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Iran, Russia, Syria adamant in terror fight: Tehran

TEHRAN — Ali Asghar Khaji, who acts as senior assistant to Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif for political affairs, has said that Iran, Russia and Syria will continue cooperation in fighting terrorism.

"Strategic cooperation of Russia, Syria and Iran in line with fighting devil phenomenon of terrorism and also consultations to find a political solution to the Syria crisis

will continue," he said during a meeting with Syrian Ambassador to Tehran Adnan Hassan Mahmoud.

Khaji said that it is essential for the international community to support the Syrian people and also the country's national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

He also attached great importance to continuation of cooperation within the framework of the Astana talks. **→2**

Stock market attracts \$8.3b in 2 months

TEHRAN — Iran's stock market has attracted 350 trillion rials (about \$8.33 billion) of liquidity since the beginning of current Iranian calendar year (March 20), the managing director of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), which is Iran's major stock market, told ILNA.

Highlighting that the stock market is welcoming initial public offering (IPO) of the companies, Ali Sahraei said, "We

held the IPO of Shasta although it was a very complicated process."

Iran's stock market witnessed its largest-ever initial public offering on April 15, when Social Security Investment Company (SSIC, also known by its Persian acronym Shasta) offered eight billion shares, which account for 10 percent of its stakes, for sales in Tehran Stock Exchange. **→4**

COVID-19 slashes Iran's airport passenger traffic by 80%

TEHRAN — Passenger traffic at Iranian airports was plunged by 80 percent in the first month of the current Iranian calendar year (started March 20) due to the coronavirus pandemic, IRNA reported on Saturday.

"Some 3,000 passengers were transferred at airports affiliated with Iran Airports and Air Navigation Company (IAC) [during the month of Farvardin],

which shows an 80-percent decline in comparison to the same month last year," said Hamidreza Seyyedi, the IAC deputy director for planning, supervision and economic affairs.

The pandemic also resulted in a decrease of 70 percent and 79 percent respectively in the number of flights and cargo transport, the official noted. **→8**

PERSPECTIVE
Mostafa Mousavi Sabet
Head of the Tehran Times
Art & Culture Desk

FitzGerald translation of Rubaiyat still worthy of praise, whether Persians like it or not

Persian classical poets such as Sadi, Hafez, Ferdowsi and Attar are more or less famous in the West, but perhaps Omar Khayyam Neyshaburi is treated differently by Westerners from his other Persian counterparts.

The reason for this differential treatment is that Khayyam's brave attitude and apparently materialistic approach to the world in his poetry have caused people in the West to feel more empathy toward the Iranian poet, who is also renowned as a scientist in mathematics and astronomy.

Such an attitude drew English writer Edward FitzGerald in the middle of the 19th century to do a translation of the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam based on a manuscript of the masterpiece, which dated back to the 15th century.

As many scholars believe, the translation marked the beginning of Westerners' acquaintance with Khayyam's poetry, although FitzGerald's friend, Edward Byles Cowell, a noted translator of Persian poetry and the first professor of Sanskrit at Cambridge University, had previously translated several poems from the collection of the quatrains.

"FitzGerald brilliantly introduced Khayyam to the West while managing the impossible, that is, conveying the spirit of Khayyam's Rubaiyat in a way that even some of the more accurate translators of Khayyam after him failed to achieve," Mehdi Aminrazavi, professor of philosophy and religion and co-director of the Leidecker Center for Asian Studies at the University of Mary Washington, wrote in his book "The Wine of Wisdom: The Life, Poetry and Philosophy of Omar Khayyam".

"Having reviewed most, if not all, available English translations of Khayyam, many of which are more accurate than FitzGerald's, I would still refer non-Persian readers to FitzGerald's translation, which simply captures the heart and the soul of Khayyam's poetry," he added. **→12**

EU is united in opposing Israeli West Bank annexation

The European Union will make a diplomatic push to try to stop Israel from going ahead with a plan to annex parts of the occupied West Bank, the bloc's foreign policy chief said on Friday.

Josep Borrell said the EU would use "all our diplomatic capacities" to try to dissuade Israel's incoming government from going ahead with the move, approved under United States President Donald Trump's West Asia plan, al Jazeera reported.

The region's Palestinians, whose land has been under an Israeli military occupation since 1967, are outraged at the notion that Israel could be allowed to claim Palestinian territory without their consent.

While member states of the EU - Israel's largest trading partner - are alarmed at the prospect of annexations, which they say would violate international law and harm the chances of peace, they are divided about what action to take against Israel.

"What everybody agreed is we have to increase our efforts and our reach out to all relevant actors in the West Asia (Middle East)," Borrell said after the talks.

"We are ready to do that and we will do that in the next days using all our diplomatic capacities in order to prevent any kind of unilateral action."

The push will involve talking to Washington and Arab countries as well as Israel and the Palestinians, Borrell said.

Israel's long-awaited unity government will be sworn in on Sunday - after three inconclusive elections in less than a year and a power-sharing agreement between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former rival Benny Gantz.

Some EU countries have pushed for the bloc to take a hard line against Israel, with Luxembourg's veteran foreign minister Jean Asselborn in particular calling for the recognition of a Palestinian state. **→10**

Coronavirus could cost global economy \$8.8t: ADB

The coronavirus pandemic could cost the global economy between \$5.8 trillion and \$8.8 trillion (£4.7 trillion-£7.1 trillion), according to Asian Development Bank (ADB).

That's more than double last month's prediction and equates to 6.4%-9.7% of the world's economic output.

It comes as measures to slow the spread of Covid-19 continue to paralyze economic activity around the world.

Globally authorities have taken aggressive action to cushion their economies from the outbreak's impact.

"This new analysis presents a broad picture of the very significant potential economic impact of Covid-19," the ADB's chief economist Yasuyuki Sawada said.

"It also highlights the important role policy interventions can play to help mitigate damage to economies," he added.

The ADB said the top end of the range was based on the assumption that curbs to movement and businesses operating would last six months, while the bottom end assumed the restrictions would remain in place for three months.

Central banks around the world have moved aggressively to cut interest rates and roll out massive stimulus measures to help combat the impact of the outbreak that has rocked financial markets and raised fears of a deep global recession.

Yesterday new figures showed the huge impact of Covid-19 on the world's biggest economy as the number of Americans seeking unemployment benefits jumped by almost 3 million last week.

Nearly a quarter of the U.S. workforce is now claiming some form of benefits.

Earlier this week the chairman of the U.S. Federal Reserve warned that America's economic recovery is likely to be slower than initially hoped. **→4**

Boeing to deliver more than 1,000 missiles to Saudi Arabia

Boeing has won two contracts worth \$2.6 billion to deliver more than 1,000 air-to-surface and anti-ship missiles to Saudi Arabia, the U.S.' defense department announced yesterday.

In an official statement, the Pentagon explained that the first contract was worth \$1.97 billion, adding that it would include "modernizing SLAM ER cruise missiles and delivering 650 new missiles in support of the government of Saudi Arabia."

The statement pointed out that the contract would be "completed by December 2028 for the

SLAM ERs." The latter is GPS-guided air-to-surface missile with a range of up to 155 nautical miles, Middle East Monitor reported.

The Pentagon also said that the second \$650 million contract was for the "delivery of 467 new Harpoon Block II anti-ship missiles, including more than 400 to Saudi Arabia."

"The rest will be delivered to Brazil, Qatar and Thailand. Support equipment will be supplied to India, Japan, the Netherlands and South Korea," the statement added, according to AFP.



Tehran Times/ Samira Nazari

Home sweet home: thousands of migratory birds land in Iran's Allah-Abad wetland

For the second consecutive year, Allah-Abad wetland is becoming a refuge for species of migratory birds including flamingo, crane, mallard, bustard, see-see partridge, heron, and even some native ones, such as eagles, falcons, and bitterns.

Situated in Qazvin province, west-central Iran, the natural wetland was revived after years being deserted due to drought and heatwaves, thanks to rising rainfalls.

According to local officials, some of these birds fly their wings on the northern route from the Caspian Sea to Siberia in Russia, and others on the West Asian route in North Africa.

Russia calls opponents of nuclear deal 'helpless', 'ignorant'

TEHRAN — Mikhail Ulyanov, Russia's permanent representative to the Vienna-based international organizations, has said that opponents of the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the JCPOA, are "helpless and even ignorant".

"The opponents of the #IranDeal are helpless and even ignorant. In the beginning of a dispute they provide 2-3 counterarguments and slogans. As soon as these arguments and slogans are exhausted, they move on to insulting opponents without proper justification. Not surprising!" he tweeted on Saturday.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov said on Thursday that no country is allowed to implement the United Nations Security Council resolutions selectively.

Ryabok was openly referring to Resolution 2231 that endorsed the 2015 nuclear deal but the U.S. violated it by quitting the JCPOA.

"No one is allowed to implement UN Security Council resolutions selectively and extremely fragmentarily," Ryabkov told the Valdai discussion club, the UrduPoint News reported.

The actions of the United States to extend the arms embargo and launch the process of returning sanctions against Iran are "cynical" and could lead to a crisis in the UN Security Council, the top Russian diplomat said.

"In this situation, it is cynical to push for the activation of the snapback mechanism [return of sanctions], which is laid down in this resolution," Ryabkov said. **→2**

China says U.S. sanctions destabilize West Asia

By staff and agency
Wang Qun, the China's ambassador to the United Nations in Vienna, said on Friday that the United States' sanctions on Iran are distorting global oil supply and further destabilizing West Asia, Reuters reported.

During a meeting with officials from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), headquartered in Vienna, he accused Washington of exacerbating humanitarian crises in countries such as Iran and Venezuela with new "long-arm extra-territorial sanctions".

He also accused the United States of undermining the global economy by building trade barriers and artificially prolonging the global coronavirus pandemic by halting funding to the World Health Organization.

Court in Iran sentences Fariba Adelkhah to 6 years in prison

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — A court in Iran has sentenced Fariba Adelkhah, a senior research fellow at Sciences Po University in Paris, to six years in prison on national security charges.

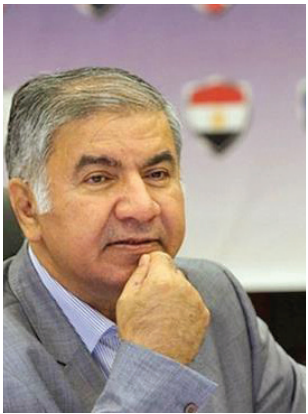
According to Adelkhah's lawyer, she was sentenced to five years in jail for "gathering and conspiring against national security," as well as one year for "propaganda against the Islamic Republic".

"We have appealed and if accepted, the sentence will drop to five years," lawyer Saeid Dehghan told the Reuters news agency.

Adelkhah, a 60-year-old anthropologist and researcher at Sciences Po's Center for International Studies (CERI) in Paris, was reportedly arrested in June 2019 on charges of espionage.

Iran's OPEC governor Kazempour Ardebili dies of brain hemorrhage

(Press TV) — Iran's governor to the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) has passed away after suffering a brain hemorrhage and falling into a coma.



Hossein Kazempour Ardebili, 68, died at a hospital in capital Tehran on Saturday.

The veteran politician was appointed governor to the OPEC oil group in 1985. He had also served as Iran's ambassador to Japan from 1990 to 1995.

Kazempour Ardebili was a survivor of the 1981 bombing of the Islamic Republic Party headquarters by the MKO terrorist cult in Tehran which killed 73 top Iranian officials. He was serving as trade minister at the time, appointed the year before.

Minister of Petroleum Bijan Zangeneh issued a message, saying "I can't believe that my affable friend, Hossein Kazempour Ardebili, has suddenly left this mortal world for eternal destiny and I have sat in mourning for him."

"Nearly 23 years of close cooperation with Hossein Kazempour Ardebili have put me in a position to testify that he was a religious, educated, humble and very honorable man as well as a true and unassuming servant of the Iranian nation, who was loyal to the Islamic Republic and loved Iran, and its pride and progress was his constant concern," he said.

"He was a prominent diplomat who intelligently and vigorously defended our national interests at OPEC for more than three decades in the most difficult circumstances and in the face of all troubles," Zangeneh added.

Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif also described Kazempour Ardebili as "a prominent and unique diplomat," adding that his passing is "a great loss for the diplomatic community."

Over the past four decades, Zarif said, Kazempour Ardebili had always been "a clever and strong defender of national interests and a trustworthy, precise and candid advisor to the Islamic Republic's officials."

Iran is a founding member of OPEC, sitting on the world's fourth-biggest oil reserves and largest gas reserves.

The oil industry is on the frontline of the U.S. economic war on Iran, because it accounts for a major portion of the country's hard currency earnings.

Iran, Russia, Syria adamant in terror fight: Tehran

1 → For his part, the Syrian ambassador called for expansion of cooperation and consultation.

In line with their security cooperation, Iran, Turkey, and Russia - three power brokers in Syria - launched the Astana peace talks on the Syrian crisis. The talks were launched in January 2017 with the aim of putting an end to the Syrian conflict.

Kazakhstan has hosted multiple rounds of talks on Syria since January 2017 most of which involved delegations from the Syrian government and opposition.

Russia calls opponents of nuclear deal 'helpless', 'ignorant'

1 → "Washington will not have an easy road here in any case. Although the conclusion is that the next crisis in the UN Security Council and the UN as a whole is imminent, taking into account this U.S. stubbornness. Of course, I can agree with this conclusion," he said.

Ryabkov noted that it was the United States that had left the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action two years ago, and now they are "in a state of gross violation of UN Security Council resolution [2231]."

Richard Goldberg, a political advisor and aide to the U.S. National Security tweeted on Thursday that "the UN Security Council must extend the arms embargo against Iran. If it won't, the U.S. is prepared to 'snap back' sanctions, writes Brian H. Hook, U.S. special representative for Iran."

In a tweet on Thursday, Ulyanov said that it looks like the U.S. attempts to blackmail the UN Security Council members.

"Looks like an attempt to blackmail the UNSC Member States. US position on arms embargo against #Iran and #SnapBack is very weak not only from the viewpoint of common sense but also in legal terms," he said.

Parliamentary committee enumerates steps needed to counter Israel's anti-human moves

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The Iranian **d e s k** Parliament National Security and Foreign policy Committee on Saturday approved a plan to counter Israel's hostile moves against peace and security.

The ratification came a few days after Iranian lawmakers approved the double-urgency of a motion which would obligate the Iranian government to take certain measures against the hostile measures of the Israeli regime. No parliamentary voiced any opposition to the motion, therefore its "double-urgency" was approved unanimously.

Speaking after the parliamentary committee meeting, MP Hossein Naqavi Hossein said according to the plan all state bodies are obliged to use all regional and international capacities to counter the "hostile moves of the Zionist regime".

Hosseini, who acts as the parliamentary committee spokesman, enumerated Israel's hostile acts as starting wars, doing terrorist acts, blockading people, building settlements, displacing Palestinians, occupying other countries' lands, such the Golan Heights.



Following is main ratifications of the parliamentary committee:

The Majlis (Parliament) support Palestinians with Quds as their capital.

The government is obliged to fully back

the "oppressed Palestinian people".

Using any hard or soft product from a company which has a branch in Israel is banned in the country.

Any cooperation or espionage in favor

A U.S. decision to invoke snapback provision would be a strategic error: CSIS deputy chief

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Eric Brew-**d e s k**er, deputy director at the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), has said that a decision by Washington to invoke the snapback provision would be a strategic error and will undermine credibility of the United States.

In an article published at the CSIS website on Friday, he said such an attempt is a bad policy.

"A decision by the United States to invoke the snapback provision would be a strategic error. It would come with a range of negative consequences, few benefits, and kick the current crisis between the United States and Iran into overdrive," he wrote.

He added, "This so-called 'snapback' measure would also dissolve the Iran nu-

clear deal. Setting aside questions over the legality of such an attempt, it is simply bad policy. It will deepen the rift between the United States and Europe. It will undermine the credibility of the United States and the Security Council. And it will facilitate the expansion of Iran's nuclear program."

He also noted that Iran may respond to such action by withdrawing from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT).

"Iran might not get a 'vote' at the UN Security Council, but it certainly gets to

respond. On this front, Iran has threatened its own 'nuclear option' if UN sanctions are reimposed: Abandon the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty," he said.

He said, "Iran wouldn't need to make this decision immediately: It can wait. No doubt, Russian, Chinese, and European reactions to the snapback will matter. If Tehran believes the United States is diplomatically isolated and that other parties have no intent to actually honor the snapback, Tehran could easily choose

Eric Brewer says if the U.S. invokes snapback sanctions "it will deepen the rift between the United States and Europe. It will undermine the credibility of the United States and the Security Council."

Top researcher: Israel's war strategy changed after General Soleimani's assistance to resistance front

TEHRAN (FNA) — Head of the Research Center of the International Islamic Awareness Organization Hossein Akbari underlined that Israel was forced to change its war strategy from offensive to defensive mode after IRGC Qods Force Commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani stood beside the resistance front's leaders.

"Actually, martyr Soleimani was the initiator of a strategic move which forced Israel to change strategy from offensive to defensive," Akbari said in an interview with Persian-language Sobh-e No on Saturday.

He explained that General Soleimani awakened many people in the Muslim world when he stood beside Secretary-General of Hezbollah resistance group in Lebanon and defeated Israel in 2006 while many imagined that the regime cannot be defeated.

"It was the first and biggest failure of Israel," Akbari said, adding that it was followed by the regime's second defeat during the 22-day war against Gaza.

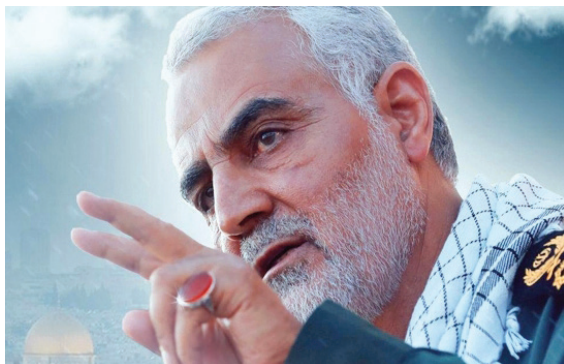
"Martyr Soleimani's command ran through the Palestinian resistance in a unique way and defeated

Israel in the territories occupied by the regime," he underlined.

Akbari said that after all these defeats, the Syria war was ignited and the U.S. and its allies attempted to establish security for Israel but General Soleimani's advice to the Syrian army commanders defeated them again.

General Soleimani had before his martyrdom in January 2020, in an interview disclosed some untold facts about the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah 33-day War.

"I should say that the 33-day war had some hidden causes which were the principle factors leading to the war. The war had some apparent and some hidden causes, the pretext of which were the hidden goals that the [Zionist] regime sought for a period of time. When I say there were hidden causes, we had some information about the preparations of the Zionist regime, but we had no information on the fact that the enemy wanted to launch an attack in ambush. Later, based on two circumstances, we concluded that prior to this war, a swift ambush was



supposed to be conducted to overturn Hezbollah. Well, this war happened when two important events, one concerning the entire region and another exclusively concerning the Zionist regime were taking place," he said in 2019 in an interview with Khamenei.ir website.

He said that Tel Aviv was using the opportunity of the presence of U.S. military forces in the region to uproot Hezbollah from Southern Lebanon, adding that some Arab countries were also collaborating with the Israeli-American plot.

UN human rights chief urges U.S. to lift sanctions on Iran

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — UN High Commissioner **d e s k** for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet has urged the United States to lift sanctions on Iran and Venezuela, stressing that the sanitary situation called for such a move in order to save lives.

In an interview with France 24 published on Friday, she added that the medical exemptions to those sanctions touted by the Trump administration were too narrow and said only a suspension or a lifting of the sanctions would have a real impact.

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

"At this crucial time, both for global public health reasons, and to support the rights and lives of millions of people in these countries, sectoral sanctions should be eased or suspended," she said in a statement.

U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein has said that the United States should provide partial, temporary sanctions relief to Iran when the country is fighting the coronavirus.

"The U.S. should provide partial, temporary sanctions relief to Iran and facilitate efforts by international organizations to provide humanitarian funds and supplies so the country can respond more effectively to its coronavirus outbreak. Doing so would reduce popular resentment in Iran against the U.S. and help contain the spread of the disease throughout the region," she wrote in an article titled, "U.S. and Iran Need a Coronavirus Peace Plan" published by Bloomberg on Thursday.

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.

"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.

He added, "The United States has always acted against the independent and oppressed nations. In this pandemic, it causes problems for importing medicine."

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.

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

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

"The sanctions are illegitimate in the first place, and maintaining them during the pandemic is sheer sadism," Chomsky told IRNA in an interview published on May 2. Speaking from his office in self-isolation to Croatian philosopher and author Srećko Horvat in April, Chomsky blasted U.S. President Donald Trump for continuing sanctions on Iran.

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

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.

Why is U.S. pushing unworkable plan to renew Iran arms ban?

POLITICAL DESK **TEHRAN** — In an article published in Al-Monitor on Thursday, Mark Fitzpatrick argued that whether the United States' push to kill the Iran nuclear accord succeed or not, U.S. President Donald Trump would benefit from the plan.

The following is the full text of the article:

Two years after the United States withdrew from the Iran nuclear deal, the administration is looking extend the UN ban on conventional arms sales to and from Iran, a strategy designed to kill the deal for good and benefit President Donald Trump whether it succeeds or not.

In a May 9 statement marking the second anniversary of the Donald Trump administration's withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo pledged to "exercise all diplomatic options" to extend the UN ban on conventional arms sales to and from Iran beyond its current expiry date on Oct. 18. But the strategy has little chance of continuing to curb Iranian arms purchases. The real intent appears to be to finally kill the nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), before the Nov. 3 U.S. presidential election. If Trump loses, as now seems likely, this would make it much more difficult for a Joe Biden administration to restore the benefits of the deal.

The strategy Pompeo laid out on April 29 has two parts. First, the United States will propose a resolution at the UN Security Council to extend the arms embargo. If — or rather when — this fails, the United States will invoke the unilateral snapback clause of UN Security Council Resolution 2231 to restore all sanctions that were eased by that resolution in accordance with the JCPOA.

The first part will fail because Russia and China will not countenance any such new resolution that punishes Iran over a sequence of tit-for-tat moves initiated by the United States pulling out of the JCPOA two years ago. Moscow and Beijing wanted to end the arms ban when the JCPOA came into being in 2015, and only reluctantly agreed to extend it for five years. It had long been foreseen that the ban would end if a nuclear deal was struck.

Even U.S. allies on the council oppose the move, which explains why, after foreshadowing that the draft resolution would be proposed in May, U.S. officials now indicate they are in no rush.

The second part of the strategy, sanctions snapback, may possibly succeed, albeit only superficially. It rests on the politically hypocritical yet legally plausible argument that even though the United States is no longer party to the JCPOA, and has said so many times, the UNSCR 2231 language confers the right to invoke snapback to the original parties, listing them by name. Under the ingenious provisions of the snapback mechanism, no other UNSC member can veto it.

Yet invoking snapback this way would still be very difficult. The United States would first need to persuade the country holding the UNSC presidency, which rotates monthly, to agree to table the measure. Indonesia and Russia, which occupy the presidency in August and October, respectively, surely would not be persuaded.



“As former State Department coordinator for Iran nuclear implementation Jarrett Blanc recently warned, the Trump strategy for sanctions snapback carries several other significant risks: a crisis pitting the United States against the UN, a delegitimization of UN embargoes, a weakening of the sanctions tool for use elsewhere and an acceleration of the very arms sales of most concern. Others note that the Trump administration’s gambit could leave the United States with little leverage to negotiate any other restrictions imposed by the JCPOA that are far more consequential.”

France and Germany, the presidents in June and July, are also doubtful. Niger, the president in September, is more susceptible to U.S. pressure.

September thus is the most likely time, first to table the arms ban resolution and then, when it fails, the snapback mechanism. But Russia would challenge the move by raising a point of order on whether the United States is a participant and thus entitled to make the triggering notification under paragraph 11 of Resolution 2231. A qualified majority of nine of the 15 UNSC members would then be needed to sustain the council president's ruling.

Whether it succeeds or not, moving forward with this gambit in September could be politically advantageous for Trump. While re-imposing all sanctions would be politically contentious, tying it to the arms embargo would be clever, given the broad bipartisan support for denying Iran new means.... As Fox News trumpeted, even leftist Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-MN) signed on to an American Israel Political Action Committee letter to support extending the UN arms embargo on Iran, although she and other Democrats made clear they did not support sanctions snapback.

■ **Minimal impact of lifting embargo**
If the embargo is lifted, the impact on arms shipments would be minimal. Russia

and China, already gearing up to sell their military wares to Tehran and contesting U.S. moves to undermine the JCPOA, can be counted on to ignore a ban that was extended in an underhanded fashion. Other states that would profit from arms trade with Iran would follow suit.

No doubt, Iran would like to modernize its military and plug capability gaps. A 2017 analysis by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) concluded that Iran would seek to obtain weapons systems that it has been unable to produce domestically, such as surface-to-air missiles, advanced fighter aircraft, tanks, advanced mines and anti-ship cruise missiles. However, even in 2017, when sanctions remained eased under the JCPOA, the IISS assessed that Tehran's acquisition of these weapons systems would be limited by their high cost.

Today, with government coffers constrained by deep cuts in oil revenue and mounting social needs, the prospect for major arms purchases is quite limited. Even when it did not face a U.S. pressure campaign, the Islamic Republic of Iran never imported arms on a major scale. Its military strategy relied instead on the use of foreign proxies and other asymmetric tools that have been highly effective in extending its regional influence and defense in depth. There is no reason to

think that it will significantly change this successful strategy when the arms ban is removed. This was a key conclusion of the IISS report.

Meanwhile, other UN Security Council bans on arms exports to Yemen and to non-governmental entities in Lebanon remain in place, so lifting the export part of the Iran arms ban will make no difference. Multiple unilateral U.S. arms trade regulations affecting Iran will also continue, including targeted sanctions on the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and on Iran's Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces.

Thus the real impact, and the real purpose of the arms embargo strategy, would be to kill off the JCPOA before Trump's elected term ends. At a minimum, punishment advocates seek to build a "sanctions wall," in the words of the anti-Iran Foundation for Defense of Democracies, to make it as hard as possible for a post-Trump administration to restore diplomatic comity with Iran.

■ Worst-case outcomes

Re-imposing all pre-JCPOA sanctions would be disastrous for global nonproliferation, multilateral diplomacy and regional peace. In this eventuality, Iran has made credible threats to not only resume industrial-scale uranium enrichment but also to withdraw from the Non-Proliferation Treaty and any obligation to accept inspections.

As former State Department coordinator for Iran nuclear implementation Jarrett Blanc recently warned, the Trump strategy for sanctions snapback carries several other significant risks: a crisis pitting the United States against the UN, a delegitimization of UN embargoes, a weakening of the sanctions tool for use elsewhere and an acceleration of the very arms sales of most concern. Others note that the Trump administration's gambit could leave the United States with little leverage to negotiate any other restrictions imposed by the JCPOA that are far more consequential.

To avoid these worst-case outcomes, French and German officials are considering an option that would allow the arms embargo to expire yet replace it with a new arrangement among key players that would maintain the essence of the ban. As suggested by Ellie Geranmayeh, a senior policy fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations, the Security Council could agree on a new set of stringent conditions or codes of conduct for future arms sales to Iran. Alternatively, major exporting states could agree to ad hoc measures with this effect. It would be highly useful, for example, to strike a deal with Russia not to sell Iran Yakhont anti-ship cruise missiles, which the IISS study said would be a game-changing development for the region. Concerned states should also seek to restrict the sale of unmanned systems that are beyond Iran's domestic production capability.

Rather than boisterous moves to upend the playing board for symbolic and political reasons, what is needed is quiet diplomacy to address the real problems. Best of all would be a return to compliance with the JCPOA by both the United States and Iran and negotiations between them to resolve issues of concern. Actions that make this impossible must be avoided.

U.S.-Israel alliance makes world insecure: Foreign Ministry

POLITICAL DESK **TEHRAN** — Iran's Foreign Ministry has described the U.S.-Israel partnership as a force which makes the globe insecure, saying the U.S. is committed to an apartheid regime whose existence depends on racism, occupation, terror and aggression.

"Accurately speaking, the US is committed to an apartheid regime whose existence depends on racism, occupation, terror & aggression, to name a few," the Foreign Ministry wrote in a tweet on Friday.



The tweet came on the 72nd anniversary of the Israeli regime, an event that Palestinians call Nakba day (Day of the Catastrophe). The day is observed on May 15 every year.

"The partnership America is cherishing has built on destruction, bloodshed in #Palestine & beyond," the tweet read. "The alliance does make the globe insecure."

In an earlier tweet, the Foreign Ministry had urged the world to stand up for the Palestinians' rights.

"Today is the Day of Catastrophe (or #NakbaDay) after the Zionists' occupation of the lands of Palestinians, led to their mass exodus since 1948. The world must stand up for the Palestinians' right to self-determination, as this long overdue right is recognized globally," read the tweet, which was posted on Thursday.

The Foreign Ministry also issued a statement on Thursday calling on the international community to take effective action to support Palestinians' struggles to liberate their land.

"During more than seven decades of occupation, the Zionist regime began its acts of aggression with war and crime against the real owners of this land and then continued this policy with building settlements (deep into occupied territories), displacing Palestinians, desecrating al-Aqsa Mosque, Judaizing al-Quds and the West Bank, continuing the blockade of Gaza, illegally annexing the occupied Golan (Heights) and attempting to grab major parts of the West Bank," said the statement, according to Tasnim news agency.

The statement expressed Iran's support for the Palestinian cause, calling on the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), governments, Islamic countries, and all freedom-seeking nations around the world to help end Israeli occupation and aggression and restore the Palestinian people's rights.

In 1948, the Zionist regime forced 760,000 Palestinians out of their homeland to the West Bank and Gaza Strip, neighboring Arab states as well as to many other countries in the world, and hundreds of Palestinian villages were depopulated and destroyed. The vast majority of Palestinian refugees, both those outside the 1949 armistice lines at the war's conclusion and those internally displaced, were barred by Israel from returning to their homes or reclaiming their property. This dispossession and dispersal of the Palestinian people is known to them as al-Nakba, meaning "the catastrophe," or "the disaster."

Iran dismisses U.S. scapegoating of China over COVID-19

POLITICAL DESK **TEHRAN** — Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi on Friday rejected the United States' blame game against China, calling on independent countries to stand up to the U.S. bullying.

"Iran dismisses the recent American regime's #COVID19-related blame game & smears against China," Mousavi said via Twitter on Thursday.

"The regime's campaigns aim at diverting attentions at home & abroad from the Admin's incompetency to save lives & reopen economy," he remarked. "Iran calls on independent states to stand against of United States bullying."

Tensions between Washington and Beijing have soared to a fever pitch in recent days and the two sides have traded barbs over the handling of the pandemic.

U.S. President Donald Trump said that China should have stopped the coronavirus at its source. "Whether it came from the lab or came from the bats, it all came from China, and they should have stopped it."

However, U.S. intelligence agencies have confirmed that the coronavirus does not appear man-made or genetically modified, refuting the theory promoted by some Trump backers.

Meanwhile, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Thursday accused China of trying to steal U.S. intellectual property and data pertaining to coronavirus research.

Washington condemns such attempts by China-linked "cyber actors and non-traditional collectors affiliated," Pompeo said in a statement.

"While the United States and our allies and partners are coordinating a collective, transparent response to save lives, the PRC continues to silence scientists, journalists, and citizens, and to spread disinformation, which has exacerbated the dangers of this health crisis," he added.

Earlier this month, China's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying urged the U.S. to stop shifting the blame to China and turn to facts.



Quds Day rallies will be held by marching cars, Rouhani says

Eid al-Fitr prayers to be held across Iran

POLITICAL DESK **TEHRAN** — President Hassan Rouhani announced on Saturday that Eid al-Fitr prayers will be held across the country in local mosques in accordance with health protocols.

However, the president said, the prayers will not be held in places where large gatherings are formed, such as Mosalla.

The president also said the International Quds Day will be held in Tehran by marching cars under the watch of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps. "A car march will be held in Tehran under the supervision of the

Guards to mark Quds Day."

He added, "People can attend Quds Day rallies by riding their cars."

Speaking in a meeting of the national headquarters tasked to contain the coronavirus, Rouhani said that the Covid-19 was not over yet and that the country was still grappling with the deadly virus. However, he said, the situation has improved.

The president also thanked the nation for their co-operation and strict observation of health protocols alongside their religious practices on the Laylat al-Qadr

ceremonies.

The president added that after Ramadan, restaurants will be reopened by observing some specific protocols.

Holy places, such as shrines, will also be reopened restrictively for some specific hours, he added.

According to Rouhani, universities will also be reopened from June 6.

Tehran Governor-General Anoushirvan Mohtashemi-Bandpei announced on May 12 that the Eid al-Fitr prayers will be held in the capital in case the task force tasked to combat coronavirus issues the permit.

Tehran slams Trump-Pompeo-Hook triangle as source of threat

POLITICAL DESK **TEHRAN** — Ali Shamkhani, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), has slammed U.S. President Donald Trump, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and special representative for Iran Brian Hook as a source of threat.

"#Trump, Pompeo & Hook triangle has created an image of the #USA administration that its allies consider it unreliable, its rivals consider it threat & its citizens consider it inefficient & incompetent," Shamkhani tweeted on Friday.

"The rule of irrational inefficient one is the source of the threats, only," he added.

The Trump administration has adopt-

ed a "maximum pressure" policy against Iran after it pulled out of the Iran nuclear agreement in May 2018.

Pompeo and Hook are among the top architect of the policy, which includes harsh sanctions and threats. They're also pushing to extend an arms embargo on Iran, which is set to expire in October.

Last month, Pompeo said Washington technically remained a "participant" in the deal in order to use a mechanism embedded within the accord to make the UN maintain the arms embargo.

Hook also told reporters, "We are operating under the assumption that we will be able to renew the arms embargo."

In a tweet on Thursday, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif likened Washington's JCPOA argument to Trump's suggestion to inject disinfectant to treat coronavirus patients.

"Those who muse about injecting disinfectant to 'clean' the coronavirus, also argue that they are a 'participant' in a UN Security Council Resolution endorsing a deal that they long ago 'ceased participating' in. Their own words," Zarif wrote.

Hook wrote in the Wall Street Journal on Wednesday that "one way or another" Washington would ensure the arms embargo remains. He said the United States

has drafted a Security Council resolution and "will press ahead with diplomacy and build support."

A resolution needs nine yes votes and no vetoes by Russia, China, the United States, France or Britain to be adopted by the 15-member Security Council. Russia has already signaled it is opposed to extending the arms embargo.

"If American diplomacy is frustrated by a veto, however, the U.S. retains the right to renew the arms embargo by other means," Hook wrote, citing the ability of a party to the Iran nuclear deal to trigger a so-called snapback of all UN sanctions on Iran, which includes the arms embargo.

Stock market attracts \$8.3b in 2 months

1 → Shasta is the investment arm of the Social Security Organization, which provides healthcare entitlement and pension benefits for a large proportion of Iran’s middle and working-class members of the labor force.



Answering to a question about the number of IPOs planned for the current year, Sahraei said, “We try that more IPOs will be held this year compared to the previous year, while it is important that the large and strong companies will offer their shares.”

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

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

Coronavirus could cost global economy \$8.8t: ADB

1 → Jerome Powell cautioned that the U.S. faces a slow and painful economic recovery without more government relief. At the same time, it was estimated that the UK government’s efforts to combat the coronavirus pandemic has risen to £123.2 billion.

The Office for Budget Responsibility said it now expects annual borrowing to equal 15.2% of the UK economy, with increased cost of the government’s furlough scheme being the main cause for the increase.

(Source: BBC)

Saudi sovereign fund buys minority stakes in Citi, Boeing, Facebook

Saudi Arabia’s sovereign wealth fund has bought minority stakes in major American companies including Boeing (BA.N), Facebook (FB.O) and Citigroup (C.N), according to a U.S. regulatory filing.

The PIF disclosed stakes worth \$713.7 million in Boeing, ABOUT \$522 million in Citigroup, \$522 million in Facebook, \$495.8 million in Disney (DIS.N) and \$487.6 million in Bank of America (BAC.N), the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) filing bit.ly/3e2Ao1B on Friday showed.

The PIF has a nearly \$514 million stake in Marriott (MAR.O) and a small stake in Berkshire Hathaway (BRKA.N), according to the filing. The PIF also disclosed an \$827.7 million stake in oil company BP (BP.L), which has American Depository Receipts (ADRs) listed in the United States.

The sovereign wealth fund was not immediately available to comment.

Last month its head, Yasir al-Rumayyan, said the fund was looking into investment opportunities in areas such as aviation, oil and gas, and entertainment, adding that there would be a lot of potential for investment opportunities once the coronavirus crisis passes.

The PIF disclosed an 8.2% stake in coronavirus-hit Carnival Corp (CCL.N) in April, sending the cruise operator’s shares nearly 30% higher.

The Saudi fund bought stakes in Royal Dutch Shell (RDSa.L), Total (TOTF.PA), Eni (ENI.MI) and Equinor (EQNR.OL) earlier this year, a source familiar with the transactions told Reuters on April 9.

The SEC filing on Friday showed it had a \$483.6 million stake in Shell, a \$222.3 million holding in Total and a \$481 million stake in Suncor Energy (SU.TO).

An earlier filing in Norway had shown the PIF had a 0.3% stake in oil and gas firm Equinor.

PIF already has a \$2 billion stake in Uber Technologies (UBER.N) and electric car company Lucid Motors. It used to own a small stake in electric carmaker Tesla (TSLA.O), but the latest filing did not show any exposure.

(Source: Reuters)

Germany plans 57 billion euro aid package for virus-hit municipalities

German Finance Minister Olaf Scholz is working on an aid package worth 57 billion euros (\$61.65 billion) to help municipalities cope with plunging tax revenues caused by the coronavirus crisis, a ministry document showed on Saturday.

Europe’s largest economy is facing its deepest recession since the Second World War, even as a lockdown to fight the virus is gradually eased. The drop in business activity has hit tax revenues and left a hole in municipal finances.

Scholz’s aid package aims to help cities and towns stabilize their finances, according to the finance ministry document seen by Reuters. The plan also contemplates extra relief for some heavily indebted municipalities.

“This protective shield should not only bring cities and municipalities through the current difficult situation, but also enable them to do their job even better,” Scholz was quoted as saying in the strategy paper.

The federal government wants the 16 state governments to shoulder half of the costs and parliament should approve the plan before the end of this year, the document said.

Under Germany’s federal system, local authorities are in charge of a large chunk of public investments such as building roads and bridges as well as modernizing schools and hospitals.

Scholz was expected to present further details of his plan later on Saturday.

He said earlier this week that plunging tax revenues will not stop the government from unleashing another fiscal stimulus package next month and that the measures should include emergency aid for struggling municipalities.

(Source: Reuters)

Over 2.5m tons of sponge iron produced in a month

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Production of sponge iron in Iran hit 2.54 million tons during the first Iranian calendar month Farvardin (March 20-April 19), IRNA reported.

As reported, sponge iron output in the first month of this year shows three percent rise compared to the figure of the first month of the previous year.

Producing 711,500 tons of sponge iron, Mobarakeh Steel Company was the top producer, accounting for 28 percent of the total monthly output.

Iran’s production of sponge iron has climbed six percent to 27.907 million tons in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19), from 26.359 million tons in its preceding year, according to the data released by Iranian Steel Producers Association (ISPA).

The country’s export of sponge iron has also risen 77 percent in the past year. Meanwhile, sponge iron consumption in



Industry Ministry to hold meeting for managing steel market



ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iran’s acting minister of industry, mining and trade says a committee meeting will be held this week for discussing issues related to the country’s steel market, Tasnim news agency reported on Saturday.

According to Hossein Modares Khiabani, reviewing the ways of distributing steel products in the market and pricing the mentioned products according to economic formulas are among the main goals of the mentioned meeting.

“The meeting will be participated by steel products manufacturers so that the necessary amendments can be applied on the ways of supplying steel products and setting prices based on economic formulas,” Modares Khiabani said.

The official noted that the main goal of the Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry is to ensure that in addition to supplying the raw materials needed by the steel industry’s downstream sector, exports of such products are also supported.

“In this regard, in addition to increasing steel production, the plan to increase exports of steel products in the current Iranian calendar year 1399 (started on March 20) will be pursued more seriously, and in this area, the Industry Ministry will provide assistance for producers and exporters.”

Following the Industry Ministry’s new

policies, steel products are not going to be allowed to be traded as capital goods, and new mechanisms will be designed to make sure these products will be available to real consumers and the downstream industries, the official stressed.

Last week, the Islamic Republic of Iran’s Customs Administration (IRICA) announced that the government has obliged the country’s steel companies to offer at least 60 percent of their annual production at the commodity exchange market.

As reported, steel ingot producers must also plan for 25 percent of their remaining production to be allocated for exports, and the rest will also be set aside for long-term contracts or exports.

Following the mentioned announcement, the government was criticized by the country’s steel producers interrupting the exports from this sector and preventing the producers from supplying the foreign revenues they need.

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

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

Shares of 3 more banks to be offered via ETF



ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian Finance and Economic Affairs Ministry announced that the shares of three more banks will be offered in the country’s stock exchange via the exchange-traded fund (ETF), ILNA reported on Saturday.

As reported, Eghtesad Novin Bank, Post Bank of Iran, and Tose’e Ta’avon Bank are the banks that will be added to the three previous banks, shares of which are due to be offered in the stock exchange.

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

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

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

The shares to be offered via the above mentioned Iranian ETFs belong to those

the country increased four percent to 26.965 million tons from 25.826 million tons on an annual basis.

Three projects each with a capacity of 800,000 tons were launched in the country during the past Iranian year.

The projects were put into operation in the southeastern province of Kerman, South Khorasan Province in east and Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari Province in the southwest of the country.

Iran is only second to India globally in terms of the volume of sponge iron production. The country is the 10th largest steel producer in the world.

Sponge iron is a metallic product produced through the direct reduction of iron ore in the strong state. It is a substitute for scrap and therefore is mostly applicable in making steel through the secondary route. The procedure of sponge iron making aims to expel the oxygen from iron ore.

governmental bodies defined in Iran’s privatization program, a comprehensive plan seriously followed up by the government to downsize and reduce its role in the economy.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Coronavirus seemingly tamed, Chinese economy starts to recover

By Keith Bradsher

China has turned its factories back on after bringing the coronavirus outbreak largely under control within its borders. The question now is who will buy the goods those factories make.

Industrial production surged last month in China more than twice as fast as most economists expected, according to official data released on Friday by the country’s National Bureau of Statistics. But retail sales fell even more sharply than anticipated, while orders for future exports from China have stalled.

Chinese officials are starting to acknowledge a mismatch as the economy reopens.

“The recovery of the production side may be slightly faster than the consumption side,” said Liu Aihua, the director general of the agency’s department of comprehensive statistics.

The world is watching China’s economic performance closely. It is a couple of months ahead of the rest of the world in coping with the virus and then trying to reopen businesses. Its successes or stumbles could offer lessons to others.

Despite signs of progress, the task remains formidable. The Chinese economy shrank in the first three months of this year for the first time since Mao died in 1976. Inventories of unsold goods are piling up. Shoppers are staying home. Factories are churning out clothes, toys and electronics faster than consumers in China or

overseas want to buy them. As the virus spreads around, surveys of purchasing managers in China showed export orders plunging in April.

“We should be aware that given the continuous spread of the epidemic abroad, the stability and recovery of the national economy is still faced with multiple challenges,” Ms. Liu said.

The difficulties are prompting more and more warnings that China — and possibly other countries after it — may face a “W-shaped” pattern of economic activity.

In such a pattern, the economy nose-dives when most businesses close during lockdowns and then seems to recover when factories and stores reopen. But with many consumers still scared of infection and leery of spending money, the economy then dips a second time before embarking on a more sustainable recovery.

Many economists at Western financial institutions now say a second dip this summer is more likely than any other result and are predicting that Beijing will have to step up government spending to offset the further slowdown.

“Supply is significantly outpacing demand,” said Larry Hu, the chief China economist at the Macquarie Group, an Australian financial conglomerate. “It requires stimulus to get China out of the second part of the ‘W.’”

Finance Minister Liu Kun wrote in a column on Thursday in The People’s Daily, the official

mouthpiece of the Chinese Communist Party, that China should make more use of fiscal policy to maintain economic growth. It was the clearest signal yet that when the country’s legislature gathers at the end of next week in Beijing, China may unveil an expansionary budget that creates a larger deficit and approves issuing more government bonds.

The National People’s Congress is scheduled to convene for its annual session starting next Friday, 11 weeks after it is usually held. Beijing also announced on Friday that it would ease restrictions on banking and other financial services among Hong Kong and adjacent areas of mainland China in an attempt to increase economic growth there.

Some economists are already optimistic. According to the government’s China Academy of Information and Communications Technology, shipments of smartphones to stores and other retailers within China were up 17 percent in April from a year earlier. That strong demand suggests that tens of millions of Chinese had the wherewithal to upgrade their phones even after the pandemic faded, said Xu Sitao, the chief China economist at Deloitte.

As the world’s largest oil importer by a wide margin, China is also enjoying a huge windfall from the plunge in global oil prices. “China’s growth this year could surprise on the upside,” Mr. Xu said.

New coronavirus infections had largely disappeared in China by the start of last month, according to official reports. Only a dozen new, locally transmitted cases were officially acknowledged nationwide in the first week of April. Data suggest that practically all factories and many other types of businesses were open throughout last month.

Strong exports kept factories busy last month. Many industrial complexes were catching up during April on orders placed while Chinese cities were locked down.

The country’s industrial production was up 3.9 percent from April of last year. Industrial production had been down 1.1 percent in March from a year earlier and had plunged in February, when the virus outbreak was at its worst in China.

But shopping and fixed-asset investment stayed weak. Retail sales were down 7.5 percent in April from a year earlier, marginally worse than economists’ expectations, although considerably better than sales in March.

Tens of millions of migrant workers are unemployed. Estimates of overall unemployment run as high as 20 percent. Many white-collar workers have suffered pay cuts.

“You can’t get people to spend money if they don’t have money or have a way to get it,” said George Magnus, an economist at the Oxford University China Center.

(Source: New York Times)

Developing new fields necessary to meet Iran's gas needs: POGC head

E N E R G Y **TEHRAN** — Managing Director of Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC), which is in charge of developing Iran's giant South Pars gas field in the Persian Gulf, says the reserve can supply 75 percent of the country's natural gas needs for the next 25 years if other fields in the Persian Gulf are developed as well.

According to Mohammad Meshkinfam, although the reduction of recovery factor in the South Pars reservoir is not noticeable at the moment, but in the next five years, it will reach a point where this reduction will be significant, Shana reported on Saturday.

Mentioning the latest progresses in the field's Phase 11 development project Meshkinfam said: "The development plan of Phase 11 is being implemented with a

focus on the southern platform located near Iran and Qatar border."

"To accelerate the development project, Phase 11 Development Plan is designed based on maximum utilization of existing facilities", he mentioned.

The official noted that the installation of the wellhead jacket of phase 11, which was loaded from the yard of Naft Sazeh Qeshm (NSQ) earlier this month, will be completed within a month, and immediately after the installation drilling rig will be placed on the jacket and drilling operations will begin.

He further mentioned the platform C of phase 12 nearing its end and noted that since the gas pressure in this platform has reduced significantly the extraction operations will be finished in the beginning of the next Iranian calendar year (March 2021) and the platform will be relocated to the phase 11.



In an interview in August 2019, Meshkinfam had said that the recovery factor of some phases in the field have started to fall.

The official had stressed that within the next three or four years if Iran does not come up with a plan for managing the situation, the decrease in the field's production pressure will be as big as the total capacity of a phase (56 million cubic

meters) per day.

South Pars is the world's largest gas field, covering an area of 3,700 square kilometers of Iran's territorial waters in the Persian Gulf.

The giant field is estimated to contain a significant amount of natural gas, accounting for about eight percent of the world's reserves, and approximately 18 billion barrels of condensate. The field is divided into 24 standard phases.

Zanganeh offers condolences on passing of Iran's OPEC governor

E N E R G Y **TEHRAN** — Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh has offered condolences on the passing of the country's Governor to the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) Hossein Kazempour Ardebili, Shana reported.

Kazempour Ardebili, 68, passed away in a hospital in Tehran on Saturday, two weeks after he slipped into a coma due to a brain hemorrhage.

"I can't believe that my compassionate friend, Hossein Kazempour Ardebili, has suddenly left this mortal world for eternal destiny, but death is both a reality and a truth from which there is no escape and we can do nothing but to surrender," Zanganeh wrote in his message of condolence.

After nearly 23 years of close cooperation with Kazempour I can testify that he was a pious, humble, and a very honorable man who was a true and unwavering servant to the Iranian nation, loyal to the Islamic Republic and a lover of Iran for whom pride and progress of Iran was



a constant concern, Zanganeh stated.

"He was a prominent diplomat who defended our national interests intelligently and vigorously

in OPEC for more than three decades, in the most difficult circumstances and in spite of all adversity."

Also, in a message, Foreign Minister Zarif expressed his condolences, saying, "The death of our dear brother, modest friend and honorable colleague, Hossein Kazempour Ardebili, a veteran and unique diplomat of our country, is a great loss for the diplomatic community."

"This survivor of the June 28, 1981 bombing, he had always remained an astute and dignified defender of the national interests of the country either as an ambassador or minister or deputy minister and served as a reliable, exact and straightforward advisor to the Islamic Republic of Iran's officials," Zarif added.

Kazempour Ardebili was appointed as Iran's representative to OPEC in 1995 and served for 13 years.

He once again became Iran's governor to OPEC in 2013 and had held the post until he passed away.

In the early 1990s, Kazempour Ardebili had been Iran's ambassador to Japan. He also served as the country's deputy foreign minister and deputy oil minister in the 1980s.

U.S. oil, gas rig count plunges to record low for 2nd week

U.S. energy firms cut number of U.S. oil and natural gas rigs operating to an all-time low for a second week in a row as producers slash spending on new drilling after oil prices collapsed due to a slump in demand caused by global lockdowns to stop the coronavirus pandemic.

The rig count, an early indicator of future output, fell by 35 to a record low of 339 in the week to May 15, according to data from energy services firm Baker Hughes Co going back to 1940.

The prior all-time low was 374 rigs in the week ended May 8.

More than half of the total U.S. oil rigs are in the Permian basin in West Texas and eastern New Mexico, where active units dropped by 23 this week to 175, the lowest since July 2016.

Global fuel demand is expected to drop roughly 10 percent in 2020 from 2019, prompting companies to make drastic cuts to spending, lay off thousands of workers and close production to offset the world-wide supply glut.

"The number of rigs running in the United States has fallen 52 percent since the start of the year. Over 400 rigs have gone offline, which is more than ... are still running," analysts at Enverus DrillingInfo said.

Drillers have cut an average of 50 rigs per week since mid-March after crude prices started to plunge due to the coronavirus and a brief oil price war between Saudi Arabia and Russia.

Analysts expect energy firms to keep chopping rigs for the rest of the year and noted drillers will be hesitant to activate new units in 2021 and 2022.

Simmons Energy, energy specialists at U.S. investment bank Piper Sandler,



forecast the U.S. rig count would fall from an annual average of 943 in 2019 to 528 in 2020, 215 in 2021 and 221 in 2022.

In Canada, drillers cut the rig count by three to a record low of 23 this week, according to Baker Hughes.

U.S. oil rigs fell 34 to 258 this week, their lowest since July 2009, while gas rigs fell by one to 79, a record low according to data going back to 1987.

The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) projected a fall in domestic crude output to 11.7 million barrels per day (bpd) this year from a record 12.2 million bpd in 2019, while global petroleum and other liquid fuels consumption will drop to 92.6 million bpd in 2020 from a record 100.7 million bpd in 2019.

U.S. crude futures were trading around \$29 a barrel on Friday, up about 68 percent over the past three weeks but still down over 50 percent since the start of the year.

Chesapeake Energy Corp., which helped revolutionize the use of hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, to extract oil and gas from shale formations, is considering a bankruptcy restructuring.

Energy consultant Rystad Energy forecast U.S. fracking activity will hit "rock bottom" in May before starting to recover in the third quarter.

(Source: Reuters)

Petrobras looks to China's 'teapots' to keep oil exports flowing

Brazil's state-run Petrobras sees no need for cuts in oil production, executives say, as the market for its crude remains robust in China, while domestic demand for fuel picks up amid social distancing fatigue in Latin America's largest economy.

On a Friday earnings call with analysts, executives credited the company's strong relationship with independent refineries in China's Shandong Province, known as "teapots," for allowing Petrobras to export a record amount of crude in recent months, even as some economies are effectively shut. Storage capacity for crude oil and gasoline is not proving to be an issue, they added.

Petroleo Brasileiro SA, as the firm is formally known, had throttled back oil production by 200,000 barrels per day in early April, or almost 10 percent of its output, on fears that weak global demand amid the coronavirus pandemic demand would leave the company without places to store crude.

Other major oil companies also scaled back production significantly, including Chevron Corp's cutbacks in the Permian Basin. But within a month Petrobras had reversed its cuts, surprising many.

On Thursday night, the company posted margins that beat expectations, even as it took a \$11 billion impairment on its exploration and production assets.

Executives said on Friday that crude sales to China have been particularly key to bringing Petrobras through the demand crisis caused by the novel coronavirus pandemic, while bunker fuels sales had also remained robust.

"Our commercial team has been developing a long-term relationship with Shandong refineries in China where our oil has strong demand even during the

crisis," Chief Logistics Officer André Barreto Chiarini said, citing appetite for the output from four specific offshore oilfields in Brazil.

"Crude oil from the Lula, Iracema, Sapinhoa and Buzios fields have the same overall characteristics as specific Chinese oils ... that are experiencing declining production," he said.

He added that Petrobras has capacity to boost oil exports 10 percent above the April record of 1 million bpd.

In a sign that adherence to social distancing measures is slipping from an already low baseline in Brazil, Petrobras downstream chief Anelise Lara told journalists that domestic demand for gasoline and diesel had rebounded significantly from lows in early April.

While demand for gasoline had been 65 percent lower than normal, it is now off only 40 percent to 45 percent, she said. Diesel consumption had fallen 50 percent, but is now only 30 percent off normal levels.

The company expects demand for all products except jet fuel to return to near-normal levels in the third or fourth quarter, Lara added.

Executives also said they would dramatically reduce the company's real estate footprint to cut costs. The home office regime adopted by the company during the pandemic showed that 50 percent of office workers could effectively work from home permanently, Chief Executive Roberto Castello Branco said.

Brazil-listed preferred shares in Petrobras were down 0.1 percent in afternoon trade, while Brazil's benchmark Bovespa equities index fell over 1 percent.

(Source: Reuters)

Capacity of Iranian power plants to increase 1800MW by mid-Sep.

E N E R G Y **TEHRAN** — The capacity of Iranian power plants is going to increase by 1800 megawatts (MW) by the end of the second quarter of the current Iranian calendar year (September 21), according to the head of Iran's Thermal Power Plants Holding Company (TPPH).

Referring to the complete readiness of the country's power plants to provide reliable and sustainable electricity during the summer's peak consumption period, Mohsen Tarzatab said: "By the end of the summer, more than 1,800 megawatts will be added to the capacity of the country's power plants under the framework of the A-B-Iran program."

As reported by the portal of Energy Ministry (known as Paven), the official noted that according to the Energy Ministry plans, about 3,846 MW of new capacity should be added to the country's power sector since the last summer up to the first half of the current Iranian calendar year, of which 1,102 MW has become operational by the end of the previous year (March 19).

Emphasizing that about 92,000 MW of power plants were scheduled to go through overhaul programs for this summer's peak consumption period, Tarzatab said: "So far, 90 percent of



the basic repairs of steam and gas units, combustion chambers and periodic repairs of heating units have been completed."

Summer months constitute Iran's peak demand periods, so most of the power plant overhaul programs are scheduled to take place during autumn, winter and spring seasons.

Over two-thirds of Iran's thermal power plants are owned and operated by the country's private sector and private owners are currently generating nearly 67 percent of Iran's thermal power.

Currently, a total of 478 thermal power plants are operating throughout Iran which includes both gas power plants and combined cycle plants.

Iran's total power generation capacity currently stands at about 85,000 MW, more than 90 percent of which is supplied by thermal power plants.

Natural gas prices could double next year

April has seen a marked reversal of fortunes for shale oil drillers in the United States. The price for May deliveries of West Texas Intermediate crude briefly dropped to minus \$40.32 per barrel on 20 April, [i] before rebounding to over zero. For the first time ever, traders were paying to have crude taken off their hands. The supply glut, combined with fears of limited storage space in Cushing, Oklahoma running out, is crushing the shale industry. The record low gas price, not seen since December 2009, mirrors oil since 40 percent of America's natural gas production is associated gas derived from oil production.

Reasons for the current low price of natural gas

Even before the current crisis, natural gas prices were unusually low at just \$2.33 in December 2019, [ii] as supply greatly exceeded demand thanks to a mild winter, a slowdown of economic growth in the U.S., China and the rest of the world as well as a glut in liquid natural gas thanks to new export projects coming online in the U.S., Africa and Australia. The arrival and spread of COVID-19 is turning things from bad to worse. "U.S. electricity demand is beginning to rapidly decline due to coronavirus-related containment measures" [iii] states Andy Weismann, CEO of EBW Analytics Group on an industry website. And, since electricity consumption is now a major driver for gas usage in the U.S., demand for gas has fallen.

Well operators are cutting back on drilling

Crude oil prices look subdued for the coming year according to industry observers. By contrast, some analysts expect natural gas prices to rise by the fall for, in response to low crude prices, an increasing number of E&P companies are being forced to cut activity and reduce drilling budgets by between 30 and 50 percent. This is already being mirrored in a reduction in new fracked well-starts from 780 in January to just 162 in April 2020, according to recent statistics from Rystad Energy, April 2020. [iv] The U.S. government's own estimates show output falling by 660,000 barrels per day by next year, from a peak of 13.2 million barrels a day. As crude output declines so will natural gas output and the price of the latter will rise.

The price of natural gas could double

The EIA's April note forecasts rising gas prices in the autumn, in anticipation of higher winter demand for heating and a revival of industrial activity. At the start of April, gas was priced at just \$1.64 per million British thermal units (MMBtu), the lowest it has been since December 2009. Goldman Sachs analyst Samantha Dart expects gas prices to jump to \$3.50 / MMBtu gas by winter 2020-2021 and reach \$ 3.25 / MMBtu by summer 2021. Bank of America concurs but puts the rise to just \$ 2.45 / MMBtu in 2021.

Impact of higher gas prices

The impact of higher natural gas prices could prevent hundreds of debt-laden small independent producers across Texas and the Midwest, who account for 83 percent of oil and 90 percent of gas output, from going bankrupt or shutting wells.

The return to better natural gas prices could incentivize E&P companies to reduce flaring and venting of gas and sell this higher valued commodity to local buyers. The upcoming completion of several gas takeaway pipelines will also open access to Gulf coast LNG processing plants and gas-hungry Mexico. At this juncture, as one industry observer put it, shale oil producers should regard natural gas as their main source of income in coming months and oil as a by-product. Adding, tongue-in-cheek, perhaps crude oil should be renamed associated crude oil?

(Source: rigzone.com)

Huge glut of oil sitting on tankers shows signs of shrinking

One of the oil market's most obvious signs of oversupply -- millions of barrels being stored on tankers all over the world -- is showing very tentative signs of shrinking.

On Thursday, North Sea oil traders offered almost 8 million barrels of crude for sale on a pricing window organized by S&P Global Platts. Some of the 13 cargoes were previously being stored at sea. The offers -- most didn't end in deals -- were the first of their kind since a global surplus began overflowing onto tankers early last month.

The offers provide an insight into how physical crude traders view the all-important North Sea oil market, where prices serve as benchmark for millions of barrels all over the world. The amount stored on ships globally is tentatively showing signs of falling too. It stood at 155 million barrels on Thursday, down from 176 million barrels last week, according to Vortexa Ltd., a tanker analytics firm.

Though volumes have fallen, the amount floating is still more than double what it was two months ago.

"Crude in floating storage is likely to fall first and fastest upon any demand strength, as it's typically the most expensive form of storage available," said Jay Maroo, a senior analyst at Vortexa.

Contango shrink

In the North Sea alone, there are 10.8 million barrels of oil floating off European ports, according to Bloomberg data, a level that hasn't been seen for a significant period of time. Fourteen ships are carrying benchmark Brent, Forties and Ekofisk crudes, while three others have Norwegian oils and one has Clair crude. The number of cargoes being offered or sold fell to 9 shipments on Friday, or 5.4 million barrels.

It's too soon to say if the shrinking floating hoard will mark the start of a trend, or whether it's just the ebb and flow of trading.

Most estimates indicate that oil production continues to exceed demand by millions of barrels a day, implying there's an excess that still needs to be stored.

Nevertheless, the drop in stockpiles at sea mirrors a sharp reduction in the financial rewards that the oil market offers those who're storing.

Aso-called supercontango, where more-immediate prices are deeply discounted relative to later months, has fallen sharply in recent weeks. At one stage, the gap between first-month Brent crude and supplies six months later stood at \$14 a barrel. That equated to \$28 million for a standard supertanker cargo. Now the gap is just \$3.43 and wouldn't cover the cost of hiring the ship.

The precise picture on floating storage -- and which trades are being unwound -- is also a mixed one.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Second Announcement



IN THE NAME OF GOD
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING

INTERNATIONAL TENDER No: 99/103-04/03

Tender Holder:

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING (IRIB)

Subject of Tender:

Broadcasting the TV network of Hispan TV on Hispasat 1E Satellite (Latin America) for three years in accordance with the technical specification and other terms and conditions mentioned in the tender documents.

Deadline and how to receive the tender documents:

From **Sunday 17 May 2020 (1399/02/28)** until **Wednesday 20 May 2020 (1399/02/31)** by **04:00 p.m** with presentation of introductory letter by company or its representative and the receipt of paying the documents fee.

Place of receiving the tender document:

Interested participants may refer to purchasing (KALA) Dept. ,4th Floor of IRIB Administration Complex ,Hotel Esteghlal St. Vali –Assr Ave, Tehran, Iran

The fee of the tender documents and how to deposit it:

Submission of payment receipt for the amount of 1,000,000 Rials to account 4101029171204273 with BIC No.IR 310100004101029171204273 IRAN Central Bank in the name of IRIB.

Type and amount of guarantee for participation to tender:

The amount of deposit for participant in tender is USD 38000 fixed or its equivalent in Rials 6270000000 which should be in the form of Bank Guarantee.

Time and place of delivering Bidding Envelopes:

The sealed packages/envelopes should be submitted no later than **09:00 a.m.** on **Saturday 20 of June 2020 (1399/03/31)** and at the address mentioned in 4th clause.

Time and place of opening Qualification Evaluation envelopes:

The date of opening the Qualification Evaluation envelopes is on **Saturday 20 of June 2020 (1399/03/31)** at **10:00 a.m** in the office of International Purchasing .

Time and place of opening Envelopes:

The envelopes A of those eligible participants who meet the qualification criterion and approval of Technical and Commercial committee will be opened on **Sunday 21 June 2020 at 02:00 p.m (1399/04/01)** in the office of Financial Vice President .In case of complete content in the envelopes A the envelopes of B and C of eligible participants will be opened at the same time and place.
The participant must be qualified by the competent authorities.

For more information please see :

www.iriboffice.ir/tenders and http://iets.mporg.ir/ Tel: 00982122167053

Purchasing (Kala) Dept.,IRIB

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Western media's dual-track approach towards Ebola in Africa, COVID-19 in U.S. is regretful!

By Mohammad Jafari

Frankly saying, the Western media's performance in covering news related to Ebola epidemic in Africa was regretful as they were maximizing the consequences of the disease in African nations, but later while facing the novel coronavirus outbreak in the U.S. and in the European countries, the same outlets tried to minimize the impacts, the move that should be death with as a form of double-standard journalism.

"Let us try a little thought experiment. Imagine, if you will, that rather than Europe and North America, the epicenter of the novel coronavirus pandemic was Africa, and the disease was killing many tens of thousands of people there. What images and storylines would be used to tell the story on TV screens and newspaper front pages in the West? Would they differ from those being employed by editors to explain the tragedy the virus is cutting across the global north?" Patrick Gathara, a communications consultant, writer, and award-winning political cartoonist based in Nairobi, wrote in his article published by Al Jazeera.

Well, as it turns out, we do not need to imagine. There was just such an infectious disease that tore through West Africa five years ago, and we can examine how that was reported. The Ebola epidemic, which struck in 2014, affected six countries in Africa, with isolated cases being recorded in North America and Western Europe. The disease killed more than 11,300 people, all but one in West Africa, particularly in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Although this is a fraction of the numbers associated with COVID-19 today, the coverage in the Western press was much less restrained, at least as far as the showing of bodies and portrayal of grief was concerned.

"Images of dead bodies in the streets and medical workers in hazmat suits" was staple fare. Daniel Berehulak, an Australian photojournalist working for the New York Times, was awarded the 2015 Pulitzer Prize for Feature Photography for his coverage of the epidemic. He had "followed a burial team and documented a trail of the dead". This year, though, the coverage is very different, and it is unlikely that Columbia University will be handing out Pulitzers to photographers following body collection teams in Europe or the U.S.

Why? While there is considerable variation between and within countries and cultures, in general, and contrary to popular wisdom, the news media tends to be rather reticent about showing death, especially when it involves familiar people. In his book on the reporting of death in the West, Dr Folker Hanusch notes that "newspapers show very little actual death, when they do, the dead are more likely to be from abroad, and even more likely to be from distant cultural backgrounds".

The same can also be said of images of grief. During the Ebola crisis, the private grief and mourning of African families were transformed into a public spectacle for Western consumption in a way the grief of Western families (and arguably that of families elsewhere) is not today. It is true that public performances of mourning like death wails and ritualized weeping long abandoned by many European societies are still practiced in many parts of the continent. But when taken out of their proper contexts and exoticised by insensitive media reporting, they can be made to seem strange and macabre to uncomprehending audiences in the West.

It is not a phenomenon unique to Western journalism. Interviews with Kenyan editors last year also showed that they were more likely to publish gruesome images from events in far off lands and that feature exoticised victims - that is those who are geographically, culturally and even racially remote from their audiences. However, because African media organizations are reliant on Western news agencies for their coverage of Europe and America, their coverage tends to reflect that of Western media, with few images of dead white bodies or heart-rending images of grief.

In the West, the story of the coronavirus deaths is being told largely through infographs and statistics rather than images. Unlike the victims of Ebola, the tragedies of coronavirus victims are



demonstrated in numbers, not photographs. But if the epicenter of the pandemic were to shift to Africa, this is not likely to continue. And that could lead to a serious fallout as happened last year when the New York Times used graphic pictures in its coverage of the Dusit D2 attacks in Nairobi, Kenya. As Sarah Sentilles notes, the media's "practice of keeping some bodies protected from view while other bodies - be they victims of bombings or natural disasters or police violence - are visible everywhere" may reinforce racist and nationalist ideas that some deaths are more significant than others - "those visible dead do not belong to us".

So what can Western media do to avoid this? They could learn from previous mistakes, anticipate the situation and develop guidelines for their editors on the use of death images. Following the Dusit D2 controversy, the New York Times promised to develop such guidelines. Sadly though, there is no indication that this has actually been done.

Secondly, editors would do well to recognize that there is more to African responses to epidemics than the favored images of poverty, dying and wailing, show. Stories and images that highlight the agency of Africans, and that recognize that there is more than one "Africa" are just as important.

A final strategy that Western media could adopt would be to use local reporters and photographers who may provide more sensitive and nuanced coverage of the disease in their own nations. Relying exclusively or even primarily on foreign correspondents and photographers, who import their own societal biases into story and image selections, would inevitably end up compromising the reporting.

The goal would not be to make all reports of the pandemic look and sound identical across all countries. There is still need for media reports to allow foreign audiences to recognize themselves in the subjects of the coverage without erasing the differences. It is a tricky balance and one that even the most empathetic of reporters will struggle to find.

As of May 15, the number of people infected with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) around the world surpassed 4 million 555 thousand, according to the data released by coronavirus research centers.

The death toll is over 304,000.

1 million 722 thousand 232 patients have recovered.

The U.S. is leading in the world in terms of the largest number of infected people (1 million 458 thousand 243 confirmed cases). 86,942 deaths were reported.

Then, came Spain which confirmed 274,367 cases. The total number of deaths in Spain was 27,459.

The next was Russia. The total number of cases in Russia reached 262,843. 2,418 patients died as of Friday.

UK overtook Italy, confirming 233,151 cases. The death toll reached 33,614. UK reported most death cases in Europe, and 2nd in the world after the United States.

Italy reported 223,096 cases and 31,368 deaths.

The next was Brazil with a total of 204,795 cases and 14,058 deaths.

France reported 178,870 cases and 27,425 deaths.

Germany confirmed 174,975 cases and 7,928 deaths.

Turkey recorded 144,749 cases. The deaths comprise 4,007.

China, where the COVID-19 outbreak started, confirmed a total of 82,933 cases. 4 new cases were confirmed in the country in the past one day. The death toll here is 4,633. No death case had been registered in the past few days.

Georgia confirmed 671 cases of coronavirus and 12 deaths.

Among the Arab states Qatar overtook the United Arab Emirates (UAE) with the most confirmed cases - 28,272. The death toll reached 14 in Qatar. The number of infected people in the UAE was 21,084. 208 death cases had been registered here. In Kuwait the number of confirmed cases was 12,860, that of the deaths was 96. Egypt reported 10,829 confirmed cases and 571 deaths. Iraq confirmed 3,143 cases and 115 deaths. 891 cases were reported in Lebanon, the deaths comprise 26.

In late December 2019, Chinese authorities notified the World Health Organization (WHO) about an outbreak of a previously unknown pneumonia in the city of Wuhan, central China. WHO declared the outbreak of the novel coronavirus a global pandemic and named the virus COVID-19.

According to the data of the World Health Organization, coronavirus cases have been confirmed in more than 212 countries and territories.

First Announcement



Water and Wastewater Company of Isfahan Province Call for Prequalification to Hold a Public Bidding

- 1- Water and Wastewater Company of Isfahan Province intends to hold a prequalification for a public bidding through the *Iran Public e-Procurement System* based on the following information:

Item	Subject	Reference No.	Iran Public e-Procurement System No.
1	International Bid for Financing (Foreign Finance), Inspection and Rehabilitation of the Mains and Sub-mains of Isfahan Sewage Collection System	99-1-25	2099001434000001

- 2- The whole bidding process from receipt and delivery of the prequalification documents up to sending invitation for the other bidding processes will be held through *Iran Public e-Procurement System* (www.setadiran.ir); in case the bidders have not registered in the mentioned website yet, they are required to register and obtain their electronic signature certificate in order to attend the bidding. **The publication date of call in website is 13/05/2020.** Information and bidding documents will be submitted to the bidders through the Iran Public e-Procurement System after holding prequalification process and sending invitations.

Title	Hour	Day	Date	Remarks
Deadline for receiving the prequalification documents	14:00	Thursday	18/06/2020	One month after publication
Deadline for responding to prequalification documents	08:00	Sunday	19/07/2020	Two months after publication

Information of the bidding holder in order to take more information about the prequalification documents:

Address : Isfahan wastewater renovation project management's office- Isfahan water and wastewater building- Ferdousi Street- Isfahan- Iran ,Phone No: (+9831)32223700

Fax: (+9831)32228800

- 3- **Contact information of Setadiran website in order to attempt the registration process:**

4-1- Call center: 021-41934

4-2- Registration Office: 021-88969737 & 021-85193768



Iranian Offshore Oil Company (P.J.S)
INVITATION TO PUBLIC TENDER (Pre-Qualification)
TENDER NO: 001/99/OT

Chartering Of Fast Crew Boat to Provide Services in Operating Fields Of IOOC 1399.830

Iranian Offshore Oil Company (IOOC) intends to open Pre-Qualification for above tender with the following conditions:

Scope of work:

Chartering Of Fast Crew Boat to Provide Services in Operating Fields Of IOOC

Location:

IOOC Oil Fields in Persian Gulf

Performance Period:

2 Years

Other item shall be considered:

- Ability of submission Bid Bond as in the amount of Iranian Rial **10,792,181,600** for Iranian Bidders and EURO **71,425.00** for Foreign Bidders
- Ability of submission 10% of total Contract Price value as performance guarantee in case of winning according to Company's procedure.
- Proposals should be submitted with no condition, incomplete, ambiguous or adverse of Package specification in deadline.
- Company shall reserve the right to accept or reject any or all of proposals or part(s) thereof according to Tender Law.
- The validity of the submitted financial proposals shall be 3 months from the opening of financial envelopes date and extendable for one further period.
- for invitation to above tender, it is necessary to achieve the determinate minimum score in the Pre-qualification. Bidders who have ability and are willing to participate in the Pre-qualification are requested to submit a written request to Contract Department, within One Week from Second Announcement by representative and collect the Pre-Qualification Forms.

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

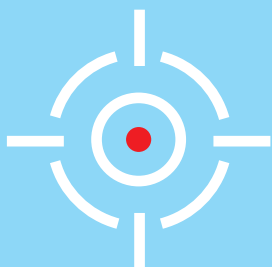
Address for willing to participate and submission Pre-qualification Documents: 5th Floor, #12, Touraj St., Khakzad st., Vali-e-Asr Ave., after Balal Mosque, before Modarres Crossroad, Tehran, Iran. Tel: +9821-23942510

Note: Additional information is available at IOOC website address: www.iooc.co.ir on the day of Second Announcement

Iranian Offshore Oil Company Public Relations

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021 - 430 51 430

COVID-19 slashes Iran's airport passenger traffic by 80%

➔ **1** Widening travel curbs to contain the spread of the coronavirus prompted more flight cancellations over the past couple of months, with restrictions spilling from domestic to international travels. Many countries, including Iran, imposed travel restrictions to help curb the spread of novel coronavirus. In this line, incoming and outgoing flights have been suspended, and road travels restricted to a great extent.

Globally the number of weekly scheduled flights in mid-March was down more than 12% from a year ago, flight data provider OAG said, with many airlines having announced further cuts to come.



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

The latest available data show eight million tourists visited the country during the first ten months of the past Iranian calendar year.

Historical fabrics exhibition to mark International Museum Day

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** – Tehran's Reza Abbasi Museum will showcase a collection of historical fabric works in an online exhibition on Tuesday to celebrate International Museum Day, CHTN reported.

The fabrics date back to the early Islamic era, Buyid era (934-1062) and Safavid period (1501–1736), of which six pieces of silk and exquisite brocades are on display for the first time, director of the museum Sediqeh Qodratbadi said on Saturday.



Archaeologist and scholar Zohreh Ruhfar is also scheduled to give a speech on the history of early Islamic textile during the exhibition, which can be visited on the museum's Instagram page, she added.

The International Museum Day has been celebrated worldwide since 1977 on or around May 18 to highlight the importance of museums and the challenges they face.

Named after one of the greatest artists of the Safavid era, Reza Abbasi Museum embraces several permanent exhibition halls, each dedicated to an epoch of Iranian arts and history.

The museum's treasure trove contains artifacts made of baked clay, metal, and stone from the prehistoric times to pottery and metal objects, textile and lacquer painting, manuscripts, and jewelry belonging to the Islamic period. The displays are set according to the time interval from the 7th millennium BC to the early 20th century.

Ancient castles and fortresses in Iran: Portuguese Castle in Qeshm

HERITAGE d e s k Portuguese Castle in Qeshm Island was built in the year 1030 AH (1620-1621 CE) under the decree of the Spanish monarch of the times. The castle has two ramparts and towers in the four corners. Within the castle several extremely ancient and rusty cannons remain to date.



The castle with the disordered square plan has walls with about 3.5 meters thickness and towers with 12 meters height at the four sides, according to Iran Travel, Tourism, and Touring Organization.

The structure was constructed under the orders of Afonso de Albuquerque, the Portuguese conqueror, and includes weapon caches, a great cistern, barracks, prisons, churches, headquarters, and halls.

The church in some of these castles has two rows of round stone with beautiful arches of carved coral stones. Portuguese Castle is one of the attractions in the southern Hormozgan province.

Qeshm Island is situated to the north of Hormoz Strait in the Persian Gulf, and the city of Qeshm is located in the southeast of this Island.

Agritourism may shorten way to materialize 'Surge in Production'

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — Agritourism, a relatively new branch of the travel industry in which tourists stay with local people in rural areas abroad, is deemed as a means to materialize the national goal of 'Surge in Production'.

The tourism industry, which itself plays a pivotal role in the growth of other industries and sectors in various regions and countries, not only generates revenues but also pushes up other related sectors and manufacturing and customer service jobs.

Some experts believe that boosting tourism will result in higher demand, new markets, and ultimately a rise in production, as Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei set the goal by naming the current Iranian calendar year as the 'Year of Surge in Production', aiming to create a tangible change in people's lives.

Some believe that in addition to the customer services jobs, Agritourism pays special attention to the production sector, saying "For this reason, agricultural tourism is much more important and practical than other branches of tourism because it creates a new chain and diversity in the field of production and services."

Farm/ranch recreation refers to activities conducted on private agricultural lands, which might include fee-hunting and fishing, overnight stays, educational activities, etc. This category of tourism is a subset of a larger industry known as agritourism. Agritourism is "a commercial enterprise at a working farm, ranch, or agricultural plant conducted for the enjoyment of visitors that generates supplemental income for the owner."

Agritourism and nature-tourism enterprises might include: Outdoor recreation (fishing, hunting, wildlife study, horseback riding), educational experiences (cannery tours, cooking classes, or tea or coffee tasting), entertainment (harvest festivals or barn dances), hospitality services (farm stays, guided tours, or outfitter services), and on-farm direct sales (u-pick operations or roadside stands).



Agritourism is a subset of a larger industry called rural tourism that includes resorts, off-site farmers' markets, non-profit agricultural tours, and other leisure and hospitality businesses that attract visitors to the countryside.

Rural Tourism, however, differs from agritourism in two ways. First, rural tourism enterprises do not necessarily occur on a farm or ranch, or at an agricultural plant, they do not generate supplemental income for the agricultural enterprise.

To cite an example, we could refer to

saffron farms in northeast Iran that are going to fame as a new destination for agritourism. Iranian Saffron is known as the "red gold", saffron is a magical ingredient in Persian culture, from aromatic foods and colorful desserts, to the physical and spiritual medicine.

Every year, the saffron harvest season begins in early November. While most other vegetation is gone, the bright purple flowers cover the fields and create an outstanding landscape in dry regions in Iran. Major saffron producers of Iran are located on the east

side of the country. If you would like to see the biggest market, head to Mashhad, which is also known for its religious importance.

Today, agritourism is regarded as a stimulus to the imbalanced economy of agriculture sectors and the tendency for emotional and nostalgic roots of the modern world citizens and due to factors such as visitor participation in farm activities, direct purchase of products, spending a night at a farm, curiosity and learning about the farm and agriculture products has been able to create a wide target population.

Human life in Iran's Rey is as old as 8,000 years: archaeologist

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** – Rey is considered to be the oldest city in the central Iranian plateau with a history of human settlement that stretches back in time for over 8,000 years, a senior Iranian archaeologist Qadir Afrovand has said.

"The ancient hill of Cheshmeh-Ali (literally meaning 'Spring of Ali'), which is now a popular tourist destination in the heart of Rey, southern Tehran, bears testimonies to being a seat of power for various governments and dynasties throughout history," CHTN quoted Afrovand as saying on Saturday.

"When cavemen decided to get rid of the insecurity and unbearable coldness of the highlands of Alborz, the western slopes of Mount Tabarak (now known as Bibi Shahar Banu) became their first haven for prosperity and creativity of their primitive minds. It became most suitable and at the same time perhaps the warmest and safest point compared to their earlier habitat in Alborz."

Cheshmeh-Ali is a historical and recreational spot located in the south of Tehran and north of Rey as the history of settlement in the latter goes down to the 3rd millennium BC.



Last year, the National Museum of Iran hosted an exhibition featuring relics unearthed from Cheshmeh-Ali and Qeytariyeh

neighborhoods of the Iranian capital. Titled "Ancient Tehran: From Plain to Mountain", the exhibit showcased 110 objects including

potteries decorated with delicate red lines that were unearthed in Cheshmeh-Ali and date from 4800 BC to 5200 BC.

The history of Rey, according to the Encyclopedia Britannica is featured in the Avesta (the original document of Zoroastrianism, an Iranian religion) as a sacred place, and it is also mentioned in the book of Tobit, of the biblical Apocrypha, and by classical authors.

The first well-documented evidence of human habitation is in deposits from several excavated cave and rock-shelter sites, located mainly in the Zagros Mountains of western Iran and dated to Middle Paleolithic or Mousterian times (c. 100,000 BC).

From the Caspian in the northwest to Baluchistan in the south-east, the Iranian Plateau extends for close to 2,000 km. It encompasses the greater part of Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan west of the Indus River containing some 3,700,000 square kilometres. In spite of being called a "plateau", it is far from flat but contains several mountain ranges, the highest peak being Damavand in the Alborz mountain range at 5610 m, and the Dasht-e Loot east of Kerman in Central Iran falling below 300 m.

59 properties in Yazd added to National Heritage List

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** – Fifty nine historical and natural sites in the central Iranian province of Yazd have been inscribed on the National Heritage List, provincial tourism chief has said.

Thirty six immovable properties, six moveable properties, 12 intangible items, five natural sites, and four historical structures were added to the National Heritage List during the previous Iranian calendar year 1398 (ended on March 20), Ali-Asghar Samadiani announced on Saturday, CHTN reported.

Over 150 archaeological and historical sites were also identified across the province through excavations and surveys conducted by Yazd Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department during last year, he added.

He also noted that some 450 historical objects as well as 409 historical sites in the province were restored by teams of cultural heritage experts and restorers in the previous Iranian year.

Moreover, visits to historical and cultural heritage museums in the province rose by 14 percent during the past year compared to the year earlier, he stated.

In July 2017, historical structure of the city of Yazd was named a UNESCO



World Heritage. Wedged between the northern Dasht-e Kavir and southern Dasht-e Lut on a flat plain, the oasis city enjoys a very harmonious public-religious architecture that dates from different eras.

Yazd is usually referred to as a delightful place to stay, or a "don't miss" destination by almost all of its visitors. It is teemed with mudbrick houses that are equipped with innovative badgirs (wind catchers), atmospheric alleyways,

and many Islamic and Iranian monuments that shape its eye-catching city landscape.

It is a living testimony to intelligent use of limited available resources in the desert for survival. Water is brought to the city by the qanat system. Each district of the city is built on a qanat and has a communal center.

Buildings are built of earth. The use of earth in buildings includes walls, and roofs by the construction of vaults and domes. Houses are built with courtyards below ground level, serving underground areas. Wind-catchers, courtyards, and thick earthen walls create a pleasant microclimate.

Partially covered alleyways together with streets, public squares and courtyards contribute to a pleasant urban quality. The city escaped the modernization trends that destroyed many traditional earthen cities.

It survives today with its traditional districts, the qanat system, traditional houses, bazars, hammams, water cisterns, mosques, synagogues, Zoroastrian temples and the historic garden of Dolat-abad. The city enjoys the peaceful coexistence of three religions: Islam, Judaism and Zoroastrianism.

Why Iran, unlike others, held mass prayers successfully amid pandemic?

By Faranak Bakhtiari

TEHRAN — With the onset of coronavirus outbreak, the governments around the world announced restrictions on social and religious gatherings, but some religious people started to violate the rules endangering others' lives. However, Iranians reacted positively and observed health protocols outlined by the government standards even during Ahya nights.

Ahya nights, also known as Laylat al-Qadr, is a religious ceremony to mark the eve of the 21st day of the fasting month of Ramadan, which is one of the most significant events of the holy month of Ramadan, being held this year on May 13, 15, 17.

Iranian people could go on the ritual safe with observation of hygiene principles, after the government announced to open the mosques and holy shrines regarding the safe standards.

While, in South Korea, a Christian gathering at a church, in Malaysia, a gathering of 16,000 Muslims in a mosque, and in New York, a gathering of Orthodox Jews has led to the wide spread of the disease.

In New York, despite the ban on large gatherings, several Jewish weddings and funerals were held in violation of public



health orders.

While there have been high-profile incidents of police disrupting Jewish gatherings, the New York City Police Department has also made arrests of various sorts for failing to practice social distancing.

And pictures of throngs hanging out at parks and closely congregating for the Navy Blue Angels and Air Force Thunderbirds fly-

overs were released.

Early on in the pandemic police made arrests at large Jewish gatherings, a local news station reported that a school bus was carrying children to a Jewish school that was open, illegally.

Also, in Israel, it was Lag Ba-Omer, a Jewish holiday traditionally celebrated with mass gatherings around roaring bonfires.

Thousands usually visit the site at this time of year, but in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic the Israeli government issued a decree ordering that from May 7 to 13, «gathering on the area of Mt. Meron will be prohibited except for local residents or people who need to go there for work.»

It didn't work. Hundreds of ultra-Orthodox Jews turned up on Mt. Meron Tuesday in defiance of the ban, according to the CNN. In the end, 320 people were arrested for violating health and security measures.

The mass arrests are the latest incident in a global trend with dangerous consequences, a segment of the ultra-Orthodox Jewish community from Israel to London to New York are refusing to obey social distancing orders.

This is while, no serious violation or arrest has happened among Iranians who soon accepted to follow the protective rules and stay with what government wanted them to do and break the transmission chain.

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

Hunting ban extended in northern forests for 5 years



ENVIRONMENT **TEHRAN** — The ban on hunting in all areas and forest lands of the northern provinces of the country has been extended for another five years, head of Golestan province's department of environment has said.

Based on viewpoints of experts from specialized working groups and the approval of the relevant organizations, the decision was taken with the aim of protecting the wildlife of the forests of northern Iran in the provinces of Golestan, Gilan and Mazandaran, Mohammad Reza Kanani told IRNA on Saturday.

"We do not have accurate statistics on hunting weapons, not even the permitted ones in Golestan province."

Pointing to the issuance of temporary bird hunting licenses in some periods last year, he said that last year (ended on March 20), 3,000 bird hunting licenses were issued in non-forested areas of Golestan.

Bird hunting in Golestan is mostly done in the wetlands of the northern part of the province but in a limited way by observing environmental protocols.

Spanning from the south of Azerbaijan to about 850 km eastward to the provinces of Gilan, Mazandaran and Golestan, the Hyrcanian Forests are witnesses of the ancient forests of the world estimated to be survived for a long period spanning 35 and 50 million years.

Designated as a World Heritage site by UNESCO in December 2019, the Hyrcanian Forest contains very rich ecosystems due to the particular orographic and climatic situation (precipitation rich, warm-temperate, high moisture from the Caspian Sea and damming effect of the Alborz Mountain range).

According to UNESCO, the forest contains the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity with 69 mammal species and 304 bird species, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation. It also contains superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance.

Wild white storks hatch in UK for first time in hundreds of years



White stork chicks have hatched in the wild in the UK for the first time in centuries.

Eggs in one of three nests at the Knepp estate in West Sussex have hatched, the White Stork Project announced.

Observers watched as the parents incubated the nest of five eggs in an oak tree. They were seen removing eggshells from the nest and regurgitating food for the chicks.

It came after the same pair of white storks unsuccessfully tried to breed at Knepp last year. Lucy Groves, project officer for the White Stork Project, said it was the first time in hundreds of years that wild white stork chicks have hatched in the UK.

She said: "After waiting 33 days for these eggs to hatch it was extremely exciting to see signs that the first egg had hatched on 6 May. The parents have been working hard and are doing a fantastic job, especially after their failed attempt last year."

"It is incredible to have the first white stork chicks hatch in the wild for hundreds of years here at Knepp."

"These are early days for the chicks, and we will be monitoring them closely, but we have great hopes for them. This is just one step towards establishing this species in the south of England. It may be a small step, but it is an exciting one."

"This stunning species has really captured people's imagination and it has been great following the sightings of birds from the project during the period of lockdown and hearing about the joy and hope they have brought to people."

The project aims to restore a population of at least 50 breeding pairs of white storks in southern England by 2030.

Isabella Tree, who co-owns Knepp with Charlie Burrell, said: "When I hear that clattering sound now, coming from the tops of our oak trees where they're currently nesting at Knepp, it feels like a sound from the middle ages has come back to life, the Guardian reported."

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → E

Iran to implement food safety program

A food safety document will be approved and implemented in the future in the country, Vahid Mofid, an official with the Food and Drug Administration has stated.

The document is consisting of standards through which food safety is best ensured; the whole food production process from cultivation to markets will be under control, it also identifies and controls hazards in the production, manufacturing and handling of food rather than relying on end product standards alone, he explained.

The standards enable the country to oblige food businesses to meet the document principles, they will be subject to periodic observations by a suitably qualified food safety auditor, he added.

اجرای سند ایمنی غذا در حال پیگیری است

مدیرکل فرآورده‌های غذایی و آشامیدنی سازمان غذا و دارو درباره وضعیت فعلی سند ایمنی غذا گفت: سند ایمنی غذا در حال تکمیل شدن است و تا پس از طی مراحل اداری اجرا شود.

وحید مفید روز جمعه در گفت و گو با خبرنگار ایرنا افزود: با این سند، نظارت بر کل حلقه‌های تولید در زنجیره غذا از مزعه تا سفره تحت کنترل بخش‌های مختلف درمی‌آید و میزان سموم مصرفی، انواع کودهای مصرف شده و چگونگی حمل مواد غذایی و توزیع آن، نوع آب و آبیاری زمین‌ها در سند ایمنی غذا تعریف شده است چراکه این عوامل در کیفیت محصول غذایی تاثیرگذار هستند. مدیرکل فرآورده‌های غذایی و آشامیدنی سازمان غذا و دارو اظهار داشت: این استانداردها کشور را قادر می‌سازد که تولیدکنندگان غذایی به رعایت اصول سند مجاب کند، و شرکت‌های تولیدکننده مواد غذایی هر دوره توسط یک سازمان ایمنی مواد غذایی کنترل خواهند شد.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“-ate”

■ **Meaning:** become
■ **For example:** the disease has been **eradicated** from the world.

PHRASAL VERB

Poke around

■ **Meaning:** to look for something, especially by moving a lot of things around
■ **For example:** James began poking about in the cupboard, looking for the sugar.

IDIOM

On the cusp

■ **Explanation:** a point in time that marks a transition or the beginning of a change
■ **For example:** Some people think the world is on the cusp of a new era.

Focus on the wildlife trade, not wet markets, say experts

Coronavirus has created an entirely new lingo. We “Zoom” into meetings and “clap for our carers”. New York is “on pause” to “flatten the curve” while Britain is figuring out how to “stay alert”.

“Wet markets”, a term that has become synonymous with the pandemic's initial outbreak, is arguably the least understood, the Independent reported.

It has been used interchangeably, and incorrectly, with wildlife markets where a mix of wild species are sold in cages. Zoonotic diseases can be transmitted as a result of the close proximity between wildlife and people.

Wet markets are essentially farmers' markets with rows of stalls selling fresh fruit, vegetables, eggs, meat and fish. They were thrust into the spotlight late last year after one market in Wuhan, China played a suspected role in the coronavirus outbreak.

Wild animal sections are rarely found at wet markets. But conflation of the two has helped fuel calls for outright bans on wet markets by media, public health officials, politicians and celebrity animal welfare advocates.

It is a mistake that risks perpetuating dangerous stereotypes, experts told The Independent.

Dr Xaq Frohlich, a food historian at Auburn University, said that the danger of calling to ban wet markets “confuses a marginal activity [the wildlife trade] with a fundamental, basic and historically common activity. It would be like calling for the ban of farmers' markets and restaurants”.

He added: “Regulated wet markets with inspections, proper training and safety codes are as safe as things that we take for granted in the United States.”

Of the initial 41 people hospitalised with the coronavirus in Wuhan, 27 patients had been exposed to Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market, according to a study in medical journal The Lancet.

However in the earliest case, the patient had no reported link with Huanan market and, in total, 13 of the 41 cases had no link to it.

A section of Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market reportedly sold 30 species of animals including live wolf pups, golden cicadas, scorpions and civets, according to The Guardian. China closed the market in January.

Scientists may never find the exact origins of Covid-19 (and a new report states there is “zero evidence” that it came from a lab). On the whole, researchers agree that the most plausible explanation is that the virus made the jump from an animal to humans in a “zoonotic spillover” event.

Although the term wet market is typically used in parts of Asia, it could just as easily refer to other markets across the world.

For example, it is not common to refer to Pike Place Market in Seattle as a wet market, Dr Frohlich says, but it shares characteristics with those found in Asia.

The term differentiates from “dry” markets, where packaged goods, spices or textiles are sold, and gained popularity in Singapore in the early Seventies.

As you might expect, water features heavily: vendors hose down stalls to keep them clean, ice keeps meat fresh and tanks of water hold seafood.

Wet markets provide low-cost, fresh food for shoppers and income for legions of stall holders and farmers. It's part of daily life: a place to gossip, haggle over prices and to share advice on recipes for seasonal produce.

A 2012 study in China linked the density of wet markets to good nutrition in children, particularly those in low-income families, according to the LA Times.

In some major cities, wet markets are being edged out as old neighbourhoods disappear.

Jim Wang grew up in Shanghai and has travelled across China to learn about local cuisine. His company, Shanghai Foodie, allows tourists to experience the city's food culture from a local's perspective.

“In the 1990s, large wet markets had different floors for fruits and vegetables, seafood, and livestock like chickens, ducks, geese, pigeons, some exotic birds,” he told The Independent.

“You could pick a live animal and the vendor would butcher on-site or else you might take it home alive so that it was fresher when you came to cook.”

“This is the stereotype of what people think about Chinese wet markets now but they are extremely misunderstood in the West. In the past 20 years, Shanghai has become extremely clean.”

WORDS IN THE NEWS

Twins Successfully Separated

(October 13, 2003)

Twins from Egypt, who were attached by the head, have been successfully separated by doctors in the US. The operation took more than 30 hours to complete. The boys are in a very serious, but stable condition. This report from Ian Pannell:

Ahmed and Mohamed Ibrahim were brought to the US from Egypt a year ago to prepare for this **complex** and **high risk** operation. Though they have separate brains, the two year olds shared **an intricate web** of blood vessels. After months of preparation, doctors in Dallas spent hours separating them and carrying out **restorative surgery**. So far all has gone to plan.

When their father was told ‘we have two boys’, he **fainted on the spot**. Their mother, like much of the team, was in tears. Although the procedure appears to have been a success, much remains to be done. The boys will be taken to **an intensive care unit** where they will remain in **a drug induced coma** for up to five days to prevent brain damage. They will then need months of **therapy** and additional **reconstructive surgery** in the coming years to help them recover. But doctors hope that soon Ahmed and Mohamed will be able to **stand face to face** for the first time.

■ **Words**

complex: complicated and difficult with many things involved
high risk: extremely dangerous with a great possibility of failure
an intricate web: a complicated structure with many fine details
restorative surgery: an operation to repair parts of the body so that they can work well again

fainted on the spot: immediately lost consciousness for a short time

an intensive care unit: a special medical department where patients, who might die, are treated

a drug induced coma: a deeply unconscious state caused by medication

therapy: treatment to help patients recover from physical or mental illnesses

reconstructive surgery: an operation to rebuild damaged parts of the body

to stand face to face: if two people are looking directly at each other, they are standing face to face

(Source: BBC)

Russia records highest coronavirus death toll yet

Russia Saturday recorded its highest daily death toll yet from the coronavirus while new cases fell to the lowest level in two weeks.

Russia is in second place in the world to the United States with 272,043 cases, with 9,200 new cases announced Saturday, the lowest number since May 2, AFP reported.

But the number of deaths announced Saturday for the last 24 hours was the highest yet in Russia, at 119.

Critics have cast doubt on Russia's low mortality rate, accusing authorities of under-reporting deaths in order to play down the scale of the crisis.

The total number of officially confirmed deaths is now 2,537, lower than a number of other countries with fewer cases.

Russian health officials say one of the reasons the count is lower is that only deaths directly caused by the virus are being included.

Authorities also say that since the virus came later to Russia, the country had more time to prepare hospital beds and launch wide-scale testing to slow its spread.

UN prosecutor hails arrest of Rwanda genocide suspect

A top UN prosecutor said Saturday that the arrest of a key Rwanda genocide fugitive in France showed that suspects would be brought to justice for crimes in the 1994 bloodshed.

"The arrest of Felicien Kabuga today is a reminder that those responsible for genocide can be brought to account, even 26 years after their crimes," said Serge Brammertz, chief prosecutor of the Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals (MICT) in The Hague. "Today's arrest underlines the strength of our determination."

The prosecutor praised French authorities, saying the arrest "could not have been made without their exceptional cooperation and skill", and also thanked other countries and international organisations that helped.

Kabuga is now expected to be transferred to the custody of The Hague to stand trial "following completion of appropriate procedures under French law," the statement said.

Kabuga was indicted by the UN International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in 1997 on seven counts including genocide.

The Rwanda tribunal formally closed in 2015 and its duties have since been taken over by the MICT, which also deals with cases left over from the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.

Turkey detains pro-Kurdish mayors, removes them from office

Turkish authorities detained four more elected mayors from Turkey's mainly Kurdish populated east and southeast regions, as the government pressed ahead with its crackdown on a pro-Kurdish party it accuses of links to Kurdish militants.

The mayors from the People's Democratic Party, or HDP, were detained at their homes, removed from office and replaced with government-appointed trustees, the state-run Anadolu Agency reported. A fifth mayor was also fired, but hasn't been detained, AP reported.

The government accuses the party of links to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK. The HDP denies the accusation.

The HDP denounced the crackdown on the elected mayors as a government "coup."

"This amounts to the rejection of democracy, this amounts to the non-recognition of the will of the people," party co-chairman Mithat Sancar said.

The Kurdish people won't yield to pressure and will fight for their democratic rights, Sancar said at a news conference.

The four mayors were elected to office in local elections last year in the cities of Igdir and Siirt as well as in Siirt's districts of Baykan and Kurtalan and the district of Altinova in Mus province.

HDP says the government has appointed caretaker mayors to 45 out of a total of 65 municipalities that the party won in local elections in March 2019. At least 21 mayors have been imprisoned on terror-related charges.

Seven former HDP lawmakers, including former chairman Selahattin Demirtas, are also in prison.

Amnesty condemns U.S. support for Israel's plans to annex West Bank

Amnesty International yesterday condemned the United States' support for Israel's plans to annex large swathes of the occupied West Bank.

The rights watchdog said the U.S.' "firm support to Israel's plan to annex parts of the West Bank shows how both the U.S. and Israel see themselves as above the law", adding that "such a step offers the Israeli authorities the greenlight to continue violating international laws."

"Such plans will not change the legal obligations of Israel, as the occupying power, under international humanitarian law and international human rights law, nor deprive Palestinians of protections guaranteed under these legal frameworks," it added on Twitter.

It called on the international community to reject the Israeli plan "to unlawfully annex parts of the occupied West Bank, which violate international law, and reiterate the illegality of Israeli settlements in occupied territory."

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo visited Israel for several hours on Wednesday during which he announced his country's support for Israel's annexation plan, adding that Israel will "decide when and how it will annex the territories".

According to Palestinian estimates, the Israeli annexation will affect more than 30 per cent of the West Bank area.

EU is united in opposing Israeli West Bank annexation

➔ But others have urged caution and dialogue with Israel, which is seen as an important EU partner in the West Asia.

«We are in a dialogue with the responsible parties, including in Israel,» German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said.

«We have always made it clear ... that we are committed to the goal of a negotiated two-state solution, and that we believe that annexations are not compatible with international law.»

Earlier this week, the United Kingdom also reiterated its long-standing policy that it would not support annexations.

Saudis cancel payouts to Yemen puppets, ask them to leave

Riyadh asks Hadi regime officials to leave as costs bite amid economic downturn

Saudi Arabia has reportedly asked members of the regime of former Yemeni president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi residing in the capital Riyadh to leave and suspended financial support provided to them.

The decision comes as slumping oil prices and the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic have saddled the kingdom with its worst financial crisis in decades.

Citing an official with the self-proclaimed Riyadh-backed Hadi government, the Arabi21 news website reported on Friday that Saudi authorities had informed officials and employees in the Yemeni presidency and the prime minister's office, in addition to a number of ministries, about their decision.

The source, who was speaking on condition of anonymity, noted that the decision targeted officials in the presidency and cabinet, including deputy ministers, in addition to others who had arrived in Saudi Arabia earlier and were hosted in hotels for a short period before being transferred to apartments at Riyadh's expense.

The source, however, claimed that «not all Yemeni officials and employees are accommodated at the expense of the Saudi government» and that «most of the government staff live at their own expense».



A document issued on May 13 and circulated on social media indicated that Hadi officials and employees residing in Riyadh had been informed that the last Saudi payment would be provided at the end of May. Whoever wants to stay or extend their

residence in Riyadh after May 31 would pay their own expenses, the document read.

Earlier this week, Saudi Arabia announced that it will suspend the cost of living allowance and raise the value added tax threefold in a bid to boost state finances battered by

the coronavirus outbreak and plummeting oil prices.

The austerity measures came after the kingdom reported a \$9 billion budget deficit in the first quarter of 2020.

"These measures are painful but necessary to maintain financial end economic stability over medium to long term...and overcome the unprecedented coronavirus crisis with the least damage possible," Saudi Finance Minister Mohammed al-Jadaan said in the statement.

According to Press TV, Saudi Arabia is trying to make up the difference between lower-than-expected oil revenues and higher spending to rein in the coronavirus.

The kingdom is stuck in a costly war on Yemen it launched in March 2015 in a bid to reinstall the Hadi regime and crush the popular Houthi Ansarullah movement.

However, over five years into the Western-sponsored war, Saudi Arabia has achieved neither of its objectives, but plunged Yemen into what the UN says is the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

Over the past years, most members of the self-proclaimed Hadi government have been residing in Riyadh and Jeddah at the expense of the Saudi government.

Crowds at Wuhan clinics fear coronavirus testing could rekindle disease

As Wuhan, the Chinese city where the COVID-19 pandemic began, revs up a massive testing campaign, some residents crowding the test centers expressed concern Saturday that the very act of getting tested could expose them to the coronavirus.

Safety has become a hot topic on social media groups among the 11 million residents of Wuhan, people told Reuters as they converged on open-air test sites at clinics and other facilities. Many said, though, that they support the voluntary campaign.

Wuhan health authorities sprang back into action after confirming last weekend the central Chinese city's first cluster of new infections since it was released from virtual lockdown on April 8, Reuters reported.

The new cases - all of them people who had previously shown no symptoms of the disease - spurred Wuhan authorities to launch a citywide search for asymptomatic carriers



of the virus, aiming to gauge the level of COVID-19 risk.

Although Wuhan's cinemas and banquet halls remain shut to curb large gatherings, the testing requires people

to wait in long, sometimes messy, queues.

"Some people have expressed worry in the (social media) groups about the tests, which require people to cluster, and whether there's any infection risk," said one Wuhan resident who asked not to be named.

"But others rebutted those worries, saying such comments are not supportive of the government."

The unprecedented scale of testing indicates the official level of concern, some experts say. Others say it is an extremely costly exercise and question its effectiveness.

At a testing kiosk set up at the side of a busy road in Jiangan district in central Wuhan, a volunteer was patrolling and spraying disinfectant at a long line of people.

Many people observed social distancing, such as queuing 1 meter apart, and there were signs to remind them. But just as many did not. In some cases, volunteer workers were not insisting that they comply.

Britain is cocaine capital of Europe



The UK has become the biggest user of powder cocaine in Europe, an investigator with the National Crime Agency said.

Estimates on the amount of the Class A substance being trafficked into the country has risen three-fold since 2011 to 117 tones, Lawrence Gibbons of the National Crime Agency told the Times.

The head of drugs threat at the agency added that the 'middle class' stereotype of cocaine no longer rings true.

He told the paper: 'A lot of the consignments we see coming into Europe - through Spain, Belgium or the Netherlands mainly - a significant proportion is destined for the UK.'

'The UK is the biggest user of powder cocaine in Europe.'

Mr Gibbons added that more stringent policing would not solve the problem of demand for the drug, saying users should be aware of the 'reality of a trade that is run by criminal gangs who use guns, violence, trafficking and debt bondage'.

Police seized 9,645kg (9.6 tonnes) of cocaine in 2018/19 - the largest amount since records began in 1973, according to the Home Office.

The amount of the class A drug seized by police in 2018/19 was up 12% or 6,307kg on the previous period when 3,338kg was confiscated.

More recently, UK Border Force officials found 31lb (14kg) of cocaine stashed among two consignments of face masks after stopping a Polish van driver near Calais.

Three men were arrested after cocaine with a potential street value of £3 million was found in a 'purpose-built hide' in a lorry which arrived at Dover on a ferry from France on April 23.

And two men were charged earlier in May with allegedly breaking into the London Container Terminal in Tilbury to retrieve packages of drugs with a potential street value of £1 million from a refrigerated container which had arrived from Belize.

Jordan warns Israel of 'massive conflict' over annexation



Jordan's king Abdullah II warned Israel of a "massive conflict" if it proceeds with plans to annex large parts of the occupied West Bank, as European Union foreign ministers agreed to step up diplomatic efforts to try to head off such a move.

Abdullah II warns Israel that the regime should wait for a major clash with the kingdom if it goes ahead with plans to annex the occupied Palestinian territories of the West Bank and the Jordan Valley.

Abdullah said in comments published by the German magazine Der Spiegel on Friday that Amman was considering all options to respond to Israel's plans to begin the illegal annexation process in early July.

However, the king fell short of threatening Israel with a freeze of Jordan's controversial peace treaty with the Tel Aviv regime.

"I do not want to jump to statements and threats, and I will not prepare the ground for confrontation, but we are studying all the options and formulating understandings with many European countries and

the international community," he said.

The comments come after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu received the approval of his newly-installed coalition government to put his annexation plan for a vote in the Israeli cabinet or parliament as soon as July 1.

The plan, which enjoys the full support of the U.S. government, has faced growing international criticism as the Israelis intend to annex lands that were occupied after the 1967 war with the Arabs and have been illegally used for settlement over the past decades.

The international community views the entire West Bank and the eastern part of the occupied city of Jerusalem al-Quds as lands that could become home to an independent Palestinian state in future.

King Abdullaah II said that pressing for a one-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would mean a collapse of the Palestinian Authority, the administration which is based in the West Bank and represents the interests of the Palestinians around the world.

Brutal Afghan attacks highlight limitations of U.S.-Taliban deal

Two brutal attacks this week have laid bare major weaknesses of the U.S.-Taliban troop withdrawal pact: Nothing in it obliges the Taliban to prevent such massacres and the Afghan government's ability to thwart them will only wane as U.S. troops pull out.

The pact is ultimately supposed to promote peace between the Afghan government and the Taliban, which denied carrying out a Kabul attack in which three gunmen disguised as police killed 24 people, including two babies, at a Kabul maternity ward and a suicide bombing in eastern Afghanistan that killed 32.

The key provisions of the February 29 agreement - to which the Afghan government was not a party - involved a U.S. commitment to reduce its military footprint in Afghanistan to 8,600 by mid-July and, conditions permitting, to zero by May 2021, Reuters reported.

In return, the Taliban promised, among other things, not to allow "its members, other individuals or groups, including al Qaeda, to use the soil of Afghanistan to threaten



the security of the United States and its allies."

But the agreement says nothing about attacks on Afghan civilians such as the two that occurred on Tuesday.

"There's nothing in our peace agreement with the Taliban that would preclude them from killing Afghans," said Democratic U.S. Representative Tom Malinowski, a former

top State Department official for human rights.

"And of course the moment we're out, there's no practical deterrence either," he added.

U.S. Special Representative Zalmay Khalilzad, architect of the deal, acknowledged it did not bar attacks on Afghans and said it would be best if both sides began talks and efforts to combat such attacks while U.S. forces are still there.

"The agreement does not specifically (call) for them not to attack Afghan forces, said Khalilzad. However, he said the Taliban committed to reducing violence and that a ceasefire would be among the first topics in intra-Afghan negotiations.

It's reported that the Taliban has been careful not to attack U.S. and coalition forces, but have mounted more than 4,500 attacks in Afghanistan, a sharp increase in violence here in the first 45 days after signing the agreement.

More than 500 civilians were killed in Afghanistan in the first quarter of 2020 as violence raged even after the pact was struck, according to the United Nations.

Football leagues to resume behind closed doors

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran football leagues will resume after the holy month of Ramadan, President Hassan Rouhani said.

Rouhani said that the competition will resume under the terms of a strict health protocol.

“The football leagues will restart after the holy month of Ramadan but the competitions must be played behind closed doors,” Rouhani said.

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

“We held a meeting with Mehrzad Khalilian (head of the Sports Medicine Federation) 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.

The matches will be held behind closed doors and players must also avoid goal celebrations.

The initial protocols have been approved by Iran’s Health Ministry and Sports Ministry. 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.



Iran Professional League (IPL) will reportedly resume from June 11. With nine weeks remaining, Persepolis sit top of the table with 47 points, followed by Sepahan and Tractor both with 37 points. The death toll from the novel coronavirus in Iran surpassed 6,900 on Friday, while nearly 92,000 positive cases have recovered from the disease.



Iran’s Hazfi Cup will also resume: official

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Acting head of Iran Football League Organization Soheil Mahdi has said that the Hazfi Cup is as important as Iran Professional League (IPL) and the Iranian football knockout cup competition will resume as well as the IPL after the government approval.

Mahdi said the Iran Football League Organization waits to be formally informed by the country’s Coronavirus Combat and Prevention Headquarters about the exact date of resuming the competitions.

IPL officials are considering ways to complete the 2019-20 season in a safe and secure way without endangering anyone’s life due to the risk of infection.

The competition was officially suspended on March 11, 2020 by the decree of the government.

But the situation in the country is getting better and the

government has taken some steps to ease lockdown around Iran in recent weeks.

President Hassan Rouhani announced on Saturday that Iran football leagues will resume after the holy month of Ramadan.

Acting head of Iran Football League Organization reacted eagerly to the President announcement: “I heard good news from the President, and this shows the improvement of health and safety issues in our country, which makes us happy,” Mahdi said.

“We are currently waiting for the time of the start of training sessions. We are not decision-makers in this regard. Like the IPL, the Hazfi Cup is important to us, and now we need to first determine how to continue the league matches, and then we can also hold the Hazfi Cup as well,” he added.

Javanmardi’s golds at Rio among memorable shooting para sports moments

Winning two gold medals at the Rio 2016 is among five top memorable shooting Para sports moments in Paralympic Games.

Javanmardi became the first Iranian woman to win a title in shooting with her gold in the women’s P2 (10m air pistol – SH1) at Rio 2016. Five days later, she took another gold in the P4 (mixed 50m pistol – SH1).

From a Swedish shooter dominating the sport to Iran and North Macedonia making history at Rio 2016, there are plenty of memorable shooting Para sports moments in Paralympic Games.

Sweden’s Jonas Jacobsson is the most successful shooter in Paralympic Games history with 27 medals. At London 2012, the Swede took a gold and a silver in the men’s R7 (50m rifle 3 positions – SH1) and R1 (50m air rifle standing – SH1), respectively, to clinch medals at nine straight Paralympics since Arnhem 1980.



Zhang Cuiping from China was responsible for three of her country’s eight medals in Brazil. She won gold in the mixed R6 (50m rifle prone SH1) and women’s R8 (50m rifle 3 positions SH1) with new Paralympic records, and took a silver in the women’s R2 (10m air rifle standing SH1).

Olivera Nakovska-Bikova gives North Macedonia its first Paralympic gold medal in 20 years winning the women’s P2 (10m Air Pistol – SH1) at London 2012. She celebrated with her coach, Branimir Jovanovski, who had won the only other Paralympic gold medal for their country at Barcelona 1992 (in the same event).

Power couple Vasyi and Olga Kovalchuk were on the podium in Rio 2016. Vasyi landed gold in the mixed R5 (10m Air Rifle Prone – SH2) while Olga took silver in the women’s P2 (10m Air Pistol – SH1).

(Source: Paralympic.org)

Athletics chief says sport could rebel against pandemic rules

World athletics chief Sebastian Coe has warned that sports leaders may rebel against pandemic restrictions as they struggle to get major events back on track.

Coe expressed the frustrations felt by many sports chiefs when he said it was crucial to get top events started again even as the coronavirus takes a mounting toll around the world.

“We have to be guided by what governments, the WHO and local authorities are telling us, but we also have to make our own decisions and make sensible compromises,” Coe, 63, told Indian television channel WION.

“There may be a moment when a sport decides that it is ready to stage events even if it is not always with the approval of those authorities.

“We will be respectful, but we have to make decisions in the best interest of our sport and our athletes,” the British former track legend insisted.

Athletics like other key sports has seen its calendar and finances badly hit by the postponement of this year’s Olympic Games in Tokyo.

The world athletics championships planned for 2021 have had to be pushed back by a year to allow for a provisional plan to stage the Tokyo Games next year instead.

Coe said no one could give a cast-iron assurance that the Olympics will be held.

“Speculating about something that is over a year away is unhelpful,” said the former chief of the 2012 London Olympics.

“We are trying to give the athletes some clarity about the calendar and speculation from scientists and medical experts does not help.

“I hope that the pandemic will be contained so that we don’t have to cancel the Games.” Athletics’ Diamond League may only start in August and finish in October. Coe said competitions will look very different with athletes battling each other in empty stadiums.

“Meeting directors will have to take their own decisions about how to get athletes to competition in a safe and secure manner that doesn’t risk infection,” he said.

“Each event will have to decide on a format for competition with these safety considerations two months in advance.

“Everybody is waiting to return to competition and organizers will have to be as creative and ingenious as possible in the current circumstances.”

In a separate interview with Indian media, Coe said there would be greater use of technology to make events “more exciting” for television viewers and to adapt to the coronavirus threat.

“If you think of relay, the baton exchange could be another source of infection, but we are finding ways to organize it,” the World Athletics chief said.

“As a runner I can feel the emotions of the athletes if there is only training and no competition.”

(Source: AFP)

Player divide threatens Premier League’s restart plan

The Premier League’s bid to restart the season in June is in danger of being derailed by a heated debate between players about the risks of playing amid the coronavirus crisis.

While Premier League chiefs believe completing the campaign is essential to safeguard the financial and sporting future of the game, some stars are not so convinced.

AFP Sport looks at both sides of the row: “I’m not going to put my family at risk”

Watford captain Troy Deeney has been one of the loudest voices against returning to the pitch so soon.

Although the Premier League has agreed to fund regular testing for players and staff, there is no guarantee of keeping the virus at bay while vaccine trials remain in the early stages.

Adding to Deeney’s concern, black and ethnic minorities are statistically more at risk of dying from the virus, leaving him adamant he will not gamble with his family’s life just to satisfy the desire for football to resume.

“I’m not even talking about football at the moment. I’m talking about my family’s health,” Deeney said on Instagram.

“I’m not going to put my family at risk. What are they going to do, take money off me? I’ve been broke before so it doesn’t bother me.

“They’re talking about not playing in front of fans until 2021. So if it’s not safe enough for fans to be inside a stadium, why

should it be safe for players to be in there?”

Critics of Deeney’s view have noted that Watford were just outside the relegation zone on goal difference when the season was halted, so his club would clearly benefit from the season being abandoned.

But Manchester City stars Sergio Agueiro and Raheem Sterling have also raised concerns about restarting, while Newcastle’s Danny Rose, on loan from Tottenham, launched a furious rant about the situation.

“Government is saying ‘bring football back’ because it is going to boost the nation’s morale. I don’t care about the nation’s morale, bro, people’s lives are at risk,” he said.

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

Like Deeney and other Premier League skippers, Norwich captain Grant Hanley took part in a conference call with the Premier League this week that reportedly saw numerous disagreements.

“I think the overall feeling is that players have got concerns. There’s just so much uncertainty,” Hanley told Sky Sports.

“Every team and player has got different views on it. Ultimately it’s putting your family at risk that is the main concern.”

“Looking forward to playing again”

In contrast to the anger expressed by some of his peers, England captain Harry Kane has preached a more moderate attitude.

(Source: Mirror)

Iranian wrestler Esmaeilpour comes out of retirement

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iranian freestyle wrestler Masoud Esmaeilpour has come out of retirement.

The 31-year-old wrestler was forced to retire from the sport due to injury two years ago.

Esmaeilpour has won Asian championship three times in 2010 (New Delhi), 2014 (Astana) and 2015 (Doha).

He also claimed a silver medal at the 2014 World Championships (Tashkent) and a bronze medal at the 2013 World Championship (Budapest).

The lightweight freestyler also seized a gold medal at the 2014 Asian Games in Incheon.

Esmaeilpour represented Iran at the Wrestling Men’s freestyle 60 kg event at the 2012 Summer Olympics.

Kaveh Rezaei to leave Charleroi

PLDC — Iranian forward Kaveh Rezaei will return to Club Brugge at the end of the Belgian First Division A season.

According to RTBF.be, the 28-year-old striker, who was loaned to Charleroi, will leave his current team at the end of the season.

A club’s official has confirmed that Rezaei will be the only player who leaves the team at the summer.

Rezaei has scored 12 goals in 22 matches for the Charleroi this season.

Qatar FA extends suspension of football activities

Qatar Football Association has extended the suspension of all football activities and events until the end of May.

“In line with the circular no.13 of 2020 published by the Qatar Olympic Committee to extend the suspension of all sports activities from 14 May 2020 to 31 May 2020, the Qatar Football Association extends the suspension of all football events and matches organized by the QFA until 31 May 2020,” said QFA in a statement.

“This decision comes within the framework of the efforts and measures taken by the state to limit the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19), in order to ensure the safety of players, officials and fans at the stadiums hosting the matches,” added the release.

The decision of the QFA to extend the suspension was the fifth since football activities were halted in the peninsula due to the COVID19 pandemic.

The Qatar Stars League was suspended after the 17th round of matches with Al Duhail leading the table with 42 points, four points ahead Al Rayyan while defending champions Al Sadd are third with 32 points.

(Source: AFC)

Kobe Bryant chopper crash pilot had no drugs in system: autopsy

The pilot of the helicopter that crashed while carrying Kobe Bryant and his daughter to a basketball tournament in California did not have alcohol or drugs in his system, according to the autopsy report released on Friday.

Ara Zobayan, 50, was taking the Bryants and six others to a youth tournament when the chopper slammed into the mountains west of Los Angeles, killing all nine on board instantly.

“Toxicological testing did not detect the presence of alcohol or drugs of abuse,” the Los Angeles County coroner’s report said.

The clinical report described the carnage at the January 26 crash scene and said that all the victims died of blunt force trauma. The manner of death for each was listed as accidental.

The investigation showed the helicopter was traveling at 296 kilometers per hour (184 mph) when it crashed into the hillside after running into heavy fog and cloud cover. Police said the helicopter plunged several hundred feet before impact.

The report said the 41-year-old Bryant had injuries to nearly his entire body. “These injuries are rapidly if not instantly fatal,” a medical examiner wrote of Bryant.

His 13-year-old daughter Gianna also died in the crash.

Bryant did not have any drugs in his system except Ritalin -- a drug typically used to treat attention deficit hyperactivity and narcolepsy.

Also dying in the crash were two youth basketball teammates of Gianna Bryant: 14-year-old Alyssa Altobelli and 13-year-old Payton Chester.

Others who perished were Altobelli’s parents John and Keri, Chester’s mother Sarah and basketball coach Christina Mauser.

Vanessa Bryant, the basketball star’s widow, previously filed a wrongful death lawsuit against helicopter operator Island Express.

(Source: Eurosport)

Former Arsenal and England defender Sansom in hospital

Former Arsenal and England defender Kenny Sansom, who played against Diego Maradona’s Argentina in the 1986 ‘Hand of God’ World Cup quarter-final, is being treated in hospital for an unspecified illness.

“Kenny is currently ill in hospital. He is being well cared for and does not have COVID-19,” a message on his Twitter account said.

Arsenal said in a separate tweet that their thoughts and prayers were with the 61-year-old “at this difficult time”.

Sansom, who made 86 appearances for England between 1979 and 1988 and also played 394 games for Arsenal, talked about his subsequent problems with gambling and alcoholism in a 2008 autobiography ‘To Cap It All’.

Five years ago, he revealed he had been close to suicide after becoming homeless.

(Source: Reuters)

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 ■ Managing Director: Mohammad Shojaeian
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» **Editorial Dept.:** Fax: (+98 21) 88808214 — 88808895
 editor@tehrantimes.com
 » **Switchboard Operator:** Tel: (+98 21) 43051000
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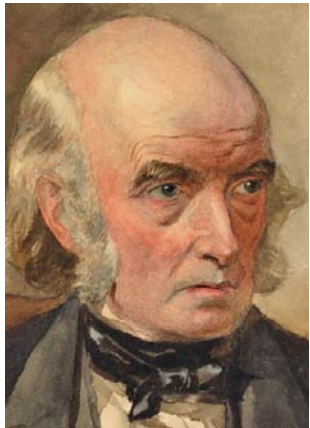
GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Contentment is eternal wealth.

Imam Ali (AS)

FitzGerald translation of Rubaiyat still worthy of praise, whether Persians like it or not

→1 But the key point is that if the British linguist and diplomat Sir Gore Ouseley had not taken a rare copy of the Rubaiyat and several other Persian manuscripts with him to England during his mission to Iran in the early 19th century, perhaps there would have been no translation of the collection by FitzGerald. So, Iranians seem to have mixed feelings about this plunder by Ouseley.



A portrait of the English writer Edward FitzGerald by an unknown artist.

The London book dealer Bernard Quaritch published the first edition of FitzGerald's translation of the Rubaiyat in 250 copies in 1859. It did not sell well at first, however, increasing interest in the poems encouraged Quaritch to produce a second edition nine years later.

The Rubaiyat enthusiasts such as English poets Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Algernon Charles Swinburne decided to found the Omar Khayyam Club in London.

FitzGerald's translation was also behind the introduction of Omar Khayyam in America as American critic Charles Eliot Norton wrote a review on the translation in 1869 and his enthusiasts established the Omar Khayyam Club of America.

The Rubaiyat also traveled to France, the Netherlands and Germany. But the story of its reception in Germany is also interesting: Its Germany translator, Walter von der Porten, was under the influence of the FitzGerald translation.

The rise of Nazism in Germany brought the Rubaiyat into disrepute, because the message of the poems was against despotism and the Nazis could not tolerate such an outlook.

As mentioned before, Khayyam's apparently materialistic approach to the world has attracted Westerners, including FitzGerald, to his poetry. However, Leili Anvar, a translator and professor of Persian literature at the Institut des Langues et des Civilisations Orientales in Paris, believes that Khayyam and some other Persian classical poets such as Jalal ad-Din Rumi and Hafez have been introduced with a misunderstanding in the West.

Speaking at a literary meeting in Tehran in July 2015, she said FitzGerald has adapted the Rubaiyat of Khayyam for English readers.

"Although, his English adaptation is very delightful, you never think what you are reading is Khayyam's perfect poetry. In fact, Khayyam has been introduced with a misunderstanding to the world," Anvar stated.

Anvar, who is the translator of a French version of Persian classical poets Jalal ad-Din Rumi's Masnavi-ye Manavi, criticizes American Persian literature expert Coleman Barks' translation of the Masnavi-ye Manavi.

She also called the French translation of the Divan of Hafez by the renowned French Hafez scholar Charles-Henri de Fouchécour "really bad."

In any case, FitzGerald was the pioneer in the introduction of the Rubaiyat of Khayyam to the West. He and other Western scholars such as de Fouchécour and Barks deserve great respect for their contributions to Persian literature.

* Today marks Khayyam Day in Iran.

Keith Urban test drives live concert at drive-in movie theater

NEW YORK (Reuters) — Country music star Keith Urban performed a surprise live show at a drive-in movie theater in Nashville in a test drive for how concerts might look in the era of social distancing.

Urban, on stage with just one other musician, played at the Stardust Drive-In outside Nashville Thursday night for about 200 frontline local healthcare workers who watched from their cars.

It was thought to be the first major live music show of its kind in the United States following the cancellation of hundreds of concerts and tours and the closure of large venues in March because of the coronavirus epidemic.

"It was a lot of fun," Urban, who was named entertainer of the year by the Academy of Country Music last year, told the "Today" show on Friday.

"We didn't know what to expect. For some degree, from a performance standpoint, it was a bit of a proof-of-concept show as well as to figure out what works, what doesn't," he added.

“Salman Farsi” locations in Turkey, Armenia moved to Iran as pandemic continues

A R T TEHRAN — The producer of the Iranian TV series “Salman Farsi” announced on Saturday that the locations in Turkey have been moved to Iran since the COVID-19 pandemic is still continuing.

Davud Mirbaqeri is the director of the series, which is about the life story Salman Farsi, the Iranian companion of the Prophet of Islam (S).

“A season that covers the period of Salman Farsi's life when he lived in the Byzantine Empire was scheduled to be filmed on locations in Turkey and Armenia, but we had to change our decision due to travel restrictions due to the coronavirus pandemic,” producer Hossein Taheri said in a press release.

The decision to change locations brought the project to a halt while the cast and crew were working on locations in Iran during March despite the new virus outbreak in the country.

Taheri said that the project will resume filming on locations in Iran after the end of the holy month of Ramadan.

The project is being produced at Sima Films, a production studio affiliated with the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB).

Alireza Shojanuri, the star of Majid Majidi's 2015 blockbuster “Muhammad (S), the Messenger of God” about the life of Muhammad (S), will play the title role in “Salman Farsi”.



Davud Mirbaqeri directs a scene in the TV series “Salman Farsi”.

Female calligrapher Maryam Kazemi inscribes entire Quran in gold

A R T TEHRAN — Maryam Kazemi Savadkuhi has inscribed the entire Quran in the naskh style of calligraphy with golden ink and is believed to be the second female calligrapher of the world of Islam.

“I have spent about one year working almost around the clock to accomplish this copy of the Holy Quran. The entire work has been done by me, but the binding has been carried out by Ali Behdani,” she told the Persian service of Honaronline published on Saturday.

Each page measures 50x70 centimeters and all the pages have been colored with saffron.

The book also enjoys a very valuable cover bearing gol-o-morgh paintings, a unique style of Persian painting featuring bird and floral motifs in different colors.

Kazemi said that she chose the naskh style of calligraphy because it is very fluent. In her inscription, she made use of the calligraphy style of Ahmad Neyrizi, a master of calligraphy during the 18th century. Each page has been embellished with

embossed illuminations, which have been plated with gold.

“I felt a precious and everlasting work is missing in my artistic career. I thought I must inscribe something that gives me peace and tranquility. The inscription of the Quran was of great significance for me and I believe I will see its spiritual effects in my life,” she said.

Kazemi began learning calligraphy at the Chalus branch of the Iran Calligraphers Association in northern Iran in 1990, and later continued to learn calligraphic painting in Tehran.

“I have been working as a calligrapher for about 30 years and have held several exhibits of calligraphy and calligraphic paintings so far,” she concluded.

Fariba Maqsoodi from the western Iranian city of Kermanshah is considered as the first female calligrapher who inscribed the entire Quran in nastaliq style of calligraphy and was honored as the first female calligrapher of the world of Islam in 1997.



Calligrapher Maryam Kazemi Savadkuhi looks at the copy of the Holy Quran she has inscribed within a year. (Honaronline)

“Yalda” to compete in Pyeongchang Intl. Peace Film Festival



A scene from Iranian director Masud Bakhshi's movie “Yalda, a Night for Forgiveness”.

A R T TEHRAN — Iranian director Masud Bakhshi's movie “Yalda, a Night for Forgiveness” will be screened at the 2nd Pyeongchang International Peace Film Festival as the organizers have recently announced the official lineup.

Seven other films will be competing in this category of the festival, which will be running in the South Korean city of Pyeongchang from June 18 to 23.

“Yalda” is a co-production of Iran, France, Germany, Switzerland, Luxembourg and Lebanon, and it will be competing in the International Feature Competition category of the festival with three films from Korea and four from other countries.

Yalda is about a young woman, Maryam, who has been sentenced to death for murdering her husband, Nasser. Iranian law allows for the victim's family to forgive her and spare her life, so Maryam's fate will be decided by Nasser's daughter, Mona,

on the country's most popular televised reality show.

In front of millions of viewers during Yalda, the winter solstice celebration, Maryam and Mona discover that forgiveness can be difficult as they relive the past.

“Yalda, a Night for Forgiveness” received the Grand Jury Prize of the World Cinema Dramatic section at the Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah in February.

“A Distance Place” by Kunyoung Park, “Dust and Ashes” by Hee-kwon Park, and “Way Back Home” by Sunjoo Park are the three movies from South Korea competing in the official section of the Pyeongchang festival.

Other movies are “Identifying Features”, a co-production of Mexico and Spain by Fernanda Valadez, “Nafi's Father” by Mamadou Dia from Senegal, “Negative Numbers” by Uta Beria from Georgia and “Tony Driver” by Ascanio Petrini from Italy.

Children's Book Council of Iran unveils nominees for Astrid Lindgren Award



This combination photo shows Jamshid Khanian (L), Farshid Shafiei (C) and Abdolkarim Bahar.

CULTURE TEHRAN — The Children's Book Council of Iran has announced its nominees for the 2021 Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award, a prestigious Swedish honor to promote children's and youths' literature in the world.

The nominees are the celebrated writer Jamshid Khanian, book reading promoter Abdolkarim Bahar and illustrator Farshid Shafiei.

Khanian was nominated for his influential role in the formation of adolescent fiction stories, and his focus on peace, friendship, love and respect in his stories.

Shafiei was selected for his illustrations bearing Persian spirits, while making a new movement in illustration of children's books.

Bahar was selected for his cultural activities promoting reading in the deprived regions and rural areas of the country.

Iran's nominations for the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award, which is presented by the Swedish government to promote children's and youths' literature in the world, are selected separately every

year by Iran's Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA), the Iranian Association of Writers for Children and Youth, and the Children's Book Council of Iran.

The IIDCYA has announced writer Hamidreza Shahabadi and its mobile library program, which program promotes reading in remote regions and villages across Iran, as its nominees for the 2021 Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award.

The Iranian Association of Writers for Children and Youth selected writer Hamidreza Shahabadi, book reading promoter Abdolkarim Bahar and Afghan book reading promoter Nader Musavi.

The Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award amounts to SEK 5 million (about €570,000), making it the world's largest award for children's and young adults' literature.

The award was established in 2002 by the Swedish National Council for Cultural Affairs to commemorate writer Astrid Lindgren and to promote children's and youths' literature from around the world.

Jazz singer seeks digital orchestra to beat coronavirus blues

PARIS (Reuters) — American jazz singer Melody Gardot is inviting musicians around the world to play along digitally on her new album to overcome the solitude and financial strain of coronavirus lockdowns.

For the song “From Paris with Love” on her new album, Gardot is asking orchestra musicians worldwide - strings, woodwinds or harp - to contribute remotely by playing along to a score and a backing track.

Producers will assemble the performances into what she calls a “digital global orchestra” to make it sound as if all musicians are playing together in the same room. The chosen musicians will be paid professional studio rates and royalties will be donated to charities benefiting healthcare workers.

Confined in her home in Paris, Gardot had been set to

record part of her new album with the London Symphony Orchestra just before a Europe-wide coronavirus lockdown put an end to all music production.

For the video clip of the song, Gardot has invited fans to contribute short video portraits of themselves from wherever they are in the world with a sign “From (their city) with Love”.

“We all worry about contagion now, but a smile is one of the contagious issues that I would like to have,” Gardot told Reuters.

“It can make us feel a little more connected despite what is going on. We cannot touch each other, we cannot travel, this is kind of a postcard,” she said.

Participating musicians will receive instructions on how to record and film themselves performing the piece at home

and can file their contributions till May 18 at midnight.

Gardot, who sells more records in Europe than in the United States and is very popular in France, is one of many musicians worldwide who have tried to break the barriers of lockdown by using social media for live or recorded performances.

The Grammy-nominated singer said the lockdown had knocked her out of her rhythm of constant touring, often playing several days a week, 11 months a year, but she said the isolation had been relatively bearable compared to being in hospital for a year after being knocked off her bike by a car when she was 19.

“(The lockdown) is heartbreaking in a fraternal way, but for myself I have seen rainier days,” she said.