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Inflation rate seen to fall to 20% next year

TEHRAN — Inflation rate in Iran is predicted to go down to under 20 percent in the coming Iranian calendar year (begins on March 19), Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Governor Abdolnaser Hemmati announced on Tuesday.

Speaking to the media after the annual conference of "Resistance Economy", the official said, "Our goal is curbing inflation rate and no estimation shows an inflation rate of over 20 percent for

the next year", IRNA reported.

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

The SCI said that the inflation rate has fallen 1.4 percent in the mentioned time span from the twelve-month period ended in the last day of the ninth Iranian month of Azar. **→4**

Zarif: Resistance and referendum are solutions to Palestine issue

TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Zarif has suggested that the solution to the Palestinian issue is "resistance and referendum".

"In my opinion, this is an opportunity for the world of Islam to realize that the solution for the issue of Palestine turns around the two pivots of democracy and resistance," Zarif said in an interview with the khamenei.ir

published on Monday.

"The unity inside Palestine on the basis of resistance can turn out to be a very auspicious phenomenon for foiling Zionist policies," he said.

The chief diplomat also said democracy "is a very important player as well", noting the self-proclaimed defenders of democracy have no reason to oppose referendum in the occupied lands. **→3**

Liberation of Aleppo not end of Syrian army's anti-terror campaign: Assad

PRESS TV — President Bashar al-Assad has congratulated the Syrian nation and government forces over major territorial gains made in the country's embattled northwestern province of Aleppo following intense battles with foreign-sponsored Takfiri militants, emphasizing the achievements do not mark the end of the campaign against terrorism that has plagued the country.

"When the city of Aleppo was fully liberated back in [December] 2016, I highlighted that the status quo will not be ... the same as it used to be. I well knew that Syrian Arab Army soldiers are fighting wholeheartedly, and the patriotism of Aleppo residents together with their sense of affiliation to their ethnic homeland and army will alter the calculations of the enemies," **→10**

Does NATO respond positively to the Turkish supererogation?

By Ramin Hossein Abadian

TEHRAN — Turkey is once again turning to the West, while over the past two years, it had been distancing from the West and trying to collaborate with Russia due the success of the Astana peace process on the Syrian conflict.

Damascus's strategic patience is over because Ankara has failed to fulfill its commitments regarding retaking the areas captured by terrorists backed by Turkey. The Syrian army's widespread advances over the last two weeks in areas occupied by terrorist forces in the northwest have led to Ankara's reaction and increased tensions between Syria and Turkey. Along with wresting control over the strategic Damascus-Aleppo highway, the Syrian army carried out successful operations in recapturing 1500 km² of Syrian territory and about 100 towns and villages in west and south Aleppo, especially key towns of

Khan Tuman and Saraqib. Following the Syrian army's operations, the Turkish government has sent thousands of troops and military equipment to the outskirts of Idlib to prevent the continued advance of the Syrian forces.

Turkey's moves were due to a green light by the U.S., NATO and the EU, which have so far not been in Ankara's favor; rather they have resulted in massive casualties and the loss of six military bases in Syria's territory.

Recently, Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar called on the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to support the Turkish military in order to halt the Syrian army's offensive against Idlib, the stronghold of the latest Turkish-backed terrorist elements.

Obviously, the move by Turkey has broken the commitments to the Sochi agreement and the

Astana process, with the aim of holding its place in NATO. This is a wish that seems unlikely to come true, given the chaotic situation of NATO and the West's distrust of Turkey.

Accordingly, it is certain that Idlib and its outskirts will soon be completely liberated because of the high motivation and ability of the Syrian army. The liberation will definitely thwart all hostile policies that Turkey has adopted in Syria for many years and will bring heavy defeat for Ankara.

The developments in Syria in the recent days shows that Turkey is no longer trustworthy as it has explicitly violated Syria's sovereignty as an independent state. There have been some accords on Syria, such as the Sochi agreement, regarding the establishment of a safe zone in Idlib, while Turkey has not considered the slightest value for the agreements.

Why Netherlands approved asylum for a terrorist?

By Mohammad HomaeeFar

TEHRAN — Association for defending victims of terrorism's public relation section reported in 17 February that, third session of "legal capacities in access to justice for victims" held in Allame Tabatabaei University. University professors and prominent human rights activists, law students and lawyers and some victims' families were attendances.

As first speaker, Mr. Jafar Kousha, Professor of law in Beheshti University, said: When a crime happens, community waits for a good and appropriate response to it, so, No response can bring negative consequences.

By mentioning to criminology he added: in criminology we should pay attention to goals,

roles and effects of punishments. In this regard, safeguarding values is the base of punishments and security is the most important value in the society. So we must oppose anyone who wants to put in danger the security of society.

This Prominent professor who was delivering about "non-punishment as a cause of spread of crimes" added that: goals of punishments are deterrence and compensation and without consistency between crimes and punishments, we face with negative effects.

He continued: our question is that what is the consequences if culprits or someone who put security in danger became unpunished?

Professor Kousha said about the case of Hafte

Tir terrorist incident in 1981 that in Iran, we have not any criminal code for terrorism and this is a major problem.

Professor of law in university of Beheshti asserted on the necessity of having professional structures and judges and said: the obstacles should be lifted. Political calculations and relations hinder judicial processes. Judicial branch is independent. Our problem is the security and authority of judiciary branch. If we impose suitable punishments on culprits there will be tranquility in victims and society will be in order and anyone who wants to do terrorist crime will be faced by a powerful judicial process and will be deterred from doing so. **→7**



ARTICLE

Farrokhs Hesabi
Tehran Times journalist

It's time for a unity ticket to support Team Melli

After days of openly pursuing replacements, Dragan Skocic was finally appointed as the head coach of Iran football national team and it's time for a unity ticket to support Team Melli.

During that time there were many names of Iranian coaches shortlisted for the Iranian national team hotseat. Among them Amir Ghalenoei and Ali Daei, both of whom had expressed their desire to coach Team Melli, were so close to signing a contract with the Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran (FFIRI).

However, Iran football federation did a U-turn and selected a foreign coach, namely Dragan Skocic. The federation senior officials said that the negotiation with the Iranian coaches failed and Skocic was the best possible option for leading the national team in the current situation.

Skocic, 51, has replaced Marc Wilmots who left Team Melli in early December. FFIRI has been heavily criticized for the way Wilmots parted away with the Iranian national team. The Belgian coach left his role, just seven months after replacing Carlos Queiroz at the helm of the three-time Asian champions.

While Wilmots was selected to get the Iranian team to the World Cup 2022, the Belgian struggled to make any sort of meaningful impact on the team's performance and they lost back-to-back games against Bahrain and Iraq in the 2022 World Cup qualification and now the national team are in danger of being eliminated from the 22nd edition of the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

After the appointment of Skocic, the Iranian media and football experts have intensified pressures on the Iranian federation because they believe that the new coach is not the right one, and is not selected in the right way.

FFIRI had contemplated a series of other names, including ex-international Vahid Hashemian and the former Persepolis coach Branko Ivankovic. Almost a dozen managers had been connected to the national team as rumors circulated. The impression was of a federation not sure which way to turn. **→11**



ARTICLE

Ebrahim Fallahi
Tehran Times journalist

S.Korean companies leave Iran: Such a pity! But for them

South Korea's LG Electronics and Samsung have ended their presence in the Iranian market over the past few months, abiding by the U.S. pressures for cutting ties with one of their biggest markets.

This is not the first time that South Korean companies are turning their backs to Iran, assuming that whenever the condition is calm again they will be able to come back easily and Iran will accept them with open arms.

This time, however, the situation seems to be different, Iranian officials have warned the Asian companies that they won't be welcomed back even if the U.S. sanctions are removed.

But, who really is on the losing side of this whole situation? Iranian customers and consumers of the South Korean products or the companies that are facing the loss of an 80-million market?! This question is fairly easy to answer.

■ S. Korean companies in Iran
South Korean companies have been, for long, big players in the Iranian home appliances and electronics market.

Huge companies like Samsung and LG Electronics and even carmakers like Hyundai and KIA Motors have had a great share in the country's market and Iranian consumers have always welcomed the Asian country's brands.

According to the official data, South Korean brands have had a grip on over 30 percent of Iran's home appliance and electronics market on average and in some areas their share has been even more than 50 percent.

The Asian country, however, has been one of the most conservative trade partners of Iran when coming to the U.S. bullying. After the re-imposition of the U.S. sanctions on Tehran, South Korea was the first country to withdraw from the Iranian market without any resistance, the country stopped its oil imports from Iran immediately after the U.S. threatened Iranian oil buyers to pull back from the Iranian market. **→4**



© Tehran Times/ Mohammad Mohsenifar

"The Sun" up at National Will Manifestation Awards

TEHRAN — Majid Majidi's child labor drama "The Sun" stood on top again on Monday by winning five honors at the National Will Manifestation Awards following its win last week as best film at the Fajr festival.

The awards are presented to those films that promote issues being pursued by some public organizations and institutes. Juries from the organizations select winners from the films screened at the Fajr Film Festival every year. **→12**

‘Daesh has resumed activities after Soleimani assassination’

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi has said the world will not be safe from terrorism as much as it was before the assassination of General Qassem Soleimani.

According to ISNA, in an interview with Croatian daily of Vecernji list published on Monday, Mousavi said that after Soleimani’s assassination, Daesh terrorists have got the chance to resume their activities and threaten international security.

The U.S. assassinated Soleimani, Iran’s top anti-terror commander, in an airstrike in Baghdad on January 3.

■ **‘Documents on Ukrainian plane incident will be released gradually’**

Mousavi also said that the documents on the Ukrainian passenger plane which was mistakenly downed by the Iranian military near Tehran on January 8 will be released gradually.

The Ukrainian passenger plane, with 176 people aboard, was mistaken for an invading missile. The tragic incident happened a few hours after Iran fired missiles at a U.S. airbase in Iraq in retaliation for the January 3 assassination of General Qassem Soleimani. Following the retaliation attack, the Iranian military had been put on high alert.

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

■ **‘British diplomat’s presence in January rallies was wrong’**

Mousavi also said the presence of British Ambassador Rob Macaire in rallies in Tehran in January was a “wrong” behavior.

“I am a diplomat and have served in various parts of the world. We, as diplomats, have no right to attend such events. Based on international law, we must never interfere in domestic affairs of the countries where we are on mission. A diplomat must not even express his (her) views on such issues publicly. Rob Macaire, the British ambassador, really made a mistake,” he said.

He noted that a foreign diplomat’s presence in protests is contrary to international conventions.

On January 12, Iran’s Foreign Ministry summoned Macaire for his “unconventional behavior and presence” in the illegal gatherings.

The British diplomat was reminded that his presence in illegal gatherings has no conformity with his responsibility as his country’s political representative in Iran and that his behavior is in contrast to the 1961 Vienna convention on diplomatic relationship, the ministry said.

It added the British government should provide answers in this regard.

Ambassador Macaire was accused of “inciting” the protesters in front of Amir Kabir University of Technology.

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Abbas Araghchi said in a tweet on January 12 that Macaire was temporarily arrested for participating in the “illegal gathering” in Tehran.

“He wasn’t detained but arrested as an unknown foreigner in an illegal gathering. When police informed me a man’s arrested who claims to be UK Amb, I said IMPOSSIBLE! only after my phone conversation w him I identified, out of big surprise, that it’s him. 15 min later he was free,” Araghchi tweeted.

Washington preventing Riyadh to hold dialogue with Iran: Lebanese daily

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** – A Lebanese daily has said Washington is preventing dialogue between Tehran and Riyadh.

According to Al-Binaa, a Saudi official has said Riyadh believes it is possible to hold comprehensive talks with Tehran, according to ISNA.

He said that the talks can cover various issues including Yemen and Lebanon, ISNA reported on Tuesday.

Ahmad Dastmalchian, Iran’s former ambassador to Lebanon, is of the opinion that the United States and the Zionist regime of Israel are impeding a de-escalation of tension between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

“In my opinion, Saudi Arabia seeks to reduce tension with Iran, but the United States and the Zionist regime have prevented Saudi Arabia to implement this issue, because their interests depend on a crisis among Iran and Arab brothers in the region,” ISNA quoted him as saying in an interview published on Monday.

Dastmalchian said after developments in Syria and Iraq, the Saudis have come to the conclusion that they cannot do anything in the region without Iran and that they must enter talks with Tehran.

The former diplomat added that Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani was on a mission to Iraq to reduce tension between Iran and Saudi Arabia, however, the U.S. assassinated him because Washington seeks to increase the tension.

During a press conference on Sunday, President Hassan Rouhani said that Iran has “no unsolvable” problem with Saudi Arabia.

“We have always said that we have no complicated and unsolvable problem with Saudi Arabia and the issues between the two countries can be discussed whenever Saudi Arabia is ready,” Rouhani stated.

Nearly 58 million Iranians entitled to participate in parliamentary elections: Interior Ministry

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Jamal Orf, the deputy Interior Minister and the head of the country’s election headquarters, said on Monday that a sum of 57,918,000 Iranians are eligible to participate in the parliamentary elections on Friday.

“A sum of 57,918,000 Iranians are entitled to vote in the upcoming elections. A little more than 29 million voters are men and 28,800,000 are women,” Orf stated.

He further said 2,900,000 of this figure are potential first-time voters.

The eligible age in Iran to vote has been 18 since January 2007. 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.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Leader of the Islamic Revolution, said on Tuesday that if more people vote in the elections the next parliament will be “stronger”.

“The more people attend ballot boxes, Majlis will be stronger,” Ayatollah Khamenei said in a meeting with a large number of people from East Azarbaijan province to mark the anniversary of Tabrizers’ uprising against the Pahlavi regime on February 18, 1978.

President Hassan Rouhani said on Monday that Iran has set the bedrock for democracy and elections in the West Asia region.

Political figures call on people to participate in parliamentary polls

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — In recent days a great number of senior religious and political figures have called on people with different political persuasions to take part in the 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 on Friday.

Behzad Nabavi, who served as the vice speaker of the Parliament and was one of the founders of the reformist the Islamic Revolution Mojahedin Organization (IRMO), told the Ensaf news website that the people should participate in the elections to prevent “great losses”.

“The ballot boxes are the only acceptable path to turn the existing situation into the desired one,” the veteran politician underscored.

Janal Orf, head of the Interior Ministry election headquarters, said in a meeting with IRNA managers on Monday that high voter turnout will reduce the enemy’s threats against the country.

“If people participate in the elections at a low level, the enemies will imagine that the popular acceptance of the establishment has declined and will certainly intensify their pressure on the country,” Orf argued.

Gholam Ali Haddad-Adel, a well-known principlist figure and former parliament speaker, called on the people not to ignore their role in deciding the country’s fate.

“More participation in the elections will promote the country’s dignity,” Haddad-Adel



said, adding the outcome of elections is not predictable, but the composition of the fresh parliament will certainly be different from the current one.

Ali Shakouri Raad, chief of the Unity of the Iranian Nation Party, said though his party has not issued any list of candidates, he is resolved to “be present strongly at the scene”.

Hossein Mar’ashi, spokesman for the Executives of Construction (Kargozaran-e Sazandegi) Party, who is unhappy with the performance of the Guardian Council in banning certain parliament hopefuls, said, “Iran’s future is dependent on such ups and downs... (and) I don’t agree to leave the scene due to the acts of powerful institutions.”

Zahra Shojaeian, a major advocate of women’s rights and an advisor on women’s affairs in President Khatami’s administration, said, “We will participate in the elections to serve Iran.”

Gholam-Hossein Karbaschi, secretary general of the Construction Party and former Tehran mayor, also called for participation in the elections.

“We must not leave people alone in their hard days,” Karbaschi said, pointing to his party members.

Mohsen Hashemi, head of the central council of the Construction Party and the son of Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, called on the people to vote for the list of candidates of

his party to make the parliament great again.

The Construction Party is campaigning with the slogan of Yaran-e Hashemi (the supporters of Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani).

Grand Ayatollah Nasser Makarem Shirazi told his theology students that “if elections are held enthusiastically, the U.S. will become sad.” However, the ayatollah said, if people do not vote massively the U.S. will intensify its pressure on Iran.

The U.S. has slapped harsh sanctions against Iran in line with its “maximum pressure” strategy against Iran.

Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi said if “we call on people” to participate in the election it “does not mean that we have closed our eyes to the realities”. He said, “We know that people are under extreme pressure.”

The ayatollah said the people are facing prices rises, unemployment, and housing problems.

The grand ayatollah added, “With our enthusiastic presence in the election we should disappoint the enemies and prove that sanctions and pressures will not affect us. We should also prove that Iran is an independent, strong and brave country... and due to this reason we insist that it is necessary that all participate in the elections.”

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Leader of the Islamic Revolution, said on Tuesday that if more people vote in the elections the next parliament will be “stronger”.

President Hassan Rouhani said on Monday that Iran has set the bedrock for democracy and elections in the West Asia region.

Ayatollah Khamenei: Voting is a civil right Election is a source of glory and respect for the Islamic establishment

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** – Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Leader of the Islamic Revolution, said on Tuesday that if more people vote in the elections the next parliament will be “stronger”.

“The more people attend ballot boxes, Majlis will be stronger,” Ayatollah Khamenei said in a meeting with large number of people from East Azarbaijan province to mark the anniversary of Tabrizers’ uprising against the Pahlavi regime on February 18, 1978.

“The enemy’s aim is separating the Iranian youth from the Islamic establishment; of course, similar to the Bahman 22 rallies (Feb. 11) and martyr General Qassem Soleimani’s funeral ceremonies, the enemy’s evil objectives in the election day (Feb. 21) won’t be materialized too,” the Leader added.

“Election is a civil right, public Jihad and divine test that if accompanied with massive participation of people it will bring glory and respect to the Islamic establishment and protect the country against plots,” Ayatollah Khamenei went on to say.

“You are witnessing that how the U.S. propaganda is trying to create a division between

the Islamic establishment and the people. They are working and planning continuously. As they themselves claim they have created think tanks, but won’t attain any result,” the Leader underscored.

Ayatollah Khamenei said that both the enemies and friends of Iran will monitor participation of the people in the elections.

He added that the enemies want to see the results of their pressure on Iran and the country’s friends are monitoring the process of elections worriedly.

“I always say in my messages to our friends that you should not be worried. The Iranian nation know what to do,” the Leader stated.

“The elections will thwart most of evil intentions of the U.S. and the Zionist regime against Iran,” Ayatollah Khamenei added.

“I have always advised that Iran must become strong to foil the enemies’ plots,” the Leader remarked.

Ayatollah Khamenei also said recently certain U.S. officials have made “nonsense” remarks about elections in Iran, noting, “A part of such remarks is aimed at affecting the elections to make our people feel hopeless.”

Larijani, Nasrallah discuss regional developments

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani, who had visited Lebanon, held talks on Monday with Hezbollah Secretary General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah on the latest developments in the region.

There were no details of the content of the talks. Larijani started a tour of Syria and Lebanon on Sunday. The visit first took him to Damascus and then Beirut.

According to the Tasnim news agency, in a press conference in Iran’s embassy in Beirut, Larijani said that Iran is ready to cooperate with the new Lebanese government.

“The brotherly country of Lebanon has been able to pass a critical stage with the formation of the new government, and we are ready to cooperate with it,” the senior parliamentarian stated.

He added, “We hope the new Lebanese administration, presided by Dr. Hassan Diab, would overcome all the difficulties.”

Larijani met on Monday with top Lebanese officials, including Lebanese President Michel Aoun.



During the meeting with the Lebanese president, Larijani conveyed a message of President Hassan Rouhani and invited Aoun to visit Iran.

Ways to expand relations have been mentioned in Rou-

hani’s message.

During a separate meeting with a group of Lebanese intellectuals, Larijani also said Iran is ready to hold political talks with its Arab neighbors.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran considers political dialogue the solution to problems with certain Arab countries in the region. We are ready for talks,” he said.

He noted that Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has announced Iran’s readiness to hold talks with Saudi Arabia.

“We have close ties with a number of Arab neighbors. We do not like severing relations and we believe that misunderstandings can be cleared up through talks,” the top MP said. He added that there may be some different views, however, it does not mean there is animosity.

Larijani noted that certain Arab countries have been deceived by the United States.

“Iran is against this situation and is not their enemy,” the speaker added.

NY Times visits anti-Iran terrorist group’s lair, observes cult-like modus operandi

(Press TV) — The New York Times has been given access to inside a secretive facility housing anti-Iran Mujahedin-e Khalq Organization (MKO) terrorists in the Albanian capital, Tirana, noticing and recounting the cult-like nature of the group.

The Times’ Patrick Kingsley described his observations from a recent visit as well as discrepancies between what he was told by a few members at the camp and confessions of former members living independently in Albania in an article on Sunday.

■ **‘Odd, telling moments’**
“[M]ost residents were off limits,” and interviews were allowed only “with several members,” Kingsley wrote.

The correspondent cited “several odd and telling moments when secrets were tightly held.”

The members would turn coy when asked about where their nominal ringleader, Massoud Rajavi, who disappeared in 2003, was. Senior MKO figures “stumbled” after being faced with the question.

Rajavi’s wife, Maryam, now runs the terrorist organization. The duo’s radical ideology is

considered to have informed its activities since the 1980s, when the group developed what has been essentially a cult of personality.

■ **‘Oddly empty’**
Kingsley described the Tirana facility as “oddly empty,” despite the group’s claim that it houses around 2,500 members.

“We saw no more than 200,” he wrote, adding, “The others seemed to have been sequestered away — or to have left the group altogether.”

He also recounted details from interviews with 10 former members who lived outside the camp in Albania. They unanimously confessed to “being brainwashed into a life of celibacy,” Kingsley wrote.

“Inside the group, they (the former members) said romantic relationships and sexual thoughts were banned, contact with family highly restricted, and friendships discouraged,” the correspondent reported. “All recounted being forced to participate in self-criticism rituals, whereby members would confess to their commanders any sexual or disloyal thoughts they had.”

“Little by little, you are broken,” said Abdulrahman Mohammadian, a former member.

The MKO has conducted many assassinations and bombings against Iranian officials and civilians since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. It notoriously sided with former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein during the 1980-88 war on Iran.

Out of the nearly 17,000 Iranians killed in terrorist assaults since the Islamic Revolution, about 12,000 died in MKO’s acts of terror.

The terrorist outfit was on the U.S.’s list of terrorist organizations until 2012.

The Times said crossing out its name took “intensive lobbying by a bipartisan group of lawmakers.” It also quoted Ditmir Bushati, a former Albanian foreign minister, as saying that Tirana offered it a safe haven in an attempt to “curry favor with” Washington.

MKO throws lavish conferences every year in the French capital, with certain American, Western, and Saudi Arabian officials attending as guests of honor. These include former U.S. national security advisor John Bolton, U.S. President Donald Trump’s personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani, former Canadian prime minister Stephen Harper, and former Saudi Arabian spy

chief Prince Turki al-Faisal.

■ **‘Troll farm’**

Kingsley said the group’s members operated computer suites inside the camp — a “troll farm” — attempting to tarnish the image of the Islamic Republic.

The former members described the troll farm as a place where “junior members use multiple accounts on Facebook and Twitter, typing messages that criticize the Iranian government, lionize the MKO leadership, and promote its paid lobbyists.”

Mohammadian said when Giuliani and Bolton made public speeches in recent years, members were ordered “to take a particular line and tweet it 10 times from different accounts.” Kingsley also recounted visiting “a recording studio” during the tour, where musicians composed anti-Iran songs and music videos for release on social media.

Capt. Matthew Woodside, a former naval reservist who oversaw American policy at the Iraqi camp between 2004 and 2005, told Kingsley, “I find that organization absolutely repulsive... I am astounded that they’re in Albania.”

Zarif: Resistance and referendum are solutions to Palestine issue

➔ “Those whose cry of democracy has deafened the world and who refer to the Zionist regime as the only democracy in the region should be prepared to embrace the real democracy.”

An excerpt of Zarif's interview are presented below:

Unfortunately, in the course of the past years – particularly in recent years – not only has the Arab world adopted a passive outlook towards the Zionist regime and towards the U.S., but they have also allied themselves with the Zionists against the Islamic country of Palestine. This course of action has pushed them into a delicate situation. That is why the Americans have reached the conclusion that they can unveil their plan. However, until a few years ago, the Americans were not in the same position; they did not even think of turning the issue of Palestine into a real estate business and sacrificing all the desires, dreams and essential rights of the people of Palestine for the sake of their own construction projects.

As a matter of fact, this plan would turn Palestine into something like the Bantustans of the apartheid era. In other words, there would be designated regions which would come out in the center of occupied Palestine in order to control its inhabitants. In that deal, everything is in the control of the Zionist regime as the clauses specified in the “Deal of the Century” are beyond the ones suggested in Oslo and Madrid accords. In its current shape, the plan would metamorphose Palestine into small segments situated among the lands encircled by Zionist territories. It would even grant to the Zionists all the lands disputed since 1967.

The stance adopted by some of the heads of Arab countries – who have turned into the leaders of the Arab world today due to the problems that big Arab countries are faced with – is different from that of the Arab people, but the important thing that has happened is that the dependent Arab regimes have endeavored in recent years to introduce the Islamic Republic as a danger – a false one – to their people.

In my opinion, this is an opportunity for the world of Islam to realize that the solution for the issue of Palestine turns around the two pivots of democracy and resistance. The goal of the Resistance is clear and the Palestinians are resisting as well, but today all Palestinians should express their unanimous opposition to the Deal of the Century. The unity inside Palestine on the basis of resistance can turn out to be a very auspicious phenomenon for foiling Zionist policies.

Democracy is a very important player as well. Those whose cry of democracy has deafened the world and who refer to the Zionist regime as the only democracy in the region should be prepared to embrace the real democracy. What does real democracy mean? It means that all those who live in Palestine, who are the real owners of Palestine, but who have been displaced around the world should be able to determine and make decisions for their own future. Why are the advocates of democracy intimidated by this proposal?

[Or by] The plan that the Supreme Leader of the Revolution has introduced in recent years as the Islamic Republic's proposal for the question of Palestine—which is naturally a logical one? When a similar plan was implemented in South Africa and when apartheid was eliminated as a result of it, did it lead



“[Democracy] means that all those who live in Palestine, who are the real owners of Palestine, but who have been displaced around the world should be able to determine and make decisions for their own future,” says the foreign minister.

to the massacre of the white people? Why do they wish to falsely promote the notion that this plan will lead to the massacre of the Jews? [The Supreme Leader] has reiterated many times that we have nothing against the Jewish people and that the Jews who have been living in Palestine have the right to reside there, but that they cannot determine the fate of others. It is each and every one of the Palestinians who should determine their own fate.

In South Africa, all Africans – including the blacks, the whites and the people of color – were once divided into different groups and they were deprived of the human right to live together, but they decided to put an end to such a system. Almost 30 years have passed from [the days of] that system, but we have not been a witness to any war or massacre in South Africa.

As for Palestine, instead of giving in to the humiliation and the increasing and infinite pressures exerted by the U.S. and the Zionist regime, there are two solutions that should be pursued simultaneously, not separately from one another. One is resistance and another is democracy and popular vote. If they put these two solutions in practice, the question of Palestine will be resolved. Last year, we registered with the United Nations the Supreme Leader's proposal in the United Nations as an officially recognized proposal, so that the world would become familiar with it, as is already familiar with it to some extent.

When the Deal of the Century was just

about to be unveiled, we promoted the plan proposed by the Supreme Leader of the Revolution so that the world would know that the only solution for Palestine is not merely to violate the rights of the Palestinians and to pursue a settlement project, that rather the only solution is to assert the rights of the Palestinians.

Notice that the final decision rests with the people of Palestine. It is they who should make this decision. In our opinion, one of the mistakes made in the past 30 years was that they [Some Palestinian organizations] thought they would be able to revive the rights of the Palestinians through cooperating with the occupiers. However, today all Palestinian parties have realized that this is not the case. Therefore, they should begin to think about an alternative for the Oslo accord and subsequently, the Deal of the Century which is the continuation of the U.S. interventionist policies regarding the question of occupied Palestine. Therefore, the Palestinians should accept that this is not just another intervention and that the U.S. is one side of the problem and the dispute. Therefore, they should work on a plan which can provide them with a solution.

We have always stressed that it is the Palestinians who have the right to choose and the Islamic Republic will accept whichever path the people of Palestine opt for. In other words, we accept that the Palestinians should make the final decision and their final decision should be respected by everyone.

The Islamic Republic has always stood by Palestinians' and other Muslim nations' side in their resistance, including Lebanon, Syria and other Arab countries whose lands have been occupied by the Zionist regime. Martyr Soleimani was, in fact, a symbol of the Iranian nation's cooperation with and assistance to the nations of the region. Martyr Soleimani was an individual who mounted resistance not only in the face of the Zionist regime but also in the face of extremism and terrorism. He stood by the side of the resistant people of Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. It could be said that Martyr Soleimani was not only a hero of Resistance but also a hero in the fight against terrorism and advocating peace.

Surely, his martyrdom will bring about many natural outcomes, some of which we witnessed in Iraq. After long periods of struggle and contention on the streets of Iraq, after the martyrdom of the commander, all the people of that country became united in order to bury his pure body and later on, they demanded that the U.S. be expelled from Iraq.

With such a cowardly and foolish act, Trump put an end to the U.S. presence in the region. In other countries including India too, the people held demonstrations against the U.S. in hundreds of cities. This indicates that with that action, the U.S. dealt itself a fundamental blow and it strengthened the camp of Resistance and the camp of anti-domination and anti-arrogance in the region and in the whole world.

Eight conservationists get jail terms on espionage charges: Judiciary

POLITICAL DESK TEHRAN — From the Judiciary's point of view, the dossier of environmentalists is regarded as an act against national security, the Judiciary spokesman announced on Tuesday, noting a guilty definite verdict has been issued in the case of the eight conservationists on charges of spying.

According to MONGABAY, the eight environmentalists were all affiliated with the Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation (PWHF), a Tehran-based conservation organization that has been reportedly working to save the critically endangered Asiatic cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus venaticus*) and other species.

“PWHF founder Morad Tahbaz and program manager Niloufar Bayani both received 10-year sentences each on charge of collaborating with the hostile government of the United States; cheetah researcher Houman Jowkar and



biologist Taher Ghadirian were sentenced to eight years each on the same charge,” Gholam Hossein Esmaeili told a regular news briefing.

He added, “Coordinator Sepideh Kashani on charges of cooperating with the hostile government of the U.S., big cat conservationist Amirhossein Khaleghi Hamidi on charges of spying for the United States and former PWHF staffer Sam Radjabi on charges of cooperating with the hostile government of the United States received six years each, while Abdolreza Kouhpayeh, a conservationist and wildlife photographer, received four years on charges of collusion and (illegal) gathering,” he added.

The Judiciary spokesman said, “Their sentences in the appeals court has been confirmed,” he said, underlining that the delivered verdicts are final and definite.

‘Maximum pressure’ policy on Iran is failing, says Bolton



POLITICAL DESK TEHRAN — The Trump administration's maximum pressure policy against Iran is failing, says former U.S. national security adviser John Bolton, the architect of Washington's so-called “maximum pressure” policy.

“It's failing, because I don't think it lives up to its bumper-sticker slogan of maximum pressure,” Bolton said on Monday.

He made the remarks in his first public appearance since the U.S. Senate impeachment trial in which Republicans refused to hear his testimony.

“I don't think we're applying maximum pressure on Iran. I think there are countless

ways during my tenure that we could have applied more pressure and we should have.”

Bolton was notoriously famous for his ultra-hawkish stance toward Iran. He was pushing for regime change in Iran.

Before Bolton's dismissal by President Donald Trump, Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif had branded Bolton as part of a “B-team” who were encouraging Trump to start a war against Iran.

The other members of the B-team were Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman and Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Zayed. Reacting to Bolton's ouster back in

September 2019, Zarif tweeted, “Thirst for war—maximum pressure—should go with the warmonger-in-chief.”

Speaking at the Munich Security Conference on Saturday, Zarif said Trump suffered bad advice from his hawkish former national security advisor Bolton.

“Now today with John Bolton gone unfortunately somebody else is trying to mimic John Bolton and promise the president that killing Soleimani will bring people to dance in the streets of Tehran and Baghdad,” Zarif said, pointing to the U.S. assassination of Iran's top general, Qassem Soleimani, in the first days of 2020.

Sherman calls assassination of Gen. Soleimani an extraordinary risk

By staff and agency

Wendy Sherman, the former undersecretary of state for political affairs who led the U.S. negotiating team that concluded the Iran nuclear agreement, has said that assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani was an extraordinary risk.

“I think the president took an extraordinary risk and I don't think we've seen the end of that risk yet,” WUSF News quoted her as saying in a news conference before the Ringling College Library Association Town Hall lecture series.



She added, “After he [Soleimani] was murdered by the United States government, they [the Iranian people] were in the streets protesting America. That's not in our national security interest.”

She said that the assassination of Soleimani and the subsequent retaliation by Iran against U.S. troops in Iraq brought the two countries close to war.

In an interview with CNN aired on Saturday, veteran U.S. diplomat Joseph Nye said Trump revoked an executive order signed by President Gerald Ford by directing the Pentagon to assassinate Soleimani.

“By assassinating of a high official in a third country when you are not at war, you are revoking what Gerald Ford had done after Vietnam which says we are not to get into business of assassination. I don't think we really want to drop that norm,” Nye said.

“What happens for example if Secretary [Mike] Pompeo goes to Baghdad and somebody shoots him? We'd have no right to complain if we've shot Soleimani.”

He noted, “We gave up assassination after the Vietnam war after Gerald Ford signed an executive order. I am not sure that Trump thought through what it means if you drop that moral principle.”

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has said that assassination of Soleimani by the U.S. was a flagrant violation of international law.

“If we are talking about the latest swirl of U.S.-Iranian escalation with which the current year started, then our position is known. We condemn any actions that contradict the principles of the UN Charter and lead to increased tensions in the region. The Pentagon attack on the airport in Baghdad organized on January 3, which killed the commander of the special forces of [Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps] IRGC of Iran [Qassem] Soleimani, became a flagrant violation of international law,” UrduPoint quoted Lavrov as saying on Monday in an interview with the Italian La Stampa daily.

The Russian foreign minister pointed out that it was a civilian airport, emphasizing that “these actions on the part of Americans are beyond the limits.”

General Soleimani was assassinated in a U.S. airstrike in Baghdad on January 3.

Iran retaliated to the attack on January 8 by firing dozens of ballistic missiles at a major U.S. air base in western Iraq, dealing a great blow to the U.S. that it is invincible.

Envoy vows continued support for Iranians in China amid coronavirus crisis

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — Iranian Ambassador to China Mohammad Keshavarzadeh made assurances that the country's nationals residing in China will be strongly supported by the embassy until the end of the coronavirus epidemic in the East Asian country.

In a post on his Twitter account on Tuesday, Keshavarzadeh said, “The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in China will continue to support dear compatriots residing in China until the end of the Coronavirus crisis.”



He further pointed to the quarantine of the Iranian students that recently returned home from China and said, “Fortunately, the quarantine of the Iranians residing in Wuhan, who recently returned home, ended without a single case (of coronavirus) reported.”

About two weeks ago, dozens of Iranian students were flown back to the country by a Mahan Airlines plane from the Chinese city of Wuhan, the epicenter of a coronavirus outbreak.

Having been quarantined for the past weeks, the students were discharged on Tuesday.

On February 3, head of the Affiliation Center for Disease Control of Iran's Ministry of Health and Medical Education Mohammad Mehdi Gouya said no Iranian student in Wuhan had been infected with the coronavirus.

Iran's Civil Aviation Organization (CAO) has made several flights during past weeks to transport Iranians residing in China and Chinese residing in Iran.

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	472119.9
IFX	6121.32

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	45,492 rials
GBP	54,600 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$56.70/b
WTI	\$51.30/b
OPEC Basket	\$56.73/b
Gold	\$1,588.75/oz
Silver	\$17.91/oz
Platinum	\$982.05/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Inflation rate seen to fall to 20% next year

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



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

But since the last year's calendar month of Khordad (ended on June 22, 2018), when the inflation rate stood at 10.2 percent, as announced by the CBI, the country's experiencing double-digit inflation rates again.

On Tuesday, Hemmati also put the liquidity growth at 28 percent at the end of the tenth Iranian calendar month of Dey, and emphasized the CBI's effort

to control liquidity growth in the country.

The CBI governor further said that it's unlikely that Iran will be put on the Financial Action Task Force (FATF)'s blacklist.

TCCIMA hosts Iran-India business forum

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) held an Iran-India business forum at the place of the chamber on Tuesday, TCCIMA website published.

The gathering was aimed at investigating the barriers in the way of bilateral trade between the two countries and finding the ways to boost Iran-India trade.

It was participated by the Indian Ambassadors to Tehran Gaddam Dharmendra, some officials from Indian Embassy in Iran, and representative of India's UCO Bank, in addition to officials from Iranian Foreign Affairs Ministry, banking system, Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), and some Iranian traders and businessmen.

Trade through bartering, establishing bank branches in the other country, facilitating trade for the two sides' businessmen, imposing preferential tariffs, and necessity of double taxation avoidance were some of the issues investigated and emphasized by the two sides during the business forum.

Addressing the gathering, Indian ambassador to Tehran lamented that the level of trade between the two countries is not acceptable, saying, "We are trying to take some measures for removing problems and banking barriers in the way of trade between the two sides."

Dharmendra also emphasized the necessity of implementing a double taxation avoidance agreement between Iran and India.

He further mentioned conducting trade with national currencies of the two countries as an important strategy to facilitate bilateral trade.

Covid-19 hits earnings and growth, Asian markets fall

Asian markets tumbled Tuesday after Apple warned the new coronavirus had hit output and demand in China, fuelling fears over the wider impact of the epidemic on corporate earnings and economic growth.

Investors looked past a positive lead from European bourses to focus on the spiraling fallout from the virus that has so far killed more than 1,800 people and infected nearly 72,500, mostly in mainland China.

As well as denting company bottom lines, the virus has sparked panic buying, economic jitters and the cancellation of high-profile sporting and cultural events.

"Best to buckle in as we could be in for a bumpy ride (over) the next few weeks," said Stephen Innes of AxiCorp.

"I'm struggling to find any research report that doesn't suggest (COVID-19) could significantly affect short term earnings."

Apple suppliers in Asia were hit by the tech giant's warning that it would miss its quarterly revenue forecast because of the virus, dragging markets lower.

Tokyo's benchmark Nikkei 225 index closed down 1.4 percent -- its fourth straight session in the red -- a day after data showed the economy shrank in the December quarter, even before the effects of the virus hit Japan.

Hong Kong was 1.5 percent lower as banking heavyweight HSBC reported a 33 percent fall in 2019 pre-tax profits alongside an announcement that it was cutting 35,000 jobs. Its shares were off 2.8 percent.

Mainland China's benchmark Shanghai Composite Index recovered earlier losses to close up 0.1 percent.

(Source: hindustantimes.com)

Over \$35b supplied for import of basic goods since last March

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Despite the U.S. sanctions and their most pressures on Iranian economy Iran has managed to supply \$35.5 billion for importing basic commodities in the current Iranian calendar year (began on March 21, 2019), Central Bank of Iran (CBI)'s governor informed on Tuesday.

The official said that of the mentioned figure, about \$14 billion has been for importing some more essential goods such as medicine, medical equipment and livestock food, and there is an abundant supply of such products in the country, IRIB reported.

In last December, Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani had announced that the basic goods that the country needs in the current Iranian calendar year and also in the next year have been reserved.

The minister said the government and private sector's warehouses are already filled up with the basic commodities and there is no concern in this due.

Also, the deputy finance and economic affairs minister has announced that the government has provisioned \$14 billion of official-rate foreign currency in the next



Iranian calendar year (March 2020-March 2021)'s budget bill for imports of basic goods.

Importers of rice, barley, corn, edible oils, oilseeds, and livestock feed, as well as medicines and a few other items are going to receive the government support, accord-

ing to Mohammad-Ali Dehqan Dehnavi.

"The government has identified these goods as the basic needs of the people and has decided to keep the prices of such items low in the market, so \$14 billion of foreign currency with official rate will be provided

to the importers of these commodities next year," Dehnavi said.

Meanwhile, in a new directive in January, Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) obliged the customs departments throughout the country to take necessary measures (mentioned in the new instruction) for facilitation of the clearance of basic goods.

As the sanctions may make the country face shortage of basic goods, the government and IRICA have taken various measures to avoid such condition.

One major action is facilitating condition for the importers of the basic commodities, for example providing them with required foreign currency through NIMA (Iran's Forex Management Integrated System).

In August, 2019, Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Farhad Dejjpasand, in a directive addressing the IRICA head, obliged the customs administration to take measures for facilitating customs processes.

Meanwhile, following a previous directive by President Hassan Rouhani, IRICA has been providing new facilities for importers of basic goods which makes them able to clear their commodities in less than an hour.

Tehran, New Delhi stress preserving, expanding bilateral trade



Indian Ambassador to Tehran Gaddam Dharmendra (R) meets TCCIMA Head Masoud Khansari in Tehran on Monday.

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — During a meeting between Indian Ambassador to Tehran Gaddam Dharmendra and Head of Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) Masoud Khansari at the place of TCCIMA on Monday, the two sides emphasized the necessity to preserve Iran-India trade ties at the first step and expand it at the next stride.

In the meeting, Indian ambassador announced that the negotiation between Indian and Iranian officials on signing a preferential trade agreement (PTA) has been finalized.

During the previous (fourth) round of the negotiations on the said agreement, which was held in Tehran, the two countries discussed draft text of the pact which is to reduce tariff rates by 25%-45%.

And in the fifth round of the talks held at the place of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) in Tehran last week, some clauses of the pact remaining from the previous talks were reviewed and discussed.

In Monday meeting, Gaddam Dharmendra also announced that the finance for supplying necessary machinery to be installed in Iran's southeastern port

of Chabahar has been secured and the machinery and equipment will be installed at the port by the next two years.

After years of negotiation, Iran has awarded the development project of Chabahar port to India, and the South Asian country committed \$500 million to build two new berths in this port.

However, after the U.S. reimposed sanctions on Iran in November, 2018, the future of many Iranian projects including Chabahar port was shadowed by the consequences of the sanctions.

But following several rounds of negotiations and discussions with New Delhi, the U.S. administration finally exempted the Chabahar project from the sanctions.

Addressing the meeting with the Indian ambassador, TCCIMA head emphasized that Iran and India should initiate some strategies to preserve their mutual trade under the sanctions condition, for example benefitting from bartering.

Khansari also reiterated that Chabahar port development is an important project to strengthen Iran-India trade relation, while lamenting about the speed of implementing this project.

PMO allocates over \$857m for maritime reform plan



PMO Head Mohammad Rastad speaks in the 27th conference of coordination among the country's maritime bodies in Tehran.

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) has allocated 36 trillion rials (about \$857.2 million) of its budget resources for a program to develop the country's maritime industry, IRNA reported on Tuesday, quoting the PMO head.

Speaking in the 27th conference of coordination among the country's maritime bodies in Tehran, Mohammad Rastad noted that PMO has taken significant measures regarding the improvement of the country's maritime industry.

The maritime industry transformation plan was prepared by the Ministry of Transportation and Urban Development in collaboration with the Defense Ministry back in 2019.

According to Rastad, the plan which has already begun, is mainly focused on improving the country's ports and maritime fleet.

The program includes a project for construction of 40 vessels, for which the contracts worth 24 trillion rials (about \$570 million) have been signed with domestic companies.

"In addition to the mentioned vessels, another project for building 43 new vessels

has been also awarded to four different shipbuilders inside the country, and 14 trillion rials (about \$333 million) has been allocate for this project as well," the official added.

He further stressed that the modernization of the passenger fleet should also be taken into serious consideration, adding that the capacity of the country's passenger shipping fleet should also be increased.

Focusing on the development of the production and reliance on domestic production are the two main features considered in the planning for the development of the country's maritime industry, the official said.

Earlier this month, head of the Industry Ministry's Supreme Maritime Council announced that 158 new vessels are going to be added to Iran's shipping fleet.

"We have the construction of 158 vessels on the agenda; about 62-70 percent of which will be built inside the country," Siamak Seyed Marandi said.

According to Marandi, the development of the maritime industry has been considered as one of the main priorities of the industry ministry and the necessary planning has been carried out in this regard.

S. Korean companies leave Iran: Such a pity! But for them

1 → Now the time has come for LG and Samsung to give in to the U.S. pressures despite their great interest in staying in the Iranian market. The two companies officially cut their trade relations with Tehran in the past months, submitting to U.S. sanctions imposed on Iran after Washington withdrew from the 2015 nuclear deal, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

■ The "no-return" departure

The withdrawal from the Iranian market is going to cost the South Korean companies a great deal. Considering Iran's huge market for electronics and home appliances and with regard to the strong presence of Korean companies in this market, leaving Iran would be a significant hit to the mentioned companies' revenues in the region.

The reaction of Iran to this withdrawal, on the other hand, is yet another blow to the mentioned companies since returning to the Iranian market is not going to be as easy as the previous times.

Earlier on Sunday, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi warned that companies that accompany the U.S. in its "maximum pressure" policy against Iran and leave the Iranian market will face difficulty to return to the country in the future.

"The companies which left Iran have lost a market that cannot retake easily," Araqchi said.

He added that Iran will not forget the countries' behavior in difficult times.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi also said via Twitter on Friday that "Some foreign companies, which have left Iran in recent years and months submitting to the U.S.



bullying, should know that returning to the Iranian market will be very difficult."

According to trade principles, keeping one's foothold in a country's market is harder than entering it, Mousavi said.

So it seems that making the decision to leave Iran cannot be considered the safest option for conservative Korea, this time!

■ A chance for domestic brands to flourish

The withdrawal of Samsung and LG from Iran not only is not a bad thing for the country but can be considered a blessing for the domestic production sector.

Iran was among the top producers of home appliances in the Middle East for more than 85 years and long before the establishment of companies like Samsung and LG, major Iranian companies were mass-producing home appliances.

Therefore, the departure of the Asian companies from the Iranian market can be considered a new opportunity for

domestic companies to, once again, come to the spotlight for showcasing their capabilities and benefit from a market that belongs to them.

According to Alireza Mousavi Majd, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Iranian Association for Audio and Video Accessories, the infrastructure left by Samsung and LG will be used by their Iranian subsidiary companies, namely SAM Service and Goldiran, to manufacture home appliances and electronics such as TV sets and computer monitors.

As reported, the mentioned companies will continue production, under new brands of Sam and Gplus respectively, by relying on domestic production lines and by turning to alternative international trade partners like China.

■ Final thoughts

Leaving Iran will definitely be a great loss for South Korean companies and they will soon come to regret this decision.

They will definitely be back to reclaim their market share in Iran in the future, but, what is important here, as repeatedly noted by senior officials, is not to forget those who abandoned us in the hardship.

The mentioned companies' withdrawal from the Iranian market should become, as it already is, a new chance for Iranian producers which have been pushed aside, for long, by such foreign competitions.

The Iranian government should support the domestic producers to gain their footsteps in the market, and the companies should, on the other hand, take all necessary measures to present such high-quality products to the market that satisfy the Iranian customers and encourage them to back their national interests.

Promoting domestic production a ‘must’ in the sanctions era: Zanganeh



ENERGY **TEHRAN** — Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh says promoting the country's domestic production in various areas is a key to Iran's economic development during the sanctions, Shana reported.

Speaking on the sidelines of the unveiling ceremony of Iran's sixth domestically-built oil rig on Tuesday, Zanganeh emphasized the Oil Ministry's support for domestic companies, start-ups and knowledge-based firms, saying that Academic Center for Education, Culture and Research (ACECR) could be one of the main centers to work in this area and the government should support them.

The minister further noted that Khuzestan province (southwestern Iran) could be one of the country's industrial hubs, adding that “we should seize the opportunity to develop domestic production and technologies in this regard.”

Mentioning a project for maintaining and enhancing oil production in 28 reserves operated by the National Iranian South Oil Company (NISOC) in Khuzestan Province, Zanganeh said four percent of the funding for these projects (about \$240 million) is planned to be allocated for urban development projects in the region.

Back in January, Managing Director of Iran's Petropars Group, which is the Monitoring and Controlling (MC) body in a project for maintaining and enhancing oil production in 28 reserves operated by the National Iranian South Oil Company (NISOC), had said that the project will be completely handled by domestic firms.

“The project which constitutes more than a hundred sub-projects, including drilling of about 280 new wells and repairing hundreds of wells, could boost domestic trade and employment,” Shana quoted Hamidreza Masoudi as saying.

Iran unveils domestically-made drilling rig

ENERGY **TEHRAN** — Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh unveiled a domestically-built drilling rig in a ceremony held in Khuzestan province, southwestern Iran on Tuesday.

The drilling rig, called Fat'h-72 has been completely designed and constructed by experts from the province's Academic Center for Education, Culture and Research (ACECR) in Ahvaz, the capital city of Khuzestan, Shana reported.

The unveiling ceremony was attended by senior officials including Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh, Managing Director of National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) Masoud Karbasian, and Chief of the Academic Center for Education, Culture and Research Hamid-Reza Tayebi, as well as the Managing Director of National Iranian Drilling Company



(NIDC) Seyed Abdollah Mousavi.

As the sixth domestically-made drilling rig, Fat'h-72 is going to be installed and used in one of the new fields discovered in the region.

ACECR has signed a €33-million deal with the National Iranian Oil Company for construction of three drilling rigs, one of which is Fat'h-72.

The rig's maximum drilling depth is reported to be 20,000 feet, and the structure is able to tolerate a maximum static load of one million pounds.

Fat'h-72 is also equipped with a 500-ton top drive which is used to rotate the drill string during the drilling process, a 137.5-inch rotary table and three reciprocating mud pumps each with a power up to 1600 horsepowers (hp).

Oil prices slip as coronavirus concerns linger

Oil prices slipped on Tuesday on lingering concerns over the economic impact of the coronavirus outbreak in China and its effect on oil demand, tracking losses in financial markets.

Brent crude LCOc1 was at \$57.30 a barrel, down 37 cents, or 0.6%, by 0126 GMT, while U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude CLc1 fell 15 cents, or 0.3%, to \$51.90 a barrel.

“While it's more comfortable to call oil higher, given the likely pent-up demand to lead to a recovery from second quarter, it's far too early to suggest oil market concerns have dissipated,” said Stephen Innes, chief market strategist at AxiCorp.

U.S. stock futures slipped from record levels on Tuesday after Apple Inc (AAPL.O), the

most valuable company in the United States, said it will not meet its revenue guidance for the March quarter as the coronavirus outbreak slowed production and weakened demand in China.

The number of new coronavirus infections in mainland China fell below 2,000 on Tuesday for the first time since January, Chinese health officials said, although global experts warn it is too early to say the outbreak is being contained.

The International Energy Agency (IEA) said last week the virus was set to cause oil demand to fall by 435,000 barrels per day (bpd) year-on-year in the first quarter, in what would be the first quarterly drop since the financial crisis in 2009.



Still, with some Chinese independent refineries snapping up crude supplies after being absent from the market for weeks, traders held out hopes that China's demand could recover in coming months.

Investors are also anticipating that the

Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its allies, including Russia, will approve a proposal to deepen production cuts to tighten global supplies and support prices.

The group, known as OPEC+, has an agreement to cut oil output by 1.7 million bpd until the end of March.

Oil output from Libya has fallen sharply since Jan. 18 because of a blockade of ports and oil fields by groups loyal to eastern-based commander Khalifa Haftar.

Libya's national oil corporation, NOC, said on Monday that oil production was at 135,745 barrels per day as of Monday, compared with 1.2 million bpd before the stoppage.

(Source: reuters.com)

The world's top LNG producer is in trouble

By Cyril Widdershoven

International expansion in Australia, Qatar, Mozambique and Egypt, combined with a continuously strong U.S. shale gas export drive, is pushing down prices further. Analysts have warned before that a possible LNG glut could end in tears, but nobody was expecting that the market would also be hit by a demand side shock such as China's coronavirus.

The last couple of weeks, major LNG export cargoes to China have been diverted to other clients or are still looking for a destination in an already woefully oversupplied market.

Major LNG producers such as Qatar or Egypt are feeling the pain already. During Egypt's EGYPS2020, a major oil and gas conference, participants showed concern about the imminent future of the East Med gas hub, as new LNG export contracts still have not been signed and asking prices are unlikely to be met.

Today's announcement that Qatar has delayed its choice of Western partners for the world's largest liquefied natural gas (LNG) project by several months isn't going unnoticed. Without direct statements by Qatar Petroleum, sources have stated that the delay decision has been made based on current market fundamentals and the still unclear impact of the Corona virus.

Qatar has been fighting an uphill battle as the market has been glutted by U.S. shale gas exports and a drop in Chinese demand.

■ The Qatar LNG expansion

International interest for the Qatar LNG expansion has been large, and among those interested were industry giants such as Shell and ExxonMobil.

No list of interested parties has been issued by QP, but around six Western companies are believed to have shown

interest. The market was expecting the announcement of its partners by QP in Q1 2020, but this will be delayed until later this year.

Rationally the decision to delay is needed, as a 60% LNG production expansion by QP to reach a volume of 126 million tons by 2027 will be a real risk.

At the same time, the coronavirus has put the total global market on edge. Demand for oil and gas is feared to be hit very hard, even when current demand figures of China and others are way above what some analysts have been expecting the last weeks.

Lower prices have enticed Chinese fill up storage tanks. Still, if Chinese authorities fail to contain the virus, Asian economies could come to a partial standstill, which would gravely impact demand for transportation fuels and natural gas.

Not only traditional LNG exporters, such as Qatar, or East Med producers like Egypt or Algeria, are being hit by the current glut. U.S. shale gas exporters are now facing a major crisis too. Dreams about entering global strong markets with high price settings however have been destroyed, as due to an already existing gas glut, prices have been low already.

■ Pushing prices further down

U.S. gas exports are now only contributing to the glut, pushing prices even further down. Booming U.S. exports combined with lower Asian demand is a major recipe for disaster, affecting most IOCs, but especially Shell, Total and ENI, as all have been concentrating their own investment and expansion strategies in natural gas. Some U.S. producers, such as Chesapeake Energy are already fighting bankruptcy, and IOCs have been hit by a slump in profits.

For Arab producers, especially Qatar, Algeria or Egypt, the future is uncertain. New gas discoveries will need to be monetized to support economic growth and diversification



plans. For Qatar current expansion plans are needed, not only for new exports but also to keep the international investors and operators interested in the success story of Qatari LNG.

Algeria at the same time is looking at other routes to get additional cash to prop up its fledgling economy the coming years. Egypt's Energy Hub strategy, in cooperation with Cyprus and Israel, is a matter of life or death.

International cooperation and investment strategies are needed to the regional economy going. Without markets or clients, however, all will be put on ice, as no investor or IOC will be willing to spend another \$10 billion on a possible new 8 million tons LNG train. In Qatar's case, the planned expansion is slated to cost around \$60 billion.

All eyes are currently on China, as the Asian giant has accounted for 40% of the global growth in LNG demand since 2015. Strategies were decided on demand projections for China to exceed 82 million tons per year by 2023. The same was expected, at lower volumes, for India and possibly other areas in Asia and even Europe.

The current slump and the coronavirus effect has put all in doubt. A main concern will be that the LNG glut spirals out of control, pushing major operators over the edge too.

(Source: oilprice.com)

Coronavirus outbreak's effect on the oil and gas market

As the death toll from the coronavirus keeps rising, it is crippling not only China's economy but is having a knock-on effect globally.

Formula One's race in Shanghai has been postponed and this year's Mobile World in Barcelona has been cancelled. Oil prices have tumbled 20 percent below their January peaks, raising the prospect that OPEC could cut production again.

But it is not only OPEC that is feeling the pinch. China has also turned away gas tankers, slashing gas prices in half.

Yury Sentyurin, secretary-general of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum, said: “This is a force majeure situation. Any contract between sellers and buyers have a special clause ... called force majeure, for some events and

situations which are out of the influence of participants of the parties of the contracts.”

Sentyurin points out there may be some postponements and delays in contracts but argues: “I think this is a temporary situation because fortunately life hasn't stopped and people will continue living, will continue producing, will continue consuming and everything will continue, from my point of view.”

Warming oceans and melting ice caps could cause sea levels to rise by more than a meter (three feet) by the end of the century, according to the United Nations.

The rise could displace or affect up to 680 million people living along the world's coastlines. The UK's National Oceanography Centre (NOC) projected that flooding

from rising sea levels could cost the globe \$14 trillion annually by 2100.

Indonesia is planning to spend more than \$30b on moving its capital because Jakarta is sinking at an alarming rate. A majority of the city could be submerged by 2050.

The United States will need to spend \$400b over the next 20 years to improve its flood defenses. And New York State is considering spending more than \$100bn on a storm barrier, an idea President Trump calls: “costly, foolish and environmentally unfriendly.”

But the World Bank believes every dollar spent on sea defenses can yield between \$7 to \$10 by preventing costly damage.

Swenja Surminski, head of Adaptation Research at the Grantham Research Insti-

tute, tells Al Jazeera climate change is the “defining issue of our generation” and it is “no longer a distant threat” as the impacts of climate change can be seen, particularly along coastal areas.

“Coastal areas are particularly exposed, not just because of sea-level rise, but also other challenges.”

Surminski notes that water usage and the fact that about half of all global megacities are in coastal areas are major challenges in battling the threat of climate change and rising sea levels.

“So these are massive, and still growing sites, where people live, where their livelihoods are – and these are exposed from sea-level rise.”

(Source: hellenicshippingnews.com)

The path to increased use of renewables in powering data centers

By Emiliano Cevenini

The data center industry has made remarkable progress in improving efficiency. According to statistics compiled by the International Energy Agency (IEA), data center energy consumption has remained flat in the last three years while workloads and internet traffic were growing dramatically.

Despite these efforts, the data center industry remains a significant consumer of energy, accounting for about one percent of global electricity consumption. With workloads continuing to rise, industry energy consumption is likely to remain in the spotlight.



It will be challenging to continue to offset continued growth with efficiency gains, especially since the low-hanging fruit has already been harvested. One potential solution is increased use of renewable energy sources, and there appears to be a good deal of optimism on this front among industry professionals.

In Vertiv's 2019 Data Center 2025 survey, more than 800 industry professionals were asked to project the percent of global data center energy that would come from various power sources in 2025. They predicted that 13 percent of data center power would come from solar and eight percent from wind — about one in every five kWhour of total data center power coming from these two renewable sources.

Projections for energy sources were fairly consistent across regions, with a few exceptions. Expectations for solar were higher in Latin America (17 percent) than other regions.

■ The North America hydro projections

Latin America was also high on hydroelectric power, projecting 29 percent of data center power from this source in 2025. The North America hydro projections were a distant 13 percent.

Combining average responses for solar, wind and hydro power from Latin American participants creates the expectation of 56 percent of data center power coming from these three renewable sources in 2025. The next highest percentages for these three sources were EMEA at 37 percent, China at 36 percent, North America at 34 percent, and APAC had the lowest projections for the three renewables at 31 percent.

It's difficult to get good numbers on where we are today in regard to those projections, but few would argue that we are on pace to achieve them.

While wind and solar technologies have become more efficient and more cost-competitive in recent years, their inherently intermittent nature doesn't match well with the always - on, high power requirements of today's data centers. For these sources to provide the capacity and availability data centers require, they need to be integrated with the grid. Two recent trends demonstrate how that is happening.

Microgrids represent a viable strategy for integrating renewables with the data center and they appear to be gaining traction.

According to 2Q19 Navigant Microgrid Tracker, 575 new microgrids were planned or installed in the second quarter of 2019 with Asia Pacific emerging as a global leader in microgrid capacity, followed by North America, the Middle East & Africa.

In data center applications, these grid-connected, on-site energy generation or storage plants enable data centers to gain greater control of energy costs by reducing peak demand — a strong value proposition that extends beyond sustainability goals.

Because their role is to offset peaks in demand, the data center is never totally dependent on the microgrid, making renewables such as solar an attractive microgrid option. While they may never account for a large percentage of data center power, continued growth in solar-powered microgrids can help contribute to increased use of renewables in data centers.

There is even greater potential for data center operators to flex their power as energy consumers to drive increased development and availability of grid-connected solar and wind power. This is happening through the use of power purchasing agreements (PPAs).

■ The clean energy attributes

Unlike renewable energy credits (RECs), which represent the clean energy attributes of renewables but are not a direct energy purchase, PPAs allow operators, where possible, to purchase the dispatched clean electricity along with the bundled REC.

PPAs have become the preferred tools for large hyper scale and colocation operators, who are often driven by demand for clean energy from their customers, to accelerate the timeline for achieving ambitious clean energy goals.

Where grid-connected renewable energy sources are not available, large developers are working with their utility partners to make them available wherever possible. As a result, PPAs not only represent the best alternative for increasing renewable energy consumption, they are serving to drive new development of grid-scale renewable energy sources.

PPA's will become less necessary as the percent of renewables on the grid increases, but for organizations or individual facilities that make the commitment to 100 percent renewable power they will continue to be used in the long-term to compensate for the inevitable gaps in the availability of grid-connected renewable energy while simultaneously driving development that helps fill those gaps.

With large data center operators both leading the industry in committing to clean energy and accounting for an increasing percentage of total data center capacity, PPAs can have a significant impact on the percent of renewables used by the industry. By remaining committed to maximizing our use of renewable resources while continuing to drive improvements in efficiency, the industry can become a leader in the responsible use of electricity.

(Source: datacenterdynamics.com)

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Why Netherlands approved asylum for a terrorist?

1 → Another speaker in this session was Doctor Zamani, professor of Law and Political Sciences in Allame University. He talked about international responsibility of the state of Netherlands. He thanked Association for Defending Victims of Terrorism for its essays to deliver this sort of issues and wished that these actions prevent the victims of Hafte Tir terrorist incident to become forgotten.

Doctor Zamani added: all the victims of Hafte Tir terrorist incident are voiceless. Netherlands has a powerful judiciary system and bringing its state to the court is very tough goal but we should pay attention to two issues:

First, state of Netherlands has approved asylum and residency for Ali Motamed. Is there any international commitment for states to investigate about background of whom been accused of terrorism and disapproving asylum for them?

Do the families of victims, who are present in this session, have the right of pursuing legal process about Hafte Tir terrorist incident in Netherlands' judiciary authorities? Why the asylum been approved for Ali Motamed? Is there any lawsuit in this regard?

He added: terrorist attacks have public dimension and it is on all states to investigate about it. We want from the state of Netherlands to afford necessary judicial assistance for victims' families.

Doctor Zamani in other part of his speech said that: commitment of state is commitment for result and not the commitment to mere a try. State of Netherlands should act transparent and committed. Independency of judiciary system should not be a reason for not assigning the judicial procedures to the state as a whole. State is integrated.

He added: after 2001 we saw a wave of change in the approach of states toward asylum seekers and due diligence had been added. It should be announced that how Mohammad Reza Kolahi acquired asylum and why his past was unknown for the state of Netherlands.

At the last part of his speech, Mr. Zamani, professor of international law said: traditional principle is that state must avoid in being a base for terrorists or attacking other states. We don't know that Mr. Kolahi had acquired citizenship or residency. State of Iran should insist for the truth. All the states have duty to background check for anyone who wants to enter to that country.

Then, Ms. Anicée Van Engeland, a senior lecturer in International Security and Law at Cranfield University, made a video conference. Her topic was France and its

measure to enable victims of terrorism in access to justice.

She said, "France has been presented a success model when it comes to enabling victims of terrorism accessing to justice. There is, first of all, a governmental body called the interministerial support unit for victims (CIAV). That body takes care of everything that's outside the law, which is medical support, psychological support, coverage of medical cost, and access to social benefits. There are also several associations that are there to support the victims of terrorism."

The professor of Cranfield University said in another part of her speech "The rules also state that protection of victims need to be adequately recognized in the criminal proceeding. While in France there is no definition of who is a victim of terrorism, per se there is certainly a position that is adequately recognized in criminal proceedings. Once the victims of terrorism have filled the complaint and their complaint is being processed, they can have access to the compensation fund for victims of act of terrorism in other offences. They will support them with psychological and physical support. During that time the prosecutor of Paris will start drafting a list of people who have been the victims. And the victims need to bring evidence that they were actually in the location and they were

injured during the terrorist action. It's extremely important as a lot of people have tried to claim for compensation by being pretending victims."

Pointing out the long procedure of French courts, she said, "One of the victims had said lodging a complaint is pointless, it just adds one bad thing to another. They kill you once with the offender, and the justice system doesn't kill you once but a thousand times." She added that, but we know also some reports of the people who are accessing to justice.

The next speaker was Dr. Fahim Danesh, a university lecturer and researcher of international, law pointed out the existence of international courts in the Netherlands which make the country as a symbol of law and justice. He and stated that, nevertheless, with a thorough and accurate knowledge of the Dutch legal system we can lodge a complaint.

In one part of his speech, he said, "one of the most important rights of the victims is that they should be recognized. In international instrument it was emphasized that these people are victims and domestic courts are responsible to recognize them. Being a victim can be addressed and reflected psychologically. A fund has been established at the International Criminal Court for supporting victims. Different



states donate a lot of money to this fund and there are plans to normalize the situation of victims." He added that one of the main demands of the Hafte Tir victims is that they are recognized.

The international law researcher referred the case of Mothers of Srebrenica who sued the Dutch government and they could eventually obtain compensation from the Dutch government although they faced a lot of problems. He continued "We are in favor of such judicial system. Following the file case be an opportunity. The Dutch have, in their legal structure, accepted that the families of the victims should be theoretically included. This entry can be called "Amicus Curiae" (Court Friend). On this basis, we can submit our considerations to the court. We just have to show that we are neutral and third party and that we are amicus curiae.

The next speaker of the meeting was Dr. Nargesian, the Assistant Prosecutor of International Affairs of Tehran's court. He pointed out some of the aspects in the case, such as the absence of a contract between the government of the Netherlands and Iran, as well as passing 38 years of the case made it difficult to address the issue." The 1951 Convention states that terrorist offenders should not be granted asylum", he emphasized.

He continued "We have a legal gap in our country, and terrorism has not been criminalized in our criminal law. But the Dutch government must be accountable for granting asylum, and we are ready to hear legal advice from lawyers.

The next speaker at the meeting, Dr. Nejandi Manesh, a professor at Faculty of Law and Political Science of Allameh Tabataba'i University, said in one part of his speech, "We demand the Dutch government the right to know the truth. Why the word "Martyr" is written on the tomb of Ali Motamed? If the murder was a normal case, why is the Mojahedin-e Khalq Organization's (the Hypocrites) sign is on his tomb? Why the Dutch government has granted asylum to a

terrorist? There were cases in which a person seeking asylum was a driver of a forbidden party who has not been granted asylum. Why has Mohammad Reza been granted asylum?

In another part of his speech, Allameh Tabataba'i University Professor said: "Mojahedin-e Khalq Organization was designated as a terrorist group from 2002 to 2009. Why no measure was taken regarding the case? Removing the group from the terrorist list, must have done with prior consent of the victims. Perhaps the lawsuit against the Hypocrites in Albania will challenge the country's judiciary, and all of these require the right question and what answer we are looking for.

Dr. Nezhandi Manesh, spoke about the grief of Mr. Pakenjad, son of the martyr of Hafte Tir and said, "Another right that families have is to find a suitable way to compensation. Perhaps the bitterest moments I met was when Mr. Pakenjad was talking near the grave of his father and uncle's killer. It was very heartbreaking.

In the end, he expressed his hope that within the legal framework, regardless of political discussions, the issue of litigation of the victims of the Hafte Tir bombing would be brought before the Dutch court and the victims get the desired result.

After discussing the legal issues, the families of the martyrs of Hafte Tir bombing expressed a part of their sufferings which still continue after many years. They urged the legal authorities and the attendees to pursue this issue diligently so that the desired result in the punishment of offenders can be achieved and the truth about the incident is clarified.

In the end of the meeting, Ms. Arjang, M.Sc. Student of International Law at Allameh Tabataba'i University, discussed the role and status of the United Nations in accessing justice for victims of terrorism.

At the same time, the exhibition "Who is Ali Motamed?" was held and welcomed by visitors and students.

Robert Fantina: U.S. "Economic Terrorism" proves Washington's word is meaningless



TEHRAN (FNA) — Robert Fantina, author and journalist, says Washington claims to be fighting against terrorism, but at the same time it is sponsoring all kinds of terrorism, including "economic terrorism" against people of Iran.

In an exclusive interview with FNA, Fantina said, "The US showed that it has no concept of international relations... and showed once again that it holds international law in contempt."

Robert Fantina is an author, journalist and activist for peace and social justice. While living in the US, he actively opposed the war in Iraq, prior to and following the US invasion of that country. Shortly after the 2004 presidential election he moved to Canada.

Below is the full text of the interview:

■ How do you find the US sanctions against Iran?

A: The sanctions against Iran are completely unjust, and violate the JCPOA. The agreement was also endorsed by the United Nations, and by the US, by violating it, Washington showed once again, that it holds international law in contempt.

Additionally, by re-imposing these sanctions, the US showed that it has no concept of international relations, because it threatened some of its oldest and closest allies, also signatories to the agreement, with sanctions if they continued to honor the agreement.

The Iranian government has called the sanctions 'economic terrorism', which is a very reasonable term for what the US is doing to Iran. While the US launched its so-called 'war on terrorism' in the early part of this millennium, it is, and for generations has been, the largest and deadliest sponsor of international terrorism on the planet.

The US has proven to the world that its word is meaningless.

■ Trump withdrew the US from JCPOA, restored the sanctions and discouraged other signatories to JCPOA from fulfilling their commitments. Do you believe there is still room for the negotiations to continue, and possibly make a "Trump Deal"?

A: As Iranian government spokespeople have repeatedly said, Iran does not negotiate with terrorists, and the US is imposing economic terrorism on the people of Iran. Had Trump wanted to renegotiate the JCPOA in good faith, he would have kept the US in the agreement, and approached the Iranian government and requested further talks to address other issues. This is diplomacy. Trump, and the US government in general, only believes in the use of force, which it has used for generations, to the detriment of people around the world.

Trump refers to himself as a master deal-maker, although there is no evidence to support such a ridiculous claim. Parts of the so-called 'Deal of the Century' that he is proposing between Palestine and the apartheid Zionist regime have been leaked, and it gives Palestine nothing and the Zionists everything. Trump's record as a businessman in New York City further disproves his self-designation as a great deal-maker.


The only way Iran will renegotiate the JCPOA is if the US government honors its side of the agreement, removes the threats against the other signatories, and then requests additional talks with Iran. Even then, Iran is under no obligation to have additional talks with the US.

■ People of Iran deposed the Iranian monarch who they chanted as the US's lapdog. How do you think these people would react to a probable Trump-brokered deal with the US?

A: In 1953, the CIA overthrew the democratically-elected government of Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh, and installed the brutal Shah of Iran as monarch. For the next twenty-six years he oppressed the people of Iran, until he was overthrown in 1979, against the wishes of the United States. The revolution that year established the Islamic Republic, which the US has opposed since its inception.


The United States has never understood the desire of any people to establish their own form of government. It seeks only its own advantage, regardless of the cost in human suffering to anyone. And now the US government has imposed brutal and unjust sanctions, believing that the people of Iran will blame their own government, and overthrow it, so the US can once again install a brutal regime that will do its bidding.

History, from which the US refuses to learn, clearly shows that this will not happen; the people of Iran know it is the United States, and not their own government, that is causing the current economic hardships. There is no reason for them to turn their country over to the nation that is the source and reason for their suffering.



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Second Announcement
Call for public tender (First/Second publish)
Two-Stages (semi compressed) tender



National Iranian Drilling Company

Subject of Tender: P/F: "MCCOY (FARR)" HYDRAULIC POWER TONG

Tender descriptions:			
The Tender holder	Registration No. through national electronic tendering system	Tender No. /Indent No.	Estimated value (Rial)
National Iranian Drilling Company	3/229/222	Tender No.: FP/04-98/189 Indent No.: 08-22-9845104	7.857.000.000

Qualitative evaluation of tenderers

Method	Qualification process will be done in plain mode in offers opening session according to presentation of valid practice certificate / legal documents (certificate of corporation/ supply announcement up to latest changes) which should be related to tender subject.

Purchasing & Submitting

Tender Document Distribution by Company	
Distribution Place	Hall No.:113, 1 st floor, Foreign Procurement Dept., National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN 061-34148656 - 06134148615 Room No. 431, 4 th floor, Oil central building No.8,Yaghma alley, Jomhori Islami st., Tehran - Iran
Submitting Method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt in the amount of 190,000 Iranian Rials under account number 4001114004020491 (Shaba No. IR 520100004001114004020491) in name of "NIDC Income Centralized Fund" issued by I.R. of Iran Central Bank. •Submitting format Request for the purpose of receiving Tender Documents.
Documents Receiving Method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •35 Days after the last time of Purchasing. (closing date 6 April 2020) • The envelopes will be opened At 12:00. a.m On 7 April 2020)
Closing date	Hall No. 107, 1 st floor, Tender Committee, Operation building, National Iranian Drilling Company, Airport square, Ahwaz, IRAN. Tel: +98-61-34148580 +98-61-34148569
Address	

Tender Guarantee

Value of guarantee	393.000.000 Rial / 2,972 Euro
Type of guarantee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓-Bank guarantees or guarantees issued by non-bank institutions that obtain activity license from the central bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran. ✓-Submitting one original Bank Fund Receipt under account number 4001114006376636 (Shaba No. IR 350100004001114006376636) in name of "NIDC saving account" by the central bank of Islamic Republic of Iran
Duration of credit & quotation	Tender Guarantee and quotation should be valid for 90 days and extendable maximum for one time in initial validity duration.

(Name of department)

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تهران تایمز نویت اول ۹۸/۱۱/۲۹ نویت دوم ۹۸/۱۱/۳۰

IKAC to construct new aircraft hangar for Qeshm Airlines

TOURISM **TEHRAN** – The Imam Khomeini Airport City is to build a new aircraft hangar for Qeshm Airlines within the airport's grounds, located in southern outskirts of Tehran.

On Monday, IKAC held a ceremony to build the hangar



on a land area of 16,000 square meters, IKAC Managing Director Mohammad Mahdi Karbalaei said, IKAC News reported.

Talking to reporters, Karbalaei expressed hope that mutual cooperation between the IKAC and airline companies would lead to development and profitability of the air transport and related companies.

Imam Khomeini International Airport registered 47,446 takeoffs and landings in the last fiscal year that ended on March 20, 2019, to register a 19% decline.

More than 7.27 million passengers and 141,704 tons of cargos were transported from the airport during the period to rank third on the list of Iran's busiest airports in 2018. The figures show respectively 19% and 14% decline year on year.

Ancient plant foods found in northern Australia

Archaeologists have found ancient plant foods eaten some 65,000 years ago by early human populations in northern Australia.

The bits of plant food, preserved as charcoal in ancient cooking hearths, have offered scientists new insights into the diets of the indigenous Australians.

The charcoal bits were recovered from archaeological dig sites in Arnhem Land, a historical region of northern Australia occupied by indigenous groups for thousands of years. Within the charred morsels, scientists identified the remnants of 10 different plant foods, including several types of fruits and nuts, as well as roots, tubers and palm stem.

"Many of these plant foods required processing to make them edible and this evidence was complemented by grinding stone technology also used during early occupation at the site," University of Queensland archaeobotanist Anna Florin said in a news release.

The latest findings, published Monday in the journal Nature Communications, suggest the earliest indigenous Australians possess extensive botanical knowledge, which helped them adapt to a variety of harsh terrains across the continent.

"They were able to guarantee access to carbohydrates, fat and even protein by applying this knowledge, as well as technological innovation and labor, to the gathering and processing of Australian plant foods," Florin said.

The ancient hearths were found at Madjedbebe, a sandstone rock shelter and Australia's oldest indigenous site. "Madjedbebe continues to provide startling insights into the complex and dynamic lifestyle of the earliest Australian Aboriginal people," said Queensland University professor Chris Clarkson, who served as lead excavator on the most recent digs.

Scientists have previously discovered the world's oldest stone axes at Madjedbebe, 35,000 years old. Even older spearheads have been recovered, the oldest evidence of stone grinding technology outside Africa. Researchers have also previously found evidence of the use of ochre, as well as the earliest known use of reflective pigments.

"The site is an important cultural place to Mirarr people today who strive to protect their heritage from numerous threats, including mining," Florin said.

(Source: UPI)



ROUND THE GLOBE

Red Fort Complex

The Red Fort Complex was built as the palace fort of Shah-jahanabad – the new capital of the fifth Mughal Emperor of India, Shah Jahan.

Named for its massive enclosing walls of red sandstone, it is adjacent to an older fort, the Salimgarh, built by Islam Shah Suri in 1546, with which it forms the Red Fort Complex.

The private apartments consist of a row of pavilions connected by a continuous water channel, known as the Nahr-i-Behisht (Stream of Paradise).



The Red Fort is considered to represent the zenith of Mughal creativity which, under the Shah Jahan, was brought to a new level of refinement. The planning of the palace is based on Islamic prototypes, but each pavilion reveals architectural elements typical of Mughal building, reflecting a fusion of Persian, Timurid and Hindu traditions. The Red Fort's innovative planning and architectural style, including the garden design, strongly influenced later buildings and gardens in Rajasthan, Delhi, Agra and further afield.

(Source: UNESCO)

Japan, Austria downgrade Iran travel warning

TOURISM **TEHRAN** – Japan and Austria have significantly downgraded their travel warnings on Iran, a caution they, amongst some other countries, issued following the deadly crash of a Ukrainian plane near Tehran last month.

The jetliner, with 176 people onboard, was mistakenly downed on January 8 by the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) air defense system, a few hours after Iran fired dozens of missiles at a U.S. airbase inside Iraq in retaliation to the assassination of Iranian Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad on January 3.

"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan has eliminated its travel warning on Iran [asking its citizens to avoid 'non-essential' travel to the country] and it has also terminated depicting Iran's security map with a warning sign," ISNA reported on Tuesday.

An advisory, which warned about traveling to Iran, is now deleted from the website of the ministry, the report added.

Austrian ambassador to Tehran Stefan Scholz on Monday wrote on his Instagram account that his country has lowered its travel warning for Iran.

"Austria has downgraded its travel warning for Iran, repealing its general advice against non-essential travels following a thorough reassessment of the security situation."

"We believe that the risk to Austrian nationals except for some specific border areas has changed. This decision will also further contribute to civil society contacts and commerce," the envoy added.

Late in January, the EU Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) approved that European airlines can return to parts of Iranian and Iraqi airspace. Germany's Lufthansa was among airlines that canceled flights over the affected airspace.

Inbound tours started to severely drop



Foreign travelers pose for a photograph during their visits to Hafezieh, a major cultural tourist spot where Hafez, the illustrious Persian poet of the 14th century, is laid to rest in Shiraz, Southern Iran. (PHOTO CREDIT: letsvisitpersia.com)

following the crash, triggering a major setback to Iran's budding tourism industry. The blow, however, is being hoped to be amended as soon as possible by a comprehensive action plan Iran's tourism ministry has put into practice since January 25.

In the same time, Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts

Ali-Asghar Mounesan issued a statement, inviting all travelers and holidaymakers to visit the ancient land, saying that the country-size guesthouse is wholeheartedly ready to receive tourists from around the world.

The official emphasized that the Iranian government is trying its best to host incoming tourists by improving tourism infrastructure,

offering attractive and pocket-friendly packages, as well as incentives such as visa waivers or 90-day visas on arrival.

The 2019 Travel Risk Map, which shows the risk level around the world, put Iran among countries with "insignificant risk", a category where the UK, Denmark, Switzerland, Norway, and Finland are placed in.

Iran to pursue visa-free travel with Russia at Moscow tourism fair

TOURISM **TEHRAN** – The Iranian tourism minister on Monday said that the country will follow up on the issue of visa-free travel for mutual tourist groups with Russia at the upcoming [27th edition] Moscow International Travel & Tourism Exhibition (MITT), which will be held from March 17 to 19.

"The Russian fair is very important [for us] so that we should have a strong and influential presence in this exhibition... One of the major issues is to pursue and finalize visa cancellation for Iranian and Russian group tours," Ali-Asghar Mounesan said, CHTN reported.

He made the remarks at a meeting with representatives of the private sector active in tourism projects.

In December, Mounesan announced that Tehran was considering to allow Russian tourists visa-free entry into the country to boost tourism, after it granted same



privilege for some other nationals including Chinese and Omani passport holders.

Ganjali Khan complex reminiscent of everyday life in 17th-century Iran



TOURISM **TEHRAN** – The historical Ganjali Khan complex, which is composed of a madrasa, a mosque, a caravanserai, a hammam (public bathhouse), a water reservoir and a labyrinth bazaar, all centered on a large public square, is a typical Iranian tourist spot to wander around!

Located in Kerman, southern Iran, the complex is well designed for avid anthropologists, travelers or even curious people to catch on how typical Iranians lived during the

17th-century Safavid era in Iran.

Lavishly decorated structures and abundant wax dummies clad in indigenous outfits could help visitors better conceive traditions, culture and lifestyle of the time.

Covering an area of 11,000 square meters, the compound was built upon the order of Ganjali Khan who governed Kerman and some neighboring areas during the late 16th to early 17th centuries under Safavid Shah Abbas I (r. 1571-1629).

With an entrance at the northeastern corner of the square, the mosque though is small in size enjoys elaborate tilework and arabesque designs. It boasts a gilt-pattern inner dome and honeycomb windows.

The hammam has been repurposed into an anthropology-like museum in which wax dummies illustrate the workings of a traditional bathhouse. There is also a display case of antique washing utensils. The waxworks clearly illustrate the activities which took place in the old hammam: including a rather chubby chap being cleaned!

The bazaar is ornamented with exquisite plasterwork and wall paintings that are well-preserved although they are roughly 400 years old.

The caravanserai is based on the four-iwan typology, with guest rooms constructed around a courtyard. Shah



Abbas I (1571-1629) is credited with building a network of caravanserais across Iran during the much later Safavid dynasty.

The big and sprawling Kerman province has been a cultural melting pot since antiquity, blending Persians with subcontinental tribe dwellers. It is home to myriad historical sites and scenic landscapes such as Bazaar-e Sartasari, Jabalieh Dome, Ganjali Khan Bathhouse, Malek Jameh Mosque and Shahdad Desert to name a few.

Kyoto launches an 'empty tourism' campaign amid coronavirus outbreak

Kyoto is usually packed with tourists from all over the world.

But as the coronavirus outbreak keeps visitors away from the historic streets of Japan's former capital, a group of shopkeepers has launched an "empty tourism" campaign to lure them back.

Merchants from five shopping streets in Kyoto's Arashiyama neighborhood -- a popular tourist district on the western outskirts of the city that's filled with temples and shrines -- have devised an advertising campaign dubbed "suitemasu Arashiyama," which translates to "empty Arashiyama" or "there are few people around in Arashiyama."

The posters created for the campaign showcase how any would-be travelers could have the district's most-visited spots all to themselves.

It does so by showing images of four

popular tourist sites in Arashiyama with a tongue-in-cheek message for each one.

One poster shows a monkey with the caption: "It's been a while since there were more monkeys than humans." Underneath, there's a photo of Togetsukyo Bridge -- normally crowded with Instagrammers -- with no tourists about.

Another depicts Arashiyama's beautiful bamboo grove accompanied with several hashtags, including "#nopeople" and "#nowisthetime."

Arashiyama has enjoyed many busy traveler-filled winters over the past few years.

However, due to the effects of the coronavirus outbreak, locals report that the neighborhood has had fewer visitors so far in 2020 than in 2019.

As a consequence, the district's tourism website states that shopkeepers are at the

ready to welcome visitors "with even more hospitality than usual."

"Recently our region sustained a lot of disasters, like typhoons, flood [and] the coronavirus. We have to keep our chins up," Shuichi Kato, a community spokesman dedicated to promoting tourism in Arashiyama, told CNN Travel.

Kyoto, which has 17 UNESCO World Heritage sites, usually receives thousands of foreign tourists daily.

Often, tourism headlines from Kyoto have focused on bad behavior -- for example, the historic Gion neighborhood cracked down on photography last year in response to ongoing issues with tourists chasing geishas and trying to take pictures of them without permission.

But this year, amid fears over the coronavirus outbreak, Japan's popular

destinations have seen a slump in tourist numbers.

It isn't only Japan that has been affected -- destinations throughout Asia have reported dwindling tourist populations in the double digit percentages since the outbreak began.

In January, China announced a ban on outbound group travel as part of its battle to stop the spread of the coronavirus outbreak, which has killed 1,873 people and infected more than 73,000 people around the world.

That particularly affected Japan, which had approximately 9.6 million visitors from China in 2019 -- a third of foreign tourist expenditure in the country.

Speculation is growing around the ramifications the travel ban will have on Japan's tourism industry and economy.

(Source: MSN)

UNHCR lauds Iran as ‘a global example’ for supporting refugees

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, has appreciated Iran as “a global example” for its 40 years of supporting refugees.

“Refugees in Iran can access free primary health care, and the national health insurance scheme. Work rights have been progressively expanded over the years. Most of these commendable initiatives are funded from Iran’s own resources, despite escalating economic pressures impacting both the refugees and their hosts,” he explained.

He made the remarks during the International Conference on 40 Years of Hosting Afghan Refugees in Pakistan, which was held in Islamabad on Monday.

“Pakistan and Iran together continue to host 90 percent of registered Afghan refugees globally – some 2.4 million people.

In recent years, there have been commendable efforts towards identification and documentation of these populations, and enhancing access to passports and work permits. I encourage these efforts to continue and to be



accelerated,” Grandi stated.

“And we should not forget that the Islamic Republic of Iran has also been a global ex-

ample. Progressive education policies have driven up literacy rates and transformed the prospects of generations of Afghan refugees.

Why Iranians who first discovered colors think of chromophobia?

By Maliheh Ahmadbeigi

TEHRAN — With an impressive background in art and dyeing industry, Iranians’ ability to choose colors and their mastery in making natural colors without causing any harm to the nature has been proven both in the antiquity and the Paleolithic period. However, over the past three decades, chromophobia is affecting the people making them more reluctant to use bright colors.

Chromophobia is the strongest irrational fear on the verge of disgust for color. In most cases, an inadequate attitude is observed towards a particular color - a person is afraid only of red, black or yellow. Less commonly, fear causes a combination of colors or a wide range of palettes.

The Iranians were the first generation to recognize the colors and make them out of nature and create the most artistically artifacts and thus to be admired everywhere in the world.

Light and color are the elements that has been playing an important role in traditional architecture of Iran, especially in religious spaces such as mosques.

Today, people highly have a tendency to dark colors, especially black, which appears both in their clothing and houses’ decoration.

Some phycologists claim that colored decoration may cause stress or aggravate it. That is partly true when using not standard design and colors in decorations!

But that’s not the real reason, no expert has ever discovered the great secret of phobia in the use of colors in decoration, or why most people like dark and classic themes more than bright colors, and even why do only a few have



the courage to make color decorations?

If the decoration is perfectly professional and based on design standards, it will bring feelings of freedom, joy, hope, motivation, confidence and self-esteem.

One of the reasons behind chromophobia among Iranians is fear of discipline. Yes, in the dark theme, if your home is a little untidy, it does not attract much attention and you can arrange things sooner.

While, when the decoration is colorful, the slightest clutter can be clearly seen and like a big magnifying glass catches the eye.

In most homes, only the discipline is respected and there is no sign of freshness, especially color variation! And that is because using colorful accessories in the decoration makes them frightened, so they prefer to use dark and neutral colors.

In fact, the percentage of dark theme error is much less than the design with varieties of colors, which is another mystery of the phobia, so the ladies has both

her own taste in house design and can make the slightest mistake in decoration.

Colors show the vitality and passion of life over your soul, and you will lose that blessing in chromophobia, the fear of not being able to decorate with colorful decorations and that your home may not be beautiful will always keep you away from a variety of colors.

That is why your best choice is to use dark and neutral colors, instead of asking a designer to decorate your house or taking a risk of using colors.

You might think that the classic dark theme is a sign of strength in design, as claimed in some design books and psychology, black is also the color of power, but warnings such as depression, sadness and other mental illnesses are also acknowledged.

In spite of all these struggles for specificity, I believe the only possible power and right design in the world is to be able to enhance your inner freshness, to enhance your spirit, keep you calm and increase your sense of life and hope.

Colors have a huge world, some are more arrogant and do not associate with any color while some others are humble and can create aesthetic integrity and turn the earth into a heavenly paradise. So, we have to be aware of each color’s properties and not underestimating the individual and environmental psychology.

It is important to point out that any lapses in choosing the right color will have far-reaching consequences! You might also think that making a colorful decoration is easy and there is no need to get help from an expert in decoration and design, but this is a misconception and every success will only be achieved by professionals.

Shiraz University, Chinese Academy of Sciences sign MOU



SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Shiraz University and Chinese Research Center for Eco-Environmental Sciences (RCEES) have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to expand cooperation in scientific and research projects, IRNA news agency reported on Tuesday.

Joint research activities through the Silk Road Research Program, joint publication of articles and books, study opportunities for faculty and doctoral students, use of laboratory facilities, experience exchange workshops especially in the field of natural disasters, droughts, floods, medicinal plants, biodiversity, land degradation and international joint research projects were among the mutually agreed programs.

The MOU provides the opportunity of extensive scientific and research cooperation in a wide range of areas of interest to both natural and agricultural resources.

Research Center for Eco-Environmental Sciences, Chinese Academy of Sciences, formerly the Institute of Environmental Chemistry of Chinese Academy of Sciences founded in 1975, is the first comprehensive research institution engaged in research on eco-environmental science and technology in China.

Currently there are 473 staff in RCEES, including 5 academicians, 105 research professors, 106 associate professors, 179 assistant professors and 28 junior researchers or administrators working in various areas. There are 11 research departments or laboratories including three state key laboratories (State Key Laboratory of Environmental Chemistry and Ecotoxicology, State Key Laboratory of Aquatic Chemistry, State Key Laboratory of Urban and Regional Ecology), 8 departments for administration or management and other sections.

ENGLISH IN USE

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A ← → E

3,863 Iranians lost lives in road crashes within 3 months

Road crash casualties amounted to 3,863 in the country during the first three months of the current Iranian calendar year (starting on March 21), traffic police chief Seyed Kamal Hadianfar has said.

During the first three days of summer, 64 people were killed in traffic related accidents, while 1,375 others got injured, he added. He went on to note that 2,368 drivers were responsible for the crashes occurred in the aforementioned period.

Given that 91 percent of the country’s total transportation is carried out on roads, there must be special attention to the infrastructure of the roads nationwide, he noted.

۳,۸۶۳ نفر کشته در تصادفات ۳ ماه نخست سال

رئیس پلیس راهور گفت: در سه ماهه نخست سال جاری، ۳ هزار و ۸۶۳ نفر در تصادفات کشته شدند.

به گزارش خبرنگار باشگاه خبرنگاران پویا؛ سردار سید کمال هادیان‌فر اظهار کرد: دو هزار و ۳۶۸ راننده مقصر باعث مرگ این ۳ هزار و ۸۶۳ نفر در تصادفات شدند.

رئیس پلیس راهور ادامه داد: ۹۱ درصد تردها در کشور، در جاده‌ها صورت می‌گیرد که به زیرساخت جاده‌ها باید توجه ویژه‌ای شود.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“cerebro-, cerebr-”

■ **Meaning:** brain

■ **For example:** Passive smoking is considered a major cause of **cerebrovascular** disease, which causes strokes.

PHRASAL VERB

Think something up

■ **Meaning:** to produce a new idea, name etc. by thinking

■ **For example:** She was trying to think up an excuse.

IDIOM

Give somebody a (good) run for their money

■ **Explanation:** to make your opponent in a competition use all their skill and effort to defeat you

■ **For example:** They’ve given some of the top teams a run for their money this season.

Hundreds of thousands of mussels cooked to death on New Zealand beach in heatwave

Hundreds of thousands of mussels have been cooked to death on a beach in New Zealand’s North Island, with experts saying more will die as the effects of the climate crisis accelerate.

The mass die-off in Northland was sparked by “an exceptional period of warm weather” combined with low tides in the middle of the day, which had exposed the shellfish, said Dr Andrew Jeffs, a marine scientist from the University of Auckland.



He said more marine life would soon be affected by climate change, and there was little that that could be done to protect the vulnerable shellfish, other than manual protection measures such as shade cloth, which were impractical and “unrealistic”.

Northland is experiencing drought conditions, with many parts of the region not seeing rain for a record-breaking 40 plus days. The effects of the drought have been severe, with Kiwi birds perishing as they search for water, and tankers of freshwater urgently trucked in to fill rainwater tanks in remote communities.

Exposed at a time of day when the sun was at its most intense, hundreds of beds of mussels had been “cooked” by the sun, Jeffs said.

Scientists had observed mussels suffering under changing weather conditions for a decade, but conditions were now getting more intense and devastating for the animals. “I think we’re going to see entire communities of marine creatures change,” said Jeffs.

“These tidal areas are already a very intense place to live and have got very hot sunshine during the summer, it only makes it more intensive. It will only be the very toughest plants and animals that will survive there.”

According to local Northland resident Brandon Ferguson, the smell of the dead mussels was pungent and disturbing.

“It smelt like death and most of the shells had already been cleaned out by gulls and other sea life, but there were still hundreds of full mussels, dying mussels and dead mussels washing in and some just floating around in the tide,” Ferguson told the Northern Advocate newspaper.

“It was heartbreaking to see. Some were still washing in, but not knowing what was wrong, we didn’t touch them, there were more than 500,000 empty shells that we saw.”

The Ministry for Primary Industries said it was investigating the mass die-off and urged people not to collect or eat the affected mussels.

Jeffs said mussels were ecologically very important for New Zealand’s coastal environment, but it was likely they would disappear from reef areas, as conditions became increasingly adverse, especially during summer.

“This is large-scale, whole reef systems being dried out and dying,” Jeffs said. “We’re just going to lose them”

(Source: The Guardian)

WORDS IN THE NEWS

Earthquake hits China

(February 24, 2003)

China says that at least 240 people in the Xinjiang region of north-west China have been killed in a serious earthquake. Officials say that about 1,000 people have been injured and 1,000 buildings have been destroyed in one of the least developed regions in China. This report from Francis Markus: The powerful earthquake, measuring six-point-eight on the Richter Scale, struck **a cluster** of small villages and towns in the **remote** and **arid** border region of Xinjiang, close to Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Officials say it hit at about ten am local time. That’s when many people were having their breakfast because it gets light very late in China’s far western regions.

In one of the worst-hit villages in the Bachu area, authorities say about a thousand homes **collapsed** and at least one school and a clinic. Rescuers, including People’s Liberation Army soldiers, are already at work searching through the rubble of buildings, many of which are **hastily built** out of poor quality construction materials.

And the government has also begun sending in **relief supplies** of milk and grain and emergency blankets. But this region, populated largely by members of the Muslim Uighur people, is one of the least developed in China and authorities are likely to **be hard pressed** to respond to the disaster. This area is **no stranger** to big earthquakes but those over the past few years have caused only **light casualties** because of the **sparse population**. It now seems clear that this one is among the most serious in terms of loss of life.

■ **Words**

a cluster: a small group of things or people that are gathered closely together - here, it refers to villages and towns
remote: far away from other places
arid: very dry so that very few plants can grow there
collapsed: suddenly fell down
hastily built: built very quickly, possibly without enough planning

relief supplies: money, food or clothing for people who are poor or hungry
to be hard pressed to: if you find it very difficult and stressful to do something, you are hard pressed to do it
no stranger to: to already have experience of something
light casualties: not many seriously injured people
sparse population: very few people living far away from each other

(Source: BBC)

Turkey beefs up military presence in Syria amid Russia spat

PRESS TV — Turkey significantly beefs up its military presence in northwestern Syria amid continued disagreement with Russia over Damascus' counterterrorism operations in the area.

On Tuesday, Turkey's Haberturk TV reported that the Turkish army had dispatched around 300 military vehicles to its observation posts in Syria's Idlib Province.

It said the convoy featured military trucks, armored vehicles, and self-propelled artillery.

A video provided by AFP, meanwhile, showed a Turkish military convoy arriving in the village of Matarim in a militant-held area in Idlib that lies near the strategic M4 Highway. The highway connects the flashpoint town of Saraqeb with government-held Latakia.

Turkey has 12 observation posts in Idlib, set up as part of an Iran-brokered agreement with Russia to de-escalate the situation near the Turkish border. Some of the posts, however, now lie in the territory that has been recaptured in joint Russo-Syrian efforts.

Ankara, which itself supports a number of anti-Damascus militant outfits in Idlib, claims that Syrian offensives there have killed 13 of its troops this month. It has threatened to attack the Syrian military unless government forces abandoned the liberated areas, and asked Moscow to "stop" Damascus.

Earlier, reports said that the Turkish military had gone as far as conducting some strikes against the Syrian Arab Army (SAA).

Damascus, though, has vowed to liberate the entire Syria, including Idlib, which contains the largest remaining concentrations of Takfiri terrorists in the Arab country.

According to the Syrian government, there are at least 70,000 militants in the militant-held part of the province, many of whom belong to Hayat Tahriri al-Sham, formerly known as al-Nusra Front or al-Qaeda's Syria offshoot.

The Turkish government alleges that by refusing to "contain" Damascus' advances towards re-establishing its sovereignty over the Syrian territory, Moscow has flouted the agreement it has made with Ankara concerning the Arab country.

At one point, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan even threatened to quit the Astana process, a Syria talks' framework that gathers Moscow, Ankara, and Tehran, and the Turkish forces abandoned their joint patrols with the Russian troops in northwestern Syria.

Russia has, on the other hand, blamed Turkey for failing to rein in the Ankara-backed militants in Idlib, which Moscow says were mounting attacks on Syrian and Russian forces.

Also on Tuesday, though, the Turkish forces resumed the joint missions with the Russian troops, Reuters reported, citing Russia's Defense Ministry, as Ankara, which has purchased Russia's S-400 advanced missile defense systems, was expected not to allow its differences with Moscow over Syria to compromise the Russo-Turkish relations.

A Turkish delegation, headed by Deputy Foreign Minister Sedat Onal also traveled to the Russian capital on Monday, and has been discussing the spat with a Russian team led by Presidential envoy for Syria Sergey Vershinin, Turkey's official Anadolu Agency reported.

However, Omer Celik, spokesman for Turkey's ruling Justice and Development (AK) Party, said Russia had "clearly" been informed about Turkey's stance in the region.

He said Ankara was determined to push back against the Syrian soldiers, and had made the necessary military preparations to do so. Celik said the Turkish military would take action if the Syrian forces did not withdraw from the areas they have recaptured.

This is not the first time that the Turkish military involvement in Syria has resulted in controversy.

Over the past four years, the Turkish military has staged at least two unauthorized incursions into northern Syria to push back against Kurdish militants, whom Ankara says seek to overthrow the Turkish government.

The aggression prompted the areas' Kurdish population to ask the Syrian government for protection against the Turkish forces.

Maduro says U.S. plotting to invade Venezuela, country 'not afraid of combat'

TEHRAN (FNA) — Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro said the United States and some of its allies are plotting to invade Venezuela and that the South American country is "not afraid of military combat."

In a televised speech on Monday, Maduro said the US had assembled a "mercenary force" to invade Venezuela, presstv reported.

"We don't want war; we don't want violence; we don't want terrorism, but we are not afraid of military combat and we are going to guarantee peace," said the Venezuelan president, surrounded by the armed forces' high command.

The US has been carrying out a pressure campaign against Maduro's government and urged the armed forces to turn against him. Washington has been backing opposition figure Juan Guaido in his attempts to topple the government in Caracas, including through a recent coup that failed.

The administration of US President Donald Trump has also imposed several rounds of sanctions against the oil-rich country aimed at ousting Maduro and replacing him with Guaido.

Guaido is considered responsible for causing political crisis in Venezuela when he unilaterally declared himself "interim president" of the country in January last year, rejecting the outcome of the May 2018 election, which Maduro had won.

Maduro said there were groups of military "deserters" training in neighboring Colombia to "enter silently and attack military units".

He said military exercises were conducted over the weekend in reaction to threats of aggression orchestrated by the US, Colombia, and Brazil.

Venezuela's armed forces and civilian militia on Saturday kicked off two-day nationwide military drills, dubbed the Bolivarian Shield 2020 Operation. According to official figures, about 2.4 million forces participated in the drills.

The exercises were conducted "based on real threats, not imagined ones", Defense Minister General Vladimir Padrino, who was seated next to Maduro during the president's Monday speech, said.

Liberation of Aleppo not end of Syrian army's anti-terror campaign: Assad

➔ **1** Assad said in a televised speech broadcast live from the capital Damascus on Monday evening.

He added, "Years of violent and barbaric [militant] shelling of most Aleppo neighborhoods left tens of thousands of people dead, injured, orphaned and widowed. Years of siege without running water, electricity or other basic necessities were meant to bring the people of Aleppo to their knees.

"With any shell that fell on Aleppo, the enemies would entertain the hope that the city's identity would change to what it never used to be. They dreamed of creating an Aleppo that would not be in harmony with Damascus at all, and whose people would capitulate to them for a few dollars and much disgrace."

"The enemies were daydreaming as the willpower to confront them grew following any shell that struck Aleppo. Patriotism sharpened and faith in the homeland became stronger as people lost lives. In reality, Aleppo remained a city steeped in history, nobility and authenticity," Assad pointed out.

The Syrian president further noted that Aleppo will certainly rise from the ashes of war, and will retain its economic and commercial weight in Syria's economy.

"We are fully aware that the recent



liberation does not mean the end of the war, the failure of schemes, the complete purge of terrorism or the surrender of enemies. Nevertheless, it means that enemies have been taken down a peg as a prelude for their total defeat, sooner or later," Assad said.

"It also means that we must not rest assured, and must prepare for the coming battles. Therefore, the battle to liberate the entire Aleppo and Idlib will continue irrespective of some hollow threats just as the campaign to retake all Syrian territories, to crush terrorism, and to restore stability will

also continue," he commented.

Assad underlined that Syrian army soldiers will not hesitate to carry out their national duties as regards defending the country and its nation.

The remarks came as Syria's General Command of the Army and Armed Forces announced in a statement earlier in the day that government forces had established full control over tens of villages and towns in the western and northwestern countryside of Aleppo.

The statement listed some of the liberated towns and villages as Sheikh Ali, Urum al-Kubrah, Urum al-Sughra, Kafr Naya, Kafr Dael, Kafr Hamrah, Babis, A'wejl, Haritan, Hayyan, Anadan and Bayanoun.

Last month, Syria's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates wrote to the United Nations, stressing that the operation in Idlib and Aleppo against Takfiri elements "will not stop until the elimination of those terrorists, who threaten safety and security of Syrian civilians."

The Syrian offensive against militants in Idlib began on August 5, 2019, after those positioned in the de-escalation zone failed to honor a ceasefire brokered by Russia and Turkey and continued to target civilian neighborhoods.

Saudi Arabia urges Germany to lift arms export ban despite continuing war on Yemen



PRESS TV — Saudi Arabia, which is in the midst of a bloody war on Yemen, has urged Germany to lift its ban on arms exports to the kingdom.

In an interview with German news agency DPA on Monday, Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud claimed that the Riyadh regime needed the German weapons to "defend ourselves."

"We hope Germany understands that we need the means to defend ourselves," he said, pointing to attacks on two major oil facilities in Saudi Arabia last year, which Riyadh and the United States blamed on Iran without evidence but which the Yemeni forces took responsibility for.

Iran rejected the accusations of involvement and said the attacks were legitimate acts of self-defense by Yemen, which has been under incessant Saudi strikes since 2015.

The Saudi foreign minister claimed that Germany's decision not to approve arms exports to Saudi Arabia despite the continued threat of such attacks did not conform "to the framework of good relations" between Riyadh and Berlin.

The Saudi official's remarks come six weeks before the German government is due to decide whether to extend the ban once more beyond its current expiration date of March 31, 2020.

The ban was effectively enforced following the murder of dissident Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul in late 2018. It has been extended twice.

German ruling coalition partner calls for extension of arms ban

Meanwhile, a high-ranking member of Germany's Social Democratic Party (SPD), which is part of the ruling coalition, said Monday that Berlin's ban on weapons exports to Saudi Arabia had to be extended until at least the end of the year due to the continuing war on Yemen.

"Without a fundamental shift by Saudi Arabia in the Yemen war — one of the worst humanitarian catastrophes in the world — there cannot and must not be any arms

exports," Gabriela Heinrich, the deputy chair of the SPD's parliamentary group, told DPA. "From the point of view of the SPD parliamentary group, the moratorium must thus be extended at least until the end of the year."

The ban restricts not only the deliveries of fully assembled products, but also of components used by weapon companies in other European nations. This has prompted outrage mostly in France and Britain, which have heavily relied on German high-tech components for producing and assembling fighter jets and warships for Saudi Arabia.

In an attempt to alleviate its partners' concerns, Berlin has agreed to extend export licenses that had already been granted for nine months, provided that the companies undertook not to deliver any finished weapon systems to Saudi Arabia until the end of the year.

The government of Chancellor Angela Merkel also called on France and Britain to ensure that their weapon system deliveries to Saudi Arabia or the United Arab Emirates — another main belligerent in the Yemen war — would not be used in the Yemen conflict, either.

The two Arab regimes and their regional allies in the Middle East have been waging the deadly war on Yemen since March 2015, using weapons and intelligence supplied by Western countries, most notably the United States, France, Britain, and Canada.

The German government has come under pressure from many conservatives at home to end the ban on Saudi Arabia. The critics argue that a continued ban could jeopardize projects such as the development of a Franco-German combat jet and other arms deals.

The arms ban, however, has been praised by human rights advocates, who have said it has had more effect than expected.

Many other countries, however, have decided to maintain profitable arms deals with Riyadh, despite the outrage over both the Khashoggi murder and the many civilian casualties in Yemen.

U.S. neocons, Zionist lobby losing war in Syria: commentator



PRESS TV — The United States government, neoconservatives and the Zionist lobby in Washington are losing the war in Syria, according to Edward Corrigan, an international lawyer and political commentator.

US President Donald Trump has called for an end to Russia's support for the Syrian government, engaged in efforts to liberate the whole country.

Trump "expressed concern over the violence in Idlib, Syria, and... conveyed the United States' desire to see an end to Russia's support," in a call with his Turkish counterpart, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, on Sunday.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu expressed a similar sentiment among journalists at the Munich Security Conference after he talked with his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov.

Commenting on this, Corrigan said, "They're losing the war. Before they did not want to engage in any sort of political process, they still thought that they could accomplish some of their goals by military means. Now, they realize that they can't do that. So now they're in public about this switching gears and talking about politics only because they're trying to save the remnants of the [Daesh] and dash other extremist groups in the better and undisruptive part of Syria."

"And it's only because they're losing. And I don't think the Russians would do that because it's purely hypocritical to see the Americans have been providing weapons to Saudi Arabia, to the United Arab Emirates to the... militants in the south, and, of course, even the Pentagon has been arming the Kurds. So, you know, this is an example of hypocritical and say, you know, do it we say don't do as we do," he said.

"The Americans are up to their neck, in providing arms to the various groups in order to destabilize and try to destroy Syria, as are the Israelis. The Israelis are supplying American weapons and paying salaries. And you know, for the most part,

providing American war materials to the extremist groups in Syria to take up Israel's objective," he stated.

"And these are not the same as Turkey's objectives. And Turkey is trying to reassert itself as a player in the area. Some people call this, you know, reasserting itself with the Ottoman Empire. But the Turks also have a lot of problems with the Americans, you know, the strong support for the Palestinians inside Turkey. There will be next to zero support for the American move of their embassy from Tel Aviv to Turkey. There is no support for the so-called deal of the century, which is basically the total capitulation of the Palestinians, and enforcing an Israeli hegemony over the West Bank, and, you know, even that creating, what is, you know, basically, even more of an apartheid state than it is," he noted.

"They want to take away the Arabs in Israel and put them into the West Bank but also take the West Bank deport the Arabs. They don't want the Arab population. They will only want Jewish only settlements," he said.

"So there's a lot of problems between Turkey and the United States, and we have seen evidence of this by, you know, Turkey price getting the S-4 defense system. Also, the Americans are threatening them about by not allowing Turkey to get the F-35 stealth fighters and there are other problems," he said.

"But basically Americans are doing whatever they want to their domestic agenda and for Israel and for the Zionist lobby, the neocons and Christian fundamentalists in the United States, and they don't care about Turkey which should be, you know, it's the second-largest army in NATO, and they should be treating it with much more respect and not by lamming down policies that are totally hated by the Turkish population and the Turkish government down their throat, you know. They have a single-minded one-dimensional view of things which is nowhere near the reality of it," the analyst concluded.

MP: U.S. forces' continued deployment in Iraq under NATO?disguise against parliament's approval

TEHRAN (FNA) — A senior member of the Iraqi parliament's security and defense commission warned that the US plot to prolong the presence of its soldiers in the country under the cover of NATO is against the legislative body's approval which calls for withdrawal of all foreign forces.

"The parliament will stand against any agreement or negotiations between Baghdad and the US on delivering the US forces' mission to the NATO and such approaches and agreements with the US are against the bill approved by the Iraqi lawmakers about the expulsion of foreign military forces from the country," Karim al-Mahmudawi told the Arabic-language al-Ma'aloume news website on Tuesday.

He added that the parliament's approval is crystal clear and underlines the necessity for withdrawal of all foreign forces, noting that there is no need to other agreements.



Mahmudawi said that there is no need to the presence of 5,000 US forces in Iraq as claimed by Washington for training purposes.

During their meeting on Wednesday and Thursday in Brussels, the defense ministers of the NATO countries approved the transfer of some coalition activities to the NATO mission, with the mission being strengthened by troops from the alliance's member states.

NATO secretary-general, Jens Stoltenberg, announced on Thursday that the number of troops to be transferred from the coalition to the NATO force, and the details of training activities to be resumed by the mission, will be discussed during a meeting of the international coalition on Friday in Munich, on the sidelines of the security conference.

The Iraqi parliament called on the government in January to work to end all foreign troop presence as a backlash grew after the killing of a top Iranian military commander and an Iraqi militia leader in a US strike in Baghdad.

Iran water polo in shock over FINA's decision

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran Swimming Federation still is in shock after International Swimming Federation (FINA) introduced Kazakhstan as Asia's water polo representative in the 2020 Olympic Games.

The competition, featuring men's and women's teams from China, Iran, Japan South Korea, and host Kazakhstan, would have determined the Asian representatives for the 2020 Olympics, but it was cancelled due to coronavirus and the decision to cancel was precipitated by the Kazakh government.

FINA, the worldwide governing body for aquatic sports, has confirmed that the Asian Swimming Federation (AASF) will not hold a qualification tournament for the Asian water polo teams hoping to represent their country in the Olympics. No other Asian country, including Kuwait, Singapore, South Korea and Thailand, was willing to host an international event that includes athletes with potential exposure to the frequently fatal virus.

The coronavirus outbreak originated in Chinese city Wuhan and has since spread to several countries. More than 71,000 cases of coronavirus have been reported in China. A total of 1,770 people have died from coronavirus in the country, according to Chinese authorities.

But it's so weird that Kazakhstan has been awarded a big gift after refusing to hold the tournament.

AND it's not clear why Iran has been excluded from the competition.

Kazakhstan's policy to refuse hosting the



competition has nothing to do with Iran and FINA should not awarded the country a quota berth without qualification.

Kazakhstan undoubtedly is the most powerful country in the Asia but FINA has not made a logical decision to award the nation

a berth because the other teams' rights are being violated by the decision.

The Iranian players claimed a bronze medal in the 2018 Asian Games and were hopeful that they can secure a place at the Olympics for the second time after

44 years but were disappointed by the FINA's irrational decision.

Iran, as a team battling for a place in the Olympics, can meet Kazakhstan in a neutral field to determine the Asia's representative. It's fair.

ACL 2020: Persepolis held by Shahrjah, Sepahan lose to Al Sadd

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Persepolis football team of Iran were held to a 2-2 draw by Emirati side Sharjah, while Sepahan lost to Al Sadd of Qatar 3-0 on Matchday 2 of the AFC Champions League on Tuesday.

Ali Alipour left-footed shot from the left side of the six-yard box gave the visiting team a lead in the 9th

minute but Mohammed Khalfan equalized the match in the 25th minute.

Two minutes later Alipour completed his brace but Ryan Mendes made it 2-2 just before the halftime.

Al Taawoun of Saudi Arabia also defeated Al Duhail of Qatar 2-0 and moved to top of Group C with six points. Alduhail is second with three points and Sharjah

and Persepolis are third and fourth with one point.

In Doha, Sepahan lost to Al Sadd 3-0 in Group D. Akram Afif was on target in the 51st minute and Hassan Al Haydous scored twice in the 72nd and 78th minute.

Al Nassr of Saudi Arabia also beat Al Ain of the UAE 2-1 in the group.

Iran women's 3x3 schedule at OQT released



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iran will start the FIBA 3x3 Olympic Qualifying Tournament (OQT) with a match against Japan.

Team Melli will meet Japan and Turkmenistan in Group B on March 28 and play Ukraine and Australia two days later.

A total of 20 teams per gender can still make it to Tokyo after qualifying for the FIBA 3x3 Olympic Qualifying Tournament (OQT), which will grant three tickets to the Olympics by gender.

Iran are in Group B along with Japan, Ukraine, Turkmenistan and Australia.

The U.S. women's team will play in Group A with France, Germany, Uruguay and Indonesia.

Group C includes Netherlands, Estonia, Belarus, Hungary and Sri Lanka. In Group

D, Italy, Taipei, Switzerland, Spain and host India will play.

The top two teams in each group will advance to the quarterfinals, where the knock-out stage begins.

The winner of the third-place game, as well as both teams that qualify for the final, will compete in the Olympics.

The world's top three teams in this event—China, Serbia and Russia—and Japan, the host nation, have already booked their ticket to Tokyo.

In total, there will be eight 3x3 teams that qualify.

The eighth team will be decided in a separate six-team tournament in April in Budapest, Hungary. This tournament is meant to produce a 3x3 team whose country was not represented in the traditional 5x5 format in either 2012 or 2016.

Iranian Greco-Roman wrestlers win two golds in Asian C'ships



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iranian Greco-Roman wrestlers Pouya Nasserpour and Amin Mirzadeh won gold medals at the Asian Wrestling Championships underway in Delhi, India on Tuesday.

Nasserpour, a 2018 world junior champion, defeated Uzbekistan's Jasurbek Ortikboev 8-0 in the 55kg final bout.

2018 world junior champion Mirzazadeh also defeated Kim Minseok from Korea republic 9-0 in the 130kg final match.

Pejman Postham lost to Tamerlan Shadukayev from Kazakhstan 10-1 in the final match of the 77kg.

Meysam Dalkhani from Iran also won a bronze medal at the 63kg, losing to Yernur Fidakhmetov from Kazakhstan 2-0.

Iran has sent 10 wrestlers to the competition. The tournament is missing teams

from China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Turkmenistan, due to circumstances related the new coronavirus outbreak mainly in China.

India's government has suspended e-visas for Chinese nationals due to the deadly virus that has claimed more than 1,800 lives since spreading from its epicenter in Wuhan, China.

The tournament got underway on Tuesday and runs through Feb. 23.

The championship has been classified as a ranking tournament for the Tokyo Olympics by the United World Wrestling — the global governing body of the sport.

The tournament will be played in three categories -- men's freestyle, Greco-Roman and women's wrestling. The first two days will see Greco-Roman competition, followed by women's wrestling (next two days) and men's freestyle (last two days).

Vietnam F1 Grand Prix gets go-ahead despite virus fears

Vietnam's inaugural Formula One Grand Prix will take place in Hanoi in April as planned, organizers told AFP on Tuesday, avoiding the fate of the Chinese Grand Prix which was postponed over the deadly coronavirus outbreak.

The virus, which has killed more than 1,800 people in China, has trashed Asia's sporting calendar, forcing the postponement of top events including the Hong Kong Sevens rugby.

But Vietnamese authorities said the country's inaugural F1 race would go ahead as «scheduled» on April 5, Le Ngoc Chi, CEO of Vietnam Grand Prix told AFP.

That flies in the face of mounting fears over the spread of the virus from neighboring China and the risk of transmission among the crowds expected to make the journey to the Vietnamese capital.

«The time for the... F1 race will not be postponed or delayed,» Tran Trung Hieu, deputy director of Hanoi's tourism department was quoted as saying by state media Tuesday.

«Although this is a sports event, it has a very huge impact on Vietnam and Hanoi's tourism,» he said, adding all measures will be taken to ensure safety.

AFP reporters saw workers building stands at the race-track as construction continued this week.



Football friendly cancelled

The go-ahead comes the same day Vietnam's football federation announced that an international friendly scheduled a week before the F1 race will be cancelled.

Vietnam and Iraq's national teams were supposed to play on March 26 as preparation for World Cup qualifiers But the match has been cancelled because of the outbreak and at «the request of the Iraq Football Federation», said a statement from Vietnam's Football Federation.

Last week, Vietnam became the only country outside of China to enforce a mass quarantine of a community to

contain a cluster of virus cases.

Checkpoints have been set up around the six villages that make up Son Loi, about 40 kilometers (25 miles) outside Hanoi after six people were detected with the virus there.

Vietnam, which shares a porous border with China, has 16 confirmed cases of the coronavirus, including those in Son Loi. It banned all flights to and from mainland China in a bid to stop the virus from spreading.

It also suspended new tourist visas for Chinese nationals or foreigners who had been in China over the past two weeks. The communist country will get its first taste of the glitz and glamour of Formula One with the Hanoi race, as the sport attempts to reach new markets in Southeast Asia.

Hanoi has bet big on the event's popularity, signing a 10-year, multi-million-dollar deal with Formula One last year which state media said would cost Vietnam \$60 million per year.

The fee has been picked up in full by the country's largest private conglomerate, VinGroup, which is hoping to dazzle with a night race on a street track.

The commitment to hold the race will likely be welcomed by Formula One chiefs who are scrambling to fit the postponed Shanghai race into this season's schedule.

(Source: AFP)

It's time for a unity ticket to support Team Melli

I → Despite all criticism, newly-appointed coach tried to talk positively in his first official press conference and said that Iran national football team need to feel the energy in a positive way to book a place at the 2022 FIFA World Cup qualification third round.

For Dragan Skocic, there is excitement. Aged 51, this is the job he most covets. A former coach of Foolad and Sanat Naft, Skocic led the latter to top positions at the Iran Professional League (IPL) this season and were judged to have played beautiful football with the Abadan-based team. The former Croatian player is committed to a style based on possession and technique, although ready to play defensive football whenever possible.

Iran national team will have four must-win matches in late March and early June in the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and AFC Asian Cup China 2023.

It's time for a unity ticket to support Team Melli and their new head coach for being successful in the way ahead. This team needs the support of fans, experts, media and authorities to make it happen.

Mourinho fears Son will miss rest of Spurs' season with arm fracture

Jose Mourinho says the "situation couldn't be worse" at Tottenham as he revealed he is expecting Heung-min Son to be out until next season.

The South Korean forward suffered an arm injury in a first-minute challenge with Aston Villa's Ezri Konsa at the weekend and though he completed the 90 minutes and scored twice, he now faces surgery and a long-term lay-off.

In his pre-match press conference for Wednesday's Champions League clash with Leipzig, Mourinho suggested he disagreed with a club statement which said Son would missing for only a "number of weeks".

The Spurs boss said he was "not counting" on Son playing again this season – adding to his woes with Harry Kane also a long-term absentee.

Mourinho said: "We are going to miss him.

"The club wrote a nice statement. If I was the one to write the statement I would write differently. We miss him.

"The situation couldn't be worse. That is obvious. There is nothing we can do.

"We are going to play with the players we have available. I was worried about not having attacking options on the bench – now I don't have attacking options on the pitch."

Asked if he would have to try a different style of play with Son now absent as well as Kane, Mourinho replied: "Yes, it has to be.

"You know that I like analogies, and sometimes I do good ones and sometimes I do silly ones – I think, in this case, I'll try to do one for you.

"When we arrived we were on the minus-12th floor, we got on the stairs and we started climbing. But immediately, in the beginning, the stairs broke so we were in trouble and we were finding a way to try to get up.

"We found a way, with a lot of work and a lot of effort and we started going and going and going, and when we arrive on the fourth floor, which was where we wanted to arrive, somebody came and took the stairs away.

"So now we are in trouble. Now we have two options.

"One is to give up and we will fall and normally die – because it's the fourth floor. Another way is to fight with what we have, no stairs but arms. So, we're going to be on that balcony fighting with everything that we have."

Harry Winks reiterated his boss' disappointment that Spurs would be without Son for a lengthy period.

The 24-year-old midfielder said: "It is a massive blow for us. He is a top player.

"He brings more than just his goals to the team. His work-rate and energy and his experience as well. He's doing so well.

"It's a massive loss for us. But we've got good enough players in the squad as well who can fit in and hopefully we can still score enough goals."

(Source: Guardian)

Myanmar under match-fixing scanner as FIFA and AFC investigate World Cup Qualifiers defeat

Myanmar national team have come under the match-fixing scanner after FIFA and Asian Football Confederation (AFC) launched an investigation into one of their 2022 FIFA World Cup Qualifiers defeat.

Myanmar had suffered a heavy 7-0 defeat at the hands of Kyrgyz Republic at the Dolen Omurzakov Stadium, Bishkek in their third outing of the 2022 World Cup and 2023 AFC Asian Cup Joint-Qualifiers second round campaign last October.

According to Myanmar Football Federation (MFF) chairman Zaw Zaw, officials from both FIFA and AFC visited Myanmar recently to investigate any match-fixing which might have taken place during the World Cup Qualifiers tie.

"It is normal that FIFA initiate investigation into matches where goal margins are large. We helped them in the investigation. FIFA has always performed investigations like that," Zaw Zaw was quoted as saying by the Eleven Myanmar.

The 7-0 defeat to Kyrgyzstan had led to the sacking of Montenegrin tactician Miodrag Radulovic and the return of Antoine Hey as the Asian Lions head coach.

"Investigations on match-fixing are carried out around the world. According to the rules and regulations, FIFA and AFC investigate whenever they have doubts about a possible match-fixing. If they find something, they will make an announcement. If not, we will not," the MFF head said.

According to the report, FIFA and AFC officials interviewed eight players who had played in the match and questioned them by showing videos and facts.

After suffering three defeats in their first three games, Myanmar have bounced back under Hey with wins against Tajikistan and Mongolia in Group F of World Cup Qualifiers.

They will now face Japan in their next qualification tie on March 26 and then take on Kyrgyz Republic in the return leg on March 31.

(Source: Fox Sports)

Neon followed up its "Parasite" Oscar win with the Valentine's Day release of "Portrait of a Lady on Fire", one of 2019's most acclaimed films. Following a one-week qualifying run in December, Celine Sciamma's French period romance opened in 22 theaters with a strong per-theater average of about \$20,000.