Introduction:

Iran: A concise History

“Certain regions of the world are distinguishable as being associated with a particular human culture pattern, which is at once distinctive in character and also sufficiently strong to have survived as a readily identifiable entity over many centuries... Of these regions, Iran is certainly one”.

Cambridge History of Iran

Known as Persia until 1935, Iran is a country with a history of over 10000 years and home to one of the oldest known civilizations. Persia, or Iran, as the country is more appropriately called, presents a lexicon of human history matched only by a handful of other countries in the world. The name Persia is derived from the Persis, a province in southern Iran from which a southern Iranian tribe, known as the “Persians” created a world empire in the sixth century B.C. The name Iran, pronounced “Eran”, however, comes from the term “Aryan” meaning “the land of nobles”, a name first used about the first millennium B.C.

‘Iran’ as a territory has multiple meanings. Broadly and devoid of any sort of political or territorial claims, one can see it as three regions. First, there is modern Iran, within its international borders. Then there is ‘Greater Iran or / ‘Iran exterior comprising the additional areas that once formed part of the Iranian world at various times in history. Lastly, there are the areas, sometimes very remote from the center, including parts of Europe and India that exhibit Iranian influence.

In the seventh century A.D. the new faith, Islam, which was based on Monotheism, offered the Iranian population an excellent opportunity whence for several centuries Iranian arts and acumen crystallized and became paramount in the Islamic world. The following centuries witnessed the development of distinctive traditions in pottery and ceramics, tile work, stucco, brickwork, metalwork, glassware, carpets, textiles, jewelry, music and poetry.

In antiquity, and again during the Islamic period, Iran’s position between the West and China helped to transform this land into “a crossroad of civilizations” and one of the great sources of art and thought. Iran’s originality is such that it continuously invented new forms while maintaining its distinct character, as its influence extended over immense regions.
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Policy
Leader hails health professionals for sacrifices amid coronavirus outbreak
April 9, 2020

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

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has praised the Iranian nation’s “shining” performance in the fight against the deadly coronavirus pandemic, which he described as a "test" facing the entire world.

“By enduring the hardship of being away from their family, even during the Nowruz holidays, and by tolerating the pressures resulting from treating patients in critical condition, the health professionals of the country placed their lives and their health at the service of the people,” Ayatollah Khamenei said in a televised speech on Thursday, on the occasion of the birthday anniversary of the 12th Shia Imam, Imam Mahdi [May God Hasten His Reappearance].

“This very significant matter will leave a good memory in the minds of the people of Iran,” added the Leader, according to his official website.

“The coronavirus outbreak should not cause us to neglect the oppression and tyranny of the superpowers in the world against different nations including the Palestinian and Yemeni nations.” Describing the coronavirus pandemic as a strange test for all governments and nations, the Leader said, “Enough has been said about the
statistics, the very good actions that have been taken place, and the recommendations. Sada-Sima (national TV network) has also performed well in this regard, but the important point is the brilliant performance of the Iranian nation in facing this modern form of cholera.”

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.

“The Armed Forces, too, truly used all their powers in construction and creativity, including equipping hospitals and infirmaries by manufacturing medical equipment. Moreover, the Armed Forces and the youth, besides those in the Armed Forces, displayed new capacities in confronting this matter.”

He described the cooperation of the people throughout the country as beautiful and astonishing, and added, “All these valuable movements show the depth of the influence of Islamic culture on the people. In opposition to the desire of some people who have endeavored to humiliate the Islamic-Iranian culture in the course of the past two decades and to divert attention towards the Western lifestyle, these moves showed that the Islamic culture and the chain of Islamic values are very strong and firmly rooted in the people of Iran.”

**Leader slams U.S. confiscation of masks, gloves**

Ayatollah Khamenei also pointed to the reaction of the Western world to the coronavirus pandemic, making a reference to the confiscation of masks and gloves by the American and some European governments, people overrunning stores to empty the shelves, people fighting each other for a few rolls of toilet paper, as well as lining up to buy weapons, the governments’ refusal to treat the elderly and also people’s suicide attempts.

He went on to say, “In this event, the Western culture and civilization have shown their true nature, which is a natural consequence of the philosophy governing the Western civilization, a philosophy that is founded on individualism, materialism and mostly atheism.”

Quoting a Western politician who had said the Wild West has been revived, Ayatollah Khamenei said, “When we say that the West has a savage spirit despite its clean-cut, perfumed appearance, some people deny this. But now, they themselves are acknowledging this openly.”

**People truly respect public order: Ayatollah Khamenei**
“In this event, the Western culture and civilization have shown their true nature, which is a natural consequence of the philosophy governing the Western civilization, a philosophy that is founded on individualism, materialism and mostly atheism.”

Elsewhere in his remarks, the Leader said the Iranian people are truly acting in accordance with the firm recommendations of the National Committee on Combating Coronavirus.

“Of course, officials may announce something to the people, which they have doubts about, and the people may come to the conclusion that it is not necessary to do it. However, when something is announced firmly, the people cooperate. An example of this was the people’s decision not to celebrate the last day of the New Year holiday by not going out and to respect the public order. Of course, this conduct should continue and the decisions announced by the National Committee on Combating Coronavirus should be taken seriously and followed.”

He described the coronavirus as a “grave problem” and a “dangerous disease” for humanity, but added that the incident “should not cause us to ignore other important problems and events in the world, because in recent years, the world and our country have been faced with bigger problems and incidents.”

As an example, the Leader pointed to the use of chemical weapons some 32 years ago by former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein which killed thousands of Iranians and Iraqis, saying, “At that time, some countries, which were making big claims about civilization and progress, provided Saddam with chemical weapons. Up until today, none of them has given any answers for the crimes they committed back then.”

“The coronavirus outbreak should not cause us to neglect the oppression and tyranny of the superpowers in the world against different nations including the Palestinian and Yemeni nations. We should also not neglect the conspiracies and enmity of the arrogant powers, because unlike the notion that some people have – saying that if we don’t show enmity, they won’t either – the enmity of the arrogant powers is based on the essence of the Islamic Republic and religious democracy.”

Pointing to the serious efforts made by the officials at the National Committee on Combating Coronavirus, Ayatollah Khamenei said, “In the National Committee on Combating Coronavirus, some decisions have been made for the underprivileged classes of society. I advise them to implement these plans as soon as possible and in the best way they can. Of course, the people are responsible for helping the underprivileged classes as well.”
He called on rich people to start large-scale activities to help the needy, especially on the eve of the auspicious month of Ramadan, which is the month of giving alms and helping others.

“In the holy month of Ramadan, it would be good to carry out an extensive maneuver to give help, show sympathy and provide sincere assistance to the needy and the poor in society,” he said.

At the end of his statements, the Leader offered some words of advice to the officials and the youth who are active in the areas of science and technology, saying, “The issue of a surge in production is vital and should not be forgotten. Furthermore, the youth who are active in the areas of science and technology should seriously pursue work in the laboratory and producing the needs of the country.”

**Ayatollah Khamenei urges people to follow health tips in fighting coronavirus**

March 3, 2020

TEHRAN - Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said on Tuesday that it essential that citizens follow health guidelines to help boost the country’s battle against the coronavirus outbreak.

“These guidelines must not be disobeyed, because God has made us duty bound to feel responsible for the health of ourselves and others,” he said on Tuesday after he planted two saplings, an annual tradition in honor of National Arbor Day and Natural Resources Week.
He added, “Anything that helps prevent the spread of coronavirus is a good deed and anything that helps spread it is a sin.”

The Leader also said that all sectors of the country must fully cooperate with the Ministry of Health, which is at the forefront of the fight against Coronavirus.

“The Armed Forces and the sectors related to the Office of the Leader have also been ordered to do the same,” he added.

Elsewhere, Ayatollah Khamenei said, “Coronavirus has affected many countries. Our officials have reported with sincerity and transparency since day one. However, some countries where the outbreak has been more serious have tried to hide it. Of course, we ask God to heal the sick in those countries too.”

## Poor families of prisoners in Iran to receive financial aid

April 13, 2020

TEHRAN – Upon an order by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the underprivileged families of prisoners will be supported financially, Judiciary Chief Seyed Ebrahim Raisi announced on Monday.

“Based on the order of the Leader and through actions that will be taken by the Mostazafan Foundation, tens of thousands of underprivileged families of prisoners will be supported financially,” he said during a meeting of the Judiciary Supreme Council.
He noted that all the bodies are obliged to respect people’s dignity.

Elsewhere, he attached great importance to domestic production in order to improve the economy.

“The first step in boosting domestic production is strengthening national determination and public participation and also tapping the capacities,” the top judge pointed out.

In a New Year message on March 20, Ayatollah Khamenei said a further surge in production is needed in the country, saying the slogan of the New Year is “Surge in Production”.

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

**Zarif says Iran does not need charity from Trump**

April 7, 2020

TEHRAN – Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said that Iran is rich in human and natural resources and does not need charity from U.S. President Donald Trump to contain the outbreak of the coronavirus.

“Iran is rich in human & natural resources. We don’t need charity from @realDonaldTrump —who’s forced to buy ventilators from sources he’s sanctioned,” Zarif tweeted on Tuesday.
He added, “What we want is for him to STOP preventing Iran from selling oil & other products, buying its needs & making & receiving payments.”

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

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

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

UN supports Iran’s resistance economy plans

TEHRAN – The United Nations supports Iran’s resistance economy programs, Ugochi Daniels, UN resident coordinator and representative of UN secretary general in Iran has said.

The notion of resistance economy was introduced by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in 2013 to refer to an economy based on higher
production and self-sufficiency, greater investment from oil incomes, financial reform, greater transparency and “knowledge-based” industries.

“I was very interested in the government's emphasis on creating economic, social and developmental infrastructure in the villages,” said Daniels in a specialized workshop on employment in rural areas held in Tehran on Tuesday.

Daniels lauded the performance of the vice-presidency for rural development and deprived areas, highlighting the positive aspects of government focus on development and job creation in rural areas. “Creating jobs in rural areas and establishing a high council of villages and nomads is very important in this regard,” she noted.

The UN also supports rural development and employment, she said, expressing pleasure that the vice presidency is working with the United Nations on employment and rural development.

The United Nations program is to support sustainable and comprehensive development around the world, she noted, highlighting, the UN has over 75 years of experience in assistance and support 200 countries.

“Our experience shows that targeted investment for the underprivileged areas will improve the countries’ condition,” she added.

“Based on what we have as a worldwide experience, the UN wants to support Iran's resisting economy on the basis of its plans. So we will support job creation and social development, as well as vulnerable people and household heads,” she explained.

Therefore, Iran can count on the UN for its goals of assisting rural employment, she noted.

She went on to add that 80 percent of the villagers have migrated to the cities, but this pattern should be reversed.

**UN atomic watchdog: Iran still providing nuclear site access**

March 9, 2020
Rafael Grossi, the director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, said on Monday that Iran continues to provide international inspectors access to its nuclear facilities, even after its announcement it was no longer bound by “any restrictions” of the landmark 2015 deal with world powers, known as the JCPOA.

“The agency has not observed any changes to Iran’s implementation of its nuclear-related commitments under the JCPOA in connection with this announcement, or in the level of cooperation by Iran in relation to agency verification and monitoring activities under the JCPOA,” AP quoted Grossi as telling board members in Vienna.

In his speech to the board members, Grossi called on "Iran to cooperate immediately and fully with the agency, including by providing prompt access to the locations specified by the agency."

"The agency has identified a number of questions related to possible undeclared nuclear material and nuclear-related activities at three locations that have not been declared by Iran," Grossi said, according to his prepared remarks. “The agency sought access to two of the locations. Iran has not provided access to these locations and has not engaged in substantive discussions to clarify the agency's questions.”

Behrouz Kamalvandi, the spokesman for the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, said on Wednesday that Iran has “strong reasons” not to respond to “unprincipled questions and demands” by the IAEA.

Kamalvandi also said no country in the world has had cooperation with the IAEA as much as Iran, adding Iran has provided “the most detailed” reports to the agency.
The remarks by Kamalvandi came one day after the IAEA issued two reports about Iran’s nuclear program. In one of its reports, the agency said it had sent questions to Iran in three separate letters but received no answers.

Kamalvandi said, “Questions and accesses demanded by the International Atomic Energy Agency must have legal basis.”

Kamalvandi and Iran’s ambassador to the Vienna-based international organizations Kazem Gharibabadi have said the IAEA is using bogus intelligence by the Israeli spy services as the basis for its reports.
TEHRAN – Iranian films “Dressage”, “Beloved” and “Finding Farideh” will go on screen in various sections of the Beirut International Women’s Film Festival (BWFF), which will be held in the Lebanese capital from March 8 to 13.

Directed by Puya Badkubeh, “Dressage” is about Golsa and her friends who rob a corner shop, but while evaluating the booty, they are dismayed to realize that they forgot to take the security camera footage. One of them must return to the crime scene and retrieve it. The vote falls on Golsa, who bravely completes the mission. Her friends’ behavior makes her think, and she hides the hard drive somewhere in secret. But her accomplices and their well-to-do families, worried about their social standing, put more and more pressure on Golsa.
Yasser Talebi is the director of the acclaimed documentary “Beloved”. The film is about an 82-year-old woman who prefers a hard, solitary herder’s existence with her cows to a more comfortable life among people.

Co-directed by Azadeh Musavi and Kurosh Atai, “Finding Farideh” is about a Netherland-based Iranian woman who was adopted by a Dutch couple forty years ago, and returns to Iran to search for her family.

The festival will also screen Iranian shorts “Tattoo” by Farhad Delaram, “Driving Lessons” by Marzieh Riahi and “Passage”, a co-production between Iran and Australia by Iranian director Kimia Hendi.

Photo: A scene from “Dressage” by Puya Badkubeh.

Documentarians need to raise awareness of coronavirus: filmmaker

March 4, 2020

TEHRAN – Veteran Iranian documentarian and researcher Ahmad Zabeti Jahromi said on Wednesday that the most important duty of the Iranian documentary filmmakers is to raise public awareness of the new virus, which has become an epidemic in the country.

“Concern over a virus epidemic has long been a major topic in the history of filmmaking, mostly the realm of science fiction, however, documentary cinema should focus on the issue, which I call a futuristic documentary cinema,” Zabeti Jahromi told the Persian service of MNA on Tuesday.
“The outbreak of the new coronavirus is also an issue, which has drawn world attention and has been on top of the news of what is threatening the world,” he said.

“That is why it is facing a wide reaction in the world and our country is no exception. Therefore, many documentarians should record this issue, which will be of great significance in history in the future,” he added.

“In the current days, the disease has been the major concern in the country, and all the organizations and institutes have considered it a national crisis, and therefore the documentarians need to take action and record the realities about this problem,” he suggested.

Photo: Veteran Iranian documentarian Ahmad Zabeti Jahromi in an undated photo.

**Iranian doc on Asian cheetahs to go on screen at UN**
March 2, 2020
TEHRAN – Iranian filmmaker Fathollah Amiri’s documentary “The Extinction Vortex” on Asian cheetahs will go on screen at UN Headquarters in New York tomorrow as one of the finalists of the World Wildlife Day film showcase, Iran’s Documentary and Experimental Film Center announced on Monday.

The film, which will be screened along with a number of international documentaries on wild animals and plants, tries to determine the actual number of
Asian cheetahs in Iran and find a relationship between different habitats and Cheetahs.

The international film screening has been organized by the Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and Jackson Wild Film Festival, to highlight wildlife as a part of the world’s biological diversity and to celebrate World Wildlife Day.

Top documentaries will also be honored during the program. All finalists and winners will also be screened at international events around the world during 2020.

“Sustaining all Life on Earth” is the theme of the 2020 World Wildlife Day.

Photo: A poster for Iranian director Fathollah Amiri’s documentary “The Extinction Vortex”.

Movies from Iran scoop awards at Big Muddy Film Festival

March 3, 2020

TEHRAN – The Iranian movies “Driving Lesson”, “In Between” and “One Night” won awards at the 42nd Big Muddy Film Festival in Carbondale, Illinois, the U.S. on Sunday.

“Driving Lesson” directed by Marzieh Riahi won the Best Long Narrative Award and “In Between” by Aliyar Rasti received second best film in this section.

“One Night” by Aida Alimadadi was also crowned best short narrative.
“Driving Lesson” tells the story of Bahareh, a young woman who, according to Iranian law, must have a man from among her relatives accompany her on driving lessons so she and her male instructor won’t be alone.

“In Between” is about a young woman who tries to prove her innocence in her boyfriend’s death.

“One Night” is about a middle-aged woman who tries to have a connection with her deceased husband.

Photo: A scene from “Driving Lesson” by Marzieh Riahi.

Films by female Iranian directors to go on screen in Strasbourg

March 9, 2020

TEHRAN – Eight short films by female Iranian filmmakers will be screened tonight during a special program at Cinema Star in Strasbourg, France.

Strass’Iran, a France-based Franco-Iranian cultural association will organize the program in collaboration with Iranian director Ghasideh Golmakani to celebrate International Women’s Day.

“The Toaster I Used to Live in” by Rojin Shafiei, “Online Shopping” by Ghasideh Golmakani, “Personal” by Sonia Haddad and “The Drive” by Tanin Torabi are among the films.
The lineup also includes “Moment and Forever” by Yasaman Hassani, “Icky” by Parastu Kardgar, “Hanged” by Roqayeh Tavakkoli and “Needle” by Anahita Qazvinizadeh.

**Photo:** A scene from “Online Shopping” by Iranian director Ghasideh Golmakani.

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**Rumi’s Masnavi-ye Manavi published in Georgian**

*March 9, 2020*

TEHRAN – The first book of the Masnavi-ye Manavi, Persian poet Molana Jalal ad-Din Rumi’s masterpiece, has been published in Georgian.

Translated by Georgian poet and orientalist Giorgi Lobzhanidze, the book has been released by Sulakauri Publishing in the Georgian capital of Tbilisi, the Iranian Cultural Office in Tbilisi has announced.

Lobzhanidze is working on the second and third books of the Masnavi-ye Manavi, which will be published in the coming months in collaboration with the Iranian Cultural Office.

He is also the translator of the Gulistan (The Rose Garden), one of Persian’s classical masterpieces by Sadi, and “The Water’s Footsteps” by Sohrab Sepehri.


Brussels Millenium festival picks Iranian films

March 9, 2020

TEHRAN – A lineup of six Iranian movies will go on screen in various sections of the Millenium International Documentary Film Festival in Brussels, Belgium.

The acclaimed documentaries “Sunless Shadows” directed by Mehrdad Oskui and “The Marriage Project” co-directed by Hesam Eslami and Atieh Attarzadeh will be competing in the official competition of the festival.

In “Sunless Shadows”, Oskui builds a remarkable relationship with a group of adolescent girls who are serving their sentences for the grave crime of murdering
their father, their husband or another male family member in an Iranian juvenile detention center.

“The Marriage Project” is about the head of a psychiatric hospital in Tehran, who encourages the patients to form relationships with each other, get married and live as a family.

“No Place for Angles” by Sam Kalantari, “Asho” by Jafar Najafi, “Song Sparrow” by Farzaneh Omidvarnia and “Waterfolk” by Azadeh Bizargiti are also among the films to be screened in other sections of the festival, which will be held from March 27 to April 4.

Photo: A scene from “The Marriage Project” co-directed by Hesam Eslami and Atieh Attarzadeh.
Society
PEACE CAMPAIGNERS OVERWHELMED BY WARMTH, GOODWILL AND LOVE OF IRANIANS

TEHRAN – Members of “Jai Jagat 2020”, a global peace campaign trekking from India to Switzerland in an estimated one year schedule, say they’ve been overwhelmed by warmth, goodwill and love of Iranians.

“The Iranians showed great enthusiasm to associate with Jai Jagat march and propagate its objectives in their communities. Soon, the Iranian authorities extended the visit till the 24th Feb. These goodwill gestures and the reception immediately dispelled all apprehensions before the visit while the originally planned period of three weeks visit for peace,” they posted on Facebook on Monday.

“After many changes to the Iran visit owing to sensitive developments over the last two weeks, a six-member delegation reached Tehran on the 4th of February and was enthralled to receive a heartwarming welcome.”

The trekkers visited Tehran, Shiraz, Ahvaz, Bushehr, Yazd, Isfahan and Kashan during their Iran excursion before entering Armenia and join the rest of the Jai Jagat team on Monday.

According to organizers, one of the aims of the Jai Jagat global peace walk is to strengthen people’s perspective and tools for peacebuilding.
“In this context, while the mission largely remained a cultural visit, it also included detailed and meaningful meetings with cross section of society including academics, diplomats and civil society and development organizations along with members of the public in both cities and the villages. The interactions facilitated individual, group discussions, and large meetings to communicate the objective of the Jai Jagat global peace march and the practice of nonviolence.”

“Jai Jagat 2020”, carrying Mahatma Gandhi’s message of non-violence, justice and peace, started from Raj Ghat in New Delhi on October 2, 2019, which marks the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, the renowned anti-colonial nationalist and political ethicist who employed nonviolent resistance to lead the successful campaign for India’s independence from British Rule.

The journey is planned to come to an end in Geneva, Switzerland, where a dialogue will take place with UN agencies on implementation of UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Iran ‘a role model for world’ in fight against coronavirus: WHO

March 8, 2020

TEHRAN – Richard Brennan, the Regional Emergency Director of the World Health Organization (WHO) Eastern Mediterranean Region, has said countries in
the region and all over the world should use Iran’s experience as a role model in fight against the novel coronavirus.

“Iran benefits from one of the strongest healthcare systems in the region. Iran has made notable achievements in the field of battling coronavirus,” the WHO official said in a press conference in Tehran on Saturday, IRNA reported.

Fake news are one of the adversaries of fighting the coronavirus, he said, noting that information dissemination about the coronavirus should be accurately carried out.

“Over the past couple of day, experts from the World Health Organization, The Robert Koch Institute, and China’s CBC Group have held meetings with Iranian officials. They exchanged many experiences and we have learned many lessons from the Iranian healthcare system.”

“Researches are underway for producing vaccine and medicine [for the disease], but it will take nine to twelve months to develop a vaccine,” he explained.

On March 2, WHO sent an aircraft carrying tons of medical supplies and test kits along with a medical team to Iran in order to help combat the novel coronavirus, known as COVID-19.

The supplies, worth of over $300,000, consisted of gloves, surgical masks, and respirators.

The Plan and Budget Organization has allocated 5.5 trillion rials (nearly $170 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) more to the Ministry of Health in order to counter COVID-19.

This allocation is in line with the order of President Hassan Rouhani to enhance services of medical staff, nurses and health workers fighting coronavirus, IRIB reported.

Health Minister Saeed Namaki has announced that effective measures have been taken and comprehensive plans are underway to get rid of the virus in the country.

The country has put in place a set of contingency plans, including the temporary shutdown of schools, universities and cultural centers, in an effort to curb a coronavirus outbreak that has already claimed eight lives in the country.

The number of coronavirus cases in the country has risen to 6566, with 2134 recovered and 194 dead so far.
No problem with Iran’s statistics on coronavirus: WHO

TEHRAN – The World Health Organization’s director-general, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, said on Sunday that the organization has not noticed any problem with Iran's statistics on coronavirus outbreak.

Some media have doubted the official statistics provided by the Iranian health ministry, citing the COVID-19 death toll in Iran is far exceeding that of official statistics.

There are “specific mechanisms” for investigating the facts, the WHO official told CNBC.

“There are reports in the media, but here is the World Health Organization which is a technical organization and needs to investigate the facts; We don’t repeat what the reporters say, we have our own mechanism, and we haven’t seen faults in the statistics.”

Kianoush Jahanpour, head of the Iranian health ministry’s public relations and information center, told IRNA on Friday that “the BBC Persian news network claiming that at least 210 people have died from coronavirus, is irrelevant.”

The BBC Persian is seeking to take political advantage of the coronavirus outbreak, he added.

“The media outlet’s claim is irrelevant. This time too it has drawn a blank,” the Iranian official said, adding that even the number of fatalities among those suffering from acute respiratory syndromes may not reach that high.
Jahanpour said the channel had intentionally come up with the figure to sow fear among Iranians and reminded that it has stopped short of naming its sources.

He said the Islamic Republic viewed the issue of the outbreak as one that was tied to the public health, and would, therefore, avoid politicizing it.

The country has observed rigor and transparency in its reports on the spread, while many others are either incapable of exactly recording their cases or would deny the number of victims for political reasons, according to the official.

“I have to tell you that Iran is the first and the only country to release its information about coronavirus without any processing and in a fully transparent manner since the beginning of the outbreak,” Jahanpour told Press TV on Friday night.

The level of Iran’s transparency “has taken many by surprise,” including some media outlets, which are known for their siding with Iran’s enemies, and their support for the sanctions that have come to target Iranians, including Iranian patients, he stated, referring to the BBC Persian and similar media organizations.

It was “inhumane” for a media organization that claims to be professional not to name its sources, Jahanpour asserted, reiterating that the British channel’s claims were “politically-motivated” and aimed at disturbing the public opinion and creating “horror” among the Iranian nation.

The novel coronavirus has so far infected 2336 people across the country, raising the death toll to 77.

**Is it safe to travel to Iran as a solo female traveler?**

Before I started reading more into Iran, all I heard about this country were stories about its politics. In the media, Iran seemed like a place where no one would ever want to visit. Can you imagine solo female travel in Iran?
After my trip to Iran, I can tell you now that Iran has the most hospitable people and great architecture. Traveling to Iran as a solo female traveler has been safe, rewarding and fun.

Iran is safe, accessible and totally easy to navigate as a solo female traveler. Sure, you might experience some inconveniences, but for every annoying man you get 3 nice ones, just like anywhere else. Iran is a destination you must see for yourself to see what I mean.

While organized tours are still dominating Iran’s tourism, it’s not uncommon to find another person traveling solo. Backpackers and hostels can be found anywhere on a tourist route from Tehran to Shiraz and Yazd.

Plus, if you can’t find a hostel, a cheap guesthouse is also an option. No matter which way you travel in Iran, you can always find an affordable place to stay for less than $30 a night for a double room.

**Iran in Western media**

Traveling to Iran or anywhere in the Middle East independently, especially as a woman, isn’t perceived well these days. Some time ago an article about a woman cycling through the Middle East alone went viral. People were wondering whether it’s safe for a woman to cycle alone across the Middle East? The comments weren’t pleasant:

‘It’s foolish and she was very lucky not to get herself raped or killed or both. I hope this article won’t encourage other solo female travelers to visit these countries alone’ – 400 upvotes

‘Not impressed. Putting oneself in harm’s way, which then puts potential rescuers in harm’s way makes little sense.’ – 170 upvotes

But how can we talk about media coverage of safety in Iran when BBC, that published the article, doesn’t even bother to check the facts. The article states: ‘In Iran, I was given more freedom. Yet foreigners are not permitted to stay with locals without permission, and several of my hosts endured an intense grilling by police.’ None of the above is true.

Staying with locals is only forbidden for British, Canadian and American citizens. Anyone else can stay with locals wherever whenever and no police will come and check on you.

U.S. government currently warns against travel to Iran for obvious reasons, these two countries don’t get along. It says that U.S. citizens may be subject to harassment or arrest while traveling in the country.
Again, I’d say that this statement is very exaggerated. Especially after Argo – the film exaggerating the seizure of the American Embassy in Tehran won the Academy Award for Best Picture.

My Advice is: don’t believe what you hear on the news. Explore the place, talk to locals and come to your own conclusions. Come to Iran with an open mind and I guarantee you’ll make many great friends in Iran.

Is it safe to travel to Iran in 2020?

Many travelers, including myself, describe it as one of the ‘safest countries I’ve ever been to’. You’ll be much more likely to get mugged in Europe than in Iran.

Violent crimes against foreigners are extremely rare and, indeed, if you do your best to fit in with local customs (read more on the dress code and how local women fight it), you are unlikely to be treated with anything.

In fact, I’ll be returning to Iran in 2020 to explore even more of its natural beauty.

My experience of traveling solo in Iran

I traveled to Iran solo and later teamed up with another girl whom I met at the hostel. I traveled around the country, in the same way, I would anywhere else in the world.

Wandering around in the evening, taking the metro, using local taxis and buses, going to markets etc.

I met many women whose lives didn’t seem very different from the women I know at home. At the birthday party, it was actually men who had to clean after, not women.

Young girls told me they date the same way people date in the Western world, they just don’t announce it anywhere and keep it to themselves.

I only felt uncomfortable twice in Iran – once in Esfahan (Isfahan) and once in Kashan. In Esfahan a man in a car started driving next to me and my friend in the evening. Every time we moved, he moved. It scared my friend and me for a bit, but the moment we approached another traveler the car left.

Another unpleasant situation I encountered was while walking around the narrow streets of Kashan. I was filming with my DJI gimbal with my iPhone attached to it when I fell someone approaching me on a scooter.

To me, being uncomfortable once or twice doesn’t mean that the place is dangerous. I never once felt physically threatened, unsafe, or at risk, even when I was wandering the streets of Iran.
I felt safer in Iran than if I was walking around in NYC. Even the tap water was safe in Iran!

People believe that Iran is full of moral police watching your every step, ready to arrest Westerners at the slightest provocation. In my experience, this couldn’t be further from the truth.

While cases or reporting and arrests occur, it’s not as common as it’s being portrayed outside of the country.

Everyone I met was extremely helpful and treated me like I was an expensive piece of jewelry. Escorting from one place to the other, while feeling responsible for me. And that’s the people I met on the street for 5 minutes! So unless you’re planning on running around naked with a bottle of smuggled vodka in hand, don’t be afraid.

Anna Karsten (born 1988 in Warsaw) is a travel blogger, traveler, and social media personality. She and her writing and photography have been featured in the New York Times, Forbes, CNN, National Geographic and Travel Channel.

**Iranian students continue education through TV channels amid Corona threat**

March 9, 2020
TEHRAN – Two state TV channels in Iran are broadcasting educational programs after the closure of schools in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak, IRIB news agency reported on Monday.

Amoozesh (Education) Channel started broadcasting programs on Saturday for students all over the country, Masoud Ahmadi, director of Amoozesh channel said, adding that Channel Four is broadcasting educational programs. Through the first phase, the state TV started to broadcast 10-12 educational programs, which will reach up to 40 programs by the next week, he added.

Also, another channel specifically addresses the health issues for students and families, he highlighted.

Ahmadi further announced the possibility of adding another TV channel after the new year holidays (Noruz, starting March 21) to the educational networks.

In order to achieve the important goal of education, all educational staff should be in touch with each other on a daily basis, including district administrators, school administrators, as well as teachers and students, to ensure the full implementation of distance education according to each classroom curriculum, Education Minister Mohsen Hajimirzaei wrote on his Twitter account on March 5.
Science & Technology
Iran to hold expo on medical, healthcare achievements
April 12, 2020

TEHRAN - Iran International Exhibitions Company (IIEC) plans to hold an exhibition on the country’s medical and healthcare achievements in the battle against the coronavirus outbreak, IRNA reported on Sunday.

According to the IIEC Managing Director Bahman Hosseinzadeh, with a focus on the surge in production, the event will be held after the holy month of Ramadan (ends on May 23).

The mentioned exhibition is aimed to introduce laboratory equipment, medical staff uniforms, and all kinds of protection masks, while presenting new technologies in the field of disinfectant and sanitizer production developed by Iranian manufacturers during the coronavirus outbreak, the official said.

He further noted that all necessary measures will be taken to assure the safety and health of both visitors and exhibitors during the event.

Ensuring a safe distance between visitors and exhibitors, providing sanitizers and disinfection equipment such as spray tunnels in the exhibition hall’s entrance, providing alcohol spray in the booths as well as providing protection masks are among such measures.

Hosseinzadeh also underlined some of the Leader’s comments regarding the importance and necessity of the surge in production in the current Iranian calendar
year (began on March 20), noting: “As the front line of the surge in production, exhibitions will take the first step by offering a platform for presenting the country's products and marketing for export development.”

**All-Iranian COVID-19 diagnostic kits to be released within month**

March 9, 2020

TEHRAN – Iran will commercialize domestically-made COVID-19 diagnostic kits by the Iranian calendar month of Farvardin (March 21-April 22), secretary of biotechnology development of Vice Presidency for Science and Technology announced.

Following a call by the headquarters for the production of COVID-19 diagnostic kits, a contract was signed with five knowledge-based companies and manufacturing process began, ISNA quoted Mostafa Qane’ei as saying on Monday.

Diagnosis is the most important part of coronavirus treatment, he highlighted.

Patients suspected to coronavirus are currently being identified by diagnostic kits that have entered Iran in the form of assistance and purchases by the World Health Organization, China and UNICEF, he said. So, the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology decided to manufacture the kits domestically, he noted.
Existing imported kits are sufficient for the next two months but after this period we will be faced with shortages of kits, however, the domestic ones will enter the market, he concluded.

Deputy health minister Kianoush Jahanpour said that at least 7,161 people have so far been infected in the country. Of the total figure, 2,394 have been recovered and 237 have died.

**Coronavirus in Iran: more than 50% recovered**

April 10, 2020

TEHRAN- The total number of people diagnosed with the coronavirus in Iran has reached 68,192, of whom 4,232 have died and 35,465 recovered.

Meanwhile, 1,972 new patients have been identified over the past 24 hours, Health Ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour said on Friday.

He added that 122 more people have died during the same period of time, ISNA reported.

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

The government has allocated 1,000 trillion rials (about $24 billion at the official rate of 42,000 rials) to help lessen the impact of the coronavirus outbreak on the national economy.
‘Diversifying technological products main goal of RIPI’
April 12, 2020

TEHRAN – Head of Iran’s Research Institute of Petroleum Industry (RIPI) says the institute has it on the agenda to diversify the basket of technological products in the oil industry, Shana reported.

“The research institute is not just a research contractor, it plays a strategic role in addressing the needs of the oil industry,” Jafar Tofiqi said.

“We will be facing more demand from the oil industry in the current [Iranian calendar] year (began on March 20), so we need to expand the basket of our technological products in order to meet those requirements; this requires more capacity building and empowerment within the Petroleum Industry Research Institute,” the official stressed.

He went on to say that the technical requirements of the oil industry are constantly evolving: "In the current situation when foreign companies are not present, this opportunity should be used to replace these companies to create value and technology."

According to the official, considering the workforce’s health and wellbeing, looking out for new technologies, pushing to go completely green and accelerating research projects as well as providing sustainable financial resources are also among the major priorities of the RIPI in the current year.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Tofiqi stressed the need to expand the network of cooperation between the research institute and the country’s top universities and research centers, saying: "Since there is a lot of capacity in universities and
research centers in the country, good ideas have been formed in these centers that we can use to expand our projects."

He also pointed to the development of RIPI’s overseas activities and said: "Although cooperation with foreign institutions is very difficult in the current situation, we can use the opportunities created to cooperate with neighboring countries."

RIPI was initially established under the title of the “Iran Petroleum Industry Research Development Office” in 1959. Its primary aim was carrying out research on the application of petroleum materials.

The main strategy of PIRI is creating value-added via development and indigenization of new technologies used in the oil industry.

Iran pioneer in cancer innovation, research among Islamic countries

TEHRAN – Iran has the most research and innovation in the field of cancer both in the region and among Islamic countries, deputy health minister Reza Malekzadeh has stated.

Referring to the great progress in cancer research, he said that “We have been able to play a role in this area globally.”

He added that one of the hopes for early detection of cancer is the use of urine and blood tests for people who are susceptible to cancer.
“We have conducted researches in the field of blood and urine biomarkers, which will help control cancers in the country,” he said.

A team of researchers at Iran University of Medical Sciences for the first time in the world has managed to detect bladder cancer up to 10 years before clinical diagnosis and early tumor formation in asymptomatic healthy individuals.

Led by Malekzadeh, the team has been able to detect the disease early in urine samples by examining a somatic genetic mutation.

According to WHO, to assess the test’s ability to detect the mutations in urine samples before any clinical symptoms of bladder cancer occur, World Health Organization, International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) researchers collaborated with the Tehran University of Medical Sciences in Iran and the United States National Cancer Institute to design a unique pilot study within the Golestan Cohort Study.

**Cancer patients increasing annually**

Pointing out that there are about 250,000 cancer patients in the country, Malekzadeh noted that 50,000 people die each year from the disease and 125,000 new patients develop cancer, so that the number of people with the disease increases each year.

In 2014, some 125,000 Iranian have been diagnosed with cancer, of which about 52 percent were male and the rest were female, and we anticipate that the number of cases will reach 150,000 by 2025, and during this period, there will be more than 5,000 cases annually, he explained.

He went on to say that 380,000 deaths occur every year in the country, of which about 122,000 are premature deaths, or nearly 40 percent of deaths happen to people aging 70 or less.

Among the premature deaths, 34,000 are related to cancer, he lamented, adding, 11,000 people aging less than 50 years lost their lives due to cancer.

Cancer is the second leading cause of death globally, accounting for an estimated 9.6 million deaths, or one in six deaths, in 2018. Lung, prostate, colorectal, stomach and liver cancer are the most common types of cancer in men, while breast, colorectal, lung, cervical and thyroid cancer are the most common among women.

**Iran’s cancer registry system the most accurate**

The cancer registry system is one of the most accurate one in the world, and we are the most advanced in the field of cancer in the region, Malekzadeh highlighted.
There has not been a precise cancer registration system in the country since four years ago, which is the most important infrastructure for cancer control to know which cancers are most common in the country and how to prevent and treat them, he concluded.

The Comprehensive Cancer Registry Program, which covers about 100 percent of the population, is now being published in collaboration with the medical universities with its detailed annual reports.
Sport
TEHRAN – National football team head coach Dragan Skocic says that the Iranian people are the most hospitable people in the world.

In an interview with vecernji.hr, the Team Melli coach lauded the Iranian nation and said that the country is very safe.

“I’ve coached in Iran for five years and have a good knowledge of the country’s football. I’ve already worked in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia and played in the UAE and know the Middle East and I have to say there is unfair judgment against the Iranians,” Skocic said.

“The Iranian people are wonderful. They are interested in going restaurants and music can be heard everywhere. You don’t know how good the Iranians are and they have a great history. Iran and Croatia have historical ties and I have to say I am feeling good there because it’s a normal country,” the 51-year-old coach added.

“I’ve traveled around the world and I think the Iranian people are the most hospitable. I am not saying this because I am working there. I used to live there and the country is safer than so many European countries. However, traffic is a big problem there and their football is an organized chaos. The Persian cuisine is good as well,” Skocic said.
“I have been appointed as Team Melli coach with the aim of helping them book a place at the 2022 World Cup qualification next stage. We are third in Group C but we know our strengths and weaknesses,” he stated.

“Iranian players have high quality and Team Melli are the best Asian football team. The nation love football and we have a lot of work to do,” Skocic concluded.

**Sohrab Moradi snatches gold at West Asian C’ship**

TEHRAN – Sohrab Moradi seized a gold medal at the 96kg at the West Asian Weightlifting Championship in Dubai, the UAE.

Moradi, who won a gold at 94kg in Rio but has suffered two serious injuries during qualifying, participated in the competition as the only Iranian lifter.

Iran was supposed to participate in the competition in Dubai with seven weightlifters but their flight was cancelled due to coronavirus threat.
He took a gold medal with a total of 370kg (163kg in snatch and 207kg in clean & jerk).

A weightlifter from Saudi Arabia won the silver medal with 302kg and Uzbekistan’s weightlifter claimed the bronze with 290kg.

Moradi badly injured his spine a year ago then dislocated a shoulder last July.

He also is hopeful of a good performance at the Asian Championships in Kazakhstan in April.

Moradi is way down in 78th place in the current rankings and would probably need to lift close to world-record levels in both those competitions to make it – but he is the world record holder in snatch and total at 96kg, both set when he won the 2018 world title.

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**Iran win two gold medals at Karate 1-Premier League Salzburg**

March 1, 2020

TEHRAN – Bahman Asgari Ghoncheh and Hamideh Abbasali from Iran clinched two gold medals at the Karate 1-Premier League Salzburg on Sunday.
Asgari, who had won a gold medal at Karate 1-Premier League Paris in late January, claimed a gold in Austria beating Stanislav Horuna from Ukraine 3-0 in the Male Kumite -75kg final.

The Iranian karateka had edged Erman Eltemur of Turkey in semi-finals 4-4 and qualified to win his third medal in three events this year.

At the Female Kumite +68kg, Abbasali earned a 2-1 win over Italian Clio Ferracuti and seized Iran’s second gold.

She had had taken gold in Paris after beating her Turkish opponent Meltem Hocaoglu Akyol.

The competition brought over 600 competitors from 88 countries together at the 2020 Karate 1-Premier League Salzburg. This tally represents a considerable increase with the previous event since 513 competitors from 79 countries took part in the Karate 1-Premier League Dubai.

**Persepolis a step closer to fourth successive title**

TEHRAN – Persepolis saw off Shahr Khodro 3-1 to take a step closer to Iran Professional League (IPL) title for the fourth successive time.
On Thursday, the Reds hosted their powerhouse rivals behind closed doors in Tehran’s Azadi Stadium.

Vahid Amiri gave Persepolis an early lead in the ninth minute after receiving a pass from Mehdi Torabi in the six-yard area.

Persepolis second goal came after a throw-in led to a quick exchange of passes which freed Bashar Resan to fire his shot into the roof of the net in the 16th minute.

Shahr Khodro pulled a goal back in the 52nd minute courtesy of a header from Farshad Faraji.

Two minutes after the hour mark, Torabi was brought down in the penalty area and he converted his penalty to seal a 3-1 win for Persepolis.

Shahr Khodro created several scoring chances but Persepolis goalie Bozidar Radošević made several noteworthy saves.

Persepolis went seven points clear at top of the IPL table.

Earlier on the day, Esteghlal suffered a 1-0 loss against Gol Gohar in Sirjan.

Sepahan were held to a 1-1 draw by Zob Ahan in Isfahan derby, Foolad defeated Shahin Bushehr 1-0 and Machine Sazi lost to Nassaji 3-0 in Tabriz.
Iran freestyle wrestling crowned Asian champions

TEHRAN – Iran finished in the first place at the 2020 Asian Wrestling Championships on Sunday.

The Iranian freestylers won eight medals in 10 weight categories in the two-day competition held in New Delhi, India.

On Sunday, 92kg wrestler Mohammadjavad Mohammadebrahim clinched a gold medal with a 11-0 win over Japanese Takuma Otsu.

Ahmad Yousef Bazrighaleh suffered a close loss to Japanese Shutaro Yamada in the 86kg final bout.

Mostafa Mohabbali Hosseinkhani beat Sumiyabazar Zandanbud from Mongolia 5 - 0 in the 74kg and won a bronze medal.

And Parviz Hadi took a bronze defeating Tajikistan’s Farkhod Anakulov 10-0 in the 125kg.

On Saturday, the Iranian wrestlers had won four medals in five weight classes.

Mojtaba Goleij took a gold beating Salywart Kadian from India 10-0 in the 97kg.
Amirhossein Hosseini lost to Uzbekistan’s Ilyas Bekbulatov 10-6 in the 70kg final match.

Amirhossein Maghsoudi seized a bronze at the 65kg after a 2-0 win over Abbos Rakhmonov from Uzbekistan.

And Ali Savadkouhi defeated Kazakhstan’s Galymzhan Usserbayef 5-0 in the 79kg bronze medal match.

Iran topped the standings with 168 points. India became runners-up with 159 points and Kazakhstan came third with 146 points.

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**Iran too strong for Qatar at FIBA Asia Cup qualifier**

TEHRAN – Iran overpowered Qatar 95-52 here at the 2021 International Basketball Federation (FIBA) Asia Cup qualification on Sunday.

In the match held in empty Azadi Hall amid fears of a coronavirus outbreak, Qatar center Emir Mujkic scored match-high of 14 points and Iran captain Hamed Haddadi scored 13 points.

Iran had defeated Syria 94-48 in their first match in Group E on Thursday.
A total of 24 countries will take part in the qualifiers – divided into six groups. According to FIBA, the top two teams of each group will secure places at the 2021 Asia Cup. Meanwhile, the third-placed team in each group will battle over the four remaining slots in the tournament.

The qualifiers will run until February next year, as teams play both home and away matches – giving local supporters the opportunity to cheer on their national squads directly during the matches.

The second window of the qualifiers will be held in November, while the last is scheduled for February 2021.
More gains for stock market
April 12, 2020

TEHRAN- Past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19) witnessed a very fruitful performance for the country’s stock market.

And as TSE Head Ali Sahraei has announced, the value of trades at the Tehran Stock Exchange jumped 2.6 folds, while Return on Investment (ROI) reached 180 percent 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). The lucrative status was also witnessed in these markets in the past year.

While growth and development in the Iranian stock market have been started in recent years, the previous year was in fact a time of flourishment for the country’s stock exchanges.

Different factors contribute to the past year’s prominent success in the stock market.

One important factor was proper ground laid in the stock market and providing better conditions for traders.

The other factor was the status of parallel markets, such as those of foreign currency, gold coin, and housing in the past year that made making investment in the stock market an obviously better and more profitable choice for the investors.
And now despite the economic condition created by the coronavirus outbreak, the Iranian stock market is experiencing more growth in the current Iranian year, which began on March 20.

On Saturday, TEDPIX hit the record high of 600,000 points, as it gained 10,803 points to 608,000. Some 6.663 billion securities worth 57.27 trillion rials (about $1.36 billion) were traded through 37,000 deals at TSE.

The index also climbed on Sunday, it gained 15,422 points to 623,278, as 7.445 securities valued at 63.726 trillion rials (about $1.5 billion) were traded.

Production of antiseptics doubled in a month
March 3, 2020

TEHRAN – Iranian Industry, Mining, and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani says the production of antiseptic products in the country has doubled since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar month (February 20), IRNA reported.

According to Rahmani, the ministry has issued new licenses for the companies which have been able to produce such products.
Regarding the production of face masks, the official noted that since the Health Ministry has announced that 80 million of such products are currently needed in the country, the Industry Ministry has taken necessary measures to meet the needs of the people in the shortest possible time.

“Although production of this product has been two to three times higher than usual, but domestic production hasn’t been enough and, with the government's support and the central bank's allocation of foreign currency, imports are on the agenda as quickly as possible,” Rahmani said.

The official noted that a coronavirus containment headquarter has been established in the Industry Ministry for taking necessary measures for production, distribution and monitoring the markets of health and hygiene products.

In late February, Rahmani had held a meeting with the producers of health and hygiene products to discuss the supply of such products amid at the coronavirus outbreak.

The meeting was attended by the representatives of the country’s major health products manufacturers as well as senior officials including the government’s spokesman Ali Rabiei.

Coronavirus, known officially known as COVID-19, appeared first in the Chinese city of Wuhan in December and has since spread globally. The World Health Organization has declared it a global health emergency.

**IMF can give Iran financial support despite U.S. pressures: Bloomberg**

April 12, 2020
TEHRAN – The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is able to provide Iran with its rightful financial assistance despite the U.S. efforts to sabotage the disbursement of the funds, Bloomberg reported on Sunday.

As reported, the U.S. which has a 16.51 percent vote share in IMF cannot veto the IMF board but it could use its sanction powers to sabotage the process.

The U.S. administration has been trying to prevent Iran from accessing its financial resources all around the world during the coronavirus crisis and the Islamic Republic has asked the IMF for a $5 billion loan which has also faced the U.S. opposition.

The European Union, however, has voiced its support for Iran’s request, calling on the Trump administration to ease its economic pressure on Iran at this time of crisis.

The report further argued that the IMF can take some measures in order to address both Iran and the U.S. concerns.

First, the Fund can account for the unease of U.S. regulators by excluding dollars, which are normally part of the Special Drawing Right (SDR) basket of currencies in which loans are made. Iran could even agree to accept the loan in euros alone, given that the EU is its primary supplier of medical goods.

Second, the loan could be paid into an account maintained in Europe by the Central Bank of Iran. This would mean that the funds are spent within the European financial system, and therefore subject to oversight from regulators who can monitor for potential misuse, in communication with American counterparts.

The Trump administration has itself implemented a similar system as part of the Swiss Humanitarian Trade Arrangement, a payment channel launched in February that enables the Central Bank of Iran to use assets in Switzerland towards payment of humanitarian exports by Swiss companies.

Administration officials know a loan to Iran can be “de-risked” but what they are actually seeking to avoid is a political defeat.

To that end, the IMF could seek a more discrete way to provide financial support: it could boost Iran’s access to liquid foreign-exchange assets by arranging the sale of some of Iran’s assets at the Fund to a third party, such as a European country.

In this scenario, the IMF would reallocate some portion of Iran’s 1.55 billion in SDR holdings (valued at approximately $2.1 billion) to the buyer, which would then make a payment to Iran in a foreign currency, such as euros, to an account maintained by Iran’s central bank outside the country. The funds would then be
spent in accordance with the same oversight measures described above. Such a transaction would not require approval from the IMF board of governors, meaning the U.S. can avoid appearing isolated during an approval vote.

It can be done. The question now is whether the IMF has the will to do it.

Commodities worth over $1b traded at IME in a week

March 8, 2020

TEHRAN- Some 735,525 tons of commodities valued at $1.047 billion were traded at Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) during the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday).

As reported by the Public Relations and International Affairs Department of IME, metal and mineral trading volume experienced a growth of 24 percent at this market over the past week.

On the domestic and export metal and mineral trading floor of IME, 344,525 tons of various products worth $600 million were traded.

On this trading floor, 329,097 tons of steel, 7,300 tons of copper, 7,240 tons of aluminum, 250 tons of molybdenum concentrates, 18 tons of precious metal concentrates, 620 tons of zinc ingot as well as 24 kg of gold bullion were traded by customers.
The report declares that on domestic and export oil and petrochemical trading floors of IME, 391,062 tons of different commodities with the total value of $463 million were traded.

On this trading floor, 120,378 tons of bitumen, 113,500 tons of VB feed stock, 71,027 tons of polymer products, 44,000 tons of lube cut oil, 35,386 tons of chemical products, 2,240 tons of base oil, 100 tons of argon, 905 tons of insulation, as well as 3,525 tons of sulfur were traded.

As previously reported, over 2.56 million tons of commodities valued at $3.648 million were traded at Iran Mercantile Exchange during February.

During the last month, the oil and petrochemical trading floor of IME played host to trading of 1,644,350 tons of commodities worth more than $1,897 million.

On this trading floor, more than 411,309 tons of bitumen, 324,615 tons of polymer products and 131,768 tons of chemical products, 562,475 tons of VB feed stock, 168,200 tons of lube cut oil, 26,110 tons of sulfur, 5,905 tons of insulation, 26,110 tons of slaps waxes, 5,767 tons of base oil and paraffin waxes, and 200 tons of argon were traded by customers.

The metal and mineral trading floor witnessed trading over 910,549 tons of commodities worth more than $1,747 million.

On this trading floor 1,845,229 tons of steel, 34,550 tons of copper, 680 tons of molybdenum concentrates, 60 tons of precious metals concentrates, 680 tons of zinc, 27,350 tons of aluminum, 2,000 tons of coke, as well as 42 kg of gold bullion were traded by customers.

The side market of the IME experienced trading of 300 tons of tomato paste, 50 tons of used locomotive engine oil, 2,153 tons of metal scrap, 250 tons of steel scrap as well as 2,700 tons of phosphate concentrates.

As previously announced by the International Affairs and Public Relations Department of IME, some 2.874 million tons of commodities valued at $3.397 billion were traded at this exchange market in January.

IME is one of the four major stock markets of Iran, the other three markets are Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market known also as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), and Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX).
Iran saves $7bn with indigenizing industries in 5yrs.: cmdr.  
March 7, 2020

TEHRAN – Khatam-al Anbiya Construction Headquarters managed to save the country more than $7 billion by localizing the equipment in some industries including oil and gas within five years, according to its commander.

Speaking on Saturday on the occasion of organizing Iranian Technical and Engineering Capabilities’ Exhibition, Commander of Khatam al-Anbiya Construction Headquarters Saeid Mohammad added, “despite sanctions imposed against the country, competent domestic companies managed to cut dependency on foreign companies especially in oil and gas industries.”

Turning to the activity of Khatam-al Anbiya Construction Headquarters in the oil and gas sector, he stated, “the HQ, in cooperation with the private sector, succeeded in indigenizing more than 70 percent of large industries including steel and copper in sanctions period.”

In this exhibition, a contract was inked between Khatam-al Anbiya Construction Headquarters and Esfahan Steel Company (ESC) in the field of manufacturing national rail, he highlighted.

He pointed to the key role of the private sector and added, “Khatam-al Anbiya Construction Headquarters has stood by the private sector for the economic prosperity of the country.”