







## ISA plans 4 steps to develop space technology in new year: official

Head of Iranian Space Agency (ISA) Morteza Barari on Sat. said that his agency is planning to develop space infrastructures in four steps in the current Iranian calendar year (started March 20, 2020).

According to the roadmap, the Iranian Space Agency has put the launching of three satellites and one launcher atop agenda this year, Barari added in an interview with Mehr correspondent.

"Under the roadmap compiled by the ISA, one satellite will be put into orbit in each step. Accordingly, it is predicted that we can launch at least three satellites along with one launcher into space," he noted.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Barari pointed to the reduction of the country's dependency on foreign models of space navigation and added, "the subject of positioning and space navigation has currently been put atop agenda of the Agency as one of the main topics considered in the development of space technology in the current year according to the Aerospace Development Documents approved by the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution in 2012."

He further noted that positioning and navigation roadmaps will be compiled soon using the space technology and added, "in this regard, we have held expert-level meetings with the officials at the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development, based on which, the roadmap has been finalized and we are compiling a strategy."

Development of ground bases for launching a satellite is one of the other steps taken by the Agency for developing space infrastructures in the country, he said, adding, "accordingly, Iranian Space Agency will follow the task of manufacturing satellite, launcher, space base, space explorations and space navigation this year."

## Tehran, Minsk discuss ways to boost economic cooperation

Saeed Yari, Iran's ambassador to Belarus, discussed ways to enhance bilateral cooperation with the European country in a meeting on Friday.

He held a meeting with the country's Minister of Industry Pavel Utiupin in Minsk who is also the Belarusian head of the two countries' joint economic commission.

The two officials discussed the latest status of trade and economic cooperation while also conferring on necessary arrangements to hold the 15th session of the joint economic commission.

Belarus is one of the members of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) along with Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia.

Spokesman of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) Seyyed Rouhollah Latifi said in early March that exports to Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) countries in the first 11 months of the previous Iranian year (March 21, 2019 - February 19, 2020) stood at \$1.244 billion, registering a growth of 105 percent, compared to the same period in the year before.

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► **License Owner & Managing director:** Reza Mahzunieh  
 ► **Editor-in-Chief:** Marzie Rabiei  
 ► **Assistant Editor-in-Chief of English Section:** Bahare Yousefi  
 ► **Isfahan Office:** Hooraa Building, Shahid Mofateh Street, Ahmad Abad Square, Isfahan, Iran  
 ► **Tel:** 031-32274500  
 ► **Public Relations:** 031-32274754

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 ► **SMS:** 30007232



## President Orders Special Support for Iranian Businesses

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani earmarked 750 trillion rials in financial aid for the businesses keeping their employees amid the outbreak of the coronavirus.



In a decree on Friday, Rouhani ordered Minister of Cooperative, Labor, and Welfare Mohammad

In a decree on Friday, Rouhani ordered Minister of Cooperative, Labor, and Welfare Mohammad Shariatmadari to allocate a sum of 750,000 billion rials in credit to the enterprises and businesses

Shariatmadari to allocate a sum of 750,000 billion rials in credit to the enterprises and businesses that guarantee they will not expel their workers amid the implementation of plans to contain the coronavirus epidemic in the country. The president also called on the minister to carry out a careful inspection to make sure that all health protocols are being fully observed in the housing



facilities for disabled veterans and retirement homes.

Rouhani also held a telephone conversation with Minister of Roads and Urban Development Mohammad Eslami, urging him to carry out a detailed evaluation of the status of the country's airports, train stations and bus terminals and offer proposals for

handling the situation considering a remarkable drop in the travels after enforcing the restrictions for controlling COVID-19. On Tuesday, Rouhani extended social distancing measures until April 8 to help stop the spread of the novel coronavirus across the country. He has repeatedly called on Iranians to stay

indoors, noting that social-distancing and self-quarantining have helped the country's health authorities make major breakthroughs in their battle against the viral infection. The disease has so far killed 3,294 people and infected over 53,000 others in Iran. Nearly 18,000 people have also

recovered.

## Iran saffron prices stumble to record lows amid virus surge in Europe

The price of the Iranian saffron, a premium quality spice believed to have high healing powers, has stumbled to lows never seen in decades as a coronavirus pandemic hits major customers in Europe. A major Iranian saffron trader said on Thursday that prices have been down by more than a half in recent weeks and reached a point where even the illegal trade

of saffron across the eastern Iranian borders is no longer tenable. Ali Hosseini, a member of Iran's National Saffron Association, said that prices are now plummeting to \$400-500 per kilogram of the spice, levels that had never been seen since the 1980s and 1990s. Hosseini said that the main reason for depressed prices was record low demands from Spain and Italy, the two main destinations for Iran's saffron exports. Italy and Spain have become the hardest-hit nations in the world by a new coronavirus outbreak that has infected over 200,000 people in the countries and led to nearly 25,000 deaths. Spain has always been on top of Iran's list of saffron exports

with companies in the European country buying the spice in significant volumes to process it for use various industries like food and pharmaceuticals. International saffron prices saw a major boom over the past years and reached all-time highs of \$1,100 per kilogram. The expensive spice had become popular among smugglers who shipped it to countries like Afghanistan to send it to Europe as American sanctions on Iran sometimes intervened with direct exports. Hosseini said China, the country where the new coronavirus disease originated nearly four months ago, had also slashed its demand for the Iranian saffron.

## Iran-Oman port transit line launched

The head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization announced the launch of a container transit line from Bandar Abbas port city, south of Iran, to Oman's Sultan Qaboos Port in Muscat. The head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization Hamid Zadboom said the transit line will be used for transporting

fruits and vegetables with competitive price as of Saturday.

"Despite creating problems for foreign trade, Coronavirus could have not stopped Iran's trade," he added. Stressing that Iran's economy will pass the coronavirus crisis, Zadboom said in addition to posing a threat to the economy and foreign trade, Coronavirus created a special and brilliant opportunity to expand exports to other sectors, including service exports.

On 17 Feb, The Head of Iran-Oman Joint Chamber of Commerce said the volume of trade between Iran and Oman reached \$1.161 billion last year, compared to \$221 million in 2013.

The Head of Iran-Oman Joint Chamber of Commerce Mohsen Zarabi made the remarks at the Oman Mining Opportunities meeting, saying that Iran's total export to Oman was \$146 million in 2013, but in 2019 it reached \$728 million.

NO 453

Sudoku

Solution: NO 452

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News

## Turkey opens way for 33 Iranian lorry drivers stranded in Europe due to border closure

Turkish border guards opened way to 33 lorry drivers stranded in Europe due to Turkey's border closure. Head of Iran Roads Maintenance and Transport Organization Abdolhashem Hassannia on separate phone calls thanked Iranian ambassadors in Turkey, Greece, Romania, and Bulgaria for their efforts to return the trucks home. Hassannia said that hundreds of Iranian drivers were stuck in Europe and now have returned home or negotiations are still in

progress for the rest of them. He said that 19 Iranian trucks and their 20 drivers have entered Turkey via Bulgaria and are now being escorted toward the Iranian border by the Turkish police. According to Mohammad Farazmand, Iran's ambassador in Ankara, he held talks with Turkish authorities to let Iranian truck drivers come home from borders of Greece and also the drivers stuck in Ukrainian port or Odesa and Moldovan border.

## Gilan province exports to Eurasia up 69%

More than 328,000 tons of goods worth about \$164 million were exported to member countries of Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) via customs of Gilan province, northern Iran, since October 27, 2019 - the date of entry into force of the Interim Trade Memorandum between Iran and EAEU - till the end of last Iranian year on March 20.

Gilan Customs Supervisor Abolghasem Yusefi-Nejad made the announcement, saying that the figure shows a 86% and 69% jump in terms of volume and value, respectively, in comparison with the corresponding period of last year.

The exported products from Gilan mainly include mineral products, vegetables, fruit, dates, raisins, tea, glass, food products, textile and plastic products.

A total of 467,000 tons of goods worth \$327 million were imported into the northern Iranian province from the Eurasian countries in the same period, registering an increase of 43% and 33% in weight and value year-on-year, Yusefi-Nejad added.

Iran and EEU are looking to substantially increase trade, as they signed a three-year provisional agreement in Astana, Kazakhstan, on May 17, 2018, for the bloc to welcome Iran into EEU.

The preferential trade agreement came into effect on October 27, 2019, based on which the two sides have three years to upgrade the treaty into a full-fledged free trade deal that lowers or abolishes customs duties.

The average tariff set by EEU for Iranian goods as part of their provisional preferential trade agreement stands at 3.1%, while Iran's average tariff for commodities from EEU amounts to 12.9%, according to the deputy for international affairs with Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture.

**In a letter to Leader: 11th Parliament to prepare grounds for 'surge in production'**

A major portion of newly-elected lawmakers sent a letter to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, vowing to prepare the grounds for realizing the motto of the year which is 'surge in production'.

In the letter on Friday, 182 newly-elected lawmakers from across the country lauded the Leader's measure to name the new Iranian year as the year of 'surge in production'.

MPs described the new guideline as a more advanced and promising version of 'boosting production', which was the previous year's motto.

The lawmakers highlighted that the Leader's new year message will define the strategic path for the Parliament in the years to come, adding that production surge in the Islamic Republic, which is grappling with cruel sanctions, would be a symbol of resistance, getting stronger, and winning victory in the economic war launched by enemies.

Ayatollah Khamenei stressed the need for a surge in production in the country in his new year's message on March 20. "Officials should act in a way that production will witness a surge, God willing, and that there will be a tangible change in the lives of the people," he said.

**MP: US unjust sanctions impede Iran's efforts to fight COVID19**

Iranian lawmaker Fatemeh Hosseini on Saturday thanked IPU president for her message of empathy, saying US unjust sanctions impeded Iran's efforts to contain coronavirus.

"Thankful for your support & empathy & standings with us in hard times," Hosseini wrote in her Twitter account.

"My colleagues and I in Iran's Parliament do extensively work to mitigate various impacts of #COVID19 on Iranians, though US economic terrorism and unjust sanctions impede our efforts to cope w/ the struggle," she added.

Earlier, President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)

Gabriela Cuevas Barron in a message expressed solidarity with Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani diagnosed with coronavirus, saying: "I also stand in solidarity with the MPs. We will get through this together."

After certain symptoms emerged, Larijani underwent coronavirus testing and he tested positive for COVID-19. He is currently in quarantine receiving medical treatment.

Meanwhile, Iranian Ambassador to Bern referred to the challenge posed to Iran in fighting coronavirus due to US cruel sanctions and legitimately urged the UN member states to oppose unilateralism and distance themselves from US illegal, shameful and immoral limitations.

He noted that the US cruel sanctions have deprived Iranian

government of having access to financial resources to supply drug and food.

Such measures have blocked Iran's access to international banking system and financial operations, Iranian diplomat said, adding that the US regime and its allies shamelessly take advantage of coronavirus to impose political pressure on Iran.



**G77, China urge intl. community to disregard unilateral sanctions amid outbreak**

The Group of 77 coalition of developing nations and China called on the international community to take effective measures against the unilateral sanctions against developing countries amid the COVID19-pandemic.



In a statement released on Friday, the group expressed solidarity with all affected countries

struggling to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic while voicing support and admiration for all healthcare professionals and medical researchers who serve on the frontlines in the battle against the disease.

The Group of 77 and China called upon the international community to adopt urgent and effective measures to eliminate the use of unilateral coercive economic measures against developing countries, said the statement, according to Xinhua.

The statement stressed that such coercive measures not only have



a negative impact on the capacity of States to respond efficiently in the face of the pandemic, but also affect essential cooperation and solidarity among nations. This appeal echoed a recent joint statement made by United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and the Non-Aligned Movement, among other organizations, which also recognized that blockades and sanctions, especially on medical equipment and medicines, directly affect

developing countries fighting the coronavirus. The statement by the Group of 77 and China also called for sharing of information and technology for the detection, prevention, treatment and control of the pandemic at the global level.

Furthermore, it commended the solidarity and cooperation among developing countries, within the framework of South-South cooperation, in contributing to the efforts to confront the

pandemic, adding it is time for the international community to demonstrate its capability to work together in solidarity to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19.

The Group of 77 at the United Nations is a coalition of developing countries with an aim to promote its members' collective political and economic interests in the world body. Although there were 77 founding members, the group has expanded to more than 130 members.

The statement by the Group of 77 and China also called for sharing of information and technology for the detection, prevention, treatment and control of the pandemic at the global level.

**US Sanctions on Iran Threat to Global Public Health: Envoy**

Esmail Baghaei Hamaneh, Iran's ambassador and permanent representative to the UN office in Geneva, described the US sanctions against the country as an "unprecedented threat" to global public health amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The cruel and illegal sanctions on Iran, which has resulted in the ordinary Iranian people being denied access to medicine and medical equipment and services amid the coronavirus outbreak, clearly exemplifies a crime against humanity, Baghaei Hamaneh said in a letter addressed to Director-General of the World

Health Organization (WHO) Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus on Friday. He added that the sanctions have blocked Iran's banking interaction with other countries in order to buy commodities required in the fight against the coronavirus and warned that the illegal restrictions are a serious threat to Tehran's efforts to battle and contain the virus, Press TV reported.

The senior Iranian diplomat also said that the tightening of economic and banking restrictions on Iran amidst the pandemic runs counter to international regulations.

Baghaei Hamaneh further stressed all international and unilateral sanctions must be removed as emphasized recently by United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

On Friday, the UN General Assembly failed to approve a Russian-backed resolution calling for UN solidarity



in the face of the challenges posed by the new virus and urging an end to trade wars, protectionist practices and unilateral sanctions without UN Security Council approval.

In a Friday statement, the Group of 77 and China called for an end to unilateral sanctions against countries like Iran and Venezuela during the coronavirus crisis, warning they could hinder efforts to tackle the pandemic. The coronavirus pandemic has so far killed 3,294 people and infected over 53,000 others in Iran. Nearly 18,000 people have also recovered.

**Lawmaker condemns US economic terrorism amid pandemic**

Fateme Hosseini, a member of the Iranian Parliament, pointed to the barriers posed by the US against Iran's efforts to contain the COVID-19 outbreak.

"Thankful for your support & empathy & standings with us in hard times. My colleagues and I in Iran's Parliament do extensively work to mitigate various impacts of #COVID19 on Iranians, though US economic terrorism and unjust sanctions impede our efforts to cope w/ the struggle," Hosseini tweeted on Friday night. The remarks came in response to a tweet by President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Gabriela Cuevas Barron, who has expressed solidarity with Tehran amid the pandemic. "I wish to send #Iran's Speaker of Parliament, Mr. Larijani, my most sincere expressions of support and solidarity as unfortunately he has been positively diagnosed with the coronavirus #COVID19. I also stand in solidarity with the MPs. We will get through this together," she wrote.

Iran is one of the worst-hit countries by the virus with 53,183 confirmed cases and 3,294 deaths as of Friday. Meanwhile, the imposition of unilateral sanctions against Iran by the United States since its withdrawal from the JCPOA has blocked Tehran's access to its resources outside the country while also banning Iran's banking transactions which hamper the country's efforts to buy necessary medical equipment amid the outbreak.

Many countries and international bodies have called on the Trump administration to lift the sanctions but the White House has not yet taken any effective step to remove the sanctions while also introducing new ones last week.

**Overcoming coronavirus to require global coop.: envoy**

Stating that more than one million people in the world are suffering from coronavirus today, Iran's Ambassador to China Mohammad Keshavarz-Zadeh said that containing the virus will require global cooperation.

Referring to the public mourning in China for those who died of coronavirus, Mohammad Keshavarz-Zadeh wrote in a tweet, "Saturday has been declared a day of mourning across China to remember victims of coronavirus. I offer my condolences to all the families of the victims, especially to the compatriots who lost their loved ones to the virus."

"Today, more than one million people in the world are infected with coronavirus," he said, adding, "Overcoming coronavirus requires global cooperation." Earlier today, people across China stopped for three minutes to pay tribute to those who have died in the country's coronavirus outbreak.

In Wuhan, where the outbreak began, all traffic lights in urban areas have been turned red for three minutes. The city of 11 million was the hardest hit by the outbreak, recording 2,567 fatalities. This accounts for more than three-quarters of China's coronavirus deaths.

**News**

**Germany deplores 'US piracy' over mask confiscation**

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

The local government in Berlin said the shipment of US-made masks was "confiscated" in Bangkok, BBC reported on Saturday.

The FFP2 masks, which were ordered by Berlin's police force, did not reach their destination, it said.

Andreas Geisel, Berlin's interior minister, said the masks were presumably diverted to the US.

The US company that makes the masks, 3M, has been prohibited from exporting its medical products to other countries under a law invoked by President Donald Trump. On Friday, Trump said he was using the Defense Production

Act to demand that US firms provide more medical supplies to meet domestic demand. "We need these items immediately for domestic use. We have to have them," Trump said at the daily Coronavirus Task Force briefing.

Geisel said the diversion of masks from Berlin amounted to an "act of modern piracy", urging the Trump administration to adhere to international trading rules. "This is not how you deal with transatlantic partners," the minister said. "Even in times of global crisis, there should be no wild-west methods." Geisel's comments echo the sentiments of other European officials, who have complained about the buying and diversion practices of the US.

In France, for example, regional leaders say they are struggling to secure medical supplies as American buyers outbid them.

The president of the Île-de-France region, Valérie Pécresse, compared the scramble for masks to a "treasure hunt".

"I found a stock of masks that was available and Americans -



"I'm not talking about the American government - but Americans, outbid us," Pécresse said. "They offered three times the price and they proposed to pay up-front."

# ISFAHAN NEWS

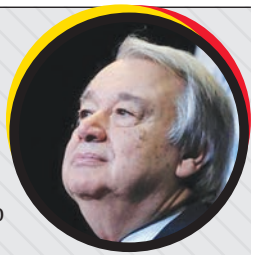
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## UN calls on warring parties to halt clashes amid coronavirus

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Fri. renewed his call for a global ceasefire, urging all parties in conflict to lay down arms and allow war-torn nations to combat the coronavirus pandemic. "The worst is yet to come," Guterres said at a UN press conference, referring to countries beset with fighting like Syria, Libya, and Yemen. "The COVID-19 storm is now coming to all these theaters of conflict." Guterres said there had been some progress following his March 23 call for peace, but that fighting still rages in a number of countries, hampering the ability to put into place plans to combat the virus, according to AFP.



### Headlines

**MP: US unjust sanctions impede Iran's efforts to fight COVID19**

**Lawmaker condemns US economic terrorism amid pandemic**

**ISA plans 4 steps to develop space technology in new year: official**

CALL TO PRAYER TIME IN ISFAHAN

**Morning call to prayer:**

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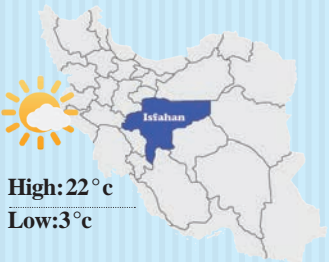
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**Evening call to prayer:**

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### WEATHER



## EU calls for humanitarian exceptions of sanctions on Iran

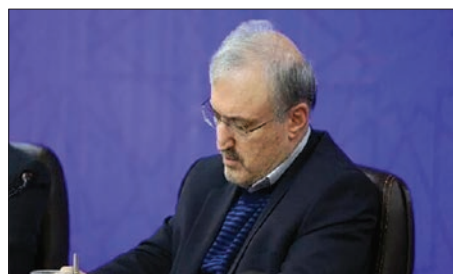
The European Union (EU) supported on Friday the application of the "humanitarian exception" so that economic sanctions on countries like Iran, Cuba, and Venezuela are suspended amid the countries' efforts to contain the coronavirus pandemic. In a telematic press conference, the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Arancha González Laya, explained that this has been agreed by the EU's foreign officials during a videoconference meeting that they held on Friday, according to EN24. González Laya recalled that all the economic sanctions imposed by both the United States and other countries "always carry a humanitarian clause or exception" whereby the sanctions are suspended in the face of a humanitarian emergency such as the one causing the coronavirus.



## President Orders Special Support for Iranian Businesses

## Health min. praises Basij efforts in fighting COVID19-

Iranian Minister of Health and Medical Education Saeed Namaki appreciated the relentless efforts of Basij Volunteer Forces in implementing the national plan on battling coronavirus, also known as COVID19-



"although we will go through a relatively difficult path in fighting against the virus, we owe this success to the unity, amity, empathy and cooper

For this purpose, the health minister penned a letter to Brigadier General Gholamreza Soleimani, the Commander of IRGC Basij Volunteer Forces on Sat. and thanked the relentless and unsparing contributions and assistance of Basij Volunteer Forces in implementing the national anti-coronavirus plan in the country. He pointed to the wise instructions of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution regarding the acceleration of activities in the field of fighting against coronavirus and added, "although we will go through a relatively difficult path in fighting against the virus, we

owe this success to the unity, amity, empathy and cooperation of Basij Volunteers Forces indeed." Despite tough sanctions imposed against the Islamic Republic of Iran, the country has made considerable progress in containing the virus as compared to other countries which enjoy economic prosperity, he said, adding, "it is hoped that Basij Volunteer Forces will continue contributions and assistance to the Ministry of Health until full eradication of the coronavirus has been achieved."

## UN to Decide in A Month on Holding World Leaders' Meeting

The president of the UN General Assembly said the -193 member world body will take a decision in the coming month on whether to delay the annual gathering of world leaders in New York in late September because of the coronavirus pandemic.

"The very existence of this organization has the same effect now during a time in which a lot of people go through fear and anxiety."

Tijjani Muhammad-Bande said in an interview with AP that "this is not something that has so far been an issue of serious consultation," and for now the calendar of events remains. It calls for the General Debate — the official name of the high-level meeting — to open on Sept. 22, with a kickoff event for world leaders the previous day to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the United Nations.

The former Nigerian ambassador said "in the coming month we'll take a decision through the normal means," which means consulting all UN member states.

The United Nations has canceled or postponed numerous upcoming events including the five-year review of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty that had been scheduled to start in late April, and two major events in Mexico City in May and Paris in July to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Beijing women's conference, which adopted a 150-page roadmap to achieve gender equality.

Muhammad-Bande announced the postponement Friday of several meetings of the General Assembly scheduled in the next two months including the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II on May 6.

"The current situation might have pushed us to postpone events celebrating the 75th anniversary (of World War II) but it illustrates, maybe more than anything else, the absolute need for the UN to guide the global efforts and provide much needed support to defeat our common threat," he said. "The UN, since its creation, has given a sense of hope to many people in very difficult situations," Muhammad-Bande said. "The very existence of this organization has the same effect now during a time in which a lot of people go through fear and anxiety." He said "everything is secondary to COVID right now."

But Muhammad-Bande stressed that other issues are still being discussed in the assembly's committees, which are meeting by video conference.

What has emerged so far from the pandemic, he said, "is greater realization of how interconnected we all are ... and also in my view I can see better relations among nations." Muhammad-Bande pointed to the authority of the UN World Health Organization, saying people everywhere want to hear what it has to say about COVID-19.

## Japan Receives Requests for Avigan from about 30 Countries Hit by Coronavirus

The Japanese government plans to provide nations hit by the coronavirus pandemic with the anti-flu drug Avigan developed by a Japanese chemical firm. Clinical trials of Avigan are now underway in Japan to examine the effectiveness and safety of the drug for potential use in treating symptoms caused by the new coronavirus.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga told

reporters on Friday that the government has so far received requests for the drug from about 30 countries.

Suga said the government plans to expand clinical trials of Avigan while having discussions with the countries that placed the requests, NHK reported. He added that it will provide each of those nations with the amount of the drug they need, free of charge.

The German government reportedly plans to procure millions of packs of Avigan to treat coronavirus patients with severe illness.

Researchers in China say that Avigan proved effective in clinical trials with people infected with the coronavirus.

## Some 70 Million Iranians Screened for Coronavirus: Official



Deputy commander of Iran's Basij Force said around 70 million people across the country have been screened for the novel coronavirus in a plan implemented with the participation of over 50,000 teams from Basij. Speaking at a press conference on Saturday, Brigadier General Mohammad Hossein

Sepehr highlighted the measures to contain the coronavirus epidemic, saying around 70 million people in Iran have been screened for the disease with the help of more than 50,000 screening teams of the Basij. Under a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of Health and Medical Education, more than 600,000 Basij forces have taken part in the countrywide plan to help various organizations in the battle with coronavirus, he noted.

Basij is duty-bound to give assistance to all organizations of the Islamic Republic, he said, adding that Basij has called on academic centers, knowledge-based companies and people to propose their innovative ideas for the fight against the coronavirus in the health sector and management field.

In a letter to commander of Basij, Minister of Health Saeed Namaki has expressed his gratitude to the volunteer forces for their close cooperation with the medical staff and for contribution to the national mobilization plan for the fight against COVID-19.



