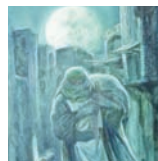




**U.S. knocks on a closed door seeking to extend Iran arms embargo** **2**



**Iran football league to resume season in late June** **11**



**Hassan Ruholamin creates painting in honor of Imam Ali (AS)** **12**

**Condolences on martyrdom anniversary of Imam Ali (AS)**



# Heil David! Israel: A utopian image or merely a mirage?

See pages 6- 7



## Pompeo doesn't know ABC of politics: Rouhani

TEHRAN — President Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday that U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo does not know the ABC of politics, noting that the “worst” and “most devil” administration is ruling the United States.

Referring to the U.S. assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani in Iraq in January, Rouhani said, “What administration assassinates a military

commander while he is on mission?”

“It has been for two years that we face the worst administration. I cannot remember the White House be inhuman to this extent... a bunch of people who know nothing. You see this country's secretary of state seems he does not know the ABC of politics,” Rouhani pointed out as he was speaking to his cabinet members. **→2**

## Philanthropists donate \$216m to support orphans

TEHRAN — Iranian benefactors contributed 9.1 trillion rials (nearly \$216 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) to support orphans in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended March 20).

Currently, there are 710,265 active supporters in the country who support 294,043 orphans, IRNA quoted Seyyed Morteza Bakhtiari, head of Imam Khomeini

Relief Committee, as saying on Wednesday.

Last year, a total of 46 trillion rials (nearly \$1 billion at the official rate of 42,000 rials) allocated to employment facilities and 174,000 job opportunities were created for the financially struggling families.

Some 2,400,000 families in the country are currently supported by the committee.

## Ferdowsi Day commemorated on Tehran webinar

TEHRAN — The Iranian Society of Cultural Works and Luminaries held a webinar on Wednesday to commemorate Ferdowsi Day, which falls on May 15, 2020.

A number of literati, including Hassan Bolkhari, Mir Jalaeddin Kazzazi, Ali Ravaqi and Vahidreza Qorbani, delivered speeches during the webinar.

In a statement published on Wednesday, Book City Institute deputy director Ali-Asghar Mohammadkhani also extended

his congratulations for Ferdowsi Day.

He called Ferdowsi's masterpiece Shahnameh the most precious and valuable document of the Persian language, and the brightest evidence of the glory of Persian culture and civilization.

The Shahnameh, which is known as the “Book of Kings” in English, is the celebrated work of the epic poet Ferdowsi, in which the Persian national epic found its final and enduring form. It was completed in 1010. **→12**

## Afghan President orders troops to resume offensive against Taliban

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani has ordered the military to move to an “offensive mode” against the Taliban and other armed groups after dozens of people, including newborn babies, were killed in two separate attacks in the war-ravaged nation.

“I am ordering Afghan security forces to switch from an active defence mode to an offensive one and to start their operations against the enemies,” Ghani said in a televised address on Tuesday.

At least 24 people were killed - including newborns and nurses - when gunmen stormed a maternity hospital in the capital, Kabul early on Tuesday, officials said.

Shortly afterwards, the ISIL (ISIS) armed group claimed it carried out a suicide blast at a funeral in the country's restive east, which left two dozen mourners dead.

“Today, we witnessed terrorist attacks by

the Taliban and Daesh groups on a hospital in Kabul and a funeral in Nangarhar, as well as other attacks in the country,” Ghani said, using the Arabic acronym for ISIL.

### ■ The U.S.-Taliban deal

The Taliban, which signed a peace deal with the U.S. in February, denied its involvement in the attacks.

Ghani's move came months after Afghan forces pledged to only react defensively to Taliban's attacks since the deal was signed in the Qatari capital Doha.

The Afghan president said offensive operations were needed to “defend the country, safeguard our countrymen and infrastructure, and to repel attacks and threats by the Taliban and all other terrorist groups”.

In a statement on Wednesday, the Taliban warned it was “fully prepared” to counter any offensive by Afghan forces. **→10**

## Industry Ministry allows unlimited exports of face masks, uniforms, serologic kits

TEHRAN — Acting head of Iran's Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry announced the licenses issuance for unlimited exports of face masks, nursing uniforms and COVID-19 serologic test kits, Shata news reported on Wednesday.

“The decision to allow the unlimited exports of the three items has been made in order to support domestic production and we hope that expansion of destination markets is going to encourage their production even more, Hossein Modares Khiaabani said.

As reported, Khiaabani noted that in order to support domestic production, order registration and imports of medical equipment that have locally-made equivalents is also banned.

According to the official, the conditions for the production of health prod-

ucts and medical equipment related to coronavirus control in the country have made Iran one of the export hubs for such products.

The license for the exports of these three items has been referred to the Industry Ministry's General Directorate for Export and Import Regulations, and also based on coordination with the Health Ministry and the Food and Drug Administration, 50 percent of domestically-made ventilators, vital sign monitors and portable oxygen concentrators are also allowed to be exported, he said.

Iran was an importer of healthcare products at the beginning of the coronavirus outbreak, but in less than four months, the country not only is capable of meeting its domestic needs but it has also become an exporter of such products.

## U.S. senator urges Trump admin to get back into JCPOA

TEHRAN — Chris Murphy, the U.S. senator from Connecticut, has urged the Trump administration to get back into the Iran nuclear deal (JCPOA), saying it's ridiculous for the administration to suggest it can pick and choose the parts of the JCPOA that it wants to observe and enforce.

“That's a wonderful way to approach an international agreement: I will not comply with the portions that my country is subject to, but I expect you to the portions that your country is

subject to,” Murphy said in an interview with The National Interest published on Tuesday.

He believes that the arms embargo on Iran is important and it needs to stay in place, “and I think the Trump administration has put us in an awful position, because it is harder than ever to reimpose the arms embargo outside of the JCPOA.”

“I don't have a lot of creative advice for the administration, other than get back inside the JCPOA, because if you're inside the JCPOA, it

makes an arms embargo much easier to reinstate,” the U.S. senator added.

“The reality is the nuclear deal doesn't exist today,” Murphy told Al-Monitor two months ago.

“You have to live in that reality,” he said, adding, “I don't think it'd be great policy to let the embargo disappear if we're not in the [deal]. So, I'm generally sympathetic to the idea that we're going to need to re-up it and be back in a position to negotiate with the Iranians in the next administration.” **→3**

## ‘CBI’s access to its foreign resources improving’

TEHRAN — Governor of Central Bank of Iran (CBI) says the bank's access to its financial resources abroad is improving, IRNA reported on Wednesday.

“Over the past 50 days, more than \$2.5 billion has been provided by the central bank and non-oil exporters, about 50 percent of which has been supplied through the NIMA system [Iran's domestic Forex Management Integrated System],” Abdolnasser Hemmati wrote on his social media.

Mentioning the problems caused by the coronavirus outbreak and the preventive measures taken by neighboring countries which resulted in the closure of border terminals, Hemmati noted that the situation will become normalized with the gradual reviving of non-oil and oil exports.

Earlier, Hemmati had stated that CBI's most important monetary policy for the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 20) is going to be curbing inflation.

According to the official, despite the decrease in oil revenues under the U.S. sanctions and a sharp decline in oil prices, the situation of the country's bank reserves of the foreign currency is appropriate.

“These achievements have been realized through the efforts of the banking system and due to the correct policy of the central bank, and if the banking system is supported, we will see greater achievements in the future,” he said.



## Qadr nights being observed under health protocols

Communal praying and recitations of the Holy Quran are being held across the country during Qadr nights - the 19th, 21st and 23rd of the holy month of Ramadan, falling on May 13th, 15th, and 17th this year - observing health protocols amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The last 10 days of Ramadan are especially important because the Quran was revealed in this month on Laylat al-Qadr (Qadr Night).

The 21st of Ramadan marks the martyrdom anniversary of Imam Ali (AS), the first Shia Imam.



## ARTICLE

**Salman Parviz**  
Journalist

## Saudis react to economic squeeze

Saudi Arabia and the UAE introduced the five percent Value Added Tax (VAT) in January of 2018, a first for the Persian Gulf region which had long prided itself on its tax-free, cradle-to-grave welfare system. On the same day Saudi Arabia announced petrol price hike of 127 percent. Measures were taken to boost revenues, cut spending and lowering the ballooning budget deficits.

The other four Persian Gulf Arab states - Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman and Qatar - decided to delay introduction of VAT in 2019. No announcement on introduction of VAT has been made by any of the above-mentioned yet.

Saudi finance minister on Monday said the Kingdom will triple VAT and halt monthly “cost-of-living allowance” payments for the 1.5 million state employees in new austerity measures amid record low oil prices and a coronavirus-led economic slump. These measures shift the burden of the falling oil prices squarely on the shoulders of the ordinary Saudis.

“It has been decided the cost-of-living allowance will be halted from June 2020 and VAT will be raised from five to 15 percent from July 1,” Mohammed al-Jadaan said in a statement released by the Saudi Press Agency.

The austerity measures come as spending outstripped income, pushing the kingdom into a \$9 billion budget deficit in the first quarter.

The government was also “cancelling, extending or postponing” expenditures for some government agencies and cutting spending on major state projects introduced as part of an ambitious Vision 2020 reform program to diversify the oil-reliant economy, the minister added.

### ■ Crude plunge

Prices of global benchmark Brent crude start the year around \$66 a barrel. By the end of February, Brent was trading around \$50 a barrel as coronavirus lockdowns severely curtailed oil demand.

The Saudis wanted to counter the crude price plunge by deep supply cuts but failed to convince Russia to play ball.

Riyadh retaliated in March by lowering the price it charges for crude announcing surge in output -- moves designed to steal share of higher-cost producers like Russia and U.S. shale oil firms. **→10**



## Pompeo doesn't know ABC of politics: Rouhani

President says the 'worst' and 'most devil' administration is ruling the United States

**1 →** He added, "The United States has always been terrorist, however, this extent is unprecedented. The United States has always acted against the independent and oppressed nations. In this pandemic, it causes problems for importing medicine."

### ■ 'The public to be informed about details of naval accident'

Elsewhere in his remarks, Rouhani said that the people will be informed about details of the deadly accident to the Konarak support vessel.

"The reasons behind the accident will be known and announced to the people," he stated.

He expressed condolences to the families of the victims.

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.

## The lost balance of the Iran Nuclear Deal and Iran's 'strategic patience'

By Ambassador G.Hossein Dehghani

8 May 2020 marked the second anniversary of the U.S. withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), or the Iran Nuclear Deal, and the re-imposition of all US sanctions that had been lifted in concert with the treaty. It is a well-substantiated and globally acknowledged fact that the U.S. is no longer a JCPOA participant, and I do not intend to discuss the obvious here. Instead, I would like to dissect the idea of balance, which is the vital element for the successful implementation - or under current circumstances the survival - of the JCPOA.

From a textual perspective, this balance is struck between Iran's nuclear commitments and its enjoyment of economic benefits thereof. This is essentially a rather legal take on the idea of "balance" in the nuclear deal and fails to capture the overall goal and ambitions as perceived by the agreement. There is more to the JCPOA than it is narrowly perceived through perusal of its meticulously fashioned text.

To better comprehend the current situation, we should look at the nuclear agreement in its wider political, security and economic context. The JCPOA was only a means to an end, not an end in itself. From a security and economic perspective, the JCPOA is set to yield the bulk of its positive outcomes on multi and bilateral fronts. That is to say, in return for the temporary and voluntary measures taken by Iran beyond its commitments under the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Safeguards Agreement, all international restrictions and constraints against Iran - including, amongst other things, the automatic termination of the arms embargo on 18 October 2020 - will be terminated according to an established timetable.

On the economic plane, the deal was envisioned as a path towards the normalization of trade and economic relations with Iran. In this context, the idea of balance is tied to the 2012 status quo ante when the EU was Iran's biggest trade partner.

2012 marked a shift in EU's approach to Iran in terms of sanctions, with Iranian oil and Central Bank being added to the list to which the EU restrictive measures now applied. From 2012 to 2015, Iran's trade with the EU took a deep plunge from the record high of 2011 to the nadir of 2013-2015, and now to an all-time low of 2019. Although 2017 offered a glimpse of pre-sanctions status quo ante, it failed to keep up the good trend and the opening that was created due to the implementation of the JCPOA. The uncertainty created by the new U.S. administration and their year-long campaign to exasperate Iran until it exited the agreement killed the constructive atmosphere in which the JCPOA had been successfully implemented.

In a sense, up until 8 May 2019 - the date on which Iran announced its reversible phased plan to cease performing in part its nuclear commitments after a year of patience - the narrowly defined textual balance had been fully maintained, and technically verified, by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). On the wider plane, however, Iran was losing its economic benefits as the landscape did not offer any positive sign, as far as the promised normalisation of trade and economic relations were concerned. From a strictly JCPOA standpoint, it meant that the normalization of trade and economic relations with Iran remained elusive, becoming a distant unattainable goal. The short period from Implementation Day on 16 January 2016 to 2018 indicated the huge economic gains for the EU as it managed to almost reach its pre-sanctions export to Iran. To the EU, the political, security and economic functions of the JCPOA were in perfect shape.

Economic benefits were what was perceived to accrue from the bilateral aspects of sanctions-lifting commitments under the JCPOA. Iran's official statements to the effect, that it exercised strategic restraint for a full year (from 2018 to 2019), should be regarded in this light. It means Iran had made the fateful decision to stay compliant unilaterally, thereby keeping the textual balance of the deal, in spite of its diminishing economic value which saw 2019 become the worst period of Iran-EU trade. Any attainment of textual balance would hinge upon restoring the contextual balance; that is, any expectation from Iran to restore the May 2019 status quo ante goes hand in hand with increased benefits from the implementation of the JCPOA on political and economic planes.

Another important element integral to the successful implementation of the JCPOA is the more nuanced political benefits which are to accrue from the lifting of UN sanctions, i.e. the multilateral aspects of the deal. Under Security Council resolution 2231 (2015), a batch of UN arms embargoes on Iran will automatically expire on 18 October 2020. Although it falls way short of what the JCPOA promised, it nonetheless injects a semblance of balance into the deal.

Convolved in a flawed logic, the fresh US onslaught on the JCPOA, if it materializes, may throw the deal irredeemably off-balance. Arguably, from an economic, political and security perspective, the EU was one of the major winners of the JCPOA. The nuclear deal is a major EU foreign policy achievement, and I am inclined to believe that the EU - the EU triumvirate in particular - is in a good place to maintain the existing frail balance on the multi and bilateral front by standing against the latest U.S. offensive on the JCPOA, as well as restoring the balance on the economic front, thereby resuscitating the moribund nuclear agreement.

(Source: Euronews)

# U.S. knocks on a closed door seeking to extend Iran arms embargo: Russia

'This is ridiculous' that the U.S. is talking about JCPOA, Ambassador Nebenzya says

By staff and agency

Russia's Ambassador to the United Nations Vasily Nebenzya has said that the United States cannot demand the extension of arms embargo against Tehran since it is no more a party to the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the JCPOA.

"I do not see any reasons why arms embargo should be imposed on Iran," TASS quoted him as saying on Wednesday in a press conference.

"It expires on 18 October. It was temporary. Let's call a spade a spade: it was not in fact even an embargo. It is the provision where Iran is allowed to export/import armaments on the consent of the Security Council. Of course, you may call it a de-facto embargo, because we know what would happen if Iran asked for such waiver, but technically it was not an embargo. For us it's clear, it expires on 18 October. We proceed from that fact," he said.

The high-ranking diplomat noted that exactly two years ago, the U.S. "proudly announced" that it withdrew from the JCPOA and closed the door behind.

"Now they knock on that door and say 'just wait a second, we forgot to do one little thing on the JCPOA. Let us back, we will do it and leave again'. This is ridiculous," Nebenzya said.

He added, "You know, in order to be able to use the instruments provided by JCPOA you first have to be a participant



of the JCPOA. The U.S. has not been an effective participant of the JCPOA for two years now."

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is preparing an argument that the U.S. remains a participant in the Iran nuclear accord that President Trump has renounced, part of an intricate strategy to pressure the United Nations Security Council to extend an arms embargo on Tehran or see far more stringent sanctions reimposed on the country.

Russian military expert Igor Korotchenko has said that the United States is no longer a party to the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the JCPOA, and has no "moral" and "political" right to use the deal to reach its political objectives.

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

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

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on May 5 that Pompeo pretends UNSCR 2231 is independent of the JCPOA, noting that the JCPOA is "PART of 2231".

In a tweet, Zarif advised Pompeo to read the 2231 resolution.

"JCPOA is PART of 2231. That's why it's 104 pages—& why he's not read it.

2231 for Dummies:

-It would NOT EXIST w/o JCPOA

-US violated it & prevented others from complying

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

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

"US must be held to account and bear responsibility, not to be APPEASEMBOLDENED, for its bullying behavior and recurring pattern of wrongful (ab)use of the #UNSC & manipulation of its decisions," Hamaneh tweeted on May 3.

In another tweet, he said, "US' invocation of #UNSCR2231 is a travesty, flouting a fundamental principle governing intl relations; ... a party which disowns or doesn't fulfill its own obligations cannot be recognized as retaining the rights which it claims to derive from the relationship' (#ICJ, 1971)."

## Iran urges Japan to support 2231 resolution

POLITICAL  
desk

**TEHRAN** — Iran's embassy in Japan has urged Japan to support the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231 which removes the sanctions against Iran.

"The international community, except for the United States' regime, does not agree pressure on countries in the situation of fighting the coronavirus. Given Iran-Japan traditional and friendly relations, we expect it [Japan] to support the United Nations Resolution 2231 in international bodies, especially the World Health Organization, and does not comply with the sanctions," the embassy posted the message on its Twitter account on Wednesday in Japanese and Persian languages.

The Resolution 2231 endorses the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the JCPOA, based on which Iran agreed to limit its nuclear activities in return for removal of sanctions.

However, the U.S. unilaterally withdrew from the deal in May 2018 in violation of the UN resolution and returned sanctions on Iran.

U.S. President Donald Trump has even refused to lift sanctions on Iran when the country is fighting the coronavirus.

In a letter to the G-20 economic powers on March 24, Antonio Guterres, the UN Secretary General, 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.

## MP urges Afghanistan to be vigilant about enemies' plots

POLITICAL  
desk

**TEHRAN** — Hossein Naghavi Hosseini, the spokesman for the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, has said that the Afghan government must be vigilant about the enemies' plots which seek to weaken relations between the two countries.

"Iran and Afghanistan are two neighboring countries that have relations and old affinities. In the past 40 years after the victory of the Islamic Revolution, Iran has clearly supported Afghanistan and has hosted many Afghan migrants. They enjoy all facilities the same as the Iranians citizens. No country have treated migrants (so well) like Iran," he told ISNA in an interview published on Wednesday.

Afghan news media have reported that about 50 Afghan migrants crossing into Iran illegally had been beaten and thrown into a river.

Naghavi Hosseini said the incident occurred on the Afghan part of the border.

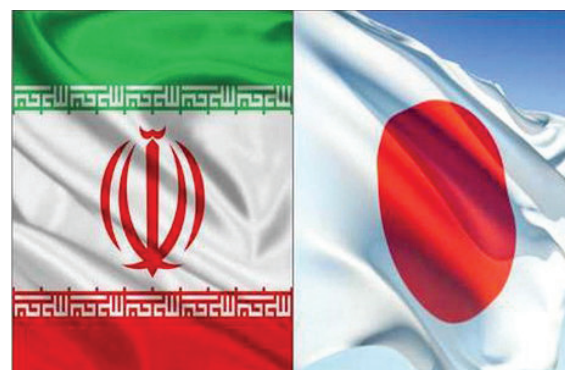
"Our citizens and forces cannot do anything in Afghanistan's soil. So, we know nothing about details of the incident. Investigation is required in this regard," he said.

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 Gvt. What happened



One segment of the briefing says "President Trump refuses to let up on choke hold."

Norman Roule, a retired CIA official who served as national intelligence manager for Iran until 2017, told The Nation that the international community should do everything it can to enable the Iranian people to obtain access to medical supplies and equipment partly because "as Iranians travel throughout the region, they will continue to disperse the virus."

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

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

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

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

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif held a phone conversation with acting Afghan foreign minister Mohammad Haneef Atmar on Sunday discussing the tragic incident.

According to the Afghan Foreign Ministry, the two foreign ministers exchanged views on ways to start "joint investigation" into the incident.

They also agreed to hold joint sessions if necessary.

Atmar said his government has sent an investigation team to Herat and began studying the incident at the site.

Zarif also assured the Afghan side that Iran will soon form a team to probe the incident at the site.

The two foreign ministers also agreed that if necessary the investigation teams from the two countries can hold meetings at the site of the incident and cities of Mashhad and Herat.



## Moscow not ruling out talks about arms deliveries to Iran after UNSC embargo expiration

**MOSCOW** — (UrduPoint News) —Russia does not rule out launching negotiations about arms deliveries to Iran when the United Nations Security Council's embargo is lifted in the fall, the head of the Foreign Ministry's Second Asian Department, Zamir Kabulov, told Sputnik on Wednesday.

Iranian Ambassador to Russia Kazem Jalali has said in an interview with Sputnik that Tehran has already received several offers on weapons deliveries and plans certain steps after the expiration of the

embargo.

"Yes, as the relevant resolution of the United Nations Security Council expires soon, and Russia has been thoroughly abiding by it," Kabulov said, when asked if Russia can start arms deliveries to Iran after the embargo terminates in the fall.

"Relevant negotiations have not started yet, but they will be quite possible, as the international legal obstacle, which will be in place until October, will be removed," Kabulov added.



# Leader offers sympathy over naval incident, orders probe

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has offered his condolences with the families of the victims of the recent naval incident and ordered the Army to launch an investigation into the incident.

Ayatollah Khamenei on Tuesday sent a message of sympathy to Army Chief Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi over the martyrdom of Navy forces in the fatal accident in the country's southeastern waters.

The Leader said the tragic accident involving Konarak vessel that resulted in the martyrdom of a number of Navy servicemen has been "very bitter and regrettable", Tasnim reported.

"Although the hardworking servicemen who have died in the course of hard duty will gloriously benefit from divine reward, God willing, the grief at the loss of the beloved ones for their families and the damage of loss of the sincere hardworking young forces to the Force (Navy) is so huge and heavy," Ayatollah Khamenei underlined.

Offering condolences to the bereaved families and praying for the recovery of the injured, the Leader ordered the relevant authorities to "shed light on the dimensions of the incident, identify the ones possibly at fault, and make the necessary arrangements



to prevent a recurrence of such damaging and bitter incidents."

Nineteen 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.

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.

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.

Following the incident, Army Commander Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi expressed condolences to the bereaved families.

"I express my deepest condolences on the martyrdom of a number of the white [uniform] wearers of the Iranian Navy to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution and the bereaved families as well as all my fellow soldiers," Mousavi wrote in a message on Monday, according to Mehr.

He also prayed God Almighty to bestow the martyrs the highest places in heaven for their braveries and selflessness.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif also expressed condolences to the families of the victims, saying he was deeply saddened by the incident.

"We are all indebted to these loved ones who sacrificed their lives for our security and well-being," Zarif said in his message.

## Russian diplomat rejects U.S. hawks' assessment on the Moscow support for JCPOA

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Mikhail Ulyanov, Russia's permanent representative to the Vienna-based international organizations, has ruled out assessment of U.S. hawks about Russia's support for the Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"Do you know why Russia supports #JCPOA? Because from October, RF (Russian Federation) will be able to earn some money from supplies of weapons to #Iran," Ulyanov wrote in a tweet on Wednesday.

He added, "It's not a joke. This is an assessment of hawks. We can only sympathize with Washington whose experts deliver such judgments to US administration."

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

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

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

Pompeo claimed the satellite launch showed that Iran's space program was in fact "neither peaceful nor entirely



civilian".

Tehran subsequently branded Pompeo as "Secretary of Hate", saying he has achieved nothing since he assumed the post two years ago.

Even before the satellite launch, Pompeo had said Washington will try to extend arms embargo against Iran in violation of the UN Security Council Resolution 2231 that

endorsed the JCPOA.

Ali Shamkhani, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), has said continuation of the illegal arms embargo on Iran will kill the nuclear agreement Tehran signed with six world powers in July 2015.

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

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

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

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

But according to Kourosh Ahmadi, an international law expert, the United States' legal argument that it remains an original "participant" under the terms of the Security Council resolution "lacks any legal logic".

## Iran to give crushing response to any U.S. adventurism: envoy



**TEHRAN (Tasnim)** — Iranian Ambassador to Moscow Kazem Jalali has warned that the country's military will give a harsh response to any U.S. military adventurism.

"Trump's actions related to the veto may have two aims. First, this comes in the context of disagreements between political parties in the United States, and of the attempt to secure victory in the upcoming election. Secondly, the U.S. is likely primed for a military conflict with Iran. We hope that Trump's actions are not motivated by the second goal, as Iran will provide a harsh response to any military escapade by the U.S.," Jalali said in recent interview with Russian media, Sputnik reported on Wednesday.

On May 7, U.S. President Donald Trump vetoed legislation passed by both houses of Congress to limit a president's ability to wage war against Iran.

"This was a very insulting resolution, introduced by Democrats as part of a strategy to win an election on November 3 by dividing the Republican Party," Trump said in a statement released by the White House last week.

The resolution, which passed the House of Representatives in March and the Senate in April, was the latest effort by Congress to wrest back from the White House its constitutionally guaranteed authority to declare war.

Elsewhere in the interview, Jalali pointed to Washington's attempts to extend a UN ban on arms sales to Tehran that will expire in October, and said, "Ensuring its defense needs is Iran's legitimate right, and when the restrictions are lifted, necessary steps will be made. Up to date, Iran has received offers on deliveries of military equipment and defensive armament, but the existing restrictions hindered deals in this area".

Last month, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Washington technically remained a "participant" in the deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), in order to use a mechanism embedded within the 2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers to make the UN maintain the arms embargo on Tehran.

Diplomats say the United States would face a messy battle if it tries to trigger a return of sanctions, which includes the ban on Iran.

The United States has raised with the European parties to the deal the possibility of restoring sanctions if it is unable to get the 15-member Security Council to stop an arms embargo on Iran from expiring in October.

A resolution to do so needs nine yes votes and no vetoes by Russia, China, the United States, France or Britain.

## Army: Naval vessel incident under investigation



**TEHRAN (FNA)** — Spokesman of Iranian Army Brigadier-General Shahin Taghikhani said on Wednesday that the recent incident of Konarak logistical vessel is being inquired to show more dimensions of the sad event.

"Foreign media are trying to spread rumors on this issue as they usually do so about the events," Brigadier-General Shahin Taghikhani said.

Underlying that people should get the news from reliable sources, Taghikhani added that the rumors are very "irrelevant and primitive".

He categorically rejected the rumor on hitting the vessel by Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), adding that enemy media disseminate such rumors to undermine the IRGC's status.

He said that the Navy had carried war-games with two big powers, namely Russia and China some months ago, which increased the preparedness of the Navy.

Nineteen Iranian navy men were martyred and 15 others injured in a fatal incident for the Iranian Army Navy's Kenarak support vessel in the country's waters near the Southern port of Jask in the Sea of Oman on Sunday.

The incident happened during the Iranian Navy drills on Sunday, the public relations office of Bandar Abbas First Naval Zone of the Navy reported early Monday.

The Navy's public relations also declared in a statement that 19 Navy personnel have

been martyred and 15 injured, adding that rescue teams were quickly deployed to the site where they evacuated the wounded.

The Navy said the vessel has been towed to the port for further investigations.

Meantime, Head of Iranshahr University of Medical Sciences Mohammad Mehran Amini Fard said on Monday that 15 other forces who have been injured in the incident have been transferred to Imam Ali (AS) hospital in Chababhar.

He added that 2 of the wounded forces were outpatients, 2 others underwent medical operations and are now kept in the ICU and 11 others are in stable conditions and kept at the hospital.

Kenarak logistical vessel is a Hendijan-class ship purchased from the Netherlands during the Pahlavi regime over 4 decades ago. The vessel is armed with a 20mm-caliber cannon and 4 Nour Anti-Ship Cruise missile launchers. The ship is also used for naval surveillance and reconnaissance missions as it has also been equipped with mine-laying capability and drone launchers.

The Iranian Navy transferred its main headquarters from the capital city of Tehran to the port city of Bandar Abbas, on the shores of the Persian Gulf waters, in November.

Navy Commander Rear Admiral Khanzadi inaugurated the new headquarters in Bandar Abbas in November.

## Tehran denounces terror attacks in Afghanistan

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi has condemned the terrorist attacks on a hospital in Kabul and a funeral service in Nangarhar that have killed dozens of civilians in a double tragedy for Afghanistan.

In a statement on Tuesday, Foreign Mousavi deplored the terrorist attacks and the other military actions in various regions of Afghanistan, the Foreign Ministry website reported.



He condemned the strikes on civilians and non-military sites, and voiced concern about the rise in violence in Afghanistan.

The spokesman also expressed sympathy with the Afghan government and people, particularly with the families of victims of the recent attacks.

Mousavi urged all forces engaged in the military operations to cease the armed actions in honor of the holy month of Ramadan and prepare the ground for dialogue and sustainable peace in Afghanistan.

At least 11 were killed in a Tuesday morning attack on a Kabul hospital, including mothers, nurses and two newborn babies, Afghanistan's Interior Ministry said on Tuesday.

Shortly after, a suicide bomber targeted a funeral ceremony in Nangarhar, leaving at least 24 dead and 68 injured.

Hours after the attacks, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani directed security forces to resume offensive operations against the Taliban.

"I strongly condemn recent attacks in a hospital in Kabul and Nangarhar province which killed a number of innocent people including women and children," Ghani said in an address to the nation.

"Taliban have rejected our repeated call for a ceasefire, calls for ceasefire don't mean weakness," Ghani said. "I once again call on them to embrace peace, which is not only a demand of the government but the nation and international community."

However, the Taliban has denied involvement in both attacks, according to the group's spokesperson.

## U.S. senator urges Trump admin to get back into JCPOA

**1→** Last month, Washington called on the United Nations Security Council to extend its arms embargo on Iran, which will otherwise expire in a few months.

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



However, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is preparing an argument that the U.S. remains a participant in the Iran nuclear accord. That claim comes even as Trump clearly stated in May 2018 he was "terminating the United States' participation" in the JCPOA.

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

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said neither the United States nor its European allies, with their "flimsy" misreading of the landmark nuclear deal, were allowed to "lecture" the Islamic Republic on its missile program.

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

Observers say it is absurd that the United States claims it is still a participant to the JCPOA.

## Police bust one ton of narcotics in Saravan County

**TEHRAN (MNA)** — The anti-narcotic forces of Sistan-Baluchestan province, southeastern Iran, have captured one tone of different types of narcotics in a single operation in Saravan county.

Deputy Police Chief of Sistan-Baluchestan Second Brigadier General Ahmad Taheri said on Wednesday that following an armed clash between the police and the smugglers in the rural regions of Saravan County, the anti-narcotics forces captured 1,092 kilograms of different narcotics, including 992kg of opium and about 100kg of hashish.

Three offenders have been arrested along with three sedan vehicles and a number of AK47 rifles, he added.

Earlier this week, the forces captured over 4,000 kilograms of opium in a single operation in Iranshahr, Sistan-Baluchestan province.

This is while last week, the police forces of the southeastern province had busted over 9.5 tons of narcotics after heavy armed clashes with drug traffickers in various operations.



## Businesses in free zones to get coronavirus compensation facilities

**ECONOMY TEHRAN** — First Vice-President Es'haq Jahangiri said business units based in Iran's free trade zones can use the 500 trillion rials (about \$11.9 billion) of facilities that the government is providing to compensate the economic damages of the coronavirus outbreak.



Jahangiri said that the government has provided these facilities under easy conditions and expressed hope that by the end of the Iranian month of Khordad (June 20), all units affected by the coronavirus crisis will be able to benefit from these facilities.

The official underlined the significance of the free zones in the country's economy, saying the free zones have been established with the aim of becoming important centers of investment, production and employment in the country, portal of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) reported.

The first vice-president emphasized that the program prepared by the Secretariat of the Free Zones High Council for the implementation of 310 development and service projects in the country's free zones by the Iranian calendar year of 1400 (starts on March 2021) must be seriously pursued.

He further mentioned 620 trillion rials (\$14.7 billion) of investment made in the mentioned projects and said: "The implementation of these projects will increase production and employment and will have a [positive] impact on the country's economy."

In mid-April, Iran's President Hassan Rouhani announced a government's one-quadrillion rials (about \$23.8 billion at the official rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) rescue package for supporting those affected by the pandemic.

Speaking in a cabinet economic meeting, Rouhani said this package was provisioned to help low-income households and struggling businesses that have been affected by the economic consequences of the pandemic.

Rouhani went on saying that 520 trillion rials (about \$12.3 billion) was also going to be offered in the form of loans to 10 prioritized business and production categories which have been affected the most from the coronavirus outbreak.

The government had previously announced that about 230 trillion rials (\$5.4 billion as per official exchange rate) will be offered as loans with 12-percent interest rates to small and medium enterprises and low-income households.

## U.S. futures rise, Europe stocks drop, dollar dips

U.S. equity futures advanced on Wednesday, pointing to a rebound after yesterday's late slide, while Asian shares edged higher and European stocks dropped. Treasuries rose, and the dollar edged lower.

S&P 500 futures fluctuated before heading upward as the American opening drew near and traders prepared for remarks due later on Wednesday by Fed Chairman Jerome Powell, who may offer fresh clues on the outlook for the world's largest economy, and for monetary policy. Oil retreated from a five-week high.

Declines in travel and auto shares pulled the Stoxx Europe 600 Index lower, as corporate earnings continued to underscore the devastating impact of the coronavirus pandemic. The world's largest container line, A.P. Moller-Maersk A/S, said the fallout from Covid-19 will drive volumes down by as much as 25% this quarter. European tech shares pared declines, however, after China's Tencent Holdings Ltd. said first-quarter sales beat estimates. Most European bonds gained.



Equity investors are debating whether the rally from March lows went too far, with veteran investor Stan Druckenmiller saying the risk-reward calculation for stocks is the worst he's seen in his career. Data on the virus's spread is being weighed against the constant news flow of attempts to kick-start industries. Tesla Inc. was allowed to begin preparing for reopening its only U.S. car plant as soon as next week. Germany will reopen its borders on June 15.

"Market sentiment remains highly susceptible to headline risk and we will continue to be buffeted by the coronavirus numbers over the coming weeks," said Simon Ballard, chief economist at First Abu Dhabi Bank. "At the core of investor concerns is the lack of conviction in a self-sustaining global economic recovery."

Elsewhere, India's main equity benchmark jumped more than 2% after Prime Minister Narendra Modi said his government will spend a total of 20 trillion rupees (\$265 billion) to help the economy weather the fallout from the pandemic.

These are some of the main moves in markets: Futures on the S&P 500 Index climbed 0.6% as of 6:35 a.m. New York time. Nasdaq 100 Index futures increased 0.7%. The Stoxx Europe 600 Index fell 1.2%. The MSCI All-Country World Index fell 0.2%.

The Bloomberg Dollar Spot Index decreased 0.1%. The euro advanced 0.1% to \$1.0855. The British pound gained 0.3% to \$1.2295. The Japanese yen strengthened 0.1% to 107.03 per dollar. The Mexican peso strengthened 1.1% to 24.1094 per dollar.

The yield on 10-year Treasuries fell less than one basis point to 0.66%. Germany's 10-year yield dipped three basis points to -0.54%. Britain's 10-year yield fell three basis points to 0.221%. Portugal's 10-year yield declined six basis points to 0.856%.

West Texas Intermediate crude decreased 0.7% to \$25.60 a barrel. Gold strengthened 0.1% to \$1,703.69 an ounce.

(Source: Bloomberg)

# CNG plan to reduce daily gasoline consumption by 12m liters

By Mahnaz Abdi

In mid-November 2019, the Iranian government started rationing of subsidized gasoline and increased fuel prices as part of a plan to reduce the energy subsidies to use the revenue for supporting underprivileged families.

Later that month, deputy finance and economic affairs minister said the fuel rationing plan would make the country able to export 3.65 billion liters of gasoline every year and earn about 140 trillion rials (about \$3.3 billion) from the exports.

While the rationing plan has made gasoline consumption follow a downward trend, it has also encouraged consumption of compressed natural gas (CNG).

According to a report by the National Iranian Oil Products Distribution Company (NIOPDC) released in early February, consumption of compressed natural gas in Iran increased by 31 percent since the implementation of the gasoline rationing scheme up to the mentioned date.

As reported, the country's CNG consumption which stood at 19 million cubic meters (mcm) before the implementation of the fuel rationing scheme, increased to 25 mcm in February.

And as the CNG consumption is being welcomed more and more in the country, the government is seriously pursuing a program for converting the vehicles to the dual-fuel cars and also manufacturing of such cars.

On Wednesday, National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company (NIORDC) held a press conference on unveiling a comprehensive data system of the country's dual-fuel vehicles.

Addressing the press conference, Keramat Veis-Karami, the managing director of National



NIOPDC Managing Director Keramat Veis-Karami (L) and NIORDC Director for Research and Technology Mohammad Rezaei (C) in a press conference on Wednesday

Iranian Oil Products Distribution Company, referred to the above mentioned program as one of the biggest projects of the Oil Ministry.

The official said that complete implementation of this plan will increase the daily CNG consumption by 12 million cubic meters, while reducing the gasoline consumption by 12 million liters per day.

As announced by the NIOPDC, the average gasoline consumption in Iran stood at 94.4 million liters in the beginning of the past Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2019), which fell to 75.5 million liters in the end of the ninth Iranian calendar month of Azar (December 21) after the rationing plan was implemented.

"While a short time has passed since the

cars in Iran have started CNG consumption, we have built 2,400 CNG stations throughout the country" Veis-Karami said, adding that the daily CNG consumption has been 24 mcm in the country in February, but these stations can supply up to 40 mcm of CNG per day.

### ■ Converting to dual-fuel cars free for public vehicles

In the press conference on Wednesday, during which a comprehensive data system of the country's dual-fuel vehicles was unveiled, Mohammad Rezaei, the director for research and technology in NIORDC, elaborated on the system.

He said while the system was designed in February, it did not become operational

## Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan approve joint COVID-19 control protocol

**ECONOMY TEHRAN** — Transport desk ministers of Iran, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, in a video conference meeting, approved a joint protocol for controlling coronavirus to resume transit, Portal of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) reported on Wednesday.

Speaking in the meeting, Iranian Transport Minister Mohammad Eslami said multilateral transit transactions with the neighboring countries, as well as with the countries of the Indian Ocean and Europe, requires collaboration for establishing unified protocols that could safely increase the volume of interactions between the countries.

"We are and have always been ready for cooperation in order for developing common ways to facilitate trade, and today, this meeting is attended by officials from



customs, as well as the Health and Foreign Affairs Ministries that are ready to make the necessary arrangements in a way for

promoting the growth of trade exchanges between us," Eslami told his counterparts. According to the official, the World Health

Organization (WHO) reports show that Iran's healthcare system has performed well in controlling and treating coronavirus, which is the result of specialized decisions and policies.

"From day one, we continued to operate on the basis of health protocols and required all transit, road, air and sea sectors to comply with these protocols. The protocols are now being implemented at 24 border terminals," the minister stressed.

Based on the mentioned protocols, the environment and goods crossing from the exit and entry points are constantly disinfected, and transit drivers are controlled by medical staff at the borders, the official added.

Further in the video conference, Eslami announced the launch of 20-meter disinfectant tunnels at the borders within the next 10 days according to the Health Ministry protocols.

## Iran-Germany trade expected to improve in 2020

**ECONOMY TEHRAN** — Iran desk Germany Joint Chamber of Commerce predicts that trade between the two countries is going to increase by up to 15 percent in the current year following the establishment of appropriate infrastructure by Iran's financial institutions, IRNA reported.

According to the Federal Statistical Office of Germany (Destatis), economic relations between Iran and Germany are improving despite the U.S. sanctions.

The trade between the two sides reached €394 million in the first quarter of this year, Reuters reported.

Meanwhile, the Iran-Germany Chamber

of Commerce also sees a promising outlook for bilateral relations in the remaining months of 2020.

Michael Tockuss, a board member at German-Iranian Chamber of Commerce says that in recent months most of the exchanges between the two countries have been pharmaceuticals and medicine, and it

is hoped that other items will be added to the basket by facilitating financing.

According to Tockuss, Iranian banks have had a better performance than their German counterparts in creating infrastructure and financing exports, and now there are enough financial resources to carry out larger projects.

## Restarting China's economy amid risk of a second wave of outbreak

China's economy is now gradually recovering from COVID-19 and is entering a reopening phase. But reopening the economy carries the risk of a second wave of outbreaks.

There have been hopeful signs of economic recovery in China. From February to March 2020, China's manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) jumped from 35.7 to 52.0 and the services PMI rose from 29.6 to 52.3 — beating market expectations.

With 50 million migrant workers still stuck in their homes and consumers still worried about the pandemic, both supply and demand will experience a slow recovery.

Demand for China's exports has also fallen as countries outside of China grapple to contain COVID-19. Half a million Chinese companies closed in the first quarter of 2020 while only 3 million companies were established — 29 percent lower than the same time last year.

Over 5 million workers lost their jobs and the urban unemployment rate rose to 6.2 percent in February, the highest since 2002. Nearly 9 million students will also be graduating from universities and entering the job market.

Employment is the top priority for the Chinese government and should be the focus of its policy response. To effectively reopen the economy and create jobs, four important steps must be taken.

First, it is crucial to avoid a resurgence of COVID-19. There are still sporadic cases emerging in China as well as cases brought by those returning to China from outside. Strict testing, tracking and quarantining measures are still of the utmost importance.

Rigorous monitoring of returning migrant workers' health and the enforcement of social distancing at workplaces are necessary measures to ensure the orderly resumption of production. From government mandates to community-based surveillance to individual discipline, every effort must be made to ensure the careful resumption of economic activities.

Second, China needs to institute more effective policies to stimulate the economy. Policy measures to combat the economic fallout have been modest so far. On the monetary



front, the People's Bank of China (PBoC) has reduced the seven-day repo rate by 20 basis points.

The PBoC also cut reserve requirements for small- and medium-sized banks from 7 to 6 percent. These measures helped provide ample liquidity to the economy. Chinese banks issued new loans totaling 5.8 trillion yuan (\$865 billion) in the first quarter of 2020, a 14 percent increase from the same period in 2019.

On the fiscal front, the central government would increase the 2020 budget deficit-to-GDP ratio to as high as 3.5 percent, up from 2.8 percent last year — which is estimated to unleash 400 billion RMB (\$56.8 billion) to China's economy.

The central government also plans to issue two to four trillion RMB (US\$282 billion to US\$563 billion) in special treasury bonds to shore up the capital of state-backed funds and policy banks. As of 20 March 2020, China's local government bond issuance reached 1.4 trillion RMB (US\$200 billion), accounting for 76 percent of the allocated quotas.

Given high private (non-financial) sector debt — which stood at 205 percent of GDP at the end of 2019 — the PBoC has been prudent in cutting key interest rates, while adopting a more targeted approach to direct credit for SMEs.

Fiscal spending would be much more effective and the central

government has plenty of room to flex its fiscal muscles. But the central government in the first two months of 2020 only spent 427 billion RMB (\$61 billion), a meagre increase of 4.7 percent from the same period in 2019. Local government spending in fact edged down by 3.9 percent year-on-year to 2.8 trillion RMB (\$400 billion).

As a monetarily sovereign government, China has unlimited spending power and should immediately and significantly increase spending on social security, unemployment benefits, payroll subsidies and health care. The Chinese government should directly provide or subsidize payrolls and open public sector job opportunities to hire any workers who are willing to work but fail to find private jobs instead of relying on private companies to stabilize employment.

Government deficit and debt should not be a constraint on China's efforts to stabilize employment and stimulate economic growth. China's fiscal spending and public debt are relatively low compared to the United States — spending can expand considerably without worsening private or local government debt.

Third, the pandemic calls for global cooperation. While the G20 has largely failed to undertake concrete actions to fight the pandemic and protectionism, China should step up and play an instrumental role in confronting the global health and economic crises. As China resumes production, it could help restore global supply chains and boost global demand through imports. China should also consider debt forgiveness for some of the poorer and vulnerable African countries.

Fourth, restarting the economy must go hand in hand with boosting investment in technologies. It is clear from China's experience that big data and advanced medical devices are key to containing pandemics. When it comes to more technologically sophisticated medical devices like ventilators, the top 10 producers are all US or European companies. China must expand its research and development to drive economic growth and help safeguard against the next crisis.

(Source: thailand-business-news.com)



# Iranian oil production not halted by coronavirus outbreak: Zanganeh

ENERGY  
desk

**TEHRAN** — Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh says the coronavirus outbreak has not halted oil production in the country, Shana reported.

Speaking in a meeting attended by First Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri and his deputies, Zanganeh elaborated on the Oil Ministry's measures for containing coronavirus, saying that the ministry has made serious efforts to prevent any stoppage in the oil production while protecting the workforce.

Oil Ministry's measures have been taken in four phases of prevention, readiness, confrontation and returning to normal condition, the official said.

He further added that all activities of the oil industry like basic repairing in the South Pars phases and activities of phases 13, 14 and 21-24 have been resumed.

Mentioning the drastic fall of the global

oil prices and the U.S. sanctions along the pandemic, Zanganeh pointed to the fall of refineries' profitability as well as the reduction of petrochemical price as negative impacts of COVID-19 on the oil industry.

Back in March, Zanganeh and Head of National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) Masoud Karbasian had discussed necessary measures for containing the coronavirus in the Iranian oil industry's operational areas.

In the meeting the oil minister also discussed ways of preventing the spread of coronavirus in the oil, gas, refining and petrochemical operational areas with his deputies and managers of operating companies via videoconference.

Managing Director of Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC) Mohammad Meshkini, Managing Director of National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) Hassan Montazer Torbati, Alireza Sadeq-Abadi, the managing



director of National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company (NIORDC), and Managing Director of Iranian Oil Terminals Company (IOTC) Pirouz Mousavi, as well as Head of Iranian Offshore Oil Company (IOOC) Alireza Salmanzadeh were among the officials who attended the meeting via video conference.

At the end of the meeting, the officials emphasized that the priority of the country's

oil industry is maintaining the health and safety of employees and increasing the level of health services in order to prevent the spread of the virus and contain it.

Earlier that month, head of National Iranian Drilling Company (NIDC) had also said that despite the coronavirus outbreak, all operations in the country's oil and gas rigs are ongoing in full compliance with safety and healthcare standards.

## Oil traders see market starting road to recovery

Crude oil traders expect the market to be closer to balance in the next few months as production cuts are implemented and the global transport system emerges from a coronavirus lockdown.

Futures prices and swaps linked to physical prices show the market has now moved through the worst of the crisis caused by the volume war between Saudi Arabia and Russia and the pandemic-driven collapse in consumption.

In the futures market, Brent's six-month calendar spread has narrowed to a contango of less than \$5 per barrel in recent days from more than \$12 in late April.

In the swaps market, the six-week calendar spread for dated Brent cargoes has shrunk to a contango of less than \$3 per barrel from more than \$6 in early April.

The spread is an implicit measure of the ease and cost of storing crude — with the contango comprising the cost of storing, financing and insuring physical barrels.

Contango, where prices for near dates trade lower than those for later dates, is associated with an over-supplied market with high and/or rising inventories.

In March, the contango flared out as global crude stocks swelled following the breakdown of talks between the OPEC+ group of oil exporters on March 6 and Saudi Arabia's subsequent decision to boost production.

It grew even further in early April, as the United States and other advanced economies shut many businesses and transport systems to suppress the coronavirus epidemic.

By the middle of last month, global production was exceeding consumption by as much as 30 million barrels per day (bpd), causing the volume of oil in storage to surge.



With onshore tank farms filling rapidly, by tens of millions of bpd, and increasing volumes of crude being stored on vessels moored offshore, the cost of renting tank space soared.

By mid-April, access to tank space onshore or offshore had become the most valuable commodity in the oil market.

The near-record contango reflected expectations tank space would become entirely full at some point during May or June if inventories continued rising at the same rate.

Since then, however, the contango has forced a rapid market rebalancing by restraining production by U.S. shale firms and members of the expanded OPEC+ group of exporting countries.

### ■ Crash rebalancing

By depressing cash prices, the contango, with its sharp discounts for cash crude, has forced a halt to new well drilling and the closure of existing wells in the United States.

The most recent weekly data indicates output has already

fallen by more than 1 million bpd since the middle of March, with more cuts likely later in May and June.

Ultra-low prices have also compelled Saudi Arabia and Russia to implement production cuts, as slumping export earnings threaten government budgets and foreign exchange reserves.

On the consumption side, the gradual reopening of economies and transport systems in North America, Europe and Asia as the epidemic is brought under control has increased fuel use.

Provided producers continue to limit output, the market should gradually move into deficit over the second half of the year as transport systems reopen, which should arrest and then start to reverse the stock build.

Crude inventories will remain very high through the end of the year but they are no longer expected to continue swelling uncontrollably or threaten to exhaust available tank space.

The six-month contango in Brent futures has eased to the 4th percentile for all trading days since 1990, still very wide, but no longer extreme, and down from within the 1st percentile late last month.

Like most other features of the oil market, calendar spreads exhibit cyclical behavior, and should continue to narrow over the rest of 2020 and into 2021 as inventories gradually return to more typical levels.

The main risk comes from a premature increase in production, if either U.S. shale firms or members of OPEC+ try to boost output before consumption and stocks return closer to normal.

(Source: Reuters)

## Iraqi Basrah crude trading for June cycle off to firm start in Asia

June loading cargoes of Iraq's Basrah crude began trading in the spot market this week, fetching strong premiums from end-users on the back of firm demand from China, as well as shorter availability of alternative heavy sour crude barrels, traders told S&P Global Platts on Wednesday.

Even with spot cargoes fetching premiums over the official selling price, the final prices for these cargoes still work out to a net discount against the underlying benchmarks, according to Platts data.

At least three million barrels of Basrah Light from the June loading program had already been sold from various equity holders to end-users, with at least two of the three cargoes destined for Asia, they said.

A 1 million-barrel clip of the grade allocated for Asia was first reported sold by an oil major to an unnamed buyer at a premium of around \$2/b over the June Basrah OSP.

A second, destination unrestricted cargo, was heard purchased by an end-user at a premium of around \$2.80/b over the OSP.

Finally, a third 1 million-barrel clip of June loading Basrah was heard sold by a European trader to a buyer in China at a premium of around \$3/b over the OSP.

Shorter supply of alternative medium and heavy sour grades in Europe, and availability of storage in China are some of the reasons why the Basrah cargoes fetched premiums amid a period of muted global crude demand due to several reasons, traders in the industry pointed out.

"Generally in the global pool, heavier crude is in shorter supply due to a smaller Urals loading program in Europe and long standing constraints in terms of Venezuelan and Iranian oil that is off the market," said a Singapore-based crude trader.

Combined May loadings of Urals crude are scheduled to be 865,890 bpd lower than April at 1.25 million bpd, the lowest for the medium-sour grade in at least eight years, according to the provisional program seen by Platts at the end of April.

"Additionally, now you have OPEC cuts,

and those tend to impact medium to heavier sour crude barrels," he added.

These trades, known as 'preprogram sales' were carried out ahead of the issuance of the June loading program, which is expected to be released in the coming days alongside confirmation of monthly volumes for term customers of SOMO.

The trades likely occurred a couple of days before Iraq's SOMO issued its OSPs for June, in which SOMO hiked its prices in step with Saudi Aramco and other West Asia producers.

SOMO raised the OSP for its Basrah Light and Basrah Heavy grades, scheduled to load in June and head to Asia, by \$2/b and \$2.10/b, respectively, from May.

Basrah Light cargoes heading East in June will be priced at a discount of \$4.55/b to the mean of Platts Oman/Dubai assessments in that month, while parcels of Basrah Heavy will be \$6.20/b below the benchmark.

(Source: Platts)

## Trump administration approves largest U.S. solar project ever



The U.S. Department of the Interior approved this week the biggest solar project in the United States ever—an estimated \$1-billion solar plus battery storage project in Nevada.

Australia's Quinbrook Infrastructure Partners and California-based Arevia Power now have the green light to build and operate the Gemini Solar Project some 30 miles northeast of Las Vegas in Clark County, Nevada. The project will consist of a 690-MW photovoltaic solar electric generating facility plus a battery storage facility. The project will be the world's eighth-largest solar power facility and is expected to generate enough electricity to power 260,000 homes in the

Las Vegas area and potential energy markets in Southern California, the Department of the Interior said.

The plan received the U.S. Administration's approval despite objections from environmentalists who had argued in recent years that the construction would endanger rare species in the area, including the desert tortoise, and endanger the habitats of desert kit foxes and rare wildflowers, among others.

The Gemini project is expected to be built in two phases, with the first phase coming online in 2021 and final completion as early as 2022, the Department of the Interior said. The on-site construction workforce is expected

to average 500 to 700 workers, with a peak of up to 900 workers, supporting up to an additional 1,100 jobs in the local community and injecting an estimated US\$712.5 million into the economy in wages and total output during construction, the Interior said, at a time when more than 20 million Americans have already lost their jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic. Federal revenues from the project are expected to exceed US\$3 million annually to the U.S. Treasury.

Abigail Ross Hopper, President and CEO of the Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA), said, commenting on the project's approval:

"The solar industry is resilient and a project like this one will bring jobs and private investment to the state when we need it most. We appreciate the work that the Trump Administration has done to make this historic project a reality."

"Gemini offers the opportunity to showcase, at an unprecedented scale, what we believe to be one of the most promising technological advances in coupling battery storage to utility scale solar power to produce low cost renewable energy over the long term," said David Scaysbrook, Co-Founder and Managing Partner of Quinbrook.

(Source: oilprice.com)

## Modern Stadium of Martyrs of Khuzestan (Football Club (KSC





## Imam Khomeini viewed the right path move toward Quds: Islamic Jihad representative

By Mohammad Mazhari

Glorifying the International Quds Day, initiated by founder of the Islamic Republic Imam Khomeini in 1979, is an annual event held on the last Friday of Ramadan to express support for the Palestinians and oppose Zionism and Israel. Quds Day is a unique form of wide-aware campaign against the Israeli occupation of Palestine.

The Muslims around the world pour into the streets each year to mark Quds Day, but this year due to the novel coronavirus pandemic, rallies will have a different shape and style. The marchers are to prove that they will never give up their struggle against the Zionist regime of Israel. The Muslims are resolved to prove that the anti-Zionism path is always full of people who never put the Palestinian cause aside.

Representative of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad Movement in Tehran Naser Abu Sharif, in an interview with the Mehr News Agency, underscored, “The International Quds Day is the day of taking giant strides on the right path. It proves that any other path is wrong and destructive. The right path is moving towards Quds. Imam Khomeini’s correct understanding of the religion as well as the current situation caused him to initiate the Quds Day.”

He further pointed to the internal crises with which the Zionist regime is struggling and said, “The Palestinian Arabs who are living in the occupied territories form over 40 percent of the territories’ population. These residents include Muslims, Christians and Druze people who have their own problems and tensions with the Zionist regime. There are also Jewish communities including Falasha and Haredim sects in the occupied territories. The Zionist regime has now turned into the greatest racist government worldwide as the far right Zionist groups have been trying hard to broaden their control over the West Bank.”

Abu Sharif highlighted the existing political differences among the Zionist factions and said, “The recent elections reflected the regime’s unstable political, social and ideological situation. The election showed that the regime is suffering from considerable religious, factional and tribal differences. In addition to deep differences among the political parties, there are over 10 different tribal, ideological and religious groups inside the Zionist regime.

“Possibly the mentioned internal differences and tensions do not leak out openly their consequences in social and political scenes, but when they are coupled with the central government’s weakness and intensified political disputes, the problems will be more obvious. The internal disputes presage a very dangerous future for the regime as we are witnessing a big gap among key political parties and lack of a reliable willful leadership in Tel Aviv. The mentioned deficits will bring a catastrophic fate for Israel,” Abu Sharif stated.

He added, “The Zionist regime, in spite of all-out support provided by the hegemonic powers, is experiencing a decrease in number of those who follow far rightists; there are also weaker extremist movements and hate against others. The Zionist regime is not ready anymore to handle a situation of internal coexistence to later pave the ground for coexistence with the Palestinians. Accordingly, the Tel Aviv regime will face a huge deadlock in the future.

“Furthermore, the Zionists had to form a unity government without any form of solidarity. Vast political tensions that forced the Zionists to hold three rounds of elections (in less than a year) has now caused the Israeli political parties and lawmakers to choose Benjamin Netanyahu as the prime minister regardless of his scandalous cases,” the representative of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad Movement added.

Abu Sharif said that now the illegal Zionist regime of Israel is 72-year old. However, he added, “The Zionists have not thus far been capable of forming a religion-oriented Jewish government. Their governments have been formed based on race and ethnicity which has been ruled by the Jews with Western origin. The Zionists have regarded the Jews with Eastern origin as some tools to materialize their hegemonic plots.”

“Regardless of the hegemonic powers’ unsparing support for Israel and imposing pressure on the world nations to normalize relations with Tel Aviv and recognize the regime over the past decades, the Zionist regime has yet failed to gain international recognition. Israel is still an unstable shoddy building which may collapse in a jiffy,” he underlined.

He pointed to widespread corruption among the political leaders in Israel, and said, “We witness a large number of ministers and prime ministers in Israel facing corruption charges. The corrupt Israeli officials have lost their standing and position among the Israelis but they are still chanting racism and Zionism slogans. The only reason that brings the Israelis to a common point is their fear from living in an insecure situation.”

Abu Sharif criticized certain Arab nations for ignoring the Palestinian cause and said, “The establishments (certain Arab leaders) that are currently ruling over the Ummah (the Islamic nations) suppose that they will fail to govern their countries without the West’s financial and political support. Therefore, such Arab countries see no choice for themselves but accepting the United States’ orders and demands. Such Arab countries believe that normalization of relations with Israel is the only path towards pleasing the U.S. The U.S. in turn will slur over the whole crimes such Arab rulers have committed against their own people.”

He added, “These pro-West regimes are nothing but some tools used by the Zionists. The regimes are currently utilizing the entire facilities, funds and media, including the MBC news network and other outlets, to distract the regional nations from the most important issues of the Ummah.”

Unfortunately, rulers in the certain Arab countries imagine that the only way to preserve their power is turning back to their own people and seeking the hegemonic powers’ assistance, he pointed out.

“Fortunately, the Islamic world nations are completely aware. The Zionists’ plots may deceive some simple-minded people but can’t derail the Ummah’s general policy which is defending the Palestinian cause and the holy Quds,” Abu Sharif concluded.

# 72 years of misery: History and identity cannot be built like settlements



**TEHRAN** – Palestinian will always remember May 14, 1948, which they refer to as Nakba Day (Day of Misery).

Many Palestinians have old keys in their boxes which shows a historical depth and identity. They believe that one day they will return and that the next generation must be able to understand the meaning of homeland.

Over the last 72 years, the Zionist regime has committed numerous crimes such as genocide and conspiracy to eliminate one nation and replace them with the Jews who were scattered around the world. They were brought into this sacred territory to experience the dream of a “promised land without taxes.” An experience that soon led to reverse migration and forced African Jews to unwillingly leave their homeland.

The Zionist regime was established on the basis of violence, assassination, demolition of houses and farms and the construction of new settlements. It has

no historical background or national identity. It does not have the components of a nation. The only things that exist are the army and military equipment. The army became the basis of the political and social life of the Zionist society.

Moreover, the media empire seeks to strengthen the myth of invincibility and the strongest army in the region which plays a role in stabilizing and legitimizing the occupation of Israel. The project of legitimizing the Zionist regime, along with referring to the power of the military, are the most important tool for maintaining the morale of the Zionist regime’s community without any regard for social and identity challenges. Although Israel was able to establish a rootless regime in this holy land through military power and a help by Britain, after 72 years it cannot provide them with historical identity.

Which military power has been able to create historical depth?

Therefore, today, Israel has failed miserably in both establishing a nation and a government, to the point that it has not been able to organize its internal structure for the first time.

It seems that despite all the genocides, killing of children and women,

destruction of houses and displacement of the Palestinian people, it is Israel that should be concerned today, not the Palestinians. The closer Israel gets to what it calls its anniversary of independence, the extent of its internal crises and external challenges increases.

The Israeli society no longer trusts its political and military leaders, and this has created serious challenges. This is due to Israel’s successive defeats in several wars that it waged in the region and against Palestine, most notably the 22-day war in Gaza in 2008 and the 33-day war in summer of 2006 against Lebanon.

Therefore, these 72 years can be presented as years of struggle for consolidation, which, of course, have had the opposite effect. There is no such thing as the myth of invincibility today. The literature of unilateralism is over.

The Israeli army has suffered heavy defeats at the hands of small Resistance groups. Suicide and corruption in the military are on the rise, and even the promises of tax exemption cannot keep the army operating. The Zionist community, which is affiliated with the same army, is also very unstable.

Britain, as the godfather of Israel, played a key role in its formation, and

today the United States continues to provide annual financial and military support to complete the Zionist regime project. However, all these issues could not improve the situation of the regime.

Today, 72 years later, it is Israel that has surrounded itself with walls that it has built at great expense to protect the residents of the settlements.

The budget for education and economic projects are reduced every year to strengthen the military and it is because the founding nature of Israel is formed on this basis.

The transfer of the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem al-Quds, the purchase of Iron Dome system, mass killings in Gaza and Lebanon, construction of concrete walls around the borders of the occupied territories, destruction and compulsory migration of Palestinian people, strengthening regional terrorism, assassination of resistance leaders, using media outlets, and coercing incompetent Arab rulers to accelerate the process of normalization have all failed to bring the desired result for the regime which is consolidation and legitimacy. On the contrary, these moves strengthened the wave of global hatred toward Tel Aviv’s political and military savagery.

## Zionist regime coming close to its end: human rights activist

### INTERVIEW

By Mohammad Ali Haqshenas

**TEHRAN**– A human rights activist believes that the Zionist regime is coming close to its final day as the world is becoming more aware of the nature of the regime.

“I believe the Zionist regime is nearing its end as more and more free people in the world are awakening and the more intolerant and aggressive they become which also shows their true weaknesses and illegitimacy,” says Firas Al Najim, head of the Canadian Defenders for Human Rights.

Firas made the remarks in an interview with the Mehr news agency on the occasion of the 72nd anniversary of the Nakba Day (the Day of Catastrophe).

The Nakba Day is marked annually on May 15. It refers to the forcible expulsion of some 700,000 Palestinians from their lands following the creation of Israel in 1948 and their scattering across refugee camps in the West Bank, Gaza, and neighboring countries.

Here is the full text of the interview:

■ Now after 72 years of Israeli occupation, what do you think is the current condition of the regime regarding its political, social, and identity status?

I believe this illegitimate regime has been more exposed and has revealed its true colors that are full of darkness from all sides. It is full of arrogance, injustice, and intolerance.

■ The Israeli regime has made every effort, including genocide and displacement of Palestinians, to establish its stance and legitimize its presence. How far do you think the regime has come near to this aim?

It has accomplished its aim of occupying, massacring, and spreading corruption in holy occupied Palestine and it has reached the world.

■ What does political crises, diversions between different Israeli political parties, and elimination of the depth of security and its peripheral security indicate?

I believe the overall Zionist politics is a big game that is used at times to show major divisions but they are united to divide the Palestinians and to expand their occupation to further areas such as the West Bank.

■ How do you assess the role of UK and US in establishing Israel to complete the project of the Zionism government and also their financial and military aids to the regime?

I see the UK and the US as the main and key backers of this illegitimate regime and its cruel occupation and that this backing and support is embedded in the establishment and that they will continue to assist in this evil project to



secure their hegemonic control of the Middle East with their military bases and puppet regimes. The global Zionist movement owns a lot of corporations and control of western politics and especially in those two countries.

■ How far has Tel Aviv’s military efforts for creating deterrence and preventing Palestinian and Lebanese resistance through buying Iron Dome systems gone so far? Why do operations of Resistance groups still continue despite these efforts?

They have invested a mass amount of funds and efforts into the defense and systems such as the iron dome and they cannot fully protect the Zionist regime from the resistance movements attacks and missiles and this reveals the true weakness of those systems and that there will always be gaps and losses for the future.

■ Isn’t it the Israeli regime which has confined itself in many walls?

They have cornered and confined themselves in a very dangerous position and the outcome is not looking well for them at all.

■ How do you see the political and military balance of Resistance groups in Palestine and Lebanon?

The resistance in those two countries has grown to become a powerful reality and that the Zionist regime and all its capabilities and allies have reached a conviction that they cannot eradicate them as they have tried over and over again and all their projects and plans have failed miserably. The Zionist regime survives by a delusional mindset.

■ What’s your opinion about the future of the Zionist

regime given the identity, social, and psychological crises and its lack of history?

I believe the Zionist regime is nearing its end as more and more free people in the world are awakening and the more intolerant and aggressive they become which also shows their true weaknesses and illegitimacy.

■ The trend of some Arab states’ normalization of ties with Israel has accelerated and publicized. How do assess these measures of the Israeli regime?

These Arab regimes have all been UK established and then later supported by US and they are all regimes that are truly unpopular and disliked by their own nations. These regimes depend on the western support and they are all interconnected with the Zionist illegitimate regime and in true reality, they need to back up one another and listen to the instructions of the ones that kept them in power or else they will be easily removed and the UK and US regimes have pressured them in this stage to normalize the relationships and publicize it. Unfortunately, they have accepted to be bullied and gotten immune to this system to survive and hold on to power.

■ How far has the relocation of the US embassy to al-Quds and proposition of the so-called ‘Deal of the Century’ by Trump administration changed the balance in favor of Israel and their efforts for legitimization?

These are all delusional plans that will fail and it only proves the illegitimacy of the Zionist regime by pulling this sudden shocking plan and trying to lure the rest of the world governments to accept and support it. Another bullying method and plan by the Zionist lobbyist controlled congresses and parliaments of the world. This ‘failure of the century’ has no legitimacy and no real support and has failed even by the weak and controlled United Nations assembly resolutions. Israel is on its way to a major decline moving towards dismantlement and liberation as the resistance in the region is growing stronger with lots of experiences and determination. Palestine will be free from the river to the sea.

I would like to add that with the corona crisis many places cannot attend and rally on al Quds day but there is a global movement on social media under the hashtag called #FlyTheFlag for Palestine that is in its works and is supported by many credible organizations in the world. The fight for Palestine is growing in the whole world.

Firas Al Najim: Ottawa Manager of Canadian Defenders For Human Rights, a registered non-profit organization that sends aid to Gaza, Yemen, Iran, Iraq, and many other countries. The body also lobbies to fight for the rights of the oppressed.

## Israel: A utopian image or merely a mirage?



**TEHRAN** – While the founders of Israel had envisioned a utopia for Israeli settlers, now after 72 years, it has brought no freedom or justice to anyone except for some Zionist Jews and been involved in genocide and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians an Israeli-American activist and author tells the Tehran Times.

■ ‘Genocide and ethnic cleansing is the practice of Israel’

On promises by the founders of Israel, including Ben Gurion, who had envisioned a utopia for settlers in Israel based on freedom, justice and peace, Miko Peled says “Israel is an apartheid regime” which

“has been involved in genocide and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians.”

He says Israel is “providing Jewish citizens who are Zionist with all the rights of a liberal democracy.”

He also says it “is true” that some Israelis are returning to their original countries as they are fed with governance.

■ ‘Corrupt Netanyahu main reason behind Israeli political crisis’

Israel has been in a political crisis after three inconclusive elections and it is facing the growing prospect of an unprecedented fourth election.

Peled says it is mainly because “Israeli politics is controlled by the corrupt Prime Minister Netanyahu and his racist, violent allies.”

The deadlock ended now that Netanyahu got an agreement that he accepted and protects him and allows him to continue to serve as prime minister, he says, adding there was even a social disobedience “about the fact that the man they voted for, Benny Gantz, who promised to unseat Netanyahu, lied to his voters and is now sitting with Netanyahu.”

■ ‘Israel not a democracy but an apartheid’

On claims by Tel Aviv and its allies in the West that Israel is the only democratic country in the West Asia region, Peled says, “Israel is not and has never been a democracy. It an apartheid regime.”

He goes on to note that “the problem with West perspective is that it is a Zionist perspective which recognizing the legitimacy of Zionism and does not recognize the rights of Palestinians.”

■ Israel sees Trump’s reckless policies toward Iran ‘a great thing’

Actually, in over a year that Israel has been holding three elections, each time Donald Trump has taken a step to promote chances of Netanyahu in elections. His administration moved U.S. embassy to Jerusalem, recognized the occupied Golan Heights as Israeli territory, and recently Mike Pompeo claimed that annexation of lands in the West Bank does not violate international law. However, each time Netanyahu’s party failed to win enough seats in Knesset to form a government

“Israelis are actually very happy with Trump. His support for the Israeli regime

and his reckless policies regarding Iran and the Palestinians is seen as a great thing,” Peled points out.

■ ‘Racism in Israel comes even at expenses of public health’

Despite the coronavirus epidemic, Israel is refusing to release Palestinians who are held in crowded prisons, he said, noting, “Israel never respected Palestinian rights, even now that the spread of the Coronavirus is dangerous to all people.”

“Racism in Israel is so strong that it comes even at the expenses of public health,” the activist regrets.

■ ‘2 million people of Gaza are heroes’

Gaza Strip is considered the greatest open prison on the earth.

Peled calls two million residents of Gaza “heroes” who are victims of “Zionist racism and violence”.

He also notes that except Iran, no country in the world cares about the miseries of the Gazans.

“They are victims of Zionist racism and violence and of the fact that the rest of the world, with the exception of Iran do not care about them.”



# Zionists regime's parasitic life at risk: expert

Iranian political expert on West Asian Affairs Ahmadreza Rouhollahzad says the world powers are coping with economic challenges and the issue has negatively influenced the Zionist regime economic conditions, which is living a parasitic life.

On the occasion of Nakba Day, May 15 (an annual day of commemoration of the displacement that preceded and followed the Israeli Declaration of Independence in 1948), Tehran Times conducted an interview with Iranian expert on West Asian Affairs and Secretary of the Political Commission of Society for the Defence of Palestinian Nation Ahmadreza Rouhollahzad to shed light on political, economic and social status quo of the regime in Tel Aviv 72 years after its formation in occupied lands.

The expert's views on various aspects of the Zionist regime's conditions follows:

## ■ Tel Aviv regime's supporting pillars

The Zionist regime has been established based on some factors: First of all, it relies on world arrogant powers. It was primarily dependent on Britain and now it is backed by the U.S., while it also has other world powers' protection. Second, it relies on its military power as a means to reach its occupying policies. Third, it relies on media and news networks to shield it. The other factor is the regime's economic power and having access to financial resources, which made Zionists to take advantage of various banks and companies all across the globe. Population is another important factor for the regime, which can guarantee its existence.

The named factors can give us a vivid overview of the current political, economic, and social conditions of the 72-year-old Israeli regime and its future.

## ■ Zionist regime now against U.S. interests

Considering the protection of world powers from the regime in Tel Aviv, we can see that the all-out protection for the Zionist regime does not exist as before because the world powers are faced with some problems including financial ones. The Israeli regime is now dealing with different challenges both regionally and internationally. The Zionist regime was basically founded to guarantee the colonizing targets of the world powers but under the present circumstances, the lobbies protecting the regime are not united as they were used to be. As some American lobbies have asserted, despite the fact that the regime was founded to meet the demands of the U.S., it is now forcing Americans to dispatch military forces to protect it and the issue put the U.S. interests at a big risk. In better words, the Zionist regime's radicalistic measures have made the U.S. be faced big problems in the region. This made the U.S. to think of pulling out its forces from the region, to find a better chance for playing its desired role in the Middle East. The same story repeats itself in the relation between the Zionist regime and some European countries.

## ■ Deterrence power of Resistance Axis pushing back Zionists

As mentioned, the Zionist regime's military power comes as significant. However, the efforts of the Resistance Axis, which was formed after the Islamic Revolution of Iran by Iran, have endangered Israelis' favored targets. The occupying regime had once the military power to make several countries kneel down but as of 2006, the Resistance Axis has been successful to curb the military might of the Zionists, who are equipped with modern weaponry under the protection of western powers. The regime was fully grounded in several wars with the Resistance Axis in 2006, 2008, and 2014. The axis is now at a high level of deterrence power, in a way that Zionist can only hold one-day or two-day wars against it and is not powerful enough for longer confrontations.

## ■ Zionists regime's parasitic life at risk

The world is coping with an economic recession, including the world powers. The fact has negatively influenced the Zionist regime, too, which is living a parasitic life. It is faced with some difficulties in supplying its financial resources.

While China comes with the biggest economic growth, the main supporter of the Zionist regime i.e. the U.S. is dealing with major economic difficulties. Therefore, the economic conditions in the occupied lands are hurt as well. The regime has been faced with protests against the economic status quo, domestically, in recent years.

## ■ Western public opinion against Israeli regime

Regarding the control of the Zionist regime on media and its desired influence on public opinion, it is worth noting that thanks to the formation of independent news networks and channels besides the appearance of social media, the regime has lost its exclusive tribune. Public opinion has now the chance to listen to and be informed



by non-Zionist sources. For instance, public opinion in western societies which felt sympathy with Zionists over the holocaust was totally against the regime during the 22-day war in Gaza. Western public opinion, accordingly, concluded that the Zionist regime is not a victim of a massacre titled holocaust but it is by itself a criminal who performs mass genocide.

The Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement (also known as BDS), a campaign promoting various forms of boycott against the Israeli regime, is a good example of anti-Zionist approaches across the world.

## ■ 'Depopulation' a big challenge for the Israeli regime

As discussed, the Zionist regime has applied 'settler colonialism' policy, which includes the replacement of indigenous populations with an invasive settler society that, over time, develops a distinctive identity and sovereignty. In past years, the regime sought to attract people from across the globe into its illegal territory to guarantee its existence. Any threat against the Zionist population number, accordingly, is considered a threat to its existence. Based on the figures provided by the Tel Aviv regime, its population currently is a bit more than eight million, of which 2.5 million are Palestinians with Israeli identity certificates, who are regarded as residents, not citizens. 1.25 million of the population are the Jews who used to live in Palestine but migrated countries such as the U.S., the UK, Poland and etc. They are, however, counted as Israelis in official statistics although they do not live inside the regime's territory. In addition, the number of applicants for living in the occupied lands is also dropping.

Therefore, the population is declining and this is a big challenge for the regime.

## ■ Unfair distribution of wealth in a nonhomogeneous population ignites dissatisfaction in occupied lands

The regime in Tel Aviv is ruling a nonhomogeneous population, i.e. members have different origins and cultures. However, the distribution of wealth and power among those living in occupied lands is not equitable. There have been several protests and riots in occupied lands, accordingly.

## ■ Zionist regime experiencing incremental, endogenous collapse

The regime in Tel Aviv is coping with some endogenous challenges, as well. Coalitions in the regime are dissolved one after another, forming new ones but a large number of these coalitions' members are not able to gain victory in elections to form a government. As we see, after three rounds of holding elections, there is still no government. The gaps among Zionist society is ever-increasing, the issue can strengthen the probability of the regime's collapse.

As sociologists in the occupied lands assert, chances for the regime to survive the ongoing conditions are not high and it may collapse within one or two decades. As experts confirm, the Zionist regime is struggling to pull its self out of the swamp it is entrapped in.

## ■ By 'Deal of Century' U.S. wants to kill 2 birds with 1 stone

The 'Deal of Century' is a Zionist-American plan,

designed to finish the job with Palestine. Regarding the growing economic power of China and India besides those of the BRICS or the EU, American think-tanks have advised the government to put an end into the Middle-East case. The U.S. military presence in the Middle East reduces its chance against economic powers. Therefore, the U.S. hegemony and its unilateralism approaches in the world are under a dire threat, and to protect itself, the country needs to reinforce its economic power and increase the costs for its rivals.

One of the cases that the U.S. has spent a lot on is the Middle East, in which Americans have counted on the Zionist regime. To put an end to this file, the U.S. presented the Deal of Century, which seeks the eradication of Palestine and the Palestinian identity.

The deal includes a new wave of immigration and will bring a huge number of refugees. It can be translated into a 'new type of population displacement'. The deal urges a group of displaced Palestinians to settle down in Soma, under the control of Egypt. Another group must be accommodated in Jordan. The deal also bans the return of Palestinian refugees, living in other countries, to their homeland.

In better words, being implemented, the 'Deal of Century' will leave no country for Palestinians and in result, will break the Resistance Axis; The U.S. will kill two birds by one stone!

## ■ 'Deal of Century' doomed to failure

The U.S. plans to pull out its forces from the Middle East but before that it needs to form parallel power, with the Zionist regime as the pivotal point. The Resistance Axis and the Islamic Revolution of Iran are, however, the major obstacles on the way of the U.S. and its Arab allies who seek to carry out conspiracy plots against regional countries.

In general, the capacities and capabilities of the Resistance Axis in the region and the challenges that the U.S. and Tel Aviv regime are dealing with do not allow the Deal of Century to hit its set targets. There are some concerns for the U.S. about the implementation of its proposed plan, among which that can be referred is the Zionist regime's inability in forming a government in the occupied lands.

The integrated Resistance Axis is now influential enough with an acceptable level of deterrence power in the region not to let the US to make the deal operation. The Zionist regime cannot impose wars against the axis and it is fully aware that any attack will be responded harshly. Lebanese Hezbollah has become an obsession for the Zionist regime, which is much stronger than in 2006.

Also, comes the Islamic Republic of Iran, which proved its might and authority targeting a U.S. airbase in Iraq a few months ago after the martyrdom of Lt. Gen. Qasem Soleimani and is deterring any foreign aggression in the Persian Gulf. Yemen has also improved into a new resistance axis. Syria is stepping out of a 10-year-old internal war, while Iraq is striving to establish an independent government. Tehran-Beirut road is being formed gradually.

For sure, the mighty Resistance Axis will not allow the U.S. to reach its desired goals.

## 'Establishment of Jewish state Western plot to control over region's oil reserves'

By Mirzafarjouyan

An American analyst believes that the establishment of the Jewish state was a Western plot to extend its influence in a part of the world not its own, wanting control over the region's vast oil reserves.

Nakba day, meaning 'Day of the Catastrophe', is observed on 15 May every year, commemorating the displacement of 700,000 Palestinians forced to flee as a result of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, the land theft and the destruction and depopulation of hundreds of Palestinian towns and villages.

The refugees forced to seek refuge in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip, often without citizenship being granted.

Many Palestinians continue to hold and treasure the keys to their lost homes, and the key has become a symbol of Palestinian right to return home.

Nakba Day commemorations typically take the form of rallies and speeches in cities around Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza, with Palestinian marchers commonly brandishing placards, flags, and house keys, the latter symbols of the homes and still-deserted villages their families have not been allowed to return to.

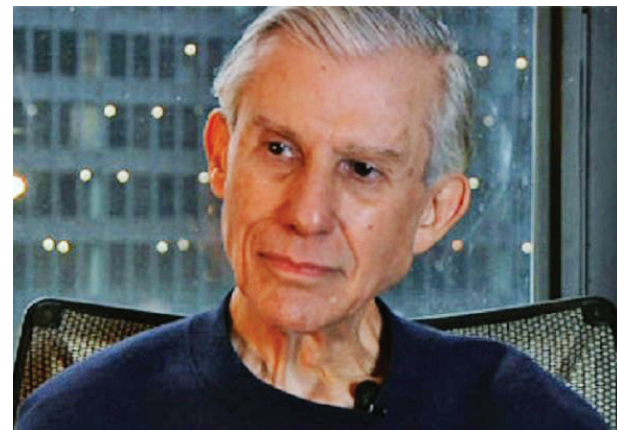
Defending the right of existence and the right of return of the indigenous Palestinians was wrongly equated with anti-Semitism.

On May 15, millions of Palestinians living in the Palestinian territories and abroad will mark the 72nd anniversary of the Nakba.

To shed light on the issue, we reached out to American analyst and columnist Stephen Lendman.

Following is the text of our interview with him:

72 years have passed since the Israeli regime's occupation of the Palestinian lands; where is the regime standing today in terms of identity as well as the political and social status?



The Israeli regime is concerned internationally about one thing alone — maintaining full U.S. support no matter how egregious its policies against Palestinians and regional countries like Iran and Syria.

As long as U.S. support continues, its ruling regimes know they can do whatever they please with impunity. The Netanyahu regime consistently and repeatedly takes full advantage.

The status of Palestinians is dismal and getting worse ahead with Israel's planned annexation of illegal settlements, the Jordan Valley and the northern Dead Sea, along with further areas it intends incorporating into its territory unlawfully — a major Fourth Geneva and UN Charter breach.

Resistance is the only Palestinian option — on their own because no one internally will help. The Abbas-led PA operates in cahoots with Israel regime, claiming to support the Palestinian people but its actions show otherwise.

What do the current political crises and rifts among the Israeli regime authorities, as well as the regime's undermined security, suggest?

Internal Israeli rifts appear to be largely resolved. Benny Gantz surrendered to Netanyahu's demands. Both figures are hostile to regional peace and Palestinian rights. Netanyahu's trial on serious charges of bribery, fraud, and breach of trust is scheduled to begin in late May.

It was postponed earlier, possibly again. He's doing whatever it takes to retain power and stay out of prison. Most Israeli's despised him and wants him replaced. Whether he stays or goes won't change the country's policies.

■ Based on the available data on the U.S. and Britain's arms and financial support to the Israeli regime, how do you see the role of Washington and London in the formation and realization of the Zionist regime?

The U.S. and NATO one-sidedly support the Israel regime at the expense of regional peace and Palestinian rights. I see nothing ahead that will change this.

■ The Israeli regime has been struggling to repel the Palestinians' and Lebanese' resistance movement in the past years; have the Zionists been successful in this regard? And will these efforts help Tel Aviv survive?

Since establishment in May 1948, the Israel regime has been very successful in achieving its aims and growing in strength, including as a nuclear power. The establishment of the Jewish state was a Western plot to extend its influence in a part of the world not its own, viewing Arabs as inferior people, Westerners superior, wanting control over the region's vast oil reserves.

Western civilization is deeply flawed. Self-declaring itself superior is part of its racist attacks on others elsewhere, especially nations rich in resources the West seeks control over.

■ The normalization process of Arab-Israeli ties has been accelerated in recent years, and they are not hiding it anymore; what are the main reasons behind such measures by the Israeli regime?

Most Arab states sold out to the U.S.-led West long ago, allowing themselves to be exploited instead of uniting to resist and maintain their independence.

■ The U.S. moved its embassy from Tel Aviv to al-Quds in 2017; how much did this measure favor the legalization process of the Zionist regime?

Moving the U.S. embassy to Quds was symbolic, but also something Israeli regime long sought as a way to make its illegitimacy look legitimate. It's a short-term gain I don't believe will stand the test of time.

The Israel regime is a rogue regime. Long term it's sowing its own demise as a regional power, the same thing true of the US globally. It's a declining power while China, Russia, Iran, and other nations are rising. That's the future but things play out slowly.

## Zionists in isolation after seven decades

By Morteza Rahmani

Head of Tehran Jewish Association Homayoun Sameyeh says the Zionist regime, despite all its struggles and the supports by some western countries, has not been able to find a fixed global position since its forcible establishment 72 years ago.

"The more time passes, the more the Israeli regime faces global isolation, contrary to its longstanding wish for a fixed position among the world countries," Sameyeh said in an interview with Tehran Times, on the occasion of 72nd anniversary of the Nakba Day (Day of Catastrophe).

The Nakba Day (May 15) marks the establishment of the Israeli regime in 1948 and the forcible expulsion of about 700,000 Palestinians from their lands and their scattering across refugee camps in the West Bank, Gaza, and neighboring countries.

Sameyeh, who chairs Tehran Jewish Association and has recently won the Jewish seat in Iran's 11th Parliamentary elections, sat for a talk with Tehran Times on this matter.

Here is the text his interview:

■ 72 years have passed since the Israeli regime's occupation of the Palestinian lands; where is the regime standing today in terms of identity as well as the political and social status?

This year marks the 72nd anniversary of the occupation of the Palestinian territories by the Zionist regime with the support of the arrogant powers of the time, including colonial Britain. During these years, not only has this regime committed massive massacres and oppression of the Palestinian people, but it has also created insecurity and fomented tensions and conflicts in the West Asia region.

Such disturbing measures have revealed the vicious nature of the regime to all freedom-seekers in the world, and have consequently added to the isolation of the Zionists.

■ What do the current political crises and rifts among the Israeli regime authorities, as well as the regime's undermined security, suggest?

More than a year has passed since the

elections of the Zionist regime, however, we can see that the lack of serious coordination among its authorities has prevented any practical move for the formation of the cabinet in the regime.

the volatile situation in the regime can also be seen in many rifts among its political parties as well as public protests inside occupied lands.

■ The Israeli regime has been struggling to repel the Palestinians' and Lebanese' resistance movement in the past years; have the Zionists been successful in this regard? And will these efforts help Tel Aviv survive?

Despite all its pointless struggles and the massacre of the Palestinians, the Zionist regime has not achieved such an ill-wished goal, and these crimes have led to nothing but a global shame for its leaders.

We all hope to see the decline of this regime in the near future and to see the freedom of the oppressed people of Palestine and their attainment of their rights.

■ What have been the impacts of the Resistance Movement's military progress



## 800 historical monuments, sites to be ceded to private sector

**HERITAGE** **TEHRAN** — Some 800 historical monuments and sites across the country have been identified to be temporarily ceded to the private sector with the aim of higher productivity and better maintenance.



“About 800 monuments have been handed over to the fund [the Revitalization and Utilization Fund for Historical Places], and will be ceded to the private sector for restoration and maintenance,” IRIB quoted Hadi Mirzaei, the director of the Fund, as saying on Wednesday.

Over the past couple of years, tens of historical places and monuments have been similarly ceded to the private sector. Upon an initiative scheme, the Fund (known by its Persian acronym Saabta) provides the opportunity for privately-owned businesses to run certain old structures to be maintained and repurposed into hotels, traditional restaurants or lodging places.

According to cultural heritage officials, this sort of investment seems to be attractive for private investors, because accommodation in [well-preserved] monuments is attractive for both domestic and foreign tourists.

The Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts announced last December that of the numerous historical buildings and structures that are scattered across Iran, some 2,500 ones need restoration.

Iran hosts some of the world’s oldest cultural monuments including bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, gardens, rich natural and rural landscapes, more than 20 of which registered on the prestigious UNESCO World Heritage list.

## Ancient castles and fortresses in Iran: Alamut Castle

**HERITAGE** **TEHRAN** — Nestled on top of a hill in a relatively remote village amidst the northern Iran’s Alborz Mountains, the well-fortified Alamut Castle was once sheltering the followers of Hasan-e Sabbah (1070–1124), spiritual leader of Islam’s heretical Ismaili sect, known as ‘Assassins’.



In popular myth, Sabbah led a bizarre, much-feared mercenary organization whose members were dispatched to murder or kidnap leading political and religious figures of the day.

In early 1930s, British-Italian explorer and travel writer Freya Stark described her exploration of the place in her book “The Valleys of the Assassins”.

Nowadays, the ruined castle is a top travel destination in northeastern side of Gazor Khan Village in the environs of Mo’aleh Kalayeh, from the environs of Roudbar of Alamut, Qazvin province.

While approaching the village, you should pass for nearly half along a narrow road surrounded by cherry and pomegranate orchards, until a mass of gray-brown rock looms from distance with fortifications perched atop a summit.

Alamut, which means “eagle’s nest”, is a geographic region in the western edge of the Alborz range, between the dry and barren plain of Qazvin in the south and the densely forested slopes of the Mazandaran province in the north.

Narratives say that the name Alamut derives from a regional eighth-century king who spied an eagle landing amid its rugged lofty crags and was inspired to build an impregnable fortress.

Sabbah’s rule from Alamut (which he renamed City of Good Fortune) is shrouded in mystery and enigma. This is partly because most Ismaili records of the era were destroyed by the Mongols while the writings of their detractors survived.

It is said that Assassins believed that their actions would transport them to paradise. Supposedly Sabbah cunningly cultivated such beliefs by getting his followers stoned on hashish (unknown to them) and then showing them beautiful secret gardens.

This gave the sect its popular name ‘Hashish-iyun’, root of the modern English term ‘assassin’. Or so the story goes. Peter Willey’s book, Eagle’s Nest, gives an altogether more sympathetic version, portraying Sabbah as a champion of the free-thinking, pro-science Islamic tradition and suggesting that the hashish tales were exaggerations designed to denigrate Ismaili Islam.

Whatever the truth, most of the impregnable Ismaili castles were captured by Mongol ruler Hulagu Khan in 1256 using diplomatic trickery, having earlier forced the surrender of the Ismailis’ spiritual leader (Sabbah’s successor).

The crushing of Alamut Castle was effectively the end of the Ismailis for generations, though believers resurfaced centuries later and now Ismaili Islam is the predominant faith in parts of Tajikistan and northern Pakistan (though not at all in Iran).

The castle was almost forgotten and only returned to public consciousness with the publication of Stark’s 1930s travel diary Valleys of the Assassins. A copy of that recently reprinted volume makes a great companion for the trip.

Most visitors -- virtually all Iranian -- regard the gorgeous mountain-rimmed valley as an idyllic weekend retreat. Villages and hamlets dot its floor and sides; corn fields and rice paddies occupy parcels of land between ravines, and irregular terraced plateaus ruffle the valley’s picturesque undulating terrain.

A steep trail winds up the hillside past an unfinished hoist to a narrow saddle overlooked by a weirdly eroded slanting crown of rock and cliffs. Snack and tea vendors do a brisk trade beneath the castle’s entrance kiosk.

# Ancient Iranian relief depicting victory over enemies restored

**HERITAGE** **TEHRAN** — A team of Iranian archaeologists and restorers have completed an intricate restoration project on a 3rd-millennium-BC bas-relief, which depicts the victory of a King over his enemies. The relief is carved on the face of a rock cliff in Salas-e Babajani county, Kermanshah province.

“A bas-relief [located] in Salas-e Babajani, which was once determining a political border between Iran and Mesopotamian, has been fully restored by experts affiliated with Iran’s Research Institute for Cultural Heritage and Tourism,” Mehr reported on Tuesday.

The relief shows a scene of a king’s victory over his enemies, in which the king’s body is larger than the others, with one of his legs placed on a captive’s abdomen, the report said.

The work of art had been suffered from triple problems; an earthquake with a moment magnitude of 7.3 that occurred on the Iran–Iraq border in November 2017; heavy downpours; and vandalize acts.

To restore the relief, some epoxy resins were merged with mineral supplements to come close to the original color of the object but attempted to make a slight difference so that forthcoming generations would not have trouble for conducting further research. For areas with deep fracture points, stainless steel wires were used and molded with specific epoxy-filled solution. Moreover, the whole relief was covered by a layer of nano-silica coating.

According to earlier reports by the provincial tourism department, the magnificent bas-relief, which depicts Iddin-Sin who was a monarch of the Kingdom of Simurru [circa 2000-1900 BC], is one of the most important archaeological



findings [in the region] that can reveal some information about Zagros-inhabited tribes in the third millennium BC.

The relief is one of a group of similar rocks carved on the high cliffs of the eastern border of Mesopotamia. This area was marked by numerous battles between the Mesopotamian cities, outstanding

among them is Ur, and their opponents, during the last two hundred years of the third millennium. Despite the long and well-documented rivalry between Ur and Simurru, these rock relief carvings exhibit features typical of the Mesopotamian tradition, namely, the depiction of a young king trampling his enemy in front of a

goddess and carrying a scepter surmounted by two volutes.

The Simurru Kingdom was an important city-state of the Mesopotamian area from around 2000 BC to 1500 BC, during the period of the Akkadian Empire down to Ur III. The Simurru were regularly in conflict with the Akkadian Empire.

## Dutch envoy visits tulips field near Tehran, calls it ‘breathtaking’

**HERITAGE** **TEHRAN** — Dutch Ambassador to Iran, Jacques Werner, has paid a visit to a vast colorful tulip plain near the Iranian capital, calling it ‘breathtaking’.

“Breathtaking. Very nice to see these beautiful #tulip fields, yesterday, only one hour drive from #Tehran, near Kondor/Karaj in the Alborz mountains, with thousands of colourful #tulips,” Werner tweeted on Sunday.

One of the tourist attractions in the Alborz province, the plain is situated in Kondor village, some 22 km far from Karaj county, west of Tehran. The hillside plain is home to over 2,100,000 tulip bulbs in 30 different types cultivated in the area of 3.5 hectares, creating a spectacular view in the Alborz mountain range.

Finally, the complex has an array of small,



local bazaars selling traditional products, including herbal infusions, plums, and other goods — providing a well-needed income for locals. The beauty of the flowers and plants, as well as the charming buildings and bazaar, offer people a chance to forget about the hostel and bustle of living in big cities for a few hours.

Iran is the hub of tulips, which is called “Laleh” in Persian. The tulip became one of the most common symbols of the 1979 Islamic Revolution as well.

According to geographical research, around 170 various types of tulip grow across the country. Some researchers believe that tulip was taken from Iran to Constantinople by the envoy of the Roman Emperor Ferdinand I to Iran, who took the tulip grain to Vienna in the 16th century and introduced the flower to Europeans.

## Restoration begins on Xerxes rock-hewn tomb in Naqsh-e Rostam

**TOURISM** **TEHRAN** — A restoration project has been commenced on parts of Xerxes rock-hewn tomb in Naqsh-e Rostam, a royal rock-hewn necropolis in Fars province, southern Iran, manager of the historical site Mostafa Rakshandeh announced, CHTN reported on Monday.

Cracks, contraction and expansion, the internal pressure of rocks and plant growth have damaged most of the bas-relief carvings of the tomb, of which 13 have been restored, he added.

He also noted that the restoration project, which is one of the biggest of its kind, has begun since 2017 and will continue until the full restoration of the tomb.

Xerxes I, Old Persian Khshayarsha, by name Xerxes the Great, (born c. 519 BCE—died 465, Persepolis, Iran), Persian king (486–465 BCE), the son and successor of Darius I. He is best known for his massive invasion of Greece from across the Hellespont (480 BCE), a campaign marked by the battles of Thermopylae, Salamis, and Plataea.

His ultimate defeat spelled the beginning of the decline of the Achaemenian Empire.

Naqsh-e Rostam, meaning “Picture of Rostam” is named after mythical Iranian hero which is most celebrated in Shahnameh and Persian mythology. Back in time, natives of the region had erroneously supposed that the carvings below the tombs represent depictions of the mythical hero.

One of the wonders of the ancient world, Naqsh-e Rostam embraces four tombs are where Persian Achaemenid kings are laid to rest, believed to be those of Darius II, Artaxerxes I, Darius I and Xerxes I (from left to right facing the cliff), although some historians are still debating this.

There are gorgeous bas-relief carvings above the tomb chambers that are similar to those at Persepolis, with the kings standing on thrones supported by figures representing the subject nations below. There also two similar graves situated on the premises of Persepolis probably belong to Artaxerxes II and Artaxerxes III.

Beneath the funerary chambers are dotted



with seven Sassanian era (224–651) bas-reliefs cut into the cliff depict vivid scenes of imperial conquests and royal ceremonies; signboards below each relief give a detailed description in English.

At the foot of Naqsh-e Rostam, in the direction of the cliff face, stands a square

building known as Ka’beh-ye Zardusht, meaning Kaaba of Zoroaster. The building, which is roughly 12 meters high and 7 meters square, probably was constructed in the first half of the 6th century BC, although it bears variety of inscriptions from later periods.



## 17th-century caravanserai, now elegant 5-star hotel

**HERITAGE** **TEHRAN** — The extensively renovated Abbasi Hotel was once a Safavid-era (1501-1736) caravanserai in Isfahan, central Iran.

Arranged around a huge garden of ponds and towering cedars, and with a view of the madrasa’s lovely dome beyond, the centuries-old hotel is a very special place to stay.

Hotel facilities include a cozy traditional restaurant, a welcoming coffee shop, a business center, craft shops, and an indoor pool, a sauna, and a gym.

Isfahan is a living museum of traditional culture and home to a wide range of magnificent Islamic structures.





# UNICEF provides wound dressings for EB children in Iran

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has shipped specialized wound dressings for Iranian children suffering from Epidermolysis bullosa (EB), also known as butterfly disease, with financial support of Germany.

The wound dressings, a product of the Swedish pharmaceutical company Mölnlycke, were procured by UNICEF Global Supply Hub in Copenhagen. Weighing 5.8 metric tons. This shipment of wound dressings will be delivered to the Ministry of Health for handover to Iran's EB Home Foundation and further distribution among families with EB children in various provinces.

Although food and medicine are claimed to be exempted from U.S. sanctions, financial and banking sanctions have limited the life-saving medicine trade which harshly targeted the patients.

Across the country, 700 people have been diagnosed with EB, but consid-



ering that EB is estimated to occur in 1 newborn per 50,000 live births, it is suggested that in Iran 1,200 people are suffering EB.

In Iran, these patients are known as "butterflies" because their skin is as fragile as butterflies' wings, EB patients are in desperate need of special bandages as even minor frictions cause severe painful blisters. The condition usually manifests in infancy or early childhood. EB has no cure, although symptoms of mild forms of the disease can improve with age.

Without the bandages, they face difficulties even in their daily routine, including walking, eating or even breathing, and unfortunately there is no alternative treatment for such pain.

Exemptions for humanitarian trade (such as food, medicine and medical equipment) have not been effective in protecting Iranian patients from access to imported medicine, such as the bandages used for EB patients' treatment.

## Iran, Russia to enhance cooperation in fight against coronavirus

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Health Minister Saeed Namaki and his Russian counterpart Mikhail Albertovich Murashko discussed ways to enhance cooperation in dealing with the coronavirus pandemic.

It is necessary to expand cooperation and exchange experiences between Iran and Russia in the fight against the coronavirus and also with more efforts of countries in the region by observing health protocols and trade exchanges, Namaki said during a video conference meeting held on Tuesday.

Pointing to the need for cooperation between the two countries amid COVID-19 prevalence, he said that with the support of the World Health Organization, Iran took measures in the framework of the National Basij, social distancing and then the gradual reopening of businesses within the framework of smart distancing plan, which led to a drop in the burden of disease and mortality in



the country.

He noted that the cooperation between the Iranian and Russian Ministries of Health have improved in re-

cent years, and that efforts have been made to expand bilateral relations and cooperation, especially in the fields of research and medicine, as well as the transfer of experience.

Murashko, for his part, described Russia's health care measures, especially border control, equipping hospitals, developing and communicating health and medical protocols to the public, staff, centers and institutions, as well as medical measures.

He acknowledged that the lock-downs and restrictions have caused serious economic consequences.

Referring to quality strategic relations between Iran and Russia, he emphasized that the development of relations and mutual cooperation in various fields of health and research, especially medicine and vaccines.

Russia, with over 242,000 COVID-19 cases, and Iran, with more than 112,000 confirmed cases, are both among the top 10 countries most affected by the pandemic.

## Frog populations 'suffering alarming decline' due to over-consumption by people

Water frogs are in danger of becoming regionally extinct in parts of Turkey, where they are native, due to over-harvesting for human consumption, scientists have warned.

A study has shown the population of Anatolian water frogs fell by around 20 per cent each year between 2013 and 2015 in Turkey's Ceyhan and Seyhan deltas.

Researchers from Ege University, Middle East Technical University, Stony Brook University and the Turkish government, predicted a 90-per-cent chance the frogs would be wiped out in the south-central Cukurova Region by 2050. If harvesting trends continue, they could even be extinct by 2032.

The frog harvesting industry in Turkey, which is about 40 years old, is worth

nearly \$4m (£3.2m) each year. More than 36 million of the amphibians are exported from Turkey annually, mainly to countries in the EU and the USA.

The amphibians are widely eaten in east and southeast Asia, as well as in the US and France. A joint investigation by the Moving Animals group and The Independent in February found that live frogs were being crammed into tubs and sold in street markets in Vietnam.

The new study, published in conservation journal Oryx, said Turkey occupied a precarious position in an "extinction domino" line, in which the pressure to supply frogs could threaten other populations that are currently stable.

Kerim Cicek, one of the authors, said: "Declining amphibian populations

worldwide could have an irreversible and destructive impact on both natural ecosystems and human welfare. They are integral components of many ecosystems, often constituting the highest fraction of vertebrate biomass.

"Unfortunately, the literature on declining amphibian populations and its conservation has increased exponentially each year. We must stop the alarming decline of amphibians before it's too late."

However, the solution may not be as simple as banning the harvesting of frogs wholesale. When frog harvest was banned in France and Romania, exports of wild frogs from India and Bangladesh increased, the authors said. When harvesting was subsequently banned in those countries, the problem of declining frog



populations was replicated in Indonesia and China — the latter of which is now the largest exporter of frogs.

The average harvest from the Ceyhan and Seyhan delta region is about 327 tonnes annually — about 17 million frogs, the Independent reported.

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ع

## Guardian Council ratifies bill on soil conservation

The Guardian Council ratified the bill on soil conservation which has been passed by the Majlis (Iranian Parliament) earlier in February, Masoumeh Hosseinpour, director general of department for parliamentary and legal affairs at the Department of Environment (DOE) has announced.

As per the law, any trade or export of soil is prohibited, and only the excretion of minerals or exportation of low amounts of soil for research purposes is excluded after meeting the legal process, she noted.

She went on to add that under the law, the judiciary system seeks to establish specific centers in order to pursue the related issues or violations, mining activities are also subject to compliance with environmental regulations.

## لایحه حفاظت از خاک توسط شورای نگهبان تایید شد

مدیر کل دفتر حقوقی و امور مجلس سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست اظهار داشت: لایحه حفاظت از خاک بعد از تصویب مجلس شورای اسلامی، به تایید شورای نگهبان رسید.

به گزارش گروه محیط زیست خبرگزاری فارس، معصومه حسین پور، گفت: در قانون حفاظت از خاک انتقال خاک به خارج از کشور ممنوع است و فقط خروج مواد معدنی و مقادیر کم خاک به منظور امور پژوهشی پس از رعایت فرایند قانونی مربوط مستثنی است.

مدیر کل دفتر حقوقی و امور مجلس سازمان محیط زیست درباره نقش دیگر نهادها در این قانون گفت: بر اساس این قانون قوه قضائیه به منظور رسیدگی به جرائم موضوع نسبت به ایجاد شعب تخصصی اقدام و به جرائم مربوط خارج از نوبت رسیدگی می کند. بر اساس این قانون عملیات معدنی هم منوط به رعایت ضوابط زیست محیطی خواهد بود.

## PREFIX/SUFFIX

### “uni-”

■ **Meaning:** single  
■ **For example:** **unicorn** is a mythical animal represented as a horse with a single straight horn.

## PHRASAL VERB

### Part with something

■ **Meaning:** to give something to someone else, although you do not want to  
■ **For example:** I'm reluctant to part with any of the kittens, but we need the money.

## IDIOM

### Off the cuff

■ **Explanation:** to say something without any previous thought or preparation  
■ **For example:** He handles off-the-cuff interviews very well.

## Climate change may kickstart dormant El Niño weather system in Indian Ocean

An El Niño-like weather system that has been dormant for millennia in the Indian Ocean could be kick-started due to climate change, according to new research.

The study found small shifts in sea surface temperature in the Indian Ocean could lead to weather patterns similar to the El Niños currently experienced over the Pacific Ocean.



The El Niño phenomenon is a broad, ocean-atmosphere climate interaction linked to periodic warm waters along the Equator across the central and eastern areas of the Pacific Ocean, according to the National Ocean Service. They typically occur every three to seven years and an episode can last up to two years.

El Niños can dramatically influence weather patterns around the world and cause both flooding and droughts, depending on the region. A study last year found that climate change has increased the frequency of extreme El Niño events in the Pacific region.

The El Niño event that ended in 2016 caused mass coral bleaching on the Great Barrier Reef, intense droughts across Africa, South America and regions of the Pacific and southeast Asia. Wildfires in Indonesia and Canada were also linked to it.

The new study, published last week in Science Advances, found that raising or lowering the average global temperatures by just a few degrees may cause the Indian Ocean to behave in a similar way to other tropical oceans with its own El Niño. It could start to take effect within the next 30 years.

The Indian Ocean previously experienced El Niño patterns more than 20,000 years ago during the last Ice Age.

Climate scientist Pedro DiNezio, from the University of Texas at Austin who co-authored the study, told Earther: "The re-emergence will depend strongly on the rate of global warming, so ultimately on whether greenhouse gas emissions are abated or not."

"We are certain that the risks of these extreme events is becoming larger and larger as we pump more CO2 into the atmosphere, and certainly going to have an unequal impact on countries in the tropics."

The team of researchers analysed 36 different climate models from the Coupled Model Intercomparison Project (CMIP) — a collaboration by climate scientists aimed at improving knowledge of climate change.

The team selected the models which match current conditions most accurately and then analysed how increased global warming might alter conditions for the Indian Ocean.

According to the models, global warming could reverse the west-to-east winds in the Indian Ocean which currently keep conditions stable, the Independent reported.

If El Niño patterns emerge over the Indian Ocean, regions of Africa, Asia and Australasia, which are already vulnerable to the most extreme climate change impacts, may see an increase in storms, floods and droughts.

## WORDS IN THE NEWS

### China details space plans

(October 06, 2003)

Just days before China is expected to launch its first manned space flight, a Chinese defence official has spoken about China's even more ambitious space programme.

These comments are a sign that Chinese ambitions in space go far beyond a **manned space flight**. A top defence official, Wang Shuquan, said China will conduct tests for a future **lunar landing** and the Beijing Youth Daily newspaper has described the next milestone after the manned space flight as sending a satellite to **orbit the moon**. This lunar orbiter would circle the moon for a year, gathering information about the moon's geology, soil, environment and natural resources.

In the past Chinese officials have even talked of the possibility of **establishing a base** on the moon.

But what happens to these plans is likely to depend on the success of China's **manned space flight**, and although no dates have been officially revealed, that's believed to be just days away. The speculation in the Chinese press is that it will **blast off** just after the plenary meeting of the Communist party's central committee which ends on October 14th.

A successful launch will **spark an outpouring** of national pride, boosting the credibility of the Communist party. Failure however would be a huge **loss of face**.

It's not yet known who China's first **astronaut**, or taikonaut, as they are called here, will be. But reports say fourteen **would-be astronauts** have arrived at the launch pad at Jiuquan in western Gansu province and are training inside the actual spacecraft.

■ **Words**  
**manned space flight:** a flight outside of the earth's atmosphere, with a human in the spacecraft  
**lunar landing:** a lunar landing happens when a spacecraft is brought down safely to the surface of the moon  
**milestone:** an important event in the history or development of something  
**orbit the moon:** follow a path that goes around the moon  
**establishing a base:** creating a place which people can live and work  
**blast off:** a spacecraft blasts off when it leaves the ground to begin its journey into space  
**spark an outpouring:** here - create very strong feelings within the Chinese population (if something sparks something else, it causes it to happen)  
**loss of face:** embarrassment  
**astronaut:** a person who travels in a spacecraft  
**would-be astronauts:** would-be astronauts are people who would like to be astronauts but aren't yet

(Source: BBC)



## Saudis react to economic squeeze

➔ 1 Brent subsequently closed out in March around \$22 a barrel. Two U.S. senators introduced legislation to remove U.S. military troops and equipment from Saudi Arabia if the kingdom did not stop pumping so much crude. Last month OPEC+ agreed to cut output by a record 9.7m barrels a day, but by then the global demand had already fallen around 30m barrels a day due to the measures intended to prevent the coronavirus from spreading.



Efforts by the world's top oil producers to cut supplies and boost prices are being overshadowed by concerns that fresh outbreaks of the coronavirus could lead to further economic losses. (Photo: Richard Carson/Reuters)

In March Saudis dig into their savings at the fastest pace in nearly 20 years. The kingdom has gone to the international debt market by issuing \$7 billion worth of bonds last month alone. But the kingdom cannot simply borrow its way out. Austerity measures were also needed by ramping up VAT from five to 15 percent. Now Saudis citizens will face inflation caused by tripling of VAT along with a reduction in their disposable income of the breadwinner starting in June.

Pundits believe that the austerity measures can lead to social unrest with the existence of a social contract between the ruler and ruled that pivots on a generous welfare state in exchange for political obedience.

This Tuesday Aramco reported a 25 percent fall (\$16.64 billion from \$22.17bn last year) in first-quarter net profit as Brent crude prices fell 65 percent despite Russian and Saudi announcement of 9.7m barrels in output cuts starting from May.

Aramco had kept output at 9.7m bpd during the first three months of the year before opening its taps in April after the collapse in earlier supply cut talks with Russia.

==Hajj & Umrah cancellation  
Apart from the earnings from crude exports, one of the kingdom's bread earners is tourism in the form of pilgrimage. The kingdom has asked Muslims to postpone their pilgrimage this year because of the health risks but the annual pilgrimage is still officially scheduled for late July.

On March 4, Saudi authorities cancelled the umrah, a voluntary meritorious pilgrimage, for its citizen. Foreign citizens were already barred from travelling to the kingdom for umrah. Official figures from 2019 indicate that more than 7.5 million people performed the minor pilgrimage.

Like many countries, the kingdom has enforced a lockdown and curfew in an attempt to stem the outbreak. If the Hajj pilgrimage cancellation is implemented, it will be added to a list of almost 40 dramatic cancellations since the first pilgrimage in year 629.

In 2012 Saudi Arabia was the epicenter of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus MERS-CoV virus originated from infected camels. Although it had a higher fatality rate of 34 percent but its rate of infection was lower than Covid-19 and the disease was contained.

Returning back to this year's Hajj pilgrimage, the absence of millions of pilgrims in Mecca and Medina this year will have devastating consequences for the tourism industry of the country.

Every year, more than two million perform the five-day religious ceremony of Hajj where pilgrims gather for a set of rituals in Mecca, travelling together to several sites in the outskirts of the city and then visiting the holy city of Medina, 300 miles away, where the Prophet Muhammad (S) is buried.

Saudi National Tourism Committee emphasized the need to restructure the sector to make it major contributor to the national economy as early as 2016, when tourism sector contributed \$22.6 billion to the Saudi GDP with Hajj and Umrah providing \$12 billion.

Economist Abdullah Katib estimates the annual revenue from Hajj season at \$5.3-6.1 billion about 40 percent of this revenue comes from housing, 15 percent from gifts, 10 percent from food and the remainder from other services."

The kingdom's reputation in the broader Muslim world has taken a battering in the past few years, with the tumultuous rise of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, its disastrous war in Yemen and the gruesome murder of Jamal Khashoggi.

The Hajj stampede of 2015 resulted in the deaths of over 2,400 pilgrims. Through DNA samples from victim's families only 11 Iranian bodies out of 389 repatriated were identified. Riyadh's lack of control and taking sufficient preliminary safety measures was criticized worldwide.

Riyadh needs to be cautious because implications of neglect this time around can be global.

## Afghan President orders troops to resume offensive against Taliban

➔ 1 "From now onwards the responsibility of further escalation of violence and its ramifications shall fall squarely on the shoulders of the Kabul administration," it said. National Security Advisor Hamdullah Mohib said on Twitter: "There seems little point in continuing to engage Taliban in peace talks."

The latest killings raise new questions about the fate of a hoped-for peace process that is teetering as Afghanistan grapples with a public health crisis due to the coronavirus.

The Taliban have largely refrained from launching major attacks on Afghan cities and American interests since the February deal meant to pave the way for peace talks with the Kabul government.

But the so-called intra-Afghan talks hit a wall as a prisoner swap - a key part of the Doha deal - was delayed as the Ghani administration refused to release 5,000 Taliban prisoners in one go. So far, the Afghan government has released nearly 1,000 Taliban prisoners while about 100 government prisoners have been set free by the Afghan armed group.

The accord will also see all U.S. and foreign forces quit Afghanistan over the next year. Thousands of U.S. troops have already pulled out, while a further 8,600 are expected within months.

# EU 'could impose sanctions' over Israel's annexation plan

The EU's Foreign Affairs Commission could impose sanctions on Israel if the latter implements its annexation plan in the occupied Palestinian West Bank, Israel Hayom revealed on Sunday. According to the Israeli newspaper, an informed source said that EU Foreign Policy Chief Josep Borrell is pushing for sanctions.

Israeli politicians within the new coalition government, including Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu and Blue and White leader Benny Gantz, have pledged repeatedly to annex large parts of the occupied territory. Indeed, the annexation of the illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank is part of U.S. President Donald Trump's "peace plan" known as the "deal of the century".

However, the newspaper pointed out that all major foreign policy decisions at the EU can only be made by a consensus among the bloc's 27 member states. If it comes to a vote, Israel believes that its allies



such as Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and the Czech Republic will block any major punitive action which Borrell may try to push through.

Sweden, Ireland and Luxembourg are apparently pushing for the harshest response to any annexation, namely suspending the EU-Israel Association Agreement, which regulates relations between Brussels and Tel Aviv. They might also push to exclude Israel from Horizon Europe, an ambitious EU research and innovation framework slated to run between 2021 and 2027, or for the EU to pull out of the open skies agreement with the occupation state, which it has yet to ratify.

According to Middle East monitor, all of these scenarios would have a significant economic impact, said Israel Hayom. It also alleged that Borrell is known for his "animosity" towards Israel. Critics of the colonial-settler state suggest that accusations of "anti-Semitism" are likely to follow.

## U.S. anti-ISIL chief says his goal in Syria is to create a 'quagmire' for Russia, not battle terrorism

James Jeffrey, the U.S. special envoy for Syria and defeating the ISIL (ISIS), has made quite a frank confession of how he sees his job and that of U.S. troops there: to create a new Vietnam or Afghanistan for Moscow.

"Our military presence, while small, is important for overall calculations. So we urge the Congress, the American people, the president to keep these forces on, but again this isn't Afghanistan, this isn't Vietnam, this isn't a quagmire," Jeffrey said on Tuesday, during a video event hosted by the Hudson Institute.

The arrival of the Russian expeditionary force in late 2015, following an invitation from Damascus, turned the tide of war in Syria. With their assistance, government forces rolled back both Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIS) terrorists and other militants, including Al-Qaeda affiliates, on multiple fronts – and scuttled U.S. plans for regime change in Damascus.

According to RT, Jeffrey grudgingly admitted the Russian military has been successful in Syria, but argued "they don't have a political way out of their problems" with Syrian President Bashar Assad, and the US aims to offer "a



way forward" through the UN – presumably referring to Resolution 2254 that Washington has long interpreted as "Assad must go."

The envoy's admission on Tuesday is a step beyond his remarks in early March, when he told reporters on a conference call that the U.S. aims to "make it very difficult" for Russia to help the Syrian government achieve a military victory.

## Pompeo lauds Israel over coronavirus cooperation, raps China

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo praised Israel on Wednesday for sharing information during global efforts to combat the coronavirus pandemic and took another swipe at China over what he said was its lack of transparency.

U.S. President Donald Trump and his senior officials have engaged in a war of words with China, where the new coronavirus first emerged, saying it failed to inform the world fast enough about the dangers it posed and muzzled those who raised the alarm. Beijing strongly denies the charges, Reuters reported.

Arriving in Israel on a one-day visit, Pompeo told Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu: "You're a great partner, you share information - unlike some other countries that try and obfuscate and hide that information - and we'll talk about that country, too."

Pompeo did not name China and did not give specific examples of Israeli cooperation in the fight against coronavirus.

Earlier, Pompeo repeated Washington's charges against Beijing in an interview for the Israel Hayom newspaper.

## Israeli aircraft violate Lebanese airspace, again

Multiple Israeli aircraft entered Lebanese airspace Wednesday in violation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701, which calls for Israel to respect Lebanon's sovereignty.

The state-run National News Agency reported that the aircraft flew at low altitude over several locations in south Lebanon including Hasbaya, Nabatieh, and the occupied Shebaa Farms, Daily Star reported.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres in an April 30 report said that such flyovers were "deeply concerning" and that Israeli aircraft made "near dai-

ly overflights above Lebanon" between October 2019 and April this year.

"The alleged use of Lebanese airspace by the Israel Defense Forces to strike targets in the Syrian Arab Republic is deeply concerning. I renew my call for Israel to adhere to its obligations under relevant Security Council resolutions and immediately cease its overflights above Lebanese airspace," Guterres said.

"Violations, by air and ground, run the risk of triggering an escalation and could jeopardize stability in Lebanon, Israel and beyond," Guterres added.

## FBI accidentally names Saudi official suspected of supporting 9/11 hijackers

The U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is reported to have accidentally revealed, in a court filing, the identity of a Saudi diplomat, who is suspected of having directed support for two of the al-Qaeda-linked hijackers involved in the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

In an exclusive investigative report on Wednesday, Yahoo News said the diplomat's name had been exposed after the FBI failed to cross out his name in one case in a declaration it had filed with federal court.

The declaration identifies the official as Mussaed Ahmed al-Jarrah, a Saudi Foreign Ministry official, who was assigned to the Saudi Embassy in Washington, D.C., in 1999 and 2000.

Some 3,000 people were killed in the attacks that targeted several locations across the U.S.

Saudi Arabia's name came to the fore in discussions concerning the historic acts of terror soon after their occurrence, with investigators quickly concluding that 15 of the 19 hijackers involved in the raids were of Saudi origin.

However, Riyadh has managed to avoid any liability amid what the families of the victims, survivors and their lawyers denounce as Washington's attempts to shield the kingdom



from any comeuppance.

### ■ 'Third man'

Until 2012, two Saudi officials were suspected of having provided chief support to two of the hijackers. The officials have been named as Fahad al-Thumairy, a radical Saudi cleric, who was the imam of the King Fahd Mosque in Los Angeles, and Omar al-Bayoumi, a suspected Saudi government agent.

## HRW slams Israel's 'discriminatory' land policies against Palestinians

Human Right Watch (HRW) has condemned the Israeli regime's discriminatory land policies against Palestinians in the West Bank, besieged Gaza Strip, and elsewhere in the occupied territories, saying while Palestinian communities are squeezed and their residents' access to land is being sharply restricted, Israeli-inhabited towns are growing.

The New York-based body, in a report published on Tuesday, said a great proportion of the Palestinian population has been confined to densely-populated towns and villages as a result of the Tel Aviv regime's decades-long discriminatory policies of land expropriation.

It noted that even though Palestinian neighborhoods have little room to expand, Israeli authorities nurture the growth and expansion of nearby predominantly Israeli communities – most of which have been constructed on Palestinian-owned lands.

Moreover, many Israeli-populated towns have admissions committees, which effectively do not allow Palestinians to live there.

The HRW went on to say that the Israeli regime directly controls 93 percent of the land in the occupied territories, including East Jerusalem al-Quds, and the so-called Israel Land Authority (ILA) manages and allocates such pieces of land.

Almost half the members of ILA's governing body apparently belong to an Israeli fund whose explicit mandate is to develop and lease land for Israeli Jews and not any other segment of the population.

Palestinian citizens of Israel constitute 21 percent of the population, but Israeli and Palestinian rights groups estimated in 2017 that less than 3 percent of all land there falls under the jurisdiction of Palestinian municipalities.

According to Press TV, Human Rights Watch noted that Israeli authorities have seized hundreds of thousands of dunams of land (10 dunams equals 1 hectare) from Palestinians since 1948, and much of the confiscation took place the following year,

when the Tel Aviv regime imposed military rule on most Palestinians in the occupied territories.

During this period, Israeli authorities confined Palestinians to dozens of enclaves and severely restricted their movement. They also used various military regulations and new laws to seize land belonging to internally-displaced Palestinians.

The HRW then underlined that the Israeli regime's policies in recent years have not only failed to overturn earlier land grabs, but have actually further restricted land available for the residential growth of Palestinians.

The group then cited the findings of a 2003 report that "many Arab towns and villages were surrounded by land designated for purposes" such as so-called security zones, regional councils, parks and nature reserves or highways, which "prevent or impede the possibility of their expansion in the future."

Additionally, the Arab Center for Al-

ternative Planning told the HRW that it estimates that 15 to 20 percent of homes in Palestinian towns and villages lack permits, because their owners' applications have either been rejected or because they did not apply knowing that Israeli officials would reject their requests.

The group then warned that between 60,000 and 70,000 homes in the occupied territories, excluding Jerusalem al-Quds, are estimated to be at risk of full demolition.

By contrast, in the cases reviewed by Human Rights Watch, Israeli planning authorities have offered sufficient land and zoning permissions to similarly-situated, predominantly Israeli communities to help their growth.

Eric Goldstein, acting West Asia executive director at the HRW, said, "These practices are well-known when it comes to the occupied West Bank, but Israeli authorities are also enforcing discriminatory land practices inside Israel."



# Iran football league to resume season in late June

**S P O R T S   T E H R A N** — Iran Professional League (IPL) can complete the season as the government have given the green light to restart the league in late June.

Iranian Deputy Health Minister Iraj Harirchi announced plans to ease the coronavirus lockdown.

“We held a meeting with Mehrzad Khalilian (head of the Sports Medicine Federation) on Monday and discussed with a view to complete the season as the organizers of La Liga, Serie A and Bundesliga are going to make it happen,” Harirchi said.

“With nine weeks remaining, we can finish the current season in six weeks. The teams will have three weeks to prepare for the competition,” he added.

“Of course, there will be red lines to restart the competition. The season would resume under the terms of a strict health protocol. The matches will be held behind closed doors but we will see a real football onto the field. Players must also avoid goal celebrations,” Harirchi stated.

“The initial protocols have been approved by Iran’s Health Ministry and Sports Ministry but the football federation will make a final decision about the resumption.

“We also have another option to finish the league but I think it will be a low-probability event. People above 65 years and the players with suspicious symptoms are not allowed to participate at the competition. All players will also be tested for COVID-19 every five days,” Harirchi concluded.



## Top 5: Iranian Wrestlers

**S P O R T S   T E H R A N** — Iran has provided some of the best talents that the world has throughout the many years of Iranian wrestling dominance.

That tradition has been long-standing and because of that, the official Instagram account for United World Wrestling (UWW) has taken a look at the top five Iranian wrestlers of all time.

The UWW has introduced the top five Iranian wrestlers.

### ■ 1- Gholamreza Takhti

And the strong tradition of Iranian wrestling can be found back in 1951. That’s when Gholamreza Takhti made his senior-level debut. Takhti comes in at number one.

Nicknamed The World Champion, Takhti was a three-time Olympic medalist capturing gold at the 1956 games.

He also earned a pair of silver medals in both the Helsinki and Rome Olympic games.

The two-time world champion was inducted into the United World Wrestling Hall of Fame in 2007.

The native of Tehran passed away all too young at the age of 37, but his legacy and impact he had on Iranian wrestling will last forever.

### ■ 2- Hamid Sourian

Iran’s first-ever Greco-Roman Olympic champion comes in at number two. Hamid Sourian was part of an unparalleled powerhouse 2012 Iranian squad.

Sourian was one of three Greco-Roman champions



for Iran in the London Olympic Games and also represented Iran in both the 2008 and 2016 Olympic games.

The six-time world champion won 34 consecutive matches before disqualification and a bad streak in the 2015 world quarter-finals.”

### ■ 3-Abdollah Movahed

“A blast from the past checks in at number three, with Abdollah Movahed. A five-time world champion raised eyebrows in his senior-level debut back in 1959 and his career took off from there.

Movahed was a two-time Olympic champion bringing the prestigious gold back to Babolsar in both the 1964 and 1968 games.

Movahed was perfect during a five-year stretch in the prime of his career, not losing a match while claiming five world titles.”

### ■ 4- Rasoul Khadem

“Rasoul Khadem ends the list at number four. One of the most monumental moments in Iranian wrestling took place in the 1996 Olympic Games when Khadem stunned two-time Olympic gold medalist and five-time world champion Makhrebek Khadartsev to capture his lone Olympic gold in his storied career.

After a near-miss following a bronze medal performance in the 1992 Olympic Games, Khadem’s Olympic title run will be a story long told in Iranian culture.

Khadem went off to win a pair of world titles along with five Asian championships.”

### ■ 5- Hassan Yazdani

“Coming in at number five is the youngest star for Iran who’s enjoying the prime of his career, Hassan Yazdani.

You don’t get the nickname The Greatest without earning it and Yazdani has certainly done his part to carry on the tradition of Iranian wrestling.

The 25-year-old won the 2016 Rio Olympic gold medal at 74 kilos and has captured a pair of world championships to go along with a bronze and silver medal as well.

The Greatest knows a thing or two about the power of social media with nearly 500,000 followers on Instagram making him a national star, and certainly the greatest wrestler in Iran.”

## Iran’s ‘adventure freak’ Saeed Zaroori living life to the fullest

Saeed Zaroori sits at the bottom of the Persian Gulf in his wheelchair. It is a spectacle to say the least. Witnessing the depths of the ocean is a life changing experience for the Iranian.

Placed in the same situation, most people would be alarmed, but for the extreme sports enthusiast who has muscular dystrophy, it was a moment of pure bliss.

“Diving with my wheelchair was really different,” Zaroori said of his underwater adventure. “It was like a world without barriers. I could feel it. I was in my wheelchair and I could go everywhere with just a simple move.”

Zaroori is on a mission to conquer his fears and he has been accomplishing it one daring feat after another over the past decade. Paragliding, cave exploration, kayaking, rock climbing, alpine skiing, rafting, and more - Zaroori has done it all and he is encouraging others to pursue their dreams as well.

“I’m another person because of my experiences,” he said. “I know myself better. I know how to handle my fears, how to connect with other people.”

### ■ Lifestyle shift

Zaroori was not always on the chase for the next adrenaline rush. Just the opposite.

Getting on a flight to India in 2009 for a medical conference, the future parachuting aficionado was panic-stricken. It was his first solo trip and the sudden independence from his family, including his three dotting sisters, was unsettling.

“It was very difficult for me. I was full of stress. When I was in the airplane going to India, I was shaking because I didn’t know what to do,” Zaroori recalled. “But people helped me a lot and they were very friendly, and I found out that, ‘hey, it’s not that difficult’. You can ask other people to help you.

“After returning from this trip, I was



another person. I found out that I love this lifestyle. I like to experience different things.”

Upon his return, Zaroori set a goal to become financially independent. This took several years, but he eventually found a solution by setting up a translation center. As the work orders increased, Zaroori was able to fund new adventure trips.

Each expedition takes several months to plan. There are a lot of factors to consider, such as logistics, funding, team support and equipment. Zaroori often has to design his own equipment because he is the first man with muscular dystrophy to attempt such feats in Iran.

This was the case with his first alpine skiing descent in Shemshak three years ago.

Without any local examples to follow, Zaroori went online to find out how people with similar conditions ski in other parts of the world. The search led him to the dual ski. Since there were none in his home country, he created his own design and

gave it to his friend to make.

“We tested it and yes, there were lots of problems, but I actually made it and it was very interesting to be testing my idea,” Zaroori said. “It was coming from my mind.”

Since then, Zaroori’s appetite for adventure has only increased. He has travelled ‘from the top of the sky to the ocean and underground’, catching on the wind with his hang glider and plunging 300 metres under the earth to explore biting cold caves.

He now makes a special effort to have these experiences in his wheelchair, whenever possible. Zaroori has already dived and rock climbed in a wheelchair, and is now working on designs to do the same with a parachute.

“I’m doing adventure on my wheelchair to show that we have to be on our wheelchair when we are living. It’s a symbol,” he said. “I’m trying to promote accessibility with these adventures.”

### ■ Fighting fear

Visibility is a key component of Zaroori’s mission. He regularly speaks about his experiences on television, writes in newspapers as an adventure and travel journalist, and gives lectures. In his message, he encourages people to live fully and face their fears.

Despite his own action-packed resume, Zaroori is not immune to fear either. His struggle - ironically for a man who jumps out of airplanes and scales rocks - is heights.

“I have trained myself to face my fears. I’m really afraid of being on tall buildings. I feel scared, but I have to confront my fears and I won’t let them stop me,” Zaroori said. “It’s crystal clear that you have to live your life. My adventures help other people to see that.”

Zaroori’s spirited message is getting across, as fan letters continue to flood his inbox.

“Every day I get some reactions from people. They say, ‘we have wasted our lives, we have not chased our dreams, we have spent our lives without any goals’,” Zaroori said. “They say, ‘you are living the life to the fullest and we are trying to be like you’.”

Zaroori, however, discourages people from trying to replicate his experiences. Instead, he tells them to carve out their own, unique path.

“I always say, do not chase me. I have my own life and I have my own story,” he said. “You have to chase your dreams. Maybe your dream is to be a good teacher, to be a positive person. Being a positive person, I think, is the best thing we can do in our world and it is the main goal of my life. To be myself and to be positive.”

As for his next adventure, Zaroori is planning a trip to the Arctic to see polar bears - one of the few dreams he has not ticked off his list...yet.

(Source: Paralympic)

## Cisterna eye Saeid Marouf: report

**S P O R T S   T E H R A N** —Iran international setter Saeid Marouf has reportedly caught the eye of Italian top flight volleyball team Cisterna.

Marouf currently plays at Chinese club Beijing BAIC Motor. Top Volley Cisterna head coach Lorenzo Tubertini as shown interest in signing the 35-year-old player.

Nicknamed “Golden Claw” for his quick touch, Marouf has played key role in Iran’s success in the recent years.

In 2008, 2012 and 2016 he was awarded the title of best setter during the Olympic qualifications. He won the same title in the 2013 Asian championship and in the 2014 World League.

La Gazzetta dello Sport has reported that Top Volley Cisterna are preparing to sign the player.

## Orumiye chosen to host World Wrestling Clubs Cup

**T A S N I M** — Iranian city of Orumiye, West Azarbaijan Province, has been confirmed as host of the 2020 World Wrestling Clubs Cup for freestyle style.

The sports officials of the city have announced their readiness to host the prestigious event.

It will be held from November 18 to 20.

The World Wrestling Clubs Cup is an international wrestling clubs competition among teams representing member nations of the United World Wrestling (UWW), the sport’s global governing body.

The tournament was held on the proposal of the Islamic Republic of Iran Wrestling Federation in 2014 in Iran.

Sanandaj in Kurdistan Province had already been confirmed as host of the 2020 World Wrestling Clubs Cup for Greco-Roman style in early November.

## Azmoun not joining Napoli, Zenit says

Zenit St Petersburg are not interested in selling Sardar Azmoun to Napoli, calling speculation ‘a classic example of how agents are only out for themselves’.

It had been reported Napoli were preparing a €15m swoop for Azmoun, signing him as a replacement for Dries Mertens.

However, Zenit CEO Alexander Medvedev told championat.com: “We don’t want to negotiate for Azmoun with Napoli or any other club.

“This is a classic example of how agents are only out for themselves. Now we have more to worry about: ending the season and winning the title.

“We’re not thinking about anything else.”

The forward has scored 14 goals in 29 appearances for the Russian side this season.

(Source: Football Italia)

## Cameroon cancel all football activities, announce league champions

The Cameroonian Football Federation (FECAFOOT) have announced the suspension of all football activities in the country.

Like most countries Cameroon had suspended their football activities for several months due to the coronavirus pandemic.

And now as the number of confirmed cases approach the 3k mark, the country’s football federation have decided to cancel all football activities in the country until the 2020/2021 season.

The decision means that current league leaders PWD Bamenda will be crowned champions for the first time in their history, just four years after being promoted to the first division.

Additionally, second division champions Les Astres and second-placed Yafoot will be promoted. Meaning that there will be 20 teams in the MTN Elite 1 championship next season because all clubs occupying the 15th, 16th, 17th and 18th positions in the first division will not be relegated.

Maletos and New Star, who currently sit bottom of the Cameroonian second division, will also avoid relegation.

(Source: Kingfut)

## London mayor Khan opposed to Premier League June restart

London mayor Sadiq Khan is opposed to the idea of the Premier League resuming in the capital next month while the COVID-19 pandemic continues to cause hundreds of deaths in the UK each day, a spokesperson for the mayor’s office has said.

The possibility of a restart next month was given a boost when the government said elite sport could return behind closed doors after June 1. “Sadiq is extremely keen for the Premier League and professional sport in general to resume,” the spokesperson told the Evening Standard.

“However, with the country still in the grips of this crisis, and hundreds of people dying every day, he believes that it is too early to be discussing the resumption of the Premier League and top-flight sport in the capital.”

Five Premier League clubs are based in London — including Arsenal, Chelsea and Tottenham Hotspur.

“As a Liverpool fan, Sadiq of course wants the Premier League to return,” the spokesperson added. “But it can only happen when it is safe to do so, and it cannot place any extra burden on the NHS and emergency services.”

Liverpool lead the league with nine rounds remaining and need only six points to seal the title.

An official protocol sent to Premier League players and managers outlining conditions for returning to training said pitches, corner flags, cones and goal posts would have to be disinfected after each session. Players will be tested twice per week for the virus and take a daily temperature check, while they will also be forbidden from congregating together or travelling to or from training with team mates.

Professional Footballers’ Association chief executive Gordon Taylor said it was crucial that every safety precaution had been taken for the players.

(Source: Reuters)



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A king's friend is like one riding a lion. The people envy him and wish to be in his place, but he himself is well aware of his dangerous position.

*Imam Ali (AS)*

## Ferdowsi Day commemorated on Tehran webinar

→1 He said that Ferdowsi Day is the best day to review and study the Shahnameh.

"The Shahnameh is no doubt the most significant epic masterpiece in the world, it is a book of life, which teaches nobility and politeness, as well as wisdom, happiness and moderation," he asserted.



A view of the mausoleum of Ferdowsi in Tus, Khorasan Razavi Province.

In addition, IRIB Channel 4 aired a documentary named "The Best Verse of Poets" to celebrate Ferdowsi Day.

Directed by Dariush Yari, the documentary explores why Ferdowsi chose the epic genre to narrate the stories of the kings in the Shahnameh.

The documentary also features speeches by several experts on the Shahnameh and showed performances of naqqali, a dramatic style of storytelling dedicated to stories from Ferdowsi's Shahnameh and other epic Persian stories.

## Tehran Choir video featuring John Rutter's "For the Beauty of Earth" released

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — The Tehran Choir by conductor Mehdi Qasemi has released a video in which its members perform British composer John Rutter's "For the Beauty of the Earth" during the home quarantine in the battle against the spread of COVID-19.



The Tehran Choir gives a performance at Tehran's Vahdat Hall in an undated photo.

Several musicians from the Tehran Symphony Orchestra, Iran's National Orchestra as well as musicians from several other countries have collaborated in this project, the Persian service of ILNA reported on Wednesday.

Each musician has recorded his/her own part separately at home.

"For the Beauty of the Earth" is a sacred choral composition by Rutter, an arrangement of the hymn of the same name. The work was published by Oxford University Press in 1980.

This is the second video released by the Tehran Choir during the pandemic. The group first performed "We Are the World", a charity single originally recorded by USA for Africa in 1985.

# Hassan Ruholamin creates painting in honor of Imam Ali (AS)

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — Painter Hassan Ruholamin, who is famous for his epic drawings, has created a painting in honor of Imam Ali (AS), the first Imam of the Shia.

The painting depicts Imam Ali (AS) in an alley in Kufa, Iraq at night, carrying a bag of food for the poor. The painting refers to a story about the Imam who disguised himself as a stranger to help the poor by distributing food for them at night.

He published the painting on his Instagram page on Ramadan 19, which marks the anniversary of the night, at which Imam Ali (AS) was stabbed in the head with a poisoned

sword in 661 CE.

In addition, the 19th, 21st and 23rd nights of the holy month of Ramadan, are called the Laylat al-Qadr (The Grand Nights), during one of which the entire Quran was sent down to the Prophet Muhammad (S).

A large painting depicting the last moments in the life of Imam Hussein (AS) in the Ashura event has also been created by Ruholamin.

His other paintings include "The Apocalyptic Companion of Aba Abdillah", a painting in memory of Quds Force commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani who was martyred in a U.S. air raid in Baghdad in January.



A painting by Hassan Ruholamin depicts Imam Ali (AS) in a Kufa alley at night, bearing a bag of foods for the poor.

## Iranian photographers honored at NSAPK Circuit 2020

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — Three Iranian photographers have been honored at the 5th Circular Exhibition of Photography – NSAPK Circuit 2020 in Serbia and Montenegro.

Ali Samei won the Salon Gold Medal for his photo "Muddy Face" in the Portrait category, the organizers have announced.

The photo shows a man from Lorestan Province with his face coated with mud as a tradition while he attends a mourning ceremony for Imam Hussein during Ashura.

Seyyed Ehsan Mortazavi received an honorable mention for his photo "People and Flowers" in the Open Color category, while Omidreza Purnabi received an honorable mention for

"End of the Day" in the Open Monochrome section.

The FIAP Blue Badge for the Best Author at Salon Kotor went to Jayatu Chandra Das from India and the FIAP Blue Badge for the Best Author at Salon Novi Sad was awarded to Flemming Ryborg from Denmark.

The exhibition will be organized in the categories of "Woman", "Portrait", "Open Color" and "Open Monochrome".

Salon Novi Sad will host the exhibition from August 15 to 22, while Salon Kotor will hold the exhibition from August 17 to 24.

The exhibition will be organized at Salon Podgorica on August 21 to 28.

## "No Place for Angels" crew honored by Tehran Municipality

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — The crew members of the acclaimed documentary "No Place for Angels" about the national Iranian women's hockey team were honored by the Tehran Municipality during a special ceremony at Milad Tower on Monday, the Documentary and Experimental Film Center (DEFC) announced.

The documentary was also screened at the ceremony, which was attended by Tehran Mayor Piruz Hanachi, DEFC director Mohammad Hamidi-Moqaddam and the members of the hockey team.

"The film is remarkably good and energetic, and I was highly impressed by it," Hanachi said after watching the documentary directed by Sam Kalantari.

"Therefore, the Tehran Municipality will do its best as much as possible to support the national Iranian women's hockey team," he added.

"It is really attractive for me that the documentary features the ability of Iranian sportswomen, and I promise to give them a sports hall to do their practicing and go on to achieve greater victories," he noted.

Hanachi also said that the Tehran Municipality will provide support for the documentary to be screened for the public.

"No Place for Angels" won the special jury award at the 13th Cinéma Vérité, Iran's major documentary film festival, in December 2019.

It also received the Crystal Simorgh for best documentary at the 38th Fajr Film Festival in Tehran in February.



Crew members of "No Place for Angels" about the national Iranian women's hockey team, Tehran Mayor Piruz Hanachi and some DEFC officials pose after a screening of the documentary at Milad Tower on May 11, 2020. (DEFC)

## Broadway theaters to remain closed through Sept. 6

**NEW YORK (Reuters)** — Broadway theaters have extended their closures because of the coronavirus pandemic through Labor Day on Sept. 6, the Broadway League industry group said on Tuesday.

Among the most-visited tourist attractions in New York, the theaters had previously set a tentative reopening date of June 7.

The Broadway League, which represents producers and theater owners, said on Tuesday it was working with government

authorities, unions and health experts to develop plans to re-open with new safety measures for audiences, performers and stagehands.

Live theater productions face unique challenges in the pandemic, including a large number of people in small spaces and physical contact among performers on stage.

Producers are discussing staging shows with smaller casts rather than big musicals, and writers have been working on stories that allow for social distancing.

## Disney to release "Hamilton" performance in July on its streaming service

**LOS ANGELES (Reuters)** — Walt Disney Co will release a film recording of the smash Broadway musical "Hamilton" on its streaming service on July 3, the eve of U.S. Independence Day, the company said on Tuesday.

Disney had planned to debut the film, which features footage of the live show in June 2016 with creator Lin-Manuel Miranda and the original cast, in movie theaters in October 2021. But the coronavirus pandemic, which has shuttered Broadway stages and

cineplexes, has prompted Disney to adapt its programming strategy.

"In light of the extraordinary challenges facing our world, this story about leadership, tenacity, hope, love and the power of people to unite against the forces of adversity is both relevant and impactful," Disney Executive Chairman Bob Iger said in a statement.

"Hamilton" is a rap musical in which African-American and Latino actors play the founding fathers of the United States. It won 11 Tony awards and a Pulitzer Prize.

## Movie-related products still hit stores despite film delays

**LOS ANGELES (AP)** — Hollywood pressed pause on releasing most major films in theaters to combat the coronavirus outbreak, but that hasn't necessarily been the case for toys and merchandise related to those movies.

Despite film delays, toy production and gaming companies are often staying on schedule, releasing a variety of products tied to major titles from "Black Widow" to "Minions: The Rise of Gru" in hopes of weathering through the pandemic. Most products are already in retail stores, appearing on shelves and being sold online several months to a year ahead of the film's new release date.

Some believe toy makers made the right choice to sell products now rather than later. Especially since many of the products have already been manufactured and packaged for sale.

"The train had already started moving on these toys and there was no way to stop it," said James Zahn, senior editor at The Toy Insider. He doesn't expect those products to sell as quickly when there's no movie to support them, but he believes putting them on sale now is possibly the best option instead of being stored away in a warehouse, which he thinks is the worst-case scenario.

Zahn said quickly selling the toys and merchandise on clearance could be another option.

"It can become very costly," he said. "You're basically

paying rent, monthly rent to a warehouse. You need to turn that product quickly. Everything is on schedule. Now, that schedule is out of sync. It's not just toys. It's a full marketing program that has multiple moving pieces between different licensing partnerships."

Cinemas across the U.S. have been closed since mid-March with many film releases postponed for a later date. Some states are looking to soon reopen theaters.

With most movie theaters closed, studios opted to funnel their new or recently released films on home viewing platforms. That happened with Pixar's "Onward," which played in theaters for weeks before it was forced onto a digital platform, making more sense for toy companies to continue to release their product to coincide with the animated film.

Marvel's "Black Widow" has been postponed until November, but products related to the film including toys and books along with characters from the film highlighted on a free-to-play mobile game. A collection of dolls are at retail stores for the live-action remake of the animated classic "Mulan", which was delayed until July 24.

Mattel said products for "Top Gun: Maverick", which had an original July release, will begin rolling out this summer and continue to launch throughout the fall leading up to the new release date on Dec. 23.

Films such as "Minions: The Rise of Gru" and "F9" from the Fast and Furious saga have been postponed for a full year, and "Ghostbusters: Afterlife" was delayed by several months. But products for those films can be found online.

LEGO has a particular plan in place for next year's "Minions" movie.

"We recently launched two LEGO Minions building sets that are inspired by the property and characters, but we are holding back the rest of the collection that is directly linked to the upcoming film to coincide with the new premiere date," said Mike Ilacqua, head of U.S. marketing for LEGO Group.

Zahn said the early release of products could be damaging for "F9" and "Minions." He also said there's a risk that the emotional connection could be harmed for the child or adult if they are unable to see the actual film. He calls the movie "a commercial for the product," especially for characters being introduced in the new films such as Taskmaster and Red Guardian in "Black Widow."

In many cases, viewers of the film may want to act out what they've seen.

Duplessis said she's grateful for her purchase, and thinking about buying more.

"My kids are familiar with Scooby Doo," she said. "The movie is a bonus. Whether they have the movie out or not, it's not a deal breaker for them."