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Iran inks 2-year agreement for exporting electricity to Iraq

TEHRAN — Iran has signed an agreement with Iraq for exporting electricity to the country for two years, Iranian Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian, who visited the Arab neighbor on Wednesday, said. Heading a delegation of electricity experts, Ardakanian arrived in Baghdad, capital of Iraq, on Wednesday, and met with his Iraqi counterpart and some other senior officials of this neighboring country. During his daylong visit, the minister

held talks with Iraqi President Barham Salih, the country's Energy Minister Majid Mahdi Hantoush, as well as Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kazemi, Ali Abdul Amir Alavi, Iraq's minister of finance, and heads of central bank and Trade Bank of Iraq. According to the minister, the electricity export contract that used to be a one-year agreement was extended during the current year to cover 2020 and 2021. →4

Coronavirus: Iran preparing to reopen doors to foreign travelers

TEHRAN — Iran's tourism ministry has forecast that the country will start hosting foreign travelers as of mid-summer with the priority given to travelers from the neighboring countries. "Based on our tourism marketing program monitoring and data analysis from the neighboring countries, the Persian Gulf

littoral states, and the European Union, an initial forecast suggests that Iran will open land borders to neighbors as of 15th of Tir (July 5) and some of its air borders as of 1st of Mordad (July 22)," ISNA quoted Mohammad-Ebrahim Larjani, the director of the ministry's advertising and marketing office, as saying on Friday. →8

World Environment Day: Iran outlines plan to protect its rich biodiversity

By Faranak Bakhtiari

TEHRAN — Because the most important part of wildlife conservation is habitat preservation, the Department of Environment (DOE) have developed several national programs, 10 of which are underway, and 10 others will soon be finalized to implement, Shahaboddin Montazemi, director of wildlife's conservation office at the DOE told the Tehran Times. World Environment Day, hosted by

Colombia this 2020, is the most renowned day for environmental action. Since 1974, it has been celebrated every year on 5 June, engaging governments, businesses, celebrities and citizens to focus their efforts on a pressing environmental issue. This year, the theme is biodiversity — a concern that is both urgent and existential. Recent events, from bushfires in Brazil, the United States, and Australia to locust infestations across East Africa — and now, →9

PERSPECTIVE
Mahmood Monshipouri
Francisco State University
and the University of
California, Berkeley

The implications of declining U.S. leadership

The Trump administration's ongoing policy of withdrawal from international institutions—including the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, the 2016 Paris Climate Change Accord, the Open Skies Treaty, and now the World Health Organization (WHO) in the middle of the greatest global health crisis—demonstrates the declining U.S. leadership ever since the post-World War II order was created. This latest move is made at a time when the world relies heavily on the WHO's leadership to steer the COVID-19 pandemic response.

While as recently as two months ago praising China in the hope of salvaging bilateral trade ties between the two countries, Trump has now turned against China and the WHO. The latter has been instrumental in managing and treating the worldwide spread of malaria, tuberculosis, SARS, HIV-AIDS, and other infectious and non-communicable diseases. Trump's recent announcement (May 29, 2020) to permanently end the U.S. contribution to the WHO, and even to withdraw U.S. membership, is yet another attempt to distract the public from his mishandling of the current coronavirus crisis—a move that will lead to further global U.S. isolation, ironically putting China in a much stronger position to influence that organization's policies.

Over its more than seventy-year life, since its inception in 1948 within the UN framework, the WHO has had major achievements, such as eradicating smallpox, and failures, such as its sluggish reaction to the Ebola outbreak in 2014. On balance, however, the World Health Organization's raison d'être has never been called into question. The significance of the organization will be amplified when and if a second wave of the coronavirus returns, again posing an existential threat to all the countries around the world. Second waves have a history of striking back even harder than the initial outbreak, as was the case for the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic. →7

Iranian students rally in solidarity with African Americans

TEHRAN — Iranian students and rights activists gathered outside the Swiss embassy in Tehran on Wednesday to express solidarity with African Americans over the shocking killing of George Floyd at the hands of a white police. Demonstrators held placards that read "No to racism" and "I can't breathe". They also held candle-lit vigil for the victims of U.S. police brutality, Press TV reported on Wednesday. They also chanted anti-racism slogans while holding pictures depicting the U.S. police brutality against demonstrators. In the crowd, there were also non-Iranian students who used the chance to condemn racism. Demonstrations in Tehran came against the backdrop of days of angry protests across the U.S., with people setting police cars ablaze and clashing with police. In Tehran, students believe racism in America

is systemic and is yet to take a break. U.S. police has a long track record of unpunished violence against black people. According to a study conducted in 2019 and published on LA-times website, about 1 in 1,000 black men and boys in the U.S. can expect to die at the hands of police. That makes them 2.5 times more likely than white men and boys to die during an encounter with cops. The Iranian Foreign Ministry has strongly denounced rampant bloodshed of African-Americans in the United States and the country's suppression of the protests that have engulfed the U.S. in the aftermath of Floyd's death. "Iran regrets the tragic murder of black Americans, denounces deadly racial profiling in the United States & urges authorities to do justice for every case," the ministry said in a tweet on Friday. →3

Over 10,000 arrested, protests against Floyd killing continue

By staff & agencies
More than 10,000 people have been arrested in protests that have rocked the United States since the police killing of George Arbery, an unarmed Black man, according to an Associated Press tally. Arbery, the black jogger who fatally shot by two white men on Feb. 23 in Georgia. According to the tally, Los Angeles has recorded 2,700 arrests since the protests, followed by New York City with some 1,500 arrests. Police in Dallas and Houston, Texas, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, have also arrested several hundred people. The toll is likely much higher. The arrests come amid a crackdown on protests against the killing of Floyd and broader acts of police brutality. Many have been arrested for curfew violations, which major cities have imposed to quell demonstrations that have at times turned violent, with looting, vandalism and fires.

Some police departments in major cities, such as Houston, say while hundreds have been arrested, "this is an extremely low number ... considering the thousands of people in our community demonstrated peacefully". Several major cities scaled back or lifted curfews imposed for the past few days. As protests continue, police in riot gear charged into a crowd of about 1,000 protesters defying a local curfew in New York City's Brooklyn borough, albeit peacefully, near an outdoor plaza, and clubbed demonstrators and journalists as they scurried for cover in heavy rain. The tally comes as protests continue to erupt nationwide over the killing of Floyd, who died after a white officer knelt on the 46-year-old's neck for nearly nine minutes. Video of the incident shows Floyd repeatedly pleading with the officer, saying: "I can't breathe." Floyd eventually appears motionless, with the officer's knee still on his neck. →10

Annual minerals export of \$10.5b projected

TEHRAN — Iranian acting minister of industry, mining and trade announced that reaching the minerals export of \$10.5 billion is planned for the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20, 2021). Making the remarks during a meeting with the board members of Iran Mine House, Hossein Modarres Khiabani also elaborated on the industry, mining, and trade ministry's programs for the mining sector in the current year, which is named the year of "Surge in

Production", IRNA reported. The official said that the ministry's policy is moving toward production of products with higher value-added and strengthening exports for the whole steel chain. He said the minerals and mining projects constitute the main part of the 200 major industrial, mining, and trade projects, which are planned to be inaugurated across the country by the Iranian calendar year of 1400 (begins on March 20, 2021).

According to Deputy Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister Saeed Zarandi, 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 projects that are going to create job opportunities for 41,000 people. →4



Seal tangled in net recovered, returned to sea

A Caspian seal which had been caught in a fishing net around Ashuradeh, the only island of the Iranian coast of the Caspian Sea, was released back into the sea after being rehabilitated. Caspian seal is endangered according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), as recently demonstrated to have declined by more than 90 percent since the start of the 20th century. According to the latest census conducted in 2016, the population of Caspian seals has reached less than 70,000.

N.Korea expresses support for China's measures in Hong Kong

North Korea's foreign minister met with the Chinese ambassador to express support for China's measures in Hong Kong, North Korea's KCNA state news agency said on Friday. "The Hong Kong issue is China's internal affairs and external interference violates China's sovereignty, and North Korea will actively support the Chinese party and government to defend national sovereignty, safety and territorial integrity," KCNA cited foreign minister Ri Son Gwon as saying. Chinese Ambassador Li Jinjun expressed gratitude for North Korea's support, it said. North Korea's comments come after Beijing imposed a new national security law on Hong Kong that Western countries say could restrict freedoms in the former British colony. North Korea said on Thursday the United States was in no position to criticize China over Hong Kong or human rights when Washington threatens to "unleash dogs" to suppress anti-racism protests, a reference to a tweet by president Donald Trump. ■ Hong Kong legislature passes national anthem bill The Legislative Council (LegCo) of China's Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) approved the national anthem bill at the third reading debate on Thursday afternoon. The bill was passed with the support of 41 lawmakers and one voting against. The legislative meeting starting in the morning was once suspended for four hours because of the obstruction of opposition lawmakers, who repeatedly committed disruptive acts, even pouring foul-smelling liquid on the floor. →10

Tehran confirms talks with Richardson over Michael White's release

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Iran confirmed on Friday that Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif had discussed prisoner releases with former U.S. ambassador Bill Richardson.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said on Friday they had discussed the release of U.S. navy veteran Michael White "months ago".

"We have always responded positively to humanitarian efforts that would lead to the release of Iranian hostages in the United States and elsewhere," Mousavi said.

Tehran confirmed on Thursday a prisoner swap between Iran and the United States.

Iran urges France to stop interference in its domestic affairs

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi has urged France to stop interfering in Iran's domestic affairs.

Mousavi's comments came as French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian reiterated his demands for Iran to release Fariba Adelkhah, a research fellow at Sciences Po University in Paris, in a statement on Friday.

Mousavi said, "As we have said for several times, the issue of Iranian national Fariba Adelkhah has been subject to an independent and fair judicial procedure. She has been sentenced proportionate to the crime she committed."

He noted that the sentence will not be affected by political pressure.

A court in Iran has sentenced Adelkhah to six years in prison on national security charges.

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

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

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

Russia says sanctions for Iran oil supply to Venezuela are unacceptable

By staff and agency Maria Zakharova, the Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, said on Thursday that threats hurled by the United States at other governments of imposing sanctions in case they facilitate supplies of Iranian oil to Venezuela are unacceptable.



"Certain warnings voiced a few days ago by the U.S. administration to governments around the world regarding any cooperation in Iran oil supplies to Venezuela go beyond any acceptable limits," TASS quoted her as saying during a briefing.

She added, "To add to the previously put forward threat against insurers and ship owners, Washington now threatens port administrations, owners and captains of vessels. In the last few days, the U.S. Treasury expanded the sanction list by adding four more shipping companies engaged in Iran oil deliveries to Venezuela, extending the restrictions in place and other aggressive statements."

Conn Hallinan, a columnist for Foreign Policy In Focus, has said that arrival of Iranian fuel tankers in Venezuelan waters was a crack in wall of the United States' illegal sanctions against Caracas.

This action is a step in reducing "pressure" on Venezuela, Hallinan said, adding the Venezuelan people were in dire need of fuel.

This shipment brought revenue for Iran and from this point of view it was "a crack in wall of the United States' illegal sanctions," he told IRNA in an interview published on Monday.

He noted that the Iranian tankers entered the Western hemisphere despite the U.S. sanctions which was a "thorn in Trump's side".

The 5th and last Iranian fuel tanker reached Venezuelan waters on Sunday.

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.

Rouhani to Trump: Holding Bible to justify violence against Americans is 'shameful'

POLITICAL TEHRAN — President Hassan Rouhani said on Thursday that it is "shameful" that President Donald Trump holds Bible in his own hand to justify violence against Americans who are protesting the death of a black man by a White policeman.

Rouhani was referring to Trump's photo-op at a church and his use of the Bible for his political purposes.

"Bible is a divine and holy book which invites all the people to peace and humanity. Bible is not a book that orders killing of innocent people. It is shameful that a president who wants to take actions against his own nation holds a holy book," Rouhani said.

Trump's walk across Lafayette Square on Monday evening to St. John's Episcopal Church that took place after authorities forcibly pushed out peaceful protesters has drawn criticism from lawmakers and public figures, including former Defense Secretary James Mattis. During the police effort to clear the crowd Monday, there were reports and



eyewitness accounts that canisters were shot in the crowd, putting off thick smoke that

contained an irritant that made people choke and cough, CNN reported.

Rouhani condemns crimes against protesters in the U.S.

Protests have started across the U.S. over brutal killing of the African-American man.

George Floyd died on May 25 after being pinned down by a white officer despite yelling: "I cannot breathe" under the knee of a white U.S. police officer.

Reportedly, the unrest over Floyd's death came to Trump's doorstep as demonstrators circled the White House grounds on May 30, chanting "I can't breathe" and "Black Lives Matter."

Iran's Foreign Ministry has urged the United States to listen to its people and change its bankrupt policies.

"Failed to keep its promise of stopping wasting money on foreign adventurism & embattled in a Covid19 crisis of its own making, US regime now employs army, 'vicious dogs & ominous weapons' to intimidate protesters. Instead, US should listen to its ppl & change its bankrupt policies," the Foreign Ministry tweeted on Sunday.

Ayatollah Khamenei: Kneeling on neck is U.S. nature

POLITICAL TEHRAN — A police officer put his knee on a black man's neck and pushed until he dies, Leader of the Islamic Revolution lamented on Wednesday, noting it shows the nature of the United States' governments.

Speaking in televised speech commemorating the demise anniversary of Imam Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Revolution, the Leader said such crimes have frequently happened in the past, and the U.S. has done the same things in many countries including Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria and other countries.

The annual ceremony marking the death of Imam Khomeini was not held in his mausoleum due to the coronavirus.

Pointing to the slogan of "I cannot breathe," which the U.S. people have been chanting in recent days, Ayatollah Khamenei said, "This is what the nations that have been the victims of United States' oppressive usurpation want to say from the bottom of their hearts."

A 46-year-old African-American man, died on Monday after being handcuffed and pinned to the ground by a white police officer's knee in an incident that was recorded on video.

According to the New York Times, Chauvin, the policeman, kept his knee on black man for eight minutes and 46 seconds.

The Leader went on to say that the United

States has lost face over its poor handling of the coronavirus pandemic.

"By God's favor and grace, the United States has been disgraced as a result of its own actions. Their management of the coronavirus brought them disgrace, and their weak handling of the situation caused them to have several times as many casualties as other countries. The American people feel embarrassed and ashamed of their government."

■ **'Imam Khomeini proved superpowers can be defeated'**

Ayatollah Khamenei also said that Imam Khomeini proved that the superpowers can be defeated.

"Imam showed that superpowers can be defeated which was proven in the future. You saw what happened to the Soviet Union and you are seeing what is going on in the United States," the Leader pointed out, according to Khamenei.ir.

■ **Imam Khomeini coined the phrase 'The Great Satan'**

The Leader said that Imam Khomeini was against international bullies and arrogant powers and he did this in an outspoken way, adding that "The Great Satan" was an astonishing term that Imam coined.

"The ideological and practical implications of the term 'The Great Satan' are very vast

in scope. When you consider someone and some organization as 'Satan', it is clear how you should behave and feel towards them. Until the last day, Imam had the same feeling towards America. He used to use the term 'The Great Satan' and he believed in it with all his heart and soul," he said.

He also said, "Imam was in the camp which was against international bullies and arrogant powers and he did this in an outspoken way. He showed no considerations for them. This was why in the confrontation between bullies, arrogant powers and the thugs of the world, and the oppressed, Imam was in the latter camp. He used to announce this in an outspoken way and without any considerations and fear. He was an ardent advocate of the oppressed all over the world. He did not compromise with arrogant powers."

■ **'Resistance form the cornerstone of Imam Khomeini's school of thought'**

Ayatollah Khamenei also said that resistance and refusal to give in to problems and obstacles form the cornerstone of Khomeini's school of thought.

"Imam had a certain characteristic which I would like to explain more today. That characteristic is resistance: resistance and firmness. What introduced Imam as a man with a school of thought and philosophy in his own time and in history had more to do

with this characteristic: the characteristic of steadfastness, resistance and refusal to give in to problems and obstacles," he said.

He added, "During revolutionary activities, many individuals became exhausted and they were on the verge of despair, but Imam stood firm. He stood firm on the path of fighting without the slightest retreat. This was related to pre-revolutionary era. After the victory of the Revolution too, other comprehensive pressures loomed large before him, but he did not lose the essence of resistance and steadfastness. He resisted."

The Leader continued, "What does resistance mean? Resistance means that you choose a path that you deem legitimate and true. It means moving on this path and not allowing obstacles to prevent you from taking that path. This is what resistance means. Imagine that you face an obstacle or a deep hole when you are taking a road or imagine that you face a rock when you want to reach the peak of a mountain. When some people confront this rock, this obstacle or this thief or wolf, they return and they change their minds about continuing the path. However, some people do not do so. They look around and see how they can get around the rock and maneuver the obstacle. They find the way, remove the obstacle or pass through it in an intelligent way. Resistance means this."

Zarif says Trump advisors made a 'dumb bet' by inciting him to quit JCPOA

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Friday that U.S. President Donald Trump's advisors, that now most of them have been dismissed, made a "dumb bet" by encouraging him to quit the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as JCPOA.

"Your advisors—most fired by now—made a dumb bet," Zarif tweeted.

Zarif added, "Up to you to decide *when* you want to fix it."

The Iranian foreign minister told Trump that the JCPOA was working when he entered the White House.

"And we had a deal when you entered office. Iran & other JCPOA participants never left the table," Zarif stated.

Zarif's comments came as response to a Trump's tweet in which he thanked Iran for releasing U.S. Navy veteran Michael White, proposing talks.

"So great to have Michael home. Just arrived. Very exciting. Thank you to Iran. Don't wait until after U.S. Election to make the Big deal," Trump said in his tweet on Friday.

In his Wednesday tweet, Zarif said Iran and other signatories to the JCPOA never left the negotiating table and even the remaining parties sent humanitarian aid to Iran to fight the coronavirus pandemic despite efforts by Trump's "subordinates".

"We achieved humanitarian swap *despite* your subordinates' efforts, @realDonaldTrump," Zarif pointed out. Tehran has confirmed a prisoner swap between Iran and the United States.

"Pleased that Dr. Majid Taheri and Mr. White will soon be joining their families," Zarif tweeted on Thursday. "Prof. Siros Asgari was happily reunited with his family on Weds."

"This can happen for all prisoners," Zarif said, adding,

"No need for cherry picking. Iranian hostages held in—and on behalf of—the US should come home."

Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said in a statement on Thursday that White, who had been in jail in Iran, was released after being granted Islamic mercy for his crimes.

White was released from jail given the time served and in respect of human rights considerations, and left Iran on Thursday, Mousavi said.

Zarif said in December that Tehran was ready for a full prisoner exchange with the United States, tweeting: "The ball is in the US' court".

Switzerland which takes care of the U.S. interests in Iran has played a role in the recent prisoner exchange. It has announced that that it is ready to act as a facilitator for more prisoner swaps.

Iran condemns new U.S. sanctions on Syria

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi on Friday condemned new sanctions of the United States on Syria and urged removal of them.

Mousavi described the action as illegal which runs contrary to humanitarian principles.

"Harms and negative consequences of such sanctions target the ordinary people," he said.

The Syrian government condemned Wednesday a new wave of the U.S. sanctions against the country, calling the measures "economic terrorism" that will increase the suffering of the Syrian people, according to AP.

On Wednesday, an unnamed source with the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates denounced the so-called Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act — also known as the Caesar Act and expected to come into force in mid-June — as another form of terrorism which has shed the blood of Syrian civilians and ravaged their achievements, Syria's official news agency SANA reported.

"The Syrian Arab Republic strongly condemns the imposition of further sanctions on it by the U.S. administration through the so-called Caesar Act. The sanctions are based on a bunch of lies and fabricated claims by parties hostile to the Syrian nation. This falls within the framework of their declared war that uses various methods, including terrorism,

economic blockade, political pressure and smear campaign," the source added.

He highlighted that the Caesar sanctions act, which aims to sanction any party that assists the Syrian government, is a flagrant violation of the most basic principles of human rights and international law.

By imposing these restrictions, the U.S. administration will "bear main responsibility for the suffering of the Syrian people when it comes to their livelihoods," the source added.

Zarif censures Europe's 'deafening silence' on U.S. brutality against protesters

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has slammed Europe's "deafening silence" on the United States' brutalities against people.

"US cities are scenes of brutality against protesters & press, as military crackdown is threatened Europe—quick to be judge & jury about non-Western societies—keeps

deafeningly silent, Zarif tweeted.

The foreign minister added, "If it wants to keep lips sealed now, it should always keep them that way."

Angry protests are spreading across the United States following the tragic death of George Floyd, a black American, by a White policeman on May 25 in Minneapolis.

Iranian parliament condemns U.S. police 'racial terrorism against blacks'

(Press TV) — Members of the Iranian Parliament (Majlis) have denounced the racist terrorism perpetrated by U.S. police against defenseless African Americans, saying they have been unable to breathe for decades and subjected to violence and discrimination.

In an English-language statement issued on Tuesday, the Iranian lawmakers expressed their outrage at the shocking U.S. police brutality that led to the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis on May 25, saying the tragedy "revealed the inhumane nature of the U.S. regime."

Floyd, an unarmed African-American man, died after

a U.S. police officer knelt on his neck for more than eight minutes despite his cries that he could not breathe.

His death, captured on video, has sparked street protests across the U.S., which are being met with an increasingly heavy-handed police response.

U.S. President Donald Trump has supported the violent suppression of the demonstrations.

The Iranian MPs described Floyd as just one of hundreds of black Americans brutally killed by police every year, saying the blacks "have been unable to breathe for decades under the pressure of racial terrorism by the U.S. regime."

"Today, 'American nightmare' is emerging more than ever, and the cry of the oppressed blacks is being heard, who, like martyr Malcolm X, want to shout that we are victims of Americanism; the victim of the hypocritical system that today seems to be all over the world, as if it has the authority to tell all the people of the world how to run their country," they said.

El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, better known as Malcolm X, was an American Muslim minister and human rights activist who was a popular figure during the civil rights movement. He was assassinated in New York on February 21, 1965.

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Tehran urges U.S. to free all Iranian hostages after prisoner swap

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Tehran has confirmed a prisoner swap between Iran and the United States, urging Washington to release all Iranian hostages held by the U.S. government.

“Pleased that Dr. Majid Taheri and Mr. White will soon be joining their families,” Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif tweeted on Thursday. “Prof. Sirous Asgari was happily reunited with his family on Weds.”

“This can happen for all prisoners,” Zarif said, adding, “No need for cherry picking. Iranian hostages held in—and on behalf of—the US should come home.”

Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi also confirmed on Thursday that Dr. Majid Taheri, an Iranian scientist who had been imprisoned in the U.S., was released from jail.

Taheri spent 16 months in prison for allegedly violating U.S. sanctions on Iran.

Zarif said in December that Tehran was ready for a full prisoner exchange with the United States, tweeting: “The ball is in the US’ court”.

In his statement, Mousavi also said U.S. Navy veteran Michael White, who had been in jail in Iran, was released after being granted Islamic mercy for his crimes.

Mr. White was released from jail given the time served and in respect of human rights considerations, and left Iran on Thursday, he said.

“So great to have Michael home,” U.S. President Donald Trump tweeted on Friday. “Just arrived. Very exciting. Thank you to Iran. Don’t wait until after U.S. Election to make the Big deal. I’m going to win. You’ll



make a better deal now!”

In an earlier tweet, Trump said, “We have now brought more than 40 American hostages and detainees back home since I took office.”

“Thank you to Iran, it shows a deal is possible!” he added.

White’s release came a day after Iranian scientist Sirous Asgari, who had been held by United States immigration authorities for months, arrived in Tehran.

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

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

“It makes sense to send me to the hos-

pital as soon as possible. I don’t trust them at all,” the 59-year-old said at the time, amid repeated coughing fits. “If something happens, they are not fast responders ... I prefer to leave this dirty place.”

Asgari’s story sparked international outrage after he spoke about his fears of COVID-19 spreading inside crowded ICE facilities with substandard cleaning practices and a lack of supplies.

Imam proved U.S. knee can be forced off the neck of the oppressed: Ghalibaf

POLITICAL TEHRAN — New Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf says Imam Khomeini proved to the world that the United States’ knee can be forced off the neck of the oppressed.

“57 years ago, Iranian people together with their Imam shouted that ‘we cannot breathe as long as Iran is backyard to the arrogant’,” Ghalibaf tweeted on Thursday.

“Imam Khomeini showed to the world that the criminal America’s knee can be forced off the neck of the oppressed,” he wrote, hinting at the killing of an African-American man by U.S. police.

The parliament speaker added that Imam Khomeini delivered such hard slap on their face that they forgot all about occupation, coup and looting.

Protests erupted in various cities across the United States after a video went viral which showed brutal treatment of George Floyd under the knee of a U.S. police officer before his death.

Floyd’s last words were “I cannot breathe”. A friend of Floyd’s said he did not resist arrest and gave



the officers no reason to be afraid. Floyd’s death has reignited conversations over racial bias and police brutality in the U.S.

On May 29, U.S. President Donald Trump described the protesters as “thugs”.

In a tweet, he also said, “When the looting starts, the

shooting starts.”

Tehran has condemned the U.S. government’s brutal crackdown on protesters, urging Washington to let the American people breathe.

“Stop violence against your people and let them breathe,” Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said during a press conference on Monday.

“The world has heard your outcry over the state oppression. The world is standing with you,” he said.

He also censured the U.S. government for its destructive domestic and foreign policies, adding, “The American regime is pursuing violence and bullying at home and abroad. We are greatly sad to see, along with the people across the world, the violence the U.S. police have recently unfolded.”

“We deeply regret to see the American people, who seek respect and no more violence, are suppressed and met with outmost violence,” Mousavi said.

More than 10,000 people have been arrested since the protests began in the United States, according to an Associated Press tally.

Rome-Tehran relations thriving, Italian ambassador says on Republic Day

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Italian Ambassador to Tehran Giuseppe Perrone has said the relations between Italy and Iran are thriving in all areas.

“The relations between Italy and Iran today are thriving in all areas,” Perrone said in a video message to Italian expatriates in Iran published on the embassy’s social media channels.

He said Italy has been, and still is, one of main commercial and economic partners of Iran while cultural, artistic and scientific relations are growing stronger than ever.

He also announced that the traditional reception on the occasion of the 74th an-



niversary of Italy’s Republic Day could not take place in the Iranian capital, due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Due to the COVID-19 emergency, this year the traditional reception hosted in the gardens of the Italian Ambassador’s Residence in Farmanieh could not take place, the ambassador remarked.

In the video message, the Ambassador, underlining that Italy and Iran were both heavily affected by the pandemic, expressed confidence that the two countries, thanks to the resilience and spirit of sacrifice of their people, will effectively overcome this challenge and come out of it stronger.

Reaffirming Italy’s commitment to further enhance bilateral relations, Perrone mentioned some flagship projects undertaken by the embassy in the past few months such as “Urban Art Unites”, which brings together Italian and Iranian street artists to jointly create artworks to be exhibited on the exterior walls of the Ambassador’s Residence; “Spotlight on Italian Cinema”, a week long film event in Tehran, Kish and Shiraz in partnership with Art and Experience Cinema which was temporarily suspended due to the coronavirus outbreak but due to resume as soon as health conditions allow.

Russia defends Iran satellite launch against U.S. opposition



Russia is defending Iran’s right to launch a satellite, dismissing U.S. claims that Tehran was defying the UN resolution endorsing the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and the 5+1 nations - Russia, China, U.S., France, Britain and Germany - by sending it into space.

The U.S. officially withdrew from the agreement in May 2018.

According to the Associated Press, Russia’s UN ambassador, Vassily Nebenzia, said that “the ongoing attempts of the United States side to deprive Iran of the right to reap the benefits of peaceful space technology under false pretenses are a cause for serious concern and profound regret.”

He dismissed as “misleading” U.S. accusations that the April 22 satellite launch carried out by Iran’s Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) went against the 2015 resolution, which calls on Iran not to undertake any ballistic missile-related activities capable of delivering

nuclear weapons.

“Iran has never possessed nuclear weapons, nor does it possess these weapons now, nor, we expect, will it ever possess them in the future,” Nebenzia said in a letter to Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and the Security Council circulated Thursday.

Since the Iran nuclear deal was adopted in 2015, he said, “Iran has been the most verified state by the International Atomic Energy Agency” and “it is an established fact that Iran does not possess, nor develop, nor test or use ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons.”

The Russian ambassador was responding to a letter from U.S. Ambassador Kelly Craft to the council president last month saying that “space launch vehicles incorporate technologies that are virtually identical to and interchangeable with those used in ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons.”

“We once again urge the international community to hold Iran accountable for its actions,” she wrote. “Iran’s further development of ballistic missile technology contributes to regional tension and poses a threat to international peace and security.”

Craft urged the Security Council to strengthen existing sanctions on Iran to address the threat and to consider re-imposing “binding restrictions” against its repeated missile and satellite launches.

Tensions between Iran and the U.S. have escalated since the Trump administration withdrew from the 2015 nuclear deal in 2018 and re-imposed crippling U.S. sanctions. A year ago, the U.S. sent thousands

more troops, long-range bombers and an aircraft carrier to the Middle East in response to what it called a growing threat of Iranian attacks on U.S. interests in the region.

The satellite launch was a first for the IRGC. After its announcement, U.S. President Donald Trump wrote on Twitter, without citing any specific incident, “I have instructed the United States Navy to shoot down and destroy any and all Iranian gunboats if they harass our ships at sea.”

Both Nebenzia and Craft called on the UN secretary-general to reflect their letters in his report on implementation of the 2015 Security Council resolution, which is due by June 23. The Security Council has scheduled an open briefing on the resolution for June 30 followed by closed consultations.

A UN arms embargo against Iran is set to expire in October and the United States circulated a draft UN resolution that would indefinitely extend it to a small number of council members in late April.

Nebenzia has said Moscow will oppose any U.S. attempts to extend the arms embargo and reimpose UN sanctions on Iran. He also dismissed as “ridiculous” the possibility of the Trump administration possibly seeking to use the “snap back” provision in the 2015 council resolution, which would restore all UN sanctions against Iran that had been lifted or eased under the terms of the agreement if the nuclear deal is violated.

Nebenzia said the U.S. pulled out of the agreement and “they have no right” to use any of its provisions.

U.S. Senate approves Trump pick to lead Voice of America

POLITICAL TEHRAN — U.S. Senate on Thursday approved President Donald Trump’s pick to lead the Voice of America and other U.S. government-funded international broadcasters that have been criticized by the White House over claims of unfavorable news coverage.

According to The Washington Post, the Senate voted 53-38 to confirm Michael Pack, a former associate of Trump political adviser Steve Bannon, to run the U.S. Agency for Global Media, which oversees VOA and its sister outlets including Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia and the Cuba-oriented Radio and Television Marti.



Trump had pushed for Pack’s confirmation while launching unprecedented attacks on the Voice of America for its coverage of China’s response to the coronavirus pandemic.

Democrats feared that Pack, a conservative filmmaker and former educator, could turn the organization into a Trump propaganda machine funded with more than \$200 million a year in taxpayer money.

“Congratulations to Michael Pack!” Trump tweeted Thursday. “Nobody has any idea what a big victory this is for America. Why? Because he is going to be running the VOICE OF AMERICA, and everything associated with it.”

Last month, Trump said, “If you hear what’s coming out of the Voice of America, it’s disgusting.”

“The things they say are disgusting toward our country. And Michael Pack would get in and do a great job,” he added.

According to The New York Times, Trump has privately referred to the Voice of America as the “Voice of the Soviet Union.”

Brian Hook, the U.S. special representative for Iran, has strongly criticized the performance of Voice of America’s Persian service which he said sounds more like the “Voice of the mullahs” than the “Voice of America.”

In a note published by The New York Post on May 27, Hook wrote that VOA Persian “needs to do a better job of countering Iranian disinformation and propaganda.”

He said he was receiving regular complaints about VOA’s Persian service. “Iranian viewers say its American taxpayer funded programming often sounds more like the ‘Voice of the mullahs’ than the ‘Voice of America,’” he added.

Hook said that addressing such complaints was a priority for the Trump administration and urged VOA to give access to “independent and truthful reporting.”

This is while many observers consider Voice of America’s Persian service to be a form of propaganda tool, aiming to sow discord and dissimulation among the Iranian public as part of Washington’s decades-long policy of overthrowing the Islamic Republic.

In what appeared like an order, Hook urged the network to specially focus on “human rights in Iran, corruption among the Iranian regime and analysis that counters propaganda rather than propagating it.”

He then went on to threaten the network with closure if it does not follow the order.

“If it can’t meet these standards — and soon — Congress should consider ending its funding and shutting down VOA Persian as a fiduciary duty to American taxpayers,” he concluded.

Iranian students rally in solidarity with African Americans

Since the heart-wrenching murder, protests have been held in hundreds of U.S. cities and National Guard troops have been deployed in at least 23 states to handle the protests.

Thousands of people have also rallied in different cities across the world in solidarity with anti-racism protests in the U.S.



Demonstrators from Australia to Europe have identified with the cause of the U.S. protests and urged their own governments to stand up to racism and police violence.

The European Union said it was “shocked and appalled” by the death of Floyd in police custody, calling it “an abuse of power” and warning against further excessive use of force.

“Like the people of the United States, we are shocked and appalled by the death of George Floyd... all societies must remain vigilant against the excessive use of force,” Josep Borrell, the EU’s foreign policy chief, told reporters.

The Pope has also issued a call for racism not to be ignored. “We cannot tolerate or turn a blind eye to racism,” he said. But he also condemned the violence: “Nothing is gained by violence and so much is lost.”

Iranian cargo ship sinks off Iraqi coast

ECONOMY TEHRAN — An Iranian cargo ship named *Behbahan* sank off the Iraqi coast on Thursday night, Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) published on its website on Friday quoting a PMO official as saying.



Nourollah As'adi, the director general of Iran's Bushehr Province Ports and Maritime Department, said, "The ship, which had left [Iran's southwestern port] Khorramshahr on Tuesday transporting ceramic and constructional materials to Iraq's Umm Qasr Port, sank last night in the Khor Abdullah maritime canal between Iraq and Kuwait."

Nader Pasandeh, the PMO director for marine safety, told IRNA on Friday that of the seven crew members of *Behbahan*, four members have been rescued, one member has died, and two members are missing, one of them is Iranian and the other one is Indian.

Search operation is currently underway to rescue the remaining crew, he added.

Iran-Turkey main trade gate to reopen this week

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The main trade gate between Iran and Turkey, which has been closed for three months due to the coronavirus pandemic, will be reopened this week.

Turkish Trade Minister Ruhsar Pekcan said that Ankara will order a reopening of the Gurbulak border gate, known on the Iranian side of the border as Bazargan, to help boost trade between the two neighbors, Press TV reported.

The long-awaited measure comes more than a week after Iranian and Turkish presidents discussed the reopening of air and land borders between the two countries now that the pandemic has slowed down.

Iran sees trade with Turkey as key in efforts to confront the U.S. sanctions that have sought to undermine Tehran's oil exports. Petrochemical products account for a major share of Iran's exports to Turkey although the U.S. bans have made it difficult to settle payments between businesses in the two countries.

Turkey also relies on Iran as a major market for its manufacturing goods, including industrial machinery and garment, while it also sends to Iran some sizable shipments of crops and fruits that are not cultivated in the country.

As announced last week by the spokesman of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), Iran and Turkey exchanged 6,300 wagons of commodities via railway during a 70-day period from the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20).

According to Rouhollah Latifi, Iran's exports to Turkey via railway stood at 3,072 wagons of goods and its imports from the neighboring country reached 3,228 wagons during the mentioned period of time.



The official further said, "Turkey has closed Bazargan border with Iran since February 20, so the only way for transportation of goods is via railway, and we hope that the air path and land borders between the two countries will be reopened following a telephone conversation between the presidents of Iran and Turkey in the coming days."

IRICA Head Mehdi Mir-Ashrafi held a meeting with his Turkish counterpart Riza Tuna Turagay, via video conference on May 5, to discuss reopening of trade borders with the implementation of health and safety protocols.

Readiness to exchange health protocols for reopening trade borders, importing goods from Sarisu trans-boundary market, implementation of the third phase of e-Tir electronic project in all customs offices of the two countries, online exchange of information and X-ray in shared borders were among the important topics of discussion in the said meeting.

Mir-Ashrafi urged Turagay to take all the necessary measures to ensure the reopening of the two countries' borders since the Turkish borders with its other neighbors are already open.

"The World Trade Organization (WTO) stated that trade borders between countries should not be closed under any circumstances, but due to the coronavirus outbreak the two countries' largest border, Bazargan, has been closed and we expect the two sides to take necessary measures to reopen the borders in accordance with health protocols", he stressed.

Turgay for his part expressed hope that the two countries' borders will be open soon and the trade between the two sides is going to get back to normal soon.

"We are constantly pursuing the reopening of the borders, however, the ministries of health and interior should also approve, but we will do our best," Turgay said.

In late February, Turkey closed its border with Iran as a preventive measure against the deadly coronavirus outbreak.

On May 1, the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPO) hosted a meeting to explore new health and transportation protocols for trade with Turkey.

According to TPO office of public relations, the meeting was attended by the organization's head, Hamid Zadbomb, along with representatives of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA), Iran-Turkey Joint Economic Committee, as well as the ministries of health; transport and urban development; and foreign affairs.

Iran inks 2-year agreement for exporting electricity to Iraq

1 → During the meeting with Hantoush, which was also attended by officials from the two sides' electricity sectors, the Iraqi minister expressed gratitude for Iran's energy exports and cooperation in reconstructing the country's electricity sector.

Mentioning his country's electricity dues to Iran, Hantoush noted that the issue is currently being discussed and under consideration by the country's finance ministry.

The official put his country's electricity imports from Iran at 1200 megawatts (MW) and expressed hope that the figure wouldn't decline during the summer peak consumption period.

According to Ardakanian, with the coordination of the Iranian embassy in Iraq, half of the country's electricity due payments worth \$400 million was received during the Energy Minister's trip.

In the meeting, the two sides reviewed previous agreements and discussed a three-year plan for reconstructing the Iraqi electricity industry by the Iranian private sector.

■ Iraqi president calls for expansion of ties

During his one-day visit to Iraq, Ardakanian also met and held talks with Iraqi President Barham Salih in the Iraqi capital Baghdad, in which the two sides exchanged views on broadening bilateral ties especially in the field



of energy and electricity.

As IRNA reported, during the meeting, the Iraqi president stressed the need for joint coordination and the development of bilateral cooperation, especially in the electricity and water sectors, in line with the progress and prosperity of the two neighboring nations.

Ardakanian for his part stressed Iran's readiness for continuous cooperation and

support for Iraq in all areas.

Developing bilateral cooperation between Tehran and Baghdad in the field of electricity, synchronizing the two countries' power grids, cooperating in the field of training, and developing power networks were of the main topics of discussion between the officials.

■ Iraq willing to expand all-out relations with neighbors

Ardakanian also held talks with Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi, after which the Prime Minister's office released a statement saying that in his meeting with Ardakanian, al-Kadhimi stressed Baghdad's willingness to develop the best of relations with its neighbors.

The two sides exchanged views on cooperation opportunities in the energy sector and boosting bilateral ties between the two neighboring states, according to the statement.

Kadhimi also underlined the need for maximum efforts to resolve complicated problems gripping the region.

Iraq and Iran share a 1,400-kilometer-long border. Except for gas and power, Iraq depends on Iran for supplying almost everything from food, fruits, and vegetables to machinery and home appliances.

Iranian energy accounts for between 30 and 40 percent of the electricity consumed in Iraq.

Over the past months, Washington has been pressing Baghdad to stop buying natural gas and electricity from Tehran as part of its "maximum pressure" campaign aimed at choking off Iran's revenue.

Last month, Iraq's former electricity minister Luay al-Khateeb said Iran will remain a key source of energy to the Arab country for years to come until suitable alternatives materialize.

Iran, Serbia discuss expansion of transport ties



ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iranian Ambassador to Belgrade Rashid Hassanpour met with Serbian Minister of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure Zorana Z. Mihajlovic on Thursday and discussed expansion of cooperation in air and road transportation.

As reported by IRNA, Mihajlovic also underlined the capacity for facilitating cooperation between Iranian and Serbian construction companies.

The official also expressed hope that the two countries' presidents would meet in the near future.

She also praised Iran's principled position with regard to defending Serbian territorial integrity and national sovereignty.

She described Iran-Serbia air transportation agreement as an important factor in developing tourism, and cooperation in agricultural and economic fields.

Hassanpour, for his part, underlined the recent phone call between Iranian and Serbian presidents and expressed Iran's readiness for reinforcing cooperation in agriculture, food industry, education, information technology,

tourism, mine and construction fields.

Iranian ambassador stressed the need for facilitating visa issuance and launching direct flight between Tehran and Belgrade aiming to exchange tourists.

Earlier, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani in a phone call with his Serbian counterpart Aleksandar Vucic underlined Iran's readiness for transferring anti-COVID experiences to Serbia, saying the U.S. cruel sanctions will not disturb economic ties between the two countries.

Referring to Iran's success and planning in fighting coronavirus such as producing diagnostics test kits by Iranian knowledge-based companies, President Rouhani said Iran is ready to share experiences and to maintain scientific and technology cooperation with Serbia.

Meanwhile, Vucic stressed that his country is against imposing sanctions and pressure on Iran.

We should take advantage of the existing opportunities for developing cooperation in trade, scientific, cultural, technology, tourism and academic fields, he added.

GSI carries out exploration operations on 150,000 sq.km in a year



ECONOMY TEHRAN — Deputy head of Geological Survey and Mineral Explorations of Iran (GSI) says the organization has carried out exploration operations on 150,000 square kilometers of land in the previous Iranian calendar year 1398 (ended on March 19).

"Exploration operations on 60 potential areas began last year, of which 30 areas were cleared and the operations for the rest will be carried out this year," Mohammad-Baqer Dorri told IRNA on Wednesday.

Back in April, the Iranian Mines and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) announced that mining exploration operations were underway in 652,061 square kilometers of land across the country.

According to Mohammad Aghajanjou, the deputy manager of the mining industries development at IMIDRO, the mentioned exploration operations were being conducted by a consortium of IMIDRO and the country's major mining companies.

Back in March, IMIDRO Head Khodadad Gharibpour announced that

his organization has managed to identify over 760 new promising mineral zones across the country.

"With the new discoveries, the total area of IMIDRO's exploration zones has reached 650,000 square kilometers," Gharibpour had said.

Earlier last month, Dorri had said that GSI was ready to carry out exploration projects for the countries in the region.

"Today, with 60 years of experience and with access to modern equipment and facilities, GSI is able to carry out mineral exploration activities for the countries in the region," the official said.

According to Dorri, Iran is currently extracting 68 types of minerals and GSI experts are ready to do related exploration activities in the neighboring countries.

Earlier, GSI Head Alireza Shahidi had said that the organization carried out exploration operations for Tajikistan, Sudan, Nigeria, Bolivia, Venezuela and Ecuador.

Iran is among the top countries in the region in terms of the mining industry.

Annual minerals export of \$10.5b projected

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 by 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 Revolution of Iran Seyed Ali Khamenei, the government is determined to support domestic 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.

■ Annual investment making in mining sector up 60%

The spokesman of Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) has announced that investment making in the country's mining sector has increased 60 percent in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19).

In an interview conducted by IRNA on Wednesday, Mohammad Sepehr put the investment made in mining and mineral sector last year at \$3.2 billion, showing a considerable 60 percent growth as compared to a year earlier.



Iran's investment in this sector increased last year despite tough U.S. sanctions and also spread of the coronavirus in the country, the official noted.

He further underscored that most mining and mineral projects were put into operation but the official inauguration of some of these mining projects was postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The official further announced that mining and mineral project worth \$2.2 billion would be inaugurated in the current year, which is named the year of "Surge in Production."

Last week, Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry signed a trilateral memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Geological Survey and Mineral Explorations of Iran (GSI) and IMIDRO for expansion of the country's mining sector.

The MOU was signed by Iran's Deputy Industry Minister, and Trade Minister Darioush Esmaili, GSI Head Alireza Shahidi and IMIDRO Head Khodadad Gharibpour during a meeting between the acting minister of industry, mining and trade and

the representatives of the country's mining sector.

Development of cooperation in the fields of exploration, extraction and processing of minerals, utilization of capacities, experiences and abilities of each sector, and attracting more investment from the country's private sector and cooperatives in this industry were reported to be some of the main goals of the signed agreement.

Also, the implementation of exploration projects by Geological Survey and Mineral Explorations of Iran and the formation of a joint committee whose task is to review the proposed exploration projects were also among the important subjects mentioned in the MOU.

Back in April, Esmaili had said that the Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry has provisioned operational targets in the mining sector's three major areas of exploration, extraction and processing, for the current year.

"In the mining industry sector, we have targeted a 25-percent increase in the production of mineral products, and in the exploration sector, we will add about 20 percent to the previous reserves", the official said.

The mining sector accounted for 25 percent of the country's non-oil revenues in the past Iranian calendar year, he said.

The mining sector accounted for 25 percent of the country's non-oil revenues in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19).

IMIDRO plans to put projects worth \$2.276 billion into operation during the current year.

According to Gharibpour, IMIDRO and its subsidiaries are going to implement 31 projects in a variety of fields including steel, copper, gold, antimony, nepheline syenite, phosphate and also mining infrastructure in the current year which is named the year of "Surge in Production" by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei.

Rouhani inaugurates major water, electricity projects in 2 provinces

ENERGY TEHRAN — Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, on Thursday, inaugurated eight electricity and water projects in the southern province Bushehr and northwestern West Azarbaijan province via video conference.

The projects included the first steam unit of the Assaluyeh combined cycle power plant in Bushehr and the Oshnavieh Dam in West Azarbaijan, as well as some development projects to improve and optimize the power distribution networks in both provinces.

As reported, the steam unit of the Assaluyeh combined cycle power plant which was implemented with 22.4 trillion rials (over \$533 million) of investment is going to create direct jobs for 800 people.

The implementation of this unit is going to increase the efficiency of the power plant up to 50 percent from its current 33 percent.

Over 2.44 trillion rials (about \$58 million) has also been invested in the Oshnavieh Dam project.

A total 26.3 trillion rials (over \$626 million) has been invested in the eight



projects inaugurated in the mentioned provinces; the projects will create direct employment for 1,687 people.

Earlier this year, Iran's Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian said following a program called "A-B-Iran", the ministry is going to

inaugurate 250 major water and electricity projects worth 500 trillion rials (about \$11.9 billion) during the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20, 2021).

According to Ardakanian, in the water sector, the mentioned projects include nine major dams, implementation of modern irrigation systems in 54,000 hectares of land, 20 water, and wastewater treatment plants and supplying drinkable water through pipeline to more than 1400 rural areas across the country.

According to the A-B-Iran scheme [the acronyms A and B stand for water, electricity in Persian], Energy Ministry plans to inaugurate some water, electricity projects across the country every week.

Back in May, Ardakanian inaugurated six electricity projects in Markazi Province in central Iran through video conference.

The mentioned projects were inaugurated in the third week of the implementation of "A-B-Iran" program.

During the 20 weeks of the mentioned program in the previous year, the minister made 31 trips to various provinces for inaugurating energy projects.

821MW to be added to Iran's renewable power capacity

ENERGY TEHRAN — Some 821 megawatts (MW) are going to be added to Iran's renewable power generation capacity which currently stands at 821 MW, IRNA reported.

As reported, the country's renewable electricity generation capacity reached 820 MW at the end of the second month of the current Iranian calendar year (May 20).

Renewable power plants across Iran have managed to produce 4.739 billion kilowatt-hours (kWh) of electricity preventing the production of 3.232 million tons of greenhouse gases.

Using renewable sources has also resulted in a 444 million kWh reduction in power grid losses.

The number of installed renewable power plants across Iran reached 131 by May 20, and 79 power plants are also under construction.

The total capacity of rooftop PV systems installed in the country has also reached 3,936 kW by the mentioned date.

According to IRNA, more than 1000

small-scale solar power plants are also under construction, which is an indication of the growing popularity of such plants in the country.

The volume of public investments in renewable power plants has exceeded 143 trillion rials (over \$3.4 billion) by May 20.

Over 44 percent of Iran's power plants are solar farms, while 34 percent are wind farms and 12 percent are hydroelectric power plants and the rest are other types.

Renewables, including hydropower, account for just seven percent of the country's total energy generation, versus natural gas' 90 percent share.

Overall, in the next five years, Iran is aiming for a 5,000 MW increase in renewable capacity to meet growing domestic demand and expand its presence in the regional electricity market.

According to Iran's Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization (known as SATBA), the number of small scale solar power plants across the country which are



used by households or small industries is also increasing noticeably as Iranian households and small industries are embracing the new

technology with open arms and investors also seem eager for more contribution in this area.

Annual petchem output to rise 35% by Mar. 2021

ENERGY TEHRAN — Iran's annual petrochemical production will increase 35 percent in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20, 2021), according to the managing director of National Petrochemical Company (NPC).

Making the remarks on Wednesday on the sidelines of his visit to the different units of one of the petrochemical complexes in the country, Behzad Mohammadi said that the operation of 16 petrochemical projects in the current year will increase the production capacity of the petrochemical industry by 35 percent, Mehr news agency reported.

He pointed to the plan of increasing the production capacity of propylene in the smartening process of the petrochemical industry and put the current production capacity of propylene in the country at more than 950,000 tons.

Presently, the country is facing a shortage of propylene and for this reason, planning has been made for increasing production capacity of propylene in petrochemical industry, he stated.

"We have targeted production of 12 strategic products from propylene in the current year, based on which the demand of downstream industries will be met" he added.

Iran has been facing a shortage of propylene for years. The country's propylene production in the Iranian calendar year 1404 (March 2025-March 2026) will be four percent of its total petrochemical production.

It is while this figure will be 18 percent worldwide, 21 percent in China, 17 percent in the United States, and 16 percent in Saudi Arabia.

Currently, with the production of 985,000 tons of propylene by Iranian refineries and petrochemical plants, there is a shortage of 175,000 tons of this product in the country, Shana has reported.

In the calendar year of 1404, the amount of propylene production will reach 1.95 million tons, while Iran will be facing an annual shortage of about 700,000 tons of the item.

In order to tackle this projected shortage, the first step is to launch projects with methanol and propylene output.



Propylene is a colorless fuel gas with a naturally pungent smell. Although similar to propane, it has a double bond which gives it a combustion advantage i.e. it burns hotter. This fuel gas is extremely flammable and non-toxic. Propylene is obtained during the refining of gasoline.

Projects worth over \$11b to be inaugurated

The deputy oil minister further pointed out that 16 petrochemical projects, valued at over \$11 billion, will be put into operation in the current year.

Elsewhere in his remarks, he called the current year as a prosperous and golden year for Iran's petrochemical industry and added, "according to the scheduled program, a number of 16 petrochemical projects will be inaugurated by yearend but it is likely that three to four of these projects would be put into operation with delay due to the outbreak of coronavirus pandemic."

The official had said last week that making the petrochemical industry smart is the only way for a stable presence in the global markets.

Making the remarks in an interview conducted by Shana, Mohammadi reiterated, "In the petrochemical sector we should have a global view."

He also emphasized moving in the way of attracting more investors to this industry.

The official further mentioned the production of petrochemical products in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19) and said, "Last year was a successful year in terms of petrochemical production, there was no problem in this due, and the projected annual output was achieved."

According to Mohammadi, the petrochemical industry is not like the oil industry and it is practically unsanctionable.

"For oil, the ways of selling and the costumers are specific and limited but that is not the case with petrochemicals. There are hundreds of holdings which are eager for buying our diverse petrochemical products", the official has told the Tehran Times in a press conference on the sidelines of the 24th Iran International, Oil, Gas, Refining and Petrochemical Exhibition (Iran Oil Show 2019).

"However, we are holding meetings with our customers to explore various aspects of possible impacts of the U.S. sanctions on our trade", he added.

As the second-biggest source of revenue for Iran, the petrochemical industry is one of the most important pillars of the country's resilient economy and one of the main suppliers of foreign currency especially the euro for the country.

The industry became more significant since the re-imposition of U.S. sanctions on the country's oil industry and since then, the government has been taking serious measures to expand the industry and move toward self-sufficiency. Cooperating with capable domestic knowledge-based companies and startups is one of the very fruitful steps that the oil ministry has taken in its efforts to reach complete independence from the foreign resources for meeting its equipment needs.

In this regard, the country's Petrochemical Research and Technology Company (PRTC) has played a very significant role in collaborating with such companies for working on innovative research projects for producing various equipment and base-products needed in the industry.

OPEC+ to meet today on extending cuts, pushing for compliance

OPEC and its allies led by Russia will meet today to discuss extending record oil production cuts and to approve a new approach that aims to force laggards such as Iraq and Nigeria to comply better with the existing curbs.

The producers known as OPEC+ previously agreed to cut supply by 9.7 million barrels per day (bpd) during May and June to prop up prices which collapsed due to the coronavirus crisis. Cuts have been due to taper to 7.7 million bpd from July to December.

According to Reuters, two OPEC+ sources said Saudi Arabia and Russia had agreed to extend the deeper cuts until the end of July but said Riyadh was also pushing to extend them until the end of August.

Benchmark Brent crude, which slumped below \$20 a barrel in April, was up about 3 percent on Friday to trade at a three-month high above \$41. Prices had slipped from recent highs earlier in the week on uncertainty about when OPEC+ would meet.

Today's video conferences would start with talks between members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries at 1200 GMT and would be followed by a gathering of the OPEC+ group at 1400 GMT, two OPEC+ sources said.

Three OPEC sources said an extension to cuts was contingent on high compliance. They said countries that produced above quota in May and June must promise to adhere to targets and agree to compensate for any earlier overproduction by cutting more in July, August and September.

The energy minister of the United Arab Emirates, Suhail Al Mazrouei, called for improved compliance in a letter sent to OPEC+ and seen by Reuters.

Oil traders ask why U.S. inventory math isn't adding up

Oil traders and analysts scrutinizing U.S. inventory data for signs of a market recovery are being confronted by an odd situation: the math just doesn't add up.

As per Bloomberg, various government data sets including stockpiles, production, imports and exports are signaling that current official figures on at least some supplies are excessive. While it's unclear where exactly the discrepancy lies, the difference could potentially signal a more bullish outlook for crude prices as they claw their way back after diving below zero in April.

The excess is showing up in the U.S. Energy Information Administration's so-called crude supply adjustment factor -- the difference between stockpile numbers and those implied by production, refinery demand, imports and exports. That has averaged negative 980,000 barrels daily over the past four weeks -- the largest in records going back to 2001, and equivalent to more than 27 million barrels.

The adjustment factor tends to swing back and forth, depending on irregularities in various surveys the EIA pulls from for its reports. For these weekly reports, the EIA is not able to collect domestic crude oil production, instead estimating it from its short-term energy outlook model.

Some investors lay the blame for the current discrepancy on U.S. oil production numbers. While daily output fell 700,000 barrels to 11.2 million in May, they believe oil's plunge into negative territory in April should have led to a steeper decline.



"This is a high frequency data series, and so there's often some smoothing that results from it," said John Kilduff, a partner at Again Capital, who added the discrepancy may have to do with production figures. "When the numbers are off, you just have to make sure you're checking everything else independently, like other ways to track import and exports numbers."

Just last month, consultancy IHS Markit said that U.S. oil producers are in the process of curtailing 1.75 million barrels a day of existing output by early June due to operating cash losses, lack of demand and storage capacity and an unwillingness to sell resources at low prices. Some of that lower production is already becoming evident, according to information disclosed in various company announcements and state data.

While output may be a factor, it's unlikely the full answer. According to the EIA's Robert Merriam, the accuracy of its production modeling compared to subsequent monthly data has been good, often within 1-2 percent in most months.

Since prices started tumbling in March following the collapse of the OPEC+ deal to cut output, the EIA's weekly data has recorded a production decline of 1.9 million barrels a day, which he said was substantial compared with historical numbers. And while he's also seen a wide range of analyst estimates on current production volumes, it's not clear whether those are comprehensive or extrapolated.

"The adjustment reflects the aggregate uncertainty around each of the supply and disposition elements, and the crude production estimate certainly remains but one potential factor," Merriam, the director of the Office of Energy Production, Conversion, and Delivery at the EIA, said.

He said that there have also some large weekly swings in reported inventory levels and refinery runs, so all the elements within the crude data are moving around far more than they usually do, adding that "the timing of reporting those could also be driving the adjustment lately, as they always do."

A year ago, the crude adjustment factor caught the attention of energy enthusiasts when the figure was more than 800,000 barrels a day for four weeks, implying the reverse -- that something in the data was undercounted. The EIA, at the time, had suspected that besides understating oil production, one of the reasons was plant condensate that was associated with natural gas output, but blended into the crude oil stream.

Solar, wind, storage link arms in push for "majority renewables" by 2030

The solar, wind, energy storage, and hydropower industries announced a new era of cooperation between their sectors, intending to bring renewables to constitute a majority of electricity generation sources by 2030.

As per greentechmedia.com, while the American solar and wind industries have long fought for many of the same policies on the national stage, the two markets are largely supported by different mechanisms at the federal level, and a policy victory for one industry has not always meant a victory for the other.

But the two industries have grown increasingly blended, particularly among development companies. Utility-scale solar now competes strongly in many of the wind industry's strongest markets, from Texas to the Midwest. Last year the American Wind Energy Association (AWEA) announced it would transform its flagship annual Windpower conference and exhibition to a "Cleanpower" event designed to incorporate solar and storage.

"What's good for wind is not always good for solar," said Chris Brown, president of Vestas Americas and AWEA

board chair, speaking this week at the first Cleanpower event, held virtually because of the ongoing pandemic. "But we didn't come to the industry to wall ourselves off and fight with each other. We came to this industry to fight against climate change."

Put together, solar and wind account for 10 percent of electricity generation in the United States. Add in hydro and the figure jumps to 17 percent. Under this week's goal announced by the industries' leading trade groups, wind and solar would each reach 20 percent of generation by

2030, complemented by 125 gigawatts of energy storage. Traditional hydropower would tick up to 9 percent of generation.

The industry groups said the efforts would build to over 1 million jobs by 2030, with the majority working in solar.

AWEA, along with the Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA), the Energy Storage Association and the National Hydropower Association, said the groups would work together on several "advocacy principles" including achieving carbon reductions, building a more resilient grid and advancing fair market competition.

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INVITATION TO INTERNATIONAL TENDER

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Si	16 %	Min
Mn	65 %	Min
S	0.03 %	Max
C	2.0 %	Max
P	0.25 %	Max
Size Of Pieces	20-60 mm	Min 90 % <20 mm Max 10 %
Packing	Bulk in Container	
Delivery Date	August	September
2019	(4000 MT)	(4000 MT)
		October
		(4000 MT)

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- ACCOUNT No.1902-750-4019644-1 AT "EGHTESAD NOVIN BANK- OF IRAN AHVAZ SHARIATI BRANCH" OR

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Oil min. holds phone talk with Russia's energy min. on reducing oil output

TEHRAN, Feb. 20 (MNA) – Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh held a phone conversation with the Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak on Thu. with regards to the cooperation of the two countries within the framework of OPEC Plus.

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Trump is uniting Americans — against him

By Eugene Robinson

The first time I witnessed the use of tear gas and brutal force against lawful, peaceful protesters was in Chile during the reign of military dictator Augusto Pinochet. The shocking abuse of state power we saw near the White House on Monday reminded me of that place and time — and made clear the peril we now face.

Pinochet had seized power in 1973 in a bloody U.S.-backed coup. In 1988, believing himself invincible, he called for a plebiscite to give him eight more years in power. I covered the run-up to that vote. And when those calling on Chileans to vote “no” held rallies, Pinochet’s goon squads inevitably found or invented some reason to disperse the crowds with overwhelming force. The worst kind of tear gas, I discovered the hard way, was some concoction the strongman had bought from the apartheid government in South Africa.

That sort of thing doesn’t happen here in the land of the free and the home of the brave. Except this week, in Lafayette Square.

After mounted police, flash-bang explosives, rubber bullets and tear gas had cleared a path for him, President Trump preened and strutted to his Dear Leader photo op like a wannabe Pinochet, trailed by his wannabe junta — Defense Secretary Mark T. Esper, Attorney General William P. Barr, daughter Ivanka Trump and Gen. Mark A. Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who was, absurdly, wearing camouflage fatigues as though he were in Baghdad or Kabul, not downtown Washington.

Trump stood in front of historic St. John’s Episcopal Church and held aloft a Bible as though it were some new-and-improved gadget he was hawking in an infomercial. Trump cut a ridiculous figure, so yes, we can laugh at him. But his authoritarian, call-in-the-troops response to the protests over George Floyd’s killing shows — as if more evidence were needed — how dangerous he is to the very idea of America.



The Lafayette Square atrocity moved Trump’s first defense secretary, Jim Mattis, to finally speak out. “Donald Trump is the first president in my lifetime who does not try to unite the American people — does not even pretend to try,” Mattis wrote in a statement published by the Atlantic. “Instead he tries to divide us. We are witnessing the consequences of three years of this deliberate effort.”

On Wednesday afternoon, as I visited the site where demonstrators were gassed and manhandled, I wondered whether Trump’s attempt at division might not be having the opposite effect.

The passionate but entirely peaceful crowd was much larger than Monday’s, and I was struck by its rainbow diversity; African Americans may have been a plurality, but there were also whites, Latinos and Asian Americans in substantial numbers. It wasn’t possible to observe the six-foot rule for social distancing, but most of the protesters were wearing

masks or bandannas. Some of the face coverings bore the same messages as the handwritten signs some people held up: “Black Lives Matter.” “Stop Police Murder.” “I Can’t Breathe.”

I ran into the Rev. Rob Fisher, rector of St. John’s, who said he had been given no warning that the president intended to use his church as a backdrop for photographs that are already being used in Trump campaign ads. “The only way to the next step is that voices need to be heard, not tanks and guns,” Fisher said.

La Voyce Reid, a social worker who lives in the Virginia suburbs, told me that “this is my first time ever coming out to a protest.” Reid, who is African American, said she grew up in South Central Los Angeles and remembered the Rodney King riots in 1992. She brought along her 15-year-old daughter and her 22-year-old son because she thought it was important for them to be there, too. “Sitting at home and watching on television just wasn’t enough.”

Chris Bostick, who is black, and his friend Jordan Gault, who is white, both work as bartenders and are currently out of work. They said it was important to them to be physically present. Gault held a sign that read, “Whites are not all racists, Blacks are not all criminals, Cops are not all killers, We are all human.”

Separating the protesters from Lafayette Square and the White House beyond was a line of federal officers, clad in riot gear, who wore no insignia or name tags that would allow them to be identified and held accountable for anything they did during the demonstration. Behind them were military-style troop carriers; behind the vehicles, a hastily erected black chain-link fence. If all of that was intended to intimidate, it spectacularly failed.

All those years ago in Chile, Pinochet thought he could use force to intimidate citizens into submission, too. The people ended up booting him out of power in a plebiscite and renewing the nation’s treasured democratic traditions. Sic semper tyrannis.

Persian Gulf non-cooperation: Inside the flailing PGCC

As fighting raged during the 1980-1988 Iraq-Iran war, neighboring countries of the Persian Gulf region decided it was time to organize militarily and economically to ensure strength in numbers.

Thirty-nine years later, the union that became known as the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC) is in tatters because of a blockade imposed on one of its members, the natural gas-rich nation of Qatar.

The PGCC was fractured on June 5, 2017, when Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, along with Egypt, a non-council member, severed all ties with Qatar and blocked air, land, and sea routes to and from the country.

Three years later, with the blockade still in full force, the fate of what once represented Persian Gulf-Arab unity is now in question.

Bringing together Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, the PGCC faces “unprecedented” challenges — including the repercussions from the coronavirus pandemic and the diplomatic crisis caused by the siege, Secretary-General Nayef al-Hajraf said in a statement marking the bloc’s 39th anniversary last month.

■ The beginning

The PGCC was formed on May 25, 1981, in Abu Dhabi, UAE, as the bloody war between Iraq and Iran was at its peak and the region was still reeling from the Islamic Revolution in Iran two years earlier.

■ The goals were lofty

The PGCC’s aim was to coordinate resistance to outside intervention in the Persian Gulf, and a Unified Economic Agreement was signed in November 1981 and ratified in 1982. One of its goals was to include free trade among member states in all agricultural, animal, industrial, and natural resource products of national origin.

It also sought to strengthen cooperation among its six member states and regulate areas such as economic affairs, commerce, customs and communications, education and culture, social and health affairs, information and tourism, and legislative and administrative protocols.

The PGCC — a region with a population of about 50 million people, half of those expatri-

ate workers — also aimed to stimulate scientific and technological progress, establish scientific research centres, and encourage cooperation with the private sector.

With its headquarters in the Saudi capital, Riyadh, the PGCC allowed the free movement of citizens and capital, but restrictions on some economic activities were left in place.

■ Military cooperation

The PGCC formed a joint military ground force known as the Peninsula Shield in 1984 to rapidly deploy if any of the members were attacked.

In 1987, PGCC nations declared any assault on a member state tantamount to an attack on the entire group. Despite these moves, however, the invasion of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein’s Iraq in 1990 was not met with Persian Gulf troops.

The West Asia pro-democracy protests that erupted in 2011, known as the Arab Spring, were largely avoided in the PGCC — with the exception of Bahrain.

In March 2011, about 1,000 Saudi soldiers entered the country to protect government facilities at Bahrain’s request, in line with the PGCC defense pact. Dozens of protesters were killed, many arrested, and the uprising was put down.

■ Economics

Fossil fuels are the main driver of the PGCC’s economic engine, accounting for about 90 percent of government revenues.

The PGCC nations are facing their worst economic crisis in history amid the double shock of plunging oil prices and the coronavirus pandemic, the Institute of International Finance (IIF) noted this week.

Overall gross domestic product (GDP) will contract 4.4 percent this year, despite indications the coronavirus spread has been successfully contained.

Saudi Arabia, the region’s largest economy, could see its real GDP shrink 4 percent this year and its deficit widen to 13 percent.

Qatar, the world’s largest producer of liquefied natural gas, will also suffer from low energy prices, but it continues to develop its share of

the North Field, the world’s biggest gas deposit.

Because of the air, sea, and land blockade, Qatar has been forced to seek out new trade routes and partners, and opened up its \$74bn Hamad Port.

Business between Oman and Qatar is booming since the siege was imposed. Over the past three years, Qatar has also developed stronger economic relations with Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan.

Reports have emerged that Qatar, Oman and Kuwait may establish a free-trade zone independent of the PGCC.

PGCC Secretary-General al-Hajraf, Kuwait’s former finance minister, said last week the Persian Gulf crisis and the pandemic represent “a common concern for all countries of the council.”

“This matter makes it imperative for all of us as the PGCC system to enhance joint action and collective preparedness to deal with the post-coronavirus world with its economic, health, security, and labour dimensions in order to protect our people and preserve their gains,” he said in a statement marking the PGCC’s 39th anniversary.

■ Ostracizing Qatar

The blockade was not the first time Qatar faced internal PGCC sanction. In 2014, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain withdrew their ambassadors to Qatar over concerns about Doha’s independent foreign policy.

Efforts to resolve the current crisis are reportedly continuing, with Kuwait acting as the main mediator since the beginning of the crisis in June 2017.

Three months after the blockade was imposed, Kuwait’s Emir Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah told a press conference with US President Donald Trump: “What is important is that we have stopped any military action.”

The blockading nations immediately denied a military incursion had been planned.

James M Dorsey, a senior fellow at the S Rajaratnam School of International Studies, wrote in Modern Diplomacy that some Qatari officials believe “gaining control of Qatari gas reserves was a main objective of the Saudi-UAE boycott.”

Analysts have suggested the severe shift in PGCC cooperation and solidarity occurred following the rise to power by Saudi Arabia’s current Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman, after his father became king in January 2015. In tandem with the UAE’s Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed, the two countries moved to dominate the political agenda of the Persian Gulf grouping.

“The organisation has been usurped by Saudi Arabia and the UAE to coerce the smaller states into followership,” said Andreas Krieg, an assistant professor at King’s College London.

■ PGCC break-up?

Speculation has been rife that Doha may split with the PGCC, though a Qatari official denied such a move was imminent.

“Reports claiming that Qatar is considering leaving the PGCC are wholly incorrect and baseless,” Deputy Foreign Minister Lolwah al-Khater said last week.

“Such rumours must have originated from people’s despair and disappointment with a fractured PGCC, which used to be a source of hope and aspiration for the people of the six member countries. As we are reaching the third year of the illegal blockade on Qatar by Saudi Arabia, UAE and Bahrain, there is no wonder why the people of the PGCC are doubting and questioning the PGCC as an institution.”

“Qatar hopes the PGCC will once again be a platform of cooperation and coordination. An effective PGCC is needed now more than ever, given the challenges facing our region,” al-Khater said.

With discussions continuing, Kuwait’s Prime Minister Shaikh Sabah Al Khaled said on Wednesday “hopes are bigger than before” of ending the Persian Gulf crisis.

“We used to move one step ahead and return two steps backwards. But now if we move forward a step, it is followed by another step,” Al Khaled told local media.

But one Western official in the Persian Gulf, quoted by the Wall Street Journal on Wednesday, was far less optimistic.

(Source: *al Jazeera*)

The implications of declining U.S. leadership

➔ What does the U.S. withdrawal from this organization mean? It means, among other things, that the United States is retreating from its global leadership role—morally and from the standpoint of its soft power. On both accounts, the Trump administration’s unilateral approach has dramatically undercut the ability of the United States to influence the behavior of other states through the attractiveness of its culture and the persuasiveness of its policies. The U.S. withdrawal from the WHO will further accelerate the ongoing decline in the perceived competence of the United States to effectively address new global challenges. Most ominously, however, this development is likely to fuel a great-power discord between China and the United States, dehumanizing the former while damaging the long-term relationship between the two countries.

To fully understand the implication of the U.S. withdrawal from the WHO, one needs to note that the WHO relies on assessed and voluntary contributions from its member states. In 2019, according to one study, the United States provided the WHO an estimated \$419 million, representing roughly 15 percent of the World Health Organization’s total revenue over

its current two-year budget period. This move will most likely delay the discovery phase as well as clinical trials necessary to develop a global vaccine. Perhaps, more importantly, this decision will weaken the effectiveness of the organization and the broader cooperation among countries to stem the spread of COVID-19 pandemic around the world.

Trump has ceaselessly harkened back to his outdated notions of building walls and imposing travel bans in pursuit of his populist policies at a time when the stakes have never been higher. All of this flies in the face of the clear lesson to be learned from the COVID-19 crisis that the virus knows no boundaries and that walls and borders cannot separate one nation’s public health and safety from those of others. Needless to say that a virus anywhere is potentially a virus everywhere in a world that has become increasingly globalized, hence the need for collaborative, multilateral governance. Trump’s claim that virus is “going away very soon” runs counter to the growing spike in confirmed cases

around the world.

Furthermore, Trump’s disregard for the detrimental effects of climate change, as well as his policies reversing pollution standards, have exacerbated the deleterious effects not only on environmental sustainability but also, more subtly, on human sustainability. Earth scientists remind us that humans are altering the environment at a much quicker pace than at any other time in history, a fact that has contributed to the evolution, the mutation, and the spread of all types of viruses. Human encroachment into animal habitats—consider, for example, how deforestation and forest degradation have contributed to global warming—has created further contact between humans and animals, rendering disease transmission more likely than ever before.

At home, Trump’s mishandling of nationwide and global protests over the death of George Floyd—an African-American man who died at the hands of a white police officer while still in custody—was on vivid display on the Internet, as

captured on several bystanders’ smartphones. The incident has dramatically weakened Trump’s presidency, is likely to defang his entourage, and could possibly demoralize the riot police in the face of widespread national and global protests. The nationwide and racially diverse protests, dominated by youth and vibrant civil society movements, have captured the world’s imagination, while posing the most serious challenge to the Trump administration. Instead of healing the wounds of racial and systemic discrimination and police brutality, Trump’s rhetoric, tweets, and public gestures have deepened the divides in an already polarized nation, significantly diminishing trust in his leadership skills and damaging his populist image beyond repair. The result has been obvious: Trump’s policies have been consistently unsuccessful both at home and abroad.

Mahmood Monshipouri, Ph.D., is a professor of international relations at San Francisco State University and a lecturer at UC-Berkeley. He is the editor, most recently, of *Why Human Rights Still Matter in Contemporary Global Affairs*. (mmonship@sfsu.edu and mmonship@berkeley.edu) Cell #415-265-6965 and landline#510-705-1533.

“Trump’s policies have been consistently unsuccessful both at home and abroad.”

James Mattis denounces Trump, describes him as a threat to the constitution

James Mattis, the esteemed Marine general who resigned as secretary of defense in December 2018 to protest Donald Trump’s Syria policy, has, ever since, kept studiously silent about Trump’s performance as president. But he has now broken his silence, writing an extraordinary broadside in which he denounces the president for dividing the nation, and accuses him of ordering the U.S. military to violate the constitutional rights of American citizens.

“I have watched this week’s unfolding events, angry and appalled,” Mattis writes. “The words ‘Equal Justice Under Law’ are carved in the pediment of the United States Supreme Court. This is precisely what protesters are rightly demanding. It is a wholesome and unifying demand—one that all of us should be able to get behind. We must not be distracted by a small number of lawbreakers. The protests are defined by tens of thousands of people of conscience who are insisting that we live up to our values—our values as people and our values as a nation.” He goes on, “We must reject and hold accountable those in office who would make a mockery of our Constitution.”

In his accuse, Mattis excoriates the president for setting Americans against one another.

“Donald Trump is the first president in my lifetime who does not try to unite the American people—does not even pretend to try. Instead, he tries to divide us,” Mattis writes. “We are witnessing the consequences of three years of this deliberate effort. We are witnessing the consequences of three years without mature leadership. We can unite without him, drawing on the strengths inherent in our civil society. This will not be easy, as the past few days have shown, but we owe it to our fellow citizens; to past generations that bled to defend our promise; and to our children.”

He goes on to contrast the American ethos of unity with Nazi ideology. “Instructions given by the military departments to our troops before the Normandy invasion reminded soldiers that ‘The Nazi slogan for destroying us... was ‘Divide and Conquer.’ Our American answer is ‘In Union there is Strength.’ We must summon that unity to surmount this crisis—confident that we are better than our politics.”

Mattis’s dissatisfaction with Trump was no secret inside the Pentagon. But after his resignation, he argued publicly—and to great criticism—that it would be inappropriate and counterproductive for a former general, and a former Cabinet official, to criticize a sitting president. Doing so, he said, would threaten the apolitical nature of the military. When I interviewed him last year on this subject, he said, “When you leave an administration over clear policy differences, you need to give the people who are still there as much opportunity as possible to defend the country. They still have the responsibility of protecting this great big experiment of ours.” He did add, however: “There is a period in which I owe my silence. It’s not eternal. It’s not going to be forever.”

That period is now definitively over. Mattis reached the conclusion this past weekend that the American experiment is directly threatened by the actions of the president he once served. In his statement, Mattis makes it clear that the president’s response to the police killing of George Floyd, and the ensuing protests, triggered this public condemnation.

“When I joined the military, some 50 years ago,” he writes, “I swore an oath to support and defend the Constitution. Never did I dream that troops taking that same oath would be ordered under any circumstance to violate the Constitutional rights of their fellow citizens—much less to provide a bizarre photo op for the elected commander-in-chief, with military leadership standing alongside.”

He goes on to implicitly criticize the current secretary of defense, Mark Esper, and other senior officials as well. “We must reject any thinking of our cities as a ‘battlespace’ that our uniformed military is called upon to ‘dominate.’ At home, we should use our military only when requested to do so, on very rare occasions, by state governors. Militarizing our response, as we witnessed in Washington, D.C., sets up a conflict—a false conflict—between the military and civilian society. It erodes the moral ground that ensures a trusted bond between men and women in uniform and the society they are sworn to protect, and of which they themselves are a part. Keeping public order rests with civilian state and local leaders who best understand their communities and are answerable to them.”

■ In union there is strength

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James Madison wrote in Federalist 41 that “America united with a handful of troops, or without a single soldier, exhibits a more forbidding posture to foreign ambition than America disunited, with a hundred thousand veterans ready for combat.” We do not need to militarize our response to protests. We need to unite around a common purpose. And it starts by guaranteeing that all of us are equal before the law.

(Source: *The Atlantic*)



Tehran's historical towers turn off lights in honor of Imam Khomeini

HERITAGE TEHRAN – Tehran's historical towers turned off lights on June 2 and remained dark to commemorate the death anniversary of Imam Khomeini, the late founder of the Islamic Revolution.

[Exterior] lighting for Tehran province's historical towers of Tughrul and Shebeli will not be carried out on the eve of the 14th day of Khordad (the third month in the Iranian calendar) which marked the 31st death anniversary of Imam Khomeini, CHTN quoted provincial tourism chief Parham Janfeshan as saying on Tuesday.



Standing tall in the city of Rey, the 12th-century Tughrul Tower is the tomb of Seljuk ruler Tughrul Beg, who died in Rey in 1063. Shebeli Tower, which dominates the Damavand's countryside skyline, is a roofed octagon tomb of Sheikh Shebeli, a Sufi mystic of the Islamic Golden Age.

Fire inflicts no damage to 14th-century Rab'-e Rashidi

TOURISM TEHRAN – The fire that broke out in Rab'-e Rashidi in northwestern East Azarbaijan province on Wednesday has inflicted no damage to the 14th-century educational complex.

Located in Tabriz, the capital of East Azarbaijan province, Rab'-e Rashidi was established during the reign of Ghazan, a ruler of the Ilkhanid dynasty (1256-1353).



Due to the dry vegetation in the area and the heat and wind, the fire spread to the southern parts of the complex, but it was contained and successfully extinguished by firefighters, said Seyyed Ramin Asbaqi, the director of Tabriz Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department, CHTN reported on Thursday.

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

Soaked in history and culture for millennia, Tabriz embraces several historical and religious sites, including Jameh Mosque of Tabriz and Arg of Tabriz, and UNESCO-registered Tabriz Historic Bazaar Complex to name a few.

Iran keeps an eye on possible inscription of the site on the UNESCO World Heritage list by 2025.

Restoration begins on Zanjan's Chehel Sotoun Mosque

HERITAGE TEHRAN – A restoration project has been commenced on parts of Chehel Sotoun Mosque in Zanjan, west-central Iran. CHTN reported on Friday.

The mosque's columns, walls, ceiling's insulation, arches and gutters need some rehabilitation works, which will be done by the end of July, Zanjan province's tourism chief Amir Arjmand said.



The restoration project aims to repair and strengthen the mosque with the utmost sensitivity, using the most suitable combinations of materials and traditional executive methods, he added.

The Qajar-era (1789–1925) mosque is located in the historic bazaar of Zanjan. It is the second most prestigious seminary school in Zanjan after Jameh Mosque.

The main prayer hall of the mosque is built in Chehel Sotoun (forty columns) style, which is mostly compared to the 17th-century Chehel Sotoun palace in Isfahan.

Zanjan is one of the cities founded by Sassanid King Ardashir I (180-242 CE). The province makes a base for wider explorations with the architectural wonder of Soltaniyeh, the subterranean delights of the Katala-Khor caves, colorful mountains, and the UNESCO-registered Takht-e Soleiman ruins are nearby.

Coronavirus: Iran preparing to reopen doors to foreign travelers

→ 1 "We are constantly monitoring [our target] countries and we have decided, in the first phase, to resume tourism interactions with the neighboring countries."

The rapid spread of the novel coronavirus has plunged the travel and tourism industry and economy in the global scene over that past couple of months as passenger traffic on airlines and hotel occupancy rates have fallen off a cliff compared to the same periods previous years.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the official referred to travel demands from Oman, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Pakistan, Iraq, Turkey, China, and Hong Kong, even in the conditions of the coronavirus pandemic, adding: "Apart from these applicants, we have had requests from European backpackers to travel to Iran."

"However, the foreign nationals have cited various reasons for their visits such as trade, medical treatment, pilgrimage, education, or visiting relatives so that whenever the borders are open we can rightly determine the volume of travel demands."

"I am sure that if the borders of Iran and Turkey are opened right now, the demand for travel to that country would be significant because many (Iranian) people have administrative, commercial, or educational affairs in Turkey."

The official also pointed to health protocols being developed with the assistance of the Health Ministry to protect international arrivals, saying: "We are in talks with the Ministry of Health to draw up a protocol concerning foreign arrivals to the entry points. We are also setting a timetable for reopening borders to foreign nationals and tourists, given the latest conditions of the coronavirus, similar to classifications that other countries, including Turkey, have made so far."

"Some countries are still classified in code red coronavirus status, an issue that we have included in our schedule for reestablishing tourism ties."

Larijani underlined that the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts does not solely decide on the resumption of



An undated photo depicts foreign travelers trekking across the Dasht-e Lut, a barren landscape of shifting sands and wind-hewn dunes, in central Iran.

travel relations with other countries. "We are preparing our proposals to discuss them with the Coronavirus Combat Operations Headquarters to reach a joint decision."

The official noted that joint consultation is currently underway with tourism ministers of 30 target countries, adding: "Iran has announced that it will welcome tourists from those countries as soon as the borders are open."

"We are doing soft marketing as the government share and we expect the private sector also take action."

Larijani then called on travel agencies to review the target market countries and not rely on the capacity of neighboring countries and East Asia. The official proposed them to prepare a variety of tour packages tailored to the needs of specified travelers.

Deputy tourism minister Vali Teymouri

said earlier in May that Iran's tourism industry will get back on the right track sooner than expected thanks to measures taken to tackle the spread of coronavirus.

"I believe that tourism industry of the country will get back on the right track far sooner than generally expected thanks to the measures taken to deal with the spread of coronavirus in tourist destinations, hotels, stopovers, and all the centers which are affiliated with the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts," Teymouri said in an exclusive interview with the Tehran Times.

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

"Given the policies of the country's tour-

ism industry over the past two years to focus on tourism markets in the neighboring countries, the possibility of recovering and reviving international tourism in the shortest possible time is predictable."

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

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

Iran getting Asbads ready for UNESCO tag



TOURISM TEHRAN – Several centuries-old windmills, locally called Asbads, that are still standing tall in Hamun county, southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchestan, are being restored in order to be prepared for possible inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage list.

The restoration project was commenced two years ago to prepare the historical windmills to join Asbads in South Khorasan and Khorasan Razavi provinces for possible UNESCO registration, CHTN quoted Alireza Jalalzai, the director of Sistan-Baluchestan's Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department, as saying on Tuesday.

The rehabilitation works include debris removal, reinforcement and completion of restoration and reconstruction of the Asbads' painted walls, which is being carried out continuously, he added.

The Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts has almost completed preparations for a chain of such vertical-axis windmills for possibly becoming a UNESCO World Heritage.

Made of natural clay, straw, and wood, an Asbad is typically comprised of eight

chambers, with each chamber housing six blades. As the area's strong, steady wind enters the chambers it turns the blades, which then turn grindstones. The structures reach up to about 65 feet in height.

The Asbad used to be a smart technique to grind grains. It also bears testimony to the human being's adaption with nature by transforming environmental obstacles into opportunities. "Asbad is a smart technique to grind grains, a technique which goes back to ancient times when the people living in the eastern parts of Iran, in an attempt to adapt themselves with nature and transform environmental obstacles into opportunities, managed to invent it," according to UNESCO website.

"The earliest known references to windmills are to a Persian millwright in 644 CE and windmills in Seistan [Sistan], Iran, in 915 CE," the Encyclopedia Britannica says.

Avid visitors and researchers can examine the subtle yet simple mechanism in person as several windmills have been restored and brought back to life to testify how ancient Iranians harnessed the wind to make a living.

The Islamic Republic designated the Asbad as a national heritage site in 2002.

Coronavirus: Yazd hosts only 20 foreign tourists in spring



TOURISM TEHRAN – The central province of Yazd, a traditional heaven for cultural travelers, has hosted only 20 international tourists as well as 300 domestic travelers so far in spring, provincial tourism chief has said.

While over two million foreign tourists and about half a million Iranians visited the province at the same period of time in the previous year, coronavirus outbreak has hit the tourism industry in the region hard, said Seyyed Mostafa Fatemi, ILNA reported on Friday.

Although the coronavirus lockdown has been eased, considering the beginning of summer time and warm and dry weather of Yazd, the province won't expect more tourist arrivals, he added.

In late February, Iran temporarily closed cultural heritage museums and historical sites across the country and limited travel between its major cities in an effort to halt the spread of the coronavirus.

However, different provinces launched virtual tours and online visits for the people who were in home quarantine over past few months.

Couple of weeks before the virus

spread, Iran was emerging as the third fastest growing tourism destination in the globe in 2019, with 27.9 percent growth year on year, according to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

Domestic travel in Iran reaches its climax from mid-March to early April, a time corresponding to the Persian New Year (Noruz) holidays. Iranians made 74 million overnight stays in their domestic trips during the Noruz holidays last year, which showed a 20 percent increase year on year.

With its winding lanes, forest of badgirs (wind catchers), mud-brick houses, atmospheric alleyways and centuries of history, Yazd is a delightful place to stay, referring as a 'don't miss' destination by almost all travel associates in the region. The oasis city is wedged between the northern Dasht-e Kavir and southern Dasht-e Lut on a flat plain ringed by mountains.

Yazd Jameh Mosque, Dowlatabad Garden, the Yazd Atash Behram, also known as Atashkadeh-e Yazd, Towers of Silence, and adjacent desert landscape are among its tourist sites.

Motorcycle rally held in memory of Imam Khomeini

TOURISM TEHRAN – Some Iranian motorcyclists took part in a rally on Wednesday towards the mausoleum of Imam Khomeini to commemorate the 31st demise anniversary of the founder of the Islamic Revolution.

Organized by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, the rally started from Tehran's Milad Tower in the north to Imam Khomeini's mausoleum in the south, IRNA reported.

A total of 31 cyclists, riding bikes with capacities of 250cc or less, attended the event, observing health protocols needed to contain the coronavirus pandemic, the report said.

Every year on the occasion, a commemoration ceremony is held at the mausoleum in southern Tehran, with large crowds of mourners attending. This year, however, the ceremony was canceled in a bid to observe social distancing measures in place to protect against the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.



World Environment Day: Iran outlines plan to protect its rich biodiversity

1 → a global disease pandemic – demonstrate the interdependence of humans and the webs of life, in which they exist.

World Environment Day has grown to become a global platform for public outreach, with participation from over 143 countries annually.

■ Sustainable exploitation of biodiversity a must

“Today, all governments have come to the conclusion that all aspects of human life, as well as growth and development, depend on biodiversity.

All three pillars of biodiversity namely, variation at the genetic, species, and ecosystem levels are important and must be considered to ensure biodiversity preserve; any damage to any of these three pillars will damage the entire biodiversity and pose a serious threat to human life.

Although it is believed that Iran's geopolitical position is the reason for its rich biodiversity, I believe that it is a gift from God,” Montazemi explained.

“Indeed, Iran is not one of the megadiverse countries, like Brazil, India, and Malaysia, but it has habitats with the richest biodiversity.

However, various factors such as sustainable exploitation of biodiversity should come to the center of attention to better protect the country's biodiversity, to do so, help local communities earn income, and biodiversity can also benefit from local communities' protection,” he said.

He went on to say that the DOE has taken extensive measures in various areas such as habitat, species, and genetics; four types of areas have been designated for protection, including, 31 national parks, 46 wildlife refuges, 169 protected areas, and 38 natural national monuments.

“Today, we have been able to preserve many species of animals and provide protection; as animal species include 37 species of mammals, 78 bird species, 22 species of reptiles, 6 species of bivalves, and 25 species of fish of inland waters.

The organization's gene bank is also a major step toward the genetic protection of species.”

■ Wildlife habitat protection a main priority

“What is important in wildlife species conservation is the conservation of species in natural habitat, therefore, the DOE's main priority is to preserve the country's wildlife habitat.

For the flagship species, several national protection programs have been developed, 10 of which are underway, such as the conservation plans for Persian leopard and the brown bear.

Some 10 action plans will soon be finalized for a series of species, which will be announced to the agencies after approval by the expert committee,” Montazemi stated.

■ More brown bears killed in conflicts

Referring to the brown bear protection



plan, he said that “the initial framework of a protection program is based on promoting public awareness, along with reducing conflicts among wildlife species and locals.

We should develop an environment regarding various factors, in which the bears can not only survive but have a desirable life in nature.

Unfortunately, over the past year, we have seen an alarming increase in the slaughter of bears during conflicts with humans, which could be rooted in the encroachment on the habitat of these animals.

And after researches, we realized that land-use changes were the reason behind the conflicts, as in the main bear habitats, some people or farmers, who owned lands, have built small buildings to live and earn income for themselves, therefore, posed a threat to the species habitat.”

“Instead of stopping entering natural habitats and land-use changes, we drive the bears out, unfortunately, he lamented, adding, it is why we also lost Persian leopard in different parts of the country.

When a bear enters the village, it may seem like a simple event, but it can have very bad consequences, so, we need to train the locals on some certain issues like waste management, he noted, adding, many villagers release the waste in surrounding areas, which might attract the animals to the villages,” he added.

He went on to say that “this highly requires training, management, and supervision, local communities are supposed to help us to protect the wildlife because humans are more responsible for conflicts with animals.

Livestock and herding dogs are other causes of animal deaths, which need proper management to be addressed.”

■ DOE not to give up on Asiatic cheetah reproduction

Pointing to the Asiatic cheetah conservation project as a great success, he stated that a vast majority of locals re-

siding around the cheetahs' habitats are farmers and livestock owners, who were trained by the NGOs on the protection of the precious species, the importance of cheetahs in the ecosystem, and how to behave with the species.

This has led to good achievements in Persian cheetahs' habitats, for instance, locals have recently reported the existence of a cheetah family of five members, and kept an eye on the animals to prevent them from road accidents, he explained.

He further called on the media to take steps forward to raise public awareness of wildlife protection and endangered animals.

However, the DOE is still trying to plan for the reproduction of Asiatic cheetahs and does not give up.

Referring to the Cheetah reproduction programs, he said that each plan is initially a proposal and after numerous researches and sometimes investigations it will be implemented.

For instance, we have proposed a plan to capture two male cheetahs living in central Yazd province for captive breeding, but after numerous studies, it was rejected, of course, using them for gene bank is undeniable, he added.

■ Forest protection needs national unity

In reply to a question on how much the DOE is responsible to extinguish the recent wildfires, Montazemi said that it considerably needs national determination, first people should be very cautious about the forests and pastures due to the high risk of ignition.

A wildfire broke out across several forests and protected areas in four western and southwestern provinces of Khuzestan, Bushehr, Lorestan, Kohgiluyeh, and Boyer-Ahmad on May 28.

The fire also swept through Khaeez protected area, measuring 28,000 hectares is one of the main habitats for wild goats in Zagros

forests and was burning for almost 6 days.

Issa Kalantari the DOE chief told ISNA that some 27,000 hectares of Khaeez protected area was burnt in the fire.

The whole population must avoid activities that cause a wildfire, and the DOE cannot shoulder the whole burden.

President Hassan Rouhani has obliged all the responsible bodies to join hands to extinguish the fire, and many of which came to contain the wildfires. However, in environmental protection, even a single mistake is a lot and can cause irreparable damages, Montazemi stated.

Emphasizing that wildfires should not happen at all, he said that the DOE is not the only responsible body to put out the fire, but people should resist any fire to erupt in forests.

“The wildfire happened during the breeding season when many animals stayed with their babies and could not cross the impassable passages and escape the fire, therefore, many squirrels, birds, and other species were killed in the fire. While loosing even a bird can hurt the ecosystem.

Numerous oak trees turned into ashes, and hundreds years should pass to grow an oak tree, and it definitely will come up with dire consequences.

So far, there is no certain evidence whether the fire was human-caused or natural, he highlighted, implying that our investigation team is operating in the area to find out the reason, but it might be related to negligence,” he explained.

Referring to the slow process of firefighting operations and extinguishment, he said that the country is facing a lack of equipment, especially aerial firefighting facilities, which is the leading cause of slow firefighting, impassable areas.

We need to provide a better infrastructure to protect the wildlife, ecosystem, and protected areas of the country by equipping the DOE because currently we are not equipped with any helicopters.

It is noteworthy that “indeed, every protection measure in national scale needs a nation to be addressed, but it does not diminish the importance of responsible bodies' role.”

■ Media should raise public awareness

He further called on the media to introduce biodiversity value to the public and make people aware of the preciousness of the species.

Environment protection needs national determination and unity. Public culture should be promoted and prevent them from littering in nature. This might seem very simple but of great importance.

Different sections of society need different training ways, for example, children cannot be trained with methods the elderly are trained, each requires a specific way, and the media can highly support the process, he concluded.

Covid-19 is nature sending us a message - we must listen

It's World Environment Day, and our political and corporate leaders need to take note. The degradation of our planet isn't just an environmental problem, it presents serious global economic risks too. Our economies, livelihoods and wellbeing all rely on nature, from the food we eat, to controlling our climate, regulating disease and as a place of recreation. Without nature, there would be no life.

Covid-19 is nature sending us a message. In fact, it reads like an SOS signal for the human enterprise, bringing into sharp focus the need to live within the planet's means. The environmental, health and economic consequences of failing to do so are disastrous, the Independent reported.

Now more than ever before, technological advances allow us to listen to such messages and better understand the natural world. We can estimate the value of 'natural capital' – the planet's stock of renewable and non-renewable natural resources, like plants, soils and minerals – alongside values of produced and human capital (think roads and skills), which together form a measure of a country's true wealth.

Data from the UN Environment Programme show that – per person – our global stock of natural capital has declined nearly 40 per cent since the early 1990s, while produced capital has doubled and human capital has increased by 13 per cent. The food we produce is killing us and decimating biodiversity.

But too few of our economic and finance decision-makers know how to interpret what we are hearing, or, even worse, they choose not to tune in at all. A key problem is the mismatch between the artificial 'economic grammar' which drives public and private policy and 'nature's syntax' which determines how the real world operates.

The result is that we miss the message. In recent decades we've heard repeatedly that we've 'never had it so good'. Since the middle of the 20th century, humanity has prospered at an unprecedented rate. The average person today enjoys a far higher income, is less likely to be in absolute poverty, and lives significantly longer than their ancestors. These are tremendous achievements.

But our approach has meant these successes have come hand in hand with profound degradation of the biosphere, and extensive biodiversity loss. Last year's global assessment by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) reported a decline since 1970 in 14 of 18 categories of nature's contributions to people – vital areas like water purification, air quality and disease regulation.

These extreme contradictions are unsustainable. Simple estimates of our total impact on nature now suggest that maintaining the world's current living standards with our current economic systems, fuelled by unsustainable production and consumption, would require 1.7 Earths.

One truly worrying result of our over-demand is that critical ecosystems are reaching tipping points. Ocean heatwaves have already destroyed half of the shallow water corals on Australia's Great Barrier Reef. As the IPCC reported in 2018, scientists have projected that a 2C global temperature rise will result in the almost complete eradication (a 99 per cent loss) of coral reefs globally.

The economic impacts can be devastating. Large numbers of people depend on coral reef fisheries for livelihoods and nutrition, particularly in developing countries. Reef tourism and recreation bring significant economic benefits.

Meanwhile, several scientists have shown that deforestation of our tropical forests is pushing them dangerously close to tipping points that would see rainforest switch to grassland. This could have enormous consequences for the water cycle and cause major climatic disruption.

So, if the language of economics is failing us, how and where do we begin to find better answers? At the end of April, the Dasgupta Review on the economics of biodiversity – an independent, global review commissioned by the Treasury last year – published its interim report. The review seeks to reconstruct our economic grammar by showing that our economies are embedded within, and not external to, nature.

WORDS IN THE NEWS

World AIDS Day

(December 01, 2003)

To coincide with World AIDS Day, the World Health Organisation and UN AIDS are launching a campaign to treat three million HIV sufferers with antiretroviral drugs by the year 2005. It is called the Three by Five Plan. This report from Imogen Foulkes: The WHO says preventing and treating AIDS is the most urgent health challenge the world has ever faced. Eight thousand people die of AIDS every single day, although it is now a treatable disease. Six million people, mainly in the developing world, need antiretroviral drugs but don't have access to them. The Three by Five plan wants to ensure that poor countries get the best quality medicines at the best prices and it aims to improve care, treatment and diagnosis by training thousands of new medical and community workers.

The WHO has simplified drug monitoring regimes in order to make it easier for patients to follow the treatment successfully. To get three million people on to antiretroviral drugs by 2005 will cost five and a half billion dollars. Much of that money is already committed to the plan through the Global AIDS Fund, the World Bank and President Bush's AIDS initiative. The WHO says the Three by Five plan is a way to challenge the unacceptable inequality surrounding the treatment of AIDS. But six million people need the drugs and deciding which three million will benefit will be very difficult. Individual countries will have the final say, but a meeting to discuss this is due to be held at the WHO in the next few weeks.

■ **Words**
antiretroviral drugs: medicines designed specially to treat certain viruses, in particular the HIV virus
don't have access to: are unable to obtain
diagnosis: identifying what is wrong with someone who is ill
drug monitoring: regular checking of drugs
regimes: systems or methods of achieving something - a formal use
to follow the treatment: to do what has been recommended to improve the condition of a sick person
committed: promised; intended for use for the project. To commit money or resources to something means to use them for a particular purpose.
initiative: an important act that is intended to solve a problem
surrounding: associated with
the final say: if you have a say in something, you have the right to give your opinion and influence decisions. If you have the final say then you are the last to give your opinion, and you make the final decision.

(Source: BBC)

Cleanest air on earth discovered in groundbreaking study

The cleanest air in the world has been discovered in the Antarctic Ocean, according to a groundbreaking new study.

An atmospheric region called the boundary layer air, which feeds into the lower clouds, was found to be unchanged by human-related (anthropogenic) activities.

The discovery was made by a research group from Colorado State University's Department of Atmospheric Science, the Independent reported.

The scientists wanted to find out what was in the air and where it was coming from by measuring its composition of bioaerosols, the natural or artificial particles

that suspend in the air. Samples were taken aboard the research vessel Investigator which sailed from Tasmania to the Antarctic ice edge.

The scientists found that the air layer was free from particles that humans create from burning fossil fuels and travelling in planes and cars.

Climate change means that scarcely any region of the planet is untouched by people, and the team assumed that the air over the Southern Ocean (SO) that surrounds Antarctica would also be impacted.

“We were able to use the bacteria in the air over the Southern Ocean as a diagnostic tool to infer key properties

of the lower atmosphere,” research scientist Thomas Hill, co-author on the study, said in a statement.

“For example, that the aerosols controlling the properties of SO clouds are strongly linked to ocean biological processes, and that Antarctica appears to be isolated from southward dispersal of microorganisms and nutrient deposition from southern continents.

“Overall, it suggests that the Southern Ocean is one of very few places on Earth that has been minimally affected by anthropogenic activities.”

The study was published earlier this week in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → E

Recent rainfalls not to fully address prolonged droughts: expert

Despite above normal rainfalls the country has received, it cannot be claimed that the long-term droughts are set right, director for flood control and aquifer at Forests, Range and Watershed Management Organization has said.

That's why water management policies must be still drawn up with regard to water scarcity, ISNA news agency quoted Abolqasem Hosseinpour as saying on Saturday.

“However, with only a year of high rainfall averages we cannot say that drought is no longer hitting the country,” Hosseinpour said. Climate change has resulted in a drop in water resources, on the other hand, due to excessive use of subsurface water resources, the country is facing serious shortages which are not compensated by a year of normal rainfalls, he lamented.

بارش‌های اخیر خشکسالی کشور را جبران نمی‌کند

مدیرکل دفتر کنترل سیلاب و آبخوان‌داری سازمان جنگل‌ها، مراتع و آبخیزداری گفت: پس از بارش‌های اخیر در کشور، نمی‌توان ادعا کرد که خشکسالی‌های بلند مدت ما جبران شده است.

ابوالقاسم حسین‌پور در گفت‌وگو با ایسنا، اظهار کرد: سیاست‌های آبی ما همچنان باید منطبق بر کمبود منابع آبی باشد.

ما نمی‌توانیم با یک سال بارش نرمال و ترسالی ادعا کنیم که دوره خشکسالی کشور پایان یافته است.

وی ادامه داد: تغییرات اقلیمی سبب محدود شدن منابع آبی شده است و از سوی دیگر در کشور ما به دلیل اضافه برداشت از منابع آبی به ویژه آبخوان‌های زیرزمینی، کمبود جدی منابع آبی داریم که با بارش نرمال و حتی بیش از نرمال یکسال جبران نمی‌شود.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“dextro-, dextero-, dextr-”

■ **Meaning:** right

■ **For example:** A good handyman is skillful, *dexterous* and proficient in whatever it is he is doing.

PHRASAL VERB

Nod off

■ **Meaning:** to begin to sleep, usually when you do not intend to and are sitting somewhere

■ **For example:** I missed the movie because I kept nodding off.

IDIOM

Crest of a wave

■ **Explanation:** If you are on the crest of a wave, you are very successful in what you are doing

■ **For example:** Our company is going from success to success. We're on the crest of a wave right now.

Erdogan cancels Turkey curfew over economy worries

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan cancelled Friday a weekend curfew introduced to halt the spread of coronavirus, pointing to concerns over the economy.

Turkey has been locked down on weekends and public holidays since April, and the interior ministry said in the early hours of Friday that 15 cities would again be shuttered this weekend, AFP reported.

However, hours later Erdogan announced on Twitter that he had cancelled the curfew after "feedback from our citizens" suggested it would have a negative economic impact.

Cafes, restaurants and other public spaces reopened this week, sparking hopes that the curfew would be lifted.

"We were not willing to see our citizens suffer just as they began to return to their usual daily life following a two-and-a-half-month break," the president said.

But he urged citizens to use masks, practise social distancing and ensure they were following the rules of hygiene.

Turkey has recorded more than 167,000 cases of COVID-19 and 4,630, but the number of daily fatalities has fallen to below 50 in the past couple of weeks.

Libyan unity govt retakes Haftar's last redoubt in west

Forces loyal to Libya's internationally recognised government said Friday they had entered Tarhouna, the last major stronghold of eastern commander Khalifa Haftar near Tripoli, capping the sudden collapse of his 14-month offensive.

There was no immediate comment from Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA) on whether its forces remained in the town, a day after they were pushed from their last positions in the capital, Reuters reported.

Turkish backing has helped the internationally recognised Government of National Accord (GNA) to a string of victories in recent weeks, ending an assault on Tripoli that led to battles in its southern suburbs and bombardment of the city centre.

The GNA operations room said in a statement that its forces had reached the centre of Tarhouna after entering from four sides.

Abdelsalam Ahmed, a resident of Tarhouna, said GNA forces had entered the town.

Libya's conflict is far from over, however, with the LNA still controlling the country's east, where there is a parallel administration, and large parts of the south, where the country's main oilfields are located.

The LNA is backed by Russia, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt.

The United Nations has warned that a recent flood of weapons and fighters to both sides in Libya risks a major new escalation.

Jakarta mosques host Friday prayers for first time in two months

Indonesians in Jakarta returned to mosques on Friday for prayers after the city relaxed rules on attending places of worship as part of a loosening of restrictions in place since late March to contain the spread of the coronavirus. Jakarta's governor on Thursday announced some easing of restrictions including attending mosques for communal prayers but warned the fight against the outbreak was far from over in southeast Asia's biggest city.

Indonesia has been the hardest-hit country in east Asia outside China from the pandemic and Jakarta has been the epicenter of the outbreak, with 7,766 cases and 523 deaths, Reuters reported.

"I feel happy that I can come back to the mosque ... because there's a difference in praying from home," said Deko Ronal Rafiyanto, 41, at the Al Azhar mosque in South Jakarta.

Under the new rules, places of worship must limit capacity. Visitors to the Al Azhar mosque wore masks and had their temperature taken before entering.

"I hope it is safe, and we are following the health protocol," said Muhammad Yasin, 50.

Some public transport has resumed operations and offices and malls are due to open in the city over the next two weeks.

Pakistan says working with India in fight against locust menace

Pakistani and Indian authorities are working together to combat the worst invasion of desert locusts in decades in the region, which is threatening crops in both countries, Pakistan's foreign office has said.

The two countries - also bitter regional rivals - have been coordinating through the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), on controlling the locust activity, sharing data and attending weekly meetings.

During a weekly briefing on Thursday, a spokesman from Pakistan's foreign office said a decision to work together was made at a ministerial-level meeting of Pakistan, India, Afghanistan and Iran in March.

The participants decided to revive communication between the regional countries through the FAO's Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in South-West Asia (SWAC).

Each country, helped by the SWAC, agreed to establish a technical and operational coordination (ToC) team to exchange information, enhance coordination at the border areas and increase synchronisation to combat the desert locust outbreak in the region, said the spokesperson.

Pakistan's foreign office said the country has been participating in SWAC meetings weekly, which are fruitful in exchanging information in the bordering areas of Pakistan and India.

"On its part, the government of Pakistan remains committed to cooperating with all SWAC member states, including India, in combating the desert locust outbreak," the spokesman said.

According to al Jazeera, Pakistan is facing its worst locust infestation in two decades, prompting authorities to declare a national emergency.

Millions of locusts have also engulfed India's seven heartland states, including the western desert of Rajasthan, and threaten vegetable and pulse crops such as lentils and beans.

Anti-Netanyahu protesters block Tel Aviv road shouting "I can't breathe"

Hundreds of demonstrators blocked a major road near Tel Aviv's Rabin Square Thursday night, protesting new bills advanced by Israel's right-wing coalition.

Close to a thousand protesters gathered at Rabin Square Thursday evening to protest Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's "Coronavirus Law" expanding police authority and power.

Israel Police began dispersing the crowd blocking the road early Friday morning, with several protesters being taken into custody, J Post reported.

"After the protesters blocked Ibn Gabirol Street in Tel Aviv and disrupted public order in the area, attacking drivers and throwing bottles and paint toward vehicles, police began clearing the road and carrying out arrests of the attackers," Israel Police Spokesperson's Unit said.

"During the dispersal, objects were thrown toward police officers and some of the protesters so much as physically attacked law enforcement who were doing their jobs," police said. "Some twelve rioters have been taken into custody for further interrogation."

The Tel Aviv protesters shouted they "can't breathe" and that they are "being suffocated



by the encroaching dictatorship," referencing the racial riots raging across the U.S.

Violent demonstrations have been raging across the U.S. since the death of African-American George Floyd, who was suffocated to death by police officer Derek

Chauvin in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

A video circulating social media and news showed Chauvin kneeling on Floyd's neck for some eight minutes while the latter was saying he could not breathe. Floyd was later pronounced dead at the hospital.

Syrian air defenses thwart Israeli airstrike on Hama

Syrian air defenses have thwarted Israeli airstrikes over the western province of Hama.

"At 21:25 local time, Israeli warplanes targeted one of our military sites in the vicinity of Masyaf, but our air defense system immediately responded to enemy missiles and shot down a number of them," Syria's official news agency SANA quoted a military source as saying on Thursday.

According to Lebanon's al-Mayadeen TV channel, the missiles were fired from Israeli warplanes over the Lebanese airspace.

The Tel Aviv regime mostly keeps quiet about the attacks on Syrian territories that many view as knee-jerk reaction to Syrian government's increasing success in confronting terrorism in country.

The Israeli attacks are thus considered an attempt to prop up foreign-backed Takfiri terrorist groups suffering heavy defeats against Syrian government forces.

Israel has also been a main supporter of terrorist groups that have opposed the government of President Bashar al-Assad since militancy erupted in Syria in March 2011.

'Israel's aggression against Syria fueled by U.S. bullying, coercion'

A senior official with the Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, has strongly condemned the latest Israeli airstrikes against Syria's western-central province of Hama, saying such acts of aggression are instigated by the bullying and coercion of the United States.

"The attack on the Syrian territories proves that the Zionist project has set the entire Muslim world at its target," Lebanon-based Arabic-language al-Mayadeen television news network quoted Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem as saying.

He added, "The arrogance of the occupying regime is being fueled by the bullying and coercion of the United States in addition to the actions of some parties seeking

normalization with the Zionists."

Late on Tuesday, Syria's official news agency SANA reported that the country's air defenses had intercepted and shot down a number of Israeli missiles before they reached their targets in Hama.

The missiles were fired by the Israeli air force from Lebanese airspace at 21:25 p.m. local time (1925 GMT) and were aimed at a military facility on the outskirts of Masyaf, located about 45 kilometers (27 miles) west of the provincial capital city of Hama, SANA quoted an unnamed military source as saying.

The airstrikes caused material damage in the targeted area but left no casualties.

Israel's aggressive moves have been viewed by observers as an attempt to weaken the Damascus government as it increasingly gains the upper hand in its fight against the foreign-backed terrorist groups.

Hamas calls for new strategy to counter challenges facing Palestinian cause

The head of the political bureau of the Hamas resistance movement has called for a coherent national strategy in the face of dangers and challenges that threaten the Palestinian cause.

"The first component of such a strategy is consensus on a national plan outside the Oslo Accords [signed between the Israeli regime and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)], and to terminate all agreements in addition to relevant security and economic annexes," Ismail Haniyeh said at a virtual conference on the occasion of Naksa (Setback) Day, which is commemorated every year on June 5 and marks the displacement of Palestinian people after Israel prevailed in the 1967 Six Day War.

He added, "The second element seeks the launch of a comprehensive resistance campaign against the Zionist Occupation (Israel) through popular, media, political and economic means, and armed struggle in particular."

Haniyeh stressed that the third component is to restructure the PLO and incorporate all Palestinian factions in it, whilst the fourth one is aimed at the formation of a regional bloc that safeguards the Palestinian cause.

The high-ranking Hamas official went on to say that Palestinians and Jordanians share three challenges, the first of which



is the upshot of Nakba Day (the Day of Catastrophe), which is commemorated on 15 May every year and marks the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their homeland when the Israeli regime was created back in 1948, and Naksa Day.

according to Press TV, whilst the second challenge is strategic threats, the third common danger is U.S. President Donald Trump's so-called Middle East plan, which strongly favors Israel and has been rejected by the Palestinians, in addition to the Tel Aviv regime's plans to annex large parts of the occupied West Bank, Haniyeh pointed out.

The Hamas leader finally called on Muslim states to work towards reduction of tensions in the West Asia (Middle East) region, and focus on the Palestinian cause and the issue of occupied Jerusalem al-Quds.

Russian-U.S. Tensions Rise in Syria

Tensions flared between Russia and the United States as the Russian military reportedly seeks to expand its presence in U.S.-controlled northeastern Syria, news outlets reported this week.

The latest flare-up follows the Russian military's reported attempt to build a base near the Turkish and Iraqi borders last week. President Vladimir Putin has ordered talks with Russia's ally Syria on cementing Moscow's presence with additional military facilities in the conflict-torn country.

U.S. and Russian forces squared off in two tense encounters in the same area on Tuesday and Wednesday, the Mideast news website Al-Monitor reported, citing local monitoring groups and news agencies.

Villagers reportedly protested against a Russian patrol Tuesday near the northeastern Syria border town of Al-Malikiyah (Derik) as U.S. convoys awaited them nearby. On Wednesday, a Russian patrol was said to have come toe-to-toe with an American convoy outside Derik, blocking civilian traffic for hours.

AFP video showed U.S. and Russian military patrols parked on a road as local civilians protested the Russian presence.

The latest standoffs follow a series of similar incidents reported in northeastern Syria earlier this year.



"This is not a sustainable situation," tweeted Brett McGurk, the former U.S. envoy for the U.S.-led coalition against Islamic State.

American officials have previously accused Russia of violating the terms of de-confliction in what they characterized as an attempt to challenge the U.S. presence there.

Russia, a staunch ally of the Syrian government, launched a military air campaign in Syria in 2015 to help Damascus recapture parts of the country from rebels.

Moscow has long insisted that the U.S. military presence in Syria is illegal.

The UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group said Thursday that Russia withdrew from the village of Qesirdib where it had attempted to set up a new base.

Over 10,000 arrested, protests against Floyd killing continue

➔ That officer - Derek Chauvin - has been charged with second-degree murder and manslaughter. The other three officers involved have been charged with aiding and abetting a second-degree murder and manslaughter.

Crackdown

The protests over police violence have at times been met with just that - more police violence, rights groups say.

According to videos, witness accounts, and reports, police have used tear gas, rubber-coated bullets, flashbangs, batons and other tactics against protesters. Police say they are responding to protesters who are violent, pointing to the looting, vandalism and fires that have taken place.

In Atlanta, Georgia, six officers were charged after police pulled two people from their car, threw them to the ground

and shot them stun guns, according to authorities.

Police have also targeted journalists with arrests, intimidation and violence, according to rights groups.

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) in Minnesota on Tuesday filed a lawsuit against the state of Minnesota's state and local law enforcement officials, "to ensure that police officers who target journalists are held fully accountable for their unlawful actions."

The Committee to Protect Journalism has received reports of at least 125 press freedom violations from journalists covering the protests, including reports of a number of arrests.

Senate Democrats, some kneeling, honor George Floyd with moment of silence at Capitol

Senate Democrats stood in silence for 8 minutes and

46 seconds Thursday at the U.S. Capitol to honor the lives of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor, all unarmed black individuals whose deaths have spurred worldwide protests against racism and police brutality.

Senate Democrats, some kneeling on the marble floors in Emancipation Hall - which is named after slaves who helped construct the Capitol - were led in prayer by Senate Chaplain Barry Black, who honored the lives of Floyd, Arbery and Taylor and praised peaceful protesters.

"We come today to acknowledge that injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere," Black said in a prayer to a silent hall, only broken with the sounds of camera shutters. "We come with hope in our hearts because we know that right defeated is better than evil triumphant."

N.Korea expresses support for China's measures in Hong Kong

➔ Given the chaos, LegCo President Andrew Leung Kwan-yuen put the bill to a vote shortly after the meeting resumed in the afternoon.

During a press briefing after the meeting, Leung said the disruptive acts were extremely irresponsible and strongly condemned the lawmakers involved.

HKSAR Chief Executive Carrie Lam expressed support for Leung's decisive

action in her post on social media on Thursday night and stressed that the disorders during the national anthem legislation proved that it is impossible for the LegCo to pass the national security law in the foreseeable future.

Hong Kong can not tolerate intensifying violence, rising national security risks and continued social unrest, Lam said, noting that the decision of the national

legislature to make national security laws for Hong Kong responded to the public appeal for stability.

Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs of the HKSAR government Erick Tsang Kwok-wai said the national anthem law will take effect on June 12, urging residents to respect the national anthem and not to commit insulting acts.

The legislation began in 2018 but was

postponed for about a year due to violent incidents and riots last year and the filibuster by opposition lawmakers in the LegCo's House Committee.

China's National Anthem Law came into force in the mainland in 2017 and then the Standing Committee of the 12th National People's Congress adopted the decision to add the law to Annex III to the HKSAR Basic Law.

FFIRI removes Sport Minister from its statutes

S P O R T S TEHRAN — The Secretary General of the Football Federation of the Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) Mehdi Mohammad Nabi said that the name of Sports and Youths Minister Masoud Soltanifar has been removed from the new Statutes of the federation.

Speaking about the controversies that aroused over the amendment of the FFIRI Statutes and FIFA's objections to some of its provisions, Nabi said: "We summarized the views regarding the draft statutes by holding meetings in the last week, and as a result, the reforms considered by FIFA would take place."

"We have sent the amended draft statutes to FIFA and the problems regarding this issue have been resolved," he added.

Last week FIFA, in a threatening letter to FFIRI, gave the federation a week (ending Friday, June 5) to revise its statutes.

FIFA called on the FFIRI to address some issues, including the reduction of the role of the Iranian sport minister in the internal FFIRI affairs.

Nabi announced the complete removal of the Sport and Youth Minister from the FFIRI statutes and said: "We have resolved the provisions which FIFA has objected and we would not have any problem in this regard. We appreciate the Ministry of Sport and Youth for accompanying us. FIFA's issues and objections will definitely be resolved. News about the formation of the Normalization Committee is not true."

Meanwhile, the Secretary General of



the FFIRI also talked about the possibility of holding the remaining matches of the group stage of the AFC Champions League in West Asia in one host country.

The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) is committed to completing this year's Champions League, after discussing the matter with member federations during online

meetings. It will now propose a format and dates for the matches for a "final review", after which they must be approved by the AFC Competitions Committee.



Two Iranian female riders handed four-year doping ban

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Maedeh Nazari and Fatemeh Hadavand have been handed out four-year doping bans by the Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI).

Both Iranian female riders tested positive at the 2018 Asian Track Championships in Malaysia.

Nazari and Hadavand had anabolic steroids in their system during the track competition, which resulted in the UCI handing out bans two years later.

Nazari, 21, and Hadavand 22, have both been banned for four years, with their suspension back-dated to the date the anti-doping rule violations were committed, which means they will be eligible to race again in 2022.

Hadavand won the junior national championships back in 2015, winning both the time trial and the road race in the same year.

She went on to finish third in the elite nationals the following year.

Nazari has also claimed medals in Iran's national championships, taking second in the time trial and third in the road race in 2016.

Both riders have also claimed national titles on the track. The riders were tested two days apart on February 2018 at the Asian Track Champs at the Velodrom Nasional in Nilai, Malaysia.

Jahanbakhsh, Gucci nominated for Asia's greatest Eredivisie player

Iranian players Alireza Jahanbakhsh and Reza Ghoochannejhad have nominated for the Asia's greatest Eredivisie player.

Born in Mashad and spending the majority of his childhood in the Netherlands, Ghoochannejhad spent four seasons plying his trade in the second tier Eerste Divisie in his early twenties, but it is his more recent exploits which have earned a place on our shortlist.

After stints in Belgium, England, Qatar and Kuwait, an outstanding 2016-17 season saw the Iranian forward finish second in the Eredivisie scorers' race, netting a history-making hat-trick against PSV Eindhoven in the process.

Eight more goals the following season preceded moves to Cyprus and Australia, with the man known as 'Gucci' returning to Dutch football with PEC Zwolle at the beginning of the 2019-20 season.

Also, many Asian players have made an impact in European leagues, but Iranian winger Jahanbakhsh is one of a very select group to have finished a season as the top goal scorer in a top-flight competition.



A stellar return of 21 goals in 33 matches in the 2017-18 season included two hat-tricks, and was complemented by 12 assists, but Jahanbakhsh's brilliant final campaign in the Eredivisie was the culmination of five years of groundwork.

A shining light at NEC Nijmegen, and the club's Player of the Season in their 2014-15 promotion campaign, he went on to star for AZ, finishing with 39 goals and 31 assists in just over 100 Eredivisie appearances.

The Iranian duo will compete with Fandi Ahmad (SIN), Brett Holman (AUS), Huh Jung-moo (KOR), Jason Culina (AUS), Lee Young-pyo (KOR), Park Ji-sung (KOR) and Shinji Ono (JPN) to be named as the greatest player.

(Source: the-afc)

Tamas Ajan: IWF president 'corrupt at highest level'

An independent report has found "corruption at the highest level" in international weightlifting.

It said former International Weightlifting Federation president Tamas Ajan, 81, operated a "culture of fear".

Investigator, law professor Richard McLaren, said Hungarian Ajan interfered in anti-doping efforts and oversaw financial mismanagement in his pursuit of "absolute control".

Ajan resigned from his role in April. The investigation into the IWF began in February, following a documentary by German state broadcaster ARD called Secret Doping - Lord of the Lifters, which featured alleged corruption within the sport.

McLaren, who is from Canada, also led the investigation into the Russian doping scandal, which resulted in a four-year ban from all major sport for the country.

He served 24 years as the IWF general secretary and 20 as president, joining the organization in 1976.

"I found an organization that had been subject for close to half a century to an



autocratic leader, who dictated through various control mechanisms everything that occurred within the organization," said McLaren in a Zoom conference.

"His (Ajan's) obsession with control made it a culture of fear that prevented a vibrant and robust sports administration. "We found systemic government failures and corruption at the highest level of the IWF."

In a statement, the World Anti-Doping Agency (Wada) said it "welcomes the work that has been carried out" by McLaren.

"Once Wada has had the opportunity to review that evidence as well as the report in full, the agency will consider the next appropriate steps to take," it added.

(Source: BBC)

Iranian up-and-coming star Javad Karimi awaits time to shine

Javad Karimi is a promising young setter from the Iranian men's national team waiting for his turn to shine on the court.

There are several up-and-coming setters on the Iranian roster and they all look up to captain and world-class setter Saeid Marouf. Karimi, who came from the junior team, rose through the ranks to become Iran's second setter.

With Marouf setting very high standards for the position, rookie setter Karimi plays his role solidly and has created high standards for himself by providing great plays expected of him by his coaches and teammates.

Karimi is big in talent and desire, and while he is waiting to step into a leadership position, he patiently waits for his turn and performs effectively as the team's second setter. "We have good players in our team," said Marouf about Karimi's performance at the 2019 FIVB Volleyball Men's World Cup in Japan. "In each position we have young players. I think now our second setter (Karimi) is playing very well. He has enough focus on the game."

Karimi feels fortunate to play under a great leader like Marouf, but also looks up to many other setters.

"Playing with Marouf is a great experience. This only means that I am learning from one of the world's best setters. I am so lucky to be in the same team as Marouf because he is such a generous leader who shares his experience to the younger players," Karimi said.

"I follow a lot of players, especially the plays of the best setters in the world. I study them and their strong points and try to use them in my own game." His latest competition was at the Tokyo Continental Volleyball Qualification tournament in Jiangmen, China, but his shining moments



at the FIVB World Cup in Japan truly demonstrated his drive and passion for the game.

"The 2019 FIVB World Cup is one of the biggest tournaments for me, probably next to the Olympic Games. Playing against the top players in the world gave me an amazing experience. I played many matches in this tournament and I gained a lot of experience from it."

He is still enhancing his reputation as a worthy successor to the Iranian first setter Marouf, and the youngster is hopeful to bring his team similar success as he demonstrates his abilities, earns his place in the roster and works on his progress each day.

"I come from a volleyball family. My father was the

one who influenced me. When I was young, he would take me to play volleyball with him. I trained under different coaches and I trained hard to be invited to the youth national team. I positively took one stage after another until I got a spot in the senior national team."

"When you play in the national team, it is all about flag and country. Everyone's focus would be on performance. When you play in a club, it is a profession which can earn a living for the athlete. Playing professionally also helps you work on your skills.

"Since starting my professional career, I always dreamt about playing in the Olympic Games. That is a big accomplishment for any player. I was so happy the day we earned the Tokyo 2020 berth as this is the biggest success in my career so far."

Karimi is set for a promising future, but for now he is just as thrilled as any young talent about what comes next. The 22-year old budding star signed a two-year contract in April with Belgian club Greenyard Maaseik and will be the first Iranian player to play in that league.

"It's great to have this opportunity to play in a foreign club. Any player would welcome this kind of experience. I am pleased to be able to play overseas at this young age. I am happy that I joined a great club in Europe which is led by a great coach. I hope I can be a good ambassador for Iranian volleyball in Belgium."

He has a simple wish for the future.

"I just wish my teammates, my coaches and the fans will be satisfied with my game."

(Source: FIVB)

Sirous Pourmousavi no longer Iran U19 coach

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Sirous Pourmousavi quit as Iran U19 football team head coach.

He has stepped down from his role ahead of the 2020 AFC U19 Championship.



The top four teams of the tournament will qualify for the 2021 FIFA U20 World Cup in Indonesia

Pourmousavi led Iran to win the 2019 Central Asian Football Association's (CAFA).

The 2020 AFC U19 Championship will be the last edition to be played as an U19 tournament, as the AFC have proposed switching the tournament from under-19 to under-20 starting from 2023.

Pourmousavi was appointed as Iran U19 coach in December 2018 as replacement for Farhad Pourgholami.

Iran to meet Oman prior to 2022 World Cup resumption

Tasnim — Iran national football team will host Oman in Tehran's Azadi Stadium ahead of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and AFC Asian Cup China 2023.

Iran will have four matches in late March and early June. Iran sit five points behind leaders Iraq in Group C but having played one game fewer.

FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and AFC Asian Cup China 2023 will reportedly resume in October.

Ezatolahi, Ebrahimi to leave Eupen

PLDC — A Belgian site has reported that Iranian players Saeid Ezatolahi and Omid Ebrahimi will leave Eupen in the summer.

Nieuwsblad has reported Ebrahimi, who joined the Belgian club on loan in 2019, will return to Qatari club Al Ahli.

Ezatolahi, who also joined Eupen from English Championship side Reading, will return Rostov in the summer.

Eupen are a Belgian association football club based in the city of Eupen in the German-speaking Community of Belgium, in the province of Liège.

The team currently compete in the Belgian First Division A, and play their home matches at the Kehrwegstadion.

Tahbaz 2nd at Online Asian Junior Chess C'ship

IRNA — Arash Tahbaz from Iran finished in second place at online Asian Junior Chess Championship.

Tahbaz came second with 6.5 points. A chess player from Uzbekistan won the gold medal with 7.5 points.

Tabatabaie and Parham Maghsoudlu ranked 6th and 7th, respectively.

Mobina Ali Nasab, Anahita Zahedifar and Mitra Asgharzadeh represented Iran's female team and Parham Maghsoudloo, Arash Tahbaz and Mohammad Amin Tabatabaie were members of Iran's male team.

Report: Arsenal contacts Arshavin over potential move for Azmoun

Arsenal coach Mikel Arteta has contacted his former Gunners teammate Andrey Arshavin over a potential move for Zenit St. Petersburg striker Sardar Azmoun.

Azmoun, 25, has been in excellent form for Zenit once again this season — netting 14 goals in 29 appearances and boasting a



creative side, with seven assists. But he is expected to leave this summer, despite the health crisis.

Indeed, Arsenal is keen with doubts over the future of Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang and Alexandre Lacazette. Arteta has spoken to Arshavin, who is on a committee at Zenit to do with first-team transfers.

Aubameyang is Arsenal's top scorer and one of the biggest reasons why they aren't in the bottom half of the Premier League table.

The Iranian is also experienced on the international netting 31 goals in just 46 caps for his country so far.

Azmoun has had an impressive season in Russia with Zenit. The Iranian, still only 25, has scored 14 goals and has provided seven assists in all competitions this season.

AC Milan and Napoli are also interested in signing Azmoun this summer. However, if Arteta really wants to bring him in, he will be hoping that his relationship with Arshavin helps sway the deal towards North London.

(Source: HITC)

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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

God has given man intelligence to deliver himself from distress and anxiety.
Imam Ali (AS)

WHAT'S IN ART GALLERIES

Painting



Paintings by Elahyar Najafi are currently on view in an exhibition at Aran Gallery.

The exhibition named "The Tower of Babel" runs until June 11 at the gallery located at 5 Lolagar St., Neauphle-le-Chateau St.



Mohammad Khalili is displaying his latest paintings in an exhibition at O Gallery.

The exhibit titled "Geometry of Silence" will continue until June 15 at the gallery, located at 18 Shahin St., Sanai St.



Entezami Gallery is showcasing a collection of paintings by Ali Rahimi in an exhibition titled "Along the Darkness".

The exhibit will be running until June 10 at the gallery located at No. 608 Motahhari Ave.



Iranshahr Gallery is playing host to an exhibition of paintings by Farshid Larimian.

The exhibit titled "Unheilich: A Journey to the Field of the Uncanny" will run until June 24 at the gallery located at 1/69 Sepand St., Azodi St. off Karim Khan Blvd.



Paintings by Morteza Khosravi, Mina Ghaziani, Mehdi Darvishi, Alireza Adambakan and several other artists are currently on display in an exhibition at Asr Gallery.

Entitled "A Window to See", the exhibit will continue until June 16 at the gallery located at 18 Delaviz St. off North Mirzaye Shirazi St.

Multimedia



An exhibition of artworks by Jalal Shabahangi, Ali Golestaneh, Ebrahim Faraji, and Manuchehr Niazi is underway at Negar Gallery.

The exhibition will run until June 9 at the gallery located at 154 near Iranshahr St., Karim Khan Blvd.

Photo



Photos by Sara Rashidi are on display in an exhibition at Saye Gallery.

The exhibit titled "Manifestation of a Dream Transformed" will continue until June 10 at the gallery located at No. 21, 13th Alley, Sanai St. off Karim Khan Ave.

Collage



Amin Shojaei is displaying a collection of his collages in an exhibition entitled "Observation" at Platform 3 Gallery.

The exhibit will run until June 15 at the gallery, which can be found at 29 Shahamati Alley near Valie Asr Square.

"Damoan Jungle" competing in Taiwan Intl. Children's Film Festival

TEHRAN — The Iranian animation "Damoan Jungle, Yes or No", about an elephant that is learning to say "no", is competing in the Taiwan International Children's Film Festival (TICFF).

Co-directed by Hadi Amiri and Raha Faraji, the story is about Filoo, a little elephant who lives in the jungle with other animals. He is super kind to his friends, only too kind. His biggest problem is that he is unable to say "no" to the others. Being asked to take on too many unreasonable chores, Filoo always ends up exhausted, but not for long! His encounter with a special mentor changes his mindset completely.

The film has been selected to be screened in the TV/Web Program section of the festival, which is currently underway in Taipei.

"Sloth" by Julia Ocker and "Kids of Courage" by Matthias Zirzow both from Germany, "Pichintun - Camilo, A Blind Boy" by Karen Garib from Chile and "Operation Ouch!" by Eric McFarland, Christian Welsh and Jamie McLeish from UK are also competing in this section of the festival, which is organized online this year.

The festival will run until August 5.

Global music streaming providers offering Hossein Alizadeh's "Radif Navazi"

TEHRAN — Several international music streaming and media services providers, including Spotify in Sweden and Rockol in Italy, are offering "Radif Navazi" (Playing Radifs), an educational album of Iranian traditional music by tar virtuoso Hossein Alizadeh.

In everyday Persian usage, radif means row, order or series. However, in Persian classical music, the word denotes a certain arraying of melodic structures exerting a special priority, a kind of logic and esthetics declaring a cultivated vision towards music.

Radif is used in at least 2 different and simultaneously interrelated meanings in technical music terminology: First, as an abstract term, it signifies the sum total of melodic arrangements in all of the seven dastgahs in Persian classical music. Second, used in relation to a specific dastgah, it means the ordering of existing melodies in a particular dastgah.

The word dastgah in the Persian language means "system", as well as "equipment". The suffix "-gah" signifies a place of doing something. For instance, daneshgah (university) means the place of science (danesh). Here, dastgah is used in two different significations: First, the totality of melodies of a certain musical system, e.g. dastgah-e Shur consists of Shur, Abuata, Bayat-e Tork, Afshari, Dashti and their related gusheshs. Second, the word refers to the frets of a string instrument (dast means "hand", hence dastgah literally denotes "the place of the hand").

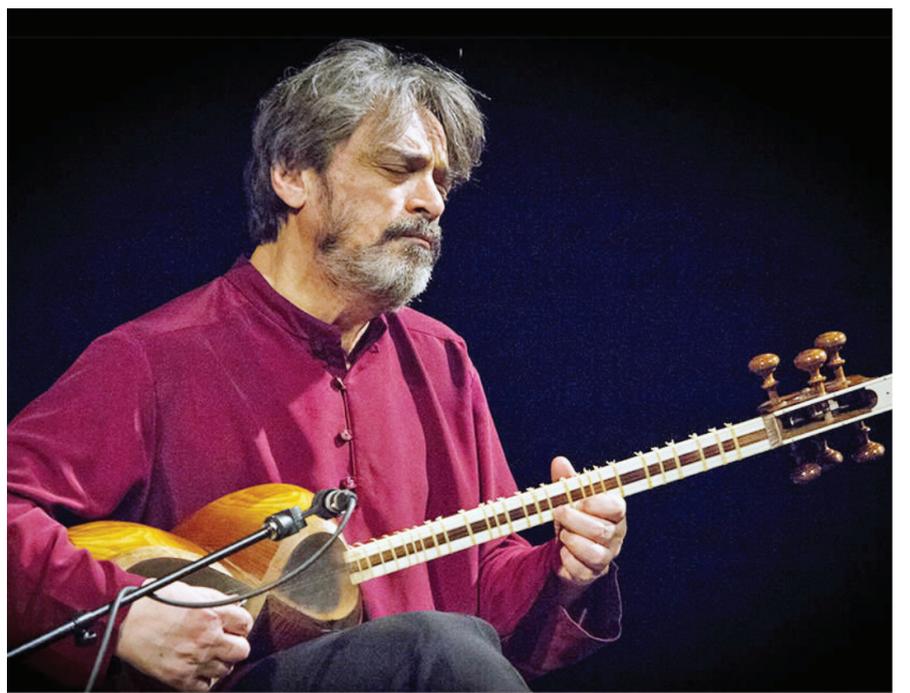
Persian classical music consists of seven major systems – dastgahs and five minor ones – avaz. Thus we can say that the radif is the totality formed by these 7 dastgahs and 5 avazes.

The radifs were composed by Mirza Abdollah Farahani, a tar and setar virtuoso who lived from 1843 to 1918.

The collection was performed by Nur-Ali Borumand, who also taught many Iranian singers and musicians during the twentieth century.

Alizadeh has performed the collection based teachings from Borumand.

The album was originally released in 1991 by the Mahoor Institute of Culture and Art, a Tehran-based label.



Tar virtuoso Hossein Alizadeh performs during a concert at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on May 8, 2018. (Honaronline/Hassan Motahhari)

Tehran meeting studies influence of Imam Khomeini on Persian literature



Afghan poet Mohammad-Sarvar Rajai speaks at a meeting on the influence of Imam Khomeini on Persian poetry and literature at the Iran Public Libraries Foundation on June 2, 2020.

TEHRAN — The Iran Public Libraries Foundation organized a session last

Tuesday to discuss the influence of Imam Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Republic, on Persian poetry and literature.

Scholar Hossein Qarai and Afghan poet Mohammad-Sarvar Rajai, who is also the deputy director of the Afghanistan Literature House in Tehran, attended the meeting named "The Age of Ruhollah".

Speaking at the meeting, Rajai talked about his writing activity and the love and interest of Afghan people towards Imam Khomeini.

"I was interested in writing when I was a young adult. I had no one to guide and help me in writing. The very first time I decided to write seriously was when I was in Peshawar in Pakistan. I visited Iran's Cultural Office there and participated in a competition of article writing with the central theme of Imam Khomeini," Rajai said.

"I took third place in that competition. And later, I traveled to Iran and continued my writing activity under the supervision of several Iranian masters," he added.

He next pointed to his book "In the Arms of Hearts"

which contains a selection of poetry and memories of Afghan people about Imam Khomeini.

"I actually tried to show the Iranian people that Imam Khomeini has had many followers, not only in Iran but also across the borders," Qarai said.

For his part, Qarai, a researcher of the oral history of revolutionary literature, spoke about the roots of the Islamic Revolution.

"I believe the root of the revolution goes back to the Iranian demonstration on June 4, 1963 which is considered the beginning of the revolution," Qarai said.

"The demonstration, which continued in several cities such as Varamin, Qom, Shiraz and Tehran, has been mentioned in the books by several writers and poets such as Ali-Akbar Khoshdel Tehrani and Rahim Makhdumi" Qarai added.

The program ended with poetry recitations by Ali-Mohammad Moaddab and Sara Jelodarian.

The death anniversary of Imam Khomeini, which fell on June 3 this year, was observed in numerous cultural events across the country.

Children's writer Susan Taqdis's last book published

TEHRAN — The last book by Iranian children's author Susan Taqdis, who died in April, has been published.

"O God... O God", which is the first book of a three-volume series published by Neyestan, is composed of ten supplications in the language of children.

In this book, whose target audience is children between the ages of eight and ten, children talk to God about their needs and wishes. It actually provides new insights into theism for children.

The book can also be viewed as a practice for composition for children at school.

"O God, when I began writing this book I asked you to help me. I said that nobody has written a book of prayers for children, or if there are some books of this kind, I have read none of them, so help me write good words," Taqdis wrote in a preface to the book illustrated by Sara Kasiri.



This combination photo shows writer Susan Taqdis and her book "O God... O God".

Culture minister speaks at webinar on Imam Khomeini, Nelson Mandela

TEHRAN — Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Seyyed Abbas Salehi attended a webinar on Imam Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Republic, and the South African anti-apartheid hero Nelson Mandela on Wednesday.

Organized by the Embassy of Iran in the South African capital of Pretoria, the minister discussed the roles of Imam Khomeini and Nelson Mandela as the great leaders of all time in clarifying the future path.

He said that Imam Khomeini and Nelson Mandela both fought for peace and justice and their path still continues.

"Imam Khomeini observed discipline in his life and made use of his time and opportunities the best way possible," he said.

Pointing to the political thoughts of Imam Khomeini and his position among people, he said, "Imam Khomeini established a political system at the very beginning of the victory of the Islamic Revolution where several elections,

such as for members of parliament and for president, were held."

He said that Imam Khomeini's discipline made the Islamic Revolution move towards developing social and political systems very quickly, adding, "Imam Khomeini had a stable character and did not fear threats made by the world powers. He had a very honest relationship with people and other nations, and defended the oppressed people and stood against the arrogant."

The minister also praised efforts made by Nelson Mandela in fighting against apartheid, and said, "He fought against racism for many years and the long years in prison made a steadfast and powerful character out of this personality."

"Imam Khomeini and Nelson Mandela both fought for peace and justice and their path will continue forever," he concluded.

Imam Khomeini's grandson Hassan Khomeini, and Ali Akbar Velayati, a top advisor to the Leader of the Islamic



Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Seyyed Abbas Salehi in an undated photo.

Revolution, also delivered speeches during the webinar. Western Cape High Court Judge Siraj Desai and researcher Haroon Aziz were among other participants.

The death anniversary of Imam Khomeini, which fell on June 3 this year, was observed in numerous cultural events across the country.

French dramatist Antoine Rault's "Le Systeme" to appear in Persian

TEHRAN — Iranian dramatist and director Golchehr Damghani is currently working on a Persian translation of "Le Systeme" by French dramatist and novelist Antoine Rault.

The play is about a young idealistic Scottish card master, John Law who comes up with an ingenious system, under which France would use paper notes and bonds

instead of gold.

"I first saw the play performed in Paris by director Antoine Rault and I wanted to translate it into Persian," Damghani said.

"A good point about works by Rault is that his stories are based on historical events. When I saw Rault's play I became more interested in him and held several talks with him during which he showed interest in having his works translated into

Persian," she added.

"Rault is a graduate of the Paris Institute of Political Science and is very interested in the world's political history. I am also interested in politics and that is why his works sound appealing to me. I think his works are very special and unique," she noted.

She said that this is Rault's second play, and that she has already translated

"Le Démon de Hannah" by Rault, which is a play about the love between Hannah Arendt and the German philosopher Martin Heidegger.

Rault is a playwright, a novelist and a screenwriter who won the prestigious Grand Prix de l'Académie Française (the French Academy Prize) in 2006 and was nominated for the Molières, the French equivalent of the Olivier Award, for several of his plays.