

Diplomat urges EU to support nuclear deal in practice 2

Historical monuments undergo restoration in northwest Iran 8

Siamand Rahman's statue unveiled in his hometown 11

IIDCYA announces nominees for Astrid Lindgren Award 12

Non-oil export vital for production surge

See page 4



Iran says has provided Afghans with best facilities for 40 years

TEHRAN — Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said late on Monday that Iran has provided the best facilities for over three million Afghan refugees over the past 40 years. Providing jobs, free education, free health facilities and many other facilities that are widely available to Afghan guests are indicative of Iran's good hospitality, Mousavi said, IRNA reported.

The remarks came days after a number of Afghan media outlets claimed that more than 40 illegal migrants had been arrested by Iranian border guards and thrown into Harirud River. From the first hours the reports were published, relevant Iranian institutions put an investigation of the incident on the agenda, said Mousavi. →3

Tehran Symphony Orchestra, world musicians to release "Ode to Joy" in pandemic

TEHRAN — The Tehran Symphony Orchestra plans to release a music video from Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 "Ode to Joy" it produced along with 148 world musicians to give encouragement to people around the world in the battle with the coronavirus crisis. "The idea was first formed to help connect the musicians and people across the

world through music during the pandemic," conductor Bardia Kiaras said in a press release published by the Rudaki Artistic Cultural Foundation on Tuesday. Musicians from the neighboring countries and Europe have performed the 4th movement of the symphony "that mostly carries the message of peace and friendship," he noted. →3

Evidence suggests prehistorical Iranians migrated to Americas

TEHRAN — Some prehistorical residents of the Iranian plateau migrated to the Americas, an Iranian archaeologist and researcher say based on evidence from similarities between the petroglyphs and cave painting symbols in central Iran and the ones found in the Americas. "After years of exploring ancient paintings inside Iran's caves and mountains and other parts of the globe, amazing achievements have been made in this

regard," Mohammad Nasserifard told IRNA in an interview released on Tuesday. "The ancient paintings of cave walls and mountains in Iran have been compared with ones in other parts of the world, their similarities in appearance and motifs have been 'amazing,' according to quotes by professors Jan Brouwer and Gus van Veen," Nasserifard said, adding "His research and findings are presented to enthusiasts and researchers for the first time." →8

ARTICLE
Mehdi Zare
 Professor of engineering seismology

Damavand quake: A trigger of risk panic in Tehran

On 8 May 2020, 48 minutes after the midnight (local time), a moderate earthquake with a magnitude of 5.1 on the Richter scale shocked citizens of Tehran province. Most of the people were already in sleep.

The epicenter of the earthquake was in the vicinity of Damavand, a city 40km northeast of Tehran. According to the 2016 national census, Damavand has 48,000 inhabitants.

It caused two deaths and 20 injuries. The two died because of the panic caused by the tremor. However, over a million people in Tehran left their homes and slept in parks or inside their cars.

The causative fault for the earthquake was Moshafault, 5km north of the city of Damavand, has a history of major historical earthquakes in 958 A.D. in Rey-Taleghan with an estimated earthquake magnitude (EEM) of 7.7; 15 June 1665 with EEM 6.5 that caused landslide and created Taar lake in the vicinity of Damavand, actually a mountain promenade in Tehran province; 27 March 1830 EEM 7.1 in Shemiranat; 2 October 1930 EEM 5.0 in Ah-Mobarakabad; 20 January 1990 EEM 5.9 in Firouzkuh; and 9 May 2020 EEM 5.1 in Damavand.

People living around the Moshafault within a 25km distance are estimated to be around 300,000, while the inhabitants within its 50km are about 17.5 million, based on to the 2016 census. This large population is concentrated in and around the megacity of Tehran and Karaj in the provinces of Tehran and Alborz.

There is a Moshafault segment from Damavand towards northern Tehran, where it is estimated a locked part of the fault along about 100km length, at least since 27 March 1930 earthquake. Therefore, there is a probability of major earthquake triggered along this part of the Moshafault close to Tehran.

Tehran is one of the most hazardous metropolises of the world in terms of the risk of different natural disasters, such as earthquake, flood, subsidence, drought, landslide, fire following an earthquake, etc. On the other hand, Tehran has over 8,300,000 night time population with a mixture of old non-resistant structures as well as modern high-rise buildings which affect the vulnerability of this city. →9

MPs approve motion on Israel's hostile measures

TEHRAN — Iranian lawmakers have approved the double-urgency of a motion which would obligate the Iranian government to take certain measures against hostile measures of the Israeli regime. No parliamentarian voiced any opposition to the motion, therefore its "double-urgency" was approved unanimously. Following the approval, MPs chanted "Down with Israel", Mehr reported.

Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani urged the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee to address the motion as soon as possible so that the parliament could vote on it at the beginning of next week. Earlier on Tuesday, Mohammad Javad Abtahi, a member of the Velaei faction of the parliament, said 33 lawmakers had signed the motion.

He said the motion consists of 14 articles. One of the articles, he continued, maintains that the historic land of Palestine belongs to the original Palestinian people. Also, according to the motion, the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran will be obligated to

impose bans on all economic, commercial and financial institutions of the Zionist regime whose shares belong to Israeli citizens or which are registered in the occupied territories, he explained.

Chairman of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee Mojtaba Zonnour said while the world is distracted with the coronavirus pandemic, the Zionist regime is doing everything it can to put Iran's interests at risk.

During the open session of the parliament, Zonnour said that since its formation, the Zionist regime has been making difficulties for Muslims in the region. He named the regime as the main culprit acting against the interests of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Iranian nation.

"Spying, terrorism, and the martyrdom of Iranian nuclear scientists, cyber and electronic warfare, and cyber-attacks on nuclear and economic centers are among the Zionist regime's actions against the Iranian nation," Zonnour stated.

Afghan President Ghani, Abdullah reach power-sharing deal

By staff & agencies

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah, his political rival, have reached a deal to form a unity government, a source in the presidential palace said.

"The [former chief] executive will no longer challenge or veto major decisions of the authorities. Ghani will be recognized as president by Abdullah," the source said.

According to the source, Abdullah will be given the leadership role in the nation's peace process, while his role within the government will be revealed later.

Both Ghani and Abdullah, the former chief executive, consider themselves Afghanistan's leaders following a disputed election last September, The Nation reported.

Ghani was forced to agree with Abdullah, who will now be in charge of half of the positions in the Cabinet of Ministers, the source added.

The source also said that the sides will sign the power-sharing deal in the next few days.

Abdullah has contested the results of the last presidential election in Afghanistan last year, which Ghani won. Abdullah held a parallel inauguration ceremony for himself simultaneously with Ghani in March, but the international community only recognizes Ghani.

The dispute represented a distraction as the war-torn country battles the coronavirus pandemic. The virus has so far infected 2,200 people across Afghanistan and killed 164. The Taliban militant group has also intensified its attacks against the government despite a deal with the United States.

In the election last year, Abdullah was seeking the presidency for the third time, after losing in 2009 and 2014. →10

'France pushing for firm EU response to any Israeli land theft'

France has been pushing its European Union (EU) partners to consider threatening the Israeli regime with a firm response if Tel Aviv proceeds with a plot to annex parts of the occupied West Bank, diplomatic sources say.

Three EU diplomats told Reuters on Monday that France wants to raise the issue during a meeting of the bloc's foreign ministers on Friday.

Belgium, Ireland and Luxembourg also seek to introduce some sort of punitive economic measures

against Israel on the event's agenda, they said. The diplomats did not specify what punitive measures could be on the table to deter Israel from stealing more Palestinian land.

The report came after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said cabinet discussions would start in July over extending Israeli "sovereignty" to the settlements built on occupied land and to the Jordan Valley in the West Bank, as was mooted under U.S. President Donald

Trump's Middle East scheme.

Palestinians have expressed outrage at Israel's plans to cement its hold on land it seized during the 1967 war -- part of the territory they are demanding for a future state of Palestine.

"There is clearly a need to look at what annexation means in the context of international law and we do need to know our options," said one senior EU diplomat involved in discussions. →10

Iran needs over \$238b for realizing 'Surge in Production': fin min

TEHRAN — Iranian Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Farhad Dejjpasand said the country needs at least 10 quadrillion rials (nearly \$238.1 billion) to realize the motto of "Surge in Production", Tasnim news agency reported on Tuesday.

Speaking in the 94th meeting of the government-private sector dialogue council, Dejjpasand underlined the important role of the private sector in developing domestic production and noted that public, private, and cooperative sectors all could play an important role in this regard.

As reported, the problems of the exporters in relation to the Central Bank of Iran (CBI)'s decisions regarding the reinjection of foreign revenues from exports to the domestic Forex Management Integrated System (locally known as NIMA) was one of the major issues discussed at the mentioned meeting.

Emphasizing the need for achieving acceptable economic growth in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 20), the official expressed appreciation for the determination and efforts of the private sector in joining the capital market and said: "We hope that arrangements will be made so that every week at least one large private company offers its shares on the stock exchange."

Iran is following a comprehensive program for rising capital through attracting public resources into the stock market, so the government has been encouraging bot private sector and state-owned companies to offer their shares in the country's stock market.

In early March, Dejjpasand said offering the shares of state-owned companies, which are planned to be privatized, would be sped up. →4



Funeral procession held for Navy sailors

TEHRAN — A funeral procession was held for 19 Iranian Navy personnel in the southwestern port city of Chabahar on Tuesday.

The ceremony was held with military top brass and a number of senior state officials in attendance.

The Iranian Navy's Public Relations Department announced on Monday that 19 sailors were martyred and 15 others injured during a naval exercise in the country's southern waters.

The incident took place in the perimeter of Iran's southern Jask port, in Hormozgan province. →2

Funeral procession held for Navy sailors

On Sunday evening, an incident happened to the Konarak support vessel during a naval drill with other ships in waters near Jask port, where a number of the Navy's sailors were martyred, the department said in a statement on Monday.

It extended condolences to families of the victims, suggesting that until thorough investigations are carried out, it is expected to avoid rumors and speculations.

Following the incident, the naval rescue and relief teams were immediately deployed to the scene, disembarked the injured and the bodies, and took the injured servicemen to the medical centers, the statement said.

The forces on board the doomed vessel showed exemplary courage to save their comrades, it added.

President Hassan Rouhani, Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, Army Commander Abodl-Rahmi Mousavi, military chief of staff Mohammad Baqeri, IRGC Commander Hossein Salami, and Supreme National Security Council Secretary Ali Shamkhani issued separate messages offering condolences over the martyrdom of the sailors.

Russia proposes arms delivery to Iran on consent of UNSC

MOSCOW (IRNA) – The Russian envoy in a message on Tuesday said that delivery of tanks, armored combat vehicles, artillery systems, aircraft, helicopters, ships and missiles to Iran has not been prohibited but should be done with the consent of the UN Security Council.

Restrictions on the supply of 7 categories of weapons to Iran will expire on October 18, Permanent Representative of Russia to International Organizations in Vienna Mikhail Ulyanov wrote in his Twitter account on Tuesday.



Although there is no reason for revising the provisions related to the Iran nuclear deal known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231, U.S. is trying by all means to extend these sanctions, he added.

Hot debates are expected to be held in the UNSC in this regard, he noted.

Ulyanov went on to say that arms embargo on Iran has once again been put on international community's agenda.

Earlier, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif in a message said that the JCPOA is part of the UNSCR 2231 and advised U.S. secretary of state to read the resolution.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has recently claimed that the U.S. is still a participant to the UNSC Resolution 2231 and can request an extension of Iran's arms embargo based on the Article 11 of the resolution.

With its unilateral exit from the nuclear deal two years ago, the United States violated its commitments under the 2015 multilateral accord and the subsequent Resolution 2231 as well.

Russia, China, as two other signatories to Iran nuclear deal, as well as some European countries and Iran have made clear that the U.S. claim is a misconception of the resolution. They reiterated that Washington is no longer a party to deal as it has unilaterally withdrawn from the accord.

Lebanon offers condolences to Iran over tragic naval incident

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Lebanon expressed sympathy with the Iranian government and nation after 19 servicemen were martyred and 15 others injured following a naval incident in the country's southern waters.

"The Embassy of Lebanon in Tehran extends its condolences to the Government and People of Iran, and to the Iranian Navy on the sad loss of life resulting from the tragic incident in the Gulf Oman yesterday. We further extend our deepest sympathies to the families and loved ones of the 19 Navy personnel who lost their lives, and wish those who were injured a speedy recovery," the Lebanese Embassy in Tehran said in a tweet on Tuesday.

According to Iran's Navy, the incident happened when a number of the Navy vessels were carrying an exercise off the coasts of Jask and Chabahar southeast of Iran.

After the incident, the casualties were dispatched to the Haft-e Tir Pier in Chabahar, and transferred to the city's Imam Ali (PBUH) Hospital via ten ambulances.

An informed military source, meanwhile, dismissed reports that the vessel had been totally destroyed in the incident, saying it had been towed to the shore afterward.

Great nation of Iran wins scene of battle against COVID-19: Rouhani

(MNA) – The great nation of Islamic Iran was the victor of scene in the fight against the novel coronavirus, also known as COVID-19.

Speaking in a get-together meeting in the presence of activists in the fight against COVID-19 in the provinces of East and West Azarbaijan on Monday, Rouhani said, "following the outbreak of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, the noble nation of the country especially medical staff came to the scene with their utmost power and brought about an honor for the country in the fight against coronavirus pandemic."

According to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, this honor, self-sacrifice of doctors and medical staff must be gone down in the history of the Islamic Revolution, he emphasized.

Turning to the discriminatory approaches taken against human beings in many claimant countries in the field of coronavirus, President Rouhani added, "unlike discriminatory behaviors of many countries, Islamic Republic of Iran was the victor of the scene in all fields and managed to offer quality medical services to coronavirus patients."

Elsewhere in his remarks, President Rouhani pointed to the key role of knowledge-based companies in the field of battling COVID-19, and added, "not only knowledge-based companies could meet the domestic demands in the process of battling the novel coronavirus, but also they embarked on exporting corona diagnostic kits to other countries."

Tehran to Washington: Stop talking rubbish!

POLITICAL TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi has urged United States officials to "stop talking rubbish", saying that Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has put "universal prisoners swap" on the table since September 2018.

"Stop talking rubbish! Since Sep2018, @JZarif has put 'universal prisoners swap' on the table, urged the U.S. to act responsibly abt the Iranian HOSTAGES in U.S. & elsewhere. Your regime has reacted callously & risked their lives. World is watching your action, not your word. Let our citizens go!" he tweeted on Monday.

His tweet came as a response to Ken Cuccinelli, the U.S. acting deputy secretary, who accused Zarif of just talking and not taking real actions to take back Iranian scientist Sirous Asghari and others.

"@JZarif, after months of stalling @DHSgov as we have been trying to return Sirous Asgari, you suddenly woke up one day recently and say you actually want him back. You SAY you want all of your citizens back. I call B.S."

How about you put your money where your mouth is?" Cuccinelli tweeted Monday.

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 a 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.

Zarif announced on Monday that Iranian scientist Sirous Asghari will return to Iran soon.

Asgari had tested positive for coronavirus in prison. He broke the story in an interview with the Guardian on April 28.

"Sirous Asgari has been acquitted of charges and if his coronavirus test proves negative, he will return to the country with the first flight," Zarif told reporters after attending a parliamentary committee meeting.

All necessary measures have been taken for his return, Zarif added.

Asgari, a materials science and engineering professor, had visited the U.S. to see her daughters. However, he was arrested under the allegation of violating sanctions against Iran.

The professor, who has a history of respiratory problems, was exonerated in a U.S. sanctions trial last year, but Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) jail in Louisiana had refused to release him or allow him to return to Iran.

Iranian diplomat urges EU to back nuclear deal in practice

POLITICAL TEHRAN – Parviz Esmaeili, the Iranian ambassador to Croatia, has urged the European Union to support the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the JCPOA, unilaterally and practically.

"The European Union's united voice in support for multilateralism and the JCPOA must turn into united determination and act," he said via a videoconference on Monday with the non-European ambassadors in Croatia.

The ambassador said that the EU has so far played a positive role in supporting the JCPOA politically, yet it is needed that political support is translated into action.

"Only in this way, the European Union can be a support for international diplomacy, peace and cooperation," the diplomat pointed out.

U.S. President Donald Trump quit the multilateral nuclear deal in May 2018 and introduced the harshest ever sanctions on Iran as part of his administration's "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran.

The U.S. move was in violation of the UN Security



Council Resolution 2231 that endorsed the JCPOA.

Under the JCPOA, Iran promised to put limits on its nuclear activities in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions.

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

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

Iran's move is in line with paragraph 36 of the JCPOA. President Hassan Rouhani said on May 6 that Iran will return to full implementation of the JCPOA if other signatories do the same.

Josep Borrell, the EU foreign policy chief, said in December 2019 that the signatories to the nuclear deal should adopt a united stance to preserve the deal.

Zarif says Trump admin has proven no one can trust negotiation with U.S.

POLITICAL TEHRAN – Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Tuesday that the United States' administration must revise its behavior and stop inventing pretexts.

"All the world has come to the conclusion that if they reach any agreement with the United States, it [the U.S. administration] may violate it. The current administration of the United States must revise its behavior instead of making pretext," Zarif told reporters.

He also said that there is no negotiation between Iran and the U.S.

"The United States proved no one can trust negotiating with it and the result of the talks," noted the chief diplomat.

In a violation of Resolution 2231 that endorsed the 2015 nuclear agreement, U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew Washington from the agreement, officially known as the JCPOA, in May 2018 and imposed the toughest ever sanctions in



history on Iran.

Trump has been repeatedly calling for dialogue with Iran.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said in January 2019 that there will be no negotiations between Iran and the U.S. at any level.

Ayatollah Khamenei said that Washington seeks to impose its "imprudent demands" through negotiations and does not seek to find a fair and just solution.

Iran says Trump admin's incompetence has imposed intolerable burden on frontline nurses

POLITICAL TEHRAN – Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said on Tuesday that the incompetence demonstrated by President Donald Trump's administration has imposed intolerable burden on "frontline nurses" with insufficient protective gear.

"Today is Nurses Day. Amid COVID19, we are all indebted to sacrifice of hero nurses in Iran & across the world risking their lives to save ours. The risk is particularly noticed in U.S. where Trump Gvt. incompetence has imposed intolerable burden on frontline nurses, with insufficient equipment," Mousavi tweeted.

According to Fars news agency, a lack of protective equipment for medical staff has become a crisis in the U.S. within the pandemic without a cohesive federal response. But while small and public hospitals across the country struggle to obtain masks and gowns for their staff, billionaire board members of large medical



centers have called in favors, and states are relying on wealthy philanthropists to close the gap.

Previously, Trump told states they were on their own, and the federal government was a "back up".

The coronavirus death toll in the United States continues to surge with 81,795 deaths and over 1,385,000 cases. The U.S. continues to lead worldwide cases and deaths from the virus.

Chicago university professor says lifting sanctions on Iran is essential

POLITICAL TEHRAN – Nathan Tarcov, a professor at the University of Chicago, has said that it is essential to remove sanctions against Iran.

"The United Nations' high commission has called for re-evaluation of sanctions given the crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic. However, it had no result," Tarcov told ILNA in an interview published on Tuesday.

He noted that the United States claims sanctions do not include humanitarian aid and medical equipment.

"But, this issue is complicated. Sanctions have affected Iran's interaction and have made problems for the Iranians in meeting their needs," the professor stated.

The president of the Iran-Switzerland Joint Chamber of Commerce has said the Trump administration uses the Swiss Humanitarian Trade Arrangement (SHTA) as one of its propaganda tools.

In an interview with ILNA, Sharif Nezam-Mafi said the United States claims to have set up a humanitarian channel, but in practice does not allow it to be used.

Nezam-Mafi said the channel is like the "piggy bank" and since the United States does not allow money to be transferred to this channel, it is clear that this process is not practical.

Officials in Tehran have said U.S. "economic terror" against Iran has increased to "medical terror".

In a letter to Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on May 6, 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 chief Russian diplomat also urged the European countries not to be afraid of the U.S. threats and continue interaction with Iranian partners.

"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.

Satellite launch strengthens Iran's standing in West Asia: expert

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Seyed Hossein Mousavian, a former Iranian nuclear negotiator who now works as a researcher at Princeton University, says Iran is the only country in West Asia which is self-sufficient on conventional arms, pointing to the recent satellite launch as an important step in proving self-sufficiency.

In an interview with SpaceWatch, Global published on Monday, Mousavian said Iranian defense industry has built all range of weapons from jet fighters, missiles, tanks, to submarines.

"The new success on satellite launch strengthens Iran's standing in the Middle East [West Asia], proving self-sufficiency and resistance is the best way forward," he added.

The full text of the interview is as follows:

■ Why do you think Iran, and the IRGC in particular, carried out the launch when they did given the difficulties the country is facing and has experienced?

A: Iran has been sanctioned since the 1979 revolution. The world powers, specifically the U.S. and EU, have exported hundreds of billions of the most sophisticated conventional weapon to the Middle Eastern countries. Saudi Arabian and other Arab neighboring countries of Iran have been provided with these weapons. Saddam invaded Iran right after revolution and the Arab neighbors provided money, and the world powers provided full range of weapons for him to disintegrate Iran. During the war, Iran was attacked by thousands of missiles. Saddam used chemical weapons and killed and injured 100,000 Iranians while the U.S. and Europe provided material and technology of chemical weapons for Saddam. Since then, the U.S. strategy has been regime change in Iran with all options on the table.

With this reality and history, Iran was forced to strive for self-sufficiency in its economy, industry and conventional



"Practically Iran showed goodwill by complying with the deal and showing the highest level of transparency and cooperation on the nuclear issue, but was rewarded with the most comprehensive sanctions in contemporary history. Unfortunately, the EU fully capitulated to the U.S. unilateral sanctions. This reality convinced Iran that the West is not trustworthy, and to count on the East for support."

arms, cyber and space technology. This has been Iran's strategy in response to invasion, regime change, and possible U.S.-Israeli military strike. During post revolution era, sanctions have never been successful in stopping Iran, but have rather made Iran more serious to resist and become more self-sufficient.

■ What, if any, are the implications of the satellite launch for Iranian-U.S.

relations as well as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and the Iranian nuclear program?

A: The nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, was the first serious route of diplomacy between Iran and the world powers, specifically the U.S. The deal was agreed upon in 2015 between Iran and the world powers; the U.S., Russia, China, France, Germany

and the UK.

The JCPOA is the most comprehensive agreement during the history of non-proliferation. The IAEA confirmed that Iran implemented the JCPOA completely and comprehensively with zero failure for 3 years. With the JCPOA, Iran implemented the highest level of transparency measures, and provided most access, which no other member of NPT has ever provided.

But the U.S. withdrew from the deal, violated UN resolution 2231 as well as many IAEA resolutions, and imposed sanction. Practically Iran showed goodwill by complying with the deal and showing the highest level of transparency and cooperation on the nuclear issue, but was rewarded with the most comprehensive sanctions in contemporary history. Unfortunately, the EU fully capitulated to the U.S. unilateral sanctions.

This reality convinced Iran that the West is not trustworthy, and to count on the East for support.

■ Does the satellite launch have any meaning for Iran's standing in the Middle East?

A: Iran is the only country in the Middle East which is self-sufficient on conventional arms. Iranian defense industry has built all range of weapons from jet fighters, missiles, tanks, to submarines. The new success on satellite launch strengthens Iran's standing in the Middle East, proving self-sufficiency and resistance is the best way forward.

■ Why do you think the IRGC has created its own Space Command?

A: The IRGC has had its own space program and command for many years.

■ In your opinion, how should the Iranian government respond to criticism of the IRGC satellite launch?

A: The Iranian government fully supports the advancement of the country on conventional arms to defend the existence and integrity of the country. On this matter, IRGC plays a key role.

No talks so far over attack on British embassy in 2011: Zarif

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said Tehran and London have not talked nor taken measures with regard to paying compensation to the UK for an attack on its embassy in Tehran a few years ago.

International law has regulations in this respect and Iran has announced that guarding foreign embassies is among its responsibility, Zarif said on Tuesday, according to Mehr.



The two sides should negotiate over the details of the issue but not negotiation has taken place so far, he added.

In protest over sanctions during the Ahmadinejad administration, a number of protesters attacked British embassy in 2011. Then Police Chief Esmail Ahmadi-Moqaddam announced afterwards that twelve people were arrested in connection with the storming of the British embassy and were handed over to the Judiciary.

In 2015, weeks after Iran and six world powers — the United States, Britain, France, China and Russia plus Germany — clinched a nuclear deal, the British embassy in Iran was reopened.

A member of the parliament recently disclosed that 270 billion rials was paid to the UK as compensation for the damage incurred in the attack.

According to Ahmad Mazani, the compensation which amounted to 1.3 million pounds was paid for the restoration of several pieces of art that had been destroyed during the attack on the embassy.

The Tehran-London relations failed to prosper in the aftermath of the U.S. abandonment of the nuclear deal, about which the three European parties to the deal, including the UK, remained passive in practice.

The relations further turned sour earlier this year, when British Ambassador Rob Macaire was arrested briefly by the Iranian police for attending an unauthorized demonstration in central Tehran on January 11.

"Following the British ambassador's presence in an illegal gathering, he received a serious warning to avoid repeating such behavior," Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said at the time.

"We summoned the ambassador. We reprimanded him severely and after that the Foreign Ministry issued a statement in last line of which we warned of tougher action than summoning in case such behavior is repeated," Araghchi added.

Top general urges Pakistan to help free abducted border guards

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Hossein Bagheri called on Pakistan to push for the release of three Iranian border guards who had been kidnapped at a border post and taken into Pakistan.

In a telephone conversation with Chief of Army Staff of the Pakistan Army General Qamar Javed Bajwa on Monday, Major General Bagheri called on the Pakistani Army officials to take decisive action for the release of three Iranian border guards who have been held hostage by the so-called Jaish-ul-Adl terrorist group since October 2018.

The top Iranian commander also stressed the need for the two Muslim neighbors to strengthen security measures along the common border to prevent the terrorist groups and the common enemies from upsetting security at the border.

Major General Bagheri then pointed to the growing trend in the brotherly ties between the armed forces of the two



countries, and voiced Iran's preparedness to enhance "defense-economic cooperation" with Pakistan.

General Qamar Javed Bajwa, for his part, gave a brief report on Pakistan's measures to construct barriers along the common border with Iran.

He also called for closer military cooperation with Iran and the exchange of experts to ensure border security and prevent the terrorist activities along the common borders.

Pakistani-based terrorists kidnapped 14 Iranian forces at a border post in Mirjaveh region in Iran's southeastern province of Sistan and Baluchestan in October 2018.

The Iranian military forces along the southeastern border areas are frequently attacked by terrorist groups coming from Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Tehran has frequently asked the two neighbors to step up security at the common border to prevent terrorist attacks on Iranian forces.

Iran urges practical measures by EU to retain JCPOA, help multilateralism

TEHRAN (FNA) — Iran's Ministry of Health categorically dismissed the allegations by U.S. officials that Washington has enabled the establishment of a sanctions-free channel for the transfer of medicine to the Islamic Republic.

"The U.S. holds the world record in lying," Iranian Deputy Health Minister Alireza Rayeesi told a news conference via video link on Monday.

"Their allegations about the existence of a channel for the transfer of medicinal items (to Iran) is false," he added.

The official noted that under circumstances wherein thousands of people are losing their lives around the world due to the deadly coronavirus every day, keeping a country under sanctions "lacks any justification".

Iran has won a case against the U.S. at the International Court of Justice that obliges Washington to exempt food and medicine from the sanctions it illegally and unilaterally reimposed in 2018. The U.S. government alleges that it has spared those items, a claim that Tehran dismisses as untrue.

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 287,000 people and infected over 4.25 million others globally.

The Iranian health ministry announced on Monday that 1,683 new coronavirus cases have been diagnosed in the country in the past 24 hours, adding that 45 patients have also died in the last one day.

"1,683 more patients infected with COVID-19 virus have been identified in the country

since yesterday," Jahanpour said.

The official added that less than 30% of those diagnosed with COVID-19 virus infection have been hospitalized as others have been outpatients. The remaining 70% showed minor symptoms of the disease and had been identified through health ministry's screening measures, he explained.

Jahanpour added that the number of coronavirus patients in the country has increased to 109,286 people.

He said that 6,685 people have lost their lives due to infection to the virus, including 45 in the past 24 hours.

Jahanpour, meantime, stated that 87,422 infected people have recovered and been discharged from hospital, expressing concern that 2,703 patients infected with COVID-19 virus are in critical conditions.

He also noted that 601,324 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 Iranian foreign ministry declared that despite Washington's claims of cooperation to transfer drugs to Iran via the new Swiss-launched payment mechanism, the U.S. is troubling the process amid the coronavirus outbreak in the country.

Although U.S. claims that medicines and medical equipment are not under sanctions, they have practically blocked the transfer of Iran's financial resources in other countries into the Swiss Humanitarian Trade Arrangement (SHTA), Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Seyed Abbas Mousavi said.

As the death toll from the virus surges, Iran intensifies its preventive safety measures. Closure universities have been extended until further notice but schools in certain low-risk areas will open limitedly on May 16.

The government also imposed travel restrictions, specially on Iran's North, which is among the red zones. The country has also

adopted strict digital health control procedures at airports to spot possible infections. Namaki announced last month that a new national mobilization plan would be implemented across the country to fight against the coronavirus epidemic and more effectively treat patients.

Namaki said that the plan will include all the 17,000 health centers and the 9,000 medical and clinical centers in all cities, suburban areas and villages.

He added that the plan will include home quarantine, noting that infected people will receive the necessary medicines and advice, but they are asked to stay at home.

Namaki said that people with a more serious condition will stay at the hospitals, adding that the public places will be disinfected, the entries of infected towns and cities will be controlled to diagnose and quarantine the infected cases.

He added that the necessary equipment and facilities have been provided, expressing the hope that the epidemic would be curbed.

According to the latest statistics of Health Ministry, the number of medical laboratories to test coronavirus infection has reached over 90 across the country.

The World Health Organization (WHO) says Iran's response to the virus has so far been up to the mark. Still, it says the U.S. sanctions are a big challenge, and Washington would be complicit in the rising death toll in Iran if it would not remove its sanctions.

The World Health Organization has considered priorities in combating coronavirus and Islamic Republic of Iran obeys and follows up priorities as defined by WHO.

The WHO is dispatching separate delegations to all countries.

Iran says has provided Afghans with best facilities for 40 years

➔ He said since the issue is related to the lives of human beings, it was dealt with very carefully and an attempt was also made to take all the aspects of the incident into account immediately.

Accordingly, all relevant institutions, including the political and border departments in the Foreign Ministry, police, Interior Ministry, Intelligence Ministry and General Staff of the Armed Forces, were mobilized to obtain a comprehensive assessment and clarify the facts, the spokesman added.



He further explained that based on confirmed reports received from the border guards of the Islamic Republic of Iran, there has been no such incident at that time, nor have there been any clashes between the Iranian forces and Afghan nationals.

On Sunday, Iran and Afghanistan's foreign ministers discussed the reports over the phone. Mohammad Javad Zarif and Mohammad Hanif Atmar exchanged views on joint investigations into the matter and the creation of respective inquiry task forces.

Zarif assured his Afghan counterpart that an Iranian investigative team would soon begin looking into the matter, while Atmar notified the Iranian minister that an Afghan delegation had already visited the northwestern Afghan province of Herat, where the river partly flows, and begun a probe.

Iran's Foreign Ministry has rejected as a "bitter joke" a claim by the United States that Iranian guards were involved in the tragic deaths of Afghan migrants near the border.

"Iran has strong ties with Afghanistan & leads the way to help Afghan leaders for inclusive Govt. What happened to Afghan nationals in Herat is tragic & unrelated to Iran, but U.S. regime's allegation against Iran is a 'bitter joke'," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement published via Twitter on May 5.

"The (U.S) regime is a war criminal in Afghanistan & state sponsor of terrorism across the world," the statement added.

Providing jobs, free education, free health facilities and many other facilities that are widely available to Afghan guests are indicative of Iran's good hospitality, Foreign Ministry spokesman states.

Iran needs over \$238b for realizing 'Surge in Production': fin min

E → The minister further highlighted that Iran's stock market is reaching its real status, adding, "People are gradually getting acquainted with the capital market's potential and welcoming it." Iranian President Hassan Rouhani has also stressed the need for the expansion of the privatization program.



Speaking in a meeting of the government economic coordination headquarters, on April 21, Rouhani called for more government-owned companies and big enterprises to be listed on the stock market.

Major issues discussed in meeting of economic coordination headquarters

E → **TEHRAN** – Headed by President Hassan Rouhani, the government economic coordination headquarters, in its 135th meeting, discussed some of the country's most important economic issues on Tuesday, IRIB reported.

As reported, supply of basic goods, guaranteed purchase of wheat, managing imports, and financing projects, were among the issues explored in the meeting.

As for the guaranteed purchase of wheat, the condition was assessed as appropriate in terms of production and demand.

In the meeting, it was also decided that necessary coordination between the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade and the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) will be made so that the imports

will be planned in such a way that the domestic production won't be disrupted while the goods needed by the people will be supplied.

Financing various projects including the renovation of the Rey power plant was also reviewed and approved in the meeting.



Stocks falter as anxiety grows over second coronavirus wave

Asian shares tumbled on Tuesday on growing worries about a second wave of coronavirus infections after the Chinese city where the pandemic originated reported its first new cases since its lockdown was lifted.

European markets were set to open lower with EUROSTOXX 50 futures STX1c1 off 0.52% and FTSE futures FFI1c1 down 0.22%. E-Mini futures ESC1 for the S&P 500 slipped 0.68%.

The central Chinese city of Wuhan reported five new cases on Monday, casting doubts over efforts to lower coronavirus-related restrictions across the country as businesses restart and individuals went back to work.

"Markets have been torn between optimism on the tentative re-opening of some economies and caution on the still grim economic data," said OCBC Investment Research in a Tuesday markets note.

"Any recovery in equity markets is likely to be fragile for now, as markets will watch for cracks in the financial system and elsewhere in the economy as virus infections climb."

MSCI's broadest index of Asia Pacific shares outside of Japan .MIAPJ0000PUS stumbled more than 1%, snapping two straight sessions of gains.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng index was among the hardest hit .HSI, down 1.78% followed closely by Australia, off 1.24%. South Korea's KOSPI .KS11 faltered 0.85%.

China's blue-chip CSI300 index .CSI300 was off 0.5% after the country's factory prices fell at the sharpest rate in four years in April, worse than analysts' expectations.

As countries around the world gradually ease restrictions in an effort to restart their economies, investors are becoming anxious about a second wave of infections.

Germany's Robert Koch Institute reported that the "reproduction rate" - the number of people each person infected with the coronavirus goes on to infect - had risen to 1.1. Any rate above 1 means the virus is spreading exponentially.

The worrisome news follows a fresh outbreak in night clubs in South Korea and record number of new cases in a day in Russia.

"The re-opening of the global economy will likely follow the shape of activity in China. Businesses there have restarted operations but are not necessarily at capacity," Bob Baur, Chief Global Economist at Principal Global Investors.

"While businesses have mostly restarted, China's households stay cautious. Restaurants are open, but seats are empty. Vehicle sales bounced off the bottom but are well below normal. Households in the U.S. and Europe will surely mirror this wary attitude even as activity picks up."

Fund managers expect equity markets to stay the course through June and avoid retesting March lows given the massive monetary stimulus provided by the U.S. Federal Reserve and other major central banks.

Late on Monday, the Fed said it would start purchasing shares of exchange-traded funds that invest in bonds, one of several tools to improve market functioning in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

Markets are also keeping a wary eye on China's trade relations with the United States as well as Australia.

U.S. President Donald Trump said on Monday he opposed renegotiating the U.S.-China "Phase 1" trade deal while Australian media reported that China has suspended imports from four abattoirs in an escalation of tensions.

(Source: Reuters)

Non-oil export vital for production surge

E → **TEHRAN** – Iran's First Vice-President Es'haq Jahangiri has called for increasing non-oil exports as the only way for realizing the motto of surge in production, IRNA reported.

"The Foreign Affairs Ministry should provide the necessary bases for the development of [non-oil] exports by expanding and strengthening economic diplomacy," he said in a meeting on reviewing ways of boosting economic relations with the neighboring countries and supporting non-oil exporters.

In the meeting, Jahangiri emphasized the importance of non-oil export and pointed to it as the most important factor in domestic production, saying: "We have no choice but to expand exports if we are looking for a surge in production."

He further underlined the need for expanding economic relations with the countries in the region and noted that the domestic market is limited and one of the requirements for a surge in production is to be able to supply domestic products in international markets.

"In order to boost domestic production, we need to look for foreign markets to supply



our domestic products," he said.

Referring to the Central Bank of Iran (CBI)'s report on the need for \$35 billion

for importing basic goods and raw materials for production in the current Iranian calendar year 1399 (started on March 20),

the first vice president added: "Let's focus on non-oil exports so that we don't have to worry about importing basic goods in the current year."

Emphasizing that 15 neighboring countries and countries such as China and India and Eurasian members should be targeted as the most important export destinations of the country, Jahangiri called on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other relevant agencies to strengthen economic diplomacy and focus on these export destination countries to provide the necessary infrastructure for the development of exports to these nations.

Since the re-imposition of U.S. sanctions on Iran, the country has been following new strategies for reducing reliance on oil and moving toward an oil-free economy.

In this regard, promoting domestic production and developing non-oil exports have been introduced as the main goals of the government in the current Iranian calendar year.

The current year has been called the year of "Surge in Production" by the Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei.

Iranian banks to sell over \$23b worth of excess assets

E → **TEHRAN** – Iran's Deputy Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Abbas Me'marnejad says Iranian banks and their subsidiaries are going to sell one quadrillion rials (about \$23.8 billion) worth of properties and shares in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 20).

According to Me'marnejad, the banking system has offered 70 trillion rials (about \$1.7 billion) worth of shares in the country's stock market over the past 1.5 months as part of a plan to reform the country's banking sector, IRIB reported.

The first large bank offering will be announced next week by Omid Investment Group, a subsidiary of Sepah Bank, and it's valued at more than 700 trillion rials (about \$16.6 billion).

The deputy minister noted that the value of government shares that are being transferred through exchange-traded funds (ETFs) has currently doubled.

Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), which

is the main stock exchange of Iran, listed the first exchange-traded fund (ETF) from a series of three ETFs on May 2.

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

Back in October 2019, Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Farhad Dejpasand announced that a one-year program is underway for 10 government-owned banks (including the biggest lenders) to relinquish the excess assets- mostly real estate- and increase their cash reserves.

Speaking in a meeting with the managing directors of the government-owned banks, he noted that the ministry will follow up on the provided solutions in the program through relevant authorities until it reaches a conclusion.

Iran's banking industry is suffering, among other things, from issues such as



poor balance sheets, capital inadequacy, inability to recover non-performing loans to the tune of billions of dollars, arcane rules, and dubious operations of illegal credit institutions that have been punishing the economy for years.

In late August 2019, Governor of Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Abdolnasser Hemmati said the bank has been working hard to reform the banking system long grappling with mismanagement and financial indiscipline.

Iran's export of goods with preferential tariffs to EAEU increases 85%

E → **TEHRAN** – Export of the commodities subjected to preferential tariffs from Iran to the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) member states has risen 85 percent since implementation of a free trade agreement between the two sides (October 2019), head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) announced.

Hamid Zadboum also said that 13 percent of Iran's imports from the EAEU are subjected to the preferential tariffs, while 49 percent of the country's exports to the bloc is subjected to those tariffs, TPO website published.

The official said that Iran's exports to the EAEU member countries are more variable compared to its imports from those states, adding exports can be even more expanded.

On April 17, Zadboum announced, "The list of products subjected to zero tariff in trade with the Eurasian Economic Union has been announced."

"The list mainly includes agricultural, pharmaceutical and foodstuff products,"



the official stressed.

According to the TPO head, the Eurasian Economic Committee approved a list of essential import products to the union to minimize the negative economic impacts of the coronavirus outbreak and to prevent the shortage of such goods in the union.

He further noted that zero-tariff goods for exports to Eurasia include some agricul-

tural and food products (potatoes, onions, garlic, cabbage, carrots, peppers, rye, rice, buckwheat, fruit juice, and baby formula) and some pharmaceutical products and medical supplies (endoscope, contactless thermometers, and disposable medical pipettes).

The import of these goods has been declared 'essential' due to the increased

demand or short-term shortages caused by the current situation of the pandemic in EAEU member states, he added.

Iran and Eurasian Economic Union reached a free trade agreement in October 2018 based on which about 862 commodity items were subjected to preferential tariffs.

The interim agreement enabling the formation of a free trade area between Iran and the EAEU was signed on May 17, 2018, and officially came into force on October 27, 2019.

Iran is a very important market in the region and the development of ties with this country is of high significance for the EAEU members (Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan).

The free trade agreement between Iran and this union has laid the ground for the expansion of trade ties between the two sides.

The agreement with the bloc has increased Iran's exports to the EAEU member states significantly, which is a turning point for the Islamic Republic plans for boosting non-oil exports during the U.S. sanctions.

TEDPIX falls 26,645 points on Tuesday

E → **TEHRAN** – TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), dropped 26,645 points to stand at 1.021 million points on Tuesday, IRNA reported.

The index falling was after some consecutive days of growth. On May 9, TEDPIX hit the record high of one million points. The index's daily jump was also unprecedented as it gained 42,372 points to stand at 1.2 million points.

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

Mobarakeh Steel Company, Persian Gulf Petrochemical Industry Company, Pars Petrochemical Company, and National

Iranian Copper Industry were the biggest contributors to the index jump.

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

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



China announces new tariff waivers for some U.S. imports

China announced on Tuesday a new list of 79 U.S. products eligible for waivers from retaliatory tariffs imposed at the height of the bilateral trade war, amid continued pressure on Beijing to boost imports from the United States.

China's finance ministry said in a statement the new waivers will take effect on May 19 and expire on May 18, 2021. The latest list waives tariffs on products including ores of rare earth metals, gold ores, silver ores and concentrates.

The ministry did not disclose the imports value of the products. Beijing in February said it will grant exemptions for 696 U.S. goods including key products such as soybeans and pork based on applications from companies.

Beijing and Washington's top trade negotiators held a call last week and discussed implementation of the Phase 1 deal signed in January. Under the deal, China agreed to increase its purchases of U.S. goods from a 2017 baseline by \$200 billion over two years, with about \$77 billion in increased

purchases in the first year and \$123 billion in the second year.

Renewed tensions between the two countries, sparked by the COVID-19 pandemic that began in China late last year, are also raising questions about the trade truce.

U.S. President Donald Trump has threatened to terminate the deal if China fails to meet its purchase commitments.

China's Global Times, published by the official newspaper of the ruling Communist Party, also reported on Monday that some



government advisers were urging Beijing to invalidate the trade deal and negotiate a one more favorable to China.

(Source: Reuters)

Government's role in oil products distribution should be reduced: Zanganeh

E N E R G Y TEHRAN — Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh has ordered the review of measures for reducing the government's authority in storage, transportation and distribution of gasoline and gasoil used by the transportation sector, Shana reported on Tuesday.

In a letter to one of his advisors, Mohammadreza Moqadam, on Sunday, Zanganeh underlined balanced development of fuel distribution companies, providing the necessary conditions for equal delivery of fuel from distribution storages to all stations, transfer of air refueling services to the competent private sector, reducing bureaucracy, improving productivity and

efficiency of fuel supply chain as some of the goals of this decision.

As reported, Moqadam has been tasked to conduct necessary research in collaboration with the National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company (NIORDC) considering all the aspects and sensitivities of the mentioned issues, and report back to the minister.

As a subsidiary of National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company was established in March 1991 and undertook to perform all operations relating to refining and distribution of oil products.

Although NIORDC was formed in the



1990s, the company has actually inherited 90 years of Iran's oil industries' experiences in the fields of refining, transfer and

distribution of oil products, as well as, engineering and construction of installations of oil industries.

Oil prices rise as Saudi Arabia pledges further supply cut

Oil futures climbed in early trade on Tuesday, boosted by an unexpected commitment from Saudi Arabia to deepen production cuts in June to help drain the glut in the global market that has grown as the coronavirus pandemic crushed fuel demand.

Brent crude futures climbed to a high of \$30.11 a barrel and were up 0.9 percent, or 28 cents, at \$29.91 at 0021 GMT, clawing back some of the previous session's losses. The benchmark fell \$1.34 on Monday.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures were up 1 percent, or 24 cents, at \$24.38 after touching a high of \$24.77.

Saudi Arabia said overnight it would cut production by a further 1 million barrels per day (bpd) in June, slashing its total production to 7.5 million bpd, down nearly 40 percent from April.

"This reduction in production provided excellent optics encouraging other OPEC+ members to comply and even offer additional voluntary cuts, which should quicken the global oil markets' rebalancing act," Stephen Innes, chief global market strategist at AxiCorp, said



in a note. OPEC+ is a grouping comprising members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and other producers including Russia. The United Arab Emirates and Kuwait

also committed to cut production further, promising to cut another 180,000 bpd altogether.

Those cuts, combined with the world's biggest economies relaxing coronavirus

restrictions and stoking a gradual recovery in fuel demand, are expected to ease some pressure on crude storage capacity.

However, in the wake of new outbreaks of the coronavirus, including in China and South Korea, the market is wary of a second wave of COVID-19 cases that could result in new lockdowns and stall a recovery in demand.

Inventory data this week will be key to extending the recent rally in oil prices, AxiCorp's Innes said.

"The majority of traders' top-line view is that inventories will increase at a slower pace but will still build, capping oil prices in the medium term," he said.

U.S. crude inventories likely rose by about 4.3 million barrels in the week to May 8, a preliminary Reuters poll showed, ahead of reports from the American Petroleum Institute industry group on Tuesday and the U.S. Energy Information Administration on Wednesday.

Meanwhile six analysts polled estimated that gasoline stockpiles fell by 2.3 million barrels, down for a third straight week.

(Source: Reuters)

Iraq's April crude oil output steady on month despite expiry of old OPEC+ pact

Iraq's total crude output, including flows from the semiautonomous Kurdish region, remained nearly steady in April as OPEC's second largest oil producer did not boost production despite expiry of the old OPEC+ oil production cuts in March.

Iraq's state oil marketer SOMO said on Sunday that oil production in April was at 4.48 million bpd, compared with 4.5 million bpd in March, even as some of its OPEC allies boosted output to record levels that month.

SOMO said in a letter to S&P Global Platts that April exports fell to 3.853 million bpd from 3.869 million bpd in March. The figure includes the Kurdish region in northern Iraq.

Iraq took the biggest hit to production for OPEC members in April, losing 110,000 bpd as low fuel demand and a lack of product storage space forced its refineries to severely lower crude runs, according to the latest Platts OPEC survey. Production was at 4.54 million bpd in April.

New government

Iraq is struggling to boost output due to the oil price crash amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The country had to shut-in its 90,000 bpd al-Gharraf oil field since mid-March



due to the pandemic after operator Petronas of Malaysia evacuated staff.

Iraq's parliament granted last week its vote of confidence to most members of the new cabinet of Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi, but postponed the oil minister vote. The country has been run by a caretaker government since December 2019 following the resignation of the government of Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi over protests that have in the past disrupted oil production.

Kadhimi said in his government program he wants to form a negotiating delegation to discuss amending terms of the technical service contracts with international oil companies, which operate the country's biggest fields in the south.

(Source: Platts)

LNG fleet growth may slow: MISC

Malaysian shipping firm MISC expects growth of the global LNG fleet to slow and weak demand to weigh on spot charter rates this year amid the outbreak of Covid-19 and seasonal low demand.

The firm expects depressed LNG spot charter rates to persist in the second quarter, having dipped in the first quarter due to a slowdown in Asian LNG demand because of the virus, high inventories and a mild winter. Low LNG prices and the weak global economy delaying the start-up of planned LNG projects may also lead to slower fleet growth, MISC said.

The firm's first-quarter LNG business revenue increased from a year earlier, mainly supported by "recurring income from its portfolio of long-term contracts" and lower dry-docking activities.

But the company's outlook for dry-docking activities and marine repairs this year "remains uncertain" owing to lockdowns and disruption to the global supply chain of raw materials, which may raise associated costs. Social distancing measures and Malaysia's Movement Control Order (MCO) imposed on 18 March to control the spread of the virus had resulted in a suspension of the firm's yard operations, which



was later adjusted to allow a limited number of the workforce to return on 16 April and a restart of full capacity on 28 April. Despite the resumption of operations, the full impact of the volatile global economy on MISC's business operations is "riddled with uncertainties", the company said.

MISC has a total of 29 LNG carriers and two floating storage units (FSUs), of which the majority operate in the Pacific basin. The FSUs are located at the 3.8mn t/yr Malacca terminal in west Malaysia.

The firm ordered two more LNG carriers of 174,000m³ capacity in October from South Korea's Samsung Heavy Industries (SHI) for delivery in the first quarter of 2023.

(Source: Argus Media)

BP chief sees risk of oil demand passing peak

BP's new chief executive said the coronavirus hit to crude consumption was likely to endure beyond the pandemic — and may even have ushered in "peak oil" demand.

Bernard Looney, who took the top job at the UK energy major in February, told the Financial Times that the Covid-19 crisis was only "adding to the challenges of oil in the years ahead", as travel bans and lockdowns slash consumption by a third from pre-crisis levels of roughly 100m barrels a day.

"It's not going to make oil more in demand. It's gotten more likely to have oil be less in demand," Mr Looney said, noting that use of technology that enables remote working, cutting the need for travel, could persist long into the future.

"I don't think we know how this is going to play out. I certainly don't know," he said. "Could it be peak oil? Possibly. Possibly. I would not write that off."

The oil industry is assessing how much of the slump in demand sparked by coronavirus may become permanent. BP said last year that it expected consumption to grow over the next decade before plateauing in the 2030s.

BP, which derives the bulk of its cash from oil, reported a 66 percent drop in earnings in the first quarter and like other supermajors has been forced into cash conservation mode. It has issued billions of dollars in debt, cut spending and delayed project approvals to preserve dividend payouts, which analysts believe have become unsustainable.



The company is facing its latest crisis just as Looney seeks to overhaul its business model and longer-term strategy for a world that demands fossil fuel companies take more accountability for climate change.

He said the pandemic had bolstered his "personal conviction" of the need to shift strategy. BP is expected to invest more in low-carbon energy and less in hydrocarbons as part of a new pledge to become a net zero emissions company by 2050.

Looney noted that as crude prices have plunged, renewable energy projects had been able to attract funding, suggesting that the pandemic has weakened

the investment case for oil.

"It's the model that is increasingly respected and admired by investors as being resilient and having a different risk profile," he said.

BP's board wants to present a renewed approach at its annual meeting this month after last year's gathering saw the company at odds with investors who demanded targets on emissions and greater disclosure on how the business aligns with the Paris climate goals.

It is still unclear how BP, whose shares recently fell to a 24-year low, plans to execute its strategy. Analysts question whether its heavy debt load, among the highest in the sector, will allow for the kind of change Looney is after.

In the shorter term, bankers and investors question whether the company will follow Shell in cutting or rebasing its dividend to give it more room to maneuver, particularly if oil prices stay low and asset sales remain difficult.

"Shell's dividend policy action makes it easier for others to follow at a time when there is a very real focus on balance sheet strength and liquidity," said Francois Austen, head of the energy practice at consultancy Oliver Wyman.

Looney said that while there was "significant" interest in the company's next move, he would not comment on the direction BP would take, saying only that it would review dividend policy quarter by quarter.

(Source: Financial Times)

COVID-19 could spark a renewable energy boom

There is a growing acceptance that the prospect of a V-shaped recovery is unrealistic. "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. But Kashkari now says that "we are in for unfortunately a slow, long recovery," characterized by "devastating" job losses.

The world finds itself at a crossroads. The coronavirus pandemic has ravaged the global economy, leading to massive (and growing) unemployment.

At the same time, the climate problem is not going away. Last month was tied for the warmest April on record globally, and 2020 is on track to be the warmest year ever. Larger and more frequent natural disasters are increasingly likely to happen.

In the face of multiple crises, governments can kill two birds with one stone by going big on green stimulus, rescuing the economy while also making big cuts to greenhouse gas emissions. But failure to seize the opportunity may mean that we "leap from the COVID frying pan into the climate fire," according to a group of leading economists.

A new report from the University of Oxford examined over 700 fiscal stimulus policies under 25 umbrella categories. The options were gauged by four factors: speed of implementation, economic multiplier, climate impact potential and overall desirability.

The crisis has "demonstrated that governments can intervene decisively once the scale of an emergency is clear and public support is present," wrote the report's authors, which included renowned economists Joseph Stiglitz and Nicholas Stern.

Facing the worst downturn since the Great Depression, governments are passing once unthinkable pieces of legislation, with price tags that boggle the mind. Still, they are still falling short, and more trillion-dollar fiscal packages are likely.

But simply rebuilding the old economy isn't good enough, the Oxford report argues. First of all, it may not work. Shoveling tens of billions of dollars at the airline industry, for instance, will do little if nobody wants to fly for the foreseeable future.

More importantly, re-inflating old industries will lead to climate disaster. Given the scale of spending under consideration, then, there is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to "build back better," the Oxford report argues. "The recovery packages can either kill these two birds with one stone — setting the global economy on a pathway towards net-zero emissions — or lock us into a fossil system from which it will be nearly impossible to escape," they warned.

These aren't just the conclusions of environmental groups or activists. The results of the Oxford paper stem from a survey of 231 finance ministry officials, central bankers, and other economists, representing 53 countries.

"A lesson from the [2008-2009 Global Financial Crisis] is that green stimulus policies often have advantages over traditional fiscal stimulus," the economists wrote. Construction jobs for renewable energy installation or retrofitting buildings, for instance, cannot be offshored. They are also labor intensive — for every \$1 million spent, 7.49 full-time renewable energy jobs are created but only 2.65 jobs in fossil fuels. And, of course, the long-term effects of cleaner air and lower emissions offer additional benefits.

Some policies are quick to implement and have long-run economic multiplier effects, such as direct liquidity support for households and small business. But they don't move the needle on climate. Other ideas, such as investing in green spaces, carry substantial climate benefits but don't have strong economic multiplier effects. (Notably, bailouts for airlines score very poorly on both metrics — negative climate impact and a poor economic multiplier effect).

The report found five major buckets that the 231 respondents tended to prefer to satisfy both economic and climate goals: clean physical infrastructure, building efficiency retrofits, investment in education and training, natural capital investment, and clean R&D.

The call from hundreds of economists is echoed by a growing number of global leaders. The head of the International Energy Agency (IEA) says fiscal stimulus should focus very strongly on clean energy. The President of the European Commission has called for a "European Green Deal."

It remains to be seen if this kind of stimulus comes to pass. The Trump administration is obviously resisting any talk of a Green New Deal, instead aggressively deregulating environmental protections and offering various bailout measures for the oil industry.

(Source: oilprice.com)

Malaysian oil exploration vessel leaves South China Sea waters after standoff

An oil exploration vessel contracted by Malaysian state energy company Petronas that was involved in a standoff with a Chinese survey vessel in the South China Sea left the disputed waters on Tuesday, three security sources and the vessel operator said.

Petronas has been conducting exploration activities near an area claimed by Malaysia and Vietnam as well as by China since late last year. In mid-April, the Haiyang Dizhi 8 — the Chinese government survey vessel — started operating in the area, escorted by coast guard and China Maritime Militia vessels.

Three American warships and an Australian frigate conducted a joint exercise near the site of Petronas' operations amid the standoff last month.

The West Capella, the vessel contracted by Petronas, left the waters as it has finished its exploration activities in the area, the sources said. They did not want to be named as they were not authorized to speak to the media.

Petronas' contract for the vessel with offshore drilling company Seadrill was scheduled to end this month.

Malaysia's foreign ministry and Petronas did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Seadrill's communications director Iain Cracknell confirmed that the West Capella has left the area after completing its planned work. The Chinese government vessel, the Haiyang Dizhi 8, was still in the area — about 371 km (230 miles) offshore Malaysian Borneo, data from ship tracking website Marine Traffic showed.

The data showed the vessel has been moving within Malaysia's exclusive economic zone in a hash-shaped pattern consistent with carrying out a survey, as it did during a tense standoff in Vietnamese waters last year.

The Washington-based Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative (AMTI) has said the China-Malaysia standoff has been going on for months.

China has denied reports of a standoff, saying that the Haiyang Dizhi 8 was conducting normal activities.

The incident prompted the United States to call on China to stop its "bullying behaviour" in the disputed waters.

China claims almost all of the energy-rich South China Sea, also a major trade route each year. The Philippines, Brunei, Vietnam, Malaysia and Taiwan have overlapping claims.

(Source: Reuters)

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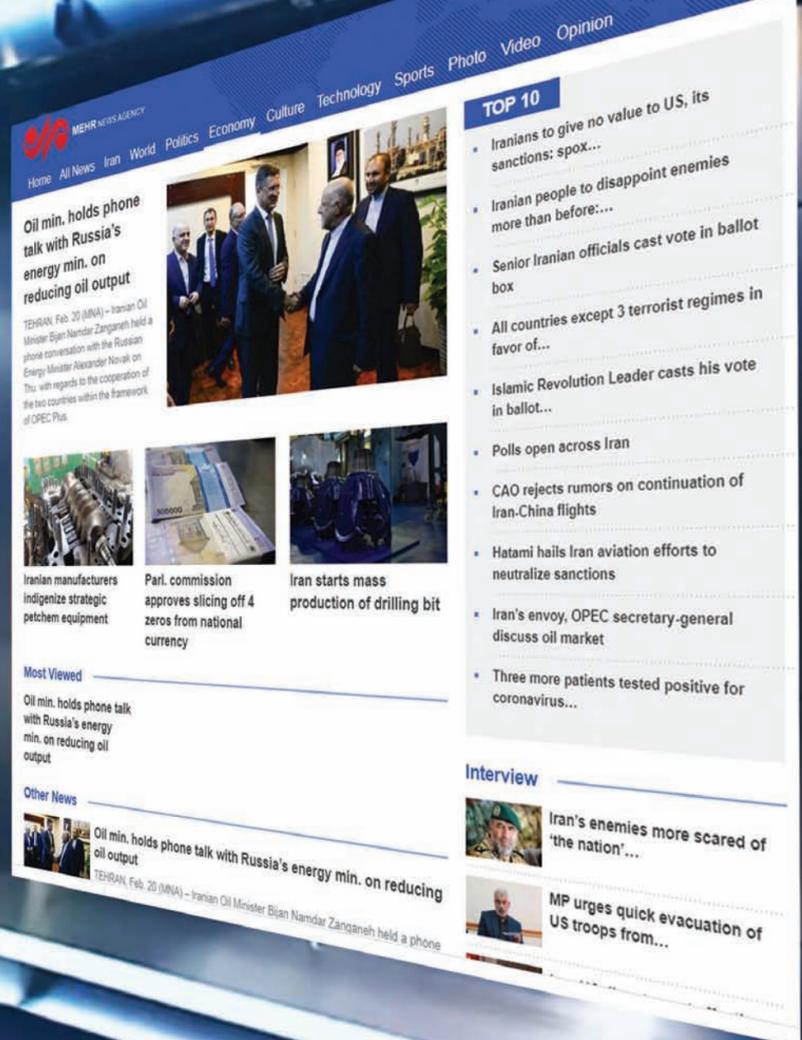
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Libyans stuck in a bloody civil war since 2011! Who is guilty?

By Mohammad Jafari

It is approximately a decade that people in Libya have been deeply suffering from occupation, civil war, terrorism, massacre, explosions, insecurity and instability, causing the African nation to come to the conclusion that those who ousted dictator Moammar Khadafy knew well that it was easier for them to blow up a nation than create a stable peace.

Doug Bandow, a former Special Assistant to President Ronald Reagan and author of several books, has explained in his commentary published by the Antiwar that how those who overthrew Khadafy and promised peace and democracy for the nation left Libya alone among hostilities and bloodshed.

It has been nearly a decade since Libyan dictator Moammar Khadafy suffered an ugly demise at the hands of insurgents. Few mourned his passing. When asked about his fate, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton cackled maniacally, "We came, we saw, he died."

American and European officials declared success. Another dictator down, freedom on the march, U.S. and Europe triumphant, Arabs embracing democracy, memories of Iraq excised. "Leading from behind" with bombers and drones looked to be a winning strategy.

That was then. Alas, once again Washington found that it was easier to blow up a nation than create a stable liberal peace. The victors fell out and squabbled among themselves, divided by ideology, ambition, theology, and geography. They ended up playing what amounted to a real Game of Thrones, minus the dragons. Columnist Danny Sjursen aptly observed, "The traditional descriptor of 'civil war' – which usually implies two discrete sides – only vaguely applies. Given the broad array of ethnic, religious, and criminal militias involved – and cultivated by various and nefarious foreign actors – it seems anarchy might be the more appropriate Libyan label."

The bloody aftermath of American intervention opened space for lawless militias. In 2014 Amnesty International complained that the West was ignoring its violent handiwork, "Armed groups have tortured – and probably summarily killed – detainees in their custody, and have committed a wave of abductions targeting civilians based on their origins or perceived political allegiance."

Worse, certainly from the West's standpoint, was the spread of radical jihadists, including the Islamic State. In 2015 the latter group highlighted its vile agenda by murdering 21 Egyptian Coptic Christians who had been working construction in Sirte, Libya. Two months later the Islamic State killed 30 Christians from Eritrea and Ethiopia, in this case migrants seeking passage to Europe. They all died as a consequence of Washington's and Europe's hubris.

Eventually two competing governments emerged and today are involved in a revived full-scale civil war. The official Government of National Accord, based in Tripoli and headed by Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj, was formed through a United Nations initiative. Opposing the GNA is Khalifa Haftar, commander of the Libyan National Army, whose stronghold is in the east, helped Khadafy come to power, was captured fighting in Chad, spent two decades in America, became a citizen and CIA asset, returned to Libya, and ended up as a not particularly competent field marshal.

The anfractuosity details of the conflict are difficult to follow and don't much matter to Americans. The battle has raged back and forth, neither side strong enough to conquer the whole of the country. And the fighting has attracted outside interest, with multiple countries intervening, helping drive the war's course.

Today Italy, Qatar, and most importantly Turkey support the GNA. Ankara's assistance recently helped turn the tide, as Haftar's forces were put to flight. Egypt, France, Jordan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates back Haftar. Moscow's aid brought the field marshal to Tripoli's gates by last year's end. The fight is no longer just among Libyans. The Erdogan government deployed former Syrian insurgents under Turkish command; Russia sent in mercenaries controlled by the Putin government as well as Syrians paid by the same.

Although the GNA lately has gotten the better of Haftar, battlefield success seems to change as regularly as phases of the Moon. Observed Jason Pack of the group Libya Analysis, "Haftar's ability to rule eastern Libya and the power he has over many tribes in the center of the country will not be changed. Rather the next phase of the civil war would start." The Libyan people will suffer whichever way the combat goes.

The US has no official position on the war. The Obama administration, responsible for creating a geopolitical mess in Libya, recognized the GNA. However, President Donald Trump called Haftar and, according to the White House, "recognized Field Marshal Haftar's significant role in fighting terrorism and securing Libya's oil routes, and the two discussed a shared vision for Libya's transition to a stable, democratic political system." After which the State Department urged Haftar to halt his offensive. The only good news: when urged to maintain America's involvement in the conflict by the Italian government, Trump replied: "I think the United States has right now enough roles. We're in a role everywhere." All too true.

Several lessons stand out from Washington's foolish decision to enter Libya's civil war, in response to Europe's self-serving supplications and Clinton's bloody ambitions.

Most important, Washington should avoid conflicts which don't matter to Americans' security. Khadafy originally was a geopolitical troublemaker, but that soon left him isolated. Terrorist attacks on the US triggered airstrikes by the Reagan administration. However, in 2003 the discovery of nuclear materials bound for Libya led him to make a deal with the West, making him the toast of Europe. Having been housebroken, so to speak, he worked with American officials against terrorism.

In fact, in 2009 the Senate's trio of apocalyptic wannabe field marshals Joseph Lieberman, John McCain, and Lindsey Graham visited Khadafy in Tripoli to discuss possible financial and military aid to reward him for opposing al-Qaeda. They chatted amiably about, among other things, helping refurbish Libya's C-130s, and expressed amazement at being in the country supping with Khadafy. The State Department cable indicated that Sen. McCain talked with Khadafy father and son about "the many ways in which the United States and Libya can work together as partners."

Two years later he and Graham were making the rounds of TV talk shows demanding war against Khadafy for being, shock!, a dictator. That coincided with President Barack Obama claiming to be intervening for humanitarian purposes:



Benghazi, he warned, "could suffer a massacre that would have reverberated across the region and stained the conscience of the world." However, he, like officials around the globe, usually spout humanitarian slogans to camouflage their real agendas.

Obama's claim was fraudulent, a blatant lie. The administration cited a Khadafy speech threatening death and worse to those resisting his forces, but his bloody rhetoric was directed at enemy combatants, those armed and resisting government forces, not civilians. In fact, he promised amnesty for insurgents who abandoned their weapons. Nor had Khadafy massacred any civilians, even on retaking cities from the opposition. He was a garden-variety dictator with little respect for life and dignity, but in that he differed not at all from a score of regimes allied with and armed by the US and European governments.

While claiming to care about Libya's people, America and European embarrassingly secondary player which ran out of munitions and had to beg Washington for resupply – actually prolonged combat in a low-tech civil war, increasing casualties. Rather than risking any of their own people, the "great" powers did just enough to ensure that Khadafy would lose, irrespective of the cost to the Libyan people.

Even worse was leaving the country in chaos. Obama piously declared: "We had a unique ability to stop the violence." What came next was worse than the original war. The continuing conflict also diverted GNA-affiliated militias from warring against ISIS and other violent extremists. So far nine additional years of murder and mayhem have resulted, while most of the Western leaders who orchestrated the disaster have retired in comfort if not luxury. And the conflict continues to rage. War is not a humanitarian instrument and its impact is only rarely beneficial to those suffering through it. Alas, its practitioners, especially those directing the world's sole superpower, rarely pay a price for loosing the dogs of war upon other nations.

Moreover, ill-considered interventions set dangerous and harmful precedents that can be reversed only with great difficulty. In 2011 China and Russia went along with a U.S.-sponsored resolution authorizing "all necessary measures to prevent the killing of civilians." After the allies supported the insurgency by targeting Khadafy's force, Beijing and Moscow realized that they had been swindled. They indicated that never again would they trust America and approve a similar measure.

Perhaps the worst impact was on states that might negotiate with America. Khadafy's fate was filmed. Anyone can view his ragged and bloodied visage shortly before his torturous death on YouTube. No doubt the leaders of North Korea have seen what happened to someone who dealt with Washington and offered up his missiles and nukes. The West played him and took him out at its earliest opportunity when he was vulnerable. Why would Kim Jong-un ever trust Washington? The likelihood of the North yielding its regime-protecting deterrent was never good. After Libya it is inconceivable.

All too often ill-considered US intervention empowers other and sometimes hostile powers. The most important beneficiaries of America's invasion of Iraq were al-Qaeda and ISIS. Americans, and many more Iraqis and Syrians, died in the ensuing conflict. Now Washington is demanding that the weak Iraqi government put the demons freed by America's action back into the geopolitical Pandora's Box.

Libya's conflict has had a similar result. Other than France and Italy, none of the states meddling in Libya's conflict come close to representing America's interests and values. The latest nations to intervene, Russia and Turkey, are most likely to act against Washington's policies. Whereas Khadafy had established a working relationship with the US government and numerous capitals across Europe, today America faces only chaos. And a triumphant unity government influenced by either Moscow or Ankara is unlikely to be particularly friendly.

Why are so many countries devoting so much effort to shaping Libya's future? The Europeans fear more economic migrants heading to their continent. Turkey hopes to control Libya's oil, though in today's world the value of such deposits is problematic. Moscow desires influence and perhaps a military base. However, continued turmoil, which seems inevitable so long as a half dozen countries intervene and block one another, is unlikely to benefit anyone.

The conflict's final lesson is that even the guilty can be counted on to express pieties to cover their crimes. Washington sought to discourage Ankara from acting. State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortogus declared: "external military intervention threatens prospects for resolving the conflict."

Libya is a continuing tragedy. Thousands of Libyans have died. Tens of thousands have been injured or driven from their homes. Like Humpty Dumpty, the country is increasingly unlikely to emerge whole. And whatever results is likely to be influenced if not controlled from afar. GNA's interior minister, Fathi Bashagha, observed: "Every day we are burying young people who should be helping us build Libya." Sadly, graves will continue to be filled.

This was a bit rich coming from someone representing the US, which along with France and Italy, also currently involved, exacerbated, prolonged, and expanded the initial conflict. Of course, Washington long has believed that it possesses a monopoly on the right and duty to bomb, invade, and occupy other nations at will.

Similarly, the Arab League denounced "foreign interference" which could "further aggravate the situation in Libya and threaten the security and stability of neighboring countries and the entire region." Among the organization's members: Egypt, Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and UAE, all backing one side or the other in Libya's destabilizing civil war. So far none has apologized for its involvement.

Indeed, Egypt's President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi announced: "We will not allow anyone to control Libya. It is a matter of Egyptian national security." When he last met the president, in December, the White House reported that they "rejected foreign exploitation and agreed that parties must take urgent steps to resolve the conflict before Libyans lose control to foreign actors." Alas, that happened precisely nine years ago. When America and Europe decided to initiate regime change.

Even the man with ultimate responsibility for the Libyan disaster, President Obama, eventually realized that the result was a "shit show." However, he learned the wrong lesson. He still defended intervening but declared in 2014: "[W]e [and] our European partners underestimated the need to come in full force if you're going to do this. Then it's the day after Qaddafi is gone, when everybody is feeling good and everybody is holding up posters saying, 'Thank you, America.' At that moment, there has to be a much more aggressive effort to rebuild societies that didn't have any civic traditions."

Actually, he meant building, not rebuilding, societies without civic traditions that the West takes for granted. And he presumed Libyans who had just won their civil war would have welcomed the West coming "in full force" and imposing its vision for Libya's future. Washington spent years attempting the same without much better success in Iraq. And three very different administrations have so far devoted almost 19 years to nation-building in Afghanistan without establishing a peaceful, stable, liberal democracy. The mistake in Libya was intervening, not intervening more heavily and longer.

Desperately needed is a regional conference on Libya's future, involving all the combatants. The most realistic outcome is to recognize separate states. Libya, yet another artifact of European colonial line-drawing, long melded three (two important, one less so) very different regions and sets of tribes. Cyrenaica, hosting Benghazi, in the east, long was hostile to Khadafy and spawned previous revolts against his rule.

So divided were Libyans that even three years after Khadafy's death a British training program for recruits in the army of the nominal national government at the time had to be closed. London's plan to assist Libya collapsed "after a series of criminal charges and convictions for sex offenses," reported the Guardian. "But the strategy has had the makings of a disaster since the beginning. It is partly because of infighting among the trainees – fueled by ideological, political and tribal differences – over events back in Libya." There no longer is any reason to maintain the fiction that these peoples should be forced to live together.

Libya is a continuing tragedy. Thousands of Libyans have died. Tens of thousands have been injured or driven from their homes. Like Humpty Dumpty, the country is increasingly unlikely to emerge whole. And whatever results is likely to be influenced if not controlled from afar. GNA's interior minister, Fathi Bashagha, observed: "Every day we are burying young people who should be helping us build Libya." Sadly, graves will continue to be filled.

Libya is the malodorous gift that keeps on giving. Yet there is little evidence that American policymakers have learned anything from the ongoing disaster, which means more innocent people around the world are likely to die in future bungled attempts by Washington to violently transform other nations.

According to Al Jazeera, at least three people, including a civilian, were killed after rocket attacks by forces loyal to Libyan renegade military commander Khalifa Haftar hit the capital Tripoli and a nearby area, the government said early on May 8.

Rockets struck Tripoli port, Mitiga International Airport and a coastal road, said Mustafa al-Mujib, spokesman for the government's military campaign to combat Haftar's assault on Tripoli, dubbed Operation Volcano of Rage.

How COVID-19 economic consequences unearthing deep-rooted unemployment in the West

Joblessness, which has always been one of the main concerns for the US and the European countries, has now become more threatening in the Western nations which face the economic impacts of the novel coronavirus pandemic.

The United States on May 8 recorded its steepest job losses in history over the coronavirus pandemic as Europe, faced with rising deaths, moved to keep its borders shut for another month, an AFP report on the rate of unemployment in the United States and the European Union released.

Hopes have been rising that the worst of the global catastrophe, which has killed more than 270,000 people, has passed, and the United States on Friday approved a new at-home saliva test to speed up diagnosis for COVID-19.

But after weeks in which half of humanity was restricted from carrying on normal life, the effects have been painfully visible, with the global economy suffering its most acute downturn in nearly a century.

In the United States, 20.5 million jobs were wiped out in April -- the most ever reported -- with unemployment rising to 14.7 percent, the highest since the Great Depression.

The world's largest economy has suffered the deadliest coronavirus outbreak, with more than 75,000 fatalities and 1.2 million cases as of May 7.

Mindful of elections in November, President Donald Trump has nonetheless vowed to reopen the country, and a growing number of state governors have already let business resume with precautions.

Trump played down the unemployment numbers, saying they were expected, as the White House pointed to substantial gains on May 8 on global stock markets as proof that better times were ahead.

"We're going to have a phenomenal year next year," Trump told reporters. "I think it's going to come back blazing."

His optimism came even as the virus spread within the White House, with the press secretary of Vice President Mike Pence testing positive.

Neighboring Canada also shed three million jobs, bringing its unemployment rate up to 13.1 percent, two days after the European Union forecast a massive recession in the bloc.

Parts of Europe have also started reopening. Germany, the continent's biggest economy, took decisive early action that stemmed the virus and Chancellor Angela Merkel plans an almost complete return to normal within the month.

Italy, where deaths on Friday passed 30,000, plans to allow worshippers to return to mass, while Denmark said on May 8 that cinemas, museums and zoos would unshutter on June 8.

In Britain, which has suffered the world's highest death toll after the United States, Prime Minister Boris Johnson offered a roadmap out of lockdown on Sunday.

But the European Commission recommended that the 27-nation bloc keep banning non-essential entry of visitors until June 15, an extension of one month.

"The situation remains fragile both in Europe and in the world," it said in a statement.

Ylva Johansson, the EU commissioner for home affairs, said the first priority will be removing temporary border controls to restore free movement within the bloc -- a key principle of the union.

The virus that has infected 3.9 million people worldwide overshadowed one of the most important dates on the European calendar -- the anniversary of the end of World War II on the continent.

Parades and commemorations to mark 75 years since Nazi Germany's surrender were canceled or scaled down, and the thoughts of many national leaders were on fighting the new global challenge.

"For us Germans, 'never again' means 'never again alone,'" said President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, who laid a wreath in Berlin along with Merkel -- the two standing apart in line with social distancing guidelines.

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

Far from bringing the world together, the crisis has triggered a war of words between China, where the virus first appeared in the metropolis of Wuhan, and the United States, where Trump has battled criticism over his handling of an epidemic which he boasted of having under control in January.

The Trump administration has brought into the mainstream a theory that the virus came from a Wuhan laboratory, despite the World Health Organization and the top US epidemiologist saying there is no evidence.

China rejects the charge, and America's allies are not convinced. According to German news weekly Der Spiegel, citing a leaked internal memo, Germany's defense ministry and spy agency see Trump's claim as a "calculated attempt to distract" from his own administration's failings.

The feud spread on May 8 to the UN Security Council, where the United States, stunning other members, prevented a vote on a resolution that called for a ceasefire in various conflicts around the world.

The resolution, led by France and Tunisia, would have asked all countries and groups to lay down their arms so they can focus on combating the coronavirus.

A State Department official told AFP that China had "repeatedly blocked compromises that would have allowed the Council to move forward."

Diplomats said that the United States was concerned about language in the resolution on the role of the World Health Organization, which has been at the forefront of confronting COVID-19.

Trump has vowed to freeze the more than \$400 million in annual US funding for the UN body, saying it did not act quickly enough when the mysterious respiratory disease emerged in Wuhan and blindly took the word of China.

The United States on May 8 also accused China and Russia of stepping up cooperation to spread disinformation online about the virus, including promoting conspiracy theories that it was cooked up by US scientists.

"We see this convergence as a result of what we consider to be pragmatism between the two actors who want to shape public understanding of the COVID pandemic for their own purposes," said Lea Gabrielle, director of the State Department's Global Engagement Center, which monitors foreign propaganda.

The Food and Drug Administration gave emergency approval to the home-collection option, which is significantly easier than the most common test which involves swabbing inside a patient's nose.

The new kit, developed by Rutgers Clinical Genomics Laboratory, is a rare test that does not require a trip to a doctor or other testing site.

Public health workers warn that a complete return to normal is impossible until the development of a vaccine, which could take months if not more.

Trump, however, again offered rosy predictions as he said a vaccine was not a prerequisite to end the pandemic.

"At some point it will probably go away by itself," he told reporters, while adding, "If we had a vaccine, that would be very helpful."

Natural heritage listing planned for Kouh Siah

TOURISM TEHRAN – Kouh Siah (literally meaning Mount Black) in the city of Robat Karim, Tehran province, is planned to be inscribed on the natural heritage list, provincial tourism chief Hamid Karimi said on Monday, CHTN reported.



Kouh Siah is one of the attractions of the city, which has turned black due to the presence of minerals over the years, he added. Most of the mountains in the region have dry and volcanic valleys, with black color and acidic rocks, he noted.

He also stated that the national registration of such natural attractions can introduce them to travelers as well as help tourism develop in the region.

Nearly, two-thirds of Iran is covered with mountains, the main mountain chain is the Zagros Mountains that bisect the country from northwest to southeast.

Rimming the Caspian Sea littoral is another chain of mountains, the narrow but high Alborz Mountains. Volcanic Mount Damavand, 5,610 meters, located in the center of the Alborz, is not only the country's highest peak but also the highest mountain on the Eurasian landmass west of the Hindu Kush.

Police seize historical relics in northern Iran

HERITAGE TEHRAN – Iranian authorities have recently confiscated four historical objects from a smuggler in Bandargaz, northern Golestan province, Mehr reported on Monday.

The recovered objects dates from 1st millennium BC and the Islamic era, said Amir Rahmatollahi, a senior police official in charge of protecting cultural heritage.

The relics include three urns and one pottery jar, he added.



File photo depicts fragment of a prehistorical pottery unearthed in the Iranian Plateau.

Golestan is reportedly embracing some 2,500 historical and natural sites, with UNESCO-registered Gonbad-e Qabus – a one-millennium-old brick tower – amongst its most famous.

Narratives say the tower has influenced various subsequent designers of tomb towers and other cylindrical commemorative structures both in the region and beyond. The UNESCO comments that tower bears testimony to the cultural exchange between Central Asian nomads and the ancient civilization of Iran.

Ancient castles and fortresses in Iran: Qal'eh Dokhtar

HERITAGE Qal'eh Dokhtar ("Castle of Maiden") is a castle made by Ardashir I in 209 CE. It is located on a mountain slope near the Firouzabad-Kavar road in Fars province.

The name of this castle implies it was dedicated to the goddess Anahita, to whom the term "Maiden" refers. After capturing Isfahan and Kerman from the Parthians, Ardashir rebuilt the city of Gur near the castle in Firouzabad, making it his capital.



After defeating Artabanus V (Artabanus V), the Parthian king in a great battle in 224 CE, he built the Palace of Ardashir nearby the Dezh Dokhtar structure. Ardashir's grandfather was a prominent priest of the Goddess Anahita at the nearby temple of Darabgird (Darabgerd), "City of Darius", according to Iran Tourism and Touring Organization.

Ardashir I was the founder of the Sasanian Empire. He was also Ardashir V of the Kings of Persis, until he founded the new empire. After defeating the last Parthian shahanshah Artabanus IV on the Hormozdgan plain in 224, he overthrew the Parthian dynasty and established the Sasanian dynasty. Afterward, Ardashir called himself "shahanshah" and began conquering the land that he called Iran.

Evidence suggests prehistorical Iranians migrated to Americas

→ The archaeologist underlined that such petroglyphs may be a missing link in human history and arts.

"Appearance similarities, artistic styles, and uniform themes of ancient petroglyphs and cave paintings of this land (Iran) reveal many missing links in human history and arts one of which is the resemblance of ancient artifacts in Iran with ones found in the American continent."

"The discovery of equestrian motifs with leopard-like horses in Iran, which the Indians called 'Appaloosa', is one of the reasons for this migration, which can be seen on the walls of caves and mountains of Qasr-e-qand and Neyshekar regions which date from 11,000 years ago. They are similar to the leopard-like horses of Baluchestan."

Nasserifard said French archaeologists had previously said that paintings of leopard horses on the Maral Cave showed a special species of horse, which lived only in Europe, while women living in Balochistan 11,000 years ago saw such a genuine Iranian horse. They are domesticated and seen riding on the walls of the mountains of Balochistan, and the footprints of the Indian dream horse, Apalusa, are the same leopard horse taken from ancient Iran by immigrants to the Americas.

He noted that studies of Iranian lithographs, especially ones carried out on the Teymareh rock art site in Khomein county, central Iran, show that thousands of years ago, the inhabitants of the Iranian plateau migrated to the Americas.

"These migrations took place from the Bering Strait, in an area between the northeast of Asia and the northwest of the Americas, or from the frozen oceans before the tenth millennium BC. One of the paintings, found among mountain petroglyphs in Khomein, depicts a hunter man on horseback, which alike the American Indians, carries blades made of birds' feathers on his back."

Elsewhere in his remarks, Nasserifard explained "This type of cover and hunting can be seen among Indians living in different parts of the Americas through documents and photographs taken, ... these numerous prehistorical figures can show the migration of the inhabitants of the Iranian plateau to the American continent during the past



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millennia."

Earlier in March, a team of entomologists and archaeologists concluded that a previously-founded petroglyph showcases a six-limbed creature with the head and arms of a praying mantis. The rare 14-centimeter rock carving was first spotted in the Teymareh rock art site in Khomein county, central Iran, during surveys between 2017

and 2018, but could not be identified due to its unusual shape.

Jan Brouwer and Gus van Veen have examined the Teymareh site estimating its carvings were made 40,000-4,000 years ago.

One can only guess why prehistoric people felt the need to carve a mantis-man into rock, but the petroglyph suggests humans have linked mantis to the supernatural since

ancient times. As stated by the authors, the carving bears witness, "that in prehistory, almost as today, praying mantis were animals of mysticism and appreciation."

Prehistoric rock art provides insights into past eras and cultures as archaeologists classify the tools for the carvings by specific eras. Incising tools include flint, metal, or thigh bones of hunted prey.

Historical monuments undergo restoration in northwest Iran

HERITAGE TEHRAN – Five historical buildings and structures in northwestern East Azarbaijan province were restored during the previous Iranian calendar year 1398 (ended March 20).

Parts of historic bazaar of Tabriz, Rab'-e Rashidi, King Hasan mosque, Chahar Menar (Four Minarets) tomb and Sheikh Shahaboddin Ahari mausoleum underwent some rehabilitation works, provincial tourism chief Ahmad Hamzezhadeh said on Monday, CHTN reported.

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

The historic bazaar of Tabriz, which caught fire in 2019, has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2010 and was mentioned by Marco Polo when he travelled the Silk Road in the Middle Ages.

A labyrinth of interconnected covered passages that stretches for about 5 km, the bazaar has been a melting pot of cultural exchange since antiquity.

It embraces countless shops, over 20 caravanserais and inns,



some 20 vast domed halls, bathhouses, and mosques, as well as other brick structures and enclosed spaces for different functions. Its history dates back to over a millennium, however, majority

of fine brick vaults that capture most visitor's eyes date from the 15th century.

Rab'-e Rashidi, which is also located in Tabriz, the capital of the province, was established during the reign of Ghazan, a ruler of the Ilkhanid dynasty.

It embraces a paper factory, a library, a hospital (Dar-al-Shafa), a Quranic center (Dar-al-Quran), residential facilities for teachers, students' quarters and a caravanserai amongst other facilities.

Tabriz became the capital of the Mongol Il-Khan Mahmud Gazan (1295-1304) and his successor, Timur (Tamerlane), a Turkic conqueror, took it in 1392. Some decades later the Kara Koyunlu Turkmen made it their capital, it was when the famous Blue Mosque was built in Tabriz.

The ancient city retained its administrative status under the Safavid dynasty until 1548, when Shah Tahmasp I relocated his capital westward to Qazvin.

During the next two centuries, Tabriz changed hands several times between Persia and Ottoman Empire. During the World War I, the city was temporarily occupied by Turkish and then Soviet troops.

Half of Iran's hotels reopened after taking hit from coronavirus

TOURISM TEHRAN – Some 50 percent of hotels across Iran have so far been reopened after the hospitality industry took a severe hit from coronavirus pandemic in both at the national and international levels.

"Some 50 percent of hotels across Iran have been reopened as of the beginning of the [Iranian] week [May 9] for business travelers," Mehr quoted Jamshid Hamzezhadeh, the head of the Association of Iranian Hoteliers, as saying on Monday.

"The shutdown cost Iran's hospitality industry 45 trillion rials (some \$1.1 billion at the official rate of 42,000 rials) over the past three months," he noted.

"We have not made an official announcement in this regard, but hotels in each province are reopening in accordance with their situation and in coordination with local health departments."

"Since business trips have commenced, if hotels are not

opened, people may go to unauthorized centers, which may lead to harmful consequences," he said.

"We are implementing the health protocols previously announced by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts."

Briefing on practical health policies carried out in hotels, Hamzezhadeh said "For example, we have declared that a hotel room is disinfected and remain empty after 48 hours of passenger use. Another issue that is important for us is the emphasis on employee health. Also, each passenger should pass through the diagnostic tunnel when entering a hotel."

In response to the coronavirus pandemic, the Ministry has declared new guidelines and instructions to ramp up the safety in particular for "emergency or work travels" in hotels, guest houses, eco-lodge unites, tourist destinations, transport facilities, recreational centers, and restaurants.



Handicrafts worth over 50\$m exported to Iraq via Mehran border

HERITAGE TEHRAN – The western Iranian province of Ilam has exported more than \$50 million of handicrafts to neighboring Iraq through Mehran border since last Iranian year 1398 (started March 21, 2019), CHTN reported.

"Over 50 million dollars of various products of handicrafts have been exported to Iraq via Mehran border," Ilam province's tourism chief Abdolmalek Shanbehzadeh said on Monday.

Embossed kilim, wooden products, traditional glassware, zilou floor coverings, ceramics and wool felt products constituted the lion's share of the exports, of which embossed kilim is the most sought-after, he added.

Embossed kilim was inscribed on the National Heritage list in 1988 and is one of the main handicraft products of the province, he noted.



Currently, 33 fields of handicraft are practiced in 120 workshops across the province, generating jobs for many

jobseekers directly or indirectly, the official said.

Iran exported \$427 million worth of handicrafts during the first eleven months of the past calendar year.

Dozens of Iranian handicrafts have gained the UNESCO Seal of Excellence during the past couple of years and some 295 fields of handicrafts are currently practiced across Iran with more than two million people engaging, majority of whom are women.

Iran's handicrafts exports reached \$289 million in the year 1397, showing three percent growth year on year, based on data released by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts.

Traditional ceramics, pottery vessels, handwoven cloths as well as personal ornamentations with precious and semi-precious gemstones were exported to Iraq, Afghanistan, Germany, the U.S., the UK, and other countries.

Damavand quake: A trigger of risk panic in Tehran

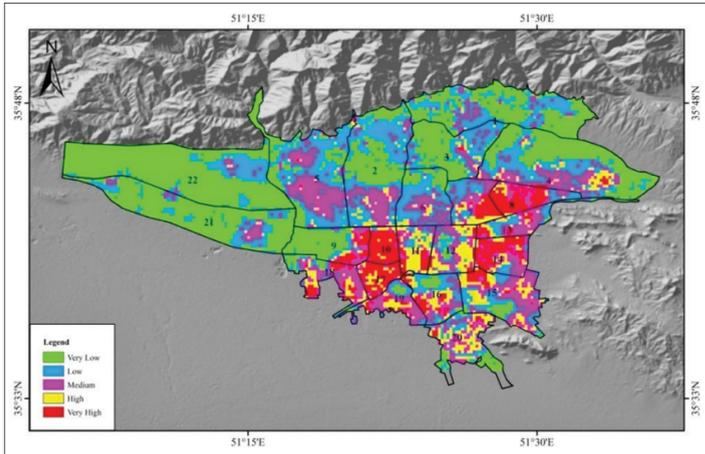


Fig. 1. Risk map of the multi-geo-hazards in Tehran (by Mehdi ZARE, 2015)

➔ Risk of natural hazards is usually defined as below:

$Risk = Hazard * Vulnerability * Exposure$

Hazard represents the probabilities and intensities of a disaster. **Vulnerability** can be considered in terms of technical, physical, organizational, psycho-social or economic vulnerabilities, and the **Exposure** is the number or the amount of a target which is considered as elements at risk such as the population of a city.

For the city of Tehran, the hazard assessment of earthquake, flood, landslide and subsidence are performed to derive an overall multi-hazard map. Then, by combining the overall multi-hazard map with the distribution of non-resistant structures as the vulnerability factor and the population density as the exposure term, a risk map of the multi-hazards is prepared (Fig. 1).

The risk map of the multi-hazards in Tehran indicates that the central and southern regions of the city are located at a higher risk zone than other regions, so that the central and southern regions need a closer attention in disaster risk reduction plans.

In addition, during the recent years, several researchers have attempted to model and assess the post-earthquake fire in urban areas. The recent serious fire incidents in single tall buildings in 2017 such as the fire in the Plasco Building (Fig. 2) in Tehran draws our attention to the fact that how resilient will urban areas be in case of an extensive post-earthquake conflagration? Therefore, modeling of the risk of earthquakes and their subsequent fires should be regarded as an important issue in disaster risk reduction strategies in urban areas, especially in the metropolises and large

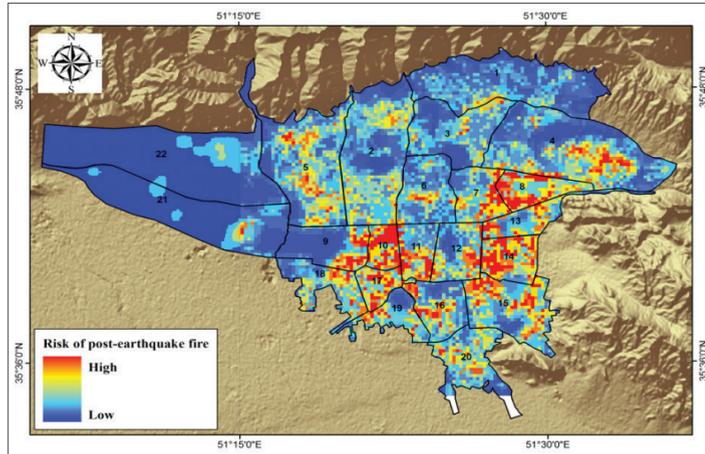


Fig. 3. Risk Map of post-earthquake fire in Tehran (by Mehdi ZARE, 2018)



Fig. 2. The 17-story Plasco Building in Tehran which was engulfed by a fire and fully collapsed on January 19, 2017

developing cities like Tehran.

We have attempted to model the risk of probable post-earthquake fire in

Tehran. At first, the earthquake hazard map was prepared by preparation and combination of two maps: a PGA map with 475 years return period for surface deposits using the probabilistic seismic hazard analysis and fault rupture hazard map. Then, a human exposure map was provided in terms of population density according to the latest census of Iran. Several vulnerability factors (Table 1) were depicted.

Based on aggregation of these data, an overall vulnerability map was prepared. Finally, by multiplying the hazard map with the vulnerability and the exposure maps, the risk map of the post-earthquake fire was prepared for Tehran (Fig. 3) which indicates that the central and southern regions of this city are located at a higher risk zone.

Fig. 2. Recent fire incidents in high-rise buildings in 2017: The 17-story Plasco Building in Tehran which was engulfed by a fire and fully collapsed on January 19, 2017

Mehdi Zare is professor of engineering seismology at the International Institute of Earthquake Engineering and Seismology (IIEES) in Tehran. He is also associate member of Geology Division and the Academy of Sciences in Iran.

Table 1. Factors of risk of post-earthquake fire in Tehran

Hazard	Exposure	Vulnerability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surface PGA Surface fault rupture zone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Population density 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High-rise buildings (> 10 floors) Buildings quality (high quality, moderate, worn out or non-resistant) Narrow paths (width<10 m) Accessibility to main streets, freeways and highways Bridges and tunnels Fire hydrant valves Accessibility to fire station Accessibility to hospitals Strategic facilities (oil refinery, gas and water lines, etc) Potential flammable places (wood and textiles warehouses) Population centers (the great bazaar, malls, stadiums, etc)

Allah-Abad wetland hosting 30 bird species once again

ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — Currently, 30 species of birds that migrate from Siberia to Africa landed in the Allah-Abad wetland in central Qazvin province, head of provincial department of environment has stated.

Allah-Abad wetland has been revived with increasing rainfall and hosts migratory birds from inside and outside the country every year, IRNA quoted Siavash Rezazadeh as saying on Sunday.

Some of these birds fly their wings on the northern route from the Caspian Sea to Siberia in Russia, and others on the West Asian route in North Africa, he added.

He went on to say that flamingo, crane, mallard, bustard, see-see par-

tridge, heron, and even some native birds, such as eagles, falcons, and bitterns, live temporarily in this wetland.

The permanent revitalization of Allah-Abad wetland, which is now on the agenda, has led to more bird breeding and may provide conditions in the future for animals such as deer to be released in these areas, he explained.

Rezazadeh also noted that the presence of migratory birds in this wetland can turn this natural attraction into a bird watching site and increase the number of tourists in Qazvin province.

Dasht-e Allah-Abad in Abyek with an area of 60,000 hectares is one of the shooting and hunting areas of Qazvin province.

UNICEF sends fifth shipment of anti-corona aid to Iran

SOCIETY TEHRAN — The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has delivered the fifth consignment of anti-corona shipment to Iran with the financial support of the Japanese government.

"With the financial support of the Japanese government, UNICEF has imported the fifth consignment of aid, including 36 tons of personal protective equipment, to protect the brave Iranian medical staff on the front lines in the fight against coronavirus," Kianoush Jahanpour, the Ministry of Health spokesman wrote on his Twitter account on

Tuesday.

With the arrival of this shipment and taking into account the previous four shipments of UNICEF assistance, the total amount of personal protective equipment items that UNICEF has imported into the country since the coronavirus outbreak reached 63 tons.

Some of these items have been distributed among the health care staff of hospitals under the supervision of medical universities in the provinces of Gilan, Isfahan, Khuzestan, North Khorasan, Sistan-Baluchestan, East Azarbaijan, West Azarbaijan, Qom, Tehran and Alborz.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

Wetlands restoration requires a budget of \$14b: DOE chief

In order to restore wetlands in the country a budget of 600 trillion rials (nearly \$14 billion) is required, chief of the Department of Environment (DOE) Issa Kalantari said on Sunday.

There are 80 big and small wetlands in the country and some are dried out, Kalantari regretted adding that last year (March 2017-March 2018) more than 20 trillion rials (nearly \$475 million) was allocated to wetlands restoration and the amount is projected to increase to 25 trillion rials (nearly \$595 million) for next fiscal year (starting on March 21), he said.

Some of the sand and dust storms originate from the dried bed of the wetlands and revival of these hotspots would help in decreasing sand and dust storms, he highlighted.

رئیس سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست: احیای تالابها به ۶۰ هزار میلیارد تومان اعتبار نیاز دارد

رئیس سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست روز یکشنبه گفت: برای احیای تالابها دست کم ۵۰ تا ۶۰ هزار میلیارد تومان اعتبار نیاز است. کلانتری امروز با اشاره به وجود ۸۰ تالاب کوچک و بزرگ در کشور که بخش عمده‌ای از آن‌ها خشک شده‌اند، اظهار کرد: در سال گذشته بیش از ۲۰۰۰ میلیارد تومان اعتبار برای احیای تالابها و دریاچه‌ها تخصیص داده شد که سال آینده شاهد حدود ۲۰۰ میلیارد تومان اعتبار برای این امر خواهیم بود. وی با اشاره به اینکه بخشی از وجود ریزگردها در کشور با خشک شدن تالابها در ارتباط است، تصریح کرد: اگر تالابها احیا شوند بخش عمده‌ای از ریزگردها کاهش می‌یابد.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

"lipo-, lip-"

■ **Meaning:** fatty

■ **For example:** **Lipid** accumulation frequently leads to mental retardation or progressive loss of central nervous system functions.

PHRASAL VERB

Tear somebody away

■ **Meaning:** to make yourself or someone else leave a place when you or they do not want to leave

■ **For example:** He was enjoying the fun and couldn't tear himself away.

IDIOM

A big ask

■ **Explanation:** an inconvenient request

■ **For example:** I know it's a big ask, but could I borrow your car for a week?

65% of Iranian nurses at forefront of corona fight

By Faranak Bakhtiari

TEHRAN — Some 65 percent of the 200,000 Iranian nursing community has been at the forefront of fighting the coronavirus pandemic in the country, said the deputy health minister for nursing.

Maryam Hazrati made the remarks on the occasion of International Nurses Day celebrated around the world on May 12.

The International Council of Nurses (ICN) has declared the Nursing the World to Health - for this year's theme - focusing on the true value of nurses to the people of the world, under a theme of "Nurses: A Voice to Lead."



This year's celebrations will be extra special because the World Health Organization (WHO) has designated 2020 as The Year of the Nurse and Midwife.

Iranian nurses shined in battling coronavirus epidemic, and a number of them were martyred along the way, she stated, IRNA reported.

She explained that we should appreciate all the nurses on World Nurses' Day. Iran's nursing position in the world and in the region is high, and today Iran is the second-largest country in the Eastern Mediterranean region in terms of nursing science production after Turkey.

Currently, 45,000 nursing students are studying in 192 medical sciences universities of the country, for bachelor's degree and 12 master's degrees, including children, surgery, community health, mental health, neonatal and pediatric intensive care, adult intensive care, military nursing, and etc., she added.

She went on to say that there are 16 nursing research centers, a nursing research network, 38 scientific journals of nursing in English or Persian, which are published in reputable international indexes.

■ Nurses to hospital beds ratio in Iran

The average ratio of nurses to hospital beds in the country is now 1.02, which is far from the standard level, and we hope to reach the required standard in the next five years, Hazrati said, adding, the standard ratio of nursing to bed, which includes nurses, paramedics, operating room nurses, anesthetists, paramedics, is 2.3 people per hospital bed.

In the world, the ratio of nurses to the population is now measured because the role of nurses is not only known in the hospital but also the role of nurses in society, she also said.

Referring to the role of nurses in countering the coronavirus epidemic, she stated that "Nurses in the country are a family of 200,000 people, more than 65 percent of whom were in direct contact with COVID-19 patients in hospitals and took care of patients, which resulted in the release of many patients.

Since the onset of the outbreak, no COVID-19 patient has left untreated behind hospitals, even normal patients received the necessary care during this period, there was no dialysis patient who did not receive dialysis services three times a week and their care or medication was stopped, she highlighted.

Prior to the epidemic in Iran, a checklist of hospitals for treatment of COVID-19 patients was developed and sent to medical universities; based on that, continuous visits have been made so far and nursing managers are monitoring the observance of this protocol; nursing staff training and empowerment for the care of patients was also conducted during this period, she also explained.

Nurses have been trained to care for infected patients during their university years, but to better remember and care for patients with COVID-19, nursing administrators and educational supervisors and infection control supervisors have been trained through video conferencing and instructed to train other nurses and groups, she noted.

■ No shortage of nurses for coronavirus epidemic

There has so far been no report on the shortage of nurses in the provinces, for example, Gilan province which had the highest number of infections did not face such problems. Even in Khuzestan province, which is currently facing an increase in new cases of COVID-19 disease, have not reported any nurse shortages, while if they need it, their needs will be met, she further explained.

■ Free voluntary care of coronavirus patients

Since the beginning of the epidemic, about 1,733 nurses, including faculty, graduate nursing students, retired and volunteer nurses, have offered to care for infected patients and provide counseling and training services at hospitals, Hazrati emphasized.

A total of 673 volunteer nurses were offering specialized counseling, she added.

She also emphasized that a number of nurses have also been sent to non-hospital centers, such as nursing homes, to prevent COVID-19 spread.

Wherever there was a report of a shortage of protective equipment, it was quickly investigated, and now we have not received any reports on the shortage of masks, gloves, scrubs, and protective equipment in any of the country's hospitals, she stated, concluding, of course, the use of these items is done according to the standards, and not all isolated clothes or N95 masks are needed.



Every action has a reaction. We have one planet; one chance.

Afghan President Ghani, Abdullah reach power-sharing deal

➔ Following the 2014 presidential election, Afghanistan was struck by a similar power crisis. Back then, Ghani and Abdullah fought a close and angry race that sparked widespread allegations of fraud and saw the United States step in to broker an awkward power-sharing agreement between the rivals under which Ghani became president and Abdullah became "chief executive."

Afghanistan has seen a surge in violence despite the U.S.-Taliban deal, which was signed in February. Under the deal, the Taliban agreed to halt their attacks in return for the U.S.'s phased withdrawal of its forces from Afghanistan and a prisoner exchange with the Afghan government, which was not a party to the talks or the deal.

The Kabul government and the militant group have been discussing the prisoner exchange since early April.

While they have swapped a number of prisoners as part of the process, the exchange has faced hurdles.

Russia reports 10,899 new coronavirus cases, surpasses UK tally

Russia on Tuesday reported 10,899 new cases of the novel coronavirus in the last 24 hours, bringing the nationwide total past that of Britain to 232,243, the third highest total worldwide.

The country's coronavirus response center said the death toll from the virus rose by 107 people to 2,116.

Russia puts the continued daily rise in cases down to wide-spread testing. It has carried out more than 5.8 million tests.

(Source: Reuters)

Afghan gunmen storm maternity clinic in Kabul, 13 killed including two newborn babies

Thirteen people, including two babies, were killed Tuesday when gunmen stormed a maternity hospital in the Afghan capital Kabul, an interior ministry spokesman said.

"The fatalities also include mothers and nurses," spokesman Tareq Arian said.

More than 100 people, including three foreign nationals, were rescued in a clearance operation by security forces that lasted hours, AP reported.

The 100-bed government-run facility is supported by Doctors Without Borders, which is also known by its French name Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), said Wahidullah Mayar, a spokesman for the Ministry of Public Health.

Doctors Without Borders did not immediately respond to a request for comment. It says on its website it operates a maternity clinic at the hospital in one of Kabul's poorest neighborhoods.

A series of bloody attacks have taken place in the capital in recent months claimed by the Daesh group.

On Monday, security forces said they had arrested three senior Daesh members including a regional leader.

Last week, security forces killed and arrested several members of a Daesh cell that authorities said was responsible for several high-profile attacks in Kabul including one on a Sikh temple in March.

On budget eve, EU defense money at risk from coronavirus

European Union plans for a multi-billion euro defense fund have been thrown into doubt by the economic shock of the coronavirus, officials and diplomats say, potentially threatening three years of unprecedented military cooperation.

With EU governments focused on a trillion-euro plan to offset the worst economic contraction since the 1940s, the billions for defense in the 2021-2027 budget are at risk, Reuters reported.

Deep cuts would undermine EU ambitions to reduce a military reliance on the United States, complicate efforts to streamline a bewildering plethora of military systems in Europe, and decimate contracts for the European defense industry.



"We can expect an additional strain on resources, it is already looming," said Jiri Sedivy, new chief executive of the European Defense Agency, which helps EU governments develop military capabilities. He took up his post this month.

"It's especially disappointing considering that defense budgets only recently recovered from the financial shock of ten years ago," he told Reuters.

With the European Commission expected to present revised budget proposals next week, defense ministers were to gather for a video call on Tuesday in a pessimistic mood, according to EU officials and diplomats.

"We need to argue that the case for defense cooperation is still there," said an EU diplomat, who said that working together in defense could squeeze more out of a tight budget.

Military cooperation could also help advances in technology for pandemics, officials say, including in chemical and biological research such as hi-tech, resistant clothing.

Following Britain's 2016 vote to quit the EU, France and Germany seized on European defense as a way to promote integration. They agreed a new pact with other EU governments.

While the United States, the world's biggest military power, has 30 weapons systems, the EU has 178. The bloc has 17 types of battle tank, compared to just one in the United States.

'France pushing for firm EU response to any Israeli land theft'

➔ "We also need to say what exactly the consequences of annexation would be, ideally as a way to stop any such move," the diplomat added.

EU foreign policy spokesperson Peter Stano said on Monday that the 27-member bloc would take action if Israel moved ahead with its illegal annexation of the West Bank.

"Annexation is not in line with international law. If it goes ahead, the EU will act accordingly," he told the European Commission's daily press briefing.

In terms of procedure, EU governments would need to ask the EU's External Action Service (EEAS) to draw up a list of options. All 27 EU nations would need to agree to any response, but Israel's closest allies such as Hungary and the Czech Republic could still block even preparatory work, according to Reuters.

According to Press TV, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell has said the bloc does not recognize Israeli rule over Palestinian land, and that it will "continue to closely monitor the situation and its broader implications,



and will act accordingly."

Separately, the UK also said it would not support Israel's annexation scheme, with Britain's minister of state for the Middle East and North Africa telling the parliament that "our long-standing position is that we do not support the annexation of parts of the West Bank, and... doing so could make a sustainable two-state solution harder."

Meanwhile, Secretary-General of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)'s Executive Committee Saeb Erekat said Ireland and Greece were also opposed to Israel's new land grab bid.

Erekat tweeted Monday that he had held in-depth talks with Ireland's Foreign Minister Simon Coveny as well as with Greek Foreign Minister Nikolaos Dendias.

During the talks, he said, the European diplomats called for an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories and the implementation of a so-called two-state solution based on the pre-1967 borders in line with international law.

Turkey accuses five nations of forming 'alliance of evil'

Turkey Tuesday accused Greece, Cyprus, Egypt, France and the United Arab Emirates of seeking to form an "alliance of evil" after these countries issued a joint declaration denouncing Ankara's policies in the eastern Mediterranean and Libya.

In a strongly-worded statement, Turkish Foreign Ministry spokesman Hami Aksoy said the five countries were pursuing "regional chaos and instability" in the eastern Mediterranean and sacrificing Libyans' "hope for democracy for the reckless aggression of dictators."

The foreign ministers of the five countries held a teleconference Monday to discuss the situation in the eastern Mediterranean, where Turkey has been drilling for potential hydrocarbon deposits in an offshore area where Cyprus has exclusive economic rights, as well as the situation in Libya, AP reported.

Last year, Turkey signed a contested maritime border delineation deal as well as a military cooperation agreement with the internationally-recognized government in Tripoli.

Turkey says the deal grants its economic rights to a large swath of the east Mediterranean Sea and prevents any energy-related projects from moving forward without Ankara's consent. Greece and Cyprus have protested



the deal, saying it contravenes international law and infringes on their own rights in the area.

The five nations denounced what they said was Turkey's sixth attempt in less than a year to "illegally conduct drilling operations in Cyprus' maritime zones."

Turkey doesn't recognize ethnically divided Cyprus as a state and claims much of its exclusive economic zone as its own. It has dispatched warship-escorted vessels off Cyprus to drill for gas, insisting that it's acting to protect its interests and those of Turkish Cypriots to the area's natural resources.

WHO says U.S. and Brazil failed to take warnings about virus outbreak seriously from the start

The United States has the highest number of coronavirus cases globally, the only country reporting seven-digit numbers of infections. Brazil is also one of the 10 most infected nations according to the WHO. Its President Jair Bolsonaro has repeatedly dismissed the virus as just a "flu".

The United States and Brazil failed to take warnings issued by the World Health Organization seriously right from the beginning of the coronavirus outbreak, Margaret Harris, a spokesperson for the international agency, told a virtual briefing on Tuesday.

The United States currently reports 1,298,287 confirmed cases of the coronavirus as well as 78,652 deaths, which makes the United States the leading nation in terms of both the number of infections and fatalities.

U.S. President Trump has been repeatedly accused of downplaying the threat of the coronavirus infection, with his critics saying that he had missed opportunities in the early stages of the epidemic to introduce stricter measures to halt the



spread of the virus.

Brazil has registered 162,699 cases and 11,123 fatalities so far, making it the seventh worst-hit nation, according to the WHO.

Similarly to Trump, Brazil's President Bolsonaro was accused of failing to take the coronavirus threat seriously by his opponents. Bolsonaro has repeatedly dismissed the coronavirus as "the flu" and has continued to meet the public after a trip to the United States in March, which saw 20 members of his delegation contract COVID-19.

'Trump Death Clock' counts preventable U.S. coronavirus deaths

A newly erected billboard in New York's Times Square shows the number of U.S. coronavirus deaths that its creator says could have been avoided if President Donald Trump had acted sooner -- and it's called the "Trump Death Clock."

Created by filmmaker Eugene Jarecki, the "clock" was installed on the roof of a Times Square building, empty due to the pandemic. As of Monday, the counter showed more than 48,000 deaths out of a total of more than 80,000, by far the highest tally in the world.

The "clock" ticks on the assumption that 60 percent of COVID-19 deaths in the United States could have been prevented had the Trump administration implemented mandatory social distancing and school closures just a week earlier than it did, on March 9 instead of March 16, Jarecki explained in a post on Medium.

The New York-based filmmaker, who has twice won awards at the Sundance Film Festival, explained that 60 percent was a conservative estimate calculated by specialists following remarks made in mid-April by leading U.S. infectious



diseases expert Anthony Fauci.

Fauci, who has become the trusted face of the government's virus response, had said that if "you had started mitigation earlier, you could have saved lives."

"The lives already unnecessarily lost demand we seek more responsible crisis leadership," Jarecki wrote in his Medium post.

"Just as the names of fallen soldiers are etched on memorials to remind us of the cost of war, quantifying the lives lost to the president's delayed coronavirus response would serve a vital public function." (Source: AFP)

Coronavirus cases surpass 100,000 in Persian Gulf Arab states

The total number of the novel coronavirus cases within the six Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries has passed the 100,000 mark, with 557 deaths, according to a Reuters tally.

Saudi Arabia, the worst-hit country by the pandemic, reported 1,966 new cases and nine new deaths on Monday.

The kingdom, which has the highest count at 41,014 infections and 255 deaths, has already halted international flights, suspended the year-round 'Umrah' pilgrimage, closed most public places, and heavily restricted internal movement.

The daily number of new cases in Saudi Arabia first crossed the 1,000 threshold on April 18.

Saudi Health Minister warned in early April of a huge spike in the cases of up to 200,000 within weeks.

According to an April report by the New York Times, 150 royals had caught the virus.



The paper cited doctors at the King Faisal Hospital, where members of the royal family are treated, as saying that they were preparing as many as 500 beds for an expected surge in numbers of coronavirus patients from the

ruling Al Saud family.

According to press TV, elsewhere in the region, Qatar overtook the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as having the second highest infection count among the six states on May 5.

Despite measures being taken to contain the spread of the coronavirus, such as suspending passenger flights, closing most public venues, and imposing curfews, the number of coronavirus cases in the Arab states has been rising.

The overcrowded labor camps in the region, often unsanitary and populated with mostly Asian workers, are believed to be hotspots of the new coronavirus.

The new coronavirus, which causes a respiratory disease known as COVID-19, emerged in the city of Wuhan in December last year, incrementally affecting the rest of the world.

The virus has so far infected 4,225,018 people worldwide, and over 285,152 have died, according to a running count by worldometers.info.

Ahmaud Arbery killing: U.S. authorities weighing hate crime charges

The United States Justice Department is weighing whether to file hate crime charges against the white men who killed Ahmaud Arbery, an unarmed black man who was shot dead while jogging in the small coastal town of Brunswick, Georgia, department spokeswoman Kerri Kupec said.

"The Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice, the FBI, and the U.S. Attorney

for the Southern District of Georgia have been supporting and will continue fully to support and participate in the state investigation. We are assessing all of the evidence to determine whether federal hate crimes charges are appropriate," Kupec said in a statement.

State authorities were unable to investigate the killing as a hate crime as Georgia is

one of four states without a hate crime law.

Outrage over Arbery's death came last week after a video of the alleged murder, which took place on February 23, surfaced.

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FFIRI to send amended Statutes to FIFA

S P O R T S TEHRAN — After months of controversies, the draft statutes of the Football Federation of the Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI), as a “non-governmental public organization,” will be sent to FIFA.

The draft statutes of the FFIRI has been reviewed and approved by the Executive Committee of the federation and is ready to be submitted to the international governing body of football.

At this stage, FIFA will scrutinize the amended statutes. If there is no discrepancy with the FIFA Statutes, the Iranian football federation will hold the General Assembly to approve the statutes.

Mehdi Mohammad Nabi, the FFIRI's Secretary General, explained the amended cases of the statutes.

The most critical issue is related to the nature of the federation. Nabi announced that in the amended statutes, the federation has been considered as a non-governmental public organization. Thus, the federation is subject to some state laws, and the government can monitor it.

FIFA firmly emphasizes that member associations should be free from external interference – in this case, the government. However, the fact that most countries are dependent on their governments for funding, stadiums (and sometimes spon-



sorship), makes the government believe they have a stake in what happens in their Football Associations.

It then raises the following questions: Are FAs, in this case, FFIRI, truly independent from their government? Is there a clash between FIFA and national governments? Whose law or regulations supersede the other?

These are questions that often arise when the issue of government interference arises.

At this stage, the Iranian Football Federation will negotiate with FIFA to obtain its consent to accept FFIRI as a non-governmental public organization. Still, if FIFA emphasizes the nature of the federation as an “independent non-governmental organization”, it will be a challenging story for Iranian football federation in upcoming months.

The FFIRI had previously announced that the elective General Assembly and the presidential elections would be held in the first half of 2020 September.

In its latest move, however, the Football Federation has shifted the date from September 22 to October 6. The FFIRI will wait for FIFA's response to confirm the exact date.

Additionally, holding elections on this proposed date depends on the process of amending the Statutes of the federation and obtaining its permission from the competent authorities.

Siamand Rahman's bust unveiled in his hometown

S P O R T S TEHRAN — The bust of late powerlifter Siamand Rahman has been installed in his hometown Oshnavieh on Tuesday.

The governor of the city and Rahman's family attended the unveiling ceremony in the city entrance.

The strongest ever Paralympian passed away at the age of 32 on March 1 after suffering a heart attack.

Powerlifting superstar Rahman, a two-time gold medalist in London 2012 and Rio 2016, was preparing to win his third successive gold at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games.

Rahman broke the 300kg barrier in the men's over 107kg at the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games, lifting an un-

precedented 310kg. The mark he set is the equivalent of three baby elephants.

The Iranian powerlifter had already won three gold medals in the last three Asian Para Games (2010 Guangzhou, 2014 Incheon and 2018 Jakarta).

Rahman was laid to rest in his hometown Oshnavieh.

“It's great to be part of this awesome campaign. I am so excited to see we are getting closer to the Games,” said Rahman. “I can't wait to compete in Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games. In Tokyo, everything is going to be between the bar and me. I will redraw the boundaries,” Rahman said last year.



Al Soma: Syria's early Asian Cup exit was a blow



Striker Omar Al Soma is still bitterly disappointed with Syria's group stage exit from the AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019, describing it as one of the most difficult moments of his career.

Syria headed into UAE 2019 on the back of a fabulous run in the FIFA World Cup Russia 2018 Qualifiers, losing to Australia in the Confederation Playoff, but finished bottom of Group B of the AFC Asian Cup after collecting only one point from a goalless draw with Palestine in their opening match before losing 2-0 and 3-2 to Jordan and Australia respectively.

Speaking in an interview with Sama TV, the 31-year-old Al Soma said there were a lot of expectations and the early exit was very hard to deal with.

“I can't forget what happened in the Asian Cup,” said Al Soma. “It was very difficult for all of us because of what happened in our matches and the high hopes that we had.”

“There was a lot of criticism because of the bad results that we had,” he added. Al Soma, who has been playing his club football with Saudi Arabia's Al Ahli since 2014, said the early exit from the Asian Cup gave them a lot of lessons and this has helped Syria in the Asian Qualifiers for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and AFC Asian Cup China 2023.

Syria are currently top of Group A of the Asian Qualifiers after registering five victories from as many games with Al Soma playing an important role with seven goals. (Source: AFC)

S. Korea Olympic judo star given life ban over alleged sexual assault



A South Korean judo star who won a silver medal at the 2008 Olympics has been banned for life from the sport's national body over allegations of sexual assault against a teenager.

Wang Ki-chun rose to fame after coming second in the men's under 73-kilo category in Beijing despite suffering a rib cage fracture in the early rounds.

He was arrested earlier this month for the alleged sexual assault of a minor, and if convicted could be jailed for life.

In a unanimous decision, the Korea Judo Association banned the 31-year-old over the incident, effectively ending his sporting career.

The association said it took into account Wang's “inappropriate” conduct which undermined the “integrity and social standing of judo” when deciding on the life ban, according to Yonhap news agency.

Wang has seven days to lodge an appeal.

South Korea is a regional sporting power and regularly in the top 10 medal table places at the summer and winter Olympics.

But in an already intensely competitive society, winning is virtually everything in its sports community -- and physical and verbal abuse are rife.

Just last week, Olympic short-track speed skating medalist Lim Hyo-jun was convicted of sexually harassing a fellow male athlete by pulling down his trousers, fined 3 million won (\$2,450) and ordered to undergo 40 hours of therapy for sex offenders.

Last year, double Olympic gold medalist Shim Suk-hee went public with accusations her former coach sexually molested and physically abused her multiple times. (Source: Eurosport)

Premier League braced for TV losses as player protests mount

Premier League clubs face having to pay a huge refund to broadcasters even if they manage to complete the coronavirus-disrupted season behind closed doors.

Broadcasters would be reimbursed for matches not being played as scheduled and the lack of atmosphere in empty stadiums is also a factor.

The BBC reported the bill facing the English top-flight, which continued talks on “Project Restart” on Monday, could be as high as £340 million (\$420 million).

“We were able to update our clubs today on our situation with broadcasters, which is obviously confidential,” said Premier League CEO Richard Masters.

“Whatever happens, there's going to be significant loss of revenue for clubs. That is inevitable.”

“We were able to paint a picture today about what would happen in various scenarios, playing out the season and not playing out the season, to allow them to have a picture of that as we stand in the early part of May.”

The rebate to broadcasters would surge to an estimated £760 million if the season cannot be completed. Masters has previously warned of a £1 billion loss once the absence of gate receipts is taken into account.

For the first time on Monday, the 20 Premier League clubs discussed models that may have to be used to decide final standings if it is not deemed safe to resume.

New government guidelines have paved the way for elite



sport to return behind closed doors in England from June 1.

Player fears

However, England internationals Raheem Sterling and Danny Rose are the two latest high-profile players to raise their concerns over a return to contact sport when the rest of society is being advised to follow social-distancing guidelines.

“The moment we do go back it just needs to be a moment where it's not just for footballing reasons, it's safe for not just us footballers but the whole medical staff, referees,” Sterling told his YouTube channel.

“I am not scared, but reserved and thinking what the worst outcome could be.”

“I've had friends whose grandma has passed away, I've had family members as well that have passed away. You've got to be wise and take care of yourself and those around you.”

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said in parliament on Monday that the return of sport on TV would “provide a much-needed boost to national morale.”

However, a YouGov poll revealed that 73 percent of 2,000 people surveyed said the return of the Premier League and English Football League would not lift their spirits.

Britain has been one of the worst-hit countries in the global pandemic, with the government officially recording more than 32,000 deaths from COVID-19.

“People's lives are at risk,” Rose, who is on loan at Newcastle from Tottenham, told an Instagram live.

“Football shouldn't even be spoken about coming back until the numbers have dropped massively.”

The Premier League are due to meet unions for players and managers later this week to discuss protocols for a return to group training.

“Safety comes first. We must listen to government, the authorities and the medical experts and continue to follow their advice,” added Masters.

“That is exactly what we are doing. We are getting ourselves in the best position to resume the season, but only when the conditions are right.”

(Source: Mirror)

FIFA officially postpones 2020 Futsal World Cup

MNA — In a statement on Tuesday, FIFA officially announced that this year's Futsal World Cup has been postponed to September 2021.

World governing body FIFA said that the decision has been made “Following a thorough assessment of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent recommendations made by the FIFA-Confederations COVID-19 Working Group.”

According to the statement, the event will be held on September 12 to October 3, 2021, in Lithuania.

The event was due to be held from September 12 to October 4 in Lithuania, however, the coronavirus outbreak complicated the situation. On the one hand, the qualification events in Asia and America have been postponed due to the pandemic, and on the other hand, Lithuania had reportedly requested the postponement of the event for one year.

Iran's Mohammad Mohebbi on Granada's radar

TASNIM — La Liga side Granada have set their sight on signing Iran international winger Mohammad Mohebbi.

Mohebbi currently plays at Iranian top flight football team Sepahan and the club's spokesman has confirmed they have received the offer.

Mohebbi started his football career in Shahin Bushehr in 2017 and joined Sepahan at the beginning of the current season.

The 21-year-old player also represented Iran national football team three times and scored two goals.

Granada Club de Fútbol or simply Granada, are a Spanish football club in Granada, in the autonomous community of Andalusia. Founded on 14 April 1931, they play in La Liga. The club play their home matches at the Estadio Nuevo Los Cármenes.

Hossein Tayyebi linked with Benfica futsal team

IRNA — Iranian futsal player Hossein Tayyebi has been linked with a move to Portuguese team Benfica.

Tayyebi currently plays at Kazakhstan's Kairat Almaty.

The Portuguese team are going to find replacement for Bruno Coelho, Chaguinha and Andre Coelho.

Sport Lisboa e Benfica, commonly known as Benfica, are a professional futsal team based in Lisbon, Portugal, that play in the Liga Portuguesa de Futsal, where they are the current champions.

Vettel to leave Ferrari at end of 2020 F1 season

Four-times Formula One world champion Sebastian Vettel will leave Ferrari at the end of the 2020 season, with the German facing an uncertain future in racing.

The sport's oldest, most glamorous and successful team announced the move in a statement on Tuesday after talks on a new contract ended without a deal.

“This is a decision taken jointly by ourselves and Sebastian, one which both parties feel is for the best,” said Ferrari principal Mattia Binotto.

“It was not an easy decision to reach, given Sebastian's worth as a driver and as a person.”

Vettel joined in 2015 with the dream of emulating boyhood hero and seven times champion Michael Schumacher in winning titles in the famous red cars.

Where the 32-year-old will go, whether he will remain in a sport whose delayed season has yet to start, and who might replace him are the big questions now.

“In order to get the best possible results in this sport, it's vital for all parties to work in perfect harmony,” said Vettel. “The team and I have realised that there is no longer a common desire to stay together beyond the end of this season.”

(Source: Reuters)

Chinese Super League side Tianjin Tianhai fold amid Covid-19 uncertainty

The Chinese Super League club Tianjin Tianhai, who once had the World Cup winner Fabio Cannavaro as manager and signed Alexandre Pato and Axel Witsel, have declared bankruptcy and folded.

Tianjin, founded in Inner Mongolia as Hohhot Binhai in 2006, have struggled since the arrest and imprisonment of their former owner Shu Yuhui, finishing second bottom of the CSL last year.

Shenzhen, who were relegated after finishing bottom, have been reprieved and will replace Tianhai in the CSL for the 2020 season, which has been delayed because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

“Given an unsustainable financial situation, the club is no longer able to maintain normal operations,” Tianjin said in a statement. “After a period of thoughtful consideration... the club has no choice but to formally announce Tianjin Tianhai is disbanding.”

The club were one of the league's most ambitious at the height of the gold rush in Chinese football when huge sums were spent on foreign players and managers.

Then called Tianjin Quanjian after billionaire Shu's traditional Chinese medicine company they won promotion to the CSL in 2016 under Cannavaro. With Witsel in midfield and Pato, bought for \$20m (£16.2m), scoring 15 goals, the club finished third in 2017 and qualified for the Asian Champions League for the first time.

Things started to unravel after the arrest of Shu for running a pyramid scheme in January 2019. Without his backing the Tianjin football association was forced to step in and take over, changing the name to Tianjin Tianhai and imposing budget restrictions. Shu was sentenced to nine years in prison and fined £5.7m in January this year.

The CSL season should have started in February. The Chinese FA is looking at plans to begin the season, pending the approval of China's sports ministry for professional sport to resume.

(Source: Guardian)

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GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

The world is a road for going to the next one,
and if it had been created for itself, man would
have lived eternally in it.

Imam Ali (AS)

Tehran Symphony Orchestra, world musicians to release "Ode to Joy" in pandemic

→1 "What the audience will see is the performance of each musician who has recorded his/her own part separately at home," he added.



Bardia Kiaras conducts the Tehran Symphony Orchestra in an undated photo.

The video is scheduled to be released on social networks next week.

Earlier on April 17, the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization (ICRO) announced that the Young Musicians European Orchestra and the Tehran Symphony Orchestra have teamed up to record a music video for Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 "Ode to Joy".

The performances were to be supervised by the conductor of the Young Musicians European Orchestra conductor, Paolo Olmi, who was supposed to do the final arrangements for the orchestra.

IIDCYA announces nominees for Astrid Lindgren Award

TEHRAN — Iran's Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA) has announced writer Hamidreza Shahabadi and its mobile library program as its nominees for the 2021 Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award.

The mobile library program promotes reading in remote regions and villages across Iran.



Children attend a reading session organized by the IIDCYA mobile library program in an undated photo. (IIDCYA)

Iran's nominations for the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award, which is presented by the Swedish government to promote children's and youths' literature in the world, are selected separately every year by the IIDCYA, the Iranian Association of Writers for Children and Youth, and the Children's Book Council of Iran.

Shahabadi was also among the nominees selected nearly two weeks ago by the Iranian Association of Writers for Children and Youth.

Book reading promoter Abdolkarim Bahar and Afghan book reading promoter Nader Musavi are others nominated by the association.

"When Moji Was Lost", "A Banana that Smiled", "Tambourine" and "Translator" are among Shahabadi's noteworthy credits.

IIDCYA selected children's book writer Hushang Moradi Kermani for the 2019 and 2020 editions of the award.

Art Bureau observing Grand Nights by tazieh performances

TEHRAN — The Art Bureau in Tehran is organizing six tazieh (Iranian passion play) performances to observe the Laylat al-Qadr (The Grand Nights).

The Grand Nights are the 19th, 21st and 23rd nights of the holy month of Ramadan, during one of which the entire Quran had been sent down to the Prophet Muhammad (S).

The Andisheh Hall of the bureau will host troupes from across the country, which are scheduled to perform for six nights, the bureau announced on Tuesday.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, people are not allowed to attend the performances, which will be streamed online every night at 9:30 pm on namayeshnet.com.

Experts from the Art Bureau are supervising the health protocol for the theatrical performances during the coronavirus pandemic.

The first performance was held on Monday night, featuring the martyrdom of Muslim ibn Aqil al-Hashimi, the messenger of Imam Hussein (AS) to Kufa during the Ashura uprising, which led to the martyrdom of the Imam.

The story of the martyrdom of Muslim ibn Aqil's sons, Muhammad and Ibrahim, was staged on Tuesday.

The story of Hurr ibn Riahi, Yazid's commander, who joined the troops of Imam Hussein (AS) on the eve of Ashura, is scheduled to go on stage on Wednesday night.

A highlight of the performances has been allocated to the story of the



Photo: This file photo shows thespians performing a tazieh. (IRNA/Ali Marimi)

martyrdom of Imam Ali (AS), which will be held on Friday that marks the martyrdom anniversary of the Imam.

Tazieh represents religious events,

historical and mythical stories and folk tales. Each performance has the four components of poetry, music, song and motion.

However, stories about the uprising of

Imam Hussein (AS) and his companions against the oppressive Umayyad dynasty in 680 CE are more highly regarded by tazieh troupes and audiences.

Actor Navid Mohammadzadeh faces new challenge in "Night, Interior, Wall"



Navid Mohammadzadeh poses with the Orizzonti Award for Best Actor for his role in "No Date, No Signature" at the award winners photocall during the 74th Venice Film Festival at Sala Casino in Venice, Italy on September 9, 2017. (Getty Images/Vittorio Zunino Celotto)

TEHRAN — Navid Mohammadzadeh, the star of Jalilvand brothers' acclaimed drama "No Date, No Signature", will be portraying a blind man in their new project titled "Night, Interior, Wall".

In the movie, the peaceful world of a blind man named Ali is affected by the ill-timed entry of a woman to his life.

The shooting of the film will start

soon as the crew is obliged to observe the health protocols for film projects during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mohammadzadeh won the Orizzonti Award for Best Actor for his role in "No Date, No Signature" during the 74th Venice Film Festival in Venice, Italy in 2017.

Produced by Ali Jalilvand, the film also brought his brother, Vahid, the best director award at the festival.

Persian version of "Willi Wishes for a Brother" republished



A copy of the Persian version of "Willi Wishes for a Brother".

TEHRAN — Iran's Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA) has recently published the fifth edition of the Persian translation of Austrian author Bernhard Lins' book "Willi Wishes for a Brother" ("Willi Wunscht Sich Einen Bruder").

The book illustrated by Slovenian painter and illustrator Alenka Sottler tells the story of a boy who wishes to have a brother to play football with and take to

the river for camping, however, her mother brings him a sister instead.

The Persian version, which was first published in 2008, has been translated by Ali Khakbazan.

Born in the Austrian city of Feldkirch (Vorarlberg), Lins is a teacher at a primary school. As a composer, singer and musician, he started to publish his own songs in 1975. Since then, he has released several CDs and cassettes as well as numerous children's books.

"Seinfeld" star Jerry Stiller dies aged 92, son Ben pays tribute

NEW YORK (Reuters) — Jerry Stiller, who played two of American television's most cantankerous fathers on the sitcoms "Seinfeld" and "The King of Queens", has died aged 92, his son Ben Stiller said on Twitter on Monday.

"I'm sad to say that my father, Jerry Stiller, passed away from natural causes," wrote Ben, a Hollywood comedian who appeared with his father in "Zoolander" and other movies.

"He was a great dad and grandfather, and the most dedicated husband to Anne for about 62 years. He will be greatly missed. Love you Dad," he added.

Jerry Stiller was part of a 1960s comedy team with wife Anne Meara. But he was in his mid-60s when he got what would become his signature acting role - Frank Costanza, father of ne'er-do-well George Costanza (played by Jason Alexander) on "Seinfeld," a tense, bombastic man always on the verge of apoplexy.

In 1993, Stiller had thought his entertainment career was nearing an end when he got a phone call from Larry David, co-creator of "Seinfeld", about joining the cast led by comedian Jerry Seinfeld.

The show, one of the most highly regarded in U.S. TV history, was in its fourth season at the time but Stiller said he had never watched a minute of it and had to ask, "Who's Seinfeld?"

He was performing in a play at the time and had to turn down the TV job. Stiller got another chance at the role a few months later and took it.



PHOTO: Actor Jerry Stiller arrives at the American Museum of Natural History for the premiere of the movie "Night at the Museum" in New York, U.S. December 17, 2006. (Reuters/Eric Thayer)

Stiller was in only 26 of the 172 "Seinfeld" episodes but each appearance was memorable, whether he was screaming "serenity now!" in a tense situation.

Jerry Seinfeld on Monday paid tribute by posting a photo of himself holding "The Last Two People in the World," a 1967 comedy album from Stiller and his wife.

Julia Louis-Dreyfus posted a clip of old bloopers from the sitcom, while Alexander called him "the kindest man I ever had the honor to work beside."

Stiller said he was originally told to play Frank in a meek, understated manner in contrast to the character's loud, shrill wife. A few days in, however, Stiller responded

to one of the wife's rants with an improvised tirade of his own and the show's producers and cast liked it.

"And from that day on, it was the best years of my life as an actor because I worked with people who were the most generous actors in the world," Stiller said in an interview with the Archive of American Television.

"Seinfeld" ended its nine-year run in 1998 and that same year Stiller moved into another sitcom dad role on "The King of Queens". As Arthur Spooner, he played another blowhard oddball - although not quite as eruptive as Frank Costanza - living in the basement of the home of his daughter (played by Leah Remini) and her husband (Kevin James) through the show's nine seasons.

Stiller was born and grew up in New York, inspired by comedian Eddie Cantor and the vaudeville shows he saw with his father, a bus driver.

After serving in the U.S. Army, Stiller studied drama at Syracuse University and then sought acting jobs. He was working with a woman comedy partner when he met Meara in 1953 at an agent's office. They married a few months later.

Stiller and Meara worked together in the Compass Players comedy troupe before forming their own team. By the 1960s, they had become a popular comedy duo on U.S. television and appeared 36 times on "The Ed Sullivan Show." Their act included skits such as an interview with the biblical Jonah after his encounter with the whale and parodies of TV commercials.

Japanese author Murakami to DJ "Stay Home" radio special as virus shutdown

TOKYO (Reuters) — Haruki Murakami, one of Japan's most acclaimed novelists, will host a radio special to try to lift the nation's spirits as a state of emergency over the novel coronavirus lingers.

Murakami, whose breakout novel "Norwegian Wood" debuted in 1987, will play favorite songs and welcome listener comments during a "Stay Home Special,"

the name evoking a plea from Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike for residents to avoid going out.

"I'm hoping that the power of music can do a little to blow away some of the corona-related blues that have been piling up," Murakami wrote on a web page promoting the special.

While a nationwide state of emergency is due to last until May 31, officials said some

regions may be able to lift restrictions as early as this week if infections are under control. Tokyo, the epicenter of Japan's outbreak, confirmed 15 new cases on Monday, the first time in 42 days that the daily number has fallen below 20.

Murakami, a perennial favorite for the Nobel Prize in Literature, is a notorious recluse but has hosted his Murakami Radio show every

couple months. As a teenager he developed a passion for jazz and spoke of writing to its beat. He and his wife, Yoko, opened a jazz club while still university students and ran it for seven years.

The Murakami Radio Stay Home Special will play on Tokyo FM 80.0 and 38 stations nationwide on May 22 from 10 p.m. to 11:55 p.m. (1300-1455 GMT).