

Coronavirus urges people to change: cartoonist Einstein

A cartoon exclusively designed by Brazilian artist Cival Einstein for the Tehran Times.



World Health Day: dedicated medics on frontline fighting the invisible enemy

This time, medical professionals have gone far to help patients afflicted by the coronavirus, so the least we can do is supporting them and paying tribute to those putting themselves at risk battling against a dangerous enemy which is not even visible.

Observed on April 7, World Health Day is the day to celebrate the work of

Loading, unloading of goods at ports continue observing healthcare protocols

TEHRAN — Loading and unloading of commodities are being conducted continuously at the ports of Iran while the health requirements are completely met, the head of Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) announced on Tuesday.

Mohammad Rastad reiterated that all port operations are done observing healthcare protocols and the principles set by the Coronavirus Containment Headquarters, PMO portal published.

The official further elaborated on the organization's programs for developing Shahid Rajaee Port (Iran's major container port located at the southern province of Hormozgan) during the current Iranian calendar year (began on March



20) and said about 900 meters of docks at the phase three of container part will be completed

Amnesty, HRW urge Bahrain to release political inmates amid COVID-19 pandemic

and inaugurated in this year.

By completing phase three, the capacity of this port will increase significantly, Rastad underscored.

According to the official, PMO will pay 36 trillion rials (about \$857 million) for supplying marine fleet during the current Iranian calendar year.

He said this fund will be paid to the marine industries of the country for supplying the required fleet in this year, which is named the year of "Surge in Production".

The official further underscored that all parts required in the maritime and port projects will be supplied by domestic producers.

Salehi, a nuclear physicist, also said that production in nuclear medicine has increased, noting it is essential to meet the country's medical needs given the "cruel sanctions".

the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran

which herald a new chapter in expansion

of the organization's activities," he said in

a statement published on Tuesday on the occasion of National Day of Nuclear Tech-

nology, which falls on Wednesday, April 8.

'Unilateralism virus' infects collective actions, Iran says

year: Salehi

TEHRAN — Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said on Tuesday that the coronavirus crisis is an opportunity if the global fight on COVID-19 lead to global solidarity and collaboration. Mousavi made the comments on World Health Day.

TEHRAN — Ali Akbar Salehi, director of

the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran,

has said that Iran unveiled 122 nuclear

achievements over the past Iranian cal-

The Iranian year, 1398, ended on

"I announce with honor that this organ-

ization's 122 new achievements in the past

vear have been the result of untiring efforts

made by a large number of researchers of

endar year.

March 19.

"#WorldHealthDay is a timely day for rethinking abt post-corona world. #CoronaCrisis is an opportunity, if the global fighting on #COVID19 will lead to global solidarity & collaboration. @WHO does its coordination task well, though 'unilateralism virus' infects collective actions," he tweeted.

Confirmed coronavirus cases across the globe now number at 1,347,803, and a total of 74,807 people have lost their lives as a result of complications caused by the virus, according to data collected by Johns Hopkins University. More than 277,400 people have recovered, Press TV reported on Tuesday.

Ancient bas-relief discovered in western Iran

TEHRAN — An ancient bas-relief carving, which depicts human being figures, has recently been discovered in western Iran.

Estimated to date from the Parthian era (247 BC – 224 CE), the relief was found during an archaeological survey in Kuhdasht county, Lorestan province. A total of 112 historical relics were found during the survey which took 45 days to complete, said senior archaeologist Hamzeh Qobadi, who led the survey, CHTN reported on Monday.

Traces of Paleolithic era (Old Stone Age) were also found during the survey, which is first in its kind in Kuhdasht, provincial tourism chief Seyyed Amin Qasemi said. $\rightarrow 8$

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COVID-19 and evolutionary

selection pressure

ccording to the World Health Organization, a novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) has emerged from China and rapidly spread across the world, now with 1,362,850 confirmed cases and 76,367 deaths (as of 7 April 2020).

Movement of human population, in terms of exploration, pilgrimage, politics, business and pleasure impacted global dispersal of microbes. During the entire span of 200,000 years of human history, movement of hominins

Twenty international rights groups, including
the Amnesty International and the Human
Rights Watch, have called on the Bahrainiin the wake of the coronavirus outbreak, but the
releases excluded opposition leaders, activists,
journalists and human rights defenders.political dissidents currently being held in the
Manama regime's prisons in the wake of the novel
coronavirus pandemic, stressing that failure to

Manama regime's prisons in the wake of the novel coronavirus pandemic, stressing that failure to take the measure will have dire consequences. "Even if the release of political prisoners and prisoners of conscience in Bahrain, whose number stands in thousands, might not be recognized as a religious, constitutional, national and human right and would have no priority among the policies of ruling authorities, there is inevitable truth that COVID-19 virus could hit prisons and lead to consequences much more catastrophic that what the world has been witnessing," he said in a statement. Manama has been engaged in a heavy-handed crackdown since a popular uprising began in the Kingdom back in 2011. It has detained thousands of activists since then. $\rightarrow 10$

nurses and midwives and remind world leaders of the critical role they play in keeping the world healthy. Nurses and other health workers are at the forefront of COVID-19 response - providing high quality, respectful treatment, and care, leading community dialogue to address fears and questions and, in some instances, collecting data for clinical studies. Quite simply, without nurses, there would be no response.

The COVID-19, an infectious disease first identified in Wuhan, China, has started spreading quickly and globally; since Tuesday, Iran reported more than 62,589 coronavirus cases and some 3,872 deaths from the disease, while affecting 1,356,369 people in 209 countries.

However, novel coronavirus has shown that human is still vulnerable to major disease outbreaks.

Here, health workers are those who make the most efforts but get the least attention among the nervous people and officials who are expected to make reasonable responses to the crisis.

The Iranian medical community has repeatedly succeeded in surviving the people in the floods and earthquakes, and so on, but this time the test is bigger and broader.

The reality of today's medical community shows that each member is working around the clock and does not back down.

Since March 25, it is reported that 43 medical staff in the country has lost their lives due to the coronavirus infection.

These days photos of health workers are being posted around social media, drawing attention and praise of nearly the whole people, while each one shows the physical and emotional toll the epidemic is taking. \rightarrow 9 Rights Watch, have called on the Bahraini regime to release opposition leaders, political activists and journalists amid the coronavirus outbreak.

In a joint statement on Monday, the rights groups said all prisoners of conscience remain detained in Bahrain solely for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression, assembly, and association, Press TV reported.

The statement said many of the prisoners of conscience currently jailed in Bahrain are old and/ or suffer from underlying medical conditions.

"Such prisoners are at high risk of serious illness if they contract COVID-19, and thus ought to be prioritized for release," it added.

Last month, Manama released 1,486 prisoners

Opposition leaders imprisoned for their roles in the 2011 protest movement remain behind bars. These include Hassan Mushaima, the head of the opposition group Al-Haq; Abdulwahab Hussain, an opposition leader; Abdulhadi Al Khawaja, a prominent human rights defender; and Dr Abdel-Jalil al-Singace, the spokesman for Al-Haq.

Other prominent opposition figures, including Sheikh Ali Salman, the secretary general of the Al-Wefaq National Islamic Society (Al-Wefaq), also remain imprisoned.

A few days ago, Bahrain's most prominent Shia cleric Ayatollah Sheikh Isa Qassim demanded the immediate and unconditional release of



Charity societies in Tehran are providing basic goods for the low-income and underprivileged families as the coronavirus outbreak has crippled their livelihoods.

The government has allocated 1,000 trillion rails (about \$24 billion at the official rate of 42,000 rials) to help lessen the impact of the coronavirus outbreak on the national economy.

across the continents finds antecedents in modern international tourism.

Recent headlines such as, Ebola, Zika, SARS and the last but not the least the COV-ID-19 repeat the human history buried in the classical antiquity when human ancestors began acquisition of microbial pathogens from the animals as hunters-gatherers.

Globalization has rewarded us to travel geographic distances far greater than what we could do in the past. Incidentally, the emergence of at least 40 new infectious diseases in the last 50 years has interplayed with the ever-increasing density of touring human population.

So far, the COVID-19 transmission tends to be horizontal and the viral fitness is trading off with the host fitness as a function of mobility and population density.

Here comes the persistence of COVID-19 life strategy which is critically dependent on temporal and spatial nature of the infected cluster of human population. On the other hand, the preventive measures through social, cultural, political and clinical management have been impacting a negative selection pressure on COVID-19.

Moreover, persistence or decline of widely dispersed viral population might exhibit 'Allee effect'. The possibility of either stabilization or decline of COVID-19 will depend on the size and density of the infected 'floating' population of humans who are yet to reach to their base from the site of infection. Alternatively, disease-driven mutual selective pressures and disease-modified fitness can lead to modular evolutionary consequences, such as, de novo gene acquisition, one of the frequent events in the past history of viral evolution. In this context, there is an urgency to call upon policy makers for formulating a sustainable strategy to tackle COVID-19 like future pandemic disasters.





APRIL 8, 2020

Zarif says Iran ready to cooperate with Turkey in coronavirus containment

POLITICAL TEHRAN – Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Tuesday that Iran is ready to cooperate with Turkey in containing the outbreak the coronavirus, known as Covid-19.

INTERNATIONAL DAILY

TEHRANTIMES

In a phone conversation with Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu, Zarif also expressed sympathy with the Turkish people in their struggle with the deadly virus.

The Turkish Health Ministry announces on Tuesday that so far 30,217 citizens have contracted the coronavirus and 649 have died. The total number of people diagnosed with the coronavirus in

Iran is much higher than Turkey.

As of Tuesday, the number of persons confirmed contracted the virus reached 62,589, of whom 3,872 have died and 27,039 recovered. Health Ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour said 2,089

new patients have been identified over the past 24 hours. Speaking in a televised program, Jahanpour added that 133 more people have died during the same period of time.

Iran has announced social distancing measures in a bid to minimize the spread of coronavirus.

The government has allocated 1,000 trillion rails (about \$24 billion at the official rate of 42,000 rials) to help lessen the impact of the coronavirus outbreak on the national economy.

U.S. senator: Innocent Iranians dying because of 'our sanctions'

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Chris Murphy, U.S. senator from k Connecticut, has said Iranians are dying of



coronavirus partly because of U.S. sanctions.

"Innocent civilians are dying there in part because our sanctions are limiting humanitarian aid during coronavirus,' Murphy wrote on his Twitter page on Monday.

The senator said it is necessary that the Trump administration to ease sanctions against Iran amide the coronavirus crisis

"We need to ease them to ensure that aid gets through,' he suggested.

Former world officials: U.S. sanctions compromising Iran healthcare system

A group of 24 senior diplomats and defense officials have called on U.S. President Donald Trump to make a targeted effort to ease Washington's rules, which prevent Tehran from trading in medical and humanitarian goods, in order to save "potentially hundreds of thousands of lives" across the Middle East amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic

In a statement on Monday, the group said the move "could potentially save the lives of hundreds of thousands of ordinary Iranians and, by helping to curb the virus rapid spread across borders, the lives of its neighbors, Europeans, Americans and others," The Guardian reported.

Former EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini, former director general of the World Health Organization Gro Harlem Brundtland, four former NATO secretary generals and senior American diplomats in the administrations of George W. Bush, Bill Clinton and Barack Obama are among the main supporters of the call

Signatories also include former U.S. secretary of state Madeleine Albright, former U.S. defense secretaries William Cohen and Chuck Hagel, former director of the International Atomic Energy Agency Hans Blix, former U.S. treasury secretary Paul O'Neill, former U.S. lead diplomat on the Iran deal, William Burns, and former NATO secretary general George Robertson.

The United States reinstated its sanctions against Iran in May 2018 after leaving a United Nations-endorsed nuclear agreement with the Islamic Republic and five other major powers -- the UK, France, Russia, China plus Germany. While the Islamic Republic is battling the fast-spreading outbreak, the Trump administration refuses to ease up its "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran. It has even tightened sanctions several times in recent weeks, making it almost impossible for Iran to access life-saving medications and medical equipment necessary in the fight against the deadly new coronavirus pandemic. The statement by the world's former diplomats and officials further said, "Though never intended to kill, U.S. 'maximum pressure' through sanctions on Iran are compromising the performance of the Iranian healthcare system as Iran's outbreak moves into its second month.' It added, "Despite humanitarian exemptions provided under U.S. and international law, these sanctions make the importation of medicine, medical equipment and raw materials needed to produce these goods domestically slower, more expensive, and complicated.' The signatories also urged Trump not to use U.S. voting rights on the International Monetary Fund (IMF) board to disrupt an Iranian request for a \$5bn (£4bn) loan and to issue a statement supporting the use of INSTEX, a trade mechanism set up by Britain, France and Germany in 2019 to protect companies doing business with Iran from Washington's sanctions.

Russia calls for expanding INSTEX beyond EU borders

POLITICAL d e s k Ulyanov, Mikhail Russia's Russia's permanent representative to the Vienna-based international organizations, has called for expand INSTEX to include countries beyond the borders of the European Union.

Ulyanov said in a tweet on Tuesday this action is in line with common benefit.

"If it happens, then the prospects of return of #Iran to full compliance with #JCPOA will be much brighter," the Russian diplomat also said.

INSTEX (the Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges) 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 European 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.

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said on Monday that operationalization of the INSTEX is welcomed by Iran, however, it does not meet the country's expectations.

We take the operation of INSTEX as a good omen, but this is much less than what we



expect," he said in a video press conference. In late November 2019, Belgium, Denmark,

Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden issued a joint statement announcing

becoming shareholders of INSTEX.

"In light of the continuous European support for the agreement and the ongoing efforts to implement the economic part of it and to facilitate legitimate trade between Europe and Iran, we are now in the process of becoming shareholders of the Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges (INSTEX) subject to completion of national procedures. INSTEX was established by France, Germany and the United Kingdom in January 2019, read the statement, published by the Foreign Ministry of Finland

Iran has likened INSTEX to a beautiful car that lacks gasoline.

In a telephone conversation with his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron on Monday evening, President Hassan Rouhani said described as "positive but insufficient" the first steps that the three European parties to the nuclear treaty have taken to bring INSTEX into operation.

"This path should not be confined to the medical commodities and foodstuff alone, and we must be able to use it to supply all of our country's demands," Rouhani underlined.

On May 8, 2019, exactly one year after President Trump abrogated the JCPOA, Iran said its "strategic patience" is over and started to gradually reduce its commitment to the JCPOA at bi-monthly interval. Finally, on January 5 Iran took the last and final step in reducing its commitments to the JCPOA.

However, Iran has insisted that it will reverse its decisions if the EU abides by its obligations under the multilateral pact.

'Trump more dangerous than coronavirus': security chief

POLITICAL TEHRAN – A top Iranian security official has called U.S. President Donald Trump "more dangerous than coronavirus", saying moves to block vital medical supplies to fight coronavirus from reaching Iran was tantamount to crimes against humanity.

"Trump is more dangerous than coronavirus," said Ali Shamkhani, secretary of the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC).

The Trump administration has opposed efforts by the International Monetary Fund to assist Iran during the coronavirus pandemic.

The sanction on health items is an illegal and inhumane act and a symbol of Trump's open hostility to the Iranian people," Shamkhani wrote in a tweet on Sunday.

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

As of Tuesday, 3,872 people have died of COVID-19 in Iran, while the number of confirmed cases in the country reached 62.589

Since 2018, the Trump administration has imposed a policy of "maximum pressure" sanctions against Tehran after Washington withdrew unilaterally from the landmark 2015 nuclear agreement endorsed by the UN Security Council **Resolution 2231**

Under the deal - reached between Iran, the U.S., the European Union, China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and Germany in 2015 - Tehran promised to curtail its nuclear ambitions in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions.

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

A group of 24 senior diplomats and defence officials, includ-

ing four former NATO secretary generals, have urged Donald Trump to save "potentially hundreds of thousands of lives" lost to coronavirus across the Middle East by easing medical and humanitarian sanctions on Iran, The Guardian reported on Monday.

The call has the backing of the former EU foreign affairs chief Federica Mogherini, the former director general of the World Health Organization Gro Harlem Brundtland, and senior American diplomats in the Bush, Clinton and Obama administrations

The bipartisan group is not pressing for a generalised lifting of the sanctions but instead a targeted effort to ease U.S. rules that prevent Tehran trading in medical and humanitarian goods. The group says the move "could potentially save the lives of hundreds of thousands of ordinary Iranians and, by helping to curb the virus's rapid spread across borders, the lives of its neighbors, Europeans, Americans and others".

Iranians are facing "one of their country's darkest times in living memory" the group says. "Reaching across borders to save lives is imperative for our own security and must override political differences among governments," it adds.

Signatories include the former US secretary of state Madeleine Albright, former U.S. defense secretaries William Cohen and Chuck Hagel, former director of the International Atomic Energy Agency Hans Blix, former U.S. treasury secretary Paul O'Neill, the former U.S. lead diplomat on the Iran deal, William Burns, and the former NATO secretary general George Robertson.

Writing in the National Interest on April 4. Assal Rad who has Ph.D. in history from the University of California, said. "This virus is not confined to China or Iran, or Europe or the United States. It knows no borders, no religion, no gender, and no politics. In order to combat, it requires our mutual cooperation that transcends all these divisions.



In a telephone conversation with his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron late on Monday, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said countries should exert pressure on the United States to lift its "cruel and one-sided" sanctions against Tehran

"The U.S. administration has not only violated international regulations by imposing illegal sanctions on Iran, but is also breaching health regulations ratified by the World Health Organization in 2005 through its measures under the current circumstances," Rouhani stated.

Foreign Minister Zarif warned in mid-March that U.S. sanctions is not only putting Iranians' life in danger but also will pave the ground for a faster spread of COVID-19 to other countries.

"It is IMMORAL to let a bully kill innocents. Viruses recognize no politics or geography. Nor should we," Zarif wrote on his Twitter account, implying that no government should keep mum on such brutal sanctions on Iran.

Iran does not need charity from Trump: Zarif

"What we want is for him to stop preventing Iran from selling oil"

coronavirus outbreak," President Hassan Rouhani said in a televised speech in March. Health Ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour said on Tuesday that the total number of people diagnosed with the coronavirus in Iran has reached 62,589, of whom 3,872 have died and 27,039 recovered.

In a tweet on March 12, Zarif called on the IMF to extend support to Iran, who is a member state of the Washington-based lender.

Zarif said the IMF managing director "has stated that countries affected by #COVID19 will be supported via Rapid Financial Instrument. Our Central Bank requested access to this facility immediately.

In an Instagram post, Abdulnaser Hemmati, the governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI), said Iran has asked the IMF for \$5 billion emergency funding to fight the pandemic as the number of infections keeps growing in the country.

Hemmati added that he had written to the IMF head, Kristalina Georgieva, to stress Iran's "right to benefit from the fund's \$50-billion Rapid Financing Instrument (RFI)."

Elsewhere in their statement, former world officials warned of "significant and long-lasting consequences for the reputation of the United States and Europe among the Iranian people" if Trump does not provide relief from sanctions.

They said, "This would starkly raise the political costs of engaging with either the U.S. or Europe for any current or future Iranian decision-makers, while simultaneously boosting the influence of Iran's non-Western partners.'

(Source: Press TV)

OLITICAL TEHRAN – Foreign Mind e ^{s k} ister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said that Iran is rich in human and natural resources and does not need charity from U.S. President Donald Trump to contain the outbreak of the coronavirus.

"Iran is rich in human & natural resources.

We don't need charity from @realDonaldTrump -who's forced to buy ventilators from sources he's sanctioned." Zarif tweeted on Tuesday. He added, "What we want is for him to STOP preventing Iran from selling oil & other products, buying its needs & making & receiving payments.'

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

Borrell says sanctions must not prevent delivery of humanitarian aid to Iran

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell has said that sanctions on Iran must not prevent delivery of humanitarian aid to Iran when the country is fighting the coronavirus.

"In the case of the United Nations and the European Union, it is guite clear that our sanctions are not a problem from the point of view of facilitating humanitarian aid. But we ask that this be done [also] by other countries that have established sanctions, and that there be humanitarian exemptions to provide medical supplies and equipment to the countries that are subject to sanctions: Cuba, Iran, the North Korea, Syria, Venezuela, [so that sanctions] do not prevent the delivery of humanitarian aid," he said on Monday at a press conference, according to EU website.

He added, "I think that it is absolutely necessary to clarify this subject, because there are financial actors who are very reluctant to participate in the flow of humanitarian aid because they are afraid of falling under sanctions. It is imperative that this be made clear, that in these circumstances, more than ever, there will be no sanctions for those who participate in the exchange of goods and services which have to do with more necessary humanitarian aid."

Mikhail Ulyanov, Russia's permanent representative to the Vienna-based international organizations, tweeted on Tuesday, "#US is not ready to think about sanctions relief for #Iran. OK, leave alone humanitarian considerations. In any case this is not pragmatic taking into account that COVID-19 can spill over to neighboring countries and affect 70,000 US troops in the region and a lot of US civilians."

Foreign ministers of the European Union have urged suspension of the U.S. sanctions against countries, including Iran, in the fight against the coronavirus.



Spanish Foreign Minister Arancha Gonzalez Laya told reporters that the issue was discussed in a meeting on Friday according to ISNA.

She noted that the sanctions must be removed when there is human rights urgency like outbreak of the coronavirus.

Dane Rowlands, a professor at Carleton University, has said it is "regrettable" that the United States is refusing to ease sanctions on Iran while the country is fighting the coronavirus pandemic.

"The United States can reduce restrictions and facilitate Iran's access to medicine, however, the government of the United States does not prioritize this issue which is regrettable," Rowlands told ILNA in an interview published on Monday.

He noted that innocent people are losing their lives in Iran due to lack of access to medicine resulting from U.S. sanctions

A UN human rights expert called on March 31 for lift-

ing international sanctions against countries ranging from Iran to North Korea and Venezuela in coronavirus crisis, according to Reuters.

'The continued imposition of crippling economic sanctions on Syria, Venezuela, Iran, Cuba, and, to a lesser degree. Zimbabwe, to name the most prominent instances, severely undermines the ordinary citizens' fundamental right to sufficient and adequate food," Hilal Elver, UN special rapporteur on the right to food, said in a statement.

Elver, an independent expert, said that it was a matter of "humanitarian and practical urgency to lift unilateral economic sanctions immediately".

In a letter to the G-20 economic powers on March 24, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called for rolling back international sanctions regimes around the world.

Guterres said sanctions are heightening the health risks for millions of people and weakening the global effort to contain the spread of the new coronavirus, Foreign Policy reported.

"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," he said.

'Let us remember that we are only as strong as the weakest health system in our interconnected world," the UN chief said.

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 statement.

Rouhani to Macron: Initial INSTEX steps positive but 'not sufficient'

POLITICAL desk Hassan Rouhani has said initial steps to implement the trade mechanism with Europe, also known as INSTEX, are positive but not sufficient.

Rouhani made the remarks in a phone talk with French President Emmanuel Macron late on Monday.

He called on friendly countries to exert pressure on the U.S. to lifts its "cruel and one-sided" sanctions against Tehran amid Iran's battle against the coronavirus.

Iran in comparison with other countries to battle the coronavirus when it is under the U.S. sanctions, said Rouhani.

"The U.S. administration has not only violated international regulations by imposing illegal sanctions on Iran, but is also breaching health regulations ratified by the World Health Organization in 2005 through its measures under the current circumstances," Rouhani stated.

Rouhani also called for an internationally coordinated fight against the new coronavirus. "Without joint global cooperation and

exchange of our experiences, we cannot master this critical phase," Rouhani said. Iran and France are among the countries

hardest hit by the coronavirus. The outbreak has infected more than 62,000 people and killed over 3,800 in Iran. France has also confirmed about 98,000 cases of coronavirus so far. Death toll in the country also stands about 8,900.

On April 6, Human Rights Watch (HRW)



called on the United States to ease economic sanctions on Iran and expand the licensing of sanctions-exempt items to ensure the country has access to essential humanitarian resources during the pandemic.

Rouhani also expressed Iran's readiness to return to full compliance with its commitments under the nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), only if all sanctions against the country are lifted.



"The removal of sanctions and fulfillment of its commitments by Europe are a necessity, which has become more significant at the current specific situation," the Iranian president pointed out.

The United States reinstated sanctions against Iran in May 2018 after leaving the UN-endorsed nuclear agreement with the Islamic Republic and five other major powers – the UK, France, Russia, China plus Germany. Since then, Washington has corded other countries to follow suit and mount pressure on Iran or face punishment.

For his part, Macron called on Iran to respect its nuclear obligations as the world focuses its attention on the coronavirus pandemic.

He hoped Iran will "turn to the respect of its nuclear obligations, refrain from taking new measures contrary to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and contribute to the easing of regional tensions," a government statement said.

Macron and Rouhani agree to look at conditions for talks

According to the BBC, the French presidency published a statement (in French), saying that President Macron had spoken for more than an hour with his Iranian counterpart.

Macron said he was very concerned about the "risk of a further weakening" of the treaty and "the consequences that would necessarily follow".

The statement said the two leaders had agreed "to explore by 15 July the conditions for the resumption of dialogue between all parties".

The French statement also said Macron would continue consultations with the Iranian side and international partners to reduce tensions.

"Lifting all sanctions can be the beginning of a move between Iran and six major powers," Rouhani said.

Warmongers after escalating Iran-U.S. tension: MP

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Heshmatollah Falahatpisheh, a member of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, says warmongers want to escalate the tension between Iran and the United States.

"Behind the recent U.S. moves in Iraq is an election agenda," Falahatpisheh said on Tuesday, according to ISNA. "The interests of third-party countries and warmongers are in escalating the tension between Iran and the U.S."

"What's happening in Iraq today due to the presence of U.S. military forces is against that country's domestic laws and the people's interests," he said.

According to reports, the U.S. has 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 month, 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.

Falahatpisheh said the move extends U.S. presence in Iraq, which is against the domestic laws of both Iraq and the United States.

Iraqi lawmakers unanimously approved a bill on January 5, demanding the withdrawal of all foreign military forces led by the United States from the country following the assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, the commander of the IRGC Quds Force, along with Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the deputy head of Hashd al-Sha'abi in a U.S. airstrike authorized by President Donald Trump two days earlier.

Later on January 9, Adel Abdul-Mahdi, the former Iraqi prime minister, called on the United States to dispatch a delegation to Baghdad tasked with formulating a mechanism for the move.

Abdul-Mahdi said Iraq rejects any violation of its sovereignty, particularly the U.S. military's violation of Iraqi airspace in the assassination airstrike.

Following the deployment of Patriot, Iran warned the U.S. that it was leading the Middle East to disaster in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic.

The U.S. deployment runs "counter to the official position of the Iraqi government, parliament and people," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

It called for a halt to "warmongering during the coronavirus outbreak" and warned that U.S. military activities in the region could lead it to "instability and disaster".

U.S. forces should "respect the wishes of the Iraqi people and government and leave the country," the statement added.

Nearly 2,000 hospital beds made by IRGC for coronavirus patients

TEHRAN (FNA) — The deputy commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps for health, medical training and biological defense announced that the IRGC has set up 1,920 hospital beds to help the health ministry with treatment of coronavirus patients in Iran.

"Today, we have prepared 800 beds in field hospitals and 1,120 beds for the patients who are recovering," Brigadier General Ahmad Abdollahi told FNA on Tuesday. 3,739 people. Jahanpour, meantime, voiced pleasure that the recovery of coronavirus patients in Iran has sped up, saying that 24,236 people have been treated so far.

He also voiced concern that 4,083 coronavirus patients in Iran are in critical conditions. The coronavirus COVID-19 is affecting approximately all countries and territories around the world. The virus was first reported



Judiciary slams U.S. sanctions as inhumane

POLITICAL desk tively impacted Iran's ability to contain the coronavirus outbreak. During a presser on Tuesday, Judiciary spokesman Ghol-



amhossein Esmaeili said such measures are a clear violation of international human rights laws, Mehr reported.

Esmaeili referred to Washington's economic terrorism against Tehran, especially under the current circumstances of the pandemic outbreak, saying, "None of the U.S.'s measures are compatible with human rights."

Pointing out that everybody with any race, nationality, and language has an equal right to live, he said Washington's approach amid the new virus outbreak clearly breaches these rights.

"The U.S. moves, including medical embargo, and piracies are a clear sign of discrimination among the humans across the world," he said, adding that "although Washington has failed to contain the pandemic in the U.S., the history will never forget such criminal measures in the international arena."

The U.S. has been accused of hijacking medical supplies in different instances.

Germany has accused Washington of redirecting three million Germany-bound masks for its own use, in a move condemned as "modern piracy".

France has also said while the regional leaders are struggling to secure medical supplies as American buyers outbid them.

Esmaeili urged the international bodies to stand up to the U.S.'s bullying and fulfill their human responsibilities in the current situation.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) has also called on the United States government to ease the unjust sanctions against Iran, saying, "The U.S. should take immediate action to ease sanctions and expand licensing of sanctions-exempt items to ensure Iran's access to essential humanitarian resources during the pandemic."

The HRW noted that as the burden on the country's health care system has dramatically increased due to the pandemic, the broad U.S. economic sanctions resulting in severe international banking restrictions have drastically constrained the ability of the country to finance humanitarian imports, including medicines and medical equipment. While the U.S. government has built exemptions for humanitarian imports into its sanctions regime, Human Rights Watch research in October 2019 found that in practice, these exemptions have failed to offset the strong

"The U.S. moves, including medical embargo, and piracies are a clear sign of discrimination among the humans across the world," the Judiciary spokesman said. Esmaeili also said, "although Washington has failed to contain the pandemic in the **U.S., the history** will never forget such criminal measures."

reluctance of U.S. and European companies and banks to risk incurring sanctions and legal action by exporting or financing exempted humanitarian goods.

The Human Rights Watch added that under international

He added that the IRGC has also allocated 70% of its hospital beds to coronavirus patients and helped the government in screening nearly 70mln people in Iran for infection to COVID-19 virus.

"Now, over 2,700 coronavirus patients are being treated at the IRGC's medical centers and a part of them have recovered," General Abdollahi said.

He also said that Basij (volunteer) forces have distributed over 100,000 aid packages among the poor people and those who have lost their jobs after the coronavirus outbreak across the country, upon the IRGC commander's order.

Iranian Health Ministry Spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour announced on Monday that over 60,000 people in the country have been infected with coronavirus, including 2,274 new cases in the last one day, adding that 3,739 patients have also died so far.

"2,274 new cases of coronavirus infection have been identified since Sunday, increasing the number of infected people to 60,500," Jahanpour said.

He noted that unfortunately, 136 patients infected with COVID-19 virus have lost their lives since Sunday, raising the total toll to in the central Chinese city of Wuhan late last year. It has so far killed more than 74,700 people and infected over 1.34 million others globally.

The Iranian foreign ministry declared that despite Washington's claims of cooperation to transfer drugs to Iran via the new Swisslaunched payment mechanism, the U.S. is troubling the process amid the coronavirus outbreak in the country.

Although U.S. claims that medicines and medical equipment are not under sanctions, they have practically blocked the transfer of Iran's financial resources in other countries into the Swiss Humanitarian Trade Arrangement (SHTA), Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Seyed Abbas Mousavi said.

As the death toll from the virus surges, Iran intensifies its preventive safety measures. Closures of schools and most universities have been extended until late April.

The government also imposed travel restrictions, especially on Iran's North, which is among the red zones. The country has also adopted strict digital health control procedures at airports to spot possible infections. Health Minister Saeed Namaki announced last month that a new national mobilization plan would be implemented across the country to fight against the coronavirus epidemic and more effectively treat patients.

Namaki said that the plan will include all the 17,000 health centers and the 9,000 medical and clinical centers in all cities, suburban areas and villages.

He added that the plan will include home quarantine, noting that infected people will receive the necessary medicines and advice, but they are asked to stay at home.

Namaki said that people with a more serious condition will stay at the hospitals, adding that the public places will be disinfected, the entries of infected towns and cities will be controlled to diagnose and quarantine the infected cases. He added that the necessary equipment and facilities have been provided, expressing the hope that the epidemic would be curbed. According to the latest statistics of Health Ministry, the number of medical laboratories

to test coronavirus infection has reached over 90 across the country.

The World Health Organization (WHO) says Iran's response to the virus has so far been up to the mark. Still, it says the U.S. sanctions are a big challenge, and Washington would be complicit in the rising death toll in Iran if it would not remove its sanctions.

The World Health Organization has considered priorities in combating coronavirus and Islamic Republic of Iran obeys and follows up priorities as defined by WHO.

The WHO is dispatching separate delegations to all countries.

Larijani calls for turning COVID-19 into opportunity

TEHRAN (MNA) — Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani said the coronavirus outbreak can lead to introducing changes in economic structures and turned into an opportunity.

"Coronavirus is a divine test that its social effects should be studied and its threats should be turned into an opportunity by revising some economic structures," Larijani said in a phone conversation with MP Hamidreza Fouladgar, chairman of the committee on supporting domestic production.

"This depends on reforming economic structures and the experiences of the establishment of e-government and other

important measures such as rural development, management of reverse migration, decentralization and coordination of institutions to help affected businesses can be used in the post-corona era."

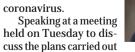
He went on to refer to the need to decrease people's in-person visits to offices and intracity commutes by developing e-government, increasing virtual training, and boosting e-commerce according to the sixth development plan.

He also said that Iran can use the experiences of some other countries for getting through the depression. For his part, Fouladgar briefed Larijani on the committee's decisions regarding 'Surge in Production' which was introduced by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution as the motto of the year.

The MP said that the committee has held seven sessions in the new year on the issue and has discussed mitigating the effects of the outbreak on the country's economy, 10 approaches to speed up the economic growth, achieving sustainable development, and maximum use of production capacity. law, a country or coalition of states enforcing economic sanctions should consider the impact on the human rights of the affected population, especially regarding their access to goods essential to life, including medicines and food.

'No shortage of basic commodities in Iran'

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Iran's First Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri assured people that the country is not going to face any shortage of basic commodities in the current Iranian year (started March 20), particularly amid the outbreak of the coronavirus.



by the Iranian Customs Office in the fight against the coronavirus, Jahangiri said detailed plans have been formulated to fulfill the country's need for basic commodities this year.

He said while people in the other countries swarmed the stores after the outbreak of COVID-19 and snapped up all goods on the shelves, the shops in Iran did not face any problem and all basic commodities have been supplied seamlessly.

The vice president further said certain countries are so ruthless that they denied Iran's access to the foreign currency resources after the outbreak of the coronavirus in order to foment a crisis and impair the Islamic Republic's ability to supply the necessary commodities, but the situation marked a milestone in the country's management strategies, as people did not witness any shortage of goods although the grocery shopping across Iran rose by five times higher than the normal days.

In comments on April 4, Minister of Roads and Urban Development Mohammad Eslami said Iran's ports are stuffed full of basic commodities and trucks and trains are queuing up to carry the shipments into the country.



APRIL 8, 2020

How do you reopen the economy after coronavirus? German experts have a plan

How do you restart an economy that's been shut down by a pandemic? The answer is: very, very carefully.

Even as the novel coronavirus continues to spread around the world, European governments are starting to think about how to re-open factories, offices and schools while minimizing the chance of further outbreaks. Austria on Monday said it would gradually begin to reopen shops after Easter, becoming the first country in Europe to do so.

Pressure is building on governments to explain their plans because of the mounting economic costs of measures designed to contain the coronavirus. It's compounded by fears that food supplies and health care provisions could be undermined if the restrictions are in place for too long.

While lockdowns are likely to remain for weeks — and in some countries, months - detailed planning done now could protect vulnerable people and help economies bounce back more quickly when restrictions are eased. Getting it wrong could lead to more outbreaks, another round of restrictions on work and public life, and much more economic pain.

In Germany, where 100,000 people have tested positive for coronavirus and nearly 1,600 have died, a group of economists, lawyers and medical experts are recommending a gradual revival of Europe's biggest economy that would allow specific industries and workers to resume their activities while steps are taken to prevent a resurgence of coronavirus.

A dozen academics write in the report, which was published last week by the Ifo Institute for Economic Research, that they do not expect a vaccine or effective treatment for the coronavirus to be available before 2021. As a result, Germany should approach the fight against the disease "more like a marathon than a sprint."

"Future measures must be designed and prepared in such a way that, on the one hand, they ensure good health care and, on the other hand, that they can be sustained over the necessary periods of time," the experts write. "Planning for this transition must begin immediately in politics, administration, companies and other organizations.

Germany has ordered the closure of schools, restaurants, playgrounds, sports facilities and most shops until at least April 20, pushing an economy that was already teetering on the brink of recession into a deep slump. Government spokesman Steffen Seibert said Monday that he cannot yet provide a firm timetable for lifting restrictions. If o has forecast a 20% hit to GDP this year if the lockdown lasts for three months.

How to restart an economy

The German government is already rolling out an economic rescue package worth up to €750 billion (\$825 billion) that includes measures to spur lending to businesses, take stakes in companies and support furloughed workers. The package is among the biggest launched anywhere in the world.

The Ifo report suggests the country should now create a national task force of experts and public representatives that would make recommendations on how to ease restrictions on work and public life, and when industries should restart production. Going back to work would be voluntary for employees.

Industries such as telecommunications and auto production that add the most value to the economy should be prioritized, the report says, while work that can easily be done from home should continue to be done remotely. Nurseries and schools would open relatively quickly, because young people rarely have severe symptoms and parents cannot work if child care facilities and schools remain closed.

No clubbing or big events

Companies that make health care products or components should also reopen quickly, while hotels and restaurants would only be allowed to do so in a "very carefully and controlled manner" because it is difficult for people to keep their distance in such establishments. Discos and clubs should remain closed for now, the report says, and events with a large number of spectators should not be held.

The experts say it's possible that different standards may be set in different regions. Restrictions could be eased first in places with low infection rates or reduced risk of transmission, such as rural communities. As time passes, regions where the population has built up a degree of immunity could be allowed to operate with fewer restrictions.

That, of course, requires coordinated and large scale testing for coronavirus. Comprehensive training on proper hygiene, and new rules mandating the use of personal protective equipment would also be neces

Iran pushing to raise petchem output

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Director k of Iran's National Petrochemical Company (NPC)'s Projects says with several new projects going operational, the country's petrochemical production capacity is going to increase significantly in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 20).

"In the year of "Surge in Production", the petrochemical industry is trying to benefit from the most of the domestic capabilities and with new petrochemical projects being inaugurated, the production capacity in this industry will increase significantly," IRNA quoted Ali-Mohammad Bosaqzadeh as saying. He said the petrochemical industry is

now the center and pillar of the country's economic development and is in close collaboration with all industrial sectors, adding that injecting resources into the productive sectors and prohibiting the waste of national resources can lead to the second and third leaps in the petrochemical industry. Noting that the balanced development of

the petrochemical industry is of particular interest among NPC strategies for the current

year, he said: "In this regard, the development

year, he said: "In this regard, the development of downstream petrochemical industries is and will result in the production of products

with higher added value."

He further noted that most of the underway projects in this industry are currently using domestic equipment, licenses and technological knowledge of Iranian experts.

Considering the undeniable significance of the petrochemical industry in Iran's resilient economy in the sanctions era, the Iranian Oil Ministry and the country's National Petrochemical Company have been taking major steps to facilitate further development of this industry in recent years.

Back in September 2019, Bosaqzadeh noted that Iran's annual petrochemical output, which is currently at nearly 70 million tons, is planned to reach more than 100 million tons by the Iranian calendar year of 1400 (ends on March 2022) and to 130 million tons or nearly doubled) by 1404 (ends on March 2026).

Also in August 2019, Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh had announced that the country's annual petrochemical output is expected to reach more than 100 million tons by 2021, despite U.S. sanctions.

Details on Finance Ministry's plans for 'Surge in Production' announced

ECONOMY TEHRAN – Iran's minister of finance and economic affairs has notified the government agencies, banks and insurance companies of the ministry's plans for the surge of production in the current Iranian calendar year (started on March 20), Tasnim news agency reported on Tuesday.

As reported, the Finance Ministry programs cover five major areas including production financing, investment reinforcement, and foreign trade development, improving the business environment, financial discipline, as well as activation of the government's idle assets.

As for the financing of productive projects, the ministry has put the priority in funding production units that present

a specific plan and roadmap for boosting production. Selling the banking system's idle assets and facilitating the process of granting facilities to production units and designing bank credit instruments to facilitate financing the production of domestic products were also among the programs underlined by the ministry.

As for the investment development, strengthening and expansion of effective monitoring of existing investment projects with the aim of identifying and resolving their problems as well as pursuing and attraction of foreign finances and facilities from international development organizations through activating a new foreign policy system and forming a strategic committee with the relevant agencies are reported to be the major programs on the ministry's agenda.

The development of electronic systems in customs with the aim of facilitating foreign trade along with facilitating the imports of capital goods and raw materials through the

reduction of customs processes have also been mentioned as some of the main components of the country's export strategies.

Accelerating the country's licensing system and the development and completion of the national licensing portal in order to facilitate the issuance of all sorts of licenses for production units were also stressed with regard to the improvement of the business environment.

Reorganization of less efficient state-owned companies and prioritization of awarding such companies to the private sector in order to boost the domestic production is also another major goal of the Finance Ministry plans.

Non-inflationary provision of public budget resources by increasing the share of cash equivalents is also among such programs.

Exploration operations underway on over 652,000 sq.km of land: IMIĎRO



ploration operations are underway in 652,061 square kilometers of land, IRNA reported on Tuesday, quoting a

ECONOMY TEHRAN – Mining ex- antimony and other rare earth elements. He noted that in the framework of the country's Sixth National Five-Year Development Plan (2016-2021), efficiency, productivity and maximum utilization of the capacities of the country's mining industry have been given great importance and so should be considered in every step from exploration up to the production processes. The official also announced that over 11 trillion rials (about \$262 million) of investment has been made in IMIDRO projects through the contribution of the private sector. IMIDRO is currently collaborating with major mining companies across the country including Khuzestan Steel Company, Mobarakeh Steel Company, Golgohar Mining, and Industrial Company, Chadormalu Mining and Industrial Company, and also Iran Minerals Production and Supply Company. Gharibpour further stated that his organization supports the research projects required in the industry, saying that paying attention to the scientific subjects and modern technology through cooperation with the universities is seriously followed up by IMIDRO.

Surge in production requires all-out support: energy minister



E C O N O M Y d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian Energy Minister Reza Iranian calendar year (September 22, 2019-March 19, 2020), based on which Ardakanian outlined his ministry's plans the ministry inaugurated some water, to materialize the motto of this Iranian electricity projects across the country calendar year (started on March 20), which is named the year of "Surge in Production" by the Leader of Islamic Revolution Seved Ali Khamenei. Addressing a video conference with the senior directors in water and electricity sectors, the minister said that surge in production requires all-out support of everybody and emphasized cooperation of all subsidiaries of the ministry to meet this goal, the portal of Energy Ministry (Paven) published. As previously announced, Energy Ministry plans to inaugurate 15 major projects in water and electricity sectors during spring, which corresponds to the first quarter of the Iranian calendar year. The mentioned projects will be put into operation in 15 provinces. Energy Ministry launched a scheme named A-B-Iran [the acronyms A and B stand for water, electricity in Persian] during the second half of the past

everv week



INTERNATIONAL DAILY **TEHRANTIMES**

The experts also recommend that Germany organize a "massive" increase in the production of protective clothing and masks, boost its production capacity for drugs and vaccines, and establish an information technology platform that allows for strategic planning.

And while the task force would make recommendations, politicians and business leaders would make the final call on when to lift restrictions. "The attempt to centrally control the resumption of production would ... not work in practice. This resumption must be controlled primarily by the institutions and companies themselves," the report states.

Looking to China

Countries trying to jumpstart their economies while preventing a second wave of coronavirus infections may look to China for clues on what works and what doesn't.

The country likely suffered its first economic contraction in decades in the first quarter after the central government in Beijing imposed drastic measures to contain the spread of the coronavirus.

China has embarked on an aggressive plan to save its economy, launching policies and campaigns meant to push people back to work, encourage business confidence, and protect as many companies from failing as possible. Beijing is spending billions of dollars on medical supplies and treatment, and pumping money into infrastructure projects to create jobs. It's also removing road blockades and allowing people to travel more freely in areas where the virus appears to have run its course.

But it's too soon to sound the all-clear. New questions are being raised about whether infection data reported by Beijing can be trusted, and huge numbers of people were seen flocking to tourist sites over the weekend. Some businesses have rushed back to work too soon, complicating the recovery efforts. A top titanium producer restarted its factories in February, only to halt work again because workers were infected.

The need for balance

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the United States' top infectious disease expert, said recently that while public health is his top priority, keeping society and the economy on total lockdown for too long would have unintended negative consequences.

And former British Prime Minister Tony Blair told BBC radio on Monday that he was "terrified" at the economic damage the lockdown was doing to the UK economy, estimated by the Centre for Economics and Business Research at £2.4 billion (\$2.9 billion) per day.

(Source: CNN Business)

deputy with the Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO).

Mohammad Aghajanlou, the deputy manager of the mining industries development at IMIDRO, said the mentioned exploration operations are being conducted by a consortium of IMIDRO and the country's major mining companies.

Back in March, IMIDRO Head Khodadad Gharibpour announced that his organization has managed to identify over 760 new promising mineral zones across the country.

"With the new discoveries, the total area of IMIDRO's exploration zones has reached 650,000 square kilometers," Gharibpour had said.

According to the official, IMIDRO has registered license requests for 270 areas of the new exploration zones, and so far exploration licenses have been issued for 52 areas which include mining zones for lead, zinc, gold, copper, iron, coal, brine, chromite,

As reported, 227 projects were put into operation in the country under this scheme, many of which were completing semi-finished projects and are considered some new movement in this regard.

Last month, when speaking on the occasion of finishing the A-B-Iran program, Ardakanian said during this program 227 major projects with a total investment of 335.6 trillion rials (about \$7.99 billion) have gone operational in the country.

The minister said that during the 20 weeks of the mentioned program he made 31 trips to various provinces for inaugurating energy projects.

He also announced that three power plants and 40 new projects worth 60 trillion rials (about \$1.4 billion) will be inaugurated during the first quarter of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-June 20).

Asian shares cautiously gain on hopes virus is slowing, dollar slips

Asian stock markets rallied for a second day on Tuesday and riskier currencies rose, on tentative signs the coronavirus crisis may be levelling off in New York and receding in Europe.

Gains, however, lacked Monday's momentum as the number of coronavirus cases kept rising globally and an economic crash on a scale not seen for generations looms large.

FTSE futures gained 3.08% and EuroSTOXX 50 futures rose 0.61%, pointing to a steady open in Europe, while U.S. stock futures were steady after trading either side of flat through the Asian day.

"At the moment Asian markets are leading their global counterparts and reacting with some optimism to speculation that we may be reaching peak infection and mortality rates in major cities," said Michael McCarthy, chief market strategist at ČMC Markets. "But frankly that may be ill-founded."

The United States is bracing for its toughest week yet as the death toll climbs above 10,000 while across the Atlantic, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has entered intensive care after his COVID-19 symptoms worsened.

Japan's Nikkei rose 2% and has erased most of last week's losses after Prime Minister Shinzo Abe promised a massive \$991 billion economic stimulus package - equal to 20% of GDP.

MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan pared early gains, but rose 1.4%. "The market is front running what it believes is a peak in the virus case count with Europe leading the way," said Chris Weston, head of research at Melbourne brokerage Pepperstone.

"You can almost smell the fear of missing out from active managers.³

Worldwide, the virus has infected more than 1.3 million people and killed over 74,000, and the numbers are rising even as swathes of the globe are under lockdown.

Hope stems though from hardest-hit Italy and Spain, where authorities have started looking ahead to easing lockdowns

after steady falls in coronavirus-related fatality rates.

In New York, the number of deaths each day has also steadied while hospitalizations, admissions to intensive care and the number of patients put on ventilators all declined.

Markets in Seoul, Shanghai and Hong Kong opened higher, then pared gains. Australia's ASX 200 slipped into the red.

Peak death week

Moves in the currency and bond markets were more muted, weighed by worries that lifting lockdowns too soon could drive a fresh wave of infections and caution about the economic fallout.

The U.S. dollar, which has soaked up safety flows for weeks, slipped on most majors.

The Australian dollar hit \$0.6148, its highest in a week.

"It's a long way short of a serious rally," said Sean Callow, an FX analyst at Westpac in Sydney. "There is still so much bad news to absorb from the economy.'

(Source: Reuters)

Oil higher amid hope for production cut

Oil rose on Tuesday amid hope that the world's biggest producers of crude will agree to cut output as the coronavirus pandemic crushes demand, even as analysts warn a global recession may be deeper than expected and big production cuts will be needed.

Brent crude was up by 80 cents, or 2.4 percent, at \$33.85 a barrel by 0657 GMT after falling more than 3 percent on Monday. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude was up by 83 cents, or 3.2 percent, at \$26.91 a barrel, having dropped nearly 8 percent in the previous session.

The world's main oil producers including Saudi Arabia and Russia are likely to agree to cut output at a meeting on Thursday, although that would depend on the United States joining in, sources told Reuters.

But the threat of a major recession hangs over the market due to the halt of much economic activity as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, with half the global population under some form of lockdown or social distancing measures

"Anything less than a coordinated global cut is going to be disappointing to the market, as further price declines will be necessary to shut



in enough output," said Greg Priddy, director global energy and Middle East at Stratfor in Houston.

Worldwide oil demand has dropped by as much as 30 percent, or about 30 million barrels per day, coinciding with moves by Saudi Arabia and Russia to flood markets with extra supply after an agreement on withholding output fell apart.

Oil prices slumped on Monday after Saudi Arabia and Russia delayed a meeting to agree on output cuts till Thursday.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and other producers including

Russia, a grouping known as OPEC+, had been curtailing production in recent years amid a rapid expansion of U.S. output that made the country the world's biggest crude producer. There are questions whether the U.S. would

join any coordinated action.

U.S. President Donald Trump said on Monday that OPEC had not asked him to push domestic oil producers to cut their production to buttress prices. He also said that U.S. output was declining in response to falling prices.

"I think it's happening automatically but nobody's asked me that question yet so we'll see what happens," the president told a press briefing on Monday afternoon.

Coordinated action by U.S. oil producers to reduce output would typically be a violation of antitrust laws.

A global recession that economists in a Reuters poll say is under way will likely be more serious than expected a few weeks ago due to the viral outbreak, the latest survey showed.

"We expect energy prices to hover around current levels until economic activity recovers,' Capital Economics said in a note.

(Source: CNBC)

Asian refiners cut runs, shut down as demand destruction intensifies

Facing limited demand for their oil products due to the coronavirus pandemic, refineries all over the world are increasingly cutting throughput and in some instances shutting down. Asia is no different.

COVID-19, first hit Wuhan in Hubei province in central China in December, impacting demand in Asia's biggest oil demand center. It has since led to lockdowns in India, Malaysia, Thailand and Pakistan, forcing regional refiners to cut runs and in some cases to declare force majeures for crude imports.

But there are some signs of oil demand recovery in China, where state-owned refining giants have increased run rates. "China's domestic demand has been recovering since March as industry production and domestic transportation resume when COVID-19 spread is controlled," a senior executive with PetroChina said.

S&P Global Platts Analytics expects global oil demand to contract by 4.5 million b/d in 2020. This compares with a growth of 1.3 million b/d projected at the start of the year, as COVID-19 causes grounds flights and locks people in their homes.

Asia's oil demand is expected to contract by 3 million b/d in the first of 2020, before rebounding to grow by 1 million b/d in H2 2020, and refinery runs in Asia feel by 2.7 million b/d in the first quarter of 2020 and are expected to fall further in Q2 as storage space runs out, according to Platts Analytics.

China China's state-owned oil refining giants have raised their refinery utilization rates to around 70 percent of their combined nameplate capacity in March from a record low 67 percent in February on signs of oil demand recovery in the developed southern and coastal regions where the spread of coronavirus was under control, according to a Platts survey.



Sinopec, the world's largest refiner by capacity, raised its run rates to 72 percent in March from a historical low of 64 percent in February and will further increase throughput in April, the survey showed. Maoming Petrochemical in Guangdong province lifted its run rate to 103 percent in March from 86 percent in February, becoming one of the Sinopec refineries fully to return to normal.

PetroChina's refineries, most of which are in northern China and inland, cut their average throughput plan to 64 percent of capacity in March from 66 percent in February and 78 percent in January. PetroChina's export refinery Guangxi Petrochemical remained shut despite finishing its 50-day scheduled maintenance

local information provider JLC.

State-run Indian Oil Corp. has cut through-

maintenance season this year Japan's crude throughput dipped 0.2 per-

products such as gasoline and gasoil, coupled

with country's relatively light spring refinery

cent week on week to 2.81 million b/d over March 22-28, according to the Petroleum Association of Japan data. It was last lower 23 weeks ago at 2.68 million b/d during October 13-19 during the autumn refinery turnaround season.

In April, Japan's refinery outage will total up to 497,000 b/d or 14 percent of its installed refining capacity of 3.52 million b/d because of upcoming scheduled maintenance program unless refineries currently shut unplanned will come back online, according to Platts calculations based on industry information. S. Korea

SK Innovation's main refining unit SK Energy with a combined capacity of $840,000 \, \text{b/d}$ cut its crude run rate to 85 percent in March, compared with 95 percent a year earlier, and it will further lower run rate in April and beyond.

SK Energy has also delayed commercial production from its newly-built 40,000 b/d vacuum residue desulfurization due to the market uncertainty.

GS Caltex with a combined capacity of 800,000 b/d has conducted regular crude distillation maintenance in March, earlier than originally scheduled.

S-Oil which has 250,000 b/d and 89,000 b/d condensate fractionation units said it has no plans yet to reduce its run rates but hinted at run cuts rate by saying it is monitoring the market very closely.

Hyundai Oilbank which runs two CDUs with $520,000 \,\text{b/d}$ and $170,000 \,\text{b/d}$ condensate splitters said it has lowered its crude run rate to 90 percent. It declined to comment on whether it would cut the rate further. (Source: Platts)

Coronavirus is hitting renewable energy supply chains and factories

Global renewable energy capacity hit 2,537 gigawatts (GW) at the end of last year, an increase of 176 GW compared to 2018, but the coronavirus continues to cast a shadow over the sector's prospects for 2020, impacting both supply chains and manufacturing facilities.

According to figures from the International Renewable Energy Agency's (IRENA) "Renewable Capacity Statistics 2020" report, new additions last year were slightly lower than the revised total of 179 GW added in 2018

Looking at the bigger picture, however, the organization said Monday that renewables "accounted for 72 per cent of all power expansion" in 2019, with solar and wind growing by 98 GW and almost 60 GW respectively. Together, these two technologies were responsible for 90% of renewable additions in 2019.

In terms of other sources, hydropower growth was described as being "unusually low" last year. In a foreword to the report, IRENA's Director-General Francesco La Camera explained that a number of large projects had "missed expected completion deadlines.

Breaking things down geographically, the report shows that Asia was responsible for 54% of renewable capacity additions last year. While the additions reported by IRENA may appear promis-

ing overall, this year looks set to pose a number of challenges for the renewables sector, many of them connected to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has caused issues with supply chains and forced some factories to shut.

There are also fears that the pandemic could negatively affect investments in clean energy, while the steep drop in oil prices is another factor that could potentially make renewables less attractive to some markets.

IRENA's La Camera acknowledged the impact that the corona virus pandemic would have going forward.

"As an existential threat, the multi-faceted fallout from coronavirus ... now sits alongside climate change as a defining challenge of our time," he wrote.

Challenges ahead

On Monday, Wood Mackenzie projected that 3 GW of solar photovoltaic and wind installations in India could be delayed due to the lockdown currently in place there.

"The timing of the lockdown is unfortunate as Q1 (the first quarter) is typically one of the busiest periods for wind project installations, Robert Liew, a principal analyst at the research and consultancy firm, said in a statement.

'The lockdown will delay some projects until summer, and if the lockdown is extended past April, wind farm construction could be further delayed into the monsoon season, where wind installations are typically at their lowest," he added.

Wood Mackenzie added that solar photovoltaic installations in India were "expected to be hit hard" because the sector was "heavily dependent" on Chinese photovoltaic module imports, which had experienced disruption because of the virus.

Globally, the wind industry is undoubtedly facing challenges. Toward the end of March, the Global Wind Energy Council said its forecast of continued growth across the next five years - more than 355 GW of additions - would "undoubtedly be impacted by the ongoing COV-ID-19 pandemic, due to disruptions to global supply chains and project execution in 2020.

It was, however, "too soon to predict the extent" of the coronavirus' impact on both energy markets and the wider global economy, the GWEC added.

On a regional level, the impact of the pandemic has already had an impact. According to industry body WindEurope, while "the majority' of wind turbine and component factories in Europe are continuing to operate, 18 manufacturing sites are currently closed. All these facilities are in Spain or Italy, which have been hit particularly hard by the pandemic.

A number of other factories, WindEurope says, "have temporarily paused activity as a precautionary step to strengthen sanitary measures within the sites and guarantee full compliance with government recommendations.

Europe's supply chain also "experienced some disruptions" in February related to components and materials from coming China. According to WindEurope, supplies are now "ramping back up again." (Source: CNBC)

The world's biggest oil deal can't save crude prices

G20 countries are set to send their oil minister for an emergency meetng on Friday, a sign that there is a chance that OPEC and Russia can pull in other oil-producing countries into a global production cut. Sentiment around the odds of a massive production cut deal have seemingly gyrated just as much as oil prices. Last week, President Trump's tweet was met with euphoria by oil traders but skepticism by analysts. A day later, the odds seemed to improve dramatically and OPEC+ agreed to hold a meeting on Monday after Russia voiced some degree of support. But Trump dashed hopes again after he emerged from a meeting with American oil executives and said that the free market would sort things out. That statement may have caused OPEC+ to delay a meeting until the end of this week. Saudi Arabia delayed the release of its monthly pricing list, an influential data point that offers both a pricing benchmark and also offers a window into Saudi strategy. The delay suggests that Riyadh will wait and see if there is any progress on OPEC+ talks before taking action one way or another.

Qatar Petroleum: coronavirus turmoil

put at most of its refineries by 25 percent-30 percent, although it has tweaked the product slate to meet the rise in LPG demand because of

Japan

increased cooking during the lockdown period. India's No. 2 refiner Bharat Petroleum Corp. has reduced crude throughput by 30 percent at its Mumbai refinery, according to a source close to the company. The cut took

effect on March 29, and was expected to last at least a week Corp. Ltd. has cut its throughput by a tenth at its Mumbai refinery, while the Vizag refinery is operating at its normal run rate, according to market sources.

period in end-March on high crude inventories. Independent refineries in eastern Shandong province also lifted their run rates to an average of 52.1 percent over March 1-25 from 41.5 percent in February, according to

India

will not stop LNG expansion abroad

Qatar Petroleum (QP) is pressing ahead with foreign as well as domestic expansion despite the global market turmoil caused by the coronavirus pandemic, its chief executive told Reuters on Monday.

Saad al-Kaabi, who heads the energy portfolio of the world's top liquefied natural gas (LNG) supplier, also said the company could seek to raise debt next year for its domestic North Field LNG expansion.

Qatar, a tiny but wealthy country is one of the most influential LNG market players with annual production of 77 million tonnes. It plans to increase its LNG production to 126 million tonnes a year by 2027.

Kaabi told Reuters QP will postpone the start of production from its new gas facilities until 2025 following a delay in the bidding process, but is not downsizing the world's largest LNG project, the North Field expansion.

We are still going to expand externally. We have always focused on upstream assets and... we are still interested in going ahead abroad," Kaabi said in a video conference interview.

ExxonMobil, Royal Dutch Shell, Total and ConocoPhillips are long-standing partners in Qatar's LNG plants.

Some of these have signed deals over the last year to give Qatar stakes in their oil and gas projects.

Energy companies worldwide have cut spending as oil prices plummeted to 18-year lows, dragging gas prices down with them, after a producer supply pact collapsed in March just as the impact of lockdowns to limit the spread of the new coronavirus destroved demand.

Qatar Petroleum is majority owner of the Golden Pass LNG terminal in Texas, with



Exxon holding a small stake.

Kaabi said the Golden Pass project was on schedule.

"The Golden Pass is proceeding... that's our major expansion outside Qatar regarding our LNG portfolio," he said.

"We don't have a project that is on the table that we are taking off the table. We are always looking for opportunities.'

Exxon and Qatar Petroleum made a final investment decision to build the project in February and expect the project to begin production in 2024.

Golden Pass is designed to produce around 16 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) of LNG, equivalent to about 2.1 billion cubic feet per day (bcfd) of natural gas.

Kaabi said the company was looking at opportunities to reduce its operating costs and capital expenditure, but that would not impact the major projects it is working on.

'QP is in a very good position financially. We have reduced our debt tremendously over the past years. We can weather the storm very easily," he said.

Although the company was not looking to raise debt for now, Kaabi said some of its foreign partners ask QP to raise debt for their own project finance.

"We will look at it at the right time ... We could be looking at it for next year," he said. (Source: Reuters)

record levels in 2019

New renewable energy capacity hit

Almost three-quarters of new electricity generation capacity built in 2019 uses renewable energy, representing an all-time record. New data from the International Renewable Energy Agency (Irena) shows solar, wind and other green technologies now provide more than one-third of the world's power, marking another record.

India's No. 3 refiner Hindustan Petroleum

Some Japanese refiners are considering

cutting operating rates further in April -- despite

the rate in March falling to the typical turna-

round level before the maintenance season

has started -- on plummeting global demand.

ing at the potential need for run cuts in April

due to a drop in domestic demand for key oil

At least two Japanese refiners are look-

Fossil fuel power plants are in decline in Europe and the US, with more decommissioned than built in 2019. But the number of coal and gas plants grew in Asia, the Middle East and Africa. In the Middle East, which owns half the world's oil reserves, just 26%of new electricity generation capacity built in 2019 was renewable.

The world has invested about \$3tn in renewables over the past decade, according to Irena, but annual investments must double by 2030 to tackle the climate emergency.

"While the trajectory is positive, more is required to put global energy on a path with sustainable development and climate mitigation." said Francesco La Camera, director general of Irena. "At this challenging time, we are reminded of the importance of building resilience into our economies.'

La Camera said the huge spending planned by governments in response to the coronavirus pandemic must support green initiatives rather than fossil fuels. "In responding to today's crisis, governments may be tempted to focus on short-term solutions," he said. "Yet distinctions between short-, mediumand long-term challenges may be deceptive. The pandemic shows that delayed action brings significant economic consequences.'

The global oil market is in turmoil, hit by collapsing demand due to Covid-19 lockdowns and a savage price war between Saudi Arabia, Russia and the US. La Camera said:



"Renewable energy is a cost-effective source of new power that insulates power markets and consumers from volatility." Solar and wind power are now the cheapest form of electricity in two-thirds of the world.

The Irena data shows the increase in new renewable energy capacity slowed slightly in 2019 - from 179GW to 176GW - but that new fossil fuel power also fell. The total green energy installed to date around the world grew by 7.6%, with the UK's total rising 6.1%. The UK is now 11th in the world for installed renewables

New solar power provided 55% of the new capacity, most of which was installed in Asia, with China, India, Japan, South Korea and Vietnam leading the way. Other major increases were seen in the US, Australia, Spain, Germany and Ukraine.

Wind power made up 34% of the total, with almost half in China and significant additions in the US. Global wind power capacity remains just ahead of solar, with 95% being onshore turbines.

Other green technologies - hydropower, bioenergy, geothermal and marine energyall grew modestly year-on-year. While small compared with solar and wind power, geothermal energy – tapping the heat of deep rocks-is growing, with Turkey, Indonesia and Kenya leading the way.

(Source: The Guardian)

The odds of success vary depending on who you ask.

On the bullish side of the ledger is the fact that an emergency meeting of the G20 oil ministers has been called, signaling potential participation in global production cuts beyond just OPEC+ countries. "It is coming to a level where it will have significant implications for the stability of the global economy and millions of workers employed in the oil and gas industry," Fatih Birol, the executive director of the International Energy Agency (IEA) told the FT. "The main task [of the G20] is to provide and maintain the financial and economic stability of global markets so it is perfectly in-line with their remit."

Saudi Arabia and Russia are "very, very close" to an historic deal to cut production, but success likely hinges on whether or not the U.S. and other non-OPEC countries join.

Still, several analysts voiced skepticism that a production deal was imminent.

The meeting delay "is a fresh sign that working out a deal of this magnitude will take time," JBC Energy wrote in a note on Monday. "Defining the right size for it will be very difficult, and of course, there is good reason to wonder if it will materialise at all." The fact that Brent was trading at around \$34 on Monday suggests that "a large part of the market still appears to be holding onto the hope of a better future,' the firm concluded.

However, even if they do, a global production cut – even one as large as 10 million barrels per day (mb/d) - may only buy time as the oil market continues to collapse.

Estimates of demand destruction now top 20 mb/d. Some estimates even put the global glut at 35 mb/d.

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Fifth and final batch of stranded Bahrainis fly home

By Salman Parviz

TEHRAN — A chartered flight arranged by Bahraini Health Ministry evacuated the final batch of Bahrainis stranded in Iran amid the present coronavirus (SARS-COV-2 or COVID-19) outbreak.

As part of the Bahraini International COVID-19 Repatriation Program the final batch of Bahrainis arrived home Monday as "all the necessary medical precautions have been taken" said the ministry.

They were among an original 1,630 Bahraini citizens, mainly pilgrims, stranded in Iran since COVID-19 outbreak In February.

There are no direct flights between Bahrain and Iran. Many Bahrainis go to Iran via Oman and Dubai on pilgrimage to Shia holy cities such as Mashad and Qom. Bahraini authorities have banned the entry of their citizens from Iran to Bahrain.

Bahrain's Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced Monday that it had so far evacuated more than 1,200 citizens, Dubai's state news agency ONA reported.

The Bahraini government said that they had secured accommodation for those returning from several countries, including Iran, Iraq, Morocco and Jordan.

Bahraini Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sheikha Rana bint Issa Al Khalifa, told Bahrain TV that in the early stages of the spread of coronavirus, the kingdom focused on efforts to evacuate citizens from China where the Bahraini citizens were students studying abroad.

The first batch of Bahraini citizens stranded in Iran returned home on March 10 under the



The Bahraini government said they had secured accommodation for those returning from several countries, including Iran, Iraq, Morocco and Jordan. (File/AFP)

auspices of Sultanate of Oman, Seyed Abbas Mousavi Foreign Ministry spokesman said, adding that the "Islamic Republic offers special gratitude to the government of Oman" and "hopes that the positive interaction on part of the Bahraini government and continuation of this process" would allow them to return to their homeland, reports Tasnim.

Earlier Mousavi had criticized the Bahraini government's irresponsible behavior towards its citizens stranded in Iran. "While many regional countries took action to take back their citizens in cooperation with our country's officials, sadly the government of Bahrain has not done anything to take back its citizens despite the readiness of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran for cooperation, and has not either accepted the proposals put forward by certain parties," Mousavi said on March 4. Bahraini authorities have tasked a foun-

Bahraini authorities have tasked a foundation under the Justice and Islamic Affairs Ministry to cover the cost of nationals stranded abroad Bahrain News Agency said.

On March 27, a group of 31 Bahrainis arrived in Qatar from Iran but were left stranded, as Manama does not allow direct flights to Doha since it joined two other Persian Gulf states (Saudi Arabia and UAE) in imposing a blockade against Qatar in June 2017. However, on earlier Qatar took part in an emergency (Persian) Gulf Cooperation Council meeting, the first such participation since the imposition of blockade.

A statement from Qatar's Government Communications Office said Doha had offered to fly the Bahraini citizens on a private charter flight to Bahrain "at no expense to the individuals or the government of Bahrain". But Manama rejected the offer and flew back its citizens later.

Since the COVID-19 outbreak there were more than 2000 Bahraini citizens stranded in Iran. It took five flights to evacuate them.

According to the Bahraini Ministry of Health more than 77 people on board the first flight conducted by Omani Peace Airlines had been infected.

The second flight which was scheduled for March 23 to leave from the holy city of Mashad for Bahrain International Airport was cancelled, disappointing many Bahrainis who had spent long and exhausting hours at Mashad airport waiting for the flight to take off.

The Bahrain Mirror called it "extreme disregard for Bahraini citizens" while the Bahraini Ministry of Health blamed the contracting company and said that the cancellation was due to logistical reasons that were not mentioned.

There were five deaths among Bahrainis stranded in Mashad who were stranded for over a month.

The cancellation was declared following the diagnosis of 77 passengers out of the 165 who were on the first flight, with coronavirus, reported MNA.

Surge in gun sales, coronavirus-based possible chaos to push U.S. in civil war

The remarkable surge in firearms sales has been reported across the US as people fear social order will unravel if the health and economic crisis caused by Covid-19 escalates, a senior media editor wrote on his analytic article, noting the circumstances may push the United States in a civil armed conflict.



Finian Cunningham, who has been writing for nearly 20 years as an editor and a writer in major news media organizations, including The Mirror, Irish Times and Independent, has expressed his concern about a possible chaos which may occur in the next two-three weeks due to rise in coronavirus outbreak and aftermath crisis across the US.

Cunningham, in his article published by the Information Clearing House on April 7, says that the specter of the coronavirus pandemic in the US has darkened decidedly, with US President Donald Trump warning of a harrowing next few weeks from a surging disease death toll. Into the malevolent mix are reports of American citizens buying up firearms as if there is no tomorrow.

In recent weeks, gun sales have hit record highs amid public fears of a breakdown in law and order. Most of the sales were among first-time buyers, according to reports. During March, before the government-ordered shutdown of businesses due to the coronavirus epidemic, mandatory FBI background checks showed a huge spike suggesting gun sales had gone through the roof.

Some 3.7 million checks were carried out in that month alone, corresponding to individuals purchasing firearms. Bear in mind too that each individual can buy several guns

Bear in mind too that each individual can buy several guns under the same application. Bear in mind too that the US is already the leading nation for citizens owning firearms, with an estimated 390 million pieces in circulation, equivalent to more than one weapon for every citizen. Bear in mind too that the US is the world's leader in deaths from mass shootings.

That's in "normal" times, never mind the highly anxious present development over COVID-19.

Every year, official figures show some 11,000 Americans are killed in homicides with firearms. Nearly double that figure die in suicides involving guns, putting the annual death toll from gun violence at well over 30,000. The US death toll from the COVID-19 disease is heading towards 10,000 as the number of fatalities escalates as of April 7. Official estimates are warning of COVID-19 mortality in the US reaching as high as 200,000.

But what could add to the deadly impact of the pandemic can be the prevalence of guns and the growing fear of social chaos. This is what Trump may have been hinting at when he said last month that the longer the economic shutdown goes on the more casualties will result. In recent days, the president has voiced concern that the US economy cannot go on indefinitely "paying people not to work".

Trump doesn't want the economy to tank because with that so will his reelection hopes flounder. More than that, however, Trump and the corporate class know that the capitalist economy is like a bicycle. Once it stops moving it will fall over. So, the imperative is to get businesses re-opened and workers back on the job.

What if millions of workers don't want to go back to the front line knowing that their lives may be at risk from a pandemic that has not been contained?

American historian sees generals' foot print in spreading lethal viruses globally

Similarities between spread of the Spanish flu in Europe in the last year of World War I and today's coronavirus outbreak are obvious, Gareth Porter says, adding in both lethal pandemic the US military generals' foot print should not be ignored.

Porter, who is the author of Manufactured Crisis, has compared the two similar incidents in his analytic article published by the Anti War on April 4.

The independent journalist and winner of the 2012 Gellhorn Prize for journalism, in his article, has pointed out how generals fueled 1918 Flu pandemic to win their World War.

Just like today, brass and bureaucrats ignored warnings, and sent troops overseas despite the consequences, porter has underlined in the article.

The US military has been forced by the coronavirus pandemic to make some serious changes in their operations. But the Pentagon, and especially the Navy, have also displayed a revealing resistance to moves to stand down that were clearly needed to protect troops from the raging virus from the start.

The Army and Marine Corps have shifted from in-person to virtual recruitment meetings. But the Pentagon has reversed an initial Army decision to postpone further training and exercises for at least 30 days, and it has decided to continue sending new recruits from all the services to basic training camps, where they would no doubt be unable to sustain social distancing.

A couple of days ago, the captain of the aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt, on which the virus was reportedly spreading, was relieved of command. He was blamed by his superiors for the leak of a letter he wrote warning the Navy that failure to act rapidly

tinued to be sickened by the virus, at first with milder illness and relatively few deaths but the war managers simply evacuated the sick and brought in fresh replacements, allowing the virus to adapt and mutate into more virulent and more lethal strains.

The consequences of that approach to the war became evident after the August 27 arrival in Boston harbor, when visitors brought a much more virulent and lethal strain of the virus; it quickly entered Boston itself and by September 8, had appeared at Camp Devens outside the city. Within ten days, the camp had thousands of soldiers sick with the new strain, and some of those infected at the camp boarded troops ships for Europe.

Meanwhile the lethal new strain spread from Camp Devens across the United States through September and October, ravaging one city after another. From September onward, the US command in France, led by Gen. John Pershing, and the war managers in the War Department in Washington, were well aware that both US troops already in Europe and the American public were suffering vast numbers of severe illnesses and death from the pandemic.

Nevertheless, Pershing continued to call for large numbers of the replacements for those stricken at the front lines, as well as for new divisions to launch a major offensive late in the year. In a message to the War Department on September 3, Pershing demanded an additional 179,000 troops.

The internal debate that followed that request, recounted by historian Carol R. Byerly, documents the chilling indifference of Pershing and the military bureaucracy in Washington to the fate of American troops they planned to send to war. After watching the horror of lethally-infected soldiers dying of pneumonia in the infected camps, acting Army Surgeon General Charles Richard strongly advised Army Chief of Staff Peyton March in late September against sending troops from the infected camps to France until the epidemic had been brought under control in the surrounding region, and March agreed. Richard then asked for stopping the draft calls for young men heading for any camp known to be already infected. March wouldn't go that far, and although the October draft was called off, it was to resume in November. The War Department acknowledged the heavy toll the pandemic was taking on US troops in October 10, informing Pershing that he would get his troops by November 30, "if we are not stopped on account of Influenza, which has now passed the 200,000 mark.' Richard then called for troops to be guarantined for a week before being shipped to Europe, and that the troopships carry only half the standard number of troops to reduce crowding. When March rejected those moves, which would have made it impossible for him to meet Pershing's targets, Richard then recommended that all troop shipments be suspended until the influenza pandemic was brought under control, "except such as are demanded by urgent military necessity." But the chief of staff rejected such a radical shift in policy, and went to the White House to get President Woodrow Wilson's approval for the decision. Wilson, obviously recognizing the implications of going ahead under the circumstances, asked why he refused to stop troop transport during the epidemic. March argued that Germany would be encouraged to fight on if it knew "the American divisions and replacements were no longer arriving."Wilson then approved his decision, refusing to disturb Pershing's ar plans.



the First World War is clearly revealed with the astonishing fact that more American soldiers were killed and hospitalized by influenza (63,114) than in combat (53,402). And an estimated 340,000 American troops were hospitalized with influenza/pneumonia, compared with 227,000 hospitalized by Germans attacks.

The lack of concern of Washington bureaucrats for the well-being of the troops, as they pursue their own war interests, appears to be a common pattern—seen too, in the US wars in Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq. Now it has been revealed once again in the stunningly callous response of the Pentagon to the coronavirus pandemic crisis.

In the 1918 war, there was no protest against that cold indifference, but there are now indications that

threatened the health of his 5,000 sailors.

Secretary of Defense Mark Esper justified his decision to continue many military activities as usual by declaring these activities are "critical to national security." But does anyone truly believe there is a military threat on the horizon that the Pentagon must prepare for right now? It is widely understood outside the Pentagon that the only real threat to that security is the coronavirus itself.

Esper's decisions reflect a deeply ingrained Pentagon habit of protecting its parochial military interests at the expense of the health of American troops. This pattern of behavior recalls the far worse case of the US service chiefs once managing the war in Europe. They acted with even greater callousness toward the troops being called off to war in Europe during the devastating "Spanish flu" pandemic of 1918, which killed 50 million people worldwide.

It was called the "Spanish flu" only because, while the United States, Britain and France were all censoring news about the spread of the pandemic in their countries to maintain domestic morale, the press in neutralist Spain was reporting freely on influenza cases there. In fact, the first major wave of infections in the United States came in US training camps set up to serve the war.

Abundant documentary evidence shows that the 1918 pandemic actually began in Haskell County, Kansas, in early 1918, when many residents came down with an unusually severe type of influenza. Some county residents were then sent to the Army's Camp Funston at Ft. Riley, Kansas, the military's largest training facility, training 50,000 recruits at a time for the war. Within two weeks, thousands of soldiers at the camp became sick with the new influenza virus, and 38 died.

Recruits at 14 of 32 large military training camps set up across the country to feed the US war in Europe soon reported similar influenza outbreaks, apparently because some troops from Camp Funston had been sent there. By May 1918, hundreds of thousands of troops, many of whom were already infected, began boarding troopships bound for Europe, and the crowding onboard the ships created ideal conditions for the virus to explode further.

In the trenches in France, still more US troops con-

But the decision was not carried out fully. The German Supreme Command had already demanded that the Kaiser accept Wilson's 14 points, and the armistice was signed on November 11.

The disastrous character of the US elite running t

the families of soldiers put being at risk are expressing their anger about it openly to representatives of the military. In a time of socio-political upheaval, and vanishing tolerance for the continuation of endless war, it could be a harbinger of accelerated unraveling of political tolerance for the war state's overweening power.

As of April 7, the total number of people infected with the novel coronavirus around the world reached 1,288.080, according to the data released by coronavirus research centers.

Death toll was over 70,000.

More than 272,000 patients had recovered.

US was leading in the world in terms of the largest number of infected people (336,906 confirmed cases). Over 9,600 deaths were reported.

Then came Spain which confirmed 135,032 cases so far with 3,386 new cases reported in one day. The total number of deaths in Spain was 13,055.

Spain was followed by Italy which reported a total of 128,948 cases. 15,887 patients died.

Germany was the 4th with 100,232 confirmed cases and 1,590 deaths. It was followed by France which has 92,839 confirmed cases and 8,078 deaths.

China, where the COVID-19 outbreak started, is now the 6th as it confirmed 81,708 cases so far. 39 new cases were recorded. The death toll was 3,331.

The total number of coronavirus cases in Iran reached 60,500 with over 2,000 new cases at the time. The number of deaths was 3,739.

Iran was followed by UK – 47,806 cases, Turkey – 27,069 and Switzerland – 21,652.

Georgia confirmed 188 cases of coronavirus and Russia – 6,343. 47 people died in Russia.

According to the data of the World Health Organization, coronavirus cases were confirmed in 204 countries and territories as of April 7.

and territories as of April 7. In late December 2019, Chinese authorities notified the World Health Organization (WHO) about an outbreak of a previously unknown pneumonia in the city of Wuhan, central China. WHO declared the outbreak of the novel coronavirus a global pandemic and named the virus COVID-19. The near-mutinous episode on the USS Theodore Roosevelt aircraft carrier speaks of a simmering mood against the authorities. When the Pentagon bosses sacked Captain Brett Crozier for sounding the alarm about infections among his 4,000 crew, the crew cheered their commander as a hero for putting their health and safety above orders from the admirals.

Elsewhere, the critical shortage of protective equipment for essential workers such as healthcare personnel shows that the US authorities have not done nearly enough to ensure public safety. If workers are forced back to their jobs by authorities who are seen as callous and uncaring – motivated only by private profit – then that will surely breed further massive resentment and anger.

How will people feed their families if government welfare checks dry up, as Trump has hinted they will dry up owing to fiscal pressure?

Some 10 million Americans have lost their jobs so far due to the COVID-19 pandemic with total job losses possibly soaring to 47 million. Oh yeah, Washington can find trillions for military spending every year, but when it comes to supporting workers and their families during a time of crisis, well then suddenly there must be fiscal prudence. Such twisted priorities tell people that, as far their governing class is concerned, they are expendable.

It's not hard to imagine hungry and desperate people forcing their way into closed shops and stores to raid for food, medicines and other essential supplies if it comes down to a survival situation. The ethics of feeding one's children takes precedence over legal formalities of paying at a checkout – particularly when there is no checkout operating.

Seems too like it's not just the US citizenry who are expecting trouble ahead. The US government has mobilized over 21,000 troops belonging to the National Guard to be deployed across states in the event of social disorder.

The US is not a good place to be right now. A pandemic worsened by government mishandling of the crisis, massive social insecurity among impoverished workers, and enough guns and ammo out there to wage a war. When Trump warns that the worse is yet to come, he may not even realize just how bad that is.

As of April 7, the total number of people infected with the novel coronavirus around the world reached 1,288.080, according to the data released by coronavirus research centers.

The US has been leading in the world in terms of the largest number of infected people (336,906 confirmed cases). Over 9,600 deaths have also been reported as of April 7.



Rural handicrafts workshop readjusted to produce face masks

HERITAGE TEHRAN – A handicrafts workshop in a rural area, northeast Iran, which used to produce silk textiles, has been repurposed to make protective face masks as the country is fighting the coronavirus pandemic.



Located in Torbat-e Heydarieh in Khorasan Razavi province, the workshop has employed 22 female workers, producing some 4,000 masks per day, CHTN reported on Monday.

The masks are produced under the supervision of a medical university, the report added.

So far, the total number of people diagnosed with the coronavirus in Iran has added up to 62,589, of whom 3,872 died and 27,039 being recovered.

Tehran to mark Intl. Day for Monuments and Sites online

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** – A number of experts in the fields of cultural heritage, architecture, and restoration will convene a video conference on April 17 to mark the International Day for Monuments and Sites.

The event will be held at the Glassware and Ceramic Museum of Iran (Abgineh Museum), a day prior to original date, which is April 18, CHTN reported.

The participants, along with their global counterparts, will be exploring the idea of sharing—and its counterpoints, contestation and resistance—in relation to cultures, heritage and responsibility.

Given the current global outbreak of Covid-19 and the containment measures in different countries around the world, the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) encourages people to celebrate the International Day for Monuments and Sites in compliance with instructions from local and national authorities so as to ensure the safety of participants.



The archaeological ensemble called Takht-e Soleyman ("Throne of Solomon") is situated on a remote plain surrounded by mountains in northwestern Iran's West Azerbaijan province. The site has a strong symbolic and spiritual significance related to fire and water – the principal reason for its occupation from ancient times – and stands as an exceptional testimony of the continuation of a cult related to fire and water for some 2,500 years.



European expertise to help restore ancient mosque in Iran

HERITAGE d e s k **TEHRAN** – Several European professionals have announced readiness to share expertise and offer advice for partially restoring Jameh Mosque of Qazvin, which is one of the oldest congregational mosques in Iran.

"The European experts are affiliated with an experienced scientific group in the field of restoration and rehabilitation of historical monuments, which [their competence] is endorsed by [Iran's] Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts," provincial tourism chief Alireza Khaza'eli announced on Monday, CHTN reported.

The official, however, did not provide any further details on the experts, but said the project will be launched after the coronavirus pandemic is contained.

Locally known as the Masjid-e-Jameh Atiq, the mosque is originally built on the site of a Sassanid fire temple, it was subsequently developed and expanded over several different periods. Its construction was first ordered in 807 CE (192 AH) by the Abbasid Caliph Harun Al-Rashid. Under the Seljuk leaders (1038-1194), two iwans were added to its north. After a renovation in the eleventh century, the twelfth century saw the construction of the main prayer hall, a dome, a courtyard, and a religious school. Under the Safavids (1501-1732), the southern and western iwans and arcades were added, and the Qajar period (1779-1924) witnessed a major renovation and expansion.

The mosque follows the four-iwan typology; each iwan is centered on a large courtyard with a central fountain. This courtyard is one of the largest mosque courts in Iran, measuring nearly four thousand square meters. Its two main prayer halls are located along the north and south sides of the court. Two narrow arcaded halls, five meters wide, run along the east and west.



A portico of the Jameh Mosque of Qazvin is seen behind scaffolding in an undated photo.

The mosque is constructed of brick, which is clad with tiles and inscriptions in some areas. The main prayer hall is the most ornamented part of the mosque. Both its mihrab and minbar are made of stone, and the upper part of the walls is ornamented in different floral patterns and small polychrome tiles. A half-dome roofing the south iwan also has a double-shell structure. The two northern minarets are clad with colorful tiles in floral patterns. The interior of the iwans are decorated with muqarnas; in the north iwan, these muqarnas are stuccoed, while those in the southern iwan are of exposed brick.

Ancient bas-relief discovered in western Iran

→ 1 "Other relics related to historical periods up to Qajar era [1789–1925] were also discovered in the survey," he added.

Last May, a team of Iranian archaeologists announced evidence of Paleolithic residents found in Lorestan's Kaldar cave, a key archaeological site that provides evidence of the Middle to Upper Paleolithic transition in Iran. The team excavated stone tools and a fragment of a fossilized skull, which are attributed to Homo sapiens. The cave also yielded weapon fragments crafted by Neanderthals.

In taxonomy, Homo sapiens is the only extant human species. The name is Latin for "wise man" and was introduced in 1758 by Carl Linnaeus (who

Drilling wells near Naqsh-e Rostam banned over probable damage



RITAGE TEHRAN – Drilling those of Darius II, Artaxerxes I, Darius I and



is himself also the type specimen). Neanderthals are an extinct species or subspecies of archaic humans in the genus Homo, who lived within Eurasia from circa 400,000 until 40,000 years ago. Lorestan was inhabited by Iranian Indo-European peoples, including the Medes, c. 1000 BC Gimmediae and Southing intermittee the mole

Lorestan was inhabited by Iranian Indo-European peoples, including the Medes, c. 1000 BC. Cimmerians and Scythians intermittently ruled the region from about 700 to 625 BC. The Luristan Bronzes, noted for their eclectic array of Assyrian, Babylonian, and Iranian artistic motifs, date from this turbulent period. Lorestan was incorporated into the growing Achaemenid Empire in about 540 BC and successively was part of the Seleucid, Parthian, and Sasanid dynasties.

Tehran to hold virtual workshop on geotourism



OURISM TEHRAN – Tehran geological marvels which can attract

Located here, in a harmonious composition inspired by its natural setting, are the remains of an exceptional ensemble of royal architecture of Persia's Sasanian dynasty (3rd to 7th centuries). Integrated with the palatial architecture is an outstanding example of Zoroastrian sanctuary; this composition at Takht-e Soleyman can be considered an important prototype, according to the UNESCO.

An artesian lake and a volcano are essential elements of Takht-e Soleyman. At the site's heart is a fortified oval platform rising about 60 meters above the surrounding plain and measuring about 350 m by 550 m. On this platform are an artesian lake, a Zoroastrian fire temple, a temple dedicated to Anahita (the divinity of the waters), and a Sasanian royal sanctuary. This site was destroyed at the end of the Sasanian era, but was revived and partly rebuilt in the 13th century. About three kilometers west is an ancient volcano, Zendan-e Soleyman, which rises about 100 m above its surroundings. At its summit are the remains of shrines and temples dating from the first millennium BC.

Takht-e Soleyman was the principal sanctuary and foremost site of Zoroastrianism, the Sasanian state religion. This early monotheistic faith has had an important influence on Islam and Christianity; likewise, the designs of the fire temple and the royal palace, and the site's general layout, had a strong influence on the development of religious architecture in the Islamic period, and became a major architectural reference for other cultures in both the East and the West. The site also has many important symbolic relationships, being associated with beliefs much older than Zoroastrianism as well as with significant biblical figures and legends.

The 10-ha property also includes Tepe Majid, an archaeological mound culturally related to Zendan-e Soleyman; the mountain to the east of Takht-e Soleyman that served as quarry for the site; and Belqeis Mountain 7.5 km to the northeast, on which are the remains of a Sasanian-era citadel. The archaeological heritage of the Takht-e Soleyman ensemble is further enriched by the Sasanian town (which has not yet been excavated) located in the 7,438-ha landscape buffer zones. d e s k deep wells near Naqsh-e Rostam, a royal rock-hewn necropolis in Fars province, southern Iran, has been banned over probable subsidence of land and damage to the ancient site.

Drilling new wells are subject to gain official permission from the cultural heritage, tourism and handicrafts department general, CHTN reported.

Naqsh-e Rostam, meaning "Picture of Rostam", incorporates memorials of the Elamites, the Achaemenids and the Sassanians. It is where four Persian Achaemenid kings are laid to rest, Xerxes I (from left to right facing the cliff), although some historians are still debating this.

There are gorgeous bas-relief carvings above the tomb chambers that are similar to those in Persepolis, with the kings standing on thrones supported by figures representing the subject nations below.

Beneath the funerary chambers are dotted with seven Sassanian era (224–651) bas-reliefs cut into the cliff depict vivid scenes of imperial conquests and royal ceremonies; signboards below each relief give a detailed description in English.





Coronavirus: No visitors to tulip park

TOURISM d e s k **TEHRAN** – Photos depict tulips in full bloom at Chamran park and flowers garden in the city of Karaj, April 6, 2020. Typically at this time of the year, the botanical garden hosts thousands of people and nature lovers each day, but the place is now closed over the coronavirus fears.

Late in March, entry to museums, cultural sites, and parks across the country was banned because of the virus pandemic.

Chamran park annually showcases some 300,000 pieces of tulip bulbs in over 30 different colors from late March through mid-April.

Being a vast land with very varied climatic conditions, Iran is one of the largest producers of ornamental flowers in the region. The country's soil is home to almost any type of flower and plant in various regions of the country.

Flowers are a big part of Iranian culture. The rose for example, is used to make rosewater, which in the past, was sprinkled on guests while the flowers themselves constituted an ingredient for flavoring desserts.

d e s k province's department of cultural heritage, tourism, and handicrafts is scheduled to hold a virtual workshop on geotourism today.

The workshop is aimed to turn the spotlight on Tehran province's geographical characters, environment, heritage, aesthetics, and culture, provincial tourism chief Parham Janfeshan announced on Monday, CHTN reported.

"Thanks to its distinct geographical conditions, Tehran enjoys a variety of

many tourists each year," the official said.

Underlining the importance of education in tourism, he noted "If we want to realize sustainable development in the province's tourism, we must strengthen the foundations of education," he said.

Many experts believe that geotourism is not a niche market as the global population of travelers increases and destinations become more globalized and homogenous, principles of geotourism are resonating with travelers across the globe.



Asiatic cheetahs' return to birthplace: semi-captive living or reaching end of life?

By Faranak Bakhtiari

TEHRAN – The Department of Environment (DOE) is transferring three Asiatic cheetahs kept in Tehran's Pardisan Park to Semnan province where they have been born to live the rest of their life in semi-captive conditions because they are no longer able to reproduce.

The world's fastest mammal, capable of reaching speeds of 120 kilometers per hour, once stalked habitats from the eastern reaches of India to the Atlantic coast of Senegal, once their numbers have stabilized in parts of southern Africa, but they have practically disappeared from northern Africa and Asia.

The subspecies "Acinonyx jubatus venaticus", commonly known as the Asiatic cheetah, is critically endangered, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature, with fewer than 50 believed to remain in Iran.

On Monday, the DOE made a big shock to the country's environmental community by deciding to hastily transfer three Asiatic cheetahs to their new detention center without informing experts, environmental activists and the media. It seems that these activities are being carried out to implement the semi-captive keeping of the cheetahs, which

have been criticized by experts many times before. The project team is said to have put a lot of stress on the cheetahs after several unsuccessful firing of anesthesia darts due to lack of previous experience.

According to Iman Memarian, a wildlife veterinarian, a drug called medetomidine is used to anesthetize cheetahs, which at a dose of 5cc, the female cheetah may fall into a coma, cardiac and respiratory arrest, or may eventually die.

The project, which began in the last days of March, is being carried out in violation of protocols related to captive cheetahs.

The release of images of non-standard boxes has aroused the concern of environmentalists, who say the boxes, which were intended to transport cheetahs through a pickup truck to Semnan province, will kill the animals.

Efforts by journalists to communicate with experts and officials of the DOE and to question the objectives and motivations for the project have not been successful, and they have decided to publish an open letter warning of the irreparable consequences, according to Mehr news agency.

The 24-hour challenge of the DOE sending the cheetahs to their birthplace has only ended with the transfer of the youngest cheetah, Iran, which has been released in its habitat, Turan National Park in complete health.

Delbar, Kushki and Iran reach the bitter end Two female Asiatic cheetahs, Delbar and Iran, and the male one, Kushki, have lived in the capital for the past few years. In 2015, Delbar once became pregnant naturally but sadly lost her cub.

Last year (March 2018-March 2019), she was physically prepared for mating with Kushki, however, possibly due to Kushki's old age, the two didn't breed.

Delbar underwent artificial insemination earlier this year (starting on March 21), which turned out unsuccessful. The younger female cheetah named "Iran" which is three years old and her pregnancy possibility is high, is also trans-

ferred to a fenced area in the central part of the country. Natural mating and artificial insemination have been



already tried for Asiatic cheetahs kept in captivity, which sadly failed. Now, fertilizing the female Asiatic cheetah is nearly impossible due to their old age.

Keeping cheetahs in captivity not helpful

Memarian, who was an opponent of the plan, said that it was a big mistake to focus on the implementation of the semi-captive reproduction scheme, adding that the number of Persian cheetahs was not high enough to raise hope for reproduction in captivity.

He said it was wrong to compare the natural conditions of Iran and South Africa in prescribing reproduction in semi-captive conditions for Persian cheetahs, adding that in South Africa, almost all natural areas and parks have been fenced, and several thousand cheetahs live in the wild.

In South Africa's transfer of cheetahs, only one out of every four cheetahs survives, and in addition to the dangers of moving, keeping them in semi-captive conditions, health management is much more difficult, he highlighted.

Cheetahs born in captivity cannot adopt to nature "Whether reproduction in captivity or semi-captive conditions does not save the Asian Cheetah from extinction, because even this type of reproduction has not been successful in South Africa," he said, referring to the exorbitant costs of implementing the project in nature.

He went on to note that more importantly, cheetahs born in these conditions can not return to nature.

Roads, stray dogs, habitat fragmentation, and hunting are among the reasons behind cheetahs being endangered, and the DOE's focus should be on protecting habitats. However, cheetah habitats, especially the corridors, are generally empty, and only cheetahs are reported to live in the Turan National Park habitat, he explained.

This is while, Alireza Jourabchian, Conservation of the Asiatic Cheetah Project founder, told Tasnim in October 2019 that unfortunately, mismanagement severely affected

conservation projects.

Asiatic cheetah born in captivity will never learn the skills to survive in nature and will not be able to reproduce in nature, thus a captive breeding plan cannot be considered as a measure to prevent the extinction of the cheetahs, he lamented.

Protecting cheetahs in natural habitats more useful

Mohammad Ali Yektanik, an environmental expert who opposes the project, told Mehr about the reasons for his opposition to the project "Previous phases of the captive cheetah breeding project have failed, despite the heavy costs." "According to Shahaboddin Montazemi, the director

of the wildlife office of the DOE, the chances of success are very small at two percent, so given the current management environment in the country, insisting on continuing to implement such a plan with existing priorities to save the remains of Asian cheetahs in Iran is not logical," he added.

The shortage and, in some cases, the lack of workforce and the minimum necessary facilities for wildlife protection, what is the need for a budget that only benefits the implementers of the cheetah reproduction plan and does not have a protective function for nature to be repeated with different kinds of justifications?

Environmentalists have repeatedly stated that protecting cheetahs in natural habitats is the top priority, but as the population of cheetahs has not reached the desired level, the organization is considering resolving the crisis and other methods.

The use of artificial insemination, reproduction in captivity at the Cheetah reproduction and breeding center in Pardisan Park has been one of the activities that, with its unsuccessful implementation, eventually led environmental officials to take a chance on the project.



World Health Day: dedicated medics on frontline fighting the invisible enemy

 $1 \rightarrow$ To help them get through such an extremely demanding time, the effort and commitment of every one of us are

needed, despite the responsible bodies' protection and support. Doctors, nurses and other staff are making efforts in overwhelming and frightening conditions, not only because the virus is new or invisible, but because mostly they are overworked

and vulnerable to the infection. They may also bear considerable mental stress as well as those in the front line of war events, in addition to the fear they feel about disease transmission when in contact with their family and loved ones. We can help them by resisting the spread of inaccurate information, as fake news can raise public concern, panic, and unrest; which can easily disrupt the availability of food and vital supplies such as face masks, gloves or others, running out for health workers and other frontline workers who are highly in need of which.

Moreover, choosing to stay at home and not to be a chain in disease transmission will also be much helpful.

However, the government and decision-makers must also try best to set the most efficient policies in the fight against the disease and give the medical staff what they need to survive

South Korea to send \$2m anti-corona shipment to Iran

SOCIETY desk shipment worth \$2 million to Iran to help the country combat the coronavirus.

To date, South Korea has provided Iran with items worth \$200,000, including a PCR and a disinfectant pump, South Korea's embassy in Iran wrote on its Twitter account on Tuesday.



Last week, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries Fund for International Development (OFID), provided Iran with \$500,000 to combat COVID-19, according to the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance.

Besides, Russia has sent 50,000 coronavirus diagnostic kits to the Iranian Embassy in Moscow, Iran's Ambassador to Russia Kazem Jalali announced in March.

Moreover, the World Health Organization sent an aircraft carrying tons of medical supplies and test kits along with a medical team to Iran in early March.

Also, the World Heath Organization delivered a shipment of emergency medical supplies and medicine to Iran as part of COVID-19 response measures on March 24.

The total number of people diagnosed with the coronavirus in Iran reached 62,589 on Tuesday, of whom 3,872 have died and 27,039 recovered, Health Ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour said.

Iran starts smart screening program to contain coronavirus

SOCIETY desktright **TEHRAN** – The second phase of the social distancing plan in Iran started on Tuesday within the framework of a screening program to curb the spread of coronavirus.



"Under the program, we will conduct tests on the asymptomatic people who are transmitting the virus to the community without awareness," Health Minister Saeed Namaki said explained, IRNA reported.

"With the help of knowledge-based companies, we are moving to centers that have no symptoms, and for this we need an extensive diagnosis," he added.

Iran implemented the social distancing measures from March 27 for two weeks in a bid to minimize the spread of coronavirus. According to the plan, intercity travels were restricted and

only residents were allowed to enter their cities. Moreover, holding any kind of meeting or congregation was



this crisis as long as we will need them in case the next pandemic arrives.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

Iran breaks U.S. monopoly on aviation navigation charts

Iranian researchers have succeeded to produce aviation navigation charts, known as Inflight AIP (Aeronautical Information Publication), which was monopolized by the United States, IRNA news agency reported on Sunday.

Prepared by Iran's Army, the Inflight AIP was unveiled in Tehran with Air Force Commander Brigadier General Aziz Nasirzadeh and Vice President for Science and Technology Sourena Sattari in attendance.

Digital aeronautical charts, including instrument flight rules (IFR) and visual flight rules (VFR), is a high-quality knowledge-based product which was solely produced by Jeppesen Company and was not available for Iranian airlines due to U.S. sanctions. ایران انحصار آمریکا در نقشههای هوانوردی را شکست

ایـران بـا تولیـد نقشـههای هوانـوردی (INFLIGHT AIP) کـه پیـش از ایـن در انحصـار آمریـکا بـوده بـه موفقیـت چشـمگیری در زمینـه صنعـت هوانـوردی دسـت یافـت.

به گزارش ایرنا، روز یکشنبه با حضور امیر سرتیپ خلبان عزیز نصیرزاده فرمانده نیروی هوایی ارتش و سورنا ستاری معاون علمی و فناوری ریاست جمهوری از نقشههای هوانوردی (INFLIGHT AIP) تولید داخل رونمایی شد. چارتهای هوایی دیجیتال شامل نقشههای پروازی IFR و VFR یک محصول دانش بنیان با فناوری بسیار بالا است که پیش از این انحصار آن در اختیار آمریکا و شرکت جپسن (Jeppesen) قرار داشت که به دلیل اعمال تحریمهای ظالمانه شرکتهای هواپیمایی ایرانی از دسترسی به این نقشهها محروم شده بودند.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

"-dom"

Meaning: state, condition, quality
For example: we do have some freedom of choice.

PHRASAL VERB

Pull in

Meaning: to move to a designated place at the side of the road
For example: A police car signaled to me to pull in.

IDIOM

Do a double take

Explanation: to look at someone or something again because you are very surprised by what you saw or heard
For example: Colleagues often walked past me in the hallway, then stopped and did a double take.

banned and all parks and gyms, as well as universities and schools, remained closed.

Meanwhile, rail, road, and air transport were limited.

WORDS IN THE NEWS

Road to peace?

(June 02, 2003)

For decades Ariel Sharon has insisted that the occupation of large parts of the West Bank and Gaza is essential for Israel>s security. Now, he>s formally agreed to the road map - a peace plan that would establish a Palestinian state in that territory. Is this a real change in position or is it a tactical manoeuvre? This report from Barbara Plett.

Ariel Sharon presented his acceptance of the road map **in terms of pragmatic** self-interest rather than as a step towards peace. He told his cabinet that approving the US-backed plan would safeguard Israel>s strategic relationship with Washington and it would help the country>s struggling economy because, he said, diplomatic progress would lead to economic benefits. This largely negative **endorsement** faced strong opposition from the far right. But Mr Sharon is really **swimming with the tide** as **polls** show that a solid Israeli majority supports the road map. There is debate in Israel though about what the old warrior is really up to. Some analysts believe his new moves are only tacti-

really up to. Some analysts believe his new moves are only tactical, **concealing** old policies of **expanding** Jewish settlements in the occupied territories. Others believe he does want to achieve a settlement of the conflict in this his final term as prime minister. Ariel Sharon>s view of the road map is **ambiguous** enough to allow for both readings.

Words

in terms of: the way something is described pragmatic: practical endorsement: support swimming with the tide: agreeing with what most people think polls: surveys of public opinion concealing: hiding expanding: increasing the size of ambiguous: unclear



China reports no Covid-19 deaths for first time

China reported no coronavirus deaths on Tuesday, the first time since it started publishing daily figures in January.

The National Health Commission said it had 32 confirmed cases, down from 39 on Monday.

It comes as the government is under scrutiny as to whether it is underreporting its figures, BBC reported.

The government says more than 3,331 people have died and 81,740 have been confirmed as infected.

China is concerned a second wave of infections could be brought in by foreign arrivals.

It has already shut its border to foreigners including those with visas or residence permits.

International flights have been reduced with both Chinese and foreign airlines only allowed to operate one international flight a week. Flights must not be more than 75% full.

On Wednesday, Wuhan is set to allow people to leave the city for the first time since the lockdown began in January. Officials say anyone who has a "green" code on a widely used

smartphone health app will be allowed to leave the city.

Some people in "epidemic-free" residential compounds have already been allowed to leave their homes for two hours.

UK PM fights worsening coronavirus symptoms in intensive care

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who is battling worsening coronavirus symptoms, was stable during his first night in an intensive care unit at a London hospital, the PM's spokesman said on Tuesday.

"The prime minister has been stable overnight and remains in good spirits. He is receiving standard oxygen treatment and breathing without any other assistance. He has not required mechanical ventilation, or non-invasive respiratory support," the spokesman said, adding that Johnson did not have pneumonia. Johnson, 55, first announced he had tested positive for the

virus on March 27 and went into self-isolation. After failing to shake off a high fever for more than a week, he

was admitted to Guy's and St Thomas' hospital in central London on Sunday from where he continued to lead the government until he was moved into intensive care on Monday evening, when his condition deteriorated.

"Over the course of [Monday] afternoon, the condition of the prime minister has worsened and, on the advice of his medical team, he has been moved to the intensive care unit at the hospital," Number 10 said in a statement

(Source: al Jazeera)

Pakistan arrests doctors protesting for coronavirus medical gear

Police in the southwestern Pakistani city of Quetta have arrested at least 50 doctors who were protesting against the lack of personal protective equipment (PPE) kits for health workers on the front lines of the country's battle against the coronavirus, officials and doctors' union representatives said.

Representatives of the Young Doctors Association (YDA), who organized the protest, said at least 67 members had been arrested on Monday.

Release orders had been issued for those detained, said Dr Rahim Khan Babar, a YDA spokesman, but they were refusing to leave the police stations where they were being held until their demands for additional PPE kits were met.

'I was arrested yesterday, I am still in the police station," Babar told Al Jazeera on Tuesday.

"They have given orders for our release, but we have refused to leave, because no steps have been taken. Doctors came out for equipment, and you beat them and then locked them up. What kind of law is that?'

Video footage from Monday's protest showed dozens of doctors raising slogans and criticizing the provincial government. Shortly afterwards, police stepped in to end the protest, clashing with several of the protesters and detaining dozens.

(Source: al Jazeera)

Syrian troops, residents block another **U.S. convoy in Hasakah**

U.S. military dispatches 35 trucks to oil-rich northeastern Syria

Another U.S. military convoy has been forced to retreat from an area in Syria's northeastern province of Hasakah after local residents, in coordination with government forces, prevented the foreign forces from passing through the community.

Local sources, requesting not to be named, reported that a U.S. convoy of five armored vehicles was forced to turn around and head back in the direction it came from on Tuesday afternoon after locals of the village of Hamu and Syrian troops blocked the road and prevented its movement. No injuries were reported.

According to Press TV, on March 27, Syrian army soldiers and angry local residents had forced a U.S. military

convoy to retreat from the same village. Two days earlier, a U.S. military convoy was forced to retreat from an area in the same Syrian province after government forces blocked its way and groups of local residents, upset with their presence in the region, threw stones at the American troops.

SANA reported at the time that Syrian army soldiers stopped the American convoy, consisting of 11 armored vehicles, as it tried to make its way through the village of Hamu in the al-Qamishli countryside of Hasakah province

Locals then threw stones at the American convoy and forced them to retreat.

Meanwhile, Syrian media say the United States has dispatched truckloads of military and logistical equipment to the country's northeastern province of Hasakah as Washington and some of its regional allies keep vying with one another to seize oil reserves and plunder natural resources in the war-battered country.

Local sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, told Syria's official news agency SANA that a convoy of 35 trucks crossed the Waleed border crossing on Monday and headed toward U.S. positions in the Jazira region of the province.

The sources added that the majority of the equipment was sent to a base that American troops have set up at Kharab al-Jeer Airport in al-Malikiyah district.

The report comes only a day after the Arabic-language Enab Baladi weekly newspaper, citing a video published by the local North Press news agency, reported that the so-called U.S.-led military coalition purportedly



formed to fight the Daesh Takfiri terrorist group had airdropped military and logistical equipment to an area close to al-Omar oil field in Syria's eastern countryside of Dayr al-Zawr.

The report noted that the operation took place late on Saturday.

In late October 2019, Washington reversed an earlier decision to pull out all of its troops from northeastern Syria, announcing the deployment of about 500 soldiers to the oil fields controlled by Kurdish forces in the Arab country

The Pentagon claimed that the move was aimed at protecting the fields and facilities from possible attacks by Daesh. That claim came although U.S. President Donald

Trump had earlier suggested that Washington sought economic interests in controlling the oil fields.

U.S. Secretary of Defense Mark Esper also threatened that the U.S. troops deployed to the fields would use "military force" against any party that might seek to challenge control of the sites, even if it were Syrian government forces or their Russian allies.

Syria, which has not authorized American military presence in its territory, has said the U.S. is "plundering" the country's oil.

On December 18, 2019, China's special envoy for Syria said the United States' pretext for extending its military presence in the Arab country, namely to protect Syrian oil fields, was untenable.

U.S. braces for 'peak death week' from coronavirus

U.S. lawmakers call for probe on disruptions to pandemic supplies

The U.S. has the third-highest number of reported deaths from the disease in the world, only exceeded by Italy with 15,887 and Spain with 13,055.

White House medical experts have forecast that between 100,000 to 240,000 Americans could die as a result of COVID-19, the respiratory disease caused by the new coronavirus, even if sweeping orders to stay home are followed.

The US had entered what an official called the "peak death week" of the coronavirus on Monday, while a watchdog report said hospitals were struggling to maintain and expand capacity to care for infected patients.

"It's going to be the peak hospitalisa-tion, peak ICU [intensive care unit] week and unfortunately, peak death week,' Admiral Brett Giroir, a physician and member of the White House coronavirus task force, told ABC's Good Morning



states of New York, New Jersey, Connectgramme, Giroir said: "Whether you

to this and everyone needs to follow the precautions we've laid out.'

Meanwhile, citing concerns over severe supply disruptions, senior US legislators have called for an expedited investigation into specific imported products needed to combat the coronavirus pandemic.

Some critics have argued US tariffs on Chinese goods could be impeding the response to the contagion. A huge surge in demand worldwide has interrupted flows of medical supplies and protective gear and led to shortages of many products.

UŠ House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Richard Neal, a Democrat, and Senate Finance Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley, a Republican, asked the US International Trade Commission (ITC) to provide details about the source countries for such products, as well as tariff classifications and duty

Biden nabs endorsement of prominent black lawmaker **John Lewis**

U.S. Representative John Lewis of Georgia endorsed Joe Biden's presidential campaign on Tuesday, giving the Democrat's bid further support among the party's black leadership.

"Joe Biden has no delusion about this nation's past, but he knows who we can be at our best," Lewis said in a campaign video announcing his support, Reuters reported.

Lewis is known for his activism in the 1960s in support of civil rights for black Americans.

Biden is seeking his party's nomination to face President Donald Trump in the Nov. 3 election.

The former vice president currently has a lead in that race for nomination over his lone remaining rival, Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont, after victories powered by support from black voters and legislators from southern states like Georgia.

Georgia delayed its own presidential primary set for March 24 until May 19 because of the coronavirus.

Amnesty, HRW urge Bahrain to release political inmates amid COVID-19 pandemic

 $\rightarrow 1$ Thousands of anti-regime protesters have held demonstrations in Bahrain on an almost daily basis ever since a popular uprising began in the country in mid-February 2011.

They are demanding that the Al Khalifah regime relinquish power and allow a just system representing all Bahrainis to be established. Manama has gone to great lengths to clamp down on any sign of dissent. On March 14, 2011, troops from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates were deployed to assist Bahrain in its crackdown.

On March 5, 2017, Bahrain's parliament approved the trial of civilians at military tribunals in a measure blasted by human rights campaigners as being tantamount to imposition of an undeclared martial law countrywide.

America programme on Monday. He raised particular alarm for the

icut and the city of Detroit, Michigan. live in small-town America or you live rates, by April 30. Separately, on NBC's Today pro- in the Big Apple, everyone is susceptible

(Source: agencies)

Britain set for 66,000 COVID-19 deaths, most in Europe



Britain could see as many as 66,000 COVID-19 deaths during the first wave of the current pandemic, new research showed Tuesday, making the outbreak there by far the deadliest in Europe.

Modeling conducted by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) at the University of Washington's School of Medicine showed that approximately 151,680 people were likely to die from the virus across the continent.

While the novel coronavirus emerged

in China and was initially focused in east Asia, the World Health Organization now says the pandemic is centered in western Europe, with Spain, Italy and France experiencing devastating death tolls.

Most European nations have introduced strict social distancing measures to try to stem the virus spread. More than 5,000 people have died from COVID-19 in Britain, fewer than in Spain, Italy and France.

But Britain's epidemic lags behind

the rest of the continent by several days, and its death toll trajectory is already steeper than other nations.

Using local and international data on case numbers, as well as age mortality breakdowns from Italy, China and the US, the team at IHME modeled the expected death toll on a country-bycountry basis.

A key consideration was an individual nation's intensive care bed capacity.

It found that Britain could experience 66,000 COVID-19 deaths by July, far more than Italy, the next most severely impacted, with around 20,000.

Spain and France were next, with 19.000 and 15,000 predicted deaths, respectively.

'We are expecting a foreboding few weeks for people in many parts of Europe," said IHME Director Christopher Murray.

"It seems likely the number of deaths will exceed our projections for the United States.

On Sunday the institute predicted ust over 80,000 US COVID-19 deaths luring the pandemic's first wave.

The modeling suggests that outbreaks in Italy and Spain, where hundreds of deaths have been reported daily for weeks, may be past their peak. Daily deaths in both countries have declined for several days.

But Britain is likely weeks away from

getting a handle on its death toll as intensive care capacity is overwhelmed.

Peak demand was forecast to see more than 100,000 hospital beds needed versus the 17,765 currently available.

- Could still get worse -

Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who is currently in intensive care with COVID-19, came in for criticism for his government's slow response to the pandemic.

Britain now has strict social distancing measures in place, but it had held off implementing them even as the outbreak surged in Europe.

The IHME models include the predicted effect of social distancing, and Murray said it was vital that measures aren't relaxed too suddenly once countries pass their morality peak.

'It is unequivocally evident that social distancing can, when well implemented and maintained, control the epidemic, leading to declining death rates," Murray said.

Those nations hit hard early on implemented social distancing orders and may have the worst behind them as they are seeing important progress in reducing their death rates.

"Each nation's trajectory will change -- and dramatically for the worse -- if people ease up on social distancing or relax other precautions.

(Source: AFP)

TEHRANTIONAL DAILY

Olympics postponement an opportunity not a threat: Salehi Amiri

S P O R T S d e s k ident of the National Olympic Committee (NOC) of the Islamic Republic of Iran Reza Salehi Amiri believes that the Tokyo 2020 Olympics postponement will not harm the country's sportspersons and he sees it as an opportunity not a threat.

Due to the outbreak of the pandemic coronavirus, the press conference of Reza Salehi Amiri was held online with the media representatives on Monday.

"We call it an opportunity because the postponement of the Olympics gives us one more year to provide better conditions for our athletes," the head of the Iranian NOC said.

"On the other hand, some of our athletes like Hassan Yazdani (wrestler), Hamideh Abbasali (karateka) and Sohrab Moradi (weightlifter) did not have good conditions due to injuries and the extra time will give them the opportunity to return to full fitness at a steadier pace.

"We don't look at the Olympics in terms of

profits and losses. Health is more important than any other cancelled sporting events. The Olympics postponement was a global demand, and of course, we were among the first ones who called for the postponement," he continued.

Speaking about the number of berths of Iran at the Olympics, Salehi Amiri said: "Our athletes have secured 51 berths so far and we predict at least 10 and a maximum of 20 more quota places. Things are going according to plan. Our target budget was \$10m. Now that the budget has been increased, we are more prepared to support the related federations."

The head of the Iranian National Olympic Committee also talked about the time of starting training for the athletes due to the outbreak of novel coronavirus.

"We will reschedule and adjust our programs according to an announcement from the Coronavirus Combat and Prevention Headquarters. Whenever the headquarters give permission, the federations start to plan for their athletes," he added.



The Tokyo Olympics postponed until 2021 after talks between Japan's prime minister, Shinzo Abe, and the International Olympic Committee president, Thomas Bach, led to the confirmation of a decision made inevitable by the coronavirus pandemic.

AFC to use VAR in Champions League QF: report



SPORTS TEHRAN — Asian Football Confederation (AFC) has reportedly decided to use Video Assistant Referees (VAR) in the AFC Champions League current season.

In a letter sent to the national associations and clubs participating in the AFC Champions League, AFC has informed them the VAR technology will be used from the quarter-finals.

Iranian stadiums have not been equipped with the system despite the Iranian officials had already said they would use it in the current season.Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE use

passed away in Madrid, Spain on Monday.

71-years-old.

during the 1995/96 season.

Madrid: Legendary coach Radomir Antic, who guided Chi-

na PR clubs Shandong Luneng and Hebei China Fortune,

Antic, who passed away after a battle with cancer, was

The news was confirmed by Atletico Madrid, a club

Antic is the only person to have managed Atletico, Real

where he spent three separate spells from 1995 to 2000,

most notably winning the league and Copa del Rey double

VAR in their leagues, Arriyadiyah has reported. This is the first time that the AFC is going to implement VAR in the continental championship.

The AFC has decided to use VAR after the successful implementation of the system in the knockout stage of the AFC Asian Cup 2019 in the UAE, and 2020 AFC U23 Championship in Thailand.

For the participating clubs, who do not use the VAR technology in their local leagues, the AFC will assess the feasibility of implementing VAR in their stadiums. Karimi may undergo surgery as Olympics postponed



MNA – Iranian freestyle wrestler Alireza Karimi may undergo surgery as he now has enough time to recover due postponement of the Tokyo Olympics.

He suffered a knee injury in late December 2019 at the World Wrestling Clubs Cup held in Bojnurd, northeast Iran.

Doctors have used a non-aggressive PRP therapy combined with special training to treat his injury so that he could reach the 2020 Olympics. In early March, he announced his return to the mat and continuation of his training in his hometown Karaj.

Now, as the 2020 Tokyo Olympics has been postponed for a year, the medical team of the wrestling federation is going to inspect the extent of Karimi's injury and perform surgery if it is required. Karimi needs to win the required points in qualifying events to secure his ticket to Tokyo.

Iranian freestyle team has so far gained three out of six quotas for the Olympics. The qualifying events have been postponed for 2021.

Legendary coach Radomir Antic passes away

Madrid (1991/92) and Barcelona (2003).

He had a distinguished playing career as well, with stints at Partizan Belgrade, Fenerbahce, Real Zaragoza and Luton Town.

Antic was instrumental in leading Serbia to the 2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa, where they were eliminated after the group stage. He finished his coaching career in China PR, managing Shandong Luneng and Hebei China Fortune.

(Source: the-afc)

PORTS TEHRAN – Former Esteghlal and Iran na-

d e s k tional football team forward Fariborz Esmaeili passed away on Tuesday.

Ex-Iran forward Esmaeili



He died at the age of 80.

Esmaeili represented Iran national football team at the 1964 Summer Olympics, where Team Melli lost to Germany (4-0) and Romania (1-0) and drew 1-1 with Mexico.

He made 14 appearances for Iran national football team from 1964 to 1968 and scored four goals.

Esmaeili also was a member of Iran national football team at the 1966 Asian Games and helped the Persians to win a silver medal. Esmaeili started his playing career at Taj (known as Esteghlal)

and also played in Tehran based football clubs Oghab and Shoa.

Tehran Times offers its heartfelt condolence to his bereaved family.

Ehsan Hadadi recovers from coronavirus

Tasnim — Iranian discus thrower Ehsan Hadadi has fully recovered from the coronavirus.

The Olympic silver medalist had tested positive for the virus in late March.

"Ehsan has self-quarantined after he was diagnosed with the coronavirus and his recovery is going well," Iran Athletic Federation's doctor Ashkan Ordibehesht had said.

Iran's Health Ministry on Tuesday announced 133 new deaths from the novel coronavirus, raising the death toll to 3,872 across the country.

The total number of cases climbed to 62,589, with 2,089 new infections, while 3,987 infected people were in a critical condition, he said.

Iran One of the Best Teams in the World: Helio Sousa

Bahrain national football team coach Helio Sousa regarded Iran as one of the best teams in the world.

The tiny Persian Gulf country is vying with Iran and Iraq in



Group C to book a place at the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

"Since the draw, we knew we were in one of the strongest groups of the Qualifiers. This idea is supported by the qualities, capacities and recent trajectory of the other teams in the group, as well as due to their ranking place," Sousa told the-afc.com.

'Iran is one of the best teams in the world. They have a lot of players playing high-level championships in many different continents. Iraq also is a fantastic team with an incredible potential. It has plenty of highly-skilled young players and with a very interesting number of players playing in top level leagues. Theoretically we were the third strongest team in the group and, in the opinion of almost everyone, we, together with Hong Kong and Cambodia, would have no chance of fighting for the first place in the group, not even to be one of the best second places," the 50-year-old Portuguese stated. "We didn't think that way. We believed, since the beginning, that we could create conditions to be in right away in the fight for the first place or for one of the best seconds. And, until this moment, in a very short period of time, we did that. We showed that we built a team to fight for the first place," Sousa added. 'We are in the fight with Iraq and Iran to get the first place or one of the best four second places in order to continue playing in the next round of the qualifiers and try to reach the FIFA World Cup. The beginning proposal was to try to achieve that goal only in 2026, but we are already there trying to achieve it now," he said. (Source: the-afc)



Stars of the mat encourage wrestling community to "Stay at Home"

The stars of United World Wrestling took to social media in massive numbers this week to encourage fellow wrestlers and their fans to "Stay Strong and Stay at Home!"

More than 70 of the world's most successful wrestlers, including Olympic champions Jordan BURROUGHS (USA), Hassan YAZDANI (IRI), Saori YOSHIDA (JPN), and Artur ALEKSANYAN (ARM) sent in their messages to United World Wrestling, who has shared their video via Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube.

Lalovic also shared a short video message of his own asking the community to under-

stand that "courage today means wisdom and responsibility" and that we will all get through this soon.

Offline, the wrestling community has also included several athletes who've been on the front lines fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. In Iran, Olympic champions Rasoul KHADEM and Komeil GHASE-MI helped deliver medical equipment to highly affected areas of their home nation, while several doctors associated with the sport have been supporting their city's responses.

(Source: United World Wrestling)

Charl du Toit shares his lockdown experience on Instagram Live

World Para Athletics is catching up with athletes on Instagram Live to hear what they have done to stay active and healthy during the COVID-19 pandemic.

South Africa's two-time Paralympic champion Charl du Toit was the first to join us on Instagram Live sharing his experience with athletes and fans.

"It was a great experience, I really enjoyed the opportunity to be on the [World Para Athletics] Instagram account specially in these challenging times," said Du Toit after going live.

The COVID-19 coronavirus outbreak has caused the postponement of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games to 2021 and put more than half of the world's population on lockdown.

Du Toit spoke from home in South Africa's administrative capital Pretoria where he has also been practicing.



"My favorite part of the chat was to help encouraging my fellow athletes, as it has been challenging for all ones," he added. "I know the decision to postpone the Games in Tokyo was not an easy one, but I thank the IOC and the IPC for taking that decision." The 27-year-old said he was particularly interested to know how the other athletes are dealing with aspects of the lockdown that go far beyond training practices.

"It is one thing to show your physical capabilities, but the mental part plays such a big role too. I wanted to see how they are doing mentally and help with the questions they had, including what do for the rest of the year and how they can take it forward."

For those who want to keep in touch, Du Toit said he is eager to help.

"I really have a love for people, I just like to help them to be the best version of themselves. I love working with people, it is great to have an audience we can directly talk to and help them with the info they need.

(Source: Paralympic.org)

Spurs' Son set for chemical warfare training in South Korea

SEOUL (Reuters) — Tottenham Hotspur striker Son Heung-min will be exposed to tear gas, undertake live-fire drills and go on a 30km loaded march during three weeks of intense military training in South Korea this month, a Marine Corps official told Reuters on Tuesday.

All able-bodied men are required to serve in the military for around two years in South Korea, which is technically still at war with the North, but Son received an exemption for leading the country to gold at the 2018 Asian Games.

Son, 27, will complete his mandatory military service while the Premier League remains suspended due to the coronavirus outbreak, the London club said on Monday.

Son, currently in self-quarantine in line with tightened entry rules due to the COV-ID-19 pandemic, would begin the stint on April 20 at a Marine Corps unit in the southernmost island of Jeju, local media said.

The Military Manpower Administration (MMA), which handles conscription issues, declined to confirm the date and location citing privacy rules.

But an official at the Marine Corps said Son would receive a shortened version of a boot camp required for all new regular enlistees, including discipline education, combat drills and a chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) exercise.

A video of military training posted by the MMA on YouTube showed a group of soldiers undergoing CBRN training in a gas chamber. After a few minutes they are let out, tears streaming down their faces and pouring water over their heads.

Fukushima Olympic Flame display cancelled over virus concerns

TOKYO (Reuters) — The exhibition of the Olympic Flame, due to remain on display in Fukushima until the end of the month, will be cancelled over coronavirus concerns, the Tokyo 2020 Organizing Committee announced on Tuesday.

In what was intended as a symbol of resilience, the flame went on display a week ago at the J-Village, Japan's national soccer training centre, used as a rescue headquarters during the disaster at the Fukushima nuclear plant in 2011.

But following the Japanese government's decision to declare a state of a emergency on Tuesday, Olympic organisers have cancelled the exhibition.

The opening stages of the Tokyo 2020 torch relay were supposed to be underway by now, but the International Olympic Committee and Japanese government, under pressure from athletes and sporting bodies, pushed the Games to next year.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe announced the state of emergency on Tuesday, giving authorities more power to press people to stay at home and businesses to close.

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Obtain knowledge wherever possible... The worth of everyone depends on what he knows. Imam Ali (AS)

Cartoonist Ali Derakhshi making animation series on coronavirus

TEHRAN – Iranian cartoonist and animator e s k Ali Derakhshi is making a series to teach people how to follow health protocols during the home quarantine. Entitled "COVID 19 Seconds", the series is composed of fifteen 19-seconds episodes, Iran's Documentary and Experimental Film

Center (DEFC), which is the producer of the animated series, announced on Tuesday.



Iranian cartoonist and director Ali Derakhshi in an undated photo

The main character of the series is a lion that has to stay home due to the coronavirus epidemic.

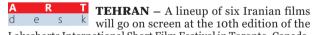
Several other Iranian artists have also produced animations on coronavirus - COVID-19 to raise people's awareness of the disease and to entertain children who have been quarantined in their homes over the past month.

Iran's Saba Animation Center is producing an animation series titled "Coronavirus" reminding people of tips to prevent spreading coronavirus.

Pejman Malmir, Hesam Javaheri, Behnam Berenji and Azadeh Nikbar are the directors of the 26-episode series.

Iranian cartoonist Jamal Rahmati also announced that he has used characters from Persian poet Ferdowsi's magnum opus, the Shahnameh, to make an animation series named "The Seven Adventures of Coronavirus" on coronavirus.

Shorts from Iran line up for Lakeshorts film festival



Iranian writer's "Hannah" teaching world's children about coronavirus

CULTURE d e s k Asghar Seidabadi (Seyyedabadi) has recently authored a book named "Hannah, Our Hero" to teach children around the world how to take care of themselves during the coronavirus pandemic.

Illustrated by his daughter Ghazaleh, the book has been translated into English, Italian, French and German, he has announced on his official website. The book was authored when the home quarantine began in Iran with the Iranian New Year holiday on March 20.

In a preface to the book, Seidabadi refers to some books written on coronavirus – COVID-19 by Chinese and American authors during the coronavirus pandemic and added, "They were useful books but for me, the social aspects of the event and its effect on our lives and tolerating the situation was more important than how to tackle and get rid of the virus. 'Hannah, Our Hero" is about several children

including Hannah that go to visit their uncle, Bahman, who doesn't know that he is infected with COVID-19. All children are infected, but Hannah escapes uninfected due to her care about the tips for dealing with coronavirus.

All versions of the book are available for download on Seidabadi's official website http://aliseidabadi.ir. The book was translated into Italian by Shabnam

Six Iranian shorts to compete in **Spanish fest**

R T TEHRAN – A lineup of six Iranian films will be competing in the second edition of the Cachinus de Cine International Short Film Festival for Children and Youth taking place at the beginning of May in Cilleros, Spain.

The short films "Confused" and "Miracle" by Saman Kafi will be competing

in the Junior Category. Also included in the Junior Category is the short film "Half Past Four".

In the Animation Category, there are two Iranian animations "Green & Blue" and "I Am Tree".

"The Small World" is an entry to the Documentary Category.

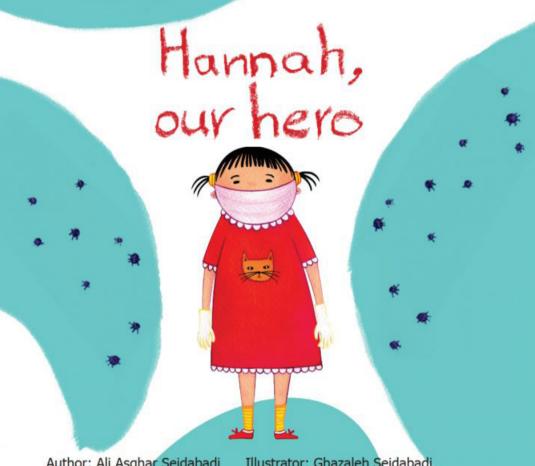
More than 500 short films from 50 different countries will be competing at the festival this year.



Cinema.



A logo for FICIJ Cachinus De Cilleros



Author: Ali Asghar Seidabadi Illustrator: Ghazaleh Seidabadi Translators: Farshid Sadatsharifi and Sara Louise Anderson

Front cover of the English version Iranian children's writer Ali-Asghar Seidabadi's latest book "Hannah, Our Hero".

Kasrai. Farshid Sadatsharifi and Sara Louise Anderson The German and French versions have been rendered are the translators of the English and French versions. by Zahra Nurbakhsh.

Iranian director Tufan to make new film with producer Brett Granstaff

T TEHRAN – Iranian k filmmaker Rahim Tufan announced on Tuesday that he will make his new project named "Barat Matrix" with American producer Brett Granstaff in the U.S. after the end of the coronavirus crisis. "I've reached an agreement with Brett

Granstaff to produce my new film this year,' he told the Persian service of Honaronline.

'I've been working on the plot for years and negotiated with some of Iranian producers, but finally, I decided to make it as an international production due to its subject," he added.

"Barat Matrix", which is Tufan's second film after his 2016 drama "One Kilo and 21 Grams", has a philosophical subject and is about metaphysics, psychology and human instincts.



Iranian filmmaker Rahim Tufan in an undated photo.

Coronavirus urges people to change: cartoonist Einstein

By Manijeh Rezapoor

TEHRAN – Brazilian cartoonist and illustrator Cival Einstein regards the COVID-19 pandemic as the fight of David and Goliath, calling it a war that has forced

"When the truth comes, it hurts some people. I think we will not know the world without creative expressions and art makes us reflect the reality," he described. Einstein also said that he believes his

other artist friends are busy producing

they can, but the virus is an invisible and fast enemy," he explained.

Asked if he is satisfied with the policies of his country taken towards the combat against COVID-19, he answered that the cases of coronavirus infection and the death

Lakeshorts International Short Film Festival in Toronto, Canada.

"Howling" by Parsa Bozorgani, "The Incomplete" by Erfan Parsapur and "Braceball" by Rayhaneh Mortezainia are among the films.

The lineup also includes "Magralen", a co-production between Iran and Canada by Maryam Zarei, and "Extra Sauce" and "Better than Neil Armstrong", both by Alireza Qasemi.

The Lakeshorts International Short Film Festival, which was scheduled to be held in April, has been postponed until September due to the coronavirus outbreak in the world.

"Harry Potter" author J.K Rowling says fully recovered from likely coronavirus

New York (Reuters) – "Harry Potter" author J.K. Rowling said on Monday she had recovered from a suspected case of COVID-19 after two weeks of illness.

"For last 2 weeks I've had all symptoms of C19 (tho haven't been tested)," Rowling said on her Twitter account. She also shared a video of a breathing technique that she said had helped her manage her worst symptoms and had been recommended by her husband, who is a doctor in the U.K.

"I really am completely recovered and wanted to share a technique that's recommended by doctors, costs nothing, has no nasty side effects but could help you/your loved ones a lot, as it did me," she added.

Rowling, 54, whose "Harry Potter" book series and subsequent films have millions of fans worldwide, was the latest celebrity to announce they had recovered from the disease caused by a new coronavirus that has taken the lives of more than 70,000 people worldwide.

The growing list includes actors Tom Hanks and Idris Elba, U.S. pop singer Pink and heir to the British throne Prince Charles

Rowling last week announced that "Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone," the first book in the series about the boy wizard, will be available for free worldwide as an ebook and audiobook throughout April, as part of an initiative to help parents, carers and teachers entertain housebound children.

people to change.

"Nature deserves respect, the American imperialists and the Chinese have explored and hurt nature a lot, and she couldn't take it and it is reacting this way. We are paying a high price for it," he told the Tehran Times in an email interview on Monday.

Einstein is taking part in Iran's We Defeat Coronavirus International Cartoon Contest with his submission based on Gulliver's adventures portraying Gulliver as huge, but even the huge one cannot escape the coronavirus and has to stay at home.

Asked how he really sees the situation, and whether he considers it a good or a bad opportunity for art especially caricature. he said, "I believe art is a therapy, while it is educative and playful, it is like a school. He noted that caricature helps take off the masks of those who always used masks to deceive people.

artworks on the theme of coronavirus. which is an accessible theme and refers to many interpretations.

"In this theme, we have a salad of subjects, such as politics, social life, history and facts, of course. I see it with a positive side," he said. Einstein added that he is filled with new

ideas and is busy producing more works every day, while he is in home quarantine.

"I can see the pain of others and put it in the cartoon, this is very important for me, I pour all my feelings into the cartoons which are joy, sadness, creativity and hoping for better days to come," he added.

Last updated April 7, 2020, a total number of people diagnosed with the coronavirus in Brazil has reached 12,232, of whom 566 have died and 127 recovered. Einstein said that his country is also

taking quarantine measurement as it is known worldwide, however, some accept

Brazilian cartoonist Cival Einstein and follow the rules and some don't.

"In my country, some people have their beliefs and think this is a lie, they are the most diverse interpretations, some groups accuse other groups, saying that quarantine is the electoral stage, others believe in science, others in faith, and the governments of some states are doing what

rates at the moment are low in his country compared with the United States, Italy, China, and other countries.

"No, I'm not happy with the policies. It could be better, they don't give up their salaries to help people, it doesn't make me happy, it could be better, maybe a few are working hard to fight this pandemic, but they are not many," he said.

Einstein has participated in many festivals and cartoon contests in Iran and the world, winning a special prize in 2014 at the Macedonia cartoon competition, where he selected as a member of the jury in 2019.

He also received first prize at the Fourth International Graphic Humor Festival in Armenia in 2018.

'I will continue making cartoons. I believe art saves and irony softens the pain and laughter relaxes the soul," he concluded.

Venice Film Festival rules out digital option

NEW YORK (Variety) -- The Venice Film Festival is forging ahead with preparations for the September 2-12 event despite coronavirus concerns, and ruling out the possibility that the fest could go digital – at least not in its entirety.

"The Venice Film Festival cannot be replaced by an online event," a Venice spokesman told Variety on Monday. He added that "there is obviously the possibility that we use technology for some initiatives," but noted that at present "it's too early for this to be decided."

The Venice spokesman was commenting on a brief interview given by Venice artistic director Alberto Barbera to Italian news agency ANSA over the weekend, in which Barbera said he is currently not weighing digital options.

Barbera was reacting in the interview to last week's announcement by Toronto Film Festival co-heads Joana Vicente and Cameron Bailey that they were "looking at both on-site and digital innovations" for that event, which is scheduled to run Sept. 10-20, due to "uncertainty about what 'people coming together again' will look like come September."

"Toronto is a different type of festival, not comparable to Cannes or Venice," Barbera told ANSA, adding that while he and his team "are working just the same as in past years," at present, "we cannot provide specifics about the future," besides the fact that Venice does not see scrapping the physical aspect of the event as a possibility.

Meanwhile, in a further indication that Venice is moving forward seemingly undeterred, at least until a clearer September scenario emerges, organizers on Monday announced the call for projects for its Final Cut in Venice co-production workshop dedicated to supporting works from the Middle East and Africa,

currently scheduled to be held during the fest.

While Italy is currently in strict lockdown - with a coronavirus death toll of more than 15,000 that currently makes it the world's hardest hit country by the pandemic – new infections are believed to have plateaued and, somewhat similarly to China, the hope is that the crisis will subside in Italy sooner than some other nations.

Last month, the fest's parent organization, multidisciplinary arts org. the Venice Biennale, headed by film producer and former Cinecittà studios chief Robert Cicutto, moved the opening date of its Architecture Biennale, which was originally set to open May 23, to August 29, due to coronavirus concerns.

Venice, which is considered the world's oldest film festival, in January announced that Cate Blanchett would preside over its 77th edition.