



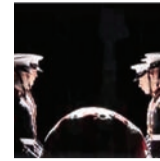
U.S. sanctions have lost efficiency: Iranian diplomat **2**



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Iran strongly denies Willy Sagnol talk **11**



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New Iranian Parliament opens



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200 industrial, mining, trade projects to be implemented by Mar. 2021

TEHRAN — Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry plans to inaugurate 200 major industrial, mining and trade projects across the country by the Iranian calendar year of 1400 (begins on March 20, 2021), IRNA reported.

According to Deputy Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Saeed Zaran-

di, the said projects are going to be implemented under a new program called "Persistent Production-Effective Employment-Sustainable Exports".

As reported, some 1.69 quadrillion rials (about \$40.23 billion) has been invested in the mentioned project that are going to create job opportunities for 41,000 people. **→4**

Birthday of Iranian-Turkmen poet Makhtum-Qoli Faraghi celebrated

TEHRAN — The 287th birth anniversary of the Iranian-Turkmen poet Makhtum-Qoli Faraghi (Magtymguly Pyragy, 1733-1790) was celebrated in a seminar aired on the IRIB channel of Golestan Province on Wednesday.

Makhtum-Qoli is considered to be the founder of authentic Turkmen literature by the people who speak the language.

The mausoleum of the poet is located in Aq-Tuqai village in Iran's northern province of Golestan.

The ceremony was attended by Golestan officials and a number of Turkmen poets, while the message of the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Seyyed Abbas Salehi was read at the ceremony. **→12**

Third Iranian tanker reaches Venezuelan waters

TEHRAN — The third cargo of an Iranian tanker flotilla carrying fuel for Venezuela on Tuesday reached the nation's exclusive economic zone as the previous two were discharging at state run PDVSA's ports, Refinitiv Eikon data showed.

According to Reuters, the Iran-flagged tanker Petunia crossed the Caribbean Sea earlier on Tuesday, following the same route as vessels Fortune and Forest. The Fortune arrived on Monday at a port serving PDVSA's El Palito refinery.

President Nicolas Maduro said he would announce in the coming days a "plan" for fuel distribution. Gasoline is so heavily subsidized that it is essentially free, but shortages have forced Venezuelans to either wait in days-long queues or pay steep prices on the black market.

"Now we will be able to go in phases toward a new normal in terms of gasoline supply," Maduro said in a state television address. **→3**



ARTICLE
Yuram Abdullah Weiler
Analyst and journalist

Martyr Qassem Soleimani: The real shatterer of ISIS

Turning logic and rationality on its head, the psychopathic U.S. assassin-in-chief has made the absurd claim that he was the one who defeated Daesh (ISIS or ISIL) in its entirety. This is while it was none other than the whiny wimp in the White House himself who ordered the gangland style, terror execution of the Iranian hero responsible for the defeat of ISIS, Martyr Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani.

As the coronavirus death toll in the U.S. approaches 100,000, the U.S. president, while taking a much-needed golf break from his arduous duties defending the American republic against all enemies external and internal, took to Twitter to claim "it was me who shattered 100% of the ISIS Caliphate." This startling statement was in the midst of a prolonged presidential proclamation in defense of his golf outing "to get outside and perhaps, even a little exercise," following the former reality TV show star's pathetic performance in coping with the Covid-19 pandemic in America.

This delusional denizen in the Oval Office boasted incredulously of receiving "Great reviews on our handling of Covid 19," while complaining that "we made a lot of Governors look very good - And got no credit for so doing." Bishop Talbert Swain of the predominantly African American Church of God in Christ, in response to the sickening, self-congratulatory post by POTUS, poignantly pointed out that "100,000 people couldn't give reviews because.....they're DEAD." Here, as in the case of the ridiculous rant about shattering ISIS, the truth is 180 degrees out of phase with Trump's Twitter post. The U.S. has in fact proven itself to be exceptional in that the country has become the epicenter of the worldwide coronavirus pandemic, lagging far behind other nations in testing and response.

Contrary to the Mar-a-Lago marauder's swaggering about shattering the ISIS caliphate, General Qassem Soleimani played a key role in the defeat of the takfiri terrorist organization in both Syria and Iraq. As Gil Barndollar, a senior fellow at Catholic University of America's Center for Studies of Statesmanship and Defense Priorities put it, **→3**

Iran plans to equip environmental defenders with high-tech facilities

TEHRAN — Iran plans to provide a budget to equip the environmental defenders with technological advances, Jamshid Mohabbat Khani, commander of the protection unit of the Department of Environment (DOE) has announced.

It is planned to purchase quadcopters, set up a nationwide wireless system and to install cameras on the rangers' uniforms, he stated, Mehr news agency reported on Tuesday.

Mohabbat Khani, referring to the order issued by the DOE to equip environmental protection facilities in the four areas under the supervision of the organization, said that the provinces are supposed to provide the best facilities by estimating their needs and coordinating with the DOE.

He added that if this year's budget is provided, many of the equipment will be upgraded.

Pointing to the purchase of quadcopters to monitor protected areas, prevent crime, identify and even deal with poachers, he said that some quadcopters can carry 100 liters of water and spray it over areas burning in fire.

Installing cameras on rangers' uniform is another plan that can be effective in documenting while helping the defenders to prove conflicts with poachers to the judiciary, he highlighted.

Mohabbat Khani explained about the establishment of a wireless system, saying that "currently, in some provinces, protection units do not have such system, and in other provinces, there are old wireless devices."

The new wireless devices have a GPS that can be used to track and monitor the forces in the event of an accident, and the rangers can contact all of the country's police stations, he highlighted. **→9**

The usual victims

African Americans 2.5 times more likely to be killed by police

TEHRAN — Four Minneapolis police officers were fired Tuesday after the detention and death of 47-year-old George Floyd — a scene that unfolded in a Facebook video showing a white officer kneeling on Floyd's neck as he pleaded with police, "I can't breathe."

Floyd died at Hennepin County Medical Center soon after the encounter, which started when police detained him Monday evening

on suspicion of trying to pass a fake \$20 bill at a convenience store, startribune reported.

U.S. Police killed 1004 people in 2019. Black people were 24% of those killed despite being only 13% of the population.

The FBI launched an investigation Tuesday, as the Minneapolis Police Department fired the officer as well as three others who were at the scene. The quick action didn't prevent a large protest

Tuesday evening that included tense confrontations with police, who responded with tear gas.

In the U.S., African Americans are 2.5 times more likely to be killed by police than white people. For black women, the rate is 1.4 times more likely.

That's according to a new study conducted by Frank Edwards, of Rutgers University's School of Criminal Justice, Hedwig Lee, of Washington University in St. **→10**



© Mehr/Mayram Kanyab

Lifebot medical robot unveiled

A medical robot, dubbed 'Keyvan Lifebot' was unveiled at Tehran's Shahid Hasheminejad hospital on Wednesday.

The robot is equipped with stereo vision technology which is used for its reliability and effectiveness in extracting various information (like color, or dimension). It can be also used for tracking or detecting objects.

Robots are increasingly being used in the healthcare sector as a potential solution to the current and future challenges.

Kang stepped village added to national heritage list

TEHRAN — The stepped village of Kang in the northeastern province of Khorasan Razavi has been inscribed on the national heritage list.

The national registration of the village will lead to its better preservation as well as help tourism develop in the region, IRNA quoted the province's deputy tourism chief Marjan Akbari as saying on Wednesday.

Kang, with an antiquity of more than 3,000 years, is situated at a distance of some 30 km from Mashhad, the provincial capital.

The village, located on the highlands of Mount Binalud, is also adjacent to Nishabur, known for its turquoise handicrafts and mines.

The village is surrounded by an eye-catching landscape and it is home to warm and friendly people. Visitors experience traditional dishes, tasty local foodstuff and indigenous flatbread. There are also pocket-friendly hostels and eco-lodges unites.

"A beautiful place with a calm and enjoyable nature, and traditional people associated with the historical context of the village attribute it to the Masouleh of Gilan," according a foreign visitor to the village.

Tip: Get there as early in the morning as possible and you will enjoy the cool and pleasant climate.

Get into one of the local eatouts nearby to try their smoked tea or other local delicacies cooked the traditional way.

The village is also known as 'Khorasan's Masouleh', as its bizarre architecture - each house is built on another's rooftop, most of which having porch-balconies and earthen roofs - can also be found in Masouleh, a historical village in northern Iran. **→8**

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Revolutionary press should defend truth **11**

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Iran breaking shackles of U.S. sanctions: energy analyst

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Seyyed Saeed Mirtorabi Hosseini, an Iranian oil and gas analyst and a fellow scientist at Kharazmi University, has said that arrival of Iran's oil tankers in Venezuela's waters shows that the Iranian nation is breaking the shackles of United States' sanctions.

"The United States has imposed sanctions [in the energy sector] on two countries, Iran and Venezuela. But they were able to oppose these unilateral U.S. sanctions. The successful shipment of oil tankers to Venezuela, which is in dire need of fuel, tells Iran that it is on the right track to confront the cruel U.S. sanctions. It symbolizes that the Iranian nation is breaking the shackles of U.S. sanctions," Sputnik quoted him as saying on Tuesday.

Hosseini also noted that the U.S. is unlikely to launch an attack on Iran's tankers in the Atlantic Ocean or near the Venezuelan coast, because it would cost it dearly.

"Tankers are provided with an Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) Navy escort. I do not think that the United States will take such a step as attacking or hijacking Iranian tankers. It will be considered a violation of International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea and generally cost the Americans a heavy price. The only disadvantage of these tankers is the possible lack of international insurance, as many large insurance companies have to comply with the rules dictated by the United States," he said.

The first of five Iranian tankers carrying 1.53 million barrels of gasoline and alkylate reached Venezuelan waters late Saturday to ease the Latin American nation's fuel crunch.

The second tanker has also reached the Venezuelan waters. Three other tankers are on the way to arrive in Venezuela.

The shipments have infuriated Washington as both Iran and Venezuela are under illegal U.S. sanctions.

The U.S. recently beefed up its naval presence in the Caribbean for what it called an expanded anti-drug operation.

Washington has also threatened to take measures especially against Iran, according to a senior U.S. official, who did not provide further details.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani on Saturday warned of retaliatory measures against the United States if it caused problems for tankers.

Iran, Afghanistan in agreement on migrant border incident, Foreign Ministry official says

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for International and Legal Affairs Mohsen Baharvand said on Wednesday that Iran and Afghanistan are in agreement on that incident which led to tragic deaths of a number of Afghan migrants in border area.

Baharvand told IRNA that there is no different views as reported by certain foreign media outlets.

Iranian diplomats and border guards have carried out investigations which shows the Iranian guards were not involved in the incident, he noted.

Iranian and Afghan political delegations held new talks in Kabul on Tuesday on the incident.

According to ISNA, the talks were inconclusive and the delegations plan to continue the talks.

It was the second time that Iranian and Afghan officials met on the issue.

Afghan news media have reported that about 50 Afghan migrants crossing into Iran illegally had been beaten and thrown into a river. Iranian political and border officials have refuted the claim, saying the incident happened on the Afghan side of the border.

According to some reports, 18 of the migrants, including a 12-year old boy, were drowned in the Harirud river.

Afghanistan's Foreign Ministry announced on May 9 that an inquiry had been launched into the tragedy.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif held a phone conversation with acting Afghan foreign minister Mohammad Haneef Atmar on May 10 discussing the deaths of Afghan migrants.

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

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

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

According to Tasnim, Iran spends eight billion dollars on Afghan migrants every year in various sectors.

Based on the latest official figures, 951,142 Afghan refugees reside in Iran. In addition to the refugees, there are around 2.5 million Afghan nationals living in Iran, inclusive of passport holders and undocumented Afghans.

The UN refugee agency has, on numerous occasions, praised Iran for hosting Afghan refugees for more than four decades.

It is time to stand against U.S. warmongering, Iran says

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iran's Foreign Ministry has said that it is the time to stand against the United States' violence and warmongering.

"Regretful that 100k of United States soldiers killed in battles waged bc of US leaders' instrumental rationality & insatiable greed. US war machines have just led to killing, destruction, atrocities. Time to stand against US violence, warmongering, as remembering millions of lost lives," the Foreign Ministry said in a tweet on Tuesday.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on May 2 that the U.S. is the biggest "military spender" and "arms seller", which has also been starting, instigating and benefiting from wars around the globe.

Zarif said the U.S. has long been the world's top "military spender, arms seller, war initiator and instigator and conflict profiteer".

New Iranian Parliament opens

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The new Iranian Parliament (Majlis), the 11th of its kind since the victory of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, was opened on Wednesday.

Senior officials, including President Hassan Rouhani, Judiciary Chief Ebrahim Raisi, Chief of Staff of Armed Forces Mohammad Hossein Baqeri, Army Commander Abdolrahim Mousavi, a number of key ministers of interior, foreign affairs and oil and tens of other officials, attended the inauguration ceremony.

The MPs in the 290-seat parliament swore the oath of office before Judiciary Chief Ebrahim Raisi to stay loyal to the constitution and guard the national interests.

Also, the candidates for the post of parliament speaker were announced in the afternoon session of the principlist-dominated parliament. Key new MPs Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, Mostafa Mirsalim, Hamidreza Hajbabayee and Hassan Norouzi announced their candidacy for the post of speaker.

MP Mohammad Saleh Jokar, the representative of Yazd in the parliament, said these four representatives announced their decision to stand for the post in the meeting of the Popular Faction of the Islamic Revolution Forces.

According to Jokar, each candidate was to address the parliamentary faction for 15 minutes.

Qalibaf, Mirsalim, and Norouzi were elected to the parliament from the Tehran constituency in the February elections. Hajbabayee represents the city of Hamadan.

Qalibaf and Mirsalim competed with Hassan Rouhani in the 2016 presidential election.

Jokar also said MPs Abdolreza Mesri (from Kermanshah), Ali Nikzad (from Ardebil), Elyas Naderan (from Tehran), Alireza Monadi (from Tabriz), Seyed Reza Taqavi (from Tehran), Seyed Mohammad Reza Tajodini (from Tabriz), Amirhossein Qazizadeh Hashemi (from Mashhad), and Mohammad Mehdi Zahedi (from Kerman) also announced their candidacy for deputy speakers.

■ Ayatollah Khamenei: Economy must be new parliament's priority

In a message to the new parliament on Wednesday, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei emphasized that attention must be paid to economy.

"In the area of economy, we have not got a favorable grade in achieving justice in the 'decade of progress and justice'.... This unwanted reality must make all prioritize livelihood of the poor classes of the society," the Leader said in his message.

The message was read by Ayatollah Mohammad Mohammadi-Golpayegani, the head of Ayatollah Khamenei's office.

The Leader noted that economy and culture are the top priorities of the country.

"Currently, economy and culture are on the top list of the country's priorities."

To solve economic problems it is necessary to revise policies to boost employment, production, increase value of national currency and tame the inflation, the Leader suggested, adding that the general policies of the resistance economy must also be prioritized.

He also attached great importance to reducing reliance on oil revenues.

The Leader also suggested MPs to avoid being involved in disputes under the influence of personal and factional tendencies or dragged into ethnic or regional groups.



The Leader also pointed to the supervisory role of the parliament, saying, "My emphasis is on upholding piety, fairness and avoiding personal and factional hatred. Neither the right of a hard-working director or manager should be violated and nor a leniency."

The Leader also advised new MPs to take revolutionary stance toward important international and domestic issues.

Ayatollah Khamenei also called on the new parliament to give calm down public opinion in their parliamentary speeches and establish a brotherly interaction with the executive and Judiciary.

In his message, the Leader also called on the MPs to abolish redundant and disturbing laws and avoid legislating abundant laws.

Elsewhere, he said that all must respect law.

Observing law is necessary to achieve objectives stated in the constitution and the parliament is obliged to pave the way for this purpose.

The country will achieve its sublime objectives if there is enough, proper, and implementable laws, Ayatollah Khamenei remarked.

Ayatollah Khamenei went on to say that Majlis will stand on "the top of affairs" if legislators be "active", "clean", "disciplined" and have a proper understanding of the country's "condition and priorities".

■ Rouhani says Iranian parliament is symbol of Islamic democracy

Addressing the new parliament, President Rouhani also said Iran's parliament is "symbol of Islamic and religious democracy".

"Majlis is an important symbol of democracy around

the world. In Islamic Iran, the Islamic Consultative Assembly is a symbol of Islamic and religious democracy," Rouhani pointed out.

He also said that the constitution is the basis for cooperation between the administration and Majlis.

"Preferring national interests over partisan and factional interests will be the basis for the cooperation of the government and parliament," he noted.

Elsewhere, Rouhani noted that independence of the three branches of the government does not mean conflict among them.

"We can maintain independence of the branches and interact in a way that we will be able to reach the main goal," he pointed out.

He added, "The parliament, government, Judiciary and armed forces are serving the well-being, justice, independence of the people and national interests of the country. So, we should not forget these aims when we fulfil our duties."

■ 'Administration and parliament can counter U.S., coronavirus'

Rouhani also said that the administration and parliament can cooperatively counter the United States' sanctions and provocations and also the coronavirus through cooperation.

"So, in fighting the coronavirus and the United States' economic war and its terrorist acts, which are both economic terrorism and more recently medical terrorism, we can fight their sanctions and provocations and also this disease together through cooperation and synergy," the president pointed out.

Key new MPs Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, Mostafa Mirsalim, Hamidreza Hajbabayee and Hassan Norouzi announce their candidacy for the post of parliament speaker.

U.S. sanctions have lost efficiency: diplomat

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian Ambassador to Venezuela Hojat Soltani has said that the United States' unilateral sanctions have lost their efficiency.

"The United States' unilateral sanctions against Venezuela, Iran and a number of other countries have lost efficiency," IRNA quoted him as saying on Tuesday in an interview with the Al-Alam news network.

He also said that arrival of Iranian oil tankers in the Venezuelan waters was an "international victory".

"The Iranian oil tanker Fortune delivered its cargo in Venezuela and three other tankers are moving towards Venezuela," he said.

The third cargo of the Iranian tanker flotilla on Tuesday reached Venezuela's exclusive economic zone as the previous two were discharging at state run PDVSA's ports, Refinitiv Eikon data showed.

According to Reuters, the Iran-flagged tanker Petunia crossed the Caribbean Sea earlier on Tuesday, following the same route as vessels Fortune and Forest. The Fortune arrived on Monday at a port serving PDVSA's



El Palito refinery.

Ambassador said, "Two Iranian oil tankers arrived in Venezuela without being harassed by any country."

He described the day that the Iranian tankers arrived in Venezuela as "great" and "historic" for the people of both countries.

The five tankers deliver some 1.5 million barrels of fuel to Venezuela that despite having abundant reserves, is facing fuel shortage due to illegal U.S. sanctions.

Tehran's decision to send Iran-flagged

tankers to Venezuela amid U.S. sanctions against both countries has infuriated those in the White House.

Iran has warned to retaliate any aggression against its tankers while noting that it has the inherent right to trade with other countries.

Mehdi Sanaei, a top advisor to Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, said on Tuesday that arrival of Iranian oil tankers in the Venezuelan waters in the Caribbean is an end to a "unipolar system".

"Iranian oil tankers' arrival in the Caribbean Sea is an important event based on international law and with international dimensions which will remain in history as a main chapter in ending unilateralism. This event rings the bell of end to unipolar system," he tweeted in Persian.

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro has hailed the arrival of Iranian tankers to Venezuela amid U.S. threats.

"The 'Fortune' became this Monday # 25 May a symbol of freedom and courage for two peoples: Venezuela and Iran," tweeted Maduro while posting photos of the Iranian tanker docked in a Venezuelan port.

Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel has also said that arrival of Iranian oil tanker in Venezuela breaks the United States' "unacceptable" and criminal blockade".

"The first of five Iranian oil tankers arrives in Venezuela breaking unacceptable and criminal blockade. #VivaLaSolidaridad Long live solidarity among the peoples," he tweeted on Sunday.

■ 'Iranian oil tankers mark a victory for international community'

Ambassador Soltani also on Wednesday said that Tehran's insistence on sending oil tankers to Venezuela despite the U.S. opposition and threats was a victory for the UN and international community.

"Forcing the aggressor and arrogant U.S. government to comply with its responsibilities under international rules and treaties and respectful to the freedom of shipping and trade is the most important strategic effect of the tankers' arrival in Venezuela," Soltani wrote on his twitter page.

"The UN and the international community have been for years waiting and deserving such a victory," he added.

Tehran dismisses claims of torturing, detaining illegal nationals at Afghanistan borders

TEHRAN (MNA) — The Director-General of Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs of the Ministry of Interior Mehdi Mahmoudi on Wed. categorically turned down the claim of torturing and detaining illegal nationals at borders of Khorasan Razavi province with Afghanistan, saying such incidents have nothing to do with the border guards of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Regarding the rumors and incorrect news published in social media, claiming the torture and drowning of a number of Afghan citizens in Hari River [Harirud] by Iranian border guards, he added, "although there are fundamental doubts about the accuracy of this issue and its connection with the claimed time and place of the incident, this issue has nothing to do with the border guard of the Islamic

Republic of Iran."

According to the studies made in this regard, these citizens may have tried to enter the land and territory of the Islamic Republic of Iran by crossing hard-to-pass areas of the river and some of them have drowned due to the water level, he added.

The spread of such news has been leveled by the enemies of the two countries of Iran and Afghanistan with the aim of dividing and creating discord between the two nations.

Yearlong services rendered by the Iranian government to Afghan refugees is solid evidence for the said claim and these rumors will not disrupt friendly ties between the two countries, Mahmoudi emphasized.

On May 1, some claims surfaced in media reports that

Tehran urges lifting of 'inhumane' sanctions on Syrians

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Ali-Asghar Khaji, the Iranian foreign minister's special assistant for political affairs, on Wednesday called the sanctions against the Syrian people "inhumane" and said it is necessary to remove the bans as

soon as possible.

In a phone talk with United Nations Special Envoy for Syria Geir O. Pedersen, Khaji called on the related international bodies to gear up the efforts in line with the lifting of the sanctions that have challenged

the Syrian people's lives in different forms, Mehr reported.

Khaji also highlighted the significance of helping the war-torn country retain its peace and stability in the fight against terrorism.

During the conversation, the two sides

also conferred on other issues, including the provision of the grounds for the return of the Syrian refugees to their homeland and facilitating the delivery of humanitarian aid packages to Syria, amid the novel coronavirus pandemic.

Diplomacy, respect key to resolving issues with Iran, says Princeton researcher

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Seyed Hossein Mousavian, a former Iranian nuclear negotiator who now works as a researcher at Princeton University, has said diplomacy, respect, and non-interference are key to resolving problems with Iran.

“The corona crisis is a global crisis that affects most countries in the world, but Iran’s problem in managing this crisis is different from all other countries because of the worst sanctions in history,” Mousavian said at a virtual meeting of the Pennsylvania Council on Foreign Relations, according to Iran Press.

“At the same time, corona’s crisis management in Iran has been much better than in the United States,” he said.

Due to the failure of the Trump administration in the regime change project in Iran, the White House has found the corona crisis as an opportunity to intensify pressure on Iran and therefore has increased inhumane sanctions against Iran during the corona crisis, the former diplomat added.

The researcher noted that the structure of Iran’s health system is strong, and at the same time, the Iranian people have realized that the U.S. policy has targeted their country’s existence.

Therefore, he continued, they will be united in defending their country’s identity, existence, and independence, and will not succumb to U.S. pressure.

According to Mousavian, during the corona crisis, Qatar sent the most humanitarian aid to Iran among its neighbors as well as China at an international level.

At the same time, Iran has neither passed through the corona crisis nor been defeated



Due to the failure of the Trump administration in the regime change project in Iran, the White House has found the corona crisis as an opportunity to intensify pressure on Iran and therefore has increased inhumane sanctions against Iran during the corona crisis, the former Iranian diplomat says.

but is in the middle of a complete containment of the disease, he opined.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Mousavian said Iran was the first member of the United

Nations to propose the denuclearization of West Asia about 50 years ago.

“Unfortunately, after 50 years, despite dozens of UN resolutions, the international community remains at zero levels not going anywhere.”

The senior academic figure further explained that the main reason for the failure of the region and the international community in implementing the plan to free West Asia from weapons of mass destruction is the fact that in the region only Israel has an arsenal of nuclear weapons and does not fall under the UN resolutions.

The former Iranian diplomat said West Asia is facing many crises such as war, terrorism, civil war, and ethnic strife, and therefore the danger of terrorist groups’ access to technology and nuclear weapons and mass killings is greater than ever.

Multiple initiatives would be needed to ensure peace, stability and security in the region, including regional arrangements for conventional weapons and non-conventional weapons, he remarked.

“Such arrangements create a balance of power and allay concerns about aggression and war. After the Revolution, Saddam invaded Iran with the support of Arab countries and all world powers. About 100,000 Iranians fell victim to Saddam’s chemical weapons, the materials and technology of which were provided to Saddam by the United States and Europe.”

“After the war, the United States topped the list by exporting hundreds of billions of dollars of conventional advanced weapons, turning the region into a full-fledged military zone that has been engulfed in a variety of crises,” he concluded.

Tehran: U.S. police brutality knows no bounds

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — It seems that the United States police’s brutality against African-Americans knows no boundaries, the Iranian Foreign Ministry said via Twitter on Wednesday.

“6 yrs after ‘I can’t breathe’ pleas of Eric Garner, #GeorgeFloyd, another black man, dies after a cruel, inhumane arrest,” the ministry tweeted.

“It seems that US #PoliceBrutality against blacks knows no boundaries. And as always, the response to calls for justice, is employing even more force.”

It came after a video surfaced showing brutal treatment of an unarmed African-American man under the knee of a U.S. police officer before his death.

George Floyd died on Monday after being pinned down by a white officer despite yelling: “I cannot breathe.”

Four Minneapolis police officers were fired on Tuesday, a day after a bystander’s cell phone video captured one of them pressing his knee on Floyd’s neck.

The white Minneapolis police officer pinned him down with his knee in the U.S.

state of Minnesota, which led to his death, police has confirmed.

“I stand before you and the city of Minneapolis here to say that our deepest condolences. The vast majority of the men and women who proudly put on this uniform each and every day understand the important role and relationship that we must have, we must have will all of our community members,” said Minneapolis Police Chief Medaria Arrandondo.

An ambulance took the suspect to the hospital, where he died a short time later.

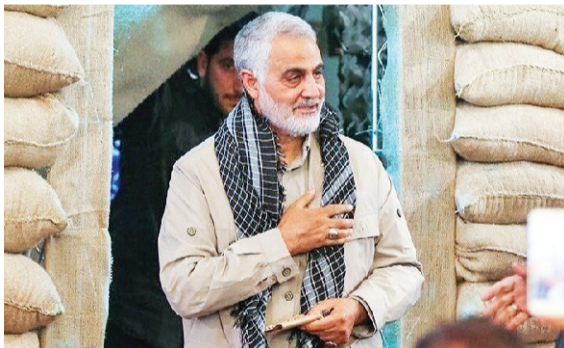
Martyr Qassem Soleimani: The real shatterer of ISIS

1→ “The inconvenient truth is Iran and its proxy forces played a critical role in defeating ISIS in both Iraq and Syria.” Furthermore, General Soleimani was the chief architect of Iran’s most successful mix of diplomatic and military strategies, which have successfully transformed the Islamic Republic from beyond a mere regional power into a force to be reckoned with on the world stage.

Hailing from a small village in Kerman Province, General Qassem Soleimani joined the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) after its founding in April of 1979. Upon completing basic training, the young Soleimani was immediately made a training instructor and subsequently rose through the ranks to become the leader of the prestigious 41st Division of the IRGC, whose sobriquet is Thar Allah (Vengeance of Allah), which is also a nickname of Imam Hussein (as). He served as a commander on the front lines during the Sacred Defense, the 8-year-long war imposed upon Iran by the U.S.-backed dictator Saddam of Iraq, and by March of 1998, he had assumed command of the elite Qods Force.

Following the September 11, 2001 terror attacks on the New York World Trade Center and the Pentagon, General Soleimani was responsible for helping the Americans defeat the Taliban by sharing intelligence and supporting the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan. For a brief moment, it seemed as though a genuine breakthrough had been facilitated between the Islamic Republic and the U.S., only to have all progress toward a thawing of relations sabotaged by the duplicitous, backstabbing Americans when president George W. Bush called out Iran as a member of the “Axis of Evil” in his January 2002 State of the Union Address.

Martyr Soleimani was also the military genius who shattered the Israeli image of invincibility during the 33-day-long War of Tammuz in 2006 between the Lebanese Resistance Movement, Hezbollah, and the Zionist entity. The war was part of George W. Bush’s broad plan to destroy the resistance in Palestine and Lebanon, and topple the government in Syria



after having invaded Afghanistan and Iraq, thereby isolating and encircling Iran. It was General Qassem Soleimani that went to Beirut in the early days of the Israeli attack on Lebanon to organize the resistance forces and coordinate combat operations. He stayed in Lebanon for the entire duration of the conflict alongside Hezbollah Commander Imad Moughniyeh (Martyred in 2008) except for a brief trip back to Iran one week into the war when he returned for one day to give a briefing to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei.

The petty U.S. president has long had it in for General Soleimani. In a July 22, 2018 post to Iran’s President Hassan Rouhani, Trump threatened, “NEVER, EVER THREATEN THE UNITED STATES AGAIN OR YOU WILL SUFFER CONSEQUENCES THE LIKES OF WHICH FEW THROUGHOUT HISTORY HAVE EVER SUFFERED BEFORE.” In response to this aggressive, adolescent assertion, General Soleimani declared, “It is beneath the dignity of the president of the great Islamic country of Iran to respond, so I will respond, as a soldier of our nation.” Martyr Soleimani correctly observed that Trump’s rhetoric “is still that of a casino, of a bar. He talks to the world in the style of

a bartender or a casino manager.” Addressing the rogue Republican American leader, the late Commander warned, “We are near you in places that you can’t even imagine. We are a nation of martyrdom. We are the nation of Imam Hussein (as).” Furthermore, the Martyred former Qods Force Commander predicted, “You may start the war, but we will be the ones to determine its end.”

Some of the more clear-eyed U.S. officials have acknowledged the stupidity of Trump’s cowardly assassination of General Soleimani. Douglas London, a recently retired CIA Senior Operations Officer and Chief of Counterterrorism for South and Southwest Asia, noted that as the IRGC Qods Force continues to expand its scope of operations following the martyrdom of General Soleimani, “the greater the chances that American vulnerabilities will be exposed, which would raise the cost for the Trump administration in many respects.” Political analyst at Persis Media Maysam Behravesht writes, “Indeed, the Islamic Republic’s unconventional alliance network reaches far and wide, and its workings have only intensified since the Soleimani killing.” Given the U.S. president’s psychotic behavior and the coronavirus pandemic, those manifold American vulnerabilities are becoming obvious to the entire world.

“The killing of General Soleimani, a top-ranking military official of a nation-state, who enjoyed the full support of the leadership of Iran, is nothing but a crime,” wrote Archit Shukla, a law student at the National University of Study and Research in Law in Ranchi, India. “The stupid American leaders assumed that they can defeat the axis of resistance by assassinating General Soleimani,” wrote Mohammad Ghaderi, editor-in-chief of Tehran Times International Daily. The stupid American leaders should know that Martyr Qassem Soleimani is the real shatterer of ISIS, not some poorly rated reality TV show actor currently cringing in the White House.

a safer world for all countries including the U.S.,” he added.

The ambassador also said the United States has finally realized that fulfilling its commitments and responsibilities regarding international treaties is a good thing.

“It (the U.S.) should also know that Barjam (Iran nuclear deal), resolution 2231, NPT, not supporting terrorism, etc. are other international commitments that should be observed and implemented,” the ambassador added.

On Saturday, President Hassan Rouhani said Iran is always entitled to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity, and warned that if Iranian oil tankers in the Caribbean or anywhere in the world get into trouble by the Americans, Tehran will definitely retaliate.

“Although some of the U.S. measures have created unacceptable conditions in different parts of the world, we will not be the initiator of tension and clash,” Rouhani said in a phone call with the Qatari Emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani.

Iranian deputy FM meets Afghanistan’s Abdullah

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iran and Afghanistan discussed a recent incident at the common border that resulted in the deaths of Afghan migrants trying to cross into Iran illegally.

Heading a high-ranking delegation, Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal Affairs Mohsen Baharvand met with Head of Afghanistan’s High Council for National Reconciliation Abdullah Abdullah in Kabul on Tuesday evening.



During the meeting, the two sides reviewed the results of a probe into a deadly incident along the Iran-Afghanistan borders.

Baharvand underlined the need for cooperation of both countries within the framework of the joint committee to probe the case, Mehr reported.

Abdullah stressed the good neighborliness between Iran and Afghanistan, saying his country wants a serious and fair investigation into the human tragedy.

Earlier in the day, the Iranian delegation held a meeting with an Afghan delegation headed by Foreign Minister Mohammad Hanif Atmar in Kabul.

At that meeting, Atmar called for Iran’s full cooperation on joint investigations related to the incident.

“The purpose of this research is to get the facts, to take legal action against the perpetrators, and to take the necessary measures to prevent such unfortunate incidents in the future, which may affect the relations between the two friendly and neighboring countries,” he said.

On May 1, some claims surfaced in media reports that Iranian border guards had tortured and thrown as many as 57 Afghans into the Hari River (Harirud) in western Herat province to prevent their illegal entry into Iran. The Khaama Press News Agency said at least 23 of them drowned in Harirud.

Iranian border officials have dismissed reports that they were drowned by Iranian border guards. Iran has said the incident happened on the Afghan side of the border.

Iran’s Foreign Ministry has rejected as a “bitter joke” a claim by the United States that Iranian guards were involved in the tragic deaths of Afghan migrants.

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

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

Iran shows it is capable of countering U.S.: ex-WH official

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Professor Frank N. von Hippel, former assistant director for national security in the White House Office of Science and Technology, has said that Iran showed it is capable of countering the United States’ sanctions by delivering oil to Venezuela.

“This delivery is a symbolic action which showed Iran’s capability to counter the United States and its pressure. It also showed that Iran will not give in to sanction and pressure,” ILNA quoted him as saying in an interview published on Wednesday.

He also noted that transfer of oil to Venezuela proved inefficiency of the U.S. sanctions.

Iranian oil tanker Fortune arrived and docked at its destination in Venezuela, El Palito refinery, to deliver fuel to people who are under the intense sanctions pressure of the United States.

The second Iranian tanker has also arrived in Venezuelan waters. Three other tankers are on their ways to the Caribbean to deliver their cargo to Venezuela.

The five tankers deliver some 1.5 million barrels of fuel to Venezuela that despite having abundant reserves, is facing fuel shortage due to illegal U.S. sanctions.

The U.S., which has imposed sanctions on both Venezuela and Iran, says it is monitoring the convoy. Both Caracas and Tehran have warned Washington not to interfere with the delivery.

Iranian Ambassador to Venezuela Hojatollah Soltani says the U.S. abstention from aggression against Iranian tankers showed that there’s still wisdom in the U.S. establishment.

“The U.S. act of non-aggression against Iranian oil tankers showed that wisdom, foresight, and tactfulness is still alive at some levels of that country’s establishment,” Soltani tweeted on Monday.

“Those [individuals] should make the warmongers understand that observing international regulations and treaties by governments, including the U.S. government, will create a safer world for all countries including the U.S.,” he added.

The ambassador also said the United States has finally realized that fulfilling its commitments and responsibilities regarding international treaties is a good thing.

“It (the U.S.) should also know that Barjam (Iran nuclear deal), resolution 2231, NPT, not supporting terrorism, etc. are other international commitments that should be observed and implemented,” the ambassador added.

1→ The United States has criticized the shipment, as both OPEC nations are under sanctions. A U.S. official said earlier this month that President Donald Trump’s administration was considering responses to the shipment, prompting the Iranian government to warn Washington against military action.

The vessels did not appear to encounter interference during their journey.

The second tanker in the flotilla, the Forest, docked Tuesday at a port serving PDVSA’s second largest refinery, Cardon, in western Venezuela, according to two sources and the Eikon data.

Iranian Ambassador to Venezuela Hojatollah Soltani said on Monday that the U.S. abstention from aggression against Iranian tankers showed that there’s still wisdom in the U.S. establishment.

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alive at some levels of that country’s establishment,” Soltani wrote in a tweet.

“Those [individuals] should make the warmongers understand that observing international regulations and treaties by governments, including the U.S. government, will create



Iran, Iraq discuss expanding transport cooperation

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iranian Transport and Urban Development Minister Mohammad Eslami discussed expansion of transportation cooperation with his Iraqi counterpart over phone, IRIB reported.

In the conversation, Eslami expressed hope that with the new Iraqi minister taking office, a new chapter will be begun in the two neighbors' mutual cooperation.



Iranian Transport and Urban Development Minister Mohammad Eslami

"I am confident that with your presence in this position, we will experience a different and prosperous period," Eslami said, adding "I am ready to meet [with you] both in Tehran and Iraq and to be able to lay the corner stone for a long-term cooperation."

Mentioning Shalamcheh-Basra railway project, the Iranian official said, "We have completed the railway to Shalamcheh for many years and I declare my readiness to invest in the completion of the project from Shalamcheh to Basra."

The minister further noted that Iran has 24 border crossing points with neighboring countries, adding: "We are implementing healthcare and safety protocols in all these terminals, and we hope that after the Eid al-Fitr holidays, trade relations will be resumed from land borders."

Mentioning the new Iraqi minister's background in the country's aviation sector, Eslami said: "Fortunately, the number of flights between the two countries has been good, and we expect the flights to resume after the pandemic conditions are alleviated, and our people will be able to travel to each other's countries."

The Iraqi minister for his part, expressed hope that several meetings would be held to advance relations between the two sides and complete the joint railway project.

"We will try to get this [Shalamcheh-Basra railway project] done as soon as possible and we will hold a joint meeting as soon as possible," he said.

The Iraqi transport minister also said that in the near future, the borders between the two countries will be opened, the most important of which are railways and air communication.

"We are also renewing and amending previously signed agreements in line with the interests of the people of both countries," he added.

In order to complete the Shalamcheh-Basra railroad, the 17-kilometer Khorramshahr-Shalamcheh railroad project was completed in 2011 to connect the Iranian railroads to Iraq, and it was decided to join the city of Basra.

To build the railroad, the Iraqi side was to take measures inside Iraq from Shalamcheh to Basra, but due to economic problems and a shortage of funds, the Iraqi government has so far refused to build this part of Shalamcheh's railroad to Basra.

To complete the rail project, according to an earlier agreement reached with Iraqi authorities, Iran will construct a 700-meter bridge on Arvand River for the railroad to pass above the river and reach Basra Train Station after 32 kilometers.

Iran and Iraq have been taking significant steps for boosting economic relations in the past few years.

The two countries are following up plans for increasing their bilateral economic trade to over \$20 billion.

Last March, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani headed a high-ranking political and trade delegation in a visit to Iraq, during which the two sides inked several agreements and emphasized expansion of trade ties.

Monthly red meat output up 2% yr/yr

ECONOMY **TEHRAN**— Statistical Center of Iran (SCI) announced that production of red meat in Iran stood at 21,900 tons in the first month of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-April 19), which was two



percent higher than the output in the same month of the previous year, IRNA reported.

The SCI's report said that beef and veal had the lion's share (55.4 percent) in the country's red meat output during the first month with 12,100 tons, followed by lamb and mutton with 7,900 tons, goat meat with 1,420 tons, and red meat from other livestock with 421 tons.

As previously announced by the SCI, production of red meat in Iran stood at 94,900 tons in the last quarter of the past Iranian calendar year, indicating 16 percent growth compared to the same quarter in the preceding year.

Iran is among the leading consumers of red meat in the West Asia region with lamb being the most sought after.

However, the consumption per person is around a third of what is normally seen in countries like the U.S. and Australia, mainly due to the prohibition of pork in Islamic law.

The major part of Iran's red meat imports comes from countries like Brazil, where Iranian supervisors directly control culling methods to ensure they comply with religious rules.

200 industrial, mining, trade projects to be implemented by Mar. 2021

1 → In terms of the number of projects, Kerman Province with 26 projects and in terms of the volume of investment, Khuzestan Province with nearly 360 trillion rials (about \$8.57 billion), have the largest share of the said projects in the country, Zarandi said.

He noted that the said projects, which are characterized with factors like completing the industry's value chain, reducing imports, being export-oriented, using technology and creating jobs, have been selected as national

projects.

Currently, there are 12,500 projects with physical progress of over 60 percent across the country, of which 6,000 are related to leading and prioritized industries, according to the official.

In the current Iranian calendar year which has been named the year of "surge in production" by the Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran Seyed Ali Khamenei, the government is determined to support do-



mestic production and promote the country's none-oil exports.

The "Persistent Production-Effective Employment-Sustainable Exports" program has been defined by the Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry in line with the government's new strategies for developing the country's

infrastructure in order to realize the "Surge in Production" motto.

A same program (called "A-B-Iran") was also defined by the Energy Ministry last year, under which numerous energy projects were inaugurated in various provinces across the country.

Zahedan-Chabahar railway's 2 sections to be completed by next 10 months



ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Head of Iran's Budget and Planning Organization (BPO) announced that two sections of Zahedan-Chabahar railway are going to be completed by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2021).

Mohammad-Baqer Nobakht made the remarks during a visit to the southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchestan on Tuesday, Mehr news agency reported.

Also a deputy at Construction and Development of Transportation Infrastructures Company (CDTIC)said, "The Zahedan-Khash and Iranshahr-Chabahar sections of the project are scheduled to go operational by the end of the current year, and the middle section of the project, that connects Iranshahr to Khash, will be operational in the next Iranian calendar year 1400."

Zahedan-Chabahar railroad which is to connect Zahedan, the capital city of Iran's southeastern province of Sis-

tan-Baluchestan, to Chabahar port in the province was previously planned to be completed by the end of the current Iranian calendar year.

Chabahar Port in southeast Iran is the most prioritized one for railway connection as the port's exemption from the U.S. sanctions on the country has become an opportunity for development of export, transit, and also transshipment through this port.

Lying on the coast of the Gulf of Oman in Sistan-Baluchestan Province, Chabahar is the country's only oceanic port and given its strategic location in the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) development of the port is of high significance for Iran.

The project for building the 610-kilometer railroad was launched nine years ago but due to lack of financial resources it was stopped for three years. Then the contractor of the project was replaced and the operation was started.

IMIDRO to revive 50 small copper mines by Mar. 2021

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) announced that it plans to revive 50 idle small copper mines in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20, 2021), IRNA reported.

As reported, reviving these mines will bear many fruitful results for the National Iranian Copper Industry Company.

IMIDRO Head Khodadad Gharibpour has announced that the National Iranian Copper Industry Company has defined copper projects worth 100 trillion rials (about \$2.38 billion) to be implemented in the current year.

Among the small copper mines throughout the country, 94 mines are active, 96 mines are idle, and 21 mines are being equipped.

Reviving the small mines was one of the major plans that Iran's mining sector was seriously pursuing in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19), which was named the year of "Pickup in Production".



Last year, Gharibpour had mentioned this plan as one of the most significant plans of "Resistance Economy", saying that IMIDRO was strongly determined to carry out it.

Such strong will resulted in reviving 146 small mines in the previous year, although the planned figure was 150, which did not come true because of the coronavirus pandemic

in the last month of the year.

Reviving the small mines is also among the top plans of the country's mining sector in the current Iranian calendar year, which is named the year of "Surge in Production".

IMIDRO head has announced that the organization is planning to revive 200 small mines in the present year.

NIDC digs 23 oil, gas wells in 2 months

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — National Iranian Drilling Company (NIDC) dug and completed digging operation of 23 oil and gas wells during the first two months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-April 19), the company's director for consolidated planning announced.

Babak Zanganeh said the drilled wells consisted of 12 development/appraisal wells and 11 workover wells, Mehr news agency reported.

Some 17,297 meters of digging has been conducted for the mentioned onshore and offshore wells, according to the NIDC's director.

As announced by the head of NIDC's Technology and Engineering Department, the company indigenized the knowledge for manufacturing 6,000 drilling equipment in collaboration with domestic manufacturers and engineers in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19),

According to Behnoud Mansournejad, before this success, the technology for manufacturing the mentioned equipment was in the possession of a handful of foreign companies.

Among this equipment, the parts related to the rotary Blow out Preventers (BOP) used in air drilling operations have



been tested in operation and approved by the operational units for optimal performance.

Mansournejad said that the use of the domestically-made parts and equipment saved the country 45 billion rials (about \$107 million) in the previous year.

For the current year, a list of basic equipment needs of the country have been identified in collaboration with NIDC's operational and support departments to be indigenized by local companies and knowledge-based firms for the first time, he added.

Earlier in 2019, Mansournejad had announced that almost 80 percent of the oil and gas industry's drilling equipment needs have been indigenized by NIDC in the past decade.

According to the official, the equipment indigenized by NIDC includes drilling mud pumps, blowout preventers, traction motors, draw-works, drilling fluid recycling systems, mission centrifugal pumps, top drives, and drilling rig slow circulation rate pressure systems.

NIDC, a subsidiary of National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), undertakes most drilling operations across the country and has drilled 4,489 onshore and offshore oil and gas wells in the past four decades after the victory of the Islamic Revolution.

Holding 70 onshore and offshore drilling rigs as well as equipment and facilities for offering integrated technical and engineering services, the company accounts for a major part of drilling exploration as well as appraisal/development wells in the country.

on Investment (ROI) reached 180 percent in the previous year.

While growth and development in the Iranian stock market have been started in recent years, the previous year was in fact a time of flourishing for the country's stock exchanges.

Different factors contributed to the past year's prominent success in the stock market.

One important factor was proper ground laid in the stock market and providing better conditions for traders.

The other factor was the status of parallel markets, such as those of foreign currency, gold coin, and housing in the past year that made making investment in the stock market an obviously better and more profitable choice for the investors.

And now despite the economic condition created by the coronavirus outbreak, the Iranian stock market is experiencing more growth in the current Iranian year.

"Given the significance of reviving small mines, we have doubled the organization's internal budget for the plan to revive small mines in the current year", Gharibpour announced last week in a meeting on monitoring the plan for reviving and developing the small mines.

According to the official, based on an MOU signed three years ago, 500 small mines were planned to be revived throughout the country in a course of five years to create jobs for 25,000 people.

This year's slogan of surge in production means that more minerals should be supplied as the feedstock for the industrial units, and it indicates the significance of reviving and developing the small mines (which constitute 98 percent of mines in the country) as some major sources of such supply.

IMIDRO and other related organizations have already announced their support for this plan and the mining sector's officials have been suggesting different strategies for optimizing implementation of the plan.

190 dams under study, construction across Iran

ENERGY TEHRAN — Some 190 dams, with a total reservoir capacity of 48.488 billion cubic meters, are under study or being constructed across Iran, IRIB reported.

According to the Energy Ministry's portal (Paven), 90 of the mentioned dams with a total reservoir capacity of 29.724 billion cubic meters are under study and another 100 dams with a total reservoir capacity of 18.7672 billion cubic meters are under construction.

Also, as of the current Iranian calendar year's first month of Farvardin (ended on April 19), 183 dams with a total reservoir capacity of 52.443 billion cubic meters have been put into operation.

As reported, out of the total dams under study, 31 dams are located across the Caspian Sea basin, 52 dams are in the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman watersheds, while five dams are based in the central plateau and another two are in Sarakhs catchment area.

Out of a total of 183 operational dams, 52 are related to the Caspian Sea catchment area, 12 are based in Urumieh basin, 68



dams are located in the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman watersheds, 34 dams are in

the Central Plateau, 11 dams are in Sarakhs catchment basin, and another six dams are

located across the eastern boundary basin (Hamoun).

Last year, Energy Ministry inaugurated 10 new dams in six different provinces across the country which added 745 million cubic meters (mcm) to the total water storage capacity of Iran's dams.

The mentioned dams were inaugurated as a part of a major program called "A B Iran" [the acronyms A and B stand for water, electricity in Persian], in which nearly 10 trillion rials (over \$238 million) of projects were inaugurated in each of the country's provinces, on average.

The program has continued in the current calendar year (started on March 20).

Based on the "A B Iran" program, Energy Ministry plans to inaugurate some water, electricity projects across the country every week.

Back in March, Managing Director of Iran Water Resources Management (IWRM) Company Mohammad Rasouliha said more than 30 billion cubic meters of water was stored behind the dams across the country at the time.

Oil cargoes snapped up in Asia in sign demand is coming back

Asian buyers are snapping up distressed cargoes of oil from Africa to West Asia in another sign that demand is coming back in the world's biggest crude-importing region.

Indian, Chinese and South Korean refiners have been purchasing the so-called distressed shipments, or crude that's set to load in around a month or less, according to traders and refinery executives. Some of the oil was already being stored at sea near Singapore, while other cargoes were purchased just days before they were scheduled to load in June, they said.

Indian Oil Corp., the country's biggest refiner, has been perhaps the most aggressive buyer of prompt cargoes, releasing a slew of tenders for African, West Asian and U.S. crude. While IOC is ramping up fuel output to meet rising domestic consumption, other Asian processors are seeking to make up for steep allocation cuts by OPEC+ producers such as Saudi Arabia and Iraq, the traders and refiners said.

The return of prompt demand is occurring as lockdown restrictions around the region are eased and as consumption of some oil products recovers. It's helping to chip away at the overhang of unsold crude



that was built up during the unprecedented supply-demand shock earlier in the year and may provide more support to the rally in oil prices that's been underway since late April.

Meanwhile, oil's market structure has made the case for hoarding crude less appealing than it was a few weeks ago. Brent's six-month timespread was at a contango of almost \$13 a barrel in late March, meaning prompt cargoes were that much cheaper than later-dated ones, encouraging traders to lock in the spread for a profitable storage play. However, that gap has since shrunk to about \$3.10 a barrel at 10:30 a.m. London time.

(Source: Bloomberg)

Oil falls on U.S.-China tensions over Hong Kong

Oil prices fell on Wednesday after U.S. president Donald Trump said he was working on a strong response to China's proposed security law in Hong Kong.

A potential deterioration in relations between the world's two biggest economies could ratchet up the pressure on global businesses and oil demand already weakened by the coronavirus pandemic.

Brent crude fell 45 cents, or 1.2 percent, to \$35.72 a barrel by 0906 GMT and U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude was down 26 cents, or almost 1 percent, at \$34.09.

"As much as oil fundamentals are improving, there are still several flies in the bullish ointment. They include the latest uptick in U.S.-China tensions," said Stephen Brennock of oil broker PVM.

"The threat of a fresh U.S.-China trade war is no longer just a tail risk and could spell disaster for risk assets."

Gloomy forecasts over the economic impact of the pandemic also weighed on crude prices. The euro zone economy is likely to shrink between 8 percent and

12 percent this year, European Central Bank President Christine Lagarde said, warning that a mild scenario is already outdated and the outcome would be between the medium and severe.

Traders were also paying attention to early signals on a meeting between the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its allies in less than two weeks.

The group known as OPEC+ is cutting output by nearly 10 million barrels per day (bpd) in May and June, but the question is whether it will continue to do so as demand recovers after the easing of coronavirus lockdowns in many countries.

"Stock builds are falling and the market will be balanced in June, so who wants to willingly forego millions of crude barrels in sales if he's able to sell it in a recovering market," said Rystad Energy's head of oil markets, Bjornar Tonhaugen.

Global energy investment is expected to fall by about 20 percent, or \$400 billion, this year because of the coronavirus outbreak, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said on Wednesday.

(Source: Reuters)

Russia to ease oil cuts starting July in line with OPEC+ deal

Russia is determined to start easing oil output cuts from July, sticking to the terms of the OPEC+ deal struck earlier this year, according to people familiar with the key producer's position.

OPEC and its allies reached a historic accord in April to slash production as the pandemic savaged demand. As part of that deal, the cuts would slowly taper from July.

But since the agreement was sealed, Saudi Arabia tried to prop up the market with additional cuts and Persian Gulf allies followed suit. As OPEC+ prepares to meet in two weeks' time, members are weighing up whether to extend the cuts or ease them.

Three Russian officials and two people in the industry, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the nation's position is to stick to the plan. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Tuesday the deal is "undoubtedly successful," and said countries will look how the situation develops before taking a decision at the June 9-10 meeting.

The historic April agreement, which marked the end of a price war between Moscow and Riyadh, helped to reduce global glut and has prompted a recovery in crude prices. Brent traded at \$36 a barrel on Tuesday -- almost 70% higher than a month ago -- as the easing of coronavirus lockdowns around the world slowly lifts demand. At these levels, it's still a blow for Russia's budget.

On Tuesday Russian oil producers discussed the future of the OPEC+ deal with Energy Minister Alexander Novak, including the possibility of extending the deepest cuts for another two months, according to Kommersant, a Russian business newspaper.



The discussion came up as Saudi Arabia, the de-facto OPEC leader, has pressed for extending the cuts, Kommersant said, citing an unidentified person. The meeting didn't reach a consensus, according to the newspaper.

Russia has traditionally preferred a cautious, wait-and-see approach before OPEC+ meetings, often agreeing to proposals of its partners at the last moment.

Approaching normal

While the crude surplus remains at about 7 million to 12 million barrels a day, Russia expects that global supply and demand could balance in June or July, Novak said in a statement Monday.

Russian industry players are also cautiously optimistic about the recovery. The St. Petersburg Oil Terminal, where

fuel from key refineries is loaded onto ships bound for Europe, has recorded a sharp rebound in European demand for some types of oil products, such as diesel, as lockdowns are relaxed.

"We see that the demand is approaching normal levels," with the exception of jet fuel consumption, which may take as much as three years to return to the 2019 volumes, Mikhail Skigin, the terminal's Chief Executive Officer told Bloomberg in an email.

Skigin expects Russia's domestic refineries to return to normal operations in summer after massive idling earlier this month.

The cuts have been painful in Russia, where producers have faced their greatest challenge in decades: shutting in a large number of wells without permanently damaging the fields. Russia is making about a quarter of the total OPEC+ cuts.

Rosneft PJSC, which accounts for about 40% of nation's output, has so far just limited oil flows to comply with its quota. But within the next three months it will look into "full shut-ins and long-term conservation of some of the highest-cost projects," Chief Financial Officer Pavel Fedorov said this month.

According to the deal, Russian oil companies have to reduce their crude production on pro-rata basis by 2.5 million a barrels in May and June, down from about 11 million barrels a day. Then the cuts will average 2 million barrels a day until the end of this year and will flatten further to 1.5 million through April 2022.

(Source: Aljazeera)

Oil majors promise to maintain clean energy push despite pandemic

The heads of the world's largest oil and gas producers pledged Tuesday to maintain a strategic focus on producing cleaner energy and helping to mitigate climate change despite reeling from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on oil and gas prices.

Noting "concerns" that the coronavirus crisis could push oil and gas companies and governments to delay climate action, the industry-led Oil and Gas Climate Initiative said it is dedicated to maintaining this mission to help "combating the climate challenge".

"Rather than shifting our priorities, the COVID-19 crisis is further crystallizing our focus on what is essential: health, safety and protection of the environment while providing the energy

and vital products that society needs to support economic recovery," OGCI CEO's said in an open letter published Tuesday.

Chaired by former BP boss Bob Dudley, the OGCI was formed in September 2014 to help fund clean-energy ventures and coordinate industry efforts to support the Paris Agreement climate goals.

The OGCI member companies -- BP, China's CNPC, Italy's Eni, Spain's Repsol, Saudi Aramco, Shell, Brazil's Petrobras, Exxon, Chevron, Occidental, Norway's Statoil and France's Total -- operate about 30% of global oil and gas production in 130 countries.

Peak demand

The International Energy Agency in March expressed concern that sliding fossil fuel prices could discourage spending on energy efficiency measures needed to curb greenhouse gas emissions. At the same time, the massive financial shock of the pandemic could jeopardize policies to support renewable energy and future low-carbon energy systems, market watchers say.

The OGCI said it plans to continue supporting governments as they design efficient policies that can accelerate energy transitions. It also reiterated its commitment to accelerate emissions reductions, such as through continued reductions in methane emissions.

"We will continue to work with others to support economic recovery and to transition to a healthier, lower-carbon future," the CEOs said in the letter.

Speaking to the Financial Times earlier this month, BP's CEO Bernard Looney said global oil demand may have already peaked ahead of the pandemic lockdowns which may leave lasting changes in energy consumption far into the future.

On Monday, however, the head of the IEA Fatih Birol told Bloomberg News he expected global oil consumption to return to pre-crisis levels or above sooner or later given a sustained economic recovery and low oil prices.

Before the crisis, world oil demand growth, which last year stood at around 100,000 b/d, was widely expected to flatline in the next decade as advances in renewable energy and electric vehicles continued to sap the world's need for fossil fuels.

(Source: Platts)

Global energy investment expected to tumble 20 percent in 2020 due to COVID crisis: IEA

Global energy investment is expected to plunge by around 20 percent or \$400 billion in 2020, its biggest fall on record, because of the new coronavirus outbreak, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said on Wednesday.

The Paris-based IEA said this could have serious repercussions for energy security and the transition to clean energy as the global economy recovers from the pandemic.

Governments are easing restrictions put in place to curb the spread of the virus after the confinement of around 3 billion people brought the global economy to a near standstill.

At the start of the year, global energy investment was on track for a 2 percent increase in 2020, its biggest growth in six years, the IEA said. A total of \$1.8 trillion was invested in the sector in 2019.

"The historic plunge in global energy investment is deeply troubling for many reasons," said Fatih Birol, the IEA's Executive Director. "It means lost jobs and economic opportunities today, as well as lost energy supply that we might well need tomorrow once the economy recovers," he said, adding that it could hurt the move towards cleaner energies.

The IEA said revenues for governments and industry are set to plummet by over \$1 trillion in 2020 due to the fall in energy demand and lower prices.

Global energy companies have cut investments and shelved projects to shore up their finances due to the crisis. The IEA said higher debts after the crisis will pose lasting risks to investments.

Investment in oil and gas is expected to fall by almost one-third. The IEA said if investment in oil stays at 2020 levels, it would reduce the level of global supply in 2025 by almost 9 million barrels a day, a clear risk of tighter markets if demand moves back to pre-crisis levels.

(Source: Reuters)

Solar, wind could provide 3 times Germany's current power demand by 2040

Solar and wind power sources in Germany have the potential to provide three times the country's current power demand by 2040, according to a new study by Aurora Energy Research.

In its report Cost Potential Curves for Renewables: A Geospatial Analysis, the consultancy says that the actual build-out potential for renewables in Germany -- considering geo-technical, economic and socio-political constraints but also assuming technological advancement -- is enough to generate nearly 1,800 TWh early by 2040.

Aurora notes that the economic renewable potential in the country is limited to about 30%-40% available sites due to cannibalization effects. For onshore wind, the importance of site quality will increase.

Government regulations and growing opposition are acting as an obstacle for wind capacity expansion. In order for the country to reach its target of bringing renewables' share in power consumption to 65% by 2030, the solar industry will need to add 9 GW-11 GW of capacity a year, the report says.

(Source: Renewable Now)

Australia embarks on a mammoth renewable energy exporting project

As well as being a world-class LNG exporter, Australia may soon become a major exporter of renewable energy.

Engineers are now looking to connect Singapore with Darwin, using a 3,800-kilometer undersea cable, effectively connecting the South-East Asian country to the Australian grid.

Perth-based company Guardian Geomatics has been awarded the contract to conduct a route survey for the Sun Cable project which is backed by Atlantica founder Mike Cannon-Brookes and Fortescue Metals founder Andrew Forrest.

The two billionaire backers led a capital raising round for the project last November. And while the total amount of money raised remains undisclosed, the two funds Grok Ventures and Squadron Energy raised tens of millions of dollars during this first capital raise. The total cost of the project is expected



to be around \$13 billion.

Guardian Geomatics will commence preparations this month, with initial plans to utilize sister company Guardian Offshore's vessel "Offshore Solution" to deliver the work, starting later in 2020.

The 15,000 hectare, 10GW solar farm near Tennant Creek in Australia's Northern Territory is the largest solar farm in the world currently under development. The project also includes plans for a massive 50-megawatt battery storage facility which ensures a steady

around the clock energy supply.

Most of the energy from the project will be exported through the undersea cable to Singapore, but a small part will be delivered to consumers in and around Darwin.

Sun Cable expects to reach financial close for the megaproject somewhere in 2023, with full commercial operations starting in 2027.

As an island nation with limited space for power generation, Singapore has relied on LNG imports for about 95 percent of its electricity needs and despite the growth in solar PV and other renewables, Singapore will continue to rely on natural gas for the next 50 years or so.

Solar PVs contributed 174.3 MW in 2019, or just a meager 1.3 percent of total electricity capacity. Sun Cable says the project can supply a fifth of Singapore's power.

(Source: oilprice.com)



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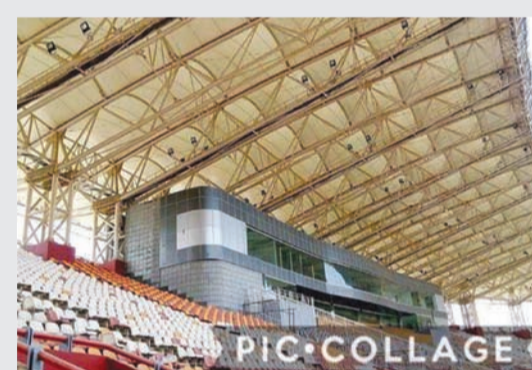
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Zionist regime cannot continue to live by sword if Palestinians adhere to moral weight of their cause

By Mohammad Jafari

According to lessons of the humankind history, the Zionist regime of Israel will certainly end its occupation just as all colonial powers over the past century did, however the Palestinians' unity, resistance against oppressors and firm determination to rely on their own maturity, ingenuity and dynamism will accelerate the process.

Marwan Bishara, a senior political analyst, has opined in his commentary published by Al Jazeera that the Palestinians are not powerless, so there is much they can do to stop Israeli expansionism.

"Since the catastrophic Arab failure in the 1948 and 1967 wars led to total Israeli control over historical Palestine, the Palestinians have been trying to recover their losses, but to no avail," he pointed out in his commentary.

Refugees and prisoners in their own homeland, they have tried armed struggle and peaceful negotiations with equal vigor, but have failed to get justice or attain peace.

Both strategies entailed great sacrifice and major concessions, but ultimately neither led to the liberation of Palestine from Israeli domination.

Worse, Israel's appetite for expansion has grown with every Palestinian concession, and now its delusion of invincibility is driving it to illegally annex almost a third of what the Palestinians assumed would be their future state.

Regardless of whether it actually formalizes its de facto annexation or not, Israel is already radically and unilaterally changing the reality on the ground.

So now what? What to do? What not to do? It is important to remember that contrary to newspeak there is no "Palestine problem" but rather an "Israeli colonial problem" - the region's last colonial problem - and the Palestinians may prove to be its only solution.

Since its creation at the end of the 19th century, Zionism has mutated from arguably a legitimate Jewish national movement in Europe to a European colonial enterprise in the eastern Mediterranean.

It led, among other things, to a century-long conflict, multiple wars and hatred, fuelled by ethnic cleansing, dispossession and the displacement of millions of people.

Since then, increased Israeli colonization, especially in the occupied West Bank, devolved into a reprehensible system of apartheid.

Interestingly, apartheid was born in South Africa in 1948, the same year the Palestinian catastrophe began, and it ended in 1994, a year before apartheid basically started in Palestine with the Oslo-II agreement, which divided the occupied territories intobantustans.

Like South Africa, Israel should be induced to produce its own FW de Klerk to end its apartheid. Such a leader would find the Palestinians ready to reconcile and together with Israel build a better future.

Frederik Willem de Klerk OMG DMS is a South African politician who served as State President of South Africa from 1989 to 1994 and as Deputy President from 1994 to 1996.

De Klerk brought the apartheid system of racial segregation to an end and negotiated a transition to majority rule in his country. He and Nelson Mandela jointly received the 1993 Nobel Prize for Peace for their collaboration in efforts to establish nonracial democracy in South Africa.

And like South Africa, this does not mean ending Israel. It means liberating Israel from its paranoid garrison mindset that sees hegemony as the only way to survive.

Considering we are all one human race, apartheid is ultimately about hegemony, despite its racial or other pretexts.

It follows that the struggle against apartheid must be a universal, indivisible struggle for justice and freedom - one that opposes anti-Semitism, as it does colonial Zionism.

But what shape and path should it take? Palestinians have already begun to think about and debate new ideas to end apartheid, which deserve further study and development.

But before we get into what the Palestinians need to do, let us look into what they should not do.

Surrender is not an option. Do not even think about it. Accepting the so-called "deal of the century" put forward by U.S. President Donald Trump and his ally Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is to surrender to Israeli hegemony. It means living in captivity in perpetuity.

Without surrender, there is no victory. As long as the Palestinians do not lose, Israel cannot win.

Refusing to give up or give in may not be easy, but it has proven effective in frustrating Israel's plans, and restraining certain Arab regimes' predilection for mischief.

Do not despair. Time and history are on your side. It may not seem that way judging from Israel's visible confidence, (read arrogance), but even though it is a self-proclaimed country of "immigrants", it has been bleeding hundreds of thousands of emigrants, mostly to the U.S.

And a high 40 percent of Israelis are thinking of emigrating, as countless Palestinians risk their lives to reclaim their right of return.

It is the same story repeated over and over again. Most if not all colonial powers lost to the weaker indigenous population over the past century. So will Israel.

To that end, Palestinians have wisely framed their cause in legal terms and extracted many UN resolutions condemning Israel's violations of international law.

But international law does not deter the strong or save the weak, certainly not when the U.S. flashes its veto at the mere mention of Israel.

Just do not depend on it. Depend on yourselves. And forget about the UN convening an international peace conference without American blessing.

Do not beat yourselves up too much. Be reasonable. Yes, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) has made its share of mistakes, but the Palestinians are not responsible for the contempt and incompetence of certain Arab regimes, or the cynicism of Western powers, especially the U.S. appeasement of Israel.

And stop with the self-pity. You cannot motivate and energize depressed people. It will not kill you to smile. The best laughs are those mixed with tears. There is much to dread, but there is much more to dream about.

Do not underestimate the moral weight of your cause in the Arab world and beyond, regardless of what the doubters say. No matter how many dictators recognize Israel, a belligerent apartheid state will never achieve true legitimacy or security regionally.

Never. Arabs see the struggle for justice in Palestine as a symbol



and extension of their own fight for justice.

Syrians, Saudis, Yemenis, Egyptians and others may be engrossed in their own tragedies, as they must be, but polls consistently show that, collectively, Arabs see Palestine as their foremost cause in the struggle against colonialism.

Do not forget that. Israel has always tried to separate Palestinians from Palestinians and the Palestinians from their Arab neighborhoods. Do not allow it and do not engage in secret negotiations.

There are more than a few ways to connect and bridge the geographic divide.

As war and diplomacy come to a dead end, and as Israel dashes forward arrogantly grabbing and annexing more Palestinian land, speak up and do not let Netanyahu and Trump get off easy.

Try not to repeat the mistakes of the past.

Try not to look back. Look ahead. Look for a third way forward.

The lopsided peace process has been terribly divisive for the Palestinians. It is what asymmetrical peace processes do. Therefore, abandoning it must lead to some form of national unity.

The dreadful competition between the main political factions has thus far proven detrimental to national unity and elections have been no less divisive.

Instead of uniting against the occupation, the factions have been preoccupied with managing it.

While Fatah and Hamas continue to insist on holding onto their "strongholds", the separated bantustans in the West Bank and Gaza, some suggest the establishment of an overall political umbrella, perhaps a reformed and expanded PLO, to unite all the Palestinians around the undisputed cause of justice.

But this will require a new generation of Palestinians to step up and take over from the predominantly septuagenarian and octogenarian leadership to chart a fresh, new way forward.

All bureaucratic tasks and responsibilities, whether on the level of the National Authority or the municipalities should be left to technocrats, chosen on the basis of merit not partisanship.

This requires a great deal of maturity, ingenuity and dynamism. Another interesting idea is for Palestinians to unite behind multiple strategies, instead of being divided behind one failed strategy of negotiations.

This tactical decentralization means "popular mobilization" where each Palestinian community should be able to design and embrace strategies of struggle according to its abilities and circumstances.

Palestinians in Gaza may want to retain their deterrence capabilities to defend against another Israeli assault, and Jerusalemites may want to strengthen their city's Palestinian presence and character.

Likewise, Palestinians in Israel may want to transform Israel's binationality from demographics to politics. The Palestinians in Jordan may want to work with Jordanians to block Israel's attempt to make their country the alternative Palestinian state. And the Palestinians in exile may want to promote the cause in foreign capitals. And so on.

These micro strategies should be continuously synchronized and synergized as integral parts of the national struggle for justice and liberation as a whole.

Palestinians should no longer be satisfied with passive "steadfastness". They need to reactivate and re-energize the popular base.

Comprising almost half the population between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, the Palestinians need to immunize themselves against persistent Israeli repression and marginalization.

Palestinians need to offset Israel's new attempts at dividing and ostracizing them by improving business infrastructure and economic life to help people endure.

They need to expand on one of their greatest recent achievements, namely institution building.

This entails deflating an inflated bureaucracy by ending corruption and nepotism and creating partnerships between the public and private sector to improve economic planning and infrastructure development.

Currently, one-third of the national budget goes to the security apparatus, more than both the health and education sectors receive. Given that it serves Israeli more than Palestinian security, there is no reason why it should continue to consume so much of the Palestinian budget.

Boosting national immunity is also about boosting individual immunity in everyday life.

And there is no immunity without national and personal dignity.

A Palestinian may be able to block or defy the humiliation of an Israeli soldier, but may still find him/herself powerless when humiliated by a fellow (armed) Palestinian. Such humiliation is emotional and leads to indifference, even betrayal. This must stop.

And there is no dignity without work. This means there needs to be job creation, the expansion of good productive employment, so that poor Palestinians are not forced to slave away at Israeli settlements.

Palestinians are some of the most educated people in the region. Modest investment in human capital could yield great national advantage in the long run.

As the PLO hedged its bets exclusively on the U.S.-led peace

process, it abandoned much of the international solidarity movement.

Today, Palestinians need to rebuild links to European, Latin American, African and other foreign solidarity movements. These would be essential for their struggle moving forward, just as they were in ending apartheid in South Africa.

Moreover, and unlike many forgotten indigenous populations, Palestinians are not alone. They are part of a vast Arab region, and can draw strength and solace from their Arab hinterland. Palestinians also have a special connection to the Islamic world, much of which has suffered terribly from Western colonialism.

It is paramount to confront Israel's peddling of religious justification for its occupation with civic and universal, not religious, arguments.

All colonial enterprises of the past several centuries have used varying degrees of religious justification, and Palestine has been the focal point of interest for all three Abrahamic religions.

But treating Palestine as a "promised land" or "a waqf" turns the divine from a peacemaker to a real estate broker.

Palestine belongs to all its inhabitants, especially its indigenous people.

Winning Jewish support for justice and freedom in Palestine is imperative to dispel Israeli propaganda, and indispensable to roll back Israeli hegemony.

Just as white people participated in the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa and in the civil rights movement in the U.S., Jews are indispensable in the struggle against apartheid in Palestine.

Throughout their history, Jews have been the victims of racism, suffering greatly from European anti-Semitism. And for long, they have been at the forefront in the fight against racism.

This week, for example, I read an obituary titled, "Denis Goldberg Man of Integrity: South African Freedom Fighter, Anti-Zionist Jew, and True Mensch" written by Ronnie Kasrils, a prominent Jewish South African anti-apartheid activist about a comrade who had passed away. Reflecting on Goldberg's lifelong anti-racism struggle, Kasrils emphasized: "As an anti-Zionist Jew he came to view Israel's colonial-racism as akin to apartheid South Africa."

I know many such people, having worked closely with Jewish academics, students, journalists, feminists, editors, publishers, lawyers, unionists, and activists on various progressive causes including that of free Palestine.

Palestinians must take down anyone who peddles anti-Jewish slogans in their name and build on increasing Jewish resentment towards an Israeli leadership that does terrible things in their name.

When former US presidential candidate Bernie Sanders accused Netanyahu of "reactionary racism" and grew even more popular in the process, it showed just how far the American Jewish community and the Democratic Party have gone, bearing in mind that most American Jews vote Democrat, not Republican.

Palestinians need to nourish this new spirit and synergy to counter the Israeli-inspired campaign equating anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism.

Anti-Zionism has nothing to do with anti-Semitism. After all, Jews were the first to oppose Zionism.

A new Palestinian-Jewish partnership must fight Israeli injustice tooth and nail, exposing the Israeli government's malign attempts to label movements like Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) as anti-Semitic.

In short, and as I argued recently, it is high time for a Palestinian-Jewish spring.

The evolution of this renewed struggle in its totality will determine the outcome - two states or one binational state, not the opposite.

The continuing debate about the singularity or duality of states is not only premature, it may prove divisive and debilitating.

Israel will certainly oppose a one-state solution with the same if not stronger determination it opposes a sovereign Palestinian state with.

The sooner the Palestinian leaders realize there are no short cuts or off-the-shelf solutions the better they will be prepared for the long haul.

That is why the Palestinian endgame should be justice and freedom. They are not only an attainable goal that everyone will rally behind, but also a prerequisite for peace and security in the region.

They require changing Israel's calculus, not defeating it, or destroying it, as Israeli leaders whine and warn.

This is how major powers gave up their colonialism and how South Africa ended its system of apartheid. They were forced to reconsider the calculus of gain and loss.

In this way, Netanyahu's Israel cannot have all the land and all the security. It cannot continue to live by the sword and preach Kumbaya to the Palestinians.

"Kum ba yah" ("Come by Here") is an African American spiritual of disputed origin, but known to be sung in the Gullah culture of the islands off South Carolina and Georgia, with ties to enslaved West Africans.

In short, it cannot have its cake and eat it too.

If history is any guide, Israel will end its occupation just as all colonial powers of the past century ended theirs.

The sooner the better for both Palestinians and Israelis.

Tehran signals its oil trade <legitimate>: Japanese expert

BY Payman Yazdani

According to Refinitiv Eikon data, the third cargo of an Iranian tanker flotilla, Petunia, carrying fuel for Venezuela on Tuesday has reached the nation's exclusive economic zone.

The oil tankers encountered no signs of U.S. interference as it eased through Caribbean waters toward the Venezuelan coast late on Saturday. Venezuelan officials celebrated the arrival.

"Iran and Venezuela have always supported each other in times of difficulty," Venezuelan foreign minister Jorge Arreaza tweeted. "Today, the first ship with gasoline arrives for our people."

The Iranian officials had earlier warned of retaliatory measures against the U.S. if Washington causes problems for tankers carrying Iranian fuel to Venezuela.

To shed more light on the issue we reached out to Sachi Sakanashi, Assistant Director of JIME Center, Institute of Energy Economics, Japan.

Here is the full text of our interview with her:

■ What is the political significance of Iran's move? What is its message to the other countries that are under heavy U.S. unilateral sanctions?

I think Iran's message is that Iran's oil trade is legitimate and when there is a country that wants to buy Iranian oil, Iran will send it even across the Atlantic Ocean.

■ Is it compliance to international norms to interrupt countries' legal trade unilaterally?

The problem is that the U.S. has the power to impose its unilateral sanctions to the other countries regardless of its unilaterality. But in this case, I don't believe U.S. has decided to take any immediate action to obstruct Iran's oil export to Venezuela, partly due to the fact that the U.S. is aware that such a move would not be able to gather enough support from the international community.

■ Iran has threatened that any U.S. possible action against Iranian oil tankers will not be left unanswered. What can be consequences of any U.S. mistake for world energy market?

U.S. has not declared that it will physically disturb Iran's oil export to other countries. They usually designate organizations or individuals to block their property in the United States. It is possible that the U.S. Treasury will take action, which might not have any immediate impact on the world energy market.

Sachi Sakanashi has worked for two years from 2000 to 2002 as a Cultural Attaché at the Japanese Embassy in Tehran.

Biden slams Trump as 'absolute fool' for not wearing face mask

U.S. Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden has called Republican President Donald Trump an "absolute fool" for not wearing a mask in public to combat the spread of the coronavirus.

The presumptive Democratic presidential nominee's comments came on Tuesday, a day after he wore a black face mask while making his first public appearance in more than two months.



In a Twitter message, Trump appeared to make fun of a photo of Biden in his mask. In an interview with CNN, Biden responded, "He's a fool, an absolute fool, to talk that way." "Every leading doc in the world says you should be wearing a mask in a crowd," Biden said.

The former vice president also noted that nearly 100,000 Americans have been killed by COVID-19 and suggested that as many as half of those deaths were the result of Trump's delayed response to the outbreak and "lack of attention and ego."

«So I thought it was very unusual that he had one on,» Trump said at the White House.

On Monday, Biden made his first public appearance since March by laying a wreath at a military veterans' memorial near his home in Wilmington, Delaware.

Biden has been staying at home because of the coronavirus pandemic. Trump has criticized the 77-year-old candidate for not leaving his house.

Trump has also repeatedly ridiculed Biden as too old and prone to blunders to beat him in November's presidential election.

U.S. government health officials have recommended wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where social distancing measures are difficult to maintain.

More than 1,725,000 people have been infected with the coronavirus in the U.S. so far and over 100,000 have died, more than the number of American forces killed in the Korean and Vietnam wars combined.

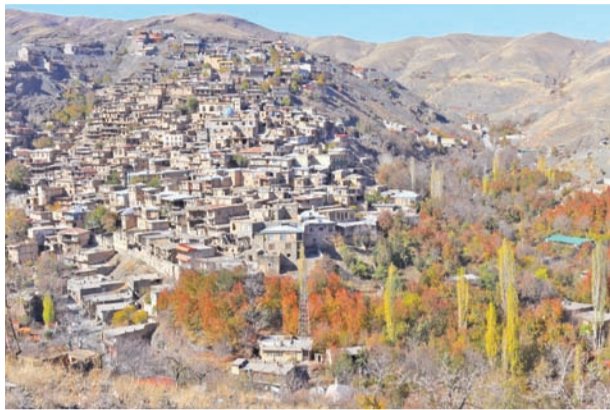
All 50 states have now at least partially reopened, raising fears among some health officials of a second wave of outbreaks.

A third of Americans are showing signs of clinical anxiety or depression, the most definitive and alarming sign yet of the psychological toll exacted by the coronavirus pandemic.

The troubling statistics, which suggest a huge jump from before the pandemic, were released last week in a tranche of data from the Census Bureau. The agency launched an emergency weekly survey of U.S. households at the end of April to measure the pandemic's effects on employment, housing, finances, education and health.

Kang stepped village added to national heritage list

➔ Roughly a millennium old, Masouleh is one of the most famous villages in Iran, and hence one of its most touristic ones. Also known as the historical city of Masouleh, it features the earth-colored houses that are stacked photogenically on top of one another like giant Lego blocks, clinging to a mountainside so steep that the roof of one house forms the pathway for the next. The existence of numerous graveyards inner and outside of the city proves its old texture. Storied and terracing plan of the city is in parallel to the mountain slope.



Uraman in west of the country, is also another stepped village, which is considered a cradle of Kurdish art and culture from the days of yore.

Stretched on a steep slope in Uraman Takht rural district of Sarvabad County, the village is home to dense and step-like rows of houses in a way that roof of each house forms the yard of the upper one, a feature that adds to its charm and attractiveness.

Ancient mountainous castle reopens to sightseers

TOURISM **TEHRAN** – The historical castle of Alamout in Qazvin province opened its doors to the sightseers on Tuesday, after over two months of closure due to the coronavirus outbreak, IRNA reported.



Inscribed on the national heritage list in 2002, Alamout Castle nests on top of a hill in a relatively remote village amidst the northern Iran's Alborz Mountains. The castle was once a shelter for the followers of Hasan-e Sabbah (1070–1124), spiritual leader of Islam's heretical Ismaili sect, known as 'Assassins'.

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

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

Nowadays, the ruined castle is a top travel destination in northeastern side of Gazor Khan Village in the environs of Mo'alem Kalayeh, from the environs of Roudbar of Alamout.

The relics of castle stand on the cliff of Kanglour-Marazi along with valleys and horrible precipices.

According to the tentative list of UNESCO, the relics of walls, towers and lookout posts of the Alamout Castle have been made of stones with gypsum as binding material. The castle is ten thousand square meter in area. The requisite buildings have been constructed on different levels of the steep cliff. All levels and steep places have been optimally utilized.

Iran's most wild and beautiful places: Badab-e Surt

TOURISM **TEHRAN** – Cradle of one of the oldest civilizations on Earth, Iran is home to turquoise-domed mosques, glittering palaces, and the tombs of long gone poets reveal the mysteries and intrigues of the ancients.

Yet beneath the footprints of man lies an even lesser known, wilder Iran, brimming with remarkable geologic formations, ancient forests, and overgrown monuments that nature has reclaimed as its own.



Badab-e Surt, which is situated in the northern Mazandaran province, is one of the country's amazing geologic formations; a striking panorama of rust-colored travertine terraces cuts across the mountains.

The stepped, limestone formations were created over thousands of years by the flowing and cooling of water from two mineral hot springs. While travertine terraces are found in other places—like Mammoth Hot Springs in Yellowstone and Pamukkale in Turkey—Badab-e Surt's distinctive coloring results from a high concentration of iron oxide sediments. Not only does it make for dreamy views, but one of the springs is thought to have healing properties due to its high salinity and mineral content.

Explore mausoleum of Esther and Mordechai

The purported burial site of Purim's Persian queen and a pilgrimage site for Iranian Jews

By Afshin Majlesi

TEHRAN – The mausoleum of Esther and Mordechai is a Jewish shrine in the city of Hamedan, west-central Iran, where, according to Judeo-Persian tradition is the burial site of the two cousins who played a pivotal role in the Book of Esther (also known as the Megillah).

This tradition, according to the Encyclopedia Iranica, is not supported by the Jews outside of Iran and does not appear in either Babylonian or Jerusalemite Talmuds. A parallel tradition holds that their bodies were brought to another place for burial. So it is not certainly known if the shrine is the actual site where Mordechai and Esther are laid to rest.

The site is also a pilgrimage site for Iranian Jews throughout the year especially on Purim. While the original date of shrine's construction is unknown, its date of destruction, at the hands of Mongol invaders, allegedly occurred in the 14th century.

The saga of Mordechai and Esther form the basis for the Jewish celebration of Purim [also known as the "Feast of Lots"]; hence, the site is of deep historical significance to Iranian Jews and the wider Jewish community.

According to the biblical book named after her, Esther was a young Jewish woman who caught the eye of the Persian King Ahasuerus, became queen, and with the assistance of her cousin, saved Jews throughout the Persian Empire from annihilation in the 5th century BC. Every year, on the occasion of Purim, Jews around the world mark this miraculous salvation by reading the Book of Esther, dressing in costumes, and eating delicacies.

German archaeologist and Iranologist Ernst Herzfeld (1879–1948) contends that the current structure may actually belong to Shushan Dokht, the Jewish queen of King Yazdgerd I (ca. 399–420 CE), who is credited with securing permission for Jews to live in Hamadan.

According to the encyclopedia, Herzfeld described the place as a simple structure which has been restored several times, rejecting the tradition relating the tombs to Esther and Mordechai, who he said were buried in Susa.

Herzfeld dates the current structure to 1602 CE, partly on account of its traditional Persian architectural style (known as Emamzadeh), which was ubiquitous amongst the shrines of Muslim religious leaders built in that era. In most cases, these buildings include an entry hall and a main square hall with a domed ceiling that surrounds the sarcophagus (stone coffin).

Until the 1970s, the shrine was hidden away in a crowded part of Hamadan, surrounded by houses, and accessible only through a narrow dirt alley. But the site and its premises underwent a major renovation project in the early 1970s.



A view of the modest mausoleum of Esther and Mordechai in the city of Hamedan, west-central Iran.

Houses around the tomb were purchased and demolished, making the shrine accessible from the main street. The renovation, however, did not significantly alter the shrine itself, or the grave stones cluttering the plaza outside the old shrine.

Known in classical times as Ecbatana, Hamadan was one of the ancient world's greatest cities. Pitifully little remains from antiquity, but significant parts of the city center are given over to excavations. Ecbatana was the capital of Media and subsequently a summer residence of the Achaemenian kings who ruled Persia from 553 to 330 BC.

A recent media hype
Earlier this month, some foreign media outlets reported that the shrine was set on fire and destructed.

To investigate the issue, Homayoun Samayeh, the head of Tehran's Jewish community, paid a visit to the shrine. He dismissed the rumors circulating about damage to Esther

and Mordechai's tomb, saying "these are media propaganda waged by enemies of the Islamic Republic."

"Contrary to the rumors published in some media, no damage has been inflicted on the shrine of Esther and Mordechai," Mehr quoted Samayeh as saying on the sidelines of his visit on May 17.

"Religious minorities, especially Jews, live in this country under the shadow of the Islamic Republic and all-round support from the government, and are grateful for the services of the government and the system," he said.

"The shrine of Esther and Mordechai is completely intact, and there may be burnt carpet outside this complex in a corner which has been magnified and exaggerated by the enemies of the Islamic Republic."

Samayeh added that the Iranian Jewish community does not allow the enemies of the Islamic Republic to use them as a tool to attain their hostile goals.

Coronavirus: a pilgrimage to Shah-e Cheragh after two-month closure



TOURISM **TEHRAN** – Photos depict people visiting Shah-e Cheragh ("King of Light"), a major mausoleum and pilgrimage site in the tourist city of Shiraz, southern Iran, on May 26, 2020.

On Monday, the mausoleum reopened along with other holy shrines and grand congregational mosques around the country after more than two months of closure due to the coronavirus outbreak.

Following the official approval of the coronavirus epidemic in Iran, the national headquarters for combating coronavirus promoted the "Stay Home Movement" after the closure of schools and universities, so that the whole country could act based on scientific and effective steps to combat the virus. On March 15, the closure of holy shrines and religious places across the country hit the news.

Shah-e Cheragh is where Sayyed Mir Ahmad, one of brothers of Imam Reza (AS), is laid to rest. It normally draws hundreds of the faithful from all over the country or even abroad per day.

The dazzling shrine of mirrored tiles boasts architectural elements and motifs from various centuries and its courtyard and tilework represent relatively modern embellishments from the late-Qajar period. Its blue-tiled dome is flanked by dazzling gold-tipped minarets.

There is also a modest museum in the northwestern corner of the courtyard, next to the shrine, which showcases shrine-related objects, including some highly prized old Qurans and an exquisite door embellished with silver and gold.

Visitors are welcome to enter the courtyard in the middle of the complex but entrance to the shrine is not usually permitted to non-Muslims. Photography with large digital cameras are not permitted.



Qajar-era cistern undergoes restoration

TOURISM **TEHRAN** – Qajar-era (1789–1925) Haji Nezam Ab-Anbar (cistern) in Kashmar, northeastern Khorasan Razavi province, underwent some rehabilitation works, CHTN quoted the province's deputy tourism chief Marjan Akbari as saying on Wednesday.

The cistern's dome, façade, worn-out walls

and bricks were restored with a budget of 260 million rials (about \$6,000), she added.

The term Ab-Anbar is common throughout Iran as a designation for roofed underground water cisterns. It associates with water management systems in arid areas that are reliant on permanent springs or on seasonal rainwater.

Such underground reservoirs or Ab-Anbars are parts of the iconic qanat systems, which rely on snow-fed streams flowing down from surrounding mountains.

Qanats, according to the UNESCO, provide exceptional testimony to cultural traditions and civilizations in desert areas with an arid climate.



Experience wildlife in safe, friendly and educational environment near Tehran

TOURISM **TEHRAN** – Safadasht Zoo, which is situated in Malard county, some 50 southwest of the Iranian capital, offers you scenes of wildlife in a safe, friendly and educational environment.

Spanning five ha in area, the zoo is home to some 800 animals, representing more than eighty species including exotic birds, mammals, and reptiles in a beautifully landscaped setting.



Iran plans to equip environmental defenders with high-tech facilities

1 → Marine protection to be promoted

Stating that the DOE is also trying to promote protection in the maritime areas, he noted that "to do this, we will soon launch air monitoring system over the maritime areas and wetlands in the country."

Fishermen's boats are generally faster than the maritime rangers' boats, which is why we have a problem preventing crime, and we have prioritized equipping the boats, he emphasized.

He went on to state that 50 marine rangers will soon be recruited and trained, then they will be active in 7 provinces where there are maritime areas.

■ 70% of wildfires unintentionally set

Elsewhere in his remarks, Mohabbat Khani pointed to the above-normal rainfall this year and last year and the increase in the vegetation of rangelands and forests across the country and highlighted that the risk of wildfires in the country increases.

According to statistics recorded in previ-



ous years, 70 percent of fires in the country's forests and pastures have been set unintentionally by the tourists, and given that the risk of wildfires is high this year, people should be more careful when camping in nature.

He cited fires that are set for cooking, cigarettes, and other incendiary items, along with garbage that turns into a magnifying glass by sunlight and ignites, as the main causes of wildfires in the country.

Another 20 percent of the fires were intentional due to land-use changes and other illegal motives, and 10 percent were set naturally, he stated.

In all provinces, teams of trained environmentalist defenders are on duty, he said, adding, these forces are equipped with the special firefighting facilities that have provided been last year.

He further announced the readiness of the Disaster Management Organization, the Armed Forces, and the DOE, to deal with possible fires.

Iran sends anti-corona medical supplies to Afghanistan

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — A plane carrying medical aid provided by Iranian people and the private sector landed at Kabul airport on Tuesday, IRNA news agency reported.

The shipment consists of masks, disinfectants, medical gloves and hospital supplies donated by the people and the private sector of Iran to Afghans.

The aid is planned to be handed over to Afghan government and Ministry of Health officials during an official ceremony.

Iran had previously assisted the Afghan government by 2,000 coronavirus test kits.

Earlier in April, Afghanistan appreciated Iran for offering health and treatment services to Afghan refugees infected with coronavirus free of charge.

FAO delivers first batch of desert locust control equipment to Iran

Tehran — As part of an ongoing support provided by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to Iran for controlling desert locust infestation, the first consignment of pest control equipment supplied by the Organization, was delivered to the country's plant protection authority.

According to a press release published by the FAO Representation in Iran, this delivery includes 25 vehicle-mounted Ultra Low Volume (ULV) sprayers worth around USD 125,000.

Iran is now experiencing the worst desert locust outbreak in the last 50 years. The latest tracking data shows that seven out of 31 provinces of the country have been invaded by this pest so far and the new projection implies that this number might be increased to 10.

Although, last year Iran managed to conduct pesticide spraying operations in more than 700,000 ha of its rangelands, this year, as the infestations have occurred in larger scales, the country needs to expand the control operation and treat at least one million ha of surface areas.

In this regard, FAO has financed a USD 500,000 emergency Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) project to further enhance Iran's national technical capacity for early warning, monitoring and management of desert locust.

In the framework of this project, FAO assists the Plant Protection Organization of the Ministry of Agriculture Jihad with increasing its technical capacity through training workshops and learning programmes for 320 pest and agriculture officers in the locust affected provinces of the country.

This project also provides the country with additional handheld and knapsack sprayers, Personal Protective Equipment, chemicals (pesticides), and data management and communications software and hardware equipment.

Magnitude 4 quake hits Tehran province

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — An earthquake measuring 4.0 on the Richter scale shook Tehran province on Wednesday.

The earthquake occurred at 1:41 p.m. local time at a depth of 12 kilometers near the city of Damavand, northeast of Tehran, according to the Iranian Seismological Center.

On May 8, an earthquake measuring 5.1 on the Richter scale shook the same area, killing two and injuring 33.

The causative fault for the earthquake was Mosha fault, 5km north of the city of Damavand. It has a history of major historical earthquakes in 958 A.D. in Rey-Taleghan with an estimated earthquake magnitude (EEM) of 7.7; 15 June 1665 with EEM 6.5 that caused a landslide and created Taar lake in the vicinity of Damavand, actually a mountain promenade in Tehran province; 27 March 1830 EEM 7.1 in Shemiranat; 2 October 1930 EEM5.0 in Ah-Mobarakabad; 20 January 1990 EEM5.9 in Firouzkuh; and 9 May 2020 EEM5.1 in Damavand, according to Mehdi Zare, a professor of engineering seismology.

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

WORDS IN THE NEWS

Security in Iraq

(November 05, 2003)

A week of increasing violence in Iraq has threatened Iraqis and foreign forces alike. There are now signs that security in Baghdad is being increased - but will checkpoints be the answer? This report from Jonny Dymond:

The **sprawling** headquarters of the **Coalition Provisional Administration**, sitting on the west bank of the Tigris, escaped from Tuesday night's attack **unscathed**. There are some signs that security in central Baghdad has been **stepped up**. Late on Tuesday night, a military **checkpoint** appeared on one of the main roads in the city's business and commercial district. On Wednesday morning, a **higher profile** US army presence was on the streets outside the **fortified** hotels where most foreigners stay. But there's a limit to what the **occupying powers** can do. To close down Baghdad with endless checkpoints and a large number of troops on the streets would not only provide attackers with a greater range of **softer targets**, it would also make the city feel yet more occupied. Better intelligence, rather than a **heavy-handed** security presence, is what the coalition needs most.

■ Words

sprawling: covering a large area
Coalition Provisional Administration: The US-led administration in Iraq - something that is provisional has been arranged for the present time but will be changed in the future
unscathed: undamaged
stepped up: increased
checkpoint: a place where traffic has to stop and be checked
higher profile: more obvious
fortified: fortified buildings are strengthened, to resist attack
the occupying powers: countries which have taken power in Iraq
softer targets: places which are easier to attack
heavy-handed: rough and thoughtless

(Source: BBC)

‘Sympathetic Iran’ donates \$35m to families affected by COVID-19

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — A national campaign called Iran-e Hamdel (literally meaning sympathetic Iran) has collected 1.5 trillion rials (nearly \$35 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) to help the financially struggling families affected by the coronavirus outbreak.

Launched at the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan (April 23), the campaign aims to provide financial assistance to the needy affected by the pandemic.

Benefactors, charity centers and religious organizations have distributed some 9.5 million warm food packages,

worth 1.3 trillion rials (nearly \$32 million), among the needy since the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan, Seyed Morteza Bakhtiari, head of the Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation said on Tuesday.

To date, 2,140,840 people have participated in the campaign, IRIB quoted Bakhtiari as saying.

In a televised speech on April 9, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said the Corona outbreak is a test for all the world, both for governments and for nations. The Iranian Nation shone brightly in this test, and at

the peak of this national pride are the health professionals.

Besides the health professionals, volunteers, university students and Basij forces have entered the battlefield against Corona and their services are indescribable, the Leader's Twitter account wrote.

People's participation in the fight against Corona was truly amazing: 1) people feeding the needy; 2) turning houses into workshops to sew free masks; 3) disinfecting public areas; 4) talking to landlords and shop owners to exempt people from their rents.

Regional initiative for locust infestation

Already hard-hit by coronavirus, a second wave of locust swarm invasion from East Africa threatens region

By Salman Parviz

A trilateral plan among Iran, Pakistan and India is being formulated to address locust swarm infestations that devour crops and threaten the livelihood and sustenance in the region, already struggling with coronavirus pandemic.

The desert locust is considered the most destructive migratory pest in the world and a single swarm covering one square kilometer can contain up to 80 million locusts.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) said on Friday there was an increased risk along both sides of India-Pakistan border.

India, which was battered by Cyclone Amphan on its east coast, announced that New Delhi is waiting to hear from Islamabad on a proposal for the collaborative action. Iran has already acknowledged and responded to the Indian action plan, which includes an offer to provide pesticide Malathion for aerial spraying to restrain locust populations in southeastern provinces of Sistan-Baluchestan and South Khorasan.

The plan of action was recommended after reports emerged that swarms of the destructive pests were heading towards India after breeding and maturing in Iranian and Pakistani provinces of Baluchistan. In India, more adult groups of small swarms have been reported which have spread into the states of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.

Experts say that a larger than normal locust attack could happen this year in India and a plague will give a heavy blow to agriculture, just in time when food security has become paramount.

Iranian agriculture ministry's Plant Protection Organization said the military was called for help last week for a second year to help fight locusts that have invaded the south of the country, threatening to destroy crops worth more than seven billion dollars. The locust swarms also threaten livestock, endangering pastoral communities and can have adverse impact on the tourism industry.

Spokesman for the ministry, Mohammad Reza Mir, said more than 200,000 hectares of orchards and farmland have been under attack by desert locusts in seven of the country's 31 provinces.

"The military have promised to help fight the desert locusts, including by providing all-terrain vehicles for use in areas which are hard to access" Mir told ILNA adding that last year the military "was a big help."

An agreement was signed on March 19, according to which the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations agreed to provide Iran \$200,000 and help to procure equipment for the country's two desert locust control centers for capacity building.

"In Pakistan, 38 percent of the area (60 percent in Baluchistan, 25 percent in Sindh and 15 percent in Punjab) are breeding grounds for the desert locust, whereas the entire country is under the threat of invasion if the desert location is not contained in the breeding region," according to an FAO report. The report highlights migration pattern of locust and its potential impact on agricultural economy of Pakistan.

The silver lining is that an already regulated bilateral collaboration between India and Pakistan exists, six regular meetings between India and Pakistan are held every year from June to November.

The FAO report shows that swarms of locusts would be migrating to Pakistan in coming months from southern Iran's border areas of Baluchestan, Oman and East Africa.

According to the report, the last serious desert locust invasion in the eastern region of Pakistan occurred in 1993. Beginning in mid-2018, some 25 years later, a major upsurge of desert locust developed in the Arabian Peninsula as a result of higher frequency of cyclones originating in the Indian Ocean in 2019, that brought heavy rains to the Empty Quarter (Rub' al Khali) along the borders of Saudi Arabia, Oman, UAE and Yemen.

"This year the situation is aggravated as for

the first time in many decades, there is a second threat of invasion by swarms in East Africa in late June and during July," the FAO report says.

■ Regional issue

Locust swarms is nothing new to East Africa and West Asia, but this year's swarms are expected to be larger than in 2019 because their number increases on average 20-fold with each generation. The locust infestation is the worst in 70 years in East Africa and has affected 23 countries in all.

The insects first swept through Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and South Sudan in January and February. Now, after those locusts laid eggs, new swarms likely to be 20 times larger were beginning to eat their way through the region.

The World Bank has set up a \$500 million program to fight the locust infestation in East Africa and parts of West Asia, which is said to cause economic damage costing \$8.5bn this year.

Swarms of locusts, many billions strong, were moving from East Africa to West Asia and South Asia, "decimating livelihoods and devouring food", said David Malpass, President of the World Bank Group, adding the locust swarms threatened a "monumental crisis" and "a humanitarian emergency."

The highly mobile species of short-horned grasshoppers travel in swarms of 30 to 50 million insects, covering a distance of 150 km and devouring up to 200 tons of crops per day.

East Africa's locust swarm threaten food security in an area already under threat from plagues. A desert locust can eat roughly its weight in fresh food per day (about two grams). A one square kilometer swarm contains at least 40 million locusts, each eat the same amount of food each day as about 35,000 people, based on a person eating an average of 2.3 kilograms of food per day.

Locusts can lay as many as 80 eggs per female, and deposit them at a depth of 10 to 15 centimeters below the earth's surface.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ع

Tehran to host autism conference

The 4th conference on autism disorder with a theme of empowering human resources and families will be held in Tehran on February 20.

The event is organized by the Charity Foundation for Special Diseases in cooperation with the Special Education Organization, the Ministry of Health, the Welfare Organization and the Health Psychology Association.

برگزاری همایش اوتیسم در تهران

چهارمین همایش «اُتیسم، توانمندسازی نیروی انسانی و خانواده» اول اسفند ماه در تهران برگزار می‌شود.

این همایش توسط بنیاد امور بیماری‌های خاص و با مشارکت سازمان آموزش و پرورش استثنایی، وزارت بهداشت، سازمان بهزیستی، و انجمن روان‌شناسی سلامت ایران برگزار می‌شود.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“-et, -ette”

■ **Meaning**: small

■ **For example**: This **marionette** performance was the best school program I have seen in my 21 years of teaching.

PHRASAL VERB

Hand something around

■ **Meaning**: to offer something to each person in a group

■ **For example**: Willie helped hand the mugs around.

IDIOM

(As) broad as it's long

■ **Explanation**: this expression means that there is no real difference which alternative is chosen

■ **For example**: A: "Do you prefer the white or the red car." B: It's as broad as it's long. I'll only have it for a day."

Hezbollah warns of Israeli plan for Palestinian state in Jordan

The Secretary General of the Lebanese resistance movement Hezbollah has warned of Israel's plans for a Palestinian state in Jordan.

In an interview with Lebanon's Noor Radio on Tuesday, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah called the Zionist regime a cancerous entity with no credibility in the region.

"Israel aims to occupy the entire Palestine and according to this scheme, Jordan is an alternative home for the Palestinian people," he was cited as saying by the website of Al Manar TV.

He further asserted that Tel Aviv lacks the courage to wage another war on Lebanon, given the Muslim country's defensive might.

"We warn Israel against committing a folly by launching the great war, all factions of axis of resistance could engage in such a war," Nasrallah said.

The Hezbollah leader vowed a firm response to any attacks by the Israeli military, noting that the fake and racist entity would not manage to survive.

"We neither want a civil war nor want to rule the country," he said. "We retaliate to any attack on our fighters everywhere."

Nasrallah further lambasted the U.S. military presence in the region, asserting that it "indicates the weakness of its allies" in West Asia.

Cording to Press TV, on Monday, the second-in-command of Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance movement hailed the 2000 liberation of southern Lebanon from the Israeli occupation as a "turning point" in the history of the region.

"We have moved from the stage of despair to hope, from surrender to resistance, from humiliation to honor, and from defeat to victory," Sheikh Naim Qassem said.

U.S. redeploys additional military equipment to northeast Syria

The United States has deployed additional military equipment to the northeast of Syria's Al-Hasakah governorate, the country's state-run news agency SANA reported citing local sources.

According to the agency, a convoy of armored vehicles and other military equipment arrived from Iraq via the Al-Walid crossing point. SANA cited local sources as saying that the equipment was intended to boost the capabilities of existing U.S. bases in the region.

Moreover, six U.S. armored vehicles left Iraq's El Mahmoudia village to the south of the Al-Walid crossing point, crossed the Iraqi-Syrian border and headed towards a Syrian oil field controlled by US troops.

On October 9, 2019 Turkey launched an operation codenamed Peace Spring with the aim of creating a buffer zone in northern Syria, where, Ankara said, Syrian refugees would be able to return from Turkey. At the end of October U.S. President Donald Trump declared the pullout of U.S. military from the area of the Turkish military operation, but at the same time added that Washington was determined to retain control of oil fields in the country's northeast. Arab and Turkish mass media subsequently said more than once that the United States was regrouping its forces in the northeast of Syria.

EU proposes 750 billion-euro coronavirus recovery fund

The European Union's executive arm is proposing a 750 billion-euro (\$825 billion) recovery fund to help the bloc's economy through the painful recession triggered by the coronavirus pandemic, commissioner Paolo Gentiloni said Wednesday.

Gentiloni, who is in charge of economic affairs at the commission, wrote in a tweet that the move is "a European turning point to face an unprecedented crisis."

However, the 27-nation EU remains deeply divided over what conditions should be attached to the funds, and the commission proposal is likely to set off weeks of wrangling. Details of the plan are due to be unveiled later Wednesday, AP reported.

The move comes as the world's biggest trading bloc enters its deepest-ever recession, weighed down by the impact of the coronavirus. Virtually every country has broken the EU's deficit limit as they've spent to keep health care systems, businesses and jobs alive.

While citizens across Europe are slowly returning to work and students move gradually offline and head back to classrooms, hardest-hit countries like Italy and Spain remain in desperate needs of funds and want to avoid any long-term wrangling.

Earlier this month, the leaders of Germany and France - historically, the two main drivers of EU integration - agreed on a one-time 500 billion-euro (\$543 billion) fund, a proposal that would add further cash to an arsenal of financial measures the bloc is deploying to cope with the economic fallout.

That plan would involve the EU borrowing money in financial markets - an unprecedented move by the commission - to help sectors and countries that are particularly affected by the pandemic.

Don't let patent rows hamper search for virus vaccine: UN

The UN patent agency has hailed the push to create a coronavirus vaccine and make it globally available, but warned against allowing copyright rows to overshadow and delay the process.

"What we need in the first place here is innovation," Francis Gurry, the head of the UN's World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), told reporters in a virtual briefing.

According to AFP, World Health Organization member states last week adopted a resolution recognising that extensive immunisation against COVID-19 would be a "global public good", and pushing for any vaccine to be equitably and fairly distributed to all.

Some, including South Africa, are calling for any vaccine against the novel coronavirus to be patent-free.

But that idea has met with pushback from pharmaceutical companies and Washington, which opposes any challenge to international intellectual property rights.

Gurry pointed out that "there are provisions in international legal instruments and there are provisions in national legal instruments which allow access, or intellectual property rights to be overridden in certain circumstances."

The COVID-19 pandemic, which has killed over 350,000 people out of the more than 5.5 million infected worldwide, certainly represents such an emergency, he said.

The usual victims

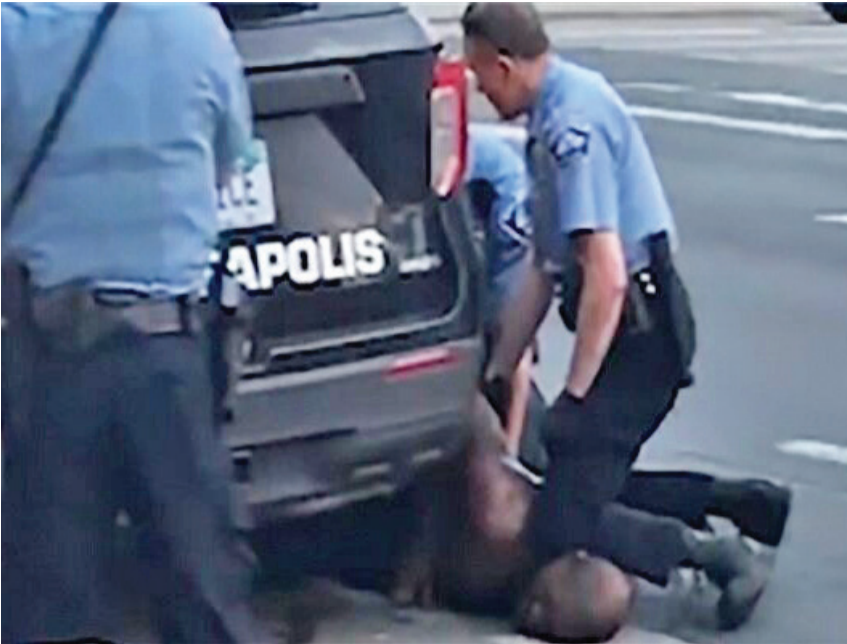
→ 1 Louis's Department of Sociology, and Michael Esposito, of the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research. The researchers used verified data on police killings from 2013 to 2018 compiled by the website Fatal Encounters, created by Nevada-based journalist D. Brian Burghart. Under their models, they found that roughly 1-in-1,000 black boys and men will be killed by police in their lifetime. For white boys and men, the rate is 39 out of 100,000.

In fact, people of color in general were found more likely to be killed by police than their white counterparts.

According to Citylab, the study was published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, or PNAS, a journal that recently drew controversy for publishing another study on police killing disparities. That study, led by Michigan State University psychology professor Joseph Cesario, published on July 22, found that violent crime rates and the racial demographics of a given location are better indicators for determining a police killing victim's race.

As Cesario explained in a press release:

Many people ask whether black or white citizens are more likely to be shot and why. If you live in a county that has a lot of white people committing



crimes, white people are more likely to be shot. If you live in a county that has a lot of black people committing crimes, black people are more likely to be shot.

The two studies are just the latest salvos in a long-running debate over whether police violence towards African Americans is better explained because of

racial prejudice or because black people are really violent enough to justify extra police force. The Cesario study, with its focus on crime rates, seems to fall in the latter camp. Both rely on media-generated police shootings data—Cesario's uses databases produced by The Washington Post and The Guardian.

China's president orders military to prepare for war

Chinese President Xi Jinping has ordered China's armed forces to "comprehensively" strengthen the training of troops and be prepared for war, as tensions rise between Beijing and a number of other countries.

Speaking on the sidelines of the annual meeting of the National People's Congress on Wednesday, Xi praised the Chinese army's contribution to the country's fight against the coronavirus epidemic but called on the armed forces to ramp up military training.

"It is necessary to explore ways of training and preparing for war because epidemic control efforts have been normalized," China's official news agency Xinhua quoted Xi as saying. "It is necessary to step up preparations for armed combat, to flexibly carry out actual combat military training, and to improve our military's ability to perform military missions."

Xi further said the military had to think about "worst-case scenarios," adding that it had to be prepared to "resolutely safeguard national sovereignty" and "safeguard the overall

strategic stability of the country."

Xi's call for scaling up battle readiness followed a decision to increase the budget for the Chinese military by 178 billion dollars last year.

It also comes amid the straining of relations with India over border issues and rising tensions with the United States and Australia over the coronavirus pandemic.

The U.S. and Australia have called for a probe into the origins of the coronavirus.

Since the coronavirus epidemic broke out in the Chinese city of Wuhan in late December, Beijing and Washington have clashed over the spread and the virus' origin.

U.S. President Donald Trump keeps referring to the new coronavirus as the "China virus."

Trump has over the past weeks claimed that there is evidence Beijing created the coronavirus in a medical lab in the Chinese city. This is while the U.S. intelligence agencies say they have seen no evidence to show the virus is man-made.

France halts hydroxychloroquine for coronavirus treatment



The French government banned Wednesday the treatment of COVID-19 patients with hydroxychloroquine, a controversial and potentially harmful drug that US President Donald Trump has said he is taking preventively.

The move came after two French advisory bodies and the World Health Organization warned this week that the drug -- a treatment for rheumatoid arthritis and lupus - had been shown to be potentially dangerous in several studies, AFP reported.

The urgency of the coronavirus outbreak has prompted some doctors to prescribe the drug despite a lack of research to demonstrate its efficacy against the novel coronavirus.

Among them were a French infectious disease specialist who caught the ear of Trump, who stunned his own administration last week by revealing he was tak-

ing hydroxychloroquine as a preventive measure against COVID-19.

Under the new French rules, the drug can be used only in clinical trials to test its efficacy against coronavirus - making it unclear if the French doctor, Didier Raoult, would be able to continue using it at his hospital in Marseille in the south.

Raoult has already rejected a comprehensive study published last week in The Lancet medical journal, which found that administering hydroxychloroquine or its related compound chloroquine actually increased the risk of dying for many patients.

Hydroxychloroquine, also used to treat malaria, is sold under the brand name Plaquenil by French pharma giant Sanofi, which promised to offer governments millions of doses if studies proved it could be safely used in the coronavirus fight.

With eye on election, Trump says he wants full Afghanistan pullout



President Donald Trump on Tuesday renewed his desire for a full military withdrawal from Afghanistan but added that he had not set a target date, amid speculation he might make ending the United States's longest war part of his re-election campaign.

«We're there 19 years and, yeah, I think that's enough ... We can always go back if we want to,» Trump told a White House news conference.

Asked if the Thanksgiving holiday on November 26 was a target, Trump said: «No. I have no target. But as soon as (is) reasonable. Over a period of time but as soon as reasonable.»

The U.S. has already begun to withdraw its forces as part of an agreement signed with the Taliban armed group in the Qatari capital Doha on February

Several academics have challenged Cesario's methodology, namely his decision to "sidestep the benchmark" of using population to calculate racial disparity. It has been questioned whether using population is an appropriate benchmark in these kinds of analyses: Critics of this technique believe that population-benchmarking is flawed because it assumes black and white people have an equal likelihood of encountering police. (An example of population-benchmarking is, as Cesario's study explains, stating: "26% of civilians killed by police shootings in 2015 were Black even though Black civilians comprise only 12% of the U.S. population. According to this 12% benchmark, more Black civilians are fatally shot than we would expect, indicating disparity.")

Instead of using population, Cesario analyzed variables such as the race of the police officers, crime rates, and the racial demographics of locations where police shootings happened in 2015. From that, he derived that black and Latino victims of police killings were more likely to have been shot by black and Latino cops, and that "might not be due to bias on the part of Black or Hispanic officers, but instead to simple overlap between officer and county demographics."

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has also on several occasions accused China of not being transparent and honest about the coronavirus pandemic.

China has defended its handling of the outbreak, repeatedly saying it "has been nothing but open, transparent, and responsible" in informing the World Health Organization (WHO) and affected countries about the pandemic.

More recently, the U.S. and China have clashed over Hong Kong and Taiwan.

According to Press TV, separately on Wednesday, Wu Qian, the spokesman for China's Ministry of National Defense, said Taiwan's reliance on "foreign forces" to advance its secession bid from China posed the biggest threat to China's national security.

"China's homeland security and overseas interests are also facing some real threats," Wu said. "China must have a clear mind when it comes to national defense and be prepared for danger in peace time."

Trump threatens to close down social media after Twitter posts warning under his tweet

U.S. President has threatened to close down social media platforms that do not support his agenda, a day after Twitter posted a fact-checking notice on one of his tweets.

Social media firms suppressed conservative points of view, the president claimed - without any evidence - before saying his administration would "strongly regulate [the companies] or close them down, before we can ever allow this to happen".

Trump advised the companies to "Clean up your act, NOW!!!!".

It is unclear whether the president's professed goal would be compatible with the first amendment to the U.S. constitution.

On Wednesday, he tweeted: "Republicans feel that Social Media Platforms totally silence conservatives voices. We will strongly regulate, or close them down, before we can ever allow this to happen. We saw what they attempted to



do, and failed, in 2016. We can't let a more sophisticated version of that happen again.

"Just like we can't let large scale Mail-In Ballots take root in our Country. It would be a free for all on cheating, forgery and the theft of Ballots. Whoever cheated the most would win. Likewise, Social Media. Clean up your act, NOW!!!!"

Twitter's fact-checking notice was posted on a previous Trump tweet that claimed mail-in ballots could allow widespread voter fraud. It immediately led to a presidential eruption accusing the platform of "completely stifling FREE SPEECH".

Trump's outburst on Wednesday also followed Twitter's refusal to delete a number of posts in which he accused a television presenter of murder, again without any evidence.

The widower of Lori Klausutis, a staffer for former Republican congressman Joe Scarborough who died some two decades ago in an accident, had asked Twitter boss Jack Dorsey to remove the messages because they sullied his wife's memory.

Iran strongly denies Willy Sagnol talk

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — The Football Federation of the Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) has strongly denied reports that it has been linked with Willy Sagnol.

Italian site Foot Mercato has reported that the Iranian federation has opened negotiations with the former Bayern Munich assistant but FFIRI spokesman Amir Mehdi Alavi has dismissed claims the federation has held talks with the Frenchman.

"That's absolutely not true. Dragan Skocic will remain as Iran coach," Alavi said.

The Italian media had already reported that Andrea Stramaccioni and Giovanni "Gianni" De Biasi were shortlisted to take charge of Iran national football team but the federation refuted the speculations.

Sagnol has never worked as head coach in a team and was assistant of Carlo Ancelotti in Bayern Munich in 2017.

Speculations about the Iranian football team can harm the team since the team are in a sensitive situation.

The Persian are third in group C, five points behind Iraq in the 2020 World Cup qualification.

The Iranian football outfit have four must-win game ahead and the rumors will definitely distract the team.

After back-to-back appearances in 2014 and 2018, the aim now is to secure a third consecutive participation for the first time.

Iran have reached the World Cup on five occasions.



Iranian skater Nemati dies of Covid-19



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran national skate team member Mohammad Nemati died of Coronavirus on Tuesday.

He has died at the age of 20 in his hometown Mashhad. Nemati won a gold medal in South Korea international competition in 2018.

Nemati also was a member of Iran national team in the 18th edition of the Asian Roller Skating Championship in Mumbai, India. Some media reports suggest that he has died from suspected poisoning.

Tehran Times offers its heartfelt condolence to his bereaved family.

Ex-Iran athlete Ghasem Koveitipour passes away



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Former Iran athlete Ghasem Koveitipour has passed away on Monday.

He died of heart attack at the age of 69 in Ahvaz, Khuzestan Province.

Koveitipour won a bronze medal at the 1974 Asian Games 4 x 400 m relay in Tehran.

He was laid in his hometown Khorramshahr on Tuesday.

Tehran Times offers its heartfelt condolence to his bereaved family.

Persepolis keeper Radosevic ready to become first choice

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Bozidar Radosevic says that he thinks about football rather than financial issues as he hopes to wear the No. 1 shirt at Persepolis.

The Croatian goalie returned to Tehran after more than two months break due to coronavirus outbreak.

Speaking about the isolation time in his hometown, Radosevic said: "It was a difficult time for me. It was hard for professional footballers because you couldn't practice as much as you wanted to. I tried to continue my personal training program during the quarantine time."

The 31-year-old goalkeeper joined the Reds in 2016 as Alireza Beiranvand's backup. He won Iran Professional League (IPL) with Persepolis for three consecutive seasons along with winning Hazfi Cup and the Iranian Super Cup three times.

Radosevic also met Persepolis acting general manager



Mehdi Rasoul Panah over his unpaid salaries.

"I talked to Mr. Rasoul Panah and he vowed to pay my salary in the coming days. But, the most important thing for me is that I've finally returned to Iran. My priority is football, not financial issues."

Persepolis and Iran national team goalkeeper, Beiranvand, will leave the team at the summer to join the Belgian team Royal Antwerp.

"I've been here for the last four seasons and I've been waiting for this opportunity to become the No.1 goalkeeper at Persepolis," Rado spoke about the possibility of becoming the first-choice stopper for Persepolis in next season.

"You can see how I have behaved and tried my best in training and matches and I hope it's my turn in the next season."

Premier League clubs vote to resume contact training

Premier League clubs voted unanimously on Wednesday to resume contact training as the English top-flight took a significant step towards a possible restart in June.

The Premier League was put on hold in March due to the coronavirus pandemic, with Liverpool agonizingly close to the title.

Clubs returned to training in small and socially distanced groups last week but they have now moved to stage two of the "return to training protocol".

"Premier League shareholders today voted unanimously to resume contact training, marking another step towards restarting the Premier League season, when safe to do so," the league said in a statement.

"Squads are now able to train as a group and engage in tackling while minimizing any unnecessary close contact."

It added: "Discussions are ongoing as work continues towards resuming the season, when conditions allow."

The small number of positive tests from the first two rounds of testing at Premier League clubs has raised hopes of a return next month.

Eight cases of coronavirus among players and staff have been detected from 1,744 tests in the Premier League.

In the second-tier Championship, just two positive tests were registered from 1,014 tests.

A targeted return date of June 12 was described by Premier League chief executive Richard Masters last week as a "staging post".

Players and coaches have argued they will need until at least the end of June to reduce the risk of injuries after such a long lay-off.

Some players have voiced fears over their safety and that of their families due to the virus.

Watford captain Troy Deeney has not returned to training after three positive cases were registered by the Hornets over concerns he could spread the virus to his five-month-old son.

Germany's Bundesliga has already managed to complete two rounds of fixtures since returning behind closed doors and there has been little player opposition to La Liga's plans to return in Spain from June 11.

Liverpool captain Jordan Henderson said playing at an empty Anfield and winning the Premier League title with no fans present would be "pretty strange".

Liverpool were 25 points clear of 2019 champions Manchester City when the league was shut down, on the verge of being crowned English champions for the first time in 30 years.

(Source: AFP)

Olympic chief Bach consults with IOC members over virus fallout

Olympic chief Thomas Bach on Wednesday held a series of talks with International Olympic Committee members on the potential consequences of the coronavirus pandemic that has seen the Tokyo Games pushed back a year to 2021, sources said.

Bach was to address the 100 IOC members in three different sessions decided by language and local time zone.

Bach's aim is to canvas the members for their view on "how to handle the consequences of the coronavirus pandemic", a source told AFP.

The IOC president wants to hear "thoughts, ideas and experiences of all members across the globe", it added.

While Bach addressed all Olympic actors on March 24 when announcing the postponement of the Tokyo Games, it is the first time since the COVID-19 outbreak that he has specifically consulted IOC members.

Bach was backed up by Olympic Games executive director Christophe Dubi, IOC sports director Kit McConnell, IOC director general Christophe De Kepper and chief operating officer Lana Haddad.

The IOC's medical and scientific director, Richard Budgett, also took

to the floor to discuss "the issue of a vaccine", according to a second source.

Bach warned last week that 2021 was the "last option" for holding the delayed Tokyo Games, stressing that postponement cannot go on forever.

He said he backed Japan's stance that the Games will have to be cancelled if the coronavirus pandemic isn't under control by next year.

The German wouldn't say, however, whether a vaccine was a prerequisite for going ahead with the Olympics, but was lukewarm on the idea of holding them without fans.

In March, the Tokyo 2020 Olympics were postponed to July 23, 2021 over the coronavirus, which has killed hundreds of thousands around the world and halted international sport and travel. It was the first peacetime postponement of the Olympics.

The IOC has already set aside \$800 million to help organizers and sports federations meet the extra costs of a postponed Olympics.

According to the latest budget, the Games were due to cost \$12.6 billion, shared between the organizing committee, the government of Japan and Tokyo city.

(Source: Mirror)

Ex-Tractor forward fortune joins Auxerre

Former Tractor football team forward Kevin Fortune has joined Ligue 2 side Auxerre.

The 30-year-old player has penned a two-year contract with the French team.

The player, known for his contributions to RC Lens in the recent past, has been without a club since February, after departing Iranian side Tractor FC. Fortune joined Tractor in August 2019 but scored once in 10 matches.

Fortune was born in Paris, France but originated from Martinique. He made his debut for the Martinique national football team in 2019.

(Source: Bein Sport)

Asian half-marathon championship canceled

Tasnim — The first edition of the Asian half-marathon championship has been canceled.

The event has been halted due to Covid-19 pandemic.

The inaugural continental had been scheduled for July 19 at Shanghai, China.

Asian Athletics Association President Dahlan Al Hamad has announced the cancelation of the competition, saying the health of the athletes is the association's priority.

Dates for Women's Olympic Asian Qualifiers Play-off final confirmed

The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) in consultation with FIFA has approved the proposals by the Chinese Football Association (CFA) and the Korea Football Association (KFA) to move their Women's Olympic Football Tournament Tokyo 2020 Asian Qualifiers Play-off matches to February 19 and 24, 2021.

China PR and Korea Republic were set to contest Asia's final spot in the Women's 2020 Tokyo Olympic Football Tournament over two legs on June 4 and 9, 2020.

Subsequently on March 30, 2020, the International Olympic Committee announced the decision to move the Tokyo Summer Olympics from July 24 - August 9, 2020 to July 23 - August 8, 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The latest decision was confirmed to allow both Member Associations to have sufficient preparation time considering the challenging and unprecedented circumstances brought about by the pandemic.

China PR and Korea Republic will be seeking to join Japan (men and women), Australia (men and women), men's AFC U23 Championship winners Korea Republic and runners-up Saudi Arabia as Asia's representatives at the Tokyo Olympic Games.

(Source: the-afc)

Motorsport UK aims to get back on track from July 4

LONDON (Reuters) — The governing body for motorsport in Britain aims to resume racing activities without spectators from July 4, it said on Wednesday.

Motorsport UK suspended all its events throughout the country from March to the end of June due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We have explained our plans to government and are fortunate that motorsport takes place outdoors over large controlled spaces," said Motorsport UK chairman David Richards in a statement.

"Our plan is that, subject to government advice and ongoing lifting of restrictions, motorsport will resume from 4th July.

"We are making this announcement now as event organizers, venues, preparation specialists, the supply chain, volunteer marshals, officials and competitors all need time to put in place their plans."

Silverstone was due to host the British Formula One Grand Prix on July 19 but could now have two races, in late July and August, under a revised calendar and dependent on government approval.

"If we move into August that might give a little more certainty but, actually, I think it's probably essential that there's clarity on the quarantine situation in advance of that," Silverstone circuit boss Stuart Pringle told Sky Sports television.

Britain is due to introduce a 14-day quarantine period for most arrivals in the country from June 8. Formula One has yet to be granted an exemption.

Empty Japan stadiums could soon hear the sound of app-lause

A new Japanese smartphone app will allow fans to send virtual cheers and jeers to sports stadiums in the hope of creating atmosphere at matches played behind closed doors due to coronavirus.

Instrument maker Yamaha said its remote cheering system will let users tap buttons on the app to deliver cheers -- or boos -- via dozens of speakers placed inside grounds.

Event organisers can pre-set various types of cheers and jeers, and change the intensity levels depending on the number of users pressing their buttons -- aiming to replicate the roar when a goal or home run is scored. Even when a live audience is permitted, fans may still use the app to prevent potentially coronavirus-laden droplets flying through the air through shouting.

They can pick which side of the stadium to send their chosen cheer or jeer, and can remotely join chants that only designated users can begin. The company originally planned to launch the app in later this year, but accelerated its development after the coronavirus forced sporting events to be cancelled or played without fans.

Yamaha said a recent test of the system at a 51,000-seat stadium produced a sound similar to that of a live crowd.

The firm deployed 58 speakers at the Ecopa Stadium and invited officials from football teams Jubilo Iwata and Shimizu S Pulse to send in remote cheers and boos.

(Source: Eurosport)

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GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Enmity produces rancor and destruction.
Imam Ali (AS)

DEFC productions garner 39 international honors over last Iranian year

A R T **TEHRAN** – Films produced at the Documentary and Experimental Film Center (DEFC) collected 39 awards at the international events during the last Iranian calendar year from March 21, 2019 to March 20, 2020.

The productions from the center were screened in over 130 international events, the DEFC announced on Wednesday.



"Beloved" directed by Yasser Talebi was DEFC's most honored film during the last Iranian calendar year winning 21 awards at international events.

Directed by Yasser Talebi, "Beloved", about an 82-year-old woman who prefers a hard, solitary herder's existence with her cows to a more comfortable life among people, won 21 awards.

It took first place among the top five mid-length films selected by audience votes at the Hot Docs festival in Toronto, Canada.

The documentary also received the best photography award and the High School Students Award at the Sole Luna Doc Film Festival in Palermo, Italy.

The Trento Film Festival in Italy also honored the movie with the jury special mention and a UNESCO honorable mention.

"Finding Farideh", Iran's submission to the 2020 Oscars, which is about a Netherlands-based Iranian woman who was adopted by a Dutch couple forty years ago and returns to Iran to search for her family, was DEFC's second most honorable production.

Among the honors the film won was the best film award at the 1st edition of the Nostalgia Film Festival, an independent Iranian film event established by Iranian director Mohammad Qanefard in Milan, Italy.

Co-directed by Azadeh Musavi and Kurosh Atai, "Finding Farideh" was named best documentary at the 5th Herat International Women's Film Festival in Afghanistan.

DEFC productions have also won 48 awards at Iranian events over the past Iranian calendar year.

"No Place for Angels" about the national Iranian women's hockey team was the most honored documentary of the center.

Directed by Sam Kalantari, the film received the special jury award at Cinéma Vérité, Iran's major documentary film festival, which is organized by the DEFC in Tehran every year.

It was also picked as best documentary at the 38th edition of the Fajr Film Festival in Tehran.

Vocalist Alireza Qorbani to give online concert at Vahdat Hall

A R T **TEHRAN** – Vocalist Alireza Qorbani will be giving an online concert at Vahdat Hall in Tehran today, the Rudaki Foundation announced on Wednesday.

"Zero Degree Orbit", "Bridge", "Arghavan" and "Smell of Gisoo" are among the pieces Qorbani will be singing during the concert.



Vocalist Alireza Qorbani performs at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on March 14, 2016. (Tasnim/Mohammad Delkesh)

Composer Saman Samimi, tar player Milad Mohammadi and percussionist Hossein Zahavi accompanied him in the performance.

Music ensembles from Ukraine, Greece, India, Colombia, Sweden, Germany, the U.S., France and several other countries also gave performances at the expo.

Ebrahim Haqiqi reproduces world-famous artworks in new collection "Coronaism"

A R T **TEHRAN** – The 70-year-old Iranian graphic designer Ebrahim Haqiqi has reproduced some world-famous artworks in his new collection "Coronaism", which is on view in an online exhibit at Golestan Gallery in Tehran.

He has picked works by Vincent van Gogh, Rene Magritte, Francisco Goya, Leonardo da Vinci, Frida Kahlo and Edvard Munch, having added a number of elements representing the coronavirus days such as face masks.

"In the last days of 1398 (Iranian calendar year March 2019-2020) when the home quarantine was observed across the country and we were not able to take a trip and were forced to stay at home, I began to make these paintings and publish them on my Instagram," he told the Persian service of Honaronline.

"Those days there were shortages of masks, plastic gloves and disinfectant solutions and the outbreak of COVID-19 was much more serious," he said.

"In those days I noticed that some artists had remade some world-famous paintings. The idea was also shaped in my mind to work on some of the world's famous paintings and reproduce new designs. I first began to work on one painting by Rene Magritte, because I am very much interested in works by Magritte and had worked on a selection of his works in a collection of posters in the years between 1969 and 1974," he explained.

"I thought how I can represent the elements related to the new virus in these works better and noticed that portraits and close-up paintings had more potential for reproductions, and elements such as face masks can be seen better in these works," he said.

"In some of the reproductions at the very beginning I only added images of masks, plastic gloves and containers of disinfectant



A remake of René Magritte's "The Son of Man" by Iranian graphic designer Ebrahim Haqiqi from his collection Coronaism that is on display in an exhibit at Golestan Gallery in Tehran.

solutions, but later I thought more senses need to be added and only symbolic elements are not enough. Feelings such as loneliness, anxiety, and isolation, which were common in every individual around the world, are

missing and I thought I would like to reflect them all in my reproductions," he noted.

"Therefore I began further investigations into works by other artists and chose works with more open and wider spaces, and chose

works that reflected these feelings. I did not intend to just depend on humor and satire, although the entire collection is a bitter satire that reflects our memories of the coronavirus days," he said.

"It was important for me to select works by world-famous artists so that visitors could easily recognize the works and discover that I have worked on works by other artists. However, some criticized asking why I had reproduced works done by others. Initially, they didn't have any understanding of my goal but gradually they caught on to the main idea," he mentioned.

He said that he found the images by searching on the Internet and he also scanned some from books and images that he had.

"I tried not to ruin the original work because they belong to the masters of art and I have great respect for them; I only meant to add this new virus and pour the feelings of man into the world-famous works," he explained.

Haqiqi further added that he preferred to display his works in a gallery where visitors could come and see the works, but due to the pandemic, he decided to display them in an online exhibit at Golestan Gallery.

"I made a collection of 100 works and showed them to some of my friends who finally chose 50 for the exhibit. Each painting is created in three copies which are offered for sale," he said.

He said that he is also planning to select 70 of the works for a book he plans to publish in the future.

Haqiqi received a lifetime achievement award from the 37th Fajr Film Festival in January 2019. He received the award for the posters he has created for Iranian movies over his career spanning for over a half a century.

Birthday of Iranian-Turkmen poet Makhtum-Qoli Faraghi celebrated



This file photo shows people gathering at the mausoleum of Makhtum-Qoli Faraghi in Aq-Tuqai village in Iran's Golestan Province to celebrate the birthday of the poet.

→1 "Iran has long been the cradle of culture, poetry and literature. Every corner of this land is decorated with shining gems that have not been restricted in their homeland and have found national and international fame with their works, words and behavior," Salehi said in his message.

"Makhtum-Qoli Faraghi, the prominent poet of the everlasting green land of Golestan, is one of the great men who is famous in the world of poetry and literature," he added.

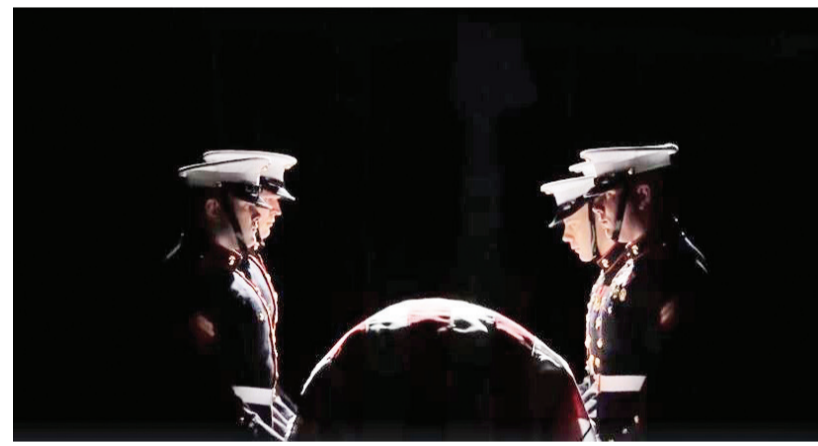
"He is from among the people and lived among them and composed his poetry about the pains and concerns of the people of his time. His deep religious beliefs and his love towards Prophet Muhammad (S) bestowed a deep meaning to his poetry," he noted.

"He was not the only poet of the Turkmen. His morals, strong beliefs in religion and his love for people made him a famous poet and a shining star in the sky of culture that bestows light upon those seeking the truth. He is known as one of the pioneers of poetry with moral themes," he mentioned.

"Paying tribute to this Turkmen poet is honoring humanity and human moral virtues. The concepts and themes hidden in the poetry of Makhtum-Qoli have turned his works into a treasure full of moral virtues," he said.

"I hereby express my sincere regards toward the brave and friendly Turkmen people and those who hold a commemorative ceremony for this great poet," he concluded.

Iranian doc spotlights veterans deported after fighting in U.S. wars



A scene from the Iranian documentary "Deported Veterans without a Country" by Mohammad Tayyebi.

A R T **TEHRAN** – An Iranian documentary directed by Mohammad Tayyebi scrutinizes the multiple cases of non-U.S. veterans who fought for the U.S. Army in Iraq, hoping that they will receive U.S. citizenship without further requirements, but the U.S. declined to grant them citizenship, and others who were deported on different charges.

"Deported Veterans without a Country" is scheduled to be broadcast by Press TV in the near future.

Numerous people from across the world joined the U.S. Army and fought for the country in Afghanistan and Iraq in hopes of receiving U.S. citizenship. However, they could not obtain citizenship in the

United States.

The documentary has been produced in collaboration with Filmar, a film studio cofounded by Tayyebi and Sonia Sarlak in Italy.

As an independent private institution in the cinema industry, Filmar's activities include production, distribution and education in the field of cinema.

"Victory" directed by Hamid Kuhpai on the challenges and struggles Muslims endured in their efforts against Apartheid in South Africa and their memories of detainment, torture and death was produced at Filmar in 2018.

"The Beginning" by Agim Abdula and "Aysan" by Kheradmandi Mehrshad are other productions by the company.

Art Bureau to display artworks on Palestinians' resistance

A R T **TEHRAN** – The Art Bureau plans to showcase a collection of artworks by a number of Iranian artists on the resistance of Palestinians after the pandemic.

The collection was created last week by 50 artists in an art project in Mashhad in the courtyard of the holy shrine of Imam Reza (AS), the eighth Shia Imam. The project was carried out in three days to mark International Quds Day on May 22.

Mohammad-Ali Rajabi, Masud Nejabati, Ali Vazirian, Hassan Ruholamin, Abbas Barzegar Ganji, Zahra Asadian, Nasser Taqizadeh, Abbas Gudarzi and Mehdi Farrokhi were among the participating artists.

The Art Bureau's Visual Arts Office is the organizer of the project, which was arranged to respect and support the years-long resistance of the oppressed people of Palestine.

It also included the release of poetry recitation and music videos with the central themes of resistance of Palestinians.

There are plans to hold the exhibit in Tehran as well. 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.



Artists draw paintings on Palestinians' resistance in the courtyard of the holy shrine of Imam Reza (AS) in Mashhad on May 22, 2020.

Monstra Lisbon Animation Festival picks movies from Iran

A R T **TEHRAN** – Several movies by Iranian filmmakers are competing in the various sections of the 20th Monstra Lisbon Animation Festival underway in Portugal.

"One Person" by Mahbubeh Kalai is competing in the Student Shorts category of the event, which is being organized online this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The movie is about a bowl that has three motifs of roses. In the bowl, there is a universe of meaning that is the story of love and loneliness.

"Am I a Wolf?" by Amir-Hushang Moein has been selected to screen in the Short Film Competition.

Produced at the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults, the movie is about a group of children

who perform the familiar story of the wolf and the yearlings in school as a puppet show. The nanny goat grieving for its yearlings and the angry wolf in its solitude face each other.

In the Supershorts section, Mehdi Barqzadegan's "Show Off" is competing.

The film tells the story of a crow who has lost one of her tail feathers. However, the crow removes all her feathers so as to attract more attention. Just then, among the crowd, a fox notices her.

This section also features "Mellat Bank" by Ruhollah Saadatmand. It is about some employees frustrated in a small office. Their boss is disappointed by the situation but he finds the solution.

The Monstra Lisbon Animation Festival opened on May 25 and will run until May 31.



"Show Off" by Mehdi Barqzadegan is competing in the Supershorts of the Monstra Lisbon Animation Festival in Portugal.