



**Iran denounces Bloomberg article for promoting violence, terrorism** **3**



**Quarterly exports to Iraq stand at \$1.45b** **4**



**Dragan Skocic wants to do great things in Iran** **11**



**Books on Iran-Iraq war published in English** **12**

# Zarif holds talks with senior Iraqi officials



Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif (L) holds talks with Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein in Baghdad on Sunday, July 19, 2020.

See page 2

## Afghanistan sends 1st transit consignment to China via Chabahar Port

**TEHRAN** — Afghanistan's first transit goods to China via Iran's southeastern Chabahar Port was shipped, the director-general of Ports and Maritime Department of Sistan-Baluchestan Province, where Chabahar lies, announced on Sunday.

Behrouz Aghaei said the shipment was carried out through Shahid Beheshti Port in Chabahar, IRNA reported.

The official further said that while the world is affected by the coronavirus pandemic, Shahid Beheshti Port in

Chabahar has taken a big step to facilitate trade between Central Asian countries and Afghanistan with the countries of South and Southeast Asia and the Far East by establishing regular container transportation services.

Stating that Afghanistan's first transit shipment of dried fruit was sent to Tianjin Port in China, he said that the cargo was sent to the Indian port of Mundra via Chabahar, which was unloaded at this port and loaded on another ship to its final destination. **→4**

## Iran sends anti-corona medical aid to Iraq

**TEHRAN** — Iran has delivered a consignment of medical equipment weighing one ton to Iraq to help the neighboring country fight the coronavirus, Iraj Masjedi, Iranian Ambassador to Iraq has announced.

Masjedi stressed that there is good health cooperation between the two sides in the current situation, expressing hope that the cooperation will continue.

The number of people diagnosed with coronavirus in Iran reached 273,656 on Sunday, of whom 14,188 have died and 237,788 recovered so far. Over the past 24 hours, 2,182 new cases of people having the virus have been identified, and 209 died, Health Ministry spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari said.

Currently, 3,556 patients with coronavirus are in critical condition, she added.

## Calligrapher Gholam-Hossein Amirkhani honored as Living Human Treasure

**TEHRAN** — The 81-year-old calligrapher Gholam-Hossein Amirkhani has been selected as a Living Human Treasure.

The decision to honor the celebrated artist with the title was made on February 18, 2020, the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts (MCHTH) announced on Sunday.

Amirkhani, who is the director of the Iran Calligraphers Association, was decorated with the Knight of the Order of Arts

and Letters in March 2017.

He learned the nastaliq style of Persian calligraphy from Seyyed Hossein Mirkhani and his brother Seyyed Hassan, two unparalleled masters of Persian calligraphy.

Amirkhani is one of the few Persian calligraphers who has shown great skill in this style. Numerous calligraphers consider him as the best living calligrapher of this style. **→12**

## American Caesar act cannot affect the Syrian economy: Syrian politician

By Mohammad Mazhari

**Tehran** — A member of the National Reconciliation Committee in Syria stresses that the American Caesar act cannot paralyze the Syrian economy, and Damascus's collaboration with its neighboring countries will continue.

"American Caesar act cannot affect the Syrian economy, or change the situation," Omar Rahmoun tells the Tehran Times. "The only effect of Caesar's act is the psychological impact as the media infuse the Syrian markets with concerns about an economic collapse." He added.

Following is the text of the interview:

■ What is your comment on the Turkish presence in Libya? What is Syria's position towards recent military clashes in Libya?

A: Turkey is going now and in the next phase to play the scarecrow role, in which America will frighten Arab countries and milk them.

The Turkish presence in Libya is an expansionist colonial policy that tries to restore the Ottomans Empire's glories, and all the slogans that Erdogan raises on the victory of the Libyan people are fake and misleading.

Ankara is intended to camouflage the real goal, which is the new colonialism and serving superpowers.

There are two projects in Libya; An Arab project aimed at expelling the occupiers and returning stability to Libya. This project, supported by Russia and Syria, stands with Libya against colonialism and occupation.

The second project is the Turkish-American occupation, which plans to control the Libyan oil and gas capabilities.

Syria stands against this American-Ottoman project in Libya.

■ What is the impact and repercussions of the Caesar project on the Syrian economy and political structure? What are the possible mechanisms which the Syrian government can develop to contain U.S. sanctions?

A: American Caesar bill cannot affect the Syrian economy, or change the situation. Our borders with neighboring countries have remained open, and our cooperation with our friends has increased recently.

The only effect of Caesar's act is the psychological impact as the media infuse the Syrian markets with concerns about an economic collapse due to the act. Still, after the signing of the law, nothing happened on the ground. **→7**

## U.S. Navy issues 'stop-work order' following second warship blaze

A rapidly extinguished fire aboard the amphibious assault ship Kearsarge prompted the Navy to issue a "stop work order" Friday to General Dynamics NASSCO shipyard in Norfolk, Naval Sea Systems Command told Defense News Saturday.

The incident started when a spark from welding landed on nearby material, which was then quickly put out by the fire watch. Fire watch is a sailor or contractor who stands nearby with a fire hose and/or extinguisher to stop a larger blaze in its tracks, Defense News reported.

In a statement, Naval Sea Systems Command spokesman Rory O'Connor said the "stop work" was to ensure the company followed fire safety protocols.

"On July 17, the Navy was informed of a fire aboard USS Kearsarge (LHD 3), currently conducting a Selected Restricted Availability

at General Dynamics NASSCO — Norfolk," O'Connor said.

"The fire was quickly extinguished by the fire watch and resulted in minimal damage. In response to this incident, the Navy has issued a stop work order for all ships in maintenance availabilities at GD NASSCO Norfolk to ensure compliance with all established fire protocols and procedures."

In a phone call Saturday, Anthony Paolino, a General Dynamics NASSCO spokesman, said the incident involved an ember landing on plastic, causing it to melt and smoke, but said there was no larger fire. NASSCO was already reviewing its safety protocols prior to the "stop work" order, and that it fully supported the Navy's ongoing safety stand down in the wake of this week's fire aboard Bonhomme Richard, Paolino said. **→10**

## U.S. protests: Oregon sues over 'unlawful detentions'

The attorney general for the U.S. state of Oregon has filed a lawsuit against the federal government, accusing it of unlawfully detaining protesters.

There have been nightly protests against police brutality in Portland since the killing of George Floyd.

This week, federal officers in unmarked vehicles appeared to forcefully seize protesters from the streets and detain them without justification, BBC reported.

The federal government has said it is trying to restore order in the city.

Federal agents, deployed by President Donald Trump, have also fired tear gas and less-lethal munitions into crowds of demonstrators. Homeland Security Secretary Chad Wolf previously called the protesters a "violent mob".

Late on Saturday, protesters were seen dismantling a fence around the federal courthouse, hours after it was put up. The U.S. Attorney's

office in Oregon said on Twitter that the fence aimed to "de-escalate tensions between protesters and law enforcement officials and asked people to leave it alone."

Officers declared a riot outside the Portland Police Association building in the north of the city. It was set on fire but the blaze has now been put out, police said.

■ What does the lawsuit say?

In the lawsuit, Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum requested a restraining order to stop agents from the Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Marshals Service, U.S. Customs and Border Protection and the Federal Protection Service from making any more arrests in the city.

"These tactics must stop," Ms Rosenblum said in a statement. "They not only make it impossible for people to assert their First Amendment rights to protest peacefully, they also create a more volatile situation on our streets." **→10**

## Iran extends ban on group tours in bid to contain coronavirus

**TEHRAN** — Iran has decided to extend a ban on inbound group tours as the country is still grappling with the coronavirus pandemic, deputy tourism minister Vali Teymouri said on Sunday.

However, travel agencies can organize business tours for individuals, he added, ISNA reported.

The Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts attempts to bring the flow of [foreign] travelers back to normal as of mid-July which was concurrent with the opening of some borders of the country, he explained.

The national headquarters for the coronavirus control has issued a permit for solo travelers to enter the country in accordance with health protocols, but group tours will be prohibited, he reiterated.

Last month, Mohammad Ali Vaeqi, the vice president of the Iranian Tour Operators Association, warned that the coronavirus pandemic may turn tours and travels in Iran into luxury items as observing health protocols will rise the cost of traveling in the country.

"With the continuation of the coronavirus

outbreak, tourists may prefer individual travel rather than tours. They may also choose to go on a trip by their own vehicle and stay in tents or in nature instead of hotels.... So far, 90 percent of the 2020 inbound tours have been canceled, and the possibility of canceling the remaining 10 percent is still high," he explained. The tourism ministry last month announced that it expects the country would start hosting foreign travelers as of mid-summer with the priority given to travelers from the neighboring countries. **→8**

## Iran provides laboratory services to neighboring countries

**TEHRAN** — Iran provides laboratory services to the neighboring countries as the significant number of researchers in those countries is a good platform for expanding the export of laboratory services.

Reza Asadi-Fard, director of the laboratory network at the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology, pointed out that the quality of the country's laboratory services has increased, stressing the need to provide these services to other countries, IRNA reported.

One of the best ways to introduce the country's laboratory services to global markets is to facilitate the export, he noted, adding, certainly the services have an acceptable capacity to be exported to other countries.

The Vice Presidency for Science and Technology has been providing the technology and innovation for several years to applicants in various fields such as engineering, materials and metallurgy, electricity and electronics, chemistry, aerospace, mining; and also services in the fields of environment, agriculture and medicinal plants, biotechnology, and medicine, he explained.

One of the plans the Vice Presidency this year is to supply products in these fields to international markets, he concluded.

Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry has planned that the annual export of commodities and services to Iran's 15 neighbor countries will reach \$32 billion in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 19, 2020). According to the Association of Iranian Exporters of Technical and Engineering Services, Iran has the potential and capability to export technical and engineering services worth \$25 billion in a year.

Taking this huge potential into consideration, boosting such exports would be an advantage for expanding the country's foreign trade especially with the neighbors.



File photo

## Father of Iran wrestling dies

**TEHRAN** — Kyoormars Abolmoolooki, the father of Iran's modern wrestling, passed away on Sunday. Abolmoolooki, who was born in Tehran, died at the age of 97.

He led Iranian freestyle wrestling team at the 1954 World Wrestling Championships in Tokyo, where Iran won two gold medals and one silver and finished in third place after Turkey and Soviet Union.

Abolmoolooki also was the first Iranian international referee.

He was laid to rest on Sunday in Tehran's Behesht-e Zahra Cemetery.



## Iranian Supreme Court to review cases of 3 men sentenced to death

**POLITICAL DESK** **TEHRAN** — The Supreme Court of Iran has accepted a request to review the cases of three men sentenced to death in connection with the violent protests in November 2019.

According to ISNA, the lawyers representing the convicts announced on Sunday that the execution has been halted and the issue is expected to be reviewed.

The three men were arrested during protests over fuel price rise in November 2019. They were convicted of offences including sabotage, armed robbery and illegally fleeing the country.

## Taliban has no office in Iran: Araghchi

**POLITICAL DESK** **TEHRAN** — Deputy Iranian Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Abbas Araghchi has said that the Taliban has no office in Iran.

In an interview with TOLONews, Araghchi said that the Taliban may have “Mashhad council”, however it is out of question in Iran’s view, IRNA reported on Sunday.



“It is a reality that the United States considers itself Afghanistan’s ally and has also held talks with the Taliban on the future of Afghanistan,” he added.

He also said it has been for several years since Iran started contacts with the Taliban.

“As we have had contacts with all groups, we also contacted them [Taliban] and listened to their views and expressed our own views,” the top diplomat pointed out.

He added, “All are aware who created the Taliban and supported it and who is now holding talks with them and making a deal with them. This is a clear reality that the United States considers itself an ally of Afghanistan and has also negotiated with the Taliban and reached agreement with them. We have no such relations with the Taliban.”

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.

## U.S. has lost its credibility: Chicago University professor

**POLITICAL DESK** **TEHRAN** — Ronald Grigor Suny, a professor at the University of Chicago, has said that the United States has lost its influence and credibility.

The U.S. has turned back on its allies and has lost its credibility and influence, Suny told ILNA in an interview published on Sunday.



According to a translation of his remarks, the professor said powerful and important countries such as Iran, China and Russia are countering the U.S. unilateral acts.

Government spokesman Ali Rabiei said last week that the United States has discredited and isolated itself by quitting the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the JCPOA.

“By quitting the JCPOA, the consequences of which cannot be compared to withdrawal from other international agreements, the United States discredited itself and made itself isolated,” Rabiei said during a press conference.

Peter Jenkins, a former British ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency, has said that the United States has gained no benefit by withdrawing from the JCPOA.

Jenkins told IRNA that the U.S. lost its soft power after pullout from the international agreement.

Matt Duss, a foreign policy advisor to Bernie Sanders, has said that Donald Trump’s Iran policy has isolated the United States.

“Bush’s Iraq policy isolated the US, massively boosted our adversaries, and caused enormous human suffering.

Trump’s Iran policy has isolated the US, massively boosted our adversaries, and caused enormous human suffering.

Maybe it’s time to stop letting neocons write policy,” Duss tweeted on July 12.

Edward Corrigan, an international lawyer and analyst from Canada, told the Tehran Times in an interview published on July 10, that the power of the United States is declining in the world, and Europeans are taking steps “to separate themselves from the Americans economically and politically.”

# Zarif holds talks with senior Iraqi officials, says Iran looking for new stage in relations

Assassination of Gen. Soleimani features high in Zarif’s talks with officials in Baghdad

**POLITICAL DESK** **TEHRAN** — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Sunday held several rounds of talks with senior Iraqi officials during his one-day trip to Baghdad, ushering in a “new stage” in Iran-Iraq relations.

“Today in Baghdad, I will have the opportunity to meet and exchange views with various Iraqi officials including the president, prime minister, speaker of the parliament, foreign minister, head of the judiciary, chief of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), and other political officials of the country,” Zarif told reporters upon his arrival in Baghdad.

“We will hold talks with the Iraqi brothers about the cooperation between the two countries that was agreed upon during Mr. Rouhani’s visit to Baghdad, as well as regional issues, American crimes in the region, the martyrdom of Qassem Soleimani, martyr Abu Mahdi al-Mohandes and their companions, and other regional cooperation issues,” Iran’s top diplomat added.

The foreign minister also expressed happiness over the opportunity to visit Iraq after the formation of the new Iraqi government in May. He noted that Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi will visit Iran on Tuesday at the invitation of President Hassan Rouhani.

Iran’s chief diplomat also took a flight from Baghdad to Irbil on Sunday afternoon for talks with the officials of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). Zarif visited Irbil upon an official invitation by Nechirvan Barzani, the president of the KRG.

■ **‘New stage in relations with Iraq’**  
In his talks with al-Kadhimi, Zarif discussed the latest bilateral and regional issues as well as the Iraqi prime minister’s imminent trip to Iran, which is expected to take place on Tuesday.

He pointed out that Iran is looking forward to a new and positive stage in its relations with Iraq, according to a statement issued by the media office of the Iraqi prime minister.

Zarif also told the prime minister that Iran is interested at the highest level in the upcoming visit by al-Kadhimi to Iran to start a new stage of cooperation between Tehran and Baghdad.

For his part, al-Kadhimi underlined the



Foreign Minister Zarif visited the site where top Iranian General Qassem Soleimani and Iraqi PMF deputy chief Abu Mahdi al-Mohandes were assassinated in a U.S. terrorist attack near Baghdad’s international airport on January 3, 2020. Zarif was accompanied by the Iranian ambassador to Iraq and several Iraqi officials.

importance of developing bilateral ties between Iraq and Iran in various sectors.

“Iraq is seeking to assert its balanced and positive role in making peace and progress in the region,” said the Iraqi prime minister.

In addition to the prime minister, Zarif held talks with Iraqi President Barham Salih in Baghdad’s Palace. Salih stressed the depth of Iraq’s historical relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran, adding that the cooperation between the two countries should be expanded in all sectors, according to a statement published by Iraq’s Presidential website.

President Salih further reiterated the keenness of Iraq to be a factor of stability, adding that the region is in need of building balanced ties, understanding and clear vision to reach fundamental solutions to the crises in the region through engaging in a constructive and honest dialogue between all parties.

Salih also hailed Iran’s support to Iraq, especially in combating Daesh terrorists.

For his part, Zarif expressed Iran’s readiness to help Iraq in various sectors, underlining the importance of strengthening ties between the countries in the region for the sake of peace and combating terrorism.

■ **‘Iran-Iraq relations are strong’**

Elsewhere in his remarks, Foreign Minister Zarif said that Iran-Iraq relations are strong and will never be shaken.

He also pointed out that the economic relations between the two countries can be expanded for the good of the two nations.

According to IRNA, upon his arrival in Baghdad, Zarif also said that Iraq can play a role in the security arrangements in the Persian Gulf region.

At a joint press conference with Zarif, Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein said that he has discussed with Zarif the ways to protect Iraq’s sovereignty.

“We agreed on the necessity to protect the sovereignty of Iraq and Mr. Minister (Zarif) reiterated that the strength of Iraq is the strength of the region,” Hussein said, adding that they underlined the need to keep Iraq and the region out of international tensions.

■ **Following up on U.S. crime in assassinating Gen. Soleimani**

Iran’s top diplomat also pointed to the martyrdom of IRGC Quds Force Commander Lt. Gen. Qassem Soleimani and deputy chief of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) Abu

Mahdi al-Mohandes, calling their assassination “a great loss” in the fight against terrorism.

Talking at the joint press conference, Zarif said, “Unfortunately, the assassination of the two martyrs - Soleimani and al-Mohandes - is a great loss in the fight against Daesh, and that Iraq and Iran will follow up on this issue, which is a very important issue.”

Zarif started his one-day tour of Baghdad on Sunday morning. He held at least two rounds of talks with his Iraqi counterpart.

He also met with the head of the al-Fath parliamentary bloc.

Upon his arrival in Baghdad, Zarif has also paid homage to General Soleimani and al-Mohandes by visiting the location where they were assassinated by an American drone strike near Baghdad’s international airport on January 3, 2020.

Accompanied by Iranian ambassador to Iraq Iraj Masjedi and several Iraqi officials, Zarif also paid homage to General Soleimani and al-Mohandes by visiting the location where they were assassinated by an American drone strike near Baghdad’s international airport on January 3, 2020.

General Soleimani, one of Iran’s most revered military commanders, was famous for his contributions to the fight against terrorist groups, including Daesh (ISIS) in Iraq and Syria.

However, Iran did not let the U.S. go unpunished for its reckless terrorist attack. Five days after the U.S. strike near Baghdad’s international airport, Iran launched a military operation codenamed “Operation Martyr Soleimani,” which saw Iran showering the U.S. Ein al-Asad airbase in Iraq’s western governorate of al-Anbar with tens of ground-to-ground missiles.

Initially, the U.S. sought to down play the strike on its airbase. But the Pentagon admittedly announced later that more than 100 U.S. service members have been diagnosed with traumatic brain injury (TBI) stemming from Iran’s missile attack on the airbase.

Zarif also underlined the need to be aware of the Daesh (ISIS) threat to the region.

“We should be fully aware of the continued security threat of Daesh,” the Arabic-language al-Mayadeen TV network quoted Zarif as saying.

## Rouhani says Iran able to pass the current difficult situation

**POLITICAL DESK** **TEHRAN** — President Hassan Rouhani said on Sunday that Iran is capable of passing this difficult situation.

“Despite complicated problems and impediments, the country is capable of passing this difficult situation,” he said during a meeting of the economic coordination headquarters.

Iran is under the harshest illegal sanctions in history by the United States. No country in the world has ever seen such a sanction.

The Trump administration’s illegal sanctions, which run contrary to UN Security Council Resolution 2231, have closed all financial channels to Iran.

The sanctions are intended to choke off the Iranian economy.

The situation has become more complicated

as the country is hit hard by the coronavirus, bring to halt some businesses and make hundreds of thousands jobless.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said the economic terrorism against Iran has been promoted to “medical terrorism”.

Rouhani said, “The administration makes efforts to solve the country’s problems through a realistic view on the current difficult situation and reliance on domestic capabilities.”

The president said that the country will overcome problems and difficulties by experiences of experts and people and also cooperation among the three branches of the government.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on July 12 that all economic problems can be solved.

“If self-reliance thinking and national con-

fidence, especially among the youth, be on the rise and the country’s strong capabilities are tapped, and illusory hopes on outside borders... are weakened, I am quite confident that economic problems are solvable,” the Leader told the new parliament (Majlis) through a videoconference.

He likened economic problems in the country to an “illness”.

“Undoubtedly, the country will beat this illness through its strength and defense power, as it is admitted by the enemies that they failed to reach their anti-Iran objectives through harshest sanctions and comprehensive pressure,” the Leader stated.

The Leader noted that “inflation, devaluation of the national currency, illogical price rise, problems of production enterprises and

problems caused by sanctions” are among the issues that have made the people’s living, especially the poor and middle classes, difficult.

The Leader also pointed to the country’s capabilities, citing establishment of thousands of knowledge-based companies, implementation of hundreds of infrastructure projects, continuous inauguration of new projects as well as astonishing progress in the military industry and also advances in space technology as examples of the country’s high potential.

Ayatollah Khamenei attached great importance to relying on domestic capacities to solve the problems.

The main issues to solve are “production, employment, inflation, management of financial system, and non-reliance on oil revenue,” the Leader insisted.

## China has provided Iran with most coronavirus aid, ambassador says

‘It is unacceptable to help tighten U.S. cruel sanctions’

**POLITICAL DESK** **TEHRAN** — Iranian Ambassador to Beijing Mohammad Keshavarzadeh has said that China has provided Iran with the most coronavirus aid, noting that in such a situation it is unacceptable to help tighten United States’ cruel sanctions on Iran.

The ambassador also criticized those at home and abroad who are trying to dishearten Iranian citizens about the yet-to-be finalized agreement between Iran and China.

“In this critical situation in which health workers are making efforts to defeat corona, we all are duty bound to reduce the people’s suffering and pain. It is unacceptable to help tighten the United States’ cruel sanctions under any pretext. So far, most of the foreign help to Iran has been from China. Do not cause disappointment by unfounded lies,”

the ambassador tweeted.

In an interview with IRNA published on July 11, Keshavarzadeh said that the hype created against the long-term partnership agreement between Iran and China is “farcical”.

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.

“Countries like the United States which has imposed cruel sanctions on us and has even blocked our money in other countries such as Japan and South Korea and prevent us from using it to purchase medicine and food are making claims which are farcical,” the ambassador stated.

He added, “Claims about leasing some islands to the Chinese or deploying Chinese

military forces in Iran are farcical and negative propaganda.”

The diplomat also noted that the U.S. has made every efforts to isolate Iran and cripple its economy and obviously opposes partnership agreement with China.

Elsewhere, he said that the cooperation plan is a “roadmap” to expand ties and cooperation.

“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.

## Diplomat says Iran has moved with wisdom toward U.S. irrationality

**POLITICAL DESK** **TEHRAN** — Iran’s Ambassador to Russia, Kazem Jalali, has said that Iran has clear stance against the United States’ actions, noting that Tehran has moved with wisdom in regard to U.S. irrational behaviors.

In an interview with IRNA published on Sunday, Jalali said that the U.S. President Donald Trump has embarked on illogical, hasty and non-productive propaganda campaign against Iran.

The ambassador said former U.S. National Security Advisor John Bolton, a hardliner, had earlier encouraged withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran as the best day in his life but he is now questioning Trump



on different areas.

Today, the U.S. Democrats and even many of the Republicans explicitly announce that restoration of the U.S. image discredited

in the international community by Trump’s withdrawals from the international treaties and organizations posed a major challenge for Washington after Trump, Jalali said.

Elsewhere, the ambassador slammed Europe for not making enough efforts to counter the U.S. unilateralism.

Elaborating on Iran’s JCPOA achievements, Jalali said that Iran seeks lifting sanctions and enjoying economic interests but thanks to U.S. anti-Iran acts and its economic war against Iran, it has been impossible.

In an article published by IRNA on July 13, Jalali said that there is still chance to save the nuclear deal if the remaining parties have the political will to keep the agreement.

“When the agreement was signed, almost all the parties admitted that it is a win-win deal. However, after five years of harming the JCPOA and implementing it in an unbalanced way, this characteristic of the mentioned document has been annihilated. However, there is still chance to save the JCPOA and political will and practical action of the remaining parties are required,” he wrote.

He said Russia and China have proved “politically” and “practically” that they are determined to preserve the JCPOA.

But he slammed the Europeans for not being committed to their obligations in practice.



# Iran denounces Bloomberg article for promoting violence, terrorism

**POLITICAL**  
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**TEHRAN** — Iran's UN Mission has denounced a Bloomberg article for encouraging violence, terror and sabotage against Iran, saying the article promotes violence and terrorism.

Alireza Miryousefi, head of media office of Iran's Mission to the UN, on July 16 responded to a Bloomberg opinion column written by Eli Lake titled "Sabotage in Iran Is Preferable to a Deal With Iran".

In his response published in the Letter to the Editor section of the American news outlet, Miryousefi said Lake's column is "one that against all journalistic standards encourages violence, terror and sabotage, and makes a number of factual errors and assumptions."

"Firstly, praising the illegal assassination of nuclear scientists and encouraging sabotage in Iran's infrastructures amounts to what are inhumane, barbaric acts that promote violence and terrorism," he wrote.

According to Miryousefi, such measures do nothing less than keeping tensions high, and could ignite a full range escalation.

He said Iran has publicly announced: "If it's concluded that a regime or a government had a hand in the incident, directly or indirectly, the Islamic Republic will respond decisively."

Five years ago, he continued, "We reached an historic agreement, the JCPOA,



or Iran Nuclear Deal, which addressed different aspects of Iran's peaceful nuclear program. It was only after two years of intensive, difficult negotiations that all parties were satisfied that all issues had been resolved."

It was the Trump administration that unilaterally withdrew from this international accord and violated UN Security Council resolution 2231, which enshrined

it in international law, Miryousefi said, adding that the rest of the world has strongly criticized this blatant U.S. retreat from its obligations.

Lake's article argued that recent incidents in Iran, among them the one at the Natanz nuclear facility, showed that there were better ways to frustrate what it called the "nuclear ambitions" of the Islamic Republic.

Iran has not officially declared whether the incident at the Natanz complex was an accident or an act of sabotage, but the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) said the main cause has been determined and will be announced at an appropriate time.

Some reports suggested Tel Aviv's alleged role, but Israeli officials neither confirmed nor denied the regime's involvement.

Meanwhile, Iranian officials have said much of the speculation linking the incident to Israel is nothing but bluster which pleased Israeli leaders, warning Tel Aviv of serious consequences if it turned out to be true.

The Bloomberg article further claimed that one of the recent incidents in Iran appeared to have targeted "an underground research facility for chemical weapons."

Miryousefi said Iran has been the biggest victim of chemical weapons attacks in contemporary history, courtesy of Saddam Hussein, who was supported by the West in his war on Iran.

"These attacks were accompanied not only by silence, but also with the shameful aid of Western countries," he said.

"Iran has no program or plans to produce chemical weapons, and the claim made in the opinion piece is not just bizarre, but completely fallacious," he added.

## Diplomat highlights Iran's friendship with nations

**POLITICAL**  
d e s k

**TEHRAN** — The Foreign Ministry Director-General for West Asia has said that countries can rely on Iran's friendship, emphasizing that Delhi, Beijing and Moscow are the priority of Tehran's foreign policy.

"Thousands of friends are few and one enemy is many," Seyed Rasoul Mousavi wrote on his Twitter account on Saturday, according to Fars.

"Iran is a country for lasting and strategic friendship with all who want to be friends of Iran," he added.

"Of course, Iran's neighbors, India, China and Russia, are at the forefront of Iran's foreign policy," he stressed.

In relevant remarks on Thursday, Iran's new ambassador to Austria Abbas Baqerpour Ardakani voiced Tehran's preparedness to engage in constructive and productive

negotiations with friendly countries.

"Very Productive & Rewarding: Separate Bilateral Meetings with Vienna-based Ambassadors of Russia, China, Iraq, Indonesia, Oman, Qatar, Italy, Syria, Australia, Pakistan, Algeria, Afghanistan, South Africa, Hungary & Tajikistan during last days; TBC with others with the same spirit," Baqerpour Ardakani said via Twitter.

## U.S. after weakening Iran's international posture: ex-EU diplomat



**POLITICAL**  
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**TEHRAN** — A former EU Special Representative to the Middle East peace process has said the United States' withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal and its "maximum pressure" policy against Tehran is aimed at weakening the international posture of Iran.

In an interview with ILNA published on Sunday, Marc Otte said the Trump administration wants to punish Tehran for what it calls Iran's negative role in the region.

"In my view, many conservatives in the U.S. aim at regime change in Tehran, in agreement with Israel and maybe some Arab countries. In that context remember Trump has always said that if elected he would leave the JCPOA because it was a bad agreement in his view," Otte said.

Asked about Europe's role in this regard, the Belgian diplomat confirmed that the question is whether they have the tools and the political resolve to be effective, especially in view of possible secondary sanctions by the U.S. against European exporters.

That is why they have instituted IN-

STEX, a mechanism to protect European operators, he said, adding that at the same time, the E3 powers and the EU also try and convince the U.S. to change course.

On China and Russia's roles, he said, "The question is what will be their strategy in the current atmosphere of confrontation between the three powers. China and Russia are also in consultations with the Europeans."

"The IAEA warns that Iran is not sticking to its commitments and during the last year increased its stocks of enriched uranium, raised the level of enrichment from 3.67% to 4.5% and upgraded the capacities of its centrifuges and it also says that the accumulation of uranium is almost 8 times the maximum allowed," the ex-EU diplomat stressed.

He added that mutual goodwill by all parties as well as confidence-building measures are the only way forward.

Asked about who is expected to win the 2020 election, Otte said, "I don't know if Trump will be re-elected, as it is not clear yet if the U.S. policy will change if he isn't."

## Tehran rejects rumors of giving islands to China



**POLITICAL**  
d e s k

**TEHRAN** — Iran's deputy foreign minister for the economic diplomacy has rejected rumors surrounding the partnership agreement with China, saying Iran will not give any of its islands to China under the 25-year comprehensive partnership deal.

In remarks on Sunday, Gholamreza Ansari said Iran seeks a win-win partnership agreement with China, Mehr reported.

He rejected the ongoing rumors as unfounded claims distributed by some media outlets.

No country can ask the Islamic Republic to donate its islands or any other specific benefits, the diplomat added.

"Iran seeks win-win accords with China as it does the same with its relations with other countries," Ansari reiterated. "We are moving toward strategic agreements with friendly countries."

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 multilateralism, 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.

distancing himself from Iran, after he assumed the office.»

Upon his arrival in Baghdad, Zarif told reporters that he planned to discuss with the Iraqi officials a variety of issues including the U.S. crimes in the region and the assassination of top Iranian military commander Lt. Gen. Qassem Soleimani, who was assassinated by an American drone strike near Baghdad's international airport on January 3, 2020.

"Zarif's visit to Baghdad came to follow up the case of the assassination of the commander of the Iranian Quds Force, Qassem Soleimani," added the leader of al-Fath Alliance.

## Iran sends black box of Ukrainian plane to France

**POLITICAL**  
d e s k

**TEHRAN** — Iran has sent the black box of a Ukrainian passenger plane, which was accidentally downed near Tehran earlier this year, to France.

Iran's deputy foreign minister said the black boxes were taken to Paris on Friday and would be deciphered on Monday.

The Ukrainian passenger plane, with 176 people aboard, was mistaken for an invading missile. The tragic incident happened a few hours after Iran fired missiles at a U.S. airbase in western Iraq in retaliation for the January 3 assassination of General Qassem Soleimani. Following the retaliation attack, the Iranian military had been put on high alert.

The victims of the crash included 82 Iranians, 63 Iranian-Canadians, 11 Ukrainians, 10 Swedes, four Afghans, three Germans, and three British nationals.

Earlier this month, Deputy Foreign Minister of Ukraine Yevhen Yenin said that the volume of compensation for victims of the Ukrainian plane crash will be discussed when the technical investigation is completed.

"At this stage, technical investigation has not yet been completed. If it confirms the fact of unlawful interference, it will be possible to proceed to the second phase of the negotiation process and more specifically discuss the volume of compensation. It's still too early to talk about something," Yenin told Ukraine 24 TV channel in an interview published on July 6.

He also said, "Black boxes have not been sent to France yet. As of today, we have another promise from the Iranian side to do this on July 20. A couple of days ago we received from the French authorities their consent to accept two of our experts who will participate in the process as members of the technical investigation group."

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif had announced on June 22 that Iran will send the black boxes to France.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran will send the black box of the Ukrainian airplane to France in the coming few days in order to read its information," Zarif said in a phone call with Canadian Foreign Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne.

France's BEA air accident investigation agency is known internationally as one of the leading agencies in the world for reading flight recorders, and black boxes have been sent there in other high profile cases of crashes.

Head of the Judicial Organization of the Armed Forces said on June 30 that extensive investigations have been carried out over the Ukrainian plane crash incident and the dossier will be sent to court after investigations are completed.

"We have carried out extensive investigations in this dossier and have reached good results," Shokrollah Bahrami told reporters.

Bahrami also noted that the families of the victims will receive financial compensation for the incident.

## Iran may sue S. Korea for unpaid debts: spokesman

**TEHRAN (Tasnim)** — Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman said Tehran may lodge a complaint against South Korea in case Seoul refuses to pay off its oil debts after all diplomatic efforts.

Speaking to Tasnim in Iran's northwestern city of Ardabil, Seyed Abbas Mousavi said if diplomacy does not yield results and South Korea continues to obey the U.S.'s policies, Iran will summon South Korea's ambassador to Tehran and force Seoul to pay off its debts through international tribunals.

Highlighting the Foreign Ministry's efforts to unfreeze the Iranian assets blocked by South Korea, Mousavi said President Hassan Rouhani has recently issued an order to resort to legal procedures to restore the petrodollars held in South Korea.

He also denounced the illegal and unilateral U.S. sanctions against Iran, saying the "master-servant relationship" between Washington and Seoul is an issue relating to them, but South Korea "must be sincere in the bargain with Iran and honor its commitments."

In June, Hossein Tanhaee, the chairman of Iran and South Korea's joint chamber of commerce told Borna news agency that Iran's frozen assets in South Korea were between \$6.5 billion and \$9 billion.

Tanhaee added that not only Korean banks refuse to release Iran's money, some of them have also demanded commission and maintenance fees for Iran's accounts.

## Judiciary: Iraq seriously pursuing U.S. assassination of General Soleimani, al-Muhandis

**TEHRAN (FNA)** — Iraq's High Judiciary Council in a statement on Sunday elaborated on the latest measures adopted to pursue the U.S. assassination of former IRGC Quds Force Commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani and Deputy Commander of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis.

"Investigations are underway based on Iraq's criminal procedure code with attention to all aspects and the place of the incident," the Council said.

It added that a legal representative from the Iran's embassy in Iraq has also been invited to listen to the Iranian side about the issue.

"The foreign ministry and the secretariat of the ministers' council have also been demanded to provide information about the assassination and investigations continue based on Iraq's judicial laws," the statement said.

Lieutenant General Soleimani was assassinated in a U.S. drone strike on Baghdad International Airport in Iraq on January 3.

The airstrike also martyred al-Muhandis. The two were martyred in an American airstrike that targeted their vehicle on the road to the airport.

Five Iranian and five Iraqi military men were martyred by the missiles fired by the U.S. drone at Baghdad International Airport. Iran announced in late June that it had issued arrest warrants for 36 officials of the U.S. and other countries who have been involved in the assassination of the martyred General Soleimani.

"36 individuals who have been involved or ordered the assassination of Hajj Qassem, including the political and military officials of the U.S. and other governments, have been identified and arrest warrants have been issued for them by the judiciary officials and red alerts have also been issued for them via the Interpol," Prosecutor-General of Tehran Ali Alqasi Mehr said.

He said that the prosecuted individuals are accused of murder and terrorist action, adding that U.S. President Donald Trump stands at the top of the list and will be prosecuted as soon as he stands down presidency after his term ends.

## Zarif delivers message to Saudi Arabia from Baghdad: report

**POLITICAL**  
d e s k

**TEHRAN** — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has reportedly delivered a message from Iran to the Persian Gulf states while visiting Iraq on Sunday, according to a report published by an Iraqi news agency.

«The visit [by Zarif to Iraq] aims to deliver a message to [Persian] Gulf states, specifically Saudi Arabia, that Tehran is ready to reach understandings with Iraqi mediation. Iraq has the potential to play this role and it is not in Iraq's interest to be with any axis against another axis,» Ghadhanfar al-Batteekh, the leader of al-Fath parliamentary bloc told

Shafaq News on Sunday, hours after Iran's top diplomat arrived in Baghdad.

During his one-day visit to Iraq, Zarif held talks with several senior Iraqi officials including Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein, Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi, President Barham Salih, chief of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) Falih al-Fayadh, head of Judiciary Faegh Zeidan and Hadi al-Ameri, the head of the Badr organization.

Al-Batteekh also claimed that "Zarif's visit to Baghdad aims to emphasize and strengthen Iranian-Iraqi relations and assuage apprehensions that the Iraqi prime minister is



## Quarterly exports to Iraq stand at \$1.45b

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Iran has exported commodities valued at \$1.45 billion to Iraq during the first quarter of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-June 20), the secretary general of Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce announced.

Hamid Hosseini put the weight of exported products to the neighboring country at five million tons, IRNA reported.

Hosseini further said that Iran had exported 6.2 million tons of commodities worth \$2.35 billion to Iraq during the first quarter of the previous year, but the quarterly export has dropped due to the closure of the borders because of the coronavirus pandemic in this year.

During a meeting between Iran's Ambassador to Baghdad Iraq Masjedi and Manhal Aziz Al-Khabbaz, Iraq's new minister of industry and minerals on June 24, the two sides discussed expansion of trade and industrial cooperation.

They urged expansion of ties in various areas including the auto industry, launching joint industrial parks, and other industrial and mining areas.

The officials also discussed holding the two countries' joint economic committee meeting and Iran's investment in manufacturing tractors, buses, and mini busses in Iraq.

The economic and political relations between Iran and Iraq have increased significantly in the past few years and the two neighbors are seeking ways to facilitate financial transactions and boost their trade ties.

The two countries have it on the agenda to increase the value of their bilateral trade to \$20 billion by 2021.

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

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

## EDBI implements special plan to support exporters in face of pandemic

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Managing Director of Export Development Bank of Iran (EDBI) said that the bank has implemented special programs for supporting exporters during the pandemic, the bank's office of public relations announced.



Speaking in a press conference on the occasion of the bank's 29th establishment anniversary, Ali Saleh-Abadi underlined the significant role of the EDBI in supporting the exporters.

The official noted that in the face of the U.S. sanctions and the coronavirus outbreak, the bank has increased the decision-making powers of its branches to support exporters who have suffered from these conditions, and has also decreased the interest rate of the bank's facilities.

According to Saleh-Abadi, the interest rate of the bank's facilities for knowledge-based companies is 12 percent, and EDBI has allocated 4 trillion rials (about \$95.2 million) of facilities to be offered to such companies.

The official further noted that in the absence of oil money, managing the country's economy would depend on the revenues from the country's non-oil exports.

"Non-oil revenues are the main source of foreign currency for the country and this indicates the significance of EDBI as the major supporter of non-oil exporters," he said.

## 328 big production units ready for presence in stock market

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Iranian deputy industry, mining and trade minister announced that 328 big production units are prepared for presence in the country's stock market, IRIB reported.

Saeed Zarandi said that financing these units' projects and activities through the capital market is a unique opportunity for them.

The current Iranian calendar year (began on March 20) is named the year of "Surge in Production", indicating that many endeavors should be made in all sectors for realizing a jump in the country's production status.

Materializing this motto requires strong financial support for the production units, and directing the liquidity toward the production activities.

It is obvious that the capital market can play a significant role in the realization of this objective.

The country's capital market enjoys high potential to support domestic production and as its capacity is being more and more expanded, it should be noted that it's now the best place for attracting the liquidity to the production.

The need for securing the required funds for the production activities on one side and the current promising status of the capital market on the other side highlights how much this market can pave the way for realizing the slogan of "Surge in Production".

The capital market can surge production by promoting the major elements of production, which are capital, workforce, and technology.

In an interview conducted by the Tehran Times on July 5, Bahram Shakouri, the chairman of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA)'s Mines and Mining Industry's Committee, said that the capital market is a chance for the mining sector to bloom.

Among the major issues that the mining sector is currently facing, financial problems and resource limitations are the most severe ones.

In this regard, the government has urged the Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry to take necessary measures for supporting such mines to get back on their feet and start operating again.

The main solution that has been offered for the mining sector is for mines to enter the capital market and offer their shares to raise funds for developing projects and resuming their operations.

While the motto of "Surge in Production" defines a heavy responsibility for all sectors of the country, the capital market can play a key part in the materialization of this motto, as it can provide financing in a rapid, low-cost, and transparent way.

# Afghanistan sends 1st transit consignment to China via Chabahar Port

**1 →** During the past month, Afghanistan sent three transit consignments to India via Shahid Beheshti port in Chabahar, Mehr news agency reported on Sunday.

On July 1, Aghaei announced that Afghanistan sent 39 containers with a total capacity of 76 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEU) to India through Iran's southeastern Chabahar port, IRIB reported.

According to the official, 30 refrigerated containers and nine conventional ones (a total of 76 TEUs) were shipped from Chabahar Port on June 30 heading for the Indian ports of Mandra and Nhava Sheva.

In 2016, Iran, India, and Afghanistan decided to jointly establish a trade route for land-locked Central Asian countries.

India sent its first consignment of wheat to Afghanistan through Iran's Chabahar Port back in 2017.

Later on, Afghanistan officially started exporting goods to India through Chabahar port in a ceremony held in early February 2019.

The event was attended by Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, along with Iranian Am-



bassador to Kabul Mohammadreza Bahrami and Indian Ambassador to Afghanistan Vinay

Kumar.  
In November 2019, Afghanistan Amba-

sador to Tehran Abdul Ghafoor Liwal said his country was planning to increase commodity transit through Iranian Chabahar Port.

"Chabahar is an economic and a transit bridge for Afghanistan and we are going to expand our economic relations through increasing exports and imports through Chabahar," he said.

Earlier this month, Head of Iran-Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce Hossein Salimi announced that the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) has approved Afghanistan's Ghaz-anfar Bank to open a branch in southeastern Chabahar Port for facilitating trade activities in the port.

As Iran's only oceanic port, Chabahar consists of two separate ports named Shahid Kalantari and Shahid Beheshti, each of which has five berths.

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

India has doubled the allocated funding for the development of the port in its national budget bill for 2020.

## Single-window system for listing private firms on stock market starts operation



**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Single-window system, which was launched on June 30 to accelerate the process of private companies' acceptance to the stock market, started the first stage of its operation on Sunday, IRIB reported.

As announced by the Public Relations Department of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA), the companies could start registration in the system as of Sunday.

ICCIMA, Iranian Association of Internal Audits (IAIA), Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), and Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market, known as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on June 30 for launching the single-window system.

The signing ceremony was attended by Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Farhad Dehpasand, ICCIMA Head Gholam-Hossein Shafeie, Head of Iran's Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO) Hasan Qalibaf, Managing Director of TSE Ali Sahraei and IFB Managing Director

Amir Hamouni.

The MOU was aimed at creating a single portal for evaluating, assessing and monitoring the financial and technical situation of private sector companies for approving their entrance into the capital market.

As reported, the term of this memorandum is one year and will be extended if the parties agree.

Although the Iranian stock market is a newly developed market and people have only recently gotten acquainted with its activities, this market has been booming in recent years.

In the past Iranian year 1398 (ended on March 19), the performance of the Tehran Stock Exchange, which is the main stock market of Iran, was unprecedented, as its main index, TEDPIX, which had closed at 178,000 points at the end of the calendar year 1397, climbed to 512,000 points at the end of last year.

Many domestic companies have already offered their shares in the market, while much more are getting ready to join.

## Commodities worth \$1.1b traded at IME in a week



**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Over 559,589 tons of commodities valued at \$1.119 billion were traded at Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) over the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday).

As reported by the IME International Affairs and Public Relations Department, last week, on the domestic and export metal and mineral trading floor of IME, 202,258 tons of various products worth \$594 million were traded.

On this trading floor, 192,835 tons of steel, 4,110 tons of copper, 3,500 tons of aluminum, 140 tons of molybdenum concentrates, 18 tons of precious metal concentrates as well as 5 kg of gold bullion dust were traded by the customers.

The report declares that on domestic and export oil and petrochemical trading floors of IME, 354,876 tons of different commodities with the total value of \$528 million were traded.

On this trading floor, 103,000 tons of VB feed stock, 97,717 tons of bitumen,

74,577 tons of polymer products, 34,218 tons of chemical products, 640 tons of insulation, 35,000 tons of lube cut oil, 2,234 tons of base oil as well as 7,490 tons of sulfur were traded.

Furthermore, 2,455 tons of commodities were traded on the IME's side market.

IME is one of the four major stock markets of Iran, the other three markets are Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market known also as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), and Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX).

On April 21, IME Managing Director Hamed Soltani-Nejad unveiled the market's new outlook plan, which depicts IME's development roadmap until the Iranian calendar year of 1404 (March 2020-March 2026). Materializing the slogan of this Iranian year, which is "Surge in Production" is seriously considered in the mentioned plan and it is, in fact, the strategic approach of the outlook plan.

## Iran, Bangladesh stress need for joint investment

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — During a meeting between Bangladesh's Ambassador to Tehran Gousal Azam Sarker and Head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Gholam-Hossein Shafeie in Tehran on Saturday, the two sides emphasized the need for carrying out some joint investment projects.

The Bangladeshi envoy voiced his country's readiness for joint investment with Iran and said, "Given the current situation, we must take smart and innovative steps to develop relations between the two countries. In this regard, in addition to investment and carrying out joint projects, barter trade can be a good solution", ICCIMA news portal reported.

The ambassador also stressed the importance of investment and joint activities between the private sectors of the two countries and said: "By joint investment, you can focus on new products and gain new markets, it will also have a combined effect and lead to the transfer of technology and knowledge." Shafeie for his part mentioned the D-8



Bangladesh's Ambassador to Tehran Gousal Azam Sarker (L) meets with ICCIMA Head Gholam-Hossein Shafeie in Tehran on Saturday.

Summit, which was scheduled to be held in Dhaka this year but became postponed due to the coronavirus outbreak, and said that this summit is going to be an opportunity to

negotiate with member states and develop Iran's relations with these countries.

Expressing dissatisfaction with the two countries' current level of trade, Shafeie said:

"There have always been good grounds and capacities for cooperation between Iran and Bangladesh that have been neglected so far. In this regard, we can use barter trade to solve the problem of banking transactions."

There are many commodities produced in the two countries that can be exported to meet the needs of the other side; for example, rice, tea, and hemp produced in Bangladesh are of better quality than other countries in the region and have a good market in Iran. These products can be bartered with Iranian products consumed in Bangladesh, ICCIMA head said.

The official also criticized the seven-year delay in holding the two countries' joint Economic Committee Meeting and said: "I hope this meeting will be held again and will be the beginning of expanding relations between the two countries."

He further referred to the preferential trade agreement concluded between the two countries and approved by the Iranian parliament, and expressed hope that it would be implemented as soon as possible.

## ICCIMA holds meeting on facilitating trade with Russia

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Deputy Head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Mohammadreza Karbasi met with Iran's ambassador to Russia through video conference on Saturday to discuss ways of facilitating trade between the two countries.

The meeting was attended by Iran's commercial attaché in Russia, the country's consular officer in Astrakhan, the chairman of the Iran-Russia Joint Chamber of Commerce, the director-general of Customs Office of International Cooperation, representatives of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as some businessmen, ICCIMA news portal reported.

As reported, reviewing the latest situation of commodity traffic on the borders of Iran and Russia, presenting the existing problems and suggestions to solve them, discussing suggestions for removing transit and trade barriers for export and import of goods with Russia, presenting the latest status of maritime transport in the Caspian Sea and future plans, explaining the latest customs measures and proposals for the continuation of trade with Russia were among the most important topics discussed at the meeting.

Lack of refrigerated containers, transportation problems, banking problems, the impossibility of opening an LC, as well as money transfer problems were among the most important issues that the participants in this virtual meeting

mentioned as obstacles to improving Iran-Russia trade.

In the meeting, Karbasi also presented some data on trade with the members of the Eurasian Economic Union and said that the volume of Iran's trade with this union before the preferential trade agreement amounted to \$605 million in terms of exports and \$1.486 billion in terms of imports, but the total trade grew by 14 percent to \$2.417 billion by June 20.

In this regard, he underlined the importance of free trade with Eurasian countries especially with Russia, and added: "Considering the importance of Russia, the first representative office of the Iran Chamber of Commerce will begin its activities in Astrakhan in the near future."



# Iran breaks all-time power consumption record amid heatwave

**E N E R G Y** **TEHRAN** — Daily electricity consumption in Iran reached 58,104 megawatts (58.1 gigawatts) on Saturday to register the highest power consumption recorded in the history of Iran's electricity industry, IRNA reported.

Based on the data released by Iran's Power Generation, Transmission and Distribution Management Company, known as TAVANIR, the recorded figure was 333 MW more than the last year's peak consumption.

According to the Energy Ministry's Spokesman for Electricity Industry, Mostafa Rajabi Mashhadi, currently, 14 provinces are in the red zone for high electricity consumption and TAVANIR might be forced to cut some over-consumers from the grid.

"If consumers cooperate [and manage their consumption], we will get through the summer without any blackouts, otherwise we will have to impose some restrictions," Rajabi Mashhadi told ILNA on Saturday.

The official said the electricity consump-



tion is expected to increase even more in the coming week since the weather is expected to get even hotter.

"For every degree increase in temperature, 1500 MW is added to the country's electricity consumption," Rajabi Mashhadi said.

He called on people to decrease their consumption and avoid using appliances with high energy consumption during peak consumption hours.

The rise in electricity consumption comes as earlier this month the energy ministry had warned of the unprecedented increases in power consumption across the country.

With the beginning of the hot season in Iran, the electricity consumption has been constantly increasing across the country so that several new records have been registered for the power consumption in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 21).

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

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

## Fuel stations obliged to pay VAT

**E N E R G Y** **TEHRAN** — Iranian National Tax Administration (INTA), in its latest revision of the country's tax regulations, has obliged fuel station owners to conform to the Value-Added Tax (VAT) regulations, IRNA reported on Sunday.

According to Mohammad Masihi, INTA's deputy for tax incomes, all fuel stations (both oil and gas products) with any volume of sales or income from products and services are called on to abide by the VAT regulations as of the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year 1399 (March 20).

A value-added tax, known in some countries as a goods and services tax (GST), is a type of tax that is assessed incrementally. It is levied on the price of a product or service at each stage of production, distribution, or sale to the end consumer. If the ultimate consumer is a business that collects and pays to the government VAT on its products or services, it can reclaim the tax paid. It is similar to and is often compared to a sales tax.

Iran's tax revenue has increased 31 percent in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19), according to Omid- Ali Parsa, the INTA head.

Putting the country's tax income at 1.43 quadrillion rials (about \$34.04 billion) in the previous year, the official said, "We could collect 250 trillion rials (about \$5.9 billion) as value-added tax", IRIB reported.

Parsa also said that the country has gained projected tax income by 102 percent in the past year, and put the average tax income growth at 21 percent during the previous five years.

The head of the National Tax Administration further mentioned preventing tax evasion as one of the prioritized programs of INTA.

As the oil sale accounts for just seven percent of the country's income in the current Iranian calendar year (began on March 20), the revenues gained from elimination of hidden energy subsidies as well as increased tax incomes will replace oil revenues, according to Head of Iran's Plan and Budget Organization



(PBO) Mohammad Bagher Nobakht.

"This does not mean a rise in tax income; but by setting new tax bases and eliminating

unnecessary exemptions at a time of economic warfare, more tax revenues will be provided," the official had said in late November 2019.

## Azerbaijan warns of risks to Caspian energy exports from conflict with Armenia

Azerbaijan warned on Saturday about security risks to the oil and gas it supplies to European markets due to the outbreak of hostilities at its border with Armenia, Reuters reported.

Elshad Nassirov, vice president of Azeri state energy company SOCAR, said on a conference call some of the energy infrastructure involved in shipping Caspian oil and gas to world markets is located in the vicinity of the current military operations.

Fifteen servicemen from Azerbaijan and Armenia and one Azeri civilian have died since Sunday in clashes between the two countries, who fought a war in the 1990s over Azerbaijan's breakaway region of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Nassirov told the call that if they looked at a map they would see that clashes had taken place near some of its infrastructure. He said the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, the Baku-Supsa oil pipeline, the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzrum gas pipeline and some other facilities were located not far from the territory where clashes had taken place.

Nassirov also referred to the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline, the last stretch of the Southern Gas Corridor which also includes two other pipelines running via Georgia and Turkey - important because

its completion means the whole corridor will be operational, reducing Europe's dependence on Russian gas supplies.

"The pipeline will be ready and operational in time in October-November this year," he said.

Armenia on Saturday also warned about security risks to the region coming from Azerbaijan after Baku said on Thursday it might strike the Metsamor nuclear power plant.

"This is a statement that should be unequivocally considered a crime against humanity ... it should be given an appropriate international response and probe," Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said.

Speaking on the conference call organized by U.S.-based think-tank the Caspian Policy Center, details of which were published on the group's website, Nassirov called on the West to help protect its energy exports.

"I would use this opportunity to invite our colleagues in Washington and elsewhere to think about how fragile ... this region is and to think how to provide ... military and physical security to the corridor, which is providing energy security to Europe," Nassirov said.

## Russia aims for 15% of global LNG market by 2025

Ongoing development of new liquefied natural gas (LNG) projects in Russia will allow it to seize a 15-percent share of the global LNG market, Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak wrote in an article in the Russian magazine Energy Policy.

According to oilprice.com, since Russia began LNG exports in 2009 with the Sakhalin-2 project, its exports of LNG have increased 4.5 times, Novak said.

While Russian gas export monopoly, Gazprom, has been busy launching new pipelines east and west — the Power of Siberia to China and TurkStream to Turkey — Russia's largest private gas producer Novatek is boosting its presence on the global LNG market.

Novatek, which already exports LNG from the Yamal LNG plant, gave in September 2019 the go-ahead to its second large LNG project, Arctic LNG 2 on the Gydan Peninsula.

The Russian government is helping Novatek with its LNG projects in the Arctic.

The Arctic area could become the key driver of Russia's natural gas production in less than two decades, as it has the potential to produce 90 percent of all the gas produced in Russia by 2035, a senior government official said in October last year.



"The Arctic's contribution in the oil and gas sector will continue to grow, we can really bring gas production to 90 percent of the national level and to a quarter of all oil production in Russia," Alexander Krutikov, Russia's Deputy Minister for the Development of the Russian Far East and the Arctic, said back then.

Krutikov was presenting a strategy for the development of the Arctic regions in Russia, in which energy and chemicals will play leading roles.

The Arctic region is also key to Russia's ambitions to be a dominant player in the global LNG market, Krutikov said.

Russia is supporting its companies with tax breaks, waivers on extraction taxes, and other incentives in order to develop its Arctic areas.

## What role will hydrogen play in the EU's future?

The media — at least in Europe — seems to be abuzz with talk about green hydrogen, oilprice.com reported.

As an energy source, backers envision hydrogen powering everything from aircraft, to steel mills, to global shipping fleets, cars, and homes.

The catalyst (no pun intended) came from the E.U.'s recent greenhouse gas emission policy review.

The review pushed hydrogen options up the agenda as the only way many industries would achieve carbon neutrality in the next few decades.

Plans old and new have been dusted down or reexamined to push the agenda in an environment awash with stimulus in the hope financial support will make some of them possible.

The Financial Times is far from alone, but its recent coverage in multiple articles illustrates the wide interest in the topic.

While hydrogen carries huge potential for some industries to dramatically reduce carbon emissions, steel being a major sector dear to our hearts, it isn't without challenges beyond the pure economics.

To be considered blue hydrogen — that is, without the carbon footprint that comes from its traditional production route of splitting natural gas — it either has to come from the electrolysis of water or from natural gas combined with carbon capture and sequestration. In the latter's case, both are established technologies but are hugely expensive.

Furthermore, the electricity needed to power the process



needs to come from solar or wind power sources if it isn't to have its own carbon footprint.

It is debatable whether Europe has the available unused landmass to build enough solar parks or erect enough wind turbines to create sufficient power to power the plethora of industries being promoted as candidates for a switch to hydrogen.

According to the International Energy Agency, almost all hydrogen is supplied from fossil fuels. Furthermore, 6 percent of global natural gas and 2 percent of global coal are going to hydrogen production.

As a consequence, the production of hydrogen is responsible

for CO2 emissions of around 830 million tons of carbon dioxide per year.

That total is equivalent to the CO2 emissions of the United Kingdom and Indonesia combined — hardly a clean fuel based on current industrial production practices.

Nor is hydrogen a particularly energy-intensive fuel source. Only some 35 percent of the electricity generated at the solar cell makes its way through to the fuel at the point of use. In many cases, why wouldn't you just use electricity, for example, in powering cars?

For steel production, electricity can be a direct substitute for hydrogen required as a reductant in blast furnaces by switching steel production to electric arc furnaces. Then, however, iron ore needs to be refined to pellets to make that technologically viable.

Once again, that is a potentially polluting and power-consuming process.

Hydrogen has been boosted as the fuel of the future on at least two occasions in the past, both crossroads of one sort or another.

The oil crisis of the early 1970s and the onset of the climate change campaign in the late 1980s both boosted hydrogen's profile.

However, neither event proved successful in producing significant change with respect to hydrogen.

Will this time be any different?

## Wind to make renewable energy the base for Japan

Japan will build more offshore wind farms as part of its shift away from fossil fuels, Nikkei quoted industry minister Hiroshi Kajiyama as saying on Friday.

Kajiyama said over the next decade, Japan will aim to add infrastructure with the capacity to generate 1 gigawatt each year, eventually reaching a combined 30 gigawatts by 2040.



Japan currently generates just 20,000 kilowatts through offshore wind farms, all of which are government projects. One gigawatt is equal to 1 million kilowatts.

The push for offshore wind farms will be included in the government's new plan on promoting renewable energy, which will be finalized by next March after discussions with the private sector.

"Wind power will play a big role in making renewable energy a primary energy source for Japan," Kajiyama said at a press conference.

Kajiyama said the introduction of large-scale wind farms off the country's coast would not only have a positive impact on the environment but also the economy, as each facility is composed of about 10,000 to 20,000 parts and would require decades of maintenance.

Japan has faced international scrutiny for being unwilling to reduce its reliance on fossil fuels. The country had 150 coal-fired power units as of the end of June, and critics say a plan to scrap about 100 of them over the next decade is not enough.

## U.S. seeks to rent SPR space to India after similar deal with Australia

The United States and India signed a memorandum of understanding July 17 that could result in India renting space in the U.S. Strategic Petroleum Reserve for an overseas oil stockpile, after Australia did the same earlier this year.

India has relatively small SPR capacity at home -- 39 million barrels -- considering its ranking as the third-largest oil consumer after China and the U.S.

The U.S. SPR, held in four caverns on the Gulf Coast, currently has capacity for 714 million barrels.

If the U.S. and India work out a deal for SPR rental, India would be able to buy U.S. crude at low prices and store it until demand rebounds.

U.S. Secretary of Energy Dan Brouillette told reporters July 10 that volumes or other details had not been reached on the potential SPR deal.

"It could ultimately look similar to what we've done with Australia, but there's no predetermined outcome," he said. "But we're excited to begin the conversation with India. We do think it's important for both of our nations."

In April, Australia reached a final deal with the U.S. to create its first emergency oil stockpile and store it in the U.S. SPR caverns.



Australia said it would spend AS\$94 million (then \$59 million) to buy crude at current low prices and store the supply in the SPR for an initial period of 10 years. The plan had been in the works since 2018.

When oil prices crashed in March, the U.S. Department of Energy, or DOE had hoped to buy up to \$3 billion in U.S. crudes to fill the government stockpile. Democrats in Congress blocked the plan, so the agency rented out space to private oil companies as their storage options were tightening.

SPR stocks have grown by 21.2 million barrels from April to 656.1 million barrels as of July 10, according to the latest Energy Information Administration data. At current capacity, the stockpile has room for another 57.9 million barrels.

Brouillette made the SPR comments after a virtual ministerial meeting with Indian petroleum and natural gas minister Dharmendra Pradhan.

### Export slowdown

Asked about the outlook for U.S. crude exports to India, Brouillette attributed a recent slowdown in the flows to lower global demand as a result of the coronavirus pandemic and government lockdowns.

"What we're seeing today is an increase as the economies begin to open up again," Brouillette said. "We see that not only in the sale of product across the oceans, but we see it in the data that shows traffic increasing here in the United States as well as around the world. We're on an upward trajectory in both countries."

U.S. crude exports to India fell to 144,000 b/d in May, down from 247,000 b/d in April, according to the latest U.S. Census Bureau data.

The flows peaked in April 2019 at 393,000 b/d, but have remained below 300,000 b/d since then.

Beyond the SPR plans, the US and Indian energy ministers discussed a public-private hydrogen task force to scale up technologies to produce hydrogen from renewable energy and fossil fuel sources, and cooperation on sustainable biofuel production and use.

They discussed India's plans to reach renewable energy targets and modernize its power distribution sector.

The U.S. Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and India's Central Electricity Regulatory Commission are working to share best practices for regulating electricity and developing electricity markets.



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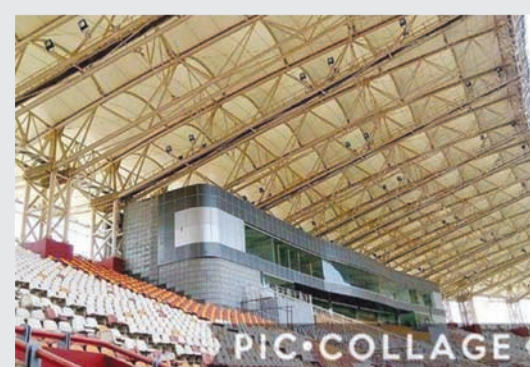


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## Modern Stadium of Martyrs of Khuzestan Football Club (KSC)



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# Israel pushes towards ‘final solution’ for Palestine

By Yasir Ali Mirza

The celebrated Palestinian-American intellectual, Edward W. Said, set out long ago in his seminal book *The Question of Palestine* that Zionist colonialists set foot on the shores of Palestine in the 1880s been continuing a colonization project to dehumanize the local populace.

He said, “Even the West Bank and Gaza - fairly obvious candidates to the rest of the world - seemed a “security” risk. Although it was usually hinted that a Palestinian state there would be a guerrilla base for attacking Israel, the really obstinate fact being covered up was that Zionism had always denied the existence of a competing national right in Palestine. A Palestinian state was a grave political risk, and so was Palestinian nationalism or simply Palestinians.” Hence, the recent annexation plan of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government and the declaration of Israeli sovereignty over the West Bank settlements should be viewed from the standpoint of the radical Zionist consciousness and come as no surprise.

For all intents and purposes, Israel is creeping closer towards its goal of creating an “Eretz Israel” (Greater Israel) by, slowly and surely, exterminating the Palestinian Arabs in the occupied territory. The new movie by the right-wing government to arrogate the Palestinian territories and to metamorphose it into the Jewish ambit is the latest attempt to give credence to the argument. The idea of the Judaization of the Palestinian land is not a new phenomenon, but it lies in the Zionist-Jewish first-generation leadership's collective consciousness. Joseph Weitz, who happened to be the director of Jewish National Land Fund, which was entrusted with the responsibility to buy large tracts of land, has expressed a similar kind of rationalization in his writings which were later published as a book entitled *My Diary and letters to the Children* in 1965. He advocated the mass expulsion of Palestinian Arabs with impunity, which, in his view, is the only way out to achieve “salvation.” Since that juncture in time, unilaterally usurping the Arabs' land has become the cornerstone of the Jewish state, which has been built on deep scars of racism and religious discrimination.

■ **Why is the plan of annexation necessary?**

Prime Benjamin Netanyahu's fresh annexation play is part of the Trump Administration's “peace plan” called Deal of the Century. It is not only flouting international law but also the Oslo Accord, which had guaranteed a “two-state solution” to the Arab-Israel conflict. So far, this historic treaty is considered to be a historic milestone between Palestine and Israel. The 181-page dossier titled: *Peace to Prosperity: A Vision to Improve the Lives of Palestinian and Israeli People*, which was unveiled on January 28, 2020, at the White House in Washington DC with much fanfare, is essentially a brainchild of U.S. President Donald Trump's advisor and son-in-law Jared Kushner, a property developer having zero experience in diplomacy. It is no surprise that not a single Palestinian faction or group was invited to any negotiations before announcing the plan to the public.

This move came close on the heels of se-



rious corruption charges slapped against the hawkish Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. He embraced it as a blessing in disguise. To keep him from the indictment, protected by constitutional immunity while in office, he had given the go-ahead to impose Israeli sovereignty over the Jordan Valley, 132 settlements and other areas totaling 30% of the West Bank. Shielding the rest of the settlements from any possible attacks coming from Palestinian resistance movements has also been given by the Israelis as one of the reasons for this move. As ever before, it has cited its clichéd and pitiable excuses of national security as a pretext to militarize the strategic locations in the occupied territories.

■ **The deception of the Oslo Accord**

The recognition of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), followed by the Oslo Accords and its dissimulation of the “two-state solution” of the conflict, resulted in the “peace” overtures initiated in the early 1970s. For the first time, the Arab League recognized the “outlawed” PLO as “the sole legitimate representatives of Palestinian people in any Palestinian territory that is liberated” in its 1974 Rabat Summit. This had major implications in regional geopolitics. Eventually, Egyptian President, Anwar al-Sadat, made separate compromises with the Israelis at Camp David in 1978 and left Palestine alone in the broader Arab-Israel conflict. Suddenly, and conveniently, it transformed into a bilateral conflict and was no longer an issue of the Arab world.

As the years passed by, the illusion of the Palestinian dream quickly began to crumble since the Israelis were not serious in their attempts to implement the deal. Eventually, the PLO started losing its clout. It was 1987, the Al-Aqsa Intifada, and the emergence of Islamist organizations such as Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), which brought the PLO center stage in international diplomacy. In the late 1980s, the U.S. and Israeli leadership roped in the Fatah-led PLO into brainstorming secret negotiations separate from the Madrid Peace Conference, which eventually yielded favorable results. Yasser Arafat agreed to recognize Israel's right to exist in lieu of a Palestinian state, a promise which has yet to be fulfilled. Showing its freakish diplomatic maneuvering, Israel again advertently ditched Arafat by not taking

a firm decision on Palestinians' right to return or refugee status, Palestinian sovereign state, issue of Jerusalem, etc. Issues that were left ambiguously open-ended in 1993 were once again rearing their heads in front of the Palestinians.

■ **The future hangs in the balance**

Although the annexation deadline of July 1 has already passed, no action has yet been initiated by the Israeli government. The volatile political situation does not allow Netanyahu to take firm action as his arch-rival, and now national unity dispensation partner Benny Gantz, who is also Israel's Defense Minister, is prioritizing the country's effort to fight the Coronavirus pandemic effectively. On the contrary, as Netanyahu is commonly known, is in a hurry to begin the annexation process before the U.S. Presidential elections in November this year, because there is more likelihood of the plan being axed if Democratic presidential hopeful Joe Biden comes to power. He has already shown his concern and categorically expressed his reservations about the plan.

Nonetheless, the annexation plan has triggered a wave of protests in the occupied territories. Any attempt to change the legal framework's status quo would further worsen the conflict, and the region would be engulfed in an abysmal situation. It will possibly lead to a full-blown conflict between Palestinians and Israelis. If Israel manages to impose its sovereignty over the annexed lands, the Palestinians have warned that they will, in turn, unilaterally declare their independent statehood, which is a legitimate right under the Oslo Accords. Palestinian Authority President, Mahmoud Abbas, has immediately rejected the decision. Condemning the move, Prime Minister Mohammed Shtayyeh has said, “This is an issue in which we cannot be silent on. Annexation is an existential threat to our future.” These statements show that the Palestinian people will not remain idle even in the worst of situations.

■ **Meek international & regional response**

As far as the international response is concerned, it has failed to stop Israel's expansionist ambitions. The United Nations, the European Union, or, for that matter, even the submissive Arab leaders have only given lip service to the legitimate Palestinian cause.

The United States has never been an impartial negotiator. During the height of the Coronavirus crisis in May, when the world was fighting the pandemic, Mike Pompeo visited Israel and discussed the proposed annexation plans. Being one of the parties in the conflict, only Jordan has reacted very sharply. King Abdullah II has already announced that Jordan will pull out of the 1994 agreement with Israel. The Middle East Monitor reported that the majority of the Arab nations, including Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and other Gulf states, have informed Israel that they will stay aloof from the annexation of Palestinian land in the occupied West Bank. This shows their duplicity towards the perpetual plight of the Palestinian people.

Economic and diplomatic interests become immaterial if Israel continues its immoral and unethical ways incessantly committing crimes, and the international community must uphold the values of justice and democratic principles. India is a consistent and sincere supporter of the Palestinian cause since the time of Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi; however, it has shifted closer to Israel in recent years. Being a non-permanent member of the UNSC beginning from January next year, India can play the role of a peacenik to avoid any hostilities between the two asymmetric warring factions.

Israel's move has also had major geopolitical implications in the region. Against the backdrop of enmity against Iran, the Gulf Arab states would strengthen their rapprochement with Israel at the cost of the Palestinian cause. The regional arch-rivals of Iran may align with Israel in order to counterbalance its “threat.” Turkey and Israel have common interests and common enemies, namely, gas exploration in the Mediterranean Sea and Hezbollah. The powerful Lebanese Shi'ite Movement, and ardent Iranian ally in the region, is fighting Israelis along the borders and now with Turkish forces in Syria's Idlib province. Turkey has had diplomatic relations with Israel since its inception and, despite all his rhetoric, President Erdogan will not take risks that could hamper its burgeoning economic and geopolitical interests.

■ **Palestinians will not succumb**

The Palestinian people are reeling under a harsh military occupation that hinders their mobility across checkpoints. The blockade has turned Gaza and the West Bank into the largest open-air prison, and they face humiliation and physical abuse on a daily basis by Israeli security forces. Even their mobility within their jurisdiction is subject to the IDF's discretion. If Netanyahu is carrying out the incomplete mission to achieve “salvation,” then Palestinian Arabs--- Muslims and Christians, are ready to resist its sinister design. It is crystal clear that despite being dispossessed and humiliated, Palestinians would not succumb to land grabbing tactics and leave their homeland. No matter how much Israel employs its military machine to make occupying machinations possible.

Yasir Ali Mirza is a Doctoral Candidate (Ph.D. Research Scholar) at Center for West Asian Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India.

(Source: Press TV)

## American Caesar act can't affect Syrian economy: Syrian politician

1 → We have come a long way; still, the country would not calm down until life returned to the time before the media hype that accompanied the Caesar law.

■ How do you see the fate of the Turkish-American presence in Syria? Turkey says it wants to thwart Kurdish attempts for separation, and the U.S. claims it came to fight terrorism.

A: All foreign occupation on the Syrian lands will end and disappear. We are in the last episode of the existence of this occupation of our lands, especially the Turkish and American invasion in the north and northeast of Syria.

There is no reason to continue the invasion, and the occupation forces will be gone, while the coming days are going to witness a lot of changes related to this aspect.

■ Regarding the Astana talks, what are the latest developments, and do you think it has been successful in reducing tension?

A: Undoubtedly, the Astana talks had a perfect role in creating de-escalation zones that came eventually under the control of the Syrian state and the Syrian Arab Army. But the talks are now almost frozen because the Turkey as a guarantor is unable to fulfill its obligations to end activities of extremist factions and separate the moderate opposition from the radical ones.

■ It seems that the countries that fought to topple the Syrian government have now accepted that Bashar Al-Assad remain in power. In view of such developments, do you expect Syria to resume its relations with Persian Gulf countries or Turkey?

A: Everything has changed, and the whole world has changed. There is a big difference between 2011 and 2020. The countries that attacked Syria and were adamant to topple the Syrian government today are continuing to restore their relations with Syria, trying to take advantage of the country to strengthen the Arab barrier against the new Turkish colonial policies.

As is well known, the UAE has reopened its embassy in Damascus, and the (Persian) Gulf countries will soon be behind.

■ What are the latest developments surrounding aid delivery to Syria? How do you see the role of Washington and the Security Council in this regard?

A: The U.S. always raves about helping the Syrian people while it trains and equips armed groups to fight against Bashar Al-Assad.

Recently, the Chinese and Russian double veto was used to overturn a decision passed in 2014 to deliver aid through cross-border outside the state control and without coordination with Damascus.

After using the veto and responding to proposals, it was agreed to open the Bab Al-Hawa Border Crossing only for a year.

Afterward, any aid must be entered through coordination with the Syrian government.

In my assessment, the U.S. main goal is to strengthen and equip terrorists by weapons, not aid delivery.

If it wanted to help the Syrian people, the Caesar act would not have been ratified.

## Armenia and Azerbaijan: A decades-long and volatile rivalry

Azerbaijan and Armenia, two ex-Soviet republics in the Caucasus, have been locked in a decades-long territorial dispute which frequently erupts into deadly fighting.

Here are the key issues surrounding their conflict.

■ **Nagorno Karabakh**

At the heart of the standoff between Yerevan and Baku is the contested Nagorno Karabakh region.

The Soviet authorities merged the predominantly ethnic Armenian territory with Azerbaijan in 1921. After the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union, Armenian separatists seized it in a move supported by Yerevan.

An ensuing war left 30,000 dead and forced hundreds of thousands from their homes. Despite a ceasefire mediated in 1994 by Russia, the United States, and France, fighting erupts frequently.

During the most recent serious clashes in April 2016, some 110 people were killed.

■ **Revolts and dynasty**

Armenia, a Christian country since the fourth century, has been rocked by political and economic instability since it gained independence from the USSR.

The country's post-Soviet leadership repressed opposition to its rule, was accused of falsifying ballot results, and was largely beholden to Russia's interests.

In the spring of 2018, mass street protests brought current Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan to power. He has since cracked down on corruption and introduced popular judicial reforms.

Azerbaijan, a Muslim-majority country on the Caspian Sea, has been under the rule of a single-family since 1993.

Heydar Aliyev, a former officer of the Soviet security services, the KGB, ruled the country until October 2003. He handed over power to his son, Ilham, weeks before his death.

In 2017, Ilham Aliyev made his wife, Mehriban, the country's first vice president.

■ **Russia and Turkey**

Turkey, which is ambitious to be a regional powerbroker in the Caucasus, has thrown its weight behind oil-rich and Turkic-speaking Azerbaijan.

A mutual mistrust of Armenia fuels Their alliance, and Ankara routinely issues strongly-worded statements in support of Baku's ambitions to reclaim Nagorno Karabakh.

Yerevan harbors Turkey's hostility over the massacres of some 1.5 million Armenians by Turkey under the Ottoman Empire during World War I.

More than 30 countries have recognized the killings as genocide, though Ankara fiercely disputes the term.

Russia, which maintains close ties with Armenia, is the major powerbroker in the region. It leads the Collective Security Treaty Organization military alliance of ex-Soviet countries that includes Armenia.

Yerevan relies on Russian support and military guarantees because Azerbaijan's spending on arms overshadows its defense budget.

■ **Oil and diaspora**

Azerbaijan has recently begun leveraging oil revenues as part of a bid to overhaul its image in the West.

Baku has invested in massive sponsorship deals, including with the Euro 2020 football championship, which was postponed because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Baku held international football fixtures during previous tournaments and has hosted Formula 1 Grand Prix races since 2016.

Azerbaijan has also tried to pitch itself to European countries as an alternative energy supplier to Russia.

On the international stage, Armenia has a vast and influential diaspora who fled during the Ottoman-era repressions.

(Source: The New Arab)

## WHO reports record rise in global COVID-19 cases for 2nd day in a row

The World Health Organization (WHO) has, for the second day in a row, reported a record increase of almost 260,000 new coronavirus cases worldwide.

The WHO report registered on Saturday a total of 259,848 new cases in 24 hours, while the previous record was 237,743 on Friday.

Global deaths also rose by 7,360 — the biggest one-day increase since May 10.

The new figures bring the world's total fatalities to 601,213 and the confirmed cases to more than 14.2 million, according to the Johns Hopkins University tally.

The United States is the worst-hit country by the coronavirus pandemic, with over 3.7 million infections and more than 140,000 deaths.

The United States has been trying to rein in the outbreak at the state and local levels but with only limited success.

Brazil is following the US, with over two million cases and nearly 72,000 contagions.

The Latin American country has started to resume business in many areas despite mounting cases as Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro still opposes the imposition of lockdown measures.

The following is the latest on the coronavirus pandemic from across the globe:

■ **El Salvador to move to 2nd stage of economic reopening**

El Salvador's President Nayib Bukele announced on Saturday that the country would move to the second phase of reopening its economy despite the fact that cases of the novel coronavirus continue to rise in the Central American country.



Under a plan outlined by the government last month, the manufacturing, footwear, paper, cardboard industries, and public transport, will reopen as of July 21.

El Salvador has registered 11,508 total cases of coronavirus and 324 deaths.

■ **India reports record cases in one day**

India recorded its biggest surge in coronavirus cases to date, with 38,902 new cases and 543 deaths in the last 24 hours.

The country's total infections now stand at 1,077,618, and the total death toll has climbed to 26,816, according to the Indian Health Ministry data.

■ **Australia's Victoria state makes mask-wearing compulsory**

Victoria, Australia's second-most-populous state, has compelled people in Melbourne to wear masks when leaving their homes, as the state marked two weeks of triple-digit

increases in new coronavirus infections on Sunday.

Victoria Premier Daniel Andrews said people not wearing face coverings would be fined 200 Australian dollars (\$140).

Victoria, which has forced nearly five million people into a partial six-week lockdown since July 9, reported 363 new cases of the coronavirus on Sunday, after 217 cases the previous day.

Three deaths from the COVID-19 disease were reported in Victoria on Sunday, bringing the total to 38 and raising Australia's death toll to 122.

Australia has recorded a total of about 11,800 cases.

■ **Barcelona limits access to public beaches**

The police in Barcelona are curbing access to some of the Catalan city's beaches as

tourists are ignoring regulations amid the coronavirus's resurgence.

Catalan health authorities reported more than 1,200 new cases on Saturday in 24 hours.

The new outbreak has forced regional officials to announce the prohibition of gatherings of more than ten people that went into effect on Saturday.

The new restrictions were imposed less than four weeks after Spain ended a state of emergency when its 47 million population was subjected to one of the world's toughest lockdowns to slow the spread of the flu-like pathogen.

The disease has claimed more than 28,400 lives in the country.

■ **Coronavirus infections in Nigeria top 36,000**

According to official statistics, the number of cases in Nigeria has risen to 36,107 with 653 new infections.

Six new fatalities were recorded in the West African nation, bringing the total to 778, the Nigerian Center for Disease Control (NCDC).

More than 14,900 people have recovered from the virus in Nigeria.

■ **South Africa ranks fifth in global coronavirus cases**

According to the Johns Hopkins University tally, South Africa now ranks fifth in the world for confirmed coronavirus cases as the African continent faces the pandemic's first wave.

On Saturday, South Africa reported 13,285 new confirmed cases for a total of 350,879 — the tally puts the country ahead of Peru and accounts for roughly half the cases in Africa.

(Source: agencies)



### Three neglected crafts revived in North Khorasan

**TOURISM d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Three fields of handicraft, which had been fallen into oblivion, have been revived in the northeastern province of North Khorasan, IRIB reported. Abrisham-bafi (knitting patterned silk fabrics), Ruduzi (traditional embroidery) and Namad-mali (literally meaning felt beating) are the revived handicrafts in the province, provincial tourism chief Ali Abedi said on Sunday.



Namad-mali is a traditional craft being practiced in Iran to make namad, a traditional rug, out of woolen fabrics by rolling and pressing them. More than 15 obsolete fields were brought back to life previously and currently, 61 fields of handicraft are being practiced across the province, the official added. Though North Khorasan province may not be the first choice of travelers, its tourism is getting momentum. According to Lonely Planet, most foreign tourists pass straight through North Khorasan in transit between Mashhad and Gorgan, but if you have time to explore, it's worth diverting south from the capital, Bojnurd, towards Esfarayen, famed for its wrestling tournaments, the remarkable citadel of Belqays and the partly preserved stepped village of Roein some 20km north. Although a lot of new building spoils the effect in parts of the village, Roein is considered Khorasan's answer to the well-known Masuleh and is a possible starting point for hikes to little-visited mountain villages.

### Over 100 tourism projects worth \$83m underway in southeastern Iran

**TOURISM d e s k** **TEHRAN** — A total of 119 tourism projects, worth 3.5 trillion rials (over \$83 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) are underway in southeastern Kerman province, CHTN reported.



Parts of the projects are scheduled to be completed by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2021) and the rest will come on stream in the near future, provincial tourism chief Fereyduun Fa'ali said on Sunday. Hotels, guest houses, eco-lodge units, and recreation centers are among the projects which are being implemented in close collaboration with the private sector, the official added. He also noted that tourism could be one of the sources of income for the province if its capacities are utilized and the necessary investment is made. Implementation of such projects could attract more tourists to the province and create more job opportunities for people, he noted.

The big and sprawling Kerman province has been a cultural melting pot since antiquity, blending Persians with subcontinental tribe dwellers. It is home to myriad historical sites and scenic landscapes such as Bazaar-e Sartasari, Jabalieh Dome, Ganjali Khan Bathhouse, Malek Jameh Mosque, and Shahdad Desert to name a few.

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

By Pashmina Binwani

(Part 4/8)  
The next 24 hours involved trying out his local bread, climbing over a random hill in Iran, and getting caught in a hailstorm continued by supermarket hunting for the best spices available in Asian cooking.



We were supposed to show a little bit of Malaysia through our mediocre cooking skills. We ended up cooking turmeric banana curry and Asian fried rice. In return, he exchanged his stories with us and his dreams to learn German and hopefully migrate to Germany where he sees his IT career kicking off.

■ **Yazd**

I was pleasantly surprised how Iran's old mud-town was stunning in every aspect and was unlike any other place that I have visited. Globalization may have erased traditions and skills but not in Yazd, Iran's mud-town. People are trained to be ecological, rather than technological.

# Iran extends ban on group tours in bid to contain coronavirus

➔ **1** "Based on our tourism marketing program monitoring and data analysis from the neighboring countries, the Persian Gulf littoral states, and the European Union, an initial forecast suggests that Iran will open land borders to neighbors as of 15th of Tir (July 5) and some of its air borders as of 1st of Mordad (July 22)," said Mohammad-Ebrahim Larjani who presides over the ministry's advertising and marketing office.

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

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

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



File photo depicts foreign travelers visiting the centuries-old Chehel Sotoun Palace in Isfahan, central Iran. 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).

### Archaeologist says newest Ecbatana excavations yielded 'satisfying' results

**HERITAGE d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Senior Iranian archaeologist Mehrdad Malekzadeh has said results of the 22nd archaeological season recently conducted on the ancient city of Ecbatana in west-central Iran were "satisfying".

"It seems that the 22nd season of excavations has led to significant achievements and cultural elements about the Median period, 37 years after the excavations began at the site, and after six decades of choosing the location of Tepe Hegmataneh in a historical section of the present city of Hamedan," CHTN quoted Malekzadeh, who led the 22nd season, as saying on Sunday.

Ecbatana is widely believed to be once the capital of Medes, an ancient city on the site of which stands the modern city of Hamadan in west-central Iran. Ecbatana was subsequently the summer residence of the Achaemenian kings and one of the residences of the Parthian kings. According to ancient Greek writers, the city was founded in about 678 BC by Deioces, who was the first king of the Medes.

"In the 22nd season, we succeeded to discover remnants of a rampart tower in



a location we expected before through a trench carved based on the topography of the hill and our studies.... One of the most important potteries we found is called the known 'Median bowl' which dates back to late Iron Age," Malekzadeh explained.

The 70-day archaeological season came to an end late in June aimed at exploring and re-examining the stratigraphy of the hill, to shed new light on its lowest layers which are deemed to be related to the [early] settlement on Hegmataneh hill and the

foundation of its [ruined] fortress and towers.

Ecbatana is deemed to be remaining a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, for decades or even centuries to come as the site of the ancient city lies partly within the modern city of Hamadan, which has never been excavated before.

According to ancient Greek writers, Ecbatana was founded in about 678 BC by Deioces, who was the first king of the Medes. The city was subsequently the summer residence of the Achaemenian kings and one of the residences of the Parthian kings. It is deemed to be remaining a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, for decades or even centuries to come as the site of the ancient city lies partly within the modern city of Hamadan, which has never been excavated before.

The Greek historian Herodotus described the city in the 5th century BC as being surrounded by seven concentric walls. Ecbatana was captured from the Median ruler Astyages by the Persian king Cyrus the Great in 550 BC, and it was taken from the last Achaemenian ruler by Alexander the Great in 330 BC.

### Birjand hosting Lut Desert photo exhibit to mark UNESCO-listing anniversary

**TOURISM d e s k** **TEHRAN** — A photo exhibition of Lut Desert is currently underway in Master Esmaeli Gallery in the northeastern city of Birjand on the occasion of the 4th anniversary of the desert's inscription on UNESCO World Heritage list.

The exhibit, which displays photos by Iranian photographer Iman Behdani, aims at promoting tourist attractions of the UNESCO-registered Lut Desert in the barren heartland of Iran, IRNA reported on Sunday.

Due to the outbreak of the coronavirus in the country, the exhibit can be visited online as well, the report added.

The exhibit will continue until Tuesday.

The Lut Desert, widely referred to as Dasht-e Lut ("Emptiness Plain"), is a large salt desert encircled by the provinces of Kerman and Sistan-Baluchestan, and South Khorasan. It is the world's 27th-largest desert and was



inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List on July 17, 2016.

The Lut Desert is teemed with giant dunes, shifting sands, salt plains, and wind-hewn kaluts, offering visitors epic journeys of breathtaking beauty and wilderness. It is a destination for people who are in search of new adventures; outstanding scenery and unparalleled serenity.

The scorching desert is also being considered as one of the top areas in the world for finding meteorites, thanks to its unique parameters. In recent years, significant finds have been made, with the efforts of national and international teams of researchers.

Seven years of satellite temperature data analyzed by NASA show that the Lut Desert is the hottest spot on Earth. Based on the research, it was hottest during 5 of the 7 years and had the highest temperature overall: 70.7°C in 2005.

### In Focus: Grand Bazaar of Kerman



**TOURISM d e s k** As one of the oldest trading centers in Iran, the grand Bazaar of Kerman embraces a variety of mazes, intersections, entrances, and passageways.

The main thoroughfare of the bazaar is made up of some smaller marketplaces. Most of its covered structures are associated with the Safavid era (1501–1736), though the history of trade in there is rooted much deeper in time.

The Kerman Bazaar with its beautiful manifestation has left as a memorial from the ancient periods and its architecture characteristics astonish the eyes of every visitor. Stretching for 1200m from Tohid Sq(Arg Sq) northeast to Shohada Sq (Moshtag Sq), Kerman's Grand Bazaar is one of the oldest trading centers in Iran.

Architecture of the bazaar reflects the geographical conditions and climatic circumstances of Iran in the past. Such architecture works indicate the style of architecture in the Sassanid era. The bazaar comprises of various rows or alleys such as Arg, Ganj Ali Khan, Ekhtiyari, Sardari, Vakili, Attari, Qadam Gah and Mozaffari rows.

In the Iranian culture, bazaars have been traditional public spaces in the Iranian cities with great contributions to commercial activities in the urban life meanwhile their extended activities can be traced to social, cultural, political, and religious roles.

Kerman has long been a melting pot for people passing between Persia and the Indian subcontinent.

UNESCO describes Kerman as "one of the important locations that connect West to East, and North to South."





# Iranian researchers find COVID-19 can cause PTSD in medical staff

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — A recent study conducted by Iranian researchers showed that the coronavirus pandemic can lead to serious psychological problems such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in medical staff who were at the frontline of the fight against the disease.

With the rapid outbreak of COVID-19 in the early 2020s, severe physical and psychological pressure was placed on the medical staff of hospitals involved in the care of patients with the disease.

Therefore, Shirin Esmaili Doolabinejad and Mitra Safa, with their colleagues at Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences; in a study give a review of the psychological impacts of COVID-19 outbreak on the mental health status of medical staff, ISNA reported.

The researchers in this study examined 311 nurses and paramedics of Masih Daneshvari Hospital. A questionnaire was used to assess post-traumatic stress disorder in these individuals and the obtained data were analyzed by statistical methods.

Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a mental disorder that can develop after a person is exposed to a traumatic event, such as warfare, traffic collisions, child abuse, or other threats on a person's life. Symptoms may include disturbing thoughts, feelings, or dreams related to the events, mental or physical distress to trauma-related cues, attempts to avoid trau-



ma-related cues, alterations in how a person thinks and feels, and an increase in the fight-or-flight response. These symptoms last for more than a month after the event.

Masih Daneshvari Hospital is one of the first and main centers for the treatment of COVID-19 and a subspecialty center for the treatment of lung diseases in Tehran.

During the epidemic, all wards of the hospital were dedicated to coronavirus patients. The staff of this hospital experienced severe psychological stress due to the sudden

and high volume of exposure to critically ill patients, a sharp increase in working hours, and many of them got infected or their colleagues, or the loss of their family members or the community.

This high pressure and observation of the suffering of others can have a very serious impact on their mental health and functioning. Therefore, in this study, the PTSD status of the medical staff of this hospital was examined.

According to the findings of this study, 88 percent of participants showed severe

PTSD, and only 12 percent got moderate PTSD scores, while none of them showed mild PTSD; which indicates the depth and severity of the psychological impact of the current crisis on the medical staff.

People in their third decade of life had the lowest rates of depression and people in their fourth decade of life had the highest rates of depression. In this study, men and women were the same in terms of PTSD incidence.

Married individuals got higher PTSD scores, more penetrating memories, and an inability to control emotion, and this is a controversial finding in this study. Also, there were no relations between the number of children and PTSD.

The study concluded that the serious spread of traumatic psychiatric symptoms in the current situation can lead to damage to the health system. While serious effort is necessary for many areas, spending time and money on the mental health of at-risk patients as well as society as a whole is a necessity.

The number of people diagnosed with coronavirus in Iran reached 273,656 on Sunday, of whom 14,188 have died and 237,788 recovered so far. Over the past 24 hours, 2,182 new cases of people having the virus have been identified, and 209 died, Health Ministry spokeswoman Sima Sadat Lari said.

Currently, 3,556 patients with coronavirus are in critical condition, she added.

## EU supports joint project of Iranian, French universities

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — The European Union (EU) will provide financial support for a joint project of the geology departments of Yazd University in Iran and Cergy-Pontoise University in France, IRNA news agency reported on Sunday.

By announcing winners of the Erasmus+ Program 2020, the joint project succeeded in obtaining EU financial support.

Based on the jury's score, the proposal received 83 out of 100 points for EU funding. Within the framework of this project, a number of faculty members and graduated students of geology departments of Yazd University and Cergy-Pontoise University will be sent for educational and research opportunities.

The duration of this training program lasts for a maximum of 2 years and will be started in August.

Erasmus+ is the EU's program to support education,



training, youth, and sport in Europe. Its budget of €14.7 billion will provide opportunities for over 4 million Euro-

peans to study, train, and gain experience abroad.

Set to last until 2020, Erasmus+ does not just have opportunities for students. Merging seven prior programs, it has opportunities for a wide variety of individuals and organizations.

Detailed information on these opportunities, including eligibility criteria, is available in the Erasmus+ Program Guide. An indicative funding guide for some centralized opportunities is also available.

The aim of Erasmus+ is to contribute to the Europe 2020 strategy for growth, jobs, social equity, and inclusion, as well as the aims of ET2020, the EU's strategic framework for education and training.

Erasmus+ also aims to promote the sustainable development of its partners in the field of higher education and contribute to achieving the objectives of the EU Youth Strategy.

## Antarctica more widely impacted by humans than previously thought



Antarctica is considered one of the Earth's largest, most pristine remaining wildernesses. Yet since its formal discovery 200 years ago, the continent has seen accelerating and potentially impactful human activity.

How widespread this activity is across the continent has never been quantified. We know Antarctica has no cities, agriculture or industry. But we have never had a good idea of where humans have been, how much of the continent remains untouched or largely unimpacted, and to what extent these largely unimpacted areas serve to protect biodiversity.

A team of researchers led by Monash University, including Dr Bernard Coetsee from the Global Change Institute at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg (Wits University), has changed all of that. Using a data set of 2.7 million human activity records, the team showed just how extensive human use of Antarctica has been over the last 200 years. The research was published in the journal Nature.

With the exception of some large areas mostly in the central parts of the continent, humans have set foot almost everywhere, according to the Science Daily website.

Although many of these visited areas have only been negligibly affected by people, biodiversity is not as well represented within them as it should be.

"We mapped 2.7 million human activity records from 1819

to 2018 across the Antarctic continent to assess the extent of wilderness areas remaining and its overlap with the continent's biodiversity," says Coetsee, a conservation scientist at Wits University. Based in Skukuza in the Kruger National Park in South Africa, Coetsee helped conceptualise the study and collated a spatial database from multiple sources to map the extent of human activity in Antarctica.

"In a region often thought of as remote, we showed that in fact human activity has been extensive, especially in ice-free and coastal areas where most of its biodiversity is found. This means that "wilderness" areas do not capture many of the continent's important biodiversity sites, but that an opportunity exists to conserve the last of the wild."

The study found that only 16% of the continent's Important Bird Areas, areas identified internationally as critical for bird conservation, are located within negligibly impacted areas, and little of the total negligibly impacted area is represented in Antarctica's Specially Protected Area network.

High human impact areas, for example some areas where people build research stations or visit for tourism, often overlap with areas important for biodiversity.

Lead author, Rachel Leihy, a PhD student in the Monash School of Biological Sciences, points out that "While the situation does not look promising initially, the outcomes show that much opportunity exists to take swift action to declare new protected areas for the conservation of both wilderness and biodiversity."

"Informatics approaches using large data sets are providing new quantitative insights into questions that have long proven thorny for environmental policymakers," says Steven Chown, the corresponding author based at Monash University.

"This work offers innovative ways to help the Antarctic Treaty Parties take forward measures to secure Antarctica's Wilderness."

The transdisciplinary team delivering this work includes researchers from Australia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and South Africa.

## UK ports free-for-all could spell doom for grey seals

The looming cranes of the Humber's four ports are surrounded by wildlife, from bitterns and marsh harriers to grey seals, lounging on the mudflats and hunting for fish in the estuary waters. Despite the steady flow of cargo ships in and out of the ports, wildlife has thrived – testament to the success of decades of environment policies, according to green groups.

Yet those groups are now increasingly alarmed that the government's plans to turn ports like those in the Humber into free ports will have a "disastrous" effect on the seals and other wildlife across the UK.

Ministers are considering excluding free ports from rules protecting birds and wildlife habitats – protections which George Eustice, the environment secretary, has previously attacked as being "spirit-crushing" and pledged to scrap.

Andrew Dodd, head of casework for the RSPB, said: "Removing those protections would be disastrous for the wildlife in those areas and a massive backward step in the

way the UK looks after its most important wildlife places. It would undo a lot of the positive work that the ports sector has done with major environmental organisations over the last 20 years."

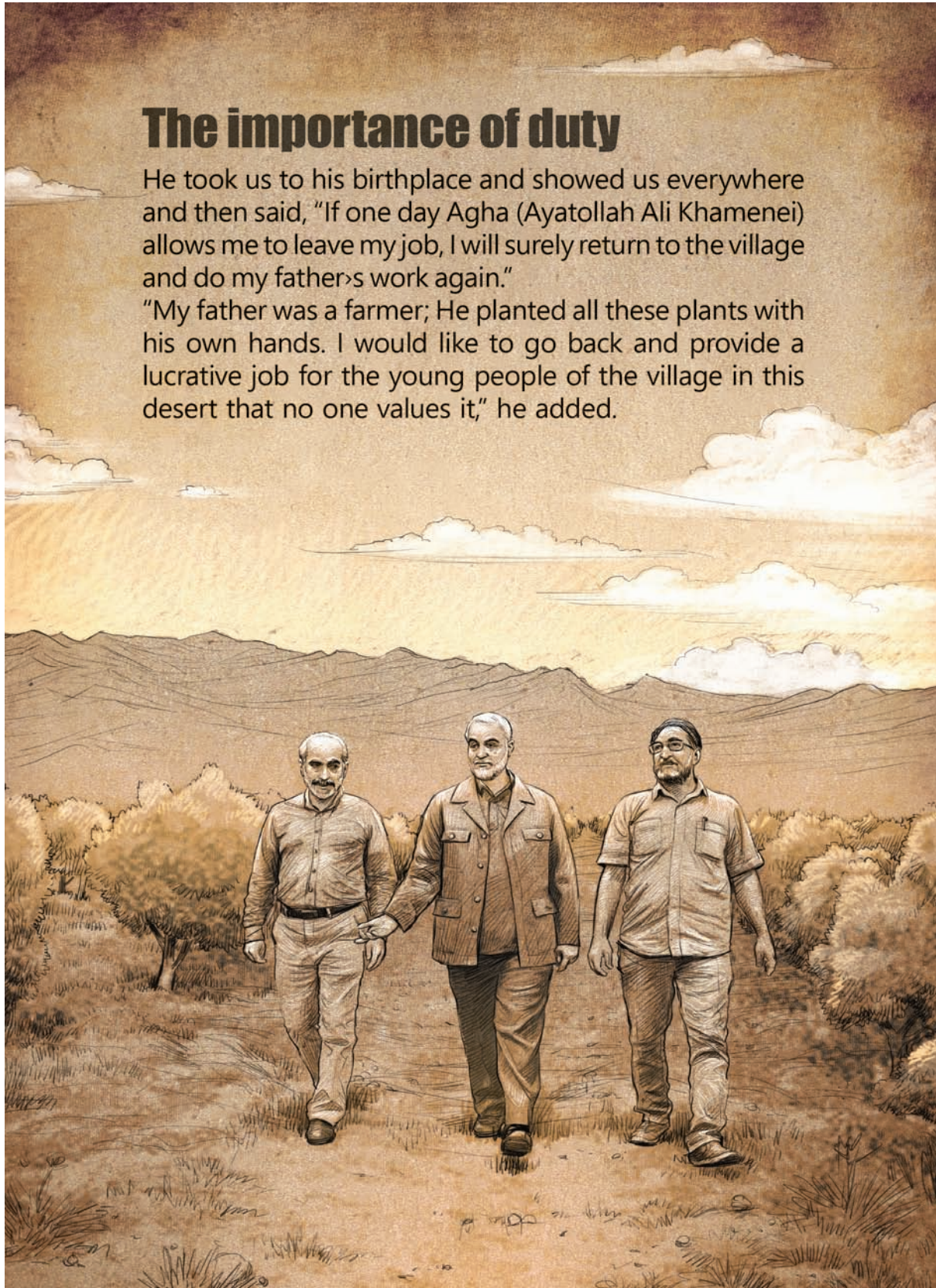
Birds and habitats regulations derive from two EU directives which Eustice said during the referendum campaign "would go" in the event of Brexit. They are among rules that Boris Johnson has derided as "newt-counting delays" which hold up his Project Speed ambitions to "build, build, build". The regulations enabled the creation of hundreds of special areas of conservation and special protection areas, which green groups say have delivered essential protections for Britain's green spaces and wildlife such as the Humber estuary with its population of grey seals.

Tomorrow, Eustice will deliver a speech hosted by the Green Alliance when he is expected to outline how the government will reform planning.

## The importance of duty

He took us to his birthplace and showed us everywhere and then said, "If one day Agha (Ayatollah Ali Khamenei) allows me to leave my job, I will surely return to the village and do my father's work again."

"My father was a farmer; He planted all these plants with his own hands. I would like to go back and provide a lucrative job for the young people of the village in this desert that no one values it," he added.





## Kuwait's Sheikh Sabah undergoes 'successful' surgery

Kuwait said its 91-year-old ruler has undergone successful surgery, without elaborating on what ails him, according to a report published on the state-run KUNA news agency on Sunday.

The Gulf nation has yet to elaborate on what required Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah to seek a previously unannounced medical treatment on Saturday.

Sheikh Sabah's sudden surgery could inspire a renewed power struggle within Kuwait's ruling family.

KUNA news agency had described Sheikh Sabah's hospitalization on Saturday as "medical checks", citing a statement from the country's royal court.

Several hours later, KUNA published a second report saying 83-year-old Crown Prince Nawaf Al Ahmad Al Sabah had assumed some of Sheikh Sabah's powers temporarily, without explaining why that was necessary.

However, a copy of the ministerial decree posted by Kuwait's official gazette, Kuwait Al-Youm, and seen by The Associated Press news agency on Sunday said the crown prince would be empowered for "the duration of a surgical procedure until the health event is over". The decree did not elaborate further.

## U.S. Navy issues 'stop-work order' following second warship blaze

→ 1 GD NASSCO was the lead contractor for the pier-side maintenance aboard Kearsarge's sister ship Bonhomme Richard at the time of the fire that broke out July 12. The Navy said the fire likely originated in the lower vehicle storage area but that there was no known hot work going on in that location at the time.

Both Bonhomme Richard and Kearsarge are Wasp-class amphibious assault ships. Kearsarge has been in maintenance at NASSCO since late last year.

In an interview with Thursday with Defense News, Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Michael Gilday said the Navy was preparing to launch dual investigations into the fire on Bonhomme Richard: A safety investigation, which are generally not released to the public so that witnesses can feel free to speak openly, and a more formal administrative investigation, which generally comes with disciplinary recommendations and are releasable to the public

## UN chief to world leaders: 'Inequality starts at the top'

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres Saturday accused world powers of ignoring inequality in global institutions, but said the coronavirus pandemic has created a "generational opportunity" to build a more equal, sustainable world.

Delivering the annual lecture for the Nelson Mandela Foundation via internet, Guterres pushed for a so-called New Global Deal to ensure power, wealth and opportunity are shared more broadly and fairly at the international level. Daily star reported.

"The nations that came out on top more than seven decades ago have refused to contemplate the reforms needed to change power relations in international institutions," Guterres said. "The composition and voting rights in the United Nations Security Council and the boards of the Bretton Woods system are a case in point."

"Inequality starts at the top: in global institutions. Addressing inequality must start by reforming them," he added.

The Bretton Woods system includes the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

He said the pandemic has revealed, like an x-ray, "fractures in the fragile skeleton of the societies we have built."

"It is exposing fallacies and falsehoods everywhere: the lie that free markets can deliver healthcare for all; the fiction that unpaid care work is not work; the delusion that we live in a post-racist world; the myth that we are all in the same boat," said Guterres during the virtual lecture.

"Because while we are all floating on the same sea, it's clear that some are in superyachts while others are clinging to the floating debris," said Guterres, a former Socialist prime minister of Portugal.

The coronavirus has infected more than 14 million people and there have been nearly 600,000 known deaths worldwide, according to a Reuters tally. The UN has appealed for \$10.3 billion to help poor states, but has received only \$1.7 billion.

Guterres said rich countries have "failed to deliver the support needed to help the developing world" and that the pandemic has "brought home the tragic disconnect between self-interest and the common interest; and the huge gaps in governance structures and ethical frameworks."

He said a changing world needs new social protection policies with safety nets including universal health coverage and the possibility of a universal basic income.

Guterres concluded: "Now is the time for global leaders to decide: Will we succumb to chaos, division and inequality? Or will we right the wrongs of the past and move forward together, for the good of all?"

## Resistance News

## Scores of Jewish settlers defile Aqsa Mosque's courtyards

INTERNATIONAL d e s k TEHRAN— Dozens of Jewish settlers on Sunday morning entered the Aqsa Mosque in Occupied Jerusalem and desecrated its courtyards under police guard.

82 settlers, including students of religious students, stormed the Aqsa Mosque through al-Maghariba Gate and toured its courtyards under police escort, according to local sources.

The Aqsa Mosque is exposed to daily desecration by Jewish settlers and police forces in the morning and the afternoon except on Fridays and Saturdays.

The Israeli police close al-Maghariba Gate, which is used by Jews to enter the Mosque, at 10:30 am after the settlers complete their morning tours at the holy site. Later in the afternoon, the same gate is reopened for evening tours by settlers.

During the presence of settlers inside the Mosque compound, entry restrictions are imposed on Muslim worshippers at the entrances leading to the Mosque and their IDs are seized until they leave the holy place.

# Syrians vote in parliamentary elections as war winds down

Syrians have gone to the polls to elect a new parliament and put bitter years of war behind them, even as the country strives to liberate territories still controlled by foreign-backed militants.

More than 7,400 polling stations opened at 7:30 a.m. local time (0430 GMT) on Sunday, including in former militant strongholds of Eastern Ghouta, east of central Damascus, and the southern countryside of the northwestern Idlib province.

Portraits of the 1,658 contenders have been displayed across the capital for weeks, including several prominent businessmen.

Many candidates are running on a platform to curb inflation and renovate the infrastructure ravaged by nine years of conflict.

"Lawmakers are going to have to make exceptional efforts to improve services," said Umayya, a 31-year-old woman who works in a dentist's practice.

President Bashar al-Assad's Baath party and his allies are expected to win most of the parliament's 250 seats in the third such polls to be held in Syria ever since foreign-sponsored militancy broke out in March 2011. The two previous polls were staged in May 2012 and April 2016 respectively. In the last legislative elections in 2016, turnout stood at 57.56 percent.

The elections, twice postponed from April due to the novel coronavirus pandemic, come weeks after the United States imposed new economic sanctions on Syria under the so-called Caesar Act.

according to Press TV, on June 23, Foreign Minister Walid al-Muallem denounced the sanctions, saying the coercive measures were meant to revive terrorism in Syria and force Damascus to turn its back on the anti-Israel resistance front.

"Syrian people are accustomed to unilateral



sanctions, which have been imposed on them since 1978 under various pretexts. Syrians should try to use the latest sanctions as an opportunity to advance

the national economy, achieve self-sufficiency, and deepen our cooperation with friends and allies," he said at the time.

## Netanyahu's corruption trial to hear first witnesses in January

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's corruption trial will begin in earnest in January with witnesses being heard three times a week, a court decided on Sunday.

Lawyers for Netanyahu, the first serving prime minister in Israel to go on trial, had asked for a six-month postponement to prepare their strategy. They suggested it would be difficult to gauge the truthfulness of witnesses wearing anti-coronavirus masks, currently compulsory in Israel, Reuters reported.

Netanyahu's legal troubles have partly fuelled mounting street protests against him, with demonstrators citing his alleged corruption and handling of the coronavirus pandemic, which has taken a turn for the worse in Israel.

Israeli police used water cannons to disperse demonstrators from outside



Netanyahu's residence in Jerusalem on Saturday, and in Tel Aviv, protesters blocking traffic clashed with police.

Netanyahu was not required to appear at Sunday's court session.

The veteran leader's trial formally opened in May in the Jerusalem District Court, where Netanyahu denied the charges of bribery, fraud and breach of trust against him and his attorneys were given two months to study the material against him.

## France, Germany, Italy threaten sanctions on violators of Libya's arms embargo

France, Germany and Italy have threatened to impose sanctions against countries that are violating a United Nations (UN) arms embargo on conflict-torn Libya.

In a joint statement after a meeting in Brussels on Saturday, French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte called on "all foreign actors to end their increasing interference and to fully respect the arms embargo established by the United Nations Security Council" on the African country.

"We are ready to consider the possible use of sanctions if the breaches of the embargo at sea, on land or in the air continue, and look forward to the proposals that the High Representative of the European Union for foreign affairs and security policy will make in this regard," they said.

The three European leaders also expressed "serious concerns" over the rising tensions in Libya and urged an immediate cessation of hostilities in the oil-rich country.

"We share serious concerns about the mounting military tensions in this country and the increased risk of regional



escalation," they said. "We therefore call on all the Libyan parties and their foreign supporters to immediately cease the fighting and put an end to the ongoing military escalation across the country."

Earlier in the month, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned that foreign interference in the Libya conflict

## N. Korea's Kim chairs key military meeting on 'war deterrent'

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un has presided over a meeting of the ruling party's Central Military Commission (CMC) to review key issues concerning the country's defense power and "war deterrent."

Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported on Sunday that two meetings had been held on Saturday with CMC Vice-Chairman Ri Pyong Chol, members of the CMC and commanding officers of the armed forces, during which Kim discussed "the key issues of further bolstering a war deterrent of the country."

First, at an enlarged meeting of the Seventh Central Military Commission of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK), Kim led discussions on ways to promote the education and guidance of commanders and army officials.

An organizational matter was tabled at



the meeting on dismissing or appointing commanding officers of major posts at institutions related to the armed forces, the KCNA reported.

After the enlarged meeting, there was a closed-door meeting of senior officials and military commanders, who examined "the strategic mission of the major units for coping with the military situation in the vicinity of the Korean Peninsula and the potential military threat," the report added.

## Hong Kong leader says virus now spreading 'out of control'

The deadly coronavirus is spreading out of control in Hong Kong with a record 100 new cases confirmed, the finance hub's leader said Sunday as she tightened social distancing measures to tackle the sudden surge in infections.

The finance hub was one of the first places to be struck by the virus when it emerged from central China.

But the city had impressive success in tackling the disease, all but ending local transmissions by late June. AFP reported.

However, in the last two weeks, infections have spiked once more and doctors fear the new outbreak is now spreading undetected in the densely

packed territory of 7.5 million people.

Sunday chief executive Carrie Lam said more than 500 infections had been confirmed in the last fortnight alone, nearly a third since the outbreak began.

On Sunday 108 new infections were recorded by health authorities, a daily high for the finance hub, bringing the total to 1,886 cases.

"I think the situation is really critical and there is no sign the situation is being brought under control," Lam told reporters.

Lam announced new social distancing measures last week, shuttering many businesses including bars, gyms and



nightclubs, and ordering everyone to wear masks on public transport.

Restaurants were ordered to only offer takeout services in the evenings.

Sunday Lam announced even more

## U.S. protests: Oregon sues over 'unlawful detentions'

→ 1 Their methods, she added, are "entirely unnecessary and out of character with the Oregon way".

"The federal administration has chosen Portland to use their scare tactics to stop our residents from protesting police brutality and from supporting the Black Lives Matter movement," she said. "Every American should be repulsed when they see this happening. If this can happen here in Portland, it can happen anywhere."

The lawsuit itself claims that these tactics prevent citizens, who are "reasonably afraid of being picked

up and shoved into unmarked vans - possibly by federal officers, possibly by individuals opposed to the protests" from being able to exercise their constitutional First Amendment right to assembly.

It also accuses federal officers of violating the Fourth and Fifth amendment by seizing and detaining people without a warrant, and denying them due process.

Earlier this week, Oregon Governor Kate Brown also accused federal agents of a "blatant abuse of power".

■ What happened?

A report from Oregon Public Broadcasting (OPB)

earlier this week contained detailed accounts of witnesses who had seen federal law enforcement officers dressed in camouflage emerge from unmarked vehicles, grab protesters without explanation, and drive off.

The last week has seen a violent escalation between protesters and federal agents, deployed two weeks ago by Mr Trump to quell civil unrest.

Since at least 14 July, OPB reports, federal agents have been jumping out of unmarked vehicles throughout the city, and grabbing protesters seemingly without cause.



# Dragan Skocic wants to do great things in Iran

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Iran national football team head coach Dragan Skocic says that he wants to do great things in the team, since the Persians are not in good situation in their group.

Skocic, who has been named as Iran coach in February, has a difficult task since the team need four wins to book a place in the next round of the 2022 FIFA World Cup qualification.

The Croat says that he puts in a lot of hard work to find the best way for the national team.

“Since I’ve returned to Iran, I am attending the league competition to monitor the players. I will continue to watch the matches to see more players,” Skocic said.

Iran sit third in Group C and should beat Cambodia, Hong Kong, Bahrain and Iraq to qualify for the next stage.

“The situation is not good in our group but we are analyzing our performance to find the best way in the future. I want to do great things here and promise the fans the situation will be different from the past,” he added.

“I expect more of myself and know that all Iranians expect to qualify for the 2022 World Cup. I am responsible for that, that’s why I am here. I know that playing in the FIFA World Cup is very important to the Iranians,” the 51-year-old stated.

“It’s time to think big. Iran is an important country in Asia and we have to do our best to pave the way for advancing from our group. We should have great ideas. At this time, we need support and we have to focus all our energy to finish our job,” Skocic concluded.



The “Persian Leopards” will host Hong Kong on October 7, and will travel to Cambodia five days later. Iran will also face Bahrain and Iraq on November 11 and 16 respectively based on the new match dates scheduled by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC).

## Persepolis move 15 points clear with tight Foolad win



**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN**— Persepolis football team edged past Foolad 1-0 to move 15 points clear at the top of the Iran Professional League (IPL) on Saturday.

Siamak Nemati scored the sole goal of the match in the 67th minute in Tehran’s Azadi Stadium thanks to a deflected effort from Foolad defender.

It was Persepolis’s 19th win in the current season.

Persepolis also reached 1,000 points in the IPL competitions.

With five matches to spare, Persepolis

almost claimed the title for the fourth time in a row.

If Tractor and Foolad fail to win their matches on Thursday, Persepolis will claim the title, with five matches to play.

“I am very happy with the important win. We didn’t play based on our philosophy in the first half but in the second half we could play as we wanted. Persepolis are very close to Iran’s league title but we have yet to win the championship,” Persepolis coach Yahya Golmohammadi said in the post-match news conference.

## Mazloumi shortlisted for Iran U19 team hotseat



**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN**— Parviz Mazloumi could be set for a return to management, with the former Esteghlal coach said to be a candidate for Iran’s U19 football team.

According to some reports, the 65-year-old had a meeting with the directors of the Iranian football federation on Sunday.

Following his departure from Esteghlal at the end of the 2015-2016 Iran Professional League (IPL) season, Mazloumi has not worked in any team in Iran football. He recently expressed his interest in taking another job.

Iran U19 football team has been without a coach since Siros Pourmousavi stepped down from his role in early June.

As an experienced coach, Mazloumi has already served as coach at several Iranian teams such as Esteghlal, Mes Kerman, Aluminium, Sanat Naft and, Iran B national team.

In the recent weeks, Sohrab Bakhtiarzadeh, current head coach of Shahr Khodro, was reportedly liked with Iran U19 team.

Iran will take part in the 2020 AFC U19 Championship in Uzbekistan in October, where Iran are drawn in Group A along with Indonesia, Cambodia, and Uzbekistan.

## Arsenal boss Arteta hopes Cup win over City convinces Aubameyang to stay

Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta says their 2-0 victory against Manchester City in the FA Cup semi-final on Saturday could convince striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang to commit his future to the north London club.

Aubameyang, 31, scored in either half to fire Arsenal past holders City at an empty Wembley Stadium.

Aubameyang, the club’s top scorer this season with 25 goals in all competitions, is out of contract at the end of next season and has not yet agreed to an extension.

“Good and beautiful moments, they are always better than the bad ones,” Arteta told reporters. “As I told you, the way I look at him when I speak with him, he sounds pretty convinced.

“But obviously if he can see that success and the direction we are taking is the right one, I think he will be more positive about it, yes. Hopefully it will help him to be more convinced we are going in the right direction.”

The victory against City came just days after Arsenal beat Premier League champions Liverpool.

“We are really happy with what has happened in the last four or five days,” Arteta said.



“To beat probably the best two teams in Europe is the nicest thing to do so credit to the players for what they are doing, their performances and the level of fight

they are showing.”

Arsenal will face Chelsea or Manchester United, who play on Sunday, in the FA Cup final on Aug. 1.

Mikel Arteta offered further evidence that Arsenal may have found the manager to lead them back to glory as he masterminded a 2-0 win over his former club Manchester City in the FA Cup semi-final at Wembley on Saturday.

A month after his first head-to-head against City boss Pep Guardiola ended in a 3-0 Premier League defeat, Arteta proved he is a fast learner as he conjured the perfect strategy to get the better of the man he served as assistant until December.

While Arsenal’s first goal had the stamp of Guardiola’s style of play all over it — an 18-pass move finished off by striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang — this was not a case of the apprentice beating the master at his own game.

Guardiola’s sides rely on overwhelming possession and quick passing and movement. They did so again on Saturday with 71% possession and 16 attempts at goal compared to four for Arsenal.

(Source: Reuters)

## Olympic figure skater dies aged 20 after ‘falling from her window’

Olympic figure skater Ekaterina Alexandrovskaya has died aged 20 after reportedly falling out of a window.

Russian-born Alexandrovskaya represented Australia at the 2018 Winter Olympics in PyeongChang.

The cause of the death has yet to be confirmed but reports claim she “died on the spot” following the incident in Moscow.

Alexandrovskaya retired from the sport earlier this year due to injury.

Tributes have poured in for the athlete, a two-time Australian National Champion

pair-skating with partner Harley Windsor.

Windsor, 23, posted a heartbreaking message on social media.

He wrote: “Words cannot describe how I feel right now. I am devastated and sick to my core about the sad and sudden passing of Katia.

“The amount we had achieved during our partnership is something I can never forget and will always hold close to my heart. This news is something you can never prepare for. Rest In Peace Katia.”

Australia’s chef de mission in Pyeongchang

Ian Chesterman said: “It is enormously sad to lose Katia, who was a vibrant and talented person and an incredible athlete.

“She was quiet and humble in her manner but incredibly determined to be the best she could be.

“Life since the Games has not been easy for her and this is another timely reminder of just how fragile life is.”

Alexandrovskaya and Windsor were the first Australian pair-skaters to compete at the Olympics for a decade.

However, they finished 18th and narrowly

missed the cut to progress to the next stage.

Chief executive of the Olympic Winter Institute of Australia Geoff Lipshut added: “Katia and Harley were Australia’s first figure skating world champions.

“She came to Australia to fulfil her sporting dreams.

“The news today is so sad, my thoughts are with Katia’s family in Russia, Harley and the skating community in Australia.

“I will remember Katia as a young person of great talent and remarkable potential.”

(Source: Mirror)

## IOC to donate \$50,000 in earthquake aid to Iran

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — The International Olympic Committee (IOC) will send \$50,000 to Iran to reconstruct the schools in Kermanshah Province, western of the country.



In response to this tragic event, Iran’s National Olympic Committee had requested equipment for the school since the quake and later aftershocks damaged several schools in the region.

The financial support will be allocated to 50 schools across the province.

The 7.3-magnitude earthquake in November 2017 killed more than 600 people and injured another 7,460.

## Three Iranian defenders nominated for ACL2018 Team

Iranian players Voria Ghafouri, Jalal Hosseini and Shoja Khalilzadeh have been nominated for the favorite defenders for all-star XI in 2018 AFC Champions League.

There are the 14 players in contention for the four places in the backbone. The football fans should review the nominees and then choose their favorite defenders.

■ **Vouria Ghafouri**

Ghafouri appeared in all 10 of Esteghlal’s games as the Tehran giant reached the quarter-finals for only the second time. The full-back’s energy down the right was a constant threat to opposition defenses while he also weighed in with two goals, including a match-winning strike against Al Hilal.

■ **Shoja Khalilzadeh**

A rock in the heart of the Persepolis defense, Khalilzadeh enjoyed a superb 2018 campaign and played a huge role in helping the Tehran giant reach the final for the first time. No player won more tackles or made more clearances than the center-back, who was part of a backbone that conceded fewer goals per game than any other side.

■ **Jalal Hosseini**

Fans’ favorite Hosseini was not only excellent alongside Khalilzadeh in his side’s defense, he also popped up with crucial goals along the way. The Persepolis captain’s last-minute winner against Al Jazira in the last 16 sent Azadi Stadium into raptures before another goal against Al Duhail in the quarter-finals sparked a remarkable comeback in what was a memorable campaign for both club and player.

(Source: the-afc)

## Mehdi Taremi nets brace against Santa Clara

**Tasnim** — Rio Ave Iranian striker Mehdi Taremi scored twice in the match against Santa Clara on Saturday.

Rio Ave kept their hopes to qualify for the UEFA Champions League with the draw at the Stadio Dos Arcos.

Taremi put the visiting team in the lead in the 23rd minute but Ze Manuel levelled the score just before the halftime.

Fabio Rafael Cordoso made it 2-1 for Santa Clara but with nine minutes remaining, Taremi converted the penalty to make it 2-2. Taremi has scored 16 goals in 28 matches for Rio Ave.

## Iraq 2020-21 season to start on September 20

The Iraq Football Association normalization committee has announced that the new season of the Iraq Professional League will start on September 20 with the participation of 20 clubs.

A statement said the “Normalization Committee agreed on the decision of the Competitions Committee to launch the new 2020-2021 season on September 20 with the participation of 20 clubs.”

A draw will be conducted on August 29 as the teams will be playing just one leg against each other.

The normalization committee previously decided to call off the 2019-2020 season due to the COVID-19 pandemic with the approval of the 15 clubs.

(Source: the-afc)

## Marcelo Bielsa wins Premier League promotion with Leeds United

Marcelo Bielsa has coached Leeds to a Premier League promotion, in addition to winning the Sky Bet Championship!

Congratulations to former Argentina national team coach Marcelo Bielsa on his incredible achievement with the club. This would be the first time Leeds United would be back in the Premier League in 16 years, having been relegated all those years ago and unable to return.

Huddersfield’s win against West Brom on Friday confirmed Leeds United’s return to the Premier League with two games remaining.

As manager, Bielsa has won Olympic gold with Argentina back in 2004, as well as three league titles in Argentina.

(Source: mundoalbicelste.com)



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GUIDE TO  
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

A human being is a source of amazement;  
for, he sees by means of tallow, speaks  
by a little flesh, hears by a bone, and  
breathes by slit.

Imam Ali (AS)

German premiere of “Yalda”  
set for August 27

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — Iranian writer and director Masud Bakhshi’s drama “Yalda, a Night for Forgiveness” will begin its German premiere on August 27, the German distributor Little Dream Entertainment has announced.



Photo: A scene from Iranian director Masud Bakhshi’s movie “Yalda, a Night for Forgiveness”.

The film is about Maryam, a young woman who has been sentenced to death for murdering her husband, Nasser. Iranian law allows for the victim’s family to forgive her and spare her life, so Maryam’s fate will be decided by Nasser’s daughter, Mona, on the country’s most popular televised reality show.

In front of millions of viewers during Yalda, the winter solstice celebration, Maryam and Mona discover that forgiveness can be difficult as they relive the past.

The film, which is a co-production from Iran, France, Germany, Switzerland and Luxembourg, has been screened in several international events and was acclaimed in some.

It won the special mention for best screenplay at the 24th Sofia International Film Festival in Bulgaria early July.

It also received the Grand Jury Prize of the World Cinema Dramatic section at the Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah in February.

“Cycle” wins Silver Nib at  
Romanian screenwriting contest

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — “Cycle” written by Iman Davari from Iran won the Silver Nib at the Let’s Make It! Screenwriting Contest in Romania on Friday, the organizers announced.



A logo of the Let’s Make It! Screenwriting Contest.

The script was competing in the Short-Short Film Screenplay category.

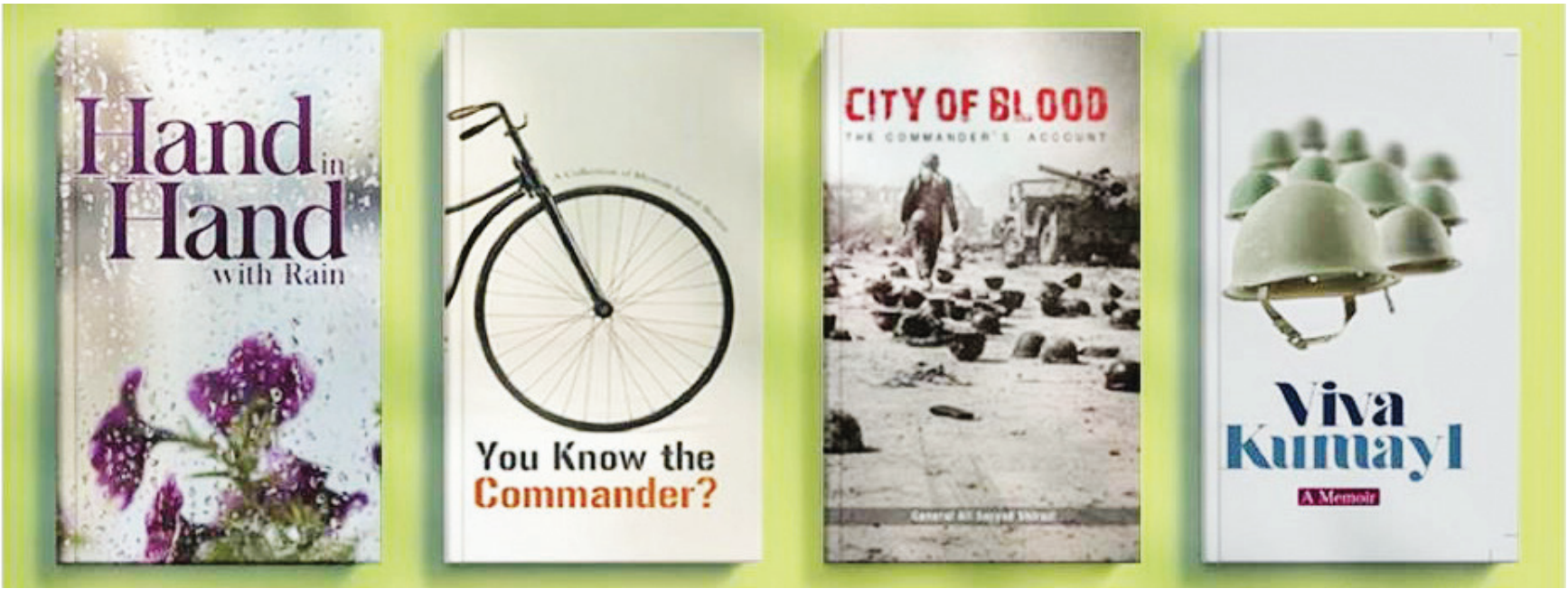
The Golden Nib Award in this section was given to “What Can It Be?” written by Casey Hagaman.

856 screenplays were submitted to the secretariat of the 4th edition of the festival.

“Adam & Eve” written by Alexis Williams won the Grand Prize this year. Based on the festival rules, the organizers usually support the grand winner for production. However, Williams refused to accept their support.

As a consequence, the support was instead allocated to “What Can It Be?” written by Hagaman and it will be produced before the end of 2021

Books on Iran-Iraq war  
published in English



Four war books Sureh-Mehr has published in English.

**C U L T U R E** **TEHRAN** — Four books on the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war, which is known as Sacred Defense in Iran, have been published in English. “Viva Kumayl”, “Hand in Hand with Rain”, “City of Blood: The Commander’s Account” and “You Know the Commander?” have translated and published in collaboration between Sureh-Mehr Publications and the Iran Language Institute.

“Viva Kumayl” written by Mohsen Motlaq, a war veteran who recounts his memories of the days he spent with Iranian soldiers and volunteers on the frontlines.

The book was originally published in 1991, three years after the end of the war. The Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei wrote a recommendation for the book at that time.

“The writing is scented with a rich aroma of sincerity,” the Leader wrote and added, “Due to its fine style of narration and satirical attitude, these memories are more readable than other written memories of the war; it should be translated.”

Co-written by Hedayatollah Behbudi and Morteza Sarhangi, “Hand in Hand with Rain” is a compendium of accounts of their visits to the warzones and Khorramshahr and Abadan, two Iranian cities hit by the war, a few months after the end of the war. The writers were praised by the Leader for the efforts they made in writing the book.

“City of Blood: The Commander’s Account” covers the remarks Ground Force Chief Brigadier General Ali Sayyad Shirazi made in a long interview with Saeid

Fakhrzadeh about Iran’s military movements a few days before the liberation of Khorramshahr on May 24, 1982. The Persian version of the book has been edited by Ahmad Dehqan, one of Iran’s foremost war writers.

Sayyad Shirazi was assassinated by the Mojahedin-e Khalq Organization (MKO) in 1999 while serving as the deputy chief of the Iranian Armed Forces General Staff, the second-highest military office in Iran.

In “You Know the Commander?”, a number of commanders narrates memories about their comrade Hossein Kharrazi, one of Iran’s high-ranking commanders who was martyred during Operation Karbala 5 on the frontline at Shalamcheh on February 27, 1987.

The book has been written by Marjan Fuladvand and is appropriate for teenage readers.

Iran’s “Cellmate” honored at Japan  
Media Arts Festival



A logo for the Japan Media Arts Festival.

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — Iranian film “Cellmate” has won an award for its screenplay written by Solmaz Etemad at the Japan Media Arts Festival in Tokyo.

The film directed by Behzad Khodaveisi won one of the four Excellence Awards in the Entertainment Division of the annual festival, which has organized since 1997 by Japan’s Agency for Cultural Affairs.

Starring Saba Mohammadi and Qorban Najafi, the film is about Rana, a girl around the age of 10, who spends her day in a courtyard playing with a little bird in a cage, hanging out laundry, or reading books.

She hears laughing voices of other children from the outside. A white-haired man comes home and orders Rana to bring him a towel and a drink, and she obeys. Toward the end of the story, the man speaks kindly to Rana, who is crouched in a corner

of a room. He then takes her hand and, together, they go into the house. Through the window, the viewers see the photos of their wedding on the wall.

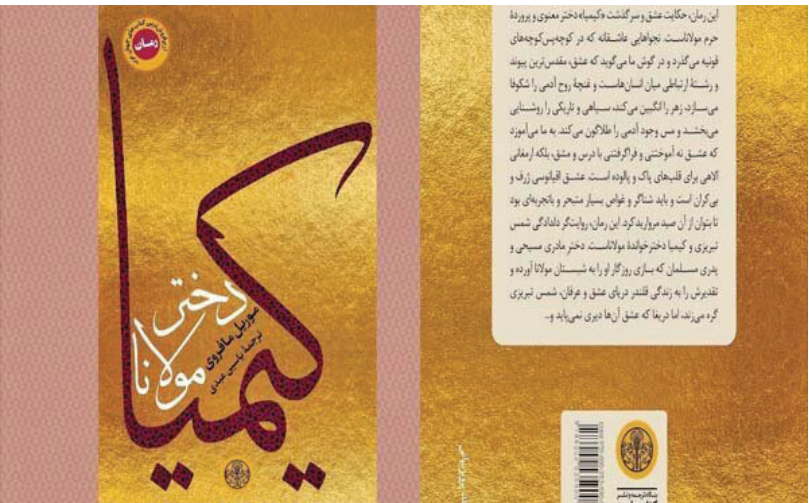
The film, which is filled with bright colors, ends with a text stating, “Annually, in the world, 12 million girls marry before they reach the age of 18, which is a marriage almost every two minutes.”

The application and video work “Ogiri AI and Chihara-Engineer”, multimedia production “New Logos Order” and the game “Sekiro: Shadows Die Twice”, all from Japan, won the other three Excellence Awards in that category.

The Japanese video work “Shadows as Athletes” received the Grand Prize in the section.

The Japan Media Arts Festival is also organized in the categories of art, animation and manga.

“Rumi’s Daughter” comes to Iranian  
bookstores



Cover of the Persian translation of Muriel Maufroy’s novel “Rumi’s Daughter”.

**C U L T U R E** **TEHRAN** — Muriel Maufroy’s novel “Rumi’s Daughter” has been published in Persian by Parseh Publications.

The book has been translated into Persian by Yasin Abdi.

Rumi was one of the great mystical poets of all time, a vibrant figure whose unorthodox views on love still resonate today.

Although little is known about his life, people do know that he lived in Anatolia, had an extraordinary spiritual friendship with a man named Shams, and brought an adopted girl, Kimya, into his family.

This stirring novel is Kimya’s story of how she finds herself drawn to the mysterious Shams, and how, by marrying him, her soul begins its true journey into fire. Set against the decline of the Byzantine Empire and the Mongol invasions, this

tale of a tempestuous love affair combines all the timeless themes and passions of Rumi’s own verse.

Maufroy was born and brought up in France but writes in English. She has lived most of her life in the U.S. and England, where she worked for the BBC as a radio journalist for many years.

However, due to her involvement in Sufism, her interests have turned increasingly towards West Asia. She went several times to Turkey and Iran and, at more peaceful times, to Syria and Jordan. She also obtained a first-class degree in Persian from the School of Oriental and African Studies in London.

Her two books “Breathing Truth”, a book of quotations of Rumi, and the novel “Rumi’s Daughter” have been very successful. The latest has been translated into nine languages, but not into French!

“Better than Neil Armstrong” wins big at Southport festival

**A R T** **TEHRAN** — “Better than Neil Armstrong” by Alireza Qasemi from Iran has scored a big success at the Southport International Short Film Festival in England by winning two major awards from the English event.

The awards for best film and best drama went to the movie, the organizers announced on June 29.

The movie received the awards for its originality and high imagination, said jury member Tony Jordan, the British television writer.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the festival was organized online.

The film is about four kids who start their journey to the Moon with the mission of finding a mysterious place called



A scene from “Better than Neil Armstrong” by Iranian director Alireza Qasemi.

Calligrapher Gholam-Hossein Amirkhani honored  
as Living Human Treasure

→1 Amirkhani is the third figure selected as a Living Human Treasure.

Veteran translator Najaf Daryabandari, who was also the writer of a bestselling cookbook, was honored with the title in

2017. He died in May at the age of 91.

Dotar maker Zolfaghar Beitaneh from South Khorasan Province was selected as a Living Human Treasure in March. Master calligrapher Gholam-Hossein

Amirkhani attends a ceremony held at the Imam Ali (AS) Religious Arts Museum in Tehran on February 3, 2017 to celebrate his 77th birthday. (Tehran Picture Agency/ Ahmad Aghasiani)

