lows of \$185/mt on March 23, to \$317/mt on May 6, according to S&P Global Platts data. Platts FOB USGC propane cargoes were assessed at \$217.93/mt on May 7.

(Source: Platts)

Norway's oil industry questions \$10 billion tax plan

The chief executives of Equinor and Aker ASA said that while the plan will improve oil companies' liquidity, it does nothing to address risks related to production capacity and the startup of new projects.

"Changes to the proposal are required in order to avoid significant and permanent reduction in capacity and competency for the Norwegian supplier industry," said Aker ASA's chief executive Oyvind Eriksen.

Equinor's CEO, Eldar Saetre, said the government's tax deferral would force the company to delay the start of several new projects.

The Norwegian government proposed the tax deferral plan at the end of last month,

hoping to prevent a slump in investments. It boils down to letting companies write off investments more quickly, Reuters reported at the time, allowing them to delay paying taxes. It would also make their taxable income lower, allowing them to take more substantial deductions on new investments.

"Even if the government pursues a policy of becoming less dependent on oil, it's important to prevent the current crisis from making the decline so rapid that we lose key competence that will help the transition," Prime Minister Erna Solberg said at the time.

The proposed measures may be positive for exclusively Norway-focused companies, but Equinor also has operations outside the

country, which would limit the benefits of the tax deferrals, a local energy analyst told Reuters in April.

Norway agreed last month to cut its oil production by 250,000 bpd in June and then maintain 134,000-bpd lower production until the end of the year.

The baseline for the cuts will be 1.86 million bpd, which, according to the Norwegian Petroleum Directorate, is substantially higher than the average production rate for March, which was 1.68 million bpd. The difference means that the actual June cut will be about 70,000 bpd, based on March levels, according to Oilprice calculations.

(Source: oilprice.com)



A \$10-billion tax deferral plan proposed by the Norwegian government has prompted two oil industry executives to voice concern that it would do nothing to support the sustainability of the oil industry in Europe's largest producer, Bloomberg reports.

Second Announcement
Call for public RE tender (First/Second publish)
One Stages tender

N.I.O.C 1399.613 Subject of Tender: P/F: "SJ" HYD. POWER UNIT MODEL: YZ3000 National Iranian Drilling Company

Tender descriptions:

The Tender holder	Registration No. through national electronic tendering system	Tender No. /Tender No.	Estimated value /Rial(
National Iranian Drilling Company	3,236,506	Tender No.: FP/12-99/012 Indent No.: 08-22-9845068	3,500,000,000

• **Qualitative evaluation of tenderers**

Method	Qualification process will be done in plain mode in offers opening session according to presentation of valid practice certificate / legal documents (certificate of corporation/ supply announcement up to latest changes) which should be related to tender subject.

• **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) closing date-2020: MAY-26(
Distribution Place	Hall No. 113, 1 st floor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN 061-34148660 Room No. 431, 4 th floor, Oil central building No.8, Yaghma alley, Jomhori Islami st., Tehran - Iran
Submitting Method	• 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. • Submitting format Request for the purpose of receiving Tender Documents.
Closing date	• 35Days after the last time of Purchasing) closing date-2020JULY-06 (
Documents Receiving Method	• The envelopes will be opened At 09:00 a.m On-2020 JULY 07
Address	Hall No. 107, 1 st floor, Tender Committee, Operation building, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN. Tel: +98-61-34148580 +98-61-34148569

• **Tender Guarantee**

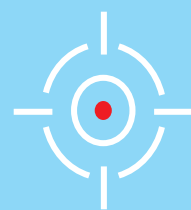
Value of guarantee	175,000,000 Rial 1,281 / Euro
Type of guarantee	✓ Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that obtain activity license from the central bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran. ✓ Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt under account number 4001114006376636 (Shaba No. IR 350100004001114006376636) in name of "NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran.
Duration of credit & quotation	Tender Guarantee and quotation should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum for one time in initial validity duration.

(Foreign Procurement Dept.)
More of this & other tenders are accessible by click on: www.nidc.ir <http://sapp.ir/nidc-pr>
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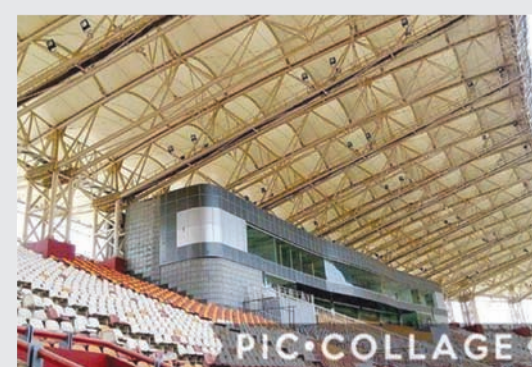
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Oil min. holds phone talk with Russia's energy min. on reducing oil output

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

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When self-deceiving MBS imagines himself as super hero in a supposed David-and-Goliath-style story!

By Mohammad Jafari

The Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman (MBS), the de facto ruler in Riyadh, has proved that he can't tolerate any opposite view, any dissident or any criticism in any field as the MBS imagines that his thoughts have their roots in somewhere out of the world, unaware that his self-deceiving character has caused even his close friends to abandon him gradually.

Akbar Shahid Ahmed, a foreign affairs reporter based in the D.C. bureau of the Huffington Post, has reviewed in his commentary published by the HuffPost a series of different views towards Saudi crown prince's dream-like plans, including Neom project.

On April 13, Saudi security forces killed an activist named Abdul Rahim al-Huwaiti, protesting displacement for a futuristic megacity. When authorities came to raid his house and arrest him, he opened fire, Saudi officials claimed.

It's the first death connected to Neom, a proposed \$500 billion city in a remote northwestern corner of Saudi Arabia that is a signature project for the country's crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman. The de facto Saudi ruler says the metropolis will be stunningly futuristic, with residents' every need met by robots and the so-called internet of things, and unique in the ultraconservative kingdom for relaxed social norms and laws. "You have no one there, so the regulations will be based on the needs of companies and the investors," the prince, known as MBS, said in 2017.

But 20,000 people were there, mostly members of the ancient Huwaitat tribe ? including al-Huwaiti, who spent months speaking up for them in online videos before his government shot him to death in his own home.

As MBS's international reputation has swung between wunderkind and tyrant, his rich foreign friends, including powerful Americans, have consistently pushed one narrative. They argue that his economic reforms for Saudi Arabia, the biggest economy in the Arab world, are worth supporting regardless of his human rights abuses.

It's now becoming clear that his repression is inseparable from his plans for the Saudi markets.

After al-Huwaiti's death, prominent Saudi rights advocates began sharing a hashtag on Twitter ? one of the most popular social networks in the kingdom ? calling him a martyr. Another activist from the tribe, Alya Abutayah Alhwaiti, told HuffPost, other media outlets and her followers that she received threats of government retribution for her posts.

For some of MBS's most important allies, it could be time for a reckoning, if only for the sake of public perception. Neom's board of advisers boasts big names: Rob Speyer, the head of real estate company Tishman Speyer; Masayoshi Son, the chairman of SoftBank; Timothy Collins, the CEO of private equity firm Ripplewood Holdings and chairman of the board of advisers for Yale University's



School of Management; Marc Raibert, the chairman of Boston Dynamics; John Rossant, the NewCities Foundation chairman; Alexandra Cousteau, the president of the Oceans 2050 Foundation; noted MIT professor Carlo Ratti; former DowDuPont chairman Andrew Liveris; and top chemist Jean Fréchet.

Those nine individuals have been on the board since Riyadh first announced its formation in 2018 ? one week after Saudi agents murdered journalist Jamal Khashoggi. As other board members announced they were stepping down, Ratti's office told Fast Company he would decide how to proceed following U.S. investigations. Weeks later, the CIA concluded MBS ordered Khashoggi's killing. Ratti appears to have stayed on the board anyway.

None of those nine listed Neom advisers responded to HuffPost's inquiries about their involvement and whether they had heard about al-Huwaiti's death. The only board member to do so was the tenth, Ali Shihabi, who joined the group earlier this year. Previously known as an advocate of MBS in the U.S., Shihabi said via email that the government responded appropriately and questioned al-Huwaiti and his tribe.

Their decision likely isn't about income ? Shihabi wrote that he wasn't aware of compensation for the role other than for travel expenses.

Instead, board members are likely grappling with the same dilemma facing hundreds of other individuals, businesses and even governments over their relationships with MBS: how close to remain to a partner who is sometimes useful for his wealth and influence, but seemingly always just days away from another reprehensible, embarrassing move.

Leaders in global business stuck by the prince despite his responsibility for Khashog-

gi's murder and a Saudi military intervention in Yemen that's caused thousands of deaths. Will they do the same as he launches crackdowns on behalf of projects that bear their names?

Filming videos in his hometown of Khuraybah, al-Huwaiti portrayed MBS as out of touch with Saudi citizens. Members of the Huwaitat tribe were not prepared to move on behalf of Neom, he suggested, and they worried the government would persecute them for their refusal.

The community initially saw the potential of the project but soon became anxious, said Alhwaiti, who lived in the area as a child and now resides in London. They were given few details about the compensation they would receive for being displaced and worried that authorities would destroy their homes without even considering if they were empty. Alhwaiti amplified Twitter hashtags critical of Neom for months, as well as al-Huwaiti's videos.

Al-Huwaiti repeatedly told his viewers he expected to be targeted.

Then officials came to his home last month and he filmed himself describing their arrival, apparently on his roof. What happened next is disputed. Saudi authorities say he shot at them instead of surrendering himself as a "wanted" man. Alhwaiti, who is in touch with members of her tribe who are on the ground, says he did not have a gun and shared photographs of a shot-up building.

"They made an example of Abdul Rahim. ... That's what the government does," she said.

The heavy-handed approach reflects the man now running Saudi Arabia day to day.

And his backers insist there's no scandal in either the shooting or the displacement. Shihabi, the Neom board member, claimed al-Huwaiti was armed and forced police to call in special backup, though he said he was not sure if the activist shot first. (The Saudi state narrative does not mention a second team being called in.)

A similar sequence of events would have occurred in the U.S., Shihabi suggested.

"Police shoot people for much less than threatening them with an AK-47," he wrote.

He also defended MBS's approach to the land. Saudi households have received government requests for their property for decades, Shihabi wrote, saying his own family had sold land to the state. Plus, he asserted, "the Huwaitat is not particularly 'native' to that spot" since the tribe has members in multiple countries.

Limiting citizens' ability to protest displacement is important in the kingdom, Shihabi argued. "If the [government] allowed a [Western-style] process to take place every time they exercised eminent domain Saudi would not have been built in 50 years," he wrote.

In the past, however, the process of the government taking land typically involved a negotiation, said Yasmine Farouk, a visiting fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

"Opposition is not tolerated but it doesn't always get this violent," she said.

"MBS has been destroying all sources and dynamics of traditional legitimacy on which his family has relied," Farouk said. "One of them was the respect for the tribal social fabric."

Al-Huwaiti referenced "the rule of children" in his videos ? a seeming nod to not just the 34-year-old prince's age but also his style of leadership.

While some Huwaitat leaders reiterated their allegiance to MBS and his father, King Salman, in the weeks after al-Huwaiti's killing, according to Saudi media reports, Alhwaiti believes that was simply further evidence of bullying by the regime.

She wants MBS and Neom officials to prevent harassment tied to the development. "It's very simple," she said. "Don't move us from our home. We want to be part of this successful thing."

The region's residents are ready for a long fight, she believes.

"He wants to vanish anything original here," Alhwaiti said. "He will be very stubborn, but

we are as well."

A lawyer representing Alhwaiti wrote to the entire Neom board on April 28 asking it to ensure the development respects Saudi citizens' rights, but received no response.

This was supposed to be MBS's year. Prior to the coronavirus outbreak, he was scheduled to host a summit of international leaders in November, a public relations coup for a young ruler who just recently risked global pariah status.

The world seemed to be getting accustomed to the prince's pugnacity. MBS's arrest of two rival princes in March drew little international condemnation compared to his previous assaults on royal family members, or his even more audacious targeting of Khashoggi, Lebanon's prime minister and Yemeni civilians.

Neom is central to his strategy of winning international approval and investment to wean Saudi Arabia off of oil. Along with the new city's modern features, Saudi authorities have promoted plans to tie it closely to neighboring Jordan and Egypt ? the only two Arab states to recognize another Saudi neighbor that's also a stone's throw from Neom, Israel. Washington has been eager to encourage cooperation between the Israelis and the Saudis, its two closest regional partners.

Headlines tying the project to a killing and a David-and-Goliath-style struggle threaten the prince's pitch.

Al-Huwaiti's killing drew global media attention. It came as MBS received a new, separate wave of criticism from influential Americans, one of his most important audiences. Republicans slammed him for hurting U.S. fossil fuel companies by driving oil prices down. This was a shift: Most GOP members traditionally support the kingdom and follow President Donald Trump's example of backing the prince, while most Democrats have already been skeptical of MBS for years over human rights concerns and pledged to get tougher on him.

At home, bad news about Neom wouldn't ordinarily represent a big problem. Citizens in major Saudi cities like Riyadh and Jeddah often overlook, or hear heavily controlled information about, sparsely populated corners of the country, Farouk said.

"To Saudis, Neom is one of the things that Mohammed bin Salman has used in a very systematic way to sell his vision to the West more than to inside," she said.

But the timing of the trouble with the Huwaitat is unhelpful for MBS within the kingdom. It's one more sign of a mismatch between the prince's proposals and what many of his people actually need, according to Annelle Sheline, a research fellow at the Quincy Institute.

"People have yet to see any benefits from new cinemas. ... Those things don't matter for a rural population where there's still not enough jobs," she said. "It highlights that so much of what MBS has done so far is aimed at this Saudi young elite and also aimed at the global elite with his use of all their catchwords ? and a lot of it is smoke and mirrors."

As Saudis hear their government warn of less spending and a reduced standard of living because of the downturn in the global economy and the end of a period of historically high oil prices, it's clear to them the prince's "Vision 2030" plan has not overhauled their country ? and that when their leader did have income to experiment with, he spent it on expensive boondoggles like Neom. Experts now say the city and similarly ambitious projects should be wound down to save money.

For MBS, downgrading the city would be hard to swallow. "All authoritarian leaders want to talk of big things. ... want a big thing linked to their name that lasts forever," Farouk said. "He still doesn't have this kind of legacy."

Most of his fellow citizens face even more visceral disappointment.

"It's unfortunate that so many of his promises are failing, because many Saudis were excited for a new approach," Sheline said.

How presidential grandstanding can simply ignore U.S. Congress War Power Act to wage war against other nations!

The War Powers Act, which once was approved by the Congress to mandate the president to get authorization to launch military operation overseas, can be easily regarded as an unconstitutional encroachment on executive power by the U.S. president under the pretext of protecting national interest.

Jim Bovard, an anti-war American author whose articles have been publicly denounced by the chief of the FBI, the Postmaster General, the Secretary of HUD, and the heads of the DEA, FEMA, and EEOC and numerous federal agencies, has explained in his article published by the Libertarian Institute that the Congress' War Powers Act has failed to deter U.S. attacks abroad in the subsequent decades.

Fifty years ago, President Richard Nixon popped up on national television on a Thursday night to proudly announce that he invaded Cambodia. At that time, Nixon was selling himself as a peacemaker, promising to withdraw U.S. troops from the Vietnam War. But after the sixth time that Nixon watched the movie "Patton," he was overwhelmed by martial fervor and could not resist sending U.S. troops crashing into another nation.

Presidents had announced military action prior to Nixon's Cambodia surprise but there was a surreal element to Nixon's declaration that helped launch a new era of presidential grandstanding. Ever since then, presidents have routinely gone on television to announce foreign attacks that almost always provoke widespread applause—at least initially.

Back in 1970, congressional Democrats were outraged and denounced Nixon for launching an illegal war. In his televised speech, Nixon also warned that "the forces of totalitarianism and anarchy will threaten free nations and free institutions throughout the world." Four days after Nixon's speech, Ohio National Guard troops suppressed the anarchist threat by gunning down thirteen antiwar protesters and bystanders on the campus of Kent State University, leaving four students dead.

Three years after Nixon's surprise invasion, Congress passed the War Powers Act which required the president to get authorization from Congress after committing U.S. troops to any combat situation that lasted more than 60 days. Congress was seeking to check out-of-control presidential war-making. But the law has failed to deter U.S. attacks abroad in the subsequent decades.

In 1998, President Bill Clinton launched a missile strike against Sudan after U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania were bombed by militants. The U.S. government never produced any evidence linking the targets in Sudan to the terrorist attacks. The owners of the El-Shifa Pharmaceutical Industries plant—the largest pharmaceutical factory in East Africa—sued for compensation after Clinton's attack demolished their facility. Eleven years later, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit effectively dismissed the case, "President Clinton, in his capacity as commander in chief, fired missiles at a target of his choosing to pursue a military objective he had determined was in the national interest. Under the Constitution, this decision is immune from judicial review." Presidential determinations based on secret (and often false) information were sufficient to legally absolve any killings or calamities abroad.

In 1999, Clinton unilaterally attacked Serbia, killing up to 1,500 Serb civilians in a 78 day bombing campaign justified to force the Serb government to embrace human rights and ethnic tolerance. Serbia had taken no aggression against the United States, but that did not deter Clinton from bombing Serb marketplaces, hospitals, factories, bridges, and the nation's largest television station (which was supposedly guilty of broadcasting anti-NATO propaganda). The House of Representatives took a vote and failed to support Clinton's war effort, and 31 congressmen sued Clinton for violating the War Powers Act. A federal judge dismissed the lawsuit after deciding that the congressmen did not have legal standing to sue. Most of the U.S. media ignored dead Serb women and children and instead portrayed the bombing as a triumph of American benevolence.

After the 9/11 attacks, President George W. Bush acted entitled to attack anywhere to "rid the world of evil." Congress speedily passed an Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF) which the Bush administration and subsequent presidents have asserted authorizes U.S. attacks on bad guys on any square mile on earth. Congressional and judicial restraints on Bush administration killing and torturing were practically nonexistent.

Bush's excesses spurred a brief resurgence of antiwar protests which largely vanished after the election of President Barack Obama, who quickly received a Nobel Peace Prize after taking office. That honorific did not dissuade Obama from bombing seven nations, often based on secret evidence accompanied by false denials of the civilian casualties inflicted by American bombings of weddings and other bad photo ops.

In 2011, Obama decided to bomb Libya because the U.S. disapproved of its ruler, Muammar Gaddafi. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton notified Congress that the White House "would forge ahead with military action in Libya even if Congress passed a resolution constraining the mission." Plagiarizing the Bush administration, the Obama administration indicated that congressional restraints would be "an unconstitutional encroachment on executive power." Obama "had the constitutional authority" to attack Libya "because he could reasonably determine that such use of force was in the national interest," according to the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel. Yale professor Bruce Ackerman lamented that "history will say that the War Powers Act was condemned to a quiet death by a president who had solemnly pledged, on the campaign trail, to put an end to indiscriminate warring."

On the campaign trail in 2016, Donald Trump denounced his opponent as "Trigger Happy Hillary" for her enthusiasm for foreign warring. But shortly after taking office, Trump reaped his greatest inside-the-Beltway applause for launching cruise missile strikes against the Syrian government after allegations the Assad government had used chemical weapons.

The following year, the Trump administration joined France and Britain in bombing Syria after another alleged chemical weapons attack. Several officials with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons leaked information showing that the chemical weapons accusations against the Syria government were false or contrived but that was irrelevant to the legality of the U.S. attack.

Why? Because the Justice Department ruled that President Trump could "lawfully" attack Syria "because he had reasonably determined that the use of force would be in the national interest." That legal vindication for attacking Syria cited a Justice Department analysis on Cambodia from 1970 that stated that presidents could engage U.S. forces in hostilities abroad based on a "long continued practice on the part of the Executive, acquiesced in by the Congress." The Justice Department stressed that "no U.S. airplanes crossed into Syrian air-space" and that "the actual attack lasted only a few minutes." So the bombs didn't count? If a foreign government used the same argument to shrug off a few missiles launched at Washington D.C., no one in America would be swayed that the foreign regime had not committed an act of war. But it's different when the U.S. president orders killings.



National Iranian Oil Company
IRANIAN OFFSHORE OIL COMPANY
Pre-Qualification

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1399.674

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Performance Period:

2 Years

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- 3: Proposals should be submitted with no condition, incomplete, ambiguous or adverse of Package specification in due date.
- 4: Obtain a minimum Score of Pre-qualification assessments.

Note: Bidders shall be the Owner of the Packages or submit the valid agreement for hiring the Packages among the Period of the Contract. Bidders who have ability and are willing to participate in the Pre-qualification are requested to submit a written request to Contract Department, within Ten Days from Announcement by representative.

Closing Date for submission of the Pre-Qualification Documents shall be up to 14 days after the deadline of receiving Pre-Qualification Documents. Place and time of submission and opening of proposals will be stated in Tender Documents.

Address for willing to participate and submission Pre-Qualification: **5th Floor, #12, Touraj St., Khakzad st., Vali-e-Asr Ave., after Balal Mosque, before Modarres Crossroad, Tehran, Iran.**

Telephone: +98 21 23 94 25 11

Fax: +98 21 22 66 42 34

Note: Additional information is available at IOOC website address: www.iooc.co.ir

Iranian Offshore Oil Company Public Relations

Siraf to launch historical ceramics data bank

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** – Siraf Port in the southwestern province of Bushehr will establish a data bank on fragments of historical ceramics and pottery discovered through excavations, provincial tourism chief has said.

The findings, which were collected by British archaeologist David Whitehouse and his Iranian colleagues in six seasons of excavation during the 1970s, are currently preserved in the province's cultural heritage department and will be organized after about 50 years, Mehdi Azarian said, CHTN reported on Saturday.



He also noted that most of the ceramics date back to the Sassanid era (224–651) and the early Islamic centuries.

With about 1,100 years of history, the historical port of Siraf in the Persian Gulf has been inscribed on the National Heritage list.

At one time, the port had been one of the major centers for marketing pearls and silk in the region, but it was gradually submerged over the centuries.

According to some historians, Siraf had a population of about 300,000 during the early Islamic era and this fact shows that it was a large city. However, today, just about 7,000 people live in Siraf in a small area.

Flash floods unearth human skeletons dating to later Islamic times

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** – Two human skeletons, which have newly been discovered in Iran's northern Golestan Province, are estimated to date from the later Islamic times, CHTN reported on Friday.

The burial method indicates that these two skeletons belong to the late Islamic period, which is consistent with previous archaeological studies in this cemetery, and according to the burial culture of the Islamic period, there were no objects in the graves, the report added.



The human remains were brought to light after rounds of rainstorms partly washed the soil away from margins of an ancient commentary nearing the village of Qarah Tappeh, in Torkaman county, Golestan province.

"Over the last few days, the remains of two human skeletons have emerged, which according to archeological observations of this department is the result of several factors, including the widening of Gorgan-Turkmen road in the past years which leveled the edges of Agha-Imam Islamic cemetery; last year's floods in the province that caused gigantic volumes of water entering this area; and recent rains that caused further erosion of the soil."

In 2016, geophysical surveys and archaeological soundings for demarcating a protective core and buffer zone for the sites of Qara-Tappeh and Sagzabad resulted in the discovery of a vast graveyard to the east of Qara-Tappeh, west, and south of Tappeh Qabrestan estimated to date back to the late Iron II-early Iron III period.

Ancient castles and fortresses in Iran: Salsaal Castle

HERITAGE d e s k The ruins of Salsaal Castle, also known as Salsaal-Lisar Castle, is nested on top of a hill in the Hareh Dasht region of Talesh county, northern Iran.

Made of stone, mortar, and brick, the structure is said to date back to the Seljuk era (1037–1194), holding clues to architectural traditions of the time. The castle comprises of an alcove, sentry picket, water reservoir and stable.



Covering an area of 2373 square kilometers, Talesh county is situated on the southwestern coast of the Caspian Sea.

COVID-19 cuts foreign arrivals in Iran by 15.8%: UNWTO

→ 1 "Taking into account past market trends, this would mean that between five and seven years' worth of growth will be lost to COVID-19. Putting this into context, UNWTO notes that in 2009, on the back of the global economic crisis, international tourist arrivals declined by 4 percent, while the SARS outbreak led to a decline of just 0.4 percent in 2003."

UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said: "Tourism is among the hardest hit of all economic sectors. However, tourism is also united in helping to address this immense health emergency – our first and utmost priority – while working together to mitigate the impact of the crisis, particularly on employment, and to support the wider recovery efforts through providing jobs and driving economic welfare worldwide."

Pololikashvili added that, while it is too early to make a full assessment of the likely impact of COVID-19 on tourism, it is clear that millions of jobs within the sector are at risk of being lost. Around 80 percent of all tourism businesses are small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and the sector has been leading the way in providing employment and other opportunities for women, youth and rural communities.

Alongside this new assessment, UNWTO underlines tourism's historic resilience and capacity to create jobs after crisis situations, while also emphasizing the importance of international cooperation and of ensuring the sector is made a central part of recovery efforts.

Since the start of the current crisis, UNWTO has been working closely with the wider United Nations system, including directly alongside the World Health Organization (WHO) to guide the sector, issuing key recommendations for both high-level leaders and individual tourists. To better consolidate and strengthen the response, the Organization has established the Global Tourism Crisis Committee.

Earlier this month and in response to the coronavirus pandemic, Iran's Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts announced new guidelines and instructions to ramp up the safety of travels across the country ahead of



File photo depicts international travelers posing for a photo during their visits to the UNESCO-registered Persepolis, which was once the ceremonial capital of the mighty Achaemenid Empire (550-330 BC), in southern Iran.

anticipated travel surge in the ancient country.

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).

Carpet Museum to host meeting on medallion patterns

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** – The Carpet Museum of Iran will host an online meeting on Monday on medallion patterns of the carpets woven in the central city of Isfahan, the museum's director Parisa Beyzaei said, CHTN reported on Saturday.

Carpet designer Hamid Zarei is scheduled to deliver a speech during the meeting, which will be streamed both on the museum's official website and on social media, she added.

Handwoven Persian carpets are sought after internationally for their delicate designs and good quality. A medallion pattern is arguably the most characteristic feature of all types of Persian rugs. However, there is tremendous variation in the shapes and sizes of the medallions as well as the way they are used in various rugs. It's not wrong to say that no two rugs will have the same medallion layout.



Medallion carpet is any floor covering on which the decoration is dominated by

a single symmetrical centrepiece, such as a star-shaped, circular, quatrefoiled, or

octagonal figure. The name, however, is sometimes also given to a carpet on which the decoration consists of several forms of this kind or even of rows of medallion figures.

Among Persian carpets, particularly those of the classic period, the medallion may represent an open lotus blossom with 16 petals as seen from above, a complex star form, or a quatrefoil with pointed lobes.

Toward each end of the carpet there may be added to this centrepiece a cartouche form (an oval or oblong ornate frame), placed transversely, and a finial or pendant that sometimes is very large. In each corner of the field there may appear a quarter-medallion, which may or may not have the same contour and the same appendages as the central medallion. Such combinations are still used in the decoration of modern Persian carpets.

45 new items in Ilam listed as national heritage

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** – A total of 45 historical sites and movable properties, scattered across the western Iranian province of Ilam, have been inscribed on the National Heritage List, provincial tourism chief has said.

Some 39 historical sites as well as six movable properties of the province were added to the National Heritage List during the previous Iranian calendar year 1398 (ended on March 20), Abdolmalek Shanbehzadeh announced on Thursday, CHTN reported.

So far 203 archaeological and historical sites have been identified across the province through excavations and surveys conducted by Ilam Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department, he added.

He also noted that 12 mansions and historical sites in the province underwent some rehabilitation works in the previous Iranian year.

The national registrations and restoration projects aimed at better preservation as well as help tourism develop in the region, he stated.

Home to almost half of Iran's UNESCO sites, western Iran is a land of hospitable people, wild extremes and wilder history, and it may be an independent traveler's adventure playground. The region also witnessed the rise and fall of many great empires once bordering Mesopotamia, Ottoman Turkey, and Czarist Russia.

From the fecund Caspian coast to the stark, mountainous northern borders and the crumbling desert ruins of the southern plains, the region hosts everything from paddy fields to blizzards to Persian gardens.

Mazandaran craftspeople produce medical products amid corona outbreak



TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** – Some 110,000 face masks and over 2,500 medical gowns have been produced by craftspeople of the northern Mazandaran province, CHTN reported.

As the country is fighting coronavirus pandemic, some handicrafts workshops in the province have been repurposed to produce medical products, the provincial tourism chief Seifollah Farzaneh said on Saturday.

He also announced that nine hotels across the province are ready to accommodate medical staff and coronavirus patients during their recovery period.

Earlier this month, craftspeople of the southeastern Sistan-Baluchestan province produced some 300,000 protective face masks, which were distributed among local residents and foreign tourists.

Last month, a handicraft workshop in northeastern Khorasan Razavi province, as well as five traditional costumes production workshops in western Kordestan province, were also readjusted to produce face masks.

Stretched along the Caspian Sea and Alborz mountain range, Mazandaran is a popular destination for domestic holiday-makers.

National Honey Festival to be held in Khomein



TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** – The National Honey Festival will be held in the city of Khomein, central province of Markazi, in August, provincial tourism chief has announced.

The festival aims at promoting the honey produced in Khomein, as a unique brand to domestic and foreign markets, Ali Mashhadi said, CHTN reported on Saturday.

The festival will help boost honey production in the city and generate jobs in the region, he added.

He also expressed his hope that the coronavirus would be eradicated by the time the festival begins as Khomein is declared as one of the areas with no traces of coronavirus.

Markazi province is considered as the industrial capital of the country. It is also rich in natural, historical, cultural and religious attractions.

Hand-woven carpets and klisms, made in its cities including Farahan, Sarugh, Liliyan, Senejan and Vafs are known internationally.

Iran, Lebanon, Palestine iconic sites lit white to honor medics fighting COVID-19

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Four religious and tourist sites in Iran, Lebanon, and Palestine were illuminated with white lights to show solidarity with healthcare workers on the front lines of the coronavirus pandemic.

Tabiat (Nature) Bridge in Tehran and Khajou Bridge in Isfahan as the two major tourist attractions in Iran, as well as the Temple of Jupiter – the world's largest Roman temple situated in Lebanon's Baalbek, and the Beit Jala Mosque and St. Nicholas Church in Palestine, were lit up in honor of the emergency workers.

The measure was taken to mark the World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day, May 8, and in line with a campaign titled "The Common Pain" launched by Asian Mayors Forum.

World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day is an opportunity to show our collective gratitude to our 13 million volunteers for their exemplary dedication to the humanitarian cause and our Fundamental Principles and also to thank them for their kindness, bravery and selflessness, according to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies website.



"On May 8 this year, we find ourselves physically distant from one another, but we are closer than ever as we walk the path to-



wards humanity. We are truly united in this crisis. The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement has always been there,



close to the people who need us most when times have been the toughest, when hope might seem so far out of reach."



Charities release 8,599 inmates of unintentional crimes

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Some 8,599 inmates of unintentional crimes were released from prison with the help of charities last year (ended March 20), IRNA reported on Saturday.

According to the Blood Money Organization, 330 of the released prisoners were women and the rest were men who had been arrested in most cases for issuing checks or bail through the plaintiffs.

The whole debt of 8,599 released prisoners amounted to 18 trillion rials (nearly \$428 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials), 44 percent of which was waived by the plaintiffs.

Among the convicts, 451 were in prison due to their inability to pay their debts related to blood money and 8,148 due to their inability to pay their financial debts related to checks, dowries, and alimony.

Also, 1,249 prisoners released without



payment and only with the efforts of the provincial agencies, through peace and reconciliation.

In the provincial list, the blood money organization of Tehran, with the release of 801 prisoners, had the highest number of freedoms.

Besides, Isfahan and Khorasan Razavi, with the release of 756 and 551 prisoners, respectively, played a greater role in the release of involuntary crime doers after Tehran.

Guangzhou receives thank you video for donations to sister city in Iran

China's city of Guangzhou received a video message from its sister city of Gorgan in Iran on Friday as a token of gratitude for the donation of medical supplies to aid Iran's fight against COVID-19.

Abdolreza Dadboud, mayor of Gorgan, said in the video that global cooperation has been an effective method to better manage and control the spread of the novel coronavirus.

"Fortunately, both countries of the Islamic Republic of Iran and People's Republic of China have had close collaboration in the past two months and great efforts have been made," he said.

The mayor thanked Guangzhou for delivering 300,000 masks and 200 thermometers to Gorgan.

Noting that all masks have been distributed to medics and local residents and the thermometers have been used in screening patients, he said he would like to extend



his sincere gratitude to all those involved in the process of delivering the shipment.

"We are looking forward to extending collaborations with Guangzhou and developing the plans and projects, which have already been arranged as soon as the coronavirus pandemic ends across the world especially in both countries of Iran and China," he said.

Guangzhou paired with Gorgan as sister cities in December 2018.

(Source: Xinhua)

WHO provides Iran with 100,000 COVID-19 test kits

SOCIETY TEHRAN — The World Health Organization has delivered 100,000 coronavirus diagnostic kits to Iran, health ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour said, ISNA reported on Saturday.

"Dr. [Christoph] Hamelmann, the WHO Representative in Iran, paid a visit to Pasteur Institute of Iran, and praised the country's efforts over the past months in order to expand and improve capacities for diagnosing COVID-19," Jahanpour wrote on his Twitter account.

On March 10, a team of experts from WHO, GOARN partners, Robert Koch Institute in Berlin and the Chinese Center for Disease Control concluded a technical support mission on COVID-19 to Iran.

"After five days of extensive meetings and field visits, we see that Iran's strategies and priorities to control COVID-19 are evolving in the right direction, a comprehensive coordinated approach is being applied, and

solid work is being done especially in the areas of case management, laboratories, and risk communications. We are also impressed by the engagement from other sectors of the community.

Health officials and health workers are clearly working very hard, and are committed to controlling this outbreak and saving lives. The government is leveraging the strong national health system and disaster management capacities to respond to the outbreak," said Dr. Richard Brennan, WHO Regional Emergency Director for the Eastern Mediterranean Region, who led the mission.

The number of people diagnosed with coronavirus in Iran reached 106,220 on Saturday, of whom 6,589 have died and 85,064 recovered so far.

Over the past 24 hours, 1,529 new cases of people having the virus have been identified, Deputy Health Minister Kianoush Jahanpour said, ISNA reported.



The director of Pasteur Institute of Iran, Dr. Alireza Biglari (left) received the new COVID-19 test kits from the WHO representative in the I.R. Iran, Dr. Christoph Hamelmann (right).

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → E

Knowledge-based companies unite to counter coronavirus

All knowledge-based companies in the country have been united to combat the coronavirus and many startups have been activated in this field, said Sourena Sattari, vice president for science and technology.

Some 200,000 nano masks are produced daily in the country, Sattari said, hoping that the output will reach 300,000 by the end of the week, IRNA reported.

He said Iran is one of the few countries that are able to manufacture machinery for producing nano masks which block particles less than three-tenths of a nanometer, including viruses.

شرکت‌های دانش بنیان برای مقابله با کرونا بسیج شده‌اند

سورنا ستاری معاون علمی و فناوری ریاست جمهوری گفت تمامی ظرفیت‌های شرکت‌های دانش بنیان برای مقابله با ویروس کرونا بسیج شده‌اند و استارت‌آپ‌های زیادی در این حوزه فعال شده‌اند. به گزارش ایرنا، ستاری با اشاره به اینکه در حال حاضر روزانه ۲۰۰ هزار عدد ماسک نانویی در کشور تولید می‌شود، گفت امیدواریم تولید این ماسک‌ها تا پایان هفته به ۳۰۰ هزار عدد در روز برسد. وی گفت: ایران جزو معدود کشورهایی است که دستگاه‌های تولید کاغذ نانو فیلترهای ماسک را دارد که قادر هستند تا جلوی ذرات کمتر از سه دهم نانومتر، شامل ویروس‌ها، را بگیرند.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“-bound”

■ **Meaning:** a word ending shows that something is restricted by or confined to

■ **For example:** **Deskbound** executives can't grasp production problems.

PHRASAL VERB

Hammer away

■ **Meaning:** to keep saying something because you want people to understand or accept it

■ **For example:** I keep hammering away at this point because it's important.

IDIOM

Bring someone to heel

■ **Explanation:** if you force someone to behave in a disciplined manner, you bring them to heel

■ **For example:** The boy had always behaved badly, but the new headmaster managed to bring him to heel.

Parts of world on brink of 'sustained heat' beyond human tolerance decades earlier than expected, researchers warn

"Intolerable" heat and humidity caused by global warming had been expected in the coming decades, but now researchers have found that the crisis is already here.

A new study identifies thousands of previously rare or unprecedented bouts of extreme heat and humidity are taking place now across the world in Asia, Africa, Australia, South America and North America.

The southeastern region of the US saw extreme conditions dozens of times, near the Gulf Coast in east Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and the Florida Panhandle. New Orleans, Louisiana and Biloxi, Mississippi were worst hit.

The phenomenon is only now being recognised because prior studies focused on averages of heat and humidity measured over large areas and periods of several hours. In the new study, researchers zoned in on hourly data from 7,877 individual weather stations, allowing them to be more localised and exact.

Extreme heat and humidity episodes greatly impacted coastlines where evaporating seawater provides abundant moisture to be sucked up by hot air, the study noted.

However the effects could also be felt inland in Arkansas and along the southeastern coastal plain, where moisture-laden monsoon winds or vast crop irrigation appear to cause the same effects.

In the Persian Gulf, researchers found more than a dozen recent brief extreme heat outbreaks which threatened human survival.

The current episodes are localised and lasted a matter of hours but they are increasing in frequency and intensity, say the authors of the study, which appears this week in the journal Science Advances.

Such conditions not only pose extreme risk to human life but have the potential to decimate economies.

"Previous studies projected that this would happen several decades from now, but this shows it's happening right now," said lead author Colin Raymond, who did the research when he was a PhD student at Columbia University's Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory. "The times these events last will increase, and the areas they affect will grow in direct correlation with global warming."

The researchers analysed data from weather stations from 1979 to 2017 and found that extreme heat/humidity combinations doubled in that time.

Repeated hot spots were found across India, Bangladesh and Pakistan. Northwestern Australia was another extreme heat zone along with the coasts of the Red Sea and Mexico's Gulf of California.

The highest, potentially fatal readings, were spotted 14 times in the cities of Dhahran and Dammam, Saudi Arabia; Doha, Qatar; and Ras Al Khaimah, United Arab Emirates. More than 3m people live in these regions.

Parts of southeast Asia, southern China, subtropical Africa and the Caribbean were also effected by extreme heat and humidity episodes.

Humid heat is worse for people than "dry" heat because when the air is already heavy with moisture, it slows the evaporation of sweat, the human body's cool-down process. In the most extreme conditions, sweating could stop altogether.

In these extreme humid heat zones, unless people can get into an air-conditioned room, the body's core soars beyond the range it can survive and organ failure begins. Even someone in good health, in the shade, wearing no clothes and with unlimited drinking water, would die within hours, the study has found.

The heat/humidity effect is measured by the so-called "wet bulb" Centigrade scale. In the US, it's the "heat index" or "real-feel" Fahrenheit readings. (The National Weather Service has a helpful chart here).

Previous research shows that even if a person is in peak, physical condition, when the heat index hits 132F (or 32C on the "wet bulb") then outdoor activities become impossible.

At 35C — which happened briefly in the Persian Gulf cities — temperatures become life-threatening. A reading of 35C translates to around 160F on the heat index but the scale ends at 127F, therefore the temperature goes literally off the charts.

The study found that wet-bulb readings close to or topping 30C have doubled since 1979 around the world.

WORDS IN THE NEWS

Russia undecided on climate deal

(September 29, 2003)

President Vladimir Putin has said that Russia has not yet decided whether to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, the treaty aimed at reducing global warming. Without Russia's ratification, the Protocol cannot enter into force. This report from the BBC's science correspondent Richard Black:

Even at the Kyoto Protocol's **inception** in nineteen ninety-seven, there were indications that some nations saw it more as a trade opportunity than an environmental agreement. **Last-minute** revisions were made allowing rich countries to keep their own **emissions** high, instead paying poorer nations to reduce **theirs**. The country which would end up paying most, it was thought, was the United States, while Russia would be the main **beneficiary**. Now the US has withdrawn; and with it has gone Russia's main hope of making money from the treaty. In recent days Russian officials have said they won't **ratify** Kyoto without guarantees of income. There's **undoubtedly** political pressure as well from both sides. When Canada was **wavering** on ratification a year ago, the US **lobbied** hard for it to withdraw, and it's likely the Bush administration has been exerting similar pressure on Russia; whereas some politicians from the European Union, the **bloc** keenest on Kyoto, have said that if Russia wants to be Europe's ally on other issues it must ratify.

■ **Words**

inception: a formal word meaning start

last-minute: if something is last-minute it happens just before something else

emissions: here, gases released into the atmosphere

theirs: here, refers to emissions

beneficiary: if you are a beneficiary you receive or are helped by something

ratify: accept or take on something formally

undoubtedly: without doubt, certainly

wavering: becoming less certain

lobbied: tried to persuade

bloc: a group of countries with similar aims

(Source: BBC)

U.S. tightens visa rules for Chinese journalists amid coronavirus tensions

→ 1 In issuing the new regulation on Friday, the Department of Homeland Security cited what it called China's "suppression of independent journalism."



The regulation, which will take effect on Monday, will limit visas for Chinese reporters to a 90-day period, with the option for extension. Such visas are typically open-ended and do not need to be extended unless the employee moves to a different company or medium.

A senior DHS official, who requested anonymity to discuss the matter, said the new rules would allow the department to review Chinese journalist visa applications more frequently and would likely reduce the overall number of Chinese journalists in the United States.

"It's going to create greater national security protections," the official said.

The new rules will not apply to journalists with passports from Hong Kong or Macau, China's two semi-autonomous territories, according to DHS.

Tensions between the United States and China have increased in recent months as the novel coronavirus has swept across the globe, killing more than 269,000 people worldwide to date, according to a Reuters tally.

President Donald Trump said in late April that he was confident the coronavirus may have originated in a Chinese virology lab, but declined to describe the evidence, ratcheting up tensions with Beijing over the origins of the deadly outbreak. The Chinese state-backed Wuhan Institute of Virology has dismissed the allegations. Most experts believe the virus originated in a market selling wildlife in Wuhan.

Russia records more than 10,000 new coronavirus cases in past day

Russian authorities said on Saturday they had recorded 10,817 new cases of the coronavirus in the last day, pushing the nationwide tally to 198,676.

Russia's coronavirus taskforce said that 104 people had died overnight, bringing the national death toll to 1,827.

Russian coronavirus cases overtook French and German infections this week to become the fifth-highest in the world.

Trump, Saudi king reaffirm defense ties amid tensions

U.S. President Donald Trump and Saudi Arabia's King Salman spoke by phone on Friday and "reaffirmed the strong United States-Saudi defense partnership," the White House said, amid tensions over Saudi's oil output.

The two men spoke after news the United States planned to withdraw two Patriot anti-missile batteries from Saudi Arabia that have been a defense against Iran.

According to Reuters, Trump had worked last month to persuade Saudi Arabia to cut its oil output after an increase in production during the early stages of the coronavirus pandemic put heavy pressure on U.S. oil producers.

"The two leaders agreed on the importance of stability in global energy markets, and reaffirmed the strong United States-Saudi defense partnership," White House spokesman Judd Deere said. "The president and King Salman also discussed other critical regional and bilateral issues and their cooperation as leaders of the G7 and G20, respectively."

The statement did not mention the Patriot missiles and the White House declined further comment.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo confirmed on Friday media reports that the missiles would be withdrawn, but he said it did not signal a decrease in U.S. support for Saudi Arabia and was not an effort to pressure Riyadh on oil issues. He also said it did not mean Washington thought Iran was no longer a threat.

Second White House worker tests positive for coronavirus

A second White House worker this week has tested positive for coronavirus, officials said, even as Donald Trump continued to go mask-free at a World War II commemoration with veterans in their 90s.

A member of Vice President Mike Pence's staff was found to have coronavirus, a senior administration official told journalists, AFP reported.

As a result, six people who may have had contact and who were meant to be traveling with Pence on Air Force Two had to leave the plane before takeoff at Joint Base Andrews, near Washington, for Des Moines, Iowa.

"Out of abundance of caution we went back and looked into all the person's contacts most recently," the official, who asked not to be named, said.

"That's why we asked some of our staff to deplane. Nobody else was exhibiting any symptoms or having any feeling of sickness. We asked them to go get tested and to go home out of an abundance of caution."

On Thursday, a Trump spokesman said the president's valet, a member of the military who is in close contact with the president, had tested positive.

Trump and Pence were tested and confirmed to be negative. Both are tested daily.

The latest scare came as Trump is pressing for a quicker re-opening of the U.S. economy, which has been hammered by the fallout from mass lockdowns and social distancing.

White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany said there was no risk of a White House outbreak or threat to Trump.

U.S. sets up new military base in Syria's oil-rich Dayr al-Zawr

The United States has reportedly established a new military base in Syria's oil-rich eastern province of Dayr al-Zawr after bringing in reinforcements to the war-torn Arab country.

The so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) quoted reliable sources as saying on Friday that the new US base is located in Day al-Zawr's al-Jazrat area.

The US-based monitoring group reported that more than 300 trucks, carrying ammunition, weapons, military and logistical supplies, had entered Syria over the past few days and that most of those trucks headed to al-Jazrat.

It further said the U.S. forces are expanding their base in the al-Omar oil field in the eastern countryside of Dayr Al-Zawr.

Recently, it added, American soldiers and other U.S.-led coalition troops had arrived at the base.

Washington runs several military bases in Syria, mainly in northern and eastern regions where the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) are operating.

The U.S. has been plundering Syria's natural resources and collaborating with Takfiri militants to topple the government of President Bashar al-Assad.

The Damascus government, which is conducting a military campaign against the foreign-backed terrorists, has repeatedly called for withdrawal of the U.S. occupation



forces from Syria.

■ **Trump extends national emergency to continue Syria occupation**

On Friday, U.S. President Donald Trump extended for one year the «national emergency» for Syria in order to continue its occupation of the Arab country.

According to a White House statement, Trump took the decision "to deal with the unusual and extraordinary threat to the na-

tional security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States constituted by the actions of the Government of Syria."

"The United States will consider changes in the composition, policies, and actions of the Government of Syria in determining whether to continue or terminate this national emergency in the future," it said.

■ **Terrorists step up attacks**
The United Nations High Commissioner

for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet warned Friday that Syria's situation is a "ticking time-bomb" as terrorist groups such as Daesh exploit the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic to mount more attacks on civilians.

«We are receiving more reports every day of targeted killings and bombings from one end of the country to the other, with many such attacks taking place in populated areas,» Bachelet said.

«Various parties to the conflict in Syria, including ISIL (Daesh), appear to view the global focus on the COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity to regroup and inflict violence on the population.»

According to press TV, nearly all of the attacks have occurred in northern and eastern parts of the country under the control of Turkish armed forces and affiliated armed groups, or of the opposing U.S.-backed SDF militants.

Bachelet said, «If the current patterns of violations and abuses continue to spread and escalate, there is a risk the country will enter another spiral of extreme and widespread violence committed with impunity by all parties to the conflict.»

Syria plunged into foreign-sponsored militancy in 2011. Takfiri terrorists overran parts of Syria before government forces retook almost all of them with help from Damascus' allies, namely Iran and Russia.

New outbreaks in Germany, S. Korea underline risk of easing up

Fresh coronavirus outbreaks at slaughterhouses in Germany and new cases reported Saturday in South Korea linked to a man who had visited multiple nightclubs highlighted the challenges authorities face as they seek to open up their economies.

Meanwhile in Belarus, which has imposed no lockdown despite increasing case numbers, tens of thousands of people turned out to mark Victory Day. That was in contrast to Russia where a muted event took place over an empty Red Square.

Germany and South Korea have both carried out extensive testing and contact tracing, and have been hailed for avoiding the mass deaths that have overwhelmed other countries in their regions. But even there, authorities have struggled with finding the balance between saving lives and saving jobs.

The United States, Brazil and Italy also were wrestling with how to ease curbs on business and public activity.

Meanwhile, governments were coming under fresh scrutiny for their handling of the pandemic. German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said that Europe must acknowledge that it "wasn't well-prepared" for the coronavirus pandemic, though he also said that solidarity is increasing and that the 27-member European Union has "grown in the crisis."

In the United States, internal government emails obtained by The Associated Press show that a decision to shelve detailed advice from the nation's top disease control experts for reopening communities during the coronavirus pandemic came from the highest levels of the White House.

Health officials in Germany were scrambling to contain fresh outbreaks of the new coronavirus that have emerged at three slaughterhouses - two in the west of the country



and one in the north.

The response is seen as a test for the government's new strategy of getting local authorities to tackle any surge in new cases, which was agreed Wednesday as part of a plan for gradually easing restrictions and returning to normality.

In South Korea, a decline in new infections had prompted the government to ease social distancing guidelines and announce plans to reopen schools Wednesday.

But the capital city shut down more than 2,100 nightclubs, hostess bars and discos Saturday after dozens of coronavirus infections were linked to club goers who went out last weekend as the country relaxed social distancing guidelines. Many are linked to the Itaewon leisure district of the capital, Seoul, where a 29-year-old man visited three nightclubs before testing positive.

Hard-hit Italy saw people return to the streets for their traditional aperitivos and revel in fine weather as restric-

tions there have eased - going too far for some authorities.

Milan mayor Giuseppe Sala warned that "a handful of crazy people" were putting the city's economic recovery at risk, and threatened to shut down the city's trendy Navigli district after crowds of young Milanese were seen out at operative hour ignoring social-distancing norms.

In Rome, the Campo dei Fiori flower and vegetable market was bustling Saturday morning, the first weekend Italians were allowed outside for more than just work and basic necessities. Long a center of nightlife, the Camp piazza has also come back to life at the evening appetitive hour. A few bars have opened for takeout cocktails and snacks, catering primarily to parents of kids who romp around the square on bikes.

But confusion about what is now allowed and what is not created frustration for business owners.

Carlo Alberto, owner of the TabaCafe, an Argentine empanada bar that was selling Aperol Spritz and gin & tonic to a handful of patrons Friday, said that since opening this week he had been threatened with a fine by the police because of the crowds that had formed in front of his bar.

"Am I supposed to send them home? They need a guard here to do that," he said. "The laws aren't clear, the decree isn't clear. You don't know what you can do."

Worldwide, the virus is confirmed to have infected over 3.9 million people and killed more than 275,000, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University based on data reported by governments.

Pakistan allowed shops, factories, construction sites and some other businesses to reopen Saturday, while 1,637 new cases and 24 deaths were reported.

(Source: AP)

Trump knocks Biden for campaigning from basement amid virus

U.S. President Donald Trump needled his Democratic rival Joe Biden Friday for limiting his campaign appearances to virtual events from the basement of his home in Delaware.

"I'd love to see him get out of the basement so he can speak," Trump said in a telephone interview with Fox News.

Trump is eager to resume normal campaigning, which has come to a halt amid the coronavirus pandemic. His rallies are a hallmark of his Republican campaign and help energize his base and provide his team with crucial data that will be used to turn out supporters in the fall. Biden, meanwhile, is known for connecting more effectively with people in smaller settings and has struggled with large rallies, something Trump would like to highlight, AP reported.

Trump made his first trip out of Washington in more than a month this week. He relies on a federal supply of coronavirus tests to maintain a traditional schedule and said he'd be willing to provide Biden with that test as well if that helped resume normal campaign activities.

Trump offered to supply Biden with a rapid COVID-19 testing system. If Biden's team asked for the tests, Trump said, "We would have it to them today."



Trump, Vice President Mike Pence and anyone they come into close contact with are now being tested daily for COVID-19 after one of the president's valets tested positive for the virus this week. Trump revealed Friday that Pence's press secretary, Katie Miller, who is married to senior Trump adviser Stephen Miller, had also tested positive for the coronavirus. The availability of the tests has allowed Trump and Pence to resume a travel schedule and to host business leaders, medical professionals and lawmakers for meetings.

The stockpile of the rapid testing machines, which provide individual results in five to 15 minutes, is largely controlled by the federal government. Trump personally delivered boxes of test kits to the Navajo Nation Tuesday, flying them on Air Force One to Phoenix.

World leaders evoke WWII spirit in battle against pandemic

Global leaders marked 75 years since the end of World War II in Europe, urging citizens to draw inspiration from the historic victory as the world battles against the coronavirus pandemic.

With parades and commemoration events cancelled or scaled down as part of efforts to contain the outbreak, Europe and the United States marked the defeat of Nazi Germany in somber mood, AFP reported.

Britain's Queen Elizabeth II, who as a 19-year-old princess joined the celebrations on the streets of London, delivered a televised address to the nation at the same time that her father, King George VI, gave a radio address marking VE day in 1945.

She recalled the millions of people who died "so we could live as free people in a world of free nations".

"The greatest tribute to their sacrifice is that countries who were once sworn enemies are now friends, working side by side for the peace, health and prosperity of us all.

"Never give up, never despair -- that was the message of VE Day," she said.

U.S. President Donald Trump said the anniversary served as a reminder "that no challenge is greater than the resolve of the American spirit".

"Over the past months, our nation



has faced remarkable adversity during the coronavirus pandemic. But just as we have so many times before, America will triumph," Trump said ahead of a small ceremony at Washington's WWII memorial.

In Berlin, German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier and Chancellor Angela Merkel stuck to social distancing guidelines as they laid down their wreaths.

In his speech, Steinmeier recalled how nations joined forces to fight the tyranny of Nazism and said the same unity was needed to defeat the virus.

"For us Germans, 'never again' means 'never again alone'," he said.

"We want more, not less cooperation in the world -- also in the fight against the pandemic."

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson also drew wartime parallels with COVID-19.

Germany sees increased risk of hard Brexit if Britain refuses to extend deadline

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said in a newspaper interview on Saturday there was a growing risk of a hard Brexit in the midst of the coronavirus crisis as negotiations between Britain and the European Union so far on the future trade relationship had yielded hardly any progress.

Britain left the EU in January, and talks with the bloc are now focused on setting new trading terms from 2021, when London's status-quo transition period ends. However the talks quickly hit an impasse when nego-

tiations resumed last month, according to diplomats and officials, Reuters reported.

"It's worrying that Britain is moving further away from our jointly agreed political declaration on key issues in the negotiations," Maas told Augsburger Allgemeine newspaper.

"It's simply not on, because the negotiations are a complete package as it's laid out in the political declaration," he added.

Maas said there was currently neither common ground on how to shape a comprehensive trade deal nor on whether

to extend the negotiation period beyond the end of the year.

"The British government is still refusing to extend the deadline," Maas said. "If it stays that way, we will have to deal with Brexit in addition to the coronavirus at the turn of the year."

Irish Foreign Minister Simon Coveney said on Friday the coronavirus pandemic had made an already difficult timeline for a British-European Union trade deal "virtually impossible" and that it would make sense to seek more time.

Beiranvand shortlisted for AFC Player of the Year 2020

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Persepolis goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand has been shortlisted for the AFC Player of the Year 2020.

The Iranian custodian will vie with last year's winner Akram Afif from Qatar, Japan's versatile defender Tomoaki Makino and Saudi Arabian Salem Muhamed al-Dawsari who currently plays at Al Hilal, staddoha.com reported.

The initial list of the AFC Player of the Year 2020 includes 10 players.

The AFC Annual Awards will be held in Doha, Qatar in December.

Beiranvand had been nominated for the accolade in two previous editions but the first one was won by Qatari defender Abdelkarim Hassan and Afif clinched the award last year and Beiranvand finished in second place.

The Iranian goalkeeper, who helped Persepolis win Iran Persian Gulf Professional League three times in a row, is optimistic about winning the honor this year.

Iranian players have won AFC Player of the Year awards four times so far.

Khodadad Azizi is the first Iranian player to become AFC Player of the Year in 1996.

Ali Daei won the prize three years later. Mehdi Mahdavi and Ali Karimi were also named the AFC Player of the Year in 2003



and 2004, respectively.

Asian Footballer of the Year is an annual prize awarded to the best Asian player in a calendar year, organized by Asian Football

Confederation (AFC).

The award began in 1988 through International Federation of Football History & Statistics (IFFHS) with sport magazines and

journalists, then it was adopted by the AFC

in 1994 with the allocation of annual award.

The AFC selected Kazuyoshi Miura in 1993, but this selection was unofficial.

Iran volleyball weighing up Juan Cichello: report



S P O R T S TEHRAN— Local media have reported that Iran volleyball federation has opened negotiation with Argentine coach Juan Manuel Cichello.

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

Now, the Iranian federation is reportedly weighing up the candidates.

"I like Iran and I've always helped them to make their dreams come true," Cichello said.

"I know the Iranians are aiming a medal

at Olympics this time. I will definitely think about their bid but no one has contacted me yet," the former Qatar coach added.

Cichello has worked in Iran national team in two stints and has also coached Iran U23 volleyball team.

The 45-year-old coach has most recently worked as head coach of Italian team Emma Villas Volley.

Iran volleyball team are drawn with Japan, Poland, Italy, Canada and Venezuela in Pool A at the Olympic Games.

Pool B consists of Brazil, USA, Russia, Argentina, France, and Tunisia.

Iran football league plans to test players for COVID-19



S P O R T S TEHRAN— Iran Football League Organization plans to test players and staff on a regular basis.

According to the reports, the top officials of the Iranian football, intend to enforce strict health and safety protocols if the Coronavirus Combat and Prevention Headquarters allow the continuation of the league.

One of the most important health issues that, among others, should be taken seriously is that all the players, coaches, and team members should be

tested for coronavirus constantly. The League Organization maintains the utmost attention to the preventive measures for the health of the players and all members of the clubs, in compliance with all government guidelines and the protection of public health.

The players and staff must undergo testing in the Iran Football Medical Assessment and Research Center (IFMARC) every matchday week and if the results come back negative for COVID-19, they will be allowed to take part in the matches.

Korea Republic ace Son earns military accolade

Tottenham Hotspur striker Son Heung-min was named one of the top five recruits in his unit as he finished three weeks of compulsory military training in Korea Republic on Friday.

Korea Republic's marine corps posted pictures of Son wielding an M-16 assault rifle and saluting on their Facebook page as he completed his stint at a boot camp.

All able-bodied Korea Republic men are obliged to serve in the military for nearly two years, making up the bulk of Seoul's 600,000-strong forces.

But Son — the top Asian goalscorer in Premier League history, and the Asian Football Confederation's reigning international player of the year — was in the Korea Republic team that earned an exemption by winning gold at the 2018 Asian Games in Indonesia.

The Spurs star burst into tears of joy after the 2-1 ex-



tra-time win over Japan, which meant he could fulfil his obligations with just three weeks' basic training and around 500 hours of community service.

In April he reported to a marines camp on the island of Jeju for the basic training, which involved lengthy hikes, as well as tear-gas training and rifle practice.

He was judged among the five best recruits out of 157 on his course, a spokesperson for the Republic of Korea Marine Corps told AFP.

"Son did exceptionally well in all areas of training, including military ethics and security education," he added. Likes poured in for the Facebook pictures, with fans posting messages of congratulation.

"He indeed is world-class. I'm a die-hard Son Heung-min fan," wrote one Korea Republic marine veteran.

The Premier League has been suspended since mid-March due to the coronavirus and no date has yet been set for a resumption.

(Source: AFP)

Bundesliga restart gives hope to other leagues - Schalke's Wagner

The resumption of the German Bundesliga next weekend amid the COVID-19 crisis will give hope to other European leagues that they can also successfully return, according to Schalke 04 coach David Wagner.

The Bundesliga season will restart on May 16, making it the first European league to resume amid the pandemic that has infected more than 3.95 million people globally and killed more than 270,000.

Germany's top flight will resume under strict health protocols, with no fans allowed in stadiums and several matches, including the Ruhr valley derby between Borussia Dortmund and Wagner's Schalke, taking place on the re-launch day.

"It's no surprise. The Germans are always very disciplined, looking straight forward and trying to quickly find solutions. Everybody follows rules, everything's on time, typical Germans," Wagner told The Times on Saturday.

Wagner, a friend of Liverpool manager

Juergen Klopp, said his German compatriot was looking at the progress in Germany with Premier League sides hoping to play matches in June once given the green light by the government.

Liverpool are two wins away from securing their first English league title in 30 years.

"This is why everybody looks to Germany and thinks, 'OK, if the Germans can do it, we at least have a chance to do it as well'. This is exactly what Juergen said to me," he added.

"All you guys in England are praying we get the Bundesliga back up and running because this will be a hopeful sign... and that even if you are maybe four to five weeks behind, you can get it done."

Wagner said it was strange to be playing when people are dying from the virus.

"But for me personally, I say, 'OK, we have to do our job and we like to save our business as well'," he added.

(Source: Reuters)

Watford slam Premier League's 'distorted' neutral venue plan

Watford have become the latest English top-flight club to hit out at proposals by the Premier League to end the season at neutral venues, with chairman Scott Duxbury worried about the impact of a "distorted nine-game mini-league".

Clubs are due to meet on Monday to consider the Premier League's controversial 'Project Restart' plan, which seeks to play the season to a finish following its suspension because of the coronavirus pandemic, with Watford joining fellow relegation candidates Brighton and Aston Villa in voicing their opposition.

Duxbury, while accepting fans cannot attend because of COVID-19, is unhappy with a proposal that would see 17th-place Watford denied the "familiarity and advantage" of playing at Vicarage Road.

"There is no altruism in the Premier League," Duxbury wrote in Saturday's edition of The Times. "There are 20 different vested interests, which sometimes align but more often than not work purely to protect each individual club."

"That is why some clubs are happy to sign up to 'Project Restart' because arguably there is only an upside in participating in this compromised format; it means (leaders) Liverpool can win the title, other clubs can book their place in Europe next season."

"But when at least six clubs — and I suspect more — are concerned about the clear downside and the devastating effects of playing in this kind of distorted nine-game mini-league, then I believe the Premier League has a duty of care to address those concerns."

Duxbury said it was wrong to switch to neutral venues three-quarters of the way through a season.

"How can the long-term future of clubs be determined under these fundamentally changed conditions? How is there any semblance of fairness? To wave aside all the fears and concerns is too simplistic. Surely all 20 clubs must agree the fairest way forward to complete the season?"

(Source: AFP)

Iran's Khadem to participate at FIDE Online Steinitz Memorial

Sarasadat Khademalsharieh will feature Iran at the FIDE Online Steinitz Memorial.

The event consists of two 10-player tournaments, one open and one for women. Each player will play each other twice over 18 rounds of blitz matches, where the players have three minutes for all moves and a two-second increment after every move.

2018 and 2019 Women's World Blitz Champion Kateryna Lagno (Russia) heads the women's line-up, with former Women's World Champions Alexandra Kosteniuk (Russia), Antoaneta Stefanova (Bulgaria), Tan Zhongyi (China), and 2018 World Blitz silver medalist Sarasadat Khademalsharieh (Iran) all in action.

The total prize fund is EUR30,000, with EUR18,000 for the Open section (EUR4,500 for 1st) and EUR12,000 for the Women's section (EUR3,000 for 1st). One innovation is that half of the prize money is to be paid out on a game-by-game basis, with every point in the Open section worth an extra EUR100 (EUR70 in the Women's section).

Wilhelm Steinitz was born on May 17, 1836, and became the first undisputed World Chess Champion in 1886 when he beat Johannes Zukertort (UK). Steinitz defended his world title three times against Mikhail Chigorin (1889, 1992) and Isidor Gunsberg (1891) before losing it to Emanuel Lasker (Germany) in 1894. Six years later, he passed away in the US city of New York.

(Source: nhandan.org)

Julio Velsaco rejects Iran offer

Argentine coach Julio Velasco has rejected Iran Volleyball Federation's bid to take charge of Team Melli.

Head of volleyball federation Mohammad Reza Davarzani had revealed that they are going to reappoint Julio Velasco as Iran coach.

Most of Iranian players and experts praise the Argentinean coach for the progress he made with Team Melli from 2011 to 2014.

Iran Volleyball Federation parted company with Igor Kolakovic last month and is going to hire a new coach for the team.

In a meeting held on Monday in Tehran's Olympic Academy, Davarzani said the federation has negotiated with Velasco but the coach, in an interview with Rai Sport, has said he doesn't accept the Iran's offer.

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

(Source: Rai Sport)

Ali Miri bids farewell to Iran weightlifting team

TASNIM — Iranian weightlifter Ali Miri has announced his retirement from National Team on Friday.

Miri quit in protest over the negligence of West Azarbaijan Province weightlifting towards himself.

He won a silver medal at the 2019 edition of International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) World Championships in Thailand after lifting 374kg in total.

Miri also won a silver medal at the 2019 Asian Championships in Ningbo, China.

Patosi not for sale: Cape Town City

Cape Town City club chairman John Comitis says they have no intention of selling their players despite PSL clubs facing financial uncertainty.

Ayanda Patosi is one of the South African team and currently is on loan at Foolad Khuzestan FC from City.

The attacking midfielder recently revealed he would like to stay with the Iranian club on a permanent deal.

"But I know Patosi has been playing overseas — the benefit to him is extremely high and we wouldn't stand in his way as long as it works for the club as well," Comitis said.

"My intention is still to keep a very strong squad and to have a team that can compete," he continued.

(Source: Goal)

Daniel Arzani confirms Celtic exit and discusses Man City future

Manchester City loanee Daniel Arzani only made two appearances on loan at Celtic after joining the club from Melbourne City in 2018.

Daniel Arzani has confirmed he will leave Celtic when his loan deal expires next month, as the Manchester City loanee opened up on his disastrous two-year spell in Scotland.

Arzani joined City after appearing for Australia at the 2018 World Cup, before immediately joining Celtic on a two years loan deal. However, the midfielder only played 28 minutes of football for the Scottish Champions across two appearances after he suffered a cruciate ligament injury on his debut.

Now, the 21-year-old says he will leave Celtic Park this season, with another loan move expected to come for him to prove himself.

Discussing the possibilities of his next move, Arzani told The World Game: "Holland comes up because it's a selling league and they develop a lot of really good talent there. But they're not the only league to have done that."

"It's been a really tough last two seasons for me. Celtic's been tough, there are a lot of good people there and it's a good club, but the most important thing for me is game time and I wasn't getting that."

(Source: Manchester Evening News.co.uk)



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Adopt generosity, and avoid vain severity and oppression; for, severity compels people to emigrate, and oppression incites revolt, and puts an end to your rule.

Imam Ali (AS)

Lebanese publisher Dar Al Hadaek acquires rights to Persian book “The Boxer”

CULTURE **TEHRAN** — Dar Al Hadaek, a Lebanese publishing house specialized in publishing and distributing Arabic children's books and magazines, has purchased the rights to the Arabic version of Iranian



Front cover of Iranian writer Hassan Musavi's book “The Boxer”.

writer and illustrator Hassan Musavi's acclaimed story, “The Boxer”.

The rights to the Arabic version of the book were transferred to the Lebanese publisher in an agreement with the Dayereye Mina (Blue Circle) Literary Agency, a Tehran-based institute representing Tuti Books, the Iranian publisher of the book, the agency has announced.

“The Boxer” tells the story of the hectic life of a champion who is struggling between the kindness and violence, the more he boxes,

the smaller his surrounding world becomes.

Musavi won the grand prix of the Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava (BIB) in Slovakia for the book.

The book is for the ages between 6 and 12.

Tehran Municipality to organize mobile film festival on home quarantine

A R T **TEHRAN** — The Tehran Municipality plans to organize an international festival of mobile short films to help people share experiences during the home quarantine.



Filmmaker Mohammad Abdizadeh shoots his latest documentary “After These Three Months” in a Tehran hospital for patients with coronavirus. (DEFC/film photo)

“Quarantine, Life, Love, Religion”, “Quarantine, Family, Children”, “Quarantine, Spirit, Home Violence” and “Quarantine, Special Disease, Elderly” are among the topics of the International One Minute Quarantine Mobile Short Film Festival.

Interested individuals are asked to depict their bittersweet moments, depression, happiness, hope, despair and even death with their cellphones during the home quarantine battling the spread of coronavirus.

They can submit their films to the Tehran Municipality before June 9.

The films will be judged by a jury composed of Iranian cineastes Reza Banafshehkhah, Saeid Soltani, Vahid Musaian, Gholamhossein Shah-Ali, Sirus Kahurinejad, Azita Mugui and Saghar Khajeh-Amiri.

The organizers have said that the festival can help showcase public creativity under conditions where there is no professional equipment, and that make the most out of the least.

Iranian galleries prefer to continue lockdown in pandemic

→1 “All the good events happen during the opening ceremonies, however, if even an opening ceremony is allowed, nobody will attend, therefore any exhibition these days will be spoiled,” Golestan said.

She added that an online exhibit at Golestan Gallery was a good experience, and had a good sale,

“However, an online exhibit cannot be compared with a regular exhibit. Online galleries make do not yield good profits, and with the current situation it is only considered a hobby.”

“The same is true all over the world, and we are no exception,” she noted.

Many galleries have gone out of business, artists have lost livelihoods these days, and the cultural industry is focusing on the Internet, because it represents an alternative way to allow art galleries to exhibit their works.

“The Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance has agreed to pay the rent for some galleries, but we own our gallery, and we have to pay our employees, but here is no income. We know we must accept the current situation and there is no other way. Of course, we have no objection for the ministry to pay the rent; this is a positive step,” she remarked.

Cartoonist Kambiz Dermabakhsh, who is also displaying some of his works in an online exhibit, said that not many people show interest in buying artworks these days now that the galleries are closed.

Derambakhsh has shared a collection of his cartoons on coronavirus with his fans on Instagram. The new images bear a small note giving warnings or recommendations to



Paintings by Yaqub Emdadian are on view in an exhibition at Tehran's Hur Gallery in January 2020. (Honaronline/Mahdieh Babai)

people to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

“I was one of the first who began to work on coronavirus and held an online exhibit. I believe these days need to be recorded, perhaps they will not be sold but I am not

making them be sold. I think these days must be retained as history for future generations,” he said.

“What is important these days are the living conditions of the artists. They need

to work and they do not make any money now that the galleries are closed and no one shows interest in buying artwork. This is a bad situation and we only have to wait,” he said.

Persian literati celebrate birthday of Imam Hassan (AS)

CULTURE **TEHRAN** — A large number of poets and writers from Iran and several Persian-speaking countries celebrated the birthday of Imam Hassan (AS) on Friday night.

The celebration titled “Visiting the Moon” was held in the courtyard of the Art Bureau in Tehran.

Islamic Ideology Dissemination Organization director Hojjatoleslam Mohammad Qomi, Art Bureau director Mohsen Momeni-Sharif and several other cultural officials also attended the celebration.

The celebration used to be held during the annual meeting of the poets and literati with Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei

on the eve of the Imam's birthday on Ramadan 14. However, the meeting was canceled this year over the COVID-19 pandemic.

The poets and writers also recited some of their latest works during this year's celebration. In addition, the organizers played a recording of last year's speech by Ayatollah Khamenei during the gathering.

During last year's meeting, the Leader criticized Persian media and Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) for disregard of the standard language, using “faceless language” and foreign terms and words, and addressed the cultural officials and literati, “Don't let the Persian language fall into decay and ruin.”

“Illustrated Famous Chinese Myths Series” published in Persian

CULTURE **TEHRAN** — “Illustrated Famous Chinese Myths Series” has been published in Persian by Afarinegan Publishing in Tehran.

Somayeh Noruzi has translated the 10-volume collection into Persian from an English translation by Duan Lixin.

Afarinegan purchased the rights to the series from China Intercontinental Press.

“The Cowherd and the Weaver Maid” is a highlight of the English-Persian collection, telling the story of Niulang who is an industrious and kind-hearted man. An old ox became his only friend. With the help of the ox, Niulang finds a fairy maiden called Zhinu. They fall in love with each other and get married, and then live a happy life.

Another compelling story of the collection is “Jingwei Trying to Fill Up the Sea”. It is about Emperor Yan, who had a daughter called Nu Wa, who was swallowed by the merciless ocean when she went out to sea.

Jingwei hated the ocean for taking her life. Her soul turned into a little bird. She vowed to fill up the ocean, so she took small pieces of stone or small branches and threw them into the sea without stopping. Jingwei continued her actions to fill up the ocean.

The collection also contains “Birds Paying Homage to the Phoenix”, “Change Flying to the Moon”, “Nuwa Creating Human Beings”, “Morin Khuur Suho and the White Horse” and “Pangu Separating Heaven and Earth”.

Also included are “Shennong Discovering the Curative



This combination photo shows the front covers of the Persian translation of several books from the “Illustrated Famous Chinese Myths Series” published by Afarinegan Publishing in Tehran.

Virtues of Plants”, “Yu Leading the People in Curbing Floods” and “The Eight Immortals Crossing the Sea”.

Bob Dylan announces first album of new music since 2012

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Bob Dylan is releasing his first album of new music in eight years following a spurt of creativity from the man regarded as one of the world's most influential songwriters.

“Rough and Rowdy Ways” will be released on June 19, according to a brief announcement on Dylan's official website early on Friday. It will be a double album but no further details were given.

The announcement followed the release late on Thursday of a third new song by Dylan.

In late March, Dylan surprised fans by releasing a 17-minute song, “Murder Most Foul,” inspired by the assassination more than five decades ago of U.S. President John F. Kennedy. It also included free wheeling observations about pop culture and multiple song references stretching back to the 1960s, when he burst onto the scene as a folk singer before turning to electric rock music later in the decade.

Three weeks later, he released a second song, “I Contain Multitudes.”

Dylan, who shuns publicity but still tours the world in small venues, gave no details about when the music for the new album was written and recorded.

The author of iconic 1960s counterculture songs including “Blowin' in the Wind” and “Like a Rolling Stone”,



Singer Bob Dylan performs during a segment honoring Director Martin Scorsese, recipient of the Music+ Film Award, at the 17th Annual Critics' Choice Movie Awards in Los Angeles January 12, 2012. (Reuters/Mario Anzuoni)

last released an album of original music in 2012 with “Tempest”, which featured a tribute to murdered Beatle John Lennon and a 14-minute song about the sinking of the Titanic.

His influence has not waned. Dylan won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2016 and his handwritten lyrics to “Like a Rolling Stone” fetched a world record \$2 million when they were sold at auction by Sotheby's in New York in 2014.

A hand-written page of lyrics for his 1963 song “The Times They Are A-Changin'” is currently up for sale by Los Angeles-based autograph dealers Moments in Time with an asking price of \$2.2 million.

La Scala opens virtual tour during coronavirus lockdown

MILAN (AP) — Milan's famed La Scala opera house on Thursday unveiled a virtual journey through its ornate premises and rich archives via Google Arts & Culture, with serendipitous timings as theaters throughout Italy and the western world remain closed due to the coronavirus.

The project has been in the works for years, and organizers accelerated it during the coronavirus, knowing there was a captive audience eager for cultural outlets. To herald the event, the La Scala orchestra and artists released a video performance of an excerpt from Verdi's “Simon Boccanegra,” with musicians and singers performing in their gardens, living rooms, balconies and studios.

“We are sad not to see the orchestra together, not to see the dancers together, not to see the chorus together, not see the stage hands every day ... The theater is a big family,” said Dominique Meyer, La Scala's general director.

“Or course we can't wait to return to the theater, but in the meantime we can explore these secrets of the theater and learn things that even we didn't know,” he added.

The project includes virtual tours of the theater, backstage and museum, along with 240,000 archival photos and 16,000 documents, more than 40 digital exhibits and close-up views of costumes worn by stars such as Maria Callas. Performances



In this Monday, Feb. 24, 2020 filer, a woman wearing a sanitary mask walks past La Scala Opera house in Milan, Italy. (AP/Luca Bruno)

of operas are available on another platform through Italy's RAI state television.

La Scala has been closed since Feb. 23, within days of the first positive case of domestically transmitted coronavirus in Italy. While museums are slated to reopen May 18, the government has yet to indicate an opening date for the theaters in the country that invented the opera. La Scala has proposed reopening with a performance of Verdi's Requiem in September.

The Arena di Verona -- an open air theater in a Roman amphitheater -- has canceled its hugely popular summer opera festival, but has announced a series of operatic concerts in August with a fraction of its capacity, from 13,500 to just 3,000. The program is still being worked out.