

Iran to lodge an official complaint against South Korea over blocking Iranian

"Iran preparing to file an official complaint against two South Korean banks," the head of Iran-South Korea Chamber of Commerce told ILNA.

In an exclusive interview, the Iranian official Hossein Tanhaei confirmed "There had been a variety of talks about the amount of Iranian money blocked in South Korea, indicating that between \$ 6 billion and \$ 9 billion of Iranian money had not been released in Korea, but that figure we emphasize is \$ 8.5 billion."

Regarding economic relations between the two countries, Hossein Tanhaei said "Currently, there is no significant economic relationship between the two countries and it can be said that the economic, trade relations between Iran and Korea have come to a halt."

"We have practically no contact with the Koreans and only a few small Korean private sector companies remain in the pharmaceutical sector."

"Previously we only had economic relations with 160 Korean companies in the Chamber of Commerce but today all the major companies have left Iran," the economic expert stressed.

Hossein Tanhaei added that under these conditions, it's natural and logical that we pursue the case of a complaint against two South Korean banks that have frozen nearly \$8.5 billion of Iranian funds under pressure from the United States.

He pointed to sending medicine and food shipments to Iran and added that Seoul had promised to send at least \$ 50 million in pharmaceutical items to Iran, but that figure did not reach \$ 2 million.

Back in June, CBI Governor Abdolnasser Hemmati said that Iran will take back its dollars from South Korea through legal and international methods.

Also in May, Iranian Foreign Ministry had said that preliminary steps were taken to set up a channel to allow Iran to use its funds in South Korea to buy humanitarian goods. Weeks later South Korea's Foreign Ministry said Seoul was sending \$500,000 worth of medicine to Iran.

Yazd earns \$103 million in exports during four months

More than 860,000 tons of non-oil commodities worth \$103 million were exported from Yazd province, central Iran, during the first four months of the current fiscal (March 20- July 21), a senior official said.

"The main products exported over the period were construction materials, such as tiles and ceramics, steel and glass products, iron bars and Molybdenum dioxide," Mohammadreza Alamdar-Yazdi, the head of Yazd Industries, Mining and Trade said.

Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Pakistan, the UAE, Azerbaijan, Oman, Armenia, Turkey and the Netherlands were respectively Yazd's top customers in the four months, he added.

Alamdar-Yazdi noted that some around 11,000 tons of goods worth \$38 million were imported through the province's customs during the same period.

Industrial machinery, parts and equipment, electricity and electrode equipment, chemicals, cellulose and polymer were the main goods imported into the province.

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Iran Steel Heavyweights' Exports Down %44 to 1.28m Tons

Iranian heavyweight steel producers exported a total of 1.28 million tons of finished and semi-finished steel products, including beam, rebar, ingot, slab, hot and cold-rolled coils, and coated coils, during the first four months of the current Iranian year (March -20 July 21) to register a %44 decline compared with last year's corresponding period.



The mills experienced a year-on-year decline of 29% in exports during the fourth month of the fiscal year

(June 21-July 21) to 451,280 tons, latest data released by the Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization show.

With 404,507 tons of exports during the four-month period (down 43% YOY), Khouzestan Steel Company was Iran's biggest exporter. The company exported 132,148 tons of steel in the month to July 21, to register a year-on-year decline of 19%. Esfahan Steel Company (ESCO) was the second biggest exporter during the four-month period, as it shipped out 282,999 tons of products, down 22% compared with last year's corresponding period. However, ESCO experienced a 4% YOY growth to 102,418 tons during the fourth month under review.

Mobarakeh Steel Company ranked third as it exported 127,930 tons during the four months, down 75% compared with last year's corresponding period. The mill's exports in the month to July 21 amounted to 64,930 tons, down 59% YOY. The company is the largest steelmaker in the Middle East and North Africa region and one of the largest industrial complexes operating in Iran.

During the period under review, Hormozgan Steel Company exported 148,077



tons of slabs, down 35% YOY. The mill exported 34,967 tons of the product in the fourth month to register a 10% growth YOY.

Khorasan Steel Company came next with 29,998 tons of bloom in the four months, down 66% YOY. The company also shipped out 319 tons of rebar, plunging by 93% YOY. The MIDRO report only takes into account the output of large-scale producers. A more comprehensive report, which includes exports of smaller scale steelmakers, will be published in the coming days. More than 10.36 million tons of unfinished and semi-finished steel products were exported from Iran in the last Iranian year (ended March 19, 2020) to register a 22.21% YOY increase.

Semi-finished steel made up 6.9 million tons or more than 66.66% of the total export volume, up 26% YOY. Billet and bloom had the lion's share of semis exports with a total of 4.83 million tons to mark a 24% YOY rise. Slab followed with 2.07 million tons, up 31% YOY.

Exports of finished steel products increased by 16% YOY to reach 3.45 million tons. According to World Steel Association's latest data, Iran is currently the 10th biggest steel producer in the world, as it produced a total of about 13.89 million tons of crude

steel during the first half of 2020, up 10.2% compared with the corresponding period of 2019.

The country's June output stood at 2.43 million tons to witness a year-on-year growth of 5.3%, according to the Brussels-based international trade body for the iron and steel industry. Iran's crude steel output stood at 31.9 million tons in 2019, according to Worldsteel, up 30.1% YOY.

Iran is aggressively pursuing the target of becoming the world's sixth largest steel producer as per the 20-Year Vision Plan, which targets annual production capacity expansion to 55 million tons and 20-25 million tons of exports per year by 2025.

The country's current steel production capacity stands at over 37.5 million tons per year.

The country's steel production capacity is expected to reach 43.6 million tons by the end of the current Iranian year (March 20, 2021), while the actual production is estimated to hit 31.1 million tons to utilize 71% of the nominal capacity, according to MIDRO.

US Sanctions The US has broadened the scope of its sanctions on steel, stainless steel, aluminum and copper trade with Iran to stop imports into the country of

specialized metals that it says could be used in Iran's nuclear, ballistic missile and military programs, S&P Global Platts reported.

Most of the products had already been targeted by secondary sanctions against Iran, previously published by the US. The latest list gives more detailed descriptions of some of the products previously included in more general categories.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo late July 30 announced the US State Department has identified 22 specific materials that it alleges are used in connection with Iran's nuclear, military, or ballistic missile programs.

"Those who knowingly transfer such materials to Iran are now sanctionable pursuant to Section 1245 of the Iranian Freedom and Counter-Proliferation Act," Pompeo said in a statement.

The sanctions also cover trade in graphite and raw or semi-finished metals that may be used in Iran's construction sector, which according to the US is controlled by the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps.

"The IRGC's construction firm and many of its subsidiaries remain sanctioned by the United Nations because they were directly involved in the construction of the uranium enrichment site at Fordow," Pompeo said.

Sweet gas output vol. in SPGC at 155% hike: CEO

Chief Executive of South Pars Gas Company (SPGC) said that production volume of treated sweet gas at the company increased about 155 percent last year (ended March 20, 2020) as compared to 2013.

Hadi Hashemzadeh Farhang made the remarks in an interview with IRNA on Sunday and added that production volume of sweet gas will also register a hike in the current year (started March 21, 2020).

He put the number of refineries that were put into operation at South Pars Gas Company in 2013 at five, adding, "with the commissioning of new refineries, the number of refineries has increased by 12 before the termination of the last Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2021)."

Presently, South Pars Gas Company accounts for more than 74 percent of domestic gas output share, he said, adding, "when the new phases of the company are put into operation, about two-thirds of the nation-wide gas output is provided through South Pars Gas Company."

According to the senior officials of the Ministry of Oil and National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC), gas output production volume in South Pars Gas Company will hit from 280 million cubic meter in 2012 to 750 million cubic meters by the end of the current year."

By increasing gas production volume at South Pars Gas Company, export of gas in this company has increased by 90 percent, he said, adding, "currently, about 80 million cubic meters of gas is exported by the company on average daily."

NO 558

Sudoku

Solution: NO 557

News

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Tehran-Vienna flights resumed on Sat.

Abbas Bagherpour, the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Austria, announced on Saturday the resumption of flights from Tehran to Vienna by Iran Air. He made the announcement on Saturday, saying that Iran air will resume flights between Tehran and Vienna every Saturday.

Flights between Iran and Austria were suspended about five months ago

from the closure of borders due to the coronavirus outbreak.

Iran Air is scheduled to operate one flight per week (Saturday) from Tehran to Vienna and vice versa. Based on coordination between Iranian and Austrian officials, some special flights were conducted from Vienna to Tehran to bring home the Iranians stranded in Austria.

Vicious normalization reveals true face of UAE rulers

The Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said that the vicious project of the normalizing ties with the Israeli regime has revealed the true face of UAE rulers. The humiliating compromise of the UAE rulers with the criminal Zionist regime is a clear betrayal to the human values, Islamic teachings, Islamic Ummah, and the Palestinian cause, Ghalibaf said while addressing the Parliament's open session on Sunday.

The remark comes as the Israeli regime and the UAE have reached a deal that will lead to full normalization of diplomatic relations between the two sides, in an agreement that US President Donald Trump apparently helped broker. Defending Palestine and fight against the Zionist regime is a clear criterion for determining hypocrites from those who pursue justice, Ghalibaf added.

"Those who seek to establish friendly ties with the Zionist regime are considered traitors by all the Islamic Ummah and are complicit in all of the regime's crimes in the past and future," he added.

"We warn the current traitors and those who want to probably join this vicious project that the fight against the Zionist regime will never be stopped and it will continue with increasing power and knowledge of the Islamic Ummah and the Palestinian nation."

Zarif reacts to US' claim about seizure of Iranian tankers

Iranian Foreign Minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif in a tweet referred to US recent allegation about seizure of four Iranian tankers, saying hollow and cheap propaganda doesn't deflect from miserable failure of the US diplomatic malpractice at UN.

"Pirates of the Caribbean have their own judges and courts now. Sadly for them, stolen booty wasn't Iran's. Fuel was sold F.O.B. Persian Gulf. Ship and flag weren't ours either. Hollow, cheap propaganda doesn't deflect from miserable failure of US diplomatic malpractice at UN," Zarif wrote on his official Twitter account.

UAE major loser of tie normalization with Zionists

:MP

Reacting to UAE-Zionist ties, Vahid Jalal Zadeh said that the Arab states have been blackmailed again, and UAE should know that it is the main loser of this agreement and it will obtain no positive result for its country.

Speaking in an interview with Mehr News Agency, the member of the National Security Commission of the Parliament reacted to the UAE agreement with the Zionist regime to normalize ties and added, "As usual, the Arab

countries have been blackmailed by the Zionists, however, UAE should know that it is the main loser of this agreement because it will have no impact on the development of this country."

Of course, the people of the Arab world must be considered separately from their governors; because many of them are among the freedom seekers in the region and even they have declared their opposition to this shameful agreement, Jalal Zadeh added.

He went on to say that as the Americans have always been making every effort to mend the relations of the compromiser countries with the Zionist regime, therefore the UAE's agreement with the Zionist regime is the result of

Americans efforts.

With this action, the UAE registered its name among the compromiser countries, he said, adding "And Saudi Arabia is also the fourth side of the United States, the Zionist regime and the UAE, but for some reason, it does not want to make this issue public and announce that it has crossed the red lines, but everyone knows Saudi Arabia is also behind this."



UAE-Israel Deal A 'Confession of Treason': US Analyst

An American analyst in Madison described a recent deal between Israel and the UAE as a "confession of treason", saying that both Tel Aviv and Abu Dhabi are confessing their treason aloud to the world.



"... it is neither a breakthrough nor a peace agreement. Israel and the UAE already enjoyed close unofficial relations. So the Emiratis are not doing anything new. They are merely confessing their treason aloud to the world. A confession of treason is not a peace agreement. It will have no effect on the Palestinian struggle to resist genocide, nor on the Islamic and Christian struggles to reclaim the holy places. Nor will it stop the Zionist campaign to finish the genocide and steal all of the land between the Nile and the Euphrates," Kevin Barrett told Tasnim.

Dr. Kevin Barrett, a Ph.D. Arabist-Islamologist, is one of America's best-known critics of the War on Terror. Dr. Barrett has appeared many times on Fox, CNN, PBS and other broadcast outlets, and has inspired feature stories and op-eds in the New York Times, the Christian Science Monitor, the Chicago Tribune, and other leading publications. Dr. Barrett has taught at colleges and universities in San Francisco, Paris, and Wisconsin, where he ran for Congress in 2008. He is the co-founder of the Muslim-Christian-Jewish Alliance, and author of the books Truth Jihad: My Epic Struggle Against the 9/11 Big Lie (2007) and Questioning the War on Terror: A Primer for Obama Voters (2009). His website is www.truthjihad.com.

The three Arab countries that have normalized relations with Israel have had to violate the will of their people to do so. They have had to relinquish even the appearance of sovereignty as well.

Following is the full text of the interview:
Israel and the UAE on Thursday announced they have reached a deal that will lead to full normalization of diplomatic relations between the two sides. What are your thoughts on the agreement?
Barrett: Trump and his Koshier Nostra handler Jared Kushner are trumpeting the UAE-Israel agreement as a campaign stunt. They hope to gain a few extra votes, and a few extra tens of millions of dollars from rich Zionists, by portraying it as a "breakthrough peace agreement." In fact, it is neither a breakthrough nor a peace agreement.



Israel and the UAE already enjoyed close unofficial relations. So the Emiratis are not doing anything new. They are merely confessing their treason aloud to the world. A confession of treason is not a peace agreement. It will have no effect on the Palestinian struggle to resist genocide, nor on the Islamic and Christian struggles to reclaim the holy places. Nor will it stop the Zionist campaign to finish the genocide and steal all of the land between the Nile and the Euphrates.

The Emirates is now the third Arab country, after Egypt and Jordan, to normalize with Israel. Abu Dhabi was already believed to have clandestine relations with Tel Aviv. Some have called the deal a "victory" for the US foreign policy. Do you believe so taking into account that the UAE is not a powerful Arab state and in fact is a vassal state?

Barrett: The three Arab countries that have normalized relations with Israel have had to violate the will of their people to do so. They have had to relinquish even the appearance of sovereignty as well.

Jordan is a fully-subjugated US vassal state ruled not from the Al-Maquar palace compound, but from the US Occupation Embassy. Egypt, to its everlasting shame, has also become something of a joint US-Israeli vassal state, thanks to the billions of dollars the US taxpayers give its military junta as a payoff for doing the bidding of the Zionists. The Emirates, too, is basically a puppet regime. It was cut off from the region until the 1960s, after which it assumed its current status of neocolonial enclave and playground for the global elite.

Egypt is a genuine nation with millennia-old roots

and a distinct identity. It is and will always be one of the world's most important nations. But Jordan and the UAE are not only insignificant, they lack any genuine national identity based in authentic history. Both are simply ineffectual neocolonial backwaters carved out of the suffering flesh of the region by the knife of the colonizer. Neither fake nation will exist a century from now. Indeed, their expiration date may arrive much sooner than that. So when the leaders of such fake nations commit treason to obey orders from the self-proclaimed global hegemon, against the will of the vast majority of their people, it amounts to a minor tragedy that will soon be swept away in the larger flow of history.

Touching on the UAE-Israel deal on Friday, the secretary general of Lebanon's resistance movement said, "We weren't surprised by the UAE's decision. Trump has already milked the Persian Gulf states financially, religiously and morally just to serve his friend Netanyahu". What is your take on this?

Barrett: Seyed Hassan Nasrallah is right. Trump was inserted into the US presidency by Netanyahu and his Koshier Nostra financial backers, led by Sheldon Adelson, the Las Vegas crime kingpin. Indeed, it has been reported that in the summer of 2016, when Trump's campaign looked hopeless, Israeli intelligence approached Trump and explained that he would not reach the White House without their help. And Trump, a lifelong money-launderer and frontman for the Koshier Nostra, agreed to serve Tel Aviv in return for Israeli assistance in manipulating social media and hacking voting machines in swing states. This is the real

election interference scandal that America's Zionist-dominated media has attempted to bury under the fake "Trump-Russia" scandal. (The Russian mafia consists of Zionists who are more loyal to Israel than to Russia.) Since he took office in 2016, Trump has followed Netanyahu's orders. He tore up the JCPOA, moved the US embassy to Occupied al-Quds, murdered Gen. Soleimani, and pressured the puppet dictators of the fake Persian Gulf countries to cozy up to Israel. The UAE-Israel deal is just the latest of Trump's betrayals of the US and the world in service to the Zionist criminal entity.

Israeli media reports say that Bahrain will be next. It seems that the United States is building a coalition of vassal states in the Middle East region to counter Iranian influence. What do you think?

Barrett: The US and its Saudi friends/vassals rule Bahrain through the bogus al-Khalifa monarchy. When Trump and Bin Salman tell the King of Bahrain to jump, he says "how high?" So it seems highly possible that Bahrain will follow the UAE down the road of treason, even though the majority of Bahrainis oppose the monarchy almost as fervently as they oppose normalization with the Zionists.

If that happens, the popular backlash to Arab leaders' treason could start in Bahrain and spread throughout the region. Sooner or later, the people of the region are going to stand up and free themselves from their treasonous, bloodsucking leaders. Maybe a series of open confessions of treason from self-appointed kings and princes will be the spark that sets off the long-overdue Arab Islamic Revolution.

NEWS

US to suffer another defeat with its 'snapback' plan: Vaezi

Iranian President's Chief of Staff Mahmoud Vaezi highlighted that US efforts to use the 'snapback' mechanism of the JCPOA will also fail with a 'more powerful political and legal argument'.

"The international community once again opposed America's unilateral policies in the UNSC and supported the JCPOA," he tweeted on Sunday in reaction to the rejection of UNSC draft resolution on extension of arms embargo against Iran.

"In continuation of its mistakes, America seeks to trigger the snapback mechanism; they will suffer another defeat with the same process that recent resolution was rejected and with a more powerful political and legal argument," he added.

US administration claims that as a JCPOA signatory it has the right to trigger the snapback mechanism that could resume all UN sanctions against Iran. Meanwhile, Tehran stresses that US has no right to do so as President Donald Trump has officially 'ceased US participation' in the deal back in May 2018.

"In the final month of his administration, Trump should have learned that equations in politics are different from those in the world of trade," said Vaezi, adding that Trump should await consecutive losses if he does not introduce change in his past policies.

UAE-Israel Shameful Deal to Expedite Zionist Regime's Termination: Velayati

Ali Akbar Velayati, an international adviser to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, denounced the agreement between the United Arab Emirates and Israel on the normalization of ties, saying it would only hasten the termination of the Zionist regime. In a statement released on Saturday in his capacity as secretary general of the World Assembly of Islamic Awakening, Velayati slammed the agreement between the UAE and Israel as "ignominious and reprehensible."

The deal would only result in Abu Dhabi's isolation, alienation from the rest of the international Muslim nation, and engender such level of Islamic awakening among the regional peoples that "will precipitate the Zionist regime's disintegration," he added, press TV reported.

Following Israel's occupation of Palestinian and other Arab territories, the regime scored successive victories against the Arab front due to lack of alignment and necessary cooperation within the Arab world, the statement said, adding that Tel Aviv's victories were owed to some Arab states' clandestine collaboration with the global arrogant powers and the Zionist lobby.

However, victory of Iran's Islamic Revolution in 1979 and removal of the country's US-backed and Israel-allied former regime "invited a new phase in the developments that concerned Palestine, and the course of the (regional) resistance tipped the balance of power in favor of the oppressed people of Palestine," Velayati said in the statement.

The advisor also cited Israel's failure to impose its conditions on Lebanon and the Gaza Strip during the wars that the occupying regime waged against the territories in the 2000s as cases in point.

The official went on to elaborate on some more recent victories that have been scored by the regional resistance front in the face of Israel and the countries that support it.

The United States, Israel's biggest ally, suffered a "terrible defeat" in its effort to impose its hugely pro-Tel Aviv "deal of the century" scheme earlier this year, while Washington and its allies failed to break down the axis of resistance in Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen, the statement said.

The Assembly finally urged all Muslim states and nations to openly condemn the normalization push, and "spare no effort until the final victory of the Palestinian cause, i.e. disintegration and fall of the usurping Zionist government."

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Hamas, Islamic Jihad: Israel, UAE Must Abolish Shameful Deal

Chiefs of Palestinian movements of Hamas and Islamic Jihad said a recent deal between Israel and the UAE is "out of historic context" and a "violation of Palestinian, Arab and Islamic principles". In a telephone call, leaders of both resistance movements insisted that the UAE "must abolish this shameful deal." Hamas Chief Ismail Haniyeh, who conducted the call, agreed with the Islamic Jihad Leader Ziyad Al-Nakhala on "continuous coordination between the leaderships of both movements", the Middle East Monitor reported. Separately, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif spoke with Haniyeh and denounced the Israel-UAE deal, stressing on Iran's permanent support for Palestine. Haniyeh thanked Iran and the Iranian people for their constant support of the Palestinian cause. "We will always continue the line of resistance and fight against the occupation, and we will not be affected by such treacherous acts, but we feel pain from this dagger that stabbed the Palestinian people from behind," Haniyeh said.



Headlines

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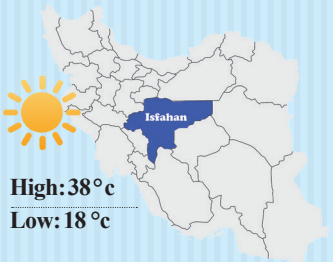
CALL TO PRAYER TIME IN ISFAHAN

Morning call to prayer : 05:01:46

Noon call to prayer : 13:07:19

Evening call to prayer : 20:04:12

WEATHER



High: 38°C
Low: 18°C



China welcomes Putin's initiative on issues around Iran

A Foreign Ministry spokesperson said Saturday that Beijing welcomes Russian President Vladimir Putin's proposal of holding an online summit over the Iranian nuclear issue. Spokesperson Zhao Lijian made the remarks when asked to comment on Putin's proposal. Putin proposed on Friday holding an urgent online meeting of the heads of the five states that are permanent members of the UN Security Council with the participation of the leaders of Germany and Iran to discuss Iran and the Persian Gulf situation. China appreciates Russia's efforts to ease tensions on the Iranian nuclear issue and to strengthen regional security, Zhao said, according to Xinhua.



Iran to lodge an official complaint against South Korea over blocking Iranian

Iran to export weapons after sanctions lift: defense minister

Iranian Minister of Defense Brigadier General Amir Hatami said that Islamic Republic of Iran will export weapons and arms after sanctions imposed against the country are lifted.

Speaking on Sunday in a ceremony held on the occasion of National Defense Industry Day, Hatami added, "Iran will use all capacities in the world to meet its arms requirements, selling and exporting weapons after sanctions removal."

He congratulated the National Defense Industry Day and stated, "In fact, the defense industry is the strategic depth of the country and science and technology field is the support for the defense industry of the country."

The Islamic Republic of Iran owes its success in the defense industry to the guidance and wise leadership of Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Hatami added.

He pointed to the key role of media and added, "We are facing many developments in the region and in the current situation, media play a leading and key role in this field."

Iranian media outlets and Armed Forces played their key role with regard to the dissemination of accurate information in regional events, he emphasized.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Hatami pointed to the salient characteristics of the defense industry and added, "We are able to meet more than 90 percent of our defense requirements

so that we could materialize our predefined objectives in the defense field that Iran should be the first power in the region in the field of science and technology in 2025 Defense Outlook."

Any sanctions cannot dissuade Iran to strengthen its defense power and capability, he underlined.

Turning to the latest achievements of the defense industry of the country, Hatami added, "Some parts of country's defense achievements would be unveiled on August 22 in the presence of Iranian President which are in the fields of aviation, missile, drone and maritime."

Iranian Ministry of Defense has established very close relationships and interaction with knowledge-based companies, academic centers, universities and private sector firms, he said, adding, "Knowledge-based companies and academic centers have a great share in defense industry achievements greatly."

He once again stated that the Islamic Republic of Iran will export its arms and weapons after sanctions lift, adding, "Sanctions did not create any restrictions, rather, the country attained all progresses and achievements in the defense industry in sanctions condition."

In response to a question on the space activity of the Ministry of Defense, Hatami stated, "The space program of the Islamic Republic of Iran is a permanent program and has gone through several stages."

Trump Grabs Spotlight But Reclusive Biden Leads Polls

Despite being gaffe-prone, getting up in years and barely heading out on the campaign trail, Democrat Joe Biden is leading in the polls as the coronavirus epidemic and economic crisis make the November presidential election in the US a referendum on Donald Trump.

While Trump's handling of the virus outbreak and the protests has been widely criticized, Biden has been climbing in the polls.

The 77-year-old Biden, on the other hand, has held few campaign events, spending most of his time since mid-March at home in Wilmington, Delaware. Biden's sparse public schedule has minimized the risks of his catching the virus while at the same time reducing his chances of making any faux pas. And if the polls are any indication, the Democratic candidate's low-key style is paying off. The election website Real Clear Politics has Biden with a 7.7-point lead over Trump nationally. Allan Lichtman, a history professor at American University, has correctly predicted the results of every US presidential election since 1984, including Trump's upset 2016 victory. His 2020 forecast? Biden, President Barack Obama's two-term vice president, will win the November 3 vote.

"This has nothing to do with Joe Biden," Lichtman said in an interview with AFP. "It's not dependent on Donald Trump's personality either. It's based on the record."

The professor bases his predictions on what he calls the 13 "Keys to the White House."

Among them: How strong is the US economy? Is there social unrest? Is the president an incumbent? Is the president charismatic? Is his opponent? Of his last "key," Lichtman says "Biden doesn't fit that bill."

"He's a very empathetic, sincere man but he's not inspirational," he said. In late 2019, Lichtman had Trump in good shape to win re-election.

"What has happened since is he made the colossal mistake of thinking he can talk his way out of the crises that hit the country, the pandemic, the cries for social justice, the economic downturn," Lichtman said. "That doesn't work. And the result is a failed presidency."

With more than 169,000 deaths and over 5.3

million COVID-19 cases, the United States is the worst-hit country in the world with an economy on its knees.

The killing of George Floyd, an African-American man, by a white police officer, triggered a summer of nationwide protests against racial injustice and police brutality.

While Trump's handling of the virus outbreak and the protests has been widely criticized, Biden has been climbing in the polls.

The former vice president has been able to largely sit back and watch events unfold, with the Trump campaign accusing him of "hiding" in his Wilmington basement.

"By his almost reclusive campaign he has maintained the spotlight on President Trump," said Christopher Arterton, professor emeritus of political management at George Washington University.

And Trump's management of the crises facing the country has pushed many independent voters "from undecided to, 'I'm not going to vote for him,'" Arterton said.

Despite Biden's lead in the polls, neither professor is ready to say he has the election locked up, not in these uncertain times and with a candidate as unpredictable as Trump.

"He will do anything, he has no scruples," Lichtman, an avowed Democrat, said of the Republican president.

Trump, 74, has suggested that Biden is senile and called him a puppet of the "radical left" who would somehow "hurt God."

There are also three debates scheduled between the two men in September and October which could be the occasion for fireworks.

With Trump largely unable to expand his voter base, the real estate tycoon has been accused of trying to suppress the Democratic vote.

Lichtman said this could pose dangers for Democratic hopes of regaining the White House. "My big worries about this election are two things that have nothing to do with the keys," he said.

"One is voter suppression. Trump and his enablers are going to make it difficult for people to vote, particularly to vote by mail in a pandemic," Lichtman said.

Third Stage of Russia's Coronavirus Vaccine Research May Begin in 7-10 Days

The third (post-registration) stage of the research on the coronavirus vaccine developed by the Russian Health Ministry's N. F. Gamaleya Federal Research Center for Epidemiology and Microbiology

may begin in 7-10 days, its Director Alexander Gintsburg said. Several tens of thousands of people are expected to take part in this research.

"On Monday, we will present the first version of the protocol on post-registration research. Given this great interest and attention of the public and the press, I think that the Health Ministry won't delay the process and will approve the protocol within a week. So, I

believe within seven or ten days at maximum everything will begin," Gintsburg told TASS. Earlier, the press service of Russia's public health watchdog, Roszdravnadzor, said some 2,000 people would take part in the clinical trials after the drug's registration. In his turn, Gintsburg said several tens of thousands of people were expected to be involved by the third stage. The research will be conducted in the Moscow Region.

