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U.S. talks with Taliban aimed for 'face-saving' exit from Afghanistan: columnist **7**



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Congratulations on Eid al-Ghadir



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Iran sending field hospital and medicine to Lebanon

432 idle industrial units revived in 4.5 months

TEHRAN — Iran's Deputy Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister Mohsen Salehinia announced that 432 idle industrial units have been revived throughout the country since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20), IRIB reported.

Salehinia, who is also the head of Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO), said that reviving the mentioned units has created jobs for 7,591 persons.

Tehran with 48 units, Qom with 46 units, and Isfahan with 41 units were the provinces in which most of the revived units are located, he added.

The official said that there are currently about 45,000 small and medium-sized industrial units in the country's industrial parks, of them 9,500 units are inactive, adding that 1,500 idle industrial units are planned to be revived in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20, 2021). **→4**

Iranians express grief over tragic Beirut explosion

TEHRAN — Top Iranian officials including President Hassan Rouhani, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, Supreme National Security Council secretary Ali Shamkhani have separately expressed deep grief over the tragic explosion in Beirut, Lebanon.

Rouhani on Wednesday expressed

his deepest condolences to the Lebanese government and people over the Tuesday explosion, saying Iran is ready to offer medical aid to the country.

In a message to Lebanese President Michel Aoun on Wednesday, Rouhani said the explosion that claimed the lives of many people has caused grief in Iran.

Rouhani wished a speedy recovery for those injured in the incident. **→2**

Israel, U.S. are beneficiaries of Beirut tragedy, says Lebanese researcher

By Mohammad Mazhari

TEHRAN — Lebanese political researcher Ali Mourad says the Israeli regime and the U.S. are the main beneficiaries of the deadly huge explosion that happened in Beirut on Tuesday afternoon.

"The beneficiaries of this tragedy are the Israelis and the Americans in the first

place," Mourad tells the Tehran Times.

On the whys and whats of the blast, the researcher says, "What is for sure is that there is negligence and recklessness of the officials at the port and the judicial body since the Amonia shipment was kept in a chamber in the port for 7 years without removing it from there." **→7**

U.S. protests: 4 countries where legislators tweeted about George Floyd, 'Black lives matter'

Protests and debates over racism and police brutality have spread far beyond America's shores since the death of George Floyd at the hands of a Minneapolis police officer on May 25. And public officials have joined the discussion in many countries — including in four nations where Pew Research Center has been tracking the Twitter activity of national legislators for much of the past two years.

Indeed, many legislators in these four countries — Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom — directly addressed Floyd's killing and the subsequent protests on their Twitter accounts, according to a new analysis by the Center. The analysis looks at predominantly English-speaking countries where lawmaker tweets can be analyzed in a standardized way, but these nations are far from the only ones where Floyd's death has commanded attention among political leaders.

A 59% majority of British members of Parliament who tweeted between May 26 and June 10 posted about Floyd or used the phrase "Black lives matter" or the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag, according to the new analysis. Smaller percentages of national legislators in Canada (44%), Australia (26%) and New Zealand (14%) did so, too.

■ Colorado police chief apologizes over four Black girls held at gunpoint

A Colorado police chief apologized on Tuesday to family members of four Black girls, one as young as 6, who were held on the ground at gunpoint over the weekend by officers who mistakenly believed they were riding in a stolen car, an incident caught on videotape.

The video footage, shot by a bystander and broadcast on local television, shows the girls, ages 6, 12, 14 and 17, on the ground with several police officers of the Denver suburb of Aurora standing over them. **→10**

Corona is a reality but it cannot stop traveling, tourism minister says

TEHRAN — Iran's tourism minister on Tuesday said that it is true that the coronavirus pandemic is a [bitter] reality but it cannot bring traveling to a complete standstill.

"Corona is a fact, but can the virus stop tourism? Certainly not. For us, the coronavirus is a new experience in dealing with crises that teaches tourism experts around the world how to deal with such a disaster, and thankfully governments are turning this into an opportunity for better planning," Ali-Asghar Mounesan said, ISNA reported.

He made the remarks in a video showcased on Tuesday evening during a prize-giving ceremony in which a select of tourism businesses, tour operators, investors, and hoteliers were honored.

"Tourism experts will certainly find a way to deal with this great crisis. As if the measures so far been taken in Iran and all over the world

show that we will surely succeed [to make a big rebound] through proper smart planning."

Addressing the attendees to the ceremony, the minister explained: "Investments and the launch of new projects in the tourism sector have been increased dramatically underway across the country. Of these, about 600 are hotel-related projects that show a very promising future, conveying a message that investors see profitable prospects for Iran's tourism."

Elsewhere in remarks, the official said "We are not saying that tourism should [merely] replace oil [revenues], but tourism can become first [sector of] economy in the country replacing revenues [currently being come from [the export of] mineral and raw resources."

"Tourism can create an easy way to earn and create employment by tapping into the existing historical and natural capacities of the country." **→8**

Not even one person deprived of PHC services

By Faranak Bakhtiari

TEHRAN — Mohammad Shariati, associate professor at the Tehran University of Medical Sciences and former director of the national health network, believes that thanks to the expanded and efficient national healthcare system, not even one person is deprived of primary health care (PHC) services.

In an exclusive interview with the Tehran Times, Shariati referred to the country's public health coverage, saying that there is not a single

person in Iran even in the most remote areas that do not have access to medical care services. "We provide all the population with primary health care and health services."

"In this regard, we established mobile team, through which customized vehicles travel to the heart of communities, especially remote areas, and provide prevention and healthcare services; They overcome barriers of time, money, and trust, and provide community-tailored care to the whole populations."

The villagers whose population is less than 500 and there is not a health center in the village, receive prevention and primary health care services from mobile teams, and can receive emergency services through 115, depending on the location or by ambulance or helicopter," he explained.

"The other way to offer these services to the deprived populations is health clinics affiliated to universities of medical sciences that dispatch helicopters in case of any reports from rural areas, he added. **→9**



Ghadir naqqali festival announced winners

TEHRAN — Winners of the fourth edition of the Ghadir Naqqali and Pardekhani Festival were honored during a ceremony at the courtyard of Namayesh Radio in Tehran.

The Art Bureau of the Islamic Ideology Dissemination Organization and IRIB's Namayesh Radio organize the festival to honor best performers of naqqali — a dramatic style of storytelling dedicated to stories from Ferdowsi's Shahnameh and other epic Persian stories. A morshed or naqqal is someone who performs a naqqali. **→12**

Who is benefiting from blast in Beirut?

By Mehdi Azizi

TEHRAN — The massive explosion in Beirut is feared to create a similar situation to the aftermath of Rafic Hariri's assassination in 2005, which led to foreign intervention in Lebanon, even to a larger and more dangerous scale.

The political situation in Lebanon over the past few days can be described as the calm before the storm.

Instability and creating a political conundrum in the country were on the agenda as a joint project among the domestic elements, political rivals and foreign anti-Lebanese movements, who had not been successful in materializing their goals in the past.

Manipulation of the internal protests, which were initially formed with economic purposes, did so little in obstructing the process of forming the new Lebanese government, although such uprisings could bring about turmoil for a short period.

On the other hand, forcing the Resistance Movement to either join the protesters or be removed from the political arena was the next project that was pursued. Hezbollah had no choice; either it had to stand by the protesters, which meant contributing to the scenario of making Lebanon insecure, or let its popular position among the protesters would be tarnished.

Although the foreign movements' priority was not to impede the formation of a new government, it could have given them an opportunity for a while to revitalize and rebuild their political position. Such movements are those whose leaders have long relied on foreign support to turn domestic crises into opportunities to secure their political wishes. **→7**

EDITORIAL
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How to make the Lebanese succumb to U.S.?

The scenario has two dimensions and is quite simple: prove Hezbollah to be the main element paving the way for the explosion and make the way for a country with some financial and logistical resources to save the day.

The vital information about the leading cause of the Tuesday massive explosion in Beirut released a few hours later: a cargo containing more than 2,700 tons of highly explosive material, triggered by a small fire, resulted in the third most powerful blast in the world since WW II's Hiroshima. It's not officially confirmed whether or not it was the third massive explosion. More importantly, the cargo had been sitting in the port for over six years. A diplomatic source told the Tehran Times that an eastern European country sent this cargo to be used by Syria's opposition groups in the war against Bashar Assad's government.

The critical question is: who is responsible for the cargo to be stuck in the port for so long? There are different answers to this question. Reliable data proves that the Lebanese government at the time seized the cargo for customs reasons. But media outlets that have been fighting against the Resistance Front for quite a long time (inside and outside the region) now spread unconfirmed information suggesting an arms depot that belongs to Hezbollah made the blast so powerful. This implants an idea deep inside the brains of the Lebanese: Beirut's disastrous incident is somehow related to Hezbollah.

On the other side, the country will soon need significant help from other countries to reconstruct itself, which will give countries like the U.S. and Saudi Arabia a golden opportunity to complete their puzzle in the region and serve the interests of Israel in a better way. Whether the U.S. would step forward for help directly, or send another country from Europe or West Asia as a representative, the main precondition to rebuild the infrastructure will probably be disarmament of Hezbollah. Regarding the harsh conditions caused by the biting sanctions, it can be hard to convince the Lebanese to resist against the condition to disarm Hezbollah.

Countries like Iran, Iraq, and Syria must RUSH to help Lebanon, now.

Ayatollah Khamenei pardons, commutes sentences of 2,135 prisoners

POLITICAL d e s k TEHRAN — Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has pardoned or reduced the prison sentences of 2,135 prisoners convicted by various courts.

The Leader granted the clemency upon a request by Judiciary Chief Ebrahim Raisi on the occasion of Eid al-Adha and Eid al-Ghadir.

Article 110 of the constitution grants the Leader the right to pardon or commute the sentences of convicts upon a recommendation from Judiciary chief.

Iran sending field hospital and medicine to Lebanon

POLITICAL d e s k TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Wednesday that Iran is sending field hospital and medicine to Lebanon after two huge explosions in Beirut on Tuesday afternoon.

“Reiterated #Iran’s strong and steadfast solidarity with people of Lebanon in call with FM Wehbeh. Iran is sending field hospital & medicine to assist with disaster relief. Iran stands with Lebanon,” Zarif tweeted.

A warehouse at the Beirut Port caught fire on Tuesday afternoon, triggering a huge explosion.

The Lebanese Red Cross said in a statement that over 100 people were killed and more than 4,000 were injured.

Reportedly, hospitals, already struggling with the country’s coronavirus outbreak, have been overwhelmed by the large number of injured people. Several hospitals were damaged in the blast.

Right after the tragic event, Zarif wrote, “Our thoughts and prayers are with the great and resilient people of Lebanon.”

Zarif added, “As always, Iran is fully prepared to render assistance in any way necessary.”

Iran’s chief diplomat asked the Lebanese to “stay strong” in the face of the calamity.

“Stay strong, Lebanon,” Zarif said.

Iran’s Judiciary head urges intl. action against U.S. sanctions on Lebanon after massive blast

Iran’s Judiciary Chief Ebrahim Raisi has called on the international community to take action to help lift U.S. sanctions against Lebanon to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe in the wake of a recent massive explosion that ravaged the country’s capital Beirut.

The Iranian official on Wednesday offered his condolences to the Lebanese government and nation over the tragic explosion in Beirut, and said the damage to an important part of Beirut’s economic infrastructure and its consequences have doubled the tragedy for the people of the country.

The necessary action today, while maintaining national coherence and vigilance against acts by enemies of the Lebanese nation and government aimed at invoking sedition and division, is to immediately address the basic needs of the Lebanese people, whose supply has been disrupted as a result of this incident, Raisi added.

He said this painful incident took place at a time when the wounds caused by the Israeli occupation and its repeated acts of aggressions against the Lebanese people have not yet healed, coupled with Washington’s brutal sanctions against Beirut.

“Considering the cruel and inhumane sanctions imposed by the criminal U.S. regime against the Lebanese people in recent months, which constitute a serious obstacle to addressing the essential needs of the Lebanese people, efforts to immediately lift these sanctions in order to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe must be on the agenda of the governments having friendly ties with Lebanon as well as the international community,” the Iranian Judiciary chief noted.

He added that the Iranian Judiciary’s High Council for Human Rights will put on the agenda taking legal action to remove these pressures and defend the rights of the Lebanese people.

Hundreds of individuals and entities have been sanctioned by the U.S. in Lebanon, with the list focusing mainly on those with ties to the Hezbollah resistance movement. The list, however, includes a wide range of targets, from pharmaceutical companies, religious organizations and community outreach groups to banks and trading importer/exporters.

Observers say that the U.S. sanctions on Lebanon have deteriorated the already struggling economy of the Arab country.

President Hassan Rouhani on Wednesday tasked the Iranian Red Crescent Society with sending humanitarian aid to Lebanon.

In remarks at a Wednesday cabinet meeting, Rouhani assigned the Iranian Red Crescent Society to immediately send humanitarian aid to Lebanon, including medical and health supplies.

Separately, the chief commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), Major General Hossein Salami, Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff of Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Bagheri and Army Commander Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi also commiserated with the Lebanese nation, government and army as well as Hezbollah Secretary General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah on the tragic incident and expressed readiness to render assistance to the nation.

Also, Iranian Defense Minister Brigadier General Amir Hatami, in a phone conversation with his Lebanese counterpart, voiced Tehran’s readiness to send medical equipment and staff to Beirut.

■ **Tehran to turn off Milad Tower lights in solidarity with Beirut**

Following the tragic explosion in Beirut and the death of dozens of citizens of this city, the lights of Milad Tower, the sixth tallest tower in the world, will be turned off tonight at 9 pm local time (0430 GMT) on Wednesday, August 6, as a sign of sympathy of the Iranian people with the Lebanese people.

The blast that rocked the Lebanese capital has so far killed at least 100 people and injured more than 4,000 others.

President Michel Aoun said the blast was caused by 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate stored unsafely in a warehouse. Lebanon has announced three days of mourning.

Iranians express grief over tragic Beirut explosion

Rouhani says Iran is ready to treat the Lebanese injured in the huge blast

POLITICAL d e s k TEHRAN — Top Iranian officials including President Hassan Rouhani, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, Supreme National Security Council secretary Ali Shamkhani have separately expressed deep grief over the tragic explosion in Beirut, Lebanon.

Rouhani on Wednesday expressed his deepest condolences to the Lebanese government and people over the Tuesday explosion, saying Iran is ready to offer medical aid to the country.

In a message to Lebanese President Michel Aoun on Wednesday, Rouhani said the explosion that claimed the lives of many people has caused grief in Iran.

Rouhani wished a speedy recovery for those injured in the incident.

The Iranian government is ready to send medical consignment and treat the injured, he wrote.

Rouhani also hoped that aspects of the incident would soon become clear and calm would return to Beirut.

At least 100 people were killed and more than 4,000 were wounded after a massive explosion at the port sent shock waves across the Lebanese capital.

On Wednesday morning, smoke was still rising from the port, where a towering grain silos had been shattered. Major downtown streets were littered with debris and damaged vehicles, and building facades were blown out. At hospitals across the city people had been waiting all night for news of loved ones who had gone missing or were wounded. Others posted requests for help online.

George Kettaneh, an official with the Lebanese Red Cross, said the toll could rise further.

Several smaller explosions were heard before the bigger one occurred.

Abbas Ibrahim, the head of Lebanon’s General Security, said that “highly explosive materials” confiscated earlier had been stored at the site.

Footage shared on social media captured



Rouhani



Ghalibaf



Zarif



Shamkhani



Jannati



Mousavi

the moment of the bigger explosion, with a colossal shock wave seen traveling fast across several hundreds of meters and shrouding the area in thick smoke.

The blast left enormous material damage to the surrounding buildings and structures.

Lebanese Prime Minister Hassan Diab vowed that those responsible for the massive blast in Beirut would be held to account, also calling for international assistance to help the country, which is already beset by economic crises.

Diab announced three days of national mourning for the victims of the deadly blast in Lebanon, also declaring a state of emergency across the country for two weeks.

■ **Ayatollah Jannati calls Islamic countries to help Lebanon**

Secretary of Iran’s Guardian Council Ayatollah Ali Jannati called on all Islamic countries to come to the aid of Lebanon.

“Although we are in the Eid al-Adha and Eid al-Ghadir period, but the very painful tragedy of the explosion in Lebanon’s Beirut caused grief and sorrow of all Muslims throughout the world, especially Iran,” Ayatollah Jannati said at the beginning of the council’s meeting on Wednesday morning.

“The material and spiritual damage caused by this tragedy and the damage that come afterward will affect the Lebanese people for years,” he said.

He also urged Iranian authorities, executive bodies and revolutionary institutions to help the Lebanese people in spite of the

problems that the coronavirus caused for Iran.

■ **‘Our thoughts are with Lebanon,’ says Zarif**

“Our thoughts and prayers are with the great and resilient people of Lebanon,” Foreign Minister Zarif wrote in a tweet on Tuesday night.

“As always, Iran is fully prepared to render assistance in any way necessary. Stay strong, Lebanon,” Zarif added.

Hossein Amir Abdollahian, a senior foreign policy advisor to the Iranian Parliament speaker, also tweeted, “Extremely saddened for the explosion in Beirut Port. My sincerest condolences & sympathy to all my dear brothers & sisters in #Lebanon. May the Almighty grant patience to the bereaved & swift recovery for the wounded people. Ready to deliver any assistance!”

■ **Ghalibaf: Our hearts are filled with grief**

Parliament Speaker Ghalibaf urged the Iranian Red Crescent Society and other relief institutions to immediately dispatch help for the injured people.

“Our hearts were filled with grief and sorrow over the catastrophe at the port in Lebanon’s Beirut,” Ghalibaf said during an open session of the parliament on Wednesday.

“The Iranian people’s hearts are with the bereaved people of Lebanon,” he said.

“I express my condolences over this incident to the dear people of Lebanon, the government and parliament of that country and especially to the Mujahideen of Hezbollah

lah and my dear brother Hassan Nasrallah, who is the leader of resistance,” he added.

Ghalibaf also voiced Iran’s readiness to dispatch humanitarian aid to Lebanon.

■ **Top security official condoles with Lebanon**

Secretary of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) expressed heartfelt condolences to the people of Lebanon, saying Tehran was ready to help Beirut by all means.

“I offer my heartfelt condolences to the president, the government and the people of Lebanon on the explosion in Beirut and the death and injury of a number of Lebanese people,” Shamkhani said in a tweet in Persian.

“We share the great sorrow of Lebanon, and we stand by its proud and resilient people for any help and assistance,” he added.

■ **Beirut blast was an ‘alarming’ incident: Foreign Ministry**

Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi expressed regret over the tragedy, describing it as an “alarming” incident.

In a statement on Tuesday night, Mousavi said Iran is following up the news of the incident with deep sorrow.

The spokesman offered the Iranian nation and government’s sympathy and condolences to the Lebanese nation and government, and voiced Iran’s readiness to help the Lebanese brothers and sisters.

He also underlined Tehran’s solidarity with the nation and government of Lebanon at such difficult times.

Inside the efforts to exploit Beirut tragedy

Beirut tragedy must not be exploited

POLITICAL d e s k TEHRAN — While

Hezbollah and its allies in the Lebanese government are badly affected by the Beirut massive explosion, some Saudi- and U.S.-affiliated media outlets spread rumors about Hezbollah’s alleged role in the explosion. An analyst tells the Tehran Times that Saudi Arabia is exploiting the deadly blast to mobilize the public against Hezbollah.

On Tuesday, the Lebanese capital city of Beirut was massively rocked by a blast that killed more than 100 and injured thousands of people. The blast was so powerful that it was felt in countries as far as Jordan and Cyprus.

“Today is a deeply sad and painful day... Beirut is grief-stricken... Lebanon is facing a disaster,” Lebanese Prime Minister Hassan Diab said shortly after the Tuesday blast left much of Beirut under debris.

“This is a great national disaster. The images and videos we see truly express this tragedy and translate the scope of the calamity that has affected Lebanon. Beirut is grieving... All of Lebanon is disaster-torn. Lebanon is going through a quite ordeal that could only be faced with national unity and solidarity among all Lebanese from all backgrounds and regions. We are going through a disaster that could only be overcome with determination and tenacity to face this serious challenge and its destructive consequences,” the prime minister noted, adding that those responsible for the blast will be held accountable.

A diplomatic source familiar with the situation in Lebanon told the Tehran

Times that the blast is “highly likely” to be an orchestrated sabotage.

Lebanese President Michel Aoun has said that the blast was caused by explosive materials stored in a warehouse at the Beirut port.

“It is unacceptable that a shipment of 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate has been present for six years in a warehouse, without taking preventive measures,” the president noted.

The source told the Tehran Times that the shipment contained highly explosive materials that were imported from an Eastern European country six years ago and it was supposed to be delivered to militants in Syria.

“Lebanon’s prime minister, president, and the cabinet ministers didn’t know that such a shipment is stored in a warehouse at the port,” the source said, adding that financial issues between the buyer and seller of the shipment have prevented its delivery to the Syrian militants.

If true, this information stands in stark contrast to what the Saudi and American media outlets say about the alleged role of Hezbollah in the blast. The Saudi media has managed to blame the explosion on Hezbollah. For example, al-Hadath TV, a Saudi news network, immediately broadcasted footages from the site of the blast suggesting that it was a result of a missile hitting the port. The network also hosted analysts who laid the blame for the explosion on Hezbollah. The analysts claimed that Hezbollah was to blame for the blast because even if it wasn’t an attack, Hezbollah would be responsible for “storing arms” at the port.

However, independent analysts believe that

Hezbollah and its allies in the Hassan Diab government were the parties most affected by the destruction of the Beirut port because Lebanon has already been reeling from a devastating financial and economic crisis and the Beirut port blast will only make the economic situation worse.

About 70% of Lebanon’s imported goods were entering the country through the Beirut port, which includes wheat silos and a free zone with an area of 81,000 square meters. But the ports are now totally destroyed. Therefore, the Diab cabinet, which is backed by Hezbollah, will face difficulties providing citizens with basic goods like wheat and medicines.

Some analysts believe that the Saudis may have some role in the blast because the Beirut port is basically managed by their ally, al-Mostaqbal bloc.

“Evidence shows that the Saudis may have a role in the blast,” Amir Mousavi, a former Iranian diplomat, who served as Iranian cultural attaché in Algeria in 2015, told the Tehran Times. He said that the Lebanese authorities’ investigation into the blast could hurt the Saudis and their allies in Lebanon.

According to Mousavi, officials at the Beirut port are closely allied to the al-Mostaqbal bloc and its Saudi-backed leader, Saad al-Hariri. Mousavi confirmed that senior Lebanese officials were unaware of the existence of the explosive materials at the port.

“The al-Mostaqbal-backed officials at the Beirut port didn’t inform the government or other high-ranking Lebanese officials that there were highly explosive materials stored in a warehouse at the port,” said Mousavi,

who is now the director of the Tehran-based Center for Strategic Studies and International Relations.

He also said that the Diab government inherited the current economic woes from al-Hariri, who left the power in late October 2019 amid nationwide protests in the country.

“Diab inherited the government from al-Hariri with an empty treasury. During the last days of al-Hariri’s premiership, his allies took out about \$20 billion from Lebanon, a move that exacerbated Lebanon’s hard currency crisis,” Mousavi pointed out.

The former diplomat went on to say that unlike Saudi Arabia, which sought to exploit the Beirut blast to sow discord among the Lebanese and mobilize them against Hezbollah, Iran rushed to help Lebanon immediately after the Tuesday blast, sending three planes with medical aid to Lebanon including a field hospital.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif expressed solidarity with Lebanon.

“Our thoughts and prayers are with the great and resilient people of Lebanon. As always, Iran is fully prepared to render assistance in any way necessary. Stay strong, Lebanon,” Iran’s chief diplomat tweeted on Tuesday. He also held a phone conversation with his Lebanese counterpart.

In a tweet on Wednesday, Zarif said he “reiterated Iran’s strong and steadfast solidarity with people of Lebanon in call with FM Wehbeh.” Zarif added, “Iran is sending field hospital and medicine to assist with disaster relief. Iran stands with Lebanon.”

Iranian parliament preparing plan to stop NPT Additional Protocol

POLITICAL d e s k TEHRAN — The head of the Parliament National Security and Foreign Policy Committee announced on Wednesday that the parliament has put on its agenda a double-urgency plan to stop implementation of the Additional Protocol to the NPT in Iran by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

“The double-urgency plan to stop implementing the Additional Protocol is on the agenda of the Majlis presiding board,” Mojtaba Zolnour said, according to IRNA.

Abbas Moghtadaei, the deputy chairman of the Parliament National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, said on July 11 that the parliament has prepared a plan to stop the voluntary implementation of the Additional Protocol.

“This plan has been prepared in the for-

mat of urgency based on which voluntary implementation of the Additional Protocol will be stopped and the government is obliged to observe it,” Moghtadaei said.

Moghtadaei said that the plan has been drawn up in response to the United States and Europe’s excessive demands.

Iran’s parliament issued a statement in June strongly condemning an anti-Iran resolution by the International Atomic Energy Agency’s Board of Governors, asking the government to stop implementing the Additional Protocol, which allows surprise inspections of nuclear sites.

“The Islamic Consultative Assembly strongly condemns resolution of the International Atomic Energy Agency’s Board of Governors which was proposed by three European countries of England, France, and

Germany under the pressure of the ruling regime in the United States and the fake Zionist regime. It [the parliament] considers the resolution another example of structural discrimination by the international agency,” the statement read.

The statement was signed by 240 MPs.

It called the resolution “excessive demand” despite the fact that Iran has cooperated with the agency transparently.

“The Islamic Republic has implemented the Additional Protocol voluntarily and not based on its safeguards duties. According to reports of the Agency’s director-general, the Agency has carried out the most precise inspections, including 30 surprise inspections annually,” the MPs stated.

The 35-member IAEA board passed the resolution on June 19, demanding access to

two old places they claim nuclear work may have been done there.

Nine countries out 35 members to the IAEA board did not vote for the resolution. China and Russia voted against the resolution and Thailand, Mongolia, Niger, South Africa, India, Pakistan and the Republic of Azerbaijan abstained.

■ **‘Parliament to prepare 12 anti-U.S. plans’**

In his interview with IRNA, Zolnour also said that the parliament prepares 12 anti-U.S. plans to make it more costly for the United States any action against Iran.

“Majlis will put these plans on agenda gradually to take action in reviving national interests and increasing the price of any action against the country’s interests for the United States,” he said.

Sanctions cannot bring Iranians to their knees: Rouhani

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — President **d e s k** Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday that enemy must know that the Iranians cannot be brought to their knees through sanctions.

“We have to make the enemies understand that they cannot bring us to knees by sanctions and they have no other way but to accept the logic and truth. That day will not be far and we will gain success through patience and resistance,” Rouhani said during a cabinet meeting.

The president also said that the country is facing two problems of “sanctions” and “distortion” at the same time, noting that both of them cause suffering.

“Sanctions are imposed by enemies and we are feeling its consequences. Distortion is sometimes done by the enemies, however, sometimes the distortion is done from inside of the country which is ‘more painful,’” he stated.

The president added, “Some people tend to ignore sanctions. They say what has the administration done? Why has it not taken action? It is important to see the situation in which the administration is making efforts and is doing its



job. We have to see the situation. Is the administration working in a battlefield or is resting? Which one is that? We have to see realities.”

Elsewhere, Rouhani said that the country must break the sanctions.

“We have to break the sanctions and offset them. We have to cut the hand of those who impose sanctions,” he suggested.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on July 31 that along with the sanctions a “distortion” campaign is also underway against Iran.

The enemies are seeking to reverse the realities in Iran in order to demoralize the people and give a “wrong address”, the Leader said.

Elaborating on the purpose behind U.S. sanctions, Ayatollah Khamenei said, “Their mid-term aim is to create limitations so that there would be no progress in scientific areas. Their long-term is to bankrupt the government and crumble the country’s economy so that it would no longer be able to survive.”

Along with these three purposes, the Leader pointed out, they want to cut Iran’s relations with countries which are members of the Axis of Resistance in the region, but “the cat dreams of mice”.

U.S. circulates resolution on Iran arms embargo at UN: Bloomberg

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The United States has **d e s k** circulated a new resolution to the UN Security Council members, calling for an extension of the UN arms embargo on Iran.

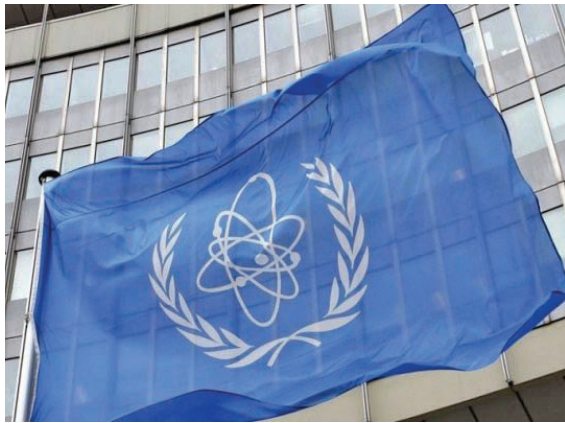
Bloomberg News reported on Wednesday that it had obtained a copy of the text, which asks UN member states to stop all sales of weapons to and from Iran.

It also asks UN member states to refrain from providing any “technical training, financial resources or services, advice, other services or assistance related to the supply, sale, transfer, manufacture, maintenance, or use of arms” to Iran.

According to Bloomberg News, the new resolution is almost identical to one the U.S. circulated in June, signaling the Trump administration is unwilling to make changes suggested by allies and opponents on the Security Council.

U.S. Ambassador Kelly Craft acknowledged on Tuesday that Russia and China are likely to veto any resolution. The U.S. has threatened to invoke a “snapback” provision in the 2015 Iran nuclear deal to reimpose all UN sanctions against Tehran. The U.S. claims it can do that even though President Donald Trump quit the multinational accord in 2018.

“The strategy in a perfect world will always be to



have them abstain and obviously not veto” the U.S. resolution, Craft said of Russia and China in an online appearance at the annual Aspen Security Forum.

“However, let’s be realistic here. Right now the strategy is working with other members of the Security Council” to put China and Russia “in a corner and shine a light on them.”

The United States has stepped up calls for the ex-

tension of the UN arms embargo on Iran since April.

In June, the United States introduced a draft resolution at the UN Security Council to extend the arms embargo on Iran before it expires in mid-October. Russia and China have already voiced their opposition to the draft resolution.

In 2015, Iran signed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, the U.S., and the European Union.

The JCPOA required Iran to scale back its nuclear program in exchange for sanctions removal, including lifting the arms embargo five years after the deal’s adoption. In 2018, the U.S. pulled out of the JCPOA and reinstated harsh sanctions on Tehran.

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

Last month, Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said Iran has told all members of the UN Security Council and its friends that the extension of the arms embargo would be “unacceptable”.

The spokesman said Iranian officials do not think other countries would succumb to the U.S. bullying.

“We hope the U.S. pressure ends,” he said, adding, “Iran is striving to secure its right.”

Lebanon hails IRCS for humanitarian aid

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Head **d e s k** of the Lebanese Red Cross George Kataneh has thanked the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) for its immediate readiness to provide humanitarian assistance to the victims of the massive explosion in the port of Beirut.

Speaking in a telephone conversation, Kataneh told IRCS Chief Karim Hemmati that Lebanon is currently in the phase of emergency accommodation and food distribution among the victims and the health department is evaluating hospitals, Mehr reported.

Karim Hemmati, for his part, offered condolences of the Iranian nation and government with the Lebanese nation, saying, “We spare no efforts to provide any assistance that Lebanon needs.”

Iran was set to send humanitarian aid to Lebanon on Wednesday afternoon.

So far, at least 100 people were killed and thousands injured in a massive explosion in Beirut, which sent shock waves across the Lebanese capital.

Witnesses in Cyprus, barely 100 miles from Beirut, say the blast was not only heard but felt. Local media reported Cypriot authorities being placed on alert within minutes of the explosion with many comparing it to a similar blast in southern Cyprus nine



years ago at a munitions dump in the naval base of Mari.

In the aftermath of the attack, hospitals asked people with non-life-threatening injuries to stay at home because they were unable to cope with a huge influx in patients. Several hospitals were damaged in the explosion. In Gemmayze district, medical staff have been forced to treat patients in a car park, while others have reported shortages of key medicines including antibiotics.

The Red Cross is coordinating with the Health Ministry to set up morgues because hospitals have become so overwhelmed, Kettani has told Reuters.

Rescue workers are continuing to search through rubble at the port, according to the civil defense director general, Raymond Khattar, who said it is believed people remain trapped.

Youm-e-Istehsal observed in Tehran

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The **d e s k** embassy of Pakistan in Tehran held a virtual seminar to observe Youm-e-Istehsal in Jammu & Kashmir.

Messages of the president, prime minister and foreign minister of Pakistan were read out to the participants comprising Iranian scholars, academicians, intellectuals, media persons, members of Pakistani community, Pakistani and Iranian students.

Highlighting human rights abuses in Jammu & Kashmir, Ambassador Rahim Hayat Qureshi said that the recent use of force and continued siege of Kashmir by the Indian forces have failed to suppress the indigenous struggle of the Kashmiri people aspiring for their right to self-determination.

The ambassador said that Pakistan raised the Kashmir issue at every forum to sensitize the world community about the Modi government’s actions in the region.

By abolishing the articles 35A and 370 of the Constitution, the Indian government has attempted to turn the Muslim majority into minority in Jammu & Kashmir by pursuing its Hindutva agenda, the ambassador said.

He added in spite of the appeals from UN secretary general and human rights organizations, India continues its siege and human rights violations.

“Continuous military siege has cri-



pled life in Kashmir,” the ambassador remarked.

Ambassador emphasized that Pakistan would continue to support the Kashmiris till they achieve their right to self-determination. He thanked Supreme Leader Ayatollah Syed Ali Khamenei, the Iranian government and people of Iran for supporting the cause of the Kashmiri Muslims and expressing dismay over the recent Indian atrocities in Jammu & Kashmir.

Renowned Iranian scholars Hojjatul-Islam Syed Salman Naqvi and Syed Hassan Raza, in their speeches, condemned the abrogation of special status of Kashmir, human right violations being committed by Indian forces against the peaceful Kashmiris. They appealed to the Muslim Ummah to raise their voice unanimously in support of the innocent Kashmiris and demand immediate restoration of special status and put an end to siege of Jammu and Kashmir.

in a veiled reference to the death of black man George Floyd in Minneapolis after a white police officer knelt on his neck.

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

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

“This has again undermined the joint efforts to preserve the JCPOA [Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action],” Zhang said, referring to U.S. efforts to extend the arms embargo.

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

Final report on Ukrainian plane crash to be published soon

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Deputy Foreign Minister for **d e s k** International and Legal Affairs Mohsen Baharvand has said that the final report on the Ukrainian plane crash will be published soon.

“The International Civil Aviation Organization and the people will be informed about the report. There will be advices in the report to prevent such incidents in future,” Baharvand told IRNA in an interview published on Wednesday.

He also said that next round of talks over the incident will be held in Tehran in October.



In a tweet on Saturday, Iran’s Ambassador to Ukraine Manouchehr Moradi said that second round of talks over the Ukrainian plane crash will be held in October in Tehran.

“The first round of negotiations between Iran and Ukraine about #ps752 issues was held in Kiev during the visit of Iranian delegation to Kiev on 30-31 July and ended with participants from Canada, Sweden & United Kingdom. Talks were constructive and fruitful. Second round to be held on Oct. 2020 in Tehran,” Moradi tweeted.

The Ukrainian airliner was shot down shortly after taking off from Tehran’s Imam Khomeini airport on January 8, killing all 167 passengers and 9 crew members.

On January 11, the Armed Forces General Staff released a statement saying the plane was mistakenly downed near the airport.

The incident happened a few hours after Iran fired dozens of ballistic missiles at a U.S. airbase inside Iraq in retaliation for the assassination of top Iranian military commander Qassem Soleimani.

The airplane had been mistaken for an invading missile. Iran has sent the black box of the passenger plane to France for decoding.

The Iranian embassy in France announced on July 21 that the preliminary analysis of the recovered data from the black boxes is underway in the BEA laboratory in France.

According to the embassy, a team of Civil Aviation Organization of the Islamic Republic of Iran in a joint effort with the French side began to decode the black boxes the prior day, Mehr reported.

On the first day of this joint technical cooperation, a delegation of Iranian experts and a group of French laboratory experts succeeded in recovering the FDR (flight data recording) section in the black boxes of the plane, it added.

Iran: U.S.-SDF oil deal in Syria lacks legal validity

TEHRAN (FNA) — Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi condemned an oil agreement signed between the Kurdish-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and an American company as “a violation of Syrian sovereignty,” and said that such a deal has “no legal validity”.

Last week, U.S. Senator Lindsey Graham and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo referred to an oilfields deal between the SDF and a U.S. firm during a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing.

“The deal struck between the SDF and the U.S., as an illegal and occupying force in the Syrian territory, has no legal validity,” Mousavi said.

The Iranian foreign ministry spokesman reiterated that the deal violates international law as well as Syria’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.

“This is yet another step by this country (the U.S.) to plunder Syria’s natural resources,” he added.



The SDF is a U.S.-backed alliance of militias that have seized swathes of Syria’s Northern and Eastern regions from the ISIL terrorist group and are refusing to return control of those areas to the Damascus government.

During the hearing, Graham said the SDF informed him that a deal had been signed with an unnamed U.S. company to “modernize the oil fields in northeastern Syria,” and asked Pompeo whether the administration was supportive of it.

“We are,” Pompeo responded. “The deal took a little longer than we had hoped, and now we’re in implementation.”

In a statement on Sunday, Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates strongly condemned the agreement, which it said is aimed at stealing the country’s oil, stressing that Damascus considers the contract null and void with no legal effect.

The U.S. has long been providing the SDF with arms and military training, calling them a key partner in the purported fight against the ISIL terrorist group. Many observers, however, see the support in the context of Washington’s plans to carve out a foothold in the Arab country in the post-ISIL era.

U.S. President Donald Trump has openly expressed an interest in the oilfields of northeast Syria.

Washington announced a military withdrawal from Syria in December 2018, but Trump later pledged a number of U.S. forces would remain in areas “where they have oil”.

China, Russia likely to veto U.S. effort to extend arms embargo on Iran

By staff and agency

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Kelly Craft said on Tuesday that China and Russia are likely to veto an effort to extend a UN arms embargo against Iran.

In an online appearance at the annual Aspen Security Forum, Craft said that the U.S. has little faith it can bring Russia and China around, Bloomberg reported.

That could spell a crisis at the UN, with Craft and Secretary of State Michael Pompeo threatening to invoke a “snapback” provision in the 2015 Iran nuclear deal to reimpose all UN sanctions against Tehran.

“The strategy in a perfect world will always be to have them abstain and obviously not veto the U.S. resolution. However, let’s be realistic here. Right now the strategy is working with other members of the Security Council to put China and Russia “in a corner and shine a light on

them,” she said.

The ban on arms deals with Iran is set to expire in October under terms of the 2015 agreement, which President Donald Trump pulled the U.S. out of in 2018.

Several diplomats say that France, Germany, the U.K., Russia and China are trying to negotiate a solution that might prevent the U.S. from taking such a step.

On June 30, the U.S. was rebuked at the UN Security Council meeting, including by the five European countries on the council.

Russia’s Ambassador to the UN Vassily Nebenzia slammed the U.S. for pursuing a “maximum suffocation” foreign policy against Iran, saying Washington’s goal was to “achieve regime change or create a situation where Iran literally wouldn’t be able to breathe”.

“This is like putting a knee to one’s neck,” said Nebenzia,

Iran exports over 18,000 tons of goods to Iraq through Mehran border

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran has exported 18,884 tons of commodities to Ira through Mehran border since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20), IRNA reported quoting an official as saying on Tuesday.

Mahnaz Hemmati, the head of standard department of Iran’s western llam Province, also said that 158,000 tons of goods were exported to Iraq from this border point in the past Iranian year.

She added that the main exported goods were constructional materials, chemicals, and auto parts.



Shahid Soleimani border point, also known as Mehran border point, only 230 km away from Baghdad, is the closest Iranian border point to the Iraqi capital.

Last week, Mehr news agency reported that Iran and Iraq resumed trade through Mandali (Soomar) border which had been closed for about five months due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Mazen al-Khuzai, the director of Mandali Region, announced the reopening of the mentioned border crossing, the Al-Malumah news site published.

Accordingly, dozens of trucks, passing from the Iranian border, headed towards Mandali border, the official added.

Mandali border crossing is located in the vicinity of the Soomar border marketplace, in the Iranian Kermanshah province.

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

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

In mid-June, the two sides decided about implementing an agreement for using Iran’s export revenues in Iraq for importing basic goods from the country.

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

4-month exports from Kermanshah Province stand at \$709m

ECONOMY **TEHRAN**— More than 1.76 million tons of commodities worth \$709.36 million were exported from Iran’s western Kermanshah province during the first four months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-July 21), a provincial official announced.

Khalil Heidari, the director-general of the province’s customs administration, said that the exports from the province witnessed a 14-percent fall in value and one percent drop in weight during the four-month period of this year, compared to the same period of time in the past year, Mehr news agency reported.



The official said that of the total value of exports, over \$392 million has been the worth of products cleared and exported through the major customs of Kermanshah, Parvizkhan and Paveh, indicating a seven-percent decrease year on year.”

“Tomato, coolers, cheese, tomato paste, light oil and oil products, biscuit, melon, watermelon, ceramics and tiles, and plastic products were the main commodities exported from the province during the four-month period,” Heidari added.

He also announced that the province exported goods to 19 countries during the first four months of this year. Iraq was the top destination of the exported products.

The value of Iran’s non-oil trade during the first four months of the current year stood at \$19.635 billion, IRNA reported.

According to the spokesman of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), Rohollah Latifi, in the mentioned period Iran imported \$10.922 billion worth of goods, while exporting \$8.713 billion.

The volume of traded goods was estimated at 42 million tons, of which 30.285 million tons were related to exports and about 11.793 million tons were imported goods.

Iran’s top five non-oil export destinations during this period were China with \$2.474 billion worth of exports, Iraq with \$1.965 billion, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) with \$1.216 billion, and Afghanistan with \$713 million as well as Turkey with \$405 million, so the country’s top five export destinations remained the same in comparison to previous months, according to Latifi.

As reported, China accounted for over 28 percent of Iran’s total exports, followed by Iraq, UAE, Afghanistan, and Turkey with 22 percent, 14 percent, 8 percent, and five percent respectively.

The top five sources of imports during this period were China with \$2.806 billion, the UAE with \$2.479 billion, Turkey with \$1.178 billion, India with \$757 million, and Germany with \$493 million worth of imports.

China accounted for over 25 percent of Iran’s total imports, followed by UAE, Turkey, India, and Germany with 23 percent, 11 percent, seven percent, and five percent, respectively.

432 idle industrial units revived in 4.5 months

1 → The mentioned 432 units coming back to the production cycle, the plan for reviving small and medium-sized industrial units in the present year has come true by 29 percent, Salehinia noted.

ISIPO managed to revive 1,185 idle production units across the country during the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19), according to Ali-Asghar Mosaheb, ISIPO deputy head for small industries affairs.

According to the official, the mentioned units returning to operation created direct jobs for 21,618 persons.

One of the approaches through which ISIPO is planning to help inactive units get back in the production cycle is to see

their knowledge and technology needs, Mosaheb said.

“The country’s technology units and scientific and research centers have come to believe that they can help the industry and that the industry can use their potentials and capacities,” he added.

The latest data released by the Iranian Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry shows that 72,250 industrial and mining units are operating across the country in which nearly 2.43 million people are working.

According to the data, with 15,822 active units, the field of non-metallic minerals accounts for the biggest share of the mentioned units, while food and beverage



products and rubber and plastic products with 8,682 and 7,524 units are in the second and third places.

In terms of job creation, the group of non-metallic minerals has also the highest employment rate, with 382,837 people working in this sector. The group of food and beverage products and the group of manufacturing chemical products are also in the second and third place with the employment of 362,223 and 200,358 people.

Tehran, Isfahan, and Khorasan Razavi provinces had 9785, 8585, 5294 active units, respectively, by the end of the last Iranian calendar year (March 19) accounting for the highest number of units among the Iranian

provinces.

The employment of the said provinces in the industrial and mineral units was 402,915, 262,498, and 193,290 people respectively.

Also, Kish Free Zone with two active units, Chabahar Free Zone with 73 units and Maku Free Zone with 84 units had the least number of active units among the provinces, with 70, 1416 and 2330 people working in them, respectively.

In the past few years, many of the production units across Iran have been wrestling with financial issues as well as the problem of supplying their raw materials, so that many have been forced to shut down or decrease their activates.

Tehran, Baku discuss joint projects implementation process

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — During a telephone conversation between Iran’s Finance and Economic Minister Farhad Dejpasand and Azerbaijan’s Deputy Prime Minister Shahin Mustafayev on Tuesday evening, the two sides discussed the process of implementing Iran-Azerbaijan joint projects.

As reported by IRNA, the two officials also explored the ways to expand bilateral ties in different fields of trade, industry, agriculture, tourism, communication and information technology, as well as transit.

In early March 2017, Azerbaijan officially launched a rail

link with Iran by sending a train across the border to Iran’s northern city of Astara thus taking an ambitious multimodal transport project that connects northern Europe to India closer to reality, Press TV reported at the time.

The train arrived in Iran simultaneously with a visit to the Islamic Republic by Azerbaijan’s President Ilham Aliyev where he discussed the implementation of the North-South Transport Corridor (NSTC) with Iran’s President Hassan Rouhani.

Aliyev told reporters after meeting Rouhani that the NSTC was an important project, stressing that it could have positive

effects on the economies of its host countries.

The NSTC is a multi-modal route to link India and West Asia to the Caucasus, Central Asia and Europe.

The ship, road and rail route connects India’s Mumbai to the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas and further to Baku in Azerbaijan as well as Astrakhan, Moscow and St Petersburg in Russia before stretching to northern Europe and Scandinavia.

In addition to Iran, India and Russia, countries that are on board to integrate into the transit network include Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Turkey, Tajikistan, Oman, Syria and Bulgaria.

Aluminum ingot output rise 49% in 4 months on year

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Production of the aluminum ingot in Iran rose 49 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.

Production of this product had also risen 63 percent during the first quarter of the present year (March 20-June 20), compared to the first quarter of the previous year.

Production of the aluminum ingot in the country is planned to increase 63 percent by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2021).

Iran’s major aluminum producers produced 275,716 tons of aluminum ingots in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19), according to the data released by the Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry.

The country’s aluminum ingot production in the past year fell eight percent in comparison to the figure for its preceding year.

The data show that among the country’s top producers, Iranian Aluminum Company (IRALCO) had the best performance registering a four-percent rise during the mentioned period.

On April 23, during the inauguration ceremony of Iran’s biggest aluminum



production complex (in the central Fars province), the former industry minister said the country’s aluminum production is expected to be doubled with that unit going operational.

The minister put the value of the Iranian mining industry’s production at about \$22 billion, saying that the country is relatively self-sufficient in minerals and a great deal is also exported every year.

He went on underlying, “The country’s capacities in the sector, saying that Iran is ranked 18th among the world’s top aluminum producers, and with this new plant going operational the country will climb four places to stand at 14th place.”

Iran plans to reach the annual production of 1.5 million tons of aluminum ingot by the Iranian calendar year 1404 (March 2025-March 2026).

Economic activity in Iranian ports ongoing constantly: PMO head

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Head of Iran Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) has underlined economic activity in ports as a major indicator of the Iranian economy’s dynamism, saying economic activity in the country’s ports has been constantly ongoing.

“Activities in Iranian ports do not stop even for a moment,” IRIB quoted Mohammad Rastad as saying.

“We have a lot of capabilities in the country’s maritime sector and the world is also closely watching the Islamic Republic of Iran’s capacities in this sector while monitoring the activities that are being carried out,” the official said.

Rastad noted that Iran’s maritime transport fleet is one of the largest fleets in the world and the country’s ports have a capacity of about 250 million tons per year.

“The International Maritime Organization (IMO) considers the Islamic Republic of Iran as an influential country in the maritime sector,” he stressed.

Pointing out that there is a positive atmosphere in the maritime sector to introduce the country’s capacities more than before, the deputy transport minister said: “The country’s ports are operating around the clock; for example, basic goods are being unloaded and loaded at Imam Khomeini Port every day, and in Shahid



Rajaei Port, the activities do not stop even for a moment.”

Rastad further said that the country’s ports have sisterhood agreements with more than 40 ports in the world, adding: “We are also negotiating with several other ports,”

In late June, Rastad had called for close coordination and collaboration among the country’s maritime organizations for defeating U.S. sanctions on this sector.

According to the official, some 52.5 million tons of non-oil commodities were exported from Iranian ports in the previous Iranian calendar year 1398 (ended on March 19).

In late March, Rastad announced that PMO is going to pay 36 trillion rials (about \$857 million) for supplying marine fleet during the current Iranian calendar year (began on March 20).

GSI exploration operations up 15% in 4 months

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The head of Geological Survey and Mineral Explorations of Iran (GSI) announced a 15 percent increase in the organization’s exploration operations carried out during the first four months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-July 21) compared to the same period last year, IRIB reported.

According to Alireza Shahidi, GSI has set a goal for conducting mining exploration operations, including identification, and general and detailed exploration, on 115,000 square kilometers of land in the current Iranian calendar year, of which 30,000 square kilometers have been completed in the said four months.

For the previous year, the goal was to conduct exploration operations on 110 square km of land, Shahidi added.

The Deputy Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister further noted that in the field of preparing offshore and onshore applied geological maps at different scales, the preparation



of 55 map/report sheets has been put on the agenda as a quantitative goal for the current year, 17 of which have been prepared in the mentioned four months to register a 13

percent growth compared to the previous year.

In early June, GSI Deputy Head Mohammad-Baqer Dorri announced that the organization carried out exploration operations on 150,000 square kilometers of land in the previous Iranian calendar year 1398 (ended on March 19).

“Exploration operations on 60 potential areas began last year, of which 30 areas were cleared and the operations for the rest will be carried out this year,” Dorri said.

Back in April, the Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) announced that mining exploration operations were underway in 652,061 square kilometers of land across the country.

According to Mohammad Aghajanlou, the deputy manager of the mining industries development at IMIDRO, the mentioned exploration operations were being conducted by a consortium of IMIDRO and the country’s major mining companies along with the GSI.

Housing construction activities down 18% in a month

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Housing construction activities and services across Iran decreased by 18 percent in the fourth Iranian calendar month of Tir (June 21-July 21), IRNA reported, citing Iran Chamber of Cooperatives (ICC).

As reported, the Purchasing Managers Index (PMI) for the construction sector fell to 52.78 percent in the mentioned month.

PMI is a measure of the prevailing direction of economic trends in manufacturing. The PMI is based on a monthly survey of supply chain

managers across 19 industries, covering both upstream and downstream activity.

Other indicators among the main components of PMI which include the number of new orders, the speed of order fulfillment, the figure for the raw materials purchased, and the recruitment of manpower, also experienced a decrease in the mentioned period.

As for the residential building market, based on the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) data, the volume of trade for residential apartment transactions in Tehran (as a statistical sam-

ple for the whole country) in the mentioned month increased by 30.3 percent compared to the previous month.

Housing prices in Tehran also experienced monthly inflation of 10.4 percent in the said period.

The prices have also risen in the production and supply of construction equipment, due to foreign currency market fluctuations and the rising prices of raw materials in some items, as well as the coronavirus outbreak, according to the ICC Statistics and Planning Department.



Iran's daily gas exports hit new record high

ENERGY **TEHRAN** — Iran's daily natural gas exports hit a record high of 79 million cubic meters (mcm) during the Iranian calendar month of Tir (June 21-July 21), Head of National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC)'s Dispatching Department said.

"Iran's gas exports to other countries had never reached 70 million cubic meters per day, but in Tir a new record was set and [the exports] reached 79 million cubic meters per day," Shana quoted Mohammadreza Jolaei as saying.

The official noted that the average figure for the daily exports of gas to Iraq and Turkey currently stands at 75 mcm.

According to Jolaei, this record has been achieved in a situation where Iran is at the peak of its summer electricity consumption and most of the gas refineries have been under annual overhaul.

The consumption by the country's power plant was also at its peak, however, their required gas was fully supplied and no liquid fuel was used, he added.



The official reminded that the country's natural gas is currently exported to Iraq and Turkey and Iran is ready to provide any amount requested

by the importers.

Back in June, NIGC Managing Director Hassan Montazer Torbati announced that natural gas exports to the neighboring countries increased by 3.6 billion cubic meters in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19) registering a 26-percent rise year on year.

Referring to the gas industry's new records in production, transmission, distribution, and exports during the previous Iranian calendar year, Torbati pointed to the unprecedented increase of natural gas exports last year and said that the surge in exports was realized despite the significant increase in the domestic consumption.

Earlier in May, Torbati had said that the conditions governing Iran's long-term gas contracts probably undergo essential changes after the coronavirus pandemic.

The official told ILNA that Iran would introduce new pricing mechanisms in gas export deals in the future, without elaborating on how they would work.

BP exits Alaska but leaves behind long Arctic oil legacy

By Tim Bradner

Dwindling prospects, in its view at least, changes in corporate strategy, the failure to commercialize large stranded gas reserves and Alaska's volatile politics and frequent changes in taxes all appear to have played a role in the company's decision to sell its legacy North Slope holdings.

BP left a long legacy in Alaska, spearheading the exploration in the early 1960s that ultimately led to the discovery of Prudhoe Bay, North America's largest oilfield, Platts reported.

As a Prudhoe Bay operator, BP became known for technology innovations, including drilling the first commercially successful horizontal production wells. That innovation set the stage for U.S. shale oil and gas development using a combination of horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing.

BP sold its Alaska holdings July 1 to Hilcorp Energy, a midsize Texas-based independent that owns and operates smaller Alaskan fields. Hilcorp has a reputation for purchasing mature, declining assets and aggressively redeveloping them.

Hilcorp also acquired BP's 50 percent share of Milne Point, another producing field on the slope, and Liberty, an undeveloped offshore deposit.

The story of major companies like BP discovering and developing large finds and then selling them to lower-cost operators is an old one played out many times, even by BP in the North Sea, but the company's Alaska story is also a tale of geopolitics and corporate strategy played on an international scale.

■ Alaska entry

It started when BP was kicked out of prized holdings in Persia by a populist government in the 1950s. Denied access to its key crude oil source for European markets, BP felt survival depended on diversification into U.S. markets.

At the time there were U.S. controls on imported oil, so BP had to not only find a U.S. marketing partner but also a domestic source of crude oil. U.S. companies controlled existing domestic production in states like Texas, but BP's geologists felt the remote Alaskan North Slope offered opportunities for big discoveries with potential to give the company an entry into the U.S.

In 1963, BP began drilling the first of a long string of dry holes on the slope, which finally led to the prize at Prudhoe Bay in 1968.

Atlantic Richfield (ARCO) and Humble Oil, now ExxonMobil, in a joint venture followed BP in exploring on the North Slope and actually drilled the first discovery well, but BP quickly drilled on its Prudhoe Bay leases and wound up with most of Prudhoe's 9.6 billion barrels of oil. ARCO and Humble wound up with most of the large gas resource in the field.

But while BP now had a large source of U.S. crude it still needed a marketing arm, which led it to acquire Standard Oil Co. of Ohio, or Sohio, an experienced U.S. Midwest marketer. This allowed BP's diversification out of Europe and ended near-total dependence on West Asian oil.

■ Prudhoe Bay decline

But things changed for BP in Alaska as years passed. The big Prudhoe field began its decline in 1988 and now produces about a fifth of what it did when output started.

Hopes for finding more Alaska super-giants soon faded. ARCO, with BP as partner, developed the nearby Kuparuk River field, then, and still, the second-largest North America producer, but other discoveries proved to be mid-sized.

The super-giant prospects BP was looking for weren't there.

The company was keen on the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge east of Prudhoe, where the geology offered prospects for really big finds. BP teamed up with Chevron to drill an exploration well. The results of that are still confidential, but prospects for developing any find in ANWR dimmed as U.S. conservation groups lobbied Congress to keep the area closed.

Congress did finally approve leasing and exploration in the refuge last year, but the refuge is seen as so politically radioactive that interest by BP and other major companies seems to have cooled.

■ Going after gas

Still looking for ways to grow its Alaska business, BP focused on the huge gas resource in the Prudhoe reservoir and teamed up with other companies and the state of Alaska with plans for a \$40 billion-plus natural gas pipeline.

BP felt if Prudhoe gas could be marketed, it would help



pay field costs and increase profitability for continued oil production.

An all-land pipeline through Canada was planned but later scuttled when the shale gas revolution sent U.S. natural gas prices plummeting. An alternative plan to export the gas as LNG from south Alaska is now at an advanced stage and a Federal Energy Regulatory Commission license was issued earlier this year, but prospects in the target Asia LNG market seem grim.

■ Tax increases

Thwarted on several fronts, the final straw for BP may have been a steady cycle of state tax increases on oil. A citizen initiative that would double taxes on Prudhoe Bay will appear on the general election ballot in November. Last spring, BP officials acknowledged the threat of new taxes was a significant factor in the company's decision to sell.

It had become clear to BP that operating a declining and increasingly marginal asset, with costs rising, no longer fit its long-term strategy. The higher overhead of a large company and multiple layers of making decisions no longer worked well for Prudhoe Bay. Companies like Hilcorp that are smaller and quicker with decisions are better at exploiting opportunities for new oil at Prudhoe.

Alaska has been good for BP, basically enabling its growth out of Europe and the West Asia. Now BP is reinventing itself for a new, less carbon-intensive world, and in that plan, Alaska had become a distraction.

IMF: global oil demand will shrink by 8% in 2020

The coronavirus crisis will lead to global oil demand dropping by around 8 percent this year compared to last year, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said in a new report, as carried by Qatari daily The Peninsula.

According to oilprice.com, this year, oil prices will be 41 percent lower than in 2019, the IMF said in its 'Global imbalances and the COVID-19 crisis' external report. The direct impact of the low oil prices on oil trade balances will vary across economies, reflecting their dependence on oil exports and imports, according to the IMF.

The fund's estimates for this year's



global oil demand decline are in line with other forecasters such as the International Energy Agency (IEA) and OPEC.

Last month, the IEA said in its latest Oil Market Report that global oil demand was set to crash by 7.9 million barrels per day (bpd) this year, but this forecast is slightly more optimistic than last month's expectation of an 8.1-million-bpd demand drop.

The IEA, however, noted that the recent rise in COVID-19 cases and the reinstating of partial lockdowns in some countries continue to contribute to the uncertainty surrounding the world's global oil demand in 2020.

This year, the world is expected to consume an average of 92.1 million bpd

of oil, compared to the typical demand of 100 million bpd, the IEA said.

OPEC, for its part, expects overall global oil demand to drop by 8.9 million bpd in 2020, before rising by 7 million bpd in 2021, when it will still be lower than demand in 2019.

The oil price plunge and the production cuts after the coronavirus pandemic will hit oil exporters in the West Asia and North Africa (MENA) hard, with the combined oil income for those countries expected to plummet by \$270 billion this year compared to 2019, the IMF said in its latest update on the region last month.

Libya's meager crude oil exports set to plunge in August

With Libya's conflict escalating, the country's crude oil exports are set to be just 1.2 million barrels in August, a 40-percent plunge from July, Bloomberg reported, citing an initial loading program it has seen.

This month, two terminals in the country holding Africa's largest crude oil reserves are set to ship a cargo of 600,000 barrels each, according to the program Bloomberg has seen.

Most of Libya's oil terminals and facilities are closed amid an ongoing civil war in the country, with violent clashes erupting between armed groups in Libya's Oil Crescent.

Currently, oil production in the country is around 100,000 barrels per day (bpd). This figure is dramatically down from 1.2 million bpd at the start of the year, just before paramilitary formations affiliated with the Libyan National Army (LNA) of eastern Libyan strongman General Khalifa Haftar occupied Libya's oil export terminals and oilfields.

Early in June, Libya's National Oil Corporation (NOC)



resumed production at the 300,000-bpd Sharara oilfield after negotiating the opening of an oilfield valve that had been closed since January. But just a day later, Sharara shuttered again, after an armed force had told the workers

in the field to stop working.

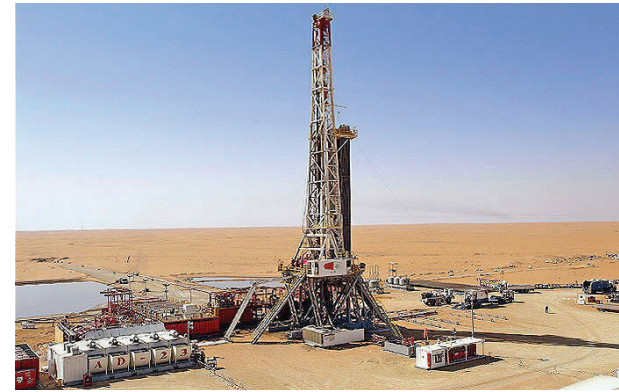
Last week, NOC said that it "is deeply concerned about the continuing militarization of its oil facilities and the heavy presence of foreign mercenaries at various oil fields and ports in the east and south of the country."

The presence of mercenaries at the Ras Lanuf petrochemical complex, the Zueitina oil port, and the Zallah field "are a threat and may lead to the destruction of the Libyan people's sole source of revenue," the Libyan oil firm said.

A few days earlier, NOC's chairman Mustafa Sanalla said that "The illegal oil blockade has had disastrous effects on our national economy and damaged the living standards of Libyans. Our reservoirs are suffering permanent damage, and stagnant fluids are corroding our pipelines, which will cost us huge amounts to repair. We urge all Libyan parties to do everything possible to restart oil production as soon as possible to avoid further damage."

Central processing unit of Azar joint field operational

TEHRAN (Shana) — The CEO of Oil Industries' Engineering and Construction Company (OIEC) announced oil production through the Central Processing Facility (CPF) of Azar joint field, adding: "The development plan of this joint field will be officially put into operation in the near future."



Gholamreza Manouchehri, in a meeting with a group of contractors of the construction project of "NGL3100" plant, said his company is currently one of the most active contracting sectors in the country, said: "OIEC manages, directs and implements a large portion of the country's gas, refining and petrochemicals projects."

Among the company's activities are construction of NGL3100 plant, Dehloran Petrochemical Plant, Ramshir and Mansouri field development projects, Kian Petrochemical Plant and Azar field development project, he said.

He announced the official inauguration of the Azar field development project in the near future, and said: "Production from this field has started through the central processing facility (CPF). Of course, it is currently impossible to use the gas section of this project because its gas liquefaction unit has not yet been commissioned."

Manouchehri further touched on the latest status of the Ramshir and Mansouri oil fields development plans in the oil-rich regions of Khuzestan and said: "The contractual and credit issues of this projects are being studied by the relevant working groups in OIEC in cooperation with the esteemed employer."

He stated that Kian Petrochemical Project, as the largest petrochemical project in the country, is being implemented OIEC Company, saying, "Part of the tenders related to this mega petrochemical project has been held by OIEC Company and in the construction and implementation of this project, goods and equipment supplied by local manufacturers will be used."

Energy giants race for 'green hydrogen' market share

By Haley Zaremba

Green hydrogen is red hot. Hydrogen has long been touted as a virtually inexhaustible source of clean energy with zero carbon emissions, since this first element on the periodic table burns clean, leaving behind only water vapor. This makes hydrogen highly marketable as a promising fuel source option for a decarbonized economy of the future. The idea of a new energy order has gained a ton of attention in the wake of the novel coronavirus' unprecedented interruption to the energy sector status quo, with such influential organizations as the World Economic Forum calling for a "great reset". Not all hydrogen is created equal, however. Hydrogen power is not a novelty; it is already widely used in commonplace industrial processes such as ammonia production, in refineries and as a feedstock for chemicals. The standard hydrogen used in these production processes, however, is not as "green" as you may think. It's created through the use of fossil fuels, primarily coal and natural gas. This form of hydrogen is known as "grey hydrogen," and is essentially useless in terms of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Green hydrogen, which is produced using renewable energy, is also currently in production, but it is still extremely cost prohibitive compared to grey hydrogen. But plenty of renewable energy projects have been trying to make green hydrogen competitive for years, and the sector got a major bump earlier this year as oil supermajor Royal Dutch Shell got involved in the initiative with an offshore wind farm. The green hydrogen revolution is upon us. And now it's found itself at the center of the raging debate about the future of energy.

"Within the span of a week, major utilities Iberdrola, Uniper and NextEra all made moves into the hydrogen market, in a reminder that the miracle molecule is not the sole domain of the oil and gas sector," Greentech Media reported just this week. "But whether utilities will have the ability — or need — to compete with oil companies in the emerging hydrogen market remains an open question."

While supermajor oil companies like Shell, BP and Equinor have dominated the hydrogen sector in terms of gigawatt scale, utilities are giving them a run for their money, particularly in Europe, the U.S., and Canada.

"In the U.S., NextEra recently announced a 20-megawatt electrolyzer, essentially designed to produce green hydrogen for self-consumption at a gas-fired plant in Florida," reports Greentech media. "The \$65 million pilot will be fueled by the Sunshine State's ample solar resources with the hydrogen mixed into the feedstock for the 1.75-gigawatt Okeechobee gas plant. It could be up and running in 2023, if regulatory approval is forthcoming."

At the same time, German utility Uniper has created a green hydrogen partnership with GE and Siemens that aims for total decarbonization of the utility. "The two industrial giants will help Uniper gradually convert its gas power fleet to hydrogen, and Siemens will also work on electrolysis infrastructure for the firm."

Despite all this progress and these major projects being unveiled rapid-fire, green hydrogen still is not a cost-competitive alternative to fossil fuels. In fact, one major green hydrogen project recently announced by Spain's Iberdrola, does not plan on turning a profit at all. The €150 million (\$176 million) 20-megawatt electrolyzer project for an ammonia factory in Spain is due to go live next year, but will not make any money. "This is an innovation project, to test technology, help to drive down costs for the future and increase Iberdrola's knowledge and experience," an Iberdrola spokesperson was quoted by Greentech Media.

"At the moment, the economics of green hydrogen can't compete with fossil fuel-derived alternatives," the report continues. "For green hydrogen to work, electricity prices will need to be near zero and electrolyzer utilization rates will need to be high." This means that oil and gas firms will remain at the helm of the green hydrogen sector as long as the industry requires such deep pockets to survive. But as technology becomes more refined and efficient, and more governments around the world (with the notable exception of the U.S.) fall in line with green stimulus and big boons to renewable energy built into their post-COVID economic recovery plans, utilities may just win out in the end.

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Oil min. holds phone talk with Russia's energy min. on reducing oil output

TEHRAN, Feb. 20 (MNA) -- Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh held a phone conversation with the Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak on Thu. with regards to the cooperation of the two countries within the framework of OPEC Plus.

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Israel, U.S. are beneficiaries of Beirut tragedy, says Lebanese researcher

‘The behavior of the American bloc inside Lebanon right after the incident was suspicious’

➔ Following is the text of the interview:

■ What may be the causes of the huge explosion that ripped through Lebanon's capital, Beirut?

A: We are still at an early stage of the investigation of what really happened at the Beirut Port. The government has declared Beirut as a devastated city and the army and the security agencies will be in charge of the city, after declaring the state of emergency. There are a lot of scenarios to explain what happened, and all of them might be considerable. What is for sure is that there is negligence and recklessness of the officials at the port and the judicial body since the Amonia shipment was kept in a chamber in the port for 7 years without removing it from there. The question here is: Did somebody ignite a detonating factor purposefully inside the chamber or it happened accidentally? The answer should be addressed by the investigation committee

■ Who will seek to take advantage of the tragedy?

A: The beneficiaries of this tragedy are the Israelis and the Americans in the first place. The behavior of the American bloc



inside Lebanon right after the incident was suspicious. Some U.S.-aligned politicians and media characters immediately pointed at the resistance and Hezbollah in an attempt to create an accusation supported by a Saudi media coverage that tried to promote such a false and unrealistic accusation. There is a gruesome attempt by some inside Lebanon to

invest politically against their political rivals, which sends to the whole world a bad message and proves that there were bad intentions right before the accident, linked to the so-called Lebanon Special Tribunal court decision.

■ Do you think the latest development in Lebanon, especially the resignation of foreign minister are related to the explosion?

A: The latest developments in Lebanon prove that Washington decided to create a state of chaos in Lebanon, and all politicians who are controlled by the Americans are expressing this with their behaviors recently. Of course, when we are talking about chaos in Lebanon that means escalation of security levels alongside the political level which been taking place since months ago.

■ What will be Hezbollah's reaction to the explosion?

A: I think Hezbollah will behave responsibly, as usual, and for sure the leadership of the resistance will act on the basis of protecting Lebanon from external dangers as they've always done. Responsible speech can be read in the statement of Hezbollah issued after the incident took place, and all the Hezbollah emergency response teams and medics were rushed into the devastated area right after the explosion. On the political level, Hezbollah knows for sure that every such incident would be used for cheap political investment by its local foes but the strategy has been to contain those aggressive moves politically and concentrate on countering the external threats imposed by the U.S. and the Zionist entity.

U.S. talks with Taliban aimed for ‘face-saving’ exit from Afghanistan: columnist

Pakistani analyst says U.S. presence in Afghanistan ‘is not in favor of any regional country’

By Mohammad Mazaheri

TEHRAN — A Pakistani columnist says the United States has started peace Talks with the Taliban for a “face-saving” exit from Afghanistan.

“The U.S.-Taliban peace agreement is just a face-saving agreement for the U.S. which will allow them a respectful exit from Afghanistan,” Zafar Iqbal Yousafzai tells the Tehran Times.

Yousafzai, the author of “The Troubled Triangle: the U.S.-Pakistan Relations under the Taliban's Shadow”, also says both India and Pakistan are playing constructive role in Afghanistan but at the same time they trying to “secure their own interests as well”.

Following is the text of the article:

■ How do you assess U.S. presence in Afghanistan? Has the U.S. been successful in fighting terrorism in Afghanistan?

A: The U.S. has lost much as compared to its gains in Afghanistan. Its plan was to wipe out the Taliban and install a democratic government that would serve the U.S. interests. However, after two decades of war, which termed the longest war in U.S. history, it could not wipe out the Taliban. In the case of al-Qaeda, the U.S. succeeded to flush them out from Afghanistan in particular and the region in general. As for countering terrorism is concerned, the U.S. was used to call the Taliban terrorists and utilized its modern weapons and technology yet could not secure the desired results. When the U.S. realized they could not wipe the Taliban out, the Obama administration initiated peace talks with the Taliban. The U.S.-Taliban peace agreement is just a face-saving agreement for the U.S. which will allow them a respectful exit from Afghanistan.

■ What are the implications of the U.S.- Taliban talks? The considered Taliban a terrorist organization, and now they are negotiating.

A: The U.S.-Taliba piece deal, if succeeded, will bring a positive change to the region. The U.S. presence in Afghanistan is not in favor of any regional country. When the Bush administration was planning to invade Afghanistan, President Bush contacted Putin and informed him about the invasion. Putin did support the invasion but put a condition that after the war on terror, the U.S. will have to leave, which means he was not in favor of a long U.S. presence in Afghanistan. Pakistan also considers the U.S. presence in Afghanistan a threat to its nuclear weapons. China is too curious about the U.S. presence. Iran's suspicion is not less vis-a-vis the U.S. presence in Afghanistan in general and in the Shindand airbase (Herat) in particular that is very near to Iran's border. Except for India, there is a regional

consensus about the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan. If the U.S.-Taliban peace deal succeeded, it will bring stability to Afghanistan as the war will end the ongoing war, the Taliban is fighting against the U.S. and Afghan forces. The inclusion of the Taliban in government will strengthen the Afghan government.

You are right the U.S. was calling the Taliban as terrorists. In the initial eight years of war on terror, the U.S. policy was solely militaristic, to wipe out the Taliban by force. Nonetheless, with the growing insurgency despite the more than 100 thousand U.S. and coalition forces, the Taliban insurgency was not in control. Thus, President Obama ordered Richard Halbrook to initiate a dialogue with the Taliban. The Taliban would still be terrorists if they were weak. The U.S. has no other way to exit from Afghanistan except to ink a deal with the Taliban.

■ How do you see the U.S. intent to reduce its forces in Afghanistan? Is it a real decision or just for the upcoming presidential election?

A: The main factor the U.S. wants to withdraw from Afghanistan is the time and cost of this engagement. Besides, there are multiple pressures on Washington to wind this war up. Congress pressure, masses pressure, international pressure, and no dead-end of the war compelled the U.S. to take a decisive decision. Moreover, Trump announced in his 2016 presidential campaign that he will bring back all the U.S. troops home. By signing this agreement, on one hand, he will cash this move domestically to bring troops home. While on the other hand, he will try to present the U.S. exit a victory for the U.S.. Yesterday (Monday) in an interview, President Trump stated to reduce the troop's level to 4000-5000 thousand till November. Since the signing of the deal with the Taliban, the U.S. has withdrawn 6,000 troops from Afghanistan which shows the seriousness of the U.S. withdrawal.

■ How do you see the role of regional countries like Pakistan and India in the stability of Afghanistan?

A: Pakistan and India have very different roles in Afghanistan by engaging with two different factions of the society. In the 1990s, Pakistan supported the Taliban while India along with other forces supported the Northern Alliance, a

“Taliban are very strong which does not allow Daesh to become strong or expand in the country (Afghanistan).”



rival get up of the Taliban. Yet Pakistan had an upper hand in the Afghan affairs in the 1990s. The 9/11 incident changed the dynamics of the region and Afghanistan. India was given a major role in post-9/11 Afghanistan while Pakistan was ignored to a large extent. The group (Taliban) Pakistan was supporting were in a weak position yet Pakistan helped them out with their resurgence in ode to balance the equation. Both India and Pakistan are playing construction active role in Afghanistan but at the same time, trying to secure their own interests as well. The present Afghanistan government is completely in the Indian clutches which Pakistan wants to become balanced by Taliban inclusion on the government.

■ What is the position of Daesh (Islamic State) in Afghanistan? Which sides support it, and can it continue competition with the Taliban?

A: The Daesh presence in Afghanistan is not much strong and did not succeed to hold strong footing after five years of presence in the country. It has various reasons: 1) Daesh is not an indigenous movement. 2) they have no strong local support. 3) their ideology doesn't match to the ideology the local people believe in. 4) Taliban are very strong which does not allow Daesh to become strong or expand in the country.

Daesh can't compete with the Taliban as they have strong and expanded networks all over the country and hold many areas under their control. The future of Daesh will be determined by the Taliban's inclusion in the government that could be disastrous for Daesh as the Afghan forces along the Taliban cadres can wipe Daesh out of Afghanistan.

U.S. left with no option but to withdraw from Iraq

By Ramin Hossein Abadian

The intensification of anti-American attacks in various parts of Iraq has left American terrorists with no other option than to pull out from Iraq.

The recent series of developments in Iraq show that U.S. leaders themselves have come to the conclusion that they are no longer as safe and secure in Iraq as they once were. The targeting of U.S. interests in Iraq has increased dramatically in recent months, the root cause of which is Washington's hostile actions.

Rocket attacks on various U.S. terrorist bases, especially on Camp Taji in Baghdad, rocket attacks on the Green Zone where the Washington embassy is located, uncoordinated public raids of the U.S. embassy due to the country's interference in Iraq's internal affairs, are all a series of developments that have taken place in Iraq in recent days and have directly targeted the interests of the Americans.

In addition, a U.S. military convoy was attacked in the Iraqi province of Al-Diwaniyah. In this attack, 3 American armored vehicles were set on fire. The military convoy was en route from Basra and was planning to transfer military equipment and vehicles to

U.S. military bases.

Meanwhile, the American military base “Bismayah” near Baghdad was hit by 4 rockets Friday night. Following the attack, the Americans finally acted on their previous decision to evacuate the base. In one of the latest incidents, however, a supply convoy of American terrorist forces was hit with a roadside bomb in the Makishifa district in Saladin province. After the convoy was targeted, American helicopters were sent to reconnoiter the area.

Informed sources said that the targeted convoy included 11 Hummer vehicles, generators, and MARP vehicles. The Ashab-al-Kahf later in a statement claimed responsibility for the attack on the U.S. military convoy in a move that made Americans feel even more insecure in Iraq. All of these attacks were in fact natural reactions of the Resistance to the hostile political and military behavior of the United States against Iraq.

These cases indicate that the interests of the United States in Iraq are currently at direct and serious risk. Among them, the military convoys and bases, which are manifestations of American terrorists' occupation, are more vulnerable than anything else. U.S. officials are well aware of the extent and depth of the threats to their forces.

Still, the strategy pursued by U.S. leaders is to divert public attention from the spread of threat and insecurity against their troops in Iraq. U.S. officials are trying to cover up the dangers currently facing their troops in Iraq by raising issues such as strategic talks and negotiations with the Baghdad government, the need to dismantle the activities of Resistance groups in Iraq, as well as by intervening in Iraq's political affairs.

In fact, the Americans have made every effort to prevent public opinion from paying attention to the series of intense operations against their direct interests in different parts of Iraq. That is why they are trying to cover up the blows they have suffered in recent weeks by relying on diversion tactics and creating hype over unimportant issues.

All these efforts are in vain as the collective demand of the Iraqi Resistance groups and public opinion is the withdrawal of the United States from this country. Even various political parties and movements have repeatedly and on various occasions called for the need to implement the official resolution of the Iraqi Parliament on the expulsion of foreign forces, particularly the American ones, from Iraq. Therefore, it is clear that the withdrawal of American troops from Iraq is a collective and public demand.

It is perfectly clear that the Americans are left with no choice but to leave Iraq. Although they are trying to normalize the situation of their troops in Iraq, they are well aware of the extent of the damage done to the ranks of the military, and therefore, the withdrawal is the first and last way to relieve the Americans of the dangers waiting for them in Iraq.

Despite all this, the American strategy in Iraq shows that they are already focusing their efforts on delaying their withdrawal from the country. Raising the issue of strategic talks with the central government in Baghdad can be a tactic to that effect. On the other hand, Washington's actions in inciting the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government officials and persuading them to defend the U.S. military presence in the region is another factor that shows that the American leaders are looking to buy more time before leaving Iraq.

In any case, it goes without saying that military operations against American terrorists have already begun in various parts of Iraq, and today no spot can be considered a safe haven for American troops in this country. This is exactly what the Americans are very concerned about. They know full well that the next military strike on Iraqi soil may be far more destructive than any other time.

Who is benefiting from blast in Beirut?

➔ The political movements in Lebanon can best be described as those who are “partners with the thieves and pretend to be friends with the host”. They were also allied with the “government of the banks” and contributed to the country's economic collapse. “government of the banks” is a disgusting political term that defines the corrupt political class in Lebanon.

The developments in the past days can reveal “warning signals” about foreign intervention and pre-determined plots that sought to push Lebanon into a new scenario. The main objective of such a scenario is to provide perimeter security for the Israeli regime and destroy the deterrence of the Resistance Movement and to compensate for the defeat in Syria. Some of these signals have commonalities with the situation after the assassination of the former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafic Hariri in 2005.

Although the Arabic and American media, in the very first moment, accused Hezbollah of being behind the incident, it can be said that the odds are high about the possibility of a sabotage plan.

Whether the new incident has similar objectives, like the situation after the assassination of Rafic Hariri which provided the grounds for the Syrian army to withdraw from the Lebanese border and the occupied territories, is to be answered in the next few days by the Americans' stance and approach.

However, the scope of this new scenario is wider, deeper and more dangerous.

Even if we accept that the Israelis and the United States were not involved in the Beirut bombing and put aside the possibility of any sabotage plan, they will certainly not ignore this opportunity to seek their political exploitation and to pave the way for shaping a new Lebanese political structure.

The explosion has once again provided an opportunity for Al-Hadath, Al-Arabiya, and Western media outlets to fan the flames, which are likely to be burning by the U.S.

French Foreign Minister's visit to Beirut and France's pressures to the country, along with the U.S. ambassador's occasional interventions, the Israeli regime's movements on the occupied borders, U.S. spy planes patrolling the Lebanon-Syria coast a day before the Beirut bombing, the meeting last week between the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the U.S. and the Israeli regime, the sudden resignation of Lebanese Foreign Minister Nassif Hitti, foreign and regional pressure to overthrow the Lebanese cabinet, and the identification of vulnerable Lebanese areas by the Zionist regime are among the most critical events in Lebanon in recent weeks, that should be considered while reviewing the Beirut explosion and the goals behind it.

Besides, the storage of this amount of chemicals in the port of Beirut is not something that the Israelis were unaware of. The analyses after the explosion possibly can show which movement is going to take the most advantage of the Beirut explosion.

It should be noted that the port of Beirut is the main port of Lebanon, through which more than 70% of the country's imports are carried out to provide the basic needs of the people; in such circumstances, the Lebanese economy will be seriously damaged. It is in the interest of the opponents of the Resistance and could help them put maximum pressure on the Resistance Movement, or at least to moderate or neutralize its measures against the Zionist regime.

Therefore, it seems that all the pieces of the puzzle have been prepared to put Lebanon in a state of economic and political turmoil in order to design a new scenario.

From the very first moment, the Saudi and American media and the Zionist-affiliated elements inside and outside Lebanon will exert every effort to accuse Hezbollah and the Resistance Movement's allies as the main culprits.

The Americans, who did not take a clear stance immediately after the explosion, will undoubtedly try to impose their wishes on the Lebanese government under the pretext of rebuilding or providing financial assistance in the turbulent economic situation in Lebanon.

Certainly, their most important wish would be the gradual elimination of Resistance from the Lebanese political arena as well as the implementation of the Caesar Law on Syria.

The explosion will also give the U.S. and Israeli regime more time to design their plots, as dealing with the explosion will need a big share of the Lebanese government's time and efforts.

The scenario of the assassination of Rafic Hariri in 2005, which marked the beginning of a new chapter in foreign interventions in Lebanon, seems to be being pursued on a larger and more dangerous scale with the bombing of Beirut. However, the role of Hezbollah's valuable experiences in managing critical political situations and changing the equation should not be overlooked.

Possibility of U.S. sabotage in Beirut explosion

Following the explosion in Beirut on Tuesday, radar images of “unusual patrols and reconnaissance operations” of four U.S. Navy spy planes on the Lebanon-Syria coastline were released.

Some radar images of unusual patrols and reconnaissance operations of four U.S. Navy spy planes on the Lebanon-Syria coastline were released after the powerful explosion in the port of Beirut.

In this regard, some security experts said that there is possibility of U.S. sabotage, adding that U.S. forces may have planned a sabotage operation in recent days.

According to MNA, security analysts believe this is unprecedented.

The importance of this point and the release of these radar images is that the American intelligence sources were aware of the existence of 50 tons of nitrate that had been stored in this port for about nine years.

A massive explosion rocked Beirut, Lebanon, with the force of an earthquake followed by a shock wave that devastated much of the city.

The blast appeared to have followed a fire that had broken out in the city's port area, based on a video from the scene. The cause of the blast was immediately unknown. The force of the blast shook buildings, which were then hit again by the shock wave that blew out windows, sending shards of glass flying.

Lebanese Health Minister Hamad Hassan said that more than 50 people have been killed and 2,700 are wounded in a massive explosion at the port in Lebanon's capital, Beirut.

Beirut's governor Marwan Abboud called it a “national catastrophe” and the prime minister declared a day of mourning.

Four archaeological hills being demarcated in Miandoab

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — Teams of Iranian archaeologists have commenced separate surveys to demarcate four archaeological hills situated in Miandoab county, northwestern West Azarbaijan province.

“Demarcation projects for four historical hills have recently been started in Miandoab county as the permit for the fifth has been issued [by the Research Institute of Cultural Heritage & Tourism] and it will be commenced soon,” CHTN quoted Miandoab’s tourism chief Fatemeh Alizadeh as saying on Tuesday.



The province has been the seat of several ancient civilizations. It formed part of Urartu and later of Media. In the 4th century BC, it was conquered by Alexander the Great and was named Atropatene after one of Alexander’s generals, Atropates, who established a small kingdom there. The area returned to the Persian (Iranian) rule under the Sasanians in the 3rd century CE. The Arabs controlled Azerbaijan from the 7th century until Turkish nomads overran it in the 11th century. Thenceforth the inhabitants of the region were Turkish speakers. The region was overrun by the Mongols in the 13th century, and, under the ruler Hulegu, Azarbaijan became the center of a Mongol empire extending from Syria on the west to the Oxus River (now Amu Darya) on the east.

As its name suggests, Miandoab (literally meaning between the two waters) is sandwiched between the two rivers of Zarrineh-Rud and Simineh-Rud. Miandoab enjoys very fertile soil and an excellent “Mediterranean” climate.

Ground broken for vast recreational center in UNESCO-nominated Uraman

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — Construction of a vast recreational and hospitality center was officially began on Tuesday with a ground-breaking ceremony in the Uraman region, a cradle of Kurdish art and culture from the days of yore in western Iran.



The Uraman cultural landscape is one of the country’s candidates for being designated by UNESCO as a World Heritage in the near future, IRNA reported.

Local officials believe that the inscription could both jumpstart tourism in the region and be a stimulus for better conservation of its natural landscapes and unique cultural scenes for the next generations.

Stretched on a steep slope in a rural district of Sarvabad county, Uraman is home to dense and step-like rows of houses in a way that roof of each house forms the yard of the upper one, a feature that adds to its charm and attractiveness.

Ancient relics of Iran: Head of a ruler ca. 2300–2000 BC

(The Metropolitan Museum of Art) — The identity of this lifelike head and where it was created remain a mystery. The expert craftsmanship and innovative technology involved in shaping it and casting it in copper alloy, a very costly material, indicates that it represents a king or elite person. The nose, lips, large ears, heavy-lidded eyes, and modeling of the face are rendered in a naturalistic style. The dark, empty spaces of the eyes were probably originally inlaid with contrasting materials. Patterns in the elegantly coiffed beard and well-trimmed mustache and the curving and diagonal lines of the figure’s cloth turban can still be seen beneath the corroded copper surface. These aspects of personal appearance further support the identification of this image with an elite personage. Furthermore, the head’s unusually individualized features suggest that it might be a portrait. Were that to be true, the head would be a rare example of portraiture in ancient Near Eastern art.

Recent examination has revealed that the head, long thought to be virtually solid, originally contained a clay core held in place by metal supports. It may be among the earliest known examples of lifelike hollow casting in the lost-wax method. A plate across the neck incorporates a square peg originally set into a body or other mount, which may have been made of a different material.



Corona is a reality but it cannot stop traveling, tourism minister says

→ 1 Mounesan has long been attaching importance to tourism as a source of revenue, which could substitute petro-dollars. Back in 2017, he said: “Every single foreign tourist visiting Iran spends an average of \$1,200, bringing in income as much as exporting 30 barrels of oil.”

Referring to the pandemic and its impacts on the traveling sector, he said: “All the economists in the world have predicted [dramatic] changes and developments for many once-prosperous sectors..... However, the technology is advancing, and smart solutions... will certainly bring changes in the world’s economic sectors.”

In June, the United Nations World Tourism Organization praised efforts made by Iran’s tourism ministry to manage the travel industry during the coronavirus pandemic. UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said in a letter to Mounesan that the country’s measures have truly earned plaudits to mitigate the impact on tourism.

“A series of measures that the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts of Iran has taken, in accordance with the guidelines and recommendations of UNWTO, has truly earned plaudits as an effective practice to mitigate the impact on tourism,” the letter reads.

Some experts believe that the coronavirus pandemic may turn tours and travels into



Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan speaks in an undated photo.

luxury items as observing health protocols will raise the cost of travel in the country. Mohammad Ali Vaeqi, the vice president of the Iranian Tour Operators Association, warned earlier in June that with the continuation of the coronavirus outbreak, tourists may prefer individual travel rather than tours,

adding that they may also choose to go on a trip by their vehicles and stay in tents or in the nature instead of hotels.

In the global scene, part of the new travel puzzle is the jet-set mindset focusing on tough hygiene care and social distancing as cardinal guidelines for slowing the spread

of the virus. So the average expenditure will be raised for a typical traveler particularly inbound passengers so lesser ones can afford to buy privacy and space and safer travel amenities.

Meanwhile, deputy tourism minister Vali Teymouri, has said the tourism industry of Iran will get back on the right track sooner than expected thanks to measures taken to tackle the spread of coronavirus.

“I believe that tourism industry of the country will get back on the right track far sooner than generally expected thanks to the measures taken to deal with the spread of coronavirus in tourist destinations, hotels, stopovers, and all the centers which are affiliated with the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts,” Teymouri said in an interview with the Tehran Times.

Iran expects to reap a bonanza from its numerous tourist spots such as bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, mausoleums, churches, towers, and mansions, of which 24 being inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list. Under the 2025 Tourism Vision Plan, it aims to increase the number of tourist arrivals from 4.8 million in 2014 to 20 million in 2025. The latest available data show eight million tourists visited the Islamic Republic during the first ten months of the past Iranian calendar year (started March 21, 2019).

Innovative cultural industries can contribute to economic prosperity: official

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — Innovative industries in the field of cultural heritage, mainly handicrafts and music, can contribute to economic prosperity provided that their capacities are appropriately used through proper planning, deputy tourism minister Pouya Mahmoudian has said.

Culture and art are definitely economic in nature and it is needed to take advantage of them by having a special view from culture to the category of economics and vice versa, the official added, ILNA reported on Wednesday.

She also noted that for many years, in many developed and developing countries, the discussion of cultural and creative industries has been in the center of attention and policies, and now, the need for attention to these industries in the economic field in the country is felt more than ever.

However, as the country relied on the oil-dependent economy for many years, many of its policies depended on heavy industries, and it was thought that only such industries can play a role in the prosperity of the country’s economy, she lamented.

But relying on the capacities of the culture and art of this country can lead to achieving great things in the field of the country’s economy, she noted.

Referring to the infinite capacity of the handicrafts sector in Iran, she mentioned that all Iranian provinces have their own unique handicrafts and traditional arts, which could be used as a hidden treasure in the cultural and economic fields.

Back in February, the official announced that Iran ranks first globally in the number of cities and villages registered by the World Crafts Council (WCC).

Iran exported \$527 million worth of handicrafts during the past calendar year 1398 (ended March 19).

Of the figure, some \$273 million worth of handicrafts were exported officially through customs, and \$254 million was earned via suitcase trade (allowed for customs-free and tax-free transfer) through various provinces.

Back in May, Mahmoudian noted that due to the outbreak of coronavirus, suitcase exports of handicrafts were completely stopped since the month of Esfand (the last month of the year), and official exports of handicrafts experienced a steep decline.

Talking on the significance of handicrafts in the country, she noted, “Iran globally ranks first in terms of having the topmost number of world cities [and villages] of handicrafts.”

“Some 295 fields of handicrafts are currently practiced across Iran with more than two million people engaging,



majority of whom are women... Handicrafts also play an important role in the economy in our rural villages,” she said.

Iran’s handicrafts exports reached \$289 million in the year 1397, showing three percent growth year on year, based on data released by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts. Traditional ceramics, pottery vessels, handwoven clothes as well as personal ornamentations with precious and semi-precious gemstones were exported to Iraq, Afghanistan, Germany, the U.S., the UK, and other countries.

Eight moveable properties in Tehran added to national heritage list

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — A total of eight historical moveable properties in the Iranian capital have recently been inscribed on the national heritage list, CHTN reported on Wednesday.

Statues of Persian poets Omar Khayyam Neyshaburi and Ferdowsi as well as two statues of Mirza Taqi Khan Farahani also known as Amir Kabir, who was chancellor under Naser al-Din Shah Qajar, were among the new properties added to the national heritage list.



The list also includes a manuscript of One Thousand and One Nights, a statue of Garshab’s battle with a dragon, a bony object resembling glasses, and a bust of Ferdowsi.

The first time Tehran is mentioned in historical accounts is in an 11th-century chronicle in which it is described as a small village north of Ray.

Ray, in which signs of settlement dates from 6000 BC, is often considered to be Tehran’s predecessor. It became the

capital city of the Seljuk Empire in the 11th century but later declined with factional strife between different neighborhoods and the Mongol invasion of 1220.

Tehran has many to offer its visitors including Golestan Palace, Grand Bazaar, Treasury of National Jewels, National Museum of Iran, Glass & Ceramic Museum, Masoudieh Palace, Sarkis Cathedral, Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art and Carpet Museum of Iran, to name a few.

St. Thaddeus Monastery hosting painting exhibit to mark UNESCO-listing anniversary

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** — A painting exhibition is currently underway at the St. Thaddeus Monastery, in the northwestern West Azarbaijan province, on the occasion of the 12th anniversary of the monastery’s inscription on UNESCO World Heritage list.

The exhibition, which displays 77 paintings by children and teenagers, was inaugurated by the Archbishop of Azarbaijan’s Armenians Gregor Chiftechian, CHTN quoted the director of Iran’s Armenian monastic ensembles Sherly Avedian as saying on Monday.

Also known as the Qareh Klise (“the Black Church”), the monastery is one of the oldest surviving Christian monuments in the country. It is situated in Chaldoran county, some 20 kilometers from Maku, adjacent to the borders of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Turkey.

The ancient church shows off elaborate bas-reliefs of flowers, animals, and human figures on its façade and exterior walls. It bears verses of the Old and New Testament in Armenian calligraphy as well.

St. Thaddeus Monastery plays host an annual religious ritual every summer. Last July, it hosted over 3,000 Christian



worshippers coming together from Iran, Armenia, Syria, Lebanon, the Netherlands, France, Austria, Germany, Canada, and some other countries.

Baptism of children and youngsters along with performances of traditional songs and dances are amongst highlights of the pilgrimage.

The festivity is of high importance for Iranian-Arme-

nians who mostly come from the cities of Tabriz, Urmia, Tehran, Isfahan, and Qazvin, to stage the reunion in groups and families.

Attendees commemorate the martyrdom of St. Thaddeus, one of the twelve disciples killed while he was preaching the Gospel. The legend says a church dedicated to him was first built in 68 CE where Qareh Klise is standing.

Thaddeus was an apostle of Christ and the ceremony is rooted in the last supper with Jesus Christ on the night of his arrest and execution by the Roman soldiers.

Together with St. Stepanos Monastery and the Chapel of Dzordzor, Qareh Klise was placed on the UNESCO World Heritage list in 2008 under the name “Armenian Monastic Ensembles of Iran”.

All three sites are located in West Azarbaijan and are of high significance from historical and cultural perspectives. They bear credible testimony to interchanges with the ancient regional societies in particular the Byzantine, Orthodox, and Persian. UNESCO says that they bear examples of the outstanding universal value of the Armenian architectural and decorative traditions.

Over \$78 million invested to renovate Shiraz historical texture

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** — Some 3,300 billion rials (over \$78 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) has been invested to renovate the historical texture of Shiraz, aiming at developing tourism in the city as the capital of Fars province.

The historical texture of Shiraz is of high cultural value, which could be revived more properly with the cooperation of government organizations and the private sector, CHTN quoted provincial tourism chief Jamshid Moeini as saying on Wednesday.

The investment will lead to creating job opportunities for over 800 people in the region, the official added.

Celebrated as the heartland of Persian

culture for over 2000 years, the southern Iranian city in Fars province has become synonymous with education, nightingales, poetry, and crafts skills passed down from generation to generation. It was one of the most important cities in the medieval Islamic world and was the Iranian capital during the Zand dynasty from 1751 to 1794.

Shiraz is home to some of the country’s most magnificent buildings and sights. Increasingly, it draws more and more foreign and domestic sightseers flocking into this provincial capital.

Eram Garden, Afif-Abad Garden, Tomb of Hafez, Tomb of Sa’di, Jameh Mosque of Atigh, and Persepolis are among the his-

torical, cultural, and ancient sites of Shiraz that are of interest to domestic and foreign tourists.

The UNESCO-registered Persepolis, also known as Takht-e Jamshid, whose magnificent ruins rest at the foot of Kuh-e Rahmat (Mountain of Mercy), was the ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid Empire. It is situated 60 kilometers northeast of the city of Shiraz in Fars Province.

Shiraz is also home to some magnificent historical gardens such as Bagh-e Narenjestan and Eram Garden, which are top tourism destinations both for domestic and international sightseers.

UNESCO describes the Persian Garden



as an idea that combines natural elements with manmade components in order to materialize the concept of Eden or Paradise on Earth.

Not even one person deprived of PHC services

1 → All universities of medical sciences are responsible to provide services to the whole remote areas or villages with few residents in their province,” Shariati noted.

Even during coronavirus pandemic, no one was left behind and we have provided millions of people with insurance coverage, even the deprived or the refugees, while in many developed countries there have been many patients who lost their lives on the streets being left untreated, he lamented.

He further said that but in comparison to other countries with full potential, income, technology advances, and numerous medical staff, Iran better handled the crises and provided treatment to all, despite U.S. sanctions and all restrictions.

All COVID-19 tests is free for those who need to be tested by a health care professional, he added.

Development of PHC network

Referring to the network's development, Shariati said that we always assess the need of society and improve the network procedures in line with the new standards and strategies.

The key point is that the network has made extensive changes in terms of urban areas coverage, although villages have always been the network's priority.

With the implementation of the Health Transformation Program, the primary health care network in the suburbs was expanded and primary health care is provided to suburban residents free of charge.

Another important change in the network in recent years has been the addition of nutritionists and clinical psychologists to the health team, especially in the cities.

But the most significant of all was the national electronic health record (EHR) system in which every citizen is registered with the national ID number, which provides us with comprehensive health data on different fields.

However, the network must grow in different fields, including, achieving quantitative and qualitative standards, compliance with upstream laws and regulations, solving problems, and respond to current health needs, redesigning based on future conditions.

EHR a unique experience

«Each person who refers to the health houses or health posts is registered in the system, in urban areas, over 95 percent of the population are registered and in rural areas, the number reaches up to 99 percent, because in villages all the residents refer to the health houses while it is less in metropolitan areas.

Although, almost it was believed that setting up an e-health record in PHC system is more difficult than building and equipping a hospital and developing treatment process because we wanted to set up an online system in villages where there was not even internet, and sometimes we had to first build a road.

However, we succeeded, and now only 2 percent of the population residing in re-



remote areas may have not accessed the EHR system, and a few villages also are using the system offline.

The system could significantly help us in the successful implementation of the national campaign for controlling hypertension, which was taking the blood pressure of target groups, registering their information, and referring the patients to specialists held on May 17- June 6, 2019.

It once more came to help us in COVID-19 screening, and we could test those in remote areas and present certain data on the new cases across the country.

Countries that started e-health records much earlier than us had to work offline due to the technology of that time, but we did not go that route, and from the first day launched e-health records online», Shariati said.

Family Physician program to promote health and reduce unnecessary costs

The Family Physician Program was launched in 2005 in all villages and cities with a population of less than 20,000 people. Rural insurance funds were provided by the government. But the family physician program in cities with a population of more than 20,000 people for the first time in 2012 in Fars and Mazandaran provinces based on version 02 of the instructions of the family physician program and referral system by employing trained physicians and health care providers to provide comprehensive and continuous health services.

«The physician assumes medical coordination of care with other physicians for the patient with multiple health concerns, which reduces the unnecessary diagnostic and treatment processes along with reducing patient's spending on treatment and care.

Because of the variety of medical services a family physician can provide a broad scope of expertise much less expensive than a specialty doctor. If a specialty doctor is

necessary, family physicians can consult with a specialist.

Part of a family physician's job is helping the patients navigate the increasingly more complicated healthcare industry.

When family physicians are covering the societies, hospital visits, emergency rooms, and surgical hospital visits are all lowered, which can help lower the cost of medical care within the communities.

Their preventive, as well as chronic care, can cause health growth in the country,” he explained.

Challenges facing health system

Pointing to the challenges to the health network expansion, he said that high reliance on hospitals, special practitioners, providing services based on the characteristics of the provider instead of paying attention to the needs of the people, lack of participation of physicians in the risk imposed and additional costs on the ward, therapeutic insurance instead of health insurance, and are the main challenges in on the development path.

«Insufficient attention of some managers to the issue of prevention and payment system for specialized services in the specialized services sector, which can lead to induced demand from the service provider is another challenge.

Another barrier to the expansion of health networks is a conflict of interest among some of the decision makers.

Since the payment system for family physicians is based on Capitation Adjusted by Performance, there is no longer any reason for them to induce demand,» he noted.

Such conflicts of interest threaten the quality of patient care, but family doctors can lead to the closure of many health facilities, and many financial ties that increase patient spending on treatment and bring the health centers high profit, he added.

The FP program is the largest socio-economic reform in any country, and its devel-

opment requires government action, Shariati further highlighted.

PHC network full of knowledge and experience

Although it may seem very simple that two health care practitioners are offering primary health care to a limited population of villages, it is fully applied knowledge, they use various procedures and analytical tools to generalize concepts to solve diverse problems and situations.

Many times that we were trying to find a solution for a specific condition or problem, we came to a conclusion that there is not been any research that can provide us with a fine answer, so we started conducting researchers to create the knowledge, which is simply used in the network infrastructure, he said.

Smart Health Network

Shariati went on to say that «We have designed a model called the Smart Health Network, which is a model for providing, maintaining, and promoting integrated health with a focus on the government, not just the Ministry of Health.

This model not only requires cross-sectoral cooperation but also a coordinated health approach in all sectors.

According to this model, to promote personal health, people should be empowered and we should provide them with the necessary tools and facilities to achieve personal health promotion, while also providing them with a health-supportive environment.

Fighting risk factors alone is not enough, but we must also improve protective factors, health, vitality, and productivity.

The model suggests that instead of entering people's health data into the systems, data related to people's health must be extracted from the servers of various organizations automatically.

Instead of providing health services to people based on pre-determined health plans, we should design and provide the most appropriate services for the individuals.

All these personalizations are not possible but with the use of artificial intelligence, therefore, the vision, mission, goals, and tasks need to be redesigned.

This model proposes to integrate the information islands of organizations that are currently separated; it can lead to significant growth in health factors.»

«The system works based on an integrated but distributed database, for instance, if a person refers to a health center and is diagnosed with a certain disease that needs a change in position or task, the system immediately informs the patient's workplace and asks them to change his task.

If they resist doing that, the system will notice and announce the violation to the legal authorities and the company would be fined.

So, this is what we expect to happen for the country's health network,» Shariati concluded.

Medicinal plants export fetches \$500m

SOCIETY TEHRAN— Iran earns some \$500 million annually by exporting medicinal herbs, an official with the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology said.

About \$350 million of the revenue is related to saffron and the rest is related to other medicinal herbs, IRNA quoted Mohammad Hassan Asareh as saying on Wednesday.

Tarahom Behzad, deputy director of the Forests, Ranges, and Watershed Management Organization, has said that some 2,300 species of medicinal plants are cultivated across Iran, of which 1,738 species are endemic species.

Of the 8,425 species of herbs identified in the country, 2,300 have medicinal, aromatic, and cosmetic properties, he added.

In the first nine months of the past Iranian calendar year (started March 2019), 1,600 tons of medicinal plants were exported, which was 1,434 tons last year and 870 tons a year before, he said, adding that export of medicinal plants has



increased over the past two years.

He also stated that this year 26 products have been exported, with 4 new products compared to the last year's products.

According to the World Health Organization, the global market for herbal products is \$60 billion annually. About 25 percent of medicines worldwide are made of herbs. Among 252 important medicines of WHO, 11 percent are exclusively produced from medicinal plants.

Mohammad Reza Shams-Ardakani, director of the department of Iranian traditional medicine at the Ministry of Health, has said that the establishment of traditional health centers, enhanced cooperation to promote a healthy lifestyle based on traditional medicine, and flourishing of health tourism for Iranian traditional medicine are on the agenda.

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

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

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ج

Precipitation forecast to reach above normal in next 3 months

The country is predicted to receive above normal rainfall over the next three months (February 20-May 21), head of the climatological research institute affiliated to Iran's Meteorological Organization (IMO) has said.

The whole country will meet normal and above normal rainfalls, the northern parts will receive above normal rainfall while southern provinces will receive normal to lower-than-normal rainfall, IRNA quoted Iman Babaeian as saying on Sunday. This month, northern and eastern provinces will receive rain above normal averages, while in the first month of spring precipitation will be at normal amounts across the country, he noted, adding, during the second month of spring rainfall will reach its peak.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“hemi-”

■ **Meaning:** half

■ **For example:** Damage to the corresponding part of the right **hemisphere** had no effect on speech.

PHRASAL VERB

Hear from

■ **Meaning:** to receive news or information from someone:

■ **For example:** Police want to hear from anyone who has any information.

IDIOM

Build bridges

■ **Explanation:** help opposing groups to cooperate and understand each other better

■ **For example:** A mediator is trying to build bridges between the local community and the owners of the new plant.

Waste recycling can generate \$10b in value-added products

SOCIETY TEHRAN— The development of the waste recycling industry can lead to \$10 billion in value-added products per year, head of the Iranian Recycling Industries Association has stated.

It can produce value-added products worth up to \$10 billion annually, ISNA quoted Seyed Tohid Sadrnejad as saying on Wednesday.



Stating that only one to two percent of the country's valuable waste is recycled in authorized industrial units, he estimated the value of the waste market at \$2.5 billion per year, of which just \$500 million enters the domestic economy officially.

According to him, with the development of waste management, about 1.2 million sustainable jobs can be created in the country.

Poor waste management brings the country an annual loss of 440 trillion rials (about \$10.5 billion), Hassan Pasandideh, head of waste management affairs at the Department of Environment (DOE), has said.

Referring to dry waste as an economic commodity, he said that waste can generate employment and income, as well as helping to manage the environment.

«Currently, we have specific regulations for medical and agricultural waste disposal, but we also need to develop regulations for hazardous and industrial waste, which is planned to be determined,» he highlighted.

Meanwhile, Sadr-o-din Alipour, the director of the environment and sustainable development department of Tehran Municipality, has said that over 3,000 tons of plastic waste are generated per day in the country, which reaches 1 million tons in a year.

Ali Moridi, head of soil and water office at the DOE, said in October 2018 that while reduction of waste generation and separation of waste at source are the two major processes in waste management, in Iran the focus is mainly on the last phase of waste management which is waste disposal, which will slow down the path to waste minimization and waste sorting at source.

Although proper waste management could solve the country's environmental problems, the budget requested by the DOE for waste management has not been approved by the Majlis [Iranian parliament], he lamented.

According to a report published by United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in October 2016, waste generation per capita in Iran's urban areas is about 658 grams per day while Iranian waste generation per capita in rural areas is about 220-340 grams per day. Average Iranian waste generation per capita amounts to some 240 kilograms per year.

In Tehran alone waste generation per capita is estimated at 750-800 grams per day and each Tehran citizen generates about 270-450 kilograms of waste per year.

The report continues that unfortunately only 7 percent of the waste is separated at the source, 13 percent is recycled and only 2.5 percent of them end up in formal or sanitary landfills and some 77.5 percent of the waste will be burnt or buried in informal landfills located in the countryside or deserts near cities.

WORDS IN THE NEWS

Chinese AIDS activist detained over Tiananmen

(April 05, 2004)

In China, a well-known AIDS activist, has been detained. He was planning a commemoration of the 15th anniversary of the killings in Tiananmen Square. On June 4 1989, the army opened fire on unarmed demonstrators, killing 100s. This report from Louisa Lim in Beijing.

The AIDS activist, Hu Jia, hasn't been seen since Saturday morning, when he was taken away for questioning by police. His family say he sent **text messages** to friends telling them he'd been **detained**. Hu Jia is an **outspoken advocate** for people with HIV-AIDS; he's publicly criticised the authorities on their treatment of AIDS victims and other issues. In an article written last month, he said the government should **acknowledge** that its killing of unarmed civilians in 1989 was a serious mistake. «That **great weight** on our hearts must be lifted», he wrote, «and justice must return». He laid out his plans **to stage a vigil** in Tiananmen Square on the night of June 3rd to remember those who died. His **detention** comes a week after three female activists, who lost relatives in 1989, were **held in custody** for five days. It's a sign the authorities are moving early **to head off trouble** ahead of this sensitive anniversary. A new generation of leaders has come into power since the killings, but they've shown no sign of a change in **stance** and have defended the behaviour of their predecessors.

Words

text messages: written messages that are sent via mobile or cellular phones

detained: kept under the control of the police

an outspoken advocate: someone who speaks openly on behalf of others, even if those opinions are shocking

acknowledge: admit, accept as true

great weight on: worry, upset

to stage a vigil: to organize a period of time in a place where people meet and remain quiet, especially at night

detention: arrest, imprisonment

held in custody: arrested and kept in prison, usually until a trial

to head off trouble: to prevent problems or difficulties before they happen

stance: attitude

(Source: BBC)

‘Wildly irresponsible’: Former Trump aide slams president for ‘spitballing’ on cause of Beirut blasts

Donald Trump has been roundly criticized for his remarks suggesting that an “attack” or “bomb” caused deadly explosions in Beirut.

The president said the explosions – which killed more than 100 people and injured thousands of others – “looked like an attack” despite no immediate evidence suggesting the blasts were intentional.

Lebanese officials have not publicly determined the cause of Tuesday’s explosions but have pointed to a warehouse that was improperly storing thousands of tons of unsecured ammonium nitrate for several years.

“I met with some of our great generals and they just seem to feel that it was [an attack],” the president said. “This was not some kind of a manufacturing explosion type of event. This was a – seems to be, according to them, they would know better than I would – but they seem to think it was an attack. It was a bomb of some kind, yes.”

U.S. Department of Defense officials said there was no immediate indication that the explosions were the result of an attack, according to CNN. The Pentagon has also referred requests for comment to the White House, The Independent reported.

Brett McGurk, a former national security official in the Trump administration as well as under former presidents Barack Obama and George W. Bush, said the president’s remarks were “wildly irresponsible”.

“It’s wildly irresponsible for a president to stand at the [White House] podium and spitball about an international incident like this as hundreds of casualties are still missing or being treated,” he said on Twitter.

He added that the Defense Department “should clean this up tonight”.

Walter Shaub, a former director of the U.S. Office of Government Ethics, added that the U.S. should “avoid speculation and wait until we have information from a reliable source”.

“The president of the United States of America is not a reliable source.”

Lebanese General Security chief Abbas Ibrahim said the explosions were likely set off by material that had been seized several years ago, according to the Associated Press.

U.S. protests: 4 countries where legislators tweeted about George Floyd, ‘Black lives matter’

→ 1 The car was being driven by Brittney Gilliam, 27, the mother of the 6-year-old. Gilliam is shown in the video being handcuffed by police.

Aurora Police Chief Vanessa Wilson apologized to the family and said she was reviewing a department policy requiring that officers draw their weapons and order occupants of suspected stolen vehicles to lie prone during “high-risk” stops.



“We must allow our officers to have discretion and to deviate from this process when different scenarios present themselves,” Wilson, Aurora’s first female police chief, said.

Wilson said the city would pay for any counseling the girls needed following the incident.

The Aurora Police Department is already facing state and federal investigations over the August 2019 death of Elijah McClain, a 23-year-old Black man who died after three policemen subdued him and paramedics injected him with the sedative ketamine.

“If there ever was a police department that needs to be de-funded, abolished and rebuilt from the ground up, it’s Aurora,” said David Lane, an attorney for family members of the girls.

Protesters who took to the streets following the death of George Floyd, a Black man, under the knee of a Minneapolis police officer have called for police agencies nationwide to be defunded.

The weekend incident in Aurora stemmed from an erroneous report that Gilliam, her nieces, sister and daughter were in a stolen car, Lane said.

The attorney said he will seek a legal settlement with the city, but that if negotiations prove unsuccessful “it’s off to court we go.”

Resistance News

Haneyya extends condolences to Lebanon after devastating blast

INTERNATIONAL **TEHRAN**— Head of the political bureau of the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, Ismail Haneyya, has extended condolences to the Lebanese government and people over the deadly explosion at the Port of Beirut.

Haneyya phoned Michel Aoun, the president of Lebanon, Hassan Diab, the prime minister of Lebanon, and Nabih Berri, the speaker of the parliament of Lebanon, to express his full solidarity with the Lebanese people.

The Hamas leader offered his deepest condolences to the families of those who fell victim to the tragic blast and wished the injured a speedy recovery.

A huge explosion rocked the Lebanese capital Beirut on Tuesday, killing at least 100 and injuring 4,000 others.

The explosion sent shockwaves across the city, causing widespread damage as far as the outskirts of the capital which was later declared disaster zone.

Beirut blast: Two-week state of emergency declared in ‘disaster-stricken’ city

Hezbollah urges unity to overcome ‘national tragedy’

Lebanon’s President Michel Aoun has called for a two-week state of emergency in Beirut following a huge explosion that claimed more than a hundred lives, injured thousands more and sent seismic shockwaves through the capital, with the country’s top defense body describing Beirut as a “disaster-stricken” city.

Lebanon’s Supreme Defense Council headed by President Aoun held an emergency meeting at the Baabda presidential palace in the early hours of Wednesday.

Following the session, a statement by the council, read live on television, said Aoun had decided to release 100 billion Lebanese pounds in emergency allocations from the 2020 budget.

The council also recommended that a committee be tasked with investigating the blast and present its findings within five days to mete out the maximum punishment for those responsible.

It further suggested declaring Beirut a “disaster-stricken” city, announcing a two-week state of emergency in the capital and handing over security responsibility to military authorities.

■ Toll expected to rise

The blast took place on Tuesday in port warehouses near central Beirut storing highly explosive material, specifically ammonium nitrate, commonly used in both fertilizer and bombs.

The explosion — the most powerful in Beirut in years — flattened much of the strategic port and left buildings in ruin as a giant cloud of smoke rose above the capital.

Germany’s geosciences center GFZ said the explosion triggered a 3.5 magnitude earthquake, which was also felt as far away as Cyprus over 200 kilometers across the Mediterranean.

The Lebanese Red Cross put the death toll at above 100.

“Until now over 4,000 people have been injured and over 100 have lost their lives. Our teams are still conducting search and rescue operations in the surrounding areas,” a statement said Wednesday.

Lebanese Health Minister Hamad Hasan said earlier that the toll was expected to rise.

“There are many people missing. People are asking the emergency de-



partment about their loved ones and it is difficult to search at night because there is no electricity,” he told Reuters.

George Kettani, the head of Lebanon’s Red Cross also told Al Mayadeen TV channel, “What we are witnessing is a huge catastrophe,” adding, “There are victims and casualties everywhere.”

■ Aoun: Unsafe storing of ammonium nitrate ‘unacceptable’

In remarks published on the Presidency Twitter account, the Lebanese president said that it was “unacceptable” that 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate had been stored in a warehouse for six years without safety measures.

He vowed that those responsible would face the “harshest punishments,” calling for an emergency cabinet meeting on Wednesday.

President Aoun also visited the site of the explosion along with senior military officials on Wednesday morning.

■ Letters show Lebanese officials knew of danger

The cargo of ammonium nitrate arrived in Lebanon in September 2013, on board a Moldovan-flagged vessel sailing from Georgia to Mozambique.

The ship docked in the Lebanese capital after facing technical problems at sea and its dangerous cargo was offloaded and placed at Beirut port’s Hangar 12.

On June 27, 2014, then-director of Lebanese Customs Shafik Merhi wrote a letter to an unnamed “Urgent Matters judge,” asking for a solution to the matter.

Over the next three years, customs officials reportedly sent at least five more letters and proposed three options, including exporting the ammonium nitrate, handing it over to the Lebanese Army, or selling it to the privately-owned Lebanese Explosives Company.

However, they received no reply to their letters.

On October 27, 2017, Badri Daher, the new Lebanese Customs Administration director, wrote to a new letter to a judge, urging him to come to a decision on the matter in view of “the danger ... of leaving these goods in the place they are, and to those working there.”

■ Diab: Those responsible will pay price

Separately, Lebanese Prime Minister Hassan Diab promised there would be accountability for the fatal incident at the “dangerous warehouse,” adding that “those responsible will pay the price.”

“Beirut is grieving... All of Lebanon is disaster-torn. Lebanon is going through a quite ordeal that could only be faced with national unity and solidarity among all Lebanese from all backgrounds and regions. We are going through a

disaster that could only be overcome with determination and tenacity to face this serious challenge and its destructive consequences,” he said during a speech.

“I promise that this catastrophe will not go unpunished and those responsible will be held accountable.”

■ UNIFIL ship damaged, personnel wounded

Meanwhile, the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) released a statement, saying one of its maritime task force ships docked in Beirut port was damaged and a number of naval peacekeepers were injured, some of them seriously, in the blast.

“UNIFIL is transporting the injured peacekeepers to the nearest hospitals for medical treatment,” the statement read.

It also noted that UNIFIL is assessing the situation and stands ready to provide assistance and support to the Lebanese government.

■ ‘Wheat in Beirut’s port granaries unusable’

The explosion at Beirut’s largest port has destroyed silos that serve as the national grain reserve.

Lebanon imports up to 80 percent of its food needs and is particularly reliant on imports of soft wheat.

Economy Minister Raoul Nehme said that the wheat in Beirut’s port granaries cannot be used.

Lebanon will import wheat, but the country currently has enough wheat until it begins importing it, he told local media.

■ Hezbollah urges unity

The Lebanese Hezbollah resistance movement has called for unity to overcome what it describes as “national tragedy” following a deadly blast in Beirut.

In a statement released few hours after the massive explosion at Beirut Port on Tuesday, Hezbollah offered “deepest condolences over the national tragedy which took place in Lebanon in these hard times,” and urged national unity among all the Lebanese.

“This grievous disaster, along with its unprecedented repercussions and damage it had caused on several levels, requires a national stand by all Lebanese people and powers in a bid to overcome this ordeal,” the Lebanese resistance movement underlined.

In affront to China, U.S. announces highest-level visit to Taiwan in decades

The United States says Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Alex Azar will travel to Taiwan in the coming days, marking the highest-level visit to the self-ruled island in decades, amid escalatory posturing toward China.

The American Institute in Taiwan (AIT), the de facto U.S. embassy in Taipei, made the announcement on Wednesday.

“This marks... the first Cabinet member to visit in six years, and the highest level visit by a U.S. Cabinet official since 1979,” it said.

The last trip by an American cabinet-level official to Taiwan was in 2014, when the then-head of the Environmental Protection Agency visited.

The AIT said Azar would be accompanied on the “historic” trip by Mitchell Wolfe, the chief medical officer of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and other members of the administration.

“Taiwan has been a model of transparency and cooperation in global health during the COVID-19 pandemic and long before it,” Azar said in a statement. “I look forward to conveying President [Donald] Trump’s support for Taiwan’s global health leadership and underscoring our shared belief that free and democratic societies are the best model for protecting and promoting health.”

Taiwan has won praise for its response to the coro-



navirus pandemic, having kept its case numbers low due to effective and early prevention steps.

In a separate statement on Wednesday, Taiwan’s foreign ministry confirmed the trip, adding that Azar would meet with president Tsai Ing-wen. The ministry further described Azar’s upcoming trip as “ample evidence of the solid foundation of mutual trust” between Washington and Taipei.

According to Press TV, China has sovereignty over self-ruled Taiwan, and under the “One China” policy, almost all world countries recognize that sovereignty.

The U.S., too, recognizes Chinese sovereignty over the island but has long courted Taipei in an attempt to

counter Beijing.

Washington, which has no formal diplomatic relations with Taipei by law, is the island’s largest weapons supplier and an avid backer of Taiwan’s secessionist president Tsai, causing increasing tensions with Beijing over trade and a host of other issues.

China has pursued reunification with Taiwan ever since the island broke away from the mainland during a civil war in 1949.

■ U.S. cabinet official’s visit to Taiwan to endanger peace: China

Later on Wednesday, China expressed strong opposition to Azar’s planned visit to Taiwan, saying the trip would endanger “peace and stability” in the region.

“China firmly opposes official exchanges between the U.S. and Taiwan,” Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said at a regular briefing in Beijing.

“We urge the U.S. to abide by the one-China principle... stop all forms of official exchanges with Taiwan... and refrain from sending any wrong signals to the Taiwan independence forces,” he added.

China and the U.S. are also at odds over a growing number of issues, including the origin of the new coronavirus, Hong Kong, and the South China Sea, besides Taiwan.

Pakistan unveils new map with all of disputed Kashmir as own territory

Pakistan’s Prime Minister Imran Khan has approved a “new political map” of the country that marks the Indian-controlled part of the disputed Kashmir region as Pakistani territory.

Khan unveiled the map on Tuesday, ahead of the first anniversary of New Delhi’s revocation of the autonomous status of Indian-administered Kashmir.

The map marks the Indian-administered part of the region as “Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir,” unlike its former status as “disputed territory.”

“Today is a historic day for Pakistan as the Cabinet, opposition, and Kashmiri leadership endorsed the new map,” Khan said, unveiling the map. “Kashmir will become part of Pakistan and this map is the first step toward it.”

The Himalayan region of Kashmir has been split between India and Pakistan since their partition in 1947. The countries have fought three wars over the territory.

The Indian-administered part of the region, known as Jammu and Kashmir, enjoyed

autonomy until August 2019, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s Hindu nationalist government revoked that status.

The Pakistani prime minister said separately that he would deliver a public speech in Muzaffarabad, the capital city of Azad Kashmir, on Wednesday.

India reacted by describing the map as “an exercise in political absurdity.”

“We have seen a so-called political map of Pakistan that has been released by Prime Minister Imran Khan. This is an exercise in political absurdity... These ridiculous assertions have neither legal validity nor international credibility. In fact, this new effort only confirms the reality of Pakistan’s obsession with territorial aggrandizement supported by cross-border terrorism,” the Indian Ministry of External Affairs said in an official statement on Tuesday.

India regularly accuses Pakistan of aiding militants to cross the border in Kashmir to conduct attacks. Islamabad denies that accusation.

Visual point of view



Zob Ahan goalkeeper Mehdi Khalil sympathizes with Lebanon

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Zob Ahan Lebanese goalkeeper Mehdi Khalil expressed his sadness and shock at the explosion in Lebanon's Beirut city killing scores of people.

A massive blast in the Lebanese capital, Beirut, has killed at least 70 people and injured more than 4000 others, according to the Lebanese authorities.

The officials are blaming highly explosive material stored in a warehouse for six years.

Mehdi Khalil, in an interview with Varzesh3 website, explained how he had been informed of the terrible incident.

"When I finished the training session with the team on Tuesday, I saw that my wife had sent me a video of this catastrophe. I was shocked and heartbroken when I watched the scene. Actually, I could not believe what I was watching, it was an incredible explosion!" Khalil said.

"I was immediately concerned about my family and friends," he said, referring to his family in Lebanon: "Everything including houses, cars, and people were torn to pieces. I cannot choose words to describe the situation and what hap-



pened. I hope this will not happen again anywhere in the world."

"My thoughts are with the people of Lebanon and with the families of

the victims of the tragic Beirut blast," Khalil said. "It was a day of mourning for Lebanon. People from around the world got upset by this incident. Many

nations have expressed their sympathy with Lebanon. All we can do now is pray for Lebanon and for the victims' family."

Mehdi Khalil, 28, has played in some Beirut based clubs such as Safa and Ahed during his career before joining the Iranian Professional League (IPL) side Zob Ahan in January 2019.

He cited the conditions in his country related to 2019 Lebanese protests, locally known as the October Revolution, and the ambiguity surrounding the resumption of sports activity as the reasons for the transfer.

"Because of everything that is happening in the world, from coronavirus crisis to this terrible explosion, 2020 may be a special year for people all over the world. So let's pray for the best to happen for all the people. Let's continue our prayers and keep our faith to achieve the best. In the end, I must express my condolences to those who have lost their lives and wish the injured ones a speedy recovery. Our thoughts and prayers are with the bereaved families and the injured. This is life," he concluded.

Hossein Tayebi joins Benfica futsal team

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iranian international futsal player Hossein Tayebi joined Portuguese futsal club Benfica on Wednesday.

Tayebi, 31, has joined Benfica from Kairat Almaty of Kazakhstan.

Tayebi has won two UEFA Futsal Champions League silver and bronze medals with Kairat as well as 10 titles in Kazakhstan with the team.

"I am very happy to join Benfica, it will be a very interesting challenge. I'm looking forward to winning, and Benfica are a winning club by nature. When you're there, only victory matters in every game," Tayebi told slbenfica.pt.

"And that's what I like. All players respect Benfica as one of the biggest clubs in the world, which also have a rich history. I've played against Benfica a few times and



I'm fully aware of how good they are as a team. I hope we'll now get even better and stronger", the pivot added.

Tayebi is one of member of Iran national futsal team and has won AFC Futsal Championship two times. The 31-year-old pivot has also claimed a bronze medal at the FIFA Futsal World Cup.

Iranian freestyler Hadi aims Olympic medal

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iranian heavyweight wrestler Parviz Hadi is going to win a medal at the next year's Olympic Games.

The 125kg freestyler has won two Asian Games gold medals and three gold medals at the Asian Championships but has not yet won an Olympics medal.

Hadi, who participated in a ceremony in Tehran on Tuesday to collect and dispatch packages of food for families affected by the coronavirus pandemic, has said he's determined to claim a medal at the prestigious event.

"First of all, I hope the Iran league will start as soon as possible since the competition will help us to prepare for the world championships. We have started to train from June and I think we need to wrestle to stay fit," Hadi said in an



interview with IRNA.

"League will help us to prepare for the world championships and Olympic Games and it also is our profession and we need to wrestle to make money," he added.

"I have dedicated much of my life to wrestling and will have to my best to win a medal in the next year's Olympics," Hadi concluded.

Alipour chosen the best forward of ACL2018 Team

Persepolis football team Ali Alipour was chosen as the best striker of the ACL2018 Team.

After deciding the top goalkeeper, the best defense in front of him and the playmakers in midfield, the-afc.com introduced eight players of the 2018 AFC Champions League Best XI confirmed.

Persepolis' run to the final was built on a solid backline, with goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand and defenders Shojae Khalizadeh and Jalal Hosseini already included in the relevant categories for the Best 2018 XI, but defense alone does not win games, and Ali Alipour was the main outlet up front for the Tehran giant.

Having scored just one goal in his previous two



Continental campaigns, Alipour netted a brace in the 2018 opener against Nasaf before adding another against Al Wasl as Persepolis topped Group C.

Alipour saved his next two goals for vital moments in the knockout stages as he scored against Al Jazira in the Round of 16 and Al Sadd in the semi-finals to help his club into their first AFC Champions League final.

The Iranian striker defeated Baghdad Bounedjah, Dejan Damjanovic, Youssef El Arabi, Mame Thiam, Kim Shin-wook, Yuma Suzuki, and Alexandre Pato to win the award.

He won the poll with 73 percent.

Tour de France alters 2021 schedule to avoid overlap with Tokyo Olympics

The 2021 Tour's start has been moved up to avoid clashing with the Olympics, but that made for a new scheduling headache in Denmark.

Denmark's staging of the Tour de France's start, known as the 'Grand Depart', has been pushed back a year to 2022, Danish organizers said in a statement on Monday.

The Danish organization charged with planning the start of the Tour de France has come to an agreement with French Tour organizers, Amaury Sport Organization (A.S.O.), to postpone hosting the first three days of the tour, it said.

The start of next year's Tour de France was last week brought forward by six days to avoid clashing with the men's road race at the rescheduled Tokyo Olympics.

The new June 26 start date of the 2021 Tour, however, created a clash for Denmark with soccer's European Championship, which is being held in cities across Europe, including Copenhagen.

The Danish start to the Tour will now be held from July 1-3, 2022, the



Danish organizers said.

"I am happy that we have succeeded in securing a Danish tour start in 2022," mayor of Copenhagen and chairman of Grand Depart Copenhagen Denmark, Frank Jensen, said in a statement.

"We are many who have been looking forward to getting the Tour de France to Denmark next year, and now we unfortunately have to wait a little longer," Jensen said.

It was not immediately clear where next year's Tour de France would begin. The 2020 Tour de France was postponed until Aug. 29 due to the COVID-19 outbreak. The race is set to wrap up on Sept. 20.

(Source: cbssports)

International matches at risk if safety protocols not observed - UEFA

UEFA has warned that the staging of international matches will be at risk if its protocols for the return of the Champions League and Europa League are not observed.

Both tournaments resume this week after a five-month delay because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The protocols were distributed to all 28 teams still in the two competitions.

Both competitions conclude with 'final eight' tournaments behind closed doors in Portugal and Germany.

The Champions League final will be held in Lisbon on 23 August, two days after the Europa League final takes place in Cologne.

"UEFA expects all parties to adhere to hygiene best practices both in the controlled match environments, as well as in their private day-to-day lives," the protocols state.

"It is imperative that all precautions set out in this document, as well as the standard hygiene best practices, will be strictly adhered to by all members of these various groups.

"Non-respect of such social norms could have serious consequences for the staging of international matches."

The return of European club competition will immediately be followed by the



start of the Nations League international qualifiers at the beginning of September.

In addition, the 2020-21 European club season starts on 8 August, with Northern Irish side Linfield involved in the Champions League preliminary round.

The protocols themselves have been drafted under the guidance of UEFA medical committee chairman Tim Meyer, who is also in charge of the Bundesliga protocols in Germany.

Club players and staff have been told they will be tested either two or three days before they leave their home countries for the 'final eight' tournaments and again, on site, the day before each game.

(Source: Eurosports)

Shaikh Salman offers condolences and support to Lebanon

The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) President Shaikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa, sent his condolences on behalf of the Asian football family to the Lebanese people, after the port explosion in the capital, Beirut, which caused so many casualties.

In his letter to Hachem Haidar, Lebanon FA Presi-

dent, Shaikh Salman offered the AFC's heartfelt sympathies following the tragic event.

"We offer our deepest condolences to Lebanon FA, and we confirm that the AFC football family is ready to support you during these difficult times," said the AFC President.

"The AFC stands as one with the Lebanese people

and shares their sadness, but we are confident that Lebanon can overcome this event by a continued show of great unity."

Shaikh Salman also expressed his condolences to the families of those who were sadly killed and wished those injured a speedy recovery.

(Source: the-afc)

ASBC lauds Iran's new sensation Ali Khodadadi

Iran's boxing life is in strongly developing stage to find the way back to their glorious previous decades. Their superb new talent -8year-old Ali Khodadadi impressed the whole country with his fantastic boxing and sparring video which we share in all channels of the Asian Boxing Confederation.

Iran's Ali Khodadadi was born in 2012, he is only -8year-old but could be one of the ASBC Future Stars. Ali Khodadadi lives and trains in the city of Isfahan which is located in Central Iran, 400km south of the capital and famous of its Persian architecture.

Ali Khodadadi's coach is an experienced trainer, Mr. Ali Alizadeh since the beginning of his boxing career. Khodadadi's speed and technique in that young age is incredible, his sparring skills are better than many of the schoolboys and junior boxers.

Iran has got seriously high number of talented schoolboys and kids who could be the future stars of the country and the Asian continent. The resident of the Iranian Boxing Federation Mr. Hossein Souri is active and he believes the strong developments of the country. His mission is to double the number of the total number of boxers in Iran and raise the popularity of boxing into the top sports of the country.

(Source: ASBC)

Iranian fighter Aliakbari joins ONE Championship

ONE Championship has signed former Greco-Roman wrestling world champion Amir Aliakbari to a contract.

The plan is for Aliakbari to debut in ONE at the end of October, Aliakbari's manager, Ali Abdelaziz, told ESPN.

Aliakbari (10-1) has won five in a row, with his lone career loss coming to MMA legend Mirko Cro Cop. He is considered a difference-maker in the heavyweight division.

Last week, ONE signed 13-time Brazilian jiu-jitsu world champion Marcus "Bucheche" Almeida to his first MMA contract.

Aliakbari has finished seven of his 10 victories by TKO. The 32-year-old signed with the UFC last year, but he withdrew from the promotion because of a doping ban handed down by the international amateur wrestling governing body, as well as sanctions on his native Iran from the United States.

"My name is Amir Aliakbari," Aliakbari said in a statement provided to ESPN. "This is the real Iron Sheik, the pride of Iran. USA have one guy named Iron Sheik but he's a fake -- fake wrestler. I'm glad to sign with ONE Championship. I'm going to invade their heavyweight division, and fight (champion) Brandon Vera."

"When I'm finished with him they're not going to recognize him because I will disfigure his face. I believe I'm the best heavyweight in the world today. I'm unstoppable. I'm coming to ONE Championship and I'm bringing the entire Persian army with me -- no one is safe."

(Source: ESPN)

Hadi Choopan invited to 2020 Olympia

Iranian athlete Hadi Choopan has been invited to the 2020 Olympia.

The updated list of the 10 qualified competitors for the 2020 Olympia was released on the official website.

Choopan finished third last year and has been invited to the prestigious event once again.

10 athletes who qualified for the 2020 Olympia

Brandon Curry (USA)

William Bonac (Netherlands)

Hadi Choopan (Iran)

Dexter Jackson (USA)

Roelly Winklaar (Curacao)

Phil Heath (USA)

Cedric McMillan (USA)

Nathan DeAsha (UK)

Juan Morel (USA)

James Lewis (USA)

William Bonac, Hadi Choopan, and Roelly Winklaar are questionable of the already qualified competitors right now since they don't live in the USA.

The Olympia is scheduled for December and will take place at Planet Hollywood in the Las Vegas Strip.

(Source: fitnessvolt.com)

Iran to relaunch beach volleyball league

Volleyball.ir — Iran volleyball federation is going to launch beach volleyball league.

Tofigh Kaboli, head of Iran beach volleyball committee, has said that the federation will relaunch the league.

"Iran beach volleyball league was previously held two times and we are going to hold it once again," Kaboli told in an interview with volleyball.ir.



"The league will be held according to the FIVB's regulations and we are communicating with head of Iran volleyball federation to provide instructions for the league," he added.

Iran has improved in beach volleyball during the last years and hosted many international events including 2019-2020 FIVB Beach Volleyball World Tour in Bandar Torkaman and Qeshm.

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GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Contentment is eternal wealth.

Imam Ali (AS)

Persian literary influence on English literature

Part 1

The Early Image

I. Classical and biblical sources

Persia was first presented to the West through classical and biblical literature. During her long history it had extensive relations, both hostile and friendly, with the Greek city-states, the Romans and the Byzantine Empire.

These centuries of continual contact produced a considerable amount of writing on the Persians in Greek and Latin.

The importance of the Greco-Persian wars made Aeschylus depart from what was almost an unwritten canon of Greek tragedy in choosing the contemporary Persians instead of mythological figures as the characters of his play.

■ The Old Testament

However, because of the benevolence of the Achaemenid kings towards the Jews, represents the Persians mores sympathetically than do the classical works. Medieval Europe became acquainted with Persia mainly through Patristic and later through classical sources.

From the second half of the fourteenth century onwards, more and more information was derived from the classical sources. In the Confessio Amantis, John Gower gives two stories about the Achaemenid kings. The punishment of the corrupt judge Sisamnes by Cambises, and the story of Cyrus and the Lydians have their ultimate sources in books V and I of Herodotus respectively.

Chaucer at the end of “The Monk’s Tale” tells of the wars of Cyrus and Croesus, which again comes from the first book of Herodotus. Other examples can be given, indicating the importance of classical and classically derived sources in the early presentation of the Persians.

■ Amantis

Amantis tells how Darius asked his three attendants which was mightiest, king, truth, or woman. The story which comes from Esdras was at a later period to become the subject of one of the earliest plays about Persia.

It is to a certain extent a morality play.

The anonymous playwright not only personifies “Char-tytie” and “Iniquity” and so on, but also presents Persia and Medya, “Iuda and also Ethiopia” as its dramatis personae, who come to the Kynges Banket.

The writer’s lack of knowledge of history can be seen from the following instance, where he strangely makes “Percia” salute Darius in this manner.

Naturally, later plays, which are mostly inspired by classical sources, display a much better sense of history. A lamentable Tragedie mixed full of pleasant mirth containing the life of Cambyases king of Persia.

Thomas Preston, whose bombastic style was satirized by Falstaff, is one of the earliest English historical dramas.

Though its oriental element is slight, Preston is more acquainted with the Persians than is the writer of the “Interlude”. Herodotus, who is the source of the story, attributes the ferocious deeds of “Cambises” to his insanity, but Preston, moralizing, considers drinking and an evil nature responsible for them.

A century later, Elkanah Settle treated another aspect of the same king’s life in his play.

“Cambyases, the King of Persia”, which was successfully performed around 1670, at the Duke’s Theatre. Settle, like Preston, is indifferent to the presentation of the Persians and their customs and manners.

The only distinction, which he makes, between them and other nations is their religion of sun worship. This is one of the earliest references to Zoroastrianism in English drama.

In spite of the valuable information furnished by certain classical authors on the history and geography of ancient Persia, their knowledge of the religion and literature of that country was comparatively limited. They make hardly any references to Avestic mythology or Pahlavi writings.

“Plato in Alcibiades” refers to Zoroaster as the son of Oromasades. Plutarch, drawing upon the latter, has a still clearer conception of Zoroaster.

But their information is at best scanty and inaccurate and the Iranian Zoroaster for them remains the great magician.

Such versions are duly reflected in English literature. In the Confessio Amantis, Gower considers Zoroaster as the first experimenter in the art of magic.

Gower repeats the story of Pliny (The Natural history), that Zoroaster was born laughing. In 1661, all information about him was collected from the classical sources in a little known book entitled “De Zoroaster Bactriano”.

To be continued.

* This article has been co-produced by Hasan Javadi, faculty member of the University of California, Berkeley, Middle East Studies Department, and American scholar John Yohannan.

“Returning” wins big at Sarv Theater Awards

A R T **TEHRAN** — “Returning” was the big winner at the 1st edition of the Sarv Theater Awards as it garnered honors in several categories including best play.

The Association of Revolution and Sacred Defense Theater and the Revayat Cultural Foundation have established the awards to honor theatrical works on revolution and resistance and stage artists working on these subjects.

Director Hossein Mosafer Astaneh staged the play that previously had been staged in February and July in Tehran. Javad Nuri is the producer of the play.

It is about a businessman who launches a large shopping center project in Khorramshahr, the Iranian city that was almost totally destroyed during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war. In the aftermath of the war, people in the city need homes and jobs rather than a shopping center.

The awards ceremony, which was organized in the courtyard of Tehran’s Sarv Theater on Tuesday evening, was attended by a number of top cultural officials and stage artists.

A jury composed of actor and director Qotbeddin Sadeghi, director Mehrdad Rayani-Makhsus and actor and director Hossein Pakdel judged the productions of the year



Hossein Mosafer Astaneh accepts the award for best director at the 1st Sarv Theater Awards at Tehran’s Sarv Theater on August 4, 2020. (Mehr/Mehran Riazi)

to select the winners.

Mosafer Astaneh, who also won the award for best director, expressed his thanks to his troupe and said, “All members of my troupe did their best. Otherwise, we never could have presented the play on stage as well as it was.”

“We had no minor roles; everybody played a key role in this production and I dedicate this honor to all the artists accompanying me on and behind the stage,” he noted.

The play also brought Majid Rahmati the award for best actor and Shirin Bina an honorable mention in the best actress section.

In addition, playwright Kheirollah Taqiani received an honorable mention in the best script category, while the award for best script went to “Blood Garden” written by Mohammad Neqai.

Elahesh Shahparast was named best actress for her role in “The Vein” directed by Ayyub Aqakhani. Mohammad Maleki won the award for best composer for his collaboration in this production and Armin Vaseqi received an honorable mention in this category.

The award for best set designer was presented to Saeid Aqai for his collaboration in “Dayik”. Mona Qanbari won an honorable mention in this section.

Ghadir naqqali festival announced winners

→ The festival was also established to celebrate Eid al-Ghadir, the day on which Imam Ali (AS) was appointed as successor to the Prophet Muhammad (S).

In the Adult Section, Mohammad-Rafi Sheikhi was selected best naqqal. Second prize was shared by Hamid Ebrahimi and Seyyed Mehrdad Kavusi.

Ali Azimi and Hassan Basiri also shared third prize in this category.

In the Radio Naqqali Performance Section, Masumeh Lashani won the top prize for female performer. Negar Behresi was selected as runner-up, and Leila Sadat Musavi and Fahmideh Barutchi shared third prize.

Seyyed Morteza Al-e Ahmad, Abbas Daruki and Seyyed Morteza Nazemi shared the top prize for male performer in this section.

Hadi Hassanabadi and Javad Khorram took second and third places.

In the Young Adult Performers Section, Atena Bayat, Mohammad Mirzapur and Mohammadreza Mohammadi were honored.

Mohaddeseh Salehi, Tamara Yekta, Andia Heidari, Sarina Heidari, Mahya Mohammadjafari, Parnian Sadat Nadimi and Parian Sadat Nadimi were the winners in the Children’s Naqqali Section.

“Storytelling is one of the ancient arts, and mothers were the early storytellers and trainers of culture guardians,” jury member Mohammad-Hossein Nasserbakht said during the awards ceremony.

“I hope this festival can help preserve and restore the traditional arts for future generations,” he added.

Naqqali is also one of the oldest forms of dramatic performance in Iran that has long played an important role in society from the courts to the villages. It was inscribed on UNESCO’s List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding in 2011.

Iranian docs competing in Ierapetra festival

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iranian films “Kiarostami and His Missing Cane” and “The Little Plant” are competing in the 7th International Documentary Festival of Ierapetra in Greece.

“Kiarostami and His Missing Cane” is a new narrative of Abbas Kiarostami’s point of view on life, his vision and worldview that director Mahmudreza Sani tried to portray during four years of cinematic workshops

held by Kiarostami around the world. The film also features Kiarostami’s restlessness for the future of the cinema.

The film won the award for best documentary feature at the 4th Salto Independent Film Festival in Uruguay in 2019.

Directed by Komeil Soheili, “The Little Plant” is about a little plant that got lost in a remote area and can’t find any other plant that looks like it. Talking with locals, including immigrants from Yemen who have

recently resettled there, he gets to know new things about how their lives were affected by climate change.

Lefteris Charitos is presiding over the jury for international documentary competition, which is composed of Christos Karakapelis and Michel Garance.

Christoforos Charalampakis, a professor of linguistics at Athens University, is the honorary president of the festival, which will announce winners on August 10.



A poster for “Kiarostami and His Missing Cane”.

Two more movies from Iran join Rhode Island festival

A R T **TEHRAN** — Two short movies by Iranian filmmakers have joined the Rhode Island International Film Festival, which opened on Tuesday in the U.S. cities of Providence and Newport.

“Fault Line” by Soheil Amirsharifi and “Gabriel” by Yusef Kargar are the movies.

“Fault Line” tells the story of Nahal, who breaks her arm in a fight at school. Later, a man claims to the school principal that Nahal had hit someone while riding a motorcycle and fled the scene. While her injured arm shows evidence of her involvement in the accident, she denies it by asserting that the CCTVs prove she hurt her arm at school.

The film won the award for best short at the 63rd BFI



A poster for “Gabriel” by Yusef Kargar.

London Film Festival in October 2019.

“Gabriel” is about a middle-aged man who lives with his son. His wife has been lost for some time. All the people are suspicious about her. One day news comes to him and he has to choose one: expediency or conscience?!

The festival earlier announced that three other Iranian movies are competing in the festival, which will be running until August 9.

The films “Coup 53” directed by Taqi Amirani, “Untimely” by Puya Eshtehardi and “Termites” by Masud Hatami.

The Rhode Island festival was established by George T. Marshall, the founder of the Flickers Arts Collaborative. Flickers organizes the event in collaboration with several other institutes.

Vocalist Amir-Reza Heravi releases debut album with Czech orchestra



A poster for vocalist Amir-Reza Heravi’s debut album “Sobhe Khialangiz”.

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iranian vocalist Amir-Reza Heravi released his debut album “Sobhe Khialangiz” (“Dreamy Morning”) recorded with the Prague Metropolitan Philharmonic Orchestra, the Persian service of IRNA reported on Wednesday.

Heravi began learning music at 14 from top musicians such as Mohammadreza Lotfi, Ali-Asghar Shahzeidi, Mohammad Golriz and Alireza Qorbani.

He had said earlier that he is under the influence of Hossein Khajeh-Amiri and Gholam-Hossein Banan, two top Iranian vocalists.

Iranian musicians Pedram Faryusefi, Meisam Marvasti, Nilufar Mohebbi and

Atena Eshtiaqi have also accompanied the orchestra. Eminent musician Mahyar Alizadeh and several other musicians have collaborated in this collection as composers.

The Prague Metropolitan Philharmonic Orchestra was founded in 2002 with the vision of creating an ensemble specializing in the recording of soundtracks for motion pictures.

The members of the orchestra are players selected from major Prague-based symphony and opera orchestras: the Czech Philharmonic, the Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Prague Symphony Orchestra and the Orchestra of the National Theater.

The orchestra has been involved with

many award-winning projects including the film “Leviathan” with music by Phillip Glass, which won Best Film at the London Film Festival. The orchestra also performed on the soundtrack of “The Musketeers” on BBC 3, in the major Czech film “Milada” and in a number of films by Polish director Jacek Bromski.

The orchestra has given performances in Prague and other Czech cities and abroad, and performs many premieres by contemporary composers, including Argentine composer Daniel Doura’s monumental Sinfonia Argentina, which was first recorded in 2015 and given its world premiere in 2018 at concerts in Prague, Teplice and Munich.

New Persian translation of “The Little Prince” published

CULTURE **TEHRAN** — A new Persian translation of French author Antoine de Saint-Exupéry’s story “The Little Prince” has recently been published by Ejaze Elm Publications in Tehran.

The book has been rendered into Persian by Fatemeh Saeida. The novella is about a downed pilot in the Sahara Desert, who is frantically trying to repair his wrecked plane. His efforts are interrupted one day by the apparition of a little prince, who asks him to draw a sheep.

Published in 1943, the book has been read by millions of children in more than a hundred languages. It is also read

by adults for its allegorical meaning.

Several Persian translations of “The Little Prince”, including those by Abolhassan Najafi, Mohammad Qazi, Ahmad Shamlu and Delara Qahraman, have previously been published in Iran.

With his good command of the French language, the late linguist and translator of French literature, Najafi, translated the book in 2000 and it was published by Niloofar Publications the same year.

The book was warmly received by readers and was republished a year later.

Najafi’s Persian translation of “The Little Prince” was published in both Persian and Cyrillic scripts in

Tajikistan in 2017.

Saint-Exupéry was a French aviator and writer whose works are the unique testimony of a pilot and a warrior who looked at adventure and danger with a poet’s eyes. His fable “Le Petit Prince” (The Little Prince) has become a modern classic.

He was raised in an aristocratic family. He fell in love with aviation at an early age after he took his first airplane ride at the age of 12. He received his pilot’s wings during his compulsory military service.

His adventures as a pilot would supply the inspiration for all of his literary endeavors, which culminated with the 1943 publication of the classic “The Little Prince”.