



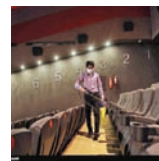
Iran won't surrender to bullying **2**



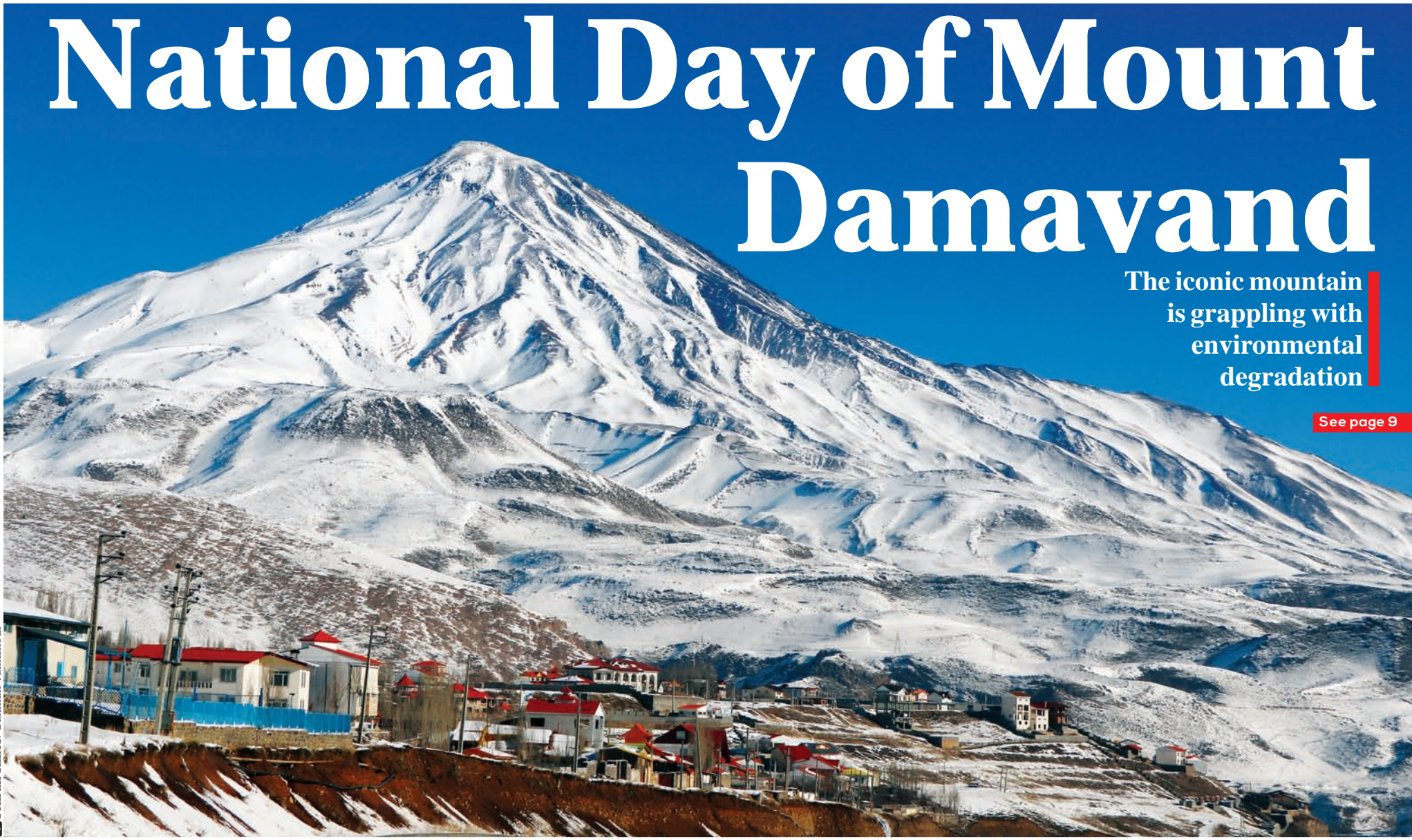
Hamas calls for 'armed struggle' to liberate West Bank from Israeli occupation **10**



Iran volleyball coach to be appointed until September: Davarzani **11**



Fears of coronavirus rebound prompt Iran to ponder new limits on cultural activities **12**



© Tehran Times/ Bahman Vakhshour

National Day of Mount Damavand

The iconic mountain is grappling with environmental degradation

See page 9

Natanz incident causing no work stoppage, slowdown at facility

TEHRAN — The Atomic Energy Organization of Iran says an incident hitting the Natanz nuclear facility Thursday has caused no stoppage or slowdown of enrichment, because the affected shed was actually under construction and not part of the enrichment process yet.

Behrouz Kamalvandi, the spokesman for the AEOI, made the remarks in an interview on Thursday evening regarding the incident that is currently under investigation for causing material damage to the inactive shed that is located in an open area of the Natanz site. **→2**

Iran-EAEU trade exceeds \$2.4b since preferential trade agreement

TEHRAN — The value of trade between Iran and the members of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) reached \$2.418 billion since the implementation of the preferential trade agreement on October 27, 2019, the spokesman of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) announced. **→4**

Biden pulls together 600 of lawyers as a bulwark against election trickery

U.S. Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden said that his party has assembled a group of 600 lawyers and thousands of other people to prepare for possible "chicanery" ahead of November's election. **→10**



ARTICLE

Salman Parviz
Journalist

Post-war reconstruction plans for Libya?

An assessment trip is planned within two weeks by Turkish banks and companies on how to rebuild post-war Libya and secure its energy infrastructure. People familiar with the plan informed Reuters. Turkish state lenders plan to help set up Libya's banking system and assist in organizing payment channels through Turkey for key Libyan imports.

«Separately, a meeting between Libyan business heads and Turkish manufacturers of food, medicine, and other goods is expected to be rescheduled «soon» after a coronavirus-related delay,» said Mur-taza Karanfil, head of the Turkey-Libya business council at the Foreign Economic Relations Board of Turkey.

Pundits believe that Libya is one of the most important crises to watch for in 2020 because of Russia and Turkey's involvement in a country endowed with Africa's largest oil reserves.

Turkey is supporting Tripoli repel a 15-month assault by renegade general Khalifa Haftar. According to agency reports, Turkish drones were used to back up militias aligned with UN-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA), inflicting heavy losses in early June prompting Haftar's forces to retreat. The renegade general declared early June that he was ready to stop fighting and enter talks. Haftar announced a ceasefire in Cairo in the presence of Egyptian ally, President Abdul Fattah el-Sisi.

There were no representatives of (GNA) or its main backers, Turkey, and Qatar during the announcement.

Worth mentioning is that Jens Stoltenberg, head of NATO military alliance in an interview early May, commented that Turkey remains an important ally, and NATO is ready to support GNA, locking horns between Russia and NATO allies. Libya, after all, is minutes away from major NATO surveillance and reconnaissance installations in southern Italy.

Analysts say a ceasefire in Libya will depend on whether Russia and Turkey can reach an agreement first. **→7**

Health Ministry to promote Iranian lifestyle based on traditional medicine

TEHRAN — The Ministry of Health's department of Iranian traditional medicine has signed a memorandum of understanding with five executive bodies for the development of a culture of cultivation and consumption of medicinal plants, IRNA reported on Friday.

The memorandum was signed between the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Interior, Iran University of Medical Sciences, the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology, the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance.

Mohammad Reza Shams-Ardakani, director of the department of Iranian traditional medicine at Ministry of Health, said that the establishment of traditional health centers, enhanced cooperation to promote a healthy lifestyle based on the traditional medicine,

and flourishing of health tourism for Persian traditional medicine are among the important goals of the MOU.

There are 56 health centers and clinics offering Iranian traditional medicine services in the country.

In July 2019, Javad Mirarab an official with the Ministry of Agriculture, said that medicinal plants are cultivated on some 188,000 hectares of lands in Iran.

He also said that exports of the aforesaid medicinal plants brought \$450 million for Iran last year, and saffron with a value of \$325 million constituted the largest share of exports.

Meanwhile, head of the natural products department at Food and Drug Administration Mahnaz Khanavi said that natural and herbal medicines constitute 4 percent of the total amount of medicines used in the country. **→9**

U.S. creates force to protect monuments amid anti-racism protests

By staff & agencies

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security announce a special new task force to protect historic monuments across the country, some of which have come under attack for glorifying the country's racist past.

Acting Homeland Security Secretary Chad Wolf said in a statement that he was positioning "rapid deployment teams" around the country to protect monuments and statues during the July 4th Independence Day holiday, Japan Times reported.

Many monuments have come under attack, and some pulled down, in the past month as protesters against police abuse of African Americans target figures of the pro-slavery south in the 1860s Civil War and other symbols of the country's legacy of slavery.

But the monument protests have extended to revered early presidents George Washington

and Thomas Jefferson, both slave owners.

In some cases, local governments under popular pressure have decided to remove the monuments themselves.

U.S. President Donald Trump expressed outrage when on June 22 demonstrators attempted to pull down a statue directly in front of the White House of president Andrew Jackson, another slave owner who presided over the mass expulsion of Native Americans from their homelands in the 1830s.

Trump demanded U.S. law enforcement arrest and prosecute anyone who damages a monument and imprison them for the maximum 10 years.

"DHS is answering the president's call to use our law enforcement personnel across the country to protect our historic landmarks," Wolf said in the statement. **→10**

UNWTO meeting: Iran outlines measures to help tourism recover from COVID-19

TEHRAN — Iran took part in a virtual seminar of the United Nations World Tourism Organization on Wednesday, outlining measures the country has taken so far to prop up the travel industry since the outbreak of the coronavirus.

The 32nd Joint Meeting of the UNWTO Commission for East Asia and the Pacific and the Commission for South Asia (32nd CAP-CSA) which had been planned to be held in Sri Lanka this year was held online due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Deputy tourism minister Vali Teymouri

addressed the meeting, saying that managing the psychological impact [caused by the virus pandemic], and defining [health] protocols for those who are active in the field of tourism on how to deal with the virus, trying to meet public demand, gradually reopening tourism facilities, and preparing government support packages were among the most important measures.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the official attached great importance to synergy and cooperation between member states as a need to put an end to this global recession.

"Maintaining the spirit of cooperation between countries, as well as adhering to the goals of tourism, respecting the principles of 'responsible tourism' and taking trustworthy measures are among the necessities for the tourism industry to overcome this global recession."

UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili and tourism officials from some 30 regional countries attended the webinar which also discussed realms of tourism-related investment, innovation, and technology. **→8**

Actor Sirus Gorjestani dies at 76

TEHRAN — Actor Sirus Gorjestani, who is most famous for his roles in the comic series and movies such as "The Suspect Ran Away" and "Sperm Whale 2", died from a heart attack in a Tehran hospital on Thursday. He was 76.

"He was admitted to Lavasani Hospital the night before and he passed away from a heart attack today," his son, Siavash told the Persian service of MNA.

Gorjestani was born in the northern Iranian town of Bandar Anzali in 1944. His family moved to Tehran about ten years later, beginning a new life in the Nasser Khosro neighborhood.

He learned acting experimentally and was employed at the Theater Office. He began his acting career by playing minor roles in the movies "Twenty Years of Waiting" by Mehdi Reis-Firuz and "Double Agent" by Mehdi Mirsamadzadeh in 1966. **→12**



U.S. seeks to seize four Iranian tankers sailing towards Venezuela

By staff and agency

U.S. prosecutors have filed a lawsuit to seize four tankers sailing towards Venezuela with gasoline supplied by Iran.

The lawsuit, filed late on Wednesday in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, was followed on Thursday by a warrant issued by U.S. District Judge James Boasberg for the seizure of the more than 1.1 million barrels of gasoline in the four vessels, Reuters reported. Legal sources said the gasoline could likely only be seized by U.S. authorities if the tankers enter U.S. territorial waters.

In the civil-forfeiture complaint, U.S. federal prosecutors aim to stop delivery of Iranian gasoline aboard the Liberia-flagged Bella, Bering, Pandi and Luna, according to the lawsuit, first reported by the Wall Street Journal.

Boasberg issued the warrant for the seizure of the gasoline in the tankers based on probable cause that the fuel is forfeitable, the Justice Department said.

The lawsuit also aims to stop the flow of revenues from oil sales to Iran. Five Iranian oil tankers by the names of Petunia, Forest, Faxon, Clavel, and Fortune carried fuel to Venezuela despite the United States' sanctions. The last of them entered Venezuelan waters on June 1.

The tankers carried 1,520,000 barrels of gasoline and diesel fuel to Venezuela. There was also a team of Iranian engineers and specialists from the oil industry on board heading for the country.

Venezuela's envoy to the UN Jorge Valero has said that Iran and Venezuela will continue fighting U.S. President Donald Trump's hostile policies.

"The people of Iran and Venezuela are two brotherly nations and will continue their war against Trump's hostile policies," ISNA quoted him as saying on June 9 in an interview with Al Mayadeen TV channel.

Iran, Iraq discuss security cooperation

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Iranian military attaché to Iraq Mostafa Moradian and Mohammad Reza Al Haidar, head of the Iraqi parliament's security and defense committee, discussed security and defense cooperation on Friday. Expansion of military relations and also cooperation in area of security were discussed at the meeting.



Haidar praised Iran's support for Iraq in fighting Daesh. Moradian met with former Iraqi Defense Minister Enad Sa'adoon Khatab al-Jabouri in May and called for expanding military cooperation.

In the meeting, the Iraqi defense chief also praised Iran's support for Iraq in the fight against Daesh.

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

"We want to give Iraq all our capacities and we want to become strategic partners and turn our relations into a successful model of cooperation," he told Jabouri through a video conference.

Hatami attached great importance to expanding defense cooperation to help establish regional security and stability.

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

"As we proved that we stand beside the Iraqi people in fighting Daesh, we will stand beside the Iraqi government to help establish stability and make progress," Rouhani stated in a phone call.

He said Iran attaches great importance to Iraq's independence, political stability, national sovereignty, and integrity.

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

Rouhani also highlighted the importance of regional peace and stability.

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

Natanz incident causing no work stoppage, slowdown at facility

1 → His remarks came hours after an informed Iranian security official told Press TV that there was no evidence to show that the incident has been an act of intentional sabotage.

Kamalvandi said, "The incident took place at about 02:00 local time this morning and caused no loss of life," adding, "We have many open-space sheds at the Shahid Ahmadi Roshan enrichment complex. Our enrichment activities are mostly done underground."

"Our open-space sheds do different things. This was one of those sheds, which was under construction. We have material damage, but no loss of life," he added.

Kamalvandi refuted reports about possible radioactive contamination following the incident, saying, "Contrary to the false propaganda by enemy and counterrevolutionary media, no contamination has occurred because there has been no nuclear material in this shed."

"Our [nuclear] activities are being carried out without stoppage and in the best possible form in this important facility and enrichment of [nuclear] material continues."

Elsewhere in his interview, Kamalvandi emphasized that experts were investigating the cause of the incident and assessing the extent of the damage done to the shed.

"Since our main enrichment work is not done here, we will face no problem and no work stoppage or slowdown," he concluded.

A security official, who was speaking to Press TV on condition of anonymity earlier in the day, also affirmed that the incident is under thorough examination by expert teams from the AEOI.

He likewise ruled out the notion of contamination, saying the affected site did not contain any radioactive material, adding that none of the AEOI's personnel were present there at the time of the incident.

Natanz is a uranium enrichment center located in the city of the same name in Isfahan Province, some 250 kilometers (155 miles) south of the capital, Tehran.

It is among the sites now being monitored by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) under a 2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and major powers.

The IAEA, meanwhile, announced that it was aware of the incident, but did not foresee any change to the UN nuclear watchdog's regular verification of Iran's commitments to the body's Safeguards Agreement as a result of the development.

The Safeguards Agreement between Iran and the IAEA ensures non-diversion of nuclear material declared by the Islamic Republic.

Iran pays tribute to victims of 1988 U.S. downing of passenger jet

Iran commemorates the 32nd anniversary of the downing of its passenger aircraft by a U.S. Navy guided-missile cruiser over the Persian Gulf, which killed 290 people.

A memorial ceremony was held on Thursday on the eve of the tragedy's anniversary, with the participants, including the families of the victims and local officials, tossing flowers into the waters of Hormozgan Province near Hengam Island.

According to Press TV, they also chanted slogans such as "Down with the U.S." and "Down with Israel."

On July 3, 1988, the USS Vincennes fired missiles at an Iran Air Airbus A300B2 which was flying over the Strait of Hormuz from the port city of Bandar Abbas to Dubai, carrying 274 passengers and 16 crew members.

Following the attack, the plane disintegrated and crashed into the Persian Gulf waters, killing all 290 on board, among them 66 children.

U.S. officials claimed that the USS Vincennes had mistaken Iran Air Flight 655 for a warplane. This is while the warship was equipped with highly sophisticated radar systems and electronic battle gear at the time of the attack.

In 1990, the captain of the cruiser, William C. Rogers, was cleared of any wrongdoing, and was even awarded America's Legion of Merit medal by then U.S. president George Bush for his "outstanding service" during operations in the Persian Gulf.

Iran won't surrender to bullying: Kharrazi

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Kamal Kharrazi, chairman of Iran's Strategic Council on Foreign Relations, has said that Iran will not surrender to bullying and will continue its path more determinedly.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has shown during the past 40 years that it will not surrender to the foreigners' bullying behavior and will continue its path more determinedly despite pressure," IRNA quoted him as saying on Friday.

He added, "West should know that neither the economic sanctions nor the arms embargo will make Iran return from the independent strategic path it has taken."

Kharrazi also said that "unilateral" and "wrong" policies of the U.S. and the E3 - France, Germany and the UK - to stop Iran's peaceful nuclear program have always been fruitless.

"The United States' attempts to extend arms embargo on Iran, the three European countries' action in the International Atomic Energy Agency against Iran and suspicious behavior of the agency's director general



will lead to collapse of the JCPOA [the 2015 nuclear deal]," warned Kharrazi, who was Iran's foreign minister from 1997 to 2005.

The United States has stepped up calls for an extension of a UN arms embargo on Iran since April. The UN arms embargo on

Iran is set to expire in October.

The U.S. administration has made such action despite the fact that Donald Trump officially quit the nuclear deal in May 2018 and slapped the harshest sanctions in history, including a total oil embargo,

Iranian ambassador urges intl. community to respect 2231 resolution

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Iran's Ambassador to Pakistan Mohammad Ali Hosseini has urged the international community, especially signatories to the 2015 nuclear deal known as the JCPOA, to respect the 2231 resolution of the UN Security Council which endorses the agreement.

"Being still committed to its obligations-15 of IAEA reports vouch for it. #Iran call upon international community, especially JCPOA singers to respect Res2231 and its provisions," he tweeted on Thursday.

In another tweet, he said, "US significant non-performance to UNSC/Res2231 is a manifestation of 'threat to international peace' that needs #UNSC determination. 'Economic Terrorism' of the US that has imposed huge economic and non-economic detriments to #Iranian nation, ought to be indicted."

"#US approach to #JCPOA is bold in unilateralism, bleak on improving #UNSC peace seeking function and pure humbug in reflecting #Iran's cooperation with IAEA. Not only US illegally withdraw from JCPOA, also is punishing others for not imitating the same!" he said in a separate tweet.

In an address to a virtual UN Security Council meeting on Tuesday, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said, "Iran and other members of the international community

have, since the 8th of May 2018, been witnessing the U.S. Government—a co-sponsor of Security Council Resolution 2231—persistently flouting the Resolution, while also trying to force other States to join it in violating the very text it put forward itself. More dangerously, and for the first time in UN history, a permanent member of the Security Council is punishing law-abiding States and private citizens for not violating a Council resolution, which emphasized, and I quote, 'promoting and facilitating the development of normal economic and trade contacts and cooperation with Iran'."

"And yet, not a single Council session has been convened to reprove the U.S. Government, or to at least investigate its repeated violations. Instead, some European members of the Council are contemplating further undermining the Resolution and the Council while further renegeing on their own JCPOA commitments," Zarif added.

■ Ambassador criticizes Europeans for introducing Iran as non-cooperative

Ambassador Hosseini also criticized the Europeans as non-cooperative while the country has been under most robust inspection regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

"In spite of being under most robust inspection regime of IAEA, #Iran is still introduced non cooperative by those European who are vociferous in rhetoric but devoid in action



for cooperation! how fair them!" he tweeted.

The 35-member IAEA board of governors passed a resolution on June 19 demanding access to two old places under the allegation that nuclear work may have been done there.

France, Britain, and Germany, the three European parties to the nuclear deal, submitted the draft resolution to the IAEA board for approval.

Nine countries out 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.

Russia warns an extension of arms embargo on Iran will jeopardize nuclear deal

By staff and agency

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova warned on Thursday that an extension of arms embargo on Iran will jeopardize efforts to preserve the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the JCPOA.

The remarks by Zakharova came two days after the U.S. was rebuked by the UN Security Council including the five European countries on the council.

A week earlier the U.S. introduced a draft resolution at the UN Security Council that would extend the arms embargo on Iran before it expires in October.

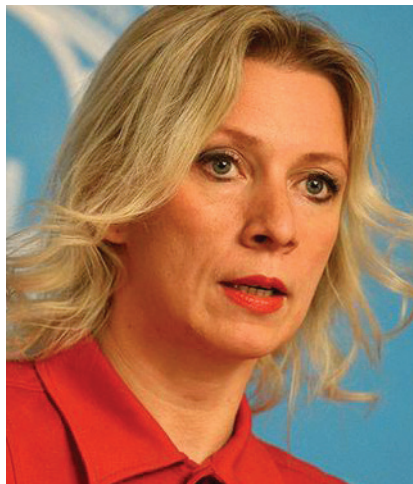
"The United States' push was not only unjustified but also counterproductive in terms of the prospects of preserving the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)," Russia's Sputnik news agency quoted Zakharova as saying.

The United States has stepped up calls for the extension of a UN arms embargo on Iran since April.

Under the UN Security Council Resolution 2231, which endorsed the 2015 nuclear deal.

The U.S. President Donald Trump administration has threatened that it may seek to trigger a snapback of all sanctions on Iran if its attempts to extend the arms embargo fail.

Zakharova said in May that Washington's plans to introduce an indefinite arms embargo against Iran have no prospects.



"The stubborn shattering of the JCPOA through new anti-Iranian ideas, which include the proposal to impose an indefinite arms embargo against Iran, simply does not honor the United States. It is clear that this course has no prospects," Zakharova said at a briefing, Sputnik reported.

Those members of the JCPOA, who have maintained a genuine full commitment to the nuclear deal, will continue to fight for its preservation and sustainable implementation, she said.

"There should be no doubt about this in Washington," she asserted.

In a letter to the United Nations' Secretary General Antonio Guterres and the Security Council circulated on June 8, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov accused the Trump administration of unleashing a politically motivated campaign against Iran and called for "universal condemnation" of the U.S. attempts.

The Russian foreign minister said the United States withdrew from the 2015 nuclear agreement between Iran and six major powers and now has no legal right to try to use the UN resolution endorsing the deal to indefinitely continue the arms embargo.

In an address to a virtual UN Security Council meeting on Tuesday, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said, "The international community in general—and the UN Security Council in particular—are facing an important decision: Do we maintain respect for the rule of law, or do we return to the law of the jungle by surrendering to the whims of an outlaw bully?"

At the virtual Security Council meeting on Tuesday, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo pressured member states to support the extension.

Russian ambassador to the UN Vassily Nebenzia also censured the U.S. for pursu-

ing a "maximum suffocation" foreign policy against Iran. Nebenzia said Washington's goal was to "achieve regime change or create a situation where Iran literally wouldn't be able to breathe".

"This is like putting a knee to one's neck," said Nebenzia in a veiled reference to the death of black man George Floyd in Minneapolis after a white police officer knelt on his neck. The incident has since sparked protests across the U.S. and in other countries.

China also voiced opposition to the anti-Iran move, urging Washington "to stop its illegal unilateral sanctions" on Iran.

In a statement to the UN Security Council, Zhang Jun, China's permanent UN representative, said the root cause of the current crisis is the U.S withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal in May 2018 and the reimposition of unilateral sanctions against Iran, Xinhua reported.

"This has again undermined the joint efforts to preserve the JCPOA [Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action]," Zhang said.

He stressed that the agreement was endorsed by the UN Security Council and "is legally binding".

"We urge the U.S. to stop its illegal unilateral sanctions and long-arm jurisdiction, and return to the right track of observing the JCPOA and Resolution 2231 [of the UNSC]," he said.

Defense chief says Iran's armed forces will respond to any 'desperate' move

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Defense Minister Amir Hatami said on Friday that Iran's armed forces will respond to any "desperate" move by enemies.

During a visit to Martyr Mousa Namjoo's family, Hatami said that the United States is taking "desperate moves" in various political, economic and social areas to break the Iranian people's resistance and cause public dissatisfaction.

"The United States will definitely be defeated like in the past," he predicted.

Namjoo along with some other top military commanders, including Air Force commander Javad Fakouri and IRGC deputy chief Yousof Kolahdouz, were martyred in a plane incident on June 28, 1981. They were returning to Tehran from the battlefields in Iran's southern borders with Iraq.

Defense Minister Hatami went on to



say that the armed forces have the power and determination to respond to any move

by the enemies.

Major General Mohammad Hossein

Baqeri, the Armed Forces chief of staff, warned in December 2019 that his forces will give a "decisive" response to any misadventure by the enemies, making them regret their actions.

Chief of the Islamic Republic of Iran Air Force (IRIAF) Aziz Nasirzadeh said in February that Iran is capable of responding quickly to any military threat.

"As we are capable of creating security in the region and respond to any threat quickly, we also have the capability to create peace and stability," Nasirzadeh said.

Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Ashtiani, the deputy chief of staff of the Armed Forces, said in February that Iran's current situation in terms of military power is better than any other time.

Ashtiani added that the country's power is now sustainable.

Tehran slams U.S. military threat as ‘moldy option’

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman has condemned the United States' threat of a military attack on Iran as a "moldy option" which has been sitting on the table gathering dust for years.

In a statement late on Wednesday, Abbas Mousavi responded to the threatening remarks made by U.S. special representative for Iran Brian Hook, saying the real threat to regional peace is the U.S.'s military presence.

Hook said on Tuesday that the White House was willing to take military action against Tehran to prevent the Islamic Republic from "developing nuclear weapons".

The U.S. special representative said during a visit to Jerusalem that "the military option is always on the table."

Mousavi referred to the comments as "groundless and worthless" and denounced the American official's divisive mission to the region as well as his threats against Iran.

"Alongside the desperate attempts at unfounded justification of the subject of the arms embargo extension, Brian Hook is talking of military option against Iran, a moldy option that has been sitting on the table of delusional U.S. presidents gathering dust for years," he said.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran's principled policy in the military sector is absolutely clear and the nature of this program is totally defensive," Mousavi maintained, according to the Foreign Ministry website.

"The real threat to the region is the destructive and destabilizing presence of the U.S., transforming the region into military bases, preventing progress and development of the region with the aim of creating division, and fomenting fear for the easy sale of products of the military industries of that country (the U.S.)," the spokesman added.

He said as long as U.S. officials talk about the military option against Iran, and delay their withdrawal from the region, the Islamic Republic will spare no efforts to strengthen its military power, and considers this as its inalienable right to defend the national in-



“Brian Hook has held consultations about the arms embargo on Iran while his country and a number of its allies are in possession of hundreds of nuclear bombs and other weapons of mass destruction, and, at the same time, are not cooperating with the International Atomic Energy Agency and other international institutions at all, and the Agency (IAEA) is not conducting any inspection of their nuclear facilities either,” the Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman deplores.

terests of Iranians.

"Brian Hook has held consultations about the arms embargo on Iran while his country and a number of its allies are in possession of hundreds of nuclear bombs and other weapons of mass destruction, and, at the same time, are not cooperat-

ing with the International Atomic Energy Agency and other international institutions at all, and the Agency (IAEA) is not conducting any inspection of their nuclear facilities either," he deplored.

"What is worse is that the U.S. has practically turned the region into a powder keg

with the mass sale of advanced arms and equipment to these countries, as much of these weapons are still being employed against the oppressed and defenseless people of Yemen, Palestine, Iraq, Syria and other regional nations," the spokesman stated.

Mousavi concluded that ensuring the security of the region in the hands of regional countries is the principled and invariable policy of the Islamic Republic.

The United States has been seeking support for its demand of extending a 13-year UN weapons embargo on Iran. However, Russia and China, which are both members of the UN Security Council, oppose the embargo.

The UN arms embargo is due to expire in October under United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2231 that endorsed the 2015 nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

The U.S. abandoned the JCPOA on May 8, 2018, and pursued a policy of "maximum pressure" on Iran to force it to negotiate a new deal but to no avail.

Hook started a West Asia tour a few days ago to discuss Iran with U.S. allies, with stops in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the UAE and Israel.

In his visit to Riyadh on Monday, Hook claimed that lifting the arms embargo on the country will trigger an arms race in West Asia.

"This is not an outcome that the UN Security Council can accept. The council's mandate is clear: to maintain international peace and security," he claimed.

The U.S. diplomat made similar remarks in Bahrain and the UAE.

In response, Iran's Mousavi strongly criticized the Arab countries for supporting Washington's anti-Iran stance, saying stability and security will not be established in the region through obeying the orders of the United States.

"The only way to create stability and security in the region is changing hostile behaviors and moving toward regional cooperation," he said on Tuesday.

Tehran: U.S. shot down Iranian airplane ‘deliberately’ in 1988

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The Persian Gulf has long witnessed U.S. crimes in the region, Iran's Foreign Ministry has said, adding that the U.S. deliberately shot down an Iranian airplane 32 years ago and killed 290 on board in 1988.

"What is US human rights?" the Foreign Ministry wrote in a tweet on Thursday. "Answer: Unparalleled commitment to killing people!"

It said, "Persian Gulf has long witnessed US crimes in the region. 32yrs ago, US deliberately shot down an Iranian airplane. 290 were killed."

"US has not yet apologized nor embarrassed," it added.

In recent days, Iran has rebuked the United States for its history of horrible, deadly violations of human rights both at home and in other countries.

"From 26 June to 2 July every year, Iranians recall horrible, deadly violation of human rights by the American regime," Iran's Foreign Ministry tweeted on June 26.

"In the next 7 days named as #USHumanRightsWeek, we will shed light on the US actions undermining basic rights of people at home, in Iran & elsewhere," it added.

The ministry also noted that the U.S. regime is leading a global campaign including economic, medical terrorism against the Iranian people.

"From depriving Iran of its own financial resources for making ends meet, to banning delivery of the COVID19-related supplies for saving Iranians' lives, the US regime is desperately leading the global campaign to use economic, medical terrors agnst Iranian #HumanRights," the Foreign Ministry wrote in another tweet on June 26.

Iran condemns U.S. sanctions on countries hit hard by coronavirus

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Majid Takht-Ravanchi, Iran's ambassador to the United Nations, has highlighted the need for lifting of the United States' sanctions, which have been weakening the targeted countries' fight against the spread of the coronavirus.

In an address to a UN Security Council meeting at the UN headquarters on Thursday, Takht-Ravanchi said, "Serious outbreaks of certain diseases with a high mortality rate, entail security implications in conflict situations. One example is the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic in the conflict situations in our region from Yemen to Palestine to Syria."

In these countries, the pandemic has worsened the socio-economic situation, negatively impacted de-escalation efforts and peace negotiations and, by adding a new layer to the already existing problems, has further complicated the overall situation, he said, according to IRNA.

The Iranian envoy said that in Yemen, where the nation is already experiencing the world's worst humanitarian crisis, the death toll from the virus could "exceed the combined toll of war, disease and hunger over the last five years", as stated by the UN officials present in that country.

He also said that in Palestine, the Israeli regime has continued over a decade-long inhumane blockade against the Gaza Strip even during the coronavirus outbreak, leading to further deterioration of the already fragile humanitarian situation there.

"While the impacts of serious outbreaks of certain diseases with a high mortality rate in conflict situations need to be addressed, the immoral and inhumane nature of unilateral sanctions and their impacts on extending the pandemics and worsening the conflicts must not be overlooked," Takht-Ravanchi concluded.

Do not to miss chance of economic co-op with Iran: advisor to Parliament speaker

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Hossein Amir Abdollahian, a senior foreign policy advisor to the Iranian Parliament speaker, says Iran will leave behind the U.S. sanctions, advising the EU not to miss the chance of economic cooperation with Iran.

In a meeting with Italian Ambassador to Iran Giuseppe Perrone late on Thursday, Amir Abdollahian described intensification of the U.S. sanctions against Iran as a failed economic terrorism.



"No doubt, we will overcome the new sanctions with power and relying on the huge capabilities of the country and the great people of Iran, but Europe must find ways not to lose chance of active economic cooperation with Iran," he remarked, IRNA reported.

Unfortunately, Europe's fear of the U.S. unilateralism has led to the loss of golden opportunities for economic cooperation with Iran, he added.

Amir Abdollahian also referred to historic and cultural relations between Iran and Italy, saying the Iranian parliament welcomes boosting parliamentary exchanges with Italy.

Parliamentary relations have always played a crucial role in enhancing mutual cooperation, he said.

He also described the U.S., the Zionist regime and Saudi Arabia's unconstructive behavior as a source of tension and instability in the region.

The U.S. openly support for terrorist groups, and interference in regional affairs have exacerbated the crisis, he added.

Bolton: Iran might ‘play Trump along’ if he wins second term

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Former U.S. national security adviser John Bolton has said he's worried that Iran might be able to play his former boss along if he's re-elected.

In a video conference interview with Israel's Channel 13 on Friday, Bolton said if U.S. President Donald Trump wins a second term, he may try to embrace Iran in a bid to clinch a new nuclear accord. The remarks come amid ongoing tensions between Tehran and Washington which have been in place since Trump unilaterally abandoned the 2015 Iran nuclear deal in May 2018 and reinstated crippling economic sanctions against Tehran.

Iran has made it clear that negotiation is always possible within existing frameworks of the nuclear deal and only if the U.S. returns to the deal and honors its commitments. It has emphatically rejected any prospect of bilateral talks with the U.S.

"Just as [North Korean leader] Kim Jong-un played Trump along in the Korea context, I worry that in a second term



the Iranians might be able to do the same," Bolton said.

"I think [Trump] has his own definition of what amounts to honesty. He certainly has a lot of different versions of facts. They tend to come and go as they suit him. I found that very frustrating. I think foreign leaders find it frustrating. I'd rather have somebody more grounded

in reality as president," the ex-adviser added.

Bolton, who is notoriously famous for his ultra-hawkish stance toward Iran, said on June 23 that the U.S. withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal "was my happiest moment, probably of the whole time" in the Trump administration.

"I probably should have left the administration then," Bolton told Fox News' Special Report with Bret Baier in an interview.

He said U.S. President Donald Trump undercut his own hardline Iran policy, telling Baier, "We did put enormous pressure on Iran but when it came down to it by near the end of my tenure, Trump's still looking for that deal, wanted to meet with the Ayatollahs, wanted to meet with [Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali] Khamenei, wanted to meet with the Iranian Foreign Minister [Mohammad Javad Zarif]."

Trump has been repeatedly calling for dialogue with Iran. The U.S. president ousted Bolton on September 10, 2019.

Trump's ‘maximum pressure’ strategy is dangerous and should end

By Seyed Hossein Mousavian

(Middle East Eye) — On 19 June, based on allegations from Iran's archenemy Israel, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) adopted a non-obligatory resolution initiated by three European countries (Germany, France and Britain) calling for Iran to give inspectors access to two sites where the country is thought to have had nuclear activities two decades ago.

"Those who have made it a policy objective of destroying the JCPOA are now trying to ... advance the same agenda," Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said, noting that the IAEA's processes were being abused to undermine the nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

In May 2018, U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew from the nuclear deal in an effort to dismantle the legacy of his predecessor, Barack Obama, and to bring regime change to Iran through a "maximum pressure" policy. The escalatory spiral in U.S.-Iran relations intensified after the U.S. sanctioned Iran's supreme leader and foreign minister, and assassinated General Qassem Soleimani in a drone strike.

The chronology of U.S. policies against Iran in recent months suggests that Trump is looking to drive the final nail into the coffin of the nuclear deal, ensuring he leaves no chance for the next U.S. administration to revive it or engage in any form of rapprochement with Iran.

Last month, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced that the U.S. was terminating the remaining sanctions waivers enshrined in the nuclear deal. With that move, Iran now has every legitimate

reason to enrich uranium to a level of 20 percent purity, instead of limiting it to under five percent.

It also gives Iran legitimacy to redesign its heavy water facilities at the Arak reactor. Kelsey Davenport, the director of nonproliferation policy at the Arms Control Association, has said that "ending waivers that allow Tehran to import fuel for the reactor hands Iran a justification to resume enriching uranium to 20 percent, a level that is below weapons-grade but poses a more significant proliferation risk than Iran's current enrichment".

Earlier this month, the Washington Free Beacon revealed that Congressional Republicans would unveil the largest package of Iran sanctions in history, with more than 140 new initiatives. Under the plan, the U.S. government would be barred from lifting sanctions without first obtaining consent from the House and Senate.

■ Reinstating sanctions

The U.S. has also presented a draft resolution to the Security Council to extend a UN arms embargo on Tehran. The real U.S. strategy is to "snap back" all UN sanctions on Iran, with full knowledge that Russia and China would not agree to renew the arms embargo, which is a clear violation of the nuclear deal and UN Resolution 2231.

The Trump administration has imposed comprehensive sanctions against Iran, crippling its economy. Iran's main source of foreign revenue, namely its oil exports, have plummeted from 2.5 million barrels a day to almost zero in the last couple of years, and its currency has hit record lows. Yet, Trump has achieved none of his political agenda.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani has already informed the other parties



to the nuclear deal that Iran may leave the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) if the nuclear file is referred to the UN Security Council.

Based on a report published this month by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, the nine nuclear-armed states - the U.S., Russia, the UK, France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea - together possess an estimated 13,400 nuclear weapons, around 3,720 of which are currently deployed with operational forces and nearly 1,800 "in a state of high operational alert".

The irony about nonproliferation and the role of the IAEA is that while Iran possesses zero nuclear bombs, and its nuclear program is the most inspected in the world, the Iranian nuclear file has remained a priority of the IAEA and the U.S. for the past two decades.

In 2019, Iran reportedly received 21 percent of all visits to nuclear sites around the world by IAEA inspectors, and more than 90 percent of the visits by inspectors

6,000 permits issued for industrial unit establishment in a quarter

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian Deputy Industry Minister Saeed Zarandi announced that 6,000 permits have been issued for the establishment of industrial units in the country during the first quarter of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-June 20), ILNA reported.



As previously announced by the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade, issuance of permits for setting up industrial units in Iran increased 16 percent in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20, 2019).

Most of the issued permits were related to the food industries; and Semnan, Qom and Khorasan Razavi were the provinces receiving the highest number of the permits.

As already reported, some 2,200 industrial units will come back to the production cycle by the end of the current Iranian year.

Last year, 1,900 inactive units were planned to restart activity, but the planning came true for 1,700 units and led to creation of 28,000 jobs.

As previously announced by Deputy Industry Minister Mohsen Salehinia, during the current year the government plans to provide facilities under the framework of subsidies for projects with more than 60 percent of physical development, to supply working capital of firms, to renovate production units and etc.

He said that 360 trillion rials (about \$857.1 million) of facilities will be granted to the industrial units in this year in the framework of production flourishing plan.

Freeway network to be expanded by 5,000km in 5 years

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian Transport and Urban Development Minister Mohammad Eslami has said that the country's freeway network is going to be expanded by 5,000 kilometers (km) in the next five years, IRNA reported.

Eslami said there are currently 2,400 km of freeways across Iran, adding that another 580 kilometers will be added to the country's freeway network by the end of the current administration (early August 2021).

"We will increase the [length of] freeways in a five-year program to 5,000 km," he said.

He also mentioned the country's railway network, saying that there are about 14,700 kilometers of rail roads in the country.

"We plans to add another 1,200 kilometers to the country's railway lines by the end of the current administration," the official said.

Another 14,000 kilometers of railway lines are also under study and construction, of which 3,300 kilometers are under construction and the rest are under study, he said.

The minister further noted that the main focus of the ministry is currently expansion of the main roads including freeways, highways and also the railway network.

According to the official, the priority for the development projects in this sector are freight centers and the rail lines that can increase the freight share of the railway network.

Back in June, Eslami had announced that 980 kilometers of freeways will be inaugurated throughout Iran during the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20, 2021).

Mentioning his ministry's plans for the current Iranian year, Eslami noted that construction of 1600 km of highways were on the agenda for the current year.

Raw materials constitute 85% of Iran's imports

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iran's acting minister of industry, mining and trade said on Thursday that 85 percent of the country's current imports are raw materials for the production and industry sectors, IRNA reported.

According to Hossein Modares Khiaabani the other 15 percent are mostly consumable products.



Mentioning the reduction of the country's foreign trade due to the outbreak of coronavirus, Khiaabani said the gap between production and exports is getting smaller with the re-opening of the country's borders with the neighboring countries.

The global trade has declined by 33 percent due to the pandemic, he said.

The official also noted that every year \$1.5 billion worth of cell phones are imported into the country and the domestic producers must be supported to prevent the outflow of the country's revenues.

Back in June, Khiaabani said his ministry has it on the agenda to export \$41 billion worth of non-oil commodities in the current Iranian calendar year (March 2020-March 2021), while preventing the imports of unnecessary commodities.

Neighboring countries are the main target for the mentioned exports, he said.

Since the re-imposition of the U.S. sanction, Iran has been focusing on the promotion of domestic production and limiting the imports in order to move the economy toward self-sufficiency and resilience.

According to the head of Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), 35 million tons of goods were imported into the country during the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19).

Iran-EAEU trade exceeds \$2.4b since preferential trade agreement

1 → Ruhollah Latifi put the weight of commodities traded between the two sides at 6.873 tons, IRIB reported.

Saying that the basic commodities account for the major part of Iran's imports from the EAEU member states, the official announced that Iran's imports from those countries constitute 72 percent of the total trade between the two sides.

He put Iran's imports from the EAEU countries based on the preferential tariffs at over 5.207 million tons valued at \$1.737 billion, and the county's exports from the block at 655,614 tons worth \$681 million.

The IRICA spokesman mentioned Russia and Armenia as the major exporters of goods to Iran, while Russia and Kazakhstan were the top importers of commodities from Iran.

In mid-May, head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) announced that the export of the commodities subjected to preferential tariffs from Iran to the Eurasian Economic Union's member states had risen 85 percent since the implementation of the



agreement between the two sides.

Hamid Zadboum also said that 13 percent of Iran's imports from the EAEU are subjected to the preferential tariffs, while

49 percent of the country's exports to the block is subjected to those tariffs.

The official said that Iran's exports to the EAEU member countries are more variable

compared to its imports from those states, adding exports can be even more expanded.

Iran and Eurasian Economic Union reached a free trade agreement in October 2018 based on which about 862 commodity items were subjected to preferential tariffs.

The interim agreement enabling the formation of a free trade area between Iran and the EAEU was signed on May 17, 2018, and officially came into force on October 27, 2019.

Iran is a very important market in the region and the development of ties with this country is of high significance for the EAEU members (Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan).

The free trade agreement between Iran and this union has laid the ground for the expansion of trade ties between the two sides.

The agreement with the bloc has increased Iran's exports to the EAEU member states significantly, which is a turning point for the Islamic Republic plans for boosting non-oil exports during the U.S. sanctions.

Iran, Australia discuss reviving economic ties



TCCIMA Head Masoud Khansari (L) meet with Australian Ambassador to Tehran Lyndall Sachs in Tehran on Wednesday.

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Head of Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) Masoud Khansari met with the Australian Ambassador to Tehran Lyndall Sachs on Wednesday and explored ways of reviving the two countries' economic relations.

In the meeting, which took place at the TCCIMA place, the officials stressed the need to identify ways of facilitating bilateral trade and overcoming obstacles created by the U.S. sanctions for utilizing the capacities of the Iranian business community and the Australian economic actors, the TCCIMA portal reported.

Underlining the need for strengthening the economic relations between the two sides' private sectors, Massoud Khansari voiced the readiness of TCCIMA specialized committees for cooperation with Australian foreign trade experts and for sharing the experiences and capacities of the Iranian private sector.

He stressed that the level of economic relations between Iran and Australia can be improved even during the sanctions and that both sides need to identify and implement

ways to facilitate relations.

In this regard, Khansari pointed to the possibility of expanding ties in areas like agriculture, environment, and mining industries and announced the readiness of the Tehran Chamber to cooperate with the Australian Embassy in Iran to restore relations.

The Australian ambassador for her part noted that some Australian companies are currently operating in Iran and that the two countries' relations in the fields of minerals and mining industry as well as higher education are ongoing and stable.

Sachs also voiced her country's readiness for expansion of cooperation in new areas.

The envoy said that despite the sanctions, Australia's trade office in Iran is open and continues to operate.

She underlined the ability of Iranian entrepreneurs based in Australia to improve relations between the two countries, noting that there is now a large community of Iranian businessmen and traders living in Australia that are ready to expand their economic relations with Iran through their offices in the countries of the region and the Persian Gulf nations.

SATKAB, AFZO ink MOU for co-op on exports to Eurasia



Anzali Free Zone Organization's Director Mohammad-Vali Rouzbehan (L) and SATKAB's Head Mohammad-Vali Alaedini sign a cooperation MOU in Tehran on Wednesday.

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian Electrical Power Equipment Manufacturing and Provision Company (SATKAB) has signed a memorandum of Understanding with Anzali Free Zone Organization (AFZO) for cooperation on exports of equipment and technical services to Eurasia.

As reported by IRIB, the MOU was signed in a ceremony attended by senior officials from the two sides including Anzali Free Zone Organization's Director Mohammad-Vali Rouzbehan and SATKAB's Head Mohammad-Vali Alaedini.

The MOU is aimed at supporting domestic production and developing the exports of water and electricity equipment and technical engineering services to the Eurasia region from Anzali Free Zone in northern Iran.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Alaedini noted that the support of domestic production is the main priority of SATKAB activities in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 20).

"Using this opportunity [cooperation

with AFZO] for supporting domestic production and directing domestic products to export markets is a manifestation of SATKAB's plans in this regard," he said.

According to Alaedini, SATKAB is determined to have a serious presence in the Eurasian market and the memorandum with the Anzali Free Zone Organization has been concluded in this regard.

Rouzbehan, for his part said: "Anzali Free Zone enjoys good infrastructure for exports of commodities and technical and engineering services and we hope to fulfill this year's slogan which is "Surge in Production" by concluding such memorandums of understanding."

Iran and Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) reached a free trade agreement (FTA) in 2018 based on which about 862 commodity items are subject to preferential tariffs.

Eurasia is a very important market in the region and development of ties with EAEU members (Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) is of high significance for Iran.

Tehran hosting intl. doors, windows exhibit

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iran's 12th Doors & Windows Technology International Exhibition kicked off at the Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds on Thursday and will run until Sunday, Public Relations Department of Iran International Exhibitions Company (IIEC) announced.

The inauguration ceremony of the exhibit was participated by Ali Nikzad, the second vice-speaker of the Iranian parliament, and Bahman Hosseinzadeh, the managing director of IIEC.

The event is being held complying with all health protocols, it's not open for the public visit, and just the experts and specialists, who are formally invited, can visit it.

Last week, in an interview conducted by the Public Relations Department of IIEC, the head of the exhibition's organizing headquarters mentioned the four-month stop in holding the exhibitions due to the coronavirus outbreak, and reiterated that the health protocols would be observed at the highest level during the 12th Doors & Windows Technology International Exhibition, in a way that the exhibitors and visitors would have the least concern about the coronavirus pandemic.

The industrialists and traders are highly welcoming the windows and doors exhibit, so this edition of the exhibit will



be held in an area of over 21,000 square meters, Farhad Aminian further underscored.

He also stressed that this exhibition, which has a special focus on the presence of the domestic producers and industrialists, highlights the domestically-made products

TEDPIX rises 13.5% in a week

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), went up 13.5 percent to stand at 1.612 million points in the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday), IRNA reported.

As reported, Bank Mellat, Tejarat Bank, Isfahan Oil Refinery, National Iranian Copper Industry Company, Iran Khodro Investment Development Company, and Mobarakeh Steel Company were the major contributors to the index's weekly growth.

TEDPIX hit the record high of 1.5 million points on Tuesday.

It has also climbed 28.77 percent in the past Iranian calendar month (April 21-June 20) from its preceding month.

The index gained 283,868 points to 1,270,627 during the past month.

Although, the value of trades at the TSE, which is Iran's major stock exchange, fell 31 percent in the past month.

While the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19) was full of success for the TSE, the market is also preserving its successful performance in the current year, and the noticeable point in this due is that the other economic sectors are experiencing some declining trend due to the coronavirus pandemic.

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

In a press conference on June 22, the head of Iran's Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO) announced that 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).

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 that is entering the capital market has provided some good opportunity for this market.

Under the current condition, the status of the parallel markets such as the markets of foreign currency, gold, and housing seems to have a noticeable effect on the unprecedented growth in the stock market.

While this condition, which has made in-



vestment making in the stock market a more profitable choice for the investors, has been a contributing factor for the growth in the stock market in the present year; it began in the past year and is still affecting the capital market.

Rouhani inaugurates 10 major water, electricity projects

ENERGY TEHRAN — Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, on Thursday, inaugurated 10 electricity and water projects worth 19 trillion rials (about \$452.3 million) in two provinces, IRNA reported.

The projects were inaugurated in the southern Fars province and western Kermanshah province via video conference during the ninth week of the Energy Ministry's A-B-Iran program, based on which every week major energy projects are going to be inaugurated in various provinces across the country.

Nine of the mentioned projects were in Shiraz city in Fars province and the other one went operational in Kermanshah.

The projects included some water supply projects, comprised of transmission lines, pumping stations and water treatment plants, plus six solar farms in Fars province, as well as a dam in Kermanshah province.

As reported, the mentioned projects are going to create direct jobs for over 1500 people, while offering indirect job



opportunities for over 2000 people. Earlier this year, Iran's Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian said in the

second phase of "A-B-Iran" the ministry is going to inaugurate 250 major water and electricity projects worth 500 trillion

rials (about \$11.9 billion) during the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20, 2021).

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

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

Since the beginning of the second phase of the scheme in the current Iranian calendar year, every week several water or electricity projects have gone operational across the country.

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

Iran resumes gas exports to Turkey

ENERGY TEHRAN — Iran has resumed natural gas exports to Turkey after a three-month hiatus caused by a pipeline blast on the Turkish side on March 31, Shana reported quoting an official with the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC).

According to the Acting Head of Dispatching Department Mohammad Reza Julaei, gas export is now ongoing in compliance with the previous commitments of the two countries.

Natural gas exports from Iran to Turkey came to a halt on March 31 after an explosion and fire at a pipeline on the Turkish side of the border; the reasons for the blast were not officially announced.

The explosion occurred near the Bazargan border crossing on Turkish soil. Turkey had undertaken to repair the pipeline and compensate for the damages.



In a visit to Istanbul in mid-June, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif called for efforts to restart the export of natural gas to Turkey after carrying out necessary repairs to the pipeline.

Iran is Turkey's second-biggest supplier of natural gas after Russia. Tehran sells about 10 billion cubic meters a year of gas under a 25-year supply deal to Turkey which it uses for electricity generation.

The gas exports are carried out via a 2,577 km (1,601 miles) pipeline running from Tabriz to Ankara.

Turkey imported 7.7 billion cubic meters of gas from Iran in 2019, or some 17 percent of its total gas imports.

After the re-imposition of U.S. sanctions in November 2018, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan made it clear that his country would continue to buy natural gas from the Islamic Republic.

OPEC cuts output to lowest since 1991 as virus slams oil demand



OPEC slashed oil production to the lowest level since the Persian Gulf War in 1991, as it escalated efforts to revive global markets just as a resurgence of the coronavirus is threatening demand again, Bloomberg reported.

Saudi Arabia faithfully delivered the extra curbs promised in June, and the laggards, though still trailing in implementing the cuts, stepped up their performance, according to a Bloomberg survey. OPEC and its partners' record output cuts since May have helped revive the oil market, but a recent surge of COVID-19 infections in countries including the U.S. is highlighting the fragility of the revival.

The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries cut production by 1.93 million barrels a day to 22.69 million a day last month, according to the survey. That's the lowest since May 1991, though membership changes since then affect the comparison.

The survey is based on information from officials, ship-tracking data and estimates from consultants including Rystad Energy A/S, Rapidan Energy Group, JBC Energy GmbH and Kpler SAS.

The intervention by OPEC+, the coalition that spans the cartel plus outsiders such as Russia, has helped more than double benchmark Brent crude from the lows of April, when the virus outbreak is estimated to have taken out about a third of global demand. Prices were above \$41 a barrel on Wednesday.

Yet the pullback in the group's output to the lowest in almost three decades illustrates the scale of the sacrifice involved. OPEC+ pledged 9.7 million barrels a day of cuts at a meeting in April — about 10 per cent

of global supplies — and some of its West Asian members then promised to voluntarily cut even deeper in June.

Saudi Arabia, the group's biggest member, cut back by 1.13 million barrels a day to 7.53 million in June, fully implementing its additional voluntary reduction. Fellow Persian Gulf exporters Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates met their OPEC-mandated targets, but fulfilled only a small part of the extra curbs.

■ Varying compliance

Overall, OPEC delivered all of the reduction pledged in the April agreement, though rates of compliance vary significantly between members.

While Iraq, Nigeria and Angola are still lagging behind, their performances improved last month. Iraq implemented 70 per cent of its quota, Nigeria 77 per cent and Angola 83 per cent. At a meeting in early June, the countries agreed to make up for earlier cheating by making extra curbs in the coming months.

Compliance from countries outside OPEC has been stronger than usual, as the scale of the demand collapse and risk of a renewed price decline encourage adherence. Russia pumped close to its target for a second month, and Kazakhstan was on track to hit its quota.

The slump in OPEC's output also reflects the long-term decline in several members — most notably Venezuela.

While exempt from having to make deliberate cuts, Caracas is nonetheless seeing output dwindle as U.S. sanctions and prolonged economic recession slam its petroleum industry. It pumped just 340,000 barrels a day last month, the survey showed.

Marine fuel market facing tougher Q3 as supply rises



Global supply of fuel oil, used by ships and power plants, is expected to grow in the third quarter, depressing the marine fuel market as shipping demand remains weak, Reuters reported quoting analysts and trade sources.

Third-quarter supply is estimated to rise by 620,000 barrels per day (bpd) from the second quarter as China and Brazil increase production, according to consultancy Energy Aspects.

This comes as inventories across key marine refueling hubs recently reached all-time highs, depressing bunker fuel prices and refiners' margins and dashing hopes for a profitable year for sellers of low sulfur fuel that meets new emission regulations set by the International Maritime Organization.

"We had 9-10 million tons (of fuel oil inventories) at the start of the year that was supposed to draw by the start of Q2 but we are seeing 13 million tons now and (it is) building every month," said a senior fuel oil trader who declined to be identified.

Inventories in northwest Europe and the United Arab Emirates were at record highs in June while those in top bunkering port Singapore climbed to their highest level in more than three years.

Record supplies have depressed the delivered VLSFO (very low sulfur fuel oil) bunker spot discount to around record lows of about \$45 per ton below benchmark gasoil prices and cut Asian refiners' profits by nearly 80 percent from their record highs at the start of the year to \$10.25 a barrel on Thursday, according to trade sources and Refinitiv data.

Signs of weakness in bunkering demand have also emerged in Singapore, which is by far the world's largest marine refueling

hub, and in the UAE's Fujairah hub.

"Until recently, bunker fuel sales at key bunkering hubs were buoyed by opportunistic restocking, but sales volumes have since caught up with the reality of slowing global trade," Energy Aspects said in a note on Wednesday.

"Weak demand and rising supplies have meant that VLSFO cracks are struggling to stay in positive territories as refinery restarts on account of improving on-road fuel demand continue to depress the sluggish bunker market."

And the demand outlook remains weak, according to multiple Singapore-based bunker traders.

"A meaningful rebound in bunkering demand is unlikely before the end of the summer," Energy Aspects said.

The number of container ship blank sailings, for example, increased to 82 in the week to June 28 from just 13 in the week of May 17, Alan Murphy of consultancy Sea-Intelligence said on Tuesday.

An increase in blank sailings, or the number of vessels that skipped a port along its route or has had its entire journey cancelled, is likely to limit demand for bunkers.

Similarly, spot crude oil tanker fixtures fell 7 percent in the first half of 2020 compared to year-ago levels as the coronavirus, Poten & Partners said in a note on Friday.

The International Monetary Fund has predicted a deeper global recession as the coronavirus pandemic causes wider and deeper damage to economic activity than first thought.

"The IMF projection — if it turns out to be correct — is telling us that the current low demand levels are likely to persist for a while," Murphy at Sea-Intelligence said in a note.

Global oil investment to drop by one-third, Russian energy minister says

Global investment in oil is set to plunge by one-third this year due to the coronavirus and its effect on economies and oil demand, Russia's Energy Minister Alexander Novak said at an online conference on Thursday.

At the peak of the pandemic in April, global demand crashed by 25-28 percent, or by 28 million barrels per day (bpd), Novak said, noting that the new OPEC+ production cut agreement is helping the market rebalance. That balance, and even a deficit, could be reached this month, the Russian minister said.

Novak's views on the market rebalancing and investments in the oil industry echo assessments of analysts and international organizations.



The COVID-19 pandemic will result in the biggest annual drop in energy investments on record — nearly \$400 billion, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said in its World Energy Investment 2020 report in May.

The oil and gas sector will see the steepest decline in investment this year compared to last year, the IEA has estimated. Investment in oil and gas is set to plunge by \$244.1 billion, or by nearly one-third, in 2020 compared to 2019.

"The shale industry was already under pressure, and investor confidence and access to capital has now dried up: investment in shale is anticipated to fall by 50 percent in 2020," the IEA said in its report. The slashed investments in the oil industry could lead to a tighter oil market than previously anticipated, according to the IEA.

Rystad Energy expects global spending on upstream oil projects to plunge by 29 percent year on year to \$383 billion in 2020, with investments in shale taking the biggest hit and plummeting by 52.2 percent to \$67.3 billion.

"As the impact will be more severe than in the previous downturn, companies are fiercely defending shareholder value and pivoting towards more conservative spending strategies in the near-term. As the global upstream sector contends with low prices, falling demand, and fluctuating exchange rates, every dollar cut will strike directly to the bone," Rystad Energy's upstream analyst Olga Savenkova said last month.

Market structure for Dubai crude futures stable ahead of fresh drivers

The market structure for benchmark Dubai crude futures was little changed July 3 from the day before, with intermonth spreads trading at range bound levels as market participants awaited fresh drivers.

At 12 pm in Singapore (0400 GMT), the August/September Dubai crude futures spread was pegged at a 29-cent/b backwardation, narrowing 2 cents/b from the 31 cents/b assessed at the 4:30 pm close (0830 GMT) on July 2, S&P Global Platts data showed.

Meanwhile, the September/October spread was pegged at a 12-cent/b backwardation, stable from the 4:30 pm close July 2.

Market activity was relatively calm July 3 as participants awaited new official selling prices by key West Asian producers that were expected to be released over the weekend.

Tepid demand also capped any further recovery in the market structure amid a backdrop of lackluster refining margins and uncertainty, trade sources said.

"Crack margins are not seeing much improvement and OSP changes are too volatile these days. There is just too much uncertainty," a crude oil trader said. "If the OSP goes up too much, it will be difficult [for buyers] as margins are still not seeing much change," the trader added.

Spot trading activity for September-loading cargoes has also been thin so far as market participants await the release of the new OSPs.

Global oil demand, CO2 emissions likely peaked in 2019: energy consultancy

Global oil demand and carbon dioxide emissions probably peaked in 2019 as the COVID-19 pandemic will have a lasting impact on both, Reuters reported, citing energy consultancy DNV GL.

The Norway-based consultancy, which advises both petroleum and renewable energy companies on risk management and technology, said global energy use would be 8 percent lower in 2050 than previously expected due to the impact of the pandemic.

"Lasting behavioral changes to travel, commuting and working habits will also decrease energy usage and lessen demand for fossil fuels from the transport sector as well as from iron and steel production," DNV GL said in a statement about its research on the impact of the pandemic on oil demand and emissions.

"While we expect oil demand to recover next year, we think that it's likely that it will never reach the levels seen in 2019," Sverre Alvik, head of DNV GL's Energy Transition Outlook, told Reuters.

The International Energy Agency said on June 16, it did not expect oil demand to return to pre-pandemic levels before 2022 due to a slump in air travel.

DNV GL has previously predicted oil demand would plateau in 2022. Growing skepticism about long-term global oil demand in a post-pandemic world is putting pressure on oil companies to revalue their assets. Shell said on Tuesday it would write off assets worth up to \$22 billion after the coronavirus crisis knocked oil and gas demand and weakened the outlook for energy prices.

Renewable energy is seen benefiting from the crisis, because when total energy demand falls, the cheapest sources, such as wind and solar, are preferred to fossil fuels, Alvik said.

While global CO2 emissions also likely peaked in 2019, the expected decline in future would not be steep enough to meet the Paris climate agreement goals, so other measures such as carbon capture and storage (CCS) and greater use of hydrogen were needed, DNV GL said.

"COVID-19 has shown that behavioral changes are indeed possible, and we can use this opportunity to make a change which is good for (the) climate," Alvik said.

The spread between cash Dubai crude and Dubai futures was seen steady to firmer for the first two days of the September-loading trading cycle.

September cash Dubai were assessed at a premium of \$1.29/b to the same-month Dubai futures at the 4:30 pm (0830 GMT) Singapore close July 2, up 9 cents/b from the day before, Platts data showed.

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U.S. interfering in Arab countries to guarantee Israel's security: Lebanese journalist

By Mohammad Mazhari

TEHRAN — A Lebanese journalist believes that U.S. interference in the Arab countries is first and foremost intended to provide security for Israel.

After U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon Dorothy Shea's comments against Hezbollah in an interview with Saudi state-owned broadcaster al-Hadath, her words were rebuffed as open interference in the domestic affairs of Lebanon and a violation of diplomatic norms.

Shea had accused Hezbollah of obstructing economic reforms in Lebanon.

"Frankly, this resembles an act of war against a certain group of Lebanese society," Abir Bassam tells the Tehran Times

Bassam says, "It is not the ambassadors' job in general to discuss the country's internal affairs." Following is the text of the interview:

■ What is your comment on the statements of the U.S. ambassador to Lebanon?

A: In the best-case scenario, we can say that the ambassador was critical of Hezbollah in Lebanon. However, it did not stop at this stage. The ambassador accused Hezbollah of taking the Lebanese government hostage and holding back its economic growth.

Firstly, this kind of speech addresses the Lebanese people and their officials and is considered interference in domestic affairs.

Secondly, this kind of remarks are provocative to those who have always been aligned with the resistance movement, and even causes frustration to those who are against Hezbollah.

Thirdly, it is not the ambassadors' job in general to discuss the countries' internal affairs. Besides, this shows Americans' intentions towards Hezbollah and Lebanon's stability, which is becoming more and more fragile since the 17th of November 2019.

The ambassador's accusations present an aggressive political attitude towards a certain group of people who are part of the Lebanese population and are officially represented with Hezbollah parliamentarians in the Lebanese parliament. Frankly, this resembles an act of war against a certain group of Lebanese society.

■ Do you think these statements signal new developments in Lebanon?

A: It might be. Or perhaps the Americans are preparing for such a thing. In the end, the Americans' interferences in the Arab countries have been aimed at one end goal, which is the security of Israel.

However, the Resistance in Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, is their biggest challenge to protect Israel. And it is still true. Hence, one element of protection for Israel can be provided by recalling for civil war in Lebanon again.



On June 28, Lebanese Foreign Minister Nassif Hitti summoned U.S. Ambassador Dorothy Shea to Beirut over comments she made against Hezbollah.

■ Why Lebanon's economy is in crisis? Is Hezbollah really jeopardizing the economy in Lebanon?

A: The Lebanese fundamental economic crisis has started with the economic procedures adopted by the governments of Lebanon since 1991. The economic policy was based on services, turning Lebanon into a service provider state in the region. These services depend mainly on monetary services and different kinds of tourism: from sightseeing to medical tourism. To a large extent, this marginalized agriculture and industry and made Lebanon dependent solely on imports and very little export. However, Lebanon had to compete with other main countries that have been remotely providing these services and doing an excellent job, such as India, Australia, and Belgium. Lebanon, especially after the 15-year civil war (1975-1990), cannot be such a competitor to these states.

This policy was deeply related to the atmosphere that prevailed in 1990, with many Arab countries signing peace treaties with Israel. Syria was leading such peace talks as well, after the first war in the (Persian) Gulf in 1990. However, the foundation of such economic policy proved to be based on cartoon boards. Syria withdrew from the peace talks, Rabin was killed, and Lebanon backed by Syria continued its resistance against the Israeli occupation in South Lebanon. In this period of history, Hezbollah demonstrated for-

midable Resistance and Islamic Resistance that led to significant accomplishments against Israel until the liberation of the South in May 2000.

Regarding the second part of the question, it can be simply stated in the following manner: the U.S. will not give any financial aid to Lebanon as long as Hezbollah is in the government. The U.S. doesn't have any problem with Hezbollah as a political party; it has a problem with its Axis of Resistance; in other words, it has a problem with Hezbollah's advanced missiles arsenal, which brings us back to the basics that are the Israeli's security!

Therefore, the World Bank will not be giving any more loans based on its conditions. Hezbollah insists that the conditions should not contradict Lebanon's sovereignty and its autonomous decisions. It argues that the World Bank is not allowed to interfere in the Lebanese internal and external decisions.

■ Do you expect the Lebanese government to contain the economic crisis?

A: Diab's government has been doing fine with all the crises accumulated during the past 20 years. However, this government is not getting the support it needs even from the parties that have brought it into existence. Too many conflicting interests are governing these parties and, in particular, the coming (U.S.) presidential elections.

A sharp fall in the value of the Lebanese cur-

“This kind of remarks (by the U.S. ambassador) is provocative to those who have always been aligned with the resistance movement, and even causes frustration to those who are against Hezbollah.”

Post-war reconstruction plans for Libya?

After heavy losses in early June Haftar ready to stop fighting

➔ After the siege of the capital broke, Interior Minister Fathi Bashagha hailed “the beginning of the end of the entire dictatorship project,” and urged cities under Haftar's control to rise up against him and spare themselves further conflict.

President Sisi has threatened to intervene militarily in neighboring Libya if Turkish-backed forces capture Sirte. Control of Sirte also means control over the crucial port and gateway to important oil terminals to export Libya's vast oil wealth.

In televised remarks after inspecting military units at an army base near the border with Libya, Sisi warned that the fall of Sirte or the inland Jufra airbase would be a “red line” for Egypt.

Egypt has been alarmed by Turkey's intervention, which it considers a regional foe because it supports the Muslim Brotherhood group that Sisi ousted from power in 2013.

Former U.S. ambassador to Libya, Deborah Jones, expressed her surprise at Sisi's statement saying Egypt didn't consider the city a red line when the Daesh (ISIS) terror group occupied it, reports Middle East Monitor. In a sign of defeat, the report added that Haftar's forces had started stealing equipment from Sirte power plant, a reminder of the plundering and destruction that late Saddam Hussain committed after his occupation of Kuwait in 1991 when he was convinced of his withdrawal.

The 76-year-old Libyan born Haftar's eastern-based Libyan National Army (LNA) launched his campaign into the war in 2014. He is backed by Russia, UAE, Egypt, and Jordan. Thousands of Russian mercenaries, along with fighters from Sudan and Chad, are reportedly on the way to Sirte's strategic city as GNA moves to take the city. The GNA, led by Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj, announced it was determined to end “the occupation” of the cities of Sirte and Jufra by foreign fighters.

In a complex web of the military alliance by various sides, Turkey and France have engaged in a war of words in recent weeks over their roles in war-torn Libya

Macron accused Turkey of importing a large number of fighters reportedly from Syria into Libya and lambasted Russian President Vladimir Putin's ambivalence over his country's mercenaries operating in the oil-rich North African state. However, on Monday, Macron said Putin had told him that private contractors fighting in Libya did not represent Russia.

France has long denied backing Haftar but has stopped short of rebuking his allies, especially UAE, which has also been singled out by the UN for violating an arms embargo in Libya. Under President Nicolas Sarkozy, Paris led the military intervention in Libya in 2011 toppling Gaddafi.

While fighting continues near Sirte, Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan's top deputies visited the GNA in Tripoli in mid-June, reports the New York Times quoting sources adding politicians could join the upcoming trip by what they called a “committee” of business representatives.

Turkish builders had worked projects in Libya before Turkey officially threw its support behind the GNA in November. The backlog of Turkish contract works there amounts to \$16 billion, a sector official said in January.



Celebrating with Libyan national flags in Tripoli in early June after fighters loyal to the U.N.-backed government captured the town of Tarhuna from rival forces loyal to the commander Khalifa Hifter. (Photo: Agence France-Presse — Getty Images)

Tripoli has been under siege by LNA's Haftar, who started his offensive on the capital last April. The offensive was launched while UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres arrived in Tripoli to prepare for a peace conference. Unsuccessful in taking over Tripoli, Haftar laid siege on the capital since the start of his offensive.

Turkey has heavily criticized France, saying Paris is trying to restore “old colonial rule” in the North African country. Turkish foreign ministry spokesman Hami Aksoy said, “The people of Libya will never forget the damage France has inflicted on this country.”

Macron has denied backing Haftar, claiming it is favor of finding a “political solution.”

Ties between the two NATO allies have soured in recent weeks over Libya, northern Syria, and drilling in the eastern Mediterranean. Tensions escalated following a June 10 incident between Turkish warships and a French naval vessel in the Mediterranean Sea.

Oil production

With 46.4 billion barrels as of 2010, oil reserves in Libya are the largest in Africa. Much of Libya's oil wealth is located in the east, but the revenues are channeled through Tripoli-based state oil firm National Oil Corporation (NOC), which says it serves the whole country and stays out of its factional conflicts.

Prior to the 2011 Libyan civil war, Libya produced over 1.5 million barrels a day. As a result of a blockade of export terminals by LNA by February of this year, oil production dropped to 200,000 barrels a day reports Bloomberg. NOC said the North African state's current production level is at 91,221 barrels per day as of March 17.

In order to choke GNA from the crucial crude export revenue, the LNA seized Libya's export terminals and ports in the east in mid-January.

Spain's foreign affairs ministry released a statement on

rency is the worst thing that was tasked with this government to deal with. Working with a central bank governor who has allowed the smuggling of the dollars outside the country and guarding the U.S. interests are among the major obstacles, as politicians and fiscal specialists have repeatedly accused him of. The dollar price defines the prices in Lebanon, including gasoline, bread, rice, vegetable, meat, medicine, etc.

The government's main problem is that it has not been able to present an emergency policy for passing the current stage or a long-term plan to face the following phases.

The government's measures are trying to take into account the development of the agricultural and industrial sectors. Still, Lebanon's borders to the East are closed, even with its sister country, Syria. It is under American restrictions; it seems that Lebanon is unable to face these challenges.

In the end, all should take responsibility for this condition, including the current government and the majority in the parliament. They need to take bold steps towards Syria, Iran, China, and Russia...etc. It should get close to the whole countries mentioned above, or at least Syria. This is a must.

■ Concurrent with increasing pressure on Hezbollah, the world is witnessing the Israeli move to excavate gas on Lebanon's marine border. What's your evaluation of this?

A: In my opinion, it is irrelevant. Israel must have received the U.S.'s approval to take such a step, which meets Trump's need to establish something he can please his AIPAC voters with.

It will have an added value for both the Israeli and the Americans if the Lebanese government and Hezbollah do not take bold steps in the face of the Israeli move. It will be a retreat for Lebanon and the Resistance.

Still, if they (Lebanon) make a move, the consequences must be measured carefully. At the end of the day, Israel does not want to open war on its “northern borders”. However, if the Americans decided to do so, the Israelis could not refuse, as it happened in 2006. The war was an American decision.

I believe that both the Israelis and the Americans want Iran's head on a spike first. Thus, Hezbollah will be out of Syria; this is their aim. I came across that in many of my readings. They pushed for war against Iran; it turned out to be very costly for the Americans, especially after what the U.S. had experienced in Ein al-Assad in Iraq. Indeed, this is the scale by which I would measure the Israeli step. Nevertheless, until today, Israel has not come even a meter close to the Lebanese territorial waters. So, let us wait and see!

Why is Tehran not going to a settlement with Trump?

By Muhammad Mazhari

It seems that the time is not proper for settlement talks between Tehran and Washington as the nuclear deal is heading for a total failure.

The current U.S. administration has shown that there is no point in talking to Washington as the results of any negotiations or agreements cannot be relied upon.

Trump has a freaky desire and insistence on taking photos to just increase his chances of reelection without any coherent plan to conclude a real agreement.

Almost the whole world has become quite convinced that any deal signed with the U.S. would be broken at Washington's will, so no one should bet on this administration.

«The rest of the world can no longer take it for granted that the U.S. still aspires to be a global leader and needs to readjust its priorities accordingly.» German Chancellor Angela Merkel warned On June 26.

On the other hand, Iran's foreign policy is announced by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei, who emphasized «no war, no negotiations with Trump».

It means that there will be neither escalation nor concessions while Tehran showed its readiness to respond to any American misadventure at the same level, as it fired more than a dozen ballistic missiles at the Assad air base in Iraq, where American troops are stationed. The base was targeted in retaliation for a drone strike by the United States that martyred Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani in early January.

There is also increasing pressure on the American side by resistance groups to expel its forces from the Iraqi territory.

Indeed, both of the two sides decided to reduce tensions in West Asia after a series of successive events, including Iran's downing of an invading U.S. spy drone.

Each side has its own reasons for avoiding escalations. For example, when Saudi Arabia encouraged Trump to attack Iran under the allegation that Iran was behind attacks on Aramco, he was reluctant to confront Iran directly, knowing that more escalation with Iran was not in America's interest. Iran was ready to expand the scope of war in any confrontation by targeting U.S. forces and bases in the region.

In fact, it could affect Trump's reelection chances while he had promised before to stop U.S. endless wars abroad.

Although Washington and Tehran never left indirect negotiation in some specific cases, nobody bets on improving bilateral relations or resolving deep-rooted conflict with the White House.

For instance, indirect talks for exchange of prisoners continued, but it is unlikely that these negotiations result in a comprehensive agreement between the two sides.

Prisoner swap negotiations can be interpreted as a step to control the level of tensions in such a dangerous condition. The arrival of Iranian oil tankers to Venezuela, despite U.S. threats to seize them confirms claims that suggest there is a kind of implicit agreement to «de-escalate».

Given its regional role and international circumstances, Iran does not intend to intensify tension with the United States and does not provoke American public opinion before the U.S. elections.

Apparently, the best choice for Iran is to wait for the November presidential elections, especially in light of the recent developments that are likely to force Trump out of the White House.

EU gives conditional approval for the use of COVID-19 anti-viral redeliver

The European Commission, the bloc's executive arm, on Friday authorized the use of the anti-viral drug to redeliver to treat the new coronavirus.

“Today's first medicine authorization to treat COVID-19 is an important step forward in the fight against this virus,” EU Health Commissioner Stella Kyriakides said in a statement.



“We are granting this authorization less than a month after the application was submitted, showing clearly the EU's determination to respond quickly whenever new treatments become available,” she said.

At least two major US studies have shown that remdesivir can reduce the duration of hospital stays for COVID-19 patients.

Washington authorized the emergency use of the medicine -- which was originally intended as a treatment for Ebola -- on May 1, followed by several Asian nations including Japan and South Korea.

The green light comes on the recommendation of the European Medicines Agency which gave its conditional authorization last week to treat patients above 12 years of age who are suffering from pneumonia and require extra oxygen.

It said its assessment was based mainly on data from a study sponsored by the US National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID).

The research, published in the leading journal, the New England Journal of Medicine in May, showed that injections of remdesivir speeded patient recovery compared with a placebo.

On average, it reduced patients' hospital stays from 15 days to 11.

More than 11.019 million people have been infected globally, and more than 520,000 have died since the COVID-19 disease first emerged in China.

The World Health Organization (WHO), on June 26, warned about a “significant resurgence” of cases of the new coronavirus in nearly a dozen European nations, saying the risk of another outbreak has now become a “reality.”

WHO regional director for Europe Hans Henri Kluge said in a statement, “For weeks I have spoken about the risk of a resurgence as countries adjust to measures.”

(Source: AFP)

Anthropology museum 'cleaned out' in downtown Tehran

HERITAGE TEHRAN — A burglar has 'cleaned out' a museum of anthropology, which is located within the premises of a centuries-old mansion called Sara-ye Kazemi in downtown Tehran.



The burglary took place three weeks ago when a person concealed in the museum for several hours on June 8, and removed artifacts by midnight, cleaning out the showcases full of valuable objects before dawn, a cultural heritage activist, Arash Saberi, told ISNA on July 1.

Saberi estimated the value of the stolen objects at thirty billion rials (about \$715,000), the report said.

According to ILNA news agency, the burglar was arrested by the police two days after the crime took place and all stolen objects have been recovered and being kept by the law enforcement forces.

Sara-ye Kazemi is located in one of old neighborhoods of the Iranian capital city in the 12th district.

13 items added to intangible cultural heritage list

TOURISM TEHRAN — Thirteen new items from the northeastern province of North Khorasan have been registered on the National Intangible Cultural Heritage list, CHTN reported on Friday.



The skill of baking Yukha bread in Gholaman village, the skill of making Pandirpust cheese, the tradition of exchanging milk, the local game of Korkh and Mir, and the skill of making Chartan curd are among the items inscribed on the National Intangible Cultural Heritage list.

The inscriptions were announced on Thursday in a letter to the governor-general of the province, the report added.

Though North Khorasan province may not be the first choice of travelers, its tourism is getting momentum.

According to Lonely Planet, most foreign tourists pass straight through North Khorasan in transit between Mashhad and Gorgan, but if you have time to explore, it's worth diverting south from the capital, Bojnurd, towards Esfarayen, famed for its wrestling tournaments, the remarkable citadel of Belqays and the partly preserved stepped village of Roiein some 20km north. Although a lot of new building spoils the effect in parts of the village, Roiein is considered Khorasan's answer to the well-known Masuleh and is a possible starting point for hikes to little-visited mountain villages.

Museum, featuring objects from 5th BC onwards, inaugurated in northern Iran

HERITAGE TEHRAN — On Thursday, a cultural heritage museum, featuring relics from 5th BC to the contemporary era, was officially inaugurated in the premises of the Ramsar Palace Museum, in Mazandaran province, northern Iran.



Covering 150 square meters in area, the museum showcases a wide range of vessels and utensils handcrafted using different techniques and materials including pottery, stone, porcelain, metal, glass, and crystal, IRNA reported.

Set in a walled garden, the lavishly decorated Palace Museum was once a summer residence for the last Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza, and the royal family. However, the building is best remembered for hosting the 1971 signing of the Ramsar Convention, an international treaty for the protection and conservation of the world's wetlands.

UNWTO meeting: Iran outlines measures to help tourism recover from COVID-19

→ 1 The meeting was wrapped up by calling on both the public and the private sector to collaborate and share experience to boost tourism as a catalyst for sustainable development in the region.

Last month, Pololikashvili, in a letter to tourism minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan, praised Iran's efforts made to manage the travel industry during the pandemic. "A series of measures that the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts of Iran has taken, following the guidelines and recommendations of UNWTO, has truly earned plaudits as an effective practice to mitigate the impact on tourism," a segment of the message reads.

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.

Under the 2025 Tourism Vision Plan, the country aims to increase the number of tourist arrivals from 4.8 million in 2014 to 20 million in 2025. The latest available data show eight million tourists visited the Islamic Republic during the first ten months of the past Iranian calendar year (started March 21, 2019).



Coronavirus cuts medical tourists in Mashhad by 95%

TOURISM TEHRAN — The coronavirus pandemic has slashed the number of travelers visiting the city of Mashhad for medical purposes by 95 percent over the past few months, IRNA reported.

Due to the travel restrictions imposed by Iran and neighboring countries, the number of medical and health tourists visiting medical centers and hospitals in Mashhad has decreased significantly and new admission of non-emergency foreign patients hasn't been done, said Esmaeil Khayyami, the health tourism manager of Mashhad University of Medical Sciences.

After Tehran, Mashhad has the most medical tourists in the country, the official added.

He also noted that medical tourists admitted to Mashhad hospitals and medical centers are from 55 different nationalities, more than 60% of whom are from Iraq and the rest are from Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan.

For the time being, 14 hospitals and three medical centers are offering special services to foreign patients in Mashhad, who are



mostly visiting these centers for Open-heart surgeries, vascular surgeries, general surgeries, orthopedics, skin, hair and beauty services, dental services, as well as women's and infertility services.

Iranian hospitals admitted nearly 70,000

foreign patients over the Iranian calendar year 1397 (March 2018 – March 2019) and it made an economic contribution of around \$1.2 billion to the country, according to the medical tourism department at the Ministry of Health.

In April 2018, the rotating presidency of the International Health Tourism Conference of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) was handed to the Islamic Republic for a three-year term.

Mohammad Jahangiri who presides over a national center for developing health tourism said in May 2018 that Iran has the capacity to annually earn \$7 billion in medical and health tourism, though the sector now brings in only one-seventh or even lesser of the sum.

The Islamic Republic has set its goals to exceed its yearly medical travelers to around 2 million in [calendar year] 1404.

Before the coronavirus puts everything on lockdown, Mashhad played host to thousands of travelers and pilgrims who come from various Iranian cities, neighboring countries, and even across the globe to visit the imposing, massive holy shrine complex of Imam Reza (AS), the eighth Imam of the Shia Muslims.

Almost 40 million Iranian pilgrims and travelers visited the shrine city of Mashhad, the capital of Khorasan Razavi province, during the last Iranian calendar year (ended March 19).

Police blocks websites trading historical objects

HERITAGE TEHRAN — Iranian police have blocked 86 websites which were illegally trading historical artifacts, ISNA reported on Thursday.

The cultural and historical heritage should be preserved and passed on to the next generation and all people are needed to cooperate in this regard as a national duty, said Amir Rahmatollahi, a senior police official in charge of protecting cultural heritage.

To identify the websites that illegally sell historical relics, the cyberspace is being monitored 24 hours a day, the official added.

Earlier in June, Facebook banned the sale of historical artifacts, including Iranian carpets, on its platforms in an attempt to prevent priceless items looted or stolen from being sold online.

Published photos of stolen historical artifacts on Facebook and Instagram were one of the reasons which led to the decision.

Several reports confirmed that the looters were using the platform to identify and sell



illegally excavated antiquities mostly from the countries in West Asia.

Several exquisite and priceless relics that represent various eras of the country's rich

history, have been unearthed in various excavations in the country's historical sites, and are mostly being kept in different museums.

Iran is home to one of the world's oldest continuous major civilizations, embracing settlements dating back to 4000 BC.

The name of Iran, formerly known as Persia, mostly conjures up the first Persian Empire, ruled by the Achaemenids (550 – 330 BC) and sites such as Pasargadae and Persepolis. However, there are tens of prehistorical sites as the Burnt City in Sistan-Baluchestan, Tepe Sialk in Kashan, Susa and Chogha Zanbil in the Khuzestan province and Ecbatana in Hamedan which predate Achaemenid period.

From a wider point of view, Iranian history can be divided into Pre-Islamic and Islamic eras. The Medes unified Iran as a nation and empire in 625 BC. The Islamic conquest of Persia (633–656) that put an end to the mighty Sassanid Empire (224–651) was a turning point in the history of the nation.

Iranian silkmakers spin a niche to sustain millennia-old industry

HERITAGE Photo collection depicts members of a rustic Iranian family who are breeding clusters of silkworms on piles of mulberry leaves in Minudasht county, Iran's northern Golestan province, on June 28, 2020.

It is one scarce family in their village trying to spin a niche around a noticeable supply chain of high-quality material. Each member of the family plays a role in the process. Even youngsters help their parents for instance in the final stage of the silk thread production, where several threads are gathered together to form bundles.

The memory of the Silk Road is still alive in the remotest regions of Iran, where the ancient route once passed. Sources say that for some 3,000 years, silk thread produced in Iran has been used to make clothing fabric and for weaving Persian rugs.

The Silk Road was a well-connected network of routes which, according to ancient maps, began in China and passed through central Asia before ending in Syria. It served as an important trade route connecting the Mediterranean Sea and China.



© Tehran Times/Mahsa Safari



Prominent Mount Damavand grappling with environmental issues

By Faranak Bakhtiari

TEHRAN — Mount Damavand, the highest peak in Iran, is located northeastern Tehran, but today, it is facing many environmental problems and challenges. Environmental enthusiasts believe that with the inclusion of Damavand National Day in the official calendar of the country, more attention should be paid to this unique natural phenomenon, while unfortunately no action has been taken so far.

Mount Damavand, a potentially active volcano 5600-m high, is a stratovolcano which is the highest peak in Iran and the highest volcano in Asia, which is a significant mountain in Persian mythology and folklore; it is the symbol of Iranian resistance against despotism and foreign rule in Persian poetry and literature.

It is in the middle of the Alborz range, near the southern coast of the Caspian Sea, in Amol County, Mazandaran province, 66 kilometers (41 miles) northeast of the city of Tehran.

Mount Damavand is the 12th most prominent peak in the world and the second most prominent in Asia after Mount Everest. It is part of the Volcanic Seven Summits mountaineering challenge.

The peak has been plagued by many environmental problems in recent years, including, road construction, high tourist traffic flow, poor mining, overgrazing of livestock in the pastures around the peak slopes, depletion of Dasht-e Shaghayegh (the plain of Iranian poppies) by tourists, land-use changes and construction.

Excessive climbing, dumping of indestructible waste at heights where it is almost impossible for unprofessional people to collect and clean it, lack of sanitary services, legal and illegal hunting, overpopulation of herding dogs that led to the death of wildlife species, as well as the destruction of ancient artifacts in the area, are among the issues, if left unresolved, could pose a serious threat to this natural heritage.

Mountains are home of 15 percent of the world's population and a quarter of the



world's land animals and plants, in addition to providing fresh water to half of humanity, so their conservation is a key factor for sustainable development.

Because all kinds of precious metals and stones, coal, and other raw materials are hidden in the heart of the mountains, they have always been encroached by humans; also due to agricultural lands which are used for forage production, herbs, livestock breeding, production of meat, dairy and all kinds of food.

Unfortunately, mountains are under threat from climate change and overexploitation, and Damavand is no exception.

Meanwhile, NGOs and environmental organizations have taken action to address these problems. Some local and indigenous peoples whose settlements are exposed to environmental damage have also taken action to prevent the threats, but yet the government and non-governmental organizations have not been able to work together and resolve the issue.

■ **Formation of special working group to protect Damavand necessary**
Environmental activist Hossein Abiri Golpayegani told IRNA on Friday that given

the experience of more than three decades of environmental activity among environmental activists, especially in the mountainous sector, it is necessary that public organizations, government agencies, and locals form a special working group to protect and preserve Mount Damavand.

"This year, environmental activists are celebrating the Damavand National Day for the 16th year (of course, the ceremony is scheduled to be held online this year due to the coronavirus epidemic). During this time, they have gained good experience in defending Damavand's environment.

Also, for more than 15 years, activists from Tehran and Mazandaran have been visiting the slopes of Damavand peak for several weeks to guard the Shaghayegh plain.

However, environmental activists have not yet been able to properly sensitize local people to the effects of the destruction of natural areas around their residence. Therefore, locals' participation to defend Mount Damavand should be taken seriously," he explained.

He went on to say that "Mount Damavand seems to be no priority for responsible bodies such as Department of Environment (DOE),

and the ministry of cultural heritage.

Although the DOE registered the upper part of the peak as a natural monument a few years ago, it has not done any protection measures for this 2500-m height so far.

Also, since 2008, Damavand has been nationally registered as the first natural and historical monument by the cultural heritage ministry, but has not carried out any protection program as it should."

To solve the problems of Mount Damavand, there is no choice but to gather governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations, and locals to cooperate; therefore, it is suggested that a working group be formed with the presence of the people and various organizations interested in preserving Damavand, responsible bodies such as the DOE, the Forests, Rangelands, and Watershed Management Organization, and the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, he explained.

This working group can prepare instructions that must be implemented by all; for instance, related agencies will provide facilities, funds, and expertise to help identify problems in the region, and NGOs, as a line of communication between the government and locals, will hold training courses and promote culture among the people, he noted.

In this working group, locals will be tasked with protecting Damavand; once the protection of the environment becomes a culture for the people of the region, destruction will no longer continue but will be minimized, he further added.

The first program of Damavand National Day, which was held with the cooperation of the Tehran climb board, mountain climbing buffs, mountaineering groups and the media from June 22 to 24, 2004, was accompanied by hundreds of climbers to symbolically collect the waste in Damavand mountainous area.

And each year, a special program has been conducted to mark this day, meanwhile, the officials are expected to seriously consider the protection of Damavand, so that it will no longer be subject to deliberate and unintentional destruction.

WHO supports Iran in fight against influenza

SOCIETY

TEHRAN — The World Health Organization (WHO) has provided the necessary equipment to help the national influenza center respond to influenza, IRNA reported on Friday.

Involved in providing emergency support to counter COVID-19 in Iran, WHO continues to strengthen its support for the national influenza program.

The cargo includes laboratory equipment for influenza test and virus isolation from the National Influenza Center of Iran, which was sent to the center to prepare for the winter when flu strikes.

The center operates as a key institution for communication between the World Health Organization and Iran on issues related to the epidemiological aspects of influenza and its spread. It is equipped with molecular and cellular biological technologies for virus isolation, genomic sequencing, and simulation.

The isolated viruses are then sent to the WHO Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System (GISRS) to be used to produce the influenza vaccine after approval.

In 1969, the national influenza center



of Iran joined the GISRS. In 2005, after an outbreak of bird flu in some countries, health authorities in Iran focused more seriously on the medical and economic impact of influenza and expanded the laboratory as part of the Virology Department of the School of Public Health, Tehran University of Medical Sciences. WHO evaluates the performance and quality of the laboratory through the annual accreditation program.

Iranian researchers published an essay by the British Medical Journal, warning the dangers of co-infection of Covid-19 and influenza A "Covi-Flu" to the global economy and sustainable development.

Health ministry to promote Iranian lifestyle based on traditional medicine

1 →

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) herbal medicines are naturally occurring, plant-derived substances with minimal or no industrial processing that have been used to treat illness within local or regional healing practices. Traditional herbal medicines are getting significant attention in global health debates.

Global herbal market size is estimated at approximately \$72 billion which is predicted to reach \$7 trillion by 2050. Medicinal plants are used in various industries which are worth around \$80 billion.

Europe is the largest herbal product market valued at \$7.5 billion and has a 40% market share. China has the highest number of medicinal plants and also is the leading country in export of medicinal plants globally having 15% sharing global export under this category.

Hossein Rezaeezadeh, the president of Iran School of Traditional Medicine, said in January 2019 that twenty health centers offering Iranian traditional medicine were being constructed in 20 different areas across the country.

He added that a university unit of study



offering Iranian traditional medicine would be added to the program of all medical science courses across the country.

According to Rezaeezadeh, eight schools of Iranian traditional medicine were operating in different universities across the country.

"Up to now, more than 600 students, general practitioners, and pharmacists were accepted in Iranian traditional medicine programs and 240 of them have already graduated," Rezaeezadeh added.

Christoph Hamelmann, WHO representative in Iran has said that Iranian traditional medicine has the potential to gain international recognition and WHO must support its globalization.

Iran breaks U.S. monopoly on aviation navigation charts

Iranian researchers have succeeded to produce aviation navigation charts, known as Inflight AIP (Aeronautical Information Publication), which was monopolized by the United States, IRNA news agency reported on Sunday.

Prepared by Iran's Army, the Inflight AIP was unveiled in Tehran with Air Force Commander Brigadier General Aziz Nasirzadeh and Vice President for Science and Technology Sourena Sattari in attendance. Digital aeronautical charts, including instrument flight rules (IFR) and visual flight rules (VFR), is a high-quality knowledge-based product which was solely produced by Jeppesen Company and was not available for Iranian airlines due to U.S. sanctions.

ایران انحصار آمریکا در نقشه‌های هوانوردی را شکست

ایران با تولید نقشه‌های هوانوردی (INFLIGHT AIP) که پیش از این در انحصار آمریکا بوده به موفقیت چشمگیری در زمینه صنعت هوانوردی دست یافت. به گزارش ایرنا، روز یکشنبه با حضور امیر سرتیپ خلبان عزیز نصیرزاده فرمانده نیروی هوایی ارتش و سوزنا ستاری معاون علمی و فناوری ریاست جمهوری از نقشه‌های هوانوردی (INFLIGHT AIP) تولید داخل رونمایی شد. چارت‌های هوایی دیجیتالی شامل نقشه‌های پروازی IFR و VFR یک محصول دانش بنیان با فناوری بسیار بالا است که پیش از این انحصار آن در اختیار آمریکا و شرکت جیپسن (Jeppesen) قرار داشت که به دلیل اعمال تحریم‌های ظالمانه شرکت‌های هواپیمایی ایرانی از دسترسی به این نقشه‌ها محروم شده بودند.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“-dom”

- **Meaning:** state, condition, quality
- **For example:** we do have some **freedom** of choice.

PHRASAL VERB

Pull in

- **Meaning:** to move to a designated place at the side of the road
- **For example:** A police car signaled to me to pull in.

IDIOM

Do a double take

- **Explanation:** to look at someone or something again because you are very surprised by what you saw or heard
- **For example:** Colleagues often walked past me in the hallway, then stopped and did a double take.

Rising temperatures could cause mass die-off of tropical plants by 2070, research suggests

Tropical plants which flourish closest to the equator are among those most at risk from climate breakdown, with the warming world expected to eventually become too hot for some species to germinate.

This process could happen within just 50 years, according to researchers from the University of New South Wales (UNSW).

Using almost 10,000 records for more than 1,300 species from the Kew Gardens' global seed germination database, the researchers examined the range of temperatures each species could tolerate and still survive, as well as looking at climate models.

They found many tropical plants will be at risk of reaching the maximum temperature at which they could germinate.

The closer a plant is to the equator, the more at risk it will be of exceeding its temperature ceiling by 2070, the research team said.

Lead author Alex Sentinella, a PhD researcher at UNSW, said past research had found animal species closer to the equator would be more at risk from climate change.

"The thought was that because tropical species come from a stable climate where it's always warm, they can only cope with a narrow range of temperatures – whereas species from higher latitudes can cope with a larger range of temperatures because they come from places where the weather varies widely," Mr Sentinella said.

"However, this idea had never been tested for plants.

"Because climate change is a huge issue globally, we wanted to understand these patterns on a global scale and build upon the many studies on plants at an individual level in their environment," he said.

The researchers examined seed germination data from the Millennium Seed Bank Partnership Data Warehouse, hosted by Kew Royal Botanic Gardens in London, to quantify global patterns in germination temperature.

They analysed 9,737 records for 1,312 plant species from every continent except Antarctica and excluded agricultural crops.

Mr Sentinella said they chose seed data because it was widely available and relevant to the ability of a species to cope with different temperatures.

"With seeds, you can experiment on them quickly, there are a lot of studies about them and importantly, germination directly relates to how a species will survive, because if the seed doesn't germinate the plant won't live," he said.

"So, we collated the data from the Kew Gardens database, examined all experiments on the same species from the same locations, and then determined the range of temperatures each species could tolerate in order to survive."

The researchers also examined climate data for the same locations as the plant species used in the study.

They looked at current temperature – the average temperature of the warmest three months from 1970 to 2000 – and predicted temperature for 2070.

The researchers then compared the temperatures the plants were experiencing now with the forecasted 2070 temperatures.

They found tropical plants do not have narrower temperature tolerances but were more at risk from global warming, because it would bring them close to their maximum seed germination temperatures.

"These plants could be more at risk because they are near their upper limits. So, even a small increase in temperature from climate change could push them over the edge," Mr Sentinella said.

The research is published in the journal Global Ecology and Biogeography.

"The figures are quite shocking because by 2070, more than 20 per cent of tropical plant species, we predict, will face temperatures above their upper limit, which means they won't germinate, and so can't survive."

Mr Sentinella said the researchers also found that more than half of tropical species are expected to experience temperatures exceeding their optimum germination temperatures.

"That's even worse because if those plants can survive it would be at a reduced rate of germination and therefore, they might not be as successful," he said.

WORDS IN THE NEWS

Polio immunisation

(February 23, 2004)

More than sixty million children in ten African countries are being immunised against Polio in the three days from 23rd to 25th February. This is part of a final push to eradicate the disease. Some states in northern Nigeria have refused to participate because of fears about the safety of the vaccine. This report from Ania Lichtarowicz:

Tens of thousands of health workers will go house to house over the next three days in an effort to **immunize** sixty three million children under the age of five in **sub-Saharan Africa**. The campaign is the start of monthly national immunisation days during the low season for polio. It's hoped that vaccinating children now - when the **virus** is at its weakest - will be the best way of stopping **transmission**.

When the polio **campaign** started in 1988, a thousand children were **paralysed** every day by the virus, last year less than eight hundred children were affected in total.

But claims by local religious leaders that the vaccine is unsafe have seriously **hampered** efforts to stop polio spreading - not only in Nigeria, but also in India and Pakistan - where similar immunization schemes are due to begin shortly.

However the Global Polio **Eradication Initiative**, as well as state officials and religious leaders have **commissioned** independent tests that show the vaccine to be safe - they hope this will **allay** fears of parents and allow children to be protected against Polio.

■ Words

immunize: give a vaccination - a harmless form of the germs that cause a disease, given to people to prevent them getting the disease itself

sub-Saharan Africa: the part of Africa below the Sahara Desert

virus: a kind of germ that can cause a disease

transmission: the passing of something from person to person

campaign: an activity to achieve something; usually social or political change

paralysed: made unable to move

hampered: if you hamper something you make it difficult to do and delay progress

Eradication Initiative: an activity to end or get rid of something

commissioned: asked or paid to do something; for example a report or a book

allay fears: stop people feeling afraid

(Source: BBC)

Iraq threatens to sever trade ties with Turkey over cross-border operation

Iraq has threatened to cut off its trade ties with Turkey in protest at Ankara's ongoing cross-border operation in the country's semi-autonomous Kurdistan region against hideouts of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) militant group.

"Turkey has interests in Iraq as the annual trade balance between Baghdad and Ankara stands at more than 16 billion dollars annually. There are also hundreds of Turkish commercial insinuates operating inside Iraq. The Iraqi government will take actions against all these interests if urgent need arises," spokesman for the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ahmed al-Sahaf, said in an exclusive interview with local Kurdish-language Rudaw television news network on Thursday night.

Sahaf further noted that the Iraqi government has a wide array of options to stop the Turkish offensive and demand compensation for the loss of civilian lives.

Biden pulls together hundreds of lawyers as a bulwark against election trickery

➔ 1 "We put together 600 lawyers and a group of people throughout the country who are going into every single state to try to figure out whether chicanery is likely to take place," Biden, the presumptive Democratic nominee, said on a video conference with donors to his campaign, Reuters reported.

"We have over 10,000 people signed up to volunteer. We're in the process of getting into the states in question to train them to be in a polling place," he said, in a time when the coronavirus pandemic requires extra precautions. Biden's remarks come as the candidate offers dire warnings about efforts by Republicans to cheat in the Nov. 3 election while also criticizing his election opponent, Republican President Donald Trump, for undermining confidence in the vote.

A senior political adviser and top lawyer for Trump's campaign, Justin Clark, said Biden is lying and stoking fear while Democrats are trying to "fundamentally change" how elections are conducted, an apparent reference to their support for widespread mail-in voting. Republicans have argued that mail-in voting and other changes being suggested by Democrats in the midst of the pandemic could create fraud.

"They are inserting chaos and confusion into our voting process because it is the only way they can win," Clark said in a statement, adding that the president is committed to "fair and free elections."

Biden has previously said that his single greatest concern is Trump's trying to "steal" the victory.

Election experts have been on edge about the process given chaos and legal challenges during primary elections held amid the viral outbreak.

Israeli, UAE tech firms pen deal on virus research

A state-linked technology company in the United Arab Emirates has signed a partnership with two major Israeli defense firms to research ways of combating the coronavirus pandemic.

The agreement, announced late Thursday, comes just weeks after the UAE warned Israel that proceeding with its planned annexation of parts of the occupied West Bank would upend its efforts to improve ties with Arab states, Daily Star reported.

G42, an Abu Dhabi-based company specializing in artificial intelligence and cloud computing, signed a memorandum of understanding with Rafael and Israel Aerospace Industries, the UAE's state-run WAM news agency reported. It said executives held a signing ceremony by video link between the two countries, which do not have diplomatic relations.

Rafael and IAI's Elta subsidiary confirmed the agreement. Elta, which specializes in sensors, radars, electronic warfare and communication systems, said they would cooperate on research and technology focused on artificial intelligence, sensors and lasers.

They said the collaboration would not only benefit the two countries, but the entire world as it grapples with the pandemic.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has vowed to annex all of Israel's West Bank settlements as well as the strategic Jordan Valley, had announced an agreement with the UAE a week ago, without providing specifics.

Resistance News

IOF tear-gasses Palestinian protesters in al-Khalil

INTERNATIONAL **TEHRAN**— Dozens of Palestinian citizens choked on tear gas fired by Israeli occupation forces (IOF) to quell a peaceful protest in al-Khalil, south of the West Bank.

Local sources said that violent confrontations flared up when the IOF attacked dozens of Palestinians demonstrating against the annexation and settler attacks in al-Khalil.

The IOF heavily fired tear gas canisters, stun grenades and rubber-coated metal bullets at the demonstrators. Many suffered tear gas suffocations and were treated in the field.

A wave of mass protests has hit the Palestinian territories lately over Israel's plan to annex the Jordan Valley and large parts of the Occupied West Bank.

Haneyya meets Qatari foreign minister

INTERNATIONAL **TEHRAN**— A senior Hamas delegation led by its political bureau chairman Ismail Haneyya met in Doha on Thursday with the Qatari deputy premier and foreign minister Sheikh Mohammed Al-Thani.

The delegates briefed Sheikh Mohammed on latest developments of the Palestinian question and the Movement's efforts to unite Palestinian national ranks to confront the Israeli annexation and settlement plans in addition to the Judaization attempts of Occupied Jerusalem.

The delegation appreciated Qatar's supportive stand of the Palestinian cause, legitimate rights and people.

For his part, the Qatari foreign minister reiterated his country's support for the Palestine just cause. He also voiced support for efforts to unite the Palestinian ranks.

The Hamas delegation included political bureau members Dr. Mousa Abu Marzouk, Ezzet al-Resheq and Maher Obeid.

Hamas calls for 'armed struggle' to liberate West Bank from Israeli occupation

A senior Hamas leader has called on other Palestinian groups in the occupied West Bank to join hands and start an armed struggle against the Israeli occupation.

Mahmoud al-Zahar, a co-founder of the Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas and a member of the group's leadership in the Gaza Strip, says all Palestinian groups must follow the successful model implemented in the liberation of the Gaza Strip, namely armed struggle, in order to counter Tel Aviv's expansionist policies in the West Bank.

Speaking to the Lebanese TV channel Al Mayadeen on Thursday, al-Zahar said the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) must stop implementing its Oslo Accords with the Israeli regime, and take up arms against the occupiers.

Hamas is going to ask for the cooperation of the Palestinian Authority and the Fatah movement in order to have new principles and mechanisms devised, he said.

According to Press TV, the top Hamas official said based on new principles, a plan must be developed for the real liberation of Palestine, similar to the plan that resulted in Gaza's liberation through armed resistance.



On Thursday, in a show of unity, senior officials from Fatah and Hamas held a joint press conference that is the first of its kind in several years.

Jibril Rajoub, Fatah Secretary General

from Ramallah, and Saleh al-Aroui, Hamas deputy chief from Beirut, vowed in a video conference to unite efforts in fighting Israel's plan to annex parts of the occupied West bank, including parts of the strategic

Top U.S. spies brief Congress on Russia-Taliban intelligence

CIA Director Gina Haspel and National Security Agency Director Paul Nakasone met with congressional leaders at the United States Capitol on Thursday to share U.S. intelligence suggesting Russia offered the Taliban bounties to kill U.S. troops in Afghanistan.

Amid rising calls for new sanctions on Russia, U.S. intelligence officials are under pressure from members of both parties in Congress to provide explanations.

U.S. media outlets have reported that intelligence agencies concluded the Russian military offered bounties to Taliban affiliates in Afghanistan to kill American troops and coalition forces. President Donald Trump has played down the reports and called the allegations a hoax.

Members of Congress who were briefed behind closed doors on Thursday included top Republican and Democrat leaders from the House of Representatives and the Senate as well as chairs of the intelligence committees. The U.S.'s top spy, Director of National Intelligence John Ratcliffe, also attended.

"I'm not going to say anything about the briefing, but I believe that the president is not close to tough enough on [Russian President] Vladimir Putin," Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer told reporters as he left the briefing.

Going into the meeting, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi - who has been harshly critical of Trump, calling him unfit for office - said she hoped to learn "the truth" about the Russian bounties.

French president names Jean Castex new prime minister

French President Emmanuel Macron on Friday named Jean Castex, who coordinated France's virus reopening strategy, as the country's new prime minister.

The relatively low-profile Castex replaces Edouard Philippe, who resigned earlier in the day. Macron is reshuffling the government to focus on restarting the economy after months of lockdown.

France is to name a new prime minister on Friday shortly after the announcement of Edouard Philippe's resignation.

President Emmanuel Macron wants a new government to focus on efforts to relaunch the French economy deeply hit by the coronavirus crisis, AP reported.

The French presidency said a new prime minister will be appointed "in the coming hours." Many government members are expected to be replaced in the ensuing reshuffle.

In an interview given to several local newspapers on Thursday, Macron, said he is seeking a "new path" to rebuild the country for the two remaining years of his term.

He praised Philippe's "outstanding work" in the past three years. "I will need to make choices to lead (the country) down the path," he said.

Macron did not elaborate on the profile of the next prime minister. French media list Florence Parly and Jean-Yves Le Drian, former defense minister and foreign minister respectively, among potential candidates.

The reshuffle comes days after a green wave swept over France in local elections. Macron saw his young centrist party defeated in France's biggest cities and failing to plant



local roots across the country.

The reshuffle was planned even before Sunday's voting, as Macron's government faced obstacles and criticism before and during the virus crisis.

As the pandemic was peaking in the country in March and April, authorities came under fire for the lack of masks, tests and medical equipment.

Before that, Macron's pro-business policies, widely seen as favoring the wealthier, had been hampered by the yellow vest economic movement against perceived social injustice. This winter, weeks of strikes and street demonstrations against a planned pension overhaul disrupted the country.

In addition, Macron's efforts to boost job creation have been swept away by the economic and social consequences

U.S. creates force to protect monuments amid anti-racism protests

➔ 1 "We won't stand idly by while violent anarchists and rioters seek not only to vandalize and destroy the symbols of our nation, but to disrupt law and order and sow chaos in our communities."

The new "Protecting American Communities Task Force" will coordinate law enforcement and provide intelligence to protect monuments, he said.

Trump tweeted early Wednesday that his recent executive order to protect monuments and statues is now in effect, reminding that damaging federal property could bring more than 10 years in prison.

"Please do not put yourself in jeopardy. Many people now under arrest!" he wrote.

■ U.S. couple waves guns at anti-racism protesters
Meanwhile, for Reuters photographer

Lawrence Bryant, the events of last Sunday in St. Louis, Missouri, will make him extra vigilant the next time he goes out to cover anti-racism protests that are sweeping the United States.

In a series of dramatic pictures, Bryant captured a couple exiting their mansion carrying firearms which they waved towards the crowd, as they confronted demonstrators making their way to the mayor's home nearby to demand her resignation.

The images, taken at close range, have featured prominently on news websites and in newspapers since they were taken.

Bryant, 45, recalled that on Sunday evening several hundred white and Black protesters walked through an open gate into the community where the couple - Mark McCloskey and his wife Patricia McCloskey - lived.

They were met by Mark McCloskey holding what looked like an automatic rifle and shouting "get out!" several times at the crowd. In photographs and video footage of the incident, he wore a pink shirt, beige trousers and his feet were bare.

With places to take cover, Bryant said he was not overly worried at that point, even when the man appeared to cock his weapon.

Then Patricia McCloskey appeared from the front of the house holding a handgun. Bryant quickly became more concerned.

"She had her finger on the trigger and looked nervous and I became a little bit more worried, as there were kids out there and she was sporadically pointing the gun at random people," he recalled.

"I just was trying to make frames. Trying to stay safe, trying to dodge the barrel of the

Jordan Valley.

July 1 was set by Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu to start annexation of parts of the West Bank but Tel Aviv failed to launch the scheme on the set date amid differences between Netanyahu and key members of his cabinet, whose consent the White House says is needed for the annexation to go ahead.

Netanyahu's office announced that he will continue to discuss the plan with the U.S. administration.

The announcement came shortly after Hamas fired a volley of rockets into the sea as a serious "warning" against the annexation plan.

According to the Palestinian Samanews, a barrage of 20 rockets was launched within an hour.

Palestinian resistance groups have declared their resolve to stand up to the Israeli occupation and the regime's expansionism.

U.S. President Donald Trump gave Tel Aviv the green light for the land grab in his self-proclaimed "deal of the century," which was unveiled in January with the aim of legitimizing Israel's occupation and re-drawing the West Asia (Middle East) map.

Modi takes veiled dig at China on visit to disputed border area

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said the "age of expansionism" is over, as he paid tribute to soldiers killed in last month's border skirmish with China on a surprise visit to the northern Himalayan region of Ladakh amid escalating tension between the Asian giants.

"Age of expansionism is over, this is the age of development. History is witness that expansionist forces have either lost or were forced to turn back," Modi said without naming China during his first trip to the disputed region since June 15 deadly border clash, in which at least 20 Indian soldiers were killed.

Modi, who has been under pressure to respond to what India deems Chinese incursions, met troops at a base in Ladakh's

Nimu area, pictures from Reuters partner ANI showed.

"Your courage is higher than the heights where you are posted today," he said in his address to soldiers in Ladakh.

"The bravery that you and your compatriots showed, a message has gone to the world about India's strength."

According to al Jazeera, Modi was accompanied by the chief of defense staff, General Bipin Rawat, and the chief of the army, General Manoj Mukund Naravane.

India and China have traded blame for triggering the high-altitude brawl in the Galwan Valley on June 15, in which 20 Indian soldiers were killed and at least 76 were injured.

of the country's lockdown.

The government issued a 460 billion-euro emergency package through a state-funded partial activity scheme, tax cuts and other financial aids for businesses, and Macron needs to adapt his policies as France's economy is expected to shrink by 11% this year.

The unemployment rate that fell from 9.2% at the beginning of Macron's term in 2017 to 7.6% earlier this year - its lowest level since 2008 - is now expected to increase steadily.

"Our first priority will be to rebuild an economy that is strong, ecological, sovereign and united," Macron said in a televised address to the nation on June 14.

He ruled out any tax rise and instead said "working and producing more" is the response amid bankruptcies and layoffs caused by the crisis.

He put an emphasis on creating new jobs with climate-oriented policies including renovation of old buildings and greener transport and industries.

Philippe, 49, is expected to become the mayor of his hometown of Le Havre, in western France, after he won a large victory in Sunday's voting.

A conservative, former member of The Republicans' party, he had joined Macron's government in May 2017.

He had seen his popularity sharply increase in recent weeks, according to French poll institutes that show many French consider he did good job in gradually easing virus-related restrictions in the country and enforcing an emergency package to support the French economy.

gun and stay out of sight and out of line. I'm a big, Black man and I always have to pay attention to that anyway."

The McCloskeys have said they feared for their lives on Sunday and that protesters damaged a wrought-iron gate at an entrance to the wealthy neighborhood.

"Their actions were borne solely of fear and apprehension, the genesis of which was not race related. In fact, the agitators responsible for the trepidation were white," their lawyer said in a statement sent to Reuters.

"The McCloskeys want to make sure no one thinks less of Black Lives Matter (protest movement), its message and the means it is employing to get its message out because of the actions of a few white individuals who tarnished a peaceful protest."

Saudi suspects tried in absentia for Khashoggi death

A Turkish court on Friday opened the trial in absentia of two former aides of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and 18 other Saudi nationals over the 2018 killing of Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi.

Turkish prosecutors have indicted the 20 Saudi nationals over Khashoggi's grisly killing at the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul that cast a cloud of suspicion over Prince Mohammed. They are seeking life prison terms for the defendants, who have all left Turkey, AP reported.

Saudi Arabia rejected Turkish demands for the suspects' extradition and put some of them on trial in Riyadh.

The proceedings were widely criticized as a "whitewash" and Khashoggi's family later announced that they had forgiven his killers.

The trial in Turkey will be closely watched for possible new information or evidence into the killing, including the whereabouts of Khashoggi's remains.

The Turkish prosecutors have charged the prince's former advisers, Saud al-Qahtani and Ahmed al-Asiri, with "instigating a premeditated murder with the intent of (causing) torment through fiendish instinct."

Prosecutors are also seeking life prison sentences for

18 other Saudi nationals charged with carrying out "a premeditated murder with the intent of (causing) torment through fiendish instincts."

Khashoggi, who was a resident of the US, had walked into his country's consulate on Oct. 2, 2018, for an appointment to pick up documents that would allow him to marry. He never walked out.

A team of 15 Saudi agents had flown to Turkey to meet Khashoggi inside the consulate. They included a forensic doctor, intelligence and security officers and individuals who worked for the crown prince's office.

Iran volleyball coach to be appointed until September: Davarzani

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Head of Islamic Republic of Iran Volleyball Federation (IRIVF), Mohammadreza Davarzani, has said the head coach of Iran national football team will be appointed prior to start of the domestic league.

Iran national volleyball team are without a coach since parting company with Igor Kolakovic in late March following cancellation of 2020 Olympic Games due to the pandemic coronavirus (COVID-19).

Now the head of the federation, in an interview with Radio Iran, has said that the new head coach will be named before the start of the Iran Super League in September.

"We are going to appoint the new head coach before the start of the competition since he has to monitor the games," Davarzani said.

Iranian federation had already announced that it would weigh up finding the best possible coach – foreigner or Iranian – for the upcoming Olympics since that are going to finish the Games as a medal winner.

"The combination of an Iranian coach and a foreigner might be the best choice. We are discussing about which one to be named as head coach."

Julio Velasco had been linked with a move to Iran but Davarzani has said that the Argentine has not accepted the offer to return to Iran.

"Velasco prefers to stay in Italy at the moment," he added.

Iran debuted in 2016 Olympic Games where the Persians finished in fifth place behind Brazil, Italy, the U.S. and Russia.

In this edition, Iran want to make a splash and this is the reason why the federation



is not in a hurry to choose the new head coach. The National Team have been drawn

in Pool A along with Japan, Poland, Italy, Canada and Venezuela, while Pool B con-

sists of Brazil, the U.S., Russia, Argentina, France, and Tunisia.

Six Foolad players test positive for COVID-19

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Due to the fact that six players of the Foolad Khuzestan team are infected with the coronavirus, based on the health protocols of the Iranian Professional League, the activities of the team should be suspended until the recovery of the infected ones.

Javad Nekounam, head coach of Foolad, announced on Friday that six players of his side have tested positive for coronavirus.

He claimed that his team were not able to play in this situation because they lack key players in their squad. However, as said by Naekounam, the Football League

Organization insists on the presence of the Ahvaz based team in their Sunday match away against Nassaji.

In early June of 2020, in the second phase of the government's plan to control the outbreak of Covid-19, the guidelines about social distancing and the health requirements of the football matches were also announced.

According to the guidelines, if there are more than five people in a team with positive tests for coronavirus, the activity of the relevant team will be suspended until the patients fully recover and obtain a health certificate.



Not even an ACL tear can deter karate's Olympic hopeful Abbasali

Even when karate was not on the Olympic program, young Iranian karateka Hamideh Abbasali would tell anyone listening that one day she would triumph on the biggest sporting stage of them all. Now, with 12 extra months to recover from serious injury, she is ready to embrace her longed-for opportunity at Tokyo 2020.

All Hamideh Abbasali's sporting hopes and fears collided at the World Karate Federation (WKF) Karate1 Premier League event in Salzburg, Austria, in late-February this year.

The 30-year-old, who has fantasized about being an Olympian for as long as she can remember, won her second major title in five weeks to put herself on the brink of qualifying for a spot at the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020. But, in the process of defeating Italy's Clio Ferracuti 2-1 in the 68+kg final, she immediately put that dream debut in doubt.

"The competition was really stressful and physical. I knew winning a gold medal would stabilize my place at Tokyo 2020," said Abbasali, who endured the physical and mental agony of tearing the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) in her left knee en route to victory.

"Injury in professional sport is inevitable, but when the injury is close to the most important sporting event, it certainly puts a lot of pressure on an athlete psychologically, and I am no exception to this rule."

The injury seemed particularly cruel considering how Hamideh had hauled herself back to the summit of women's kumite. The Iranian has been a fixture on the international circuit for close to a decade, but her golden period seemed set in 2014-2016, when she secured +68kg World Championship silver and bronze and became Asian Games champion. As she moved into her late twenties,



Abbasali's form dipped, with a 12th-place finish at the 2018 World Championships suggesting her best days were behind her.

That was all, however, before the lure of an Olympic Games started to loom large.

"I have been focusing all my efforts and planning on the Olympics," Abbasali admitted. "I have been planning much more seriously for the Karate1 [the results of which fed into the WKF's Olympic ranking system]. I have always been trying to finish those competitions successfully so that the way to reach the Olympics was smoother for me."

The approach worked. Hamideh roared back to the very top. Since the start of 2019, she has finished fifth twice, third three times and first twice in the 10 Karate1 Premier League events she has entered. It has made her the +68kg world No.1 but, perhaps more importantly, it elevated her to second in the standings of the WKF Tokyo 2020 +61kg –

one of three Olympic weight categories in kumite for women.

Just as all this combined to deliver her ticket to Tokyo, her ACL snapped. Surgery in Germany followed swiftly and, although Abbasali now insists that she "never despaired" that she could get herself fit in time for Tokyo 2020, the doubts must have been there. It is why amid the darkness of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a chink of sporting light for the athlete.

"It was really good news for me," Abbasali admitted of the 12-month enforced postponement of the Tokyo 2020 Games. The knee is already feeling good.

"About three months have passed since my knee surgery and I started rehabilitation exercises. I am in good condition," she confirmed.

The ability to recover from setbacks is perhaps even more critical to great karateka than

to other world-class athletes. It is no surprise therefore that Abbasali lists two weary warriors as her inspirations. Compatriot Jassem Vishgahi won the -75kg men's World Championship gold back in 2006 and is still competing today, while Azerbaijan's Rafael Aghayev has fought his way relentlessly to the very pinnacle of the sport. The five-time world champion is already widely considered to be the best of his generation and will have a chance to cement that reputation at Tokyo 2020, having secured his spot in Salzburg, like Abbasali.

If she manages to mirror her hero and write her name in karate folklore, Abbasali knows she will have one person to thank.

"The main hero of my life is my mother," she said. "She was interested in her daughters being athletes. I enrolled with my sister in a club near our house. But my sister did not continue, and I, who was not interested in karate in the beginning, gradually became interested in the sport."

It has proved a good match. Abbasali's mentality is clearly ideally suited to the demands of kumite.

"My greatest strength as a karateka is having patience and hope until the last moment. I always try to do my best in all competitions," she said.

It looks like it will, with a little luck, be enough to get her to where she has always wanted to go.

"Many years ago, whenever I was asked, 'What is your biggest wish?', I would say in response, 'Winning the Olympics' and most of the times I heard back that karate was not in the Olympics and that I could not achieve this dream... But I did not forget my dream. I have been waiting for it to come true for years."

(Source: Olympics)

Mohajeri named Machine Sazi coach

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Mohammadreza Mohajeri is new head coach of Iran top-flight football team Machine Sazi.

The 55-year-old coach has replaced Ahad Sheikhlari in Tabriz based football team.

Under coaching of Sheikhlari, sits 10th in Iran Professional League, seven points above drop zone.

Mohajeri had already coached Machine Sazi in 2018-19 season before taking charge of Nassaji.

He will lead the team on Sunday in the match against Naft Masjed Soleyman.

Mahdavia's goal nominated for Asia's Greatest World Cup Goals

A goal from Mehdi Mahdavia in the 1998 FIFA World Cup, has been nominated as the Asia's Best FIFA World Cup goals.

In a second semi-final featuring 10 more Asian World Cup classics, this week's selection features some of the continent's all-time greats, all delivering moments of magic on the game's biggest stage.

There are fabulous free-kicks, blistering breakaways and scorers from distance, but which five goals will advance to next week's final?

In an eagerly anticipated fixture, and with Team Melli already a goal up thanks to Hamid Estili's first-half header, Mehdi Mahdavia put the seal on a famous win with a lung-bursting breakaway run and finish.

Finding himself in open space in the 83rd minute, the future Bundesliga star sprinted towards goal before expertly poking the ball into the bottom corner from just inside the penalty area, all but guaranteeing three priceless Iranian points.

Mahdavia will vie with Faisal Al Dakheel (Kuwait), Hwangbo Kwan (Korea Republic), Fahad Al Ghesheyan (Saudi Arabia), Ahn Jung-hwan (Korea Republic), Brett Holman (Australia), Yasuhito Endo (Japan), Park Ji-sung (Korea Republic), Keisuke Honda (Japan) and Son Heung-min (Korea Republic) to qualify for the final stage.

Iraj Danaeifard's goal against Scotland in the 1978 FIFA World Cup had been previously nominated as Asia's Greatest FIFA World Cup goal in the first semi-final.

(Source: the-afc)

Iran football assistants arrive in Tehran

Tasnim — Iran national football team coaches Anton Usnik and Mladen Zganjer arrived in Tehran.

Zganjer, goalkeeping coach, and Usnik, who has previously worked as Dragan Skocic's assistant at Sanat Naft, had left Iran after football competitions were halted due to the coronavirus outbreak.

Vahid Hashemian and Karim Bagheri are Iranian assistants of Dragan Skocic.

The Iran national football team currently sit third in Group C, five points behind Iraq in FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 qualification.

Taremi will join Benfica: Report

The Portuguese newspaper Record has reported that Rio Ave forward Mehdi Taremi will join Benfica next season.

According to the report, Taremi is expected to cost around 10 million euros.

The 27-year-old Iranian has his first season in European football and has scored 16 goals so far for Rio Ave.

Mehdi Taremi has been also linked with French clubs including Nantes and Marseille.

Boavista goalkeeper Helton Leite has been also caught the eye of Benfica, Record reported.

(Source: Record)

Xavi reaches 'firm agreement' to become the next Barcelona manager

Barcelona are a mess right now.

After drawing three of their last four matches, Blaugrana have relinquished their advantage in La Liga's title race and now trail Real Madrid by four points.

But that doesn't even tell half the story. Lionel Messi has made headlines for not listening to assistant manager Eder Sarabia during a drinks break, manager Quique Setien appears to be on his way out while £108 million signing Antoine Griezmann is only good enough to play the final few seconds in a must-win clash against Atletico Madrid.

Then, to make matters worse, reports emerged on Thursday that claimed Messi wants to leave at the end of his contract in 2021.

Just 12 more months of Messi at the Camp Nou is enough to unsettle any Barca fan.

However, there's some encouraging news emerging. With Setien seemingly set to leave his role at the end of the season, the club are on the lookout for their next manager.

And it seems they've settled on club legend Xavi. That's according to Mundo Deportivo journalist, Francesc Aguilar, who claims Xavi has reached a 'firm agreement' to take over Barcelona at the end of the season.

The legendary footballer played almost his entire career playing for Barcelona between 1998 to 2015, making more than 700 appearances winning eight La Liga titles and four Champions Leagues.

In a series of tweets, Aguilar reveals that he's been informed by a reliable source in Qatar - where Xavi is currently managing - that the former midfielder has accepted the deal and will earn €6 million-per-year.

(Source: Givemesport)

Brighton coach Potter reacts to Jahanbakhsh's link with Ajax

Graham Potter has reacted to reports linking Iranian winger Alireza Jahanbakhsh to Eredivisie team Ajax.

Jahanbakhsh joined Brighton for £17m in 2018 from AZ Alkmaar but has struggled to establish himself as a regular with Graham Potter. He has made only eight Premier League appearances this season.

Reports from the Netherlands suggest Ajax have targeted Jahanbakhsh as a replacement for Hakim Ziyech, who is set to join Chelsea.

He grabbed his first Albion goal against Bournemouth in the 2-0 triumph, while against Chelsea he helped Albion to a 1-1 draw with a spectacular overhead kick.

"Every player is disappointed when they are out of the squad, regardless of the final number," said Potter. Sometimes you can make decisions on a starting eleven and then you look at the balance on the bench

and sometimes a player can miss out on the 20 but is actually quite close to the starting eleven.

"He is that type of player that I just mentioned. You can make a different decision from the starting eleven, then with the amount of attacking players we have on the pitch.

"Maybe with the make-up of it he's just been a bit unlucky. He has been top in terms of how he has worked, his professionalism, his support for the team, how he's conducted himself has been incredible.

"It's so hard when you have to make those decisions to leave players out, especially like Ali. He deserves to be in the starting eleven and the squad, he deserves that with his attributes, with his work. It's just the joys of the head coach. He has to make the decision and at the moment he's been unlucky," Potter concluded.

(Source: Argus)



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GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

He who is negligent, is deprived of rights, and
he who listen to a tell-tale, loses a friend.

Imam Ali (AS)

WHAT'S IN ART GALLERIES

Painting

■ Tala Derangi is displaying her latest paintings in an exhibition titled "Tehrat" at Saleh Gallery.

The exhibition will be running until July 15 at the gallery that can be found at 148 Karim Khan Ave.

■ An exhibition showcasing a collection of paintings by Mahta Moeni is currently underway at Asr Gallery.

The exhibit entitled "Close-up" will continue until July 14 at the gallery located at 18 Delaviz St. off North Mirzaye Shirazi St.

■ Bama Gallery is playing host to an exhibition of paintings by Habibeh Yusefi.

The exhibit named "Shadowless" will run until July 9 at the gallery located at 356 Felestin St., near Bozorgmehr junction.

■ Saye Gallery is showcasing paintings by Sahar Qorbanishad in an exhibition named "The Other Self".

The exhibit will run until July 15 at the gallery located at No. 21, 13th Alley, Sanai St. off Karim Khan Ave.

■ Atash Shahkarami is displaying his latest paintings in an exhibition named "Bones" at Vista Gallery.

The exhibit will run until July 13 at the gallery located at No. 11, 12th Alley, Mir Emad St.

Multimedia

■ An exhibition of films, videos, and sets of installation by Dorsa Basij is currently underway at Vaali Gallery.

The exhibition titled "Past Continuous" runs until July 14 at the gallery located at No. 71, Khoddami St. off of Vanak Square.

■ A group exhibition by the Sakoo Art School in Tehran is underway at Shokuh Gallery.

The exhibit will continue until July 14 at the gallery located at 19 Amir Nuri Alley, North Salimi St. near Andarzgu Blvd.

■ Atashzad Gallery is hanging a collection of artworks from the Raha Art Group in an exhibition named "Creation of Colors".

The exhibit runs until February 26 at the gallery located at 3 North Abbaspur (Tavanir) St. near Vanak Sq.

■ Dena Gallery is hosting an exhibition of artworks by a group of artists, including Nasser Ovisi, Majid Barzegar, Kambiz Derambakhsh, Sina Yaqubi, Farshid Maleki and Ali Ganjavi.

The exhibit will run until July 9 4 Sussan Alley off Qarani St.

■ A group exhibition entitled "Hiatus" is currently underway at Ehsan Gallery.

The exhibit will continue July 8 at the gallery located at No. 22, East 14th St. in the Ajudanieh neighborhood.

Calligraphic painting

■ A group exhibition displaying calligraphic paintings by Saeid Naqqashian, Hassan Mehrabani, Azim Allah, Shadi Talai, Morteza Shamisa and several other artists is currently underway at Shangar Gallery.

The exhibition will be running until July 14 at 2 Sattari Alley, Jolfa St. off Shariati Ave.

Fears of coronavirus rebound prompt Iran to ponder new limits on cultural activities

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iran's Coronavirus Combat and Prevention Headquarters is scheduled to hold a session on Saturday to examine the imposition of new limits on art and cultural activities as fresh cases of COVID-19 have been reported across the country.

Over the past few weeks, the outbreak appears to be growing in some provinces and the death toll continues to rise. In an effort to tackle the spread of the coronavirus, the headquarters will decide whether or not to allow art and cultural centers to continue their activities.

Alireza Vahhabzadeh, a health minister advisor, said that the headquarters has not made a final decision, but if the death toll continues to rise in some provinces, it will make a decision and extend restrictions in art and cultural fields.

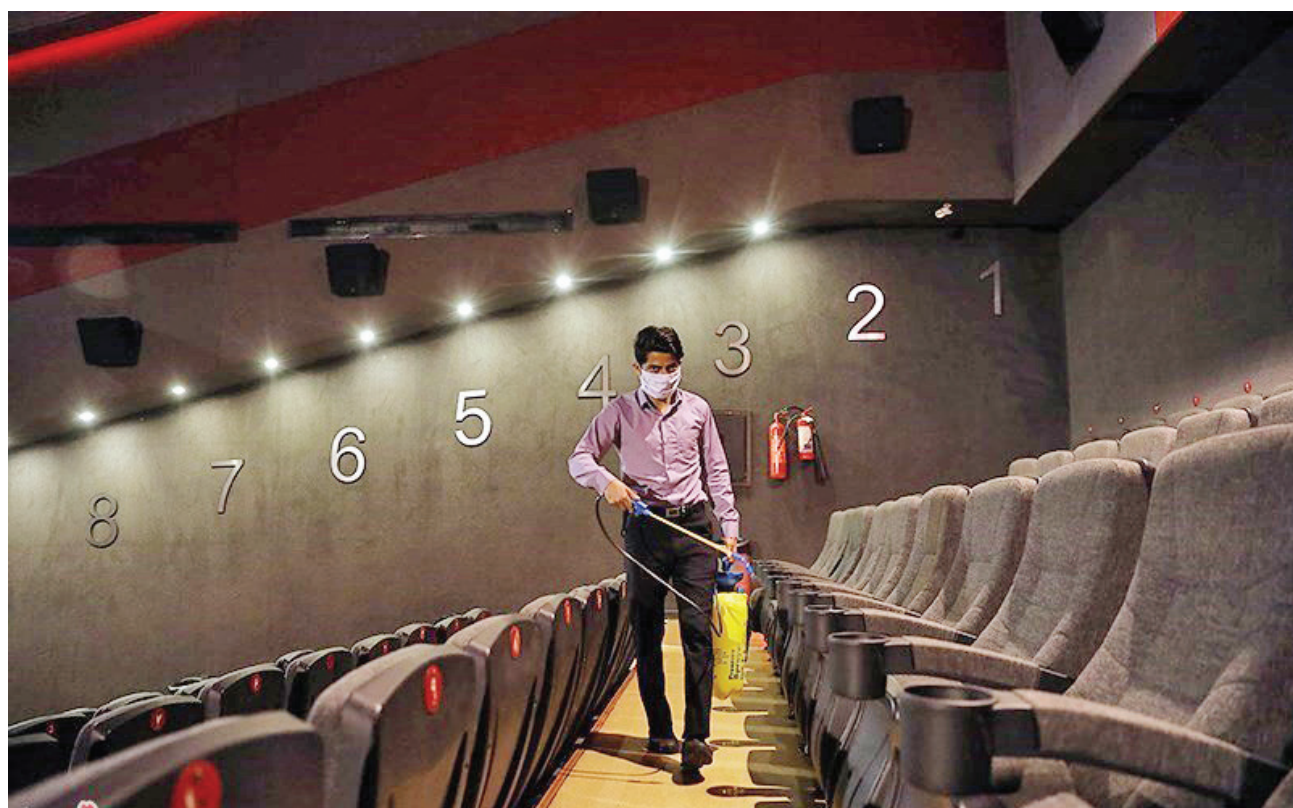
Movie theaters, as well as theater and concert halls, resumed activities mid-June after a four-month-long closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a meeting held at the Coronavirus Combat and Prevention Headquarters in early June, President Hassan Rouhani had said that movie theaters and concert halls could resume activities with 50 percent of their capacity.

The Cinema Organization of Iran had announced earlier that movie theaters in the so-called "white areas" -- regions with no coronavirus hospitalizations in the past two weeks -- were allowed to reopen.

The cinemagoers were told to observe social distancing, while the employees were asked to wear face masks and plastic gloves.

Fever tests before entering the cinemas, frequent sanitization of the halls and public



An employee wearing a face mask amid the fear of COVID-19 disinfects a theater in the northern Iranian city of Mashhad on July 2, 2020. (Tasnim/Nima Najafzadeh)

restrooms, as well as the screening of a video on how to protect oneself from the coronavirus before the feature film are also among the regulations required by the headquarters.

In a letter sent to Rouhani earlier, the Association of Iranian Theater Owners asked for the coronavirus restrictions on cinemas to be lifted, and called for a reopening of theaters across the country

based on health protocols during the pandemic.

The Cinema Organization of Iran has also announced that Iranian cineastes can resume their activities in the near future.

Zulfu Livaneli's "Last Island" pops up at Iranian bookstores

CULTURE **TEHRAN** — Turkish writer Zulfu Livaneli's novel "The Last Island" has been published in Persian by Negah Publications in Tehran.

The book has been translated into Persian by Ilmaz Hoquqi.

"The Last Island" was written in 2008, but to a large extent, the story foreshadows the events and aftermath of Istanbul's bloody Taksim Square political protests of 2013.

The anonymous narrator of "The Last Island" calls this place, which he named "the last refuge, the last humanitarian corner."

It is almost a utopia. Everybody was doing as much as he could. However, this situation does not last long: the country's settling on the island in order to spend the retirement of the president of the coup, this paradise will lack the peace of those living on the island.

The president is determined to save Son Ada (Last Island) from anarchy. He begins to manage the society that is content with the state of the island by doing whatever the majority's votes indicate by the help of established boards, making the island's wooded paths arranged according to park and garden traditions. Seemingly everything



Front cover of the Persian translation of Turkish writer Zulfu Livaneli's book "The Last Island".

is in line with democratic traditions. While the utopia turns into a complete

dystopia, there are seagulls, especially those who rebel against this trend.

Actor Sirius Gorjestani dies at 76

→1 He also played a role in the play "The Stone and Sorna" directed by Nosrat Partovi at Tehran's Sangalaj Theater in 1970.

"The Cry of the Mojahed" directed by Mehdi Madanian in 1979 was his first film produced just few months after the victory of the Islamic Revolution.

He collaborated with outstanding directors such as Rakhshan Bani-Etemad

in "Canary Yellow" and Kianush Ayyari in "Dust Devil".

Gorjestani's prolific output of stage performances include "The Court" directed by Hadi Eslami, "The Golden Teeth" by Davud Mirbakeri and "Mahan and Kushan" by Iraj Raad.

He was an actor in many popular TV series, including director Ziaeddin Dorri's

"The English Briefcase" and Davud Mirbakeri's "Imam Ali (AS)".

He starred in the title role in director Kamal Tabrizi's TV series "Shahriar" about the Persian poet Mohammad-Hossein Behjat – Shahriar.

"Playing Shahriar was a difficult job, but it was the easiest role I've played, because I actually portrayed my father in the series,"

Gorjestani said in "Face", a documentary series about some outstanding Iranian cineastes.

"Everybody praised me for playing the role," he added.

"We Are All Together", Tabizi's 2019 comedy about a group of passengers who survive a plane crash, was Gorjestani's swansong.

New Zealand festival to screen Iranian drama "Just 6.5"

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iranian director Saeid Rustai's acclaimed drama "Just 6.5" will be screened in the official competition of the New Zealand International Film Festival.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the festival is scheduled to be held online from July 24 to August 3.

Starring Payman Maadi and Navid Mohammadzadeh, "Just 6.5" is about a police group under the leadership of Samad who has been assigned to arrest Nasser Khakzad, a major drug trafficker in Tehran.

"Just 6.5" was a big winner in several festivals including the 32nd Tokyo International Film Festival in November 2019, and received two major honors at the event.

Rustai won the award for best director and Mohammadzadeh was crowned best actor for his portrayal of the major Iranian drug trafficker, Nasser Khakzad.

The New Zealand festival will open with the premiere of "True History of the Kelly Gang" by director Justin Kurzel from Australia.



Navid Mohammadzadeh acts in a scene from Saeid Rustai's drama "Just 6.5".

Lebanese actress Anne-Marie Salameh joins "Shark" cast in Tehran

A R T **TEHRAN** — Lebanese actress Anne-Marie Salameh, famous for her role in the Lebanese TV series "Jouzour" has joined Iranian director Ali Atshani's new project "Shark".

The actress arrived in Tehran on Thursday and will act in the film produced Mohammad Ahmadi.

Salameh is a graduate of dramatic arts and has played in several films and

series including "Al Hob Jonoon 2", "Bilad Aleuzi", "Win Kenti" and "Sarkhat Rouh 4". "Jouzour" is an Arab drama series revolving around the story of Fouad, a businessman who, on his death bed, reveals to his children the existence of another daughter Carla, who he has kept secret for years.

Sima Tirandaz, Mehdi Hashemi, Behnaz Jafari and Mehran Ahmadi are some Iranian members of the cast for "Shark".



Ali Atshani (R) directs Lebanese actress Anne-Marie Salameh in a scene from "Shark".