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Production of sponge iron increases 12% in 4 months yr/yr

TEHRAN — Production of sponge iron in Iran increased 12 percent during the first four months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-July 21) compared to the same period of time in the previous year.

As reported by IRIB, more than 10.581 million tons of sponge iron has been produced in the four-month period of this year, while the figure was 9.468 million tons in the same time span of the past year.

As previously reported, production of sponge iron in Iran has also risen 12 percent during the first quarter of the current year (March 20-June 20) compared to the first quarter of the previous year.

Over 8.213 tons of sponge iron has been produced in the first quarter of this year.

Meanwhile, sponge iron output increased 16 percent to 661,466 tons in the third Iranian calendar month Khordad (May 21-June 20) compared to the third month in the past year. **->4**

Iran to unveil two new missiles on Thursday

TEHRAN — Defense Minister Amir Hatami said on Wednesday that Iran's defense industry is advancing, noting that the defense industry is a pioneering and driving force for other industries.

Hatami made the remarks during a meeting with members of the parliament's industries and mines committee.

The defense chief said the military is involved in national programs such as

"space program" and other fields favored by Majlis (parliament) and the administration.

Hatami also said the defense industry is ready to help the private sector.

The minister also said Iran is located in a strategic region where there are many players and it is necessary that Iran promote its defense and deterrence capabilities. **->3**

Japanese environmental drawing contest honors paintings by Iranian children

TEHRAN — Paintings by Iranian children Melika Amjadian and Nasim Zamani have been honored in the international section of the 20th JQA International Environmental Children's Drawing Contest in Japan.

Melika and Nasim are among the 23 winners of first prizes at the competition, which is co-organized for children aged 7 to 15 by the Japan Quality Assurance Organization (JQA) and the International

Certification Organization Network (IQNet). It is also supported by the UNICEF Tokyo Office.

In addition, the Iranian children Arefeh Mirhaj, Sarina Rabi Hamedani, Hannaneh Eshqi and Sama Hosseinejad were awarded honorable mentions.

The children are the members of Iran's Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults. **->12**

By Farrokh Hesabi
Tehran Times journalist

Iran football's biggest scandal of all time

Negotiating a foreign head coach's contract is far from simple, especially in the Iranian football, and, not only in Iran but generally in modern football, clubs and football federations have to consider many financial and legal issues when concluding a contract with a foreigner.

However, there is no excuse for people who signed the foreign players and coaches. Some of the coaches are earning far too much, and some others take advantage of the mistakes in their contracts.

Wilmots filed a complaint against the FFIRI to FIFA for non-payment during his time as head coach.

The directors of the Iranian football federation had a lot of hopes to win the lawsuit, but the verdict of the FIFA Players' Status Committee was against the Iranians so that the FFIRI was sentenced to pay 6,500,000 euros to Wilmots.

The Belgian coach was appointed in May 2019 with a three-year contract to lead Iran in their quest for a sixth FIFA World Cup appearance, but left his position as just after six matches in charge due to what he called 'serious contractual violations by the Iranian Football Federation'.

The case has caused astonishment and anger among the Iranian authorities and football fans. They have voiced their anger not only over the manner of selecting and concluding the contract with Marc Wilmots, who was paid much more than his market value, but also over the manner of ending the contract with him.

The Iranian football federation firstly denied the issue of the failure in the Wilmots's case, but finally admitted that they had received the verdict from FIFA.

The top officials of the football federation, including those who involved in the deal with Wilmots, sought to distance themselves from the contract scandal and management disgrace.

Members of the FFIRI's board of directors, who all have signed Marc Wilmots' contract, are also responsible for such a scandal and must pay for their costly mistake.

It seems that in response to the public outrage, shown at media as well as social networks, the board of directors' members of the football federation should resign from their position in Iranian football as soon as possible.

Tens of projects to promote tourism, handicrafts in central Iran

TEHRAN — A total of 95 tourism-related projects are scheduled to be inaugurated across central Iranian provinces of Yazd and Isfahan on the occasion of the Government Week (August 24-30).

Some 55 projects in tourism and handicrafts sectors will come on stream in Isfahan province, provincial tourism chief Fereydoun Allahyari said on Wednesday.

In collaboration with the private sector and with a budget of 1.6 trillion rials (about \$38 million), the mentioned projects will generate job opportunities for 400 people, the official added.

Mohammad Mirshamsi, a provincial tourism official in Yazd, also announced on Wednesday that 40 tourism-related projects will be inaugurated across the province.

A budget of 1.1 trillion rials (about \$26 million) has been allocated to the projects, which will create 280 job opportunities, he noted.

The projects include eco-lodge unites, tradi-

tional restaurants, and accommodation centers.

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

However, on Monday, he noted that Iran's travel sector has suffered a loss of 12 trillion rials (some \$2.85 billion at the official rate of 42,000 rials) since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic.

Some experts expect Iran to achieve a tourism boom after coronavirus contained, believing its impact would be temporary and short-lived for a country that ranked the third fastest-growing tourism destination in 2019. **->8**

U.S. protests: Police declare riot in Portland amid ongoing protests

U.S. police have declared a riot in Portland amid ongoing protests over racial injustice.

According to AP, the riot was declared Tuesday night outside the building, police said. They ordered people to leave the area. People were smashing windows on the first floor, and threw "burning material" inside, the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office said.

The Multnomah County Building was set on fire and vandalized, said county commission chair Deborah Kafoury, the Oregonian/OregonLive reported. There was damage to a lobby where protective equipment against the spread of the coronavirus is distributed, she said.

The building is used for marriages, among other services. Kafoury asked that residents support efforts to address the pandemic and provide programs.

"In such a difficult, uncertain time, our com-

munity needs all of us to work together," she said.

Demonstrations that often turn violent have racked Oregon's biggest city for more than two months following the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

Police on Tuesday said they have identified a suspect accused of punching and kicking a man to the ground after he crashed his pickup truck on a sidewalk near ongoing demonstrations.

Authorities had received a report around 10:30 p.m. Sunday of protesters chasing a truck a few blocks from the downtown federal courthouse. The driver crashed and was then assaulted, authorities said.

Authorities are trying to track down the suspect, Marquise Love, 25, police said in a statement. The victim of the assault has been released from a hospital and is recovering. **->10**

International Tribune: A non-closed chapter

By Abir Bassam

Fifteen years, the Lebanese people have been waiting for fifteen years for the alleged justice that should be brought by the International Tribune. The tribune was commissioned to investigate the assassination of the Lebanese Prime Minister Rafic Hariri.

But, after the long waiting for the indefinite results, the indictment list on the 18th of August was clearly a "U" turn back to the starting point. The declaration was internationally needed as a damned sword on the

necks of Syria and Hezbollah.

However, it is difficult to trust the results of the international investigations because it was doubted from the start by judges and investigators who were directly involved in it.

According to an article published by the Lebanese newspaper al-Akbar, the president of the International Tribune, Sir David Baragwanath, forced the vice president of the tribune Robert Roth to resign because his wife was working with an editor to unspecified Israeli newsletter.

And Mrs. Roth was accused of tampering with the evidence.

Former UN investigator Bo Astrom announced another accusation of deliberately dropping crucial evidence. In a recorded interview, he said many facts involved the inquiry was totally ignored by the investigators, especially the facts related to the Wissam al-Hassan assassination in 2012. Al-Hassan was the only person who had information about the road or roads Hariri parade was supposed to take. **->7**



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Konkur kicks off amid pandemic

TEHRAN — Iran's national university entrance exam (Konkur) started on Wednesday under health protocols amid the COVID-19 pandemic and will run through August 22.

The exam will be attended by 1,393,233 candidates, which shows an increase of 274,440 compared to last year.

Konkur includes three main groups of mathematical sciences, experimental sciences, and human sciences along with two other groups of art and foreign languages.

Due to the special conditions caused by the outbreak, seven thousand environmental health experts are monitoring the exam process.

The exam is being held at 10 mosallas (large mosques) and 48 stadiums across the country. **->9**

E3 faces dilemma over snapback of UN sanctions on Iran

TEHRAN — As the U.S. push to reinstate all UN sanctions on Iran reaches a critical point, analysts tell the Tehran Times that the U.S. move to snap back UN sanctions on Iran will likely face strong opposition from the international community.

According to a Reuters report, in a bid to muster support for the U.S. efforts to trigger a snapback of UN sanctions on Iran, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo will likely travel to New York on Thursday to meet with the UN officials including UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and Indonesia's UN Ambassador Dian Triansyah Djani, the Security Council president for August.

Pompeo is also expected to submit a complaint to the UN Security Council about what the U.S. calls Iran's non-compliance with the 2015 nuclear deal, which is officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). On Friday, the U.S. put forward a resolution calling for the extension of a UN arms embargo on Iran but the Security Council rejected the resolution. With the failure of the resolution, the U.S. is now poised to initiate the highly controversial process of triggering a return of all UN sanctions on Iran.

While the U.S. claims it has the legal authority to trigger the snapback process as defined in the UN Security Council, the EU has announced that the U.S. has no legal right to trigger the snapback of UN sanctions because it withdrew from the JCPOA.

"Given that the US unilaterally withdrew from the JCPOA in May 2018 and has not participated in any JCPOA structures or activities subsequently, the US cannot be considered as a JCPOA participant. **->3**

Time for Washington to change tack, Zarif says of 1953 US-UK coup against Iran

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said that the United States keeps getting humiliated by the Iranian people and it is time for it to change tack.

"67 years ago today, US/UK tried to suffocate the Iranian people's demand for dignity in a coup overthrowing their elected government. Since 1979, the US has desperately tried to resuscitate the past. Yet it keeps getting humiliated by the Iranian people. Time to change tack?" he tweeted on Tuesday.



On 19 August 1953, the democratically elected government of Iran led by Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddeq was overthrown. The coup was orchestrated jointly by the United States, under the name "Pejak Project", and the United Kingdom, under the name of "Operation Boot".

The coup saw the formation of a military government under Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, who progressed from a constitutional monarch to an authoritarian one who relied heavily on United States' support to hold on to power until his own overthrow in February 1979.

In 1989, the U.S. State Department first released coup-related documents, but edited out any reference to American or British involvement. Since then, the omission of CIA's role has been widely criticized by historians.

Finally, in 2013, the CIA publicly admitted for the first time that it was behind the coup. It also released documents that showed how the British government tried to block the release of information about its own involvement in overthrow of Mosaddegh.

Saudi Arabia issues desperate calls for extension of anti-Iran UN arms ban

(Press TV) — The Saudi regime has issued a desperate call for the extension of a UN arms embargo against Iran only days after the UN Security Council said a resounding 'No' to a U.S. resolution seeking an illegal extension of the embargo.

The cabinet, chaired by King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud on Tuesday, demanded the extension of the arms embargo on Iran, alleging that the removal of the sanctions will lead to "more destruction" and further fuel conflicts in the Middle East region.

It also pledged the kingdom's support for all international measures that contribute to stopping Iran's regional clout.



The Security Council on Friday rejected a U.S. resolution to extend the arms embargo on Iran that is due to expire in October under a 2015 nuclear agreement between Tehran and six other world countries.

Besides the U.S., only one of the Council's 15 members — the Dominican Republic — voted in favor of the U.S.-drafted resolution, which had the support of the Saudi regime and its allies at the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

The vote highlighted the division between Washington and its European allies since U.S. President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from Iran's nuclear accord, which is officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and has been endorsed by Security Council Resolution 2231, in May 2018.

Prior to the session, Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to the UN Abdul Aziz al-Wasel had called for the extension of the arms embargo on Iran, claiming that Tehran funnels weapons to certain groups to disturb the peace in the Middle East.

The allegations come despite the fact that Saudi Arabia is known to be actively supporting and aiding the Takfiri terrorist groups wreaking havoc across the region.

Moreover, the oil-rich conservative kingdom has been engaged in a bloody campaign against neighboring Yemen since March 2015 with the aim of reinstating a Riyadh-friendly former government there.

The Riyadh regime has not been alone in the atrocious campaign. It has been flanked by regional allies and enjoys arms supplies from its Western backers.

Over 100,000 people have been killed, according to some semi-official figures.

The war has also destroyed and shut down Yemen's infrastructure. The Yemeni population has been subjected to large-scale hunger and diseases aggravated by the naval blockade imposed on the country by the coalition of aggressors.

Takht-Ravanchi says U.S. complaint against Iran will fail

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Majid Takht-Ravanchi, Iran's ambassador to the United Nations, has said that the United States' move to file a complaint against Iran at the UN Security Council will fail, calling it a "defeated policy".

Washington is reportedly planning to submit a complaint to the UN Security Council over allegations of Iran's non-compliance with the 2015 nuclear deal, even though the U.S. unilaterally withdrew from the historic pact in May 2018.

U.S. diplomats and a UN official said Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is likely to travel to New York on Thursday to seek a return of all UN sanctions on Iran and meet with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, Reuters reported.

Pompeo is likely to meet with Indonesia's UN Ambassador Dian Triansyah Djani, the Security Council president for August, to submit the complaint, diplomats said.

Takht-Ravanchi said, "The United States should learn lesson from the former session of the Security Council in which it could just be able to have the Dominican Republic as accompany."

He noted that the U.S. policy of pressure



against Iran cannot be called diplomacy. On Friday, the UN Security Council almost unanimously refused to back a U.S.-drafted resolution on extending the

UN's arms embargo against Iran, which is due to expire in October under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). During the 15-member Security Council

vote, the U.S. resolution received support only from the Dominican Republic, leaving it far short of the minimum nine yes votes needed.

Russia and China voted against the resolution. The other members, including France and Britain as permanent members of the council, and Germany refused to vote in favor of the U.S. resolution.

After Washington's humiliating failure at the Security Council, U.S. President Donald Trump announced that he intends to trigger the snapback mechanism, which would reimpose international sanctions against Iran at the United Nations.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Monday that the U.S. "killed" the JCPOA, "buried" it and held a "funeral" for it, but even the corpse of the nuclear pact defeated the United States.

The chief Iranian diplomat argued that the Americans thought they could secure 9 votes, which would prompt Russia and China to veto the resolution, but it didn't even need those countries using their veto power.

According to Zarif, the fact that Russia and China voted against the resolution demonstrated the two countries' insistence on their stance.

Rouhani: Country being run by non-oil export President says 'tyrannical White House' and 'cruel' sanctions are not permanent

POLITICAL TEHRAN — President Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday that the Iranian economy is being managed by non-oil exports, which he said is "unprecedented" in the past several decades.

"We are managing the country with non-oil export. This is a very important issue. It is unprecedented in the history of Iran. Neither before the (1979) Revolution and nor after the Revolution," Rouhani said during a cabinet meeting.

He added, "This year only 10% of the budget relies on oil."

Iran's current year started on March 20, 2020. The president went on to say that in certain years, when the oil price was high, Iran's oil income reached about 100 billion dollars. He said even in 2011 Iran's oil income hit 102 billion dollars.

"Our dear people should know this reality that once in a year 100 billion dollars of oil money were deposited in the treasury... today there is no such 100 billion dollars and this is an honor for the government to say that is managing its trade" with the least reliance on oil, Rouhani stated.

The Trump administration, which unilaterally withdrew from the 2015 nuclear deal in May 2018, has imposed a total oil embargo against Iran in violation of international law.

Before the sanctions, Iran was the third largest oil producer within OPEC.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Rouhani said the current

"tyrannical White House" and "cruel" sanctions are not permanent.

"We have stood against the sanctions which will come to an end. If anyone in Iran thinks that this tyrannical administration of the White House and the cruel sanctions are permanent, they are mistaken, because both tyrants in the White House and the sanctions will not last forever," the president stated.

He added, "Sanctions will fall apart... We made them understand that they have made a mistake through our resistance and the White House has fully understood that they were wrong, but they were helpless in the way they took, and it is difficult for them to find a way out."

'Snapback mechanism is doomed to failure'

Elsewhere, Rouhani said that the U.S. attempt to trigger snapback mechanism is doomed to failure.

He noted that the U.S. is not a party to the 2015 nuclear deal anymore and all sides have condemned Washington's attempt to try resort to such a ploy.

"The world is aware what will happen if the United States takes step in this dead-end path. They themselves have burned the bridge and imagine that there is still a bridge for them to cross," the president remarked.

After a defeat at the UN Security Council on Friday to extend arms embargo on Iran which expires in October, U.S. President Donald Trump's administration plans to use the snapback provision, even though it quit the deal in 2018



and the move is opposed by the remaining parties to the accord — Germany, Britain, France, Russia, China and Iran.

Only the Dominican Republic voted in favor of the U.S. draft resolution to extend arms embargo against Iran. 11 other countries, including Europeans, abstained. China and Russia opposed.

Rouhani thanked all the 11 countries, especially Russia and China, which did not vote for the resolution.

The Security Council has 15 members. The five permanent members (China, France, Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States) and 10 non-permanent members.

The current non-permanent members are Belgium, Dominican Republic, Estonia, Germany, Indonesia, Niger, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, South Africa, Tunisia and Vietnam.

"They themselves (Americans) have burned the bridge and imagine that there is still a bridge for them to cross," Rouhani notes.

Vaezi says tankers seized by U.S. do not belong to Iran

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Presidential chief of staff Mahmoud Vaezi said on Wednesday that the tankers seized by the United States and the cargo they were carrying did not belong to Iran.

"These tankers do not belong to Iran. Anyway, oil is being sold and purchased in international waters. About the issue that the oil may have belonged to Iran, we do not follow the oil that we sell and receive its money," he told reporters on the sidelines of a cabinet meeting.

"The tankers were not Iran-flagged and others have purchased their cargo," he noted.

U.S. officials claimed on August 13 that the Trump administration has seized the cargo of four tankers which was targeting for transporting Iranian fuel to Venezuela, The Associated Press reported.

A senior U.S. official told AP that no military force was used in the seizures and that the ships weren't physically confiscated. Rather, U.S. officials threatened



ship owners, insurers and captains with sanction to force them to hand over their cargo, which now becomes U.S. property, the official said.

An informed Iranian source told Nour News that no Iranian tanker has been seized.

"As it has been announced for several times, the Islamic Republic of Iran will respond to any hostile action that limits

its legal rights, and so far has not permitted any country to take such actions," the source said.

Iranian Ambassador to Venezuela Hojat Soltani tweeted on August 14, "Another lie and psychological warfare by the United States' imperialism propaganda machine. The tankers are neither Iranians, nor their owners or flags have anything to do with Iran. The terrorist Trump cannot make up for his humiliation and defeat towards the great Iranian nation through fake propaganda."

U.S. prosecutors filed a lawsuit in July to seize four tankers sailing towards Venezuela with gasoline supplied by Iran.

The lawsuit, filed in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, was followed by a warrant issued by U.S. District Judge James Boasberg for the seizure of the more than 1.1 million barrels of gasoline in the four vessels, Reuters reported.

Legal sources said the gasoline could

likely only be seized by U.S. authorities if the tankers enter U.S. territorial waters.

In the civil-forfeiture complaint, U.S. federal prosecutors aim to stop delivery of Iranian gasoline aboard the Liberia-flagged Bella, Bering, Pandi and Luna, according to the lawsuit, first reported by the Wall Street Journal.

Boasberg issued the warrant for the seizure of the gasoline in the tankers based on probable cause that the fuel is forfeitable, the Justice Department said.

The lawsuit also aims to stop the flow of revenues from oil sales to Iran.

Five Iranian oil tankers by the names of Petunia, Forest, Faxon, Clavel, and Fortune carried fuel to Venezuela despite the United States' sanctions. The last of them entered Venezuelan waters on June 1.

The tankers carried 1,520,000 barrels of gasoline and diesel fuel to Venezuela. There was also a team of Iranian engineers and specialists from the oil industry on board heading for the country.

Iran expresses readiness to help Afghanistan peace process

POLITICAL TEHRAN — In a telephone conversation with his Afghan counterpart on Wednesday morning, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif expressed Iran's readiness to help peace negotiations in Afghanistan.

The two sides exchanged views on many issues including Afghanistan's peace process, the need to continue the intra-Afghan talks without any foreign interference, preserving the achievements of the past 18 years, and Iran's readiness to help the Afghanistan peace negotiations, according to a statement issued by Iran's Foreign Ministry.

Zarif also discussed with Hanif Atmar, the acting foreign minister of Afghanistan, the issue of finalizing a



comprehensive agreement between Iran and Afghanistan. Afghanistan's Foreign Ministry also issued a statement on the call, saying that Iran expressed readiness to host the Afghanistan peace talks.

According to the Afghan statement, the two sides exchanged views on a broad range of issues including strengthening regional and international consensus on the peace, reducing hostilities, releasing the remaining prisoners, and the decisions made by the Loya Jirga, a consultative system made up of high-ranking Afghan figures.

The call came days after reports in the U.S. media accused Iran of offering bounties to the Taliban for targeting American and coalition forces in Afghanistan, a claim that Iran firmly denied.

U.S. attempts to fight multilateralism doomed to failure: ambassador

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Iranian Ambassador to Paris Bahram Qassemi has said U.S. attempts to fight multilateralism and violate international norms is doomed to failure.

In a statement on Tuesday, Qassemi wrote that what happened at the UN Security Council meeting was a new process which can lead to fascinating consequences, IRNA reported.

He was pointed to the United States' efforts to extend an arms embargo on Iran, which ended in a humiliating defeat at the UN Security Council on Friday. Only the Dominican Republic backed the U.S.-anti-Iran resolution. The vote highlighted the division between Washington and its European allies since Trump withdrew from the nuclear accord in May 2018.

According to Qassemi, the U.S., as a permanent member of the UNSC faced a historic defeat which can be considered a turning point in the contemporary era.

He described the role of Iran's diplomacy as undeniable, saying such role should be



considered precisely, fairly and reasonably. The ambassador said that the votes in favor and against the U.S. draft resolution indicated that the world is concerned about

continuation of the hegemony of a power with a long record of breaching international law and human rights.

Multilateralism is the only solution to the current problems the international community is suffering from, he noted.

Following Washington's failure at the UN Security Council, Trump announced that he intends to trigger the snapback mechanism, which would reimpose international sanctions against Iran at the United Nations.

In response, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said in a tweet on Sunday that United States' recourse to the snapback mechanism under resolution 2231 has "no leg to stand on," as Trump has withdrawn the U.S. from the nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

In his Monday night televised interview, the foreign minister also said the U.S. is not a dominant power in the world anymore, hinting at its failure with the UNSC vote on Friday as a sign of the decline of Washington's power.

Trump regards accepting Putin's proposal as defeat, expert believes

POLITICAL TEHRAN — An international affairs expert believes U.S. President Donald Trump thinks accepting the proposal put forward by his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin would be an acknowledgment of defeat for him.

"Trump thinks by [accepting] this proposal, the world would get out of his hand and he regards accepting Putin's proposal as a defeat for himself," said Sabah Zanganeh, in an interview with IRNA published on Wednesday.

In a statement on Friday, Russian President Vladimir Putin proposed an online summit with the U.S., Britain, France, China, Germany and Iran in a bid to avoid "confrontation and escalation" at the UN.

"The issue is urgent," the Russian president said, adding that the alternative was "only further escalation of tensions, increasing risk of conflict - such a scenario must be avoided."

The call was welcomed by some countries, including China and France, but Trump dismissed it.

The U.S. national security adviser Robert O'Brien said on Sunday that the Russians are proposing a summit with the UN Security Council's five permanent members to try to "bully" the U.S. back into the Iran nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which Trump walked away from in May 2018.



The Russian president's call for de-escalation came after the United States' efforts to extend an arms embargo on Iran ended in a humiliating failure at the UN Security Council.

"As the U.S. gets closer and closer to the presidential elections, Trump gets more and more inflicted with overexcitement and behavioral changes," Zanganeh said. Zanganeh, a former Iran's representative at the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC), also said everything the U.S. president is doing shows his inability in such circumstances.

"Trump's numerous measures, such as inviting [others] to extend the Iran arms embargo, encouraging the Emirates and the Zionist regime to reach an agreement on establishing political relations, threatening to use the snapback mechanism and even changing the U.S. special representative for Iran, show his anger and inability in exerting pressure on the Islamic Republic of Iran," he added.

Bolton raps Trump for 'not seeking regime change' in Iran

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Former U.S. national security adviser John Bolton has criticized U.S. President Donald Trump for not adopting the policy of "regime change" in Iran.

In an interview with BBC Persian broadcast on Tuesday night, Bolton claimed that the Islamic Republic's current situation is vulnerable, saying the way to change the establishment is through unrest.

The Iran hawk further said it is a great tragedy that the U.S. and other countries have failed to help Iranian people "overthrow the regime."

He also claimed that as long as the current government is in power in Iran, the region will not experience peace.

Trump ousted Bolton on September 10, 2019. Bolton was infamous for his ultra-hawkish stance toward Iran.

Bolton ditches questions about his ties with MEK

Speaking at the National Press Club on Tuesday about his promise to celebrate regime change in Iran in 2019, Bolton dodged a question about his ties with the terrorist Mujahedin-e-Khalq (MEK) group, and called for "regime change" instead.

"I didn't hear the excerpt from my speech but I can tell you what I did say in 2018 was that the objective of the United States' policy should be regime change in Iran before the 40th anniversary of the 1979 revolution," he said.

"The Trump administration never



adopted a policy of regime change," he claimed. "I think that's a mistake."

Bolton and some other former and current officials of the Trump administration have attended the MEK's meetings. Bolton has praised the terrorist group as a "democratic alternative" to the Islamic Republic.

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

Based in Iraq at the time, MEK members were armed by former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein to fight against Iran during a war that lasted for 8 years in the 1980s.

In 2012, the U.S. State Department removed the MEK from its list of designated terrorist organizations under intense lobbying by groups associated with Saudi Arabia and other regimes opposed to Iran.

The Trump administration is hungry for war with Iran

(Excerpt from The Independent) — As the world battles a deadly pandemic and the global community calls for worldwide cooperation and ceasefires, Donald Trump's hawkish policy on Iran has not changed. The international consensus on Iran has been centered around diplomacy and the survival of the nuclear deal, which was confirmed again in an unprecedented defeat of the U.S. at the UN Security Council last week. Even America's closest European allies, the UK, Germany, and France, refused to vote for the U.S. resolution to extend an arms embargo on Iran.

Iran hawks see this time of global crisis as an opportune moment to go after a country of over 80m people, in a region already beleaguered by decades of conflict and U.S. militarism.

Rising tensions between Washington and Tehran since Trump unilaterally exited the Iran nuclear deal in 2018, and the belligerent rhetoric of this administration — especially from the Department of State led by Mike Pompeo — recalls the build-up to the 2003 invasion of Iraq. However, the pithy slogan, "Don't Iraq Iran", is not an accurate analogy to the situation of Iran today. In fact, a potential conflict with Iran will not be like the war in Iraq, instead, the more plausible comparison is Syria.

Even the most determined hawks in Washington realize that the war with Iraq was a mistake and that the American people have no appetite for war. Yet, not only has the U.S. under the Trump administration become increasingly isolated from the international community, on the issue of Iran it is acting against the will of the global consensus and America's closest allies. Despite running on a platform against the Iraq war and U.S. militarism in the Middle East, and claiming that he wants a deal with Iran, reports reveal that President Trump greenlit the CIA in

2018 to carry out covert operations against Iran, with the objective to destabilize or collapse the country, according to former officials.

The most outspoken Iran hawk in the current administration, Mike Pompeo, has been integral in Trump's Iran policy. Two weeks after Pompeo swore in as secretary of state, Trump announced the U.S. withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal. Since then, none of the stated or supposed goals of the administration's "maximum pressure" policy have come to pass. Instead, Iran took measured steps to reduce its compliance with the nuclear deal and we have seen a persistent increase in tensions, which almost led to war in January after the assassination of Iranian general Qassem Soleimani.

The upcoming appointment of another long-time Iran hawk to the post of Iran envoy, Elliott Abrams, who was involved in the Iran-Contra scandal under the Reagan administration, signals diminishing hopes for any diplomacy with Iran. Currently serving as Trump's special representative for Venezuela, Abrams has been pushing for regime-change there and will most likely incorporate a similar policy in his new role.

As we near elections in November, the Trump administration has failed to deliver few foreign policy victories. Protests against racism and police brutality continue unabated, the U.S. is first in the world in Covid-19 cases and deaths, and the economy is inching towards recession. Seeing the likely scenario of a Biden victory, Iran hawks have doubled down on their failed approach in hopes of sparking a conflict before Trump may leave office.

A series of recent explosions and fires in Iran reflect apparent efforts to destabilize the country, the fact that some were at crucial infrastructure sites rises the idea that Iran is being

provoked into escalating the situation. Israel also appears to have a hand in the alleged acts of sabotage, something it has carried out many times in the past.

As 1,000 Americans are dying per day from Covid-19, this open and reckless antagonism against Iran appears to be growing in scale — for instance, a recent egregious move by a U.S. fighter jet, which flew dangerously close to an Iranian civilian plane, or a sitting U.S. senator openly calling for the "collapse of the regime". While we hear talking points that are familiar for anyone who lived through the invasion of Iraq, there is little accountability for the fallout of such a "collapse".

If Iran becomes a theatre of war, it will draw global geopolitical actors to play out their own clashes in yet another West Asian country. The case of Iran today is nothing like the case of Iraq in 2003. It is not truly analogous to Syria either, and would likely have a much greater adverse impact.

What we do know for certain is that no one can afford another fruitless and devastating war. Millions of innocent Iranians will bear the brunt of the havoc, but as we well know, there will be reverberations throughout the world. A Syrian-style civil war in Iran would devastate the entire region and even beyond the Middle East.

In the case of Iran, a peaceful solution is not only possible, it already exists in the framework of the nuclear deal. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is not only a deal on Iran's nuclear program, it is a door to more diplomacy between Tehran and the West and can pave the way for negotiations and potential agreements on many issues. Neither Iranians nor Americans want war. At a time when the global community is facing insurmountable challenges, it is crucial to move towards peace.

Ron Paul warns Trump's failed Iran policy may lead to war

TEHRAN (Press TV) — Former U.S. congressman Ron Paul has warned that the Trump administration's failed Iran policy was leading Americans to war in the West Asia region.

In an interview attached to a featured article titled 'Trump's Failed Iran Policy Is Leading Us To War', Paul said Trump's failed hostile "maximum pressure" policy against Iran had received no support by most other countries.

The former Republican congressman and presidential candidate referred to the Trump administration's Iran policy as an example

of "arrogance at its greatest", insisting that the use of force, and bullying a country to submit to U.S. demands, was not the right direction for the Iran policy.

"If people really, really cared about it they would be going in a different direction," he said, pointing out that diplomatic relations and trade deals were the right path to peace.

"We should be able to talk to people. We should be able to trade with people," he said.

He noted that America's defeat at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) was

another indicator that the Trump administration was on the wrong path and other members of the UNSC had understood this.

Paul said U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Special Representative for Iran Elliott Abrams, who were currently running U.S. foreign affairs, were hawkish neocons (neoconservatives), pursuing the objectives set by the deep state, which were devised to benefit the owners of the military-industrial complex.

"Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has been

foaming at the mouth for war with Iran for years, along with the various neocons like Eliot Abrams who serve as cogs in the war machine," the article reads.

According to Paul, Trump's West Asia policies had resulted in an escalation of tensions, driving the region towards war.

"The friction is growing. It is growing very much," he said.

Paul noted that, "It has been aggravated with the recently signed treaty between the UAE and Israel," he said.

Iranian Defense Ministry to unveil two new missiles on Thursday

Defense industry is a pioneering and driving force, Hatami says

I→ "We have to increase our domestic deterrent and defense power, and we need independent research budget to reach objectives of our strategic policies. We hope the 11th the Majlis (sitting parliament), as before, would pay attention to this important issue," General Hatami pointed out.



Speaking to reporters after a cabinet meeting on Wednesday, Hatami also said three defense projects will be inaugurated on Thursday, which coincides with National Defense Industry Day.

The production line of the engine used in the Kowsar fighter jets and two new missile products will be unveiled, the defense minister said.

Speaking in a press conference on Sunday, Hatami said, "There are also achievements in missile, drone, marine and aerial areas which will be unveiled with the presence of the president by the end of the year."

The current Iranian calendar year ends on March 20, 2021.

The defense minister also said that the country will send satellites into space by its two indigenized carriers named Simorgh (Phoenix) and Zol Janah.

He noted, "The Islamic Republic of Iran's space program is a permanent program which has passed several phases and has several other phases ahead."

"The country needs heavier cargos over 100 kilogram to be carried into space and we plan to carry heavier cargos to the higher altitude orbits which will be done by the Simorgh and Zol Janah satellite carriers," Hatami explained.

"We have the Sarir satellite carrier for cargos weighing between 300 kilogram to 1,000 kilogram and we will, of course, have Soroush-1 and Soroush-2 satellite carriers for higher altitude orbits at 36,000 kilometer," the Fars news agency quoted him as saying.

E3 faces dilemma over snapback of UN sanctions on Iran

I→ We therefore consider that the US is not in a position to resort to mechanisms reserved for JCPOA participants (such as the so-called snapback)," the DPA news agency quoted a spokeswoman for EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell as saying on Sunday.

With the U.S. insisting on the triggering of the snapback process, the European signatories to the JCPOA - France, Germany, and the UK (E3) - seem to be caught in the middle between Iran and the U.S., analysts told the Tehran Times.

If the U.S. notifies the Security Council of Iran's "non-compliance", the Council would then have 30 days to solve the issue. Some experts believe that the E3 can stop the U.S. efforts to re-impose the UN sanctions by building consensus among countries on the Security Council, and if the UN sanctions reinstated, the Europeans can mitigate the effects of sanctions.

"The Europeans can save the JCPOA. They can prevent the Security Council from holding a session on Iran or refuse to participate in the session. They also can convince their allies to refrain from taking part in the session. Furthermore, if the U.S. succeeds in reinstating the UN sanctions on Iran, the Europeans can refrain from implementing the sanctions," Hassan Beheshtipour, an expert on Iran's nuclear program, told the Tehran Times.

The Europeans didn't say what they will do if the U.S. re-imposes the UN sanctions on Iran. However, Beheshtipour believes that the U.S. will fail to achieve its goals even if it succeeds in slapping the international sanctions because other countries, including the E3, would not cooperate with the U.S.

"The U.S. could trigger the snapback through a complicated process at the Security Council. However, it will not get the desired result, which is the return of the Security Council's previous resolutions, because it doesn't coordinate with other countries. The implementation of the resolutions is contingent on the cooperation of other countries such as Germany, Russia, the UK, France, and China with the U.S. These countries won't implement the resolutions because they disagree with the U.S. on the reinstatement of the UN sanctions," Beheshtipour argued, adding that "if the U.S. reinstates the UN sanctions, countries opposing unilateralism won't implement them."

Some experts hold the belief that the U.S. push to reinstate the UN sanctions could create a situation rarer than hens' teeth, with some countries around the world refraining from implementing the UN Security Council's resolutions while others implement them.

Fowad Izadi, a professor of American studies at the University of Tehran, previously told the Tehran Times that a U.S. move to snap back the UN sanctions on Iran would divide the world into two blocs: some countries would be obliged to follow the U.S. while others could ignore the U.S. pressure.

"We know that the United States doesn't follow international law and they use different instruments that they have to engage in illegal activities. So the end result is going to be some countries follow the U.S. dictates because they have no other choice, and some countries are going to be more independent and able to withstand the U.S. pressure," the professor said.

Whether the E3 withstand the U.S. pressures remains an open question. But if the U.S. administration follows through on its promise to force the return of UN sanctions on Iran, the E3 could soon find themselves standing at a crossroads in their policy toward Iran. If they choose the U.S., they may lose the JCPOA. And if they choose to preserve the JCPOA, they could risk deepening the schism between the two sides of the Atlantic Ocean. It remains to be seen which choice the E3 would make.

It seems that the Europeans are giving up on their efforts to preserve the nuclear deal, because they think the U.S. is hell-bent on dismantling the deal. European diplomatic sources told the Asharq Al Awsat newspaper that the E3 have not yet found the means to ward off what they consider as an "imminent danger", a threat to U.S.-European relations, and a weakening of the authority of the Security Council.

According to the European sources, the goal of Donald Trump and his administration is to "embarrass Iran, and force it out" of the JCPOA.

4.5m new trading accounts opened in stock market in 4 months

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The head of Iran's Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO) said that 4.5 million new trading accounts have been opened in the country's stock market during the first four months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-July 21).

Hasan Qalibaf-Asl said it is while the number of trading accounts opened in the stock market was 820,000 in the past year and 50,000 in its preceding year, IRNA reported.



The SEO head further announced that the new shareholders have entered the stock market with the average capital of 100 million rials (about \$2,380) – 150 million rials (about \$3,571). It should be noted that in late February, SEO set new regulations for the opening of trading accounts for the new shareholders in the country's stock market.

Based on an announcement by the SEO, the new applicants can conduct trade one month after opening their trading accounts and they are required to pass an exam given by Securities and Exchange Brokers Association (SEBA) or SEO during the one-month time, while they are also committed to avoiding signal selling and some other actions, and if they do so, their accounts will be blocked.

As decided by SEBA, the applicants are required to take the mentioned exam in person or virtually, and it is in line with elevating the knowledge of shareholders.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the SEO head said that the capital market was not paid attention by the people in the past years, adding, "But this market is currently highly welcomed which has made a real change and development in it."

He said while the total investment in the capital market reached 350 trillion rials (about \$8.33 billion) in the previous year, the figure was one quadrillion rials (about \$23.8 billion) just in the four first months of the current year.

Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Farhad Dejpasand has recently said, "We try to save the liquidity attracted by the capital market and lead it toward production and development."

TPO hosts Commodity-Country Desk meetings with Turkey

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Director General of the Asia-Pacific Office at Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) says his organization has hosted a Commodity-Country Desk on trade with Turkey, with a focus on developing the exports of agricultural, foodstuff products.

In the meeting, which was attended by traders and businessmen active in the field of agricultural and foodstuff products, ways to develop exports to Turkey were discussed, Reza Seyed Aqazadeh said.



As reported by the TPO portal, food products, and conversion industries are among Iran's advantages in the global markets, including Turkey, and the Trade Promotion Organization manages the export development process by identifying the country's foreign trade priorities.

"It was decided that the issues and problems of Iranian companies and businessmen raised in this meeting would be followed up by the Asia-Pacific Office of the TPO," Aqazadeh said.

As reported, the Commodity-Country Desk on trade with Turkey was held at the place of the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran in collaboration with the Iran-Turkey Joint Chamber of Commerce.

In late July, the chairman of Iran-Turkey Joint Chamber of Commerce said the coronavirus pandemic has decreased Iran's exports to Turkey by 90 percent in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 20) compared to the previous year.

Mehrdad Sa'adat said there is no reason for such drop rather than the coronavirus pandemic, adding that trade between the two countries has been fortunately increasing after reopening of the borders, and the traders are trying to compensate for the four-month drop in the bilateral trade.

"We are now witnessing some long lines of trucks at the border crossings waiting for entering Turkey," he added.

Sa'adat had told IRNA on June 27 that Iran's export to Turkey was continuing via the roads and railway.

He said, "The number of trucks waiting in Bazargan Border to enter Turkey indicates that Iran's export to its neighbor is increasing, adding that Iran's transit of commodities via Turkey has also risen noticeably after the reopening of this border."

In early June, land borders between Iran and Turkey reopened after more than three months.

Production of sponge iron increases 12% in 4 months yr/yr

1 → Iran's production of sponge iron has climbed six percent to 27.907 million tons in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19), from 26.359 million tons in its preceding year, according to the data released by Iranian Steel Producers Association (ISPA).

The country's export of sponge iron has also risen 77 percent in the past year.

Meanwhile, sponge iron consumption in

the country increased four percent to 26.965 million tons from 25.826 million tons on an annual basis.

Three projects each with a capacity of 800,000 tons were launched in the country during the past Iranian year.

The projects were put into operation in the southeastern province of Kerman, South Khorasan Province in east and Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari Province in the southwest of



the country.

Iran is only second to India globally in terms of the volume of sponge iron production. The country is the 10th largest steel producer in the world.

Sponge iron is a metallic product produced

through the direct reduction of iron ore in the strong state. It is a substitute for scrap and therefore is mostly applicable in making steel through the secondary route. The procedure of sponge iron making aims to expel the oxygen from iron ore.

7th ship carrying Indian wheat for Afghanistan arrives in Chabahar

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The seventh cargo ship carrying Indian donated wheat for Afghanistan with 352 containers has docked at Shahid Beheshti port in Chabahar, southeastern Iran, a provincial official told IRNA on Wednesday.

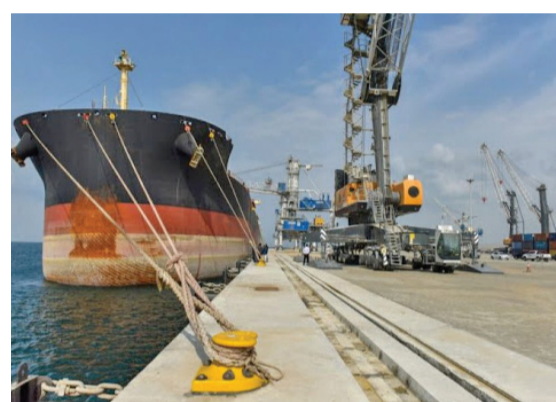
Behrouz Aqaei, the director-general of Ports and Maritime Department of Sistan-Baluchestan Province, where the strategic Chabahar Port lies, said that the consignment weighs about 8,800 tons.

He added that some 1,700 containers weighing 43,000 tons of India's wheat for Afghanistan have so far arrived in Chabahar Port.

The shipment has been sent to Afghanistan through the Milak border in the southern part of Sistan-Baluchestan.

India aims to donate some 75,000 tons of wheat to Afghanistan via the Iranian port city of Chabahar.

Referring to the arrival of other humanitarian wheat from India to Afghanistan in the upcoming months of the current year, Aqaei said, "While the world economy is affected by the coronavirus pandemic, we observe the development of exports and imports in Shahid Beheshti port."



Earlier, Union Minister of State for Shipping and Union Minister of State for Chemical and Fertilizers of India Mansukh Laxmanbhai Mandaviya said his country will save 20 percent logistic costs by using Chabahar Port for transporting to Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). "In a strategic development, loading and unloading of

cargo have started at Chabahar Port. Container transport logistic costs to CIS countries will be reduced by 20 percent through Chabahar. So far, cargo to CIS countries from India could be sent only via China or Europe," he added.

"If we want to send containers to CIS countries we can only send via Europe or China. There was no other connectivity with CIS countries. Now, we have developed Chabahar Port and there is direct connectivity to these countries via Afghanistan," the Indian minister noted.

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

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

Later on, in February 2019, the Afghanistan-Iran-India trade corridor for the trade between the two countries through Chabahar Port was officially inaugurated.

India which initially committed up to \$500 million for the development of Chabahar Port along with associated roads and rail lines, doubled the allocated funding for the development of the port in its national budget bill for 2020.

Commercial property offered at IME for 1st time

ECONOMY TEHRAN — A commercial property was offered at Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) for the first time on Wednesday.

As reported by the IME International Affairs and Public Relations Department, the side market of the IME hosted the offering at the base price of 10.639 billion rials (about \$253.3 million).

On July 25, a member of Iran's Securities and Exchange High Council announced that the country's real estate stock exchange would be established by the next four-six months.

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

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



calendar month (early July).

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

Deputy Head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA) says the

establishment of the country's real estate stock exchange is going to promote transparency in this market.

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

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

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

25 percent is given to private sector companies.

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

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

In late June, Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Farhad Dejpasand announced the establishment of the country's real estate stock exchange.

The minister had stated that the Economy Ministry was finalizing the issue with the Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO).

Iranian customs bans rice imports as of August 22

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) has banned any registration for imports of rice as of the beginning of the next Iranian calendar month of Shahrivar (August 22) until further notice.

As Mehr News Agency reported, IRICA Deputy Head Mehrdad Jamal Orounqi told a local radio program that the plan for the seasonal ban on rice imports, which aims at supporting the domestic farmers, should have been implemented in the beginning of the current Iranian calendar month (July 22) but was postponed to the next month.

According to Orounqi, nearly 800,000 tons of rice was imported into the country and was cleared from various customs in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19).

The official noted that rice imports have decreased by about 20 percent in the current year, saying: "About 390,000 tons of rice has been cleared through customs, while some cargoes are still stored in customs."

According to the Secretary of Iran Rice Association



Jamil Alizadeh Shayeq, Iranian farmers managed to produce 2.6 million tons of rice during the past Iranian calendar year 1398.

The country's rice production stood between 2.2 and 2.3 million tons in the preceding year 1397 (March 2018-March 2019) and the increase in the production consequently decreased the imports of the commodity.

Iran's annual rice consumption stands at about three million tons. That means nearly 400,000 tons of the product is required to be imported into the country, according to Shayeq.

However, customs data show that nearly 700,000 tons of rice was imported into the country in the first quarter of the previous year (March 21-June 21, 2019).

More than 90 percent of Iran's rice is produced in the northern provinces of Gilan and Mazandaran, and less than 10 percent of the commodity is produced in the provinces of Isfahan, Ilam, Kurdistan, Khuzestan and so on.

Based on official statistics, over 620,000 hectares of the country's agricultural lands are under rice cultivation, of which 520,000 hectares are in Mazandaran, Gilan and Golestan provinces.

Stationary retail sales fall 70%

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Head of Stationery and Engineering Equipment Sellers said the sales of the mentioned products have fallen up to 70 percent in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 20) compared to the previous year due to the closure of schools following the coronavirus pandemic, ISNA reported.

"Although [the Iranian calendar months of] Mordad and Shahrivar [July 22- September 21] are the peak months for the sales of stationery products, due to the outbreak of the coronavirus and

the closure of schools and universities, the stationery sales experienced a sharp decline; Thus, the sales of such products decreased by about 60 to 70 percent compared to the previous year," Mousa Farzanian said.

The official also pointed to the ban on the imports of some stationery products like pens, markers, and polish corrector since the calendar month of Ordibehesht (started on April 20) and said considering the decline in sales and enough domestic production no problem is expected regarding the supply of the mentioned

products.

He stated that the stationary sellers were not among the groups considered hurt from the pandemic and have not received any support from the government so far.

"It might cause serious problems for some of them. Our efforts for persuading the National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control to place this sector among the corona-affected industries also failed. Of course, the government does not have enough funds to help all units," he said.



Gas supply to power plants hits record high

ENERGY TEHRAN – Head of the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) Hassan Montazer Torbati said the cumulative gas supply to the country's power plants in the first four months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-July 21) has hit a new record high of 26 billion cubic meters.

According to Torbati, the figure has increased by about two billion cubic meters compared to the same period in the previous year, IRIB reported.

"The cumulative supply of gas to power plants was about 24 billion cubic meters in the previous year (1398)'s same period," he said.

"In the year named by the Leader as the Year of 'Surge in Production', the National Iranian Gas Company has increased the supply of gas to power plants with the aim of reducing liquid fuel consumption and creating excess capacity for the export of oil products," the official added.

He stated that despite the beginning of the overhaul period for the country's gas refineries in the mentioned period of the year, an average of 210 million cubic meters of natural gas was delivered to the country's power plants



with proper management of the production, transmission and distribution networks. Torbati noted that the increase in gas

consumption relatively decreases the use of other liquid fuels like gas oil. "Every billion liters of oil and gas prod-

ucts is worth about \$500 million in the global markets, so saving two billion cubic meters of gas supply to power plants means \$1 billion in revenue from product exports," he said.

Gas supply to power plants reaches its maximum level during the summer peak consumption period (the Q2 of the year) in Iran.

Currently, all the country's gas and thermal power plants are connected to the national gas network, however, in the cold seasons, with the increase in gas consumption by the domestic sector the supply to the power plants will be reduced and replaced with liquefied fuel.

Earlier in May, Acting Director of Iranian Gas Transmission Company (IGTC) Mehdi Jamshidi Dana had said that during the peak consumption period in summer power plants would need 310 mcm of gas per day, a figure that could be easily met by the National Gas Company given its network capacity.

Iran is currently producing over 810 mcm of natural gas daily which is mostly used inside the country for the domestic sector and also as fuel for the power plants and a small portion is also exported to the neighboring countries like Iraq.

Oil markets retreat after API reports large gasoline build

A large build in gasoline inventories which offset a modest draw in crude oil inventories cooled bullish sentiment in markets somewhat on Tuesday afternoon, oilprice.com reported.

The American Petroleum Institute (API) reported on Tuesday a draw in crude oil inventories of 4.264 million barrels for the week ending August 14—a near mirror of last week's draw figure.

Analysts had predicted a modest inventory draw of 2.670-million barrels.

In the previous week, the API reported a draw in crude oil inventories of 4.401 million barrels, after analysts had predicted a draw of roughly half that.

Oil prices were trading down on Tuesday afternoon before the API's data release, and just minutes before the release, WTI had fallen by \$0.33 (-0.77 percent) to \$42.56. The Brent crude benchmark had fallen by \$0.30 (-0.66 percent) to \$45.07, even as OPEC showed this week that its overall July compliance rate was about as good as it could get.

Still, traders are leery in the runup to any of the invento-

ry reports, and this week is also complicated further by the scheduled OPEC meeting, although most analysts agree that the meeting will likely prove rather uneventful.

Oil production in the United States now appears to be leveling off after falling from a high of 13.1 million bpd on March 13 to 10.7 million bpd on August 7, according to the Energy Information Administration—the loss adding to OPEC's production cuts.

The API reported a build of 4.991 million barrels of gasoline for the week ending August 14—compared to last week's 1.310-million-barrel draw. This week's build is not what analysts had expected, which was a 1.057-million-barrel draw for the week.

Distillate inventories were down by 964,000 barrels for the week, compared to last week's 2.949-million-barrel draw, while Cushing inventory fell by a modest 590,000 barrels.

At 4:33 pm EDT, WTI was trading at \$42.58 while Brent was trading at \$45.09.



Low oil prices hamper China's efforts to meet U.S. trade deal target

China has stepped up its purchases of U.S. crude oil in recent trading cycles in an effort to comply with the Phase 1 trade deal with Washington struck in January, but low oil prices may severely impede Beijing's efforts to meet the purchase target for energy products in terms of dollar value.

As reported by Platts, the acceleration of purchases comes at a time when a review of the trade deal due over the weekend was postponed indefinitely, but tough market conditions this year mean that any targets dependent on a revival of the economy or energy demand will be out of reach.

These include coronavirus-related destruction of demand for transport fuel, poor downstream economics as Asian refinery margins are wafer thin, no sign of recovery for key products like jet fuel, and swelling queues of VLCCs waiting weeks to discharge crude cargoes at Chinese ports.

State-owned Chinese oil companies returned to buying U.S. crude oil for September-loading and the volume is expected to exceed the last buying spree in May, according to trading sources.

At least seven China-bound cargoes, carrying around 14 million barrels of crude, have been scheduled for September loading in the U.S. Gulf Coast in recent days with China as their destination, S&P Global Platts fixtures data showed. These will arrive



through October-November.

Meanwhile, August is on track to have the largest amount of U.S. crude delivered to China in a given month, expected to cross 30 million barrels, according to data intelligence firm Kpler. This reflects the resumption of U.S. crude loadings in May and June, after a four-month hiatus, while China's economy started to recover from the pandemic.

U.S. crude arrivals in China in August will be double the previous high of 14.71 million barrels in January 2018 recorded by China's General Administration of Customs. As a result, around 85 million barrels of U.S. crude will be delivered to China by September, Kpler data showed.

By comparison, China imported 376 million barrels of crude in total in July, GAC data showed.

Crude price plunges

In terms of value, China's crude imports

from the U.S. for the first three quarters of 2020 may reach around \$3.42 billion based on the average Dated Brent price of \$40.87/b up to August 17 this year.

If China can import 10 VLCCs (20 million barrels) of U.S. crude a month in the fourth quarter, worth \$100 million each at an oil price of \$50/b, it would only amount to another \$3 billion, a trader with a U.S. crude supplier said. China's state-owned refineries can accommodate a maximum of 10 VLCCs of light U.S. crude a month due to their configuration.

This far below the Phase 1 commitment, which calls for an additional \$18.5 billion of U.S. energy purchases in 2020 over 2017 levels, and \$52.4 billion worth of purchases over 2017 levels across the next two years.

China's purchases of U.S. energy goods, including crude, LNG and petrochemicals, amounted to only about \$2.9 billion by the end of June, way below the target, according to Panjiva, a business line of S&P Global Market Intelligence that provides news and analysis about global supply chains.

Crude was expected to take the lion's share of the purchases, on account of it being a high-value commodity, but its price has taken a pummeling in 2020.

In 2017, China imported about 153,000 bpd of U.S. crude oil that was worth \$3.2 bil-

lion at an average price of around \$57.59/b, customs data showed. Dated Brent fell to a year-low of \$13.24/b in April from as high as \$69.96/b in early January.

Downstream challenges

In addition, small-scale independent refineries, which account for over a quarter of China's refining capacity, are running out of crude import quotas.

The independents were the first Chinese refineries to buy U.S. crude in May, when imports of U.S. crude resumed, and accounted for a large portion of the volumes till August, Platts data shows.

Without them, the onus for U.S. crude procurement falls on state-owned refineries who are a lot less flexible in changing their crude slate.

One Sinopec refiner told Platts that state-trader Unipac has been trying to push them to buy West Texas Intermediate crude, but the refinery has been reluctant due to the high volume of light distillates that don't have buyers in the current market.

A surge in tanker freight rates in the first half of this year, despite the contango in crude prices, also closed the arbitrage window for China to import U.S. oil. Additionally, rapidly deteriorating U.S.-China relations mean that no Chinese refiner wants to expose their crude shipments to the vagaries of geopolitics.

Russia's crude oil exports to Europe may not stay low for long

Russia's seaborne crude oil exports are trending lower so far in August compared to July, but with Russia ramping up production with the easing of the OPEC+ cuts, this summer's trend of low volumes of exports to Europe may not last long, IHS Markit said on Tuesday.

Russia has already increased its crude oil production in early August to 9.8 million barrels per day (bpd), up from below 9.4 million bpd last month, Fotios Katsoulas, Liquid Bulk Principal Analyst, Maritime & Trade, at IHS Markit wrote.

As OPEC+ is easing the record collective cuts of 9.7 million bpd to 7.7 million bpd as of August 1, Russia plans to raise its oil production by 400,000 bpd.

Russian seaborne crude oil exports plunged by 42 percent year-on-year in July and declined by 14 percent compared to June, according to data by IHS Markit Commodities at Sea. In the first half of August, cargoes loaded from Russian ports are 10 percent lower compared to July and 34 percent lower



compared to August 2019.

"Other suppliers have been quickly filling the gaps so far, but the increase in Russian production since early August could bring this trend to an end," IHS Markit's Katsoulas said.

While Russian shipments to Europe were at record low levels in July, crude oil cargoes from the U.S. to European importers strengthened in July, following three months of very low activity. U.S. cargoes loaded for Europe in July exceeded 1.2 million bpd for the first time since March 2020, while shipments in the first half of August remained above 1 million bpd. Refineries in north Europe are importing most of the U.S. crude oil as they prefer U.S. grades to Russia's flagship crude export grade Urals, Katsoulas noted.

In Russia's refined products exports, an interesting development in recent weeks is increased Russian flows to the United States, especially of fuel oil. According to IHS Markit, "trade seems to be following seasonality, as August is typically a strong month for flows of refined products from Russia to the US."

Nevertheless, Russia has generally exported more refined product volumes to the U.S. this year than in 2019, IHS Markit's data showed.

COVID-19 positive Russian oil minister will join OPEC+ meeting

Russia's Energy Minister Alexander Novak will take part in the virtual meeting of the OPEC+ monitoring panel on Wednesday, despite testing positive for COVID-19, Russia's energy ministry said on Tuesday.

Earlier on Tuesday, Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin said that Novak had tested positive for the coronavirus while he was on a visit to Russia's Far East. Novak returned to Moscow and will work remotely, the ministry said.



Novak feels good and doesn't have any symptoms, and he plans to take part in the OPEC+ panel's meeting on August 19 via video conference, a representative of the Russian energy ministry told Russia outlet RBC.

Prime Minister Mishustin and Vladimir Putin's Press Secretary Dmitry Peskov have recovered from COVID-19 after contracting the virus earlier this year.

The Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee (JMMC) holds meetings every month until the end of 2020, instead of ahead of every full OPEC+ meeting only, because of the volatile oil market and the highly uncertain trajectory of global demand recovery.

The JMMC is meeting this week, but it will not discuss any revisions of the ongoing production cut pact and is not expected to make any major decisions to tweak the deal, Novak said last week.

The OPEC+ coalition saw its compliance rate with the oil production cuts at 95 percent in July, four sources from the group told Reuters on Monday, which is a level similar to the previous month, if the additional one-month voluntary cuts from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Kuwait for June are excluded.

At last month's panel meetings in mid-July, the JMMC noted an improved compliance rate with the cuts. The overall compliance rate for the OPEC+ group was a record-breaking 107 percent in June, but it was due to the additional voluntary contributions from Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait, which cut a total of 1 million bpd in June on top of their shares of the cuts. Without those three voluntary outperformers, the OPEC+ group's compliance was 95 percent in June, which still was the highest since the cuts started in January 2017.

Norway's oil fund fears market disconnect from real economy

The world's largest sovereign wealth fund has warned over the disconnect between the financial markets and the real economy as U.S. stocks set a new intraday record on Tuesday.

Buoyed by record-low interest rates, equity markets have staged a fierce rebound since hitting lows in March when governments across the world imposed lockdowns to curb the spread of coronavirus, Financial Times reported.

The recovery in equities, turbocharged by central banks' stimulus, helped Norway's \$1tn oil fund, the world's largest sovereign wealth fund, to the second-best quarter in its history, returning 13.1 percent in the three months to the end of June.

Trond Grande, deputy chief executive of Norges Bank Investment Management, which manages the fund, said on Tuesday: "We've seen an unexpectedly sharp recovery in the financial markets but maybe we haven't seen the full effect on the real economy."

Asked whether he was concerned about the disconnect, Grande told the Financial Times: "Yes, I think it's something to have on the radar."

At a press conference in Oslo, Grande added that the pandemic "doesn't seem to be under control in any shape or form".

The caution from the fund, set up almost a quarter of a century ago to help manage the income from Norway's oil industry, came as a widely watched survey showed global investors are increasingly anxious that the sharp rally in equities, bonds and gold since the darkest days of the coronavirus crisis has left assets "overvalued".

According to the latest Bank of America survey of investors, who collectively manage \$489bn, a portfolio with equal holdings of stocks, bonds and gold is the most expensive it has been since 2008.

Despite the angst over valuations, the survey also found that investors remained upbeat on global markets as almost 80 percent expect economic growth to improve.

Grande said the value of the wealth fund had continued to recover over the summer and it was now flat or slightly up for the year as a whole.

He added: "That said, we often see disconnects between the two. At some stage, and in the long run, you would expect them to be equalised."

As debate rages over valuations, the fund is currently in the midst of the biggest political storm in its history over the botched appointment of a new chief executive.

Norway's parliament is considering whether to try to block Nicolai Tangen, a former hedge fund manager, from becoming chief executive because of alleged conflicts of interest. All the opposition leftwing parties have come out against Tangen as long as he retains ownership of AKO Capital, the London-based hedge fund he founded and where he owns a 43 percent stake.

Norway's largest political group, the Labour party, which could win next year's elections, has expressed its concerns about Tangen in unusually strong terms. Tangen declined to comment on the mounting opposition.

Grande said he had not heard any concerns "directly" from business partners about the row. But he added: "Obviously it's something you would have wanted to avoid. Hopefully we have built a reputation over more than 20 years that can withstand some turmoil."

The fund's deputy chief executive also applied to succeed Yngve Slyngstad, who has been chief executive of NBIM since 2008. He refused to say how he felt about missing out on the job. Asked if he was ready to become interim chief executive if Tangen could not be confirmed by September 1, he said it was a "hypothetical question" and that the fund was planning for Tangen to take over.

Saudis keep pressure on OPEC+ laggards before ministerial talks

Saudi Arabia kept up the pressure on OPEC+ nations that have been exceeding their oil-output targets, hours before a meeting to discuss their agreement, Bloomberg reported.

King Salman bin Abdulaziz called Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari to emphasize the importance of complying with production targets and compensating for past shortcom-

ings, state-run Saudi Press Agency said on Wednesday.

Nigeria, Iraq and several other nations have consistently fallen short of their pledges to cut production as the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries and its allies seek to offset the sharp drop in oil demand triggered by the coronavirus pandemic.

Their level of compliance will be one of the main subjects of discussion at a video conference later on Wednesday of the OPEC+ Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee, which is chaired by Saudi Arabia and Russia.

The coalition of producers is restoring some of the vast quantities of crude halted during the depths of the Covid-19 crisis. So far

the supply boost hasn't derailed oil's fragile recovery, which has seen prices climb to a five-month high.

But continuation of that trend will depend on maintaining discipline and ensuring that Nigeria, Iraq and other nations fulfill their promises to compensate for cheating on their quotas in earlier months.

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

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

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Beirut blast caused social solidarity: Lebanese expert

By Mohammad Mazhari

TEHRAN — The Beirut blast on August 4 not only caused human and financial losses but also raised doubts about time of the incident and its location.

It prompted the Lebanese government to take a series of measures to face the repercussions of the massive explosion.

The Lebanese government decided to form an administrative investigation committee headed by Prime Minister Hassan Diab, whose government resigned on August 10, to submit a report that takes the most severe penalties against those who have failed to do their duties properly.

The government requested the Supreme Defense Council to impose house arrest on everyone who has managed works related to storing and guarding the ammonium nitrate since June 2014.

Besides economic losses and deaths, the massive explosion may affect the Lebanese political future. Some observers say it has deepened the division between the rival political parties, while others prefer to underline that the blast will cement solidarity in the Lebanese society.

In this regard, Ali Yahia, a Lebanese consultant in international relations, tells the Tehran Times that the Beirut blast triggered a global sympathy and helped create social solidarity between the people of Lebanon.

The text of the interview is as follows:

■ There are unconfirmed reports that the blast was caused by a missile or fighter jet? What authorities in Lebanon think?

A: As of now, there exists no evidence that targeted missiles were responsible for the Beirut blast; investigators have yet to identify any rocket remnants and the preliminary results of perimeter samples collected and tested by both Lebanese and French laboratories show no indication of an external attack.

I do want to note that the two explosions were separated by 33 seconds. The first occurred after the ammonium nitrate experienced an explosive shockwave with a temperature of more than 210 degrees Celsius (the minimum required to trigger such an explosion), and equivalent to the explosive force of 2,750 tons of ammonium.

This was essentially similar to a tactical nuclear bomb that formed a massive mushroom-like cloud.

According to some experts, it is known as "Riley Taylor's Instability," which indicates the movement of two liquids with a



different density, pushing the heavy liquid, thus producing the mushroom shape.

It is expected that the investigation, which is separated in three phases, will include identifying the source of the payload and its intended destination (especially since it entered Beirut port months after the confiscation of weapons from the ship Lutfallah II, which was en route to the Syrian opposition), as was announced by Lebanese President Michel Aoun. Additionally, the results of the chemical tests require a longer waiting period than that for radiation tests.

■ How may the explosion affect the Lebanese political future?

A: There is no doubt that the Beirut blast triggered a response of global sympathy and social solidarity with the people of Lebanon. With the immediate assistance of the Palestinian Civil Defense, Lebanese Red Cross, and Lebanese civil society in addition to the generosity of many Syrian citizens, including workers and refugees who were helping pull victims buried under the rubble; laymen could hear different dialects as they lent a hand.

However, internal political divisions and the soft counter-war that continues to exploit existing tensions exacerbated the situation.

For example, Dr. Milton Friedman's "Shock Doctrine" promotes economic policies that cannot be accepted in "normal situations," as witnessed in Chile, Argentina, Indonesia and Brazil, East Asia, Iraq, Libya.

The attempt to restore the nation to the

'post-Hariri assassination of 2005' status is unfeasible due to local, regional and international developments.

Given Lebanon's primary political parties, including Hezbollah, the Amal Movement, the Free Patriotic Movement, and the Future Movement are trying to maintain the cohesion of the state whilst preventing the collapse of the remaining institutions, external factors have become more influential, active and necessary. However, many international actors are only now involving themselves once faced with the danger of economic and societal collapse.

■ What are the reasons for the resignation of Hassan Diab's government? How do you see the role of foreign interference, especially the economic pressure imposed on Lebanon?

A: No government, especially a democratic parliamentary system such as that in Lebanon, can withstand and respond to the ramifications of such a disastrous explosion. This, combined with external factors such as French President Emmanuel Macron calling for a national unity government and existing internal tensions following the resignation of some parliamentary figures.

The Beirut port explosion has significantly reduced the financial and political blockade declared upon Lebanon during the previous phase, whether through tactical assistance such as the Paris Conference (\$298 million), promises of strategic assistance via the Seder conference funds (\$11 billion) in exchange for the start of reforms.

In addition, Lebanon has been promised assistance from the World Bank, and through a relative change in America's approach to the Lebanese file; an about-face from the path of strangulation and sanctions imposed by the U.S. Treasury on Lebanese banks and companies via a historic telephone conversation between the Lebanese and American presidents, and the dispatch of U.S. envoy David Hill, who adopts a less hardline approach than David Schenker.

The broad title and main objective of the Western return to Beirut from the port gate are to prevent the collapse of Lebanon and change Eastward direction for reconstruction.

■ What are the possible scenarios for the post-government resignation?

A: We are at a flashpoint; applying the same measures adopted at the 1991 Taif Agreement has proved fruitless. Further, Lebanon is facing a Homeric challenge; should Beirut apply similar methods used in the past, instead of embarking on reforms that mitigate the power of the entrenched oligarchy, thereby denying the existing clientelist system via the construction of a productive, diversified economy, and a concerted effort to complete the Taif Agreement by the abolishment of political sectarianism, governmental reforms will stagnate.

■ How do you evaluate the positions of Western countries, including France, whose president came and issued orders for reform and also America's approach to the Beirut blast and their solutions for rebuilding the port? Is Lebanon going to internationalize its port?

A: No doubt that Beirut's port is critical to Lebanon's bottom line as it is the backbone of internal trade and 50% of the nation's GDP (it has contributed \$250 billion to the economy over the past decade). Lebanon imports more than 70% of its consumer goods through the port, and it is one of the ten most important ports in the Mediterranean Sea.

It is also a fundamental node in the War of Ports and strategic straits, especially in response to Chinese efforts to establish the "String of Pearls," to complement the "One Belt One Road" initiative and its entrance to the ports of Piraeus in Greece and Ashdod in Palestine.

In an effort to compete with Haifa, Beirut's port was considered as an alternative. As for calls for an international investigation, the U.S. and France have committed to assist under the authority of the Lebanese judiciary.

International Tribune: A non-closed chapter

➔ In addition, the tribune announcement was politically manipulated. Judge David Ray revealed on the 18th of August, as he was reciting the verdict that most of the evidence depended on telephone communication data. Telephones were used to orchestrate the assassinator(s). However, the investigations could not link the numbers to its users.

Furthermore, the persons who were charged with the assassination were all Shiites. As if Hezbollah was foolishly pointing the fingers towards him. In fact, the accusations were pointed to freedom fighters, who were preparing exploding charges that allegedly targeted the Israelis in South Lebanon.

The final investigation revealed that three of the accused persons were discharged. Hezbollah and Syria are the main parties that benefited from the assassination of Hariri; however, there are no proofs to support the accusations. Hence, the carefully planned assassination was declared as an act of political vendetta. And it took the stupid tribune fifteen years to announce these results.



It is important to dissect the political gain, especially the one that was achieved by Syria and Hezbollah from the assassination! Before the assassination, Hezbollah was leading fruitful talks with Hariri, relations with the late prime minister were about to become at its best since 1991. Total coordination in the next elections was about to be reached.

Secondly, Hezbollah, before the 14th of February 2005, did not aim to be part of the Lebanese political maze.

Meanwhile, the Syrians, with their presence in Lebanon, protected his back. The Hezbollah was indeed presented in the Lebanese Parliament, but it was not among its plans to be part of Lebanon's corrupt governments since the Taif Agreement in 1989. Hezbollah's main focus was on protecting the South, liberating the Shebaa and Kafer-Shoba farms, and liberating the Lebanese war prisoners in the Israeli dungeons. Three aims were not to be granted to Lebanon on a silver plate, and the Israeli knew that if it were accomplished, they would distort his image as the ultimate power in the region.

On the other hand, the Syrians were perfectly aware of the winds of international political changes accompanied by electing George Bush junior.

The Syrians were alerted by U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell about the consequences of their continuous support for the resistance against Israel in Lebanon.

They urged the Syrians to disarm Hezbollah military wing. Nonetheless, the Syrians refused American demands. Resolution 1559 appeared on the horizon, and the Syrians refused to leave Lebanon unless the Lebanese government asked them. It seemed that the situation was still water running deep. When Hariri was assassinated, it was the huge eruption that made it possible for the Americans to fulfill at least one part of their demands: the Syrian Army withdrew from Lebanon.

The Syrian departure resulted in non-humanitarian results. Syrian workers were attacked in the streets, more than 100 were killed, and no official investigations were seriously held. Until today no indictments were directed to anyone. This, for sure, created sentiments of fear and hatred among the Syrians towards the Lebanese. Even Syrian businesspeople were kidnapped in several areas of Lebanon. The same was about to happen in Syria; however, the Syrian police arrested several attackers, and restrictive rules were issued in 2005 to control such irregularities. It was the Israeli war in 2006 that could bring back the Syrians and the Lebanese sentiments of pride.

The Americans thought they had created a deep ditch of hate among the brothers; nonetheless, it was in vain.

It is important to study the atmosphere that prevailed after 2005, on the political and social level, to understand who benefited from the assassination. The ridiculous legal pleading of Judge David Ray was totally dependent on the testimonies given by the same people and parties that have benefited from Hariri's assassination, which paved the way for a golden era for all the parties who became fully in control.

Walid Jumblatt became the defender of Hariri. He took the family and the country under his "wings." Fouad Siniora was nominated to be the next prime minister after the resignation of Omar Karami. The main beneficiary was Samir Geagea, the murderer of Lebanese politicians, and the executor of massacres in Lebanon was given a full pardon.

The previous group worked closely with the Americans to disarm Hezbollah during the 2006 war and later in 2007 during the attempt to control Hezbollah's communication sector, which provided protection for the secret telephone lines among the freedom fighters and with their commandants.

There was a far greater conspiracy to displace the Shiites in South Lebanon if Israel had won the war in 2006. This was the end means of the assassination of an important man as much as Hariri was. The International Tribune has failed to read in politics these facts, as much as it was able to read the other version.

When Marwan Hamadeh's attempt of assassination took place in 2005, Syria without a certified investigation was directly accused. In a paradox, the same kind of explosion which was used in the attempt to kill Hamadeh was used to kill Hariri in Damascus. The French revenged the killing of their ambassador in Lebanon by using a similar charge in the al-Azbakia neighborhood in 1981.

Bernard Emie, the French ambassador, was the first to go around giving consultation and provoking the different parties after the attempt to end Hamadeh's life. Judge Ray called it a Syrian warning.

However, it can be easily called as the first attempt to threaten the Syrians. In case they failed to comply with the American demands in disarming Hezbollah.

It seems that we need to wait another month before the date of the sentence on the 21st of September. Nothing is special about the date. Salim Ayyash is going to be sentenced after declaring the innocence of the three other suspects. The next month, Ayyash, a simple man, will be accused of plotting, preparing, and killing a state's man for personal vengeance. And that is why the Lebanese taxpayers paid 800 million American dollars so that an American cliché verdict is achieved.

Why Zionist stooges like Pompeo spewing insane nonsense against Iran

By Kevin Barrett

So, Mike Pompeo has been leading the charge in the Trump administration to try to trigger the snapback provisions in the Iran nuclear deal, the JCPOA. And this has led to a chorus of derision and mockery from all over the world, not just from sources one would expect, like Foreign Minister Zarif from Iran, but from elsewhere as well even including from John Bolton, who was former (Pompeo's) extremely hawkish anti-Iran colleague.

Everybody is laughing at Pompeo at this point because Pompeo's position is that even though the United States has left the JCPOA and is out of the deal, it is still somehow in the deal, and able to trigger snapback. Pompeo also claims that the United States is going to unilaterally trigger multilateral sanctions.

So, everyone is scratching their heads and wondering what Mike Pompeo is smoking. He thinks that he can be in and out of the deal at the same time. He thinks he can impose unilateral multilateral sanctions. This violates elementary logic in a rather amusing way.

It's like Lewis Carroll and Alice in Wonderland, saying you can believe six impossible things before breakfast. Well, Pompeo was already got two of them. And it is also reminiscent of the complete lack of logic in the U.S.-Iran policy. They're basically running on fumes, and they're desperately clutching at these illusory remedies for their bankrupt position by invoking these kinds of crazy contradictions.

You know, maybe Pompeo is living in a quantum world where Schrodinger's cat can be alive and dead at the same time, the U.S. can be in and out of the deal at the same time. But nobody else is in that quantum world. And he's going to have to come back to Earth at some point.

So, why are the so-called Americans—people like Pompeo are really, of course, representing Netanyahu. Trump was inserted into the Oval Office by Netanyahu's people, precisely to carry out all of these insane Likud policies—so why are they so desperate? Why are they acting so irrationally, out of sheer desperation?

I think the reason is that they have won a certain battle in terms of trying to remake the Middle East (West Asia) region, on behalf of Israel, but they've lost the war. Because they've painted themselves into a corner, both in terms of global public opinion and now regional public opinion as the Emirates have made this treasonous deal with the Israelis alienating the entire region, the entire Arab world.

And this is at a moment when the Arab oil states are in serious decline. They're about to really step off the stage of history, as discussed in Patrick Cockburn's column "There's a Historic Change Taking Place in the Middle East (West Asia)."

He points out these Arab oil states, because of the collapsing price of oil, among other things, are now essentially about to lose their whole base and their population is going to be impoverished. And the leadership, such as the leaders of the Emirates, and the Saudis and the other Persian Gulf sheikhdoms in particular, are all going to be overthrown.

So, who will be left? The countries that have actual economies other than just oil, countries that are not just gas stations in the desert. And that includes not just Turkey, of course, which has a strong economy, but also Iran, which has built its own DIY - Do It Yourself -- local economy because of all the sanctions.

Iran is not dependent on oil exports partly because it's been sanctioned so heavily. So now it's the leading auto manufacturer in the region. It's putting satellites in space. And once it gets through this Trump sanctions period which is happening because Trump and his people have alienated



the whole world, Iran will come roaring back.

Meanwhile, the Arab world will see massive unrest, as the poor majority of pious Muslims gets on board with the Islamic Revolutionary spirit against their extremely corrupt Zionist secularist elite rulers.

And all of this does not bode well for the genocidal Zionist entity occupying Palestine. No wonder they're so desperate. No wonder the Zionist stooges like Pompeo are barking out this kind of insane nonsense as the Trump administration collapses and as its Iran policy collapses. We're probably going to see more of this kind of insanity—hopefully, nothing that will lead to any explosions of extreme violence or larger war—but you can't put anything past them, as we saw with that presumably Israeli bomb that destroyed the port of Beirut.

And so, the region needs to be on its guard. Better things will be coming, but it may be a very rough period before they finally arrive.

Kevin Barrett is an American author, journalist and radio host with a Ph.D. in Islamic and Arabic Studies. He has been studying the events of 9/11 since late 2003.

(Source: Press TV)

Millions of Yemenis facing death amid lack of funding, UN warns

The United Nations has warned that millions of Yemenis are facing death amid lack of funding that forced the organization to shut or severely cut half of its major programs in Yemen.

She urged donors to provide the funds needed to continue the UN programs in Yemen, which had a "real impact."

"Humanitarians have prevented large-scale famine, rolled back the worst cholera epidemic in modern history, and provided help to millions of displaced people."

Five years of Saudi-led aggression on the impoverished country have left over 24 million Yemenis in dire need of humanitarian aid, including 10 million suffering from extreme hunger levels.

According to the UN, the underfunding had a dramatic impact, including having food rations for over eight million people in northern Yemen in April, as well as slashing or cutting health services in a further 275 specialized centers for treating people with cholera and other infectious

diseases.

The supplies needed to treat trauma patients, who will almost certainly die without immediate treatment, were cut.

Medicines and essential supplies for 189 hospitals and 2,500 clinics - representing half of the health facilities in the coun-

try - will cease, if funding is not urgently received within weeks.

Saudi Arabia and a number of its regional allies launched the devastating war on Yemen in March 2015 in order to bring former president, AbdRabbuh Mansur Hadi, back to power and crush the Houthi Ansarullah movement.

The US-based Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), a nonprofit conflict-research organization, estimates that the war has claimed more than 100,000 lives over the past five years.

Riyadh and its allies have been widely criticized for the high civilian death toll resulted from their bombing campaign in Yemen.

"We have a moral obligation to warn the world that millions of Yemenis will suffer and could die because we don't have the funding we need to keep going," the UN humanitarian coordinator for Yemen, Lisa Grande, said Wednesday. US

A glimpse of Muharram mourning rituals across Iran: Tasht Gozari

(Part 2/8)

HERITAGE TEHRAN — One of the most famous rituals in Ardabil is Tasht Gozari during the mourning season of Muharram. People of Ardabil, who are Azeri, love Imam Hussein (AS) and his young brother Hazrat Abulfazl Abbas (AS). Before Muharram, people in Ardabil begin Tasht Gozari ritual, which is dated back to several years ago. People in other cities near Ardabil also hold Tasht Gozari ritual.



People gather in Jame mosque of the city and fill some big washtubs and put them in a corner of the mosque. Then they begin mourning ceremony including reciting prayers and some eulogy and chest thumping ritual. After mourning, some men put the washtubs on their head and people in mosque drink the water as their will as blessing water.

Origins of Tasht Gozari ritual

Despite being thirsty, Imam Hussein (AS) asked his companions to pour water they bring with themselves in a washtub for their enemy army and their horses. This indicates the sacrifice of Imam Hussein (AS) and Ardabil citizens hold Tasht Gozari in commemoration of Imam Hussein (AS) thirst and also his sacrifice.

Sprawling on a high, windswept plateau, whose altitude averages 3,000 meters above sea level, Ardebil is well-known for having lush natural beauties, hospitable people and its silk and carpet trade tradition, it is also home to the UNESCO-registered Sheikh Safi al-Din Khanegah and Shrine Ensemble.

Tens of projects to promote tourism, handicrafts in central Iran

→ With its winding lanes, forest of badgirs (wind catchers), mud-brick houses, atmospheric alleyways and centuries of history, Yazd is a delightful place to stay, referring as a 'don't miss' destination by almost all travel associates in the region. The oasis area is wedged between the northern Dasht-e Kavir and southern Dasht-e Lut on a flat plain ringed by mountains. 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.

Isfahan is also one of Iran's top tourist destination for good reason. Its profusion of tree-lined boulevards, Persian gardens and important Islamic buildings gives it a visual appeal somewhat unmatched by any other Iranian provinces, and the many artisans working here underpin its reputation as a living museum of traditional culture.

One more suspension bridge to be built in Ardebil

HERITAGE TEHRAN — One more suspension bridge will be constructed in Ardebil province, northwest Iran, a provincial tourism official has said.

Measuring 700 meters in length, the bridge is planned to be built in Jabdaraq village in Meshginshahr city with the aim of boosting the tourism in the region. Farzad Keysan said, CHTN reported on Wednesday.

The city also has another suspension bridge, which was inaugurated in 2015. With 345 meters long, 3 meters wide and 80 meters high, it is said to be the largest of its kind in West Asia.

The project will be implemented by the private sector in an area with pristine nature, which can provide a basis for the development of the region and can make the region a tourism hub in the country, the official added.

Back in July, provincial tourism chief Nader Fallahi noted that Ardebil can be named the province of suspension bridges, pointing to Meshginshahr suspension bridge and Hir curved glass suspension bridge as well as Azna suspension bridge, which is under construction and will come on stream in June 2021.



Inaugurated in January, Hir curved glass suspension bridge is the first of its kind in the world. Measuring 220 meters in length, the bridge's all-glass parts and metal cables have been constructed by domestic engineers using high-quality materials.

Earlier in April tourism authorities of the province announced that they have developed extensive plans to draw more tourists during the winter season to the province and make it the winter tourism hub of the country.

In December 2019, Fallahi announced that seventeen tourism projects, worth 1,500 billion rials (some \$35 million) would be inaugurated in the province in the near future.

Ha said that the objective to launch tourism projects in the province is to provide tourists from all over the world and domestic tourists as well with the opportunity to use these facilities and select Ardebil as their prime destination.

Sprawling on a high, windswept plateau, Ardebil is well-known for having lush natural beauties, hospitable people, and its silk and carpet trade tradition. It is also home to the UNESCO-registered Sheikh Safi al-Din Khanegah and Shrine Ensemble.

The province is very cold in winter and mild in summer, attracting thousands every year. The capital city of Ardebil is usually recorded as one of the coldest cities in the country in winter.

Archaeologists find Paleolithic sites in southeast Iran

HERITAGE TEHRAN — A team of Iranian archaeologists has recently discovered first-hand Prehistorical human settlements believed to date back to the Paleolithic era on the outskirts of Fahraj in Kerman province, southeast Iran.

Led by archaeologist Shahram Zare', the team has launched extensive research on the eastern edge of Kerman province on the margins of the UNESCO-registered Lut desert. The research is part of a greater project, supervised by the Research Institute of Cultural Heritage and Tourism, to develop an extensive archaeological map of Iran.

Zare' said most of the newly-identified sites are linked with the Middle Paleolithic epoch that is the second subdivision of the Paleolithic or Old Stone Age. The Middle Paleolithic broadly spanned from 300,000 to 30,000 years ago.

"Dating of these sites is being carried out based on the morphology of stone artifacts collected from the surface as well as making [direct] comparisons with similar samples [previously found] in other parts of the Iranian plateau, the ones that have been dated beforehand."

"Most of the stone tools are made of chert



and some of which are of volcanic origin, relatively severely eroded due to high-temperature fluctuations between the day and night," Zare' explained.

Chert is a hard, fine-grained sedimentary rock composed of crystals of quartz that are very small. Chert is often of biological origin but may also occur inorganically

as a chemical precipitate or a diagenetic replacement.

Kerman province is bounded by the provinces of Fars on the west, Yazd on the north, South Khorasan on the northeast, Sistan-Baluchestan on the east, and Hormozgan on the south. It includes the southern part of the central Iranian desert, the Dasht-e Lut. The southern Lut is relatively dry and is not saline, while in the east are sand dunes and in the west, wind-carved ridges 180–240 feet (55–70 meters) high, called kalut.

Paleolithic toolmaking

According to Britannica, at sites dating from the Lower Paleolithic period (2,580,000 to 200,000 years ago), simple pebble tools have been found in association with the remains of what may have been some of the earliest human ancestors. A somewhat more-sophisticated Lower Paleolithic tradition known as the Chopper chopping-tool industry is widely distributed in the Eastern Hemisphere and tradition is thought to have been the work of the hominin species named Homo erectus. It is believed that H. erectus probably made tools of wood and bone, although no such fossil tools have yet been found, as well as of stone.

50 Iranian properties on tentative list of UNESCO

HERITAGE TEHRAN — A total of 50 Iranian properties have already been placed on the tentative list for [possible] inclusion on UNESCO's World Heritage list in the years to come.

"They are the foundations of tourism industry development in the country," Mehr quoted deputy tourism minister Mohammad Hassan Talebian as saying on Tuesday.

Talebian made the remarks in a visit to historical and cultural monuments in the ancient town of Bastam, near Shahrud, Semnan province.

"Among the properties are some caravanserais located in Semnan province."

The case for Bastam and Kharaghan includes the complex of Sheikh Bayazid Bastami, the chief mosque, the towering dome of Kashaneh, and a part of the old wall of the city. The complex of Sheikh Bayazid Bastami comprises the grave of Sheikh Bayazid Bastami, one of the five elevated Sufis of the world. For the same reason, from the 19th century onward, several important properties have been constructed around it. The oldest property of the complex dates back to the 8th and 9th centuries CE.

Authenticity and integrity have been kept for one thousand years. Scientifically, the properties have been confirmed through excavations and renovations. The complex of Sheikh Bayazid Bastami can be compared with other religious complexes in the Islamic world but its remarkable issue is that it has had a regular trend of development through one thousand years.

In the file submitted to UNESCO, there are 25 caravanserais, selected from hundreds of caravanserais from all over Iran.

As Iran historically is located between the main ancient civilizations, the historical roads are playing a critical role in Persian civilization. From the beginning of the history to the current time, the role of Iran as a bridge has encouraged the rulers and people to always care about roads and related structures as one of the main financial income resources. For example, Silk Road is one of these long-lasting corridors which played an important role in the Persian Empire during history.

The historical roads have had several elements related to their functions. Bridges, checkpoints, castles, bazaars and caravanserais as the main element of the historical road in Iran, were not only a simple place for travelers to rest and keeping safe their belongings, also were a meeting point for travelers, merchants, scientists, and many other scholars who wanted to exchange knowledge and ideas, as well as discover new civilizations.

Caravanserais are usually a place that provides safety for Caravans and travelers against natural risks like rain, snow, storms, and floods, or danger of robbers on the roads. That's why the structure of caravanserais is like a castle and good fortified. From a simple enclosure building at the first prototypes to the highly decorated ones in the middle centuries or the very fortified types of it, are the evidence of progress,



improvement, and evolution of this kind of buildings.

The most characteristic element of Persian caravanserai is the central courtyard, this design is very functional and it's the result of evolution. The central court allows the best form of fortification and provides four rows of rooms around the yard. On the back of the rooms, there are four halls for animals and stores.

Caravanserais are from unique examples of Iranian architecture that in each historical period and in different parts of Iran, significant examples have remained which can be considered as architectural masterpieces.

Nomadic art of making Siah-Chador revived in western Iran

TOURISM TEHRAN — The art of making Siah-Chador (nomadic black tents), that had been fallen into oblivion in western Ilam province, has been revived.

Making Siah-Chador is a valuable industrial art with a history close to the nomadic life, that had been forgotten, but now it has been revived and reached the production stage with the careful planning in collaboration with the private sector, CHTN quoted provincial tourism chief Abdolmalek Shanbehzadeh as saying on Wednesday.

As Masoumeh Ebtekar, vice president for women's and family affairs, announced



in April 2018, some 75 percent of Iranian handicrafts are produced by females, and making Siah-Chador is not an exception.

The field has been practiced by women among Iranian nomads for generations. The black tents are woven from the hair

of black goats, which don't let water pass through and are available, cheap, light, and easy to collect and carry.

Men are responsible for setting up the tents and nomads usually live and rest under these black tents in summers and winters.

Reviving this field of handicraft will contribute to the prosperity of the nomadic economy, as well as generate job opportunities, Shanbehzadeh added.

Back in May, the official announced that Ilam has exported more than \$50 million of handicrafts to neighboring Iraq through the Mehran border since the last Iranian year 1398 (started March 21, 2019).

Embossed kilim, wooden products, traditional glassware, zilou floor coverings, ceramics, and wool felt products constituted the lion's share of the exports, of which embossed kilim is the most sought-after.

Dozens of Iranian handicrafts have gained the UNESCO Seal of Excellence during the past couple of years.

Home to almost half of Iran's UNESCO sites, western Iran is a land of hospitable people, wild extremes, and wilder history, and it may be an independent traveler's adventure playground. The region also witnessed the rise and fall of many great empires once bordering Mesopotamia, Ottoman Turkey, and Czarist Russia.

Rey to host online meeting on tazieh

TOURISM TEHRAN — The ancient city of Rey will be hosting a virtual meeting on tazieh, Iranian passion play, on the occasion of the lunar month of Muharram (starting Friday) in which Shia Muslims commemorate the martyrdom anniversary of Imam Hussein (AS).

The Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department of Rey is scheduled to host an online meeting on tazieh in the near future, in which various aspects of the religious dramatic art will be discussed, CHTN reported.

Tazieh represents religious events, historical and mythical stories and folk tales. Each performance has the four components of poetry, music, song, and motion. However, stories about the uprising of Imam Hussein (AS) and his companions against the oppressive Umayyad dynasty in 680 CE are more highly regarded by tazieh troupes and audiences.

As Rey is considered a religious center in the southeast of Tehran, tazieh has been performed in this city for a long time every year, and the meeting will discuss the history of tazieh performances as well as boost the religious tourism in the region, Rey's cultural heritage department director Amir Mosayeb Rahimzadeh said on Wednesday.



Tazieh, which has a long history in Iran, was registered on UNESCO's List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in November 2010.

Iranians, who are mostly Shia Muslims, hold special ceremonies during the first ten days of the lunar month of Muharram to commemorate the martyrdom anniversary of Imam Hussein (AS), the grandson of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

and his 72 loyal companions, including Tazieh, Sineh-Zani [beating the chest] and Nazri, food offerings during Muharram in every village, township, city or metropolis, which are usually sponsored by wealthy benefactors.

Rey was one of the capital cities of the Parthian empire (3rd century BC–3rd century CE) and it was captured by the Muslim Arabs in 641 CE. During the reign of the Muslim caliph al-Mahdi in the 8th century, the city grew in importance until it was rivaled in western Asia only by Damascus and Baghdad.

According to Encyclopedia Britannica, Islamic writers described it as a city of extraordinary beauty, built largely of fired brick and brilliantly ornamented with blue faience (glazed earthenware).

It continued to be an important city and was briefly a capital under the rule of the Seljuqs, but in the 12th century, it was weakened by the fierce quarrels of rival religious sects.

In 1220 the city was almost entirely destroyed by the Mongols, and its inhabitants were massacred. Most of the survivors of the massacre moved to nearby Tehran, and the deserted remnants of Rey soon fell into complete ruin.

Sheikh Fazlollah Noori Mosque in Tehran being restored, reinforced

TOURISM TEHRAN — A team of cultural heritage experts, architects and restorers have commenced a project on Sheikh Fazlollah Noori Mosque in a bid to bring the centuries-old monument, which is located in downtown Tehran, back to its former glory.

The dome and colorful tiles, walls,

and geometric ornamentations, pillars, and ceilings of the mosque are subject to the project, which is now complete by 20 percent, Seyyed Majid Ghamkhar, an official with Tehran Municipality, said on Tuesday.

The mosque is named after Hajj Sheikh Fazlollah Noori Tabarsi (1843-1909), a

prominent Shia Muslim cleric who held many religious and political gatherings at the mosque. He was one of the leading scholars trying to establish the Persian Constitutional Revolution that took place between 1905 and 1911. The revolution paved the way for a fundamental change in Persia (Iran), heralding the modern era.



SDSs generated by Lake Urmia hotspots reduced by 90%

ENVIRONMENT **TEHRAN** — After the beginning of restoration measures, the sand and dust sources (SDSs) generated by Lake Urmia hotspots has been reduced by 90 percent, even has reached zero in some critical areas, head of the Lake Urmia Restoration Program has said.

Prior to the start of the executive activities for Lake Urmia rehabilitation, an area of approximately 100,000 hectares was considered as a land sensitive to wind erosion due to the lake's retreat, Farhad Sarkhosh stated.

In addition to the specialized measures in controlling the critical hotspots of SDSs, a 50 percent increase in the Lake's surface and an eightfold increase in its water level caused many lands prone to wind erosion to return to normal again, he explained.

He went on to note that the government has spent 100 trillion rials (about \$2.3 billion at the official rate of 42,000 rials) to implement rehabilitation projects on the lake.

During a five-year period until last year, a total of 673 billion rials (nearly \$16 million) have been earmarked to counter sand and dust storms generated by the resources surrounding Lake Urmia, 70 percent of which has so far been provided, he noted.

The SDSs control operations in the area are either completed or in its final stage, which is a significant measure as saved 14 million people, he further stated.

Referring to the operation of water transfer projects from the south of West Azerbaijan to Lake Urmia, Sarkhosh said that these projects



were put into operation in January this year and will increase the water level of the lake by about one meter annually.

The lowest amount of water in Lake Urmia was recorded in 2012, a year before the start of the practical work of the restoration program, with 500 million cubic meters of water, which now reached more than 4 billion cubic meters showing an eightfold increase, he highlighted.

He went on to state that despite this relative increase in water level, the 30-year chart of changes in Lake Urmia based on satellite data shows that the lake is still far from its good condition and increasing rainfall and optimal use of water resources can continue to increase the water level and lead to its complete restoration.

Although the level of 1,274 meters has been announced as the lake's ecological level,

this lake will have favorable conditions at the level of 1,272 meters and more than 95 percent of the dust sources will be eliminated, Sarkhosh emphasized.

Lake Urmia, located in the northwest of Iran, was once the most extensive permanent hypersaline lake in the world. Unsustainable water management in response to increasing demand together with climatic extremes has given rise to the lake's depletion during the last two decades. The lake's restoration program was established in 2013 and aims to restore the lake within a 10-year program.

The level of Lake Urmia reached about 1271.56 meters on July 21, equivalent to 3,004 square kilometers surface area and 4.19 billion cubic meters in volume, while at the beginning of Lake Urmia Restoration Program in 2013, the Lake's level was about 1270.32 meters, 1783 square kilometers in surface area and 1.14 billion cubic meters in volume, which indicates a 50 percent increase in the lake's surface area.

Achieving sustainable rehabilitation requires countless efforts, such as preventing the lake's water flow from entering the agricultural land. Lake Urmia's condition stabilized with a positive trend due to heavy rainfall, but there is a fear that this trend will be reversed by drought in the coming years.

The above normal levels of rain came to help conservation measures to preserve the Lake Urmia, however, it still needs 9.5 billion cubic meters of water to reach its ecological level of 1274.10 meters.

Conservation plan prepared for Persian Gulf humpback dolphins

ENVIRONMENT **TEHRAN** — An action plan for the protection of Persian Gulf humpback dolphins has been prepared and will be implemented with the participation of the three coastal provinces, head of the department of environment of Bushehr province, said on Wednesday.

The project is the result of years of efforts and monitoring of dolphins in the Persian Gulf ecosystem, which will be implemented by the three coastal provinces of Bushehr, Khuzestan, and Hormozgan, Farhad Gholinejad said, IRNA reported.

Under the program, in addition to constant monitoring, efforts are being made to preserve the species and its habitat, he said, adding, the monitoring and protection of habitats of species whose habitats have been severely and extensively destroyed is our priority.

He went on to note that the destruction of natural habitats is indirectly related to environmental pollution such as industrial and municipal wastes and effluents, therefore the development of a comprehensive action plan plays a vital role.

Oil spills and other pollutants dumped into the Persian Gulf, such as municipal and industrial wastewater as well as tourist traffic, are the main causes of habitat destruction of this valuable species, he lamented.

Given all these habitats threatening conditions, it seems that special attention should be paid to the issue of natural habitat protection, he emphasized.



Gholinejad also mentioned the very important and vital role of local communities, non-governmental organizations and the media in protecting the Persian Gulf humpback dolphins, and called on all concerned in this field to take an active part in the action plan.

Humpback dolphins are characterized by the conspicuous humps and elongated dorsal fins found on the backs of adults of the species. They are found close to shores along the coast of West Africa (called the Atlantic species) and right along the coast of the Indian Ocean from South Africa to Australia (known as the Indo-Pacific species). Adults can reach from 1.8 to 2.6 meters and weigh in the range of 100 to 139 kilograms.

A total of 47 Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins have been spotted in the Dayer Nakhiloo National Marine Park in Bushehr province since a field monitoring project was launched in February 2014.

The dolphin is listed as 'nearly threatened' by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, but some argue that it meets the IUCN's requirements for a 'vulnerable' status.

FAO strengthens agricultural drought monitoring, warning systems in Iran

ENVIRONMENT **TEHRAN** — The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has helped Iran to establish a country-specific agricultural drought monitoring system, enabling the national authorities to detect periods of water stress and forecast crop yields more accurately in the Lake Urmia basin.

In this regard, FAO organized a three-day workshop to equip Iranian experts with operational knowledge and skills required to establish a country-level Agricultural Stress Index System (ASIS).

Designed by FAO to assist the countries in monitoring agricultural drought and managing its risk, ASIS as a part of the Global Information and Early Warning System on Food and Agriculture uses satellite data to detect agricultural areas where crops could be affected by drought and as a result, it helps the countries to strengthen their agricultural drought monitoring and early warning systems.

"ASIS can monitor the crop-specific areas during the crop cycle, detecting water stress and forecasting drought, that can produce a production reduction, two months ahead," Oscar Rojas, FAO Natural Resources Officer who led the three-day workshop said.

Initially developed by FAO-HQ covering all around the world, the country-specific version of ASIS once calibrated with field data, including land-use maps, sowing dates, crop cycle duration, and crop coefficients; it will detect periods of water stress in crops and forecast crop yields more accurately.

"The tool simplifies the results in the form of easy-to-interpret maps enabling decision-makers at national and local levels



to implement drought mitigation activities in agriculture, including the payment of parametric crop insurances and the provision of social protection schemes, on a timely basis. These results are also useful for guiding public investments such as water harvesting, irrigation, and water reserves," Rojas added.

In this endeavor, and as part of the "Integrated Programme for Sustainable Water Resources Management in the Lake Urmia Basin" project jointly implemented by the FAO and Lake Urmia Restoration Program (ULRP) and funded by the Embassy of Japan.

"ASIS can assist in close monitoring of the agricultural stress within the Lake Urmia basin in order to manage the impact of those stresses on water resources management. Moreover, adding a probabilistic forecast to the ASIS which is going to be implemented within the extension of the ULRP-FAO project would be a proper tool for decision-makers," Behdad Chehrenegar, the Head of Research Division of ULRP noted.

FAO is the lead UN agency dedicated to increasing the resilience of agricultural livelihoods and food systems and supports its member countries in their efforts to develop and establish agricultural early warning action systems.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

← → ↻

Relief foundation creates over 1.5m jobs for the deprived

Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation has generated over 1.5m job opportunities for those financially struggling since the past 7 years, Hojatollah Abdolmaleki, the Foundation's deputy director has announced.

Job generation for the underprivileged is among the most important and tough responsibilities of the Foundation, he stated, YJC reported on Monday.

Since Iranian calendar year of 1390 (March 2011–March 2012) to 1396 (March 2017– March 2018), the Foundation has earmarked 100 trillion rials (nearly \$2.4 billion) to open up over 1.4 million job opportunities in order to facilitate income generation for the deprived, he explained.

ایجاد بیش از یک میلیون و ۵۰۰ هزار شغل برای محرومان در کشور

کمیته امداد امام (ره) از سال ۹۰ تاکنون بیش از یک میلیون و ۵۰۰ هزار شغل برای محرومان کشور ایجاد کرده است.

به گزارش خبرنگار باشگاه خبرنگاران جوان، حجت الله عبدالملکی معاون کمیته امداد امام خمینی (ره) اظهار کرد: ایجاد اشتغال امری سخت است، تولید اشتغال برای محرومان سخت‌ترین اقدام برای کمیته امداد است که در حال انجام است.

وی افزود: از سال ۹۰، یک میلیون و ۴۰۰ هزار شغل با تسهیلات ۱۰ هزار میلیاردی برای محرومان ایجاد شده است، در سال گذشته نیز برای ۱۴۸ هزار نفر با ۲ هزار و ۳۰۰ میلیارد تومان تسهیلات توسط کمیته امداد شغل ایجاد شده است.

\$240m earmarked to reduce pollution, natural resources degradation

ENVIRONMENT **TEHRAN** — Some 10 trillion rials (nearly \$240 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) has been allocated in order to reduce pollution and prevent the destruction of natural resources in the country.

The fund operates using financial resources along with legal instruments with the support and participation of the private sector for sustainable development and comprehensive protection of the environment, which has so far taken appropriate action in this regard, Amir Arsalan Mohajeri, head of the National Environment Fund, explained.

According to the law, all fines, taxes, and resources deposited in the fund account are spent on environmental issues and prevention of destruction, he added, IRNA reported.

The National Environment Fund needs the cooperation of economic sectors, the private sector, and investors with the aim of improving the protection and sustainable development of natural resources and biodiversity, along with reducing pollution, and enhances cooperation in different parts of the country, he also stated.

Crimean-Congo fever kills 5 in Iran

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Crimean-Congo Hemorrhagic Fever (CCHF) has claimed five lives in the country since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21), director of zoonotic diseases management office at the Ministry of Health has said.

Behzad Amiri said that over the past five months 38 people have been diagnosed with the disease but were cured and survived death.

Last year, 119 persons were diagnosed with Crimean-Congo fever in the country, of whom 11 died, he regretted, adding, since the beginning of this year, 38 people have been identified with Crimean-Congo fever, of whom 5 have lost their lives, unfortunately.

Mohammad Nabavi, deputy director for communicable diseases department of the Ministry of Health, said that some 10 percent of the people who are diagnosed with Crimean-Congo fever and receive proper medical care may die, while this number increases to 50 percent for the people who do not get any treatments.

According to the Health Ministry, some 100 to 150 cases of Crimean-Congo fever are annually reported in Iran.

According to the World Health Organization, the Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever virus causes severe viral hemorrhagic fever outbreaks.

CCHF outbreaks have a case fatality rate of up to 40 percent.

The virus is primarily transmitted to people from ticks and livestock animals. Human-to-human transmission can occur resulting from close contact with the blood, secretions, organs or other bodily fluids of infected persons.

Konkur kicks off amid pandemic

1 → All participants and invigilators must wear face masks and receive a hygiene package including a mask, alcohol pad, and hygiene gel.

Large halls have been selected with a suitable capacity and the seats are arranged with an approved physical distance of 180 cm from each other. Meanwhile, the venues and all equipment are disinfected.

Some 61 candidates of the national university entrance exam are infected with the virus that will take the exam at hospitals approved by the Ministry of Health.

The oldest candidate is 83 years old and the youngest is aging 15.

In this year's national exam, 58.28 percent of the total candidates are female and 41.72 percent are male.

Konkur is held annually in June or July in Iran and in some other countries as well, however, this year due to the pandemic, it was postponed till August. Every year the participants sit for the multiple-choice exam to vie to get the best results possible as the seats at tuition-free public universities are limited. Based on the figures only 20 percent of the students would manage to win the seats at top charge-free public universities.

LET'S LEARN PERSIAN

(Part 5)

(Source: saadifoundation.ir)

■ **Vowels in the Middle** – Short vowels /a, e, o/ are not usually written in the middle of a syllable. When necessary, they are represented by the signs َ, ِ and ُ, which are placed above or below the previous letters:

| | | |
|-----|-------|------|
| I | /mar/ | *مَن |
| yen | /yen/ | یَن |
| ton | /ton/ | تَن |

Long vowels /ā, ī, u/ are written with the letters الف, ی and و:

| | | |
|-------|--------|--------------|
| bread | /nān/ | (formal) نان |
| half | /nim/ | نیم |
| bread | /nuri/ | (spoken) نون |

Letter /he/ has the sound /h/, like h in he: ه ح هـ

| | | | |
|----------|-------|-------|-------|
| the Hajj | /haj/ | حَجَّ | حَجَّ |
|----------|-------|-------|-------|

Letter /xe/ has the sound /x/, like ch in Scottish loch and ch in German Bach: خ چ

| | | | |
|------|--------|------|---------------|
| home | /xāne/ | خانه | خ + ا + ن + ه |
|------|--------|------|---------------|

Letter /dāl/ has the sound /d/, like d in day: د ذ

No recognition of Israel unless Palestine freed: Imran Khan

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has categorically said that Pakistan could not recognise Israel as a state unless it gave freedom to Palestine.

In a two-hour late-night interview with Dunya TV on Tuesday, he touched upon several issues, from the government's strategy to deal with Covid-19, sugar and wheat crises, poor civic amenities in Karachi, government-opposition relations and FBR reforms to Pakistan's foreign relations.

On foreign policy, the prime minister said: "The Quaid-i-Azam had said in 1948 that Pakistan could not recognise Israel unless it gave freedom to Palestinians."

"If we recognise Israel and ignore tyranny faced by the Palestinians, we will have to give up (the cause of) Kashmir as well, and this we cannot do."

ARTICLE CONTINUES AFTER AD

In the context of the UAE, which has recently established ties with Israel, the prime minister said every state had its own foreign policy.

He refuted an impression that Pakistan-Saudi Arabia relations had been shaken over Kashmir issue. "Saudi Arabia is one of our key friends and our relations are still fraternal and unchanged," he said.

The PM said Pakistan's future was linked to China as China defended Pakistan in all difficult times. He said Chinese President Xi Jinping would visit Pakistan in the winter.

Mali soldiers promise elections after coup d'etat

Soldiers who overthrew Mali's president in a coup d'etat that drew international condemnation pledged on Wednesday to restore stability and oversee a transition to elections within a "reasonable" period.

President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita resigned and dissolved parliament late on Tuesday, hours after the coup leaders detained him at gunpoint, plunging a country already facing an armed movement against it as well as mass opposition protests deeper into crisis, al Jazeera reported.

Colonel-Major Ismael Wague - a spokesman for the coup-makers calling themselves the National Committee for the Salvation of the People - said they acted to prevent Mali from falling further into chaos.

"The social and political tension has undermined the proper functioning of the country for quite a while," said Wague, flanked by soldiers.

"Mali descends into chaos day by day [with] anarchy and insecurity because of the fault of the people in charge of its destiny. Real democracy doesn't go with complacency, nor weakness of the state authority, which must guarantee freedom and security of the people."

Lukashenko says opp. attempting coup with formation of transitional council

Belarus' President Alexander Lukashenko has accused the opposition of attempting to stage a coup by forming a council to supposedly oversee a political transition in the country.

The opposition, which contests the re-election of Lukashenko in the August 9 presidential vote, announced the formation of the 70-person "coordination council" on Tuesday.

The council, which includes the representatives of political parties and cultural figures, is meant to be "a single representative body of the Belarusian society," according to the opposition.

Aides to the self-exiled opposition leader Svetlana Tikhonovskaya also said she was ready to serve as a "national leader" until a new election was arranged.

Lukashenko, who has already ruled out holding a repeat election, said on Tuesday that he "definitely consider[s] this as an attempt to seize power."

Attending a meeting of Belarusian Security Council, he warned that "adequate measures" would be taken against those who "joined this headquarters," referring to the opposition council. "But strictly in accordance with the constitution and the law. We have enough of those measures to cool some hot heads," he added.

He said that the council comprised "the formers, the sore, who had a taste of power in the past; as well as deliberate Nazis." Lukashenko won Belarus' presidential election earlier this month by a landslide, securing a sixth term in office. But his political opponents organized protests and claimed electoral fraud. The allegations were echoed by Western states.

The Belarusian president has expressed concern about foreign meddling in the internal affairs of his country. Last week, he also warned about potential military action by NATO against Belarus.

"(NATO) tanks and jets are on standby within 15 minutes' reach of our borders. This is not for nothing. NATO forces are rattling tank tracks at our doors. Military power is building up on the western border of our country," he said on Sunday.

Resistance News

Israeli warplanes target resistance site in Gaza

INTERNATIONAL TEHRAN— The Israeli occupation army on Tuesday night waged aerial attacks on a Palestinian resistance site in the Gaza Strip, with no reported casualties.

A reporter for the Palestinian Information Center (PIC) said that eight Israeli airstrikes targeted the same resistance site in the south of al-Zeitoun neighborhood in Gaza City.

The aerial aggression caused damage to civilian property and panic among families in the bombed area.

The Israeli army claimed the new airstrikes were in response to rocket fire from Gaza on Tuesday evening.

For over a week, the Israeli army has been attacking Gaza in response to incendiary balloons launched by young protesters from the besieged coastal enclave.

The authorities in Gaza describe the flying of balloons carrying incendiaries towards Israel by young men as acts of protest against Israel's failure to honor previous ceasefire pledges to ease the blockade on Gaza and its persistence in attacking fishermen.

Palestinians in Gaza rally against Israel-UAE deal

Don't follow UAE lead in betraying Palestine: Abbas tells Arab states

By staff & agencies

Hundreds of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip Wednesday rallied against the U.S.-brokered deal to normalize ties between Israel and the United Arab Emirates.

Protesters burned Israeli and American flags, trampled on posters of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Donald Trump, and chanted «normalization is betrayal to Jerusalem and Palestine.»

According to AP, unlike Palestinian protesters last Friday near the Al Aqsa Mosque compound in Jerusalem's Old City who also burned posters of the Emirati crown prince, the Gaza demonstrators stopped short of burning symbols of the UAE - apparently not to antagonize the Persian Gulf Arab country, where tens of thousands of Palestinians work and live.

The demonstrators in Gaza City also voiced support for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas for his rejection of President Donald Trump's Mideast plan, which the Palestinians say unfairly favors Israel.

The protest was organized by the Hamas group, which rules the Gaza Strip, and other factions.

Khalil al-Hayya, a senior Hamas official, denounced the Israeli-Emirati deal.

«Normalization with the occupation harms us and doesn't serve us,» he said. «Instead, it serves and promotes the occupation in its projects that target Palestine and the region.»

■ **'Don't follow UAE lead in betraying Palestine'**

Meanwhile, authority President Mahmoud Abbas has railed against the United Arab Emirates (UAE) — which long portrayed itself as an advocate of Palestine's cause — for stabbing the Palestinian nation in the back by making peace with Israel, warning other Arab countries not to follow in Abu



Dhabi's footsteps.

He made the remarks at a meeting of the Palestinian leadership in the West bank city of Ramallah on Tuesday night, which was also attended by representatives of different Palestinian factions, including the Gaza-based resistance groups of Islamic Jihad and Hamas.

Abbas condemned the UAE's decision to normalize ties with Israel as a "stab in the back of the Palestinian people."

He reminded the Arab countries that based on the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative any Israeli normalization should come after an agreement is reached between the Palestinians and Tel Aviv, and not the other way around.

"Some countries have begun moving, both openly and in secret...this is rejected, and we the Palestinians will continue to absolutely reject this, no matter which country does this. You must respect the decisions on which you

have signed off," he said.

Last week, Israel and the UAE announced in a joint statement, issued by the White House, that they had agreed to the full normalization of relations, sparking anger among Palestinians and other supporters of the Palestinian cause against Israeli occupation.

Upon a request by U.S. President Donald Trump, it claimed, Israel "will suspend declaring sovereignty" over parts of the occupied West Bank.

Abbas delivered the warning after media reports, citing experts, speculated that Bahrain was likely to toe the UAE line in normalizing ties with Israel.

On Tuesday, Israeli media also cited Sudanese government sources as announcing an "impending" normalization agreement with Tel Aviv. Sudan's acting foreign minister, however, denied knowledge of such talks with Israel.

Russian major general dies, two servicemen injured in Syria

A Russian major general has lost his life and two servicemen have sustained injuries when an improvised explosive device went off near their military convoy in Syria's eastern province of Dayr al-Zawr.

Russia's Defense Ministry said in a statement that the roadside bomb exploded while the convoy was returning to its base from a humanitarian operation near the provincial capital city of Dayr al-Zawr, located 450 kilometers (280 miles) northeast of the capital Damascus, on Tuesday.

The statement added that three servicemen were wounded in the blast, of whom a "senior military advisor with the rank of major general" succumbed to his injuries.

The Russian Investigative Committee said early on Wednesday it had launched a criminal case following the incident.

"The crime that left a Russian army general killed and two more servicemen injured will not be an exception. Forces of the Investigative Committee, who are now doing their service in Syria, will establish all details of this criminal offense as part of the case. Establishing those guilty for



the death and injuries of our servicemen is not just our duty, it is also a matter of honor," the committee announced in a statement.

According to Press TV, earlier this month, Russia raised the alarm at "an aggravation of the situation" in the oil-rich areas of Dayr al-Zawr Province, which are occupied by American forces and where remnants of the Takfiri Daesh terror group are active.

Over 120 Russian servicemen have so far lost their lives in Syria since the country went on a mission in September 2015 to help the Arab country in its counter-terrorism operations.

Several rockets strike U.S. military base in eastern Syria

Syrian state media say a U.S. military base located near an oilfield in the eastern part of the Arab country has come under a rocket attack.

Syria's official news agency SANA announced late on Tuesday that several rockets had targeted a U.S. military base near the Conoco oil field controlled by American troops and Kurdish militants in the eastern Syrian province of Dayr al-Zawr.

There was no immediate report on the possible casualties.

This comes a day after a U.S. air raid on a Syrian military checkpoint in the northeastern city of Qamishli killed a soldier and injured two others.

Since late October 2019, the United States has been redeploying troops to the oil fields controlled by its Kurdish mercenaries in eastern Syria, in a reversal of President Donald Trump's earlier order to withdraw all troops there.

The Syrian government views the U.S. military presence as an illegal occupation of the country aimed at plundering its natural resources.



On July 30, during his testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo confirmed for the first time that an American oil company would begin work in areas controlled by the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in northeastern Syria.

Syria says the deal is "an affront to national sovereignty" that amounts to "theft."

The presence of U.S. forces in eastern Syria has particularly irked the civilians, and local residents have on several occasions stopped American military convoys entering the region.

Russia worked to help Trump in 2016 election: U.S. Senate panel

The United States Senate intelligence committee concluded that the Kremlin launched an aggressive effort to meddle in the 2016 presidential contest on behalf of Donald Trump as the Republican-led panel on Tuesday released its fifth and final report in its investigation into election interference.

The report (PDF) also alleged the WikiLeaks website played a key role in Russia's effort to influence the 2016 election and likely knew it was assisting Russian intelligence.

The report purposely does not come to a final conclusion about whether there is

enough evidence that President Trump's campaign coordinated or colluded with Russia to sway the election to him and away from Democrat Hillary Clinton, leaving its findings open to partisan interpretation.

Former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort worked with Russians, the report alleges, including oligarch Oleg Deripaska, before during and after the 2016 election that pitted Trump against Clinton.

It lays out significant contacts between Trump associates and Russians, describing for instance a close professional

relationship between Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort and Konstantin Kilimnik, who the committee describes without equivocation as a Russian intelligence officer.

The panel found Manafort's role and proximity to Trump created opportunities for Russian intelligence, saying his "high-level access and willingness to share information with individuals closely affiliated with the Russian intelligence services... represented a grave counterintelligence threat."

The report notes how Manafort shared internal Trump campaign polling data with Kilimnik and says there is "some evidence" that Kilimnik may have been connected to the Kremlin's operation to hack and leak Democratic emails, though it does not describe that evidence. In addition, the report says that "two pieces of information" raise the possibility of Manafort's potential connection to those operations, but what follows next in the document is blacked out.

Russia tried to discredit investigations into its role in election meddling, according to the Senate document.

"The Committee observed numerous Russian-government actors from late 2016 to at least January 2020 consistently spreading overlapping false narratives which sought to discredit investigations into Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. elections and spread false information about the events of 2016," the report said.

The Senate panel described its report, totaling more than 1,300 pages, as "the most comprehensive description to date of Russia's activities and the threat they



posed". The bipartisan investigation lasted almost three and a half years, much longer than the other probes.

The latest assessments were contained in the fifth and final chapter of the Senate Intelligence Committee's report on allegations that Russia sought to help Trump defeat Clinton.

Previous chapters have ratified U.S. spy agencies' findings, made public in January 2017, that Russia had sought to help Trump in 2016 by denigrating Clinton, making it harder for her to win, and harming her presidency if she did.

A group of Republicans on the panel submitted "additional views" to the report saying that it should state more explicitly that Trump's campaign did not coordinate with Russia. But Democrats on the panel submitted their own views, arguing that the report clearly shows such cooperation.

The last chapter of the committee report, released as Trump prepares to face off against Joe Biden in the 2020 presidential election, is likely to be the most definitive public account of the 2016 election controversy.

Visual point of view



© Tehran Times/ Abbas Goudarzi

Iran, Uzbekistan friendly cancelled

S P O R T S TEHRAN — The friendly match between Iran and Uzbekistan has been cancelled following changes to the men's and women's international match calendars in response to the global disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic made by FIFA.

These changes follow a thorough consultation process with the Confederations and football stakeholders. This process resulted in proposals via the FIFA-Confederations COVID-19 Working Group that maintain the previously agreed principle that a tailor-made and flexible approach between Confederations is required, reflecting the varied circumstances of the pandemic across the world.

The warm-up was originally scheduled for Sept. 7 but FIFA replaced the window from 31 Aug. to 8 Sept. and it means the 'Persian Leopards' will have to change their fixture.

The friendly match between Iran and Syria scheduled for Sept. 3 had been previously cancelled.



The 2022 World Cup qualifiers scheduled this year were postponed to 2021 last week due to the coronavirus pandemic. FIFA and the Asian Football Confederation issued a joint statement saying the delay is to protect the health and safety of all participants from COVID-19.

Iran, who sit third in Group C behind Iraq and Bahrain, have four must-win matches ahead in the competition.

Deagan Skocic's team were due to host Hong Kong and Cambodia on Oct. 8 and Oct. 13 in Tehran and Phnom Penh, respectively. Iran also had two matches against Bahrain and Iraq on Nov. 12 and 17 in Tehran but the games will be held in 2021.

The eight group winners of the World Cup qualification's group stage and four best runners-up will advance to the AFC Asian Cup China 2023 Finals and the final round of qualifying for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.

The next best 24 teams from the second round of the joint qualifiers will compete in a separate competition for the remaining 12 slots in the 24-team AFC Asian Cup China 2023.

The FIFA World Cup in Qatar will run from November 21 to December 18, 2022.

IPL: Do or Die Time

S P O R T S TEHRAN — On the last day of Iran Professional League (IPL), six teams will remain in the fight for the competition's survival and three teams remain in the fight for AFC two quotas.

One of pars Jonoubi, Machine Sazi, Paykan, Saipa, Gol Gohar and Zob Ahan will join Shahin who were relegated to Azadegan League last week.

On the other hand, three teams will have to look for two places in the next season's AFC Champions League.

Persepolis became the first team to qualify for the continental competition and now, Tractor, Sepahan and Foolad will fight for two places.

Esteghlal have also sealed a place in the event. The Blues will remain among top four even if they lose to already-re-



gated Shahin since Foolad and Tractor will meet on the last day and their result will guarantee Esteghlal's place in the next season's ACL.

All this will be decided on Thursday and it's the definition of do or die.

No Iranian teams allowed to sign foreigner

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Iranian football teams are not permitted to sign foreign coach and player in the 2020-21 Iran Professional league (IPL). The decision has been ratified by the executive board of Iran Football League Organization on Wednesday.

"Due to the challenging situation of the currency exchange and the recent hike in the dollar's value against the rial, there is no possibility for Persepolis and Esteghlal clubs to sign foreign coach or player. These clubs can renew their current squad and coaching staff contracts and focus on signing Iranian players rather than foreigners," Mehdi Alinajad, the Iranian Deputy Minister of Sport and Youth, had said last week.

Now the organization has approved the decision however the current foreign coaches and players, who are working in



Iran football, can extend their contracts with their teams.

The new season of Iran Professional League (IPL) will start in early October, Fariborz Mahmoudzadeh, head of the Transfer Committee of the Iran Football League Organization, had previously said.

Pahlevani wrestling registered on National Heritage list

S P O R T S TEHRAN — Pahlevani wrestling or koshti pahlevani has been registered on the National Intangible Cultural Heritage list.

Traditional Iranian wrestling dates back to ancient Persia and was said to have been practiced by Rostam, mythological Iranian hero of the Shahnameh epic. The original purpose of these institutions was to train men as warriors and instill them with a sense of national pride in anticipation for the coming battles.

As a physical training for a Pahlevan, Koshti is a kind of grappling, using some combat techniques, that its spirit strongly relies on chivalry, bravery and generosity contrary to some other sports and traditions that are mostly practiced



to abuse power and oppress the weak.

Practiced in a domed structure called Zurkhaneh (House of Strength), training sessions consist mainly of ritual gymnastic movements and climax with the core of combat practice, a form of submission-grappling.

The spiritual power of Pahlevani Sport is so high that in today's world we see it as one of the widespread, influential and popular sports throughout the world and the culture it carries within is so rich.

In Iran, the pahlevani sport has a special role among Iranians and its culture and spiritual as well as physical elements are so influential and impressive on people's lifestyles and even the society's trend and orientation.

Tianjin appoint Wang to replace Stielike

Chinese Super League (CSL) side Tianjin Teda have terminated the contract of head coach Uli Stielike and replaced the German with former Henan Jianye coach Wang Baoshan, the club announced on Wednesday.

Stielike had been under pressure following a poor start to the delayed 2020 CSL campaign, with Tianjin picking up just one point from their first five games of the season so far.

The German, who had previously led Korea Republic to the final of the 2015 AFC Asian Cup finals in Australia, had been in charge of Tianjin since September 2017 when he steered the club away from the relegation zone in the final weeks of the season.

Tianjin again narrowly avoided relegation in 2018 when they finished in 14th position, one place above the drop zone, before showing a marked improvement in 2019 when Stielike steered them to seventh.

Tianjin have made a dreadful start to the current season, losing four and drawing one — against Chongqing Lifan — of their first five games to sit at the bottom of Group B of the reformed Chinese Super League standings.



Wang, who has significant experience working in the Chinese Super League after stints with Chongqing and Henan, also previously served as an assistant coach to the China national team.

The new coach's first game will be on Saturday, when Tianjin take on newly promoted side Qingdao Huanghai.

(Source: AFP)

Manchester United, Manchester City given extended summer break

Manchester United and Manchester City are set to miss the opening weekend of the Premier League after being granted an extended summer break following their European commitments, sources have told ESPN.

The two Manchester clubs will be given a 30-day break between their final games of this season and the new campaign.

City lost to Lyon in the Champions League quarterfinals on August 15 while United were knocked out of the Europa League by Sevilla 24 hours later.

It means they are unlikely to have fixtures scheduled for the opening weekend of the Premier League season on September 12-13 and will instead play their first games two or three days later in midweek.

However, City and United may have to play each other or one of the teams through to the Champions League or Europa League group stage in their opening matches. The 13 clubs without European football will be in Carabao Cup second-round action in the midweek of Sept. 15, while Tottenham play their first Europa League qualifying fixture.

United's players have been given two weeks off following their 2-1 defeat to Sevilla and are expected back in training early next month.

Manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer is



hopeful of giving his squad a two-week preseason before playing their first game of the new season.

Both City and United are set to organize warm up games to help them prepare, although sources have told ESPN it is "unlikely" either will use preseason to schedule international friendlies.

(Source: ESPN)

PSG fans arrested, urged to stay at home after club make Champions League final

French police said there were 36 arrests made in the capital on Tuesday after Paris Saint-Germain supporters celebrated on the streets after the club reached the Champions League final for the first time in their history.

PSG cruised to a 3-0 victory against RB Leipzig to set up a clash against Bundesliga champions Bayern Munich or fellow Ligue 1 side Lyon in the final on Sunday.

Thousands of the club's fans gathered on the Champs-Élysées to celebrate the victory with a number of them failing to wear masks and adhere to health protocols.

The police said arrests were made due to a number of individuals performing violent acts against officers and damaging shops in the city.

French Sports Minister Roxana Maracineanu responded to the images and urged supporters to avoid



heading outside amid the coronavirus pandemic.

"It's truly sad that we couldn't have any PSG supporters at the stadium last night," she told France Info.

"I appeal to their responsibility so they can celebrate the victories of our clubs by staying at home with their closest friends in order to reduce the contamination risks. We have to avoid gatherings in the street."

There were similar scenes in England last month when a police officer was seriously injured after thousands of Leeds United supporters celebrated the club's promotion to the Premier League.

Liverpool fans were also condemned by the club and police when supporters defied social distancing rules to celebrate the club's first league title in 30 years in June.

(Source: ESPN)

FFIRI to file appeal with CAS

Tasnim — The Football Federation of the Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) is going to file an appeal with the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS).

FIFA has ordered FFIRI to pay Marc Wilmots the sum of six million euro but the Iranian federation want to file an appeal against the fine.

The Belgian left his position as coach of Iran after six matches in charge in early December.

Under leadership of Wilmots, Iran beat Hong Kong and Cambodia in the 2022 World Cup qualifiers but was defeated against Bahrain and Iraq in Group C that left Iran in the third place in the group.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran Football Federation has to pay EUR 6,137,500 to Marc Wilmots as compensation for breach of contract," FIFA wrote in a letter sent to Iran football federation.

In accordance with articles 15 and 18 of the procedural Rules, this correspondence only communicates the findings of the decision without grounds.

Should any of the parties wish to receive the grounds of the decision, a written request must be received by FIFA, within 10 days of receipt of notification of the findings of the decision. Failure to do so within the stated deadline will result in the decision becoming final and binding and the parties being deemed to have waived their rights to file an appeal.

FC Porto one step closer to sign Taremi

PLDC — FC Porto, defending champions of Primeira Liga, are on the verge of signing a contract with Iranian striker of Rio Ave Mehdi Taremi.

Taremi's shining in his first year of presence in the European football have increased speculations about his future team. He managed to score 18 goals for Rio Ave and named the league's top scorer along with two other players.

The Iranian striker is reportedly on the radar of FC Porto, Sporting Lisbon, Benfica, and also teams from England, Russia, Germany, and France.

Among these, though, FC Porto seems to be more serious, according to the Portuguese outlets.

O Jogo newspaper dedicated its Tuesday's front page to Taremi's transfer, writing that the striker will probably join Porto in the next 24 hours with contract worth €5 to 6 million.

Meanwhile, Abola daily claimed on Wednesday that the transfer has been completed with a 4-year contract worth €6 million.

Barcelona appoint Koeman as new coach to lead recovery from disastrous season

Barcelona have appointed Ronald Koeman as their next coach, the club said in a statement on Wednesday, as the Catalans look to rebuild after their 8-2 thrashing by Bayern Munich in the Champions League last week.

Koeman, who has left his role as manager of the Netherlands, has signed a two-year-deal with Barcelona, who sacked Quique Setien on Monday after he presided over the club's worst defeat ever in European competition and a first trophy-less season for the club since the 2007-08 campaign.

Koeman, who will be officially presented at the Camp Nou stadium later on Wednesday, is dearly loved at Barca for his role in Johan Cruyff's hugely successful side known as the 'Dream Team' and for scoring the goal that delivered the club's first ever European Cup in 1992.

The defender later became the club's assistant coach before embarking on a career as a head coach, managing Dutch sides Ajax Amsterdam, PSV Eindhoven and Feyenoord plus Premier League sides Southampton and Everton and La Liga's Valencia.

"Barcelona and Ronald Koeman have come to an agreement for him to be the team's coach until 30 June 2022," said Barca's statement.

"A club legend and Barca's hero at Wembley who gave fans their first European Cup, Koeman is coming back to the Camp Nou. But this time he will be in the dugout to lead the team."

Koeman has frequently been linked with the Barcelona job in the past, in spite of a somewhat patchy club record which included disappointing stints at Valencia and Everton.

But he worked wonders with the Dutch national team, leading them to 2019 UEFA Nations League final as well as earning qualification to the postponed European Championships after they had failed to reach Euro 2016 and the 2018 World Cup.



"Over the past two and a half years, I have done everything I can to achieve success with the team," Koeman told the website of the Netherlands' soccer association, the KNVB.

"I look back with pride on what we have achieved together in that period. The Dutch national team has a bright future, I am convinced of that. Everyone knows that Barcelona is my dream club. It feels very special to me to be able to become a coach there."

The KNVB's director Eric Gudder added: "We regret Ronald's decision, but respect his choice. In the period that Ronald has been national coach, he has achieved good results and given the team color back in their cheeks after a number of difficult years."

Assistant coach Dwight Lodeweges will act as interim national coach until the KNVB has appointed a successor.

(Source: Reuters)

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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

[O Allah] What did he find he who lost You?
And what did he loose he who found You?
Truly he has failed who is contented with other than You.

Imam Hussein (AS)

Japanese environmental drawing contest honors paintings by Iranian children

The Environmental Best Prize, the top honor of the contest, went to the Japanese 10-year-old girl, Kitahara Kokomi.

"When I look at the works gathered here, I feel as if I am communicating with the mind of each child," Kinutani Koji, president of the jury, has said in his statement for the closing day of the contest.

"I always learn a lot from the entries, some of which are innocent and spontaneous, others are heavily tinged with the air of their native countries, and yet others have strong messages to bring to a wide audience," he added.

In the international section, Denis Avdic, a 14-year-old boy from Bosnia and Herzegovina, won the best prize, while the American 13-year-old girl Lindsay Qin was presented with the UNICEF Prize.

Hossain Shahadat from Bangladesh, Lara Hine Chinita from Portugal, Samadhar Tanuj from India and Nutthanicha Veerasene from Thailand received the JQA Special Prize.

The jury special prize in the international category was awarded to Ang Jia Yi from Malaysia.

"We hold this contest to give an opportunity for children of the future generation to become more aware of their global environment through drawing pictures under the theme of the environment of our Earth," the organizers have said in their statement for the competition.

Anne Wiazemsky's "One Year Later" appears in Persian

A Persian translation of French author Anne Wiazemsky's novel "Un An Après" ("One Year Later") has been published by Markaz Publications in Tehran.

The book has been rendered into Persian by Qassem Rubin.

"The hunt for students continued on Boulevard Saint-Germain and Rue Saint-Jacques," reads part of the book.

"Groups of young people, boys and girls mixed together, fought with their bare hands against the police batons, others threw various objects picked up on the sidewalks," it adds.

"Sometimes, smoke prevented me from making out who was attacking whom. We would learn later that it was tear gas. The phone rang. It was Jean-Luc, very worried, who feared that I had not had the time to get back to our apartment," it adds.

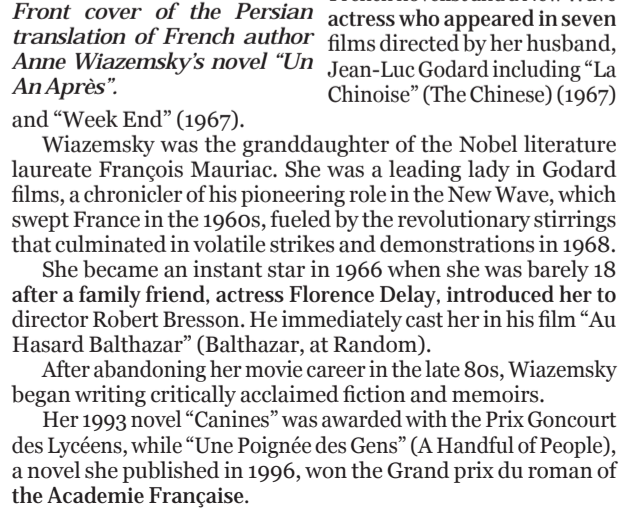
Anne Wiazemsky was a French novelist and a New Wave actress who appeared in seven films directed by her husband, Jean-Luc Godard including "La Chinoise" (The Chinese) (1967) and "Week End" (1967).

Wiazemsky was the granddaughter of the Nobel literature laureate François Mauriac. She was a leading lady in Godard films, a chronicler of his pioneering role in the New Wave, which swept France in the 1960s, fueled by the revolutionary stirrings that culminated in volatile strikes and demonstrations in 1968.

She became an instant star in 1966 when she was barely 18 after a family friend, actress Florence Delay, introduced her to director Robert Bresson. He immediately cast her in his film "Au Hasard Balthazar" (Balthazar, at Random).

After abandoning her movie career in the late 80s, Wiazemsky began writing critically acclaimed fiction and memoirs.

Her 1993 novel "Canines" was awarded with the Prix Goncourt des Lycéens, while "Une Poignée des Gens" (A Handful of People), a novel she published in 1996, won the Grand prix du roman of the Academie Française.



Tazieh performances to go on stage at Rudaki Open-Air Theater

A R T TEHRAN — The Rudaki Open-Air Theater will be hosting tazieh performances during the first ten nights of the lunar month of Muharram amid the coronavirus pandemic.

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

Rudaki Foundation Managing Director Mehdi Afzali has invited tazieh expert Ahmad Azizi, the head of Sayyid al-Shuhada Tazieh Troupe, to give performances.

Azizi said that the troupe will begin their performances every night after the evening azan (call to prayer) for ten nights.

"A big stage has been set up in the area and rows of seats observing social distancing have also been situated, observing health protocols proposed by the Health Ministry so that the mourners can make the best use of these days and nights," Azizi said.

Pointing to the high position of ritual art and plays especially tazieh among the Iranian nation, Azizi said, "We know that we are experiencing a different situation this year due to the spread of coronavirus, but the love of the Muslim nation towards Imam Hussein (AS) cannot be disturbed without repercussions."



Thespians perform a tazieh in Tehran an undated photo. (Tasnim/Mohammadreza Jafarzadeh)

"The management of the Rudaki Foundation in addition to Iran's Dramatic Arts Center have had good cooperation with the troupe, and we hope the audience will make the best use of the performances," he concluded.

In addition, several cultural and religious centers across Tehran will be

hosting over 50 tazieh performances on Imam Hussein (AS) in a program titled "Mourning of the Sun".

A number of the performances will also take place in the courtyards of Imamzadehs, the tombs of the Shia Imams' descendants.

The courtyards of the cultural centers of Khatam, Eshraq, Razi and Bahman, as well as Imamzadeh Ali-Akbar (AS) in Chizar, Imamzadeh Ahl ibn Ali (AS) in Khavaran, and Imam Hossein Square are among the main locations for the tazieh performances.

According to the director of the Khatam Cultural Center, Seyyed Ahmad Musavi, the performances will take place in open spaces observing health protocols.

The performances will begin on Friday and will continue until September 17.

Hojatoleslam Meisam Amrudi, the director of Art and Cultural Organization of the Tehran Municipality, had also announced earlier that the courtyards of its cultural centers will be dedicated to Muharram mourning ceremonies.

He added that the decision has been made to support the mourning groups across capital.

"About 60 cultural centers and culture houses with a capacity of over 20,000 individuals will be dedicated to the groups," he said.

Book of Shahnameh stories illustrated by Morteza Momayyez published

CULTURE TEHRAN — A book containing a selection of stories taken from Ferdowsi's epic masterpiece Shahnameh, and bearing illustrations by Morteza Momayyez, has been published by Yasavoli Publications in Tehran.

The stories have been rewritten by writer, translator and literary critic Hassan Golmohammadi in the book named "Selections from Ferdowsi's Shahnameh".

Momayyez, who is considered to be the father of modern graphic art in Iran, died of cancer in 2005 at the age of 70.

The book is a selection of the stories in poetry and prose, and it is very useful for the younger generation who are not very familiar with Shahnameh.

The book tries to encourage the youth to read Shahnameh with its attractive form of narration, while the illustrations by Momayyez have made the appearance of the book very special.

"It was in 1970s and 1980s I got to know Momayyez, and he gave me some of his illustrations on Shahnameh so that I choose poetry suitable for the designs from Shahnameh and later published them with inscriptions by a famous calligrapher," Golmohammadi said.

"The price offered by the calligrapher was high and the project was halted, but after a while Momayyez requested permission to keep the illustrations and use them for a book on Shahnameh," he added.

"Later I obtained permission from the Momayyez Foundation and published them in the book," he noted.

The Shahnameh millennium was accepted on UNESCO's 2010 calendar of events.

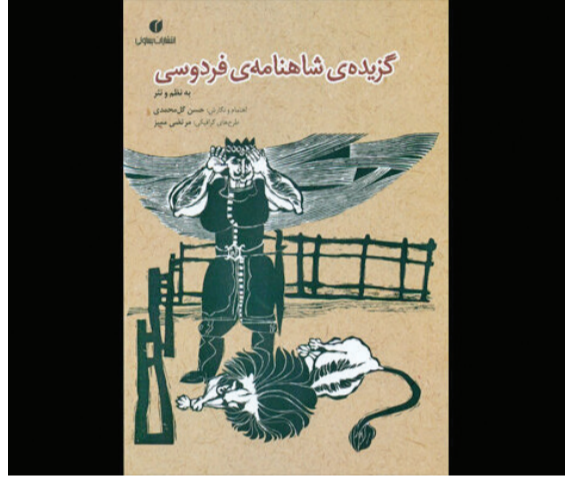
The Shahnameh, in which the Persian national epic found its final and enduring form, was completed in 1010.

It was written for Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna. However, he didn't welcome it because of the Shia religion of Ferdowsi.

According to some historical sources on Persian literature, Ferdowsi spent 30 years writing the Shahnameh, which is comprised of nearly 60,000 verses.

Also known as "Book of Kings" in English, the Shahnameh is based mainly on the Khwatay-namak, a history of the kings of Persia in Pahlavi (Middle Persian) from mythical times down to the 7th century.

For nearly 1000 years, Shahnameh has remained one of the most popular works in the Persian-speaking world.



Front cover of the book "Selections from Ferdowsi's Shahnameh" published by Yasavoli Publications in Tehran.



An illustration created by the illustrators at the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA).

Veteran, young illustrators working on new IIDCYA books

A R T TEHRAN — Over 75 veteran and young illustrators have joined forces to illustrate the latest productions done by the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA).

The illustrators are busy in these days of the pandemic to produce the best they can for children of different ages.

The graphic design work of the institute,

which played a major role in developing this new art form in Iran and across the world with such masters as Morteza Momayyez, Farshid Mesqali, Ali-Akbar Sadeqi and several others, remains active today 55 years later with new artists alongside the veterans.

Kamal Tabatabai, an expert on art at the institute, says that the current situation of the pandemic has provided a good opportunity for the veterans to work alongside the young and novice artists, creating increased motivation for both to work harder.

He hoped that this process would continue so that new talented illustrators could be introduced.

Maneli Manuchehri, also an expert at IIDCYA, said that most of the works are being produced by the young illustrators, which demonstrates their love and motivation.

"Cycling Wind" competing in Glasgow Short Film Festival

A R T TEHRAN — "The Cycling Wind" from Iranian director Nazanin Sobhan-Sarbandi is competing in the Glasgow Short Film Festival in Scotland.

Produced by the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCY), the film tells the story of a young wind that comes into possession of a bike, which helps the wind to blow even faster without expending much energy, and to truly enjoy its time.

The festival, which is going online, will announce winners on August 23.



A scene from "The Cycling Wind" by Nazanin Sobhan-Sarbandi.

DMZ festival picks Iran's "The Unseen"

A R T TEHRAN — Iranian director Behzad Nalbandi's animated movie "The Unseen" will be screened at the 12th DMZ International Documentary Film Festival, in South Korea.

"The Unseen" is about homeless women in Iran who are locked away, banished to the outskirts of the city, and made invisible. Nalbandi secretly conducted interviews in the camps and creates a world of his own: cardboard animations make those affected visible again. The DMZ festival, which intends to discover and introduce talented filmmakers and Asian documentaries, will take place in Gyeonggi Province, Paju and Goyang from September 17 to 24.



A scene from "The Unseen" by Behzad Nalbandi.

Arri joins up with Iranian director in short film "When I Killed the Cat"

CULTURE TEHRAN — The Arri Group, a German manufacturer of motion picture film equipment, has joined up with Iranian director Mansur Foruzesh to produce a short film entitled "When I Killed the Cat".

This 15-minute movie, which will be a joint production of Iran, England and Hungary, is about a man who kills his cat to erase some of his bad memories.

"We spent about six month finding a company to sponsor the project, as the screenplay had been completed a year ago," Foruzesh said in a press release published on Wednesday.

"The equipment provided by the Arri Group is of great value, and if we did not have their support it would have been almost impossible to use such equipment in the production," he noted.

"Due to our plans for numerous locations and special shootings, we needed the work to be highly professional. Therefore, all the members of the technical crew have an extensive background in large productions in Hollywood," he added.

The project will be filmed in late August on location in a forest near the Hungarian capital of Budapest, and Marci Ragályi, the Hungarian cinematographer for big productions such as "Inferno" and "Houdini", will be collaborating in this project.

Foruzesh expressed his hope that the pandemic would not halt his project.

His previous shorts "A Few Knots Away" and "The Hose" have been screened at several international events, including the Religion Today Film Festival in Italy.



A poster for Iranian filmmaker Mansur Foruzesh's short film "When I Killed the Cat".