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Whoever is responsible must be tried



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Iran urges UN to hold U.S. accountable for 'adventuristic' airliner harassment

Iran has urged the UN to hold the United States accountable for harassment of an Iranian passenger plane by two U.S. warplanes over Syria last month, calling it an "adventuristic act" and "unlawful."

In identical letters sent to UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres and the Security Council on Friday, Iran's Ambassador to the UN Majid Takht-Ravanchi complained that Mahan Airlines Airbus A310, which had taken off from Tehran and was heading to Beirut on July 23, "was aggressively and unexpectedly intercepted" by two Amer-

ican F-15 fighter jets in Syrian airspace.

In response to the U.S. warplanes' "offensive and hazardous maneuvering" and in order to save the passengers' lives, the pilot had to change altitude abruptly causing injuries to those onboard, he added.

Takht-Ravanchi also noted that in line with provisions of the Convention on International Civil Aviation, the Civil Aviation Organization of Islamic Republic of Iran had contacted Syrian authorities and called for "a prompt and accurate investigation" into the incident. **→2**

Govt. raises \$3.6b by selling stocks

TEHRAN — Head of Iran's Planning and Budget Organization (PBO) has said that offering shares of state-owned companies has brought the government 160 trillion rials (over \$3.6 billion) in the first four months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-July 21).

According to Mohammad-Baqer Nobakht, the mentioned earnings came as the government had foreseen only 119

trillion rials (about \$2.83 billion) of capital market revenues for the mentioned four months.

According to the official, in the face of the U.S. sanctions and the global recession caused by the coronavirus pandemic, Iranian oil exports have declined and oil revenues have fallen, so the government is offsetting the budget deficits through other sources. **→4**

Palestinian film events seek better ties with Iran Resistance festival

TEHRAN — The organizers of the 16th edition of the Resistance International Film Festival have said that some Palestinian film events are seeking better ties with the Iranian festival.

In a letter sent to the Resistance festival executive Ahad Mikailzadeh, Mofeed Abu Shamala, the CEO of the Red Carpet Human Rights Film Festival in Gaza who is also the chief editor of Gaza's Al Mujta-

ma newspaper, has expressed his thanks to the organizers of the event and called upon them to sign a memorandum of understanding, the organizers announced on Friday.

The Red Carpet Human Rights Film Festival in Gaza presents short, feature, documentary and animated films on regional and global humanitarian issues. The first edition took place in May 2015. **→12**



ARTICLE

Salman Parviz
Journalist

First Phase III Covid-19 vaccine trials begin in UAE

UAE Ministry of Health and Prevention announced it is hosting world's first Phase III clinical trials of an inactivated vaccine to combat coronavirus Covid-19 pandemic, reported various media outlets on August 5. According to the Gulf News, the vaccine was developed by Abu Dhabi-based G42 Healthcare and Sinopharm GNBG.

In the UAE 61,606 cases have been confirmed until August 6, with 55,385 recoveries and 353 deaths.

The third phase follows the success of the first two phases of tests conducted by state-owned pharmaceutical Beijing-based Sinopharm in China, which resulted in 100 percent of volunteers generating antibodies after two doses in 28 days. Around 15,000 volunteers are needed to conclude the Phase III scientific research phase before taking the vaccine to the market.

Phase III trials are open to individual volunteers aged between 18 and 60 living in the UAE and will last three to six months. A medical center was opened outside Abu Dhabi for the first time for volunteers to register in Sharjah. The facility can register up to 500 volunteers per day and will be open to residents of Sharjah and other neighboring emirates as part of campaign launched on July 16.

There are five stages and three phases before approval for limited use of vaccine. First stage starts with preclinical non-human trials. Phase I starts human trials and tests vaccine safety and dosage. Phase II tests vaccines in expanded safety trials. In Phase III vaccines are tested in large-scale efficacy tests. If Phase III is successful vaccine will be approved for limited use in the fifth stage.

Phase III trials present challenges for vaccine-makers around the world, such as the need to recruit enough participants and qualified health staff. To demonstrate efficacy of the vaccine data on 20,000-40,000 people is required and then followed closely for several months or even years, scientists say. **→7**

Italian embassy responsible for depicting Tehran-Rome 'so deep and complete' cultural ties: envoy

By Afshin Majlesi

Italian ambassador to Tehran Giuseppe Perrone has said that his embassy is highly responsible for depicting the richness of so deep and so complete cultural ties, which have long been developed between the two nations.

"I think because our cultural ties are so deep and so complete in every area, we do have a responsibility to showcase this richness and to tell people the story of this important connection that has always existed between Italy and Iran in different areas, so we look forward to our future projects which are going to be quite amazing as well."

Perrone made the remarks late on Wednesday in his residence during an exclusive interview with the Tehran Times on the sidelines of an unveiling ceremony of the first episode of a joint video-theater project "8 1/2 Theater Clips: How the Pandemic Changed our Lives" co-performed

by Iranian and Italian artists.

Briefing on the history of archaeological ties between the two nations, the envoy said: "Archaeology is one of the most traditional areas of cooperation between Italy and Iran ... Last, in November, we celebrated 60 years of our joint missions, which has been quite an achievement because over sixty years many Italian archaeologist missions came to Iran and did important discoveries, working with Iranian archaeologists and learning how to work together."

The ambassador stressed the need for greater archaeological cooperation as the two countries are "heirs to ancient civilizations."

"Archaeology is certainly an area for us that is extremely important because it tells the world how our countries are heirs to ancient civilizations and this extremely important because it is part of identity, it's part of who we are, and it helps us to better connect with one another." **→8**

U.S. protests: Protests rock Portland, mayor says tumult helps Trump

By staff & agencies

Violent clashes this week between protesters and police in the United States city of Portland, Oregon, have ratcheted up tensions in the city days after an agreement between state and federal officials appeared to bring calm.

Demonstrators continued to rally in the west coast city on Thursday night, hours after the city's mayor decried the unrest that has roiled Portland since George Floyd was killed.

"You are not demonstrating, you are attempting to commit murder," Mayor Ted Wheeler said on Thursday in a hastily called news conference alongside Portland police chief Chuck Lovell. Wheeler also warned that the city anticipated more "attacks on public buildings" in the immediate future.

According to al Jazeera, On Thursday night, Portland police declared an unlawful assembly outside a precinct and protesters were ordered

to leave. They had said earlier that they believed the intent of the crowd was to vandalise and burn the precinct.

Police cleared the area around the precinct of demonstrators, at times running at the crowd to push people away. Smoke canisters were also deployed, news outlets reported. Portland police said some demonstrators in the group laid ties made of rebar in the street that caused damage to police vehicles.

Demonstrators and journalists have shared on social media images of police forcefully arresting protesters and pushing journalists as they covered demonstrations.

"Don't think for a moment that if you are participating in this activity, you are not being a prop for the re-election campaign of Donald Trump - because you absolutely are," the mayor had said. "If you don't want to be part of that, then don't show up." **→10**

Why Imran Khan didn't make it

TEHRAN — In a bid to calm tensions in the region, Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan made efforts to mediate between Iran and Saudi Arabia, but his efforts ended in deadlock due to the Saudis' unwillingness to fundamentally solve disagreements with Iran, a former diplomat told the Tehran Times.

The Pakistani prime minster has recently said that he is still mediating between Iran and Saudi Arabia to deescalate tensions in the region. His efforts to defuse tensions between Tehran and

Riyadh began in October 2019, when he paid visits to Iran and Saudi Arabia in a bid to find a common ground between the two countries.

Imran Khan paid a visit to Iran to defuse tensions in the region, according to a statement issued by Pakistan's Foreign Ministry at the time.

"As part of his initiative to promote peace and security in the region, Prime Minister Imran Khan will be undertaking a visit to Iran on 13 October 2019," the statement said.

This was the second high-level meeting be-

tween the Pakistani prime minister and Iranian officials, whose main goal was to deescalate long-simmering tensions between Riyadh and Tehran. Earlier in September, Imran Khan had met with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani on the sidelines of the 74th UN General Assembly meeting in New York.

In an attempt to prevent what Imran Khan called war between Iran and Saudi Arabia, Pakistani officials, including the prime minister, **→2**

S. Arabia, U.S. want Iraq to be hostile to Iran, al-Nujaba says

By Mohammad Mazhari

TEHRAN — On June 27, Britain's ambassador to Iraq, Stephen Hickey, who has served in the post since last September, posted a tweet against what he called "militia groups."

Hickey incited Iraqi people to turn their backs on Hashd al-Shaabi, accusing the organization of strengthening its grip on the war-torn Iraq.

In response, Nasr al-Shammari, the al-Nujaba's deputy military chief, urged the senior diplomat to keep his views to himself.

"Stop lying and mind your own business and represent your old country as a diplomat," al-Shammari warned.

In this regard, Shammari tells the Tehran Times that the British ambassador always violates his diplomatic job and interferes in Iraqi domestic affairs.

"He still dreams that his country is a great empire, forgetting that it is just a servile and petty follower of America and that it has no significant value in the global balance of power except through this subordination," Shammari points out.

He says a passive position by Iraqi officials has allowed for such a meddling, which is considered a violation of diplomatic norms and an underestimation of Iraq's sovereignty.

Shammari asked Ambassador Hickey to hear another voice from the nation that would make him more cautious about what he says.

On labeling Iraqi groups or individuals as "terrorist," he notes that the U.S. and its proxies in the region accuse everyone who opposes their imperialist, colonial, and arrogant policies of various charges. **→7**



© Mehr/ Mahdi Sholekian

Iran sets up field hospital in Beirut

Iran has dispatched two shipments of humanitarian aid to Beirut following devastating explosions in the Lebanese capital, the Mehr news agency correspondent from Beirut reported. The consignments include food and medical supplies, and field hospitals for treatment of the injured.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Wednesday that Iran is sending field hospital and medicine to Lebanon.

Head 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 that happened in the port of Beirut on Tuesday afternoon.

Diplomat says Iran to continue supporting Lebanon

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Tehran's Ambassador to Russia, Kazem Jalali, has said that Iran will continue supporting the Lebanese people and government.

In a meeting with Lebanese Ambassador to Russia Chawki Bou Nassar on Friday, Jalali offered the Lebanese people condolences over a massive blast in Beirut on Tuesday afternoon that killed at least 157 people and injured about 5,000.

The Lebanese diplomat praised Iran for its supports.

According to the authorities, the explosion was caused by 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate, confiscated by the customs services in 2014 and since stored in the port. The city has been declared a disaster site, with a state of emergency being imposed for two weeks.

In a phone conversation with Lebanese President Michel Aoun on Thursday, President Hassan Rouhani said that Iran is ready to send humanitarian aid to Lebanon.

Iran has already set up field hospitals in Beirut.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif had announced on Wednesday that Iran was sending field hospital and medicine to Lebanon.

"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.

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.

Rouhani phones Aoun, says Iran ready to provide any help to Lebanon

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — President Hassan Rouhani called Lebanese President Michel Aoun on Thursday to tell him that Iran is ready to provide medical, food and relief aid to the Lebanese following a devastating blast at Beirut port on Tuesday night that left at least 150 people killed, over 5000 injured and 250,000 homeless.

"Iran's foreign and health ministers, as well as the head of the Red Crescent, have been tasked with keeping in touch with their counterparts so that we can provide any assistance to Lebanon's people quickly," Rouhani stated.

Rouhani added the Iranians sympathize with the Lebanese people over the tragic incident.

Aoun praised the Iranian government and people's sympathy over the Beirut explosion.

"The Lebanese people have always appreciated the attention and love of the Iranian people and government," Aoun said. "Naturally, it is time-consuming to investigate all aspects of this incident and summarize the damages and assistance needed, but the history of relations and friendship between the two nations of Iran and Lebanon proves that whenever the Lebanese government and people need help, the Iranian nation and government have not withheld any help and we are deeply grateful for the fraternal and friendly feelings of the Iranians towards us," the presidential website quoted Aoun as saying.

The cause of the explosion is linked to a large stockpile of ammonium nitrate that was stored at the port for years.

The explosion, hitting with the force of a 3.5-magnitude earthquake, was the biggest ever seen in Beirut. The explosion was felt in the neighboring island of Cyprus, around 240 kilometers away — or about 150 miles — from Lebanon, according to the European-Mediterranean Seismological Centre (EMSC).

Iran urges UN to hold U.S. accountable for 'adventuristic' airliner harassment

1 → Iranian authorities also launched a probe after the plane returned from Beirut, he said, stressing that the results of both inquiries would be released "after the revision and finalization of the collected data and information."

"It is obvious that the act by the U.S. fighter jets is a flagrant violation of the aviation security and freedom of civil aviation reflected in the 1944 Chicago Convention on International Civil Aviation and its relevant annexes as well as an infringement of the 1971 Montreal Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Civil Aviation," Iran's UN envoy said



He further expressed Iran's "strongest objections against this violation of international law" and emphasized that the country would pursue the issue through relevant international bodies.

"It is incumbent upon the United Nations to reject such an unlawful and yet adventuristic act and hold the United States accountable for this irresponsible behavior," he added.

Following the incident, the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) said a single F-15 had made a "standard visual inspection" of the Iranian airliner at "a safe distance," a claim vehemently rejected by Tehran.

Iran's President Hassan Rouhani denounced the illegal U.S. maneuvering as an act of "aerial terrorism," calling on the UN Security Council, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and regional states to break their silence on Washington's "dangerous mischiefs."

He also referred to the U.S. downing of Iran Air Airbus A300B2 over the Persian Gulf on July 3, 1988, which killed 290 people, saying the Americans have a history of such acts.

(Source: Press TV)

Ayatollah Khamenei: Iran standing by the Lebanese in the painful tragedy

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — In a message late on Wednesday, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei expressed sympathy with the Lebanese people and said Iran stand by them in the painful tragedy resulting from a huge explosion at Beirut Port.

"We sympathize with dear Lebanese citizens and stand by them in the painful tragedy of the explosion occurred at Beirut Port which killed and injured many people and caused severe damages," Leader said in the message.

Ayatollah Khamenei added, "Patience in the face of this tragic incident will be a golden page of Lebanon's honors."

On Tuesday afternoon, a massive explosion rocked Beirut with the force of an earthquake followed by a shock wave that devastated much of the city leading to the death of at least 157 people and injury of more than 5,000 others.

■ 'Several books can be written about crimes of arrogant powers' armies'

In a tweet on the occasion of the 75th



"Patience in the face of this tragic incident will be a golden page of Lebanon's honors," the Leader says in message to the Lebanese.

Iran does not consider Hook's departure as game-changer: diplomat

By staff and agency

Alireza Miryousefi, head of media office of Iran's Mission to the UN, has said that top United States' envoy for Iran Brian Hook's departure from his post is not considered as game-changer by Iran.

Hook's departure "does not concern us and is not something we consider as a game-changer," he told Reuters in an interview published on Thursday.

Hook will be replaced by Elliott Abrams, who will combine the Iran special representative job with his current role as special envoy for Venezuela.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo confirmed Hook's departure, but did not give any reasons for his departure.

Hook was a central figure in implementing the Trump administration's "maximum pressure" policy on Iran. He has claimed the "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran had been "very successful".

Miryousefi told Reuters, "The so-called 'maximum pressure' campaign waged by the U.S. government has failed."

"Iran is not on its knees, and will not do so regardless of who is in charge of implementing this bankrupt policy," he said.

Trump quit the nuclear deal in May 2018 and introduced the harshest ever sanctions in history on Iran as part of his administration's "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran.

Many analysts and think tanks believe that the maximum pressure policy has failed.

Presidential chief of staff Mahmoud Vaezi has said that the Iranian people's determination has defeated the United States' policy of "maximum pressure".

"Tightening sanctions cannot impede Iran's scientific and defense progress. These advances will continue by the scientists and youths' endeavor. The policy of maximum pressure has failed against the Iranian people's determination and its continuation along with other wrong policies of Trump will lead to his defeat in presidential elections," he wrote in a tweet in Persian on August 2.

In a tweet in June, Vaezi said that the Donald Trump administration has no way but revising wrong policies and making up for past mistakes, especially economic and medical terrorism against Iran.

Vaezi, a former deputy foreign minister, predicted that Trump will lose the November election if he insists on his wrong policies.

"Continuation of practicing discriminatory policy and pushing knee on neck and tightening unilateral sanctions and health and economic terrorism against the Iranian people will not end in Trump's victory in elections, and will just make this administration more isolated. The United States has no way but revising wrong policies and making up for the past," Vaezi tweeted.

U.S. Democratic Rep. Adam Schiff said in May that Trump's policy of maximum pressure against Iran is a "failed policy".

"No amount of spin can save this disastrously failed policy," he said in a tweet.

In an article titled "The Total Destruction of U.S. Foreign Policy Under Trump," Wendy Sherman, the former undersecretary of state for political affairs who led the U.S. negotiating



team that concluded the Iran nuclear agreement, has described Trump's "maximum pressure" campaign against Tehran as an instance of his "painful" and "costly" foreign policy failures.

"Trump's approach to Iran is another painful and costly example. Over three years after the Trump administration withdrew from the nuclear deal, Iran has more highly enriched uranium more operating nuclear facilities, more sophisticated technology," she wrote in her article published by The Foreign Policy magazine on July 31.

"U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Iran envoy Brian Hook advertise this as a campaign of 'maximum pressure,' but their ultimate objective—which they insist is not regime change—remains a mystery," she added.

Why Imran Khan didn't make it



"Messages have been exchanged between Iran and Saudi Arabia, especially after the Aramco attacks, which crippled the Saudi oil exports," said Mousavi.

According to Mousavi, in the aftermath of the Aramco attacks, the Saudis felt that they are in a weak position, and that they embraced new approach toward Iran to temporarily reduce tensions, because they have come under huge pressure from the Yemeni Ansarollah.

The former diplomat also said that in addition to Imran Khan, other regional leaders including Iraq's former and current prime ministers as well as the emir of Kuwait have made efforts to mediate between Iran and Saudi Arabia, but the Saudis' unwillingness to comprehensively settle their disagreements with Iran led to the failure of all diplomatic overtures, including the ones by Prime Minister Khan.

In his interview with al-Jazeera, Khan said

that his mediation efforts didn't stop, and he is making progress in this regard. Whether the Pakistani prime minister succeeds in his mediation efforts remains an open question.

Some analysts believe that mediation efforts may fail because the U.S. and its allies are exploiting these efforts to portray Iran as a rogue state that reject diplomacy and political solutions.

As the tensions soared between Iran and the U.S. over the past few years, many leaders around the world, including Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahadi, and French President Emanuel Macron made efforts to deescalate the tensions by offering diplomatic overtures. While Iran has appreciated the diplomatic overtures, the U.S. has been seeking to portray Iran as a country that isn't responding to diplomacy with diplomacy.

U.S. President Donald Trump asked the Japanese prime minister to mediate between Tehran and Washington in June 2019, and even tasked him with delivering a message to Iran's leadership. Abe paid a visit to Iran on June 12 and called for peace in the region. However, the Abe visit was overshadowed by a fresh round of U.S. sanctions on Iran's petrochemicals, a move that destroyed any hope of diplomatic breakthrough between Iran and the U.S. Nearly five days before Abe began his visit to Tehran, the U.S. Treasury Department hit Iran's Persian Gulf Petrochemical Industries

Company (PGPIC) with economic sanctions due to its alleged ties with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Apparently, the sanctions have been designed by certain elements within the Trump administration to destroy the Japanese prime minister's mediation efforts, because Iran had already announced that it would never negotiate with the U.S. under the pressure.

Brian Hook, the former U.S. special representative for Iran and senior policy advisor to the secretary of state has claimed on many occasions that Iran should meet diplomacy with diplomacy.

In a telephone call from Muscat with reporters on June 24, Hook said, "I also made clear in bilateral talks, I conveyed our seriousness to negotiate a comprehensive deal with Iran when the time is right. We have kept our maximum pressure campaign firmly within the limits of diplomatic and economic pressure. Iran has repeatedly rejected diplomacy. It has responded to diplomatic overtures by Japanese Prime Minister Abe with violence and terror. It is time for Iran to meet diplomacy with diplomacy."

Analysts and politicians agree that the White House is seeking submission and not dialogue with Iran. It is because of such policy approach that mediation efforts by Pakistan and other friendly states have not produced dialogue between Tehran and Riyadh.

Leader's aide: Iran always standing by, supporting Lebanon

TEHRAN (FNA) — Supreme Leader's top adviser for international affairs Ali Akbar Velayati Ali Akbar Velayati expressed sympathy with the Lebanese people, government and Hezbollah Leader Seyed Hassan Nasrallah over the huge explosion in Beirut, reiterating that Iran will never leave the brotherly country alone.

Velayati, in a message on Thursday, offered his commiseration with the Lebanese government, people and Seyed Hassan Nasrallah over the Tuesday tragic blast in Beirut, and underlined Iran's permanent support and solidarity with the beleaguered country.

"The tragic incident in Beirut which killed and injured a number of dear Lebanese people, has saddened the Iranian nation," he said.

Lebanon is always steadfast, he said,

adding, "As always the Islamic Republic of Iran will support Lebanon and stand by its government and people."

A massive explosion rocked the Lebanese capital of Beirut on Tuesday, killing at least 157 people, wounding over 5,000 more, and smashing a vast area.

Terrifying footage showed a huge mushroom cloud of fire and smoke covering much of Beirut's port area, blowing out windows and destroying buildings in the neighborhood, as a warehouse at the Beirut docks caught fire on Tuesday afternoon.

Photos on social media showed many buildings in the area damaged or destroyed, leaving residents covered in glass and blood.

Several smaller explosions were heard before the bigger one occurred and turned the

city's streets into a debris-strewn wasteland.

In addition to local authorities, more than 30 Red Cross teams are responding at the scene of the blast.

Health Minister Hamad Hassan blamed the explosion on a fireworks accident, ordering all hospitals in Beirut to prepare for the victims of the incident.

Head of the Lebanese Red Cross George Kettaneh also stated that hundreds of injured people were taken to hospital for treatment, while some still remain trapped in their homes.

Hotel Dieu Hospital in Beirut reported it was treating more than 500 injuries and was not able to receive more. Tens of injured needed operations, the hospital said appealing for blood donations. Rizq Hospital also said that it has admitted 400 wounded people.

The health ministry said all Beirut hospitals are overcrowded with those injured in the incident and can no more accommodate anyone.

Yet, the health minister told Lebanon's LBC News that hundreds are feared dead and thousands have been wounded in the blast. He added that the death toll now stands at over 157.

The Lebanese Red Cross also declared that over 5,000 people have been wounded in the incident, while the numbers are still expected to rise. It added that over 157 dead bodies have been collected from the scene of the incident so far.

Beirut Governor Marwan Abboud called it a "national catastrophe" and Prime Minister Hassan Diab declared a day of mourning.

UN set to roundly reject U.S. resolution on Iran: diplomats

POLITICAL DESK **TEHRAN** — The United Nations Security Council is set to roundly reject a U.S. resolution to extend an arms embargo on Iran, according to UN diplomats.

According to the diplomats, opposition to the resolution's current form is so widespread that Washington is unlikely to secure the nine votes required to force Moscow and Beijing to wield their vetoes.

"The resolution takes a maximalist position on Iran," one diplomat told AFP.

Another said the draft "goes beyond the current provisions" of the ban on conventional weapons sales to Iran that ends on October 18.

The United States has stepped up calls for an extension of UN arms embargo on Iran since April.

Under UN Security Council Resolution 2231, which endorsed the 2015 Iran nuclear deal (JCPOA), arms embargo against Iran expires in October.

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

U.S. President Donald Trump pulled America out of the nuclear deal in May 2018 and



slapped unilateral sanctions on Iran under a campaign of "maximum pressure".

The U.S. resolution, seen by AFP, effectively calls for an indefinite extension of the embargo on Iran and uses hawkish rhetoric.

"The focus should remain on preserving

the JCPOA," a third diplomat told AFP.

"It is the only way to provide assurances about the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program. No credible alternative to this instrument has ever been proposed since the U.S. withdrawal," the diplomats added.

"This is a car crash that everyone knows is going to happen," New York-based UN expert Richard Gowan told AFP, describing the U.S. draft as a "poison pill of a text".

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced on Wednesday that the U.S. would put forward its anti-Iran resolution despite ardent opposition from Russia and China.

Former U.S. special representative for Iran Brian Hook, who resigned this week, had asserted during his tenure that if the U.S. resolution failed, the administration would pursue another approach to preserving the Iran arms ban.

The U.S. is expected to argue that it legally remains a "participant state" in the nuclear accord only to trigger the so-called snapback that would restore all UN sanctions, which had been in place against Iran prior to the deal's inking.

However, China, Russia and even European allies of the U.S. have made it clear that they believe the U.S. has no legal standing to invoke the snapback provision.

Iran has repeatedly said that the United States, through its unilateral pullout from the deal, forfeited all rights to have a say in the agreement.

Americans have bitten off more than they could chew, Tehran says

POLITICAL DESK **TEHRAN** — The Americans have bitten off more than they could chew when it comes to their Iran policy, Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said on Saturday.

"No difference between John Bolton, Brian Hook or Elliott Abrams; when it comes to the US #Iran policy, American officials have been bitten off more than they could chew," Mousavi wrote in a tweet.

"Same applies to Mike Pompeo, Donald Trump AND their successors," he added.

It came after the Trump administration's lead diplomat on Iran, Brian Hook, announced his resignation.

Hook will be replaced by Elliott Abrams, who will combine the Iran special representative job with his current role as special envoy for Venezuela.

Hook, until now a rare survivor at the top levels of the State Department in the maelstrom of the Trump era, did not give a reason for his resignation, claiming the "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran had been "very successful".

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo confirmed Hook's departure and referred to him as "a trusted adviser to me and a good friend", but did not give any reasons for his departure.

Pompeo added that Hook had "achieved historic results countering the Iranian regime".

Hook was a central figure in implementing the Trump administration's "maximum pressure" policy on Iran, which



followed Trump's withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal in May 2018.

■ **'Pompeo may have to pack his bags too'**

Ali Shamkhani, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), also responded to the news, saying Pompeo may have to face the same fate.

"The goal of #MaximumPressure strategy was reduced from regime change to prevent #Iran from becoming rich!" Shamkhani tweeted earlier on Saturday.

He added, "Brian, like John, failed and left the White House. Maybe Mike will have to pack his bags as well, before Donald leaves."

Hook's departure comes while the United States is ramping up efforts to push for the extension of a UN arms embargo on Iran.

Bloomberg News reported on Wednesday that the United States has circulated a new resolution to the UN Security Council members, 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.

The United States has stepped up calls for the extension 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.

Last month, 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.

Advisor censures Macron's intervention in Lebanese affairs

POLITICAL DESK **TEHRAN** — Hossein Amir Abdollahian, a senior foreign policy advisor to the Iranian Parliament speaker, has criticized French President Emmanuel Macron for interfering in the internal affairs of Lebanon, saying Lebanon can maintain its national unity and independence through unity.

"Pres. @EmmanuelMacron's warning in Flag of Lebanon wasn't a heal to the wound of #BeirutBlast," Amir Abdollahian said via Twitter on Saturday.

He added, "W/ united ethnicities, faiths & movements, Lebanon who has stood firmly agnst Israel can maintain national unity, independence. Flag of Lebanon needs assistance & solidarity, not intervention by

external parties."

On Tuesday evening, a sequence of two explosions occurred at the port of the city of Beirut, the capital of Lebanon. The extremely powerful second blast resulted in at least 157 deaths, some 5,000 injuries, and an estimated 300,000 people made homeless.

Macron appeared at the site of the explosion on Thursday, and called for an international inquiry into the devastating blast that generated a seismic shock felt across the region.

Lebanon's Arabic-language al-Mayadeen television news network said Macron, in a meeting with President Michel Aoun, threatened Lebanese leaders with sanctions if they do not submit to reforms and



a "political change".

Macron also called for a "new political pact" among Lebanese political factions and said he had proposed a roadmap to the Lebanese authorities to unlock billions of dollars in funds from the international community,

and that he would return to Lebanon in September to follow up.

"I will be back on September 1, and if they can't do it, I'll take my political responsibility" toward Lebanon, said Macron.

On Friday, Lebanese President Michel Aoun said no colonial power can return to Lebanon.

"Lebanese sovereignty will not be harmed under my watch," Aoun told reporters, rejecting the call for an international investigation. Aoun said the blast might have been triggered by a foreign act.

"The cause has not been determined yet. There is a possibility of external interference through a rocket or bomb or other act," he said.

Iran to stand by Lebanese people, government: Vaezi

POLITICAL DESK **TEHRAN** — Iran's presidential chief of staff Mahmoud Vaezi has underscored Iran's support for Lebanon, saying Tehran is standing by the Lebanese people and government through their hardships.

In a tweet on Friday, Vaezi pointed out that in the aftermath of the massive explosion in Beirut, the Iranian people and government are in solidarity with the Lebanese, and will spare no efforts in helping Lebanon.

The powerful explosion on Tuesday took place at port warehouses storing highly explosive material, specifically ammonium nitrate, commonly used in both fertilizer and bombs, killing 157 people and injuring a whopping 5,000 others.

On Thursday, President Hassan Rouhani assured his Lebanese counterpart Michel Aoun, in a telephone conversation, that the Iranian nation and government would spare

no effort in helping the Lebanese government and nation in the aftermath of the catastrophe.

Secretary General of Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance movement Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah has urged an impartial investigation into the blast that rocked Beirut on Tuesday afternoon.

Speaking in a televised speech on Friday, Nasrallah said those responsible for the deadly disaster had to be held to account regardless of their affiliations.

Describing the blast as a massive humanitarian and national catastrophe, the Hezbollah chief called on all the Lebanese to unite to overcome the ordeal.

He also dismissed as "injustice" media speculation in the early hours of the tragedy that Hezbollah had stored missiles in the port, adding that those accusations aimed to incite the Lebanese people against the resistance group.



Nasrallah said those media outlets that spread the allegations had had political motivations and sought to incite a civil war in Lebanon.

Israel's sympathy for Beirut incident hypocritical, Iran says

POLITICAL DESK **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi on Thursday said that expression of sympathy by certain countries, including the Israeli regime, for the Beirut incident is "hypocritical and superficial", the Mehr news agency reported.

Mousavi, who was on a visit to Urmia, said that Iran has so far sent two humanitarian aid convoys to Lebanon, and its friendly assistance will continue.

"After this incident, some humanitarian aid, especially from some Islamic countries, have been sent to Beirut. In the meantime, we witnessed the expression of sympathy of some countries, including the Israeli regime and the countries that have imposed sanctions on Lebanon, which is hypocritical," the Foreign Ministry spokesman said.

He added some Western and European countries, which have imposed sanctions on Lebanon, offered condolences which shows they are not honest.

Mousavi announced that Iran is read to help reconstruct the port of Beirut, which was devastated in the huge explosion on Tuesday afternoon.

"We stand with the Lebanese government and people."

MP Masoud Pezeshkian tests positive for coronavirus

POLITICAL DESK **TEHRAN** — Masoud Pezeshkian, a renowned lawmaker who represents Tabriz, Osku and Azarshahr, posted on his Instagram page on Saturday that he is infected with the coronavirus.

"Following certain symptoms and testing, the test was positive and I have contracted the virus. I am in quarantine at home and thanks to God my general physical condition is well," he posted.



Pezeshkian was minister of health between 2001 and 2005.

He was the chancellor of Tabriz University of Medical Sciences for 7 years. He is a heart surgeon and an academic member of Tabriz University of Medical Sciences at the present time.

Pezeshkian was deputy parliament speaker in the previous parliament.

Google deletes over a dozen YouTube accounts linked to Iran

TEHRAN (Press TV) — U.S. tech company Google has taken down more than a dozen accounts on its subsidiary online video-sharing platform YouTube, claiming they had been part of "coordinated influence operations" from Iran.

In a report for the second quarter of 2020 that was released earlier this week, Google announced that it terminated 16 YouTube accounts in April that were allegedly linked to International Union of Virtual Media (IUV) internet group.

The accounts in question purportedly took part in "coordinated influence operations," operating in several languages, including English, Arabic, Persian, French, Spanish and Russian.

The Google report further said IUV posted content in Arabic related to the U.S. government's response to COVID-19 and content about Saudi-Arabian relations.

The United States has a history of calling on social media companies Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to block Iranian accounts in particular as part of its so-called "maximum pressure" campaign against the Islamic Republic.

In April, Facebook closed accounts it said were tied to Iran and seeking to influence the public in multiple countries.

Facebook later said in early June that it had started to label Iran's English-language Press TV television news network as well as Russia's Sputnik and China's Xinhua news agencies as "state-media", adding it would later block them from running advertisements in the United States.

The social media company said then it would initially apply the label to about 200 pages belonging to these outlets.

The labels, Facebook said, would immediately start appearing on pages globally, as well as on news-feed posts within the United States.

The decision to label the media outlets came after they published in-depth articles and videos about a series of protests across the United States following the killing of unarmed black man George Floyd at the hands of a white Minneapolis police officer.

It also came ahead of the November presidential election in the U.S., and as President Donald Trump is in a tight spot amid the coronavirus crisis.

Social media activists maintain that Facebook has labeled the Iranian, Chinese and Russian media outlets under pressure from the U.S. government, which has resorted to sanctions a weapon of choice.

While banning the Iranian, Chinese and Russian networks for being "state-media", the company has said it will not label any U.S. government-run outlets, including Arabic-language Alhurra television news network, because they allegedly had editorial independence.

In 2018, Facebook targeted hundreds of accounts allegedly tied to Iran and Russia under the pretext of fighting what it calls "misinformation" campaigns. Among the accounts was one belonging to the Quest for Truth (Q4T) Iranian media organization, which promotes Islamic values.

Facebook is also known for blocking pages critical of the Israeli regime.

Twitter and YouTube have also conducted specific bans targeting accounts allegedly linked to countries that are critical of the policies of Western governments, such as accounts in Iran, Russia, and Venezuela.

Speaker calls for steps to realize unity among Muslim leaders



TEHRAN (MNA) — The Iranian parliament speaker has congratulated Eid al-Ghadir to the political and religious figures of the Shia world.

In messages to political and religious figures of the Shia world on Saturday, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf congratulated the arrival of Eid al-Ghadir.

The speaker added, "In the current critical situation of the Islamic world and in the shadow of adhering to the Holy Quran and the Ahl al-Bayt (PBUH), it is necessary to take and realize our strong and unifying steps with unity and practice of the teachings of pure Islam."

Saturday marked Eid al-Ghadir, which is the day when the Prophet of Islam appointed Ali ibn Abi Talib (PBUM) -- the first Shia Imam -- as his successor and Muslims' next leader.

Prophet Mohammad announced his appointment on the way back from his last Hajj pilgrimage fourteen centuries ago. Shia Muslims celebrate this auspicious occasion around the world.

Eid al-Ghadir comes eight days after another great festivity, called Eid al-Adha or the Feast of Sacrifice -- an important festival on the Islamic calendar that marks the climax of the annual hajj pilgrimage in Mecca and Medina.

Govt. raises \$3.6b by selling stocks

1 → “Oil sales have dropped dramatically this year so that only six percent of our expected oil revenues have been realized so far,” Nobakht said.

He further underlined the effectiveness and significance of other sources of income like taxes, customs revenues and capital market incomes in the current situation, and said: “So far, 75 percent of tax revenues for the current [Iranian calendar] year have been realized, 20 percent more than last year's same period.”



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

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

Nobakht has previously said that oil sales will account for just seven percent of the country's income in the current Iranian calendar year and the revenues gained from elimination of hidden energy subsidies, selling government bonds and shares as well as increased tax incomes will replace oil revenues.

U.S. is becoming the biggest uncertainty in future global economic growth

Throughout the second half of the year, the U.S. economy is expected to be operating alongside the nation's wide-spread epidemic, racial tensions and domestic factionalism. Potential social risks brought about by the three issues will further hinder the economic recovery of the U.S., and the American economy may become the biggest uncertainty in global economic growth.

As the world's largest economic entity, the U.S.' recession will directly drive down the growth rate of the global economy. Since the U.S. has maintained close economic and trade ties with most of the major economies around the world, its recession will lead to a drastic plunge in global demand, further causing contractions in trade and investment of those economies.

The U.S. has rolled out a series of policies to monetize financial deficit in a bid to stimulate economic growth amid the fallout of the pandemic, which has aggravated financial risks in the country, and cast a shadow over further investments.

The ongoing China-U.S. trade disputes may even expand to financial areas. Though the fallout from a possible financial dispute remains unclear, it could become another risk for the global economy during the second half of the year.

The U.S.' failure to handle the coronavirus may even prolong the pandemic, which has already become the most critical variable in the global economy. Instead of flattening the curve, the U.S., during the past few months, has been speeding along a path to higher numbers of infections and is reported to have over 25 percent of the world's total confirmed cases.



Meanwhile, the horrid death of George Floyd triggered massive anti-discrimination demonstrations in the U.S., which are adding pressure to epidemic prevention.

The country is also struggling with contradictions between the need to quarantine and the desire to reopen the economy. Viruses don't have a nationality, and if the rate of infections in the U.S. continues to rise, the vulnerable global economy will surely take yet another hit.

The U.S. economy relies heavily on consumption. It is also the world's largest consumer of finished products. With COVID-19 ripping across the U.S., skyrocketing unemployment has resulted in sliding consumption which in turn is causing a decline in exports from its trade partners.

The U.S.' huge debt and expanding stock market bubbles have damaged the confidence of global investors. In order to tackle the fallout of the pandemic, the U.S. government has launched massive stimulus packages and the U.S. Federal Reserve has pledged unlimited quantitative easing, drastically accelerating the U.S.' deficit.

The massive QE could ease a liquidity crisis and pressure on small businesses in the short term, however, it won't boost the economy's internal growth. Instead, it could create further risks in financial markets.

According to World Bank data, U.S. GDP reached \$21.43 trillion in 2019, accounting for 24.42 percent of the world's GDP. Based on the IMF current estimates, the U.S. economy is expected to contract 8 percent this year, meaning it could cause global growth to decline about 2 percentage point.

Although market institutions have forecast a potential recovery of the U.S. economy in the second half of the year following its drastic plunge of 32.9 percent in the second quarter, those forecasts were based on a better containment of the virus in the US. The current rate of infections is not at all reassuring.

Azerbaijan seeking Iranian labor, social welfare expertise

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** – Azerbaijan's labor minister Sahel Babayev has expressed his country's willingness to benefit from Iran's experience in the fields of labor and social welfare.

During an online meeting with Iranian labor minister Mohammad Shariatmadari on Thurs-

day, the Azeri official called for the implementation of a previously signed memorandum of understanding between the two countries.

The Iranian minister, for his part, underlined the need for exchanging experiences in the fields of labor and social welfare between the two neighbors.

Afghanistan transits 15,000 tons of goods through Iran's Dogharoon border

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** – Afghanistan has transited over 15,000 tons of commodities through Dogharoon border with Iran in the first four months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-July 21).

The mentioned commodities have been sent to their destination markets through Iran's southern ports or Western land borders, IRNA quoted Hamid Mohammadifaz, an official with the Iranian Road Maintenance and Transportation Organization (RMTO), as saying on Friday.

"These goods were imported by 610 trucks, of which 34 truckloads were transited to Turkey from the western borders and the rest went to the southern ports of the country," the official said.

"While last year only 11 trucks transited cargoes from Dogharoon border crossing to the southeastern Chabahar port, this year, 256 trucks have transited Afghanistan's goods



through this route," he noted.

Dogharoon is one of Iran's top border customs in terms of employing modern management technologies, electronic infrastructures, and computerization which is located on the Iran-Afghanistan border in the northeastern Khorasan Razavi Province.

Trade through the border, which was closed temporarily due to the coronavirus pandemic, was officially resumed in June.

Transit cooperation between Iran and Afghanistan has witnessed considerable growth in recent years despite the restrictions caused by the U.S. sanctions and also the outbreak of the coronavirus.

Earlier this week, Afghanistan's private sector signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to transit goods via Iran's southeastern Chabahar Port.

Iran auto industry begins to absorb shock of U.S. sanctions

TEHRAN (PressTV) — Managing director of Iran Khodro (IKCO), the largest car maker in West Asia, says Iran is now producing more than 50 auto parts which were imported.

"With the measures we have taken in the field of domestic production and self-sufficiency... we have been able to reduce more than \$50 million in production costs and planned for another \$300 million in reduced costs," Farshad Moqimi said.

When the U.S. unleashed its most aggressive sanctions ever on Iran in August 2018, it reserved the first hammer blow for the car industry to hurt as many Iranians as possible.

The auto industry is a key driver of Iran's economy, the operation and prosperity of which keeps more than 60 other industries moving. The industry is only second to its energy sector, accounting for some 10 percent of the gross domestic product and 4 percent of employment.

"When the United States has targeted the automotive industry and started its sanctions from this sector, we must work together to maintain the flag of production in this industry flying high," Moqimi said.

Iran began manufacturing its own car in 1967, churning out the box-shaped Paykan which was a replica of the British-made Hillman Hunter. It also imported mainly from Western Europe and the United States, which accounted for approximately 40 percent of Iran's market.

However, the baby boom during the first

decade of the Islamic Revolution of 1979 generated a young population which was almost 75 percent urbanized by 2017 and hungry for cars.

The post-war governments decided to give a new lease of life to the auto industry, because Iran could not afford to drop automotive sector altogether. The sector is so massive with its solid infrastructure in production, which holds both economic and political importance to the government.

However, they opted to stop manufacturing and start assembling instead, because they thought Iran could not compete with strong international carmakers.

International players, meanwhile, showed interest in the Iranian market and policies were put into place that allowed car imports without technology transfer.

France, a partner of Iran in the automotive industry for a long time, entered into new joint ventures with the two largest local manufacturers IKCO and Saipa.

To meet the demand, automotive production rose by more than 18 percent in 2017. Iran produced 1.4 million cars and commercial vehicles, ranking sixteenth in the world.

However, foreign companies that made cars in Iran — including France's Peugeot and Renault — decided to leave after U.S. President Donald Trump announced new sanctions on the Islamic Republic.

Renewed sanctions led to delays in car

deliveries and a shortage of parts and by June 2018, a month after sanctions were renewed, car production dropped by 29 percent compared with the same month a year earlier.

Iran's union leaders warned then that up to 450,000 jobs in the auto parts industry were on the line, prompting the defense ministry to waste into the quandary.

The ministry is now helping the Iranian carmakers manufacture hi-tech auto parts which Iran used to import.

Iran's auto industry has emerged as one of the frontlines in a raging "economic war" on the country which is lining up its defense ministry to protect the sector from US sanctions.

Cars produced in Iran under license from foreign manufacturers rely on critical imports of parts ranging from airbags, pistons and cylinder heads to computer chips including engine control units and sensors.

Moqimi said IKCO has produced more than 172,000 cars since the beginning of the Persian year in March, up 36 percent against the period last year - meaning Iranian carmakers begin to find solutions to their parts bottleneck.

"A 30 percent increase in car delivery to customers is also one of Iran Khodro's recent achievements," he said, adding 51,000 cars among more than 200,000 units not delivered on time have been released to their owners. Iran has gone through waves of sanctions



since the Islamic Revolution that have spilled over into daily life in the country of about 85 million.

On the flip side, the U.S. pressures have been a boon to domestic manufacturers who have thrived under the new situation through mobilizing their resources to fulfill some of the tasks which were an exclusive competence of foreign companies.

More than 100,000 people are employed by IKCO and Saipa, while another 700,000 Iranians work in industries related to car manufacturing.

There are around 13 public and private auto manufacturers in Iran, with IKCO and Saipa accounting for about 94 percent of the domestic production.

Moqimi said Iran is now self-sufficient in some auto parts, "but we have a problem in supplying raw materials, and have to supply them from foreign sources," adding domestic manufacturing of the raw materials should also be on the agenda.

Will China and U.S. join efforts to restore global economy?

China and the United States should stand up for other countries and lead the fight against the coronavirus pandemic crisis. According to the IMF, developed countries are allocating up to 20 percent of GDP to overcome the crisis, while developing countries can afford to allocate no more than 5 percent of GDP.

The IMF report says that 45 low-income countries have already applied for emergency financial assistance to combat the pandemic, Sputnik reported.

According to experts cited by CNBC, the current crisis has hit almost all countries evenly, as the pandemic is equally dangerous to everyone. However, every country has different capabilities to combat the pandemic crisis.

According to Raghuram Rajan, a professor at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business, developed countries have more financial opportunities. They have allocated up to 20 percent of their GDP as fiscal and monetary stimulus measures to support the economy and financial stability. Developing countries cannot afford this.

At best, they allocate 5 percent of their GDP, but often emergency measures to support their economies don't exceed 1 percent of GDP. Professor Rajan warned that powerful nations haven't paid enough attention to emerging economies. With limited fiscal resources, they may not be able to deal with the current situation on their own. Many countries are at risk of their debt increasing drastically in relation to their GDP, which will create another threat to financial stability amid the already dire situation caused by the coronavirus crisis.

The Chinese and U.S. national flags are seen before the start of a Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) conference in Beijing of the UN Security Council's five permanent members (P5) China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, China, Wednesday, Jan. 30, 2019.

The IMF statistics confirm the fears of uncontrolled debt growth in developing countries. According to the June World Economic Outlook report, 45 countries have already applied to the IMF for emergency financial assistance. According to the IMF's calculations, these countries' level of public debt for the 2020-2021 fiscal year will amount to 48 percent of GDP. At the same time, according to numerous economic studies, when the public debt level reaches 60 percent of GDP, the average annual economic growth rate decreases by 2 percent.



Singapore's Senior Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam said that much of the world's GDP growth — about two-thirds of the global growth — comes from developing countries.

According to him, the world is now facing a real threat of these countries transforming from developing to degrading. In this case, the entire world's economic growth is at risk. In turn, Professor Rajan believes that the United States and China should start playing a constructive and leading role in supporting developing countries for the common good. He believes that it won't be possible to solve global growth problems without help from these major powers.

Indeed, both China and the United States have a major impact on the economy and development of the rest of the world. Therefore, the situation in other countries directly depends on their relationship.

China-US cooperation will benefit everyone. Unfortunately, the relations between the world's two largest economies have entered a downward spiral, Jiang Yuechun, director of the Department for World Economy and Development Studies at the China Institute of International Studies, said.

"China and the United States play an important role in the global economy. Cooperation between the two parties would contribute to economic prosperity and stability in the world. On the contrary, competition between the two will undoubtedly have a negative impact on global development".

"In the current context, be it economics, politics, or fighting against the epidemic, the U.S. is taking an extremely negative approach towards China. I believe that such a stance on the part of the United States only aggravates the already difficult global situation".

According to the expert, China is trying to play a constructive role to resolve the global crisis caused by the pandemic. However, the U.S.' failure to prevent the pandemic's spread threatens the American economy and, consequently, the development of not only the United States, but other countries as well.

"China's response to the epidemic was unprecedentedly tough, and it has brought clear positive results. Moreover, China has made maximum efforts to provide assistance to other countries, whether it is controlling the epidemic spread, or treating patients and providing medical supplies. However, it's a pity that the United States has failed to cope with the epidemic. The number of cases in the U.S. is growing, which threatens not only the United States' return to normal life but also the recovery of the American economy".

"On top of that, the U.S. injects negativity to international cooperation. Washington refused to support the WHO at the most crucial moment when the whole world is fighting the epidemic. Neither do we see whether the U.S. made any right steps regarding cooperation with other countries. The United States is a big player in the international community, and it must take effective action at a time when the world is facing a crisis".

The experts interviewed by CNBC count on the upcoming U.S. elections. They believe that November will be a turning point when the two states will again be able to establish a dialogue.

However, the emerging bipartisan consensus in the United States on the need for a tougher approach to China raises doubt as to whether reshuffling in Washington can bring the two countries' relations out of the downtrend. Both Biden and Trump are using rhetoric of a Chinese threat in their election campaigns to justify any of their actions and the corresponding failures in the economy, social sphere, and politics.

However, it's important to understand that shifting responsibility won't contribute to the common cause of fighting the pandemic and recovering the global economy. This is what experts are talking about. We need to put aside mutual claims, at least for a while, and start working together.

Major petchem projects worth \$1.6b inaugurated

ENERGY **TEHRAN** – Three major petrochemical projects with a total investment of \$1.6 billion were inaugurated in southern Bushehr and western Lorestan provinces on Thursday.

President Hassan Rouhani and Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh inaugurated the projects via video conferencing, Shana reported.

“Today we are witnessing the transformation of the petrochemical industry. Today’s inaugurations were doubly gratifying because when we want to distance ourselves from crude oil exports and turn them into valuable products, one of the ways is to develop and transform the petrochemical industry,” Rouhani said.

He stated that 17 petrochemical projects will be inaugurated in the country this calendar year (started on March 20), and noted: “These projects are for setting the ground for and materializing the third leap of the petrochemical industry, which will take place in [the Iranian calendar year] 1404 (2025).”

“The value of our petrochemical production which stood at \$1b has now reached \$11b,



and again it will increase from \$11b to \$25b, and from \$25b to \$37b; this means a great

development in the country’s petrochemical industry,” he added.

Addressing the ceremony, Zanganeh also stressed that the total value of Iran’s petrochemical products will reach \$37 billion by March 2024.

The oil minister noted that 27 petrochemical projects worth \$17 billion will go operational across the country by March 21, 2021.

By the end of the year, the country’s petrochemical production capacity will be increased by 25 million tons per year, he stated.

“One of the most important tasks of the petrochemical industry is to prevent the sale of raw materials by completing the value chain in the oil and gas industry, as well as supplying downstream feedstock for the domestic industries while preventing more than \$5 billion in foreign currency from leaving the country annually.”

Petrochemical industry plays a crucial role in Iran’s non-oil economy, as the petrochemical export is the second-largest source of revenue for the country after crude oil. Petrochemical exports already constitute nearly 33 percent of the country’s non-oil exports.

Thermal power holds 92% share of Iran’s electricity output

ENERGY **TEHRAN** – Thermal power plants are generating nearly 92 percent of Iran’s needed electricity, said Mohsen Tarzatab, head of Thermal Power Plants Holding Company (TPPH).

Only eight percent of the country’s electricity need is supplied by hydropower and renewable power plants, IRNA reported on Friday, quoting Tarzatab as saying.

According to the official, Iran’s current electricity is supplied by thermal power plants, including steam, gas and combined cycle power plants, as well as non-thermal power plants, including hydropower, renewable energy, diesel, small-scale and nuclear power plants.

He put the total installed capacity of the country’s power plants at 83,264 megawatts (MW), of which the share of steam, gas, combined cycle, hydroelectric, and renewable power plants stands at 15,800 MW, 25,400 MW, 25,790 MW, 12,000 MW, and 825 MW respectively.

There are 84 power plants with 544 thermal electricity generation units across the country, over two-thirds of which are owned and operated by the country’s private sector.

According to the Iranian Energy Ministry, the power generation capacity of Iran’s thermal power plants has increased by 9,000 megawatts (9GW) over the past six years.



Electricity consumption falls as weather cools down

ENERGY **TEHRAN** – Daily electricity consumption in Iran retreated from the peak high of 58 gigawatts in the week ended on August 7 to settle around 57 GW, data released by Iran Grid Management Company (IGMC) showed.

According to the IGMC data, the country’s daily electricity consumption which had already declined from the peak 58 GW to settle at 57.14 GW on Saturday (August 1), fell even further to 53.976 GW on Thursday (August 6), Tasnim reported.

Iran’s daily electricity consumption exceeded 58,000 megawatts (58 GW) in late July to register the highest power



consumption recorded in the history of the country’s electricity industry.

Based on the data released by Iran’s Power Generation, Transmission and

Distribution Management Company, known as TAVANIR, the recorded figure was 333 MW more than the last year’s peak consumption.

With the beginning of the hot season in Iran, the electricity consumption increased unprecedentedly so that several new records were registered for the power consumption since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21).

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

In this regard, the Energy Ministry

has been following new strategies in recent years to manage the consumption and lessen the electricity losses in the national grid.

In late July, Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian said that his ministry was considering new incentive packages for low-consuming households and industrial electricity subscribers.

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

Iran eyes \$400m revenue by Kaveh petchem plant

TEHRAN (Shana) — The CEO of Kaveh Petrochemical Plant stated that the facility was built with \$950 million of investment, adding the project would generate \$400 million annually.

Speaking in a ceremony to launch the facility on Thursday (August 6), Ebrahim Asgarian noted that the facility is the world’s largest methanol producer with a daily production capacity of 7,000 tons of the item.

It is developed for production of 2.3 million tons of methanol, he said, adding the plant is built in 200 hectares of land which can be developed for 5 projects.

He added: About 1350 people are working in Kaveh Petrochemical Complex, 60% of which are local employees.

The CEO of Kaveh Petrochemical Plant considered a private jetty and utility as important features of this project, and said the design and construction of the plant’s

jetty took seven years, which has the capacity to berth ships with a capacity of 100,000 tons and its capacity can be increased to 8 million tons per year. In addition to the ability to load methanol by SPM method, this jetty has the ability to load other materials.

Asgarian continued: “Kaveh Petrochemical Plant has 9 storage tanks with a capacity of 420,000 tons of methanol, which is unique.”

Asia shrugs off OPEC supply rise as refiners grapple with crippled demand

Middle Eastern {West Asian} sour crude supply is expected to increase this month after OPEC+ members on July 15 agreed to pare back their production cut commitment. But Asian consumers, who under normal circumstances would have welcomed the move, have barely taken notice.

It remains to be seen where all this excess oil will eventually end up as Asian buyers grapple with crippling demand and have to tweak refining strategies to minimize losses.

S&P Global Platts Analytics in a recent note said that it sees Dated Brent struggling to remain above \$40/barrel over the next couple of months as supply is on the rise, but demand growth faces a slowdown on a worsening COVID-19 scenario.

The 23-country OPEC+ coalition enacted a 9.7 million bpd production cut accord in May in response to the coronavirus crisis, but rolled the deal back to 7.7 million bpd in August through to the end of the year. The coalition is betting on a pick-up in global fuel consumption and better preparedness by governments to prevent another spike in COVID-19 cases.

But in Asia, ample petroleum products supply amid deteriorating oil demand means that it could take at least several months to see a pickup in Asian refiners’ appetite for incremental crude oil supply, more so as some refiners are opting to import motor fuels instead of raising refinery runs.

“Asian refiners are seeing much worse margins compared to their peers in Europe or the US. Factors behind this include weakened

demand in the region as a result of COVID-19, a closed European gasoil arbitrage, diminished gasoline imports by Indonesia, plus strong exports from China and India,” Alex Yap, senior analyst with Platts Analytics said.

“Even with a tentative demand recovery, we expect pressure on margins to keep Asian refinery runs down by over 1 million bpd year on year through the third quarter 2020,” Yap said.

■ Low runs, more product imports

The lack of any significant recovery in demand for jet fuel, the product worst hit by the pandemic, has made it difficult for refiners to boost run rates.

Northeast Asian refiners in particular are determined not to abruptly boost crude imports and refinery run rates in coming months as fuel demand recovery remains fragile across Asia amid a resurgence in COVID-19 cases in some countries in the region.

South Korean refiners, who are typically active exporters of refined products, are focusing on maintaining a supply-demand balance and remain cautious about not over-committing to crude procurements, industry sources have said.

South Korea’s refined oil products demand in June dipped 0.3 percent from a year earlier to 2.4 million bpd, with a sharp decline in jet fuel consumption offsetting a recovery in auto fuel demand during the month, according to data from Korea National Oil Corp.

Reflecting the cautious sentiment, refiner SK Energy plans to run its refineries at 80



percent-85 percent rates in the third quarter, higher than the record-low 74 percent in the second quarter but well below the first-quarter run rate of 92 percent.

Similarly, Japanese refiners are keeping a close eye on crude procurements in the coming months, amid rising concerns over the growing number of new COVID-19 cases, according to company sources.

Japanese refiners have been opting to import oil products such as gasoline, demand for which has seen some recovery, while maintaining their refinery run rates relatively low at about 60 percent of installed capacity of 3.52 million bpd, leaving their crude requirements at a minimum.

“Production yield for jet fuel and kerosene distillates are usually around 20 percent [of total production],” Petroleum Association of Japan President Tsutomu Sugimori said on July 17. Sugimori, who is also chairman of ENEOS Holdings, the parent of the largest Japanese refiner ENEOS, said that ENEOS

has cut its distillate yields by half and said other refiners were doing the same. Japanese refiners are also opting to import refined products instead of raising run rates.

ENEOS, which is not typically an active importer of refined products, has stepped up its imports of gasoline and gasoil in recent months instead of raising run rates because of recovery in the domestic motor fuels demand.

■ China, India may disappoint OPEC+

China and India have always been the most dependable and by far the biggest outlet for OPEC+ producers but Asia’s biggest oil consumers may also disappoint the suppliers in the second half of 2020.

India, one of the fastest growing oil markets in Asia in recent years, is expected to end 2020 with its oil demand slipping into the red, a trend not seen for nearly two decades. According to Platts Analytics, India’s oil demand is expected to be down 115,000 bpd, year on year in H2, and whole-year demand will be down by 405,000 bpd, year on year.

“India’s refinery runs in the second half of the year are expected to be 260,000 bpd lower, year on year, as refiners hold back from raising throughput,” said Lim Jit Yang, advisor for oil markets at Platts Analytics.

Total capacity utilization across all refineries in India had risen to 85 percent in June, from 77 percent in May, as retail fuel demand had started showing signs of revival with the easing of the lockdowns. But the trend is getting reversed again.

Lorestan catalyst unit to yield \$30m/y

TEHRAN (Shana) – The Managing Director of Bakhtar Petrochemical Holding Company said that the catalyst unit of Lorestan Petrochemical Plant would generate \$30 million annually.

Davood Reza Rabbani said on Thursday, August 6, that the unit was put into operation in a bid to render the country needless of importing petrochemical catalysts.

He stated that Lorestan Petrochemical Catalyst Unit had been

implemented with the technical knowledge of the Petrochemical Research and Technology Company, adding: “This holding has produced about 600,000 tons of items since 2018g by supplying catalyst for Kermanshah Petrochemical Plant.”

The CEO of Bakhtar Holding Company, stating that the advantage of Lorestan Petrochemical Catalyst Unit is that 50 percent of the facilities are related to the construction of the catalyst base, continued: “This is an exceptional situation that we are both producer and consumer of this catalyst. Even among international companies, it is also very rare for a company to be both a producer and a consumer of catalysts.”

Rabbani pointed out that Bakhtar Holding Company was implementing eight knowledge-based projects, six of which are being implemented in Lorestan. In addition to Lorestan Petrochemical Catalyst Unit, which opened today, “we have three projects for fixed-bed catalysts, which we hope to be complete by the end of the year.”



Saudi, Iraqi ministers discuss OPEC+ compliance, as Baghdad pledges catch-up oil cuts

Saudi Arabia is keeping the pressure on Iraq to adhere to its OPEC+ production cut commitments, amid signs it likely did not achieve full compliance with its quota yet again in July.

Iraq, the OPEC+ alliance’s third largest producer, has consistently struggled to make its full output reductions but has pledged to make additional cuts of 400,000 bpd below its quota in August and September to make up for its overproduction in May, June and July, according to an Aug. 7 joint statement from the two countries. That would put Iraq’s effective quota at 3.404 million bpd.

Iraq pumped 3.716 million bpd in June, according an average of the six secondary sources used by OPEC to monitor production, including S&P Global Platts. July output figures will be revealed on Aug. 12, and Iraq’s cut commitment may be adjusted further based on the data, the joint statement said.

Saudi energy minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman and Iraqi counterpart Ihsan Ismael “reaffirmed their full commitment to the OPEC+ agreement” during a phone call late Aug. 6, the joint statement added.

Prince Abdulaziz has made quota compliance a top priority as co-chairman of a key OPEC+ monitoring committee with Russian energy minister Alexander Novak. The committee is next scheduled to meet online Aug. 18.

OPEC and 10 allies implemented a historic 9.7 million bpd production cut accord in May, as the oil market was reeling from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the deal has been successful in lifting Brent prices from the teens in April to around \$45/b in recent days. Mexico has since exited the deal.

The cuts eased to 7.7 million bpd in August, with the alliance anticipating rising demand.



Iraq’s quota from May to July was 3.592 million bpd. It is 3.804 million bpd from August through the end of the year, not including its additional cut.

■ Making the cut

Iraq has consistently struggled to hit full compliance in the three and a half years that the OPEC+ alliance has cooperated on output cuts.

The economically strained and politically fractured country has previously said it needs to pump as much as it can as it rebuilds from years of war against the Islamic State. It is also hampered by its agreements with international oil company partners that would impose severe financial penalties if certain production levels are not hit, as well as disputes between the federal government and the semi-autonomous Kurdish region.

In July, Iraqi crude exports climbed 4.4 percent to 3.218 million bpd, according to official ministry data and shipping agents’ reports seen by Platts, as higher shipments from the Kurdish region in the north more than made up for declines from elsewhere in the country.

Platts estimates Iraqi refinery runs averaged about 400,000 bpd in the month, while crude consumption for power generation was about 180,000 bpd.

Adding those to the export figure would indicate Iraqi crude production was around 3.8 million bpd, not including any stock changes.

In a separate statement Aug. 6, Iraq’s State Oil Marketing Organization said its additional cuts highlight the country’s “high commitment to overcome all challenges that stand against the oil production cut in order to serve its ultimate goal in achieving the necessary supply/demand balance in the oil market at this time when bad effects of COVID-19 pandemic are still in place.”

In their call, Prince Abdulaziz thanked Ismael for his efforts to improve Iraq’s compliance, their joint statement said.

“The two ministers stressed that efforts by OPEC+ countries towards meeting production cuts and the extra cuts under the compensation regime, will enhance oil market stability, help accelerate the rebalancing of global oil markets and send a constructive signal to the market,” the statement said.

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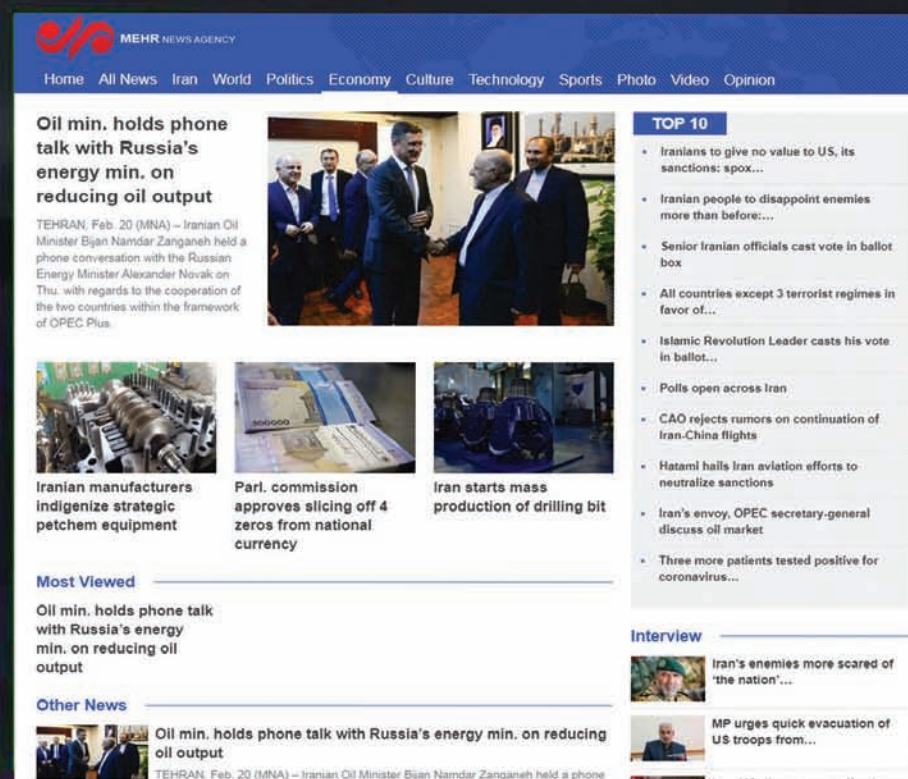
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S. Arabia, U.S. want Iraq to be hostile to Iran, al-Nujaba says

“Saudi Arabia and the U.S. want Iraq as a tool for their vicious goals”

1 → On July 28, the Daily Telegraph referred to Shammari's statements as the official spokesman for the Islamic Resistance movement of Harakat al-Nujaba, which he addressed to the British ambassador.

“Our message is directed to Britain and the U.S.,” he stresses. “We, as a free country, will not accept any form of mandate, whether from arrogant countries or international institutions controlled by powerful countries, and no matter what they try to distort the reality, interfere or incite, and whatever their proxies and friends delude them, Iraq will not play a subordinate role, and this land will never be safe for their forces.”

He emphasizes that the people of Iraq have never forgotten their revolution against the British mandate in 1920 that humiliated them and never forget the resistance that defeated the occupation forces.

“You (Britain) have to stop your interference in our domestic affairs. Historically, morally and ideologically, we are more capable than you, and we have all the things that you do not possess and never heard about,” he says.

Responding to a question about achievements of the visit by Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi to Tehran for both Iran and Iraq, the spokesman for al-Nujaba says al-Kadhimi's visit did not bring anything new to the level of relations between the two countries.

Pointing to affinities and proximity between the two brotherly neighbors in terms of common interests, beliefs, religion, close social ties, and economic exchange, he says, “But the new thing is that the visit came after attempts of some dreamers of restoring the dictatorship of the Baath (party) and declaring hostility between the two brotherly neighbors,” Shammari remarks.

On postponement of al-Kadhimi's visit to Saudi Arabia and the U.S., Shammari criticized



the alliance between these two countries as the sponsors of terrorism.

The biggest victim of the Saudi-American terrorism is the oppressed Iraqi people, ranging from the American invasion to the al-Qaeda and ISIS terrorism, he says, adding before them the blood-thirsty Baath regime violently suppressed the Iraqis.

“This alliance does not like to see Iraq as a master of itself and maintain balance and good neighborly relations with the surrounding countries. They want Iraq as a tool for their sick goals, ambitions, and enmities. The most important thing they want from the Iraqi government is to declare hostility

to the Islamic Republic of Iran,” he reveals.

In a comment on the announcement of early elections in Iraq, Shammari explains that American expectations are often unsuccessful for several reasons.

“First, American information sources are biased towards the American vision, and therefore they analyze the events based on what U.S. officials want to see,” he notes.

The second reason is that the U.S. is a country that relies on releasing wrong information to the media that are biased toward Washington and thus presents a fabricated and false image that does not indicate reality, he explains.

Al-Nujaba spokesman says the U.S. and its proxies in the region accuse everyone who opposes their imperialist, colonial, and arrogant policies of various charges.

First Phase III Covid-19 vaccine trials begin in UAE

Human rights groups say treatment of migrant workers in PGCC states deteriorating amid pandemic

1 → Researchers around the world are developing more than 165 vaccines against the coronavirus, and 28 vaccines are in human trials. Vaccines typically require years of research and testing before reaching the clinic, but scientists are racing to produce safe and effective vaccine by next year.

If and when a vaccine is developed for Covid-19 then production of enough quantities and distribution becomes the next challenge.

The first vaccine safety trials in humans started in March, with the hope of stimulating the immune system to produce effective antibodies against the virus.

Meanwhile, during a video call Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif held talks with his UAE counterpart Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed al-Nahyan and exchanged greetings for Eid al-Adha holiday, reports the Emirati state news agency WAM.

Zarif tweeted that the talks were “very substantive, frank and friendly” on Covid-19 as well as “bilateral, regional and global situations.”

“We agreed to continue dialogue on theme of hope – especially as region faces tough challenges, and tougher choices ahead,” Zarif wrote.

The two ministers held a telephone call in March in which Sheikh Abdullah expressed the UAE's support for Iran during the coronavirus outbreak.

According to Worldometers data, the number of Covid-19 cases in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region crossed 1,243,659 on August 3rd. The Arab PGCC countries account for 51.4 percent of all cases in the MENA region, while Iran makes up 24.9 percent.

Foreign workers' plight

The two things the six Persian Gulf Co-operation Council (PGCC) member countries rely most on are revenue from oil/gas exports and foreign workers, both have been hit

hard due to Covid-19 outbreak.

Dubai's plans to host Expo 2020 in October, which was expected to draw 25 million visitors, has been postponed until next year.

Due to the economic fallout of the pandemic, the UAE has changed its law to allow companies to break work contracts, lower wages, and pressure foreign workers to take unpaid leave, reports Deutsche Welle.

Expatriates make the bulk of Dubai's 3.3 million population and account for 98 percent of private sector work force. Due to the slump in the crude export revenues and pandemic lockdowns, many foreign blue-collar workers in the region have racked up debt and would go hungry without the help of charities as they wait for work and to be paid.

There are no social safety networks for foreigners, who make up about 90 percent of the population in the UAE. The blue-collar jobs are the most vulnerable. They are paid low wages, work long hours and often live in cramped dormitories that have been coronavirus hotbeds. Xenophobia is escalating as expatriates are blamed for spreading the virus.

Some foreign laborers have said they find little reason to stay without work and wanted to return to their home countries despite being owed months of wages; hundreds of thousands have already left.

The treatment of migrant workers in the PGCC states have come under criticism by human rights groups, saying conditions have deteriorated because of the coronavirus.

No official statistics on how many people have left the UAE are available. But at least 200,000 workers, mostly from India, Pakistan, the Philippines and Nepal have left, according to their diplomatic missions.

UAE Covid-19 stimulus, recovery measures

According to the UAE's Central Bank data, local banks had withdrawn AED43.6 billion (\$11.87 billion) of the reg-

ulator's AED50 billion (\$13.6 billion) Targeted Economic Support Scheme stimulus package launched to counter the impact of Covid-19 as of 18 July. Some measures to minimize economic crisis include:

July 30: Federal Authority for Identity and Citizenship discusses initiatives to restore normalcy and gradually ease restrictions due to Covid-19;

July 27: Government confirms decision to resume the circulation of newspapers, magazines and paper-based marketing material;

July 23: Flag carrier Emirates to offer free medical coverage for expenses related to Covid-19 cases;

July 22: Visas of UAE residents stranded abroad will expire without exception, and those whose visas expire after July 12, have a month to renew the documents before fines begin;

July 13: Third-stage study of a possible vaccine approved by the Ethics Committee Scientific Research in Abu Dhabi;

July 12: Abu Dhabi Fund for Development suspends debt service repayments during 2020 for eligible countries and businesses;

July 6: Business tenants of Dubai Developments Group properties in emirate, including small firms and entrepreneurs will be exempted from paying rents for a period from three to six months;

July 4: After being tested Abu Dhabi resident allowed to take 48-hour trips outside the Emirates. Commuters travelling to Emirates must be tested before they arrive at the border.

In order to slow the pandemic spread, commercial flights to 31 countries deemed high-risk were banned until further notice. The countries include: India, Pakistan, Egypt, the Philippines, Lebanon, Sri Lanka, China, Brazil, Mexico, Italy and Iraq. Emirates has resumed flights to/from Tehran in July after six months of halt.

“Thirdly, promoting these expectations is part of the psychological war that is intended to weaken axis of resistance and to suggest to them that things are not in their interest,” Shammari maintains. “Consequently, what comes out of U.S. sources is often different from reality.”

According to senior member of al-Nujaba, a vast majority of the honorable Iraqi people are still hostile to the American, British, and Zionist plans.

“We are for holding early elections that are free and fair and without any external interference and pressure, that the results of it would shape the features of the next phase, and that in light of their results they produce a national, professional, non-sectarian government,” Shammari emphasizes.

Regarding U.S.-Iraqi negotiation on withdrawal of American forces from Iraq, he tells the Tehran Times that there is a binding parliamentary decision to expel American forces and all foreign forces from Iraq and put an end to the work of the international coalition to fight ISIS inside Iraq.

“The American side and the Security Council were informed of this decision through a letter from the Iraqi government containing the same demands, accompanied by the decision of the Iraqi parliament,” he says. “These decisions are not reversible from any Iraqi or American side.”

And as the prime minister indicated a few days ago, Iraq does not need any foreign forces inside its territory, because Iraqi security forces are able to achieve security and “spread it over all the Iraqi land,” he asserts.

He concludes that all the American attempts are useless and will cost them more losses at the hands of the men of resistance, and they will soon be forced to surrender and leave Iraq completely.

People united against devastating blast: advisor to Lebanese president

By Fatemeh Salehi

Amal Abou Zeid, Advisor to the President of the Lebanese Republic, said in an exclusive interview with MNA that the Zionist regime is extremely frightful of Lebanon's possible reaction to Beirut devastating blast.

Lebanon, which is currently grappling with many economic and political problems, was the scene of a massive explosion that ripped through the capital, Beirut, on Tuesday, killing at least 137 people, with dozens missing and 5,000 wounded.

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

Speaking to Tehran Times/ Mehr News Agency in an exclusive interview, Amal Abou Zeid, Advisor to the President of the Lebanese Republic, referred to speculations about the targeting of the Beirut Port by a missile, and how some Israeli news outlets covered the explosion from this angle.

“The Israeli cabinet denied any involvement in the explosion,” Amal Abou Zeid added. “All of these reactions indicate that Tel Aviv is panicking and is very afraid of a stronger reaction by the Lebanese resistance against Israel should the regime's involvement be confirmed.”

About the negative claims fabricated against Lebanon's Hezbollah regarding the blast, Amal Abou Zeid said, “It is only natural to see some parties, such as Israel, to falsely accuse Hezbollah of being indirectly involved in the massive explosion that ripped through the Beirut Port. There are also some countries, which oppose Hezbollah and hold the resistance movement responsible for many issues, to raise similar accusations.”

Talking about the reaction of the Lebanese nation to this devastating disaster, he said “This calamity revealed the national solidarity in Lebanon, as reflected in the medical, public and government aid, soon after the explosion.”

“The Lebanese people showed that they are standing united in the face of this great tragedy and are fulfilling their humanitarian and national duties,” he further stressed.

The massive explosion that ripped through the Lebanese capital of Beirut on Tuesday, took place at a warehouse at the Beirut Port, which, according to Lebanese officials, stored thousands of tons of ammonium nitrate – a substance used in making fertilizers and explosives.

The cargo had been stored at the port since it was confiscated from a ship more than six years ago. The stockpile is believed to have detonated after a fire broke out nearby.

The death toll reached 137 on Thursday, and with dozens missing and 5,000 wounded, it is expected to rise as search and rescue operations continue.

According to Beirut Governor Marwan Abboud, the explosion has rendered 300,000 people temporarily homeless and damage from the disaster would cost the country billions of dollars.

Palestinians caught between waiting and the possibility of annexation

By Ramona Wadi

While the Palestine Liberation Organisation has been calling upon the EU to step up from rhetoric to action regarding Israel's forthcoming annexation of occupied West Bank territory, Europe's Foreign Affairs Chief Josep Borrell invited Israeli Defence Minister Gabi Ashkenazi to Brussels to meet with the bloc's foreign ministers.

“While the international community is concerned with the ‘possibility’ of annexation,” said PLO Executive Committee Member Hanan Ashrawi, “Israel is implementing its annexation scheme on the ground without any deterrence.” Israeli plans for further construction in East Jerusalem prompted Ashrawi's comments, as EU politicians adopt activist tactics by abandoning their power to act both morally and politically and opting instead to write a “protest letter” to Israel's Foreign Ministry.

It would be perplexing to come to terms with the fact that such dismissive attitudes towards Palestinians and Palestine are not properly rejected by the Palestinian Authority, were it not for the fact that the PA itself is enamoured of futile pleas in place of political action.

The EU, meanwhile, is not adopting condescending attitudes towards Israel and its annexation plans. In his phone call with Ashkenazi, Borrell reiterated the EU's “unequivocal commitment” to Israel's security, which he described as “not negotiable for the EU”.

Ashkenazi's accusation of EU “megaphone diplomacy” is thus a sham. That type of diplomacy is reserved for Palestinians, encouraged as it is by the PA's accommodating collaboration. The Israeli official made his comment in May, when Borrell declared that the EU “looks forward to continue working with the new Israeli government in a constructive and comprehensive way.” In other words, the EU will ensure that if Israel wants to build further settlements to normalise the forthcoming annexation, it will stand by Israel in the name of its (entirely fake) security narrative.

If the EU truly wanted to put a stop to annexation, Ashkenazi would have been invited to a meeting in which EU foreign ministers would outline action to be taken against Israel. As Ashrawi succinctly asserted, though, the EU thrives upon possibility, and so does Israel, which makes the bloc and the colonial presence in Palestine diplomatic allies working in tandem.

The EU knows that waiting, as the international community tells Palestinians to do constantly, has led to a near-irreversible situation. International diplomacy has normalised delays, to the point that they are now permissible political actions undertaken by powerful countries against states and populations concerned with accessing and implementing their legitimate political and legal rights. Hence, writing a protest letter to Israel's Foreign Ministry is lauded as action, despite the disparity in the EU's diplomatic relations with Israel and the PA. Making headlines in Israeli media, after all, conveys Israeli displeasure and the illusion of action. And nothing else matters, as far as Israel and the EU are concerned.

Take away the two-state compromise from international diplomacy and the EU's peacebuilding narrative, and the Palestinians will, at least, have a voice that is not tainted by external impositions. If Israel's colonial narrative was adopted willingly internationally, there is no reason why the Palestinian leadership should not prioritise and maintain Palestinian narratives. However, the issue of PA compromise, even with “waiting”, remains, and Palestinian efforts at diplomacy are merely mirrored by ineffective tactics employed by the EU.

Ramona Wadi is an independent researcher, freelance journalist, book reviewer and blogger. Her writing covers a range of themes in relation to Palestine, Chile and Latin America. Her article appeared in MEMO.

Will the demonstrations end Netanyahu's political career?

By Motasem A Dalloul

Massive demonstrations across Israel are calling for the unseating of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over corruption cases and his alleged mishandling of the coronavirus crisis. Worryingly for Netanyahu, the protests are growing, and look set to get even bigger, fuelled by hate speech and violence from his supporters and police.

According to Israeli media, thousands of demonstrators have gathered in Tel Aviv and other cities. The police have been removing them forcibly, while those who manage to stay behind face being pepper sprayed by pro-Netanyahu gangs and, some reports claim, beaten up by them.

At the same time, his political opponents are involved in a fierce battle with Netanyahu over his handling of the protests. Some, even from the right-wing, are threatening to bring down the coalition government.

The alternate Prime Minister Benny Gantz, from the left of centre Blue and White, Netanyahu's coalition partner, commented on the violent crackdown on the demonstrators: “As a government, we are obliged to be attentive to the people. As the regime, we bear the responsibility of facilitating holding the demonstrations and to protect

the demonstrators who, regrettably, were attacked yesterday once again at several locations. The right to protest is the life's breath of democracy, and violence erodes the foundation of democracy.”

This sends a clear message to Netanyahu, calling on him and the police to abandon violence against the demonstrators. “Nobody restricts the demonstrations,” insisted the Prime Minister, while also accusing them of being “coronavirus incubators”.

Haaretz reported that the right-wing Yamina alliance is threatening to embarrass Netanyahu's Likud party by planning to present a bill that would allow the Knesset to override High Court rulings. The alliance apparently seeks to “lure” right-wing MKs to break the coalition's discipline or “embarrass them by forcing them to vote against it.” Other bills from right and left aim to “rattle” the coalition.

Meanwhile, Israel is facing a crisis related to its credit agencies' rating due to the ongoing conflict within the coalition over the approval of a very short-term budget for the rest of 2020 or a two-year budget for 2020 and 2021. While Netanyahu and his camp are insisting on a short-term budget, the others, led by Blue and White, are fighting for the two-year proposal.

Added to this is the financial cost of the



coronavirus pandemic, which is hurting large economies and strong states, so what must it be doing to Israel? Last week, the global rating agency Fitch downgraded the sovereign debt outlook of the United States to negative. Haaretz did not rule out that the reasons which led to this downgrading would also apply to Israel, which is blundering through the pandemic under Netanyahu's leadership.

“If the government has not approved the 2021 budget by the end of this year,” the chief economist at Bank Leumi, Gil Bufman, told Haaretz, “Israel may be added to the rating agencies' watch list, increasing the risk that their Israeli outlook will be lowered to negative... The political situation is not sending good signals vis-à-vis management of fiscal

policy and and it's fair to assume that this will manifest itself in the credit agencies' report.”

In Yedioth Ahronoth, journalist Nahum Barnea pointed out that: “Israel needs a talented leader, not a magician, a servant or a lord; it needs a person who is not chased by his criminal cases. Is Netanyahu, despite all of his virtues, able to meet all of these conditions? For me, it is likely that even his supporters would not be able to give a positive answer to this question.” The message that the protesters are sending is clear, he added: “Democratic countries cannot depend on one person.”

Speaking to right-wing Israeli journalist Baruch Yedid, who is close to Netanyahu, I was told that the demonstrations and increasing tension within the coalition could bring about the end of the government. Citing internal polls for Likud, Yedid said that Netanyahu's popularity has decreased from 42 or 44 per cent to just 32.

He also expects the coalition government to end very soon, which means yet another General Election could be on the way. “The world is taking one way and Israel is taking another way,” he concluded. That is Israel's democracy.

Motasem A Dalloul is MEMO's correspondent in the Gaza Strip.

Rome's envoy unveils coronavirus-era series at Tehran ceremony

By Afshin Majlesi

TEHRAN – Rome's ambassador to Tehran Giuseppe Perrone on Wednesday unveiled the first episode of a joint video-theater project, co-performed by Iranian and Italian artists, which turns the spotlight on how the novel coronavirus imposes curbs on everyday life.



A trailer and the opening episode of the experimental series titled "8 172 Theater Clips: How the Pandemic Changed our Lives" were screened in a custom-arranged ceremony followed by a cozy launch event at the residence of the ambassador in northern Tehran.

"Though, tonight, we are unveiling one of the most amazing and artistic projects so far done [with assistance of the embassy], we are few in numbers due to the observance of health protocols to prevent the spread of the virus," Perrone said addressing the attendees ranged from foreign diplomats and architects to theater directors, artists and correspondents.

This eight-part film, with the language of performing arts and theater, explains to us how the disease has changed our emotions, habits and lifestyle, and it offers ways to go beyond the imposed boundaries of the epidemic, the envoy said.

Talking about the Italian contributors to the project, Perrone said: "They were very interested in being here tonight, but it was not possible due to the current situation [travel limits imposed by the pandemic], and they sent us a video message..."

Co-produced by the Embassy of Italy in Tehran and the Italian theater company Instabili Vaganti, with the participation of the Iranian director Ali Shams and the performer Danial Kheirikhah, the video-performances are scheduled to be published from August to December on the Embassy's social channels (Twitter, Instagram and YouTube).

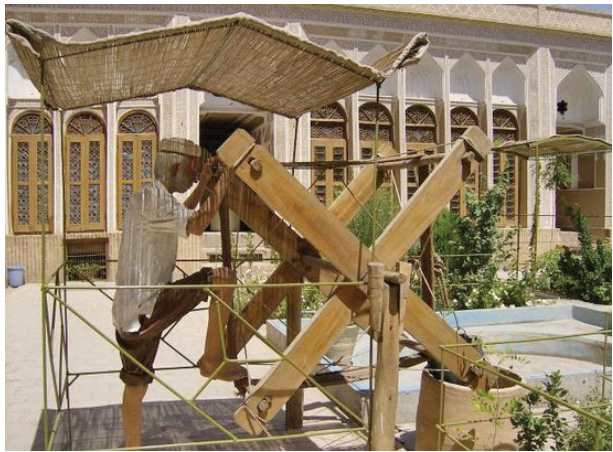
It was born the on-line project conceived and directed by Instabili Vaganti, Anna Dora Dorno and Nicola Pianzola, in order to maintain active dialogue between artists from different countries and to photograph the particular historical period we are going through.

The project, according to organizers, launched during the lockdown period, at a time of crisis that prompted the company to transform the limits imposed by the anti-COVID measures into an opportunity, envisages the use of online platforms for the creation and sharing process, in an attempt to overcome not only the geographical borders, marked even more by the pandemic, but also stylistic, gender and thought.

The artwork opens up various collaboration paths that will lead to the creation of a video performance series in which Instabili Vaganti interacts with individual artists from the different countries involved in the project, thanks also to the support of the Italian cultural institutes in the world.

Iran attractions: Yazd Water Museum

(Lonely Planet) — Yazd is famous for its qanats (underground aqueducts) and Yazd Water Museum, one of the best of its kind, is devoted to the brave men who built them. Located in a restored mansion with a visible qanat running underneath, the museum offers, through a series of photographs, exhibits and architectural drawings, a fascinating glimpse into the hidden world of waterways that have allowed life to flourish in the desert.



The uniform of the qanat builders shows an early form of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), with padded cotton hats and white-colored clothing that was both luminous in the dark and would act as a shroud in the event of a fatal accident.

The museum, which charts the 2000 years that Iran's unique irrigation system has been in operation, describes the drilling of mother wells (which can reach a depth of 300m, such as the qanat near Mashhad) and the use of water distribution clocks. These clocks (basically a bowl with a hole in the bottom) helped to mark out the 15- or 20-minute shares of water purchasable by householder or farmer.

Qanats run through many of the wealthy old houses in Yazd, collecting in pools in basements known as sardab. As the coolest part of the house, these rooms were often beautifully decorated and several fine examples exist in Yazd's old traditional hotels today. The qanats (there are many running through each town) are the reason why the wealthiest districts are always closest to the mountains – to be closest to the freshest water.

Italian embassy responsible for depicting Tehran-Rome 'so deep and complete' cultural ties: envoy

→ 1 Perrone reminded that joint missions, who have stopped work due to coronavirus health limitations, would start again soon.

"We have [archaeological] missions in some areas... unfortunately, due to the health crisis, they have stopped working but we hope they can resume soon."

Elsewhere in his remarks, the ambassador pointed to the conference in which Tehran and Rome mark 60 years of collaboration in the fields of cultural heritage and archaeology last year. From the early 20th century on, Italians participated in the scholarly investigation of ancient Iranian history and culture.

"So, last year, we celebrated the 60th anniversary of our joint cultural heritage and archaeology collaboration.... an occasion that also opened an extremely beautiful and meaningful exhibition dedicated to the 60th year of partnership at the National Museum of Iran in downtown [Tehran]."

Answering a question about the joint future plans, the ambassador said: "We've planned to expand many of the missions that we have here in different areas of Iran both in the south and in the north working with prestigious Italian universities.... to extent excavation surveys but like I said they are on halt now because of the health crisis."

"We are planning to hold a joint archaeology film festival with some films to be screening in Tehran and Shiraz at the beginning of 2021 if the health condition will allow us."

Responding to a question about the goal of the film event, the ambassador said "It's not only about the past. It will be showcasing many films about archaeology.... Many films that portray [aspects of] our history together."

Providing an example, Perrone referred to the cutting-edge technology Italian experts utilized to restore some parts of the UNESCO-registered Persepolis.

"We have had [top] mission in Persepolis, 'Restorers without Borders' as well as a joint archeological mission of the University of Bologna, ISMEO and the University of Shiraz (co-led by Prof. Francesco Callieri and Prof. Ali Askari), who brought in Iran a very cutting-edge technology to restore some parts of the Persepolis It was like a breakthrough Likely [it was] the first kind of archaeological restoration mission that applied that technology here



Italian ambassador to Tehran Giuseppe Perrone speaks in an undated photo.

so Italy is big in terms of archaeology."

Referring to cultural tourism, which is another arena of cooperation between the two nations, he explained: "That's an area, which is extremely important. Last year we held an important project on promoting cultural tourism ... there was also a delegation came here from Italy last November and they visited several regions in north and west of the country with the idea to improve Iran's capacity to attract [more] tourists and

that I think was extremely useful and has gonna have its follow-up again as soon as corona allows, unfortunately!"

"That was a project done by an Italian NGO called The Alliance of Italian Cooperatives (ACI), which sent a delegation here to visit several tourist destinations in the country to cooperate in improving their capabilities, their skills and set up [the ground to] even work together on improving in generally Iran's ability to attract more tourists, which

"Well, normally elite tourists come here, I mean people who are very aware of cultural heritage so it's a very qualified type of tourism between Italy and Iran... ones who know very well the Iranian culture... The ones who are willing to discover the country with their own eyes and touch with their own hands its marvelous and incredibly rich cultural heritage."

Over 200 historical monuments restored in central Iran

TOURISM DESK **TEHRAN** — Over 200 aging structures and buildings have been restored across Yazd province, central Iran, since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year 1399 (March 20).

As the coronavirus pandemic has brought the province's tourism to a standstill and there are no visitors to the historical sites, it seems the best time for the implementation of the restoration projects, said Seyyed Mostafa Fatemi, the provincial tourism chief, CHTN reported on Saturday.

Most of the restoration projects have been done in collaboration with the private sector as well as volunteer teams of restorers, the official added.

Back in July, the official announced that due to the global coronavirus pandemic, visits to the province has plummeted to one percent during the first three months of the current Iranian calendar year compared to the same period last year.

In July 2017, the historical structure of the city of Yazd

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

Yazd is usually referred to as a delightful place to stay, or a "don't miss" destination by almost all of its visitors. The city is teemed with mudbrick houses that are equipped with innovative badgirs (wind catchers), atmospheric alleyways, and many Islamic and Iranian monuments that shape its eye-catching city landscape.

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

Yazd Jameh Mosque, Dowlatabad Garden, the Yazd Atash Behram, also known as Atashkadeh-e Yazd, Towers



of Silence, and adjacent desert landscape are among its tourist sites.

Historical cistern discovered in northeast Iran

TOURISM DESK **TEHRAN** — A historical Ab-Anbar (cistern) has recently been discovered in Torbat-e Heydarieh, northeast of the country, IRNA reported.

The cistern is estimated to date back to late Qajar era (1789–1925) and early Pahlavi period (1925–1979), and it seems to be a part of a bigger historical complex, Ali Mohammadi, the head of Torbat-e Heydarieh Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department, said on Saturday.

The cistern, which was destroyed and



turned into a street with the expansion of the city, is being documented by the cultural heritage experts, the official added.

The history of the area stretches back to the Achaemenian Empire from the 6th to 4th century BC and the Parthian Empire from the 3rd century BC to the 3rd century CE.

Over 60 historical sites have been identified inside the historical texture of the city, of which 17 historical properties have been inscribed on the National Heritage list so far.

The term Ab-Anbar is common

throughout Iran as a designation for roofed underground water cisterns. It associates with water management systems in arid areas that are reliant on permanent springs or on seasonal rainwater.

Such underground reservoirs or Ab-Anbars are parts of the iconic qanat systems, which rely on snow-fed streams flowing down from surrounding mountains.

Qanats, according to UNESCO, provide exceptional testimony to cultural traditions and civilizations in desert areas with an arid climate.

Some \$9m spent to revive 14th-century Rab'-e Rashidi

HERITAGE DESK **TEHRAN** — A budget of 370 billion rials (about \$9 million at the official dollar rate of 42,000 rials) has spent on reviving of the Rab'-e Rashidi in northwestern East Azarbaijan province over the past three years, a provincial tourism chief has said.

Located in Tabriz, the capital of East Azarbaijan province, the 14th-century educational complex was established during the reign of Ghazan, a ruler of the Ilkhanid dynasty (1256–1353).

The budget has spent on the acquisition of the lands in the area of the historical complex, as well as archaeological excavations and restoration projects, CHTN quoted Alireza Quchi as saying on Thursday.

Rab'-e Rashidi includes several archaeological layers



that date from Ilkhanid, Safavid, and Qajar eras. It is said that students from Iran, China, Egypt, and Syria studied there under the supervision of physicians, intellectuals, scientists, and Islamic scholars.

The ancient complex embraces a paper factory, a library, a hospital (Dar-al-Shafa), a Quranic center (Dar-al-Quran), residential facilities for teachers, students' quarters, and a caravanserai amongst other facilities.

Soaked in history and culture for millennia, Tabriz embraces several historical and religious sites, including Jameh Mosque of Tabriz and Arg of Tabriz, and UNESCO-registered Tabriz Historic Bazaar Complex to name a few.

Iran keeps an eye on the possible inscription of the site on the UNESCO World Heritage list by 2025.

Iran ranks first in West Asia for breast milk banks

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Iran ranks first in West Asia for breastfeeding of immature newborn infants, as 11 breast milk banks have been established in the country, head of mother's milk bank of Al-Zahra hospital in the northwestern city of Tabriz has stated.

Breast milk donation is as important as blood donation due to saving lives of so many premature babies in hospitals whose best nutrition is breast milk, Mohammad-Baqer Hosseini told IRNA on Saturday.

Recalling that breast milk banks are widely active all over the world, he said that milk banks have been active in European countries for nearly 100 years.

Worldwide, about 600 breast milk banks have been established, with the first established in Austria, he noted, adding, there are currently 210 breast milk banks in Europe and Brazil alone has 210 milk banks.

Human milk is pasteurized so that there is no risk of transmitting infectious diseases, even in case of AIDS or any other diseases, he said.

He went on to explain that mothers who have insufficient milk volume for any reason, including multiple births, can receive their baby's required consumption from the milk bank. Also, babies born prematurely, such as a baby weighing 600 grams at 26 weeks, or premature babies born with diseases such as gastrointestinal disease and cannot feed on infant formula.

Mothers who have more milk than their children need can donate milk. The milk is taken to the milk bank by health centers and pasteurized, then the necessary tests are performed on it and stored in special containers in portable refrigerators and freezers, he added.

In July 2016, the first breast milk bank was established in Al-Zahra Hospital of Tabriz University of Medical Sciences, with the financial support of the Ministry of Health, he stated.

Since then, 10 breast milk banks have been set up in the country, two of which are located in Tehran, and others in Mashhad, Zahedan, Ahvaz, Kermanshah, Shiraz, Kerman, Tabriz, and Yazd are active and one is being launched in Isfahan, he said.



Improving breastfeeding practices could save the lives of more than 800,000 children under 5 every year, the vast majority of whom are under six months of age. Beyond survival, there is growing evidence that breastfeeding boosts children's brain development and provides protection against overweight and obesity. Mothers also reap important health benefits from breastfeeding.

■ Breastfeeding a unique process

Breastfeeding provides ideal nutrition for infants and contributes to their healthy growth and development while reducing the incidence and severity of infectious diseases, thereby lowering infant morbidity and mortality, and contributing to women's health by reducing the risk of breast and ovarian cancer, and by increasing the spacing between pregnancies. It also provides social and economic benefits to the family and the nation and provides most women with a sense of satisfaction when successfully carried out.

Recent research has found that these benefits increase with increased exclusiveness of breastfeeding during the

first six months of life, and thereafter with increased duration of breastfeeding with complementary foods, and program intervention can result in positive changes in breastfeeding behavior.

Improving breastfeeding practices could save the lives of more than 800,000 children under 5 every year, the vast majority of whom are under six months of age. Beyond survival, there is growing evidence that breastfeeding boosts children's brain development and provides protection against overweight and obesity. Mothers also reap important health benefits from breastfeeding, including a lower risk of breast cancer, ovarian cancer, and type 2 diabetes.

The life-saving protection of breast-

feeding is particularly important in humanitarian settings, where access to clean water, adequate sanitation, and basic services is often limited.

Only about two in five children (42 percent), the majority born in low- and middle-income countries, were breast-fed within the first hour of life. While this is a slight improvement from 37 percent in 2005, progress is slow.

Attainment of this goal requires, in many countries, the reinforcement of a "breastfeeding culture" and its vigorous defense against incursions of a "bottle-feeding culture". This requires commitment and advocacy for social mobilization, utilizing to the full the prestige and authority of acknowledged leaders of society in all walks of life.

■ World Breastfeeding Week 2020

World Breastfeeding Week (WBW) is a global campaign to raise awareness and galvanize action on themes related to breastfeeding, celebrated annually on August 1-7 in commemoration of the 1990 Innocenti Declaration.

Started in 1992, WBW's annual themes include healthcare systems, women and work, the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes, community support, ecology, economy, science, education, and human rights. Since 2016, WBW is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In 2018, a World Health Assembly resolution endorsed WBW as an important breastfeeding promotion strategy.

WBW 2020 will focus on the impact of infant feeding on the environment or climate change and the imperative to protect, promote, and support breastfeeding for the health of the planet and its people.

The theme is aligned with thematic area 3 in the WBW-SDG 2030 campaign which highlights the links between breastfeeding and the environment and climate change.

The World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) applies the warm chain approach of working together across sectors and levels to make common cause with groups working on environmental issues. Together, we need to emphasize the link between breastfeeding and the environment.

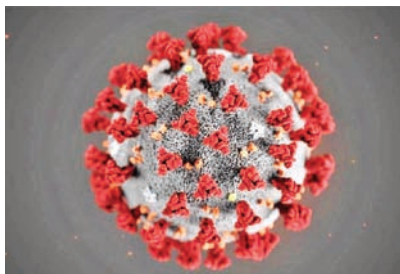
Iranian, Italian universities to hold webinar on COVID-19

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Bu-Ali Sina University and Hamedan University of Medical Sciences from Iran and Bari Aldo Moro University of Italy will be holding a webinar on COVID-19 on August 11, ISNA news agency reported.

In this webinar, specialists in virology, epidemiology, and zoonotic diseases from universities and scientific-research institutes of Iran and Italy will discuss the latest scientific findings on SARS-CoV2 virus.

How the new coronavirus pandemic unfolds, clinical signs and new treatments, laboratory diagnosis of infection, the latest information on vaccination, and epidemiology of the disease in communities are the topics that will be discussed during the webinar.

The number of people diagnosed with coronavirus in Iran reached 324,692 on Saturday, of whom 18,264 have died and



282,122 recovered so far. Over the past 24 hours, 2,125 new cases of people having the virus have been identified, and 132 died, Lari said.

Currently, 4,148 patients with coronavirus are in critical condition, she added.

Since Saturday, 249,756 coronavirus patients have been identified in Italy, of whom 35,190 lost their lives and 201,642 have been recovered.

Iranian researchers extract antibiotics from marine sediments

ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN — The results of a study by Iranian researchers showed that marine sediments contain antibiotic compounds that can be used in the pharmaceutical industry.

Due to antimicrobial resistance occurring in some bacteria and fungi, especially bacteria that cause nosocomial infections, the treatment process using common antibiotics is difficult, so it is necessary to produce new antibiotics to treat these diseases.

According to ISNA, Seyedeh Zahra Mirsonbol and Khousro Issazadeh, along with their colleagues at the Islamic Azad University, Lahijan Branch, participated in this study.

The results of the study showed that Streptomyces derived from marine sediments have strong antimicrobial activity



against pathogenic bacteria and the greatest effect on Staphylococcus aureus.

The ocean is a natural habitat for antibiotic-producing bacteria, and marine aquaculture introduces antibiotics into the ocean to treat infections and improve aquaculture production. Studies have shown that the ocean is an important reservoir of antibiotic resistance genes.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → E

‘Welfare Organization helps 15,000 breadwinning women to become financially independent annually’

On average, 15,000 female heads of households who have been under Iran Welfare Organization's assistance, become financially independent annually through employment and entrepreneurship programs, Derakhshan-Nia, director general of family and women capacity building office at the Welfare Organization has said.

سالیانه ۱۵ هزار زن سرپرست خانوار از چرخه حمایت بهزیستی خارج می شوند

فریبا درخشان نیا، مدیر کل دفتر توانمندسازی خانواده و زنان سازمان بهزیستی کشور گفت: به طور میانگین سالیانه ۱۵ هزار نفر از زنان سرپرست خانوار تحت پوشش، از طریق اشتغال و کارآفرینی در قالب انفرادی یا گروه های همیار، بازتوان شده و از چرخه حمایت خارج می شوند.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“demi-”

■ **Meaning:** half

■ **For example:** He caused the horse to make a **demi**volte across the path.

PHRASAL VERB

Open up

■ **Meaning:** if opportunities open up, or a new situation opens them up, they become available or possible

■ **For example:** With a microscope, a whole new world of investigation opens up.

IDIOM

Cross the line

■ **Explanation:** to go beyond the authorized limits and do something which is not acceptable

■ **For example:** He has an unpleasant habit of telling jokes that really cross the line.

Bold green policies from world governments ‘could halve temperature rises expected by 2050’

The global lockdown will have a “negligible” impact on rising temperatures but a green recovery could avert the climate crisis, a study has said.

Lockdowns to stop the spread of coronavirus caused huge falls in transport use, as well as reductions in industry and commercial operations, cutting the greenhouse gases and pollutants caused by vehicles and other activities.



The impact is only short-lived, however, and analysis shows that even if some lockdown measures last until the end of 2021, global temperatures will only be 0.01C lower than expected by 2030.

But if countries choose a “strong” green stimulus route out of the pandemic it could halve the temperature rises expected by 2050, the study published in Nature Climate Change said.

That gives the world a good chance of keeping temperature rises to the 1.5C goal that countries signed up to under the international Paris climate agreement to prevent the most dangerous impacts of global warming.

Recovery packages targeting low-carbon energy and energy efficiency and not giving bailouts for fossil fuels could “mean the difference between success and failure” on avoiding a dangerous climate crisis.

Study lead author Professor Piers Forster, director of the Priestley International Centre for Climate at the University of Leeds, started working on the analysis with his daughter Harriet after her A-levels were cancelled.

They used mobility data from Google and Apple to calculate how 10 different greenhouse gases and pollutants changed between February and June in 123 countries, before a wider team helped with detailed analysis.

The team also modelled options for post-lockdown action, ranging from a fossil-fuelled recovery to two different levels of green stimulus.

Emissions of carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxides and other pollutants fell by between 10 and 30 per cent, the analysis said.

But because the reduction was only temporary, the impact on warming driven by the long-term build up of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere will be very small.

It is what happens now that is important, the researchers said.

Strong action to drive the recovery through green measures could lead to greenhouse gas emissions being 50 per cent lower in 2030 than they would otherwise be, which would reduce expected warming by 0.3C by 2050.

It could set the world on track to keep temperature rises to no more than 1.5C above pre-industrial levels.

Beyond that threshold, scientists warn of worsening impacts of the climate crisis, including increased droughts and extreme weather, spread of diseases, reduced crop yields, rising seas and harm to wildlife.

Professor Forster said: “The choices made now could give us a strong chance of avoiding 0.3C of additional warming by mid-century, halving the expected warming under current policies. “This could mean the difference between success and failure when it comes to avoiding dangerous climate change.”

He added: “The study also highlights the opportunities in lowering traffic pollution by encouraging low emissions vehicles, public transport and cycle lanes.

“The better air quality will immediately have important health effects – and it will immediately start cooling the climate.”

Study co-author Harriet Forster, who has just completed her studies at Queen Margaret's School, said: “Our paper shows that the actual effect of lockdown on the climate is small.

“The important thing to recognise is that we've been given a massive opportunity to boost the economy by investing in green industries – and this can make a huge difference to our future climate.”

WORDS IN THE NEWS

Iraq foreign hostages

(April 12, 2004)

Seven Chinese nationals have become the latest foreigners to be taken hostage in Iraq. The US military said that three more marines were killed on Sunday in western Iraq. It didn't say whether they were involved in fighting in Fallujah. After a week of fierce fighting in Fallujah both sides have agreed to stop shooting. This report from Barbara Plett:

China's state news agency says the seven men were **abducted** near Fallujah while travelling on the main road between Jordan and Baghdad. They're the latest foreigners to be kidnapped during a week of fierce fighting in Iraq.

A British man has been released. But the fate of three Japanese hostages threatened with execution still **hangs in the balance**. Meanwhile, residents of Fallujah are burying their dead and trying to get out of the city during the **lull** in fighting. Local hospital officials say more than six hundred people have been killed, most of them civilians. The marines **insist** most of the dead are fighters. The Americans have failed to **crush the insurgents** despite the use of massive force. **Mediators** continue efforts for a **negotiated solution**. But the US military is reinforcing its troops to **resume the offensive** if talks fail.

■ Words

abducted: taken away illegally usually by force

the fate of: what will happen to

hangs in the balance: remains undecided

lull: a period of quiet or little activity

insist: say very firmly and refuse to change their mind

crush: completely defeat

insurgents: people who are fighting against the government or army of their own country

mediators: people who are trying to settle a dispute between two groups

negotiated solution: an answer to the problem based on talks

resume the offensive: to restart the strong attack

(Source: BBC)

No colonial power can return to Lebanon: Aoun

Lebanese President Michel Aoun says no colonial power can return to Lebanon, following a trip by French President Emmanuel Macron to disaster-stricken Beirut that sparked outrage among the Lebanese.

"Lebanese sovereignty will not be harmed under my watch," Aoun told reporters on Friday, three days after a huge explosion occurred at a port in Beirut, killing 154 people and injuring a whopping 5,000 others.

Macron appeared at the site of the explosion on Thursday, having rolled up the sleeves of his shirt and attempting to take the appearance of a concerned leader by roaming around and talking to people.

During a meeting with Aoun, Macron also called for an international inquiry into the devastating blast and reportedly threatened Lebanese leaders with sanctions if they did not submit to reforms and "political change."

Lebanon gained independence from French colonial rule more than seven decades ago. Aoun rejected the call for an international investigation in his Friday remarks.

The blast took place in warehouses storing highly explosive material, specifically ammonium nitrate, commonly used in both fertilizer and bombs.

Foreign sabotage possible

Aoun said the blast might have been triggered by a foreign attack. "The cause has not been determined yet. There is a possibility of external interference through a rocket or bomb or other act," he said.

According to Press TV, Aoun said he had asked Macron "to secure aerial images to determine what happened and if the French do not have them, we will request them from another source."

He said an investigation would look into the cause of the explosion. The Lebanese president had previously said that it was "unacceptable" that 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate had been stored in the warehouse for six years without safety measures.

According to Aoun, 20 port officials have been detained as part of the investigation.

"Corruption is not limited to [officials at] this port, and efforts to fight it must extend to all ports," Aoun said.

The blast came amid public anger over the ruling elite's mismanagement of an economic crisis. The Lebanese pound has continued to plummet against the US dollar, losing more than 60 percent of its value over the last weeks while sources of foreign currency have dried up.

Observers say American sanctions on Lebanon have deteriorated its already struggling economy.

Arab League says ready to mobilize Arab efforts to help Lebanon after explosion

Trump says he will join international aid conference call for Lebanon

Arab League Chief Ahmed Aboul Gheit said on Saturday he would seek to mobilize Arab efforts to provide support to Lebanon after a massive explosion in the port of Beirut destroyed parts of the capital this week.

According to Reuters, speaking after a meeting with Lebanese President Michel Aoun, he also said reporters that the Cairo-based league of Arab states was ready to assist the investigation into the blast.

"We are ready to help with all our means," he said, adding that he would take part in an international conference call to be organized by France on Sunday to discuss aid for Lebanon.

The death toll from Tuesday's port explosion stands at 154, according to an official estimate on Friday, but is expected to rise further, with more than 5,000 people injured, some seriously.

Trump & Lebanon

Meanwhile, U.S. President Donald Trump said on Friday that he will join a conference call with Lebanon's president and other world leaders on Sunday to discuss aid to Lebanon in the wake of this week's devastating Beirut port explosion.

Trump said on Twitter that he spoke separately with Lebanese President Michel Aoun and French President Emmanuel Macron, who also will join the call.

"We will be having a conference call on Sunday with President Macron, leaders of Lebanon, and leaders from various other parts of the world. Everyone wants to help!" Trump tweeted.

He said he told Aoun that three large U.S. aircraft were en route to Lebanon to deliver supplies and personnel.

Resistance News

Young Palestinian woman succumbs to injuries from Israeli fire

INTERNATIONAL DESK TEHRAN — A young Palestinian woman has succumbed to the injuries she sustained from fire by Israeli forces in the occupied northern West Bank city of Jenin.

According to Palestinian media, clashes occurred between Israeli forces and Palestinians in al-Jabriat district in Jenin early on Friday.

The 32-year-old victim, identified as Dalia Ahmed Soleiman Samudi, was shot in the chest in front of her house when Israeli soldiers opened fire at her.

Mahmoud al-Saadi, director of the Palestinian Red Crescent in Jenin, said the Israeli forces also opened fire on the ambulance carrying the victim.

Tensions have been running high in the occupied territories amid plans by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's regime to annex the occupied West Bank and the Jordan Valley. The plan has been delayed but it has not been called off.

Netanyahu has been driven ahead by President Donald Trump of the United States, who unveiled a plan for the West Asia in January that effectively sidelines the Palestinians.

According to Press TV, The Palestinians want the occupied West Bank as part of a future independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem al-Quds as its capital. Trump's plan envisions Jerusalem al-Quds as "Israel's undivided capital" and allows the Tel Aviv regime to annex settlements in the occupied West Bank and the Jordan Valley. The plan also denies Palestinian refugees the right of return to their homeland, among other controversial terms.

Israel's unlawful annexation push has drawn widespread criticisms from the entire international community, including the regime's closest allies. And it has angered the native Palestinian population.

Whoever is responsible must be tried: Nasrallah

INTERNATIONAL DESK TEHRAN — Secretary General of Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance movement Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah has urged an impartial investigation into the blast that rocked Beirut on Tuesday.

"During the investigation, no one must be allowed to be covered. We shouldn't do this in the typical Lebanese fashion of giving people passes for their sect, etc. Whoever is responsible must be tried for their actions, not based on their sect, etc," Nasrallah said.

"Whoever they are -- even if they are all from one sect, whatever their party, whatever their family -- they must be held accountable based on their actions," he added.

Speaking in a televised speech on Friday, Nasrallah said those responsible for the deadly disaster had to be held to account regardless of their affiliations.

He stressed that the probe should have neither political nor sectarian motives.

The powerful explosion on Tuesday took place at port warehouses storing highly explosive material, specifically ammonium nitrate, commonly used in both fertilizer and bombs, killing 154 people and injuring a whopping 5,000 others.

Describing the blast as a massive



humanitarian and national catastrophe, the Hezbollah chief called on all the Lebanese to unite to overcome the ordeal.

He also dismissed as "injustice" media speculation in the early hours of the tragedy that Hezbollah had stored missiles in the port, adding that those accusations aimed

to incite the Lebanese people against the resistance group.

According to Press TV, Nasrallah rejected the claims, and said those media outlets that spread the allegations had had political motivations and sought to incite a civil war in Lebanon.

18 killed in Air India crash

The plane swayed violently as it approached a hilltop runway drenched in monsoon rain, and moments later the special return flight for Indians stranded abroad by the pandemic skidded off, nosedived and cracked in two, leaving 18 dead and more than 120 injured.

Among the injured Friday night, at least 15 were in critical condition, said Abdul Karim, a senior police officer in southern Kerala state. The dead included both pilots of the Air India Express flight, the airline said in a statement, adding that the four cabin crew were safe, AP reported.

The 2-year-old Boeing 737-800 flew from Dubai to Kozhikode, also called Calicut, in Kerala. There were 174 adult passengers, 10 infants, two pilots and four cabin crew on board.

In a telephone interview from his hospital bed, Renjith Panangad, a plumber who was returning home for

the first time in three years after losing his job at a construction company in Dubai, said the plane swayed before the crash and everything went dark.

He said he followed other passengers who crawled their way out of the fuselage through the emergency door.

"A lot of passengers were bleeding," said Panangad, who escaped without major injuries. "I still can't comprehend what happened. As I am trying to recall what happened, my body is shivering."

He said the pilot made a regular announcement before landing, and moments after the plane hit the runway, it nosedived.

"There was a big noise during the impact and people started screaming," he said.

Kozhikode's 2,850-meter runway is on a flat hilltop with deep gorges on either side ending in a 34-meter drop.

Hong Kong says U.S. sanctions "clowning actions"

The Hong Kong government said the sanctions were "shameless and despicable" and represented "blatant and barbaric" interference in China's internal affairs.

The United States Friday imposed sanctions on Luo Huining, the head of China's Liaison Office, as well as Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam and other current and former officials that Washington accuses of curtailing political freedoms in the global financial hub, Reuters reported.

The move accelerates rapidly deteriorating Sino-U.S. ties, more than a month after Beijing imposed sweeping national security legislation on Hong Kong that drew condemnation from Western governments and sent a chill across the city.

"The unscrupulous intentions of the U.S. politicians to support the anti-China chaos in Hong Kong have been revealed, and their clowning actions are really ridiculous," the Liaison Office said in a statement.

"Intimidation and threats cannot frighten the Chinese people."

The Hezbollah chief also expressed the resistance group's readiness to help all the victims of the explosion. "We are ready to shelter the homeless families and to provide them with alternative housing," he said.

On Wednesday, Beirut's Governor Marwan Aboud said the blast had left 300,000 people homeless.

Lebanese FM welcomes Nasrallah's remarks

Lebanese Foreign Minister Charbel Wehbe said Friday night that he had a positive view of remarks made by Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah about taking advantage of recent opportunities.

Wehbe added that Lebanon will seize every opportunity to improve its relations with the outside world, and in the past two days, it has talked to 30 foreign ministers, all of whom have announced their readiness to meet him.

Rejecting allegations that Hezbollah was involved in the blast in the port of Beirut on Friday night, Sayed Hassan Nasrallah advised the government to seize the opportunity of managing the recent crisis.

The Lebanese foreign minister noted that the Lebanese government's priority now is to try to rescue and provide relief over Beirut blast.

Luo, the most senior mainland political official based in the Chinese-controlled territory, said U.S. sanctions on him indicated he was doing what he "should be doing for my country and Hong Kong," according to the statement.

As well as Luo and Lam, the sanctions target Hong Kong police commissioner Chris Tang and his predecessor Stephen Lo; John Lee, Hong Kong's secretary of security, and Teresa Cheng, the justice secretary. Xia Baolong, the director of the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office in Beijing, was also named.

Police chief Tang told local media on Saturday that maintaining the security of the country and Hong Kong was his responsibility, and foreign sanctions were meaningless.

The sanctions freeze any U.S. assets of the officials, prohibit them from carrying out business in the country and generally bar Americans from doing business with them.

U.S. protests: Protests rock Portland, mayor says tumult helps Trump

→ 1 The Pacific Northwest Youth Liberation Front, which advertised the Wednesday rally on social media, used Twitter to announce "Round 2" of the same demonstration on Thursday night with the slogan - "No cops. No prisons. Total abolition."

The group, which described itself as a "decentralized network of autonomous youth collectives dedicated to direct action towards total liberation", did not immediately reply to The Associated Press news agency's request for comment.

In a social media post, the group says it rarely organises protests, but promotes them.

The weeks-long clashes between thousands of protesters and U.S. agents sent by the Trump administration to guard the Mark O Hatfield Federal Courthouse stopped after an agreement between Democratic Governor Kate Brown and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security that called for the agents to begin drawing down their presence in Portland's downtown on July 30.

But after a brief weekend reprieve, protest activity has continued nightly in other parts of the city, with Portland police, local sheriff's deputies and, in some cases, Oregon state police troopers on the front lines as demonstrators demand an end to police funding.

Wednesday night's activity was in a residential neighbourhood 6 miles (about 10km) away from the federal courthouse. Protesters on Wednesday gathered outside a police precinct



and shined lasers in officers' eyes, disabled exterior security cameras, broke windows and used boards pulled from the building to barricade the doors and start a fire, authorities claimed.

There were 20 sworn officers inside, as well as civilian employees, said Captain Tony Passadore, who was the incident commander.

Police used tear gas for the first time since federal agents pulled back last week. "I don't want people to get confused to think that this was something related to Black Lives Matter," Passadore said of the precinct rally.

"I've been the incident commander for 24 nights of the 70-plus events, and I've seen amazing protesting going on in the city of Portland where people gather together."

Former Saudi official accuses the Crown Prince of trying to kill him

A former top Saudi intelligence official publicly accused Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman of sending a team of agents to Canada to kill him.

The allegation came in a lawsuit filed in United States federal court on Thursday by the former official, Saad Aljabri, who has accused Prince Mohammed of seeking to silence or kill him to stop him from undermining the prince's relationship with the United States and the Trump administration.

The suit marks the first time a former senior Saudi official has publicly accused Prince Mohammed, the kingdom's de facto ruler, of carrying out a widespread and sometimes violent campaign to silence critical voices.

Mr. Aljabri, who was a top aide in the Saudi Interior Ministry, now lives in self-imposed exile near Toronto. Prince Mohammed has been trying to coax him to return to Saudi Arabia and in March, Saudi Arabia detained two of Mr. Aljabri's adult children and his brother, prompting accusations by relatives and United States officials that they were being

held hostage to secure Mr. Aljabri's return.

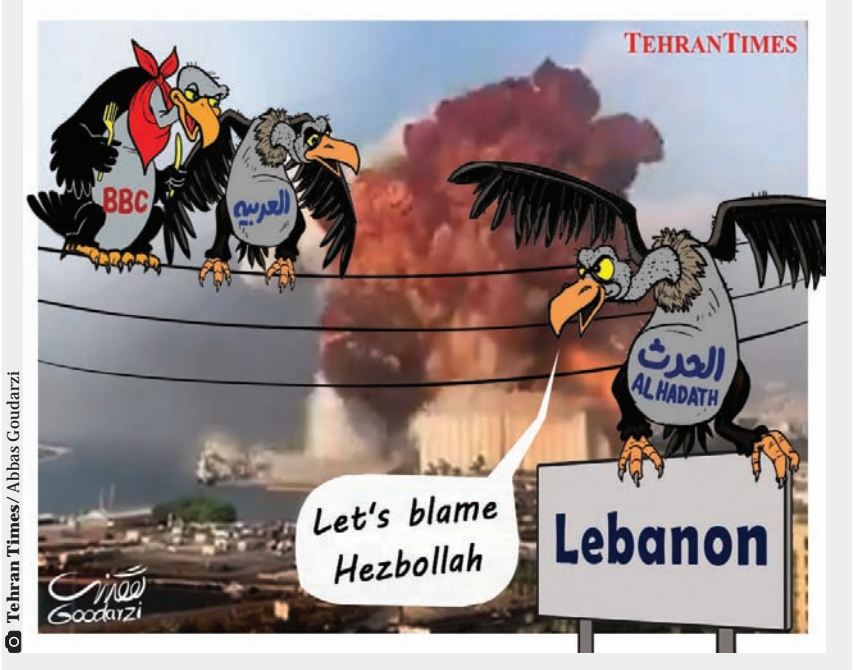
His lawsuit says that Saudi agents attempted to target Mr. Aljabri in Canada less than two weeks after another team of Saudi operatives killed and dismembered the dissident Saudi writer Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul. American intelligence agencies have determined that Crown Prince Mohammed likely ordered the killing.

Mr. Aljabri's suit contained scant evidence to support its charges, including about the alleged Canada operation, nor could they be independently verified by The New York Times.

A spokesman for the Saudi embassy in Washington did not respond to a message seeking comment, and Prince Mohammed has said that he had no prior knowledge of the operation targeting Mr. Khashoggi.

The lawsuit is the latest riposte in a years-long battle at the top of the Saudi power structure as Prince Mohammed has worked to consolidate his grip on the kingdom.

Visual point of view



Azmoun most decorated Iranian player in European leagues

SPORTS

TEHRAN — Iranian striker, Sardar Azmoun, raised his total trophies with Zenit Saint Petersburg to three after winning the Russian Super Cup final on Friday.

Zenit, who had already won the Russian Premier League (RPL) and the Russian Cup, secured their third glory in the 2019 – 2020 season with a 2-1 victory over Lokomotive Moscow.

Sardar Azamoun, who ended the 2019-20 Russian Premier League season as top

scorer, started at the front line of Zenit and, despite failing to score at the Super Cup final, added more silverware to his 2020 season while helping his team to complete winning the treble within one year.

Azmoun currently is the most decorated Iranian player in the European leagues.

The Iran national team star scored 17 goals in the league, and despite equaling his teammate Artem Dzyuba, the Iranian was ahead of the Russian striker by fewer goals from the penalty spot.



The Golden Boot is awarded to the highest-scoring player in the league.

Sardar, 25, who has been playing six years in Russian teams, joined Zenit Saint Petersburg in 2019.

With €12m contract fee, Azmoun is the

second most expensive Iranian player of all-time, After Alireza Jahanbakhsh.

Azmoun shared his delight on social media by posting a picture with the trophy along with his parents, attaching the caption 'And the third trophy... Thank God!'

Persepolis lift Iran Professional League trophy

SPORTS

TEHRAN — Persepolis lifted the Iran Professional League trophy for the fourth time in a row amid fireworks in a special ceremony on Friday in Tehran's Azadi Stadium.

Persepolis, who had won the title with four games to spare, celebrated the accolade in the empty stadium.

Before the celebration starts, Persepolis lost to struggling Zob Ahan 1-0 which it was their first loss after 16 matches.

With supporters absent due to the coronavirus restrictions, Iran's Sports Minister Masoud Soltanifar, Iran Football Federation acting president Heydar Baharvand and the federation Secretary General Mehdi Mohammad Nabi attended the celebration.

Persepolis lifted the 2019-20 IPL under stewardship of Gabriel Calderon



but the Argentine left the Iranian giants in January after financial problem with the team's officials.

Former Persepolis defender Yahya Golmohammadi was named as new head coach for his second stint and led them to win the title for the fourth successive time.

Iranian wushu athlete Hashemi handed four-year doping ban

SPORTS

TEHRAN — Iranian wushu practitioner Mar-yam Hashemi Foroud has been banned for four years.

Hashemi has received a four-year ban after testing positive for the anabolic steroid nandrolone.

A sanction of four years ineligibility is imposed on the athlete, starting on 21 October 2019 (the date of the sample collection) and concluding (but not inclusive of) on 21 October 2023.

She is disqualified from the 15th World Wushu Championships in Shanghai, China and the results at the competition forfeited as per Art.9.10f IWUF Anti-Doping Rules 2015.

Hashemi had won a gold medal in the World Wushu Championships in the 75kg



weight category.

Men's Sanda athletes Hamidreza Gholipour and Moein Taghavi had been previously handed four years doping ban each.

Doping can demoralize wushu in Iran since the sport has improved a lot in the recent years in Iran.

UK footballers face 12-match ban for racism

Players in English football will be banned for six to 12 games for discriminatory conduct under new Football Association sanctioning guidelines.

FIFA and UEFA imposed a minimum 10-game ban for racism or other forms of discrimination.

The FA said there is flexibility to issue bans for fewer than six matches if the discrimination was on social media or if specific mitigating factors are presented.

The governing body can now pursue cases if an incident of discrimination took place in private setting or outside of a standard football environment.

Manchester City's Bernardo Silva was banned for one

game for a controversial social media post towards teammate Benjamin Mendy while Tottenham midfielder Dele Alli received the same punishment for appearing to mock an Asian man over the coronavirus.

Piara Powar, executive director of football's anti-discrimination Fare Network, said the new rules fail to acknowledge any sanctions for football supporters.

"Again the FA has shifted the burden on to individuals -- mostly players -- who transgress," he said.

"Clubs whose fans behave consistently badly will get a minor sanction, despite the fact that these types of incidents are the most damaging. The FA just does not want

to punish clubs."

There has been a number of incidents involving football fans this season with Bulgaria receiving a two-match stadium closure after racist abuse from the stands in their match against England while a 12-year boy was arrested for sending racist online messages to Crystal Palace winger Wilfried Zaha.

Following the restart after the suspension caused by the coronavirus pandemic, footballers in the UK took the knee in support of the Black Lives Matter movement in the wake of the death of American citizen George Floyd in May. (Source: ESPN)

Cazorla: I want to help Al Sadd win everything

Santi Cazorla wants to help Al Sadd SC "win everything", as the mercurial Spanish midfielder was officially unveiled by the defending Qatar Stars League champions.

Cazorla, who has signed a two-year contract with the Doha-based side, described Al Sadd as the biggest club in Qatar and was excited with the challenge that awaits.

Cazorla joined Al Sadd from Villarreal, having played for the La Liga side the last two seasons after six years with English Premier League club Arsenal.

"Al-Sadd is the biggest club in Qatar and it's a great honor to be here and to be part of this club," said Cazorla, who turns 36 years old in December.

Capped 81 times by Spain, Cazorla said his target is to win everything with Al Sadd.

"We have to try to win everything, all the titles. I will try my best every day to help the team."

Cazorla said he was excited to be teaming up with head coach Xavi, admitting that the Spanish legend played a key role in him signing for Al Sadd.

"Xavi was very important in my decision to come to Qatar. He was my reference



when he was a player, and I'm sure he'll be the same as a coach."

Asian fans will get to see Cazorla in the 2020 AFC Champions League, with Al Sadd set to resume their Group D campaign against UAE's Al Ain on September 15.

Al Sadd had registered a win and a draw before the competition was suspended in March due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cazorla will get a chance to see his new teammates in action when Al Sadd take on QSL leaders Al Duhail on Saturday, with the defending champions needing a win to keep their hopes of defending the league title alive.

(Source: the-afc)

Reports: Juventus sack Sarri

Reports are growing that Maurizio Sarri's time at Juventus is up, with a crisis meeting called, Maurizio Pochettino, Zinedine Zidane and Simone Inzaghi contacted.

Multiple sources now suggest the decision has been made and the coach informed, with a statement expected imminently.

Friday night's Champions League exit at the Round of 16 stage to Olympique Lyonnais proved the final straw for a campaign that has been consistently below expectations.

Although Sarri did steer them to a ninth consecutive Scudetto, that too was a struggle and ultimately the gap from Inter was just one point, with none of the sparkling attacking football he was brought in to provide.

Losing the Italian Supercup and Coppa Italia Finals were already a damning indictment, but a Champions League exit to a side that finished seventh in Ligue 1 is considered unacceptable.

According to multiple reports, there is to be a crisis meeting this afternoon at the Continassa training ground, as President Andrea Agnelli said he would 'evaluate' every situation.

It's widely believed Sarri will be sacked over the next two to three days, as negotiations have already begun to find his



replacement.

Sportitalia claim Pochettino was contacted last night to check for his availability, and of the alternatives, he is the only one not currently under contract.

Sky Sport Italia suggest Simone Inzaghi was called, but Lazio have just qualified for the Champions League and it seems unlikely he'll quit at this stage.

Zidane has only recently returned to Real Madrid after a split and won the Liga title, so he too is an improbable candidate.

Agnelli will also pull the plug on several careers at Juventus, with Sami Khedira, Blaise Matuidi and Daniele Rugani among those heading for the exit.

(Source: Football Italia)

Albion: Jahanbakhsh wonder strike up for goal of the season

Alireza Jahanbakhsh's unforgettable overhead kick is in the running for a major end-of-season award.

The Iranian midfielder's sublime strike is one of nine contending for the title of Premier League goal of the season.

The 84th-minute goal came on New Year's Day and was only Jahanbakhsh's second for the club since becoming the Seagulls' record signing in July 2018.

Albion reportedly paid a fee of 17£million for the now -26-year-old, who opened his account for the club just days earlier as they dispatched Bournemouth.

The eye-catching strike snatched Albion a point against Chelsea in a 1-1 draw at the Amex, with the London club having taken the lead through Cesar Azpilicueta after ten minutes.

But Jahanbakhsh faces stiff competition for the title of Premier League goal of the season.

Other contenders include Moussa Djenepo's impressive solo effort for Southampton against Sheffield United in September, Matty Longstaff's low drive which earned



Newcastle a win against Manchester United the following month and Bruno Fernandes's volley against Albion in June.

Maghsoodloo wins Double Speed Chess Grand Prix

Iranian Grandmaster Parham Maghsoodloo emerged victorious at the Double Speed Chess Grand Prix.

The first event featured 875 participants. Some of the top contenders in most Grand Prix events like GMs Fabiano Caruana, Hikaru Nakamura and Maxime Vachier-Lagrave all failed to qualify.



In the playoffs, Peter Svidler managed to defeat Sam Sevan, who missed a sneaky mate threat.

In the playoff, the story was Parham Maghsoodloo's wild games. He reached the semi-finals by defeating Tang and then won a convincing opening game against Zierk. However, needing only a draw to reach the finals, Maghsoodloo fell into a lost position and way behind on the clock. Yet, somehow he kept his cool, complicated the game, and his opponent was the one who lost on time, chess.com reported.

In the finals against Alekseenko, Maghsoodloo again started with a win as Black before running into trouble when he only needed to draw as White.

The win brought Maghsoodloo tournament victory for him in Iran.

(Source: Chess.com)

Paços de Ferreira eye Alipour: report

Portuguese football club Paços de Ferreira are in negotiations with Persepolis to sign Ali Alipour.

Alipour, 26, has scored 62 goals and provided 32 assists in 192 games for Persepolis.

The striker, who can also play as a winger, is expected to arrive in Paços de Ferreira in the next two weeks to sign a contract for two seasons with the team.

Ali Alipour had been already linked with a move to Rio Ave.

Paços de Ferreira are one of the historic teams in Portuguese football, having been in the Portuguese Primeira Liga for 20 seasons.

(Source: A Bola)

Esteghlal striker Motahari a doubt for Sepahan Match

Tasnim — Esteghlal football team forward Arsalan Motahari will most likely miss the match against Sepahan.

Esteghlal will host Sepahan in Tehran's Azadi Stadium on Monday in Iran's Hazfi Cup quarterfinals.

Motahari suffered a hamstring injury in the match against Shahr Khodro on Thursday.

Esteghlal midfielder Farshad Esmaeili also is a doubt for the Sepahan match after an injury from his right foot.

Tractor, Naft Masjed Soleyman and Persepolis have already qualified for the Hazfi Cup's semifinals.

11 Bangladesh players coronavirus positive

Eleven players from the Bangladesh national football squad have tested positive for the COVID-19 coronavirus.

The infections were confirmed after 24 of 36 players scheduled to join a training camp organised by the team's English coach Jamie Day were tested.

"None of them carried any symptoms before coming for the test," Bangladesh Football Federation General Secretary Md Abu Nayeem Shohag said on Friday.

The training camp is in preparation for the Asian Qualifiers for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and AFC Asian Cup China 2023, with Bangladesh scheduled to resume their Group E campaign in October.

Jamie Day's side will face Afghanistan on October 8, Qatar (October 13), India (November 12) and Oman (November 17).

(Source: the-afc)

Two employees of Tokyo Olympic organizers positive for COVID

TOKYO (AP) — Two employees of the Tokyo Olympic organizing committee have tested positive for COVID-19, officials said Saturday.

That brings to three the number of employees of the committee who have tested positive since the pandemic began.

Organizers said a man and a woman had tested positive but gave few details. They said the man was in his 20s and the woman in her 30s, and that both were now working from home rather than at the headquarters located near Tokyo Bay.

Many of the organizing committee's employees have been working remotely though some have returned to office work in the last few months.

The organizing committee has a staff of 3,500.

The 2020 Tokyo Olympics have been put back to July 23, 2021 due to the pandemic. The original closing ceremony was to have been Sunday, Aug. 9.

Japan has reported just over 1,000 deaths from COVID-19. Like the country, Tokyo has been largely spared, though new cases have been rising for the last few weeks with officials urging people not to travel and to stay away from bars and restaurants.

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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

One who is sure of God's compensation, shows much generosity himself.
Imam Ali (AS)

Palestinian film events seek better ties with Iran Resistance festival

→1 Mikailzadeh and Abu Shamala and Ibrahim Muslim, the director of the International Film Festival on Nakba and Return, also held a video conference, discussing a number of plans to expand relations among the three resistance films events in the region.



A poster for the 16th Resistance International Film Festival.

They reached an agreement to screen the entries to the 16th Resistance International Film Festival in Palestine shortly after the original event.

The organizers announced earlier that the festival has been warmly welcomed internationally as they have received over 1200 submissions from filmmakers from around the world.

They said that they have received 1260 submissions from filmmakers in Central America, South America, Europe, Asia and Africa.

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

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

The festival, which will take place in Tehran from September 21 to 27, has dedicated a section titled "Health Defenders" that will screen movies on medical workers and their endeavors on the front lines of the campaign against COVID-19.

It has so far received 372 submissions in this category from around the world.

An exhibition of photos and posters on the medical workers will be also organized on the sidelines of the festival.

Sherlock Holmes stories published in Persian

A R T TEHRAN — A Persian translation of "The Adventure of the Dancing Men and Other Sherlock Holmes Stories" by British author Arthur Conan Doyle has recently been published by Hermes Publications in Tehran. The book has been rendered into Persian by Heshmatollah Sabbaghi.

Undoubtedly the world's best-known fictional detective, Sherlock Holmes, with his faithful sidekick, Dr. Watson, is the scourge of London's underworld, sallying forth from his rooms at 221B Baker Street to solve crimes and bring evildoers to justice.

Now, five of the best Holmes stories have been collected in this book, offering a superb sampler of the great sleuth's fascinating adventures.

"The Adventure of the Dancing Men" is about the sudden appearance of mysterious stick-figure drawings, which prove disastrous to a country squire and his bride.

All the stories represent a wonderful introduction to the larger body of Holmes stories, as well as a delightful pocket-sized treat for any mystery lover.

Conan Doyle was born in Edinburgh in 1859 and died in 1930. He set up as a doctor at Southsea and it was while waiting for patients that he began to write. His growing success as an author enabled him to give up his practice and turn his attention to other subjects.

His greatest achievement was his creation of Sherlock Holmes, who soon attained international status and constantly distracted him from his other work. At one point Conan Doyle killed him but was obliged by public protest to restore him to life. And in his creation of Dr. Watson, Holmes's companion in adventure and his chronicler, Conan Doyle not only produced a perfect foil for Holmes but also one of the most famous narrators in fiction.

Iran's National Orchestra releases "Song of Humanity" in honor of health workers

A R T TEHRAN — Iran's National Orchestra has released a music video titled "Song of Humanity" to acknowledge the efforts the medical staff have made in the battle with the coronavirus.

The orchestra under the baton of conductor Sohrab Kashaf has performed for the music video, which was unveiled during a meeting attended by Health Minister Saeid Namaki and Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Seyyed Abbas Salehi at the Health Ministry on Thursday.

The orchestra performed the song in honor of the healthcare staff in Vahdat Hall in Tehran.

Speaking at the ceremony, the culture minister expressed thanks to the health minister and all the medical and healthcare staff in their battle with COVID-19, and said, "The medical staff have always been with people over the past 40 years, especially during the Iran-Iraq war."

"The history of war cannot be recorded without the history of medicine. During the chemical bombardment in the war, like these days of battling with the coronavirus, there was not much knowledge, but the energy, faith and commitment of the medical staff made them win the situation. We are proud of them over the past forty years, and now, after five months of hard days with the new virus, their great efforts will surely be recorded. Their help and endeavors will not be forgotten," the culture minister said.



A monitor shows "Song of Humanity" in a meeting to unveil the music video organized at the Health Ministry in Tehran on August 6, 2020.

He added, "Art and culture also followed the healthcare staff and carried out their social responsibility well. I hope this video will act like a little gift for the health care staff and help keep their spirits higher."

Health Minister Namaki also on his part expressed thanks to the orchestra, and said, "Our colleagues are battling

with the coronavirus in these hard days of sanctions. We, unfortunately, have lost a number of our colleagues, but what has encouraged them these days are the additional energy that people and art and cultural figures have given them. This video will surely keep their spirit up."

"Art is the language of love. The individual who goes through fire as a

healthcare staff is in love. The great efforts made by our doctors and nurses in the battle with coronavirus are praiseworthy," he said.

Namaki wished a long and precious life to all the artists, calling them a great social asset.

"I hope no one will get infected with this disease and I wish that we will be able to control this disease in the near future," he concluded.

A number of Iranian musicians have released music videos during the home quarantine to insert hope and encourage people in the battle against the coronavirus, while they have also tried to express appreciation for the efforts made by the healthcare staff.

The Tehran Symphony Orchestra released a music video from Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 "Ode to Joy" it produced along with 148 world musicians in May.

Members of Iran's National Orchestra also produced "Sabokbal" and "Romantic Passion" during the home quarantine in May.

Each musician recorded a video of her/his performances of composer Hossein Dehlavi's "Sabokbal" and Morteza Neydavud's "Romantic Passion" in an innovative project by the Rudaki Artistic Cultural Foundation. The two videos were produced based on the videos recorded by each musician.

Promoting the motto "We Stay Home in Order to Go on Stage Sooner", the first performance was released online in April.

Actress Mahchehreh Khalili dies at 44

Her close friend and colleague Parastu Salehi announced her death news in an Instagram post on Friday.

Khalili had a degree in architecture from Oxford University and completed courses at Method Acting, a college school in London that provides acting classes and lessons.

She was a grandchild of veteran actress Parvin Solemani and made her debut with Iraj Qaderi's drama "Black Eyes" in 2000.

"Havana File" by Alireza Raisian, "Trap" by Sirus Alvand and "Mask" by Kazem Rastgoftar are some of the movies in which Khalili starred.

However, she did some of her best work in the TV series "In the Eye of the Wind" by Masud Jafari Jozani and "The Pahlavi Hat" by Ziaeddin Dorri, both of which chronicle part of contemporary Iranian history.

Khalili produced her masterpiece in "Mokhtarnameh", director Davud Mirbaqeri's TV series about an uprising organized by Mokhtar Saqafi after the events of Ashura,

the 10th of Muharram, to take revenge against the killers of Imam Hussein (AS). She portrayed Narieh, Mokhtar's sister in the blockbuster.

Director Ali Atshani's 2017 acclaimed drama "Wishbone" features one of her last appearances in the film industry.

Khalili who held dual citizenship in Tehran and London gave birth to her only son, Parvaz in Iran to let him have Iranian nationality.

"I wanted my son to be born in Iran. I wanted him to have an Iranian identity card and passport. This was very important for me, because I had lived far from Iran for twenty years, but I always wished to live in Iran, and I have always considered myself an Iranian," Khalili had earlier said on Dorehami, an Iranian TV talk show hosted by director and actor Mehran Modiri.

Her close friend, actress Naeimeh Nezamdoost said on Saturday that there are no plans to transfer Khalili's remains to Iran and she will be buried in a cemetery in London.

Iranian documentary on Ayatollah Khomeini screened in Najaf

A R T TEHRAN — The Owj Arts and Media Organization announced in Tehran on Saturday that it has screened a documentary on Ayatollah Seyyed Abolqassem Musavi Khomeini (1899-1992), the grand scholar of Shia Muslims, at the Imam Al-Khoei Foundation in the Iraqi city of Najaf.

The documentary named "Ayatollah" by director Seyyed Mostafa Musavi-Tabar, explores different aspects of the character of Ayatollah Khomeini from his childhood to adulthood, his relation with Imam Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Revolution, his meeting with Iran's former empress Farah Pahlavi, and

his meeting with former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein in his palace.

The achievements of the ayatollah, his challenges and the martyrdom of his sons are also included in the documentary.

The director has conducted over 300 hours of interviews with many influential figures such as Sheikh Moslem Vahedi and Ayatollah Mohammad-Mehdi Musavi Khalkhali, to make his film.

A number of scholars from the Najaf Seminary attended the screening of the documentary, to which the Ahd Institute has also made a contribution.

Grand Ayatollah Khomeini was born in Iran and passed away in Iraq.

Educated in the established traditional way of Shia theology by well-known jurists, he joined the world-renown theological institution in the holy city of Najaf in 1912, the year he migrated from Iran.

He taught in Najaf for over 70 years. For 50 years, he specialized in supervising post-graduate studies.

He is considered as the architect of a distinct school of thought in the principles of jurisprudence and Islamic law.

His interests included astronomy, mathematics and philosophy.

He was a prolific writer in the aforesaid disciplines. He wrote 37 books and treatises, most of which have been published.



Scholars watch the documentary "Ayatollah" by director Seyyed Mostafa Musavi-Tabar at the Imam Al-Khoei Foundation in the Iraqi city of Najaf.

Iran-Austria Music Event pays tribute to world medical staff

A R T TEHRAN — A music festival named the "Iran-Austria Music Event" was held at Tehran's Niavaran Cultural Center on Friday to pay tribute to the medical staff around the world.

Speaking at the ceremony, the director of the event, Hessam Sakhtianchi, said that the event aimed to give hope to the musicians while it also intended to pay tribute to healthcare staff.

"I am happy that I could manage to bring together a number of professional Iranian and international musicians to watch during these hard days of battle with COVID-19," he said.

Stefan Scholz, the Austrian ambassador to Tehran, also attending the ceremony, said that such good relations between Iran and Austria are hardly seen



Iranian-Austrian musicians perform in Tehran's Niavaran Cultural Center in honor of the world medical staff.

between other countries.

He also expressed thanks to all doctors and nurses in Iran and across the world, and said that the healthcare staff have so far saved the lives of many and some have unfortunately died and that the performance is done in their memories.

Next, the organizer of the event, the Iranisch-Österreichische Handelskammer (Iranian-Austrian Chamber of Commerce) thanked Niavaran Cultural Center director Ebadreza Eslami for his support.

The band featured Iranian musicians Ali Zarrabi on trumpet, Makan Khoynejad on cello, Soroush Omumi on drums, Basir Akbari on guitar and two international saxophonists, all of whom performed under the baton of conductor Forugh Fazli.

Scandinavian Intl. Film Festival to screen movies from Iran

A R T TEHRAN — The short movies "Limit" and "Label" by Iranian filmmakers will be competing in the Scandinavian International Film Festival, which will take place in the Finnish capital of Helsinki from August 22 to 26.

"Limit" directed by Javad Darai tells the story of a desperate man who frantically pleads with strangers to accompany him to his home, without being clear on his intentions.

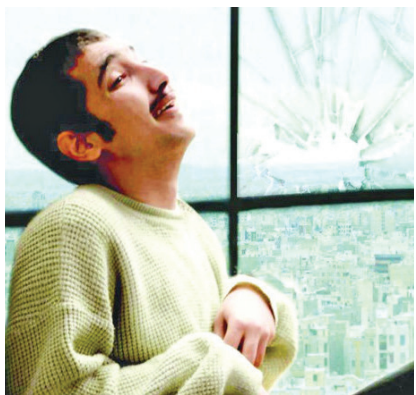
The film has been screened at numerous international events and won several honors, including the grand prix of the 10th Entr'2 Marches in Cannes, France in May 2019.

It also was named best short film at the Woodbury Short Film Festival that took place in March in Salt Lake City, the capital city of Utah in the western U.S.

The 7th Speechless Film Festival in the U.S. also gave its award for best student film to the film in April 2019.

Directed by Mohammad Shahrestanki, "Label" is about Mohsen, who breaks off his engagement on the threshold of the wedding ceremony.

"The Scandinavian International Film Festival serves as a cinematic cultural template for emerging, talented filmmakers who wish to express their uniqueness through the lens of past excellence while exposing themselves to the latest innovative concepts in the arts," the organizers of the event have said in a statement.



A scene from the short movie "Limit".