



**U.S. will definitely be expelled from Syria, Iraq** **2**



**'Annual non-oil exports could reach \$100b'** **4**



**Iran Professional League to resume on June 11** **11**



**Iran to publish journal on Commander Soleimani on Quds Day** **12**

# Population growth needs family-friendly policies



See page 9

## Zarif gives stern warning to U.S. about Iranian tankers

**TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif wrote a letter to UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres late on Sunday warning about possible attempts by the U.S. to “disrupt” the movement of the Iranian tankers carrying fuel to Venezuela, warning such a move will be “illegal”, “dangerous”, “provocative”, “instance of piracy” and a “great danger to international peace and security”.

In the letter Zarif warned against “America’s movements in deploying its navy to the Caribbean in order to intervene and create disruption in transfer of Iran’s fuel to Venezuela.” Zarif added, “The U.S. must stop bullying at the international scene and respect Sovereignty of international law, especially free navigation in open seas.” **→2**

## Iran’s annual fishery output hits nearly 1.3m tons

**TEHRAN** — Iran’s fishery output reached 1.28 million tons in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19), the head of Iran Fisheries Organization (IFO) announced on Monday.

Nabiollah Khoun-Mirzaei said it is while the planned figure was 1.25 million tons, and underscored that this amount of output was achieved despite the sanctions and related difficulties in the previous year,

IRNA reported. The official noted that the output, which was more than the projected amount, was achieved through the help of research sectors as well as the ground laid by the private sector. Referring to the high quality of Iran’s fishery products, the head of IFO said that these products were sold easily in the export markets. **→4**

## Tourism industry to rebound sooner than expected: deputy minister

By Afshin Majlesi

**TEHRAN** — The tourism industry of Iran will get back on the right track sooner than expected thanks to measures taken to tackle the spread of coronavirus, deputy tourism minister Vali Teymouri has said. “I believe that tourism industry of the country will get back on the right track far sooner than generally expected thanks to the measures taken to deal with the spread of coronavirus in tourist destinations, ho-

tels, stopovers, and all the centers which are affiliated with the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts,” Teymouri said in an exclusive interview with the Tehran Times on Sunday. “In response to the pandemic, the tourism ministry in close collaboration with the health ministry has developed protocols comprising practical guidelines and instructions to improve health standards in hotels, **→8**



**ARTICLE**  
**Salman Parviz**  
Journalist

## PGCC migrant labor camps Covid-19 hotspots

**T**he two things the six Persian Gulf Co-operation Council (PGCC) member countries rely most on are revenue from oil/gas exports and foreign workers, both have been hit hard due to Covid-19 outbreak.

PGCC members -- comprising of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman -- host the majority of the 23 million migrant workers living in Arab states, according to the International Labor Organization.

The appalling working and living conditions of migrant laborers in these states is nothing new. The situation has been criticized by Amnesty International in the past, now amid the novel coronavirus outbreak the plight of the migrants has deteriorated.

They compose around half of the region’s population the migrant workers are mainly from India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, the Philippines and Egypt. They work for long hours for wages that are high only compared to back home but low by any other standards.

As the hostility towards the foreigners is growing louder so are question about how to replace them with locals.

Roughly two-thirds of PGCC nationals work for their governments, despite efforts to encourage them into the private sector. Companies are offered incentives to hire locally and charge expatriates extra taxes.

Xenophobia is escalating as expatriates are blamed for spreading the virus. Migrant labor camps are becoming coronavirus hot spots and citizens are demanding their government to protect them.

“What this crisis has really exposed is the systematic discrimination of the (Persian) Gulf,” said Hiba Zayadin, a regional researcher at Human Rights Watch. “It’s shown how terrible it can be for the society as a whole.”

At the mercy of visa sponsors and politically connected visa brokers few protections are available for migrant laborers. Employers can cut their wages with impunity. Whether they’ve lived for two months or two decades they are always considered “temporary” and left out of social contract. **→7**

## Abdullah praises Zarif’s support for political accord in Afghanistan

**TEHRAN** — Abdullah Abdullah, Afghanistan’s president of the High Council for Peace and National Reconciliation, has praised Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif’s support for a political power-sharing deal in Afghanistan.

“I appreciate a call by I.R. of Iran’s FM @JZarif who expressed support for the political accord signed today, as well as for a ceasefire & regional consensus. I assured him that peace is a priority & urged more bilateral cooperation leading to a durable peace & a stable region,” he tweeted on Monday.

According to Reuters, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and his rival Abdullah signed a power-sharing deal to end a months-long political stalemate, Ghani’s spokesman said on Sunday, a step that could smooth efforts to end the country’s long-running war.

Following the political agreement, Zarif immediately telephoned President Ghani and

Abdullah welcoming the agreement which ended months of political stalemate in the Central Asian country.

In the telephone conversation, Zarif said Iran is ready to help facilitate reconciliation between all Afghan groups.

Prior to Zarif’s telephone talks, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi also released a statement expressing delight over power-sharing agreement between President Ghani and Abdullah.

Mousavi said Tehran is ready to help the process of intra-Afghan talks which would also include Taliban.

Ghani’s spokesman said the agreement is a step that could smooth efforts to end the country’s long-running war.

“The Political Agreement between President Ghani and Dr. Abdullah Abdullah has just been signed,” said Sediq Sediqqi on Twitter. **→2**

## U.S. elite forces ill-equipped for cold war with China

The elite U.S. special operations forces are ill-equipped for high-tech warfare with China and Russia, experts warn, as the Trump administration pivots from the “war on terror” to a struggle with geopolitical rivals. Special operations, known for kicking down doors and eliminating high-value targets, number 70,000 personnel, cost \$13bn a year and have carried much of the burden of the war on terror. But it is unclear what role they will play as the Pentagon moves to redeploy troops from Afghanistan to the Indo-Pacific to counter China’s regional ambitions.

General Richard Clarke, commander of special operations command (Socom), told an industry conference this week that the U.S. needed to develop new capabilities to “compete and win” with Russia and China. He added that Socom must develop cyber skills and focus on influence campaigns rather than “the kill-capture missions” that characterized his own time in Afghanistan after

the September 11 2001 attacks. Socom’s fighters include U.S. Navy Seals, Army Green Berets and Marine Corps Raiders. Defense officials say China has raised military spending and research with the aim of exploiting American vulnerabilities, while Russia has tested out new technology during combat in Syria. “Maybe we are further behind than we know,” Colonel Michael McGuire, director of combat developments at Socom, told the annual Special Operations Industry Conference. Because of Covid-19 the event was conducted virtually for the first time. “Things just moved much more quickly than we expected,” he said of the new threats, citing the erosion of America’s traditional military advantages in the sky, space and communications.

Col McGuire highlighted U.S. vulnerabilities in cyber security, and soft-power tactics by America’s enemies that could “drive fissures through some of our alliances”. **→10**

## Iraqi leaders condemn Western diplomats for raising rainbow flags

By staff & agencies

Iraqi leaders have condemned western diplomatic missions in Baghdad for hoisting rainbow flags in a sign of solidarity on the International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia.

The European Union, the World Bank MENA, and the Canadian and British embassies to Iraq all hoisted the flag in Baghdad on Sunday morning to “highlight the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people,” the EU mission said in a tweet, which has since been removed.

Rudaw English has approached the EU mission for comment, but is yet to receive a response.

Although same-sex relationships are technically legal under the Iraqi Penal Code, they are still widely frowned upon in the largely conservative society.

Iraq’s foreign ministry issued a statement on Sunday to “denounce” the raising of the flags, claiming it is against “the noble morals of all divine religions.”

“We remind all the missions operating in Iraq

to adhere by the laws of the country, and to follow diplomatic norms,” it said.

Bashir Hadad, deputy speaker of Iraqi parliament, also issued a statement calling the hoisting of the pride flags a “clear provocation to the feelings of the Iraqi people.”

“We do not allow the hoisting of the homosexual flag on our land [...] We have directed the foreign relations, religious affairs, and other relevant committees to take the necessary measures against this behavior,” he said. **→10**



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## Tea harvest begins in northern Iran

Tea harvest season has started in farmlands across the northern provinces of Gilan and Mazandaran.

More than 55,000 families grow tea over 28,000 hectares of farmland in the two provinces, accounting for 90 percent of the country’s total tea production.

It is estimated that 115,000 tons of tea leaves will be harvested this year.

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## Iran's principled policy is expanding ties with Iraq: Rouhani

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — President Hassan Rouhani said on Monday that Iran's principled policy is expanding relations and cooperation with Iraq in various areas. In a phone conversation with Iraqi President Barham Salih, Rouhani attached great importance to expansion of economic relations.



"Expansion of relations in various areas among the friendly governments and nations can help us pass the problems," he said. Elsewhere, he said that Iran attaches great importance to stability in Iraq. "The Islamic Republic of Iran will stand beside the Iraqi government and people and seeks to maintain Iraq's sovereignty and prevent foreign intervention," Rouhani pointed out. Salih, for his part, said cooperation of friendly countries, such as Iran, is required to establish stability in Iraq. He also said that foreign countries must not interfere in Iraq's affairs.

The Iraqi president urged the extra-regional countries to stop interfering in the regional affairs.

In a phone conversation with new Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi on May 11, Rouhani said Iran will stand beside the Iraqi government and people.

"As we proved that we stand beside the Iraqi people in fighting Daesh, we will stand beside the Iraqi government to help establish stability and make progress," Rouhani stated in the phone call. He said Iran attaches great importance to Iraq's independence, political stability, national sovereignty, and integrity.

"We always have to be careful about plots which target interests of the Iraqi people and the region," he noted.

Rouhani also highlighted the importance of regional peace and stability.

For his part, Kadhimi said, "We will never forget Iran's help to Iraq in fighting Daesh and we seek expansion of relations in various areas."

Iranian Defense Minister Amir Hatami said on Sunday that Tehran and Baghdad should become "strategic partners".

"We want to give Iraq all our capacities and we want to become strategic partners and turn our relations into a successful model of cooperation," he told the newly-appointed Iraqi Defense Minister Enad Sa'adoun Khitab al-Jabouri through a video conference.

## U.S. positive about S. Korea's push to build mechanism for humanitarian trade with Iran: source

**(Yonhap)** — The United States "positively" views South Korea's push to forge a payment mechanism to conduct humanitarian trade with Iran without fears of violating U.S. sanctions on Tehran, a diplomatic source said Monday.

Seoul and Washington have been in consultations over the envisioned Korean Humanitarian Trade Arrangement (KHTA), though discussions on specifics have been slow due to the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.



The KHTA uses an Iranian bank free from U.S. sanctions, such as the Middle East Bank, to enable humanitarian transactions with Iran, which has been suffering from shortages of medicine, medical equipment and quarantine supplies due to the biting sanctions.

"The U.S. has positively viewed Seoul's push for the KHTA as it is a model akin to the Swiss Humanitarian Trade Arrangement (SHTA)," the source told Yonhap News Agency, referring to a payment method designed to facilitate Swiss companies' sales of food and medicine to Iran.

"Despite its positive stance, the U.S. has not been able to move swiftly on this matter due to domestic situations related to the pandemic, but discussions have moved forward to some extent," the source added.

To restart humanitarian trade with Tehran, Seoul has also been pushing to harness the SHTA and the U.S. government's General License No. 8 -- a mechanism to authorize certain humanitarian transactions with Iran even if they involve Iran's central bank, which is subject to U.S. sanctions.

Though humanitarian exports are not subject to sanctions, South Korean firms had difficulty resuming their sales of medicines and other products to Iran due to concerns that they could be affected by the American sanctions.

## Abdullah praises Zarif's support for political accord in Afghanistan

**1 →** Abdullah would lead the council for peace talks with the insurgent Taliban and his team members would be included in cabinet, Sediqqi added, according to Reuters.

Abdullah had disputed the results of an election in September and announced the formation of a parallel government earlier this year.

# Ayatollah Khamenei says U.S. will definitely be expelled from Syria, Iraq

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on Sunday that the United States' forces will definitely be expelled from Syria and Iraq because of their criminal actions and warmongering.

"The long-term actions of the United States have caused the government of this country to be hated in a large part of the world. These actions include war mongering, helping notorious governments, advocating terrorism, supporting oppression wholeheartedly, and the like. Of course, the Americans cannot stay for long in Iraq or Syria, and they will be expelled," he said during a meeting with university students through a video conference.

He added, "The United States openly says that it has deployed its forces in Syria because there is oil there. Of course, they [the U.S. forces] will not stay for long either in Iraq or in Syria. They will certainly have to leave those countries, and they will definitely be expelled."

Elsewhere, he said that a part of hatred



towards the U.S. comes from the behavior of the current U.S. officials, including President

Donald Trump and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

## Quds Day will be marked as long as occupation and crime persist: Iran

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — The Iranian Foreign Ministry said on Monday that so long as the Palestinians lands remain under occupation and crimes against Palestinians continue the International Quds Day will be marked.

"As long as the Zionist occupation and crime exist, the International Quds Day will be commemorated," ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi told a regular news briefing.

Mousavi also welcomed new developments in Iraq and Afghanistan.

After months of political deadlock, finally the Iraqi political factions agreed on a new prime minister and the parliament voted for most of his proposed ministers.

Also, on Sunday Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah agreed on a power-sharing deal.

"There were events in Iraq and Afghanistan that helped political stability after a long time," Mousavi said.

"As a neighbor, Iraq is very important to Iran, and it is now wrangling with the U.S. and terrorist conspiracies, and the current government is backed by Iran," Mousavi noted.

The spokesman also expressed hope that the political agreement in Afghanistan "would be a prelude to inter-Afghan talks".

He said Iran wants to have a stable and prosperous neighbor based on its neighborly policy. "It was important for us that this country be stable and that there were several rounds of efforts, contacts, and travels, and that the Iranian representative traveled to Kabul, and thank God, the result was good, and Iran's role in this field is important and makes us proud."

He added that Iran, unlike others who want to fish in muddy waters, considers Afghanistan security and stability in Afghanistan as a top priority and sees the power-sharing agreement as a prelude to inter-Afghan talks to build lasting peace in the country.

According to the power-sharing agreement, Abdullah will serve as Afghanistan's president of the High Council for Peace and National Reconciliation.

**■ 'Trump is disrupting world order, seeking anarchism'**

On Sunday, Iran summoned the Swiss ambassador to the Foreign Ministry over possible attempts by the U.S. to block Iranian tankers carrying gasoline to Venezuela. Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif also wrote a letter to the UN secretary general warning that any move against Iranian tankers will be "illegal", "dangerous", "provocative", "an instance of piracy" and "threat to international peace and security".

Foreign Ministry spokesman Mousavi said, "Free trade between independent states is a legitimate matter, however the United States President Donald Trump is disrupting world order and seeking global anarchism."

**■ 'We hope Americans do not do anything stupid'** Mousavi added that what the U.S. has said about Iranian oil tankers is "illegal" and warned that Washington "will face Iran's reaction if they do anything".

"We gave the necessary advice to the Americans through the Swiss ambassador, and Zarif's letter to the United Nations secretary general reminded the consequences of any action; we hope they do not do anything 'stupid' in this regard."

He added, "Iranian ships carry fuel to Venezuela and they



do business legally. If Americans don't like it, it's up to them. I hope the Americans don't do 'stupid' things because they will definitely face Iran's response."

**■ 'Iranians not involved in Hariroud incident'**

Regarding a tragic incident that about 18 Afghan migrants have been drowned in a river along the border between Iran and Afghanistan, Mousavi said, he said no report has been confirmed by "our security, military, and border guards" that the migrants were drowned on the Iranian side of Hariroud River.

"It is not (yet) clear how they died," he added.

Iran has been hosting millions of Afghan since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and the civil war in the country.

Following the incident, Iran has asked Afghanistan to activate its border checkpoints with Iran.

"We welcome millions of Afghan refugees, but we want these visits to be legal. Some people take advantage of the loopholes, and it is the duty of every country to protect its borders."

The spokesman for the Foreign Ministry added that a delegation from Afghanistan entered Iran a few days ago and held talks with Iranian border guards about the incident.

Mousavi reiterated that the incident took place neither on the Iranian soil nor by Iranian forces, announcing that a delegation from Iran may visit Afghanistan in the coming days to probe the issue.

**■ 'U.S. just makes slogans against terrorism'**

The spokesman also said the United States just chants slogans against war on terrorism, but the Islamic Republic proves war on terror "in action".

About U.S. Secretary of State Pompeo's remarks that Iran should leave Syria, the Foreign Ministry spokesman said from time to time Pompeo says something based on his own imagination.

Mousavi said Iran's advisory mission in Syria is based on the Syria government's request.

He added, "We are in Syria to help them fight terrorism, what the U.S. says in the word we do in practice."

"Our attendance in Syria does not concern the U.S. and the Zionist regime at all," he pointed out.

**■ 'We are still critical of Europe's inaction'**

Asked about Europe's stance on extending the arms embargo against Iran and recent remarks by EU foreign policy chief Joseph Borrell, the diplomat said, "We don't disrupt their thinking. They have been thinking for two years."

## Zarif gives stern warning to U.S. about Iranian tankers

### Foreign Ministry summons Swiss ambassador

**1 →** Five Iranian tankers carrying at least \$45.5 million worth of gasoline are now sailing to Venezuela. The vessels are flying under the Iranian flag.

At the same time, the Iranian Foreign Ministry summoned the Swiss ambassador to Tehran to seriously warn against any ill-considered measures by Washington.

The Swiss embassy in Tehran protects the U.S. interests in Iran as the two countries have no diplomatic relationship.

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Abbas Araghchi called on the ambassador to communicate Iran's "serious warning" to officials at the White House.

Araghchi said any potential threat to

Iran's tankers would be met with a "quick and decisive response" and that "the United States government will be responsible for its consequences".

The deputy foreign minister said commercial ties between Iran and Venezuela is "quite legitimate and legal".

"Resort to forceful and bullying acts by the U.S. will be a threat to free navigation and international trade" including energy transmission and "will be an open piracy and flagrant violation of international law and the principles of the United Nations charter.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi also on Monday advised Washington not to commit "stupid" acts in regard to tankers.

**In letter to UN chief, Zarif says any U.S. moves against oil tankers moving toward Venezuela will be illegal, dangerous, great danger to international peace, and act of piracy**

## Araghchi says any potential threat to Iran's tankers would be met with a "quick and decisive response"



"Of course, hatred of the United States is not confined to this. The long-term actions of the United States, including carrying out massacres and various crimes, showing injustice, supporting terrorism, helping despotic and notorious governments, unconditionally supporting the increasingly oppressive actions of the Zionist regime, and more recently, their deplorable handling of the coronavirus pandemic are other reasons why the United States is hated," the Leader stated.

**■ 'Young administration is solution to country's problems'**

Ayatollah Khamenei also said that the solution to the economic problems facing the country is formation of a young and pious administration.

"The establishment of a young, pious administration does not mean that the head of the administration must be a young thirty-two-year-old, rather it means that the administration should be comprised of enthusiastic, energetic, ready, members who are at an age to work and struggle," he explained.

He was openly referring to the U.S. unilateral withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal in May 2018 and reimposition of sanctions against Iran

"The situation is clear to everyone including the Europeans. We are still critical of Europe's inaction, and we cannot count on Europe to be positive or negative."

"We are doing our job and we hope that the Europeans will move faster," he noted.

"At the moment, they are under the pressure of a bully and they have done nothing but talk, and any association with the bully (U.S.) will be to the detriment of the Europeans themselves."

In response to a question about Syria, the Foreign Ministry spokesman said that Iran, Russia, and Turkey have their own mechanism for Syria. "There were discussions that some countries should be added to the (peace) process, but in the end it was decided to be the same three countries. We do not deny any benevolent action, but we believe that the Astana process is working."

Regarding the adoption of a law against the actions of the Zionist regime in the parliament, Mousavi said that Foreign Ministry diplomats "were present in the National Security Commission and the point of view of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was conveyed to them. Certainly, the Foreign Ministry will enforce it if it becomes law. The fate of the Palestinian people and the Holy Quds has always been a priority for the Foreign Ministry."

The parliamentary committee has tasked the Foreign Ministry to raise the issue of referendum in the occupied Palestinian territories at the United Nations with the participation of all native inhabitants including Jews, Christians and Muslims.

On the news that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman had asked Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi to mediate between Tehran and Riyadh, the spokesman said, "Obviously we didn't get anything, but what we heard was media reports that he wanted the situation to be a little better between Iran and Saudi Arabia."

However, he said, Iran has previously stated that it is ready to discuss and resolve misunderstandings with Saudi Arabia through a mediator or without mediator.

"The region needs to move in this direction, and if they go in that direction and decide, Iran's arms will be open."

**■ 'NO country in a position to decide for Syrian people'**

Regarding news of a decision by Iran and Russia on the future of the Syrian government, the spokesman said, "Our relations with Syria are very close, friendly and strategic, and we and others are not in a position to decide for the Syrian people. Neither we nor Russia have pursued such a goal."

Elsewhere the spokesman also said the United States must allow the Swiss banking channel, known as SHTA, to be active and "our resources to enter this channel from different places. We reserve the right to use these resources."

Mousavi added he does not "know if the South Korean government has been able to get a permit from the United States. The money of the Iranian nation is in South Korea, and excuses such as sanctions and U.S. obstruction are not acceptable to us, and we want our money to enter the country."



# Iran warns U.S. against any act of piracy against its tankers

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Government spokesman Ali Rabiei has warned that Iran is ready to respond to any act of piracy against its tankers by the United States.

“We want to ensure the full security of these commercial shipments from any act of piracy by the U.S. government, which has a long record in this regard,” Rabiei said during a press conference on Monday.

He said no country is compelled to adhere to the U.S.’s unilateral sanctions on other countries and “we are committed to do our expected commercial interactions with Venezuela.”

“The gasoline-carrying tankers were sent to Venezuela due to a request by the Venezuelan government,” the spokesman explained.

Rabiei said Iran expects the international community to ensure the security of commercial waterways, condemning the U.S. for violating maritime laws.

Vessel tracking data have reportedly suggested that an Iranian tanker that had loaded fuel at Bandar Abbas port in southern Iran at the end of March, sailed through the Suez Canal and entered the Atlantic on Wednesday.

An unnamed official with the U.S. administration that has brought both Iran and Venezuela under sanctions, however, told Reuters on Thursday that the shipment was “unwelcome,” claiming “we’re looking at measures that can be taken.”

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi has called the threat “shameless” and said the U.S. under



President Donald Trump was disrupting the world order, ignoring the standing norms, and waging anarchy.

Iranian vessels are bound for Venezuela carrying fuel shipments, Mousavi said, noting that the undertaking faces no legal prohibitions. The development is completely legitimate as opposed to maritime piracy “which is [something

that is] mastered by the U.S.”

Last July, the UK seized an Iran-operated supertanker with U.S. instructions, attacking the vessel in the Strait of Gibraltar. Gibraltar’s government, however, released the vessel in August notwithstanding the U.S. bans.

On Sunday, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif sent a letter to

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres warning the U.S. about sending troops to the Caribbean Sea with the aim of interfering with the transfer of Iran’s fuel to Venezuela.

Zarif has stressed that the U.S. must give up bullying on the world stage and respect the rule of international law, especially free shipping in the high seas.

## Majlis tasks Iranian government to establish a virtual embassy in Palestine

### Iranian lawmakers ratify anti-Israeli motion

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Iran’s lawmakers on Monday passed a motion against the hostile measures of the Zionist regime, Tasnim reported.

In an open session of the parliament, the MPs ratified the motion by a unanimous vote, tasking the government to establish a virtual embassy in Palestine.

The new law also bans the use of hardware manufactured by the Zionist regime, bans the activities of software platforms owned by the Israeli regime, and bars all natural and legal persons, organizations and companies affiliated with the Zionist regime from attending Iranian exhibitions and gatherings.

The new law also defines the punishment for cooperation with Israeli-linked institutions, and stipulates that travelling to the occupied territories by Iranian nationals will carry imprisonment and passport deprivation up to 5 years.



The parliament also assigned the Iranian prosecutor general to lodge a complaint against the Zionist

regime’s leaders in international tribunals for a whole host of crimes, such as their crimes against humanity, war crimes, genocide, acts of aggression, and terrorist activities inside and outside the occupied territories.

The Iranian lawmakers also determined the punishment for espionage for the Israeli regime, tasked the Foreign Ministry to pursue plans for the political initiative on holding a national referendum in the Palestinian territories, and defined the duties of all Iranian organizations to reveal the anti-human nature of the Zionist regime.

The Islamic Republic’s cultural bodies, including the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance and the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting, were assigned the task of engaging in extensive cultural activity aimed at exposing the Zionist regime’s nature and atrocities.

## Russia says U.S. cannot be participant to JCPOA

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Mikhail Ulyanov, Russia’s permanent representative to the Vienna-based international organizations, says those who don’t comply with sunset provisions of Annex B of Resolution 2231 cannot be recognized as a JCPOA participant.

“Annex B of resolution 2231 is a trap for US,” Ulyanov tweeted on Monday. “If US is a #JCPOA participant, it cannot question current provisions on arms embargo. If Wash. tries to revise decisions on arms embargo, it becomes yet another (one of many) reasons to reject US ridiculous claims to be a participant.”

“US hopes to retain rights of a #JCPOA participant. Groundless. Not only b/c of withdrawal from #IranDeal,” he wrote, adding, “According to Annex B of res.2231

participation of China, France, Germany, RF, UK and US in JCPOA is contingent upon compliance with “sunset” provisions, incl. arms embargo.”

He further explained, “In other words those who doesn’t comply with sunset provisions of Annex B of resolution 2231 can not be recognised to be as #JCPOA participant by definition.”

“This is dispute-ending point forever,” the Russian diplomat concluded.

Two years after the United States withdrew from the Iran nuclear deal, the Trump administration is looking to extend a UN ban on conventional arms sales to and from Iran, a strategy designed to kill the deal for good.

In a May 9 statement marking the second anniversary of the Donald Trump adminis-

tration’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 October 18.

In recent weeks, Russia has leveled strong criticism against the U.S. for trying to kill the deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

On Saturday, Ulyanov advised Washington to read the text of UN Security Council Resolution 2231 more carefully.

“#US mistakenly believes that para 10&11 of #UNSC res. 2231 allow US to invoke SnapBack to restore #UN #sanctions against #Iran,” Ulyanov said via Twitter. “US partners need to read the text more carefully. Both paras clearly indicate that

it can be done only through the procedures specified in JCPOA.”

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

Ryabkov 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 said.

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 added.

## Larijani: Israel disturbing region through hostile acts

**TEHRAN (FNA)** — Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani praised the approval of a bill to confront Israel’s hostile acts against peace and security, deeming it as important given the regime’s disturbing measures in the region.

“Approval of the bill to confront the hostile acts of the Zionist regime against peace and security is highly important in confrontation against the regime’s hostile measures to disturb the regional situation,” Larijani said, addressing an open session of the parliament in Tehran on Monday.

He appreciated the lawmakers for the approval of the plan, saying, “The parliament’s measure was very timely.”

The Iranian parliament in its meeting on Monday unanimously approved the generalities of a bill to confront the hostile acts of the Zionist regime against peace and security.

The parliament’s National Security and Foreign Policy Commission had on Saturday prepared and approved the bill aimed at “confronting the hostile acts of the Zionist regime against peace and security”.

“Based on the first article of the plan, all Iranian bodies are required to use the country’s regional and international capacities to confront the Zionist regime’s measures, specially its warmongering and terrorist moves, siege (of Gaza), settlement construction, displacing the



Palestinian people and occupation of countries’ lands, including Golan,” Rapporteur of the parliament’s National Security and Foreign Policy Commission Seyed Hossein Naqavi Hosseini told FNA on Saturday.

He added that the plan also underlines support for Quds city as the Palestinian capital and the Palestinian people.

Naqavi Hosseini said that based on the approval, any cooperation or spying for the Zionist regime is equal to enmity towards God and corruption on earth and activities of the Israeli software platforms in Iran and using its hardware and software products is forbidden.

He noted that another article of the plan requires the foreign ministry to pursue the referendum in the

Palestinian territories which has been registered at the UN too.

The new bill also bans transferring the goods produced by the Israeli companies via the Iranian territories as well as participation of the Israeli nationals and firms in the exhibitions held inside Iran.

The plan was approved on the eve of the International Quds Day on May 22.

The International Quds Day is an annual event opposing Israel’s occupation of Beitul-Muqaddas. Anti-Zionist rallies and demonstrations are held on the last Friday of Ramadan in Muslim and Arab countries around the world, specially in Iran, as well as a large number of non-Muslim states.

The International Quds Day was started by the late Founder of the Islamic Republic, Imam Khomeini, in 1979 as a way of expressing solidarity with the Palestinians and underscoring importance of the holy Quds to Muslims.

Due to the outbreak of coronavirus in Iran, the International Quds Day will be commemorated differently without holding gatherings and rallies.

Earlier this month, an official with the Coordination Council of Islamic Propagation Organization said Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei will deliver a speech on the occasion of the International Quds Day corresponding with May 22.

## Raisi highlights importance of Palestinian cause

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Judiciary Chief Ebrahim Raisi has underlined the importance of the Palestinian cause and liberation of the holy city of Quds.

Addressing a meeting of Judiciary officials in Tehran on Monday, Raisi hinted at the upcoming International Quds Day and said it is a priority for Muslims to liberate Quds.

He also denounced the Zionist regime’s crimes against the people of Palestine, Lebanon and other regional countries, saying the regime is now seeking to implement the scandalous “deal of the century” plan.



The U.S. and the Zionist regime will never succeed in carrying out this plot, he added.

The International Quds Day is a legacy of the late founder of the Islamic Republic, Imam Khomeini, who designated the day in solidarity with Palestinians.

Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, the International Quds Day has been held worldwide on the last Friday of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan.

This year, the International Quds Day falls on Friday, May 22. Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei will deliver a live speech on the occasion, which will be aired live on local and international radio and television channels.

This year, rallies in Iran will be held in a different form due to the coronavirus pandemic as it is necessary to observe social distancing.

Rallies are held each year in various cities around the world by both Muslims and non-Muslim communities. Many Jewish people also attend the rallies in order to draw a line between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism.

President Hassan Rouhani announced on Saturday that Quds Day will be held in Tehran by marching cars under the watch of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps.

Secretary-General of the Lebanese Hezbollah Resistance Movement Hassan will also deliver a speech on May 23.

## International lawyer says U.S. has no way to extend Iran arms embargo

**TEHRAN (IRNA)** — Nima Nasrollahi, an international lawyer said on Monday that he believes that it is not possible for the U.S. to extend arms embargo on Iran after its unilateral exit from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action two years ago.

Speaking to IRNA correspondent, Nasrollahi also said that there is no possibility for passing a new UN resolution against Iran like the 2010 Resolution 1929 as the permanent members of UN Security Council are not unanimous in this regard.



Nasrollahi, a faculty member of Science and Culture University, said that the U.S. imposed arms sanctions on Iran in 1984 while the United Nations did not have such sanctions against Iran until 2006 when it approved Resolution 1737 which restricted Iran’s nuclear technology.

The United Nations also passed Resolution 1747 in 2007 which banned Iran from exports of arms, the academic said.

In 2010 the Resolution 1929 was passed which banned Iran from any sales, purchases, exports or imports of arms, he said, adding that this resolution created the main problem for the country.

He said that a 2015 Iran nuclear deal and a subsequent Resolution 2231 stress that the arms embargo on Iran has to be lifted five years after the accord and the UN resolution came into effect.

Now we are nearing October 2020 when the arms embargo on Tehran are expected to be lifted, Nasrollahi said.

He said that the U.S. is no longer a party to Iran nuclear deal and therefore it has no access to the dispute resolution mechanism envisaged by the deal by which it could extend the arms embargo on Iran under certain conditions.

Now the U.S. State Department is seeking to return to JCPOA and exploit its Art. 36 to raise Iran’s case before the UN Security Council and re-impose the sanctions, the international lawyer said, adding that it is not possible for the U.S. to do so.

Based on the UN Charter, re-imposition of Iran arms embargo requires the affirmative vote of all members of the UN Security Council and it can be vetoed by each permanent member of the Council, he added.

It would have been much better for the U.S. to remain a party to JCPOA and send Iran’s case to the UN Security Council by means of the dispute resolution mechanism, he said, noting that in such case China and Russia could not veto the Council’s decision.



## Iran’s annual fishery output hits nearly 1.3m tons

**1 →** In mid-January, the official had also said that new export destinations have welcomed Iran’s high-quality fishery products in the past Iranian calendar year.

New markets including China, South Korea, and the Eurasian Union nations have opened up for Iranian fishery products in the current year, Khoun-Mirzaei said.



“Based on the negotiations and agreements signed between Iran and China by the minister of agriculture, the Chinese fishery market has been opened to Iranian products. The Eurasian nations and South Korean markets have also welcomed Iranian fishery products and have the potential for exports,” the official explained.

According to the deputy head of Fishery Organization Hossein Ali Abdolhay, some 12 aquatic species are already bred in Iran and the figure is planned to reach 17 by the end of the Sixth Five-Year National Development Plan (March 2021).

Meanwhile, Managing Director of Iran’s Agricultural Parks Company (APC) Ali Ashraf Mansouri has recently announced that some 1,500 hectares of fishery parks are planned to be inaugurated in the country in the current year.

## ‘Chabahar Port’s capacity for transit an advantage for Turkmenistan’

**TEHRAN** — The governor of Sistan-Baluchestan Province said Turkmenistan can use the capacity of Chabahar Port (in southeast of Iran) and its trade-industrial free zone for transiting goods, IRNA reported.

Speaking in a video conference with Iranian Ambassador to Turkmenistan Gholam Abbas Arbab Khales, Ahmad Ali Mouhebati said Sistan-Baluchestan Province, especially Chabahar, enjoys many capacities in trade, economic and commercial fields.

Chabahar is connected to the open waters and plays a major role in developing trade, he added.

Sistan-Baluchestan is considered an important opportunity for domestic and foreign investors, he said, adding that executive bodies will make all their efforts for starting economic activities.

Elaborating on investment opportunities in Sistan-Baluchestan Province and Chabahar, Mouhebati called for Turkmen economic activists’ investment and participation.



Arbab Khales, meantime, expressed his readiness for maintaining coordination for Turkmen officials’ visit to Chabahar.

He noted that investment delegations will visit the capacities of Chabahar Port.

In the meantime, director of Iranian Foreign Affairs Ministry’s Office in Chabahar Free Zone Hamid-Reza Toosi said Chabahar with its important trade capacities and also Shahid Beheshti Port enjoying an 8.5 million-ton capacity of loading and unloading per year can play important role in promoting trade.

Chabahar, as Iran’s only ocean port, plays an important role in developing trade, exports, and imports and in fishing as well.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei’s special attention and the efforts made by President Hassan Rouhani’s government have accelerated developing Makran Coasts, especially Chabahar Port, in a way that five big ships carrying basic goods, including wheat, barley, soybean, and corn berthed in one week.

The geographical location and the current atmosphere in Iran for developing Chabahar Port have made the Iranian port play a major role in national and international arenas.

On Sunday, the deputy head of Sistan-Baluchestan Province’s Ports and Maritime Department announced that docking operations were carried out simultaneously for eight ships at Iran’s Chabahar Port, for the first time in the port’s history.

“Since last week, eight docking operations, with a total length of more than 200 meters, were carried out in one day in this port,” ILAN quoted Hossein Ebrahimi as saying.

According to Ebrahimi, the boom in Chabahar Port’s maritime traffic is an indication of a bright future for sustainable development in this oceanic port.

For the second consecutive week, all five berths of Shahid Beheshti Port have been occupied, the official said, adding “This shows that Chabahar Port is gaining a significant place among the ports of the country and the region.”

Chabahar Port is one of the modern ports in the country in terms of equipment, benefiting from 30 strategic loading and unloading devices, according to the official.

“This equipment has played a significant role in the growth of unloading and loading operations, exports, and imports in this port,” he said.

As Iran’s only oceanic port, Chabahar consists of two separate ports named Shahid Kalantari and Shahid Beheshti, each of which has five berths.

Iran has awarded the development project of this port to India, and the South Asian country committed \$500 million to build two new berths in this port.

# Monthly steel ingot production surpasses 2.3m tons

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Production of steel ingot in Iran reached 2.321 million tons during the first Iranian calendar month Farvardin (March 20-April 19), IRNA reported citing the data released by the country’s steel producers.

As reported, the figure shows a two-percent growth compared to the output in the first month of the past year, which was 2.274 million tons.

The released data also put the steel billet and bloom output at 1.284 million tons in the first month of this year, which was four percent lower than that of the same month in the previous year.

Although, the monthly steel slab production rose 12 percent to 1.037 million tons.

According to Iran’s outlook plan for the mining sector, production of steel ingot in the country is planned to hit 33 million tons in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20, 2021).

The country has produced 20.226 million tons of steel ingots during the past year.

The report also said that major steel producers have produced 1.797 million tons of steel ingots during the first Iranian calendar month of Farvardin (March 20-April 19), which accounts for 5.4 percent of the planned 33-million-ton output. The figure shows the monthly growth of one percent.

Iran’s annual steel ingot production is planned to increase 3.2 million tons in the current year, as announced by the Iranian



Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO).

IMIDRO has put the value of the projects to boost the steel ingot output in the present year at \$793 million.

Citing the data indicated in the World Steel Association (WSA)’s latest report, IMIDRO has also announced that the production of crude steel in Iran has risen 14.1 percent in March 2020 from March 2019.

The WSA’s report, which is on steel production by 64 countries, put Iran’s steel output

at over 2.8 million tons in March.

WSA has previously announced that Iran’s crude steel production climbed 30 percent in 2019 while the average global growth in this sector stood at 3.5 percent.

According to the global organization, Iran produced 31.9 million tons of crude steel in 2019, while the figure was 24 million tons in 2018.

The data and reports released by Iranian organizations also show that the country’s steel sector is still experiencing growth in output and export despite the U.S. sanctions.

## ‘Facilitating exports could compensate for pandemic’s economic damages’

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Board Member Keyvan Kashefi says the economic damages caused by the coronavirus outbreak to the country’s non-oil exports can be compensated if the government facilitates exports after the virus is contained, ICCIMA portal reported.

Noting that the Coronavirus outbreak has affected trade around the world, including in Iran, Kashefi said: “In Farvardin [the first Iranian calendar month] this year, we had a 36-percent decrease in exports and Iran’s trade balance reached minus \$279 million.”

The official noted that the main reason for the decline in exports was the closure of the trade borders due to the pandemic, adding that the exchanges which took place through sea or railways were less damaged.

“For example, exports to countries such as China and the UAE, which are mainly by ship, are underway almost like before; however, exports through trucks and land crossings bore the greatest impact, and we had the largest decline in exports to countries that traded with us through land, including Iraq.”



“If the spread of coronavirus continues and the borders remain closed, we will see a significant reduction in exports this year, but the exact figure is still not estimated,” Kashefi said.

According to the official, one of the issues that the government should pay attention to in order to compensate for the decrease in exports is to support the exports of commodities that are needed in the current situation in the world.

“Various types of sanitizers and disinfectants that are produced in sufficient quantities in the country are among these commodities,” he said.

## CBI capable of controlling currency market: governor

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Governor of Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Abdolnasser Hemmati says the bank is going to control the currency market just like it did in the previous year, IRNA reported.

Stating that the current situation of the markets in the country is not more complicated than in August and September last year, the official said, “with the serious efforts of my colleagues in the Central Bank, the stability will be established in the markets.”

“In those days, as the U.S. sanctions were intensifying, the foreign exchange markets were severely disrupted and the dollar rate in the market reached very high levels,” Hemmati wrote in an Instagram post on Monday.

But with the CBI management and the measures taken, despite all the problems over the past two years, the relative stability of markets was retained and the country registered a positive economic growth in the end of the previous Iranian calendar year (March 19), the chief banker said.

The official noted that the current turbulence in the market is a result of the coronavirus outbreak which causes the three-month shutdown of many economic activities in the country and also the reduction of oil prices as well as the continuous pressures of the U.S. sanctions.

“The situation is difficult, but it is improving and can be managed and

In its outlook plan for the Iranian calendar year 1404 (2025-2026) Iran has envisaged production of 55 million tons of steel per annum, and to achieve this target the country requires to produce 160 million tons of iron ore concentrates.

Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry has announced that production of iron ore concentrate in Iran reached 47.306 million tons in the previous Iranian calendar year, registering a four-percent rise compared to the preceding year.

The country has extracted 64.274 million tons of iron ore during the past year, according to the data released by Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization.

In a bid to prevent the exports of unprocessed minerals, creating more value-added and meeting the requirements of domestic producers for the raw materials, Iran has levied a 25-percent duty on the exports of raw minerals (especially iron ore) since September 23, 2019.

Industry Ministry believes that the duty is going to encourage the production of more processed minerals such as pellets and concentrate instead of selling the raw minerals.

Iran’s export of steel products in the past Iranian calendar year rose 27 percent compared to its preceding year.

As reported, the country’s major steel producers managed to export about 7.33 million tons of the products in the previous year.



stabilized,” Hemmati stressed.

Back in February, the official had announced that CBI’s major economic indicators show that the economy is emerging from a recession that began nearly two years ago when the United States imposed sanctions on Tehran.

The official has previously cited reports by the CBI and the Statistical Center of Iran suggesting that the economy had started to grow regardless of the share of oil revenues in government budgets.

Back in January, Hemmati had announced that CBI was fully controlling the currency market and people should not have any worries over the exchange rates.

## ‘Annual non-oil exports could reach \$100b’

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Head of the Export Promotion Committee of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and agriculture (ICCIMA) says Iran has the capacity to increase its annual non-oil exports to \$100 billion, ILNA reported.

“If the government consults with the private sector in the export sector, we can achieve the last year’s export figures and even more, otherwise reaching this goal will be very difficult,” Jamshid Nafar said on Monday.

Referring to the downward trend in the exports in the first month of the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 20), Nafar said: “In Farvardin [the first Iranian calendar month], the figure has only reached \$1.6 billion, which is perfectly normal considering the problems caused by the coronavirus outbreak, the problem will be solved by the opening of the borders.”

“Our main problems in exports are the lack of infrastructure, problems related to various directives and management issues, and if we want to increase the value of exports, we must find solutions to these problems,” he said.

Increasing non-oil exports to the neighboring countries is one of the major plans that Iranian government is pursuing in the current Iranian calendar year.

Earlier this month, First Vice-President Es’haq Jahangiri called for developing non-oil exports as the only way for realizing the motto of surge in production.



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

Iran shares border with fifteen countries, namely the United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Russia, Oman, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kuwait, Qatar, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia.

## Leather output reaches 124 MCFT in a year

**ECONOMY d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iranian leather production companies managed to produce over 124 million cubic feet (MCFT) of heavy and light leather in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19), IRNA reported.

Based on the data released by Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry, light leather output stood at 42 MCFT, while heavy leather production reached 82 MCFT.

According to the Trade Map website, in 2018, Iran was ranked 101 in global leather imports among 198 countries and as for the exports of the commodity the country was ranked 49 among 176 countries.

According to the mentioned website, Iran imported \$1.7 million worth of leather in the said year, while the country’s exports in the same year stood at \$75 million.

Currently, there are 228 active units in the

leather industry with more than 3,800 employees in various provinces including East Azarbaijan (141 units), Tehran (70 units), Khorasan Razavi (16 units) and Hamedan province (one unit).

Leather industry is one of important sectors of the global economy. Currently, big countries like Russia and Italy have the upper hand in this industry, although many of the products produced in these countries are made of Iranian leather.





# Annual electricity exports to neighbors up 27%

**ENERGY** **TEHRAN** — Iran's electricity exports to the neighboring countries in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19) reached 8 billion kilowatt hours (kWh), registering an increase of 27.6 percent year on year, IRNA reported.

According to Iranian Electrical Power Equipment Manufacturing and Provision Company (known by its Persian acronym SATKAB), the Islamic Republic of Iran exported electricity to Armenia, the Republic of Azerbaijan, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic in the past calendar year.

Iran's total energy exports to the mentioned countries in the previous year stood at 8.31 billion kilowatt hours, 1.736 billion kWh more than the figure for the preceding year.

The highest electricity export in the said period was 6.652 billion kWh to Iraq, up 34.6 percent from the preceding year of 1397, followed by Afghanistan (775 million kWh) and Pakistan (516 million kWh). Armenia (53



million kWh) and Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic (33 million kWh).

Electricity imports in the previous year amounted to about 1.329 billion

kWh, of which 1.294 billion kWh were from Armenia and 34 million kWh was imported from the Autonomous Republic of Nakhchivan.

Based on the mentioned data, Iran's electricity exports were six times more than the country's imports.

Iran's electricity exports to its neighbors are witnessing an upward trend in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 20) as well, so that in the first 45 days of the year electricity exports reached 436 million kWh, 19 percent more than the figure for the last year's same period.

Iran has had electricity exchanges with most of its neighbors namely Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Iraq, as well as the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic among which Turkey, Iraq, Pakistan and Afghanistan have been solely importers of Iran's electricity.

In 2019, Iran synchronized its electricity network with that of Iraq in order to be able to boost its power cooperation in the future.

## Brent at one-month high, U.S. oil tops \$30 as restrictions ease

Oil prices climbed by more than \$1 a barrel on Monday, with benchmark Brent hitting a one-month high and U.S. crude topping \$30 supported by optimism about the re-opening of economies and output cuts by major producers.

Brent crude was up \$1.21, or 3.7 percent, at \$33.71 a barrel by 0912 GMT, its highest level since mid-April.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude was up \$1.59 or 5.4 percent at \$31.02 per barrel, its highest since mid-March.

"Optimism on the demand side of the oil equation has helped prices climb further, with gasoline demand coming back as governments ease confinement measures," said Rystad Energy's senior oil markets analyst Paola Rodriguez Masiu.

Summer weather is enticing much of the world to emerge from coronavirus lockdowns. Shops and restaurants prepared to reopen in Italy on Monday, while other centres of the outbreak such as New York and Spain gradually lifted restrictions.

The positive sentiment in the market was reinforced as U.S. Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell issued an optimistic outlook

for economic recovery later this year.

"Assuming there is not a second wave of the coronavirus, I think you will see the economy recover steadily through the second half of this year," Powell said Sunday night in broadcast remarks.

The June WTI contract expires on Tuesday, but there was little indication of it repeating a historic plunge below zero last month on the eve of the May contract's expiry.

However, analysts cautioned that demand was not expected to recover to pre-coronavirus levels any time soon.

"Clearly the fundamentals in the market are improving, but we continue to believe that the market is rallying too much too soon, with the risk that further strength will only prolong the supply and demand imbalance," ING analyst Warren Patterson said.

Also supporting oil prices are production cuts by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its allies, including Russia, a grouping known as OPEC+.

The world's top exporter Saudi Arabia announced last week that it would cut an additional 1 million barrels per day in June,



while OPEC+ wants to maintain existing oil cuts beyond June when the group meets next.

Kuwait and Saudi Arabia have agreed to halt oil production from the joint Al-Khafji field for one month, starting from June 1, Kuwait's Al

Rai newspaper reported on Saturday.

Production is also falling as U.S. energy firms cut the number of oil and natural gas rigs operating.

(Source: Reuters)

## Kuwait, Saudi Arabia to shut shared Al-Khafji field just months after restart

Kuwait and Saudi Arabia agreed to stop production from the Al-Khafji crude oil field — part of their shared Neutral Zone — as of June 1, according to a source with knowledge of the situation.

The shutdown comes just months after both countries agreed to resume production at the Neutral Zone. Total production at the Neutral Zone, which comprises the offshore Al-Khafji and onshore Wafra fields, was 260,000 bpd in April, with each country sharing output 50-50. Kuwait's share of the Wafra field was 60,000 bpd at the time and the Al-Khafji share was about 70,000 bpd, signaling the shutdown will remove about 140,000 bpd from the market.

"There are simply no buyers. This is why everybody is volunteering cuts," the source said.

Saudi Arabia and Kuwait in December agreed to restart the Neutral Zone, with Al-Khafji shuttered since 2014. It is jointly owned by Saudi Arabia's Aramco Gulf Operations Co. and Kuwait Gulf Oil Co., a unit of state-run Kuwait Petroleum Corp.

**Production ready**

"Production is now an OPEC question. Much of the capex has been spent. It seems the new goal of the Neutral Zone is to be production ready; for when market conditions improve," a second source with knowledge

of the situation said. "During this time there is still a consistent technical push to make some of the production ready should it be needed."

It is unlikely that production at Wafra will also be shut, the source said. "For Kuwait, Wafra is connected directly to our refineries, so there are no problems with export," the first source said.

Wafra is operated by KGOC and Saudi Arabian Chevron. Kuwait Petroleum Co. and Saudi Aramco did not respond to requests for comment.

Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and 21 other members of the OPEC+ alliance agreed in April to reduce production by 9.7 million bpd in May and June, followed by a 7.7 million bpd drop in the second half of the year and 5.8 million bpd cut from January 2021 to the end of April 2022. The agreement is intended to counteract plummeting demand caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

Last week, Saudi Arabia said it will voluntarily cut an additional 1 million bpd of its crude oil production in June below its quota under the OPEC+ agreement and hold its output at 7.492 million bpd. The United Arab Emirates and Kuwait followed suit with announcements they will cut an additional 100,000 bpd and 80,000 bpd, respectively.

(Source: Platts)

## Dubai crude futures timespreads dip despite physical market firming

Benchmark Dubai crude futures timespreads were lower mid-morning Monday in Asia, even as cash differentials for physical barrels in the West Asia sour crude spot market rose amid improved sentiment.

At 11 am in Singapore (0300 GMT) Monday, the June/July Dubai futures timespread was pegged at minus 12 cents/b, while the July/August spread was pegged at minus 24 cents/b.

In comparison, the June/July timespread was assessed at minus 1 cent/b at the 4:30 pm Singapore close (0830 GMT) Friday after briefly flirting with backwardation on the day, while the July/August spread was assessed at minus 17 cents/b.

While lower on the day, the Dubai futures timespreads have risen from the start of the month, when the June/July spread was assessed at 89 cents/b and the July/August timespread at minus 75 cents/b on May 4, S&P Global Platts data showed.

The prompt Dubai futures spread was last in backwardation on March 5 at 3 cents/b, but has since traded in the negative, falling to as low as minus \$4.09/b on April 21, Platts data showed.

Spot trading activity for July-loading cargoes is expected to move into full swing this week following the conclusion of Qatar's monthly spot tender late last week - widely



regarded as a curtain opener for spot trading and an indicator of price trends in the West Asia crude market.

Qatar Petroleum for the Sale of Petroleum Products, or QPSPP, awarded two July-loading Al-Shaheen crude cargoes at an average discount of around \$2.70/b to Platts front-mont Dubai crude assessments, up from an average discount of \$10.40/b heard concluded for June-loading cargoes the previous month.

QPSPP also awarded a July-loading cargo of light sour Qatar Land crude at a discount of \$4/b to Platts Dubai, up from minus \$9.30/b last month.

Several tenders for West Asia crude cargoes are expected to emerge this week from end-users such as Taiwan's CPC, Formosa Petroleum Corp. and Japan's Fujio Oil, including offers for Russia's ESPO crude oil.

(Source: Platts)

## Nigeria opens money tap as oil revenue runs dry

The government of Nigeria, whose revenue could be slashed by more than half this year due to the oil-price slump, finalized plans for a revised budget that keeps spending almost intact, and that will mean more borrowing.

Finance Minister Zainab Ahmed got approval from the West African nation's cabinet on May 13 to go ahead with the new budget that cuts expenditure by only 0.6 percent from what was proposed before oil prices dropped. The government plans to spend 10.52 trillion naira (\$27 billion) this year, even as it reduced the crude benchmark in the budget to \$25 a barrel from \$57.

Nigeria will have to rely on borrowing to finance the spending plan. The country targets revenue of 5.6 trillion naira, but it has never collected this much, even when oil prices were higher. In 2019, Nigeria hit 58 percent of its revenue target when crude averaged \$61 a barrel, with earnings from the commodity contributing half of income.

The budget deficit of 5.4 trillion naira will be

financed by both the local debt market and concessionary loans from the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, Islamic Development Bank and Afreximbank, Ahmed said. The government also plans to sell assets to cover some of the shortfall.

Nigeria could face a situation where 2.6 trillion naira set aside to service debt consumes almost all of its revenue, unless it gets a waiver from creditors. Interest payments could take 96 percent of the federal government's revenue, up from 58 percent in 2019, according to the IMF

**Emergency support**

"We have already borrowed and we are going to borrow," Michael Famoroti, chief economist of Stears Business in Lagos, said by phone. "As long as we can still pay our interest there is no problem, but when we are getting to the point where are spending about 95 percent of our revenue on servicing debt, then our creditors begin to doubt that we can actually pay back."

The IMF approved \$3.4 billion in emergency support to fight the pandemic last month, the biggest for any country on the continent so far. The lender projected public debt will rise to 34.8 percent of gross domestic product this year, from 29.1 percent in 2019, and will peak at 37.4 percent in 2022. Still, government debt is sustainable and there is adequate capacity to repay the fund, it said.

Nigeria's non-oil revenue, which is already among the lowest in the world according to the IMF, will also take a hit from a slowdown in economic activity due to restrictions imposed to stop the spread of the coronavirus pandemic. The economy could contract 3.4 percent this year, the lender projects. That would be the worst performance since at least 1991.

**Revenue measures**

"Spending as a percentage of gross domestic product is still pretty low, Nigeria's revenue as a percentage of GDP is even lower," Razia Khan, chief economist for Africa and West Asia with

Standard Chartered Bank, said by phone. "It is going to be all-important to see what revenue measures underlies the budget assumptions."

Once lawmakers approve the revised budget, it still has to be signed into law by President Muhammadu Buhari. No date has been fixed for presentation to lawmakers.

Nigeria could boost revenues by merging its official exchange rate, which has been fixed at 360 naira per dollar, with that of the rate offered to investors and importers, which averages 387 naira to the dollar, Khan said. Such a devaluation would mean more naira for every dollar of oil sales.

Earnings from crude sales will plunge 80 percent to 1.1 trillion naira this year, the budget office said in a presentation last week. In 2014, when oil prices averaged \$44.6 per barrel, government income at the federal level stood at 2.1 trillion naira, with crude sales contributing 879 billion naira, according to a 2019 report from the IMF.

(Source: Bloomberg)

## The future of solar power: From unbelievably cheap to insanely cheap

Clean technology advocate and futurist Ramez Naam admits he was wrong about the price of solar. His forecasts in 2011 were among the most optimistic in the world, but he turned out to be wrong by at least a factor of two.

Solar is now half the price he predicted nearly a decade ago, and already at a price that established institutions like the International Energy Agency thought wouldn't be possible for a century to come. That's how dramatic the cost of the technology has fallen. And it's going to get cheaper.



"Solar has plunged in price faster than anyone — including me — predicted. And modeling of that price decline leads me to forecast that solar will continue to drop in price faster than I've previously expected, and will ultimately reach prices lower than virtually anyone expects. Prices that are, by any stretch of the measure, insanely, world-changingly cheap."

We saw this in action last month, when Abu Dhabi Power Corporation's 2GW Al Dhafra project attracted record low bids of 1.35 cents in U.S. currency, roughly \$A0.02/kWh, or \$A20/MWh, from a consortium including French energy giant EDF and Chinese solar company JinkoPower.

That bid promises to deliver a levelised cost of solar energy at almost half the once record-breaking price achieved three years ago for the mammoth 1.17 GW Noor Abu Dhabi solar park, which started sending power to the grid mid-way through last year.

As Naam explains in this must-read blog post, solar has got to this point largely through sheer scale of global deployment.

He uses data from seven different sources spanning global, U.S., Chinese, and Indian trends, to paint "an incredible picture" that shows the price of solar electricity from utility-scale systems dropping by anywhere between 30-40 percent with each doubling of cumulative solar deployment.

"This is a stunning pace of decline. It's far higher than the bulk of academic studies and industry projections, which typically fall into the 10-20 percent learning per doubling range," Naam says. "And it's more than twice the 16 percent learning rate I found in my 2015 analysis."

But perhaps even more incredible is that this learning curve is by no means done. The world is headed from insanely cheap solar, to ultra-cheap solar.

Naam says the world is currently entering what he calls "the third phase of clean energy," where building new solar and wind power is cheaper, even, than keeping existing fossil fuel plants running.

And cheap solar will be a major part of this.

"With average prices in sunny parts of the world down to a penny or two by 2030 or 2035 ... building new solar would routinely be cheaper than operating already built fossil fuel plants, even in the world of ultra-cheap natural gas we live in now," Naam writes.

He comes to this conclusion using what he describes as a "cautious" learning rate of 30 percent. As illustrated in the chart below, just two more doublings of scale, to 2,400GW of solar producing roughly 8 percent of global electricity demand, would see solar costs cut in half from today's levels.

"In the sunny parts of the world with low costs of capital, labor, and land, we could routinely be seeing unsubsidized solar in the 1-2 cent (US\$) range. In California (typical of the green line) we could be seeing unsubsidized solar at 2.5 cents per kWh. In northern Europe, we could be seeing utility scale solar routinely priced at 4-5 U.S. cents per kWh," he writes.

Naam notes that to the far right of the graph, solar deployment hits 19 Terawatts. "This may seem like an absurd, pathological amount of solar, enough to provide 2/3 of the world's current electricity production," he says, but when you consider the changing shape of electricity demand and supply, it's not so implausible.

Naam argues that this sort of terrawatt-scale demand for cheap and abundant solar power will come from a richer world; a world that has shifted to electric transport; grids dominated by flexible demand; the arrival of cheap energy storage, and finally; industrial decarbonization.

"Add these up, and it's plausible that solar contribution to the energy system could double or triple the amount currently considered feasible for solar to provide," he says.

But while solar might give the appearance of a self-powered juggernaut on a set course to solve the world's energy problems, it is not. As Naam himself stresses, "projections are only projections" and we shouldn't "blindly assume" that they will come to pass. As usual, policy will be key. And as usual, that is a concern for Australia.

"There will be real obstacles — technical, economic, social, regulatory, and political — that will all need to be overcome to bring this to bear," Naam says.

"And there may well be a physical floor price that solar reaches as prices drop too close to the cost of land and other resources that are resistant to cost decline."

Other technologies — in particular various forms of energy storage — will also have to keep up the pace. And, to be sure, when Naam published a Twitter version of his thoughts it sparked an interesting reaction from others pointing out the need for storage, or advanced demand management. But the costs of those are coming down too.

Even so, says Naam, "the incredible pace of solar provides us an incredible tool for decarbonizing our electrical grid, while ultimately lowering costs for consumers, businesses, and industries."

"And for now, have hope. Technology innovation — initially kicked off by farsighted policy — is giving us better and better tools to decarbonize society, while reducing the cost of energy, and increasing global prosperity."

(Source: reneweconomy.com)

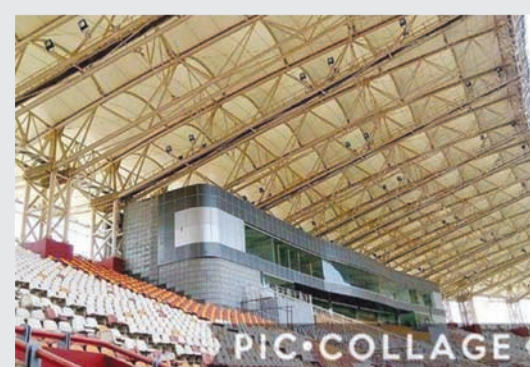


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## Modern Stadium of Martyrs of Khuzestan Football Club (KSC)



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# PGCC migrant labor camps Covid-19 hotspots

## Impoverished migrant workers desperate, unable to return home

**1 →** The World Bank estimates that the global remittances will fall by about a fifth this year, from \$714 billion last year to \$572 billion.

Persian Gulf foreign workers sent more than \$124 billion to their home countries in 2017. The UAE and Saudi Arabia were the world's second and third-largest exporters of remittances after the U.S., according to World Bank data.

Now tens of thousands have lost their jobs during the lockdowns, leaving them to ration dwindling food supplies while their families back home struggle without their remittances.

The oil-dependent Persian Gulf countries are themselves grappling with falling incomes and budget deficits amid the pandemic. They can no longer guarantee the high living standards their citizens once took for granted.

Some countries have agreed to pay for repatriation flights. A few home countries are resisting because of the lack of resources to quarantine or care for returnees.

One exception is India, which has organized a huge evacuation effort aimed at bringing back thousands of Indians mainly from the Persian Gulf, reports The New York Times.

Indian government's 'Vande Bharat' mission flights are evacuating stranded Indian nationals from countries affected by the pandemic.

The six Persian Gulf Arab countries have some eight million workers from India alone, of whom more than half are blue collar workers.

India itself is grappling with tens of thousands of migrant workers returning from big cities to their villages after losing their jobs due to countrywide lockdown imposed in late March.

Here's an overview of the situation in the region on a case by case basis:

### UAE

According to 2018 World Bank data UAE has a population of 9.6 million. The Persian Gulf trade hub of Dubai had plans to host Expo 2020, which was scheduled to open in October and predicted to draw 25 million visitors. Now the event has been pushed back 12 months, joining a list of other events that have been postponed.

A mass exodus of expatriates – who make up the bulk of Dubai's 3.3 million population – is expected. Many are now out of work, must continue to pay rent and now way to return home.

UAE has changed its law to allow companies to break work contract, lower wages and pressure foreign workers to take unpaid leave, reports German broadcaster Deutsche Welle.

Foreigners account for 98 percent of Dubai's private sector workforce, mainly migrant workers for south Asia. UAE has extended all residency visas until the end of the year, allowing redundant expatriates to look for work or wait for flights home to restart.

"We're looking at a minimum population contraction of 10 percent for the year," Nasser al-Shaikh, a former head of Dubai's department of finance, tweeted in April.

The UAE stopped passenger air traffic – the lifeblood of the economy – in late March.

The second phase of repatriation flights to India began May 16 when three flights from Dubai and Abu Dhabi departed for Kerala.

Reconfirming the schedule of flights, the Consulate General of India on Friday tweeted, "We are happy that 11 Air India Express flights are planned to India from Dubai in the second phase of Vande Bharat Mission," from May 16 and ending May 23. Repatriation flights to India began on May 7.

More than 40,000 Pakistanis in UAE have registered with consulates to return home. The first PIA flight carrying 227 passengers from Dubai left for Islamabad April 18.

UAE recorded its first case of Covid-19 at the end of January. By May 10 more than 17,000 cases and 185 deaths were reported by Johns Hopkins University.

### Qatar

In 2010 Qatar was awarded the right to host the 2022 World Cup. With all the related construction and hospitality work migrant population has rapidly grown. The country's population jumped from 1.6 million in December 2010 to 2.7 million in October 2018.

Amnesty International reports document



the abuse and exploitation of low paid migrant workers extensively since World Cup was awarded to Qatar.

In September 2018, Amnesty International published an investigation into an engineering company called Mercury MENA that left dozens of workers stranded and penniless, eventually forcing them to return home despite being owed thousands of dollars of wages and benefits.

Rooms in the so-called industrial area of Doha, where eight to ten people live at a time with little running water or sanitizing products.

As reports of widespread infections erupted parts of the industrial area was in complete lockdown.

According to Qatari government website new measures were introduced, with room occupancy limited to four people, hygiene product availability and wages and treatment for the sick guaranteed.

Nevertheless, the condition of migrant workers in Qatar, one of the richest countries in the world, has deteriorated after the outbreak. According to a Guardian daily report many low-wage migrant workers in the country, desperate and unable to return home, have been forced to beg for food following a surge in the outbreak.

According to the Gulf Times there are 29,425 positive cases to date in Qatar. With a population of 2.8 million the total number of Covid-19 deaths has remained low so far at 14.

About 25 percent of those tested for the virus in the past week have been found to be effected. Home to two million immigrants, Qatar now has one of the highest rate of infection per capital in the world.

### Kuwait

Kuwait state news agency KUNA reports that full curfew started on March 11, but people were allowed to leave home for two hours between 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. each day. Restrictions have started to ease now.

With a population of 4.6 million migrant workers make-up some two-third of the population or 3.3 million. The authorities offered amnesty for undocumented workers that they would be allowed re-entry if they volunteered

for repatriation.

Thousands of workers who volunteered are now stranded in unsanitary detention camps with appalling conditions in the desert for over a month in four packed compounds on the outskirts of Kuwait City waiting to be repatriated. In such cramped up environment detainees are unable to practice social distancing.

Footage shows toilets overflowing with sewage, with detainees unable to wash their hands to lack of access to running water. Devoid of basic health care or communication network these migrants are prevented from leaving the compound.

Over 20,000 laborers, predominantly from Bangladesh, Egypt, India, Sri Lanka and Sudan, are awaiting repatriation reports Middle East Eye. Delays have led to protests inside the camps with local authorities using tear gas and rubber bullets.

Kuwait has recorded 11,975 coronavirus cases and 88 deaths.

### Bahrain

The 458,000 migrant workers comprise about 77 percent of the total work force, public and private sectors. The health ministry in Bahrain announced that 90 percent of active coronavirus cases in the country were among migrant workers.

There are about 2,200 registered overcrowded and unsanitary labor camps in the country.

Labor and Social Development Minister Jameel Humaidan said the campaign aims to "reduce the numbers of employees in the camps."

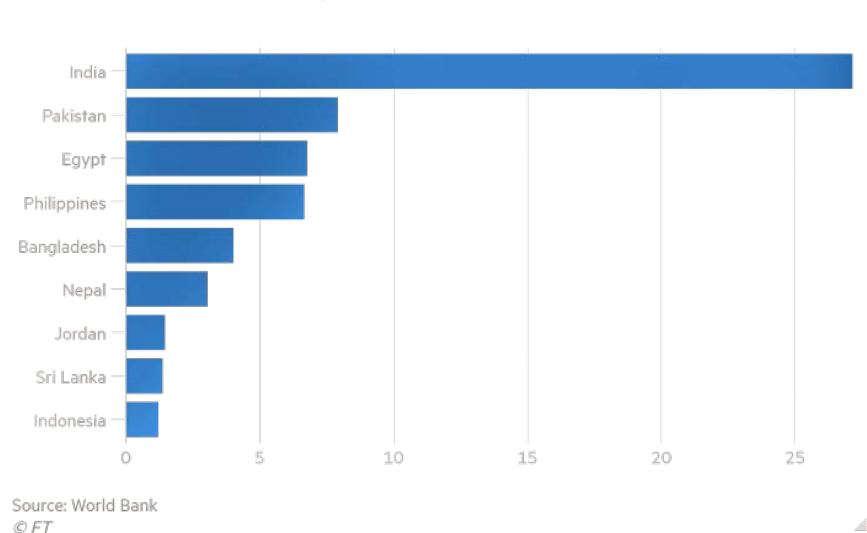
Thousands of migrants in Bahrain have been relocated to safe shelters this week, according to the Gulf Daily News, and plans were underway to move low-income workers and ease overcrowding in labor camps.

Bahrain has announced that it will cover medical expenses of all foreign workers infected with Covid-19.

An official at Bangladesh embassy in Manama reported on May 15 that some 7,000 to 8,000 Bangladeshi migrant workers in Bahrain have lost their jobs since shutdown was enforced in the country.

Where do remittances from PersianGulf countries go?

Destination of remittance flows (\$bn, 2017)



Bahrain's Labor Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA) recently reported that due to the economic fallout some 10,000 jobs losses were incurred in the tiny Persian Gulf country.

The Dacca-based Daily star reported that Bahrain is home to about 150,000 Bangladeshis of which at least 12,600 undocumented migrant workers have so far applied to get regularized under the amnesty program declared by Bahrain government in early April.

As per Bahrain government's estimate, currently there are around 55,000 undocumented workers.

To date Bahrain has 6,956 confirmed Covid-19 cases, 12 deaths and 2,910 recoveries.

### Oman

Oman's Ministry of Health on Monday announced 193 new confirmed cases with Covid-19, out of which 72 were Omani nationals and 121 non-Omanis, reports the Oman Observer. A total of 1,496 patients in the Sultanate have recovered, the ministry said.

This brings the total number of cases in the Sultanate to 5,379, including 23 deaths.

As part of the Vande Bharat Mission, the fourth repatriation flight left Oman to India yesterday. As many as 177 passengers and five infants took off from Muscat airport to Hyderabad in the Air India Express flight.

On Sunday three new evacuation flights to Kerala were added to take-off this week.

At least 700,000 people working in Oman are believed to be affected after Oman asked firms to replace expats with locals, reports The Times of India.

### Saudi Arabia

Since the beginning of 2017 more than 667,000 foreign workers left as the kingdom imposed higher fees on expatriates and companies that were grappling with sluggish economy laid off staff.

The higher fees on expatriates were imposed to make room for domestic labor to take a more active role in running the economy. But labor market surveys revealed that the Saudis are not filling the roles being vacated by foreigners as unemployment hit its highest on record at 12.9 percent in 2018.

Now with the Covid-19 pandemic we are witnessing another wave of migrants returning home. Migrants account for a third of Saudi Arabia's 33 million population and more than 80 percent of the private sector workforce.

Riyadh is unlikely to be able to keep providing free health care for foreigners as the kingdom itself is grappling with the fallout of low crude demand and due to travel restrictions the kingdom's tourism industry, mainly based on pilgrimage, has suddenly shutdown.

Strict lockdown measures were enforced that has shuttered many areas of economy, but businesses are eligible for government support to pay salaries.

Riyadh is stepping up the deportation of thousands of Ethiopians, including some who are suspected of suffering from coronavirus, an act that some migrant advocates have described as reckless and inhumane.

As many as 500,000 Ethiopians reside in the kingdom working in the construction industry, as maids or as animal herders. Some 300,000 Ethiopians had been repatriated during the past two years.

Ethiopia has requested that the deportations stop and on Saturday denied landing rights to the Saudi aircraft.

In its latest effort to wean the kingdom off the crude export revenue dependence the country has started to entice skilled foreign workers the kingdom has approved new residency scheme.

The new law would offer two types of residencies: one would be permanent while the other could be renewed annually. The new program would allow expatriates to own property and offer other benefits. Details are to be published within the next 90 days.

By the last week of April Health officials confirmed 1,141 people tested positive for Covid-19 and the death toll stood at 114 while 1,812 had recovered.

Doha: Workers inside the Lusail Stadium in December. The stadium is under construction for the 2022 FIFA World Cup, scheduled to be held in Doha, Qatar. (Photo: Kai Paffenbach/Reuters)

## COVID-19 as a common foe has united political rivals in Afghanistan!

BY Mohammad Jafari

Regardless of its inevitable negative impacts on the people's lives and the country's economy, the novel coronavirus outbreak has forced political rivals in Kabul to see the glass as full-half to reach a power-sharing agreement and even try to cooperate more than ever with Taliban group to end decades long dispute and take practical steps towards restoration of sustainable peace and tranquility across the war-hit country.

The coronavirus pandemic is swiftly rearranging global priorities. The contagion, which has killed more than 300,000 people globally, gave rise to some new rivalries, but it also forced old foes in several parts of the world to pause their conflicts. In March, responding to the United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres's appeal for a global ceasefire, conflicting parties in Colombia, Sudan, Syria, Ukraine and Yemen have expressed their willingness to pause hostilities," Abdul Basit, a research fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Singapore, explained in his article published by Al Jazeera.

Like all global crises, COVID-19 also created challenges and opportunities for local and international stakeholders in Afghanistan.

The Taliban and the Afghan government agreed to cooperate to stem the spread of the virus, and this led to a reduction in violence in the urban areas of the country. In other areas, the Taliban are not publicizing their attacks. The Taliban not only reduced violence, but also agreed to a complete truce in provinces most affected by the coronavirus. The armed group is also encouraging people with COVID-19 symptoms to go to government hospitals for tests, exercise social distancing and maintain proper hygiene.

In the coming months and years, this budding cooperation can potentially help the government and the Taliban to reach a power-sharing deal and bring sustainable peace to Afghanistan. However, if pandemic causes large-scale devastation in the country - a likely scenario given the scarcity of resources and the broken health system - it can encourage the United States to hasten its exit and push Afghanistan towards civil war.

For the Afghan government, COVID-19 has provided a way out of the impasse it found itself in following the disputed presidential election, and brought President Ashraf Ghani and his political rival Abdullah Abdullah closer to a power-sharing agreement. Reportedly, Abdullah has presented a plan to the government to end the political crisis, asking for a 50 percent share in the cabinet, the authority to appoint governors in provinces where he won the majority of votes and a decision-making role in the peace process. Ghani and Abdullah are now believed to be close to reaching a final agreement in which the latter would get a leadership role in the peace process but recognize the former as the legitimate president of the country.

COVID-19 has also earned the Afghan government some breathing space in the intra-Afghan peace process. Social distancing measures and travel restrictions have made it difficult for Afghan officials to hold face-to-face meetings with their American counterparts. As a result, Washington eased the pressure it has been applying on Kabul to move the process forward. Exploiting this relaxation, President Ghani released only 100 Taliban prisoners instead of the 1,500 originally promised to ensure progress on peace negotiations.

Keeping a higher number of Taliban fighters in prison could give the Afghan government extra leverage in future negotiations, and keep these people off the battlefield for longer. However, this is a strategy fraught with risks. Health experts across the globe have warned that prisons and jails can become hotspots of coronavirus. If the Afghan government does not release these prisoners soon, and coronavirus reaches the country's prisons, this will not only make the government look bad and add to its woes, but will also exacerbate the country's COVID-19 crisis, as these prisoners will become new vectors for the disease. "The pandemic has left the Taliban in a bind as well," the author underscored.

The Taliban is a decentralized movement that unites different groups with diverse interests and goals through violence. The reduction in violence, coupled with the stalling of the peace process, will test the organizational coherence of the militant movement. This year, for the first time since the start of the Afghan war, the Taliban has not launched a spring offensive. The hardliner factions in the movement are undoubtedly disturbed by the Taliban leadership's reluctance to take action and will likely pressurize the Rahbari Shura (Executive Council) to resume fighting. If they do not get their way, these factions may splinter off to continue violent attacks.

The Islamic State of Khorasan (ISK) is already exploiting the Taliban's decision to reduce violence to launch high-impact attacks of its own. In recent weeks, ISK has targeted a Sikh temple in Kabul, killing 25 people and launched a missile attack on the Bagram airbase. On May 12, gunmen suspected to be part of ISK stormed a maternity hospital in Kabul, killing 24 people including two newborn babies, their mothers and an unspecified number of nurses. The armed group also attacked a funeral in eastern Nangarhar province on the same day, killing a further 24 people. The hard-line Taliban factions may eventually choose to join the ISK and continue their violent attacks under the group's banner.

Despite knowing that it may cause upheaval in the movement and give ISK space to expand, the Taliban leadership chose not to launch a spring offensive because such a move could have undermined the deal it reached with the US in Qatar. Moreover, violence amid a pandemic would have allowed the Afghan government to portray the Taliban as a self-centered and power-hungry entity only concerned with a power grab.

Even though the pandemic left the Taliban between a rock and a hard place, and put the movement's organizational coherence at risk, the armed group also succeeded in finding opportunity in the crisis. By reducing violence across the country and bringing its attacks to a complete halt in provinces most affected by the virus, the movement demonstrated that it can act as a responsible stakeholder in the face of a national crisis and bolstered its political legitimacy.

Moreover, the militant movement has reconciled with the International Committee of Red Cross and other humanitarian organizations by restoring their security guarantees, and allowed them to provide assistance in Taliban-controlled areas affected by COVID-19. By doing this, the group signaled not only to the Afghan government but also to the world that it can work as a responsible stakeholder in any post-settlement Afghanistan.

The COVID-19 pandemic offers a rare window of opportunity for the Afghan government and the Taliban to iron out their differences. The pandemic has forced a de facto ceasefire (a long-standing demand of the government) between the two sides and encouraged them to work together to tackle the virus.

This cooperation can potentially serve as a much needed confidence-building measure and allow them to reach a political compromise and power-sharing agreement. The recent attacks on the Kabul maternity hospital and the funeral in Nangarhar, however, led the government to order its troops to move to an "offensive mode" against the Taliban, signaling the cooperation between the two sides can soon come to an end. If the Taliban and the government waste this opportunity for peace, amid changing global priorities, they may not find willing allies and donors to continue supporting and funding their endless war in the post-COVID-19 world.

## Trump's firing of State Department watchdog may be 'unlawful': Pelosi

U.S. President Donald Trump's firing of the State Department's top internal watchdog "could be unlawful" if it was intended to retaliate against one of his investigations, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said Sunday.

Trump late Friday ousted Inspector General Steve Linick, the fourth inspector general he has fired since early April, following his February acquittal by the Republican-controlled Senate in his impeachment trial, Reuters reported.

"The president has the right to fire any federal employee, but the fact is if it looks like it's in retaliation for something the IG, the inspector

general, was investigating, that could be unlawful," Pelosi said on CNN's "State of the Union."

The top Democrats on the House and Senate Foreign Relations Committee on Saturday began a probe into the firing, saying it was their understanding that Secretary of State Mike Pompeo personally recommended Linick's sacking because the inspector general "had opened an investigation into wrongdoing by Secretary Pompeo himself."

A State Department spokesperson confirmed Linick had been fired but did not comment on Pompeo's role in the dismissal.

White House adviser Peter Navarro, meanwhile, downplayed the firing, saying that what Trump terms the "deep state" has caused problems and those who are not loyal must go.

"We've had tremendous problems with, some people call it the 'Deep State.' And I think that's apt. So I don't mourn the loss," Navarro, the director of the Office of Trade and Manufacturing Policy, said in an interview on ABC's "This Week."

"There's a bureaucracy out there. And there's a lot of people in that bureaucracy who think they got elected president and not Donald J.

Trump."

Navarro did not offer any evidence to back up his claim.

Trump and his allies have long pushed conspiracy theories that target what they denounce as the "deep state," career civil servants meant to be nonpolitical who, they say, are working to undermine Trump.

Navarro's comments are likely to further inflame tensions with Democrats who have sounded alarms over what they call an escalating pattern by Trump of firing watchdogs whom he views as a threat to his presidency.



Historical coin found in ancient port city southern Iran

**TOURISM d e s k** **TEHRAN** – A historical coin, dating from 1835 CE, has recently been found in the southern port city of Siraf while a databank was being established for fragments of centuries-old ceramics and potteries discovered through years of excavations in the ancient region.

“The historic coin dates from 1835 and the 19th century and was discovered at the same time as the pottery bank was being set up in the historical house of [the British archaeologist and senior scholar David] Whitehouse (1941 – 2013),” ISNA quoted a local cultural official as saying on Saturday.



The site was discovered in the 19th century (it was first mapped by Sir Aural Stein), and was the target of a massive British archaeological excavation between 1966-75, led by Whitehouse.

The excavations uncovered the mosques, houses, bazaars, and Sasanian origins of the town and a massive haul of Islamic and Chinese pottery, glass, and inscriptions. Siraf was an internationally famous port, especially during the Abbasid period (c.750 CE onwards), when ships owned by Sirafi merchants sailed the Indian Ocean in search of luxuries. Through Siraf passed the silks and porcelains of China, the spices and aromatic woods of India and Indonesia, and the ivory, animal skins, and gold of East Africa.

With about 1,100 years of history, the historical port of Siraf in the Persian Gulf has been inscribed on the National Heritage list. At one time, the port had been one of the major centers for marketing pearls and silk in the region, but it was gradually submerged over the centuries.

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

International Museum Day: Iran museums hailed by online visitors

**HERITAGE d e s k** **TEHRAN** – Contrary to previous years, thousands of art-and-history lovers toured Iran’s cultural heritage museums online on Monday (May 18), which marks the International Museum Day.

Traditionally, Iranian museums, like many other counterparts across the globe, offered free admission to mark the occasion, which were mainly ruled out this year in a bid to contain the coronavirus pandemic.



In return, a member of museums, such as the Carpet Museum of Iran hosted online meetings or workshops to cherish the day, for which “Museums for Equality: Diversity and Inclusion” has been selected as the 2020 motto.

Each year since 1977, the International Council of Museums (ICOM) has organized International Museum Day on May 18 or around this date, to represent a unique moment for the international museum community.

The objective of International Museum Day is to raise awareness about the fact that, “Museums are an important means of cultural exchange, enrichment of cultures and development of mutual understanding, cooperation and peace among peoples.”

Some Three million historical objects are currently being kept in Iranian museums which are affiliated with the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts.

Ancient castles and fortresses in Iran: Tall-i Takht Citadel

**TOURISM d e s k** The ruined Tall-i Takht Citadel is an enormous unfinished platform built to one side of a natural hillock a kilometre north east from Pasagardae, southern Iran.

Some sources cite that the monument was probably built during the reign of Cyrus the Great but was abandoned after his death in 530 BC. Like the acropolis in Athens, it may have been intended as a massive fortified plinth to hold palaces and temples.



This was, in fact, realized later at Persepolis when Cyrus’ successors built their palaces on large plinths somewhat similar to Tall-i Takht.

Iran tourism industry to rebound sooner than expected: deputy minister

**→ 1** guest houses, eco-lodge units, tourist destinations, transport facilities, recreational centers, and restaurants.”

Titled ‘The Smart Travel Protocol (Travel + Health)’, it has been widely welcomed by travel professionals and tourism stakeholders for being very effective in recovering and stimulating domestic tourism, Teymouri explained.

The official also praised Iran’s hospitality sector for doing its best even during the days that the pandemic was at the highest level in the country. “Due to the observance of health standards and quality of services, [a significant number of] accommodation centers and hotels in Iran were open and ready to provide services even during the peak days of the disease.”

Referring to foreign arrivals, Teymouri said that international tourism could be recovered soon because it is mostly relying on potential travelers and pilgrims from the neighboring countries.

“Given the policies of the country’s tourism industry over the past two years to focus on tourism markets in the neighboring countries, the possibility of recovering and reviving international tourism in the shortest possible time is predictable.”

Teymouri also appreciated the country’s healthcare system for its measures to contain the virus saying, “Iran was one of the first countries hit by the coronavirus outbreak. However, due to the serious and speedy reaction of the healthcare system, the number of infections and fatalities are less than many



Iran’s deputy tourism minister Vali Teymouri speaks in an undated photo.

other countries that were infected after the Islamic Republic.”

“Iran owes these achievements to the compassionate medical professionals from emergency service workers to specialists who are working hard without rest to make sure the patients receive the care they need.”

The deputy tourism minister also underlined medical tourism in the country as one of the pillars of the booming travel industry, noting “Before the outbreak, medical tourism

was established to be a growing industry in Iran. However, like many other countries, the industry is hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic... Looking to the bright side, we must say that in the light of this disease, a lot of new technologies and services have been added to the already significant medical capacities of the Islamic Republic.”

Many domestic experts say that medical tourism in Iran produces win-win outcomes as the country yields considerable benefits to

international health-care seekers, offering affordable yet quality treatment services.

Medical tourism fetched Iran some \$1.2 billion in 2018, based on official statistics, hosting patients from the Persian Gulf littoral states, Iraq and Syria as well as Iranian expatriates residing in Canada and Germany amongst others.

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

On April 20, Iran lifted intercity travel bans days after President Hassan Rouhani unveiled a “Smart Social Distancing Initiative” as a new phase of measures to prevent the virus spread. Over the past couple of months, 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.

The latest available data show eight million tourists visited the Islamic Republic during the first ten months of the past Iranian calendar year (started March 21, 2019).

Iran expects to reap a bonanza from its numerous tourist spots such as bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, mausoleums, churches, towers, and mansions, of which 24 being inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list. Under the 2025 Tourism Vision Plan, it aims to increase the number of tourist arrivals from 4.8 million in 2014 to 20 million in 2025.

No harm to Hindu Temple as fire hits nearby handicrafts stalls

**HERITAGE d e s k** **TEHRAN** – A Hindu Temple, which is located in Iran’s southern Hormozgan province, has not been damaged as a fire incident took place at handicrafts stalls adjacent to the sanctuary, an official with the provincial governor general’s office has said.

“The fire in the Hindu Temple area had nothing to do with the temple’s historical monument and only the [nearby] handicrafts market was destroyed by the fire,” Mehr quoted Fatemeh Roknoddini as saying on Monday.

Referring to rumors by some foreign media outlets claiming that the temple was intentionally set on fire, she noted, “The fire was limited to traditional structures within the temple premises but no damage suffered the Hindu Temple itself.”

“At the time of the fire, the handicraft [sales] exhibition was closed and none of the exhibitors were present at the accident scene.”

“The handicrafts exhibition was built on the eastern side of the temple, which was damaged in the fire incident yesterday. The main body of the Hindu temple was not damaged in the incident,” she underlined.

“The fire burnt 20 stalls made of wooden palm branches and leaves. The structure were made before the Iranian New Year (Noruz) to host a crafts exhibit.”

Last year, a fresh round of restoration work – concerning cracks running in the dome, anti-termite treatment, fixing electrical installations - was carried out on the Hindu Temple which stands tall in Bandar Abbas.

The modest temple was built in the early 20th century to serve the Indian community working for the British East India Company. Its architecture features are a combination of Persian and Hindi architecture, which is one of the historical monuments in the southern province. However, it lacks the vivid colors that are usually associated with Hindu temples.



Qajar-era Tekkiyeh to undergo urgent restoration

**TOURISM d e s k** **TEHRAN** – Bagh Sheikh Tekkiyeh, a Qajar era (1794–1925) place for gathering of mourners in Saveh, central province of Markazi, will undergo urgent rehabilitation works in the near future, provincial tourism chief Reza Ayaz said, CHTN reported on Monday.

The Tekkiyeh is located in the historical village of Bagh Sheikh, which also includes a cistern and a caravanserai, dating back to the Zand dynasty (1751-1794).

With grief-stricken hearts, millions of the faithful across Iran along with their fellow Shia Muslims worldwide hold massive mourning ceremonies in the lunar month of Muharram to commemorate the martyrdom anniversary of Imam Hussein (AS), third Shia Imam and the grandson of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

During that month, apart from mosques, each neighborhood sets up its own establishment for the ceremonial processions of the month known as Tekyeh (or Tekkiyeh), which are venues for gathering of mourners



known as ‘heyat’ (literally meaning group or delegation) who cherish the courage of Imam Hussein (AS) and his

72 loyal companions who were all martyred in the battle of Karbala in 680 CE.

Tekkiyeh (stemming from the word eteka, meaning backup or reliable) was historically a staying place for visiting pilgrims and dervishes who relied on the goodness of the benefactors for daily sustenance.

Today Tekkiyehs, however, are specific locations for mourners who meet and participate in religious gathering after which they head out on the streets in groups known as dasteh (literally meaning cluster) to parade a dramatic mourning.

Tekkiyeh is also a place for performing tazieh, a passion play inspired by historical and religious narrations, and Sineh-Zani [beating the chest] ceremonies.

Tazieh, which recounts religious events, historical and mythical stories and folk tales, was registered on UNESCO’s List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in November 2010.

Over 40 historical monuments restored in Sistan-Baluchestan

**HERITAGE d e s k** **TEHRAN** – Some 43 historical buildings and structures in Iran’s southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchestan were restored during the previous Iranian calendar year 1398 (ended March 19).

Sehkuheh and Khan-Malek Kiani citadels, Heidarabad and Nikshahr castles and historical structure of Sehkuheh village are among the restored sites, CHTN quoted Alireza Jalalzai, the director of Sistan-Baluchestan’s Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department? as saying on Monday.

The restoration projects aimed at preserving, protecting, and strengthening the historical sites, he added.

Sistan-Baluchestan was previously shunned by potential foreign and domestic travelers though it is home to several distinctive archaeological sites and natural attractions,

including two UNESCO World Heritage sites, namely Shahr-e-Soukhteh (Burnt City) and Lut desert, parts of latter is situated in Kerman province.

For mainstream Iranians, the name of Sistan-Baluchestan was conjuring up stories of drought, desiccated wetlands, and dust storms. On the international scale, foreigners may consider it a reminiscent of the big red blot on the Iran safety map.

In ancient times, according to Encyclopedia Britannica, the Baluchistan region provided a land route to the Indus Valley and the Babylonian civilizations. The armies of Alexander the Great marched through Baluchistan in 326 BC on their way to the Hindu Kush and on their return march in 325 experienced great hardships in the region’s barren wastes.



Craftspeople produce 700,000 face masks for free

**HERITAGE d e s k** **TEHRAN** – Some 700,000 protective face masks have been produced and distributed for free by two handicrafts workshops in the central Isfahan province during the past two months.

Two workshops have been repurposed to make protective face masks while the country is fighting the coronavirus pandemic, CHTN quoted Fereydoon Allahyari, Isfahan’s cultural

heritage chief, as saying on Monday.

Most of the masks, which were produced under health protocols, have been distributed among craftspeople, artists and other residents of the province as well as charity organizations, he added.

Over the past two months, some handicrafts workshops across the country have been repurposed to make protective face masks as well as medical products amid

coronavirus outbreak.

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

Earlier this month, craftspeople of the southeastern Sistan-Baluchestan province produced 300,000 protective face masks as well.



# International Day of Families: population growth needs family-friendly policies

By Faranak Bakhtiari

**TEHRAN** — Population, development and their consequences are strategic issues that require short-term and long-term policies and planning to be addressed. Due to the declining trend of population growth in Iran, it is better to focus on family-friendly policies.

Population decline come up with consequences, including the reduction of the working population (aged 15 to 64) and the aging population in the coming decades, the general population growth policy was announced on May 20, 2014 by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

The policies address the need to increase the population and the various dimensions of it, including childbearing, facilitating marriage and strengthening the family, reproductive health, promoting the Iranian-Islamic lifestyle, empowering young people, honoring the elderly, and the environment, which can lead to an increase in the quantity and quality of the population if it is timely and continuous implemented.

However, the question is, where has been the process of implementing the general population policies in recent years? How is it possible to achieve the goals of population policies, which are to increase the growth of the population, considering the qualitative dimensions? And finally, what are the strategies for institutionalizing population policies and programs in the country?

In recent years, the "population control" discourse has been replaced with "increasing population and childbearing" at the micro and macro levels, and the issue of "why" has changed to "how to implement" new population policies.

Despite this change in discourse, the implementation of population policies has been slow and less goals achieved due to the lack of coordinated management as well as the lack of necessary economic, social and managerial platforms.

The Statistical Research and Training Center has proposed four optimistic and pessimistic views on fertility rate in the country, according to which the total population of the country in 2050 reaches a minimum of 95 million and a maximum of 112 million people.



The first view claims an increased fertility rate of about 2.6 children in 2050 (optimistic), through which the total population will reach up to 112,475,000.

The second one, by stabilizing the total fertility rate from 2016 onwards, equaling 2.11 children, the total population will stand at 104,017,000.

According to the third view, with a decrease in the total fertility rate with a steep slope below the replacement level of 1.5 children (pessimistic), the country's population will be 95,317,000.

And in the fourth case, by reducing the total fertility rate by a gentle slope to below the replacement level of 1.9 children in the country's population will reach 101,392,000.

Studies have shown that Iran's mortality rate has been steadily declining in recent decades, among the factors influencing this, young population, the improvement of nutrition and health progress in recent decades are of great importance.

Iran has achieved a demographic window of opportunity which must be seized now before its working-age population starts to shrink and get older in 2050s.

**■ Support in the face of economic shocks a need**

Mohammad Jalal Abbasi, a demographic expert and head of the Population Association, said that usually when society is facing

economic shocks and psychological crises, as in the current situation of a global pandemic, marriages and childbearing are affected due to fears of a vague future.

Many may delay in making decisions about starting a family or having children, he added.

He went on to explain that therefore, "sustainable employment" is the best guaranteed option and economic protection for families, in other words, sustainable employment takes precedence over marriage and the introduction of childbearing.

Employment and marriage support policies need to be institutionalized so that couples' fertility behavior, with the benefit of this support, is less affected by cross-sectional circumstances, he highlighted.

Given the increasing number of university-educated women and the changes in family attitudes toward women's employment, it is expected that business rules will need to be regulated in such a way as to allow women to combine work, childbearing and housework, he emphasized.

Evidence suggests that providing benefits for women in the form of "family-friendly policies", increased maternity leave, job security after returning to work, and flexible working hours plays a major role in fertility rate, he noted.

Finally, given that population policies and programs do not achieve their goals in

## Ayatollah Khamenei highlights West's failures in sphere of family

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has criticized the West for its weak point and record of failures in the sphere of the family, saying when the family is weakened and destroyed in a society, corruption becomes institutionalized in that society.

In a series of comments published on the Leader's Twitter account on May 16, Ayatollah Khamenei said: "The West cunningly evades discussing the issue of the #family. They bring up the issue of #women in every discussion but don't discuss the family. This is because the West's weak point & record of failures are in the sphere of the family."

"Women's nudity and exploitation for men's pleasure led to the destruction of families & the weakening of the foundation of the family in the West. When the family is weak-



ened and destroyed in a society, corruption becomes institutionalized in that society."

"In Western culture, a #woman must expose herself to men in order to be a source of pleasure for them! Is there a graver form of oppression?! They call this 'freedom,' and the opposite they call 'captivity'! While on the contrary, women's modest dress brings them respect."

## Tehran hotels, restaurants to reopen after Ramadan

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — Hotels and restaurants in the capital city of Tehran will resume operation in compliance with all health protocols after the holy month of Ramadan, an official with Tehran Public Security Police has announced.

By implementing health guidelines for dealing with coronavirus, restaurants and hotels were among the most restricted occupations, but after nearly two months, it is time to reopen, IRNA quoted Nader Moradi as saying on Monday.

According to the announcement of the National Task Force for Fighting Coronavirus, hotels and restaurants will be fully reopened after the holy month of Ramadan, in compliance



with health protocols.

Emphasizing that the decision only applies to restaurants and hotels, he said that "At the moment, the activities of other high-risk businesses, which were previously banned, are in place, and the police will pursue violations."

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → E

## Medical waste disposal become possible using plasma technology in Iran

Using plasma gasification, Iranian researchers managed to dispose medical wastes and disassemble all its hazardous gases by filters, IRNA reported on Sunday.

Considering numerous problems encountered in medical and urban waste management in the country, we decided to employ high technology to overcome them, Mahmood Quran-Nevis, an official with Vice Presidency for Science and Technology has said.

He went on to add that currently, autoclaves are used as waste disposal facilities in hospitals; the temperature of the autoclave is 130 degrees and most of the bacteria are not killed and subsequently they can contribute to various environmental problems.

Referring to the foreign countries reluctance to provide us with high technology machines, he noted that regarding the importance of medical waste disposal and disinfection, we managed to domestically produce the necessary equipment needed for healthcare waste treatment and disposal.

## امحای زباله‌های بیمارستانی با کمک فناوری پلاسما

محققان کشورمان با بهره‌گیری از فناوری پلاسما موفق شدند ضمن امحای تمام زباله‌ها، گازهای خطرناک آن را توسط فیلتری جداسازی کنند.

محمود قرآن نویسنده مجری طرح امحای زباله‌های بیمارستانی به روش پلاسما گفت: با توجه به مشکلات زیادی که در حوزه زباله‌های بیمارستانی و شهری در کشور وجود داشت، به این نتیجه رسیدیم که باید این مشکل را از طریق فناوری «های تک» حل کنیم.

وی افزود: در حال حاضر در بیمارستان‌ها برای امحای زباله از اتوکلاوها استفاده می‌شود که دمای حرارت این اتوکلاوها ۱۳۰ درجه بوده و بیشتر باکتری‌ها در این دما از بین نمی‌روند و مشکلات زیست محیطی زیادی را به وجود می‌آورند.

رئیس مرکز تحقیقات فیزیک پلاسما دانشگاه آزاد با اشاره به این موضوع که هیچ کشوری حاضر نشد فناوری «های تک» را به ما عرضه کند، بیان کرد: با توجه به اهمیت امحای زباله بیمارستانی بر آن شدیم تا با حمایت مادی و معنوی معاونت علمی و فناوری ریاست جمهوری (مرکز طرح‌های کلان ملی فناوری)، واحد علوم و تحقیقات دانشگاه آزاد، مرکز تحقیقات فیزیک پلاسما و با همکاری برخی شرکت‌های داخلی، ساخت و تولید تجهیزات مورد نیاز این طرح را انجام دهیم و در داخل کشور بومی‌سازی کنیم.

## PREFIX/SUFFIX

### “-crat”

■ **Meaning:** government

■ **For example:** The \**bureaucrats*\* imposed rules and regulations on big business.

## PHRASAL VERB

### Hinge on/upon something

■ **Meaning:** if a result hinges on something, it depends on it completely

■ **For example:** His political future hinges on the outcome of this election.

## IDIOM

### A bundle of nerves

■ **Explanation:** if you describe someone as a bundle of nerves, you mean that they are very nervous, tense or worried

■ **For example:** My son is doing his driving test today. Needless to say he's a bundle of nerves!

## Imam Ali Islamic Center in Sweden holding online religious programs in Ramadan

By Haniyeh Sadat Jafariyeh

**TEHRAN** — Due to the coronavirus pandemic, Imam Ali Center in Stockholm, Sweden has shifted to holding online religious rituals during the holy month of Ramadan. In an interview with Mehr news agency the spokesperson of the center elaborated on its activities and rituals.

In Ramadan, Muslims across the world fast, abstaining from eating, drinking, smoking, ingesting medicine, from sunrise to sunset in observance of one of the religions' primary holidays. In Scandinavian countries, including Sweden, Muslims do Ramadan rituals, too.

In an interview with Mehr news agency, the Spokesperson of Imam Ali Center Akil Zahir provided some information about the center and its activities in Ramadan.

Here is the full text of the interview:

■ **Tell us about Imam Ali Center, please. What is its mission, responsibilities and activities?**

Imam Ali Islamic Center, in Sweden, is an independent, religious, and ideal association founded by a group of Shi Muslims, 1997.

The association organizes its activities in accordance with Islam and Swedish law. The Center maintains regular activities such as daily communal prayer, Friday prayer, psalm reading and other religious and cultural celebrations that interest Muslims, especially Shia, in Scandinavia.

The Center aims, inter alia, to create a friendlier relationship and cooperation with various institutions, including government, to facilitate the integration of Muslims into Swedish society.

The Imam Ali Islamic Center also has an administrative department that offers religious ceremonies, divorces, certificates, and other services. The Center offers education for children and adolescents, as well.

■ **How many Muslims and Shites are there in Sweden?** Tell about their community and social-religious interactions.

We have no exact figures to tell us about the number of Muslims in Sweden. This is because it is forbidden to ask citizens about their faith.

But according to some estimations, there are up to 800,000 Muslims in Sweden. We believe that at least 30 percent of them are Shi'ite Muslims.

In recent decades, Muslim organizations have been able to establish themselves here in Sweden. They have their mosques and associations that hold Islamic activities.

There is also a good relationship between religious communities and the state here in Sweden.

■ **What Islamic rituals are held at the center in Ramadan?**

In our congregation, we coordinate various religious programs, cultural ceremonies, education, children activities, and other activities.

In previous years, we used to hold daily programs in Radamn when we recited the Qur'an, read the dua (a prayer of supplication or request) and answered Ahkam questions. During the second half of the holy month of Ramadan, the number of programs used to increase as we celebrated Imam Hassan's (A) birthday, observed the Qadr nights, and hold a special program in connection with the Imam Ali (A) martyrdom.

Our programs have always been held in three languages ??at the same time, in Persian, Arabic, and Swedish. Several thousand people used to participate in these programs.

But now during the Corona pandemic, we have canceled all such programs. We are running them online.

We are having several activities and programs online and in the said languages. We try to keep in touch with our members as before.

We are under specific conditions due to the outbreak right now and we must get adapted to it. It is necessary to use the resources that are available in a good and efficient way.

■ **Are you in contact with Muslims and Islamic centers in other Scandinavian countries?**

We are informed of the great mosques and Islamic associations in other Scandinavian countries. We sometimes get in touch with them and try to exchange experiences. An example of collaboration has been about prayer times in northern Europe, which has been a challenge for Muslim organizations in this area.

## WORDS IN THE NEWS

## North Korea Nuclear Discussions

(October 20, 2003)

President Bush and South Korea's leader, Roh Moo-hyun, have discussed America's latest ideas on how to end North Korea's nuclear crisis. The discussion took place in Bangkok where 21 nations of APEC are holding a summit. Peter Leng reports:

Washington's **very public moves** on North Korea have **overshadowed** this meeting of APEC leaders, with security, and not trade, very much **at the top of the agenda**.

South Korea's national security advisor, Dr Ra Jong-Yil, said he was not surprised that the issue of North Korea was **dominating** discussions and he was very encouraged by the latest American ideas on trying to end the crisis over **Pyeongyang's** nuclear weapons programme. He stressed that the Americans had given no detail of what he called the **security assurances** that could be offered to the north. No one, he said, **was privy to the actual wording** or the means of implementing any security guarantee. Dr Ra said such details would have to be worked out by all six countries involved in efforts to resolve the nuclear crisis, including North Korea itself. He hoped such talks could take place by the end of the year. But for now, he said, **positive progress** was being made.

■ **Words**

**very public moves:** approaches that can be easily seen by everyone

**overshadowed:** if something is overshadowed, attention and importance are taken away from it

**APEC:** Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation

**at the top of the agenda:** something at the top of the agenda is the most important thing

**dominating:** if a topic is dominating, it gets more time and attention than any other

**Pyeongyang:** here, the capital city is used to refer to the whole country of North Korea

**security assurances:** guarantees against possible attacks against North Korea

**was privy to:** if you are privy to something, you're one of the few people who know about it

**the actual wording:** the exact written words

**positive progress:** movement in the right direction

(Source: BBC)



## Saudi debts increased 1500% during Salman’s rule

Saudi’s national debt has increased 1,500% since King Salman came to power in 2015 according to data released by the World Bank.

At the end of 2019, the kingdom’s debt reached \$183.7 billion, compared to \$11.8 billion in 2014; a rise of over 1,560 per cent, according to data collected by Arabizi21.

Saudi Finance Minister, Mohammed Al-Jadaan, announced his government plans to borrow 220 billion riyals (\$58 billion) this year, this will push the country’s debt to a quarter of a trillion dollars.

Plunging oil prices and the suspension of Hajj and Umrah travel have reduced the country’s income< The Middle East Monitor reported.

This, along with the high costs of the Yemen war and the interventions in Libya, Syria and other Arab states have increased the country’s expenditure and raised its debts, observers say.

## 113K suspected cholera cases in Yemen: WHO

There has been approximately 113,000 suspected cases of cholera in war-torn Yemen since January, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

A total of 56 cases were confirmed by laboratory research and 29 deaths were registered from cholera, Anadolu reported.

The WHO supported 138 centers in the fight against diarrhea and 58 centers for thirst treatment, it said.

It pointed out that diarrhea and thirst are among the most obvious symptoms of cholera.

Several health sources said hospitals have stopped admitting patients with symptoms of the COVID-19 disease in recent days since they are not equipped to deal with the virus.

Save the Children said on Thursday that authorities in Aden have reported an average of 50 deaths per day since May 7 - five times higher than the baseline average of 10 deaths a day in more normal times. Yemen’s health system has all but collapsed since the conflict broke out in 2014.

Making the situation worse is intermittent infighting between mercenaries supported by the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

On Saturday, at least 14 UAE-backed southern separatists and Saudi-led militants were killed as clashes between the two sides entered a sixth day in the southern Yemeni province of Abyan.

## Libya’s GNA recaptures strategic al-Watiya airbase

Libya’s internationally-recognised government says it has captured the strategic al-Watiya airbase from fighters loyal to renegade military commander Khalifa Haftar.

Military spokesman Mohamed Gnnu said in a Twitter post on Monday the forces of the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord (GNA) had taken over the entirety of the base near the Tunisian border.

The announcement by the administration of Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj came after a month-long counteroffensive that has seen forces allied to it drive Haftar’s troops out of much of Libya’s western coast.

According to al Jazeera, Haftar launched an offensive in April 2019 to seize control of Tripoli, resulting in a stalemated conflict that has killed more than 1,000 people.

Analysts say the GNA’s capture of al-Watiya, located some 25km (16 miles) from the Tunisia border, will allow its forces to fully focus on repelling Haftar’s fighters in southern Tripoli.

## UK-flagged tanker attacked in Gulf of Aden

A UK-flagged chemical tanker has foiled an attack by armed pirates in the Gulf of Aden, the vessel’s operator Stolt Tankers says.

Stolt Tankers said the pirates, using two speedboats, approached the Stolt Apal some 75 nautical miles off Yemen on Sunday before an exchange of fire.

“After multiple warning shots were fired by the armed guard team aboard Stolt Apal, the skiffs opened fire on the ship. The armed guard team returned fire, disabling one skiff and ending the pursuit,” a company spokesman told Reuters.

“A coalition warship (also) responded and Stolt Apal has resumed her voyage,” he added, but did not specify which coalition was meant. Maritime security sources said the ship had been sailing through a transit corridor patrolled by international naval forces because of the high risk of attack.

Stolt Tankers, a subsidiary of Norwegian listed Stolt-Nielsen, said no injuries were reported, and none of the ship’s cargo was damaged, but the ship’s bridge had sustained minor damage from bullets.

According to Press TV, the Gulf of Aden is one of the most important trade routes for Middle Eastern oil heading to Europe.

## Afghan intelligence officials killed in Taliban car bombing

A car bomb attack targeting an Afghan intelligence agency installation in the eastern province of Ghazni has killed at least seven people and wounded 40 others, an official said.

“The terrorists have used a humvee in their attack. They have targeted the National Directorate of Security unit in Ghazni city,” Wahidullah Jumazada, spokesman for the governor, told the AFP news agency on Monday.

“Most of the victims are intelligence personnel,” Jumazada added. The interior ministry in Kabul and a health official in Ghazni also confirmed the attack.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said the armed group was behind the attack in Ghazni province, a Taliban stronghold, al Jazeera reported.

The provincial capital, also called Ghazni, briefly fell under Taliban control twice in recent years. The province has in the past been the scene of many large-scale attacks against both Afghan and NATO forces.

The attack came a day after Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and his political rival, Abdullah Abdullah, signed a power-sharing agreement, two months after both declared themselves the winner of last September’s presidential election.

# Iraqi leaders condemn Western diplomats for raising rainbow flags

## MP Calls for Expulsion of UK, EU, Canada Diplomats

→ 1 “The [EU] mission must immediately lower the flag and apologize for their action which should not be repeated again,” he added.

Influential Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr’s Sairoon bloc also called the act “unacceptable” and culturally insensitive during the holy month of Ramadan.

“We refuse and condemn any behavior that contradicts the culture and religion of the Iraq people. We ask the European mission in Iraq to lower the flag,” read a Sairoon statement.

“We are in a blessed and holy month for all Muslims, and the foreign diplomatic missions in Iraq need to take into account the peculiarities of Muslim peoples,” it added.

Sadr himself tweeted about the incident later in the day, calling LGBTQ+ people “mentally ill and in need of recovery and guidance.” He described the raising of the flags as “attacks on all People of the Book, not just Muslims.”

He called on the Iraqi parliament to investigate the case and to “seek an apology [from these countries] as soon as possible,” also suggesting that Iraqi embassies abroad should raise Islamic banners.



Amir Ashour, founder and executive director of activist network IraQueer, said

being LGBTQ+ is not incompatible with being Iraqi.

## U.S. elite forces ill-equipped for cold war with China

→ 1 He proposed shifting focus to defense over attack. While some military analysts have suggested SOF should take on more of a supporting role and expand their psychological operations, others urge speedier development of new stealth weapons and cutting-edge technology. “You could have hundreds and thousands of engagements every single day in a fight against China. We are just not fast enough, dynamic enough or saleable enough to handle that challenge,” said Chris Brose, chief strategy officer at Anduril, a start-up defense technology company, which supplies SOF. He added that satellites could be blinded or shot out of orbit. But he said the battle with Beijing would probably fall far short of all-out war. “Most of the U.S.-China competition is not going to be fighting world war three,” he said. “It’s going to be kicking each other under the table.” He cited reconnaissance, influence operations and sabotage. “It’s not going to be Abbottabad; this is going to look very different,” he said of the 2011 U.S. Navy Seal raid on a Pakistan compound in which al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden was killed. U.S. special operators have for



years had the run of the battlefield. But they face very different conditions in any fight against China, which has developed an arsenal of missiles, fighter jets, spy planes and other eavesdropping and jamming techniques that would make it hard for America to conceal troops,

transport and communications.

A former SOF commander said Socom would need to plan operations without GPS or access to satellites, which help with targeting, communications and beaming down intelligence. They would need to develop cheaper, more plentiful and easily replaced equipment in case satellites were shot out of the sky. “Special operations forces are not ready for operations against a near-peer foe, such as China, in a direct engagement,” the former commander told the Financial Times. “We need special operations forces to find a way to operate in running gun battles and other scenarios without communications,” he said. He added that units would have to be cut off from higher command and execute plans on the ground with “substantially less oversight than we have practised in the recent war on terror”. A former SOF intelligence officer said the traditional culture of the troops had been changed by the demand for direct battle in counter-terrorism operations. He called for a return to their cold war roots.

(Source: FT)

## New Israeli cabinet union between war criminals and the Zionist right: Hamas



The spokesperson for the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas has slammed the formation of the new Israeli cabinet as a union between “war criminals and Israel’s far right”, calling for Palestinian unity to counter it.

“The addition of war criminals into Israel’s far right government will exacerbate the challenges facing the Palestinian people,” Hazem Qassem said in a statement on Sunday.

The remarks come after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his former election rival and centrist Blue and White leader Benny Gantz swore in their new power-sharing cabinet earlier in the day, Press TV reported.

The formation of new cabinet put an end to three rounds of inconclusive elections between Netanyahu – known for his hawkish rightwing policies – and Gantz, which led the Israeli military from 2011 until 2015.

Qassem stressed in his statement that Palestinians will continue their resistance against Zionist occupation regardless of the developments.

“The people of Palestine will not pay the slightest attention to the formation of the new cabinet,” he said.

He added, however, that Palestinians will need to counter the new cabinet, which seeks to enact radical measures such as the annexation of the West Bank, by focusing on unity and cohesion.

Netanyahu has set July 1 for the start of cabinet discussions on extending Israeli appropriation to settlements in the West Bank and annexing the Jordan Valley.

Israel was given a green light to annex settlements and other strategic territory

in the occupied West Bank after United States President Donald Trump unveiled the so-called “deal of the century” in January.

Palestinian groups have firmly rejected the joint Israeli-American initiative as a further encroachment upon Palestinian land and have called for a unified stance against the occupation.

■ ‘The gangster geopolitics of U.S., Israel’

In an opinion piece published earlier this week, former UN human rights investigator Richard Falk decried what he described as an emerging trend of “gangster geopolitics” shared between Tel Aviv and Washington.

“Israeli-U.S. relations are being managed in accord with ‘gangster geopolitics’, and without paying heed to international law or UN authority,” he said.

Falk added that Israel’s recent push to annex the occupied West Bank was a “dark tale” of utter disregard of international law being openly endorsed by the U.S.

“It is a despicable act that sweeps law and morality aside while political space is forcibly cleared for land theft. It follows an incredible pattern of official behavior both in the U.S. and Israel,” he said.

“As could be expected, Donald Trump’s America is creating no friction, not even whispering to Netanyahu at least to offer legal justifications or explain away the negative effects of annexation on Palestinian peace prospects,” he added.

Falk highlighted that domestic supporters of Tel Aviv’s annexation plans defended the measures solely based on Zionist ambitions of Jewish control over the territories.

## WHO chief promises review of its’ pandemic handling



The head of the World Health Organization (WHO) said Monday that he would initiate an independent evaluation of its handling of the coronavirus pandemic at the “earliest appropriate moment” and vowed transparency and accountability.

“We all have lessons to learn from the pandemic. Every country and every organization must examine its response and learn from its experience. WHO is committed to transparency, accountability and continuous improvement,” WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told its annual ministerial assembly.

Tedros thanked early high-level speakers for their “strong support for WHO at this critical time” and said that the review must encompass responsibility of “all actors in good faith”.

“The risk remains high and we have a long road to travel,” Tedros said. Preliminary serological tests in some countries showed that at most 20% of populations had contracted the disease and “in most places less than 10 per cent”, he said.

The World Health Assembly, which has been trimmed from the usual three weeks to just two days, Monday and Tuesday, was expected to focus almost solely on COVID-19, which in a matter of months has killed more than 310,000 globally, and infected nearly 4.7 million.

A number of heads of state, government chiefs, health ministers and other dignitaries were expected to attend the meeting, AFP reported.

“Critics [...] continue to rely on the outdated and unfounded notion that being LGBT+ is a western export. We believe that diversity exists everywhere. The recognition of the LGBT+ community in Iraq, an important and valuable part of the society, is not a western export,” Ashour told Rudaw English.

The act of raising the pride flag is a tribute to those murdered and persecuted for their sexuality, he said.

■ MP Calls for Expulsion of UK, EU, Canada Diplomats

Meanwhile, An Iraqi lawmaker has called for the expulsion of UK, EU, and Canada’s diplomats for hoisting the LGBT flag in the capital Baghdad on Sunday.

MP Hassan Salim said in a statement that raising the flag of LGBT is “an insult to the Muslims as well as the traditions of Iraq”, considering those embassies “more dangerous” than the Islamic State (IS).

He noted that “Iraq should close down those embassies.”

In another event, the committee of endowment and religious affairs at the Iraqi parliament called for an extraordinary session to discuss the matter.



# Players will face legal action in case pretending to have coronavirus

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN**— Acting **d e s k** head of Iran Football League Organization Soheil Mahdi has warned team members and players about pretending to have coronavirus.

"Anyone who falsely states to be infected with the coronavirus will face legal action," Warned Soheil Mahdi.

The Iran Professional League (IPL) will resume on June 11, the Iran Football League Organization announced on Sunday.

All sports activities in Iran were suspended on March 11, following the outbreak of the COVID-19 coronavirus. The season was halted with nine rounds remaining.

When asked about the beginning of the group training of the IPL team, Mahdi responded: "in order to return to group training, all the teams must take measures to test their players and technical staff for Covie-19. We hope that this will happen



in the next two or three days. After the teams' squads give negative results in

testing coronavirus, the teams can start training."

Regarding the implementation of health protocols, the head of the Football League Organization said: "We have three medical organizations that oversee sports activities; 1. Iran Football Medical Assessment and Research Center (IFMARC), football federation Medical Committee, and Sports Medicine Federation. These three organizations monitor the proper implementation of health protocols in competitions."

He also explained how the league will continue if there will be new cases of coronavirus infection among the players.

"There are two different issues in this regard; What to do with the person who is really infected, and what to do with the person who pretends to have coronavirus. About the first one, we should consult with national competent authorities. But about the second case, anyone who falsely states to be infected with the coronavirus will face the criminal charge," Soheil Mahdi said.



## Iran Professional League to resume on June 11

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN**— The Iran Professional League **d e s k** will resume on June 11, the Iran Football League Organization announced on Sunday.

All sports activities in Iran were suspended on March 11, following the outbreak of the COVID-19 coronavirus. The season was halted with nine rounds remaining.

On Saturday, Iran President Hassan 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. According to the announcement, the teams will start their training on Saturday and the competition will resume on June 11.

Persepolis were leading the standings on 47 points with Sepahan and Tractor 10 behind.

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 death toll from the novel coronavirus in Iran surpassed 6,988 on Sunday, while nearly 94,464 positive cases have recovered from the disease.

## Kolakovic satisfied with his performance in Iran



Igor Kolakovic is satisfied with what he has earned in Iran national volleyball team.

The Montenegrin coach led Iran for three years and parted ways with the team after cancellation of the 2020 VNL and Olympic Games.

"I have good memories from Iran however I had some difficult times in the country but I want to forget them," Kolakovic said.

"Iran is a beautiful country and has kind people. I have to say I enjoyed working with brave and clever players in Iran. They keep the fighting spirit alive in the competitions," he added.

"I am satisfied with my performance in Iran because we won the country's first medal in the history. Iran claimed a bronze medal at the 2017 edition of the FIVB Volleyball World Grand Champions Cup. We proved several times we are the best team in Asia. I should also say we prepare the young players for the future of Iran," Kolakovic concluded.

Kolakovic was unveiled as new trainer of the Polish side Aluron Virtu Zawiercie.

He said that the negotiations didn't take long as the president of the club has the

same idea for building the team like him.

The club was determined to hire Kolakovic. The coach, who led Serbia to bronze medal of the World Championship 2010 in Italy and won the European Championship a year later, admitted that it's a real challenge for him to work in the Polish league.

"Aluron Virtu is a well-organized club with an ambitious president and the best fans in Poland. All these facts immediately directed me to my decision, as well as conversations with the club's president. That's why I take up the challenge", commented Kolakovic in the interview for Polish media.

"Negotiations did not last long. We have reached an agreement and set the conditions quickly", added the Montenegrin. The Polish volleyball league was prematurely ended due to the coronavirus outbreak. Aluron took 10th place.

"The competition is one of the strongest leagues in the world, it's not a coincidence that Poland is the current world champion. The halls are always full of supporters, and this creates the best atmosphere for playing volleyball", concluded Kolakovic.

(Source: China.org)

## Celtic champions, Hearts relegated as Scottish season ends due to pandemic



Celtic have been declared Scottish champions for a record-equaling ninth successive season while Hearts were relegated after the clubs voted on Monday to end the Premiership season early because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The SPFL has today announced that, following consultation with all 12 top-flight clubs, the Board of the SPFL has determined that the 2019/20 Ladbrokes Premiership has been concluded with immediate effect," the Scottish Professional Football League said in a statement.

"The decision means that Celtic are crowned 2019/20 champions and Hearts have been relegated to the Championship."

When the season was stopped in March because of the pandemic, Celtic were 13 points clear of Old Firm rivals Rangers, who had a game in hand, while Hearts were four points adrift at the bottom of the standings.

Places were decided on a points-per-game average. Hearts said they were still considering legal action, saying they had been "unfairly penalized" because of the pandemic.

In a statement the Edinburgh club said they would be submitting a member's resolution offering a "pragmatic solution" to the issues the game is facing. Hearts believe there is an appetite for a restructuring of

the Scottish leagues.

"It is our belief that this resolution, if supported, will provide an opportunity to avoid disproportionately disadvantaging — financially and otherwise — any club," Hearts said.

"This is possibly the final chance for our game to stand together, protect each other and not only survive but flourish in the aftermath of this terrible pandemic."

"As previously intimated the club has been taking legal advice throughout this process and are continuing to do so."

"We hope that the resolution being prepared will avoid the need to go down this route. Legal action would be both time consuming and expensive. However the cost to the club of relegation would outweigh these considerations."

Last week Scottish clubs failed to support a request by Rangers for an independent investigation into the SPFL's handling of the season in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

The resolution, backed by Hearts and Stranraer, was put forward after serious misgivings about how a previous vote on the SPFL's plan to end the lower leagues early, and possibly the Premiership too, was carried out.

(Source: Mirror)

## East Asia & ASEAN Wrap: Ulsan and Jeonbuk stay perfect in K League

Dramatic late wins dominated the headlines in Korea Republic at the weekend as Ulsan Hyundai and Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors turned draws into wins in the dying minutes to set the pace after two rounds of fixtures in the K League.

As football slowly begins to emerge from its hiatus in certain countries around the world, two of Japan's Germany-based players were in action on Saturday as the Bundesliga resumed, while the season in Chinese Taipei is now in full flow.

Elsewhere, China PR's women are back in training and Hanoi FC stepped up their preparations for the resumption of the Vietnamese season, while ball juggling and dodgy hairdos also feature in this week's look at the action in East Asia and ASEAN.

Junior Negrao's 88th-minute goal saw Ulsan Hyundai come from two goals down against Suwon Samsung Bluewings to claim a 3-2 win on Sunday as the 2019 runners-up maintained their perfect start in the 2020 K League season.

Goals either side of the interval put hosts Suwon into a 2-0 lead but Brazilian Negrao and Kim In-sung drew Ulsan level soon after before Negrao's free-kick was misjudged by goalkeeper No Dong-geon as the visitors secured all



three points to stay on top of the standings after two games.

Defending champions Jeonbuk left it even later as they also made it two wins from two following a 2-1 scoreline over Busan IPark on Saturday, with South African Lars Veldwijk coming off the bench to score a debut goal in the third minute of added time to seal a dramatic victory.

Pohang Steelers followed up their opening-day win over Busan by claiming a 1-1 draw away at Daegu FC, while Seongnam FC also remain unbeaten after a scoreless draw at home to Incheon United.

Moon Seon-min was on the scoresheet as Sangju Sangmu secured their first points of the season with a 2-0 win over Gangwon and FC Seoul also picked up their first points of the campaign as the capital city side saw off Gwangju 1-0 at Seoul World Cup Stadium.

After two rounds of fixtures, Ulsan and Jeonbuk are the only sides on maximum points, while at the other end of the table newly promoted Gwangju and Busan — as well as Suwon — have all lost two from two.

Chinese Taipei: Hang Yuan move top  
League leaders going into the weekend, Taipower FC suffered their first defeat of the season as second-from-bottom TSU FC secured their first win following a surprise 2-1 victory on Sunday.

Hang Yuan FC took full advantage by leapfrogging their rivals to the top of the standings with a hard-fought 1-0 win over Tainan City as they remained unbeaten after six games.

Third-placed Taichung Futuro are the only other side yet to suffer defeat after they eased to a 4-0 victory against bottom side Taipei Red Lions, while defending champions Tatung FC saw off Ming Chuan University 4-1.

(Source: AFC)

## Para athlete Taremi to auction gold medal to release inmate

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Para athlete Kambiz Taremi is **d e s k** going to auction his gold medal to release an inmate in Iran's southern Hormozgan Province.

The sprinter claimed two gold medals in the Tunisian para athletic championship.

Now, the athlete has put his medal up for auction in a bid to raise money for prison of unintentional crimes.

Behzad Zadaliashgari, captain of Iran blind football team, has decided to release a prisoner with his marriage cost.

The Rio Paralympics silver medalist showed his generosity as he made decision to release a debtor.

## Mostafa Karkhaneh named Saipa volleyball team coach

Mostafa Karkhaneh has been appointed as new head coach of Saipa volleyball club.

The 60-year-old coach has already worked in many Iranian clubs including Shahr-dari Orumiyeh, Barij Essence Kashan, Matin Varamin, Giti Pasand, Petrochimi Bandar Imam and Paykan Tehran.

On Monday, the veteran coach penned a contract with the Iranian top-flight volleyball club.

The details of the deal have not been revealed. Karkhaneh is the most decorated Iranian coach in the domestic league. He has won 13 titles in Iran and seven titles in the Asian Club Championship.

The Iranian Super League (ISL) is a professional volleyball league in Iran at the top of the Iranian volleyball league system. Paykan Tehran has won the most titles in the new Super League with 12 titles.

(Source: Tasnim)

## Qatar Stars League to restart on July 24

The Qatar Stars League will resume on July 24, the Qatar Football Association announced on Sunday.

In an announcement on social media, the QFA said the 2019-20 QSL season will conclude on August 26.

Football in Qatar was suspended on March 14, following the outbreak of the COVID-19 coronavirus. The season was halted with five rounds remaining.

Al Duhail were leading the standings on 42 points with Al Rayyan four behind. Defending champions Al Sadd were third on 32 points.

(Source: the-afc)

## Jordan's first Air Jordan sneakers sold for record \$560,000 at Sotheby's

NBA great Michael Jordan's autographed game-worn sneakers from his rookie season fetched a record \$560,000 (463,380 pounds) in an online auction, Sotheby's said on Sunday.

The Air Jordan 1s, designed for Jordan in 1985 and the first ever signature sneakers, were expected to sell for between \$100,000 and \$150,000 in the auction.

Known for selling multimillion-dollar art, Sotheby's held its first auction dedicated entirely to sneakers last year and had then set a world record of \$437,500 for a pair of 1972 Nike running shoes known as the "Moon Shoe."

"We saw tremendous bidding up until the moment the sale closed, with the value more than doubling in the final hour alone," said Brahm Wachter, Sotheby's director of eCommerce development.

"That coupled with strong international bidding from six countries on four continents shows not only the incredible appeal of Michael Jordan... but also that sneaker collecting is truly a global and growing market."

Like most of Jordan's basketball shoes, they are a mismatched pair in a size 13 (left) and size 13.5 (right).

(Source: Reuters)

## Premier League clubs to resume training from Tuesday

Premier League clubs will return to training on Tuesday after agreeing to allow "small group" sessions to begin.

The league held a conference call for all 20 clubs on Monday where the move was given unanimous backing.

It is the first step in the league's 'Project Restart' plans to restart play in the league which has not held a game since March 9 due to the novel coronavirus pandemic.

"Premier League Shareholders today voted unanimously to return to small group training from tomorrow (Tuesday) afternoon — the first step towards restarting the Premier League, when safe to do so," the league said in a statement.

"Step One of the Return to Training Protocol enables squads to train while maintaining social distancing. Contact training is not yet permitted," it added.

The league said the decision had been taken in consultation with players, managers, Premier League club doctors, independent experts and the Government.

"Strict medical protocols of the highest standard will ensure everyone returns to training in the safest environment possible," it added.

"The health and wellbeing of all participants is the Premier League's priority, and the safe return to training is a step-by-step process."

"Full consultation will now continue with players, managers, clubs, the PFA (Professional Footballers' Association) and LMA (League Managers Association) as protocols for full-contact training are developed," the statement concluded.

(Source: Reuters)



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**GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING**

One who is sure of God's compensation, shows much generosity himself.

*Imam Ali (AS)*

## Kayhan Kalhor to give online setar recital

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — The World-renowned Iranian musician Kayhan Kalhor, which is most famous for his skills in playing kamancheh, will be giving an online setar recital this Thursday.

Interested individuals can watch his performance on his Instagram page, while the performance is also available on the website of Stanford University in California.

Four-time Grammy Award nominee Kalhor has won several awards at Iranian and international music events.

He won the Artist Award of the globalFEST, North America's most important world music industry event, which was held in New York in January.

He won the Artist Award at the WOMEX Awards, the World Music Expo, in Finland in August 2019.

He was also one of the two winners of the Isaac Stern Human Spirit Award at the Shanghai Isaac Stern International Violin Competition in August 2018.

## Non-native Persian language teachers welcome online courses by Sadi Foundation

**C U L T U R E** **TEHRAN** — Non-native Persian language teachers from 15 countries have welcomed online Persian teaching courses held by Iran's Sadi Foundation, a Tehran-based organization that promotes the Persian language abroad.

143 individuals registered for this course out of which nine were able to pass and receive the international certificate of the Sadi Foundation, the foundation announced in a press release on Monday.

The individuals registered from Turkey, Georgia, Japan, Germany, Russia, Spain, Italy, Tunisia, Lebanon, Argentina, Egypt, Armenia and several other countries.

The package offered videos of Persian language instruction in addition to related sources and online tests followed by answers.

The videos were mostly liked by Iranian Persian language teachers, non-native Persian language teachers and teachers in Iranian cultural offices abroad.

## NEWS IN BRIEF



**A R T** **TEHRAN** — Vocalist Homayun Shajarian will be giving an online concert with the Tehran Chamber Orchestra at Vahdat Hall in Tehran on May 24.

Works by composers Mohammad-Javad Zarrabian and Sina Jahanabadi have been selected to be performed by 35 musicians at the concert, which will be conducted by Bardia Kiaras.

Over the past few weeks, vocalists Vahid Taj, Ali Zandevakili and Parvaz Homay, pianist Saman Ehteshami and tar virtuoso Keivan Saket were the musicians who gave online concerts at Vahdat Hall due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



**C U L T U R E** **TEHRAN** — A number of Iranian literati have launched a movement named Free Palestine under the auspices of the Art Bureau in Tehran to support the oppressed people of Palestine.

They publish their literary texts and poetry in line with this movement on their Instagram page.

Alireza Qazveh, Ali Mohammad Moaddeb, Milad Erfanpur, Hamed Asgari and Hossein Motavellian are among the literati.

# Iran to publish journal on Commander Soleimani on Quds Day

**C U L T U R E** **TEHRAN** — Iran plans to publish a special journal on Martyr Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, which will be released in Tehran on International Quds Day.

International Quds Day, which falls on the last Friday of the holy month of Ramadan every year, was initiated in 1979 by the founder of the Islamic Republic, Imam Khomeini, to express solidarity with Palestinians who have been under the Zionist regime's occupation for seven decades.

The one-edition journal named "The School of Haji Qassem" begins with a biography of the IRGC Quds Forces chief, who was assassinated in a U.S. airstrike in Baghdad in January.

The journal draws its title from a comment by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who called Soleimani's ideology "a school".

A collection of the Leader's comments on Soleimani has also been published in the journal.

It also carries a collection of articles analyzing his activities as a revolutionary during the 1979 Islamic revolution and as a commander during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war, as well as in the fight against the ISIS terrorists in the region.

One of the articles reviews the key role the Sarallah Brigade played under Soleimani during the Iran-Iraq war, especially in Operation Beit-ul-Muqaddas in 1982.

His role in the victory of the Lebanese in the Israeli 33-Day War of 2006 has also



A poster for the journal "The School of Haji Qassem", which will be published on Friday.

been scrutinized in another article.

An article also studies his relations with Fatemiyoum, an Afghan brigade that fought against the ISIS terrorists.

Another highlight of the journal reviews

his collaboration with the resistance front in the Yemen war.

The journal also carries some interviews about Soleimani with various officials, including Judiciary Chief Ebrahim

Raisi, Secretary-General of the Lebanese Hezbollah Resistance Movement Hassan Nasrallah, former Iraqi prime minister Nuri al-Maliki and Syrian Grand Mufti Ahmad Badreddin Hassoun.

## The Times writer's book on inner conflicts threatening Israel published in Persian



A poster for the Persian version of Gregg Carlstrom's book "How Long Will Israel Survive?: The Threat From Within".

**C U L T U R E** **TEHRAN** — "How Long Will Israel Survive?: The Threat From Within", a book by Gregg Carlstrom, a correspondent for The Times and The Economist, which analyzes various internal conflicts threatening the Zionist regime, has been published in Persian.

The book published by Dideman in Tehran has been translated by Ehsan Mohammadi and Mohammad-Javad Akhavan.

In this book originally published by the Oxford University Press in 2017, Carlstrom reviews Israel's most serious challenges coming from within.

There was once a national consensus in Israeli society: politics was split between left and right, but its people were broadly secular and liberal. Over the past decade, the country has fractured into tribes: disparate groups with little shared understanding of what it means to be a Zionist, let alone an Israeli.

A once-unified population fights internecine battles over religion and state, war and peace, race and identity contesting the very notion of a "Jewish and democratic" state.

While this shift has profound implications for Israel's relationship with the broadly liberal Jewish diaspora, the greatest consequences will be felt at home.

Israel's tribes increasingly lead separate lives; even the army, once a great melting-pot, is now a political and cultural battleground. Tamir Pardo, former head of Mossad, has warned of the risk of civil war.

Gregg Carlstrom maps this conflict, from cosmopolitan Tel Aviv to the hilltops of the West Bank, and asks a pressing question: will Israel survive its own internal contradictions?

Carlstrom contributes to a number of other publications, including The Atlantic, Foreign Policy, New York magazine and others.

## Paintings, cartoons on Iranian, Palestinian resistance on view at Tehran exhibit



A cartoon by Iranian artist Mohamad Ali Rajabi.

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — An exhibition of paintings and cartoons representing the resistance of Iran and Palestine opened on Monday at the Palestine Museum of Contemporary Art in Tehran.

The showcase titled "Manifestation of Resistance" has been organized by the Revolution and Sacred Defense Visual Arts Association to observe International Quds Day and the liberation of Khorramshahr.

A collection of 32 cartoons on Quds Day and a selection of 29 paintings with the central theme of the liberation of Khorramshahr are on view at the exhibit, the association announced on Monday.

The exhibit is open to the public and visitors must observe health protocols. Moreover, the works are on display in a virtual exhibit available on the website of the museum.

International Quds Day was initiated

by the founder of the Islamic Republic Imam Khomeini in 1979 to express solidarity with Palestinians and oppose the Zionist regime.

The day is observed by rallies around the world on the last Friday of the fasting month of Ramadan.

Rallies are held each year in various cities around the world by both Muslims and non-Muslim communities.

This year Quds Day will be held in Tehran by marching cars under the watch of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps to combat coronavirus pandemic. People can attend Quds Day rallies by riding their cars.

May 24 is the day which marks the liberation of Khorramshahr in 1982, after the city was captured by Iraqi forces on October 26, 1980.

The exhibit will be running until May 28 at the museum located at 74 Mozaffar St., Taleqani Ave., Felestin Sq.

## Actress Fatemeh Motamed-Arya donates Zurich Golden Cyrus Cylinder to Film Museum of Iran

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — Actress Fatemeh Motamed-Arya, who has played in over 70 films including the acclaimed dramas "The Blue-Veiled" and "Gilaneh", has donated her Honorary Golden Cyrus Cylinder to the Film Museum of Iran.

She made the donation to observe International Museum Day, which is celebrated every year by the International Council of Museums on or around 18 May, the museum announced on Monday.

Motamed-Arya received the award for her lifetime achievements during the 5th Iranian Film Festival Zurich, Switzerland on March 28, 2019.

"I present the Honorary Golden Cyrus Cylinder to the Film Museum of Iran, because I know that it will be put on display with a collection of precious artifacts from the history of Iranian cinema," she said.

Motamed-Arya had previously donated the awards she received from the Fajr Film Festival and the Montreal World Film Festival to the film museum.

She also received the Henri-Langlois Prix 2012 for her lifetime endeavors in the promotion of cinema and maintenance of professional cultural values during the 34th edition of the Recontres Henri



The Honorary Golden Cyrus Cylinder of the 5th Iranian Film Festival Zurich received by Iranian actress Fatemeh Motamed-Arya has been donated to the Film Museum of Iran. (Film Museum of Iran)

Langlois International Film School Competition at the Main Auditorium of the TAP Scene Nationale de Poitiers in France. This prize is also on view at the Film Museum of Iran.

Earlier in April, the Iranian Psychiatric Association together with Iran's UNESCO Chair in Health Education have selected Motamed-Arya as a Goodwill Ambassador for Mental Health.

## Krakow festival to screen Iran's "Sunless Shadows", "The Unseen"

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — The animated movie "The Unseen" by Behzad Nalbandi and the documentary "Sunless Shadows" by Mehrdad Oskui, both from Iran, will go on screen at the 60th Krakow Film Festival, the organizers have announced.

In "Sunless Shadows", Oskui builds a remarkable relationship with a group of adolescent girls that serve their sentence for the grave crime of murdering their father, their husband or another male family member in an Iranian juvenile detention center.

"The Unseen" will be screened in the World Stories section of the Polish event, which will be organized online from May 31 to June 2020.

World Stories is a permanent non-competing section of the Krakow Film Festival, which transports the viewers to the most distant corners of the world. This year, the protagonists of the documentary films are women, mothers, daughters, wives, and their struggles with their often confusing fates.

"The Unseen" is about homeless women in Iran who are locked away, banished to the outskirts of the city, and made invisible. Nalbandi secretly conducted interviews



A scene from "The Unseen" by Behzad Nalbandi.

in the camps and creates a world of his own: cardboard animations make those affected visible again.

"Glitter and Dust" by Anna Koch and Julia Lemke from Germany, "Lili" by Peter Hegedus from Australia and Hungary, and "Ninosca" by Peter Torbiornsson from Sweden are among other films to go on screen in the World Stories section.

Around 200 films from all around the world, among them documentaries, short films and animations, will take part in several competition sections of the festival.