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Deal of the century will die prior to Trump's death

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Iran has always been ready for talks with Saudis: Kharrazi

TEHRAN — Kamal Kharrazi, chairman of Iran's Strategic Council on Foreign Relations, said on Wednesday that Iran has always been ready to hold talks with Saudi Arabia, noting Riyadh must change its aggressive policies.

"We have always been ready to hold talks with Saudi Arabia. However, unfortunately, the rulers of this country are not the decision makers and the United States' interests are involved," Kharrazi

said during a meeting with two noted Lebanese journalists.

Kharrazi said Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates must change their "aggressive policies", especially toward the Yemeni war.

"More than four years of war in Yemen has proved that problems of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates cannot be solved through war, and it is essential for them to submit to the Yemenis' demands..." **→2**

Putin says Iran, Russia are powerful actors against terror

TEHRAN — Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Wednesday that Iran and Russia are two important, powerful players in the fight against international terrorism. Putin made the remarks in a session to receive credentials from 23 ambassadors to Russia, including Iran's new ambassador Kazem Jalali.

Jalali had already delivered copy of his credentials to Deputy Foreign Minister for East and South Asia Morgulov Igor

Vladimirovich on December 25, 2019.

Putin said the Tehran-Moscow co-operation will continue, IRNA reported.

He said relations between Iran and Russia are growing and are based on mutual respect.

Relations between Tehran and Moscow are based on mutual respect and Moscow will continue its effort to save the Iran nuclear deal, said the Russian president. **→3**

U.S. polarization at its height as Pelosi rips up Trump's speech

Bitter divisions ruling the U.S. political scene were exposed as President Donald Trump was delivering his State of the Union speech to Congress on the eve of his impeachment trial.

Trump avoided mentioning the subject of his impeachment during his 80-minute speech on Tuesday, but bipartisan tension continued to dominate the atmosphere with

fewer Republicans giving the president standing ovations, while rival Democrats remained seated.

As the president took his place at the front of the House chamber for his State of the Union address, Speaker Nancy Pelosi reached out to shake his hand, which Trump refused while turning his back. **→10**



PERSPECTIVE

M.A. Saki
Deputy editor-in-chief

We are all Chinese

At this difficult time that the Chinese people are grappling with the novel coronavirus it is our human and moral duty to show a feeling of empathy toward the Chinese.

Like all other Asians, the Chinese are an affectionate and kind nation. At such a critical situation that coronavirus is taking tolls among people in Wuhan, ordinary people around the world can just wish that the Chinese would overcome this deadly disease as soon as possible.

However, physicians, state officials, and philanthropists from different parts of the world are expected to do whatever they can to help China contain the epidemic.

The great Persian poet Saadi (Saadi Shirazi) in his book Golestan (Rose Garden) says: A friend in need is a friend indeed.

The Chinese, like the Japanese and Koreans, are the pride of the Asian continent. Just in a four-plus decade, since the time the country started economic reforms, it has made substantial technological and economic progress, emerging as the second largest economy in the world.

So, at this critical situation such a great and iron-willed nation, which inherits an ancient civilization, needs respect and due attention.

China has acted speedily to counter the outbreak of coronavirus. The construction of a 1000-bed hospital in just 10 days in Wuhan, the epicenter of the virus, is a proof that the country is well-prepared in the face of calamities. However, one thing that will remain in the memory of the Chinese is how other countries behaved or reacted at this difficult time.

It is absolutely necessary to take all the precautionary measures to stop the flow of the virus to other countries, and that China must take all the essential steps, including hygienic measures, to eliminate all the possible causes of the current virus and similar ones in the future. But adding salt to the wound at this sensitive time is unforgivable.

For example, remarks by U.S. Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross, who in an interview on Fox Business on January 31 said the deadly virus in China "will help to accelerate the return of jobs to North America", is disgusting.

All our thoughts and wishes are with the Chinese people at this hard time and earnestly hope that they would win over the disease soon.

As a new era unveils, who is in charge?

By Salman Parviz

TEHRAN — As the era of American hegemony ends pundits ask what will take its place. From crackdowns in Hong Kong, to start of another era of protests in Lebanon and Iraq, to tensions in Syria and Yemen, to Iran-U.S. standoff, to brutal police crackdowns on Yellow Vest protesters in Paris, to the unpredictability of the scene in South America, including looming crisis in Chile and Venezuela's scramble for power, flurry of missiles launched by North Korea, Japan and

South Korea's intelligence sharing dispute, to 1.9 million stateless in northeastern state of Assam, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's decision to strip Indian-controlled part of Kashmir of its autonomy last August, declaring "A new era has begun."

The uni-polar world we lived in a quarter of a century after the end of Cold War is over. The most explosive situation is still around and that is the scuffles between the Islamic Republic and the U.S. which many analyst predicted to be a catalyst to World War III.

Mahan Air clarifies why did not suspend China flights after requested ban

By Afshin Majlesi

TEHRAN — Over the past days some media outlets blamed Iran's Mahan Air for why it continued a number of China services for days despite the health ministry's call for a halt (due to the outbreak of coronavirus).

In an interview with the Tehran Times, Mehdi Aliyari, director of the airline's department for international affairs, rejected media reports that the airline had operated some China services

without obtaining legal permission.

"On Friday (January 31), the health ministry requested that China flights should be suspended, but it will be finalized at a cabinet meeting on Sunday in order to make their decisions and make it clear to us so that we would act accordingly," Aliyari said.

"However, we contacted the civil aviation organization on Saturday to clarify our assignment, and they insisted that they were waiting for the

government's decision, which was to be made at a cabinet meeting on the next day."

"The organization, however, told us to stop selling tickets for flights to and from China destinations, and we, accordingly suspended all sales of Chinese flights for February 1 to 29," he added.

The official underlined that there is currently no sales for flights to China and vice versa yet the airliner has no schedule for its routine China flights. **→8**

Trump and his blows to the American economy!

By Mohammed Mehdi Abbasi

TEHRAN — In the 2016 election, Donald Trump could defeat all of his rivals and become the U.S. president. He is the one who has always been criticized and mocked in the world because of his decisions, behavior and policies.

But despite all criticisms and negative views against him, Trump and his aligned media outlets have always tried to portray the greatest achievement of the Trump administration as U.S. eco-

nomical growth and improving the livelihood of the American people.

But to what extent this claim is true? Has Trump been a successful president economically? Have he and his administration been able to resolve U.S. economic and livelihood problems?

What statistics and economic analysis show us is something contrary to the beliefs formed in public opinion and offer many

reasons to reject the belief.

1. The most important reason for Trump's economic successes has always been the decline in the U.S. unemployment rate, which has been unprecedented in the country since 1969. But in spite of all the efforts that Trump and his team are making to declare this rate a success of their administration, this low unemployment rate is not merely the administration's achievement. **→7**



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Iran plans to send astronauts into space using domestic technology

TEHRAN — Iran has taken the first step to send astronauts into space using space capsules which are projected to be manufactured over the next three years.

"We have ordered the Aerospace Research Institute to produce five space capsules on a 190-kilometer orbit," Information and Communication Technology Minister Mohammad Javad Azari-Jahromi said. **→9**



ARTICLE

Batool Subeiti
Journalist
from London

Trump-Netanyahu deal: lose-lose situation

The Liberation movements of the Middle East are changing the face of the world. The reality of the 'Deal of the Century' plan, the culmination of what Trump stated was "a long and very arduous 3-year process," is that America and Israel want it actualised against all the odds of it succeeding.

It is worth noting that the \$50 billion of bribery money within the deal, which will supposedly revitalise and "fundamentally transform the West Bank and Gaza", is a sum that will apparently be donated by the Gulf, in return for the Palestinian nation to accept forgoing all of Jerusalem immediately and under the condition the Palestinian resistance groups give up all arms as a means of its defence and protection.

To the Arab nations that are facilitating this deal and effectively selling Palestine to Israel for some cheap bucks, the message is clear: if you do not want to positively contribute towards the Palestinian's right to live liberated from occupation, then at least do not facilitate the Zionist settler-colonial objective.

The least other nations can do that have been in support of the two-state solution is to rise up and reject this deal. Indeed, such a deal can never and will never come into fruition, whether through peace or war. That is because nobody except Israel's key allies has given it recognition, whilst on the other hand, Israel does not have the capacity nor strength to enter into a war with the Liberation fronts on the ground, that are only increasing in strength day after day. What exactly makes the so called 'Deal of the Century' different to all other deals in the past, supposedly enacted to achieve a 'peaceful' solution to the 'Israeli-Palestine' conflict? Before we explore this question, it is worth understanding what Israel's main objective to entering 'peace negotiations' is to begin with. Israel's main threat since its creation in 1948 is to be denied legitimacy for its existence from the wider surroundings, even if the surrounding states and populations are weak and are not able to directly confront Israel's aggression- that is beside the point. This is because Israel can never truly feel secure whilst they are not receiving recognition. **→7**

Forming human rights institution put on the government’s agenda

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — According to a report released by the government media office on Wednesday, the cabinet of ministers has completed assessment of a bill to form a national human rights institution.

The report reads that the ministers completed assessment of the bill on forming the national civilian and human rights institution. It said the bill has been put on the government’s agenda for final approval.

The bill was submitted by Laya Joneidi, the presidential aide for legal affairs. Early in November, Iran held a five-day exhibit on its “human rights achievements” at the United Nations Office in Geneva, Switzerland.

“The promotion of human rights [is] the Islamic Revolution’s raison d’être,” declared Iran’s Foreign Ministry in a statement published at the time, highlighting a five-day exhibition of slides and posters celebrating its “human rights achievements”.

The exhibition reportedly drew attendance from representatives of Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, China, Estonia, North Korea, Oman, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, and Venezuela.

“Neither the eight-year imposed war nor the wave of terrorism could divert the Islamic Revolution away from the path to democracy and regard for the people’s human dignity,” said Esmail Baqaei Hamaneh, Iran’s representative at the UN in Geneva.

“[The exhibition showcases] Iran’s advances in supporting and promoting human rights in various areas, such as the women’s rights, children’s rights, rights of religious minorities, respect for cultural and ethnic diversity, and rights of disabled persons,” the Foreign Ministry said.

Zarif appoints new deputies, directors

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, in separate decrees on Wednesday, appointed new envoys, deputies and Foreign Ministry directors for different departments.

According to the ministry’s information department, Mohsen Baharvand was appointed as the deputy foreign minister for legal and international affairs.

Baharvand was previously the Foreign Ministry director for the Americas affairs and assistant to the foreign minister.

Zarif also appointed Qolamhossein Dehqani, the caretaker deputy foreign minister for legal and international affairs, as Iran’s ambassador to Belgium following an approval by President Hassan Rouhani.

Reza Nazar Ahari, who had been serving as the director general of diplomatic coordination and regional initiatives of the ministry, was appointed as assistant to foreign minister and the director general for the Foreign Ministry department for America affairs.

Ahari had also been the Iranian ambassador to Japan.

Marziyeh Afkham, whose mission as Tehran’s ambassador to Malaysia terminated recently, took office as the minister’s assistant for civil legal affairs. The post was held by Afsaneh Nadipour who was recently appointed as the Iranian ambassador to Denmark.

Morteza Moradian, the former Iranian envoy to Denmark, has returned to Tehran after completing his mission.

In the meantime, Mahmoud Barimani was appointed as the director general of bilateral diplomatic coordination and regional initiatives at the ministry.

Barimani was foreign minister’s assistant and director general of the European Department of the ministry.

Iran has always been ready for talks with Saudis: Kharrazi

1 → and let this country form a democratic government,” said Kharrazi, a veteran politician who was Iran’s foreign minister from 1197 to 2005.

In a tweet, written in Arabic, in January, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said, “Iran is still interested in holding talks with its neighbors. We announce our readiness to participate in any collaborative action to serve the regional interests.”

“We welcome any step which restore hope to the regional people and brings stability and prosperity,” Zarif added.

Iran and Saudi Arabia have been at loggerheads over a number of issues including the Saudi war on Yemen and Riyadh’s support for Trump’s anti-Iran moves.

Saudi Foreign Minister Farhan Al Saud told Reuters on January 22 that Riyadh was open to talks with Tehran. However, he leveled some accusations against Iran. The Saudi minister said Iran should act as a normal country. In response, Zarif said a normal country does not invade its neighbors, an open reference to the Saudi-led war on Yemen.

Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi has welcomed a readiness by Tehran and Riyadh to hold dialogue to reduce tensions.

“We call for clearing up misunderstanding between two brotherly countries of Iran and Saudi Arabia,” IRNA quoted him as saying on January 24 on the sidelines of a press conference in Islamabad.

He added, “Pakistan does not want hatred between Tehran and Riyadh and visited Iran and Saudi Arabia aiming at conveying message of peace.”

Imran Khan, the Pakistani prime minister, visited Riyadh in December 2019 as part of continued efforts to mediate between Iran and Saudi Arabia.It was his fourth visit to Saudi Arabia since May 2019. Khan visited Tehran on October 13, 2019 to “facilitate” possible dialogue between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Khan met with Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Hassan Rouhani.

Foreign Minister Qureshi has said that Iran and Saudi Arabia should bridge differences.

In an interview with Aaj News in October, Qureshi said that Pakistan will continue efforts in line with reducing tension in Iran-Saudi relations.

UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric has said that UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres welcomes Khan’s initiative to de-escalate tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Last October the Iranian Foreign Ministry said Tehran is ready for talks with Saudi Arabia with or without a mediator.

During a joint press conference with Khan in Tehran, Rouhani, without mentioning Saudi Arabia, suggested that Iran will give a positive response to “good intention”. Rouhani said Iran “welcomes efforts by the Pakistani prime minister to settle tensions in the region” and “restore peace and stability”.

Leader: Deal of the century will die prior to Trump’s death

Those who love Iran should vote in incoming elections, Ayatollah Khamenei notes

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei said on Wednesday that the U.S. president’s “deal of the century” plan for the future of Israel and Palestine will die before Donald Trump’s life comes to an end.

The Leader’s remarks came in a meeting with a large number of people from all walks of the life in the Imam Khomeini Hosseiniyeh in central Tehran.

Addressing a pro-Israel audience at the White House with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu by his side last week, Trump announced the general provisions of the deal of the century.

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.

In his Wednesday address, Ayatollah Khamenei said that the deal of the century is an “evil, failed and insane” plan.

“The way to counter the plan is keeping courageous resistance by the Palestinian nation and groups as well as the Islamic world’s support,” the Leader suggested.

The Leader reiterated his previously declared proposal of a general referendum in the occupied lands so that the native inhabitants of Palestine can determine their fate, saying this “can be a basic solution” to



the Palestinian issue.

“The Americans think cheerfully that their plan against the Palestinian nation will be successful by selecting a big name for the plan (Deal of the Century), however, the move is insane and evil. The plan from its beginning has been against them,” Ayatollah Khamenei went on to say.

Noting that deal of the century will die before the Trump’s death, he said the plan

is certainly doomed to failure.

“The Americans are trading something with the Zionists that is not their own asset,” the Leader said, adding Palestine belongs to the Palestinians who are entitled to decide about their fate.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on Monday rejected the plan. The 57-member body, which held a summit on Monday to discuss the plan in Saudi Arabia’s

No one is above the law, Rouhani underscores

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — President Hassan Rouhani underlined on Wednesday that no one is above the law and the people in Iran.

Addressing his cabinet of ministers, the president said, “No one is above the law and the people. We should not imagine that we are leading the people’s thoughts. We should not imagine that if we were not, the people would be misled.”

He added, “The people understand well and choose well too.”

Also in late January, Rouhani, who has criticized the Guardian Council for banning certain hopefuls to run for parliament, highlighted the importance of the approaching elections, saying peoples’ trust in rulers is more important

than the outcome of elections.

“Undoubtedly, elections, especially the Islamic Consultative Assembly’s election is of great importance, but the people’s trust (in the rulers and the establishment), as well as social wealth, are more important than the elections,” Rouhani told a gathering of provincial and city governors ahead of the February 21 parliamentary elections.

The parliamentary elections, the 11th of its kind since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, will be held in over 200 constituencies across the country’s 31 provinces on Feb. 21.

Elsewhere in his Wednesday remarks in the cabinet, Rouhani pointed to the February 11 rallies to mark the 41st anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution, saying the current year’s rallies should be held as great as

previous years as “enemies have stood against our interests by their maximum power”.

He further highlighted the key role of moderate religious and political officials in managing the country in hard days.

The Iranian nation toppled the U.S-backed Pahlavi regime on February 11, 1979, ending the 2,500 years of monarchy in the country.

The revolution, spearheaded by the late Imam Khomeini, established a new political system based on Islamic values and democracy.

On Bahman 22nd, which mostly falls on February 11, Iranian people pour into the streets in their millions to commemorate the great victory of the Islamic Revolution.

Iran open to resolving differences with Saudi Arabia, UAE ‘as quickly as possible’: diplomat

By staff and agency

Iraj Masjedi, the Iranian ambassador to Iraq, has said that Iran is open to resolving differences with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, “as quickly as possible”.

In an interview with an Iraqi news agency published on Tuesday, he said that his government “welcomes efforts

to resolve issues either from inside Iraq or any other country in the region,” Al-jazeera reported.

Masjedi said Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, who was assassinated at the Baghdad airport in a U.S. air raid on January 3, was carrying a message setting out Iran’s position on possible rapproche-

ment with Saudi Arabia.

Soleimani’s message that he was meant to deliver when he arrived in Baghdad, set out Tehran’s position on “fighting terrorism and achieving peace and security in the region,” Masjedi said.

Pointing to Iran’s retaliatory missile attack on a major U.S. airbase in Iraq on

Envoy: Tehran open to broader ties with Sarajevo

TEHRAN — Iranian Ambassador to Sarajevo Mahmoud Heidari, in a meeting with new Defense Minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina Sifet Podzic, expressed Tehran’s eagerness to develop close and intimate ties with Sarajevo.

In a meeting with Podzic, Heidari voiced his country’s readiness for strengthening relations with Bosnia-Herzegovina and congratulated him on his appointment for the position and wished him success in the new post, the FNA reported.

He also conveyed Defense Minister Brigadier General Amir Hatami’s greeting to his Bosnian counterpart.

Podzic, for his part, appreciated Iran for supports for his country and hailed Iranian Embassy’s approach to forge friendly relations with all Bosnian tribes.

Bosnia-Herzegovina gained independence from Yugoslavia in 1992 and it was recognized as an independent country in the same year.

In November, Member of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s Presidential Council Shafiq Jafarovic, in a meeting with Heidari, voiced his country’s firm resolution for further developing ties with Tehran, and welcomed efforts to strengthen bilateral relations.

Speaking in a meeting with Heidari, Jafarovic supported developing relations with Tehran and stressed the deep friendship between Iranian and Bosnian nations.

He also extended support for the efforts made in line with developing relations.

Meanwhile, Heidari elaborated on Iran’s regional initiatives for reinforcing peace and stability in the Persian Gulf.

He noted that Iran has taken four steps for reducing its nuclear related commitments which will be reversed if the other parties deliver on their own side of the bargain.



Late in October, Heidari, in a meeting with the religious leader of Bosnia and Herzegovina Husein Effendi Kavazovic, said that his country is after bolstering religious and cultural interactions with the Balkanic country.

Iranian organizations and entities in Bosnia and Herzegovina try to strengthen common cultural features between the two countries, said Heidari, in Sarajevo, in a meeting with Reis-ul-ulema of the Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina Effendi Kavazovic.

“Iranian entities in Bosnia and Herzegovina try to consolidate common cultural backgrounds between the two nations,” he added. The Reis-ul-ulema is the head of Muslims from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Muslim diaspora from the country.

The new Chief Mufti of the European country’s Islamic community also expressed gratitude to Iran for supporting Bosnia and Herzegovina in hard times.

“We have good relations with Iranian entities here with respect to cultural and religious efforts,” said Kavazovic, expressing hope that Iran-Bosnia and Herzegovina ties will be boosted further.

Trump’s defeat marked by million-strong funeral procession of Gen. Soleimani, ambassador says

TEHRAN — Iranian Ambassador to Spain Hassan Qashqavi said that Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani’s popularity was indebted to his sincere fight against terrorism, adding that the turnout of millions of people at the late commander’s funeral procession was a demonstration of Donald Trump’s complete defeat.

In a meeting with professors and students of Madrid foundation of strategic and international studies on Tuesday, Qashqavi said that fight against terrorism was the key to Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani’s popularity, according to the FNA.

Qashqavi referred to American officials’ attempt to create rift among Iranians, massive turnout in General Soleimani’s funeral procession indicated defeat of Trump’s plans against Iran.

Iranian diplomat also replied to the questions posed by the audience on regional developments.

He also elaborated on the latest developments with regard to Iran nuclear deal also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

He underlined the importance of taking independent policies by the European Union against U.S.’ over-ambitions.

Lieutenant General Soleimani was assassinated in a U.S. drone strike on Baghdad International Airport in Iraq on January 3.

The airstrike also martyred Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, deputy commander of Iraq’s Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), or Hashad al-Shaabi. The two were martyred in an American airstrike that targeted their vehicle on the road to the airport.

Five Iranian and five Iraqi militaries were martyred by missiles fired by the U.S. drone at Baghdad International Airport.

Last month, Iran’s Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations Majid Takht-e Ravanchi underlined that the U.S. assassination of General Soleimani was a clear manifestation of state terrorism.

“Rallies and crowds in the region commemorating Martyr Soleimani’s role in

fighting terrorism and denouncing his assassination as well as the participation of millions only in our capital in his funeral procession--the second largest in the history of our nation and the entire region--exhibited how beloved he was nationally and regionally. If anything, the U.S. adventurism testified one fact: after this cowardly assassination, the region is less secure and less stable. Consequently, the most effective way to ensure regional peace and security is the withdrawal of U.S. forces from the region, as they have always been the source of instability in our neighborhood,” he added.

Europe knows there's no deal better than JCPOA: presidential chief of staff

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Presidential chief of staff Mahmoud Vaezi said on Wednesday that European Union knows that there is no deal better than the 2015 nuclear agreement, officially known as the JCPOA.

Vaezi also predicted that the EU will not refer Iran's case to the United Nations Security Council.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a cabinet meeting, he also called EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell's visit to Iran on Monday "very good".

"The first point that Mr. Borrell raised was that he admitted that the Europeans failed to remain committed to their obligations after the United States' withdrawal from the JCPOA," Vaezi said.

The presidential chief of staff added, "The second point he raised was that Europe seeks to have good relations with Iran in various areas. He said efforts will be made to keep the JCPOA and there is no deal better than it."

Borrell was notified in January by Paris, London and Berlin that they had triggered the dispute mechanism.

"All these remarks mean what they (Europeans) have said about the dispute mechanism will not be practical," Vaezi noted.

Borrell has said that the EU will extend indefinitely the time limit to resolve disputes in the nuclear deal to avoid having to go to the UN Security Council or triggering new sanctions.

"We are in agreement not to go directly to a strict time limit which would oblige (us) to go to the Security Council," Reuters quoted him as saying during a visit to Tehran on Monday.

In his remarks, broadcast on Tuesday, he said, "The willingness is not to start a process that goes to the end of JCPOA, but to keep it alive."

Borrell said on January 24 that he had extended the time available to discuss ways



to save the nuclear deal.

"There is agreement that more time is needed due to the complexity of the issues involved. The timeline is therefore extended," Borrell said in a statement.

In the meeting with Borrell in Tehran on Monday, President Hassan Rouhani criticized the EU for failing to honor its commitments after the U.S. quit the deal and reinstituted sanctions on Iran.

However, Rouhani said, "The Islamic

Republic of Iran is still ready to cooperate with the European Union for resolving issues, and at any time that the other side (EU) fully observes its commitments Iran will also return to its commitments."

In May 2019 Iran started to reduce its commitments to the JCPOA at bi-monthly intervals in response to the abrogation of the pact by the U.S. coupled with the European Union's inaction to shield Iran's economy from sanctions.

Washington is after disheartening Iranians, says Larijani

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — The U.S. officials have focused on disheartening the Iranian people and creating divisions between the government and nation, says Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani.

"If you take a look at the society and the international stage, you'd realize that what the Americans have focused on is fomenting despair among people and creating a division between the government and people," Larijani said on Wednesday.

He made the remarks while addressing the International Conference on the Second Step of the Revolution in Tehran.

In a statement last year, marking the 40th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, the Leader asked the youth to take "the second great step" for the progress of the revolution.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei insisted on "justice and campaign against corruption" in the next stage.



The Leader also pushed for promotion of science and research; economy; spirit-

ually and ethics; independence, freedom, and national dignity; foreign relations;

and lifestyle.

"The statement is one of the exceptional documents of the country," Larijani said, pointing to Ayatollah Khamenei's remarks, which put forward a roadmap for the future.

The U.S. is trying to tell the Iranian nation that the situation is adverse, and that the paths taken have been wrong, he said, adding, "This is the approach and ploy they are pursuing."

He also said Iran should further resist against the arrogant countries and preserve its political independence, which has been one of the important achievements of the Islamic Revolution.

Iran has been under unprecedented U.S. political and economic pressure ever since President Donald Trump withdrew the U.S. from the Iran nuclear deal in May 2018 and imposed the "harshes ever" sanctions on Tehran.

Zarif says Leader's Palestine proposal the only reasonable solution

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif says the proposal put forward by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei with regard to Palestine is the "most reasonable and practical solution" to the Palestinian issue.

The easiest way is to hear the voice of all Palestinians, including Muslims, Jews and Christians, who should determine the future of Palestine in a democratic process, Zarif said on Tuesday, IRNA reported.

He made the remarks while speaking to reporters on the sideline of the opening ceremony of the Iranian Diplomatic Science Association.

Zarif also said that the U.S. has lost

the opportunity to participate in the process of solving the Palestinian issue by presenting the plan.

Ignoring the Palestinian rights and condoning the usurpation of the Palestinian lands, the U.S. has no place in this respect and it is only the Palestinian people who should determine their own future, he said.

Last week, U.S. President Donald Trump unveiled his long-delayed Middle East plan, a proposal Palestinian leaders called a "conspiracy" that "will not pass".

Following Trump's announcement, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said "a thousand no's" to the plan.

The American plan has sparked widespread international condemnation.

The "deal of the century" plot, fronted

by Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, had already been rejected by the Palestinians, who say the White House's policies have been blatantly biased in favor of Israel.

Palestinians have cut off all contacts with the Trump administration since the U.S. president broke with decades of bipartisan policy to recognize Jerusalem al-Quds as the capital of Israel in December 2017.

In June 2018, Ayatollah Khamenei reiterated the need for a referendum among "true Palestinians of all faiths," being Muslims, Christians or Jews, adding that such a move would lead to the establishment of the Palestinian government.

Ayatollah Khamenei said the referen-

dum and the subsequent formation of such a governing system would eventually translate into the destruction of the "bogus regime" of Israel in the not-too-distant future.

The Leader made similar remarks on Wednesday.

He also said the deal of century plan will die before Trump dies, adding that this plot will never yield any result and, therefore, spending money on it and launching a campaign for it is "a stupid thing to do".

"The Americans have made a deal with the Zionists on something they do not own," the Leader said, adding that Palestine belongs to the Palestinians and making any decision on their land is up to them.



POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** - Deputy Chief of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Ali Fadavi said on Wednesday that no power

No power can harm united Iran: IRGC deputy chief

can harm the Islamic Revolution if Iranians remain united.

"No one can harm the Islamic Revolution if unity is maintained," he said during a speech at a conference.

Fadavi also said, "Today, we should use our capacities to fight economic and cultural wars."

President Donald Trump has acknowledged that the U.S. has launched an economic war against Iran that its kind the world has never seen.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the top IRGC commander said that Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani played an "effective" role in the resistance front.

He said that the youths will follow the path of martyrs.

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.



Putin says Iran, Russia are powerful actors against

1→ Back in 2015, Iran and six world powers, including Russia, struck a nuclear agreement, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which put some limitations on Iran's nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief.

The JCPOA was ditched by the U.S. under President Donald Trump's order. Trump has also adopted a "maximum pressure" policy against the Islamic Republic which targets Iran's oil exports and bans top Iranian officials and commanders.

In response to the U.S. withdrawal, on May 8, 2019, Iran announced that its "strategic patience" is over and started to gradually reduce its commitments

Zarif deplores 'deal of century' in phone calls with Palestinian leaders

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has discussed the so-called "deal of the century", a U.S.-orchestrated scheme to disenfranchise Palestinians, with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and Hamas Political Bureau Chief Ismail Haniyeh in separate phone conversations.

In his conversation with Abbas on Tuesday, Zarif voiced Iran's strong opposition to the plot, underlining that Tehran will continue supporting the Palestinian people's rights and formation of a sovereign Palestinian government with East al-Quds as its capital.

He hailed the PA president's efforts to create national unity in Palestine, saying the Islamic Republic will continue to support the process of reconciliation among Palestinians, Tasnim reported.



For his part, Abbas highlighted the efforts made to ensure national unity in Palestine, saying he will dispatch a delegation to Gaza to contribute to unity among Palestinian groups.

Addressing a pro-Israel audience at the White House with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu by his side, U.S. President Donald Trump announced the general provisions of the plan last week.

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.

Following Trump's announcement, Abbas said "a thousand no's to the Deal of the Century." Palestinians also took to streets in Gaza and the West Bank to protest the plan.

Iran slammed the move as "treason of century" against the inalienable rights of Palestinian people, calling on the freedom-seeking nations and governments to counter the move.

Palestinian land and territory belong to the Palestinian people, Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said last week, adding, "The Zionist regime is an occupier and the only solution to the crisis is holding a referendum among the main residents of the land."

In his conversation with Haniyeh, Zarif strongly condemned Trump's plan as "inhumane", reiterating support for the Palestinian people and leaders in their opposition to the one-sided plan.

Zarif emphasized the need for unity and solidarity among Palestinian groups and among freedom-seeking nations and governments of the world to counter such big "conspiracy of the century", IRNA reported on Wednesday.

He further reiterated Iran's support for the Palestinian people's legitimate struggle against the occupying Zionists, underscoring the need for extensive efforts to counter Washington's tyrannical plan.

Haniyeh said the Palestinian groups are united and resolute to counter the Zionist regime's occupation.

He also thanked Iran for standing up with the innocent Palestinian people against the occupiers.

Zarif also held a phone conversation with his Algerian counterpart, Sabri Boukadoum, to exchange views about a range of issues, including the latest developments regarding the Palestinian issue.

According to Tasnim, the two diplomats stressed the need for the Muslim world to take a firm stance against this conspiracy and in support of the rights of the Palestinian people.

Guardian Council chief: Upcoming polls will be competitive

TEHRAN (MNA) — Secretary of Guardian Council Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati said that the upcoming election will be competitive when one takes into account the number of candidates qualified for election.



More than 7,000 candidates from different political parties have been so far qualified so far which shows that the election will be competitive and healthy as before, he said on Wednesday.

The council has exercised extreme care to review candidates according to election laws because any carelessness may lead to entering a person to the parliament who lacks the required conditions, he added.

Some 16,000 candidates enrolled for the upcoming election across the country. According to the law, the Guardian Council screens candidates' qualifications. The first stage of reviewing the parliamentary hopefuls has been completed and those disqualified can appeal to the initial decision.

The 11th Iranian parliamentary election is scheduled for February 21, 2020. The upcoming elections will be held in over 200 constituencies across the country's 31 provinces. The Iranian parliament has 290 members who are elected by the people for four-year terms.

Principlists and reformists are the two main parties competing for the seats of the Parliament.

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	445894.1
IFX	5654.00

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	46,348 rials
GBP	54,695 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$55.37/b
WTI	\$50.82/b
OPEC Basket	\$55.51/b
Gold	\$1,557.15/oz
Silver	\$17.67/oz
Platinum	\$977.30/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Philippines GDP growth could slow on outbreak

Philippine economic growth could slow this quarter as factory closures in China, which is battling a coronavirus outbreak that has killed hundreds and sickened thousands more, hit the global supply chain, according to Mitsubishi UFJ Group (MUFG) Global Research.

“Growth momentum in the manufacturing sector may slow in the near term as the factory closures in China are expected to affect the supply chain network,” the company said in an e-mailed note.



Finance Secretary Carlos G. Dominguez III said the government would keep its 6.5% to 7.5% growth target this year despite the coronavirus outbreak in China and Taal Volcano’s eruption last month.

“While these developments might slightly restrain our economic expansion, these threats are not enough to force a dramatic reduction in our growth estimates,” he told a Senate hearing on the coronavirus.

The economy grew 5.9% last year, the slowest in eight years and missing the government’s minimum goal of 6%. Lackluster growth of 5.6%, 5.5%, and 6% was posted in the first three quarters after lawmakers failed to approve the national budget on time.

Electronics export growth could come in at three percent this year, from a preliminary projection of five percent which the Semiconductor and Electronics Industries of the Philippines, Inc. (SEIPI) adopted in a Jan. 29 board meeting, if the widening outbreak is not curbed soon, SEIPI President Danilo C. Lachica said in a mobile phone message.

The Philippine electronics industry exports and imports electronic parts to and from various countries including China. Mr. Lachica said the electronics industry exports 30% of its products to China and Hong Kong. He added that 40% of the industry’s imports are from China, Taiwan and Hong Kong.

Electronic product exports hit \$36.48 billion in the 11 months through November last year, up 2.55% annually and accounting for 56.5% of the country’s merchandise exports for that period.

Philippine goods shipped abroad

The same period saw sales abroad of semiconductors or component parts reaching \$26.77 billion, up 1.864% on the year and making up 73% of electronic products sold overseas and 41.46% of all Philippine goods shipped abroad.

Combined exports from China and Hong Kong accounted for the bulk of total exports in the 11-month period, with 13.6% and 13.5%, respectively, after the United States with 16.3%, preliminary data from

Mr. Dominguez said the tourism sector could be hit amid a travel ban on foreigners from China, Hong Kong, and Macau.

He said yearly tourist arrivals dropped by 1.3% to 1.9 million when the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) outbreak hit in 2003.

The number rebounded the following year, with tourist arrivals surging by 20% to 2.3 million in 2004, he added.

Security Bank Corp. Chief Economist Robert Dan J. Roces said the Philippines has “lower trade risks compared with our neighbors.”

“In terms of regional supply chains, Hong Kong, South Korea and Vietnam are the most exposed,” he said in a separate note.

Mr. Roces said gross domestic product (GDP) could lose \$300 million or 0.1% for every quarter from tourism and external trade losses alone. Other vulnerable sectors include airlines, gaming, lodging and leisure, he added.

Meanwhile, ING NV-Manila Senior Economist Nicholas Antonio T. Mapa said consumption might be affected as Filipinos cut mall visits because of the coronavirus scare.

(Source: bworldonline.com)

TPO holds 1st meeting of Commodity-Country Desk on trade with Iraq

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran’s d e s k Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) held the first meeting of its Commodity-Country Desk on trade with Iraq presided by Farzad Piltan, the director general of TPO’s Office of Arabian and African Countries.

As reported by the website of TPO on Wednesday, the meeting was mainly focused on investigating the ways for increasing exports to Iraq’s Kurdistan region and removing the barriers related to transporting these materials to the country.

In addition to introducing the potentials of Iraqi Kurdistan’s market; problems and solutions for the development of exports to the mentioned region were presented at the meeting which was attended by Iran’s Consul General in Sulaimaniyah, according to Piltan.

Iran’s participation in Iraq’s International Trade Fair which is due to held in a month was another issue raised in the meeting, while



TPO’s plans for the development of trade relations with Iraq as well as the Kurdistan

region were outlined. Despite the re-imposition of U.S. sanctions

against the Islamic Republic, Iraq has been getting closer to Iran both politically and economically.

There is also the same approach adopted by Iran, as many Iranian companies now eager to conduct trade with Iraq, especially with the Kurdistan region where there is a great demand for Iranian products.

Iraq is currently Iran’s biggest trade partner and the two countries have been taking significant steps to improve their mutual trade over the past few years.

In early February, central banks of Iran and Iraq reached an agreement to set up a payment mechanism to facilitate banking ties and boost trade between the two countries.

Iran’s exports to Iraq have increased by 37 in the last Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20) and the two neighbors have it on agenda to boost their mutual trade to \$20 billion by 2021.

9-month aluminum ingot production exceeds 185,000 tons

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran’s d e s k major aluminum producers produced 185,570 tons of aluminum ingots during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-December 21), IRNA reported citing the data released by Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO).

The IMIDRO data show that 121,934 tons of the product was produced by Iranian Aluminum Company (IRALCO) during the mentioned period.

Iran produced 276,575 tons of aluminum ingots in the past Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20, 2019).

IRALCO accounted for producing 53 percent of the total production in the past year.

As the world’s 18th producer of alu-



minum, Iran plans to reach the annual production of 1.5 million tons of aluminum ingot by the Iranian calendar year 1404 (March 2025-March 2026).

The country is targeting the production of 823,000 tons of aluminum ingots for the next Iranian calendar year (March 19, 2020-March 20, 2021), which requires an investment of \$1.8 billion.

Tehran hosting exhibition on Iran’s export potentials

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The d e s k Fourth Export Potentials Exhibition of Iran (IRAN EXPO) kicked off in Tehran’s Shahr-e-Aftab International Fairground on Tuesday.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by senior officials, including the Chief Executive of International Exhibition of Shahr-e Aftab Mohammad Raouf Ghaderi.

Speaking in the inaugural ceremony, Ghaderi said: “The country’s export potentials are due to the production capabilities. The more the country distances itself from oil revenues, the more export potentials and capabilities will be increased.”

He pointed to the key role of the private sector in the economic prosperity of the county and said, “The 4th Export Potentials

of the Islamic Republic of Iran Exhibition will play a leading role in this regard.”

According to its official website, Iran EXPO is an international trade event that aims to help companies export their products, develop new markets, and promote their industries by serving as a platform for trade and commerce in the Islamic Republic of Iran regarding the importance of the non-oil export position. It will be a four-day event that caters to the trade audience, Iran Expo aims to strengthen economic relations between Iran and other countries. It targets key sectors or industries which are identified as having the capacity and capability to produce highly-quality products for export and more potential areas of investment.

The exhibition is scheduled to be wrapped up Thursday.

Iran, Zimbabwe discuss expansion of trade co-op

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** – Head of Iran d e s k Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) met with the Zimbabwean ambassador to Tehran Christopher Mapanga on Tuesday to discuss expansion of mutual trade relations.

The lack of a joint Iran-Zimbabwe Economic Committee meeting since 2015 and the low level of trade relations between the two countries, despite the high capacity for bilateral cooperation, were the most important issues raised during the meeting, ICCIMA portal reported.

At the meeting, Gholam-Hossein Shafei underlined various areas for cooperation between the two countries and said Iran and Zimbabwe could work together in numerous sectors including, agriculture, mining, energy, oil and gas, engineering services and agricultural machinery.

He further pointed to the unfamiliarity and lack of knowledge by the two countries’



Head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Gholam-Hossein Shafei (R) met with the Zimbabwean ambassador to Tehran Christopher Mapanga (L) in Tehran on Tuesday.

private sectors from each other, as one of the factors contributing to the low level of trade

relations between the two countries, adding that ICCIMA is ready to hold a “Zimbabwe

Economy Day” in Tehran, in collaboration with the Zimbabwean embassy to alleviate the situation.

“The event will be an opportunity to introduce Iran’s economic capabilities to Zimbabwean economic activists,” Shafei said.

Mapanga for his part, referred to the sanctions imposed on both countries and noted: “Zimbabwe has endured many pressures and restrictions and today the country is willing to learn from Iran how to deal with such conditions.”

“Iran’s Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture has played an important role in this situation and has been able to formulate policies and programs to provide its government with new opportunity to support the economy,” he said.

He referred to the country’s mineral reserves, gas and favorable lands for agriculture and called for cooperation with Iran in these areas.

Pos Malaysia sets sights on the booming digital economy

Pos Malaysia Bhd is gearing up for transformation and has set its sights on the booming digital economy.

Its group chief executive officer (CEO) Syed Md Najib Syed Md Noor said the company foresees rapid switching towards electronic and digital channels and an inclination to forego mail-based and traditional forms of communication.

“Digitalization is the way forward for Pos Malaysia to transform the existing postal system, which necessitates business adaptability to remain relevant in the industry as the world is moving towards Industrial Revolution 4.0,” he said in a statement.

Pos Malaysia, according to him, has allocated over RM300 million in coming years for the digitalization of its core system, including the track-and-trace system, retail, mobile application and other improvements across its business chain to drive efficiency and service quality.

The new core system is expected to be fully operational by mid-2020, with supporting sub-systems to follow, he said.

The company has also conducted a soft launch of its cashless payment initiative by enabling selected Pos Automated Machines (PAM) to accept bill settlement via the Touch ‘n Go, Boost and Maybank QRPay e-wallets for eight to 30 billers/agencies.

The move, which will be expanded in the near term to include all Pos Malaysia channels including post office counters, the website and mobile application, is in line with the country’s aspiration towards a cashless society.

More competitive than ever

“We remain confident as we see the unprecedented opportunities brought upon by the changing landscape and the untapped potential in the strength of our people, as well as our wide network reach, which we will use

to transform the postal service of Malaysia and emerge to be more competitive than ever,” said Syed Md Najib.

Pos Malaysia, in a statement on Jan 28, announced that it would implement a commercial postage rates review effective Feb 1, but the move will not affect individual mail users.

It will continue to provide affordable postage rates for personal and non-commercial mail users at the current domestic stamp rate of 60 sen.

The move, said the company, is in tandem with the rising operation costs and the increase in the international rate structure by the Universal Postal Union (UPU), which has changed the global postal landscape and prompted Pos Malaysia to transform the postal system for greater efficiency.

According to Pos Malaysia’s website, commercial stamp rate will be increased by 70 sen to RM1.30 while the rate for commercial registered mail will be up 90 sen to RM3.10.

Meanwhile, Telekom Malaysia Bhd (TM) has expressed its support with Pos Malaysia’s latest move.

The “price revision is only within the commercial postage category, whereby the domestic stamp rate for commercial mail has seen an increase from RM0.60 to RM1.30,” said its group CEO Datuk Noor Kamarul Anuar Nuruddin.

Various Pos Malaysia’s clients, he said, have expressed support towards the new postage rates and TM has opted to stand with its fellow corporations in maintaining its cost to customers.

CIMB Group group wholesale banking CEO Shahnaz Jammal said the bank is confident that Pos Malaysia will become a key e-commerce center in Malaysia and contribute towards further growth of the sector.

(Source: theedgemarkets.com)

BOJ signals readiness to ease as virus impact clouds outlook

By Leika Kihara

The Bank of Japan stands ready to ramp up stimulus if the economy’s recovery is derailed, Deputy Governor Masazumi Wakatabe said on Wednesday, warning that the coronavirus outbreak could hurt corporate sentiment and global trade.

Wakatabe said Japan’s economy is likely to have emerged from a sharp but temporary slowdown late last year helped by robust domestic demand and easing Sino-U.S. trade tensions, signaling that no immediate monetary easing was on the horizon.

But he said risks remain high, as last year’s sales tax hike hurt household income and lingering uncertainty over the global outlook weigh on business sentiment.

“There have been heightening uncertainties regarding the impact of the spread of the coronavirus on the global economy,” Wakatabe told business leaders in Matsuyama, western Japan.

The “BOJ ... won’t hesitate to take additional easing steps if there is a greater possibility that the momentum toward achieving its 2% price target will be lost,” said Wakatabe, who is seen as an advocate of aggressive monetary easing. Japan’s economy, the world’s third-largest, likely suffered a contraction in the final quarter of last year as a domestic sales tax hike in October and slowing global demand hurt consumption and exports.

The BOJ expects the economy to recover this year and help fire up inflation toward its 2% target, clinging to hope that global growth will rebound around mid-year and underpin exports.

But the widening fallout from the coronavirus has cast doubt on the central bank’s rosy projection, putting it under pressure to maintain or even expand its massive stimulus.



Japan monitoring its borders

Ten people on a cruise liner in the port of Yokohama have tested positive for the coronavirus and Japanese authorities have joined governments around to world to monitor its borders as infections rise and the death toll from the outbreak climbs to almost 500.

Wakatabe said the BOJ’s ultra-loose policy helps maximize the benefits of the government’s spending package on the economy, signaling the central bank is doing enough for now to support growth.

He added, however, that the BOJ must maintain its policy bias toward additional easing and remain on guard against risks that could derail a fragile recovery.

“Japan’s inflation has yet to reach our 2% target. The risk of the country slipping back into deflation has not been completely dispelled,” Wakatabe said.

Under a policy dubbed yield curve control, the BOJ guides short-term interest rates at -0.1% and the 10-year government bond yield around 0% as part of efforts to hit its price goal.

While stubbornly low inflation has forced the BOJ to sustain its radical stimulus, many central bankers are wary of loosening policy further due to the rising cost of prolonged easing such as the strain it inflicts on financial institutions.

(Source: reuters.com)

Iran's biggest APG processing plant to go on stream soon

ENERGY **TEHRAN** — Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh said the country's biggest plant for collecting and processing of Associated Petroleum Gas (APG) is going to be launched early next calendar year which begins on March 20. Talking to the state TV on Tuesday evening, Zanganeh said nearly \$3 billion has been invested in the mentioned complex, namely Bidboland Persian Gulf Gas Refinery, Shana reported.

According to the official, the plant would operate with a gas processing capacity of 56 million cubic meters per day and would produce 3.4 million tons of petrochemical feedstock. He also noted that two deals had been struck

with the Persian Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company and Maroon Petrochemical Company for gathering APG in Wast Karoun fields.

"Once these projects came on stream, the value of their output would exceed \$2 billion," Zanganeh said.

The minister further noted that the NGL 3200 plant for gathering APG is also being constructed in West Karoun region which would hopefully come online by 2021. The project has so far witnessed 40 percent physical progress.

Associated petroleum gas (APG), or associated gas, is a form of natural gas which is found with deposits of petroleum, either dissolved in the oil or as a free "gas cap" above



the oil in the reservoir.

The gas can be utilized in a number of ways after processing: sold and included in the natural-gas distribution networks, used for on-site electricity generation with engines

or turbines, re-injected for secondary recovery and used in enhanced oil recovery, converted from gas to liquids producing synthetic fuels, or used as feedstock for the petrochemical industry.

CNG consumption up 31% following gasoline rationing

ENERGY **TEHRAN** — Consumption of compressed natural gas (CNG) in Iran has increased by 31 percent since the implementation of the gasoline rationing scheme, according to the National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company (NIORDC).

As reported by IRNA, the country's CNG consumption which stood at 19 million cubic meters (mcm) before the implementation of the fuel rationing scheme, now has increased to 25 mcm.

In mid-November 2019, the Iranian government started rationing of subsidized gasoline and increased fuel prices as it plans to use the revenue for supporting underprivileged families.

Later that month, head of NIOPDC's CNG promotion program announced that CNG consumption in the country had increased by 10 percent only two weeks after the beginning of the program.

According to Hassan Gholipour there are currently 2,400 CNG stations across Iran and more than 2,478 compressors are installed in the country's CNG stations.

Mohammad Baqer Nobakht, head of the Planning and Budget Organization, said on November 12 that proceeds from the price hikes would be used to fund additional subsidies for 18 million underprivileged families, or about 60 million people.

According to a statement published by National Iranian Oil Products Distribution Company, the price for a liter of regular gasoline was increased to 15,000 rials (nearly 35 cents at the official rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) from 10,000 rials and the monthly ration for each passenger car was set at 60 liters. Additional purchases would cost 30,000 rials per liter.

Due to heavy subsidies and devaluation of its currency, Iran has one of the cheapest fuel prices in the world and the country has been fighting rampant fuel smuggling to neighboring countries.

In one of its latest reports dubbed "World Energy Outlook 2018", the International Energy Agency (IEA) put Iran on top of the list of the world's countries for energy subsidies. That means Iran holds the first place among the world's countries in terms of the amount of subsidies which is allocated to energy consumption.

Iran boosts Darkhoein oilfield's production capacity

ENERGY **TEHRAN** — Production capacity of Darkhoein oil field in southwestern Iran is increased by 20,000 barrels per day (bpd) over the course of the past 12 months, Shana reported, quoting the head of Arvand Oil and Gas Company, which is in charge of the field.

According to the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), Jahangir Pourhang said a tender has been held for the repair of five wells in the oil field, adding: "This tender was held in line with strategic plans for preserving the production capacity of Darkhoein Field."

He also said that a project for collecting 50 million cubic feet (mcf) of flare gas in West Karoun fields has also been awarded to the private sector, adding the company has been obliged to convert the collected gas into gas liquids and dry gas.

"Currently, the process of ceding the land and equipping the initial workshop by the contractor has been fulfilled and the ground will soon be broken for initiating the project."

Pourhang said the project would be



carried out with an investment of \$120 million which would be supplied by the project's developer.

Located near the Iraqi border, Darkhoein was first developed by Italy's oil and gas group Eni in collaboration with Iran's Arvand Oil and Gas Company, a subsidiary of the state-owned National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC).

However, since the re-imposition of the U.S. sanction the Italian company was forced to back out of the project and the Arvand Oil is currently in charge of the field.

Coronavirus reveals OPEC to be stuck in endless cycle of supply cuts

By Dan Eberhart

The members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) are scrambling to meet this week in Vienna to discuss deeper production cuts to account for demand destroyed by the coronavirus in China and the subsequent crash in oil prices.

Oil production cut meetings have become all too familiar for the oil-price cartel, prompting questions of whether its dominant role in global oil markets has changed for good.

OPEC has been in a defensive posture since late 2016, when it and some non-cartel allies, led by Russia, intervened in over-supplied oil markets with significant supply cuts to support higher prices and make room for booming U.S. shale production.

OPEC, led by Saudi Arabia, has been unable to break out of the cycle of cuts ever since.

Now there is talk of OPEC making additional cuts of between 500,000 and 1 million barrels a day to offset lost oil demand in Asia stemming from the coronavirus outbreak, which has prompted a near 20 percent drop in oil prices and reduced international benchmark Brent below \$55 a barrel.

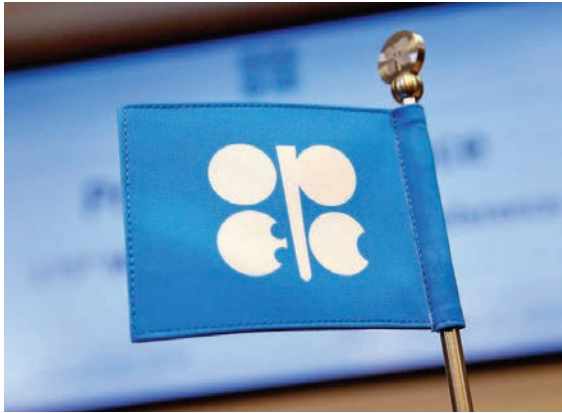
A pandemic virus in China, the world's engine of oil demand growth, may be considered a "black swan" event by some, but it illustrates the dilemma OPEC faces. Oil markets have become hardwired to the downside, and there have been precious few catalysts to support prices, never mind pushing them on an upward trajectory.

In the last five months alone, oil markets have brushed off devastating attacks on Saudi Arabia's oil facilities, which temporarily knocked out more than half of the kingdom's output, and the threat of all-out war in the Middle East, which peaked after the January 3 killing of Iran's top military commander by a U.S. drone strike.

These would have once been considered doomsday events by oil markets, yet they've hardly registered on traders' radars. And there's plenty more proof of this upside apathy.

Among the OPEC members

Virtually all of Libya's 1.2 million barrels a day of production capacity has been taken offline since January 17 by a politically-inspired oil blockade. Elsewhere among the OPEC members, the exports of Iran and Venezuela have been



decimated by U.S. sanctions in the past two years, while Iraq, the cartel's second-largest producer, is on the frontline of the mounting tensions between the United States and Iran.

The reality is that the latest Libya outage, which could drag on for months, may very well be enough to account for a temporary loss of demand in China.

But oil traders don't appear to care. Their bias to downside risk is nearly unshakeable at this point. It's not hard to see why.

No matter how many supply outages or threats to production emerge, there remains too much capacity in the market. The Saudi-led OPEC+ alliance is deliberately withholding 2.1 million barrels a day off the market. That's up from 1.2 million barrels a day of output cuts the group originally agreed to from 2017 to 2019.

There is also plenty of oil in storage around the world, especially in Asia.

OPEC's latest monthly report puts OECD commercial oil stocks at 2.92 billion barrels at the end of November, a little higher than the 2.91 billion reported by the International Energy Agency (IEA). That puts inventories at between 8.9 million barrels (IEA) and 17.5 million (OPEC) above their average level for the last five years.

So much oil stockpiled has a dramatic effect on the sentiment of investors, many of whom have been put off by oil's

performance in recent years.

This problem has been evident in equity markets for some time.

The S&P indexes that track oil services companies and producers are both now trading at all-time lows. Shares of Exxon Mobil, long considered the gold standard for major oil companies because of its superior financial returns, are trading at a 10-year low.

For better investment opportunities

Some of this is a structural shift. As the oil industry matures, investors increasingly don't see it as a growth business and are on the lookout for better investment opportunities. And this thinking may be bleeding into the commodity market itself, with potentially enormous ramifications for OPEC.

Gone are the days when OPEC members fretted about finding the "sweet spot" for oil prices — the point that would generate maximum revenues to fund national budgets while keeping global oil demand humming at a healthy clip.

OPEC is more often than not on its back foot, trying to adjust its output enough to keep prices from falling too far, too fast.

That's a role cartel members are unaccustomed to playing. It will be interesting to see whether OPEC members are up for it. Within the expanded OPEC+ group, Russia has already suggested it will move away from output cuts later this year.

Other member states, however, may have no choice given their dependency on oil revenues to balance their annual budgets.

A slowdown in U.S. shale oil production growth may help stem OPEC's decline, but that's far from certain. The U.S. Energy Information Administration and other analysts expect shale output to level out and enjoy a long plateau, rather than suffer a steep decline. The U.S. shale dragon should remain a strong force in the market for at least the next decade.

As oil demand in the world's advanced economies continues to slow, OPEC is facing the prospects of being in the supply-cutting "downside protection" business for the foreseeable future. Such a scenario marks a major turning point for the global oil industry and a significant change of fortune for the members of OPEC.

(Source: forbes.com)

New brand of nocturnal solar panels is in the works

New research concludes that it is possible for solar panels to generate energy after nightfall. Eco-friendly options have only gotten friendlier.

According to a new study and to Science Alert, certain special solar cells are likely to create as little as a quarter of the power they make during daytime, all under special conditions. In order for this soon-to-be miracle to happen, scientists would have to include thermo-radiative devices that would emit electricity through radiative cooling, where heat leaves and the tool ends up producing a small quantity of energy in the process.

Tristan Deppe and Jeremy Munday, researchers from the University of California

(Davis), explain that all we need for this kind of solar panel is to create one that operates in the exact opposite manner as traditional panels, which is why it's starting to be known as the Anti-Solar Panel.

"You have heat energy coming from the Sun towards the Earth and that normal solar cell picks off that energy as it's transmitted from the Sun to the Earth, so basically you need these two different temperature bodies and some way of converting that power."

"What this nighttime device does is a similar sort of thing — where it's just taking a hot body and a cold body — but now the relatively hot body is the Earth and space is the cold body. As this heat is flowing from

the Earth to outer space, it's picking that off and converting that into power."

Night-time solar panel

Science Alert also points out that, regarding a night-time solar panel, aiming the device at the cold night sky is a way to get the process going. Which is great to know, considering that's how I thought solar nighttime panels worked at night; I thought the panel could just soak up some of the sun's light reflecting off the moon. Nevertheless, the panel still needs to be different.

The University of California isn't the only academic institution to make strides in this new movement. The Electrek site explains that scholars from Stanford University published

a paper last September called Generating Light From Darkness.

"Unlike traditional thermoelectric generators, our device couples the cold side of the thermoelectric module to a sky-facing surface that radiates heat to the cold of space and has its warm side heated by the surrounding air, enabling electricity generation at night."

The paper also highlights that said approach is considered practical for both lighting and off-grid sensors. This method is also perfect for those countries in the world in which traditional electricity is not reliable on certain areas in which blackouts are prone to happen.

(Source: griddaily.com)

Oil jumps 3% on reports of effective coronavirus drug

Oil prices jumped by more than 3% on Wednesday after reports that scientists have found an effective drug against China's fast-spreading coronavirus, which has hit the world's second-largest economy in recent weeks.

Brent crude oil futures LCOc1 were up \$1.76, or 3.2%, at \$55.72 a barrel by 0919 GMT. U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures CLc1 were up \$1.34, or 2.6%, at \$50.93.

China's Changjiang daily reported on Tuesday that a research team at Zhejiang University found two new drugs that can effectively "inhibit coronavirus."

Separately, Sky News cited Imperial College London researchers as saying that they made a significant breakthrough on a coronavirus vaccine, though the report said it would still be too late for the current outbreak.

The virus outbreak prompted bans on travel to many parts of China and steep output cuts by local oil refiners.

Analysts have estimated that the virus could reduce global oil demand by up to 0.5% this year.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and allies led by Russia, a group known as OPEC+, weighed the impact on global oil demand and economic growth from the coronavirus outbreak at a meeting on Tuesday, hearing from China's envoy to the United Nations in Vienna.

Producers are considering further output cuts and moving a planned policy meeting to February rather than March.

"This is a critical time for oil prices and even if we see OPEC+ deliver deeper production cuts, an extended shutdown of China will destroy demand for crude's top importer," said Edward Moya, an analyst at broker OANDA.

"At these prices, commodity producers will soon begin to cut back on production and investment," Moody's Analytics said in a note on Wednesday.

The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) will release its weekly report later on Wednesday.

Data from the American Petroleum Institute showed on Tuesday that U.S. crude oil stocks rose by 4.2 million barrels to 432.9 million barrels in the week to Jan. 31, well above analyst expectations for a build of 2.8 million barrels.

(Source: reuters.com)

Chinese LNG importers consider invoking force majeure

Chinese state-backed importers of liquefied natural gas (LNG) are examining if they can provisionally halt contracts for the supercooled fuel, as the coronavirus outbreak depresses energy demand in the world's second-largest economy.

Two sources briefed on the discussions said the move could see the temporary cancellation of contracts — under a condition known as force majeure — by companies such as China National Offshore Oil Corporation, and possibly Sinopec and China National Petroleum Corporation.

Gas demand has fallen rapidly after the extended Chinese New Year holiday, as Beijing struggles to bring the coronavirus outbreak under control by shutting down cities and restricting travel.

The companies did not immediately respond to requests for comment outside normal business hours.

"China's LNG market got off to a very weak start this year," said an official at Huayou Zhonglan Energy Co, a LNG factory based in the southwestern city of Bazhong. It is not one of those considering force majeure. "Our future depends on how quickly the government puts the disease under control."

The temporary cancellation of contracts would create new headaches for LNG suppliers, who are already grappling with record low prices in Asia following a mild winter and growing output from projects in the U.S. and Australia.

Prices in Asia have fallen

Prices in Asia have fallen towards the \$3 per million British thermal units (mmbtu) mark for the first time in history, down from more than \$5/mmbtu mid-January, while prices are also weak in Europe and Latin America.

LNG and oil prices have been hit hard as flights have been halted, motorists have stayed off the roads and factories have shut for longer than anticipated. "This is terrible news for the global LNG market, which is already in a very depressed state," said Jonathan Stern at the Oxford Institute for Energy Studies.

"If the spot price is further depressed, it causes all types of mayhem, especially for long-term buyers with the price linked to oil."



Most buyers of LNG tend to purchase the fuel through long-term contracts pegged to oil prices, which have become more expensive than buying LNG on the spot market.

There are question marks, however, over whether Chinese LNG buyers will be able to trigger force majeure provisions, given they are often designed for more conventional problems such as facility outages that might stop a buyer taking supplies.

But sellers may be willing to be flexible, people in the industry said, given China's problems with the virus and the fact the country is set to become the biggest buyer of the fuel in the next few years.

"It's not clear that just because you've got reduced demand you've got a case for force majeure — in some LNG agreements, changes in demand are specifically excluded as a reason," said Frank Harris at consultancy Wood Mackenzie.

"But they may ask sellers to work with them and the sellers might be more willing than usual to be flexible given the buying power of the client."

Analysts said that trying to estimate the extent of the energy demand fall in China was difficult, as the last similar outbreak — Sars in 2003 — came when the country's economy was far smaller and its energy demand much lower.

But BP chief financial officer Brian Gilvary said on Tuesday that he believed the latest virus could slash oil demand globally by 40 percent this year. The slowdown in economic activity due to coronavirus could take out 5-7 percent of China's LNG demand in February, according to S&P Global Platts. The supercooled fuel is less widely used in transportation than oil.

Oil prices entered a bear market on Monday, defined as having fallen 20 percent from their recent peak, with Brent crude slipping below \$55 a barrel.

(Source: ft.com)

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Trump and his blows to the American economy!

1 → Decreasing the U.S. unemployment rate began almost since the beginning of Barack Obama's presidency, falling from 10 percent to under five percent. Trump took office in the middle of this downward move and decreased it to under four percent. A simple comparison between first 29 months of the presidencies of Obama and Trump shows that Obama had been able to create one million more jobs than Trump.

There is also a large gap between the unemployment rate announced by the U.S. government and the real unemployment rate. For example, the U.S. has more than 2,300,000 prisoners who are not included in the unemployment rate statistics, while they do not have a job. In this regard, the American journalist Chris Hedges said, "If you look at how they measure unemployment, for instance if you work one hour a week you counted as an employee on the average worker wall mart works 28 hours a week which put them below the poverty line they counted as employee if you have stopped looking for work after four weeks you are magically erased from the unemployment rolls and it does not count large sector of the population, students, retired people who many of them are now riding around in R.V. vans worked doing temp works for Amazon at Christmas for 12 hours a day and warehouses, prisoners so... it (the unemployment rate)



New research finds that American businesses and consumers are paying the price for President Trump's tariffs on Chinese goods. (Photo: Jeenah Moon for The New York Times)

pushing probably 17 percent".

2. The Trump administration is now facing a \$ 1 trillion budget deficit, which is very high compared to many previous U.S. governments. Trump is also dealing with a \$23 trillion national debt these days. A figure, which accounts for nearly one-third of the world's total debt, and has become a crisis that the Trump administration has been unable to resolve, worsening over the past few years.

3. U.S. Gross domestic product (GDP) at the end of 2019 was 2.1 percent. The number is far less than the 4, 5 or 6 percent that Trump had promised, and less than 2.4 percent average GDP growth in Barack Obama's second term.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) also has estimated in its new report that U.S. economic growth will fall to 2 percent in 2020 and 1.7 percent in 2021, which is a serious alarm for Donald Trump's economic record.

4. Since Trump came to power, seven million people have been added to the uninsured population in the U.S., and the number of uninsured Americans has risen from 10.9 percent to 13.7 percent within three years. This is a problem that cannot be overlooked easily, as based on polls, first concern of many Americans, or more accurately, one of the their main demands, is about cutting health care costs or improving health care in the United States.

However, during his presidency, not only Trump has not taken significant step to resolve this problem, but also escalated the crisis.

5. Since Donald Trump became President, average wage in the U.S. has increased insignificantly. For example, the median household income in the first year of Trump's presidency was \$ 62,600. In 2018, the second year of Trump's presidency, this number raised by \$500 and reached to \$63,100. In the U.S. 78 percent of the population now live paycheck to paycheck, and nearly 43 percent of people are no longer able to afford their basic living expenses such as rent and food. Now in such a country, wages, despite the arguments over Trump's economic successes, have slightly increased. The salary of a full-time worker in the U.S. (proportional to inflation) is still three percent lower than the salary 40 years ago.

6. The Trump administration's business condition is not very well either. According to statistics, U.S. trade deficit in 2018 was 25 percent more than when he took office. The issue, coupled with the costs of the U.S. trade war with China and the discontent of American farmers with Trump, has become a serious nightmare for him and his cabinet. The main victims of Trump's trade war have been American farmers, who were one of largest groups that voted for Trump in 2016 and now are dissatisfied with him and his policies.

The mentioned points were just a few reasons why Trump and his cabinet have failed to resolve U.S. economic problems. These are the most obvious evidence that Trump has created serious crises for the U.S., despite his alleged successes. The crises, along with livelihood and welfare problems of millions of Americans, are going to be the main issues that Trump will face in the November 2020 election.

As a new era unveils, who is in charge? Political wrangling as we enter uncharted territory

1 → Part of the problem is having an American president like Trump who is leading the so-called "civilized world" to their eventual decline. Trump pulled out of Paris climate change, Iran nuclear deal, stumbling NATO alliance, arms control with Russia, NAFTA, UN Human Rights Council, and there is more to come.

The chaos was obvious last August in the recent G7 meeting in Biarritz, France which ended without a joint statement of common intention and agreement for the first time since it began as the Group of Five in 1975. Ahead of this 45th G-7 summit, Trump said he favors readmitting Russia back (expelled after Crimea annexation). Obama was the president when Putin made his game changing grab for Crimea.

It was Obama who decided the U.S. – long exhausted by the long war in Afghanistan and the unnecessary one in Iraq – should not intervene in Syria, an abstention that allowed Iran and Russia to step forward and shape the conflict.

Middle East as usual remains contested ground, where former nominal U.S. allies Saudi Arabia, UAE, Turkey, Qatar, Egypt no

longer need to defer to Washington. Saudi Arabia, Egypt and UAE have backed proxy armies in Libya fighting the UN-backed Tripoli government which has received military support from Turkey and Qatar.

In Yemen, UAE withdrew its forces as part of Saudi-led coalition last July leading to clashes on the ground between pro-Saudi forces and a militia previously loyal to UAE.

Turkey is an important geopolitical member of NATO. When Turkey purchased Russian S-400 missile defense system it caused an uproar.

In an interview French President Emmanuel Macron in which he cited the "brain death" of NATO and wondered whether its commitment to collective defense still held and in his eyes NATO members can no longer trust the U.S.

Referring to Macron's statement the hysterical German Chancellor Angela Merkel said "I understand your desire for disruptive politics, but I'm tired of picking up the pieces," according to a New York Times article dated Nov. 23.

Erdogan also hit back at Macron saying, "Have your own brain death checked. These

statements are suitable only to people like you who are in a state of brain death." France reacted to Erdogan's statement by summoning the Turkish envoy in Paris to complain.

These tensions overshadowed the summit to mark NATO's 70th birthday in London on Dec. 3.

Nowhere the sharp divisions at the top of U.S. politics was as obvious as during Trump's third annual State of the Union address on Tuesday, in which he hailed the "great American comeback". At one point the Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi ripped up a copy of his speech behind him.

The United States emerged from the World War II as the dominant economic, political and technological power. The only major combatant to avoid serious damage to its infrastructure, its housing stock or its demographic profile. When the Soviet Union finally disintegrated in 1991, American hegemony was complete.

The biggest winners of today's tussle in the West are Moscow and Beijing. However, protests in Hong Kong depict a remarkable challenge to Beijing's ascension in the world stage. As the world watches Beijing's Uighur



45th Annual Group of 7 Summit in Biarritz last August.

Muslim minority in re-education camps, China continues building artificial islands in South China Sea.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said Tuesday that a nationwide vote on constitutional changes he proposed wouldn't be used to extend his current term in office (expiring in 2024), but remained obscure about

his future political plans. However, during his term he has remained popular with the Russian people and managed to bring back some of the lost glory of Soviet Union to the present day Russia.

Analysts say that Russia's dependence on fossil fuel export could spell disaster in the future.

Trump-Netanyahu deal: lose-lose situation

1 → If we take a brief look at history, we see that during the six-day war in 1967, Israel illegally annexed the West Bank and the Golan Heights, whilst the 1973 Arab-Israeli war ended in a way that was benefitting to Israel.

Through the Camp David Accords that followed in 1978, Israel started to feel they were achieving their goals, through receiving recognition and legitimacy from neighbouring countries, namely Egypt under Anwar Sadat. The so called 'peace agreements' that followed after the collapse of the Soviet Union, from the Madrid Conference to the Oslo Accord's, they were all pursued for one purpose and only – that is for Israel to normalise relations with neighbouring countries, including the Palestinian Authorities, as seen with Yasser Arafat's recognition of Israel's right to exist in the Oslo Accords. The reality is that it makes no difference to Israel whether there is an agreement in place or not, whether one side or two sides are present: Israel will do whatever it feels the need to do- and in the case of the previous 'peace' agreements, Israel partook in them all precisely to establish their legitimacy that they have very much sought after. Despite the fact the previous agreements were 'mutual' between the parties, Israel did not comply with the rights they said the other parties were entitled to and left them hanging on false and empty promises, and that is due to the nature of Israel, that has no regards for human rights and considers itself above basic international laws. To further illustrate this point, Israel's pulling out of Gaza in 2005 was unilateral and without the consent of the Palestinian's- this certainly wasn't due to Israel's regard for international law;

the proof for this is that Gaza is still under Israeli siege and is currently described by the UN as the 'world's largest open-air prison'. Dismantling Israeli settlements in Gaza was to serve Israel's own interests, given Gaza has a very large population density and they were threatened by the resistance groups that were present there. On the same note, Israel's pulling out of South Lebanon in 2000 occurred without any prior agreement with the Lebanese authorities. Again, that is because it wasn't in Israel's interest for them to remain in Lebanon- the price they were paying for their occupation of South Lebanon was too high, most certainly as a result of the strength the resistance group gained in Lebanon that made it impossible for Israel to achieve the gains it sought to begin with- to the extent that Israel now thinks twice before it decides to put itself in a direct confrontation with Lebanon. To conclude here, Israel does what it sees to be in its interests, irrespective of whether there is an agreement or not and irrespective of international law.

Now when we look at the so called 'Deal of the Century', which outlines the annexation of the Jordan Valley, in addition to the annexation of 20% of the West Bank via 15 illegal Israeli settlements within Palestinian territory and maintaining Jerusalem as Israel's undivided capital?effectively legitimising themselves over the whole land and debunking the two-state solution 'promise', it is clear the deal is one sided, in contrast to all the previous deals and goes fundamentally against international norms. That is because the other side meant nothing to Israel and its allies to begin with and Amer-



ica, alongside Israel are now showing their true colours. The reality of the situation is that Israel has only been able to achieve its goals- not due to their strength- but due to the weakness of their surroundings. They have reached such a level of impunity in violating human rights because they are sure there is no accountability or counteracting action from the surroundings towards them.

Exploring this deal a little further, what is the danger of its implementation? With over 2.5 million Palestinian's living in the West Bank, an extremely densely populated region, Israel is not only seizing the best land and resources through annexing the territories and giving themselves false authority over the land, they are striving to create an unbearable condition for the Palestinian's living within, such that they become hopeless and

would want to immigrate and abandon their own homeland themselves. It is important to denote the role of the Liberation axis in counteracting this deal: the reality of the situation is that the Liberation fronts in the region have been mobilising for decades before this deal was first negotiated 3 years ago in the White House. Indeed, according to the axis of Liberation, the deal is already expired before its actualisation- it is too late and cannot achieve anything because the situation on the ground is going in another direction. The state of Israel is defending itself with a deal that isn't under the right conditions for survival- that is because the Liberation groups are only expanding and gaining more power day by day, as they are focused on developing their potentialities and abilities to deter any aggression. Since the Syrian Civil war there has been a

new era for the Liberation fronts in the Middle Eastern region, that have become united in their struggle and all parties regard an attack on one as an attack on them all. Most certainly, the Liberation Fronts will not remain silent on the annexing of the Jordan Valley and the West Bank, whilst its strength will only serve to diffuse every point on the 'deal'. On that note, it is important to understand the role of the Liberation groups in the region with respect to Israel's sense of stability and security. Prior to the Islamic Republic of Iran's establishment in 1979, every single nation in the region would comply with Western demands- without even questioning, however Iran's independence in 1979 from the shackles of Western Imperialism proved to the West and Israel that they now have to take other calculated measures, as a new power in the region has come along and has a say in the region affairs, driving it in a direction that is going against the Western interests of the region. Indeed, the biggest worry for Israel since the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran and it's support of the Liberation groups in Palestine, Lebanon and elsewhere has been their collective determination and seriousness in fighting back Israeli occupation, even if the resistance hasn't managed to pose a direct threat on Israel's settler-colonial expansion and annexation in the heart of Palestine, which has only been increasing year upon year. It is the spirit of recognizing Israel for what it is and not giving it legitimacy that threatens Israel more than anything, even if that is on the level of a Palestinian peacefully protesting in their homeland. The reality is that Israel is in a big conflict where

it desires to capture what it wants by force, whilst the balance of powers on the ground is shifting to a level where Israel will not be able to gain what it wants. The increasing power of the Liberation front will not allow the state of Israel to live in security and satisfaction and indeed, the Liberation movement is striving to make th cost for the Western powers sustaining Israel so high that even America, its greatest ally would feel Israel is a huge burden on it. Indeed, Israel was created in order to serve as an extension of the West in the region, and Israel is only surviving due to Western support, therefore when the state of Israel goes from securing the interests of the West to a place where the West is paying more than it is receiving through the existence of Israel, it will forego sustaining Israel itself. This can also be seen in the light of America's presence in the Middle East that is unstable, as the imperialist power is only diminishing with no concrete base to remain. Would Israel feel safe if its biggest ally, America was removed from the region? Indeed, the resistance is creating an unbearable condition for Israel to survive, and it has reached the point where Israel's legitimacy is being rejected from the masses on the international scene. The 'Deal of the Century' is most certainly a lose-lose situation, given it cannot be enacted, whether through peaceful means or by war. The world is increasing in recognition of Israel and the West's hypocrisy, as they are unveiling their true colours for themselves, whilst the Liberation fronts are only going from strength to strength.

The writer is a UK-based student and activist.

Tehran-Bishkek flight resumed after 12 years

TOURISM **TEHRAN** – Iran and Kyrgyzstan have resumed flights after around 12 years halt, Mehr news agency reported.

The first direct flight between the two countries took off from Tehran and landed at Bishkek's Manas airport on Tuesday, Iran's Ambassador to Kyrgyzstan Ali Mojtaba Roozbahani wrote in Russian on his Twitter account.

According to ISNA, the flight was operated by Iran's Vares Airlines.



On the sidelines of the 12th Iran-Kyrgyzstan Joint Economic Committee meeting which was held in Tehran on December 3-4, 2019, the two sides agreed to facilitate visa issuance and resume direct flights.

The event was co-chaired by Iranian Minister of Transport and Urban Development Mohammad Eslami and Kyrgyzstan's Minister of Transport and Roads Janat Beishenov.

In a meeting with Kyrgyz Prime Minister Mukhammedkalyi Abylgaziev in November, Iranian First Vice-President Es'hag Jahangiri said his country is ready to ease visa regulations for Kyrgyzstani nationals in a bid to boost tourism.

‘Safe’ biodiverse regions now vulnerable to climate change

Some of the most biodiverse regions on Earth have served as a place of respite for thousands of plant and animal species during previous periods of climatic upheaval. New research suggests these former safe havens are now exceedingly vulnerable.

For the new study, scientists analyzed the influence of extreme climate change events on biodiversity hotspots across history. Researchers then compared previous climate change episodes with 21st century patterns.

The results, published Monday in the journal *Nature Climate Change*, showed the rapid pace of human-caused climate change is likely to erode the mechanisms that previously made biodiverse regions places of refuge.

“Our results show that the magnitude and accelerated rate of future climate change will disproportionately affect plants and animals in tropical regions and biodiversity hotspots,” Damien Fordham, an associate professor of global ecology the University of Adelaide in Australia, said in a news release. “Worryingly, these are regions on Earth with the highest concentrations of biodiversity.”

Traditionally, climate change related to glacial-interglacial cycles occurs over relatively long timescales. During these periods of warming and cooling, old species have found ways to persist in the regions of biodiversity found throughout the tropics. These safe havens have also served as sites of speciation, places where new species diverge.

Modern climate change, caused by human-produced greenhouse gases, is happening at a much more rapid pace. According to the latest analysis, the speed and severity of the environmental changes caused by warming and severe weather is likely to disrupt the ability of biodiversity hotspots to shelter vulnerable species.

Places of climate stability are likely to become increasingly unstable as temperatures rise, researchers determined.

(Source: UPI)



ROUND THE GLOBE

Petra

Situated between the Red Sea and the Dead Sea and inhabited since prehistoric times, the rock-cut capital city of the Nabateans, became during Hellenistic and Roman times a major caravan center for the incense of Arabia, the silks of China and the spices of India, a crossroads between Arabia, Egypt and Syria-Phoenicia.

Petra is half-built, half-carved into the rock, and is surrounded by mountains riddled with passages and gorges. An ingenious water management system allowed extensive settlement of an essentially arid area during the Nabataean, Roman and Byzantine periods.

It is one of the world's richest and largest archaeological sites set in a dominating red sandstone landscape.



The Outstanding Universal Value of Petra resides in the vast extent of elaborate tomb and temple architecture; religious high places; the remnant channels, tunnels and diversion dams that combined with a vast network of cisterns and reservoirs which controlled and conserved seasonal rains, and the extensive archaeological remains including of copper mining, temples, churches and other public buildings.

The fusion of Hellenistic architectural facades with traditional Nabataean rock-cut temple/tombs including the Khasneh, the Urn Tomb, the Palace Tomb, the Corinthian Tomb and the Deir (“monastery”) represents a unique artistic achievement and an outstanding architectural ensemble of the first centuries BC to AD.

The varied archaeological remains and architectural monuments from prehistoric times to the medieval periods bear exceptional testimony to the now lost civilizations which succeeded each other at the site.

(Source: UNESCO)

Beijing envoy says will make every effort to expand Iran-China tourism ties

By Afshin Majlesi

TEHRAN – Chinese ambassador in Tehran Chang Hua said on Wednesday that the embassy will make every effort to expand tourism relations between the two countries.

“I hope that Chinese arrivals in Iran will be increased in the future and I believe such travels are essential for the two nations to become more familiar.”

The envoy made the remarks at a press conference at China's embassy in Tehran, during which he discussed a range of issues such as coronavirus outbreak in China and beyond, economy, trade and travel.

Currently, flights between the two countries have been [temporarily] suspended as a means to control the disease, he added.

The ambassador also reminded attendees of his wish to become “a tourism ambassador” for Iran in order to help expand bilateral ties.

He also implicitly censured U.S. President Donald Trump for threatening to launch attacks on Iran's cultural sites that belong to the entire global community.

In response to a question about the measures taken by the Chinese government to halt the spread of the coronavirus, the envoy said that a large number of Chinese medical experts are working hard to find a certain cure for the disease.

He also said international cooperation is underway in this regard.

He assured that the mortality rate of coronavirus is much less than some influenza viruses.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the envoy said, “The news on the novel coronavirus is logical and fair and we hope that this approach of Iranian media will be continued”.

“The outbreak will have influences in short-time and how far the impact will go relies on the time we can beat it.”

Speaking about Iran-China economic cooperation, he said, “It is being improved despite the pressure of the third country [the U.S.]”.

“The U.S. has unilaterally withdrawn from the [2015 nuclear deal, internationally known as] JCPOA and is interfering with Iran's economic ties with other countries.”

“Despite such difficulties, we are boosting bilateral ties with Iran,” he noted.

“China condemns U.S.’ unilateral moves and backs its legal ties with Iran,” he added.

Then, a video clip was broadcast for the attendees, showing several Iranian children speaking in Chinese, announcing support for China.

The envoy expressed thanks to those Iranian people and children who have announced their support for China via their tweets or video clips on social media.

He, in particular, hailed the stance of the Islamic Republic of Iran towards the issue, noting that Foreign



Beijing's ambassador in Tehran Chang Hua speaks at a press conference at China's embassy in Tehran, February 5, 2020. The envoy discussed on the coronavirus spreading in China and beyond, as well as a range of related issues such as ways to control the disease, its death toll, the humanitarian aid, economy, trade and travel with a host of reporters and media personnel.

Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has been the first foreign minister in the world who announced support for China.

The ambassador also expressed gratitude for Iranian foreign ministry's stances and support besides other Iranian officials including Health Minister Saeed Namaki and Tourism Minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan.

He referred to the recent tweets of Zarif and foreign ministry's spokesperson Abbas Mousavi as good examples of Iran's support for China under the present tough conditions.

He named the stance of Iranian officials and media as “impartial and fair”.

Lamenting about the U.S. stance towards the virus outbreak in China and measures done by the Chinese government, he said, “China feels responsible for its people and does the same for all people in the world.”

“In the last days of January, World Health Organization managing director visited China and hailed our measures

in combating and curbing the virus,” Hua said, “He hailed China's measures for coping with a contagious disease as an example for the world.”

He quoted Iranian health minister as saying “a virus does not know borders,” adding, “I hope the one or two countries to cooperate with China facing the situation instead of abusing it.”

The Iranian government has waived visa requirements for passport holders from China and Hong Kong to attract more foreign tourists from the Far East; however, it is a unilateral measure i.e. Iranian tourists visiting China or Hong Kong still need visas.

Iran embraces hundreds of historical sites such as bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, mausoleums, churches, towers, and mansions, of which 22 being inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

Mahan Air clarifies why did not suspend China flights after requested ban

➔ **1** “But we announced that whoever has purchased our tickets ten days, or two weeks ago, or who have either traveled to Iran or traveled to a third country via Iran should be transferred to their original destination. These passengers were either Iranians who have traveled to China and later wanted to return to Iran or Chinese nationals who had come to Iran for a visit or on a transit flight.”

“Mahan Air operated these China flights in accordance with the country's civil aviation organization because it wanted to give these people (the stranded passengers), in particular Iranian citizens, an opportunity to get their destinations.”

“So we operated four (round) flights according to the recommendation of the Civil Aviation Organization. Three of which took place on Sunday (February 2nd) between Tehran and Shanghai, Beijing and Shenzhen, and the forth is being operated today (Tuesday) connecting Tehran to Guangzhou.”



“Therefore, all travelers who could change their tickets, either shorten their stay or change their destination, were transferred by Mahan Airlines without being penalized for changing dates or destinations of their flights.”

“So we operated these flights to help the (Iranian) gov-

ernment because they were not financially profitable. We didn't consider any commercial-economic benefits for making those flights because (on average) they had passenger loads between 40 to 45 percent.”

The official also said that “another flight is being arranged upon request of the Foreign Ministry to transfer Iranian students from Wuhan to Iran on Wednesday. He noted that about 70 Iranian students are now in Wuhan and they will be kept in quarantine for 14 days.”

The coronavirus outbreak has disrupted flights to and from China, one of the world's busiest travel markets, as airlines around the globe halt service. Commercial flights to and from Wuhan, where the virus is centered, have mostly stopped globally.

Cancellations have spread to major hubs in Beijing and Shanghai. Carriers from British Airways to Singapore Airlines to United Airlines have suspended flights to China's biggest cities.

Boeing's colossal 777x is about to have its first test flight

The Boeing 777x will likely have its first test flight at the plane manufacturer's Paine Field facility in Everett, Washington, this week—a major step in getting the new aircraft certified with safety regulators. The first test flight was originally scheduled to take off on Thursday morning, but was delayed by Boeing due to rainy weather. The company is now targeting Friday morning for the huge aircraft to take to the skies for the first time.

Boeing's enormous 777x is expected to be delivered to airlines in 2021, with its largest version, the 777-9, able to seat more than 400 passengers. For comparison, Boeing's largest Dreamliner, the 787-10, can only seat up to 330 travelers. The plane's new folding wingtip design lets its vast wings fit into standard airport gates, while allowing them to be extended on the runway before takeoff for maximum fuel efficiency in flight.

When the tips are folded down, the plane's wingspan stretches 235 feet, which tops Boeing's biggest plane, the double-decker 747-8, by 10 feet.

After its test flight, the new plane will reach its next level of certification, just as Boeing once again delays the return of the embattled 737 MAX, which has been grounded since March 2019 after two crashes killed 346 people. The 737 MAX's new estimated return date is now “mid-2020,” the manufacturer said in a statement on Tuesday. This new timeline “accounts for the rigorous scrutiny that regulatory authorities are rightly applying at every step of their review of the 737 MAX's flight control system,” the statement said. U.S. airlines that fly Maxes had already pushed the plane off their schedules until June 2020.

The launch of the 777x has not been

without its own setbacks. Originally scheduled to be tested in 2019 and rolled out to airlines in summer 2020, the plane's safety certification hit a snag in September when it failed a standard stress test, which assesses how the aircraft structure holds up under extreme conditions. “As the test approached its target stress level, an explosive depressurization tore through the fuselage,” the Seattle Times reported, ripping a hole in the plane and blowing off a passenger door. Because the incident occurred so close to the plane's targeted stress level (it was 99 percent of the way there), Boeing likely reinforced the area where the depressurization occurred, making it safe to fly. The company said as much back in September, noting in a statement on the incident that while its “root cause assessment continues, at this time we do not expect that this will have a significant

impact on aircraft design.”

As for the plane's first flight, the 777x is expected to take off from Paine Field and fly in the area for about five hours, testing its abilities through several maneuvers at different speeds and altitudes, according to Simple Flying. The plane has already been spotted on the runway performing rejected take off and low-speed taxi tests, but the plane has not yet been airborne. Boeing will be live streaming the 777x's test flight on its website.

Some of the world's top airlines have placed orders for the twin-aisle 777x, including Singapore Airlines, Cathay Pacific, Lufthansa, Etihad, Qatar Airways, All Nippon Airways, British Airways, and the plane's launch customer, Emirates, which has ordered more than 100 of the aircraft.

(Source: MSN)

Dubai airport reports first dip in passenger numbers in 20 years

The number of travelers passing through Dubai International airport dipped last year for the first time in 20 years but the airport remained the world's busiest for international passengers, authorities said on Wednesday.

Traffic at the major transit hub dropped 3.1 percent to 86.4 million passengers, down from 89.15 million passengers in 2018, Dubai Airports said.

It is the first fall in the number of passengers at Dubai International since at least 2000, according to figures from Dubai Statistics Centre, a government agency.

The airport retained its position as the top global airport serving international passengers, beating second-placed Heathrow Airport by

six million passengers, the statement said.

It attributed the decline in passenger numbers to a “series of challenges” including the 45-day closure of the airport's south runway to enable its refurbishment, global market conditions, as well as the worldwide grounding of the Boeing 737 MAX.

“While customer numbers in 2019 were lower than the preceding year, the impact of the 45-day closure of the runway, the bankruptcy of Jet Airways, as well as the grounding of the Boeing's 737 MAX accounted for an estimated 3.2 million passengers over the course of the year,” Dubai Airports CEO Paul Griffiths said.

Low cost carrier Flydubai has been one

of the biggest customers of the Boeing 737 MAX, which has been grounded since March last year following two crashes that killed 346 people and opened the doors to intense scrutiny of the US manufacturer's safety practices.

India accounted for the largest number of passengers using Dubai airport, with 11.9 million.

Saudi Arabia provided the second largest, with 6.3 million, narrowly ahead of Britain's 6.2 million.

The number of flights handled by the airport also dropped last year, falling by 8.6 percent to 373,261, Dubai Airports said.

The volume of cargo handled fell by 4.8 percent to 2.5 million tonnes.

Passenger arrivals in Dubai reached a record 16.73 million passengers last year, up 5.1 percent on 2018 but far short of the 20 million the authorities hope to welcome this year.

For the past few years, the glitzy city state has been battling an economic slowdown led by its key real estate and tourism sectors.

Growth slowed to 1.94 percent in 2018, before rebounding slightly to 2.1 percent last year, according to government figures.

Dubai is pinning great hopes on the global trade fair Expo 2020 -- which opens later this year for six months -- to lift the slowing economy.

(Source: AFP)

Iran plans to send astronauts into space using domestic technology

1 → “The capsule is expected to be utilized in the next three years which will be the first step to send Iranian astronauts into space,” he added, ILNA news agency reported on Wednesday.

The preliminary phase of work is almost over and the weight of the capsules will be about 1,700 kilograms, he noted.

This is the most important step after sending a satellite into orbit that will have a significant impact on the progress of space science in the country, he concluded.



An environmental research satellite, called Zafar, has been recently manufactured by Tehran's University of Science and Technology, which will be sent into orbit within the next few days.

It weighs 113 kilograms and is capable of taking color photos and survey oil reserves, mines, forests, and natural lands.

Zafar satellite can also create land use maps, urban development monitoring maps, agricultural land boundary maps, and natural land and forest change

maps, as well as monitor permanent and seasonal lake changes and identify post-disaster demolition in urban areas and upgrade structural maps (fault and folding identification).

Iran launched its first satellite, called Omid (literally meaning hope), in 2009. Rasad (literally meaning observation) satellite was also sent into orbit in 2011.

In 2012, Iran successfully put its third domestically manufactured satellite, named Navid (literally meaning promise), into orbit.

Denmark's biggest pharmaceutical company to launch production line in Iran

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Denmark's ambassador to Tehran, Danny Annan, has said the country's largest pharmaceutical company will begin production in Iran within the next two months.

“Despite sanctions, we are determined to strengthen ties with Iran,” he added, IRNA news agency reported on Wednesday.

The company will produce injectable insulin in Iran, under the first phase, he said, noting that the product will be distributed inside Iran, and will be later exported to neighboring countries and the region.

Stating that U.S. unilateral sanctions against Iran are not supported by the European Union and Denmark as well, he emphasized that despite the sanctions, Denmark is determined to expand its relationship with Iran.

Although food and medicine were claimed to be exempted from the U.S. sanctions, financial and banking sanctions have limited the life-saving medicine trade which harshly targeted the patients suffering from rare diseases.

Moreover, fears of falling afoul of Washington have restricted exports to Iran.

Exemptions for humanitarian trade



(such as food, medicine, and medical equipment) have not been effective in protecting Iranian patients from access to imported medicine, such as the bandages used for patients suffering Epidermolysis Bullosa (EB), a rare genetic disease that causes painful blistering of the skin.

With the return of sanctions, over a year (May 2018-May 2019), 15 patients covered by EB Health House lost their lives, including Ava, a two-year-old girl in Ahvaz city, who died of infection and lack of skincare.

Companies exclusively producing medicine for Mucopolysaccharidosis (MPS) patients, such as BioMarin Pharmaceutical Inc. of the U.S. and a South Korean company, have refused to export these drugs to Iran, threatening the lives of 335 patients in Iran.

TIM 2020 seeks joint investment to mitigate sanctions effect

SOCIETY TEHRAN — The second Technology Investment Meeting (TIM 2020) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation (D-8) kicked off in Tehran on Tuesday with the aim of promoting joint investment of domestic and foreign companies in order to reduce effects of the U.S. sanctions.

This year, 20 foreign investment companies and 100 domestic investment companies attended the event, Milad Sadrankhanloo, deputy secretary of the event stated, IRNA reported.

Referring to the presence of 120 domestic and foreign investors at the meeting, he said that the first edition of the event was hosted by Iran in 2017, with over 20 Venture Capital Funds and 200 investors in attendance.

SadrKhanloo added that creating mutual funds between member states that are not limited to one specific geographic area and are globally widespread could reduce sanctions.

The event also creates a context for the use of smartphones for exchanges between countries, he highlighted.

He concluded that investors from



nine countries, namely, Nigeria, Lebanon, Switzerland, Zimbabwe, Germany, Turkey, the Netherlands and India participated in the two-day event.

D-8 includes major Muslim developing countries namely, Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan and Turkey.

Focusing on international investment opportunities, the meeting aims at addressing the investment potentials in Islamic developing countries in order to open up an opportunity for foreign and domestic investors.

One of the main aspects of international investment is the creation of financial and technical infrastructure for knowledge and technology companies.

Wildlife emerging months earlier than normal as winters 'lost' to climate change

Wildlife is being confused by “lost” winters, conservationists warn as butterflies, newts and nesting blackbirds are spotted earlier than normal.

The latest data from Nature's Calendar, which asks members of the public to record signs of the changing seasons, shows that active butterflies and newts and blackbirds building a nest have already been spotted months before normal.

Analysis of the conditions in 2019 found that all but one of the 50 spring events tracked by the scheme were early last year, amid warmer winter temperatures.

The Woodland Trust, which runs the Nature's Calendar scheme, warns that many species are losing their seasonal cues as winters warm and seasons shift.

Some could be tempted out of hibernation too soon, and be hit by plummeting temperatures amid increasingly erratic weather, while some birds appeared to be breeding too late to make the most of vital food sources, the Trust said.

Lorienne Whittle, Nature's Calendar citizen science officer said: “It seems that last year we almost lost winter as



a season - it was much milder and our data shows wildlife is responding, potentially putting many at risk.

“Our records are showing random events such as frogspawn arriving far earlier than expected, possibly to be wiped out when a late cold snap occurs.”

She added: “It appears that some species are able to adapt to the advancing spring better than others.

“Oak trees respond by producing their first leaves earlier and caterpillars seem to be keeping pace.

“But blue tits, great tits and pied flycatchers are struggling to react in time for their chicks to take advantage of the peak amount of caterpillars, the food source on which they depend.”

This winter's surprise sightings include two December records of peacock butterflies in Kent and Cornwall, thought to have been woken early due to mild weather in the south of the country, and a red admiral in the Channel Islands.

Active newts were recorded in late December in Cheshire and a blackbird was spotted building a nest at the beginning of January.

(Source: The Independent)

Jackass penguin call shares traits of human speech, scientists say

The call of the jackass penguin, a wheezing bray that sounds like a donkey in distress, follows some of the same linguistic laws found in human languages, scientists have found.

Researchers say that, just like in our own speech, more frequently used sounds within the call tend to be shorter, while the longer the call, the shorter the sounds within it. It is the first time this pattern has been shown outside primates.

“We can probably find many other species that conform to these laws because this is probably a general principle, rather than something related to human language specifically,” said Dr Livio Favaro, a co-author of the research now at the University of Turin.

Prof Stuart Semple of the University of Roehampton, who was not involved in the work but has previously conducted similar research in non-human primates, said the new study adds weight to the idea that animals tend to convey information in the most efficient way. Such an approach is known as “compression” and is also seen in systems such as morse code where the most commonly used letters have the simplest and shortest sounds – either a dot or a dash.

“If you have compression in the communication system it is more efficient,” said Semple. “So it is the sort of thing that evolution will have acted on because animals that communicate efficiently are expending less energy.”

Writing in the journal Biology Letters, Favaro and colleagues describe how they analysed 590 vocalisations recorded from 28 adult African penguins – also known as jackass penguins because of their distinctive sound – that live in Italian zoos.

These vocalisations were so-called “ecstatic display songs” – calls, typically uttered by males, that communicate an individual's identity, tell rivals that territory is taken, and help the birds bag a mate.

These songs are made up of sequences of three distinctive types of sound – or syllables.

The team say the findings suggests the penguins' songs follow two laws seen across a wide range of human languages as well as some, but not all, non-human primates – Zipf's law of brevity and the Menzerath-Altmann law.

The former states that the more often a sound is used the shorter it is – in English, for example, the most common words include “the”, “to” and “of” – while the latter says that the longer a unit of language the shorter the components within it: for example cumbersome words tend to contain shorter syllables than simple ones.

“One-syllable words can be very long, like ‘strength’, but many-syllable words tend to have short syllables, like ‘pa-ra-meter-ise’,” said Prof Chris Kello, an expert in modelling language patterns at the University of California, Merced who was not involved in the latest research.

While the new study has limitations – including that it only looked at one form of vocalisation among the penguins – Favaro said the study shows the linguistic laws are not about language per se, as they are not linked to semantics or syntax, but are rooted more in a fundamental principle of sharing information efficiently. What's more, he added, the research reveals the interplay of different evolutionary pressures, such as the need to convey the size of the animal and its identity, all while communicating efficiently.

Kello welcomed the study. “Linguistic laws, like Zipf's law of brevity and the Menzerath-Altmann law, were originally discovered in text,” he said, noting that meant it was initially thought that they arose from the symbolic nature of human language.

“This new study provides more evidence that the laws are physical and not symbolic, because even penguins show them. Instead, the laws seem to reflect something deeper and more general about communication and information.”

(Source: The Guardian)

WORDS IN THE NEWS

Australian bush fires

(January 20, 2003)

Authorities in the Australian capital Canberra have been accused of not doing enough to protect the city from bush fires that have killed four people and destroyed hundreds of homes. Emergency crews have said they've contained the outbreaks that tore through the city's suburban fringes over the weekend. This report from Phil Mercer:

With Canberra's **bush fire** crisis now **easing**, the authorities are facing tough questions about just how prepared they were for the city's worst ever natural disaster. Residents who found themselves on the frontline have suggested the **fire-storm** simply took **emergency crews** by surprise. Weather forecasters said they warned of extreme conditions in the days leading up to the weekend's devastation. A full-scale investigation into the Canberra fires is being considered. The capital's chief minister, John Stanhope, has admitted fire crews simply couldn't cope. He said **bitter lessons would be learnt**. The New South Wales fire service commissioner, Phil Koperberg, has **defended the emergency response**. He said crews had been confronted by the most ferocious outbreaks ever seen in Australia, and to contain them was impossible. The fires were sparked by lightning. They raced through suburban streets, engulfing and destroying more than four hundred homes. A coronial enquiry will look into the deaths of the victims. **Wild-fires** continue to cause chaos elsewhere in south-eastern Australia: **vast swathes** of the Kosciuszko National Park in New South Wales have been **reduced to ash**. There's a similar picture in Victoria, where dozens of **fire-fronts** continued to advance through inaccessible mountain regions. This is already Australia's longest-ever bush fire season, and officials have said there's no end in sight.

Words

bush fire: a fire which starts in the bush (wild, uncultivated land) **easing**: if an unpleasant situation eases, whatever is causing the difficulty lessens

fire-storm: this happens when hot air rises and more air rushes in to take its place making the fire uncontrollable

emergency crews: people working on emergency vehicles (police, fire, ambulance)

bitter lessons would be learnt: the anger they felt would make them prepare better for the future

defended the emergency response: said the emergency services had reacted well

Wild-fires: fires which spread very quickly

vast swathes: long strips of land

reduced to ash: all that was left was a grey powder

fire-fronts: the line between what is on fire and what isn't

(Source: BBC)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → C

'Pharmaceutical industry unfazed by U.S. withdrawal of nuclear deal'

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

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

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

سخنگوی وزارت بهداشت: خروج آمریکا از برجام تاثیری در دارو ندارد

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

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

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

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“fore-”

■ **Meaning:** before or in front

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

PHRASAL VERB

Go about something

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

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

IDIOM

Dive in headfirst

■ **Explanation:** If you begin something enthusiastically, without thinking about the possible consequences

■ **For example:** Tony accepted the project without calculating the time it would take; he always dives in headfirst!

U.S. polarization at its height as Pelosi rips up Trump's speech

➔ **1** In return, Pelosi, who appeared to be taken aback, avoided citing the usual "high privilege and distinct honor" that accompanies the speaker's introduction of the president to Congress. All she said in introducing Trump was this, "Members of Congress, the President of the United States."

The speaker then proceeded to rip apart a copy of Trump's remarks behind his back after his speech was over on live television. There was also booing and several Democrats walked out.



Leaving the House floor, Pelosi said she had torn up the speech "because it was the courteous thing to do, considering the alternative."

The speech "was a manifesto of mistruths," she added. Also in a statement issued shortly after the speech ended, Pelosi called Trump's message deceitful.

"The manifesto of mistruths presented in page after page of the address tonight should be a call to action for everyone who expects truth from the President and policies worthy of his office and the American people," Pelosi said in a statement. "The American people expect and deserve a President to have integrity and respect for the aspirations for their children."

Trump has been on bad terms with Pelosi for long and their relationship took a turn for the worse ever since the Democratic-controlled House of Representative impeached him in December, charging him with abusing power by pressuring Ukraine to probe political rival Joe Biden, and then obstructing their congressional inquiry.

On Wednesday, the Republican-controlled Senate is set to vote on whether to remove Trump from office. The Senate is almost certain to acquit the president, as a two-thirds majority is required to remove Trump and none of its 53 Republicans have indicated they will vote to convict.

(Source: Press TV)

EU's new foreign policy chief to meet Pompeo in Washington

Josep Borrell, the new EU foreign policy chief, will hold talks in Washington on Thursday and Friday with U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and White House senior adviser Jared Kushner, the European Union said in a statement on Wednesday.

Despite divisions over Iran, Pompeo has sought to re-establish friendlier ties with the incoming leaders of the European Union, including Borrell, and mark an end to troubled relations since President Donald Trump took office.

"These meetings will provide an opportunity to advance the foreign policy dialogue between the EU and U.S. and should focus specifically on ways to enhance transatlantic relations," the EU's foreign service said in a statement.

(Source: Reuters)

Withdraw behind observation points, or Turkey will do what is necessary: Erdogan to Syrian troops

Damascus must withdraw its troops from Turkey's positions in Idlib or face retaliation, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said, following a deadly clash between the two nations' forces in the jihadist-riddled area.

Things can't continue to go the way they did on Monday, the Turkish president told a party session, referring to clashes between Turkish and Syrian troops in the northwestern Syrian governorate earlier in the week.



The Syrian government will have to pull its troops away from Turkish observation posts in Idlib by the end of the month, Erdogan demanded. He said Turkish troops will force Damascus to retreat if this is not done, deploying the army and warplanes if necessary.

Several Turkish personnel were killed when a military convoy was hit by Syrian artillery fire, as Ankara moved its troops into Syria without prior notice. The incident triggered a retaliatory bombardment of Syrian Army positions.

The Idlib governorate is the last large stronghold of anti-government forces in Syria. It was proclaimed a de-escalation zone under the Russia-Turkey agreements. Turkey, which has influence with several armed groups there, is supposed to help deescalate the armed conflict and assist with a transition to political dialogue and a peaceful resolution. It has 12 observation posts that are meant to monitor the situation.

Syrian troops have been gradually capturing some parts of the Idlib governorate, pushing militant groups - who continuously violated the ceasefire - closer to the Turkish border.

Russia blamed Monday's incident on miscommunication with the Turkish side. Erdogan and his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, took part in an emergency phone call following the clashes in an effort to deflate the tension, and agreed to reinforce coordination in Syria.

(Source: RT)

Draft UNSC resolution rebukes Israel annexation plan

A draft United Nations Security Council resolution condemns Israel's plan to annex the settlements it has built illegally on occupied Palestinian territories in a rebuke of a U.S.-devised scheme that endorses such land theft.

The draft, which was reported on by Reuters on Tuesday, has been drawn up by Palestinians and circulated to council members by Tunisia and Indonesia.

The resolution "stresses the illegality of the annexation of any part" of the occupied Palestinian territories and "condemns recent statements calling for annexation by Israel" of these territories.

Last Tuesday, U.S. President Donald Trump unveiled the outlines of his so-called "deal of the century," which features Israel's annexation of the apartment blocks that it has propped up across the West Bank since occupying the Palestinian territory during a war in 1967.

More than 600,000 Israelis live in over 230 settlements built on the land since the occupation.

The deal also envisions the recognition of Jerusalem al-Quds as Israel's "capital" — although Palestinians want the occupied holy city's eastern part as the capital of their future state.

All previous foreign-mediated agreements between Palestinians and Israelis as well as repeated United Nations' resolutions have mandated Tel Aviv to withdraw



behind the 1967 borders.

All Palestinian factions have unanimously rejected Trump's plan. Palestine stopped recognizing the U.S. as a mediator in the Middle East process when Trump, in December 2017, recognized occupied Jerusalem al-Quds as Israel's "capital."

Trump had announced the scheme — masterminded by his son-in-law and advisor Jared Kushner among other key pro-Israeli figures — some two years ago, but had withheld its details.

The draft "strongly regrets" that the Trump plan "breaches international law"

and UN resolutions.

The deal also "undermines the inalienable rights and national aspirations of the Palestinian people, including to self-determination and independence," the draft says.

The resolution stresses the need for an acceleration of international and regional efforts to launch "credible negotiations on all final status issues in the Middle East peace process without exception."

It is expected to be submitted to a vote at the Security Council on February 11, coinciding with a visit by Mahmoud Abbas, president of the Palestinian Authority.

Netanyahu-Burhan meeting slammed in Sudan, exposes divides

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was smiling and gesturing as he posed for pictures alongside Yoweri Museveni, the president of Uganda who hosted him in the city of Entebbe on Monday; but it was another meeting, far from the media glare, that made international headlines - and raised eyebrows.

In an unannounced move, Netanyahu on Monday also held talks with Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the head of Sudan's sovereign council, a joint civilian-military transitional body that has been governing the country since August last year in the wake of longtime President Omar al-Bashir's overthrow months before.

Following the secret meeting, Israel said the two countries had agreed to move towards forging normal relations. Only two Arab states - Egypt and Jordan - have diplomatic ties with Israel.

"History!" tweeted Netanyahu, who is fighting for his political future ahead of a snap legislative election on



March 2, the third in less than a year.

As news of the talks spread, protests reportedly erupted in Khartoum as Sudanese government ministers insisted they were unaware of the meeting and had heard about

it through the media.

Al-Burhan himself only made his first public remarks about it the next day after briefing the council and the cabinet.

"I took this step from the standpoint of my responsibility ... to protect the national security of Sudan and achieve the supreme interests of the Sudanese people," Burhan said in a statement on Tuesday.

The meeting came two days after the Arab League, of which Sudan is a member, joined Palestinian leaders in rejecting US President Donald Trump's Middle East plan, which he unveiled while standing alongside Netanyahu at the White House last week.

The plan proposed a two-state solution to the decades-old Palestinian-Israeli conflict, with a new Palestinian capital outside of Jerusalem while maintaining the historic city as an "undivided capital" for Israel.

(Source: al Jazeera)

EU states in UNSC call on Myanmar to protect its Rohingya Muslims



The European Union (EU) member states in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) have urged Myanmar's government to prosecute those involved in committing human rights violations against the nation's minority Rohingya Muslims.

"Myanmar must address the root causes of its conflicts," said a joint statement issued Tuesday by France, Germany, Estonia, and Belgium following a closed-door UNSC meeting.

They called on Myanmar to adhere to measures aimed at preventing genocide in the Southeast Asian country against its Muslim minority citizens as set forth by the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

The UN has already in the past said genocide has taken place against the Rohingya in Myanmar. And the ICJ last month ordered Myanmar to protect the Muslims.

The four European countries further called on Myanmar to take "credible action to bring to justice those responsible for human rights violations."

"Myanmar must also create conditions for and facilitate a voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable return of the Rohingya to Myanmar," they said, referring to the Rohingya refugees displaced by a military-led campaign of violence against them.

The statement was also signed by former Security Council member and EU state Poland, though it marked the first time the members of the bloc issued a joint UNSC statement without the United Kingdom, which exited the EU on Friday.

Britain, however, was among the countries that had requested the meeting on

Myanmar, while China — an ally of Myanmar — opposed issuing a joint declaration by the entire council, according to a diplomatic source cited in an AFP report.

Nearly 740,000 Rohingya Muslims were forced to flee Myanmar's Rakhine State to neighboring Bangladesh following a bloody military-led crackdown that started in 2016 and that the UN said was perpetrated with "genocidal intent."

Thousands of Rohingya were also killed in the crackdown.

Widespread rape, arson, and murder against the Rohingya have been documented by rights groups and the UN.

While the majority of Myanmar's Rohingya population have fled to Bangladesh, violence against the remaining Muslims has not finished. A leading global telecoms operator said on Tuesday that Myanmar had re-imposed an internet shutdown in the western states of Rakhine and Chin amid new violence in the area.

Lawmakers in the regions affected by the internet shutdown said the outage could prevent aid from reaching Rohingya villages caught up in the fighting.

The purported re-imposition of the internet shutdown comes after two women, one pregnant, were killed and seven others injured in an alleged artillery attack on a Rohingya village in Rakhine on January 25.

Maung Kyaw Zan, a member of the national parliament for Buthidaung Township, told foreign press agencies that Kin Taung Village had been struck by unprovoked shelling from a nearby military battalion. The military denied pounding the village, blaming a Buddhist rebel group for the attack.

(Source: Press TV)

Buttigieg holds narrow lead over Sanders in Iowa



Former South Bend, Indiana, Mayor Pete Buttigieg held a narrow lead over Senator Bernie Sanders as the long-delayed results of a chaotic Iowa caucus continued to trickle in late on Tuesday.

With 71 percent of the precincts reporting, Buttigieg was leading the state delegate chase with 26.8 percent, while Sanders had 25.2 percent, Senator Elizabeth Warren had 18.4 percent and former Vice President Joe Biden had 15.4 percent.

The partial results come after confusion and frustration over delays in announcing the Monday's caucus tallies due to a "coding issue" in an app that precincts used to report the data.

It was unclear when the final vote will be announced.

While campaigns were eager to spin the results to their advantage, there was little immediate indication that the incomplete results eased the confusion and concern that loomed over the opening contest of the Democrats 2020 presidential primary season.

During a private conference call with campaigns earlier in the day, state party chairman Troy Price declined to answer pointed questions about the specific timeline - even whether it would be a matter of days or weeks.

"We have been working data and night to make sure these results are accurate," Price said at a subsequent news conference.

The leading candidates pressed on in next-up New Hampshire, which votes in just seven days, as billionaire Democrat Michael Bloomberg sensed an opportunity, vowing to double his already enormous advertising campaign and expand his sprawling staff focused on a series of delegate-rich states voting next month.

The party's caucus crisis was an embarrassing twist after months of promoting the contest as a chance for Democrats to find some clarity in a jumbled field with no clear frontrunner. Instead, after a build-up that featured seven rounds of debates, nearly \$1bn spent nationwide and a year of political jockeying, caucus day ended with no winner, no official results and many fresh questions about whether Iowa can retain its coveted "first" status.

Iowa marked the first contest in a primary season that will span all 50 states and several U.S. territories, ending at the party's national convention in mid-July.

■ **'Beginning of end of Trump'**

Campaigning in New Hampshire on Tuesday, Warren said she was "feeling good" about her performance in Iowa but questioned the state party's plans to release partial results.

"I just don't understand what that means, at least half of the data. I think they ought to get it together and release all the data," she said.

The Sanders campaign told supporters that its internal monitoring showed him in the lead with nearly half the vote in. Sanders himself said late Monday: "Today marks the beginning of the end for Donald Trump."

Buttigieg, the former mayor of South Bend, Indiana, essentially declared an Iowa victory.

"So, we don't know all the results, but we know by the time it's all said and done, Iowa, you have shocked the nation," he said before leaving Iowa. "By all indications, we are going on to New Hampshire victorious."

(Source: al Jazeera)

Persepolis, Esteghlal both ready to win Tehran derby

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran Professional League (IPL) leaders Persepolis face their archrivals Esteghlal on Thursday in the Iranian capital's derby at Azadi Stadium.

One of the most historic club rivalries in Iran and Asia has become even hotter in this season. What's more, this week's game could have a huge say in the 2019-2020 IPL title race.

Persepolis will come into the game five points clear at the top of the table after Sepahan's goalless draw against Machine Sazi two weeks ago. Esteghlal, meanwhile, are now eight points behind back in fourth spot so they realistically need to win at this game to keep their title hopes alive.

On Saturday, Yahya Golmohammadi's side defeated Sanat Naft 1-0 in an impressive challenge in Abadan, thanks to a free-kick from versatile midfielder Ahmad Noorollahi. Meanwhile, Farhad Majidi's men defeated Naft Masjed Soleyman 2-1 in Tehran.

The Reds are at their best form with seven wins in their last seven league games and nine out of nine in all competitions. Golmohammadi, head coach of Persepolis, has complete confidence in his players.

"We have a special game ahead of us. Tehran's derby is one of the most important games and one of the greatest derbies in the world. We have very good players who have always been able to make right decisions and perform well in difficult situations and big games" Golmohammadi said.

He believes in Persepolis players' mentality: "They have a strong mentality and they are born winners. I hope that we will see a good match from the both sides on



Thursday so the fans can enjoy the game."

Esteghlal, had a very poor start to their season, but they recaptured their form under their ex-coach Andrea Stramaccioni and then continued the form with his successor Farhad Majidi, the popular ex-player of the team. With Majidi on the hotseat the Blues

have had three wins in a row at the AFC Champions League and IPL.

Majidi pointed to the importance of the Red-Blue derby in his press conference.

"The match against Persepolis is important to both teams and we can't deny the game's importance," He said.

The head coach of Esteghlal called his team "the winning team" and he refused to talk about Persepolis' strengths: "The winning team talk about their awesomeness and what they are going to do in the match. The losing team speak about what they should do against their rival."

Iran crowned Fajr Weightlifting Cup champions

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran won the title of the fifth International Fajr Weightlifting Cup (Namjou Cup) on Tuesday.

The competition, which was one of the qualifiers for the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games, took place in Rasht, Iran from Feb. 2 to 5.

Iran claimed the title with 448 points, followed by Iraq and Indonesia with 245 and 241 points, respectively.

The competition brought 34 weightlifters from Iran, Armenia, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Norway and Turkey together. The men weightlifters competed under



seven weight classes.

The competition was held in accordance with IWF Constitution and By-Laws, and IWF Technical and Competition Rules & Regulations.

Iran B beaten by Thailand B at SAT International Futsal C'ship

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran B futsal team lost to Thailand B 5-0 at the SAT International Futsal Championship Hat Yai Thailand 2020 on Wednesday.

The Iranian team, who had defeated Tajikistan (3-2) and Malaysia (5-0) in their two previous matches, will play Thailand A on Saturday.

SAT International Futsal Championship Thailand 2020 is being held in Hat Yai, Songkhla from Feb. 2 to 8.

The tournament was supposed to be played with six nations into two groups of three. Then, due to the Coronavirus concern both Turkmenistan and Kuwait withdrew from the



event, being replaced by Myanmar and Thailand "B".

Finally, also Myanmar withdrew and the challenge was reorganized in a unique group of five teams.

Athletes' Olympic dreams dashed by Australian government

The Olympic dreams of 15 athletes are in tatters just weeks out from an Olympic qualifying event in Melbourne.

Three Iranian hopefuls have been refused entry into Australia for this month's Gymnastics World Cup, with officials accusing the Australian government of 'politicizing' their visa requests.

Meanwhile, 12 Chinese gymnasts set to compete in the event are stuck at home amid the coronavirus outbreak that has locked international travelers from China out of Australia.

Melbourne will host four days of competition from February 20-23 as athletes from around the world bid to book their ticket to Tokyo.

Just days before Abdollah Jamei, Saeedreza Keikha and Mahdi Ahmad Kohani were due to fly out of Tehran, Iranian gymnastics officials received word that the trio's visa applications had been denied.

"Three months ago, we requested visas for three of our gymnasts to compete in the 2020 World Cup Gymnastics Melbourne, but Canberra's embassy in Tehran has refused to do so," Iran Gymnastics Federation president Zahra Inchehdargahi said.

Inchehdargahi said Australian embassy had 'politicized'



the issue with their reasons for denying the requests.

The official claimed the potential for the three athletes to seek asylum in Australia was behind the decision, in addition to Iran's 'economic situation'.

Event organizers Gymnastics Australia (GA) said it was aware the government had rejected Jamei, Keekha and Kohani but was yet to settle the dispute.

"GA has sought assistance from the Australian Olympic Committee in an effort to resolve the issue with Commonwealth government authorities as quickly as possible," a

GA spokesperson told 7NEWS.com.au.

Keikha, who sits fifth in the pommel horse world rankings, could miss out on an Olympic berth if the visa decision is not overturned.

The Chinese gymnastics team is expected to be forced out of the World Cup following the Australian government's travel ban to curb the spread of coronavirus in the country.

China's 12 athletes had not left for Australia before the restrictions on international travelers were applied on February 1.

As the death toll in the stricken country nears 500 with thousands more infected, it is unclear if the temporary ban will be lifted before the event gets underway on February 20.

Some airlines - including Qantas - have already suspended services between Australia and China until the end of March.

Several Chinese gymnasts who sit in the top 10 in their respective disciplines are among those whose Olympic hopes are up in the air.

The FIG and International Olympic Committee are yet to resolve the potential impact of the travel ban on the athletes' qualification bids.

(Source: 7news.com.au)

Iran football now misses Carlos Queiroz more than ever

By Mohammad Ali Haqshenas

Iran national team is in a state of limbo since some two months ago as the federation officials have so far failed to appoint a new coach for the team.

Iran football federation ended cooperation with the Portuguese Carlos Queiroz back in January 2019 after Team Melli suffered a defeat against Japan in the continental championship. Queiroz managed the team for some eight years, winning back-to-back berths to FIFA World Cup 2014 and 2018. During his tenure, Iran had always stood top of the Asian ranking. Although the team's mostly defensive strategy had raised some criticism but he went to create a unified hardworking team during his eight year presence in the country.

Besides that he was also good at making enemies. His verbal fights with the then Persepolis coach Branko Ivankovic was one of the setbacks. The confrontations went so far as to create a sort of discord between fans of Persepolis and Team Melli. Some of the fans were saying that «our

national team is Persepolis» which was unfortunate for Iran's football.

He was one of the few coaches who could tolerate payment problems that Iran suffers due to the U.S. sanctions. Belgian Marc Wilmots, Italian Andrea Stramaccioni, and Argentinian Gabriel Calderon are among the foreign coaches who have recently parted way with Iran football mainly due to delays in their payments.

After Marc Wilmots, Iranian federation seems to have no hurry for appointing a new coach despite the fact that the team have to win the remaining four games, which will start in some two months, to advance to the next stage of 2022 World Cup qualifiers. I think having had the possibility to take a quick look into the future, the federation would have put all-out effort into keeping Queiroz as the team's boss.

Surely, Queiroz was not a saint or 'world's best coach' but he had managed to grab a good understanding of Iranian and Asian football.

"One year after leaving Iran I want to express a message of gratitude to all players, staff, fans and Iran Football Federation. It



was a great honor and privilege to serve Iranian Football. I will keep forever in my heart all the memories and wonderful moments shared with Team Melli and Iranian Fans," he wrote in an Instagram post on Feb. 2 while some players such as Sardar Azmoun and Alireza Jahanbakhsh commented with

heart emojis in response.

After all, the federation is now reportedly focusing on two Iranian coaches, namely Amir Ghalenoei and Ali Daei for Team Melli's hotseat and it will be a while before we would know their final decision after more than two months of delay.

Dragan Skocic steps down as Sanat Naft coach

TASNIM — Dragan Skocic resigned his job as Sanat Naft football coach on Tuesday.

The 51-year-old Croat coach is reportedly a candidate to replace Amir Ghalenoei in Sepahan.

Ghalenoei will most likely be appointed Iran national football team head coach.

Behnam Seraj was appointed as Sanat Naft interim coach.

Alireza Mansourian is a candidate to take charge of Sanat Naft.

Sanat Naft sit sixth in the Iran Professional League, 10 points adrift of top.

Paulo Sergio shortlisted for Sanat Naft

PLDC — Portuguese coach Paulo Sergio has been nominated to take charge of Iranian football club Sanat Naft.

The 51-year-old coach was head coach of Sanat Naft in 2018 but left the team to join Saudi Arabian football club Al Taawoun.

Sanat Naft parted company with Dragan Skocic on Tuesday by mutual consent.

Ex-Zob Ahan coach Alireza Mansourian and Iran U19 coach Sirous Pourmousavi are among the candidates for Sanat Naft hotseat.

The Abadan-based football team sit sixth, 10 points behind Iran professional League leader Persepolis.

Lebanon confirmed as host of the FIBA U16 Asian Championship

FIBA Asia confirmed Lebanon will be the host of the FIBA U16 Asian Championships 2019 for men.

The FIBA U16 Asian Championship 2019 will be played April 5-12, 2020 in Lebanon and will feature the top 16 teams from Asia and Oceania.

The participating teams will be divided into four groups of four teams each.

The teams qualified for the event are: are Japan, Korea, Chinese Taipei, China, Australia, New Zealand, Syria, Iran, Lebanon, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, India, Kazakhstan, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

The top four teams will represent Asia-Oceania at the FIBA U17 Basketball World Cup 2020 in Sofia, Bulgaria taking place in July.

(Source: FIBA)

FIFA's Football for Schools launched in Myanmar

The Myanmar Football Federation (MFF) has officially launched the FIFA Football for Schools project with the support of the FIFA Foundation following an event at the Yangon Football Academy.

The event, hosted by MFF President Zaw Zaw, was attended by the State Counsellor H. E. Aung San Suu Kyi, Union Minister for the Health and Sports Dr. Myint Htwe, Union Minister for Education Dr. Myo Thein Gyi, FIFA Foundation CEO Youri Djorkaeff, together with guests, presidents and secretaries from local township football associations.



"The FIFA Foundation is honored to be involved in supporting this key development project," said FIFA Foundation CEO Youri Djorkaeff. "Football is a sport for life. To have the seeds sewn at school level is crucial for the ongoing development and popularity of football for the future generations, but more important than that, through football we can convey a message of tolerance, unity, respect, fair play and other positive values so important in today's society."

"We have identified the need to make football accessible for children from all states and regions across Myanmar," said President Zaw Zaw. "The FIFA Football for Schools project is fundamental in delivering this. This event marks the first activity in relation to the FIFA Football for Schools project in 2020, but the MFF has more to contribute in the months ahead in each of the 243 township football associations who have registered their interest in this exciting project."

To mark the occasion, the MFF donated 10,000 footballs to the Union Minister for Education, but they will subsequently provide additional guidelines and instruction to ensure effective coaching instructor courses in all regions across the country to help the delivery of the FIFA Football for Schools project.

(Source: FIFA)

Persepolis to host Al Taawoun in Dubai's Zabeel Stadium

TASNIM — Iran's Persepolis will host Al Taawoun of Saudi Arabia at Dubai's Zabeel Stadium in the 2020 AFC Champions League.

On March 2, the Iranian team will host Al Taawoun in Group C in Dubai, the UAE.

Zabeel Stadium is currently used mostly for football matches. The stadium holds 8,439 people.

Al Taawoun will host Persepolis at the Al Kuwait Sports Club Stadium in Kuwait.

The 2020 AFC Champions League group stage will be played from February 10 to May 6.

A total of 32 teams will compete in the group stage to decide the 16 places in the knockout stage of the 2020 AFC Champions League.

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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING
Some people worship God willingly, which is the worship of traders, others worship Him for fear, which is the worship of slaves, and still another group worship Him in gratitude, which is the worship of the noble.

Imam Ali (AS)

Iran honors top books of the year

CULTURE **TEHRAN** — Top publications in various categories were honored at the 37th Iran's Book of the Year Awards, which were presented by President Hassan Rouhani during a special ceremony at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on Wednesday.



President Hassan Rouhani and scholars pose during the 37th Iran's Book of the Year Awards at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on February 5, 2020. (President.ir)

“Cinema and Death: About Immortality” by Milad Roshanipayan won the award in the dramatic arts category.

In the play section, a Persian translation of Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen's 1892 play “The Master Builder” by Behzad Qaderi received the award.

In the literature category, the award for the short story went to “We Were Traveling Through the Heyran Pass” by Hossein Lalbazari.

“The Shamelessness Situation” by Hamed Jalali and “Turning on the One-Way Street” by Mohammadreza Marzuqi shared the award for best novel of the year.

In the literary criticism section, “About Eternality and Mortality” by Ahmad Shakeri was honored.

In the translation section three books were awarded. A Persian translation French author François Jost's book “Introduction to Comparative Literature” by Alireza Anushirvani, Laleh Atashi and Roqieh Bahadori was one of the books.

American literary historian David Damrosch's “What Is World Literature?” translated by Shabnam Bozorgi and American writer H. Porter Abbott's “The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative” translated by Roya Purazar were the other winners.

In the story translation section, Canadian writer Jonathan Auxier's “The Night Gardener” translated into Persian by Samin Nabipur was honored.

In the documentation category, “Trainspotter” by Ehsan Noruzi about the history of railroads in Iran won the award.

The organizers also honored dozens of books in various categories, including history, religion, philosophy, social sciences, engineering and geography.

Animations on life of martyr Soleimani in production

A R T **TEHRAN** — Over 90 animators in 25 teams from 15 provinces have gathered in Tehran to produce animations on the life story of Quds Force commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani.

The participating teams will be creating their animations within a three-day period, which began on Tuesday at the BOX startup factory of the Sharif University of Technology.

The technique of producing the animations are free and the top animations will be awarded.

The event has been organized by the Rezwan accelerator, a company investing in new ideas in collaboration with the Saba Animation Center. Soleimani was martyred in a U.S. air raid in Baghdad on January 3.

“Dictator’s Wives” comes to Iranian bookstores

CULTURE **TEHRAN** — The first book of French writer Diane Ducret's two-volume collection “Femmes de Dictateur” (Dictator's Wives) has recently been published in Persian in Tehran.

Mohammad-Ali Asgari is the translator of the book, which has been released by Peydayesh Publications.

The collection discusses how nine of the 20th century's great dictators, among them Lenin, Bokassa, Hitler and Saddam Hussein, included their women in their game, and the results of their actions.

The writer tries to picture the romantic relationships, the intervention of politics and the diverse destinies, often tragic, of the women who crossed paths and shared their lives with dictators.

Fajr filmgoers spend emotional night on Sardasht chemical attack tragedy

By Seyyed Mostafa Mousavi Sabet

TEHRAN — Filmgoers left Tehran theaters teary-eyed Tuesday evening after watching director Mohammad-Hossein Mahdavian's new film “Walnut Tree” on the profound tragedy of Iraq's chemical attack on the Iranian town of Sardasht in 1987.

The film, which is competing in the 38th Fajr Film Festival, tells the true story of Qader Mulanpur, a man who was away when his family was affected by the chemical attack in a village near Sardasht. His effort to save his pregnant wife and their three children are in vain and they die one by one from the fatal wounds sustained as a result of the chemical attack.

In 1987 Iraq bombarded the Iranian town of Sardasht and the surrounding region with chemical weapons, killing over 1000 and injuring over 8000 civilians, many of whom were permanently disabled.

A press conference organized at Mellat Cineplex after a special screening for critics and journalists was dominated by remarks made by Mahdavian and members of his cast and crew lamenting the total disregard of the people who were injured in the region, which is home to a large Kurdish population.

“People in Kordestan are surely one of the subjects that could be considered in a movie like this,” Mahdavian said at the press conference.

“Minorities in our country have endured sufferings for their homeland and have always been ignored. They suffered huge losses for their country as they were on the frontlines, but their grief was disregarded in deprivation. This is a serious grievance,” he lamented.

“I tried to make a film that is patriotic and at the same time critical of the government,” noted Mahdavian whose “Standing in the Dust”, a biopic on Iranian commander Ahmad Motevasselian, was picked as best film at the Fajr festival in 2016.

Payman Maadi, who portrays Qader Mulanpur in the film, also participated in the conference by phone.

The star of the Oscar-winning movie “A Separation” said, “I love Kurdish people and I'm proud of playing the role in the



Director Mohammad-Hossein Mahdavian and cast member Mehran Modiri attend a press conference for “Walnut Tree” during the 38th Fajr Film Festival at Mellat Cineplex in Tehran on February 4, 2020. (Mehrfilmfestival.com)

movie and I thank the people of Kordestan for letting me be a small part of their great story and wear their attire.”

“I hope I could owe a debt of gratitude to the history of my country [by playing this role] and I bow down before the grief my people have endured and I wish a better life for my people than this,” he added.

Maadi described the decision of Mahdavian and producer Mostafa Ahmadi as “a great job to portray a horrible disaster.”

Mahdavian praised Maadi for his powerful performance in the film and called him the best option for the role.

“We were making a film, which was heavily dependent on the actor that was chosen to play Qader's role,” he said and added, “In addition, the film has a

humanitarian basis and the potential to be screened outside Iran, so it was appropriate to select an actor that is familiar to the world.”

Mehran Modiri, one of the few Iranian actors who fought in the war, stars as Dr. Yazdanbakhsh in the movie.

At the press conference, he also called himself a lover of Kurdish people and said, “They are really cultured and honorable people.”

“I agreed to take part in this project since we owe a debt of gratitude to these people who were really hospitable to us during wartime,” he added.

In a recent interview with the Persian service of MNA, Mahdavian has said that he was thinking of a wider audience beyond

national boundaries for “Walnut Tree”.

“This tragedy could occur anywhere in the world,” he noted and added that the use of weapons of mass destruction is a crisis of the modern world, and people of the world should realize what weapons of mass destruction are when we talk about them.”

Mahdavian began his career 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.

His “The Midday Event”, a political drama that features the terrorist atrocity of the Mojahedin-e-Khalq Organization in Iran of the 1980s, was named best film at the Fajr festival in 2017.

Iranian filmmaker Abbas Amini on Berlinale jury



Iranian filmmaker Abbas Amini in an undated photo.

A R T **TEHRAN** — Iranian filmmaker Abbas Amini has been selected as a member of a jury for the Generation section of the 70th edition of the Berlin International Film Festival, the organizers have announced.

He will judge the films in the Generation 14plus Section of the festival, which will be held from February 20 to March 1.

South African writer and director Jenna Bass and Indian filmmaker Rima Das are the other members of the jury.

Two Iranian films “White Winged Horse” by Mahyar Mandegar and “Yalda, a Night for Forgiveness” by Masud Bakhshi will be screened in this section of the

festival.

The festival will also screen “The Alien” (“Namo”) by Nader Saeivar in the Forum section and “The Kites” by Seyyed Payam Hosseini in the Generation Kplus, while “Selfie with Democracy” by Ali Atshani will be showcased during the European Film Market (EFM), which will be held on the sidelines of the festival.

Amini's two films, “Valderama” about a teenage boy who is trying to obtain the ID card he's never had and “Hendi and Hormoz” about an arranged marriage, went on screen at the Generation 14plus section in the previous editions of the festival.

Iran, National Center of Manuscripts of Kazakhstan ink MOU



A view of the National Center of Manuscripts and Rare Books of the Ministry of Culture and Sports of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

CULTURE **TEHRAN** — Iran and the National Center of Manuscripts and Rare Books of the Ministry of Culture and Sports of the Republic of Kazakhstan have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to boost bilateral cooperation.

The MOU was inked between Iran's cultural attache in Kazakhstan Ali Kebriyazadeh and director of the center Nurlan Erezhepov, Islamic Culture and Relations Organization (ICRO) announced in a press release published on Wednesday.

“Iran's office and the center have had good collaboration including educating Kazakh experts on manuscripts in Iran as

well as exchanging rare documents and manuscripts,” Kebriyazadeh said.

“The MOU will provide an opportunity for both sides to make use of the latest technical and academic facilities. While several meetings and seminars on culture and civilization are also planned to be held in the future,” he added.

Erezhepov also said that he believes that Iranian cultural and scientific centers can assist his country in obtaining copies of manuscripts and documents related to the history of Kazakhstan.

He also said that setting up a section at the center to offer books on Iranian studies will help Kazakh researchers significantly.

Baby Yoda powers Disney streaming subscriptions to fast start

NEW YORK (Reuters) — Walt Disney Co's new streaming service Disney+ reached 28.6 million paying subscribers this week, the company said on Tuesday as it reported quarterly earnings that beat Wall Street forecasts.

Shares of Disney were flat following the results after bouncing between positive and negative territory.

The results showed Disney made a strong entrance into the streaming video wars dominated by Netflix Inc. The owner of sports powerhouse ESPN is trying to transform its business to capture audiences that are moving online.

Analysts at three brokerages had expected more than 20 million subscribers to Disney+, which is available in five countries including the United States. Disney+ will be available in India on March 29 through streaming service Hotstar.

Netflix, which began delivering online video 13 years ago, boasts 67.7 million paid subscribers in the United States and Canada.

Subscribers at Hulu, a streaming service Disney now controls, climbed to 30.7 million as of Monday, the company said. ESPN+ customers reached 7.6 million this week.

“(I) believe we're now well positioned to not only withstand the disruptive forces of technology but thrive in today's increasingly dynamic media environment,”

Disney Chief Executive Bob Iger said on a conference call.

Iger said 50% of Disney+ subscribers signed up directly with the company and 20% came from its partnership with Verizon Communications Inc. He said the service did not experience significant cancellations after the end “The Mandalorian,” a “Star Wars” series that became a cultural phenomenon thanks to a character commonly called Baby Yoda.

During an earnings call, Iger said that “The Mandalorian” will return in October and will go beyond season two, “including the possibility of infusing it with more characters and taking those characters in their own direction in terms of series.”

Selling Disney+ in a bundle with ESPN+ and Hulu helped lower cancellation rates, Iger added.

Earnings for the quarter grew with help from healthy business at Disney's theme parks and the strong performance of animated movie “Frozen 2.”

Excluding certain items, Disney earned \$1.53 per share, above the average analyst estimate of \$1.44, according to IBES data from Refinitiv. Revenue rose to \$20.9 billion, up 36% from a year earlier.

The parks, experiences and products division posted operating income of \$2.3 billion, up 9% from the prior year.

Disney was forced to close both Shanghai Disney Resort and Hong Kong Disneyland in late January during the busy Chinese New Year holiday to help stop the spread of coronavirus.

The closings could shave \$135 million off operating income at Shanghai, and \$40 million at Hong Kong, if they extend for two months, Chief Financial Officer Christine McCarthy said.

The bulk of Disney's theme parks revenue comes from its U.S. parks. Iger told CNBC that advance U.S. bookings had not been affected.

The Hong Kong park could see an additional \$105 million decline in operating income during the quarter, McCarthy said, as ongoing anti-government protests have depressed tourism.

Disney's direct-to-consumer and international segment, the division that is spending big to build the streaming business, reported an operating loss of \$693 million, below analyst expectations.

Operating income in Disney's media unit, home to ESPN, the Disney Channels and ABC, rose 23% to \$1.6 billion.

Profit more than tripled at the movie studio to \$948 million.