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# Europe's submission has whetted Trump's appetite



©File photo

## Inflation rate slides 1.4%: SCI

TEHRAN- The Statistical Center of Iran (SCI) announced that the inflation rate in the twelve-month period ended on January 20, which marks the end of the tenth Iranian calendar month of Dey, stood at 38.6 percent.

The SCI said that the inflation rate has fallen 1.4 percent in the mentioned time span from the twelve-month period ended in the last day of the ninth Iranian month of Azar, IRNA reported.

The center also announced that the point-to-point inflation rate has dropped 1.5 percent to 26.3 percent in the tenth month of this year from the same month in the previous year, while it has risen from the figure of the last month.

Point-to-point inflation has fallen 1.4 percent to 26.2 percent in the urban areas and slid 1.9 percent to 27 percent in the rural regions on a monthly basis, the same report confirmed. ➔ **4**

## Tehran slams Seoul for miscalling Persian Gulf

TEHRAN — Tehran has strongly criticized Seoul for misnaming the Persian Gulf and dispatching a military mission to the waters south of Iran under a pressure by the United States.

"If South Korea does not even know the historical name of the Persian Gulf, with what knowledge and excuse does it want to send its military forces to this region?" Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi tweeted in both Persian and Korean languages on Tuesday night.

"Mutual respect and accepting the realities are the basis of relations between civilized nations," he added.

It came after Seoul announced a decision to expand the operational area of its anti-piracy unit from the Gulf of Aden to the Gulf of Oman and "the Arab-Persian Gulf."

On Sunday, Mousavi similarly criticized French President Emmanuel Macron for misnaming the Persian Gulf and for France's military presence in the region. ➔ **3**

## Lebanon announces formation of new government

Lebanon's Prime Minister Hassan Diab has announced the formation of the country's new government, saying his cabinet will try to meet the demands of protesters.

Speaking at the Lebanese presidential palace in Beirut on Tuesday, Diab described his government — made up of 20 specialist ministers backed by the country's political parties — as a technocratic "rescue team" that would work to achieve the goals of

protesters who first took to the streets in October last year.

"This is a government that represents the aspirations of the demonstrators who have been mobilized nationwide for more than three months," Diab said, adding that his government "will strive to meet their demands for an independent judiciary, for the recovery of embezzled funds, for the fight against illegal gains." ➔ **10**



**ARTICLE**  
**Salman Parviz**  
Journalist

## Quest for peace in Libya

The world witnessed the overthrow and killing of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011, eight years after the colonel had eliminated his country's weapons of mass destruction program, including a decades old nuclear weapons program.

NATO members led by Britain and France supported the so-called revolution by air strikes — then watched as the country sank into chaos. Barrack Obama said leaving Libya without a plan after Gaddafi was the "biggest mistake" of his presidency. If he is watching recent events he must be still in regret.

Today the country is divided into two factions backed by foreign powers struggling to put the country together.

On the one side there is the UN recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) under Prime Minister Fayez Mustafa al-Sarraj in Tripoli, a city under siege by the Libyan National Army (LNA) headed under General Khalifa Haftar who started his offensive on Tripoli last April.

Haftar is supported by Egypt, France, Jordan, Russia and the United Arab Emirates, while al-Sarraj is backed by Italy, Qatar and Turkey.

The Wall Street Journal reports that prior to his offensive Haftar was in Riyadh where Saudis gave him tens of millions of dollars days before launching offensive on Tripoli.

Last July, Tripoli accused UAE of deadly airstrikes that killed more than 50 people. Libyan Interior Minister Fathi Baghagha added U.S.-made F-16 jet fighters could have used Egyptian air base on the Mediterranean coast to launch the attacks.

On Jan. 2, Turkish parliament passed a bill that allowed President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to send troops to Libya. Turkish troop deployment started Jan. 5 and so far Turkey has sent some 2000 fighters from Syria to Libya.

Turkey has also helped Qatar in bypassing the Saudi led blockade.

### Summits

There have been several efforts by international community to put an end to the Libyan strife. On Jan. 13 the two warring factions went to Moscow for talks. Al-Sarraj signs the deal but Haftar walks out asking more time to consider. ➔ **7**

## Iraqi president meets Trump in Davos, discuss foreign troops cut

Iraqi President Barham Salih met U.S. President Donald Trump in Davos on Wednesday and discussed reducing foreign troops in the country, the Iraqi presidency said, after Washington spurned an Iraqi request earlier this month to pull out its troops, Reuters reported.

"During the meeting, reducing foreign troops and the importance of respecting the demands of Iraqi people to preserve the country's sovereignty were discussed," the statement said.

Iraq's parliament passed a non-binding resolution on Jan. 5 requesting the government to end the presence of foreign troops in Iraq following U.S. air strikes that killed Iranian General Qassem Soleimani and Iraqi militia commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis.

The killing of Soleimani, to which Tehran responded with a ballistic missile attack on two Iraqi military bases housing

U.S. forces, has highlighted the influence of foreign powers in Iraq, especially Iran and the United States.

Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi asked Washington to prepare for a U.S. troop withdrawal in line with Iraq's parliament decision, but Trump's administration rebuffed the request.

Washington said later it was exploring a possible expansion of NATO's mission in Iraq, a plan to "get burden-sharing right in the region".

### Million-man march

Influential Iraqi Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr has demanded that Iraqis stage a "million-man march" against the continued U.S. military presence in the country, days after Iraq's parliament voted to expel the American troops following an assassination operation by Washington on Iraqi soil.

The march is needed "to condemn the Ameri-

can presence and its violations," Sadr, who leads the largest parliamentary bloc, Sairoon, said in a tweet on Tuesday.

"The skies, land, and sovereignty of Iraq are being violated every day by occupying forces," he added. The cleric, however, cautioned that such a show of popular disapproval should be a "peaceful, unified demonstration," but did not offer a date or location for the proposed rally.

On January 5, the parliament voted overwhelmingly in favor of a resolution calling for the expulsion of all U.S.-led forces, two days after the U.S. military assassinated senior Iranian commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani and along with Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the second-in-command of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), among others, near the Baghdad airport. ➔ **10**

## Trump impeachment: U.S. Senate approves trial rules

After more than 12 hours of debate and several failed Democratic bids for amendments calling for documents and witnesses, the US Senate approved a resolution along party lines outlining the rules that will govern the impeachment proceedings of President Donald Trump.

With Republicans banding together, the Senate early on Wednesday voted 53-47 to adopt the trial plan, which allows opening arguments from House lawmakers prosecuting the case to begin later in the day.

The trial started in earnest on Tuesday with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell abruptly abandoning plans to cram opening arguments

into two late-night sessions for each side.

Instead, managers from the House of Representatives and Trump's defense lawyers will now each have three days for 24 hours of opening arguments.

McConnell's handwritten, last-minute changes stunned fellow senators and delayed the start of the proceedings. He acted after protests from senators, including fellow Republicans, who were concerned about the optics of middle of the night sessions.

It was a dramatic setback for the Republican leader and the president's legal team, exposing a crack within the party's ranks and the politi-

cal unease over the historic impeachment proceedings unfolding amid a watchful public in an election year.

### Rare event

Tuesday's session marked an historic day for the deeply divided country. Trump is only the third president in the history of the United States to face an impeachment trial.

Chief Justice John Roberts gavelled open Tuesday's session, with House prosecutors on one side, Trump's team on the other, in the well of the Senate. Senators sat silently at their desks, under oath to do "impartial justice". No mobile phones or other electronics were allowed. ➔ **10**



© IRNA/ Amin Jalali

## Expert Islamic unity meeting held in Tehran

An expert meeting of Islamic denominations in the Islamic Republic was held in Tehran on Wednesday. The Islamic unity meeting, which is considered the bedrock for the new Islamic civilization, was attended by Ayatollah Seyyed Mohammad Hosseini Shahroudi - the representative of Kurdistan in the Assembly of Experts - and some guests from minority groups. Ayatollah Shahroudi said unity among Muslims has shown itself in the Islamic world, citing expression of solidarity between Shia and Sunni Muslims over the martyrdom of General Qassem Soleimani.



**ARTICLE**  
**Martin Love**  
Political analyst from North Carolina

## Iran's one strike may have changed Mideast forever

The JCPOA certainly seems to be comatose and dying. Don't blame Iran. Blame the U.S. first and then the E-3: Germany, France and the U.K. Can it be stated more plainly? No.

One should have no problem with Iran's reactions to shoddy treatment except that this is exactly what Sheldon Adelson, the casino magnate billionaire who has literally bought Trump and his gangsters and much of the Republican Party, has wanted, along with Netanyahu and the rest of the Zionists: that the JCPOA die and even that Iran might withdraw from the NPT and at least superficially, if not in fact, seem to be pursuing nuclear weapons.

(On the other hand, it's not nuclear weapons that probably invokes the ire of the bloody Western "establishment" (led by the U.S.) so much as it is the fact that Iran has mastered the technology of nuclear energy and how to obtain its fuel from raw uranium.)

But why did they, the Trump gang and supporters, want this — the demise of the JCPOA? What is the haunting question, because the desire never made sense. How much easier it is, though, to attack independent Iran if, falsely or not, propaganda can be blasted that claims the Islamic Republic is, finally, aiming to build a nuclear weapon given the sanctions it has sustained in the past year and a half plus and the slow demise of the JCPOA and lately Soleimani's criminal assassination?

And it is not only Adelson or others of his ilk, but many more in Washington, and it's no surprise they are almost all Zionists -- a people without honor but lots of lucre, the latter which Trump respects above all else. Trump, who has been impeached and is facing some sort of contrived "trial" in the U.S. GOP controlled Senate which will more than likely result in acquittal. ➔ **3**

### Correction

The name of Afsaneh Nadipour, Iran's new ambassador to Denmark, was wrongly typed Naderipour in our Wed. issue. The mistake is regretted.



## High turnout in Feb. election will depend on competitive atmosphere: Rouhani

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Speaking at a cabinet meeting on Wednesday, President Hassan Rouhani said a competitive situation can pave the ground for a high turnout in the February 21 parliamentary elections.



The president went on to say that the people are entitled to make sure about fair competition, transparency in the elections.

The remarks by the president comes as the Guardian Council has said 90 sitting MPs are ineligible to run for parliament. However, the council has given them the chance to file their complaints for further study.

Rouhani said it is not possible that a single faction run the country.

Presidential chief of staff Mahmoud Vaezi claimed on Wednesday that support for the JCPOA has been one of the reasons for disqualifying parliament hopefuls.

Ayatollah Jannati, the Guardian Council chief, said on Wednesday that his council does not favor one faction over another.

"The Guardian Council neither benefits nor agonizes from approving or rejecting the competence of anybody, and factions are not different for it," Jannati said, adding the council "only sticks to law".

Jannati also criticized Rouhani for expressing dismay over the rejection of some candidates, saying, "The president should not make statements that would worry the public opinion or disappoint people or misused by enemies."

The Iranian parliament has 290 members who are elected by the people for four-year terms.

In his Wednesday remarks, Rouhani also highlighted the importance of people and law, saying no one is above law and people.

"Everybody must know that there is no holy institution higher than the people and higher than the law," Rouhani pointed out.

## No talks over NPT withdrawal in cabinet: presidential chief of staff

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Mahmoud Vaezi, President Hassan Rouhani's chief of staff, said on Wednesday that there has not been any debate in the cabinet about leaving the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

"In the government, we did not have any talks over approval of Iran's withdrawal from the NPT. Naturally, the issue is among the government's authorities," Vaezi told reporters after the cabinet meeting.

He further said, "President Rouhani, in a letter to the 4+1 countries (Russian, China, Britain, France plus Germany) in April, announce that Iran is interested in remaining in the JCPOA (the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) and is prepared to fulfill its obligations under the deal provided that other sides adhere to their commitment under the pact too."

"The president, in the letter, had announced that if the U.S. or any other signatories of the pact try to send Iran's case to the United Nations Security Council, Iran will embark on making tougher decisions, including withdrawal from the NPT," Vaezi went on to say.

On Monday, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif warned that Iran may quit the NPT if the Europeans refer Iran's nuclear case to the UN Security Council.

"If they (Europeans) take any action, the issue of quitting the NPT will be raised based on the letter of the President dated May 2018," Zarif said.

France, Germany and the United Kingdom, the three European states signatory to the JCPOA, issued a joint statement on January 14, announcing they formally triggered the dispute mechanism which could bring the issue before the UN Security Council.

"Steps in reducing the [JCPOA] commitments have already been taken. However, Iran will quit the NPT if the Europeans continue their behavior or send Iran's case to the Security Council," Zarif stated.

Zarif went on to say that the Foreign Ministry is legally pursuing the triggering of dispute mechanism by Europeans. "The Islamic Republic of Iran officially started the dispute mechanism in May 2018 after the United States' withdrawal from the JCPOA. Three letters were sent to Mrs. Mogherini [then European Union foreign policy chief] on May 10, 2018, August 26, 2018 and November 2018 in which it was announced officially that Iran has started the dispute mechanism."

He added, "In the letter which was sent in November 2018, we said that Iran has started the dispute mechanism and therefore, we have no choice but to reduce commitments to the JCPOA."

"After the aforementioned letter, the Islamic Republic of Iran gave the European Union seven months and then started to reduce the JCPOA commitments in May 2019," the foreign minister explained.

Zarif noted that Iran will reverse its decision once the Europeans return to their commitments.

U.S. President Donald Trump quit the nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, in May 2018 and introduced the harshest ever sanctions in history on Iran as part of his administration's "maximum pressure" strategy against Iran.

The European countries failed to protect Iran's benefits from the deal and after patiently watching for more than a year and seeing no clear action from the European signatories of the nuclear deal, Iran started to partially reduce its commitments.

Under the dispute resolution mechanism, countries have 30 days to resolve the problem, though that can be extended. If it cannot be solved, the matter could be brought before the UN Security Council and could then result in the snapback of sanctions that had been lifted under the deal, according to The Guardian.

# By triggering dispute mechanism, Europe proves its incapability: Salehi

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Ali Akbar Salehi, director of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, has said that the Europeans' action in triggering the dispute mechanism in the 2015 nuclear deal proves their "incapability" and "indiscretion".

France, Germany and the United Kingdom, three parties to the nuclear deal, issued a joint statement on January 14, announcing they have formally triggered the dispute mechanism that may lead to the snapback of UN sanctions against Iran.

"Statement of Germany, France and Britain on triggering the dispute mechanism proves their lack of wisdom and incapability in the face of the United States' demands," Salehi told IRNA in an interview published on Wednesday.

U.S. President Donald Trump unilaterally quit the nuclear deal in May 2018 and introduced the harshest ever sanctions in history on Iran as part of his administration's "maximum pressure" strategy against Iran.

In response to this move, on May 8, 2019, Iran announced that its "strategic patience" is over and started to gradually reduce its commitments to the JCPOA at bi-monthly intervals. At the time Iran announced if the European parties to the deal take concrete steps to shield Iran's



economy from the U.S. sanctions it will reverse its decision.

However, seeing no action by the Europeans, on January 5 Iran took the last and final step by removing all limits on its nuclear activities.

Iran's moves are based on paragraph 36 of the JCPOA which "allows one side, under certain circumstances, to stop complying with the deal if the other side is out of compliance."

Despite taking the last step, Iran has re-

minded the Europeans to fulfill their commitments in order to keep the deal alive.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif warned on Monday that Iran may quit the NPT if the Europeans refer the Iran case to the UN Security Council.

■ **'More studies needed on the Ukrainian plane crash'**

Salehi also said that more studies are needed to clarify all the reasons that led to the downing of the Ukrainian plane crash.

He added that committees have been formed to study the issue.

The Ukrainian passenger plane, with 176 people aboard, was mistakenly downed on January 8 near Tehran by the air defense system.

The victims of the crash included 82 Iranians, 63 Canadians, 11 Ukrainians, 10 Swedes, four Afghans, three Germans, and three British nationals.

The passenger plane was accidentally shot down on January 8, nearly four hours after the Iranian military fired dozens of missiles at a U.S. air base in Iraq in retaliation for the assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad five days earlier.

The Iranian military announced on the morning of January 11 that the plane had been mistaken for a cruise missile.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on January 17, "There are ambiguities in the plane incident. We thank the commanders for explaining it to the people, but this issue must be pursued and reoccurrence of similar incidents must be prevented seriously."

President Hassan Rouhani said on January 14 that the Judiciary should form a special court headed by a high-ranking judge and assisted by tens of senior experts to investigate the issue.

## Europe's submission has whetted Trump's appetite, Zarif says

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Tuesday that the Europeans' submissive policies toward the JCPOA have only whetted U.S. President Donald Trump's appetite.

"Sorry to say I told you so:

When E3 sold out remnants of #JCPOA to avoid Trump tariffs last week, I warned that it would only whet his appetite," he said in a tweet.

Zarif's comments came as Trump threatened Europe for the second time to put hefty tariffs on European cars.

According to the Washington Post, Trump renewed his threat to put hefty tariffs on European cars Tuesday at the World Economic Forum in Davos, promising hardball tactics

if trade negotiations do not go his way.

The Washington Post reported on January 15 that a week before Germany, France and Britain announced triggering the dispute mechanism in the 2015 nuclear deal, the Trump administration issued a private threat to the Europeans that if they refused to call out Tehran and initiate an arcane dispute mechanism in the deal, the United States would impose a 25 percent tariff on European automobiles.

In his tweet, Zarif also urged the European Union to "exert its sovereignty".

"After selling their integrity and losing any moral/legal ground, ANOTHER tariff threat. EU would do better to exert its sovereignty," he said.

Zarif said on January 13 that France, Germany, and the UK have bowed to "the U.S. diktat" for 20 months.

It is more than 20 months that the Trump administration has quit the nuclear deal and introduced the harshest ever sanctions in history against Iran while Europeans standing idle by.

"For 20 months, the E3-following UK appeasement policy has bowed to US diktat," he tweeted.

Zarif said this policy "hasn't gotten it anywhere-and it never will."

The chief diplomat added that the three European countries can save the 2015 nuclear deal "but not by appealing the bully & pressuring the complying party."

## Qatari emir's talks in Tehran mainly focused on Persian Gulf security: Vaezi

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Presidential chief of staff Mahmoud Vaezi said on Wednesday that the recent meetings between senior Iranian officials and the emir of Qatar in Tehran was mainly focusing on reinvigoration of security in the Persian Gulf.

"A large part of the emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani's trip to Tehran

was about security in the Persian Gulf," Vaezi told reporters after the cabinet meeting.

Hamad Al Thani traveled to Iran in early January and held separate meetings with senior Iranian officials, including Leader of the Islamic revolution Ayatollah Khamenei and President Hassan Rouhani.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Vaezi pointed to the Omani foreign minister's trip to Tehran

on Tuesday and said, "Yusef bin Alawi was not delivering any message to Iran."

"Iran is located in the northern side of the Strait of Hormuz and Oman is on the southern coast, naturally, our interaction with Oman should be high because based on our pre-planned policy these are regional countries that must maintain the region's security," he added.

Touching upon Tehran-Riyadh relations,

Vaezi said, "Putting an end to relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia or preventing exchange of message between the two countries have never been an issue for us. The issue of relations with Saudi Arabia should not be the issue of relations with the U.S."

Vaezi added that his country has always been after reinvigoration of relations with neighboring countries, including Saudi Arabia.

## More American troops 'treated' after Iran attack on U.S. base, Pentagon admits

The U.S. military says there were more troops in the U.S. airbase in Iraq when it came under attack by Iran in retaliation for the U.S. assassination of Iran's General Qassem Soleimani.

U.S. Central Command announced Tuesday that apart from the 11 previously announced injured, additional troops were being treated.

The CENTCOM has refused to mention the exact figure so far and appears to be taking advantage of U.S. President Donald Trump's impeachment trial in the Senate to make the announcement as smoothly as possible in order to save the U.S. military's reputation in the wake of the disastrous defeat.

Capt. Bill Urban, spokesman for CENTOM, said additional service members were moved "out of an abundance of caution" and that "it is possible additional injuries may be identified in the future."

"As medical treatment and evaluations in theater continue, additional service members have been identified as having potential injuries," Urban claimed. "These service



In this AFP file photo taken on December 26, 2018 President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump speak to members of the U.S. military during an unannounced trip to al-Assad Air Base in Iraq.

members -- out of an abundance of caution -- have been transported to Landstuhl, Germany for further evaluations and necessary treatment on an outpatient basis. Given the nature of injuries already noted, it is possible additional injuries may be identified in the future."

On January 8, the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) fired volleys of ballistic missiles at the Ain al-Assad airbase.

The missile operation was in response to the January 3 assassination of Lieutenant General Soleimani, commander of the IRGC's Quds Force, and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the second-in-command of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), and a group of their companions in Baghdad. The cowardly operation was conducted under U.S. President Donald Trump's direction.

Both commanders enjoyed deep reverence among Muslim nations over their endeavors in eliminating the Daesh Takfiri terror group in the region, particularly in Iraq and Syria.

(Source: Press TV)

## 'U.S. wants to make anyone dealing with Iran pay the price'

(Press TV) — Press TV journalist Marzieh Hashemi and stem cell scientist Dr. Masoud Soleimani, both Iranian citizens who experienced illegal detention by the U.S. government, have offered their assessments of why they think they were subjected to such unfair treatment by Washington.

Hashemi, the American-born Press TV journalist and presenter, views her detention as part of the U.S. government's "intimidation" tactics against individuals who are somehow connected to the Islamic Republic.

Speaking on Press TV's Debate program, which marked one year since her detention in the United States, Hashemi said, "It is this battle by the United States against Iran, and they would make an example out of anyone, who plays whatever role in the Islamic Republic."

Hashemi, a Muslim convert, was detained at St. Louis Lambert International Airport in Missouri on January 13th last year while in the U.S. to visit her ill brother and other family members.

She was then transferred to a jail in Washington, DC, where she was initially forced to stop observing her Islamic dress code and only offered non-halal food. The

Federal Bureau of Investigation declined to comment on her arrest at the time, but the U.S. government confirmed that she had been arrested as a "material witness."

The U.S. government finally released her 10 days later without charge.

She added that the intimidation campaign is aimed at "those who want to stand up and speak about the Islamic Republic, talk about Iran, whether on social media on other forms."

"[The U.S. is seeking to] make an example that 'if you do this, you're going to pay a price,'" Hashemi observed.

Also in October 2018, the FBI arrested the Iranian stem cell scientist at an airport in Chicago. Soleimani had been invited by the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota to lead a research program there.

The arrest was made on alleged charges that he had violated the U.S. trade sanctions by trying to have biological material transferred to the Islamic Republic. The charges related to September 2016 when Soleimani had seized on two former students' plans to travel from the U.S. to Iran to get recombinant proteins, which are found fundamentally in every medical testing and biological research laboratory.

Soleimani was imprisoned in Atlanta, Georgia without trial after arrest. He traveled back to Iran in December after being released by the U.S. in a prisoner swap.

■ **'U.S. uneasy with Iran progress'**

Soleimani told Press TV that he had been subjected to a 14-month ordeal "almost for no reason," recalling "regular pressure, stress, and inhumane conditions in a country that claims to be adhering to the law" during his detention.

"I was not given a trial. Obviously you need to be tried for any wrongdoing you've committed. But there was no trial. They were just clinging on to this excuse [that I had] bypassed the sanctions," Soleimani added, explaining that he had just attended one court hearing during which no evidence or document had been presented against him.

Soleimani recalled that his attorney had reasoned with U.S. officials that he had done nothing wrong except working to advance the treatment of his patients, and to serve humanity, and that eventually he had been proven innocent and acquitted after 14 months of unjust detention.

"What I realized was that the Americans are concerned about advancement of science and knowledge in Iran," as has



been indicated by the cases of other Iranian scientists, who faced similar problems, Soleimani noted.

Showing her approval of Soleimani's remarks, Hashemi added, "If you progress scientifically, either you do it in the name of the United States or, if you're doing it in the name of Iran, you're going to pay a price."

The duo's remarks came a day after American Customs and Border Protection agents arrested and deported an Iranian student holding a valid visa at the Massachusetts airport, in a case that has caused much media uproar.



# Downed plane's black box will not be sent abroad: Tehran

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Transportation Minister Mohammad Eslami said on Wednesday that the black box of the downed Ukrainian plane will not be transferred abroad, Mehr reported.

"If the examination team cannot decipher the data, another decision will be made," Eslami told reporters after a cabinet session.

Eslami, who traveled to Ukraine on Monday as President Rouhani's special representative, said he conveyed the condolences of the president to the Ukrainian government and nation during his trip.

He said he met with top Ukrainian leaders, including President Volodymyr Zelensky, and discussed issues surrounding the plane crash.

"They thanked Iran's special cooperation and collaboration, and [we] delivered the president's promise to transfer the victims' bodies to Ukraine," he explained.

Zelensky said on Monday that Iran had complied with most arrangements in the matter of clarifying the circumstances of the plane crash.

"Everything we talked about with the president of Iran was mainly done," he said during a meeting with Eslami.

During the meeting, Zelensky stressed the need for a further effective investigation into the crash.

He said Ukraine had the necessary tech-



nical means and experienced specialists to perform this work properly.

The parties agreed that all remnants of the aircraft preserved after the accident should be returned to Ukraine.

They also raised the issue of compensation to the relatives of those killed in the plane crash and the creation of a joint investigation team.

The parties expressed their condolences over the deaths of the citizens of Ukraine and Iran.

The Ukrainian passenger plane, with 176 people aboard, was mistakenly downed on January 8 near Tehran by the air defense system.

The victims of the crash included 82 Iranians, 63 Canadians, 11 Ukrainians, 10

Swedes, four Afghans, three Germans, and three British nationals.

The Iranian military announced on January 11 morning that the plane had been mistaken for a cruise missile. The incident took place on January 8, nearly four hours after Iran fired missiles at a major U.S. airbase in retaliation for the assassination of top Iranian General Qassem Soleimani. The military has been put on high alert due to the situation.

On Friday, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said, "The plane crash was a bitter incident."

"To the same extent we grieved over the plane incident, the enemies cheered," he said.

"There are ambiguities in the plane incident. We thank the commanders for explaining it to the people, but this issue must be pursued and reoccurrence of similar incidents must be prevented seriously," the Leader added.

Meanwhile, Iran has invited manufacturer Boeing and Airbus to take part in the investigation into the Ukrainian passenger jet.

In a statement run by the IRNA news agency earlier this month, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Abbas Mousavi said Iran "has invited both Ukraine and the Boeing company to participate in the investigations."

Mousavi said Iran will also welcome experts from other nations whose citizens died in the crash.

## Iran's UN envoy says Gen. Soleimani's assassination is a hard blow to peace

**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Esmail Baghaei Hamaneh, Iran's ambassador and permanent representative to the UN office in Geneva, has said that the United States' assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani is a hard blow to regional peace and security.

In a speech at the UN Conference on Disarmament, Baghaei Hamaneh said that Soleimani's assassination was "ridiculing principles of human civilization", Mehr reported on Wednesday.

He said that Iran's response to the U.S. "criminal action" conformed to international law and was in line with the right to legitimate defense.

The ambassador said Iran is firm to defend its "sovereignty, territorial integrity and dignity".

Iran called the assassination of the top general by the U.S. military an "act of war" and an instance of "state terrorism".

Ambassador Baghaei Hamaneh warned about the



consequences of the U.S. "terrorist crime" and urged the international community to react to this move.

Keeping silence towards assassination of a senior military official when he was on a trip to another independent country will just make the "criminals more insolent", the

ambassador warned.

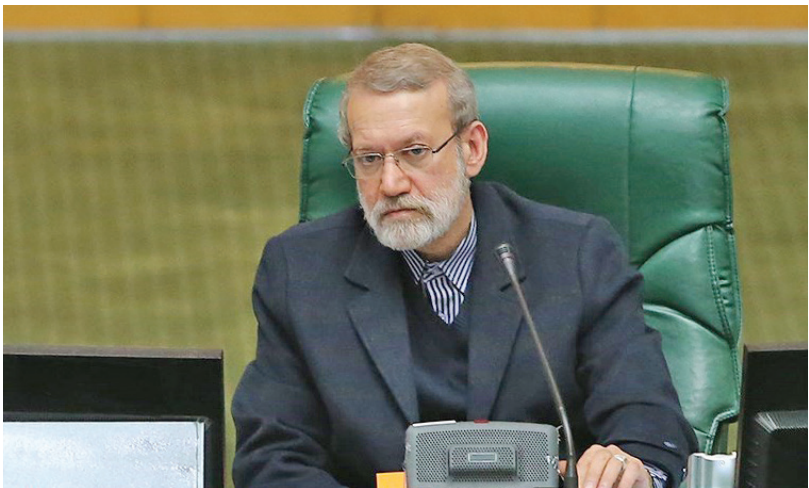
General Soleimani was assassinated in a U.S. airstrike in Baghdad on January 3. In a retaliatory move, Iran fired dozens of ballistic missiles at a major U.S. military base in Iraq on January 8.

Top Iranian political and military figures had vowed "harsh revenge" for the martyrdom of General Soleimani. Ayatollah Khamenei said on January 8 that such military actions are not enough and the U.S. forces must leave the region.

"The issue of revenge is another issue... The United States' corruptive presence in the region must come to an end. They have brought war, sedition, destruction, and also the destruction of infrastructures to the region," he stated.

In his newest remarks on January 17, Ayatollah Khamenei described the assassination of Soleimani as a cowardly act that brought disgrace upon the U.S.

## Larijani: Activation of dispute mechanism has ramifications for Europe



**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani has criticized the decision by the three European parties to the nuclear deal for triggering the dispute mechanism under the agreement, saying such move would have ramifications for them.

"The fact that the Europeans speak of taking advantage of Paragraph 36 (of the JCPOA) shows what they intend to do," Larijani said on Wednesday, Tasnim reported.

He said Iran will respond to such conduct, which is similar to that of the United States.

"Of course, it is natural that such political clash would have consequences for both sides," the parliament speaker added.

France, Britain, and Germany confirmed on January 14 that they had triggered the dispute mechanism in the JCPOA, also known as the Iran nuclear deal, but said they were not joining the United States campaign to exert maximum pressure on Tehran.

Russia has announced that it sees no grounds to trigger the dispute mechanism, saying the activation of this mechanism may make it impossible to return to the implementation of the agreement.

China has also expressed regret over

the decision, saying it will not help solve the issues or ease current tensions.

JCPOA was struck between Iran and the five permanent UN Security Council members — the United States, Russia, China, France, and the UK — as well as Germany and the European Union in July 2015 and went into effect in January 2016.

However, the accord came under increasing strain ever since U.S. President Donald Trump announced the U.S. withdrawal from it in May 2018 and unleashed the "toughest ever" sanctions against Iran despite global objections.

On May 8, exactly one year after the U.S. abandoned the deal, Tehran announced that its "strategic patience" is over and began to partially reduce its commitments to the agreement at bi-monthly steps.

Eventually, in its fifth and final step on January 5, Iran suspended all limits under the JCPOA.

Under the agreement, endorsed by the UN Security Council Resolution 2231, Iran agreed to put limits on its nuclear activities in exchange for termination of economic and financial sanctions.

Iran is still insisting that if the Europeans shield Iran from U.S. sanctions it will reverse its decision.

## Military deterrence fading threats, repelling warmongers: commander



**POLITICAL** **TEHRAN** — The deputy Army commander for coordination affairs said on Wednesday that deterrence power can be actually utilized as a diplomatic tool to counter threats and make regretful any enemy who even may think about aggression against the country.

"Deterrence is a diplomatic principle which is utilized to convince the enemy to refrain from waging war and instead resort to peace," Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari said.

"When we targeted two U.S. bases by our missiles and they did not do anything, it proves that if the U.S. attacks us we will attack them again. This issue is a blatant evidence of Iran's military deterrence power. The deterrence should foil the enemy's strategy or lessen its effects," the commander stated.

"Some say that Iran's military approach is defensive but it is not sufficient. The approach should be deterrent too," underscored Sayyari who was Navy chief from 2007 to 2017.

On Tuesday, the defense minister announced that enhancing deterrence power was a religious necessity for the Iranian Armed Forces.

Brigadier General Amir Hatami made

the remarks in a ceremony introducing Second Brigadier General Afshin Khajefard as the new director of the Defense Ministry's Aviation Industries Organization.

Touching upon the statements of the Leader in the Friday Prayers sermons, Hatami said Ayatollah Khamenei, as the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, underscored the strategy of "being strong and trying to be stronger" as a key to overcome problems.

"Iran has proved that, based on its own might and power, it will respond to any threat at any level," the minister said, adding that his forces consider the Leader's strategy as a religious obligation.

Last October, Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Hossein Baqeri said that Iran had developed such a high level of deterrence that all threats and plots against it would be vigorously responded.

Addressing a national gathering of commanders and staff officials of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), Major General Baqeri said the Islamic Republic utilizes sustainable and strong deterrence power to ward off plots by enemies who think about any form of aggression against the country.

## Iranian student turned back at Boston airport, sparking protest

An Iranian student was turned away from Boston's Logan International Airport on Monday, sparking protests over the latest in a growing number of cases of international students blocked from entering the United States amid heightened tensions with Iran, the New York Times reported on Tuesday.

Shahab Dehghani, 24, who was planning to study economics at Northeastern University, arrived in Boston on Sunday night with a valid student visa but was held at the

airport overnight for questioning and put back on a plane to Iran the next evening.

His flight left minutes after his lawyers obtained a court order directing the immigration authorities to allow Mr. Dehghani to remain in the country for 48 hours while his case was reviewed. But a federal judge declared the issue moot in an emergency hearing on Tuesday morning because Mr. Dehghani had already departed.

Mr. Dehghani is one of at least 13 Iranian students who have been turned away since August at airports across the country despite having valid visas. The cases have sparked outrage among immigrants rights advocates, local organizers and federal politicians, who say the students are being unfairly treated because of their heritage, and are experiencing devastating personal and professional fallout.

(see full text at [tehrantimes.com](http://tehrantimes.com))

## Tehran slams Seoul for miscalling Persian Gulf

**1 →** "I remind Monsieur Macron that the gulf located south of Iran has only one name and that is the #Persian Gulf. Your military presence in the Persian Gulf is as wrong as your naming it. Both mistakes are huge but compensable," Mousavi said.

It came after Macron said in a tweet that France had deployed the Jaguar Task Force mission to the Arabian Peninsula and in "the Arab-Persian Gulf."



The Persian Gulf is an international trade route connecting the Middle East to Africa, India and China. It has been referred to by historians and ancient texts as "Persian" since the Achaemenid Empire was established in what is now modern day Iran.

According to Press TV, the South Korean Defense Ministry said it had decided to "temporarily expand" the sphere of activity of its 302-strong Cheonghae unit given the current situation in the Middle East, adding that Tehran had been briefed on the deployment.

It also noted that the naval task force would operate separately from a U.S.-led military coalition, which has been deployed to the Persian Gulf waters under the pretext of protecting shipping lanes.

Over the past months, the United States has been trying to persuade its allies into a so-called International Maritime Security Construct, under the pretext of providing "security" for merchant shipping in the Strait of Hormuz and other strategic Middle Eastern shipping lanes.

Last week, U.S. Ambassador to South Korea Harry Harris renewed the call for Seoul to join the naval mission amid tensions between the two allies over a military cost-sharing deal, which they have failed to extend due to unresolved differences.

The Islamic Republic believes that such alliances are actually meant to consolidate the West's illegitimate military presence in the region and fuel insecurity.

## Iran's one strike may have changed Mideast forever

**1 →** Still, Trump is only the third President who has ever been impeached by the U.S. House of Representatives. He will have that stain forever and it is ugly. But impeached for what? Illegally withholding several hundred million dollars he was by law obliged to ship to Ukraine in his attempt to try to get dirt on political opponents like former VP Joe Biden.

If the U.S. were a "normal" country (to use a Pompeo adjective who claims that Iran is not "a normal country") and not one that since World War 2 has killed an estimated 25,000,000 people around the world in its self-adopted role as hegemon, Trump would be up for impeachment for a lot more than manipulated funds. He'd be impeached for the cold-blooded murder of Soleimani and his companions, for one thing.

Soleimani, a hero across much of the Middle East for keeping the best part of the Mideast from falling to the ISIS goon-ocracy operatives, whom the U.S. mostly trained and funded with help from Persian Gulf Arabs and the Zionists and whom they also merely pretended to want to eradicate. How can it be clearer?

U.S. foreign policy has had one dominant aim at bottom during this century, and that aim has been too successful far too often: to sow and to create chaos and disorder everywhere it can to benefit the U.S. military industrial complex in perennial warfare for hegemony and the Zionist goons, who are every bit as useless and criminal as ISIS ever has been. It has not been a War on Terror but a war OF terror on those who disagree with the U.S. or just want to be left alone to prosper.

Moreover, and this has not been said often if at all: Aside from lucre, whatever inspired legions of men, mostly young and Arab but some Europeans and some Americans, too, ever to sign up for ISIS? (These males are, after all, mostly "losers" without prospects and far from being anything identifiable as "Muslim", they are no better than the "settlers" in the West Bank who also are "losers" who have been inspired by greed and crude, murderous incentives.) One easily could argue that for the ISIS horde, one big incentive has been that they can rape, literally rape, women and enslave them and murder their families and loved ones as they please, with impunity. Or just kill for the perverse pleasure of it, the same pleasure a bragging Trump apparently felt when he ordered Soleimani's murder, or that Obama felt when he expanded cowardly drone strikes all over the Mideast a decade ago.

If all of the above sounds too grim, there is better news.

? Even if an Iranian pushed the button that sent two rockets into the civil airliner near Tehran, subterfuge by the U.S. or the CIA that forced this result has not been ruled out and may not be — ever. The fog of war is dense indeed.

? Iran's precision strike on the U.S. air base in western Iraq was a sublimely precise and masterful warning shot and retaliation for the murder of Soleimani and his comrades. And there was NO evident defense. This is humiliation for the U.S. and allies. If the Saudis or the U.A.E. leaders have any sense, they now know that at the least their infrastructure of any kind can be wiped out. And the Israelis? They ought to realize that Dimona, just to name one site, can be destroyed if enough missiles are directed to it.

The Middle East will never be the same again because of what Iran has proven. That it has real, serious, defensive tools to help deter attack, and has had some 40 years to develop and refine those tools. The leaders of the Islamic Republic have been patient and thoughtful, but they have been let down by cowards: not just cowardly Trump in murdering Soleimani, but the cowardly leaders of France, the U.K. and Germany, too, given their failure to ensure that Iran reaped some benefit by staying in the JCPOA, which now even Iran may abandon for real.



STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	411211.5
IFX	5287.76

Sources: tse.ir, ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	46,546 rials
GBP	54,768 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$64.27/b
WTI	\$58.02/b
OPEC Basket	\$66.11/b
Gold	\$1,560.55/oz
Silver	\$17.89/oz
Platinum	\$1,007.35/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

TEDPIX, IFX climb on Wednesday

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE) rose 5,202 points to 411,211 on Wednesday, IRNA reported. As reported, 5.16 billion securities worth 34.375 trillion rials (about \$818.4 million) were traded at this market.



Also, IFX, the main index of Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market known as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), advanced 29 points to 5,287 on Wednesday, as 2.048 billion securities valued at 17.77 trillion rials (about \$423 million) were traded at IFB.

Japan cuts capex view on sluggish global demand but says economy recovering

Japan's government cut its assessment of capital spending in January for the first time in eight months due to softer global demand but said its overall view of the economy was unchanged from December.

The government's economic report came after the Bank of Japan nudged up its growth forecasts on Tuesday, although Governor Haruhiko Kuroda said low inflation meant the bank needed to keep its stimulus policies in place.

"The economy is recovering at a moderate pace, while it is showing weakness centered on manufacturers ... amid continued softness in exports," the Cabinet Office said in the report.

Among key economic elements, it said capital spending was "on the trend of moderate increase but it showed some weakness".

Japan needs solid domestic demand such as capital spending to offset risks to its export-reliant economy from abroad.

January's assessment was slightly softer than in December, when the Cabinet Office said capex was increasing moderately but with weakness seen in machinery investment.

(Source: Reuters)

Germany, eurozone sentiment improves on U.S.-China trade truce: ZEW

Germany's economy started 2020 on a positive note as fears of trade disputes receded after the U.S. and China agreed a trade truce, financial analysts cited by the research institute Zew said on Tuesday.

Prospects for the German chemicals industry - the largest in Europe with annual sales of nearly €200b - also improved in January as the outlook for chemical-intensive industries such as automobiles and construction took a turn for the better.

The ZEW indicator for economic sentiment in the coming months rose in January to 26.7 points - 16 points up from December - and its highest level since July 2015.

The ZEW assessment of the current economic situation in Germany also registered a strong rise in January, at minus 9.5 points, 10.4 points higher than in December.

Nonetheless, growth in Europe's largest economy is expected to remain below average this year.

Germany is a key exports-based economy and last year's U.S.-China trade war had a big impact on its overseas markets.

"This (U.S.-China trade deal) gives rise to the hope that the trade dispute's negative effects on the German economy will be less pronounced than previously thought," said ZEW president Achim Wambach.

"In addition, the German economy developed slightly better than expected in the previous year. Although the outlook has improved, growth is still expected to remain below average."

The uptick in German sentiment was also mirrored in the wider 19-country eurozone, with the indicator at 25.6 points in January, up 14.4 points from December.

(Source: icis.com)

Iranian banks pay over \$149b in loans since mid-March 2019

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Iranian banking system has paid 6.26 quadrillion rials (about \$149 billion) in loans to domestic economic sectors since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2019), the governor of Central Bank of Iran (CBI) said on Tuesday.

According to Abdolnasser Hemmati, in the mentioned time span, over 280 trillion rials (nearly \$6.6 billion) worth of bank loans have been offered to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and 100 trillion rials (about \$2.38 billion) has also been offered to create new sustainable job opportunities, IRIB reported.

Of the mentioned figure, 83 trillion rials (nearly \$1.97 billion) was offered to more than 870 knowledge-based companies across the country and also 240 trillion rials (about \$5.7 billion) was also given to newly-married couples.

Back in November 2019, CBI announced that the country's banks



offered 3.821 quadrillion rials (about \$90.97 billion) to domestic economic

sectors in the first six months of the current Iranian calendar year (March

21-September 22, 2019), registering a 26-percent rise from the previous year's same period.

According to the data provided by CBI, in the said period, working capital loans paid to different economic sectors were above 2.11 quadrillion rials (about \$50.26 billion) accounting for 55.3 percent of the total provided facilities.

Also in early October 2019, the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade announced that in the first five months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-August 22, 2019), some 264.943 trillion rials (nearly \$6.3 billion) worth of bank loans were offered to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to complete semi-finished projects with an over 60 percent physical progress.

Iranian banks offered 7.737 quadrillion rials (about \$184.2 billion) of facilities during the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20, 2019) register a 26-percent rise from its preceding year.

Commodities worth over \$3b traded at IME in a month

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Over 2.851 million tons of commodities worth 133 trillion rials (about \$3.1 billion) were traded at Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) during the past Iranian calendar month of Dey (December 22, 2019-January 20, 2020), Tasnim news agency reported.

As reported, over 1.868 million tons of commodities valued at 71.858 trillion rials (about \$1.7 billion) were traded at the oil and petrochemical products floor of IME in the past month.

The IME's floor of industrial products and minerals witnessed trading of 974,477 tons of commodities worth 60.823 trillion rials (about \$1.4 billion) in the last month, the same report confirmed.

As previously reported, the value of trades at IME rose 26 percent to reach 135 trillion rials (about \$3.2 billion) during



the ninth Iranian calendar month of Azar (ends on December 21, 2019).

Some 2.851 million tons of commodities were reportedly traded at this market in the mentioned month to experience a growth of 16 percent.

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).

Inflation rate slides 1.4%: SCI

**1** → As previously announced by SCI, the inflation rate in the twelve-month period ended on December 21, 2019, which marks the end of the ninth Iranian calendar month of Azar, stood at 40 percent, falling 1.1 percent from the twelve-month period ended in the last day of the eighth Iranian month of Aban.

In the Iranian calendar year of 1395 (ended on March 20, 2017), Iran could manage to experience a single-digit inflation rate after 26 years.

The inflation rate stood at 9.8 percent in that year according to the Statistical Center of Iran and at nine percent according to the Central Bank of Iran (CBI).

But since the last year's calendar month of Khordad (ended on June 22, 2018), when the inflation rate stood at 10.2 percent, as announced by the CBI,

the country's experiencing double-digit inflation rates again.

Although, the government has been making a number of strides recently to curb the runaway inflation.

For example, on January 17, the Central Bank of Iran officially launched an Open Market Operation (OMO) system as part of its monetary policy to curb inflation as well as control interest rates in the interbank market and manage liquidity.

According to CBI Governor Abdolnasser Hemmati, the main purpose of open market operations is to control liquidity and inflation in the market.

"Typically, central banks conduct open market operations or buy and sell securities to achieve their macroeconomic goals, namely inflation control and economic growth stability", the official said.

Garment output rises 20% in 9 months on year

**ECONOMY** **TEHRAN** — Iranian industry, mining and trade minister announced that the country's garment output has risen 20 percent during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21, 2019), IRIB reported.

Speaking in a meeting with the domestic producers of clothes, Reza Rahmani said, "The growth in garment sector indicates promotion of domestic production, and if there will be any problem in this field we will try to remove it and in the case of any violation of the law we will confront it seriously."

The chairman of Iran's Union of Garments Producers and Sellers has said that boosting garment output and exports is atop agenda of their activities in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 19).

Back in July 2019, Abolqasem Shirazi had announced that domestic units were supplying 70-80 percent of the requirement for clothing inside the country.

He said, "After the ban imposed on the imports of clothing, domestic units are taking all endeavors to boost the quality and quantity of their products in a way that we saw no shortage in



clothing market before the new year holiday (early March)."

He also mentioned seriously combating with smuggling in garment market.

Since the U.S. re-imposed sanctions on Iran to pressure the country's economy, Iran has been taking all necessary measures to mitigate the impact of the sanctions and counter the U.S. actions.

Improving and boosting domestic production has been one of the major

strategies that Iran has been following in the past two years in order to increase its independence.

To this end, the Iranian government has put supporting domestic producers atop agenda in the current year.

Providing the required working capital for the production units and offering them facilities is one of the major measures being pursued by the government to support such units.

Leaders at Davos doubt China and U.S. will reach a phase 2 trade deal by end of Trump's term

Many business leaders at the World Economic Forum aren't convinced the latest round of trade negotiations between China and the U.S. will yield a "phase two" deal before the end of President Donald Trump's first term.

The biggest potential stumbling blocks: U.S. tariffs on Chinese goods and Chinese pledges to buy more American products.

One executive who is close to Trump said Chinese trade officials have privately told business leaders they hope all tariffs will be removed before a new trade deal. This executive declined to be named since the conversations were deemed private.

A phase two deal is expected to lead to a rollback of billions of dollars of tariffs that the U.S. first slapped on China in 2018. Trump has said he may want to wait until after the election to sign a phase two trade deal, and there hasn't been a clear timeline from the White House as to when an agreement can be reached.

**■ Removing some of the tariffs** Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, who is in Davos with the president, told The Wall Street Journal the next



agreement could remove some but not all of the tariffs.

Doubts about a second deal were likely to dominate conversations at the elite gathering in the Swiss Alps, particularly as business leaders talk with White House officials there and in the coming months as Trump pursues his reelection.

It is unclear how another China trade deal could be accomplished if Trump isn't

reelected. More than a dozen Democrats are vying for their party's nomination to take on Trump in November, including former Vice President Joe Biden, Sens. Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren, and former mayors Pete Buttigieg and Mike Bloomberg.

"No one thinks it's going to happen," Ian Bremmer, president of political consulting firm Eurasia Group, told

CNBC after being asked where Davos attendees stand on future trade talks. "I really would be shocked to see a 'trade two' deal get done before the election." He noted one of the hurdles to another agreement could come down to China not buying as much as it promised.

The phase one deal demands that China increase its purchases of U.S. manufacturing, energy and agricultural goods and services by at least \$200 billion over two years. It also includes provisions to root out intellectual property theft and forced technology transfers.

During his speech Tuesday in Davos, Trump reaffirmed that tariffs on China will remain in place and noted that these trade barriers have been a key negotiating tool.

"These achievements would not have been possible without the implementation of tariffs, which we had to use. And we're using them on others, too," Trump said. "That is why most of our tariffs on China will remain in place during the 'phase two' negotiations."

(Source: cnbc.com)



# Iran's 9-month hydropower output up over 200%

**ENERGY** TEHRAN — The electricity output of Iran's hydroelectric power plants reached 26,103 gigawatt hours (GWh) in the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21, 2019), 218 percent more than the figure for last year's same period, IRNA reported.

As reported, the country's hydroelectric power plants generated only 8,198 GWh of electricity in the last year's same time span.

According to the latest data provided by the Energy Ministry, currently 55 hydroelectric power plants with a total capacity of

12,169 megawatts (MW) are operating across the country.

The mentioned power plants every year generate 27,696 GWh of electricity on average.

Based on the provided data, 16 of the mentioned 55 power plants are located in the Caspian Sea basin, while 25 are located adjacent to the Persian Gulf and Oman Sea, one is near Lake Urmia and finally 13 are located in central Iran.

Currently, 17 new hydroelectric power plants with a total capacity of 3,517 MW are also being constructed across the country, according to the Energy Ministry.



Iran's current power generation capacity stands at about 81 GW of which the share of hydroelectric power stands at nearly 16 percent.

In late May 2019, the Energy Ministry announced that it plans to inaugurate 22

new hydroelectric units with a total capacity of 3,933 MW in the current calendar year (ends on March 19) along with upgrading and increasing the efficiency of existing power plants to add another 461 MW of new capacity.

## Nearly 4,300 electricity projects inaugurated across Iran in a week

**ENERGY** TEHRAN — Iranian Energy Ministry inaugurated 4,297 development projects worth 20 trillion rials (about \$476 million) in the 13th week of the implementation of a major program called "A B Iran", IRNA reported, quoting the Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian.

Speaking in a ceremony for inauguration of 113 of the mentioned projects in Hamedan Province on Tuesday, Ardakanian said: "In the 13th week of the 'A-B-Iran' program, nearly 4,300 projects went operational, and Hamadan's seven-megawatt solar power plant was among the major ones."



Under the A-B-Iran scheme [the acronyms A and B stand for water, electricity in Persian], 10 trillion rials (over \$238 million) of projects will be inaugurated in each of the country's provinces, on average.

Based on this program, Energy Ministry plans to inaugurate some water, electricity projects across the country every week.

Back in December 2019, Ardakanian said 3000 MW capacity of new power plants were going to go on-stream across the country by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 19, 2020).

## Oil slides as IEA predicts surplus, Libya disruption concerns fade



Oil prices dropped on Wednesday as the International Energy Agency's (IEA) forecast of a market surplus in the first half of this year was enough to cancel out concerns about military disruptions that have slashed Libya's crude output.

Brent crude LCOc1 was down 30 cents, or 0.5%, at \$64.29 a barrel at 0731 GMT, after falling 0.3% on Tuesday. U.S. oil CLc1 fell 33 cents, or 0.6%, to \$58.05 a barrel, having declined 0.3% the day before.

The head of the IEA, Fatih Birol, said he expects the market to be in surplus by a million barrels per day (bpd) in the first half of this year.

"I see an abundance of energy supply in terms of oil and gas," Birol told the Reuters Global Markets Forum on Tuesday, while attending the World Economic Forum meeting in Davos.

"It's the reason that recent incidents we have seen - with the Iranian general killed, Libya unrest - didn't boost international oil prices," Birol said, referring to the U.S. killing of an Iranian commander and retaliation by Tehran that sent prices briefly soaring earlier this month.

Libya's National Oil Corp on Monday declared force majeure on the loading of oil from two major oil fields after the latest development in a long-running military conflict.

Unless oil facilities quickly return to operation Libya's oil output will be reduced from about 1.2 million barrels per day (bpd)

to just 72,000 bpd.

### ■ The global financial markets

Meanwhile global financial markets have been destabilized by the emergence from China of a new strain of a coronavirus, with concern focused on the impact a pandemic might have on economic growth. The outbreak has stirred memories of the SARS epidemic of 2002-2003.

Should the new virus develop into SARS-like proportions, hitting travel and growth, demand for oil could fall by 260,000 bpd, Goldman Sachs said in a note.

"Demand concerns over a potential epidemic will counter concerns around supply disruptions in Libya, Iran and Iraq, driving spot price volatility in coming weeks," Goldman said, although the "impact on oil fundamentals remains limited so far."

Supply is still likely to rise, with U.S. crude production in large shale deposits expected to rise to record highs in February, although the pace of increase is likely to be the lowest in about year, the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) said on Tuesday.

Inventories of crude oil in the U.S. are likely to have fallen for a second week last week, according to a Reuters poll, although gasoline stocks are forecast to have risen for an 11th week in a row.

The poll was carried out before data due this week from the American Petroleum Institute (API), an industry group, and the official figures from EIA.

(Source: reuters.com)

## U.S. anti-OPEC efforts fading as cartel's influence seen waning



By Stephen Cunningham I

U.S. efforts to rein in OPEC's influence over global oil markets are losing momentum as the Trump administration takes a wait-and-see approach to energy prices.

While supporters of a bill that would open OPEC to possible U.S. antitrust action thought they'd found a cheerleader in Donald Trump, the current view within the White House is that OPEC's clout is already waning and there's no pressing need for action, according to an official who spoke on condition of anonymity. Unless there's a sudden and protracted spike in prices, that isn't likely to change.

Without the White House's endorsement, the so-called NOPEC bill faces stiff headwinds on Capitol Hill.

"If there's a fear that the administration is not going to support it, then that does act as a deterrent for it to move forward," said Seth Bloom, a former general counsel of the Senate Antitrust Subcommittee who helped to draft the first NOPEC bill 19 years ago.

The White House's position on OPEC may have evolved. Energy Secretary Dan Brouillette recently downplayed the cartel's power, saying in an interview that the group "doesn't have quite the same influence on the world pricing that it used to have."

Trump, who has often criticized the cartel for its influence over the oil market, declared this month that the U.S. no longer needs supplies from the region due to the shale boom. While his statement may be a

stretch, it's true that oil markets have largely shrugged off recent flare-ups in the Middle East, in part due to abundant supply.

Even U.S. gasoline prices hovering at the highest seasonal level in five years haven't sparked a Northeast Ohio Public Energy Council (NOPEC) revival.

A White House spokesperson didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

The latest versions of the bipartisan bill -- which would amend the Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890 to allow the Justice Department to sue the cartel-- have made limited progress since being introduced almost a year ago. Senator Chuck Grassley, a Republican from Iowa who introduced the Senate version of the bill, speculated that the State Department could be an obstacle. "It's kind of a case of where, I guess, the courtesies of diplomacy would say that we shouldn't interfere in the business of another state," he said. "I don't buy that argument but I think that's kind of what's behind it."

Senator Lindsey Graham, chairman of the Judiciary Committee that would be the bill's first step toward being passed, said last week that he had not even looked at it yet.

Still, the bill could get resuscitated later in the year if gasoline prices keep rising in the approach to the November election.

"In a future scenario where spiking oil prices are impacting consumers, the bill could resurface in a moment's notice," said Rapidan Energy Group's Leslie Hayward.

(Source: bloomberg.com)

## Scotland to reach this year 100% renewable energy goal

Fossil fuels are one of the main drivers of climate change, so shifting towards renewable energy is one of the main changes a country can make. That's the case of Scotland, which is in line with having an energy matrix fully based on renewables this year.

Scotland, which will host this year's UN climate summit in November, is considered a global leader on clean energy.

The country set its goal to leave behind fossils by 2020 and an interim goal of powering 50% of its electricity with renewables by 2015 -- a target clearly exceeded.

Renewable energy powered 59% of Scotland's energy in 2015, according to Scottish Development International. Since then, the country has continued to increase its use of renewables.

In 2017, 68.1% of its energy came from clean sources, a figure which rose to 74.6% by 2018.

According to WWF, Scotland generated 9,831,320 megawatt-hours (MWh) of wind energy between January and July of 2019. That could power 182% of all the 4.4 million Scottish homes, or 100% of the homes in Scotland and the North of England.

"These are amazing figures; Scotland's wind energy revolution is clearly continuing to power ahead. Up and down



the country, we are all benefitting from cleaner energy and so is the climate," Robin Parker, WWF Scotland's Climate and Energy Policy Manager, said in a statement for WWF.

### ■ Other sources of renewable energy

Wind power is the main favorite in Scotland but other sources of renewable energy are also employed such as solar, geothermal, biomass, hydroelectric, and hydrokinetic

(wave power).

Achieving a 100% renewables-based energy matrix would add Scotland to the list of other countries that achieved the same goal, such as Paraguay, Iceland, and the Congo.

In a recent report, the organization Scottish Renewables estimates Scotland will reach its goal this year thanks to the government's active role in the matter. It declared the climate emergency and committed to having zero emissions by 2045 -- five years earlier than the goal set by the UK.

No matter the goal, the expansion of renewables continues in Scotland.

ScottishPower, the renewable energy arm of the power companies, plans for a major expansion of onshore wind-farm projects across the country. Almost 100 sites for a new generation of wind farms have already been considered.

The next focus for the government should be in decarbonizing the heat and transportation sectors, NGOs have claimed.

The government has pledged to phase out petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2032 as part of the Climate Change Bill. This would mean a massive expansion of the number of electric vehicles and charging stations.

(Source: zmesience.com)

## Hydrogen from wind energy and solar power, the future

Hydrogen will be the fuel of the future and step by step will replace all current fossil fuels. In AleaSoft an analysis of the impact of hydrogen on the energy sector has been carried out as a key factor in the ecological transition and a summary of the present and future use of this gas in various sectors of the economy.

Hydrogen is the most abundant element in the universe. It is used as an input in oil refining, the production of ammonia and methanol and the manufacture of steel. Current global demand for hydrogen is more than 70 million tons per year.

The supply of hydrogen to industrial users is now an important business worldwide. The demand for hydrogen, which has multiplied by more than three since 1975, continues to increase, supplied almost entirely by fossil fuels, with 6% of global natural gas and 2% of global coal destined for the production of hydrogen.

The number of countries with policies that directly support investment in hydrogen technologies is increasing, along with the number of sectors they are targeting.

There are about 50 objectives, mandates and incentives of policies in force today that directly support hydrogen, most of them focused on the transport sector.

Almost all of the current hydrogen is produced from hydrocarbons such as natural gas and coal. As a consequence, hydrogen production is responsible for the emission of around 830 million tons of carbon dioxide per year, equivalent to the combined CO2 emissions of the United Kingdom and France.



However, there is a non-polluting alternative, the so-called green hydrogen. It is the hydrogen obtained through the electrolysis of water. Electricity is required for this process, so if the generation of a renewable source is used, hydrogen will be obtained without emissions in the process.

### ■ Costs of renewable electricity

With the decrease in the costs of renewable electricity, in particular photovoltaic and wind power, interest in green hydrogen is growing and several demonstration projects have been carried out in recent years. However, the challenge is not small.

Migrating all current hydrogen production would represent an electricity demand of 3600 TWh, more than the annual electricity generation of the entire European Union.

The construction of electrolyzers in locations with good conditions of renewable resources could become a low cost supply option for hydrogen, even after taking into account the transmission and distribution costs of hydrogen transport from renewable locations, often remote, to the end users.

In order to obtain electricity from hydrogen, the inverse reaction is precisely carried out than to obtain hydrogen. In this case, it reacts with oxygen, obtaining electricity and water. The device responsible for carrying out this reaction is called a fuel cell.

One of the first practical applications of fuel cells was in space vehicles, where in addition to the power supply, the resulting water can be used by astronauts to drink, or to cool the ship's systems

In this way, the generation of electricity with fuel cells from hydrogen is 100% clean, and also as a byproduct, drinking water is generated.

One of the main limitations of renewable energy sources is that their generation depends on meteorological variables that have an unmanageable behavior.

Wind generation depends on the intensity of the wind in the locations of the parks, which is a variable of great randomness. Photovoltaic generation depends on solar radiation profiles. This leads to these sources of energy cannot guarantee a certain production at a certain time, but will alternate periods of high and low production depending on the weather conditions of each moment.

One way to make better use of high-generation electricity peaks from these renewable sources is to use the surplus to produce hydrogen. Then, the hydrogen produced could be sold directly or used to generate electricity at a time when the production of the renewable source is scarce.

It is in this sense that the generation of hydrogen would represent the regulatory element of the equilibrium in the price of the electricity market. In a scenario of much renewable production, whether wind, photovoltaic or other source, the minimum market price would be marked by the value from which it would be more profitable to use electricity to produce hydrogen.

### ■ Production of hydrogen

A drop in price would imply the mass production of hydrogen, which would represent an increase in demand and finally a market equilibrium would be reached.

Energy storage is one of the main challenges that the sector will face in the coming years. Battery technologies have evolved a lot, but the issue of long-term storage doesn't solve it yet. It is this scenario where hydrogen could be very useful. Not only because of its ability to store energy for long periods of time, but also because it will be much easier to handle, since its weight will be lower, because the energy density of compressed hydrogen tanks is higher than those of batteries lithium-ion.

The transport sector is probably the area where hydrogen can be imposed more effectively. Hydrogen fuel cell (FCEV) electric cars would reduce local air pollution because, like electric battery cars (BEV), they have zero emissions of polluting gases.

There are already cars on the market that use this technology and have similar and even superior performance to several battery-powered cars. The aspect in which the hydrogen car will have no competition is in refueling. Replenishing a hydrogen car is much faster than recharging a car to batteries.

But the field of action of hydrogen is not summed up to cars. In larger vehicles such as buses or even in airplanes, the electric alternative with batteries is often discarded because of the weight involved in the batteries.

Hydrogen represents a much lighter way of transporting the ability to power an electric motor. In June 2019, the European companies that make up the H2Bus Consortium joined together with the objective of working together to deploy a fleet of 1000 electric fuel cell buses that will be incorporated into the fleets of several European transport managers. In addition, they will install, in each of the European cities where they operate, the hydrogen recharge infrastructure necessary to make them commercially competitive.

Green hydrogen is the fuel of the future. The ability to use a fuel with a zero CO2 footprint represents a revolution in the energy and transportation sector. Gasoline, gas, coal and all other fuels will be gradually displaced by hydrogen. From industrial to domestic use, the way forward is the use of hydrogen as the main fuel. In addition, as already mentioned, it will ultimately be the regulatory element of the balance of the electricity market.

(Source: evwind.es)



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# Quest for peace in Libya

Summits fail to bring the warring factions to a settlement

➔ More recently, the Berlin Conference was held on Jan. 19. Haftar and al-Sarraj didn't meet face to face during this summit which also failed to yield results.

Haftar seems to confuse negotiation with coercion. The renegade general had already blocked eastern ports of Libya ahead of the Berlin summit. According to the Tripoli-based National Oil Corporation of Libya allies of Haftar had blocked a key oil-export pipeline in western Libya a day after the port blockade.

Much of Libya's oil wealth is located in the east of the sprawling North African state but revenues are channeled through Tripoli-based state oil firm NOC, which says it serves the whole country and stays out of its factional conflicts.

In an interview in Berlin al-Sarraj warned Monday that the blockade will produce a "catastrophic situation" and has cut output to almost zero.

Libya had been producing some 1.2 million barrels per day. Prior to the recent disruptions to the world oil supply caused



Libya's Prime Minister Fayeze al-Sarraj says renegade commander Khalifa Haftar is not a serious partner for peace. [Claudio Peri/EPA]

by Houthi attack on Saudi Aramco facilities, the last major crude supply interruption was caused in 2011 by the Libyan civil war

cutting off 1.5m barrels per day from global oil supplies.

The situation in Somalia is not unrelated.

In Somalia, a fight for control of ports and maritime routes has pitted Turkey and Qatar versus Saudi Arabia and UAE and we have witnessed rise of Al Shabaab and piracy in all the lawlessness.

According to the UN since the start of LNA offensive last April, there has been 280 civilian casualties, some 2000 fighters have been killed and 146,000 Libyans displaced.

Western attacks in Iraq and Afghanistan made these countries fertile grounds for terrorist groups like Taliban and Daesh. With their defeat in Iraq and Syria these groups have been relocating to Libya, where they find fertile grounds of chaos to breed in.

Gadhafi had ruled for 42 years and Saddam controlled Iraq for more than 20 years. They all terrorized their citizens but amid some law and order. The overthrow of these dictators brought destruction, chaos and humiliation for their citizens.

Today if citizens of Libya and Iraq are asked if they are missing their times under their former dictators, one might be surprised by their answer.

## Buried for 50 years: Britain's shameful role in the Biafran war

A million children starved to death. I'm haunted by the images I saw there – and by the complicity of the Wilson government

By Frederick Forsyth

It is a good thing to be proud of one's country, and I am – most of the time. But it would be impossible to scan the centuries of Britain's history without coming across a few incidents that evoke not pride but shame. Among those I would list are the creation by British officialdom in South Africa of the concentration camp, to persecute the families of Boers. Add to that the Amritsar massacre of 1919 and the Hola camps set up and run during the struggle against Mau Mau.

But there is one truly disgusting policy practiced by our officialdom during the lifetime of anyone over 50, and one word will suffice: Biafra.

This referred to the civil war in Nigeria that ended 50 years ago this month. It stemmed from the decision of the people of the eastern region of that already riot-racked country to strike for independence as the Republic of Biafra. As I learned when I got there as a BBC correspondent, the Biafrans, mostly of the Igbo people, had their reasons.

The federal government in Lagos was a brutal military dictatorship that came to power in 1966 in a bloodbath. During and following that coup, the northern and western regions were swept by a pogrom in which thousands of resident Igbo were slaughtered. The federal government lifted not a finger to help. It was led by an affable British-educated colonel, Yakubu Gowon. But he was a puppet. The true rulers were a group of northern Nigerian colonels. The crisis deepened, and in early 1967 eastern Nigeria, harboring about 1.8 million refugees, sought restitution. A British-organized conference was held in Ghana and a concordat agreed. But Gowon, returning home, was flatly contradicted by the colonels, who tore up his terms and reneged on the lot. In April the Eastern Region formally seceded and on 7 July, the federal government declared war.

Biafra was led by the Eastern Region's Oxford-educated former military governor, "Emeka" Ojukwu. London, ignoring all evidence that it was Lagos that reneged on the deal, denounced the secession, made no attempt to mediate and declared total support for Nigeria.

I arrived in the Biafra capital of Enugu on the third day of the war. In London I had been copiously briefed by Gerald Watrous, head of the BBC's West Africa Service. What I did not know was that he was the obedient servant of the government's Commonwealth Relations Office (CRO), which believed every word of its high commissioner in Lagos, David Hunt. It took two days in Enugu to realize that everything I had been told was utter garbage.

I had been briefed that the brilliant Nigerian army would suppress the rebellion in two weeks, four at the most. Fortunately the deputy high commissioner in Enugu, Jim Parker,



Starving children in a refugee camp near Aba in 1968. (Photograph: AFP)

told me what was really happening. It became clear that the rubbish believed by the CRO and the BBC stemmed from our high commissioner in Lagos. A racist and a snob. Hunt expected Africans to leap to attention when he entered the room – which Gowon did. At their single prewar meeting Ojukwu did not. Hunt loathed him at once.

My brief was to report the all-conquering march of the Nigerian army. It did not happen. Naively, I filed this. When my report was broadcast our high commissioner complained to the CRO in London, who passed it on to the BBC – which accused me of pro-rebel bias and recalled me to London. Six months later, in February 1968, fed up with the slavishness of the BBC to Whitehall, I walked out and flew back to west Africa. Ojukwu roared with laughter and allowed me to stay. My condition was that, having rejected British propaganda, I would not publish his either. He agreed.

But things had changed. British covert interference had become huge. Weapons and ammunition poured in quietly as Whitehall and the Harold Wilson government lied and denied it all. Much enlarged, with fresh weapons and secret advisory teams, the Nigerian army inched across Biafra as the defenders tried to fight back with a few bullets a day. Soviet Ilyushin bombers ranged overhead, dropping 1,000lb bombs on straw villages. But the transformation came in July.

Missionaries had noticed mothers emerging from the deep bush carrying children reduced to living skeletons yet with bloated bellies. Catholic priests recognized the symptoms – kwashiorkor or acute protein deficiency.

That same July the Daily Express cameraman David Cairns ran off a score of rolls of film and took them to London. Back then, the British public had never seen such heartrending images of starved and dying children. When the pictures hit the newsstands the story exploded.

There were headlines, questions in the House of Commons, demonstrations, marches.

As the resident guide for foreign news teams I became somewhat overwhelmed. But at last the full secret involvement of the British government started to be exposed and the lies revealed. Wilson came under attack. The story swept Europe then the US.

Donations flooded in. The money could buy food – but how to get it there? Around year's end the extraordinary Joint Church Aid was born.

The World Council of Churches helped to buy some clapped-out freighter aircraft and gained permission from Portugal to use the offshore island São Tomé as a base. Scandinavian pilots and crew, mostly airline pilots, offered to fly without pay. Joint Church Aid was quickly nicknamed Jesus Christ Airlines. And thus came into being the world's only illegal mercy air bridge.

On a visit to London in spring 1969 I learned the efforts the British establishment will take to cover up its tracks. Every reporter, peer or parliamentarian who had visited Biafra and reported on what he had seen was smeared as a stooge of Biafra – even the utterly honorable John Hunt, leader of the Everest expedition.

Throughout 1969 the relief planes flew through the night, dodging Nigerian MiG fighters, to deliver their life-giving cargoes of reinforced milk powder to a jungle airstrip. From there trucks took the sacks to the missions, the nuns boiled up the nutrients and kept thousands of children alive.

Karl Jaggi, head of the Red Cross, estimated that up to a million children died, but that at least half a million were saved. As for me, sometimes in the wee small hours I see the stick-like children with the dull eyes and lolling heads, and hear their wails of hunger and the low moans as they died.

What is truly shameful is that this was not done by savages but aided and assisted at every stage by Oxford-educated British mandarins. Why? Did they love the corruption-riven, dictator-prone Nigeria? No. From start to finish, it was to cover up that the UK's assessment of the Nigerian situation was an enormous judgmental screw-up. And, worse: with neutrality and diplomacy from London it could all have been avoided.

Biafra is little discussed in the UK these days – a conflict overshadowed geopolitically by the Vietnam war, which raged at the same time. Yet the sheer nastiness of the British establishment during those three years remains a source of deep shame that we should never forget.

• Frederick Forsyth is a former war correspondent and an author.

(Source: The Guardian)

## UN: Global unemployment to rise by around 2.5 million in 2020

165 million people do not have enough paid work, and 120 million have either given up actively searching for work or otherwise lack access to the labor market. In total, more than 470 million people worldwide are affected, the report said.

Global unemployment is projected to increase by around 2.5 million in 2020 and almost half a billion people are working fewer paid hours than they would like or lack adequate access to paid work, according to UN's International Labor Organization report.

The World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2020 (WESO) report, released on Monday, states that global unemployment has been roughly stable for the last nine years but slowing global economic growth means that, as the global Labor force increases, not enough new jobs are being generated to absorb new entrants to the Labor market.

The International Labor Organization (ILO) forecasts that unemployment will rise by about 2.5 million this year. The ILO is a UN agency whose mandate is to advance social justice and promote decent work by setting international Labor standards.

"For millions of ordinary people, it's increasingly difficult to build better lives through work," ILO Director-General Guy Ryder said.

"Persisting and substantial work-related inequalities and exclusion are preventing them from finding decent work and better futures. That's an extremely serious finding that has profound and worrying implications for social cohesion," Ryder said.

The number of people unemployed around the world stands at some 188 million. In addition, 165 million people do not have enough paid work, and 120 million have either given up actively searching for work or otherwise lack access to the Labor market. In total, more than 470 million people worldwide are affected, the report said.



The number of people unemployed around the world stands at some 188 million. (Representational)

Earlier in January, a UN report on the economy showed that developed countries are experiencing slow growth, and some African countries are stagnating.

The consequence is that not enough new jobs are being created to absorb the growing Labor force as it enters the market. In addition, many African countries are experiencing a drop in real incomes and a rise in poverty, it said.

The ILO report said that moderate or extreme working poverty is expected to edge up in 2020-21 in developing countries, increasing the obstacles to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 1 on eradicating poverty everywhere by 2030.

Currently working poverty (defined as earning less than USD 3.20 per day in purchasing power parity terms) affects more than 630 million workers, or one in five of

the global working population.

Inequalities related to gender, age and geographical location continue to plague the job market, with the report showing that these factors limit both individual opportunity and economic growth.

Some 267 million young people aged 15-24 are not in employment, education or training, and many more endure substandard working condition.

The rise in trade restrictions and protectionism, which could have a significant impact on employment, is seen as a potentially worrying trend, as is the significant drop in the share of national income in the form of wages, compared to other forms of production, it said.

"Labor underutilization and poor-quality jobs mean our economies and societies are missing out on the potential benefits of a huge pool of human talent," said the report's lead author, Stefan Kuhn.

"We will only find a sustainable, inclusive path of development if we tackle these kinds of Labor market inequalities and gaps in access to decent work," Kuhn said.

The report's authors recommend that countries ensure that economic growth and development occurs in a way that leads to the reduction of poverty and better working conditions in low-income countries, through structural transformation, technological upgrading and diversification.

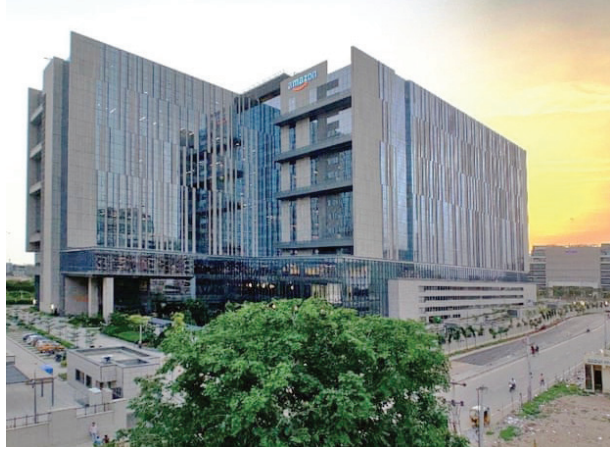
The annual WESO Trends report analyses key Labor market issues, including unemployment, Labor underutilization, working poverty, income inequality, Labor income share and factors that exclude people from decent work.

(Source: PTI)

## What Amazon's vast new Hyderabad campus reveals about its plans

Amazon have arrived in force in rapidly expanding Hyderabad, with designs on the currently almost non-existent Indian e-commerce market

The futuristic lobby of the new Amazon building in Hyderabad feels as though it should have a permanent orchestra blasting out Also Sprach Zarathustra. The scale is intended to awe. A large slogan on a wall suggests the company is "Delivering smiles". The only sound that rises above the hush is a synthesized beep, coming from a giant screen playing a video of the campus at various stages of its construction.



The campus is something of a coup for Hyderabad as the city continues its quest to rival Silicon Valley. (Photograph: amazon.in)

Built on nine acres in this Indian city's financial district, it is Amazon's single largest building globally and the only Amazon-owned campus outside the U.S. It can house over 15,000 employees, but its size is its main architectural feature: it resembles the same cube of glass steel and chrome seen in corporate offices across Hyderabad, though a flash of magenta reflected in one of the top floor windows, from a billowing sari across the road, is a nice Indian touch.

Other features are typically Amazonian. A huge cafeteria the size of an airport food court offers multiple cuisines for up to 2,500 people at a time; the leadership principles of CEO Jeff Bezos ("It's always Day One") adorn the walls of each of the 13 floors. Breakout seating allows employees to collaborate, while for privacy there are "huddle" rooms, and other "focus" rooms for brainstorming. Even the café in the lobby has mentally stimulating games on the tables such as chess and metal loop puzzles, presumably to provide what the company calls the building's "agile-based environment".

The building represents something of a coup for Hyderabad, and a milestone in the city's quest to be a rival to Silicon Valley. A study this year from Oxford Economics predicted all the 10 fastest-growing cities by GDP between 2019 and 2035 will be in India; Hyderabad is growing fourth-fastest on that list, and after Bangalore it is the country's second biggest technology hub.

The signs of the building frenzy are everywhere: cranes dot the sky, with commercial and residential buildings rising from the stony terrain Hyderabad was once known for. Huge flyovers are being built to relieve – or perhaps foster – traffic, a dozen new shopping malls are set to open next year, and migrants are pouring in looking for work. Great clouds of construction dust swirl everywhere, enveloping the city in a pall of smog.

As well as a bustling economy and an educated software workforce, Amazon's choice was also determined by the size of the almost virgin e-commerce market here. Billions of Indians still do their shopping locally: approximately 12m neighborhood shops account for almost 90% of the country's retail sales. Online shopping is minuscule. By 2022, however, India will have 829 million smartphone users, according to a report by Cisco Systems, and when they start shopping online, the demand for food, gadgets, clothes and music and online services is likely to explode: estimates put it at \$200bn (£150bn) by 2028, up from about \$30bn last year.

The world's retail giants want some of that money. There are three main players: Amazon; Flipkart, an Indian firm acquired by Walmart last year for \$16bn; and Reliance Retail, owned by India's richest man, Mukesh Ambani.

To fight this war, Amazon has 50 "fulfilment centers" in 13 states, as well as hundreds of delivery stations and sort centers. "We now deliver to 99.6% of serviceable [zip] codes in India," says Shashank Rathod, public relations specialist for Amazon India.

Because many streets and houses in this vast country are not numbered, Amazon has tied up with shopkeepers in small towns and villages to deliver orders. "Tens of thousands of local stores and service providers have joined as partners in our digital ecosystem and sharing in Amazon's growth," said an Amazon India spokesperson.

Otherwise, although there are Indian flourishes to the building – the country's many different cultures, languages, arts, architecture, films and crafts are reflected on each floor, while the groundbreaking ceremony invited Hindu priests to perform Vedic rituals with oil lamps and the ceremonial breaking of coconuts – it otherwise very much embodies the culture of big tech multinationals.

A dedicated play area allows fatigued coders to play table tennis, pool and air hockey. There are Zumba classes, a Treadwall and a small synthetic cricket pitch, where software engineer Mahesh Umamahesh is one of the fielders. "I come here about once a day because I feel my productivity improves after I feel fresh," he says. "I don't feel any guilt because it makes me more productive."

Meanwhile the company is experimenting with using Alexa to keep employees informed: there are Alexa "pods" where employees can access information about the company's policies and facilities. At a recent all-company meeting, the speakers were announced not by microphone but by Alexa.

Also visible is Bezos's "Empty Chair" principle, in which the CEO insists one chair at meetings be kept vacant, to symbolize the customer. In India, the company now has another one billion of them squarely in its sights.

(Source: The Guardian)



## Iranian troupe to perform folk dance at FITUR

**TOURISM d e s k** **TEHRAN** – A troupe of Iranian performers from northeastern Khorasan Razavi province, are scheduled to perform traditional dance at the 40th FITUR tourism trade fair, which opened in Madrid, Spain, on January 22 and will run till January 26.



“The purpose of this cultural and artistic group, which is directed by Mohammad-Hossein Tavakkoli, is to introduce Khorasan Razavi’s folk dance to participants at FITUR exhibition in Spain,” provincial tourism chief Abolfazl Mokarramifar said on Monday, ISNA reported.

Some 20 Iranian travel agencies and tour operators are set to attend Iran’s pavilion at FITUR under the auspices of the Touring & Automobile Club of the Islamic Republic of Iran (TACI) and the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts.

This year, FITUR is to celebrate its 40th anniversary with its most professional and international edition. According to Organizers, the focus will be on promoting the B2B meeting schedule, both the general program, FITUR B2B Match, and the specialized program FITUR MICE, as well as the International Purchaser Programs.

The trade fair expands its exhibition area to grow in an orderly fashion throughout 10 halls and a new layout that will place Africa in Hall 1, leaving Hall 6 in its entirety for Asia-Pacific. Organized by IFEMA, FITUR 2020 will be held at Feria de Madrid.

In December 2019, Spanish Charge d’Affaires to Tehran, Jose Luis Solano, said, “I believe that there are very good tourism relations between the two countries as we have many requests each year from Iranians for [obtaining] visas and traveling to Spain.”

Iran is a country that is highly important in terms of culture and it embraces all the necessary attractions for Spanish tourists who like to travel to the country, he added.

“Every year we see an increase in the number of Spanish visitors to Iran, and this is constant growth.”

The diplomat also referred to Iranian arrivals in Spain, saying “Some 19,000 visas were issued to Iranians during the past year.”

## Pre-Hispanic sweat lodge uncovered in Mexico City

A pre-Hispanic sauna, dating back to the 14th Century, has been uncovered by archaeologists in Mexico City.

The remains of the sweat lodge, built with blocks of adobe and volcanic rock, still had its central part where the tub or pool for the steam bath was located, according to Mexico’s National Institute of Anthropology and History.

Places like this, known as a temazcal, originated with indigenous peoples in Mesoamerica, and were permanent structures used for medicinal purposes, spiritual rituals and for women to give birth.

The findings in the historic La Merced neighborhood allowed experts to determine the exact location of Temazcaltitlan, one of the first areas of Tenochtitlan, the ancient metropolis that became modern-day Mexico City.

The excavations also uncovered the well-preserved remains of a house, including walls decorated with red motifs. It is thought a noble indigenous family lived there right after the Spanish conquest in the 16th Century.

(Source: BBC)



## ROUND THE GLOBE

### Wartburg Castle

Wartburg Castle in Germany blends superbly into its forest surroundings and is in many ways “the ideal castle”.

Although it contains some sections of great antiquity, it acquired the current layout over the course of 19th-century reconstructions. This renewal of interest was justified by its symbolic nature for the German people, and today the castle continues to be a symbol of the nation’s past and present.

Its current state is a splendid example of what this fortress might have been at the peak of its military and seigneurial power.



Wartburg Castle is perched at a height of some 400 m above the delightful countryside, south of the city of Eisenach in Thuringia in central Germany. Its varied aspect and the sense of harmony it evokes are only two of its attractions for visitors. What makes Wartburg Castle such a magnet for memory, tradition, and pilgrimage is that it stands as a monument to the cultural history of Germany, Europe, and beyond.

Lutherans the world over know of the castle as the very place where Martin Luther made his translation of the Bible. The veneration of Saint Elizabeth, which extends far beyond the frontiers of Germany, includes Wartburg Castle where she lived and worked.

Thanks to this broad range of religious content and historic data, and because of its significance in the history of the arts, Wartburg Castle attracts around half a million visitors every year, from all over the world.

(Source: UNESCO)

# Iran proposes Croatia to join UN-recognition of Noruz

**HERITAGE d e s k** **TEHRAN** – Iran has put forward Croatia a proposal to join a multinational dossier for Noruz that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization has approved for Iran and several other countries.

“Iran has suggested that the European country could join the Noruz dossier considering that [the new year celebration] is also observed in Croatia,” CHTN quoted deputy tourism minister Mohammad-Hassan Talebian as saying on Monday.

Talebian raised the issue in his meeting with Croatian Ambassador to Tehran Drago Štambuk, noting that cultural relations between the two nations date back to Achaemenid, Sassanid, and Islamic periods.

The ground is fertile for Croatia to deepen cooperation with Iran in the field of intangible cultural heritage, the Iranian official noted.

“One of our suggestions, during this visit, was to organize joint exhibitions in the arenas of cultural heritage, tourism, crafts, and museums,” Talebian said.

Noruz, which usually falls on March 21st every year, marks the beginning of spring across a vast geographical area.

The feast was initially registered on the UNESCO List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2009, as a common tradition for Iran, Azerbaijan, India, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Turkey, and Uzbekistan. However, the five other countries put in requests officially to be added to the list during a meeting held in Tehran in January 2014.

In December 2016, Iran and 11 other countries registered Noruz as a common tradition during the 11th session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

According to the UNESCO, Noruz promotes the values of peace and solidarity between generations and within



Iran deputy tourism minister Mohammad-Hassan Talebian (R) and Croatian Ambassador to Tehran Drago Štambuk pose for a photo during a meeting in Tehran, January 20, 2020.

families, as well as reconciliation and neighborliness, thus contributing to cultural diversity and friendship among peoples and various communities.

Traditions that are practiced in Noruz vary from place

to place, ranging from leaping over fires and streams in Iran to tightrope walking, lighting candles at house doors, traditional games such as horse racing or the traditional wrestling practiced in Kyrgyzstan.

## Tokyo exhibit features ancient Iran-Japan cultural ties

**HERITAGE d e s k** **TEHRAN** – Sets of valuable historical relics from ancient Iran have been recently put on show by International Network for Japanese Art at Tokyo National Museum along with exquisite objects from the formative Asuka and Nara periods (593–794), showcasing the deep cultural ties of the two countries rooted in the historical past.

Visitors were offered a rare opportunity to view exquisite Persian relics such as the 8th-century Gigaku Mask of Suiko-o (Drunken Persian King) and the 8th-century Persian-style Lacquered Ewer together in a single exhibition hall.

The exhibit was held from October 14 to November 24, 2019 in celebration of the enthronement of the emperor Shosoin, according to Tokyo National Museum

website.

The organizers said, “As befits the inaugural year of the Imperial era “Reiwa,” this special exhibition will also provide insight into the history of Japanese culture for international audiences. The significance of these works lies not only in their status as masterpieces passed down by the Imperial Household, but also in their inestimable cultural value that grows with each passing year.”

Japan has recently unveiled a rare discovery of ties between the then mighty empire of the East and people from the then Persia (now called Iran). Results of a research by the Nara National Research Institute for Cultural Properties on previously discovered objects reinforces the idea that at least one Persian man lived

in the ancient city of Nara in the eighth century CE, IRNA reported on January 14.

Experts say that it should come as no surprise that in the 8th century, someone from Persia would end up living and working in Japan, which was located at the end of the Silk Road. The route connected Japan with countries and regions far to the west, including Persia and the Byzantine Empire.

Ancient Japanese culture incorporated a continuum of cultural influences from south and central Asia, as well as from Persia. Many deities and demigods in the Japanese Buddhist pantheon had their origins from other parts of Asia. This statue of an Asura, dating from the 12th century, is thought to have its origins in part from a similar ancient Persian deity.



Gigaku Mask of Suiko-o (Drunken Persian King); Nara period, 8th century; Shosoin (The Shosoin Treasures); (On exhibit from October 14 to November 4, 2019 at Tokyo National Museum)

## Coronavirus outbreak forces Chinese to rethink travel plans

The Lunar New Year holiday in China is the world’s largest annual migration of people, with hundreds of millions of travelers fanning out across the country and the world, and hundreds of billions of dollars spent on hotels, restaurants and shopping.

Now, with a mysterious new pneumonia-like coronavirus that spreads between people, it’s also an epidemiologist’s nightmare.

The authorities are scrambling to control a virus that has sickened more than 440 people, killed nine, and spread around the region and to the United States. Officials are imposing restrictions on travel out of Wuhan, the central Chinese city of more than 11 million at the epicenter of the outbreak, and stepping up screening at transportation hubs. The World Health Organization was expected to hold a meeting on Wednesday to discuss whether to declare the outbreak an international health emergency, which would escalate the global response.

Before the virus emerged, the government had estimated that Chinese travelers would

make three billion trips over the holiday period, also known as the Spring Festival. But on Wednesday, a senior health official delivered a stark warning: the huge tide of travel during the holiday would make it more difficult to contain the outbreak. Li Bin, a deputy head of China’s health commission, also said that the virus could mutate and spread more easily.

Many Chinese have already canceled their travel plans, forgoing vacations and what for some is their only chance to return home for family reunions during the year. The Lunar New Year, a weeklong holiday, begins on Friday, when the country says farewell to the Year of the Pig and welcomes the Year of the Rat.

“After we heard how bad the situation was on Monday, we held a family meeting and decided that it just wasn’t worth the risk,” said Yan Chaowei, 32, a housewife in Shanghai who was planning on taking a seven-hour bullet train to her family home in southeastern Jiangxi Province.

“It just wouldn’t be a relaxing trip, especially with a small child,” she added. “When we finally made the decision to

stay home, we sighed with relief.”

Even some working in the travel industry were nervous. Flight attendants at Cathay Pacific, Hong Kong’s leading airline, publicly lobbied the company to allow them to wear masks during all flights, a request that was granted on Wednesday.

“It will be too late and too painful for all of us and the Company to wait until one of our own is infected,” the airline’s union for flight attendants said in a statement. “The damage caused will be catastrophic.”

In Wuhan, a major transportation hub that is popular among tourists for its colonial architecture, spicy noodles and proximity to the Yangtze River, the authorities have urged residents to stay put and others to avoid visiting. They have stopped short of imposing a full lockdown, but issued a ban on large public gatherings and performances at hotels and sightseeing destinations.

“We recommend that people not come to Wuhan if it isn’t necessary,” Zhou Xianwang, the mayor of Wuhan, said in an interview on Tuesday with the

state broadcaster CCTV.

To encourage travelers to stay away from Wuhan, tour companies are promising penalty-free refunds for hotel bookings and air and train tickets to and from the city. Travel operators are suspending itineraries with stops there, raising concerns of a slump during what is usually one of the most lucrative weeks of the year.

For Chinese companies, the outbreak could deal yet another blow at a time of slowing economic growth.

According to official estimates, Chinese spent \$74 billion on travel and \$145 billion on shopping and food during the Spring Festival holiday last year. The holiday is also one of the most profitable periods for the Chinese box office, but there are concerns that potential moviegoers might stay home to avoid sitting in enclosed spaces with strangers.

Many also take advantage of the weeklong holiday to travel abroad, particularly in the region, but may be forced to change their plans this year.

(Source: The New York Times)

## New U.S.-British treaty guards RMS Titanic wreck site

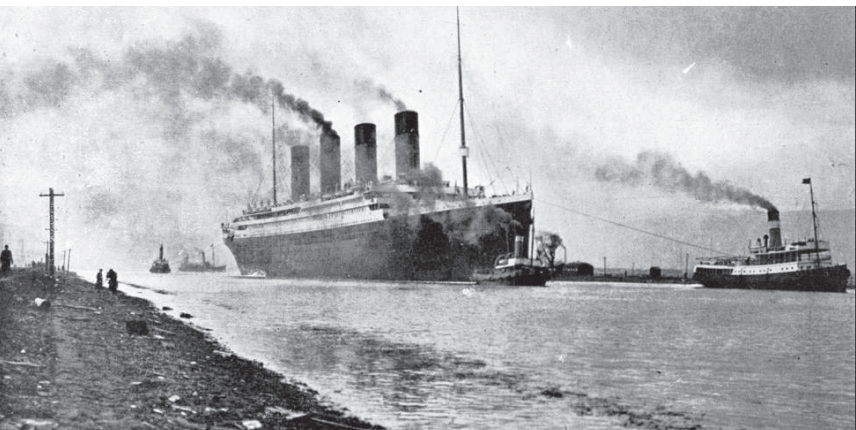
A treaty between Britain and the United States to protect the wreck of the RMS Titanic, which regulates who has access to the historic wreck site, came into force Tuesday.

British Maritime Minister Nusrat Ghani declared the agreement in effect while on a visit to Belfast, Northern Ireland, on the spot where the Titanic was built and first launched in 1912.

Britain signed the agreement in 2003, but it wasn’t ratified by the United States until last year. Under its terms, both governments have the power to grant or deny licenses authorizing entry to the shipwreck or removal of artifacts from it.

Because it is in international waters, the wreck had previously been covered only by basic protections as a United Nations World Heritage Site.

“This momentous agreement with



The new treaty protects the wreck site of the Titanic and controls access to its resting place at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean. File Photo courtesy National Archives

the United States to preserve the wreck means it will be treated with

the sensitivity and respect owed to the final resting place of more than 1,500

lives,” Ghani said in a statement. “The U.K. will now work closely with other North Atlantic States to bring even more protection to the wreck of the Titanic.”

Titanic set sail on its maiden voyage from Southampton, England, on April 10, 1912, but struck an iceberg five days later en route to New York City. It broke apart and sank to a spot on the bottom more than two miles from the surface and wasn’t located until 1985, about 350 nautical miles off the coast of Newfoundland. Since then, thousands of artifacts and a section of its hull have been removed by a private company under an exclusive license.

For years, Britain, the United States and other nations had been negotiating a permanent way to protect the wreck. Ghani said he hopes to persuade Canada and France to also sign the treaty.

(Source: UPI)



# Will aflatoxins pose serious health risks to humans and livestock?

By Faranak Bakhtiari

**TEHRAN** — Milk have always been an important source of calcium and protein for the human, while different contaminants such as aflatoxin can be found in milk mostly due to high aflatoxin exposure through livestock feed, now the question arises that does it pose a serious health threat to humans and livestock?

Aflatoxins are poisonous carcinogens and mutagens that are produced by certain molds (*Aspergillus flavus* and *Aspergillus parasiticus*) which grow in soil, decaying vegetation, hay, and grains. They are regularly found in improperly stored staple commodities such as cassava, chili peppers, cottonseed, millet, peanuts, rice, sesame seeds, sorghum, sunflower seeds, sweetcorn, tree nuts, wheat, and a variety of spices.

When contaminated food is processed, aflatoxins enter the general food supply where they have been found in both pet and human foods, as well as in feedstock for agricultural animals. Animals fed contaminated food can pass aflatoxin transformation products into eggs, milk products, and meat.

In a recently broadcasted TV show, it was announced that dietary products are contaminated with aflatoxin calling on the public to resist milk consumption.

With playing an inevitable role in food pyramid worldwide, avoiding milk is nearly impossible, so it raised people's concern and many started to join the controversial issue.

■ **Iran's aflatoxin level not above global average**

Payam Mohebbi, a veterinary physician, told the TEHRAN TIMES on Tuesday that milk or any dietary products can be contaminated with antibiotics, hormones, paracetamols, pesticides, insecticides, heavy metals, and aflatoxin mold.

Although aflatoxin is harmful, the presence of aflatoxin molds does not prove serious health threats and it highly depends on the level of contaminant, he stated.

Following prolonged exposure to a high-humidity environment, livestock food can be contaminated during storage or even before harvest, he noted, adding, Iran Veterinary Organization have long been making efforts in minimizing milk exposure to aflatoxins.

To do so, they have strictly controlled and supervised the milk factories, and even livestock food. So, over the past 30 years, milk contaminants have highly decreased, he explained.



Payam Mohebbi, a veterinary physician

Organic crops or not pasteurized dietary products may be more susceptible to contamination with aflatoxins, he said.

Mohebbi went on to state that however, the responsible bodies accurately evaluate the performance of various milk collection centers and pasteurized milk factories to ensure the health of their products by periodically monitoring and sampling contaminant levels as well as the amount of aflatoxin.

Currently, countries worldwide have standards for aflatoxin levels in food and feed, in Iran, safe exposure levels for aflatoxin has been defined as a maximum of 10 µg/kg (a µgram is one millionths [1×10<sup>-6</sup>] of a gram), totally compliant with Codex standard, he noted.

The Codex Alimentarius Commission (set to create harmonized international food standards to protect the health of consumers and ensure fair trade practices), has also set the maximum levels for aflatoxins in food, nuts, grains, dried figs and milk are in the range of 0.5 to 15 µg/kg.

European Union has established the allowable levels of aflatoxin in foods as 4 µg/kg to 10 µg/kg.

“So, Iran's standard is not above the global limits, he highlighted, adding, and the state TV should not have announced such a sensitive issue and raise concern over the huge industry.

Milk is totally safe and there is no health threat for the people provided that it is pasteurized by valid factories, he emphasized, calling on people to avoid raw milk,” he said.

■ **Acute poisoning can be life threatening**

According to World Health Organization (aflatoxicosis) that can be life threatening, usually through damage to the liver. Outbreaks of acute liver failure (jaundice, lethargy, nausea, death), identified as aflatoxicosis, have been observed in human populations since the 1960s.

Most recently deaths attributed to aflatoxins were reported during the summer of 2016 in the United Republic of Tanzania. Adults are more tolerant to acute exposure than children. The consumption of food containing aflatoxin concentrations of 1 mg/kg or higher has been suspected to cause aflatoxicosis.

Based on past outbreaks it has been estimated that, when consumed over a period of 1–3 weeks, an AFB1 dose of 20–120 µg/kg bw per day (µgram is one billionth [1×10<sup>-9</sup>] of a kilogram) is acutely toxic and potentially lethal.

■ **Milk consumption reduction can hurt generations**

Elsewhere in his remarks, Mohebbi insisted on the importance of milk in healthy generations, saying that milk consumption reduction can hurt the whole population, as it initially harm women who are playing the society's most vital role as motherhood.

Calcium is of great importance in both adult and infants body, and if mothers are not provided with a good source of calcium there will be deficiencies in the next generations, he explained.

“Over the Iran–Iraq War (1980–1988), due to certain conditions in the country people have decreased milk consumption, and the consequences appeared 30 years later, when an unprecedented growth reported in osteoporosis prevalence among women.

The disease is currently reduced compared to that period, and it demonstrates that milk quality has improved,” he noted.

According to a study done in the Iranian calendar year 1390 (March 2011–March 2012), Iranians consumed 190 ml, less than one glass of milk, of dairy per day, while the recommended use of milk per day is minimum 250 grams to maximum 450 grams.

According to global statistics in 2016, the per capita dairy consumption in Iran was 27 liters while the figure was 125 liters in Ireland and 120 liters in Finland.

■ **Why is dairy so important?**

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), milk is a major source of dietary energy, high-quality protein, and fat. It can make a significant contribution to meeting the required nutrient intakes of calcium, magnesium, selenium, riboflavin, vitamin B12, and pantothenic acid. Milk from some animal species can also be a source of zinc and vitamins A, C, D, and B6.

Milk and dairy products can be important in diversifying the diet. They are nutrient-dense and provide high-quality protein and micronutrients in an easily absorbed form that can benefit both nutritionally vulnerable people and healthy people when consumed in appropriate amounts. It is important to recognize that a combination of food is necessary for a healthy diet and that milk and dairy products are not the only sources of essential nutrients.

The critical window for adequate child growth and cognitive development is between conception and 24 months of age and hence many recent international nutrition initiatives focus on the first 1000 days. The components of milk that are thought to be particularly important to supporting child growth are protein, minerals, and lactose.

There are no global recommendations for milk or dairy consumption. Most countries recommend at least one serving of milk daily, with some countries recommending up to three servings per day. Currently, many national and international bodies recommend consumption of lower-fat dairy foods for developed/high-income countries to address the problems of overweight and obesity.

## Rouhani declares law to reflect U.S. crimes, conspiracies in school books

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — President Hassan Rouhani has declared a law, requiring the government to include subjects in the books of schools and universities to reflect American crimes and conspiracies, IRNA news agency reported on Wednesday.



Rouhani on Wednesday declared the law passed by the parliament to the ministries of education, science, and health, according to the presidential website.

## ‘City-friendly schools’ scheme launched in Tehran

**SOCIETY** **TEHRAN** — The “city-friendly schools” scheme was launched in the capital to promote environmental protection and urban development issues among students, ISNA reported on Wednesday.

Mojtaba Daneshvar, director general of citizenship education at Tehran Municipality, said that the project covers more than 550 schools, consisting of 160,000 students.



It aims to familiarize students with the rights and duties of citizens, the environment, waste, transportation and traffic, safety and security, crisis management, he explained.

The training programs will be in the form of workshops, role plays, cultural and educational camps, production of educational content such as books, brochures and posters, he concluded.

According to a report published by United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in October 2016, in Tehran waste generation per capita is estimated at 750–800 grams per day and each Tehrani citizen generates about 270–450 kilograms of waste per year.

Apart from waste, Tehran is dealing with severe air pollution. Current environmental problems are rooted in the lack of proper awareness and cultural weakness regarding the relationship between man and nature. Under such circumstances, environmental issues have only belatedly been recognized in school activities worldwide.

Effective school programs should not only help students to progress the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary for responsible environmental behavior, but also have the potential to spread awareness of the concept.

## WORDS IN THE NEWS

### Iraqi weapons dossier

(December 09, 2002)

The twelve-thousand-page declaration from the Iraqi government about its remaining chemical, biological and nuclear programs has arrived at UN headquarters in New York. This report from Greg Barrow.

**With little fanfare**, the twelve-thousand page Iraqi declaration was wheeled through the main entrance of the UN headquarters in suitcases. There to receive it was Dr Hans Blix, the head of the United Nations weapons inspection team. For him this information about Iraq's chemical, biological and nuclear programs is a **vital tool**. Experts among his inspection team can **cross-check** it with **existing intelligence**. But more importantly, inspectors inside Iraq can go to specific sites and **establish** from these documents whether Iraq is indeed telling the truth when it claims it has no weapons of mass destruction. The five permanent members of the Security Council -- Britain, Russia, France, China and the United States -- will now **share the task of making an early assessment** of the declaration. In a **surprise move** just hours after it arrived in New York, the Council decided to allow these nations to be among the first to view the documents that could **dictate the course of** military intervention against Iraq.

■ **Words**  
**with little fanfare**: when something happens or is announced quietly and in a way that people don't really notice, it is done with little fanfare  
**a vital tool**: crucial, very important  
**cross-check**: to check something is true by comparing it with other information  
**existing intelligence**: information that the United Nations already has on Iraq  
**establish**: decide that something is true  
**share the task of**: work together on something  
**assessment**: judgement, decision  
**a surprise move**: a decision or action that surprises people  
**dictate the course of**: decide the action taken

(Source: BBC)

## Greta Thunberg blasts Trump over climate change stance: ‘Your inaction is fueling the flames’

Activist Greta Thunberg has launched a scathing attack on Donald Trump's stance over the climate crisis, claiming his “inaction is fuelling the flames”.

Speaking to world leaders and industrialists on the same day the president bragged about the US economy and attacked climate activists as “perennial prophets of doom”, the 17-year-old Swede said Mr Trump's vow to plant more trees was sorely inadequate to address the situation.

“Unlike you, my generation will not give up without a fight. Our house is still on fire,” Ms Thunberg said at the World Economic Forum at Davos, Switzerland, echoing the words she used a year ago at the same event.

“Your inaction is fuelling the flames.”

Trump attacked Thunberg and other activists who have repeatedly urged world leaders to address the crisis they say is rapidly reaching the point where it will soon become too late to act. In a subsequent newspaper interview, Trump repeated his assertion that the teenager was “angry”.

“This is not a time for pessimism. This is a time for optimism,” said Mr Trump. “Fear and doubt is not a good thought process because this is a time for tremendous hope and joy and optimism and action.”

He added: “To embrace the possibilities of tomorrow,

we must reject the perennial prophets of doom and their predictions of the apocalypse.”

She added: “Planting trees is good, of course, but it's nowhere near enough. It cannot replace mitigation.”

The Swede said she was referring to “empty words and promises” by world leaders.

She added: “You say children shouldn't worry... don't be so pessimistic and then, nothing, silence.”

Earlier, Mr Trump, 73, who swiftly moved to withdraw the US from the Paris climate accord when he was elected president, and who has pushed policies critics say have further weakened environmental standards, said Washington was signing an agreement to plant more trees.

Ms Thunberg responded without naming the US president, although it was patently clear who she was referring to.

“We need to start listening to the science, and treat this crisis with the importance it deserves,” she said. “Without treating it as a real crisis we cannot solve it.”

Earlier, Ms Thunberg called on world leaders to listen to young activists who have followed her to Davos this year.

“I'm not a person that can complain about not being heard,” she said. “The science and voice of young people is not the centre of the conversation, but it needs to be.”

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ◀ ▶ ☞

## ‘Pharmaceutical industry unfazed by U.S. withdrawal of nuclear deal’

Given Iran's low volume of imports in pharmaceutical and medical equipment industry, the U.S. withdrawal from the nuclear deal won't affect the industry, the Ministry of Health spokesman said on Wednesday.

“Due to the technical know-how we possess we do not depend on import and we are capable of manufacturing many pharmaceutical products domestically,” ISNA quoted Harirchi as saying.

Harirchi further highlighted that the country has enough foreign exchange reserves and ensured the public that the current conditions won't raise any problems for the pharmaceutical industry.

## PREFIX/SUFFIX

### “fore-”

■ **Meaning**: before or in front

■ **For example**: Can dreams *foretell* the future?

## PHRASAL VERB

### Go about something

■ **Meaning**: to start to do something:

■ **For example**: I want to learn German but I don't know the best way to go about it.

## IDIOM

### Bright-eyed and bushy-tailed

■ **Explanation**: a person who is very enthusiastic and full of energy

■ **For example**: Gary was fantastic. He arrived bright-eyed and bushy-tailed at 7am and worked with us all day.

## سخنگوی وزارت بهداشت: خروج آمریکا از برجام تاثیری بر بازار دارو و تجهیزات پزشکی نخواهد گذاشت؛ چراکه وابستگی مان به دارو و تجهیزات وارداتی بسیار اندک است.

سخنگوی وزارت بهداشت تاکید کرد: خروج آمریکا از برجام تاثیری بر بازار دارو و تجهیزات پزشکی نخواهد گذاشت؛ چراکه وابستگی مان به دارو و تجهیزات وارداتی بسیار اندک است.

دکتر ایرج حریرچی در گفت‌وگو با ایسنا گفت: با تکیه بر توان دانشمندان خودمان و تولیدات مان، وابستگی دارویی مان به محصولات خارجی بسیار اندک است و میزان قابل توجهی از داروها را خودمان تولید می‌کنیم.

وی تاکید کرد: با توجه به توانی که دولت در حوزه ارز و منابعی که برای این حوزه دارد، مردم مطمئن باشند که مشکلی در این زمینه نخواهیم داشت.



## Ekaterini Sakellaropoulou elected Greece's first female president

One of Greece's top judges has become the nation's first female president.

Ekaterini Sakellaropoulou on Wednesday was elected to the largely ceremonial post after her nomination by the ruling conservative party was backed by 261 ministers of parliament in the 300-member Parliament - a rare display of unity in Greece's fractious politics.

The 63-year-old expert in environmental and constitutional law will succeed Prokopis Pavlopoulos, whose five-year term expires in March. Sakellaropoulou will take her oath of office on March 13.

Sakellaropoulou, from the northern city of Xanthi, was also the first woman to head the Council of State, Greece's top administrative court, taking on that role in 2018 with the support at the time of the government led by the left-wing Syriza party, which lost power to New Democracy in an election in July last year.

The daughter of a Supreme Court judge, Sakellaropoulou completed her postgraduate studies at Paris's Sorbonne university.

Sakellaropoulou has written numerous papers on environmental protection and chairs a society on environmental law.

For decades, failure by Parliament to elect a president in Greece could lead to a snap election. Following a recent reform, the process to select a president can go up to five voting rounds in Parliament with the threshold starting at 200 votes and gradually falling to the majority of those present in the room.

The president is nominally the head of the Greek state and commander-in-chief, officially confirming governments and laws. While they technically have the power to declare war, they can only do so in conjunction with the government.

Sakellaropoulou is joining a small group of women leading European Union countries.

(Source: al Jazeera)

## Muddle-Eastern diplomacy: White House confuses Iran and Iraq in YouTube blunder

As President Donald Trump sat down with the world's movers and shakers at Davos, White House staff clearly weren't paying much attention, mistaking Iraqi President Barham Salih for his Iranian counterpart.

"President Trump Participates in a Bilateral Meeting with the President of the Republic of Iran," the title of a YouTube video published by the White House on Wednesday proclaimed.

Hell had not frozen over, however, and Trump had not secretly met with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani unbeknownst to the world's media. Instead, the video clearly showed Trump meeting with Iraqi President Barham Salih.

Indeed, Trump clearly introduces "the president of Iraq" in the first three seconds of the clip.

But the staffer who titled the video can perhaps be forgiven for his or her mistake. After all, they're far from alone. As tensions soared between the U.S. and Iran earlier this month and war seemed inevitable, a Politico poll found that 77 percent of Americans couldn't locate the Islamic Republic on a map of the Middle East. On a zoomed-out map of the world, only two percent of respondents correctly guessed Iran's location.

To be fair, at least they didn't mix up Austria and Australia, a mistake made not only by George W. Bush in 2007 but also CNN in 2016, when it announced Australia was building a fence along its non-existent border with Slovenia.

Whatever the reason, the White House realized its mistake and corrected the video's title later on Wednesday morning.

(Source: RT)

## Iraqi president meets Trump in Davos, discuss foreign troops cut

→ 1 The parliament resolution also urged the Baghdad government to drop a request for assistance from a U.S.-led coalition of foreign troops purportedly operating against Daesh remnants in Iraq.

The Iraqis censured the targeted killings - which were ordered by U.S. President Donald Trump - as a blatant violation of the country's sovereignty as well as the security agreement between Baghdad and Washington.

In a letter to the parliament following the vote, Sadr called for an immediate cancellation of the security agreement with the U.S., the closure of the U.S. embassy, the expulsion of U.S. troops in "a humiliating manner," and the criminalization of communication with the U.S. administration.

Following the parliamentary vote, the office of Iraq's caretaker Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi asked Washington to dispatch a delegation to Baghdad to initiate preparations for the withdrawal of American troops, who number around 5,200.

In response, Trump threatened to sanction Iraq "like they've never seen before ever" if Baghdad were to expel U.S. troops.

Based on reports by the Wall Street Journal the U.S. administration has threatened to shut off Iraq's access to its main account at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, which is used to collect revenues from the Arab country's overseas oil sales, if Baghdad expelled the American forces.

(Source: agencies)

## Trump impeachment: U.S. Senate approves trial rules

→ 1 The day swiftly took on the cadence of a trial proceeding over whether the president's actions towards Ukraine warranted removal from office.

With all 100 senators seated at their assigned desks in the Senate chamber and the Supreme Court chief justice presiding, most senators appeared to be listening carefully with serious looks on their faces. Some took notes. There were very few smiles.

Democrats put forth 11 amendments for subpoenas for documents and witnesses. One-by-one those amendments were debated and then blocked by Senate Republicans holding the 53-47 majority.

Under the rules package passed on Wednesday, evidence from the Democratic House's impeachment hearings will be included in the record - a Democratic demand. Opening arguments will be followed by 16 hours of questions and answers from senators before four hours of debate.

(Source: al Jazeera)

# Lebanon announces formation of new government

The 61-year-old went on to say that, "In this decisive moment, I salute the revolution and the uprising that pushed us towards this and Lebanon has become victorious. We will achieve the social cohesion. There will be accountability."

The former education minister added, "This [is a] government that does not aspire to cronyism and favors. None of the members of the government will be standing for the next elections. This government is made up of non-partisan people who are not affected by political wrangling."

The formation of the new government under Diab came after the Lebanese Hezbollah resistance movement and its allies agreed on a cabinet that must urgently address the economic crisis and ensuing protests that toppled its predecessor.

The country had been without an effective government since Saad al-Hariri submitted his resignation as premier to Lebanon's President Michel Aoun in October.

Since October 17, Lebanon has been rocked by nationwide protests against rising inflation



and living costs as the government struggles to attract investment amid increasing economic hardships and a decreasing capital flow to the country.

Almost 400 people were wounded on Saturday evening during skirmishes between Lebanese anti-government protesters and security forces in Beirut.

Human Rights Watch condemned what it called "the brutal use of force unleashed by Lebanon's riot police against largely peaceful demonstrators."

President Aoun met security chiefs on Monday to work out a plan for security measures that need to be taken to preserve peace and stability in the country.

The protesters blame the faltering economy on widespread corruption and abuse of privileges among politicians as the national debt hovers around \$85 billion.

Successive governments have also failed to address a waste management crisis or improve the electricity grid, which is plagued by daily power cuts.

(Source: agencies)

## Saudi denies report kingdom behind hacking of Jeff Bezos's phone



The Saudi embassy in Washington, DC has dismissed a media report suggesting that the kingdom was behind the hacking of the mobile phone of the Washington Post owner and Amazon founder, Jeff Bezos.

Citing unnamed sources, British daily The Guardian reported on Tuesday that the billionaire's phone was hacked in 2018 after receiving a WhatsApp message that was apparently sent from the personal account of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS).

"Recent media reports that suggest the kingdom is behind a hacking of Mr. Jeff Bezos' phone are absurd," Saudi Arabia's embassy said on its Twitter account.

"We call for an investigation on these claims so that we can have all the facts out."

Recent media reports that suggest the Kingdom is behind a hacking of Mr. Jeff Bezos' phone are absurd. We call for an investigation on these claims so that we can have all the facts out.

Separately, the Washington Post reported that a United Nations investi-

gation will report on Wednesday that Bezos's phone was hacked after he got the WhatsApp message from an account purportedly belonging to MBS, the kingdom's de facto ruler.

Soon after the message was sent, a significant amount of data was extracted from Bezos's phone, the Post said investigators concluded citing a person with direct knowledge with the matter.

The report is set to worsen relations between the world's richest man and the kingdom which had soured following the 2018 murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, who was also a columnist for The Washington Post, inside Riyadh's consulate in Istanbul.

Agnes Callamard, UN special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, and David Kaye, special rapporteur for free expression, said in Twitter posts on Tuesday that they would be releasing a statement on Wednesday addressing the report by The Guardian.

(Source: agencies)

## Netanyahu vows to annex Jordan Valley, all West Bank settlements if re-elected



Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has doubled down on his pledge to annex the Jordan Valley and all the settlements in the West Bank as the Israeli elections draw near.

In a speech launching his right-wing Likud party's election campaign in Jerusalem al-Quds on Tuesday, Netanyahu vowed to "apply Israeli sovereignty over the Jordan Valley and the Northern Dead Sea ... without delay and without any veto of [senior Arab-majority Joint List lawmaker] Ahmad Tibi."

Ahmad Tibi is an Arab member of the Knesset criticized by Israeli politicians for his anti-Zionist positions as well as his close relations with Palestinian parties.

"Not only will we not uproot anyone, we will apply Israeli law to all Israeli settlements without exception," Netanyahu added.

The remarks came hours after Netanyahu's main rival, Blue and White party leader Benny Gantz, said he would work to advance the annexation of the Jordan Valley "in coordination with the interna-

tional community" if he wins the March 2 general elections.

Netanyahu urged Gantz not to wait until after the elections, but rather support the measure if it is brought before the Israeli parliament (Knesset) for a vote.

"Why wait until after the elections if it is possible to apply sovereignty over the Jordan Valley already with broad agreement in the Knesset? Benny Gantz, I expect your answer this evening, unless Ahmad Tibi vetoed you," the Israeli premier said.

Gantz retorted by tweeting, "First we'll discuss immunity and then we'll manage applying sovereignty," referring to Netanyahu's request from the Knesset to be exempt from prosecution in the three corruption cases he is charged with.

In September 2019, right before the last elections, Netanyahu vowed that if re-elected, he planned to annex additional "vital" parts of the West Bank beyond the Jordan Valley and the major settlement blocs, and do so in coordination with the United States.

(Source: press TV)

## Putin keeps key ministers in new Russian government

Russian President Vladimir Putin appointed a new government Tuesday, less than a week after he announced sweeping constitutional reforms and his longtime prime minister resigned. Putin, who said there was a "demand for change" in his announcements last week, kept on key allies.

Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu - both staunch Putin supporters and major policy figures - held on to their positions, as well as the finance and energy ministers, Anton Siluanov and Alexander Novak.

But he replaced several officials in charge of social affairs, including the ministers of health, education, labor and economic development.

Meeting the Cabinet of new Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin for the first time, Putin said its most important task was to "increase the welfare of our citizens and strengthen our state."

"I sincerely wish you success ... it is in the interests of the entire country," the president said during a televised meeting.

Mishustin said the Cabinet would meet right away and focus on boosting economic growth and "improving people's living standards."

The government of Putin's longtime ally Dmitry Medvedev resigned last week, a few hours after the president announced the constitutional reforms.

Medvedev was replaced the next day by Mishustin, the little-known head of Russia's tax service.



The reforms will transfer some authority to Parliament, including the power to choose the prime minister, and beef up the role of an advisory body called the State Council, potentially headed by Putin.

Critics say Putin, 67, could use that position to continue to shape domestic and foreign policy after his fourth Kremlin term ends in 2024.

Mishustin promised "real changes" as he was approved by Parliament, echoing language Putin had used in his state of the nation address announcing the reforms.

Medvedev's approval rating collapsed in recent years as

## Australia evacuates parts of its capital as bushfire conditions return

Some residents of Australia's capital Canberra were evacuated briefly on Wednesday after a bushfire broke out near the airport as searing hot weather ended a few days of respite and the number of out-of-control blazes surged in the southeast of the country.

Roads were closed and the authorities told people to leave or stay away from suburbs east of Canberra, as photos posted on social media showed gray smoke billowing above the city's suburbs. There were no reports of injuries or damage, and the warning was downgraded an hour later.

"I can see the smoke from my house," said Kane Cawse, a gym owner, by telephone as he drove toward his business in the evacuation zone about 14 km (9 miles) from the country's parliament.

"I'm just going to see exactly what's going on, make sure I've got a gym and make sure that the guys are either safe or out," he added.

In recent weeks, Canberra and the cities of Sydney and Melbourne experienced air quality rated among the worst in the world under thick clouds of bushfire smoke.

The fire broke out as a huge dust storm crossed the country's south, leaving skies deep orange and engulfing some outback towns, the Bureau of Meteorology said.

Since September, hundreds of wildfires in Australia have killed 29 people as well as an estimated 1 billion native animals, while

incinerating 2,500 homes and a total area of bushland larger than the size of Austria.

Firefighters had taken advantage of rain and milder temperatures in the past week to contain blazes, but the respite ended on Wednesday when high temperatures and winds returned.

An economic survey on Wednesday meanwhile showed the fires were causing Australians to tighten their purse strings, a sign the natural disaster is putting pressure on the world's 14th-biggest economy.

Economists said the cost to Australia's A\$1.95 trillion (\$1.33 trillion) economy could be as high as A\$5 billion (\$3.4 billion), shaving 0.25 points off gross domestic product

in the December and March quarters, and potentially prompting the central bank to cut rates as early as February.

Consumer sentiment in January was 6.2% lower than a year earlier, according to the Melbourne Institute and Westpac Bank survey released on Wednesday. Consumer sentiment data is considered a leading indicator, running ahead of actual spending data.

The huge bushfires have cut through the country's east coast during the peak summer months when many businesses usually rake in earnings from both domestic and foreign tourists. Agricultural sectors, particularly the dairy industry, have also been hard hit.

(Source: Reuters)



# Rouhani aide criticized the AFC for moving matches out of Iran

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — The Asian Football Confederation's (AFC) decision to move matches out of Iran is unprofessional and political, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's chief of staff, Mahmoud Vaezi, said on Wednesday, according to the official IRNA news agency.

The AFC shifted two preliminary matches in its elite club competition from Iran to other venues because of security concerns, Asian soccer's governing body said on Wednesday.

"This is an unsporting and unprofessional move," Vaezi said. "As we examine it we realize this has become a political issue."

Four Iranian football clubs – Persepolis, Sepahan, Esteghlal and Shahr Khodro – have announced that they will take a strong stand against the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) after it decided to ban them from hosting their rivals in Iran.

AFC has wanted that the Iranian teams would not be hosting AFC Champions League matches for security reasons.



The General Managers of the clubs will travel to Kuala Lumpur to meet senior officials of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) on Thursday.

Shahr Khodro FC were scheduled to host Bahrain's Riffa and Esteghlal FC were set to play Kuwait SC on Tuesday but both Asian Champions League matches were postponed after several governments issued warnings against traveling to Iran.

"To help facilitate the switch to neutral venues, which has been approved by the relevant AFC committees, the AFC will now reschedule the games to January 25, 2020 in the United Arab Emirates," the AFC said in a statement.

Persepolis have been drawn to meet Al Duhail from Qatar, Saudi Arabia's Al Taawon and United Arab Emirates champions Sharjah in the group phase of this year's competition.

Sepahan are slated to meet Saudi champions Al Nassr, Qatar's Al Sadd and a qualifier from the play-offs.

## Esteghlal, Shahr Khodro to meet rivals in UAE: AFC



**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) has announced that two Iranian football teams Esteghlal and Shahr Khodro will have to meet their opponents in the UAE.

Esteghlal and Kuwait SC match was originally scheduled for Tuesday in Tehran but according to the new fixture, the Iranian team should meet their Kuwaiti side at the Alawir Stadium in Dubai on Saturday.

Shahr Khodro, who had to meet Riffa in Mashhad on Tuesday, have to face the Bahraini football club at the Sharjah Stadium in Sharjah on Saturday.

A few days ago, AFC sent a letter to the Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) telling them that they would not be hosting AFC Champions League matches for the foreseeable future.

In response to the AFC's decision, four Iranian clubs – Persepolis, Sepahan, Esteghlal and Shahr Khodro – announced that they will withdraw from the tournament if the AFC insists on its decision.

On Thursday, the General Managers of the four clubs will leave Tehran for Kuala Lumpur to meet the senior officials of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) over the issue.

## Amir Ghalenoei denies Iran national team talks



**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Sepahan head coach Amir Ghalenoei says that he has not negotiated with Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) over the Team Melli hotseat.

Multiple reports in the Iranian sports media suggested that Ghalenoei has had negotiations with some of senior officials of the FFIRI with regard to taking charge of the national team.

However, Ghalenoei, 56, rejected the negotiation rumors: "I haven't talked about leading the Iranian national football team. My focus is only on Sepahan and on the start of the second half-season of Iran Professional League (IPL)."

Amir Ghalenoei is under contract with Sepahan football club.

A few days ago, Ali Daei, another Iranian candidate for taking charge of Team Melli, also said the federation has not negotiated with him.

After the Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI) parted ways with Marc Wilmots, several coaches were linked to Team Melli job, however the federation has not appointed the new head coach so far.

Croatian coach Dragan Skocic, who currently leads Sanat Naft, is reportedly among the foreign nominees to coach Iran national football team.

## New champions to be crowned as Korea Republic, Saudi Arabia make final

Bangkok: The AFC U23 Championship Thailand 2020 final on Sunday is set to be a spectacular affair between the tournament's two in-form teams.

The Continental showpiece will see new champions crowned as Korea Republic will take on Saudi Arabia at Bangkok's iconic Rajamangala Stadium.

Both Asian powerhouses booked their respective tickets to the 2020 Tokyo Olympics by advancing to the final on Wednesday and will now seek to lift the AFC U23 Championship trophy for the first time.

It won't be a first trip to the final for either side, with Saudi Arabia having finished runners-up to Iraq in the inaugural edition in 2013/14 while Korea Republic were denied by Japan in the 2016 final.

Korea Republic have an impressive record in the tournament, having made the semi-finals of all four editions and they will take a perfect record of five wins into the final.

Kim Hak-bum's side swept past their opposition en route to the final, defeating China PR (1-0), Islamic Republic of



Iran (2-1) and Uzbekistan (2-1) in Group C.

The East Asians edged Jordan 2-1 in the quarter-finals and continued their impressive run by seeing off Graham Arnold's Australia in Wednesday's semi-finals.

Saudi Arabia may not be bringing a perfect record into the final but Saad Alshehri's men have been just as impressive.

They opened their Group B campaign with a 2-1 win over 2016 champions Japan, played to a gritty 0-0 draw with Qatar and edged Syria 1-0 to finish top.

The West Asians ended Thailand's spirited campaign with a 1-0 win in the quarter-finals and displayed tremendous discipline and focus to end defending champions Uzbekistan's reign, winning their semi-final 1-0 on Wednesday.

The play-off for third place on Saturday promises to be a sizzler as well as Australia and Uzbekistan will have to quickly forget their disappointment as at stake will be the final berth to the Tokyo Olympics.

Australia are bidding to make the Olympics for the first time since the 2008 Beijing Games while Uzbekistan are seeking a first ever appearance at the global showpiece.

The AFC U23 Championship Thailand 2020 is surely set to see two blockbuster matches.

(Source: AFC)

## Fired-up Federer in ominous touch at Australian Open

Ruthless Swiss master Roger Federer Wednesday said he had "plenty left in the tank" as he kept intact his 20-year record of reaching at least the third round of the Australian Open after crushing Serb Filip Krajinovic.

The six-time champion first played at Melbourne Park in 2000 and has gone on to make the semi-finals or better on 14 occasions, with no exits before round three.

The 38-year-old third seed dominated the 41st-ranked Krajinovic 6-1, 6-4, 6-1 on Rod Laver Arena, stretching his record over him to 4-0.

Federer, who is bidding for a seventh title to match Novak Djokovic's record, and his first since 2018, came into the tournament without playing a warm-up event but has nevertheless looked ominous.

"Very happy, been a great start to the season," he said as he moved a step closer to a 21st Grand Slam title. "I feel really relaxed on court. I've trained hard and you always hope it pays off."

Asked if he felt sorry for Krajinovic, he replied: "I do feel a bit sorry, but you've got to take advantage of it."

Over his two matches so far Federer

has dropped just 13 games, and admitted he preferred easy early encounters rather than tough battles to preserve energy.

"I prefer this much more than overcooked. As easy as it looks, there's always the effort, trying to extend the lead," he said.

"Of course, it's not quite the same stress level if you're down a set or a break or two sets, whatever it may be. I prefer it this way because you have always extra left in the tank if you need it."

He faces a tougher assignment next against Australian John Millman, who beat him in four tough sets at the 2018 US Open.

"He's fit like a fiddle. I've lost to him in the past... he's from this country so naturally also it's going to be different intensity. I think this is going to be a good test for me."

### ■ Steely look

Federer raced through his opening service game against Krajinovic then broke straight-away when the Serb fired a backhand long.

The Swiss was in immaculate touch early and moving well, exhibiting his full repertoire with some deft drop shots and quality groundstrokes.

It was a lightning start and he broke again then held for 5-0 before the Serb finally got



on the scoreboard, only to see Federer serve out the first set in just 20 minutes.

With a steely look in his eyes, he broke again to take a 1-0 lead in the second set.

But Krajinovic, who made two finals last year, regrouped and managed to work a break point at 2-3, but couldn't convert. He got another opportunity at 3-4 and this time didn't waste it.

Clearly irked, Federer broke straight back

with the Serb taking his frustrations out on his racquet, smashing it into the ground.

A double fault from the demoralized Krajinovic handed Federer a break to go 1-0 ahead in the third set and there was no way back against a man operating in a different sphere.

Despite his age Federer remains a competitive force and won four singles titles last year.

(Source: AFP)

## Iran B futsal team to participate at Thailand tourney

**S P O R T S** **TEHRAN** — Iran B futsal team will travel to Thailand to take part at the SAT International Futsal Championship Hat Yai Thailand 2020.

The Iranian team have been drawn along Tajikistan and Kuwait in Group B.

Group A consists of Thailand, Malaysia and Turkmenistan. SAT International Futsal Championship Thailand 2020 will be held in Hat Yai, Songkhla from Feb. 2 to 8.

Iran B will open the campaign with a match against Kuwait on Feb. 2.

The top two teams from each group will advance to semifinals.

## Branko Ivankovic says Iran has no security concerns

**IRNA** — Former Coach of Iran's Persepolis Club Branko Ivankovic said on Wednesday that during his four-year life in Iran, he saw no security concerns in Iran.

Speaking to IRNA, Ivankovic said his long stay in Iran is the best response with regard to national security in Iran.

The Croatian professional football manager expressed hope for solving the problem with Asian Football Confederation not allowing Iranian Football clubs to host their own matches.



He noted the Iranian football spectators are really passionate and have always has massive turnout in Asian Champions League.

Earlier, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for political affairs Abbas Araghchi derided the AFC for a declaration to cancel Iran hosting Asian Champions League, saying Saudis have unfairly misused the air disaster and martyrdom of innocent passengers to their own benefit.

Arguing that flights over Iran are not safe, the AFC announced in a letter on Thursday that the Iranian teams are not allowed to host their own matches in the AFC Champions League and that the games should be held in a third country.

Iranian sports officials and the managers of the four teams to represent Iran in the AFC Champions League, i.e. Persepolis, Esteghlal, Sepahan, and Shahr Khodro, announced that if they are to play in a third country, they will withdraw from the League.

## Iran U19 futsal arrives in Dushanbe for CAFA Championship

**TASNIM** — Iran U19 futsal team arrived in Dushanbe, capital of Tajikistan on Wednesday to take part at the CAFA U19 Girl's Futsal Championship 2020.

The round-robin competition will bring Tajikistan, Iran, Kyrgyz Republic, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Uzbekistan together from January 24 to 29.

Iran will start the campaign with a match against Tajikistan on Friday.

Niloofar Ardalan's girls are also scheduled to meet Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan on the following days.

The Central Asian Football Association (CAFA) is an association of the football playing nations in Central Asia.

## 1st Iranian tennis player to attend France U14 competitions

**IRNA** — Iranian tennis player Kasra Rahmani is to partake in U14 world competitions in France as the first Iranian player under this age category.

The Les Petits As Le Mondial Lacoste is slated to be held on January 27 to February 2.

Athletes from Iran, Ukraine, Belgium, Spain, Bulgaria, Lebanon, India, Romania, Russia, Finland, the Czech Republic, Switzerland, Greece, Poland and Thailand will participate in the event.

## Omani forward Al-Ghassani on Sepahan's radar

**TASNIM** — Iran's Sepahan football team reached an initial agreement with Oman international striker Muhsen Saleh Abdullah Ali Al-Ghassani.

The 22-year-old forward has traveled to Isfahan to undergo a medical and will join the Iranian giant if he passes the tests.

Al-Ghassani was a member of Oman national football team in the 2019 AFC Asian Cup in the United Arab Emirates.

He has most recently played in Omani club Al-Suwaik. Sepahan sit second in the Iran Professional League table, four points behind Persepolis.



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GUIDE TO  
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

I am the ruler of the faithful, and wealth is the ruler of the sinful.

Imam Ali (AS)

## Art Bureau to organize miniature painting exhibition

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Tehran's Art Bureau will be playing host to an exhibition of miniatures under the title "Painting of Heavenly Images" opening on February 3. "Miniature is our national art," the director of the exhibit, Mohammad-Ali Rajabi, said during a press conference on Tuesday and added, "The exhibit will feature over 80 works, some belonging to master miniaturists."

The exhibit will be organized to review the impacts of the 1979 Islamic Revolution on Iran's post-revolution miniature painting. "The works selected to be showcased at the exhibition will later be published in a book, which will represent a live document of the Islamic Revolution art," Rajabi said.

The exhibition will be organized in collaboration with 15 cultural foundations and organizations.

Art critics and experts are also scheduled to attend panel discussions, which will be held at the Iranian Academy of Arts on February 16 and 17.

## "Historical Israelites" reviewing studies on Iran Judaism published

**C U L T U R E d e s k** **TEHRAN** — "Historical Israelites", a study that reviews books on Judaism in Iran, Israel, Zionism and other issues concerning the Jewish religion, has recently been published in Tehran.

Alireza Soltanshahi is the author of the book published by the Foundation of Historical Studies and Islamic Revolution Encyclopedia.

"Historical Israelites" reviews books by Jewish and Zionist writers, whether Iranian or non-Iranian, Soltanshahi wrote in a preface to the book.

All these books, which have been authored with the purpose of promoting ancientism, Islamophobia, anti-Shiism and anti-Semitism in Iran and other countries, were highly regarded after the victory of the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, he added.

## Book City to review essays by British poet Dick Davis

**C U L T U R E d e s k** **TEHRAN** — A selection of British poet and translator Dick Davis's essays about the translation of Persian classical poetry into English will be reviewed in a session at Tehran's Book City Institute next week.

Agah, a Tehran-based publisher, has recently published the articles in a book titled "The Musician in the Garden", which has been compiled and translated into Persian by Mostafa Hosseini.

The book takes its name from "The Musician in the Garden: On Translating Shahnameh", an essay written by Davis.

Scholars Abolfazl Horri, Mohammad Ghaffari as well as translator Hosseini are expected to attend the session on January 28.

Davis was born in Portsmouth, England, and was educated at the universities of Cambridge and Manchester. He is a professor emeritus of Persian at Ohio State University.

He lived for 8 years in Iran, as well as for periods in Greece and Italy. As an author, translator or editor, he has produced 18 books. Besides academic works, he has published translations of prose from Italian and poetry and prose from Persian, and six books of his own poetry.

"Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings", his translation of Persian poet Ferdowsi's masterpiece Shahnameh was chosen as one of the ten best books of 2006 by the Washington Post.

"Belonging" and "A Trick of Sunlight" are among his noteworthy poems.

His other credits include "The Conference of the Birds", "Faces of Love: Hafez and the Poets of Shiraz", and "The Mirror of My Heart: A Thousand Years of Persian Poetry by Women".

# Berlinale to screen "Yalda", "Selfie with Democracy"

**A R T d e s k** **TEHRAN** — The Iranian films "Yalda, a Night for Forgiveness" and "Selfie with Democracy" will be screened during the 70th Berlin International Film Festival.

"Yalda, a Night for Forgiveness" by Masud Bakhshi will compete in the Generation 14plus Section of the festival, Iran's Farabi Cinema Foundation announced on Wednesday.

The film is about a young woman, Maryam, who has been sentenced to death for murdering her husband, Nasser. Iranian law allows for the victim's family to forgive her and spare her life, so Maryam's fate will be decided by Nasser's daughter, Mona, on the country's most popular televised reality show.

In front of millions of viewers during Yalda, the winter solstice celebration, Maryam and Mona discover that forgiveness can be difficult as they relive the past.

Directed by Ali Atshani, "Selfie with Democracy" will be showcased during the European Film Market (EFM), which will be held on the sidelines of the festival, American Brightlight Film Productions, the international distributor of the film, has announced.

Starring Pulad Kimiai and Pejman Bazeghi, the film's story is about the 1980s Iran-Iraq war. It is a sequel to Atshani's 2010 movie "Democracy in the Daylight".

The 70th Berlin International Film Festival will be held from February 20 to March 1.



A scene from "Selfie with Democracy" by Iranian director Ali Atshani.

## Canadian writer Marie-Louise Gay's "Any Questions?" published in Persian



Front cover of Canadian children's writer Marie-Louise Gay's book "Any Questions?"

**C U L T U R E d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Canadian children's writer Marie-Louise Gay's book "Any Questions?" has been published in Persian.

Mahbubeh Najafkhani is the translator of the book, which was published with its original illustrations by Gay herself, the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults that is the publisher of the book announced on Wednesday.

"Sometimes a story starts with words or ideas floating out of nowhere. Some words are captured and written down... while others get thrown out or carefully put away in a drawer for future use. Until slowly, slowly, a story emerges..." Gay wrote in a preface to the book.

"Many children want to know where stories come from and how a book is made," Groundwood Books, the publisher of the original book, wrote in an introduction to book in 2014.

"Marie-Louise Gay's new picture book provides them

with some delightfully inspiring answers in a fictional encounter between an author and some very curious children, who collaborate on writing and illustrating a story," it added.

"Any Questions?" presents a world inhabited by lost polar bears, soaring pterodactyls, talking trees and spotted snails, with cameo appearances by some of Marie-Louise's favorite characters — a world where kids can become part of the story and let their imaginations run wild... and just maybe they will be inspired to create stories of their own," the publisher explained.

Children above seven are the target audience of the book, which has won great acclaims, including the Amelia Frances Howard-Gibbon Illustrator's Award.

Several other books by Gay, including, "Good Night, Sam" and some of the Stella series, have previously been published in Persian.

## Bahram Beizai's "A Study on Iranian Theater" published in Italy

**C U L T U R E d e s k** **TEHRAN** — Celebrated Iranian director and playwright Bahram Beizai's book "A Study on Iranian Theater" ("Storia del teatro in Iran") has been published in the Italian language in Italy.

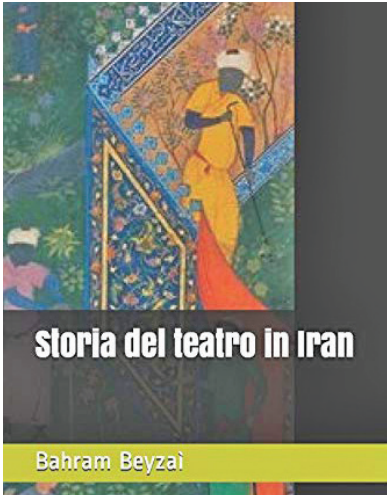
Translated by Italy-based Iranian theater expert Mani Naimi, the book is a research work on the history of Iranian theater from ancient times to the twentieth century.

The book, which was published in 1965 for the first time, is one of the major references in the field.

It has been republished several times by Roshangaran Publications, Beizai's exclusive Persian publisher in Iran.

Beizai's stories, plays and screenplays, as well as his studies on various fields, have been published in over seventy books.

His debut feature, "Downpour", is regarded as one of the most successful Iranian films ever made. Beizai is also an influential figure of Iran's New Wave cinema.



Front cover of the Italian version of Bahram Beizai's book "A Study on Iranian Theater".

## IIDCYA showcases children's books on death

**C U L T U R E d e s k** **TEHRAN** — An exhibition of books with the central theme of death is currently underway at the library of the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA).

The exhibit is entitled "Why the Sky Is Far Away" displaying 75 books by Persian and non-Persian writers.

"Duck, Death and the Tulip" by German author Wolf Erlbruch, "My Father's Arms Are a Boat" by Norwegian writer Stein Erik Lunde and "The Heart and the Bottle" by Irish writer Oliver Jeffers are among the displayed books.

Also included are "Goodbye Old Raccoon" by French-born writer Claire Jobert and "Why the Sky Is Far Away: A Nigerian Folktales" by American author Mary-Joan Gerson.

The exhibit will run until February 19 at the library located at No. 24, Khaled Eslamboli St. off Beheshti Ave.



A poster for the IIDCYA exhibit "Why the Sky Is Far Away".

## Tarantino Gets Honest About Retirement: 'Directing Is a Young Man's Game'

**Los Angeles (IndieWire)** — The end is nigh for Quentin Tarantino, film director. The Oscar winner has been adamant since "Once Upon a Time in Hollywood" opened last July about sticking to his 10-film retirement plan, meaning he only has one feature film left before he gives up directing feature films for good. Tarantino will continue to create art via books, theater projects, and possibly even television series, but his film career is coming to an end at some point in the near future. In a video interview with Rolling Stone's Peter Travers, Tarantino opened up about the personal reasons for giving up moviemaking.

"I kind of feel this is the time for the third act [of my life] to just lean a little bit more into the literary, which would be good as a new father, as a new husband," Tarantino said. "I wouldn't be grabbing my family and yanking them to Germany or Sri Lanka or wherever the next story takes place. I can be a little bit more of a homebody, and become a little bit more of a man of letters."

Tarantino added, "I guess I do feel that directing is a young man's game. I do feel that cinema is changing, and I'm a little bit part of the old guard."

Tarantino's wife Daniella Pick is pregnant with their first child. While Tarantino planned to retire long before becoming a parent, the prospect of fatherhood seems to have only



Quentin Tarantino (Variety/Stewart Cook)

convinced him more that now is the time to turn in the director's chair. Tarantino is currently nominated for three Oscars thanks to "Once Upon a Time in Hollywood"; Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Original Screenplay. The film earned a total of 10 nominations, tying with "The Irishman" as the second most-nominated film of 2020 ("Joker" leads all films with 11 nominations). Tarantino is widely viewed as the frontrunner for Best Original Screenplay, a category he's won before with "Pulp Fiction" and "Django Unchained." Tarantino has yet to win Best Director or Best Picture, and his looming retirement means he's only got two more chances.

As for what movie will be his last, Tarantino is not giving away any clues. One potential contender, an R-rated "Star Trek" movie, has effectively been ruled out by the director.

## Disputed Van Gogh self-portrait is genuine, Dutch research finds

**AMSTERDAM (Reuters)** — A rare Vincent van Gogh self-portrait, which had been contested as a forgery for decades, is a genuine work by the Dutch master, researchers have concluded after six years of study.

The Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam said on Monday that it was probably the only known work by Van Gogh painted during a psychotic episode in the summer of 1889, when he was admitted to hospital in the French town of Saint Remy.

Van Gogh struggled with mental illness throughout his life and died in 1890 aged 37 from a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

The painting was acquired by Norway's National Museum in 1910 for 10,000 French francs, which would have been slightly more than 100,000 euros today based on rough calculations.

The authenticity of the work became a topic of discussion among experts after an article in an international art publication in 1970 said the color palette and use of a pallet knife differed too much from other self-portraits.

"This uncertain situation called for action," said Mai Britt Guleng, curator at Norway's National Museum, which had had the picture on display. "When we in 2014 delivered the work in the hands of the experts at the Van Gogh Museum, we had no expectations."



People look at Dutch post-impressionist painter Vincent van Gogh's self portrait, painted during a psychotic episode, at the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam, Netherlands January 20, 2020. (Reuters/Piroschka van de Wouw)

Van Gogh Museum senior researcher Louis van Tilborgh said a detailed examination of the work proved skeptics wrong.

"If you examine the painting fully, you see there truly are similarities to Van Gogh's other work," Van Tilborgh told journalists during a presentation on the artwork before it went on display for the general public.

The differences first raised as a cause for doubt in fact reflect Van Gogh's own efforts to capture his poor mental state by using darker, or muddled, tones of usually more lively greens and blues, he said.