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Highway to hell

Senior Iranian officials censure Trump's 'deal of the century'



Monthly loading, unloading of goods at Iranian ports up 29% yr/yr

TEHRAN — Loading and unloading of goods in Iranian ports witnessed a 28.7-percent rise in the Iranian calendar month of Dey (December 22, 2019-January 20, 2020), Tasnim news agency reported citing the data from Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO).

As reported, over 10.999 million tons of commodities were loaded and unloaded at the country's 21 ports during the mentioned month, while the figure stood at

8.545 million tons in the previous year's same month.

According to the data, 2.2 million tons of basic goods, over 800,000 tons of metal products, 2.35 million tons of construction and mineral products 30,400 tons of machinery, equipment and spare parts as well as nearly 550,000 tons of fertilizers and petrochemical products were loaded and unloaded in the mentioned time span. **→4**

Health ministry plans to restrict travels from China due to coronavirus

TEHRAN — The Iranian health ministry has issued a statement, calling for the government to ban all recreational travels and restrict work travels from China due to the outbreak of coronavirus.

"Considering that the new coronavirus has been declared a global emergency by the World Health Organization, our country will take

preventive measures in harmony with other countries based on the World Health Organization's protocols," deputy health minister Alireza Raeisi told IRNA on Friday.

He also said that 70 Iranians residing in the Chinese city of Wuhan, which has been hardest-hit by coronavirus, will be returned home next week. **→9**

Khan Tuman liberated from grip of terrorists

SANA — Syrian forces managed to establish full control over a key strategic town in Aleppo following fierce clashes with terrorists in the north-western province.

The army troops liberated Khan Tuman on Wednesday afternoon after fierce fighting with members of the terrorist group Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham, commonly referred to as Tahrir al-Sham, al-Masdar news agency reported,

citing an unnamed military official.

The source added that the development came after Syrian army troops had seized all hilltops east of the town earlier in the day.

The capture of Khan Tuman will enable the Syrian army to secure areas lying on the 450-kilometer-long M5 highway that crosses the country from north to south, from Aleppo to the border with Jordan.

ARTICLE
Mostafa Mousavi Sabet
Head of the Tehran Times
Art & Culture Desk

Political, social dramas lead Fajr Film Festival

The 38th edition of the Fajr Film Festival, which features the major productions of the Iranian cinema every year during February, will be dominated by political and social dramas.

Iranian filmmakers generally give the least information possible about the plots of their movies before the premiere, so it is difficult to write about their productions. Somehow, everything in Iran may be considered political and all roads lead to politics.

Based on the limited information published about the 22 entries in the official competition, four movies of the lineup revolve around political stories from contemporary Iranian history.

"Walnut Tree" is the main highlight of the movies. Director Mohammad-Hossein Mahdavian has fictionalized a true story about Iraq's chemical attack on the Iranian town of Sardasht in 1987, which killed over 1000 and injuring over 8000 civilians, many of whom were permanently disabled. His career in cinema began in 2013 with the docudrama "The Last Days of Winter" about the 27-year-old Iranian commander Gholamhossein Afshordi during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war. In all of his subsequent movies he also focused on political stories from the history of post-revolutionary Iran.

Director Ebrahim Hatamikia is always associated with stories about war and political issues. He has not provided any details about his latest movie "Exodus" ("Exit"), but, due to his background in Iranian cinema, it can be deemed a political drama in advance.

"Abadan 11, 60" directed by Mehrdad Khoshbakht represents people's fight against Iraqi forces in the southwestern Iranian city of Abadan during the early months of the Iran-Iraq war. The film also narrates the key role played by the radio in mobilizing civilians for the battle against the Iraqis.

Behruz Shoeibi, director of "Cyanide" about Mojahedin-e-Khalq Organization's terrorist operations in Iran during the 1980s, is participating in the Fajr festival with "Day of Chaos". **→12**

Trump peace plan – sheer genius – Israel gone by 2022

By Robert David Steele

TEHRAN — Robert David Steele, a former Marine Corps infantry officer and CIA spy as well as an activist for Open Source Everything Engineering (OSEE), contributes regularly to Tehran Times.

President Donald Trump is a genius. The "new" Palestine Peace Plan is a promising first step toward the restoration of Palestine in President Trump's second term, when he can fulfil his most important promise to all Americans, one subtly made by Q Anon: "Zionists last."

Our President knows full well that the Zionists were responsible for 9/11, with planning beginning in 1988 when the Twin Towers were declared a hazard that must be manually dismantled by 2007. The owners — the States of New York and New Jersey, desiring to avoid a \$2 billion dollar

bill, began conspiring with Larry Silverstein, who briefed Benjamin Netanyahu who briefed Dick Cheney who ordered planning to begin for the 2001 false flag event that I document in the 28 memoranda by 26 expert witnesses delivered to President Trump on 8 August 2016: 9/11 Truth.

Our President is also fully familiar with the Mossad pedophilia entrapment and blackmail rings used to control US politicians, judges, prosecutors, media voices, and celebrities. I have documented the Nine Veils of Evil represented by the Ghislaine Maxwell — Jeffrey Epstein pedophilia network, which is but one of over fifty such networks managed by the Mossad in collaboration with rogue elements of the CIA and the FBI — the same rogue elements that traffic in small children, drugs, guns, cash, and gold, to create the massive off-budget funds used to nurture the Deep

State's transnational criminal operations.

It is a huge mistake to react to the President's notional peace plan as if it were real, or in isolation from the looming demise of Zionism. 9/11 and pedophilia disclosures are going to make every Jew in America immediately denounce Zionism and call for the eradication of every organization representing Zionism. The American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) and the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) — like the social media services they control — are going to face massive public condemnation, and massive legal actions to include loss of non-profit status and formal designation as agents of a foreign power (pending the demise of Israel) and anti-trust, Title 7, and tortious interference civil lawsuits from all those censored, defamed, and deplatformed — digitally assassinated — by what we in the USA call #GoogleGestapo. **→7**

Europe's goals to activate Snapback Mechanism: Buy time or take case to Security Council?

By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Britain, Germany and France recently issued a statement in Brussels on trigger mechanism what is known as the "snap-back" mechanism.

In the snap-back mechanism, legally, the dispute resolution sessions will be requested, and after that, the UN sanctions will eventually be returned by referring to UN Security Council, if the Europeans are not convinced.

Under this mechanism, the UNSC take a vote on continue lifting Iran's sanctions, and if US, French or British veto the resolution and does not ratify it within thirty days, then all sanctions will be automatically returned against Iran.

Accordingly, no country, including Russia

and China, will have a veto, not be able to help Iran in this case.

It was on this basis that Russia had stated that this process should not be initiated and that an agreement had to be reached with the Iranian Foreign Ministers in the Brigham Commission.

So Russia opposes Snapback launch, calls for joint commission on conflict resolution with Iran.

If no agreement is reached between the parties of nuclear deal, the six resolutions under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, including Resolution 1929, will be returned against Iran.

If sanctions are returned, Iran must immediately suspend uranium enrichment, and ships headed for Iran can be inspected, which will make the current economic situation even more difficult in Iran.

ARTICLE
Yuram Abdullah Weiler
Analyst and journalist

Trump's peace plan: A realistic solution or a final solution?

"A realistic solution would give the Palestinians all the power to govern themselves but not the powers to threaten Israel."

—Peace to Prosperity

On Tuesday, January 28, 2020, impeached U.S. president Donald Trump, standing with indicted Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, announced his much-vaulted "deal of the century" peace plan for Palestine. Called "Peace to Prosperity," the plan "necessarily entails the limitations of certain sovereign powers in the Palestinian areas" such as self-defense and control of airspace. While touted as a "Two-state Solution," the plan reads more like a blueprint for a final solution to exterminate Palestinian hopes for self-determination.

Standing in the historic White House East Room, the two morally impoverished leaders, one facing an impeachment trial in the U.S. Senate and the other formally indicted on bribery charges, beamed gushingly at one another, while the TV cameras rolled. In a sycophantic rant, Netanyahu called Trump "the greatest friend that Israel has ever had in the White House," to whom he owed "an eternal debt of gratitude." While three Arab leaders, namely the ambassadors from Bahrain, Oman and the United Arab Emirates, were present, notably absent were ambassadors from Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

Of course, there were no representatives of the Palestinian People present for this bilateral publicity stunt mainly organized by Trump son-in-law, Jared Kushner. Viewed as more of an ultimatum from Trump than a peace proposal, the plan effectively scuttles any hope of a real Palestinian state, although it refers to one, after having qualified that the Zionist regime would have full control of borders and airspace. Furthermore, no illegal Israeli settlements would be disturbed under the plan, while Tel Aviv's security control would be expanded to encompass the entire Jordan valley.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, reacting negatively to the plan, remarked, "After the nonsense that we heard today we say a thousand no's to the Deal of the Century," vowing resistance through "peaceful, popular means." **→7**



"The Warden" named best film at Iran critics' celebration

TEHRAN — The acclaimed drama "The Warden" by Nima Javidi has won the award for best film at the 13th Celebration of Iranian Cinema Critics and Screenwriters.

"The Warden," which tells the story of an Iranian prison warden who is assigned to transfer prisoners to a new building during the 1960s, brought Javidi the award for best screenwriter. **→12**

Cleric: Trump's 'deal of the century' nothing but disgrace

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Ayatollah Mohammad Ali Deski Movaheedi Kermani on Friday castigated the so-called U.S. peace plan for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, titled "deal of the century", calling it a "disgrace" and a betrayal of the Palestinian cause.

Addressing worshippers in Tehran, Movaheedi Kermani said, "It is a unilateral decision by the Israeli regime, the U.S. and certain Arab countries."



On Tuesday, the White House claimed that the Trump's deal was the most serious, realistic, and detailed plan ever presented, one that could make Israelis, Palestinians, and the region safer and more prosperous.

"This Vision is just the first step and provides the basis for historic progress toward peace. The United States hopes this Vision will lead to direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians," it added.

Shortly after the Trump's deal was unveiled, the Palestinians took to streets in Gaza and the West Bank to protest conspiracy of Trump favoring Israel at the expense of the State of Palestine.

On Friday, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, Iraq's leading cleric, also "heavily condemned" Trump's so-called peace plan.

Also in a statement on Wednesday, Ayatollah Sistani said the plan is doomed to failure.

According to Alsumaria, the grand ayatollah has called on the Arab world and Muslim nations to rush to Palestinians' aid.

On Wednesday, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi expressed outrage at the plan, saying it is a conspiracy to stir up hatred and violence in the West Asian region.

"The so-called 'deal of the century' is a sheer travesty, conjured up by rogue crooks to shatter the dreams of a long suffering nation for human dignity and self-determination," Mousavi wrote on his Twitter account.

He added, "It is indeed a 'Deveal (devil+deal)', descended to sow everlasting hatred and violence in West Asia."

Also, Iran's President Hassan Rouhani condemned Trump's so-called 'peace plan' for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as "the most despicable plan of the century."

"Enough of these foolish attempts," Rouhani wrote on his Twitter account on Wednesday.

"The Most Despicable Plan of the Century," he added.

Payment mechanism for humanitarian supplies to Iran to take effect

BERN — The Swiss Humanitarian Trade Arrangement (SHTA), a payment mechanism to enable humanitarian goods to be delivered to Iran, is about to be implemented. On 27 January, an initial payment for the shipment of medicines to Iran was approved in the form of a trial run.

The aim of the Swiss Humanitarian Trade Arrangement (SHTA) is to ensure that exporters and trading companies in the food, pharmaceutical and medical sectors based in Switzerland have a secure payment channel with a Swiss bank through which payments for their exports to Iran are guaranteed. In this way, Switzerland is helping to supply the Iranian population with agricultural commodities, food, medicines and medical equipment. This is in keeping with Switzerland's humanitarian tradition.

The SHTA was developed by Switzerland in close cooperation with the relevant authorities in the USA and Iran, as well as with selected Swiss banks and companies. Under the SHTA, the US Department of the Treasury will provide the banks involved with the necessary assurances that the financial transactions can be processed in accordance with US legislation.

In return, exporters and banks participating in the SHTA will provide SECO with detailed information about their business activities and business partners in Iran, and the transactions they carry out. SECO will verify this information and, in cooperation with the US Treasury Department, ensure that increased due diligence has been exercised in respect of the transactions carried out. To this end, SECO will also make the information received from the banks and exporters available to the US Treasury Department.

Negotiations on the SHTA are nearing completion. SECO, together with the FDFA and the State Secretariat for International Financial Matters SIF, has been working intensively since the end of 2018 to implement such a humanitarian payment mechanism. The Federal Council approved the implementation of the SHTA in principle on 20 January 2020.

As a pilot transaction, an initial payment for the shipment of medicines to Iran by a Swiss pharmaceutical company was authorised on 27 January. The shipment consists of cancer drugs and drugs required for organ transplants. The medicines are valued at approximately EUR 2.3 million. As the SHTA is not yet in force, the US Treasury has given the necessary assurances to the Swiss bank involved for this specific transaction.

Since the US withdrew from the nuclear agreement with Iran in May 2018 and reintroduced unilateral US sanctions, it has become increasingly difficult for Swiss exporters to supply humanitarian goods to Iran, although such shipments are in principle not subject to US sanctions. Due to the legal risks associated with US sanctions, hardly any financial institutions are willing to make payments in connection with Iran. The few remaining payment channels are expensive, complex and not very reliable.

(Source: State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO)

Pentagon raises number of U.S. troops injured in Iran missile attack to 64

The Pentagon has yet again raised the figure of soldiers wounded in Iran's retaliatory missile attack in Iraq earlier this month to 64, saying they have suffered "traumatic brain injuries".

According to Press TV, Pentagon chief Mark Esper and chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Mark Milley said Thursday the military took these types of injuries "very seriously" after criticism that the authorities sought to whitewash them.

"The number is growing," Milley added, explaining that it takes time to diagnose and screen soldiers present in the area at the time of the attack.

The New York Times cited a Pentagon statement, which put the total number of injured troops at 68.

The report said eight troops were currently being treated in the United States, 21 in Landstuhl, Germany and that another 39 injured troops have returned to military operations in Iraq.

The new tally marks at least the fourth instance where U.S. officials have raised the number of U.S. troops injured following Iran's January 8 missile attack in response to Washington's assassination of top anti-terror commander General Qassem Soleimani on January 3.

The Trump administration at first claimed that no Americans had been injured in the attack.

"We suffered no casualties, all of our soldiers are safe, and only minimal damage was sustained at our military bases," President Donald Trump said a day after the missile strike.

A week later, however, the U.S. military said 11 had been injured in the attack.



Last Friday and on Tuesday, the tally was brought to a total of 34 and 50 respectively, drawing added scrutiny and criticism against the Trump administration's initial claims of no casualties.

Trump has, nonetheless, sought to play down the reports, saying he "heard they had headaches".

"I don't consider them very serious injuries relative to other injuries I have seen," he said last week.

The comments were slammed by Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), the oldest major American veteran organization which demanded Trump to apologize for his remarks.

"Traumatic brain injury (TBI) is a serious

injury and one that cannot be taken lightly. TBI is known to cause depression, memory loss, severe headaches, dizziness and fatigue — all injuries that come with both short- and long-term effects," VFW national commander William Schmitz said.

Speaking on Thursday, Esper sought to defend the president.

"He's very concerned about the health and welfare of all of our service members, particularly those that were involved in our operations in Iraq," he said.

■ Soleimani's assassination order 'troubled' U.S. officials

An NBC report detailing the events surrounding Trump's order to assassinate General

Soleimani said the measure "troubled" many current and former American military and intelligence officials.

"Gobsmed," was the single-word reaction of a former CIA officer the NBC claimed had "spent a career" working against Gen. Soleimani.

The report said U.S. officials feared that the decision, taken in presence of "a very small group of senior leaders", could set in motion "a full-scale war" that could greatly damage the world economy and get the U.S. stuck in "yet another Middle East quagmire".

The report said U.S. commanders in Iraq anticipated numerous different forms of attacks following the assassination, from Iranian suicide drone strikes to land attacks by Iraqi fighters.

Along with General Soleimani, top Iraqi commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis was also assassinated in the drone strike. He was the second-in-command of Iraq's anti-terrorist Popular Mobilization Units (PMU).

Many American politicians have decried Trump's assassination of Gen. Soleimani as a dangerous provocation which risks bogging the U.S. down in yet another dangerous military conflict in the region.

On Thursday, the U.S. House of Representatives passed two pieces of legislation aiming to contain Trump's war powers.

The U.S. assassination of the Middle East's most prominent anti-terror commanders prompted tens of millions in Iraq, Iran, India, Pakistan and elsewhere to take to the streets and vent their anger at the United States.

Iranians turned out in numbers unmatched in its history to honor the charismatic commander and call for revenge.

Highway to hell

Senior Iranian officials censure Trump's 'deal of the century'

POLITICAL TEHRAN — A number of senior Iranian officials have lashed out at the so-called U.S. peace plan for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict titled "deal of the century".

The reactions by the Iranians came after U.S. President Donald Trump announced the general provisions of the plan at the White House with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at his side on Tuesday.

Iranians called the plan "highway to hell", "most despicable plan of century", "Deveal (devil+deal)", "shameful, deceptive plan of century", etc.

The White House claimed that the plan is the most serious, realistic, and detailed plan ever presented, one that could make Israelis, Palestinians, and the region safer and more prosperous.

"This Vision is just the first step and provides the basis for historic progress toward peace. The United States hopes this Vision will lead to direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians," it added.

Palestinians took to streets in Gaza and the West Bank to protest the plan according to which Trump favors Israel at the expense of the State of Palestine.

■ Zarif says the plan is "nightmare for the region and the world"

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said in a tweet on Tuesday that Trump's "so-called 'Vision for Peace' is simply the dream project of a bankruptcy-ridden real estate developer."

The foreign minister added the plan was a "nightmare for the region and the world and, hopefully, a wake-up call for all the Muslims who have been barking up the wrong tree."

Zarif also called for global unity for the Palestinian cause, saying the so-called peace plan was considered as "sleepwalking into catastrophe".

In another tweet on Wednesday, Zarif asked: "Could Mandela ever have imagined re-emergence of BANTUSTANS, decades after liberation of South Africa?"

The chief diplomat likened the so-called "vision for peace" as the "highway to hell". "Vision for Peace" looks more like "Highway to Hell".

The foreign minister also said Muslims

must "wake up" to this plot as the United States has proven that it has never been an "honest broker" in mediation between the Palestinians and the Zionist regime of Israel.

"We Muslims need to wake up: The U.S. never was—and can never be—anything resembling an honest broker."

Writing on his twitter account on January 27, before the formal unveiling of the plan by Trump, Zarif also suggested that it is better that the self-claimed "champions of democracy" accept Iran's democratic solution for the more than seven decades of conflict in the occupied territories.

"Instead of a delusional 'Deal of the Century'—which will be D.O.A.—self-described 'champions of democracy' would do better to accept Iran's democratic solution proposed by Ayatollah @khamenei_ir."

He said this proposal gives the right of the vote to all inhabitants of the occupied territories to decide about their future.

"A referendum whereby ALL Palestinians—Muslim, Jew or Christian—decide their future."

■ Foreign Ministry: Trump's plan to stir up hatred, violence in region

On Wednesday, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi expressed outrage at "deal of the century", saying it is a conspiracy to stir up hatred and violence in the West Asian region.

"The so-called 'deal of the century' is a sheer travesty, conjured up by rogue crooks to shatter the dreams of a long suffering nation for human dignity and self-determination," Mousavi wrote on his Twitter account.

He added, "It is indeed a 'Deveal (devil+deal)', descended to sow everlasting hatred and violence in West Asia."

■ Rouhani calls plan the 'most despicable plan of century'

On Wednesday, President Hassan Rouhani condemned the so-called peace plan as "the most despicable plan of the century".

"Enough of these foolish attempts," Rouhani wrote on his Twitter account on Wednesday.

"The Most Despicable Plan of the Century," he added.

■ Leader's advisor slams Trump's

plan as "shameful, deceptive plan of century"

On Thursday, Ali Akbar Velayati, a senior adviser to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Khamenei denounced Trump's anti-Palestine Middle East scheme as "the shameful and deceptive plan of the century," which is "doomed to failure".

While condemning the so-called peace plan, Velayati said the World Assembly of Islamic Awakening considers it necessary for all Palestinian factions to close their ranks as a "comprehensive strategy aimed at thwarting the ominous goals" of Trump's plot.

He referred to the Palestinian cause as "the most important" issue facing the Muslim world, saying Muslims are obliged to throw "unequivocal support" behind Palestine by "using all material, spiritual and media capacities, public diplomacy, holding rallies and enlightening public opinion."

■ Parliament speaker: Deal of the century total is disregard for international law

Iranian Parliament speaker Ali Larijani said in a letter to his Muslim counterparts on Wednesday that the so-called "deal of the century" is total disregard for international law, conventions and UN resolutions and the charters of the Arab League and Organization of the Islamic Cooperation requiring to resolve the Palestinian issue.

In his letter, Larijani expressed outrage at the U.S. president's act to unveil the fake "deal of the century".

He also urged the Islamic countries to stand against this plan and solve Palestinian crisis by supporting a referendum in the occupied territories by reinforcing parliamentary diplomacy.

■ Top commander: Liberation of al-Quds number one priority of Muslim world

On Thursday, Iran's military chief also reacted to the unveiling of the so-called deal of the century, urging the Muslim countries around the world to reinforce their solidarity by overcoming their existing rifts in the face of the U.S. and Israel's attempts to prevent liberation of the occupied Palestinian territories, most notably the holy city of al-Quds.



Pakistan firm to expand border security cooperation with Iran

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Pakistan's Interior Minister Ijaz Ahmed Shah said on Thursday that Islamabad is determined to expand cooperation with Iran in various areas of border security and fight against terrorism and drug trafficking.

During a meeting with Mohammad Ali Hosseini, Iran's ambassador to Pakistan, Shah stressed on religious and social affinities. For his part, Ambassador Hosseini said, "It is unavoidable to boost security in borders to help sustainable development of the region and also well-being of the people of the two countries, especially those who reside in border areas."

He also extended Iranian Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli's invitation for Shah to visit Iran.

Iran and Pakistan held their 23rd border meeting in the Pakistani province of Baluchistan on January 1.

The Iranian and Pakistan officials exchanged views over



various issues, including expansion of trade ties, restoration of sustainable security to common borders, joint campaign

against terrorism, countering illegal crossing at borders, and anti-drug trafficking cooperation.

Ahmad Ali Mohebbati, governor of the southeastern border province of Sistan-Balouchestan, said in November 2019 that the Iranian government had decided to withdraw 100 million dollars from the National Development Fund (NDF) to seal borders with Pakistan.

"This amount of money will speed up the work but will not be enough," Mohebbati told IRNA.

The provincial governor added, "Iran cannot seal the borders unilaterally and has reached agreements with Pakistan in this respect and this country [Pakistan] has also started sealing the borders."

"Pakistan has sealed 50 kilometers of the borders by constructing barbed wire and fences," he said.

He also said that sealing the borders will not cause any trouble to those residing in the area.

Sanctions on Salehi prove 'maximum pressure' policy has reached dead end: Tehran

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has denounced a recent move by the United States to impose sanctions against Iran's nuclear chief, Ali Akbar Salehi, saying the move proved that the U.S. policy of "maximum pressure" against the Islamic Republic has reached a "dead end".

"Dr. Salehi is a prominent political figure and Iran's outstanding nuclear scientist, and under his leadership, our country's nuclear science is reaching the highest scientific and practical levels today," Araghchi said in a post on his Instagram account on Friday.

"The sanctions on Dr. Salehi only shows America's anger and desperation from the dead-end policy of maximum pressure," he added.

The U.S. Treasury Department announced on Thursday that Washington has imposed sanctions on the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) and its chief, Ali Akbar Salehi.

However, sources said the U.S. will once again waive its sanctions on Russian, Chinese and European firms that work at four Iranian nuclear facilities, Press TV reported, citing Reuters.

The U.S. Treasury will issue waivers to sanctions that bar non-U.S. firms from dealing with the AEOI, the sources told Reuters on condition of anonymity.

The waivers will allow those countries to continue working at the heavy water reactor in Arak, the Fordow enrichment facility, the Bushehr nuclear power plant and the Tehran research reactor.

The U.S. State Department was expected to make an announcement about the new sanctions later on Thursday.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi also condemned the new sanctions, saying they will not hamper the Islamic Republic's peaceful nuclear activities.

"Imposing sanctions on this prominent



scientific and political figure, which has been made only out of desperation, will have no effect on the development of the Islamic Republic of Iran's peaceful nuclear program," Mousavi said on Friday.

"This is not the first time that he has been placed on the list of illegal and unilateral sanctions, just as it is not the first time that our nuclear scientists have been

the target of the animosity of the U.S. and the Zionist regime," he said.

The spokesman of the AEOI has also said the move only reflects Washington's desperation.

Speaking to Fars on Thursday, Behrouz Kamalvandi said despite these sanctions "Iran's nuclear program will continue with full force depending on the country's needs."

"Imposing sanctions on this prominent scientific and political figure, which has been made only out of desperation, will have no effect on the development of the Islamic Republic of Iran's peaceful nuclear program," Foreign Ministry spokesman Mousavi says.

He said such futile efforts by Washington will have no impact on the Islamic Republic's resolve.

Kamalvandi also reacted to remarks by Brian Hook, the U.S. special representative for Iran, who has claimed that Washington has sanctioned the AEOI and its chief because Iran had started new violations of its 2015 nuclear agreement with world powers.

Given its withdrawal from the deal and its violation of it commitments, the U.S. "is in no position" to comment on the manner in which Iran adheres to its nuclear obligations, the spokesman concluded.

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

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.

Army chief: The Islamic Revolution has protected the region from terror, conspiracies

POLITICAL TEHRAN — The Islamic Revolution has protected the region against seditions and conspiracies by terrorist groups and foreign powers, Army Chief Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi has said, days before the anniversary of the revolution's victory.



In a message, General Mousavi congratulated the "great Iranian nation" on the revolution's anniversary, saying the Islamic Revolution was the loudest voice in the contemporary era, Mehr reported on Friday.

The Army of the Islamic Republic of Iran is standing strong in safeguarding the revolution's ideals and the Iranian nation's interests and security and will never let the enemies undermine the country's security and power.

The Islamic Revolution occurred as a result of a series of events in 1979 that involved the overthrow of the last monarch of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, and the replacement of his government with an Islamic republic under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini.

The event, which falls on February 11, is celebrated each year across Iran.

Iran seeks security for all: diplomat

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Mohammad Ali Hosseini, Tehran's ambassador to Pakistan, said on Thursday that Iran seeks security for all and will remain harbinger of regional peace, security and development.

"Obviously, steps by all neighbors, especially Pakistan, are very important on this path," he said during a speech at a security conference in Islamabad.

He also said that the regional countries must abandon the illusion of "buying security" from extra-regional countries, urging them to cherish the path of regional cooperation.

Hosseini also pointed to Iran's Hormuz peace initiative to help peace and stability in the region.



At the United Nations summit in New York in late September 2019, Iran officially unveiled the proposal for regional security.

"Based upon the historical responsibility of my country in maintaining security, peace, stability, and progress in the Persian Gulf region and Strait of Hormuz, I would like to invite all the countries directly affected by the developments in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz to the 'Coalition for Hope', meaning Hormuz Peace Endeavor," President Hassan Rouhani told the UN delegates.

Foreign Minister Zarif has invited all regional states to join the peace plan for securing the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz.

In a tweet in September, Zarif said the initiative entails "dialogue, confidence-building, freedom of navigation, energy security, non-aggression, and non-intervention".

In a post on his Twitter account on October 15, 2019, Zarif renewed Iran's call to all countries bordering the Persian Gulf to join Tehran to "forge a blueprint for peace, security, stability, and prosperity" in the region.

The Strait of Hormuz is a strategic artery linking the Middle East crude producers to key markets in the Asia Pacific, Europe, North America and beyond.

Separating Iran and Oman, it connects the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea. It is 21 miles wide at its narrowest point, but the shipping lane is only two miles wide in either direction.

UK inclined to boost new round of ties with Iran: envoy

TEHRAN (MNA) — Iranian Ambassador to the UK Hamid Baedinejad in a message on Friday talked of the UK government's tendency to expand new round ties with Iran.

"UK government is inclined to improve a new round of ties with Iran but there are some challenges to overcome to reach the optimum point," Baedinejad wrote on his Twitter account on Friday.

He further described the U.S. sanctions as the main challenge for convergence of Iranian and British financial markets.

Referring to the mutual agreements between the two sides under the Iran nuclear deal (JCPOA), he lamented that they have not been implemented thanks to Trump's anti-Iranian policies and the threats leveled at the banking sectors.

He noted that the measures taken by the two countries are proof of the possible capacities to increase Tehran-London economic relations.

Rome is eager to safeguard ties with Tehran, says Italian FM

POLITICAL TEHRAN — Italian Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio has said his country is eager to maintain and safeguard its long-standing and profound relations with Iran.

Di Maio made the remarks during a phone conversation with his Iranian counterpart, Mohammad Javad Zarif, Press TV reported on Tuesday.

The two sides also touched upon the current situation in the Persian Gulf region.

Italy deems the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), as a pillar of security for the Middle East, the Italian foreign minister said.

Economic and cultural interests play a major role in driving Italian-Iranian ties. For many years, and



before the re-imposition of sanctions by the U.S., Italy competed with Germany for being ranked as Iran's top trading partner.

Di Maio also emphasized the importance of avoiding any further actions that might escalate tensions in the region. He added that constructive commitment is required by all the players involved, through dialogue and political negotiation.

The U.S. has imposed a series of sanctions on Iran which have affected trade ties between Rome and Tehran, hurting dozens of Italian firms.

According to the Italian embassy in Iran, trade volume between the two countries has dropped from about five billion euros in 2017 to 1.2 billion euros in 2019 due to the U.S. sanctions.

Tehran censures Saudi support for Soleimani assassination



POLITICAL TEHRAN — Tehran has condemned Riyadh for backing the United States' assassination of Iran's top general Qassem Soleimani, saying such stance makes Saudi Arabia a complicit in the crime.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said it was "regretful and reprehensible" that Riyadh "falsified all transparent international regulations" to call the American crime an act of "legitimate self-defense," Press TV reported.

Mousavi made the remarks on Monday, a day after Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud said he agreed with his American counterpart Mike Pompeo that the region was "safer" following General Soleimani's martyrdom in an interview with the CNN.

The Saudi official also said he believed the U.S. had acted in "their own legitimate self-defense" by assassinating General Soleimani, who was the most prominent regional commander in the fight against terrorism.

In his remarks, Mousavi reminded Saudi Arabia that the terrorist U.S. military carried out the assassination on another country's soil, inside a civilian airport, and against an official guest of the host country, which Iraq itself decried as a violation of domestic laws and international legal principles.

He advised the Saudi diplomat to read

up on the definition of "legitimate defense" in international legal sources.

Such expression of support makes the Saudi regime complicit in the crime, which was perpetrated on U.S. President Donald Trump's direct order, said the spokesman.

Trump ordered strikes that martyred Lieutenant General Soleimani, chief of the IRGC Quds Force, and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the second-in-command of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), on January 3.

In the early hours of January 8, the IRGC attacked the U.S. airbase of Ain al-Assad in Anbar province in western Iraq as part of its promised "tough revenge" for the U.S. terror attack. Brian Hook, the U.S. special representative for Iran, told the Arabic-language daily Asharq al-Awsat on January 23 that Esmail Ghaani, who is successor of Lieutenant General Soleimani, could also be assassinated.

Chief of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) responded to the remarks, warning the U.S. and Israel that none of their military commanders will be safe should they take action against Iranian generals.

"The Americans and the Zionists beware that if they threaten our commanders with assassination and if they implement their threat, life of none of their commanders will be safe," Major General Hossein Salami said on Monday, according to Mehr.

U.S. House passes legislation to stop Trump from a war with Iran



By staff and agency

The U.S. House of Representatives passed two pieces of a legislation on Thursday seeking to limit President Donald Trump's ability to go to war with Iran.

According to Reuters, the Democrat-led House voted nearly along party lines to pass one measure that would prohibit military action against Iran without congressional approval. It also voted to repeal the 2002 Authorization for the use of Military Force for the war in Iraq, which presidents have long used to justify a range of military actions.

The vote for the first measure was 228 to 175, as four of Trump's fellow Republicans joined Democrats in backing the bill and three Democrats joined most Republicans in voting no. The vote for the second was 236 to 166, with 11 Republicans voting yea and two Democrats voting nay.

"The Constitution gives Congress, not the president, the power to declare war. And with President Trump taking steps toward dangerous conflict with Iran - without any consultation with Congress - we need to reassert the responsibility given to us," Democratic Representative Eliot Engel, chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, said in support of the legislation.

In an interview with Geo News

published on January 25, Engel criticized Trump for beating drums of war against Iran.

"The United States, frankly, has been involved in too many wars in the last twenty years. And, I think it's time to back off and not have a perpetual war," he said.

He also called assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani "an ill-advised action".

Many members of Congress, including some Republicans, have been pushing the administration for more information about assassination of Soleimani, Reuters reported.

Trump did not inform Congress about the drone strike until after it took place and then, according to many lawmakers, his administration held back too much information about the reason for the strike and its legal justification.

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.

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	427139.4
IFX	5404.45

Sources: tse.ir, ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	46,266 rials
GBP	54,665 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$57.45/b
WTI	\$52.40/b
OPEC Basket	\$61.04/b
Gold	\$1,580.40/oz
Silver	\$17.89/oz
Platinum	\$973.25/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Monthly loading, unloading of goods at Iranian ports up 29% yr/yr

Based on the data by PMO, Emam Khomeini port in southwestern Iran, witnessed the highest increase in loading and unloading of goods in the said period, as the port's performance rose by 104 percent year-on-year.

Some 3.8 million tons of commodities were loaded and unloaded in this port in the mentioned period while the figure reached 1.8 million in the last year's same month.



According to the released data, over 8.985 million tons of commodities were loaded and unloaded at the ports of Iran during the ninth Iranian calendar month of Azar (November 22 – December 21, 2019), registering a 31-percent fall from that of the same month in the past year.

S. Korea ready to take action against economic fallout from new coronavirus

South Korea said Friday it is ready to take action to reduce the impact of the new coronavirus on Asia's fourth-largest economy.

The country reported its seventh case of the novel virus earlier in the day despite enhanced quarantine efforts to stem its spread. "So far, the (outbreak) has not had a significant impact on our economy," Vice Finance Minister Kim Yong-beom said during a meeting with economy-related vice ministers.

The remark came as the global financial market has been facing uncertainties amid jitters over the spread of the new virus, which could potentially hurt the local economy by weighing down on business and consumer sentiment.

China is South Korea's top trading partner.

Kim said South Korea will continue to monitor the global economy and financial markets and take preemptive action if necessary.



Finance Minister Hong Nam-ki also said on social media that the country will spare no efforts to support its economy despite the escalating fear over the novel virus.

"Although the issue is having a limited impact on economic indicators, we are still making efforts to minimize the possible fallout," Hong said. "South Korea will roll out thorough quarantine operations so that the simmering signs of economic recovery will lead to an actual rebound of the economy." South Korea's overall industrial output gained 1.4 percent in December from a month earlier. Production, retail sales and investment all gathered ground for the second consecutive month.

A day earlier, the central bank hinted it is not considering rate cuts to cope with the growing economic uncertainties stemming from the virus.

The virus has killed 213 people so far and infected nearly 10,000 people across the world.

The new coronavirus, first reported on Dec. 31, 2019, was originally believed to be passed to humans from animals but is now known to be transmissible from person to person, although victims may be contracting the virus by coming into contact with saliva and other bodily fluids rather than through airborne factors.

(Source: urdupoint.com)

TEDPIX up 4% in a week

ECONOMY TEHRAN — TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), rose 15,928 points, or four percent, to 427,139 during the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday), IRNA reported.

Also, the value of trades climbed 16 percent to 16.418 trillion rials (about \$390.9 million) at TSE in the past week, the same report confirmed.

As previously reported, TSE witnessed

the highest ever weekly rise of its main index, TEDPIX, in the Iranian calendar week ended on January 17, which was the last week of Iran's tenth calendar month of Dey.

The index rose 45,638 points, or 12.9 percent, during the mentioned week to stand at 399,445 points.

As reported, 27.689 billion securities valued at 149.793 trillion rials (about \$3.56 billion) were traded through 2.151 deals at TSE in that week, experiencing growth of



12.9 percent and 33.7 percent in the number and value of traded securities, respectively, while 54.2 percent rise in the number of trades.

Over \$476m in loans allocated for supporting non-oil exporters

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Iranian banks are going to pay 20 trillion rials (about \$476.2 million) of low-interest-rate facilities to the country's exporting companies, IRNA reported, quoting the country's industry, mining and trade minister.

Reza Rahmani noted that following his ministry's plans for promoting non-oil exports, the banks are going to provide exporting companies with facilities with a 14.5-percent interest rate.

He mentioned the re-injection of foreign currency into the country's economy by exporting companies, saying: "The rate of the return of foreign currency earned by exporters this year has been several times higher than the previous year, and this reflects better decision-making in this area."

Referring to Iran's free trade deal with the Eurasian Union, Rahmani said, "We have negotiated with some of these countries about preferential and free tariffs."

Increasing non-oil export to the neighboring countries has become one of the major plans that the Iranian government is pursuing in the current Iranian calendar year (began on March 21, 2019).

Back in August 2019, Deputy Industry Minister Hossein Modares Khiaabani said his ministry was planning to increase the value of Iran's non-oil exports to its 15



neighbors up to \$50 billion.

"Our goal is to be able to meet five percent of our neighboring countries' needs, which would amount to more than \$50 billion a year considering the total import of all the 15 countries which is at least \$1 trillion annually," he said.

The country's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) also prepared a "Non-Oil Export Support Package" for the rest of the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 19, 2020), which was approved by Iran's Resistance Economy Headquarters last week.

According to TPO Head Hamid Zadboum, in this package, various incentives have been considered for exporters, which will be provided for them based on the priorities determined in the package.

Iranian agricultural parks' output at over 80,000 tons

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Managing Director of Iran's Agricultural Parks Company (APC) says more than 80,000 tons of agricultural products have been produced in the country's agricultural parks since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2019).

"This year, the production of agricultural parks has reached 80,000 tons, however, considering the output from the subsidiary companies the total production would exceed 183,000 tons," IRIB reported, quoting Ali-Ashraf Mansouri as saying.

Mansouri said: "as an influential company in providing food security, APC is committed to ensuring productive prosperity, sustainable employment, protecting water and soil resources, improving exports, utilizing the country's resources and facilities as well as attracting investment in order for agricultural development in the country."

"The company could play a significant role in reducing the impact of U.S. sanctions by expanding agricultural parks in various fields like greenhouses, fishery and aquatic," he added.

He further mentioned some of the problems that the country's agriculture is facing and said: "Reducing the impacts of droughts caused by reduced rainfall in recent years and increasing efficiency of water consumption in agriculture are among the



top programs followed by APC."

The official went on mentioning some of the services and facilities which APC is providing for investors in this area, including providing banking facilities, issuing licenses in the shortest possible time, eliminating redundant bureaucracies, securing land with the possibility of granting of ownership after exploitation, reducing infrastructure costs in settlements, and finally providing specialized training and investment services to investors.

According to Mansouri, more than 78 trillion rials (about \$186 million) of bank loans have been provided for investors in this area, since the beginning of the current year.

Currently, more than 87 agricultural parks are under construction across Iran, the official said.

'Long joint border a privilege for Iran, Iraqi Kurdistan to expand trade'

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Having over 500 kilometers of shared borders, Iran and Iraqi Kurdistan can use this capacity to expand their trade relations, Iran's Commercial Attaché in Iraq Naser Behzad said on the sidelines of an exclusive exhibition of Iranian products in Iraqi Kurdistan region's Sulaymaniyah.

"Having two official border crossings of Bashmaq and Parvizkhan and the great interest in Iranian goods in the region would be a reliable capacity for developing the two countries' trade relations," the TPO portal quoted Behzad as saying.

Pointing out the fact that currently half of the goods available in the Sulaymaniyah market are Iranian products, the official said: "food products, carpet, plastic products, machinery, building materials, agricultural and technical services especially in the fields of transportation, construction and urban development are important priorities for contribution of Iranian companies in this market."

According to Behzad, Iraqi Kurdistan is following a five-year plan for creating industrial Zones in Sulaimaniyah for promoting local production, 100 investment projects are underway for establishing food, pharmaceutical, laboratory equipment, construction, apparel, leather, metal and electrical industries, as well as hotels and parks.

He described Sulaimaniyah as the gateway to Iraqi Kurdistan and said: "Due to the stability and security of this region, it is possible to transport goods from this



center to other neighboring provinces such as Erbil, Halabja, Diyala and Kirkuk and even other areas of Iraq."

More than 150 Iranian companies participated in the exclusive exhibition of Iranian products in Sulaymaniyah to showcase their latest products and services in this market.

Back in December 2019, Tehran hosted a business forum between Iranian businessmen, entrepreneurs and producers and a delegation from Iraqi Kurdistan region, in which the two sides explored potential areas for expanding economic relations.

Speaking in the event, Mostafa Abdulrahman Abdullah, president of the Importers and Exporters Union of Iraqi Kurdistan region, praised the ever growing economic cooperation between the two sides and noted that annual trade turnover between Iran and Iraqi Kurdistan could exceed \$6 billion.

He expressed hope that Iranian investors would form joint ventures with Iraqi counterparts and collaborate in establishing joint production units in Kurdistan region.

Manufacturing of refrigerators, freezers rises 3.9% in 9 months on year

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Manufacturing of refrigerators and freezers in Iran has increased 3.9 percent during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21, 2019), from the same period of time in the previous year.

According to the data provided by Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry, 848,300 refrigerators and freezers have been manufactured in the nine-month period of this year, IRNA reported.

Last month, the director general of Metal Industries and Home Appliances Department of the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade announced that Iran will unveil two national brands of home appliances in the near future.

Abbas Hashemi said that the new brands will meet some noticeable requirement of the domestic market.

Due to the U.S. sanctions on Iran, two South Korean brands of home appliances left the Iranian market some time ago because they could not import their required parts.

And now their Iranian partners are resuming production relying on domestic capabilities.

"The Iranian sides managed to replace the Korean parts with the domestically-made ones to create new brands", the official highlighted.

As the current Iranian calendar year of 1398 is named the year of "Pickup in Production" by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei



and given that realization of this motto toward Iran's self-reliance is in fact the only way to tackle the U.S. cruel sanctions, all governmental bodies have defined programs to boost and flourish domestic production and are seriously pursuing them.

In this due, the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade has defined seven major plans to materialize this significant objective, among them the most important one which is development of domestic production has specified programs for boosting production of products in different sectors.

For home appliances, the set program is manufacturing of 1,000 refrigerators, 800,000 washing machines, and 300,000 gas fireplace stoves in the current Iranian year (ends on March 19, 2020).

As the import of many products of this group has been banned, it could be an opportunity for domestic manufacturers to promote their products, something which will lead not only to self-reliance but also to high quality of products which will create export markets.

Eurozone growth hits 6-year low as key automobile industry struggles

The eurozone's economy slowed sharply in 2019 as factories faltered amid weak overseas demand and its key automobile industry struggled to get to grips with a cooling market and the costs of developing a new generation of electric cars.

The bloc's economic weakness also reflects longer-term problems, including an aging and stagnant population, a weak presence in faster-growing digital sectors and problems coordinating its responses to those and other challenges across its 19 member countries.

Economists don't expect a pickup in economic growth in 2020, although the manufacturing sector is expected to steady as global trade flows level out, aided in part by the recent trade truce between the U.S. and China. But they also say the economy could slow further if trade tensions with the U.S. escalate and the UK's departure from the European Union on Friday leaves the future of commerce with one of the eurozone's main export markets uncertain.

The European Union's statistics agency said Friday the eurozone's gross domestic product — the value of all goods and services produced across the economy — grew 1.2% last year, its weakest expansion since 2013, when the currency area was emerging from its twin government debt

and banking crises.

A wider global pattern

That slowdown was in keeping with a wider global pattern, with the U.S. and China also having recorded decelerations in 2019. However, the eurozone economy was significantly more sluggish than its U.S. counterpart, which expanded by 2.3%.

Overall, the global economy had its weakest year since the global financial crisis, although the International Monetary Fund expects to see a modest pickup in 2020.

That is partly due to the actions of leading central banks, with both the Federal Reserve and the European Central Bank cutting their key interest rates in 2019. Rate cuts can take months to work their way through to businesses and households, and the Fed and the ECB moved as recently as October and September, respectively.

Both have indicated they are on hold, believing that the global economy will pick up, but wary of continued threats. One new worry is that the coronavirus outbreak could further slow the Chinese economy, with repercussions for global demand.

Slower economic growth, a weaker Chinese yuan and challenges for travel and leisure stocks are among the fi-

nancial market implications from coronavirus.

"From an economic perspective, the last decade ended with a whimper," Bank of England Gov. Mark Carney said Thursday, adding that their key question facing policy makers is "whether the new decade is starting with a bang."

A surprise contraction in France

Eurozone GDP rose at an annualized rate of just 0.4% in the three months through December, its weakest expansion since the first quarter of 2013. That slowdown was partly due to a surprise contraction in France, which had performed more strongly in the previous three quarters and grew by 1.2% over the year as a whole.

By contrast, Germany's economy grew by just 0.6% in 2019, while Spain's economy expanded by 2%.

There are some signs of a eurozone revival in early 2020. According to a survey by the European Commission, manufacturers were more upbeat about their prospects in January, likely a response to the trade truce between the U.S. and China. And new figures released Thursday showed the eurozone's unemployment rate fell again in December, reaching its lowest level since May 2008.

(Source: wsj.com)

Households account for 80% of Iran's natural gas consumption

E N E R G Y TEHRAN — Iranian Energy Ministry's spokesman for the power department says in the cold season households account for 80 percent of the country's total natural gas consumption and the country's power plants are forced to use alternative fuels, Tasnim news agency reported on Wednesday.

"In recent weeks, due to cold weathers which led to an unprecedented increase in gas consumption in the home sector, we have encountered limitations regarding the power plants fuel supply, which fortunately did not cause any problems and we used alternative fuels," Mostafa Najafi Mashhadi said.

He further called on the consumers to manage their consumption during the cold seasons, saying that a reduction of only 10 percent of the gas consumed by the households could play a significant role in sustaining electricity generation.

Eriker this week, Iranian Energy Minister Reza Ardakanian said daily gas consumption by Iranian households has recently reached about 600 million cubic meters (mcm) which



is equal to 80 percent of the country's gas supply.

With the households' daily consumption at the record high of 600 mcm, and the country's

power plants needing nearly 50 mcm of gas to meet the electricity demand, it appears that the industry and exports would face serious shortages.

Iran's daily natural gas consumption hit a record high of 592 million cubic meters (mcm) a day in early January due to the heavy snowfall and cold weather that blanketed the country.

In late January, Iran Fuel Conservation Company (IFCC) called for optimization of the consumption of energy carriers announcing that the country's natural gas consumption reached a record high.

The spokesman of the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) had also emphasized the need to pay more attention to the optimization of gas consumption, saying: "Although the domestic gas sector is fully supplied considering the increase in gas production in South Pars field as well as the development of the country's gas network, however, the increase in domestic consumption could interrupt the gas supply to the country's industrial sector, power plants, and petrochemical plants."

'Iran nearly self-sufficient in manufacturing water, wastewater equipment'

E N E R G Y TEHRAN — Iran has achieved self-sufficiency in manufacturing all the equipment used in water and wastewater industries, except for the membranes used in wastewater treatment plants, Deputy Energy Minister for Water and Wastewater Affairs Ghasem Taqizadeh Khamesi told IRNA on Thursday.

Speaking on the sidelines of the 13th national exhibition of water, wastewater industries and related equipment in the city of Mashhad, Taqizadeh said: "Previously we had problems with the supplying of large and heavy pumps, however the technology for the production of such pumps was gradually developed in the country and we no longer need to import such equipment."

Regarding the membranes, currently two domestic companies have managed to produce some samples which are going through trial processes.

He further noted that one of the biggest problems

that domestic producers in this area are facing has been the supply of raw materials, adding that "heavy prices and the issues regarding their imports have become a challenge for domestic manufacturers, and hopefully government would address the concerns in this area."

Back in October 2019, head of Iran's Water & Wastewater Engineering Company known as ABFA said that over 95 percent of necessary equipment and parts in Iran's water and wastewater industry are being produced inside the country.

"More than 95 percent of water related facilities and 90 percent of sewage equipment and industrial parts, except for sludge management, are being designed and manufactured inside the country", Hamidreza Janbaz said.

"Currently, private-sector companies have become self-sufficient in manufacturing all kinds of electromotor,



pumps, branching equipment and related equipment", he added.

Queensland's largest battery paves the way for renewables

By Imogen Hartmann

Queensland's largest grid-scale battery will be built in Wandoan in Queensland under a 15-year agreement between AGL and Vena Energy Australia.

The Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) will have an initial capacity of 100MW and store 150MWh hours of energy, which could power up to 57,000 average homes annually. Queensland Energy Minister, Dr. Anthony Lynham, said, "Queensland's renewable energy revolution is steaming ahead and the next wave is battery storage."

The "climate-change deniers criticize renewable energy for not being available when the sun doesn't shine and wind doesn't blow: batteries are a game-changer."

"This battery is the first step in Vena Energy's bigger plans to deliver up to 1000MW of solar energy in Queensland."

Vena Energy CEO, Nitin Apte, said the battery build would begin in July 2020 and take about a year to complete.

The "battery energy storage system is the first major milestone in our \$650 million Wandoan South Project (external site), which has the potential to supply up to 400,000 Queensland households with solar energy," Mr. Apte said.

"During construction of the battery, local employment and procurement opportuni-



ties will be available, with the labor force anticipated to be 30 strong.

"And once the battery is built, Vena Energy Australia plans to keep the momentum moving and aims to begin work on a solar farm at the same site in 2021."

The company's renewable projects
AGL CEO, Brett Redman, said the lithium-ion battery would complement the company's renewable projects.

"This battery will support our massive Coopers Gap Wind Farm, which will be producing up to 453MW of energy when all 123 wind turbines are up and running," Mr. Redman said.

"AGL will also be able to leverage excess solar generation in Queensland and provide

capacity when the Coopers Gap Wind Farm and other renewable power sources are not generating."

Dr. Lynham said Queensland already had three large-scale batteries operating: at Lakeland Solar Farm in Far North Queensland, at Kennedy Energy Park near Hughenden, and one at the University of Queensland in Brisbane. Another in Townsville is expected to be operating in February 2020.

"Queensland has seen \$4.7 billion worth of investment in renewable energy projects since December 2016, creating 4200 jobs," Dr. Lynham said.

"Queensland now has almost 5500MW of renewable generation capacity."

"Batteries are next, and all of this in-

vestment demonstrates industry's strong confidence in Queensland's growing clean energy industry."

"Early last year we delivered the Dalrymple 30 MWESCR battery on the Yorke Peninsula in South Australia as part of a joint venture with ElectraNet and in October we announced a deal with Maoneng Group to buy capacity from four 50MW/100MWh batteries in NSW."

Redman said AGL is investigating the viability of pumped hydro plants at Kamantoo in South Australia and Bells Mountain in NSW, which, he said, would provide more than 500MW of capacity if they were progressed.

"We are also working with the New South Wales Government's Emerging Energy Program on a proposal to build a 50MW battery at Broken Hill, we have plans for a gas firming power station in Newcastle, and we are exploring other sites," Mr. Redman said.

"It's all ensuring that we remain well on track to reach our target of 50 percent renewable energy by 2030."

AGL and Vena Energy Australia have signed a 15-year agreement to deliver and operate the battery. As the user of the battery, AGL will have full operational dispatch rights, and as the owner of the battery, Vena Energy Australia will build and maintain the asset.

(Source: energymagazine.com.au)

Oil rises as WHO declares emergency, but opposes travel restrictions

Oil prices rose on Friday but were still set for a fourth consecutive weekly loss, as markets attempted to assess the economic damage of the coronavirus that has spread from China to around 20 countries, killing more than 200 people.

Brent crude LCO1 was 31 cents higher at \$58.60 a barrel by 0943 GMT but was still down 3.4% on the week.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) CL1 rose by 34 cents to \$52.48 a barrel. It is 3.2% lower on the week.

Both benchmarks rose by more than \$1 earlier in the session.

The WHO said late Thursday that the coronavirus outbreak was a global emergency, but calmed the markets by opposing travel restrictions. It said Chinese actions so far will "reverse the tide" of its spread.

"China's better-than-expected expansion in its January non-manufacturing PMI, along with the concerted efforts by the authorities to contain the viral outbreak, could help push back against some of the fears surrounding the epidemic's impact on the world's second-largest economy," said Han Tan, market analyst at FXTM.

Oil prices were also buoyed by reports that Saudi Arabia has opened a discussion about moving an upcoming policy meeting to early February from March to address the impact of coronavirus on crude demand.

Energy consultancy Wood Mackenzie lowered its estimate for world oil demand by 500,000 barrels per day (bpd) for the first quarter of 2020, according to its consultant Yujiao Lei, saying China's oil demand for the same period could also be reduced by more than 250,000 bpd.

"Although the Chinese government has been taking action



more swiftly in a more determined manner than in 2003 (during the SARS outbreak), Chinese domestic and international transport activity is incomparably higher today and thus the impact may be larger," Lei added.

China's new year holiday was due to end on Friday, when many companies planned to get back to work after a week-long vacation, but authorities have ordered businesses in many areas to stay shut longer in a bid to contain the disease.

Widespread travel restrictions, meanwhile, mean millions of migrant workers may be unable to return to what has often been called the world's factory floor.

A growing number of airlines are suspending flights to China to halt the spread of the virus.

Brexit day, which comes three and a half years after the United Kingdom first voted to leave the European Union, is not expected to move markets, analysts said.

(Source: reuters.com)

First Announcement



1398.6758

NATIONAL IRANIAN SOUTH OILFIELDS COMPANY AHVAZ-IRAN

TENDER NO. : 48-32-9825000

National Iranian South Oilfields Company (NISOC) intends to purchase the following goods

Items	Material Description	Quantity	Unit
01	CASING 7" 29 PPF WITH SPECIAL DRIFT:6.125". GRADE L-80-13CR, WITH N.VAM THREAD, PSL3, R-3(WITH MAX LEN:40.5 FT), AS PER API 5 CT & NACE MR0175, LATEST EDITION WITH PROTECTOR, MARKING: STANCELLING & ANTI GALLING IN ACCORDANCE WITH API 5CT.BODY OF PIPES SHOULD BE COATING AND VARNISH & BOX PIPES SHOULD BE COVERAGE WITH ANCHOR PROCESS	200	LE
02	TUBING 4-1/2" 13.5 PPF, GRADE L-80-13CR, WITH N.VAMTHREAD, PSL 3, R-3(WITH MAX LEN:40.5 FT), AND WITH STANDARD DRIFT AS PER API 5CT & NACE MR0175, LATEST EDITION WITH PROTECTOR, MARKING: STANCELLING & ANTI GALLING IN ACCORDANCE WITH API 5CT.BODY OF PIPES SHOULD BE COATING AND VARNISH & BOX OF PIPES SHOULD BE COVERAGE WITH ANCHOR PROCESS	3840	LE

Vendors who intend to participate in aforesaid tender are requested to send their "Intention To Participate" letter via fax to the following number along with their resume according to Qualitative Assessment Form No.2, available at: www.nisoc.ir, not later than 14 days after the second announcement, otherwise, their requests for participation in the tender will be disregarded. The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide and submit a bid bond of 62,343 EURO or 8,919,685,960 RIAL, in favor of NISOC.

Tender documents including the materials thorough technical specifications and Qualitative to Assessment Forms can be accessed via: www.nisoc.ir-material procurement management tab ONLY ACCEPTABLE DELIVERY TERM IS D.D.P., NISOC'S WAREHOUSE, AGHAJARI IRAN, PAYMENT TERM IS C.O.D., SUBSEQUENT TO NISOC'S MATERIAL APPROVAL NO ADVANCE PAYMENT WILL BE PAID

FOREIGN PURCHASING DEPARTMENT

**Bldg. No. 104, Material Procurement Management Complex
Kouy-e-Fadaeian Islam (New Site), Ahvaz, Iran
E.MAIL: KALA.F.P@nisoc.ir Tel. No.: 061 34 12 34 55 Fax No.: 061 3445 7437**

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Trump peace plan – sheer genius – Israel gone by 2022

➔ As soon as the impeachment trial is over, I predict that President Donald Trump will file a federal lawsuit for defamation against unregistered but obvious Zionist agents Chuck Schumer, Adam Schiff, and Jerry Nadler, as well as a selection of those who have been cyber-stalking the President with broadcast defamatory statements, such as Yale psychiatrist Bandy Lee; specific media personalities and their guests at CNN and MSNBC; and the social media platforms that have been censoring and misrepresenting the President while nurturing cyber-stalkers against the President. People are going to lose their jobs, their wealth, and their medical licenses when this battle is finally won.

The peace plan in its present form, written by Zionists for Zionists, is offensive in every possible respect and should be rejected: it entrenches unequal rights and validates annexation, both crimes against humanity by any possible measure. The Jordan Valley in particular – as with the Golan Heights – should be off limits to Zionist incursion. It is bad enough that the Zionists have been stealing water from the Jordanian aquifers for decades, using long underground pipes that cross beneath the border. The one important assistance that the USA could have offered is not present: 100 water desalination plants favoring the Palestinians who remain under a water siege – a form of collective punishment that is a war crime. Jordan, Iran, Syria, and Russia should plan for the use of force against Zionists moving into the Jordan Valley, and against Zionists who refuse to withdraw from the Golan Heights belonging to Syria.

The economic offerings are ludicrous and will never materialize. Iran and Palestine are absolutely in the right in continuing to demand an end to the Zionist state of Israel and complete restoration of the entirety of Palestine to the Palestinians, with the rights of Jews guaranteed within that construct.

It is a mistake to consider the peace plan in isolation from the historical reality that Palestine was stolen from the Palestinians, who are correct to reject it, and in isolation from the many regional issues – including boundary adjustments – that must be addressed as a whole. As I wrote in “Peace in the Middle East: Denuclearizing Israel, Restoring Palestine, and More,” for the Russian International Affairs Council, 18 May 2018:

Everybody has this wrong – Trump is not bluffing and he is not Netanyahu’s puppet. What has really happened here is that Xi, Trump, and Putin agreed over a year ago to take down the Deep State. The denuclearization of Korea, combined with the destruction of old banking order, will be followed by the denuclearization of Israel and the restoration of Palestine. We are at the beginning of a 1,000 year period of peace and prosperity for all.

I go on to list eight topics that must be addressed together, first by the leaders of Iran, China, Russia, and the USA and then in a larger setting with the leaders of Egypt, Jordan, and Turkey as well as the leaders of the Gulf States and the always hostile and challenging Saudi Arabia:

1. Denuclearization of the Middle East including Israel



2. Peace between the Sunnis and the Shi’ites
3. Jerusalem and perhaps Mecca as international cities
4. Restoration of Palestine
5. Creation of a Kurdish Confederacy (no changes to existing national borders)
6. Repatriation of all unemployed Muslims from Europe back to Arabia, and reparations for Iraq
7. Creation of a post-Western post-fossil fuel economy with unlimited desalinated water
8. Creation of a regional Open Source Agency and network with information and engineering bureaus sufficient to create prosperity for all at 10% the cost of the failed Western economic paradigm.

From where I sit, the matter of Palestine is not negotiable, and the Supreme Leader’s clear distinction between Jews welcome to remain in Palestine and the Zionist state of Israel (an invented state that needs to be terminated) is a vital enabler of a final accord. Henry Kissinger said this would happen by 2022. I believe President Trump is aware of the need to meet that timeline.

I have included a map of the Zionist settlements within what little territory has been left to Palestine to make the point that if Palestine were to be restored to the Palestinians, such settlements would no longer be incursions, but rather starting points for extending the same level of infrastructure and investment to all Palestinians.

I say it again: President Trump is stringing the Zionists along until after he wins re-election. In his “art of the deal” delay and deception are critical when you are not ready to “make the deal.” He cannot “make the deal” until after he is re-elected. It is not enough to reject this plan, it is vital that the Palestinians, supported by other countries, come back with a larger peace plan that is obviously more achievable,

more honorable, and more sustainable. Shine a light on the criminal insanity of the Trump Peace Plan.

President Trump knows this is a stupid plan. He knows his son-in-law is in everyone else’s pocket.

What President Trump needs from Iran and Turkey among others, is a context for “making the deal” in a way that the American public can understand, presented with such publicity that the American media, controlled by the Zionists, cannot mis-represent the alternative.

The truth about Israel, and the truth about Saudi Arabia, is not visible to the American public. The truth about Israel arming the Kurds and destabilizing Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey with Kurds, is not known. The truth about Saudi Arabia and Wahhabism – a form of Zionism that needs to be eliminated – is not known. The Saudi atrocities in Somalia and Yemen are not known. The state-sponsorship of terrorism by Israel and Saudi Arabia (and Qatar by some accounts) is not known.

President Trump is a businessman, and the American people want peace and prosperity. The truth about the role played by commerce from China to Iran and Turkey and beyond – the role played by the Silk Road and now by the Internet in facilitating commerce that flourishes in peace – is not understood by the American public. The US Government itself has been slow to understand that China has installed the Internet and cellular communications across Africa and the Middle East and Central Asia and that this is a victory that American bluster, American guns, and American lies are not going to over-turn.

Pepe Escobar is one of the most gifted observers of the region who is writing in the English language, and I offer below two quotes from his recent “Why the New Silk Roads are a ‘threat’ to US bloc.”

What the New Silk Roads are proposing is

wide-ranging, economic, interlinked integration from East Asia, through Central Asia, to Iran, Iraq and Syria all the way to the Eastern Mediterranean. Just like the Ancient Silk Roads. No wonder vested War Party interests are so uncomfortable with this real peace “threat.”

No wonder strategic fear was glaringly visible at the NATO summit in London last month, which called for ratcheting up pressure on Russia-China. Call it the late Zbigniew “Grand Chessboard” Brzezinski’s ultimate, recurrent nightmare.

Within a few years, I anticipate that Chinese and Russian and Iranian influence based on commerce and communications backed up by next generation defensive umbrellas and offensive electromagnetic scalar time-energy weaponry the US is not ready to match, will allow peaceful resolution of the Palestinian and Kurdish matters. I pray that the Sunni-Shia divide is resolved, and that the Wahhabists follow the Zionists into oblivion. In many ways the Zionists are a “mini-me” of the failed UK and US empires. The Vietnamese beat the Americans with the tunnels of Cu Chi and bare feet combined with iron will, the Czechs beat the Russians (power of the powerless), the Afghans beat both the Russians and the Americans, and Iraq is about to finally rid itself of the American occupying Army (the rockets into the US Embassy were fired by American collaborators as a false flag).

The USA is in grid-lock because of the traitors in the Democratic Party and the media who work for the Deep State and are continuing to try to over-turn the results of the last election and prevent what I am predicting, a landslide victory for President Trump in 2020. His successes – over 289 of them by one account – have been hard-fought and achieved in the face of every possible opposition up to and including at least twelve assassination attempts. Iran – and the Palestinians – will benefit from a Trump victory in 2020 and should keep this strategic perception firmly in mind going forward.

What would help our President now, in my view, is a strong counter-offensive aimed at the American public. This counter-offensive should challenge President Trump to fulfill his promise to disclose 9/11 truth and challenge President Trump to fully disclose all that we know about the hundreds of US politicians (mostly Democrats) and others entrapped by Jeffrey Epstein with pedophilia videos. Such a campaign should also strive to graphically, viscerally, compellingly, illuminate for Americans the war crimes of the Zionists and the plight of the Palestinians along with the war crimes of the Saudis and the plight of the Yemenis while publicizing the truthful books that are a stake in the heart of Zionist Israel, books such as Enclosure – Palestinian Landscapes in a Historical Mirror, Israel, The, The Culture of Critique, and We Will Not Be Silenced – The Academic Repression of Israel’s Critics.

In my view, the new peace plan should be welcomed for what it is – a throw-away – and rejected. Palestine and Iran should now propose a new larger peace summit with the leaders of China, Russia, and Turkey as well as Syria and Jordan – and perhaps others as observers, certainly including the Kurds –

and begin to hammer out a holistic sustainable peace plan that will show the latest “offer” to be a farce.

Peace in the Middle East – and the restoration of Palestine – are both inevitable. I believe our President understands that. His first term has been focused on survival, and on setting the stage for the elimination of the Deep State and the Shadow Government and the traitors such as Chuck Schumer, Adam Schiff, and Jerry Nadler – each a Zionist traitor, not just a traitor. His second term will be focused on rebuilding America. To do that he needs to reinvent national security, beginning with the closure of all US bases overseas, bringing all our troops home, and freeing America of foreign entanglements and distractions, as our first President George Washington so wisely advised. Somewhere in there I want to help our President reinvent intelligence and reinvent engineering – we can achieve a post-Western economy for the 99% at 10% the cost of the failed Western economy of waste and banking profit, using Open Source Everything Engineering (OSEE). Iran should become a leader in the OSEE domain.

I realize that superficially it appears that our President is continuing to grovel before the Zionists. I think not. The tide in America has turned. The center of gravity in the near term is the American public. It would help if President Trump were pressured to abandon the Zionists sooner than later, and also challenged on why he continues to refuse to defend the US Constitution (1st, 2nd, 4th Amendments particularly) and why he refuses to implement #UNRIG electoral reform so that the 70% of the US voters who are shut out of the election process are given voice – if we are to have peace around the world, we must take down the two-party tyranny that fronts for the Deep State, and that can only be done through electoral reform. President Trump knows all of this, but he is being mis-led by Republicans who assure him of victory if he sticks with his old, white, heartland base. Others disagree – Tucker Carlson for one, top Republican pollster Andrew Garfield for another – Zionist Michael Bloomberg could still win with a combination of money and a female as token vice president. President Trump needs a “wake up call” on this point; it may be that President Putin, prompted by the Supreme Leader, could deliver such a call.

President Trump will continue to do theatrics with the Zionists until they are such an obvious political liability within the USA that he is able to dump them. The Democratic candidates for the presidency are rejecting Zionist money and keeping Jewish voters – this is a message President Trump needs to hear more directly from every leader desiring Middle East peace.

The initiative, in my view, is now with Iran. If Iran will nurture Iraq, balance the Turks, and (with Turkey and Iraq and Syria) find a solution for the Kurds, we will by 2022 cut the Saudis and the Zionists off from US funds and military assistance, and deliver on Palestine with the Golan Heights returning to Syria. In the meantime, reject the peace plan and label it for what it is: a delusional theatrical mélange of unrealistic as well as unethical proposals of no merit.

➔ Needless to say, the Islamic resistance movement, Hamas, totally rejected the peace plan, calling it an attempt “to liquidate the Palestinian national project.” Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, warning of a “new phase in their struggle,” stated, “We firmly declare that the ‘deal of the century’ will not pass.” As if to emphasize the point, an unknown resistance fighter fired a rocket towards Zionist-held Palestinian territory shortly after the Hamas leader’s statement had been issued.

Philip Luther, Amnesty International’s Middle East and North Africa Research and Advocacy Director, noted that the deal was

Trump’s peace plan: A realistic solution or a final solution?

“proposing further annexation of Palestinian territory, which would flagrantly violate international humanitarian law.” The Zionist regime’s outright denial of basic human rights for Palestinians and dehumanizing discrimination has been well documented, and Trump’s deal, according to Luther, would be an “endorsement of these brutal, unlawful policies.”

For his part, Trump emphasized, “Under this vision, Jerusalem will remain Israel’s undivided - very important - undivided cap-

ital.” Netanyahu praised the impeached U.S. president for having been able to “recognize that Israel must have sovereignty in places that enable Israel to defend itself by itself.” Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri, responding to the giveaway of Jerusalem by Trump, wrote, “His deal isn’t worth the paper it’s written on and Jerusalem will remain for Palestinians.”

Al-Quds, or Jerusalem as it is referred to in the west, is the location of the third most sacred site in Islam, Al-Aqsa Mosque.

Before being instructed to change the qibla, or direction of prayer, the Prophet Mohammad (S) faced Jerusalem while in prayer as did his followers. For a period of over 400 years up until the First World War, Al-Quds was a province under the Ottoman Empire, after whose defeat the ancient city, along with the rest of Palestine, was placed under mandate to Great Britain. Following the Second World War, Britain relinquished its mandate, and the nascent United Nations proposed a partition plan in an effort to

resolve the violent conflict that had developed between indigenous Palestinians and Zionist immigrants.

Al-Quds itself was to be an international zone under control of “a permanent international regime for the supervision and protection of the Holy Places.” The proposal was codified in a U.N. General Assembly resolution No. 181 (II) of November 29, 1947, and further strengthened by U.N. General Assembly resolution No. 194 (III) of December 11, 1948. The commission

formed under resolution 194 concluded that “the Jerusalem area, including the present municipality of Jerusalem plus the surrounding villages and towns ... should be accorded special and separate treatment from the rest of Palestine and should be placed under effective United Nations control.” A draft text for establishing a permanent international regime for Al-Quds was prepared, but it was never implemented, despite the fact that the Palestinian and Arab delegates had indicated a willingness to accept the internationalization of the city. (See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Europe’s goals to activate Snapback Mechanism: Buy time or take case to Security Council?

➔ In fact, if Iran withdrawal from JCPOA and does not accept IAEA oversight, Russia and China will not support Iran.

Despite Russian and Chinese criticism of the US withdrawal from JCPOA and escalating tensions in the region, but when they support Iran that Iran cooperates with the IAEA.

Russia and China also have no ability to counteract the Snapback mechanism because according to the mechanism, they cannot veto the return of sanctions.

So, a day after the European Troika activated the dispute resolution mechanism, Geng Shuang, China’s foreign ministry spokesman said: “It will not help resolve the problem or ease the tension.”

China’s view has always been that there are strong reasons to reduce Iran’s obligations in JCPOA. The United States unilaterally withdrew from this (nuclear) agreement and by disregarding international law and obligations, it exerted too much pressure on Iran and thwarted other efforts to maintain JCPOA.

Mikhail Ulyanov, Russia’s permanent representative to the Vienna-based international organizations, has said that E-3 decided to engage Dispute Resolution Mechanism as set out in para. 36 of JCPOA. They stated that they did it “in good faith” to preserve the deal and that it has nothing to do with maximum pressure policy. Let’s hope that this step will not complicate the situation further.

Iran is currently cooperating with China, Russia, Turkey and India in various areas, and if the UN sanctions are returned, the Iran’s economic problems will further.

European Troika goals: Buy Time or take a case to UNSC

France has always pursued dual positions in Bringham. France and French President, Emmanuel Macron claims European leadership and does not want to withdraw from JCPOA like United States withdrawal from JCPOA.

In fact, France is trying to express its positions in the independent JCPOA.

But in fact Macron expresses the same Trump’s remarks about JCPOA in a different way. Macron had spoken on Iran’s regional and ballistic missile issues at the United Nations a few years ago and he want to include this issue in JCPOA.

Macron made the same remarks while activating the Snapback mechanism, and during his recent trip to Israel, he said that wants

to include missile issues in nuclear deal.

Germany follows the same stance as France.

But Britain is taking a tougher stance against Iran, and British Prime Minister, Boris Johnson has called for a new deal to be implemented as the trigger mechanism is activated.

But Britain is taking a tougher stance against Iran, and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has called a new deal to be instead of JCPOA as the snapback mechanism is activated.

Analysis of the European Troika’s stances shows that although European countries tend to extend JCPOA to further issues, they are also concerned about Iran’s complete withdrawal from the JCPOA or even NPT.

Western countries certainly do not want a nuclear-armed Iran, and more importantly, Iran also has an Islamic ideology that is very different and harder than North Korea.

On this basis, German Chancellor Angela Merkel at her speech at World Economic Forum in Davos, warned against prematurely scrapping an international nuclear deal with Iran, saying that it would be wrong to abandon an “imperfect” deal with nothing better in place.

Accordingly, the aim of the European countries to activate the snapback mechanism, in the first place, was to respond appropriately to a reduction Iran’s obligations in JCPOA and to stop Iran’s actions.

Europeans also want to show Washington that they are not lenient to Iran rather they are tough.

Europe’s toughening on Iran is important to Europeans because the Trump administration has threatened European countries with more tariffs on the auto industry, and so European countries are moving to tighten and activate the Snapback mechanism.

European countries, on the other hand, are trying to persuade Iran to return to its previous commitments by maintaining agreement and negotiating. That is why they have decided to buy time by extending the time to resolve the dispute and to persuade Iran to return to full compliance in JCPOA. So, EU foreign policy chief, Joseph Burrell recently announced the extension of the dispute resolution mechanism’s time.

In these circumstances, it seems that until Iran doesn’t expand its nuclear program beyond the current stage, the Europeans will not want to return international sanctions by UNSC and terminate



nuclear deal.

Given this, the “Freeze for freeze” method may be favored by the parties in JCPOA.

The “Freeze for freeze” method means that Iran does not go beyond the fifth step of reducing its obligations in JCPOA and that the Europeans extend the process of resolving disputes at least until the end of Trump’s presidency.

At the moment, it is important to note that at the present stage, what is important for Europe is that Iran’s nuclear program is under IAEA supervision and that Iran’s nuclear program does not expand.

In fact, the Europeans in this way, while not fulfilling their commitments in JCPOA, also they continue to threaten Iran with the snapback mechanism.

So, given Iran has not done thing beyond the fifth step in reducing its nuclear commitments, this has given Europeans hope to maintain nuclear deal.

Iran’s stance and the options ahead

Iran has stated that long before and before the European reference to the Dispute Settlement Mechanism, Tehran had resorted to the Dispute Settlement Mechanism under Articles 36 of JCPOA when the United States withdraw from JCPOA.

Foreign Ministry Spokesman Abbas Mousavi dismissed the claims by Britain, France, and Germany on repeated violations of the nuclear deal by Iran, saying “The Europeans are claiming that activated a dispute settlement mechanism but this claim is

not legally correct and Iran did so six months ago ... The fifth step is the final step of our obligations reductions in JCPOA but if they will take more action, We will take effective steps.”

Accordingly, the European Troika invoked a dispute settlement mechanism under articles 26 and 36 in JCPOA after of obligations reduction in JCPOA by Iran.

In fact, obligations reduction in JCPOA by Iran when did that the United States’ breach of its obligations in nuclear deal and withdrawal from JCPOA and after that Europe countries did anything for maintain interest of Iran in JCPOA.

European countries tried to maintain JCPOA after the US withdrawal, but failed to meet the economic interests of Tehran in nuclear deal, While economic benefits was Iran’s primary target for signing the nuclear deal. For this reason, Iran, after months of waiting and waiting, finally reduced its commitments in nuclear deal, but Europe did not take action for Iran and also Europe delay implementation of the SPV and INSTEX financial channel and under these circumstances, Iran has further reduced its commitments in JCPOA.

For Iran, there are different scenarios in reaction to Europe: Iran could terminate cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), could withdraw from JCPOA, or could continue cooperation with the IAEA, but at same time ignore Security Council resolutions, for example, it could continue uranium enrichment program and could prevent its ships to be inspected.

But the fact that withdrawal from JCPOA and stop voluntary implementation of the Additional Protocol and even the withdrawal of the NPT by Iran may put Iran in a bad position and even countries like Russia and China would not support Iran if Iran withdraws from NPT.

Therefore, the appropriate solution for Iran is to maintain JCPOA and remain under NPT.

Therefore, it is also appropriate for Europe to pursue a long-term settlement of disputes with Iran in JCPOA.

For Europe, it is actually better that could reach a mutually acceptable agreement with strong commitments to Iran to meet some economic benefits.

Therefore, extending of dispute resolution process time by EU has now provided a positive perspective to continue this path.

Spanish show to offer fans free admission in Tehran

TOURISM TEHRAN — Entry will be free to a major Spanish cultural heritage show in Tehran on the occasion of the Ten-Day Dawn, which marks the 41st anniversary of the Islamic Revolution.

The show, which opens today at the National Museum of Iran, will be free of charge to both foreign and domestic visitors, from February 1 to 11, excluding two Mondays (Feb. 3 and 10), the museum's director Jebrael Nokandeh said on Friday, ILNA reported.



The loan show was inaugurated last September in partnership with Spain's Archeological Museum of Alicante (MARQ), with around 300 objects, some of which dating for millennia.

The show is in return for a landmark Iranian exhibit titled "Iran, Cradle of Civilization" that the Spanish museum had hosted from March 14, 2019 to September 1 of the same year, pulling in 101,108 visitors Spain and other nationalities.

Last month, 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."

Mummies of ancient Egyptian priests found buried with thousands of afterlife 'servants'

A massive burial ground holding the remains of several high priests of ancient Egypt, along with their assistants, has been discovered in the northern part of the site of Tuna el-Gebel, Egypt's antiquities ministry announced Thursday (Jan. 30).

So far, the archaeologists have unearthed 20 stone sarcophagi (coffins) made of a "very good quality of limestone" in the burial ground, which lies about 170 miles (270 kilometers) south of Cairo, said Mostafa Waziri, the general secretary of Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities, during a news briefing.

In addition, the burials together contained some 700 amulets, some made of gold or precious stones, along with more than 10,000 shabti figurines made of faience (a glazed ceramic), Waziri said. The ancient Egyptians believed that shabti figurines served the deceased in the afterlife.

The archaeologists said they aren't sure how many mummies are buried at the site. But given that many of the stone sarcophagi have yet to be opened, it is likely that many will be discovered, the researchers said.

"Excavations are still running. We expect to find more and more and more [discoveries] in this area," Waziri said.

The high priests buried at the site date to what archaeologists call the "Late Period," a time when ancient Egypt was often struggling to achieve independence from foreigners, including the Nubians, Assyrians and Persians. The earliest Late Period burials found to date are from the 26th dynasty (688 B.C. to 525 B.C.), a time when Egypt had regained its independence after the Nubians had ruled it.

(Source: Live Science)



ROUND THE GLOBE

Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers National Parks

Nestled high in West Himalaya, India's Valley of Flowers National Park is renowned for its meadows of endemic alpine flowers and outstanding natural beauty.

One of the most spectacular wilderness areas in the Himalayas, Nanda Devi National Park is dominated by the 7,817 m peak of Nanda Devi, India's second highest mountain which is approached through the Rishi Ganga gorge, one of the deepest in the world.

The Valley of Flowers National Park, with its gentler landscape, breath-taking beautiful meadows of alpine flowers and ease of access, complements the rugged, inaccessible, high mountain wilderness of Nanda Devi. Apart from some community-based ecotourism to small portions of these parks, there has been no anthropogenic pressure in this area since 1983.



This property therefore acts as a control site for the maintenance of natural processes, and is of high significance for long-term ecological monitoring in the Himalayas.

Both parks contain high diversity and density of flora and fauna of the west Himalayan biogeographic zone, with significant populations of globally threatened species including the snow leopard, Himalayan musk deer and numerous plant species.

Covering 71,210 ha, these two parks are surrounded by a large buffer zone of 514,857 ha which encompasses a wide range of elevation and habitats. This entire area, located within the Western Himalayas Endemic Bird Area (EBA), supports significant populations of mountain ungulates and galliformes that are prey to carnivores such as the snow leopard.

(Source: UNESCO)

Three Iranian cities, one village registered by World Crafts Council

HERITAGE TEHRAN — Three Iranian cities and one village have recently been named as hubs of handicraft by the World Crafts Council - Asia Pacific Region (WCC-APR).

"By inclusion of Qassembabad village and the cities of Shiraz, Zanjan and Malayer by the World Crafts Council, now, the country embraces 14 cities and villages with such a privilege," tourism minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan announced on Tuesday, CHTN reported.

Last December, WCC-APR Director Ghada Hijavi along with fellow experts visited various handicraft workshops, stores, exhibits as well as craftspeople in the four destinations to follow up on their assessments.

Shiraz is named a "world city of [diverse] handicrafts". Celebrated as the heartland of Persian culture for over 2000 years, the southern city was one of the most important cities in the medieval Islamic world and was the Iranian capital during the Zand dynasty (1751-1794).

Malayer is made a global hub for woodcarving and carved-wood furniture. Located in west-central Hamedan province, the ancient city is home to over 4,000 furniture workshops in which more than 8,000 wood masters and some 25,000 crafters are engaged. It was named a national city of woodcarving earlier in the year 1395 (ended March 2017).

Zanjan is gained the title of a "world city of filigree". The art consists of curling, twisting, or plaiting fine, pliable metal threads and soldering them at their points of contact with each other and, if there is one, with the metal groundwork. Filigree, delicate, lacelike ornamental openwork composed of intertwined wire threads of gold or silver, widely used since antiquity for jewelry.

Situated in Roodsar county, northern Gilan province, Qassembabad village is nationally known for its traditional costumes because of their vibrant colors and uniquely beautiful designs. However, the Chador Shab, a kind of homemade



Ali-Asghar Mounesan in an undated photo

outer-garment for women, was the main subject for the WCC assessment.

Iran's handicrafts exports reached \$289 million in the past Iranian calendar year 1397 (ended March 2019), showing three percent growth year on year, based on data released by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and

Handicrafts.

Traditional ceramics, pottery vessels, handwoven cloths as well as personal ornamentations with precious and semi-precious gemstones are among Iranian exports to Iraq, Afghanistan and Germany, the U.S., the UK, and other countries.

European carriers to return to Iranian airspace

TOURISM TEHRAN — The EU Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) on Wednesday approved that European airlines can return to parts of Iranian airspace.

The decision comes three weeks after the Islamic Republic accidentally downed a Ukrainian jetliner amid an exchange of hostilities with U.S. forces in the region.

EASA announced, following an EU aviation security risk group meeting, that it was lifting temporary recommendations against overflying Iranian airspace, Reuters reported.

However, the aviation agency repeated earlier advice that airlines escape Iranian airspace below 25,000 feet, the report said.

Germany's Lufthansa was among airlines that canceled flights over the affected airspace.

Two weeks ago, Qatar Airways, Emirates and several other Persian Gulf airlines announced they will continue using Iranian



airspace despite propaganda over security issues in the region.

"We will continue to fly to Iran because Iran is an important country to us and it is our neighbor and we want to serve the people of Iran," Qatar Airways Chief Executive Akbar al-Baker said.

"Iranian airspace is important for all carriers in this region," said Adil al-Ghaith, Emirates' senior vice president, the report said.

On January 3, a U.S. drone strike assassinated top Iranian general Qassem Soleimani and in an act of retaliation, Iran fired missiles at U.S. targets in Iraq on January 8. Then, a Ukrainian airliner was accidentally shot down by Iran's air defense as it was on high alert in the tense aftermath.

Iran's tourism minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan said on January 12 that the country's tourism industry has suffered a setback but it will certainly return to "normal".

Ancient festival of mid-winter observed by Zoroastrians across Iran



The same ceremonies were also held in several other cities across the country, including Tehran, Shiraz and Kerman in which followers of Zoroastrian faith marked the event by special tributes including gatherings besides huge bonfires.

Narratives say that the festivity is to remember the mythical discovery of fire. That's why they set fire to a big pile of wood when the event reaches its climax.

The origins of the festival is somewhat ambiguous and there is no trace of this ceremony in the Zoroastrian holy texts. However, some historians suggest the ceremony existed even before Zoroastrianism, the world's oldest monotheistic religion.

The common belief emphasizes that it is a mid-winter ritual to celebrate the date when the earth starts warming up.

The feast named after "the number one hundred" (Sad in Farsi), marks 50 days and 50 nights before Noruz, the Iranian New Year, on March 21.

Some say Sadeh is a festivity to honor fire and to defeat the forces of darkness, frost, and cold. A number of mythological accounts, however, connect the festival to the origins of the human beings. According to Persian mythology, Houshang, the second king of the world, discovered fire when he tried to hit a dragon with a stone. He reportedly threw a flint stone which struck against another flint stone causing a spark and generating fire.

Prior to lighting the huge open fire, some Zoroastrian priests (Moobeds) recite verses from Avesta, the holy book of Zoroastrians. The priests are always dressed in white cotton robes, trousers and hats as a sign of purity and neatness.

Moobeds along with Zoroastrian girls and boys, all clad in white and holding torches walk around the pile of shrubs. They light the fire as the crowd's cheers grow louder.

Zoroastrian rituals are widespread in Iran. Noruz, which



celebrates the Persian New Year, Yalda Night, which takes place on the longest night of the year, and Chaharshanbeh Souri, in praise of the spring, are examples of such ceremonies that even nowadays nearly all Iranians observe. (PHOTO: Tehran Times/Majid Dehghanzadeh)

Singapore and Mongolia to bar entries from China

Singapore on Friday announced a sweeping ban on Chinese visitors and other foreigners who had been to China in the past 14 days, in an escalation of travel restrictions by the Southeast Asian transportation hub.

The city-state will also stop issuing all forms of visas to people holding Chinese passports, Lawrence Wong, the minister for national development, said on Friday.

Singapore currently has 13 confirmed cases of the coronavirus. The outbreak and the entry shutdown will be another blow to its economy, which was already hit by the fallout from the United States-China trade war.

Regional neighbors and airlines from countries that have not had any confirmed cases are also taking extra precautions to cope with rapidly spreading epidemic.

The government of Mongolia, a landlocked

country between China and Russia, said on Friday that it would close its border with China until March 2 in an effort to prevent the virus from being imported.

The authorities said they would work to bring home 30 Mongolian nationals from Wuhan, and its citizens in China would have until Feb. 6 to return. Non-Chinese foreigners visiting Mongolia will also not be able to enter through China.

Hong Kong's pro-Beijing government, rocked by months of antigovernment protests and public distrust, has come under fire for not sealing off its border with mainland China.

Some nations and airlines are also clamping down on travel. The flag carriers of Rwanda and Kenya, RwandAir and Kenya Airways, said they would cancel all flights to and from Guangzhou, the southern Chinese metropolis, until further notice. There have

been no confirmed cases in Africa.

Poland's national airline, LOT Polish Airlines, has suspended flights to China until Feb. 9 because of the outbreak, a deputy prime minister said on Twitter.

Trinidad and Tobago has also imposed a two-week travel ban on Chinese visitors, Health Minister Terrence Deyalsingh announced on Thursday. Scientists have said that the incubation period for the coronavirus could last as long as 14 days.

The State Department tells Americans not to travel to China.

The State Department on Thursday night issued a travel advisory telling Americans not to travel to China because of the public health threat posed by the dangerous new coronavirus. The department set the new advisory at Level 4, or red — its highest alert, reserved for the most perilous situations.

"Travelers should be prepared for travel restrictions to be put into effect with little or no advance notice," the State Department said. "Commercial carriers have reduced or suspended routes to and from China."

The World Health Organization on Thursday declared the outbreak a global emergency after cases were discovered in more than a dozen countries.

More than 200 people have died, with about 9,800 infections confirmed until Friday.

The number of confirmed coronavirus cases has gone up more than tenfold in a week, and Chinese officials on Friday reported the highest death toll in a 24-hour period.

On Friday, Britain's chief medical officer, Chris Whitty, said that two residents had tested positive for coronavirus, the first known cases in the country.

(Source: The New York Times)

Health ministry plans to restrict travels from China due to coronavirus

1 → According to Raesi, there are some 200 Iranian university students living in Wuhan, of whom 150 came back to Iran before the start of the Chinese new year while no one was affected by coronavirus. On January 26, Hossein Erfani, head of the health ministry's contagious diseases department, said no cases of coronavirus infection or even suspected cases have so far been reported in the country. Moreover, Kianoush Jahanpour, head of the health ministry's public relations department, announced that any kind of food carried by passengers from China and South-east Asian countries into Iran is prohibited. According to the World Health Organization, coronaviruses (CoV) are a large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory



Syndrome (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV). A novel coronavirus (nCoV) is a new strain that has not been previously identified in humans. Common signs of infection include respiratory symptoms, fever, cough, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure, and even death. Standard recommendations to prevent infection spread include regular hand washing, covering mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing, thoroughly cooking meat and eggs. Avoid close contact with anyone showing symptoms of respiratory illness such as coughing and sneezing.

Coronavirus declared global health emergency by WHO

The new coronavirus has been declared a global emergency by the World Health Organization, as the outbreak continues to spread outside China. "The main reason for this declaration is not what is happening in China but what is happening in other countries," said WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. The concern is that it could spread to countries with weaker health systems. Meanwhile, the US has told its citizens not to travel to China. The state department issued a level four warning - having

previously urged Americans to "reconsider" travel to China - and said any citizens in China "should consider departing using commercial means". China has said it will send charter plans to bring back Hubei province residents who are overseas "as soon as possible". A foreign ministry spokesman said this was because of the "practical difficulties" Chinese citizens have faced abroad. Hubei is where the virus emerged. At least 213 people in the China have died from the virus, mostly in Hubei, with almost 10,000 cases nationally.

The WHO said there had been 98 cases in 18 other countries, but no deaths. Most international cases are in people who had been to Wuhan in Hubei. However in eight cases - in Germany, Japan, Vietnam and the United States - patients were infected by people who had travelled to China. Speaking at a news conference in Geneva, Dr Tedros described the virus as an "unprecedented outbreak" that has been met with an "unprecedented response". (Source: BBC)

Trump administration to 'weaken' protections for migratory birds

Washington (CNN) — A more than 100-year-old law protecting migratory birds from unintentional deaths by oil and gas companies and construction crews could be weakened by the Trump administration "as early as Thursday," The New York Times reported Thursday. The Times said the administration is planning to eliminate the "threat of punishment" provided by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 to companies and organizations that unintentionally kill birds while performing their work. The new rule would solidify a legal opinion the Interior Department released in 2017, the paper said, which argued "only actions explicitly intended to kill birds should be forbidden under the federal law." The new rule would mean that deaths of birds from an oil slick or by the distribution of illegal pesticides would not lead to financial penalties, according to the Times. The paper said it will be "difficult" for the administration to complete the new rule by the November presidential election, but that the department "has indicated it will push aggressively to do so." Unlike the 2017 legal opinion, which can be easily reversed by a different administration, the proposed rule would be harder to overturn by a succeeding administration. The proposed rule adds to a long and growing list of environmental protection rollbacks by the administration during the last three years. In 2019, the Interior Department proposed significant



changes to the Endangered Species Act which critics fear would weaken its implementation, allow for more oil and gas drilling, and limit how much regulators consider the impacts of the climate crisis. According to the Times, the 1918 act prohibits the killing of birds, nests or eggs "from listed species without a permit" and that in the 1970s, officials "used the act to prosecute and fine companies up to \$15,000 per bird for accidental deaths on power lines, in oil pits, in wind turbines and by other industrial hazards." The paper said BP agreed to pay \$100 million under the act after thousands of birds were killed during the 2010 Deepwater Horizon disaster. Under the 2017 opinion and the proposed rule, however, the disaster would not have led to "criminal liability" under the act because the bird deaths were accidental. Bob Dreher, the senior vice president of conservation programs at Defenders of Wildlife, told the Times that his group plans to fight the forthcoming rule. Other conservation groups and several states had previously sued to block the 2017 legal opinion, the paper reported.

Change climate policy now to avert oil market crisis, warns thinktank

The oil industry is at risk of a global market shock that could halve the value of fossil fuel investments if governments delay setting policies to tackle the climate crisis, according to new analysis. A report by Carbon Tracker, a financial thinktank, warned that a "handbrake turn" in climate policy could have a "forceful, abrupt, and disorderly" impact on the global oil industry by derailing fossil fuel demand. The report warned that the longer governments wait to set new regulations to drive climate action the tougher they will need to be to avert the risk of runaway greenhouse gas emissions and dangerous global heating. The report modelled the impact of a swift government crackdown on fossil fuels from 2025. It predicted that the impact could cause global oil prices to collapse, wiping out billions of dollars worth of fossil fuel investments. Andrew Grant, a Carbon Tracker analyst and author of the report, said oil companies "risk being left with stranded assets" by assuming that governments will stop short of "forceful action to limit climate change". The thinktank urged policymakers to act soon to limit new investment in fossil fuel projects which risk being stranded, and warned oil companies to anticipate a step change in climate action. Under existing forecasts oil demand is expected to grow by 0.6% a year over the next five years, but the report found that a crackdown on greenhouse gas emissions could cause demand to shrink by 2.6% a year between 2025 to 2040. "The loss of value is driven not by the



oil industry throwing money away but simply by investing based on signals sent by the oil price," the report said. Many oil companies may have been "lulled into a false sense of security by industry scenarios" which continue to forecast steadily rising demand, according to Carbon Tracker. The thinktank also warned investors against oil market scenarios published by the International Energy Agency which predict a steady decline in demand rather than a sudden collapse. Oil companies in the US, China and Russia are more exposed to a sudden oil market shock than their European peers due to their slow progress in adopting cleaner energy sources alongside fossil fuels. Within the world's largest listed oil companies, the so-called "super-majors", ExxonMobil, ConocoPhillips and Chevron are most exposed to an oil price collapse. Europe's most vulnerable oil company is BP, according to the report, followed by Norway's Equinor, Paris-headquartered Total, Italy's Eni and Anglo-Dutch energy giant Shell. (Source: The Guardian)

Over 1,600 tons of medicinal plants exported in 10 months

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Some 1,632 tons of medicinal herbs worth €15 million have been exported from the country since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2019), deputy head of the Forests, Range, and Watershed Management Organization, has said.



The exports were made from 16 provinces to Afghanistan, India, European Union member states and the Persian Gulf littoral countries, IRNA quoted Tarahom Behzad as saying on Monday. Iran is a rich country in terms of biodiversity and plant species, enjoying 11 climates out of 15 world-known climates, he said. According to botanists and researchers, the number of plant species in Iran is 8,425 species that are scattered over 85 million hectares of the country, he added. Pointing to the natural resources sector's exports in the Iranian calendar year 1396 (March 2017-March 2018), he noted that about 840 tons of medicinal herbs were exported to EU member states and Arabic countries. He stated that last year, export of medicinal herbs was 1,440 tons, announcing that during the first ten months of this year, exports reached 1,632 tons.

Asafetida, galbanum, dorema, tragacanth, truffle were among the herbal species exported to different countries, he noted. He went on to conclude that research has shown that more than 2,300 species of herbs in Iran have medicinal, aromatic and cosmetic properties, 1,738 of which are endemic species. According to the World Health Organization, the global market for herbal products is \$60 billion annually. About 25 percent of medicines worldwide are made of herbs. Among 252 important medicines of WHO, 11 percent are exclusively produced from medicinal plants.

State of emergency declared as bushfire threatens Australian capital

Australian officials declared a state of emergency for the capital city of Canberra and surrounding regions on Friday (Jan 31), as soaring temperatures and strong winds threatened to propel a large bushfire beyond the control of firefighters. Andrew Barr, Chief Minister for the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), said the decision to declare the first state of emergency since fatal wildfires in 2003 indicated the potential danger over the weekend. Officials said an uncontrolled fire in the ACT's south, on the doorstep of Canberra, had grown to 185 sq km, almost 8 per cent of the territory's land mass. "This fire may become very unpredictable. It may become uncontrollable," Barr told reporters in a televised briefing. "The combination of extreme heat, wind, and a dry landscape will place suburbs in Canberra's south at risk." Australia's federal parliament is located in Canberra, which is also home to several government and independent institutions as well as national museums. Four people died and almost 500 homes were destroyed in the 2003 Canberra fires. The state of emergency declared on Friday will run for 72 hours, giving authorities greater powers to order evacuations, close roads and take control of private property. Heatwave conditions are also expected to sweep through Victoria and New South Wales states over the weekend, where some 80 fires are burning. In neighbouring New Zealand, where smoke from the Australian blazes has turned glaciers brown, firefighters were battling to contain around 25 fires that spread rapidly to cover around 100 hectares on the South Island. Heatwave conditions were also forecast for much of the country over the weekend. (Source: channelnewsasia.com)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → E

Marine species population increased in protected areas

According to the annual census, the population of marine species in habitats under the Department of Environment (DOE) supervision has increased, Ahmad Lahijanzadeh, head of marine environment affairs at the DOE has said. The annual Census is the authoritative source of data determining the population and distribution of animal or marine species through counting them yearly. Protecting marine habitats and listing them as protected areas are among the most important priorities of the DOE, he said, adding, all of the areas have been identified through environmental assessment and field surveys. The reproduction time is important, and the DOE forces stand guard and constantly supervise the area during this period, he noted. He went on to say that annual census shows that the number of species in protected areas is increasing, probably due to favorable condition and full-time control.

افزایش گونه‌های دریایی مناطق تحت حفاظت سازمان محیط زیست

لاهیجان زاده گفت: براساس سرشماری سالانه تعداد گونه‌های موجود در زیستگاه‌های دریایی تحت حفاظت رو به افزایش است. احمد لاهیجان زاده معاون محیط زیست دریایی سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست در گفت‌وگو با خبرنگار باشگاه خبرنگاران جوان، در رابطه با اهمیت حفاظت از زیستگاه‌های دریایی اظهار کرد: حفاظت از زیستگاه‌های دریایی و شناسایی این مناطق در اولویت سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست قرار دارد و تمام این زیستگاه‌ها در قالب مطالعات جامع و تعقیب میدانی شناسایی شده‌اند. وی با بیان اینکه در بسیاری از این زیستگاه‌ها زادآوری صورت می‌گیرد، افزود: زمان این زادآوری‌ها با شناسایی زیستگاه‌ها مشخص است و سازمان محیط زیست در این بازه زمانی حفاظت فیزیکی را انجام می‌دهد. لاهیجان زاده گفت: براساس سرشماری‌های سالانه، تعداد گونه‌های موجود در زیستگاه‌های تحت حفاظت رو به افزایش است.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“il-, im-, in-, ir-”

■ **Meaning:** not
■ **For example:** It was **impossible** to sleep because of the noise.

PHRASAL VERB

Pick something up

■ **Meaning:** to learn something by watching or listening to other people
■ **For example:** I picked up a few words of Greek when I was there last year.

IDIOM

Put a damper on something

■ **Explanation:** If someone or something puts a damper on a situation or event, they make it less successful or enjoyable
■ **For example:** The party was going great until the neighbor's complaints put a damper on it.

WORDS IN THE NEWS

New diet for pandas

(December 23, 2002)
In China, giant pandas are now eating health biscuits. Chinese scientists say the panda's regular bamboo diet simply isn't good enough, and the rare animals are suffering from malnutrition. But good food is the least of the giant pandas' problems. This report from Holly Williams:
As if the panda didn't have enough to worry about - **loggers** destroying their natural environment, hunters killing them for their skins and a **breeding programme** that's been **plagued with problems**. Now scientists say the black and white beasts just aren't eating right. They aren't getting enough vitamins, minerals or fibre. The new biscuits are high in all three - and to avoid confusing the pandas, the production line makes them in bamboo-like shapes. Apparently, the pandas find the biscuits **very tasty**.
There are only 1000 giant pandas left in the wild. At the Panda Breeding Centre in Sichuan Province, scientists are **struggling** to boost the animal's population. But the animals are **notoriously difficult to breed in captivity**. Now at least, the remaining pandas will enjoy a balanced diet. But the hunting and logging continues - and their numbers are **dwindling**.
■ **Words**
loggers: people and companies that cut down trees on a large scale
a breeding programme: a plan to try and raise the number of pandas
plagued with problems: with many problems
very tasty: having a good taste
in the wild: in their natural environment, not in a zoo or park
struggling: finding it difficult
notoriously difficult to breed in captivity: it's well known that it is very difficult for pandas to reproduce
their numbers are dwindling: there are fewer and fewer
(Source: BBC)

The "Deal of the Century" is DOA, period

By Martin Love

NORTH CAROLINA — So in Washington this week Americans witnessed two criminals, Netanyahu and Trump, putting forth a Mideast "peace" plan where one side, the Palestinians, have no representation at all (nor a hand in crafting the proposals), and which must be a total embarrassment.

After 100 years of conflict since the Balfour Declaration gave Jews a faux, unilateral "right" to colonize Palestine with force and dispossess the indigenous inhabitants, nothing has been achieved to establish equity. Anyone who has bothered to study the history of the Mideast over the last century, whatever their original orientation may be, almost invariably comes to the logical conclusions that a tragic wrong has been done to Palestine and Palestinians. At first this was done for purely political reasons by British leaders, but since the 1940s, the colonization was seized upon by Zionists and their supporters as a "fair" reaction to the so-called Holocaust, except that it created a Nakba holocaust for millions of Palestinians, who had no hand in Europe's mistreatment of Jews.

There was always some hope that Washington might get around to dealing with some fairness and giving the Palestinians a break in the longer-term interests of fairness itself and some regional peace. You can forget this with Trump, and the irony and hypocrisy are enormous.

Trump by most all accounts is immoral, totally non-religious person. There is no aspect of his adult life that is not marked by lying, cheating and stealing, and this both in his personal and domestic life and in his business dealings. No one of such low or no character and paltry intelligence has EVER been a U.S. President until now. This is a President who, for one thing, refuses even to release his tax returns — because they are almost certainly marked by deception and fraud and corruption. This is a President who has told more outright lies than any other ever, and yet at the same time he has surrounded himself with many people who are alleged "Christians" or evangelicals, who are thus by inclination also Zionists. Why? Because Trump might not otherwise have any kind of political base — so he plays into the fears, delusions, fantasies and sheer ignorance of these people while pretending to have religious convictions of his own.

Zionists in Israel eat this up, pandering to Trump's weaknesses and his narcissism and desire to be "liked", and it goes beyond "liking": some have called him a quasi "messiah" who was elected President by a "god's" will to "save" the Jews who in fact are enemies to themselves ultimately. Trump is being played by people like Netanyahu — people who really at bottom don't care at all for or about the U.S. nor for its leaders, but are just seizing on opportunities to use and to milk the U.S. politically and financially and abuse people like Trump and others in an administration that is the most fervently Christian Zionist ever in the U.S. The Trump gang hasn't just dropped support for a two-state solution, it has moved U.S. policy to endorsing the reality that Netanyahu's right-wing government has created: an ethno-national state where Israel retains territories it illegally occupied in the 1967 war. This is a world where international law has been completely ignored, and it all began to grow much worse during Ronald Reagan's tenure in the White House in the 1980s. The one hope of late has been that the International Criminal Court in The Hague might condemn Israel and its war crimes and human rights abuses, as it claimed it might, but nothing has been done yet — in part because both the U.S. and Israel have been threatening the court with counter measures.

There was not a single Palestinian in the White House room where Trump announced the plan on Tuesday. But Sheldon Adelson and wife were there, and other hardcore conservative Jews like Ron Lauder and evangelicals like the self-proclaimed "minister" John Hagee. It was like a conclave of the demented.

Trump, according to Leith Marouf, a widely followed media consultant and Mideast expert who lives in Canada and in Lebanon, said that during the meeting Trump literally boasted about the "deal" and the assassination of Iran's General Soleimani. Marouf correctly contends that Soleimani's murder was for apartheid Israel, making this usurpation of Palestine more possible.

Meanwhile, the impeachment "trial" of Trump in the U.S. Senate continues, and even though more evidence of Trump's misdeeds could even be testified to by none other than John Bolton, it's still likely Trump won't be forced to step down, and even if he were, is Mike Pence any better? No, he seems to be dumber than even Trump and Mike Pompeo, if that's possible. Yet there must be some hope that Americans may be becoming less inclined to vote for Trump in November. Trump could lose the election, preferably, to Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont. There is a man of character.

Domino of militants' collapse in eastern Idlib continues, Syrian army frees more regions

TEHRAN (FNA) - The countdown has started for the collapse of terrorists in Eastern Idlib as they are losing ground to invading Syrian Army after the strategic city of Ma'arat al-Nauman was seized by Damascus forces.

The situation in Eastern Idlib continues to worsen for the militants as Syrian army units have announced the capture of several areas on Thursday night.

Government troops continued their push North of Ma'arat al-Nauman, seizing several areas in the Eastern part of Idlib. According to a military source, the Syrian Army captured the towns of Kafr Batikh, Qomhanah, Al-Hartimah, Tal Mardikh, and Jawbas after overrunning the militant defense lines.

It comes as Syrian army forces makes a close approach towards the strategic city of Saraqib in the Northeastern countryside of the Idlib province. The crossroad city is a high priority for the Damascus government, as two major highways go through Saraqib, including the primary route to Aleppo from Idlib. The Syrian Army is now 3 kilometers away from the key city. Syrian army troops are looking to capture the dozens of villages and towns left under militant control East of Ma'arat al-Nauman before they make an attempt to capture Saraqib.

The fresh military operation by Damascus came after those positioned in the de-escalation zone failed to honor a ceasefire brokered by Russia and Turkey and continued to target civilian neighborhoods. The Syrian army forces resumed their military operation against militants in Idlib, over multiple ceasefire violations.

In mid-December, the Syrian Army started a new military operation in Southeastern Idlib to clear the area of terrorists. Days later, over 40 villages in Idlib had been retaken by government troops. The Russian Reconciliation Center for Syria has repeatedly called on militants to stop fighting and peacefully engage in conflict resolution.

Idlib is the last stronghold of militants in the Arab republic. According to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, liberating the area is essential to putting an end to the country's conflict.

Analysis of the details of "the Deal of the Century"; Israel's interests and disregarding Palestine's rights

By Mohammad Ghaderi

TEHRAN — U.S. President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu unveiled the «Deal of the Century», which Trump believes is the best and most effective plan for establishing peace between Palestine and Israel, as all the previous plans were fictitious. He claimed that the scheme would simultaneously meet the interests of Israel and Palestine.

But Palestinian National Authority President Mahmoud Abbas's stance on rejecting the Deal of the Century and Netanyahu's full satisfaction with it indicate that Trump has not observed justice in the plan as he had claimed.

Announcing al-Quds (Jerusalem) as the capital of Israel, transferring US embassy from Tel Aviv to al-Quds, recognizing occupied Golan Heights for Israel, recognizing Zionist settlements in the West Bank were among the special privileges that Trump has delivered to Netanyahu.

In general, Trump's plan, which he refers to as a two-state solution, has two political and economic aspects. From economic aspect, the plan seeks to provide \$ 50 billion in aid to the future Palestinian state and to claim that it has taken step for the welfare and empowerment of Palestine. That is why Trump claimed to be empowering the Palestinians rather than giving them money because they are capable people during the unveiling ceremony.

From political aspect, issues such as recognizing al-Quds as Israel's capital, determining borders, the statue of the Jordan Valley and the Israeli sovereignty over the settlements build after the Oslo Accord have been stated.

As Trump stated, al-Quds would be Israel's undivided capital. He also emphasized that the plan would recognize East al-Quds as



the Palestinian capital and the U.S. would open its embassy there.

The issue is vague, as on the one hand is raises the question of al-Quds's integrity as the Israeli capital, and on the other hand, considers East al-Quds as the capital of Palestine. This suggests that Trump envisages the Palestinian capital to be located on the outskirts of al-Quds.

Under the scheme, Jews are not allowed to buy houses from Arabs and vice versa. No area will be annexed to al-Quds, and the holy places in al-Quds will be preserved as they are.

In the case of the Jordan Valley, it seems that, according to the deal, the Israeli sovereignty has been recognized over a part of this area. On this basis, in his remarks after Trump's speech, Netanyahu stated that previous peace plans failed because they did not strike the "right balance" and did

not recognize Israel's sovereignty over the Jordan Valley, but President Trump's plan recognized that Israel must have sovereignty in the Jordan Valley and other strategic areas of Judea and Samaria.

"Because of this historic recognition, and because I believe your peace plan strikes the right balance where other plans have failed, I've agreed to negotiate peace with the Palestinians on the basis of your peace plan" the Israeli prime minister also added.

Trump also announced that Jordan would supervise the holy places of al-Quds. Earlier, according to some speculations, this job was supposed to be handed over to Saudi Arabia.

Anyway, given the ignorance of Jordan's role in the Deal of the Century, Oman is one of the opponent to the deal. Although, King Abdullah II of Jordan has strongly opposed the plan, given the country's financial needs for Saudi Arabia, one cannot

expect much from Jordan.

One of the most unilateral remarks by Trump at the ceremony was about the demarcation of Israeli-Palestinian borders. Trump stated, "We will form a joint committee with Israel to convert the conceptual map into a more detailed and calibrated rendering so that recognition can be immediately achieved", he also added, "We will also work to create a contiguous territory within the future Palestinian State for when the conditions for statehood are met, including the firm rejection of terrorism". In his unilateral plan, set without consulting the PNA, Trump did not even want the Palestinian to take part in defining their country's borders. The remarks by Trump regarding the rejection of terrorism means that Palestinian resistance groups will be disarmed and indifferent in the face of armed Zionist forces. A few hours before the beginning of the unveiling ceremony, Mahmoud Abbas asked for the resistance movement's help in a phone call with Hamas movement chief Ismail Haniyeh.

Abbas did not attend the ceremony and also refused to receive a copy of the plan offered by Washington.

Earlier to the phone call, Abbas said that we do not have missiles and planes, but we have a great will and nation. We will be on high alert and prepared in the coming days and we want everyone to be with us and we need everyone. Regarding the issue of returning Palestinian refugees, Trump said that no one would be displaced under the Deal of the Century. This could mean that returning the refugees has basically no place in the scheme.

In fact, Trump is seeking to pressure the Palestinians and the PNA directly and through some Arab states like Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the UAE to make Mahmoud Abbas back down from his stances.

Israeli soldiers suppress Palestinian Marches with bullets, tear gas



TEHRAN (Tasnim) — Thousands of Palestinians protested against the US President Donald Trump's so-called peace plan on Thursday, clashing with Israeli forces across the occupied territories.

The protests took place at the northern entrance of the cities of Ramallah in the occupied West Bank, Al-Bireh and Jaballa in the Gaza Strip.

Israeli forces used tear gas, live and rubber bullets to disperse the protesters. Footage from Arab media shows protesters clash with the Israeli forces as tear gas engulfed the demonstration.

The demonstrators also burned Israeli and American flags to decry US President Donald Trump's proposed 'deal of the century'.

Similar clashes were reported in (Al Khalil) Hebron, the Arroub refugee camp

and the town of Sair, north of Al Khalil, where soldiers also used the tear gas and rubber bullets to disperse the protesters.

The Palestinians have planned more massive rallies across the occupied lands after Friday prayers.

Secretary of Fatah Movement in Ramallah Mowaffaq Sehwal said that "the Palestinian people are ready to sacrifice their blood for sticking to the Palestinian cause, and for having Jerusalem (Al Quds) to be the capital of Palestine."

On Tuesday, Trump unveiled his fabled 'deal of the century', a set of proposals to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, alongside Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu in Washington DC.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas rejected the plan with "a thousand no's," as being one-sided in favor of Israel.

Tens of thousands of Yemenis protest against Trump's 'deal of century'



PRESS TV — Tens of thousands of Yemenis have taken to the streets in the northern city of Sa'ada, the capital Sana'a and elsewhere protest the so-called "deal of century" unveiled by US President Donald Trump this week.

Yemen's al-Masirah television network said the demonstrators carried banners and slogans Friday, decrying the deal and pledging to support the Palestinian struggle against the Israeli occupation.

The protesters, in a statement, slammed what they described as the treason of certain "hypocritical Arab regimes" - particularly Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates - for supporting the plan and betraying the Palestinian cause.

The statement underlined that existing divisions within the Muslim and Arab world have emboldened Tel Aviv and Washington

to carry out the measure.

The protesters called on Palestinian factions to unite and overcome existing rifts to liberate Palestine from the Israeli occupation.

The statement reiterated an earlier pledge from the leader of Yaman's popular Ansarullah movement Abdul-Malik al-Houthi to support the "Palestinian and Lebanese" resistance in any future conflict with the Israeli regime.

Trump unveiled the so-called peace plan alongside Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the White House on Tuesday.

The so-called deal would, among other contentious terms, enshrine Jerusalem al-Quds as "Israel's undivided capital" and allow the regime to annex settlements in the occupied West Bank and the Jordan Valley.

Erdogan blasts Saudi support for Trump's Palestine Deal as 'Treason'

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Friday blasted several Arab countries including Saudi Arabia for backing the US President Donald Trump's so-called deal of century, condemning it as 'treason.'

'Some Arab countries that support such a plan commit treason against Jerusalem (al-Quds), as well as against their own people, and more importantly against all humanity,' Erdogan told his party's provincial heads in Ankara.

Erdogan, a strong advocate of Palestinian rights, singled out Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Oman, DailyMail reported.

'Saudi Arabia in particular, you are silent. When will you break your silence? You look at Oman, Bahrain, and Abu Dhabi is the same,' said the Turkish president.

'Shame on you! Shame on you! How will those hands that applaud (the plan) give an account of this treacherous deed?'

Turkey's relations with Riyadh and Abu Dhabi deteriorated after the 2018 murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in the kingdom's consulate in Istanbul on the order of the Saudi leadership.

On the conflict that engulfs Libya, Turkey supports the UN-recognized government in Tripoli while Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates back eastern commander Khalifa Haftar, who controls three-quarters of Libyan territory.

'Jerusalem (al-Quds) cannot be left to the bloody claw of Israel,' he added. Erdogan warned that everyone would be responsible for 'grave consequences' of any step that encourages Israel, which he called a 'rogue state' and a 'terror state.'

The Turkish leader also said he would speak with Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas and Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh.

Today's comments come a day after the top foreign policy adviser to Iran's Leader of Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Khamenei coined the deal a continuation of the objectives of 'crusaders and Zionists.'

Ali Akbar Velayati said the so-called deal of the century would involve the 'selling and dismantling Muslim lands'.

On Tuesday night, Iran's foreign ministry called Trump's plan the 'Deval (devil+deal)', which is descended to sow everlasting hatred and violence in West Asia.

Demonstrations were held in both Istanbul and Gaza this

week, with communities coming out to condemn the plan.

The plan released on Tuesday was seen as heavily biased towards Israel and was angrily rejected by Palestinians, with one of the key bones of contention being its classification of Jerusalem (al-Quds) as Israel's 'undivided capital.'

Palestinians have long seen the city, which was occupied by Israel in 1967, as their capital.

Palestinians at the Al-Aqsa compound in Jerusalem (al-Quds) held rallies and protests after dawn prayers, which was met with heavy response by Israeli police.

Thousands of Palestinians attended the Friday prayers at noon to take part at the demonstrations.

Clashes between Palestinian protesters and Israeli forces in the West Bank have left at least 30 Palestinians wounded since Tuesday. The Al-Aqsa mosque is one of Islam's holy sites.

The Trump plan gives Israel the green light to annex the strategic Jordan Valley, which constitutes some 30 percent of the West Bank, as well as all Israeli settlements, which now number more than 200, including those in annexed east Jerusalem (East al-Quds).

French economy shrinks 0.1% under pressure of massive protests

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — France's economy shrank in the fourth quarter as protests against President Emmanuel Macron's pensions reform hit business activity.

The French economy, one of the largest in the EU, has failed to meet expectations and contracted for the first time under the presidency of Emmanuel Macron in the final quarter of 2019.

France's real GDP fell 0.1 percent in the fourth quarter, a dramatic drop after an expansion by 0.3 percent in July-September, according to a report published by the

French national statistics bureau, INSEE, on Friday. While the agency said that GDP slid just "slightly," the results are well below the earlier projected 0.2 percent growth, RT reported.

This brings the full-year economic growth to 1.2 percent in 2019, down from 1.7 percent a year earlier.

The unexpected slowdown comes due to a decline in both exports and imports, which fell 0.2 percent. One of the negative factors was changes in inventories, meaning that companies are using stocks rather than

boosting production. If it had not been for the latter, the French economy would have grown 0.3 percent, analysts say, and it may even see growth in the first quarter of this year.

Massive rallies and protests across France could also take a toll on the economy. Strikes are estimated to cost the French economy 0.1 percent. Political uncertainty slashed the GDP by 0.2 percent, according to the chief economist at Allianz Group, Ludovic Subran.

Italy, the Eurozone's third largest economy, also posted weak results for the last quarter of 2019 on Friday. Its GDP shrank by

0.3 percent during this period, marking the worst quarterly performance since early 2013.

The contractions of two of the EU's biggest economies have raised concerns over Europe's economic health on the day Britain leaves the bloc. Meanwhile, the EU's official statistical office said that the Eurozone economy is only one percent larger than a year ago. The final quarter of 2019 was weak both for the 19 members of the Eurozone and the entire EU, as the GDP for both gained just 0.1 percent, down from 0.3 percent in July-September.

Iran crowned CAFA U19 Girl's Futsal champions



SPORTS TEHRAN — Iran claimed the title of the CAFA U19 Girl's Futsal Championship 2020 on Wednesday.

The Iranian team defeated Kyrgyz Republic 2-0 in their last match.

The Persian maintained their 100 percent record in the five matches.

Nilloofar Ardalan's girls defeated Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyz Republic in the tournament.

After piling on a stunning 50 goals in their opening four matches, Iran were given their toughest battle of the tour-

namment against an unheralded Kyrgyz Republic outfit, with goals from Roghaye Somaye and Fahime Arzani either side of half-time eventually getting the job done for the Persians.

Somaye's strike put the finishing touches a superb individual campaign, with the Iranian youngster scoring a remarkable 19 goals in five matches - including seven in Iran's 16-1 win over Afghanistan on Matchday Two - to easily claim the tournament's top scorer award.

Earlier on the final day, Uzbekistan confirmed their status at the tournament's second-best side with a convincing 7-2 win over host nation Tajikistan, while Turkmenistan continued their terrific end to the tournament to finish in

third place after Mariya Charyeva bagged a hat-trick in a 9-0 over last placed Afghanistan.

Iranian skipper Maral Torkaman was also honored, earning the Most Valuable Player prize for a sterling campaign which included 12 goals of her own.

Iran are among the leading lights of Asian women's futsal, winning both editions of the AFC Women's Futsal Championship, held in 2015 and 2018 respectively.

The round-robin tournament was held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan from Jan. 24 to 29.

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

Iran's Esteghlal, Shahr Khodro book place in 2020 ACL group stage

SPORTS TEHRAN — Iranian football teams Esteghlal and Shahr Khodro booked their places at the 2020 AFC Champions League group stage.

Esteghlal cruised to a 5-0 victory over Qatar's Al Rayyan at Jassim bin Hamad Stadium on Tuesday.

Esteghlal had arrived to the play-off stage on the back of a 3-0 win over Kuwait SC in the second preliminary round, while Al Rayyan were kicking-off their campaign at this stage on home soil after finishing fourth in the 2018-19 Qatar Stars League season.

The visitors needed just nine minutes to take the lead. Voria Ghafouri and Cheick Diabate had between them scored all of Esteghlal's three goals in the previous round, and on the occasion their combination produced the opener.

Ghafouri beat the Al Rayyan wall and the goalkeeper with a well-struck free-kick from 25 yards, but his shot ricocheted off



the upright and into the path of Diabate who controlled and hammered the rebound into the back of the net.

Five minutes before the break, Diabate turned from scorer to provider. The Malian striker broke free on the counter and crossed for Mehdi Ghaedi whose looped header nestled into the far corner of goalkeeper Fahad Younis to send Esteghlal into the break with a two-goal lead.

The same pattern continued after the

restart with the visitors dominating. Al Rayyan defense failed to deal with a Hrvoje Milic cross, allowing the ball to fall for Ghaedi inside the box and the Esteghlal number 10 comportedly fired home his side's third of the night in the 47th minute, the-afc.com reported.

Substitute Amir Arsalan Motahari added his name to the scoresheet with seven minutes to go. The striker received Ghafouri's cross at the edge of the area and drove home Esteghlal's fourth goal despite Younis' desperate attempts to save.

Just before the final whistle, Motahari rounded off the scoring in a similar fashion following a cross from Arash Rezavand to make it 5-0.

Esteghlal progress to take their place in Group A of the 2020 AFC Champions League alongside UAE's Al Wahda, Iraq's Al Shorta and the winner of the second play-off match between Saudi Arabia's Al Ahli and FC Istiklol of Tajikistan.

Shahr Khodro also defeated Qatar's Al Saliya FC 5-4 in a penalty shootout after a scoreless draw at the Abdullah Bin Khalifa Stadium on Tuesday.

Shahr Khodro's success means there will be four Iranian clubs in the group stage, while Al Saliya will need to wait at least a year longer for their maiden taste of Continental group stage football.

With both sides vying for a first-ever group stage berth, there was a unanimous desire to gain an early advantage, but despite several bright attacking moments there would be no breakthrough in the first half.

Shahr Khodro became the 13th club from Iran to reach the group stage.

With a place in the tournament proper achieved, the Mashad-based side will begin their Group B campaign against reigning champions Al Hilal SFC, in a group which also contains Uzbekistan's Pakhtakor and Shabab Al Ahli Dubai.

Persepolis football club launch official mobile app

SPORTS TEHRAN — Persepolis have launched FC PERSEPOLIS, the club's official mobile app at a ceremony organized by the club and their new business partner.

At the ceremony held in Tehran, Mohammadhassan Ansarifard, General Manager of Persepolis, firstly talked about the serious financial challenges that the club face, and then announced they will cooperate with knowledge-based company, Atieh Dade Pardaz.

Head coach of Persepolis football team, Yahya Golmohammadi, technical manager Afshin Peirovani and all members of the Board of Directors of the club, as well as media representatives, attended the ceremony.

The new application is designed to provide the Reds' fans with unrivaled access



to new and exclusive Persepolis content.

While Iranian teams are deprived of domestic broadcast revenue, they try to overcome their financial problems through other possible ways. Managers of Persepolis claim that launching the official app is financially a significant one for the club and can increase their income.

Persepolis, who sit top of the Iran Professional League, are going to win the league for the fourth successive time.

Sepahan edge Foolad in Iran Professional League

SPORTS TEHRAN — Sepahan defeated Foolad 2-1 in Iran Professional League (IPL) matchday 18 on Friday.

Sepahan Brazilian forward Kiros Stanly was on target just five minutes into the match and Mohammad Mohebbi made it 2-0 two minutes after the hour mark.

With 10 minutes remaining, Hassan Beit Saeid pulled a goal back.

Earlier on the day, Tractor defeated Zob Ahan 2-1 in Tabriz's Yadegar Emam Stadium.

Algerian forward Okacha Hamzaoui gave the hosts the lead in the 46th minute but Hadi Mohammadi canceled his goal in the 57th minute.

Sasan Ansari headed the ball into back of the net in the 63rd minute.

Pars Jonoubi drew 1-1 with Gol Gohar in Jam.



Nassaji suffered a 3-1 home loss against Saipa and rock-bottom Shahin Busshaeh defeated Paykan 3-1.

On Saturday, Persepolis will meet Sanat Naft in Abadan, Esteghlal play Naft Masjed Soleyman in Tehran and Shahr Khodro entertain Machine Sazi in Mashhad.

Persepolis lead the IPL table with 37 points and one game in hands.

Sepahan and Tractor sit second and third with 35 and 33 points, respectively.

China's first World Cup races canceled amid coronavirus concern

Alpine skiing joined a long list of sports juggling schedules in the midst of a coronavirus outbreak as the International Ski Federation (FIS) announced Wednesday that the first World Cup Alpine races set for China would be canceled.

The course in Yanqing, China, will be the Olympic course in the 2022 Winter Games. A men's downhill and super-G had been scheduled for Feb. 15-16.

The situation in China, where the coronavirus death toll is now well over 100 and the number of confirmed cases is more than 6,000, has changed rapidly. Last weekend, FIS

general secretary Sarah Lewis described the possibility of canceling the event as "low risk."

Yanqing hosted its first competition, the Chinese National Winter Games, Jan. 16-20.

"Since the outbreak of the novel coronavirus 2019-nCoV, we have been paying close attention to its impact on the 2019/2020 FIS Alpine Ski World Cup in Yanqing and have taken active precautionary measures under the guidelines of local health and disease control authorities," Yangqing organizers said. "At present, the outbreak has

not ended and Beijing municipal government is taking proactive measures to contain the spread of the virus. We take the health of athletes, coaches, journalists, fans, and staff seriously. FIS, the Chinese Ski Association, and the Yanqing Organising Committee have therefore come to the decision to cancel the event."

Women's races are scheduled for Yanqing next season, and the FIS said it would work to schedule men's races on the Olympic slope as well.

(Source: NBC Sports)

AFC releases new statement on Iranian teams

Asian Football Confederation (AFC) released a statement in regard to home matches of Iranian teams in the 2020 AFC Champions League.

The statement that was issued on Thursday, January 30, reads: "Following discussions with representatives of clubs from the Islamic Republic of Iran, held in Kuala Lumpur on January 23, 2020, it was agreed that any home matches involving clubs from IR Iran on match days 1, 2 and 3 would be swapped to become away fixtures."

With this statement it seems that the four teams representing Iran in 2020 AFC Champions League (ACL) group stage - Persepolis, Esteghlal, Sepahan, and Shahr Khodro - have no problem to host their rivals on match days 4, 5 and 6 of ACL group stage.

Esteghlal and Shahr Khodro defeated their opponents in the play-off stage to join Persepolis and Sepahan at the 2020 AFC Champions League group stage.

(Source: AFC)

Jahanbakhsh listed for EPL prize

Alireza Jahanbakhsh has been confirmed as a contender for the Premier League goal of the month prize for January.

His spectacular overhead kick on New Year's Day against Chelsea is one of eight goals shortlisted.

The Iranian scored his second goal in as many games when Lewis Dunk's header was met inside the box with a spectacular overhead kick, which flew past Kepa Arrizabalaga into the bottom right-hand corner.

It summed a memorable five days for the winger, who had scored his first goal for the

club in a 2-0 win over AFC Bournemouth on 28th December with a strike after just two minutes and 29 seconds.

The list also includes Richarlison's well-taken winner against the Seagulls for Everton.

Other contenders are James Maddison and aHamza Choudhury, Sebastien Haller (West Ham v Bournemouth).

The winner is partly decided by a fans' poll. Votes can be cast at premier-league.com.

(Source: The Argus)

Bordeaux eye Iran international Mehdi Taremi

Ligue 1 side Bordeaux are in negotiations with Portuguese outfit Rio Ave about the possibility of signing 27-year-old Iranian international striker Mehdi Taremi.

Rio Ave are looking for €5m in order to sell a player under contract with them until 2021, but a deal could be closed for a €3m fee instead.

The only problem at the moment is that Les Girondins are not the only side interested, with Sporting Portugal having also positioned themselves.

They have also been offered the chance to sign Borja Baston from Swansea on loan, despite the fact that the 27-year-old's contract expires at the end of the season.

(Source: L'Equipe)

Esteghlal complete signing of Bulgarian defender

TASNIM — Bulgarian defender Nikolay Bodurov joined Iranian football team Esteghlal of Tehran on Thursday.

The 34-year-old player joined the Iranian Blues until the end of the season for an undisclosed fee.

Bodurov was a member of English side Fulham from 2014 to 2016.

Esteghlal seek to win the Iran Professional League (IPL) after seven years.

The Iranian team sit fifth in the table, eight points behind leader Persepolis.

Iran climb one place in Asian clubs' ranking in 2020

MNA — In the latest ranking of Asian Football Confederation (AFC), Iran's football have climbed up one place in Asian football clubs' ranking in 2020, above from South Korea, and stood at fifth place.

From 2017 to 2020, Asian Football Confederation (AFC) calculates the score of Asian clubs which participate in the Asian Champions League (ACL) and AFC Cup according to a certain formula.

This was happened at the condition that football teams of Esteghlal and Shahr Khodro of Iran advanced to the stage group of ACL with gaining sweet wins over their rivals.

Accordingly, Iran will compete with four representatives in this edition of ACL at the stage group.

Ivankovic: I have great ambitions with Oman

Head coach Branko Ivankovic has several goals for Oman, the first of which is to steer the West Asian side to a historic FIFA World Cup Finals appearance.

The much-decorated Croatian was unveiled as head coach last week, replacing Erwin Koeman, and Ivankovic said he was excited to be part of Oman's football project.

"We have several goals but the most important is to qualify for the FIFA World Cup 2022 and the AFC Asian Cup 2023 Finals," said Ivankovic at his first official press conference in Muscat on Wednesday.

"We have short-term goals and we also have targets for a long period. I hope to help Oman become one of the strongest teams."



Oman are currently second in Group E of the Asian Qualifiers for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and AFC Asian Cup China 2023.

The Reds will meet Myanmar in a friendly match on February 14 with their next Asian Qualifiers tie against Afghanistan on March 31.

Ivankovic said young players would be given a chance to stake a claim for spots in the national team.

"We have to make a transformation and add new faces to the national team," he explained. "I have seen the Oman players before and they have the talent to achieve good results."

"I have good experience with national teams, not only with Iran but also Croatia," said Ivankovic, who guided Iran to the 2006 FIFA World Cup Finals.

"We have a desire for great achievements together and I will work hard to fulfill the targets of Oman Football Association."

(Source: AFP)

Ali Gholizadeh extends Charleroi Contract until 2024

Charleroi Iranian midfielder Ali Gholizadeh has extended his contract at the club until 2024.

Gholizadeh arrived in Charleroi in July 2018, after having played at Saipa FC in the country. The right-back, who has six caps (3 goals) with Iran, has since played 41 games for the Belgian top-flight football team.

This season, the 23-year-old icon player has had four goals and five assists in all competitions.

Charleroi are in fifth place in the Jupiler Pro League, tied on points with Standard (41). The Liège have one more match.

(Source: dh.be)

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Managing Director: Mohammad Shojaeian
Editor-in-Chief: Mohammad Ghaderi

Editorial Dept.: Fax: (+98 21) 88808214 — 88808895
editor@tehrantimes.com
Switchboard Operator: Tel: (+98 21) 43051000
Advertisements Dept.: Telefax: (+98 21) 43051450
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GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Faith is preferring truth, even if it is to your loss, to falsehood, even if it is to your interest.

Imam Ali (AS)

“Exam” star Sadaf Asgari shines at Sundance Film Festival

A R T TEHRAN — Sadaf Asgari, the star of Iranian short film “Exam” directed by Sonia Haddad, has won the a Short Film Special Jury Award for Acting at the Sundance Film Festival in the U.S. city of Park City.



Sadaf Asgari acts in a scene from the Iranian short film “Exam” directed by Sonia Haddad.

The film is about a teenage girl who gets involved in the process of delivering a pack of cocaine to its client, and gets stuck in a weird cycle of occurrences.

The movie, which received the Grand Jury Award - Live-Action Short at the American Film Institute - AFI FEST last November, is currently competing in the 38th Fajr Film Festival underway in Tehran.

The winners of the festival were announced last Tuesday with “So What If the Goats Die” by Sofia Alaoui from France receiving the Grand Jury Prize, the organizers announced.

The Short Film Jury Award in the international fiction category was presented to “The Devil’s Harmony” by Dylan Holmes Williams from the United Kingdom, while “John Was Trying to Contact Aliens” by American director Matthew Killip won the Short Film Jury Award in the non-fiction competition.

The award for best short animation went to “Daughter” by Czech director Daria Kashcheeva, and Michael Arcos was named best director for “Valerio’s Day Out”, a co-production between Colombia and the U.S.

“The Warden” named best film at Iran critics’ celebration

1 -> Navid Mohammadzadeh was honored with the award for creative acting for his portrayal of the prison warden in the film during the celebration, which took place at the Parsian Enqelab Hotel in Tehran on Thursday.



Navid Mohammadzadeh (2nd L) accepts the award for best creative acting for his role in “The Warden” at the 13th Celebration of Iranian Cinema Critics and Screenwriters at the Parsian Enqelab Hotel in Tehran on January 30, 2020. (Mehr/Behnam Tofiqi)

Hamid Farrokhnejad and Farhad Askani were the recipients of the award in the previous editions of the festival.

“It has been several times that I have been honored in this celebration and this makes me take my steps more confidentially,” Mohammadzadeh said in his acceptance speech.

The best director award went to Narges Abyar for her acclaimed movie “When the Moon Was Full”, while Elnaz Shakerdoost received the best actress award and Fereshteh Sadr-Orafai won the best supporting actress award for their roles in the film.

The best actor award was presented to Hamed Behdad for his role in “The Castle of Dreams” by Reza Mirkarimi and the best supporting actor award was handed to Ali Nasirian for his role in “A Hairy Tale”.

The Society for Cinema Critics and Screenwriters, which is the organizer of the gala, honors a first-film director every year with the Best Creative and Promising Filmmaker Award.

This year the award went to Homayun Ghanizadeh for his film “A Hairy Tale”.

Film critic Abbas Yari, actor Akbar Abdi and cinematographer Alireza Zarrindast were honored with the lifetime achievement awards at the celebration.

Aid to flood-struck Sistan-Baluchestan to kick off Fajr Film Festival

By Manijeh Rezapoor

TEHRAN — The 38th edition of the Fajr Film Festival will officially commence today by forwarding tons of relief supplies to help the flood-stricken people in Sistan-Baluchestan.

Earlier, the organizers had said that they would not arrange an official opening ceremony in order to allocate its cost to flood relief in the southeastern Iranian region.

A lineup of 22 movies will go on screen in the official competition of the festival this year.

“Abadan 11, 60” by Mehrdad Khoshbakht, “Atabay” by Niki Karimi, “The Clouds about to Rain” by Majid Barzegar, “Toman” by Morteza Farshbaf, “Exodus” by Ebrahim Hatamikia and “Good, Bad, Garish 2: The Secret Army” by Peyman Qasemkhani are among the competing films.

The lineup also includes “Day Zero” by Saeid Malekan, “Walnut Tree” by Mohammad-Hossein Mahdavian, “Amphibian” by Borzu Niknejad, “I’m Scared” by Behnam Behzadi, “Shahre Qesseh Cinema” by Keivan Alimohammadi, “The Pulp” by Soheil Beiraqi and “Day of Chaos” by Behruz Shoeibi.

The festival will also screen “To Die in the Pure Water” by Tehran-based Afghan brothers Jamshid and Navid Mahmudi, “The Night”, a co-production between Iran and the U.S. by Iranian-American director Kurosh Ahari, “Skin” co-directed by Bahram and Bahman Ark and “The Sun” by Majid Majidi.

Also included are “Butterfly Swimming” by Mohammad Kart, “Bone Marrow” by Hamidreza Qorbani, “Qasida of the White Cow” by Behdash Sanaeiha, “There Was Blood” by Masud Kimiai and “Three Puffs of Prison” by Saman Salur.



Fajr Film Festival director Ebrahim Darughezadeh unveils a poster of the 38th edition of the event during a press conference at Tehran’s Mellat Cineplex on January 30, 2020. (Honaronline/Mohammad Namazi)

The films in the official competition are due to be judged by the jury composed of Narges Abyar, Fereidun Jeirani, Mohammad-Mehdi Asgarpur and Maziar Miri.

Abbas Belondi, Turaj Aslani, Saeid Rad, Tahmasb Solhju and Reza Purhossein are the other members of the jury.

A lineup of 10 movies will also go on

screen in the documentary section, while 10 short films will compete in the festival.

The jury for the documentary, short film, and New Look sections are Mehdi Jafari, Ruhollah Hejazi and Mostafa Razaq-Karimi. Fereshteh Taerpur and Hadi Moqadamdoost are also the other members of the jury.

The organizers have also announced that films on resistance and jihad will be honored with an award named after Quds Force commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani who was martyred in a U.S. air raid in Baghdad on January 3.

The 38th Fajr Film Festival will be held in Tehran from February 1 to 11.

“The Man Who” opens 38th Fajr International Theater Festival



A R T TEHRAN — The 38th Fajr International Theater Festival opened on Thursday by staging three plays, including “The Man Who”.

Co-written by English writer Peter Brook and French writer Marie-Hélène Estienne was performed by an Iranian troupe directed by Reza Molai at Tehran’s Divare Chaharom Theater in Fajr Plus, a section that is a prelude to the festival.

In this category, Iranian director Shaahin Ramezani staged American director and writer Woody Allen’s play “Death Knocks”.

The organizers also released “The Decisive Moment”, a book containing 59 photos of the performances staged across the country over the past year.

The photos taken by 49 photographers were also showcased in an exhibition opened at the Iranian Artists Forum in Tehran at the same time. Top photos of the collection will be honored during the closing ceremony

of the festival on February 10.

Six troupes from Poland, Armenia, Belgium, Switzerland and Greece are scheduled to perform in the international section of the festival, which is non-competitive this year.

Guests from 19 countries, including Finland, Georgia, France, Belgium, Russia, Italy, Azerbaijan and Denmark, have also been invited to the Iranian Theater Market, which is underway on the sidelines of the festival.

On the first day of the festival, the organizers announced that they have added a new play named “We Feel Collective Grief” to the schedule in sympathy for the victims of the Ukrainian aircraft, which was unintentionally targeted by Iran.

The play has been written by Yaser Mirhamidi, who is also the director of the play, which will be performed in the courtyard of Tehran’s City Theater Complex on February 8 and 9.

Majid Majidi says ready to make film on China’s struggle with coronavirus

A R T TEHRAN — Iran’s Oscar-nominated filmmaker Majid Majidi has announced his readiness to make a film on the Chinese people’s struggle against coronavirus, which has so far claimed over 200 lives in the country.

“I know you are going through very hard days and moments,” Majidi wrote in a letter sent to the Persian service of the China International Radio.

“I must tell you that the hearts of the people of the world and especially the Iranian people are with you. I have been thinking of you and the innocent children of

China every moment,” he added.

“I am sure that you, the great people of China, will overcome this big catastrophe as you have already proved over history that you are hardworking people. You will return hope and life back to China and I wish you all health and success,” he noted.

The virus is believed to have originated late last year in a food market in the Chinese city of Wuhan that was illegally selling wildlife. Health experts think it may have originated in bats and then passed to humans, possibly via another species.



Majid Majidi in an undated photo.

Syrian cartoon contest picks work by Iranian artist Amir-Reza Torkaman

A R T TEHRAN — A cartoon by Iranian artist Amir-Reza Torkaman has been selected to compete in the 16th Syria International

Cartoon Contest. Torkaman’s work is competing in the cartoon section focusing on the theme of Mask.

The caricature section is being organized on the theme of the Syrian writer and poet Mohammad Almaghout (1934-2006). Winners will be honored with golden,

silver and bronze prizes. The jury will also present five cartoonists with special prizes. The exhibition opened on January 26 and will run for one month.

Political, social dramas lead Fajr Film Festival

1 -> He described the movie as a social drama, which mainly focuses on people’s daily economic problems that led to protests across the country last November.

“There are some criticisms [of the current economic situation in the country] in the film,” he said in an interview with the Fajr organizers and added, “I hope these criticisms are regarded, and I hope the film will be able to spread the word about how a large segment of the people are facing economic problems.”

“The Undercover” directed by Amir-Abbas Rabiei about the activities of the Tudeh Party of Iran during the 1980s will premiere in New Look, a section dedicated to the directorial debut feature-films.

Makeup artist Saeid Malekan, who is also the producer of many acclaimed movies such as “Life+1 Day”, will present his debut directorial movie named “Day Zero”. The film crew described the movie as “a different narrative about a raging contemporary event.”

Malekan and Bahram Tavakkoli, the director of the acclaimed war drama “The Lost Strait”, have co-written the screenplay. Due to their backgrounds, it is likely that the film can be considered a political drama. Malekan was the producer of the “The Lost Strait”.

Young filmmaker Mohammad Kart, who is known for his acclaimed short “Pedovore” (“Child Eater”), is taking part in the festival with his debut feature, “Butterfly Swimming”.

“The Fajr festival is the place, in which we are able to



make people’s voice heard by officials; if there is a protest, it should be made by the cinema,” Kart noted in an interview with the organizers. Rasul Sadr-Ameli, the director of the award-winning drama “The Girl in the Sneakers”, is producer of the movie starring veteran filmmaker Alireza Davudnejad. Due to all these characteristics, everybody is naturally curious about this production.

“To Die in the Pure Water” is another of Fajr’s highlights. Directed by Tehran-based Afghan brothers Navid and Jamshid Mahmudi, the film narrates another story about the miserable life of their fellow Afghan migrants.

After making his previous movie “Beyond the Clouds” in the slums of Mumbai, Oscar-nominated director Majid

Majidi is attending the Fajr festival with his latest movie “Khorshid” about child labor. An all-star cast has collaborated with him in this project.

With its sole comedy film “Good, Bad, Garish 2: The Secret Army” by Peyman Qasemkhani, Fajr’s lineup this year is lacking in this genre. Most of the comedy films produced in the Iranian cinema over the past few years have been mediocre. A successful box office is the only target for the producers of such productions, so they do not think of screening their movies in any festival whether in Iran or abroad. On the other hand, Iranian festivals traditionally do not take comedy films seriously.

However, Qasemkhani’s films and writings in the comedy genre are exceptions. Perhaps his latest movie could raise a few smiles among the dearth of laughter on these difficult days our country is experiencing.

The unfavorable climate prevailing in Iranian society and politics over the past few weeks affected the Fajr festival. A large number of Iranian cineastes announced that they would not take part in the festival in sympathy for the victims of the Ukrainian jetliner, which was unintentionally targeted by Iran. However, this movement has officially been viewed as a boycott of the governmental event.

In any case, the festival kicks off today without an opening ceremony. Earlier, the organizers had announced that they would not arrange an official opening ceremony in order to allocate its cost to flood relief in Sistan-Baluchestan.