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'S. Korean current approach toward Iran will impact future relations'

TEHRAN — Former director-general of Iranian Foreign Affairs Ministry's East Asia Department has said that South Korea's refusal for releasing Iranian money which is blocked in the Asian country due to the U.S. sanctions will negatively affect the two countries' future relations. "The current behavior of the Koreans is influential in the future of their relations with Iran, and with this attitude, it will not be easy for them to return to the Iranian markets [in the future]," IRNA

quoted Seyed Jalal Sadatian as saying. As reported, South Korea's special political position has made the country very obedient to the U.S. policies and their situation seems not to be such that they could act independently. Iran is escalating pressure on the Asian country to release about \$7 billion of oil-export revenues, arguing that Seoul is buckling to pressure from its U.S. ally and illegally withholding funds needed to counter the West Asia's worst coronavirus outbreak. →4

Spiteful mercenaries trying to undercut Iran-China partnership: vice-speaker

TEHRAN — A senior Iranian lawmaker says the rumor of giving Kish Island to China is a lie concocted by the mercenaries of the U.S. regime to halt the Iran-China partnership. "The issue of giving Kish Island to the Chinese was created by the bigoted, spiteful mind of the illiterate opposi-

tion, who are mercenaries of America, in order to stop the Iran-China partnership," Vice-Speaker of the Parliament, Amir-Hossein Qazizadeh Hashemi, tweeted on Thursday. He added that the text of the partnership will be published and will be open to public investigation. →3

Iranian universities advance in Leiden Ranking

TEHRAN — The Center for Science and Technology Studies Leiden Ranking has placed 36 Iranian universities in the list of over 1,000 major universities worldwide in 2020 compared with 26 universities in 2019. The ranking is prepared based on the indicators of scientific impact and collaboration. The rankings are compiled by the

CWTS (Dutch: Centrum voor Wetenschap en Technologische Studies, CWTS) at Leiden University in the Netherlands. The CWTS Leiden Ranking 2020 offers a sophisticated set of bibliometric indicators that provide statistics at the level of universities on scientific impact, collaboration, open access publishing, and gender diversity. →9

ARTICLE
Farrokh Hesabi
Tehran Times journalist

The strange case of coaching change in Iran football

The number of head coach changes in the Iran Professional League (IPL) has increased drastically during the last few months.

In modern football, many teams who obtain disappointing results, decide to replace their head coach in the middle of the season, hoping to improve their performance.

To date, 33 different head coaches have been employed at just 12 clubs in the 2019-2020 season of the Iranian football elite league. That includes several coaches who have had multiple managerial careers at the various clubs at the same season.

Only in the last week, four teams have seen manager changes on their benches.

With six matches left to play, Mehdi Pahazadeh took the lead of struggling Shahin Bushehr. Sohrab Bakhtiarizadeh will lead Shahr Khodro from now on as he replaced Mojtaba Sarasiaei who stepped down from his role in Mashhad based football team. Italian coach Stefano Cusin was Shahr Khodro's football team interim coach for a single league match.

Hooman Afazeli was appointed as Machine Sazi coach two days after he had shockingly stepped down as coach of Pars Jonoubi. Then, on Thursday, Sirous Pourmousavi, the ex-Iran U19 football team coach, was introduced as Pars Jonoubi's new trainer.

So far, only four teams, namely Saipa, Sepahan, Foolad and Naft Masjed Solyman, have not altered their managers.

Whereas the costs of coaching change strategy are clear, particularly paying a wage for the new manager while the old manager is entitled to receive his full salary, the benefits are less clear.

In Iranian football, the continuous manager turnover has different reasons. Usually, dismissals or changes should be typically decided after a number of repeated negative results.

However, about firing the managers, we have seen other reasons rather than for the expected improvement in the team's performance. →11

The West, UN allowing Saudis commit 'veritable genocide' in Yemen: geopolitical analyst

TEHRAN - Catherine Shakdam, a geopolitical analyst and commentator based on London, tells the Tehran Times that Western powers and the UN have failed to stop Saudi crimes in Yemen and allowed the Saudi regime "to conduct a veritable genocide".

Shakdam, who consulted for the UN Security Council from 2014 to 2016 on Yemen's war, says, "The UN is owned by powers such as Saudi Arabia, Israel, and the United States. With this in mind you can understand why violence and bloodshed have become the norm."

Shakdam, the author of "A Tale of Grand Resistance: Yemen, The Wahhabi and the House of Saud", also notes "the United Nations is no longer an independent body striving for peace - rather an expression of imperialism, and military interventionism."

The text of the interview with Shakdam is as follows:

■ Has the United Nations been successful to promote a peaceful world? How do you assess the role of the great powers in the UN?

A: I'm afraid the United Nations has become a redundant institution which sits completely empty of political relevance. The UN was created on the principle that the rule of law needs to be upheld by nations under all circumstances. The UN has not lived up to such principle of fairness.

The UN has become a euphemism for manipulation, elitism, grand criminality and nepotism. When is the last time the UN stood for the oppressed of this world? The United Nations defends today the mighty against the weak, the liars and the criminals. Saudi Arabia owns the UN today ... how can we then speak of legality and legitimacy? Where was the UN when Yemen burnt under the fire of al-Saud? Where was the UN when a humanitarian blockade was imposed on Yemen? →7

American protesters clash with police downtown and on Portland's east side

Portland Police Bureau said officers responded to two protests in the city Thursday night - one at the bureau's building on East Burnside Street and another near the Justice Center downtown.

According to police, the group on the east side first met at Laurelhurst Park at around 8:20 p.m. before marching toward the police building at East Burnside and 47th Avenue. Police said the group blocked traffic, shined lasers at officers, started a small fire in the street, and threatened to enter the building and burn it down.

At this protest, a freelance journalist tweeted a video showing officers smashing the windows of a car and then ramming the car with a patrol vehicle as it sped away from officers.

An unlawful assembling was declared at the Traffic Division at 11:45 p.m. Police said they disengaged with the crowd after making arrests, but the protesters returned to the property and continued blocking East Burnside Street. The

group eventually left the area.

Meanwhile, downtown, a couple of hundred people gathered near the Justice Center and began removing the fence that officers erected around Lownsdale Square Park Thursday morning. Officers did this after protesters camped in Lownsdale Square Park and Chapman Square Park overnight from Wednesday to Thursday. Officers asked demonstrators to leave the area Thursday morning.

After removing the fence, police said the group used it to block traffic. Officers tried fixing the fence at Southwest Salmon Street and Southwest 4th Avenue, and they said demonstrators threw bottles at officers while they attempted to put the fence back in place.

By 12:30 a.m., police said the group downtown had dismantled most of the south side fence around the park and were using it to block traffic on Southwest Main Street. →10

Rouhani inaugurates energy, industrial projects worth \$880m in 3 provinces

TEHRAN — Iranian President Hassan Rouhani inaugurated 33 energy and industrial projects worth 37 trillion rials (about \$880.9 million) in three provinces as parts of Energy and Industry Ministries' development programs, IRNA reported.

As reported, in the sixth week of the Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry's "Persistent Production-Effective Employment-Sustainable Exports" program, 11 projects were inaugurated in the northern Gilan Province and two in the Central province of Markazi.

Based on the mentioned program, the Industry Ministry plans to inaugurate 200 industrial, mining, and trade projects across the country by the Iranian calendar year of 1400 (begins on March 21, 2021).

The industrial projects included an auto parts manufacturing complex, an air conditioning production unit, an industrial oil production unit as well as an industrial foam production unit.

The mentioned projects are going to create more than 1,750 direct job opportunities in the

said provinces.

Also, in the 12th week of the Energy Ministry's "A-B-Iran" program, 20 water and electricity-related projects were inaugurated by President Rouhani in the southern Hormozgan Province on Thursday.

These projects included some water supply projects, a desalination plant, two water treatment plants, numerous electricity distribution and transmission projects, as well as some irrigation projects. →4



Chabahar Port to become a major transit hub in region

Located at southeastern Iran, at the Gulf of Oman, Chabahar is the home for Iran's only oceanic port. Due to its strategic geographical position, Chabahar Port holds a great significance for Iran both politically and economically.

Chabahar is projected to act as a major transit route among the countries in the northern part of the Indian Ocean and Central Asia. Given such significance into account, Iran is seriously pursuing development of this port to make it a major transit hub in the region.

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

Israel will see Iran's upper hand if it continues airing lies, general says

TEHRAN — An Iranian Armed Forces official warned on Thursday that if Israel's officials continue propagating lies about bombarding and killing Iran's military advisors in Syria, they will see the upper hand of Iran and the resistance front in action.

Brigadier General Abolfazl Shekarchi, the Armed Forces spokesman, made the remarks in reaction to fake reports by the Zionist regime about targeting the positions of Iran's military advisors in Syria.

"We warn the Zionist liars and their puppeteers that if they continue their prattle, they will see the upper hand of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the resistance front in action," Shekarchi said, according to Press TV.

The general rejected Israel's claims alleging killing of hundreds or thousands of Iranians by its military as a "desperate media war, psychological operation, and [an attempt at] manufacturing lies."

Shekarchi said "the Zionist-Western media empire and its regional affiliates" have been leading this anti-Iran propaganda campaign for some time as part of "hollow muscle-flexing" by the inhumane, occupier, and child-killing Israeli regime in order to project a "false image" of its military capability.

Upon a request by the Syrian government, Iran has been lending effective military advisory assistance to Syria against foreign-backed militants and Takfiri terrorists. The support proved essential to Syria in defeating the Takfiri terrorist group of Daesh that has been widely reported to have been created by the United States, Israel's biggest and oldest ally, which is trying hard to change the balance of power in favor of Tel Aviv in the region. →2

IRGC captured MKO terrorists in Fars province

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Intelligence forces from the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps had arrested a team of the terrorist Mojahedin-e Khalq Organization (MKO) in the southern province of Fars, Tasnim reported on Friday.



The terrorist team had entered Fars Province in order to carry out acts of sabotage on the day marking the death anniversary of Imam Khomeini, which fell on June 3, deputy chief of the public relations department of the IRGC office in the province said.

Colonel Jalal Yarmohammadi said were arrested before committing any terrorist activity.

No date was given when they were arrested.

The official also underlined that the activities of all hostile and terrorist groups are being fully monitored by the IRGC intelligence units.

CENTCOM commander: I don't consider Iran any less threatening right now than they were several months ago

By staff and agency

Gen. Kenneth "Frank" McKenzie, the commander of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), has said that Iran is under great diplomatic and economic pressure, however, he does not consider Iran any less threatening against the U.S.



"I don't consider Iran any less threatening right now than they were several months ago," McKenzie told VOA in an interview published on Wednesday.

"Iran realizes they're not going to, probably not going to be able to get us out [of Iraq] politically. So, they've got to make a decision: Do they want to move us out through the use of force? And that would be through the use of their proxy forces... that we know operate in Iraq and have actually been very well armed... And in fact, in past years have killed a lot of U.S. Marines, sailors, soldiers and airmen," he said.

"So, I think Iran is beginning to think about testing the boundaries of what they can get away with to cause pain to us," he added.

Iran seeks UN intervention to save Yemeni lives from Saudi air raids

POLITICAL TEHRAN — The Iranian Foreign Ministry on Friday strongly denounced the latest Saudi air raids against Yemen, calling on the United Nations to stop Riyadh's atrocities "by any means possible."

The reaction by Iran came after Saudi fighter jets hit wedding parties in Yemen's Hajjah and Jawf, killing and injuring more than 25 civilians, including women and children.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi expressed regret that the Saudi-led military forces are continuing their war crimes in Yemen "under the international community's silence and indifference".



He called on international human rights bodies to prevent the continuation of such crimes by the Saudi fighter jets against Yemen by any means possible.

"The countries providing arms for the forces that have invaded Yemen, which have caused the slaughter of the Yemeni women and children by supplying them (aggressors) with destructive bombs and weapons, are accomplice in these crimes and must be held accountable for such support before the international community and the people of Yemen," Press TV quoted the spokesman as saying.

"Such crimes continue while, unfortunately, the United Nations has recently removed the name of Saudi Arabia from the list of child-murdering regimes with the political pressure of the U.S. and the Saudi petrodollars," he added.

Mousavi called on the UN to reconsider its decision, step up efforts for an immediate end to the Saudi attacks on Yemen, and take necessary measures and arrangements to protect the health and security of civilians, women and children in particular.

The Yemeni Health Ministry initially said nine people had been killed in the Saudi air raids against al-Masafa al-Marazeeq area of the al-Hazm district of al-Jawf Province on Wednesday afternoon, but later raised the death toll to 24.

The strikes were the second such incident over the past week. Ten people, mostly women and children, were killed on Sunday when Saudi military aircraft struck Washhah district in Yemen's northwestern province of Hajjah, unnamed local sources told Yemen's Arabic-language al-Masirah television network at the time.

In reaction to the attacks, United Nations Special Envoy for Yemen Martin Griffiths called for a transparent investigation into al-Jawf airstrikes.

"We deplore yesterday's airstrikes in #AlJawf... A thorough & transparent investigation is required," Griffiths wrote in a post on his official Twitter page on Thursday, describing attacks on civilians as reprehensible.

Iran-Afghanistan's comprehensive document to be finalized in three months

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Deputy Iranian Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Abbas Araghchi said on Thursday that Iran-Afghanistan's comprehensive document will be finalized in three months.

During a meeting called, "Prospect of Iran-Afghanistan Relations: Challenges and Opportunities", Araghchi said that the two countries have speeded up efforts to finalize the document.

Araghchi visited Kabul on Wednesday. He headed a high-ranking delegation to follow up the agreements reached during a visit by Hanif Atmar, Afghanistan's acting foreign minister, to Tehran on June 21-22.

During the visit, Atmar and Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif issued a joint statement defining the roadmap for bilateral cooperation in various fields, including common border security.

Iran to continue support for Afghanistan's peace efforts

Also during a meeting with Abdullah Abdullah, Afghanistan's president of the High



Council for Peace and National Reconciliation, Araghchi reiterated Tehran's long-held position that Iran will continue support for

peace efforts in Afghanistan. Araghchi also said Iran attaches great importance to regional convergence in line

with economic development.

Abdullah praised Iran for its supports and gave a report on the latest measures taken to realize peace in the country.

The two sides also noted that establishment of peace in Afghanistan would benefit peace and stability in the entire region and elsewhere in the world.

Araghchi met separately with Atmar on Wednesday.

He expressed Iran's support for peace process in Afghanistan and hoped talks among all the rival Afghan groups would start as soon as possible.

The senior Iranian diplomat also said his country believes that the achievements made and also democratic structures established after four decades of war in Afghanistan should be preserved.

He added that Iran is ready to help the Afghan government advance the peace process.

During the meeting, the two sides agreed on a roadmap and the time schedule to finalize a comprehensive strategic cooperation deal.

Rouhani calls Putin, highlights need to counter U.S. unilateralism

POLITICAL TEHRAN — In a phone conversation with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday, President Hassan Rouhani highlighted the need to counter the United States' unilateralism and its illegal attempt to extend arms embargo on Iran.

According to UN Security Council Resolution 2231, which endorsed the 2015 nuclear deal —JCPOA— the arms embargo against Iran ends in October.

Rouhani also called for deepening ties in various areas and praised Russia for supporting the nuclear deal and countering the U.S. unilateralism.

For his part, Putin said that Russia supports efforts to preserve the JCPOA.

"As has been the case during the past five years, we continue to support this international agreement, and insist on its implementation and preservation," Putin said.

The United States has stepped up efforts for an indefinite

extension of UN arms embargo on Iran. It has even submitted a draft resolution to the Security Council for the purpose.

The Trump administration has made such an action despite the fact that Donald Trump officially withdrew the U.S. from the nuclear deal in May 2018 and the U.S. is no longer a party to the agreement.

The remaining parties to the JCPOA have expressed opposition to the U.S. for trying to extend arms sanctions on Iran.

Analysts believe that Russia and China will most likely veto the U.S. plan to extend arms embargo.

Rouhani also called for continuations of Iran-Russia-Turkey cooperation on Syria within the Astana format.

In line with their security cooperation, Iran, Turkey, and Russia - three power brokers in Syria - launched the Astana peace talks on the Syrian crisis. The talks were launched in January 2017 with the aim of putting an end to the Syrian



conflict. Kazakhstan has hosted multiple rounds of talks on Syria since January 2017 most of which involved delegations from the Syrian government and opposition.

Zarif says Iran won't give an inch of its soil to China in the 25-year partnership

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said that Iran will not give even a "handspan of its soil" to China within the framework of the 25-year partnership which has not yet been finalized.

"We have not given and will not give a [single square] meter of [our] land or the exclusive right to take advantage of a handspan of Iran's soil to China or any other country," Zarif told ICANA in an interview published on Thursday.

He added, "We are at the stage of negotiations and this stage requires permission from the government but the Foreign Ministry has passed this stage."

"When we reach the stage of signing the agreement, we have to present it to Majlis if there is any legal commitment in it," the foreign minister said, noting that nothing will be hidden from the parliament.

Zarif said on July 5 that there is no "hidden issue" in the long-term comprehensive agreement between Iran and China.

"The agreement was discussed in the



meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Leader of the Islamic Revolution [Ayatollah Ali Khamenei]. We announced the issue to the people. In last year's visit, I took this agreement to China and it was announced. When China responded to our draft, we announced it and when China accepted negotiation with us, the issue was announced," Zarif told an open session of the parliament.

Government spokesman Ali Rabiee said on June 23 that Iran and China have drafted a 25-year plan for comprehensive cooperation which proves failure of the plots to isolate

the Islamic Republic.

"This plan proves failure of the United States' policies to isolate Iran, sever Iran's relations with the international community and also to harm Iran's will to expand relations with other countries," Rabiee said during a press conference.

He said that the 25-year plan is based on a win-win approach which "heralds long term cooperation".

"Recognizing cultural commonalities, encouraging multilateralism, supporting equal rights of the nations and insisting on domestic development are parts of this plan," the government spokesman explained.

In a meeting on June 21, the Iranian cabinet of ministers approved the final draft of the 25-year comprehensive cooperation with China.

President Hassan Rouhani said the strategic partnership is based on a win-win approach.

"This cooperation is a ground for Iran and China's participation in basic projects and development of infrastructure, including

the large 'Belt and Road' initiative, and an opportunity to attract investment in various economic fields, including industry, tourism, information technology and communication," the presidential website quoted Rouhani as saying.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said on June 29 that the cooperation plan has not been finalized yet.

However, he said, the content of this "agreement will be published once it is finalized."

Nikki Haley, Donald Trump's former ambassador to the United Nations, has expressed frustration over the impending partnership between Iran and China.

"The partnership ... would vastly expand Chinese presence in banking, telecommunications, ports, railways and dozens of other projects," Haley said.

The New York Times also recently ran an article, confirming that Iran and China were nearing conclusion of the roadmap in defiance of the U.S., saying the document foresees "a sweeping economic and security partnership."

'Iran-China relations are strong'

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said on Thursday that relations between Iran and China are "strong" and enemies seek to undermine the ties.

Iran and China plan to sign a 25-year comprehensive cooperation agreement. The document has not been finalized yet.

"Relations between Iran and China are relations between independent countries and have many ill-wishers. This document is a roadmap... our view on this document is long-term," Mousavi told a press conference in Ardabil, northwest Iran.

Iranian Ambassador to China Mohammad Keshavarz-Zadeh said on July 11 that the hype created against a long-term partnership agreement between Iran and China is "farfetched".

In an interview with IRNA, he said that the commotion is guided by certain TV channels based in the West and countries which do not want a growing of Iran's relations with other countries.

Officials in Tehran have said the 25-year

comprehensive cooperation agreement between Iran and China has not been finalized yet.

"The roadmap we prepare for relations with China is a lamp which shows the path. Within the framework of this agreement, we will not just import commodities; development of the country's infrastructure in land, air and space areas is included in the 25-year plan," Iran's top diplomat to Beijing stated.

Ambassador added, "All details of the plan have been studied by experts in various ministries and the Islamic Consultative Assembly (parliament). It will not be accepted if any part of it runs contrary to the country's interests."

He also said that China has a growing economy and all countries are interested in expanding relations with China.

Iran warns South Korea to return its frozen money

Mousavi also warned Seoul to return its money which is blocked in South Korea due to the U.S. sanctions.



"South Korea has blocked Iran's money under the pretext of cruel sanctions on Iran by a rogue state. This behavior is not acceptable, because relations between these two countries [South Korea and the U.S.] has nothing to do with us," he stated.

Iran is escalating pressure on the East Asian country to release about \$7 billion of oil-export revenues, arguing that Seoul is buckling to pressure from its U.S. ally and illegally withholding funds needed to counter the coronavirus outbreak.

Iran is the hardest hit country by the coro-

navirus in West Asia.

In late June, central bank governor Abdolnasser Hemmati said Iran will take back its dollars from South Korea through legal and international methods.

The official also expressed hope that the South Korean government would abide by its commitments and not block access to those funds under the pretext of the U.S. sanctions.

Earlier this month, the Chairman of Iran-South Korea Joint Chamber of Commerce Hossein Tanhaei announced that the Asian country has agreed to unblock part of Iran's frozen money which is kept by Seoul due to the U.S. sanctions.

"Based on the agreement with the Korean side the money is not going to be returned in cash but in the form of medical and pharmaceutical items," Tanhaei said.

There have been no talks on the return of the money in cash, however, it is possible that after the first part is released, Iran will gradually move towards the imports of food and livestock feed, Tanhaei explained.

Israel will see Iran's upper hand if it continues airing lies, general says

I → The Tel Aviv regime, itself, has been found culpable in numerous reports and by many regional officials of providing safe passage, medical treatment, and other instances of assistance to Takfiri terrorists.

Besides the U.S., the spokesman for the Iranian Armed Forces also implicated Israel in rearing the Daesh terrorists, saying that -- contrary to what is being claimed through the all-out media warfare -- the Zionist regime's bombardments have led to the martyrdom of no more than eight Iranians.

The official mentioned the martyrs by name in order to "further unveil the bogus Zionist regime's [attempt at] manufacturing falsehood and to lay bare its lying nature."

The "cowardly" regime also did its best, through the all-out support of the U.S. and some regional Arab countries, to make up for its losses and weaknesses by bombarding the T-4 Airbase in Syria's western province of Homs in 2018, in which only seven of Iranian military advisors lost their lives along with a number of Syria-allied fighters, Shekarchi said.

The resistance front, however, returned the attack by

launching 50 missiles and rockets at Syria's Israel-occupied Golan Heights, the spokesman noted, saying "a large number" of Israelis were killed or injured during the retaliation.

By means of the media campaign, psychological warfare and producing lies, Israel has been always trying to cover up its sheer inability and weakness as well as back-to-back defeats in the face of the resistance front in Syria during the past nine years, Shekarchi said, adding, "However, it should know this that it is [only] fooling itself."

Secret Trump order gave CIA more powers to target Iran: report

POLITICAL TEHRAN — The CIA has conducted a series of covert cyberattacks against Iran and other targets since 2018 when U.S. President Trump gave sweeping authorization for such activities, former U.S. officials with direct knowledge of the matter revealed.

According to the Yahoo News, the secret authorization gives the spy agency more freedom in both the kinds of operations it conducts and who it targets.

The authorization allows the CIA to more easily authorize its own covert cyber operations, rather than requiring the agency to get approval from the White House.

It "gave the agency very specific authorities to really take the fight offensively to a handful of adversarial countries," said a former U.S. government official.

These countries include Russia, China, Iran and North Korea — which are mentioned directly in the document — but the authorization potentially applies to others as well, according to another former official.

"The White House wanted a vehicle to strike back," said the second former official. "And this was the way to do it."

The CIA's new powers are not about hacking to collect intelligence. Instead, they open the way for the agency to launch offensive cyber operations with the aim of producing disruption — like cutting off electricity or compromising an intelligence operation by dumping documents online — as well as destruction, similar to the U.S.-Israeli 2009 Stuxnet attack against Iran's nuclear program.

The authorization has made it easier for the CIA to damage adversaries' critical infrastructure, such as petrochemical plants, and to engage in the kind of hack-and-dump operations that Russian hackers and Wikileaks



popularized, in which tranches of stolen documents or data are leaked to journalists or posted on the internet. It has also freed the agency to conduct disruptive operations against organizations that were largely off limits previously, such as banks and other financial institutions.

Another key change with the authorization is it lessened the evidentiary requirements that limited the CIA's ability to conduct covert cyber operations against entities like media organizations, charities, religious institutions or businesses believed to be working on behalf of adversaries' foreign intelligence services, as well as individuals affiliated with these organizations, according to former officials.

"Before, you would need years of signals and dozens of pages of intelligence to show that this thing is a de facto arm of the government," a former official told Yahoo News. Now, "as long as you can show that it vaguely looks like the charity is working on behalf of that government, then you're good."

A current senior intelligence official, who declined to discuss specific U.S. government operations or policies, called Trump-era interest in offensive operations "phenomenal." The CIA, the National Security Agency and the Pentagon "have been able to play like we should be playing in the last couple years," the current official said.

John Bolton's appointment as national

security adviser in April 2018 gave another boost to those seeking to ease restrictions on cyber operations.

"We needed to scrap the Obama-era rules and replace them with a more agile, expeditious decision-making structure," Bolton writes in his recently published memoir, "The Room Where It Happened." Part of this involved strengthening the U.S. government's "clandestine capabilities" in cyberspace against "nonstate actors" and others, he writes.

The new cyber authorization further emboldened the CIA's operations against Iran, according to former officials. Even before Trump signed the directive, administration officials were already encouraging the CIA to aggressively interpret preexisting secret Iran-related authorities to help prosecute the administration's "maximum pressure" campaign against Tehran.

Using the Cold War strategy of rolling back the Soviet Union as inspiration, senior Trump national security officials believed that destabilizing Iran within its borders would force the Islamic Republic to cease its activities abroad and, perhaps, collapse.

The maximum-pressure campaign includes punishing economic sanctions, but has also involved CIA cyberattacks on Iranian infrastructure, said former officials.

"It was obvious that destabilization was the plan on Iran," said one former official, and Trump administration officials were eager to have the CIA conduct destructive cyber operations against targets inside that country. Bolton "wanted another tool, he wanted another hammer. He was looking at Stuxnet and how to be mean to Iran, so that was probably attractive to him," said another source.

Iran prioritizes expansion of ties with Asian countries: Vaezi

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Iranian presidential chief of staff Mahmoud Vaezi has said the inclination toward the East, including expansion of ties with Asian countries, is a priority of the Islamic Republic.

"Eastward look, development of Asian ties are fundamental & priority policies that stretch from Iran's borders to India & China's Great Wall," Vaezi tweeted on Thursday.

"This new Asian identity turns Chabahar Pt into the land, sea, railway & terminals hub that links the East to Eurasia and Iran's western borders," he added.

Government spokesman Ali Rabiei said on June 23 that Iran and China have drafted a 25-year plan for a comprehensive partnership that proves the failure of the plots to isolate the Islamic Republic.

"This plan proves the failure of the United States' policies to isolate Iran, sever Iran's relations with the international community and also to harm Iran's will to expand relations with other countries," Rabiei said during a press conference.



He said that the plan is based on a win-win approach which "heralds long term cooperation". "Recognizing cultural commonalities, encouraging mul-

tilateralism, supporting equal rights of the nations, and insisting on domestic development are parts of this plan," the government spokesman explained.

The 25-year partnership plan has provoked bitter controversy, especially because of rumors that it entails the Chinese control on Iranian islands or the presence of their military forces in Iran.

Earlier, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif denied rumors over the sale of Kish Island to China based on partnership, saying the enemies are trying to prevent the development of Iran-China relations.

Zarif said on Tuesday that China presented its draft for partnership with Iran back in the Iranian month of Esfand (February 20 to March 19) based on Iran's draft.

"In the month of Esfand, the Chinese presented their draft based on a draft we had prepared, and we are currently examining and finalizing these two drafts so as to reach an agreement," Zarif told reporters.

Two Iranians martyred in terror attack in Kurdistan province

POLITICAL TEHRAN — The Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) Hamze Sayyid al-Shohada Base announced on Thursday that two people were martyred and one injured in a terrorist attack in Sarvabad, Kurdistan Province, on Wednesday night.

According to the IRGC base, members of a terrorist group shot a Basiji force, a staff member of the municipality, and one of the

local people, who were proving aid to regional people in the fight against the coronavirus, Mehr reported.

Related investigations are underway. Following the incident, the IRGC expressed condolences over the losses and assured the people in the area that the distribution of coronavirus aid will continue unabated. It also vowed to capture those behind the terror attack and avenge the killings.



The IRGC added that such attacks will not affect its determination to help people affected by the outbreak.

In July 2018, terrorists attacked a border post of the Hamzeh Seyed al-Shohada Base in the western province of Kurdistan, killing 11 forces of the base.

The IRGC is tasked with protecting the country's northwestern and southeastern borders.

Envoy voices Iran's readiness to help Lebanon

TEHRAN (FNA) — Iranian envoy to Lebanon Mohammad Jalal Firouznia expressed his country's preparedness to help and support the Lebanese nation and government, and added that Tehran is seeking Lebanese national unity.

Firouznia made the remarks in a meeting with Maronite Cardinal Patriarch Bechara Boutros al-Rahi, noting that Iran's support for and cooperation with the Lebanese government are in line with the interests of Beirut.

Tehran has called for cementing national unity in Lebanon in the current circumstances.

In relevant remarks on July 8, Iran's Cultural Attaché to Lebanon Abbas Khomeini and Chancellor of Saint Joseph University of Beirut Salim Daccache explored avenues for exchange of professors and students and



setting up a Persian language course at the university. Khomeini described Saint Joseph University of Beirut as one of the successful universities of Lebanon with about 50 to 60 Iranian students and cultural figures, including the late Sadeq Ayenehvand, a well-known Iranian historian who was a graduate of Saint Joseph University.

Currently, dozens of universities across the world are running Persian language courses, he said, voicing readiness for setting up Persian language department at the university and sending professors.

Salim Daccache, for his part, described Iranian students as among the most talented students of the university.

Welcoming proposal for academic cooperation, he added that online education can be placed on agenda amid coronavirus spread.

Ambassador: Iran will never give in to U.S. pressure

TEHRAN (MNA) — Iranian Ambassador to Portugal Morteza Damanpak Jami said Iran will never give in to the U.S. bullying as it has adopted a policy of maximum resistance against Washington's maximum pressure campaign.

"Iran has adopted policy of maximum resistance in the face of the U.S.'s policy of maximum pressure and it will never kneel before the U.S.," Damanpak said in an interview with Portugal's Lusa News Agency on Thursday.

The ambassador referred to Iran's nuclear deal, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, saying that the pact is still enforceable even in the absence of the U.S., as the other parties have not

withdrawn from it.

However, if the U.S. returns to the deal, Iran will also be ready to work together to implement it, Damanpak said.

The Iranian envoy termed the nuclear deal as a symbol of victory of negotiations, assuring that Tehran has never closed doors of diplomacy as the government believes in constructive interaction with the world.

The issue is the main pillar of Iran's foreign policy and Iran believes that positive interaction with the international community is needed and JCPOA proved the claim, Damanpak Jami said.

The official urged the three European parties to the deal, namely the U.S., Ger-



many and France, not surrender to U.S. bullying and live up to their commitments to the pact.

Under current circumstances, there is no room for talks with the Trump administration which has closed doors of

diplomacy to Iran and pushes its policy of maximum pressure, he said.

Damanpak also referred to a recent resolution passed by the IAEA Board of Governors, calling on the watchdog to keep impartiality and avoid politicking.

IAEA members should not heed false accusations; rather they should act based on technical documents, he said.

At the end of the interview, he deplored the U.S. for not lifting the inhumane sanctions against the Islamic Republic amid the coronavirus pandemic, saying sanctions are double burden on Iran's economy and coronavirus pandemic has added to the critical situation, as the Iranian people are in difficult conditions.

Spiteful mercenaries trying to undercut Iran-China partnership: vice-speaker

1 -> Senior MP warns Seoul over freezing Iranian oil money

Meanwhile, Qazizadeh Hashemi also warned South Korea over its "unacceptable" move to block the Islamic Republic's oil revenue.

In comments on Friday, he expressed regret that Seoul is blocking the Iranian people's oil money due to the U.S. pressure.

Iranian authorities have been pressing South Korea to release between \$6.5 billion and \$9 billion in frozen funds so that Tehran could use them for purchase of basic goods.



Qazizadeh Hashemi described the move as a "rude" behavior, saying it shows South Korea is not committed to any ethical or legal principle, Press TV reported.

South Korea is violating another nation's rights under the pressure of the U.S. bullies, he said.

He urged the Iranian Foreign Ministry to actively pursue the return of the Iranian money.

Earlier on Thursday, Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said Tehran has already given an official warning to Seoul over the frozen assets.

South Korea is citing the U.S. sanctions as an excuse for not releasing Iran's money, Mousavi told a press briefing in the city of Ardabil in northwestern Iran.

However, he added, relations between South Korea and the U.S. have nothing to do with Iran.

On Tuesday, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif told a meeting with Iranian parliamentarians that countries like South Korea have not responded positively to Iran's repeated requests for release of funds that have reportedly been blocked because of the U.S. pressure.

"Some countries like Oman and China have acted positively on return of these funds but South Korea has not taken any significant action in this regard," said Zarif, according to remarks published by Iranian parliament's news service.

Zarif said South Korean government claims it has "certain problems" in transferring the money it owes to Iran mainly because of the U.S. sanctions.

"On the one hand, we are negotiating for the return of the blocked funds and on the other, there has been some proper legal actions," said the top Iranian diplomat without elaborating on what legal path Iran has taken to secure the release of funds.

Business sources said last week that Seoul had agreed to allow Iran use part of the funds for purchases of drugs and medical equipment.

Iran is struggling to return the funds frozen by foreign banks amid a shortage of hard currency in the country which has been contending with the coronavirus pandemic over the past months.

Earlier this month, the Chairman of Iran-South Korea Joint Chamber of Commerce Hossein Tanhaei announced that the Asian country has agreed to unblock part of Iran's frozen money which is kept by Seoul due to the U.S. sanctions.

"Based on the agreement with the Korean side the money is not going to be returned in cash but in the form of medical and pharmaceutical items," Tanhaei said.

U.S. interference in Iran-Georgia relation unacceptable: envoy

TEHRAN (MNA) — In a meeting with Georgian President Salome Zourabichvili, Iran's Ambassador to the country Javad Ghavam Shahidi said the US interference in Iran-Georgia ties are unacceptable and against with the two country's interests.

In this meeting held on Wednesday, Shahidi underlined the significance of the mutual interests, noting that US unilateralism and interference in the two sides' affairs is unacceptable and will harm such issues.



"The Islamic Republic of Iran has always supported and assisted the government and people of Georgia in various economic, political, and international fields and has supported its independence and territorial integrity," the Iranian envoy said.

He, elsewhere, referred to the problems that Iranian citizens are faced with in Georgia, regarding the extension of their residence, damage to their assets and the ban on imports and transportation of goods to Georgia, and called for immediate follow-up and resolution of these problems by Georgian authorities.

The Iranian official also hailed the assistance of the President of Georgia in transferring Iranian prisoners to their country.

President Zourabichvili vowed that she will try to remove the problems related to residential, commercial, and investment restrictions, as well as cuts of imports from Iran.

Shahidi also held a meeting with the Georgian Prosecutor-General Irakli Shotaдзе, on Wednesday, where the two officials underlined the significance of boosting legal and judiciary cooperation between Iran and Georgia.

Iran has called for urgent endorsement of triple legal agreement between Tehran and Tbilisi and also for endorsement of a mutual contract to combat narcotics.

Rouhani inaugurates energy, industrial projects worth \$880m in 3 provinces

1 → 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.



Earlier this year, Iran's Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian said following the "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.

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

'S. Korean current approach toward Iran will impact future relations'

1 → In late June, the Governor of Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Abdolnasser Hemmati said that Iran will take back its dollars from South Korea through legal and international methods. The official also expressed hope that the South Korean government would abide by its commitments and not block access to those funds under the pretext of the U.S. sanctions.

Earlier this month, the Chairman of Iran-South Korea Joint Chamber of Commerce Hossein Tanhaei announced that the Asian country has agreed to unblock part of Iran's frozen money which is kept by Seoul due to the U.S. sanctions.

"Based on the agreement with the Korean side the money is not going to be returned in cash but in the form of medical and pharmaceutical items," Tanhaei said.

There have been no talks on the return of the money in cash, however, it is possible that after the first part is released, we will gradually move towards the imports of food and livestock feed, the official explained.

Industry Ministry revives 9 small mines in 3 months

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Following a program for reviving, activation, and development of idle small mines, the Iranian Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry has revived nine such mines that created 300 job opportunities in the first three months of the current Iranian calendar month (March 20-June 20).

According to IRIB, by conducting diagnostic procedures on 1,053 mines in the mentioned three months, the ministry has increased the production capacity of these mines significantly.



As reported, in the first quarter of this Iranian calendar year, 26 foreign investments worth \$500 million were approved in the country, 56 percent of which was accounted for by the industry, mining, and trade sectors.

Currently, more than 12,500 industrial and mining projects with physical progress of over 60 percent and 3800 projects with physical progress of over 80 percent are underway across the country.

Last week, IRNA reported that the Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) has assessed 490 idle small mines in 31 provinces across the country since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year.

Since the beginning of the mentioned program last May up to the end of the first quarter of the current Iranian calendar year, over 2,620 small mines in 31 provinces have gone through diagnostic procedures for identifying the reasons for their shutting down.

Also during this period, the reviving operations for 155 mines were finalized and 41 mines are now active and in production.

Last year, out of a total of 2,130 mines monitored in 31 provinces, clinical action was performed on 1,020 mines and practical solutions were offered for 146 mines.

Back in May, IMIDRO Head Khodadad Gharibpour announced that his organization was planning to revive 200 small mines by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2021).

Making the remarks in a meeting to discuss the plan for reviving small mines in the country on May 21, Gharibpour said, "We had planned to revive 150 small mines in the past year, but due to the coronavirus pandemic the figure fell to 146."

Shahid Rajaei Port's phase 3 of development to be completed by Mar. 2021

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The third phase of the development plan of Iran's biggest container port, Shahid Rajaei, is going to go operational by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2021), according to head of Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO).

"The third phase [of the port] is expected to go operational before the end of the year and it will be able to accept ships with capacities up to 18,400 TEUs," IRIB quoted Mohammad Rastad as saying.

Noting that one of the priorities of the Ports and Maritime Organization is to shift the maximum possible share of the country's cargo transport toward the rail transportation, Rastad said "direct rail transportation of goods from vessel to wagons at Shahid Rajaei Port is a sign of development in this area."

"We need to reduce road freight and move toward rail transportation," he stressed.



Pointing out that Hormozgan is a hub for cruises and tourism, the official said: "We have taken appropriate steps in this area as well," adding: "Updating the maritime

fleet and encouraging investors to develop infrastructure and modernize the fleet should also be considered as priorities."

In August 2019, PMO's Director of Engineering and Infrastructure Development Mohammadreza Allahyar had said that the port's capacity is planned to rise 2.1 million TEUs to reach 8 million TEUs through implementing the first stage of the third phase of its development plan by the end of the current Iranian calendar year.

Located in Iran's southern province of Hormozgan, Shahid Rajaei is the country's largest and best-equipped container port.

Enjoying the most modern container terminals and port equipment, Shahid Rajaei accounts for 85 percent of the total loading and unloading at the Iranian ports.

Given its significant role in the country's import and export of products as well as transit and transshipment via Iran, development of Shahid Rajaei Port has been among the most important development projects in the country.

Iran-Belarus agricultural products, foodstuff trade up 22% in 5 months yr/yr

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The value of trade between Iran and Belarus in the field of agricultural products and foodstuff increased 22.5 percent to \$4.3 million during the first five months of 2020 from the figure of the same period of time in 2019, the press service of the Belarusian Agriculture and Food Ministry told BeTA.

As reported by BeTA (Belarusian Telegraph Agency), the announcement was made after Belarusian Agriculture and Food Minister Ivan Krupko met with Iranian Ambassador to Belarus Saeed Yari in Minsk.

Participants of the meeting discussed ways to increase Belarus-Iran trade and economic cooperation in the sphere of agriculture and food, including ways to ship Belarusian dairy and meat products to Iran and Iranian fruits, fish, and sea food to Belarus. Belarus continues working to get Belarusian companies certified for shipping their products to Iran.

In order to invigorate bilateral cooperation and take a closer look at Belarusian products, Ivan Krupko invited the Iranian delegation to visit the international expo Belagro, which is due in Minsk on September 22-26.

The sides also discussed the timeframe for organizing the second session of the Belarusian-Iranian working group on cooperation in the sphere of agriculture.

In December 2019, Iran, and Belarus signed an agreement for promoting mutual

trade, IRIB reported, quoting the spokesman of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) as saying.

According to Rohollah Latifi, the agreement was signed by the IRICA Head Mehdi Mirashrafi and the Chairman of Belarus State Customs Committee Yuri Senko on the sidelines of a World Customs Organization (WCO) event in South Korea.

The agreement was signed in line with the implementation of the free trade agreement between Iran and Eurasia, Latifi said, adding that it is aimed for improving the level of cooperation between the two countries and protect the economic and social interests of both sides.

In the mentioned agreement, several important factors including identifying the two sides' needs, increasing efficiency, customs control of goods and vehicles in transit between the two countries, have been emphasized.

Belarus for long has been among Iran's trade partners and the country played a significant role in reaching the trade agreement between Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).

The EAEU is comprised of Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan. It is an international organization created with the aim of encouraging regional economic integration through the free movement of goods, services and people within the union.

TSE's main index goes up 4% in a week

ECONOMY TEHRAN — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), increased four percent during the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday).

As IRNA reported, the index gained 88,000 points to stand at 1.841 million points in the past week.

Banks, car and car parts, base metals, chemicals, oil products, cement, insurance, foodstuff and medicine groups were the main contributors to the TEDPIX's weekly rise.

Nearly four million new trading accounts have been opened in Iran's stock market since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20), the managing director of Central Securities Depository of Iran (CSDI) announced on Monday.

Underlining that the stock market is being more and more welcomed in the present year, Hossein Fahimi said that the figure is really noticeable compared to the figures of the previous years.

In a press conference on June 20, Hassan Qalibaf-Asl, the head of Iran's Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO), had announced that the number of trading accounts opened in the stock market in the past year was 820,000.

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

in the country's stock market.

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

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

While the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19) was full of success for the Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), which is Iran's major stock market, 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's main index, TEDPIX, 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.

The index also hit the record high of 1.5 million points on June 30.

TPO holds 2nd meeting of Iran-Qatar commodity-country desk

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) held the second meeting of its Commodity-Country Desk on trade with Qatar, director-general of TPO's office of Arabian and African countries announced.

As published by the TPO official website on Friday, Farzad Piltan said that the second meeting of the mentioned desk was held with the aim of investigating the ways for the expansion of dairy products exports to Qatar.

Besides investigating the Qatari dairy products market, potentials and opportunities, laws and regulations, barriers and problems in terms of exporting such products to the Arab neighbor were also discussed, the official stated.

Dairy products constitute about \$154 million of the total \$35 billion of Qatar's annual imports, Piltan mentioned, adding that these products account for \$1 million of Iran's total \$200 million of exports to Qatar.

Trade between Iran and Qatar started to thrive when the Arab country came under a blockade by Saudi Arabia and allies in June 2017.

Iranian exporters have supplied various agricultural products as well as construction materials to Qatar, bringing in over \$335 million in revenues over the past Iranian calendar year that ended on March 19.

Iran's imports from Qatar topped \$30 million over the same period, said Adnan Mousapour, the head of Iran-Qatar Joint Chamber of Commerce, who insisted that trade balance between the two countries could have further been in Iran's favor if the pandemic had not caused a closure of shipping lines.

Mousapour said that the spread of the disease in Iran had also affected tourism activities between Iran and Qatar as well as a suitcase trade which normally accounts for a major share of exchanges between the two countries.

Reports in recent months have suggested that Iran and Qatar have plans to increase the size of joint investment projects, especially those in the energy sector.

In mid-April, Iran's Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian and Qatar's Minister of



Commerce and Industry Ali bin Ahmed Al Kuwari agreed on cooperation in energy and investment spheres between the two countries during a video conference.

As the next meeting of Iran-Qatar Joint Economic Committee, which was scheduled to be held in Iran's Isfahan City in the first Iranian calendar month of Farvardin (March 20-April 19), was canceled due to the coronavirus outbreak, the two ministers, who are the co-chairmen of the committee, discussed areas of bilateral cooperation through video conference.

The two sides also stressed that the meeting of the joint economic committee will be held as soon as the coronavirus pandemic ends and then seriously follow up the objectives of bilateral trade.

Meanwhile, they decided that until then both sides pursue the discussed issues through more video conferences.

In a joint press conference with Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani in Tehran in January, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said that Iran has stood and will stand beside Qatar in the future.

"At a juncture of time, certain regional countries imposed restrictions on Qatar, but Iran stood beside Qatar and will stand based on its duties as a neighbor," Rouhani added.

He said that the two countries have a very good relationship in various areas of economy, science, and culture.

For his part, the Qatari emir said that Doha will never forget Tehran's help in difficult days.

"We praise the Islamic Republic of Iran's stance in recent years, especially when Qatar was under blockade," the emir said.

Sheikh Tamim also called for the expansion of relations.

Iran calls for expediting road, rail, sea trade with Russia

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iranian Ambassador to Russia Kazem Jalali said that his country's seeking ways to facilitate and speed up trade with Russia via road, rail, and sea, IRNA reported.

Making the remarks in a videoconference with the senior Russian officials on Thursday, Jalali said that necessary steps should be taken to increase non-oil exports, and the problems and obstacles should be removed in this due.

During the videoconference, both sides' officials also discussed creating logistics and warehouse centers in the other country's market.

Also, in another video-conference, which was held between Jalali and Russian officials at Federal Customs Service including Vladimir Vladimirovich Ivin, the deputy head of the customs, on Tuesday, the two sides investigated ways of boosting bilateral customs cooperation.

Addressing the conference, Jalali said that Iran is ready to create customs "Green Corridor" with Russia on the pandemic occasion when many international activities have been brought to lockdown.

To have multilateral cooperation with the Eurasian Economic Union (EUEA) in the framework of Russian President Vladimir Putin's initiative to create the customs "Green Corridor" in coronavirus and post-coronavirus periods is among the main agenda of development of economic relations, the ambassador said.

Russia suggested considering President Putin's initiative to create "green corridors" for delivery of essential goods that would be unimpeded by sanctions and trade wars, news agency "TASS" quoted Russia's Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) envoy Alexander Lukashchik as saying in late April.

Putin talked of the initiative at the emergency summit of the G20 group last March.

In mid-February, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Igor Morgulov said that the trade turnover between Iran and Russia has followed an upward trend in the past two years despite the challenging external conditions, Tass reported.

"Despite the challenging external conditions, the Russian-Iranian trade turnover is rising. It increased to \$2 billion last year," he said.

Mentioning the preferential trade agreement between Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), Morgulov expressed hope that the agreement would facilitate the trade between the two sides and give an extra impetus to the expansion of ties.

According to the official data, trade turnover between Russia and Iran amounted to \$1.74 billion in 2018 and \$1.589 billion in the period between January-September 2019.

Agriculture products are the backbone of trade turnover between the countries. Trade in the agriculture sector amounted to 1.283 billion in January-September 2019, an increase of 41.6 percent year-on-year.

In late December 2019, Moscow's commercial representative in Tehran, Rustam Zhiganshin had announced that more than 50 percent of Iran and Russia's total bilateral trade is being conducted through national currencies.

"If in 2018 payments in national currencies comprised 40 percent [of the two countries' trade], in 2019 this quota has already exceeded 50 percent," Zhiganshin told sputnik.

Russia's exports to Iran include machinery, steel, wagons, wood, vegetable oil, corn, barley, red meat, and other goods, while its imports from the Islamic Republic are mostly dairy products, vegetables, and fruits.

In a meeting between the Iranian ambassador to Russia and Russian Deputy Energy Minister Anatoly Tikhonov, in Moscow earlier this month, the two sides agreed on holding the 16th Iran-Russia Joint Economic Committee online or face to face in September.

Jalali and Tikhonov also discussed the process of the latest energy cooperation between the two countries.

Holding a working group on energy cooperation between the two countries and the implementation of several new projects in the fields of agriculture, energy, and transportation were among the topics discussed during the meeting.

Jask to soon become a hub for Iran oil exports: Rouhani

ENERGY TEHRAN — Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said on Thursday that Jask Island is going to become one of the country's most important oil terminals in near future, Shana reported, citing the presidency's official website.

Rouhani made the remarks in the inauguration ceremony of 81 major energy projects in the southern Hormozgan Province, where Jask Port lies.

"Jask will soon become a very important port for our oil exports, and the position of this province [Hormozgan] will become higher and more important day by day," Rouhani said.

He also mentioned the country's achievements in water and electricity sectors and said: "Despite all the sanctions pressures and limitations, about 90 percent of the design and implementation of important projects in the electricity industry is currently done by capable Iranian experts,



and we must move towards complete self-sufficiency in this industry."

Iran is currently constructing a new crude oil export terminal at Jask, 1,690 kilometers (1,050 mi) south of Tehran on the Gulf of Oman.

Back in March 2019, Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh had said that the construction of the terminal is going to be completed by 2021.

"Iran's plans to make the Jask terminal operational in two years are on track," Zanganeh said.

"We hope that this terminal [Jask] will become operational by end of the year 1399 (March 2021) and for the first time Iran's oil will be exported through Makran [Gulf of Oman]," he said.

Jask terminal, which is considered the country's second-largest oil export terminal after Kharg terminal, is expected to give Iran an alternative outlet for its oil exports.

Daily gasoline consumption rises to 74m liters

ENERGY TEHRAN — Average daily gasoline consumption in Iran has once again risen back to 74 million liters as the coronavirus-related restrictions eased and people are back to their normal routines, head of Iran Gas Station Owners Union said.

According to Homayoun Salehi, after the implementation of the rationing program and later the outbreak of coronavirus in early March and April, gasoline consumption in the country declined significantly so that in two days of April the consumption even fell to about 22 million liters, ILNA reported.

"But after the reopening of jobs and returning of people to their businesses, consumption increased by 50 million liters to about 74 million liters per day," Salehi added.

He pointed to the complete compliance of gas stations with health and safety protocols and said: "From the very beginning of the coronavirus outbreak until now, all gas stations have performed under health and safety standards but we are in a tight spot in terms of providing

disinfectants."

Gasoline consumption had fallen to 44 million liters during the Iranian New Year (Norouz) holidays (March 20-April 3) following the travel restrictions applied amid the COVID-19 outbreak.

According to Keramat Veiskarami, the managing director of the National Iranian Oil Products Distribution Company (NIOPODC), in the mentioned 15-day period the country's gasoline consumption decreased by nearly 50 million liters compared to the figure for the previous year's same period.

Iranians consumed 94 million liters of gasoline on average during the previous year's Norouz holidays, Veiskarami said.

Iranian government imposed an intercity travel ban in late March to prevent further spread of the coronavirus during the New Year holidays.

Gasoline consumption in Iran was already following a downward trend since the implementation of a rationing plan by the government.



In mid-November 2019, the Iranian government started rationing of subsidized gasoline and increased fuel prices as part of a plan to reduce the energy subsidies to free the revenue for supporting underprivileged families.

JMMC sees improving market conditions and conformity levels

TEHRAN (Shana) — The 20th Meeting of the Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee (JMMC) took place via videoconference on Wednesday, 15 July 2020, under the Chairmanship of HRH Prince Abdul Aziz Bin Salman, Saudi Arabia's Minister of Energy, and co-Chair HE Alexander Novak, Minister of Energy of the Russian Federation.

The Committee reviewed the monthly report prepared by its Joint Technical Committee (JTC) and developments in the global oil market since its last meeting on 18 June 2020. The Committee also considered market prospects for the second half of 2020.

The Committee reiterated the importance of the 'Declaration of Cooperation' (DoC) in supporting oil market stability. It recalled the historic decision taken by all Participating Countries in the DoC at the 10th (Extraordinary) OPEC and non-OPEC Ministerial Meeting on 12 April 2020 to adjust downwards overall crude oil production, and the unanimous decisions taken at the 179th Meeting of the OPEC Conference and the 11th OPEC and non-OPEC Ministerial Meeting on 6 June 2020. The outcomes of the June Meetings extended the first phase of the production adjustments until 31 July 2020; provided a compensation mechanism in respect of the months July, August and September for participating countries that were not able to achieve full conformity in May and June; and endorsed monthly meetings of both the JMMC and the JTC to strengthen monitoring and to help provide a clearer understanding of market fundamentals.

The Committee reviewed and reaffirmed the commitment of all Participating Countries to achieve full conformity and make up for any shortfall under compensation plans presented to the Committee.



The Committee stressed that achieving 100 percent conformity from all participating Countries is not only fair, but vital for the ongoing rebalancing efforts and to help deliver long term oil market stability.

The Committee reviewed the crude oil production data for the month of June 2020 and welcomed the significant performance in the overall conformity level for participating OPEC and non-OPEC Countries at 107 percent in June 2020, an achievement that found wide recognition in the market.

It reiterated its appreciation of additional voluntary contributions made by Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait in the month of June 2020.

The Committee noted that removing the credit for over-conformity results in a conformity level of 95% in June 2020, the highest since the inception of the DoC in January 2017.

It requested the JTC and the OPEC Secretariat to closely

monitor and report to the JMMC the implementation of the required compensation by the underperforming participating countries.

It also requested underperforming participating countries to submit their plan for implementation of the required compensation for the month June 2020 to the OPEC Secretariat by the end of July 2020.

The Committee welcomed the participation of Angola, Gabon, South Sudan and Congo, and noted that they had reiterated their commitment to the DoC production adjustments and compensation plans.

The Committee observed that there were encouraging signs of improvement as economies around the world open up. While there could be localized or partial lockdowns re-imposed in some places, the recovery signs are clear, both in physical and futures markets.

It noted that, moving to the next phase of the agreement, the extra supply resulting from the scheduled easing of the production adjustment will be consumed as demand recovers.

The Committee also noted that seasonality is more pronounced this year, due to the pandemic. For many DoC participants, there will be an increase in demand for utilities, as well as changes in travel patterns, boosting domestic demand for gasoline and diesel and as a result the impact on DoC participating countries' exports will be limited.

In addition, the compensation schedule that has been agreed will mean that the effective level of adjustments will be deeper.

The Committee thanked the JTC and the OPEC Secretariat for their work. The next meetings of the JTC and the JMMC are scheduled for 17 August and 18 August 2020, respectively.

Australian LNG sector faces full impact of pandemic, oil and gas price crash

Australia's LNG sector is feeling the full impact of the collapse of oil and gas prices as its biggest energy companies cut asset valuations by billions of dollars, big ticket projects face delays, cash flows decline and LNG cargoes are deferred or delayed.

The pressure on Australian oil and gas has been building since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, but the outlook on energy prices has continued to sour, and asset write-downs by global oil majors meant the rest of the industry had to follow suit.

In the week of July 13, ASX-listed Woodside Petroleum recorded \$4.37 billion in post-tax impairment losses and provisions in its half yearly financial statements, while Origin Energy said it would recognize non-cash charges of \$1.16 billion to \$1.24 billion in its full-year results on August 20.

The devaluation of oil and gas assets includes some of the world's largest LNG projects, on the back of which Australia is competing with Qatar to be the world's largest LNG exporter. These include write-downs at Wheatstone LNG, Pluto LNG and North West Shelf by Woodside, and Australia Pacific LNG by Origin.

The two companies also took provisions on their U.S. LNG contracts -- \$447 million for Corpus Christi LNG by Woodside and \$440 million-\$460 million by Origin for Cameron LNG, citing poor arbitrage economics.



Origin said that since December 31, 2019, "the primary changes in assumptions relate to a reduction in JKM LNG prices reflecting weaker medium-term demand and moderately lower long-term prices driven by expected lower U.S. gas liquefaction fees, as well as lower U.S. Treasury bond rates."

It assumes that Brent crude will average \$40/b in FY 2021, \$45/b in FY 2022 and \$50/b in FY 2021. Woodside assumes \$44/b Brent and \$4.4/MMBtu spot LNG for 2021, and \$55/b Brent and \$6.3/MMBtu spot LNG for 2022.

"The impairments are a prudent decision reflecting the fact that our industry is confronted by a tsunami of challenges," Woodside's Peter Coleman said at a conference call on July 15. "Realized prices have dropped dramatically due to global oil oversupply and demand destruction from the pandemic."

The company delayed final investment decisions on two key brownfield projects -- Scar-

borough and Pluto Train 2 were pushed to the second half of 2021 and the Browse expansion from 2023 -- both of which could delay a ramp-up in Australia's LNG export capacity.

Australian projects also took a hit when oil majors cut valuations recently -- Shell's impairments of up to \$2.2 billion for the second quarter included \$8 billion-\$9 billion in its integrated gas business covering Queensland Gas and Prelude FLNG. BP and Chevron also have LNG projects in Australia.

Spot market exposure

Woodside said 46 percent of its LNG sales in the second quarter were on the spot market and 54 percent were from contracted volumes, but it realized only \$2.6/MMBtu from the spot market compared with \$7/MMBtu from contracts. This compares with LNG spot sales of 13 percent in the first quarter, reflecting the scale of price impact on oil-linked LNG exporters in the second quarter of 2020.

"The percentage of spot sales volume was influenced by the challenging market conditions," Woodside said in a clarification issued on July 16.

"Primary drivers for the higher spot sales volume in the quarter included contractual flexibilities exercised by buyers (five cargoes, 16 percent), additional production due to strong operational reliability (two cargoes, 6 percent) and additional production due to maintenance deferred because of the COVID-19 pandemic (one cargo, 3 percent)," the company said.

Woodside said spot sales are expected to fluctuate due to seasonality and cargo timing, and further exercise of downward quantity tolerance by buyers is not expected in the second half of 2020.

Sherry Duhe, Woodside's chief financial officer, said on the conference call that the company's spot market sales will be slightly above the 20 percent level for the year due to a handful of cargo deferrals, although year-end numbers could be affected by last-quarter activities.

Overall, Australia exported 85 cargoes in June, down from 93 cargoes in May, mainly due to terminal maintenance, which helped reduce some of the oversupply in the market, according to Adelaide-based consultancy EnergyQuest.

It said a large number of Australian cargoes continued to be delayed during June, reflecting high inventories in Asia and slower downstream demand in many markets.

"Of the 85 cargoes shipped during June, 33 cargoes were delayed by sitting at anchorage or steaming in circles prior to reaching their destination. An additional 20 cargoes shipped in May have also been delayed," EnergyQuest said, adding that delays appear to be declining, with nine delayed cargoes still to offload as of mid-July.

It estimated that Australian LNG export revenue fell sharply in June to \$2.87 billion, down from \$3.74 billion in May and down 17 percent from June 2019.

Russia sees significant improvement in global oil demand in August: minister

Global oil demand will recover significantly next month, climbing to be within 10 percent of the level that the world saw prior to the coronavirus pandemic, Russia Energy Minister Alexander Novak said, according to Reuters.

That demand, according to Novak, was off by 25 percent in April, compared to demand levels before the virus hit, causing major lockdowns the world over—including the world's top two oil consumers, China and the United States.

Yesterday, OPEC agreed to relax on August 1 its production cuts that it had set for the last couple of months, with the anticipation that demand would improve accordingly. OPEC will reinstate 2 million barrels per day of oil production from its 9.7 million bpd that it had cut in May, June, and July.

OPEC cautioned, however, that another possible wave of the coronavirus—particularly in the United States—would continue to sap demand.

Russia, as part of the OPEC+ group, issued a caveat for the increase in oil production, stating that the additional oil produced by OPEC+ member countries in August would be consumed domestically by each country, and not exported. Novak insists that Russia will be able to consume any additional production for August.

Russian Urals is now trading at a \$0.50 premium to dated Brent, however, and so Russia could be tempted to export that grade in order to capitalize on the favorable differential.

For the world's most visible data-dominated oil market, the United States, this is critical, with Saudi Arabia's exports dropping off in June, which allowed US inventories to draw down this week, according to data provided by the EIA and API.

The increased OPEC+ production starting in August is expected to run through December.

U.S. oil, gas rig count rises for first time in over 4 months, up 9 on week

After more than four months of weekly decreases, the U.S. oil and gas rig count rose by nine to a net 288 the week ending July 15, rig data provider Enverus said, signaling a widely awaited trough to a difficult year for the upstream industry grappling with the coronavirus and its devastation of crude demand.

The rise in rig activity marked a cessation of weekly rig count decreases which from early March to July reached a total loss of nearly 560 rigs from domestic fields.

For the week ended July 15, oil rigs rose by 10 on week to 202, while rigs chasing natural gas fell by one to 86.

Rigs rose nominally across most of the largest basins, although they dropped by two in the Permian Basin, the U.S.' biggest petroleum play, leaving 131. Also shedding two rigs was the Utica Shale, mostly found in Ohio, leaving seven rigs.



The Eagle Ford Shale of South Texas and the SCOOP/STACK play of Oklahoma gained two rigs each, for totals of 12 and 10, respectively.

The Williston Basin of North Dakota/Montana (12 rigs), the Haynesville Shale of East Texas/Northwest Louisiana (34 rigs), and the Marcellus Basin mostly in Pennsylvania (28 rigs) all gained one rig each.

Matt Andre, analyst for S&P Global Platts Analytics, said the continued rig decline in the Permian is likely a result of rig contracts rolling off.

"But all non-Permian major oil basins have apparently stabilized, that is, stopped declining for the most part," Andre said. "My thoughts are to watch rigs in the oil-rich plays, especially the Permian, to see when things pick back up."

All major oil basins have been severely affected by rig reductions since mid-March. The Permian at its lowest was down 297 rigs, or 69 percent, over the four-month period, while the Bakken was down 41 rigs, or 79 percent, and the Eagle Ford was down 65 rigs, or 87 percent.

Oil prices were slightly down on week, with WTI averaging \$40.35/b, down 35 cents; WTI Midland averaging \$40.79/b, down 47 cents; and the Bakken Composite averaging \$35.91/b, down 41 cents.

For natural gas, prices at Henry Hub averaged \$1.74/MMBtu, up 5 cents, while at Dominion South the average was \$1.29/MMBtu, down 7 cents.

James Williams, president of petroleum consultancy WTRG Economics, noted unconventional wells, which make up the bulk of new U.S. drilling, have high decline rates—often 70 percent the first year—and require constant drilling and completions to maintain production.

"Realistically, looking forward for the next three, four, five months, the rig count is insufficient to maintain production, and, right now, the rig count is below the level that could maintain production," Williams said.

"So, we'll have operators drilling to maintain production, and probably see the ratio of completions to rigs higher than normal, essentially depending on OPEC to keep prices in the \$40/b range" for WTI, which the global producers appear willing to do, he added. "But we're definitely going to get more drilling" in the near-term.

Frac crew recovery pauses

According to an S&P Global Platts Analytics Spotlight report July 13, the recovery in hydraulic fracturing crews, or frac crews, has paused.

After hitting bottom at 45 units in mid-May, crew totals have been oscillating between 60 to 80 units since late June, Platts Analytics said. Frac crews are a significant indicator of the state of the oil patch, as they complete wells and ready them for production.

"We're thinking rigs will stay relatively low while frac crews pick up to bring DUCs [drilled but uncompleted wells] online in second-half 2020," Andre said.

Echoing the sentiment, Credit Suisse analyst Bill Featherston said in a July 14 investor note that "completion activity should begin to recover in Q3 2020."

The current change from months of a steady drip of rig removals from U.S. fields comes just ahead of second-quarter upstream conference calls which begin next week. Analysts expect the calls to focus chiefly on second-half outlooks for production and activity and preliminary glimpses into 2021 plans and spending.

First Announcement



1399.1881

NATIONAL IRANIAN SOUTH OILFIELDS COMPANY AHVAZ-IRAN
TENDER NO. : 08-38-9740017

National Iranian South Oilfields Company (NISOC) intends to purchase the following goods

Items	Material Description	Quantity
01	PARTS FOR WENZEL HYDRAULIC DRILLING JAR	65

Vendors who intend to participate in aforesaid tender are requested to send their "Intention To Participate" letter via fax to the following number along with their resume according to Qualitative Assessment Form No.1, available at: www.nisoc.ir, not later than 14 days after the second announcement, otherwise, their requests for participation in the tender will be disregarded.

The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide and submit a bid bond of 3.630 EURO or 677.274.5000 RIAL, in favor of NISOC.

Tender documents including the materials through technical specifications and Qualitative to Assessment Forms can be accessed via: www.nisoc.ir-material procurement management tab

ONLY ACCEPTABLE DELIVERY TERM IS D.D.P., NISOC'S WAREHOUSE, AGHAJARI IRAN, PAYMENT TERM IS C.O.D., SUBSEQUENT TO NISOC'S MATERIAL APPROVAL NO ADVANCE PAYMENT WILL BE PAID

FOREIGN PURCHASING DEPARTMENT
Bldg. No. 104, Material Procurement Management Complex
Kouy-e-Fadaeian Islam (New Site), Ahvaz, Iran
E.MAIL: KALA.F.P@nisoc.ir Tel. No.: 061 34 12 34 55 Fax No.: 061 3445 7437
Public Relations www.shana.ir www.nisoc.ir
تهران تایمز: نوبت اول ۹۹/۴/۲۸ نوبت دوم ۹۹/۴/۳۱

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The West, UN allowing Saudis commit 'veritable genocide' in Yemen: geopolitical analyst

Catherine Shakdam says 'money' is stopping Saudi crimes in Yemen

1 → Where was the UN when Bahrain committed atrocious acts of barbarism against civilians in the name of control? Where was the UN when Yazidi women were sold into slavery by Daesh militants? The UN has been incapable of stopping criminality. Worse still I would say that the UN has been an accessory to war crimes by keeping mum.

As for America's influence at the United Nations it is its right of veto at the UNSC which has been most damaging to peace and progress. America has become a roadblock to peace in many conflicts.

■ One of the biggest failures of the UN has occurred in Yemen, where thousands of civilians have been slaughtered by the Saudi-led coalition. What is your take on it?

A: There have been countless instances where the United Nations has utterly failed in its mission. Most blatant of all was the UN decision to withdraw Saudi Arabia from its human rights blacklist earlier in 2015. The UN is supposed to represent a political ideal and ensure countries abide by the rules of international law. So far the Saudis have not played by the rules. Yemen is just holding a mirror to Saudi Arabia and to the kind of violations the Saudis feel they're entitled to commit because no one will hold them accountable. It's not so much as the Saudi problem, we have a greater problem where the UN is completely people and countries would feel they have a higher authority.

I would say that Western powers have completely revealed their hypocritical hands in Yemen, where Saudi Arabia has been allowed to conduct a veritable genocide. All the international community could master was meek condemnation.

And then of course there has been America's weapon sales bonanza to Saudi Arabia. The rhetoric used to justify such position has been similar to that used by Israel against the Palestinians. For the sake of profiteering and geopolitical manipulations the U.S. and the UN have allowed for war crimes to be brushed as legitimate and crimes against humanity necessary in the pursuit of the greater good.

From Syria, to Iraq, Bahrain and of course Yemen, the hand of Western imperialism has darkened the skies.

■ Why has the UN failed to stop Saudi crimes in Yemen?
A: Money! As I mentioned above, the UN is owned by powers such as Saudi Arabia, Israel, and the United States. With this in mind you can understand why violence and bloodshed have become the norm. The United Nations is no longer an independent body striving for peace – rather

“It is Wahhabism which stands an enemy of humanity – Islam here has been a victim.”



“It is not just violent and repressive regimes the U.S. has helped armed, but terror militants as well... Under the pretense of democracy building Washington has empowered the likes of Daesh, and al-Qaeda.”

an expression of imperialism, and military interventionism.

■ Could we consider the UN as a tool in hands of the arrogant powers, specifically the U.S.?

A: To an extent yes, but not limited to. The U.S. has lost a great deal of its power to Saudi Arabia's money and Israel's lobby. Today the UN is fast becoming a tool in the hands of the kingdom. America appears to leading from behind once again. That being said we should not dismiss America's influence at the UN.

If I may be brutally honest the United Nations' power exist only just as long as we give it credence. Its hold on nations can only last as long as it is tolerated.

■ According to SIPRI report, Arab regimes are major customers of American weapons. Could we say the U.S. contributes to the spread of insecurity and tyranny in the region?
A: It is true that the United States has made a great deal of

money by selling weapons to violent regimes across not just West Asia but Africa and Asia. It is interesting how on the one hand the U.S. can claim to righteousness in its political conduct and still draw a profits from war crimes ... it is after all war crimes we are really talking about.

The United States today is not empowering nations against tyranny but single-handedly allowing for tyrants to abuse their people in the name of power. If anything the U.S. has worked to deny the very rights it has claimed for itself by claiming itself a nation under God.

As far as the security, or rather insecurity is concerned, Washington has of course a great deal to answer to. It is not just violent and repressive regimes the U.S. has helped armed, but terror militants as well. America's war games in Syria attest to that. Under the pretense of democracy building Washington has empowered the likes of Daesh, and al-Qaeda. I would personally argue that Terror has been used as an asymmetrical weapon of war. Instability has been engineered by Western powers so that borders could be exploded and redrawn to fit a certain agenda.

■ Are Western powers serious and honest in fighting terrorism?

A: I don't think that Western powers have ever been genuine in their so-called fight against Terror. Again, if you look at Washington's rationale you will notice that America has more often than not allied itself to Terror to pursue its geopolitical agendas. Terror has been used by Western powers ... it is a very convenient cover!

Defeating Terror can be achieved quite easily if only we were serious. Terror after all sits in Riyadh. It is Wahhabism which stands an enemy of humanity – Islam here has been a victim. But of course stopping Wahhabism would mean to rise an opposition against Saudi Arabia and the billions of dollars the kingdom has to throw at the world.

Western powers have leaned on Terror since the late 1970s to act on their behalf and manifest the changes they envision. Today Terror is carving an empire at the heart of West Asia, mapping its advances on Israel's vision: Greater Israel. Back in the 1980s a very interesting plan was drawn: The Yinon Plan which provisioned for the Balkanization of the Levant by bringing wars to nations.

Terror today is an extension of imperialism – a violent and despicable neon of a political construct invented by the West and build to Wahhabism's image.

“From Syria, to Iraq, Bahrain and of course Yemen, the hand of Western imperialism has darkened the skies.”

To resolve the Palestinian question we need to end colonialism

By Wesam Ahmad

Amid a global pandemic, economic recession and simmering racial tensions around the world, Israel's threat to formally annex parts of occupied Palestinian territory presents yet another international crisis in the making. This is because, with this outrageous move, the Israeli government threatens to unravel the rules-based system of international relations.

Today's international law regime was established in the first half of the 20th century not only to regulate relations between states but also to assist the movements for self-determination across the world and oversee the end of colonialism.

The looming Israeli annexation of Palestinian land and the global inaction on it evidence the failure of this regime to help end colonialism and put its very raison d'être in question.

■ **No law for the powerful**

Much of the narrative in international diplomatic circles around the issue of annexation has revolved around deterrence, with the rationale being the threat of tangible consequences to annexation will lead to a reconsideration of the move. Yet this narrative fails to acknowledge that we have reached a point, where Israel will annex yet another chunk of Palestinian territory precisely because deterrence has not worked. The threat of consequences has merely forced successive Israeli governments to innovate.

In fact, Israel has enjoyed wide-ranging impunity throughout the various stages of colonization of Palestine as the international community has treated it as if it were a law-abiding sovereign state and not a colonizing power. Israel's participation in the European Union's Horizon 2020 programme is just one example of this.

Israel, of course, is not alone in having expansionist ambitions. History is replete with examples of rapacious colonial states and the means, methods and justifications they have used in moving forward their colonial practices. In the vast majority of cases, these states have showed no self-restraint, requiring an external force (most often the drive for freedom of the oppressed colonial subjects) to challenge and subdue those ambitions.

It is for this reason that international law includes provisions that are supposed to curb expansionism. But while the legal framework exists, its enforcement mechanisms have been weak, which has only encouraged powerful actors to manipulate and break it. The continued colonization of Palestine is a prime example of this.

From the early days of the occupation in



1967, Israeli officials were advised that the appropriation of property for the purposes of civilian settlements would be considered a violation of international humanitarian law which theoretically prohibits the practice of colonialism.

Nevertheless, they decided to exploit provisions in the law of armed conflict which allow for the seizure of property when "imperatively demanded by the necessities of war" in order to provide an umbrella for the eventual development and expansion of Jewish settlements on Palestinian land.

When the Israeli High Court ruled against the appropriation of Palestinian private property in the 1979 Elon Moreh case, Israeli policy adapted to exploit Ottoman-era law to treat public lands as state lands and continue to expand its settlement enterprise through the distinction between public and private property in occupied territory.

Whether it was through the treatment of settlers as part of the civilian population in occupied territory or the justification of the exploitation of natural resources through royalty payments to the Israeli Civil Administration and employment for Palestinians, the Israeli judicial system has provided "legal" cover to Israel's broader colonial enterprise by exploiting another principle of the law of armed conflict, which allows changes to be made in occupied territory if they are made in the interests of the civilian population therein.

■ **The economy of colonialism**

Throughout its 72-year history, Israel has continued to refine the art of colonization and put forward what could be considered the best business practices of colonialism.

The Israeli colonial project has many of the common colonial characteristics, such as supremacy, exploitation and entitlement, but it also has at least one distinguishing feature - its multinational corporate nature.

By incorporating globalization and the free market economy into its colonial enterprise, Israel has created an economic incentive structure which continues to perpetuate the conflict in order to grow profit. By coupling state policy with private investment, Israel has invited both state and multinational corporate actors to benefit from its colonial enterprise.

For example, Germany's Heidelberg Cement, one of the world's largest building materials companies, has been accused of profiting from the extraction of resources from Palestinian land illegally confiscated by Israel in the West Bank and the sale of construction materials to illegal Israeli settlements.

Thus, corporate considerations - direct and indirect economic benefits - have discouraged governments from taking political action to hinder the momentum of Israel's colonial project and thus both state and multinational corporate actors have contributed to its operation.

This incentive structure helps explain the Janus-faced response by the international community to Israel's colonial enterprise: its condemnation of Israel and insistence on the implementation of international legal provisions and its simultaneous willingness not to take any serious measures to stop it.

The problem is that decades of impunity have led many Israeli officials to believe that there is no longer even a need to bend

international rules and seek a creeping de facto annexation and, with the backing of the Trump administration, they have now sought a de jure seizure of Palestinian land.

This has disturbed the delicate balance the international community has tried to maintain between the integrity of the international legal system and its inaction on Israeli violations, with the costs of this now potentially outweighing the benefits (including economic ones).

If Israel is exempted from the rule of international law, how can the EU evoke international law to justify its position on matters such as Russia's annexation of Crimea, for example?

■ **Time to end colonialism**

With 2020 marking the final year of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, it is time for the international community to realize that the current Israeli colonial practices cannot be separated from the history of colonialism.

Although international law was supposed to put an end to the practice of colonialism, it is clear that it has not yet finished the job. Colonialism can never truly be eradicated so long as the colonization of Palestine continues.

If the international community wants to salvage the rule of law in international relations, it has to take concrete action. Its response to the threat of formal annexation cannot be merely trying to push back from the tipping point by threatening the sanctioning of Israel to prevent it from acting on its threats. This will simply allow it to slip back into its old strategy of de facto annexation.

July 1 may have come and gone in anticlimactic fashion, but Israel has shown its true intentions to the world and they cannot be unseen.

Therefore, the international community must address the underlying root causes that have brought about this threat by ending its reluctance to hold Israel accountable for its continued colonization of Palestine and take tangible action now. That action should take the form of targeted sanctions aimed at the entire economic incentive structure feeding into, and flowing out of, Israel's colonial enterprise.

Without an external force acting against Israel's expansionist ambitions, the colonization of Palestine will continue. If the function and the spirit of rule-based system of international relations is to be preserved, that force must be the force of law.

Wesam Ahmad is a Palestinian human rights advocate at Al-Haq NGO in Ramallah, Palestine.

(source: al Jazeera)

Egypt is stuck between a Libyan rock and an Ethiopian hard place

Ethiopia's Renaissance Dam on the Blue Nile and the ongoing infighting between Libya's eastern and western forces, as perceived by the Egyptian authorities, are two major threats to Egypt's national security that, if not dealt with swiftly, would have long-lasting implications for Egypt's future.

The Egyptian government is proactively trying to tackle these two threats in the midst of the novel coronavirus pandemic, which has hit the country hard.

In an attempt to pave the way for a potential intervention by the Egyptian military in Libya, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi met on Thursday with a group of Libyan tribal leaders in Cairo to discuss the crisis in Libya.



Sisi has warned the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord (GNA), which is recognized by the UN and backed by Turkey, against crossing Egypt's red lines, signaling that doing so would lead to Egypt's military intervention in Libya.

"The red lines that we announced earlier... were basically a call for peace and to put an end to the conflict in Libya," Sisi said at the meeting with Libya's tribesmen.

"But we will not stand idle in the face of any moves that pose a direct threat to our national strategic security on our western borders, especially in light of the increasing military build-up operations in the vicinity of the city of Sirte," Sisi cautioned.

In response, the Government of National Accord's Foreign Ministry spokesperson condemned the Egyptian president's comments as "blatant interference in Libyan internal affairs."

"El-Sisi's talk is a repeat of his previous statements, which is a blatant interference in Libyan affairs," Mohammad al-Qablawi told Al Jazeera news network.

Libya has been torn apart by conflict between two major forces in the east and west since 2014, with each side seeking to expand its sway over the entire country through outside support. While the GNA is heavily supported by Turkey and Qatar, the Benghazi-based Libyan National Army (LNA) and the Tobruk-based parliament enjoy the support of Egypt, France, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

The tribesmen who met Sisi on Thursday are allied to commander of the LNA Khalifa Hifter. They told Sisi that they have authorized him and the Egyptian army to intervene in their country to counter what they described as the "Turkish invasion and terrorism."

Head of the Supreme Council of Sheikhs and Notables of Libya Mohammad al-Misbahi thanked Sisi for his support for Libya, saying "we need the support of the Egyptian armed forces to expel the Turkish colonizer."

On Monday, the Tobruk parliament approved a motion authorizing Egypt to directly intervene militarily in the Libya's crisis if needed to counter the GNA. The parliament has authorized "Egyptian armed forces to intervene to protect the national security of Libya and Egypt if they see an imminent danger to both our countries."

In addition to the Libyan war, Egypt is facing another challenge, which Egyptian officials have called it "existential threat" to their country.

Over the past few days, there have been conflicting reports that Ethiopia has started filling the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) reservoir, a giant hydroelectric project that is being built by Ethiopia on the Blue Nile. The mega dam has long been criticized by the Egyptian authorities as a major threat to their country's water security.

In comments broadcast on television on Wednesday, Ethiopian water minister Seleshi Bekele announced that the process of filling the Grand Renaissance dam has started.

"The construction of the dam and the filling of the water go hand in hand," said Bekele, a day after the negotiation between Sudan, Egypt and Ethiopia over the dam reached a dead end.

"The filling of the dam doesn't need to wait until the completion of the dam," he added.

On Tuesday, Ethiopia has told Sudan that news reports that it had started filling the GERD reservoir on the Blue Nile were incorrect, Sudan's Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

The reports raised concerns in Cairo, prompting Egypt to officially ask for urgent clarification from Ethiopia on whether it had started filling the dam reservoir, according to a statement issued by Egypt's Foreign Ministry.

Cairo and Khartoum want to reach an agreement with Addis Ababa before the filling of the dam because they fear the \$4 billion dam could lead to a potential reduction in the amount of the Nile water flowing into Sudan and Egypt. But Addis Ababa says that it will not wait until an agreement is reached with the Nile Basin countries to start filling the GERD reservoir.

The Ethiopian stance on the GERD, along with the crisis in Libya, highlights the challenges Egypt faces in a time when it is also hit by a pandemic that killed at least 4100 and infected more than 85000 people in the country. In the past, Egypt has sought to postpone countering some threats to its national security, but now it seems that Egypt can no longer delay some strategic decisions regarding the GERD and Libya.

Sisi has warned the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord (GNA), which is recognized by the UN and backed by Turkey, against crossing Egypt's red lines, signaling that doing so would lead to Egypt's military intervention in Libya.

Coronavirus: Emirates reinstates flights to Tehran after six months halt

HERITAGE **TEHRAN** – Emirates has resumed its flights to/from the Iranian capital Tehran after some six months of halt over the coronavirus pandemic, which has dramatically lessened travels and air traffic in the global scene.



“Emirates resumed its flights to Tehran this morning after a six-month suspension,” IRNA quoted Mohammadreza Karimian, a senior official at the Imam Khomeini International Airport, as saying on Friday.

“Strict implementation of health protocols aimed to control the coronavirus disease has caused airlines to gradually back their services to normal and [now] we will see the growth of flights again [in numbers],” the official noted.

The carrier says tourists traveling to Dubai must have travel insurance with COVID-19 cover or declare at check-in that they will bear the costs for treatment and isolation if necessary before they travel. The insurance certificate stating COVID-19 coverage has to be present at check-in.

Hospitality training course held in Kordestan

TOURISM **TEHRAN** – An online hospitality and hotel management course was held in western Kordestan province on Wednesday, CHTN reported.

Staff and managers of 48 accommodation centers attended the course, which aimed at empowerment the staff and promoting the hospitality industry amid the outbreak of the coronavirus in the country, provincial tourism chief Hamid Eskandari said.



The course included basic skills such as communication and ways to interact with the hotel guests, front- and back-office operations, housekeeping, human resource management, marketing and the management of food operations, and safety, health, and accident prevention, the official added.

He also noted that the course was free of charges and the participants were awarded a certificate.

Before coronavirus put the travel industry on a halt, Iraqi travelers constituted the largest source of foreign arrivals in the western Iranian province of Kordestan.

The province's tourism officials hoped that the growing trend of foreign arrivals would be maintained by better planning and deeper cooperation with the private sector and other relevant bodies.

Beyond Iran's tourist attractions: the people and places to visit in Iran

By Pashmina Binwani

(Part 2/8)

We started our journey in bustling Tehran, not knowing what to expect in this city of 14 million people. It reminded me of the hustle and bustle of India, but as I explored the streets of Northern Tehran, I came across beautiful houses lined with Cedar trees.



There were open courtyards, traditional earthy beige houses with stunning Islamic architecture (just look up to the roof of every building, bazaar and houses!)

Iranians can't do without the pomegranates

It is safe to say that Persians love their pomegranates known as 'Anar'. Every street, park, or Iranian household that we entered into served us the pomegranates. It was often an ice breaker or a subtle act of hospitality. It is served in stews, like candies, and mixed into main dishes along with walnuts and other dry fruits. I was even told that pomegranates are even mentioned in the [holy] Quran and the Bible.

Learning the art of picnicking in Iran

As my Couchsurfing host showed me Tehran, I came across Iranians basking in the November light holding large picnic gatherings everywhere where there is a little patch of dirt. Copious amounts of tea, Barbadi (bread), jam, cheese, and their endless sense of humor since to be the subject of the day. They easily choose to focus on the things that give them the most happiness and finding joy to express their current state of mind. We visited several parks such as Ab-Atash park and the Jamshidieh Stone Garden.

Museum featuring splendid Sassanid column capitals inaugurated in western Iran

HERITAGE **TEHRAN** – A museum dedicated to stone column capitals lavishly carved in the Sassanid era (224–651) was opened to the public on Thursday in Kermanshah province, western Iran.

A select of 12 column capitals were put on a show at the first phase at the museum located within the Taq-e Bostan historical site, which was originally the site of a Parthian royal hunting garden, but the Sassanians later added their own regal stamp.

The opening ceremony was attended by deputy governor general Mehrdad Salari, provincial tourism chief Omid Qaderi, and a number of local officials and history buffs on Thursday, CHTN reported.

Addressing the ceremony, Qaderi reminded attendees of the rich history and cultural Heritage of Kermanshah, saying “These 12 capitals have been unearthed from [excavations at] the Jameh Mosque of Kermanshah, [the UNESCO-registered] Bisotun, Abshuran [neighborhood], and urban outskirts. We have put them here on display in a bid to further introduce the rich history and culture of Kermanshah to the people in Iran and the globe.”

“We have numerous historical and ancient relics in the province but, unfortunately, we haven't been able to demonstrate those in a proper way.”

Talking about the capitals, the official said, “These capitals are one of the most delicate and valuable examples of sculpturing and stone arts of the Sassanids and for this reason, they have long been considered by scholars.”

“These columns were probably prepared for the construction of a royal palace in the Sassanid period, but the construction of the palace remained incomplete due to the fall of the Persian dynasty.”

“Of these magnificent capitals that bear carvings of inverted tulips are beautifully and delicately drawn,

“There are another 120 pieces of such magnificent capitals that bear delicate carvings of inverted tulips being kept at the treasure trove of the province... And we hope we will



A select of 12 column capitals are on show during the opening ceremony of a new cultural heritage museum in Kermanshah, western Iran, July 16, 2020.

be able to put them on public shows.”

Inscribed into the base of a towering cliff, Taq-e Bostan is home to extraordinary Sassanian bas-reliefs of ancient victorious kings. The biggest alcove features elephant-mounted hunting scenes on the sidewalls and highlights the coronation of Khosrow II (r 590–628), beneath which the king rides off in full armor and chain mail (half a millennium before the European Black Prince made it fashionable). The second niche shows kings Shapur III and his Roman-

stomping grandfather Shapur II. To the right of the niches is a fine tableau again showing Shapur II (r 379–383), in which he is depicted trampling over the Roman emperor Julian the Apostate (whom he defeated in 363) and receiving a crown of blessings from the Zoroastrian god Mithras.

The Sassanid era is of very high importance in the history of Iran. Under Sassanids, Persian art and architecture experienced a general renaissance. Architecture often took grandiose proportions such as palaces at Ctesiphon,

Firuzabad, and Sarvestan that are amongst highlights of the ensemble.

Crafts such as metalwork and gem-engraving grew highly sophisticated, yet scholarship was encouraged by the state. In those years, works from both the East and West were translated into Pahlavi, the language of the Sassanians. In 2018, UNESCO added an ensemble of Sassanian historical cities in southern Iran -- titled “Sassanian Archaeological Landscape of Fars Region” -- to its World Heritage list.

Iran reassures EASA about county's "safe" airspace

TOURISM **TEHRAN** – Iran's Civil Aviation Organization has dismissed a recent alert issued by the European Aviation Safety Agency that warns airlines about flying over the Iranian airspace, reassuring the agency about the country's “safe” airspace.

“Negotiations have been held with the European Union Aviation Safety Agency, and some European countries to address concerns and reassure the safety of the Iranian airspace,” IRNA quoted CAO Deputy Director Morteza Dehghan as saying on Friday.

“A day after the European Union extended the NOTAM (warning) to airlines about crossing Iran's airspace,



the Civil Aviation Organization ensured the European agency of air safety standards of the Islamic Republic.”

The Germany-based European Union agency had warned that passenger jets flying through Iranian airspace risk being accidentally targeted by the country's air-defense systems.

“Due to the hazardous security situation, and poor coordination between civil aviation and military operations, there is a risk of misidentification of civil aircraft,” EASA announced on Thursday. “Due to the presence of various advanced air-defense systems, it is advised to be cautious.”

Ruins of ancient ramparts, fortifications vandalized in north-central Iran

HERITAGE **TEHRAN** – Local vandals have severely damaged parts of the ruined ramparts and fortifications that centuries ago protected the ancient town of Damghan, now situated in north-central Iran.

“The invaders completely destroyed two old towers and a small part of the fortification wall around Damghan,” IRNA quoted Mehdi Qasemi, the tourism chief of the oasis town, as saying on Friday.

“Following the citizens' call about the demolition of a part of the fortification wall that is located in the northeast of Damghan, police forces in charge of protecting cultural heritage presented at the [crime] scene and after confirming the demolition, a decree to stop the act was issued in coordinating with the deputy prosecutor,” Qasemi explained.

Vandalizers aimed at creating a bigger passageway towards a street leading to their private houses and their actions will undoubtedly be put on trial, he noted.

Damghan fortress is one of the largest mudbrick architectures in Iran, which was built in the early Islamic era. It was once 16,000 meters in length with 106 towers, some half of which is remained to date mainly to environmental reasons.

Archaeological excavations at nearby Tepe Hissar reveal occupation from prehistoric times through the Sasanian period (224-651 CE). Damghan was an important town and capital of the medieval province of Qumis but was destroyed by Afghans in 1723. The town trades in pistachios and almonds.



Governments should change approach toward tourism in post-corona world, travel expert says

TOURISM **TEHRAN** – Governments need to redefine their approaches toward the tourism industry in order to reduce the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the travel industry as well as the economy, CHTN quoted a travel expert as saying on Friday.

“At the beginning of the pandemic, tourism workers and experts estimated that the world's tourism would be in a complete recession by the end of the year 2020 and even maybe in 2021.”

But over time, the unique capacity of tourism and travel industries and their role as the driving force of the countries' economies became more prominent, the expert noted.

“Governments are now trying to get their tourism industry on the right track sooner with new definitions as well as new marketing policies.”

The travel expert also suggested that in this regard, the tourism industry needs to gain the trust of tourists, provide motivation and increase the acceleration of marketing, fast and coordinated activities for marketing,

invest in smart business systems and digital marketing as well as support businesses and consider economic support packages offered by the government by prioritizing the health of tourists.

The novel coronavirus pandemic has brought travel to a standstill nearly all over the globe, including Iran, causing huge job and revenue losses.



The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) Director Gloria Guevara announced late in February that the global outbreak of the new coronavirus, known as COVID-19, will cost world tourism at least \$22 billion owing to a drop in spending by Chinese tourists.

Iran's tourism suffered several times over the past year Persian year (ended March 20) from various upheavals including the U.S. sanctions aimed to cripple Iran's economy,

flash floods in March 2019, the [mistakenly] downing of a Ukrainian jetliner in January, and ultimately the coronavirus pandemic in the country.

However, apart from the expenses and their certain effects, many domestic 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.

Some 6.7 million foreign nationals visited Iran during the first nine months of the past Iranian calendar year, started March 21, 2019, according to data announced by the Foreign Ministry's visa and passport department. Iran welcomed some 7.8 million foreign nationals a year earlier, achieving a 52.5 percent increase year on year.

In April, the Iranian government announced it will bail out those which are grappling with fiscal problems by offering loans with a 12-percent interest rate. The Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts also suggested a rescue package for tourism businesses.

The government has also allocated a 750-trillion-rial (about \$18 billion) package to help low-income households and small- and medium-sized enterprises suffered by the coronavirus concerns.

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

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).

Iranian universities advance in Leiden Ranking

1 -> Leiden Ranking system, unlike other ranking systems in the world, does not calculate single rankings for universities in its system, but universities are ranked in all criteria and indicators in the Leiden system, Mohammad Javad Dehghani, head of the Islamic World Science Citation Center (ISC), said.

With the presence of 36 universities in this ranking system, Iran, as in previous years, ranks first among Islamic countries in terms of the number of top universities. Turkey and Egypt are ranked second and third with 30 and 7 universities, respectively, he explained.

In 2020, Tehran University, Amirkabir University of Technology, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tarbiat Modares, Sharif University of Technology, Iran Science and Technology, Isfahan University of Technology, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Shiraz, Tabriz, Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences, Shahid Beheshti Islamic Azad University, Tehran Science and Research Branch, Tabriz Medical Sciences, Khajeh Nasir Toosi University of Technology, Mashhad Medical Sciences, Shiraz Medical Sciences, Iran Medical Sciences, Shahid Bahonar, Babol Noshirvani University of Technology, Malek Ashtar University of Technology, Sahand University of Technology, are among Leiden rankings.

In terms of scientific impact, almost all universities in the country (except 5) have performed better in terms of rankings compared to last year, and the University of Tehran, which is the first university in the country, has risen from 156 in 2019 to 140 in 2020.



In terms of collaboration, in general, there is no significant improvement in the ranking of the country's universities. However, the best ranking of the country has increased from 212 to 201 by the University of Tehran.

In terms of open access publishing, the ranking of the country's universities has not changed much, the best

ranking in the country has been obtained by the University of Tehran, which has been upgraded from 212 in 2019 to 201 in 2020.

In gender diversity, also there are no significant changes, however, the best rank in the country has been upgraded from 186 to 156 by Tehran University of Medical Sciences.

Isfahan to host mayors of ECO member countries

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — The city of Isfahan will host a meeting of mayors of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) member countries to discuss ways to overcome the complicated coronavirus crisis through developing urban diplomacy.

Aiming for the sustainable economic development of its member states and the region as a whole, ECO was established in 1985 by Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey and was later joined by seven new members, namely Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

The meeting will be held in the Iranian calendar month of Shahrivar (August 22- September 21).

Although coronavirus halted some opportunities such as tourism development and holding international events, it became a common issue in urban diplomacy, Mehr quoted Iman Hojjati, Isfahan Municipality's director for international affairs, as saying on Friday.

"The spread of COVID-19 caused us to benefit from the



experiences of the sister cities of Isfahan by presenting creative ideas in various fields," he highlighted.

In a situation where the country is bearing heavy pressures imposed by cruel sanctions, correspondence was made with

13 sister cities of Isfahan to redefine crisis diplomacy, so we got aware of the situation in other cities, and explained the conditions of Isfahan to them, he also explained.

He went on to say that we have discussed enhanced cooperation with sister cities such as Barcelona in Spain and Florence in Italy, and continued communication capacities were provided.

Relying on COVID-19 crisis diplomacy, a specialized meeting was held with the sister city of St. Petersburg, for the first time in a specialized working group, attended by the University of Medical Sciences, the representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Isfahan, he said.

He also referred to the online conversation between the mayor of Isfahan and the mayor of the Chinese city of Xi'an and said "Isfahan municipality was able to use the capacity of dialogue and interaction with sister cities to transfer experience and solutions to the issue of coronavirus, and ranked among the three most successful municipalities in the country in finding a solution to the coronavirus crisis.

Nature-led coronavirus recovery could create \$10tn a year, says WEF

Tackling the global nature crisis could create 400m jobs and \$10tn (£8tn) in business value each year by 2030, according to a report published by the World Economic Forum.

The report warns that when the world recovers from the coronavirus pandemic there can be no business-as-usual, with today's destruction of the natural world threatening over half of global GDP. In 2019 scientists warned that human society was in jeopardy from the accelerating decline of the Earth's natural life-support systems.

The report, from the New Nature Economy project, published by the WEF, says a nature-first approach from business and political leaders will be a jobs-first solution, the Guardian reported.

"There will be no jobs or prosperity on a dead planet," said Alan Jope, chief executive of Unilever and a WEF partner.

WEF, which brings together leaders and hosts the annual Davos summit, said three sectors were responsible for endangering 80% of threatened species – food and land use, infrastructure and building, and energy and mining. But it said these sectors also had the most to gain from a nature-led recovery.

The report says: "We are reaching irreversible tipping points for nature and climate. If recovery efforts do not address the looming planetary crises, a critical window of opportunity to avoid their worst impact will be irreversibly lost. Decisions on how to deploy the post-Covid crisis stimulus packages will likely shape societies and economies for decades."

Akanksha Khatri, head of WEF's Nature Action Agenda, said: "Nature can provide the jobs our economies need. There is nothing stopping businesses and governments from implementing these plans today, at scale, to re-employ millions."

Carlos Alvarado Quesada, president of Costa Rica, said: "We must use the coronavirus crisis as an opportunity to reset humanity's relationship with nature. [My country] has shown that the transition to a carbon-neutral, nature-positive, economy brings greater prosperity and jobs. It's time to mainstream this model."

Many high-level observers, including economists, health professionals, climate experts, and developing countries, have urged governments and business to pursue a green recovery but largely focused on tackling the climate emergency.

Another report in July concluded that almost a third of the world's land and oceans could be protected while bolstering the economy. The UN has also warned that the world is currently only treating the health and economic symptoms of the pandemic, not the cause – the environmental destruction.

The WEF report proposes a range of measures for boosting jobs and economies, such as cutting food waste by providing metal silos and crates to keep food from rotting. Better management of wild fish too could boost catches and add 14m jobs and \$170bn in value, it says. It is also vital to end the \$2bn subsidies given daily to agriculture which damage the planet, the WEF report says.

"This expenditure of public money is actually creating harmful effects on the public good," said Khatri. "Something is significantly broken in our system."

Coronavirus: extraordinary flight to return Iranians living in Austria

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Iran's flag carrier Iran Air has announced it will operate an extraordinary flight to return Iranians living in Vienna, Austria, amid COVID-19 pandemic, IRNA news agency reported on Friday.

Following the coordination of the Iranian and Austrian government officials, Iranians who applied to return to their country will be brought back on Saturday evening, according to the public relations office of Iran Air.

The number of people diagnosed with coronavirus in Iran reached 269,440 on Friday, of whom 13,791 have died and 232,873 recovered so far. Over the past 24 hours, 2,379 new cases of people having the virus have been identified, and 183 died, Health Ministry spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari said.

Currently, 3,509 patients with coronavirus are in critical condition, she added.

North Atlantic right whales now officially 'one step from extinction'



With their population still struggling to recover from over three centuries of whaling, the North Atlantic right whale is now just "one step from extinction", according to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The IUCN last week moved the whale's status on their Red List from "endangered" to "critically endangered" – the last stop before the species is considered extinct in the wild.

The status change reflects the fact that fewer than 250 mature individuals probably remain in a population of roughly 400. While grim, scientists and conservationists expressed hope that this move may help speed up protections for these dwindling giants, the Guardian reported.

"As scientists, we've been working for many years under the idea that North Atlantic right whales are critically endangered," said David Wiley, research coordinator for the Stellwagen Bank national marine sanctuary in Massachusetts. "The good thing about this new designation is it does bring them back front and center. Hopefully that will bring them up to the top of political consciousness."

Moira Brown, senior scientist at the Canadian Whale Institute, who has been working on right whales for over 30 years, said: "For an organization like the IUCN, which weighs a lot of information when they make these changes, to shift the right whale's status – it brings international recognition. It's an added layer of: we're not just blowing smoke here, this animal is really in trouble."

Often found leisurely filtering plankton at the ocean surface, the right whale species was once highly targeted by whalers: their slow speed made them easy to hunt, and they float when killed, thanks to thick blubber.

That slow surface feeding today leads to these whales being struck by boat propellers or becoming fatally snarled in fishing gear. According to the IUCN, of the 30 deaths or serious injuries to North Atlantic right whales recorded between 2012 and 2016, 26 were caused by fishing gear entanglement.

As a result, many scientists support stricter regulations on the fishing industry, a topic that draws concern from fishing communities: new regulations could mean fishermen must bear the cost of upgrading gear, and they are often concerned that these changes will also reduce their catch. The National Marine Fisheries Service's 2019 attempt to reduce gear in the water led the Maine Lobstermen's Association to back out of regional protective measures.

"I think it's sometimes portrayed as: you have whales, or you can have fishing," said Amy Knowlton, a senior scientist at the New England Aquarium. "What we're trying to say is you can still fish if you can do it in a safer way for the whales."

Knowlton noted that the growing entanglement problem may be partially due to stronger ropes adopted in the 1990s, making it harder for whales to break free. She is now encouraging fishermen to use lines with a weaker breaking strength.

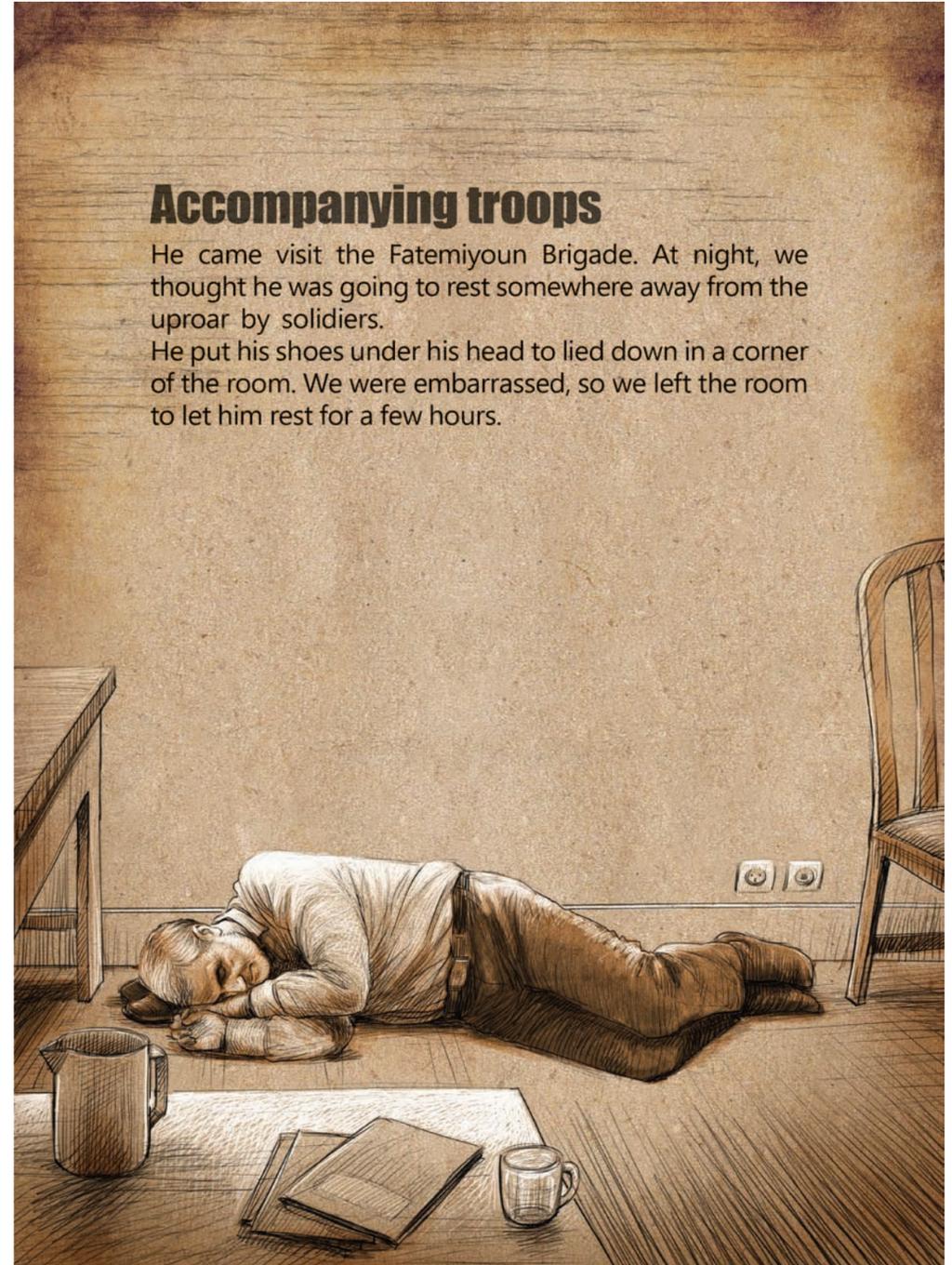
Climate change also plays a big role. Since 1990, the North Atlantic right whale's primary feeding ground, the Gulf of Maine, has warmed three times faster than the rest of the world's oceans.

The US and Canadian governments enforce seasonal boat speed limits in areas that right whales frequent. But the whales are changing their usual haunts as they seek cooler waters, taking them into places without these speed limits. Warming waters also make it harder for right whales to find food, which could explain their unusually low birth rate.

Additionally, climate change has caused a lobster boom in northern New England and eastern Canada, which has brought more fishing gear into the whale's habitat.

There is cause to celebrate small victories for right whales, like the birth of 10 calves this season. But these victories often come hand-in-hand with heartbreak: in June, one of those calves was discovered dead of a ship strike off New Jersey.

Overall, researchers are keenly aware that time is not on the whales' side, as deaths outpace the speed of regulatory action. "It's a very slow process, and keeping the public engaged and keeping funding going is tough when you know you're not going to see results for 20 years," said Wiley. "That's not unique to right whales, but we're living at the moment in time that things either get better or continue to get worse."



Accompanying troops

He came visit the Fatemiyoun Brigade. At night, we thought he was going to rest somewhere away from the uproar by solidiers. He put his shoes under his head to lied down in a corner of the room. We were embarrassed, so we left the room to let him rest for a few hours.

Hamas bans activities of Saudi-owned TV channels in Gaza over false reports

Hamas has suspended the activities of two Saudi-owned television news networks in the besieged Gaza Strip for acting like mouthpieces for the Israeli spy agencies.

The Hamas-run Interior Ministry said in a statement on Thursday that it decided against al-Arabiya and its sister channel al-Hadath for airing false news and fabrications.

The order bars "anyone or any business from providing services" to either network.



The two news networks had alleged that several Hamas members had been arrested for collaborating with the Israeli regime — a claim the movement had strongly dismissed.

Back on July 25, 2013, an office belonging to al-Arabiya channel was shut down by authorities in the Gaza Strip for reporting "false" information regarding the Hamas leadership.

Hamas authorities said at the time they were going to close the office and bar all its employees from entering the building, which was located in the al-Ramal neighborhood in the center of Gaza.

"The Attorney General decided to close down al-Arabiya... in Gaza for distributing false news regarding the smear campaign against Hamas and Gaza about what's happening in Egypt," a Hamas official told AFP then.

Al-Arabiya and al-Hadath, however, continued their operations there through freelance reporters.

The Palestinian Journalists' Bloc in Gaza on Thursday condemned the two networks as well as Arabic-language Amad news website for waging a smear campaign against resistance groups in the Gaza Strip.

The bloc said the political orientations of al-Arabiya and al-Hadath channels "are completely detached from the common belief in the Arab world, which views the Palestinian resistance front in the Gaza Strip as a beacon in the face of the Occupation (Israel), and that surrounding circumstances do not taint it."

"Hassan Asfour [editor-in-chief of Amad news website] has established himself as a person conspiring against the Palestinian cause and our nation for more than 30 years. He was one of the Palestinian officials involved in the disastrous Oslo agreement, and is seeking to serve the interests of his financiers and advance normalization with the Occupation," it pointed out.

The bloc called on Palestinian journalists, writers and analysts to boycott al-Arabiya and al-Hadath channels beside Amad news website, and not to grant them interviews.

It also called on Palestinian and Arab media institutions to confront the systematic campaigns of misinformation against the Palestinian cause, nation, and resistance front, emphasizing that such attempts are designed to liquidate the Palestinian cause and legitimize the existence of the Israeli regime.

Hamas earlier said in a statement that it "condemns the campaign of misinformation led by al-Arabiya with other media organizations, based on lies and slanders from the Zionist intelligence services, which aims to harm the Palestinian people and their confidence in the resistance and liberation project."

Erdogan accuses Egypt of "illegal" action in Libya

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan says Egypt is taking "illegal" action in Libya by supporting the rebels there.

"Steps were taken by Egypt here, especially their siding with the putschist Haftar, show they are in an illegal process," Erdogan said on Friday, referring to the commander of the rebels in Libya, Khalifa Haftar, who led an unsuccessful offensive to overtake the capital, Tripoli, starting in April last year.

Erdogan also condemned the approach of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to the Libyan conflict as "piratical."

Egypt and the UAE have been supporting the Libyan rebels against the internationally-recognized government in Tripoli, which has been able to deal major blows to the rebels in recent weeks thanks to crucial Turkish support.

Erdogan emphasized that his country would maintain its support for the Libyan government.

Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi has formerly indicated that his country would take military action in Libya in direct support of the rebels. He said on Thursday that Cairo would "not stand idle" in the face of what he called threats to Egypt's national security and could arm Libyan tribes against the internationally-recognized government of Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj.

Some Libyan factions, including prominently the pro-rebel parliament in the eastern city of Tobruk, have been beckoning Egypt to enter the Libyan conflict militarily, like the UAE.

Meanwhile, a major battle looms over the city of Sirte. Government forces are preparing to retake the city, which is located in a strategic location on the Mediterranean coastline, and the rebels, too, have been amassing in anticipation of a government offensive.

Sisi said last month that the cities of Sirte and Jufra were a "red line" for Egypt.

Libya first plunged into chaos in 2011, when a popular uprising backed by a NATO intervention led to the ouster of long-time dictator Muammar Gaddafi. The Libyan government in Tripoli and the pro-rebel parliament in Tobruk emerged in 2014.

American protesters clash with police downtown and on Portland's east side

Police said the group downtown began to leave the area within the next couple of hours.

Police Bureau said it did not use CS gas. However, video taken by a freelance journalist shows officers swinging some sort of gas-emitting device. The officers were dressed in riot gear.

U.S. deploys aircraft carriers to the South China Sea amid rising tensions with China

Amid escalating tensions with China over a number of issues, the United States has deployed two aircraft carriers to the South China Sea.

For the second time in two weeks, the USS Nimitz and USS Ronald Reagan conducted operations and military exercises in the waterway between July 4 and July 6, and returned to the region on Friday, according to a U.S. Navy statement issued on Friday.

"Nimitz and Reagan Carrier Strike Groups are operating in the South China Sea, wherever international law allows, to reinforce our commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific, a rules-based international order, and to our allies and partners in the region," Rear Admiral Jim Kirk, commander of the Nimitz, said in the statement.

Relations between Washington and Beijing have been strained over the South China Sea and over the new coronavirus, trade, and Hong Kong.

The United States has threatened to impose sanctions on China over accusations of Beijing's exploitation of offshore resources in most of the South China Sea.

The top U.S. diplomat for East Asia said on Tuesday that Washington could respond with sanctions against Chinese officials and enterprises involved in what he claimed as coercion in the South China Sea.

Earlier on Tuesday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian had censured the U.S. rejection of China's claim, calling on Washington to stop its actions of disrupting regional peace and stability in the South China Sea.

"The United States is the destroyer and troublemaker to regional peace and stability. The international community sees it very clearly," Zhao said at a regular briefing.

"It intentionally stirs up controversy over maritime sovereignty claims, destroys regional peace and stability and is an irresponsible act," he added.

Some of the world's main water routes, where trillions of dollars' worth of goods are annually transited, pass through the South China Sea.



However, parts of the South China Sea, which are said to have untapped oil and gas reserves in them, are also claimed by China's neighboring countries, the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia, and Vietnam.

The United States, which sides with Beijing's rival claimants in the maritime dispute, routinely sends warships and warplanes to the South China Sea to

assert what it calls its "right" to "freedom of navigation," ratcheting up tensions with China.

Beijing has constantly warned the U.S. against its military activities in the sea, saying that potential close military encounters by the air and naval forces of the two countries in the region could easily trigger accidents.

Hundreds of protesters swarm Netanyahu's home again



Hundreds hold fresh demonstrations in front of Benjamin Netanyahu's residence again, urging the embattled and scandal-hit Israeli prime minister to resign.

The rallies were staged in front of the building in the occupied holy city of Jerusalem al-Quds on Thursday, with protesters again holding up their symbolic black flags that, they say, signifies "the death of democracy," The Times of Israel reported.

Organizers had called on participants to spend the night there, but the police warned the demonstrators against prolonging the rallies.

The organizers have called the rallies "Siege of Balfour" in reference to a street located in the whereabouts, saying the regime has ordered the renewal of a lockdown targeting public places "only to free Netanyahu from the siege."

The youths rise up
The Israeli paper cited demonstrators as saying that such demonstrations that have been held repeatedly against the

premier for months on end had started to attract the young generation.

Netanyahu is the first Israeli prime minister to be indicted for corruption while in office. He has had charges pressed against him of bribery, fraud, and breach of trust.

He denies the charges and presents himself as a victim of a political witch hunt.

If convicted, he could face up to 10 years in prison on bribery charges and a maximum three-year term for fraud and breach of trust. According to Israeli law, however, he can remain, prime minister, until a final conviction is reached.

The Thursday rallies were the second in a week after several thousand turned up in front of the premier's home earlier, some trying to break in.

"Tuesday was insane, huge, historic. We can't recreate it, even if we wanted to. It was unreal. It was important to experience it to understand what happened," said another protester.

Zakzaky's lawyers demand the dismissal of the case, immediate release



The lawyers of jailed Muslim cleric Sheikh Ibrahim Zakzaky have called for the dismissal of the case against him and his wife as well as their immediate release from the Nigerian government's captivity.

Zakzaky's lawyers demanded, in a motion presented to the High Court of Justice in Nigeria on Thursday, that all charges against him and his wife be quashed and freed as soon as possible.

A source at Nigeria's Islamic Movement, which is headed by the prominent cleric, said the top court had set July 30 to hear and decide on the demand.

Zakzaky, who is in his mid-60s and leader of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN), has been in detention since December 2015 after his residence in the city of Zaria was raided by Nigeria's forces, during which he was beaten and lost vision in his left eye.

During the brutal arrest, three of his sons were also killed, his wife sustained serious wounds, and more than 300 of his followers were killed.

Last July, Sheikh Zakzaky's son, Mohammed, said he was shocked by his father's worsening medical condition after visiting him, stressing that he needed to be immediately hospitalized as "large and dangerous quantities of lead and cadmium have been found in his blood."

A month later, the couple was transferred to India to receive medical care. However, they were forced to leave India after a few days in protest against the Nigerian government's "obstruction" of his medical treatment and after they had "lost all faith" in the prospect of receiving proper treatment there.

Zakzaky was charged in April 2018 with murder, culpable homicide, unlawful assembly, the disruption of the public peace, and other accusations. He has pleaded not guilty, vehemently rejecting all the accusations brought up against him.

In 2016, Nigeria's federal high court ordered Zakzaky's unconditional release from jail following a trial, but the government has so far refused to set him free.

Yemeni tribes vow revenge for Jawf wedding tragedy

Yemeni tribes in the northern province of al-Jawf have rejected a financial offer from Saudi Arabia to compensate for Wednesday airstrikes that claimed over two dozen civilian lives, saying the only thing that would calm them down is revenge.

In yet another act of aggression on the impoverished country, Saudi airstrikes targeted a residential area in the al-Hazm district of al-Jawf Province, leaving 25 people dead, including women and children, and several others injured.

The casualties took place at a wedding ceremony that belonged to the Yemeni tribe of Bani Nouf in the al-Hazm district. Saudi warplanes had earlier in the day launched five airstrikes against the al-Aqsha' area in the same district, with local media reports falling short of providing the exact number of possible casualties.

The Arabic-language al-Khabar al-Yemeni news website reported on Thursday that the elders of the al-Jawf tribes, in their meetings and contacts with the Bani Nuf tribe, had thrown their support behind tribal revenge for the



recent casualties, underlining that an attack on Bani Nouf tribe would be an

attack on all the tribes in al-Jawf. The news website said Saudi Arabia had

dispatched a number of representatives to the tribes in al-Jawf to pay reparations and appease them, but they had refused to accept the financial compensation.

Martin Griffiths, the United Nations special envoy for Yemen, called on Thursday for a transparent investigation into airstrikes by Saudi Arabia and its allies in al-Jawf and described the attacks on Yemeni civilians as reprehensible.

Since March 2015, Saudi Arabia has been conducting bloody military aggression in Yemen with help from its regional allies and using arms supplied by its Western backers. The aim of the war has been to bring Yemen's former president, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, back to power and defeat the Houthi Ansarullah movement.

The ongoing war has killed tens of thousands of Yemenis and pushed the entire country close to the brink of famine. The brutal military intervention has also taken a heavy toll on the country's infrastructure, destroying hospitals, schools, and factories.

The COVID-19 pandemic is also raging unchecked in the war-torn country.

Persepolis captain Hosseini reveals his best goal ever

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Persepolis captain Jalal Hosseini has revealed his best goal ever.

Hosseini, who has played 439 times in Iran Professional League so far, is the most decorated player in Iran league. He has won seven Iran league titles during his 18 years career.

Hosseini also represented Iran national football team in the 2014 FIFA World Cup, where the 'Persian Leopards' failed to book a place in the knockout stage.

He has revealed his best goal in an interview with Persepolis's website.

"First of all, I have to say it's a great honor to play in Persepolis but I have a very difficult task as the captain of the team since Persepolis are a great club. I am happy to wear armband and I hope to do my best and satisfy our supporters," Hosseini said.

Persepolis advanced to the 2018 AFC Champions League for the first time ever thanks to two wins against Qatari giants Al Duhail and Al Sadd. In the second leg of quarterfinals against Al Duhail, Hosseini scored the first goal in Tehran's Azadi Stadium and inspired his team to score two more goals at the packed stadium.

"I had already scored a late goal against Al Jazira of the UAE and it can be my best goal but I think my goal against Al Duhail was more decisive," he added.

"When I started my career in Malavan, I never thought I would reach to this stage. I'd like to thank God for giving me the opportunity to play football for many



years," Hosseini said. Hosseini has played 115 times for Iran

national football team. He could have played in the 2018 FIFA World Cup but Carlos Que-

iroz didn't call him up to the team, while many believe that he deserved to be there.

FIFA ranking: Iran remain second best in Asia



S P O R T S TEHRAN — Iran national football team remained 33rd in world and second in Asia in the latest FIFA ranking released on Thursday.

Japan as the best Asian team sit 28th in the world.

Although club football has slowly restarted in various leagues around the world, the spread of COVID-19

remains an obstacle to the staging of international matches.

This has again affected the latest FIFA World Ranking, which remains unchanged. Belgium remain top followed by France and Brazil, while England and Uruguay are 4th and 5th, respectively.

Lurking behind them in descending order are Croatia, Portugal, Spain, Argentina, and Colombia.

Sirous Pourmousavi named Pars Jonoubi coach



S P O R T S TEHRAN — Sirous Pourmousavi has been named as new head coach of Pars Jonoubi football team.

On Thursday, the ex-Iran U19 football team coach was introduced as Pars Jonoubi new trainer.

Pourmousavi has signed an 18-month contract with the team.

With six matches left to play, Pars Jonoubi

are 13th, two points above the drop zone in the Iran Professional League (IPL) table. He replaced Hooman Afazeli in the top flight team.

Afazeli was named Machine Sazi head coach soon after parting company with Pars Jonoubi.

Pourmousavi had a difficult task in his first match against third-placed Shahr Khodro on Friday.

Cancelation and postponement confirmed for 2020 AVC Championships

As the massive global Covid19 outbreak has brought Asian volleyball activities to a complete standstill with countries imposing tight air travel restrictions, AVC has just made an unprecedented move on Thursday, deciding to cancel all 2020 AVC senior competitions and postpone all Asian Underage Championships to next year.

AVC has earlier circulated information and updates to host countries and participating federations concerning the staging and possibility to participate in the 2020 Asian Championships, but received immediate responses from the NFs that international flights remain restricted to most international airports, while there are also major restrictions on incoming travelers.

The global Covid19 pandemic has made a potential impact on hosting the 2020 AVC competitions. With Asian countries extending their lockdown restrictions, the quarantine measures and international airlines halting their flights, the AVC Cup for Men and Women, the Asian Men's and Women's Clubs Championships and all AVC Beach Tour events have been cancelled, while Asian U19 Beach Volleyball Championships, which are supposed to take place in the period between August and October, look difficult and have to shift the commencement to next year.

Learning that the participating federations cannot travel until the end of 2020, the AVC Board of Administration has come to a decision to cancel all 2020 AVC senior competitions except the Asian Underage Championships, four of which have been postponed to 2021. Following the decision, AVC has on Thursday, July 16, circulated the updated information to all AVC affiliated NFs to confirm the cancellation and postponement of 2020 AVC Championships.

Regarding the AVC Underage Championships, FIVB has already fixed the December 31 deadline for the Continental Underage Championships, which will serve as



the qualification tournaments for 2021 FIVB Underage World Championships. However, in the light of the Covid19 pandemic, AVC finds that the deadline to organize all AVC Underage Championship is possible to meet and therefore, has two options for the staging of the four Asian Underage Championships (Women's U18, Men's U19, Women's U20, Men's U21).

In Option 1, AVC has proposed FIVB that they extend the December 31 deadline for the organization of the Asian Underage Championships to February 28, 2021, reasoning that AVC has been confirmed by several federations that their governments allowed them to participate in international events from 2021. If this Option is possible, AVC will later confirm the host countries and participating federations within November 1, 2020.

In Option 2, if the Covid19 crisis may last into 2021, making all Asian Underage Championships unable to go ahead within February 2021, the Asian teams will be decided through their previous Asian Underage Championship Rankings, with the qualified teams making the cut for the 2021 FIVB Underage World Championships.

At the same time, AVC has proposed the draft of the 2021 AVC Competition Calendar, which is in accordance with the 2021 FIVB Calendar and has been agreed in principle during the July 8 online meeting chaired by

FIVB General Director Mr Fabio Azevedo and attended by FIVB and AVC Executive Vice President Mr Essa Hamza, FIVB BA Member and AVC Secretary-General Mr Shanrit Wongprasert and Mr Luis Alexandre Pontes Rodrigues, FIVB Director for Asia and Oceania.

AVC has also informed all affiliated NFs that the AVC General Assembly is likely to be held in mid-October 2020. However, due to the unstable Covid19 situation, the specific date of the Assembly will be reconfirmed ahead of the new date of FIVB World Congress, expected to be announced by FIVB within August 2020. For the delegations' convenience, AVC will confirm all AVC affiliated NFs at least two months prior to the AVC General Assembly in order that they can apply for entry visa and issue the air tickets in time.

Cloud of uncertainty has loomed over the future of the AVC Championships since the outbreak of the deadly coronavirus has been first identified in Wuhan, China in December 2019. Major competitions both indoor and beach volleyball events have been put on hold, making cancellation and rescheduling the only options left.

AVC has been closely following the pandemic of the novel coronavirus on a daily basis since the beginning of January 2020 and also is in active communication with FIVB and AVC Board of Administration in an effort of continuing its activities and competitions on schedule as many as possible.

However, the Covid19 has still spread with alarming speed, reportedly infecting over 13.7 millions and killing up to 588,000 as of July 16. With the strict safety measures of FIVB and AVC to safeguard the health of athletes, everybody involved at the competitions and the Asian volleyball community in particular, AVC decided to cancel all 2020 AVC senior competitions and postpone the aforementioned Asian Underage Championships.

(Source: asianvolleyball.net)

Real Madrid seal Spanish title with win over Villarreal

MADRID (Reuters) — Real Madrid clinched a record-extending 34th La Liga title with one game to spare by beating Villarreal 2-1 at home thanks to two goals from their leading scorer Karim Benzema.

Real have 86 points after 37 games, seven more than deposed champions Barcelona who were beaten 2-1 at home to Osasuna.

Zidane's side have won all 10 of their matches since Spanish football

restarted in June.

After the match Real captain Ramos hoisted the Liga trophy into the air at the empty Alfredo di Stefano stadium, where the Madrid side have been playing their final games of the season while their Santiago

Bernabeu home is being renovated.

"To return after spending three months locked in our homes and to win 10 matches in a row is incredible, but I always believed in my team and knew we could win it," said Real goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois.

The strange case of coaching change in Iran football

For example, financial problems of some clubs and failing to pay the wages led to the departure of foreign coaches such as Andrea Stramaccioni and Gabriel Calderon from Esteghlal and Persepolis, respectively, despite their successful run in their stint at the helm.

Team boards and general managers may also overestimate their own ability to undertake replacement decisions, or firing the manager may represent a convenient tool for owners and directors of the clubs to calm frustrated stakeholders and supporters and displace blame for the poor performance away from themselves.

The big problem in Iranian football is that just a certain number of coaches replace each other in a constantly repetitive process, and new faces rarely enter this cycle.

Coaching changes were supposed to take each of the Iranian football teams in new directions. How does it work?

Shahin Bushehr founder dies

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Abdolmohammad Pourbehi, the founder of Shahin Bushehr football club, passes away due to heart disease.

Pourbehi, born in Bushehr, was one of the persons who served football in Iran's southern province.

On Thursday, Abdolmajid Chahibakhsh, former player of Iranjavan Bushehr, had passed away due to coronavirus. Chahibakhsh was 76.

Tehran Times extends deepest sympathy to their families, loved ones, and friends over their demise.

Kaveh Rezaei no longer Club Brugge player

Kaveh Rezaei will reportedly leave Club Brugge at the transfer window.

Rezaei joined Charleori from Club Brugge on loan last season and scored 14 goals and provided five assists in 25 games for the team.

In a team photo published by Club Brugge, Rezaei is absent and it means he will leave the club, Voetbalprimeur reported.

Belgian media reported that Antwerp want to hire the Iranian forward.

(Source: Voetbalprimeur)

Bashar Resan close to leaving Persepolis

Tasnim — Iraqi midfielder Bashar Resan will most likely leave Iranian team Persepolis at the end of the current season.

Persepolis have failed to pay their debt to the iconic midfielder. Qatari teams are interested in landing the coveted player.

Resan has played a key role in Persepolis' success in the past three years, helping it to win six titles in Iran football.

The Iranian football giants are trying to overcome financial problems after parting company with Croatian coach Branko Ivankovic and Gabriel Calderon from Argentina.

Milad Taghavi appointed IRIVF secretary general

Volleyball.ir — Milad Taghavi has been appointed as secretary general of the Islamic Republic of Iran Volleyball Federation (IRIVF) on Thursday.

Iran's Sports and Youths Minister Masoud Soltanifar appointed him in the new role.

Taghavi was working as the federation's acting secretary general since March.

He has replaced Ali Fatahi in the role.

Taghavi has previously served as head of Mazandaran Province board.

Iran want to play friendly match with Palestine

PLDC — Jibril Rajoub, head of Palestine Football Federation, has said that Iran have requested them to play a friendly match.

He said that Palestine will face Iraq in a warm-up match but has not yet decided about playing with Iran.

Iran have wanted Palestine to play in October.

Iran are third in Group C, five points behind Iraq in the 2022 World Cup qualification.

Iran have already arranged a friendly match with Uzbekistan on September 7.

Qatar to host 2020 AFC Champions League in the West region

The Asian Champions League is set to restart after a seven-month pause with Qatar announced on Thursday as the host of all western region games through the semifinals.

The Asian Football Confederation said 16 teams will go to Qatar as a centralized venue to complete the group stage starting from Sept. 14.

Games in Asia's top club competition have not been played since February due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Teams advancing from the groups will stay in Qatar for single-leg knockout games from the round of 16 to the western semifinal on Oct. 3.

The 39 scheduled games will produce a finalist from the western region.

The AFC said possible host nations in eastern Asia to stage the other half of the competition "have until July 24 to submit their interest."

The Asian Champions League east region groups include teams from Australia, China, Japan and South Korea.

Cannes Classics to screen "The Chess Game of the Wind" from Iran

A R T TEHRAN — Iranian director Mohammadreza Aslani's drama "The Chess Game of the Wind" will be screened in the Cannes Classics as the Cannes Film Festival Cannes announced on Wednesday the lineup for the program, which showcases restored classic films and documentaries.

Starring Mohammad-Ali Keshavarz and Shohreh Aghdashlu, the film was directed in 1976. It is about the decadence of a family in the Qajar dynasty of Iran. The first lady of a noble house has died and now there is a conflict between the heirs for taking over her heritage.

"The Chess Game of the Wind" has been restored by Cineteca di Bologna at L'Immagine Ritrovata and the Film Foundation's World Cinema Project.

Twenty-five feature films and seven documentaries in this category as the 2020 Cannes Film Festival was not held this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Cannes Classics will be organized by the Lumiere Festival in Lyon, France, from October 10 to 18 and the Rencontres Cinematographiques of Cannes from November 23 to 26.

"Charlie Chaplin, the Genius of Liberty" by Francois Ayme and Yves Jeuland, "Be Water" by Bao Nguyen and "Belushi" by R.J. Cutler are among the documentary films selected to be screened in the section.

The feature films also include "In the Mood for Love" by Wong Kar-wai, "Breathless" by Jean-Luc Godard, "L'Aventura" by Michelangelo Antonioni, "Friendship's Death" by Peter Wollen and "The Story of a Three-Day Pass" by Melvin Van Peebles.

"Soul, the French Dispatch" by Wes Anderson and "Lovers Rock" and "Mangrove" by Steve McQueen were also selected for the 2020 Cannes Film Festival.



"The Chess Game of the Wind", Iranian director Mohammadreza Aslani's drama, will be screened in the 2020 Cannes Classics.



Photo: A poster for Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei's "An Interpretation on Sura Taghabun".

Leader's interpretation on sura Taghabun published

CULTURE TEHRAN — Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei's interpretation on Taghabun (Loss and Gain), the 64th sura (chapter) of the Holy Quran, has been published in a book. The Islamic Revolution Publications is the publisher of the book "An Interpretation on Sura Taghabun". Sura Taghabun was interpreted in ten sessions held by the Leader from September 29, 1983 to February 17, 1984

when he served as president. The Holy Quran is comprised of 114 suras, and is divided into 30 sections, each of which is called a joz. "The reason for selecting this sura from the 28th joz is that this joz and the other ending jozes of the Holy Quran were revealed to the Prophet in Medina when the Islamic government had been established, like our current situation," Ayatollah Khamenei said in the opening session.

National Commission for UNESCO launches virtual exhibit "Eternal Heritage"

A R T TEHRAN — "Eternal Heritage", a virtual exhibit of Persian calligraphy was launched by the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO on Wednesday.

Works by Nasrollah Afjei, Elaheh Khatami, Fereshteh Hosseini, Ali Shirazi, Yadollah Kaboli and Gholamhossein Khani are on view on www.gallery.irunesco.org.

The director of the commission Hojjatollah Ayyubi, in a live program posted on the Instagram of the commission, said that he had tested positive for COVID-19 in the very early days in the country and after improvement, he decided to do something positive for people to help pass these hard days.

"All the artists have made their best efforts for people to feel good and help them through these hard days. We first initiated a program to pay respects to the doctors and medical staff serving people with COVID-19," he said.

"Next, we launched several live online interviews, and gradually Instagram turned into a good venue where people could keep in touch with the artists," he said.



A calligraphy work by Ali Shirazi on view at "Eternal Heritage", a virtual exhibit of Persian calligraphy organized by the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO.

He called Iran the country of colors and arts, and said, "We next thought we need to provide a good opportunity in the virtual

world, so we began with calligraphy. The young calligraphers are very polite and pay due respect to the veterans. Calligraphy and the calligraphers are our ancient heritage. They search for the best sentences and inscribe them in the most beautiful form, which is of high value. Calligraphers actually protect the borders of culture and art," he explained.

"Every individual can open the website of the commission and see the artworks, which are on view with both Persian and English subtitles," he noted.

"We invited our top masters of calligraphy to the exhibit and we are planning to hold exhibits by the youth and Iranians who are living outside the country," he said.

Ayyubi next called on everybody to view calligraphy works by the brilliant masters of the Persian calligraphy whom he called the significant ambassadors of culture.

"We will upload a part of the art of Iranian and foreign artists in other virtual exhibits for Iranian and international art lovers, and we believe that art will conquer the coronavirus," he said.

Documentary on founder of Alborz Prize in production

A R T TEHRAN — Filmmakers Mehdi Zahhaki and Sajjad Faramarzi are making a documentary on Hossein-Ali Alborz, the founder of the Alborz Foundation Prize.

Actor Jalil Farjad plays the role of Alborz in the two-episode documentary named "Zero and Infinity".

The documentary explores the life story of Alborz from childhood to death, while the development of his foundation after the Islamic Revolution and interviews with those

who have received an Alborz Foundation Prize are also included.

The foundation was established in 1963 to help promote the culture of the country, honor top Iranian researchers and academics, and encourage talented university students.

The foundation has supported and encouraged many individuals over its long years of activity.

Alborz was born in Tehran in 1906 and studied at the Qazaqkhaneh School established



Actor Jalil Farjad acts in a scene from the documentary "Zero and Infinity".

by the Russians. He had good knowledge of English and Russian and continued his studies at Alborz College in Tehran.

He was a hardworking man and was able to obtain licenses from several German companies.

He next established the foundation to encourage talented youth and support top scholars.

He died and was buried in Canada in 1988 where he had traveled to receive treatments.

IRIB channel to review film scores by Ennio Morricone

A R T TEHRAN — Namayesh, an IRIB digital channel broadcasting TV and cinema productions, will review film scores created by the Oscar-winning Italian composer Ennio Morricone.

The channel will air seven films with Morricone's music for one week.

The films are "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly", "The Professional", "The Sicilian Clan", "The Battle of Algiers", "The Five Man Army", "The Untouchables" and "Once Upon a Time in the West".

Morricone died on July 6. He was 91. Born in Rome in 1928, he wrote scores for some 400 films but his name was most closely linked with the director Sergio Leone, with whom he worked on the Spaghetti Westerns as well as the epic crime drama "Once Upon a Time in America". Morricone worked in almost all film genres, from horror

to comedy, and some of his melodies are perhaps more famous than the films for which he wrote them.

"We will forever remember, with infinite gratitude, the artistic genius of maestro Ennio Morricone. He made us dream, moved us, writing memorable notes that will be unforgettable in the history of music and cinema," Italy's Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte had said on Twitter.

State President Sergio Mattarella had said Morricone had "greatly contributed to spreading and reinforcing the prestige of Italy in the world."

Italian film producer Aurelio De Laurentiis said, "With Ennio Morricone goes a part of world cinema. His humility, combined with a greatness that he never flaunted, allowed him to support small and big movies, giving them a unique soul that made them perfect and unforgettable."



Italian composer Ennio Morricone arrives at the 79th Annual Academy Awards in Hollywood, California February 25, 2007. (Reuters)

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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

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Imam Ali (AS)

WHAT'S IN ART GALLERIES

Painting

An exhibition of paintings by Hayedeh Ayazi is currently underway at Delgosha Gallery. The exhibit will run until August 11 at the gallery, which can be found at 30 Mohajer Alley, Iranshahr St., Karim Khan Ave.

Vista Gallery is playing host to an exhibition of paintings by Milad Purhaghu. The exhibit titled "Cordon-off" will run until July 27 at the gallery located at No. 11, 12th Alley, Mir Emad St.

Multimedia

A group exhibition by the Sakoo Art School in Tehran is underway at Shokuh Gallery. Works by Reza Babak, Nushin Jamshidi, Tara Habibzadeh, Yeganeh Khosravimanesh, Sadaf Kebari, Nikan Nejat and dozens of other artists are on view at the exhibit that will continue until July 14 at the gallery located at 19 Amir Nuri Alley, North Salimi St. near Andarzgu Blvd.

A group exhibition entitled "Event" is hanging artworks in various media at Ehsan Gallery. Among the artists are Masumeh Torkaman, Mahbubeh Sanei, Alireza Azadkia, Zahra Kazampur and Batul Mozaffari, and the exhibit will run July 22 at the gallery located at No. 22, East 14th St. in the Ajudanieh neighborhood.

Ayrik Gallery is hosting an exhibition of artworks in various media by Ali Hosseinzadeh, Parisa Badiie, Ehsan Ronaq, Arash Qorbazadeh, Ghazaleh Salehi, Fatemeh Dehshiri and several other artists. The exhibition will run until July 21 at the gallery, which can be found at Ayrik Center on East Ferdows Blvd.

An exhibition of artworks in various media by Fatemeh Shariatmadari, Faezeh Hassan-nia, Nilufar Ebadi, Mahsa Ayazi and several other artists is currently underway at Golhaye Davudi Gallery. The exhibit titled "Mystery of Phoenix" runs until July 20 at the gallery that can be found at 263 near Nejatollahi St., Taleqani Ave.

An exhibition of artworks in various media by Shadi Yasrebi, Homa Hosseinian, Yasmin Moshari, Tarlan Tabar and several other artists is currently underway at Bavan Gallery. The exhibit runs until August 28 at the gallery located at 7 Abdo off Lareztan St. off Motahhari Ave.

Entezami Gallery is playing host to an exhibition of artworks in various media by Shabnaz Khajui, Sina Feiz, Maryam Shahnekuji, Hilda Nejat and several other artists. The exhibit will be running until July 22 at the gallery located at 608 Shariati Ave. near Motahhari St.

An exhibition of artworks in various media is currently underway at Ev Gallery. The exhibition titled "Centerless" runs until July 24 at the gallery located at 36 Palizvani Alley, Africa Blvd.

Installation

Sets of installation by Mostafa Hamidi are on view in an exhibition at Saye Gallery. The exhibit named "Inconsistency Exponent X" will run until July 22 at the gallery located at No. 21, 13th Alley, Sanai St. off Karim Khan Ave.

