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U.S., UK first ignored corona; now they are failing to contain it

TEHRAN — The United States — the richest country in the world — and its close ally the United Kingdom have spectacularly failed to contain the coronavirus outbreak, climbing their way up to the top of the list of countries hardest hit by the deadly virus.

In New York City, images have emerged of coffins being buried in a mass grave, with workers in hazmat outfits seen stack-

ing wooden coffins in deep trenches in Hart Island.

According to the BBC, officials have said burials are being ramped up at site, which has long been used for people with no next-of-kin or families who cannot afford a funeral.

It is worth noting that the New York State now has more coronavirus cases than any single country on the planet. **→3**

Volunteers prove altruism in coronavirus battle

By Mehdi Garshasbi

TEHRAN — These days, people in Iran, like almost all across the world, are grappling with a new predicament, called the novel coronavirus or Covid-19.

At a time when so many folks are in so many kinds of need, volunteers are stepping up in the country to give — to donate their time, skills, materials, and much more. To meet shortages, they are making masks and other personal protective equipment at home.

To feed those in need, they are working at charities. They are shopping for and making deliveries to the more vulnerable, and producing and distributing sanitizers to prevent the spread of the virus. They are donating facilities, money, food, and even their own blood to help their neighbors make it through tough times.

The coronavirus disease pandemic is placing significant strains on health systems, essential public services and communities globally. **→9**

Economists' view on best ways to tackle aftershocks of coronavirus outbreak

By Ebrahim Fallahi

TEHRAN — As the new coronavirus (known as COVID-19) continues to spread across the world, red flags have risen in various sectors and governments are doing all they can to contain the virus from further spreading.

All over the globe schools and universities are shut down, restaurants, public places, and most of the shops are closed and people are under mandatory lockdowns.

Such restrictions will consequently result in serious problems and even recession for most of the world's economies.

This situation has created a whole new frontline in the battle against coronavirus: the economic front.

Nations all over the globe have started looking for economic strategies and programs to handle the aftershocks of the outbreak in the best possible way. **→4**



REPORT

Farnak Bakhtiari
Tehran Times journalist

Iran is unrivaled in Middle East for anti-corona measures: VP

Sourena Sattari, Vice President for Science and Technology, has said that Iran's technological measures in the fight against coronavirus is unrivaled among the Middle Eastern countries.

With the help of those who are involved in technology and innovation ecosystem projects, coronavirus medical equipment such as CT scan rooms, masks, all types of medicine and ventilators are being built in the country, he added.

Referring to Iran's position in the field of biotechnology, Sattari said that "Iran plays a leading role in the field of biotechnology in the region and the Middle East, and the production of 24 biotech drugs is evidence of this claim."

"Knowledge-based companies can produce any medicine effective in countering coronavirus or approved by the scientific committee within a week to 10 days," he noted.

Sattari made the remarks on the sidelines of a ceremony for launching the first production line of serology-based tests for COVID-19 in the city of Karaj on Saturday.

Serology testing for coronavirus better quantifies the number of infected cases, including those that may be asymptomatic or have recovered. Serology tests are blood-based tests that can be used to identify whether people have been exposed to a particular pathogen by looking at their immune response.

These tests can give greater detail into the prevalence of a disease in a population by identifying individuals who have developed antibodies to the virus.

Therefore, these kits are used in policy-making by examining different communities and occupations, and these will help physicians and policymakers in the health system to implement smart social distancing more accurately.

Serology-based tests for COVID-19 are first used in some high-risk occupations, such as medical staff, which cannot employ the social distancing plan, then it will be tested on other parts of the society, Sattari stated. **→9**

Ineffective Western liberal democracy model, new version of global management

By Mehdi Azizi

TEHRAN — Recent developments and international crises have indicated that a new era for global order has emerged which is managed by new concepts and political literature.

Undoubtedly, we are in a new era of world order governed by new concepts and political literature. Especially in recent months and after numerous crises that proved the failure and inability of Western models to manage the world.

Certainly, this new era can be considered as a new chapter to change and take into account new variables in all the fields of international politics and culture for global management.

Perhaps in previous decades, Islamic occasions were only limited to Muslims and Shiites. But due to recent political and cultural events in the world, these Islamic ideological concepts are

utilized to shape the future of the world.

Therefore, we currently see how much events such as Quds day has changed global and regional occasions so that this day can be considered as an Islamic priority in all global and regional equations. The Islamic revolution tried to introduced these events to the world and prove that Islamic discourse can be used in all the political, social, and cultural processes.

The truth is that the Islamic revolution presented a new definition of practical Islam to the world which can even be applied to international politics.

Leader of Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei also referred to this new era in his warnings, speeches, and advice which considering the current pandemic is a very significant issue.

Global justice and believing in the return of savior is a universal concept that exists in

all religions in different ways. The reason that mankind is more aware of this concept is that all the other models have been insufficient for global management. Today, human beings are far from religion and Western models and liberalism have failed to save mankind. Even some Islamic models do not have a specific plan in this regard. For example, ISIS was an effort to distort and misinterpret the Islamic version of the savior. Therefore, it can be said that the West is concerned about the success of the Islamic model regarding management approaches.

On the other hand, some intellectuals refer to the European historical experiences based on historical mistakes in the middle ages and rely on the flourishing period of Renaissance which was the most important element of the West's misunderstanding of religious developments. **→7**

Visit holy shrine of Imam Reza (AS) online

TEHRAN — COVID-19, the novel coronavirus disease, might stop you from traveling, but there are still ways to see historic and religious sites in nearly every corner of the globe.

Located in Mashhad, the capital of Khorasan Razavi province, the holy shrine of Imam Reza (AS) has long been by far the most visited religious destination in Iran, attracting millions of domestic and international visitors each year.

Religious sites in the country have never been closed, however, they along with hundreds of tourist destinations and museums were shut early in March to combat the spread of the virus, which is infecting millions across the globe.

Over the past couple of weeks, online visits to the holy shrine have been facilitated for the faithful,

potential pilgrims, and avid sightseers. There are several outlets offering virtual visits for free as you are sheltering in place or merely social distancing to prevent the spread of the virus pandemic.

Visiting the holy shrine and its complex is a pure and celestial journey for the Muslims. The complex includes the 15th-century Goharshad mosque, a museum, a library, four seminaries, a cemetery, the Razavi University of Islamic Sciences, a dining hall for pilgrims, vast prayer halls, amongst other buildings. The complex is one of the tourism centers in the country and has been described as "the heart of the Shia Iran".

The shrine is enveloped in a vast series of sacred precincts collectively known as the Haram-e Razavi, or Haram for short. This magical

city-within-a-city sprouts dazzling clusters of domes and minarets in blue and pure gold behind fountain-cooled courtyards and magnificent arched arcades. It's one of the marvels of the Islamic world, and it's worth savoring its moods and glories more than once by visiting at different times of day.

The great mosque of Goharshad is a remarkable Islamic structure due to its age, architectural characteristics and rich tile decorations. Made of brick and plaster in the 15th century, it used to be served as a free standing mosque and currently serves as one of the prayer halls within the splendid Imam Reza Shrine Complex in Mashhad. On the margins of the main veranda's entrance, there is an old inscription carved by calligrapher Baysunqur Mirza. **→8**



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Tehraners provide corona patients with fruit juice

People in Lavazan neighborhood, north-eastern Tehran, are making fresh fruit juice for patients who are hospitalized suffering from the coronavirus disease, Friday, April 11, 2020.

The total number of people diagnosed with the coronavirus in Iran reached 70,029 on Saturday, of whom 4,357 have died and 41,947 recovered.



REPORT

Mahnaz Abdi
Head of the TehranTimes
Economy Desk

Privatization to materialize 'Surge in Production'

The current Iranian calendar year (began on March 20) is named the year of "Surge in Production" by the Leader of Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

It should be considered that the trend of strengthening domestic production has been started in Iran a couple of years ago, as the country is determined to nullify the U.S. sanction on its economy through boosting production to reach more and more self-reliance.

The Leader had named the previous year as the year of "Pick up in Production", something that came true in all economic and industrial sectors through cooperation between the state-run bodies and private sector.

While Iranian ministries besides the private sector are outlining their programs for "Surge in Production", materializing this year's motto requires more stronger determination and also more cooperation.

One of the areas which can play a significant role in surging domestic production is privatization, something that has been under the spotlight in the country over the past decade, aiming at more productivity, investment making, job creation, promotion of trade balance, more competition in the domestic economy, and reducing financial and management burden on the government.

The law on the implementation of the general policies of Article 44 of Iran's Constitution on privatizing state-owned companies was declared in 2006 in a bid to downsize the government and promote the private sector's role in the national economy.

Although since then, the privatization process has been facing several challenges in the country, and has fallen behind schedule, drawing attention to the fact that urgent action should be done in this due.

Last year, Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Farhad Dejjpasand had announced that offering the shares of state-owned companies, which were planned to be privatized, would be sped up.

He had also said that the government should amend its policies and methods of setting the prices and transferring the shares in the process of privatization. **→4**

No way for U.S. but leaving Iraq: ex-diplomat

POLITICAL DESK **TEHRAN** — Hassan Danaeefar, the former Iranian ambassador to Iraq, has said that the United States has no choice other than exiting its forces from Iraq. “The people of Iraq will not let the United States influence the country’s sovereignty, and Washington has no way but leaving Iraq,” he told ILNA in an interview published on Saturday.



He noted that many of the U.S. forces are leaving bases in Iraq and the country’s demand is being fulfilled.

The Iraqi Parliament voted on January 5 to expel the U.S. troops from Iraq.

In an interview with Tasnim news agency in January, Danaeefar said that it is essential that the U.S. leave Iraq now that the Iraqi parliament has voted to expel American forces from the country.

The Iraqi people have the experience of fighting the U.S. occupation, the ambassador

said, predicting the Iraqis will rise against U.S. forces if they refuse to leave the country.

“So, if the occupant does not respect the Iraqis’ approval, they [the Iraqis] will fight them,” he said.

He said if the U.S. refuses to leave, Iraq can file a complaint in international courts.

The U.S. invaded Iraq in March 2003 under the false claim that the country was hiding weapons of mass destruction. The invasion took place despite repeated confirmations by international bodies, including the UN’s International Atomic Energy Agency, that Iraq did not have any secret weapons program.

Majid Takht-Ravanchi, Iran’s ambassador to the United Nations, has said that the U.S. must leave the region, noting that the U.S. is unwelcome in the region.

“Iraq and the region are dissatisfied with the presence of the United States, and the United States must respect the Iraqi parliament’s approval to end the United States’ military presence,” IRNA quoted him as saying in an interview with Aljazeera in January.

He said the Iraqi parliament’s approval is the result of more than 17 years of the U.S. occupation of the country.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said in January that the U.S. “corruptive presence” in the region must come to an end.

“This region does not accept the presence of the United States. The people in the region and the regional governments rising from the people do not accept this issue,” the Leader pointed out.

Pope sympathizes with Iran amid coronavirus, pontificates U.S. over sanctions

(Press TV) — The Vatican has expressed sympathy with the Iranian people and talked to the US over draconian sanctions on Tehran amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Vatican’s secretary of state Cardinal Pietro Parolin talked to U.S. officials following a letter by head of Iran’s Islamic Seminaries Alireza Arafati to leader of the Roman Catholic Church Pope Francis.

In his letter circulated last week, Arafati expressed Iran’s sympathy over the victims of COVID-19 from “all religions and nations” and urged the “cooperation of all religious centers” to counter the pandemic.

In the Vatican’s response to Arafati’s message, Cardinal Parolin wrote that “upon being informed of the details of the letter,” the Pope asked the cardinal to express “his spiritual sympathy with the Iranian people” and all victims of the disease on his behalf.

The Vatican’s letter added that Arifi had called on the Pope to act against the U.S. sanctions targeting the Iranian people amid the pandemic.

Acting upon such details and such an understanding, the Papacy contacted the United States’ ambassador to the UN, Kelly Craft, and informed them of the concerns of Iranian officials, urging attention to the matter, the letter read.

The letter, however, stopped short of condemning Washington’s criminal sanctions against the Iranian people as the country grapples with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Various international leaders, figures and groups have denounced Washington’s sanctions for hampering Iran’s coronavirus fight.

The sanctions, imposed on the country after Washington withdrew from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal in 2018, target much-needed humanitarian aid and related finances from reaching the country.

The bans come despite an International Court of Justice’s ruling banning Washington’s aid-related sanctions in 2018.

According to the latest numbers released by Iran’s Health Ministry on Saturday, 70,029 Iranians have contracted the disease, 4,357 of which have lost their lives. 41,947 people have also recovered.

■ How countries reacted to COVID-19: Iran vs U.S.

With the COVID-19 pandemic pushing world governments to the edge in their attempts to contain the deadly disease, stark differences have emerged in how the United States - the world’s largest economy - and Iran - under crippling sanctions - have managed the crisis.

The World Health Organization has on numerous accounts praised Iran’s efforts against the outbreak despite widespread U.S. sanctions banning supplies from reaching the country.

Other countries have also praised Iran for its assistance amid the pandemic.

Afghanistan’s mission to Tehran lauded Iran for providing free health services to any Afghan immigrant who may fall ill to the COVID-19 disease, ISNA news agency reported on Saturday.

Iran has hosted millions of Afghans who have made a living for more than four decades and been provided with free education for their children and other amenities by the Islamic Republic.

Iran has also been lauded by China’s President Xi Jinping as a “strategic partner” in curbing the coronavirus outbreak.

Tehran sent several aid shipments to China during the height of the coronavirus outbreak in the Asian country.

The U.S., instead, has been piling on its unilateral sanctions against countries. Washington has also been accused by its own allies of using “wild west” methods to divert and obtain coronavirus-related aid supplies ordered by other countries.

On Saturday, the U.S. became the first country to record more than 2,000 coronavirus deaths in the 24 hours.

The country has currently confirmed more than half a million COVID-19 cases and close to 20,000 deaths resulting from the disease. New York alone has more cases than any other country in the world.

Policy of maximum pressure shows lack of knowledge about containing coronavirus, Iranian ambassador to France says

POLITICAL DESK **TEHRAN** — Bahram Qassemi, Iran’s ambassador to France, has said that those who impose policy of sanctions and maximum pressure do not know fighting the coronavirus pandemic requires collective efforts.

“Some are still trying to impose policy of sanctions and maximum pressure with political objectives. Depriving the countries of their own financial resources and preventing them to access international financial resources show they do not know this sickness must be countered through collective efforts,” he tweeted on Saturday.

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 quite 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.”

In addition to its refusal to lift its illegal sanctions against Iran amid the coronavirus pandemic, Washington is adding to the list of its sanctions and even preventing the International Monetary Fund to give loans to Iran to contain the deadly virus.

President Hassan Rouhani said on Thursday that the IMF must fulfil its duties unbiasedly.

‘Comprehensive cooperation with Iraq is important for Iran’

POLITICAL DESK **TEHRAN** — Deputy Chairman of the Parliament National Security and Foreign Policy Committee Kamal Dehghani has said that comprehensive cooperation with the Iraqi government is important for Iran.

“What is important for Iran is formation of a government in Iraq which is based on law and inclusive and takes step in line with Iraq’s national interests. We hope we would have comprehensive cooperation with this country,” he told ISNA in an interview published on Saturday.

He refuted accusations that Iran interferes in Iraq’s internal affairs, saying Iran has never sought to interfere in Iraq’s domestic affairs.

“This [non-interference policy] also includes all the neighboring countries,” the MP added.

Dehghani also said that Iran and Iraq have many capacities in various areas to tap for cooperation.

Iraqi President Barham Salih named in-

telligence chief Mustafa al-Kadhimi as prime minister-designate on Thursday.

Kadhimi is the third person to be named to the post in just over two months.

Kadhimi was nominated by Salih, shortly after the previous designated prime minister, Adnan al-Zurfi, announced he was withdrawing having failed to secure enough support to pass a government.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry issued a statement on Thursday welcoming the naming of al-Kadhimi as prime minister, calling his nomination to the post “as the right decision at the right time”.

Iraj Masjedi, the Iranian ambassador to Iraq, said on Friday that Iran has a “positive view” on designation of Kadhimi as the new prime minister of Iraq.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran respects Iraq’s law and political system and supports anyone who has been designated through the legal procedure and gaining vote of the country’s parliament,” he told IRNA.

Imposition of sanctions is violation of human rights: MP

POLITICAL DESK **TEHRAN** — Abolfazl Mousavi, an Iranian MP, has said that in a situation in which the world is fighting the coronavirus pandemic, imposing sanctions and refusing to remove them violate human rights.

“Today, the world is changing and imposition of sanctions against certain countries, especially Iran, does not make sense. Definitely, refusing to remove sanctions in the current situation violates human rights and the international community does not accept it,” Mousavi told ISNA in an interview published on Saturday.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said the bans on Iran even exceed what would be “permissible in the battlefield” and called on the international community that it is “immoral” to succumb to illegal sanctions.

Iran’s ambassador to the UN offices in Geneva has written a letter to the World Health Organization chief saying that sanctions against Iran exemplify “crimes against humanity”.

Spokesperson for Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) Nafisa Shah has said that the United States must lift sanctions against Iran amid the coronavirus pandemic to avoid a humanitarian disaster.

It is very unfortunate that despite international pressure the U.S. has not lifted sanctions it has imposed on Iran, IRNA quoted her as saying on Wednesday.

“If COVID-19 pandemic will not make us come together then what will? she asked.

“It was expected that the present outbreak would lead the world community” to raise alarms and help the vulnerable countries that may face “colossal losses if help is not coming forth”, she remarked.

Chris Murphy, U.S. senator from 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.

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

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.

On March 31, a UN human rights expert called for lift-

The ambassador said that Iran supports the Iraqi parliament’s vote because it represents the entire Iraqi society which includes Kurds, Shias, Sunnis and even minorities such as Turkmen and Christians.

“Our policy is not providing support for just one political group in Iraq. We respect all ethnicities and religious groups,” he remarked.

Iran’s approach towards Iraq is supporting the country’s unity and territorial integrity, he added.

Iran has been on side of Iraq since the toppling of Saddam Hussein in 2003. It was the first country that recognized the first post-Saddam ruling system in Iraq.

Iran also rushed to the help of Iraq when the terrorist Daesh group suddenly captured large swathes of the Iraqi territory.

The religious and cultural affinities between Iraq and Iran are also very strong. Every year millions of citizens from each country visit holy shrines in either country. Since the toppling of the Saddam Hussein

“In this difficult situation, the International Monetary Fund must not be influenced by mischievous acts of the enemies of the Iranian people and fulfil its duties,” Rouhani said in a phone conversation with Iranian central banker Abdolnasser Hemmati.

Hemmati, for his part, said Iran’s request was being presented to the IMF executive board, and that Tehran was intent to pursue the demand.

Iran’s central bank wrote last month to the IMF to request the \$5bn from its Rapid Financing Initiative, an emergency program that gives loans to countries facing with sudden shocks such as natural disasters.

It was Tehran’s first request for IMF loan since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Hemmati wrote on his Instagram page on Thursday, “We expect the IMF to immediately respond to the request of Iran which itself is a founding member of the fund.”

In a tweet on March 26, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said, “Even the world’s largest economy (the U.S.) needs others to help it fight the pandemic, yet refuses to halt its Economic Terrorism against Iran.”

Zarif said the Covid-19 is ravaging the world and sparing no nation.

“Does the U.S. want a ‘forever pandemic’?” Zarif asked.

The chief diplomat said it is “moral imperative to stop observing the bully’s sanctions”.



regime in Iraq economic and trade ties between Iran and Iraq have also been ramping up.

Yahya Ale-Es’haq, chairman of Iran-Iraq chamber of commerce, says Iran has “long-term” and “strategic” view toward the Iraqi market.

He said in the calendar year of 1397 (March 2018-March 2019), Iran’s exports to Iraq stood at 13 billion dollars.

Also in the 11 months of the year 1398, it was about 11 billion dollars, added Ale-Es’haq, a former trade minister.

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.

Iran gains upper hand over U.S. in fight against COVID19-

By Yuram Abdullah Weiler

“Who’s going to pay for it?” The last words of a COVID-19 victim to his medical caretaker encapsulate the gangrenous infection in the body of the American healthcare system. How is it possible that the still wealthiest country in the world, the United States of America, has created a healthcare system that compels its citizenry to fret over medical bills during their last moments on their death beds?

Oddly enough, the same question is asked by policymakers every time the subject of universal health care for Americans is broached. Yet when it comes to trillion dollar war budgets, the absence of lawmakers asking “who’s going to pay for it?” is quite telling. This year, the U.S. president has proposed a \$740.5 billion outlay for so-called defense and

national security “to prepare for a potential future, high-end fight.” Among the provisions is a proposed expenditure of \$28.9 billion for nuclear modernization, and a whopping \$106 billion for research and development of more efficiently lethal weapons.

In contrast, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the public health arm of the U.S. government fighting the SARS COV-2 virus responsible for the coronavirus pandemic, has been targeted for a budget cut by the little man in the White House and his cabal of neoliberal henchmen. For FY2021, the proposed total for CDC is \$12.55 billion out of which only \$802 million would go for public health preparedness and response. Compared to the CDC FY2020 budget, whose total was \$12.71 billion, this year’s proposal is \$160.7 million less, and funding for such critical categories as emerging and

zoonotic infectious diseases, chronic disease prevention, birth defects, developmental disabilities, environmental health, public health, global health, and numerous others are to endure drastic cuts.

To understand how the richest country in the world can justify spending on public health services less than half of what is spent for nuclear weapons modernization, we must view this expenditure in the context of neoliberalism. This ideology, promulgated by America’s policymakers as the cure-all for all social problems, is applied to all social, political and economic areas, with the exception of the military, including public health and disease prevention. This all-encompassing ideology, as the term is applied today, had its roots in a seminal paper by economist Milton Friedman in 1951 titled “Neo-Liberalism and its Prospects,” in which

he condemned centralized economic planning as being “consistent with its own brand of chaos and disorganization,” and warned that “centralized economic control is likely to endanger individual freedom and liberty.”

Award-winning journalist and author Naomi Klein characterizes neoliberalist ideology as having three pillars: privatization of the public sector, deregulation of the corporate sector, and reduction of individual and corporate taxes to be paid for by budget cuts to social programs. The result of these three pillars is the formation of what she refers to as an “ideological wall that has blocked a serious response to climate change for decades.” We have now witnessed that the same ideological wall has stymied an effective U.S. response to the coronavirus pandemic as well.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

100 days later: Who won the war?

By Mahdi Azizi

The assassination of General Qassem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, which was carried out 100 days ago in a terrorist attack in Baghdad's international airport, may be considered the biggest miscalculation and security mistake by the United States ever.

However, the assassination was said to be a unilateral and personal decision by Trump and some other officials in the White House and the Pentagon, which revealed Trump and his inner circle's misunderstanding of the regional events.

Trump made the decision to achieve his desired results. In a rush caused by confusion, the U.S. president sought results that he had imagined could be achieved by the assassination of Gen. Soleimani.

One of the important driving factors in Trump's decision-making process and his insane political approach was to achieve his electoral interests. It was assumed that the assassination could affect the 2020 election in his favor. Also, by martyring Gen. Soleimani the White House had the illusion that it can bring the political situation in Iraq under its control, an issue which was defined by Trump's domestic goals.

Of course, the pressure applied by the Zionist regime and its interests played an important role in U.S. decisions. Tel Aviv, meanwhile, was under domestic pressure and failing to form a cabinet. It also was being threatened by the Lebanese Hezbollah and resistance groups in Palestine.

It was believed that the main reason for failures of the U.S. and Israel in the region was Iran, particularly the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Quds Force whose commander enjoyed a charismatic personality.

Numerous political and field achievements and the success of the axis of resistance in Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Yemen, as well as the repeated failures of



Saudi Arabia, as an Israeli-American stooge, are the main reasons that led Trump to make such a decision.

Trump was trying to change the situation in Iran, which had been put under maximum political and economic pressure, in U.S. favor by assassinating commander Soleimani. Buy looking at the events that followed the assassination and the regional developments, one can see Trump's miscalculations and wrong decision.

The assassination of the Quds Force commander was opposed by many Americans. The opposition emerged even at the political level and worldwide, as many believed Gen. Soleimani was an important figure in the fight against terrorism and ISIS. They viewed his assassination in contrast to the U.S. anti-terrorism claims.

According to polls, Trump's popularity and chance of winning the next election have even declined, a matter that he did not expect. Many Americans are well aware that Trump is in fact a tool for implementing the "madman theory". He has the mission to use the American citizens as means to meet the goal of 3 percent of American Jewish community, which is a political and economic exploitation.

Trump may never have predicted that large crowds in Iran, Iraq, Syria, and the countries classified as members of the axis of resistance would attend the funeral processions for commander Soleimani. The funeral, which was attended by millions of people, was actually an anti-U.S. referendum that showed how popular the discourse of the resistance movement is. In fact, the

Americans realized that "Martyr Soleimani" is more alive and more dangerous for the enemy than "Qassem Soleimani".

Evaluations showed that most of those who paid homage to Qassem Soleimani before his martyrdom and looked at him as a hero and legendary commander in the fight against terrorism, now consider him not as a person but a school.

But another issue that the Americans sought to achieve by assassination was to reduce the sphere of the influence of the Iranian Islamic resistance movement in Palestine and Iraq. The Americans assumed by conducting the terrorist attack, they would be able to reduce Iran's influence in the region and have more chance to carry out their plans in Iraq. Therefore, a little while after the assassination, reducing the Iranian influence in the region become a hot button subject for the Western media outlets.

This was another huge miscalculation by the Americans. They did not know that in addition to his commanding and charismatic personality, what made Haj Qassem Soleimani a great figure, was his quest of a discourse which is being led by Ayatollah Khamenei. It is a discourse that contains theory and worldview of martyrdom.

Although the martyrdom of Commander Soleimani was a great blow to Iran and the axis of resistance, it did not mean that Iran would remain inactive from now on. Tehran immediately appointed Gen. Esmail Qaani as commander of the IRGC Quds Force. The U.S. has been worried about the new commander since the outset of his appointment and even spoke of his assassination.

Of course, after a short period of time the axis of resistance made more achievements, especially in Syria. All these factors show that today all the countries member to the axis of resistance are more determined to achieve their goals with respect to martyr Soleimani, who has now become a school.

Temporary Saudi ceasefire in Yemen not solution: advisor

POLITICAL DESK **TEHRAN** — Hossein Amir Abdollahian, a senior foreign policy advisor to the Iranian Parliament speaker, says Saudi Arabia's ceasefire in Yemen, which is intended to rebuild its forces to resume aggression, is not the solution to the Yemeni problem.



"Ceasefire in & lifting all humanitarian sanctions on #Yemen are two key demands by Yemenis," Amir Abdollahian said in a tweet on Friday.

"Ending strikes against Yemen is a good move, but the unsustainably Saudi-initiated some-day truce aimed at rebuilding forces to resume aggression [sic] and bloodshed is not the solution," he added.

On Thursday night, the spokesman for Yemen's Houthi Ansarullah movement, Mohammed Abdul-Salam, dismissed a two-week ceasefire announced by the Saudi-led coalition waging a bloody military onslaught against the impoverished country as a publicity stunt.

"The ceasefire announcement by Saudi Arabia is a ploy indeed as it is pressing ahead with raids on Yemen, and conducting operations on various fronts, including areas where there were no clashes at all," Abdul-Salam said in an exclusive interview with the Qatar-based and Arabic-language al-Jazeera television news network.

He added, "The Saudi ceasefire is just a political and media maneuver. It pursues more than one goal. It seeks to undercut the ongoing serious negotiations with the United Nations and burnish the blood-stained image of Saudi Arabia in this critical moment when the world is facing the coronavirus pandemic."

Abdul-Salam underlined that the sensible decision for the Saudi-led coalition would be to stop the military aggression on Yemen, and lift the crippling blockade.

Meanwhile, Yemen on Friday reported its first case of infection with the novel coronavirus in a southern province under the control of Saudi-sponsored militiamen loyal to the country's former President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi.

This has raised fears of an outbreak in an impoverished country where five years of a bloody campaign led by Saudi Arabia have shattered the health system.

The supreme national emergency committee for COVID-19 in Yemen said in a posting on its Twitter page on Friday that the case was diagnosed in the oil-producing Hadhramaut province, according to Press TV.

The committee said the infected patient has been identified in the port town of Ash Shihr, and he was in stable condition and receiving care.

The local governor, Farag al-Bouhsni, said on his Facebook page that the area would be placed under a partial curfew and all workers at the town's port will be quarantined for 14 days.

Iranians voice solidarity with Japanese amid pandemic

TEHRAN (MNA) — A number of Iranian university students and healthcare personnel have sent messages of support to the Japanese nation in the battle against the coronavirus (COVID-19) disease.



Some 30 Tehran University students of Japanese Literature and a number of Iranian nurses and doctors have provided a video clip upon the request and with the coordination of the Iranian Cultural Attache in Tokyo to show their affection and support to the friendly people of Japan in the battle against the new pandemic.

The video made in the Japanese language offers support to the nurses working to alleviate the suffering and control the spread of the Coronavirus outbreak in the East Asian country.

Global solidarity is needed for full control of the spread of the new coronavirus infection.

The Japanese people had previously sent their messages of solidarity with Iran in the fight against the coronavirus and had also expressed their support to the lifting of the U.S. sanctions which have hampered the Islamic Republic's efforts to contain the disease.

The worldwide death toll from the new coronavirus has surpassed 102,000 amid over 1.7 million cases and more than 376,000 recoveries.

Japan reported 6,005 infection cases with the COVID-19, with a death toll of 99 as of Friday.

Iranian Health Ministry announced on Friday that the number of coronavirus cases had hit 68,192 in Iran, while a total of 4,232 people had died and 34,465 recovered from the disease.

Japan is among the countries sending humanitarian aid to Iran to help curb the pandemic.

U.S., UK first ignored corona; now they are failing to contain it

1→ It is worth noting that the New York State now has more coronavirus cases than any single country on the planet.

But this is only the tip of the iceberg in the United States. Many observers have long warned that the country would experience the worst coronavirus catastrophe in the world.

While the first known case of COVID-19 in the U.S. was confirmed on January 20, 2020, U.S. President Donald Trump and his administration as well as the Republican media outlets downplayed and mocked the coronavirus pandemic for over a month.

On February 27, Trump claimed that the outbreak would be temporary. "It's going to disappear," he said. "One day it's like a miracle—it will disappear."

On March 17, he said, "I've always known this is a real—this is a pandemic. I felt it was a pandemic long before it was called a pandemic ... I've always viewed it as very serious."

On March 26, he claimed this kind of pandemic "was something nobody thought could happen," while many experts had predicted a devastating global pandemic sooner or later.

Trump then went back to downplaying the outbreak, claiming that if the economic shutdown continues, deaths by suicide "definitely would be in far greater numbers than the numbers that we're talking about" for COVID-19 deaths.

Earlier this month, renowned American scholar Noam Chomsky said the coronavirus crisis could have been prevented because there was enough information available to the world.

Speaking from his office in self-isolation to Croatian philosopher and author Srecko Horvat, the celebrated 91-year-old U.S. linguist offered a stark perspective on how the pandemic has been managed by different countries.

■ Worst coronavirus response was from the U.S.: Chomsky

"China, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore began to do something, and they have sort of pretty much seemed to have contained at least the first surge of the crisis," he said, Al Jazeera reported.

"In Europe, to some extent, it's happened. Germany ... did have spare diagnostic capacity and was able to act in a highly selfish fashion, not helping others but for itself at least, to evident reasonable containment."

"Other countries just ignored it. The worst was the United Kingdom and the worst of all was the United States."

"One day [Trump] says, 'There is no crisis, it's just like flu.' The next day, 'It's a terrible crisis and I knew it all along.' The next day, 'We have to go back to the business, because I have to win the election'. The idea that the world



is in these hands is shocking."

■ UK death toll underreported: The Guardian

In the meantime, The Guardian reported on Thursday that hundreds of people were dying in Britain in care homes from confirmed or suspected coronavirus without yet being officially counted, providing evidence that the death toll could be much higher than what was reported by the government.

More than 120 residents of the UK's largest charitable provider of care homes are thought to have died from the virus in the last three weeks, while another network of care homes is reported to have recorded 88 deaths, according to The Guardian.

The report added that Care England, the industry body, estimated that the death toll is likely to be close to 1,000, despite the only available official figure for care home fatalities being dramatically lower. The Office for National Statistics said this week that 20 people died in care homes across the whole of England and Wales in the week to March 27.

The gulf in the figures has prompted warnings that ministers are underestimating the impact of Covid-19 on society's most frail, and are failing to sufficiently help besieged care homes and workers.

Britain's care industry leaders and the Alzheimer's Society have said they believe the virus is now active in around half of care settings, which look after about 400,000 people in the UK. This is far higher than the estimate given by Prof Chris Whitty, the UK government's chief medical officer,

who said on Tuesday that just over 9% of care homes had cases of Covid-19.

"We are seeing underreporting of the number of deaths," said Prof Martin Green, the chief executive of Care UK, which represents the largest care providers. "Deaths might not be in the thousands yet, but it is coming up to that level. We need a proper analysis of death rates occurring across care homes, and the government should be collecting this data."

Around 70% of residents in one Yorkshire care home for people with dementia, operated by MHA, the UK's largest charitable provider of care homes, are suspected of being infected. Thirteen people have died in another of MHA's Yorkshire homes and 11 have died in a home in Northamptonshire. The provider also believes half of its care homes have cases of infection.

■ U.S., Britain host anti-Iran channels

Despite the two countries' abject failure to adequately deal with the disease, the United States and the UK are home to a countless number of anti-Iran news channels and outlets which on numerous occasions published false reports on the coronavirus outbreak in Iran.

The BBC Persian's website ran a piece on February 25 on why many Iranian politicians have tested positive for the novel coronavirus.

The article, by Hossein Bastani, argued that the Islamic Republic authorities were lying about the number of people infected with the virus. Of course, Bastani's article was published before many politicians in the West — including British Prime Minister Boris Johnson — tested positive for coronavirus.

Another BBC Persian journalist, Rana Rahimpour, was interviewed on Radio 4 Today on the same day about the coronavirus outbreak in Iran.

During the interview, Rahimpour slammed the Iranian authorities for refusing a lockdown, blaming religious beliefs as an obstacle in the path of containing the outbreak.

"We can see a clear conflict between religious fundamentalists in Iran and science. And unfortunately, the authorities are refusing scientific facts," she said.

It is important to note the turn of events in other countries, especially in the UK, to fully grasp how ideologically biased the BBC Persian's journalists are and how they manipulate public opinion both in Iran and abroad in times of crisis.

It is also important to note — as mentioned earlier — that the BBC Persian is not alone in this propaganda war waged on Iran and its people.

Embassy in Moscow guides Iranians wishing to fly home

POLITICAL DESK **TEHRAN** — Iran's embassy in Moscow issued a statement on Friday to repatriate Iranians who wish to return to their homeland amid the coronavirus pandemic.

According to the embassy, Iranians wishing to return to Iran can get in touch with Kavan

Tour and Travel Agency, an exclusive agency of Mahan Airline in Moscow.

"In case of tightening of travel restrictions and suspension of all flights from Moscow to Tehran, the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Russian Federation will take necessary measures for repatriation of

Iranian citizens to Iran through concerned bodies in Iran and Russia," the statement read, Mehr reported.

"In this case, the process of registration of Iranians wishing to return to Iran from Moscow will be notified. Obviously, all relevant travel costs shall be borne by the applicant."

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — A senior Democratic senator has urged President Donald Trump not to block Iran's request for a \$5bn loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), saying it is "in the interest of international security" to help Iran contain the spread of the coronavirus.

Dianne Feinstein of California, a member of the U.S. Senate's intelligence and appropriations committees, said she was "disappointed" that the White House intends to block Tehran's request for funds.

"Providing these funds to Iran would help it respond more effectively to the disease and mitigate the risk of further destabilization in the region," Feinstein said in a letter to the president late on Thursday, the Middle East Eye reported.

Iran has applied for an emergency loan from the IMF known as Rapid Financing Instrument (RFI), which covers countries' urgent needs and does not require a fully-fledged reform program.

Earlier this week, the Trump administration signaled that it will not allow the IMF loan to go through.

Feinstein's letter follows numerous pleas by rights groups, world leaders and US lawmakers for Washington to ease sanctions against Iran amid the country's battle against the deadly coronavirus.

Iran has been among the countries hardest hit by the new coronavirus, which first showed up in China in late December 2019 before spreading to other parts of the world.



Iran unveils system for managing state-owned enterprises

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran's comprehensive system of state-owned enterprises was officially unveiled in a meeting attended by Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri on Saturday, IRNA reported.

The meeting was also participated by Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Farhad Dejjasand and senior directors of the ministry.

According to Jahangiri, the system is aimed to improve the performance of government-owned companies and in this regard it is of high importance.

All the government companies' general data including basic information as well as financial records are going to be stored in this system for future assessments.

Jahangiri also put emphasis on the significance of transparency in the state-run companies and said any measure to this end is valuable.

Privatization to materialize 'Surge in Production'

1 → And on Friday, President Hassan Rouhani instructed Dejjasand that the process of divesting state shares should be expedited and the proper ground should be rapidly laid in the stock market to this end.

While downsizing the government has been on the agenda, now "Surge in Production", which requires a strong presence of the private sector in all production areas, makes paying attention to privatization more vital.



The government should take the necessary measures as soon as possible to remove all hurdles in the way of privatization, the process should be amended, and the condition for offering shares should be improved.

In fact, as many economists believe, if the government wants a surge in production, privatization if done correctly is one of the main ways to reach it.

Global business, workers, civil society join call for debt relief for poorer nations

The International Chamber of Commerce on Friday joined a global trade union and a major civil society group to urge immediate debt relief for the world's poorest countries to help them fight the coronavirus pandemic and mitigate its economic impact.

In an open letter to finance ministers, the groups also urged countries to contribute to the Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust, an International Monetary Fund instrument that provides debt service relief to its poorest members.

The ICC, the International Trade Union Confederation and Global Citizen, a group pushing to end extreme poverty by 2030, warned that failure to address the debt and financing needs of developing countries could trigger a series of debt defaults that would have devastating and wide-ranging consequences.



"We are concerned that a failure to immediately address the debt and financing needs of developing countries during this unprecedented crisis will result in large-scale loss of lives and livelihoods — potentially resulting in a fundamental collapse of social and economic systems," the groups wrote.

The letter reflects increasing support for a push by the World Bank and IMF for official bilateral creditors to temporarily suspend debt payments for the poorest countries, which will be hit hardest by the pandemic.

Details of the IMF-World Bank proposal are still being finalized ahead of debate by finance officials at the virtual Spring Meetings of the Fund and the Bank next week.

On Friday, the Institution of International Finance, which includes over 450 banks, hedge funds and other financial firms, also backed the call. Other backers include the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Jubilee USA Network alliance of faith groups.

Nearly 140 campaign groups and charities, including Oxfam and Save the Children, have also urged the Group of 20 major economies and private creditors to cancel debt payments.

In their open letter, published Friday, the ICC, ITUC and Global Citizen warned that some developing countries now faced an "impossible choice" between servicing sovereign debt repayments or paying nurses and purchasing ventilators.

"Without urgent action, we see a fundamental risk that a series of debt defaults will further exacerbate the unprecedented economic downturn already unfolding before us," the groups said.

(Source: Reuters)

Economists elaborate on best ways to tackle aftershocks of coronavirus outbreak

1 → In this regard, various rescue packages have been introduced by governments which mostly include a mixture of credit assistance or guarantees, wage subsidies, tax deferrals, lowering interest rates, etc.

But what is important in this context, is to determine what strategy is most effective in mitigating the economic impacts of the virus outbreak?

■ Current programs: pros and cons

In a general sense, two major approaches have been taken by economists about the economic impacts of the coronavirus.

Since the current virus outbreak has affected both the supply and the demand sides of the countries' economies, economists either believe in supporting the suppliers or stimulating the demand side.

Considering the later strategy, analysts and experts argue that measures that target the demand side are not comprehensive and can even be counterproductive since in motivating the demand we are encouraging interpersonal contact and therefore lead to further transmission of the virus and as a result prolong the negative economic impacts and create a broken cycle.

Concerning the supply aspects, although supporting the Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) and vulnerable production units that have been affected the most from the virus outbreak, is an inevitable responsibility of the governments, but irrational liquidity support could also seriously harm the economy in the long run.

As we said the coronavirus has already hit the demand side of the economies hard, so implementing programs like interest-rate cuts and injecting liquidity into the market, although in the short term could support the



stock markets but in the long run, would result in more inflation and even lead to stagflation.

■ Better options

As the Noble Prize winner economist Robert Shiller puts it, at times like this in which the source of the problem is something real and not psychological it is hard to choose the best approach to tackle the issue altogether.

"It's hard to be effective at a time like this when the source of the problem is real," Shiller said when asked about the most effective measures for supporting the economy in times like this.

So it seems that there is not a single solution for such a huge disruption, however, some suggestions have been made based on the previous experiences of the world's successful economies like Germany and the U.S, some of which are already being applied

TEDPIX notches record high of 600,000 points

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), hit the record high of 600,000 points on Saturday, that is the first day of Iranian calendar week, Tasnim news agency reported.

The index gained 10,803 points to 608,000, as 6.663 billion securities worth 57.27 trillion rials (about \$1.36 billion) were traded through 37,000 deals at this market.

TEDPIX had posted the record high of half million points on February 24 when it climbed 4,831 points to 503,735.

As reported, over 6.354 billion securities worth 49.299 trillion rials (about \$1.1 billion) were traded at TSE.

The index gained 8.5 percent to 597,094 points in the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday).

The indices of banks, chemical and oil products companies, insurance companies and retirement funds, foodstuff industries, non-metals, metals, and base metals industries, computer companies and cement production units mostly con-



tributed to the growth of TEDPIX in the past week.

TSE Head Ali Sahraei has announced that the value of trades at the Tehran Stock Exchange, the main stock exchange of Iran, jumped 2.6 folds in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19).

The official has also put Return on Investment (ROI) at 180 percent at TSE in the previous year.

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

EU members clash over pandemic economic rescue package

France and the Netherlands have openly clashed over the meaning of a messy compromise struck by finance ministers which has unlocked a €500bn (£438bn) pandemic rescue package for European economies but left major issues unresolved.

Hours after a breakthrough was secured late on Thursday evening to allow immediate support for businesses and healthcare systems, it became clear on Friday that there remained bitter divisions within the EU over the longer-term task of rebuilding the European economy.

The finance ministers have agreed to make available to countries hardest hit by the coronavirus pandemic some €240bn of credit lines via the European stability mechanism, a bailout fund for struggling member states.

There will be no conditions attached where the spending is related to the immediate crisis. But normal rules on the need for balanced budgets will apply where the cash is spent on the wider economy.

On the toxic issue of the so-called

government to compensate for a significant part of the costs for retaining the employee.

This way the employees will receive up to 90 percent of their normal wages despite their shorter work hours and the production units won't be forced to completely stop operation or bear heavy losses.

Countries all around the world are advised to follow this strategy to prevent job losses and also to support SMEs and production units to get back up quickly after the pandemic is gone.

■ Strict preventive measures

In a recent survey published earlier this month, the Initiative on Global Markets (IGM), which is a research center at the University Of Chicago Booth School Of Business, asked top economist from all over the world about the best possible way to tackle the coronavirus problem.

The IGM survey showed that most of the world's top economists believe that implementing strict preventive measures and near complete lockdown of businesses and cities is the best way to contain both the virus and its economic impacts.

According to the survey, relaxing strict quarantine regulations in a time that the likelihood of the virus being re-spread is high will lead to greater economic losses compared to continuing strict quarantine regulations until the possibility of contamination recurrence is eliminated.

So we can conclude that the best possible way to tackle the pandemic is to apply strict preventive regulations, despite their severe short-term economic impacts, to contain the virus in the shortest possible time and then apply support packages to help the economy get back up.

While the world spends on coronavirus bailouts, China holds back

The world is opening its wallet to fight the effects of the coronavirus outbreak. The United States unveiled a \$2 trillion rescue package. European countries have announced their own spending blitz, and Japan approved a nearly \$1 trillion economic stimulus plan.

Then there's China.

The country that famously helped kick-start the world economy after the 2008 global financial crisis with a half-a-trillion-dollar spending splurge has been relatively restrained this time around. While it is helping companies keep workers and pushing its state-run banks to lend more, China has held back from spending on big packages or flooding its financial system with money.

A growing number of people say China should do more. Prominent economists are calling on Beijing to get the country's consumers spending again. At least seven provinces and cities are already distributing vouchers to empower spenders.

Justin Lin Yifu, an influential government adviser, called at a conference last week for China to rekindle economic growth by introducing vouchers nationwide that must be spent quickly or become worthless.

"Consumption vouchers are more effective" than distributing cash, he said. "People may not consume cash when they get it, so it will not be directly converted into demand."

The aim is to help China's growing ranks of college-educated employees like Huang Yihan, as well as the factory workers who largely powered the economy in the past. Huang, 24, lost her job at an eight-employee ad agency in Shanghai in early February and received only two months' pay as severance because she had been a recent hire.

Like many in her generation who grew up in a rapidly expanding economy, Huang did not expect to find herself unemployed. She studied hard in high school and attended a top-notch university in Guangzhou in southern China. But now she surveys a hiring landscape that has suddenly turned bleak for millions of young Chinese.

The quarterly rent payment for her share of an apartment is coming due in mid-April. She faces a choice of paying the rent or paying for food as she looks for her next job, though she expressed confidence that one could be found.

"If I take out the rent, I won't be left with much money," she said.

The extent of the damage that China must reverse still is not clear. Its huge economy, a major engine of global growth, was effectively idled in February after the coronavirus spread from an initial outbreak in the city of Wuhan. A glimpse of the full



effect on the country may come April 17, when China reports economic statistics for the first three months of the year. But economists widely believe the shutdown has doomed untold numbers of jobs and small businesses.

Restarting the economy will be a lot tougher than it was after 2008, when China unveiled a \$586 billion spending package. That package funded highways, bridges and high-speed rail lines across the country. It enabled big construction projects. Steel, glass and cement factories revved up to meet the new demand.

China's economy has tripled in size since then and become more diverse and more complex. China now has a much more highly educated labor force with less enthusiasm for manual labor. The service sector has become more important.

"Negative impacts of the coronavirus disease are mainly borne by people working specific industries, such as restaurants, hotels, transportation companies, movie theaters and tourism," said Zhi George Yu, an economist at Renmin University of China. "Infrastructure investment will not directly absorb many workers who worked in the industries mostly impacted by the disease."

China is still recovering from its last binge. In addition to the spending, Beijing unleashed \$2 trillion in new lending and made other moves that dumped still more credit into the financial system. As a result, China became one of the world's most indebted economies in less than a decade. Economists inside and outside the country have warned that the debt — much of it hidden away on the books of local governments and state-run companies — could disrupt the financial system and hold back long-term growth.

Even if China strengthens its economy internally, it must cope with a lack of demand for its goods from abroad.

From brick-and-mortar stores overseas, "in the last few days, the amount of orders that have been canceled at the factory

is staggering," said Sabrina Finlay, chief executive of Otobo, a footwear company in Minneapolis that does its manufacturing in China. Online sales in China have improved as the country bounces back, she added, but traffic at stores there has not fully returned.

Like France, China has focused on helping companies keep paying their workers. The newest moves, unveiled last week, will support the state-owned banking sector to lend another \$200 billion to businesses, particularly smaller ones. Local governments have also issued \$150 billion in bonds so far this year to pay contractors for the construction of roads, bridges and other projects.

When Xibei, a chain of 386 restaurants specializing in roasted lamb and other northwestern Chinese cuisine, warned publicly that it was running low on money to pay its 22,000 employees, China's government and banking system jumped into action.

Within two days, the government was discussing financial assistance, said Jia Guolong, the company's chairman. Three days later, loan documents were signed for a \$200 million, three-year, low-interest line of credit from a state-owned bank. Four days after that, Xibei was paying its workers.

"It was a requirement from the bank that we use the money to pay only salaries and food suppliers," Jia said in a telephone interview.

But Beijing is providing almost no financial assistance directly to the general public. As factory orders have dried up for exports and abroad, many manufacturing employees no longer work overtime, which previously accounted for up to a third of their compensation. While the last large-scale lockdown in China ended in Wuhan on Wednesday morning, many social-distancing rules remain in effect nationwide and have discouraged people from going out to eat or paying for other services.

So spending has stayed weak. Even now, Xibei's restaurants have just a little over half the daily sales they had before the pandemic, Jia said.

Government data shows employment by large industrial enterprises has stayed steady at 68 million people. But the data doesn't show the effect on small and medium-size businesses, which account for as much as 80% of the country's urban employment.

Yu, of Renmin University, and other economists are increasingly recommending an approach pioneered this spring by affluent areas in east-central China: handing out vouchers to stimulate consumption.

(Source: Economic Times)

Imam Khomeini Refinery produces 5b liters of euro-4 gasoline in a year

ENERGY TEHRAN – Managing Director of Iran's Imam Khomeini Oil Refining Company said the refinery produced over 5 billion liters of Euro-4 quality gasoline during the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19), Shana reported.

Following the National Iranian Oil Product Distribution Company (NIOPDC)'s general policies, we managed to produce 5.2 billion liters of Euro-4 quality gasoline, 612 million liters of Euro-5 gasoline and 3.8 billion liters of gas oil to play a significant role in the country's fuel supply in the past calendar year, Gholamhossein Ramezanzpour said.

Located in Markazi province in central Iran, Imam Khomeini refinery is one of the country's top refineries.

In the past few years, Iranian think-tanks and energy experts have been repeatedly stating that the country should increase its refining capacity in order to lessen the economy's reliance on crude sales. In this regard, one of the main strategies of the National



Iranian Oil Company in recent years has been focusing on the country's refineries.

The NIOPDC reports indicate that the country's daily gasoline production has witnessed a significant increase in the past few years.

Back in August 2019, chairman of the Association of Iranian Refining Companies announced that gasoline production in Iran exceeded 100 million liters per day.

The country has achieved total self-reliance in gasoline production and the surplus production is exported to neighboring countries, Nasser Ashouri told IRIB.

After the implementation of the gasoline rationing scheme in November 2019, Iranian refineries have been able to export up to 30 million liters of gasoline every day.

In mid-November 2019, The Iranian government started rationing of subsidized gasoline and increased fuel prices as part of a plan to reduce the energy subsidies to use the revenue for supporting underprivileged families.

Norway says it may cut oil output if OPEC+ deal implemented

Norway, Western Europe's largest oil producer, signaled on Friday it could cut its output if the deal negotiated by the so-called OPEC+ nations was implemented as planned.

Norway's Minister of Petroleum and Energy Tina Bru is taking part in Friday's G20 video conference to discuss the situation in the energy market after demand and prices were hammered by the coronavirus crisis.

Non-OPEC Norway's crude output stood at 1.75 million bpd in February, up 26% from a year earlier. Including condensate and natural gas liquids (NGL), the oil liquids production was 2.1 million bpd.

At the G20 meeting, Saudi Arabia, Russia and their allies will press Mexico to join an accord for production cuts equivalent to 10% of global supplies and will push the United States and other producers to remove a further 5%.

The plans for the OPEC+ cuts were hammered out in marathon talks on



Thursday, but stumbled when Mexico refused to sign up.

Bru said last week Norway would consider reducing output if a global deal to curb supply was agreed by major producers, but said any cut would be unilateral and not part of a formal pact.

"Assuming the deal between the OPEC+ nations is implemented, there would be a basis for Norway to consider such a unilateral cut. In this context today's G20 ministerial meeting is also important," the ministry said in a statement on Friday.

(Source: Reuters)

Serbia doubles renewable energy production in 2019

Total electricity production under Serbia's subsidy scheme for privileged power producers, mainly from renewables, doubled last year from 638 GWh to 1,361 GWh.

According to the report produced by the state-owned Electric Power Industry of Serbia (EPS), in 2018 privileged and temporary privileged producers generated the most of electricity in hydropower plants, in wind farms and in natural gas power plants.

In 2017, total production was 426 GWh. Privileged producers were paid RSD 7.4 billion (EUR 62.8 million) in 2018, while in 2019 the amount almost doubled – RSD 13.6 billion (EUR 115.5 million).

The growth of output by privileged power producers is the main barometer of the development of renewables in Serbia. Total electricity generation in 2019 was 36,000 GWh, matched by consumption.

It could be said that the rise came as a result of the Decree on incentives for the

production of electricity from renewable energy sources and high-efficiency heat and power cogeneration under which all privileged power producers have been receiving feed-in tariffs.

However, on December 31, 2019, the decree expired. Three and a half months later, the Government is silent on its next steps: it still hasn't introduced new supporting mechanism for renewables nor it has provided any official information on when exactly this is to take place. Earlier in 2018, authorities announced changes to the renewables' incentive model and they claimed last year that auctions for wind farms and solar power plants would be rolled out.

Further to this, as it explained, due to the introduction of the state of emergency amid coronavirus, the Government of Serbia has decided to suspend the effect of the power purchase agreements between EPS and privileged producers.

(Source: balkangreenenergynews.com)

G20 backs largest oil supply agreement in history

The US and the G20 on Friday called on the world's leading countries to take "all the necessary measures" to stabilize an energy industry devastated by the coronavirus pandemic, giving international backing to deep oil production cuts pledged by OPEC and Russia.

Oil demand has fallen by roughly a third as some of the world's largest economies have, in effect, shut down to try to stop the spread of the virus, driving crude prices to their lowest level in 18 years and threatening millions of energy sector jobs and long-term damage to supplies.

Early on Friday morning, Saudi Arabia-led OPEC and Russia struck a deal to cut 10m barrels a day from global supply, the biggest supply reduction ever made as the producers moved to prop up the global oil market.

Confirmation of the deal was delayed by Mexico's refusal to make large cuts to its own oil production, defying Saudi Arabia's push to have all countries in the Opec+ alliance cut an equal share.

The U.S., Russia and Saudi Arabia, the world's top three oil producers, all endorsed the agreement to cut production, with Donald Trump, U.S. president, saying that the U.S. would help Mexico "pick up some of the slack" to smooth the deal's progress.

The communique from the G20 meeting said members would "commit to take all the necessary and immediate measures to ensure energy market stability". In a reference to the OPEC deal, the communique "recognize[d] the commitment of some producers to stabilize energy markets".

An earlier draft of the communique had contained a pledge to do "whatever it takes" but this was removed in the final version. Alexander Novak, Russian energy minister, told the G20 meeting that "the role of the G20 is to comprehensively support these efforts [undertaken by Opec+]."

Saudi Arabia's crown prince Mohammed bin Salman spoke with Russian president Vladimir Putin on Friday evening, according to Saudi state media, saying they had reaffirmed the importance of co-operation between oil producers.

The push for a supply agreement is the latest in a series of efforts by governments, central banks and international institutions to prop up the global economy in the face of the Covid-19 crisis, which is driving nations across the world into deep recession.

Speaking at the emergency online meeting of G20 energy ministers on Friday, Fatih Birol of the International Energy



Agency said the "shockwaves" of the virus had created the oil crash and threatened "global economic stability".

"Nobody should harbor the idea that these measures provide a quick fix," said Birol, who leads the world's top energy body. "[But] like the effect of confinement on the spread of Covid-19, actions to address the oil market imbalance will help lower the peak and flatten the curve."

The G20's implicit backing for the OPEC deal, which aims to remove 10m barrels a day from the market, marks a diplomatic victory for Trump, who had pressed Saudi Arabia, OPEC's most powerful member, and Russia to end a month-old price war that had exacerbated the crisis in energy markets.

He held talks with Prince Mohammed and Putin on Thursday and Friday, having threatened tariffs on Saudi and Russian oil sales if they did not reach a deal. Trump has not had to commit to any mandated cuts by the U.S.

Mexico's reluctance to take on deeper cuts while its government has pledged to increase production was not thought likely to delay the OPEC cuts agreement indefinitely. This gigantic cut is dictated by an even bigger collapse in demand, forcing all of the world producers to collectively intervene in order to avoid a collapse of the oil industry.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Friday that Putin considered the deal to have been sealed.

Trump indicated that the U.S. may account for some of Mexico's cuts through declines already under way in its own oil sector.

"The U.S. will help Mexico along and they will reimburse us?..?..?at a later date when they are prepared to do so," Trump said.

Saudi-Mexican clash halts record oil cut deal despite Trump pressure

Top oil nations struggled to finalize record output cuts at G20 talks on Friday to boost prices slammed by the coronavirus crisis, as Saudi Arabia clashed with Mexico despite U.S. President Donald Trump's mediation offer.

OPEC led by Saudi Arabia and its allies led by Russia, which together make up the informal OPEC+ group, had forged a pact to curb crude production by 10 million barrels per day (bpd) or 10 percent of global supplies in marathon talks on Thursday.

Russia and OPEC said they wanted other producers including the United States and

Canada to cut a further 5 percent.

But efforts to conclude the deal hit the buffers when Mexico said it would only cut output by a quarter of the amount demanded by OPEC+.

Measures to curb the spread of the coronavirus have destroyed demand for fuel and driven down oil prices, straining budgets of oil producers and hammering the U.S. shale industry which is more vulnerable to low prices due to its higher costs.

Mexico President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said on Friday Trump had offered to make extra U.S. cuts on his behalf, an un-

usual offer by a president who has long railed against OPEC.

Trump, who had threatened Saudi Arabia with oil tariffs if it did not fix the market's oversupply problem, said Washington would help Mexico by picking up "some of the slack" and being reimbursed later. He did not say how this would work.

But the offer was still not enough to close the deal.

Two sources familiar with the discussions said Saudi Arabia clashed with Mexico on Thursday and again on Friday, when the

kingdom hosted talks of energy ministers from the Group of 20 major economies that were aimed at endorsing OPEC+ efforts.

Hours after talks ended, a G20 communique made no mention of the cuts or quantities, but only referred to "measures to ensure energy market stability". It remained unclear how the OPEC+ pact could be now finalized.

"We call on all nations to use every means at their disposal to help reduce the surplus," U.S. Energy Secretary Dan Brouillette had told the G20 talks.

(Source: Reuters)

U.S. crude storage could fill up in May as refinery demand, oil exports plunge 30 percent: Plains

U.S. commercial crude storage could hit its capacity in mid-May as refinery demand and U.S. oil exports each plunge about 30 percent, triggering widespread production cuts and shut-ins throughout the country, according to Plains All American Pipeline.

The major U.S. crude pipeline operator wrote a letter this week to the Texas energy regulator in advance of the Texas Railroad Commission's emergency meeting Tuesday to discuss potentially mandating production reductions in the state because of collapsing global demand amid the coronavirus pandemic.

In late March, Plains began asking crude oil producers to start reducing output to keep the U.S. from rapidly running out of storage space, which would cause a deeper crash in U.S. oil prices.

"We estimate that U.S. refinery demand for crude oil would be reduced by 30 percent or more, an approximate 5 million bpd decline. We also estimated that crude oil exports will likely be reduced by a similar percentage, which represents an additional demand reduction of approximately 1 million bpd," Plains President Harry Pefanis wrote this week. "We believed that commercial storage would absorb the imbalance for a period of time (mid-May, by our estimates), but that at some point curtailments of U.S. production would be required to balance the market."

U.S. production already has fallen from an estimated 13 million bpd to below 12.4 million bpd, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, but much greater reductions are expected.



"Against this backdrop, we have been advising our producer customers to proactively manage their exposure by taking steps to reduce or curtail production in a manner that was best suited for their assets rather than waiting for storage capacity to be filled and being forced to shut-in production," Pefanis added. "Some of the proactive measures we suggested producers could implement quickly included deferring completions and where practicable, choking back production."

■ Eyes on Texas

Large, independent Permian Basin producers Pioneer Natural Resources and Parsley Energy have pushed Texas to implement mandatory production cuts for the first time in nearly 50 years, but most producers are in opposition, including ExxonMobil, Chevron, Occidental Petroleum, EOG Resources, Marathon Oil, Concho Resources, Diamondback Energy and Devon Energy. They have all argued in favor of letting free markets work and the reductions will come naturally.

Although any mandatory reductions in Texas are considered unlikely because of the large base of opposition, the meeting will come after the OPEC+ group has tentatively agreed to scale back production by 10 million bpd in May and June as Saudi Arabia and Russia ended their month-long pricing war. The U.S., Canada, and others are supporting the OPEC+ deal at Friday's G20 meeting of energy ministers.

U.S. producers that oppose mandatory reductions point out that companies are slicing their spending more than 30 percent on average and pulling drilling rigs from the oilfields at a record pace.

"Indications are that production in Texas, and across the nation, is already headed toward a dramatic decline in response to the pandemic and price war, as evidenced by the reported reductions in individual operator capital budgets, as well as the material decrease in the number of active drilling rigs," Concho stated in a letter.

"In fact, Concho, as well as other operators in the Permian Basin, have begun shutting in uneconomic production in rapid response to the recent market shift. Once the market moves toward equilibrium, commodity prices will respond accordingly."

Continental Resources founder and chairman Harold Hamm, a key energy ally of President Donald Trump, joined Pioneer and Parsley in supporting the required cutbacks, but Continental doesn't operate in Texas.

Texas Railroad Commissioner Ryan Sitton has most publicly pushed for state intervention, although even he has said he has mixed feelings on the topic. The goal is to prevent uneconomic "wasteful production" of crude oil at a time when global supplies are far outpacing demand, Sitton said, adding, "it's my job to consider this."

(Source: Platts)

Coronavirus spreads at major Kazakh oilfield's worker camp

Twelve people have tested positive for the novel coronavirus at one of the worker camps located next to the giant Tengiz oilfield in Kazakhstan, its operator Tengizchevroil said on Saturday.

The Chevron-led group, the central Asian nation's No.1 oil producer, said critical activities in Tengiz had not been impacted and production was continuing as normal.

Tengizchevroil said it had taken measures to ensure the safety of workers on the site and avoid output disruption, including through limiting access to the field.

Earlier this week authorities confirmed the first coronavirus case at a 2,000-bed camp in the so-called rotational village, where workers of the company and its contractors stay during their weeks-long shifts.

On Saturday Tengizchevroil said that after tracing contacts of the first infected person, 11 more people had been diagnosed with the disease.

According to the company, the camp has been locked down and workers can enter the Tengiz field itself only after being quarantined for 14 days. Tengizchevroil has also delayed a planned maintenance turnaround until next year.

(Source: Reuters)

First Announcement



IN THE NAME OF GOD
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING

INTERNATIONAL TENDER No: 99/103-01/03

Tender Holder:

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING (IRIB)

Subject of Tender :

Leasing 9MHz space on Eutelsat 21B (E21B) for three years in accordance with the technical specification and other terms and conditions mentioned in the tender documents.

Deadline and how to receive the tender documents:

From Sunday 12th April 2020 (1399/01/24) until Wednesday 15th April 2020 (1399/01/27) by 04:00 p.m with presentation of introductory letter by company or its representative and the receipt of paying the documents fee.

Place of receiving the tender document:

Interested participants may refer to purchasing (KALA) Dept. ,4th Floor of IRIB Administration Complex ,Hotel Esteghlal St. Vali -Assr Ave,Tehran, Iran

The fee of the tender documents and how to deposit it:

Submission of payment receipt for the amount of 1,000,000 Rials to account 4101029171204273 with BIC No.IR 310100004101029171204273 IRAN Central Bank in the name of IRIB.

Type and amount of guarantee for participation to tender:

The amount of deposit for participant in tender is USD 25962 fixed or its equivalent in Rials 4050000000 which should be in the form of Bank Guarantee.

Time and place of delivering Bidding Envelopes:

The sealed packages/envelopes and (Qualification Evaluation in a separate sealed package/envelope) should be submitted no later than 11:00 a.m. on Saturday 16th May 2020 (1399/02/27) at the address mentioned in 4th clause.

Time and place of opening Qualification Evaluation envelopes:

The date of opening the Qualification Evaluation envelopes is on Saturday 16th May 2020 at 12:00 p.m (1399/02/27) in the office of International Purchasing .

Time and place of opening Envelopes:

The envelopes A of those eligible participants who meets the qualification criterion and approval of Technical and Commercial committee will be opened on Sunday 17th May 2020 at 03:00 p.m (1399/02/28) in the office of Financial Vice President .In case of complete content in the envelopes A the envelopes of B and C of eligible participants will be opened at the same time and place.

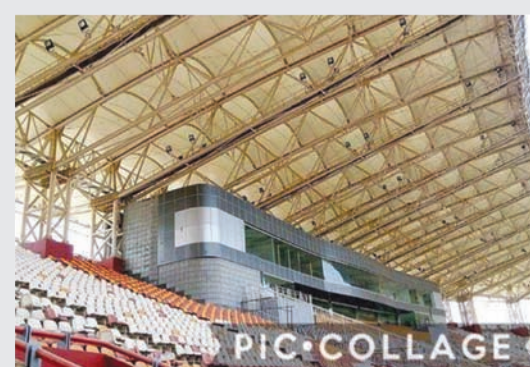
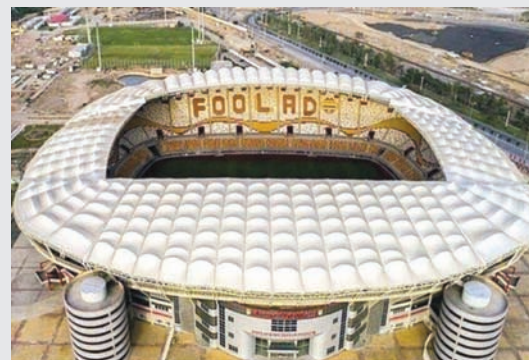
The participant must be qualified by the competent authorities.

For more information please see :

www.iriboffice.ir/tenders and http://iets.mporg.ir/ Tel: 00982122167053

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United States’ political-economic system naturally unable to protect people

The United States’ political-economic structure, whose trade and industry are controlled by private owners seeking more profit, lacks the nature of paying required in time attention to the ordinary people, a senior editor of an analytic website wrote in an article, providing the coronavirus crisis as a proof for his claim.

Glen Ford, the executive editor of the Black Radio Agenda, wrote in his article published by BAR on April 9 that COVID-19 has laid bare a fundamental truth that capitalist healthcare is a contradiction in terms, since capital – like the killer virus -- cares for nothing but reproducing itself.

“We have to ensure that we never return to the society that enabled this pandemic to emerge,” he laid emphasis on.

What some may remember as the Year of the Lost Spring – lost loved ones, lost jobs, lost freedom of movement – may also become the year that the oligarchy and its servants in both corporate parties lost popular permission to dictate the terms of life and death in the United States. For the second time this century, the economies of the U.S. and Europe are circling the abyss, dragging much of the rest of the planet with them, while China, site of the first large eruption of Covid-19, leads the world in both economic resilience and global mutual aid -- and Cuba has stepped forward once again as the champion of medical solidarity.

The superpower that has killed millions in its quest for global supremacy has utterly failed the most basic test of legitimacy at home: the ability to protect its own population.

The U.S. “public” health sector is revealed as a hollowed-out shell, crippled and shrunken by decades of unrelenting privatization at the hands of the oligarch-serving political duopoly. In effect, the Lords of Capital have been devouring the nation’s protective membrane, leaving the population defenseless against, not only microbes, but every disease of the poor -- plus opiates and the lethal social pathologies that spawn spectacular and uniquely American mass shootings at schools, churches and shopping malls, and the daily slaughter of Black and brown youth on the streets.

“The Lords of Capital have been devouring the nation’s protective membrane, leaving the population defenseless against, not only microbes, but every disease of the poor.”

The idiot currently occupying the White House did not create the healthcare crisis, and the people know it. Donald Trump is far too incompetent and unfocused to pull off such a monumental crime, which has been unfolding for decades.

In the meantime, Democrats have been full partners in stripping the people of public health protections -- including New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, the current darling of corporate media, who continues to press for \$2.5 billion in Medicaid cuts in his own state even as he poses as the nation’s top virus-slayer.

Even Joe Biden, the not-all-there man who some would like Cuomo to replace as the Democratic presidential nominee, vows to veto Medicare for All -- the first, preliminary step towards a real national health care system -- if it ever comes across his White House desk. Politicians of both parties take their orders from the Lords of Capital. Otherwise, they are demonized and threatened with expulsion from the capitalist duopoly, the only electoral game that is allowed under oligarchic rule -- which is why Bernie Sanders will always be a loyal sheep-dog for a party that opposes his old-style Democratic reforms.

In the big cities, it is almost invariably the Democrats that enforce Rich Man’s Rule -- many of them Black Democrats, since the other half of the duopoly is the White Man’s Party (GOP). Big labor’s only duopoly option is also the Democrats as the only choice to conflict with the ruling capitalist class.

“Democrats have been full partners in stripping the people of public health protections.”

The unions that purport to fight for the workers, and Blacks, who are overwhelming working class and the most left-leaning ethnicity in the nation, have both been reduced



by the duopoly to annexes of the Democratic Party, a fatal embrace. The duopoly serves only one master: Capital. Back when the Democrats were the White Man’s Party and an aging Frederick Douglass made his living as a Republican functionary, the former firebrand declared, “The Republican Party is the ship and all else is the sea around us.” Just as Douglass’ Republicans eventually sanctioned Jim Crow and the dictatorship of Capital, the Democrats have become bulwarks of an austerity Race to the Bottom that has thrown the working class and its most marginalized components overboard to drown in a sea of declining living standards and disappearing “real” jobs and social supports -- and without a national health care system.

Covid-19 has made clear the lunacy of this deal with the devil, and that “nobody will save us, but us.” Cooperation Jackson, the Mississippi-based “emerging vehicle for sustainable community development, economic democracy, and community ownership,” last week put out a call for a general strike to begin on May 1st -- May Day -- and a list of demands “that will transform our broken and inequitable society, and build a new society run by and for us -- the working-class, poor, oppressed majority.”

“Despite the asymmetry of power between ourselves on the Left and the organized working-class, and the forces of the right,” says the Call, “we have to do everything we can to intervene. We must stop the worst most deadly version of this pandemic from becoming a reality, and we have to ensure that we never return to the society that enabled this pandemic to emerge and have the impact it is having in the first place. We must do everything that we can to create a new, just, equitable and ecologically regenerative economy.”

“The duopoly serves only one master: Capital.”

The proposed demands include protection of front-line workers exposed to the virus, and of “other vulnerable communities, including the homeless, migrants, and refugees from discrimination and attack in this time of crisis”; democratization of the means of production, by converting corporations into cooperatives; universal healthcare and basic services (education, childcare, elderly care, water, electricity, internet, etc.); a universal basic income; democratized credit (“Bail out the people, not the corporations and Wall Street”); a “decarbonized economy and Green New Deal; housing as a human right; clean and decommodified water for all; a Debt Jubilee; release of prisoners and closure of jails and prisons; closure of detention centers and reunification of families; shutdown of overseas military bases and cuts in the mil-

itary budget, with spending transferred to social needs and infrastructure.

Cooperation Jackson spokesman Kali Akuno said nearly 300 activists took part in a conference call and reached “consensus on doing collective action to support what’s already going on.” Committees were formed to launch and sustain the strike and to put together a national strike fund.

“We’re trying to answer questions of the last 30 years in a few days,” said Akuno. May Day is important, “but we have no illusion that the ‘big one’ will happen on May 1st,” with the epidemic raging and much of the population still on lockdown, “but we’ll keep working towards it to send a clear message that we need a new system.”

As long as the lockdown continues, activists will have to find novel uses for technology. The Black Is Back Coalition had planned to hold its annual Electoral School gathering in St. Louis this weekend, April 11 and 12, but will instead conduct the event over the internet. The theme has been changed to “Covid-19 Pandemic: Black People Fight Back,” with an emphasis on “sellout Negroes in the time of plague,” said coalition chairman Omalu Yeshitela.

That’s an apt description of the battle ahead of us. The Democratic Party has for the last four years blamed all of the ills of capitalism -- and their own crimes -- on the singularly loathsome person of Donald Trump and his imaginary partners in Moscow. Trump has, in effect, been their shield, diverting attention from Democratic complicity in the Race to the Bottom -- which is why Hillary Clinton wanted him to be the Republican nominee, and why the Democrats insist he is the only issue in 2020. If Trump is the root of all evil, then all that needs to be done is to replace him with a Democrat -- leaving intact the system created by both parties at the behest of the ruling class. But the Covid-19 epidemic would have wrought mass death and economic havoc in the United States no matter which half of the corporate duopoly was in charge, because both corporate parties have been eagerly dismantling and privatizing the public health sector for two generations. The Covid-19 bailout of banks and corporations under Trump is modeled on the bank and corporate bailout under Barack Obama more than a decade ago. Neither scheme saved anybody but the financial and corporate elite. The First Black President and the Thoroughly Racist President both serve the same masters.

“The Covid-19 epidemic would have wrought mass death and economic havoc in the United States no matter which half of the corporate duopoly was in charge.”

Ineffective Western liberal democracy model, new version of global management

1 → The West basically does not know that the Renaissance was created by those who played a key role in creating the dark days of the middle ages. The truth is that neither the middle ages were created due to religious concepts and beliefs, nor was the irreligion played an important role in industrial and scientific progress.

However, the middle ages and the Renaissance became an excuse for Western intellectuals and theorists to marginalize religion as much as possible and later sought to expand their economic and political influence by defining this model in the Third World and the regional nations. Of course, the important role of Western intellectuals in promoting this concept should not be overlooked.

In recent days, the inability of the western model as well as international organizations to contain the coronavirus has become clear to the public. These institutions were supposed to protect human rights, but eventually, all of them failed and are currently only a tool to safeguard a population of less than 5 percent in the world.

Another significant issue is that global developments and the western and Zionist’s oppression against the nations of the world must not be marginalized amid the spread of coronavirus, something that the western media is trying to do at this time. Today, due to the dual policies of the west, most of the coronavirus victims are among the impoverished nations.

Finally, it should be noted that human beings are more than ever in need of global justice and a just savior to liberate them from all the ignorance and immorality.

Trump continuing ruthless assault on world order

By Payman Yazdani

TEHRAN—Marvin Zonis believes that the coronavirus will be extraordinarily disruptive of current world order and the US President continues his ruthless assault on the world order.

The current coronavirus pandemic ravaging every corner of the world and many states are desperate in the face of the coronavirus pandemic. Nations and governments are panicking and the economy has already collapsed. This crisis is expected to deepen more and more without a serious global willingness and cooperation.

Due to the great impact of the on the world from different aspects, many believe that changes to existing world order and international relations are invariable in the post corona era.

Mehr News Agency in an effort to make the dimension of the changes to the existing world order by coronavirus clearer has reached out to international experts and has discussed the issue with them.

Following is our interview with Marvin Zonis, Professor of international political economy and leadership at the University of Chicago.

What will be the effects of coronavirus on the existing world order?

The Coronavirus will be extraordinarily disruptive of the current world order. President Trump continues his ruthless assault on the world order by refusing to extend American leadership to other stricken countries. Simultaneously, China is making every effort to replace the U.S. as the world leader. Yet things will not go smoothly for China. Global supply chains are expanding beyond China to other countries, primarily in East Asia. Many countries that have accepted huge loans from China from its Belt and Road Initiative will find it impossible to remain current on those loans. China will be faced with the dilemma of allowing defaults or taking ownership over failed projects across Asia, Africa, and even Europe. Perhaps worst of all, countries primarily in Sub-Saharan Africa will experience threatening political unrest from their failed economies and massive numbers of virus deaths. The combination will drive flows of massive numbers of refugees seeking to enter countries in the developed world.

The existing world order is majorly based on liberalism and to some extent on realism approaches. What are the deficiencies of the liberalism and realism approaches revealed by the outbreak of coronavirus?

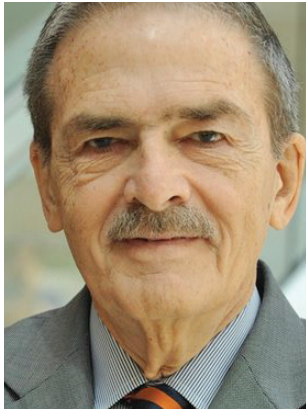
There are times in which markets fail. The coronavirus has certainly produced one of those times. It is very hard to imagine that post-virus, the liberal order will remain unaffected. Huge government interventions in the economies of the country after country are unsustainably large. They will certainly be drastically reduced over time. But it is also likely that the interventions of governments in their economies will be considerably greater than pre-virus.

The outbreak of the virus also showed that militaristic economies also are not able to maintain the security of nations and governments in post-corona era. What do you think of this?

Any country which believes its security can be assured solely through military means is surely delusional. But then again, I do not know of a single country that believes this. But we certainly will see a change in the United States. Since the al Qaeda attack on the United States on September 11, 2001, the U.S. has focused on threats to its well-being from terrorism. That is likely to change to a great extent to preparations to deal with future global pandemics. There will surely be more pandemics, especially if the world fails to police Chinese food markets to eliminate animals from whom new viruses will pass to humans in the future.

If we accept that the post-corona world order will be different from the existing one, do you think that the changes will be fundamental ones?

If world leaders are not brain dead -- which many appear to be -- there will be fundamental changes. But so many countries have leaders in complete denial (Bolsonaro in Brazil, for example) or have public bureaucracies so incompetent (Nigeria, for example) or are mired in such corruption (Iraq, for example) that it is highly unlikely they will be able to come to terms with the new reality.



Foreign-born medical staff fighting COVID19- in U.S. worrying about deportation

A newly-published report has disclosed that the foreign-born doctors and nurses who work for the U.S. health system in the hard days of COVID-19 outbreak are worried about extension of their work-permit documents by the relevant bodies.

Rafael Bernal, The Hill’s staff writer, wrote in his analytic report that doctors and other health care workers who are not U.S. citizens are facing a second challenge as they fight the worst pandemic the nation has ever seen, adding, “Ensuring their paperwork will allow them to work in the United States.”

The nation can ill afford to lose any health-care workers right now, yet foreign-born doctors, nurses and other workers could lose their jobs and their right to remain in the United States if their papers aren’t in order.

“It’s a growing problem,” Bernal quoted the health care professionals as warning.

“Health care workers ... are being drawn away from their vital work, instead busy with lawyers and [human resources] personnel at their hospital, working on renewing their immigration filings,” Leon Rodriguez, the former director of the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), was also quoted as saying by Bernal.

More than three million of the country’s 18 million health care and social workers are foreign born, according to a report by the Migration Policy Institute.

People already in the United States must fill out work permit applications to serve in hospitals, and keep up that paperwork going forward.

Doctors who’ve finished a residency program in the United States and wish to transition to full-time work are on the front lines of both the pandemic and the growing

visa application backlog.

According to the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG), 11,000 foreign-born doctors entered residency programs in 2017, leaving them on track to graduate this summer.

Doctors participate in residencies under the an academic visa, but to take on full-time jobs a majority transition to the H-1B visa, the most common type of semi-permanent foreign worker visa.

It’s unclear how many of the 11,000 foreign-born residents set to graduate in 2020 want to stay in the United States to practice medicine, but in 2018, 8,731 H-1B visas were requested for general medical and hospital workers, according to Labor Department data.

The work visa application process was changed for fiscal year 2020, but for doctors transitioning from their residency, there are still multiple obstacles, including a massive backlog of cases that means USCIS can take up to nine months to adjudicate an application.

USCIS has simplified some processes, notably allowing petitioners to submit previously existing biometrics rather than coming into the agency to rescan their fingerprints, and waiving the “wet signature” requirements on a key work permit application form.

But the agency, which imposed restrictions on H-1B applications last year, has not lifted those restrictions, even for medical professionals, this year. For instance, USCIS took away the possibility of “premium processing,” a one-time payment of \$1,440 to expedite adjudication, and has yet to announce a return to the popular measure.

The American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) filed a lawsuit against USCIS earlier this month, demanding the

agency extend all filing deadlines that come due while services are restricted on account of the emergency.

Another group affected by the application slowdown are foreign medical workers trained abroad who have been accepted into U.S. residency programs.

Those doctors might never be able to take their positions given delays at U.S. consulates and embassies. Jennifer Minear, the president-elect of AILA, said there are around 4,000 doctors waiting for their visa interviews to come to the United States.

“The new crop of residents are supposed to start on July 1, and those academic medical centers that have residency programs rely on those medical residents to provide medical care. They’re not just training, they’re also treating patients,” said Minear.

According to the State Department, which closed routine visa interviews on March 20, medical personnel can still apply for visas, as their applications are considered an urgent matter.

“Examples of an urgent matter include air and sea crew, and medical personnel, particularly those working to treat or mitigate the effects of COVID-19,” reads the department’s advisory on COVID-19 suspensions.

But Minear said that order puts the onus on each mission abroad to regulate when and how it vets medical applicants, rather than a top-down directive opening the door to those doctors.

“It’s more, ‘Go talk to the post and they’ll see what they can do,’” said Minear.

Health care workers who rely on programs like DACA or TPS are in an even more difficult position.

The Supreme Court is set to decide the

legality of President Trump’s rescission of DACA in 2017, a decision that could render its more than 800,000 beneficiaries effectively undocumented.

According to the Center for American Progress (CAP), a progressive group that advocates in favor of DACA recipients, around 29,000 DACA beneficiaries work in the health care sector.

In a rebuttal of CAP’s report, Steven Camarota, a writer for the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS), which supports reducing legal and illegal immigration, said the 29,000 DACA health care workers are a small fraction of the country’s health workforce, and that unemployed Americans in the health care sector could make up for any lost DACA workers.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the United States will require at least 200,000 more people to join the nursing profession each year until 2026, to keep up with demand.

Fiona McEntee, an immigration lawyer in Chicago whose clients include nurses with DACA, said that simplifying medical practitioners’ immigration application processes is also an issue of fairness.

“It breaks my heart chatting to them, knowing what they’re doing, how they’re putting their lives on the line every day to protect Americans and then in return they have to worry [about] this,” said McEntee.

As of April 11, number of people infected with the novel coronavirus in the United States reached 503,000, according to the data released by coronavirus research centers.

Death toll was over 18,000.

More than 27,000 patients had recovered.

The U.S. was leading in the world in terms of the largest number of infected people.

Iran, other UNWTO members exchange views on campaign against coronavirus

TOURISM **TEHRAN** – Iran and some 20 member states of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) have held a video conference discussing the best possible response to coronavirus pandemic to lessen damages on various travel businesses.

Representatives of Iran’s Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Ministry on Wednesday attended the session, which was chaired by UNWTO Deputy Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific Hae Guk (Harry) Hwang, ISNA reported.

Earlier last week, the UNWTO released a set of recommendations, calling for urgent and strong support to help the global tourism sector in the face of the novel coronavirus pandemic that has crippled traveling and jeopardized related jobs all over the globe.

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

Commenting on recommendations, UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili has said they are aimed to safeguard tourism-related jobs and support the companies that are at risk.

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

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

Golestan exports of handicrafts up 53% yr/yr

HERITAGE **TEHRAN** – Handicrafts exports from Golestan province hit \$308,000 during the previous Iranian calendar year 1398 (ended March 20), showing 53 percent growth year on year.



“Craftspeople of Golestan province have a great opportunity to reach the global markets,” said provincial tourism chief Ahmad Tajari, CHTN reported.

Hand-woven klim carpets, Turkmen handicrafts, wicker works, handmade felt products and mosaic constituted the majority of Golestan’s exports of handicrafts, he added.

Handicrafts exports from Iran reached some \$146 million during the first nine months of the past Iranian calendar year, while exports amounted to \$289 million in the year 1397 (March 2018-March 2019), according to data announced by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts.

Dozens of Iranian handicrafts have gained the UNESCO Seal of Excellence during the past couple of years. Some 75 percent of Iranian handicrafts are produced by females, Masoumeh Ebtekar, vice president for women’s and family affairs, said in April 2018.

Zenithal photography in Iran – 2019

By Franco Zampetti

(part 2/2)

I visited Tehran, an obligatory stage of arrival and return to Italy, then Qazvin for two days, Soltaniyeh and fleeting Zanjan, Isfahan for three days, then one day in Yazd (too little!). Finally Shiraz for almost three days with also a visit to Persepolis and surroundings.

In the total of 11 days in Iran I visited and photographed some active mosques, various mosques used as a museum, an Armenian Christian cathedral, various palaces, numerous bazaars, some former caravanserais, two hammams and various other historical architectures; in total I made 40 zenith photos, of which the most significant are attached here and overall they are all visible on my site.

The experience of this trip to Iran was undoubtedly rewarding and of great satisfaction, in addition to the splendid architecture I was impressed by the friendliness of the Iranians, always available to willingly give information and to browse around my particular photographic equipment and the zenith photos that I often showed them in my tablet; I really appreciated the convenience of travel by VIP bus, even for long night journeys, the friendly welcome of the hoteliers and, last but not least, a cuisine full of particularities and characterized by exotic and genuine flavors.

I returned to Italy with the firm intention of making another trip to Iran, hopefully in the future, a land of millenary culture whose stratifications are often still clearly visible and of great charm.

To prepare for the new journey I began to deepen the study of the complex history of Persia from its origins, I realized that it is an essential support to be able to fully enjoy a varied and culturally rich country like Iran.

This travelogue has been posted to the Cultural Institute of Iran, which is active for over half a century as a representative of Iranian cultural institutions in Italy.

Visit holy shrine of Imam Reza (AS) online

➔ 1 Every single day, Mashhad plays host to thousands of travelers and pilgrims who come from various Iranian cities, neighboring countries and even across the globe to visit the imposing, massive holy shrine complex of the Imam.

Some 37 million visits registered to Mashhad during the first ten months of the past Iranian calendar year (stated March 21, 2019) as about eight million came by road, six million by rail, 3.8 million by air, and 18 million by private cars, Mehr reported.

The worldwide death toll of the novel coronavirus disease is now more than 103,000, and the virus has infected more



A night view of the holy shrine complex of Imam Reza (AS), the eighth Shia Imam, Mashhad, northeast Iran. (PHOTO: Feng Wei) than 1,700,000 people. On March 11, the World Health Organization (WHO) officially declared it a pandemic. The virus has disrupted travel worldwide, leading to flight cancellations, quarantines, and other breakdowns in movement.

Caravanserais, a blend of roadside inns with fortresses



The 16th-century Zeinoddin Caravanserai, which has been turned into a tourist lodging in Yazd, central Iran.

TOURISM **TEHRAN** – Along the major roads that connect Iranian cities one can see many abandoned caravanserais, ancient roadside inns that brought comfort to travelers and their livestock on trade routes, including those on the legendary Silk Road.

For the time being, caravanserais have largely lost their old usage and popularity as places to stay on the road and are considered more for their historical and architectural aspects rather than for any practical purposes. Many caravanserais conjure up the memories of ancient fortresses and citadels when it comes to exterior facades.

Under initiative plans by Iran tourism body, many of such caravanserais have been ceded to the private sector for better maintenance. Some have been exclusively renovated and tuned into impressive boutique hotels and tourist lodgings.

Caravansary is a compound word com-

bining “caravan” with “sara”. The first stand for a group of travelers and sara means the building.

Caravanserais often had massive portals with elevated surrounding walls. Architectural styles of caravanserais reflect local styles and the construction materials available in each geographical locality.

Guest rooms were constructed around the courtyard and the stables were located behind them with their doors in the corners of the yard.

The earliest caravanserais in the county were built in Achaemenid era (circa 550 -330 BC). Such roadside inns was thriving upon the development of road systems and the increase in the number of travelers and merchants.

Shah Abbas I (1571-1629) is credited with building a network of caravanserais across Iran during the much later Safavid dynasty.

Ganjnameh: A can’t-miss in Hamedan



Rock-carved Ganjnameh inscriptions are seen near Hamedan, westcentral Iran.

TOURISM **TEHRAN** – Prehistoric rock carvings of Ganjnameh is a can’t-miss destination when you are traveling to Hamedan, an ancient city in west-central Iran.

The relaxed ambiance of the site, which is located just a short drive from the city, also opens up an opportunity for hiking on the side of Mount Alvand.

Literally meaning “Treasure Epistle”, Ganjnameh features sets of cuneiform inscriptions written in three languages of ancient Persian, Elamite, and Babylonian.

The inscriptions were first studied in detail by the French painter and archaeologist Eugene Flandin, who was accompanied by Pascal Coste, according to orientalarchitecture.com. Following on their work, Sir Henry Rawlinson, a British explorer, used the inscriptions as a sort of Rosetta stone to decipher the cuneiform characters of the era. The

inscriptions proved to belong to the age of Achaemenid Kings Darius I (521-485 BC) and Xerxes I (485-65 BC).

The right inscription, belonging to Xerxes I, reads: “The Great God [is] Ahuramazda, greatest of all the gods, who created the earth and the sky and the people; who made Xerxes king, and outstanding king as outstanding ruler among innumerable rulers; I [am] the great king Xerxes, king of kings, king of lands with numerous inhabitants, king of this vast kingdom with far-away territories, son of the Achaemenid monarch Darius.”

An adjacent 9-meter-high waterfall becomes a popular ice-climbing spot in wintertime. In contrast, Alvand summit can be reached as a day trip in summer.

Modern Hamedan largely lies on ancient Ecbatana, which was the capital of Media and subsequently a summer residence of the Achaemenian kings.

Meet the most peculiar Iranian garden in desert

By Mohammad Ali Haqshenas

TEHRAN — Originally, it was a way to protest against the government policies but the genius plan led to the construction of something wonderful that invites thousands of visitors every year.

Imagination is one of the features that differentiates humans from other species. Some people find the courage to implement what goes on their heads while others fail to do so or decide to abandon it. Today, we are going to review a story of a shepherd in Kerman province who was brave enough to materialize what he had imagined, creating one of the strangest gardens of Iran, and the world.

Located 40km southeast of Sirjan, Kerman province, the Stone Garden is what surprises visitors as it has been frozen in time. The garden is made of dry trees with a bunch of hanging stones in various sizes. The first glimpse triggers the question that why somebody should build such a thing?

■ **Who was Darvish Khan?**

Darvish Khan Esfandiarpour, better known as Darvish Khan, was born in January 1925 in Miandoab village, Kerman. It is believed that his grandfather was among powerful rulers of the era, so Darvish’s family, enjoy the title ‘Khan’ after their names. Darvish Khan was one of the major landowners of Sirjan while also making a living through raising sheep and gardening, mainly almonds.

Due to congenital disorders, he was not able to hear or speak but this didn’t stop him from trying. There are some myths about him. Locals say he once combated with two leopards and killed them for hunting one of his sheep.



A view of the Stone Garden in Iran’s Kerman province

Others say he used to entertain himself by playing with wolves and dangerous snakes.

■ **Why did he build this garden?**

It all started around 1961 with national land reforms. Darvish Khan, along with many other major owners, lost a great part of his lands. It was a great blow to him.

Although suffering from the mentioned disabilities, he managed to find a clever everlasting approach to voice protest against the government orders that had almost ruined his life.

In response to this loss, he started doing

something unearthly; hanging stones from dry tree branches.

■ **How the garden was built?**

He started the process a few years after the land reforms. Darvish Khan would collect stones while herding the sheep into neighboring areas.

There are two narratives about the source of trees. Some say that the Darvish Khan abandoned taking care of his garden as a form of protest and started building the Stone Garden using the same trees. However, some others say that he would collect dry tree

trunks from the region and secure them into the ground for his project as they believe that Darvish Khan has never cut a living tree for this purpose.

The thing is none of the stones now hanging in the garden can be found at least in the radius of 5km; this means that the process of building the garden has taken so long with massive efforts behind it. In an interview with a TV program, Darvish Khan’s daughter-in-law said that it took two months for Darvish Khan to deliver one large piece of stone to the garden.

Almost all stones bear special memories or events in Darvish Khan’s life. For example, when his son was called up for military service, he brought a human-head-size stone to hang it as a sign for his son.

His life-long efforts led to the creation of a 1000 square meters garden with 180 genuine trees.

■ **When was the first time somebody noticed the place?**

Iranian cinematographer Parviz Kimiavi saw the potentials of the site and created a movie called ‘Garden of Stones’ in 1976 with the very Darvish Khan playing as its main character. The movie won the Silver Bear at the 26th Berlin International Film Festival in the same year.

Kimiavi came back to the garden 28 years later in 2004 to create a documentary about it which persuaded officials to designate the site as a national heritage.

Darvish Khan passed away on April 7, 2007, leaving behind an invaluable heritage that makes visitors think deeper. He is laid to rest in the same garden.

Iran is unrivaled in Middle East for anti-corona measures: VP

➡ He also said that the launch of the serology testing production line was one of the most important and successful measures in this field, adding that six knowledge-based companies are operating in this field which so far has received the necessary approvals and produce all kinds of diagnostic kits.

Sattari further explained that two types of diagnostic kits are now mass-produced by these knowledge-based companies, first one is the RT-PCR tests, 8 million of which are being produced per month; while the other is serology-based tests that a total of 400,000 are being manufactured monthly and is expected to reach up to 2 million.

The RT-PCR tests currently being used globally to diagnose cases of COVID-19 can only indicate the presence of viral material during infection and will not indicate if a person was infected and subsequently recovered, he said.

With the expansion of production lines and existing capacities, we will become one of the exporters in this field, he highlighted.

According to Sattari, each kit tests 96 people in 75 minutes, and in its kind, these kits are unique in the world.

In reply to a question by the TEHRAN TIMES reporter on how much the COVID-19 production brought the country currency saving, he said that it brought us a considerable currency saving, highlighting the potential for internalizing drugs effective in coronavirus treatment.



Sourena Sattari, the Vice President for Science and Technology (R), and his advisor Parviz Karami attend a press conference for the unveiling ceremony of domestically-made serology-based tests for COVID-19.

Explaining that there are no special restrictions for the production of medicine, he stated that "currently, 98 percent of the medicine are produced domestically."

At present, 40 advanced ventilators are manufactured daily in the medical

equipment sector, while many countries are dealing with the shortages, and the two manufacturers of these devices exported their equipment to Europe before the coronavirus crisis, he explained.

The total number of people diagnosed

with the coronavirus in Iran reached 70,029 on Saturday, of whom 4,357 have died and 41,947 recovered.

Meanwhile, 1,837 new patients have been identified over the past 24 hours, Health Ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour said.

Does air pollution increase risk from COVID-19? Here's what we know



A newly released study from researchers at Harvard University has brought more attention to the impact pollution in the air can have on patients who contract the novel coronavirus.

The study connected exposure to high levels of air pollution to higher rates of death from COVID-19, raising concerns for the millions of Americans living in cities that see increased rates of pollution, made up of tiny particles that often come from high levels of traffic and industrial facilities. While the data on the novel coronavirus is still preliminary, scientists are confident that long-term exposure to air pollution contributes to health conditions like asthma or cardiovascular disease.

An estimated 141 million Americans live in counties with at least one bad rating for air quality, according to the American Lung Association's "State of the Air" report.

Here are some things to know about how air pollution could play a role in the pandemic.

■ What does the study say?

According to a nationwide study from Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, people with COVID-19 who live in areas with high air pollution levels are more likely to die than those who live in less polluted regions.

The study looked at 3,080 different counties and looked

at the levels of fine particulate air pollution — specifically tiny particles called «particulate matter» — which is generated by fuel combustion from cars, refineries and power plants — and compared it to the risk of death from the coronavirus in the U.S.

They found that a small increase — one microgram per cubic meter — in long-term exposure to particulate matter leads to a 15% increase in the COVID-19 death rate.

The study's senior author predicted that counties with higher pollution levels «will be the ones that have higher numbers of hospitalizations, higher numbers of deaths and where many of the resources should be concentrated,» in The New York Times.

■ Does this mean you are more likely to die from COVID-19 if you live in a place with high air pollution levels?

Not exactly. This study is preliminary and we're still missing a lot of data on COVID-19, but the connection between air pollution and respiratory and cardiovascular health problems is well established.

«The nation has known for some time that long-term exposure to particle pollution can worsen symptoms of lung disease, increase susceptibility to lung infection, trigger heart attack and stroke, and can even cause lung cancer and pre-

mature death. This new research from Harvard now links particle pollution exposure to a dramatically higher death rate from COVID-19,» Harold Wimmer, president of the American Lung Association said in a statement.

Trish Koman, a public health researcher at the University of Michigan, said it's more accurate to say there's a relationship between increasing air pollution and an increasingly worse effect from the virus.

■ Who is most likely to be impacted by this added risk from COVID-19?

The Harvard study shows that people who live in larger cities or areas with more air pollution could face higher risks of more severe illness from COVID-19. Over the years, research and public data have shown that in those areas, communities of color and low income communities are exposed to more air pollution than the general population.

Mustafa Santiago Ali, a former EPA official who helped create the agency's environmental justice office and vice president of environmental justice at the National Wildlife Federation, said he talks about «sacrifice zones» around the country where communities of color, low wealth, and indigenous peoples are exposed to higher levels of pollution that contribute to chronic health problems that make people more susceptible to COVID-19.

■ Why should we pay attention to the connection between air pollution and COVID-19?

Heather McTeer Toney, a former EPA regional administrator and national field director for Mom's Clean Air Force, said it's important to make communities aware of the additional risk from COVID-19 if their community is also exposed to pollution.

«If you have someone who's living right under a cloud of a constant stream of air pollution who's already suffering from things like asthma or other respiratory ailments or heart disease, already dealing with a weakened lung and respiratory system such that sheltering in place for them, because that much more dangerous, and they have to be aware of additional precautions they may need to take,» she said. (Source: abcnews.go.com)

Volunteers prove altruism in coronavirus battle

➡ From the onset of the coronavirus crisis, different groups in the country voluntarily started to help their compatriots without any support from government organizations in order to deal with the problem as soon as possible.

These community groups have proved their altruism in the past through making the best use of their capacities to remove problems during natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes and have significantly participated in reconstruction of damaged areas.

In the current situation, they are engaged with producing face masks and antiseptics, disinfecting public places and streets, as well as providing assistance to medical staff in clinics and hospitals.

They also supply basic goods and essential foods to low-income and underprivileged families.

Based on statistics, more than 10 thousand volunteer groups, including 230 groups of medical science students, with over 125 thousand members have pitched in to help older and more vulnerable people across the country.

Moreover, some 500 workshops have been established with the capacity to produce 500 thousand face masks per day and some 300 centers have been set up by around 800 medical science university students in 17 provinces with the aim of offering health services and trainings to people.

Leader of Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has lauded the sacrifices made by health professionals, saying in fighting the coronavirus outbreak they have placed their lives and health at the service of the people.

He praised the volunteers, including the clergies, student Basij forces and ordinary people, who put their lives on the line and offered help to the health professionals, patients and the needy.

Australian forest study may challenge climate change optimism

As Australia's forests burned earlier this year, people around the world worried about the impact of all that smoke on our climate.

At the same time, researchers in New South Wales were finalising a study looking at the capacity for forests to consume and store carbon from the atmosphere.

The results were not comforting.

In fact, they cast doubt over many of the climate models being used to predict carbon levels into the future.

■ A forest of cranes

In a unique experiment, Professor Belinda Medlyn and her team from Western Sydney University pumped carbon from a commercial supplier into a forest of 90-year-old trees.

They laid pipelines and built tubular structures in the forest to deliver the carbon into the air above the canopy.

For four years they kept the carbon levels 38 per cent higher than normal while they tracked the movement of carbon through the forest ecosystem and they built cranes to take them high enough to measure the results.

The looked at how the trees and the plants in the understory take up the CO2 and found that it passes through the ecosystem in a number of different ways, according to Professor Medlyn.

■ The results

Their research showed that mature trees could consume an additional 12 per cent of carbon at elevated levels, but that it wasn't sequestered. "Instead, the majority of the extra carbon was emitted back into the atmosphere via several respiratory fluxes, with increased soil respiration alone accounting for half of the total uptake surplus," Professor Medlyn said.

The explanation, according to Professor Medlyn, was in the soil. "The soil that they're growing on is fairly poor. It doesn't have a lot of nutrients in it," she said.

"The plants need those nutrients to grow, so it seems what they've done when they've been given extra carbon is just to use that to go looking for extra nutrients."

■ Implications for global climate models

If mature trees can't store the rising levels of carbon in the atmosphere, then models based on the idea that plants will respond to increased levels of CO2 with extra growth may be wrong.

Previous studies have shown that young trees can consume more carbon, so the strategy of planting trees is still valid.

Mature trees also store a lot of carbon, so old forest still need to be protected, said Professor Medlyn.

"They do have a lot of carbon stored in them, it's just they won't keep on taking up more carbon into the future," she said.

(Source: abc.net.au)

WORDS IN THE NEWS

Hillary Clinton interviewed

(09 June 2003)

On 8th June America's former first lady, Hillary Clinton, gave an exclusive interview to the US broadcaster ABC on the publication of her new book «Living History». She gave presenter Barbara Walters an insight into her life with the former president and said she would not run for president in 2004. This report from Michael Buchanan.

(TV Trailer): One of the most **divisive** people in American public life finally has her say on some of the most dramatic moments in recent political history.

(Clinton): I wasn't talking to my husband. I didn't have anything to say to him. I was so disappointed and angry. I could have wrung his neck for a million reasons.

(TV trailer):...an **unprecedented** journey from her childhood days where her values and dreams were shaped to **the campus years** when she was **swept away** by politics and passion.

(Buchanan): And the man she remains married to today, despite the hurt.

(Clinton): All I know is that no-one understands me better and no-one can make me laugh the way Bill does. He is still the most interesting, energising and fully alive person I have ever met.

(Buchanan): Hillary Clinton's supporters say she's caring and committed. Her opponents **label** her **pig-headed** and dangerous. But the New York Senator **left politics largely** aside as she discussed how she coped with the series of personal **scandals** that have **beset** the couple.

■ Words

divisive: here, someone who arouses different opinions of her

unprecedented: something that has never happened before

the campus years: the years spent as a student

swept away: overcome

label: call

pig-headed: stubborn

left politics largely aside: didn't talk much about politics

scandals: shocking situations or events

beset: happened to

(Source: BBC)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ع

Rainfalls brings life back to Gomishan wetland

Gomishan international wetland, northern province of Golestan, is once again partially filled with water with recent rainfalls, the provincial chief of the department of environment has said.

Over the past few days more than 60 percent of the wetland was filled due to the recent rainfalls and now 20,000 hectares of the wetland are covered with water, Amir Abdous said on Tuesday.

Due to the decrease in the water level at the Caspian Sea the wetland has been dried specially during hot seasons, Abdous said, adding that in winter a small part of the wetland was covered with water.

بارندگی های اخیر زندگی دوباره به تالاب گمیشان بخشید

مدیرکل حفاظت محیط زیست گلستان از آبیگری بخشی از تالاب بین المللی گمیشان در این استان خبر داد

به گزارش خبرگزاری ایرنا امیر عبدوس روز سه شنبه گفت: بارندگی های اخیر زندگی دوباره به این زیستگاه مهم بخشید و بیش از ۶۰ درصد تالاب بین المللی گمیشان آبیگری شد.

وی افزود: به علت پایین رفتن سطح آب دریای خزر تغذیه این تالاب از سوی دریا به حداقل ممکن رسیده بود و تقریباً تمام سطح تالاب بین المللی گمیشان در فصول گرم سال کاملاً خشک و در زمستان نیز بخش بسیار اندکی زیر آب قرار داشت.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“cerebro-, cerebr-”

■ **Meaning**: brain

■ **For example**: Passive smoking is considered a major cause of **cerebrovascular** disease, which causes strokes.

PHRASAL VERB

Think something up

■ **Meaning**: to produce a new idea, name etc. by thinking

■ **For example**: She was trying to think up an excuse.

IDIOM

Give somebody a (good) run for their money

■ **Explanation**: to make your opponent in a competition use all their skill and effort to defeat you

■ **For example**: They've given some of the top teams a run for their money this season.

U.S. reports highest daily virus

The United States became the first country to report more than 2,000 coronavirus deaths in a single day, marking a grim milestone as billions around the world celebrated the Easter holiday weekend under lockdown from home.

The global death toll from the virus surged past 103,000 Friday, with the United States quickly becoming the epicenter of the pandemic that first emerged in China late last year, AFP reported.

Europe has so far shouldered the majority of all deaths and infections -- though there were signs of hope the curve could be starting to flatten in some of the hardest-hit countries.

Numbers out of Madrid offered a glimmer of hope Saturday: 510 new deaths, a dip in fatalities for the third day in a row.

In France, nearly 1,000 new deaths were confirmed Friday but the country reported a drop in the number of intensive care patients for a second day running.

Turkey imposes 48-hour curfew in major cities to curb virus

Dozens of Turkish cities, including Istanbul, have been placed under lockdown for two days from midnight on Friday to combat the spread of the coronavirus, as the country's death toll from the pandemic crossed 1,000.

The restrictions, which will last until midnight (21:00 GMT) on Sunday, were imposed in 31 provinces across the country and scaled up existing curbs, under which people under the age of 20 and over 65 have been told to stay at home, al Jazeera reported.

Detailing specifics of the lockdown, the interior ministry in a statement said bakeries, pharmacies and health facilities would be excluded from the ban, enabling people to meet essential needs.

Strategic energy companies, distribution firms and some petrol stations would also be allowed to keep operating, and people working in such places were exempted from the lockdown, it said.

"It is essential that all other citizens remain in their homes aside from the specified exemptions," the statement said.

U.S. moves missile defense systems to Iraq

US officials say hundreds of their troops will remain in Iraq, noting that missile systems are now operating in the bases hosting the occupation forces.

The officials, who were speaking on condition of anonymity, told The Associated Press that Patriot missile launchers and two other short-range systems were in place at Ain al-Asad air base in Iraq's Anbar Province and at the military facility in Kurdistan's regional capital, Erbil, without elaborating on where those systems had been taken from.

Both bases were the target of Tehran's January missile attack in retaliation for Washington's assassination of senior Iranian anti-terror commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani.

The American officials further noted that a short-range rocket system had been installed at Camp Taji, north of Baghdad.



The U.S.-occupied camp came under a rocket attack last month. A member of the Iraqi parliamentary security and defense committee accused the United States of staging a false-flag operation against Camp Taji to find a compelling justification for air raids on positions of Iraq's anti-terror Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), also known as Hashd al-Sha'abi.

General Frank McKenzie, the top US commander for the Middle East, said that moving Patriots and other systems to Iraq was tricky because it meant he would have to take the systems from another location where they were also needed.

Over the past few months, the US military has been moving the missile systems, piece by piece, into Iraq, assembling them and linking them together.

Meanwhile, General Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said hundreds of soldiers from the 1st Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division, remain in Iraq, citing the "threat posed by what he called Iranian proxy groups."

U.S. offers massive reward for info on Hezbollah cmdr.

The U.S. State Department offers a \$10-million reward for information on a senior commander of the Lebanese resistance movement of Hezbollah in what is feared to be Washington's attempt at trying its hand at another assassination bid.

In a statement, the State Department put out a call for "any information on the activities, networks, and associates" of the official, which it named as Muhammad Kawtharani.

The State Department claimed that the Hezbollah official participated in "training, funding, political and logistical support" of counter-terrorism fighters in Iraq.

It claimed that Kawtharani "has taken over some of the political coordination" of the fighters that were "formerly organized by Qassem Soleimani."

On January 3, a US drone strike assassinated Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, the commander of the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the second-in-command of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) or Hashd al-Sha'abi, and a number of others, targeting their vehicle in Baghdad. At the time of the attack, General Soleimani was on an official trip in the Iraqi capital at Baghdad's request.

(Source: Press TV)

Meltdown in U.S. Saudi Arabia relations

U.S. oil state senators threaten to rethink ties to Saudi Arabia in fiery call with ambassador

by staff & agencies

During a contentious call with the Saudi ambassador in Washington, a group of 13 senators from oil producing states voiced their frustration over the oil price war that is damaging US producers and threatened to upend the US-Saudi relationship.

"We are going to fundamentally, not only reevaluate, but take actions that will start to undermine the long term relationship that many of us have supported," Sen. Dan Sullivan of Alaska told CNN in describing the messages from the senators to the Saudi Ambassador to the US, Princess Reema bint Bandar Al Saud, during that call late last month.

According to CNN, the senators have grown increasingly angry as oil prices have plunged as a result of a price war between Russia and Saudi Arabia, which comes as the coronavirus continues to devastate the country. They are fearful of their constituents being laid off if US producers are financially squeezed, which would further hurt the US economy at this delicate moment. More than 16 million Americans have already filed for unemployment in the last three weeks.

On Saturday the same group of senators will speak with the Saudi Energy Minister, Khalid al-Falih. They don't plan to hold back their ire as they press for a solution.

"We'll see what he says," Sullivan said. "But at this point actions are going to speak a lot of louder than words."

■ 'Texas is mad'

"Texas is mad," Sen. Ted Cruz bluntly stated, according to another source who was on the call. "The anger from the senators was unlike anything I have heard from this group," this source said.

Countless workers, many of them in Republican-leaning states like Texas, could lose their jobs. Some shale oil drillers that took on too much debt won't survive at all. These senators are blaming Saudi Arabia because



it is considered a strategic ally of the US.

"The Saudi kingdom is supposed to be our friend. We are a military ally. We are a diplomatic ally," Cruz said on CNBC on March 30. "You are not behaving like a friend when you are trying to destroy thousands and thousands of small businesses all across Texas and the country."

The senators say they are ready to act. "We're not bluffing, Sullivan said. "Not even remotely."

Legislation has been introduced to remove US forces from Saudi Arabia, and there has been discussion about sanctions if Saudi Arabia does not help find a solution.

During the call between Princess Reema and the angry senators, she tried to keep it short and deliver talking points. The senators wouldn't allow it.

■ 'With all due respect'

"I said ambassador, with all due respect, I don't want to hear any talking points from

you until you hear from all, I think there's 11 or 12 on the call," Sullivan said. "At the end if you still feel the need to provide us with your talking points that is fine. But I organized this call so you could hear the anger from the voices of senators who have traditionally supported the US-Saudi relationship."

The Senators explained to the Ambassador that losing their support would result in the Kingdom losing its lifeline on Capitol Hill. After the murder of Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi, support for the Saudis has waned tremendously in Washington. Without the support of these senators, anti-Saudi legislation would flourish even more, they told her.

The Saudi embassy did not reply to a request for comment.

On Saturday the same group of senators will speak with the Saudi Energy Minister, Khalid al-Falih. They don't plan to hold back their ire, as they press for a solution.

Israel threatens Hezbollah in Syria days after assassinating member in Lebanon

The Israeli military has threatened to strike the positions in Syria of the Lebanese Hezbollah resistance movement, days after assassinating a senior member of the group in southern Lebanon.

The Israeli military on Friday posted grainy footage on Twitter purporting to show the head of the Syrian Armed Forces 1st Corps, Luau Ali Ahmad Assad, "visiting Hezbollah positions in Syria."

The footage, which was filmed from a distance, showed individuals wearing military fatigues greeting a man with military salutes and shaking hands with him in an open area, Press TV reported.

The text accompanying the footage on the Israeli post

read, "See the man with white hair? That's the head of the Syrian Armed Forces 1st Corps, Luau Ali Ahmad Assad. He's visiting Hezbollah positions in #Syria."

"Our message: We see you. Consider this a warning," the caption further read. "We won't allow Hezbollah to entrench itself militarily in Syria."

It was unclear who had captured the footage, or whether it was of Assad visiting Hezbollah members in Syria.

Syria has been fighting foreign-backed militants since 2011. While that fight has been winding down, the country has also had to combat Daesh terrorists in Syrian territory, including near the Lebanese border. Hezbollah has dispatched fighters to help the Syrian military eradicate

the terrorists and has prevented the spillover of terrorist activity into Lebanon.

The Israeli regime has, meanwhile, frequently conducted airstrikes against positions in Syria. While the Tel Aviv regime has often refused to confirm or deny specific strikes, it has claimed that it has been hitting Hezbollah forces in Syria.

The latest threat comes a few days after a Hezbollah commander in charge of tracking collaborators with Israel, Ali Mohammed Younes, was killed in southern Lebanon apparently by agents working for Israel's Mossad spy organization.

Younes was found by his car and had been stabbed twice and shot four times.

Iraqi forces launch second phase of operation along border with Jordan, Saudi Arabia

Iraqi army troops and fighters from the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) have launched the second phase of a major military operation to purge the westernmost part of Anbar province along the border with Jordan and Saudi Arabia of the remnants of the Daesh Takfiri terrorist group.

Commander of Anbar Operations for the PMU, Qassim Musleh, said in a press statement on Friday that his fellow fighters and the army soldiers had mounted a multi-pronged offensive, codenamed 'Heroes of Victory.'

He added that the operation started from four axes, noting that fighters of the PMU, better known by the Arabic name Hashd al-Sha'abi, and army forces will cleanse districts on the border between Iraq and Jordan in the first axis, while the forces will purge the Iraqi-Saudi border of Daesh in the second.

Musleh pointed out that the forces will pursue the operation in far-flung geographic areas and rugged terrains that the terrorists use to either hide or camouflage in the



third and final axes.

On February 28, Hashd al-Sha'abi forces launched an operation, codenamed 'Leaders of Victory,' to clear the districts of Medisa' and Salloom Forest, which lie south of

the western town of Qa'im and nearly 400 kilometers northwest of the capital Baghdad, besides the areas of Akra and Hamid Turkey, Shalej village and Beit Ajaj region.

On September 21, 2019, the PMU an-

nounced the conclusion of a campaign against the sleeper cells of Daesh in the central parts of the country as well as a sector of the vast western desert leading to the border with Saudi Arabia.

The PMU media bureau announced in a statement at the time that the fifth phase of the 'Will of Victory' operation, which had started on September 16, was wrapped up as different units and forces of Iraqi military forces cleared the remote territory between the provinces of Karbala, Najaf and Anbar.

Iraqi forces cleared plains in a 4,800-kilometer square area in Anbar during the operation's fifth phase. The forces detained 21 Daesh suspects.

Hashd al-Sha'abi fighters have played a major role in the liberation of Daesh-held areas to the south, northeast and north of the Iraqi capital, ever since the terrorists launched an offensive in the country, over-running vast swathes in lightning attacks.

(Source: Press TV)

Cuba enraged over 'cruel & genocidal' U.S. blockade impeding anti-coronavirus efforts

The suffocating sanctions in place for almost six decades make it extremely difficult for the island nation to import essential supplies needed to battle the coronavirus, Cuban health officials say.

"The United States' economic-financial blockade is the most unfair, severe, prolonged system of sanctions of all time by one country against another," Nestor Marimon, the Cuban Health Ministry's international relations director, told reporters.

Imposed at the height of the Cold War, the American blockade has become "even more cruel and genocidal than

it normally is... when we don't have an epidemic," he said, adding that it has severely hindered Cuba's procurement of medical supplies on foreign markets, as cited by AFP.

According to Marimon, the Health Ministry lost \$160 million between April 2019 and March 2020 due to the sanctions, \$60 million more than the year prior.

U.S. sanctions have taken a toll on essential transactions related to the fight against coronavirus. Just last week, the delivery of Covid-19 test kits and ventilators donated by Alibaba founder Jack Ma was halted as the company feared breaking the embargo.

Top UN officials have issued a call for sanctions against Cuba and other countries to be lifted, including Iran and Venezuela, so they can obtain medical equipment and other supplies.

"The populations in these countries are in no way responsible for the policies being targeted by sanctions, and to varying degrees have already been living in a precarious situation for prolonged periods," UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet stated last month.

(Source: RT)

Joe Biden's next big decision: Choosing a running mate

Joe Biden faces the most important decision of his five-decade political career: choosing a vice president.

The presumptive Democratic presidential nominee expects to name a committee to vet potential running mates next week, according to three Democrats with knowledge of the situation who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal plans. Biden, a former vice president himself, has committed to picking a woman and told donors this week that his team has discussed naming a choice well ahead of the Democratic convention in August, AP reported.

Selecting a running mate is always critical for a presidential candidate. But it's an especially urgent calculation for the 77-year-old Biden, who, if he wins, would be the oldest American president in history. The decision carries added weight amid the coronavirus pandemic, which, beyond its death toll, threatens to devastate the world economy and define a prospective Biden administration.

"We're still going to be in crisis or recovery, and you want a vice president who can manage that," said Karen Finney, a Democratic strategist who worked for Hillary Clinton's

2016 campaign. The vice president is "always important," Finney added. But she pointed to Biden's role in the Obama administration's 2009-10 recovery efforts as evidence that a crisis makes the choice of a running mate an even "more important decision than usual."

Biden faces pressure on multiple fronts. He must consider the demands of his racially, ethnically and ideologically diverse party, especially the black women who propelled his nomination. He must balance those concerns with his stated desire for a "simpatico" partner who is "ready to be president on a

moment's notice."

The campaign's general counsel, Dana Remus, and former White House counsel Bob Bauer are gathering information about prospects. Democrats close to several presumed contenders say they've not yet been contacted.

Biden has offered plenty of hints. He's said he can easily name 12 to 15 women who meet his criteria, but would likely seriously consider anywhere from six to 11 candidates. He's given no indication of whether he'll look to the Senate, where he spent six terms, to governors or elsewhere.

Gabriel Calderon not ruling out a move to Iran

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Argentine coach Gabriel Calderon has refused to rule himself out of return to Iran.

Calderon, who left Iranian football club Persepolis after just six months in charge in January, has been linked with a move to Iran national football team.

Iranian media reported that the Iranian football federation is going to appoint the former Persepolis coach as Dragan Skocic's replacement.

The federation appointed Skocic as replacement of Marc Wilmots, who stepped down from his role after six matches in charge in early December.

In his interview with IRNA, Calderon has said it's not right time to talk about football due to coronavirus outbreak.

"We can talk about football when the condition returns to normal. At this time, all people must focus in fighting the coronavirus," Calderon Said.

Calderon did not rule out himself of linking to Iran national football team, wishing the Team all the best.

Newly-appointed Secretary General of the FFIRI Mehdi Mohammad Nabi had said the current head coach of Team Melli will continue his job.

"When the situation returns to normal after the coronavirus outbreak, Skocic will return to Iran to lead Team Melli. He will stay as Iran coach," Nabi said.

Iran were originally scheduled to play Hong Kong and Cambodia in March and Iraq and Bahrain in June but the competition has postponed due to coronavirus.

The Persians Team sit third in Group C five points behind Iraq in FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 qualification.



YJC / Payam parsaei

Iran's Mousavi linked with Jastrzebski Wegiel



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran international middle blocker Mohammad Mousavi has been linked with a move to Polish top-flight team Jastrzebski Wegiel.

The 32-year-old player, who is a member of Indykpol AZS Olsztyn, has caught the eye of Jastrzebski Wegiel, ivolleymagazine.it reported.

Mousavi made a splash since joining AZS Olsztyn and was named as the best defender of the PlusLiga season.

Ex-Iran volleyball coach Slobodan Kovac

leads Jastrzebski and he has shown interest in signing his former blocker.

The Polish club also eye French player Yacine Louati, who currently plays at Serie A team Pallavolo Padova.

KS Jastrzebski Wegiel SA was founded in 1949 under the name LZS Jastrzebie. So far, the team have won a total of twelve medals in the Polish Championship (MP): one gold, three silver and eight bronze medals.

The team plays in the top level Polish league, PlusLiga continuously since 1997.

First step taken to cede Esteghlal and Persepolis to private sector



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — The first step in handing over Iran's most popular clubs Esteghlal and Persepolis to the private sector was taken in April 2020.

The Iranian Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs, the Minister of Sports and Youth Affairs, the Minister of Justice, and the head of the Privatization Organization gathered around a table in order to examine how to cede Esteghlal and Persepolis clubs to the private sector.

They agreed to review the latest situation

in order to achieve this important goal in the current Iranian calendar year, 1399.

As a first step, the proposed executive program for the privatization of the two Tehran-based clubs in 1399 (20 March 2020 – 20 March 2021) was approved.

Last Friday, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani instructed the country's Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Farhad Dejjasand that the process of divesting state shares should be expedited, IRNA reported.

FIFA President outlines three immediate priorities for football

FIFA President Gianni Infantino has outlined his three immediate priorities for FIFA to support football during and beyond the coronavirus in a video message specifically addressed to the 211 FIFA member associations and shared with members of the FIFA Council. The FIFA President reiterated, in order of priority, that health comes first, that FIFA is ready to pro-actively help football through these exceptional circumstances, and that an ongoing consultation process is taking place to consider the future evolution of the sport.

"Our first priority, our principle, the one we will use for our competitions and encourage everyone to follow is that health comes first," the FIFA President said. "I cannot stress this enough. No match, no competition, no league is worth risking a single human life. Everyone in the world should have this very clear in their mind. It would be more than irresponsible to force competitions to resume if things are not 100% safe. If we have to wait a little longer we must do so. It's better to wait a little bit longer than to take any risks."

Mr Infantino singled out the member associations' pro-active involvement in using football to pass important health messaging and sharing in their respective communities at this difficult time. "This is what football and teamwork is all about," he said, "and we have to continue like this".

"(For) the emergency relief fund... thanks to the work that we have been doing together in FIFA during the past four years, we are today in a very strong financial situation," the FIFA President continued. "FIFA enjoys a good reputation on the financial markets... This has helped us consolidate a solid foundation with large reserves. But our reserves are



not FIFA's money. It is football's money. So when football is in need, we must think what we can do to help... It is our responsibility and our duty."

The FIFA President stated that a consultation process is already underway to assess the financial impact across football in order to prepare the right response based around a fund with an independent governance structure. "You have to know that we will be there and we will find solutions together," he said. "You will never be alone... (and) the world will know where the money goes and, equally important, why the money goes there."

But in order to alleviate immediate financial problems, the FIFA President stated that, subject to relevant committee approval, the second part of member association operational costs from the FIFA Forward Programme due later this year be paid in advance. Mr Infantino added that, given the exceptional circumstances, he has requested that the requirement for the fulfilment of the additional criteria be

waived for both 2019 and 2020 in order for the full amount to be paid to all member associations.

"If football manages to have a discussion where everyone contributes positively, and keeps in mind the global interest over the individual one, I am convinced our future can be better than our past, and we will be better prepared for the times ahead," the FIFA President said.

Mr Infantino thanked the Bureau of the Council members and the presidents of all confederations for the unity and solidarity shown at this time, and that such an approach will help football prosper beyond the coronavirus. With an eye to the future, the FIFA President added that the right balance needs to be found to protect both national team and club football in relation to the international match calendar, that flexibility and common sense must prevail in relation to players' contracts and transfer windows from a legal perspective, and that the necessary analyses will be conducted to help member associations via the emergency relief fund.

Although traditional consultation processes have been halted due to the travel restrictions that have been imposed in relation to the coronavirus, the FIFA President requested member associations "to work with the technology available to engage more, to talk about the common challenges that lie ahead, and to think about the future".

"I am convinced football will play a key role to bring people back together when it's safe to play again and be with our friends and families in large groups," he concluded. "Let's prepare for that moment... FIFA is with you in these difficult times, and together, we will win!"

(Source: FIFA)

AS Roma glorify Iranian doctors

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Italian Serie A club AS Roma have glorified two Iranian doctors for their efforts in fighting the coronavirus outbreak.

"Niloufar Barani should be in university but due to the COVID-19 crisis in Iran, the young doctor is working daily at Shahid Rahimi Hospital in Khorramabad," AS Roma tweeted.

"She's tired & weak but not afraid for her life. She worries about her parents though & won't go home in case they get ill," it reads.

Ahmadzadeh is a nurse in Tehran, Iran. A big Francesco Totti fan, she works with patients infected by Covid-19 each day, AS Roma tweeted.

"I want you to share my sister's photo because we haven't seen her for two months due to her work and me and my parents really miss her."

Some 42,000 coronavirus positive cases in the country have fully recovered from the disease, the spokesman said.

Iran's total death toll from the new coronavirus outbreak rose to 4,357 on Saturday with 125 lives lost in the past 24 hours, according to a health ministry spokesman.

We must support Skocic: Jahanbakhsh

PFDC — Brighton winger Alireza Jahanbakhsh says that it's time to support Team Melli coach Dragan Skocic.

Iranian media reported that the football federation is going to sign Gabriel Calderon as Skocic's replacement.

"Skocic has spent several years in Iran and knows our football and culture. He also has decent experience in comparison to other Croatian coaches who have come to Iran over the years. I think we all need to support him – both fans and footballers," Jahanbakhsh said.

"He came to Team Melli to help us play well and win our upcoming matches. For this reason, I must stress this is the time to support him and his staff. I heard Mr. Karim Bagheri will be joining the staff which will be a fantastic move for us. I saw him (Skocic) in the airport on the way to Europe when I was in Iran a few months ago and we chatted for a few minutes and had a great conversation about his plans for Team Melli," he added.

Iran sits third in Asia's Group C, five points behind Iraq in FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 qualification.

"This phase of qualification is our first challenge and it is no easy task. We will certainly work our hardest – this is the same group of hard working, talented, high quality players and thank god they are all doing great with their respective clubs. For this reason, I think this team can go to the World Cup and we will do our best," Jahanbakhsh stated.

Dalglish's son thanks well-wishers after Liverpool legend gets virus

Kenny Dalglish's son admitted he was "truly humbled" by the messages of support that poured in from across the football world after the Liverpool legend tested positive for the coronavirus.

Dalglish found he had the virus after being admitted to hospital on Wednesday for treatment for a separate infection which required intravenous antibiotics.

The 69-year-old Scot's family said on Friday he is not showing symptoms of the disease, but Liverpool fans, current players and old stars were quick to send him their best wishes.

Dalglish's son Paul responded on Twitter, writing: "It's not my place to comment on my old man, he can do that for himself in due course."

"Truly humbling messages from supporters of all teams. I'm sure we can all agree this is more important than football and that we are all united as blues to support the NHS. Stay safe everyone."

Dalglish's daughter, Sky Sports presenter Kelly Cates, also shared a message of thanks to fans for their kind words and well wishes.

"Thank you so much for your lovely messages and I'm really sorry I can't reply to them all," she tweeted.

Liverpool goalkeeper Alisson Becker said on Twitter: "Love from Becker family to Sir Kenny Dalglish!!"

Former Liverpool defender Jamie Carragher tweeted: "Hopeful Kenny will be rid of the virus ASAP."

Blackburn, who Dalglish led to the Premier League title in 1995, said: "Everyone at Rovers would like to send their love and best wishes to Sir Kenny Dalglish and his family."

(Source: AFP)

Coronavirus: Bundesliga counts down to kickoff

Five weeks after the Bundesliga was postponed, German clubs are under financial pressure to start playing again. With players back in training and some politicians onside, a restart in May edges ever closer.

Earlier weekend in the Bundesliga should have seen Bayern Munich hosting Fortuna Düsseldorf, Borussia Dortmund making the short trip to Paderborn and RB Leipzig traveling to Cologne.

Instead, Germany remains gripped by COVID-19 with more than 100,000 confirmed cases of the virus and over 2,500 deaths.

Top-flight football hasn't been played since the Rhineland Derby between Cologne and Borussia Mönchengladbach on March 11 and the Bundesliga is understandably the last thing on most people's minds.

For 13 of the 36 Bundesliga and second-division clubs who, according to German sports magazine kicker, would face insolvency by May or June without their share of around €330m (\$361m) in outstanding television rights payments, a restart cannot come soon enough.

"Regardless of the decision, the club is currently facing a potentially existential economic threat," read a statement from Bundesliga side Schalke this week, thought to be one of the most severely threatened clubs. "Everyone involved in the Bundesliga is aiming to complete the season, even if that means playing behind closed doors."

(Soruce: Deutsche Welle)

"Fear is No.1 enemy in fighting COVID-19," says Hadadi after gaining recovery

MNA — Iran's discus thrower Ehsan Hadadi talked about his experiences of fighting with the COVID-19 virus after gaining full recovery.

"It was hard to breathe but I didn't lose spirit; fear is your number one enemy in dealing with this disease. You cannot beat it if you are afraid of," the 2012 Olympics silver medalist said on Tuesday.

"This disease is not a joke. Whoever you are, you have to stay home and take the advice seriously. Some people may

think that such diseases only happen to others, but this is not the case. You can get this disease whoever and wherever you are."

He went on to say that he has had several surgeries for his injuries but has never experienced such a mood. "None of my surgeries was so intense to make me stay home for two weeks."

Hadadi called on people to adhere to health guidelines to help contain the outbreak.

He also appreciated the warm messages from his friends and sports bodies from across the world who had wished a speedy recovery for him.

Asked about his view on the postponement of the 2020 Olympics, he said "Unfortunately this was not a good happening. At least this was not good from the viewpoint of a professional athlete who tries to participate in world events and achieve a peak of readiness in a specific time."



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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Happy is he who thinks himself humble, and his work and profit are to his heart's desire; his intention is good and his heart chaste; his conduct admirable, and he feels lighter by giving the remainder of his wealth to the needy; holds his tongue and checks loquacity; abstains from troubling others and follows peace and good will; adopts the Prophet's way in his life and gains happiness; and joins the good by avoiding innovations.

Imam Ali (AS)

Book City Institute to celebrate Attar Day

A R T **TEHRAN** — The Book City Institute in Tehran plans to celebrate Attar Day this year on Monday by publishing audio files and articles on the Persian poet and mystic Farid ud-Din Attar on its website.

Persian literature aficionados will have an opportunity to become more familiar with the poet and his praiseworthy works, Book City Institute deputy director Ali-Asghar Mohammadkhani said in a press release published on Saturday.

"April 13 marks Attar Day and during the coronavirus pandemic in the country, there is no chance to hold seminars and meetings to commemorate the poet, and this will be a good opportunity to reread his works and become more familiar with his art and thoughts," he said.



Mausoleum of Persian poet Farid ud-Din Attar in Neyshabur.

"Four books by Attar simplified for children and young adults by Mehdi Azar-Yazdi and Mojgan Shafiei will be published on the Book City's official website," he added.

Attar is the composer of the masterpieces Asrar-Nama, Mantiq at-Tayr (Conference of the Birds), Mosibat-Nama, Elahi-Nama, Mokhtar-Nama and Tadkerat al-Awliya.

"These days that people are dealing with the fear and anxiety of the new virus pandemic, Attar's Tadkerat al-Awliya can bring peace and calmness back to people," he added.

The works will be available on the site and Instagram page of the institute for one week.

Iranian literati and the people have gathered every year at the mausoleum of the poet in Neyshabur to mark Attar Day by musical performances and poetry recitation events.

New Zealand festival spotlights films by Iranian women

A R T **TEHRAN** — A lineup of movies by Iranian women filmmakers has been reviewed in a special program organized by the Show Me Shorts Film Festival in Auckland, New Zealand, the organizers have announced.

Seven films selected by Iranian filmmaker Ghasideh Golmakani were screened during the program from April 7 to 9.

This event was broadcast online due to the COVID-19 pandemic with a special link and password available for ticket holders to view on the night of the program.



A poster for a review program for movies by Iranian woman filmmakers organized by the Show Me Shorts Film Festival in Auckland, New Zealand.

"The Derive" by Tanin Torabi, "Hanged" by Roqieh Tavakkoli, "Ascribed Achievements" by Samaneh Shojaei and "Red Dress, No Straps" by Maryam Mohajer are among the films.

The lineup also included "Limbo" by Ghasideh Golmakani, "The Fried Fish" by Leila Khalilzadeh and "Lady with Flower Head" by Sara Tabizadeh.

The Show Me Shorts Film Festival will be organized from October 3 to 21.

Cartoonist Alireza Pakdel's new collection healing harms from coronavirus

A R T **TEHRAN** — Cartoonist Alireza Pakdel has created a new collection to heal the mental wounds inflicted by the coronavirus epidemic in the country.

Pakdel has been active as an Iranian cartoonist during the coronavirus outbreak and his new collection has been highly praised in Iranian and international social media.

"Social, political and cultural concerns of the cartoonists help them form a strong, enduring relation with society since the artists are born from within the heart of the society and are familiar with the current situation of the country," Pakdel told the Persian service of IRNA on Saturday.

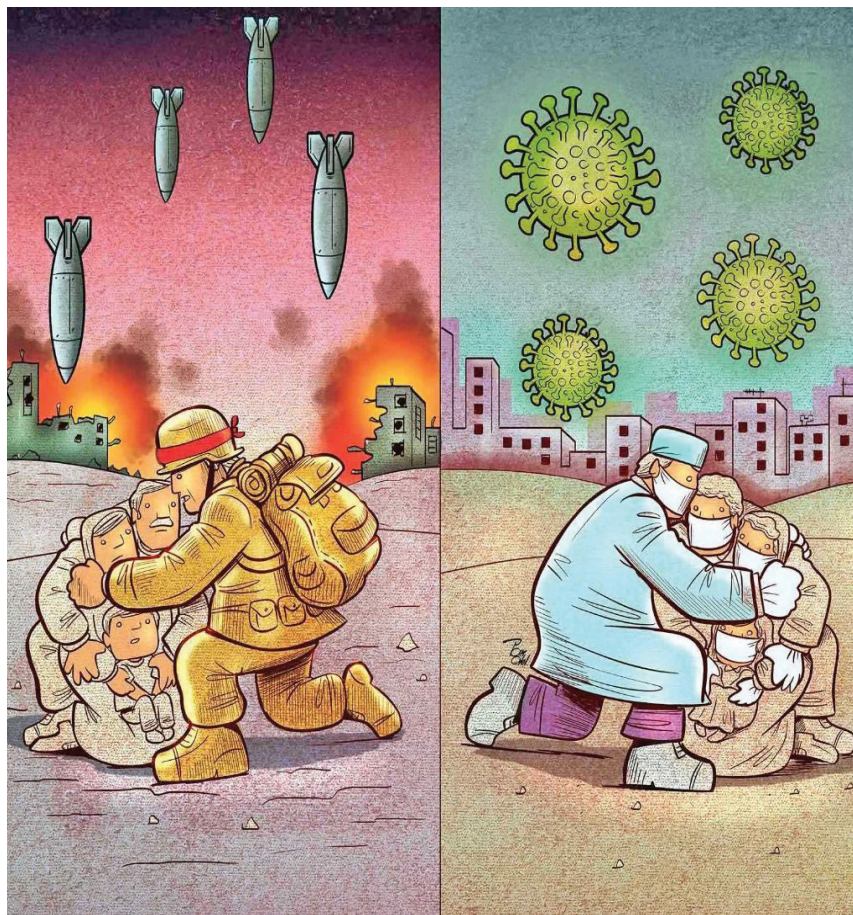
"The artists can remind the society of its ultimate condition through their art, through criticizing, enlightening and clarifying," he said.

He added that he decided to produce artworks giving hope and good feelings to people in the current situation that people are dealing with due to the coronavirus pandemic.

"The world is battling the fears of COVID-19 and the loss and damages are almost the same throughout the world. I thought I would produce works to give hope and express thanks to the medical staff, and to help reduce the fear and anxiety which have been overwhelming the society," he explained.

He added that he would continue producing cartoons these days because they have been hailed the world over, and have also been seen on social media and the media of many countries including Spain, Italy, Brazil, China, Russia and Colombia.

"I have received many kind messages from the viewers giving me more energy and motivation to continue," he concluded.



A cartoon from Iranian artist Alireza Pakdel's new collection on the coronavirus pandemic.

Works by Iranian artists on view in Art Dubai online catalog



An artwork by Iranian artist Seroj Barseghian.

A R T **TEHRAN** — Works by Iranian artists have been put on view in the online catalog of Art Dubai, a leading international art fair in the Middle East.

The exhibition takes place every March in Dubai. However, its 14th edition was postponed to March 2021 due to the coronavirus pandemic in the world.

The Iranian galleries Khak, Mohsen, Saradipur and Dastan's Basement are participating in the event this year.

Dastan's Basement is offering works by Navid Azimi Sajjadi, Mohammadreza Yazdi, Amin Montazeri, Nasser Bakhshi,

Maryam Eyvazi and several other artists.

Narges Hashemi, Bitay Fayyazi, Sasan Abri, Mojtaba Amini, Seroj Barseghian and Moslem Khezri are among other Iranian artists whose works have been selected to be showcased at the exhibit.

The fair drives meaningful engagement with the rich cultural heritage and contemporary art practices of the region, and extending to territories across what is known as "The Global South", including South East Asia, the African continent, Latin America and Australasia.

The 14th edition is scheduled to be held from March 17 to 20.

Huge statue of Martyr Soleimani to embellish Takestan



Sculptor Mohammad-Ali Jamali poses beside the head of Martyr Qassem Soleimani's statue at his atelier in Qazvin in an undated photo.

A R T **TEHRAN** — A huge statue of Martyr Qassem Soleimani will be set up at the main entrance of the town of Takestan in Qazvin Province.

The clay statue, which is 6 meters tall, has been made by Mohammad-Ali Jamali during a period of over two months, the Persian service of CHTN reported on Saturday.

"I created the sculpture to express my love for Soleimani, the commander of the hearts," Jamali said.

"The statue represents the image of a defender with a calm face, holding a

flower in his hand instead of a weapon," he added.

"I wish I could make a model of the statue to be set up in Syria, which owes Martyr Soleimani its liberty and security," he noted.

Several of Jamali's statues, including "Book Wall", "Silk Road Caravan" and "A Beautiful Thought", have previously been set up in Qazvin.

Lieutenant General Soleimani, who was the commander of Iran's Quds Force, was assassinated in a U.S. airstrike in Baghdad on January 3.

Isolation art: recreate masterworks with cabbage, lentils and socks

MOSCOW (Reuters) — While making blinis one morning in self-isolation, Natalia Goroshko noticed one in her pan had taken the floppy form of one of Salvador Dali's melting clocks.

The 31-year-old Belarusian living in Texas placed three blinis in her kitchen to match their position in the Dali painting, then photographed and posted her creation in a Russian-language Facebook group here encouraging members to reproduce famous artworks with items found at home.

Created last week, "Izoizolyaciya" - or Art Isolation - now has more than 300,000 members and a flurry of posts that include Edvard Munch's "Scream" made of slippers and clothes, and Kazimir Malevich's "Black Square" composed of socks hanging from a towel rack.

Some participants have also dressed themselves and family members in elaborate costumes — or shed layers — to reproduce portraits of the past with varying degrees of accuracy.

"There is lots of free time now and I loved how people were starting to become absorbed by art," said Goroshko, a mother of two who has a background in graphic design and photography.

The Russian-language Facebook group joins similar online initiatives, including a Dutch Instagram account with



A view shows a replica of "The Dance" painting by French artist Henri Matisse made of sausages, red cabbage, spinach and other food items in Kiev, Ukraine in this undated handout image. (Olesia Marchenko/Handout via Reuters)

The Beatles' handwritten "Hey Jude" lyrics sell for \$910,000 at auction

NEW YORK (Reuters) — Artist Paul McCartney's handwritten lyrics to The Beatles' hit song "Hey Jude" sold for \$910,000 on Friday, nine times its original estimate, auction house Julien's Auctions said.

A vintage bass drumhead with The Beatles' logo that was used during the English band's first North American tour in 1964 was another top item, selling for \$200,000.

The items were among more than 250 items of Beatles memorabilia offered in an online auction by Julien's Auctions to mark the 50th anniversary of the band's breakup.

A drawing by John Lennon and wife Yoko Ono called Bagism, a term they coined to satirize stereotyping, sold for \$93,750, while an ashtray used by the Fab Four's drummer Ringo Starr at the Abbey Road recording

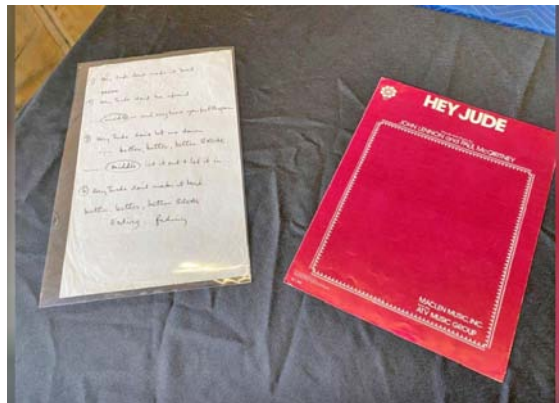
studios in London fetched \$32,500.

The wooden stage of the small Liverpool venue where the band performed before they rocketed to fame went for \$25,600.

Before the sale, Julien's Auctions music specialist Jason Watkins had described McCartney's hastily scribbled notes for a 1968 studio recording of "Hey Jude" as very rare and valuable.

"It's obviously a very iconic song that everyone's familiar with," said Watkins. "These handwritten lyrics were used in the studio as a guide when they were recording it."

The sale had been due to take place online and at the Hard Rock Cafe in Times Square, New York, but it was made online-only due to the coronavirus pandemic, the auction house said.



A sheet of paper with partial "Hey Jude" lyrics, written by Paul McCartney for a recording session in 1968, is displayed in a Julien's Auctions warehouse in Torrance, California, U.S. March 5, 2020. (Reuters/Jane Ross)