



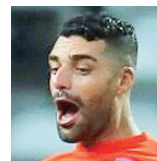
Harassment of plane a grim echo of downing of airliner in 1988: NBC News **2**



Estimated copper reserves climb 528m tons **4**



Anti-Netanyahu protesters violently attacked **10**



Mehdi Taremi helps Rio Ave qualify for Europa League **11**

Industrial parks attract \$2.1b of foreign investment



©File photo

Trump views the world as a dog-eat-dog: Princeton professor

By Mohammad Mazhari

TEHRAN — Political observers believe that the Trump administration has had one of the worst records so far, both in managing domestic crises and foreign policy.

In foreign policy, the White House, despite its policy of “maximum pressure” on Iran, has not been able to achieve its desired goals, especially as the Trump administration has been seeking “regime change” in Iran.

Internally, the situation caused by the COVID-19 and the economic crisis resulting from it have led to doubts and questions on Trump’s chances of reelection in the November elections.

Developments in the U.S. are not promising. In this regard, the Tehran Times interviewed Frank N. von Hippel, professor and co-director of Program on Science and Global Security at Princeton University. ➔7

Iran advises U.S. to study Iran’s position on Afghanistan before making claims

TEHRAN — Iran’s embassy in Kabul has issued a statement reiterating support for peace talks in Afghanistan led by the Afghan leaders.

The statement came as a response to a claim by Zalmay Khalilzad, the United States’ chief negotiator with the Afghan Taliban, about Iran’s lack of support for a U.S.-led attempt to get the Taliban militant group and the Afghan government to negotiate.

The Iranian embassy in Kabul advised the U.S. officials to study Iran’s position on Afghanistan precisely before making claims.

Also, Mohammad Ebrahim Taherian-fard, the special envoy of Iran’s foreign minister for Afghanistan, said, “Iran highlights the necessity of establishing peace based on inter-Afghan talks led by the Afghan leaders.” ➔2

Dotar virtuoso Osman Mohammad-Parast receives copy of UNESCO certificate

TEHRAN — A copy of the certificate of the registration of Iran’s dotar on the UNESCO list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity has been presented to Iranian dotar virtuoso Osman Mohammad-Parast.

The certificate, which is both in Persian and English, was given to Mohammad-Parast by the Khaf Department of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts as well

as the Khaf Office of Culture and Islamic Guidance in Khorasan Razavi Province in northeast Iran.

Iran’s traditional skills of crafting and playing the dotar won world heritage status in December 2019, joining UNESCO’s culture list as one of the most prominent social and cultural components of the folkloric music of the nation. ➔12

UNESCO provides financial support to restore ancient caravansary in Iran

TEHRAN — The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization has provided financial support to restore an ancient caravansary, which is located in Savojbolagh county, Alborz province, northern Iran.

“UNESCO has paid six billion rials (nearly \$142,000 at the official rate of 42,000 rials) for the restoration of the historic caravansary of Yingi Imam in this county,” IRNA quoted Savojbolagh tourism chief Alireza Tahmasbi as saying on Sunday.

“This caravansary is being rehabilitated within the framework of the UNESCO [and the European Union] partnership project on Silk Roads Heritage Corridors [in Iran, Afghanistan, and Central Asia],” the official noted.

He noted that the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts has so far sent over 20 billion rials (about \$475,000) for the restoration of the caravansary, adding “Presently,

a contractor is repairing the four domes of the caravansary vestibules, including removing the coatings, strengthening the worn bricks under the inner shell of the domes.”

The caravansary is one of the most important forms of Persian architecture, which emerged across the Silk Roads, and offers a unique venue for exchanging goods and traditions among travelers coming from the most diverse cultures. It lies approximately 17 kilometers west of Karaj on the Tehran-Qazvin road. Stylistically, this building dates to the 17th/11th century AH.

The building takes the form of a square with a central courtyard. At the center of the courtyard is a square platform accessed via a short flight of stairs. Four iwans open onto the courtyard at the center of its four sides. The corners of the courtyard are angled, and passageways lead off of these corners onto octagonal domed halls. ➔8

Fires and pepper spray in Seattle as police protests widen across U.S.

From Los Angeles to New York, protesters marched in a show of solidarity with demonstrations in Portland, Ore. In Seattle, they smashed windows and set fires. A shooting at a protest in Austin, Texas, left one man dead.

Weeks of violent clashes between federal agents and protesters in Portland, Ore., galvanized thousands of people to march through the streets of American cities on Saturday, injecting new life into protests that had largely waned in recent weeks, NY Times reported.

One of the most intense protests was in Seattle, where a day of demonstrations focused on police violence left a trail of broken windows and people flushing pepper spray from their eyes. At least 45 protesters had been arrested as of early evening, and both protesters and police officers suffered injuries.

Carrying signs such as “Feds Go Home”

and shouting chants of “No justice, no peace,” some among the crowd of about 5,000 protesters stopped at the site of a future youth detention center and lit buildings there on fire. Some smashed windows of nearby businesses, ignited a fire in a coffee shop and blew an eight-inch hole through the wall of the Seattle Police Department’s East Precinct building, the police said.

“At this point, we declared the event to be a riot, and several orders to disperse were given,” the Seattle police chief, Carmen Best, said at a news conference.

45 arrests, 21 police injured

Dozens were arrested and many police injured in clashes around Seattle’s biggest Black Lives Matter protest in weeks on Saturday, police said, with a renewed energy sparked by violent clashes between activists and federal agents in nearby Portland, Oregon. ➔10



ARTICLE

Masoud Hossein
Head of the Sport Desk of the TehranTimes

Discipline the ‘secret weapon’ for Persepolis

Winning the fourth title in a row, is not an easy job but the Iranian football team Persepolis have made it thanks to discipline reforms over the past years.

Croatian mentor Branko Ivankovic took charge of the Iranian popular football team in the 2015-16 mid-season of but he found out the team are suffering from lack of discipline and started bringing discipline and determination to the team.

Ivankovic warned his players that they must keep in mind that there is one way to be success and it’s the correct attitude. No other solution.

Many Persepolis players, who were also the fans’ favorite, were forced to leave the team due to disciplinary problems. Mohsen Mosalman was one the versatile players in Persepolis but despite his undoubted talent, his career was dogged by disciplinary problems. He was shown the exit door by Ivankovic.

It’s worthy of note that Ivankovic was taking advantage of his Iranian assistant Karim Bagheri.

The Iran and Persepolis legendary midfielder had the responsibility of overseeing all matters on and off the pitch.

Another secret of success in Persepolis is continuity.

Ivankovic was replaced by Gabriel Calderon but their game philosophy didn’t change.

Calderon was replaced by Yahya Golmohammadi but their game philosophy didn’t change.

Changing the style of play is a time-consuming process and Persepolis didn’t waste the time and kept their winning style.

Responsibility, stability and discipline were the secrets of the success in Persepolis.

There is clearly some work to do behind the scenes. It’s about decisions made by the managerial board in transfer window, however, some of the former officials are responsible for misbehaviors with the foreign coaches in the club as well.

And finally, one of the most important secret, maybe the most, is the Persepolis’s fans. ➔11

Is Putin on a new mission to save the Iran nuclear deal?

TEHRAN — Russian President Vladimir Putin famously said on May 15, 2019 that he was no longer willing to play the role of firefighter to extinguish the fire the Americans lit by withdrawing from the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers. But now he is “very likely” to be on a new, firefighting mission to save the deal, a university lecturer tells the Tehran Times.

“We regret that the deal is falling apart... After the signing of the agreement Iran was and still is the world’s most verifiable and transparent

country in this sense... Iran is fulfilling all of its obligations... Russia is not a fire brigade. We cannot rescue everything that does not fully depend on us. We’ve played our part,” Putin said at the time.

However, Putin seems to be assuming a new role in preventing a total collapse of the deal after he received an “important message” from Iranian President Hassan Rouhani on July 21. Last week, while Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi was heading to Iran,

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif left Tehran for Moscow to hold talks with high-ranking Russian officials.

Heading a big politico-economic delegation, al-Kadhimi visited Tehran on Tuesday and Wednesday to discuss a variety of bilateral issues such as expanding the volume of border trade and deepening political and security ties. Rouhani called the prime minister’s visit a “turning point” in Iran-Iraq ties. Zarif was remarkably absent from the Tehran talks. ➔2



Harvesting wheat by hand still works

A farmer in Arak, the central Markazi province, is putting the finishing touch on harvesting a large field of wheat, July 26, 2020. Traditional harvesting is still conventional in the region due to the high costs of machinery.

Over six million hectares of land across the country are under wheat cultivation.

The country produced nearly 14.5 million tons of wheat in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended March 20), an increase of 1.2 million tons compared to its preceding year.

Building Back Better: UN supports Iran’s socio-economic response to COVID-19

By Farnak Bakhtiari

TEHRAN — The United Nations System in Iran has launched a “Program on Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19” which focuses on three particular areas of intervention, including combined employment generation, social protection, and strengthening the health system.

It will be implemented by UN Country Team (UNCT) Iran in an integrated manner jointly with national partners, according to a report released by UNDP and UNICEF.

Global socio-economic impact of COVID-19

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the global economy and social fabric is unprecedented. Current UN DESA estimates indicate a possible loss of up to \$8 Trillion in global GDP, that is, a possible fall of 10 percent in global income affecting over 60 percent of jobs worldwide.

With four billion people, including two out of three children, either not having social protection at all or being inadequately covered by existing schemes, the crisis will have significant adverse outcomes, wiping out much previous development gains.

Iran most impacted by pandemic in MENA region

Against this global backdrop, Iran has been the country most impacted by the pandemic in the MENA region: a crisis compounding already existing adverse unilateral sanctions and other structural challenges. ➔9

Passenger on board Mahan Air flight sustained spinal cord injury during U.S harassment

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — A passenger, who was on board the Mahan Air Flight 1152, has sustained a spinal cord injury during the U.S. fighter jets' harassment of the Iranian plane over Syria, the Tasnim news agency reported. "The situation of this wounded person has been stabilized, but the severity of his injuries remains high," the agency quoted the director of Beirut's al-Rasoul al-Aazam Hospital as saying. The director also said that three wounded persons have been treated for broken legs and hands, but the condition of the person who sustained spinal cord injury is not well.



Two U.S. fighter jets conducted dangerous maneuvering near Mahan Air's passenger plane over Syria on Thursday, forcing the pilot to suddenly lower the altitude, a move that shocked the passengers on board and led to many injuries. Iran has strongly condemned the U.S. move, calling it an "act of terror." The U.S. Central Command claimed in a statement that a U.S. fighter jet was on a mission of conducting a "visual inspection" of the Iranian plane when it passed near At Tanf garrison in Syria. "Once the F-15 pilot identified the aircraft as a Mahan Air passenger plane, the F-15 safely opened distance from the aircraft," Bill Urban, the spokesman for the U.S. central Command, claimed. However, Iran firmly rejected the spokesman claim, saying that the U.S. maneuvering is not acceptable.

Prosecutor general asks Zarif to legally pursue U.S. harassment of passenger plane

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — In a letter to Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif published late Saturday, Iran's Prosecutor General Mohammad Jafar Montazeri said Iran must legally pursue the United States' harassment against a passenger plane.



"Once again, the United States turned another page in its dark record against the sacred system of the Islamic Republic of Iran and its fighter jets conducted threatening and dangerous moves close to Mahan flight number 1152 in Syrian airspace on Thursday, July 23," he remarked.

The prosecutor said passengers and crew were hurt as the pilot was forced to abruptly drop altitude.

The national prosecutor said the Iranian flights conform to law and the U.S. act was contrary to international law and the Chicago and Montreal conventions. "So, it is essential for the executive bodies, including Civil Aviation Organization and Mahan airline, to cooperate with the Syrian government and ICAO [the International Civil Aviation Organization] to implement articles 13 and 17 of the Chicago Convention and receive the report on the incident as soon as possible and take necessary legal action according to articles 44, 54, 55, 84 and 85 of the Chicago Convention," he stated.

U.S. warplanes operating illegally in Syria conducted aggressive maneuvers close to an Iranian Mahan Air flight over Syria's al-Tanf region on Thursday. The plane was en route to the Lebanese capital, Beirut.

Iran advises U.S. to study Iran's position on Afghanistan before making claims

1 → Taherianfard also said, "We advise American officials that before making remarks about the views of the officials of the Islamic Republic of Iran about the issues in Afghanistan and the region, first study these positions carefully."

According to Press TV, Khalilzad claimed, "Iran has not been as supportive as it should be in the effort to get to intra-Afghan negotiations and an Afghan settlement largely due to our (the U.S.'s) relations with them."

Late in February, the U.S. and Taliban negotiators signed an agreement in Qatar that was supposed to end 19 years of war in Afghanistan and allow President Donald Trump to begin the promised withdrawal of American troops.

The deal imposes obligations on the Afghan government, however, negotiations that led to the agreement did not involve the Afghan government's representatives.

The four-page pact spells out a timetable for the United States to withdraw its 13,000 troops from Afghanistan; in exchange, the Taliban agreed to sever its ties with al-Qaeda, the terrorist group that launched the 9/11 attacks against the U.S.

The agreement was supposed to set the stage for further negotiations between Afghanistan's government and the Taliban, a militant group that once ruled Afghanistan.

Iran has opposed the U.S. military occupation of Afghanistan and has expressed readiness to cooperate with any effort for intra-Afghan dialog.

U.S. harassment of Iranian plane a grim echo of downing of airliner in 1988: NBC News

By staff and agency

In an article published by NBC News on Saturday, it is said that the United States' harassment against an Iranian passenger plane on Thursday offered a grim echo of a shootdown by American forces over 30 years ago.

"To some, the incident recalled the July 3, 1988, downing of Iran Air flight 655 by the U.S. Navy, which remains one of the moments the Iranian government points to in its decades-long distrust of America," NBC News said.

"It was a near miss," Habib Abdolhossein, an Iranian doctoral student, told NBC News by telephone. "But there is no guarantee the passengers will be lucky next time and not share the fate of those aboard Flight 655," he said.

Pointing out that the flight was downed "towards the end of the Iran-Iraq War — when the Reagan administration supported the Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein who invaded Iran in 1980," Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, a professor of global



Iran can pursue U.S. harassment against its plane at three levels: Zarif advisor

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Ali Najafi Khoshroodi, an advisor to Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, has said that Iran can pursue harassment against Iranian passenger plane at three levels.

"Iran can pursue the issue of harassment by the United States' fighter jets against Mahan airplane at three levels of public diplomacy, political consultation and also legal complaint," he told ISNA in an interview published on Sunday.

He noted that the U.S. action was a violation of international law.

Such actions are a kind of anarchism, he added. "Presence of the United States' fighter jets in Syria violates principle of non-interference. So, we should not keep silence towards this action," he said.

Two U.S. warplanes conducted dangerous and aggressive maneuvering close to an Iranian airliner on Thursday, putting lives of tens of civilian passengers on board in danger.

The U.S. fighter jets came close to the Iranian airliner, forcing its pilot to swiftly change altitude, a move that left at least two passengers injured.

In a statement on Thursday night, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said Iran will take the necessary political and legal actions once the investigation is completed.

Laya Joneidi, the presidential aide for legal affairs, also said the action against the passenger plane is a violation of the principles of international law.

She said the actions taken by the U.S. fighters are a violation of Articles 3 and 44 of the International Civil Aviation Convention (Chicago Convention).

According to Joneidi, the explanations provided so far are unjustified and unconvincing, so the actions taken by the fighters will cause the international responsibility of their respective governments and will lead to legal action by Iran, including in the ICAO Council and the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

The Syrian ambassador to Tehran has said that the harassment against the Iranian passenger plane in the Syrian sky was a terrorist act against the innocent civilians.

"Harassment against the Iranian passenger plane of Mahan airline by the United States' fighter jets in Syria's sky is a symbol of the United States' terrorist actions against civilians, including women and children, and is also violation of law and international agreements on non-military flights," Adnan Hassan Mahmoud said in a statement on Saturday.

The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor has said the United States' harassment of the passenger plane



constitutes a serious violation of international agreements relating to the safety of civil aviation.

Euro-Med Monitor's legal adviser Tariq Hajjar said that "the U.S. military command's description of the incident as 'professional' is inaccurate."

"It is not professional for an armed military plane to harass a civilian plane that poses no danger at all, thus endangering the lives of dozens of civilian passengers," he added.

Is Putin on a new mission to save the Iran nuclear deal?

1 → He was on a visit to Moscow during which he delivered a message from Rouhani to Putin. At the end of his visit, Zarif said in tweet that he "delivered important message to President Putin," and held "extensive talks" with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on bilateral cooperation as well as regional and global coordination. According to Zarif, Iran and Russia had "identical views" on the nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Two days after Zarif's visit, President Putin and his American counterpart "thoroughly" discussed several "issues of strategic stability", including Iran's nuclear program, in a telephone call.

"The situation with the Iranian nuclear program was touched on. Both sides emphasized the need for a collective effort to maintain regional stability and the global nuclear non-proliferation regime," the Kremlin said in a statement on Thursday.

The Kremlin also said that "both sides agreed to continue contacts at various levels," adding that the conversation between Putin and Donald Trump was "constructive and substantive."

Meanwhile, Mikhail Ulyanov, Russia's permanent representative to International organizations in Vienna, described the conversation as "very encouraging."

"A very encouraging news. Not happens every day. The leaders of Russia and [the] U.S. had an exchange of views on Iran-related issues. Both sides underlined the



need for collective efforts to maintain stability in the region, as well as global regime of nuclear non-proliferation," Tweeted Ulyanov on July 24.

The telephone call was Trump's first phone conversation with Putin since last month, and it came days after the U.S. and some of its allies accused Russia of trying to hack coronavirus vaccine research. Trump last spoke to Putin in early June about this year's Group of 7 summit. The call also came two days after Rouhani's message was delivered to Putin by Zarif. The content of the message isn't known yet, but Zarif said that the message was about the JCPOA and bilateral issues.

"During the talks with Putin, I have delivered the special message of the

president [Rouhani] about the situation of the JCPOA and some bilateral issues to him [Putin]," Zarif told the IRIB news agency, after he returned from Russia.

The JACO has been on life support since Donald Trump pulled his country out of it on May 8, 2018. The U.S. is also working to extend the UN arms embargo on Iran, which is scheduled to expire in October. While the European signatories to the deal — France, Germany and the UK — continue to send mixed signals on the arms embargo, Russia and China firmly oppose the U.S. efforts in this regard. Zarif has said that Russia has taken a "very appropriate stance" on the U.S. policies against the JCPOA. He also said that the JCPOA was one of the most important issues he discussed in Moscow.

Some analysts believe that the Russian president has begun a new effort to save the Iran nuclear deal after he received a message from Rouhani.

"It's very likely that Putin is trying to save the JCPOA," Omid Asiaban, a PhD candidate in international relations at the University of Tehran and a university lecturer at the University of Birjand told the Tehran Times.

During his visit to Moscow, Zarif held talks with Russian officials for more than 4 hours, including an hour-long phone conversation with Putin, which Zarif himself described as "very fruitful". Zarif and Russian officials also discussed extending a decades-long treaty between

Iran and Russia, which is about to expire. Iran's chief diplomat said that the treaty needs to be updated in a way that keep up with the developments that have been achieved in Iran-Russia relations during the past two decades. The Iran-Russia negotiations over the treaty are underway.

"Iran and Russia are pursuing a greater plan to draft a strategic document that could shape their relations for years to come," Shuaib Bahman, a Russia expert, has previously told the Tehran Times.

Iran is also negotiating with China over another long-term strategic agreement. Some believe that the Rouhani government has adopted a new policy of cementing ties with Russia and China to ensure their support for Iran in the face of the U.S. efforts to extend the UN arms embargo.

However, Asiaban believes that Russia and China would support the JCPOA, even if their strategic agreements with Iran are not finalized.

"These two countries will always support the JCPOA, whether they sign strategic agreements with Iran or not. But their support is political," Asiaban noted.

Putin hasn't said how he intends to save the Iran nuclear deal. But his nascent efforts highlight a possible revival of diplomatic initiatives between Iran and the U.S., ahead of the expiration of the UN arms embargo on Iran in October. It remains to be seen whether he succeeds in finding a diplomatic off-ramp in the Iran-U.S. tensions.

U.S. warplanes harassed Iran civilian plane two times in 6 minutes: Informed sources to Press TV

(Press TV) — U.S. warplanes harassed an Iranian passenger plane approaching the Beirut airport two times in six minutes during the Thursday terrorist incident, informed sources tell Press TV.

According to the sources, the American fighter jets' first harassment occurred when the Iranian airliner was flying over Syria's strategic al-Tanf region, near Syria's border with Jordan and Iraq.

"The second instance of harassment took place over Syrian-Lebanese border," the sources added.

They noted that the U.S. warplanes, which harassed the Iranian civilian aircraft on Thursday night took off from al-Azraq air base in Jordan, adding that al-Azraq air base is presumably the same base from which a U.S. drone took off to assassinate the commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps' Quds Force, Lt. Gen. Qassem Soleimani, and his companions outside the Baghdad International Airport in early January.

According to the informed sources, the pilot of the airliner was forced to drop altitude to avoid collision with U.S. warplanes over the Syria-Lebanon border.

On Thursday night, U.S. warplanes operating illegally in Syria, conducted some "dangerous" maneuvering close

to the Mahan Air flight in an act of air piracy.

The Mahan Air Flight 1152 had taken off from Tehran and was en route to the Lebanese capital when the incident happened over Syria's al-Tanf region.

The Nournews agency on Friday cited an unnamed source familiar with the matter that contrary to the remarks made by CENTCOM's spokesman, Bill Urban, the U.S. jets "intercepted the Iranian plane after violating Lebanon's airspace" and were not on "a routine air mission" when they flew close to the Mahan Air plane.

The source said the F-15s harassed the Iranian plane in Lebanon's sky when it was dropping its altitude to approach the Beirut airport.

CENTCOM claimed that a single F-15 had made a "visual inspection" of the Iranian airliner "in accordance with international standards ... to ensure the safety of coalition personnel" at the military base in al-Tanf.

It added that the F-15 conducted "a standard visual inspection of a Mahan Air passenger airliner at a safe distance of approximately 1,000 meters."

In a post on his official Twitter account on Friday, Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif denounced the United States for harassing a scheduled Iranian civil airliner

over Syria and endangering the lives of civilians, saying the American government must be reined in to prevent more disasters.

"U.S. illegally occupies territory of another State and then harasses a scheduled civil airliner—endangering innocent civilian passengers ostensibly to protect its occupation forces," the top Iranian diplomat said.

Earlier on Sunday, Iran's ambassador to Lebanon denounced the harassment of the Iranian passenger plane, saying it was a "blatant example of terrorist acts by the U.S." in the region.

Mohammad-Jalal Firouznia made the remarks at Beirut's Al Rasoul Al Aazam Hospital, where he visited passengers injured on the Iranian airliner after dangerous maneuvering by U.S. fighter jets over the Syrian airspace forced the plane to quickly change altitude in order to avoid a collision.

"The move by the American fighter jets is a blatant example of terrorist and criminal acts committed by Washington in the region," he said, adding, "Iran will take all necessary juridical and legal action to condemn the actions of U.S. fighter jets, and will pursue the issue at the United Nations, the International Civil Aviation Organization and related courts, especially with regard to passengers and those injured."

Harassment of Iranian plane ‘blatant example of U.S. terrorist acts’: envoy

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian **d e s k** ambassador to Lebanon Mohammad-Jalal Firouznia has condemned the harassment of an Iranian passenger plane by the U.S., saying it was a “blatant example of terrorist acts by the U.S.” in West Asia.

“The move by the American fighter jets is a blatant example of terrorist and criminal acts committed by Washington in the region,” Firouznia said on Sunday, Press TV reported.

He made the remarks at Beirut’s Al Rasoul Al Aazam Hospital, where he visited passengers injured on the Iranian airliner after dangerous maneuvering by U.S. fighter jets over the Syrian airspace forced the plane to quickly change altitude in order to avoid a collision.

“Iran will take all necessary juridical and legal action to condemn the actions of U.S. fighter jets, and will pursue the issue at the United Nations, the International Civil Aviation Organization and related courts, especially with regard to passengers and those injured.”

The envoy said the incident is by no means justifiable, adding that the United States bears the responsibility for all the consequences of this terrorist and cowardly act.

According to Firouznia, all regional



problems stem from the Americans’ illegitimate presence, and their expulsion is the only way to end insecurity and threats in West Asia.

“The harassment of the Mahan Air passenger plane by U.S. fighter jets is a criminal act committed by the Americans. They had no right to approach the plane in the first place. By doing so, they endangered

the lives of all passengers on the flight and threatened international aviation security. We will definitely follow up on this issue,” he added.

On Thursday night, U.S. warplanes operating illegally in Syria conducted aggressive maneuvering close to an Iranian Mahan Air flight over Syria’s al-Tanf region. Mahan Air’s Flight 1152 had taken off from

Tehran and was en route to the Lebanese capital Beirut when the incident happened.

Iran said harassing a passenger plane is a violation of the principles of international law.

“The harassment of the Iranian passenger plane by U.S. warplanes constitutes a clear violation of international law as well as aviation standards and regulations,” Iran Civil Aviation Organization said in a statement.

It also urged the ICAO to look into the issue as soon as possible.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Friday denounced the harassment of the passenger plane, calling on the international community to stop the U.S. “outlaws” before a disaster happens.

“[the] U.S. illegally occupies territory of another State and then harasses a scheduled civil airliner—endangering innocent civilian passengers—ostensibly to protect its occupation forces. Audacity to compound lawlessness upon lawlessness. These outlaws must be stopped before disaster,” Zarif tweeted.

Iranian Transport Minister Mohammad Eslami also reacted angrily to the harassment, calling it a “terrorist act” and said the move should be met with condemnation by the international community.

Eslami said Iran has “submitted its legal complaint to ICAO in black and white.”

Advisor hails Iran-Iraq ties amid U.S. pressure

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Hossein Amir Abdollahian, a **d e s k** senior foreign policy advisor to the Iranian Parliament speaker, has hailed the recent visit by Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi to Iran as a manifestation of the depth of ties between Iran and Iraq.

The visit took place while the U.S. has been putting pressure on world countries including Iraq to decrease level of economic cooperation with Iran, Amir Abdollahian said during a TV program on Saturday evening, IRNA reported.

Despite all those pressures, the Iraqi premier along with eight Iraqi ministers visited Iran, he added.

Heading a high-ranking politico-economic delegation, Iraq’s new prime minister visited Iran last week in his first official visit abroad since assuming office more than two months ago.

Several senior Iraqi officials including Minister of Finance and Prime Minister Assistant for Economic and Energy Affairs Ali Abdul Amir Allawi, Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein, Petroleum Minister Ehsan Abdul Jabar, Health Minister Hassan Mohammad al-Tamimi, Minister of Planning Khaled Battal, Defense Minister Joma Enad, Electricity Minister Majed Hantoush, National Security Advisor Qassem al-Araji and Head of Trade Bank of Iraq Faisal al-Haimus accompanied al-Kadhimi.

Iran and Iraq have witnessed a significant growth in their bilateral trade, Amir Abdollahian said.

Trade between Tehran and Baghdad stood at 14 billion dollars a year, while worth of Iran’s cooperation with Europe



does not reach even to three billion dollars in the current year, the advisor said.

Such trade has even made the U.S. extend its sanctions waiver which allows Iraq to import from Iran at a time when the U.S. has imposed maximum pressure on Iran, he remarked.

Amir Abdollahian said that Iraq, with a good geopolitical and geo-strategic position in West Asia, is an important neighbor whose ties with Iran can be complementary as the two enjoy considerable commonalities.

At present, the Iraqis have arrived at a conclusion that Iran has helped them at a time when the U.S. killed the Iraqi youth, fanned the flames of insecurity and managed

the terrorists in the Iraqi soil to serve the U.S. interests, the advisor stated.

He further highlighted the important role played by martyr IRGC Quds Force Commander Qassem Soleimani in boosting Tehran-Baghdad relations after opening cross-border corridors between the two countries.

On January 3, U.S. President Donald Trump ordered airstrikes that martyred General Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the second-in-command of Iraq’s Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), in Baghdad’s international airport.

During al-Kadhimi’s visit to Tehran, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei referred to the U.S. assassination as an example of the U.S. crime which was the result of their presence in Iraq.

Underlining that Iran has never had and will never interfere in the internal affairs of Iraq, the Leader added that Iran wants a dignified, independent and united Iraq that its territorial integrity is protected.

“Of course, the American view of Iraq is exactly the opposite of ours, because the U.S. is, in the strictest sense of the word, an enemy, and it does not agree with an independent, strong Iraq with a majority government,” the Leader noted.

Ayatollah Khamenei also said Iran expects Iraq to expel Americans from their soil.

Amir Abdollahian said when the Leader talks about the assassination of General Soleimani even after six months, it means that revenge is coming.

Terrorist goals behind harassment of passenger plane: MP

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — A member **d e s k** of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee has said terror-related objectives were behind the United States’ measure in harassing an Iranian passenger plane in the Syrian sky.

“The harassment of the Mahan passenger plane must be pursued by the diplomatic apparatus, the Judiciary and the Civil Aviation Organization through international channels,” Mehr quoted Zohreh Elahian as saying on Sunday.

“Harassing the Mahan plane is an explicit threat to civilian lives and it is a blatant violation of international aviation law and regulations,” she added.

Two U.S. warplanes dangerously came

close to Mahan Air’s Airbus A310 passenger plane over Syria on Thursday, forcing the pilot to suddenly change altitude to avoid a collision. The plane was en route from Tehran to Beirut.

At least 12 people onboard were injured. Iran strongly denounced the U.S. move as a “terrorist act” and submitted a letter of complaint to the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

On Friday, Seyyed Abbas Mousavi, the spokesman for Iran’s Foreign Ministry, strongly denounced the U.S. “adventurist and dangerous” move against Mahan Air’s Beirut-bound passenger plane, saying the U.S. had no rights to inspect civilian planes in the sky.

“Both the presence of U.S. troops in Syria and the air missions of their warplanes were illegal. More importantly, no one has allowed the U.S. to inspect passenger planes in the sky using its fighter jets,” the spokesman said in a statement.

Elahian, who heads the Majlis human rights subcommittee, said the subcommittee strongly denounced this atrocious U.S. measure, which further showed the bullying and aggressive nature of the American rulers.

The downing of the Iran Air Flight 655 by the USS Vincennes which killed 290 people is in the collective memory of the Iranian nation, she remarked.

Female legislator also said the pres-



ence of American forces brings nothing but instability and chaos to different parts of the world.

“All these are evidence showing the necessity of expelling the Americans from the region,” the MP added.

MP urges FM to discuss U.S. expulsion from PG with regional states

TEHRAN (MNA) — A member of the Iranian parliament called on Foreign Ministry to follow up the U.S. harassment of an Iranian airliner and negotiate with regional countries over U.S. explosion from the Persian Gulf.

Speaking in an interview with Fars on Sunday, Tehran’s representative in parliament Seyyed Nezamoddin Mousavi said that the Islamic Republic of Iran has repeatedly stated that the U.S. military presence in various countries causes insecurity in the region.

Referring to the recent provocation by U.S. warplanes against an Iranian airliner, he said that despite the fact that the Americans tried to make excuses for their harassment, it is clear that the Americans are constantly seeking to create tension and sedition in the region, and in this regard, they do not hesitate to

harass a passenger plane.

He went on to say that the U.S. actions are solely for the purpose of inciting sedition and insecurity, and Iran’s Foreign Ministry must take a firm stand against this American aggression.

Mousavi noted that the Foreign Ministry must legally prosecute the US harassment in international forums, including the UN and ICAO.

He added that in addition, Foreign Ministry should negotiate with the regional countries over U.S. expulsion from the region.

Two U.S. warplanes put the lives of tens of Iranian and Lebanese civilians in danger after conducting dangerous maneuvering near Beirut-bound Mahan Air’s Flight 1152 on Syria’s air on Thursday night. The

airliner’s pilot reportedly reduces flight altitude to avoid colliding with the warplanes which led to several injuries among passengers.

Iran immediately reacted to the incident, saying it will give a firm response in proper time.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran leaves no hostile action against the Iranian nation unanswered and will give a firm and appropriate response to any unwise measure when the time is ripe,” Seyyed Abbas Mousavi said on Friday, hours after two US warplanes conducted dangerous maneuvering near Mahan Air’s Flight 1152.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif also condemned the ‘lawlessness’ of the United States which ‘endangered’ lives of civilians on board the Iranian airliner.

General: Monafiqeen were crushed during Operation Mersad due to youths’ sacrifices

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Chief of Staff of Iran’s Armed **d e s k** Forces Major General Mohammad Bagheri has said Monafiqeen were crushed during Operation Mersad due to God’s grace and sacrifices made by Iranian people’s youths.

General Bagheri made the remarks at a ceremony to mark the 31st anniversary of Operation Mersad, 26–30 July 1988, which was the last major military operation of the Iran–Iraq War, involving a successful counterattack against a July 1988 military incursion from Iraq, by a military force of about 7,000 members of the terrorist Mojahedin-e Khalq (MEK), who are known in Iran as Monafiqeen (hypocrites).

He commemorated the fallen soldiers who lost their lives for the Iranian people during Iraq’s war against Iran as well as Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, who was assassinated by the U.S. earlier this year.

The general noted that Operation Mersad showed the Iranian people’s awareness and cleverness in the face of the enemies’ plots.

The MEK was established in the 1960s to express a mixture of Marxism and Islamism. It launched bombing campaigns against the Shah, continuing after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, against the Islamic Republic. Iran accuses the group of being responsible for 17,000 deaths.

Based in Iraq at the time, MEK members were armed and equipped by Iraq to fight against Iran alongside the Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein during a war which lasted for 8 years.

The MEK’s affiliation to the U.S. government attracted attention in 2012 when the latter removed the former from its list of foreign terrorist organizations.

The link became more overt after U.S. President Donald Trump assumed office in 2017. Trump’s associates, including his personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani and his national security advisor John Bolton, have attended the MEK’s meetings and praised the cult group as “democratic alternative” to the Islamic Republic.

MP urges UN to condemn, pursue U.S. for threatening Iranian passenger plane

TEHRAN (FNA) — Vice-Chairman of the Parliament’s National Security and Foreign Policy Commission Abbas Moqtadayeey said that the United Nations must condemn the U.S. aggressive move against Iran’s civil airliner, noting that the issue should be followed up by Secretary General and Security Council to guarantee global peace and security.

Moghtadayeey made the remarks on Saturday, adding that the U.S. threatening of Mahan Air Flight No. 1152 was a clear violation of international commitments and it manifested terrorism against human rights that must be condemned by the UN.

He also called on UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and the UN Security Council to pursue the hostile measure to maintain international peace and security.

The lawmaker further said that the Parliament’s National Security and Foreign Policy Commission is going to properly react towards the American warplanes’ harassment of Iranian passenger plane.

He added that these moves stem from the U.S. regime’s excessive demands.

Two U.S. fighter jets approached a Mahan Air Tehran-Beirut flight over the Syrian sky in a highly risky move and the captain of the Iranian passenger plane was forced to make a sudden change of direction and altitude, causing several injuries.

The captain of Mahan Air Flight No. 1152 later said the pilots of the two hostile planes have identified themselves as U.S. army pilots during a radio contact.

A video posted by a reporter of Iran’s state-run TV who was aboard the plane showed an F-15 fighter jet from the window of the plane and comments from a passenger who had blood on his face.

In a later interview from Beirut, the reporter said three passengers have been wounded during “the U.S. planes’ intentional move”.

Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Seyed Abbas Mousavi said Iran’s Ambassador to the UN Majid Takht-Ravanchi has informed the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres of the incident, and warned that “in case of any incident for this plane on the way back home, the Islamic Republic of Iran will take the United States responsible”.

“A similar message has been sent to the Swiss ambassador to Tehran,” the spokesman added. The Swiss embassy hosts the U.S. interests section in Iran in absence of formal diplomatic ties between the two countries.

Mahan Air told FNA later that several passengers wounded during the incident were taken to a hospital in Beirut and others evacuated the plane sound and safe.

It said the passenger jetliner refueled to fly back to Iran.

The jetliner flew back home early Friday morning.

Minister of Road and Urban Development Mohammad Eslami said threatening of Iran’s passenger plane by U.S. fighter jets is a terrorist move, and added that CAOI has filed a complaint at the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

Speaking to FNA on Friday about the hostile move of the U.S. fighter jets against the Iranian Mahan Airbus late on Thursday, Eslami said, “This is a terrorist act which has been carried out by the U.S. lawless and oppressive government. This is considered an international aggression typical of the lawless American government.”

The Civil Aviation Organization of Iran called for urgent investigation by ICAO into the threat posed by the U.S. fighter jets to the Iranian passenger plane.

“Iran considers the U.S. fighter jets’ threats as blatant instance of the violation of international law, regulations and aviation standards,” the CAOI wrote in a communique on Friday.

Iranian Vice President for Legal Affairs Laya Joneidi also said disturbing a passenger plane is equal to the violation of indispensable international rules and regulations.

Causing of disturbance for a passenger plane amounts to violation of the inalienable principles of international rules, Joneidi wrote in a note on Friday.

“The behavior of the fighter jets against Flight No. 1152 of Mahan Air and creating trouble for the passenger plane, and that in a third country’s soil [airspace], is in flagrant violation of aviation security and infringing the principle of freedom of flight for civil planes,” she said, and noted, “Furthermore, it is in contrast to article 3 and article 44 of Chicago Convention, the relevant appendices and Montreal 1971 Convention.”

Joneidi underlined that the explanations presented by the U.S. are unjustifiable and unconvincing; thus, “the measures taken by these fighters have caused international responsibility for their government and is liable to legal prosecution, including at the ICAO and International Court of Tribunal.”

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — Not only have the enemies failed to achieve the objective of causing economic collapse in Iran, but the Iranian administration has supplied all necessary commodities and accelerated domestic production, President Hassan Rouhani said.

Addressing a Sunday meeting of the administration’s Economic Coordination Headquarters, Rouhani said the main purpose of the economic war launched by the

enemies, which was Iran’s economic collapse, has ended in failure.

While the enemies had plans to mount the pressure of sanctions to disrupt the supply of the necessary commodities in Iran, the Iranian administration has managed to nullify the sanctions in cooperation with people and economic activists, the president added.

Rouhani said his cabinet has succeeded in supplying the basic and necessary com-

modities and has also provided raw materials for domestic production.

The administration has even accelerated the surge in production, he added.

The president also reaffirmed his cabinet’s resolve to pursue a regular plan for supplying currency for the purchase of basic commodities and raw materials despite the foreign pressures.

He further commended local economic activists, entrepreneurs, producers and

exporters for supporting the government’s policies, saying his administration has put the oil-free economy into operation and has been handling the country’s economy under severe conditions.

In comments earlier this month, Rouhani said the country has overcome the U.S. sanctions and successfully dealt with the economic war challenges by cutting reliance on the oil incomes.

Real estate stock exchange to be set up by next 4-6 months

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — A member of Iran's Securities and Exchange High Council announced that the country's real estate stock exchange will be established by the next four-six months.

Bahman Abdollahi told IRNA on Sunday that the decision to set up the mentioned exchange by the next four-six months was made during a session of the council on Saturday.

Establishment of such exchange is in line with the government's policy of providing housing units for the underprivileged, and many efforts have been already made to prepare the required infrastructure in this due.

The head of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE) had previously announced that the exchange was due to be established in the middle of the previous Iranian calendar month (early July).

When established, it will be the country's fifth major stock exchange. The four other ones are TSE, Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market, known as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX), and Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME).

Deputy Head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA) says the establishment of the country's real estate stock exchange is going to promote transparency in this market.

According to Hossein Selahvarzi, establishing this stock exchange is going to be an opportunity for making the transactions in the housing market more competitive and transparent, and will gain people's trust for participation in mass construction projects.

Earlier this month, speaking in a meeting with the officials from Iran's Mercantile Exchange, which is in charge of the establishment of the real estate exchange, Selahvarzi said: "We are studying various aspects of the project."

The official noted that the Real Estate Exchange Company is going to be established with an initial capital of 50 trillion rials (about \$1.2 billion), of which 50 percent will be offered to people in the form of underwriting, while 25 percent will be shared among government agencies and another 25 percent is given to private sector companies.

"Companies wishing to participate must submit their initial application; these companies will be allocated up to 2.5 percent of the total capital which would be 1.25 trillion rials (equal to nearly \$29 million)", he added.

Underlining the great capacities of this exchange, Selahvarzi said the capital market has the ability to define practical tools for financing the real estate market and large construction projects, and it will make people more confident in participating in the implementation of such projects.

Transportation, main booster of monthly household spending: SCI

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The data released by Statistical Center of Iran (SCI) show that transportation had the biggest increase in the expenditure basket of Iranian households in the previous Iranian calendar month of Tir (June 21-July 21) compared to same month last year.

According to the SCI data, the average monthly net expenditure of Iranian urban households in the mentioned month increased by 27 percent year-on-year, ISNA reported.

As reported, the figure also registered a four-percent increase month on month.

Although the data indicates a downward trend for some of the inflation indicators, the net expenditure by the households has not shown any decrease.

In late June, SCI reported that the average annual net expenditure of Iranian urban households in the previous Iranian calendar year 1398 (March 2019-March 2020) increased by 21 percent compared to the preceding year.

Based on the report, the annual cost of Iranian urban households was estimated to be 474.379 million rials (about \$11,300), while the average annual income of a household in the mentioned period was estimated at 541 million rials (about \$12,800), 24.4 percent more than the previous year (1397).

Accordingly, the average annual income growth of urban households was reported to be higher than the average annual total expenditure growth.

Based on the SCI statistics, Iran's inflation rate in the twelve-month period ended on March 19, which marked the end of the previous Iranian calendar year, stood at 34.8 percent.

Chazabeh border with Iraq may be reopened this week or next week

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Reopening of Iran's Chazabeh border with Iraq, which was due to be on July 23, maybe done this [Iranian calendar] week (which ends on Friday), or next week, Iranian Customs Administration spokesman Rouhollah Latifi announced on Sunday.

Last week on Monday, a local official in Iranian southwestern Khuzestan Province announced that Chazabeh Border would be reopened on Thursday.

Governor of Dasht-e Azadegan County Hamid Sielavi said that transit of commodities would be resumed through Chazabeh Border as of July 23, after a five-month lockdown due to the coronavirus outbreak.

He said that after holding some meetings between the provincial and Iraqi officials and resolving problems and bilateral obligations, including the observance of health protocols, the two sides agreed to reopen the border on Thursday.

In relevant remarks on July 11, Latifi said that border closure, due to coronavirus epidemic, remained only with two neighboring countries. "Iran is doing trade exchange with all neighboring states, except for two countries", Latifi said at the time.

"The remaining borders will reopen with observing protective and health instructions in coordination with two neighboring states", he added.

"Four land border crossings of Sarakhs, Bajgir, Lotfabad and Incheborun with Turkmenistan in Northeastern Iran are still closed, but, Sarakhs and Incheborun cross-border terminals are open as they have railroad connections as well", Latifi noted.

As for the Iraqi borders, he underlined that normal trade will be resumed at Sumar border market with Iraq in a few days", Latifi said and expressed hope that Khosravi and Chazabeh border markets with Iraq would soon reopen after agreement on enforcing health protocols.

He further noted that the Iraqi government started reopening the border points step by step to fulfill its people's basic needs.

Earlier this month, the head of Iraq's Border Ports Authority Omar Al-Waeli announced that Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi had ordered trade exchanges with Iran to be resumed in Mandali and Shalamchah border markets.

Al-Waeli added that accordingly, 250 shipments from Iran will enter Iraq daily for two days a week through Shalamchah border in Basra and Mandali in Diyala province, IRNA reported.

Industrial parks attract \$2.1b of foreign investment

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Latest data released by Iran's Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry show that the country's industrial parks managed to attract 231 investors with a total \$2.1 billion of investment in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19).

This amount of investment led to the creation of 19,862 jobs in the industrial parks and zones, IRNA reported.

According to the Industry Ministry, over 1,100 exporting industrial units are operating in the country's industrial parks and zones whose annual export reaches up to \$12.64 billion.

Based on the report, 62 export management companies (EMC) with an annual export of \$236 million were identified in these areas and 72 export consortia with a total annual export of \$352 million were also formed in the mentioned period.

The ministry also reported that 23 memorandums of understanding (MOU) were signed with foreign partners to develop international cooperation between small and



medium industries in the previous Iranian calendar year.

Supporting 41,631 industrial units to participate in domestic and international

Economic relations expansion discussed between Iran, Brazil

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — During a meeting between Iranian Ambassador to Brazil Hossein Gharibi and Governor of the Brazilian state of Paraná Ratinho Júnior, the two sides explored the ways for the expansion of economic ties, especially in the agricultural, petrochemical and technological fields.

During the meeting, Gharibi expressed Iran's readiness for expansion and diversification of economic ties with Brazil, stressing the need for utilization of all capacities to compensate for the losses due to the coronavirus pandemic, Mehr news agency reported on Sunday.

The Brazilian official, for his part, referred to the heavy damages by the coronavirus on Brazil's economy, noting that creating job opportunities is high on the country's agenda, hence, cooperation with Iran could pave the way to some extent in this regard.

As reported, the members of Iran-Brazil Parliamentary

Friendship were also present in the meeting.

In another meeting via webinar between Iranian Ambassador to Brazil Hossein Gharibi and Brazilian Minister of Agriculture, Livestock, and Supply Tereza Cristina, on June 6, the two sides had explored the ways to expand cooperation in the fields of agriculture and livestock.

During the webinar, Gharibi referred to the status of agricultural products in the trade relations between the two countries and underlined Iran's interest in long-term economic relations through a comprehensive framework and sustainable and balanced cooperation, IRNA reported.

Tereza Cristina, for her part, referred to Iran and Brazil as two friends with a long-standing background of cooperation. She also expressed readiness for having a trip to Tehran in the post-coronavirus pandemic.

Agricultural products account for the major part of the trade between Iran and Brazil. These products consist of corn,

soy, press cake, meat, and sugar.

Last year, the secretary of the Iran-Brazil Chamber of Commerce had said that the two countries were seeking to establish bartering systems in order to keep their trade afloat during the sanctions era.

"Currently, Brazil is one of the main providers of agricultural commodities to the country, however, we are facing some banking issues in our trade and that is why the two sides are looking at bartering as a solution to this problem," Farhad Taherian told ILNA at the time.

According to the official, Iranian imports from the Latin American country are limited to 12 major commodities.

Of the total imports, 48 percent is corn, 24 percent is soy, while soybean oil, tobacco, and ethanol are other imported goods.

Petrochemical products such as urea, bitumen and petroleum are the main exported goods from Iran to Brazil, according to Taherian.

Estimated copper reserves climb 528m tons

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Managing director of the National Iranian Copper Industries Company (NICICO) said on Saturday that the capacity of the country's copper reserves has increased by 528 million tons, IRIB reported.

"Considering the new reserves, Iran has become the world's seventh-biggest holder of copper reserves," Ardeshtir Sa'ad Mohammadi said.

The official noted that more reserves could be found in the near future and Iran could outweigh Indonesia which holds the sixth place among the world's top countries in terms of copper reserves.

"Our country currently holds 4.2 percent of the global reserves," the official said, adding that new copper discoveries had been reported in the southeast and northwestern Iran.

Iran had the ninth-largest reserves of copper in 2011 amounting to 32.5 million tons.

According to Sa'ad Mohammadi each half percent increase in the total amount of the country's copper reserves is worth \$10 billion for NICICO.

The NICICO head further noted that his company is implementing a comprehensive plan for the development of the copper industry in collaboration with Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development



and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO), based on which 29 major projects will be implemented in this sector.

Based on this program, the investments for the development of the copper industry will reach 2.1 billion euros plus 200 trillion rials (about \$4.76 billion) by the Iranian calendar year 1410 (beginning in March 2031).

Sa'ad Mohammadi said key copper reserves in Iran, which are located in provinces of Kerman and East Azarbaijan, would serve more than 100 years of output at the current production level.

Iran has been investing heavily in the mining and metals sector amid efforts to diversify the economy away from oil and create new sources of income for the government.

The country has already pocketed billions of dollars from exports of various metals despite a series of American bans targeting the industry since May 2019.

Livestock food imports decrease 31%

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran's imports of livestock food have dropped 31 percent since the beginning of current Iranian calendar year (March 20), compared to the same period of time in the past year, a member of Iranian Association of Livestock Food Importers announced.

Mohammad-Mehdi Nahavandi said that cornmeal import had a proper status in the mentioned time span, while the imports of barley and soybean meals have dropped, IRNA reported.

Last month, the managing director of Iran's Livestock Affairs Support Company Hassan Abbasi Maroufan said that more than 1.8 million tons of raw materials for livestock food had been supplied to the country's animal food producers in 70 days since the beginning of the current year.

"Of course, the country's demand during this period was 2.2 million tons, which wasn't met due to the slowness of the

transportation system following the coronavirus outbreak," the official said.

"Until a month ago, up to 15,000 tons of livestock food was cleared from the customs every day and transported to the provinces, but now the daily amount of transportation has reached over 40,000 tons, which will soon fill the demand gap", Maroufan explained.

"There are currently 2.2 million tons of livestock food stored in the country's ports and are going through the process of health and standard controls for clearance and they will be on the market soon", he said at the time.

Earlier this year, the outbreak of coronavirus and the closure of trade borders with the neighbors in addition to the economic impacts of the U.S. sanctions resulted in a drastic fall in the country's animal food imports to a point that the prices of such commodities skyrocketed in the country.

Iranian stock market holds capacity to become international: MP

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The Iranian stock market has good potentials to be turned into a large international market, a member of the industries and mines committee of the parliament has said.

However, the internationalization of the Iranian stock market requires several factors, mainly money transfer conveniently and safely, MP Lotfollah Siyahkali explained.

"Iran's bourse can become international but it is necessary to be careful about the inbound financial resources," he said, adding that transactions at the stock market should be transparent.

If companies and enterprises announce their capitals and assets incorrectly, this will cause damage to the stock market and bubble as well, he stressed.

Although the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange grew more than 200 percent over the past Iranian calendar year (March 2019-March 2020), experts refer to it as a "financial bubble" and warn about this situation. They argue that a rising value of shares at the time of negative economic growth is not normal. So decreasing value of shares in the near future will have serious

consequences.

The official called "security" an important factor for domestic and foreign investors and emphasized that people all around the world invest in a market that is secure and the security depends on the fact that the products which are manufactured by the companies listed on the market should meet demands of customers.



previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19), Ayati noted.

Regarding the importance of Iran's route for the transit in the region, the official said: "The Islamic Republic of Iran is the most economical route for the transit of goods to Central Asian countries (CIS) due to shorter access to open waters, and the development of new routes, including the KATI corridor will lead to trade development and ultimately economic growth in the region."

According to the official, the development of transit, while generating revenue and increasing employment, will lead to the expansion of regional relations.

The Convention on International Transport of Goods Under Cover of TIR Carnets (TIR Convention) is a multilateral treaty that was concluded at Geneva on 14 November 1975 to simplify and harmonize the administrative formalities of international road transport.

SP phase 13 transmission pipelines ready to go operational

ENERGY
desk

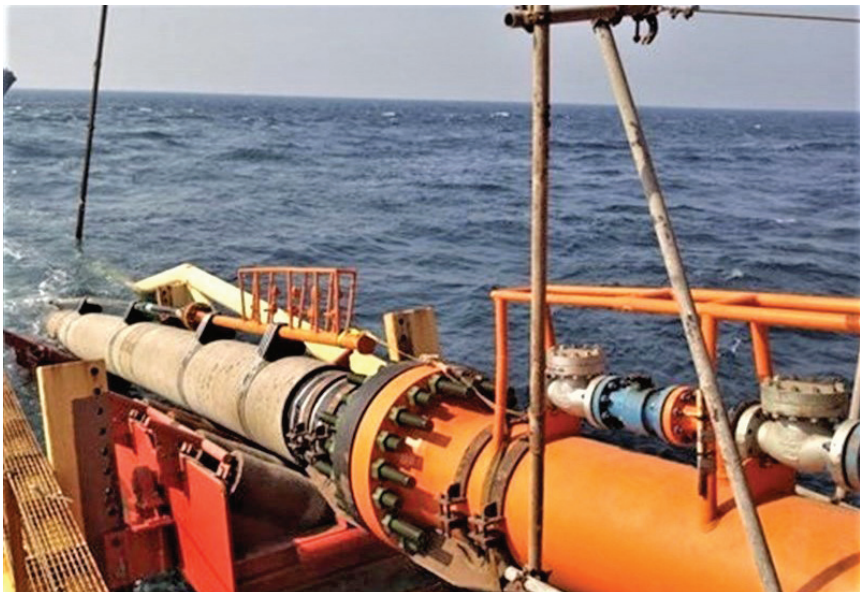
TEHRAN — The gas transmission pipelines of South Pars gas field's 13A and 13C platforms have become ready to transmit gas from these platforms to the refinery on the coast.

As reported by the portal of Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC), which is in charge of developing the giant field in the Persian Gulf, the two 32-inch pipelines are each 100 kilometers long and will transfer gas from the mentioned platforms to be processed at the phase 13 refinery.

According to Phase 13 Operator Payam Moatamed, the mentioned platforms were installed back in February and the project for connecting them to the pipelines was immediately started.

Moatamed also noted that the pipelines of the 13B and 13D, the other two platforms of the phase, were inaugurated back in February 2019.

All stages of the project including pipe coating, installation engineering, seawater piping, and commissioning of these lines have been done by Iranian experts and



engineers, according to the official. "Considering the need for group work

of the operations, we managed to complete the project by observing the social distance

in such a way that while maintaining the health of the workforce, the pipelines became ready for operation," Motamed said.

Phase 13 of South Pars gas field is aimed at the production of 56 mcm of gas, 75,000 barrels of gas condensate, and 400 tons of sulfur per day in addition to one million tons of ethane and one million tons of propane and butane per annum.

South Pars is divided into 24 standard phases of development in the first stage. Most of the phases are fully operational at the moment.

The huge offshore field, shared with Qatar, covers an area of 9,700 square kilometers, 3,700 square kilometers of which, called South Pars, are in Iran's territorial waters in the Persian Gulf. The remaining 6,000 square kilometers, called North Dome, are situated in Qatar's territorial waters.

The field is estimated to contain a significant amount of natural gas, accounting for about eight percent of the world's reserves, and approximately 18 billion barrels of condensate.

Iran oil exports no longer dependent on Hormuz Strait

TEHRAN (Shana) — President Hassan Rouhani and Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh officially inaugurated the construction of a 1,000-km pipeline extending from Goreh to Jask. The pipeline would enable to Iran to carry 1 million barrels per day (mb/d) of crude oil from Makran export terminal to target markets.

Rouhani said the project was strategic, adding: "Today is the day of assurance for our [oil] buyers. They can be assured that they could buy our oil under any conditions."

Minister Zanganeh also said that the possibility of delivering crude oil through a channel other than the Strait of Hormuz, would make Iran's oil export much more secure than neighboring and West Asia fellow exporters.

But why President Rouhani described the Goreh-Jask pipeline as one of the most strategic projects? It's easy to answer.

Having built this pipeline to export oil, Iran would no longer merely depend on the Strait of Hormuz, and it would enable Iran to carry its oil from the Makran terminal to target markets. That would mean guaranteeing oil delivery supply to buyers against the backdrop of conditions where the Strait of Hormuz has been faced with a variety of threats over the past two years. As a result, oil consumers were thinking of alternative options for that purpose.

Fereydoon Majlesi, expert on international affairs, has said that Iraq and Kuwait are the most dependent nations on the Strait of Hormuz.

"Saudi Arabia also uses the same route for its Eastern destinations. Iran had to take a strategic step to reduce dependence on this chokepoint. Therefore, building this pipeline as well as storage tanks was important," he added.

Now, with the construction of this route at a time its petroleum industry is hit with tough sanctions, Iran is assuring its oil buyers that they can rely on this country and buy Iran's oil safely.

Explaining about the strategic aspects of the Goreh-Jask pipeline, Rouhani said: "Many countries in the region have found an alternative for their oil exports in order to be able to export their oil when the Strait of Hormuz is threatened."

"Although we control the Strait of Hormuz, we have a problem that if this strait was to be closed for whatsoever reason, its oil exports would be halted and Iran would face problems. Now, we have overcome this problem," he said.

Rouhani said the line was important in terms of economy, national security and energy.

He added: "Therefore, it would give assurances to our buyers."

■ Jask to export oil early 2021

The Goreh-Jask line is 1,000 km long, starting from Goreh in the southern Bushehr Province. It will cut through Fars Province and Hormuzgan Province before reaching Jask, the Makran terminal and finally Kharg.

There are 20 oil storage tanks with capacity of about 10

million barrels, a terminal, several single-point moorings, power plants, water desalination plants, access roads as well as industrial infrastructure in Makran and Jask. That would allow the delivery of 1mb/d of heavy crude oil from oil-rich areas and accommodate very large crude carriers with capacity of two million tons.

The export terminal would bring Iran closer to its export markets in China, India, East Asia, Europe and Africa, reducing export costs.

It would be also possible to make arrangements for swapping crude oil and petroleum products with Caucasus, Central Asia and Russia.

Javad Yarjani, Iran's former OPEC national representative, said were it not for oil sanctions, the terminal would be instrumental in facilitating Iran's oil exports particularly towards East.

Zanganeh said the capital needed for the project was estimated between \$800 million and \$850 million, adding that oil exports from the Jask terminal would start by early next year.

■ Domestic manufacturing

Iran's Petroleum Ministry embarked on this project under the Rouhani administration while the United States re-imposed sanctions on Iran's petroleum industry after pulling out of the 2015 nuclear deal. The sanctions prompted many foreign companies to leave Iran.

Consequently, equipment shortages were felt in Iran because there was no experience in the manufacturing of some equipment. Therefore, National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) decided to push ahead with the project without foreigners and only by reliance on domestic manufacturers.

Zanganeh said some equipment in this project had been manufactured for the first time in Iran.

"Contracts had been signed with foreign companies for manufacturing such equipment as slabs used in pipe building. As soon as sanctions were back in place, the contracts were terminated. However, during a ten-month period, Mobarakeh Steel Mill, following hard efforts made Khuzestan Oxin Steel Co. managed to build slabs and billets respectively," he said.

Zanganeh said the Mobarakeh mill manufactured and delivered 320,000 tons of slabs while Khuzestan Oxin Steel delivered 250,000 tons of billet. He added that pipe manufacturers had built 440 km of pipeline, 350 km of which had been delivered to sites to be welded.

The minister said 50 giant pumps with capacity of 2.5MW were needed in the project.

Noting that such pumps had not been built in Iran before, he said: "For the first time, manufacturing of these pumps was assigned to three domestic companies for \$50 million."

Zanganeh said that five pumping stations were also under construction in addition to the pumps.

"Twenty tanks with capacity of 500,000-barrel storage are under construction in the Jask area by the private sector



under BOT agreements and the agreement for the oil export terminal utilities has been signed," he added.

■ Jask terminal 40 percent complete

Zanganeh said the Jask export terminal was 40 percent complete, adding: "Over the past two months the bulk of progress in this project has been made, 7 percent per month. It is valuable and we hope that this project would be completed this year to allow for exports."

Referring to a 600,000-barrel to 700,000-barrel condensate pipeline connecting to the Persian Gulf Star Refinery, he said: "By connecting these two lines, it would be possible to carry gas condensate via Jask if need be."

Highlighting the significance of the Jask terminal project, Zanganeh said: "By implementing this project, in addition to an export terminal, a development hinterland would be created in the Gulf of Oman."

The minister said \$300 million had so far been invested in the project, adding that another \$850 million was needed.

"There are of course obstacles and problems, some of which have been overcome. The remaining finance would be guaranteed through capital market so that the project would be completed in due time," said Zanganeh.

He expressed hope that oil exports would begin from the Jask terminal, as the most strategic project of the Rouhani administration, early 2021.

Reza Dehqan, deputy head of NIOC for engineering and development, said Iranian services and equipment accounted for more than 95 percent of the Goreh-Jask pipe project.

He said that five pumping stations, three pigging stations, 10 power supply posts, 400km of electricity transmission lines, 3 SPMs, 40km of undersea pipeline and 20 crude oil storage tanks were envisaged in this project, all of which being handled by Iranian contractors and consultants.

"Currently, more than 800 heavy machines and 5,000 service workers are involved in this project and everything is in compliance with health protocols," he added.

China imports more oil from Saudi than any other country in June

China's crude oil imports from Saudi Arabia rose 15 percent in June from a year ago, as refiners ordered record volumes of the fuel in March and April when oil prices tumbled, cementing the kingdom's position as the top oil supplier to China.

Imports from Saudi Arabia rose to 8.88 million tons in June, or 2.16 million bpd, in June, Reuters reported, citing data from China's General Administration of Customs on Sunday.

That was in line with May's volumes, but well above 1.89 million bpd during the same period last year.

The record imports follow a price war between Saudi Arabia and Russia, the world's top oil exporters, during March and April when the coronavirus pandemic dampened demand and caused a global fuel glut.

Shipments from Russia were at 7.98 million tons last month, or 1.95 million barrels per day (bpd), up around 7 percent from 1.82 million bpd in May and 1.73 million bpd in June 2019.

Saudi, however, delivered bigger oil cuts from June and raised crude prices as a plunge in oil prices weighed on the kingdom's budget.



China, the world's biggest crude oil importer, took in a record 53.18 million tons last month, according to customs data.

China also boosted inflows from Brazil, Norway and Angola, said Emma Li, analyst from Refinitiv.

Brazil, whose massive offshore projects are coming online, offered Asian refiners competitive deals on relatively high-quality oil just as China and other Asian countries contained the coronavirus and reopened their economies.

Analysts expect China to see another record amount of crude imports in July as some May-loading cargoes are still underway while swelling oil inventory at major Chinese ports slows new arrivals.

Pakistan's oil demand feels COVID-19 pain, set to bounce back

Pakistan's oil consumption declined by as much as 11 percent in the fiscal year 2019-20 (July-June) as COVID-19 kept people indoors while industrial activity slowed to a trickle for a substantial part of the year, but analysts are hopeful that demand will bounce back in fiscal 2020-21.

As reported too Platts, however despite the sharp fall in domestic oil consumption in a year that witnessed negative economic growth for the first time in 68 years, the country's oil product imports posted positive growth, while imports of crude oil slowed sharply in the same period.

"We expect petroleum demand to increase due to gradual normalization of economic activity following the lockdown. Demand will also find support from better farm economics, lower interest rates and the 2.1 percent real GDP growth expected for the 2020-21 financial year," said Muhammad Mohsin Ahsan, Managing Director of Optimus Capital Management.

Hamza Kamal, senior analyst at AKD Securities Ltd., shared a similar view, saying both gasoline and diesel demand would witness positive growth in the current fiscal year, although expectations of a recovery in oil prices amid anticipated lower eco-

nomie growth may limit the growth rate in oil demand.

"Prices of motor gasoline and diesel are bound to increase. This, coupled with high taxes in the form of petroleum levy and high prices, will make a case for influx of products from across the border once COVID-19-related restrictions on borders ease," he added.

Oil consumption in fiscal 2019-20 stood at 16.36 million mt compared with 18.31 million mt in the previous fiscal year, data from the Oil Companies Advisory Council showed.

Pakistan's gasoline consumption in fiscal 2019-20 remained largely flat at 7.316 million mt compared with 7.351 million mt in the preceding year. Diesel consumption in the year dropped 9 percent to 6.546 million mt and furnace oil sales fell 36 percent to 1.926 million mt.

"We expect consumption of diesel and motor gasoline to increase by 10 percent this fiscal year," said Tahir Abbas, director of research at Karachi-based brokerage house Arif Habib Ltd. "The continuous increase in vehicle population, as well as rising exports and trade activity will improve demand for petroleum products post COVID-19".

What to expect as oil and gas majors unveil their second-quarter results

Oil and gas majors are likely to report "horrendous" second-quarter results over the next two weeks, energy analysts have told CNBC, with the three-month period through to the end of June widely expected to mark the "low point" of 2020.

"Big Oil" companies, referring to the world's largest oil and gas majors, witnessed a historic fall in oil and gas prices during the second quarter as coronavirus lockdown restrictions coincided with an unprecedented demand shock.

Norway's Equinor will report second-quarter earnings on Friday, with Austria's OMV, Italy's Eni, France's Total and Anglo-Dutch company Shell set to report next week. The U.K.'s BP will unveil their quarterly results on August 4.

Stateside, ConocoPhillips will report earnings on July 30, with Exxon Mobil and Chevron expected to follow on July 31.

"I think it is going to be brutal and ugly," Kathy Hipple, an analyst at the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA), told CNBC via telephone.

Hipple pointed out that international benchmark Brent crude futures averaged just \$29 a barrel in the three months through to June, down from an average of \$51 a barrel in the first quarter.

Brent crude futures tumbled to their lowest level since 1999 on April 21, while U.S. West Texas Intermediate futures plunged into negative territory for the first time on record.

IEA Executive Director Fatih Birol has since reportedly said he believes 2020 may well come to be regarded as the worst year in the history of global oil markets, with so-called "Black April" likely to be the worst month the industry has ever seen.

"The earnings for the second quarter are going to be horrendous," IEEFA's Hipple said, reflecting on a period of significantly weaker oil and gas prices for energy majors.

"My big takeaway is that this is not just the result of the virus: These are long-term, decade-old trends," she continued. The oil industry "is not going away tomorrow, but it is a long-term decline that we are seeing."

Brent crude futures traded at \$44.61 a barrel on Thursday morning, up more than 0.7% for the session, while U.S. WTI futures stood at \$42.19, around 0.6% higher.

■ Dividends

Stuart Joyner, analyst at market research firm Redburn, told CNBC via telephone that the second quarter was going to be "the low point" of the year for oil and gas majors, with all of them expected to report "pretty weak" results.

Dividend payouts to shareholders will also be an area of focus for energy market participants.

Oil giant Shell cut its dividend for the first time since World War II in the first quarter of 2020, while Norway's Equinor slashed its quarterly dividend to shareholders by two-thirds.

Shell and BP have since announced second-quarter write-downs of up to \$22 billion and \$17.5 billion, respectively, on expectations of lower oil and gas prices over the next 30 years.

Redburn's Joyner said Big Oil companies would fall into three categories when it comes to dividend payouts in the second quarter: The ones that are not going to cut, the ones that have cut and the ones that will cut.

He suggested Shell and Total would most likely fall into the first group, given both companies have previously indicated they would not cut their respective dividends in the second quarter, while Equinor was expected to maintain a lower level of dividends for the remainder of the year.

Joyner singled out Eni and BP as the two European oil and gas majors likely to cut dividends in the second quarter, predicting both companies would do so by approximately one-third.

"I think probably the key area of interest really is going to be around what they say prospectively about where businesses are headed and how quick the recovery is," Joyner continued. "It is not necessarily going to focus, I think, on the performance in the quarter in the way that it would usually do."

"It is fairly unusual from that perspective," he added.

■ 'The game is up'

Spanish oil and gas firm Repsol reported a net loss for the second quarter on Thursday and announced write-downs of \$1.5 billion in assets as it lowered expectations of oil and gas prices over the long-term.

It joins Shell and BP in downgrading the value of its assets in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

"The game is up: Oil and gas companies can no longer mask their financial frailty," Nikki Reisch, Director of the Center for International Environmental Law's Climate & Energy Program said in a report earlier this month.

When asked whether it was fair to assume that second-quarter results for oil and gas majors would most likely reaffirm this view of the energy industry, Reisch told CNBC: "I would say, yes."

"No matter how companies slice or dice or present their performance, I think it is clear the signs are all pointing in the same direction — and that is a long-term systemic decline."

"The status quo prior to Covid was far from a stable one for the oil industry, so I think we have to keep that in mind when interpreting any reported earnings," Reisch added.

New contract signals serious development of Iraq's Huge Nasiriyah oil field

The idea of developing the 4.36 billion-barrel Nasiriyah oilfield in southern Iraq's Dhi Qar province has been seriously mooted by the each of the rapid succession of governments in Iraq since it was discovered by the Iraq National Oil Company in 1975. These plans have variously been for the standalone development of the oil field or its development within the broader scope of the 'Nasiriyah Integrated Project' (NIP) that also includes the corollary construction of a 300,000 barrels per day (bpd) refinery. All major plans stalled in one way or another but last week's signing of an 18-month contract to international oil and gas well drilling company Weatherford International with the Iraqi Drilling Company (IDC) to provide services and project management for the drilling and completion of 20 wells in the Nasiriyah field signals that a sustained and substantial development of Iraq's hidden hydrocarbons gem may finally be underway.

The original plans to develop Nassiriya on a standalone basis were shelved in the lead-up to the Iran-Iraq war that began in 1980 and lasted until 1988. The field eventually came properly on-stream in 2009 and was listed in the 2009-2010 fast-track development plan, which aimed to raise the field's output to at least 50,000 bpd in the first phase. At that point — in H109 — Italy's ENI, Japan's Nippon Oil, the U.S.'s Chevron, and Spain's Repsol submitted bids to develop the field on an engineering procurement construction (EPC) contract basis. At that point, the Japanese consortium led by Nippon Oil, and also comprising Inpex, and JGC Corporation, looked set to win the contract before negotiations broke down again.

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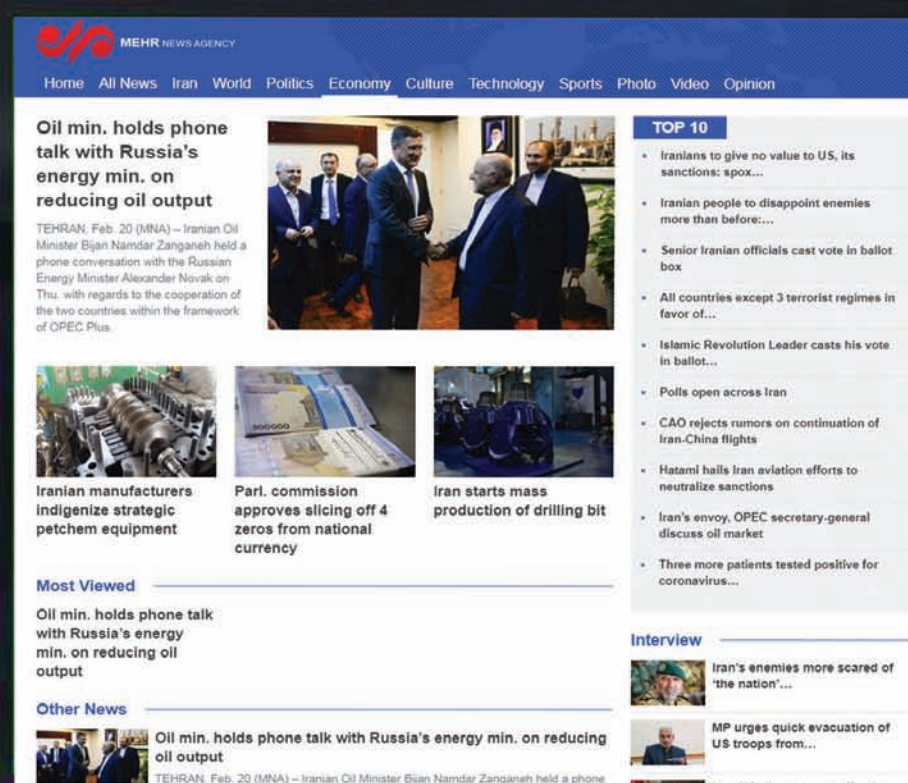
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Trump views the world as a dog-eat-dog with U.S. as the biggest dog: Princeton professor

‘Under Trump presidency, respect for U.S. has plummeted worldwide’

➔ Regarding the Trump administration's policy towards Tehran, especially its “maximum pressure” campaign to strangle Iran, Hippel said these policies have proved “disastrous” for the U.S. as well as Iran.

“They have moved us from a potentially constructive relationship to one that could too easily transition into a war,” he warned.

While politicians and analysts argue that the U.S. policies are provoking a nuclear arms race in West Asia, Hippel, who served as assistant director for National Security in the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy from 1993 to 1995, said, “The perversity of the Trump Administration policy has been to make nuclear weapons more attractive to Iran.”

He added, “I think that some elements of the Trump Administration would like to see Iran go there so that the U.S. would have an excuse to bomb Iran.”

Responding to a question about American soft power under the Trump presidency, he said that respect for the United States has plummeted worldwide.

“The Trump Administration’s perverse policy toward Iran is just one facet of a broader attitude that rejects any rules of civilized conduct and views the world as a dog-eat-dog with the United States as the biggest dog.”

Referring to Trump’s promise to reduce the number of U.S. forces abroad and return them home, the American physicist said, “There has been relatively little change in this regard.”

The Princeton University professor said the Trump administration’s move to pull out American forces from Afghanistan is a kind of “face-saving agreement”.



The U.S. first refused to negotiate with the Taliban, saying they are terrorist. However, after 19 years the U.S. is seeking an exit route by holding talks with the militant group.

“The main focus has been to withdraw from Afghanistan. I have not followed this closely, but it appears that strategy is similar to that for withdrawal from South Vietnam fifty years ago: a face-saving agreement with the adversary,” Hippel maintained.

On Sen. Bernie Sanders’s statement to change American priorities including cutting

the military budget to serve poor people, Hippel argued that the fundamental strength of the United States is not its military but rather its democratic and open society.

“This strength has been undermined by the great economic inequality that has always been with us but has broadened during the past 40 years with a smaller and smaller fraction of the society monopolizing the benefits of economic growth,” he pointed out.

Believing that the resulting resentments

created fertile ground for exploitation by a demagogue like Trump, Hippel said, “If Trump had been more competent, he might have succeeded in taking the United States down the road to fascism.”

He added, “I hope – but I am far from certain – that this road will be rejected by a strong majority in the coming election.”

Commenting on the U.S. withdrawal from international treaties like Open Skies, Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces, Hippel said, “This is not just the Trump Administration. The Republican Party has come to reject arms control more broadly because it believes that other countries will cheat, and therefore the constraints will be unilateral.”

For the Senate to approve a treaty requires a two-thirds majority and “this means that arms control treaties have become impossible except at a prohibitive price,” he said.

He noted that in 1997, President Clinton was able to get the Chemical Weapons Convention ratified only by eliminating the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency as an independent organization.

“President Obama was able to get the New START treaty ratified only by promising the Senate Republicans to replace all U.S. nuclear weapons and their “delivery vehicles” with new versions,” he maintained.

Under recent Republican administrations, the U.S. has exited treaties, starting with G.W. Bush’s exit in 2002 of the treaty with Russia limiting anti-ballistic missile systems.

“I hope that, if President Trump is defeated, he takes the Republican Party down with him and that we can return to more normal politics in the United States. But that may be just a dream,” he said in conclusion.

Regarding the Trump administration’s “maximum pressure” campaign to strangle Iran, Hippel said these policies have proved “disastrous” for the U.S. as well as Iran.

How the West lost influence in Libya’s war

After nine years of fighting in Libya, Western powers failed to stop the fragmentation of the country, which has been torn apart by warring political factions, local tribal leaders and militias, and foreign powers and thousands of mercenaries.

Futile peace-building efforts by Western powers and the inability to play a proactive role in the country have exposed ever deeper disagreements among key EU and NATO member states, leaving the initiative to non-EU players, such as Turkey, Russia, and Arab countries.

Since the beginning of the Libyan crisis, foreign powers, including those from the European Union and NATO, have played a disruptive role, greatly contributing to the overall chaotic situation in the country.

NATO bombing campaigns led by France and the UK in 2011, which aimed to oust former dictator Muammar Gaddafi, pushed the once richest African country into chaos and despair, leading many to draw parallels with the same mistakes from the Iraq war.

Instead, all foreign powers followed their particular interests or aimed to disrupt the interests of their competitors by siding with one of two major factions in the country, providing them with political, financial, and technical support, and in some cases, weapons, in violation of the UN arms embargo.

■ Disruptive role of foreign powers

Both sides in the civil war between the self-styled Libyan National Army (LNA) of General Khalifa Haftar and the internationally-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) led by Prime Minister Fayez al-Siraj has international support. Turkey, Italy, and Qatar all side with the GNA in Tripoli, while Russia, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and until recently France, back Haftar.

Even though the highly disputed role of some European countries - notably the UK, France, and Italy - the absence of any joint European initiative in Libya concerns, as the country, due to its proximity, matters greatly for Europe. Despite major stakes, the European Union seems to be completely impotent and marginalized in its approach to Libya, as is the case in Syria, leaving the UAE, Turkey, Egypt, and Russia to take the initiative.

The increased presence of Russia and Turkey, in particular, has been seen as a game-changer. While Russian mercenaries and funds underpinned Haftar’s Russian-backed offensive on Tripoli, massive Turkish support and the dispatch of Syrian mercenaries to the Tripoli-based GNA administration completely neutralized Haftar’s advancement, pushing his forces back east.

■ Powerless Europe

However, the apparent inability of European powers to act is highly surprising, as the ongoing war greatly endangers European stability and security, while indirectly affecting internal political dynamics within the EU. The migrant crisis and terrorist threats have shaped the continent’s political structure and contributed to the rise of right-wing populist movements and political parties in Europe, with France, Malta, and Italy being particularly exposed to instability in Libya.

With its almost 2,000 kilometers of coastline and vast uncontrolled spaces, the country has become a Mecca for human trafficking and the proliferation of terrorist groups, which operate throughout the fragile Sahel region.

Some hoped that the EU would exploit the Covid-19



Despite major stakes, the European Union seems to be completely impotent and marginalized in its approach to Libya.

pandemic opportunity and take the initiative to push back Russia and Turkey from Libya. There were also ever louder voices suggesting that the EU should this time use some hard power means and deploy troops on the ground rather than only focusing on providing humanitarian aid.

Prior to the pandemic, the EU tried to lead a diplomatic initiative, at the Berlin summit in January but failed to achieve any meaningful progress as participants of the summit continued to send weapons to Libya.

In fact, any joint efforts to tackle the crisis and limit the growing influence of non-EU actors have been often torpedoed by EU member states, which has pursued their own unilateral interests, notably France and Italy.

Until last year, both were effectively European rivals in Libya. Although Italy remains an ally of the Tripoli-based government, the most powerful GNA ally is Turkey, which has sent its own contingent of several thousand Syrian mercenaries, as well as armored drones and sophisticated air defense systems.

Prior to its military engagement, Ankara signed a maritime border agreement with the GNA, which triggered a heated international debate over the exploitation of rich hydrocarbon reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean. The agreement has also become a source of friction with Cyprus and Greece, as well as within NATO. Moreover, Ankara has taken the initiative while the EU floundered, perceiving the Covid-19 crisis as an excellent chance to score important points.

■ France-Turkey rivalry

Meanwhile, the clashing interests of Turkey and France have created a geopolitical competition between two countries beyond Libya, and such a rivalry may have a serious impact on NATO. The two NATO members have traded accusations and insults after they almost crashed near the Libyan coast when France accused the Turkish side of targeting a French

military vessel that was trying to inspect a Tanzanian-flagged cargo ship, carrying Turkish weapons to Libya.

France accused Ankara of blocking truce efforts in Libya, breaking the UN arms embargo, and recently urged talks among NATO allies about Turkey’s “aggressive” role in Libya. France also decided to suspend its navy from NATO’s Operation Sea Guardian. The row has also hampered already tense relations between NATO members and its ability to act as a unified and efficient organization.

Moreover, it seems that the words of French President Macron, who once said that NATO is “brain dead” are becoming a reality. On the other hand, the inner struggles within the EU and NATO have given the opportunity to non-EU actors such as Turkey, Russia, and Arab states to fully exploit the situation.

According to Dr. Mustafa Aydin, a prominent Turkish academic, writer, columnist, and president of the International Relations Council of Turkey, France is now trying to get the EU (and NATO) behind its position, but most probably will fail again as many European nations see its policies as not furthering international peace and stability while promoting French national interests against them.

■ Is NATO obsolete?

Riccardo Fabiani, North Africa Project Director at the International Crisis Group, struggles to see how NATO could patch up the crisis between France and Turkey, given that the US is refusing to play a traditional leadership role within Nato and the MENA region.

“In this political and security vacuum, it is only inevitable that countries like France and Turkey end up pursuing their national interests and clashing with each other,” he told The New Arab. He also thinks that the dis situation clearly reflects that NATO has become an empty shell, whose crisis is only exacerbated and highlighted by the antagonism between Paris and Ankara.

According to Dr. Aydin, NATO has so far avoided involvement in disputes between its two members, and this will continue in the case of the Ankara-Paris dispute. He also pointed out that NATO could only make decisions with the approval of all its members, and therefore does not expect the alliance’s further involvement in Libya or the Mediterranean unless there are other earlier agreements outside NATO on how to move forward.

For Turkey, Libya looks too tempting to simply be left to other players. Barah Mikail, the founding director of Strategic, a Madrid-based center specialized in the Geopolitics of the Middle East (West Asia) and North Africa, explained that Turkey not exactly what it can get out of its role in the war.

Namely, energy prospects in the Mediterranean, a stake in the reconstruction of Libya, provide arms to Libya and other countries in the region, and influence from its role backing the GNA to demonstrate strategic assets and a greater capacity than many EU countries.

So why say no to all of the dis? In other words, according to Mikail, Turkey has made it quite clear that it can benefit from its current strategy, and that nobody will wage war against its coz of its policies in Libya, so why step back?

In a similar fashion, Professor Hüseyin mesiksal from the Department of International Relations at the Northern Cyprus-based Near East University stated that in the post-COVID-19 order, NATO has a very limited role in resolving either Turkish-French tensions or the Syrian and Libyan conflicts.

In his view, the upcoming US elections, the socio-political implications of the Covid-19 pandemic, clashing interests of NATO member states, and the vacuum left by the US within NATO are all severely restricting the organization’s effectiveness to tackle these crises.

After all, NATO is seen as a source of Libya’s current problems, Mikail says, and reasserting a role in the country would simply add to NATO’s problems and lack of credibility.

(Source: The New Arab)

Environmental protection and climate action reduce opportunity for viruses: UN official

BY Mohammad Mazhari

TEHRAN — COVID-19 is a new virus to humans, and not much was known about it when it first appeared in China.

The pandemic has caused an unprecedented health crisis, while the measures necessary to contain the virus have triggered an economic downturn.

It seems to be more than a health crisis. It is has caused an economic crisis, a humanitarian crisis, and a human rights crisis that necessitate a multi-pronged approach that addresses this complexity and interconnectedness.

In this regard, Maher Nasser, director of Outreach Division in the United Nations Department of Global Communications (DGC), tells the Tehran Times that COVID-19 has created the biggest and most serious crisis to confront the world community since the United Nations was established 75 years ago.

“The United Nations mobilized early and launched a comprehensive response that is based on three pillars: A health pillar, a socio-economic pillar, and a recovery pillar,” says Nasser.

While researchers are working hard to identify effective treatments, up until now there is no vaccine and no specific antiviral medicine to prevent or treat it.

Experts say that those affected should receive care to relieve symptoms, and those with serious illness should be hospitalized.

However, possible vaccines and some specific drug treatments are under study and are being tested through clinical trials.

About the UN’s role in containing the COVID-19, he said that the World Health Organization (WHO) is coordinating efforts to develop vaccines and medicines to prevent and treat COVID-19.

“The most effective way to protect yourself and others is to be careful with your personal hygiene, clean hands properly, cover your cough, wear a mask in public, especially in closed spaces, and practice social distancing,” Nasser recommends.

“We have noted a sharp increase in misinformation about the virus and its impact and have created an initiative to address the ‘infodemic’ that is complicating the response across the world. You can find details and join the global effort to fight the infodemic ShareVerified.”

On the surging of Coronavirus cases in some countries such as the U.S., Nasser notes, “The dramatic increase in cases around the world, not just U.S., is worrying and is of great concern to everyone.”

The virus knows no borders. No country is safe until all countries are free from the virus.

He added that a high rate of Coronavirus cases in the U.S. has not been even in all states.

“Some states that had few cases in the spring are now seeing a rise in infections, while states where the numbers peaked in April, such as New York, have achieved remarkable results in flattening the curve and reducing the number of new infections,” Nasser stated.

In this context, WHO Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a press briefing on Tuesday that “contact tracing is essential for every country, in every situation. It can prevent individual cases from becoming clusters and clusters turning into community transmission.”

He stressed the need for strong leadership, community engagement, and a comprehensive strategy to suppress transmission.

Referring to reasons and implications of U.S. withdrawal from the WHO, Nasser pointed to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres addressing the U.S. in which he said, “It is not the time to reduce the resources for the operations of the World Health Organization or any other humanitarian organization in the fight against the virus.”

Nasser also believes that unity must prevail so that the international community can work together in solidarity to stop this virus and its shattering consequences.

Given that the U.S. government was the WHO’s largest funder, critics argue that percentages of funding share can influence decision making in international organizations such as the UN.

Nasser, however, tells the Tehran Times that all international organizations work according to the mandates given to them by their member states and in line with their founding documents.

“Budgets are either assessed or voluntary and are implemented according to the financial rules of each organization and with the organization’s governing body’s approval,” he explains.

Trump has repeatedly accused the WHO of being lenient toward China. American officials claim that international agencies and institutions are biased.

However, director of Outreach Division in the UN Department of Global Communications says that international organizations work within the mandates given to them by their member states and operate within the technical and operational limitations agreed by those member states.

On the accusations made by the U.S. against China on the spread of COVID-19, Nasser says the pandemic is a zoonotic disease, infects humans when a virus makes the jump from a wild animal to a human.

“In this case, it happened in China; in other cases, it happened in other countries and other regions, as was the case with MERS, Ebola, Zika, H1N1, and so on,” Nasser notes. “The key to understanding this is through science and facts.”

“In a way, nature is sending us a message with COVID-19. We need to take care of nature,” he stresses.

Nasser calls for reducing the opportunities for viruses to jump from an animal to humans, which requires environmental protection as well as climate action that cuts environmental degradation and ends illegal trade in wildlife.

“Among the key drivers of zoonotic pandemics risk are the over-exploitation of wildlife, such as the unsustainable, illegal or unregulated trade in high-risk species,” he states.

“The increased human-wildlife contacts, urbanization, industrialization, agricultural intensification, more international flights, increased demand for animal protein, and complex food supply chains have paved the way for spreading zoonotic pandemics,” Nasser concludes.

Finally, he predicts that “climate change as zoonoses thrive in warmer and wetter conditions.”



On the accusations made by the U.S. against China on the spread of COVID-19, Maher Nasser says the pandemic is a zoonotic disease, infects humans when a virus makes the jump from a wild animal to a human.

According to Dr. Mustafa Aydin, a prominent Turkish academic, writer, columnist, and president of the International Relations Council of Turkey, France is now trying to get the EU (and NATO) behind its position, but most probably will fail again as many European nations see its policies as not furthering international peace and stability while promoting French national interests against them.

UNESCO provides financial support to restore ancient caravansary in Iran

➔ **1** Between the iwans and the corner passages are three shallow alcoves opening onto three small chambers (making for a total of six on each side of the courtyard). The octagonal domed halls lead onto wide corridors that run behind the aforementioned chambers.



According to the UN cultural body, UNESCO and the European Union launched the project "Silk Roads Heritage Corridors in Afghanistan, Central Asia, and Iran – International Dimension of the European Year of Cultural Heritage" in October 2018. The overall project objective is to strengthen the contribution of culture to sustainable progress, notably through heritage-based tourism development, diversification of tourism products, and delivery of high-quality visitor experiences along the Silk Roads heritage corridors in the participating countries.

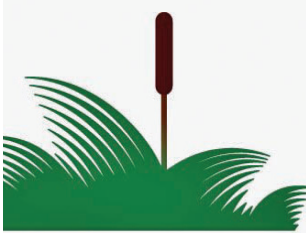
Within the framework of this project, several Silk Roads heritage sites in Afghanistan, Central Asia, and Iran will be selected for conservation/restoration, rehabilitation, and promotion to reveal their importance for the cultural identity of the region and for promoting intercultural dialogue and social cohesion. Historically, the Silk Road was a network of trade routes connecting China and the Far East with West Asia and Europe.

For thousands of years, the Silk Roads have connected civilizations and brought peoples and cultures in contact with each other from across the world, permitting not only an exchange of goods but also an interaction of ideas and cultures that have shaped our world today.

This project is jointly implemented by UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office and Iran Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization (ICHHTO) with the financial support of the European Union.

ICOMOS meetings postponed over coronavirus pandemic

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** – The 20th edition of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) General Assembly and Scientific Symposium was postponed until further notice amid the coronavirus pandemic, according to the ICOMOS official website.



A 2020 ICOMOS
-10 OCTOBER 2020 - SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

Czech globetrotters visit South Khorasan province

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** – A group of globetrotters from the Czech Republic arrived on Friday in Ayask, an ancient town in Sarayan county, eastern South Khorasan province.

Tourists and globetrotters from the Czech Republic arrived in the town of Ayask, Sarayan county, on July 24 to get acquainted with the culture of the people of South Khorasan and to visit the pristine landscape and tourist attractions of the region, a provincial tourism official noted, IRNA reported.



The six-member group entered the country via the Baku border... and they paid visits to the cities of Tabriz, Shiraz, and Isfahan before they arrive in South Khorasan, the official said.

South Khorasan is an explorer's delight – lots to discover yet barely another visitor to be found, even at the most important sights (despite a decent infrastructure of recently paved roads). The region intersperses arid mountains and semi-deserts and is famed for saffron and barberries. But there's also a wealth of old mud villages that seem to have been left almost complete as though to tempt archaeologists (relatively accessible Old Esfandiar and Old Deyhuk are amongst our favorites).

"The travelers visited margins of a vast tranquil desert, cultural heritage sites, and they also savored local food and souvenirs as well," the official added.

Castle lovers will swoon over Birjand's fortress – which might be slightly over-restored but make a great site for a traditional restaurant – and the mountain-top fortifications at Qa'en, especially magical at sunset; Forg is one of the most picture-perfect castle-citadels in Iran. Boshrooyeh's Qaleh Dokhtar is smaller and more ruinous but clings dramatically to a spike of the lonely desert crag, with some unique, still-functioning traditional waterwheels nearby.

Seljuk-era twin tomb towers in Qazvin being restored

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN**

Rehabilitation work has begun on the historical Kharraqan twin tomb towers in Avaj, northwestern Qazvin province, a provincial tourism chief has said.

To protect and maintain valuable historical monuments and prevent their destruction, a restoration project has been commenced on the Seljuk-era (1037–1194) towers, CHTN quoted Alireza Khazaeli as saying on Sunday.

Located in the Hesar village, the octagonal brick structures stand 13 meters tall and each side is 4 meters wide.

Until the early 1960s, based on inscriptions in the towers, it was thought that these two structures were the tombs of two Imamzadehs, Hadideh Khatoon and Mohammad, descendants of the seventh Shiite Imam Musa Kazim (as), but later studies revealed that two Seljuk Turks, Abu Saeid Bijar and Abu Mansour Iltaitiare, buried in these tombs.

The restoration project aims at preserving and strengthening the towers, which were damaged by the spring heavy rain and flood, the official added.

Being an early example of geometric



ornament and double domes in the 11th century, the structures were inscribed on the National Heritage list in 1977.

The official also added that in this phase of the project, top roofs, walls, interior walls decorations, and gutters are being restored with a budget of 500

million rials (about \$12,000).

Both towers were significantly damaged by the 2002 Buin Zahra earthquake. They were in a good state of preservation before the event, suggesting it was one of the most powerful quakes in the region for approximately 900 years. Since then, the

Police bust gang smuggling antiques in northern Iran

TOURISM d e s k

TEHRAN – Iranian authorities have recently busted a smuggling gang that was illegally trading ancient relics in Sari, northern Mazandaran province, IRNA reported.

A total of 278 historical objects including brass and bronze bowls, spearheads, bracelets, coins, bronze ring, and earrings, dating back to different historical eras, have been confiscated in this regard, the report added.

According to the experts, all the discovered relics, which were handed over to the province's cultural heritage department, have cultural value and historical antiquity.

Three culprits were also surrendered to the judicial system for further investigation.

Soaked in a vibrant history, Mazandaran (also known

as Tabarestan) was a cradle of civilization since the beginning of the first millennium BC. According to Britannica Encyclopedia, it was almost overrun in about 720 CE by the Arab raiders.

Its insecure eastern and southeastern borders were crossed by Mongol invaders in the 13th and 14th centuries. Cossacks attacked the region in 1668 but were repulsed. It was ceded to the Russian Empire by a treaty in 1723, but the Russians were never secure in their occupation. The area was restored to Iran under the Qajar dynasty. The northern section of the region consists of a lowland alongside the Caspian and an upland along the northern slopes of the Alborz Mountains.



Train tours come to halt in Iran over coronavirus fears

TOURISM d e s k

TEHRAN – Train tours have been stopped in Iran once again over coronavirus fears as health officials have announced a surge in virus infections in some parts of the country.

Specific tourism trains, operated by the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways, have been decided to be stopped for at least three weeks, Mehr quoted an IRIR official as saying on Sunday.

Such trains, which offer specific round trips with several stopovers, began operating intercity travels over that past couple of weeks after a three-month gap when the first phase of COVID-19 pandemic started in the country.

Train tours, however, gradually was



embarked at the beginning of Khordad (Mid-May) when coronavirus curbs eased in a bid to restore normal life and reopen an economy facing the threat of recession.

Earlier in April, the Iranian government

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

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

On April 20, Iran lifted intercity travel bans days after President Hassan Rouhani unveiled a "Smart Social Distancing Initiative" as a new phase of measures to prevent the virus spread. Over the past couple of months, many countries, including Iran, imposed travel

restrictions to help curb the spread of novel coronavirus. In this line, incoming and outgoing flights have been suspended, and road travels restricted to a great extent.

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

The latest available data show eight million tourists visited the Islamic Republic during the first ten months of the past Iranian calendar year (started March 21, 2019).

Safavid-era mosque in central Iran back to former glory

TOURISM d e s k

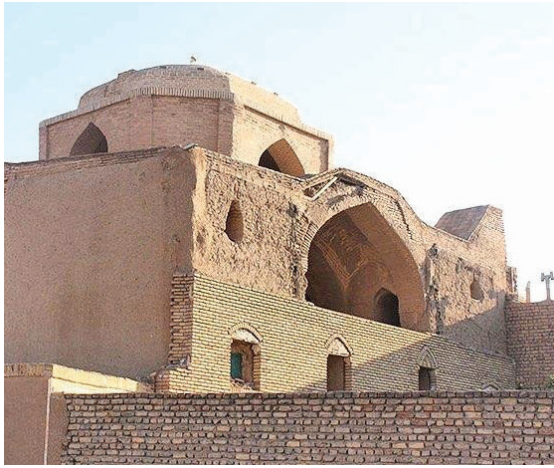
TEHRAN – The Safavid-era (1501–1736) Khosro Mosque in the ancient oasis town of Ardestan, central Isfahan province will undergo some rehabilitation works, a provincial tourism chief has said.

The three-story mosque, which is considered one of the architectural masterpieces, was built by one of the elites of the time named Khosro in 1723.

The mudbrick structure, which also has a cistern, was inscribed on The National Heritage list in 1985.

Repairing the rooftop and dome, and replacing the worn-out bricks were done in previous years and a new restoration project involves the renovation of the mosque's façade, CHTN quoted Mehdi Mashhadi as saying on Sunday.

The restoration project aims at reviving, preserving, protecting, and strengthening the historical structure with a budget of 200 million rials (about \$5,000), he added. The Safavid dynasty was one of the most significant



ruling dynasties of the country, often considered the beginning of modern Iranian history.

Isfahan has long been nicknamed as Nesf-e-Jahan which is translated into "half the world"; meaning seeing it is relevant to see the whole world. In its heyday, it was also one of the largest cities in the region with a population of nearly one million.

The cool blue tiles of Isfahan's Islamic buildings, and the city's majestic bridges, contrast perfectly with the encircling hot, dry Iranian countryside. The UNESCO-registered Imam Square, best known as Naghsh-e Jahan Sq. (literary meaning "Image of the World"), was laid out under the reign of the Safavid ruler, Shah Abbas the Great, to signal the importance of Isfahan as the capital of his powerful empire.

Modern Isfahan is now home to some heavy industry, including steel factories and a nuclear facility on its outskirts, however, its inner core wants to be preserved as a priceless gem.

Ancient relics of Iran: Storage jar decorated with mountain goats ca. 4000–3600 BC

(The Metropolitan Museum of Art) — People of the ancient Near East used the abundant supply of clay to construct bricks for their cities and also as a surface upon which to record their histories, religious beliefs, and business transactions. In addition, clay was widely used for making pottery — so much so that archaeologists find more pottery in the ruins of ancient cities than any other form of art.

In the fourth millennium BC in central and southwestern Iran, painted decoration on pottery like this large jar reached a new level of sophistication. Combinations of

geometric patterns, birds, and animals were silhouetted in dark brown on buff clay. These fine vessels were often found in tombs and therefore may have been used in religious or burial rituals.

This ovoid storage jar is a masterpiece of early pottery making, incorporating a design that is stylized but not static. A mountain goat, or ibex, stands in profile on the topmost of six bands, which circles the widest part of this large jar and emphasizes its great girth. The curves of its greatly enlarged horns echo the circular form of the jar, as do the curved spaces between the animal's legs.

The ibex possesses great energy and animation — a sensation created by the sharp projections of the ears, tail, tufted hair on the muzzle and fetlocks, and the sweeping curve of the horns. Straight lines alternating with zig-zag patterns frame the space on each side of the animal.

The design unit of an ibex within a geometric frame is repeated twice more around the circumference of the jar. The overall artistic effect is one of movement and dynamism. The slightly irregular shape of the pot suggests it either was built up by hand with coils of clay or was thrown on a slow wheel.



Building Back Better: UN supports Iran's socio-economic response to COVID-19

1 → On a very worst-case scenario, the impact may lead to a fall of up to 15% of GDP, particularly impacting the bottom 40 percent income deciles of the population, business activity and revenues, and a falling disposable income that will deepen inequality.

The partial lockdown measures have directly and indirectly affected 50 percent of Iran's estimated 25 million or so workforce; SME closure and falls in production affecting 3 million formal workers and 4 million informal workers and micro-enterprises; along with rising unemployment - possibly up to 2 million additional unemployed.

UN agencies supporting recovery against COVID-19 in Iran

Building Back Better: The overall intent is not to "go back to the pre-COVID-19 normal" but to pave the way for "a new (and better) normal" following the outbreak.

In response to the Government request in March 2020, the United Nations in Iran has been actively supporting national health, humanitarian, and socio-economic response to the COVID-19 outbreak in Iran.

The UN agencies are engaged in supporting recovery through focused activities of the UNDAF, some repurposed to align with recovery, and including through the Technical Assistance Package (TAP) initiative and South-South and Triangular Co-operation approaches.

So far over \$15 million of the UN agencies' core funds have been repurposed or are aligned towards COVID-19 related needs of Iran.

Given its comparative advantages, the UN System in Iran is actively supporting the Government with tailored solutions and best practices in development efforts and is launching a COVID-19 Socio-Economic Recovery Programme offer focused on three particular areas of intervention: combined employment generation, social protection, and health system strengthening.



How does the program contribute to address the challenges in Iran?

The program offers builds on the global UN Framework for the Immediate Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19, and the TAP of UN Iran endorsed by the Government in early 2020.

The program offer intends to support 92,000 vulnerable households through social protection initiatives and employment generation support - in four provinces.

A Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) model targeting 42,000 vulnerable households, with expanded access to basic social services, that can be potentially considered for nation-wide scale-up through a more shock responsive social protection system - and in parallel establishing 50,000 new micro and small enterprise/employment possibilities for them through low overhead cost approaches of \$1,000 per support and the

establishment of relevant activities, that are also composite social protection and micro-enterprise development approaches utilizing proven methods promoted by the UN agencies in Iran.

The UN program funding would require between \$20 million to \$50 million. The combined UN program offer is complementary to the Government's current needs and own up-scaling efforts; especially its approach towards area-based and rural employment generation and stated intentions to link up to some form of minimum floor social support for lower-income groups.

The UN-supported practices are already being used and up-scaled nationally; further seed capital would support positive economic and social multiplier effects in target communities and will contribute to 'bottom up' socio-economic approaches and impact at scale; and towards a more resilient economy and society.

Health system overwhelmed by COVID-19 amid U.S. sanctions

Iran's health system was already stressed when COVID-19 pandemic hit the country; at a time when it was already challenged by the impact of unilateral sanctions, constraints affecting the import of essential items; reduced fiscal space required to sustain a health financing system (depending on the Government funding and despite a social health insurance system with population coverage of around 95 percent); and also a reduction of purchasing power effecting the capacity to cope with out-of-pocket payments for health expenditure; significantly affecting particular poorer and otherwise disadvantaged parts of the population.

Balancing the demands of responding directly to COVID-19, while simultaneously maintaining essential health service delivery and mitigating the risk of system collapse remains a challenge.

Accelerated humanitarian exemptions for the provision of essential medicines, raw materials, and lifesaving equipment will be crucial - and the UN is engaging in high-level advocacy for lifting the impact of sanctions on the health system; simultaneously assisting the Government and facilitating procurement and financial transactions channels.

Under such conditions of a protracted health emergency, the next phase of the health sector recovery will need to address emergency preparedness and response; Universal Health Coverage requirements in COVID-19 conditions, the financing of different health service components, and health information systems; healthier populations, whole-of-society health-in-all policies approach, from top command level down to the PHC and community level, and given the bi-directional relationship between health and sustainable development there is a need for existing multi-sectoral health governance structures to be strengthened further.

Renowned photographers unite to sell work in aid of Africa's wildlife

The coronavirus pandemic is taking a devastating toll on conservation efforts across Africa with the collapse of tourism and a drop in philanthropic giving in the face of a looming global recession.



To help tackle the crisis, a group of more than 60 acclaimed wildlife photographers from around the world have come together to create a fundraising campaign, Prints for Wildlife, to support the protection of critical wild ecosystems and local communities.

This week, The Independent revealed the potential scale of the conservation crisis caused by plummeting revenues, which also impacts the livelihoods of hundreds of rangers who protect at-risk wildlife from poachers. Our Stop The Illegal Wildlife Trade campaign, is calling for an international effort to clamp down on the illegal trade of wild animals, which remains one of the greatest threats to future biodiversity.

The photography fundraiser, which launches on Sunday, was created by photographers Marion Payr and Pie Aerts, in aid of parks managed by conservation non-profit African Parks.

The organisation works in partnership with local governments across 18 parks in 11 African nations to safeguard biodiversity and support local people by delivering clean water, food security and carbon sequestration along with providing jobs and healthcare.

"When the entire world dropped off a cliff last March due to the outbreak of Covid-19, I felt the urge more than ever to be a voice of our planet in bringing together some of the best wildlife photographers in the world in an attempt to use the incredible power of art to ignite immediate action and contribute to conserving some of the most precious ecosystems of Africa," Mr Aerts told The Independent.

Each of the photographers has donated a limited fine art print to the fundraiser, on sale for \$100 via online shop Prints for Wildlife for the next month.

Will Burrard-Lucas, a British wildlife photographer, recalled capturing the photo that he donated to the fundraiser.

Forest park in Tehran to turn into "ecopark"



ENVIRONMENT **TEHRAN** — Tehran department of environment will transform Sorkheh Hesar forest park into an ecological park, IRIB news agency

reported on Sunday.

Ecopark is exploited as an amusement park without hampering its natural environment so that the bio-diversity remains unaffected there. Generally, a particular area of a forest is demarcated and brought under intensive management for this purpose.

The first phase of the creation of Eco Park has begun with the theme of identifying and preserving its biodiversity, Morteza Rahmanzadeh, mayor of Tehran's district 13 stated.

According to the studies and experiences of other countries, we intend to design a model that in addition to preserving biodiversity and diverse species, citizens can also visit and camp in the park, he explained.

He went on to say that our approach in this project is to preserve the park's biodiversity and citizens be able to see the park's wildlife without posing threat to the species.

Due to the park's ecosystem and the existence of various wildlife species such as deer, wild boar, urial, squirrels, we try to implement the plan more carefully, he concluded.

7 health projects to be inaugurated in northwestern Iran

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Seven health projects in the northwestern province of West Azarbaijan will be inaugurated by President Hassan Rouhani through a webinar on Thursday, ISNA news agency reported.

A hospital, two specialized clinics, a comprehensive health service center, two health centers, and an emergency medical center will be among the projects, Javad Aghazadeh, chancellor of West Azarbaijan University of Medical Sciences said.

The hospital is ready to operate in an area of 30,000 square meters with 260 beds, which cost 1.6 trillion rials (nearly \$38 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials), he highlighted.

One of the specialized clinics stretches to 1,800 square meters, for the construction of which 62.3 billion rials (about \$1.5 million) has been spent.

He also referred to the second specialized clinic and said that it is about 750 square meters and cost a sum of 27 billion rials (around \$600,000).



Plan for returning drop-outs to school started



SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — A plan has just started to bring students who have dropped out of school in low-income and deprived areas of the country back to the education system, ISNA news agency reported on Sunday.

The plan was launched as one of the reform plans of the Ministry of Education, Mojtaba Zeinivand, deputy education minister stated.

According to the statistics, about 800,000 who have completed primary education drop out of secondary education each year in the country, he lamented.

He added that for the first year, we are going to return 100,000 school drop-outs.



Even animals

In the middle of the war, we could hear the sound of bullet on the phone. He said: "I have heard a heavy snow has blanketed Tehran. In such times, the deer come down from mountains to find food. Immediately prepare some fodder and place it around the barracks so that they do not die of starvation."

He called again in the afternoon to ask whether we provided food for the deer.

I said, "The order was carried out. And now why in the middle of the war with Daesh why are you concerned about the food for the deer?"

He answered, "I strongly believe that they say prayers."

U.S. sends envoy to press for peace talks in Afghanistan

Washington has dispatched a special envoy for Afghanistan to press for peace talks between the government and Taliban fighters, with the diplomat scheduled to visit Kabul on a trip with stops in five nations, the U.S. State Department said.

U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad departed on Friday to travel to Doha, Kabul, Islamabad, Oslo and Sofia, the department said in a statement, Reuters reported.

The United States is drawing down its troops in Afghanistan under an agreement struck in February with the Taliban.

The agreement aimed to pave the way for formal peace talks between the insurgents and the Afghan government, and Khalilzad's task is to try and bring both sides to the table.

Khalilzad plans to press for a deal on prisoner exchanges and a reduction in violence, two issues that have hampered progress toward starting peace talks.

"Although significant progress has been made on prisoner exchanges, the issue requires additional effort to fully resolve," the State Department said in its statement.

On Wednesday, Khalilzad condemned an attack by Afghan government forces that killed 45 people, including civilians, in airstrikes against Taliban fighters in a western province bordering Iran.

Tunisia interior minister named new PM, to form gov't in a month

Tunisia's Interior Minister Hichem Mechichi has been appointed to form the next government, the president's office said, amid political tensions among major parties in the North African country.

The 46-year-old lawyer succeeds Elyes Fakhfakh, who resigned as prime minister earlier this month. But Mechichi was not one of the names proposed by the governing political parties to President Kais Saied.

In a statement following Saturday's announcement, Mechichi said he would "work to form a government that meets the expectations of all Tunisians".

According to al Jazeera, Tunisia has been praised as a rare success story for democratic transition after the Arab Spring regional uprisings sparked by its 2011 revolution.

But its leaders have struggled to meet the expectations of the Tunisian people and the already fragile economy has been battered by the closure of the country's borders because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The disease has killed nearly 50 people and infected more than 1,400 in Tunisia.

As well as being the interior minister in the outgoing government, Mechichi has been a counsellor to President Saied, handling legal matters. He has previously been chief of staff at the Ministry of Transport and also served in the Ministry of Social Affairs.

UK to boost ability to handle space threat from Russia, China

The United Kingdom will boost its ability to handle threats posed by Russia and China in space as part of a foreign, security and defence policy review being conducted by the government, Defence Secretary Ben Wallace has said.

"This week we have been reminded of the threat Russia poses to our national security with the provocative test of a weapon-like projectile from a satellite threatening the peaceful use of space," Wallace wrote in The Sunday Telegraph newspaper, adding that China also posed a threat.

"China, too, is developing offensive space weapons and both nations are upgrading their capabilities. Such behavior only underlines the importance of the review the government is currently conducting," he added.

On Thursday, the UK said it was concerned about a Russian satellite test which involved the launch of a projectile with the "characteristics of a weapon".

Tensions between London and Moscow have been high in recent weeks, as the UK has targeted Russians with new sanctions, accused Russian actors of trying to meddle in last year's election and said Russia has tried to hack into vaccine research.

Separately, the UK announced on Monday it would suspend its extradition treaty with Hong Kong in an escalation of a dispute with China over its introduction of a national security law for the former British colony.

Earlier this month, Prime Minister Boris Johnson ordered equipment from China's Huawei Technologies to be purged completely from the UK's 5G network by the end of 2027.

Resistance News

IOF kidnaps two MPs, other citizens in W. Bank

INTERNATIONAL **TEHRAN**— The Israeli occupation forces (IOF) at dawn Sunday kidnaped Palestinian lawmakers Hatem Qafisheh and Nayef al-Rajoub from their homes in al-Khalil.

According to local sources, Qafisheh was kidnaped from al-Khalil city and al-Rajoub from Dura town, southwest of al-Khalil.

Earlier, three young men were kidnaped by the IOF in Qalqilya. They were identified as Mohamed Yassin, Wisam Hamada and Wajdi al-Shanti.

In Jerusalem, the Israeli occupation police kidnaped two brothers identified as Rabhi and Ahmed al-Asmar during their presence in al-Wad street in the Old City.

Clashes flare up as IOF raids al-Khalil City

INTERNATIONAL **TEHRAN**— Violent confrontations broke out on Saturday afternoon when Israeli occupation forces (IOF) stormed Bab al-Zawiya area in al-Khalil City.

Eyewitnesses said that the IOF heavily showered the Palestinian citizens who confronted the raid with tear gas canisters and stun grenades.

No injuries were reported in the clashes, local sources reported.

Tension is witnessed on almost a daily basis in al-Khalil City, which has been targeted for 25 years with a settlement plan aimed at expanding Jewish neighborhoods there and gradually emptying the area of Palestinian residents through violence, demolitions, and land seizures.

Anti-Netanyahu protesters violently attacked

Protesters taking to streets against Israel's prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu have been violently attacked as revolt is building up against rampant corruption in the Tel Aviv regime and its handling of the coronavirus pandemic.

At least 5,000 people converged on a square outside Netanyahu's residence in Jerusalem al-Quds on Saturday night, holding a rally which lasted for three hours.

"They stole from the poor to give to the rich, what a corrupt regime!" the protesters chanted. They also carried signs reading "Enough with the detached regime!"

"The people at the top are dealing with crazy things instead of the economy and with people's health, like tax breaks for Netanyahu. It's time for him to resign," Gidi Carmon, 23, who came from the central city of Modiin to attend the protests for the first time, told the Times of Israel.

"Take annexation — it's not even about right or wrong, it's about timing. How did they spend so much time on that in the middle of this crisis?" Carmon asked in reference to Netanyahu's declared intent to annex large parts of the occupied West Bank and the strategic Jordan Valley.

Amy Katz, a Jerusalem al-Quds resident, said, "We have a prime minister who's interested in advancing his personal affairs and can't lead the people."

Police moved in to disperse the protesters as the clock struck midnight, dragging activists off the street one by



one and eventually deploying two water cannons against the remaining demonstrators as they made some arrests.

As the protesters began to leave, they were attacked by a group of people wearing all black.

One person told the Haaretz daily that he and his friend were stopped by the group and physically attacked after they refused to answer if they were for or against Netanyahu.

In the Sha'ar Hanegev region bordering the besieged Gaza Strip, one demonstrator was stabbed by a group of attackers who assaulted demonstrators on a highway overpass.

The man, identified as a 40-year-old resident of Kibbutz Gavim, was treated for lacerations to his neck.

The protesters said a group came and told them that they were not allowed to be there and then attacked them.

Fires and pepper spray in Seattle as police protests widen across U.S.

→ 1 Police said officers used non-lethal weapons in attempts to disperse the thousands of marchers in the late afternoon after some protesters set fire to the construction site for a King County juvenile detention facility and courthouse, Reuters reported.

By 10 p.m. (0500 GMT), police had "made 45 arrests in connection with today's riot in the East Precinct," the Seattle Police wrote in a Twitter post.

It said "21 officers sustained injuries after being struck by bricks, rocks mortars/other explosives. Most officers were able to return to duty. One was treated at a hospital for a knee injury."

Earlier the police had said they were working to

secure access for the city's fire department to the blaze, which it said was started by about a dozen people who were part of a large group of demonstrators.

President Donald Trump said on Thursday that he expanded the deployment of federal police to Seattle, enraging local officials and igniting anger among protesters.

"We saw what was happening in Portland and we wanted to make sure in our city we were standing in solidarity with other moms," said Lhorna Murray, who attended on behalf of the newly formed Wall of Moms Seattle, replicating a tactic from the Portland protests where mothers, dressed in yellow, form a human wall

between protesters and law enforcement.

The tactics of federal officers in Portland have drawn the ire of local leaders and Democrats in Congress, who say those officers are using excessive force and complain of overreach by the Trump administration.

U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Washington Brian Moran said in a statement on Friday that federal agents are stationed in Seattle to protect federal properties and the work done in those buildings.

The Trump administration has also sent federal police to Chicago, Kansas City and Albuquerque, New Mexico, over the objections of those mayors.

North Korea declares emergency in border town over first suspected COVID-19 case

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un declared an emergency and a lockdown in a border town after a person suspected of being infected with the novel coronavirus returned from South Korea after illegally crossing the border, state media said on Sunday.

According to Reuters, if confirmed, it would be the first case officially acknowledged by North Korean authorities.

Kim convened an emergency politburo meeting in response to what he called a "critical situation in which the vicious virus could be said to have entered the country", the North's KCNA state news reported.

A person who defected to South Korea three years ago returned across the fortified border that divides the two Koreas to the town of Kaesong this month with symptoms of COVID-19, the disease caused by the virus, KCNA reported.

"An emergency event happened in Kaesong City where a runaway who went to the south three years ago, a person who is suspected to have been infected with the vicious virus returned on July 19 after illegally crossing the demarcation line," KCNA said.

KCNA did not say if the person had been tested, but said an "uncertain result was made from several medical check-ups



of the secretion of that person's upper respiratory organ and blood", prompting officials to quarantine the person and investigate anyone he may have been in contact with.

One analyst said the announcement was important, not only because North Korea was for the first time reporting a suspected coronavirus case but also because it suggested it was appealing for help.

"It's an ice-breaking moment for North Korea to admit a case," said Choo Jae-woo, a professor at Kyung Hee University.

"It could be reaching out to the world for help. Perhaps for humanitarian assistance."

North Korea is under economic pressure because of international sanctions over its nuclear programme.

Spotlight on Joe Biden as his VP reveal nears

With the White House campaign heading into its coronavirus-hobbled home stretch, Democratic nominee Joe Biden is preparing to announce his vice presidential running mate, a woman likely to play an outsized role in a new administration.

Some 100 days before his showdown with President Donald Trump, Biden, himself a former VP, is juggling competing pressures as he narrows his choice, AFP reported.

The big reveal -- expected in early August, weeks before a mostly virtual Democratic National Convention -- could be seen as more consequential this year given that Biden reportedly said he views himself as a "transition candidate" who could stock his administration with a new generation of leaders.

Biden, 77, would be the oldest person ever elected president. He has said he would not serve a second term if his mental or physical health declined, fuelling speculation that his running mate would likely top the ticket in 2024.

He has publicly committed to choosing a woman, and with recent protests against racial injustice following the police killing of George Floyd, many Democrats are calling on Biden to name an African American.

Will he pick Senator Kamala Harris or



former national security advisor Susan Rice, both 55, as a nod to a black constituency crucial to his primary victory and the Democratic Party?

Does he elevate Senator Elizabeth Warren as a way to energize the party's progressive wing, even though at age 71 she is hardly seen as the face of a new generation?

Or does Biden choose Asian American Tammy Duckworth, 52, the war-hero-turned-US-senator who could appeal to frustrated Republicans, former Trump supporters or independents looking for a moderate alternative?

Complicating matters, the coronavirus pandemic that has killed 145,000 Americans will certainly deny Biden a splashy in-person running mate rollout and threatens to remain a number one priority for the White House next year.

Putin says Russian Navy to get hypersonic nuclear strike weapons

Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Sunday the Russian Navy would be armed with hypersonic nuclear strike weapons and underwater nuclear drones, which the defense ministry said were in their final phase of testing.

Putin, who says he does not want an arms race, has often spoken of a new generation of Russian nuclear weapons that he says are unequalled and can hit almost anywhere in the world. Some Western experts have questioned how advanced they are, Reuters reported.

The weapons, some of which have yet to be deployed, include the Poseidon underwater nuclear drone, designed to be carried by submarines, and the Tsirkon (Zircon) hypersonic cruise missile, which can be deployed on surface ships.

The combination of speed, maneuverability and altitude of hypersonic missiles, capable of travelling at more than five times the speed of sound, makes them difficult to track and intercept.

Speaking in St Petersburg at an annual naval parade that



showcases Russia's best ships, nuclear submarines and naval aviation, Putin said the navy's capabilities were growing and it would get 40 new vessels this year.

He did not specify when it would receive new hypersonic

weapons, but suggested that day was drawing closer.

"The widespread deployment of advanced digital technologies that have no equals in the world, including hypersonic strike systems and underwater drones, will give the fleet unique advantages and increased combat capabilities," Putin said.

In a separate statement released via Russian news agencies, the defence ministry said testing of the Belgorod, the first submarine capable of carrying the Poseidon drones, was underway and testing of the weapons systems was nearing completion.

"Work is being successfully completed to create modern weapons systems for the Navy," it was cited as saying.

Putin last year threatened to deploy hypersonic missiles on ships and submarines that could lurk outside U.S. territorial waters if the United States moved to deploy intermediate-range nuclear weapons in Europe.

Washington has not deployed such missiles in Europe, but Moscow is worried it might.

U16 coach Abdi satisfied with his team's preparation

S P O R T S TEHRAN — The head coach of Iran U16 national football team, Hossein Abdi, hopes that his team will move forward step by step in the difficult condition caused by coronavirus pandemic, with maximum support from the Iranian football authorities.

The Iranian U16 football team started their training camp in Tehran from last week to prepare for the 2020 AFC U16 Championship.

"Before the outbreak of the coronavirus, we were supposed to have several training camps and participate in some tournaments,"

Abdi said. "But since February, we lost time due to this global crisis."

The Iranian boys have started the new training camp from July 18 under the medical and health protocols that have been set for all the football teams by the Iranian health authorities.

"Fortunately, the three-month postponement of the tournament gave us a valuable time to prepare the team with a better condition," Abdi added.

The accommodation of the national team's technical staff and players is different in order to observe the maximum



physical distance.

The 19th edition of the AFC U16 Championship will be held in Bahrain from November 25 to December 12. A total of 16 teams compete in the event in four groups of four.

Iran are in Group A of the competitions along with the hosts Bahrain, North Korea, and Qatar. Abdi believes that it is the toughest group of the tournament.

"Bahrain are the hosts of the tournament

and will benefit from the hosting rights, and like Qatar, they have made a huge investment in the development of youth football. In my opinion, we are in the most difficult group in the competitions."

Iran and North Korea will hold the opener of the event on November 25. The Persians will next take on Bahrain on November 28 before locking horns with Qatar on December 1.

Mehdi Taremi helps Rio Ave qualify for Europa League

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Iranian striker Mehdi Taremi netted a brace against Boavista on Saturday and helped Rio Ave book a place at the 2020-21 Europa League play-off round.

Rio Ave completed the Primeira Liga's top five in the ever-evolving tussle for the final qualifying spot for Europa League football, taking advantage of FC Famalicão's 3-3 draw to Marítimo to leapfrog the former with a 2-0 win against Boavista.

Last week, Porto won their 29th Portuguese title after a 2-0 home win over Sporting.

Taremi, who joined Rio Ave at the beginning of the season on a two-year deal, scored 18 goals for the Primeira Liga side in the season.

The 28-year-old forward was also named among top three goalscorers along with Benfica players Carlos Vinícius and Pizzi.

"I am very happy since we've qualified for the Europa League play-off round. I dedicate this success to all Rio Ave fans," Taremi said.

The Iran star had been previously linked with Portuguese giants Porto and Benfica.

French clubs Nantes, Marseille and St. Etienne and Werder Bremen of Germany have already shown their interest in signing the former Persepolis striker.

Last week, Sardar Azmoun became the first Iranian football player to win Russian Premier League (RPL) Golden Boot.



Halep withdraws from Palermo, organisers 'profoundly disappointed'

World number two Simona Halep has withdrawn from next month's Palermo Ladies Open following Italy's decision to impose a mandatory quarantine for people coming from Romania and Bulgaria amid the coronavirus pandemic, organizers said on Sunday.

Italian Health Minister Roberto Speranza said on Friday people who have been in Romania and Bulgaria in the past 14 days will be quarantined upon arrival in Italy, a move aimed at preventing the importation of COVID-19 cases.

"We found out with great bitterness the decision of the world number two to cancel her participation," the tournament's director Oliviero Palma said in a statement.

Palermo will be the first professional tennis event across the WTA and men's ATP

Tours after a five-month break, with action scheduled to get underway on the clay courts of the Sicilian capital from Aug. 3.

"Given the recent rise in Covid-19 cases in Romania and my anxieties around international air travel at this time, I have made the tough decision to withdraw from Palermo," Halep said on Twitter.

"I want to thank the tournament director and the Italian ministry of health for all their efforts on my behalf and I wish the tournament a successful week."

Halep, the reigning Wimbledon champion and 2018 French Open winner, has also committed to the Prague Open, scheduled to start on Aug. 10.

Italy was the first European country to be hit hard by the novel coronavirus but



the amount of daily new infections being reported is a fraction of the numbers in late March. The country has recorded over 35,000 deaths from the virus.

Palma said the organizers had written an urgent letter to Italy's health minister, asking for exemption for tennis players taking part in the event.

"Yesterday we were optimistic, and we had informed Halep's staff about the fact that professional players are not obliged to quarantine," Palma said. "We are embittered and profoundly disappointed."

Palermo will have strict health precautions and all players will undergo COVID-19 tests before they come, on arrival and every four days subsequently.

(Source: Reuters)

Man United eye Coman as Sancho alternative - sources

Bayern Munich winger Kingsley Coman is on Manchester United's list of alternatives if they cannot secure a deal for Jadon Sancho this summer, sources have told ESPN.

United are hopeful they can land Sancho, despite Borussia Dortmund's insistence it will take a bid of around £120 million.

United believe that price tag is unrealistic in a transfer window impacted by the coronavirus pandemic and value the 20-year-old at closer to £80m.

Ole Gunnar Solskjær is keen to sign a winger to complement his other forwards and Coman, 24, has emerged as an option if a deal for Sancho cannot be agreed.

United would be open to exploring a loan move for the France international, although there is a feeling at Old Traf-

ford that Bayern would only consider a permanent transfer.

Coman has scored 32 goals in 158 appearances for the German giants after arriving from Juventus, initially on loan, in 2015.

He is facing increased competition for places at the Allianz Arena next season after Bayern swooped to sign Leroy Sané from Manchester City.

Sancho remains United's top target in the next transfer window. Sources have told ESPN that the England star would like to return to England after three years in the Bundesliga and views Old Trafford as an attractive destination.

United's bid to sign Sancho will be made easier if Solskjær's team qualify for the Champions League.

(Source: ESPN)



Jan Oblak to Chelsea? Jamie Carragher 'would be surprised' if club have not lined up Kepa successor

Jamie Carragher believes Chelsea may already have lined up a successor to goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga as they look to further improve their squad for a Premier League title push next season, labelling reported Blues transfer target Jan Oblak as a "game-changer".

The FA Cup finalists have been extremely proactive in the market over recent months after going successive windows without making any new signings, with completed deals for highly-rated Moroccan playmaker Hakim Ziyech and prolific German striker Timo Werner demonstrating Chelsea's ambitions to provide manager Frank Lampard with the upgrades he needs to close the gap to Liverpool and Manchester City in 2020/21.

While the pursuit of another attacker in Bayer Leverkusen's Kai Havertz and potentially another midfielder and left-back appears to be the priority for the club amid links to the likes of West Ham's



Declan Rice and Ben Chilwell at Leicester, a new goalkeeper could also be on the agenda this summer, with Lampard yet to be fully convinced regarding current no1 option Kepa.

Chelsea paid a record £71.6million fee for a goalkeeper to sign the Spaniard from Athletic Bilbao in 2018, but his form since that high-profile transfer has been notably erratic, testing the patience of fans.

Atletico Madrid's Oblak - who has established a reputation as one of the best 'keepers in the world over recent years - is now being mentioned in connection with a move to Stamford Bridge, but there are suggestions that his £109m buyout clause will have to be met in full for such a switch to happen.

Liverpool legend and Sky Sports pundit Carragher believes that would be a price worth paying in order to address a pressing issue, encouraging Lampard to "try and recoup what he can" for Kepa, who he believes is "not the required standard for a side of Chelsea's class".

"Given how much money has already been invested in more attackers, I would be

surprised if Chelsea have not already lined up Arrizabalaga's successor," Carragher - who thinks Lampard will follow the route taken by Manchester City counterpart Pep Guardiola, who replaced the struggling Claudio Bravo with Ederson in 2018 - wrote in his latest column for The Telegraph.

"Atletico Madrid's Jan Oblak is the best available and would be a game-changer."

"Yes, meeting his £109m buyout clause is mega expensive, but it looks like Chelsea have the funds."

"Oblak is the closest you will find to a no-brainer for any coach in need of a keeper, and given Petr Cech's involvement in Chelsea's technical department - and remembering the impact he had when becoming one of Jose Mourinho's first recruits in 2004 - the club can be well advised on what a ready-made no1 can do."

"That is their biggest priority."

(Source: standard.co.uk)

Discipline the 'secret weapon' for Persepolis

I → Persepolis have won four Iran league titles, one Hazfi Cup, three Super Cups and one AFC Champions League silver medal and have never walked alone since their fans have supported them during in the years, even when they won nothing.

Persepolis's archrivals Esteghlal are also another most popular football team in the country but they have lacked of several factors during the past years including stability and discipline.

The Reds can act as role model for the other Iranian teams.

This day last year: Iran U21 volleyball team made history

S P O R T S TEHRAN — On this day last year, Iran claimed the title of the FIVB U21 World Championship.

The Persians won the accolade for the first time ever after defeating Italy 3-2 (25-17, 17-25, 23-25, 25-22, 12-15) in the final match at the Isa Sport City Hall C in Riffa, Bahrain.



Iran captain Amirhosseini Esfandiari was named as the Most Valuable Player and Mohammadreza Hazratpour chosen as the tournament's Best Libero.

The team headed by Behrouz Ataei, also defeated Argentina and Brazil in the prestigious tournament.

Jelveh, Hazratpour, Toukhteh, Falahat, Daneshdoust, Feyz, Saadat, Esfandiari (c), Kamalabadi, Saberi, Yali and Sharifi were Iran's 12 players in the competition.

Vahid Shamsaei named Giti Pasand coach

Tasnim — Iran futsal legend pivot Vahid Shamsaei has been named as new head coach of Giti Pasand club.

The 44-year-old coach has penned a one-year contract with the Isfahan-based futsal club.

Shamsaei, who has scored 392 goals in international matches, has already coached Iranian teams Dabiri Tabriz and Tasisat Daryaei.

Shamsaei inspired Tasisat to win the 2015 AFC Futsal Club Championship.

Giti Pasand have won Iran Futsal Super League twice in 2013 and 2107.

Gomis extends stay at Al Hilal

2019 AFC Champions League winners Al Hilal have announced that they have extended the contract of French forward Bafétimbi Gomis for two more years.

The 34-year-old striker had been influential in Al Hilal's 2019 AFC Champions League title victory, winning the MOst Valuable Player and Top Scorer awards with 11 goals.

"The Lion is happy to stay in Hilal for two more years and to know more about Saudi Culture," said Gomes on his official Twitter account.

"I want to thank the fans, the coach Razvan Lucescu, my fellow players and all the technical and administrative staff at the club," he added. "I am looking forward to the next two years for more success for the Blues."

Gomis, known for his Lion-like goal celebrations, helped Al Hilal climb to the top of the Saudi League before it was suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic, scoring 14 goals.

The Frenchman is also leading the top scorers table in the 2020 AFC Champions League with three goals with Al Hilal set to resume their title defense against Uzbekistan's Pakhtakor on September 14.

(Source: the-afc)

Mini-Basketball leader Ken Charles passes away

Great Britain's Ken Charles, who spent the majority of his life promoting basketball and introducing kids to the sport the world over, has died. He was 87.

Charles was very influential in the development of basketball in the United Kingdom, which he first came to know at the age of 23 while a teacher in London. He soon after introduced children and staff to the sport when he became the head teacher at the newly founded newly founded Greneway School in Hertfordshire.

Charles devoted much of his energies to Mini-Basketball, which he was led to in 1976 by FIBA's first Secretary General, William Jones.

Charles led and managed the development of the important children's sport across the world, presiding over conferences and zone Mini-Basketball committees. He tutored the training of experienced coaches who then returned home to their respective countries to share the philosophy and good practice of Mini-Basketball.

He received the FIBA Order of Merit in 2002.

During his career, Charles served as Executive Chairman and President of Basketball England, and as President Emeritus.

(Source: FIBA)

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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

The world is a snake; its exterior is soft and nice to touch, and its interior contains deadly poison. Stupid and ignorant people are charmed by it but the wise avoid it.

Imam Ali (AS)

Dotar virtuoso Osman Mohammad-Parast receives copy of UNESCO certificate

→1 UNESCO accepted the traditional skills of crafting and playing the dotar on the world body's list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

The registration took place during the annual meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, which was held in the Colombian capital of Bogota.

Dotar, a string instrument with a pear-shaped body, is mostly played in folk performances common in Torbat-e Jaam and nearby regions in North Khorasan Province.

Mohammad-Parast mostly known as Osman Khafi has been playing dotar since he was 12.

The musician received the medal of the Islamic Culture Capital 2017. The master, who is a veteran folk musician from his native region of Khorasan in northeast Iran, received the medal from Khorasan Razavi Governor-General Office.

Dotar means "two strings" in Persian, and some believe one string is male and functions as the accord, while the other is female, playing the main melody.



Dotar virtuoso Osman Mohammad-Parast in an undated photo. (Mehr/Masud Saki)

Performers play the dotar on important social and cultural occasions such as weddings, parties, celebrations and ritual ceremonies. Bearers and practitioners are mostly farmers, including male crafters and players and female players.

In recent decades, it has also been played in local, regional, national and international festivals. While playing, the players recount epic, historical, lyric, moral and gnostic narrations that are central to their ethnic history, pride and identity.

According to the UN cultural body, traditional knowledge relating to crafting and playing the dotar is passed on informally through the master-student method, and the element is also present in local oral and written literature, which reflects the history and background of the bearers. The element fosters peaceful co-existence, mutual respect and understanding both among different communities and with neighboring countries.

Manette Ansay's debut novel "Vinegar Hill" published in Persian

CULTURE **TEHRAN** — A Persian translation of American writer A. Manette Ansay's first novel "Vinegar Hill" by Nazanin Nikuseresh has come out in Tehran.

Khazeh is the publisher of the book.

The award-winning author Ansay re-creates a stifling world of guilt and pain in a stark, troubling, yet ultimately triumphant celebration of self-determination, and the tormented souls who inhabit it in her first novel "Vinegar Hill".

Ansay's "Vinegar Hill" established the writer as a novelist who could tell a difficult story with great grace.

The book is about Ellen Grier and her family who move back to Holly's Field in Wisconsin in 1972.

Dutifully accompanying her newly unemployed husband, Ellen has brought her two children into the home of her in-laws on Vinegar Hill, a loveless house suffused with the settling dust of bitterness and routine, where calculated cruelty is a way of life.

Behind a facade of false piety, there are sins and secrets in this place that could crush a vibrant young woman's passionate spirit. And here Ellen must find the strength to endure, change and grow in the all-pervading darkness that threatens to destroy everything she is and everyone she loves.

Ansay grew up in Wisconsin among 67 cousins and over 200 second cousins.

She is the author of six novels, including "Good Things I Wish You", "Read This and Tell Me What It Says" and "Limbo".

Her awards include a National Endowment for the Arts Grant, a Pushcart Prize, the Nelson Algren Prize and two Great Lakes Book Awards.

Vocalist Salar Aqili calls playing to an empty hall tough experience

A R T **TEHRAN** — Vocalist Salar Aqili and his ensemble went on stage at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on Friday to perform to an empty auditorium, something that he called a really tough experience.

"It is very difficult for me to give a concert without an audience. This is the first time I am doing this but I should say that the audience is always in my heart," Aqili said before his performance.

"Leave Me Free" was the first song he and his pianist wife Harir Shariatzadeh performed at the beginning of the concert, but they were later accompanied by other members of the ensemble in the next performances.

Wearing face masks, the musicians included Monika Loran, Ali Jafari-Puyan, Sohrab Barahmandi, Ehsan Shami and Fardin Lahurpur.

"My Homeland", "What Can I Say", "Find Me", "I Stay Alone" and "Iran" were among other songs performed at the concert.

Aqili also performed the song "Mother" and said, "I was supposed to perform this song at the Espinas Palace Hotel in Tehran in February, but the concert was halted due to the spread of coronavirus,



Vocalist Salar Aqili performs an online concert at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on July 24, 2020. (Honaronline/Seyyed Barat Zamani)

and I hereby dedicate this song to all the mothers."

He also paid tribute to veteran actor Ali Nasirian for his role in the TV series

"Dear Brother", while he was singing "I Stay Alone", the ending credit song of the TV series.

A noteworthy point was that the concert was performed on a stage where the empty seats of the hall served as a constant reminder of the coronavirus days.

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

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

However, the musicians and the organizers have preferred to concentrate more on online concerts.

Vocalists Alireza Qorbani and Homayun Shajarian gave separate online concerts at Vahdat Hall in May.

Vahid Taj, Ali Zandevakili and Parvaz Homay, pianist Saman Ehteshami and tar virtuoso Keivan Saket were among other musicians who gave online concerts at Vahdat Hall due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Kayhan Kalhor performs for "Dance on Balloons"



Kurdish Iranian musician Kayhan Kalhor performs in an undated photo.

A R T **TEHRAN** — Kurdish Iranian kamancheh virtuoso Kayhan Kalhor has composed and played a score for "Dance on Balloons", a short film directed by Vahid Sheikhzadeh.

The movie revolves around the Kurdish children living in Sarepole Zahab, a quake-stricken town in the western Iranian province of Kermanshah.

Normal life has not returned to Sarepole Zahab yet since 2017 after a devastating earthquake reduced the town to rubble.

Kalhor has received no payment for his collaboration in "Dance on Balloons", and he has expressed sympathy for the children by his partnership in this project, a public relations team of the movie said in a statement published on Sunday.

The world-renowned musician has always been responsive to issues involving the Kurdish people.

In October 2019, four-time Grammy Award nominee Kalhor canceled his concert in Istanbul, Turkey, in

protest over the country's assault on the Kurds in Syria.

"The violence and the war in Syria have caused a lot of grief for the Kurds and this catastrophe will cause heavy casualties and make many people homeless, but some politicians do not realize these issues," he lamented.

"I was scheduled to perform a concert in Istanbul in the near future, but I canceled it in sympathy for my Kurdish brothers and sisters," he noted.

Kalhor has won several awards at Iranian and international music events.

He won the Artist Award of the globalFEST, North America's most important world music industry event, which was held in New York in January.

He won the Artist Award at the WOMEX Awards, the World Music Expo, in Finland in August 2019.

He was also one of the two winners of the Isaac Stern Human Spirit Award at the Shanghai Isaac Stern International Violin Competition in August 2018.

Tehran theater to host people who want to see "Who's Mr. Schmitt?"

A R T **TEHRAN** — French writer Sebastien Thiéry's comedy play "Who's Mr. Schmitt?" ("Qui est Monsieur Schmitt?") will be staged at Tehran's Shano Theater from July 29.

Mohammad-Mehdi Rezaian is the director of the play, which will be performed by a cast composed of Nazanin Khalili, Shayan Qannadzaheh, Hamed Suri, Mehdi Asadi and Ali Homayunifar.

Published in 2009, the play is about Mr. and Mrs. Béliér, who are having dinner in their home when they are interrupted by a phone call. While they have no phone service, the caller insists on speaking with a Mr. Schmitt.

The Béliers find out the interior of

their apartment has changed, the frames hanging on the walls have been replaced by others, books and clothes are not theirs. They start thinking maybe they are Mr. and Mrs. Schmitt.

The play achieved great success in Paris and was nominated for the best comedy at the Molière Awards in 2010.

"Who's Mr. Schmitt?" has been staged by several Iranian directors over the past decade.

Davud Rashid directed the play at the Samandarian Hall of the Iranian Theater Forum in 2011.

In 2015, Nader Naderpur's troupe performed it at Tehran's Arasbaran Cultural Center.



Siamak Safari and Behnaz Jafari act in a scene from "Who's Mr. Schmitt?" directed by Davud Rashidi at the Samandarian Hall of the Iranian Theater Forum in 2011. (Cinemapress/Maryam Qasemi)

In 2019, Iranian director Sohrab Salimi staged the play at the Abbas Javanmard Hall of the Iranian Theater Forum.

Qatreh published a Persian translation of "Who's Mr. Schmitt?" by Shahla Haeri in 2017.

Thiéry is also an actor and has played roles in various movies directed by Bertrand Tavernier, Gérard Jugnot, Alain Chabat and Jean-Michel Ribes.

He started a career in theater by writing his debut play "Sans ascenseur" when he was 30. The play was staged by director Jean-Michel Ribes at the Théâtre du Rond-Point in 2005.

He is the writer of a dozen plays, which have been performed across the world.

His "Ramses II" penned in 2017 was directed by Stéphane Hillel.

100 Works, 100 Artists Exhibition to go online amid COVID-19 pandemic

A R T **TEHRAN** — The 28th edition of the 100 Works, 100 Artists Exhibition will go online this year due to the rapid spread of coronavirus, the organizer of the annual event said on Sunday.

A selection of 282 artworks by artists from different generations will be showcased online on the website and Instagram of Golestan Gallery, Lili Golestan announced in a press release.

"People keep asking about the exhibit. They were used to visiting the exhibit in summer. A big crowd always waited outside the gallery to see the works, but now with this cursed new virus, we are forced to hold an online exhibit," she said.

"Of course, I am certain we will have more visitors, but I am not sure about the sale. I have always taken risks in my life, and now I have to wait and see what will

happen next," she added.

"The exhibit has been a good venue to introduce young talented artists from other cities. A good number of artists will be taking part in this edition. Artists from other cities especially Isfahan stand on top, then comes artists from Shiraz, Mashhad, Rasht and Kerman," she stated.

She also noted that several private collectors have also offered their works by veteran artists such as Parviz Kalantari, Reza Maafi, Parvaneh Ettemadi, Nasser Ovissi, Kambiz Derambakhsh and Faramarz Pialaram.

Works by veterans from the private collectors' collections alongside works by members of the younger generation have always helped encourage the youth, she said.

She added that the works are on sale at reasonable prices, and hoped that these difficult days would end soon and everything would return as it was previously.



Art aficionados visit the 100 Works, 100 Artists Exhibit at Tehran's Golestan Gallery on August 2, 2019. (Honaronline/Zeinab Mahdavi)



An Iranian nomad group dances in an undated photo.

Avesta band's album of happy Iranian folk songs ready for release

CULTURE **TEHRAN** — Arash Avesta, the leader and singer of the Avesta band, has said that his group recorded an album of folk songs from across Iran, which will be released in the near future.

The group has spent four years preparing a collection of 28 songs, 12 of which will be published in the audio-visual album "Happiness of Iranian Tribes".

"The orchestration of the album is based on Iranian instruments, and wind

instruments and local instruments have also been used to embellish the tracks," Avesta said in a press release on Sunday.

"Lyrics in each song are also based on the accents the local people speak, however, each song has a chorus in Persian, which is the common language of all Iranians; this lets all people enjoy the songs," he added.

He said he has gained valuable experience as a singer in performing the songs on the album, and added,

"I also used harmonies from Iranian and classical Western music in the performances."

"The visual aspect of the album provides an opportunity for the audience to be familiar with the ambiance of the folk music across the country and their local instruments and attire," Avesta noted.

He also announced his plan to publish a collection of the folk songs in few next years.