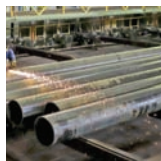




We are waiting for South Korea's tangible actions **2**



Domestic manufacturing of oil pipes saves Iran €60m **5**



Bernardo Rezende linked with Iran volleyball hotseat **11**



Afghan sculptor Abdollahi to showcase collection at Tehran gallery **12**

Leader condemns U.S. racism

“Hajj is expression of the hard and soft capabilities of the Ummah”

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See page 2

IRGC launches underground ballistic missiles

TEHRAN — The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Aerospace Force on Wednesday successfully launched a series of ballistic missiles from well-camouflaged underground missile systems during a large-scale military exercise underway in southern Iran.

It was the first time that the IRGC launched missiles from underground.

On the second day of Payambar-e Azam (The Great Prophet) 14, the IRGC

Aerospace Force showcased parts of its capabilities in combating hypothetical threats of the enemy.

According to Tasnim, the IRGC's Sukhoi-22 fighter jets also destroyed targets on the Farur Island with winged bombs.

A broad range of smart bombs were dropped to detonate the hypothetical enemy's targets with great accuracy, as the targets have been designed on a much smaller scale than the actual size. ➔ **3**

Bank loans to economic sectors up 50% in a quarter on year

TEHRAN — Iranian banking system has paid 2.247 quadrillion rials (about \$53.5 billion) of facilities to domestic economic sectors during the first quarter of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-June 20), which was 50.5 percent more than the figure of the first quarter of the previous year.

According to the data provided by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI), working capital

loans paid to different economic sectors were 1.406 quadrillion rials (about \$33.476 billion) accounting for 62.6 percent of the total provided facilities in the first quarter, IRNA reported.

As reported, the total working capital loans provided in the mentioned period increased by 59.2 percent compared to the figure for the same period of time in the past year. ➔ **4**

Zavareh's traditional blacksmithing added to intangible cultural heritage list

TEHRAN — The centuries-old traditional blacksmithing in the oasis city of Zavareh on the edge of the central desert of Iran in Isfahan province has been inscribed on the National Intangible Cultural Heritage list, a provincial tourism chief has said.

Blacksmithing is one of the oldest professions practicing in the city of Zavareh, which, despite the entry of industry into this field, is still standing.

Making shovels, skewers, tripods, scythes, and pliers are among the products of the blacksmiths of the city, which are exported to different cities across the country, ISNA quoted Mehdi Mashhadi as saying on Wednesday.

Iron replaced bronze for use in tools and weapons in the late 2nd and the 1st millennia BC, and from then until the Industrial Revolution, ➔ **8**

Corporate and government-controlled media in U.S. have lost credibility: African American author

By Amir Mohammad Esmaeili

TEHRAN — Abayomi Azikiwe, an African American author and journalist in Detroit, tells the Tehran Times that the owners of mainstream media in the U.S. have a vested interest in crushing the anti-racist movement and as a result they “have lost credibility”.

Azikiwe says the fact that most people are suspicious of cable networks and news publications “can potentially place the ruling class in serious danger of a national uprising since its appeal to the masses could easily be rejected by key elements in the population.”

Azikiwe, who is the editor of the Pan-African News Wire, also expresses his dismay over the illegal presence of U.S. forces in Syria, saying, “The American government resents the independent character of the Syria state and therefore all peace and freedom-loving people throughout the world should defend the inherent right of the Syrian people to determine their leadership and the social system that best suits them in this historical period.”

The African-American writer also says U.S. forces have been deployed in the West Asia region to just “serve an imperialist agenda”.

The text of the interview with Azikiwe is as follows:

■ Firstly, please let me ask your opinion on the recent U.S. illegal move in Syria. On Thursday night, U.S. warplanes operating illegally in Syria conducted some dangerous maneuvering close to the Mahan Air flight. The Civil Aviation Organization of Iran called it “a clear violation of international law and aviation standards and regulations.” What is your comment?

A: This incident which gained major coverage in the U.S. corporate media was not an accident. The Trump administration has never concealed its hostility towards Iran. Fortunately, the pilots were able to avoid a crash landing. Although reports indicate that many people suffered injuries. Such occurrences should not go without an official response from international human rights agencies particularly within the United Nations framework. ➔ **7**

Mutual interests entail Iran, China to quickly finalize their strategic cooperation document

TEHRAN — The Iran-China strategic cooperation program, which is under negotiation, should have been finalized years ago given that the two countries need each other and that the expansion of cooperation will best serve their national interests in various sectors, experts and former diplomats say.

The 25-year Iran-China comprehensive cooperation plan is not finalized yet. However, it was exposed to extensive discussion inside and outside Iran. The cabinet of Hassan Rouhani approved the draft of the plan on June 21 and tasked Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif with negotiating with China over the plan in order to finalize it. Three days later, the foreign minister held talks by phone with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi.

During the talks, Iran's chief diplomat expressed hope that 25-year cooperation would be signed soon.

“Foreign Minister Zarif then highlighted the strategic comprehensive relations between the two countries, expressing hope that the document on comprehensive cooperation would be soon signed by the two sides,” Iranian Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

Writing on his Twitter page in Chinese, Zarif also said, “On the eve of the Dragon Boat Festival in China, I am very pleased to hold a video conference meeting with Wang Yi, State Councilor and foreign minister of China. We agreed on deepening the comprehensive strategic partnership between the two countries, promoting the 25-year bilateral cooperation plan, and strengthening mutual support in international affairs. We reaffirmed our support for the Iranian nuclear agreement, multilateralism and international law, and jointly expressed our objection to the unilateralism and the weakening of the Iranian nuclear agreement.” ➔ **2**

National library purchases rare Shahnameh manuscript

TEHRAN — The National Library and Archives of Iran (NLAI) has recently purchased a rare manuscript copy of Persian poet Ferdowsi's epic masterpiece Shahnameh that is considered the most unabridged and perfect version ever found.

The version was inscribed in the 15th and 16th centuries during the late Timurid period and early Safavid era, the library announced in a press release, which did not mention the identity of the seller.

“The national library is the national memory

of the people, and its experts consider themselves as the guardians of the national assets. Therefore, they recognize, in particular, that all manuscripts deserve to be preserved at the library,” said Zahra Modarresi, the NLAI deputy director in the Rare and Manuscript Books Office.

“The newly-purchased version of the Shahnameh has satisfied the experts' specific criteria for being preserved at the NLAI,” she noted.

About the unique characteristics of the copy of the book, Modarresi said, “Most of the available

versions of the Shahnameh are not complete and unadulterated, but the newly-purchased copy is absolutely unabridged and perfect. It has been inscribed beautifully in nastaliq script and its first two pages carry absolutely fascinating inscriptions.”

She said that NLAI's Rare and Manuscript Books Office has acquired a number of special containers to preserve rare manuscripts and documents under carefully controlled conditions. ➔ **12**

Very quiet and deserted but beautiful: the 12th-century Jameh Mosque of Saveh

Once a very bustling place of worship from 12th century onwards, the Seljuk-era Jameh Mosque of Saveh is now very lonely and tranquil. However, it is still a big source of charm for the faithful, sightseers, and buffs of history and Islamic architecture.

The mosque comprises a courtyard, porch, minaret, dome and two archaic altars ornamented with Kufic calligraphic works. The mosque is named after Saveh, where it stands tall in central Iranian city.

The terms “Jameh Mosque” or “Masjed-e Jameh” or “Friday Mosque” is used in Iran for a grand communal mosque where mandatory Friday prayers are/were performed: the phrase is used in other Muslim countries but only in Iran does it designate this purpose.



© Tehran Times/Samira Nazari



U.S. protests continue as Barr defends federal response in Portland

By staff & agencies

Protests that resurged over the weekend in the United States continued late Monday and into Tuesday, while Attorney General William P. Barr defended the federal response to unrest in Portland, Ore., in testimony to a House committee, Washington Post reported.

Here are some significant developments:

* The U.S. Customs and Border Protection confirmed it will be sending additional federal agents to Portland in response to the ongoing confrontations between demonstrators and authorities there. More deputies began to arrive at the city last week, The Washington Post reported Monday.

* In Richmond, authorities said white supremacists marched to disrupt peaceful protests in the Virginia capital over the weekend. In Minneapolis, a person who smashed windows during a May protest — dubbed “umbrella man”

on social media — is a suspected white supremacist, police said.

* Attorney General William P. Barr released his opening statement for the congressional testimony he delivered on Tuesday and defended the federal response in Portland.

■ **Federal agents pull out of Seattle** Meanwhile, U.S. agents deployed to Seattle to protect federal property have left the city after local officials complained their presence was escalating tensions, Seattle's mayor said on Tuesday.

U.S. tactical forces arrived in Washington state's largest city last week and were on standby to protect federal facilities after attacks on a federal courthouse in Portland, Oregon.

Mayor Jenny Durkan rejected the deployment, saying it did not have the consent of local officials and could incite the property damage it was supposed to prevent. ➔ **10**

Charity building 179 bridges, roads in deprived areas

TEHRAN — Barekat Charity Foundation is working on projects for building 179 bridge and roads in deprived and underprivileged areas of 13 provinces of the country.

To date, 60 projects have been completed and the rest are underway, Mehr reported on Wednesday.

Affiliated to the Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam also known as Setad-e Ejraiye Farman-e Hazrat-e Emam, the Foundation covers 60 cities and villages in these provinces by the construction and infrastructure activities, Mehr quoted Mohammad Mahjouri, the Foundation's deputy head, as saying on Wednesday.

Also, 18 bridge and road construction projects are ready to be inaugurated, he stated.

The provinces of Khuzestan, Sistan-Baluchestan, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, and Lorestan have the largest shares of the bridges and roads, he highlighted.

A budget of 1.4 trillion rials (nearly \$35 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) has been predicted to be allocated for the projects, he stated.

Emphasizing that many residents of rural areas are suffering from the lack of roads and bridges, he said that the construction of bridges and roads in urban and rural areas, in addition to preventing the forced migration of villagers and various social, cultural, economic and livelihood problems due to marginalization in cities, causes the survival of the population in the border areas of the country, improving the living standards of the villagers and expanding social justice. ➔ **9**

Leader condemns U.S. government's racism, backs Black Lives Matter

“Hajj is expression of the hard and soft capabilities of the Ummah”

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei says Iran condemns the racist behavior of the U.S. government toward its people and supports the American people's anti-racism movement.

“In the recent events in the U.S. and the anti-racism movement, our decisive stance is to support the people and condemn the cruel behavior of the racist government of that country,” Ayatollah Khamenei said in a Wednesday message marking the Hajj season, ISNA reported.

He also said the United States' presence in West Asia harms the people of the region and brings instability, destruction and backwardness to regional countries.

Ayatollah Khamenei also described the Muslim ritual of Hajj as an opportunity to display power toward the “arrogant powers that are epicenter of corruption, cruelty, killing the weak, and plundering.”

“Hajj is the expression of the hard and soft capabilities of the Ummah (Islamic community),” the Leader pointed out.

He highlighted the need for unity within the Muslim community, saying such solidarity would counter the threats and hostilities and deal with the “epitome of evil, the aggressive and cruel U.S.” and the Zionist regime of Israel.

The Leader noted that the U.S. regime is in decline, enumerating as examples the mistreatment of its people, the deep social inequality, the terrible racial prejudice, and the barbaric killing of a black man at the hands of the police.

“The U.S.'s treatment of the weak nations, is a magnified version of behavior of that police officer who kneeled on the neck of a defenseless black man and pressed him to death,” he remarked.

The Leader also reaffirmed support for the oppressed people of Palestine and Yemen, and for the Muslims suffering from persecution all over the world.

“The U.S.'s treatment of the weak nations, is a magnified version of behavior of that police officer who kneeled on the neck of a defenseless black man and pressed him to death.”

IRGC releases ‘high resolution’ images of U.S. military base in Qatar

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Aerospace Force released on Wednesday “high resolution” images of a U.S. military base in Qatar captured by its newly-launched satellite, Nour-1.

“The images taken through mosaicking method by Nour-1 Satellite, which was launched successfully on April 22, are high resolution and show the U.S. biggest airbase in the Middle-East in Qatar which hosts nearly 13,000 American forces,” the Fars news agency reported on Wednesday.

Nour-1 was Iran's first military satellite that was put into orbit by the IRGC Aerospace Force using the Qassed satellite carrier.

The IRGC used it to monitor targets during its latest military exercises in the Persian Gulf and Sea of Oman.

During the exercises, the IRGC struck mock targets, including a replica of a U.S. aircraft carrier, and practiced countermeasures to destroy Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD), an American anti-ballistic missile defense system designed to intercept short-, medium-, and intermediate-range ballistic missiles.

“During these exercises, we deployed a mock THAAD for the first time, then hit it with anti-radar missiles,” the Tasnim news agency quoted IRGC Aerospace commander Brigadier General Amir Ali Hajizadeh as saying on Wednesday.

Iran: We are waiting for South Korea's tangible actions

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said on Wednesday that Iran is waiting for South Korea's “tangible” and “remarkable” actions.

“We have had enough of South Korea's promises. So, we are just waiting for tangible and remarkable actions. Naturally, no one in Iran is waiting for a cargo of half a million or two million dollars,” he told IRNA.

He added, “We hope the Korean officials remember the volume of the Iranian people's money in this country and also non-existence of legal impediment to do business with Iran.”

Yonhap reported that South Korea was set to hold virtual talks with Iran later Wednesday about expanding humanitarian trade like medicine exports, following the first such shipment to Tehran in May upon receiving a sanctions exemption from the U.S.

The discussion will focus on how to match Iran's demand for medicine and medical equipment with what South Korean exporters can offer, the ministry said in a release.

Lee Seong-ho, deputy foreign minister for economic affairs, will lead the South Korean side comprised of officials from other ministries and trade agencies. Among the Iranian officials attending the meeting will be Mohammad Reza Shamsheh, head of Iran's Food and Drug Administration, and its central bank officials.

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

Iran is the hardest hit country by the coronavirus in West Asia. In late June, central bank governor Abdolnasser Hemmati said Iran will take back its dollars from South Korea through legal and international methods.

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

Government spokesman Ali Rabiei said on Tuesday that South Korea should revise illegal procedures and release Iran's frozen money.

He noted that South Korea is expected to revise illegal procedures and facilitate importing humanitarian commodities to Iran when the country is fighting the coronavirus.

Rouhani says endangering passengers' lives is ‘aerial terrorism’

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — President Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday that the United States' action in endangering the lives of the Iranian passengers aboard airplane is an “aerial terrorism”.

Speaking during a cabinet meeting, the president called on the international community and related bodies such as ICAO [the International Civil Aviation Organization] to counter the U.S. terrorist act.

“It is not possible for a fighter jet to get close to a passenger plane in a free international corridor and scare the people. Undoubtedly, this is aerial terrorism,” Rouhani said, adding, “Sending a fighter jet beside a passenger plane is aerial terrorism and must be dealt with as a terrorist. ICAO, [UN] Security Council and countries should counter it.”

Rouhani said the U.S. takes all these “mischievous” acts because of its failures towards Iran.

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. A passenger, who was aboard the Mahan



Air Flight 1152, has sustained a spinal cord injury during the U.S. fighter jets' harassment of the plane.

Rouhani went on to say that the Iranians will not give in to pressure and the White House has no way but respecting law and

compensate for harms it has inflicted on the Iranian people.

The U.S. has inflicted the harshest sanctions in history of mankind against Iran by ditching the 2015 nuclear deal endorsed by the UN Security Council

By harassing passenger plane, U.S. seeks to provoke response: Tehran

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The United States was trying to provoke a reaction from the Islamic Republic by harassing an Iranian passenger plane in order to cause concern for the Iranian people, according to presidential chief of staff Mahmoud Vaezi.

“The Americans used all of their policies in the last two years, whether through their sanctions, maximum pressure or propaganda war,” Vaezi told reporters on Wednesday.

“They have tried all ways at different junctures to pressure the Iranian nation,” he added.

He asserted that the U.S. harassment of the Iranian passenger plane was a “cheap” act that was against international principles.

“They will not succeed definitely,” the presidential chief of staff added.

On the evening of July 23, 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.

Tehran later announced that it will respond to the harassment at “an appropriate time.”

“The Americans have been trying different types of piracy,” Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said on Monday during a press conference.

“The dangerous action they took against our passenger plane was a terrorist threat which was against all legal and international principles,” he said.

Mousavi said the Foreign Ministry, with the help of Civil Aviation Organization, General Staff of Armed Forces and the Judiciary, will take all measures to make the U.S. regret its actions.



He explained that certain measures have been taken with this regard, including a protest lodged by Iran's mission in the United Nations.

Mutual interests entail Iran, China to quickly finalize their strategic cooperation document

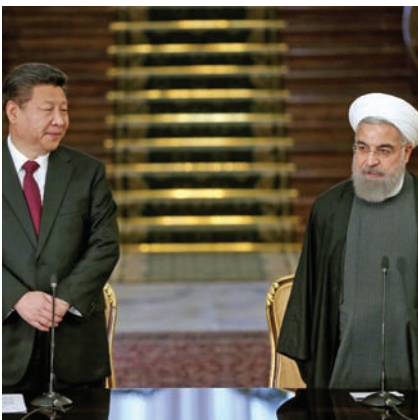
1 → For its part, Iran has approved the draft of the partnership plan, which is officially known as “Comprehensive Cooperation Plan between the People's Republic of China and the Islamic Republic of Iran,” but China has yet to approve the draft. Analysts believe that China may need more time to study the plan thoroughly.

“The Chinese conduct a lot of studies before doing things, though their studies are not always accurate. Moreover, international agreements need to be hammered out in accordance with the parties' needs and these agreements usually take a longer time,” Hossein Mala'ek, Iran's former ambassador to China, told the Tehran Times, adding that it takes a lot of time to hammer out the details of international agreements as they need to be drafted meticulously.

However, some analysts believe that Iran and China need each other in various sectors and that expediting the expansion of ties between them will serve their national interests.

“I think Iran and China should have signed the 25-year agreement six years ago,” the Fars news agency quoted Mehdi Safari, Iran's former ambassador to China, as saying in an interview with Radio Eghtesad.

According to Safari, China greatly needs energy supply from the region



and thus it needs Iran as a major player in providing energy security as well as securing energy lanes in the Persian Gulf and Sea of Oman.

“Energy security in the Persian Gulf and Sea of Oman is provided by Iran because 1,200 kilometers of the Persian Gulf and Sea of Oman's coasts belong to Iran,” Said Safari, adding that six years ago, during a meeting with his Iranian counterpart, Chinese President Xi Jinping said that Iran and China have a strategic ties, and energy is a part of this ties.

The former diplomat also said that China needs security in the region to expand its trade activities in the world, therefore Iran can be a strong partner

for China by providing security in the region.

“Iran can provide both energy and security for China,” noted Safari.

■ **“In final stages”**

On other hand, Iran also needs China to solve its economic challenges and achieve economic development, Mala'ek told the Tehran Times, referring to the current economic problems facing Iran, which have been mainly caused by illegal U.S. sanctions.

The U.S. has imposed sweeping economic sanctions on Iran after it withdrew from the Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, on May 8, 2018. As the sanctions gradually came into effect, the foreign firms operating in Iran, in particular the European ones, left Iran in droves, in a bid to avoid possible American fines for violating the sanctions.

Unlike the European firms, the Chinese small and medium-sized firms can return to the Iranian market, if they are supported by the Chinese government, Hossein Pirmoazzen, a member of Iran-China Chamber of Commerce, told the Tehran Times.

“Many Chinese firms are under U.S. sanctions, and Iran is not a small market. Moreover, many Chinese small and medium-sized firms can't do business in the U.S. These firms can do business

Resolution 2231.

In its sanctions pressure campaign against Iran under the “maximum pressure” strategy, the Trump administration has threatened to punish any company or country that do business with Iran.

Elsewhere in his Wednesday remarks, Rouhani repeated his previous remarks by saying that all religious rituals will be held by observing healthcare protocols.

Rouhani said on Saturday that Muharram mourning rituals will be held with observing healthcare protocols and social distancing.

During a meeting of the National Task Force for Fighting Coronavirus, Rouhani said that the mourning ceremony of Imam Hussein (AS) must be held throughout the country gloriously with precise observation of healthcare protocols.

The president noted that the ritual should be held in a way that it will not give a pretext to the enemies, but make Iran a role model for other countries and Shiites who hold mourning ceremony for Imam Hussein (AS).

During the Muharram rituals, millions of Muslims commemorate martyrdom anniversary of Imam Hussein (AS), the grandson of Prophet Muhammad.

Deputy minister blasts Britain for hijacking anti-coronavirus masks purchased by Iran

TEHRAN (FNA) — Iranian Deputy Health Minister for Treatment Qassem Janbabayee said that the face masks ordered by Tehran in early days of coronavirus outbreak were hijacked by the British government.

“The British government took hold of 3ml masks purchased by Iran in the first week of the coronavirus outbreak and did not deliver them to Iran, while Iran had already paid their price,” Janbabayee said, addressing a meeting in the central city of Arak on Wednesday.

He added that most countries did not deliver the masks bought by Iran, stressing that today the country has gained self-sufficiency in production of masks and other hygiene products.

In relevant remarks last Saturday, Iranian Vice-President for Science and Technology Sorena Sattari said from day one of coronavirus outbreak in country, knowledge-based companies rolled up sleeves and met internal needs without dependence on imports.

Almost nothing related to COVID-19 has been imported from other countries and everything has been secured with



reliance on domestic capability, Sattari said at Scientific and Technological Park of Hamedan, Western Iran.

He added that since the very onset of the disease, knowledge-based firms worked strenuously and manufactured the domestic need to medical and health items such as ventilator, face-mask, and so on.

Sattari underlined that these firms have worked strongly during the virus era, adding that three batches of new medicines will go be put at market within three weeks.

Also, last week, he announced that the country produces everything needed to fight against COVID-19 virus epidemic.

“The knowledge-based companies have entered the scene very well, and many equipment used to fight against coronavirus were not produced in the country in the past, but today we are producing them at good levels, a sample of which is three-layer and filter-equipped masks,” Sattari said, addressing a meeting in the Central province of Isfahan.

He added that coronavirus test kits are mass-produced in the country now and they are even being exported, noting that Iran is also producing coronavirus-related medicine and nothing is imported from foreign states.

Syria starts investigation into Tehran-Beirut flight incident

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Hassan Rezaeifar, the director of Iran's Civil Aviation Organization's Aircraft Accident Investigation Board, said on Wednesday that Syria has started investigation into an incident that occurred to a Tehran-Beirut flight on July 23.

"Syria is responsible for investigating Mahan airline's Tehran-Baku flight incident and has started the investigation," ISNA quoted Rezaeifar as saying.

Based on article 13 of the Chicago Convention, Syria, as the country in which the incident occurred, has officially started the investigation and asked for cooperation with Iran's Aircraft Accident Investigation Board and the Bureau of Enquiry and Analysis for Civil Aviation Safety of France.

Two U.S. warplanes dangerously came close to Mahan Air's Airbus A310 passenger plane over Syria on July 23, forcing the pilot to quickly change altitude to avoid a collision. The plane was en route from Tehran to Beirut. At least 12 people aboard were injured.

Iranian officials have called the move a terrorist act.

Ahmad Momenirad, a professor of international law from the University of Tehran, has said that the United States violated the Chicago Convention by harassing the Iranian passenger plane in Syria's sky.

"The action taken by the United States' fighter jets in harassing the Iranian passen-



ger plane is clear violation of the Chicago Convention, Montreal 1971 Convention and also regulations of ICAO [the International Civil Aviation Organization]," Momenirad told IRNA in an interview published on Tuesday.

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 by the U.S. so far are unjustified and unconvincing.

The actions taken by the fighters will bring international responsibility for their respective governments and open the way for Iran to take legal action against the U.S. in the ICAO Council and the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the presidential aide remarked.

Judiciary Chief Ebrahim Raisi said on Monday that the U.S. act in threatening the passenger plane is "not forgivable".

In a meeting with top judicial officials, he called on the national prosecutor general and the Judiciary's deputy director for international affairs to pursue the complaints of the passengers.

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.

Americans' regional visits aimed to foment 'Iranophobia': advisor



POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN**— A top advisor to Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has censured the rise in the number of visits by American officials to regional countries, saying the visits are parts of attempts to foment "Iranophobia".

"The growing number of trips the U.S. authorities have been making to regional countries in recent days and weeks is meant to incite Iranophobia and create instability in the region," Ali Asghar Khaji said in a meeting with Qatar's State Minister for Foreign Affairs Soltan

bin Saad Al-Muraikhi in Doha on Tuesday.

During the meeting, the two diplomats discussed ways to promote Tehran-Doha political and economic relations, Tasnim reported.

Khaji and Al-Muraikhi further talked about the ongoing developments in the region, stressing the need to continue bilateral consultations.

President Hassan Rouhani has repeatedly described enhancement of relations with neighbors, Qatar in particular, as an indispensable part of Tehran's foreign policy.

Last week, U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Mark Milley made an unannounced visit to Israel following a series of events which have raised fears of a new adventurism by the two regimes.

Milley met with senior Israeli military and intelligence leaders at an air base south of the occupied territories and discussed "regional security challenges." The American general also held a video conference with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Israeli minister of military affairs Benny Gantz said that during his talks with Milley, he had emphasized "the need to continue the pressure on Iran," claiming that the regime's military "is prepared and ready for any scenario and any threat, and I do not suggest our enemies to test us."

The visit came a day after U.S. warplanes operat-

ing illegally in Syria harassed an Iranian Beirut-bound passenger plane over Syrian airspace, which forced the Mahan Air flight to lower altitude to avoid collision.

Late last month, U.S. special representative for Iran Brian Hook started a West Asia tour to discuss Iran with U.S. allies, with stops in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the UAE and Israel.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Iran-China strategic agreement is not alliance: diplomat

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN**— A senior official at the Iranian Foreign Ministry said on Wednesday that the Sino-Iranian strategic cooperation agreement doesn't mean that the two countries are building an alliance.

"The signing of a strategic cooperation document between Iran and China doesn't mean that the two countries are allied," Radio Eghtesad quoted Mohammadreza Forqani, a senior official at the Foreign Ministry, as saying.

"What is currently being discussed is the signing of a document on strategic cooperation between Iran and China. The meaning of the document is that the two countries cooperate with each other in various eco-



nomic, political, military, security, art, cultural, tourism, technological and scientific sectors," explained Forqani, who was Iran's ambassador to Turkmenistan.

The official also said that the signing of the document could be a prelude to expanding Sino-Iranian cooperation in the future and raising it to an alliance if needed.

Iran and China are negotiating over a 25-year strategic cooperation plan that if signed would raise their cooperation to an unprecedented level.

The cabinet of Hassan Rouhani approved the draft of the plan on June 21 and tasked Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif with negotiating with the Chinese side over the plan in order to finalize it. Three days later, the foreign minister held talks by phone with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi. During the talks, Iran's top diplomat expressed hope

that Iran-China 25-year cooperation would be signed soon.

"We agreed on deepening the comprehensive strategic partnership between the two countries, promoting the 25-year bilateral cooperation plan, and strengthening mutual support in international affairs," Zarif said in a tweet, shortly after he held phone talks with his Chinese counterpart.

Some analysts believe that the cooperation plan could be finalized soon.

"This [cooperation] document is very likely to be in the final stages," Radio Eghtesad quoted Amir Azizi, an Iranian economist and university professor, as saying on Wednesday.

U.S. forces asked to stay in bunkers as Iran fires missiles amid drills: reports

(Press TV) — U.S. military forces deployed to the Persian Gulf kingdoms were reportedly asked to stay in bunkers as Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) fired ballistic missiles during normal military drills off the strategic Hormuz Strait.

Citing her "sources" and those of the CNN, a reporter for the BBC wrote in a post on her official page on Tuesday that U.S. troops based in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kuwait and Qatar had been briefly put on "high alert" due to "concerns" over Iran's missile activities.

Other sources identified the facilities as al-Dhafra base in the UAE and al-Udeid air base in Qatar, saying the American troops deployed there had been asked to stay in bunkers.

U.S. forces in Qatar and the UAE "went on high alert early Tuesday and were asked to stay in bunkers, due to intelligence indicators showing an Iranian ballistic missile had been fired and possibly headed their way, U.S. defense officials tell CNN," a Twitter user said, indicating that the U.S. forces had misread the trajectory of Iranian missiles.

The reported high-alert notice came as Iran's IRGC started the final phase of large-scale aerial and naval drills, code-named Payambar-e A'zam (The Great Prophet) 14, involving the elite force's Aerospace Division and Navy.

The maneuvers were held in the general area of the Hor-



muzgan Province, west of the strategic Hormuz Strait, and the Persian Gulf.

The drills featured missiles, vessels, drones, and radars, and are designed to practice both offensive and defensive missions.

Tuesday saw the Corps stage strikes against the life-size replica of a Nimitz-class U.S. aircraft carrier, which the American navy usually sails into the Persian Gulf through the Strait of Hormuz.

The high-alert notice came a week after Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said Iran would definitely deliver a "counterblow" to the United States over the assassination of top anti-terror commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani in January.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran will never forget this issue and will definitely deal the counterblow to the Americans," Ayatollah Khamenei said in a meeting with visiting Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi in Tehran last week.

General Soleimani, former commander of the IRGC's Quds Force, was assassinated in a U.S. airstrike at Baghdad airport on January 3 upon an order by U.S. President Donald Trump.

The assassination pushed Iran and the U.S. to the brink of war.

Shortly after the atrocity, the Leader warned about a pending "harsh revenge."

The IRGC fired volleys of ballistic missiles at two U.S. bases in Iraq on January 8. According to the U.S. Defense Department, more than 100 American forces suffered "traumatic brain injuries" during the counterstrikes.

The Corps, however, says Washington uses the term to mask the number of the Americans, who perished during the retaliation.

Iran supports intra-Afghan talks: expert

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Mohsen Rouhisefat, an expert on international affairs, has said that Iran supports talks among Afghans.

"We believe the initiative should be taken by Afghans," Rouhaneifat told ISNA in an interview published on Wednesday.



He expressed hope that peace in Afghanistan would be established by the Afghan people and political groups.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said on Monday that Tehran fully backs intra-Afghan talks to settle the long-running conflict in the country.

"We reject any foreign interference in this respect. However, the Islamic Republic of Iran has capacities that can be used to help establish peace and stability in Afghanistan," he said.

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

Mohammad Ebrahim Taherianfard, the special envoy of Iran's foreign minister for Afghanistan, on Sunday said, "Iran highlights the necessity of establishing peace based on inter-Afghan talks led by the Afghan leaders."

Nozar Shafiei, an expert on international affairs, has said that if peace in Afghanistan is based on the Afghans' interests, Iran will support it.

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 dialogue.

IRGC launches underground ballistic missiles

1→ The IRGC forces also practiced a missile combat operation by firing Hormuz and Fateh ground-to-ground missiles and a ballistic missile. The air defense units also exercised pinpoint firing at aerial targets.

A range of homegrown drones, including Shahed-181, Mohajer, and Bavar, launched a strike on the targets, while various types of sea-to-sea and coast-to-sea missiles were fired in the war game.



The IRGC troops also exercised offensive mine-laying operations and tactics to cut off the naval connections of the hypothetical enemy.

The military exercise took place in Iran's southern coastal province of Hormozgan, western parts of the Strait of Hormuz, and the Persian Gulf.

Satellite images taken by Iran's homegrown Noor (light) satellite that was launched into space in April have been used to evaluate the situation in the war game zone.

On Tuesday, which saw the first day of the war game, the IRGC staged "all-out and multi-layer" strikes against the life-size replica of a Nimitz-class U.S. aircraft carrier, which the U.S. navy usually sails into the Persian Gulf through the Strait of Hormuz.

The IRGC's servicemen began the episode by destroying the mock carrier's accompaniment with coast-to-sea fire.

The national television aired footage showing the damage caused to the mock aircraft carrier following the operational juncture.

Elite divers then took action by delivering a "confusing blow" to the carrier's command bridge, namely the room from which the vessel is steered.

Also on Tuesday, the IRGC fired long-range ballistic missiles capable of destroying hostile vessels.

According to the spokesman of the wargame, Brigadier General Abbas Nilforushan, anti-ballistic and anti-cruise missile defense operations were carried out in the war game.

The general also said the IRGC forces have used a series of "surprising equipment and weapons" in the drills, such as long-range ballistic missiles capable of hitting the intruding naval targets at a far distance.

The war game was announced to be monitored for the first time by the Noor-1 Satellite.

The IRGC successfully put Noor into orbit on April 22. The Iranian satellite was launched with the three-stage satellite carrier Qasfed (messenger) from a launch pad in Dasht-e Kavir, a large desert in central Iran.

Iran's Armed Forces hold routine military exercises throughout the year.

Iranian officials have repeatedly said that the country will not hesitate to strengthen its military capabilities, including its missile power, which are entirely meant for defense, and that Iran's defense capabilities will be never subject to negotiations.

Shiraz hosting intl. auto parts exhibit

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — The 19th edition of international auto parts exhibition kicked off on Tuesday in Shiraz, the center of Fars Province, IRNA reported.

As reported, 50 Iranian companies are participating in the four-day exhibit, which is held at the permanent international fairground of the province.

Mentioning the international event being held in Shiraz, Hamidreza Izadi, the head of Fars Province's Industry, Mining, and Trade Department, said that holding specialized exhibitions like this one play some significant role in materializing the motto of this year, which is "Surge in Production".

IIEC receives no order on not holding exhibits: managing director

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — The managing director of Iran International Exhibitions Company (IIEC) said that this company has received no letter from the Coronavirus Control Operations Headquarters banning exhibition holding.

As reported by the Public Relations Department of Iran International Exhibitions Company, Bahman Hosseinzadeh referred to some statement made by Alireza Zali, the head of the Coronavirus Control Operations Headquarters, on banning holding any kind of gathering or exhibition in Tehran by the end of the next week and said, "We do not want to make fast and irrational decisions, while we are abiding by this headquarters' regulations."



Hosseinzadeh further mentioned the four health protocols prepared by the IIEC to control coronavirus pandemic during the exhibitions.

The official has previously announced that Iran's all exhibitions, especially the big ones such as ELECOMP, Agrofood, oil & gas, Iran Health, and construction exhibits, will be held on schedule and complying with all health protocols.

"Given that the Tehran Permanente International Fairgrounds is equipped with the sanitizing and coronavirus-combatting equipment, and the four health protocols are completely observed in the exhibition area, all exhibitions are planned to be held on schedule", Hosseinzadeh said on July 15.

"As the specialized exhibitions play a significant role in boosting the country's non-oil exports, we are determined to hold all exhibitions especially the big ones, through complying with the health protocols", the official noted.

Saying that based on the official estimations, the world will suffer from the coronavirus pandemic, Hosseinzadeh said, "The economy cannot be shut down; so the exhibitions cannot be closed, but they can be held through observing health protocols."

Iran has capacity to export \$150m of garments to Iraq

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Farzad Piltan, the director-general of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO)'s Office of Arabian and African Countries said that Iran has the potential for exporting \$150 million of garments to Iraq per year.

As reported by the TPO news portal on Wednesday, the official made the remarks on the sidelines of the third meeting of TPO's Commodity-Country Desk on trade with Iraq, which was mainly focused on investigating the ways for increasing garments export to the Arab country.

"Iraq imports \$700 million of garments per year, while the share of Iran's garment exports to its neighbor is just \$35 million, which can be increased at least to \$150 million", Piltan noted.

Despite the re-imposition of U.S. sanctions against the Islamic Republic, Iraq has been getting closer to Iran both politically and economically.

There is also the same approach adopted by Iran, as many Iranian companies are now eager to conduct trade with Iraq, especially with the Kurdistan region where there is a great demand for Iranian products.

Iraq is currently Iran's biggest trade partner and the two countries have been taking significant steps to improve their mutual trade over the past few years.

Heading a high-ranking delegation, Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi arrived in the Iranian capital Tehran last week.

The trip followed the Iranian foreign minister's visit to Baghdad and Erbil last Sunday.

Iran and Iraq are finalizing a foreign currency agreement, based on which several billions of dollars will be injected into Iran's market in the near future, an official with the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) said.

Hamid Ghanbari, who accompanied Foreign Affairs Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif in the mentioned visit to Iraq on Sunday, said the two sides held positive talks and agreed on expanding foreign currency and banking ties.

"During this visit, useful and constructive talks were held with the Iraqi side, the results of which will be finalized during the visit of the Iraqi Prime Minister and the accompanying delegation to Tehran," Ghanbari said.

Also on July 21, head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) and the Iraqi Finance Minister held talks, calling for strengthening customs and border cooperation between the two countries.

In the meeting, which was on the sidelines of a meeting between Iraq's Prime Minister Mostafa al-Kadhimi and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, Mehdi Mirashrafi and Ali Allawi emphasized the reopening of Iran-Iraq borders and boosting customs cooperation.

During the meeting, the Iraqi minister underlined his government's interest in joint cooperation and using Iran's customs experiences, especially in the field of electronic procedures and automation.

Regarding his country's borders with Iran, he announced the Iraqi government's decision on reopening southern borders as soon as possible.

Regarding the technical cooperation between the two countries, Allawi called for sending Iraqi customs experts and staff to Iran to use the technical experiences of the Iranian customs.

The establishment of a joint trade gateway was also emphasized between the Iraqi minister of finance and the IRICA head.

Bank loans to economic sectors up 50% in a quarter on year

1 → The Iranian banking system has paid 9.749 quadrillion rials (over \$232 billion) of facilities to domestic economic sectors in the past Iranian calendar year 1398 (ended on March 19), registering a 26-percent rise from its preceding year.

Working capital loans paid to different economic sectors were above 5.261 quadrillion rials (about \$125.26 billion) accounting for 54 percent of the total provided facilities in the said period.

The total working capital loans provided

in the mentioned period increased by 21.8 percent compared to the figure for the preceding year 1397.

During the said period, the country's mining and industry sectors received 2.167 quadrillion rials (about \$51.59 billion) in the form of working capital loans, accounting for 41.2 percent of the total such facilities.

According to CBI, the country's banking system offered 7.737 quadrillion rials (about \$184.2 billion) facilities to domestic economic sectors in the Iranian calendar year of 1397



(ended on March 20, 2019), 26-percent more than the figure for its previous year.

Working capital loans paid to different economic sectors was above 4.319 quadrillion

rials (about \$102.8 billion) accounting for 55.8 percent of the total provided facilities in the said year, registering a 14-percent increase from its previous year.

TEDPIX rises 147% in 3 months yr/yr

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), went up 147 percent during the first quarter of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-June 20), compared to the first quarter of the previous year.

The index stood at 1.27 million points at the end of this year's first quarter, IRIB reported.

Last week, a capital market expert said that TEDPIX is expected to climb to 2.5 million-2.7 million points by the end of Iran's second quarter (September 21).

Referring to the new record registered by the index on July 20, Bahador Shams told IRNA that a noticeable amount of liquidity is leading to the stock market and many investors are seeking to make investment in this market.

There is a high demand in the market, he underscored. TEDPIX hit a new record high on July 20, as it exceeded 1.9 million points.

The index gained 46,814 points to 1.911 million during the daily trades.



It had hit the record high of 1.5 million points on June 30.

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

coronavirus pandemic.

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

In a press conference on June 22, the head of Iran's Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO) announced that the amount of liquidity absorbed by Iran's capital market has reached 500 trillion rials (about \$12 billion) during the first quarter of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-June 20).

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

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

9th round of govt. bond auctions brings CBI over \$1b

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — The Central Bank of Iran (CBI) on Tuesday held the ninth round of its weekly government bond auctions through which it sold 44 trillion rials (about \$1.04 billion) of bonds to banks and financial institutions, IRNA reported.

According to the CBI office of public relations, in this round 10 banks and institutions placed a total of 73.7 trillion rials (about \$1.75 billion) of purchase orders, from which 44 trillion rials were finalized.

The 10th round of the auction of government bonds for selling to banks, non-bank credit institutions, investment funds, insurance companies, and financing companies will be held on Tuesday, August 4, according to the CBI Brokerage.

CBI held its first auction of government bonds on Tuesday, June 2, and the auction has been held every week ever since.

It asked banks to place purchase orders for the bonds on the interbank trading platform.

According to the bank, the plan to open a primary interbank market for bond auctions is aimed at helping the government raise funds for budgetary needs as it struggles with high and rising deficits.

Earlier the CBI had announced that it



plans to hold auctions at the start of each trading week and regularly.

As reported, purchase orders will be processed by the CBI's brokerage and then will be sent to the Finance and Economic Affairs Ministry for approval. The brokerage firm should settle the payment in one working day.

Raising funds through the debt market has become a major strategy for the government which is wrestling with financial issues resulted from the coronavirus, collapsing oil prices, U.S. sanctions, and loss of oil export revenue.

The government expects to make 1.09 quadrillion rials (\$25.9 billion) from bonds as per provisions of the current fiscal budget.

Tehran, Ashgabat highly willing for expansion of trade ties: Iranian envoy

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian ambassador to Turkmenistan said that Turkmen like Iranians are highly willing to expand trade relations between the two countries, IRNA reported.

Gholam-Abbas Arbab-Khales stated that the two sides making many efforts for preserving and even boosting bilateral trade exchange despite many restrictions due to the coronavirus pandemic is an indication of their willingness in this regard.

Iran's Incheboroun railway border crossing with Turkmenistan was reopened after four months on June 23 when a cargo train carrying 30 wagons of cement consignment for export to Turkmenistan left Iran, the spokesman of Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) announced.

Rouhollah Latifi said that it was the third border crossing reopened between the two countries after the long time closure, Mehr news agency reported.

The IRICA spokesman also announced that 101 more wagons were waiting to export products to Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan through Incheboroun railway border crossing.

Garmsar-Incheboron railway, with a length of 495 kilometers, links Garmsar in the north-central province of Semnan to Incheboron



in the northeastern province of Golestan. It extends to Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan and links Central Asia to the Persian Gulf and beyond.

Iranian Transport and Urban Development Minister Mohammad Eslami said that reopening the border for trade between Iran and Turkmenistan was the result of mutual commitment, Fars news agency reported.

He underlined that reliability and mutual commitments have played a key role in the reopening of Iran-Turkmenistan shared border.

Earlier in June, Eslami had said that Tehran has always sought to strengthen relations with Ashgabat by removing barriers, adding that a new chapter in relations between the two countries has begun after making progress in implementation of joint projects.

Exports from eastern province increase 98% in 4 months

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — The value of exports from South Khorasan Province in east of Iran has risen 98 percent during the first four months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-July 21), compared to the same period of time in the past year, according to a provincial official.

Mohammad-Ali Khashi, the director-general of the province's customs department, said that 1.049 million tons of commodities valued at \$186.11 million have been exported from the province during the four-month period, indicating a 43-percent rise in terms of weight as well.

Iran's Acting Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister Hossein Modares Khiabani has said that the ministry has it on the agenda to export \$41 billion worth of non-oil

commodities in the current Iranian calendar year (March 2020-March 2021).

According to the official, neighboring countries are the main target for the mentioned exports.

Khiabani noted that the government has paved the way for all productive units to export their products so that they would be able to supply their own machinery and raw materials.

"We have special programs for supplying raw materials, exporting and manufacturing of domestic products in the automotive, steel, food, home appliances and machinery industries," he said.

Last year, Khiabani had said that his ministry was planning to increase the value of Iran's non-oil exports to

its 15 neighbors up to \$50 billion.

"Our goal is to be able to meet five percent of our neighboring countries' needs, which would amount to more than \$50 billion a year considering the total imports of all the 15 countries which is at least \$1 trillion annually," he said.

The official expressed hope that the mentioned goal would be realized before the Iranian calendar year of 1400 (which starts in March 2021), saying, "The Institute for Trade Studies and Research and also Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) are currently developing detailed plans to achieve this goal."

Iran shares border with fifteen countries, namely the United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Russia, Oman, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kuwait, Qatar, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia.

Exports of cut flowers, ornamental plants exceed \$5m in Q1

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iran exported 2,356 tons of cut flowers and ornamental plants worth over \$5.336 million during the first three months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-June 20), IRNA reported quoting an official with the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA).

According to IRICA Spokesman Rouhollah Latifi, the Iranian flowers and ornamental plants were sent to more than 23 different countries in the mentioned period.

Latifi said that Iraq was the main buyer of Iranian flowers and plants in the said period, buying more than 1,543 tons of the commodities worth \$2.389 million.

The official noted that Vietnam, the Netherlands, and Armenia were also among



the top destinations for Iranian flowers and plants with 15 tons, 5 tons and, 226 tons of imports respectively.

All kinds of ornamental trees, shrubs, plants, cut flowers, dried flowers, roses, and other ornamental flowers were among

the country's export products in this sector, according to the official.

More than 28 tons of shrubs, flowers, and plants worth \$121,172 were also imported from Turkey, Germany, and the Netherlands in the said period.

He further stated that Iran is the 17th largest producer of flowers and plants in the world and the 107th largest exporter of such products, adding: "Three billion flowers and plants are produced annually, of which only 200 million are exported."

Iran exported nearly \$40 million worth of cut flowers, ornamental plants during the previous Iranian calendar year of 1398 (ended on March 19).

As reported, Iran's southern and northern neighbors, including Iraq, Russia, Turkmenistan, Armenia, and Azerbaijan

were the top export destinations for the mentioned products last year.

The production of cut flowers, ornamental plants increased by about 22 to 25 percent in the mentioned year.

Currently, over 7,800 hectares of land, including greenhouses and farms, are under cultivation of flowers and ornamental plants, according to an official with the Agriculture Ministry.

"About four billion flowers, pots, and ornamental plants are grown in the country, every year," Gholamreza Taghavi said.

According to the official, more than 150,000 people are working directly and indirectly in this field, and significant investments have been made by the private sector in this area.

Domestic manufacturing of oil pipes saves Iran €60m

ENERGY **TEHRAN** – The acting head of Industrial Development and Renovation Organization of Iran (IDRO) has said that manufacturing various types of oil pipes by domestic producers has saved the country over €60 million.

Amir Bayat made the remarks during a visit to Esfarayen Luleh Gostar steel pipe manufacturing complex in North Khorasan Province, IRNA reported.

According to the official, the Oil Ministry has put an order for the construction of 40,000 tons of oil pipes by the mentioned complex which will prevent the outflow of the said figure.

Bayat noted that in addition to preventing the outflow of foreign currency, the final cost of these orders will be about 4.5 trillion rials (about \$107 million) cheaper for the ordering side.

The official praised the Oil Ministry's approach for supporting domestic production and noted that such acts will stimulate economic growth and production



boom in this industry.

He also called for coordination and

communication between various oil industry organizations and companies to

place their orders cumulatively so that it would make the complex able to plan and prepare the orders in a shorter time and with less residue and waste.

Luleh Gostar of Esfarayen is the only manufacturer of seamless steel pipes, included casing-tubing required by the oil, gas, and petrochemical industries.

Industrial Development and Renovation Organization of Iran was established in 1967 to develop the industrial sector and to accelerate the industrialization process of the country.

Since the re-imposition of the U.S. sanctions, Iran has been pushing for a boost in domestic production in industrial equipment and machinery to lessen its reliance on foreign trade partners for supplying such items.

Back in December 2019, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Iranian Association of Manufacturers of Oil Industry Equipment said nearly 85 percent of the country's oil industry equipment was produced based on indigenized knowledge and technology.

Energy Ministry considering incentive packages for electricity consumers

ENERGY **TEHRAN** – Iranian Energy Minister said on Wednesday that his ministry is considering new incentive packages for low-consuming households and industrial electricity subscribers, IRIB reported.

"Last year, nearly 10.6 trillion rials (about \$25.2 million) was paid to low-consuming households and industrial subscribers, and this year too, new incentive packages have been considered for awarding such consumers," Reza Ardakanian said on the sidelines of a cabinet meeting.

Ardakanian also mentioned the management of electricity consumption during the cold season and said: "The [upcoming] winter is expected to be very cold and in this regard, the subscribers who make optimal use of heating devices and consume less electricity will also be rewarded."

The official expressed satisfaction with people's cooperation in the ministry's consumption management programs and noted that the peak consumption figure for the current hot season has increased by only one percent compared to the figure for the previous summer.

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

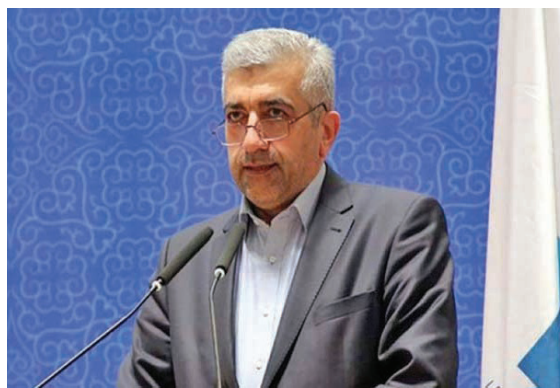
This year too, the electricity consumption pattern has been following an upward trend since the beginning of the summer as the weather has got hotter all over the country.

On July 19, daily electricity consumption in the country reached 58,104 megawatts (58.1 gigawatts) to register the highest power consumption recorded in the history of Iran's electricity industry.

Meanwhile, the ministry called on people to cooperate and manage their consumption to get through the summer without any blackouts.

Since the beginning of the hot season, the energy ministry has been implementing new programs and strategies for encouraging people and industries to optimize their electricity consumption.

In late May, the Energy Ministry's spokesman for the Electricity Sector Mostafa Rajabi Mashhadi had said that



last year, nearly 3.06 trillion rials (about \$72.85 million) were paid to the households and industrial subscribers cooperating in the consumption management program in the form of incentives and relief packages.

Asia Pacific oil demand set for 25% increase by 2040

Despite this year's drop in oil demand everywhere in the world – including in the top growth driver in recent years, Asia Pacific – demand for oil products in the region has not run its course and could jump by as much as 25 percent by 2040 compared to 2019, Wood Mackenzie said on Tuesday.

According to estimates from the energy consultancy, oil demand in Asia Pacific is on track to drop by 1.8 million barrels per day (bpd) this year compared to the pre-COVID levels in 2019.

As per OPEC's latest, more positive estimates in its July Monthly Oil Market Report (MOMR), oil demand in Asia Pacific is expected to drop by 900,000 bpd in 2020 year over year, before rising by 500,000 bpd in 2021.

Despite the hiccups in oil products demand in the short term, Wood Mackenzie sees oil demand in the Asia Pacific region rising in the long term, potentially by 25 percent, or by 9 million bpd over 2019, reaching 44.8 million bpd by 2040.

While the coronavirus crisis and the demand crash have upended short-term projections, long-term demand in Asia Pacific will continue to be robust, thanks



to increased demand for mobility and petrochemicals, according to WoodMac. As per the consultancy's estimates, Asia Pacific is set to account for more than half of global oil demand growth by 2040.

The hotspots for oil demand, however, are expected to shift away from China—the world's top oil importer—to India and Southeast Asia, requiring new refining capacity in these countries, Wood Mackenzie said.

"Although demand continues to grow, the rate of growth in the next 20 years is less than half that of the past 20 years, primarily because of higher fuel efficiency, penetration of electric vehicles and displacement of oil in the transport sector," Sushant Gupta, Research Director – Asia Pacific, Refining and oils market at Wood Mackenzie, said.

Oil majors discover significant gas field in Egyptian waters

European majors Eni, BP, and Total have successfully tested a new natural gas discovery in Egypt's shallow waters, the Italian company said on Tuesday, commenting on its find that adds to Egypt's already sizeable natural gas resources.

According to oilprice.com, once in production, the well Bashrush is estimated to deliver at up to 100 MMscf of gas and 800 barrels of condensate per day, Eni said.

Eni is the operator of the North El Hammad concession, where Bashrush is located, with a 37.5-percent interest, BP holds another 37.5 percent, and Total owns 25 percent.

The companies will be looking to develop the area with tie-ins to existing infrastructure.

"These results support our strategy to allocate a significant share of our exploration budget to the search of hydrocarbons in the vicinity of existing infrastructures," said Kevin McLachlan, Senior Vice President Exploration at Total.

"These resources have low development costs since they can rapidly be

tie-in and put into production," McLachlan added.

In recent years, Egypt has been at the center of a 'natural gas rush' in the Eastern Mediterranean after Eni discovered the vast Zohr field in 2015, saying it was the largest ever gas discovery in the Mediterranean.

Eni is the operator of Zohr and holds 50 percent, Rosneft has 30 percent, while BP and Mubadala Petroleum each have 10 percent in the Shorouk Block where Zohr is located.

Following the start-up of the giant Zohr field in early 2018, Egypt became an essential player in the Mediterranean. Zohr plays a crucial role in helping Egypt to avoid the need to import liquefied natural gas (LNG), according to the Italian energy major.

In one of the latest deals concerning the Eastern Mediterranean, U.S. supermajor Chevron will scoop up Noble Energy's natural gas assets offshore Israel and Cyprus after it entered last week into a definitive agreement to buy Houston-based Noble Energy in an all-stock transaction valued at US\$5 billion.

Oil buyers profit from a wave of cheap fuel

By Irina Slav

The downstream industry has been affected particularly severely by the unique combination of events that unfolded this year. On the one hand, the coronavirus pandemic decimated demand for their products, and on the other, OPEC+ reduced production, raising prices. What is more, refined oil products have stayed off oil buyers' radar. Refiners just got a tiny respite from oil buyers, though, according to Reuters' John Kemp. He noted in his latest column that hedge funds and other institutional oil buyers had turned their sights towards fuels last week, buying some 20 million barrels of U.S. gasoline and diesel, and European gasoil.

Unfortunately, this respite is nowhere near enough to make refiners' lives better. New flares of infection around the world have prompted several countries to reintroduce travel restriction measures just weeks after they were lifted, spelling trouble for transport demand.

And whatever spells trouble for transport spells double trouble for refiners.

The danger of a second wave has already weighed on crude oil prices. Ordinarily, this would be a positive development for refiners, but the tables have turned now that low prices are coming from expectations of lower demand for refined products. The silver lining, such as it is, is that a second wave of infections may not affect oil demand as much as the first one did—at least according to Rystad Energy.

At the same time, different fuels are recovering differently in terms of demand. Gasoline demand, for instance, has shown



some signs of recovery after lockdowns were lifted around the world. This recovery, however, has been moving unevenly. The Energy Information Administration has been reporting both inventory builds and draws in gasoline stockpiles over the weeks following the lifting of lockdowns, noting these are still above the five-year average for the season.

Distillate fuels have been slower to recover, chiefly because of the decimated demand for air travel and hence jet fuel, for which distillates serve as feedstock. In fact, in many cases, refiners were forced to use the distillates that are typically turned into jet fuel into diesel fuel, pushing up diesel inventories while demand remained weak.

The outlook for jet fuel is bleak.

Analysts from Bank of America said earlier this week that they did not expect jet fuel demand to fully recover until 2023. According to the BofA analysts, the third quarter of next year will be the first signs of jet fuel demand rebound. It will then take another two years for it to reach pre-crisis levels of 8 million bpd—if ever—because while they wait for demand for air travel to recover, some airlines could go under.

In more bad news for the refining industry, the world's largest oil importer, which reported record run rates after the end of the lockdown in China, is now cutting these run rates because of a fuel glut. This glut would likely have happened even without a pandemic: Chinese refiners have been adding refining capacity too quickly, saturating the Asian market and affecting refinery margins.

All in all, refiners need all the help they can get right now. They are unlikely to get it, however, as the world hunkers down in preparation for a second wave of Covid-19. This second wave will likely delay further the rebound in oil demand and in transport, which would, in turn, delay the rebound in refining margins, putting some refineries out of business.

Nevertheless, according to Wood Mackenzie analysts, over the long term, the downstream sector will require investments in new capacity, at least in some regions such as Asia and the West Asia, where demand for oil is expected to grow. It seems the near to medium term is problematic, but the long-term outlook for the downstream sector is quite positive.

U.S. refiners to post worst second-quarter results in a decade

U.S. oil refiners in coming days are expected to report the worst second-quarter results in a decade, with production outrunning demand while pandemic-related closings have sapped summer travel.

According to Reuters, fuel consumption has tumbled, with latest U.S. data showing a 25 percent drop on auto travel from a year earlier and a 75 percent decline in passengers at airports. Refiners get the bulk of their profits from domestic fuel sales, with the June quarter among the biggest for travel.



The seven top independent refiners, including Valero Energy Corp, Phillips 66, PBF Energy Inc and Marathon Petroleum Corp, are expected to post losses.

Valero on Thursday is expected to report a per share loss of \$1.41, according to IBES data from Refinitiv, compared to a profit of \$1.51 a year earlier. The group's average per share deficit will be \$1.05, according to Refinitiv, compared to a \$1.65 profit a year-ago.

Refinery crude processing rates remain about 2.8 million bpd, or 17 percent below the seasonal average over the past five years, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. Profits also were hurt by high inventories, as refiners ramped up in anticipation of business reopenings.

Refiners with retail networks could receive a boost from sales of tobacco and beer, which ticked up in the quarter and could offset lower year-on-year volumes, according to Credit Suisse.

"Refiners benefited as consumers who may have shopped at bigger, more crowded stores like Walmart shifted spending to smaller refiner retail locations," said Matthew Blair, refining analyst at Tudor, Pickering, Holt and Co.

Companies with heavy West Coast presence face added trouble because of California's second lockdown, with tech companies such as Facebook and Google having employees work from home.

"West Coast refining margins will be extremely weak due to a hit in driving demand...California was one of the first states to enter lockdown and has been hit again," said Blair.

Marathon's Martinez, California, refinery has remained idle and at least one of PBF Energy's two California plants could be idled to reduce losses, Credit Suisse said.

"We don't see gasoline demand recovering to pre-pandemic levels in California," Credit Suisse refining analyst Manav Gupta said in a note.

Toll of virus, oil on Saudi budget laid bare with revenue plunge

Saudi Arabia suffered a simultaneous decline in oil and non-oil revenue as the global pandemic combined with lower energy prices to jolt the kingdom's public finances, Bloomberg reported.

Oil revenue was down 45 percent in the second quarter from the same period last year to 95.7 billion riyals (\$25.5 billion), according to budget data released by the Finance Ministry on Tuesday. Non-oil revenue drawn from sources like taxes and fees declined by 55 percent.

The deficit more than tripled from the first quarter to 109.2 billion riyals even though authorities cut spending by 17 percent compared with a year earlier.

"A widening in the deficit was expected with the Covid-19 development, both on the income and non-income side," said Monica Malik, chief economist at Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank. "The government has been proactive with the austerity measures they've introduced. Oil revenue will be critical for reducing the fiscal shortfall."

Facing a twin crisis from the coronavirus pandemic and oil market turmoil, the government has taken unprecedented measures to steady its finances, including tripling value-added tax, increasing import fees, and canceling some benefits for government workers. Some economists say the budget deficit could widen to 15 percent of gross domestic product this year, comparable to the levels it reached after the last oil rout of 2014.

But Finance Minister Mohammed Al Jadaan has said the world's largest oil exporter "is not in austerity" and described changes in spending as a reallocation in outlays.

"Although recent fiscal measures should help limit the kingdom's fiscal financing requirements in the second half, we expect a full year fiscal deficit of 10.9 percent of GDP," said Bilal Khan, head of economic research for the West Asia, North Africa and Pakistan at Standard Chartered Plc in Dubai.

Also on Tuesday, Saudi Arabia's central bank released a report showing that its net foreign assets had declined by 0.4 percent in June, reaching 1.66 trillion riyals (\$443 billion). That's the lowest level since 2010.

Other key points from the new budget data include:

The budget shortfall in the first half of the year was equivalent to nearly 77 percent of the government's full-year deficit target

The biggest spending cut came from capital expenditures, which fell by 52 percent in the second quarter year-on-year, followed by spending on social benefits with a drop of 48 percent

Spending on the compensation of government employees declined 4 percent in the second quarter as officials continue to try to trim the public sector wage bill

A spending breakdown by sector for the first half of the year showed that military spending -- the largest budget item after education -- declined by 8 percent compared with the same period last year

Spending on a category labeled "health and social development" fell by 22 percent in the first half -- though the government noted that expenditure on health services alone increased by 24 percent during the same period, as authorities expanded health care outlays during the pandemic

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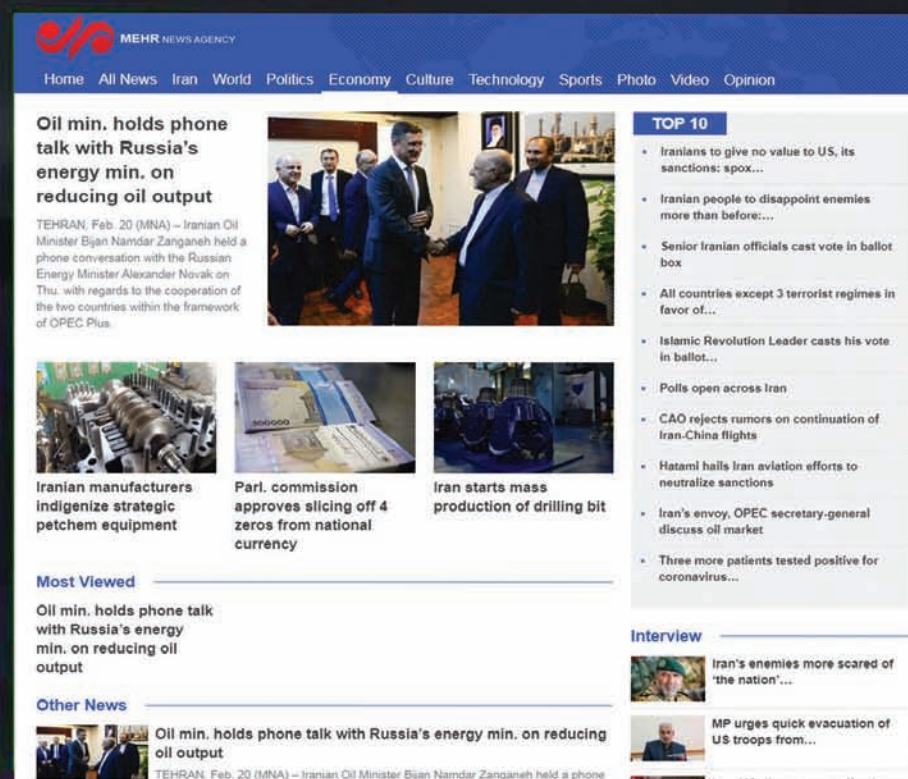
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Corporate and government-controlled media in U.S. have lost credibility: African American author

“The armed opposition groups such as ISIS were created by U.S. intelligence agencies and the Pentagon”

➔ Without permission from Damascus, the U.S. has been operating in Syria since 2014 under the pretext of fighting the ISIS terrorist group. The U.S., however, continues its occupation even as Syria defeated the Takfiri terrorists in late 2017. Is the U.S. presence in Syria legitimate?

A: U.S. troops are in Syria in order to make attempts at destabilizing the government in Damascus. Washington and its allies have said repeatedly that President Assad should leave office and go into exile. This is an outrageous and illegal position aimed at turning Syria into a neo-colony of the U.S. The American government resents the independent character of the Syria state and therefore all peace and freedom-loving people throughout the world should defend the inherent right of the Syrian people to determine their leadership and the social system that best suits them in this historical period. The armed opposition groups such as ISIS were created by U.S. intelligence agencies and the Pentagon. They have no legitimacy within the region and are there only to serve an imperialist agenda.

■ Please let's back to our main topic. Protests over the death of George Floyd continue to rage across the U.S. What do you think about the protests? Do you see any hope for a change of behavior towards African Americans?

A: These demonstrations since May 25, when George Floyd was brutally executed by a racist white police officer on the streets of Minneapolis during broad daylight, millions were rightly enraged and took the streets. Thousands were arrested and dozens were killed by the police and National Guard. President Donald Trump in early June evoked the slave-era Insurrection Act of 1807 threatening to deploy federal troops if the municipalities could not stop the protests, some of which turned violent in a rebellious manner. We see today that more federal agents and troops are being deployed to cities such as Portland, Chicago and Detroit. In Atlanta, Republican Gov. Brian Kemp dispatched the National Guard to Atlanta supposedly to help fight crime. Yet Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms did not ask for the Guardsmen and has objected to their presence. In Portland a number of elected officials filed suit in U.S. District Court demanding that the Federal forces be withdrawn.

A federal court judge ruled that the elected officials did not have standing in the case to file suit against the Trump administration on behalf of the demonstrators. What is needed is the building of a genuinely independent and revolutionary party which can organize the workers, oppressed and youth to build a new and socially transformed political dispensation. The first response is protest and rebel-

“The notion of the United States being founded as a democratic country is a national myth.”

lion. The next phase must lead to building the apparatus to effectively challenge the system fundamentally. The lives of the people depend upon this inevitability due to the horrendous social conditions now prevailing in the U.S. The U.S. has the largest COVID-19 outbreak and is rapidly descending economically.

■ It seems that the United States is a contradiction. Its founding principles embrace the ideals of freedom and equality, but it is a nation built on the systematic exclusion and suppression of communities of color. From the start, so many of this country's laws and public policies, which should serve as scaffolding that guides progress, were instead designed explicitly to prevent people of color from fully participating. What are the reasons behind this?

A: The notion of the United States being founded as a democratic country is a national myth utilized to control the narrative around the actual character of the state. The U.S. has its origins in the forced removal and genocide of the indigenous Native peoples of North America along with the kidnapping and enslavement of millions of Africans forced to work for 250 years without any monetary compensation.



“The Trump administration and its backers on Wall Street, feel threatened by the convergence of the public health crisis, the declining economy and the resurgence in the anti-racist movement.”

Even after the victory in the separatist war by the British colonies in North America leading to USA being established in the late 18th century, the Native people were being encroached upon by the settler colonial regime while the demand for African enslaved labor grew exponentially. Eventually there were 4.5 million Africans residing in the U.S. by the beginning of the Civil War (1861-1865). Only one-half million were considered “free” while nearly 4 million were enslaved. With the conclusion of the Civil War the African people were designated as having equal rights through a series of Amendments to the Constitution as well as Civil Rights Acts. Nonetheless, 150 years hence and African Americans are still struggling to gain recognition and self-determination.

■ What is important to learn from the history of slavery in the U.S. is the social construction of race, with the main objective of controlling the dominated groups and enforcing distance from them through multiple institutionalized laws and social norms. What is your take on it?

A: In order to justify the continuation of slavery under British rule and later during the first 90 years of an independent existence for the white ruling class in the U.S., the leadership provided a rationale claiming that African people were inferior and were best suited as servants of white landowners in the Northeast and the South. After slavery was phased out in many northern and pre-industrial states after the separatist war of 1776-1783, those Africans living in these areas were forced to fight slavery particularly in the years leading up to the Civil War where the Fugitive Slave Act was implemented. This meant that even if a man or woman had purchased or were awarded freedom from bondage, they were still subject to the slave catchers in non-slaveowning states who would capture people and return them to bondage in the southern region of the U.S. After the collapse of the attempt to Reconstruct U.S. democracy during the post-Civil War period, the white former slaveowners crafted laws known as the Black Codes, designed to segregate and exploit the formally enslaved population. Therefore, the criminal justice system, including the police and detention facilities were essential structures aimed at the social containment and further economic exploitation of the African people.

■ The U.S. Constitution proclaims people are free and equal, but everyone is aware this designation was not intended for enslaved Africans. It was rather for the European settlers and their descendants. Many Blacks support the idea that individuals are not equal if there is a discrepancy in employment, food securitization, good schooling, housing, and healthcare.

What do you think?

A: After the end of slavery there were mass interventions by Africans into electoral politics, community organizing and the quest for educational achievement. The passage of the 13th Amendment in 1865 ostensibly ended slavery. Later in 1868, the 14th Amendment was passed by the then Radical dominated Congress which purportedly enshrined Africans as citizens with rights to due process and equal protection under the law, the right to serve on juries and testify against whites in a court of law. Nonetheless, through the outright terror of organization such as the Ku Klux Klan, formed in the aftermath of the Civil War by former plantation owners, slave traders and failed Confederate war generals, along with the retreat by the federal government from the Reconstruction project after the contentious elections of 1876, Africans were gradually disenfranchised again and segregated for the purpose of exploitation.

■ What is the Black Lives Matter protest-ing for?

A: Black Lives Matter (BLM) began as a hashtag after the racist vigilante murder of Trayvon Martin in Sanford, Florida in 2012. Since then every large and small demonstration taking place in the U.S. is characterized by the corporate media as BLM. The actual BLM has they same first letters as the Black Liberation Movement, a term routinely used from the 1960s onward. There are many organizations fighting racism and capitalism in the U.S. The task at this stage in 2020 is to develop a program to unite all of these organizations, committees, movements and campaigns. The base of the movement for fundamental transformation must be based in the African American, Latin American and Indigenous communities in the U.S. These are the most oppressed and they are in a social position to carry out the most damage to the unjust system.

■ How do you assess the role of mainstream media in the protests? What about Facebook, Twitter and other social media?

A: The corporate media is forced to cover the demonstrations and rebellions as a result of its mass character. However, the television and radio stations, along with the newspapers and websites, convey the news with their own biases. Very rarely does the reporter interview the leadership of the movements operating in this important period. This illustrates the disconnectedness of these multi-billion dollar operations from the working class people, the impoverished, radical intellectuals and cultural workers. The owners of this media have a vested interest in crushing the anti-racist struggle. With the rapid spread of the internet spawning social media, these platforms have become

far less democratic and open in recent years.

Political ideas and debates are being censored. People involved in the struggle are developing new platforms to avoid this phenomenon. At the same time, the corporate and government-controlled public media have lost credibility on the Left and Right. Most people are suspicious of cable networks and news publications. This can potentially place the ruling class in serious danger of a national uprising since its appeal to the masses could easily be rejected by key elements in the population. These issues will only be resolved as the situation develops in the coming months.

■ Do you think this movement is different? What are the unique characteristics of this movement?

A: There is a lot of political diversity in the anti-racist movement at the present stage. However, there are currents emerging which are categorically anti-capitalist and realize that the system cannot be reformed. The only solution is to build a new system which is in the interests of the most oppressed. Since the 1960s, there has been profound changes in the labor market and the world economy overall. Communications technology has been important in building and sustaining the current demonstrations. Many of the youth and workers playing key roles in the 2020 demonstrations are sophisticated in mobilization and political education techniques. In this sense, the Trump administration and its backers on Wall Street, feel threatened by the convergence of the public health crisis, the declining economy and the resurgence in the anti-racist movement.

■ As you pointed it, the movement appears to have attracted protesters who are younger. What is the role of the youth in the movement?

A: Youth have always been in the vanguard of the world revolutionary movements even within the U.S. When Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. started his movement journey in Montgomery, Alabama with the Bus Boycott in 1955-56, he was only 26 years-old. The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was formed in 1960 by youth who became the shock troops of the Civil Rights Movement. The Black Panther Party, League of Revolutionary Black Workers, Nation of Islam were largely staffed by younger people. These youth who are taking to the streets in 2020 are following this same tradition.

■ In general, what is the relationship between the movement and family structure?

A: Since the time of enslavement, the African family has been under attack. Many were sold away from their families, even infants and children. The struggle has been to maintain families under a racist-capitalist system. In the 21st century, many African Americans

“The owners of media have a vested interest in crushing the anti-racist struggle.”

are imprisoned and therefore damaging the capacity of the people to enjoy any semblance of a normal life. The national liberation movement is designed to guard African American families and communities against attempts to destroy them by the state.

■ Some experts argue that Black Lives Matter is the largest movement in U.S. history. What do you think?

A: Well if we study African American history there have been periodic upsurges in mass discontent manifesting itself in many forms. During the Civil War, hundreds of thousands of Africans fled the plantations to join the Union Army in order to assist in the movement to end slavery. The Antebellum period was marked by slave revolts, flight from bondage and attacks against plantation owners such as the New Orleans Rebellion of 1811, the Nat Turner Revolt in 1831 in Virginia, John Brown had Africans in his military units that attacked Harper's Ferry in 1859. There were thousands of African Americans that joined the Communist Party in the 1930s during the Great Depression. In the 1960s, there were over 200 rebellions between 1963-1970.

Media didn't pay attention to humanitarian aspects of the harassment against Iranian plane

By Zeinab Awada

In the latest escalation between the United States and Iran, two American fighters intercepted an Iranian passenger plane over Syria. The harassment led to the injury of some passengers.

The Iranian plane, belonging to Mahan Air, was heading from Tehran to Beirut on Thursday when the pilot staged a safety maneuver to avoid collision. Iran's Foreign Ministry has said it will investigate harassment.



Legally, if we want to know which country should follow up on the file of the plane harassment, we must first determine who was the target and which side's interest was threatened. The main target was the plane belonging to an Iranian airline. The second side was Syria, as its airspace was violated. Lebanon has a stake as well. The plane was heading to Beirut, and most of its passengers were Lebanese.

Iran and Syria have to file a formal complaint against the U.S. administration because what happened is an assault, a criminal act, and international bullying. According to international law, those injured in the plane have the right to submit a complaint to the UN Security Council.

I doubt the complaint would produce the required result due to the American political pressure; however, Iran knows how to react and defend its interests in some way to prevent the recurrence of such an incident.

Moreover, every Lebanese who was aboard the plane has the right to submit a complaint about an attempt by the U.S. warplanes to kill him in the Syrian sky.

I believe that the personal complaint will take tangible results for humanitarian considerations, while political pressure may not be effective to prevent a condemnation of the U.S.

It is significant that what happened came in conjunction with the memory of the downing of an Iranian airliner by USS Vincennes on July 3, 1988, over the Strait of Hormuz.

Is this timing a coincidence, or does it carry a message of threatening Iran to repeat such an incident that took the lives of 290 passengers, including 66 children and 16 crew members?

Contrary to the Iranian response, the Lebanese reaction was shy. No decisive official stance was expressed to condemn what the passengers were exposed to, knowing that most of the travelers were Lebanese.

And if we assume that the passengers had been Iranian, the concerned officials in Lebanon should have condemned endangering the lives of civilians in a plane heading to our country (Lebanon)!!

The official Lebanese reactions were not proportionate to the level of what these Lebanese citizens suffered. Among them were our friends.

They told us how their heads had hit the roof of the plane during the change in altitude and how they felt close to death in the darkness of the sky, but God miraculously saved them!

If we turned the roles and Iran had harassed a plane coming to Beirut, would have we seen this official silence?! The question is directed to those who cannot say 'No' to the American master.

While the U.S. acknowledged that its warplanes came close to the passenger plane, it was an American-Israeli operation, or at least they have used an Israeli trick.

Initially, it was reported that Israeli fighters had intercepted an Iranian civilian plane before the United States acknowledged that its fighters had conducted some maneuvering close to the Mahan Air flight, claiming that it was “at a safe distance.” At the same time, it is the same method that Israeli aircraft adopted with the Russian plane that was shot down by the Syrian air defense after they succeeded in misleading it.

The same thing would have happened and the claim of “safe distance” is a big lie. Witnesses on the board say, “The sound barrier was so strong, and American fighters surrounded us from all sides. It was like trying to hijack the plane.”

The other point that should be clarified in this harassment operation is timing. Israel has benefited from this incident by diverting attention from the crime it committed in Syria a few days ago, during which it martyred one of Hezbollah members.

Perhaps Israel thought that this distraction would prevent Hezbollah's response by targeting the main supporter of the Resistance in the region (Iran).

I believe that the Americans and the Israelis exchanged roles in this operation, which was aimed to deliver a message to Hezbollah that Israel can target Iran and any other country whenever they want.

Nevertheless, in the media, the incident did not get the required attention up to the degree of the danger and the aggression that the plane's passengers were subjected to.

Unfortunately, the human sympathy with the injured passengers was confined to people who were affiliated to the Axis of the Resistance.

This incident has an important human dimension as we were on the verge of a massacre in the sky.

On the arrival of the plane to Beirut's airport, there was no media coverage because the event had not been reported widely.

Indeed, it was reported just after the incident was politicized, and various media outlets covered it according to their relationship with Iran and not on the degree of the shock.

Dollar falls to two-year lows before Fed outcome; lira weak

The U.S. dollar fell to a two-year low on Wednesday as pressure built on the Federal Reserve to strike a dovish policy stance amid a surge in coronavirus cases fueling demand for riskier currencies like the Norwegian crown and the Australian dollar.

Financial markets expect policymakers to hold fire on fresh steps, but rising infection rates are leading some analysts to predict strong forward guidance from the Fed on further policy actions.

“Even if the Fed doesn't come out explicitly signaling more policy support, the dollar's outlook remains weak thanks to the diverging trends in coronavirus cases between Europe and the U.S.,” said Ulrich Leuchtmann, head of foreign exchange and commodity research at Commerzbank.

Four U.S. states in the south and west reported one-day records for coronavirus deaths on Tuesday and nationwide cases stayed high.

Against a basket of other currencies =USD, the dollar fell 0.4% to 93.41, its lowest level since June 2018. It has weakened more than 3% since the last Fed meeting as yields on benchmark U.S. Treasury debt have fallen more than 20 bps since then.

“These factors mean we should expect a decidedly more pessimistic assessment of the outlook for economic growth,” said Derek Halpenny, head of research at MUFG Bank. “We should also probably expect some focus on the U.S. dollar, given the notable move we have had since the last meeting.”

Investors will also be watching for any indications the Fed will increase its purchases of longer-dated debt, implement yield caps or target higher inflation than previously indicated, building on recent massive stimulus measures.

Goldman Sachs on Tuesday said a potential Fed shift “towards an inflationary bias” along with record high U.S. government debt levels are raising “real concerns around the longevity of the U.S. dollar as a reserve currency.”

But John Vail, chief global strategist at Nikko Asset Management said the greenback was still up 1% in the year to date as measured by JP Morgan broad trade-weighted nominal index, despite recent weakness.

(Source: Reuters)

Veteran Iranologist, archaeologist Golzari laid to rest

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — Veteran Iranian archaeologist, Iranologist, and historian Massoud Golzari was laid to rest on Wednesday. Born in 1934 in Tehran, Golzari died due to pulmonary insufficiency on Sunday at Tehran's Shariati Hospital.

His funeral service went live on Instagram and his body was buried at the Luminaries Section of Tehran's Behesht Zahra Cemetery.



Golzari served as a member of the Department of Archeology and Art History of the University of Tehran in the 1970s and at the same time began his Ph.D. with a focus on the pre-Islamic history of Iran.

One of his notable publications is a volume dedicated to the archaeology of Kermanshah published in 1978. To honor him for his many years of research and publications about Iranian archaeology and culture, an official celebration was held in October 2018 at the National Museum of Iran.

Jebrael Nokandeh, director of the National Museum of Iran, extended his sympathy and sincere condolences on the passing of Golzari to his family, his close friends, archaeologists, Iranologists, historians, and museum curators.

Kuwait Airways to resume Iran flights

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — Kuwait Airways has scheduled to resume its service to and from Iran on August 1.

Kuwait Airways will resume flights to the UAE, Bahrain, Oman, Lebanon, Qatar, Jordan, Egypt, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Ethiopia, Britain, Turkey, Iran, Nepal, Switzerland, Germany, Azerbaijan, Philippines, and India as of August 1, ILNA reported on Wednesday.



Back in February, Kuwait Airways suspended all flights to Iran on the advice of the Kuwaiti health ministry and civil aviation authority amid fears about a coronavirus outbreak in the country. Kuwait Airways was the second flagship carrier in the region to suspend flights to Iran after Iraq Airways stopped flight days earlier.

Earlier this month, Emirates resumed its flights to and from the Iranian capital Tehran after some six months of halt over the coronavirus pandemic, which was dramatically lessened travels and air traffic in the global scene.

Some \$1m paid to support crafters in Ilam province

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — The Iranian government has paid more than 37 billion rials (about \$1 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) in loans to 630 crafters in the western province of Ilam to protect them from impacts of the coronavirus outbreak in the country, CHTN reported.

Handicrafts is a source of income for families and has a significant impact on creating home-based businesses in the region, which are now effected by the coronavirus pandemic, provincial tourism chief Abdolmalek Shanbehzadeh said on Wednesday.



Back in April, the government announced it will support 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.

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

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).

Iran welcomes international initiatives for tourism development

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iran welcomes initiatives that contribute to the development of tourism and boost cooperation in the international arena, deputy tourism chief Vali Teymouri said on Wednesday.

Referring to the international conference on youth and global peace, which is scheduled to be held in Seoul, South Korea in 2021, he noted that the tourism ministry will have an active presence in the conference which will be participated by more than 40 Asian countries to benefit from this opportunity as much as possible, CHTN reported.

The Seoul conference is organized to be held on four topics of "Youth, Economy and Tourism", "Youth and Cinema Industry in the Ancient Continent", "Urban Diplomacy, Peace and Development" and "Youth and the Fight against Terrorism".

Back in May, Teymouri declared new guidelines and instructions in a framework named "Smart travel protocol" to ramp up the safety of domestic travels being implemented in hotels, guest houses, eco-lodge unites, tourist destinations, transport facilities, recreational centers, and restaurants.



Iran's deputy tourism minister Vali Teymouri in an undated photo

"The smart travel protocol states what considerations a hotel, agency, or tour guide should follow. It's as if accommodation units need to focus more on renting one-

Zavareh's traditional blacksmithing added to intangible cultural heritage list

→ 1 blacksmiths made by hand most of the wrought iron objects used in the world. Smelting iron from its ores came into general use about 1400 BCE in West Asia and during the next 500 years, iron began to displace bronze gradually.

Zavareh is named after the brother of Rostam (the Iranian legendary and mythical hero). There are lots of attractions in this small city. The first and oldest four iwan mosque in Iran is the old Zavareh Jame Mosque going back to the Seljuk period, around 900 years old. Zavareh Sangbast Castle is the second largest castle in Iran after Alamut Castle. It is made up of mud and brick dating back to the 11th century.

Another predominant historical attraction, 33 kilometers from Zavareh, is Sarhangabad Palace built during the reign of Naser al-Din Shah Qajar (r. 1848 1896).

This palace with twenty stone columns looks like Chehel Sotoun Palace in Isfahan, decorated with peculiar plasterwork, mirrorwork, wood carving, stucco, inlay, and marquetry. It was a hunting ground and summer promenade for Qajar princes. It has a view of the mountains, river, and prairie. There is a two-story wind tower, a bath, watchtowers, and a mill around it. It is a mixture of the Safavid era (1501–1736) and the Qajar era (1789–1925) architecture made up of mud, brick, and wood.

A conical mud-brick adobe traditional Yakhchal (ice storage), and old bazaar with vernacular architecture dating back to Zandieh period (1751–1794) are among the most important tourist attractions of the city.

Meanwhile, traditional camel farming, carpet weaving, brick making, and woodturning, are among the cultural heritage of the city.



Restoration work of historical Narin castle restarts

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — A fresh season of restoration work has been commenced on the ruins of Narin castle, which is a gigantic ancient mud-brick fortress in the town of Meybod, central Yazd province.

"The first phase of restoration work has come to an end, and the second phase has been commenced with the aim of rehabilitating the surrounding ramparts," CHTN quoted Meybod tourism chief, Rasoul Moshtaqian, as saying on Tuesday.

The official added that Narin qaleh of Meybod is an all-brick structure built on top of a mud hill.

"Leveling, excavation, plastering, bonding, and brick masonry have been



carried out so far to amend the surrounding fortification."

Meanwhile, domestically-produced materials are being used during the restoration project as this building is one of the historical and magnificent monuments of ancient Iran, which was built in the

Sassanid era, whose architecture and art have long been admired by archaeologists and historians, he explained.

In the center of Meybod, crumbling Narin castle rises imposingly above the town that has grown up around it. Revealing three layers of construction, the oldest foundations suggest some kind of settlement was built here as early as 4000 BC. Legend has it that the castle belonged to King Solomon and was built by jinns (spirits), but whatever the original provenance of the castle's foundations, most of what can be seen today dates from the Sassanian era.

Lying on the silk route, the castle was used by soldiers who provided an armed

escort for passing caravans, charging a tax for their services, historical sources say.

The view from the top of the castle gives an interesting view of the town of Meybod and shows how the growing population of the citadel spilled beyond the castle walls. Watchtowers dotted around town until recently formed the further reaches of the urban area but these have since been breached as new houses stretch into the surrounding desert.

In many ways, Iran under the Sassanian rule witnessed tremendous achievements of Persian civilization. Experts say that during Sassanid times, the art and architecture of the nation experienced a general renaissance.

New properties in Yazd registered on National Heritage list

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — A total of 22 historical structures and sites, which are scattered across the central Iranian province of Yazd, have recently been inscribed on the National Heritage list, CHTN reported.

The Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts announced the inscriptions on Tuesday in a letter to the governor-general of the province, the report added.

Twelve mansions, two watermills, two cisterns, two train stations, a qanat, a castle, a bridge, a caravanserai in different cities of the province have been added to the list.

Back in May, provincial tourism chief Ali-Asghar Samadiani announced that 59 historical and natural sites in the province were added to the National Heritage List during the previous Iranian calendar year 1398 (ended on March 20), while over 150 archaeological and historical sites were identified across the province through excavations and surveys conducted by Yazd Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department during the same period of time.

In July 2017, the historical structure of the city of Yazd was named a UNESCO World Heritage. Wedged



between the northern Dasht-e Kavir and the southern Dasht-e Lut on a flat plain, the oasis city enjoys a very harmonious public-religious architecture that dates from different eras.

Yazd is usually referred to as a delightful place to stay, or a "don't miss" destination by almost all of its visitors. The city is full of mudbrick houses that are equipped

with innovative badgirs (wind catchers), atmospheric alleyways, and many Islamic and Iranian monuments that shape its eye-catching city landscape.

It is a living testimony to the intelligent use of limited available resources in the desert for survival. Water is brought to the city by the qanat system. Each district of the city is built on a qanat and has a communal center.

The use of earth in buildings includes walls and roofs by the construction of vaults and domes. Houses are built with courtyards below ground level, serving underground areas. Wind-catchers, courtyards, and thick earthen walls create a pleasant microclimate.

Partially covered alleyways together with streets, public squares and courtyards contribute to a pleasant urban quality. The city escaped the modernization trends that destroyed many traditional earthen cities.

It survives today with its traditional districts, the qanat system, traditional houses, bazaars, hammams, water cisterns, mosques, synagogues, Zoroastrian temples, and the historic garden of Dolat-Abad. The city enjoys the peaceful coexistence of three religions: Islam, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism.

The friendliest country on Earth!

(Lonely Planet) — Iran could be named the friendliest country on Earth. It is the jewel in Islam's crown, combining glorious architecture with a warm-hearted welcome.

■ In the footsteps of empire

If you're drawn to places where echoes of ancient civilizations resonate down through the ages, Iran could be your thing. Some of history's biggest names — Cyrus and Darius, Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan — all left their mark here and the cities they conquered or over which they ruled are among the finest in a region rich with such storied ruins. Walking around the awesome power and beauty of Persepolis, experiencing the remote

power of Susa (Shush), and taking in the wonderfully immense Elamite ziggurat at Choqa Zanbil will carry you all the way back to the glory days of Ancient Persia.

■ The beauty of Islam

Iran is a treasure house for some of the most beautiful architecture on the planet. Seemingly at every turn, Islam's historical commitment to aesthetic beauty and exquisite architecture reigns supreme. The sublime, turquoise-tiled domes and minarets of Isfahan's Naqsh-e Jahan (Imam) Square gets so many appreciative gasps of wonder, and rightly so, but there are utterly magnificent rivals elsewhere, in Yazd and Shiraz among others. And it's not just the mosques — the

palaces (especially in Tehran), gardens (everywhere, but Kashan really shines) and artfully conceived bridges and other public buildings all lend grace and beauty to cities across the country.

■ Redefining hospitality

Iran's greatest attraction could just be its people. The Iranians, a nation made up of numerous ethnic groups and influenced over thousands of years by Greek, Arab, Turkic and Mongol occupiers, are endlessly welcoming. Offers to sit down for tea will be an everyday occurrence, and if you spend any time at all with Iranians, you'll often find yourself invited to share a meal in someone's home. Say yes whenever you can, and through it experience first-hand,



Iranian culture, ancient, sophisticated and warm. It's these experiences that will live longest in the memory.

Two Iranian universities among top 100 in Asia

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Two Iranian universities have been ranked among the top 100 universities in Asia, according to Webometrics Ranking of World Universities for July 2020.

The University of Tehran holds 65th place in Asia and 539th in the world. Moreover, the university is ranked 7th in west Asia.

In the continental ranking, Tehran University of Medical Sciences is the second Iranian university among the top 100, while the university ranked 12th in West Asia.

The West Asia category includes 24 universities from Iran among the top 100.

Moreover, 7 Iranian universities have been listed among best 1000 worldwide; including, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences, Sharif University of Technology, Tarbiat Modares University, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Isfahan University of Technology, Iran University of Science & Technology, came in 539th, 656th, 826th, 908th, 915th, 916th places, respectively.

The "Webometrics Ranking of World Universities" is an initiative of the Cybermetrics Lab, a research group belonging to the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC), the largest public research body in Spain.

Since 2004, the Ranking Web (or Webometrics Ranking) is published twice a year (data is collected during the first weeks of January and July for being public at the end of both months), covering more than 27,000 Higher Education Institutions worldwide.

Webometrics intends to motivate both institutions and scholars to have a web presence that reflects accurately their activities. If the web performance of an institution is below the expected position according to their academic excellence, university authorities should reconsider their web, open access, and transparency policy, promoting substantial increases in the volume and quality of their electronic publications.

The Webometrics Rank of a university is strongly linked to the volume and quality of the contents it publishes on the Web.



The University of Tehran

Seven Iranian universities, namely Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences, Sharif University of Technology, Tarbiat Modares University, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Isfahan University of Technology, and Iran University of Science & Technology, have been listed among top 1000 worldwide.

Size (number of pages) of the main web domain of the institution (presence), number of external networks (subnets) originating backlinks to the institution's webpages (impact), number of citations from top authors according to the source (openness), and a number of papers amongst the top 10% most cited in 26 disciplines (excellence) are the factors deciding universities' ranking in Webometrics.

Harvard University, Stanford University, and Massachusetts Institute of Technology are the top three ranking universities worldwide in Webometrics.

THE ranking 2020

In June, Times Higher Education (THE) Asia University Rankings 2020 ranked five

Iranian universities among the top 100 universities worldwide.

The Times Higher Education Asia University Rankings 2020 use the same 13 performance indicators as THE World University Rankings, but they are recalibrated to reflect the attributes of Asia's institutions.

The number of Iranian universities has risen from 29 in the Asian Times 2019 rankings to 40 in 2020 (the number of universities in the ranking has risen from 417 to 489). In 2019, four universities in the country ranked below 100 in Asia, while in 2020 this number reached five. However, Iran's best ranking in 2019 was 43rd, but this ranking rose to 48th in 2020.

In 2020, Iran had 40 universities among the top Asian universities, which was 29 in 2019, 18 in 2018, and 14 universities in 2017.

Leiden Ranking 2020

The Center for Science and Technology Studies Leiden Ranking has placed 36 Iranian universities in the list of over 1,000 major universities worldwide in 2020 compared with 26 universities in 2019.

The ranking is prepared based on the indicators of scientific impact and collaboration.

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

With the presence of 36 universities in this ranking system, Iran, as in previous years, ranks first among Islamic countries in terms of the number of top universities.

QS rankings 2021

Also, five Iranian universities have been placed among the world's top 1,000 universities announced by the prestigious Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings 2021.

QS is the world's leading provider of services, analytics, and insight to the global higher education sector, whose mission is to enable motivated people anywhere in the world to fulfill their potential through educational achievement, international mobility, and career development.

The QS World University Rankings portfolio, inaugurated in 2004, has grown to become the world's most popular source of comparative data about university performance.

Some 1,000 of the world's top universities are ranked using six different indicators to compile QS World University Rankings 2021. Universities are evaluated according to the following six metrics: academic reputation, employer reputation, faculty/student ratio, citations per faculty, international faculty ratio, and international student ratio.

3 billion animals harmed in 'Black Summer' Australian bushfires

Nearly 3 billion animals were killed or displaced by Australia's devastating 2019-20 bushfire season in what conservationists have called "one of the worst wildlife disasters in modern history".

The number of native Australian animals harmed during the "Black Summer" is almost three times that of an earlier estimate released by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) in January.

Some 143 million mammals – including koalas and kangaroos, 2.46 billion reptiles, 180 million birds and 51 million frogs were hit by the country's worst bushfires in decades, the WWF said.



When the fires were still ripping through the country, the organisation estimated 1.25 billion animals would be affected.

But it raised the casualties figure to include the total affected area, not just the most affected states.

Professor Chris Dickman, from the University of Sydney, who co-led the project, said the numbers are "the lower bound estimates" and added he had "no doubt" some species would have been pushed to extinction.

He told ABC News: "We'll never know exactly what the number might have been."

The wildfires destroyed more than 11 million hectares across the Australian southeast – an area of land equal to about half of the size of the UK.

Dermot O'Gorman, the chief executive of WWF-Australia, said: "This ranks as one of the worst wildlife disasters in modern history."

Co-leading the project, Dr Lily Van Eeden, also from the University of Sydney, said she could not think of another fire that compares in terms of known mass mortalities of animals.

Professor Dickman suggested oil spills such as the Exxon Valdez in 1989 or BP's Deepwater Horizon spill in 2010 might compare when looking more broadly at other global wildlife catastrophes.

Dr Lily Van Eeden said the WWF research was the first continent-wide analysis of animals affected by the bushfires.

Mr O'Gorman said the findings "give other countries a window into the future of mega-fires and their devastating impact on wildlife". The climate crisis and years of drought have left the Australian bush unusually dry.

Professor Dickman said increasingly large fires of the kind seen between September 2019 and March 2020, which killed 34 people and ravaged 3,000 homes in Australia, could become more frequent.

"I think we've unleashed the demon in climate change," he told ABC News. "It's very hard to see how we're going to [be able] to scale things back."

Drive-in circus underway in Tehran amid pandemic



SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — The first international drive-in circus opened at Tehran's Milad Tower on July 16 and will run through August 21.

Artists from Iran, Brazil, Ecuador, Tanzania, Russia, Colombia, and Mexico perform the circus programs.

Due to the lock-downs as a result of the coronavirus outbreak, many recreational programs have been canceled across the country.

Over the past 24 hours, 2,636 new cases of COVID-19



were identified in the country, of which 1,604 were hospitalized. So, the total number of patients in the country reached 298,909, Sima Sadat Lari, Ministry of Health's spokesman said on Wednesday.

Unfortunately, during the last 24 hours, 196 patients lost their lives, the total number of COVID-19 deaths in the country reached 16,343, she said.

She went on to note that fortunately, 259,116 patients have recovered or been discharged from hospitals.

People's rights; the top priority

In urban warfare, some had no choice but to enter people's houses.

He addressed the soldiers, warning: "If your city is attacked, would you like anybody enter your home? You have to be very careful about people's rights. Even if a anything is moved mistakenly, put it back. God will test you, so come out victorious."



Charity building 179 bridges, roads in deprived areas



1 → He announced that 47,800 construction projects are being implemented by the foundation in the country and said that 3,500 construction and infrastructure projects in various fields related to schools, mosques, cultural centers, roads, water supply, health centers, and repairing canals in deprived and less developed areas of

the country will be completed by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 2021).

In addition to creating employment opportunities with the aim of eliminating deprivation, development, and economic and social empowerment in deprived areas as its main mission, the Barekat Foundation also has extensive activities in the fields of infrastructure development in these areas, he explained.

Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam was founded in 1989. In the Iranian calendar year, 1386 (March 2017-March 2018) Barekat Charity Foundation- the social arm of the organization- with the aim of promoting social justice was established.

Socio-economic empowerment of communities by encouraging entrepreneurship prioritizing breadwinner women, developing infrastructures such as water supply and power grids, building roads, constructing schools and increasing educational spaces, promoting health for all, granting non-repayable loans and insurance especially in less developed areas and regions most affected by 1980s war and natural disasters are of the priorities of the charity foundation.

French-made Rafale fighter jets reach India

The first batch of five French-made Rafale fighter jets has arrived at an Indian Air Force (IAF) base, Indian officials said, as the country seeks to modernize its military amid security challenges with Pakistan and China.

The planes landed at the airbase in Ambala in the northern state of Haryana amid tight security on Wednesday.

Police and soldiers closed roads leading to the base, banned photography and enforced restrictions on gatherings of more than four people, police officer Abhishek Jorwal said.

“The birds have landed safely in Ambala,” India’s Defense Minister Rajnath Singh tweeted. “If anyone should be worried about or critical about this new capability ... it should be those who want to threaten our territorial integrity.”

According to al Jazeera, the jets - built by Dassault Aviation - were piloted by IAF officers as they took off from Merignac in southwest France on Monday.

The fighter jets are part of a \$9.4bn deal signed with France in 2016. They are to be formally inducted in the IAF by mid-August.

The multibillion-dollar deal has been shadowed by corruption allegations levelled by the opposition Congress party, though Prime Minister Narendra Modi has rejected the claims.

Donald Trump Jr’s Twitter account locked over COVID-19 video

Twitter Inc said that it had reined in access to Donald Trump Jr’s account for 12 hours because a tweet he had posted violated the social media site’s misinformation policy on COVID-19.

The eldest son of United States President Donald Trump had posted a video on Monday of doctors talking about the drug hydroxychloroquine, that was removed by Twitter.

The video was also taken down by Facebook Inc and Alphabet Inc-owned YouTube after racking up millions of views, for breaking their rules on COVID-19 misinformation.

President Trump also retweeted a post late on Monday containing a link to the video and accusing Dr Anthony Fauci, the nation’s top infectious disease expert, and Democrats of suppressing the use of the drug hydroxychloroquine to treat the novel coronavirus.

Turkey passes controversial bill tightening grip on social media

Turkey’s Parliament has passed a controversial bill which gives the government greater control of social media, sparking concerns about freedom of expression in the country.

Under the new law approved on Wednesday, social media giants such as Facebook and Twitter have to ensure they have local representatives in Turkey and to comply with court orders over the removal of certain content.

Companies could face fines, the blocking of advertisements or have bandwidth slashed by up to 90 percent, essentially blocking access, under the new regulations.

The law, which targets social networks with more than a million unique daily visits, also says servers with Turkish users’ data must be stored in Turkey.

It was submitted by the ruling Justice and Development (AK) Party and its nationalist partner. The National Movement Party (MHP), which have a majority in the parliament.

Human rights groups and the opposition are worried over what they call the erosion of freedom of expression in Turkey, where criminal proceedings for “insulting” President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on social media are common.

They argue that increased control of social media will also limit access to independent or critical information in a country where the news media is in the hands of government-friendly businessmen or controlled by the state.

“Why now?” asked Yaman Akdeniz, professor at Istanbul’s Bilgi University and also a cyber-rights expert.

“While print and broadcast media platforms are already under government control, social networks are relatively free.

“Social networks have become one of the few spaces for free and effective expression in Turkey,” he told the AFP news agency.

Resistance News

Israeli army razes home under construction in Beit Awwa town

INTERNATIONAL d e s k **TEHRAN**—The Israeli occupation army on Wednesday morning demolished a Palestinian house under construction in Beit Awwa town, southwest of al-Khalil, claiming it was built with no license.

According to local sources, the house belonged to a local resident called Muaad al-Suwaiti and was one of many houses threatened with demolition in the town.

The Israeli army justifies its demolition campaign in Beit Awwa by claiming the homes are located near the separation wall although they are there before the construction of the wall.

Over 100 settlers defile Aqsa Mosque under police guard

INTERNATIONAL d e s k **TEHRAN**— Dozens of Jewish settlers escorted by police forces on Wednesday morning entered the Aqsa Mosque in Occupied Jerusalem and desecrated its courtyards.

According to the Islamic Awqaf Department, at least 110 settlers stormed the Aqsa Mosque and toured its courtyards in different groups.

Meanwhile, the Popular Committees for the Defense of the Aqsa Mosque has urged the Palestinian masses to intensify their presence at the Mosque on the Day of Arafah (July 30) and during Eid al-Adha (July 31).

The Committees called on the Palestinians from Jerusalem and the 1948 occupied lands to defend the Aqsa Mosque during these days against Jewish settlers’ intent to defile it en masse to mark what they call the anniversary of the temple destruction.

Rival Saudi-led, UAE-allied militants agree to share power in south Yemen

Yemen’s Saudi-backed militants and rival separatist forces sponsored by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have agreed to share power in the country’s south as part of an agreement brokered by Riyadh last November between militants loyal to Yemen’s former Saudi-allied government and UAE-backed separatists with the so-called Southern Transitional Council (STC).

Late on Tuesday, Saudi Arabia said it had proposed a resolution aimed at accelerating the implementation of a deal that the kingdom had brokered in Riyadh last November between militants loyal to Yemen’s former Saudi-allied government and UAE-backed separatists with the so-called Southern Transitional Council (STC).

Under the Saudi-proposed resolution, the STC agreed to rescind its “self rule” in the southern port city of Aden, which serves as the seat of the Yemeni regime led by former president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, according to a press release posted by the state-run Saudi Press Agency (SPA) and the Saudi Foreign Ministry early on Wednesday.

The sides also reached an agreement to observe a ceasefire, which came into effect



on June 22, and appoint a “governor” for the regional capital Aden and form “a government” there within 30 days.

Shortly after the report, STC spokesman Nizar Haitham tweeted that his group was abandoning self-administration.

The Riyadh agreement was designed to end the power struggle and deadly clashes

between the two sides, which are allies under the Riyadh-led military coalition.

Defying the deal, the UAE-sponsored STC declared in late April a state of emergency and announced “self-administration rule” in Yemen’s southern areas, including Yemen.

According to Press TV, the STC’s an-

EU lawmakers concerned bin Salman may kill ex-rival in Saudi jail

The largest bloc at the European Parliament says it has concerns that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman may attempt to kill his predecessor and onetime rival, Mohammed bin Nayef, in custody.

In a statement, the European People’s Party (EPP) called for the immediate disclosure of the fate of bin Nayef and his protection from murder by the heir to the Saudi throne, the Doha-based Al Jazeera broadcaster reported on Tuesday.

The group said it has obtained evidence suggesting that bin Nayef’s health condition has deteriorated in Saudi jail.

The EPP described bin Nayef’s continued detention as a source of concern for Europe, urging bin Salman to refrain from eliminating his critics and political rivals.

Bin Salman became Saudi Arabia’s crown prince on the back of a 2017 palace coup that ousted bin Nayef.

Since his ouster, bin Nayef has effectively been under house arrest and prevented from leaving the kingdom.

In March, he was arrested as part of a renewed purge of royal family members over an alleged coup attempt to unseat King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and his son.

The Washington Post revealed earlier this month that bin Salman was preparing a set of corruption and disloyalty charges against bin Nayef to demand a \$15-billion settlement from the detained prince.

Meanwhile, just last week a campaign was launched on Twitter, with users posting thousands of tweets all of which blamed bin Nayef and his long-time aide for wide-spread corruption, in an apparent bid to discredit him ahead of a possible indictment.

Some reports predict that bin Salman — the kingdom’s de facto leader — will ascend to the throne before the 2020 U.S. presidential election amid uncertainty over the health condition of his hospitalized 84-year-old father.

According to Press TV, Nabeel Nowairah, an independent researcher of the Persian Gulf Arab states, told Asia Times newspaper recently that the Saudi crown prince would take control of the kingdom by the end of the year.

“Almost everyone is in detention, the important guys,” he said. “Bin Nayef himself is in detention — they’re all not allowed to leave. And there are dozens of princes who are not allowed to travel outside the country and whose movement is monitored. I think everything is under control at the moment.”

Afghans demand permanent ceasefire ahead of peace talks

Afghans welcomed a three-day ceasefire Wednesday but demanded it be made permanent, after the government and the Taliban said they would observe a truce that could kickstart peace talks as soon as next week.

The foes announced a temporary stoppage in Afghanistan’s war Tuesday, marking only the third official pause in nearly 19 years. It is slated to start Friday and run for the duration of the Eid al-Adha Muslim festival, AFP reported.

Ali, a shopkeeper in Kabul who only gave one name, said three days was not enough.

“We want peace forever,” he told AFP. “We have the right to live in peace like other countries, we want our country to develop. We are all -- old and young -- tired of this war.”

The Taliban -- who over the years have steadfastly dismissed government calls for ceasefires and upped violence even after signing a deal with the U.S. -- announced they would down weapons for Eid after President Ashraf Ghani signalled progress in a contentious prisoner exchange.

“To demonstrate the government’s commitment to peace, the Islamic Republic will soon complete the release of 5,000 Taliban prisoners,” Ghani said, referring to the number of insurgent inmates the government originally pledged to free under the auspices of a U.S.-Taliban deal agreed in February.

The swap is a crucial step to talks starting. Ghani said negotiations could begin next week once the ex-

change was finished.

His spokesman Sediq Sediqqi told AFP that Kabul would observe the ceasefire, but cautioned it did not go far enough.

“The people of Afghanistan demand a lasting ceasefire and the start of direct talks between the Taliban and the government of Afghanistan,” Sediqqi said.

Fawzia Koofi, a prominent women’s rights campaigner and member of the Afghan government’s negotiating team, said on Twitter she was “hoping for a lasting and permanent ceasefire”.

Ahmad Jawed Ahmady, a civil engineer, said he hoped for an enduring ceasefire and “peace forever”.

Top U.S. officials also hailed developments, including special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad, who was expected to meet government officials in Kabul Wednesday.

The Taliban indicated last week they are also prepared to negotiate after Eid.

Zabihullah Mujahid, the Taliban’s spokesman for military operations, said insurgents must “refrain from carrying out any operation against the enemy during the three days and nights of Eid al-Adha so... our countrymen would spend the Eid with confidence and joy.”

The latest truce is only the third of its kind, with other ceasefires in June 2018 and May this year to mark the end of the holy month of Ramadan.

Those ceasefires prompted widespread relief across Af-

French MPs call on Bahrain to drop death sentences for prisoners

Dozens of French legislators have expressed concern over the breaches of fair trial proceedings and various forms of torture that two imprisoned Bahraini men have been subjected to, urging authorities in the Persian Gulf kingdom to abolish death sentences handed down to them.

The 39 parliamentarians, in a letter drafted by Jacques Maire of La République En Marche! (LREM) political party, joined calls by their British, European, Italian and U.S. counterparts, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR), Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB) to demand the immediate cessation of the executions of Mohamed Ramadhan and Husain Moosa.

On July 13, Bahrain’s Court of Cassation sentenced the two men to death after purportedly finding them guilty of “killing of a police officer and attempt to kill other members of the force in a premeditated ambush using an explosive device on February 14, 2014” in al-Dair village, which lies northeast of Manama. Ten other people with them were also handed down jail terms.

The French legislators further pointed to the European Parliament’s worries over Bahrain’s violation of fair trial standards, and highlighted that the two men have

nouncement deepened the rifts in the already-divided coalition, which has been engaged in a military campaign since 2015 to seize the Sana’a government from Yemen’s popular Houthis Ansarullah movement and re-install Hadi there.

The infighting in Aden and other southern regions has also complicated efforts by the United Nations for a permanent ceasefire to the Saudi war against entire Yemen.

Hadi resigned in 2014 and later fled to the Saudi capital, prompting the Houthi movement to take state affairs into its own hands in the absence of an effective government in Sana’a.

Besides running the state from Sana’a, the Houthi movement, backed by Yemeni armed forces, has been defending the country against the Saudi-led aggression.

Over 100,000 people have lost their lives as a result of the war in the past five years, according to some figures.

The war — which is accompanied by a crippling blockade — has also destroyed, damaged and shut down Yemen’s infrastructure, including a large number of hospitals.

been subjected to torture in the process of coercing confessions.

They then called on Bahraini officials to halt the use of torture in judicial and penal systems, which had earlier been echoed by a joint letter by 16 international and Bahraini rights groups to King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa.

When the ruling was issued, Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei, advocacy director of the London-based Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD), condemned the the sentences as “yet another dark stain in the struggle for human rights in Bahrain”

He had previously stated that the initial trial was tainted by irregularities.

In turn, Amnesty International, HRW and BIRD have said both Ramadhan and Moosa were tortured and forced to confess to fabricated charges. They were also subjected to sexual assault, beatings, sleep deprivation and other abuses.

Bahrain has seen anti-regime protests over the past nine years. The major demand has been the ouster of the Al Khalifah regime and the establishment of a just and conclusive system representing all Bahraini nationals.

The Manama regime, in return, has ignored the calls and is pressing ahead with its heavy-handed crackdown and persecution of human rights campaigners and political dissidents.

ghanistan but were short-lived, with the insurgents returning to the fight straight afterwards to resume near-daily attacks.

The U.S.-Taliban deal, signed in Doha on February 29, stated that the militants and Kabul should start direct peace talks on March 10, following the prisoner swap.

But that date passed amid political disarray in Kabul and disagreements over the exchange, with Afghan authorities saying some released Taliban inmates were returning to the battlefield.

Highlighting the toll on civilian and military forces in the months since the deal, Ghani said more than 3,500 Afghan troops had been killed.

He said 775 civilians had also been killed and another 1,609 wounded since the deal.

The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan has blamed the Taliban for the bulk of civilian casualties during the first half of 2020.

Observers say the recent bloodshed highlights the Taliban’s determination to push for broad control in Afghanistan, and underscores how little the U.S. can do to stop them.

The U.S.-Taliban deal “was not designed to bring peace to Afghanistan, but to facilitate a face-saving exit of U.S. forces and engagement from Afghanistan”, said Nishank Motwani, deputy director at the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit.

“The Taliban fundamentally believe that victory is theirs.”

U.S. protests continue as Barr defends federal response in Portland

➔ 1 She tweeted on Tuesday that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) told her that U.S. Border Patrol Tactical Unit agents had left Seattle. DHS did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Durkan is among Democratic mayors who have called for an end to violence at protests against racism and police brutality after Republican President Donald Trump used images of the destruction for his re-election campaign.

U.S. Attorney General William Barr said on Tuesday that federal agents were in Portland to stop “rioters” destroying the courthouse and rejected Democrats’ suggestions it was to promote Trump’s “law-and-order” campaign theme ahead of the Nov. 3 election.

Anti-racism demonstrations escalated over the weekend, with Seattle seeing its biggest Black Lives Matter protests in weeks. A man was shot and killed at an Austin, Texas, demonstration and two protesters were shot and wounded in Aurora, Colorado.

A man was arrested on Tuesday in connection with the Colorado shooting. Two protest groups sued DHS on Monday for deploying agents to protect the Portland courthouse, saying it was unconstitutional for federal forces to take on roles reserved for state and local law enforcement.

Widespread and mostly peaceful protests against racial bias and police brutality have taken place in the United States since May 25 when George Floyd, a Black man, died under the knee of a white officer in Minneapolis.

Federal agents sent to Portland have used tear gas, pepper balls and stun grenades on protesters outside a federal courthouse, who have tried to tear down a fence erected around it

Barr told a congressional hearing on Tuesday that two federal agents sent to Portland may have been permanently blinded by lasers used by activists and that far more officers had been injured than demonstrators, with industrial-grade fireworks, rocks and firebombs hurled at agents.



Bernardo Rezende linked with Iran volleyball hotseat

S P O R T S T E H R A N — Brazilian coach Bernardo Rezende is a candidate to take charge of Iran national volleyball team, the Secretary General of Iranian Volleyball Federation said.

With one year remaining to the Olympic Games, Iran waste time preparing for the prestigious event while their rivals Poland have started the preparation from last week.

Iran volleyball federation has already announced that it wants to find a big name as Igor Kolakovic's replacement since the Persian Stars are looking for a podium at the Olympics for the first time ever.

“Our priority is to find a top-level coach and have negotiated with several great coaches in this regard,” Milad Taghavi said.

Iranian media reports have suggested that the volleyball federation has opened



negotiation with former Russia coach Vladimir Alekno and Taghavi confirmed the negotiation.

“Mr. Davarzani (head of volleyball federation) has accepted personal responsibility for negotiating with the coaches and as I've already said the top-level coaches remain our top priorities,” he said.

Bernardo Rezende, who is the most successful coach in the history of volleyball, and Italian coach Andrea Anastasi are among the candidates to take charge of Iran.

“Yes, they are two other options and we have negotiated with them. But the federation has not yet reached an agreement with them,” Taghavi added.

Iran have been drawn in Pool A along with Japan, Poland, Italy, Canada and Venezuela.

Pool B consists of Brazil, the U.S., Russia, Argentina, France and Tunisia.

FFIRI’s presidential elections to be held late November



S P O R T S T E H R A N — Presidential elections of the Football Federation of the Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) will be held in late November, according to the acting president of the football federation, Haydar Baharvand.

In an interview with reporters on Wednesday, Baharvand announced that the objections considered by FIFA to the draft statutes of the FFIRI have been resolved and thus the federation is able to hold the FFIRI assembly as soon as the statutes' amendment is finalized.

The Iranian football federation sent the amended draft status to FIFA in early June, after FIFA threatened the federation to the possible global suspension over the problematic provisions of the current statutes.

The major disagreement between the Iranian football federation and FIFA has been about the legal nature of the

federation. According to Article 1 of the amended statutes, the FFIRI is a “non-governmental public organization” while FIFA emphasizes that the football federation must be a private and independent organization.

Now, it seems that FIFA has accepted the proposed changes by the FFIRI and the Iranian football federation awaits the final confirmation from FIFA to finalize its statutes by approving it in the FFIRI assembly.

The general assembly of the Federation will be held in September to approve the amended articles of the statutes, and at the same time, the decision will be made on the time of holding the presidential elections of the Football Federation.

Based on some reports, the elections will be held at a time after the last match of Iran national team in 2022 FIFA World Cup qualifiers against Iraq which is scheduled for November 17.

Earning hosting rights for 2027 AFC Asian Cup will be tough, claims AIFF

All India Football Federation (AIFF) general secretary Kushal Das has stated that India ending up as the hosts of the 2027 AFC Asian Cup will be tough even though they have already placed their bid. India will host the 2021 FIFA Women's U17 World Cup and then the 2022 AFC Women's Asian Cup.

India has been a favored destination for FIFA events since the successful hosting of the 2017 U-17 World Cup, which saw the tournament register record attendance. Securing the rights to host the 2021 U-17 Women's World Cup followed soon while landing the 2022 AFC Women's Asian Cup job was a bigger achievement. The AIFF has already submitted its bid to host the 2027 AFC Asian Cup, but according to the apex body, the other bidders will pose a tough competition given that their infrastructure and facilities are top class.

“Although we have submitted our bid (to host), there are some big footballing nations who pose a big challenge. Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Uzbeki-

stan have also expressed their interest. Given the fact that Qatar would host the FIFA World Cup in 2022, facilities and infrastructures would be top class. We'll see and look into our strategies,” stated Kushal Das, general secretary of the AIFF, during a Live Chat.

After great response at the U-17 World Cup, which saw India break the record that was set during the FIFA U20 World Cup in Colombia (13,099,29) to mark the most attended Youth World Cup, the AIFF is eyeing greater heights. The FIFA U17 Women's World Cup will kick-off on February 17, 2021, with the final set to be played on March 7.

“Once we hosted the U17 World Cup in 2017 we were confident to host more International events. Although the preparation for FIFA U17 Women's World Cup has been dented because of the pandemic we are confident to pull this off successfully. We were convinced to earn the hosting rights for this one as well as the AFC Women's Asian Cup in 2022,” added the official.

(Source: Times of India)

Hamilton aims for three wins in a row without a crowd

Lewis Hamilton can celebrate a record-stretching seventh British Grand Prix win on Sunday but the Formula One leader will be doing none of the usual crowd-surfing after what may be the weirdest home race of his life.

The second triple-header of a pandemic-hit season will be in front of empty grandstands and behind closed doors at Silverstone, celebrating 70 years since the first world championship grand prix there in May 1950.

The windswept circuit will host two races on successive weekends for the first time, the second as the anniversary race, but Hamilton's army of flag-waving fans will have to cheer from afar.

“The British Grand Prix is the best grand prix, particularly because of the fans, the thousands that turn up and really create the spectacle,” the six-times world champion said after winning in Hungary. “So it's going to be super-weird.”

Mercedes have been dominant so far, with Hamilton now on for a hat-trick of wins after victories in Austria's Styrian Grand Prix and Hungary. Team mate Valtteri

Bottas won the opener at the Red Bull Ring.

The pair have also been alone on pole so far and Silverstone's long and fast lap will suit their car, but team boss Toto Wolff is taking nothing for granted.

“We've had a good start to the season: we resolved the issues that troubled us on the first weekend, won three out of three races and scored a good amount of points,” said the Austrian.

“But the first three races have also highlighted another crucial factor: the importance of reliability in this shortened season.

“We're one of only two teams that have finished all races with both cars this year and we know how quickly a DNF (no-finish) can make a lead in the points disappear.”

Hamilton is five points clear of Bottas but 30 ahead of third-placed Red Bull driver Max Verstappen, who has been on the podium in the last two races.

“We know the areas we need to work on and with Silverstone being a home race close to the factory, that's good news,” said the Dutch youngster.

(Source: Reuters)

Saeid Ezatolahi returns to Rostov

Iran international midfielder Saeid Ezatolahi has returned to Russian football team Rostov.

Ezatolahi joined Rostov in 2015 but was loaned to Russian teams Anzhi Makhachkala and Amkar Perm, Reading of England and Belgian team Eupen.



Russian site Sport-express.ru has reported that Ezatolahi has returned to Rostov.

According to the site, Premier League football clubs including Arsenal, Everton, West Ham United and Leicester City and Serie A clubs Napoli and Fiorentina are going to sign Zenit forward Sardar Azmoun.

(Source: Sport-express.ru)

Persepolis title celebration date announced

Tasnim — Persepolis football club will lift Iran Professional League (IPL) trophy on August 7.

Persepolis claimed the title for the fourth time in a row last week, with four games to go.

The Reds will travel to Ghaemshahr on Saturday to meet Nassaji and the team cannot celebrate their title in an away match.

Persepolis will host Zob Ahan on Matchweek 28 in Tehran's Azadi Stadium.

According to the Iran Football League Organization, Persepolis will celebrate the title championship after the match against Zob Ahan.

Beiranvand receives welcome from Antwerp

Iranian goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand was given a warm welcome to Royal Antwerp.

The club's Instagram account has published a post, welcoming the 27-year-old goalie.



Beiranvand joined Antwerp from Persepolis on a three-year deal.

He has become renowned as one of the Continent's best shot-stoppers in Asia, playing a key role for the Persepolis side which recently won the Iran Pro League for the fourth successive season, and finishing as the AFC Player of the Year runner-up in 2019.

He has also performed with distinction for the Iranian national team, famously saving a Cristiano Ronaldo penalty kick at the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia.

Royal Antwerp finished fourth in a truncated 2019–20 Belgian First Division A season, giving Beiranvand the opportunity to play in the 2020-21 UEFA Europa League.

Beiranvand isn't the first Asian player to sign for Antwerp, who featured Japanese midfielder Koji Miyoshi on loan last season, and is a former home of ex-China PR striker Dong Fangzhuo.

The new Belgian season is scheduled to begin on August 8, with Antwerp up against KAA Gent.

(Source: the-afc)

2021 Tour de France moved forward to avoid Tokyo Olympics clash

The start of next year's Tour de France has been brought forward by a week to avoid clashing with the men's road race at the rescheduled Tokyo Olympics, the International Cycling Union (UCI) has said.

The 2021 Tour will begin on June 26 and end on July 18, six days before the start of the Mount Fuji road race. It was originally scheduled to begin on July 2 in Copenhagen, Denmark.

The Tokyo Games were scheduled to take place from July 24-Aug. 9 this year but have been postponed by a year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“With the Tokyo Olympic Games being held from July 23 to Aug. 8 2021, the dates of several events have been adapted,” the UCI said in a statement unveiling its calendar for the season.

“It is of note that to avoid an overlapping of the Olympic road cycling races (July 24, 25 and 28) with the Tour de France (initially envisaged for July 2-25), the French stage race will finish on July 18, the weekend before the first weekend of the Olympics.”

The UCI also said the Tour of California and the RideLondon-Surrey Classic would not be a part of its new calendar, which consists of 35 events.

(Source: Reuters)

Iran’s Pourrahnama among most successful Para taekwondo fighters

The younger sibling to fellow martial arts like karate and judo, taekwondo is defined by its highlight-reel spin kicks and is the only full-contact martial art set to feature at the Paralympic Games.

While there are two forms of taekwondo – kyorugi (sparring) and poomsae (forms) – only kyorugi will be featured at Tokyo 2020 next year.

Easily practiced around the world with little equipment required, Para taekwondo is quickly growing; last year's World Championships had winners from 10 countries, while 22 different nations won medals.

History

Taekwondo was developed in postwar Korea and designed to focus on traditional indigenous fighting systems. The first World Championships were held in Seoul, South Korea, in 1973 and have been held every two years ever since.

Taekwondo made its Olympic debut as a demonstration sport at the 1988 Olympic Games in Seoul. Para taekwondo was developed in 2005, with an initial focus on kyorugi. Para poomsae followed in 2014.

The first Para taekwondo Worlds were held in Baku, Azerbaijan in 2009. The eighth World Championships took place in 2019 in Antalya, Turkey.

The biggest landmark came in January 2015, when the sport received Paralympic status by joining the program at Tokyo 2020. Virtually every major event since the announcement has attracted a record number of athletes and nations.

Unlike Olympic taekwondo, where South Korean athletes have dominated the Olympic medal table, Para taekwondo has world champions from nearly every continent. Iran, Mongolia, Turkey and Russia have been traditionally strong. Brazil, China, Japan, and Mexico are seeing more recent successes.



How it Works

Para taekwondo is an adaptation of its Olympic counterpart with one notable exception – kicks to the head are forbidden for safety.

Kyorugi athletes often have upper limb impairments, making blocking far more difficult.

The sport is defined by its eye-catching spin kicks and last-second comebacks.

Fighters are awarded points based on the difficulty of the maneuver – two points for a kick to the trunk; three for landing a turning or back kick; and four for landing the delightful 360-degree roundhouse kick. A valid punch is worth a single point.

Points are electronically scored, based on placement and strength. Fighters wear special trunk protectors for this purpose. Judges are used to determine when a higher-difficulty kick lands.

Points can also be awarded for penalties, including kicking below the belt, falling, withdrawing from an opponent, or refusing to engage an opponent.

Like its Olympic counterpart, fights feature three two-minute rounds.

The scoring makes for entertaining, final-second flurries. Tied fights are decided in tense 'golden point' rounds.

Who Competes?

Kyorugi features four classifications – generally based on the length of the upper limb impairment and whether both upper limbs have impairments.

- K44 includes athletes with unilateral arm amputation (or equivalent loss of function), or loss of toes which impact the ability to lift the heel
- K43 includes athletes with bilateral amputation below the elbow, or equivalent loss of function in both upper limbs
- K42 includes athletes with unilateral arm amputation above the elbow
- K41 includes athletes with bilateral arm amputation above the elbow

Poomsae also offers classifications for athletes with neurological or intellectual impairments and will be adding new classifications for athletes with vision impairments or in wheelchairs.

Each kyorugi classification is divided into three weight divisions – lightweight (up to 49/61 kg for women / men), middleweight (up to 58 / 75 kg), and heavyweight (over 58 / 75 kg).

When the sport makes its Paralympic debut at the 2020 Paralympic Games in Tokyo, Japan, 72 kyorugi fighters from the K44 and K43 classifications will compete in unified 12-person brackets according to weight and gender.

Denmark's Lisa Gjessing, Iran's Mahdi Pourrahnama, the USA's Evan Medell, Great Britain's Amy Truesdale, and Mongolia's Bolor-Erdene Ganbat are some of the sport's most successful fighters and have all qualified for the 2020 Paralympic Games.

(Source: Paralympic)

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Patience is two in kind: one against what you dislike, and the other before what you like and seems beautiful.

Imam Ali (AS)

National library purchases rare Shahnameh manuscript

→1 The Shahnameh of Baysunqur, a valuable copy of the Shahnameh created in 1430 for Prince Baysunqur (1399-1433) who was the grandson of Turkic ruler of Central Asia Timur (1336-1405), is kept in the library of Golestan Palace in Tehran. It was registered on UNESCO's Memory of the World Register list in 2007.

Persian literati believe that the Shahnameh can be considered as a preserving force for keeping the culture and customs of the Iranian people alive.

In a verse from the book, Ferdowsi wrote, "I toiled much over thirty years, by the Persian language I remade Iran." It refers to the fact that Ferdowsi spent 30 years writing the Shahnameh over a millennium ago.

Ali Rahbari completes music adaptation of Shakespeare sonnets

A R T **TEHRAN** — Composer Ali Rahbari's lifetime dream to complete the music adaptation of the 154 Shakespeare sonnets into an opera has come true.

"Over the past months with the spread of coronavirus in the world, I was busy working on the project to finish the sonnets and the package will soon be released," Rahbari has told the Persian service of MNA.

"Several Iranian composers and singers along with the world singers have cooperated in this project, which will come out in eight to ten albums," he said.

He added that Slovak pianist Ladislav Fancoviv has also cooperated on the project.



Composer Ali Rahbari in an undated photo.

The maestro said that the home quarantine was the best time for him to complete the project with the collaboration of his friends.

In February 2020, Rahbari said that Naxos Records, a Hong Kong-based German record label specializing in classical music, would submit his "World without War" for the 2021 Grammy Awards.

"World without War" is Symphonic Poem No. 4 of "My Mother Persia", a cycle of eight symphonic poems by Rahbari based on lyrics by Mohammad Farid Nasser.

Rahbari, the former conductor of the Tehran Symphony Orchestra, dedicated "World without War" to his master musician Hossein Dehlavi, mostly famous for "Sabokbal", "Bijan and Manijeh" and many other compositions that connect traditional Iranian music with Western classical music.

Vocalist Mohammad Motamedi has collaborated with Rahbari in the project "My Mother Persia", which has been recorded by the Antalya State Symphony live in a concert.

The Prague Metropolitan Orchestra and the Antalya State Symphony collaborated with Rahbari on the first album.

The first volume of "My Mother Persia" was released in July 2019 and was warmly received in different countries and the second volume came out in November.

The first album features melodies and improvisations in Iranian traditional styles, including a violin concerto entitled "Nohe Khan" by soloist Paula Rahbari, as well as "Mother's Tears" and "Children's Prayer".

Rahbari also conducted "Takhti" composed by Iranian musical prodigy Puria Khadem performed by the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra in Czech in 2016.

Mohammad Motamedi sings in the piece, which also features other Iranian musicians, including Amir Bavarchi, Parisa Pirzadeh and Barbod Bayat.

Rahbari had said that he had heard and liked the beautiful, clear voice of Mohammad Motamedi in a concert with his lifelong dear friend, Hossein Alizadeh.

Khadem composed "Takhti" in memory of the legendary wrestler, Gholamreza Takhti.

"When I was in Tehran I learned about 'Takhti', which was an amazing, well-composed piece for orchestral performance and highlights a popular national theme," Rahbari had said.

He had noted that he has always had a strong desire to help young Iranian musicians to be acknowledged in the world.

Afghan sculptor Alikhan Abdollahi to showcase collection at Tehran gallery

A R T **TEHRAN** — Artibition Gallery in Tehran is scheduled to showcase a collection by Afghan sculptor Alikhan Abdollahi in an exhibition opening on Friday.

Abdollahi was born in a village in the central Afghan province of Uruzgan in the neighborhood of Bamyan, home to the huge 6th-century monumental statues of Gautama Buddha carved into the side of a cliff.

In 1988, he migrated to Iran where he met Iranian sculptor Hassan Hazer-Moshar and his fellow cartoonist Kambiz Derambakhsh, who influenced him to take up sculpture.

In his search to find a suitable material to use in actualizing his art in sculpture, he stumbled upon paper pulp egg trays, from which he began making papier-mache sculptures.

His artworks gradually found buyers, and he found the enthusiasm sufficiently inspiring to organize exhibitions in Iran and other countries.

The Tehran exhibition will run until July August 9 at the gallery located at 6 Qandi Alley, Sasanipur St., Golnabi St., off Shariati Ave.

The exhibit will also be available on Artibition.net.



Afghan sculptor Alikhan Abdollahi poses with a number of his works in an undated photo.

Overseas cineastes welcome Iran's Resistance film festival

A R T **TEHRAN** — The organizers of the Resistance International Film Festival have announced that the 16th edition of the event has been warmly welcomed internationally as they have received over 1200 submissions from filmmakers from around the world.

In a press release published on Wednesday, the organizers said that they have received 1260 submissions from filmmakers in Central America, South America, Europe, Asia and Africa.

With 460 films, Asian filmmakers have sent the most submissions. With 248 films, Indian filmmakers are on the top of the list.

The festival has also received 325 films from European filmmakers. Most of the movies are from Spanish directors who have sent 30 submissions to the event.

The 16th edition of the Resistance International Film Festival is scheduled to take place in Tehran from



A poster for the 16th Resistance International Film Festival.

September 21 to 27.

Earlier this week, in a meeting with the organizers of the festival, the director of the Cinema Organization of Iran, Hossein Entezami, called on them to put their

focus on plans for promoting the culture of resistance in the region.

"Iran is the motherland of resistance, and the Resistance festival can and must be the promoter of the culture of resistance in the region," Hossein Entezami said in a meeting with the organizers of the 16th edition of the Resistance International Film Festival on Saturday.

"This festival should play a key role in developing and naturalizing the culture of resistance, and also provide patterns for producing films in the future," he added.

The festival has allocated a special section to films on health workers this year.

The category named "Health Defenders" has been established in honor of the medical workers on the front line of the campaign against COVID-19.

It also plans to honor innovative filmmakers with the Rasul Award named after the Iranian war film director, Rasul Mollaqlolipur.

"Bride of Fire" director Khosro Sinai diagnosed with COVID-19

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iranian writer Habib Ahmadzadeh said on Wednesday that Khosro Sinai, director of acclaimed drama "Bride of Fire" and several documentary films, has contracted COVID-19.

In a post published on the social network, Ahmadzadeh asked people to pray for his health.

"I never wanted to make such a request from anyone, but today I need your prayers for my great and dear friend Khosro Sinai. How many great men like Sinai, does the Iranian cinema possess?" he said.

"Now he has been admitted to hospital and he is receiving treatment for the novel coronavirus after he tested positive for the virus. His lungs are infected and his

breathing is possible only through a ventilator," he added.

Sinai had an operation in the hospital last month and afterwards was released.

Sinai has made many documentaries, including "The Melody Which an Antique Hears", "Beyond the Clamor", "The Coldness of Iron", "Haj Mosavvar al-Maleki" and "Hossein Yavari".

He is also the director of "Talking with a Shadow", a documentary about Iran's foremost short story writer, Sadeq Hedayat, who was influenced by world literature, especially European literature, and read the works of Kafka, Poe and Dostoyevsky. He committed suicide in Paris.

In 2008, Sinai received the Knight's



Filmmaker Khosro Sinai in an undated photo.

Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland for "The Lost Requiem" (1970-1983), his documentary that tells the

story of the wartime exodus to Iran by thousands of Polish citizens after being released from the Soviet labor camps of Siberia during World War II.

A number of Polish citizens took refuge in the central Iranian city of Isfahan during World War II.

"In the Alleys of Love" and "Bride of Fire" are among Sinai's other credits.

Early in July, 81-year old writer, poet and art critic Javad Mojabi tested positive, however, he is feeling much better these days.

Mohammad Mirzamani, the composer of the 1980s popular TV series "Kuchake Jangali", tested positive for the coronavirus mid-March, but recovered and is also feeling better.

Iranian-Canadian group to publish book on contemporary Iranian female painters

CULTURE **TEHRAN** — BAAT Art, a group consisting of three Iranian and one Canadian publishers, will introduce contemporary Iranian female painters in a book to be published in English next year.

The two-volume book will help pave the way for the participation of female artists in international events.

The first volume will provide special insight into the history of painting in Iran and female artists' status in the country.

The second volume will be dedicated to the biography of the female painters, acting as a databank to introduce 1200 active and influential female artists in Iran.

The book will provide a great opportunity for female

Iranian artists who are active in many national and international events, because some still are surprised on hearing the names of female artists in international arenas, BAAT Art said.

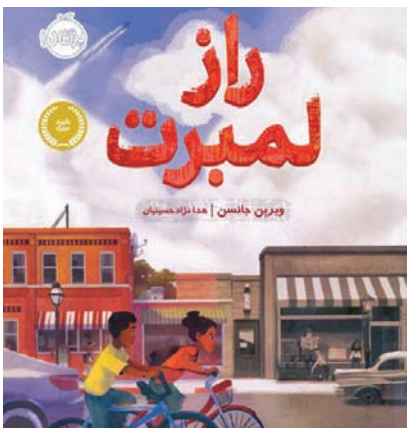
The cultural group believes that the first step to take to introduce these active female artists is to publish a pictorial book of the artists and their works in English to introduce them to the world.

Exhibitions of top selected works in the book will also be set up in different European cities concurrent with the publication of the book.

The book includes the history and origin of painting in Iran in addition to the creative and enduring female artists in Iran, while the top 100 female artists will also be introduced in the book.



A painting by Nazi Torbatinejad submitted to BAAT Art.



Front cover of the Persian translation of American children's book writer Varian Johnson's "The Parker Inheritance".

CULTURE **TEHRAN** — "The Parker Inheritance", a book by American children's book writer Varian Johnson has been published in Persian.

Porteqaal in Tehran is the publisher of the book translated into Persian by Hoda Nejadosseini.

The book is about Candice who finds a letter in an old attic in Lambert, South Carolina. She isn't sure she should read it, since it's addressed to her grandmother, who left the town in shame. But the letter describes a young woman, an injustice that happened decades ago, a mystery

Iranian bookstores come into "The Parker Inheritance"

enfolding its writer, and the fortune that awaits the person who solves the puzzle.

The story then continues that with the help of Brandon, the quiet boy across the street, she begins to decipher the clues. The challenge will lead them deep into Lambert's history, full of ugly deeds, forgotten heroes, and one great love; and deeper into their own families, with their own unspoken secrets. Can they find the fortune and fulfill the letter's promise before the answers slip into the past yet again?

"The Parker Inheritance" was named a 2019 Coretta Scott King Honor Book and

a 2018 Boston Globe-Horn Book Award Honor Book among other accolades.

Johnson is the author of nine novels, including his middle-grade caper novel, "The Great Greene Heist", which has been named to over twenty-five state reading and best-of-lists.

Varian was born in Florence, South Carolina, and attended the University of Oklahoma, where he received a BS in Civil Engineering. He later received an MFA in Writing for Children and Young Adults from Vermont College of Fine Arts, and is honored to now be a member of the faculty.