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Annual non-oil trade at \$85b

TEHRAN — The value of Iran's non-oil trade stood at \$85 billion in the past Iranian calendar year of 1398 (ended on March 19, 2020), the head of Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) announced.

Mehdi Mir-Ashrafi put the weight of the country's annual non-oil trade at 170 million tons and said this amount of trade was achieved despite the severe sanctions, IRNA reported.

The official further pointed to the measures taken by IRICA in the past year including facilitation of trade and removing customs barriers in line with supporting the government's plans in different sectors.

As one of the major organizations helping economic growth, IRICA launched smart customs project in the previous year as a move to meet today's requirements in trade sector, Mir-Ashrafi underscored.

Iran strongly warns U.S. about military threats

TEHRAN — Iran's chief diplomat and top military commander on Thursday warned the United States against any act of military action, warning the U.S. will face the "most fierce response" if it makes the slightest move against Iran.

Writing on his Twitter account, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said, "Iran starts no war, but teaches lessons to those who do."

Iran fired ballistic missile on a major

U.S. military base in Iraq after the Pentagon assassinated Iran's legendary anti-terrorism commander Qassem Soleimani. It was the first attack on the U.S. since World War Two.

Zarif warned Trump, "Don't be misled by usual warmongers, again."

The warning by the Iranian foreign minister came after Trump claimed on Twitter on Wednesday that Iran was plotting a "sneak attack" on U.S. troops or facilities in Iraq. →3

U.S. hijacking mask shipments in rush for coronavirus protection

By staff & agencies

U.S. buyers waving wads of cash managed to wrest control of a consignment of masks as it was about to be dispatched from China to one of the worst-hit coronavirus areas of France, according to two French officials.

The masks were on a plane at Shanghai airport that was ready to take off when the U.S. buyers turned up and offered three times what their French

counterparts were paying, the Guardian reported.

Jean Rottner, a doctor and president of the GrandEst regional council, said part of the order of several million masks heading for the region, where intensive care units are inundated with Covid-19 patients, had been lost to the buyers.

"On the tarmac, they arrive, get the cash out ... so we really have to fight," he told RTL radio. →10



ARTICLE

Faranak Bakhtiari
Tehran Times journalist

Nature Day manifests national empathy against coronavirus

Nature Day was another manifestation of empathy of the Iranian nation in fight against the coronavirus, as people stayed home, despite their thousand-year-old tradition.

Sizdah Bedar, also known as Nature Day, is an Iranian festival held annually on the thirteenth day of Farvardin, the first month of the Iranian calendar (falling on April 1 this year), during which Iranians reconcile with nature spending time in resorts, gardens and natural areas. It marks the end of the Noruz holidays in Iran.

An outbreak of the COVID-19, originating at a seafood market in the central Chinese city of Wuhan in late December; has spread in Iran killing at least 3,294 and infected 53,183 people since April 3, while about 1,034,116 cases have been confirmed in 180 other countries, claiming 54,465 lives so far.

In response to the epidemic, Iran has implemented a social distancing plan, which began nationwide on March 27, culminated on April 1; which prevented the people to join social gatherings and encourage them to stay at home.

The outbreak reached its peak concurrent with the Iranian New Year celebration, which has made Noruz different with years and even centuries ago.

However, in Sizdah Bedar, people were also asked to stay at home and resist picnicking outdoor to break the chain of coronavirus transmission.

It can now be said that Iranian families who have been involved with coronavirus infection have come to the conclusion that they will not get rid of the disease except by observing healthcare methods, and social distance.

Although police forces have stayed on guard to prevent people's entrance to the parks and resorts, it seemed that people themselves resisted the social gatherings.

With the efforts of the responsible bodies, law enforcement and media, resorts and gardens were closed down and traffic in the country was minimized and even zero in some cases. →9

An efficient economic system necessary for a new Islamic civilization: expert

By Mehdi Garshasbi

TEHRAN — As an annual tradition, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei addresses the nation and determines a name for the new year. This year has been named the year of "Surge in Production."

Economist and university professor Hojjatollah Abdolmaleki, in an interview with the Tehran Times, said the Leader's emphasis on "production" in recent years is mainly rooted in the fact that in the country's goal of creating a new Islamic civilization is through strengthening the national economy and creating an efficient economic system.

Below is the full text of the interview.

■ Every year, on the first day of Noruz, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution addresses the nation and assigns a specific name to the year. What is the purpose and philosophy behind

choosing a specific name for the year?

As the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei is looking for the establishment of an Islamic system. Systematization is a process that requires institutionalization and cultural evolution. One of the measures taken by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution yearly to prepare the bedrock for systematization is naming the years. By naming a year with a specific pivot, more attention will be paid to certain features of the goals behind that pivot and all executive branches of the government, elites, scientists, and the public will acknowledge the importance of the issue.

The Leader always explicates the main conceptual specifications of every issue. Then scholars and scientists of the country study those specifications to explain the goals and outcomes of every issue.

Meanwhile, the executive branch of the government tries to plan its future actions accordingly. The legislative body of the government, also, tries to revise existing regulations according to the new issue or pass new laws if needed. Finally, relevant institutions will try to inform the public of different characteristics of the issue.

Therefore, naming the years is a clever and scientific strategy to lead the Iranian society step by step towards the favorable Islamic system and to prepare all the factors which are going to be crucial and effective in that ideal Islamic system.

■ Each year has a different name. Are these names connected or should they be analyzed separately?

Each year's name is related to the past. Each name is like a piece of a puzzle and these pieces collectively make a bigger picture. →7

Five Iranian publishers announce top 10 bestsellers of the year

By Seyyed Mostafa Mousavi Sabet

TEHRAN — Iranian publishers Nimaj, Ruzbehan, Qoqnus, Cheshmeh and Afraz have announced their top ten bestselling books published over the past year as the Iranian New Year began on March 20.

■ **Nimaj's bestsellers**

Iranian writer Ruzbeh Moen's romantic novel "The Cold Coffee of Mr. Writer" leads Nimaj's bestsellers, which is followed by "Rakhshid's Secret was Revealed", another romantic novel by Ali Soltani.

Iranian writer Sanaz Zamani's story "Silent House", not to be confused with a novel of the same title by Turkish writer Orhan Pamuk, was inscribed as third on Nimaj's bestseller list.

The story of "Silent House" is set in winter 1979 when Kurosh, a young Iranian engineer, buys a listening device from a German engineer on his mission to Germany. He begins to use the device to learn the hidden secrets of some people who live around him.

The fourth book is "Journeys of the Writers" by Abutorab Khosravi. The book tells the story of Saeid and Eqlima, two scholars who team up to do research into the role of the saints in the development of societies.

"The Lion's Wound", a collection of 11 short stories by Samad Taheri, grabbed fifth place. And the Persian translation of Spanish writer Carlos Ruiz Zafon's first adult novel "La sombra del viento" ("The Shadow of the Wind") by Ali

San'avi came next.

The list also includes Turkish writer Elif Shafak's novels "The Hidden" and "Three Daughters of Eve", both translated into Persian by Saber Hosseini.

"Beizai/Crocodile", two plays by Seyyed Mohammad Mosavat and "The Hole/The Deep Sound of the Snow", two plays by Jaber Ramezani and Payam Saeidi, polled ninth and tenth places respectively.

■ **Ruzbehan's bestsellers**

Ruzbehan's bestseller list begins with Iranian writer Nader Ebrahimi's novels "Fire without Smoke" and "On the Red Marine Roads", two masterpieces of modern Persian literature from the early 1970s the publisher republished in 2017. →12



OFanini/Hasan Zarifmanesh

Fairgrounds converted into 2,000-bed hospital within 48 hours

The Iranian Army has converted the Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds into a field hospital with 2,000 beds to prepare for a probable surge of COVID-19 patients.

Built on March 25, the hospital has the capacity to add 1,000 more beds.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has assigned the Armed Forces to work on the necessary methods to prevent a further spread of the coronavirus through establishment of field hospitals and convalescent homes.

Iranian ambassador bashes racist propaganda during COVID-19 crisis

While the world witnesses the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, all countries should shoulder their responsibility and provide joint leadership, especially in the United Nations, the Iranian Ambassador to China, Mohammad Keshavarz Zadeh, has told China.org.cn.

He warned that the world should be vigilant against any xenophobic, racist or intolerant propaganda.

"It's absolutely wrong and inappropriate to label the novel coronavirus as the 'China Virus' or 'Wuhan Virus,'" said the ambassador, referring to the practice of tying the virus to China by U.S. President Donald Trump and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo earlier in March.

The ambassador said this kind of propaganda is not a new type of ignorance and racism, but such language from the top leadership of a major power is unprecedented in the 21st century.

Trump's language has also drawn domestic criticism. "It's certainly not the way the leadership of the United States, the secretary of state, and the president of the United States, ought to be behaving in the best of times - but certainly not in a crisis." The Hill quoted former White House national security adviser Susan Rice as saying on Tuesday.

In the short term, Keshavarz Zadeh called on all countries and the United Nations to make effective arrangement to lead global efforts in sharing data about the COVID-19, coordinating international research, providing and encouraging greater funding of the World Health Organization, and humanitarian assistance.

According to the diplomat, Iran, the hardest-hit country in Middle East, has entered a dire situation at a time when the government was already under extreme pressure by U.S. unilateral sanctions. This has hampered Iran's ability to purchase and access vital medical equipment and pharmaceuticals from the international market.

"Iran has been unable to purchase medical equipment and medicine even from European companies due to fears by European banks of being sanctioned by the U.S. Treasury Department if they traded with Tehran," the ambassador wrote. →2

IPU president sends message to Larijani, says coronavirus will be defeated

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — In a message to Iranian Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani who has tested positive for the coronavirus, President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union Gabriela Cuevas Barron has said that the coronavirus pandemic will be defeated through collective efforts.



The public relations department of the Majlis issued a statement on Thursday announcing that Larijani has tested positive for the coronavirus.

"Following certain symptoms, he was tested for the coronavirus and since the test was positive, he is now in quarantine and under treatment," the statement said.

Speakers of People's Council of Syria and State Duma also sent separate messages to Larijani, wishing him immediate recovery.

The total number of people diagnosed with the coronavirus in Iran has reached 53,183 of whom 3,294 have died and 17,935 recovered.

IAEA to send RT-PCR to Iran

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Kazem Gharibabadi, Iran's ambassador to the Vienna-based international organizations, said on Thursday that the International Atomic Energy Agency will send two sets of reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) to Iran to help fight the coronavirus.

"In addition to these two sets, personal protective equipment for the users of the sets, equipment for commissioning, upgrading and calibrating them and diagnostic kits using three techniques will also be sent," Gharibabadi said, according to IRNA.

The IAEA issued a statement on Wednesday announcing dispatch of diagnostic machines and kits to more than 40 countries.

According to official website of the IAEA, the first batch of supplies, worth around €4 million, will help countries use the technique known as real time RT-PCR). This is the most sensitive technique for detecting viruses currently available.

"Real time RT-PCR is an established and accurate method to detect pathogens. We've seen the number of Member State requests for support to run such tests more than double in the past two weeks," said Ivancho Naletoski, technical officer at the Joint Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)/IAEA Division for Nuclear Techniques in Food and Agriculture. "Laboratories will receive diagnostic kits and accessories needed for the analysis, disposable protective gear and equipment for the molecular detection of this specific viral genome."

'No one is fooled' by Washington's disinformation campaign envoy

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iran's ambassador to the United Nations says nobody will be duped by Washington's campaign of disinformation against Tehran, after the U.S. secretary of state accused "Iranian diplomats" of "involvement" in an alleged assassination in Turkey.

"The U.S. administration's Iran-bashing is limitless," Majid Takht Ravanchi tweeted on Thursday, adding that despite Washington's efforts to spread disinformation about Tehran, "No one is fooled."

Takht Ravanchi's tweet came after Mike Pompeo, the most notorious Iran hawk in the Trump administration, leveled the accusation in an earlier tweet, calling Iranian diplomats "agents of terror."

"While the world focuses on cooperation to defeat #COVID19 — and calls on U.S. to lift its #economic terrorism — @SecPompeo disregards this and instead spreads disinformation: this time against Iranian diplomats," Press TV quoted the ambassador as saying.

Takht Ravanchi had already blasted the United States' back-to-back attempts at spreading "disinformation" about Iran.

"U.S. disinformation campaign vs Iran continues," he tweeted in mid-February.

This came after the U.S. military claimed that one of its warships had seized Yemen-bound weapons believed to be of Iranian "design and manufacture."

Iranian ambassador bashes racist propaganda during COVID-19 crisis

1 → Since Iran detected its first coronavirus case on Feb. 19, there has been an upsurge in confirmed cases. According to Iran's health authorities, by April 3 the total number of confirmed coronavirus cases in Iran reached 53,183 and the death toll hit 3,294.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani has announced the extension of social distancing plan for another week until April 8. Iran's healthcare system faces mounting pressure with the influx of patients, said the ambassador.

Earlier in February, Beijing sent to Tehran several humanitarian aid consignments including testing kits and medical supplies, along with a volunteer group of medical experts from the Red Cross Society of China to assist Iran's response to the outbreak.

Following that, many Chinese people have also sent their undisputed assistance to Iran in fight against the epidemic, said the ambassador, expressing gratitude in a tweet.

He said, «China had a unique and unprecedented public health response that reversed the escalating cases and the country is already beginning to see success from the government's measures.»

The ambassador said it's good to see the number of new cases in China declining, which opens the door for hope in controlling the disease.

Rouhani: U.S. lost historic opportunity to review wrong Iran approach

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — President Rouhani told a cabinet meeting on Wednesday that the U.S. missed the "best historic opportunity" to rectify its mistakes by lifting illegal sanctions against Iran which is hit hard by the deadly coronavirus outbreak.

"They did not realize what they had to do. This was the best historic opportunity for the Americans to review their wrong approach, and tell their nation, for once at least, that 'we are not against the Iranian nation'," the president remarked.

"Unfortunately, the Americans did not learn a lesson even amid these acute and tough international circumstances," Rouhani lamented, according to Press TV.

The Trump administration has refused calls by the United Nations and a number of world leaders to lift or even suspend sanctions against Iran last week.

On March 24, United Nations leadership called for rolling back international sanctions regimes around the world, saying they are heightening the health risks for millions of people and weakening the global effort to contain the spread of the new coronavirus.

"I am encouraging the waiving of



sanctions imposed on countries to ensure access to food, essential health supplies, and COVID-19 medical support. This is the time for solidarity not exclusion," UN Secretary-General António Guterres wrote in a letter to the G-20 economic powers, according to Foreign Policy. "Let us remember that we are only as strong as the weakest health system in our interconnected world."

Michelle Bachelet, the UN high commissioner for human rights, also said on March 24 that "in a context of global pandemic, impeding medical efforts in one country heightens the risk for all of us."

"At this crucial time, both for global public health reasons, and to support the rights and lives of millions of people in these countries, sectoral sanctions should be eased or suspended," she said in a

Ayatollah Khamenei: We need a further surge in production

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — In a New Year message on March 20, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said a further surge in production is needed in the country, saying the slogan of the New Year is "Surge in Production".

"Last year's slogan was 'Boosting Production'. This year, I want to say that we need a further surge in production - as the slogan of the year. This year is the year of 'Surge in Production'. This is the slogan of the year," Ayatollah Khamenei said.

Following is an excerpts of his remarks published by Khamenei.ir:

As for the slogan of the year, the year 1398 was the year of boosting production and I will tell the Iranian nation that this slogan was welcomed in practice. In the beginning, experts welcomed it, saying that production was the main criterion, but it received a warm reception in practice as well. According to reliable reports that I have received, the production of the country moved forward. Some of the factories that had stopped working and that had closed down returned to work and in the case of those which worked below their capacity, they increased their capacity. Knowledge-based companies entered the arena and various organizations made good endeavors as a result of which, production was boosted.

The issue of research which is the fountainhead of production was seriously pursued in the country and we

witnessed instances of that. Well, these tasks have been carried out in the country and it is not the case that no work has been done. However, what I want to say is that what has already been done is not even one-tenth of what the country needs. Of course, "one-tenth" is not a hard statistical figure, but I estimate it to be around one-tenth. This means that we need to do ten times more work — including research, work related to production and various other tasks — so that boosting production can exert its effects in the lives of the people.

In the year 1398, production was roused and it moved forward, but its effects in the lives of the people were not yet tangible. We should make production reach a point where it can influence the people's lives. Of course, the economic issues of the country are many. There are issues such as reforming the banking system, the customs regulations, the taxing system and improving the business environment and other such issues, but the role of production is a unique and peerless one.

Considering the large market that exists inside the country, if we manage to boost production, the main activity will be in our domestic market with our eighty-million population, despite the fact that production needs foreign markets. Of course, we can interact with foreign markets as well. If we can move production forward, God willing, economic problems will definitely come to an end and the sanctions that they imposed will prove to be to our advantage.

Zarif: U.S. moves against Iran 'even exceed what would be permissible on the battlefield'



POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said that the U.S. "economic terrorism" on Iran has been expanding to the new level of "medical terrorism" which is not even permissible on the battlefield.

"This even 'exceeds what would be permissible on the battlefield,'" Zarif tweeted on March 29.

The Trump administration has slapped the harshest ever sanctions in history against Iran. It has introduced a total ban on Iran's oil export with the aim of strangulating the Iranian economy.

These illegal moves are taking place while Iran is hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic, killing more than 2,600 people and infecting about 39,000.

Zarif enumerated a series of U.S. actions against Iran, from cyberattacks on the country's infrastructure, the January 3 assassination of General Qassem Soleimani, mass punishment of Iranians through "maximum pressure" policy to closing all pathways to transfer of medical equipment and medicine to the country.

"US has gone from sabotage & assassinations to waging an economic war & #EconomicTerrorism on Iranians—to #MedicalTerroramidst #covid19Iran," Zarif tweeted.

The chief diplomat urged the international community to stop supporting U.S. "war crimes" against Iran, urging the world to "stop obeying immoral and illegal sanctions" against Iranians.

While the United Nations and many countries have called on Washington to lift sanctions at the height of the global pandemic, the

Trump administration is adding to the list of its sanctions on Iran. The newest ones were announced on Thursday by the U.S. Treasury Department.

In a letter to the G-20 economic powers on March 24, UN Secretary-General António Guterres wrote: "I am encouraging the waiving of sanctions imposed on countries to ensure access to food, essential health supplies, and COVID-19 medical support. This is the time for solidarity not exclusion."

Guterres added, "Let us remember that we are only as strong as the weakest health system in our interconnected world."

On the same date, Michelle Bachelet, the UN high commissioner for human rights, also said, "In a context of global pandemic, impeding medical efforts in one country heightens the risk for all of us."

"At this crucial time, both for global public health reasons, and to support the rights and lives of millions of people in these countries, sectoral sanctions should be eased or suspended," she said in a statement.

Tehran's ambassador to the UN said on Wednesday that the sanctions against Iran have endangered "the lives of many people not just in Iran, but also across the globe."

"The continuation of the illegal U.S. sanctions on Iran will only negatively affect Iran's ability to contain the disease. Consequently, the Iranian people will suffer more as a result of this bankrupt policy, as will the other nations on our interconnected planet," Majid Takht-e Ravanchi said in an opinion piece published by USA Today.

Medical body: History will judge silence of world bodies toward cruel sanctions



POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — The Academy of Medical Sciences of Iran has written to the UN to complain about the world's body failure to push for the lifting of cruel U.S. sanctions at a critical time when Iran is fighting a deadly coronavirus pandemic, Press TV reported on Thursday.

In the letter addressed to UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, the academy's President Alireza Marandi criticized the UN and its affiliated organizations for taking "no effective measures" to ease the restrictive U.S. measures, which are hampering Iran's fight against the fast-spreading disease.

"Following correspondence about the U.S. government's illegal sanctions against the Islamic Republic of Iran and its direct impact on the health of the Iranian people, unfortunately, so far, the United Nations and other relevant organizations including the World Health Organization, which claim to defend the rights of humanity, have taken no effective measures to lift the cruel sanctions against our dear children, women, men and patients," Marandi wrote.

Marandi, a former health minister, also lashed out at the Donald Trump administration for turning a deaf ear to international calls demanding sanctions relief and instead imposing even more anti-Iran sanctions.

"Instead, despite the urging of scientists, physicians and even some elected US officials to lift sanctions amid a worldwide Covid-19 disease pandemic, this irrational, ruthless American government has further tightened sanctions against the Iranian people,

statement.

While the Iranian nations had pinned their hope on the lifting of sanctions with the conclusion of the 2015 nuclear agreement - JCPOA - President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the U.S. from the agreement in May 2018, returned the previous sanctions, and imposed new ones.

Trump even introduced a total embargo on Iran's oil export in order to choke off the Iranian economy. Trump did this despite the fact that the JCPOA is endorsed by the UN Security Council Resolution 2231.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said the U.S. "economic terrorism" against the Iranian nation has expanded to "medical terrorism".

As the worst hit country in the West Asia region, the Covid-19 has so far killed 3,036 Iranian cities and infected 47,500.

According to the Health Ministry, 3,871 of infected persons in critical condition.

In his Wednesday remarks, Rouhani said the U.S. has "always acted against the Iranian people, and, today, their opposition towards the people came to be witnessed more clearly."

Iran's ambassador to the UN, Majid Takht Ravanchi has warned that failure to contain the deadly virus in Iran will affect the entire world.

Of course, they have inflicted some damage until now, but they have also generated profits as well because they have made us think about our own resources, about manufacturing products and about satisfying the needs of the country through relying on domestic resources. This is very valuable to us and by Allah's favor, it will continue. Therefore, we continue to need production.

Last year's slogan was "Boosting Production". This year, I want to say that we need a further surge in production - as the slogan of the year. This year is the year of "Surge in Production." This is the slogan of the year. Officials should act in a way that production will witness a surge, God willing, and that there will be a tangible change in the lives of the people.

Of course, this requires planning. The Planning and Budget Organization, the Islamic Consultative Majlis as well as its research center and the judiciary branch have a role, each in a different way. The judiciary branch has a part to play as well. Knowledge-based companies and young and innovative organizations, which are thankfully large in number, have a role to play as well. Throughout the year — the year 1398 — and the year before that, I had very good and valuable meetings with some of them. I saw them and listened to them up close. They are youth who are interested in working and who are really hopeful, energetic, motivated, talented and creative. Such groups of people thankfully exist and they should participate in planning. This task should move forward with planning, God willing.

ple," he wrote.

In May 2018, Trump unilaterally pulled the U.S. out of the 2015 nuclear deal ratified by the UN Security Council and reinstated sanctions on Iran. The Trump administration not only returned previous sanctions lifted under the Resolution 2231 it also ordered new ones, including a total ban on Iran's oil export.

The purpose behind the sanctions, which Trump himself has called the "worst ever sanctions in history" under his "maximum pressure" policy toward Iran, are intended to strangle the Iranian economy and drain the country of foreign currency reserves.

The Trump administration has threatened to penalize any country that does business with Iran.

"It is certain that history will judge the ineffectiveness and silence of international organizations claiming protection of international law and human rights against such crimes. These institutions have become toothless, if not complicit, and we will undoubtedly see the unraveling of our world order because of this refusal to take action against crass violations of international and humanitarian law by the U.S. regime," Marandi concluded.

As of Thursday, April 2, the pandemic coronavirus has infected more than 50,000 Iranians and killed about 3,200.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said the U.S. "economic terrorism" against Iranians has been expanding to "medical terrorism".

Congressional Dems warn Trump against Iran escalation

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Eight members of the U.S. Congress have urged President Trump to consult Congress before taking any military action against Iran.

The Democratic members of Gang of 8, who received high-level briefings on intelligence matters, warned in a March 27 letter that the administration had legal obligations to keep congressional leadership informed of potential military escalation.

"While there are well-understood and narrow self-defense exceptions, the Constitution and U.S. law require you to consult with Congress before engaging in military action or actions likely to lead to war," read the letter, which was obtained by CBS News.

The letter was signed by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Senate Minority leader Chuck Schumer, House Intelligence Committee chairman Adam Schiff and Senate Intelligence Committee Vice Chairman Mark Warner.

The lawmakers also cited the January strike on Iran's top general Qassem Soleimani, saying the Trump administration had "largely failed" to date to fulfill those legal obligations.

Following the attack which led to the death of General Soleimani, the Trump administration claimed the strike was carried out to forestall an attack on U.S. interests in the region.

The Gang of 8 Democrats said at the time that they were not briefed in advance of the strike.

Trump on Wednesday claimed the U.S. had received intelligence regarding an Iranian-backed "sneak attack" on American



forces in Iraq.

"Upon information and belief, Iran or its proxies are planning a sneak attack on U.S. troops and/or assets in Iraq," Trump wrote in a tweet. "If this happens, Iran will pay a very heavy price, indeed!"

Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif later responded to the threat, tweeting, "Don't be misled by usual warmongers... Iran has FRIENDS: No one can have MILLIONS

of 'proxies'."

"Unlike the US—which surreptitiously lies, cheats & assassinates—Iran only acts in self-defense. Openly," he said.

Zarif warned, "Iran starts no wars, but teaches lessons to those who do."

On Tuesday, more than 30 members of the U.S. Congress sent a letter to U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin,

calling for the suspension of sanctions against Iran amid the coronavirus outbreak which has affected the lives of millions of Iranians.

Sen. Bernie Sanders, Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Rep. Ilhan Omar led nearly three dozen lawmakers in urging the Trump Administration to ease sanctions against Iran.

The letter comes just two weeks after the Trump Administration levied additional sanctions against Iran in the midst of the pandemic.

"Rather than continue to invoke new sanctions in the Iranian people's hour of need, we urge you to substantially suspend sanctions on Iran during this global public health emergency in a humanitarian gesture to the Iranian people to better enable them to fight the virus," the letter read, according to a press release by the official website of Sen. Sanders.

"Additionally, we encourage the U.S. to find a way to deliver aid directly to the Iranian people to support the Iranian people's fight against coronavirus, as many other nations have done," the members of Congress concluded.

"Iran is facing a catastrophic toll from the coronavirus pandemic. U.S. sanctions should not be contributing to this humanitarian disaster," said Sanders.

"As a caring nation, we must lift any sanctions hurting Iran's ability to address this crisis, including financial sanctions. Every country on earth is going to be affected by the coronavirus. We are all in this together. If there was ever a moment to show each other unprecedented cooperation and support internationally, this is that moment."

Russia welcomes INSTEX progress

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova has welcomed the progress made by the three European countries regarding the INSTEX financial mechanism.

In a weekly press conference on Thursday, Zakharova said the need for such a tool, especially in the face of challenges such as the coronavirus outbreak, is felt more than ever before, IRNA reported.

She stressed that unilateral sanctions in such circumstances that Iran is scrambling to contain the deadly coronavirus are completely illegal, cruel and immoral.

According to the latest numbers released by Iran's Health Ministry on Friday, 53,183 Iranians have contracted the disease, 3,294 of which have lost their lives. Another 17,935 people have also recovered from the disease.

The Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges (INSTEX) has been designed by the European Union to facilitate legitimate trade with Tehran. It was introduced on January 31, 2019, by France, Germany, and Britain, the three countries party to the nuclear deal.

INSTEX was supposed to be a financial channel and a special mechanism for transferring money in spite of U.S. sanctions on Iran. Its objective was to facilitate Iran's transactions with European companies.

In May 2018, U.S. President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the United States from the Iran nuclear deal, also known as the JCPOA, and reinstated old sanctions and introduced new ones on the Islamic republic.

Since then, the other signatories to the JCPOA have been trying to save the deal, partly by opening up the INSTEX,



which Iran said was unfruitful.

On Tuesday, the German Foreign Ministry said Germany, France and Britain "confirm that INSTEX has successfully concluded its first transaction, facilitating the export of medical goods from Europe to Iran."

"These goods are now in Iran," it said in a statement, giving no further details.

The German Foreign Ministry added that Berlin hopes to enhance the mechanism and carry out more transaction

with Tehran.

"Now the first transaction is complete, INSTEX and its Iranian counterpart STFI (Special Trade and Finance Instrument) will work on more transactions and enhancing the mechanism," the German Foreign Ministry said.

In her press conference, Zakharova referred to the first transaction carried out within the INSTEX framework and stated that obviously, progress in implementing INSTEX will help promote countries' cooperation with Iran and the development of legal economic and trade cooperation with the country in the face of sanctions imposed by the United States.

Russia welcomed it when the mechanism was created and "today we are pleased with its development", the spokesperson said.

Zakharova went on to say that it took about a year for INSTEX to be actually launched and information about the mechanism was first released in June 2019.

The Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson said her country was aware of the fact that it is difficult for the European Union to work out effective mechanisms that can eliminate the impact of U.S. illegal sanctions.

She added, however, that certain results have been achieved and efforts must be made now to complete the projects and improve the quality and speed of work.

Zakharova said that the safeguarding of this mechanism is the rapid inclusion of the list of goods subject to U.S. sanctions, as well as the expansion of the list of countries participating in it, with the participation of countries outside the European Union and Iran's major trading partners.

Iran strongly warns U.S. about military threats

[kicker] Zarif to Trump: Iran starts no war, but teaches lessons to those who do

➔ "Upon information and belief, Iran or its proxies are planning a sneak attack on U.S. troops and/or assets in Iraq. If this happens, Iran will pay a very heavy price, indeed!" Trump wrote.

In response, Zarif said "Iran has friends" but "no one can have millions of 'proxies'."

He added, "Unlike the U.S. - which surreptitiously lies, cheats and assassinates- Iran only acts in self-defense."

Mohammad Hossein Bagheri, armed forces chief of staff, also said Iran has no intention to attack U.S. forces in the region but warned if the Americans have an "ill will against our country's security" or make the slightest move against Iran "they will face our most fierce reactions".

The major general said in recent days U.S. forces have been increasing their military



moves in Iraq and the Persian Gulf region, launched an extensive media and psychological operations and have "intentions" against Iraqi resistance forces, including Popular



Mobilization Units.

He added Iran is "closely monitoring the activities and moves of Americans" in the region and the Iranian armed forces

are fully guarding "land, marine and aerial borders".

The major general went on to say that the moves that have been taking place in recent weeks against American military bases in Iraq are a "normal reaction by the Iraqi people and resistance forces against U.S. 'satanic measures' in assassinating General Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the commander of Iraqi resistance forces, and has no nothing to do with us".

He said the fact that the U.S. is attributing these moves to Iran is a psychological projection.

The Iranian military chief said, "Americans are well aware that the people of the region and the dear people of Iraq are opposed to their military presence in these countries and it is their normal reaction."

Iran advises U.S. to avoid adventurous moves in Iraq

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Ministry Abbas Mousavi on Wednesday urged U.S. forces in Iraq to respect the demands of the Iraqi people to leave the country and avoid creating tension in the West Asia region.



On January 5, the Iraqi Parliament voted to obligate Iraq's government "to work towards ending the presence of all foreign troops on Iraqi soil". The vote represented a rebuke of the United States over its targeted airstrike on Iranian anti-terror commander Qassem Soleimani and Iraqi military commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis at Baghdad International Airport on January 3.

Mousavi said while the UN secretary general and the international community are insisting on the need to pull back from hostilities and focus on containing the coronavirus pandemic, the U.S. moves in Iraq are in contrast to "the official demands of the Iraqi government, parliament, people and create tension."

The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman warned these moves "can push the region toward instability and a catastrophic situation."

According to Press TV, Iraqi security sources have said new U.S. troops had been deployed to Ain al-Asad in the western Iraqi province of Anbar amid reports that the Pentagon was preparing for a new escalation.

The reported deployment came after the New York Times said that the Pentagon had ordered military commanders to plan for an escalation of American combat in Iraq.

Several American officials told the paper that the Pentagon had ordered planners at the Central Command and in Iraq to draw up a strategy to dismantle Kata'ib Hezbollah, which is part of the anti-terror Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) or Hashd al-Shaabi.

The U.S. has time and again targeted PMU positions, blaming the major anti-terror force for rocket attacks against American troops based in Iraq over the past few months, a charge the popular group has strongly denied.

Iraq's Al Hadath news agency has also raised the possibility of a large-scale military operation by American forces against pro-government forces in Iraq.

It also reported that the spokesman for U.S. forces in Iraq had advised people to stay away from U.S. military bases as well as facilities run by Iraqi resistance groups.

Kuwaiti newspaper al-Qabas reported that the number of American Apache helicopters and drones flying over Iraq was unprecedented since the U.S. invasion of the country in 2003.

Biden calls for sanctions relief for Iran during coronavirus pandemic

(The Hill) — Former Vice President Joe Biden called for the government to ease its sanctions on Iran as the country struggles to contain an exploding coronavirus outbreak.

"In times of global crisis, America should lead. We should be the first to offer help to people who are hurting or in danger. That's who we are. That's who we've always been. And, in the midst of this deadly pandemic that respects no borders, the United States should take steps to offer what relief we can to those nations hardest hit by this virus — including Iran — even as we prioritize the health of the American people," Biden said in a statement.



Biden said the Trump administration was cruel to "[inhibit] access to needed humanitarian assistance."

The former vice president specifically called for issuing "broad licenses" to pharmaceutical and medical device companies, easing the path for international banks, transportation companies and insurers to provide medical treatment and issuing new sanctions guidance to those groups and international aid organizations regarding how they can combat COVID-19 in Iran.

While the Trump administration has already offered aid to Iran, Biden said the gesture would do little good if not accompanied by sanctions relief.

"The administration's offer of aid to Iran is insufficient if not backed by concrete steps to ensure the United States is not exacerbating this growing humanitarian crisis. Whatever our many, many disagreements with the Iranian government, it's the right and the humane thing to do," he said. "To stop this pandemic effectively, every country on earth will need to work together."

The call comes as Iran scrambles to curtail the spread of the highly infectious coronavirus within its borders. More than 50,000 Iranians have been infected with the illness, and more than 3,000 have died in Iran.

Iran has said the lifting of U.S. sanctions would help it in the fight against COVID-19, but expressed skepticism that the White House would agree to such a move.

"American leaders are lying. ... If they want to help Iran, all they need to do is to lift sanctions. ... Then we can deal with the coronavirus outbreak," Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said in a televised speech last week.

Trump admits U.S. has 'moral responsibility' to ease Iran sanctions

U.S. President Donald Trump said he would have a "moral responsibility" to help Iran in its fight against the coronavirus pandemic if leaders of the country asked for assistance.

However, he said, they had not yet asked.

"Well they haven't even asked us to do that," said Trump, when asked by Al Jazeera correspondent Kimberly Halkett if the United States would consider easing sanctions on Iran in light of the global outbreak.

"If they want to meet, we'd love to meet and we'd settle the whole thing out," he added.

Since 2018, the Trump administration has imposed a policy of "maximum pressure" sanctions against Tehran after Washington withdrew from the landmark nuclear agreement. Under the deal - reached between Iran, the U.S., the European Union, China, France,

Russia, the United Kingdom and Germany in 2015 - Tehran scaled back its nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief.

Over the last month, as the virus spread rapidly in Iran, the U.S. repeatedly tightened sanctions designed to choke off Tehran's oil exports.

Last week, the Trump administration imposed new sanctions on 20 Iranian people and companies.

Iran has been particularly hit hard by the outbreak, which has left governments across the world reeling with more than one million people infected globally and nearly 53,000 deaths.

Tehran has reported nearly 50,500 infections in the country of 82 million, with nearly 3,300 deaths, including several members of the government.

"I put it out very publicly with respect to Iran," Trump

said during the Thursday news conference.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has refused American assistance to fight coronavirus, suggesting it could be man-made by the U.S. government. But Iranian officials have demanded the end of crippling American sanctions that have devastated Iran's economy.

The United Nations has repeatedly urged countries to alter their sanctions against several countries in light of the pandemic. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, in a letter to G20 economic powers in March, said the restrictions should be waived "to ensure access to food, essential health supplies, and COVID-19 medical support".

UN human rights chief Michelle Bachelet called for any sanctions imposed on countries such as Iran to be "urgently re-evaluated" to avoid pushing strained medical systems to collapse.

Annual worth of trades at TSE rises 2.6 folds

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — The value of trades at Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), the main stock exchange of Iran, jumped 2.6 folds in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19), TSE Head Ali Sahraei announced.

The official also put Return on Investment (ROI) at 18o per cent at TSE in the previous year, Mehr new agency reported.

TSE is one of the four major stock exchanges of Iran, the other three exchanges are Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market known as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME), and Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX).

Four scenarios for the global economy after Covid-19

In this fast-moving environment, we need to think in scenarios, rather than pretending to know how the economy will evolve over the next 1 ½ years.

We've developed four scenarios of how the virus, the lockdown measures and consequently the different economies could evolve. Needless to say, even these scenarios cannot try to fully predict reality, but we hope they can provide a benchmark for both the extremes and the middle-ground. In each case, we've laid out some possible health factors that may be driving the scenarios - although we'd emphasize these are not meant to be interpreted as forecasts.

■ **Scenario 1: Our base case**
We've discussed our base case, and what that means for the major economies, in other parts of our latest monthly update. It assumes that the lockdowns eventually manage to flatten the curve, although not entirely. Given socio-economic tensions and the significant economic fallout, the first European governments decide to begin relaxing the lockdown measures at the end of April. Others will follow in May. The return to normality is gradual, and social distancing continues for at least the entire summer.

A proportion of those who can work from home continue to do so for the foreseeable future. Meanwhile, places, where you can socialise (pubs, cinemas etc), begin to open with strict distancing rules in place. Global travel remains restrictive, but a combination of vaccine development, more widespread testing capacity and higher surge capacity within critical healthcare services, means full lockdowns can be largely avoided if the virus spreads again as we approach the northern winter.



As a result, the economic recovery will be u-shaped. Still, most countries will experience a more severe contraction of economic activity than during the financial crisis.

■ **Scenario 2: Winter lockdowns return**
This is a slight variation of our base case scenario. It starts off in much the same way, with a gradual easing of lockdown measures in May and June. However, in this scenario, the virus returns in the autumn and despite more widespread testing efforts and contact tracing, the new spread pushes most economies back into lockdown.

Crisis management is more experienced than in Spring 2020 and containment measures could be more tailor-made, keeping some regions and sectors up and running. For indicative purposes, we're assuming it will take until April 2021 before the virus is back under control and economies, as well as societies, begin to return to normality. This is a 'W-shaped recovery'.

GDP growth would be lower in 2020 but higher in 2021 than in our base case scenario. However, it may well take until late-2022 before most economies have returned to their pre-crisis levels.

■ **Scenario 3: The 'best' case**
In our 'best' case scenario, the Western world follows in the footsteps of China by ending the lockdowns as soon as the curve of new infections has been flattened.

A quick return to normality is assumed to materialise towards the end of April. This scenario also assumes that the virus doesn't come back again in the winter, either because a larger-than-expected proportion of people have already had the virus and built immunity, or because control measures become much more effective.

Even so, some economic losses would not be offset immediately. But government measures like guarantees, liquidity support and short-time work schemes foster a quick and strong rebound, notwithstanding some differences across countries depending on when the lockdown measures end. This is effectively a 'v-shaped' recovery scenario.

In this scenario, most economies would experience a mild recession of some 2-3% year-on-year but growth in 2021 would accelerate, returning most economies to their pre-crisis levels.

■ **Scenario 4: The 'worst' case**
To give a sense of how the worst-case scenario for the global economy might look, we assume here that the lockdown measures last until the end of the year.

We're assuming that things return to normal from 2Q21, perhaps if a vaccine is developed and able to be deployed over the winter months. The recovery here may be a little faster and stronger than in the other scenarios, as the virus is assumed to be completely under control. This is an 'L-shaped' recovery. Needless to say, this is an extreme scenario with lots of economic, social and political turmoil, and one that looks pretty unlikely at this stage.

In this scenario, most economies would experience an unprecedented and almost unimaginable contraction in 2Q20 of around 50% quarter-on-quarter annualised. The year 2020 would go down in the history books as the year with the most severe recession on record, seeing most economies shrinking at double-digit rates for the year as a whole.

The rebound in 2021 would be relatively muted and it would take until 2023 before most economies have returned to their pre-crisis levels.

(Source: think.ing.com)

Domestic production to save Iran over \$3b in a year

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Domestic production of industrial and mining products is planned to save the country over \$3 billion in the current Iranian calendar year (began on March 20), Iranian deputy industry, mining and trade minister for planning announced.

Saeed Zarandi further reiterated that the ministry will follow its plan of strengthening domestic production more seriously in the current year, which is the year of "Surge in Production", IRNA reported.

In October 2019, Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani had announced that the ministry plans to reduce the country's imports by \$10 billion by the Iranian calendar year 1400 (March 2021-March 2022).

According to the minister, of the mentioned total \$10 billion reduction in imports, \$1.2 billion will be in the textile and garment industry, \$500 million in cellulose products, \$2.7 billion in petrochemicals, \$2.4 billion in mining, \$600 million in steel industry, \$650 million in home appliances, \$650 million in machinery, \$1.4 billion in the automotive industry, and \$250 million in electrical and electronic appliances.

And in mid-January, Mehdi Sadeqi Niaraki, deputy industry, mining, and trade minister for industry affairs, said that domestic production has saved the country over €1.2 billion since the beginning of the previous Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2019).

"So far, the contracts and agreements signed



[with domestic producers] with the support of the domestic production promotion expert desks have resulted in a reduction of foreign currency expenditure by 1.2 billion euros," he informed.

Improving and boosting domestic production has been one of the major strategies that Iran has been following in the past two

years in order to increase its independence.

To this end, the Iranian government has put supporting domestic producers atop agenda.

Providing the required working capital for the production units and offering them facilities is one of the major measures being pursued by the government to support such units.

Power plants receive 61 bcm of gas in a year

ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) Dispatching Director Mehdi Jamshidi Dana announced that 61 billion cubic meters (bcm) of gas has been supplied to the country's power plants during the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19).

Speaking to IRNA on Friday, the official said NIGC has defined some programs to boost transfer of gas from production spots to different areas throughout the country.

He also announced that some parts of the the Ninth National Gas Pipeline which are under construction in the south of country will be put into operation in the current Iranian calendar year.

Meanwhile, constructing several pressure boosting stations is on the agenda, he added.

"We delivered 900 million cubic meters (mcm) of gas per day to the country's refineries during the peak time in the past year", Jamshidi Dana further informed.

Iran's daily natural gas consumption hit a record high of nearly 600 mcm a day due to



the unprecedented snowfall and cold weather which blanketed the country during January and early February.

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

Currently, about 30,000 villages with 4.6 million households as well as 1,148 cities with over 18 million households are connected to the national gas network in Iran.

ISIPO revives 1,185 idle production units in a year



ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO) managed to revive 1,185 idle production units across the country during the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19), Tasnim news agency reported quoting a deputy with ISIPO.

Ali-Asghar Mosaheb, ISIPO deputy head for small industries affairs, said the mentioned units returning to operation created direct jobs for 21,618 persons.

The official had previously said, "Following a program for boosting domestic

production, ISIPO managed to revive 529 idle production units in the first half of the past Iranian calendar year (March 21-September 21, 2019).

According to Mosaheb, one of the approaches through which ISIPO is planning to help inactive units get back in the production cycle is to see their knowledge and technology needs.

"The country's technology units and scientific and research centers have come to believe that they can help the industry and that the industry can use their potentials and capacities," he said.

Annual loading, unloading of cargos at Iran's ports rise 6%



ECONOMY d e s k **TEHRAN** — Loading and unloading of commodities at the ports of Iran have risen six percent during the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19), the head of Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) announced.

Mohammad Rastad also announced that the entrance of ocean vessels to the ports of country has increased eight percent in the previous year, PMO published on its website.

While Iran is combating the U.S. unilateral sanctions on its economy,

the country's ports as the major gates of exports and imports play some significant role in this battle. This role makes all-out support to ports and more development of them serious and vital.

Such necessity has led the government to define projects for more development of the ports and also take some measures to encourage investment making in ports, in addition to facilitate loading and unloading of goods, especially basic commodities, there.

How to read Friday's U.S. jobs data and beyond for virus impact

America's once-robust labor market is collapsing faster than at any point in the last century. The details are about to start showing in the monthly jobs report.

Nearly 10 million jobless claims have been filed in the past two weeks as government-mandated shutdowns to contain the coronavirus force companies large and small, and industries from restaurants to manufacturers, to close their doors.

Payrolls are forecast to decline in March for the first time since 2010 as the early impacts of the pandemic began moving through the economy. But the reference week for Friday's data ended just before business closures, along with employee layoffs and furloughs, became more widespread.

That means reports in the coming months will provide a more comprehensive and detailed picture of how the virus-containment measures are crippling the nation's jobs engine.

"This survey is not going to capture the extreme job loss that has clearly occurred in the last few weeks," said James Sweeney, chief economist at Credit Suisse Group AG. "The horror show" will come in the April employment report, which is scheduled for May 8.

Here's a guide to how to read the jobs reports both Friday and in coming months:

■ Payrolls

Change in nonfarm payrolls, median forecast: Minus 100,000 Besides the timing of the survey, there are several reasons to take the March payroll figures with a grain of salt.

First, the extent to which companies are completely going out



of business can play havoc with the payrolls count. The Bureau of Labor Statistics adjusts job numbers by accounting for business "births" and "deaths" -- but uses a statistical model to do so, given determining how many new businesses open and shut down in real time is extremely challenging, if not impossible.

The problem is exacerbated now, since firm "births" typically drop sharply in bad times, leading to potential challenges in accurately presenting the data.

The model "works very well during normal expansion times, which is most of the time," said Erica Groshen, who was BLS commissioner from 2013 to 2017. "It doesn't work as well during turning points."

A BLS spokesperson said in an emailed statement that the agency "will be reviewing our birth-death model and all other aspects of our methodology very carefully."

Read More: Reliability of U.S. Economic Data Could Take Hit From Virus

In addition to that issue, the figures on payrolls -- as well as wages and hours -- may be less reliable than usual because stretched or shuttered businesses might skip responding to the monthly survey. Typically the numbers are based on voluntary responses from about 145,000 businesses and government agencies.

One other quirk to watch: Census workers are poised to add about 17,000 to the March payrolls figure, according to the bureau's tally of temporary hiring for the decennial count. But looking ahead, even the anticipated surge in census hiring in the coming months is unlikely to offset the millions of Americans out of work.

■ Unemployment

Unemployment rate, median forecast: 3.8%, highest in a year, up from 3.5%

Over the coming months the jobless rate is expected to surge, with some estimates expecting it to rise into the mid-teens -- above the financial-crisis era's 10% peak. However, the U-3 rate, as it's formally known, may fail to capture the full extent of unemployment, because it only includes people actively looking for a job.

That means other measures, including the participation rate and employment-population ratio, should also be looked at to gauge the decline in employment.

(Source: Bloomberg)

After record rally, oil prices fall on doubts over output deal

Oil prices fell on Friday, coming off their biggest one-day gains in the previous session after United States President Donald Trump said he had brokered a deal between Saudi Arabia and Russia to cut output, but made no offer to reduce US production.

Brent crude futures fell 4.2 percent to \$28.67, after having soared 21 percent on Thursday.

US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures fell 5.7 percent to \$23.87 a barrel, after having surged nearly 25 percent on Thursday.

Friday's drop reflected market skepticism over whether a deal to call off a damaging Saudi-Russian price war would go ahead if there was no cooperation from other producers including the US. Trump told reporters at the White House late on Thursday he had made no offer to cut US output.

"Both Riyadh and Moscow will also be looking for participation from US producers, and this may prove now to be the biggest obstacle to an agreement," Royal Bank of Canada analysts said in a note.

Trump said he had spoken with both



Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday, and said he expected they would cut oil output by as much as 10 million to 15 million barrels per day (bpd).

Even with the huge gains on Thursday, prices have still slumped nearly 60 percent this year as oil demand has plummeted due to the coronavirus pandemic slashing demand even as Saudi Arabia and Russia

said they would boost output in April amid their price war, raising the prospect of a flooded market.

Analysts said even if Russia and Saudi Arabia agreed to cut production by as much as 15 million bpd, that would not be enough to balance the market in the face of a deep economic recession.

"The 10-15 million bpd oil production cut reportedly being brokered by President Trump is a great start, but deeper cuts will likely be needed to get through a difficult [second quarter]," said Stephen Innes, chief global market strategist at AxiCorp.

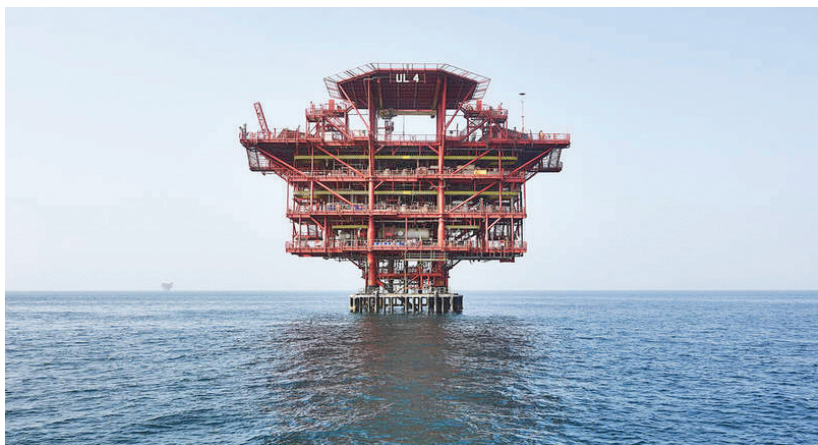
A deal between Russia and Saudi Arabia could effectively establish a floor for WTI in the \$30s, he said.

With the coronavirus pandemic worsening, the global market is facing a huge oversupply of around 25 million bpd. Cutting 10 million bpd of supply would at least help ease a shortage of crude storage capacity, Rystad Energy said.

"Running out of storage capacity would result in a complete collapse of the oil market," Rystad's head of analysis, Per Magnus Nysveen said.

(Source: [aljazeera.com](#))

This oil shock is the worst in history



The world has seen some oil shocks before, but "none has hit the industry with quite the ferocity we are witnessing today," the IEA said on Wednesday in an article on its website, referring to the effects of the coronavirus crisis that have caused oil prices to crumble.

"The impacts will be felt throughout oil's global supply chains and ripple into other parts of the energy sector," the IEA said.

While focusing on the coronavirus, the IEA also mentions the supply shock, which it tactfully blames on the "end of restraints on production from OPEC producers and Russia (OPEC+)," stopping short of singling out a few OPEC producers that have promised to purposefully flood the market with millions of extra barrels of oil per day, such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the UAE.

The reason the shock is unique this time around, the IAE says, is because one of the usual stabilization factors, consumers, is not able to do its part. As billions of people around the world still in lockdown, consumers are unable to

react to falling prices like they usually do—by consuming more. So for as long as the pandemic lasts, boosts in demand that were seen during other oil shocks are "highly unlikely."

"Instead, a rapid buildup of oil stocks is starting to saturate available storage capacity, pushing down prices further," the IEA said.

The IEA also outlined five key dimensions to the current crisis, which it promises to detail further in its upcoming Oil Market Report that will be forthcoming in a couple of weeks. Those five elements are current production grinding to a halt, "sharp" cuts to new investments all the way down the supply chain, pressure on refiners, "massive" strains on fossil-fuel-revenue-dependent countries, and low oil prices spilling over into the rest of the energy sector such as natural gas.

The IEA said that comparing the current shock to previous oil market disruptions "are inevitable but misplaced," adding that we have "never seen anything like 2020."

(Source: [oilprice.com](#))

Petrobras says talks among Russia, Saudi Arabia, U.S. 'irrelevant' for oil prices



Recent negotiations involving leaders from major oil-producing nations and the United States will prove irrelevant for oil prices, which are low because of depressed demand, the chief executive of Brazil's Petrobras said on Thursday evening.

During an online event hosted by Brazilian brokerage XP, Petrobras CEO Roberto Castello Branco said the dispute between non-OPEC member Russia and the group's de facto leader, Saudi Arabia, showed that the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries had no medium- or long-term pricing power.

"I sincerely think that this dispute between Russia and Saudi Arabia - although the markets reacted positively to some news about President Trump getting involved and what not - has become irrelevant amid the dimension of the (coronavirus) crisis," Castello Branco said.

"Oil prices are low because global demand has gone down."

Castello Branco's comments may temper speculation that Brazil will enter a potential deal among oil-producing nations to stabi-

lize the oil market. Still, Brazilian Energy Ministry officials have remained silent on any potential negotiations.

Petrobras and government officials say the company is run without any political interference, although the government is by far the biggest shareholder in Petroleo Brasileiro SA (PETR4.SA), as the firm is known. Government and company officials are known to communicate frequently.

Crude prices crashed in early March as talks between Russia and Saudi Arabia fell apart. Demand has since taken a severe hit as the economies of many countries have ground to a halt amid efforts to battle the global coronavirus outbreak.

Brent oil prices and U.S. benchmark WTI both rose over 20% on Thursday after U.S. President Donald Trump said he brokered a deal between Russia and Saudi Arabia to cut supply. But the details of any potential accord remained unclear. Officials in other oil-producing nations, including Mexico, signaled an openness to multilateral talks to stabilize oil prices.

(Source: [Reuters](#))

LNG's plummeting price in Asia should drag down thermal coal

There is an increasing disconnect between the price of thermal coal and liquefied natural gas (LNG) in Asia, with the dirtier fuel holding its value while LNG is dragged down by the collapse in crude oil.

In theory, the crash in LNG prices, both spot and contract, should result in several Asian countries switching more electricity generation to LNG and away from coal, but as yet there is little evidence this is occurring.

The spot price of LNG in Asia LNG-AS fell to \$2.80 per million British thermal units (mmBtu) in the week to March 27, down from \$3.50 the prior week and only just above the record low of \$2.70 from the week of Feb. 14.

It has dropped 59% from its winter 2019-20 peak of \$6.80 per mmBtu, reached in mid-October, and is 86% below its all-time high of \$20.50 in February 2014.

The spot market accounts for about a third of LNG volumes, with the rest being sold under mainly longer-term contracts linked to the price of crude oil.

The contract prices will also be dropping rapidly, given the 66% drop in Brent crude futures since the peak this year of \$71.75 a barrel on Jan. 8 to the close on Wednesday of \$24.74.

While the terms of the contracts vary, it's likely that the cost of LNG supplied will soon drop below \$4 per mmBtu for many, although the price reduction won't come as quickly as for spot deals, given most contracts have built in lags when it comes to implementing price changes.

While LNG prices are plummeting, the same cannot be said for Australian thermal coal, the main grade used for power generation in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan.

Newcastle coal futures ended at \$66.70 a ton on Wednesday, down from the prior close \$67.85.

However, the contract has been remarkably steady so far this year, despite the mayhem being wreaked on



other commodities as the coronavirus that started in China spreads across the world.

It ended last year at \$67.70 a ton, rose as high as \$72.25 on Jan. 13, before dropping to the low so far this year of \$65.15 on March 9, and has traded in a gentle uptrend since then.

The stability of Australian thermal coal and the plunge in LNG prices has altered the economics of power generation in Japan and South Korea, the two Asian countries most able to switch fuels.

According to Refinitiv data, the current average coal-to-gas switching price is \$4.76 per mmBtu for a combined cycle gas turbine in Japan and \$6.61 in South Korea.

This means the current spot LNG price, and quite likely the contract prices from next month onwards, are below the level at which it becomes cheaper to use natural gas than coal to generate power.

In theory, Japanese and South Korean utilities should now be planning to use more LNG and less coal, although this has yet to show up in the trade flows data.

Japan, the world's biggest LNG buyer, imported 6.67 million tons in March, down from 7.18 million in February and 7.06 million in March last year, according to vessel-tracking data compiled by Refinitiv.

South Korea, the third-biggest buyer behind China, imported 3.83 million tons in March, down from 4.42 million in February, but slightly higher than the 3.28 million in March 2019.

Turning to coal, and Japan imported 7.5 million tons of thermal coal in March, down slightly from 7.74 million in February and 7.58 million in March last year, according to the Refinitiv data, which was filtered to show only cargoes identified as thermal coal, thereby excluding coking coal volumes.

South Korea's thermal coal imports rose to 4.76 million tons in March, up from February's 4.48 million, but below the 5.0 million from March last year.

The drop in imports for LNG in both countries could be partly explained by the slowing of the economies due to the coronavirus and the passing of peak winter demand.

But it's worth noting that the imports of thermal coal didn't drop by as much in Japan's case, and actually rose month-on-month in South Korea.

If Japanese and South Korean utilities do start to switch from coal to LNG, it may not do much for the LNG price, given the global surplus and the looming world recession.

However, a switch away from coal should lead to a fall in prices as demand will drop, and thermal coal may end up joining other commodities in feeling the coronavirus chill.

(Source: [hellenicshippingnews.com](#))

Global natural gas prices for 2020 expected even lower, set to feel Covid-19 symptoms for years

The world's demand for natural gas is being impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, and although it will not be curtailed to the same extent as oil, Rystad Energy estimates international gas prices will reach lower averages than previously expected in 2020. Prices had already been low due to an abundance of liquefied natural gas (LNG) in the market, and it will take years before the virus' effect fully dissipates.

Prices in Europe (TTF) for 2020 are now forecasted at \$3.2 per million British thermal unit (MMBtu), a drop of \$0.62 per MMBtu from our February forecast. Similarly, our price forecast for Asian Spot prices has been revised down to \$3.80 per MMBtu. The lower forecast is based on the weaker demand seen globally throughout the year as a result of the lower commercial and industrial activity, which will exacerbate the looseness in the market.

Prices in 2021 and 2022 have also been revised down on lower economic growth and ample LNG supplies. Given the recent drop in oil prices and Rystad Energy's downward revision in the oil price forecast, our oil-indexed price has also been revised down. Our new oil-indexed price forecast for 2020 is \$7.45 per MMBtu (-4%).

Given the six-month lag in oil-indexation in most contracts, the oil-indexed price is expected to reach the bottom in 2021 at a level of \$5.68 per MMBtu, which is \$1.05 per MMBtu below our previous forecast (-16%). We also see US Henry Hub gas prices remaining below \$2.5 per MMBtu for a protracted period, averaging at \$1.94 per MMBtu in 2020 and at \$2.43 per MMBtu next year.

Rystad Energy expects global market fundamentals will remain loose through 2022 before prices tighten significantly as LNG demand growth outpaces liquefaction capacity due to more delays in project sanctioning. Rystad Energy forecasts a tight LNG balance in 2024 and 2025, and along with it, a price spike.

Following this period, we see downside risk for prices for 2026 and 2027 driven by potential overinvestment in 2019 as new supplies begin coming onto the market. However, the downside in prices during this period is more limited than our previous estimate as the lower number of liquefaction projects moving ahead will help keep a better market balance.

Much of the demand losses this year come from limited appetite for LNG, with buyers scaling down orders amid reduced industrial and commercial activity and oversupply, as low prices sometimes make shipping uneconomical.

As a result of the lower demand and the low prices, exporters have had to adjust their LNG production, and the US is among the countries that will see the biggest impact on LNG exports. The feed-gas volume flowing into liquefaction plants on the US Gulf Coast has slowed during the last two months, with some redirected to domestic consumption instead, boosting coal-to-gas switching in the power sector.

Feedgas reached a peak of 9,502 million cubic feet per day (MMcfd), or about 269 million cubic meters per day (MMcmd) on 31 January and has been on a declining trend since, averaging at 7,900 million cubic feet (224 MMcmd) in March. Feedgas into Sabine Pass LNG has dropped from 4,227 MMcfd (120 MMcmd) on 31 January to as low as 1,743 MMcfd (49 MMcmd) on 17 March.

"While LNG exports from the US have dropped, demand from the power sector continued to increase in March, boosted by low gas prices. US gas demand from the power sector has recently reached close to 32 billion cubic feet per day (Bcfd), or a 30% increase year-on-year. However, as the epicenter of Covid-19 moves from Europe to the US, we could see a drop in gas demand from power and other sectors, adding more downward pressure for Henry Hub prices" says Rystad Energy's Head of Gas and Power Markets Carlos Torres-Diaz.

On the production side, in the US we expect gross natural gas production to drop from 116 Bcfd in the fourth quarter of 2019 to about 108 to 109 Bcfd in the same period this year.

We estimate that in a \$30 WTI oil price scenario, Permian dry gas production might decline by more than 400 MMcfd, even before year end, and may fall by another 1 Bcfd over 2021 to 2022, if oil prices do not improve. While this pace of decline may not sound significant, it is a big difference compared to the original expectation of 4 Bcfd growth over 2020 to 2022.

The Permian Highway and Whistler pipelines will most likely still come online and achieve adequate utilization rates, but the utilization of some legacy pipelines, and the need for future projects, is now at serious risk. The lower gas production from associated wells could help balance the market and push Henry Hub prices back to \$2 per MMBtu towards the end of the year.

(Source: [hellenicshippingnews.com](#))

Oman welcomes U.S. invitation to OPEC to discuss oil price decline

Oman welcomes a U.S. invitation to OPEC members to discuss ways of halting a collapse in oil prices, the country's oil minister said, according to the Omani al-Watan newspaper on Thursday.

Oman is not in the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, but is a member of the OPEC+ alliance of OPEC and non-OPEC nations that struck an oil output deal that had led to relatively stable oil prices since 2017.

The agreement collapsed last month after Russia refused to support deeper production cuts to support prices hit by the coronavirus outbreak.

In response, OPEC's de facto leader Saudi Arabia slashed its export prices and said it would raise production to maximum capacity.

U.S. President Donald Trump said on Wednesday he had spoken to the leaders of both Saudi Arabia and Russia and believed the two countries would reach a deal to end their price war within a few days.

"The invitation addressed by the United States ... to main OPEC member countries to return to negotiations may rekindle hopes of reaching practical solutions to controlling the oil price decline," Omani oil minister Mohammed bin Hamad al-Rumhy said, according to al-Watan.

"We don't support countries in increasing production at this sensitive stage, as it doesn't serve the global oil industry nor the states' interests."

"The oil market is going through a critical stage and the economical and financial losses, especially for countries dependent on oil revenues, will be large if prices remain where they are now," he added, ruling out the possibility of price drop to about \$15 per barrel.

International crude prices have fallen by around 50% to below \$26 a barrel since the OPEC+ output deal collapsed.

Al-Rumhy announced ambitious plans late last year to invest more than \$20 billion in downstream operations in the next five years. However, the impact of current economic conditions will put on hold any investments in new fields and projects, he was reported as saying on Thursday.

(Source: [Reuters](#))

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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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TEHRAN, Feb. 20 (MNA) -- Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh held a phone

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An efficient economic system necessary for a new Islamic civilization: expert

➡ So there is a precise direction in naming each year which acts as the plot that interconnects all the names. The Leader of the Islamic Revolution, since the first year in which the process of naming the year started, has chosen the names in an order that illustrates a certain transcendental goal once you analyze the names collectively.

During several past years, the names chosen by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution have been related to economy. When you study the names, you will realize they are small parts of a big economic plan which all together, will help us move towards creating an ideal functional economic system. In fact, the concepts considered by the Leader (e.g. boost in domestic production, improvement of consumption patterns, innovation and prosperity, flourish in production, and surge in production) all together form the structure of the aforementioned ideal economic order. The Leader's emphasis on the category of "production" in recent years is mainly rooted in the fact that in our path towards creating a new Islamic civilization, the most important challenge to overcome at the moment in the country is the strengthening of the national economy and creating an efficient economic system.

Therefore, the concepts behind these names alongside each other illustrate the perfect picture of a convenient economic order.

■ As an economist, what's your idea about the importance of "production" in economic empowerment? Given the fact that our country has been under suffocating international sanctions for over four decades, isn't the expectation of a production leap rather unrealistic?

First of all, in every country which endeavors to achieve development, the element of "production" is the most significant factor in economic planning. Production is also vital to the "resistive economy". In a resistive economic strategy, production is the fundamental factor for economic growth. Production has very serious effects on obtaining economic goals in every country. Production results in the abundance of merchandise in an economy, meaning the people of the country, industries, and all economic activists including the final consumer and production units can find whatever they want in the market. This is the first influence of production growth.

The second influence is the containment of inflation. The most effective method to control or reduce the inflation rate is the production growth which can even end up in price reduction.

The third influence of production growth is the reduction of the countries' dependency on foreign merchandise and consequently reducing the demand for foreign currency. Through this strategy, the impacts of financial and bank-related sanctions against a country will decrease.

The next influence of growth in production is the increment of job opportunities which results in the increment of revenue and welfare of the society.

The last but not least influence is the increase of states' revenues from taxing without increasing the taxes. This has two effects: first, for economies like what we have here in Iran, it will decrease the dependency of the government on revenues from selling oil, and second, it will expand the governmental services and increment of public welfare.

To sum up, strengthening national production will result in public welfare for citizens and economic authority for the country on a global scale. So, the "production" is considered as a fundamental factor in economic planning and when we analyze the national and international economic status of more developed countries of the world which hold an economic hegemony or authority in global level, we realize there has been a substantial program in fields of production. They have empowered their national production and consequently increased public welfare and economic power internationally.

■ Strengthening domestic production requires various infrastructures. Our country has been struggling to make its way through uncountable impossible-to-defeat challenges to establish these infrastructures for more than 40 years. What's our status today? Do we have those infrastructures?

First, I should point out that we had a relatively good advancement in the "flourish of production" which was last year's name. Even though our revenues from selling petroleum reduced and our oil-oriented economic growth rate was negative, the economic growth rate of Iran was positive last year. This means that our real production rate in sections like agriculture, industries, and services increased and we got past the economic depression of previous years.

So, it is true to say that the prosperity of production began last year. But, as the Leader mentioned in his new years' speech, this prosperity was limited and Iranian people didn't feel its influence in everyday life. That's why the current year was named "Surge in Production" which one of its results is a sensible effect in public livelihood so that people feel the economic conditions are getting better.

The surge in production certainly needs infrastructures and some factors. Fortunately, Iran is one of the few countries in the world which has all the infrastructures and factors required for strengthening of the production

(or even a surge in production) at its disposal. Ironically, our main problems are privative, meaning the obstacles which exist in our way to boosting production rate. By removing these obstacles, we achieve the production leap.

I want to briefly talk about the infrastructures and capacities of production in Iran. Hardware-wise, production requires five factors. The first factor is the market. The second factor is the workforce. The third is knowledge and technology. The fourth factor is capital, and the fifth factor is natural resources. If a country would possess all these factors, it has a phenomenal capacity for production. Our country is rich in all those factors.

As of market factor, we already have a population of 84 million which means a huge ipso facto market. We also have 15 neighboring countries with a population of over 400 million people. These countries, collectively, spend \$2 billion on different merchandise and services of which, \$1.2 billion are imported from other countries. Iran can be one of the good exporters to these neighboring countries because, first, for most of these countries, Iranian merchandises are well qualified enough and second, most of these countries are culturally close to us. For example, most of our neighbors did not/will not acquiesce to sanctions programs against us. This means our domestic and regional market is a rich one and no matter how much we produce; the market exists out there.

As of the workforce, our country possesses over 40 million young workforces of which, 15 million are academically educated and account as expert workforces. This gives us a high capacity for production.

In the science and technology sector, Iran is a leading country in the field of new technologies in the region or as in some cases, in the world. We have 100,000 university professors who can run knowledge enterprises and perform activities in the technology sector. We also have more than 4,600 active knowledge enterprises in Iran which almost have produced any merchandise they have been ordered to produce. Many of these enterprises are producing productions that only one or two countries are capable of producing in the world. These knowledge enterprises and the technological power in Iran which has been flourishing since not long ago have proved there are no dead-ends in fields of technology and technical skills in the country.

As of the capital, we have over \$550 billion of liquidity of which, if only one third would be directed towards the production, causes a production blast rather than a production leap. So we don't even need foreign investments to boost production and there is enough cash flow in the country to achieve that goal.

As of the natural resources, Iran is a very rich country. Iran, alone, possesses natural resources equivalent to a group of European countries combined. Iran is three times bigger than France in the size of the land. The land is an important element for production. As of geographical location, Iran is located on the 30th parallel north which is considered as the best agricultural climate in the world. We have rich sources of groundwater, surface water, and precipitations and also deep waters which are recently being studied. We have 40 million hectares of fertile agricultural land for traditional agricultural methods and if we use modern agricultural methods, the entire width of Iran can be used for agriculture. As of oil and gas which are the most important minerals and raw materials of the world, Iran is the richest country and ranks first among others for total oil plus gas resources. As of other sorts of minerals, except for a handful of minerals, all other resources exist in the country.

In terms of man-made infrastructures, Iran is in very good shape. Our roads network has expanded in every corner of the country interconnecting every rural and urban zone with appropriate routes. The ICT (Information and Communications Technology) network is desirably developed all over the country. The energy network is well expanded. Every populated area enjoys an electricity network and most of the villages in the furthest corners of the country have access to gas networks. In sum, all of the necessary infrastructures for boosting the production are favorably developed across the country since the Islamic Revolution in 1979.

So, it is true to say we have extensive land which is armed and has all the requirements of the production leap at its disposal. It means we have everything we need to boost high-quality production on a global scale and the main challenge to achieve that goal is removing the obstacles in the way of becoming an international economic power. Once these obstacles are defeated, an economy, in essence, tends to increase the production rate.

■ So if everything is ready, if all factors are gathered right here right now, why we can't feel a sensible change in approaches towards the production process? The statistics even imply a considerable decrease in the production rates within the last few years. You even argued that growth in the production rate will dramatically decrease the impact of different international sanctions. What part of the government is responsible for eradicating those obstacles mentioned above?

After the Islamic Revolution of Iran, the real production growth rate is multiplied by 16.4 which means we have moved from \$100 billion of PPP (Purchasing Power Parity) in 1979 to \$1,650 billion of PPP in 2019. This



is while our population has multiplied by 2.8 and this means that real per capita production rate in Iran is now 7 times more than before the Islamic Revolution. This is a rare growth that is distinguished once compared with a country like the United States which over the same period, had its per capita production rate multiplied only by 2. It is a true argument that the U.S. has more population than Iran and its two-times growth worth more than our seven-times growth, but our growth ratio during the past 40 years has been significant and we expect it to increase.

We may see less emphasis on the production empowerment during the last few years. One reason is that those who are responsible for the lubrication of the production process, especially in the executive branch of government, have focused way more on foreign interactions and political exchanges with western countries than activating domestic capacities for production. This approach drew the attention of economic activists away from the domestic capabilities of the country in the fields of production.

Authorities of Iran have been engaged in nuclear negotiations with different countries of the world since 2003. From 2004 to 2013 the production process was not marginalized by intense nuclear negotiations and moved progressively forward parallel to diplomatic negotiations and interactions. But, unfortunately, since 2004 on, more than 90 percent of countries' power was dedicated to negotiations and we fell short of power to strengthen domestic production. Those negotiations finally resulted in The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) which didn't last long and had no positive effect on production units.

■ What role each part of the government should play to boost the production rate?

Various entities have different responsibilities. Central Bank and the banking network of the countries' responsibility is directing the heavy mass of liquidity towards production. The responsibility of the Ministry of Industry, Mining, and Trade is regulating the trade policies; partly to manage and control the importations, and partly to empower the exportations. This ministry is also responsible to provide the infrastructures necessary for production and lifting the bureaucratic obstacles in the way of increasing the production rate which is almost the most important obstacle amongst all for entrepreneurs. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance is another part of the executive body of the government which accounts for removing those obstacles (which most of them are solvable merely by signing an order on a paper). The Presidential Deputy for Science and Technology is another effective entity in this process which fortunately has been very positively active in recent years both in reinforcing the technology in the country and canalizing those technologies toward production. The taxation system of the country must try to lift the burden of taxation pressure off the shoulders of the real production activist who mainly have a clear tax file. Taxation pressures should be focused on the part of the economy that doesn't produce value-added. (e.g. capital gain tax, etc.)

■ What role does society play in the realization of the goals set forth by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution every year?

There are two main role-players in a resistive economy: state or government, and people as the main body of society. These two form the foundations of the resistive economy. The main task of government is planning and providing the infrastructures, but those plans will go no further than papers and books if the society would not act accordingly. Indeed, the government acts as the brain and operational arms are the people. For example, investments are conducted by the body of society. It is also the same about working, selling, marketing, producing and this list goes on and on. The word "people" here means university professors, workers, engineers, families, etc. For a country that is seeking to achieve a production leap, it is crucial to have a pure and unmixed public opinion and a culture consonant with this goal.

The members of the society, also by purchasing national productions, can accelerate the progress. Those who produce merchandise or prepare services are responsible to increase both the production rate and quality of the productions.

Cautious optimism as Italy shows initial signs of crisis slowing

Initial signs of a slowdown in Italy's coronavirus epidemic, the world's deadliest, have started appearing across the country in recent days, say officials, providing a beacon of cautious hope to other Western nations where authorities are implementing similar containment strategies - but where the infection rate is still growing fast.

Following a national lockdown that began on March 10, Italy has become an international litmus test to understand the dynamics of the virus's spread, and the relative success of strict measures to stem the contagion. Though statistics vary, many hard-hit countries could be around three weeks behind Italy in their domestic infection spread.

On Thursday, Italy announced that the number of deaths here had risen by 760 in 24 hours, to 13,915, as new cases grew at a steady rate by 4,668, against the previous day's 4,782, to a total of 115,242.

Similar rates of growth in total cases have been recorded in Italy over the past five days, shifting between a maximum of 5.6 percent and a minimum of four percent, showing a tentative steadying of the contagion curve.

Silvio Brusaferro, president of the National Institute of Health, told a press conference on Tuesday that the country seemed to be arriving at a plateau, showing that the movement restrictions were working. He also hinted at the possibility of having reached a peak in the contagion.

Although experts mostly agree there are some initial signs of improvement, they still warn that official numbers could be failing to provide a clear picture of the overall situation.

"Technically, the peak is the day when the highest number of daily infections is reached," Nino Cartabellotta, a leading Italian public health expert, told Al Jazeera.

"After March 21, when Italy had a high of 6,500 cases, we witnessed a decrease. We are now in a sort of a plateau, where numbers still go up and down, since they also depend on the number of tests conducted on a daily basis. This might last up to three weeks, when a [decrease] should begin."

But based on the different virus transmission rates seen across Italy's varied regions, and with discrepancies in testing policies, Cartabellotta says discussing a contagion peak in Italy was like talking about a fabled phoenix.

"The number of infected patients [announced] depends on the daily changes in the number of tests, meaning this figure cannot be taken as an objective measure. [It is like] looking through a keyhole that keeps constantly changing in size," he says.

Experts say the number of infected people in the country is certainly higher than has been announced, as the vast majority of tests have only been conducted on people who have been hospitalised, leaving infected citizens with no or few symptoms uncounted.

Meanwhile, officials said on Tuesday the number of deaths could have also been underestimated, since their data did not include the deaths of people who died at home or in nursing homes. In Bergamo, the city in Italy most badly affected by the infection, fatalities in the first three weeks of March increased more than four times compared with the same period in 2019.

But more positive signs have also emerged this week, with the rate of hospital admissions starting to slow, alongside a decline in the number of patients in need of intensive care in some of the country's worst-hit areas.

A doctor working in a COVID-19 ward at a hospital in Cremona, one of the provinces most affected by the crisis, told Al Jazeera that the number of patients who were hospitalised with serious infections had slightly decreased since the weekend, along with the number of ambulance service interventions.

Virologist and University of Florida Professor Ilaria Capua, a former Italian MP, told Al Jazeera she felt "cautiously optimistic", although she also acknowledged that an overall statement about the course of the epidemic was difficult to issue in light of the different sampling procedures carried out in different Italian regions.

"I am beginning to feel optimistic because recent data are showing that there is no significant increase in the number of deaths or in severe clinical forms that require hospitalisation," she told Al Jazeera. "The biggest problem of this pandemic is the overload of the healthcare services. The number of hospitalisations is not significantly increasing, meaning that the restriction measures that were put in place are actually working. Therefore, we are hopefully stabilising before the epidemic curve starts decreasing."

Capua said the epidemic curve might also be impacted by the growing presence of antibodies across society. Those people who have been affected by an asymptomatic or mild form of COVID-19 should have in fact produced antibodies, which are one of the likely barriers to the transmission of the virus, contributing to the effects of the restriction measures.

But if Italy relaxed now, it could still witness new peaks. Officials say a full lockdown will continue until at least Easter (April 12), while many are already expecting further extensions.

Cartabellotta warns that it could be potentially very dangerous if politicians start discussing what to do next and ways to reopen the country while basing their assumptions on the way their numbers are currently being recorded.

He also urged more clarity concerning the category of people authorities define as "recovered/discharged". As of Thursday, 18,278 individuals fall into this category.

It was not specified whether all those in this category underwent the double testing the World Health Organization requires for a case to be declared closed. The Italian health agency considers a case closed when someone heals and ceases to be contagious. Often, people who were discharged were not tested twice, meaning they could still be potentially contagious, or active cases.

"We are at risk here of letting people out who shouldn't go around," Cartabellotta says.

At the same time, more guidelines from European officials are needed to standardise metrics in measuring the contagion, thus helping scientists research and plan for the next steps to be rooted in scientific analysis.

"In order to study it we need to be speaking the same language," Capua says. "But we need to do it now. We cannot go back in time and generate data that we didn't collect in the right way. Because everything that we didn't collect is then gone, we don't have it anymore."

Male individuals also appear more likely to develop severe clinical cases of COVID-19 in Italy, and preliminary data suggest a similar scenario in other countries, though that requires more data and standardised methods to confirm.

Researchers aren't sure what's behind this apparent trend, but Capua says this preliminary evidence could represent a stepping stone as we head towards "the new normal", knowing it could represent a criterion to enact measures for the next phase of the emergency.

"If these data are confirmed, it would seem wise to start repopulating the workforce with a higher number of women than men initially," she said. "Because if women are more resistant, they'll have a tendency to get less seriously affected, and therefore they won't be another burden on the healthcare system."

(Source: al Jazeera)

Norway pleads for more aid to help Palestinians tackle coronavirus

Norway called Friday for more money to help the Palestinian Territories get through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Although there has only been one death and 161 reported cases of the coronavirus in the Palestinian Territories, the outbreak is expected to worsen there.

Globally cases have now passed 1 million, with more than 53,000 fatalities, with most in the United States, Italy and Spain after the initial outbreak in Asia.

"We need to work together to prevent this from being a bigger humanitarian and

health disaster than we think it can be, especially in Gaza, but also in the West Bank," Norway's Foreign Minister Ine Eriksen Soereide told Reuters.

"We are urging donors to step up their efforts both through the World Bank and also directly to the Palestinians," she said.

Norway chairs the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC), which is the donor group to the Palestinians.

The Palestinian Authority estimates it needs \$120 million to respond to the coronavirus outbreak, but Soereide

expects the needs to grow and the measures already taken to limit the spread to hit the Palestinian economy and budget.

She urged donors to deliver on previous commitments, including to the United Nations and non-governmental organisations, and step up their efforts.

Concerns are particularly high in the West Bank's crowded refugee camps and the densely populated Gaza Strip, where Palestinian groups have cancelled mass rallies on the border with Israel.

Soereide said there had been positive Israeli-Palestinian cooperation in tackling the coronavirus pandemic.

However, she did not expect that the United States would resume funding to the United Nations' Palestinian aid agency, or to the Palestinian Authority, which it suspended in 2018.

"We have been urging them to do so for a long time ... we do not necessarily expect there will be a change in the American line in the short-term," Soereide said.

(Source: Reuters)

Three human-like species lived side-by-side in ancient Africa

Two million years ago, three different human-like species were living side-by-side in South Africa, a study shows.

The findings underline a growing understanding that the present-day situation, where one human species dominates the globe, may be unusual compared with the evolutionary past.

The new evidence comes from efforts to date bones uncovered at a cave complex near Johannesburg.

The research has been published in the journal *Science*.

The new work also revealed the earliest known example of *Homo erectus*, a species thought to be a direct ancestor of modern humans (*Homo sapiens*).

The three groups of hominins (human-like creatures) belonged to *Australopithecus* (the group made famous by the "Lucy" fossil from Ethiopia), *Paranthropus* and *Homo* - better known as humans.

Andy Herries, from LaTrobe University in Melbourne, Australia, and colleagues evaluated remains found at the Drimolen Cave Complex using three different scientific dating techniques: electron spin resonance, palaeomagnetism and uranium-lead dating.

"We collated all of the dates from each of these techniques and together they showed that we had a very precise age. We now know that the Drimolen Main Quarry and all of the fossils in it are dated from 2.04 to 1.95 million years ago," said co-author Stephanie Baker, from the University of Johannesburg.

The Drimolen complex has produced multiple ancient fossils over the years, including those of ancient hominins.

But a few years ago, researchers uncovered two new skullcaps. One of these belonged to the relatively primitive species *Paranthropus robustus*. The other was more modern in appearance and was identified as *Homo erectus*. They named the *H. erectus* skullcap DNH 134.

Homo erectus is one of our direct human ancestors and may have been the first early human species to migrate out of Africa into the rest of the world. Not only is this the earliest example of the species anywhere in the world, but it's the only specimen known from South Africa.

"Until this find, we always assumed *Homo erectus* originated from eastern Africa. But DNH 134 shows that *Homo erectus*, one of our direct ancestors, possibly comes from southern Africa instead," said Stephanie Baker.

"That would mean that they later moved northwards into East Africa. From there they went through North Africa to populate the rest of the world."

We once thought of human evolution as a linear progression, with modern humans emerging at the end as the pinnacle of evolutionary development. But everywhere we look, it's increasingly clear the real picture was much messier.

As a case in point, another study published this week in *Nature* journal used modern techniques to date a well-preserved skull found in a quarry at Kabwe, Zambia, in 1921. The skull which is more primitive than those of modern humans, but more advanced than *Homo erectus*, was considered to be around 500,000 years old based on its anatomy.

It is considered by many researchers to belong to a species called *Homo heidelbergensis* - a common ancestor of modern humans and Neanderthals.

But scientists who have dated small samples of bone and teeth from the skull, as well as other material associated with the specimen, have shown that it is much younger - between 324,000 and 276,000 years old.

Lead author Prof Chris Stringer, from the Natural History Museum in London, UK, said: "This is surprisingly young, as a fossil at about 300,000 years old would be expected to show intermediate features between *H. heidelbergensis* and *H. sapiens*. But Broken Hill shows no significant features of our species."

The discovery implies that at least three different *Homo* species co-existed at this time in Africa.

(Source: BBC)



ROUND THE GLOBE

Morne Trois Pitons National Park

A rugged mountain range featuring steep volcanoes and deep canyons forms the natural spine of Dominica, a volcanic island of the Lesser Antilles.

A World Heritage, Morne Trois Pitons National Park (MTPNP) protects a scenically striking part in the central and southern highlands with an extension of 6,857 hectares, roughly 9 percent of the country's land area.



The centerpiece is Morne Trois Pitons, one of five live volcanic centers within the park. Above 1,300 m.a.s.l., this spectacular dome complex is the highest peak within the property. The park's landscape is dominated by the extreme relief covered by various types of tropical forest against the dramatic backdrop of diverse volcanic topography and features.

The scenic beauty is further complemented by numerous natural lakes and pools, including Boeri Lake and Freshwater Lake, the country's largest lakes. Countless rivers and creeks originate in MTPNP, often forming magnificent waterfalls on their way towards the ocean.

Within MTPNP there are massive volcanic piles surrounded by precipitous glaci slopes and soufrieres, in particular the Grand Soufriere or Valley of Desolation. In this large amphitheater-like area surrounded by mountains, the volcanic activity is displayed in the form of streams of various colors interspersed with fumaroles and hot springs, bubbling mud ponds and the aptly named Boiling Lake.

The latter is a massive hot spring with a water temperature of about 95°C. Surrounded by steep cliffs, the lake is one of the largest of its kind in the world. It constantly bubbles and churns, with steam emitting an almost surreal sound. Water level and coloration vary greatly.

(Source: UNESCO)

Age-old Noruz traditions altered by coronavirus in Iran

By Afshin Majlesi

Iranians experienced totally-changed traditions during this Noruz (the two-week New Year holidays started March 20) in the face of the novel coronavirus pandemic that has crippled the tourism and hospitality industries worldwide.

The virus, also known as COVID-19, caused air, road and rail travels a meltdown in the country such as the whole world.

In an act that is far different from the sole of the age-old Noruz traditions, a majority of people stayed home instead of coming together, visiting the loved ones, or spending time in the nature.

Each Noruz, hoteliers, airlines, tour operators, restaurants, and local communities prepare to reap a bonanza over a traditional peak season, which starts days before Noruz.

The nation by tradition make hundreds of trips, mostly domestic ones, when most businesses and workplaces are closed, as are schools. The number of domestic travelers is sometimes difficult to gauge accurately because many use their own cars to get around. In addition to Iran's popular tourist sites, including the historical cities of Isfahan and Shiraz, hundreds of thousands head for the coasts of the Caspian Sea.

However, local and government authorities, this year, issued severe warnings, urging to limit travel between major cities in order to contain the virus. They also warned that may use "force" to limit travel throughout the country if needed.

Last year, Iranians made 74 million overnight stays in their domestic trips during Noruz holidays, which showed an increase of 20 percent year on year.

Sizdah Bedar, also known as Nature Day, puts an end to Noruz rituals when millions of people flock to the parks with picnics to spend a day in nature with family and friends on the 13th day of Farvardin, the first month of the Iranian calendar.



File photo shows an Iranian boy buying a flower vase, ahead of the Iranian New Year, Noruz.

This year, parks and gardens witnessed an unusual serene and quiet picture on Wednesday.

From days before Sizdah Bedar, authorities closed parks, recreational areas and access to the countryside and mountains to avoid crowds and the further spread of the virus.

Prior to Noruz, tourism minister Ali-Asgar Mounesan announced no official celebrations or public gatherings, even the pre-scheduled ones, would be held

during the two-week holidays (starting March 20 this year) in a bid to combat the coronavirus outbreak in the country.

Commenting on cancelled travels, Mounesan asked the nation to postpone or reschedule tours so as to help the tourism industry over the virus outbreak. "My suggestion to my dear people is that they do not cancel their hotel reservations and domestic tours as far as possible in order to help the tourism industry and prevent it from bankruptcy by making

their reservations in time after virus is controlled."

Indoor traditions did not suffer much from the virus. Every nooks at homes are cleaned and colorful Noruz tables are symbolically rearranged as part of a string of customs to herald the spring and celebrate rebirth.

The pandemic is also putting thousands of jobs, particularly tourism-related ones at risk, with traveling likely to slump for months to come.

UNWTO calls for action to help virus-hit tourism

TOURISM TEHRAN — The **desk** UNITED Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has recently released a set of recommendations, calling for urgent and strong support to help the global tourism sector in the face of the novel coronavirus pandemic that has crippled traveling and jeopardized related jobs all over the globe.

Formulated with the support of the World Health Organization (WHO), the recommendations calls on innovators and entrepreneurs to put forward new solutions to help the tourism sector recover from COVID-19.

"I am deeply convinced that there is no other way to deal with global challenges, than with global responses," UN Secretary-General António Guterres said, according to the World Tourism Organization.

"This challenge is a global call to reach the most disruptive startups, entrepreneurs and drive solutions to mitigate Covid-19 impacts on tourism through health, economic and destination management solutions. A step forward for Sustainable Development in a crisis situation," the UNWTO noted.

Commenting on recommendations, UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili has said they are aimed to safeguard tourism-related jobs and



Secretary General of the World Tourism Organization Zurab Pololikashvili and Iran's tourism chief Ali-Asgar Mounesan visiting Tehran's Golestan Palace on Nov. 12, 2018 / Photo by ILNA

support the companies that are at risk.

"These specific recommendations give countries a check-list of possible measures to help our sector sustain the jobs and support the companies at risk at this very moment. Mitigating the impact on employment and liquidity, protecting

the most vulnerable and preparing for recovery, must be our key priorities," Pololikashvili explained.

"We still do not know what the full impact of COVID-19 will be on global tourism. However, we must support the sector now while we prepare for it to

come back stronger and more sustainable. Recovery plans and programs for tourism will translate into jobs and economic growth," added the Secretary-General.

Pololikashvili stressed that "for tourism to fulfil its potential to help societies and whole countries recover from this crisis, our response needs to be quick, consistent, united and ambitious".

World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) is also collaborating with World Health Organization (WHO) in launching "Healing Solutions for Tourism", an innovation challenge to help the tourism sector recover from COVID-19, where millions of jobs are at risk as the pandemic hits hard. In the face of an unprecedented challenge, the UNWTO, with the support of the WHO, calls on innovators and entrepreneurs innovators to submit ideas that can be implemented immediately in destinations, businesses and public health efforts to help the tourism sector mitigate the impact of the pandemic and kickstart recovery efforts.

According to the nonprofit World Travel and Tourism Council, which represents the international tourism industry, travel and tourism contributed \$8.8 trillion to the global economy in 2018 and was responsible for 10.4 percent of all economic activity. The council estimates that travel and tourism are responsible for 319 million jobs around the world.

Why 'can I get a refund?' is travel's biggest issue: Coronavirus Q&A

Customers are all asking the same question of an industry in freefall. As one tour operator says, how firms respond will shape whether or not they have a future.

For the past two weeks we've addressed several questions in our Q&A but increasingly readers want to know the answer to just one: can I get a refund? We answered one specific query on this last week and my colleague Miles Brignall also outlined consumer rights in this piece. But as it keeps being raised, we thought it worth addressing again.

Under the Package Travel Regulations (PTR), you are entitled to a refund if your holiday provider cannot fulfil the holiday but – and it's a big but – tour operators are struggling to meet this legal obligation while facing a massive loss of income and, in some cases, repatriation costs.

In short, the travel industry is in freefall. It has weathered problems from natural disasters to terrorism to recession, but nothing comes close to the Covid-19 crisis, which is disastrous for countries and tourist destinations all over the world. A ludicrous, hypothetical scenario – what would happen if no one could travel? – is now a shocking and surreal reality.

Of course, many sectors are on perilous ground, but the knock-on effects of this global paralysis are arguably worse for travel. The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) estimates that a million jobs are being lost every day in

the travel and tourism sector because of the pandemic.

"From waiters to taxi drivers, tour guides to chefs and caterers, pilots to cleaners, the relentless cascade of job losses is plunging millions of families into terrible hardship and debt. The domino effect of Covid-19 is right now having a massive impact, wiping out an entire economic sector," said WTTC president and CEO Gloria Guevara.

Where does this leave holidaymakers?

As Brignall says, you should keep contacting your travel provider for a refund. If the government acts on calls from Abta for the refund window to be extended from 14 days to four months, you will wait longer for the money.

But tour operators are pleading with customers to postpone instead of cancelling, warning that mass cancellations will lead to a meltdown of the sector. Credit notes are protected in the same way as holidays and if the company does go under, the Atol scheme means you will be compensated.

The most responsible tour operators are being as flexible as possible. Much Better Adventures, for example, is offering refunds as an option but incentivising customers to postpone by offering a 5% discount (for life) on future trips. So far it has worked: 80% of customers have opted to postpone instead of cancel. There will be no increase in the cost of trips for 2021, and no expiry date for credit notes. Co-founder Sam Bruce admitted that small com-

panies can be more adaptable but he's also critical of companies that are refusing refunds. "Lots of companies in our position aren't being as flexible."

He also said he doesn't support Abta's call for changes to the PTR rules and believes there is "a lot of love being lost between the travel industry and consumers. If customers bought under those terms, they should be honoured."

For some tour operators that is simply not possible. They are being asked to give full refunds for air-inclusive holidays, often without being able to recoup money from airlines – leaving tour operators out of pocket. "Until governments step up, and bring the airlines to heel, the consumer has to rely on the quit wits and sympathy of small tour operators," said Douglas Durrant of Caribbean Fun Travel.

As Bruce sees it, this is a test of loyalty – those companies that work with customers during this challenging time will be the ones that benefit in the long term.

"There are a lot of travel companies making rash decisions, and they may not come out of this looking too rosy at the end. This is about treating customers well so the terms know who to trust when this passes."

That is small comfort if you are trying to get money back right now, but worth bearing in mind when you come to book a future holiday.

(Source: The Guardian)

Iran's fight against COVID-19 to improve noticeably in coming days: health minister

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — As more new cases of the coronavirus infection are identified in the country, those undergone treatments will improve and Iran's situation in fight against the pandemic will improve noticeably in coming days, Health Minister Saeed Namaki has announced.

In a meeting held through video conferencing on Thursday with WHO officials in the Eastern Mediterranean region in attendance, experts praised Iran for implementing the national coronavirus fight plan and called for Iran to share its experience throughout the Eastern Mediterranean.

To date, we have been able to cover more than 90 percent of the target population through the national plan, Namaki stated, Tasnim reported.

Among the public and experts, a question was raised that "When we say that we could managed the first heavy wave of the disease



in the country, how have the identified cases increased?" he noted in response to the question that "With achievements in the screening of the disease, we have been able to identify more new cases of COVID-19, and in the coming days, the healing of those identified will become more apparent and will change Iran's situation globally."

People should know that we are in the disease management phase and the disease, he said, adding, "However, in some provinces, due to proper disease management, the detection rate of new cases has dropped."

He further expressed hope that with the help of people and all responsible bodies, the implementation of the social distancing plan continues strongly until April 8, concluding that the people's companionship certainly made a favorable position in the country among the Eastern Mediterranean countries.

Nature Day manifests national empathy against coronavirus

But photos went viral on social media showing family gathering at home which taught us that the Nature's Day aims to keep families together and protect nature as same as it was centuries ago.

Significant reduction in traffic

Minimizing urban traffic on the country's roads were another achievement of people's empathy on Nature's Day, as all provinces reported a 50 to 90 percent reduction in traffic on this day; East Azerbaijan reported that 90 percent of road traffic has decreased compared to the same day last year.

Or even in North Khorasan, the traffic police announced that the people's cooperation in the implementation of the social distancing plan has caused the province to be

emptied of private car traffic, so that mostly trucks can be seen on the roads.

It was also reported from Khuzestan province that with the participation of people, the suburban traffic of this province was reduced by 100 percent.

Empty tourist destinations

Favorable conditions were also reported in the tourist destination provinces; many residents in the northern provinces stayed at home, and a small number of those attempting to go on nature despite the restrictions, faced a strong barrier of law enforcement.

In Gilan province, a limited number of citizens who ignored the warnings were fined, including 120 cars.

In Tehran, as the most populous city of Iran, the conditions were not much different

from other cities; Tehran citizens consciously chose to stay at home on Nature's Day; and Piruz Hanachi, Tehran Mayor, wrote on his Twitter account on Tuesday that "I would like to express my sincere gratitude to those who accepted our advice and resisted to go to the forest and urban parks on Nature's Day in order to break the chain of coronavirus transmission."

This cooperation was followed by the appreciation of the Minister of Interior toward the people. Abdolreza Rahman Fazli expressed appreciation to the people for their full and commendable observance of the social distancing plan as a manifestation of the ancient civilization on Nature's Day.

Social distancing plan continues

Although the Noruz holiday has come

to an end, the implementation of the social distancing plan continues until April 8, which means that intercity traffic and community gatherings are prohibited; offices are open with one-third of their staff, while schools, universities and kindergartens remain closed.

Despite all the people's cooperation, according to Alireza Zali, Tehran's coronavirus management commander, although we are seeing a relative decrease in the prevalence of the disease, we should be cautious and this should not be deceptive.

Zali said that the situation, with regard to people's return from Noruz trips in the coming days, requires speculation and technical investigation and we are preparing these possible scenarios.

Climate monitoring and research could fall victim to coronavirus, scientists fear

The coronavirus pandemic has stalled scientific fieldwork and may even start to affect the monitoring of the climate, scientists have warned.

Major projects to gather environmental data have been postponed or canceled over concerns that teams of researchers working together will spread the Covid-19 virus.

The crisis has so far mainly stymied long-term studies, but concerns have been raised that routine monitoring of weather and the climate crisis may be affected if the pandemic drags on for an extended period.

Petteri Taalas, secretary general of World Meteorological Organization, said: "The impacts of climate change and growing amount of weather-related disasters continue."

"The Covid-19 pandemic poses an additional challenge, and may exacerbate multi-hazard risks at a single-country level. Therefore it is essential that governments pay attention to their national early warning and weather-observing capacities despite the Covid-19 crisis."

Wealthy countries that have deployed land- and ocean-based instruments, as well as satellites, to gauge temperature changes and other readings mostly have done so with fully or partly automated systems.

This means that data will continue to flow without much hands-on human input but should the pandemic stretch out for many more weeks then missed repairs and replacements of instruments will become an "increasing concern", according to the WMO.

Furthermore, in many developing countries measurements are routinely taken manually by scientists in the field and there are indications this work has dropped off.

A huge slump in air travel since the start of the pandemic



has dented the collection of ambient temperature and wind speed taken in-flight by sensors fitted to commercial airliners through an initiative called the Aircraft Meteorological Data Relay program. A coalition of national weather services across Europe are discussing how to compensate for the decrease in the 700,000 climate observations normally provided per day by aircraft.

In the US, a swath of climate research work has been called off or delayed. Nasa-led missions to survey the loss of land in the Mississippi River delta and hurricane recovery in Puerto Rico have been suspended. With all flights to and from Greenland suspended, a project to collect cores from the country's vast ice sheet has been voided for the year.

Nasa has asked staff to work remotely where possible, with a spokesman telling the Guardian that the agency has a continuity plan to ensure that there is "no interruption of climate-relevant data".

A five-year Nasa project to study the impact of severe thunderstorms that enter the stratosphere is now mired in uncertainty. Researchers from several universities have partnered with Nasa to use its high-altitude ER-2 aircraft to take measurements this summer but this work is now on hold.

"Because of the delays we haven't started tests yet and it's not clear if we are going to be able to do that," said Kenneth Bowman, a climate scientist at Texas A&M University, who is working on the project. "We don't really know the timings, we are taking it week to week. It's always frustrating having all of your plans disrupted, not knowing when we will do what we want to do."

Bowman said routine climate monitoring is "robust" and that he would be surprised if the pandemic disrupted this work unless it spooled out for many months or years.

Gabriel Vecchi, a climate modeler at Princeton University, said while he was concerned about the impact of the pandemic on data collection he was "quite heartened" that observations of the Earth's surface have continued unabated so far.

"We should all be grateful for the people and organizations that are continuing these essential forecast and monitoring operations, in spite of the severe challenges they are facing," he said.

If the pandemic lingers then climate scientists will face challenges shared by some other professions – meetings of teams will have to be reoriented, the maintenance of equipment will somehow have to be done and trips to research sites will be curtailed.

This is occurring at a time when air pollution, as well as planet-heating gases, has declined considerably in China and Europe due to a reduction in human activity.

(Source: The Guardian)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ع

Iran spends \$477m on refugee education annually

Iran spends about 20 trillion rials (nearly \$477 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) every year on the education of foreign national students residing in the country, head of the international affairs department of the Ministry of Education has said.

Over 558,000 foreign national children are receiving education in Iran completely free of charge, 474,000 of whom are Afghan children, ISNA quoted Gholamreza Karimi as saying on Wednesday. Karimi said that there are currently about 137,000 undocumented Afghan students in the country, adding that their parents do not have valid residency documents, "but we have provided the conditions for enrolling them in schools."

A number of foreign nationals from neighboring countries came to Iran over the past four decades due to numerous regional crises and civil wars, he lamented.

ایران سالی ۲ هزار میلیارد تومان برای دانش آموزان اتباع خارجی هزینه می کند

ایران هر سال حدود ۲ هزار میلیارد تومان برای ۵۵۸ هزار دانش آموز اتباع خارجی در مدارس سراسر کشور هزینه می کند.

به گزارش روز چهارشنبه ایسنا، غلامرضا کریمی رئیس مرکز امور بین الملل و مدارس خارج از کشور وزارت آموزش و پرورش گفت از این تعداد ۴۷۴ هزار نفر آنها اتباع افغانستانی هستند.

کریمی با بیان اینکه در حال حاضر ۱۳۷ هزار دانش آموز غیرمجاز در کشور داریم گفت پدر و مادر این افراد مدارک اقامتی معتبر ندارند اما ما شرایط ثبت نام آنها را مدارس فراهم کردیم.

تعدادی از اتباع کشورهای همسایه به خاطر بحرانیهای متعدد منطقه ای و جنگهای داخلی در طول چهار دهه گذشته به ایران آمدند. پس از صدور فرمان مقام معظم رهبری در پایان سال ۱۳۹۳ هیچ کودک ایرانی و خارجی مستقر در ایران نباید از تحصیل محروم بماند.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“mal-, male-”

■ **Meaning:** bad, evil

■ **For example:** nearly 67% of the country's population suffers from **malnutrition**.

PHRASAL VERB

Rely on

■ **Meaning:** to count on, depend on; trust

■ **For example:** Don't worry. You can rely on me. I can keep a secret.

IDIOM

Do a good turn

■ **Explanation:** If you do someone a good turn, you act in a helpful way

■ **For example:** Mike is a great guy - always ready to do a good turn.

OFID provides \$500,000 to Iran in fight against coronavirus

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries Fund for International Development (OFID) has provided Iran with \$500,000 to combat COVID-19 pandemic, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance announced on Friday.

The OPEC Fund has delivered the assistance to the World Health Organization to purchase medical equipment needed to contain the disease in Iran.

It is noteworthy that the Organization for Investment Economic and Technical Assistance has coordinated to receive cash and non-cash assistance from the OPEC Fund for World Development (OFID), the World Bank (WB), the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB).

This contribution was made to support national efforts to combat the coronavirus, and OFID has earlier provided a similar urgent assistance to our country in the advent of flood last year.

The total number of people diagnosed with the coronavirus in Iran has reached 53,183, of whom 3,294 have died and 17,935 recovered, Health Ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour said on Friday.

Wrecked sea life could be largely revived in 30 years under action plan, say scientists

Sea life and ocean ecosystems could substantially rebound within 30 years if humanity takes serious action to protect species and rebuild natural habitats, scientists say.

The world is at a point at which people must choose whether to leave future generations a resilient, vibrant ocean or an "irreversibly disrupted" one.

Marine life can be revived – but the window for doing so is now very narrow, they caution.

An action plan that includes tackling climate change would bring about a "substantial" recovery, the international team of researchers announced, as they set out a vision of restoring marine life by 2050.

The scientists said the focus should be on actively rebuilding depleted wildlife populations and ecosystems, not simply on conserving what remains, and efforts to remove pressure on the oceans must be expanded.

Steps needed include protecting vulnerable habitats and species; exercising caution in fishing; restoring habitats; reducing pollution and, critically, curbing the climate crisis.

And the plan can succeed only if the most ambitious goals to limit global temperature rises within the international Paris Agreement on climate change are reached, the experts writing in the journal Nature warn.

Extending protection across half of the oceans could cost \$10bn-\$20bn (£8bn-£16bn) a year, the report finds. But it would deliver far more in returns, through ecotourism, sustainable fishing and reductions in insurance claims from storms if coastal areas are protected by mangroves or saltmarshes.

Rising temperatures are further undermining the oceans' productivity and rich wildlife by damaging coral reefs.

But substantially rebuilding marine life, so that populations rebound by 50-90 per cent, within a human generation is largely achievable, if action happens at a large scale, the experts say.

The scientists point to examples of "impressive resilience" in marine wildlife, such as the recovery of fish populations during the first and second world wars when fishing was reduced.

Curbing hunting, better management of fisheries, regulating pollutants and creating protected areas have already reduced the toll on ocean life and helped revive some species.

Humpback whales migrating from Antarctica to Australia, for instance, have returned from the brink of extinction in 1968 to more than 40,000 today.

And northern elephant seals have increased from just 20 breeding animals in 1880 to more than 200,000 today.

Lead author Carlos Duarte, professor of marine science at King Abdullah University of Science and Technology in Saudi Arabia said: "We have a narrow window of opportunity to deliver a healthy ocean to our grandchildren's generation, and we have the knowledge and tools to do so."

(Source: The Independent)

WORDS IN THE NEWS

Sino-Indian relations

(May 14, 2003)

Indian officials have announced that a landmark visit to China by prime minister Atal Behari Vajpayee will take place in June. It will be the first visit of an Indian prime minister to China for more than a decade and is the culmination of a recent steady thawing in previously chilly diplomatic relations. This report from Jill McGivering:

Sino-Indian relations have moved from cold to **cordial**. Now both sides are trying to go further and establish a friendlier, more co-operative **climate**. There's a lot to overcome.

China is a traditional **ally** of Pakistan and accused by India of helping Islamabad develop its nuclear program. China has watched India's own nuclear program with just as much alarm - evidence, it says, of Indian aggression.

But prime minister Vajpayee's visit is the strongest sign yet of plans to **turn things around**. Motives are partly economic. China wants to learn from India's success in **IT** and expand **international outsourcing**, such as **call centers**, a booming sector in India. Indian manufacturers complain of being overwhelmed by cheap Chinese goods now **flooding** India's domestic market and want to find ways of competing. Greater warmth between these two Asian giants would also affect the **broadier strategic picture**.

Words

Sino: Chinese

cordial: warm and friendly (formal word)

climate: here, atmosphere

ally: friend, supportive country

to turn things around: here, to make an improvement

IT: short for 'information technology'

international outsourcing: the practice of companies in one country giving work to companies in another country

call centers: large offices in which a company's employees provide information to its customers, or sell or advertise its goods or services by telephone

flooding: overwhelming, dominating

broadier strategic picture: wider political situation and perspectives

(Source: BBC)

U.S. hijacking mask shipments in rush for coronavirus protection

Commander of aircraft carrier hit by coronavirus removed for 'poor judgment' after sounding alarm

→ 1 Rottner would not identify the buyers, who they were working for or which U.S. state the cargo was flown to, but another French official also involved in procuring masks from China said the group were acting for the U.S. government.

■ USS Theodore Roosevelt

The commander of a U.S. aircraft carrier that has been hit by a major outbreak of coronavirus has been relieved of command for showing "poor judgment" days after writing a memo warning Navy leadership that decisive action was needed to save the lives of the ship's crew, acting Secretary of the Navy Thomas Modly announced on Thursday.

"Today at my direction the commanding officer of the USS Theodore Roosevelt, Captain Brett Crozier, was relieved of command by carrier strike group commander Rear Admiral Stewart Baker," Modly said during a Pentagon press briefing.

Modly told reporters that Crozier was removed for showing "extremely poor judgment" and creating a "firestorm" by too widely disseminating the memo detailing his concerns, copying some 20 to 30 people.

He said Crozier was not removed because of any evidence suggesting he leaked the memo to the press, but rather for allowing "the complexity of his challenge with the Covid breakout on the ship to overwhelm his ability to act professionally when acting professionally was what was needed the most at the time."

"I have no information nor am I trying to suggest that he leaked the information. It was published in the San Francisco Chronicle. It all came as a big surprise to all of us that it was in the paper, and that's the first time I had seen it," he added.

The information in question was contained in a memo written by Crozier earlier this week to the Navy's Pacific Fleet.

Modly called Crozier's note "a blast-out email to everyone he knows."

"We are not at war. Sailors do not need to die. If we do not act now, we are failing to properly take care of our most trusted asset — our Sailors," it read, three US defense officials confirmed to CNN.

Modly said Crozier was relieved because he went outside the chain of command and sent his memo over an unsecured system, adding to the chances it could be leaked.

"He sent it out pretty broadly, and in sending it out broadly he did not take care to ensure that it couldn't be leaked, and that's part of his responsibility, in my opinion," Modly said.

"I have received absolutely no pressure. I have had no communication with the White House about this," he added. "I did, when I was arriving closer to this determination yesterday, I called Secretary Esper and told him that this was the direction I was heading and he told me he would support my decision whatever that might be."

Top Democrats on the House Armed Services Committee slammed the move in a statement Thursday.

"While Captain Crozier clearly went outside the chain of command, his dismissal at this critical moment -- as the Sailors aboard the U.S.S. Theodore Roosevelt are confronted with the COVID-19 pandemic -- is a destabilizing move that will likely put our service members at greater risk and jeopardize our fleet's readiness," they said.

"The COVID pandemic presents a set of new challenges and there is much we still do not know. Captain Crozier was justifiably concerned about the health and safety of his crew, but he did not handle the immense pressure appropriately. However, relieving him of his command is an overreaction," the lawmakers added.

Global cost of virus could top \$4 trillion: ABD

The coronavirus pandemic could cost the global economy \$4.1 trillion as it ravages United States, Europe and other major economies, the Asian Development Bank warned Friday.

The estimated impact is equivalent to nearly five percent of worldwide output based on a range of scenarios, but the lender said losses from "the worst pandemic in a century" could be higher.

"The estimated impact could be an underestimate, as additional channels such as...possible social and financial crises, and long-term effects on health care and education are excluded from the analysis," the ADB said.



The Manila-based bank said a shorter containment period could pare the losses to \$2 trillion.

The crisis has sent equity markets spinning as traders fret over the long-term impact on the world economy, though governments and central banks have stepped in to ease the pain, pledging more than \$5 trillion in stimulus and easing monetary policy.

Officially reported COVID-19 cases worldwide topped the one million mark Thursday, with tens of thousands dead, while there are warnings the numbers will continue to balloon as the disease rapidly spreads.

With billions of people in lockdown and economies at a standstill, the ADB said Asia is forecast to grow 2.2 percent this year, its slowest pace since a 1.7 percent expansion during the Asian financial crisis in 1998.

"No one can say how widely the COVID-19 pandemic may spread, and containment may take longer than currently projected," ADB chief economist Yasuyuki Sawada said.

"The possibility of severe financial turmoil and financial crises cannot be discounted," he added.

the forecasts assume the coronavirus outbreak will be contained this year and a return to normality in 2021.

However, there is still the potential for additional outbreaks and the severity of the pandemic remains uncertain.

(Source: AFP)

Iraq's PMU warns Trump, resistance groups say on alert for false-flag U.S. operations

INTERNATIONAL

TEHRAN — Iraq's Kata'ib Hezbollah resistance group, which is part of the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), has warned U.S. President Donald Trump about taking any hostile measures against the Iraqi nation and resistance groups.

In a statement on Thursday, Kata'ib Hezbollah said providing that all American troops in Iraq kept withdrawing from the Arab country until the last soldier, no attack would be launched by the resistance group against them.

The resistance group also strongly warned Trump not to get "involved in any aggressive action" against the Iraqi people and the "sacrificing" resistance groups.

"At a time when the world is facing the danger of the coronavirus pandemic, and the United Nations and humanitarian organizations are stressing the necessity of halting the wars waged by the forces of arrogance in the world; so that nations can combat this imminent danger, stupid Trump or one of his underlings threatens the resistance groups in Iraq, particularly the Kata'ib Hezbollah, with impudent remarks almost on a daily basis," the statement added.

The group also emphasized the pure patriotic nature of its resistance, stressing that it is not influenced by any foreign country, rejecting U.S. allegations that the group is supported by neighboring Iran.

The development came just a few days after U.S.-led coalition forces withdrew from KI Air Base, which lies 15 kilometers (9 miles) northwest of Kirkuk, and submitted it to Iraqi forces during a ceremony.

The coalition has already said that the transfer of U.S.-led military forces had nothing to do with the missile attacks against Iraqi bases hosting the coalition forces, or the outbreak of COVID-19.

Meanwhile, Iraq's anti-terror resistance groups have reiterated their readiness to counter any possible attack by U.S. occupation forces, saying that they are also on high alert



for any false-flag U.S. operation aimed at creating further unrest in the Arab country.

Asbat al-Thaireen, or League of the Revolutionaries, showed off its intelligence power by releasing its drone footage of U.S.-occupied Ain al-Asad Airbase. The group also released drone footage of another U.S.-occupied base, the Harir Camp north of Erbil.

Asbat al-Thaireen had earlier issued a statement to caution Iraqi forces against staying close to Americans in order to protect their lives.

The group said it had prepared itself for an attack on Ain al-Asad as the U.S. under-secretary of defense and a number of other American officials visited it but called off the operation after realizing a number of Iraqi troops were nearby.

The anti-terror resistance group says the operation was called off despite the fact that American reconnaissance drones had not noticed the resistance fighters.

The statement also warned that the group possesses equipment and weapons that the enemy would not even imagine, but

has tasted them at Taji military base.

Trump on Wednesday threatened Iran with a "heavy price" if the Islamic Republic or its allies in Iraq attack American troops in Iraq.

"Upon information and belief, Iran or its proxies are planning a sneak attack on U.S. troops and/or assets in Iraq," Trump wrote on Twitter. "If this happens, Iran will pay a very heavy price, indeed!"

The U.S. deployed Patriot missile systems to Iraq last week, apparently as a precaution against possible rocket attacks.

However, Iraqi resistance groups are on high alert for any possible false-flag operation by the U.S. forces, which are supposed to leave the Arab country.

The Iraqi military has called for an immediate withdrawal of all foreign troops from the country in accordance with the parliamentary resolution passed earlier this year following a string of U.S. strikes against multiple PMU positions.

■ **Patriot missile system deployment breach of Iraqi sovereignty**

In another development a member of the Iraqi parliament's security and defense committee has strongly condemned the deployment of Patriot missile systems at the bases hosting U.S. troops in Iraq as a breach of the Arab country's sovereignty, urging senior government officials to detail any agreement pertaining to the U.S. move.

"The decision about the withdrawal of foreign forces, including U.S. troops, is not reversible as it represents the Iraqi nation's will to respond to Washington's crimes in Iraq, its flagrant intervention in the country's domestic affairs in addition to its repeated targeting of Hashd al-Sha'abi forces (Popular Mobilization Units) and its leaders," Karim Alawi told Arabic-language al-Maalomah news agency in an exclusive interview on Thursday.

According to Press TV, he noted, "According to the available information, the U.S.-built Patriot missile was installed in three military bases where American forces are stationed. This runs counter to the sovereignty of Iraq."

News reports suggest the U.S. deployed Patriot missile systems to Iraqi military bases to purportedly protect American troops against potential missile attacks. One of the Patriot batteries was reportedly deployed to the Ain al-Asad facility in Iraq's western province of Anbar.

Last week, the New York Times reported that the Pentagon had ordered a secret directive, which called on U.S. military commanders to prepare a campaign against Kata'ib Hezbollah, which is part of Hashd al-Sha'abi.

But the United States' top commander in Iraq has warned that such a campaign could be bloody and counterproductive.

Lieutenant General Robert P. White wrote in a blunt memo that a new military campaign would also require that thousands more American troops be sent to Iraq and divert resources from the so-called fight against the Daesh Takfiri terrorist group.

Lebanon complains to UN Security Council against Israel over violating airspace

Lebanon has lodged a complaint to the United Nations against the Tel Aviv regime for violating the country's airspace after Israeli military aircraft carried out airstrikes on multiple targets in Syria's central province of Homs.

"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants has filed a complaint before the UN Security Council in New York over the dangerous Israeli violation of Lebanese sovereignty, after three Israeli aircraft bombed Syrian sites from the Lebanese airspace, which represented a threat to Lebanese civilians," the ministry said in a statement released on Thursday.

"This violation comes at a time when the entire world is facing the threat of the spread of the coronavirus pandemic," it added.

The Lebanese foreign ministry then urged the Security Council to "put a permanent end to the Israeli violations," noting that "Israel violates the Lebanese aerial, maritime and territorial sovereignty on a daily basis."

Late on Tuesday, Syria's official news agency SANA reported that the country's air defenses had intercepted and shot down a number of Israeli missiles before they reached their targets in Homs.

The missiles were fired by the Israeli air force from Lebanese airspace, it quoted a military source as saying.

There were no immediate reports of damage or casualties. Israel violates Lebanon's airspace on an almost daily basis, claiming the flights serve surveillance purposes.

Lebanon's government, the Hezbollah resistance movement and the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) have repeatedly condemned the overflights, saying they are in clear violation of UN Resolution 1701 and the country's sovereignty.

UN Security Council Resolution 1701, which brokered a ceasefire in the war of aggression Israel launched against Lebanon in 2006, calls on Tel Aviv to respect Beirut's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

In 2009, Lebanon filed a complaint with the UN, presenting over 7,000 documents pertaining to Israeli violations of Lebanese territory.

(Source: Press TV)

Democrats delay presidential convention until August



The U.S. Democratic Party postponed its presidential nominating convention by a month until August, citing the coronavirus health crisis which has upended life in the country.

The delay is the latest sign the coronavirus pandemic is having a profound impact on the presidential race and will continue to do so for months to come.

Democrats will use the convention in Milwaukee to formally pick their nominee to challenge Republican President Donald Trump in the November election. It had previously been scheduled for July.

"In our current climate of uncertainty, we believe the smartest approach is to take additional time to monitor how this situation unfolds," said Joe Solomonese, chief executive of the Democratic National Convention Committee.

With much of the country under stay-at-home orders from local and state authorities, presidential campaigning has

largely moved online, and many states have delayed votes for party nomination contests.

Democratic front-runner Joe Biden on Wednesday had called for delaying the convention, speaking in a television interview from what he called a "make-shift studio" in the recreation room of his Wilmington, Delaware, home.

Biden, who was vice president under President Barack Obama, currently leads the Democratic nominating contest against his rival, Bernie Sanders, a U.S. senator from Vermont.

White House medical experts have forecast that even if Americans hunker down in their homes to slow the spread of COVID-19, the respiratory illness caused by the coronavirus, some 100,000 to 240,000 people could die from the disease.

Already, some 5,340 Americans have died and over 225,510 cases have been confirmed, according to a Reuters tally.

(Source: Reuters)

Turkish forces, militants shell Syria's Hasakah; two civilians killed



At least two people have lost their lives and several others sustained injuries when Turkish military forces and allied militants launched barrages of mortar shells at residential neighborhoods in the western sector of Syria's northeastern province of al-Hasakah.

Local sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, told Syria's official news agency SANA that Turkish troops and their proxies targeted buildings in the villages of Qabr al-Saghir and al-Abosh, which lie in the Tall Tamr district of the province, on Thursday afternoon, leaving two civilians dead and four others injured.

The sources added that the projectile inflicted material damage on people's property in the targeted areas as well.

The development came only a day after the so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that a family of four was injured after Turkish forces and their allied militants shelled their home in Rabia'at village in Abu Rasin district

in the same province.

Separately, Turkish troops and their allies also fired mortar shells at Zarkan town and Muharmal village in the same district of Hasakah province. The shells damaged residential buildings, but there were no reports of casualties.

Also on Wednesday, The Observatory reported that Turkey had dispatched new reinforcements to Syria's northwestern province of Idlib, as Ankara beefs up its military presence in the embattled region following a ceasefire reached earlier this month with Moscow to halt an escalation of violence there.

The Britain-based war monitor, citing activists requesting anonymity, reported that a Turkish convoy, consisting of dozens of tanks, personnel carriers and armored vehicles, crossed into the Syrian territory through Kafr Lusin border crossing on Thursday afternoon, and headed towards Turkish positions.

(Source: agencies)

UK's worst case coronavirus toll is 50,000 dead

The British government's worst case scenario envisages a coronavirus death toll of 50,000 people if self isolation is not adhered to, but the United Kingdom is not right now on course for a toll of that scale, a source familiar with the government's emergency discussions said.

According to the source, who spoke on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the issue, the worst day for deaths is projected to be April 12, which this year is

Easter Sunday.

A so-called best case scenario in the circumstances would be a death toll of 20,000, according to the source.

A Downing Street spokeswoman declined immediate comment.

The United Kingdom's coronavirus death toll rose 24 percent in one day to 2,921, as of April 1.

Stephen Powis, the medical director of National Health Service England, said on Sunday that the United Kingdom

would be doing well if it kept the coronavirus death toll below 20,000.

According to a study by Imperial College last month, if no measures were taken then the outbreak would have caused more than half a million deaths in Britain and 2.2 million in the United States.

Worldwide, coronavirus deaths have reached more than 47,000, according to a Reuters tally.

(Source: daily Star)

Year in review: Iran sports

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — The Iranian sports teams and sportspersons experienced some bright moments and some dark in the Iranian year.

In the current Iranian year which started on March 20, 2019, the country's sports experienced sweet moments and bitter times. We take a look at a few of them here.

■ Tough task ahead of Iran football team

Iran national football team started the 2022 World Cup qualification on high note, beating Hong Kong 2-0 and Cambodia 14-0 but suffered two successive losses against Bahrain and Iraq.

The Team must win four remaining matches to book a place in the next round.

Croatian coach Dragan Skocic was named as Team Melli coach in early February as Belgian coach Marc Wilmots's replacement.

Iran are seeking to qualify for a third consecutive FIFA World Cup.

■ Volleyball at Olympics for second time

Iran national volleyball team claimed the title of the AVC Men's Tokyo Volleyball Qualification tournament in January and will participate at the 2020 Olympic Games as the best Asian team.

In the previous edition in Olympics, Team Melli finished in fifth place. Iran's volleyball has improved in the recent years thanks to stars namely, Saied Marouf, Mohammad Mousavi, Amir Ghafour, Shahram Mahmoudi, and Milad Ebadipour.

The team, headed by Igor Kolakovic, will meet Japan, Poland, Italy, Canada and Venezuela in Pool A at the 2020 Olympic Games.

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

■ Basketball dream of making history

Iranian basketball team are going to write their name into book history at the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo.

Team Melli secured a spot at the 2020 Olympic Games in China in September. It will be Iran's third presence in the prestigious event.

Iran's men's basketball team have qualified for the competition after 12 years. It will be the last Olympics for 35-year-old big man Hamed Haddadi, who have been an iconic player for Team Melli in the past years.



■ Iranian female weightlifters make history at IWF Worlds

Iran sent four women to the 2019 International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) World Weightlifting Championships for the first time ever in September.

The prestigious competition was held in Pattaya, Thailand and Poupak Basami (55kg), Abrisham Arjomandkhah (64kg), Elham Hosseini (71kg) and Parisa Jahanfekrian (87kg) represented Iran in the event.

The Iranian sportswomen have shown that they have the potential to make the nation proud after shining in the international events in the last years.

■ The immigration of Iranian sportspersons

Alireza Faghani, Iranian international referee, made the decision to migrate to Australia with his family in September.

Iranian judoka Saied Mollaei was cleared to represent Mongolia at Tokyo 2020 after his switch of allegiance was approved by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Executive Board.

Iran's only female Olympic medalist Kimia Alizadeh in January said she plans to compete for Germany after fleeing her home country.

■ Iranian wrestling teams claim Asian title

Iranian Greco-Roman and Freestyle teams claimed the title of the 2020 Asian Wrestling Championships in February in New Delhi, India.

The Iranian Greco-Roman wrestlers won three gold and two bronze medals on the second day of the competition and claimed the title with 190 points.

The Iranian freestylers won eight medals in 10 weight categories in the two-day competition and topped the standings with 168 points.

■ Paralympic Movement mourns passing of Siamand Rahman

The strongest ever Paralympian Siamand Rahman passed away at the age of 32 on March 1 after suffering a heart attack.

The two-time gold medalist in London 2012 and Rio 2016, was preparing to win his third successive gold at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games.

Rahman broke the 300kg barrier in the men's over 107kg at the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games, lifting an unprecedented 310kg. The mark he set is the equivalent of three baby elephants.

The Iranian powerlifter had already won three gold medals in the last three Asian Para

Games (2010 Guangzhou, 2014 Incheon and 2018 Jakarta).

■ Iran football federation's elections deferred

The Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) elective General Assembly was postponed.

FIFA had already ordered FFIRI to postpone the elections until the national governing body amends its current statutes.

The elections were scheduled for March 15 (Sunday).

The FFIRI provided some documents and appealed to FIFA so that the General Assembly could be held as planned.

The documents were not enough and FIFA asked FFIRI officials once again to revise the statutes before holding the elections.

■ All sporting events in Iran halted due to coronavirus

Iran's Minister of Sport and Youth Masoud Soltanifar on March 11 announced the suspension all sporting events in the country until April 20.

Iran's death toll from the coronavirus surpasses 1,000, with the total number of infected people across the country has reached 17,361.

The virus has now infected more than 200,000 people in at least 144 countries.

Persepolis's Hosseini chosen as Iranian ACL legend

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Persepolis football team captain Jalal Hosseini has been chosen as the Iranian legend in the AFC Champions League era.

A legend of Iranian football with well over 100 caps for his country, Hosseini first appeared in the AFC Champions League when he reached the quarter-finals with debutants Saipa in 2008 before he also reached the last eight with

both Sepahan and Naft Tehran.

It is, however, in more recent times as captain of Persepolis that Hosseini has had his biggest impact, captaining the Tehran giants to a first-ever semi-final appearance in 2017 and then going one better a year later.

In a campaign noted for drama at Azadi Stadium, Hosseini scored a last-minute winner against the UAE's Al Jazira in the Round of 16 before his goal began a remarkable comeback

in a quarter-final win over Qatar's Al Duhail.

Persepolis then edged past Al Sadd in the semi-finals, allowing Hosseini to lead his side out in the final. Unfortunately for the now 38-year-old, Kashima Antlers' 2-0 win prevented them from becoming Iran's first-ever AFC Champions League winners.

Hosseini defected Esteghlal's Farhad Majidi in the poll.

Iran Ministry of Sports warns teams not to train



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran's Ministry of Sports and Youth spokesman has warned the Iranian football teams not to start their training amid coronavirus crisis.

Maziar Nazemi tweeted that Iran Professional League (IPL) teams are not allowed to start the training.

Referring to the seven statements previously issued by the Coronavirus Combat and Prevention Headquarters, the spokesman tweeted: "Premier league clubs, who ignored the seven statements of the Coronavirus Combat and Prevention Headquarters, are responsible for the health and lives of the players. There will be serious legal consequences for such a decision."

According to media reports, Nassaji Mazandaran have started training since

Wednesday after the players and staff undergone medical tests. Sepahan are another team that are going to start training in the coming days.

The outbreak of coronavirus has caused sports events to be suspended or postponed in Asia and Europe, including both domestic and international affairs.

Iran Football Organization released a statement announcing that all football competitions of every level have been postponed until April 19, 2020.

Health Ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour announced on Wednesday that over the past 24 hours, 1,762 new cases of coronavirus have been diagnosed in the country, bringing the total number of infected persons to 27,017 in the country.

IOC president thanks Iran for support to Olympics



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — International Olympic Committee (IOC) president Thomas Bach has thanked Iran Olympic Committee for its support to the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, which has now been shifted to 2021 because of the global coronavirus pandemic.

An agreement was reached on Monday, Olympics will be held from July 23 to August 8 in 2021.

"Thank you for your letter of support for the IOC's decision to postpone the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 which I highly appreciated. As you are aware, this postponement comes after many complex but fruitful conversations with the Japanese Government and Tokyo 2020 Organizing Committee. This decision demonstrates our clear commitment to put the health of

the athletes first," said Bach in the letter.

"Naturally, your athletes will have many operational questions in relation to the postponement and therefore I would ask for your indulgence whilst the IOC team works through the details with our Japanese partners. Let me assure you that all your questions will be answered.

"I am deeply touched by your support and confidence. I am convinced that by working together, the Olympic Movement can master this new unprecedented challenge. Human-kind currently finds itself in a dark tunnel. These Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 can be a light at the end of this tunnel.

"Thanking you again for your continued confidence and wishing you and your family good health and all the very best," he concluded.

Mohammad Nabi appointed as Acting Secretary General of FFIRI

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Mehdi Mohammad Nabi has been named as the Acting Secretary General of The Football Federation of the Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI), as reported by FFIRI official website.

Mohammad Nabi replaced Ebrahim Shakouri, who had started his work as Acting General Secretary in December 2018.

Mohammad Nabi has taken on important roles in recent years in the Iranian football, including the Secretary General,

Executive Advisor to the President of the FFIRI, Deputy Secretary General, head of the Competition Committee.

Mehdi Mohammad Nabi has also worked as the General Manager of Gostareh Pars Khodro club, a member of the Board of Directors and vice-president of Persepolis as well.

In a message, Heydar Baharvand, the acting president of the FFIRI, appreciated the efforts of Shakouri during his period as the Acting General Secretary of the FFIRI.

Ex-Iran football coach Iraj Ghelichkhani dies

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Former Iran National Football Teams Iraj Ghelichkhani passed away.

He died at the age of 74. Ghelichkhani had lived with Parkinson's disease for several years.

Ghelichkhani had worked as coach in grassroots football in Iran. He had also worked as head coach in Iranian football clubs Rah Ahan, Homa, Shamooshak, Fath and Nirooy-e Zamini.

Ghelichkhani will be laid to rest on Friday in Tehran's Behesht-e Zahra Cemetery.

Tehran Times offers its heartfelt condolence to his bereaved family.

Iran to play Croatia in friendly, coach says

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran national football team will meet Croatia in an international friendly match, Team Melli coach Dragan Skocic said.

In a meeting which was held in Croatian Football Federation's headquarters in late February, Skocic and Croatian Football Federation president Davor Suker underlined their willingness to promote cooperation in football.

Now, Skocic has revealed that they had negotiated about a warm-up match between two teams after the end of the Covid-19 outbreak.

Iran have already played Croatia two times. Team Melli lost to Croatia 2-0 in June 1998 in Rijeka and drew 2-2 with the European giants in Lovech in May 2006.

Iran have must-win matches in the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 qualification against Hong Kong, Cambodia, Bahrain and Iraq.

Igor Kolakovic no more Iran volleyball coach

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — The Islamic Republic of Iran Volleyball Federation (IRIVF) has parted ways with Igor Kolakovic following cancellation of 2020 Olympic Games due to the pandemic coronavirus (COVID-19).

The 2020 FIVB Volleyball Nations League (VNL) had been also postponed because of coronavirus risk.

The Montenegrin coach was under contract with the Iranian federation until 2020 Tokyo but Iran has opted to part company with him after postponement of the Games.

"After the IOC decided to reschedule the Olympic Games, Mr. Davarzani (IRIVF president) decided to stop cooperation with Kolakovic," Iran volleyball team director Amir Khoshkhabar said.

"Iran are determined to make a splash at the Games, so the Iranian federation would prefer a foreign coach, however, an Iranian coach could be chosen," he added.

Team Melli will meet Japan, Poland, Italy, Canada and Venezuela in Pool A at the Olympic Games.

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

Kolakovic had replaced Raul Lozano as Team Melli coach in February 2017.

Olympics postponement was predictable: Soltanifar

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran's Minister of Sports and Youth Affairs Masoud Soltanifar said that postponing the Olympics was predictable.

Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games are postponed until next year because of the worldwide coronavirus pandemic.

"We were mostly prepared for the games but the International Olympic Committee (IOC) decided to postpone the competitions. Our athletes have secured 51 berths so far and were going to book more possible quota places but the games are postponed," Soltanifar said.

"We will wait and see what happens with the sports federations and then draft a new qualification schedule. Iranian athletes and para athletes will continue their training to preserve the readiness," he added.

Persepolis, Esteghlal not allowed to hire foreigners

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran's Sports and Youth Ministry has reportedly told football clubs Persepolis and Esteghlal to stop hiring foreign coaches and players from now on.

The two Iranian clubs could be banned from signing players for several transfer windows after they failed to pay the wage of their coaches and players.

The clubs' debts stand at almost USD 4 million and they are unable to pay off debts.

The United States has imposed a new set of sanctions against Iran and the state-run clubs have come under heavy pressure.

While no official announcement has been made regarding what will happen to the clubs, the media reports suggest that Iran's Minister of Sport and Youth Masoud Soltanifar is going to ban Persepolis and Esteghlal from hiring foreigners.

AS Roma praises devoted Iranian couple doctors in fight against Covid-19

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Italian professional football club, AS Roma, in its official Twitter account has praised an Iranian doctor and her husband for their commitment in fight against the coronavirus.

"Khojasteh Samadi & her husband Khashayar Abbasi are doctors in the Iranian city of Bahar. Throughout Nowruz - Persian New Year - the couple have spent the entire holidays taking care of Covid-19 patients & haven't been able to see their families for nearly two months. Respect," the tweet reads.

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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Most of those who lose their wisdom, do so because of being dazzled by greed, and shutting their eyes against fact.

Imam Ali (AS)

“The Soldiers of the Commander” published in Turkish

CULTURE DESK TEHRAN — “The Soldiers of the Commander” a book by Iranian writer Morteza Keramati about Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani’s relationship with his soldiers has been published in Turkish.

Translated by Aykut Pazarbasi, the book has been published by Feta Publishing in Istanbul under the title “Haci Kasim Suleymani ve Harem Savunuculari” (“Hajji Qassem Soleimani and Harem Defenders”) in March 2020.

In 2016, Se Noqteh publishing company released the original book in Tehran. In the first chapter, the writer gives an account of Soleimani’s leadership as the Quds Force commander. The second chapter carries the memories of his soldiers in the fight against the ISIS terrorists in Syria and Iraq.

Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani was assassinated in a U.S. terrorist attack on January 3 in Baghdad.

Italian writer Paolo Giordano’s “How Contagion Works” published in Persian

CULTURE DESK TEHRAN — An e-book version of Italian physicist and novelist Paolo Giordano’s latest book “How Contagion Works: Science, Awareness and Community in Times of Global Crises” has recently been published in Persian.

The book is currently available on Taaghche and Fidibo, two major Iranian institutes that create digital content services.

Translated by Mahya Bayat, the book has been released by Borj Publications that has acquired the copyright to the book from the Giulio Einaudi Editore, a Turin-based Italian publisher.

“How Contagion Works” reflects on the crises in the wake of the coronavirus epidemic.

Writing from Italy in lockdown, Giordano explains how the disease spreads in our interconnected world and why it matters and how it impacts us.

Giordano is the author of the critically acclaimed “Like Family” and “The Human Body”, as well as the international bestsellers “The Solitude of Prime Numbers” and “Heaven and Earth”, which have been translated into several languages.

In a video released by some Iranian publishers, Giordano has asked Iranian people to stay at home during the coronavirus pandemic.

He also expressed his hope that he will take a trip to Iran after the fears of the coronavirus contagion abate.

Children’s writer Sorayya Qezel-Ayaq dies at 77

CULTURE DESK TEHRAN — Iranian children’s writer Sorayya Qezel-Ayaq died on Thursday at a Tehran hospital. She was 77.

“Qezel-Ayaq was at the hospital since February, however, I have no exact information about her illness,” Iranian Children’s Book Council director Nushafarin Ansari confirmed.

“She left us concurrent with the International Children’s Book Day. She was so in love with children and children’s literature and spent all her life on her love and interest,” she added.

She said that there are plans to hold a memorial ceremony at a more favorable time after fears of the coronavirus contagion abate in the country.

“She made great efforts in promoting children’s literature. She was one of the most influential figures in this field, and the book council is missing her so much today,” she added.

Qezel-Ayaq was a member of the Iranian Children’s Book Council.

“Parnian and Water, with Lullaby to Dreamland”, “Lullabies and Caressing Songs from Birth to Age Three,” and “Singing with Children from Birth to Three” are among her noteworthy credits.

Five Iranian publishers announce top 10 bestsellers of the year

1 → Zahed Barkhoda’s novel “He” placed third and Ebrahim’s another story “A Man in Permanent Exile” came next.

“Stories” containing 40 short stories by Palestinian author Ghassan Kanafani selected by translator Gholamreza Emami stands fifth on Ruzbehan’s bestseller list.

The sixth bestseller is “Scorched”, the second play from a tetralogy by Lebanese-Canadian writer Wajdi Mouawad translated into Persian by Mohammadreza Khaki.

Ruzbehan’s other bestselling books are French writer Jean-Paul Sartre’s play “No Exit” translated by Behrang Esmaeiliun, British theater director and vocal coach Cicely Berry’s book “Voice and the Actor”, “Professional Acting”, a collection of articles by Scott Zeigler, Melissa Broder and several other experts translated by Ahmad Damud, and a Persian translation of American director David Mamet’s book “On Directing Film” by Damud.

■ Qoqnus bestsellers

A Persian translation of Shafak’s novel “The Forty Rules of Love”, about the Persian mystic and poet Jalal ad-Din Rumi and his companion Shams, leads Qoqnus’s popular books of the year. The book has been translated into Persian by Arsalan Fasihi, a Persian translator of Turkish literature.

Iranian writer Abbas Marufi’s story “Symphony of the Dead”, about the clash between tradition and modernity, came next while his love story “Year of Turmoil” earned third place.

A Persian translation of Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s “Love in the Time of Cholera” by Bahman Farzaneh was ranked fourth. “The Tears of My Soul”, an autobiography of the former North Korean agent Kim Hyun Hee who had been transformed by her country into an obedient killing machine, was fifth on the list.

The list also includes Canadian author Margaret Atwood dystopian novel “The Handmaid’s Tale” translated into Persian by Soheil Somi.

“Dear Leader: My Escape from North Korea”, in which North Korea’s senior propagandist Jang Jin-sung exposes shocking truths behind the regime, was the seventh on the list.

Turkish writer Ahmet Umit’s book “The Dervish Gate” translated into Persian by Fasihi occupied eighth place. The story uncovers the secret behind the murder of Shams, the companion of Rumi.

“Nine Stories”, a collection of short stories by American fiction writer J. D. Salinger translated by Ahmad Golshiri, and Iranian writer Yasaman Khalilifard’s story “It Seems that I’m Not Myself” about the disorientation of people in modern times



People visit the Tehran Book Garden, a major bookstore of the Iranian capital, in an undated photo. (Tehran Book Garden)

are Qoqnus’s other bestsellers.

■ Cheshmeh bestsellers

Australian writer Steve Toltz’s 2008 novel “A Fraction of the Whole” is on the top of Cheshmeh’s bestseller list. The book translated into Persian by Peyman Khaksar follows three generations of the eccentric Dean family in Australia and the people who surround them.

“Like the Blood in My Veins”, a collection of Persian blank verse poet Ahmad Shamlu’s love letters to his wife Aida Sarkissian, came next.

French writer Jean Teule’s 2006 black comedy novel “The Suicide Shop” and German writer Heinrich Boll’s 1955 novella “The Bread of Those Early Years” occupy the third and fourth places on the list.

“No Friend But the Mountains: Writing from Manus Prison”, an autobiographical account of Behrouz Boochani’s perilous journey to Christmas Island and his subsequent incarceration in an Australian government immigration detention facility on Manus Island, was slated in fifth place.

“Outside of Door”, a novel by veteran Iranian writer Mahmud Dowlatabadi that recounts a small portion of Afaq’s life before the victory of the Islamic Revolution in 1979 came next.

The seventh place was taken by “Autumn is the Last Season of the Year” by Nasim Marashi. The novel tells the stories of three women in their thirties.

“A Guide to Die with Herbal Medicines” by Iranian writer Atieh Attarzadeh captured eighth. The novel is about a blind girl whose world is defined in terms of her collaboration with her mother at home to prepare herbal medicines. However, attending a family meeting outside of home makes her into a different person.

“Theory of Music” by veteran composer Mostafa-Kamal Purtorab and “Art as Therapy” written by the Australian-Scottish art historian John Armstrong and Swiss-born British philosopher Alain de Botton were the last of Cheshmeh’s bestselling books of the year.

■ Afraz bestsellers

“T”, a novel by Zahed Barkhoda, tops Afraz’s bestseller list. The story narrates the internal voice of the autistic mind of its central character, which is continuously involved in playing with letters of the alphabet and numbers.

“At the Depth of 1.5 Meters” by Hanieh Soltanpur was listed as second. It is about a man who plans to marry, yet is strongly under the influence of his mother.

Saeid Jozani’s story collection “A Year Has Two Seasons” appeared as third. The collection contains four short and long stories, all of which are set in the northern Iranian region of Gilan.

The fourth place was taken by “An Opera to Silence Rudaki Hall” by Jamshid Malekpur that narrates a story with artistic characters.

“Museum of Trash Objects”, a story by Toktam Tavssoli about a woman who has been treated like a boy from childhood by her father, and Leila Babai’s detective romance book “The Crickets in Qavam us-Saltaneh Garden” were slotted in fifth and sixth places on the list.

Four other bestsellers of the Afraz publishing company are as follows: American writer Robert McKee’s “Dialogue: the Art of Verbal Action for Stage, Page and Screen” translated by Mahtab Safdari, Hungarian writer’s “Theory of the Film Character and Growth of a New Art” translated by Morteza Latifi-Nezami, Franco-Belgian writer Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt’s “When I Was a Work of Art” translated by Faramarz Veisi and Asieh Heidari, and American writer Stephen King’s apocalyptic novel “Cell” translated by Mandana Qahramanlu.

Iranian center publishes book on social, cultural implications of coronavirus pandemic



Front cover of the book “Studies on the Social and Cultural Aspects of Coronavirus in Iran”.

CULTURE DESK TEHRAN — Iran’s Institute for Social and Cultural Studies (ISCS) has recently published a book on the social and cultural implications of the coronavirus pandemic in Iran.

The book titled “Studies on the Social and Cultural Aspects of Coronavirus in Iran” contains over ten articles by the scholars of the ISCS, the institute that is affiliated with the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology has recently announced.

In a preface to the book, ISCS director Hossein Mirzai has announced the institute’s plan to publish another book on developments in higher education about the coronavirus outbreak in the world.

“Healthcare Workers and Gender Inequality” by Leila Falahati, “Coronavirus, Observers and the Development of Human Relations” by Khadijeh Keshavarz, and “Coronavirus, Nationalism and Internationalism” by Reza Mahuzi are some of the articles published in the book.

“Modern Theology and the Future of Science in Iran” by Jabbar Rahmani is one of the most informative articles of the collection.

The article gives an analysis of the Islamic clerics’ outlooks on the coronavirus epidemic in Iran.

The country is fighting the worst coronavirus outbreak in the Middle East with its death toll climbing to 2898, the Health Ministry announced on Tuesday.

Tehran gallery to hold retrospective of expressionist artist Manuchehr Niazi



Iranian artist Manuchehr Niazi poses in an undated photo.

A R T DESK TEHRAN — Mojdeh Gallery in Tehran plans to hold a retrospective of Manuchehr Niazi, an Iranian expressionist artist who has created lots of invaluable artworks over his career spanning over six decades.

The exhibition will be organized during autumn, the Persian service of Honaronline announced on Wednesday.

The 83-year-old Niazi, who follows his own specific technique to create artworks, once said that Western classical music has provided inspiration for his collections created in the forms of painting and collage.

“Classical music gives me many ideas

to draw,” Niazi told ISNA in January 2018 during the inauguration of his exhibition at Tehran’s Boom Gallery as a record played a Bach symphony.

“I was a singer and used to perform opera, so music has a great influence over me; when I listen to Beethoven’s Symphony No. 5, it gives me the forms and I begin to draw,” he said.

“Schubert has also been a source of inspiration for me,” he noted.

Niazi, who has lived for several years in the United States, has said that human beings cannot continue living without creating art.

In his view, everything is art and even a baker who shapes the dough is an artist.

“Colors of the Homeland” painter Edman O’Aivazian dies from coronavirus in London

A R T DESK TEHRAN — The London-based Iranian-Armenian painter Edman O’Aivazian passed away from a coronavirus infection at the age of 89 in London, the Persian service of Honaronline announced on Wednesday.

O’Aivazian was admitted to the hospital in London a month ago over his dizzy spells and blood pressure disorders. Fourteen days after, he was transferred into another ward due to a high fever, and finally, he tested positive for coronavirus four days ago.

Some of O’Aivazian’s paintings and architectural designs were showcased in an exhibit entitled “Colors of the Homeland” at Tehran’s Niavaran Cultural Center during September 2016.

He was the sole Iranian member of the Royal Institute of Oil

Painters in the UK. His thulth and Kufic calligraphic designs embellish several mosques in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Oman.

Aivazian, who attained his professional education in Europe, had a wide scope of interests in painting, graphic art, architecture and design.

He had made the interior designs for some Armenian churches and public and sacral buildings in Europe, the Near East and Iran.

His works are preserved at the House-Museum of Aram Khachaturian in Yerevan, Armenia, and several other museums around the world.

However, O’Aivazian wanted his paintings to adorn the walls of people’s homes rather than to be kept in the collections of art dealers.

“When you hold an exhibition, you can find your way to people’s hearts and there is no place where you can hide something there,” O’Aivazian had said after opening his exhibition in Tehran.

“An exhibition helps form a connection, and you can get a good lesson from people there that you would otherwise never learn at your work. This is the result of a direct relationship with people,” he had stated.

He had a strong dislike for selling his artworks. “Selling an artwork is like selling one’s own child,” he had asserted, adding “I am financially secure and therefore I prefer my works to be hung on the walls of houses. That way instead of having to dust my paintings, other people do the dusting,” he had remarked.