



Iranian diplomat meets new Iraqi PM **2**



Satellite launch marks enemies' intelligence defeat **3**



No blacklist in Iran football team: Dragan Skocic **11**



Doc features big price Iranian health workers paying as corona rules **12**

All should follow expert views on coronavirus

Ayatollah Khamenei says coronavirus exposed the West's failure in ethics, management



See page 9

'Supporting domestic production is priority of banking system'

TEHRAN — Governor of Central Bank of Iran (CBI) says promoting domestic production is the main priority of the country's banking system in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 19), the bank's portal reported.

Speaking in a seminar called "Banking System and Surge in Production", which was attended by First Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri, as well as the managing directors of banks and members of the CBI's

executive board, Abdolnasser Hemati said: "Although the enemies expected our economy to collapse due to the U.S. sanctions, but following the government and the CBI's strategies, we are currently witnessing an economic growth."

As the main driver of the current economic growth, non-oil exports and domestic production have become the priority of the banking system, Hemmati added. → **4**

Iran's social, religious unity 'a world model for coronavirus response'

By Faranak Bakhtiari

TEHRAN — Iran could considerably reduce COVID-19 infections and death toll since the onset of the outbreak, the reason behind which is mainly social and religious unity among Iranians that can be run as a role model anywhere in the world, Alireza Marandi, head of Iran's Academy of Medical Sciences has said.

Iranian people are total believers, and

their paying attention to moral and ethics might be the key to their success in such crises, Marandi said in an exclusive interview with the Tehran Times.

He also put emphasis on the important role of health care networks in villages and remote areas who screened people and checked their symptoms and helped them regain health and break the chain of transmission. → **9**

Tourism development in Sistan-Baluchestan among top priorities: minister

TEHRAN — Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan has said that development of the travel industry across Sistan-Baluchestan province is among top priorities.

"I am interested in Sistan-Baluchestan, and the development of this province is a priority for this ministry and the government," CHTN quoted Mounesan as saying on Saturday.

"The majority of my travels during my tenure has been to Sistan-Baluchestan, which I consider it as a safe province with significant values in terms of culture, history, handicrafts, and tourism."

Mounesan made the remarks in a meeting with several elected MPs of the southeastern province for the upcoming Majlis (Iranian parliament). → **8**

ARTICLE

Masoud Hossein

Head of the Sport Desk of the TehranTimes

Iran volleyball in no hurry to find coach

Iran volleyball officials have announced that they have negotiated with several coaches but they are in no hurry to find a new coach and have to wait a little while longer.

Iran split with Igor Kolakovic last month bringing an end to a partnership that began in 2017. Now, the Iranian federation is going to find the Montenegrin's replacement as soon as possible but, surely, they must act prudently to find new coach.

Iran national volleyball team, not hidden from anyone, want to make a splash in the upcoming Olympics and this is the reason why the federation is not going to hire an Iranian coach.

Iran volleyball believes that it's a golden chance to clinch a medal with this golden generation and hopes its efforts will not go in vain. YES, the federation's officials are right BUT the FIVB Volleyball Nations League (VNL) 2020 and Olympic Games have been canceled and it means there is enough time to find the best option.

"It will be a great honor for us to appoint an Iranian coach for the national team but we are going to win a medal at the Olympics and should consider all aspects. We have to meet expectations," Davarzani said in a meeting held in Tehran's Olympic Academy last week.

Iran debuted in 2016 Olympic Games and finished in fifth place behind Brazil, Italy, the U.S. and Russia. In this edition, Iran volleyball can write their name in history by winning the first-ever medal in Tokyo since the team take advantage of so many prominent stars including Saeid Marouf, Amir Ghafour, Mohammad Mousavi, Mohammadjavad Manavinejad, Milad Ebadipour, Aliasghar Mojarad, Ali Shafiei, Porya Yali, Javad Karimi, Morteza Sharifi and Mohammadreza Hazratpour.

The federation has no way but to make the best decision because expectations are high.

Winning a medal at Olympics is difficult but achievable like all the great targets.

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

Is Trump leaving the Saudi alone?

By Abdul Hamid Bayati

TEHRAN — In late November 1973, just six weeks after Saudi Arabia and OPEC launched a devastating oil embargo on Europe and the United States, U.S. National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger railed against the Saudis at a secret meeting in the White House Map Room. He'd already toyed with the "not ... so insane" idea of landing U.S. troops that "would have divided up" oil fields in the region, and he decried what he repeatedly called Saudi "blackmail."

"It is ridiculous that the civilized world is held up by 8 million savages," Kissinger raged.

Three months later, Kissinger was inside the palace of Saudi King Faisal, paying obeisance and promising U.S. economic, technical, and military aid—before the oil embargo was even lifted. "Our objective is to work with Your Majesty and to strengthen our friendship on a long-term basis," he said.

According to Foreign Policy, the months-long drama of the OPEC oil embargo highlighted as seldom before the often troubled, yet surprisingly

resilient nature of the U.S.-Saudi relationship. Again and again, the unlikely partners would fall out—usually over the Arab-Israeli conflict, much later over the 9/11 attacks. But it seems the fundamental bargain struck by U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt and then-King Ibn Saud in the waning days of World War II that consummated the U.S.-Saudi relationship 75 years ago would break.

Until, perhaps, now. This spring, as in the early 1970s, the Saudis unleashed their oil weapon, inflicting damage on the U.S. economy by deliberately crashing oil prices at a time of global economic collapse amid the coronavirus pandemic. Lawmakers on Capitol Hill already had little love for the Saudis, disillusioned by continued human rights abuses in the kingdom, a brutal Saudi-led war in Yemen, and, perhaps most shockingly, the Saudi state-ordered butchery of a Washington Post columnist.

By unsheathing the oil weapon, the Saudis have finally tested the patience of oil-patch Republicans, who have long been among their staunchest

supporters in Congress. Even though the United States, Saudi Arabia, Russia, and other big oil producers reached a deal this month meant to curtail oil output and undo some of the damage, it hasn't worked: U.S. crude oil prices are at their lowest levels of the 21st century, threatening mass bankruptcies and layoffs in the United States. On April 20, U.S. oil prices utterly collapsed, falling into negative territory for the first time in history.

Now, lawmakers in oil states such as Texas, Louisiana, North Dakota, and Alaska accuse Saudi Arabia of waging "economic warfare" and have drafted legislation to immediately pull out U.S. troops and furl up a decades-old U.S. security umbrella that has protected the vulnerable Saudi state.

■ U.S. to remove Patriots, other military assets from Saudi Arabia

It was recently revealed that the United States military is in the process of removing the Patriot antimissile system it sent to Saudi Arabia following the drone strike on Aramco facilities in September, 2019. → **7**

Export Guarantee Fund of Iran increases capital by \$200m

TEHRAN — Export Guarantee Fund of Iran (EGFI) has increased its capital by \$200 million, IRNA reported on Sunday, quoting the head of the fund.

According to Afrouz Bahrami, after the mentioned increase the EGFI's capital has reached \$300 million.

"This will increase the fund's risk coverage up to \$5 billion and will be a major step in providing practical support for the domestic production," Bahrami said.

EGFI's capital was supposed to be increased

by €100 million from the revenues of the National Development Fund (NDF) in the current Iranian calendar year (March 2020-21).

The head of the Export Guarantee Fund said that the mentioned capital is going to support the Fund's guarantees and insurance policies, adding that "based on the current standards, we can cover export risks up to 10 times the fund's capital."

Bahrami had previously told IRNA that the EGFI capital should be at least €500 million to reach international standards.



ISNA / Moen Azari

Rice planting at paddy fields in northern Iran

Farmers are working on paddy fields in the northern province of Gilan, planting rice after the fields are ploughed.

Planting season begins in mid-spring when the weather gets warm in the region. Rice seeds are first planted close together in one flooded paddy and grows into seedlings that will be transplanted into paddy fields.

ARTICLE

Faranak Bakhtiari

Tehran Times journalist

World's Women in Mathematics Day: Mirzakhani, a genius who shattered stereotypes

The second year of World's Women in Mathematics Day will be celebrated through video conferencing on May 12, which is the birthday of late Maryam Mirzakhani, the Iranian-born genius mathematician who shattered stereotypes about women's ability in mathematics.

At 2018 World Meeting for Mathematics held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Iranian Mathematical Society proposed designating Maryam Mirzakhani's birthday (May 12) as day for celebrating women in mathematics. The proposal was approved.

Still, some believe that studying math is not appropriate for a girl, and to justify their beliefs, they are making biological differences between men and women. They generally refer to global scientific awards for their claims. Awards that are less than 200 years old, while many women throughout history have struggled with the stereotype and their work is a refutation of statements denying women's ability in mathematics.

The presence of women in mathematics has a long history. From Hypatia, a Greek mathematician who lived about 1,500 years ago, to 19th-century English mathematician and programmer Ada Lovelace. Iranian women have also had a hand in the world of mathematics for centuries, from Bi Bi Monajemeh Nishaburi, the seventh-century mathematician and astronomer to Farideh Firoozbakht, who became famous for her theory of Firoozbakht's conjecture on the distribution of prime numbers in 1982. But perhaps no Iranian female mathematician in the world has been mentioned as much as Maryam Mirzakhani.

Mirzakhani, Stanford University professor, obtained her BSc in mathematics (1999) from Sharif University of Technology, Tehran.

Later, she earned her Ph.D. from Harvard University and was a leading scholar on the dynamics and geometry of complex surfaces. In 2014, she became the first female winner of the Fields Medal, the most prestigious award in mathematics. → **9**

Only Syrian people should decide about their future, Iran insists

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman on Sunday refuted claims by certain media outlets that guarantors of the Astana process have decided to decide about the future of the Syrian government, calling the claims “unfounded”.

Abbas Mousavi said it is only the Syrian people who can decide about the future of their country and the “type” of ruling system. “The Islamic Republic of Iran, Russia and Turkey, as members of the guarantors of the Astana process, by establishing violence-free zones, forming constitutional committee and pursuing the process of dialogue and national reconciliation are trying to strengthen Syria-Syria talks” so that “the Syrian people decide about their future,” Mousavi explained.



The Foreign Ministry spokesman added, “The Islamic Republic of Iran has always been present on the side of the Syrian government and people in the fight against terrorism and will continue this path in the future.”

In a report on May 4, Middle East Monitor (MEMO) claimed that the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC) expects that Russia, Turkey and Iran will reach a consensus to remove the head of the Syrian government, Bashar Al-Assad, and establish a ceasefire in exchange for forming a transitional government that includes the opposition, members of the government and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

In its claim MEMO added the RIAC said in a report that a Russian organization named the Foundation for the Protection of National Values, affiliated with the security services and the office of President Vladimir Putin, has been conducting an opinion poll in Syria.

The report stated that, since the beginning of its military intervention in Syria, Moscow has been keen to avoid being presented as the defender of Al-Assad, adding that in negotiations it has stressed that “the Syrian people will decide whether or not Al-Assad will remain in power”.

Russia has become more serious about making changes in Syria, RIAC explained, not least because protecting Al-Assad has become a burden, MEMO said.

IRGC, Basij prepare and distribute over 3.5 million aid packages among the poor

TEHRAN (FNA) — Spokesman of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps Brigadier General Ramezan Sharif said that the IRGC and Basij (volunteer) forces in cooperation with people across Iran have prepared and distributed over 3.5mln packages of aid among the poor who have been hurt by the coronavirus outbreak.

“People have granted over 305bln toman (over \$70mln) worth of goods or cash aid to the Basij bases and these aids have been organized and packed and distributed among (the low-income classes of) people within the framework of 3.55mln packages of foodstuff and supportive aid, of course by respecting people’s dignity,” General Sharif said on Saturday.

He added that all 54,000 Basij bases across Iran have become activated to receive, pack and distribute the aid packages among the poor people.

Elsewhere, General Sharif also said that over 4,800 coronavirus patients have so far been admitted to the IRGC hospitals, adding that the IRGC has set up 9 field hospitals equipped with 561 beds for treating coronavirus patients and prepared 15,700 beds for COVID-19 post-treatment recovery of patients in different cities of Iran.

Also, over 45mln liters of disinfectants, over 26mln pairs of gloves and 62mln masks have been supplied and distributed among different walks of life across Iran, he said.

In relevant remarks in March, General Sharif said that the IRGC had mobilized 100,000 of its members as well as Basij forces to help the government and people in the fight against coronavirus epidemic.

More than 100,000 Basij and IRGC forces are serving people against coronavirus, General Sharif said.

The Iranian health ministry announced on Saturday that 1,529 new cases of coronavirus infection have been diagnosed by the medical centers, noting that more than 85,000 patients have been treated.

“1,529 more patients infected with COVID-19 virus have been identified in the country since yesterday based on confirmed diagnosis criteria,” Health Ministry Spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour said on Saturday.

He added that the number of coronavirus patients in the country has increased to 106,220 people.

Jahanpour said that 6,589 people have lost their lives due to infection to the virus so far, including 48 in the past 24 hours.

He, meantime, stated that 85,064 infected people have recovered and been discharged from hospital, expressing concern that 2,696 patients infected with COVID-19 virus are in critical conditions.

Jahanpour also noted that 573,220 coronavirus diagnosis tests have been carried out in the country so far.

Iranian Health Minister Saeed Namaki stressed on April 7 effective measures to control coronavirus epidemic, expressing the hope that the disease would be controlled in Iran by late May.

“At present, the country is in the phase of disease management and we should not imagine that we have reached the harness and control phase. Today is the time for full-fledged combat against the virus. God willing, we will control coronavirus by late May. The virus should be controlled in the minimum possible time,” Namaki said, addressing the Iranian legislators in an open session of the parliament in Tehran.

He noted that at least 30% to 50% of hospital beds are still vacant across Iran and nearly 15,000 beds are ready to keep the patients who are recovering from coronavirus disease.

“We have now moved down to tank 6th in terms of deaths,” Namaki said, adding that the country’s situation in treatment of patients will improve in the next few days.

The coronavirus COVID-19 is affecting approximately all countries and territories around the world. The virus was first reported in the central Chinese city of Wuhan late last year. It has so far killed more than 276,400 people and infected over 4.02 million others globally.

Iranian diplomat meets new Iraqi PM

Ambassador Masjedi and PM Kadhimi hold talks on banking cooperation, Khorramshahr-Basra railway project and issuing visa for the two countries’ nationals

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iraj Masjedi, the Iranian ambassador to Iraq, met with new Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi on Saturday as he chaired the first meeting of his cabinet.

“In the meeting with Mr. Kadhimi, bilateral cooperation, continuation of actions regarding the 1975 Algiers Agreement, banking cooperation, Khorramshahr-Basra railway and visa for the two countries’ citizens were discussed,” Masjedi said in a tweet.

He added that the Iraqi prime minister praised Iran’s efforts in the fight against Daesh- also called ISIS or ISIL.

“Kadhimi considered Iran and Iraq as two friendly and brotherly countries,” the ambassador noted in his tweet.

Kadhimi also held a separate meeting with Douglas A. Silliman, the United States’ ambassador to Iraq.

In the meeting, Al-Kadhimi told the American ambassador that Iraq would not be used for settling accounts nor as a springboard to attack any neighboring or friendly country, Press TV reported.

He also highlighted the necessity for maintaining regional security and keeping the region away from dangers.



The U.S. ambassador, in turn, claimed that Washington will support Iraq and is ready to help the country both to settle its economic woes and to counter the coronavirus pandemic.

The meeting came against the backdrop of calls by various Iraqi groups and figures for the immediate expulsion of American troops from the Arab country.

Kadhimi formally took office early Thursday

after parliament approved a partial cabinet, taking the reins amid a fiscal crisis and a health pandemic.

A total of 255 of parliament’s 329 members took part in the vote, which was scheduled to take place at 9:00 pm local but began well after midnight after last-minute changes to appease political parties, AFP reported.

They approved 15 ministers out of a

prospective 22-seat cabinet, with seven ministries still empty.

Kadhimi was nominated in April, months after his predecessor Adel Abdel Mahdi stepped down — the first time a premier has resigned before the end of his term since the U.S.-led invasion in 2003.

The new government is set to hold early elections, but Kadhimi admitted it would face a litany of other challenges: navigating an economic crisis spurred by oil price crashes and the deadly coronavirus pandemic.

“I am honored and privileged to be charged with forming the government during the transitional period and having to deal with the current crises that only exacerbated since the overthrow of the authoritarian regime in 2003,” he told gathered MPs.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has congratulated Iraq for succeeding to form a new government.

“Congratulations to Prime Minister @MAKadhimi, his Cabinet, the Parliament and most importantly the people of Iraq for success in forming a new Government,” Zarif tweeted on Thursday.

“Iran always stands with the Iraqi people and their choice of administration,” he added.

Zarif’s assistant talks with Yemen’s Ansarullah spokesman

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — In a phone conversation on Saturday, Ali Asghar Khaji, the assistant to Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif for political affairs, discussed solution to the Yemeni crisis with Mohammed Abdulsalam, the spokesman for Yemen’s Ansarullah and chief negotiator of the National Salvation Government.

Khaji suggested that dialogue, which will be based on an end to the Yemeni war and blockade, is the only solution to the crisis.

For his part, Abdulsalam elaborated on the latest political developments in Yemen.

He also praised Iran’s humanitarian, political and spiritual supports for the Yemenis.

Zarif and UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres held a phone conversation on April 26 discussing the necessity to send humanitarian

aid to the war-stricken Yemen, especially as the country is being hit by the coronavirus pandemic.

For this purpose, the two top officials highlighted, it is needed to open the Yemeni borders and also protect security of borders and ports.

Guterres also welcomed Iran’s efforts for a truce in Yemen and pushing for start of political talks between the warring sides in the country.

In another telephone conversation on April 12, Zarif and Guterres discussed regional developments, especially in Yemen.

Zarif expressed Iran’s support for dialogue to settle regional issues, noting that the Yemen crisis does not have a military solution.

He added that a consistent ceasefire can

be a good start for a political resolution of the ongoing conflict in the country.

In April 2015, Zarif submitted a letter to Ban Ki-moon, then UN secretary general, outlining Iran’s four-point peace plan for Yemen.

The plan calls for an immediate ceasefire and end to all foreign military attacks, humanitarian assistance, a resumption of broad national dialogue and establishment of an inclusive national unity government.

Saudi Arabia launched military campaign against Yemen in March 2015 with the aim of eliminating the Yemeni opposition groups who had toppled the government of President Mansour Hadi.

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS), the Saudi de-facto leader, had vowed to restore the toppled president in a matter

of weeks.

In a report on its website on March 24, the Amnesty International said, “Gross human rights violations, including what could amount to war crimes, are being committed throughout the country. By the end of 2019, it is estimated that over 233,000 Yemenis would have been killed as a result of fighting and the humanitarian crisis.”

Meanwhile, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has documented more than 20,000 civilians killed and injured by the fighting since March 2015, the amnesty said.

A man-made humanitarian crisis has spiraled with approximately 16 million people waking up hungry every day, the amnesty regretted.

Iran says ready to swap prisoners with U.S. without precondition

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Government spokesman Ali Rabiei has said that Iran has announced it is ready to swap prisoners with the United States without any precondition, however Washington has not responded.

“We announced readiness to swap prisoners and hold talks in this respect without any precondition. However, it is the United States who has refrained from giving response. We hope in the current situation of the coronavirus pandemic, which threatens lives of 19 Iranian inmates in the United States’ prisons, Washington would prioritize lives of the people,” Rabiei told the Khabaronline website in an interview published on Sunday.

He noted that the Iranian inmates in the U.S. prisons are not in good condition, saying, “It is worrisome for us.”

Rabiei also said that there is no need for an intermediary to exchange prisoners.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said in December 2019 that Iran is



ready for a full prisoner swap with the U.S., noting that the “ball is in the U.S.’s court”.

Sirous Asgari, an Iranian scientist imprisoned in the U.S. who has contracted the novel coronavirus, is held behind bars in the U.S. despite being exonerated in a sanctions trial.

Three Iranian officials told Reuters that a prisoner swap with the U.S. was in the works.

Michael White, a U.S. navy veteran who has been detained in Iran since 2018 and is currently on medical furlough, is a likely candidate for the prisoners swap, the report said.

Iran’s military power is a ‘nightmare’ for U.S. hardliners: analyst

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Gordon Duff, an American veteran journalist and security and military analyst, has said that Iran’s military power is a “nightmare” for hardliners in the United States.

“The reasons why the United States is concerned about Iran’s ability to buy conventional arms is that the United States fears Iran from rebuilding its air force. With three or four dozens Russian SU 35 aircraft, Iran would have a credible air defense capability and a high speed platform for delivering ordnance,” IRNA quoted him as saying in an exclusive interview published on Sunday.

Under Resolution 2231 the arms embargo against Iran expires in October. However, the U.S. is resorting to illegal moves and coercion to extend the arms sanctions against Iran.

Duff said, “The United States’ pilots have never faced an air to air enemy since Vietnam, meaning no American pilots

have any experience with air combat.”

He added, “This weakness, the United States having an air force used only for bombing occupied countries or increasingly dependent on drones, is the United States’ weakness.”

Defense Minister Amir Hatami said in January that Iran is powerful enough to respond to any aggression and threat by the enemies.

“Thank God, today the Islamic Republic has all the necessary components of power and determination to respond to any aggressor and will respond to any threat at any level with high quality defensive weapons,” he said.

Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Ashtiani, the deputy chief of staff of the Iranian Armed Forces, said in February that Iran’s current situation in terms of military power is better than any other time.

He added that the country’s power is now sustainable.

Sanctions harm people’s health, says Chicago University professor

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Tom Ginsburg, professor of political science at the University of Chicago, has said that sanctions limit the countries’ capacities to protect the people’s health in the coronavirus pandemic.

“The international sanctions in a pandemic are a serious problem. Sanctions violate international law and the human rights,” Ginsburg told ILNA in an interview published on Sunday.

He noted that sanctions cause impediments to contain the pandemic.

In a letter to Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Thursday, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that the United States’ “illegal sanctions” against Iran hamper fight against the coronavirus outbreak.

“Russia constantly notes illegal nature of the United States’ unilateral sanctions on Iran. We have always called on the United States to remove the sanctions and stop obstructing fight against the coronavirus,” Lavrov stated.

The Russian diplomat also urged the European countries not to be afraid of the U.S. threats and continue interaction with Iranian partners.

Zarif has said the U.S. “economic terror” against Iran has increased to “medical terror”.

“Our persistent and coordinated diplomacy with like-minded countries will bring about certain results. In his letter to heads of G20 countries, [Antonio] Guterres, the UN secretary general, urged removal of sanctions. Michelle Bachelet, the UN high commissioner, has made criticisms regarding the human rights,” Lavrov stated.

In a letter to the G-20 economic powers on March 24, Guterres called for rolling back international sanctions regimes around the world.

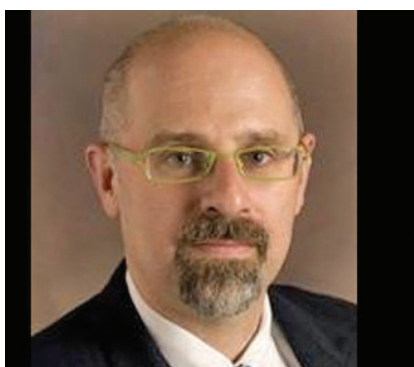
Guterres said sanctions are heightening the health risks for millions of people and weakening the global effort to contain the spread of the new coronavirus, Foreign Policy reported.

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

“Let us remember that we are only as strong as the weakest health system in our interconnected world,” the UN chief said.

Bachelet also said on March 24 that “in a context of a global pandemic, impeding medical efforts in one country heightens the risk for all of us.”

“At this crucial time, both for global public



health reasons, and to support the rights and lives of millions of people in these countries, sectoral sanctions should be eased or suspended,” she said in a statement.

Renowned American scholar Noam Chomsky has said it is “sheer sadism” that the United States maintains sanctions on Iran during the coronavirus pandemic.

“The sanctions are illegitimate in the first place, and maintaining them during the pandemic is sheer sadism,” Chomsky told IRNA in an interview published on May 2.

Speaking from his office in self-isolation to Croatian philosopher and author Srećko Horvat in April, Chomsky blasted

U.S. President Donald Trump for continuing sanctions on Iran.

“When the U.S. imposes devastating sanctions — it’s the only country that can do that, everyone has to follow ... the master. Or else they are kicked out the financial system,” said Chomsky, according to Aljazeera.

Presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden said on April 2 that Trump’s administration must ease economic sanctions on Iran as a humanitarian gesture during the global coronavirus pandemic.

The former vice president said the U.S. has a moral obligation to be among the first to offer aid to people in need regardless of where they live when confronting a virus that knows no borders or political affiliations, according to Aljazeera.

Chris Murphy, the U.S. senator from Connecticut, warned on April 13 that the Trump administration could be partially responsible for “the death of innocent people” if it continues its current policies towards Iran amidst the epidemic.

Murphy also wrote on his Twitter page on April 6 that Iranians are dying of coronavirus partly because of U.S. sanctions.

“Innocent civilians are dying there in part because our sanctions are limiting humanitarian aid during coronavirus,” he tweeted.

Overhyped SHTA does not meet Iran's humanitarian needs: Takht-Ravanchi

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Majid d e s k Takht-Ravanchi, Iran's ambassador to the United Nations, has said the Swiss Humanitarian Trade Arrangement (SHTA) does not match Iran's humanitarian needs in the current situation, IRNA reported.

Takht-Ravanchi made the remarks while addressing an international seminar on U.S. sanctions amid the coronavirus pandemic.

"On 27 February 2020, the U.S. Treasury finalized with much fanfare 'the Swiss Humanitarian Trade Arrangement' (SHTA) allowing certain humanitarian transactions with Iran," he said. "However," the ambassador added, "this narrow channel does not match Iran's humanitarian needs in the current situation."

He also said, "In our common fight against COVID-19, all of humanity is on the same front, and to succeed quickly and sustainably, we must ensure that no community or nation is left alone and behind."

Transcript of Takht-Ravanchi's speech to the conference - entitled "Sanctioned Countries Speak: U.S. Sanctions and COVID-19, A Global Threat" - is as follows:

It is indeed a pleasure to address this important international webinar which is organized by altruist people whom I wholeheartedly thank for their very valuable campaign to enhance the awareness of world public opinion on the need to fight COVID-19 without any hindrance.

Representing a country whose people have seriously suffered as a result of over four decades of inhumane sanctions, today, I will focus on the impacts of the current U.S. sanctions on Iran particularly our capacity to fight COVID-19 and to address its vast socioeconomic consequences.

In our common fight against COVID-19, all of humanity is on the same front, and to succeed quickly and sustainably, we must ensure that no community or nation is left alone and behind.

Therefore, any act restricting the ability of nations to tackle this crisis would help the disease spread like wildfire, consequently weakening the global fight against the pandemic.

A clear example in this regard is the continued application of unilateral sanctions, which undermine our front from within in favor of the disease and function exactly like the enemy's "fifth column".

Now, let me briefly explain how



"Nothing is more humanistic than confronting immoral and inhumane policies like weaponizing medicine and food in these trying times."

sanctions inhibit Iran's ability to fight COVID-19.

While Iran is experiencing one of the worst outbreaks of the coronavirus, the U.S. sanctions - which, according to its officials are the most extensive sanctions ever imposed on a country - are drastically hindering Iran's efforts to treat patients and effectively prevent the spread of the virus.

This is despite the fact that Iran's medical facilities, doctors, and nurses are among the very finest in the world, and the professional nature of our national efforts to suppress COVID-19 is highly acknowledged by the WHO.

To escape from the disgrace of the illegal and immoral nature of sanctions, the U.S. officials continue to claim that humanitarian and medical needs are exempt from sanctions, but, they are not. On 27 February 2020, the U.S. Treasury finalized with much fanfare "The Swiss Humanitarian Trade Arrangement" (SHTA) allowing certain humanitarian transactions with Iran. However, this narrow channel does not match Iran's humanitarian needs in the current situation.

At the same time, the United States has forced SHTA to pursue a very tight

and tough procedure, under pretexts like "ensuring the upmost transparency" or "enhanced due diligence" - requiring companies to provide extensive information to the Treasury Department every month on the Iranian beneficiaries of the goods, the Iranian companies' business relationships and financial details and alike - thus making it practically very difficult for companies to trade with Iran.

Additionally, the almost impossible or cumbersome nature of transferring Iran's reserves blocked outside the country to the designated Swiss bank, not only does not allow the SHTA to function properly now but may actually render it redundant in a matter of few months.

Likewise, recently several companies that supply the medicine and medical equipment required to fight the Coronavirus have stopped shipping to Iran because the current U.S. sanctions' regime makes the shipping of such items to Iran almost impossible.

Moreover, the only message of the U.S.'s additional new sanctions, imposed in the midst of the outbreak, is that companies must avoid doing any business with Iran, even if their work is humanitarian in nature.

In short, the U.S. sanction's regime, including its relevant penalties, is extremely broad and has created a compliance minefield for the legal trade with Iran and consequently, medical suppliers and relief organizations simply steer clear of doing business in Iran in the fear of accidentally getting caught up in the U.S. sanctions' web.

From the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, we have received valuable emergency aid from some countries as well as the WHO and certain humanitarian organizations.

Nevertheless, for a vast country like Iran with a population of nearly 83 million, which is among the worst impacted countries by COVID-19, such emergency aid is not the panacea.

Accordingly, due to the vast impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on almost all aspects of life in the affected societies, neither Iran nor any other country can rely only on emergency aids.

Hence, the immediate removal of all sanctions on banking, insurance, transportation, medical, industry, energy, exports, imports and alike is a must as it would enable the targeted countries to use, freely and fully, their own resources to effectively suppress the pandemic and address its short and long terms impacts.

This is what the international community is calling for, the living example of which is this webinar as well as other similar efforts of civil society in different corners of the world.

As you might be well aware, such strong and repeated calls have recently been made also by the United Nations Secretary-General, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, a number of UN human rights rapporteurs, some other international dignitaries as well as many former and current statesmen and stateswomen, parliamentarians including in the U.S., religious leaders and academia.

Likewise, at the world stage, such important political groupings like the Group of 77 and China with more than 130 Member States as well as 120 Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement, including in its recent virtual summit on COVID-19, have joined the international calls for the removal of sanctions.

To conclude, I would like to once again thank the organizers of this webinar and recognize the value of your efforts. Indeed, nothing is more humanistic than confronting such immoral and inhumane policies like weaponizing medicine and food in these trying times.

Cornel University professor says people shouldn't be denied access to medicine

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Under international d e s k law and basic ethical principles, people should not be denied access to food and medicine, says a political science professor at Cornell University.

In an interview with ILNA published on Sunday, Matthew Anthony Evangelista said the United States claims that its sanctions permit Iranian access to medicine, but the problem is the restrictions on financial transactions.

"Companies that sell food and medicine find it difficult to make the relevant payments without risking violating the U.S. rules," he said.

On the recent sanctions the Trump administration has imposed on Iran, Evangelista said it seems "especially cruel" for the U.S. government to add additional sanctions during a period when Iranian people are suffering from the coronavirus pandemic.

"But the policy is consistent with the Trump administration's approach to other countries, such as Venezuela, which it opposes—to apply more pressure when the country is weakened by disease," the American professor remarked.

On the recent request by international organizations led by the National Iranian-American Council (NIAC) from Trump to reduce the sanctions for 120 days in order to help the Iranian people cope with the virus, the professor said, "It seems unlikely that Trump's policies would find widespread support among the



American people."

Asked about the future of U.S.-Iran relations, he stressed that the main conclusion one can draw is that

the animus against the Iranian government within the Trump administration has not diminished in the face of the humanitarian catastrophe that the pandemic has "caused for both of our countries".

"On the contrary, Trump officials seem determined to increase the pressure on Iran, even as their response to the disease in the United States has proved inadequate and incompetent."

Evangelista, who teaches courses in international and comparative politics, believes that there is, however, some popular sympathy for the Iranian people expressed through calls to reduce or lift sanctions to help deal with the coronavirus, but they are not likely to succeed.

He said the signatories of the statement that urged the Trump administration to lift Iran sanctions included mainly political figures on the left side of the political spectrum, such as Senators Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren, and Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

Former Vice President Joseph Biden—the presumptive Democratic nominee in the upcoming presidential elections—also made a statement on sanctions policy, but his proposal was much weaker than it seemed, he added.

"Joseph Biden did not call for lifting or narrowing of sanctions per se. He proposed issuing licenses to companies that produce drugs and medical devices that could help fight against the virus, but his proposal does not acknowledge the problem posed by the restrictions on banking," the professor concluded.

Rouhani congratulates new Iraqi premier on appointment

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian President Hassan Rouhani d e s k has congratulated the newly-appointed Javad Zarif Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi, calling for all-out cooperation between the two neighboring nations.



"I wish that the relations between Iran and Iraq will be further promoted in the interests of the two nations and in different political, economic, and cultural fields," Rouhani said in a message on Sunday, Fars reported.

The Iranian president also wished health and success for Mustafa al-Kadhimi and prosperity for the Iraqi nation.

On Thursday, Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif congratulated Iraq for succeeding to form a new government.

"Congratulations to Prime Minister @MAKadhimi, his Cabinet, the Parliament and most importantly the people of Iraq for success in forming a new Government," Zarif wrote in a tweet.

"Iran always stands with the Iraqi people and their choice of administration," he added.

Iraj Masjedi, the Iranian ambassador to Iraq, met with the new Iraqi prime minister on Saturday.

"In the meeting with Mr. Kadhimi, bilateral cooperation, continuation of actions regarding the 1975 Algiers Agreement, banking cooperation, Khorramshahr-Basrah railway and visa of the two countries' citizens were discussed," Masjedi said in tweet.

The ambassador added that the Iraqi prime minister praised Iran's efforts in the fight against Daesh.

Kadhimi was nominated in April, months after his predecessor Adel Abdel Mahdi stepped down - the first time a premier has resigned before the end of his term since the U.S.-led invasion in 2003.

The new government is set to hold early elections, but Kadhimi admitted it would face a litany of other challenges: navigating an economic crisis spurred by oil price crashes and the deadly coronavirus pandemic.

"I am honored and privileged to be charged with forming the government during the transitional period and having to deal with the current crises that only exacerbated since the overthrow of the authoritarian regime in 2003," he told gathered MPs.

Satellite launch marks enemies' intelligence defeat: military chief

Baqeri says military satellite launch a prelude to a shift in balance of power in Iran's favor

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iran's enemies, specially the d e s k United States, have suffered a big intelligence defeat after the recent successful launch of an Iranian satellite into orbit, says Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Hossein Baqeri.

Speaking at a military gathering in Tehran on Saturday, Major General Baqeri said the IRGC's success to launch a multipurpose satellite into the orbit is an outstanding example of smart planning with reliable scientific and technical backings, Tasnim reported.



The launch of the homegrown Noor satellite amid the outbreak of the novel coronavirus shows that while the Iranian Armed Forces are playing a role in the battle with COVID-19, they have not neglected the strategy of boosting the country's power, the general added.

Major General Baqeri also hailed the satellite launch as a prelude to a shift in the balance of power in favor of the Iranian nation.

The great and historical achievement of Iran marked a big "intelligence defeat and scandal" for the enemies of Iran, particularly for the terrorist regime of the United States, the commander noted.

The IRGC successfully placed the Islamic Republic's first ever military satellite in its designated orbit on April 22, using a rocket which is also the country's first three-stage launch vehicle to successfully deliver its load.

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

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said last week that the satellite launch proves Iran is able to achieve a surge in production as well.

"Some people keep saying it's impossible and we can't, but we can," Ayatollah Khamenei said in a video conference with seven active manufacturers from different parts of the country on the occasion of Labor Week.

"When we can launch a satellite into space with a speed of 7500 m/s, have put a satellite into orbit, and have made significant progress in the defense industry, then we can achieve a surge in production too," he said, according to his official website.

The Leader explained, "The Iranian wisdom and thought that can build a satellite and set a goal of a 36,000-kilometer orbit for the next satellite, certainly enjoy the same spirit, innovation, and creativity needed to produce cars with a consumption of 5 liters/100 km and for production in other sectors."

IRGC planning to place satellite in geostationary orbit: general

TEHRAN (MNA) — A high-ranking commander in the IRGC says that the force is planning to put satellites into an orbit of 36,000 kilometers which is also known as geostationary orbit.

"We have plans to improve orbit altitudes and reach 36,000km above the earth with the help of our scientists in the Guards and Defense Ministry," Second Brigadier General Ali Jafarabadi, commander of IRGC Aerospace Force' space division, said in an interview on Sunday.

The altitude that the commander refers to is known as geostationary orbit or geosynchronous equatorial orbit (GEO). At a distance of 36,000 km, the orbiting time is 24 hours, corresponding to the Earth's rotation time. At this distance, a satellite above the Equator will be stationary in relation to the Earth.

"GEO is important because it is being spe-

cially used for communications satellites," he said, describing the altitude as 'very strategic'.

"Placing satellites in this orbit will have revenues for the country while also being a tool to maintain the country's assets in space such as locations on GEO."

The remarks come as the force successfully launched Iran's first military into the orbit 425 kilometers above Earth's surface on April 22, using the domestically-made three-stage Qased-1 launcher.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Jafarabadi said that almost all of the members of the team behind recent satellite launch are young. "Almost all members of designing, manufacturing, and controlling teams are young; I firmly announce that 90% of these individuals are below 30 years old and that all experts that had direct role in the project have completed their education in domestic universities."



‘Supporting domestic production is priority of banking system’

1 → Further in the seminar, Hemmati underlined some of the CBI’s achievements in various areas including “monetary policy”, “credit”, “foreign currency” and “payment systems” and said: “These achievements have been realized due to the efforts of the banking system and the CBI’s correct policies, and if the banking system is supported, we will see greater achievements in the future.”



The official also mentioned the bank’s strategies for supporting domestic production, saying: “the Central Bank has taken effective measures, including granting facilities to productive companies, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and knowledge-based companies to support this sector.”

During the meeting, members of the CBI’s Executive Board presented reports in the areas of “monetary policy”, “credit”, “foreign currency”, as well as “monitoring” and “payment systems”, and managing directors of some of the country’s public and private banks explored the mentioned issues and pointed out problems and proposed solutions.

China central bank signals more policy measures to support virus-ravaged economy

China’s central bank said on Sunday it will step up counter-cyclical adjustments to support the economy and make monetary policy more flexible to fend off financial risks.

The first-quarter monetary policy implementation report from the People’s Bank of China (PBOC) did not repeat the central bank’s long-standing vow to refrain from “flood-like” stimulus to support growth, reinforcing signs of more policy measures.

China’s long-term stable economic trend remains unchanged, despite the coronavirus outbreak, the central bank said.

“But at present, challenges faced by China’s economic development are unprecedented, we must fully consider difficulties, risks and uncertainties,” it said.

The bank said it will keep liquidity ample, using both aggregate and structural policy measures, and continue to deepen interest rate reforms to help lower borrowing costs and allocate financial resources more efficiently in the economy.

The central bank will also support the real economy, especially small and medium-sized enterprises, it said.

“We should properly handle the relationship between stabilizing growth, ensuring employment, adjusting structure, preventing risks and controlling inflation,” the PBOC said.

China’s economy contracted 6.8% in the first quarter from a year earlier, shrinking for the first time since at least 1992, as the coronavirus outbreak paralyzed production and spending, raising pressure on authorities to do more to stop mounting job losses.

The PBOC has already rolled out a raft of easing steps since early February, including cuts in reserve requirements and lending rates and targeted lending support for virus-hit firms.

The central bank will continue to deepen the reform of the loan prime rate (LPR) regime and improve the monetary policy transmission mechanism to help lower borrowing costs, it said.

In August 2019, PBOC overhauled the benchmark lending rate mechanism by using the market-driven LPR to replace the previous benchmark bank lending rate.

It will keep growth of M2 and social financing in line with and slightly higher than nominal GDP growth, it said.

It will deepen foreign exchange market reform, maintain yuan flexibility and keep the yuan basically stable, it said.

China will also develop its financial markets to fuel growth and economic restructuring, the central bank said.

The government will support fundraising by private firms through equity financing and bond sales, part of efforts to reduce the economy’s excessive reliance on bank lending.

Meanwhile, PBOC said it would promote “systemic” opening of its bond market, and will introduce more long-term investors.

To protect investors, regulators will seek to unify disclosure rules for various types of credit bonds and improve the mechanism to deal with bond defaults.

PBOC also vowed to foster a resilient, competitive and inclusive financial system, and continue to improve corporate governance at major financial institutions including commercial banks.

(Source: Reuters)

Crisis costs Swiss economy up to \$17b per month

Switzerland’s central bank chief said in an interview published by Swiss media Sunday that the coronavirus crisis was costing the Swiss economy up to \$17 billion each month.

The head of the Swiss National Bank, Thomas Jordan, said the crisis surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic was weighing heavily on the Swiss economy, which was currently functioning at just 70%-80% of its normal level.

“You have to go back to the oil crisis of the 1970s to find such a collapse of growth,” he told the Tamedia group in an interview published by several Swiss papers Sunday.

The impact of the widespread measures put in place in the Alpine nation to halt the spread of the virus was running up “enormous” costs, he said, “to the tune of 11 billion-17 billion Swiss francs (\$11.3 billion-\$17.5 billion) each month.”

Jordan cautioned that the public debt would swell, as would costs linked to unemployment insurance and to the subsidies provided to businesses to keep them afloat, pushing Switzerland toward a significant deficit this year.

The Le Matin Dimanche and SonntagsZeitung weeklies calculated Sunday that Switzerland in all should dish out some \$100 billion to mitigate the effects of the crisis.

(Source: Daily Sabah)

IME’s weekly worth of trades at \$619m

ECONOMY **TEHRAN—** Over 523,000 tons of commodities valued at \$619 million were traded at Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) during the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday).

As reported by the IME’s Public Relations and International

Affairs Department, last week, on the domestic and export metal and mineral trading floor of IME, 199,186 tons of various products worth \$324 million were traded.

On this trading floor, 147,888 tons of steel, 3,790 tons of copper, 7,340 tons of aluminum, 40,000 tons of zinc, 150 tons

of molybdenum concentrates, 18 tons of precious metal concentrates as well as 20 kg of gold bullion were traded by customers.

The report declares that on domestic and export oil and petrochemical trading floors of IME, 323,453 tons of different commodities with the total value of \$302 million were traded.

On this trading floor, 43,633 tons of bitumen, 102,000 tons of VB feed stock, 77,414 tons of polymer products, 26,500 tons of lube cut oil, 32,919 tons of chemical products, 980 tons of insulation, 3,208 tons of base oil as well as 36,800 tons of sulfur were traded.

Industry minister calls on automakers to boost production



ECONOMY **TEHRAN —** Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani has called on the country’s major automakers to increase production by 300,000, raising their total output to 1.2 million vehicles in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 20).

Speaking in a meeting with the heads of the country’s two major carmakers, namely Iran Khodro (IKCO) and SAIPA, Rahmani noted that they need to carefully examine the causes of the current turmoil in the country’s auto market and take serious steps to improve their sales process.

“In addition to the improvement of sales processes, the issue of increasing production should also be seriously pursued, and automakers need to be transparent so that the results of their actions would be tangible for the people,” Rahmani stressed.

The official further mentioned the current gap between the supply and demand in the country’s auto industry and said, “To fill this gap, the ministry is taking necessary

measures for launching new automotive hubs and for restoring the country’s idle automotive units.”

According to the official, currently in Iran, unlike other countries where the automotive industry has stagnated due to the coronavirus outbreak, the demand for cars has increased, which requires urgent action to increase production and to modify the market according to the unusual situation.

Despite the efforts made over the past year, the auto industry has faced serious challenges due to some negative factors like inflationary expectations and the inflow of liquidity toward this sector, he regretted.

“This crisis can be overcome through transparency,” Rahmani stressed.

He finally pointed to some solutions for the improvement of the industry, saying, “One of the necessities for the development of this industry is to utilize the successful experiences of other countries regarding the use of common platforms and common engines in products, which in practice can reduce the production costs.”



IME is one of the four major stock markets of Iran, the other three markets are Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), Iran’s over-the-counter (OTC) market known also as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), and Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX).

On April 21, IME Managing Director Hamed Soltani-Nejad unveiled the market’s

new outlook plan, which depicts IME’s development roadmap until the Iranian calendar year of 1404 (March 20205-March 2026). Materializing the slogan of this Iranian year, which is “Surge in Production” is seriously considered in the mentioned plan and it is, in fact, the strategic approach of the outlook plan.

Over 4m tons of basic goods stored at Iranian ports



ECONOMY **TEHRAN —** Head of Iran’s Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) Mohammad Rastad says 4.1 million tons of basic goods are already stored at the country’s ports, Tasnim reported on Sunday.

Speaking in a press conference on loading and unloading of basic goods amid the coronavirus outbreak, Rastad noted that 25 vessels are currently unloading their cargoes at the country’s commercial ports and 23 vessels are also waiting to unload.

According to the official, over 14.3 million tons of basic goods have been loaded and unloaded in the country’s ports, since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20), 35 percent less than the figure for the last year’s same period.

Of the mentioned 14.3 million tons of goods, 9.7 million tons were non-oil commodities from which the share of bulk goods was 4.6 million tons, down 25.6 percent from the same period last year.

As for container cargoes, 172,000 TEUs entered the country’s ports, indicating a

decrease of about 35 percent compared to the same period last year, he said.

Opining to the fact that the coronavirus outbreak has reduced the loading and unloading of goods in the country’s ports, Rastad said: “The international trade has been [negatively] affected by the coronavirus outbreak and we have been witnessing a significant drop in maritime transportation worldwide. In 2019, about 11 billion tons of goods were transported by sea, which is expected to decrease by 600 million tons this year,” the official said.

“[However] since the outbreak of coronavirus and its consequences, loading, and unloading of goods in the county’s commercial ports have not been stopped, not even for a day,” he stressed.

Noting that shipbuilding orders in the first four months of 2020 have decreased by 71 percent compared to the same period last year, the official said the daily rentals of commercial vessels have also fallen due to reduced demand so that for some vessels the rents have fallen to \$5,000.

Transit to be resumed via Iraqi Kurdistan

ECONOMY **TEHRAN —** The spokesman of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) announced that transit of goods via Iraqi Kurdistan will be resumed, IRNA reported on Sunday.

Rouhollah Latifi said through follow-up measures taken by the Islamic Republic of Iran Consulate in Erbil, Kurdistan issued the permit for Iran to transit commodities via its border.

The permit is for the transit of automobiles, constructional materials, iron, and industrial pipes under some specific condition, he noted.

During a business forum between Iranian businessmen, entrepreneurs and producers and a delegation from Iraqi Kurdistan region held in Tehran last December, Mostafa Abdulrahman Abdullah, president of the Importers and



Exporters Union of Iraqi Kurdistan region, praised the ever growing economic cooperation between the two sides and noted that annual trade turnover between Iran and Iraqi Kurdistan could exceed \$6 billion.

He expressed hope that Iranian investors would form joint ventures with Iraqi counterparts and collaborate in establishing joint production units in Kurdistan region.

He further expressed his government’s readiness for complete cooperation with Iranian exporters and businessmen for doing business in Kurdistan.

Abdulrahman further stressed the important role of embassies and consulates in preparing the ground for economic cooperation, saying introducing businessmen by the consulates will make business easier.

Focusing on foodstuff and supermarket items, the Iran-Iraqi Kurdistan business forum will

No ‘V’-shape return from devastating U.S. job loss, Fed policymakers say



As many parts of the world’s biggest economy begin to reopen after weeks of stay-at-home orders that slowed the spread of the coronavirus but gutted jobs, Americans should not expect a quick return to growth, U.S. Federal

Reserve officials said.

“A couple months ago I was optimistic, I was hopeful, that maybe we would have a ‘V’-shaped recovery - shut things down, clamp down on the virus, and then have a quick recovery,” Minneapolis Federal Reserve Bank President Neel Kashkari said in an interview on the PBS Newshour.

The virus has continued to spread across the nation, with nearly 1.3 million people infected so far and more than 77,000 dead.

With a vaccine and effective treatment unlikely for a year or two, “we are in for unfortunately a slow, long recovery” from “devastating” job losses, Kashkari said.

The U.S. economy shed a record 20.5 million jobs in April due to the lockdowns imposed by states and local governments to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus, a Labor Department report showed Friday.

Interviewed by Fox News on Friday, U.S. President Donald Trump said that the jobs will be back. “They’ll be back very soon, and next year we are going to have a phenomenal year,” he said.

That’s not the dominant view at the Fed, which has slashed

interest rates to zero, bought trillions of dollars of bonds and extended credit to local governments and businesses in an effort to prevent financial markets from imploding and keep the economy from even worse devastation.

San Francisco Fed President Mary Daly, who appeared on CNN an hour later, said the Fed’s unprecedented actions, along with nearly \$3 trillion committed by the U.S. Congress for rescue efforts, should help.

“What I’m hoping in the baseline is we can come back safely, we listen to public health officials, we take it slow but gradual...if we do those things and we reenter safely, then I expect us to have positive growth in 2021,” Daly said.

Asked if it could take 10 or 12 years to repair the job market, as it did after the 2007-2009 financial crisis, she said, “I’m working night and day to ensure that doesn’t happen.”

But the economy can’t rev up too quickly, not as long as the virus is still loose, she said.

“When the coronavirus is behind us, we can reengage fully,” Daly said, noting, “It won’t be quick; in my opinion, it won’t be ‘V’-shaped, it will be gradual.”

(Source: Reuters)

South Pars phases 17, 18 flare gas waste down 50%

ENERGY **TEHRAN** – Gas flaring at the Iranian South Pars gas field's phases 17 and 18 of development has been reduced by 50 percent, according to the managing director of the field's seventh refinery.

According to Hassan As'adi, the refinery's first off gas compressor has been installed and other compressors are going to be installed in near future, IRNA reported on Sunday.

The official noted that the installation of the second compressor is going to reduce the phases' flare gas waste very significantly.

By optimizing the acid gas enrichment unit of phase 17, we were able to completely recover the acidic gases of four gas trains and eliminate acidic gas flaring in the mentioned trains, As'adi explained.

The collected enriched gas will be processed in a sulfur recovery unit, he added.

Back in August 2019, Hamid Chitchian, a former minister who currently advises the government on energy issues, said



the country had major projects planned to prevent flare gas waste.

According to Chitchian, at the time about 16 billion cubic meters (over 52 billion cubic

feet) of flare gas was burning in the country that could be used for various economic purposes, including power generation. "The use of flare gas is one of the

challenges of the oil sector," said Chitchian, adding, "Thus we are planning to attract investment from the private sector and offer loans in the two ministries for this purpose."

Later that month, the head of National Iranian South Oil Company (NISOC) said that the country's southern oil fields will stop wasting flare gas within three years.

According to Ahmad Mohammadi, the controversial practice of burning off gases through stacks at oil fields, will stop by 2022 in at least four locations south of Iran based on deals signed with two major Iranian companies.

Once a pure crude exporter, Iran has managed to expand downstream operations in the oil and gas sector both to meet a growing domestic demand for energy and to open up new markets for its refined products.

Commercializing flare gas would enable Iran to diversify energy resources for power plants and industrial units while it can also be exported to other countries.

Iran's electricity consumption exceeds 41 GW

ENERGY **TEHRAN** – Following an upward trend in recent months, electricity consumption in Iran reached 41,694 megawatts (41.69 gigawatts) on Saturday, IRNA reported, citing data released by Iran Grid Management Company (IGMC).

As reported, the country's electricity consumption stood at 38,695 MW on the same date last year, which means the consumption has increased by 2,999 MW.

Based on the data, electricity consumption by the industry sector also exceeded 4,000 megawatts (MW) and reached 4,577 MW on the mentioned day.

Power plant power storage also increased to 3,662 MW, and the output of the country's renewable power plants reached 3,711 MW, according to the IGMC data.

Last week, Iran's Power Generation and Distribution Company (known as TAVANIR) announced that the country's electricity consumption, since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20) up to May 6 has increased by five percent compared to the same period last year.

According to Mostafa Rajabi Mashhadi, despite the coro-

navirus outbreak which led to the closure of some industrial units, the country's electricity consumption has increased following the beginning of the hot season.

"If this trend continues after all inactive units start operating, the country's energy consumption will increase very significantly and we will face power shortages during the peak consumption periods," he regretted.

The official further mentioned the Energy Ministry's incentives for encouraging consumption management, saying last year, nearly 3.06 trillion rials (about \$72.85 million) were paid to the households and industrial subscribers co-operating in the consumption management program in the form of incentives and relief packages, however.

In the past decade, constant temperature rising and the significant decrease of rainfalls across Iran have put the country in a hard situation regarding electricity supply during peak consumption periods.

In this regard, the Energy Ministry has been following new strategies in recent years to manage the consumption and lessen the electricity losses in the national grid.



State energy ministers in Germany call for investments in renewables

Germany's state energy ministers have called on the federal government to increase incentives for investments in the energy transition as part of an effort to put the economy back on a growth path following the coronavirus crisis.

In a video conference with economy and energy minister Peter Altmaier, the ministers presented a position paper – seen by Clean Energy Wire – calling for investment incentives for renewable energies, intelligent power grids and the hydrogen infrastructure. "The energy transition can become an important growth engine in overcoming the economic consequences of the coronavirus crisis," said Andreas Pinkwart, North Rhine-Westphalia's economy and energy minister. Pinkwart also called on the federal government to "urgently abolish the 52 GW cap on support for solar facilities [...] and significantly reduce the burden on electricity consumers, for example by reducing the electricity tax and the EEG surcharge", the country's levy paid by power consumers to finance renewables support.

Commenting on Monday's energy ministers' meeting, Ingbert Liebing, managing director of the German Association of Local Utilities (VKU), echoed the call for measures to boost Germany's economy, which has been hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic.

"The energy transition is an important



lever in this context, firstly to revive the economy, secondly to advance climate action and thirdly to strengthen the local economy through local value creation." Liebing called for a more efficient approval process for renewable energy projects, noting, for example, that wind farms with an installed capacity of some 1.2 GW and a combined investment of around EUR 1.3 billion remained stuck in the approval process.

As the coronavirus crisis drives many governments across the globe to introduce emergency plans to cushion the immediate economic effects, there are growing calls to align any mid and long-term stimulus efforts with climate targets. Germany's top politicians and many large companies have thrown their weight behind such a green stimulus.

(Source: renewablesnow.com)

The one factor that will determine the size of India's LNG boom

India, the fourth-largest importer of liquefied natural gas (LNG) in the world, will boost its imports by one-third over the next three years, but the import growth will depend on the state of the land gas pipeline network development, the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) said in an analysis on Friday.

India, which doesn't import natural gas via pipelines, has been increasingly relying on LNG imports for its fast-growing gas demand while domestic production is steadily declining.

India's LNG imports have increased to represent more than half of its natural gas supply last year, up from 31 percent of gas supply back in 2012, according to EIA estimates.

To meet rising LNG demand and imports, India commissioned earlier this year its sixth LNG import terminal and is building another four facilities expected to come online by 2023.

Yet, India's LNG import growth will not only depend on the pace of LNG import and regasification terminals construction, but also on the speed at which the country will be building gas pipelines to carry the gas from its coasts to the landlocked areas of demand, the EIA said.

"The construction of domestic pipelines to move LNG from the coastal import facilities to major demand centers



further inland has experienced delays. Future growth in India's LNG imports will depend on the timely completion of natural gas pipeline networks," according to the EIA.

During the current lockdown, India's LNG importers were said to have declared force majeure on imports.

According to a Wood Mackenzie analysis this week, India will see a V-shaped recovery in LNG imports from the middle of June, despite the fact that industrial demand has significantly slowed down during the lockdown.

Before the lockdown, India's "increased spot purchases were a rare glimmer of hope in the increasingly oversupplied LNG market," WoodMac said.

(Source: oilprice.com)

Drilling sinks to record U.S. low with oil sector in retreat

Oil and natural gas exploration plunged to an all-time low as the economic and industrial dislocations from the Covid-19 pandemic snuffed out the remnants of the American shale boom.

Drilling in U.S. oil and gas fields retreated by 34 rigs this week to 374, led by a precipitous drop in crude exploration that sank to levels not seen since before the shale-oil revolution kicked off at the beginning of the last decade.

Energy companies are in a full-on retreat as the historic slump in crude markets prompts widespread job cuts, budget reductions, contract cancellations and well shut-ins. In the span of just eight weeks, 53% of active American oil and gas rigs have gone dark, according to data released by Baker Hughes Co. on Friday.

■ **Decades of drilling wiped out by crude crash** "This is an unprecedented downturn," EOG Resources Inc. Chief Executive Officer Bill Thomas said during a conference call with analysts. "U.S. oil production is in severe decline and it could take years for domestic production to turn around. We believe that the historic and prolific oil-production growth by U.S. shale may have been forever altered."

View the latest market-moving news and analytics surrounding volatile crude prices.

Benchmark American oil futures have dropped 63% from the 2020 high of \$65.65 a barrel in early January as



the worldwide pandemic slashed demand for petroleum-based fuels at a time when the global surfeit was already expanding. On April 20, the price cratered to minus \$40.32.

The historic downturn will drastically reduce capital available to the industry, said Thomas, who leads the world's second-largest independent explorer by market value.

■ What Bloomberg intelligence says

Diversified oilfield-services companies such as Schlumberger, Halliburton and Baker Hughes are levered to onshore-drilling trends, as are rig contractors Helmerich & Payne, Nabors and Patterson-UTI.

Baker Hughes' weekly rig tallies have been a key oil-industry metric for decades because of the close correlation between drilling activity and crude production. U.S. oil output has fallen by 1.2 million barrels a day, or 9.2%, since touching 13.1 million in the second week of March. The combined oil- and gas-drilling figure released Friday was unrivaled in data going back to 1975.

Fracking -- the more expensive process of blasting a mix of water, sand and chemicals into drilled wells to finally unleash the oil and gas trapped in the shale rock -- is also in retreat. The number of frack crews working in the U.S. fell by 8 to 47, marking a new record low for a count that's been compiled since the start of 2014, according to industry consultant Primary Vision Inc.

In this week's frack-crew data, released late Friday, the Permian Basin of West Texas and New Mexico saw the greatest number of cutbacks. Seven crews were dropped there, leaving 32 still working in the world's biggest shale patch.

(Source: Bloomberg)

EOG shuts in 125,000 bpd of oil this month, eyes less in June

EOG Resources will temporarily shut-in production for at least four months, including 125,000 bpd in May, owing to recent low crude prices from the global coronavirus pandemic, top company executives said Friday.

But June shut-ins will total 100,000 bpd, EOG said in a late Thursday statement, adding it also shut in 24,000 bpd last month.

Shut-ins for 2020 will average 40,000 bpd, as output is gradually brought back over the rest of the year if oil market conditions permit, Bill Thomas, CEO of EOG, said in a first-quarter earnings call.

"We view it [shut-in output] as low-cost storage," Thomas said. "It's a great way to manage your business especially in the price environment we're in."

Billy Helms, EOG's chief operating officer, said 90 percent of the company's shut-in production is cash flow positive at \$10/b and the company has access to multiple markets to sell it.

Crude oil prices have been volatile and unusually low for the last two months. NYMEX WTI crude futures were in the teens for a couple of weeks, but have moved to the \$20s/b this week as more oil companies have continued to voluntarily curtail production.

■ EOG shut-ins began in March

EOG initially shut-in 8,000 bpd of oil in early March, after crude prices plunged when Russia and OPEC+ could not agree on production cuts and walked away from the negotiations. By the start of Q4, EOG expects 20,000 bpd will still likely be shut in. That output represents wells with "some form of expense" required to start them back up, Helms said.

"You have a lot of reasons why production goes down," he said. "These are wells that might have to replace gas lift valve downhole or maybe a hole in the tubing or things that require some expense or workover to bring back to production."

EOG hasn't decided yet to spend money to bring the wells back, until it sees margins improve to a point where it would make that effort, he added.

In addition to curtailing production, EOG executives have opted to defer startup of new wells until oil prices recover, so they will generate higher-return rates. Those are wells completed and waiting to be turned online. .

The company has also sharply reduced its field activity, slashing its operated rig count from 36 rigs to eight rigs in the last six weeks. It plans to average six rigs for the rest of the year.

And, it plans to bring about 485 net wells on production this year, a sizeable reduction from its earlier projection of 800 net wells.

The company will also delay drilling 150 new wells until second-half 2020 as it builds inventory for 2021 production into what is widely presumed will be a better market, although EOG executives have repeatedly said the company will only produce wells when they meet its internal economic thresholds.

"Our 2020 production profile reflects a rate-of-return decision," Helms said.

For four years, EOG said it would only drill wells that generate at least 30 percent at \$40/b WTI, but Thomas said the company's cost-cutting and efficiency efforts have changed the threshold.

The company has identified more than 4,500 net drilling locations – more than nine years of inventory at a 2020 activity pace – that can generate strong return rates of at least 30 percent at a WTI oil price below \$30/b. It plans to concentrate activity this year on these wells.

■ Oil production will drop 15 percent in 2020

This year, EOG's oil production is projected to drop 15 percent compared with 2019, to roughly 390,000 bpd, down 15 percent from 2019 levels.

Q2 production is predicted at 310,500 bpd and Q4 production should average about 420,000 bpd, as shut-in wells come back and completed wells are turned to production.

In Q1, EOG's total oil, gas and NGL production averaged 874,100 boe/d, up 3 percent from Q4 and up 13 percent from the same period in 2019. Its Q1 crude and condensate output was 483,300 bpd, up 3 percent from Q4 2019 and up 11 percent from the same period a year ago.

EOG has also reduced its 2020 capex a second time. Its spending is now set at \$3.3 billion-\$3.7 billion, down \$1 billion from a mid-March revision and down 46 percent from its original \$6.3 billion-\$6.7 billion spending plan.

Also, targeted well costs are projected to drop 8 percent this year compared with 2019 levels, including reductions of 9 percent in the Delaware sub-basin – the western part of the Permian Basin – and 7 percent in the Eagle Ford Shale of South Texas.

In 2019, and also 2018, EOG had targeted well cost savings of 5 percent. Last year it came in ahead of plan at 7 percent savings.

(Source: Platts)

Saudi shift from price war has Asia oil buyers stewing over rise

Saudi Arabia's boost to prices of most of its oil is signaling an end to a destructive price war, but it's left Asian buyers less than impressed.

The increase was a surprise to Asian customers, which were expecting another cut to prices, according to ten traders surveyed by Bloomberg, just as pockets of demand start to emerge across the region including from the biggest consumer -- China. Buyers were left disappointed when the kingdom hiked the cost of its crude for four of the five grades sold to Asia, prompting some to consider purchasing slightly less from OPEC's top exporter, traders said.

Buyers will be informing Aramco of their requests such as import volumes, grades, loading dates -- a process known as nomination -- by Friday. Saudi Arabia raised the official price of its flagship Arab Light crude to Asia by \$1.40 a barrel for June from May. That compares with an expected cut of as much as \$7.50 in a Bloomberg survey last week.

Across the region, oil demand remains some way from pre-virus levels even as consumption in some countries may have bottomed out. In China, Asia's biggest crude importer, processing rates led by independents refiners rebounded as more motorists took to the streets and factories resumed operations. India's fuel use is also seeing a slight gain this month.

Most prediction models had pointed to a month-on-month drop, as opposed to a gain, according to the surveyed traders. This indicates that the kingdom may be referencing other indicators or adjusting its prices based on the nation's overall strategy, making such models less reliable, four of the traders said.

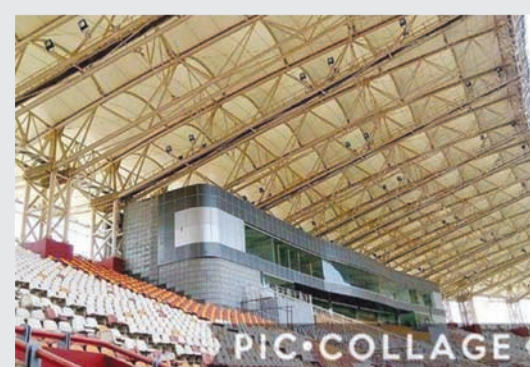
(Source: Bloomberg)

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Why American leaders ignore Israeli forces' attack on U.S. Navy in 1967?

The American leaders, who tried to reject the Israeli forces' assault on the U.S.S. Liberty technical research ship sailing in the international waters in the Eastern Mediterranean in June 1967 as an act of war against Washington, only proved that they preferred Tel Aviv's interests to their own people.

Philip M. Giraldi, a Ph.D. holder and an Executive Director of the Council for the National Interest, has firmly called on the Americans not to let the U.S. political leaders from both Republican and Democratic Parties to keep mum on the Israeli forces' intentional bloody attack on the United States Navy's U.S.S. Liberty in June 1967 which left 34 American soldiers dead and over 170 others critically injured.

"Imagine, if you will, a ship from a nation not at war with anyone sailing in international waters on a quiet June day being suddenly attacked by unidentified warplanes and torpedo boats, their markings covered up to conceal their country of origin. The vessel under attack had little with which to defend itself, but its crew heroically made sure that a large national flag was hoisted to demonstrate that it was not a belligerent in anyone's conflict. The attackers noted the nationality of the vessel, but persisted in their aggression in a clear attempt to sink the ship and kill all its crew. The officers on the ship radioed that they were under attack and asked for help, but even though friendly fighter aircraft were within striking distance and were automatically dispatched, they were then mysteriously recalled. The attacks lasted for two hours, longer than the Pearl Harbor attack that brought about American entry into World War 2, killing and wounding more than two hundred of the crew. Life rafts lowered into the water as the vessel seemed to be sinking were machine gunned by the attacking aircraft and torpedo boats to make escape or evacuation of the wounded impossible but the captain and survivors worked heroically, and successfully, to keep the ship afloat. When the vessel finally made it back to port, the officers and crew were sworn to silence by their own government and a cover-up was initiated that has persisted to this day. Many of the ship's survivors have died since that day 53 years ago, and the attempts of the remainder to see justice before they are also gone have been ignored," Giraldi explained in his commentary published by the Information Clearing House.

"I am, of course, referring to the Israeli attack on the U.S.S. Liberty, which took place on June 8, 1967, nearly 53 years ago. The anniversary of the attack is coming up in a month and the remaining officers and crew will hold a ceremony at the Navy memorial in Washington D.C. to honor the memory of their thirty-four shipmates killed and the 172 who were wounded. Seventy percent of the crew were casualties, the highest percentage of casualties on any ship that remained afloat in the history of the U.S. Navy. The lightly armed intelligence gathering vessel Liberty and its heroic crew emerged from the near destruction as the most decorated ship for valor in a single action in the United States Navy," he went on to say.

Israeli willingness to attack and kill Americans unnecessarily, apparently to send a message, has been noted before. There is the case of Rachel Corrie run over by an Israeli bulldozer and of Furkan Dogan, a Turkish-American who was, like the crew of the Liberty, killed in international waters when he sailed on the Gaza relief vessel Mavi Marmara. But in spite of that, the deliberate attempt to destroy the Liberty, which, according to former U.S. Secretary of State Dean Rusk, was clearly approved at the highest level of the Israeli government, still has shock value.

Israel's apologists, a virtual fixture at all levels in the U.S. government as well as in academia and the media, have long been making the argument that the attack on the Liberty was some kind of "friendly fire" accident. But the relatively recent discovery that a Navy spy plane intercepted and recorded Israeli both helicopter and fighter pilots mention-



ing the American flag displayed by the ship during the attack suggests otherwise. Other recordings made of the Israeli communications revealed that some of the pilots did not want to attack. One pilot said, "This is an American ship. I can see the flag. Do you still want us to attack?" Israeli ground control responded, "Yes, follow orders. Hit it!" before admonishing the pilots to "finish the job."

But while one expects the Israelis to behave abominably, based on any assessment of the years of war crimes committed in places like Lebanon and what remains of Palestine, the greatest crime against the Liberty crew was committed by the United States government itself. President Lyndon B. Johnson (LBJ) and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara reportedly were informed of the attack shortly after it began and it was Johnson who twice personally ordered the recall of the U.S. fighter planes going to rescue the Liberty. Admiral Lawrence Geis, commander of the carrier group in the Mediterranean that the planes had launched from, objected and McNamara responded testily that "President Johnson is not going to go to war or embarrass an American ally over a few sailors." It was McNamara, again acting on LBJ's orders, who had the crew sequestered after the ship made it to Malta, issuing a "gag-order" over the incident with the understanding that anyone who spoke up would be secretly court-martialed and imprisoned.

To maintain the cover-up, Captain William McGonagle, who was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for his role in saving the ship, had his medal awarded without any publicity in a private ceremony at the Washington Naval Yard rather than at the White House as was otherwise normal. The President of the United States did not make the award, yet another dismissal of the valor of the Liberty crew.

Normally an attack on a U.S. Navy vessel would have mandated an official Court of Inquiry, but in the case of the Liberty an improvised team consisting of Admiral Isaac Kidd and Chief Counsel Ward Boston was pulled together in the Mediterranean under orders from Admiral John S. McCain, father of Senator John McCain, who was based in London. The Navy's official 'Court of Inquiry' therefore consisted in reality of just Kidd and Boston making a quick visit to the Liberty at sea and then rushing back to Washington via London, where McCain endorsed the 700 page draft document without reading it. The hastily prepared report bypassed all ordinary fact-finding and legal review procedures and no one knows what channels the 'Findings of the Court of Inquiry' followed in Washington.

Acting under orders from the White House, the inquiry had been given only a week to prepare its report, a procedure that normally requires six months. The result was also predetermined by McNamara acting for LBJ, who ordered that the conclusion would be that the attack on the Liberty had been a "case of mistaken identity."

No crewmen from the Liberty were even allowed to provide formal testimony during the inquiry proceedings. Nevertheless, the

inquiry's chief counsel Ward Boston subsequently confirmed in a sworn affidavit that he and Kidd had strongly disagreed with the coerced findings, believing instead that Israel had staged an unprovoked attack intending to sink the ship and kill all the crew. Admiral Kidd referred to the Israelis as "murderous bastards." Boston also observed that the transcript of the court of inquiry that was subsequently released had been altered, presumably by someone acting on behalf of the White House, to delete and change testimony damaging to Israel.

As is often the case, there is a back story to what happened to the Liberty. In the years prior to the attack on the Liberty, President John F. Kennedy was concerned over powerful and wealthy American Jews attempting to hijack U.S. foreign policy to favor Israel. He also took steps to prevent Israeli development of nuclear weapons. After he was assassinated, his successor as president Lyndon B. Johnson, who has been described as having a political career "interwoven with Jews," saw things quite differently. He turned a blind eye over the Israeli nuclear program and surrounded himself with Jewish friends and advisors who were actively engaged in promoting the Zionist agenda, some of them plausibly as actual agents of Mossad.

Most prominent among that group were the Krims, Arthur and Mathilde, he a leading media lawyer and studio head who was a Democratic Party fundraiser and she a geneticist, a Swiss born convert to Judaism who had lived in British Mandate Palestine with her first husband, an Irgun terrorist. Jewish terror was a cause which she actively supported. The Krims were regular companions of LBJ throughout his presidency, with a reserved room in the White House and a house near his ranch in Stonewall Texas when he was on vacation there. Johnson also stayed at their mansion in New York.

At the time of the Six Day War when the Liberty was attacked, the Krims were constantly at the side of LBJ and it is generally accepted that they were both working on behalf of the Israeli government to cultivate a decisive presidential tilt towards Israel. Johnson, in fact, was informed of the Israeli intention to go to war against its neighbors in advance and gave the green light, even agreeing to come to the aid of Israel if things went wrong. To seal the deal, Mathilde was even having an affair with LBJ, a situation well known to White House staff and to the Secret Service.

Since 1967, there have been a number of documentaries, books and unofficial inquiries regarding the attack on the Liberty, but resistance from the usual suspects has meant that the story has not become better known. Meanwhile Congress, the Pentagon and the White House have refused to authorize fair and impartial formal hearings that would recognize the deficiencies in the 1967 inquiry and which would include testimony from the remaining Liberty survivors. Senator John McCain was notorious for his offhand treatment of entreaties from the survivors as was then congressman and now governor

Ron DeSantis of Florida, a former Navy Seal. DeSantis now calls himself the most pro-Israel governor in the United States.

The most serious unofficial inquiries have involved former military officers. In 2003, Admiral Thomas Moorer, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, formed an independent commission of inquiry to look into the attack. It produced Loss of Liberty, a documentary that included actual interviews with survivors. The commission, which included Rear Admiral Merlin Staring, Marine General Ray Davis, and Ambassador James Akins, reviewed all documentary evidence in the case and interviewed both survivors and other naval officers who were involved indirectly. They learned that the Liberty had been surveilled by the Israelis for at least eight hours prior to the attack and that the ship was both clearly marked as American and was unmistakable as a uniquely configured and immediately recognizable intelligence collection vessel, not even close to the profile of an Egyptian horse transporter as Israel subsequently claimed. During the carefully planned attack, Israeli used radio jamming in an attempt to prevent the Liberty from radioing its predicament.

Moorer's commission concluded that Israel had deliberately attacked the Liberty and sought to sink it and kill its entire crew. The crewmen who were killed were "murdered" by Israel while the U.S. should have regarded the attack as an act of war and responded appropriately. The cover-up of what had taken place was ordered by the White House and the fact that the truth about the incident continues to be hidden is a "national disgrace." In an op-ed Moorer wrote in 2004, he concluded by asking "Did our government put Israel's interest ahead of our own? If so, why?"

In October 2003 the Moorer commission presented its report on Capitol Hill, though its audience was often limited to congressional staffers rather than the understandably fearful members. One year later Representative John Conyers of Michigan overcame considerable resistance to have the report and some accompanying information entered into the Congressional Record. Moorer and Admiral Staring, a former Judge Advocate General of the Navy, who had been the legal officer in the McCain office in London who had not been allowed to carefully review the Court of Inquiry report, continued to advocate for an honest investigation of the attack on the Liberty until they died in 2004 and 2013 respectively.

Which leads us to the present and the question of justice for the U.S.S. Liberty survivors who will be gathering next month. The tale of the Liberty demonstrates that even fifty-three years ago the United States government was betraying its own people out of deference to Jewish power and to the government of Israel. If anything, as horrific as the killing of 34 personnel on board of the Liberty was, the situation has gotten even worse as Washington sends billions of dollars to the Jewish state annually while also giving its kleptocratic government a green light to commit war crimes and other aggressions that will ultimately draw in the United States, and could plausibly bring about our ruin. It is unpleasant to say the least to watch an unrestrained and unprincipled client government do terrible damage to a much larger patron enabled by the machinations of a dual-loyalty fifth column, but that is what we are seeing.

And the actual rot really began with the attack on the U.S.S. Liberty, when patriotic Americans died at the whim of a feckless president who loved a foreign country more than his own. One hopes he is rotting in hell. Today few Americans even know about the Liberty even though they are now facing an election in which two presidential candidates will seek to outdo each other in expressing their love for Israel. Trump and Biden should instead take pause and first demand as a sine qua non justice for the survivors of the U.S.S. Liberty.

Joe Biden lacks a campaign theme for Nov. election, let alone a promising plan for the economy to rebound!

Most of the pro-Democratic Party activists have called on Joe Biden to concentrate on an accurate workable plan for the country's coronavirus-hit economy to rebound as soon as possible if he really wants to motivate voters to elect him as the president of the United States in November, but one may simply raise a question that how a man, who has not thus far been able to choose a campaign theme, can be reliable to handle the economy in these hard days?

Liz Peek, an American business analyst, journalist, and commentator on the finance industry and government, has asked in her article published by The Hill that, "What will Joe Biden run on?"

That question must be keeping Biden's handlers up at night. The presumptive Democratic nominee needs a big bold theme to animate his campaign and excite voters; something like, for instance, "Make America Great Again." Currently, his message is about as stimulating as cow's milk.

With the election merely six months away, and the former vice president eager to deflect attention from Tara Reade's accusations of sexual assault, Biden needs to break out. But how?

Some have suggested the former VP could campaign on reinvigorating our virus-crippled economy. After all, he's running on President Obama's legacy, and during the eight years he served as wing-man, the White House did oversee a recovery from the financial crisis.

But, the nation during that period chugged along in second gear; President Trump was elected in part because he promised to do better. That he did, putting the pedal to the metal and, through deregulation and lower taxes, causing optimism to surge and growth to accelerate.

Trump will campaign on reawakening the country's animal spirits and overseeing a rebound, saying he did it once and he can do it again. Ironically, the excellent jobs market and increased incomes of just four months ago threatened to take away that major GOP campaign plank. Americans had become blasé about the robust economy; sadly, that is no longer the case.

Some advisers are pushing Biden to tout his management abilities, highlighting his oversight of the 2009 Recovery Act enacted to combat the Great Recession. After all, legislators are now spewing trillions of dollars across the land; taxpayers will want someone to watch where they land.

Republicans would love to revisit Biden's role in directing that \$787 billion stimulus program. While the Obama administration promised the spending would create 3.5 million new jobs within two years, the claim quickly pivoted to jobs "saved." And, while Obama vowed that the budget-buster would keep unemployment below 8 percent, 2009 proved to be the first of four straight years when the jobless rate would top that level.

At the end of the first year, with \$340 billion spent, then-Vice President Biden claimed the outlays had "created or saved" 640,000 jobs; that sounds pretty good, until we found out that only 30,000 of those jobs were in the private sector. Mainly, Biden funneled the funds to states and municipalities to plump up local budgets. Because teachers didn't get laid off, their jobs were "saved," though in reality most of those folks were not going to get pink slips anyway. Nice sleight of hand.

"My message today is that we're on track," Biden boasted at the time, even as unemployment neared 10 percent. He failed to mention that each job, by his calculations, cost \$248,000.

In 2009, to his credit, Biden pressed local politicians not to spend stimulus funds on "stupid things." But as the Wall Street Journal reported at the time, they ignored his advice and delegated only 10 percent to infrastructure. Worse, projects funded included \$783,000 on a study of why young people consume malt liquor and marijuana, \$92,000 for Army Corps of Engineers costumes for mascots like Bobber the Water Safety Dog and \$219,000 on a study of college "hookups."

Indeed, the late Sens. John McCain (R-Ariz.) and Tom Coburn (R-Nebr.) published a detailed report on 100 such unnecessary and frivolous projects, including pumping stations for failed golf courses, anti-terrorism funding for a dinner cruise company and an anti-capitalist puppet show.

In 2010, Obama told the nation the stimulus money had "created or saved" two million jobs, a claim rated by Politifact as "Half True." So, maybe Biden shouldn't focus on his management of the stimulus.

Still searching for a theme, Biden's team recently decided he should run on getting tough on China, and ran an ad depicting Trump as "rolling over" for Beijing during this coronavirus shutdown. The suggestion is ludicrous. If President Trump has carved out new ground anywhere, it is in pushing back against China. The president has called out Beijing not only for unfair trade practices, but also for monstrous intellectual property theft and dishonesty on a wide range of issues, including the coronavirus.

In January when Trump cut off airplanes bringing visitors from virus-infected China, Biden called the president's approach to Beijing "xenophobic." Most Americans would describe his decision as critical.

Biden is correct that Trump has tried to keep his "phase one" trade deal intact even while criticizing Beijing for misleading the world about the Wuhan virus. But that agreement was good for U.S. farmers and manufacturers; indeed, it was a worthy first step towards leveling our trade relations and curbing China's chronic theft of American know-how. Why junk a deal that was so hard-won?

Also, Beijing controls far too much of our drugs and medical supplies, and obliquely threatened to use that unfortunate dominance to hobble our fight against the pandemic. Going forward, Trump will need to wean the U.S. off such a reliance; that will be one of his campaign platforms, and it will resonate.

Meanwhile, Biden has a long history of appeasing China, including during his stint as VP. His son Hunter also muddies the water, having served on the board of a Chinese state-run firm. This will not be a winning issue for him.

Democrats are already using the pandemic to push an agenda of "fairness," arguing that the worst impact from the disease has been felt by minorities and low-income Americans. Some will respond to this message, which has energized progressive Democrats. But if the economy begins to rebound in the third quarter, as some economists project, Trump will remind voters that a robust jobs market is the best welfare program on earth.

He will be right. Never forget: It really is the economy, stupid.

Is Trump leaving the Saudi alone?

➡ According to reports, the military personnel who were deployed to the region after the attacks are also leaving, two U.S. jet fighter squadrons have left and the U.S. military may soon decide to cut back on U.S. naval presence in the Persian Gulf.

This military presence was largely seen as a deterrent against Iranian aggression, and Pentagon officials explained that the changes are because Iran is no longer "an immediate threat to American strategic interests."

More broadly, many in Washington are coming to question the very fundamentals that have underpinned a very special bilateral relationship for 75 years—essentially, U.S. security to ensure the free flow of Saudi oil and Saudi support for U.S. designs in the West Asia.

Even U.S. President Donald Trump, who has largely defended the relationship until recently, is openly questioning whether the United States needs to protect Saudi oil at all. Most of it is now sold to China and other Asian buyers, rather than to Europe and the United States as in decades past. The U.S. energy revolution over the past decade has dramatically reduced U.S. reliance on Saudi Arabia and the West Asia for oil

supplies, which has driven many foreign-policy observers to question why U.S. funding must be spent and American lives must be lost to protect a West Asian Monarchy that shares few U.S. values. A shotgun marriage that survived the oil embargo, 9/11, and the Iraq War is now being shaken by seismic geopolitical shifts, and by growing discontent among American lawmakers, the media, and the general public.

"I just have a hard time explaining to my constituents why we're spending money and risking life to defend a country that's got a sketchy history with us to begin with, and now demonstrated this type of behavior," Cramer said. "They've just become very difficult to defend."

Matters could soon grow even worse.

"The only thing holding the relationship together now is Trump—he has a peculiar affinity for Saudi Arabia," said Bruce Riedel, an expert on Saudi Arabia and 30-year CIA veteran who is the director of the Intelligence Project at the Brookings Institution. That could change with this year's election, if presumptive Democratic nominee Joe Biden prevails over Trump. Biden, the former vice president, has called Saudi Arabia a "pariah" and said he'd cut off military sales.

How did it come to this? Today's tensions stem, in many ways, from the original foundations of the odd-couple relationship: an oil-for security bargain that always sought, but never fully managed, to bridge the divide between a liberal democracy and a conservative religious monarchy.

Some experts believe U.S.-Saudi ties will ultimately weather the storm, as they always have, because of the need for a large, wealthy, and anti-Iran anchor for U.S. interests in the West Asia.

"It is really difficult, if not unthinkable, to think of a collapse in relations or divorce," said Bilal Saab, an analyst with the Middle East Institute and former advisor on West Asia issues for the U.S. Department of Defense.

Others are starting to see a potential breaking point on the horizon. "I think this is a very significant and potentially existential moment in the relationship," Riedel said. "There have been ups and downs, and no foreign country has inflicted as much economic pain as they did in 1973, but the relationship survived and recovered because there was still that basic bargain."

"But we don't need the Saudis anymore—this comes in a very different geopolitical environment than previous crises."

Mausoleum of Shaikh Kharaqani to undergo restoration, landscaping

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — A new round of restoration and landscaping projects will begin on the mausoleum of Shaikh Abu al-Hassan al-Kharaqani (963-1033), a renowned Sufi master whose students include the likes of Khwaja Abdullah Ansari (1006–1088).

“At this stage, measures such as studying the soil mechanics, repairing the flooring of the area, and re-carpeting the damaged floorings, etc. will be done based on the available credit,” Semnan province’s tourism chief Mehdi Jamal announced on Sunday, CHTN reported.



His mausoleum is located 24 kilometers outside of Shahroud inside a garden. The original mausoleum was a simple brick structure that was replaced by a new one in 1974.

There was once a mosque attached to the mausoleum of Sheikh Abu al-Hassan which had a conical dome with elaborate tilework. Only the Mihrab (prayer niche) of the mosque stands today. This Mihrab has beautiful stucco reliefs and a stucco inscription. Before the 1979 Islamic Revolution of Iran, another mosque was built around this Mihrab.

Today, the mausoleum includes a library, which houses reference books on mysticism, and rooms where pilgrims can stay.

Restoration begins on historical Baharestan Citadel

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — The Baharestan Citadel in northeastern city of Birjand, South Khorasan province is being restored in order to be protected and strengthened, Ali Shariatimanes, a provincial tourism official, said on Sunday, IRNA reported.



A potential threat of physical harm to the historical site will be lifted after the urgent restoration, he added.

He also noted that a budget of 1.2 billion rials (about \$30,000) has been allocated to the project, which is scheduled to be done in collaboration with the Regional Water Company of South Khorasan.

The monument is planned to be turned into water museum after the restoration in the near future, he stated.

Baharestan Citadel, which is one of the main historical places in Birjand, dates back to Zand dynasty (1751-1794).

The historical site was once one of the largest and magnificent Iranian gardens, which is being destroyed due to negligence and erosion over the years. However, it has been inscribed on the National Heritage list.

The Baharestan Citadel is considered to be a unique monument in terms of decorating the exterior and the interior of the brick citadel. The main building is an octagonal lattice and its exterior decorations are very similar to the bricks ornaments of the Karim Khan Zand Citadel in Shiraz.

Ancient castles and fortresses in Iran: Poshtoo Castle

HERITAGE d e s k The ruined Poshtoo Castle is one of the most significant and interesting monuments situated on the outskirts of Ahar, an ancient city in northwest Iran.



Having high, rocky ramparts, the castle is constructed on top of a hill between the Poshtab and Kovjan villages. The only access to the castle is by the 220 stony steps!

Rubble stone, clay mortar, mortar and bricks have been used in the construction of the castle.

Last year, Iran’s Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts announced it was developing a dossier for some historical castles and fortresses to possibly be registered on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

Tourism development in Sistan-Baluchestan among top priorities: minister

→ 1 The minister added that people of Sistan-Baluchestan are hospitable and kind.

“Various campaigns have so far been launched to introduce the existing capacities in this province, such as ‘Let’s see Sistan, let’s hear Baluchestan’.”

Referring to development potentials in the province, the official said “One of the most important capacities of Sistan-Baluchestan is the development of Makran, which is also emphasized by Leader [of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei], and we will witness more prosperity in the region.”

Makran is a semi-desert coastal strip stretched along the coast of the Gulf of Oman.

The collective province -- Sistan in the north and Baluchestan in the south -- accounts for one of the driest regions of Iran with a slight increase in rainfall from east to west, and an obvious rise in humidity in the coastal regions. In ancient times, the region was a crossword of the Indus Valley and the Babylonian civilizations.

The province possesses special significance because of being located in a strategic and transit location, especially Chabahar which is the only ocean port in Iran and the best and easiest access route of the middle Asian countries to free waters.

The vast province is home to several distinctive archaeological sites and natural attractions, including two UNESCO World Heritage sites, namely Shahr-e-Soukhteh (Burnt City) and Lut desert.

Some of the most notable historical and natural tourist attractions of the province are as follows:

■ Seb castle

The historical Seb castle stands tall in a village of the same name, the castle was extensively used during the Qajar era (1789–1925) as a borderline surveillance base. However, narratives say that its heyday dates back to the time of the Safavids (1501–1736). The castle is constructed of clay and mortar blend with loads of sticky plant seeds. In some parts wooden slabs cut from palm trees have been used to strengthen the overall layout, enabling it to withstand the natural disasters in particular mellow seismic vibrations.

■ Mud fountains

Mud fountains are one of the most amazing phenomena and tourist attractions of the province. There are three Mud fountains in this area that are located in Kahir, Konarak, and Khash, two of them are in the form of a hill and the other is a volcano.

■ Darak beach

It is in fact an amazing place where intersection a thirsty desert meets the sea. Darak beach and a nearby village are a destination for avid nature lovers. The beach and the amazing village of Zarabad, along with the Oman Sea, are where sand dunes, palm trees and blue sea in a frame



Darak, where the barren desert meets the sea in Iran’s Sistan-Baluchestan province

together create picturesque sceneries.

■ Darren Negaran

Darren Negaran (literally meaning illustration of the valley) is home to tens of carved pictures of different animals such as wild cows, camels, and antelopes with a large horn in a variety of styles that are drawn in most of the scenes. Some say it’s the largest stone gallery of the country. Hunters’ motifs, men’s conflicts with each other and the images of moon and sun are other subjects of these ten thousand years old stones illustrations.

■ Chabahar beach

Chabahar is the only oceanic port of Iran and it is attached to the Sea of Oman and the Indian Ocean. In the southern part of the Chabahar city, there are large rocks with the advent of seawater and erosion of sedimentary rocks that

have created a beautiful landscape. Sunset and sunrise on this beach are one of the most spectacular views that you may have in your life. Do not miss these beautiful beaches during your Iran tour.

■ Martian mountains

About 40 to 50 kilometers away from Chabahar, lies one of the wonders of Iran’s nature known as the Martian mountains or miniature. Also, it is called Kalani or Aria in the local language. Along the roadside, you can see another planet in front of you that can be easily touched. Colors of the Martian mountains varies from gray to white and displays different colors during the day due intensity of the daylight. This 4-5 million years old mountainous area features hills from 5-meter-high to the ones rising over 100 meters.

Century-old mansion to be turned into cultural center

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — Eqbal mansion, which was built one hundred years ago by two Russian brothers in the northern port city of Bandar-e Anzali, will be repurposed into a cultural center after being fully restored.

The mansion is also planned to be inscribed on the National Heritage list, Hadi Heidari, chairman of the Anzali city council announced on Sunday, CHTN reported.

The mansion is to be purchased by the Anzali municipality and then it will be transformed into a cultural center with the aim of receiving better maintenance, he added.

For centuries Anzali has served as a gateway to Europe, connecting the economies of the East and West. Not surprisingly the customs authority of Anzali is at least 300 years old.

Fishing is one of the leading occupations in Anzali, which is the main producer of caviar in the country. Rice cultivation and farming are the other traditional professions of Anzali inhabitants.



Some historical attractions of the city include Pahlavi-era Mian Poshteh Palace which is now a military museum, Qa-

jar-era (1785-1925) St. Mary Church, Anzali Clock Tower, which was originally a lighthouse, and the five-deck Mirza Kouchak Khan Cruise Ship.

Anzali Lagoon and Sorkhangol Wildlife Refuge are among the city’s top natural attractions. Anzali Lagoon divides the city into two parts and is home to various indigenous and migrant birds and fish, and also draws many tourists because of its lotus flowers and water lilies. Sorkhangol Wildlife Refuge is a heaven for birdwatchers in the wintertime.

Anzali wetland, neighboring the Caspian Sea, has long been a heaven for nature lovers and birdwatchers. Covering some 20,000 hectares, the lagoon bears international importance as being a refuge for diverse wintering water and shore birds. It is also home to all-embracing reed beds, submerged and floating vegetation. However, the wetland, like many other of its counterparts, is suffering from environmental pollution.

On the verge of oblivion: elderly potter promotes know-how in central Iran



HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — An Iranian potter, who is in her late 70s, has held a workshop to revive an indigenous skill of pottery-making without wheel which has passed down from generation to generation.

“An ancient skill of pottery-making has been revived in the village of Borjak, near the city of Khomein, through the efforts of provincial cultural heritage department over the past two years,” CHTN reported on Saturday.

Potter Ozra Hamzelou, who is a native of Borjak, conducted the workshop to share the know-how of pottery-making without wheel with some 30 local trainees at a small workspace she has established to produce such potteries.

Last year, Borjak’s especial skill of pottery-making without wheel was registered on the National Intangible Cultural Heritage list.

Potteries produced in the village are indigenously famous as ‘Do-gou-leh Borjaki’ and they are routinely handcrafted by females.

No potter’s wheel is used for this product and all production steps are done by hands. The raw material is all-native yet very simple hand-made tools are being utilized. No extra coats of glaze are applied... very simple decorations, like diagonal lines, are added on the surface.

“Do-gou-leh” or “Abgoosht” is one of traditional dishes typically served in such potteries in the region. Abgoosht is an incredibly rich stew of lamb, legumes, tomatoes and potatoes.

Pinching, slabbing and coiling are amongst basic techniques that are used for making earthenware without using a potter’s wheel. Goat’s hair are usually being used in crafting the local earthenware to help boost its strength.

Mashin Doodi’s railway to be restored



TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — Parts of Mashin Doodi railway, Iran’s first train which was discovered during a construction project in the city of Rey, southern Tehran in 2018, will be restored in the near future, a provincial tourism official has said.

The restoration project aims at strengthening the rails and repairing and replacing the worn traverses, which were built in 1883, Rey’s cultural heritage department director Amir Mosayeb Rahimzadeh said on Sunday, Mehr reported.

Mashin Doodi, which means Smoking Machine, was Iran’s first train operating between Tehran and Rey. The name was given by Iranian people because lots of steam and smoke came out of the train’s exhaust.

Although the railroad was shut down in 1962, nowadays it is active in short distances

as a tourist attraction in southern Tehran.

The ancient city of Rey, has long been a travel destination for sightseers and pilgrims, for good reason. It is home to the holy shrines of Shah Abdol Azim and Bibi Shahr-Banu, traditional bazaars, cisterns, madrasas, and caravansaries to name a few.

Rey was one of the capital cities of the Parthian empire (3rd century BC–3rd century CE) and it was captured by the Muslim Arabs in 641 CE. During the reign of the Muslim caliph al-Mahdi in the 8th century, the city grew in importance until it was ravaged in West Asia only by Damascus and Baghdad. In 1220 the city was almost entirely destroyed by the Mongols, and its inhabitants were massacred. Most of the survivors of the massacre moved to nearby Tehran, and the deserted remnants of Rey soon fell into complete ruin.

Iran's social, religious unity 'a world model for coronavirus response'

1 → Health care networks key to curbing coronavirus in Iran

Marandi explained that "However, at the beginning of the outbreak, like many other countries, we have focused on treating the patients and the medical centers were dealing with a feared crowd, unaware of the dire threat it could have for the people, the virus could easily transmit to those who were not infected.

Health networks were established about 35 years ago, when I was the health minister, first we prepared a plan on setting up a comprehensive network which connected rural areas, villages, cities, and the whole country, at that time, we faced a great lack of physicians and health practitioners, so we decided to increase the capacity of universities of medical sciences and educate more medical staff.

In the Iranian calendar year 1364 (March 1985- March 1986), we had set up both health network and increased the capacity of universities of medical sciences, so the ministry of health switched to the current Ministry of Health and Medical Education; a year later, we enrolled 7,000 students in these universities."

Then we started to establish Health Houses in the villages with two health workers for each, who were tasked with tracking the population of villages and inform them about healthcare, providing health services, and also vaccinate the people and newborns, as well as offering postpartum care, he added.

He went on to say that "it was not easy to find health workers in villages, so we first searched for a girl and a boy to learn literacy for five years, then trained medical and healthcare for two years, after that, they began activities as health workers.

Before this, we did not have any subspecialty program, we sent the patients abroad for transplant, sterility treatment, and even diagnosis of some diseases, but after increasing the capacities of universities we could achieve subspecialty which caused great currency savings.

Health networks could also lead to better education in deprived areas because before, teachers would have not stay and work in villages due to the lack of medical facilities."

Before the Health Houses establishment, public spending on healthcare services was more, but it offered the people high-quality services at low prices, he highlighted.

"And also, health indicators in rural areas are higher than in urban areas, which is still helping us survive such a global pandemic.

Health workers in rural areas have made great efforts in these years and we must appreciate what they have done and pay tribute to them for what they are still doing, as some of whom are even performing better than a physician.

Even if a vaccine for coronavirus is discovered and mass-produced, primary health care networks together will play a major role in injecting vaccines into villagers," he stated.

■ Belief; the most significant reason behind Iranians' unity

In comparison to other countries combating the global epidemic, Iran is benefiting from the strong belief which initially comes from Islam; Iran almost always has been backed by God, Iranian people are total believers, and their paying attention to moral and ethics might be their key to their success



© Tehran Times/ Shahab Ghayoumi

in such crises, Marandi said.

"In other countries, with the onset of coronavirus, we have seen that fear has made many people rush to the markets and buy almost all the food and hygiene products, however, our country has not faced such issue in great scale, and this shows that people do not only care for themselves, and consider other people as much.

Although lock-downs have reduced people's income or many of them faced severe difficulties, they did not forget the underprivileged families and we have witnessed a wide range of volunteer services that people were offering, numerous groups voluntarily joined hands to make face masks, disinfectants, or even cook food and distribute in deprived areas, as well as financial assistance.

Some shop owners refused to receive monthly rent to help the tenants whose businesses were affected by the outbreak. Many also have volunteered to make up for the lack of medical staff, or help reduce the burden on the nurses and health workers," he noted.

"In some cases, people have even dedicated themselves to help and bury the dead bodies killed by the virus, which was so tough; we have not seen any bodies abandoned on the streets of Iran, unlike other countries; so it demonstrated that our people stood up for their country and people, despite shortages, restrictions, a kind of social solidarity as suggested by Islam.

Some nations were struggling with their medical staff who were tired, unpaid or overwhelmed and went on strike. However, such things have not happened in Iran, and all the medical staff stood on the front line and battle the disease, regardless of being unpaid, tired or overwhelmed.

Many of the health workers lost their lives and this dedication only originates from beliefs and morals, and this was the leading cause of disease containment.

On the other hand, Iran was not only countering the pandemic but the harsh sanctions were exacerbating the situation for the country; we could not export oil, therefore, there has not been sufficient income for the country to import necessary medical products

and more importantly, the sanctions limited us from importing the required goods," he also explained.

He further emphasized that "other countries, despite their high potential and facilities, abandoned some sections of society and treated young people, or put some people in priority, while all the people in Iran regardless of their age, nationality, religion, or any other factor were considered important and received treatment, despite hospital bed shortages, ventilators, and medical equipment."

■ No discrimination in treatment of coronavirus patients

Elsewhere in his remarks, Marandi said that "in countries like the U.S. where I have been a few times before, there is an issue that only a part of the population is under the insurance coverage, and many are not so that when you are covered by the insurance, you will not receive treatment; now think that the person is also poor and cannot afford treatment costs, so that will die on the streets, and unfortunately, this is a very common issue in those countries which does not trigger off much reaction.

Black people have long been neglected in those countries, and where they live is isolated and this disrespect has turned commonplace, so, discrimination does not mean how it means in our country.

But, in Iran, we have provided millions of people with insurance coverage, even the deprived, and even the refugees.

Coronavirus in Iran had also a considerable death toll, in the beginning, each person died of the disease was precious and we regret it, so there is a need to try more and prevent any deaths.

But in comparison to other countries with full potential, income, technology advances, and numerous medical staff, Iran better handled the crisis, despite all the criticisms made to us, and all the exaggerations released by foreign media about our ways to manage the epidemic."

■ Religious figures' role in containing the disease

Marandi went on to say that "religious figures play a significant role, especially in such conditions when people are prevented to

do their usual religious ceremonies in shrines or mosques, during the lock-downs. Many people even have saved money for years to take a trip to holy shrines in other cities or countries but the epidemic has put a barrier to their religious behavior.

Closing holy shrines and mosques or other religious places was not an easy decision to make, so, religious figures spent a hard time to prevent people from religious gathering and these places, and the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, reassured the people when it was decided to close the religious places, and also told the people to stay home and seriously observe the hygiene principles, therefore, the people obeyed without a doubt.

While some religious followers from around the world expressed their opposition and did not follow the rules of quarantine and went on strikes causing chaos in their country, any of which has not happened in Iran, due to the powerful influence of our religious figures have on the people."

Among Christians, some behaviors might be in contradiction with the health standards, some of them are reluctant to vaccinate their children; and when a child has jaundice and need a blood transfusion, the parents refuse and prefer the child dies, in some cases, judicial system pursues the issue and force them to save the child, he added.

■ Academy of Medical Sciences' efforts to counter epidemic

Since the beginning of COVID-19 prevalence, we started holding daily meetings, sessions with scientific research centers, related organizations, experts, and reported all the findings to President Hassan Rouhani, the ministers, or the Coronavirus Combat and Prevention Headquarters, he explained.

"In particular, with the arrival of the holy month of Ramadan, it was misbelieved that fasting increases the risk of COVID-19 infection because if we stay thirsty for a long time in a day, the virus can easily enter the lungs, but we came up with a solution that people can wash their mouth several times a day to reduce the risk of infection.

Academy of Medical Sciences is mostly a think tank, we find medical and scientific solutions to some issues," he concluded.

Leader: All should follow expert views on coronavirus

Ayatollah Khamenei says coronavirus exposed the West's failure in ethics, management

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Leader of the Islamic Revolution

de s k Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said on Sunday that in dealing with the coronavirus predicament all should act based on expert views suggested by the national headquarters to fight the spread of the coronavirus.

"As I have said, I recognize expert viewpoint of the Coronavirus Combat and Prevention Headquarters as valid. Then, every decision they take, all the people, and I, will follow it," the Leader said in a meeting via video conference with members of the headquarters chaired by President Hassan Rouhani.

The Leader praised the Iranian people, healthcare workers, as well as police and armed forces for their altruism, patience, and equanimity which manifested the rich Iranian-Islamic culture during the pandemic.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Ayatollah Khamenei referred to the controversial issue of reopening mosques and religious sites during the pandemic, saying, "I do not offer any proposal in this regard, but it should be noted that prayer, especially during the holy month of Ramadan, is among the essential needs of people, because people need to keep in touch with God more in crucial times."

He went on to say that the coronavirus pandemic exposed failure of the West in terms of ethics and management.

"The West and West-oriented countries do not want this failure to be revealed, but it is required to outline aspects of this failure and raise awareness of nations."

Although the coronavirus reached Europe and the United States later than many other countries, and despite the fact that they had the opportunity to get prepared against the pandemic, they proved to be unable to contain the disease well enough so their people are grappling with different problems, including unemployment.

"The Western society is founded on money and material things. Therefore, they remained indifferent to the needy, the elderly, and the underprivileged. So, a large number of people died of the virus in nursing houses," Ayatollah Khamenei explained.

World's Women in Mathematics Day: Mirzakhani, a genius who shattered stereotypes

1 → Although Mirzakhani passed away in 2017, her invaluable contributions to the field of mathematics endure, and her trailblazing career has paved the way forward for many women mathematicians to come.

Zahra Goya, a professor of mathematics at Tehran's Shahid Beheshti University, said about Mirzakhani that Maryam Mirzakhani was not just a great temporary show, the next generation should know that Iran's rich culture for the pursuit of science recognizes no boundaries, including gender, except for scientific ethics.



Perhaps Mirzakhani's rich intelligence was not in mathematics, which made her so famous. Mirzakhani's personality traits also set her apart from the rest.

Mirzakhani's colleagues say of her "Mirzakhani was committed, ambitious and fearless in the face of problems, and always instead of choosing the easiest way to solve math problems, she would always challenge them."

This prominent Iranian mathematician was not only interested in mathematics. In one of her few interviews, Mirzakhani said that as a child she did not intend to become a mathematician but she was very interested in reading books and writing stories and thought that one day she would become a writer, but after encountering disappointing issues in literature, she eventually discovered a passion for mathematics and proved herself to be the best at it.

Amir Jafari, a professor of mathematics at Tehran's Sharif University of Technology, also says "Maryam's interest in literature as a child led her to develop mathematics according to the components of literature and fiction." In addition to her exemplary intelligence and perseverance, Maryam's imagination has led to her success. Imagination is very effective in advancing science. Because knowledge is limited and imagination is unlimited.

■ In memory of Mirzakhani

The United Nations Women, a UN entity for gender equality and women's empowerment, have honored seven women scientists, including Iran's Maryam Mirzakhani, who have made significant contributions to the field of science, highlighting their world-altering and trailblazing careers.

The National Academy of Sciences of the United States has launches an award named after Maryam Mirzakhani for her efforts and achievements, which are awarded each year to exceptional contributions and advances in mathematics.

In Iran, Maryam Mirzakhani's family announced the establishment of a charity foundation in her commemoration during a ceremony held at Sharif University of Technology.

According to Ali Naghi Mashayekhi, a member of the faculty of Sharif University of Technology, the Maryam Mirzakhani charitable foundation will be established with the aim of identifying talents and provide them with material and spiritual support, as well as providing a platform for the growth and development of the elite.

Recently, a documentary filmed in Canada, Iran and the United States, "Secrets of the Surface" examines the life and mathematical work of Maryam Mirzakhani.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → E

Iran will defeat COVID-19, we believe: Chinese envoy

Chinese Ambassador in Iran, Chang Hua, has said he believes that Iran would overcome the crisis of coronavirus outbreak. "We believe that by sending humanitarian aid, Iran will overcome the crisis," he said in a meeting with Mahmoud Reza Peyravi, secretary general of the Iranian Red Crescent Society, IRNA reported.

The envoy praised Iran's Red Crescent Society as the first organization affiliated with the Red Cross and the Red Crescent societies which sent humanitarian shipments of aid to the Chinese people.

A delegation of Chinese medical experts arrived in Tehran on Saturday with a cargo of aid to help combat the novel coronavirus, known as COVID-19.

سفیر چین: باور داریم ایران بر بحران کرونا غلبه خواهد کرد

سفیر جمهوری خلق چین در تهران ابراز امیدواری کرد ایران بر بحران شیوع ویروس کرونا غلبه خواهد کرد.

به گزارش ایرنا، چانگ هوا روز دوشنبه در حاشیه دیدار با محمودرضا پیروی دبیرکل جمعیت هلال احمر ایران گفت: ما باور داریم که با ارسال کمک های انساندوستانه از سوی دوستان دولت ایران از بحران این بیماری عبور خواهد کرد.

دیپلمات ارشد چین در ادامه ضمن قدردانی از جمعیت هلال احمر ایران به عنوان نخستین سازمان بشردوستانه عضو جمعیت های ملی صلیب سرخ و هلال احمر که محموله های کمک را برای مردم چین ارسال کرد، گفت: ما هم با شدت گرفتن ویروس کرونا در کنار ایران هستیم.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

"cryo-, cry-"

■ **Meaning:** freezing or cold

■ **For example:** You can return to most normal activities the day after **cryosurgery**.

PHRASAL VERB

Nail somebody down

■ **Meaning:** to force someone to say clearly what they want or what they intend to do

■ **For example:** Before they repair the car, nail them down to a price.

IDIOM

Cream of the crop

■ **Explanation:** the best people or things in a particular group

■ **For example:** As usual, the cream of the crop of this year's graduates were offered the best jobs.

UN Special Rapporteur's Fear of "Western Democracy"

UN Special Rapporteur says working on the case of WikiLeaks co-founder Julian Assange has raised fears about finding out further about Western countries' democracy.

"Four democratic countries joined forces to leverage their power to portray one man as a monster so that he could later be burned at the stake without any outcry. The case is a huge scandal and represents the failure of Western rule of law," said the rapporteur.

Obama says White House response to coronavirus has been 'absolute chaotic disaster'

Former U.S. President Barack Obama delivered a blistering critique of the Trump administration's response to the coronavirus crisis, describing it as "an absolute chaotic disaster" during a private call with people who worked for him in the White House and across his administration.

The searing comments, confirmed to CNN by three former Obama administration officials on the call, offered the starkest assessment yet from the former president about how President Donald Trump and his team have handled the deadly pandemic and why he believes Democrats must rally behind former Vice President Joe Biden to defeat Trump in November.

In a 30-minute conversation with members of the Obama Alumni Association, the former president said the response to the coronavirus outbreak served as a critical reminder for why strong government leadership is needed during a global crisis. The call was intended to encourage former Obama staffers to become more engaged in Biden's presidential campaign.

"This election that's coming up -- on every level -- is so important because what we're going to be battling is not just a particular individual or a political party," Obama said. "What we're fighting against is these long-term trends in which being selfish, being tribal, being divided, and seeing others as an enemy -- that has become a stronger impulse in American life."

Biden campaign is secretly building a Republican group

Appearing in an Instagram live chat with soccer star Megan Rapinoe on April 30, presumptive Democratic nominee Joe Biden made a spontaneous, vague statement about how he's been "speaking to a lot of Republicans," including "former colleagues, who are calling and saying Joe, if you win, we're gonna help."

Then he showed his hand: "Matter of fact, there's some major Republicans who are already forming 'Republicans for Biden,'" the former vice president said. "Major officeholders."

According to daily beast, the comment hardly received any attention at the time. But in declaring it, Biden ended up tipping off the earliest stages of a brewing effort that's starting to get underway in certain Republican circles behind the scenes.

Interviews with several of the most prominent Never-Trump Republicans reveal that for now, the nascent effort is loosely defined and could ultimately take a variety of forms. But preliminary talks about messaging, engagement, leadership, and roll out are starting to be broadly sketched out, according to sources directly familiar with the matter. And the talks have happened more frequently as Biden moves solidly into general election mode.

"It is literally just forming," one former top Republican Party official involved with the preliminary discussions told The Daily Beast. "I've had several conversations with people who have approached me. It's going to take off, it's going to happen. The question is to what degree and form it does," the source, who was granted anonymity to speak candidly about private discussions, said.

"You don't want something like this out on the street before it needs to be," the GOP source added. "It just makes it much harder to do."

The contours of a developing "Republicans for Biden" movement are indeed fluid, with longtime operatives and former party loyalists mixed on what a final product would look like and when it might come into fruition. The movement behind the scenes is in contrast to the very public effort to unite the left, but matches Biden's own professed fondness for working with Republicans.

When presented with Biden's comments, GOP sources interviewed referenced two main possibilities: an external group that would work on his behalf as a political action committee—similar to other Democratic-led outside groups—that could theoretically clear a pathway for others to join; or an internal operation within Biden's campaign, with one or more recognizable Republican figures joining as the public face.

A second source well-placed in Republican circles—who has had conversations with senior Biden advisers in recent weeks—said that any mounting effort would most likely come from within the campaign's vast network.

"My impression is the official one will be part of the campaign," the Republican source said, referencing the apparent "Republicans for Biden" group Biden mentioned himself.

Among the GOP's more ardent anti-Trump faction, several names came up in conversation when asked who could theoretically have a role in an outside political entity, which would not be allowed under campaign finance laws to coordinate with the campaign directly. Those names include former Sen. Jeff Flake (R-AZ), Wisconsin-based political analyst Charlie Sykes, conservative media giant Bill Kristol, former Republican National Committee Chairman Michael Steele, longtime campaign operative Steve Schmidt, former Rep. David Jolly (R-FL), and columnist Mona Charen, among others.

Meanwhile, one name in particular has been floated as a choice to help give legs to such an effort from the inside: former Republican Ohio Gov. John Kasich. The source who has spoken to top Biden allies about a number of topics said there has been discussion in Bidenworld about Kasich, a leading NeverTrump voice, who joined as a CNN analyst after leaving office in January 2019.

Turkey sets sights on Yemen, raising regional security concerns

Turkey has reportedly been increasing its presence in Yemen's southern coastal areas in a bid to expand its foothold in the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, which is worrying Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

The activity is financed and supported by Qatar via some Yemeni political and tribal figures affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood movement, the Arab Weekly publication reported.

"Cautious and virtually concealed, Turkish activity in Yemen is currently concentrated in three Yemeni coastal areas: Shabwah, Socotra, and al-Makha district in Ta'iz governorate," the report quoted anonymous sources in Yemen as saying.

Turkish intelligence elements operated in Shabwah under the cover of the Humanitarian Relief Foundation (HHF) and the Muslim Brotherhood's growing influence in the Yemeni province, it said.

The Muslim Brotherhood, the report said, hopes to wrest control over Shabwah's al-Alam area and Balhaf port in order to gain leverage over "critical gas exports and much-needed access to the coast that overlooks the Arabian Sea, a key gateway for any potential Turkish intervention and the shipment of crucial supplies from Turkish military bases in nearby Somalia."

The report further accused Turkey of escalating tensions with the help of Socotra Governor Ramzi Mahrous, citing a secret visit by the official to Istanbul, where he met Turkish and Qatari intelligence officers and Muslim Brotherhood leaders.

"The developments mean that Turkey has assumed a greater political role in southern Yemen through the country's local branch of



Turkish agenda. A 2016 file picture shows Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan (R) and Yemeni President Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi (L) address a joint press conference in Ankara. (AFP)

the Muslim Brotherhood, which is helping Turkish charities gain influence," the report said.

"The Islah (Reform) party is instrumental in giving Turkish institutions and the Turkish government, all masquerading as charity organizations, access to Yemeni cities," Yemeni political analyst Mahmud al-Tahir told the Arab Weekly.

"Turkey has interests in abetting the Muslim Brotherhood and giving it more power on the Yemeni stage," he said.

The report said Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated officials have visited Ankara to lobby

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) for more active role in Yemen, particularly by investing in the country's transport sectors and ports.

In mid-January, Turkey's Deputy Interior Minister Ismail Catakli visited Aden, which has served as the seat of Yemen's self-proclaimed regime of former Yemeni president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi during the Saudi war, according to the report.

The trip came two months after Saleh al-

Jabwani, a former transport minister of the Hadi government, visited Turkey to discuss cooperation in managing Yemeni ports.

Ankara's activities in Yemen are part of a larger campaign to shore up its influence in the southern entrance of the Red Sea, the report said.

«Turkey's efforts to increase its presence near the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, through which Persian Gulf oil is transported before reaching the Suez Canal, will threaten the security of Persian Gulf Arab states," it added.

Saudi Arabia, along with a coalition of its vassal states, launched the military aggression on Yemen in a bid to reinstall the Hadi regime and crush the Houthi Ansarullah movement. However, over five years into the war, the kingdom has achieved neither of its objectives.

The Western-sponsored bombing campaign has plunged Yemen into what the UN says is the world's worst humanitarian crisis and killed more than 100,000 people in the impoverished state.

Saudi- and UAE-backed militants have recently engaged in intense clashes in Yemen's southern areas, exposing a deep rift in a Riyadh-led military coalition.

The fresh adventures by the two camps serving the coalition have dragged other players to Yemen such as Turkey.

Libya is another scene of rivalry between Turkey on one side and the UAE and Saudi Arabia on the other.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE as well as Egypt support renegade Libyan general Khalifa Haftar, while Turkey backs the internationally-recognized Government of National Accord in Tripoli.

ICC rejects Australia's 'unfounded' challenge to probing Israeli war crimes

The International Criminal Court (ICC) has rejected Australia's demand that the tribunal halt an investigation into war crimes committed by the Israeli regime in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Australia's argument that the court has no jurisdiction to conduct the investigation is "misled and unfounded", the court said on Saturday.

Under the Israeli lobbying, the Australian government in February filed a request to intervene in proceedings at the ICC, arguing that the court lacked jurisdiction to conduct an investigation because Palestine was "not a state".

ICC chief prosecutor Fatou Bensouda dismissed the challenge as she chastised "misinformation and smear campaigns" which she said would not change facts about the conduct of the court.

"Fact: my Office is executing its mandate concerning Palestine situation with utmost professionalism, independence and objectivity in strict conformity with the Rome Statute. Any insinuation or assertion to the contrary is simply misled and unfounded," Bensouda tweeted.

Dismissing Australia's argument that the ICC's jurisdiction did not extend to the Palestinian territories, the office of the prosecutor said Canberra had not formally challenged Palestine's right to be a party to the court before.

At the end of April, Bensouda issued a legal brief stating that Palestine is considered a state.

Israeli, American, Australian and European officials,



among others, have spoken out against the move by Bensouda. Israel is not a member of the Rome Statute and has not accepted ICC jurisdiction.

In December, Bensouda announced that a five-year preliminary examination of the "situation in the state of Palestine" had found sufficient evidence of war crimes committed by Israel to proceed with a full investigation.

"I am satisfied that war crimes have been or are being committed in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem [al-Quds], and the Gaza Strip," she said.

"There are no substantial reasons to believe that an investigation would not serve the interests of justice."

Palestine was accepted as an ICC member in 2015, three

years after signing the court's founding Rome Statute, based on their United Nations "observer state" status.

According to Press TV, Israel and the U.S. have both refused to sign up to the ICC, which was set up in 2002 to be the only global tribunal trying the world's worst crimes, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Both have claimed they have credible legal systems that can properly adjudicate human rights violations which make ICC intervention dispensable.

Meanwhile, U.S. President Donald Trump's administration has backed Israel in its battle against the court.

Australia's move has been welcomed by Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Rawan Arraf, director of the Australian Center for International Justice, expressed disappointment and called on the government to let the investigation continue.

"Australia is trying to block a full and proper investigation of crimes that the international community think are most egregious," she said.

Bishop George Browning, president of the Australia Palestine Advocacy Network, hit out at the government, saying it was "getting in the way of justice".

"Australia's request to make a submission to the International Criminal Court is a shameful support of the Trump and Netanyahu agenda to sabotage progress towards justice and freedom for Palestinians," Browning said.

Venezuela seizes Colombian combat boats days after failed invasion plot

Venezuela's military says it has seized three abandoned Colombian light combat vessels that soldiers found while patrolling the Orinoco river on Saturday, several days after the government accused its neighbour of aiding a failed invasion plot.

In a statement, the defence ministry said the boats were equipped with machine guns and ammunition, but had no crew, adding they were discovered as part of a nationwide operation to guarantee Venezuela's "freedom and sovereignty".

According to a preliminary investigation the boats were dragged away by strong river currents, Colombia's navy said in a statement.

Colombia's navy said it is talking with its counterparts in Venezuela about recovering the boats.

In televised comments Venezuelan president, Nicolás Maduro, said the military would return the boats if the Colombian government made an official request for them.

Venezuela will make an official complaint to the United Nations accusing Colombia and the U.S. of violating international law for the failed invasion attempt, Maduro added.

On Wednesday, Venezuelan state television broadcast an interrogation video of a former U.S. soldier, in which he said a Florida security firm had hired him to train dissident Venezuelan troops in Colombia for an operation to seize control of Caracas' airport and capture Maduro.

Authorities said they arrested the man, Luke Denman, along with a second U.S. citizen and 11 others, as they attempted to enter Venezuela by boat on Monday from Colombia. The government said a separate raid attempt the day before left eight people dead.

Maduro on Wednesday accused Colombian President Iván Duque of enabling the operation, which Duque denied.

(Source: The Guardian)

Three key U.S. coronavirus officials in self-quarantine after COVID-19 exposure

Three senior officials guiding the U.S. response to the coronavirus pandemic were in self-quarantine on Saturday after coming into contact with someone who had tested positive for the disease, their agencies and spokesmen said.

Anthony Fauci, a high-profile member of the White House coronavirus response team, is considered to be at relatively low risk based on the degree of his exposure, according to a representative for the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

Fauci, the 79-year-old director of that institute, has tested negative for COVID-19 and he will continue to be tested regularly, the official said in an emailed statement.

Robert Redfield, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), "will be teleworking for the next two weeks" after a "low-risk exposure" on Wednesday to a person at the White House who has

the disease, the CDC said in a statement.

Redfield is 68 years old. He is "feeling fine" and has no symptoms, the statement added.

If required to go to the White House, Redfield will follow the CDC's safety practices like taking temperature, screening for symptoms each day, wearing a face covering, and distancing, the CDC said.

U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Commissioner Stephen Hahn, who is 60, is also in self-quarantine for a couple of weeks after coming into contact with someone who tested positive for the illness, an FDA spokesman told Reuters late on Friday.

All three officials were scheduled to testify on Tuesday to a Senate committee looking at steps that states and the federal government are taking to reopen businesses and schools after coronavirus shut-downs.

(Source: reuters)

EU urged to sanction Israel over plan to annex occupied West Bank

A network of pro-Palestinian European groups has called on the European Union to slap sanctions on Israel over its controversial proposal to annex much of the occupied West Bank, saying the move is part of the regime's ongoing ethnic cleansing, apartheid and colonization policies.

The European Coordination of Committees and Associations for Palestine (ECCP), in a letter addressed to the EU foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, on Saturday, said "immediate actions, including sanctions, need to be taken" to confront Israel's unilateral land grab and annexation plans, Press TV reported.

The Brussels-based group then urged the EU to take "concrete measures," arguing that the 27-member bloc has means at its disposal to punish Israel's violations.

The ECCP called for the suspension of the EU-Israel Association Agreement, and the exclusion of Israel from EU Framework Programs, funded by European taxpayers' money, as some of possible punitive measures.



"This is not the first time that Israel has tried to illegally annex parts of territories it occupies. Israel already annexed occupied East Jerusalem (al-Quds) in 1967 and Syria's Golan Heights in 1981 in gross violation of the international law,"

the letter read.

"While Gaza has been strangled by a 13-year blockade and repeated military invasions in the West Bank, Palestinians struggle with a brutal occupation, expulsion, dispossession, arbitrary arrests and house demolitions among other things," it continued.

The ECCP also urged Borrell to stand by his February statement in which he warned Israel that "steps towards annexation, if implemented, could not pass unchallenged."

"Under international law, the EU as a whole and each of its member states have the mandatory obligation to ban trade with Israel's illegal settlements, as allowing such entities to trade freely and profit from the Occupation violates duties of non-recognition of and non-assistance to serious breaches of international law. The current situation cannot be allowed to continue if the EU is serious about its commitments to human rights and the rule of law," the letter noted.

No blacklist in Iran football team: Dragan Skocic

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran national football team head coach Dragan Skocic says that the door is open for all players and there is any blacklist in his team.

Skocic highlighted the importance of giving all players the chance of playing in their national team.

The Persians await the start of the 2022 FIFA World Cup qualifiers, where they will have four must-win games against Hong Kong, Cambodia, Bahrain and Iraq.

“There is no blacklist in Iran national team and the best players will be invited to the team. Without a doubt, we will call up the best players to take part in the national team training camp as soon as the training camp begins,” Skocic said in an interview with Farhikhtegan newspaper.

Will Iran football team follow Carlos Queiroz’s defensive style or Marc Wilmots’s attacking football?

“The national team will have their own style and their own impact on the game. We will play a lot different than the team played under leadership of the two coaches. But you can be sure we will not play a defensive football.”

Some media reported that Iran football federation has opened negotiation with former Esteghlal coach Andrea Stramaccioni and ex-Persepolis trainer Gabriel Calderon but the Croatian coach doesn’t care what the media say.

““You know, it doesn’t really matter what they say because I think they want to find a replacement for me but I believe in my work. I am sure when the competition starts, everything will be alright,” he said.



Iran’s priority is to continue the leagues, official says

S P O R T S **TEHRAN**— The Football Federation of the Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) official said the federation and the football league organization do not want to see half-finished league getting abandoned.

Fariborz Mahmoudzadeh, head of the Transfer Committee of the Iran Football League Organization, has confirmed that the priority for the top official of the Iranian football is to complete football season, in particular Iran Professional League (IPL), and not to leave it without determining the champions and relegated teams.

Mahmoudzade also explained about the condition of the transfer window after football’s return.

“If the league continues, FIFA has set guidelines for the timing of the transfer window. as well as the number of substitutions in each game. FIFA’s decisions are all about keeping players healthy. Being away from football for more than two months, it puts physical pressure on players,” he said.

“In Iranian football also everyone’s priority is the health and safety of the players and football staff. The IPL was suspended by the order of Iran’s Coronavirus Combat and Prevention Headquarters, and it should start with their order as well. But in the football league organization, the main preference is to finish the league season.”

Players need to be disciplined in virus plan says Bundesliga chief

Each individual player’s behavior will be crucial until the end of the season, the medical head of the Bundesliga and UEFA’s efforts to restart the game across the continent warned on Sunday.

Tim Meyer, the head of the Bundesliga’s new coronavirus task force and chairman of the UEFA medical committee, said that while the German league had produced the safest possible system for resuming competition, it was vital that players showed discipline and kept to the new rules.

The Bundesliga will become the first major league in Europe to resume action, on May 16, with games held without spectators and with strict restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Football has to give something back to the people now,” he told Reuters in an interview.

“That also means to be disciplined as a player. Keeping themselves away from the virus and the virus from them is the target. They need to be responsible.

“They are very public and need

to show how to behave” on the pitch, play football as always but as soon as you leave the pitch, you are a citizen again and need to behave as a citizen in times of Corona,” he added.

Meyer said his task was to create the highest possible level of safety, based on what was medically justifiable.

“We do not think that any job, any profession in the country is 100% safe at this moment, as long as you deal with other human beings.

“Sometimes there are people who say, ‘there is still a little risk’. Yes there is. We will not be able to eliminate any small risk - we did a lot, we put a lot of measures in place, to make sure that infections from football are highly unlikely,” he said.

The Bundesliga has produced a detailed set of strict guidelines for the restart which include three separate zones at stadiums to limit human contact and reduce the chances of viral transmission along with a large scale testing procedure.

(Source: Reuters)

After message from Trump, UFC marks sports’ return

After a message of approval from Donald Trump, UFC 249 unfolded to mark the return of high-profile sports after a roughly two-month absence due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

Global soccer leagues have all ceased due to the virus — though Germany’s Bundesliga is set to return next weekend — along with MLB, the NBA and NHL, but Jacksonville, Florida, hosted the MMA spectacle with no fans.

“I want to congratulate Dana White and the UFC,” Trump said in a taped message aired by sports broadcaster ESPN, referring to the UFC president who is also one of his economic advisers.

“They’re going to have a big match. We love it. We think it’s important. Get the sports leagues back. Let’s play. Do the social distancing and whatever else you have to do. We need sports. We want our sports back. Congratulations to Dana White and UFC.”

According to one report, the cage floor and padding of the octagon where fights take place were regularly cleaned during

Saturday night’s proceedings. Many of those inside the stadium wore masks and gloves.

That didn’t, though, include the referees, announcer and some other officials, the same report stated. Everyone had to be tested prior to entering the arena.

One middleweight, Jacare Souza, had his fight against Uriah Hall canceled Friday after testing positive for the virus.

White defended his decision to stage the event — which was originally scheduled for New York in the middle of April — telling CNN last week it wasn’t a “crazy” idea.

“Listen, we have families, too,” he said. “I have a family. I don’t want to hurt my family. I don’t want to die.

“This isn’t just some crazy...this is a well-thought-out plan. We’ve had very, very smart people, doctors and people that have been involved with the UFC for a very long time working on this thing nonstop since it started.

“We believe that we have this thing in a place where it can be as safe as it can possibly be.”

(Source: CNN)

Mazaheri chosen as best goalkeeper at ACL2016 Team

Mohammad Rashid Mazaheri from Iran has been chosen as the best goalkeeper of the AFC Champions League 2016.

In a poll conducted by the-afc.com, 64 percent of participants voted the Iranian goalkeeper.

He beat Al Ain goalkeeper Khalid Eisa who earned 27 percent.

Along with Lekhwiya, now known as Al Duhail, Zob Ahan had the stingiest defense in the group stage, letting in just two goals in six matches, and it was largely thanks to the hugely impressive Mohammad Rashid Mazaheri in goal, who was arguably the standout custodian of the first phase of the competition.

In the Round of 16, Zob Ahan was ultimately eliminated by Al Ain, but Mazaheri’s impressive shot-stopping had already left a lasting impression.

Mohammad Rashid Mazaheri (Zob Ahan), Khaled Eisa (Al Ain), Ignatiy Nesterov (Lokomotiv), Shusaku Nishikawa (Urawa Red Diamonds) and Vedran Janjetovic (Sydney FC) were competing for the award.

(Source: the-afc)



Esteghlal, Persepolis not allowed to sign foreign players

TASNIM — Iran’s Sports and Youth Ministry has ordered football clubs Persepolis and Esteghlal they are not allowed to sign foreign players until further notice.

The ministry had already announced that the two clubs should not sign foreign coaches.

Mehdi Alinejad, the Iranian Deputy Minister of Sport and Youth, has said that they have made decision to fight football’s agents in the country.

“The sports ministry is going to prevent football trafficking because there is no place for dirty money. These two clubs are governmental and we want to eradicate corruption in our football,” Alinejad said.

Iranpourian nominated for Best ACL2016 Team

Mohammad Iranpourian from Iran has been nominated as the best defender of the AFC Champions League 2016.

Excellent at the back and a constant threat going forward, Iranpourian was outstanding as Tractor advanced to the last 16 for the first time.

Although the Tabriz side exited to Al Nasr, the right-back rounded off his campaign with a stunning goal in the second leg, the-afc.com wrote.

With the 2020 AFC Champions League currently on hiatus, the-AFC.com continues its series of articles to determine your best sides from the last four editions of the Continental competition.

Last week the-afc.com presented the candidates for the 2016 edition’s best goalkeeper, and now it’s time to turn the attention to defenders.

Iranpourian will compete with Ali Hamam (Zob Ahan), Ahmed Al Yassir (Al Nasr) and Mohammad Tresor (Lekhwiya) to win the award.

(Source: the-afc)

U.S. women’s soccer team file to appeal equal pay ruling

The U.S. women’s soccer team have filed to appeal a district court decision handed down last week that dismissed their claims for equal pay, a spokesperson for the team said on Friday.

The team suffered an unexpected blow to their high-profile case against their federation when the court threw out the players’ claims that they were under paid in comparison with the men’s national team.

District Court Judge R. Gary Klausner said the World Cup champions were paid more on both a cumulative and an average per-game basis than their male counterparts, who failed to qualify for the last World Cup.

The women’s team on Friday vowed to continue their fight. “Equal pay means paying women players the same rate for winning a game as men get paid,” said Molly Levinson, spokesperson for the players.

“The argument that women are paid enough if they make close to the same amount as men while winning more than twice as often is not equal pay,” she said.

The players had been seeking \$66 million in damages under the Equal Pay Act.

Klausner’s ruling, however, allowed the players’ claims that they do not receive equal treatment when it comes to travel, training, housing and other areas to proceed.

Those claims will be adjudicated at a trial set for June 16.

The women’s national team beat the Netherlands to claim its fourth World Cup title last summer, as the stadium rang with chants of “Equal Pay, Equal Pay”, catapulting its players into the spotlight.

The U.S national team’s long-running feud with U.S. Soccer has been a very public and bitter battle with athletes and celebrities, from Billie Jean King to Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez rallying around the women’s cause.

Last month, U.S. Soccer president Carlos Cordeiro resigned over language used in a court filing suggesting women possess less ability than men when it comes to soccer.

The language prompted an on-field protest by players, who wore their warmup jerseys inside out to obscure the U.S. Soccer logo prior to a game, and a critical response from several of the team’s commercial sponsors.

(Source: Reuters)

Third Brighton player tests positive for coronavirus: club

Brighton chief executive Paul Barber on Sunday revealed a third player at the Premier League club has tested positive for the coronavirus, raising fresh concerns about the attempt to finish the English top-flight season.

The unnamed player was tested on Saturday and will self-isolate for 14 days while he recovers from the virus.

The rest of Brighton’s squad will continue to train at home and in solo sessions at the team’s training ground.

Two other Brighton players, who were not named, contracted the virus several weeks ago and have reportedly recovered.

“Unfortunately we have had a third player test positive just yesterday,” Barber told Sky Sports News.

“Despite all the measures we have all been taking over the last few weeks, when the players haven’t been involved in taking any significant training at all, we have still suffered another player testing positive for the virus.

“There are concerns and I think it is normal for all clubs to have those concerns.

“We want to make sure we do all that we can so the protocols that are put into place are safe and secure and mitigate the risk.”

In Germany, Bundesliga 2 side Dynamo Dresden have put their entire squad and coaching staff into two-week isolation after two players tested positive for coronavirus.

The Bundesliga and Bundesliga 2 are due to restart on May 16.



Brighton’s latest positive test comes ahead of Monday’s Premier League meeting, where clubs are expected to debate the plan to complete the season behind closed doors at neutral venues and vote on whether player contracts will be extended until the end of the rescheduled campaign.

The Premier League would like to restart the season in June and play the remaining 92 fixtures by August.

Barber has been critical of the neutral venue idea, insisting that the campaign should still be played on a home-and-away basis as Brighton battle to avoid relegation.

Norwich, Watford and Aston Villa were in the relegation zone when the Premier League was suspended because of

the health crisis on March 13.

Brighton have received criticism for their vocal stance, but Barber insists all clubs will act with a degree of self-interest.

“People will accuse us of self-interest, I totally understand that, but at this stage of the season there is self-interest at every level of the table,” he added.

“There is as much self-interest at the top as there is at the bottom, there is as much self-interest in the middle as there is at the bottom.

“Everyone has different objectives for the season and we are all looking to play out the season, if it is safe to do so.

“We really do want to play and we want to make sure the competition stays as fair as it can be despite these exceptional circumstances that we are facing.”

Aston Villa and Watford have joined Brighton in speaking out against the neutral stadium plan.

But Crystal Palace chairman Steve Parish has backed the 20 clubs to eventually come to a consensus.

“There are no easy answers, we have to work through it as a collective and I think we will and come out with a consensus in the end,” he told the BBC.

“(The meeting) is another part of the journey in trying to get football back. We would be derelict in our duty if we did not find a way for the game to come back.

(Source: AFP)

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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

God must be thanked for every blessing, and he who is thankful, receives more blessings, and he who neglects it, endangers that blessing and may soon lose it.

Imam Ali (AS)

Iranian cineastes will resume activities soon: COI

A R T **TEHRAN** — The Cinema Organization of Iran (COI) has announced on Sunday that Iranian cineastes will resume their activities in the near future as the Health Ministry has recently warned of a new wave of coronavirus in the country.



File photo.

The organization said that the filmmakers are allowed to resume their works provided that the regulations issued by the Coronavirus Control Operations Headquarters are observed. “Unfinished projects that possess a production license can resume activities, which follow the regulations,” COI has announced in a press release published on Sunday. “However, those projects that are seeking production licenses can upload the required documents at the COI website for further studies, and the councils that are responsible to study and issue a production license will soon resume their activities,” it added. All the activities must be carried out based on the medical protocols for filmmakers under producers’ supervision. The producers are asked to observe social distancing while at the project, and in case the regulations are not observed, each individual can inform the organization for further decisions.

Iran grants artists exemption on insurance fees in coronavirus crisis

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iran will exempt 35,000 people in various art field from paying insurance fees during this spring to help them cope with the coronavirus turmoil, the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance announced on Sunday.



Culture Minister Seyyed Abbas Salehi in an undated photo.

The decision was made during a meeting between Culture Minister Seyyed Abbas Salehi and First Vice-President Es’haq Jahangiri. The exemption only includes those artists who hold membership in the Art Credit Fund. All movie theaters and art centers across Iran have shut down over the spread of COVID-19. Iran also has canceled all art, cultural and cinematic events due to the pandemic. Salehi had earlier said that the coronavirus outbreak in Iran will cause an estimated loss of over \$230 million in the art and culture sectors by April 19, the end of the first month of the Iranian calendar year.

Doc features big price Iranian health workers paying as corona rules

A R T **TEHRAN** — A new **d e s k** film has been produced at Iran’s Documentary and Experimental Film Center (DEFC) exploring the big price doctors and medical staff are paying during the coronavirus turmoil in the country.

“After These Three Months’ shows the casualties and damages a doctor and a nurse and their families, which were affected by the virus, have suffered and how they have been harmed emotionally,” Mohammad Abdizadeh said in a press release on Saturday.

Nevertheless, the story can be generalized beyond health workers to all people fighting against the COVID-19 pandemic, he noted. “This film has been focused on social activists, doctors, nurses, medical staff and volunteers, all of whom have played a key role in fighting with the coronavirus,” he added. “It also shows, despite all shortages, how the doctors can find remedies for the lethal virus, and how much more the new virus takes casualties in densely populated and poor areas,” Abdizadeh stated.

The film crew has also imperiled their own lives by working in risky places such as hospitals and cemeteries in Tehran and Qom.

Numerous experts and officials such as Ali Akbar Velayati, manager of Tehran’s Masih Daneshvari Hospital, and Bahram Sarmast, governor-general of Qom, where the first cases of the COVID-19 infection in two Iranian men were reported in February, have been interviewed in the documentary.



A scene from filmmaker Mohammad Abdizadeh’s latest documentary “After These Three Months”. (DEFC)

Iran to support film projects on COVID-19

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iran’s Farabi Cinema **d e s k** Foundation (FCF) announced on Sunday that it will support projects on COVID-19 in a program named “Corona Narrative: Recording Eternal Moments”.

Farabi has asked doctors, nurses and other health workers to send their videos on the coronavirus pandemic in Iran to the foundation. Based on the programs, a selection of submissions will be converted into feature films.

The program was introduced during FCF director Alireza Tabesh’s visit to the Iranian Medical Council (IRIMC).

“The foundation is ready to study those novel films and pictures taken by doctors, nurses and people,” Tabesh said. “This will help register appropriate and accurate memories and moments of the difficult days of the coronavirus pandemic in the history of our cinema,” he added. Tabesh called coronavirus the biggest ground for



Iran’s Farabi Cinema Foundation director Alireza Tabesh signs an autograph on a poster of the program “Corona Narrative: Recording Eternal Moments” at the Iranian Medical Council on May 9, 2020.



Chinese academic Nian Cai Liu (L) and Iran’s Cultural Attaché in China, Abbasali Vafai (Top R), hold talks via WeChat on May 8, 2020.

Iran, China eager to expand academic ties

CULTURE **TEHRAN** — Nian Cai Liu, the dean **d e s k** of the Graduate School of Education at Shanghai Jiao Tong University in China, and Iran’s Cultural Attaché in China, Abbasali Vafai, held a meeting on Friday, stressing the need to expand the academic cooperation between the two countries.

The meeting was made possible through WeChat, a Chinese multi-purpose social media.

Liu thanked the Embassy of Iran for developing academic ties between the two countries and expressed willingness to collaborate with Iranian universities, especially the University of Tehran

drama and melodrama at the current time and said, “Many stories, which have potential to be developed into everlasting films, have happened in the hospitals, houses and streets across our country.”

“It is our duty to bring peace back to the Iranian families and strengthen them against this catastrophe with the help of public education and proper depiction of these events by means of cinema productions. We hope the productions will find their ways into our national film festivals,” he mentioned.

“Corona Narrated by Cinema”, “Corona Narrated by Literature”, “Corona Narrated by Pictures”, “Corona Narrated by Media”, “Corona Narrated by Research”, “Corona Narrated by Sacrifice” and “Corona Narrated by Health Human Sciences” are among the major topics in the project.

Interested individuals are asked to submit their works to the organizers before July 5.

Rock ‘n’ roll pioneer Little Richard dies at age 87

NEW YORK (Reuters) — Little Richard, the self-proclaimed “architect of rock ‘n’ roll” who built his ground-breaking sound with a boiling blend of boogie-woogie, rhythm and blues and gospel, died on Saturday at the age of 87.

Richard, a Grammy Award winner and inductee to the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame whose electrifying 1950s hits such as “Tutti Frutti” and “Long Tall Sally” and flamboyant stage presence influenced legions of performers, succumbed to cancer.

“Little Richard died in Tullahoma, Tennessee of bone cancer. He was loved by his family and adored by millions,” his family said in a statement through their lawyer, Bill Sobel.

Richard’s bass guitarist, Charles Glenn, told celebrity website TMZ the musician had been sick for two months and that he died surrounded by his brother, sister and son.

At his peak in the late 1950s and early ‘60s, Richard shouted, moaned, screamed and trilled hits like “Good Golly, Miss Molly” and “Lucille,” all the while pounding the piano like a mad man and punctuating lyrics with an occasional shrill “whoooo!”

Time magazine said he played “songs that sounded like nonsense ... but whose beat seemed to hint of unearthly pleasures centered somewhere between the gut and the gutter.”

The music drew in both young black and white fans at a time when parts of the United States still were strictly segregated. Many white artists, such as Pat Boone, had their own hit versions of Richard’s songs, albeit considerably toned down and “safer” for the pop audience.

“I’ve always thought that rock ‘n’ roll brought the races together,” Richard once told an interviewer. “Although I was black, the fans didn’t care. I used to feel good about that.”



Entertainer Little Richard performs at the Crossroad festival in Gijon, northern Spain, July 23, 2005. (Reuters/Alonso Gonzalez)

Mick Jagger, Paul McCartney, James Brown, Otis Redding, David Bowie and Rod Stewart all cited Little Richard as an influence. Jimi Hendrix, who played in Richard’s band in the mid-1960s, said he wanted to use his guitar the way Richard used his voice.

“I am the innovator,” Richard would tell interviewers and audiences. “I am the originator. I am the emancipator. I am the architect of rock ‘n’ roll!”

Little Richard’s sonic extravagance was matched by his campy flamboyance. He wore brightly colored suits, a pencil-thin mustache, and a carefully curled 6-inch pompadour.

“Elvis may have been the king of rock ‘n’ roll but I am the queen,” he proclaimed. He was born Dec. 5, 1932 as Richard Penniman to a poor family of 12 children in Macon, Georgia.

His first performances were as a child in his church choir and his earliest inspirations were gospel singers, including Sister Rosetta Tharpe, who let a young Richard open her show when she stopped in Macon. A singer named Esquerita also influenced Richard’s fashion and manic musical style.

Bob Dylan’s son Jakob urges musicians to get together

NEW YORK (Guardian) — Bob Dylan’s son, the musician and performer Jakob Dylan, has urged young people to get together in person to make music and not to rely on technology, after fronting an elegiac film about how the ageing “giants” of rock gathered together to share ideas and refine their sounds.

Digital files now allow singers and musicians to hear each other across great distances, and even to collaborate on new songs, but it should never replace the habit of playing together, Dylan argues.

“It is not required to play with people any more,” Dylan, 50, told the Observer this weekend from his home in Los Angeles. “It has already altered the way people make and record music before the lockdown. They send files to each other, and they are not even in the room when they make a record together.”

The singer, whose new film about the fertile Californian music scene of the 1960s and early 70s is released in Britain next month, added that his experience of interviewing many of the towering artists who once gathered in the music haven of Laurel Canyon has strengthened his sense of the value of collaboration.

The film, “Echo in the Canyon”, was directed by former Capitol Records boss Andrew Slater and features Brian Wilson of the Beach Boys, Graham Nash, Michelle Phillips of the Mamas and the Papas, Eric Clapton, Ringo Starr and a final screen interview with Tom Petty. Its release follows Dylan’s album of cover versions of hits from the era, performed alongside leading musicians of later generations such as Beck, Norah Jones, Regina Spektor and Cat Power.

Dylan — whose father was famously



heckled by folk fans at a concert at Manchester’s Free Trade Hall in 1966 for playing with a loud, electric band — is not opposed to all use of new technology. “There are a lot of good things about technology, it has made some things much easier,” he said. “But I think if you want to play music with someone in your neighborhood, you should go around and play together.”

In the film, Dylan speaks to former members of influential bands such as the Byrds and Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, and he also talks to Wilson about the famous creative nudge he received when he listened to the Beatles’ album Revolver. He and the Beach Boys responded with Pet Sounds, and the Beatles returned the favor with Sgt Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band in 1967.

“There was a friendly sense of competition in the late 60s, but it was still competition,” said Dylan. “People shared ideas partly because they were not aware how the business would change and of the importance that would be placed on these things now. If they had been, they might have behaved differently.”

As the son of an internationally revered musician, Dylan has an especially clear perspective on modern admiration of “the gods of rock ‘n’ roll”.