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Congratulations on birthday of Hazrat Masoumeh (SA) and Daughter's Day

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Iran, Afghanistan will settle common concerns: Atmar

TEHRAN — Hanif Atmar, Afghanistan's acting foreign minister, said on Monday that Iran and Afghanistan will allay common concerns.

During a meeting with Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmani-Fazli, Atmar praised Iran's supports for hosting Afghan nationals.

He also welcomed expansion of economic relations.

Atmar, for his part, said that a document for comprehensive cooperation signed by Iran and Afghanistan will mark a great development in relations.

The document for comprehensive agreement was signed on Monday by Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and Atmar. ➔2

3 international drug trafficking gangs disbanded in Tehran

TEHRAN — Three gangs of international drug trafficking disbanded in the capital city of Tehran, and 27 dealers were arrested, IRNA news agency reported.

Hossein Rahimi, a police chief, said Iran was always in danger of importing drugs because of its proximity to Afghanistan.

With the presence of the United States

and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces in Afghanistan, planting drugs has grown several folds, he lamented.

Over 1 ton of narcotics was discovered in the operation, he explained.

Since the beginning of this year (March 21), 163 international traffickers were arrested and 6 tons of drugs were seized, he noted. ➔9

Iran ready to facilitate arrival of Afghan medical travelers: minister

TEHRAN — Iran is considering to make it easier for the Afghan nationals who are willing to visit the neighboring country for medical purposes, tourism minister has said.

"Afghan nationals constituted 48.8 percent of 125,000 medical travels who arrived in the country in 1398 [the Iranian calendar year ended on March 19, 2020] and we are ready to facilitate their arrivals," CHTN quoted Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Ali-Asghar Mounesan as saying on Monday.

Talking about obstacles that exist in the way of Afghan travelers to the country, the official noted "Health tourism for Afghan nationals is in the hands of intermediaries and brokers and most of this [issue] is due to restrictions and barriers to visa issuance by Iran." ➔8



ARTICLE

Masoud Hossein
Head of the Sport Desk of the TehranTimes

Ashkan Dejagah on verge of quitting football

Iran international football midfielder Ashkan Dejagah will likely walk away from football since he is not going to return to Iran to commit his future to his club.

The Tractor skipper has not yet returned to Tabriz to participate at the team's training and it seems he wants to retire from football.

The Iran league will resume on Wednesday and Dejagah's absence in the domestic league means that he will most likely be dropped from Iran national football team.

The "Persian Leopards" are preparing for four must-win games in the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and AFC Asian Cup China 2023 Asian Qualifiers in October and November and Dragan Skocic will surely invite the well-prepared players.

Dejagah has been struggling with knee and groin injuries in the recent years and it can be a rational reason for him to retire from football.

He remained an unused substitute in the 2018 World Cup due to his right knee injury.

Tractor general manager Mirmasooum Sohrabi said on Monday Dejagah will not return to Tabriz due to coronavirus fears, however the Iranian player has recently published a picture in a restaurant in Berlin, Germany with his friends, while he has ignored coronavirus health protocols.

Dejagah, who will turn 34 on July 5, has played at the highest level of football in his 17-year career.

Winning Bundesliga title in 2009 with Wolfsburg and to lift trophy of the UEFA European U21 Football Championship in the same year as a player of Germany are the most memorable moments of his career.

He joined Fulham in 2012 and became only the third Iranian, after Andranik Teymourian and Karim Bagheri, to play in the Premier League.

Now, the iconic midfielder has reached the end of the rope and will likely retire since he is so tired.

Dejagah has achieved everything he's wanted. And it's time to bid farewell to the sport.

The Iranian fans will not forget the Gentleman of football wheatear he retires from football or not.

Jewish people have total freedom of religion in Iran, says rabbi

TEHRAN — The chief rabbi of the Jewish community in Iran says Jewish people have total freedom of religion in Iran, and religious activities take place without any restrictions.

"We have total freedom of religion. All the synagogues are open, and Torah classes take place there. We have all sorts of educational institutions too, including elementary and middle schools," Rabbi Yehuda Garami said in an interview with Al-Monitor published on Sunday.

According to the rabbi, Jewish religious activities take place openly, without any restrictions.

"I estimate that there are between 20,000 and 25,000 Jews in the country. Most of them live in Tehran, Shiraz, Esfahan and Karman-shah, though there are other, small communities too," he said.

Garami is personally responsible for providing kosher food to those groups that want it, and the kosher slaughter of meat takes place according

to Jewish law. "Over the years I formed several shohets [ritual slaughterers]. We even have some excellent kosher restaurants, which are under round-the-clock supervision by a kashrut [dietary law] supervisor. Because we are a small community, it is only natural that we cannot provide kosher certification services to food producers, because there is not enough demand, but every Jew knows what they can and cannot buy as far as kosher food is concerned."

He said that the members of the community bond over Jewish tradition, adding that there are almost no secular Jews in the country. "In Iran, there are Jews who know more Torah and Jews who know less, but everyone is traditional. All Jews observe the Sabbath, lay tefillin [phylacteries] and respect tradition. At the same time, there is also a very Orthodox community that studies Torah on a very high level and observes all the laws." ➔3

3 killed, 23 injured in U.S. anti-racist protests

By staff & agencies

In two separate shootings in U.S. three people have been killed and 23 others wounded in anti-racist protests in Charlotte and Minneapolis.

Two people have been killed and seven others wounded in a shooting in Charlotte, North Carolina's largest city, police have said.

Five others were hit by vehicles after the shooting that happened around midnight at an "impromptu block party" that was a continuation of Juneteenth celebrations, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Deputy Chief Johnny Jennings told reporters early on Monday.

Police responding to a call about a pedestrian hit found hundreds of people in the streets, Jennings said.

As emergency services arrived, several shots were fired, scattering the crowd. Jennings said there was evidence of multiple

shooters but no one was in custody as of Monday morning.

The five people were hit by vehicles while running away, Jennings said.

The conditions of the 12 people hospitalized with injuries were not immediately clear.

Meanwhile, Twelve people were shot, including one fatally, during an overnight melee in Minneapolis, police said.

The shooting took place early Sunday morning in the 2900 block of Hennepin Avenue South, the Minneapolis Police Department said.

The 11 survivors suffered non-life threatening injuries, police said. No arrests have been made, and the motive remains unclear.

Witnesses said Hennepin Avenue South was also the scene of looting and destruction when violence marred the protests against police brutality and the death of George Floyd, who was killed in the same city. ➔10

Israeli police evacuate areas around Aqsa Mosque for settlers' march

TEHRAN — The Israeli occupation police on Sunday evening closed the Aqsa Mosque's Asbat Gate (Lion's Gate) and forced Palestinian citizens to leave al-Ghazali Square outside the Islamic holy site in order to secure a march staged by hordes of Jewish settlers.

According to local sources, large numbers of Israeli police forces were deployed at the Aqsa Mosque's gates and entrances during the settlers' march.

The settlers marched provocatively carrying

Israeli flags and temple mount banners in some of the Old City streets and around the Aqsa Mosque's walls.

Being emboldened by its growing intimate relations with some Arab Gulf regimes, the Israeli occupation authority in the holy city and extremist Jewish groups have recently launched an all-out Judaization campaign targeting the Old City of Jerusalem and the Aqsa Mosque.

Earlier, Israeli police officers physically assaulted one of the Aqsa Mosque guards and five

Palestinian girls as they were performing prayers at the Mosque's Bab al-Rahma prayer hall and detained them for several hours before releasing them and handing them written orders banning their entry to the holy site.

■ **Israeli police arrest guard, five women at Aqsa Mosque**

Meanwhile, Israeli police on Sunday afternoon arrested a guard of al-Aqsa Mosque and five women at Bab al-Rahma prayer area in Jerusalem. ➔10



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Bodies of 192 Iranian fallen soldiers brought home

Bodies of 192 fallen soldiers who lost their lives during Iraq's imposed war against Iran in the 1980s were brought home on Monday morning.

The bodies, including the body of martyr Nassim Afghani, were brought back to Iran from the Shalamche border point, according to Tasnim.

Due to the coronavirus circumstances, the ceremony was held without public presence.

According to Hossein Eshghi, head of the Armed Forces headquarters for missing soldiers, the soldiers were martyred during the operations Ramadan, Preliminary Valfajr, Kheibar, Badr, Karbala 4, Karbala 5, Beyt-al-Moghaddas 7, and others.

Iran views Trump as a 'culprit' not a president to negotiate with: advisor

TEHRAN — Hossein Dehghan, a military advisor to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has said that Iran considers U.S. President Donald Trump as a "culprit" and not a president to negotiate with.

In an interview with Aljazeera, Dehghan said that Iran will never hold talks with Trump, IRNA reported on Monday.

He added that Iran will not hold talks on its missile program and regional policies.

Elsewhere, the former defense minister said that Iran will respond to any aggression and move by the U.S. in the Persian Gulf.

■ **'Iran ready to hold talks with Saudi Arabia'**

Dehghan also said that Iran is ready to hold talks with Saudi Arabia without pre-condition.

He said that Iran's relations with the United Arab Emirates is improving and Abu Dhabi's position on Iran has changed.

Iran and Saudi Arabia have been at loggerheads over a number of issues including the Saudi war on Yemen and Riyadh's support for Donald Trump's anti-Iran moves.

Middle East Eye reported in May Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) has asked new Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi to mediate between the Saudi kingdom and Iran.

"The first call Kadhimi got after his nomination was from the crown prince of Saudi Arabia, Mohammed bin Salman, who asked the new Iraqi prime minister to restart mediation with Iran, the sources said," Middle East Eye reported. ➔2

China does not support IAEA's anti-Iran resolution

POLITICAL **d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian has said that China does not support a resolution by the International Atomic Energy Agency's Board of Governors which just increases tension.

In a press conference, he urged the IAEA to act unbiasedly, IRNA reported on Monday.

The IAEA is expected to adopt a professional position and support Iran's peaceful nuclear activities, he noted.

The 35-member IAEA board passed the resolution on Friday, demanding access to two old places they claim nuclear work may have been done there.

Nine countries out of 35 members to the IAEA board did not vote for the resolution. China and Russia voted against the resolution and Thailand, Mongolia, Niger, South Africa, India, Pakistan and the Republic of Azerbaijan abstained to vote.

Iran's new parliament have issued a statement strongly condemning the resolution, asking the government to stop implementing the Additional Protocol to the NPT.

"The Islamic Consultative Assembly strongly condemns resolution of the International Atomic Energy Agency's Board of Governors which was proposed by three European countries of England, France and Germany under the pressure of the ruling regime in the United States and the fake Zionist regime. It [the parliament] considers the resolution another example of structural discrimination by the international agency," the statement read.

The statement was signed by 240 MPs.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said on Friday that the resolution is "unacceptable" and "counterproductive".

"Issuance of the board of governors' resolution is totally counterproductive and disappointing when the Islamic Republic of Iran has had cooperation with the agency at the highest level," Mousavi said in a statement.

He added, "Exaggerating the agency's requests by certain governments with the United States at top of them while the basis of such requests can be questioned, is attempt to cause a new crisis on the path of Iran and the agency's cooperation."

He urged the members of the board of governors to be vigilant about the U.S. and Zionist regime of Israel's attempts to reopen fake old dossiers whose credibility had been proven.

Mousavi strongly condemned the UK, France and Germany's move in drafting the resolution.

"These three governments, who have been unable to implement their obligations under the JCPOA, took this action to escape forward and evade their responsibilities under the JCPOA," he said.

Elsewhere, Mousavi said the resolution is an excessive demand by the U.S. and the three European countries which will not be accepted by Iran.

Supporters of the resolution will be responsible for consequences of the tension in Iran-IAEA relations, he warned.

Immediately after the ratification of the resolution, Kazem Gharibabadi, Iran's ambassador to the IAEA, said, "Iran categorically deplores this resolution and will take appropriate action in response, the repercussions of which would be upon the sponsors of this resolution."

Gharibabadi also said, "Considering the extensive level of constructive cooperation between Iran and the Agency and simply overlooking this level of cooperation, adoption of this resolution aimed at requesting Iran to cooperate with the Agency is deeply disappointing."

Iran to send Ukrainian plane's flight recorder to France in coming days

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said Iran will send the black box of a Ukrainian passenger plane that crashed near Tehran in January to France for analysis in coming days.

In a telephone conversation with Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada Francois-Philippe Champagne on Monday, Foreign Minister Zarif informed him that Iran will send the black box of the Ukrainian plane to France within the next few days to have its data analyzed.

The top Iranian diplomat noted that the decision to send the flight recorder has been made for a while, saying the decision is going to be implemented soon.

Foreign Minister Zarif also notified his Canadian counterpart that the Islamic Republic of Iran has already informed Ukraine of its readiness to address the legal issues, the procedure for paying compensation to the families of the passengers who have died in the tragic incident, as well as paying compensation for the Ukrainian jetliner.

However, Zarif added, Ukraine has not still assigned a delegation to hold negotiations, but the Islamic Republic of Iran continues to pursue the issue.

The outbreak of coronavirus and a halt to the international flights had resulted in a suspension of plans to read the black box and other measures, while the executive measures to address the case will soon resume with the limited resumption of flights.

The Kiev-bound UTA Boeing 737 crashed shortly after taking off from Tehran on January 8, killing all 176 people on board, mostly Iranian and Canadian citizens.

Iran said the plane was hit by an anti-aircraft missile due to human error.

Iran, Oman Discuss Border cooperation

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and his Omani counterpart Yusuf bin Alawi weighed plans to promote cooperation between the two Muslim countries.

In a video conference on Monday, the senior Iranian and Omani foreign ministers discussed a broad range of issues.

In the talks, also attended by delegations from both sides, Zarif and bin Alawi exchanged views on the latest regional and international developments as well as issues of mutual interest, including the enhancement of Tehran-Muscat cooperation.

The two top diplomats stressed that mutual consultations should continue.

Iran and Oman share age-old and close diplomatic, economic, and commercial ties.

Oman played an important role in facilitating the early stages of nuclear talks between Iran and the world power which resulted in the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Iran and Oman have also held several naval exercises in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman in recent years.

On April 19, high-ranking military officials from Iran and Oman signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to boost cooperation between the two neighboring countries in various military spheres.

Iran, Afghanistan will settle common concerns: Atmar

“We thank Iran for supporting peace efforts in Afghanistan,” Afghan deputy foreign minister says

1 → “Mr. Atmar gave us the good news that this document of comprehensive cooperation will be implemented in three months which will be a great development,” the interior minister said after the meeting with Atmar.

Ali Shamkhani, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) who held talks with Atmar on Sunday, also said that the signing of the comprehensive cooperation helps expand ties between the two neighboring countries.

Rahmani-Fazli also said that the two countries have signed security agreement and plan to hold joint border committee meetings regularly.

Iran has been hosting millions of Afghan refugees since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. The flow of Afghan refugees or migrants did not stop despite the pullout of Soviet troops from the Central Asian country as the country descended into civil war and finally in 2001 the U.S. invaded the country which continues until today.

"The issue of the traffic of Afghan citizens was also discussed. Mr. Atmar thanked Iran for good cooperation in the past 40 years. The two countries will make efforts to remove impediments (for refugees) to legally enter Iran through totally legal ways," Rahmani-Fazli said.

■ 'Legalizing the situation of Afghans in Iran is our priority'

Also, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi met with Mirwais Nab, the Afghan deputy foreign minister, on Sunday.

Nab tweeted, "I held constructive talks with Araghchi about the agreement of comprehensive cooperation which includes areas of economy, transit, politics and borders. Legalizing the situation of Afghans in Iran is our priority. We also thank Iran for supporting peace efforts in Afghanistan," ISNA reported.

■ 'Afghan delegation's visit is an important step in boosting ties'

Secretary General of Afghanistan's Na-



tional Welfare Party Mohammad Hassan Jafari has said that the high-ranking Afghan delegation's visit to Iran is an important step in boosting ties.

In an interview with IRNA published on Monday, Jafari said the Afghan delegation must do its best to clear up all misunderstandings caused by some mercenaries who are working against two countries' relations.

The party chief noted that Afghan government and people will not allow a damage to relations with Iran.

An Afghan lawmaker has also said that the affinities between Iran and Afghanistan is so "strategic, deep and firm" that even changes in governments cannot undermine it, IRNA reported on Monday.

Referring to ethnic, linguistic, cultural and economic and social integration between the two nations, Seyyed Jamal Fakouri said presently about three million Afghans live in Iran.

Fakouri said these Afghan nationals, who have no legal documents, are enjoying life benefits in parallel with Iranian citizens.

Certain groups have recently attacked the Iranian embassy in Kabul under the pretext that some Afghan migrants were drowned

while they were trying to enter Iran illegally.

Iran and Afghanistan have launched a joint inquiry into the tragedy.

Iran has said it has extensive evidence that the incident has not happened on its borders.

According to Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi, the confirmed reports received from Iranian border guards show that such an incident has not occurred on the mentioned date and location.

He added that due to weather conditions of the region, not a single Afghan citizen entered the Iranian territory on that date.

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for International and Legal Affairs Mohsen Baharvand has blamed illegal traffic of Afghan migrants for the human tragedy.

Iranian diplomats and border guards have carried out investigations which show the Iranian guards were not involved in the incident, Baharvand added.

"Our investigation does not show that the incident in Harirud was caused by interference of the Iranian border guards. However, we considered evidence of the Afghan side important and gave it to the related bodies," Baharvand told IRNA in

‘No ill-intended foreign provocation can undermine Iran-Afghanistan ties’

POLITICAL **d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Iran's Foreign Ministry has said that Iran and Afghanistan are two brotherly countries and no ill-intended foreign provocation can undermine their ties.

"#Iran and #Afghanistan, as two brotherly nations, have strong, deep-rooted relations that is based on common historical and cultural bonds, and no ill-intended foreign provocation can undermine this close relation," the ministry said in a tweet on Monday.

The Foreign Ministry said in another tweet, "For decades, Iran has hosted millions of Afghan refugees who have fled the war & clashes that were ignited by US meddling & invasion. We'll continue to support our Afghan brothers & sisters during their hardships, & again we call on US to end its destabilizing presence in our region."

Mohammad Hanif Atmar, Afghanistan's acting foreign minister, made a trip to Tehran on Sunday at the head of a high ranking delegation. The visit came a week after Iran's Foreign Ministry summoned Afghan Ambassador

Abdolghafour Lival over actions of certain anti-Iran groups in Afghanistan.

Rasoul Mousavi, an assistant to Iran's foreign minister and the director-general of the Foreign Ministry Department for West Asia, expressed concerns over repercussions of such groups' actions on relations between the two countries.

Certain groups have recently attacked the Iranian embassy in Kabul under the pretext that some Afghan migrants were drowned while they were trying to enter Iran.

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

Related officials have said it has extensive evidence that the incident did not happen on the Iranian side of the border.

■ Iran slams U.S. for lecturing about rights of refugees

In another tweet, the Iranian Foreign Ministry slammed

the United States for lecturing about rights of refugees while it is building a wall along the border with Mexico to prevent migrants.

The ministry said the Trump administration has been widely condemned for its cruel border policies.

"Look who's talking about the rights of refugees! A government whose campaign motto was to 'build a wall' and has been repeatedly condemned for its cruel border policies (e. g. separating migrant children from their parents), is lecturing the world about #WorldRefugeeDay," the ministry said in the tweet.

The tweet came as a response to a tweet by U.S. Assistant Secretary Robert A. Destro claiming, "Horrorified by accounts of Afghan migrants and refugees being drowned, shot, and burned alive by Iranian border guards and Iranian police. Those responsible must be held accountable. We again call on Iran to respect #HumanRights and cease violence against refugees. #WorldRefugeeDay"

Iran views Trump as a ‘culprit’ not a president to negotiate with: advisor

1 → The Saudi crown prince said in an interview with CBS's 60 Minutes program aired on September 29 that he preferred a peaceful resolution with Iran, describing it as "much better than the military" option.

Saudi Foreign Minister Farhan Al Saud told Reuters on January 22 that Riyadh was open to talks with Tehran. However, he leveled some accusations against Iran. The Saudi minister said Iran should act like a normal country. In response, Zarif said a normal country does not invade its neighbors, an open reference to the Saudi-led war on Yemen.

Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi has welcomed a readiness by Tehran and Riyadh to hold dialogue to reduce tensions.

"We call for clearing up misunderstanding between two brotherly countries of Iran and Saudi Arabia," IRNA quoted him as

saying on January 24 on the sidelines of a press conference in Islamabad.

■ 'Saudi Arabia should admit defeat in Yemen'

Dehghan also said that Saudi Arabia should admit defeat in Yemen and adopt new policies.

What is happening in Yemen is a military chaos for which Saudi Arabia is responsible, the military advisor remarked.

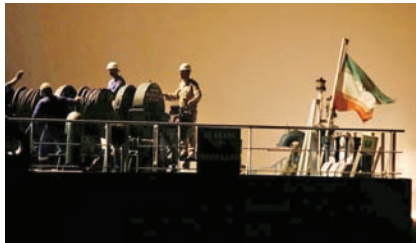
Saudi Arabia launched military campaign against Yemen in March 2015 with the aim of eliminating the Yemeni opposition groups who had toppled the government of President Mansour Hadi.

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman had vowed to restore the toppled president in a matter of weeks.

In a report on its website on March 24, the Amnesty International said, "Gross human rights violations, including what



could amount to war crimes, are being committed throughout the country. By the end of 2019, it is estimated that over 233,000 Yemenis would have been killed as a result of fighting and the humanitar-



operation in remarks to Lebanon's al-Mayadeen television network on Saturday.

The ambassador had mentioned in an earlier tweet that the ship would also carry a supply of equipment to help the Latin American country fight the outbreak of COVID-19.

Golsan is reportedly destined for the port

of La Guaira in the northern Venezuelan state of Vargas. Reports also say the vessel departed from the Shahid Rajai Port that is located off the southern Iranian port city of Bandar Abbas, on May 15.

Last month, five Iranian tankers berthed at Venezuelan ports, supplying 1.5 million barrels of fuel to the country as well as refinery equipment aimed at kick-starting its refining operations that have been hit hard by the United States' unilateral and illegal sanctions.

The U.S. has subjected Venezuela to the coercive measures with the avowed aim of ousting the country's democratically-elected President Nicolas Maduro.

Washington also brought back its sanctions against Tehran in 2018 after

an interview published on June 7.

He said, "Due to Afghan armed forces' fight against terrorism, Afghanistan has dismantled its border stations and this has caused lack of control over borders by Afghanistan. This issue has led to problems caused by human traffickers."

Baharvand also said that Iran and Afghanistan will form a joint border committee.

The deputy foreign minister for international and legal affairs had said on May 27 that Iran and Afghanistan are in agreement on the incident.

Iranian and Afghan political delegations held their last round of talks on the incident in Kabul on May 26.

Also, on June 3 a number of Afghan migrants were killed in a car accident in Yazd province.

Following the incident, Afghan Ambassador to Iran, Abdolghafour Lival, held a meeting with officials of the province. Lival said, "We believe that human traffickers and the driver are responsible for the incident."

According to Lival, the driver has been identified and judicial authorities are striving to arrest him.

The Afghan Foreign Ministry had announced it would dispatch a high-level delegation to Tehran to investigate the recent incidents for Afghan citizens.

It said the purpose of the team is to draw up a plan to prevent illegal traffic by focusing on ensuring better border security and prevent a recurrence of similar incidents.

The ministry had also said the delegation would discuss with Iranian officials the fight against human trafficking on both sides of the border, the beginning of the process of establishing the identity of Afghan citizens and the legalization of immigrant residency, as well as the implementation of the draft law on legal employment of Afghan workers.

Jewish people have total freedom of religion in Iran, says rabbi

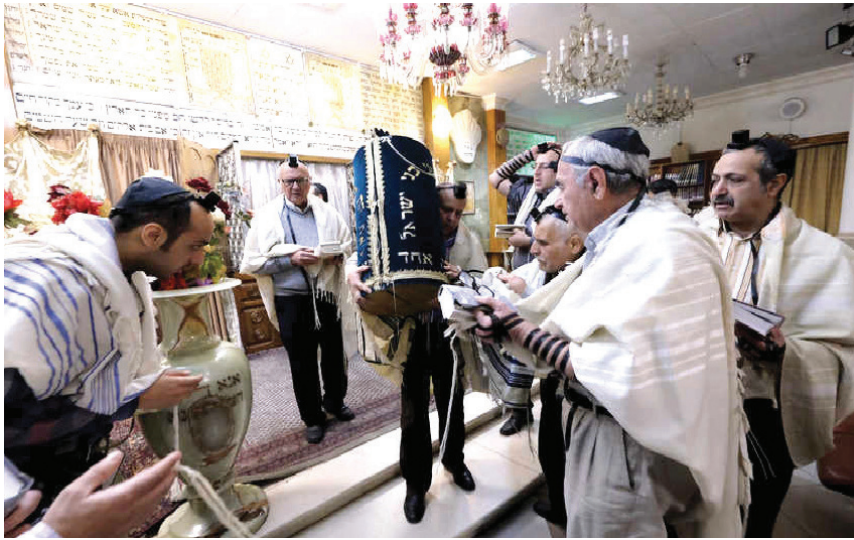
1→ According to Garami, the community is also organized socially and maintains various organizations intended to meet the needs of different groups. These include organizations for youths and students. And of course, there are also charitable organizations that assist needy Jews throughout the country. “We support at least 150 needy families regularly by providing them with food, and we help young couples get a start in life. There is plenty of mutual aid. We try to help everyone who needs it.”

On the coronavirus pandemic, Garami admitted that the difficult situation has hurt the Jewish community as well. “It is only natural that the people to suffer most from sanctions are from the middle class. As a result, we exert an even greater effort to help them. Most Jews in the country are business owners, particularly clothing store owners, and they are part of the middle class. While there is a small minority of people [in Iran] — including a few Jews — who are wealthy and are not affected directly by the sanctions, most people really do feel the pressure.”

Garami can take credit for the fact that the coronavirus crisis barely affected Iran’s Jewish community. It certainly didn’t have the same effect in Iran as it did in other Jewish communities around the world, which suffered severely because of the pandemic. In early March, he already ordered that all synagogues in the country be closed, avoiding mass infection and preventing disaster from striking the community. “I immediately understood where this was heading, so I ordered that all the synagogues be closed and that people pray privately, without a quorum.”

“At the same time, on [the Jewish holiday of] Purim, I authorized just this once to have the ‘Megillah’ [Scroll of Esther] read via livestream, and I forbade people from fasting

“Our Muslim neighbors have a lot of respect for us as Jews living in Iran,” he said. “Unlike in Europe, for example, we do not have guards outside our synagogues and schools, and our personal safety is excellent.”



“We have been living here for 2,700 years, ever since the Assyrian exile. From then until now, Jews lived in peace with their Muslim neighbors — except in a few isolated cases. It is important to remember that we are the biggest Jewish community in the Middle East after Israel. We have very strong ties to this place. Our ancestors lived here for years and many of our prophets are buried here. The Prophet Daniel is buried here, and we have the Tomb of Habakkuk, the Tomb of Mordechai and Esther, and other important sites.”

on the Fast of Esther. I continued giving my classes through Instagram and Skype. I am convinced that we came out of it [the corona crisis] relatively unscathed because of all the precautions we took,” he added.

One of the most interesting issues is the relationship between this small community and the local Muslim population. “Our Muslim neighbors have a lot of respect for us as Jews living in Iran,” he said. “Unlike in Europe, for example, we do not have guards outside our synagogues and schools, and our personal safety is excellent. Of course, we sometimes encounter people who are anti-Semitic, but that happens everywhere. Most of the population respects us and lives in peace with us. What is important is that in Iran there is no such concept as organized attacks on Jews.”

Garami noted that while Jews in Iran do

not have the custom of walking down the street in a yarmulke (skullcap), anyone who wants to wear identifiably Jewish clothing can. “You can walk around with a yarmulke, and there are in fact people who wear a yarmulke. It just attracts attention, because it is unusual, and it can become unpleasant. On the other hand, it would not pose any danger to the person wearing the yarmulke. The overall sense of safety among the Jews is excellent. We do not feel threatened in any way, either by the government or our neighbors,” he said.

He explained that the country’s Jewish community has a history of good relations with its neighbors. “We have been living here for 2,700 years, ever since the Assyrian exile. From then until now, Jews lived in peace with their Muslim neighbors — except in a few isolated cases. It is important to remember that we are

the biggest Jewish community in the Middle East after Israel. We have very strong ties to this place. Our ancestors lived here for years and many of our prophets are buried here. The Prophet Daniel is buried here, and we have the Tomb of Habakkuk, the Tomb of Mordechai and Esther, and other important sites.”

He also said there is a big difference between Zionism and Judaism. “Judaism is a religion that is 3,300 years old, while Zionism is a national and political movement that is just 100 years old. As a country, the State of Israel has nothing to do with religion in general and Judaism in particular. This is not a war between religions. All the Jews here emphasize that. The worst thing that could happen would be to give the impression that this is a war of religion.”

Back in January, Garami paid a highly publicized condolence call to the family of the IRGC Quds Force commander Qassem Soleimani, who was assassinated by the United States. Asked to comment, he said, “First of all, I wasn’t the only one going. Representatives of all the religions in Iran participated in the visit, including representatives of the Christian faith. They wanted to stress that this is not a war of religion, and that no one should think that this is a war between the different religions.”

Garami then asked to talk about general attitudes toward Soleimani. He noted, “What the Western world does not fully understand is that Soleimani is an Iranian national hero. He is really admired in our country. He showed great bravery in the Iran-Iraq War. Then, in the war in Syria, it was Soleimani who defeated the Islamic State, and this was very important to the people of Iran. Our visit, as representatives of all the religions, was to respect his memory after everything he did on behalf of Iran.”

At the end of the interview, Al-Monitor asked Garami to express his aspirations for peace. He said, “We sincerely hope that there will finally be peace in the world, that all war will disappear and that we will witness the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy [Isa. 11:6]: ‘The wolf will live with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the goat ... nation shall not lift up sword against nation.’ It is what we pray for every day.”

“What the Western world does not fully understand is that Soleimani is an Iranian national hero.”

JCPOA to continue to be in trouble if Trump re-elected: professor

“Trump’s policies are all electoral politics”

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — A professor of international affairs believes if Donald Trump is re-elected president, the JCPOA, commonly known as the Iran nuclear agreement, will continue to be in trouble.

In an interview with ILNA published on Monday, Dane Rowlands said, “Unfortunately, the JCPOA’s future probably rests in the hands of the U.S. electorate in November. If President Trump is re-elected, the JCPOA will continue to be in trouble and, for all intents and purposes, will be ineffective from the perspectives of all parties.”

“If President Trump loses the election, presumably to Biden, then there would likely be a good chance that the JCPOA would be rejuvenated,” he said.

Rowlands, a former director of the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, said he does not believe Trump has any strong views or enmity toward Iran or Iranians.

“His policies are all electoral politics,” he opined. “President Trump is all about disruption, opposing anything that President Obama did, and rejecting years of U.S. policy positions. There is no strategy here, and there is no principle, it is simply electoral politics for President Trump, and a desire to appear to be against the American political establishment.”

Trump unilaterally quit the nuclear deal in May 2018 and introduced the harshest ever sanctions in history on Iran as part of his administration’s “maximum pressure”



Professor Dane Rowlands says Trump’s administration has “no strategy” and “no principle”.

strategy against Iran.

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

Under the UN Security Council’s 2231 resolution, which endorsed the 2015 nuclear deal, the arms embargo expires in October.

On the Trump administration’s plan to push for the extension of the arms embargo, Rowlands said the U.S. will use any policy or instrument it can to harm Iran now, including arms embargoes, economic embargoes, and other sanctions.

“It will do so regardless of any international agreement or framework within which such activities could be either encouraged or discouraged,” he remarked.

He concluded that the U.S. will try to persuade or coerce others to join it in its policies targeting Iran. “At the same time, aside from the UN sanctions, there is nothing legally stopping other countries from assisting Iran. There is only U.S. coercive power and influence.”

Asked to estimate Trump’s chances of re-election, the professor said it could still go either way and will depend a lot on intervening events, especially the economy and the Covid-19 pandemic.

“President Trump has a highly committed core of voters and a lot of money; it is unusual for a sitting President to lose a re-election bid,” he pointed out.

“At the same time, and unusually, the level of vehement opposition, and indeed disgust, with this President is exceptionally high,” he said, adding, “The election will be incredibly bitter and divisive, but the outcome is highly uncertain.”

By contrast, he continued, President Obama’s re-election for his second term was essentially a foregone conclusion, and it was not really in doubt from very early on.

Iranian prosecutor general asks Romania to seriously investigate death of fugitive judge

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iran’s Prosecutor General Mohammad Jafar Montazeri has asked his Romanian counterpart to launch a serious investigation into the death of fugitive Iranian judge Gholamreza Mansouri in that country.

In his letter which was published on Monday, Montazeri explained that Mansouri was wanted by Iran’s Judiciary, which pursued his case through Interpol and got him arrested.

But he was announced dead by the Romanian government, he added.

Tehran on Friday confirmed the death of Mansouri, who was accused of corruption

and taking more than \$500,000 in bribes, in Romania.

“We are awaiting the official report of the cause of this incident and we ask Romanian authorities to officially inform us of the precise cause of this incident,” Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said on Friday.

Mansouri was found dead of apparent suicide on Friday at a hotel in Romania where he had been staying.

He was a co-defendant in a major financial corruption trial involving several senior judges accused of embezzlement and bribery.

Iran’s chief of international policing, Hadi Shirzad, said on Friday that Mansouri had jumped out of a hotel window to his death, citing information Iran had received from Interpol in Bucharest.

Iranian authorities had issued an alert for Mansouri’s arrest through Interpol and had requested he be extradited to Iran to face trial.

Mansouri was arrested in Romania last week but was residing at the Duke Hotel in Bucharest, the capital, while the police monitored him. He had been forbidden from leaving the country.



Putin doubted Israel could attack Iran: Bolton

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Russian President Vladimir Putin doubted that Israel could attack Iran,

according to former U.S. National Security Adviser John Bolton.

According to The Jerusalem Post, Bolton wrote in his book “The Room Where it Happened” that in an October 2018 meeting in the Kremlin Putin had said Israel “could not conduct military action against Iran alone because it didn’t have the resources or capabilities.”



Putin, he wrote, also doubted that the U.S. withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal was productive.

The former U.S. national security adviser also said that U.S. President Donald Trump expressed willingness to support Israeli strikes on Iran.

Describing a 2017 meeting in which Trump made the comments, he said, “On Iran, I urged that he press ahead to withdraw from the nuclear agreement and explained why the use of force against Iran’s nuclear program might be the only lasting solution.”

Though Bolton did not mention Israel using force, Trump responded by saying that he would support Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu doing so.

“You tell Bibi [Netanyahu] that if he uses force, I will back him. I told him that, but you tell him again,” Trump told Bolton.

A U.S. judge denied on Saturday a request by the Trump administration for an injunction to block publication of Bolton’s book, pointing out it is already in newsrooms around the world and extensive excerpts have been published.

However, U.S. District Judge Royce Lamberth also accused Bolton of having “gambled with the national security of the United States” by proceeding to publish without waiting for a prepublication review by the government.

A civil suit is pending against Bolton that seeks to force him to give the United States the right to all the profits from the book.

Trump called Bolton’s actions “treasonous” in a Fox News interview, saying “he should go to jail for that for many, many years.”

General: IRGC to set up permanent base in Indian Ocean

TEHRAN (FNA) — Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy Rear Admiral Alireza Tangsiri has said that Iran is planning to set up a permanent base in the Indian Ocean.

“We are after establishing a permanent base in the Indian Ocean and will operationalize this important issue by the yearend,” Rear Admiral Tangsiri told FNA on Monday.

He referred to pirates and certain foreign vessels’ malign acts against Iranian cargo ships and fishermen in the Sea of Oman and the Indian Ocean, and said, “The IRGC will no more allow such aggressions after its powerful presence in the Indian Ocean and the Sea of Oman.”



Rear Admiral Tangsiri said that good planning has been made for a mighty presence in the Indian Ocean which increases security in the region, specially for the Iranian vessels and fishermen.

He added that the IRGC has already sent two flotilla of warships to the Indian Ocean and will continue the move in future at the order of Commander-in-Chief of the Iranian Armed Forces Ayatollah Khamenei who has called for permanent deployment in the region.

In relevant remarks in January, Iranian Deputy Army Commander for Coordination Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari underlined that the country’s powerful Navy is safeguarding the international marine trade by deployment in the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden.

“Today, Iran’s Navy is present in international waters as a mighty power,” Rear Admiral Sayyari told reporters on the sideline of a local ceremony in Tehran.

He referred to the recently held trilateral naval drill with China and Russia in north of Indian Ocean, and said “the exercises with two major world powers proved Iran’s military power.”

Rear Admiral Sayyari noted that Iran is providing the security of trade cargos and oil tankers voyaging in the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden.

The Iranian Navy has been conducting anti-piracy patrols in the Gulf of Aden since November 2008, when Somali raiders hijacked the Iranian-chartered cargo ship, MV Delight, off the coast of Yemen.

According to UN Security Council resolutions, different countries can send their warships to the Gulf of Aden and coastal waters of Somalia against the pirates and even with prior notice to Somali government enter the territorial waters of that country in pursuit of Somali sea pirates.

The Gulf of Aden - which links the Indian Ocean with the Suez Canal and the Mediterranean Sea - is an important energy corridor, particularly because Persian Gulf oil is shipped to the West via the Suez Canal.

Abuse of UN mechanisms in human rights issues ‘cause of shame’: Iran

The Iranian Foreign Ministry has denounced an anti-Iran resolution recently passed by the United Nations Human Rights Council, saying the abuse of UN mechanisms is a cause of shame and embarrassment for supporters of the resolution.

The ministry spokesman, Seyyed Abbas Mousavi, accused on Monday the supporters of the resolution, approved in the 43rd session of the UN Human Rights Council, of adopting

double standards and abusing UN mechanisms.

He said the passage of the anti-Iran resolution, presented by Sweden and backed by some Western countries, was based on “selective, biased, confrontational and politically motivated attitudes.”

“The approach taken by proponents of the resolution on the human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran, which is extension of double standards that they apply

to the human rights situation in countries, has led to the abuse of UN mechanisms, which is regrettable.”

Stressing that the Islamic Republic is a religious democracy, Mousavi said, “Iran has taken steps to develop and promote human rights at the national, regional and international levels within the framework of its religious obligations, its constitution and ordinary laws, as well as international treaties.”

Iran exports \$800m of goods to Iraq in a month

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran's non-oil exports to Iraq in the Iranian calendar month of Ordibehesht (April 20-May 20) reached \$800 million, Tasnim news agency reported, quoting a board member of Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce.

"We didn't have a good trade with Iraq in Farvardin [first Iranian calendar month, March 20-April 19] due to the outbreak of the coronavirus," Hamid Hosseini said, adding "But in Ordibehesht, about \$800 million [of goods] were exported to Iraq, which is a good number."



Hosseini noted that Iraq has been Iran's second biggest export destination in the past few years, to which a variety of agricultural, construction, foodstuff, as well as engineering and technical services are exported.

Regarding the situation on the two countries' borders following the outbreak of coronavirus, he said: "Currently, Mehran border is active and the border is open two days a week, and now we are discussing reopening of other borders, including Chazabeh."

"We expect the rest of the borders to start operating in the next week or two," he added.

According to the official, the estimated figure is excluding the engineering and technical services exports.

"The value of goods exported to Iraq are estimated separately from the technical engineering and electrical services that are exported to this country, and we are trying to maintain our exports despite the existing problems, including the U.S. sanctions and pressures."

Last week, Iran and Iraq decided on the ways of implementing an agreement for using Iran's exports revenues in Iraq for importing basic goods from the country.

According to the Governor of Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Abdolnaser Hemmati, under the framework of the mentioned agreement, Iran will use its gas and electricity export revenues which amount at several billion dollars a year in addition to CBI resources in Iraq, for importing its required goods from the country.

Iran and Iraq have it on the agenda to increase the value of their bilateral trade to \$20 billion by 2021.

Manufacturing of washing machines rises 150%

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Manufacturing of washing machine increased 150.7 percent in Iran during the first two months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-May 20), compared to the same period of time in the past year, IRNA reported.

As reported, 121,200 washing machines were manufactured during the two-month period of this year.

As announced by the deputy industry, mining, and trade minister for industry affairs, Iranian producers have indigenized the knowledge for manufacturing 60 percent of the country's home appliance needs.

Speaking in the inauguration ceremony of a home appliance production unit on June 11, Mehdi Sadeqi Niaraki said the development of domestic production in the home appliance industry has been very significant so that nearly 70 percent of the small home appliances are currently made by domestic producers.



Underlining the increase in the production of home appliances during the first two months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-May 20), the official said the production of washing machines has increased from 48,000 units in the previous year to 121,000 units this year.

He further mentioned the upward trend of the production of home appliances in the previous calendar year 1398 and noted that despite the restrictions created by the U.S. this industry's production capacity increased 10 percent in 1398 compared to its preceding year.

Based on Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry data, in the previous year, 1,168,700 refrigerators and freezers were produced in the country, an increase of 7.8 percent compared to the preceding year 1397 (ended on March 20, 2019), while domestic companies produced 732,200 washing machines, to register a 32-percent increase year on year.

Also, the production of coolers increased by 6.3 percent to 904,900 units during the said period.

According to the official, the increase in the production of home appliances was achieved in a situation where two international companies (LG and Samsung) which held nearly 80 percent of Iran's market reduced their production in the country and left Iran under U.S. pressures.

South Korea's LG Electronics and Samsung have ended their presence in the Iranian market since the beginning of 2020, abiding by the U.S. pressures for cutting ties with one of their biggest markets.

The departure of the Asian companies from the Iranian market created a new opportunity for domestic companies to, once again, come to the spotlight for showcasing their capabilities and benefit from a market that belongs to them.

As the past Iranian calendar year of 1398 was named the year of "Pickup in Production" by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade defined several major plans for supporting domestic production in various areas including home appliances.

The ministry set a target of manufacturing 1,000 refrigerators, 800,000 washing machines, and 300,000 gas fireplace stoves for the mentioned year.

Since the import of many products of this group has been banned, the government support could be an opportunity for domestic manufacturers to promote their products, something which will lead not only to self-reliance but also to the production of products with higher quality which will create export markets.

Capital market absorbs \$12b in a quarter

By Mahnaz Abdi

TEHRAN— The amount of liquidity absorbed by Iran's capital market has reached 500 trillion rials (about \$12 billion) during the first quarter of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-June 20), the head of Iran's Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO) announced.

Making the remarks during a press conference on Monday, Hasan Qalibaf-Asl also said, "It is while the total amount of liquidity entered into this market stood at 300 trillion rials (about \$7.14 billion) during the past year."

The official further noted that the high amount of liquidity which is entering the capital market has provided some good opportunity for this market, as it's being developed and flourished; for the enterprises, as they're securing their required funds, and also for the government.

Mentioning the prosperous status of the capital market in the present year, Qalibaf-Asl underlined that the current status of this market is not at all comparable with that of the past three years and even the previous year.

He put the funding through the capital market at 2.6 quadrillion rials (about \$61.9 billion) in the past Iranian calendar year 1398 and said the figure was one quadrillion rials (about \$23.8 billion) just in the first quarter of the present year. Funding through this market stood at 1.2 quadrillion rials (about \$28.5 billion) in the calendar year 1397.

The SEO head also put the value of trades at Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE) and Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market, known as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), at 8.3 quadrillion rials (about \$197.61 billion) in the previous year, while the figure was 7.8 quadrillion rials (about \$185.71 billion) in the first quarter of this year.

TSE is Iran's major stock exchange, three other exchanges are IFB, Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME), and Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX).

Qalibaf-Asl further said that the number of codes issued in the stock market in the past year was 820, adding that 1.6 million codes have been issued in the first three months of the current year.

It should be noted that in late February, SEO set new regulations for issuance of trading codes for the new shareholders in the



country's stock market.

Based on an announcement by the SEO, the new applicants can conduct trade one month after receiving their trading codes and they are required to pass an exam given by Securities and Exchange Brokers Association (SEBA) or SEO during the one-month time, while they are also committed to avoid signal selling and some other actions, and if they do so, their codes will be blocked.

As decided by SEBA, the applicants are required to take the mentioned exam in person or virtually, and it is in line with elevating the knowledge of shareholders.

■ Main plans followed up by SEO

Elsewhere in his remarks, the head of Securities and Exchange Organization mentioned some of the major programs that the organization is following up seriously as follows:

- Increasing the capacity of funding
 - Promoting the international status of Iranian capital market
 - Elevating the people's financial knowledge
 - Promoting transparency
 - Risk monitoring and controlling
 - Modification of laws and regulations
 - Quality and quantity development of financial instruments
 - Creating proper technical infrastructure
 - Promoting manpower efficiency
- **SEO's 3 major responsibilities**
The head of SEO further mentioned three major responsibilities of this organization

over the past ten years.

He referred to the implementation of the general policies of the Article 44 of Constitution as the first responsibility which has led to the development of the capital market.

The law on implementation of the general policies of the Article 44 of Constitution on privatizing state-owned companies was declared in 2006 in a bid to downsize the government and promote the private sector's role in the national economy.

The government envisioned a large privatization program aiming to privatize some percent of the state-owned firms each year.

Releasing the "Justice Shares", under which the low-income Iranian families will receive shares in the state-owned companies, is the second responsibility, according to Qalibaf-Asl.

Trading the mentioned shares through the stock market has become possible this year.

The official mentioned funding as the third responsibility of the SEO.

He said, "The government is now determined that funding will be mainly done through the capital market. For the moment, neither the government nor the banks can fund the projects as before, so the capital market is expected to play a more significant role in this due."

■ IPO requests under investigation

Answering a question about the status of the companies' initial public offerings (IPOs), which according to the finance minister

should be expedited, the head of SEO said that to expedite this process the companies should take rapid action and submit their documents soon.

About 50 companies have already requested for IPO in the TSE and about 100 companies have requested for IPO in the IFB, which are being investigated by the SEO, the official announced.

It should be mentioned that in the current Iranian year, Iran's stock market witnessed its largest-ever initial public offering, as Social Security Investment Company (SSIC, also known by its Persian acronym Shasta) offered eight billion shares, which account for 10 percent of its stakes, for sales in Tehran Stock Exchange on April 15.

■ Condition to be facilitated for entrance of startups

Qalibaf-Asl further referred to the issue of the startups and knowledge-based companies entering the stock market, and said, "We are creating the proper condition for them, and we are also planning to introduce an index for them in this market."

As reported by Iran's vice presidency for science and technology earlier this month, 35 local knowledge-based companies have been recently listed on the country's stock market and the number is expected to increase in the future.

The report put the value of the shares of the mentioned companies at 1.5 quadrillion rials (over \$35.7 billion).

In the current year, a new index called Knowledge-Based Index is going to be introduced in the stock market, for which initial measures have been already taken.

In the end, Qalibaf-Asl said the more the capital market complies with the international standards, the more it will develop.

He also said that as the number of shareholders is increasing in the current year, more attention should be paid to the promotion of people's financial knowledge and institutionalizing the culture of investment making in the stock market.

"To achieve more transparency in this market, we are setting some structures based on which the companies should submit more data and information", the official further noted.

"In this year we are facilitating acceptance of new companies in the capital market, and we are trying to remove the red tape as much as possible", he added.

3rd section of Khaf-Herat railway to be completed by late Dec.

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The third section of Khaf-Herat railway project which connects the rail networks of Iran and Afghanistan will come on stream in the third quarter of the current Iranian calendar year (September 22-December 20), said Iranian Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian.

Ardakanian made the remarks in a meeting with Afghanistan's Acting Foreign Affairs Minister Mohammad Haneef Atmar in Tehran on Monday, IRNA reported.

Underlining the significance of the two countries economic relations, the official said that completing this section is aimed at accelerating the development of economic relations between the two countries.

Khaf-Herat is part of Iran-Afghanistan rail corridor. The project, started in the fiscal year of 2007-2008, connects Iran's eastern city of Khaf to Afghanistan's western city of Ghoryan.

The 132-km project is divided into three major sections, 77 kilometers of which is inside Iranian territory and 62 kilometers is in Afghanistan territory.

Referring to his visit to Afghanistan in the previous year, Ardakanian said: "During the visit with President Ashraf Ghani, many plans were made for economic cooperation; those areas of cooperation were reviewed in the today meeting."

■ Iran to hold specialized expos in Afghanistan

the Iranian minister mentioned holding two specialized exhibitions to offer the capacities of Iran's technical and engineering services in Kabul and Herat as one of the achievements of today's meeting and announced the holding of

the two countries' sixth Joint Economic Committee meeting in Kabul in near future.

Efforts are underway to finalize a comprehensive document on long-term cooperation between the two countries until the sixth meeting and under the framework of this document, several energy projects in the field of fossil fuels and renewables will be defined, Ardakanian said.

The official also pointed to the possibility of cooperation in 20 projects in the electricity sector and said: "We hope that these projects will be implemented soon."

■ Afghan bank to open branch in Chabahar

After meeting with Atmar, Ardakanian announced that Iran is possibly going to allow an Afghan bank to open a branch in Iran's southeastern port of Chabahar to facilitate the financial affairs of the two countries' mutual projects.

According to the official, Iran is going to offer its neighbor special facilities and incentives for doing business in Chabahar port.

■ Iran's electricity exports to Afghanistan to be increased

Elsewhere in his remarks, Ardakanian noted that Iran is planning to increase its electricity exports to Afghanistan by constructing a 220-Kilovolt transmission line between the two sides.

"The export of electricity to Afghanistan and other neighboring countries is part of a comprehensive plan for economic cooperation with the neighbors, so we are trying to play our part in developing the electricity industry of our neighbor Afghanistan", he noted.

Fig export stands at \$47m in a year

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran exported 13,600 tons of fig valued at \$47 million during the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19), according to the director-general of the tropical and subtropical fruits office of Agriculture Ministry.

Zahra Jalili-Moqadam also put the annual fig production at 104,000 tons, IRIB reported.

Fars province is the major producer of dried fig in Iran and therefore the main supplier of exported fig in the country, the

official further said.

She went on to say that planning for elevating the quality of the fruit based on the international standards will result in boosting its exports, and noted that improving the fig gardens is one of the plans of Agriculture Ministry in the current year, which is the year of "Surge in Production".

Iran exported over \$5.8 billion worth of agricultural and foodstuff products in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19), Head of Agriculture Ministry's

Planning and Economic Affairs Department Shahrokh Shajari has said.

According to the official, about 7.104 million tons of such products worth \$5.821 billion were exported to foreign destinations last year.

In the mentioned period, over 6.941 million tons of agricultural and foodstuff products worth \$6.392 billion were also imported into the country, according to Shajari.

Watermelons, apples, tomatoes, potatoes, onions, and shallots were the top five exported

products in the previous year in terms of weight, while in terms of value, pistachios, apples, tomatoes, pistachio kernels, and watermelons were the five major exported products.

Shajari further pointed to the major imported items in terms of weight, saying: corn, barley, soybean meal, soybean, and untreated sugar were the top five imported items, while in terms of value livestock corn, rice, barley, and soybeans were the top imported products.

Iran among world's top 5 power plant builders

ENERGY

TEHRAN — Iran is among the world's top five countries in terms of the capabilities and technology for construction of power plants, Tasnim reported on Monday, quoting Managing Director of Iran's MAPNA Group, "We are among the top five countries in the world in the construction of power plants," Abbas Aliabadi said adding "We are currently building a variety of machinery, turbines, generators and control systems, and there is no power plant equipment that we need to import."

Speaking in a signing ceremony for the construction of the second phase of Khoram-Abad power plant in the western Lorestan Province, Aliabadi said Iranian electricity industry is currently in a very good place, in terms of both power generation and equipment manufacturing.

Noting that great investments have been made in the electricity industry, the official said: "An organization has been formed in this regard that competes with advanced



countries in this industry." "We are trying to interact with the world,"

he stressed, adding that "There are no limitations for us in the technical aspects of this

industry if there were no obstacles in the economic aspects."

According to Aliabadi over 60 percent of the country's power plants have been constructed by MAPNA Group.

Back in May, the official had said that Iran is completely self-sufficient in constructing any types of power plants.

"Achieving this level of knowledge and technology, the country is now able to export services and technology in almost all related industrial areas", he said in a press conference.

The official mentioned the unjust U.S. sanctions on Iran, saying, "The hardships inflicted by U.S. sanctions has made us achieve this level of technology. All the equipment and technology used in construction of power plants is now built inside the country."

MAPNA Group is a conglomerate of Iranian companies involved in development and execution of thermal and renewable power, oil and gas, railway transportation and other industrial projects as well as manufacturing main equipment.

Electricity consumption expected to break 60GW record

ENERGY

TEHRAN — Iran's Deputy Energy Minister Homayoun Haeri says the country's electricity consumption is expected to reach 60,000 megawatts (60 gigawatts) during the summer peak consumption period, Mehr News Agency reported.

Speaking in a meeting with First Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri on Sunday, the official said the country's peak electricity consumption has already reached 56.44 GW in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 20), while the peak consumption level barely reached 54.14 GW in the previous year.

The deputy minister underlined the Energy Ministry's annual overhaul program as one of the main strategies of the ministry to realize a "zero blackout" goal during the peak consumption period, adding that every year nearly 5,000 MW capacity is added to the total overhaul program.

The average age of over 30 percent of the country's power plants is more than 20 years, the official regretted.

"Since last summer, 1433 MW of nominal capacity and 900 MW of practical capacity have been added to the country's power generation capacity," he said referring to the country's nominal electricity generation capacity.

"Since two years ago, we have been implementing a series of serious programs for consumption management, and we are committed to continue these programs," he said.

The electricity consumption in Iran has been following an unprecedented upward trend in the recent weeks as a new heat wave has blanketed the country.

Earlier this month, the energy ministry warned of the unprecedented increases in power consumption across the country.

In early May, Iran's Power Generation and Distribution Company (known as TAVANIR) announced that the electricity consumption, since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20) up to May 6 increased by five percent compared to the same period last year.

In the past decade, constant temperature



rising and the significant decrease of rainfalls across Iran have put the country in a hard situation regarding electricity supply during peak consumption periods.

In this regard, the Energy Ministry has been following new strategies in recent years to manage the consumption and lessen the electricity losses in the national grid.

Iran to double melamine crystal output

TEHRAN (Shana) — Iran's "Melamine Crystal" production capacity will double with Development of Lordegan Petrochemical Complex.

According to the National Petrochemical Company (NPC), completing the value chain has always been one of NPC's plans and policies, as the NPC CEO told a news conference last week that no more permissions would be issued for construction of methanol and urea projects in the country, announcing implementation of various projects aimed at completing the methane and ammonia value chains in the petrochemical industry.

In line with this approach, a new permit has been issued to build a melamine crystal production project to complete the methane chain, and the Iranian Petrochemical Investment Group (Petrol) recently announced the construction of a 20,000-ton melamine crystal project alongside Lordegan urea and ammonia plant.



Currently, Khorasan Petrochemical Plant and then Urmia Plant are the largest and only producers of "Melamine Crystal" in Iran, and if the Lordegan melamine crystal project is built, the production capacity of this petrochemical product will double.

Melamine crystal is a popular and widely used product in the wood, paper, paint, leather, textile, molding, adhesive, rubber, etc. industries, and countries such as Turkey, India and China are among the customers of this petrochemical item.

Hegmataneh petchem plant to supply rare PVC

TEHRAN (Shana) — Planning for the inauguration of 12 petrochemical projects, including Hegmataneh Petrochemical Plant, has been carried out in the year of "Production Leap". Once operational, the plant will supply one of the rarest petrochemical products in the world.

According to the National Petrochemical Company (NPC), launching Abadan, Ghadir, Bandar Imam and Arvand petrochemical complexes, will bring Iran's production capacity of polyvinyl chloride (PVC) to around 745,000 tons per year.

Nearly nine years have passed since the inauguration of the country's latest PVC production project, Arvand Petrochemical Plant, and with the operation of this complex, along with increasing the production capacity of PVC, the country's petrochemical production mix has diversified with new

grades of suspension and PVC emulsion.

After a decade since the opening and operation of Iran's latest PVC project, the countdown for the launch and commissioning of Hegmataneh Petrochemical Plant with a production capacity of 48,000 tons per year of PVC has started.

The plant will come online in the second half of the current calendar year, which began on March 20.

Once operational, one of the rarest petrochemical items will be produced in the plant which is medical grade of powder and granular PVC. This will turn Iran into an exporters of the item in the world.

Medical grade powder and granular PVC is one of the most unique petrochemical products in the world and only a few countries have limited technology to produce this strategic petrochemical product.

Asian buyers turn to U.S. oil amid uncertain flows from OPEC

As the OPEC+ alliance sticks to its guns in trying to curb oil output to shore up prices, Asian buyers are increasingly looking to the U.S. for a cheaper source of supply, Bloomberg reported.

Refiners in the top crude-importing region have been forced to accept big reductions in their regular contracted volumes from producers including Saudi Arabia and Iraq in the past couple of months. They've also been taken aback by sharp swings in official selling prices.

The lower volumes and pricing uncertainty is encouraging Asian processors to take a closer look at American crudes, particularly as freight rates across the Pacific have fallen over the last couple of months. Staff at four Asian processors who buy and sell crude said they were considering purchasing U.S. oil, declining to be named because the information is confidential.

Saudi Arabia and other OPEC members have long-standing reputations as reliable suppliers to Asia, but the price war followed quickly by massive output cuts have unsettled buyers in the region. While these traditional suppliers are unlikely to be overtaken by the U.S. anytime soon,



the instability has created an opening for American producers.

"It's difficult for refiners to cope with such volatility," said John Driscoll, chief strategist at JTD Energy Services Pte in Singapore. "On the other hand, U.S. oil is looking more attractive with lower prices and freight rates."

The volume of U.S. oil flowing to Asia is already rising. About 49 million barrels are scheduled to arrive next month,

compared with 27 million barrels each in May and June, figures from Vortexa Ltd. show. Deeper discounts for American crude relative to other benchmark crudes such as Brent are spurring interest from China, said Serena Huang, a senior analyst at the market analytics firm.

Flow increasing

China's Rongsheng Petrochemical Co. bought at least 2 million barrels of the WTI Midland grade for August-September

arrival, while South Korean processors including GS Caltex Corp. and SK Innovation Co. purchased U.S. varieties including WTI Midland and Eagle Ford for September. Indian Oil Corp. also snapped up 12 million barrels of American crude this month including Domestic Sweet, Eagle Ford and WTI Midland for delivery early next year.

WTI Midland, a favored grade for some North Asian refiners, is comparable to Abu Dhabi's Murban and Das Blend and Saudi Arabia's Arab Extra Light and Arab Light, as well as Russian Sokol. The American varieties are cheaper than similar West Asian types of the crude, the refinery officials said.

The spot premium to purchase WTI Midland against its benchmark has risen by about \$2 a barrel from a month earlier, while that for Murban has increased by \$4 a barrel because of an increase in its official selling price, according to data compiled by Bloomberg.

Meanwhile, the cost of hiring a Very Large Crude Carrier, which can hold 2 million barrels, for a journey from the U.S. Gulf Coast to China was around \$7.3 million on Friday, compared with \$15 million in late April, according to shipbrokers.

Annual propylene output to reach 3m tons

ENERGY

TEHRAN — The managing director of Iran's National Petrochemical Company (NPC) said that some new projects are planned to boost the country's production capacity of propylene to three million tons, Shana reported on Sunday.

Behzad Mohammadi also said that these projects as some leading projects constitute a major part of the plan for smart development of the petrochemical industry.

"The current production of propylene is about 980,000 tons per year. Statistical studies show that we now face a shortage of propylene in the country at around 200,000 tons and by [Iranian calendar year] 1404 (starts in March 2025), the deficit will be 700,000 tons", the official added.



He said that with the production of propylene, the downstream industries could be expanded with more attractiveness.

"Plans have been devised to enhance propylene production capacity of the country by 2025 by consuming surplus methanol output through using methanol to propylene (MTP) method," he added.

Mohammadi said that with easy access to propylene, construction of petrochemical projects in the central regions of the country could be facilitated. "These projects could include the production chains in downstream projects."

The managing director of the National Petrochemical Company stated that propulsion projects were being implemented in four axes: methanol, propylene, ethylene and benzene.

Mohammadi, noting the concentration of methanol units in southern parts of the country, said gas to propylene (GTPP) had been defined in northern parts of the country, instead.

Following a plan for expanding Iran's petrochemical industry, National Petrochemical Company is going to construct propylene storage tanks near Damghan city in north-central Semnan province.

As reported, the NPC managing director, accompanied by a group of officials from the province, visited the site considered for the project on June 11.

During the visit, Mohammadi emphasized that access to communication routes such as railways is a necessity for the implementation of such projects.

"The construction of these storage facilities is a base for the development of the petrochemical industry's leading projects, and in this regard, all available capacities must be used to achieve a balanced development of the industry," he said.

Earlier this month, Mohammadi had said that the capacity of the country's propylene production has increased to 950,000 tons, however, the demand for the product in the country is more than this figure and plans are underway to increase the figure.

"With the PVM method, the methanol produced by the country's methanol production units can be converted to propylene, and in this way, the production capacity of propylene can be increased," he added.

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

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.

China's new low-sulfur fuel oil contract jumps in debut trade

China's new low-sulfur fuel oil (LSFO) futures contract made strong gains in its debut trade on Monday, rising as much as 16.7 percent on the Shanghai International Energy Exchange (INE), Reuters reported.

The front-month January contract, with a listing price of 2,368 yuan per ton, later pared gains to close 9.8 percent higher at 2,599 yuan (\$367.35) per ton at the close of afternoon trade.

The contract saw open interest of 24,859 lots and trading volumes of 130,439 lots.

The launch of the contract with sulfur content lower than 0.5 percent comes after an International Maritime Organization (IMO) ruling which bans ships from using high sulfur content fuel oil this year unless equipped with exhaust scrubbers.

The contract could help boost China's ambition to build a regional bunkering hub in its port of Zhoushan to vie for the multi-billion dollar ship fuel market dominated by Singapore.

Prices for LSFO futures jumped as the market felt its listing price, set by the Shanghai exchange, was undervalued and came below Zhoushan's spot prices and Singapore's 0.5 percent marine fuel prices, said Jin Xiao, chief analyst for energy and petrochemicals at Orient Futures research unit.

"Considering that the long-term curve of Singapore's low-sulfur is in a contango structure, we think it is more reasonable for LSFO prices to have a premium to Zhoushan spot prices," he said. Contango is a situation where the futures price of a commodity is higher than the spot price.

Open to international investors, the LSFO contract is China's fifth internationalized one following the opening up of crude oil, TSR 20 rubber, iron ore and purified terephthalic acid futures to foreign participants.

"LSFO prices will see limited declines mainly due to the fact that the most serious impact of the coronavirus epidemic on the economy has ended, demand will gradually recover," Jin added. A Shanghai-based trader who traded the contract said whether or not LSFO's prices could sustain would depend on the demand and supply of the marine fuel.

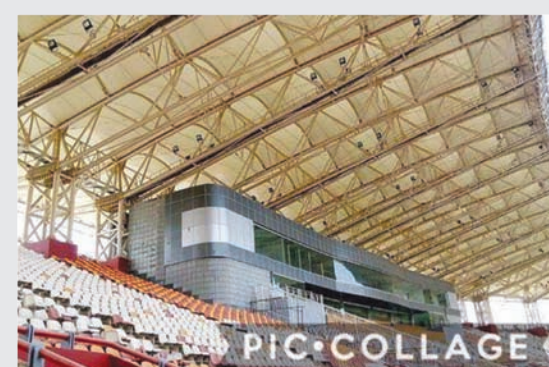
"In the short term, it will depend on crude oil, which is expected to trend slightly higher."

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West Bank annexation plan is a 21st century apartheid with Trump's approval: Amal Wahdan

By Amir Mohammad Esmaeili

TEHRAN — Amal Wahdan, a Palestinian activist who has been campaigning for the liberation of Palestine, tells the Tehran Times that the plan by Israel to annex the West Bank is a “new apartheid” that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu “would not dare” to implement without the “approval of Donald Trump and his circle”.

Wahdan, who was founder and editor of the Arab Gazette, says the annexation plan is in line with Britain's colonial design in West Asia.

“The West Bank annexation plan fits in perfectly within the larger strategy of “Greater Israel” to ensure the regional superiority of the Zionist entity through Balkanization of the Arab countries into smaller and weaker entities,” Wahdan notes.

She calls Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Trump two “troubled leaders” who need each other's help in these “difficult times”.

“Both troubled and defeated leaders, Netanyahu and Trump need each other's help in their difficult times in order to remain in office. The former is facing corruption charges that might end his political career if he is indicted and the latter is under constant attack from his adversaries and facing impeachment,” explains Wahdan, a permanent member of the Palestinian Coalition for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Following is the full text of the interview.

■ Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is facing a number of criminal indictments, has repeatedly said that he would commence cabinet-level discussions for annexing more areas in the occupied West Bank on July 1 in accordance with U.S. President Donald Trump's so-called “deal of the century” plan. What is your take on it?

A: The Zionist colonial settler entity in occupied Palestine intends to further its ethnic cleansing plans against the Palestinian people by moving on with Netanyahu's West Bank annexation scheme, a promise he made to his ultra-right election constituency and allies.

The proposed plan seeks to annex 30% of the West bank, including the Jordan Valley stretching 85km to the North along Jordan River and larger illegal settlements in the de facto occupied Palestine. This move poses an imminent threat to the livelihood of 60,000 Palestinians who live in the Jordan Valley and depend mostly on agriculture (compared to 6000 Jewish settlers) and to hundreds of thousands who live in rural areas surrounding the larger settlements.

Netanyahu would not dare to go ahead with his plan of annexation without the approval of the U.S. President, Donald Trump, and his circle. Actually, both troubled and defeated leaders, Netanyahu and Trump need each other's help in their difficult times in order to remain in office. The former is facing corruption charges that might end his political career if he is indicted and the latter is under constant attack from his adversaries.

In return, Trump will guarantee the support of AI-PAC and the American Jewish votes. In addition, we have to bear in mind that Trump's “deal of the century” granted the Zionist colonial entity what they have been dreaming for over the past decades; recognizing “Israel” as a Jewish state and Jerusalem as its eternal capital, supporting the illegal settlements in the West Bank in opposition to UN Security Council Resolution 2334, annexation of the Golan Heights, and the occupied West Bank. With this gift, Trump granted the Zionist entity what he doesn't own to those who don't deserve it. Just like what Belford did with his declaration over a century ago; he granted a Jewish Homeland in Palestine, a land that he didn't own, to the Zionist movement.

■ Could we consider this plan in line with the Zionist colonial project of “Greater Israel”?

A: The ideology of the Zionist Movement and Project has developed over the decades as an organic part of the European colonial powers. It came into formal existence at the end of the 19th century with one main theme: the creation of a Jewish Homeland. In the process to materialize this dream, several options were put in place before they spotted Historic Palestine as the most suitable choice, mainly for geopolitical reasons but covered by the religious myth for political tactics.

Most Zionist leaders from Herzl, the founder of the Zionist Movement, to Jabotinsky, Ben Gurion, Moshe



Dayan, Ariel Sharon up-to-date Netanyahu have used the religious mythology in their political platforms, speeches, and with world leaders even though none of them was actually religious.

It was Herzl who carved the area of the future Jewish state by saying: “From the Brooks of Egypt to the Euphrates.” Ben-Gurion had wanted Israel's northern border to extend to the River Litani. While the World Zionist Organization declared a century ago that the Jewish state shall extend to cover all of historic Palestine, Litani Rive, Golan Heights, Hauran Plain, Deraa, to control the Rail road from Deraa to Amman in addition to the Gulf of Aqaba.

Thus, within the framework of the Zionist project, Palestine, which has been inhabited for thousands of years becomes the ‘promised land’ to God's ‘chosen people’, and an empty land for another people (from all over the world) who have no land! The replacement of the people of Palestine with colonial invading settlers became the implementation of a divine promise.

■ Do you think the U.S. “New Middle East” doctrine was to create chaos and divide the Arab homeland into sectarian entity?

A: The West Bank annexation plan fits in perfectly within the larger strategy of “Greater Israel” to ensure the regional superiority of the Zionist entity through Balkanization of the Arab countries into smaller and weaker entities. This was in fact an extension of Britain's colonial design in West Asia when the victors of WWI, Britain- France signed the Sykes-Picot agreement. This was the first phase of the geographical division of the Arab Homeland and the creation of the satellite entities of the British colonial empire; Saudi Arabia, Persian Gulf states, carving Jordan, Lebanon and historic Palestine from the Levant.

The Oded Yonon plan went further beyond the geographic division to the sectarian divide of the Arab Homeland between Muslims and Christians, Sunnis and Shiites. This vision had kicked off in 1982 with the Israeli occupation and invasion of Lebanon and the creation of the Antone Lahed Army south of the Litani River. This war led to the expulsion of the PLO leadership and the scattering of the Palestinian fighters as far as Yemen, Tunisia, and Algeria. The second major blow was the U.S. incitement of Saddam Hussein

“For over 72 years, Zionists practiced apartheid policies against Palestinian people which is much worse than those practiced in South Africa and like those of Nazi Germany.”

of Iraq to wage an eight-year war against the Islamic Republic of Iran and its new revolution, which had immense ramifications on both countries. The third was the eruption of what the U.S. and its allies called the “Arab Spring.” This was manifested in a wave of mass demonstrations that swamped the Arab region from Tunisia in December of 2010 to Egypt, Libya and to the torn country of Iraq since the invasion of 2003, to the division of Sudan in 2013, the instigated terror war in Somalia, and the “Arab Coalition” war on Yemen in 2015, led by Saudi Arabia with the support of the U.S. and the Zionist entity.

Despite of the pan-Arab Nakba (catastrophe), millions of casualties among civilians, exodus, destruction of infrastructures, economic sanctions and devastation, and loss of billions of dollars of national wealth, the Yonon plan of Balkanization of the Arab Homeland failed miserably to achieve its goals as well as the U.S. “New Middle East” doctrine. On the contrary, it drove regional and Arab resistance movements and countries closer in confrontation with U.S. hegemony and Zionists' expansionist project from Yemen in the South, to Syria, Lebanon, occupied Palestine, Iraq and Iran as a regional power.

The Balkanization of West Asia is an integral part of the U.S. foreign policy. A policy which the U.S. administration under Bill Clinton successfully implemented in the former Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc and managed to dismantle the Eastern bloc but into failed fragmented entities.

■ The U.S.-Zionist strategy to annex the West Bank would have serious ramifications on the Palestinian Authority, Jordan and Egypt. What are the options left for the Palestinian people and leadership?

A: The U.S.-backed West Bank annexation plan has put an end to the Oslo agreement that was signed between the PLO leadership and the Zionist colonial settler entity in September of 1993 and the two-state solution. This agreement was in “Israel's” favor from A to Z. Although, it entailed mutual recognition and the creation of the Palestinian state at the 1967 war borders which included the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem as its capital, several important issues like the right of return, borders, settlements, water, sea and airports will be decided at the end of the five year period. None of these articles were implemented. Furthermore, after 25 years of Oslo, the Palestinians are still living in a huge open prison as the Gaza Strip is under siege for 13 years, hundreds of thousands of dunums of Palestinian land are confiscated, dozens of Zionists colonies are erected, over 800 km of the illegal wall surrounding and cutting in between the Palestinian cities, towns and rural areas, water springs, power grids, land, sea, and airports all are under the control of the Zionist colonial entity.

The PLO executive committee and President Mahmoud Abbas have declared their decision to abandon the Oslo agreements, to suspend their diplomatic and security relations with the Americans and the Zionist leaders in rejection to the West Bank annexation plan. But this is not enough to confront the new wave of ethnic cleansing.

The Palestinian leadership needs to free its mind from any illusions that Americans and Zionists want peace and recognize reality that we are in the process of national liberation not state-building. For over 72 years, Zionists practiced apartheid policies against Palestinian people which is much worse than those practiced in South Africa and like those of Nazi Germany. Even the UN human rights experts announced their condemnation of the Zionists' annexation plan of parts of the occupied West Bank, as a “vision of a 21st century apartheid”.

The new geopolitical order provides a positive environment to a genuine solution in front of the PLO and the Palestinian people; to restore the National Charter of 1968 and resolutions of the National Councils up to 1974 on the vision of comprehensive unity of an undivided, historic Palestine in terms of both land and people, to maintain a tight link between the objectives of the Palestinian National Movement and the Arab, regional and international resistance movements, to emphasize the leading role of the organization in liberating Palestine from settler colonization along with all national forces as a framework for their alliance during the liberation stage.

Legal blow for pro-Israel lobby as BDS continues its long advance

By Asa Winstanley

The boycott, divestment and sanctions movement (BDS) had a landmark legal victory against Israel last week. The European Court of Human Rights ruled unanimously against the convictions of Palestinian-rights campaigners by French courts for BDS protests they staged more than a decade ago.

In September 2009 and May 2010, the group of 11 activists entered a supermarket in Illzach, a town in north-east France, wearing t-shirts bearing the words “Boycott Israel”. They chanted slogans and passed out flyers urging shoppers not to buy Israeli goods, and also asked them to sign a petition requesting the supermarket chain to stop stocking such products altogether. Their actions were entirely peaceful, so much so that the company did not even file any legal charges against them.

However, the public prosecutor took a different view and launched a case against the activists, claiming that they had incited “hatred or discrimination” by calling for a boycott of Israel. This was, of course, entirely spurious. And entirely political, because France's Minister of Justice had ordered local prosecutors to go after BDS activists. They were sentenced in French courts to pay punitive fines and costs. It was an object lesson in “justice” against the “crime” of standing up for equality and human rights.

Now, after a long legal struggle, the French BDS activists have been vindicated completely. The tables have been turned, and France has been ordered to pay each of the activists about €7,000 in damages, plus their legal costs.

The European Court of Justice ruled that, “The actions and remarks imputed to the applicants had concerned a subject of public interest” and that “those actions and words had fallen within the ambit of political or militant expression.” In French, the word “militant” just means “activist”, not any kind of extremist or forceful action as the word can imply in English.

The court in Strasbourg faulted the French national courts for failing to respect Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights – the guarantee of freedom of expression – and not carrying out “an appropriate assessment of the facts”. A boycott is, after all, a form of free speech.

This was a landmark ruling. It is a significant, crushing defeat for the pro-Israel lobby, because for several years now, one of Israel's primary strategies against the BDS movement has been to persuade, pressure and cajole Western governments to pass laws banning or severely restricting BDS activities. Numerous U.S. states, as well as France and Germany, now have legislation on the books which curtails, restricts or punishes BDS activism.

Politicians passing laws through the legislature is one thing, but they have to be tested in the courts. It is likely, therefore, that anti-BDS laws will eventually be ruled unconstitutional, overturned and probably struck off the statute book. This is especially so in the U.S., where such laws are clearly in violation of the First Amendment of the Constitution, which upholds the right to free speech. This ruling by the European Court of Human Rights is a significant step in that direction.

Israel is running out of options in its war against BDS. As Dr Martin Luther King once said, “The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice.” This doesn't mean that justice is inevitable; far from it. It is up to us, the people, to bend it ourselves by our collective actions.

That is why the BDS movement has been so successful, and why Israel is so worried about it that it has created an entire ministry to fight a dirty war against the movement around the world. The so-called Ministry of Strategic Affairs is, in reality, a semi-covert spying and sabotage agency.

Companies which profit from Israeli apartheid are also worried. Palestine's BDS National Committee revealed recently that one of their activists was told by a lawyer for the Puma sportswear company, “You're making our lives miserable.”

Puma has been a key BDS target in recent years. As the main sponsor of the Israel Football Association (IFA), the company is complicit in Israel's brutal military occupation, theft and colonisation of Palestinian land. The IFA ignores its own claim to promote “non-political” sports by including teams based and playing in Israel's settlements in the occupied West Bank. All Israeli settlements are illegal under international law and constitute a war crime.

The long campaign against Israeli occupation, apartheid and expulsion requires stamina; we will win, but it will require tenacity. The BDS movement is the key for supporters of Palestinian rights who want to campaign against Israeli violations of those rights. Anyone and everyone with a sense of justice has to keep on making the lives of the war criminals and profiteers “miserable” so that it is they who give up, and BDS achieves its objectives.

Asa Winstanley is an investigative journalist living in London who writes about Palestine and West Asia. He has been visiting Palestine since 2004 and is originally from South Wales. He writes for the award-winning Palestinian news site *The Electronic Intifada* where he is an associate editor and also a weekly column for the *Middle East Monitor*.

EU diplomacy is profitable for Israel, but a disaster for Palestine

By Ramona Wadi

Since Israel announced its plan to annex swathes of the occupied West Bank, the EU has only hypothesized on what steps the bloc may take in response. The most prominent of these could be the exclusion of Israel from the Horizon 2020 research grants. Other than this possibility (it is no more than that at this stage), which should have been done long before now in any case due to Israel's perpetual violations of international law, the EU has tacitly approved Donald Trump's deal upon which annexation is based, and will most likely restrict its collective response to rhetoric.

U.S. President Trump has dealt Palestinians a severe blow, which would have been impossible if the international community had united, decades ago, to rectify its colonial approach to Palestine. Through non-binding resolutions, the UN led the way in creating Israel's ability to act with impunity which is derived from Palestinian dependence. No strategy other than anti-colonial resistance could have worked, and despite the UN's purported intentions to eradicate colonialism, it reneged and instead provided Israel with the necessary diplomatic cover to appropriate virtually all of Palestine.

The EU is no different. It placed itself at the helm of alleged peace-building strategies, in particular through its financial assistance to the Palestinian Authority alongside its diplomatic relations with Israel. As a result, Palestinians became pawns in a state-building project without a state, presided over by an internationally-funded entity that has no political legitimacy and which functions as a colonial collaborator with, and defender of, the colonial-settler state of Israel, as well as a mouthpiece for international diplomacy.

Spanish MEPs have criticised the EU's Foreign Affairs Chief Josep Borrell's statement, noting that calling upon Israel to refrain from annexation is not enough. However, the EU is also portrayed

as “the only international actor that can force upon them genuine negotiations between the parties involved.” There are no genuine negotiations, as any diplomat knows. Israel must be identified as a colonial power and decolonisation should take the place of negotiations, thus reversing the power imbalance that prevents Palestinians from uncompromised political decision-making.

Consider Luxembourg's Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn's recent statement that the EU would “inevitably” recognise Palestine as a state “if Israel moves forward with its controversial plan to annex the West Bank.” Is this ludicrous diplomacy what the PA has been striving to achieve; the recognition of a hypothetical state when there is barely any land upon which to build it? Symbolic recognition of Palestine within the two-state context has failed to achieve any political advantage for Palestinians, but recognising a state when the demise of its hypothesis has been obvious for years is the epitome of EU hypocrisy.

Writing “reproachful letters would be a humiliation for the EU,” Asselborn added. Belatedly recognising a Palestinian state is not, in EU diplomacy, because when it comes to Palestine and the Palestinian people, there is no limit to what the international community can get away with while still proclaiming itself to be a champion of human rights. The EU, in particular, relishes this status, which the PA supports unabashedly, to the detriment of the Palestinian people. Without a plan to prevent Israel's annexation of the occupied West Bank, what role is the EU playing other than facilitating the U.S. deal of the century? The reality is that EU diplomacy is profitable for Israel, but an absolute disaster for the Palestinians.

Ramona Wadi is an independent researcher, freelance journalist, book reviewer and blogger. Her writing covers a range of themes in relation to Palestine, Chile and Latin America. Her article appeared in MEMO.

Second Announcement



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Historical structure of Mayamey under restoration, landscaping

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** – A new round of restoration and landscaping has begun on the historical structure of the city of Mayamey, north-central Semnan province, CHTN reported.

The project aims at repairing the flooring of the area, re-carpeting the damaged floorings, releasing the area around the old trees of the city, which have been inscribed on the national heritage list, and strengthening the area using cob material, provincial tourism chief Mehdi Jamal announced on Sunday.



The historical structure of Mayamey includes several caravan-serais, natural sights, and historical sites such as Shah-Abbasi caravanserai, Aqaian Mosque, Aqaian Mansion, Aqaian bath-house, and Emarat cistern.

The main population centers of Semnan province lie along the ancient Silk Road (and modern-day Imam Reza Express-way), linking Rey (Tehran) with Khorasan (Mashhad). While few visitors spend much time in the area, driving through you can easily seek out several well-preserved caravanserais (notably Dehnamak and Ahowan), cisterns (the Cafe Abenbar in Garmsar is a special treat) and ruined mud citadels (Padeh is lumpy but fascinating). The large, bustling cities of Semnan, Damghan, and Shahrud (Bastam) all have a small selection of historic buildings and Semnan has a fine old covered bazaar.

Handmade glasswork on show at tourism ministry

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** – A wide-ranging collection of handmade glasswork has been put on show during a solo exhibition at the headquarters of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism in Tehran.

A total of 60 objects by the Iranian entrepreneur and crafter Amir Tajmiri have been selected for the five-day exhibit, which will be running till Wednesday, CHTN reported on Monday.

They include candlesticks, kitchen utensils, and other decorative and practical objects, which are comparable with quality products from other countries, the report said.



Iran exported \$523 million worth of handicrafts during the past calendar year 1398 (ended March 19), tourism minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan said earlier this month.

Of the figure, some \$273 million worth of handicrafts were exported officially through customs, and about \$250 million was earned via suitcase trade (allowed for customs-free and tax-free transfer) through various provinces, he explained.

Iran, one of the friendliest countries

By Rita Alves

(Part: 1/4)

When I told some people where I was going, the reaction was very similar: why are you going there, it is not safe, they are in war and so on. So, on my first two days, I just thought that I was probably on the wrong country, because I never felt so safe while travelling and people were so friendly to me...they had a chat with me in the gardens, happy to have travelers visiting their country; I was offered fresh and warm bread by a group of girls and I could go on and on about the amazing and kind people I met.



Jameh Mosque, Isfahan

A good thing is that normally I don't listen to those warnings, because they come from people that don't travel and what they know about the world is probably based on the news and social media. One thing is the politicians or the person in charge of a country and another thing is the people of that country.

So, throughout the country I have met many Iranians (probably more woman rather than man), and they would approach me and ask me about where I come from and thanking me for visiting their country, they are thrilled to receive travelers. Some groups of teenage girls could be a little hysterical with happiness and plenty of selfies were taken. But I think some Iranians thought that I would speak Farsi because of my facial features and even saying "No Farsi", they would continue a conversation and I really wish I could understand more than the basics.

Iran ready to facilitate arrival of Afghan medical travelers: minister

→ 1 "For almost the past two years, Afghanistan has promised to host Iran on the technical committees form the two countries, but conditions in that country have not been set yet."

"In the field of medical tourism, in 1398, we registered more than 125,000 foreign patients admitted to Iranian hospitals, of which 60,600 patients, or 48.8%, were Afghan nationals. The important point is that this number of people was not outpatients. They were referred to gynecology, obstetrics and infertility, eye, heart, and orthopedic surgery."

Elsewhere in his remarks, the minister pointed to cultural commonalities that exist between the two nations and quality medical services in Iran as pivotal drivers for attracting Afghan people.

"Due to cultural and linguistic commonalities, Iran is a good destination for Afghan patients and, according to them, Iran serves Afghanistan's medical tourists much better than India. Therefore, Afghanistan is both an important market for our health and medical health tourism sector and we are looking to develop it through our programs. We are trying to fertile the ground in Afghanistan [to host more travelers]."

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

People from the Persian Gulf littoral states, Iraq and Syria as well as Iranian expatriates residing in Canada and Germany constituted the majority of medical travelers to the Islamic Republic, who received plastic, cosmetics, open-heart, and orthopedic surgeries amongst other treatments over the past couple of years.

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



Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Ali-Asghar Mounesan stands in front of an Achaemenid-era (c. 550-330) bas-relief carving in an undated photo.

considerable benefits to international health-care seekers, offering affordable yet quality treatment services. The Islamic Republic has set its goals to exceed its yearly medical travelers to around 2 million in [calendar year] 1404 (March 2025-March 2026).

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.

Iranian cave estimated to date over 63,000 years

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** – Nearly one decade of archaeological surveys at Kaldar cave has concluded that parts of this western Iranian shelter date more than 63,000 years.

"After a decade of studying the cultural evidence yielded from the three seasons of archeological excavations at Kaldar Cave, the recent results show that a Paleolithic layer in the middle of this the cave is more than 63,000 years old," CHTN quoted Iranian archaeologist Behrouz Bazzgir as saying on Sunday.

Kaldar is a key archaeological site that provides evidence of the Middle to Upper Paleolithic transition in Iran. The cave is situated in the northern Khorramabad valley of Lorestan province and at an elevation of 1,290?m above sea level. It measures 16?meters long, 17?meters wide, and seven?meters high. Last year, in one of the significant



archaeological finds of Iranian history, the cave yielded fresh evidence for its Paleolithic residents; including traditions of making [stone] tools related

to Middle Paleolithic and Upper Paleolithic eras.

Excavations at the site in 2014–2015 led to the discovery of cultural remains

generally associated with anatomically modern humans (AMHs) and evidence of a probable Neanderthal-made industry in the basal layers. It also offers an opportunity to study the technological differences between the Mousterian and the first Upper Paleolithic technologies as well as the human behavior in the region.

Last year, archaeologists excavated stone tools and a fragment of a fossilized skull, attributed to Homo sapiens. The cave has also yielded weapon fragments crafted by Neanderthals.

In taxonomy, Homo sapiens is the only extant human species. The name is Latin for "wise man" and was introduced in 1758 by Carl Linnaeus (who is himself also the type specimen). Neanderthals are an extinct species or subspecies of archaic humans in the genus Homo, who lived within Eurasia from circa 400,000 until 40,000 years ago.

Fam tour underway in Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** – A familiarization tour is being held in the southwestern Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari province with the aim of introducing its tourism potentials, CHTN reported.

The five-day event also aims at promoting the province's tourist destinations, natural landscapes, local people and their traditions, provincial tourism chief Mehrdad Javadi said on Monday.

Some 250 people including 20 journalists, photographers, filmmakers, bloggers, and tour leaders started their tour across the province on Saturday, he added.

He also noted that the province has the potential

for investment in the field of tourism, which can lead to an increase in employment rate as well as economic prosperity.

Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari has various unique traditions and rituals relative to the 'tribal' lifestyles. Special forms of music, dance, and clothing are noteworthy. It has considerable potential to become a vibrant tourist attraction because of its changing natural landscape.

The province is also a hub for making wool felt products, majorly of which exported abroad. It is home to some 500 crafters, in over 250 workshops, making handmade felt products.



Three neglected crafts revived in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** – Three fields of handicraft, which were obsolete in the southwestern Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad province, have recently been revived, CHTN reported on Monday.

While 36 fields of handicraft are being practiced by almost 35,000 artisans across the province, more three forgotten fields have been brought back to life, provincial tourism chief Parisa Rad said.

Kilim-Mashteh (a kind of hand-woven kilim), jajim-bafi (a kind of hand-woven floor covering) and chit-bafi (a kind of wicker work) are the revived handicrafts in the province.

Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad province is known for its nomads and nomadic life. Sightseers may live with a nomadic or rural family for a while or enjoy an independent stay and assist them with day-to-day life. It



also opens up an opportunity to feel rustic routines, their agriculture, traditions, arts,

and culture.

Iran exported \$523 million worth of

handicrafts during the past calendar year 1398 (ended March 19). Of the figure, some \$273 million worth of handicrafts were exported officially through customs, and about \$250 million was earned via suitcase trade (allowed for customs-free and tax-free transfer) through various provinces.

Back in May, deputy tourism minister Pouya Mahmoudian noted that due to the outbreak of coronavirus, suitcase exports of handicrafts were completely stopped since the month of Esfand (the last month of the year), and official exports of handicrafts experienced a steep decline."

"Some 295 fields of handicrafts are currently practiced across Iran with more than two million people engaging, majority of whom are women... Handicrafts also play an important role in the economy in our rural villages," she said.

87% of COVID-19 victims in Iran have underlying illnesses, obesity

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — About 87 percent of those who have lost their lives due to COVID-19 in Iran had been diagnosed with obesity and underlying illnesses, Health Minister Saeed Namaki has said.

Referring to fatalities associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, he said that obesity was one of the pre-existing diseases associated with coronavirus deaths, especially patients younger than 50.

About 380,000 deaths occur annually in the country, of which 313,000 are due to non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, respiratory diseases, high blood pressure, and obesity, he stated.

■ **COVID-19 in Iran not controlled yet**

Hossein Erfani, the Health Ministry's director of infectious diseases department, said that the epidemic has not yet reached the level of control in Iran.

It is unlikely to access vaccine until the next year, so the only possible way is to change the lifestyle and social behavior of the public, he added.

■ **'Second and third wave' of coronavirus looming**

Mohammad Reza Shanehsaz, head of the Food and Drug Administration, said in May that the nation needs to prepare for a 'second and third wave' of coronavirus in October and November until a vaccine is developed.

Because of the complexity of the nature of the virus, it is no easy to develop a vaccine



which would turn the tide against the virus, he said, adding, "No specific medicine has been identified for the disease. At the same time, there is no vaccine, but in different countries, including our country, scientific research is being done on its production," he noted.

He went on to say that Iran is among

the top three rankings in the field of coronavirus research projects. "In the field of medicine, all the drugs that so far have been proposed in the world, and raised hope to treat the disease, are produced and studied clinically in the country, and we are taking steps along with the developed countries of the world."

The number of people diagnosed with coronavirus in Iran reached 207,525 on Monday, of whom 9,742 have died and 166,427 recovered so far. Over the past 24 hours, 2,573 new cases of people having the virus have been identified, and 119 died, Health Ministry spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari said.

Monsoon to reach southeastern coast of Iran

ENVIRONMENT **TEHRAN** — The monsoon, which has arrived a week later this year in the southern Indian subcontinent, will soon reach the shores of Sistan-Baluchestan province, southeastern Iran, IRNA news agency reported on Monday.

The onset of the monsoon occurs over the Bay of Bengal in May and after about 40 days in the middle of July, moves toward the southern shores of Sistan-Baluchestan province, Mohammad Reza Salari, head of Chabahar marine meteorological department said.

Signs of Monsoon's arrival first show up with swell (a series of mechanical waves that propagate along the interface between water and air and thus are often referred to as surface gravity waves), he explained.

After the soil is moisturized and if the synoptic conditions are available, the monsoon rains begin, he added.

Based on the long-term models, it is predicted that this year's monsoon rains in the southeast of the country will meet normal and above the normal average, he said.

The Indian Ocean's monsoon winds below from the sea to lands in the summer, which moderates the temperature of the air, especially in the coastal areas, and moisturizes the land, he noted.

He continued that normally, scorching heat hits South Asia during the summers, which leads to a low pressure



on land and high pressure in the neighboring oceans, such as the Indian and Pacific Oceans; so that pressure difference between the two systems causes wet winds from the sea to land.

The summer rainfall is a result of the convergence of wind flow from the sea, in large areas of the Indian subcontinent, Pakistan, southern and southeastern Iran, he stated, adding, the monsoon lasts until September, when the air temperature decreases on land and the synoptic pattern changes, the direction of the wind changes and blows from land to sea.

Monsoon rains in India do not contribute significantly to

the Sistan-Baluchestan rainfall, but in some years the rainfall has met above normal levels. Not all of this season's rains are monsoon, but the rains may be the result of hurricanes in the northern Indian Ocean, he concluded.

The monsoon of South Asia is among several geographically distributed global monsoons. It affects the Indian subcontinent, where it is one of the oldest and most anticipated weather phenomena and an economically important pattern every year from June through September, but it is only partly understood and notoriously difficult to predict. Several theories have been proposed to explain the origin, process, strength, variability, distribution, and general vagaries of the monsoon, but understanding and predictability are still evolving.

The unique geographical features of the Indian subcontinent, along with associated atmospheric, oceanic, and geophysical factors, influence the behavior of the monsoon. Because of its effect on agriculture, on flora and fauna, and on the climates of nations such as Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka — among other economic, social, and environmental effects — the monsoon is one of the most anticipated, tracked, and studied weather phenomena in the region. It has a significant effect on the overall well-being of residents and has even been dubbed the "real finance minister of India".

3 international drug trafficking gangs disbanded in Tehran

1 → Police detections of drugs have increased by 25 percent compared to the same period last year, Rahimi concluded.

■ **International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking**

By resolution 42/112 of 7 December 1987, the General Assembly decided to observe 26 June as the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking as an expression of its determination to strengthen action and cooperation to achieve the goal of an international society free of drug abuse.

Supported each year by individuals, communities, and various organizations all over the world, this global observance aims to raise awareness of the major problem that illicit drugs represent to society.

Recently, the field of addressing the world drug problem has been 'plagued' by misinformation of many kinds.

The theme for the 2020 International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking "Better Knowledge for Better Care" emphasizes the need to improve the understanding of the world drug problem and how in turn, better knowledge will foster greater international cooperation for countering its impact on health, governance and security.

UNODC encourages individuals, non-profit organizations, the private sector and Member States to get involved in its social media campaign to mark this day and invites them to draw on the resources provided in the social media campaign package.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ع

Water level in Lake Urmia rises by 33cm

The level of water in Lake Urmia, northwestern Iran, has increased by 33 centimeters compared to the same time last year, head of the provincial department for the Lake Urmia restoration program in West Azarbaijan province has said.

Currently, the volume of water of the lake is 1.920 billion cubic meters which experienced 250 million cubic meters increase compared to last year which was recorded at 1.250 bcm, ISNA quoted Farhad Sarkhosh as saying on Wednesday.

افزایش ۳۳ سانتی متری وسعت دریاچه ارومیه

مدیر دفتر استانی ستاد احیای دریاچه ارومیه در آذربایجان غربی گفت: سطح آب دریاچه ارومیه نسبت به مدت مشابه سال گذشته ۳۳ سانتی متر افزایش داشته است.

فرهاد سرخوش روز چهارشنبه در گفت و گو با خبرنگار ایسنا گفت: حجم آب فعلی موجود در دریاچه ارومیه یک میلیارد و ۹۲۰ میلیون مترمکعب است. حجم آب دریاچه سال گذشته یک میلیارد و ۲۵۰ میلیون متر مکعب بود که نسبت به سال گذشته ۶۷۰ میلیون مترمکعب افزایش یافته است.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

"eury-"

■ **Meaning:** wide

■ **For example:** The red fox is a *eurytopic* species widespread in the area.

PHRASAL VERB

Hammer something out

■ **Meaning:** to decide on an agreement, contract etc. after a lot of discussion and disagreement:

■ **For example:** Leading oil producers tried to hammer out a deal.

IDIOM

Bring up the rear

■ **Explanation:** someone who brings up the rear is the last person in a group of people who are walking or running

■ **For example:** "The pupils walked calmly down the corridor, with the teacher bringing up the rear."

2020 is our last chance to avert climate catastrophe, says energy chief

Time is running out and the world has a matter of months to avert climate catastrophe, according to the International Energy Agency Chief.

Dr Fatih Birol, IEA executive director, on Thursday announced the agency's new sustainable recovery plan, a three-year roadmap for governments to repair their pandemic-ravaged economies, create millions of jobs and "make 2019 the definitive peak in global emissions".

"This year is the last time we have, if we are not to see a carbon rebound," said IEA executive director, Dr Birol, told The Guardian.

At a press conference, the energy chief said IEA had been determined to have the report ready this month as economies begin to kick-start from the Covid-19 crisis. It is estimated that governments plan to spend \$9 trillion globally in economic recovery packages.

Dr Birol said that governments were facing "hugely consequential decisions" and the right energy policies would be crucial for emissions to permanently decline, and achieve net-zero emissions in 2050.

The Special Report on Sustainable Recovery, with input from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), has three key goals: Boosting global economic growth by 1.1% annually; saving or creating 9 million jobs a year; and reducing annual global energy-related greenhouse gas emissions by a total of 4.5bn tonnes in the three-year period.

Following the plan, IEA says, would also bring benefits for human health and well-being. It would lead to a 5% reduction in air pollution emissions, get electricity to 270m people and create clean-cooking solutions for more than 400m in low-income countries.

The plan tackles six sectors — electricity, transport, industry, buildings, fuels and emerging low-carbon technologies.

To achieve its goals, the recovery plan requires global investment of around \$1 trillion annually over the next three years. IEA suggests that the amount, representing about 0.7% of current global GDP, would come from both public spending and private finance.

"Governments have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reboot their economies and bring a wave of new employment opportunities while accelerating the shift to a more resilient and cleaner energy future," said Dr Birol.

"The plan is not intended to tell governments what they must do. It seeks to show them what they can do."

Dr Birol said the 2008 financial crisis was a critical lesson. Initially there had been a decline in emissions but by 2010, as recovery efforts ramped up, global emissions soared to historic highs.

"What we wanted to do with this report is to avoid that rebound and put the world on a sustainable energy track," he said.

The energy leader said that IEA was "hopeful" there would not be a repeat and in 2020, the world was working with three major competitive advantages.

The price of clean energy tech is much lower - solar, for example, now costs one-fifth of what it was 12 years ago. And with 2020's steep emissions declines, governments have a building block on which they could make significant change. Dr Birol added that governments were also now taking climate challenges more seriously.

In a statement to The Independent, Dr Alison Doig, International Lead at the Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit (ECIU), said: "The IEA makes clear that a sustainable global recovery from Covid-19 is desirable, achievable and affordable, boosting economic growth, creating millions of jobs in areas such as energy efficiency and putting emissions into decline.

"Perhaps the most startling line is that if governments take this path, they can make 2020 the year when the world starts beating climate change as well as coronavirus, with emissions never again rising above 2019 levels and setting a new course to deliver the goals of the Paris Agreement."

IEA analysis found that Covid-19 had a "huge impact" on the energy sector. In 2019, the electricity, oil, gas, coal and biofuels industries directly employed 40m workers around the world.

Dr Birol acknowledged that "unemployment will be a major problem" with three million jobs lost in the energy sector alone and the same number again at risk from the pandemic.

The agency's strategy would see millions of new jobs in retrofitting buildings to improve energy efficiency and grids and renewables in the electricity sector.

WORDS IN THE NEWS

US Treasury to probe O'Neill book

(January 14, 2004)

A book written by Paul O'Neill, a former US Treasury Secretary, has upset the White House because it criticises the President and senior politicians.

The allegations made by Mr O'Neill are that the President was a **bad listener**, that his tax-cutting agenda was being **foisted** on him by **ideologically driven advisors** and that his war against Saddam Hussein was fought **in spite of there being** no evidence that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction.

In response, Mr Bush tried to be **genial** and **statesmanlike**, thanking Mr O'Neill for his years of service and pointing out that **regime change** in Iraq had been President Clinton's policy as well. But behind the scenes the reaction has been **vitriolic**. The Treasury Department, which Mr O'Neill once ran, has begun what is described as an internal inquiry to see whether any of the documents used by the former minister in support of his case have been improperly removed from the archives.

It's likely that the row will **die down** without further action being taken and without great damage to the President but the **episode** is a reminder that not all senior Republicans think Mr Bush has made the right choices at home or abroad.

■ **Words**

a bad listener: someone who doesn't listen attentively to the advice and opinions of others

foisted: forced

ideologically driven advisors: advisors whose actions are governed by a set of ideas and principles

in spite of there being... even though there was...

genial: good-humoured and friendly

statesmanlike: in the manner of an experienced and skilled senior politician

regime change: change to the leadership and system of government

vitriolic: full of hatred and bitterness

die down: become quieter and less intense

episode: event

(Source: BBC)

Hezbollah video shows targets marked for retaliation in Israel

Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance movement has released a video showing that its precision-guided missiles can hit targets anywhere in Israel.

The video, circulated on social media Sunday, showed coordinates of Israeli strategic positions that are within the range of Hezbollah's missiles, with remarks of Hezbollah chief Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah playing in the background.

"Today, we can not only hit the city of Tel Aviv but also, if God wills it and with His help, we can hit very precise targets within Tel Aviv and anywhere in occupied Palestine," Nasrallah can be heard as saying.

The video concluded with the statement "Whatever you do to block the way — it's already over and done with."

Hezbollah was established following the 1982 Israeli invasion and occupation of southern Lebanon.

Since then, the movement has grown into a powerful military force, dealing repeated blows to the Israeli military, including during a 33-day war in July 2006.

Last month, the second-in-command of Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance movement hailed the 2000 liberation of southern Lebanon from the Israeli occupation as a "turning point" in the history of the West Asia.

According to Press TV, Sheikh Naim Qassem said the victory put an end to the Israeli military's invincibility myth and helped strengthen the faith of the young generations in resistance and struggles towards liberating Palestine from the Israeli occupiers.

Israel renews violation of Lebanese sovereignty

The Directorate of Orientation at the Lebanese Army Command stated that an Israeli Fighter violated Lebanese airspace on Monday dawn over the town of Olma al-Shaab and flew over the southern areas before it back towards the Palestinian occupied territories.

That's while "an Israeli military force consisting of 10 elements crossed this morning the technical fence at the site of a Maskaf Aam settlement, opposite the Lebanese Army checkpoint at the entrance to the southern Lebanese town of Adisa in the south and combed the area," the Lebanese National News Agency reported.

The agency added that "two Israeli bulldozers and trucks crossed the fence off the Lebanese Army checkpoint and resumed digging operation alongside the newly developed road in light of the Lebanese army's mobilization.

Israeli warplanes also on Sunday violated Lebanese airspace over the capital, Beirut, and its suburbs, as well as the southern regions.

Dissident Saudi video blogger warned by Canadian police he is a target

Canadian police have warned Saudi Arabian dissident video blogger and activist, Omar Abdulaziz, who is living in exile in Montreal, that he is a "potential target" of officials back home and that he needs to take precautions to protect himself.

Abdulaziz, who had a close association and worked with Jamal Khashoggi, the murdered Saudi dissident and well-known journalist for the Washington Post newspaper, told the British daily newspaper Guardian that he believed he was facing a threat to his safety, and that the Canadian officials had credible information about a possible plan to harm him.

"[The Canadian authorities] received some information regarding my situation that I might be a potential target," Abdulaziz said.

He added, "MbS [Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman] and his group or — I don't know — his team, they want to harm me. They want to do something, but I don't know whether it's assassination, kidnapping, I don't know — but something not OK for sure."

Abdulaziz said it was the first time that he had directly been called by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), which is the country's federal police force.

"They asked me, 'What do you think about it?' I said, 'I'm happy,'" Abdulaziz told the Guardian, laughing. "I feel that I'm doing something. You know, if you're not doing anything that bothers MbS, that means you're not working very well."

The Saudi dissident said he believed that such alleged threats emanated from the ultra-conservative kingdom as a way to stifle dissent, but that he would continue to challenge the ruling Riyadh regime.

"I don't want to tell you that I'm scared. I'm not, honestly. But you have to take some precautions to be ready," Abdulaziz pointed out.

Resistance News

Israeli police evacuate areas around Aqsa Mosque for settlers' march

➔ 1 Local sources said that the Israeli police arrested al-Aqsa Mosque's guard Abed al-Karim Qa'oud and transferred him to a nearby detention center for interrogation.

Five Palestinian women identified as Shefaa Abu Ghalia, Aya Abu Nab, Aya Ma'touq, Maram al-Natsha, and Mayar al-Natsha were also assaulted and arrested at the site.

Earlier in the day, Israeli police forces escorted dozens of Jewish settlers into al-Aqsa Mosque where they performed provocative rituals while restrictions were tightened on Muslim worshippers entering the site.

■ **Scores of Jewish settlers storm al-Aqsa Mosque**
In another event, dozens of Jewish settlers on Sunday forced their way into al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem under police escort.

The Islamic Awqaf Authority reported that about 60 Israeli settlers, accompanied by armed police officers, broke into al-Aqsa Mosque through al-Maghareba Gate.

The settlers carried out provocative tours inside al-Aqsa compound before they left the site hours later.

Al-Aqsa Mosque is exposed to daily break-ins by Jewish settlers and police forces in the morning and the afternoon except on Fridays and Saturdays.

Trump says he would consider meeting Maduro

U.S. President Donald Trump says he would consider meeting Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and indicated he is not entirely confident in the country's opposition leader.

A power struggle has been raging in Venezuela since Juan Guaido declared himself acting president in January 2019 in a bid to overthrow Maduro, who started a second term following elections boycotted by the opposition and internationally dismissed as fraudulent.

Nearly 60 countries - including the United States - recognized Guaido, but China and Russia backed Maduro - whose regime has been hit by punishing sanctions from Washington.

But despite tensions, Trump told news site Axios he would be open to a meeting.

"I would maybe think about that ... Maduro would like to meet. And I'm never opposed to meetings - you know, rarely opposed to meetings," the president said.

"I always say, you lose very little with meetings. But at this moment, I've turned them down."

■ No confidence

Ties between Washington and Maduro's



socialist government frayed even further in May when Venezuela detained 52 alleged mercenaries, including two retired mem-



bers of the U.S. military, accusing them of orchestrating a maritime "invasion" with American support.

Washington denied any involvement.

But despite his government's consistent backing of the opposition leader, Axios reported during the interview Trump "indicated he doesn't have much confidence in Guaido".

The president said he was "firmly against what's going on in Venezuela," but - referring to the recognition of Guaido - added: "I was okay with it ... I don't think it was very meaningful one way or the other."

The interview came as the White House was handling the fallout from explosive claims in a book by Trump's former national security adviser John Bolton, who was a key player on many diplomatic fronts.

According to excerpts published by Axios, Bolton wrote that Trump "thought Guaido was 'weak' as opposed to Maduro, who was 'strong'."

The president also called Guaido "the Beto O'Rourke of Venezuela", according to the Bolton excerpt, referring to the Democratic presidential candidate who dropped out early in the 2020 U.S. presidential race and was repeatedly mocked by Trump.

Trump slammed Bolton as a "nut job" who may be the "dumbest human being on Earth" over his backing of the U.S.-led Iraq war in 2003.

Coronavirus pandemic still accelerating: WHO chief



The novel coronavirus pandemic is still accelerating and its effects will be felt for decades, the World Health Organization's director-general told an online conference Monday.

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a virtual health forum organized by Dubai authorities that the greatest threat facing the world is not the virus itself, but "the lack of global solidarity and global leadership".

"We cannot defeat this pandemic with a divided world," he said.

"The politicization of the pandemic has exacerbated it. None of us is safe until all of us are safe."

According to AFP, the WHO warned last week of a new and dangerous phase of the coronavirus pandemic, with people

tiring of lockdowns despite the disease's rapid spread.

The COVID-19 illness, which has now killed more than 465,000 people and infected almost nine million worldwide, is surging in the Americas and parts of Asia, even as Europe starts to ease restrictive measures.

Lockdowns imposed to halt the spread of the virus have caused crippling economic damage, but the WHO says the pandemic still poses a major threat.

"The pandemic is still accelerating," Tedros told the virtual conference.

"We know that the pandemic is much more than a health crisis, it is an economic crisis, a social crisis, and in many countries a political crisis," he said.

Dutch police detain 400 after protest over coronavirus restrictions



Police in The Hague said they detained some 400 people on Sunday after demonstrators refused to leave a protest against the Dutch government's social-distancing measures put in place to halt the spread of the coronavirus.

Several thousand protesters had gathered in the Malieveld area in The Hague, close to the Dutch seat of government, even though the rally had been banned by the municipality, Reuters reported.

"We have detained some 400 people today. A large number of them have been since let go," the police said on Twitter.

The authorities had allowed a brief protest to go ahead in the afternoon before asking demonstrators to leave.

Protesters were wearing T-shirts that read: "Stop the lockdown" and carried banners demanding that the Dutch rule to keep a distance of 1.5 meters from one another be lifted.

Police eventually ended the demonstration and detained a group of 400 people who refused to leave.

The Hague Mayor Johan Remkes said the demonstration was banned because authorities had information that "trouble-makers" from all over the Netherlands, including groups of known football hooligans, were planning to descend on The Hague. "This has nothing to do with protesting or the right to freedom of speech. This group was deliberately trying to disturb public order," Remkes said in a statement.

3 killed, 23 injured in U.S. anti-racist protests

➔ 1 Some of the same businesses on the street, which had just finished repairing damage from last month, are now left with shattered windows from the shooting.

Multiple 911 callers said the shooting continued over the block, and people scattered. Minneapolis police spokesman John Elder told CNN affiliate WCCO.

A witness said at least two groups of people were shooting at each other. At first, the gunfire sounded like fireworks, witness Erik Thompson told CNN. But it kept going.

"We started hearing whizzing by our ears, and it was the bullets coming towards us," he said.

Thompson said he was standing near two police officers on patrol, who immediately drew their weapons and took up a tactical position behind a vehicle before proceeding to the location of the shooting.

Fred Hwang, the manager at a restaurant near where the shooting occurred, told CNN the gunfire started at 12:27 a.m. because a bartender was printing a receipt with that time stamp when gunshots were heard just outside the restaurant.

Hwang, who was outside the restaurant and saw the shooting, said at least two groups of people were firing weapons at each other.

■ As Protests Continue, Coronavirus Cases spike in many U.S. States

As protests against racial discrimination continue in many American cities, President Donald Trump returned to the campaign trail in Tulsa, Oklahoma. As VOA's Kane Farabaugh reports, the desire to get back to a sense of normalcy across the country is tempered by a spike of COVID-19 cases in many U.S. states.

A surge of Covid-19 cases in pockets across the U.S. is raising alarms that a second wave of coronavirus has emerged.

Locals pelt U.S. convoy with stones in Syria

In a show of seething resentment over the presence of American troops in their region, dozens of people in Syria's northeastern province of Hasakah have blocked a road, throwing stones at a U.S. military convoy and forcing it to leave the area.

Syria's official news agency SANA reported that the US convoy was confronted by residents of Faris Kabir village, which lies in the al-Qahtaniyah subdistrict of the predominantly Kurdish-inhabited Qamishli district, on Monday morning as it sought to make its way through the region.

SANA added that groups of locals threw stones at the soldiers, forcing the convoy to "go back to where it came from." No one was hurt in the confrontation.

A video published on online video-sharing platform YouTube showed several American military vehicles flying US flags parked on an unpaved road, as men and boys engulfed them amid the smoke of burning tires.

There was no immediate comment from the U.S. military.

Since late October 2019, the United States has been redeploying troops to the oil fields controlled by Kurdish forces in eastern Syria, in a reversal of President Donald Trump's earlier order to withdraw all troops from the Arab country.

The Pentagon claims the move aims to "protect" the fields and facilities from possible attacks by Daesh. That claim came although Trump had earlier suggested that Washington sought economic interests in controlling the oil fields.

Syria, which has not authorized the presence of the U.S. military in its territory, says Washington is "plundering" the country's oil.

The presence of U.S. forces in eastern Syria has particularly irked the civilians, and local residents have on several occasions stopped American military convoys entering the region.

■ SDF militants' arms depot explodes in Hasakah

Separately on Sunday, a weapon storage facility belonging to militants affiliated with the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) exploded in the town of Rmelan.

SANA, citing local sources requesting not to be named, reported that the explosion was followed by a series of blasts, leaving scores of the U.S.-backed militants dead or injured.

Security conditions are reportedly deteriorating in the areas controlled by the SDF in Syria's Hasakah and Dayr al-Zawr provinces amid ongoing raids and arrests of civilians by the U.S.-sponsored militants.

Locals argue that SDF's constant raids and arrest campaigns have generated a state of frustration and instability, severely affecting their businesses and livelihood.

Residents accuse the U.S.-backed militants of stealing crude oil and failing to spend money on service sectors.

Local councils affiliated with the SDF have also been accused of financial corruption. They are said to be embezzling funds provided by donors, and not meeting the people's primary needs.

Russia, U.S. hold arms control talks as key pact's expiry looms

The United States and Russia have kicked off two-day arms control talks, eight months before a key nuclear weapons pact is to expire.

Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov on Monday met U.S. Special Envoy Marshall Billingslea in Austria's capital, Vienna, al Jazeera reported.

The New START agreement, in force for a decade but due to end in February, is the last remaining nuclear arms control deal between Washington and Moscow.

The two countries are estimated to have about 90 percent of the world's nuclear weapons. New START's looming expiration has evoked concerns about a renewed arms race.

The U.S. has said its bilateral arms control agreements



with Russia are outdated and that it wants China to be included in any future agreements on nuclear weapons, even as Beijing has repeatedly said it is not interested in joining. Billingslea said that China was a "no-show" at the two-day Vienna talks on Monday, posting a photo on Twitter of Chinese flags at empty chairs at the negotiating table.

"Beijing still hiding behind 'Great Wall of Secrecy' on its crash nuclear build-up, and so many other things. We will proceed with Russia, notwithstanding," Billingslea said in a statement.

A Russian security expert, Dmitry Suslov, told state media before Monday's meeting that the U.S. appears unlikely to prolong the New START agreement without bringing China to the table.

Dragan Skocic satisfied with Iran league resumption

S P O R T S T E H R A N — Dragan Skocic, head coach of Iran football national team? is happy with the decision of the Football Federation of the Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) on the resumption of the league games.

The Croatian coach returned to Tehran on Sunday after more than three months. He was in his hometown during the coronavirus pandemic.

Skocic had a meeting with Mehdi Mohammad Nabi, the secretary general of the FFIRI and Mehdi Kharati, head of national teams committee, expressing his concerns over the situation of the national team and asked for friendly international matches for the team.

At the meeting, Skocic defended the decision of the Iranian football federation and the league organization to hold the remaining matches of the Iran Professional League (IPL).

He believes that if the league is canceled, the players who are playing in domestic teams, would have to come to the national team's training camp with nearly seven months without playing an official game due to the coronavirus-enforced shutdown.

The Iran Professional League will resume on Wednesday and Skocic has announced that he would closely monitor the competitions with his staff since Iran national football team prepare for the 2022 World Cup qualifiers.

Iran will host Hong Kong on October 7, 2020 and will travel to Cambodia five days



later. The "Persian Leopards" then will face Bahrain and Iraq on November 11 and 16 respectively based on the new match dates scheduled by the Asian Football Confed-

eration (AFC).

The Iranian football federation officials have made promises to the national team head coach to provide at least one friend-

ly match (probably against Oman) before the match against Hong Kong which will be Skocic's first experience on the Iranian national team bench.

Iran's Kazemi into FIBA Dunk of the Decade final four



S P O R T S T E H R A N — Arsalan Kazemi of Iran qualified for semifinals round of FIBA's Dunk of the Decade, after beating the Philippines Gabe Norwood.

Kazemi advanced to semis after garnering 60.02% of the vote beating Norwood by 20 percent. His dunk came against Greece in the 2016 FIBA Olympic Qualifying Tournament.

The other Last Four matchup pits Latvia's Kristaps Porzingis versus Angola's Carlos Morais.

FIBA has launched an interactive Dunk of the Decade bracket, asking fans to help in selecting the best slam dunk from its national team competitions from the past 10 years.

Featuring the most memorable dunks of the period between 2010 and 2020, the voting includes a total of 32 entries from a wide range of global and continental competitions, with all FIBA regions represented.

The voting runs from June 10 to 28 and will see dunks from Africa, Americas, Asia & Oceania and Europe compete against each other in regional conferences before converging for the Final Four round.

The bracket will culminate with the Final, which is set to conclude at 11:59 PM GMT on Sunday, June 28.

Fans participating in the voting will have a chance to win an official FIBA ball, with the winner of the contest to be announced following the conclusion of the bracket.

Teresa Perales wants to win medals for her son

It's almost impossible to sum up the career of an athlete like Teresa Perales and do it justice.

Tokyo 2020 will be the Spanish swimmer's sixth Paralympic Games and it is a feat she never thought would've been possible when she took up the sport 25 years ago. She originally took up swimming after developing neuropathy -- a disease that affects the nervous system resulting in the loss of the use of her legs within three months.

"I had always practiced other sports like karate, I didn't learn swimming when I was a child," the Zaragoza-born athlete told Tokyo 2020.

"So, you can imagine how I was at the very beginning. But after a few days I enjoyed it so much and realised I wanted to swim every day of my life.

"What I didn't know was that I was going to [go to the Paralympic Games] six times."

Now 44, Perales, who is Spain's most decorated Paralympian with 26 Paralympic medals, continues to have the goal of bringing home medals but she wants to win them for a much different reason.

"I want to win some medals to give as a present to my son. He deserves it," she said. "No matter when it happens, this is still my biggest dream."

■ Equaling an Olympic greats record

There are two special moments that come to Perales



mind when she is asked about her proudest moments as a Paralympian. The first was when she entered the London Olympic Stadium for the London 2012 Paralympic Games Opening Ceremony. The then 36-year-old was the flag bearer for Spain.

"I remember the lights, the sounds, the athletes, the flags but, what I especially remember is the moment I saw my little two-year-old cheering for me from the crowd," Perales said.

"I cried."

However, London was also special for another reason. Perales equaled the achievement of an Olympic swimmer who is considered one of the all-time greats -- Michael Phelps. The athlete won gold in the S5 100m freestyle -- her third consecutive gold in the event -- to win her 22nd Paralympic medal, equaling Phelps Olympic medal haul.

Her achievement made her a trending topic on Twitter. In an interview with Reuters Perales joked: "Phelps must be amazed if he sees Twitter, wondering 'who's this Teresa Perales, what has she done?'".

Back in Spain, newspapers across the country excitedly drew comparisons between the pair. It was the first time the athlete had seen her picture alongside Phelps.

However, while Phelps went on to retire after the Rio 2016 Games with 28 Olympic medals, Perales is continuing on with hopes to eclipse the most decorated Olympian in history when she takes to the pool at Tokyo 2020 next summer.

After her gold in the 50m backstroke alongside three silvers at Rio, which took her total medal tally to 26, it means Perales is just three medals shy of surpassing the Olympic great.

"I tried to repeat this again in Rio, but I couldn't. We will have to see what happens in Tokyo," the Olympic Order recipient said.

(Source: Paralympic.org)

AFC President endorses historic Australia/New Zealand bid

Shaikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa, the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) President today declared his support for the historic and technically superior bid by Australia and New Zealand to host the FIFA Women's World Cup in 2023.

The FIFA Council will decide on the hosts on June 25, 2020 between Australia/New Zealand and Colombia following the decision today by Japan FA to withdraw from the process in another impressive show of Asian football unity.

Shaikh Salman said: "On behalf of the AFC -- and the Asian football family -- I will be supporting the Australia/New Zealand bid to host the FIFA Women's World Cup in 2023 - and am sure that I will be supported by all the AFC's FIFA Council Members.

"Not only is this a historic cross-Confederation bid, with our close friends and neighbours from Oceania, but most importantly, this is the most technically impressive of the bids that the Council must choose from on June 25 and we must be guided by the experts.

"The FIFA Evaluation report could not have been clearer on the outstanding sporting infrastructure that will allow the players to perform at their optimum level and are in keeping with the ever-growing

profile of this world-class competition."

"The report also praises the general infrastructure in the two extremely well-connected and modern countries as well as the 'commercially favourable proposition' of the bid which has the financial and public commitment of the Governments of both countries -- and we thank both Prime Ministers for their continued support.

"Both Australia and New Zealand have a long history of working together on domestic, regional and international events and delivering them in world class venues to the highest possible standard and efficiency.

"Add to this, the unique nature of the cross-Confederation bid, the fact that this is the first time the Southern Hemisphere will have hosted the tournament and the benefits for the development of the women's game in Asia-Pacific that this united bid would unlock, then the proposition looks to be the only available choice.

"Asia has, in the last six years, presented a united front and its solidarity has been admired throughout the world of football and again, I am certain, that we will also join forces in Asia through its FIFA Council Members to support the Australia/New Zealand bid."



"I must also thank the Japan FA for their interest in hosting this competition and most of all for their decision to put the best interests of Asian football first by deciding to unite behind the Australia/New Zealand bid.

"The FIFA Evaluation Report praised the quality of the Japan bid and placed it only fractionally behind Australia/New Zealand and considerably ahead of the other bidder, Colombia.

"The Japan FA, along with the Korea FA who withdrew from the process last December, have both demonstrated that Asia continues to have the passion, the desire and the ability to host the biggest global tournaments -- as Qatar will prove with the FIFA World Cup in 2022.

"The Japan FA have also shown, through their actions, that the unity of Asian football is vital and all of Asia applauds them for this approach which will all now lead to a much deserved success of the Australia/New Zealand proposal.

"The AFC wishes Australia and New Zealand the very best of luck in the vote and urges the rest of Asia as well as the rest of the world to vote for this bid -- for the good of women's football."

(Source: the-afc)

Iran Volleyball Super League to be held with 12 teams

S P O R T S T E H R A N — Director of Competition and Events of Iran volleyball federation Shahram Azimi has announced that a total of 12 teams will take part at the new season of Iran Volleyball Super League.

According to him, the First Division competition will also be held with 19 participants in the men's division.

The Islamic Republic of Iran Volleyball Federation (IRIVF) has recently postponed the league competitions due to second wave of coronavirus.

The league was originally scheduled for July but Azimi has predicted that the competition will start in September.

The Iranian Super League (ISL) is a professional volleyball league in Iran at the top of the Iranian volleyball league system. It was founded in 1975 as the Pasargard Cup, but after the Iranian Revolution it was renamed to the first Division. In 1997 the league system was revamped and the Iranian Super League was established.

Paykan Tehran has won the most titles in the new Super League with 12 titles.

Persepolis defeat Shahr Khodro in friendly

IRNA — Persepolis football team defeated Shahr Khodro 3-1 in a friendly match on Sunday.

Ali Alipour (two goals) and Omid Alishah scored for Persepolis and Saeid Sadeghi was on target for Shahr Khodro in Tehran's Shahid Kazemi Stadium.

The match was held as part of preparation for the Iran Professional League (IPL) resumption.

The IPL will resume on Wednesday with a match between Foolad and Esteghlal.

Persepolis sit top of the table with 47 points, 10 points above Sepahan and Tractor.

Vasco Evora appointed Sepahan goalkeeping coach

Tasnim — Vasco José Pedrosa Évora has been named as new goalkeeping coach of Iranian football team Sepahan.

The 41-year-old Portuguese coach flew to Isfahan Monday night to finalize his contract.



Evora's contract will run until the end of the season. He has already worked at Portuguese clubs Arouca, Belenenses SAD, Sporting B and Leiria.

Evora also was goalkeeping coach of Burkina Faso national football team in 2016.

Iran Professional League will resume on Wednesday with a match between Foolad and Esteghlal.

Persepolis sit top of the table with 47 points, 10 points above Sepahan and Tractor.

August restart for Bahrain 2019-20 season

Bahrain Football Association (BFA) has announced that the 2019-20 season will resume in August after more than 90 days of stoppage due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The BFA competitions committee will reschedule the remaining seven rounds in the top flight with Al Hidd leading the table on 28 points, two ahead of Al Muharraq after 11 rounds.

In addition to the remaining Bahraini Premier League matches, a new date will be also scheduled for the final of the King's Cup between Al Muharraq and Al Hidd.

The BFA also announced that the 2020-2021 season will kick-off in mid-October.

(Source: the-afc)

VAR not being used correctly, says Barca coach Setien

The Video Assistant Referee (VAR) system is not being used correctly in La Liga, Barcelona manager Quique Setien said following Real Madrid's controversial win at Real Sociedad.

Madrid beat Sociedad 2-1 to climb above Barcelona at the top of La Liga but the home side were aggrieved because they had a goal ruled out by VAR for offside and Karim Benzema's winner stood after he appeared to control the ball with his arm.

"There are things that we cannot control and that do not depend on us. Everybody saw what happened in Anoeta and everyone will draw their own conclusions," Setien told reporters ahead of Tuesday's match against Athletic Bilbao.

"It's understandable that we think why there are some actions that are reviewed, the referee himself reviews them and they don't do the same in other plays.

"They do it on some matches and in some others (they don't). So you could really think that (VAR) is not being used correctly." Setien said controversies were part of football.

"We've been here for many years and this doesn't change. It's always the same, the controversy will always be there," he added.

"VAR is a tool that can make us better, but we have to use it to have a clearer view of reality."

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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Justice puts everything in its place, and liberality brings out things from a special direction. Justice is a statesman who gives everyone his right, and liberality is a habit belonging to one person only. Therefore, justice is worthier.

Imam Ali (AS)

Mohammad-Mehdi Dadman appointed new director of Art Bureau

A R T TEHRAN — Mohammad-Mehdi Dadman, the deputy director of the Islamic Ideology Dissemination Organization (IIDO), was appointed the new director of the Art Bureau, the organization announced on Monday. The Art Bureau is affiliated with the IIDO, a major organization that promotes Islamic culture and art under the auspices of Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.



Mohammad-Mehdi Dadman, the new director of the Art Bureau, in an undated photo. (Mehrzad Vakili)

The 32-year-old Dadman is a graduate of industrial engineering from Sharif University of Technology. He is currently a student at the Meshkat Islamic Sciences Seminary.

He is the son Rahman Dadman, who served as the minister of roads and transportation, under president Mohammad Khatami from January 14, 2001 until May 18, 2001 when he died in an air crash.

In the decree IIDO director Hojjatoleslam Mohammad Qomi issued to appoint the new director of the Art Bureau, he pointed to remarks by the founder of Islamic Republic, Imam Khomeini, on the pure Islam of Prophet Muhammad (S) and said, "The sole art that is satisfactory to the Quran is that of the promoter of the pure Islam of Prophet Muhammad (S), Islam of Imams (AS), Islam of the poor, Islam of the barefooted, Islam of those who have been the target of oppression during the bitter shameful history of deprivation."

"An art is fine and pure that lashes the modern capitalism and cruel Communism and is the destroyer of the Islam of welfare and luxury, the Islam of eclecticism, Islam of laxity and baseness, Islam of the callous rich and, in one phrase, the American Islam," he added.

Dadman replaced Mohsen Momeni-Sharif who held the position from May 2010.

Armenian publishing house buys rights to Persian novel "His Ego"

CULTURE TEHRAN — Armenia's Darak Publishing House in Yerevan has purchased the rights for the Armenian translation of Iranian writer Reza Amirkhani's novel "His Ego".

The Dayereye Mina (Blue Circle) Literary Agency in Tehran has sold the rights to the Armenian publisher.

Amir-Khani has interwoven contemporary history and the process of Iran's urbanization into this novel which chronicles the life of the protagonist, Ali Fattah, who was born into a well-established family in Tehran.

The book has been published by Sureh-Mehr Publications first and later by Ofoq Publications in Tehran.

"His Ego" has been translated into several languages including Arabic, Russian and Turkish.

Amirkhani is also the author of the bestselling novel "Salvation", which is about the consequences of urban development for a young couple that lives in Tehran.

"A Half of One-Sixth of Pyongyang", "The Good Smell of Oil" and "Ermia" are among Amirkhani's noteworthy credits.

DEFC doc to chronicle bus transit history in Tehran

A R T TEHRAN — The Documentary and Experimental Film Center (DEFC) plans to produce a documentary that will study the 100 year-long history of public transit by bus in Tehran.

"Transit by bus has made great changes in the public culture of the country. However, this documentary will not only view the historical course of bus transit in Tehran, but also will show the people's behaviors towards the vehicle," director Nima Mahdian said in a press release published by the DEFC.

"Transit by bus was one of the few modern innovations over the past century that people from all walks of life have been using, and the Tehran Bus Company was considered the largest company in West Asia with about 17,000 employees," he said.

"I wanted to have a comic outlook in the documentary, but officials at the Central Council of DEFC asked for a documentary in its usual meaning. This is why I needed additional sources from archives and that was a difficult task since the sources were scattered among many different organizations," he said.

"The team has been working on the project for about five months to collect more information from different organizations such as the IRIB and the National Library and Archives of Iran," he added.

"The project had begun with several interviews, but it was halted due to the outbreak of the coronavirus in the country. We will begin the project soon and plan to attend the 14th Cinema Verite, Iran's major international festival for documentary cinema, with the documentary," he added.



One of the early buses used by the Tehran Bus Company in the public transit system.

Palm Springs ShortFest impressed by Iran's "Funfair"



"Funfair" by Iranian director Kaveh Mazaheri won the special mention in the international competition of the Palm Springs International ShortFest in the U.S.

A R T TEHRAN — "Funfair", a co-production between Iran and Canada won a special mention at the Palm Springs International ShortFest in the U.S. city east of Los Angeles in California, the organizers announced on Sunday.

Directed by Kaveh Mazaheri, "Funfair" was screened in the international competition of the event. It is about Majid, a young financially struggling man who comes up with a ploy in order to better the life of his wife Sarah.

The award for best international short went to the Norwegian film "The Tongues" directed by Marja Bal Nango and Ingir Bal.

"Matriochkas", a co-production between Belgium and France directed

by Béangère McNeese, won the Greater Palm Springs CVB Best of the Festival Award.

"The Fabric of You" directed by Josephine Lohar Self from the UK was named best animated short, while

"The Heart Still Hums" directed by Savanah Leaf and Taylor Russell from USA was picked as best documentary short.

The award for Best Live-Action Short Over 15 Minutes was presented to "Birth Right" by Israeli director Inbar Horeh and "Dummy" by Lithuanian director Laurynas Bareisa won the award for Best Live-Action Short 15 Minutes and Under.

"Tattoo" and "Exam" by Iranian filmmakers also contended for the festival's Young Cineastes Award. None of them could win the honor.

Chekhov among bestselling foreign authors in Iran: Maxim Gorky Literature Institute CEO

CULTURE TEHRAN — Vadim Vladimirovich Polonsky, the director of the Maxim Gorky Literature Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences, has said that Russian writer Anton Chekhov is one of the bestselling foreign authors in Iran.

He made the remarks in a message submitted to "One Week with Chekhov", an online program organized by Iran's Book City Institute in collaboration with Russia's Russkiy Mir Foundation to celebrate the 160th birthday anniversary of Anton Chekhov.

He said that the institute warmly welcomes the cultural programs arranged for the weeklong webinar.

He called Chekhov one of the bestselling foreign authors in Iran. Over two million copies of his books have been sold over the past century and his plays have been staged across the country.

He said that Chekhov's popularity lies in the inseparable unity observed in his works.

He said that in Chekhov's works spirituality and materiality, life and immortality are not separated from one another and that they are all placed next to one another in an inseparable unity.

Polonsky said that Chekhov recreates life in its high perfection and that is why his books are quite understandable for readers from different cultures and in different eras.

He also hoped that cultural cooperation between Iran and Russia would continue and increase in the future. A number of Iranian and Russian experts on Chekhov are attending the webinar which opened on June 21.

Articles as well as the audio and video files are being presented on the webinar.

According to the Book City Institute deputy director Ali-

"Nasser" featuring "essence of Islamic Revolution music" released



Cover of Iranian composer Mohammadreza Aliqoli's album "Nasser".

A R T TEHRAN — The Art Bureau of the Islamic Ideology Dissemination Organization has released a symphonic poem album named "Nasser" that the bureau describes as the essence of the music that is satisfactory to the government after the victory of the Islamic Revolution.

The collection has been composed by Mohammadreza Aliqoli, who has previously composed the acclaimed albums "Song of the Earth", "So Close, So Far" and "The Bird of Imagination".

"Nasser" can be deemed the essence of the Islamic Revolution music. We can recollect the memories of the past few decades with these few minutes of music. We can remember all the bright lines of the martyrs' wills. We can recall the wrinkles on the foreheads of those who survived from the caravan of the martyrs. We can remember all the pain, epics,

hopes, wounds and victories of this land with "Nasser," the Art Bureau has written in an introduction to the album.

"This collection is one of the most valuable and powerful works in master Mohammadreza Aliqoli's career. A work that, despite a world full of absurd tastes, finds music pure in spirituality and has something new for all people and the world," the introduction added.

The album's title refers to Nasser Sharareh, a friend of Aliqoli's who was martyred during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war.

Aliqoli has composed the album in memory of Nasser, to whom the collection has been dedicated.

The album begins with a track named "Introduction" and continues with "The Beginning", "Amazement", "Peace", "Martyrdom", "Victory" and lastly "The Finale".

Asghar Mohammadkhani, Chekhov created a new style in story writing and playwrighting.

"His letters also enjoy a high value. His works were praised by his fellow writers Leo Tolstoy and Maxim Gorky. He is considered one of the most significant authors of Russia and has resurrected the daily life of people of his time in his books," he said.

He added that Iranian writers and playwrights such as Mohammad-Ali Jamalzadeh, Sadeq Hedayat, Simin Daneshvar, Hushang Golshiri and Akbar Raadi have also been inspired by Chekhov's books.

Chekhov (1860-1904) is a Russian playwright and master of the modern short story. His best plays and short stories lack complex plots and neat solutions.

"The Seagull", "The Cherry Orchard", "The Duel", "The Bear", "Uncle Vanya" and "The Three Sisters" are among his noteworthy credits.

Khazab is the translator of "Inside the Jihad: My Life with Al Qaeda", the memoirs of the Belgian spy of Moroccan origin Omar Nasiri.

Nasiri infiltrated into Al-Qaeda from 1994 to 2000, attending training camps in Afghanistan and passing information to the UK and French intelligence services.

"Life under Daesh" published in Tehran

CULTURE TEHRAN — "Life under Daesh" has recently been published by Shahid Kazemi Publications in Tehran.

The book has been compiled by Iranian scholar Vahid Khazab.

This might be a different book written about the crisis in Syria and the existence

of Daesh (ISIS). It gives an insight into the bitter life in the capital of the ISIS terrorists in Syria.

The book is composed of three chapters, the first of which recounts the memories by Samer, a Syrian man who joined ISIS to fight against the Bashar Assad government.

He talks about battles against the Assad

army in his hometown Raqqa when it was occupied by the ISIS terrorists and the pain his people suffered all these years.

In its second chapter, the book also narrates a BBC war journalist's memories of the war between the Kurds and the ISIS terrorists. The third chapter features interviews with two ISIS members.